
This ethnography discusses the "uterine family" in the context of the Chinese culture, specifically the Taiwanese culture. The uterine family is a woman's mother and her mother's children. In Taiwan, although men's concept of family remains fairly constant throughout their life, a woman's "family" is constantly changing. A girl is never anything but a temporary member of her father's household. She cannot marry one of his sons; she must leave and go to another home where she will be regarded as a stranger. In her new home, her concept of who is her family will continue to change as her own children grow up and as her mother-in-law’s sons take more wives, etc.

Since a Taiwanese woman, especially a daughter, has little official influence, she must find indirect ways to achieve what she wants/needs. She has some influence with her husband, but little. After all, she may be his wife, but he is her mother-in-law’s son. The only retaliation or means to effect change that the woman really has comes into the picture with the concept of “face." It is very important in Chinese culture that a family have and save "face." If a young woman is being mistreated, she can use her ties to other woman in the community. Since she has no other way to effect change, she just basically complains. The mother-in-law will hear what the woman is saying and, though she knows that the community will most likely side with her, she will be a little more careful in fear of losing "face" and bringing shame on her family. According to Wolf, "a truly successful Taiwanese woman is a rugged individualist who has learned to depends largely on herself while appearing to lean on her father, her husband, and her son” (1993). After all, a woman's family and influence are never really stable.