

10091BA

Intercultural Communication for the Global Workplace

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What has been most responsible for the altering or sustaining the ideology, roles or practices that constitute the 'traditional family' in X country?

Word count: 2092

Confucian ideology has been most responsible for sustaining the role of women within the traditional family in China. This assignment will focus on Confucian values within the family, together with the major legalisation change during the Cultural Revolution and the implementation of the One Child Policy (OCP). Due to limited space, this paper will specifically focus on the role of women in educated urban middle class families in China. As Confucianism is a vast ideology, I will be unable to tackle it in its entirety. Therefore, I will attempt to focus on the role Confucian principles play on the traditional Chinese family.

I must first clarify what is defined as a traditional family in China. For the purpose of this paper, this is identified as a mother who is responsible for the home duties and a father who is employed and financially supports his wife and children. This portrayal of the traditional family is further supported by Ms X (2011) who refers to a traditional Chinese family as 'the father who works outside and the mother who works inside looking after the children'. This assignment will argue that Confucian philosophy is so inherent in Chinese culture; that although social reform may have legally changed the status of women; it has not however, repealed the deep Confucian values regarding the role of women within the family. Firstly, I will discuss the main Confucian principles relating to the family such as hierarchy and filial piety. I will then discuss the role of women in Confucian philosophy, followed by legislation reform during the Cultural Revolution. Finally, I will examine the impact the One Child Policy has had on the structure of the traditional Chinese family and the role of women within it.

Confucianism has been the dominant ideology in Chinese society for well over two thousand years (Cheung, Chan, Chan, King, Chiu & Yang 2006, p. 158) and is fundamental in establishing the values and norms within the traditional Chinese family. Central to Confucian philosophy is a patriarchal hierarchy structure, which

dictates the role of each individual within the family. This hierarchal structure also shapes social behaviours and communication between husband and wife, parents and their children (particularly father and son) and between older and younger siblings. Each member must communicate in an appropriate manner according to ones place within this structure. Therefore women, which are lower ranking members, must moderate their behaviour to that of respect and obedience to those with seniority (Fowler, Gao and Carlson 2010, p. 343; Lee 1953, p. 274).

For this reason, the way a daughter communicates to her mother would be different to the way she communicates to her father, due to the hierarchal relationship. For example, Ms X (2011) says "I talk to my mother like a friend and can tell her jokes but my dad is very serious, everybody is scared of him so we can't tell him jokes. When I was small I told a joke to my father and he became very angry and said 'you can't do that to us, we are your parents'. Children are taught early on, the importance of respect for their parents and how to behave appropriately. Obedience to ones parents or filial piety, as it is often referred to, is regarded as the fundamental value of Chinese culture (Cohen 1992; Neulip 2009, p. 60). This value is integral to Chinese culture and still plays such an intrinsic part in the way families communicate with one another. Above all, it affirms the way females are taught their role within the family and thus their role within society.

Additionally, it is how these roles are taught non-verbally, which has such a subtle but powerful influence on why these prescribed roles are sustained in the Chinese culture. High-context (HC) cultures such as China, do not rely on explicit language to convey a message. Instead, they are able to communicate with non-verbal cues found in physical context or internalized in the person (Samovar L.A & Porter R.E

2003, p. 241). For example, when asked about expectations regarding living arrangements for a newly married couple, Ms X (2011) explains that it would be assumed a woman would live with her in-laws and verbal communication would not be necessary because it is the tradition and the culture. HC communication is so entrenched in the Chinese culture that without needing to verbalise ones role within the family it is already instinctively known.

Confucian philosophy has largely been responsible for establishing a woman's primary role within the family, that of caregiver. It had been assumed that biologically as well as culturally, women had been intended for one purpose which is to be responsible for home duties and the care of her husband and children (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel's 2009, p. 64). Women were considered inferior to that of her male family members and as such, females had been expected to be obedient to the various males throughout their life. This is referred to by Zhang (2006, p. 545) as the "Three Types of Obedience; a girl obeys her father at the natal home; a married women obeys her husband; and a widow obeys her son". Although, this rigid belief no longer applies in modern day China, there is still an undeniable expectation that a woman's role is that of mother and caregiver and it is this non-verbal message which continues to be conveyed down through the generations.

Although, China has seen significant legislation reform designed to enforce egalitarian gender roles within society; this has done little to dispel the deep rooted Confucian principles in Chinese culture. Legislation was introduced during the Cultural Revolution, which gave women the freedom to divorce, the right to chose ones spouse, the right to own property and inherit family property and equal opportunity in the workplace (Pimentel 2006, p. 343). Heng (1994) refers to "the

Chinese Constitution of the early 1950s which states clearly that Chinese women enjoyed equal rights with men in, political, economic, social, cultural and family life". Granted, such legalisation has given women redress in the eyes of the law; along with allowing women choices which they previously did not enjoy. However, legislation does not rid society of inequality.

In certain cultures, inequality can simply be accepted and even expected by the less powerful in society which Hofstede defined as 'power distance'. In the case of China, it would be defined as a large power distance culture due to the strict hierarchy among family members and the expectation of children to be obedient (Neuliep 2009, p. 67-69). Faurea and Fangb (2008, 3.6) conclude "in social life and even more in family life, seniority and respect for the customs remain the impassable norm". It is these norms based on the values of Confucian ideology which ultimately has sustained the fundamental role of women in China, irrespective of legislative reform.

Furthermore, male perception of an over crowded workforce and increased economic competition with women, resulted in a backlash of Mao egalitarian policy. Coupled with the implementation of the One Child Policy (OCP) this was to significantly impact on the equality of women within the family. The OCP placed greater pressure on families to produce the perfect child, and thus the emphasis was on women to return to the home to resume their role as mother and caregiver. Pimentel (2006, p. 345) states "the resurgence of innatist thinking in China coincided with the resurrection of the Confucian ideal of the 'virtuous wife and good mother". Thus, a great shift back to the Confucian value, that women were designed for the household duties and not the workplace, began to emerge (Pimentel 2006, p. 344-345).

This view was further confirmed when a survey taken of 10,000 Chinese urban men in 1986 revealed; 96% of men desired a virtuous wife who would do most of the household chores (Neuliep 2009, p. 206). Twenty five years later, and the importance placed on women to get married rather than have a career is still highly valued.

When asked what Ms X thought her parents' response would be if she chooses a career over marriage, she stated "they would say no. My dad has traditional thinking and would say a woman must get married". Additionally, Ms X (2011) believed her parents would regard marriage to be more important than a career, even though they have paid for her university education. Although the Chinese government has taken great strides to address the inequality between the sexes through the legislative process, this does little to abolish the deep seated Confucian values within the traditional Chinese family.

What is evident since the implementation of the OCP, is the importance now stressed for daughters to not only be virtuous wives and mothers but also to provide financially for their parents. Prior to the OCP, sons were highly valued within the family due to the expectation they would provide for their family materially along with continuing the family line (Neulip 2009, p. 60). However, with the enforcement of the OCP, this fundamentally altered the structure and roles within Chinese families which only produced daughters and thus created new family expectations (Fowler, Gao & Carlson 2010, p. 343). As a consequence daughters will be responsible not only for the physical wellbeing of their parents but also for the financial. This obligation is further stressed by Ms X (2011) who clarifies that providing for ones parents is discussed non-verbally it is in the culture to care for your parents when you become an adult.

Although, the shape of the traditional Chinese family has altered due to legislative reform, the values which established the role of women remain the same. Family is the oldest and the most fundamental of all institutions and will be the one that survives long after regimes evolve or disappear. Family is the first form of government. It is here, where a person first learns about authority and where they are initially introduced to values which prepare themselves for the various roles they will perform in society. Deep structure provides the unconscious fundamental values of a culture and helps shape the views of how the world should be, what is important in life and how to make choices regarding how to live your life. It is this deep structure which has more influence over the values in citizens' lives in China, than political egalitarianism (Samovar, Porter and McDaniels 2009, p. 48-52).

Finally, due to China's collectivistic culture, ones individual aspirations and behaviours are discouraged and the value of harmony, obligation, dependence and obedience to the family is stressed (Neulip 2009, p. 41). It is China's collectivistic culture which poses one of the greatest hurdles for women in pursuing a successful career. A woman's obligation to provide and care for her parents, husband, children and in-laws becomes paramount to ones own ambitions. Heng (1994) states "the role and status of women in China today is characterised by increased opportunities along with intense competition and major challenges". It is this paradox, by which women perform the role of provider and carer in modern China, which ultimately has seen the most compelling change to the role of women.

In conclusion, China's collectivistic culture has significantly hindered the full emancipation of women, due to obligations to the family, which must precede a woman's own aspirations. Moreover, it is a cultures deep structure, where values and

roles are first taught through the family to the individual, and it is this, that will long endure after governments have come and gone. Women now face the additional burden to provide financially for their families as well as being that of caregiver, since the implementation of the OCP. Even today, the value placed on women to be the virtuous wife, still exceeds that of having a successful career. This has been coupled with a return to traditional Confucian values due to a backlash of Mao egalitarian policy by men. Also in some cultures, such as that of the Chinese, inequality is simply accepted if not actually expected, and therefore no amount of legalisation reform will rid society of that discrimination. It is these Confucian beliefs, which have prescribed the role of women, to be that of caregiver and to be obedient to the various males in her life. These deep seated philosophies which have been passed down the generations non-verbally from over two thousand years ago, have stressed filial piety among women. Finally, it is this unwavering patriarchal hierarchy structure which is central to Confucian philosophy and values which maintains the role of women with the traditional family in modern day China.

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Interview Questions

How old are you?

19 years old

Where are you from in China?

South part of China, a small town called Santo

Is it rural or urban?

Small city with a lot of people

Do you have siblings or are you an only child?

Two sisters and one brother (youngest)

Where do you come in your family structure? (e.g. are you the youngest child etc)

Oldest

What are their occupation?

All in school. Second sister at university

What is your fathers occupation?

Management, makes steal

What is your mothers occupation?

Housewife

What were the occupations of your grandparents?

Grandfather is cook and grandmother fabric maker

What is the education level of your parents?

Father studied to Year 10, age fourteen. Mother went to TAFE and became a kindergarten teacher.

What is the education level of your grandparents?

None

What is your education level? (e.g. are you first year university student)

First year university

Would you consider your family middle class and if so what would you describe as middle class in China?

Parents both have work or father works and doesn't need to worry about money. Not sure what is middle class in China.

What would you consider is a 'traditional family' in China, Why?

Father works outside and mother works inside and looks after the children

Do you have any religious affiliation?

Christian

Does your dad share in the responsibility of the home duties and if so would you consider it equal distribution between your parents?

Yes if mum is busy he will help and things she can't do like change the light. Dad does the outside work and mum will do inside work.

Was their arrangement of the house duties ever discussed verbally or was it just 'known' that a particular person would take responsibility for it?

Mum does more housework because dad has outside work but if he is not busy he will help mum. If mum can't do something she will ask dad to help her. Outside work there is no verbal communication, dad just knows to do it. But if mum wants help like to clean the dishes she will ask for help verbally.

Do you remember what the roles were of your grandparents within your family?

Grandfather and grandmother worked outside but when they came home grandfather would do nothing. Housework always done by grandmother.

When you were a child, do you remember if you ever interrupted your parents when they were speaking with guests?

Yes

Would this have been encouraged or would your parents encourage you not to interrupt them whilst they were speaking?

When my dad was talking to friends can't talk, we were not aloud to make noise, very rude to guests.

If the latter, how would this have been taught? (e.g. Through verbal communication or non verbal)

When I was small I would play with my brother and sister and I made noise. My dad couldn't talk to his friend and got very angry but would not show that in front of his friend so once they leave he would come over and say 'you can't do that very rude in front of the guests'. He would let her know verbally that she could not behave like that.

Do you think you communicate differently to your mother as oppose to your father, Why?

Yes. I talk to my mother like a friend and tell her jokes but my dad very serious everybody scared of him so we can't say jokes with him. When I was small I told a joke to my father and he became very angry 'you can't do that to the us the parents'. More of an equal relationship with her mum but has to moderate her behaviour to her father. But now her father is changing a little because no one is close to him so he has changed and is more friendly and close to us so now we can tell jokes. She thinks he feels alone, whereas everyone is close to their mum. Changed about three or four years ago. He began to talk to us more and said 'you can talk to me and ask me'.

Why did you choose to come to Australia to study?

My parents wanted me to learn English. My father says that English is the common language in the world so wanted me to come here to learn English. Also it is easier to go to university in Australia than it is in China. It is hard to get into university in China.

Also the weather is good in Australia. More freedom in Australia and my father said Australia is more safe.

Was this a decision you made independently or decided in collaboration with your parents or was it your parents choice?

My parents decided for me to go to Australia. Later tell us we could come to Australia. If they later decide after, they will move to Australia. My father still in China but sometime he will visit.

What degree are you studying at university?

International business and commerce. Double degree four years.

How was the decision made to study for this degree?

Very confused why I am studying this so I asked my parents and they say accounting is good for you so you can choose accounting because when you are an adult and you have your own business you can check your incomes outcomes by your self. Also they say when you have a family and become a housewife you can check, accounting is good for your life. Also father wants me to do this because all business is international and goes over seas.

Did your parents have an influence on what you chose to study or is it a topic that has been of personal interest to you?

I knew at school what I was going to do this degree. My parents didn't force me to do it but they just suggested better to do this one. There wasn't anything else she wanted to do. They told me at dinner 'you should do so and so' so they told her in a indirect way what degree they wanted her to do.

Would you have studied a degree that your parents would not have wanted you to study, if so Why or Why not?

I think I would tell them that i would try the degree that they didn't want for one year and if that didn't suit me then I would try something else.

Is this a career your parents would like you to do, Why?

Yes because they say I'm quiet so accounting suit me more because I'm quiet and careful so accounting have many numbers.

Will you return home to China for your career or would you like to work abroad, Why?

I think I would stay here because there are different rules here from China so if I study accountancy in Australia it will have different rules than accountancy in China so I would stay in Australia.

Would you return to China to live if that was what your parents wished or would you follow your own wants? If so, Why or Why not?

If China had very good opportunity to work then I move to China but if Australia is better then I stay in Australia.

Once employed will you contribute financially to your family? If so, Why or Why not?

Yes, I know I will do that. It will depend on how much wage I have because I have to pay for food if I have more I will give it to my parents.

My parents pay money for me to become adult and pay my school fees so we need to give them our money to spend to use and enjoy their life because they do hard when I was walking for us go learning and study so we need to give them better life.

How would you 'know' to contribute financially to the family, how would this be communicated non-verbally?

Yes. didn't say it, discussed non-verbally. It's the culture in China when you become an adult you have to look after your parents, its the culture.

Would you live in your parents house, Why or Why not?

With parents. Easier take care of them also don't need to spend as much money on food and house.

If so, would this be expected or would you need to discuss this with your parents?

Don't need to ask but if I want to move out of their house then I would need to ask. Parent don't want children to move out they want to look after what they are doing so they don't worry so much.

If you are employed, will you contribute to the home duties, Why?

Yes

Would this be an arrangement that would be discussed between yourself and your parents or would you just 'know' to do it?

Yes know to do it. If your not busy then I will do it because the house is my house so take responsibility to take care of it.

Would you like to get married one day? If so, Why or Why not?

Yes

Do you think your parents would want you to get married?

Yes they say 'one day when you get married you won't want us to live with you, you will only take care of your family and will forget us'

Would your parents have input in who you married, Why?

Yes. The people must have good work and good family. They wouldn't introduce her to anyone so she can meet someone on her own but they will say if he is suitable when they meet him.

What do you expect would happen if you chose to marry someone your parents didn't approve of?

They would not want me to marry him. I think they would say "maybe he's not so good for you, tell me he was bad." if I just went and married him they would be angry.

What do you expect your parents response would be if you choose a career over marriage?

They would say no. My dad has traditional thinking and would say a women must get married.

Even though your parents have spend all this money on a university education, would it be more important for them to see you married rather than in a career?

Yes

If you do get married and have children and you were also in formal employment, would you be responsible for the home duties as well?

Yes

Would you, your husband and children live with your parents/husbands parents, Why or Why not?

If I marry I will need to live with his parents. There is some change where you can live with the females parents.

If a family had all girls and they all married and went to live with their husbands parents then who would look after those parents?

They would look after themselves

Would you have to ask to live with your husbands parents or would it just be expected?

It is tradition, it is the culture the women must live with the husbands parents. Now it is a little bit changing where the women can not live with the parents.

What do you expect the response would be from either grandparents, if you wanted to live on your own with your husband and children, Why?

If you do not want to live with your husbands parents, they need to ask the husbands parents not to live together. If parents good they say ok fine but you can choose house near them or some people say no.

Would it cause conflict if you said no?

Yeah

If you decided to continuing working, would you ask either sets of grandparents to help you care for the children or would they assume responsibility for this role without the issue needing to be discussed, Why?

It would need to be discussed but some parents like grandchildren so wont need to communicate so would want to look after them but some would want their freedom and want to travel so you would need to communicate it to the parents.

So if you worked 5 days a week would the grandparents automatically know to look after the kids whilst you were at work?

If you don't live together you would need to ask but if you did live together then the grandparents would look after them but might want one day off.

Do you think there has been a change in women's roles in China in the last three generations particularly within your own family, if so how?

Yeah with my grandparents women must look after the housework and look after children and working outside. Also women must listen to men women can't say no. Whereas with my mums generation women changed, they can discuss with their husbands. women and men are more equal.

Why do you think women's roles have changed?

I think influenced by western countries where women and men are equal. Chinese women are more powerful so men see women are good as the man and just as capable so men gave changed.

Do you think the 'one child policy' in China has any affect on women's roles in China?

Yeah, because of ocp some family have girl so they Take more care of girl whereas before they didn't care for girls you couldn't study and had to do housework. Parent now will give girl very good education and want them in a good marriage.

Do you think that political change (e.g. from feudal China to Chairman Mao to Modern communist China) has had an affect on the roles of women in China?

Yes changing very much. Hundred years ago women couldn't go outside. If you had a guest you couldn't see the guest. stay in the house couldnt go out. Now, with Mao and revolution women began to go out to work and women and men equal. So go to work but women still need to look after the house and children but men don't need to do that.

Do you think there is a change from Chairman Maos time to modern China?

Now with the 'marriage agreement act' women can makes rules like you have to be home by... You must do housework etc

What do you think is the greatest influence of this change?

Western countries and ideas influence Chinese people. Chinese women doing just as good job as men and men think she can do that too. Roles have changed a little

Do you think the Confucian ideal still plays an important influence on the roles within families in China, Why?

No. women need to listen to the man in Confucianism whereas men need to listen to the women now as well.

APPENDIX 3: ESSAY CHECK LIST

**TO BE ATTACHED BEHIND THE COVER SHEET WHEN ESSAY IS SUBMITTED
ESSAY WILL NOT BE GRADED IF SECTION A IS NOT FILLED OUT**

- Tick (☑) the box of each of the items below when your essay conforms to each.
- If your essay does not conform to some or any of the items in section A and you submit the essay anyway, it will receive a mark of "R" (resubmit). The essay will not be graded until the problem(s) is (are) rectified.#
- If you are unable to check some or any of the boxes in section B, rework your essay before you submit it, ensuring you give yourself the chance to achieve the highest grade possible.

SECTION A:

- 1.X☐ I have completed the **COVER SHEET** listing personal details, question answered and word count.
- 2.☐ My essay is stapled in the top left-hand corner (just **ONE** staple) and is **NOT** contained in any **PLASTIC** covering or folder of **ANY** kind.
- 3.X☐ Each page of my essay is **NUMBERED**.
- 4.X☐ There is a list of references titled '**REFERENCES CITED**' at the end of the essay. These references are **NOT** **NUMBERED**. They are listed in **ALPHABETICAL** order according to authors' **SURNAME**.
- 5.X☐ Each **PARAGRAPH** of my essay is **SEPARATED** from the previous paragraph by **one blank line**.
- 6.X☐ The left and right **MARGINS** are approx. 2.5cm. Excessively large margins have not been used.
- 7.X☐ The letter **FONT** size is **12** point (no smaller), and line spacing is **DOUBLE SPACED**.
- 8.X☐ I have used textnotes (author-date-**page number**) or footnotes **CITATION** method (including **page numbers** where available). Any text that does not have a citation after it is, therefore, attributable to myself alone (it is purely my own work). Please note that **PLAGIARISM** attracts severe penalties.

SECTION B:

- 1.X☐ My essay has a clearly identified **introduction**, a substantial **body** in which I develop the argument introduced or outlined in my introduction, and a definite **conclusion**.
- 2.X☐ My essay (criteria for a 70 percent result):
 - € Is a coherent, integrated, whole (see previous item).
 - € Is based on wide reading
 - € Has dealt with almost all aspects of the topic
 - € Does not simply reproduce its sources, but engages critically with them
 - € Demonstrates understanding of the important issues through use of appropriate data and or examples.
 - € Demonstrates knowledge of the appropriate concepts and terminology

Signature _____Aimee Sorrell_____

1009IBA Intercultural Communication for the Global Workplace Semester Essay

Student Name:....Aimee Sorrell.....

Student Number:.....s2758438.....

CONTENT

		E	VG	G	S	U	
APPROACH	<i>Analytical</i>						<i>descriptive</i>
ARGUMENT	<i>Appropriate & coherent</i>						<i>muddled</i>
READING	<i>Extensive</i>						<i>limited</i>
SOURCES	<i>Relevant; well integrated</i>						<i>lacking</i>
EGS & INTERVIEW MATERIAL	<i>Pertinent; well integrated</i>						<i>None; forced; ineffective</i>

ORGANISATION & COHESION

STRUCTURE	<i>lucid</i>						<i>incoherent</i>
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COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

WRITING	<i>skilful</i>						<i>Unclear; many errors</i>
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PRESENTATION

PRESENTATION	<i>good</i>						<i>messy</i>
REFERENCING	<i>Conforms to Harvard style</i>						<i>sloppy</i>

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS