

Managing Relations across Cultures: An Evaluation Perspective

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Warwick Applied
Linguistics
20 January 2021

Outline

- 1. Introduction – Politeness theory approaches**
- 2. The evaluation process - a sample analysis**
- 3. Culture and the evaluation process**
- 4. Reflections on data collection and analysis**
- 5. Concluding comments**



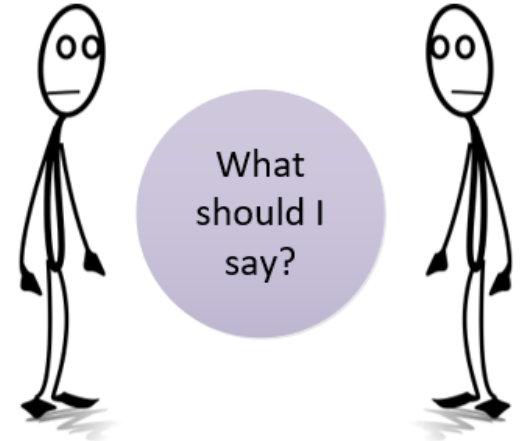
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Intro: Traditional politeness approaches

Focus on linguistic strategies

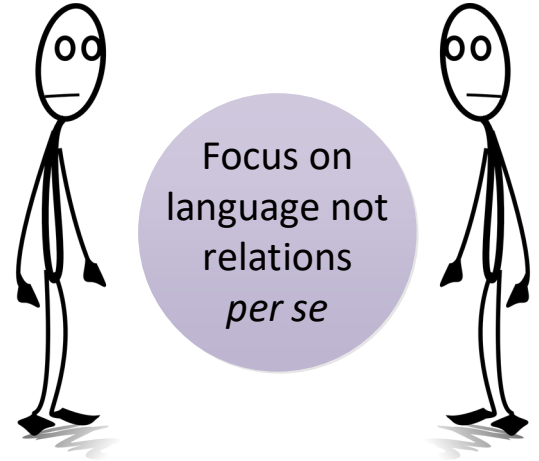
- Brown & Levinson (1987):
 - Face-threatening acts (e.g. request, disagreement) – choose level of directness according to ‘weightiness’
- Leech (1983, 2014)
 - Maxims – convey favourable meanings to others by managing constraints such as tact, modesty.



Intro: Traditional politeness approaches

In other words:

- Starting point was language not relations
- Purpose: Explain why people don't simply speak plainly and briefly
- Focus: Strategies for managing 'politeness'
- Later focus: Strategies used to convey 'impoliteness'



Introduction: Recent developments

- ‘Relational turn’ – a greater focus on relations & relating
- Evaluation – a greater focus on evaluation

Fraser & Nolan (1981): *“no utterance is inherently polite or impolite ... [it is] the conditions under which they are used that determine the judgement of politeness.”*



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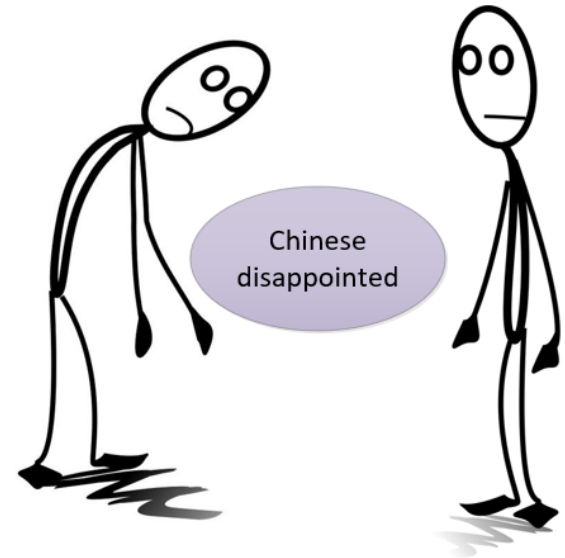
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Evaluation process: sample incident

Chinese ministerial delegation visit to USA: farewell banquet hosted by Americans

- Hosts and guests seated at a number of different tables, each served with wine
- Most senior American proposed a toast to the delegation
- Everyone chatted informally
- At subsequent Chinese internal discussion meeting, Chinese head of delegation complained that the farewell banquet was disappointing, only 'so so'.
- Why?

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Evaluation process: the Judgement

Chinese head of delegation's judgement:

*The farewell lunch was not bad. ... Overall, it was not bad but not as animated as we expected. One reason was that the Americans were not warm enough at the beginning and we could not replace them to play the host's role and be much warmer than them. **I rate it 60.***

Two elements judged



Judgement
of event

Evaluation process: the Judgement

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Two elements judged

Judgement
of event

Judgement
of
individuals

Evaluation process: context is key

1. Behaviour in context

Context has multiple layers

↓
Expectations

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Evaluation process: context is key

Crucial factor: Type of Communicative activity (e.g. meeting, lecture)

- Has major impact on norms/rules/procedures
- 4 core parameters:
 1. Purpose & enactment procedures
 2. Roles: rights, obligations, competence of participants
 3. Artifacts, instruments tools, media
 4. Environment: social atmosphere, physical arrangements

Allwood, 2007

Evaluation process: context is key

Chinese head of delegation's comments:

*The farewell lunch was not bad. The only problem was that they **didn't provide liquor** and we had to propose toasts with red wine, but **the atmosphere was not all right** in the first half. The American head of the international office proposed a toast to our delegation on behalf of all Americans present and that was all. He did not go to the other tables. I was sitting with him in the same table and as he did not do that, I felt obliged not to do more than the host. It was a pity!*

Missing
artifact

Poor
atmosphere

Evaluation process: context is key

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Missing
artifact

Poor
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Breach of
expected
procedures

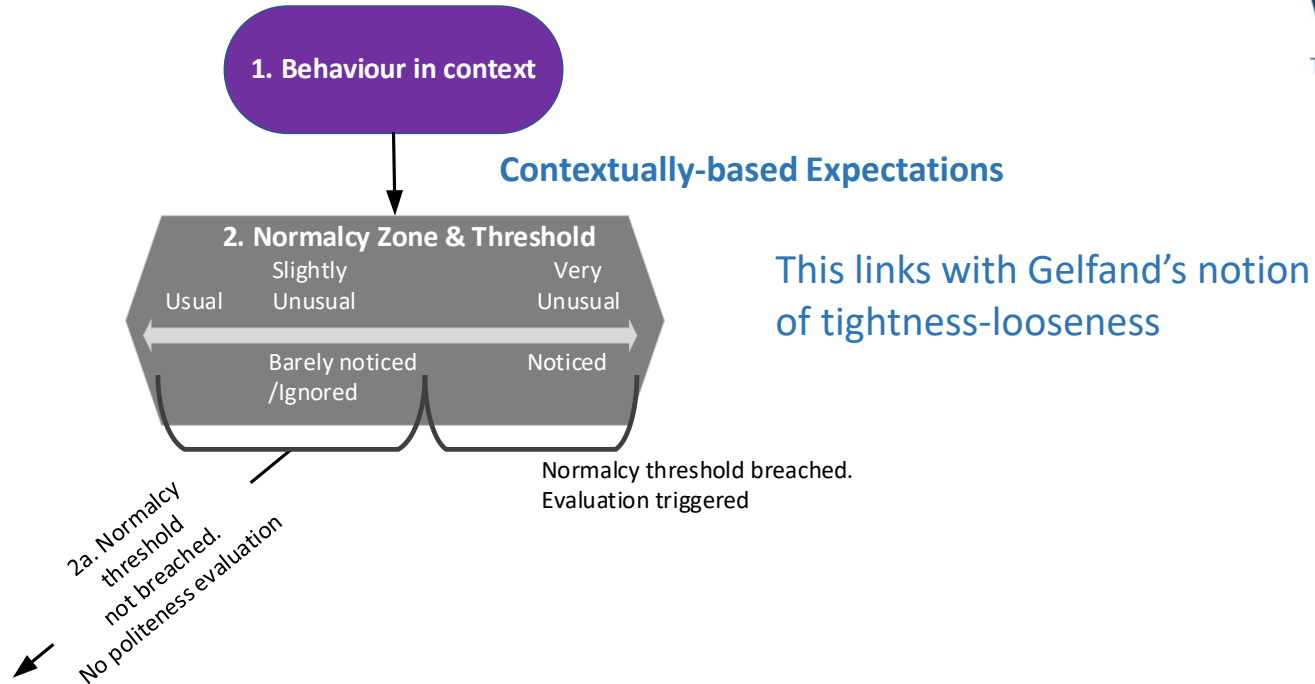
Role rights &
obligations

Evaluation process: context is key

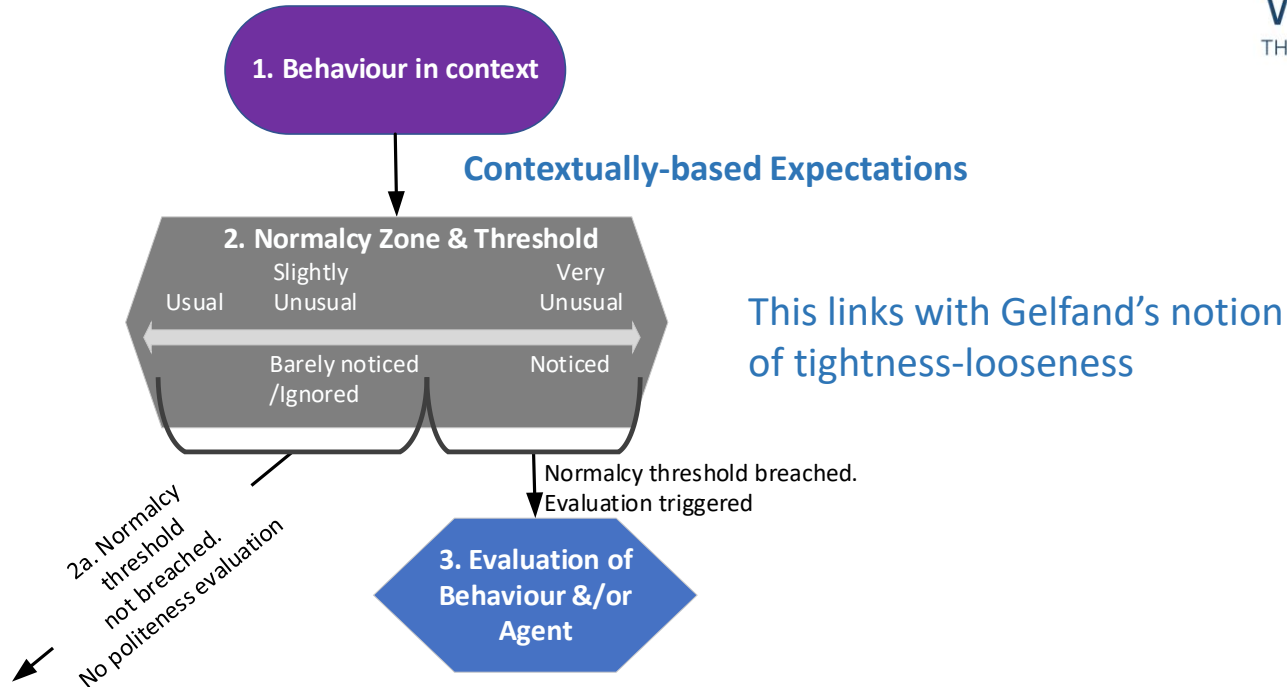
Crucial factor: Type of Communicative activity (e.g. meeting, lecture)

- Has major impact on norms/rules/procedures
- 4 core parameters:
 1. Purpose & enactment procedures (proposing toasts)
 2. Roles: rights, obligations, competence of participants (rights of guests vs hosts)
 3. Artifacts, instruments tools, media (liquor vs red wine)
 4. Environment: social atmosphere, physical arrangements (level of animation)

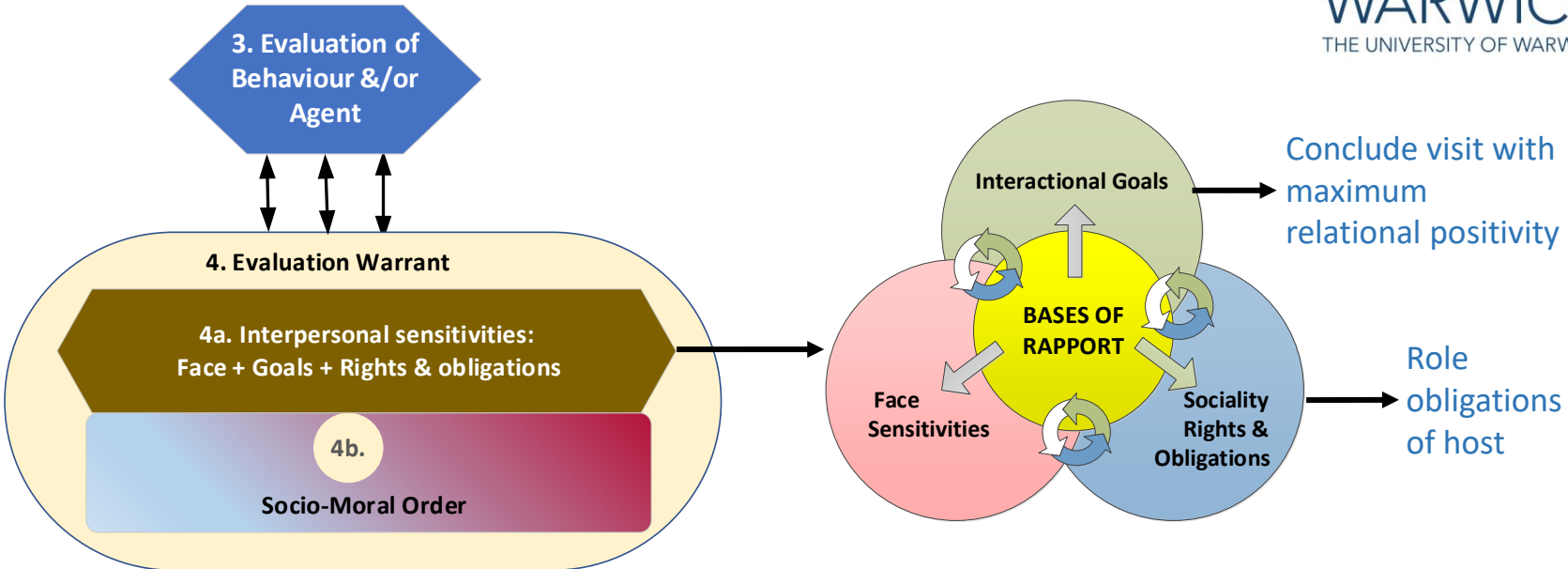
Evaluation process: context is key



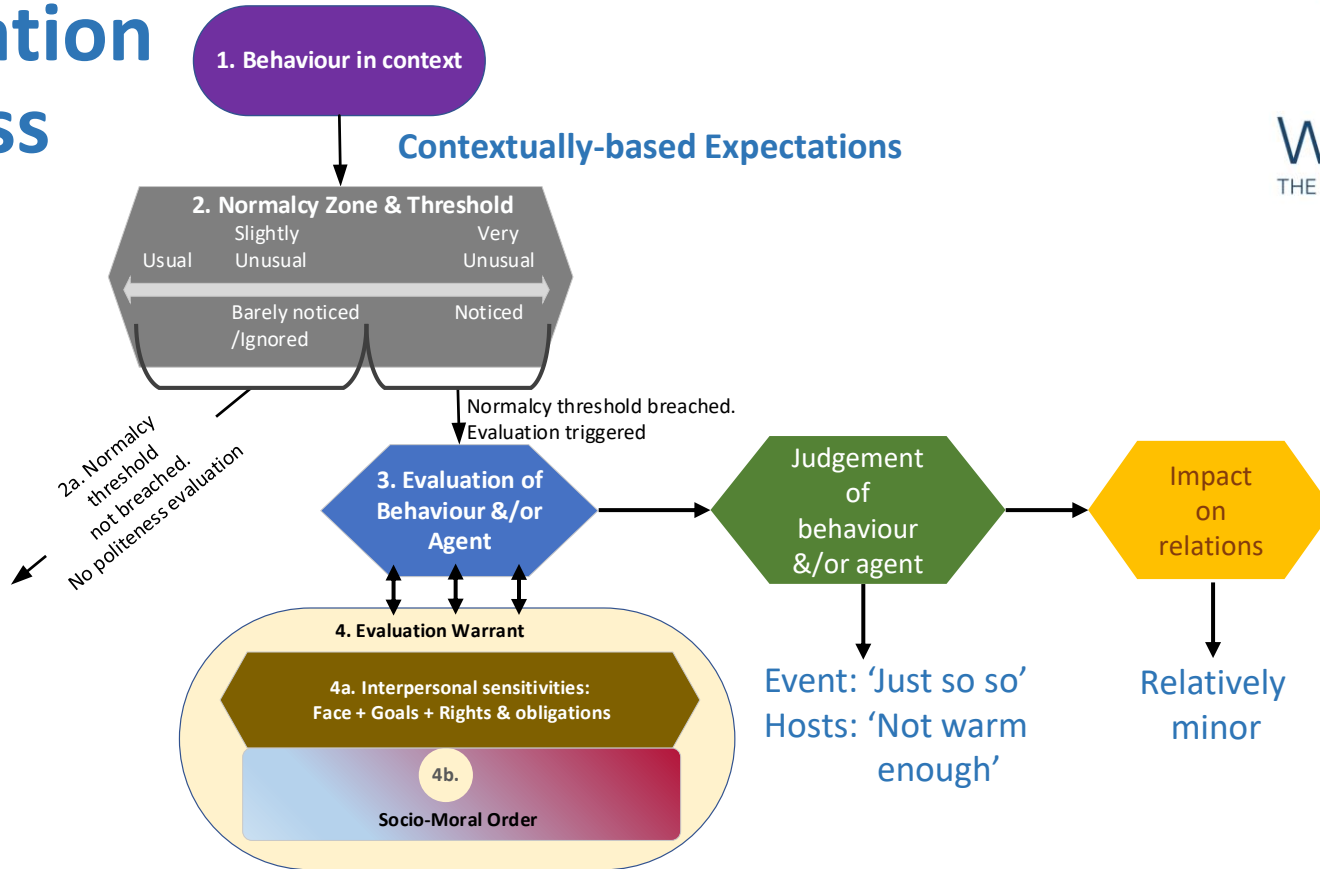
Evaluation process: context is key



Evaluation process: evaluation warrant

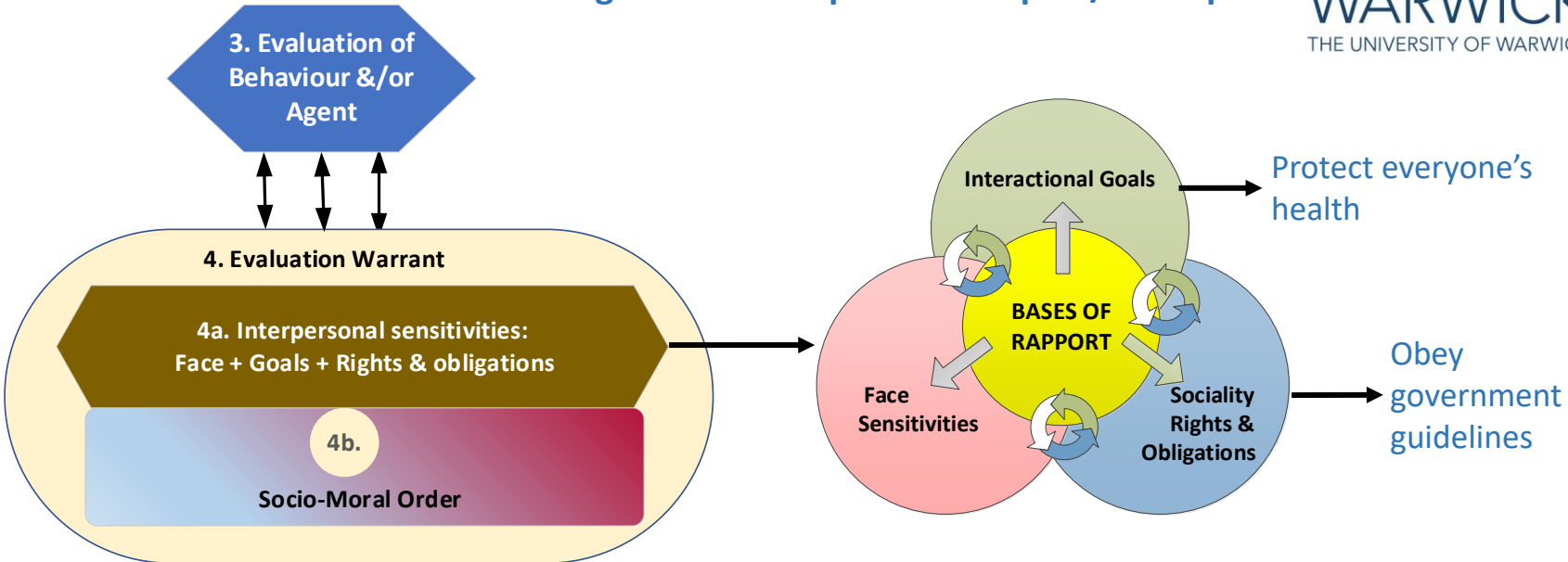


Evaluation process



Evaluation process: socio-moral order

Wearing of masks on public transport/in shops

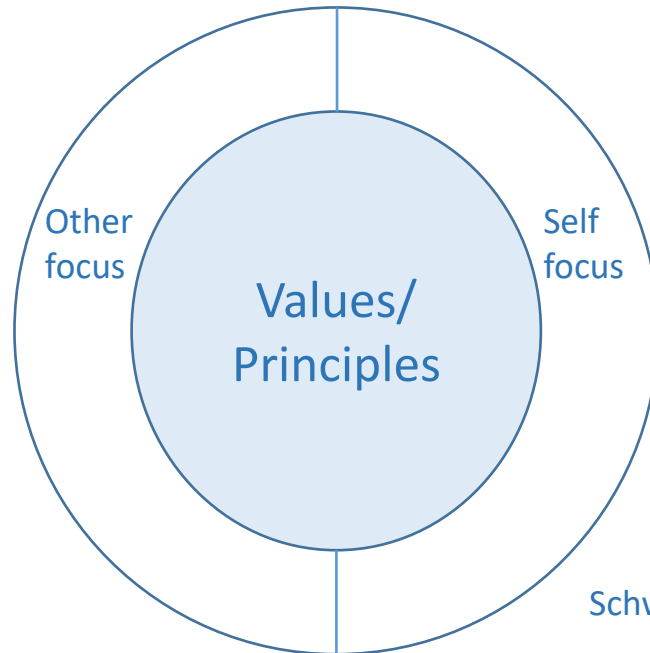


Evaluation process: socio-moral order

Self-other balance

Sample values

- Care for others
- Consideration
- Conformity



Sample values

- Autonomy
- Personal comfort/pleasure
- Personal achievement

Schwartz, e.g. Schwartz et al. 2012

Evaluation process: socio-moral order

Self-other balance

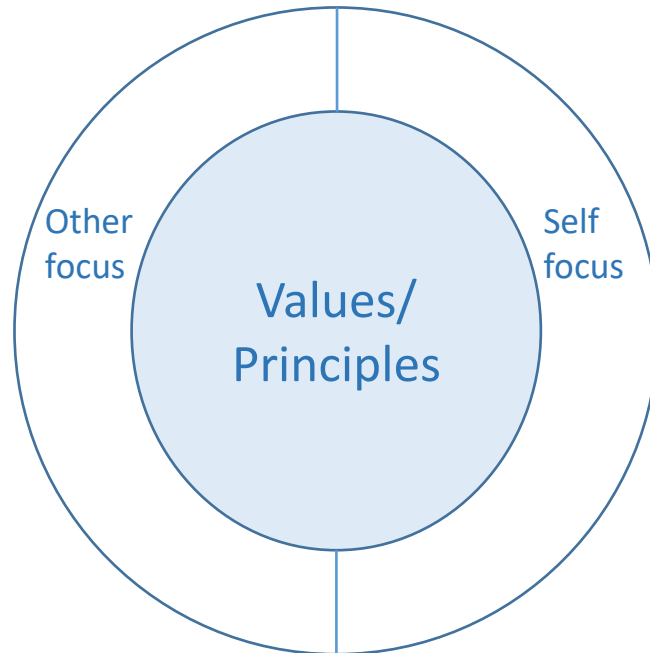
Wearing of masks on public transport/in shops

Sample values

- Care for others
- Consideration
- Conformity

*"I think that it is basic good manners, courtesy, consideration to wear a face **mask** if you are, for example, in a shop."*

"If not for yourself, but to show you care about other people around you."



Sample values

- Autonomy
- Personal comfort/pleasure
- Personal achievement

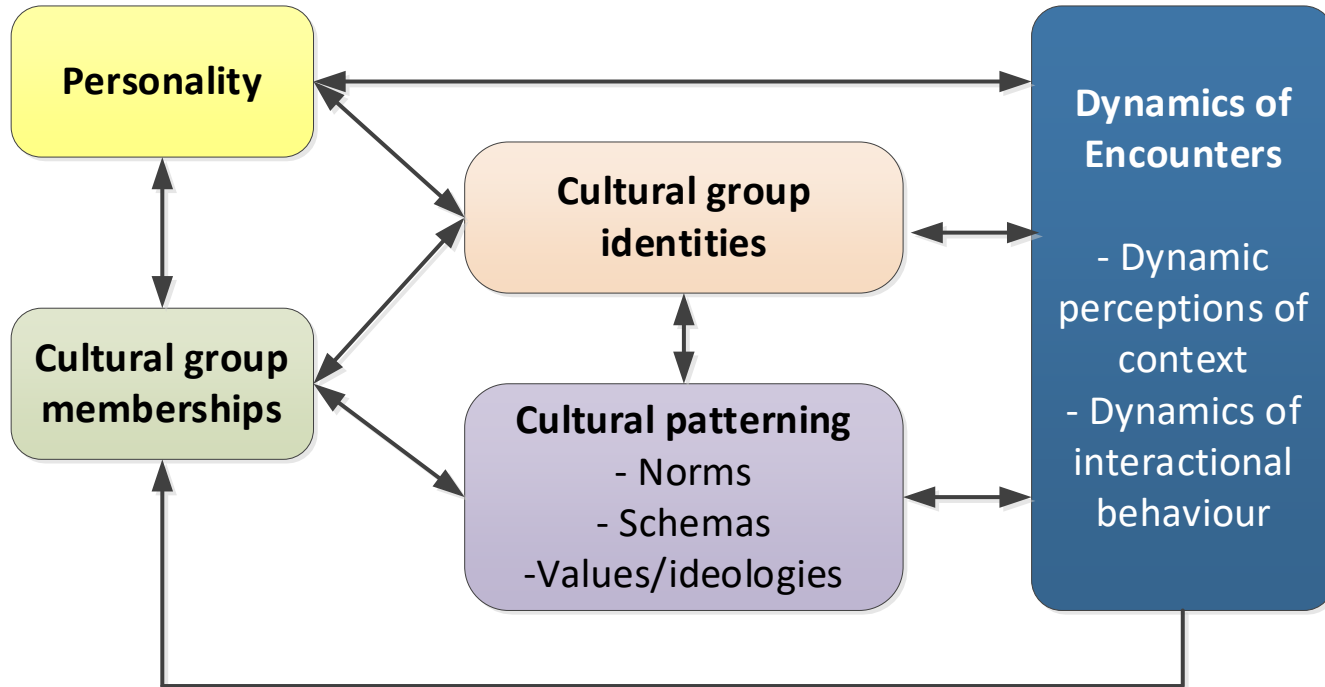
"I don't see why other people should demand that I wear one, when they don't know anything about my health or my personal situation."

Summary of poll finding: "The top reason people don't wear one is due to comfort, with 76 per cent of those surveyed saying they expected to feel uncomfortable."

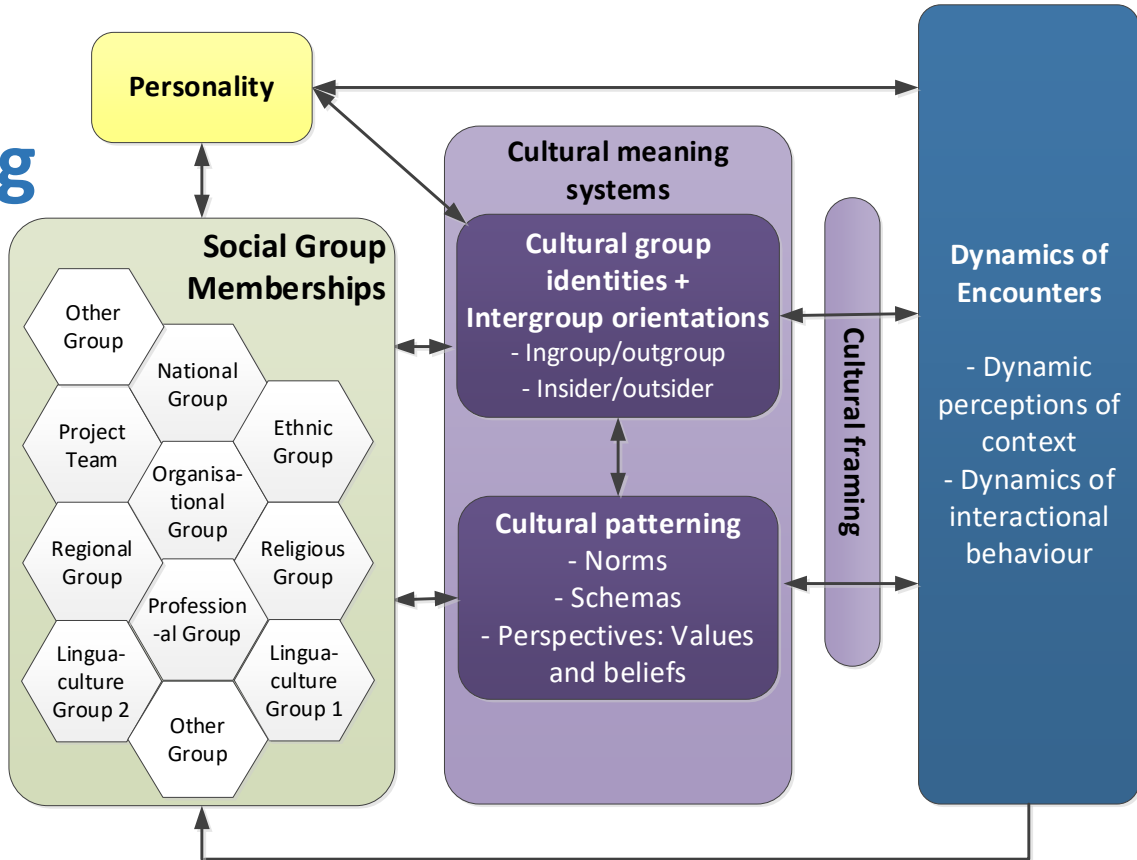
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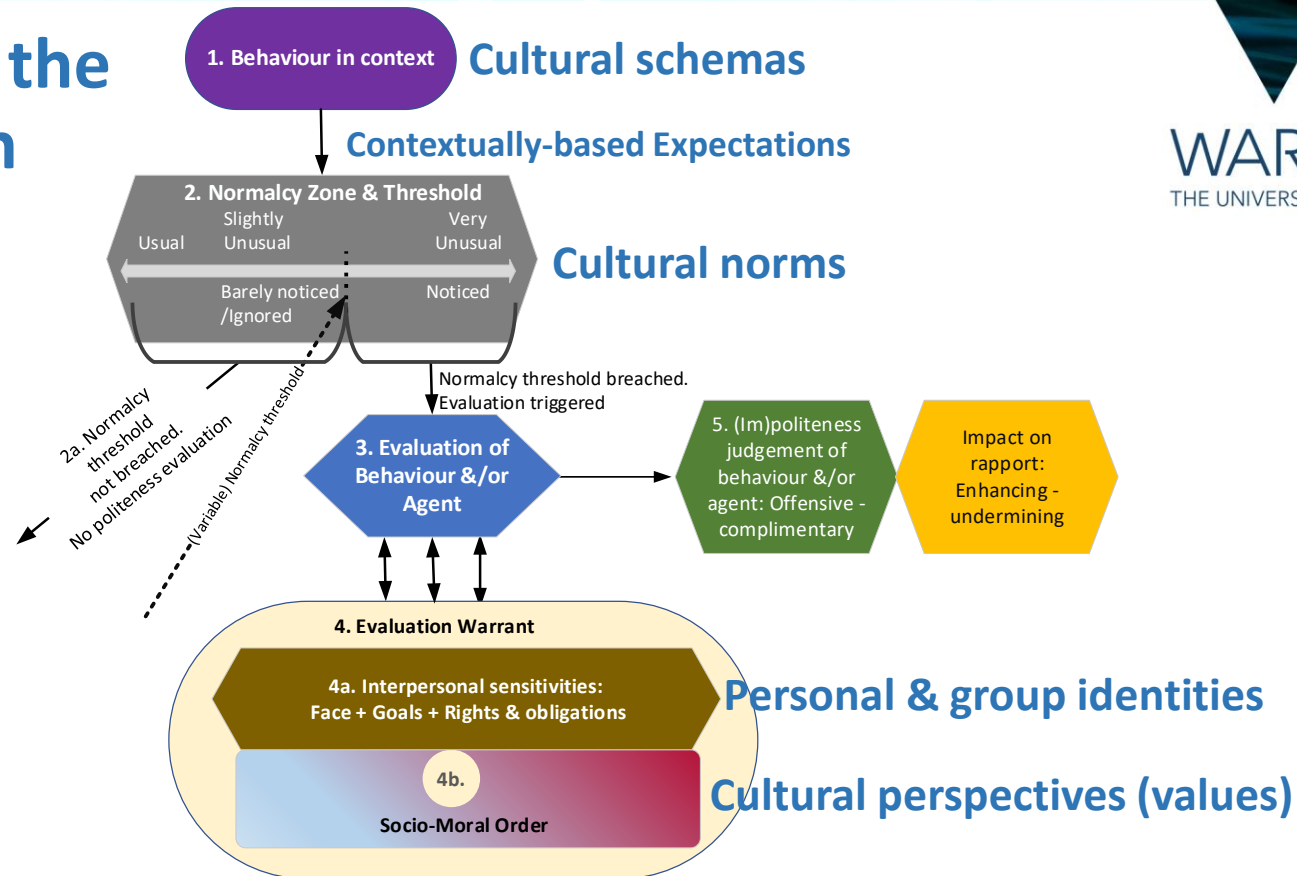
Cultural Patterning



Cultural Patterning



Culture & the Evaluation process



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Data collection & analysis

Type of data needed

- Interactional data (ideally discourse)
+
- Evaluative comments/reflections; i.e. metapragmatic comments

Data collection & analysis

Type of data needed

- Interactional data
 - Spoken discourse
 - Computer-mediated discourse
 - Post-event 'small stories' (via interviews, structured diary/report sheets)
- Meta-pragmatic comments
 - Within the discourse
 - Post-event comments (spontaneous or elicited)

Data collection & analysis

Source of today's incident: Research by Wang Jiayi (2013, 2015, 2019, 2020)



A three-week-long Chinese senior official delegation visit to the USA:

- video/audio recordings of Chinese-American meetings;
- Detailed notes of evening meetings, where Chinese officials discussed the daytime events and planned for the next day;
- Observations.

Data collection & analysis

Trustworthiness of this type of data

- Interactional data
 - How 'accurate' are post-event 'small stories' (via interviews, structured diary/report sheets)
 - Maybe 'accuracy' is not the right criteria to use ..??
- Meta-pragmatic comments
 - Within the discourse – how open/honest are participants?
 - Post-event comments – might they differ from how they felt at the time?



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Concluding comments



Future research needs

- More intercultural studies to complement the very large number of cross-cultural/comparative studies
- More focus on evaluation – how it operates and the criteria that people use for judging
- More research into the socio-moral order
- More comparative research into expectations associated with different types of communicative activities

Follow-up reading

Empirical studies

Spencer-Oatey, H., & Wang, J. (2019). Culture, context, and concerns about face: Synergistic insights from pragmatics and social psychology *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 38(4), 423–440.

Spencer-Oatey, H., & Wang, J. (2020). Establishing professional intercultural relations: Chinese perceptions of behavioural success in a Sino-American exchange visit. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 49(6), 499–519.

Spencer-Oatey, H., & Xing, J. (2019). Interdisciplinary perspectives on interpersonal relations and the evaluation process: Culture, norms and the moral order. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 151, 141–154.

Wang, J. (2013). Relational management in professional intercultural interaction: Chinese officials' encounters with American and British professionals. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick. In.

Wang, J., & Spencer-Oatey, H. (2015). The gains and losses of face in ongoing intercultural interaction: A case study of Chinese participant perspectives. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 89, 50–65.



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Follow-up
reading

Follow-up reading

Conceptual resources

- Lefringhausen, K., Spencer-Oatey, H., & Debray, C. (2019). Culture, norms and the assessment of communication contexts: Multidisciplinary perspectives. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 50*(10), 1098–1111.
- Schwartz, S. H., Cieciuch, J., Vecchione, M., Davidov, E., Fischer, R., Beierlein, C., . . . Konty, M. (2012). Refining the theory of basic individual values. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 103*, 663–688.
- Spencer-Oatey, H., Lefringhausen, K., & Debray, C. (2019). Culture, norms, and the assessment of communication contexts: Discussion and pointers for the future. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 50*(10), 1216–1220.

Spencer-Oatey, H., & Kádár, D. Z. (2021). *Intercultural Politeness. Managing Relations across Cultures*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

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Follow-up
reading



Thank you!

Any questions?

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