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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The concept of "face" is not something new to Chinese culture, and has been researched by researchers and sociologists, notably Hsien-Chin Hu (1944), Erving Goffman (1967), and many others. This study aims to situate the Chinese concept of "face" in Singaporean Literature, and further examine the way two very different, yet equally significant, Singaporean texts explore the negative aspects of this cornerstone of Chinese culture.

For this study, two works of literature will be analysed, namely *Gone Case*, a novel written by Dave Chua in 1997, and *Normal*, a play written by Faith Ng in 2015. *Gone Case* won the Singapore Literature Prize Commendation Award, and has since been remade into a graphic novel and television series, both with the same name. *Gone C*ase centers on a 12 year old boy, Yong, through his Primary 6 year, as he deals with PSLE, friendship problems, and family issues. On the other hand, *Normal* is a relatively new work of literature, and it centers on two Secondary 5 girls, Ashley and Daphne, as they struggle to overcome the low expectations set for them by teachers and parents, and prove that they are not ordinary, or "normal".

What ties these apparently disparate texts together is what they reveal about "face" in Singaporean life. Both works emphasise the importance of maintaining "face" in Singaporean culture, and this is present in not only a school setting but also within the one's familial relationships and friendships. "Face" is not always mentioned explicitly, but it functions as a motivating factor for characters in both texts, to the extent of an unhealthy obsession, showing that "face" is an irreplaceable yet harmful part of Singaporean Chinese culture, which exists in the subconscious and conscious minds of Singaporean Chinese.

1.2 Rationale

It is not uncommon to hear phrases related to "face" in our daily lives as Singaporean Chinese, such as "gei mianzi" or "diu lian", and even when it is not explicitly mentioned, it is implicitly present in Chinese society. This can be seen in Bond's (1991) observations in Hong Kong, where he noticed that there was a "plethora of relationship politics in Chinese culture". In addition, when reading both texts, "face" was found to be a recurring theme that was portrayed negatively across both works, thus this sparked my interest in exploring the topic, especially due to its relevance to Singaporean society.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How does the fear of losing "face", from the perspectives of individuals and organisations, act as a motivation for characters in the texts, and how does the portrayal of the effects of "face" then differ between the two texts?

2. How does the social context in which the work is written, shape the portrayal of the effects of "face" in each text?

1.4 Thesis Statement

In *Gone Case*, which is an older novel, the maintenance of "face" is more important to the characters, and is done without questioning, owing to the more conservative views in the time period during which the novel was written and published. However, in *Normal*, the concept of "face" is more prominent as a motivating force, but "face" is also shown to be more harmful as the play is more recent and deviates from the traditional concept of "face". Comparing the two works, this could show that Singaporeans are less willing to sacrifice their well-being and relationships to maintain "face" as time goes on, and that the obsession with maintaining "face" is increasingly frowned upon.

1.5 Scope of Research

For this study, the novel *Gone Case*, and the script of *Normal* will be analysed. A recording of the play has also been obtained, to examine certain features that may not be as evident in the text, such as tone, or even backdrop and setting. The novel of *Gone Case* will be analysed, as it is more comprehensive than the other versions, which cut short and altered the original story, leaving out crucial scenes with potential for analysis. Besides this, the social era in which each text was written and set in will be researched on, so as to examine the effect social context has on the portrayal of "face".

1.6 Significance of Research

This study aims to chart new territory, as there are no scholarly articles on this research topic, and very little done on Singaporean Literature as a genre, particularly the works which will be analysed in this paper, which could be due to *Normal* being a new literary work, only being published in 2015. This study will also bridge the gap in existing scholarship, as although many experts have written about the concept of "face", even in Chinese culture, the concept of "face" has yet to be applied to Literature, specifically Singaporean Literature, and there has been little done on "face" in a Singaporean context.

1.7 Limitations

While this study aims to bring about a better understanding of "face" in the context of Singaporean Literature, it is not representative of the genre as a whole, as only 2 works will be analysed for this study, which is but a miniscule portion of the genre. Furthermore, the actions and motivations of characters in the works, are not representative of Singaporean society at large, as it is but a fictional work that simply reflects some aspects of Singaporean Chinese culture, neglecting the other races in Singapore's multiracial society.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 "Mianzi" and "Lian"

The basis of "face" in the East and the West are largely similar in their definitions of and concepts regarding "face", but Chinese culture provides a distinction between the two types of face (Hu, 1944), and this has to be taken into account when analysing the works, since they are written in a Singaporean Chinese context. This distinction between the worldly and moral reputations, allows more instances of "face" to be identified even when not mentioned explicitly, and provides additional insight when examining the texts.

"Face" in Chinese culture can be divided into two main categories, *mianzi* and *lian*, which are based off of different criteria. *Mianzi* is defined as reputation that is achieved through getting on in life, "through success and ostentation". (Hu, 1944) *Mianzi* is qualitative and quantitative. (Ho, 1976) *Mianzi* can be gained and lost, and the amount of *mianzi* someone has is a general function of their social status. *Mianzi* can also be further differentiated by that which one inherits or is given naturally, and that which is obtained through personal effort. Besides that, one's *mianzi* is dependent on those around them.

The other type of "face" is known as *lian*. *Lian* refers to the moral reputation that one has, and unlike *mianzi*, is not something that is gained, rather it is something which everyone is entitled to, simply by their membership in society, and it can also be lost. *Lian* acts as a social sanction that enforces and maintains moral standards, and this can be done both internally and externally. (Hu, 1944) There are many Chinese phrases which are related to this form of "face", such as *diu-lian*, which refers to the loss of one's "face" and is "a condemnation by the group of immoral or socially disagreeable behaviour". This consciousness that an "amorphous public" is watching and criticising one's every move, and the fear of losing one's "face", is

what upholds moral boundaries and preserves moral values. (Hu, 1944). There is also the phrase *gei mou-mou-ren diu-lian*, which means to lose one's face for someone else. This phrase then highlights the idea that similarly to *mianzi*, one's *lian* does not belong to him alone, and instead it is often associated and linked to one's friends, family, and even educators, and this too acts as a motivation for one to maintain their "face", if not for themselves, for others.

However, Hu's theory does not account for the negative effects of "face", as aptly pointed out by Qi (2011). She asserts that while face and the fear of losing it might help to "regulate the received appropriate social behaviour of the Chinese, this maintaining social harmony" (Lau and Wong, 2008), it can also be destructive, depending on norms of society. Besides that, Hu's theory is also limited in that it was translated from Mandarin to English, thus there many have been nuances in the Chinese Language that were lost in translation.

2.2 Face-work

Goffman, in *On Face-Wor*k (1967), defines "face" as "the positive value a person effectively claims for themselves by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". "Face", as Goffman defines it, functions similarly to that of Chinese culture, and the concepts of losing, and maintaining "face", for not only oneself, but those around one, are also present. In addition, one's feelings are often linked to the "face" which they have created for themselves. (Goffman, 1967) When a person feels that he is in "face", which is when he establishes an image for himself which is better than expected, he is likely to experience feelings of confidence and assurance. On the other hand, when a person is in wrong "face", or out of "face", he is likely to feel ashamed, inferior, and even confused. "Face" is seen to be a restriction as well, as Goffman (1967) aptly compares one's "face" to his jail cell, representing

how the approved attributes and their relation to face "lock" one in a jail cell, preventing them from expressing themselves "freely".

What makes Goffman's theory unique, however, is the concept of face-work. Face-work refers to the actions taken by a person to maintain a consistent "face". (Goffman, 1967) Face-work consists of avoidance, which is avoiding any contact which would threaten one's "face", or avoiding topics in conversation that would lead to the leak of information which is harmful to one's "face", as well as correction, which refers to the re-establishment of a satisfactory "face", occurring after the loss of "face". Correction has four steps, namely: identification (challenge), offering, acceptance, and thanks. This theory of face-work hence allows us to identify "face"-saving actions taken by the characters in both texts, and acts as justification for their actions.

Unexpected insight can also be obtained from the nomenclature of Goffman's term "face-work" itself. The "work" in "face-work", implies that labour, hard work and sacrifice is necessary for the maintenance of one's face, revealing Goffman's possible negative stance towards the topic.

Goffman's work also has its limitations, as it is from a Western viewpoint, and may not be as applicable to Singaporean Chinese. As such, Goffman's theory will be utilised together with Hu's theory in a complimentary manner, providing a more balanced view on the topic.

2.3 Singapore from the 1970s to 2015

Although the time period in which Gone Case is set is not explicitly stated, it is presumed to be in the 1970s to 80s due to the rarity of technology such as computers, and the description of the education system, whereas Normal is set in the early 2000s. Gone Case was published in

1997, almost 20 years ahead of Normal, which was produced in 2015. Given the difference in the time period, it is imperative that research be done on the time period in which both works were set, to account for the difference in portrayals of "face".

Firstly, the educational backdrop of the texts has to be examined, since the main characters in both texts are students. The 1970s were when Singapore's education system first began to develop the features which are still observed today. The 1970s marked the creation of the 6-4-2 system, with 3 national exams, the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), which is shown prominently in *Gone Case*, the 'O' Levels, shown in *Normal*, and 'A' Levels. In the 1980s, streaming was introduced to combat the high rates of failure for national exams, on top of the Special Assistance Plan (SAP) and Gifted Education Programme (GEP). Starting from the 1990s, the education system began to shift towards using technology in education, as well as other special talents and achievements, such as sports and the arts. From 2010 onwards, the Ministry Of Education (MOE) started moving away from results, scrapping the banding of secondary schools and the releasing of PSLE top-scorers. Based on these movements towards holistic education, one would expect academics in *Normal* to be of a lower importance, as education becomes less grade-centric and one's "face" becomes less dependent on academic success, whereas "face" gained from academics in *Gone Case* would be more crucial as a means for social mobility.

Besides these large-scale changes to the education system, streaming, an integral part of the Singaporean education system has undergone many changes as well. Students used to be sorted into the EM1, EM2 and EM3 streams in primary school, and Special, Express and Normal at secondary school. As of 2015, students were no longer streamed into 3 major streams in primary school, but into classes based on their academic abilities. At the secondary school

level, the Special stream was replaced with the Integrated Programme, and the Normal stream was split into Normal (Academic) and Normal (Technical). Since then however, schools have begun to move away from streaming, with some secondary schools implementing Subject-Based Banding instead. Streaming itself is closely intertwined with "face", as students who are sorted into academically stronger streams gain *mianzi* since they are deemed to be "more successful", whereas those who are seen to be academically weaker lose *mianzi*. This then corresponds to the *mianzi* of their families, as one's *mianzi* is linked to those around them, resulting in greater academic pressure from parents as they fear losing their *mianzi.* As such, contrary to the point in the previous paragraph, the "face" of the characters may be more at stake in *Normal*, in which streaming is more prevalent, and even criticised in its title. On the other hand, streaming is not at all mentioned in *Gone Case*, thus academic success may instead be less of an indicator of "face".

Another factor that may have played a part in the portrayal of "face" is Singaporean economy. From the 1960s to the 1990s, Singapore experienced an annual GDP growth rate of 8% average, double of the average 3.3% OECD growth rate, even surpassing the US. (Cahyadi et al., 2004) In fact, along with Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan, Singapore was known as one of the "Four Tigers" of economic prosperity. As of the fourth quarter of 2015, Singapore's GDP at current prices was 109,575.5 million dollars, numerous times higher than the 3,209.4 million dollars in 1975. This would mean that the time period in which Normal was set was one of higher economic stability as compared to the time period in which Gone Case was set, since Singapore's economy reached its peak in the 2000s to 2010s. This could thus imply that Singaporeans in that time period did not have to worry as much about earning money, or maintaining a stable job to support their families, as they did in the 1970s, prompting a change

in mindset, from one focused on surviving from pay check to pay check, to a more introspective mindset, one that would care about "face".

However, research done cannot fully account for the portrayal of "face". This research simply provides a macro view of Singaporean mindsets, due to educational and economic changes, whereas other factors, such as the author's personal experiences, or their socio-economic status, could have played a part in their portrayals of "face".

Chapter 3: Methodology

Both Hu's theory of *mianzi* and *lian,* as well as Goffman's theory of face-work will be used to examine instances in which "face" is explicitly mentioned, or implicitly shown to be at stake, so as to better understand how "face" functions as a motivation for characters in both texts. Through the employment of these two theories, more aspects of "face" can be considered, including "face" saving actions, and the different types of "face", *mianzi* and *lian.*

Besides that, this paper utilises the New Historicist assumption that literary texts are as important as the historical context from which they emerge, and that they are mutually constitutive. (Tyson, 2006) As such, the analysis of the two works will focus on not only theme, but similar scenes will also be analysed with reference to the social context in which they are set, namely the educational and economic background, to deduce how social context may have shaped the portrayals of "face".

Chapter 4: Discussion and Analysis

4.1 Clashing Opinions: "Face" as a Motivation

In *Gone Case*, the fear of losing "face" motivates characters to do what they deem as morally correct, as well as conform to societal norms. At one point in the story, Yong's mother says "Of course give back. What do you think we are?" She immediately writes off the idea of taking money that doesn't belong to them, which can be seen in the "of course", despite them desperately needing the money to pay off debt. Besides that, she says "What do you think we are?", and the use of "what" over "who" specifically shows how she regarded the act as sub-human, and that if she were to do that, she would lose *lian* and respect from others as a human being, compelling her to return the money.

This motivation in *Gone Case* is seen at times to be harmful, but it is still done without questioning. This is clearly demonstrated in the marriage between Yong, the main character's parents, specifically the quote "I hear Ma sigh. I feel bad for her but I am relieved for Pa. She really does not want him to go. It hurts deeply but my hate grows more towards Aunt for interfering." From the start of the story, it is shown that Yong's parents are distant, with his father often out with friends, leaving his mother to juggle taking care of both children on top of her job. In fact, his father's lack of involvement is made worse by the debt he owes, a topic over which Yong's parents have had multiple heated arguments about. In spite of this, his parents stay together, putting up a facade of a happy marriage to even their family and friends, for the sake of maintaining *mianzi*. To make matters worse, Yong's mother accepts her fate without any resistance other than a sigh, as shown in this quote, displaying the heavy societal pressures she was under to maintain *mianzi*. In addition, the two-sided phrasing of the sentence "I feel bad for her but I am relieved for Pa.", shows a very binary and balanced view of *mianzi*,

that for one to maintain *mianzi,* it has to be at the expense of another person, in this case, Yong's mother.

In *Normal*, the fear of losing "face" intrinsically motivates Ashley and Daphne to strive to excel in school, not unlike that seen in *Gone Case*. Throughout the play, it is shown that students in the Special and Express streams, and even the teachers, look down on students from the Normal stream, causing the students from the Normal stream to lose *mianzi*. For example, it is remarked about Daphne by a teacher, as well as her mother, that she is wasting her time on art, and that she should give up. This is made worse when Daphne raises the issue, only to be met with disbelief from the rest of the teachers. Here, she loses her self-esteem, as well as her credibility, ultimately losing her *mianzi*. This causes her to fear further losing *mianzi*, resulting in her being unusually motivated, as can be seen when she says "I don't want more trouble. I just want to finish this painting. I don't want to give her the satisfaction of thinking she's right. I must, even if it kills me." For Daphne, a character shown to be passive and malleable, to display such willpower and determination, shows how the motivation caused by "face" can be beneficial. However, as can be seen in the use of absolutes like "must", and the hyperbole in "even if it kills me", this motivation has the potential to be extreme and thus harmful to one, driving one to overlook their wellbeing.

However, in *Normal*, there is also the presence of an extrinsic motivating force, resulting from parents', or the school's fear of losing "face". At the end of the play, when Ashley delivers her monologue, she mentions her parent's unrealistic expectations for her as a result of their fear of losing "face". Among other comments, she repeats that her father "stood there, not uttering a word. The disappointment on his face said enough.". The word "face" here, while unintentional, could also refer to his *mianzi*, signifying that she had caused him to lose *mianzi*.

The antithetical structure of the sentence, in "not uttering a word" against "said enough" then emphasises how her father's disappointment spoke louder than words, showing the extreme importance of *mianzi* to him. This coupled with the drastic reaction of her mother and the similarly repeated comparison of her to their neighbour's son, depicts how Ashley's inadequacy seemed to affect her parent's more than her, since they were afraid of losing *mianzi*. In addition, it seems especially uncharacteristic for Ashley's parents to be so invested in her results, since they are shown to be emotionally detached from her, showing that they are not concerned for their daughter and her future, but instead their own *mianzi*. This then results in a greater pressure for Ashley to do well, as she wants to make her parents proud by meeting their expectations of her.

However, in *Normal* both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation resulting from the fear of losing "face" is shown to be unhealthy and detrimental to one. This fear of losing one's "face" damages relationships and creates emotional distress for the characters. This affects not only students at the bottom of the social hierarchy, in this case Ashley and Daphne, but also top students, such as the picture-perfect Marriane. Daphne remarks to Ashley at one point in the play that she "barely had time to sleep", as a result of her mother's increased academic drilling. Daphne also mentioned that her mother was "taking the only thing that she loved", without considering what impact it had on her. In this instance, Daphne's mother sacrifices her daughter's mental and physical wellbeing for the sake of helping her obtain satisfactory results, all with the ultimate purpose of saving her own *mianzi*, since it is seen earlier in the play that she is ashamed of her daughter being in the Normal Academic stream. By doing this, she puts a strain on their mother-daughter relationship and causes Daphne to feel an unnecessary amount of stress, even attempting to take her life. In Marianne's monologue which she delivers at the end of the play, she states that "One time, I found myself lying on the kitchen floor in the dark,

/ the lights from the cars outside casting shadows on the wall. / Shadows of sharp slanted lines. Like the ones on my thigh that I would trace over and over again, / to remind myself that I was in control of my body. / There is nothing wrong with me." This quote from her emotional monologue shows how even top students suffer from the negative effects of the pressure created due to the need to maintain "face". In Marianne's case, her fear of losing *mianzi* causes her to have overachieving tendencies, and unrealistic expectations. This negatively impacts her mental health, causing her to not only be obsessive, but also resort to self-harm. This can be seen when she zooms in on her thighs, which have "sharp slanted lines", emphasising how she has cut herself, and how she has reduced herself to her pain and suffering. Worst still, the phrase "There is nothing wrong with me", shows her disillusionment, as she fails to recognise her own destructive behaviour, and it could also leave an alarming implication, that such behaviour is not uncommon in their school.

In both texts, the way the fear of losing "face" acts as a motivational force for organisations, namely the schools, is almost identical, differing only in the way the writer portrays it. In *Gone Case*, the principal is "mad" after the name of the school is disclosed in the press and holds a staff meeting behind closed doors, following a gang fight incited by its students. While it is evident that the school has lost *mianzi* due to this event, the principal's reaction seems justified, considering the severity of the crime committed. However, in *Normal*, the school has a similar response after Daphne and Ashley attempt suicide. Mrs Lim, the principal of the school tells the school that "Because we do not have all the facts at the moment, I urge all of you not to listen to any rumours that are circling around.", as well as that "It is illegal in Singapore, to take your life." There is an obvious lack of empathy for Ashley and Daphne, as well as sincerity when she says this, as she barely mentions the actual incident, instead placing a larger emphasis on saving the *mianzi* of the school. In fact, in an earlier quote, the principal refers to their

suicide attempt as "a moment of weakness." She fails to acknowledge the role the school had to play in the attempt made by the two girls, through the systematic discrimination they perpetrated, and the pressures they gave to the girls. Instead, she indirectly blames Ashley and Daphne by implying that they are not "strong" enough mentally, thus leading them to try and take their lives, all to maintain not only the school's, but her own *mianzi*. When this incident is analysed next to that in *Gone Case*, the reaction on the part of the school is more unreasonable and drastic, showing how in *Normal* this obsession with "face" is held in a more critical light.

4.2 The Evolution of "Face" in its Social Context

An interesting area of comparison between the two works is how the parents perceive the different types of "face" and their importance. What Yong's mother places a greater importance upon is the moral perception of her children, their collective *lian*. For example, when Yong threatens his brother, she slaps him, and shouts "Next time I hear you say something like that you get it, you understand? You get it!" It is also mentioned that this is the first time she has slapped him in two years, displaying the severity of the situation in her perception. Her strict tone, as well as the promised threat in "you get it", also thus shows how strongly she believed in the moral education of her children, that she was willing to play the role of a harsher disciplinarian in order to achieve this. She values her children growing up with the right set of moral values, as compared to having good grades, which is observed when she asks them "What did you do at grandparents' place? Got call them every morning?" the moment they return home. Dave Chua deliberately places academic grades and character in opposition as earlier, it is shown that Yong and his brother fare poorly in school, leading to their mother's insistence on them doing work at their grandparents' house, since the *mianzi* gained from academic success was a means of social mobility. However, in this instance, instead of asking

them if they had completed the work she assigned to them, she prioritised the development of their character, and the *lian* they presented to even their grandparents. Tying this back to their economic situation, it could be that since Yong's mother did not have the resources to gain *mianzi*, she instead focused on maintaining their *lian*, a commodity everyone is entitled to at birth.

This is in stark contrast to Daphne's family in *Gone Case,* who are more well-off, and have a larger focus on "face", particularly *mianzi*. This can be seen in the quote "She's increased all my tuition sessions and all the mock papers, pop quizzes… I barely even have time to sleep lah." Since her mother can afford to give her "tuition sessions", "mock papers", and "pop quizzes", it implies that they are of a certain economic status. Her mother's involvement in her studies also shows how she might have less to worry about in terms of work, as she has time and money to devote to her daughter's enrichment. It is evident in this quote how Daphne's mother is doing this to save her own *mianzi*, as she lacks care towards her daughter's wellbeing, and instead drives her daughter to achieve results that will reflect well on her, and defy the label of "normal" placed upon her by the system of streaming, a label which has caused both her and her mother to lose *mianzi*. This then highlights how educational policies present in the setting of the play, such as streaming, can create greater pressure for one to maintain *mianzi*. In addition, this shows not only the increasing importance of *mianzi* along with an increase in economic status, but also how this increased economic status makes the maintenance of *mianzi* easier, giving those of a higher economic status an advantage.

This idea of inequality, even when it comes to *mianzi* in particular, is echoed in *Gone Case*, yet is portrayed differently. This can be seen in the characters of Andrew, one of Yong's friends, and his mother, particularly in the quote "[Andrew's] stack of exercise books at home

is almost half his height. His mother even rearranges the problems and prints them out on nice pieces of shiny white paper, which he photocopies and passes to me and others for practice, just so we would all be even, he says." The fact that Andrew's mother, similar to Daphne's mother in *Normal,* can afford to purchase an exorbitant amount of assessment books, and print enough copies on "shiny white paper" to be shared with Andrew's friends, implies that their family is of a higher economic status, and this is juxtaposed against the economic struggle of Yong's family. Her meticulous and over-the-top rearranging and printing of the papers also shows how she devoted not only money, which would be required for printing, especially on paper of high quality, but also time in doing so, taking almost extreme measures to ensure her child does well in school. However, this determination to preserve *mianzi* is not selfish, as this *mianzi* benefits not only herself, but more importantly her child, as it would provide him with the social mobility to succeed. On top of that, the phrase "just so we would all be even", is an acknowledgement of this deep-rooted inequality, as even Andrew, a 12-year old, recognises that he has an advantage over his friends. This cements the link seen previously, that with a higher economic status, one has more resources to maintain *mianzi*, and can focus on maintaining and gaining *mianzi,* rather than focusing on making ends meet.

Since it is shown that one's accessibility to "face" increases with economic status, "face" is undoubtedly increasingly important, and a higher priority in *Normal* compared to *Gone Case,* in lieu of the changes to not only Singaporean economy, but also changes to the Singaporean education system, focusing on policies such as streaming, and moving away from "face" as a function of social mobility.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

To conclude, "face", namely *mianzi* and *lian,* have become deeply entrenched in Singaporean Chinese society, with the chasing of "face" becoming habitual. Almost paradoxically, however, this chasing of "face" has lost its original meaning. In *Gone Case*, it can be seen that "face" was pursued as a means for social mobility, and functioned more so as a social sanction, ensuring that moral standards were met. On the other hand, the maintenance of "face" is held in a more critical light in *Normal*, as it has since become a selfish desire for worldly reputation.

This can also be attributed to greater economic stability experienced during the time during which *Normal* was written and set, that would have influenced Singaporean mindsets. As we become more well-off, social mobility is less important, thus the chasing of "face" loses its original significance.

Interestingly, when using Hu's distinction between the two types of "face", it can be seen that *lian* is emphasised in *Gone Case,* whilst *mianzi* is more prevalent in *Normal*, as mentioned earlier. This reflects a dangerous shift in the mindsets of Singaporeans, as they begin to obsess over the worldly reputations they have gained, rather than the maintenance their own moral standards and values, going as far as to neglecting the wellbeing of themselves and others.

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