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ABSTRACT
          A systematic analysis was made of the communications
of 5- and 6-year-old children in two kindergarten classrooms to
discover whether children's face-to-face interactions with peers
included "face work" components (rituals through which individuals
manage impressions when it becomes difficult to maintain a social
situation) and, if so, in what forms these components were expressed.
Field note data were obtained from classrooms located in separate
large urban school districts in the Southeastern United States. One
classroom was located in a middle-income, predominately white
neighborhood; the other was in a working class neighborhood gradually
being integrated racially. In the first classroom, 7 of 21 children
were black. In the second, 4 of 24 were black. Eight girls were
included in the first classroom; 13 were included in the second. Both
classes were organized so that children had opportunities to interact
away from adult intervention. Analytical questions included the
following: Do children participate in face-work as they interact with
their peers? Do children use avoidance processes in defensive and
protective ways? Do children participate in corrective interchanges
to restore spoiled interactive order? and, Do children aggressively
take advantage of face-work rules to "make points" in classroom
interactions? The results indicated that children did take corrective
or remedial action when the images they projected were threatened.
They also practiced aggressive uses of face-work principles to
improve their relative status among peers. (RH)

Impression Management in Kindergarten

Classrooms: An Analysis of Children's

Face-Work in Peer Interactions

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the

American Educational Research Association

New Orleans

April 1984

Impression Management in Kindergarten

Classrooms: An Analysis of Children's

Face-Work in Peer Interactions

Erving Goffman (1963) has referred to children as "communication delin-

quents" because often they violate the rules of adult interaction. This

study represents an initial exploration into the dynamics of that delinquency

as evidenced in two kindergarten classrooms. It is believed that Goffman's

orientation to the study of social phenomena has direct applications for the

study of socialization processes in school and is particularly suited to the

investigation of the contributions of peer interaction to that socialization

This study applies a small portion of Goffman's rich theoretical per-

spective to the study of children's social behavior. The effort is explor-

atory in nature. The study is a systematic analysis of the communications of

five- and six-year-old children in two kindergarten classrooms. The goals of

the analysis were to discover if children's face-to-face interactions with

peers included "face-work" components as described by Goffman (1967; 1971)

and, if so, in what forms these components were expressed.

The rationale for conducting this study is based on observations by

educational researchers (e.g., Katz, 1979; Lightfoot, 1978) and other social

scientists (Denzin, 1977; Dreitzel, 1973) that childhood socialization pro-

cesses are little understood and that the research into the unique "culture

of childhood" has been neglected. This study seeks to enrich our under-

standing of social behavior   olrooms. In particular   ...

provide insight into th   perspectives of young   hey inter-

act among themselves in school contexts not directly supervised by adults. Applying Goffman's face-work perspective to children's interactions can improve understandings of the socialization of interpersonal rituals necessary for a lifetime of face-to-face encounters. For educational practitioners, understanding the dynamics of children's face-to-face behavior may serve to inform decision making concerning program planning, the creation of learning environments, and the design of educational activities.

Impression Management, Face-Work, and

Remedial Interchanges

Goffman has provided a unique and revealing perspective on the study of social phenomena. In his work, the subject of interest is the behavior of individuals in interaction with others. He argues that explorations of the micro-order of everyday interpersonal communications contributed to under-standings of the larger social order (1971; 1981). Goffman refers to his work as a "sociology of occasions." He explains: "Social organization is the central theme, but what is organized is the co-mingling of persons and the temporary interactional enterprises that can arise therefrom" (1967, p. 2).

In any contact which one individual has with another, impressions are given off and received. Of particular significance are face-to-face contacts as opposed to those mediated by such devices as the mails or telephones. Face-to-face interaction is special because, when an individual can be observed directly, a multitude of sources of expressed information are immediately available (Goffman, 1969). Individuals in face-to-face inter-actions seek to control the information expressed so that others will perceive them favorably. Goffman (1959) likens actions to theater in which interactants stage performances as actors. Individuals...tion

practice the art of "impression management;" that is, they seek to present themselves in such a way as to create the impression that they understand and comply with the moral standards which organize all civil relations. C.. impression management, Goffman (1959) writes:

> In their capacity as performers, individuals
> will be concerned with maintaining the impres-
> sion that they are living up to the many
> standards by which they and their products
> are judged. But quo performers, individuals
> are concerned not with the moral issue of
> realizing these standards, but with the
> amoral issue of engineering a convincing
> impression that these standards are being
> realized. (p. 251)

Individuals take a "line" of behavior in social interaction. Others define social situations based on these mutually accepted lines. Goffman (1967) defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular con-tact" (p. 5). If one's line becomes suspect because of an embarrassing gaffe or faux pas, the ritualized communicative order is disturbed and one's face inevitably suffers. Goffman (1967) describes "face-work" rituals through which individuals manage impressions when it becomes difficult to maintain a social situation as it has been previously defined. Face-work rituals pro-vide social moves through which individuals can defend faces which have been challenged or repair faces which have been exposed as faulty.

Since communicative equilibrium depends on mutually agreed upon defi-nitions of each participants line, adults tend to conduct themselves during encounters so as to maintain their own faces and to protect the faces of others. In each interactive setting a person will have two points of view: "a defen-sive orientation toward saving his own face and a protective orientation toward saving the others' face" (Goffman, 1967, p. 14). Face-work occurs when individuals select lines of behavior based on estimations of the effects of

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that behavior on their projected images and on the image others are projecting. Goffman describes the following basic kinds of face-work (adapted from Goffman, 1967. pp. 15-26).

Avoidance Processes. The most basic way to prevent threats to face is to avoid contacts in which threats are likely to occur. Making a gracious withdrawal when threats are anticipated is a common example. Once involved in an encounter, keeping away from subjects and activities which might lead to embarrassing revelations is a defensive strategy. Modesty and hedging are used to protect a vulnerable line in case it is subsequently challenged. Protective avoidance moves include shows of respect, politeness, and discretion. Facts which may serve to embarrass claims made by others are left unstated or stated in such a way as to allow others to escape serious loss of face. Tactful overlooking is used when individuals pretend an offensive act has not occurred or acknowledge the act but pretend it is of little significance.

Corrective Processes. When information is presented which is incompatible with the judgments of social worth that are being maintained, if it is of the magnitude that cannot be ignored, participants recognize it as a threat and initiate moves to correct for its effects. Ritual disequilibrium is felt and compels the actors to restore a satisfactory ritual state. Four classic moves comprise the corrective interchange used for re-establishing ritual order: (1) The challenge, by which responsibility is taken for calling attention to the misconduct; (2) The offering, whereby the offender is given a chance to correct for the offense; (3) The acceptance, through which participants signal their acceptance of the offering as a satisfactory means of re-establishing the interactive order; and (4) The thanks, through which the forgiven offers a sign of gratitude to his/her forgivers.

Making Points - The Aggressive Use of Face-Work. When individuals use the built in expectation of face-work to promote their own status in relation to others,

they are "making points." The general method
is to introduce favorable facts about one's
self and unfavorable information about others.
In these interchanges, aggressors court on
others to follow face-work rules. As a result
of successfully making points, not only are
facts introduced which are loaded in the aggres-
sor's favor, but the aggressor's superior
capacities for manipulating social interactions
are demonstrated.

Goffman extends his treatment of face-work principles in an essay

entitled "Remedial Interchanges" (1971). He describes "remedial work" which

functions "to change the meaning that otherwise might be given an act, trans-

forming what could be seen as an offensive act into what can be seen as

acceptable" (1971, p. 109). Three devices by which these changes might be

accomplished are offered (adapted from Goffman, 1971, pp. 109-118):

>   (1) Accounts include joinders through which
>   individuals claim that acts they are accused
>   of committing did not occur, claims that
>   although offensive acts occurred they are not
>   what they appeared and therefore harmless,
>   pleas of innocence based on excusable ignorance
>   of consequences, claims of reduced responsi-
>   bility because of reduced competence, and pleas
>   of indefensible ignorance;
>
>   (2) Apologies contain these elements: expression of
>   embarrassment, clarification that one knows what
>   was expected and accepts negative sanctions,
>   repudiation of the act and vilification of self,
>   espousal of the right way to act and avowal to
>   do so, performance of penance and the volunteer-
>   ing of restitution; and
>
>   (3) Requests, which consist of asking those who might
>   be offended for permission to engage in acts which
>   could be considered violations of personal rights.

Accounts, apologies, and requests are tied to the corrective "offerings"

outlined above. Under the topic "remedial interchanges," Goffman (1971)

describes a cycle of remediation which includes stages related to classic

face-work moves. The cycle includes stages of remedy, relief, appreciation,

and minimization. When an offense against ritual order is committed or

anticipated, the moves of the remediation cycle serve to restore the dis-

rupted equilibrium. <u>Remedies</u> are accounts, apologies, or requests through

which offenders seek to mitigate the effects of unacceptable behavior.

<u>Relief</u> moves are provided by the offended parties and function to signal

offenders that their remedies are sufficient. <u>Appreciation</u> is offered to

the victim by the offender. <u>Minimization</u> moves are signals that appreciation

is appreciated and that ritual equilibrium is restored.

The questions guiding this study are directly related to face-work and

remedial interchange concepts. These concepts will be discussed in more

detail as findings related to children's social behavior are reported.

Questions, Data Sources, and Methods

The study applies the theoretical construct Goffman calls "face-work" to

children's interactive behavior with peers. Goffman (1967) describes several

face-work components and extends these concepts in later writings under the

heading "remedial interchanges" (1971). The questions which guided the data

analysis of the study were designed to explore children's expressions of

many of these components. Analytic questions included the following:

> --Do children participate in face-work as they
> interact with their peers?; i.e., do they
> repeatedly and automatically ask themselves:
> "If I do or do not act in this way, will I or
> others lose face?" (Goffman, 1967, p. 36).

> --Do children use "avoidance processes" in
> defensive and protective ways? If so, what
> forms do these moves take?

--Do children participate in "corrective inter-
changes" to restore spoiled interactive order?
Do they practice the four classic moves adults
use to restore equilibrium once communicative
order is threatened? Do they offer "accounts,"
extend "apologies," and make "requests;" and
if so how do these compare in form to adult
"remedial work?"

--Do children aggressively take advantage of
face-work rules to "make points" in classroom
interactions? If so, what form does their
aggressive face-work take?

The basic data of the study are field note records made by the researcher

in two naturalistic studies of child-to-child social behavior in two kinder-

garten classrooms. The classrooms were located in separate large urban

school districts in the southeastern United States. One classroom was located

in a "middle-income", predominately white neighborhood and served families in

which the majority of parents were college educated, with many holding advanced

degrees. The other school was located in a "working class," historically

white neighborhood which was gradually being integrated black families

mov int the area. In the second school, over 75% of the students qualified

for "free" or "reduced price" lunches and education levels of parents ranged

from grade school to high school, with a few reporting some college. Both

schools were subject to court orders mandating bussing to achieve racial

balance. In the first classroom, seven of twenty-one children were black,

while in the second, four of twenty-four were black. The numbers of girls in

the first and second classrooms were eight and thirteen respectively. Both

classes were organized so that children had opportunities to interact among

themselves away from adult intervention as they played and completed school

tasks.

The field note data used in the analysis represent over one hundred hours

of classroom "passive participant observation" (Spradley, 1980) and include

records of hundreds·of child-to-child interaction events. The data were not collected with Goffman's perspective in mind but were the original data for two independent studies of children's face-to-face social behavior in class-room settings The field note records of children's classroom conversations were treated as raw data and were analyzed systematically according to tech-niques adapted from Spradley (1980) and Becker (1970). The principles of "analytic induction" as described by Denzin (1978) were invoked to maintain the integrity of the relationship between the research findings and the empirical reality of the classroom social scenes and to insure that analytic interpretations were borne out by the data.

Findings

Do children participate in face-work as they interact with their peers?

Analysis of the social interactions of children in the study revealed that children do take the anticipated effects of their actions on their own faces and the faces of others into account as they interact with peers. As will be evident throughout these findings, the structures of children's face-work practices are incomplete in relation to the forms adults utilize to maintain communicative order. Nonetheless, it seems clear that the kinder-garten children of the study orchestrated their social behavior based on a taken-for-granted awareness that their behavior had consequences for the images they and their peers were projecting. Some field note excerpts will begin to demonstrate how children took particular lines in interaction and how they attached significance to maintaining those lines when challenged.

> Frank walks to a position between Les and Christine
> who are coloring with felt tip markers at the art
> table. Frank has been waiting for one of them to
> finish so he can have a turn with the markers.
> Frank: "Christine, you can't draw two pictures."

> Christine: "I'm not." Christine to Les:
> "Hey, did I draw two pictures?" Les looks
> at her drawing and the model drawing which
> the teacher has placed at the table and says:
> "Yes." Christine: "I did not." Frank to
> Christine: "You did that one" (pointing to
> the model). Christine: "No I didn't. I
> just said I was gonna copy it." Frank: "Oh."
> Frank walks away.

In this interaction event, Frank took the position that Christine must
give up her seat at the art center because of the rule that only one picture
can be drawn in a sitting. He contended that she had drawn two. Christine
defended her right to stay by attacking Frank's incorrect assertion that she
had drawn two pictures. Even after the corroboration she expected from Les
did not materialize, she continued to press her case. Frank finally accepted
her explanation for why there may be confusion and retired from the inter-
change.

Goffman (1971) writes: "All behavior of the individual, insofar as it
is perceived by others, has an indicative function, made up of tacit promises
and threats, confirming or disconfirming that he knows and keeps his place"
(p. 344). In the excerpt above, the children involved were doing more than
negotiating a space at the art table. When placed within the framework
created by the analysis of hundreds of similar interaction events, this
exchange serves as an example of children's engagement in an ongoing cycle of
expressing and defending their status as competent social actors. Their
interaction moves indicated to their peers that they were willing to aggres-
sively defend their rights, that they were able to use a variety of techniques,
including the testimony of others and logical argument, to make their cases,
and that they understood the value of acceptance and withdrawal. Both
Christine and Frank came away with faces intact. They demonstrated that
they were able to maintain lines of behavior and confirm their claims to the

status associated with those lines. In the excerpt which follows, a child

loses face as the result of taking a line which he was ultimately unable to

maintain

> Sandra to Benjamin: "Why did you use all those
> colors?" (They are coloring animal pictures.)
> Benjamin: "Shuddup Sandra-head." Sandra: "Sandra-
> head?" Benjamin: "You don't even know your
> colors." Sandra: "Uh-huh, look." She points
> to each crayon in her box and names its color
> correctly. Benjamin, holding up a purple crayon,
> says: "Uh-un, this is reddish...(pause)."
> Sandra: "That's purple." Benjamin: "Uh-un, you
> don't even know your colors." Sandra: "Yes I do,
> watch me." She goes through them correctly
> again. Benjamin: "This isn't purple, it's red."
> Rod: "That's not red. Dee Dee is that red?"
> Dee Dee: "No." Benjamin: "It's purple. I said
> it was purple."

Benjamin selected a very public setting in which to attempt an attack on

Sandra's knowledge of color concepts. When she demonstrated that his claims

against her were unfounded, he attempted to fabricate evidence only to have

his efforts backfire. When other children who had witnessed his attempt

validated his gaffe, he was left with nothing but an empty denial that his

original line had ever been taken. Benjamin attempted to introduce informa-

tion which would discredit Sandra while creating an image of himself as one

adept at manipulating social exchanges to his advantage. The effect of this

spoiled attempt was to allow Sandra to maintain her status as one who knows

her colors and one who can answer a challenge, while Benjamin lost credibility

and came off as an inept social actor.

The excerpts above demonstrate that children establish, challenge, and

defend lines of behavior to which personal images or faces are connected.

In the hundreds of interaction events analyzed in this study, it was clear

that children understood that their reputations and the reputations of their

peers were subject to redefinition in every interactive encounter. As the

specific components of Goffman's face-work construct are explored below, field note excerpts will be presented. Each of those will offer an additional example in support of the finding that children in this study participated in face-work as they interacted with their peers.

Do children use avoidance processes in defensive and protective ways?

Children in the study used avoidance processes which were similar in form to those described by Goffman (1967, pp. 15-18). In order to maintain faces they were projecting, children exercised such defensive moves as avoiding situations in which threats were anticipated, changing the subject or withdrawing when confronted with face threats, waiting for others to establish lines of action prior to committing to lines of their own, and using such devices as hedging, modesty, and unseriousness to cover their lines in anticipation of possible challenges. Children also demonstrated the use of protective avoidance moves in interactions with peers. Protective processes were used less often and seemed more rudimentary in form when compared to children's defensive moves. Children were observed, however, using discretion in an effort to protect peers from loss of face. They demonstrated a capacity to leave unstated facts which might embarrass others, to assist others in generating explanations for apparent out-of-face behaviors, and to exercise tactful blindness, pretending offensive acts had not occurred or pretending acknowledged acts were not serious blunders. Field note data will be utilized as the forms of children's avoidance processes are described.

The following excerpt is an example of the use of withdrawal to avoid situational developments which could cause loss of face.

> Louis, Jeff, and Christine are playing BINGO.
> Christine is the caller   (the one turning
> the symbol cards over), and the two boys each
> have a bingo card. The cards have a variety

> of Christmas symbols to be matched. Louis calls:
> "Bingo" and moves around the table to a position
> next to Christine. Christine shows no intention
> of leaving caller position. Louis: "I'm the
> caller. The one that wins is the caller." After
> a pause, Christine places the turning cards on the
> table and leaves the game center without speaking.

In addition to physically leaving the scene of possibly threatening

interactions, children often turned their backs on potential challengers,

began conversations with others, or began singing or chanting. Although

these behaviors would be unacceptable in adult interaction, children were

virtually never challenged for using them. They functioned to provide chil-

dren with escapes from face-threatening situations.

Children also used more sophisticated, or at least more adult-like,

avoidance procedures. The first excerpt below is an example of changing the

subject in anticipation of the development of an uncomfortable situation. In

the second excerpt, one child protects herself from the loss of face associated

with rejection by framing her appeal for a play partner in the form of a

statement.

> Sarah leaning across the table to Roger:
> "I stlll love you." Roger shifts in his
> seat, does not look up from his work.
> Sarah leans still closer: "I wanna trick
> you." Roger looks up. Sarah whispers:
> "I love you Roger." Roger pulls back,
> makes a gun with his index finger, says"
> "We 'visible army men." He makes the
> sound of gunfire. Sarah returns fire.
> They duck and dodge and shoot.

> At choice time, Elizabeth goes to the toy
> record player while Teresa selects "Like
> and Different" cards. Teresa to Elizabeth:
> "I need somebody to play with me too.
> Only two people spoze to play." Elizabeth
> says nothing, pushes aside the record
> player, and joins Teresa.

Other ways of covering potentially vulnerable lines were used by children

in the classrooms observed. Children used baby talk or silly behavior when

taking chances with peers. These covers allowed children to exclaim, "I was just joking" if their overtures or requests were met with disapproval. Children also used what Goffman (1967) calls "negative-attribute etiquette" to cover requests for attention or public performances. Statements like: "It might not be good, but..." or "It probably might come out wrong" provided evidence of sufficient modesty to deter harsh criticism. Finally, children had learned to hedge statements which might be challenged. In much the same manner as adults, they qualified many of their assertions with phrases such as: "I'm not sure, but..." and "I think" and frequently followed declarations with hedging interrogatives; e.g., "We cut this on the back, right?"

Protective avoidance strategies used by children demonstrated their capacities to exercise discretion and tact in an effort to avoid or minimize the embarrassment of peers. The following interaction documents one child's attempt to avoid confronting another with an embarrassing evaluation. The event is an example of how children worked together using defensive and protective strategies to minimize face threats.

> Children are making valentines at the inde-
> pendent activity table. Amy to Elizabeth:
> "I'm finished, isn't it pretty?" Amy holds
> up her work. Elizabeth starts to deliver
> an enthusiastic "Ye..." but stops as she
> looks at Amy's valentine [which is a mess].
> Elizabeth looks uncomfortable. Amy studies
> Elizabeth's expression and says: "It's
> not so good, huh?" Elizabeth wrinkles her
> nose, avoids eye contact with Amy and goes
> back to work.

Children assisted others in escaping from embarrassing situations by going along with their face covering moves, however weak, and by tactfully overlooking events that might threaten the lines others were projecting. In the first excerpt below, one child accepts an artificial laugh as another child's escape move after an embarrassing moment. The first child signals

his acceptance by echoing the hollow laugh. In the second, one child releases

her workmate from possible embarrassment by overlooking her peer's struggle

to demonstrate competence.

> Roger to Don: "You wanna know my phone number?"
> Don signals 'yes' by looking up from his work
> and establishing eye contact with Roger. Roger:
> "5-4-3-2-1." Don: "Wanna know mine? 6-5-8
> thirty-five twenty Lemon Street. [Don realizes
> he has gotten it wrong and that Roger knows it.]
> After an uncomfortable pause, Don: "I got a new
> address and phone number." Roger: "What is it?"
> Don turns his face away from Roger's and forces
> a hollow sounding laugh: "Ha, ha, ha." Roger
> echos: "Ha, ha, ha." The subject is dropped.
>
> Children are working on a cut 'n paste phonics
> sheet. Cheryl: "Louise, where does this (piece)
> go?" Louise takes the piece and tries several
> different places on Cheryl's paper: "It goes...
> I think it goes..." [Louise seems very nervous
> when she can't place the piece.] Cheryl makes
> no reference to Louise's trouble, picks up an
> easier piece, and says: "Here, this goes here."

Children's acts of defensive avoidance were observed much more often than

acts of protection. Even though they did demonstrate the capacity to exercise

discretion and tact when the faces of others were subject to compromise, as

will be seen in the next section, children were more likely to call attention

to the out-of-face behaviors of others than discretely to overlook them.

Do children participate in corrective interchanges to restore spoiled
interactive order?

It was clear in analyzing children's interactions that they invested face

in their lines of behavior with peers and that they used avoidance processes

to maintain the images they and their peers projected. In addition, analysis

revealed that when information which contradicted established lines was intro-

duced, feelings of uneasiness or "ritual disequilibrium" were evident. In

these ways, children's face-work paralleled impression management techniques

used in adult interaction.

Sometimes children confronted events which were expressively incompatible with established judgments of social worth. When these events were too serious to be overlooked, children worked together to restore interactive order. However, they were not observed using the full cycle of classic moves Goffman (1967) describes as "corrective processes."

Challenges, offerings, acceptance, and thanks moves comprise the corrective ritual as presented by Goffman (1967). Children in the study challenged their peers consistently and in forms very much like adult challenges. They demonstrated well developed capacities for generating offerings. They used accounts, apologies, and requests as remedies when attempting to remediate potentially offensive acts (see Goffman, 1971). After challenges and offerings, however, the similarities to adult corrective processes stop. In fact, for children, the corrective process seemed to end following the presentation of a satisfactory offering. If non-response equals acceptance for children, then acceptance moves may have been "understood," but virtually no overt acceptance moves were observed. That being the case, there were naturally, no records of thanks moves.

Field note data will serve to illustrate challenges and offerings utilized by children in their "abbreviated" corrective interchanges. Examples of accounts, apologies, and requests will be provided.

Goffman (1967) describes a ritualized process through which adults, when confronted with an event which exposes an individual as being out-of-face, "ratify it as a threat that deserves direct official attention - and proceed to try to correct for its effects" (p. 19). The challenge is a move through which participants take responsibility for calling attention to misconduct. The challenge signals offenders that reparations must be made if previously projected images are to be restored. Children in the study utilized challenging

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behaviors which shared form and function with adult challenges. The following

interchange includes three examples of children's challenges. In the first

challenge, several children agreed that Sarah had been cruel to Louise. In

the second, Louise challenged Roger's shift from being her supporter to one

who would tease her ("That aint nice.") Finally, Sue pointed out a minor

semantic slip which Roger easily repaired.

> Sarah throws a pencil at Louise, hitting her
> across the fingers. Louise gets teary and
> finally breaks into soft crying. She surveys
> each face (including mine) to be sure each
> one sees she's hurt. Jerome sees her rip-
> pled lower lip and asks: "What's wrong with
> you?" Louise: "Sarah threw a pencil and hit
> these two fingers." Louise extends her fingers
> toward Jerome. Jerome: "I'ma tell. She hit
> her bad." Roger, in soft voice: "Don't cry
> Louise." Sue: "It don't help to cry. It
> don't help to cry, do it Roger?" Sarah
> watches all this with arms folded and lower
> lip and chin thrust forward. Louise goes
> from child to child at table 2 to show the
> physical evidence of her injury. James: "Oh,
> she hurt bad." Roger: "Sarah, look what you
> did." Louise goes to Sarah: "See, look what
> you did." Sarah looks, then turns away.
> Louise takes her seat, still nursing her
> fingers. After twenty second pause, Roger to
> Louise: "What's your father's name?" Louise:
> "Dommy." Roger in sarcastic, mocking tone:
> "Dommy? Tommy-Rommy-Dommy." Louise, in
> hurt voice: "That aint nice." One minute
> later, Roger to Louise: "Want me to be your
> girlfriend?" Sue: "Girlfriend?" Roger fixes
> it: "You want me to be your boyfriend?"

Offerings are moves whereby the offender is given the opportunity to

correct for the offense and re-establish expressive order (Goffman, 1967).

Goffman (1971) particularizes kinds of offerings in his discussion of

remedies. He describes accounts, apologies, and requests as remedial moves

undertaken to "transform what could be seen as offensive into what can be

seen as acceptable" (1971, p. 109). Children demonstrated a surprising

facility for generating remedies. In the sections below, examples of chil-
dren's remedies will be presented and related to Goffman's (1971) analysis
of adult remedial work.

Accounts

One way adults respond to accusations of misconduct is to argue that the
acts they are accused of committing did not in fact occur. Another is to
grant the occurrence of the act but to deny any connection or responsibility.
Children used both of these response patterns with peers. Examples follow.

> Eddy to Holly: "Oh-oh, you did yours wrong."
> She covers her bird coloring with her arms,
> says: "Uh-un." Eddy: "Yeah, you did. You
> colored it wrong." Phillip: "Yeah, it's wrong."
> Holly looks uncomfortable, shifts in her seat
> [looking for a way out]. She turns her back
> on Eddy and Phillip and says to Cheryl: "See
> how short my fingernail is."

> Louise to Sarah: "You moved my chair over there
> (to the other side of the table) . Sarah:
> "Louise, I did not." Louise looks at the
> other children at the table. Benjamin: "I
> didn't do it." Gina: "I think I know who it
> is." Benjamin: "Louise put it over there to
> get Sarah in trouble." Sarah, with finality
> in her voice: "I didn't put it over there"
> (thrusting her chin forward).

Adults sometimes account for misdeeds by arguing that their actual behav-
ior was radically different from what it appeared to be. They attempt to
mitigate responsibility by redefining the situation so that their behavior
is interpreted in a new, more favorable light. Examples from children's
interactions offer samples of their uses of these strategies.

> George sees Tess having trouble finding the
> workbook page as directed by the teacher. He
> tries to point out the page to her. Tess: "I
> wasn't through yet. I don't need your help."

> Roger sings: "Do-do face, do-do face." Louise
> puts on a look like she's really hurt by this

reference to her. Roger sees her reaction:
"Louise, I'm not calling you that, I'm calling
Sarah that. Do-do face, do-do face" (to Sarah).

Adults sometimes agree that out-of-face acts occurred and that they per-
formed the acts, but argue that they were excusably unforeseeing, that they
were victims of involuntary motor acts or unavoidable circumstances, or that
they were acting in an unserious manner (and would certainly have stopped had
they known harm would result). Children utilized claims from this group to
attempt to account for behaviors challenged by peers.

> In the cafeteria, Amy raises her hand to get
> help. Sandra: "You want me to open it?" (her
> milk carton). Amy hands it to Sandra. Sandra
> struggles with the carton turning it over on
> the table. Amy sends a disgusted look at
> Sandra. Sandra: "I didn't mean to. I didn't
> mean to."

> Tess falls as she leaves table 5, yells:
> "George!" George: "I can't ever get my legs
> out (from under the chair)."

> Gina: "Eddy can hear." Holly, in support of
> Eddy: "We're spoze to be nice to all people -
> black people, robbers." (Eddy is black.)
> Gina: "You're not spoze to be nice to the devil."
> Holly: "Uh-un, you have to love everyone."
> Eddy: "When you get older, you gonna die if you
> don't love the devil." Gina: "I know." Eddy:
> "Uh-un, you said you didn't love the devil."
> Gina: "I know, I was just foolin'."

Adults claim reduced responsibility because of reduced competence. They
claim mitigation based on sleepiness, passion, subordination to the will of
others, youthfulness, mental deficiency, and so forth. The argument is that
they are guilty of being incompetent, not of the specific deed resulting
therefrom. As in the following excerpts, children claimed "goofiness" and
the influence of another to mitigate responsibility for misdeeds.

> Sarah sings Jingle Bells over and over. Sue
> joins in for two choruses. Bob sings a little
> in baby talk: "Tinkle dells." Roger: "Tinkle
> dells?" Bob giggles: "I'm goofy."

> The class plays a game in which they are
> assigned numbers to remember. Tess to Rod,
> after he has run with the wrong group:
> "You're a three" [in an 'I caught you' tone].
> Rod: "Uh-un, I was with her and she just
> ran" (pointing to Gina).

The final account strategy is the least effective used by adults. They

claim to be responsible and competent but indefensibly ignorant of the con-

sequences of their actions. Sarah makes such a claim in the following

excerpt.

> Sarah sneaks the stethoscope to the work table.
> As she is playing with it, she pulls the end-
> piece off. Terry: "Ooh, your in trouble."
> Sarah: "I just pulled it. I didn't know it
> would break."

Apologies

Goffman (1971) describes a second domain of remedies designated as

apologies. He defines several elements which comprise apologies in their

fullest form:

> The apology has several elements: expression
> of embarrassment and chagrin; clarification
> that one knows what conduct had been expected
> and sympathizes with the application of neg-
> ative sanction; verbal rejection, repudia-
> tion, and disavowal of the wrong way of
> behaving along with vilification of the self
> that so behaved; espousal of the right way
> and an avowal hence-forth to pursue that
> course; performance of penance and the vol-
> unteering of restitution (p. 113).

In this study, children demonstrated the use of all of the elements of

adult apologies. Although no instances were recorded in which more than

three such elements were present in a single interchange, all of the elements

Goffman describes were observed as children's interactions were analyzed.

Several interaction events which contain elements Goffman includes under

apologies are presented below.

> George falls over James as he moves to put
> his work into his cubbyhole. George: "Sorry
> 'bout that man."
>
> During the "moment of silence" (observed
> each morning). Nadine to Robin: "I'm tellin'.
> You playin'." Robin has a six-inch metal strip
> which he has been brandishing like a sword.
> Robin, as he stuffs the strip into his front
> pocket and thrusts his hips forward (so Nadine
> can see): "I'll put it away, see."
>
> Sue: "Bob, get to work, you're makin' me mad."
> Bob: "Yeah, I'm makin' me mad too."
>
> Roger watches Jerome struggle with cutting
> activity: "Oh Jerome, you gotta stay on the
> lines." Jerome: "Oh shuddup! Don't tell me,
> what to do Mr. Roger." Then, after about
> thirty seconds, Jerome: "I'm gonna stay on the
> line next time."
>
> Sarah to Roger, trying to get him to sit next
> to her and away from Bob: "Move over here.
> Sit next to me." Roger moves but sees the dis-
> appointment in Bob's face. Roger signals Bob
> to move to the empty seat on his other side
> (opposite Sarah). Sarah: "Don't call him over."
> Roger to Bob: "Here, you can sit next to me too."
> Bob moves.
>
> Don and Robin are hitting and bumping each other
> (as usual). Robin slugs Don in the stomach and
> apparently knocks the wind out. Don chokes up
> and almost cries. Robin puts his arm around Don:
> "I'm sorry. You want me to kiss it better?"
> He kisses his friend on the front of his shirt.

Requests

The final remedy type Goffman describes are requests. Requests differ

from other remedies in that they are advanced prior to the execution of an

act which may be interpreted as offensive. The potential offenders antici-

pate that their behavior, if unchallenged, may cause the persons offended to

lose face. Requests consist of "asking license of a potentially offended

person to engage in what could be considered a violation of his rights"
(Goffman, 1971, p. 114). Requests are tools whereby permission is sought in
advance for intrusions on the personal territory of others. Examples in
adult interaction include: "Can I ask you a favor?" or "Are you using that
right now?" Goffman (1971) writes: "When a violation is invited by he who
ordinarily would be its victim, it ceases to be a violation" (p. 114).
Requests, then, are moves whereby such invitations are solicited. Children
demonstrated their awareness that peers had faces which were subject to loss
when violations of personal territory were not challenged. They used requests
as means for obtaining permission to intrude on the "territories of the self"
claimed by their peers. Examples are offered.

> George comes out of the restroom fumbling
> with his belt. Robin, referring to belt:
> "Can I wear that?" George does not respond.
> Robin repeats: "Can I wear that?" George
> turns away, does not respond.
>
> Phillip to Cheryl: "Can I use your brown?"
> Cheryl: "No (she had just picked it up).
> After ten seconds, Cheryl: "I'm already
> usin' it."
>
> Amy returns to table 2 with a sponge and a
> rag. She passes the sponge to Gina: "You
> wanna wipe with that?" Gina starts wiping.

Summary of Children's Corrective/Remedial Work

Children in this study did take corrective or remedial action when images
being projected were threatened. Children took responsibility for challenging
the out-of-countenance behavior of their peers and showed a well developed
capacity for generating offerings or remedies when challenged. Evidence was
not found, however, for acceptance or thanks moves which Goffman (1967)
describes under correctives: or for relief, appreciation, or minimization
moves described under remedial work (1971). It might be argued that acceptance

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or relief moves were tacitly understood in interactional contexts, but recognizable overt behaviors in those areas were not found.

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Do children aggressively take advantage of face-work rules to make points in classroom interaction?

Children in the two classrooms observed in this study practiced aggressive uses of face-work principles to improve their relative status among their peers. As their interactions were analyzed, it was evident that making points in kindergarten looked very much like making points in graduate school, at cocktail parties, or in other adult contexts.

Goffman points out that the assumptions at the core of face-work (e.g., that interacting individuals attempt to preserve everyone's line from inexcusable contradiction) open up the possibility that threats will be willfully introduced for what may be gained by them. Goffman (1967) describes making points as follows:

> The general method is for the person to introduce
> favorable facts about himself and unfavorable facts
> about others in such a way that the only reply the
> others will be able to think up will be one that
> terminates the interchange in a grumble, a meager
> excuse, a face-saving I-can-take-a-joke laugh, or
> an empty stereotyped comeback of the 'Oh yeah?' or
> 'That's what you think' variety (p. 24-25).

Children were frequently observed pointing out the mistakes, weaknesses, or inadequacies of others and, in doing so, promoting their own capacities as superior social actors. Several examples of aggressive face-work are included in the following excerpts.

> During choice time, Louis moves to a position on
> the rug where materials have apparently been left
> out after children have moved to another activity.
> Louis, in loud voice: "Whoever left their stuff
> out, clean it up." He gets no response so, in a
> louder voice, he calls: "All you girls and boys,

I wanna tell you something!" The room goes
quiet and everyone looks his way. Louis:
"Somebody left out their toys and they're
always doing it." Teacher to no one in par-
ticular: "We all do it."

Shirley and Patty are whispering together as
they sit on the rug cutting paper scraps
during choice time. The new girl walks to a
position near Shirley and Patty. Shirley:
"Go find something else to do. You're not
allowed to watch us." Patty repeats: "You're
not allowed to watch us." New girl walks away.

Teacher has instructed children to take three
strips of paper from the box being passed
through the class. Eddy sees Phillip take
only two strips, says: "You're spoze to have
three of 'em." Phillip: "Two." Eddy: "You
don't know what you're talkin' 'bout. Holly,
tell this dumbhead he's spoze to have three."

Amy has begun passing out pencils while Teacher
is still giving instructions. Cheryl [in a
voice meant for more than just Amy]: "Hey, put
those pencils back." Teacher stops and makes
Amy sit down.

As Rod returns to his seat after sharing his
puzzle at show and tell, Elizabeth: "Rod always
has to act like a gentleman." Rod: "What?"
[He heard but doesn't know what she means.]
Elizabeth: "Rod always has to act like a gentle-
man, ah-ah-ah." As she says this, Elizabeth
half-closes her eyes, tilts her head in a refined
attitude, holds up her wrist and bends it in an
aristocratic gesture on each 'ah.' Rod looks
down and does not respond.

Gina and Cheryl are admiring themselves and each
other in the mirror. Tess comes up, says to
Gina: "You wore that (red playsuit) yesterday."
Gina: "My mommy wants me to." Tess: "Did you
want to?" Gina [looking uncomfortable]: "Uh-huh."
Tess: "You wore the same socks too. And the same
shoes." Gina (trying to change subject): "I
don't have shoes like yours." Tess: "You wore
the same socks and the same shoes yesterday."
Gina slides away to her seat.

As these interactions demonstrate, children in the study had the social

knowledge and skill necessary to aggressively turn face-work expectations to

their advantage. As with adults, children utilized making points behaviors with an audience in mind. Since the goal of such behaviors was to improve relative status, the more children witnessed a successful use of aggressive face-work, the more advantage was gained.

Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

This exploratory analysis of interactions in two kindergarten classrooms provides evidence that the young children in the study had faces to lose. That is, they had come to understand that their social reputations and those of their peers were subject to redefinition in each interactive encounter. They selected lines of behavior in peer interactions based on their percep- tions of how those lines would affect lines previously established by them- selves and by interaction partners. They demonstrated an awareness of the forms and functions of impression management via face-work.

Children had learned to feel a sense of disequilibrium when they or peers were confronted with information which caused established lines to become suspect. They used the beginnings of interaction rituals to restore communi- cative order when disequilibrium was introduced. They used avoidance pro- cesses to save their own faces or the faces of peers when threats were anticipated. They used modesty, hedging behavior, and unseriousness to cover lines from possible attack. In order to defend their own faces from possible challenge they withdrew strategically, changed the subject, and allowed others to establish expectations prior to taking lines of their own. In efforts to protect peers from embarrassment children demonstrated tact, discretion, and polite inattention.

Children challenged peers freely when out-of-countenance behavior was suspected. Although discretion and tact were observed, it was likely that

public attention would be brought to bear on those found to be asserting a line to which they had false claims. When challenged, children demonstrated a well developed repertoire of responses designed to reject, deflect, or mitigate the effects of peer challenges. They effectively offered excuses or accounts, extended apologies, and made requests in response to challenges or in anticipation of offending peers.

Children demonstrated a capacity for aggressively making points in peer interactions by introducing information which cast others in an unfavorable light. Children pointed out the mistakes, weaknesses, and inadequacies of others and did so in such a way as to promote their own superior status.

Three general conclusions seem justified in light of these initial findings: (1) Children had by the second semester of their public school careers developed a complex array of social knowledge and skills; (2) The development of children's knowledge of the norms, rules, and expectations which give order to adult face-to-face interactions was incomplete; and (3) Children were more likely to be aggressive than tactful in their face-work with peers.

That social development is incomplete and yet substantial by age five or six is not surprising (see Corsaro, 1979; Ervin-Tripp, 1982; Genishi and Di Paulo, 1982). Children's incomplete development, when framed within the perspective of face-work principles, exhibits interesting characteristics. In recent writings, Goffman (1981) reiterates face-work principles as follows:

> 1. An act is taken to carry implications regarding the character of the actor and his evaluation of his listeners, as well as reflecting on the relationship between him and them.
>
> 2. Potentially offensive acts can be remedied by the

> the work can properly be terminated.
>
> 3. Offended parties are generally obliged to
>   induce a remedy if none is otherwise forth-
>   coming or in some other way show that an
>   unacceptable state of affairs has been created,
>   else, in addition to what has been conveyed
>   about them, they can be seen as submissive
>   regarding others' lapses in maintaining the
>   ritual code (p. 21).

The third principle above may not be fully developed in young children.

That is, they may not have learned that their own faces are at stake when

offenders are not forced to take ritual responsibility for offensive acts.

Children demonstrated that the out-of-line behavior of offending others could

and should be challenged. They were very aggressive in their use of challenges

and were adept at making points by revealing for public inspection the inad-

equacies of peers. However, when challenges were met with weak accounts or

apologies or with complete avoidance by those challenged, challengers typically

did not press the offenders for more satisfactory remedies. In fact, overt

signs of acceptance were not important following children's offerings. This

suggests that neither offenders nor those offended had developed the adult

sense that, in order not to be perceived as "submissive," offended parties

must press offenders to provide remedies sufficient to restore interactive

order.

On the aggressive character of children's interactions, Goffman (1981)

describes children as the "mature practitioners" of open blaming and bickering.

Indeed, in this study, children were quick to press their own advantage with

accusations, threats, and taunts. Those were often met with counters in

kind. Goffman (1967) suggests that such bickering among children may be

related to the development of poise under fire. He generalizes: "It is no

until he develops a capacity to maintain composure" (Goffman, 1967, p. 104).
Adults, then, have learned to exercise more tactful means for making points
and have developed norms and expectations which demand that careful attention
be given to the remedies offered by potential offende⁻ ₃. Children are more
aggressive than tactful and have not developed a complete sense of responsi-
bility for calling the out-of-face behavior of peers into account.

This study has implications for educational practitioners and for social
researchers interested in studying social processes in school settings. Social
competence is learned through experiences in a vast array of contexts. Chil-
dren's experiences in school rooms make an important contribution to the
socialization of that competence. Children are not passive recipients of
adult culture, but actively involved in the interactive processes of social-
ization at all levels (Drietzel, 1973). Interactions with peers may provide
children with opportunities for active social learning which are not available
to them in interactive encounters with adults (Black, 1979; Ross, 1983).
These socialization processes and the importance of peer contributions to
them are not well understood by social scientists or educational practitioners.

This study and others like it can provide information which can improve ·
the understandings of teachers and other educators responsible for designing
and implementing educational programs. For instance, it may be that programs
for young children should allow more school time for children to interact
without intrusive adult supervision.

Educational researchers and other social scientists interested in social
processes in school may find this study useful. The application of Goffman's
perspective to the study of children's social behavior in school may serve to
enrich understandings of the complex processes of socialization. Face-work

bution.   This study, while admittedly exploratory, offers some evidence for

the efficacy of applying the sociology of Erving Goffman to the study of

social interaction in school settings.

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