EXPANDED CIRCUMSTANCES IN POLITENESS: AN EXPLORATION OF POLITENESS
STRATEGIES IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

A Thesis by

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content
and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts, with a major in Communication.

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DEDICATION

To my love, Ruy, your hunger for education and pursuit of knowledge inspires me;
Mom and Dad, you saw the life that education gave me before I did;
Brother, your friendship is a gift;
and finally, to myself, through this process I have found a strength and confidence within I did
not know I possessed, what a beautiful thing

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ABSTRACT

Politeness is a communication structure that individuals utilize on a daily basis, whether consciously or subconsciously. The phenomenon of politeness has been examined in a variety of circumstances. However, current research surrounding Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory has provided an accurate investigation into politeness in interpersonal romantic relationships. The purpose of this thesis was to quantify the differences in the politeness strategies men and women employ and the differences in the strategies utilized by individuals who have experience in short term relationships and those in long term relationships. Results showed that there is minimal significant difference in the strategies chosen across gender and no difference in the strategies chosen when length of relationship was compared. This sheds light on the falsity of traditional communication troupes.

PREFACE

My husband and I have been married almost two years. He is from a big city in Brazil, and I grew up in a tiny Kansas town. Our relationship, like many others, has been a journey hallmarked by learning and growth. In our first year of marriage, I was struck by how different our communication values were. My husband thought, and still thinks, that delivering news straight away, like ripping a band-aid off, was the politest way. He values candor and directness. I, on the other hand, will take a day or two to slowly prepare him to hear news. I place an emphasis on his reception of the message. It is this dichotomy of perspectives that inspired me to investigate politeness in interpersonal romantic relationships.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Politeness. For some, it is common sense – for others, a foreign language. To some individuals, politeness looks like good manners and selfless behavior. To others, it is holding the door open for the person behind them and letting the young mother with a few items cut in line at the grocery store. And yet for others, it is telling the honest truth with no frills and pointing out when their neighbor has spinach in their teeth. In all actuality, the list of polite things one can do is rather endless. While some may be common sense and others may be determined acts, politeness would seem to be an ordinary, conventional part of life.

Learning to be polite is part of maturing. Children are taught, "if you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." Teenagers are encouraged to minimize the impact of their actions on others' feelings: "It's not you, it's me." Humanity often classifies politeness in terms of manners and etiquette.

However, the world of academia has taken the topic beyond commonplace understandings. In what some might think to be the overcomplication of such a simple, naturally occurring phenomena, academia has a wide variety of interpretations and definitions of just what exactly politeness is.[1] With the expanded study comes greater understanding and more in-depth inquiry. Politeness is now so much more than manners and etiquette.

Politeness Theory

Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson outlined Politeness Theory in their 1987 book *Politeness Some Universals in Language Usage*. Originally described as a sociological science

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[1] The following are examples of authors who have attempted to distinctly define politeness: Arndt & Janney 1985, Brown & Levinson 1987, Eelen 2001, Fraser 1990, Haugh 2004, Ide 1989, Lakoff 1975, Leech 1983, Mills 2003, Sifianou 1992, Wang 2014, Watts 2003.

theory, Politeness Theory was designed as a means to describe social relationship quality. Brown and Levinson assert that the articulation and use of specific message constructs in language choice is a key part of the make-up of social relationships, or that is to say, the expression of social relations (1987). The theory sought to shed light on the logical, mutual inferences in human interactions made beyond words, tone, and gesture.

In order to articulate the theoretical concepts of Politeness Theory, Brown and Levinson created the idea of a model person, who then interacts based on two foundational principles: face and rationality.

In general, when one thinks of "face", the idea of saving face and associations with embarrassment, humiliation, or injury to a public persona come to mind. These associations still hold true in the concept of face explored by Brown and Levinson, a two-fold concept derived from Goffman (1967). First, negative face attends to the want of an individual to operate without impediment from others, to be autonomous. On the other hand, positive face speaks to the desire of an individual to be accepted; this includes both they, themselves, and their wants. An individual's positive face wants to fit in. These two types of face combine to create the model person.

Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory assumes individuals, and thus the model person, are operating under Aristotle's understanding of practical reasoning in that they are setting end goals and engaging means to reach those ends. The means that individuals engage to reach their goal will be logical, not in excess or unnecessarily out of the direct path to accomplish the ends. Brown and Levinson refer to this as their model person possessing rationality (1987).

This model person allows for anomalies to the theoretical predictions when an individual in an interaction violates the criteria proposed in the model person. That is, if an individual is young, mentally incapable, etc., Politeness Theory many not apply to their interactions. Individuals who do not logically progress from means to an end may also engage in politeness contrary to the theorized methods of Politeness Theory.

Prerequisite: Grice's Maxims

In a 1975 article, H. P. Grice outlined four maxims for maximum efficiency in conversation and/or communication. These maxims define "the basic set of assumptions underlying every talk exchange" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 95). In that same thought, the maxims are presupposed for Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies. The maxims are as follows.

First, the maxim of quality speaks to the goal of informing others truthfully with sincerity. In that same vein, the second maxim of quantity exists. One should provide no more and no less than the information required. The third maxim, that of relevance, is fairly straightforward. The information included should be relevant. The final maxim is categorized as manner. This maxim testifies to the need for clarity. The speaker should avoid ambiguity, stating information briefly and orderly.

Paralleling these to modern, natural conversation, it is evident how often these maxims are veered from. Often, but not always, this aberration is due to individuals' respect and consciousness of face.[2] However, even in such partings, the maxims are still foundationally on the table. If they are not attended to by the speaker, the assumptions of the maxims force the hearer to decrypt the speaker's message, seeking a clear, truthful thesis of the message.

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[2] Brown and Levinson's field work also found that the want to avoid responsibility sometimes contributed to the divergence from Grice maxims (1987).

Politeness Strategies

   The positive and negative faces of people create an interdependent circle, where each individual in an interaction is mutually vulnerable in regard to face and thus in the interest of maintaining their own face, it is in the best interest of both individuals to maintain the other participant's face (i.e. to not threaten the other's face). Each face can feel threatened by different interactions and motives. An action, or intention, that intrinsically threatens face is called a face threatening act (FTA). It is noteworthy that face threatening acts, like speech acts, can include both verbal and non-verbal communication.

   Both the speaker and the hearer in an interaction are at play. Furthermore, both the speaker and the hearer have a positive and negative face to attend to. This creates a four-way grid by which FTAs can be classified. However, any given FTA may fall into multiple categories on the grid to different extents depending on the degree to which each individuals' faces are threatened. Some FTAs can be cross classified because of the intricacies of given interactions. The complexities of FTAs are matched by an equally complex approach to navigating them.

   Individuals mitigate these FTAs by, consciously or unconsciously, employing politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson outline four types of politeness strategies in their proposal of Politeness Theory: off record, bald on record, positive, and negative. Based on the situation and amount of threat to face a message or situation contains, individuals progress through the decision tree seen in Figure 1.1.
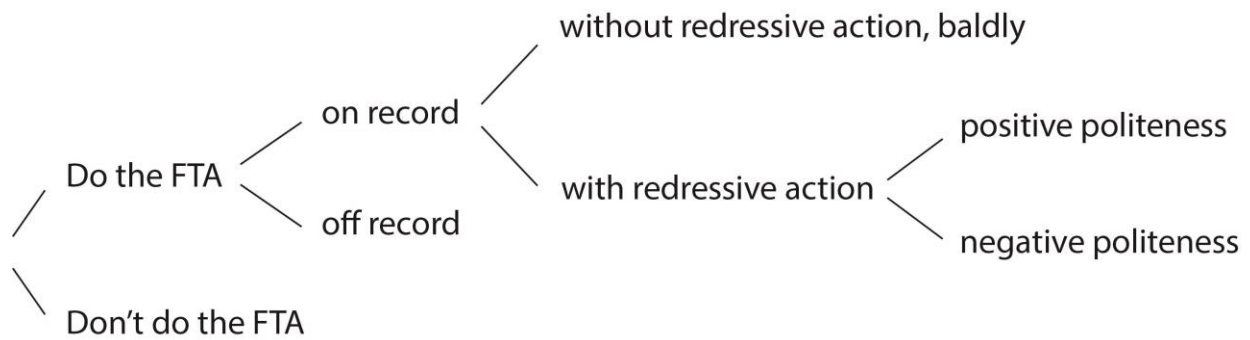
Figure 1.1: Politeness strategy decision tree[3]

The first decision to be made also provides for a non-politeness strategy, often listed in conjunction with the four politeness strategies. The choice to move forward with the FTA allows for the four different types of politeness strategies; however, if an individual opts to not move forward with the FTA based on the estimated risk of threat to face, they choose the option of not doing the FTA. This option is not a politeness strategy, but rather an anti-strategy or opt out.

Once the speaker decides to, in fact, do the act or deliver the information that will threaten the hearer's face, the next fork in the road determines if the speaker does the act on or off the record. A speaker goes on record if the act and the communicative intention of it is clear to all participants. A speaker goes **off record** when there is "more than one unambiguously attributable intention" of the act (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 69).[4] That is to say, the speaker goes off record when their act (message) could have multiple messages or interpretations; therefore, by doing the act, they are not directly committing themselves to one specific interpretation. It is implied that this gives the speaker time to "feel out" the hearer for their reactions to an act before committing themselves to a specific meaning. Brown and Levinson

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[3] Figure taken from Brown and Levinson, 1987, page 60.
[4] A logical way to keep these two straight is to compare it to the context of journalism. When a source goes on record, they are committing themselves to the things they say; their message must be clear, as it will be taken at face value.

give the following example in their book: "Damn, I'm out of cash, I forgot to go to the bank today" (p. 69). The speaker may have been intending to get a loan from the hearer, but the speaker is not committed to this interpretation, and thus cannot be held to it, if the hearer responds negatively. Off record messages often manifest themselves linguistically with one of the following: understatement, overstatement, contradictions, irony, metaphors, rhetorical questions, ellipsis, and tautologies,[5] among others.

Going on record, a speaker will move forward either with or without redressing the face threat. Going on record without redressive action is considered doing the act **bald on record**. In this case, the speaker does the act "in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 69). For the intents and purposes of Politeness Theory, this strategy conforms to Grice's Maxims (1975). Addressing an act baldly, on the record is often spurred by certain circumstances, the sum of which indicates that the speaker does not risk retribution from the hearer. These circumstances include, but are not limited to, situations where the urgency of the message is multilaterally accepted as more important than the significance of the face threats, situations in which the threat to the hearer's face is virtually obsolete (think offers that are in the hearer's best interest: "Have a seat."), or situations in which the speaker is immensely more socially powerful then the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987 p. 69).

Adding redressive action to the formula takes a clear step away from any adherence to Grice's maxims. As defined by Brown and Levinson, to be redressive in an act is to "give face" to the person being addressed (that is, the hearer of message) (1987, p. 69). Often done with adjustments or embellishments to the message, the intent of redress is to communicate that the face threat was not the aim or want of the speaker. This redress can take many forms, but one

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[5] Tautologies occur when a speaker restates the same thing twice, but in different words, often needlessly. IE: I went there personally.

example of adjusting to redress would be to include in group personal markers such as pet names or nicknames. This would be a positive politeness strategy, but depending on which face (positive or negative) the speaker is attempting to attend to, the speaker may redress with positive politeness or negative politeness.

Positive politeness attends to precisely what one would assume: the hearer's positive face. As a reminder, positive face is an individual's longing that their wants be desired, accepted, and/or acknowledged by some others. This strategy manifests linguistically in many ways which seem to be "simply representative of the normal linguistic behaviors between [those in close relationships]" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 101). These would be close relationships in which both members have an established understanding of shared wants, knowledge, and acceptance of quirks and personalities. Positive politeness is often seen at the heart of familiar or joking behavior in familiar relationships.

This association with intimate language usage is where positive politeness draws its redressive power. Positive politeness is used "as a kind of metaphorical extension of intimacy, to imply common ground or [the] sharing of wants to a limited extent even between strangers who [then] perceive themselves, for the purpose of the interaction, as somehow similar" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 103). In this way, positive politeness strategies can give face to the hearer by minimizing the FTA and thus redressing it.

Even though positive politeness is associated with intimate language, it is not the same. There is one real difference. Positive politeness possess exaggeration as a strategy, and exaggeration is not seen in the traditionally familiar intimate language. Despite being the distinguishing factor, the strategy of exaggeration does serve a very classically polite function. An example of exaggeration might be stating, "What a marvelous job you've done on this meal!"

even if the meal is not really marvelous. Exaggeration is an important strategy in the redressive efforts of positive politeness. Remembering that positive politeness addresses the hearer's longing that their wants be desire and accepted. However, sometimes this is not possible. When the speaker cannot honestly attend to the hearer's positive face because they do not want exactly what the hearer wants, exaggeration allows the speaker to communicate to the hearer that despite this, they do care for the hearer's face because they still want it to be gratified. In spite of exaggerations being often seen as insincere, in positive politeness, the redressive motive compensates for this implication and overcomes the insincerity.

Beyond redressing FTAs, positive politeness strategies also can serve another purpose. In fact, the same intimate language concept discussed above applies when positive politeness strategies are used, not in an effort to be polite, but rather in an effort to accelerate a social relationship. In this case, the same strategies can be used to convey a desire to become closer to another.

Positive politeness strategies fall into three broad types: claims of common ground, conveyance of speaker and hearer's mutual participation in the given activity, and actual fulfillment of some want of the hearer (Fig. 1.2). The latter being a direct act of redress. These three categories subset down into fifteen specific strategies or actions that are characterized as positive politeness.[6] See Figure 1.2 for the flow chart and full list of strategies.

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[6] For a full explanation of each strategy, see Brown and Levinson's 1987 book, *Politeness Some Universals in Language Usage,* pages 103-129.
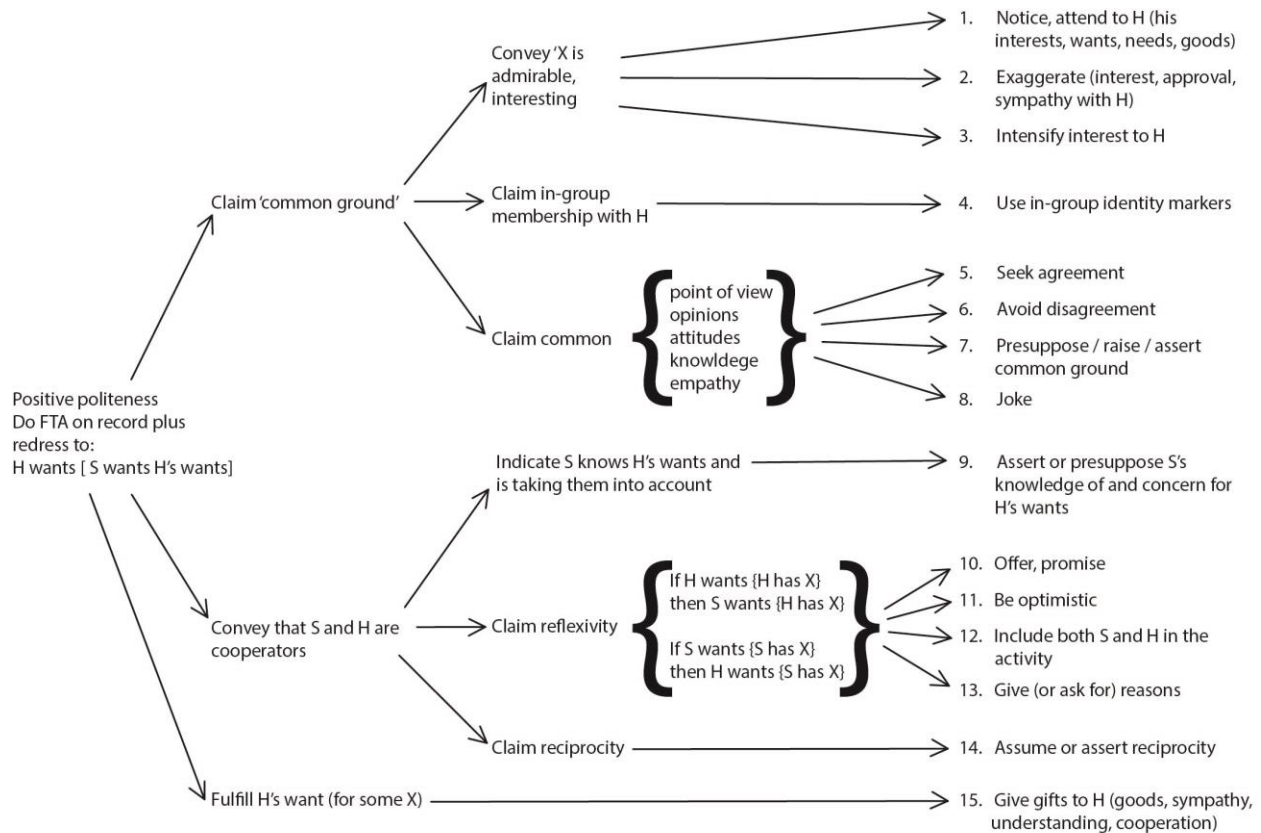
Figure 1.2: Positive politeness strategies flow chart[7]

Positive politeness is versatile because it allows for the wide address of the positive face,

even beyond the specific face need of the hearer's wants being desired and accepted. In fact, it

can include address of the actual face threat act and the imposition caused by the act directly. Or

positive politeness can attend to the hearer's positive face by employing strategies to include or

relate to the hearer themselves. This attends to the positive face by conveying the speaker's

acceptance of the hearer, and thus the want of their positive face. In contrast, negative politeness

is limited to addressing only the imposition created by the FTA. This is because **negative**

politeness attends to the negative face, and negative face refers to an individual's want to be

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[7] Figure recreated from Brown and Levinson, 1987, page 102. "H" refers to the hearer, and "S" refers to the speaker in a communication exchange.

independent, respected, and unhampered by others. This want cannot be indirectly attended to in the same way that the want of the positive face can be. Negative politeness is precise and concentrated.[8]

Negative politeness is the type of politeness that most individuals in a Western culture classically think of when they hear the word polite. It is often, but not exclusively, the strategies that fill books on etiquette and manners. The linguistic strategies of negative politeness are more traditional; they include "conventional indirectness, hedges on illocutionary force, polite pessimism (about the success of requests, etc.), [and] the emphasis on [the hearer's] relative power" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 130). All of these seek to convey to the hearer that the speaker sees the hearer's negative face wants and plans to not (or if so, only marginally) hinder the hearer's freedom.

Within this category of politeness, there is, however, an internal struggle. The speaker desires to commit the FTA off record because this would minimize the imposition of the act and give the hearer an "out." In contrast is the desire to do the act on record. This internal struggle often results in the strategy of conventional indirectness. This allows the speaker to redress the hearer's negative face on record and in the same message acknowledge their own want to go off record. An example of this conventional indirectness might be the following statement: "Can you please pass the salt?"[9] This question is not meant as an inquiry about the hearer's ability to lift the salt shaker and pass it. Rather it is an indirect request that the salt be passed. Conventionally indirect messages are contextually explicit and unmistakable, but this contextual meaning is in opposition to the words' actual denotative meaning. By encrypting both of the speaker's wants

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[8] Brown and Levinson correspond negative politeness to Durkheim's negative rites, rituals of avoidance (1915).
[9] Example taken from Brown and Levinson 1987. For an expanded examination of conventional indirectness, see Brown and Levinson's 1987 book, *Politeness Some Universals in Language Usage,* pages 132-144.

into the message, the speaker, in part, effectively addresses both. In the same stroke, the speaker

has completed a ritualistic nod to the speaker's negative face by bothering to phrase the message

indirectly. This internal struggle can be witnessed in Figure 1.3, strategy 1.
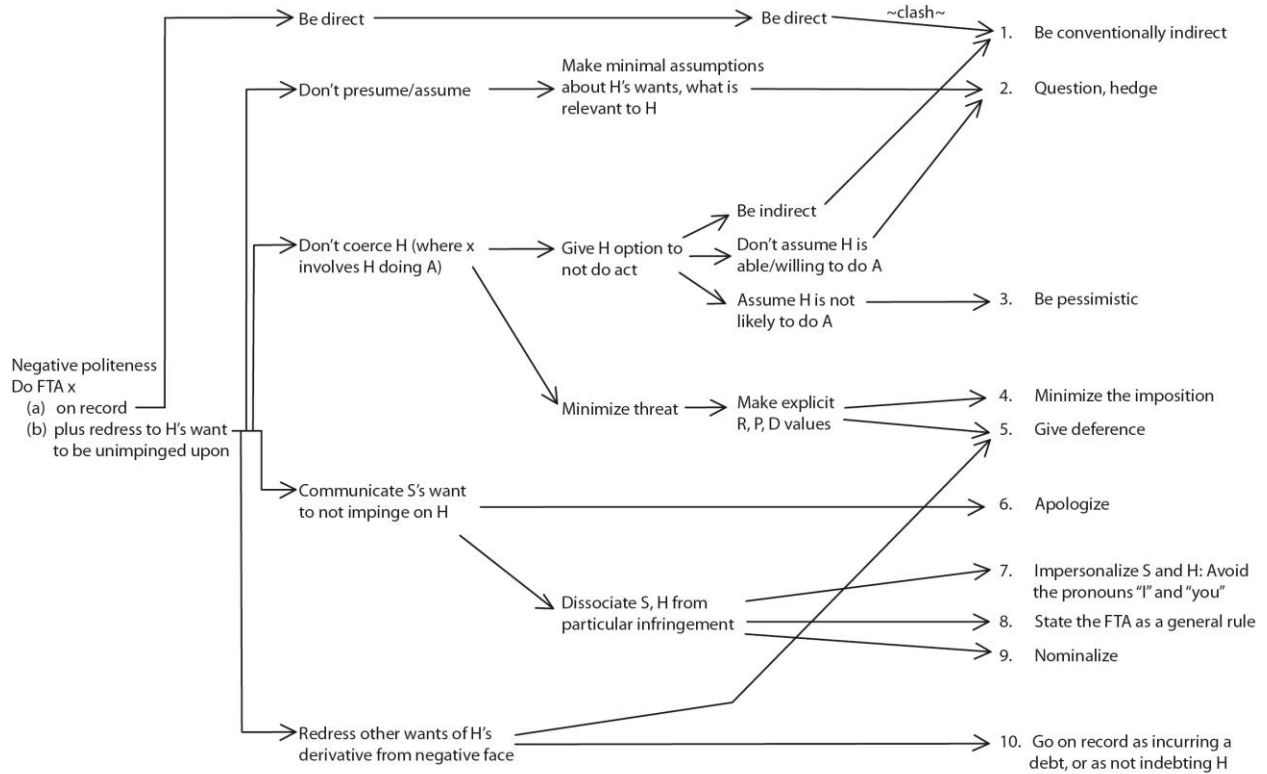
Figure 1.3: Negative politeness strategies flow chart[10]

Like their positive counterparts, negative politeness strategies also have functions beyond

strictly conveying politeness. The antithesis of positive politeness, negative strategies can act as

social distancers. The same strategies used to be classically polite can also be used to slow down

the course of social interactions that seem to be gaining momentum. They can be employed to

create social distance between individuals. For example, hedging to avoid sharing and

connecting with someone.

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[10] Figure recreated from Brown and Levinson, 1987, page 131. "H" refers to the hearer, and "S" refers to the speaker in a communication exchange. Respectively, "R", "P", and "D" represent the rank of imposition, the relative power, and the social distance.

There are two distinct factors that determine how individuals navigate these four categories of politeness strategy. Brown and Levinson propose that their model person would choose the same type of strategies in equivalent circumstances. They take this as far as supposing that real (that is to say, human) rational persons would, in given circumstances, all choose the same type of strategy. The two factors of determination in these situations are the payoff of a strategy and the circumstance in which the strategy will be employed. Certain strategies have certain ramifications. In the case of choosing a politeness strategy, these would be positive payoffs or advantages. Some advantages will be more beneficial in certain situations over others. The payoff is weighted with the circumstance, which is calculated by three factors: the mutually understood social distance between participants, the relative power that each individual possesses within the relationship, and the culturally understood ranking of the imposition. The payoff of a strategy and the circumstance in which it would need to be employed work together to determine the specific strategy chosen.

A number of scholars have researched politeness strategies used in specific circumstances. A more specific area of interest in the field includes examining one or more of the three factors by which the payoff is calculated together with the circumstance, those being social distance, relative power, and rank of imposition. Beyond this, other areas of politeness theory have been examined through a variety of lenses. A full review of the relevant literature on Politeness Theory follows.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory has been called "the most influential and most debated model of politeness to date" (Armaşu, 2012). It has been met with critical acclaim, but also significant criticism. Most notably, this disapproval is in critique of its claim of universality (Blum-Kulka, 1987; Blum-Kulka, 1990; Clancy, 1986; Gu, 1990; Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1988; Pan, 2000; Pan, 2011). While Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that their model could be applied regardless of cultures or languages, a major criticism of the theory is that it "invokes a Western-centric bias towards the Anglo-Saxon Culture" (Al-Hindawi, 2016).

Due in part to this criticism and others, many alternative theories of (im)politeness have emerged in the time since Brown and Levinson's publication (Blum-Kulka, Danet, & Gherson, 1985; Blum-Kulka, 1987, 1990; Eelen, 2001; Fraser, 1990; Gu, 1990; Ide, 1989; Janney and Arndt, 1992; Kasper, 1990; Locher, 2004, 2006; Locher and Watts, 2005; Mao, 1994; Mills, 2003; Watts, 2003, 2005). These alternative approaches vary; however, "one of the most coherent challenges" (Haugh, 2007) to Brown and Levinson's theory is a discursive approach to politeness analysis (Locher, 2004, 2006; Locher and Watts, 2005; Watts, 2003, 2005). The discursive approach is comprehensive, but the essential difference is its focus on discourse, specifically the entire communication process including the hearer's decoding, and subsequent interpretation, of a speaker's message as a marker of politeness or the need thereof (Al-Hindawi, 2016; Watts, 2003).

Because the present research will examine speaker intent and not the hearer's decoding and interpretation, the research will utilize Brown and Levinson's politeness theory as opposed to taking a discursive analysis approach.

Politeness theory examines politeness within communication exchanges between individuals. These individuals can be in a variety of relationships. There are two types of relationships which have warranted significant politeness study. The first is a dyadic relationship in which there an unbalance of power between the individuals; that is, one individual holds more power than the other. Second is interpersonal relationships. Notable these two areas of study correspond with the variables of face work in Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory: social distance, relative power, and rank of imposition.

Power Imbalance

When faced with an interaction with another with whom there is a power imbalance, individuals often employed politeness strategies to help mitigate the threats to both their own face and that of the other dyadic member. Students within teacher/student relationships employed both positive and negative politeness in attempt to reduce affronts to both faces at play (Najeeb, Maros, & Mohd Nor, 2012; Elmianvari and Kheirabadi, 2013). Students engaged politeness strategies, but also valued them. Teachers who engaged in linguistic politeness when communicating via e-mail with their students established stronger trust ties with those students (Lam, 2011). However, politeness extended beyond relational aspects into actual message decoding and understanding. When feedback on a lesson was provided politely (as opposed to direct feedback, without regard to face), students with lesser prior knowledge of a subject tested better on that subject in subsequent understanding checks. Even when attempting to be direct, individuals with greater power, and thus knowledge, may feel the need to engage politeness strategies to mitigate their feedback (Brummernhenrich & Jucks, 2013). This need to mitigate comes with an understanding of the power imbalance. High power individuals with a self-awareness of the imbalance mitigated their criticism more often than high power individuals

without a self-awareness; however, regardless of self-awareness, high power dyadic members employed positive politeness strategies in attempt to lessen the facial repercussions for the low power member when they were aware of the state of the knowledge level of the low power member (Nobarany and Booth, 2015).

A strong and growing subset of the study of power imbalance explores the impact of message delivery channel, particularly Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), on politeness strategy. In fact, in 2010, the *Journal of Politeness Research* devoted an entire edition to the focus of computer mediated communication (CMC) and politeness. While any CMC is an opportunity for misunderstandings and facial affronts, traditional CMC, e-mail, affords students and teachers a prime opportunity. For this reason, students utilize both positive and negative politeness strategies in attempts to ensure their message is conveyed without imposition (Elmianvari & Kheirabadi, 2013; Najeeb et. al, 2012). Engaging in politeness helps build trust in situations like these (Lam, 2011).

Online tutors tended to employ politeness strategies to alleviate the directness of their feedback (Brummernhenrich & Jucks, 2013); A tutor's politeness could mean the difference between understanding a concept or not grasping it for some knowledge levels (McLaren, DeLeeuw, & Mayer, 2011). This has real ramifications because many types of instructional methods can be construed as face threatening to the receiver of the message (Brummernhenrich & Jucks, 2016).

The knowledge of politeness in power relationships extends beyond academia. Politeness has been scrutinized in workplace power distance relationships (Feeney & Bonnefon, 2013; Valde & Miller Henningsen, 2015), doctor/patient dichotomies (Bonnefon & Villejoubert, 2006; Pighin & Bonnefon, 2011), and sales negotiations (Ames & Mason, 2015), among others. Even

children learn early in their lives that, depending on who hold the power in a relationship, they may need to adjust how they make their requests in order to get what they desire (Yupin, 2017).

This type of research does not trend towards either a hearer or speaker research perspective. Both are represented. That is to also say, there is not a prevalent tendency towards the study of either the higher or lower power wielding individual with in the dyadic.

Interpersonal

The second relationship prone to prevalent study is interpersonal. This field has, also, been studied from both a speaker and a hearer perspective with no substantial tilt in either direction. Interpersonal relationships include, but are not limited to, friends, work or school peers, and romantic relationships.

One politeness strategy examined at length in an interpersonal setting is the use of linguistic markers to communicate politeness or hedge information. While the speaker may intend to use a linguistic marker, like verbal probabilities (saying "likely" when it is only "possible") or numerical probabilities (percentages, chance ratio, degree of certainty), as a hedging device thus employing politeness theory, the hearer may interpret this politeness as an actual indicator of likelihood or positive face work strategy (Sirota & Juanchich, 2012; Juanchich & Sirota, 2013). In communication situations, individuals must rely on contextual variables to cue them to understand or recognize when these politeness strategies are being deployed (Park, 2008).

It is the verbal choices in these situations that can act as politeness and/or provide those contextual clues. For example, the use of modal expressions (words such as can, may, could, should) can add to the politeness perceived in a situation; however, those verbal expressions may not necessarily add to the context or make the communication act more effective (Johnson,

2008). Politeness is tricky in this way. Speakers may choose to utilize a politeness strategy at the cost of the actual communicated message (Sirota & Juanchich, 2015), for example, employing word choice in order to minimize the impact or probability of a piece of information, or they may opt to avoid the entire communication goal at its face value, i.e. avoiding open refusal, that is attempting to convey "no" without actually stating "no" (Mashiri, 2009). When confronting another in an interpersonal relationship, individuals employ bald on record, off record, and, even, mix strategies to create hybrid politeness strategies to communicate their intended message (Miller-Ott & Kelly, 2017). Again, CMC adds another twist to this literature, Responses to face threats vary across platforms. When being face threatened on social media, men and women responded in different ways and to different extents (Chen & Abedin, 2014).

There is a small amount of literature related to romantic relationships in particular. Romantic relationships have been examined with the lens of uncertainty reduction theory finding that individual's politeness strategies could not be predicted based on their level of relational uncertainty within a romantic relationship (Knobloch, Satterlee, & DiDomenico). Additionally, politeness theory has been examined using in-depth retrospective interviews; in which, the politeness strategies utilized by women during their first sexual intercourse experience were analyzed (Parker, Ivanov, & Cohen, 2016).

Politeness Theory has been explored in both power and interpersonal relationships. However, within interpersonal research there is a significant hole in the body of literature: committed romantic relationships. There is a lack of study of these types of relationships not only in communication research, but also in the many other fields of study in which Politeness Theory is often examined. To fill this void, this study will explore politeness strategies of people

in committed romantic relationships. Specifically, the researcher will look at trends in age (Park, 2008; Yupin, 2017) and gender (Chen & Abedin, 2014), divisions with limited previous investigation.

According to Brown and Levinson's theory, the payoff of a strategy and the circumstances in which it will be employed work together to decide which strategy a person will use. This research will focus mainly on the circumstance half of Brown and Levinson's process for deciding strategy. Circumstance, as they define it, is assessed based on three factors: social distance, relative power, and rank of imposition. The interplay of these three factors form the foundation of this research. This study will explore how couples in committed romantic relationships (creating little social distance) are influenced by how they were raised in relation to gender norms/expectations (establishing relative power) and values (impacting rank of imposition). Couples in committed, romantic relationships have little social distance and are influenced by this close relationship when communicating with their partner. For the purposes of this study, the researcher also assumes that males and females are raised differently and how an individual is raised influences how they perceive circumstances requiring politeness. Furthermore, the power an individual understands themselves to hold in a relationship may vary based on the gender they were raised as. Additionally, the values in which they were raised in will affect the order in which they rank impositions.

In light these presuppositions and the above outlined understanding of the study of politeness theory and strategies, the researcher proposed the following:

RQ1: How are the politeness strategies used by individuals who have shorter experience in romantic relationships different from those who have longer experience in romantic relationships?

RQ2: How are the politeness strategies men and women use in romantic relationships different?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Overview

A quantitative survey was conducted in conjunction with the Elliott School of Communication at Wichita State University. The research attempted to quantify the types of politeness used by individuals utilizing a 2x4 design with both between- and within-subjects factors. Participants' gender and length of relationship experience were between-subjects factors. Politeness strategies were within-subjects factors. Separate mixed ANOVAs were conducted for length of relationship (RQ1) and gender (RQ2). Each test was conducted on two scenarios.

Procedure

Taking place online, the survey began by obtaining informed consent. Participants then progressed through survey questions designed to understand their politeness strategy preferences and their relationship with politeness in a romantic, interpersonal context. The questions, two scenarios, proceeded in a non-priming method. After completing the related survey questions, participants were prompted to answer closing demographic questions. For a full list of survey questions, see Appendix A.

Measurement

Politeness strategy preference was measured utilizing two scenarios. After each scenario, participants were shown four possible politeness strategies, one representative for each of the four types of politeness: positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record and off record. They rated their likelihood of engaging in each strategy on a five-point scale. The 5-point likelihood scale ranged from "I would never do this" to "I would definitely do this."

The approach of using two scenarios was chosen in an effort to head off potential weakness in data gathering. This weakness would have stemmed from the fact that there are a variety of specific strategies that fall under each category of politeness strategies. The different scenarios served to double check that the integrity of the politeness strategy is favored as opposed to the specific tactic chosen.

Following this and closing out the survey, participants were asked several demographic questions. These included gender, age, ethnicity, and level of education. Questions about their relationship experience were also asked in this section. Participants denoted their relationship status, the length of their current romantic relationship, and the length of their longest romantic relationship.

Participants

Participants were recruited using Amazon's online labor service, Mechanical Turk, through which they were financially compensated $0.75.[11] Mechanical Turk is a reliable resource for participant recruitment in academic research (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011).

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[11] See Appendix B for the recruitment script utilized on Mechanical Turk. Funding provided via Wichita State University Elliott School of Communication's Basic Course Fund.

Participants[12,13] ($N = 563$) ranged in age from 19 to 77 years of age ($M = 35.45$, $SD = 10.82$). The majority of respondents were white[14] ($n = 442$); other ethnic backgrounds were present, as well, including Asian[15], black[16], and Latino[17]. Other ethnic groups were combined.[18] Participants' genders were evenly distributed across male ($n = 286$) and female ($n = 274$), with a few selecting other or opting not to disclose[19] ($n = 3$). More than half had completed a bachelor's degree ($n = 244$) or coursework beyond that ($n = 59$).

Because this research centered around interpersonal romantic relationships, participants were asked to declare their current relationship status. Both single ($n = 147$) and committed ($n = 404$) participants took part in this survey.[20] Respondents included individuals who had never been in a relationship before ($n = 7$) and many veterans to relationships, with the longest relationship articulated in the data set at 45 years ($M = 100.28$, $SD = 93.66$).

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[12] This sample size is within the researcher's goal sample size ($N = 500$-600). The literature review did not allow for adequate information to calculate a specific sample size goal. However, Chen and Abedin (2014) found a moderate significant effect in their study involving gender. An educated guess would hypothesize that the effect size when examining politeness in regard to individuals' length in relationships would be smaller. Because of this, a healthy goal sample size was determined ideal.

[13] Initial sample size ($N = 614$) was larger. Participants were excluded when responses to the key variable of the length of their longest relationship was unclear. For example, inputs made up of a singular number (such as 8) with no clear indication of months or years and no clear cue (such as age) to indicate what was meant were excluded. There were four dates inputted that pointed to dates in the 1930s and 1940s, which according to participants' age, could not be anniversary dates. These were excluded. Additionally, when two numbers were given (such as 32/5) that could not match the requested format of months/years.

[14] Participants were given a fill in the blank. Reponses coded as white include, but are not limited to: white, Caucasian, Anglo, European, Italian, Swedish, and notably Aryan, among others.

[15] Participants were given a fill in the blank. Responses coded as Asian include, but are not limited to: Chinese, Asian, Asian-American, East Asia, Korea, Viet, and Vietnamese.

[16] Participants were given a fill in the blank. Responses coded as black include African-American and black.

[17] Participants were given a fill in the blank. Responses coded as Latino include: Cuban, Puerto Rico, Latino, and Hispanic.

[18] Other categories of ethnicity include multi-ethnic and unknown. Responses coded as multi-ethnic include, but are not limited to: mixed, multiracial, biracial, black/white, white/Hispanic, and white/Arab. The latter of which is solely comprised of participants whose responses included American, USA, and one "male."

[19] The goal sample sizes for gender was a 30-70 (or less) split in either direction, as Chen and Abedin (2014) were not hindered by the uneven gender distribution of their participants.

[20] Other options included widow/widower ($n = 3$) and other ($n = 9$).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

RQ1 sought to shed light on how politeness strategies used by individuals who are early on in a romantic relationship differ from those who have had more experience in romantic relationships. For the variable of length of participants' longest relationship, responses were recoded into short-term and long-term relationships. [21] A mixed ANOVA[22] with strategy type as the within-subjects factor and length of their longest relationship as between-subjects factor was run for both the mechanic scenario, $F (2.80, 1565.08) = 2.16$, $p = .095$ and the errand scenario, $F (2.97, 1664.76) = .38$, $p = .765$.[23] These tests illustrated that there was not a statistically significant difference in the politeness strategies utilized by individuals with experience in short-term relationships and individuals with experience in long-term relationships. See Appendix C, Table 1 for a listing of means and standard deviations. Within both scenarios, a mixed ANOVA confirmed no interaction between length of relationship and preference of politeness strategy.

RQ2 sought to understand how politeness strategies used by males and females differed. A mixed ANOVA with strategy type as the within-subjects factor and gender as between-subjects factor showed varied results dependent on the scenario. For the mechanic scenario, a small significant difference was found with a very small effect size, $F (2.81, 1562.30) = 4.967$, p

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[21] Murray, Sutherland, and Milhausen (2012) define a long-term relationship as 2.5 years or more. This demarcation was utilized in the recoding.

[22] Typically, an ANOVA requires scale level data. However, because the goal was to test repeated measure and group difference, an ANOVA test was used. The ordinal data was simply treated as scale. This predicament was addressed in the crafting of the survey, but the researcher was not confident that individuals would be able to place their likelihood of utilizing a certain politeness strategy on a 0-100 scale so Likert labels were chosen to make the variable more meaningful.

[23] Mauchly's Test of Sphericity indicated the need for a Huynh-Feldt correction. Stated results reflect this.

= .003, η^2 = .01.[24] A small interaction was confirmed between gender and the preference of politeness strategy in this scenario. Men responded with a higher likelihood to utilize off record strategies while women showed a higher likelihood to select a bald on record strategy. For the errand scenario, there was not a statistically significant difference in the politeness strategies utilized by males and females, F (2.97, 1654.42) = .513, p = .67.[25] See Appendix D, Table 2, for a listing of means and standard deviations.

While only one of the original research questions proved statistically significant by a small partial interaction, the main effect of the politeness strategy type was statistically significant in both the mechanic scenario when examined by length of relationship experience and gender, respectively, F (2.80, 1565.08) = 170.14, p = .000, η^2 = .23 and F (2.81, 1562.30) = 314.84, p = .000, η^2 = .36 and the errand scenario when examined by length of relationship experience and gender, respectively, F (2.97, 1664.76) = 83.02, p = .000, η^2 = .13 and F (2.97, 1654.42) = 137.34, p = .000, η^2 = .20.[26] In this case, the main effect is more powerful than the significant interaction. The mean for the politeness strategies when selected in the mechanic scenario both by length and gender emerged in the following order: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off record. For a listing of means and standard deviations, see Appendix E. The mean for the politeness strategies when selected in the errand scenario both by length and gender emerged in the following order: bald on record, negative politeness, off record, positive politeness. For a listing of means and standard deviations, see Table 3 in Appendix E.

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[24] Mauchly's Test of Sphericity indicated the need for a Huynh-Feldt correction. Stated results reflect this.
[25] Mauchly's Test of Sphericity indicated the need for a Huynh-Feldt correction. Stated results reflect this.
[26] Mauchly's Test of Sphericity indicated the need for a Huynh-Feldt correction. Stated results reflect this.

For each ANOVA a pairwise comparison was run, as well. Within the comparison of the mechanic scenario with length of total relationship experience, each politeness strategy option (positive politeness, negative politeness, off record, and bald on record) was statistically significantly different from each of the other strategies. The same is true within the comparison of the mechanic scenario and gender. This changed, however, with the errand scenario. Within the comparison of the errand scenario and length of total relationship experience, all politeness strategy options were statistically significant different from each of the other strategies except negative politeness and off record ($p = 1.000$). The same is true within the comparison of the errand scenario and gender ($p = 1.000$).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Analysis

These quantitative results indicate that there is no clear indication of a vast difference in the type of politeness individuals use in romantic interpersonal scenarios across individuals' gender or length of relationship. This thesis set out to shed light on the circumstances in which Politeness Theory is employed. The factors of gender and relationship experience were investigated as a means to a pre-establishment of relative power and estimated rank of imposition, respectively, within romantic relationships. This research attempted to quantify these two big picture elements of circumstance in order to expand the understanding of Politeness Theory. According to Brown and Levinson, these two elements, along with their third counterpart, social distance (which was implied by the context of the study), play a key role in the dictation of circumstances that determine politeness strategies (1987); however, the politeness strategies chosen do not significantly differ across either gender or relationship experience length.

An interaction with a small effect size was found in the examination of gender and politeness strategy choice within one of the two scenarios. No other interaction effects were found. There are several possibilities as to why the interaction exists in just one scenario and only for gender. First, the interaction was found in the mechanic scenario, which could have been interpreted as a gendered scenario. In contrast to this, there is also the possibility that the scenario was easily accessible to individuals. If this is the case, then due to the polarization of the cultural stereotypes surrounding men and women's interactions with mechanics (men being expected to take care of their own care and women being targets of mechanics seeking to take

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advantage of a nativity) there is no universal way to interpret the scenario. This could have caused the interaction to be present in one scenario and not in the other, where interpretation may have been more collectively understood. Turning the examination to the types of politeness strategies yields less commentary as to the cause because despite the partial interaction, bald on record strategies were most popular for both men and women in the scenario in question.

While the answers to both research questions, which sought to identify how politeness strategies interacted with the two variables tested, is only limited partial interaction, the survey did find identifiable tendencies in popularity of strategies. In examining how participants ranked their likelihood to utilize a specific strategy, there was a statistically significant difference in the preference participants displayed toward different strategies in regard to their likelihood of use. In both scenarios, across both independent variables, bald on record politeness strategies were statistically identified as a strategy type that people were more likely to use more often.

Limitations

The research conducted within this thesis was not without limitations. Surveys, along with other types of both quantitative and qualitative research, are subject to what has come to be an innate pressure; that is, individuals want to act (and thus, answer) in a socially desirable way. In social science research, this is often called a social desirability bias. While there is no way to know if the participants of this survey felt truly free to answer without this self-monitored restraint, the propensity of participants of any type of research to answer in a way that they feel is socially acceptable must be acknowledged. Because this social desirability bias is a present issue in society, academic research often seeks to extensively study topics in an effort to create a well-rounded, unbiased understanding of the topic. As outlined in the literature review, there is limited research on Politeness Theory in interpersonal, committed romantic relationships. The

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lack of a significant body of research surrounding the topic in question is a limitation in itself. Exploratory study, while wide open, comes with an inherent limitation.

Although the rankings of politeness strategies under the two presented scenarios did allow for significant insights, the use and design of these two specific hypothetical situations could have limited the study. This is not to say that either were flawed or that there should have been more than two scenarios, simply, that the only way to know if other scenarios would produce more detailed results would be to test other scenarios. Furthermore, asking people to purposefully think about their handling of these specific situations, through the lens of politeness, could have had ramifications in the quality of data gathered. This would be because it is likely that most individuals would not have approached that situation in real life with politeness as a forethought; many people do not consciously articulate politeness, but rather, it is simply a natural communication progression for them. Orientating participants to politeness prior to the scenarios could have set them up to potentially fall into the social desirability bias as politeness is a socially desirable quality.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

While it would seem that the obvious hope is that individuals learn and adapt over time within their relationships, this research would suggest that, at least when it comes to politeness, approaches are ingrained to such a point that these adaptations do not happen. With little to no tendencies emerging within type of politeness used across genders or length of relationship, several questions emerge for future study.

In the spirit of expanding the understanding of circumstances determining politeness, adapting and expanding this study into qualitative research would allow for a different perspective. Future study of this topic should include qualitative research as it is a method rich in emphasis on storytelling and understanding or commenting on "the why" of behavior. Qualitative research should be conducted both independently and in conjunction with the continuation of this project specifically. The researcher would recommend utilizing a qualitative research method, such as focus groups, to delve into polite circumstances as a preliminary examination by which to craft the quantitative survey scenarios used in the extension of this research.

In extending this project, future research should include an investigation of gendered scenarios. While the scenarios utilized in this study were not constructed to be gendered, it did emerge that they could have been interpreted in that manner, with mechanic work being a typically masculine realm of household management and errand-running a typical feminine role. This gendering of circumstances could be leaned into in future research, crafting scenarios to test politeness strategies in typically gendered settings and surveying genders in their respective

scenarios. Additionally, future study could include a measurement of intimacy, that is to say social distance, within a romantic relationship to be cross analyzed with further findings on gender and/or relationship experience.

In the quest to understand this theory more, another communication theory comes to mind. Within Communication Accommodations Theory is the principle of convergence. Convergence refers to the accommodation or adaptation of an individual's communication to match others' communication behavior (West & Turner 2018). However, in regards to face, it would seem that the politeness facet of communication is not as pliable as other, more general applications of communication behavior. People do theoretically tend to adapt their communication style (linguistics, identifiers, nonverbals, etc.), yet in the light of politeness, and the scenarios of this research specifically, this theory would not seem to apply. There is not an accommodation happening. It appears individuals are not adapting the politeness of their communication as they acquire more experience within a relationship. Hypothetically, more experience would lend itself to a savviness about relationships. Yet, this research suggests that expression of politeness is more so ingrained with either (a) contexts and circumstances determined from more superficial, possibly contextual, factors or (b) circumstances irrelevant in the larger scale and politeness simply being ingrained either from nature or nurture scenarios. Future research should examine this.

If in fact, individuals' politeness is not based in circumstantial factors, but rather embedded in who they are, what does this mean for the classic tropes held within society? The first of which that comes to mind is the idea that after establishing a romantic relationship, an individual will change or mold their significant other for the better. Reminiscent of the good girl falling for the mysterious bad boy with the hope of changing him, this trope holds to the idea that

people can elicit change from their significant other over time. However, when it comes to

politeness, the data of this research would stand in contradiction to this idea. It simply is not

happening. As mentioned above, Communication Accommodation Theory illustrates that people

do adapt their communication style for social means, but this is likely not the case when it comes

to politeness. People simply continue approaching politeness in the way they always have.

Whether this is dictated by the way they were raised or an innate ingraining of personality is

unknown.

A second trope commonly accepted in our society is the distinctive, essential differences

in male and female communication styles. Women are often typecast as overly and

accommodatingly polite, whereas men are portrayed as rough-edged straight shooters. And yet,

there was only a partial interaction between the politeness strategies selected by men and

women. So where did this typecast come from? Is society adhering to an antiquated

understanding of gender roles?[27] Not only do the politeness strategies chosen by men and women

not meaningfully differ, they actually align. Both men and women chose bald on record

politeness as the strategy they would be most likely to use in either scenario. This means that, at

least in the narrowness of politeness, there is a significant commonality in the communication

styles of men and women. This merits further inquiry. With face a common theme in

intercultural theory, this could vary across culture rather than gender.

While the understanding of politeness in the realm of academia has become so much

more than etiquette and manners, in some ways it is just those things. There are different types of

politeness, and in the average individual, manners become ingrained from a young age. Yet, this

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[27] While great strides are being made in tearing down antiquated gender roles, a quick glance at the literature of gender and society would reveal that the answer is yes, in many arenas, society is still adhering to antiquated gender roles. However, that is beyond the scope of this study.

research would suggest that it is not just the push to be polite that is ingrained, but also an element of the specific strategical approach individuals take to being polite that seems to be deep rooted, as well. Common pieces of relationship advice often focus on changing the relationship itself, but what if the real "secret" to a relationship does not involve changing the relationship itself at all? It is a great hope that individuals change as their relationship savviness grows, but from this data, it is much more likely that the real key to a good, long-term relationship is a level of self-awareness for both halves of the couple and a healthy cognizance of a significant other's politeness pattern paired with a willingness to adapt.

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APPENDIXES

1. Consider the following scenario between you and your romantic partner: Your partner picked out a vehicle and purchased it. The mechanic you hired to examine the new purchase found some issues that could potentially make the vehicle unsafe, but you won't know for sure until next week when the mechanic has more time to examine the vehicle. Rate the likelihood of you using the following methods when telling your partner what the mechanic has just told you:

    a. Be optimistic, emphasize that this is a worst-case scenario and that you don't even know if there is really an issue yet.

        i. I would never do this.

        ii. I would rarely consider this approach.

        iii. I sometimes might consider this approach.

        iv. I would often consider this approach.

        v. I would definitely do this.

    b. Be unassuming, speak of the mechanics assessment in unsure terms. Example: "I guess the mechanic might have found an issue."

        i. I would never do this.

        ii. I would rarely consider this approach.

        iii. I sometimes might consider this approach.

        iv. I would often consider this approach.

        v. I would definitely do this.

    c. Be informative, convey just the information that the mechanic told you.

        i. I would never do this.

       ii. I would rarely consider this approach.

     iii. I sometimes might consider this approach.

     iv. I would often consider this approach.

      v. I would definitely do this.

d. Be vague, understate the potential issue and leave out details. Example: "There might be something wrong with the car, but the mechanic isn't sure. It might be nothing."

        i. I would never do this.

       ii. I would rarely consider this approach.

     iii. I sometimes might consider this approach.

     iv. I would often consider this approach.

      v. I would definitely do this.

2. Consider the following scenario involving you and your romantic partner: You need your partner to run an errand for you that you will not have time for today. It will take a little bit of time and possibly interrupt your partner's day, but it needs to be done. Rate the likelihood of you using the following methods when asking your partner to run the errand:

a. Be optimistic during your request. Example: "You have free time this afternoon to help me out by running an errand, right?"

        i. I would never do this.

       ii. I would rarely consider this approach.

     iii. I sometimes might consider this approach.

     iv. I would often consider this approach.

     v. I would definitely do this.

b. Minimize the request. Example: "I was just curious if you could run this little errand for me in your free time this afternoon."

     i. I would never do this.

     ii. I would rarely consider this approach.

     iii. I sometimes might consider this approach.

     iv. I would often consider this approach.

     v. I would definitely do this.

c. Be straightforward. Example: "I will not have time to run this errand this afternoon. Do you have time this afternoon?"

     i. I would never do this.

     ii. I would rarely consider this approach.

     iii. I sometimes might consider this approach.

     iv. I would often consider this approach.

     v. I would definitely do this.

d. Feel out the situation. Example: "What does your afternoon look like?"

     i. I would never do this.

     ii. I would rarely consider this approach.

     iii. I sometimes might consider this approach.

     iv. I would often consider this approach.

v. I would definitely do this.

3. What is your gender?

    a. Female

    b. Male

    c. Other

4. How old are you? _____

5. What is your relationship status?

    a. Single

    b. In a committed relationship

    c. Widow/widower

    d. Other

6. If you are in a current relationship: Taking into consideration the time since you have considered your relationship to be serious, how long have you been in the relationship? (if married, include dating time as well) ___ mo/yr

7. What is the longest romantic relationship you have been in? ___ mo/yr

8. What is your ethnicity? _____

9. Select which best describes your level of education:

    a. Less than a high school degree

    b. A high school diploma or GED

    c. Some college, but no bachelor's degree

    d. Bachelor's degree

    e. Coursework beyond a bachelor's degree

APPENDIX B

MECHANICAL TURK RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

We are conducting an academic survey about politeness in romantic relationships. We wish to

understand your behavior in interactions. Participants should have experience romantic

relationships. Select the link below to complete the survey. At the end of the survey you will

code in order to receive credit for taking our survey.

TABLE 1: RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCE (RQ1) MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

	SHORT TERM RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCE	
	Mechanic Scenario	*Errand Scenario*
POSITIVE POLITENESS	3.34 (1.11)	2.57 (1.08)
NEGATIVE POLITENESS	2.68 (1.01)	3.28 (1.18)
BALD ON RECORD	3.97 (1.07)	3.83 (0.89)
OFF RECORD	2.43 (1.12)	3.12 (1.14)

	LONG TERM RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCE	
	Mechanic Scenario	*Errand Scenario*
POSITIVE POLITENESS	3.22 (1.14)	2.67 (1.15)
NEGATIVE POLITENESS	2.61 (1.14)	3.36 (1.08)
BALD ON RECORD	4.23 (0.92)	3.95 (1.01)
OFF RECORD	2.42 (1.18)	3.36 (1.17)

Note: Likert scale response options were (1) I would never do this, (2) I would rarely consider this approach, (3) I sometimes might consider this approach, (4) I would often consider this approach, (5) I would definitely consider this approach.

APPENDIX D

TABLE 2: GENDER (RQ2) MAIN EFFECT MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

	FEMALE	
	Mechanic Scenario	*Errand Scenario*
POSITIVE POLITENESS	3.25 (1.18)	2.66 (1.14)
NEGATIVE POLITENESS	2.63 (1.19)	3.42 (1.07)
BALD ON RECORD	4.36 (0.85)	4.01 (0.98)
OFF RECORD	2.34 (1.12)	3.34 (1.19)

	MALE	
	Mechanic Scenario	*Errand Scenario*
POSITIVE POLITENESS	3.24 (1.08)	2.63 (1.13)
NEGATIVE POLITENESS	2.61 (1.05)	3.28 (1.13)
BALD ON RECORD	4.03 (1.02)	3.86 (0.98)
OFF RECORD	2.49 (1.22)	3.29 (1.15)

Note: Likert scale response options were (1) I would never do this, (2) I would rarely consider this approach, (3) I sometimes might consider this approach, (4) I would often consider this approach, (5) I would definitely consider this approach.

APPENDIX E

TABLE 3: MAIN EFFECT MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

	MECHANIC SCENARIO		ERRAND SCENARIO	
	Length	*Gender*	*Length*	*Gender*
POSITIVE POLITENESS	3.28 (.06)	3.25 (.05)	2.62 (.06)	2.65 (.05)
NEGATIVE POLITENESS	2.64 (.06)	2.62 (.05)	3.32 (.06)	3.35 (.05)
BALD ON RECORD	4.10 (.05)	4.19 (.04)	3.89 (.05)	3.93 (.04)
OFF RECORD	2.42 (.06)	2.41 (.05)	3.24 (.06)	3.31 (.05)

Note: Likert scale response options were (1) I would never do this, (2) I would rarely consider this approach, (3) I sometimes might consider this approach, (4) I would often consider this approach, (5) I would definitely consider this approach.