5

Facework in the Community

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Human beings and chimpanzees share some 98% of their DNA. In her lectures and films, Dr. Jane Goodall (e.g., 1986) shows that the two species are strikingly similar. Chimps have community leaders, ritualized social activity, and family ties. They use tools; play together; fight; have wars; and, amazingly, even share something akin to culture. If you watch chimpanzees long enough, you get the impression that they do a kind of rudimentary facework.

Yet, clearly, there is a universe of difference in that last 2% of genetic material. Humans use language for advanced communication. They build high-tech tools, elaborate architectural structures, and amazing modes of transportation. They adapt to almost every niche and travel easily from one part of the world to another and into outer space. Humans attend conferences, do research, make records, negotiate complex agreements, mediate conflict, experience racism, and struggle with inter-cultural communication. Human society sets us unquestionably apart even from our closest evolutionary cousins.

We human beings often enjoy solitary activities, but even when we are acting alone, we are part of a community, and the community is part of us. We can never escape the social realities created within communities.

We are born into a community, we live our lives in communities, and we die there, too. We have a stake in our community, and often the stakes are high. As a member of the community, we have the opportunity to affect what happens there, but we can never do it alone. Like the chimpanzee, we are inextricably bound to social life, but for us, social life is the very essence of our being.

Most of us probably first associate the term *community* with a geographical territory. We think first of neighborhoods, towns, and cities. The community is the place where we live. Yet, a second thought will broaden the concept. Each of us is part of many communities, they are not always geographical, and we do not always live there. The community may be the place we work, worship, play, or go to school. It may be centralized in one location, dispersed among many places, or located in cyberspace.

A community is essentially a system of personal relationships drawn together by connected concerns, interests, and activities. Communities have what Joseph Pilotta and his colleagues (2001) call *thematics.* If you ask people to talk about the community, they will say many different things, but you will soon notice the same subjects coming up again and again, and these begin to paint a collective picture of "who we are." These themes hint at what Pilotta calls "the forest beyond the daily lived reality of the individual trees of life" (p. 70). Enough is shared for the community to identify itself as a community.

This does not mean, however, that everyone has the same interests, concerns, ideals, or even a vision of the future. But people do recognize that they are part of a system of connections that gives meaning to their lives. Indeed, within community, differences make a difference, and that is how we know what is and is not relevant. In other words, a defining characteristic of communities is a shared sense of relevance shaped by a common history, salient current events, and a sense that the community is marching together into a future. The communities of our lives are powerful in shaping who we are as persons—our values, our meanings, and our ways of acting in the world.

Returning to the theory outlined in Chapter 2, we explore facework here as a central organizing framework for communication in systems. As we unwind this complex ball of string, we see that the immediate action is usually embedded in a larger conversation, which itself has implications for facework. Systems such as organizations are built up through connected conversations, or episodes, and in this chapter, we look more closely at the episodes of community life. As with the other chapters in this book, we bring all of this back to the question of how our lifescripts as persons are infused with the moral values of community.

❖ COMMUNICATION ACTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Individuals are part of larger systems, as their actions contribute to the network of interactions that define the system. At the same time, the system places limits on what individuals can do. Defining what is possible, then, is a circular, systemic accomplishment. How we behave locally does impact the larger system, and the formation of the larger system does impact how we act locally. To refine the key question for action, we now ask: *Within my lifescript as a person, the communities of which I am a member, the episodes I am now enacting, and the conversation that presents itself to me at this moment, how shall I act?*

Sane adults know that their private fantasies are usually not options. We know what would happen if we pulled the fire alarm just to hear it go off. As individuals, we are never free to do anything we might want to do and are constrained by the context. Our choices are limited by rules established in the lifescript, episode, and conversation. At the same time, however, we always do have some latitude of choice. Sometimes we follow a tightly written script, and other times, we are free to improvise. If we are effective in communicating with others, our improvisations will be highly coordinated with those of others within some sort of conversational, episodic, or lifescripted narrative.

Several years ago, during a corrupt governmental period in Mexico, we had the opportunity to spend the morning with a group of Mexican high school exchange students in the United States. We were talking about dialogue, collaboration, and consensus building, and the students explained that the liberties we enjoy in the United States to change the rules of decision making were not possible in their country. This may have been true within the larger political context, but we asked them to think about where they did have freedom. "Do you have freedom to behave in different ways with your friends?" Yes. "Do you have free-dom to try out new patterns in your families?" Yes. "Do you have free-dom to act in different ways with neighbors?" Yes, they replied. "Then you do have the ability to establish new patterns of communication within certain boundaries, and that will make a difference."

Sometimes action is a simple question, but in difficult moments, especially in conflict or in making decisions where the stakes are high, the decision about how to act can be problematic. Facework in these kinds of situations is personal, but it is more than this. How we work with face impacts perceptions of self and other, of the ongoing rela-tionships being built, and the larger systems that impact our lives. Usually, we are working with face on more than one level. Yes, we may be working to affect the feelings and image of self and others, but we

probably also have the ongoing relationship in mind, and we may be working with larger systemic issues at the same time.

Consequently, we frequently encounter contradictions and paradoxes in facework: (1) How do I build the face of others when doing so might erode my own sense of confidence and esteem? (2) How do I manage immediate face issues when everyone will benefit by changing the nature of our relationship in the long run? (3) How do I manage face of self and other when changes are needed to achieve dignity and honor of the whole community? (4) How do I manage face when the larger system is threatening all of us? Often what looks like a face threat in the immediate situation turns out to be face saving in the long run, and conversely what looks like face saving can turn out in the end to threaten face.

Examples of these kinds of facework contradictions abound. Your child is doing poorly in school and must learn that her work habits are deficient so that she ultimately can succeed. A co-worker is driving you nuts and needs to become aware of this behavior so that peace can be restored to the workplace. A community leader acts in ways that create a threatening environment for everyone, and you must decide what to do.

SIDEBAR 5.1   It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Surely, one of the icons of 20th-century popular culture was Fred Rogers. Every day for over 40 years, millions of children sat on the floor in front of their television sets to see Mr. Rogers arrive home, put on a sweater, and change his shoes. After he came in the door, Mr. Rogers had a predictable routine. He fed the fish, entertained a visitor, received a package, and took an imaginary trolley ride into the Kingdom of Make-Believe. Preschoolers loved Mr. Rogers because he liked them "just they way they are." The message was clear: No matter what else is going on in your life, you are a worthy person. This was, day after day, a supreme statement about the value of personhood.

Although Mr. Rogers enjoyed a good deal of teasing by talk-show hosts and impersonators about his mild-mannered style and childish voice, his message was not all joy and happiness. Indeed, *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood* was a place in which people died, got sick, experienced pain, felt ashamed, got so angry they were violent toward others, and experienced the anguish of divorcing parents. It was a place of dictatorial rulers, subservient citizens, aloof relatives, plotters, and planners. But it was also a place of creativity, art, music, storytelling, fantasy, and good fortune.

Mr. Rogers taught children to stay the course in the face of adversity. He taught them to value themselves and to be the best they could be. Mr. Rogers showed that social structure and rules are a necessary part of life, that different people know different things and should be valued for what they contribute. He always wore a tie and was always "Mister Rogers," not "Fred." And he showed that people could live in a world of reality, harsh though it sometimes can be. It may be true that, "You can never go down the drain," but it is also the case that, "Wishes don't make things come true."

We can learn a lot about facework from Mr. Rogers, and we see in his neighborhood that facework builds personal dignity, good relationships depend on this, and that the community at large both affects and is affected by how we treat others. No matter what harsh message he had to deliver, Mr. Rogers showed us the need to do the following:

1. Acknowledge

2. Show respect

3. Build constructive relationships

4. Honor contributions and appreciate assets

5. Value stories

6. Listen to all the voices

There is no magic formula for how to manage face in difficult situations. Good communicators are artisans who make decisions of judgment in order to mold a purposeful and salutary outcome. We have found it helpful to use certain principles as a guide:

1. Be cognizant of the larger contexts and work to change these as needed, including the pattern of conversation, the rules of the episode, and the moral guides of the lifescript.

2. Be as inclusive as possible and realize that the dignity and honor of many people, including yourself, may be at stake.

3. Speak respectfully, honoring your own and others' contributions.

4. Be explicit about broader systemic concerns, and bring others in as collaborators in making a better community.

❖ COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

How We Talk

The community is a network of inter-linked conversations. Perhaps the term *conversation* is a bit too polite and urbane to capture the sometimes-rough texture of talk, and we certainly do not use this term only to mean country club banter. For us, the term *conversation* is taken metaphorically to include community-wide "talk" of all types, including face-to-face interaction, broadcast and print media, visual images, and the Internet.

An important theme of this book is that we make our social worlds in these forms of conversation. The manner of our interactions literally creates the categories with which we understand the world of experience. Language is not a neutral medium, but forms and re-forms the arrangements of our communities. Communication, then, is the process in which we manage difference, and how we do so matters. The character of a conversation can be captured by questions such as the following:

• Who has the right to talk? Who has the obligation to do so?

• Who has the responsibility of listening? Who is permitted to ignore what is being said?

• Where does the conversation occur? Where is it not permitted to occur?

• When may the conversation happen? When can it not take place? When must it take place?

• How are communicators addressed? What do the participants have the right or even obligation to call other participants?

• What forms of language are permitted, prohibited, or required?

How would you answer these questions differently for, say, a court trial, an art opening, a street demonstration, a public hearing, a block party, an arrest, a high school basketball game, a political rally, or a department store purchase? Notice that the rights, responsibilities, and forms of communication used in a conversation create a little world in which some things are propelled to importance and others are relegated to insignificance. Notice also that in each of these examples, the manner of the conversation can threaten, build, or protect face. How you are honored or dishonored varies greatly depending upon your

role in the conversation, the language used in the interaction, and the place of the conversation within larger episodes of community life.

Kerssen-Griep (2001) offers a clear example of how face is managed in the classroom in conversations designed to build a sense of student autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The teacher encourages conversations in which students feel that they can act skillfully and independently while building relationships with others. Such conversations encourage participants to "own" and "invest" in the class. They provide opportunities for decision making and honor individual student needs. Face building conversations also create a climate in which students can feel safe to take risks and to think independently and share their perspectives with one another. Such conversations also express respect and interest in everyone's contributions, and students are encouraged and given ample opportunity to share ideas, opinions, critiques, conclusions, experiences, and plans. Face building conversations in the classroom also encourage students to process and use course information in their own lives.

Talking to Honor and Explore Differences

Since the inception of the Public Conversations Project (2003) in the early 1990s, its founders realized that the form of a conversation is vital to the way in which participants work through their differences (Littlejohn & Domenici, 2001; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). The PCP has demonstrated many times over the years that conflict that had formerly torn a community apart can be handled with grace, dignity, and effectiveness if the form of the conversation is carefully considered.

The PCP is actually based on principles of family therapy. Laura Chasin and her colleagues at the Family Institute of Cambridge in Massachusetts knew that families face the same kind of struggles that communities experience. She wondered how family therapy methods might be used to restructure conversations on the important issues within a community. Although the PCP sponsors many forms of conversation, their methods share a common set of principles that include genuine listening, respectful address, mutual understanding, and self-reflection—all key facework goals. Indeed, we have learned so much about how to do facework from our colleagues at the Public Conversations Project.

It is fascinating to watch the PCP work. The power in shifting the conversation from persuasion and influence, even attack, to respectful listening is remarkable. We have used this style of dialogue many times over the years, and we are always amazed at how deeply participants are affected by a new kind of conversation. Regardless of the specifics

of a particular public conversation, the PCP always follows certain guidelines:

- Participants relate to one another as persons, not advocates or representatives of a "side" on an issue.

- Participants speak from personal experience and tell personal stories.

- Participants reflect on core values, or what is most important to them as persons.

- Polarization is avoided. Public conversations are multi-valued, and participants are asked to reflect on shades of gray as well as pre-formed positions.

- Participants are asked to explore their own uncertainties.

- Conversations are carefully structured to build trust and to manage face. A facilitator keeps the conversation on track and helps to prevent destructive comments and interactions.

Talking to Inquire and Deliberate

The work of the Public Conversations Project shows us how inter-action is affected by the questions that people address. A church ser-vice, for example, calls our attention to questions such as these: For what should we thank God? How shall we provide one another spiri-tual support? Where do we need divine intervention? How shall we live as persons of faith? In the political realm, elections address the question of who should serve us, public hearings concern the question of what is our opinion, and polls attempt to answer the question of what the public wants.

In every way, the questions we address create the context for the episodes we conduct. Mary Alice Speke Ferdig (2001) found that episodes of public life can be understood as a kind of inquiry. She shows that the nature of dialogue can change drastically when the inquiry itself changes, and often a community needs to ask, "Are we even exploring the right question here?" Table 5.1 outlines a series of ques-tions that can structure the interaction in various community settings.

Albuquerque, the city in which we live and work, has a land-use facilitation program, in which affected neighborhoods have the opportunity to meet with developers in the early stages of a land-use

Table 5.1   Context-Setting Questions

Focus on identity	*Who am I? What is important to me? Who are we together? What do we both care about? What does each of us bring to this conversation based on our previous experiences around the topic that brings us together?*
Focus on principles	*What do I stand for? What do we jointly stand for? How do our choices and actions reflect our individual and collective values? How do we want to interact with one another in the context of this self-organizing process of change? What might that process look like?*
Focus on intentions	*Where am I going? What do I want to see happen here? What are we up to in this conversation? What can we create together that brings us to where we want to be?*
Focus on assumptions	*What aren't we thinking about here? What is our logic for these conclusions?*
Focus on exploration of possibilities	*What are the things you value most about yourself and the self-organizing experience of which you are a part? What are the core factors that give "life" and "energy" to the self-organizing process of which you are a part? What are the possibilities of that which we can create together based on the best of who we are?*

application process. Trained facilitators are assigned to cases, they consult with the adjacent neighborhoods, talk with the developer, and learn about the project from the city planner. If all parties are agreeable, a meeting is set up in a nearby school, community center, or other facility. At the meeting, citizens can share their concerns and ideas with the developer, and the facilitator submits a report of the input from the meeting to the commission as part of the approval package.

This program has been institutionalized in the city, neighborhood associations are well trained in its use, developers expect it, and the city in general benefits from early consultation. A few projects remain contentious, of course, but most turn out to be acceptable to the community because of this opportunity to work with the developer and help shape the project. With few exceptions, Albuquerque land-use meetings are constructive. They are cast in a positive light, and

professional facilitators are able to provide a sense of safety and commitment. For the most part, participants feel confident that their concerns will be taken seriously.

Everything that goes into the land-use meeting involves positive facework. Everyone is consulted ahead of time so that they know what is happening and make a clear decision about the desirability of a meeting. The facilitator builds a strong set of communication guidelines assuring that everyone will have a chance to speak and to be heard. The notes and report give credence to issues, interests, and ideas. The developer has a chance to put his or her best face forward in a presentation, and the meeting is structured as a constructive experience that can lead to projects that work for the developer and neighborhood.

Talking to Build a Future

Washington State University, Tri-Cities, and nearby Columbia Basin College are Hispanic Serving Institutions. In a community summit, college personnel met with community members to explore ways in which the higher education institutions of the Columbia Basin area could meet the needs of Hispanic communities there. Entitled *Uniting Futures* (Uniendo Futuros), Hispanic leaders from the Tri-Cities area assembled to discuss issues facing their communities and ways in which the colleges could address these more effectively. This very purpose was itself an important stage in community facework, as the significance of Hispanic communities was placed at the center of attention.

The summit was really a kind of conversation, in which the members of the community could talk about their future in higher education, while officials from the institutions listened. Billed as "a way to explore where we've been, where we want to go, and how to work together to get there," the community summit provided a vehicle for creating a context of lifelong learning. College administrators attended, were introduced, and served as "keynote listeners." Their role was to sit in on sessions throughout the day without talking about their own interests, but to listen carefully to the concerns and ideas of others.

Flipping the focus from "keynote speakers" to "keynote listeners" can be an effective way to shift roles in a conversation. Normally, experts and influentials are granted the privilege of speaking, while citizens listen. Turning this around, the keynote listener concept asks high-level individuals instead to listen and learn from the wisdom of

Table 5.2   Guidelines for Keynote Listeners: Hispanic Community Summit

Listen deeply to the conversation of the day, at the following levels, and make notes:

- Listen to the content of what is being said.
- Listen to the sub-text (concerns, values, interests).
- Listen for differences, not only in opinion but also in concerns, values, interests, and style.
- Listen for shared values and concerns (even where there may be a difference of opinion).
- Listen for what can be learned about Hispanic communities by how people talk about their issues.
- Listen to prepare to make a commitment.

Postpone judgment, listening for the potential of ideas, and make notes about the following:

- What most surprises you?
- What challenges you and why is it challenging to you?
- What intrigues you?

Be prepared to share your comments and insights in an attitude of curiosity and interest.

the community. It does honor both to dignitaries and to the public. It acknowledges the importance of what ordinary citizens have to say, and it shows that their ideas will be taken seriously. It does honor to dignitaries as well, as it gives them the special role of listening. At the same time, keynote listeners can shift the conversation so that new things are learned, new directions can be taken, and new roles can be established. Table 5.2 outlines some of the things that keynote listeners pay attention to.

At the end of the day, these individuals participated in a fishbowl interview to reflect on what they had heard and to make a commitment about next steps. The interview can be remarkable. In the case of the Hispanic communities meeting, the college administrators showed that they had been listening, that they had learned from what they heard, and that they take leadership in a collaborative effort of implementation. This is the highest form of facework.

SIDEBAR 5.2   Protocols for Working With Tribes

- Meetings between tribal officials and staff should, if possible, be conducted between the same level of officials.
- Respect tribal council officials as officials of government.
- Tribal council officials expect to be treated in the highest professional manner when conducting business.
- Like all business relationships, honesty and integrity are highly valued. A sense of humor is appreciated, but generally, serious business-like behavior is appropriate.
- Personal interest in tribal political and cultural history is appreciated, but don't let your personal interest interfere with your mission or task. When possible, do your homework ahead of time to help you understand a situation or issue.
- During negotiations, prepare to discuss all aspects of an issue at hand simultaneously, rather than sequentially.
- Understand that there are different ways of communication. Seemingly extraneous data may be reviewed and re-reviewed.
- Always shake hands when introduced, meeting someone, and departing. It is customary to shake hands with everyone in the room.
- For business meetings, dress formally.
- Traditional authorities often do not relate well to written communication and may find face-to-face consultation more appropriate.
- Like most people, American Indians object to being "consulted" by people who have little intention of doing anything in response to their concerns. Be prepared to negotiate—to the extent that you have authority—to find ways to accommodate the group's concerns. And be prepared to respond with reasons why the advice may or may not be followed.
- Do not rely solely on letters or other written materials to notify tribal governments of proposed plans or actions or to seek consultation. Many groups lack the funding or administrative support to receive and respond efficiently to letters. Letters may not reach the people who are most concerned. Follow-up written communication with telephone calls or in-person contacts.
- Tribal governments usually are not wealthy. It may be difficult for tribal officials to come to meetings or exchange correspondence. In addition, traditional leaders are busy people with responsibilities in the social and cultural life of the community. Be careful how you use their time and avoid causing undue expense. In addition, tribal governments generally do not have large staffs to assign to meetings, follow-up, etc.

- Remember that American Indians may perceive themselves as having a long history of uneven relationships with the U.S. government. They may be suspicious of your proposals. Do not expect a sympathetic attitude to be automatic.
- Be flexible about deadlines, if possible. To be effective, try to follow the most natural schedule. If the mission requires that particular deadlines must be set, be sure to explain what they are and why they must exist. Expect to negotiate about them.
- Those you consult with might not be able to answer questions immediately. They may have to think about it and consult with others. As a result, it may be necessary to pose a question and then go away while they consider and debate the matter.
- Do not assume one American Indian speaks for all American Indians or tribal governments. Take advantage of organizations such as the Urban Indian Advisory Council for broad input.

Source: From the Minnesota Indian Affairs Commission (1999). Used with permission.

The Hydrogen Technology Partnership (HyTeP) is a confederation of agencies and businesses in New Mexico working to make an economic and technological future for the development of hydrogen fuel cells. The HyTeP group planned a national conference of businesses and industries, just to listen to industry needs and requirements. The group intelligently decided that the first kind of conversation that must occur in this future-building process is one in which stakeholders talk, as community leaders listen.

The HyTeP planners are acutely aware that this is the beginning of an ongoing conversation, they cannot predict where the conversation will take them, and they are determined to remain adaptive as new opportunities present themselves. The conference-planning effort was infused with facework, even if most of the members have never heard this term. The HyTeP conference planners carefully considered each of the participants in the upcoming meeting. They knew the players, were aware of the importance of each person, and openly discussed how to best honor each one. As a group and as individuals, the planners were engaged in positive facework at every stage.

Conversations are never isolated, but always connected to something larger. Each conversation is affected in part by conversations that came before, and each will affect both real and anticipated conversations of the future. When we look at the patterns of conversation in a community, we begin to see larger communication units called episodes.

❖ EPISODES IN BUILDING COMMUNITY

A community is marked by the regular activities and patterns of conversation that occur there. An organization has meetings, work schedules, shift hours, social activities, project cycles, and lots of other regularized patterns of activity. Towns have festivals, council meetings, school activities, neighborhood get-togethers, and elections. Communities of faith have congregational rituals, governance meetings, religious and social activities, and weekly schedules. These are the episodes of community life.

Communities come into being, are sustained, and are changed by their episodes. Some episodes such as festivals, graduations, and weddings do honor to the community and to individuals. Other episodes such as riots, criminal activity, political strife, and racial incidents threaten personal face and degrade the community. Such positive and negative episodes constitute the life of the common, and how episodes are structured, how they are accomplished, gives character and meaning to life.

In his book *By Popular Demand: Revitalizing Representative Democracy Through Deliberative Elections,* John Gastil (2000) describes typical episodes in the political life of the United States. In community after community, we see democracy enacted in predictable ways, including public opinion polls, face-to-face meetings with elected officials, talk radio, lobbying, and elections. Polls provide a way to "hear" public concerns and garner their ideas. Polls normally reveal norms, and public meetings provide an opportunity to state opinions in more elaborate form that can be heard directly by policymakers. Talk radio provides a forum for venting and sharing opinions. Lobbying affords an opportunity for interest groups to ply direct pressure on elected officials, and by listening to lobbyists, officials do get a strong sense of what is important to some constituents. In sum, all of these episodes make a community in which there is freedom to express ideas, officials are sensitive to public concerns, and people can participate in democracy.

Community episodes make some things possible, but also limit what can happen. The character of a community is established as much by the

limits as by the powers of the episodes that define it. To continue Gastil's (2000) analysis, polls may tell us something about norms, but they do little to uncover the richness of the political fabric of a community, and they rarely afford an opportunity to talk about issues. Face-to-face meetings do provide such an opportunity, but if we look at the way public meetings are frequently run, there is little real dialogue or deliberation. In fact, in many communities, government agencies make a mockery of public consultation in the use of the DAD model (decide-announce-defend), in which public input is more or less irrelevant. If the issue is low-key, the public hearings may be what Gastil calls "empty meditation chambers"; if the issue is hot, "rousing political theatre" (p. 99). Public hearings also can provide a forum that encourages public face threat.

Talk radio can be even worse. Dominated by a single, often conservative voice, talk radio most frequently gives those who often feel otherwise trampled in the mass media a chance to vent. Although callers and listeners are more diverse than the conservative content suggests, hosts frequently pride themselves on the skills with which they threaten face of callers who do not share their opinions, not to mention those who do not dare to call.

Lobbying is a long political tradition and takes different forms in various communities. Unfortunately, lobbying rarely reflects a genuine public voice. Lobbyists are hired by interest groups to promote their own pre-established points of view.

As examples, these common political episodes provide ample opportunity to build one's own face, often in a competitive way, while tromping on the face of others. Despite its military overtones, the expression "rules of engagement" does capture an important aspect of community life, and that is how we engage others on matters of mutual concern.

We know of a small town torn apart over a highway improvement. The city had received a federal highway grant to improve a heavily traveled suburban boulevard that cut through the town. The idea was to get stakeholders together to make decisions about how to use this money for the improvement of the street and adjacent areas, but the matter was far from simple. The discussions had broken down, as business leaders and city residents, along with the council, quickly divided into two competing interest groups. The business interest wanted a narrower, two-lane option to slow the traffic down, which they believed would maintain business; and others, including the mayor and some other members of the council, favored widening the street to three or four lanes to improve traffic flow, safety, and access. This eventuality was both understandable and predictable, but the way in which the participants tried to work through their differences

created a series of episodes that made it impossible to move forward constructively. The essential problem was poor facework, as key players spent years hurling vitriol at one another.

Over a number of years, this conflict played out badly. Previous consensus processes failed, a lawsuit was filed, and a court-ordered mediation was unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the city was unable to use, and indeed could have lost, some $8 million, and the badly needed renovations would not get done. Business owners and city leaders all knew that something different had to happen, but emotionally, they felt damaged, and it was very hard to muster the trust needed to engage in a new way. We struggled for weeks doing our best to encourage trust building, but after months of pre-negotiations, we were unsuccessful in bringing the parties to the table. Every time they were close to signing a process agreement, a key participant would take a unilateral action to subvert it. Although the parties knew intellectually that they should change their rules of engagement, they did not have the will to do so. In the end, however, the parties refused to come to the table.

After every effort to convene the stakeholders failed, the mediators realized that they had been co-opted into the struggle and set out strong conditions for continued involvement. These included the following:

1. The parties would need to communicate directly with one another and establish a committee to finalize the process agreement.

2. The parties would need to refrain from any public statements other than those permitted by the process agreement.

3. Side meetings and public events not approved by the process agreement would not be held.

4. Disrespectful language would end.

These conditions could not be met, and the attempt to convene a process failed. Here are the tacit facework rules that were followed:

• Look for, identify, and call out negative qualities in those who oppose you.

• Impugn the intelligence and motivation of the opposing group.

• Show your anger by using harsh, damning language in private and in public.

• Return accusations and blame in kind.

• Polarize the issue, and compete hard to get what you want.

Through many episodes, including community meetings, council meetings, court proceedings, mediations, and negotiations, these rules encouraged the parties as much as possible to build their own face while threatening that of the other. As a result, everyone felt attacked, and collaboration was impossible because, in the end, the parties could not speak directly to one another and could not imagine new rules by which they might have built honor and respect for the ultimate benefit of their working relationships and the quality of life in the community.

Changing the Rules of Engagement

In many ways, this book is about how to change our rules of engagement in a way that builds honor and respect; collaborative relationships; and adaptive, learning communities. When a community embarks on the task of addressing a difficult issue with which they are confronted, they can start right at this point: Design a process that can accomplish objectives such as those in the previous sentence. For us, process management is a crucial issue because it creates the conditions that can make constructive outcomes possible in the face of difference (Figure 5.1).

The rules of engagement in many communities empower people to speak out on their opinions, but often do not allow individuals to explore issues openly. Such rules frequently afford an opportunity to test ideas through polarized debate, but often fail to permit genuine dialogue that could explore the true complexity of the issue, including common ground and difference within a context of respect. When you have the opportunity to help communities design and manage processes for change, however, you can deliberately and clearly challenge groups to call their customary procedures into question in a way that can manage face and achieve mutually desirable outcomes.

Figure 5.1   The Face Management Triad
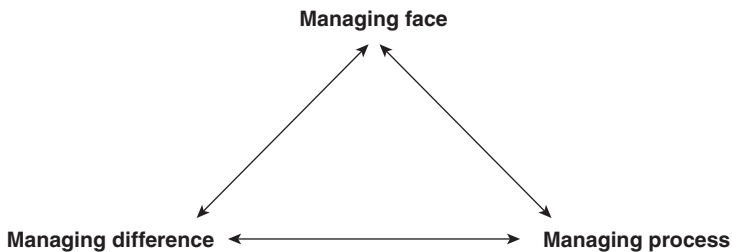
SIDEBAR 5.3   Tell Me a New Story

Those who care about communities and see a need for alternative processes for community collaboration owe a great debt to the Institute of Cultural Affairs International (ICAI; 2005). Long before the term *facilitation* was widely known, the Institute was a forerunner in designing creative processes for community change.

The ICAI began with the assumption that community change had to arise from community empowerment and that the community itself must enact new kinds of conversation in order to create new directions to rise above poverty, defeat drugs, and build social responsibility in the population. Using a Town Meeting format, the Institute went into some of the most problem-ridden communities in our country and abroad and brought community leaders together to talk in new ways about their futures.

The workshop was carefully designed. Beginning with a frank discussion of social issues, participants brainstormed their social issues such as education, crime, drugs, poverty, employment, social services, and the like. Using individual idea-writing, small-group work, and plenary sessions, participants list their concerns, cluster these into social action issue areas, and create an operating vision. The group then discerns underlying contradictions or factors that block resolution of these issues. Then a series of challenges is written, identifying the social issue, underlying contradiction, or block, and local illustrative stories. Responses to each challenge are then brainstormed and clustered into response categories. Formal proposals are then drafted.

The workshop ends as participants create a new image of the community in the form of new stories, new songs, new symbols, and a new drama. The Institute has refined and added to its methods over the years and is still going strong, having organizations throughout the United States and abroad. As a group they have shown us many things about facework:

- Communities and their members have the resources and power to change their lives.
- We are empowered when we acknowledge the limits of our present conversations and jointly create new, better ones.
- Conversations of creativity build feelings of honor and dignity, while conversations of despair threaten these.
- Collective imagination builds action-oriented relationships and healthy communities.

Breaking Old Patterns

In an attractive booklet published by the National Policy Consensus Center, Peter Adler and Juliana Birkhoff (2002) outline "Twenty things you can do to help environmental stakeholder groups talk more effectively about science, culture, professional knowledge, and community wisdom." This booklet presents a new set of rules for working through environmental conflict (Table 5.3). Together, these suggestions are just one example of how constructive facework can be the cornerstone of new episodes in the life of the community.

These twenty tools suggest tangible ways to break old patterns of interaction that may no longer serve a community. Notice that each of the twenty ideas suggests a new way of acting, and each helps to structure facework in some way on the level of the episode. Each is a guideline for how to conduct an episode of conflict resolution in a way that manages the face of all participants while building relationships and improving the quality of the community itself.

Reframing the Episode

Rules will change when the episode itself is reframed and understood in a new way. Steven Daniels and Gregg Walker (1996) point out, for example, that typical episodes of conflict resolution on environmental issues are complicated by a diversity of viewpoints, tension from differences in such factors as history and values, and strong emotional ties to the landscape. To help deal with these natural obstacles, Walker and Daniels have created a new kind of episode for complex policy issues. Borrowing from the field of education, they call their approach *collaborative learning*, or CL. Here is where reframing becomes important.

Daniels and Walker (2001) redefine the episode from problem solving to "improving the situation." The "situation" is not a specific problem or issue, but a system that must be managed. The question for participants, then, is, "How can we achieve desirable and feasible change through mutual, collaborative learning about science, the issues, and values?" Participants are teaching and learning together about their various views, cultures, and histories. Together, they learn too about the issues and gain necessary information for improvement. The method—a carefully organized episode of interaction—aims to create a safe environment and encourage dialogue and deliberation.

We are struck by the facework involved in this process. Instead of presenting the face-threatening frame of competition and conflict, they focus

Table 5.3   New Rules for Working Through Environmental Conflict

1. Begin with co-hosting.	*Have the major stakeholder groups co-host the negotiations.*
2. Create a game plan and group covenants.	*Include everyone in discussions about the process to be used and how to organize the event.*
3. Concentrate on relationships first.	*Share a meal. Have participants get to know one another as individuals rather than representatives.*
4. Be transparent about decision making.	*Establish ahead of time the rules by which decisions will be made.*
5. Pay attention to power.	*Think about how all participants can be empowered to use the resources available to them.*
6. Create rituals.	*Encourage participants to establish certain routines that have special meaning.*
7. Balance linear processes with iterative strategies.	*Create a process that allows forward movement, but also honors storytelling and repetition as needed.*
8. Talk about values.	*Encourage participants to explore their values explicitly.*
9. Acknowledge different kinds of knowledge.	*Acknowledge that different ways of knowing are legitimate.*
10. Generate multiple problem definitions.	*Permit participants to define the problem in various ways.*
11. Step out of the normal conversation mode.	*Think creatively about how to have meetings. Honor alternative forms.*
12. Create jointly owned knowledge.	*Encourage participants to collaborate in getting the information they need.*
13. Explore validity and accuracy with care.	*Encourage a climate of authenticity in which participants are free to ask for validation.*
14. Talk politics, but do it gracefully.	*Admit that important political pressures may be present, and allow frank discussion of these.*
15. Be patient teachers to others.	*Avoid mystery. Allow all participants to teach others what is important to them in ways that makes sense to the other.*
16. Organize sidebars.	*Make use of committees and special groups as necessary to explore certain issues.*
17. Create a public learning culture.	*Allow for difference and change. Admit new forms of information as they come available.*
18. Engage in storytelling.	*Stories are one of the best ways to tell others what is important to us.*
19. Explicitly articulate outcomes.	*Be clear about what is gained and what is lost by the outcome. Allow people to adjust to necessary changes.*
20. Create strong endings.	*Articulate the details of agreements and celebrate.*

on the face-building frame of learning and creative collaboration. Participants are first trained in the process. In a CL workshop format, participants—normally ordinary citizens and policymakers together— describe the situation they are facing, discuss interests and concerns, create transformative solutions, and deliberate on these. Later, ideas are sorted and processed for possible implementation. Throughout, the process is framed as a learning activity, and techniques are based on several assumptions about adult learning—that learning should be active rather than passive, that learning involves different modalities, that learning styles vary, and that learning is best when combined with systems thinking.

Facilitating communication and planning should always be based on the need for adult engagement and learning. Traditional ways of doing business within the community are not always structured in this way. Good planning requires a sense of purpose, clear vision, and commitment to a mission. Models for community change, such as the CL approach, honor previous experience, anticipate ongoing working relationships, and focus on visions rather than problems. They feature creativity, which in turn builds respect for self and other. And finally, they feature high-level thinking, which promotes feelings of value and honor for everyone involved and, in turn, honor face.

Examples of the power of reframing abound. The Public Dialogue Consortium approached Cupertino, California, to begin a quality-of-life project there, and discovered that the community was experiencing considerable racial tension because of immigration from Asia (Spano, 2001). Worrying that talks around racial issues could reproduce the very tensions they were designed to overcome, the discussions were reframed to an exploration of *cultural richness.* The result was remarkable. In Shawn Spano's (2001) book *Public Dialogue and Participatory Democracy: The Cupertino Community Project,* the city manager Don Brown wrote, "The 'light bulb' moment for me came when I realized that this project was not about changing people's minds, but that it was about giving people a way to talk about tough issues. I also realized that people's fears and concerns are real and legitimate and that they need a way of talking about them without the fear of being branded a racist" (pp. xi–xii). Can people overcome their fears of talking about hard issues, when we place facework at the center of the dialogue?

The character of the community is not a given, but is constructed and reproduced every day by the communication that happens there. The episodes, conversations, and acts of real people in daily situations constitute the social world of the community. The community is not the sum of the personalities of the people in it, but is a dynamic product of interaction. How we communicate impacts not only individuals but also the larger social world. A community, then, really is something that is *built.*

❖ LIFESCRIPTS AND THE COMMUNITY

The activity of the network of communications creates entire ways of thinking, ways of working, ways of understanding, and ways of acting. Shared history provides our most fundamental orientations to the world. That is why we always carry our communities around with us wherever we go. Our communities are part of us as persons. What we see, how we act, what we value, what things mean are all determined by ideas worked out through social interaction in communities.

If community interaction is so powerful, how do we account for individuality? We know that even within a single community, various interests clash, different values reign, and ideas compete. People do not necessarily see things the same way, and communities somehow hang together, if not always harmoniously.

If the community is a composite of persons, the person is also a composite of communities. Every person is different precisely because each is a unique combination of different social worlds. Our histories always differ, and our communities of association always vary. We may have some significant others in common, but each of us has particular relationships that influence who we are, how we understand our experience, and how we act in the world. This is precisely how the paradoxical human being can be both individual and social. We may be biologically unique, but, more important for human beings, we are individual because we are social.

And this aspect of the human condition—membership in many communities—is a crucial resource in human life. We can choose to honor other people because we ourselves have been dishonored. We can collaborate because we have experienced authoritarianism. We can remove barriers of prejudice because we have at some other time and in some other place come up against stereotyping. We can make new rules by breaking rules that did not work elsewhere. This is our power as social beings always living in community.

Our identities are shaped by our social worlds. Each of us possesses a dynamic and changing lifescript, a reflection of deep cultural ways of knowing. The lifescript gives a roadmap for how to live a life and how to respond to the constantly changing landscapes we traverse.

Lifescripts provide a sense of who we are as individuals, what it means to be a person, the nature of relationships, and even a way to understand the communities of which we have been, are, and will become members. The lifescript gives answers to questions such as, "What kind of person am I?" "What is important to me?" "How do I act?" "Where have I been, and where am I going?"

In Chapter 1, we introduced the term *moral order* to capture the assumptions that drive the lifescript. The moral order is a socially constructed set of understandings we carry with us from situation to situation. An important part of your lifescript involves face—how you want to be seen by others, how you want others to treat you, and how you treat others. Indeed, facework itself is the never-ending process of presenting self to others and acting toward others in the ongoing narrative of life. How we do this is very much part and parcel of the moral order, which is why different communities, especially cultural communities, do facework differently.

Indeed, the premise of this book is that facework lies at the heart of social action. How we build, maintain, protect, or threaten personal dignity, honor, and respect reproduces the very lifescript that guides decisions about how to do facework.

SIDEBAR 5.4   An Exercise on Stereotyping

Introduction

TIME: 1 minute

We've learned from our previous work that relationships of conflict are often fueled by distorted perceptions that people hold of one another—by assumptions people make about others who don't share their views or their culture or their experiences. Many people would like to feel less stereotyped by others. We'd like to lead you through an exercise that will allow you to communicate how you feel stereotyped and to indicate which of those stereotypes are most inaccurate or hurtful.

Generation of Lists

TIME: 15 minutes (in subgroup)

INSTRUCTIONS: We'd like the people who identify more with a prochoice perspective to gather around this easel and the people who identify more with a prolife perspective to gather around that easel. Your task is to generate on the newsprint at least eight stereotypes that you think people on the other side of the issue hold of you. That is, when someone with a different view of abortion learns that you hold a PL or PC view, what negative attributions do you worry that he or she ascribes to you? What stereotypical beliefs, attitudes, and intentions do you imagine you are assumed to have? You will have 15 minutes to do this. You might want to start with a rapid brainstorming of many stereotypes, and then sort through and identify several that are somewhat discrete. One of us will facilitate this process in

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(Continued)

each group. At the end of the 15 minutes we'll ask you to pick one of your group members to report on the list to the full group.

Marking the Lists

TIME: 5–8 minutes (in subgroup)

INSTRUCTIONS: Now we'd like to give you an opportunity to reflect on these stereotypes and think about which seem most inaccurate in your view. Which is most painful—which of these really hurts—to think that someone thinks this of you? We'd like each of you to put an "I" next to the 3 stereotypes you feel are most *inaccurate.* Then put a "P" next to the stereotype that is most *painful* or offensive. Finally, we'd like to invite you to put a "U" next to the stereotype or stereotypes that you think are most *understandable*—by doing this you're not saying it's true of you; you could be saying only that this is a stereotype your movement does too little to correct. This category is an option—we'd like to encourage you to give it some thought. Before any of you approach the easels, please take a minute to think. Then go up when you're ready. When you have finished marking the lists you'll pick a recorder to report to the other group on what the feared stereotypes are, what markings were made, and, if you'd like, you can say something about how the process went.

Group Reports

TIME: 8–10 minutes (in the full group)

INSTRUCTIONS: Now is the time for each group to report to the other. Each group has been invited to share not only the lists and the markings but also something about the process.

Sharing About the Most Hurtful Stereotypes

TIME: 20 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS: (This statement can be personalized or offered as it is here.) We'd like to have each person take the opportunity to say—again, you can pass if you'd like—something about the stereotype that you marked as most painful. And to say what it is about the way you understand yourself, the way you know yourself, what is it about your experience that makes the stereotype that you marked as the most painful, so painful. We'd like you to share just a couple of sentences. Again, what is it about how you understand yourself, know yourself, and understand your experience that makes one of these judgments or distorted perceptions so painful? This time, instead of doing a go-round, we'll do what we call the popcorn for-mat, which means, that you can speak when you feel ready. And then, when we get close to the end of our time, we'll check and make sure everybody who wants to speak has a chance.

❖ PRINCIPLES FOR PRACTICE

As we move through this book, we continually broaden the frame in which facework can be viewed. Our scholarship and experience leads us to see that face-related communication goes well beyond simple interpersonal exchanges. We learn two big lessons as we explore these larger frames.

Understand that every act is part of a larger set of interactions that, over time, connects people in relationships and communities. Think systemically and question the impact that your actions will have in the long run and the impact that the system will have on you, your relationships, and your communities.

We make positive communities through constructive communication. Communities and systems of all types are made in interaction, and if we want communities that honor human beings and their relation-ships, we must pay attention to the "how" of communication within those communities. Old patterns of interaction that do not work very well can be transformed.