

Gender Communication Differences

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Males and females of various cultures communicate in different ways, depending on multiple factors. Focusing on one culture, Chinese males and females communicate differently verbally and nonverbally depending on social power, public or private settings, and institutional influences. I chose to compare and contrast how Chinese communicate in romantic relationships with how people in my culture, Russian, communicate in romantic relationships to my Russian culture.

Male and female social power in Chinese culture is an influencer in how males and females communicate. For instance, "... males are dominant, powerful, and moral, and therefore yang. Women... are precisely the opposite—subservient, weak, selfish, and jealous—and best described as yin. As a result, female virtues became largely oriented toward social roles, especially women's duties as wives..." (Shen & D'Ambrosio, n.d., para. 6). Yin and Yang are important in understanding how Chinese men and women should behave. The Chinese believe that the way men and women should act would bring balance to society similarly to how Yin and Yang create balance in the world. Yin and Yang are also used to understand gender roles. A Chinese Confucian literature, "The Liji (Record of Rituals) states that "the male is outside, and the wife inside the home. The sun starts in the east and the moon starts in the west. This is the distinction of yin and yang, the positions of husband and wife" (Shen & D'Ambrosio, n.d., para. 5). The Record of Rituals is a Chinese Confucian literature which discusses moral principles (e.g. how one should treat others). Similarly to other cultures, Chinese culture places women in the home and men in the workforce to create a balance to society like yin and yang. Throughout history, yin and yang have been used to understand Chinese social roles for men and women and continue to be used today.

Male and female verbal/nonverbal communication in Chinese culture is an influencer in how males and females communicate. In Chinese nonverbal communication, “Direct eye contact with authority figures and elders is usually avoided, as this conveys disrespect. On the other hand, direct eye contact between members of the opposite sex may be considered flirtatious” (Promoting Cultural Sensitivity, 2008, p. 16). An individual would have to be cautious about who they make direct eye contact with, in order to avoid disrespecting someone or giving off the wrong impression. In the topic of greeting people, “Shaking hands is a common way to greet people, though a nod or slight bow is acceptable... touching is uncommon...” (Promoting Cultural Sensitivity, 2008, p. 16). Many countries greet people by shaking hands, but others tend to use a hug to greet people. An individual should note which one to use depending on which country they are in and who they are greeting. Males and females in China have similar nonverbal communication; however, they have different verbal communication. For instance, “... women are accustomed to use exaggeration, euphemism and emphasize etc that have strong emotional colors to strength the semantic effect as well as use more polite language. However, in contrast, men’s language and vocabulary are wilder and they tend to use profanity and taboo words with challenge” (Tian & Qin, 2016, p. 138). The ways men and women talk is how society wants them to act. Women are supposed to be more emotional and polite, whereas men are supposed to be tough and direct. This shows the gap between how women are expected to behave compared to men. Society more accepting of a man who swears compared to a women who swears. Women have to be respectful at all times because they have a lower social position. In order to increase their social position, women have to be polite. Men and women in Chinese culture also view things differently: “In general, men and women see things from different angles. Men tend to look at things from the macroscopic view, while women are more inclined to

see goods on a micro level” (Tian & Qin, 2016, p. 141). For example, a man on a Monday would be concerned with politics and the economy, whereas a women would be concerned with if the trash was taken out and how the bills are going to get paid. Men and women in Chinese culture also express themselves differently. For instance “... men are glad to and keen to express themselves by means of words in written form, while women prefer to be listeners and readers and choose to hide their emotions or obscure their meanings” (Tian & Qin, 2016, p. 141). Men may write a letter that states directly how they are feelings. Whereas women may hide their emotions or write a poem that indirectly expresses how they feel. While men and women communicate nonverbally similarly in Chinese culture, verbal communication is direct for men and indirect for women.

The way males and females behave in public and private settings in Chinese culture is an influencer in how males and females communicate. Every society and culture has created rules about how men and women should act in public and in private. Chinese “... men and women are asked to observe strict separation in society and uphold the distinction between the outer and inner. (Men being responsible for the family’s “outer” dealings, including legal, economic, and political affairs, and women the “inner” ones, such as familial relations and housework.)” (Shen & D’Ambrosio, n.d., para. 20). Society’s social power based on gender also influences how genders behave in public. Women are supposed to be private and keep the household running and men are supposed to be public and handle finances. In general though, Chinese cultures involves family to be private; families “... may not discuss family-related matters with nonfamily members” (Promoting Cultural Sensitivity, 2008, p. 18). Although women are supposed to remain private, when they are out in public, they have specific expectations from society. A women should “... pay close attention to her appearance, be clean and proper, and act

especially carefully around guests and in public. Her work consists mainly in household practicalities, such as weaving and food preparation” (Shen & D’Ambrosio, n.d., para. 21). A woman has to change her appearance and personality for the public and her guests, while a man has more freedom to act the same in public and in private. While there is a difference in how a man and woman act in Chinese public, both the man and women share the same goals, “... like obtaining wealth or educating children...” which “... were designated into separate spheres that either the wife or husband would control” (Shen & D’Ambrosio, n.d., para. 30). The man and women both want to be financially stable and educated children. The man and woman would determine who gets the roles that are in the middle (e.g. who is responsible to educating the children). Similarly to all gender roles and expectations in society “... behavior that fails to be consistent with social expectations and requirements will be objected and denied by society as well as be sneered at and despised by others” (Tian & Qin, 2016, p. 142). An individual’s best interest is to adhere to society’s standards in order to not receive backlash from their community. However, to change society’s standards, one needs to step out from the standard expectations and create a new norm. Chinese culture involves women to be polite and conservative whereas men are direct and in charge. This influences how women communicate in public and in private nonverbally and verbally.

The way males and females communicate is due to institutional influences such as religion. In Chinese culture, Confucianism is an influencer in how males and females communicate. According to Shen and D’Ambrosio, “Confucianism was established as the official state ideology and heavily influenced many areas of politics, including court functioning, policies, and education. This, in turn, provided the foundation for a Confucian society in which this ideology successfully penetrated the daily lives of the state’s entire populace” (Shen &

D'Ambrosio, n.d., para. 24). China has built social roles and gender norms from the ideology of Confucianism. China believes that following Confucianism will lead to people living successful lives. Confucianism effects an individual's public and private life: "Confucianism, which serves as the basis for social and interpersonal relationships, advocates reverence in the family and benevolence in government administration" (Promoting Cultural Sensitivity, 2008, p. 16).

Confucianism is the building block for male and female social power, verbal/nonverbal communication, and behaviors in public and private settings, which influences how one communicates.

The way Chinese communicate in romantic relationships are similar to how I communicate in a romantic relationship based on my Russian culture. Similarly to Chinese culture, in a romantic relationship, the man is superior to the women. The man is in charge of finding employment and the women is in charge of household tasks. One difference between the two cultures is that Russian men and women tend to talk very directly, whereas Chinese men talk directly, and women talk more politely. Females in Russian and Chinese cultures are more private and conservative than men. Both cultures appreciate privacy when it comes to family. Families only discuss family related topics with other family members. They both expect women to have a good appearance when they go out in public. A Russian women has the expectation that she should wear a dress, heels, and make up just to go to the grocery store. While Chinese culture is based from their religion of Confucianism, Russian culture is based on Russian Orthodox.

Males and females of various cultures communicate in different ways, depending on how they communicate verbally and nonverbally, their social power, their setting (public or private), and any institutional influences. In Chinese culture, women are less superior to men and are

expected to be weak and selfish. Men are expected to be dominant and direct. Chinese men and women tend to shake hands, touching is uncommon when it comes to nonverbal communication. Men are more direct when talking and women are polite. Women may also not be very direct with their emotions as males are. Women are expected to be more private and when they are in public, they need to have a good appearance. Culturally, Chinese women attend to household duties while men are employed. Chinese religion of Confucianism is what structures gender roles and gender communication in China. After comparing my Russian culture to Chinese culture, I found that both cultures are very similar in how men and women communicate in romantic relationships.

References

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