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ABSTRACT

A 2x2 factorial experiment was conducted to determine the effects of 2 interventions designed to reduce face-saving in a situation which normally produces such behavior. Face-saving, defined as sacrificing tangible (monetary) rewards to avoid public embarrassment, was measured by the length of time subjects publicly performed an embarrassing task. Subjects' payoffs increased the longer they performed. It was hypothesized that face-saving would be reduced when (1) subjects believed that another was dependent on them for his outcome; and (2) subjects expected to encounter the other afterwards. Two significant main effects confirmed the hypotheses. The results were interpreted in terms of: (1) guilt aroused by failing to help a dependent other; and (2) comparison with another who has demonstrated fortitude in performing a similar task. (Author)

The Effects of Another's Dependency and Expectations of Meeting With Him on the Reduction of Face-Saving Behavior

by

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Previous studies (Brown, 1968, 1970; Brown and Garland, 1971; Garland and Brown, 1971) have shown that face-saving, defined as the sacrifice of tangible (monetary) rewards to avoid looking foolish in public, may be affected by the manipulation of a number of situational variables. Briefly, these studies reveal that derogatory audience feedback, audience ignorance of costs, performance of an embarrassing task and anticipated audience evaluation heighten this type of behavior. In addition, these studies have shown that face-saving is likely to be increased when one: feels incompetent with respect to performing a particular task, believes that his audience consists of either close friends or total strangers whom he expects to encounter after performing deficiently, and believes that his audience is "expert" rather than similarly deficient at performing a given task. The theoretical framework underlying the studies mentioned above assigns embarrassment the status of an intervening variable which ensues between an inappropriate or deficient self-presentation and face-saving behavior. This framework was developed from the writings of Goffman (1955, 1959) and Heider (1958).

The results of our studies suggest that the potential for face-saving behavior should be increased substantially when several or perhaps all of the factors mentioned above are present in a given situational context. More intriguing than this rather obvious hypothesis is a question brought into focus by the pattern of results outlined above: namely, can an intervention which might

serve to reduce the need to save face be introduced into a situation which otherwise has a high potential for producing such behavior? More generally, is it not possible to help individuals to overcome a strong need to save face in a situation which would normally be expected to motivate such behavior?

The creation of an alternate motive of sufficient strength to overshadow the individual's concern with how he looks to his audience may be one way to reduce face-saving. In this connection, studies of bystander intervention (Darley and Latané, 1968; Latané and Darley, 1968) suggest that persons who observe another in need of help are likely to intervene in the victim's behalf less rapidly as the number of others present increases. The "diffusion of responsibility" notion, so aptly used by these investigators to interpret their results, suggests that failure to intervene in behalf of a needy other when others are present is mediated by the hope or expectation that someone else will at least take the first step. However, an alternative explanation considered by these investigators suggests that in some cases intervention may be delayed or even declined because individuals fear looking foolish or inept as a result of making an inappropriate or "clumsy" helping gesture. The latter explanation becomes attractive if we recognize that both "real" and simulated bystander intervention episodes often contain many of the situational determinants of face-saving behavior. First, from the perspective of the potential intervenor, the others who are present constitute an audience of sorts, whose members will witness his intervention. Second, it may be anticipated by the potential intervenor that the audience will evaluate his behavior. Third, the ambiguity often found in such situations (or the specific type of assistance required) may cause a potential intervenor to experience doubt about his ability to intervene competently -- unless, of course, he has been specifically trained to offer such assistance. In this regard, the results of a study by Schwartz and Claussen (1970) indicate

that there is greater hesitation to provide needed assistance when another who is "expert" is also present. Fourth, the potential for publicly visible embarrassment as a result of "blundering" would seem to be considerable in such situations. From this perspective, then, actively intervening in behalf of a needy other (when others are observing) may very likely be constrained by forces similar to those which promote withdrawal from potentially embarrassing situations in order to avoid looking foolish to others.

A recent study by Tilker (1970) suggests that more pronounced dependence of a victim on a potential intervenor is likely to increase the latter's sense of "responsibility" and, hence, his likelihood of intervention. Tilker's results suggest that providing assistance to a needy other may become a more potent motive if, in the eyes of the intervenor, the other is clearly dependent upon him for help, and if his latitude for diffusing responsibility to others is narrowed. This line of reasoning suggests that a heightened sense of responsibility toward a dependent other could, perhaps, function to reduce the strength of the potential helper's concern with how he looks to others who are present. There are two assumptions on which this reasoning is based. First, it may be assumed that failure to help another whose dependence has been clearly established may produce feelings of guilt which, if sufficiently strong, may prompt a helping gesture. Second, if dependence is clear and one knows that his failure to intervene will be visible to yet others, he may fear being held in their low regard because of his apparently "irresponsible" behavior.

The paradigm suggested by this formulation varies somewhat from that of typical bystander intervention studies, where it is generally the case that the potential intervenor is but one member of a group of observers, any of whom (from the subject's perspective) might intervene. Here, the potential intervenor is set off from the others who are present in that they constitute

an audience in which he has no membership. This difference should minimize opportunities for responsibility diffusion (if no one else has the capability of assisting the dependent other) and should provide the opportunity for testing hypotheses about interventions which might function to produce variations in face-saving behavior. Based on our interpretation of the Darley and Latané and Tilker studies cited earlier, one hypothesis is that the presence of an individual who is clearly dependent on one for assistance when opportunities for responsibility diffusion are removed, should serve to diminish the helper's inclination to withdraw from public view and should increase his willingness to provide the necessary aid -- even if this involves taking action which might cause him to look foolish or inept to witnesses while doing so.

Another variable which might affect one's willingness to engage in actions that could expose his deficiencies to an audience is related to the anticipation of meeting or not meeting with someone who has already taken such action and "lived through it." Expecting to meet with another who has had the fortitude to take such a risk carries with it a potential for comparing oneself to him and, possibly, dependence on him for a favorable evaluation. If one feels that he cannot perform at least as well as the other he may anticipate appearing "weaker" "less courageous" or "second best" to him. This can also be viewed as a form of face-saving behavior though, in this case, the object of concern for saving face may shift from the immediate audience to the "courageous" other. Thus, we would hypothesize that the strength of the forces toward taking similar action (willingness to expose deficiencies) will be increased when one expects to have an encounter with another who has withstood such a threat, and decreased when no future meeting is expected.

To carry this analysis further, it would seem appropriate to expect that the additive effects of an anticipated face-to-face meeting with another who has

displayed "staying power" and who is also dependent upon one for assistance should produce the greatest willingness to act in the latter's behalf, even if this involves the risk of publicly exposing his deficiencies. On the other hand, if no meeting is expected with another who is not dependent on one for assistance, the willingness to take such a risk should be minimized.

This paper reports the results of an experiment conducted to determine the effects of two interventions which were designed to reduce face-saving in a situation which closely resembles that described above, and which has been found (Brown and Garland, 1971) to have a high potential for producing such behavior.

Method

Overview and Design

All subjects, preselected for their poor singing voices, were asked to perform a relatively embarrassing task (singing the ballad "Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing") before an audience of evaluative male strangers whom they expected to meet afterwards. All subjects were informed that they could sing before the audience for as long as they wished, and that they would be paid at the rate of one cent per second for their singing time. The measure of face-saving employed was the length of time that subjects sang to the audience before withdrawal, given that the longer they sang, the more they could earn. (The efficacy of this dependent measure has been explored in previous studies (Brown and Garland, 1971; Garland and Brown, 1971).) One half of the subjects were told that the previous subject's payoff (all were informed that the prior subject sang) was to be determined directly by the amount of time that they sang (dependency condition) while the remainder were given no such information (nondependence condition). In addition, subjects were either informed that they would meet with the previous subject afterward, or that no meeting would occur. These variations resulted in a 2X2 factorial experiment.

Subjects

The subjects, 36 (male) college freshmen volunteers, were assigned randomly to conditions of the experiment.

Procedure

Upon arriving at the laboratory, each subject observed an interaction between the previous subject (actually a stooge) and the experimenter. During this interaction, the stooge's dependency on the subject's behavior was either established or omitted. Each subject then received tape-recorded instructions indicating that he was participating in a test of a newly developed computer that could evaluate the human voice on several dimensions. It was explained that the purpose of the experiment was to determine the extent of agreement between evaluations made by the computer and those made by a panel of evaluators. The subject, seated before a computer terminal, was provided with the words to the ballad "Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing." He listened to the melody and was then asked to sing the first line of the song into a microphone, connected (ostensibly) to the computer. After singing, the computer terminal typed out a negative voice evaluation, stating that his voice was flat, nasal, weak, etc. The subject was then asked to sing the same song, while standing before a one-way mirror, to a panel of male (students from another campus) evaluators. Each subject was told that he would meet with the panel later in the experiment and that he would be paid one cent for each second that he sang before it. Each subject was then informed that another purpose of the experiment was to determine whether the computer could make a "comparative evaluation" of two singing voices, and that, to this end, his voice would be compared with that of the previous subject who had already sung before the audience. The subject received no information about how long the other had sung. One half of the subjects ("other

dependent" condition) were informed that in order for the previous subject to get paid for the time he had sung, they would have to sing for an equal or longer period of time than he did. They were informed that if they sang for a shorter time than he, the latter would only be paid an amount equivalent to the time that the subject sang. The subjects were also informed that if they chose not to sing, the other would receive no payment at all (even though he had sung). In a second condition ("no dependency"), subjects were told only that the preceeding subject was to be paid at the same rate as they.

In addition to the dependency manipulation, subjects were informed that they would either meet the previous subject afterward or that no such meeting would occur.

The operational measure of face-saving was the length of time that subjects sang before the audience, as measured by a stopwatch. The timer was kept blind as to the subject's condition. A five minute limit was placed on singing time, but subjects were not informed of this.

After singing, a postexperimental questionnaire was administered to assess subjects' feelings of embarrassment, guilt, and concern with the audience, as well as to check on the effectiveness of the manipulations.

Results

Initial comparability of subjects' singing voices

Each subject rated the quality of his singing voice two weeks prior to participating in the research (61-point scale ranging from "poor" to "excellent.") An analysis of variance revelaed no differences between conditions.

Effectiveness of dependency manipulation

To check on the effectiveness of the dependency manipulation, subjects were asked to rate (postexperimental questionnaire) the extent of the previous

subject's dependency on them for his reward. Analysis of variance on these ratings revealed a significant main effect due to the dependency manipulation (F (1, 32) = 86.74, $p < .001$). The difference was in the expected direction.

Effectiveness of incompetency computer voice evaluation

Immediately after receiving the computer voice evaluation, each subject rated his singing ability on a six-point scale from "incompetent" (1) to "competent" (6). (The overall mean was 1.92.) An analysis of variance revealed no differences between conditions on this measure.

Analysis of dependent variable: Singing time (and payoffs)

Table 1 displays the average singing time in each condition. An analysis

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Insert Table 1 about here

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of variance revealed significant main effects due to "dependency" (F (1, 32) = 9.43, $p < .01$) and expectations of meeting with the other (F (1, 32) = 4.76, $p < .05$). On the average, singing time was greater among subjects who believed that the other was dependent on them for his outcome ($\bar{X}$ = 154 seconds) than among subjects who did not believe this ($\bar{X}$ = 74 seconds). Also, singing time was longer when subjects expected to meet with the other afterward ($\bar{X}$ = 142 seconds) than when this was not expected ($\bar{X}$ = 85 seconds). At the extremes, the additive effects of these variables produced a substantial difference in singing time ($\bar{X}$ = 176 and 40 seconds in the "other dependent-meet" and "other not dependent-no meet" conditions respectively).

Other measures

In formulating the hypotheses it was reasoned that feelings of guilt aroused by the other's dependency would induce subjects in this condition to sing

longer than subjects in the nondependency condition. To test this assumption subjects rated the amount of guilt they experienced as a result of not singing longer than they had sung (postexperimental questionnaire). Analysis of variance on these ratings revealed a significant main effect due to the dependency manipulation (F (1, 32) = 12.98, $p < .01$). Subjects who were informed that the other was dependent felt more guilty about not singing longer ($\bar{X}$ = 2.5) than subjects in the nondependency condition ($\bar{X}$ = 1.3). No other effects approached significance.

A further test of the effects of guilt may be derived from its correlation with singing time in the dependency and nondependency conditions. If our assumption is correct, guilt (due to not singing longer) and singing time should be negatively correlated in the dependency condition (singing longer reduces guilt) and uncorrelated in the nondependency condition. This expectation was confirmed. The correlation between these variables was -.50 ($p < .025$) in the dependency condition and +.05 (p = n.s.) in the nondependency condition.

To explore the possibility of differential levels of embarrassment experienced by subjects in the long as compared to short singing time conditions, an analysis of variance of subjects' ratings of their embarrassment while singing was performed. This data was obtained from a postexperimental questionnaire. The results of this analysis revealed no differences.

Finally, subjects were asked to rate their degree of concern with the audience's impression of them while singing. Analysis of variance on these ratings revealed a significant main effect due to dependency (F (1, 32) = 8.33, $p < .01$). The subjects in the dependency condition were less concerned with the audience's impression of them than subjects in the nondependency condition.

Discussion

This experiment created a conflict for subjects in which the gains to be

derived from saving face (avoiding public embarrassment) were pitted against the costs of guilt aroused by declining to aid a dependent other, and measuring up poorly against another who had had the courage to act forwardly. It was in this context that face-saving became responsive to the demands of the situation. Thus, the experimental hypotheses were confirmed. Briefly, it was found that saving face, by taking costly action to keep one's deficiencies from becoming visible to an audience can be decreased by: (1) a situationally induced motive to help another who is clearly dependent on one for assistance, and (2) the anticipation of future interaction with another who has already endured exposure of his deficiencies before that audience. These variables combined, such that subjects who expected to have a face-to-face meeting with the dependent other were most inclined to risk exposing their ineptness, while those who were constrained by neither dependency nor the expected meeting were least willing to permit such exposure.

The general effect of an anticipated meeting points not so much to an intervention which may reduce face-saving, as to possibilities for the structural redefinition of situations in which such behavior is likely to occur. Thus, superimposing the anticipation of a future encounter with a seemingly courageous other may increase pressures toward acting comparably, and may thereby elevate one's sense of "accountability" to him. Individuals may thus be induced to cast aside their concerns with preventing deficiencies from becoming visible to others in favor of "measuring up" to another's performance. The effects of dependency-nondependency are more clearly suggestive of a mechanism for reducing face-saving in situations which would be expected to produce such behavior.

Earlier, we explored the possibility of creating an alternative motive of sufficient strength to overshadow that of face-saving. We reasoned that guilt and the fear of appearing "irresponsible" for declining to help a needy other

might prove to be such motives. In this connection it is likely that -- apart from the reduction of guilt -- subjects in the dependency condition stood to derive rather inconsequential psychological gains from acting in the other's behalf. He was, after all, a total stranger about whom subjects had no information whatsoever, and whose outcome dependency remained unknown to the audience. It is in this context that the differential guilt ratings given in the dependency and nondependency conditions indicate that feelings of guilt were indeed operative in causing subjects to sing longer. Specifically, the correlations between guilt and singing time in the dependency and nondependency conditions (-.50 and +.05, respectively) reveal that, even within the dependency condition, subjects who sang less reported feeling more guilt about not having sung longer. Thus it seems appropriate to conclude that feelings of guilt, aroused by the belief that saving face would cause another to lose a reward, increased these subject's willingness to perform a rather embarrassing task before a scrutinizing audience at the risk of exposing their own ineptness.

In conclusion, our results bear not so much on the question of whether face-saving motives are present in bystander intervention episodes, but, rather, on the issue of whether failing to intervene -- if influenced by such a motive -- may be altered by interventions designed to change the structural characteristics of such situations and, hence, individual's responses to them. Our results indicate that such a strategy might indeed be fruitful.

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Footnotes

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TABLE 1

Average Singing Time

(in seconds)

	Other dependent $\bar{X}$	Other non-dependent $\bar{X}$	Overall $\bar{X}$
Expect to meet other			
N =	176 (9)	108 (9)	142 (18)
No expected meeting			
N =	131 (9)	40 (9)	85 (18)
Overall			
N =	154 (18)	74 (18)	114 (36)