

Strangers are better than the familiar ones: The effect of “face-threatening” on Taiwanese choice of helper

Kuei-Hsiang Han¹ and Mei-Chih Li²

¹ Tamkang University, Center for General Ed. & Core Curriculum

² Hsuan Chuang University, Department of Applied Psychology

This study focused on how “face-threatening” affects people’s choice of helper, and their concerns when choosing this target. Study 1 used open-ended questionnaire to collect interpersonal helping events. The results indicated that the events in which people would ask family members or acquaintances to help were nothing to do with the concept of “face”. On the other hand, the events in which participants would not ask the familiar to help were related to issues of privacy and/or face-threatening. With regards to the reasons why not ask for help from the familiar were mainly consideration not willing to make the familiar worry. On the contrary, the subjects would attribute why their friends would not ask for helps from the familiar to reasons of face- saving though the events were very similar.

Using the events and the attributed reasons for ask and not ask for helping collected from study 1, study 2 and 3 adopted scenario experimental method and manipulated the conditions of favor-request to threaten one’s social face (study 2) and moral face (study 3). Both results of study 2 and 3 showed that when the favor-request condition was not “face-threatening”, most participants chose the members of their family (expressive ties) to help, and the reason for their choice was for “better help”. Instead, when the condition was “face-threatening”, participants chose to ask help from strangers (instrumental ties), and the reason for their choice was for “face-saving”.

Keywords: *favor-request, losing face, moral face, social face, threat-to-self-esteem*

