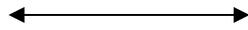# Saving Face
(Developed for the SF-IABC Diversity Event on 6-11-08)

What does saving face mean when looked at through both Eastern and Western lenses? What are the similarities and differences? Why are these important?

Below are a few general concepts that have some historical basis, though your personal experiences may differ, depending on many factors such as audience, issue, etc. These are meant only as starting points for discussion.

Eastern ⟷	Western
Concept of "face" is central to daily life and interactions with others. It can be compared with reputation or honor, but often goes much deeper. One can continually gain or lose face. **Extreme public humiliation can result in "permanent" shame or loss of face**.	**Concept of "face" is comparable to "reputation,"** but not typically central to daily life, except in cases of public figures, celebrities, certain professionals, or cultures.
Common in interdependent cultures, where honor and shame play a significant role in daily interactions. **Directly saying "No" or "I disagree" is usually avoided at all costs.**	Common in independent culture, where direct communication – even during conflicts – is commonly valued and accepted. **Directly saying "No" or "I disagree" is common and accepted.**
Usual expectation is for people to give respect and honor colleagues in both public and often in private, even if you don't personally respect her/him. Public conflict resolution usually results in all parties losing face. **Example:** discovering an error or a problem during a meeting. Best to avoid commenting on the problem in public, except perhaps to give the person "hint" so s/he may discover her/his own error. **Conflicts are best discussed in private.**	**Public disagreements, conflicts, or pointing out errors can be acceptable, if done with respect.** Public conflict resolution may be viewed as a positive aspect of individualism, in which a person takes the initiative (gains 'face'). **Example:** discovering an error or a problem during a meeting. Pointing out a problem or error in public, with due respect, is fairly common and acceptable. **Emphasis on the spirit of producing the best possible end result or outcome.**
Recognition that our actions often impact many people, including: our selves, our family, coworkers, the CAIS community. In historical contexts, actions reflect on greater society: village, city, province, and ultimately, country, ethnicity.	**A person's actions reflect mostly on the individual**, with limited thought given to impact on family, coworkers, city, state, nation, ethnicity. Positive individual acts are often included in hierarchical systems of status and compensation.
Emphasis is on group collaboration, consensus, and harmony above individualism. **More "we" than "me."**	**Group work and individualism both valued and respected,** with "top honors" often going to the individual over the group.

Courtesy of:

~ Anthony Witte, 2008. Contact: justicedoit@gmail.com