



Universidade do Minho
Instituto de Ciências Sociais

The Application and Development of Traditional Family Theory in Contemporary
China

UMinho | 2021

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**The Application and Development of Traditional Family
Theory in Contemporary China**

Dissertação de Mestrado em Sociologia

Área de especialização em Cultura, Lazer e Turismo

Trabalho realizado sob a orientação do

Professor Jean Martin Marie Rabot

Junho de 2021

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Acknowledgement

The year of 2019 is an extremely important year in my life. This year I came to Portugal with expectations and joy- the westernmost country in the European continent. At that time, my most urgent desire was to learn Portuguese so that I could find a satisfactory job in this field in the future. However, first arrival in a foreign country is always accompanied by anxiety and nervousness: language barriers, lack of understanding of the local culture, no familiar friends and teachers, and confusion about the future. After three months of language courses, I began to think about the next step in life.

The choice of applying for sociology seems to be accidental, but in fact it is a destined result. Perhaps it is the natural feeling of national identity that makes me always unconsciously turn my attention to the development of the country and the suffering of the people. Regarding the worldwide problems of poverty, war, domestic violence and child growth, I am eager to explore the reasons behind these problems and find ways to improve the current situation. The charm of sociology is exactly the reason why I chose it: it requires me to look at the essence through the phenomenon and explore the relationship between the individual and the society.

The two years of study and life have motivated me to continue to conduct in-depth research in the field of sociology. On the other hand, it also gave me a more comprehensive understanding of Portuguese culture and even European culture, giving me more opportunities to experience the local life in Portugal.

First of all, I want to thank my mentor Jean Martin Marie Rabot. At the beginning of the new academic year, I was fortunate to meet Professor Rabot. I occasionally talked to him about the research of Chinese families in the future. He not only affirmed my ideas, encouraged me, and supported me, but also recommended a large number of references. I conduct in-depth and systematic studies in the field of family sociology. In addition, during the orientation period, valuable suggestions were made by him to my dissertation in terms of depth and breadth. Under his careful guidance, I finally complete the dissertation.

Secondly, I would like to thank all the professors during the master's period. The lively discussion in class and the large amount of literature reading after class made me feel the collision of Eastern and Western cultures and the exchanges of ideas. Considering the language level at that time,

professors explained patiently and guided me to do the investigation, so that I can integrate into the class as fast as possible and keep pace with other colleagues.

Besides, I want to thank my classmates. As the only student whose mother tongue is non-Portuguese, both Brazilian and Portuguese students are very enthusiastic to help me. In the process of completing group work, they gave me full respect, listened to my opinions. They are eager to learn about China and they also create opportunities and encouraged me to express my ideas boldly. This not only improved my Portuguese language skills, but also made me more confident in communication.

Finally, I want to thank my family and friends. Although separated by oceans, their care and encouragement are the driving force that motivates me to fight and be able to meet challenges. Whether applying for a master's degree or a doctoral degree, these important choices in life, they helped me analyze the pros and cons, and also supported me to listen to my inner voice, so that I could study in the field of sociology more firmly.

I appreciate for this wonderful fate that allowed me to come to Portugal, let me choose sociology, and let me know my lovely classmates and professors. I appreciate for my persistence and love for sociology as well, which allowed me to become a better person.

Statement of integrity

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism or any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to this elaboration.

I further declare that I have fully acknowledged that Code of Ethical Conduct of the University of Minho.

Resumo:

A família, como a tradição mais básica com características chinesas, é o ponto de partida histórico da transformação social e das mudanças institucionais da China e uma base importante para o desenvolvimento nacional, o progresso nacional e a harmonia social. Antes da guerra moderna, o sistema familiar tinha forte estabilidade e era difícil de ser abalado. No entanto, as profundas mudanças na economia social e no sistema estatal apontaram para o surgimento da família chinesa e de toda a sociedade. O Estado tem participado diretamente nas atividades familiares por meio da formulação e implementação de políticas sociais e populacionais e tornou-se um grande impulsionador das mudanças familiares. Mudanças profundas ocorreram a nível da dimensão da família, das relações familiares e da cultura familiar. As partes retrógradas das velhas ideias de desigualdade de gênero e de dominação do patriarcado estão sendo corrigidas, e as partes excelentes da cultura tradicional, como a piedade filial que orientam as virtudes pessoais, receberam novas conotações na nova era. As famílias chinesas na era pós-moderna encontram problemas sem precedentes, nomeadamente quando quando confrontadas com as questões da relação entre pais e filhos. No entanto, como única forma de desenvolvimento social, este é mais um desafio que as famílias chinesas terão que enfrentar no futuro.

Por meio da comparação das diferenças entre as relações familiares, funções, estruturas e culturas em diferentes épocas, este trabalho tenta evidenciar os efeitos que o desenvolvimento nacional exerce sobre a família, já que a família e a nação constituem realidades diretamente conectadas.

Palavras-chave: família chinesa, patriarcado, piedade filial, teoria da família, pós-modernidade.

Abstract:

The family, as the most basic tradition with Chinese characteristics, is the historical starting point of China's social transformation and institutional changes, and an important basis for national development, national progress, and social harmony. Before the modern war, the family system had strong stability and was difficult to shake. However, the profound changes in the social economy and the state system have re-reported the appearance of the Chinese family and the entire society. The state has directly participated in family activities through the formulation and implementation of population and social policies and has become a huge driving force for family changes. Profound changes have taken place in family size, family relationships, and family culture. The backward parts of the old ideas of gender inequality and patriarchy are being corrected, and the excellent parts of traditional culture, like filial piety that guide personal virtues has been given new connotations in the new era. Chinese families under the post-modern trend confront unprecedented problems when facing parent-child issues. However, as the only way for social development, this is also a challenge that Chinese families need to meet in the future.

Through comparing the differences between family relationships, functions, structures and cultures in different eras, this article shows that national development does effect on family, family and nation is connected directly.

Key words: Chinses family, patriarchy, filial piety, family theory, postmodernism

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1. Introduction

1.1 Theoretical context

Family is the most basic unit of social composition. Family relationships not only affect the physical and psychological conditions of individual members, but also have inestimable significance for promoting social progress and national development. In the long history of China for more than 2000 years, since the birth of “family”, it has been a cultured unit, and people were born and raised in the family. With the rise of the industrial revolution in Europe and America, modern enlightenment thoughts were introduced into China, and the centralized family under feudal society was hit, and the relationship between family members also changed. Since Reform and Opening up, Chinese society has entered a period of historical transformation. The continuous development of economic, cultural or political activities has provided strong support for the evolution of Chinese families in the new era. There is a new trend of paternity and matrilineal duality, and the status of the patriline has weakened, the matrilineal status has risen. In modern society, family assumes the functions of social management, personality education, and moral cultivation. Traditional Chinese families have produced a series of contradictions within the family, and the imbalance of modern family relationship is the core of the contradiction, so it is necessary to analyze the Chinese family living patterns and to find solutions in multicultural system to adapt to modernity and post-modernity.

Under the circumstances of female development, family construction is facing new situations, new problems and new challenges, like the weakening of patriarchy, the equal emphasis on paternity and maternity and the development of more equal and intimate intergenerational relationships. How do Chinese families find a suitable path for the development of modern families in the practice of exploration and transformation is of great significance to the stability and prosperity of the family and the country.

1.2 Situation of the study

Family sociology is a sub-discipline of sociology. It mainly studies the origin and evolution of the family system, family structure, functions, relationships and various modern family problems. After the 19th century, Western society formally carried out in-depth research on the family as a subject. Influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution, family sociology focused on exploring the origin and development of the family. In 1870, American Anthropologist Morgan's *Ancient Society* discussed the existence and development of matrilineal and patrilineal society, the historical evolution of marriage and family form, and pointed out that the family, as a dynamic factor, it experienced group marriage and dual marriage. There are several stages ranging from marital marriage to monogamy. Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) unites the family system with the social system, clarifies the characteristics of the development of family relationships in different socioeconomic forms, and predicts the future of the family, pointing out the monogamy.

After the 1950s, contemporary family history research mainly involved issues such as population, family structure, family economy, family kinship, religion, values, emotions, and sex. Western family history research has developed rapidly and changed drastically. Compared with the past, it has three distinct characteristics: emphasize the cooperation and exchange of various disciplines, especially the cross-study of sociological and historical methods, deepen the research content and integrate the family.

Western scholars' research on Chinese families began in the 1920s. American anthropology professor Daniel H. Kulp who was considered as the first western person to study Chinese families with anthropological methods. After investigating the Phoenix Village in Shantou, Kwangtung, he published *Country Life in South China: The sociology of Familism. Volume 1. Phoenix Village, Kwangtung, China*. This book is the first representative book to systematically study Chinese families using anthropological methods. Subsequent western studies on Chinese families have adopted taxonomy, such as the British anthropologist Maurice Freedman's *Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung, Lineage Organization in Southeastern China, Rites and duties: Chinese marriage*. After the 1960s, a large number of anthropologists went deep into Chinese society, conducted field investigations and collected documents, and the study of

Chinese families reached a climax: Myron L. Cohen's *House United, House Divided: The Chinese family in Taiwan* and Margery Wolf's *Women and Family in Rural Taiwan*.

In Chinese society, "family" occupies an important position in the field of daily life, and it is at the national political level. *The Great Learning* has a cloud: "In order rightly to govern his state, it is necessary first to regulate the family." (221 BC) It means that it is not possible for one to teach others, while he cannot teach his own family. Confucius said that: "There is government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son" (475 BC), it connects family life and political order together. As for Mencius's thoughts of "growth and gratitude" of "Care for my own aged parents and extend the same care to the aged parents of others; love my own young children and extend the same love to the children of others", it reflects the ethical principles of Confucianism based on family, love and difference, the fundamental purpose is to protect the world. The social and political order is based on family, and the "nation" is the expanded "family". The traditional family theory is built on the core of "parental system", which is internally embodied as male-centered and connected by paternal blood relationship. Parents are the representatives of patriarchy and have supreme power in the family. Since modern times, patriarchy has been fiercely attacked. The new cultural movement launched in 1919 is to criticize the humble relationship between men, women and children who are from traditional feudal families. Chen Duxiu: *Confucius' Way and Modern Life*, Hu Shi: *Chastity Problem* both strongly opposed feudal chastity and advocated equality between men and women. Ba Jin's classic novel *Family* is a realistic portrayal of the decline of China's patriarchal family. The male protagonist Gao Juehui represents the progressive image of youth in the era baptized by the new culture.

The *Birth System* written by the famous sociologist Fei Xiaotong not only discusses several issues of childbearing, but also includes marriage relationship, family organization, parental power, etc. It has far-reaching significance for dealing with contemporary family problems. In the book: *From the soil*. Fei Xiaotong believes that families in western society have obvious group boundaries which are a group community with husband and wife as the main axis. However, in the traditional Chinese society, it shows a strong difference pattern. The family in China is a business organization, which presents a single-line difference pattern with the father and son or mother-

in-law as the main structure. “The three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues” and “The three obedience and four virtues” are the maintenance of family discipline. This relationship of responsibility and obedience has become a characteristic of the business community. In the local society, all forces to disrupt the order will be contained, the relationship between the couple is indifferent, and the separation between men and women is inevitable.

Since the Reform and Opening up in 1978, the changes in China's modern family include all aspects of family structure, family culture, family function and family relations. Pan Yunkang & Lin Nan: *Modern Family Model in Chinese Cities*, Yang Fan's essay: *The research on the Modern Chinese Patriarchy Problem*, Beijing Normal University Professor Li Shoufu: *Differences, Origins, and Influences of Chinese and Western Cultural Traditions* are all provided a strong theoretical basis for studying changes in modern families.

1.3 Research Strategy

The article is divided into four parts. Chapter One introduces the theoretical background and research significance. Subsequently, Chapter Two elaborated on the characteristics of the feudal patriarchal system in terms of parent-child relationship and spousal relationship and analyzed the positive and negative effects of these characteristics. Besides, with the development and outbreak of modern reforms and revolutions, changes in the political system also affected ordinary families. The occidental idea of equality has gradually been accepted in China, but the deep-rooted patriarchy has not been eradicated, and problems such as women's status, arranged marriages, and fears of parents' control on their lives still exist. Chapter Three describes that in the first 30 years after the establishment of the country, due to the influence of the Soviet Union, China has taken a long detour, and the influence of the national policy on the family has also begun to develop and change, especially the status of women in this period has been slowly promoted. The Chapter Four focuses on the post-modern society, the part of traditional family culture that involves ethics and pieties has also been given new meanings by people in order to adapt to the changes of the times. At the same time, the enhancement of children's privacy awareness, family ethical order, and support for the elderly are the things that almost all modern

families have to confront. Especially the adolescents brought up in postmodern families, they are brave to criticize the old tradition, but at the same, is hard for them to escape from the control of their families. Thus, finding an effective method to solve these problems can not only alleviate family conflicts and create a harmonious atmosphere, but more importantly, it can promote the stable development of society.

This article adopts literature research method and comparative analysis method. Using time as a clue, horizontally compare the problems encountered by Chinese and Western families in the process of family development, learn and master the research angles and research methods of foreign scholars on Chinese family problems, and draw more cutting-edge and novel perspectives; the vertical comparison is to compare the ancient family theory, family functions, family relationships and other aspects. After systematically expounding the family system based on the “patriarchy”, to conclude the positive factors for the harmonious development of modern society and the family. The application of traditional family theory to the development of modern families aims to construct a theoretical system suitable for modern families.

2. Trace the History

2.1 The Meaning and Development of Patriarchy

China went through a long period of feudalism, similar to that of the West. As early as the 8th century BC, China was an unstable confederation of lordly territories. And it continued to be so for many centuries. Max Weber very clearly highlighted the characteristics of the Chinese feudal system, in its political and economic components, but also in its social components. "Feudalism rested on honor as the cardinal virtue, patrimonialism on piety." (Weber, 1964, p.157) The little scaled production of a family is the basic economic unit of the feudal society as well as the foundation of the feudal patriarchal system. Its core is to have a "professional" parent to organize production and distribution and prevent the dispersion and loss of property and labor. The conditions for simple reproduction are guaranteed. The increase in productivity provided material conditions for family-style production, and the feudal patriarchy came into being.

As early as in the slave society, land was owned by the ruling clans. The leader of the ruling clans was the highest landowner in the country, while the ruled clans were reduced to slaves and driven to engage in collective labor. The ruling clans need unite to grow their own families and stabilize their dominant position, so the "Zong" was born. "Zong" actually means the group with the same family name. The "Da Zong" represented by the eldest son is the royal family, and the "Xiao Zong" refers to the remaining sons and concubines. To maintain the family's daily production and family harmony, the oldest protagonist manages the remaining clan members. In this system, the parents, clan sons, and patriarchs are the absolute authorities in the family, having the greatest power. "There is an unequal relationship between family and other members which is the ruling and the ruled, the dominating and the dominated". (Narrow patriarchal system) (Yang Fan, 2012, p.2)

In fact, due to the large number of people in the family with the same surname, the patriarch who has the power of commanding holds a lot of power. However, with the promotion of ironware and the continuous progress of production methods, the emerging nobles had to break free from the original production relations as to adapt to their own development. "Dividing up the royal

family, promulgating decrees, and gradually affirming the private ownership of land, disintegrating the state ownership of the land by the slave owners, and the large families of the patriarchal system have lost their basis for existence". (Gong Jie, 1980, p.12) The family-style mode of production was replaced by the feudal mode of production that centered on landlord ownership. The basic economic feature of this mode of production is the Self-sufficient Natural Economy, also called Petty-farmer Economy. "The mode of production of petty farmers is not to make them interact with each other, but to isolate them from each other. They have not formed a class. They cannot represent themselves and must be represented by others. Their representatives must be their masters as well, the high authority that stands above them, the unrestricted government power. This power protects them from other classes and gives them rain and sunshine from above. In the final analysis, the political influence of petty farmer is manifested in administrative power dominating society". Therefore, the political structure compatible with the petty-farmer economy can only be a centralized monarchy. (Marx, 1972, p.693) In addition to the Son of Heaven as the father of all peoples under heaven, the model of father and son between the emperor and the officials, the officials and the people is also set, that is, the emperor is the father, and the minister is the son; the official is the father, and the people is the child. The emperor is the patriarch of the country. The monarchy maintains the patriarchal system, and the patriarchal system is the social pillar of the monarchy. (Broad patriarchal system) (Yang Fan, 2012, p.3)

After the Qin and Han dynasties, the hierarchical autocracy represented by the enfeoffment system was gradually replaced by the centralized autocracy with prefectures and counties as the basic form, and the hereditary aristocracy was also replaced by the bureaucratic appointment system. The political influence of the patriarchal system declined, however, the ruler's use of patriarchy to strengthen autocratic ruling has not been weakened, because in their opinion, if everyone is trained to be a filial son who is obedient to his parents since childhood, he will become absolutely loyal when he grows up, whether it is "dutiful filial piety" or "stupid loyalty", both will stabilize the autocratic order.

Feudal patriarchy has affected politics, economy, ethics, ideology, and academics. "Confucius's philosophy: Cultivate the self, regulate the family, govern the state, then lead the world to peace.

But the so-called self-cultivation is not to make a person complete his personality, but to sacrifice. The first step in sacrificing personality is to 'fulfill filial piety.' The 'loyalty' of the relationship between the monarch and the minister is the magnification of the 'filial piety' of the father-son relationship. Because the monarchy system is completely the development of the patriarchal family system". (Li Dazhao, 1959, p.296) It can be seen that in order to consolidate the monarchy, the ruling class must strengthen the absolute power of the patriarchy, let the parents become the rulers of the family, and then gradually expand their influence, furtherly to implement the monarchy to the entire feudal country. "Filial piety was held to provide the test and guarantee of adherence to unconditional discipline, the most important status obligation of bureaucracy." (Weber, 1964, p.158) This is the basic feature of feudal patriarchy.

"Father, the supreme. All the humble and the young, no matter how big or small the event is, do not have to be unauthorized, must consult their parents". (Zhu Xi, 1169) This supreme parent is the master of the family. The specific influence of feudal patriarchy can be reflected in the following aspects:

i. Ideological despotism

China has always respected filial piety. "The absolutely primary virtue, constantly inculcated in children, was filial piety toward parents. In case of conflict, piety preceded all other virtues." (Weber, 1964, p.157) It is not only a basic criterion for restraining people's behavior, but also an important method used by feudal rulers to manage the country. Filial piety is a code of conduct that safeguards parental rights. However, with the strengthening of China's authoritarian rule, filial piety has been biased in the development process, and it has gradually become one-sided, vulgar and extreme. In *Baihutong·Three Outlines and Six Epochs* in the Western Han Dynasty (51 BC), the saying that "ruler guides subject, father guides son and husband guides wife." This kind of regulation makes the traditional fatherly kindness and filial piety evolved into the absolute obedience of children to their parents, and parental authority has become the world of children. After the Song Dynasty, the ruling class emphasized that parents were always right with their children. Children and grandchildren had no independent personality in front of their parents. All actions were based on the parents' order, which limited the development of children from the ideological level and made them become vassals of their parents.

ii. Rights of property disposal

In China's feudal society, which is dominated by petty-farmer economy, each household is an economic unit, and public property ownership is implemented within the family. As the representative of the family, parents have absolute control over the family's common property. When parents are alive, children and grandchildren must not "live in a separate house". Si Maguang once mentioned in his *Su Shui Jia Yi*: "Anyone who is a son should not accumulate personal wealth. The salaries and farmhouses will go to the parents. If you want to use it, please inform in advance. Do not dare to store, not dare to engage in private." (1081) The law also expressly stipulated that offspring posterities were forbidden to divide property privately. If they used family property without the permission of their parents, there were penalties for both the elder and the younger, and the severity of the punishment was determined according to the amount of property being used. Beating them, to the least were twenties, to the most were hundreds.

iii. Inferiority and superiority

The traditional family adopts the method of rectification and scoring to determine the position of family members in the relationship between the inferiors and the superiors, and then establish the corresponding rights and obligations. As the core of family power, parents are a symbol of the family therefore, the transmission of parental positions and rights is extremely important and strict and should not be taken lightly. Strict eldest son inheritance system came into being, that is, the eldest is superior to the youngest, man is superior to woman, the Di son is superior to the Shu son¹. These former three relations are interrelated and intertwined to determine the hereditary alternation of parents. The eldest son inheritance system is the most basic patriarchal principle in feudal ethics and is protected by law. The *Law of the Tang Dynasty* stipulated that the lawbreaker who violated the law was imprisoned for one year, and the *Law of the Qing Dynasty* stipulated that the staff must be beat by eighty sticks.

Under the influence of feudal ethics, children are also recognized as the property of their parents,

¹ From Wikipedia: **Dishu** was an important legal and moral system involving marriage and inheritance in ancient China. Under this system, a man was allowed one official wife, called **Di wife**, and her son was called the **Di son**. A secondary spouse was called **Shu wife**. A man might participate in a small ritual, or no ceremony, to take on a Shu wife. Several Shu wives were allowed for one man at the same time according to the law. A Shu wife's son was called the **Shu son**.

“they are skinned by parents and are afraid to damage it” (Confucius, *Filial Piety*, 241 BC), so parents can dispose of them at will. *The Book of Rites* said: “Parents are so angry and displeased to beat the children until bleeding, children are not daring to complain, then continue respect and support to the parents.” (51 BC) “The father asks the son to die, not dare to question again?” (Si Maqian, 98 BC- 74 BC) The children do not dare to have any doubts about the parents' disposition, only can accept it. Even if the children and grandchildren were killed, the punishment received by the parents was very slight, it indicated that the feudal society gave parent the rights to determine whether the children live or die.

iv. Arranged marriages

“The marriage allows non-blood women to enter the male family. High or low rank, status of superiority and inferiority, and the difference in ability between men and women will all affect the stability of the family.” (Fan Jiangang, 1997, p.44) Therefore, marriage matters in the whole family and full of religious significance. The marriage of children was handled by the parents with full authority. The marriage policy of “parents' orders, matchmakers' words” was implemented, “men and women are not allowed to marry personally”, and the marriage is completely arranged by the parents. (Shang Ligang & Wang Lu, 2001, p.51) Children had no rights to decide their spouse. From the perspective of marriage ceremonies, none of them were carried out without the name of the parents.

v. The status of women

Chinese women have been in slavery for a long time in history. This phenomenon still has a certain impact on the social life of contemporary women. “The inequality between men and women in history is not always present but is the product of historical development to a certain stage.” (Li Zhuo, 2004, p.404) Since entering class society in the Xia Dynasty, the ruling class in the past has used the influence of politics, religion, laws and ideology to put women in chains and eventually put them to the entire society's bottom. “Qian, heaven, so called father. Kun, earth, so called mother.” (*I Ching-Hexagram*, 1000-750 BC) The dualistic worldview of Yin and Yang² of the universe laid the theoretical foundation for the superiority of men and women.

² Wikipédia: **Yin e Yang** são conceitos do taoismo que expõem a dualidade de tudo que existe no universo. Descrevem as duas forças fundamentais opostas e complementares que se encontram em todas as coisas: o *yin* é o princípio da noite, Lua, a passividade, absorção. O *yang* é o princípio do Sol, dia, a luz e atividade.

Mencius's "There are three things which are unfilial, having no son is the worst" (*Mencius*, 250 BC- 150 BC) on the surface, it is said the responsibility of men, but actually is the deprivation of the "patent" rights of women's reproduction and the possession of women's unique reproductive functions. (Li Zhuo, 2004, p.407) In addition to abiding by the mental and behavioral "four virtues" standards³, women must also endure physical torture-foot binding. It deprives women of freedom of movement, keeps them away from work, and deepens their dependence on men.

Although aristocratic families and scholars support women's reading and writing, they have no choice but learning books such as *The Commandments of Women*, *The Book of Female Filial Piety*, and *The Story of a Martyr*. It is not to let women know about society and then transform society, but to let them know about women's etiquette and women's way, so that they can consciously practice the "Three Obediences and Four Virtues" (Li Zhuo, 2004, pp.409-410)

"The feudal patriarchal system protects the economic foundation and social order of feudalism. The landlord controls the farmers through the family, and if something goes wrong, the whole family will follow." (Gong Jie, 1980, p. 15) It can be seen that the feudal patriarchal system and the family, village organization which established on the system maintain the order within the family, and thus the order of the feudal society. From the perspective of the development of feudal society, social life including the level of production, production relations, social organization, and family system has been undergoing changed and it is by no means a stagnant society. But from another perspective, its social organization structure is constantly being rebuilt and repaired, presenting a huge stability in which the social structure maintains its inherent form during changes. While it has not developed into a new social structure and has not formed into the power to establish a new social form. (Li Zhuo, 2004, p.72)

2.2 The awakening mind under the cannon

"Since modern times, the West has gone through a series of social changes such as the

³ Wikipedia: the **Three Obediences and Four Virtues** is a set of moral principles and social code of behaviour for maiden and married women in East Asian Confucianism, especially in Ancient and Imperial China.

1. Feminine Virtue in Ethics in matrimony.
2. Feminine Virtue in Speech in matrimony.
3. Feminine Virtue in Visage.
4. Feminine Virtue in Works.

Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the Democratic Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution, and finally entered the modern society from the dark Middle Ages.” (Yang Fan, 2012, p.13) In 1840, the British used opium to open the door to this strongest country in the east in 1988. At this time, the Qing government, which was at the end of its rule, was still immersed in the “Hua Yi Order”, ignorant of the general trend of the world and adopted a repulsive attitude towards western culture. It was not until the failure of the second opium war (1856-1860) that China suffered huge losses, which shook the center of Chinese society. The rulers decided to implement reforms, the Wuxu Reform Movement⁴(11/6/1898-22/09/1898). However, this bourgeois enlightenment organized by scholar-bureaucrats did not fundamentally shake the foundation of feudal patriarchy, and the subsequent 1911 Revolution⁵ (10/1911-02/1912) overthrew the rule of China from the political system of the monarchy, which lasted for more than two thousand years, with the coming of the New Culture Movement (1915-1923) all provided valuable lessons for future generations in the field of thought.

i. Wuxu Reform

The bourgeois reformists represented by Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and Tan Sitong began to criticize the feudal patriarchy. Kang Youwei pointed out: “The family members are incriminated by their parents, suppressed of their entire life, and ultimately cannot be free.” “The stricter the etiquette, the deeper the suffering.” (Kang Youwei, 2002, pp.218-220) Its purpose is to talk about eradicating the ethical relationship of feudal families rooted in the body of society and establishing independent human dignity. Tan Sitong pointed at the “three outlines and five constants” that integrates patriarchal patriarchy and political patriarchy. This is “vulgar practice, verbal teachings”. “The three outlines are deterrent enough to break their courage and kill their souls.” (Cai, Shangsi & Fang, Xing, 1981, p.348) He actively promoted the concept of democracy and equality, thinking that “father and son own different wealth, they should be like brothers, they are equal.” (Cai, Shangsi & Fang, Xing, 1981, p.19) Under tremendous pressure, the Qing government sent a large number of bureaucrats and scholars to Japan to study the Japanese

⁴ Wikipedia: The **Hundred Days' Reform** or **Wuxu Reform** was a failed 103-day national, cultural, political, and educational reform movement that occurred from 11 June to 22 September 1898 in late Qing dynasty China.

⁵ The **1911 Revolution** also known as the **Chinese Revolution** or the **Xinhai Revolution**, ended China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing dynasty. On January 1, 1912, this revolution established the Republic of China (the ROC). The revolution was named Xinhai because it occurred in 1911, the year of the Xinhai stem-branch in the sexagenary cycle of the traditional Chinese calendar. The revolution marked the end of 2,000 years of imperial rule and the beginning of China's early republican era.

experience, learning from the West through Japan.

However, this bourgeois reform movement lasted only a hundred days before it failed under the opposition and suppression of the feudal die-hards. This reform with the slogan of “learning from the foreigners to develop skills to control the foreigners”, how can it not fail if it only learns technology rather than western political system and culture? As a monarchy entrenched in the history of China for thousands of years, “the emperor is in charge of everything like a father... Based on the principle of patriarchy, courtiers are treated as minor children... Because of the lack of opposition that exists objectively in subjective movements, every possibility of change is ruled out.” (Adrian, 1995, pp.114-124) On the other hand, our neighboring country, Japan, was also knocked to open by the US warships, but in the face of the invasion of Western countries, Japan took the attitude which is obviously different from China. “The Japanese have a clearer understanding of the global trend and the international environment, and the enthusiasm for broadening the knowledge of the universe.” (Li Zhuo, 2004, p. 99) Reformers relied on the power of the people to overthrow the Tokugawa Shogunate and supported Emperor Meiji, the Meiji regime was thus established. After the abolition of the shogunate system, the construction of modern industry, national defense, and education, and the revision of unequal treaties, quickly got rid of the crisis of becoming a colony. From then on, it embarked on the ranks of modernization, “more like standing in the western world nations”. (Reischauer, 1980, p.87)

It can be concluded that the reformers of the Qing government had a strong feudal consciousness of “Using Chinese culture to manage and western technology to work.” in their minds. The criticism of feudal paternalism cannot be thorough. “China is more of a denial of movement.”, “China can only stay at the beginning of history after rejecting all movements.” (Adrian, 1995, pp.143-164) If the feudal system remains unchanged, then there is “no starting point”, just “talking about reforms”. (Tan Sitong, *Benevolence*, 1896-1897)

ii. 1911 Revolution

Although the Wuxu Reform Movement failed, the struggle against feudal patriarchy did not stop. Compared with the incomplete reforms in the previous period, the critique of patriarchy and ethics in the Revolution of 1911 reached an unprecedented height. During the Hundred Days' Reform, the Reformers advocated the establishment of a constitutional monarchy and the

“emergence of the gentry”. During the 1911 Revolution, the bourgeois revolutionaries advocated the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic. The criticism of the concept of feudal monarchy must be linked to the feudal paternal system”. (Wang Yubo, 1980, p.53) First of all, sending students abroad enabled Chinese intellectuals to get in touch with Western political doctrine and natural science, and to introduce Rousseau and Montesquieu’s theories to China, successively established the progressive publications in major cities; secondly, based on Rousseau’s *Du contrat social ou Principes du droit politique*, promoted civil rights and recognized the rights of the people. “Everyone in a country has the spirit of freedom, equality and fraternity.” (*Tongmenghui Declaration*, 1905) Under the guidance of this spirit, some people began to reflect on the persecution of personality by traditional Confucianism and proposed that “Confucius looks very bad now.” (*World Scout Journal*, 1903) More people issued the *Declaration of Rejecting Confucius*. Following Kang Youwei’s “breaking the family boundaries”, it was clearly put forward the idea of “family revolution”, “getting away from the slaves of the family and being a legally political person.” (Family Revolution, *Jiangsu Journal*, 1904) “Although this kind of thinking started from the equality of human rights of bourgeois concept or even anarchism, it was of progressive significance at that time.” (Wang Yubo, 1980, p.53) In addition to the above performance, the Revolution of 1911 also highlighted the issue of emancipating women. Thanks to the establishment of new style schools, women would be able to go to school or even study abroad as well. After absorbing advanced Western thoughts, they no longer regarded the “three obediences and four virtues” as a code of conduct under the traditional ethics and believed that women must have independent personalities. The famous female revolutionary Qiu Jin said that under the shackles of patriarchy, women were like “sinking into eighteen layers of hell”, becoming “prisoners in the first half of her life, work like a horse in the latter half of life.” (Qiu Jin, 1979, p.14) “In general, there is no difference between men and women in innate human rights.” (Qiu Jin, 1979, p.130)

The 1911 Revolution created a modern national democratic revolution in a full sense. Its greatest historical achievement was the overthrow of the autocratic monarchy, the establishment of the republic, and the rise of democratic spirit. However, we must admit that although the depth and breadth of the Xinhai Revolution have made great progress compared with the Wuxu Reform, it

still did not change the nature of China's semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Under the constant pressure of the old and new forces, Chinese people are still in dire straits, feudal ideas kept remained in their minds. In the first publishing of *Woman's Magazine in Japan* (1911), while advocating that women should have independent personality, on the other hand, they advocated "integrity first". Another example is that for the family revolution, while promoting equality and democracy, at the same time, setting the example of "*feudal barbarity of Zhang Suiyang killing his wife and eating it*". It is clear to see the weakness of the Chinese bourgeoisie.

2.3 The new cultural movement leading the modern Chinese culture

The "May 4th Movement"⁶ that broke out on May 4, 1919 continued to unfold the feudal patriarchal system criticism. The significant figures during this period were Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao. Chen Duxiu was "the commander-in-chief of the May Fourth Movement, and he actually led the entire movement." (Mao Zedong, 1996, p.294) As an early Marxist who absorbed Marx's historical materialism, he refined the parts of Chinese traditional culture that were conducive to individual liberation and social transformation and also analyzed the failure of the Revolution of 1911. He concluded: "The laws of Qing Dynasty practiced before the Republic of China totally followed Confucian model." (Chen Duxiu, 2013, p.183) The mainstream ideology of feudal society had not been completely eradicated, which was bound to be ideologically different. It would not allow the Chinese to accept the new political system and new ideology, because of lacking a mass basis, finally the bourgeois revolutionary movement went to die with no doubts. At that time, China was a new democratic and republic society in appearance, nevertheless it remained in the old feudal system.

At that time, the pioneers realized that the feudal autocratic political system was inseparable from the feudal patriarchy, then could they link the social liberation movement with the breaking of patriarchy. The various movements that arose in society during that time "are a movement to break the big family system, a movement to break the patriarchy, a movement to break the

⁶ Under the influence of the October Revolution, the New Cultural Movement has undergone a fundamental change, from a movement of the bourgeois cultural revolution to a movement that widely propagates Marxism-Leninism.

dictatorship of men, that is, a movement to overthrow Confucius' patriarchy, paternalism, and pariahdom of women." (Li Dazhao, 1959, p.300)

Since feudal patriarchy is not only protected by law, but also sanctified by feudal ethics, it is impossible to liberate people's minds if feudal ethics cannot be thoroughly criticized. "To support Democracy, one has to oppose ritualism, ritual law, chastity, old ethics, and old politics." (Chen Duxiu, 1919, *La Jeunesse*); "It is nothing more than destroying Confucianism, destroying etiquette, destroying chastity, destroying old ethics (loyalty and filial piety), destroy the old clan (ghosts and gods), destroy the old politics (privileged rule by man)". (Chen Duxiu, 2013, p.361) Of course, Chen Duxiu also agreed that Confucianism should be viewed dialectically. He believed that "to respect Confucianism, we should also give full play to Confucius' not talking about gods and monsters. We should no longer advocate the democratic movement which hinder the human rights, etiquette that encourages bureaucratic arrogance." (Chen Duxiu, 2013, p.508) On the one hand, it affirmed the outstanding contribution of Confucianism in maintaining the ethical order, and on the other hand, it criticized the ideology of maintaining feudal despotism through the "three outlines and five constants".

However, limited to historical conditions, at that time the intellectual only used Marxism to criticize patriarchy initially, and some thinkers still hold feudalism. As a master of the New Culture Movement, Wu Yu still practiced patriarchy at home. Because his daughters watched movies privately and communicated with boys, he threatened to sever ties with them; Chen Duxiu became the leader of the Communist Party of China in the later period but practiced paternalistic leadership, seriously endangered the revolution. It is conceivable that in the homes of ordinary people, patriarchal thinking is even more difficult to eliminate. In *Family*, the eldest son Jue Xin's newly married scene is described in detail: "On the day of the engagement, he was played with like a puppet; he was loved by others like a baby. He does what people want him to do. He has no happiness, no sorrow. These things he did seem to be his obligations. At night, after the guests were gone, after the trick was done, he fell asleep tiredly, forgetting everything." (Ba Jin, 1981, p.390) Regarding the social phenomena reflected in *Family*, Ba Jin concluded: "From 1920 to 1921, although the May Fourth Movement had taken place, the Gao Family was still in the ear when the grandfather ruled the entire family. The old man Mr. Gao was the monarch of

feudal rule. He also had the entire old ethics as the basis of his ruling theory...He had the power of economy...the power of dealing with life and death over young people. The fate of women not to mention. The young maid bought with money was only one part of his property in his eyes. He can give her away as a present at will." (cf.: Ba Jin, 1986, p.41)

The scope and influence of the anti-feudal struggle of the May Fourth Movement was mainly limited to young students and intellectuals, did not penetrate deeply among the working class. This struggle was mainly carried out in the field of ideology, only criticized the feudal patriarchy ideologically and theoretically. There was no fundamental change in the economic structure and social system, so that the criticism was restricted (Wang Yubo, 1980, p.56), as a result, it was doomed that the May Fourth Movement could not fundamentally complete the historical task of criticizing feudal paternalism.

The 1911 Revolution was the boundary of social transformation in modern China, so that transformation can be divided into two stages: passive modernization and active modernization. The import of advanced Western civilization was the determined motivation for the reform. Due to the efforts of intellectuals, the ideas of equality and democracy had indeed been effectively spread. The reform, the democratic revolution and the cultural movement which aimed at breaking the old ethics, all of them laid a solid theoretical basis for the foundation of the People's Republic of China. However, as mentioned earlier, these changes have not fundamentally touched the foundation of feudal patriarchy. After founding the Republic of China, China's feudal monarchy had been replaced by a republic in form, but in essence it had not achieved political transformation. (Yang Fan, 2012, p.14) After Sun Yat-sen was forced to resign as the interim president, the Beiyang warlords headed by Yuan Shikai in order to maintain the dictatorship, sold feudal culture under the banner of "Respecting Confucius" and openly restored the monarchy. After the Kuomintang unified China, Chiang Kai-shek advocated restoring "the inherent ethics of our country" and "taking loyalty and filial piety as the foundation." To enslave the people ideologically, he believed that the believers of revolutionary leaders must be as sincere and enthusiastic as religious believers to their religious beliefs, be the same all the way. It can be said that patriarchy has not been completely eradicated in the constant criticism and crusade. After the foundation of the People's Republic of China, facing the just-initiated political environment

and new economic policies, the traditional “leading parent” thinking has undergone new changes, and Chinese families that have grown up in modern society will meet new challenges.

3. Preliminary Exploration of Modern Family Reform

For contemporary China, 1978 can be described as a watershed. With the continuous adjustment of economic structure, Chinese society has also entered a period of transformation. China's social transformation has the following four trends. The first one is the transformation from a planned society to a market society. The people's ideas, social policy trends, social norms and systems have all been transformed with marketization as the axis, and the social competition mechanism has gradually replaced the minority decision mechanism. The second is the transition from rural to urban society. More and more farmers become citizens, and the urbanization rate of the population continues to increase. The third is the transition from an industrial society to an information society. The fourth is to transform from a poor society to a rich society. The first trend is the main dimension of the transformation of the social system; the second is the main dimension of the transformation of the social structure; the third and fourth are the main dimensions of the transformation of social development. These four dimensions also represent the effect of China's social transformation. (Yao Shuigen, 2013, p.109) After the founding of the People's Republic of China, due to the fundamental changes in the nature of society, the family has also changed, and all aspects of the family have also undergone a process of friction and adaptation. Generally speaking, the changes in Chinese families before 1978 were at a relatively gentle stage. After that, especially since the 1990s, Chinese society has been surging and changing with each passing day. Chinese families have also experienced unprecedented changes from entities to concepts.

3.1 The influence of the Soviet Model on China

The establishment of New China enabled it to enter a socialist society directly from a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. Because of the lack of understanding of how to build a socialist country and lead the people into the road of modernization, the shortage of grasp of the objective laws of economic and political development, and the comprehensive copying of the Soviet Model in the high level of imitation from politics, economy to culture, has made Chinese society doctrine

gone through a long detour in the first thirty years after the founding of New China.

After World War II, the capitalist camp headed by the United States and the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union faced each other. Encountering such a severe international situation, leaders with Mao Zedong who was at the core have formulated the foreign policies of “starting from a new start”, “cleaning the house and treating guests again” and “leaning to one side”. The United States continued to support the Kuomintang and relentlessly suppressed and blocked the Communist Party. In order to strive for a favorable international environment and safeguard national interests, China must unite with the Soviet Union, thus forming a joint force to resist foreign suppression of the new regime. Therefore, “leaning to one side” became the only option. The prospect of the victory of the Chinese revolution strengthened the Soviet Union’s determination to cooperate with China. In addition, in January 1949, Mikoyan came to Xibaipo and reached a consensus on many issues with the leaders of the Communist Party of China, which resolved the estrangement between the two sides and created a relationship between China and the Soviet Union. Liu Shaoqi paid a secret visit to the Soviet Union in June 1949 and immediately reported it to Mao Zedong after listening to Stalin’s suggestions: firstly, as long as the Chinese government was established, the Soviet Union would immediately recognize it; secondly, China should establish a state in advance to prevent imperialists from using the so-called anarchy State intervention, or even joint intervention. Therefore, the founding ceremony originally scheduled in January 1950 was brought up to October 1949. The establishment of New China had epoch-making significance. On October 3, the Soviet Union called to establish diplomatic relations with the Chinese government as soon as possible. Thus, the Soviet Union became the first country that was around the world establishing diplomatic relations with China. Subsequently, Bulgaria, North Korea, Hungary and other countries established diplomatic relations with China, which strengthened the overall strength of the socialist camp, promoted exchanges and cooperation between socialist countries, and played an important role in maintaining peace and stability in the Far East.

In the early days of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, due to lack of experience in socialist construction, imitating Stalin's Model was an inevitable requirement for China to follow the socialist road, and it was also an important element for obtaining Soviet assistance. The

Stalin Model mainly includes a highly centralized economic system, a highly centralized political system, and a highly centralized management system in the ideological field, among which the political system is dominant. To some extent, this highly centralized model fits with the ancient Chinese centralization model, which makes the patriarchal ideology remaining in the hearts of the Chinese find a new reason for existence in the revolutionary truth of Marxism-Leninism. In the national system, the phenomenon of the party dominating everything, the party and the government are not divided, and the power is greater than the law; the phenomenon of personality cult is repeated in Mao Zedong, "dear father Mao Zedong..." This is the same as the ancient emperor called the "sovereign father"; feudalism culture once again controlled the people's thoughts. The lyrics of "The heavens and the earth are not as great as the kindness of the party, and fathers and mothers are not as good as Chairman Mao". This kind of deformed political ethics and class ethics replaced the normal family ethics. Social ethics and human nature have been distorted. (Yang Fan, 2012, pp.19-22)

3.2 Women's Liberation Movement

As an important force in social development and progress, women's social status directly determines the level of civilization of a country. (Zhang Pin, 2020, p.136) In the early days of the founding of New China, the women's movement flourished for two reasons: one was the promotion of the international women's liberation movement. The International Women's Federation organized women to oppose the remnants of fascism, opposed wars of aggression, strived for democracy and peace, and defended their rights. China joined the International Women's Federation and contributed to women's liberation together with other countries and became an active member of the fight for women's rights in the world, especially in Asia. The second one was the early Communist Party's propaganda on women's liberation. As early as the period of the New Democratic Revolution, Mao Zedong pointed out that women's power is great. "The day when women across the country rise is the time when the Chinese revolution triumphs." "The mainstream media represented by the 'People's Daily' overwhelmingly confronted the construction and writing of a large number of female media images active in the front line of

production has eliminated the long-standing haze of gender discrimination of 'male superiority and female inferiority' and 'second sex' that have long hung over the women and provided the people of socialist China with a gender relationship on the value of equality." (Wang Shenhong, 2019, p.135) This publicized the importance of the women's movement to a certain extent and laid the foundation for the advancement of the women's liberation movement.

3.2.1 Liberation of prostitutes

The liberation of prostitutes and the realization of freedom of life is an important manifestation of the development of the women's liberation movement. As a product of feudal society, brothels were a backward and barbaric system that destroyed, squeezed, and ravaged women. (Zhang Pin, 2020, p.137) In order to help these low-level women get rid of the hard life and make them to be self-reliant laborers, on the one hand, the government gave prostitutes life cares and dispels the worries of prostitutes, promoting ideological education and the staff of the correctional home helped them read and write aiming to improve their cultural level; on the other side, authorities helped them treat venereal diseases, carrying out labor reforms, and arranging employment, so that these women can learn life skills and return to normal life.

By 1956, the nationwide prohibition of prostitution was basically over. In the late 1950s, the problem of prostitutes which had lasted for thousands of years in China, was almost resolved and we have to admit that a historical miracle was created. The Harvard University professor Serioe once commented on China's anti-prostitution movement: There is no precedent in the world for solving the problem of prostitution like Shanghai. Its success lies in the following: first, it has been completely transformed from public prostitution, secret prostitution to disguised prostitution, completely being eliminated; what is more, the work is solid. Finding a way out for prostitutes is the key to ban prostitution. These women gradually become the main force of social productivity, and then create social benefits and realize the value of life. (He Libo, 2009, pp.66-68)

3.2.2 Improvement of women's awareness

From the Agrarian Revolution to the War of Liberation, women have seen the dark rule of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucracy from the cruel reality, and gradually realized that their own liberation is inseparable from the liberation of the nation. The improvement of women's consciousness is first manifested in the consciousness of production. Mao Zedong once said that the great role of women is first in the economy. Without them, production cannot be carried out, so only by allowing women to participate in labor and become producers and owners of social wealth can ultimately break the inequality, which men have absolute wealth control and women become men's accessories and family slaves. In the early days of the founding of New China, women's values showed a strong labor nature. Advocating labor, loving labor, and enjoying labor are the most distinctive characteristics of women's values during this historical period. Labor is the only way for women to pursue equality and achieve liberation, and it is also the fundamental source of women's happiness. (cf: Liu Xiulun & Chen Bojin, 2019)

"People's Pictorial" reflects women's labor values from the scenes of their labor life and the image of model labor. For example, the model image shown in "Advanced Producer of Textile Industry-Hao Jianxiu" is an ordinary working woman who took root in the grassroots. After founding the People's Republic of China, the values of labor were guided by the collective standard, serving the collective and the socialism were the central ideas guiding people's labor. Women break out of the family regime, and the value of women's labor to meet collective needs and social needs is an important connotation, rather than simply satisfying family needs. (Liu Xiulun & Chen Bojin, 2019, p.94) After mastering the economic sources of family livelihoods, they had rights to speak and make decisions on family affairs. Women's status in the family has been greatly improved, and the atmosphere reflected by the family was more harmonious as well. Secondly, women's awareness of participating in politics has been significantly improved. "When we gain power, we must enable women not only to participate in elections, but also to be elected representatives and give speeches." (Marx, 1972, p. 234) Many outstanding women were promoted to lead cadres and became female factory directors, managers, county mayor and village chief. Because of their outstanding performances, plethora of women have been elected as representatives of people's congresses at all levels to serve in state institutions. Women who

are active in the political arena have played their roles well and at the same time, won the respect of society.

3.2.3 Pursue freedom of marriage

Mao Zedong summarized the four mountains that persecuted Chinese women in “Hunan Peasant Movement Investigation Report” (1926), also known as the “four powers” theory, namely political power, clan power, divine power, and husband power. In the final analysis, this persecution is the result of private ownership of the means of production. In order to break through the suppression of the old thinking, the authority of socialist ideology must be established. Therefore, under the efforts of the Communists led by Mao Zedong, the “Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China” was promulgated in 1950. This signifies that the feudal marriage, which is characterized by arranged marriages, male superiority, and disregard of children's interests, has been basically destroyed, breaking the feudal marriage system's restraint on women from the legal level. The promulgation of the “Marriage Law” provides legal protection for women's freedom of marriage, and also provides spiritual motivation for women to break the shackles of remnants of feudal ethics. But at the same time, women also realized that although the law protected their interests, the realization of this right must rely on their own struggles and not solely waited for rewards. As a result, women throughout country fought against feudal marriages. According to statistics from the judicial departments of the people's governments of various regions in North China in 1950, marriage cases ranked first among all cases, and most of them were brought by women, who mainly demanded the dissolution of unreasonable marriage contracts. Dissatisfaction with arranged marriages and sold marriages accounted for more than two-thirds of such cases.

In general, with the encouragement and support of the state, a large number of energetic women rushed into the public sphere exclusively occupied by men for a long time. This not only greatly changed the humble and low social status of Chinese women which lasted for thousands of years, but also helped more women improve their family status. They broke the shackles dominated by patriarchal power, promoted the development of Chinese women's liberation cause, and provided

valuable reference experience for modern women.

3.3 Chinese families under the population policy - “family planning” policy

In the history of Chinese family changes, we have to mention the “family planning” policy that affects every family. “Population is the basic element of social composition, and a certain amount and quality of population is the basic prerequisite for the existence and development of society.” (Wang Sibin, 2012, p.284)

China's family planning policy is based on specific national conditions. According to the survey report of demographers in the 1950s, it was found that uncontrolled childbirth would eventually have a huge impact on society, so they began to advocate planned childbirth. With the development of society, the family planning policy has been tightened step by step, from the early “maximum two births” to the strict control of the second child, calling the one-child policy. Although the implementation of the family planning policy has rapidly reduced China's birth rate and growth rate, we have found that the original policy can no longer meet the needs of social development as well. Faced with the serious problem of the early arrival of aging, the policy of relaxing the one-child policy has been gradually brewing in recent years, and the “half-child” policy⁷, the two-child fertility policy⁸ and the universal two-child policy⁹ have been introduced one after another. The transformation of the fertility policy aims to change the fragile family structure model and the problem of aging population and few children brought about by the one-child policy.

3.3.1 Policy changes under different historical conditions

i. 1949-1978

The period from 1949 to 1956 was the period of China's transition from a new democratic society to a socialist society. At the beginning of the country's establishment, it was obscure to know

⁷ Couples whose first child is a girl can have a second child.

⁸ for couples where either the husband or the wife is from a single-child family.

⁹ Allow full implementation of the policy that one couple can have two children.

that how to take a path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, so the best way was to copy the Soviet model and establish Soviet-style socialism. People think that the Soviet Union has carried out a proletarian revolution, overthrew the old system and improved people's lives. There was a vast land and a host of resources, so the overpopulation would not exist. During that era, Chinese people also believed that the country should be able to provide food and ensure the living condition, so abortion was not allowed with the contraception not advocated. It was not until 1953 that according to statistical results, the birth rate had reached 37% which attracted the attention of demographers. In 1955, the theoretical policy of family planning took shape. However, at that time, the purpose of birth control was not to control the excessive population growth, but to protect women and children. Due to technical limitations, ideological traditions and inadequate propagandas, the policy was not slowly implemented until after 1956.

After experiencing “three years of great famine”¹⁰ in China, the population at that time experienced a compensatory rapid growth. The birth rate in 1963 reached 43.4%, and the natural growth rate reached 33.3%. The issue of population control has become the focus of discussion. In the mid-1960s, family planning took the city as a breakthrough, increased publicity, promoted the use of contraceptives, expanded the supply network of contraceptives, and paid attention to the technical nature of contraceptive methods. The birth rate has dropped significantly. Later, due to the outbreak of the “Cultural Revolution”¹¹, although the government did not give up, the planning policy was hit by “Cultural Revolution Committee” and it was forced to stagnate.

ii. 1978-2012

In 1980, the government put forward the policy of “a couple has only one child”. However, the rural areas at that time began to implement the Households responsibility system¹², and agricultural production changed from the original collective economy to family-based production, and the family became an independent production and consumption entity. At this time, the

¹⁰ The Great Chinese Famine is a period between 1959 and 1961, and widely regarded as the deadliest famine and one of the greatest man-made disasters in human history, with an estimated death toll due to starvation that ranges in the tens of millions (15-55 million+).

¹¹A violent sociopolitical purge movement in China from 1966 until 1976. Launched by Mao Zedong, Chairman of the Communist Party of China, its stated goal was to preserve Chinese communism by purging remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society, and to re-impose Mao Zedong Thought (also known as *Maoism*) as the dominant ideology in the CPC.

¹² Wikipedia: The **Household responsibility system** was a practice in China, first adopted in agriculture in 1979 and officially established in 1982, by which households are held responsible for the profits and losses of an enterprise. In agricultural production, farmers as a relatively independent economic entity contract the collective land and other large-scale means of production and carry out production and management independently according to the contract. Except for a small part of its operating income, which is paid to the collective and state taxes following the contract, all income is attributed to farmers.

family's economic function was more prominent. Therefore, labor has become the main or even the only source of family production and enrichment. Farmers' willingness to bear children has been greatly strengthened, especially giving birth to boys.

In order to alleviate the gradually strict birth policy, the government proposed the slogan of "late marriage, postponement of childbearing and giving better and fewer births" in 1984. Due to differences in production methods and values, in rural areas, "some people do have practical difficulties to have a second child. After approval, arrangements can be made in a planned way, but three children are not allowed under any circumstances." (Xu Xiangyun & Zhang Tongkuo & Jiang Shuyu, 2016, p.103) The family planning policy is written into the constitution as a basic national policy and is gradually becoming institutionalized and standardized.

iii. 2013-2021

Therefore, in 2013, the country officially announced the implementation of the two-child fertility policy, which was the first adjustment of the family planning policy since 1984. From a macro perspective, two children in each family are internationally recognized as the most ideal family structure model. A comprehensive two-child family can change the family structure of China's "4-2-1" model. The full liberalization of the two-child policy will bring China's total fertility rate to 4.5. After the policy is opened, China will experience a two-child model with explosive cumulative effects. The two-child fertility will be used as a transition to achieve the soft landing from the new two-child policy. (Xu Xiangyun & Zhang Tongkuo & Jiang Shuyu, 2016, p.104) In 2015, it was finally decided to implement the universal two-child policy.

3.3.2 The effects of family planning policy

The family planning policy has had a huge impact on China's family relations, family structure, gender ratio, population quality and other aspects, directly as the aforementioned "4-2-1" family structure, empty nest families, adoption issues, and pension issues. In terms of family relationships, interpersonal relationships tend to be simplified and family cohesion has enhanced. Specifically, there are the following effects: On the first place, in terms of peer relationships, children in only-child families no longer have siblings, and peer relationships in nuclear families

disappear. What this may produce is that the intimacy or competitive relationship that should have existed between peers within the family has been transferred to the cousins and their expanded family, as well as the circle of classmates and friends beyond the family life. The disappearance of peer relationships has affected children's growth and education, like the caring mode and interpersonal communication mode. The family emotions that children receive may come from grandparents and parents. Besides, the family field also lacks the conditions for training peer relationships. The support of the one-child family is different from the traditional model, and the responsibility of the family to provide for the elderly falls on the only child and his spouse. On top of that, the intergenerational relationship has changed. The original situation of many children and grandchildren but the domination of the parents has been subverted. In the one-child family, child principally attracts the attention of the whole family. With the lifted cost of raising, grandparents and parents may start family life centered on the only child. The emphasis on intergenerational relations has shifted downward, which has caused problems such as intergenerational doting. At the same time, the rapid development of social economy and mass media has intensified the generation gap. We have seen that the inter-generational doting and the generation gap, the desire to serve the next generation and the refusal to serve, etc. exist discordantly.

On the other hand, the childbirth policy has exacerbated the weakening of the family's ability to provide for the aged, and the intergenerational supply and demand relationship has also changed. The elderly's demand for spiritual comfort from their children has grown, but the number of children and the fast pace of social life make this demand hard to be satisfied. Empty-nest families are facing severe problems in providing for the elderly. The risks brought by only-child have increased the number of "shidu" families¹³. According to the relevant statistics, in 2012, there were one million families who lost only one child in China with an additional 76,000 families lost one child each year. The number of people who belongs to "shidu" over the age is growing. There are 3,900 "shidu" families in Beijing. The issue of "shidu" has been increasingly concerned by the society and relevant departments.

The childbirth policy also affects the relationship between husband and wife. For example, the

¹³ the term for parents that have lost their only child.

contradiction between the number of children and gender preference may put the husband and wife under pressure from the elders, and the difference in the education concept of their only child may cause the couple, even both families to be unable to reach a consensus.

Due to the herd mentality of “raising children to protect against the old”, especially in rural areas, household cost of having extra kid is extremely low and the desire to have a boy is high. Basically, every family has at least one boy. For urban families that strictly having more than one kid but are keenly to have children, there are also retaining boys and aborting girls through scientific means. These conditions have caused an imbalance on the sex ratio of babies at birth, and the indirect social hidden dangers are the improper marriage of men and women and the social anomie of trafficking in women.

4. The collision and fusion of old and new ideas

4.1 Changes in the family function and structure

The contradictory movement of the function and structure of the family is the internal basis for the family reform in contemporary China. According to the structural function theory, a certain structure always performs or exhibits one or more functions, and certain functions also explain and influence the structure. Generally speaking, the structure is relatively conservative and stable, while the function is the most active factor, with flexibility and variability. Therefore, the weakening and transfer of functions will inevitably bring about corresponding changes in the structure. Specifically, family functions have gradually transitioned from family to society. At the same time, the family structure has also changed from tight to loose, from single to multiple. (Deng Weizhi & Xu Xin, 2000, p.82)

4.1.1 Family structure

“Family structure is a unity of common living relations formed on the basis of marriage and blood relationship, including intergenerational structure and population structure, and it is the same form of combining the two.” (Deng Zhiwei & Xu Rongrong, 2001, p.38) The family structure in China can be roughly divided into four categories:

- i. A joint family is also called a compound family, which is usually a family composed of parents and two or more married sons and their grandchildren. This belongs to a multi-generational multi-pair family. Multiple male blood relatives and their spouses are in the same family, and power is concentrated in the hands of the first or second generation. Influenced by the traditional economy, this form is the most typical and the most respected, and of course the most complicated family structure.
- ii. A nuclear family is a family composed of a couple and unmarried children. It contains the three most basic relationships: husband and wife relationship, parent-child relationship and sibling relationship. Due to the small scale of this structure and simple family relationships,

it can also be said to be the most stable.

- iii. The main family is also a direct family. It is composed of "two or more generations of couples, and each generation does not exceed one couple at most, and there is no generational separation between parents and married children." (Deng Zhiwei & Xu Rongrong, 2001, p.39) This kind of family satisfies the needs of having little support and having a life for the elderly, conforms to people's ethical concepts, and is also a true traditional Chinese family model.

In the new social environment, the family structure also presents new characteristics:

- i. The family scale is miniaturized and cored. With the in-depth development of social civilization, the nuclear family is still the mainstream of modern family forms. The decline in the population's fertility rate has increased the proportion of small families. The average population per household has dropped from 5.05 in 1975 to 3.97 in the 1990s. It is now 3.98 people per household, and the overall population remains between 2-4 and it has been gradually miniaturized. The proportion of nuclear families also rose from 58% in the 1970s to more than 70% in the 1990s. Nowadays, the "4-2-1" inverted pyramid structure, namely the structure of both parents, husband and wife, and one child, has become the mainstream of modern society. (Xu, Xiangyun & Zhang, Tongkuo & Jiang, Shuyu, 2016, p.102)
- ii. The joint family tends to disappear, and the main family is declining year by year. However, the degree of performance in urban and rural areas is different. The proportion of backbone families in rural areas is still large, and the rate of decline is much slower than that in cities, and there are also a small number of joint families. However, in the future, due to the development of productivity, the individualization of lifestyles and the reduction of willingness to bear children, such families will lose the conditions and meaning for their existence.
- iii. Other types of families have gradually increased and become more diverse. For example, empty nest families, DINK families, single families, same-sex families, etc. On the one hand, the diversification of family forms reflects the inclusiveness of society. People have more freedom and humane choices and can live in their favorite families. On the other hand, avoidance of marriage will lead to a decline in fertility and aggravate social aging. As a result, the social security system is facing tremendous challenges; the lack of children's education

has seriously affected the growth of young people, and the high rate of juvenile crime has affected social stability. ~

4.1.2 Family function

“Family function refers to the role it can play in human life and social development, that is, the function and effectiveness of the family.” (Deng Zhiwei & Xu Rongrong, 2001, p.66.) “With the development and progress of society, the family function is also being adjusted and changed at any time. On the whole, the family has five basic functions: production function, consumption function, population reproduction function, the function of raising children and supporting the elderly, and the function of satisfying the physiological and psychological needs of family members.” (Tang Can, 2005, p.201) In Chinese families, the following functions are more prominent:

- i. Economic function. In traditional society, the family is the occupant of the means of production, as well as the distributor and exchange of products. In modern society, especially since the 1950s, public ownership has transferred the production function from the family to the society. The production function of Chinese families has basically been lost, although the rural household contract responsibility system in the late 1970s and the development of urban private economy in the 1990s has restored the production function of the family, however, this restoration is not a simple repetition, but a new life based on the commodity economy, and the production function of the family is becoming more and more socialized. (Deng Weizhi & Xu Xin, 2000, p.83) Whether in urban or rural areas, socialized production has become a general consensus and gradually accepted by people.
- ii. Fertility function. Fertility was originally family decision-making and couple’s behavior, but modernization has closely linked family behavior with the process of industrialization and urbanization, making family issues gradually go out of the private domain, becoming more of a public event, and subject to government and third sector intervention. (Yang Juhua & He Zhaohua, 2014, p.38) In modern society, the reproductive function for the purpose of passing down the family line has gradually degraded. In the early 1950s, Mao Zedong

strongly emphasized human creativity and criticized Malthus's pessimistic population theory. Under the protection of policies, the concept of raising children and preventing the elderly under the protection of policies led to the high birth rate. With the economic development and the one-child policy implemented in the 1990s, people's concept of fertility changed. From the initial pursuit of quantity to a focus on quality, even the DINK families were produced.

- iii. Nurturing and support functions. The modern family transfers part of the responsibility of raising the next generation and supporting the elderly to the society. The enhancement of personal concept forces people to shift the focus of life from the family to their own development. The flexible and diverse childcare institutions and pension structure meet people's needs, relieve physical and psychological pressure, and also ease some intergenerational conflicts.
- iv. Cultural and educational functions. Compared with the weakening of other functions, the cultural and educational functions have shown a trend of increasing year by year. The large number of traditional family members makes it impossible for every child to receive a balanced education. However, with the increase of nuclear families in modern society, parents have more energy and financial resources to invest in the cultivation of their children's professional knowledge and essential-qualities-oriented schooling. It is worth noting that although some experts pointed out that filial piety and ethics in traditional culture are missing in contemporary society, it can be seen from the attitude of the country and schools that family culture has never lost its special status. (This part will be elaborated in the next chapter)
- v. Political and religious functions. Since ancient times, the traditional Chinese family is not only a patriarchal system that maintains and transmits political power and status, but also undertakes the task of spreading religion. The political and religious functions of the family are single and powerful. It is in the family that people have developed the habit of authority and obedience, forming a stable patriarchal family structure. In modern families, religious activities have shifted from the family to the society. The religious function of the family has been weakened and the political function has gradually been undermined as well. Family

relations have changed from hierarchical obedience to democratic equality, and parental authority has collapsed. (Deng Weizhi & Xu Xin, 2000, p.83)

To sum up, the changes in modern family functions present the following characteristics: the diversification of executive subjects (family, country, society); the multiple possibilities of shifting the focus of execution; the diversification of execution methods; the ever-expanding demand for family functions; the improving quality of family functions; the uniqueness of development of different levels of family functions. (Pan Zequan, 2005, p.132)

4.2 Family relationships

Since the formation, family has not been a static organization, but has been continuously adjusted with the changes in social patterns, and family relationships have changed accordingly. The complexity of family relationships is often proportional to the family population. The larger the population, the more complicated the family relationship. Specifically, family relationships refer to interpersonal interactions or connections between members, including parallel relationships and vertical relationships. The former refers to relationships between peers, such as husband and wife, brothers, sisters, etc.; the latter refers to intergenerational relationships, such as parent-child, mother-in-law, grandparents, and grandchildren. As a reflection of social relationships in the family, family relationships are a collection of economic, political, legal, and moral relationships among family members. (Liu Xiaohui, 2020, p.86) Deng Xiaoping pointed out in his speech *It is important to do regular work* that keeping the family harmony is also an essential job. To handle it well, one is the relationship between husband and wife, the second is the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, the third is the relationship between sister-in-law, and the fourth is the relationship between parents and children. (*cf.*, 1994, p.294)

i. Spousal relationship

The relationship between husband and wife is the center of the family relationship network, and its quality and stability are the focus of investigating family relationship issues and the basis for coordinating and handling other family relationships. The prosperous period of the American economy after World War II provided young women with opportunities for education and

employment. Coupled with the contraceptive technology that emerged in the early 1960s, as well as the public's perception of gender roles and life satisfaction, women's dependence on men decreased. If the marriage is unhappy and women do not want to endure it anymore, there are other options. (*cf.*, Defrain, 2006, p.56) China and other industrialized countries have also been affected by this kind of thinking.

“In traditional society, men are the masters of marriage. However, as long as the wife can bring up children and be competent in housework, husbands rarely file for divorce. Couples can grow old together, and the family can maintain harmony.” (Yang Juhua & He Zhaohua, 2014, p.47) The continuous improvement of women's education has promoted the development of the concept of gender equality. They go out of the house and participate in social labor. Changes in economic capabilities and concepts have given women more initiative in marriage. In modern society, the relationship between in-laws is obviously more important than the relationship between blood. People pay more attention to the quality of marriage and the relationship between husband and wife, and the marriage relationship is more independent. For young couples, when they wake up one day and find that love is gone and the vitality in the marriage is no longer there, they will choose to separate to maintain their personal happiness.

ii. Parent-child relationship

Traditional Chinese families have attached great importance to parent-child relationship since ancient times. “In one marriage, personal happiness is secondary, while childbirth, inheritance, and succession are the primary tasks.” (Yang Juhua & He Zhaohua, 2014, p.46) In the context of low fertility, the above characteristics are presenting contradictory phenomenon of polarization emerges. On the one hand, the emotional entanglement and dependence between parents and children has deepened. The offspring carry the unfulfilled wishes of the parents and constitute the center of the parents' sentiment and life, the source of psychological pleasure and the joy of life, and they put more emotions on their parents. At the same time, parents in modern society cannot balance their emotions and energy among multiple children like parents in the high-birth rate period and can only focus their attention on a few children. (*cf.*, Yang Juhua & He Zhaohua, 2014, p.47) On the other hand, the parent-child relationship has also become alienated. Due to the invasion of public goods, the popularization of electronic products has distracted the attention

of the people and alienated the distance between family members to a certain extent. At the same time, children pay more attention to privacy and independence, hoping to get rid of the control of their parents; also because of the one-child policy, many people have formed their own groups of friends since childhood. They are more willing to communicate with friends and naturally have an estranged relationship with their parents.

Different from the aforementioned husband and wife relationship, when couples having marital problem but having children, in order not to affect their children's future, most parents will set aside their own interests and differences and start from the perspective of the child. They will seek common ground while reserving differences and pretend to be affectionate and divorce after their children are admitted to college. Even after the divorce, their parent-child relationship can still be maintained normally. It can be seen from this that the parent-child relationship still occupies an important position in people's hearts. For the future development of their children, Chinese parents can sacrifice their own interests in exchange for the stable growth of their children.

iii. The relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law

The relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law refers to the family relationship formed between a married woman and her spouse's mother and is a non-blood relationship in intergenerational relationships. The particularity of the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is that it is neither a blood relationship nor a marriage relationship, but a family relationship established on the basis of an in-law relationship. (Li Xiaofang & Guo Jingqian, 2014, p.27) The traditional relationship between it is "the strong mother-in-law and the weak daughter-in-law", which is a top-down obedience. The daughter-in-law's obedience to the mother-in-law's words is not due to the mother-in-law, but because of her identity. Everyone just follows traditional customs and habits. Everyone's behavior is bound by social status and identity role and cannot reflect their personal willingness.

However, the development of the market economy allowed the daughter-in-law to participate in social labor and control the economic power of the family. The mother-in-law's family status began to decline, showing the characteristics of "strong daughter-in-law and weak mother-in-law". "Under the atmosphere of equality, the daughter-in-law is no longer a traditional role player, but

the mother-in-law still exercises her power in accordance with the traditional role. The contrast between role recognition and role expectations has led to an unstable relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.” (Li Xiaofang & Guo Jingqian, 2014, p.28) The decrease in the number of children and the unsound pension system in rural areas have caused mother-in-law to lower her position and form a good relationship with her daughter-in-law, so as to obtain stable resources for the elderly in the future. This kind of utilitarian intergenerational relationship makes it an open competition for parents to please their children. “This is actually a survival strategy for mothers-in-law under the reality of lack of resources for the elderly in rural areas.” (Li Xiaofang & Guo Jingqian, 2014, p.28)

Whether “the strong mother-in-law and the weak daughter-in-law” or “the strong daughter-in-law and the weak mother-in-law”, it is just a manifestation of the continued existence of the patriarchal social system in which the patriarchy is transformed into the husband's power. As long as this system remains unchanged and family care for the elderly still exists, the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law will be difficult to reconcile. (Li Xiaofang & Guo Jingqian, 2014, p.30)

4.3 The composition and innovative construction of family culture

4.3.1 Traditional family culture development

The accumulation of thousands of years of civilization has allowed the Chinese traditional family culture to accumulate a very rich and relatively independent cultural content. The strong vitality of traditional family culture is not only attributed to the stable blood relationship of the Chinese family, but also to the internal reason that the content of traditional family culture is scientific and conforms to objective laws. (Qian Tongzhou, 2016, p.183)

Traditional family culture is centered on the idea of “harmony”. “He(和)” and “He(合)” appear in both Oracle and Bronze inscriptions. The original meaning of “He(和)” is a wind instrument, which is extended to sound harmony; and “He(合)” means closed, which means the two things

are in harmony and correlation with each other. Confucius's posterior human thoughts have extended the meanings of smoothness and beauty contained in the thought of "harmony" from human beings to the entire universe. Its basic meaning reflects the state between different things. Specifically, it is to recognize the differences and diversities between different things and stress the unity in differences and the unity in contradictions. On the basis of difference and diversity, we put our foothold on the coexistence, integration and common development of different things. Traditional family culture attaches great importance to patriotism and collectivism. Family culture has always been the backbone of Chinese family culture. The country is above the country as society being in the first place, and the family is the root with the society being the foundation. When personal interests conflict with national interests, people often choose to sacrifice themselves to perfect the country. Loyalty to the country is also regarded as the highest criterion of family culture. "If a country is rich, the people will be strong; there is a country, there is a home." is the general consensus of the Chinese.

However, problems have arisen in the development of traditional family culture in contemporary society. In the past, the practice of taking family culture as an element of political life and completely politicizing family culture has actually carried out a certain transformation and transcendence of traditional culture, but it almost completely wiped out the extreme behavior of the old family culture, leading to individual natural emotions which cannot be expressed and performed normally. (Zhao Zhihao, 2015, p.97) On top of that, the attitude towards traditional culture and western culture is not clear. Since the "May 4th Movement" and the "Cultural Revolution", and even in the early stages of reform and opening up, there have been periods in which traditional culture was completely denied and western values and cultural concepts were totally adopted. The society still has high enthusiasm and expectation for the revival of traditional culture, but after the passion, it is indifferent. The values of Western society have their specific growth conditions and special environment. Lacking suitable environment, after entering China, those values will not exert positive and practical effects, and they may become the fuse that triggers family conflicts. Therefore, the family culture got in a state of chaos and contradictions. Finally, there is a shortage of recognition of traditional culture. The value transformation of traditional cultural resources is a manifestation of cultural consciousness. (Qian Tongzhou, 2016,

p.184) Among them, the attitude and behavior of the government play a major role. At present, the key to the reconstruction of traditional cultural resources is the operating mechanism, but now China is almost blank in this part. China's cultural soft power does not achieve a position corresponding to the history of civilization in the world as the international cultural dissemination deficit being serious, the main reason is that the rich cultural resources have not been transformed into realistic competitiveness. (Qian Tongzhou, 2016, p.184) Combining the practices of Japan, South Korea and other countries, in addition to the guarantee of laws and regulations and state support, the independence of content must also be guaranteed, and how to integrate the characteristics of the era into the core values of society, thereby removing negative feudal influences.

4.3.2 The new connotation of filial piety

The culture of filial piety has a long history in Chinese culture. As early as the Oracle era, the word “Xiao (filial piety)” appeared, and it was mentioned frequently in the “Book of Songs” and “Er Ya”. The idea of filial piety originated in the Yin and Shang era. In the Western Zhou Dynasty, the idea of filial piety was basically established and became the core of the moral code. The main meaning of filial piety in this period is to respect the ancestors, and its main form is to worship ancestors. As a moral code with religious significance, the theory of filial piety has been further developed during the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period and has gradually evolved from respecting ancestors to family ethics. Confucius, the representative of the Confucian, emphasized that filial piety should be combined with “li” and “ti”, and gradually expanded the scope of the role of filial piety to the basic virtues that all people should have. The ruling class uses the “loyalty” and “filial piety” that people value most, on the one hand, it is to maintain feudal rule and vigorously promote the theory of filial piety. Because family ethics are valued, filial piety plays a role in maintaining the order of elders and children within the family and enhancing the sense of mission of family-centered internal personnel. (Li Jingjing, 2016, p.10) The reason why Confucianism is able to occupy the core dominance of Chinese society for a long time since the pre-Qin Dynasty is that it has deeply grasped the Chinese people's the most basic

psychological appeal of attaching importance to blood kinship. Therefore, the monarchs of the previous dynasties advocated the rule of filial piety in order to allow the subjects to express their loyalty to the monarch and the nation. To see whether a person is loyal, firstly, we must see whether he is filial or not. Only by being a filial son at home, it is possible to be a loyal minister in the court. (Li Jingjing, 2016, p.12)

As mentioned above, the filial piety culture based on blood relationship has been unable to adapt to the needs of society due to the accelerated development of modern society and the continuous change of family structure. This has resulted in the weak awareness of filial piety among young people, the escalation of family intergenerational conflicts, the abandoning and the murdering of the old parents. Teenagers lack respect for their elders. The implementation of the one-child policy has made many children “little emperors” and “little princesses” in the family. Parents overspoil their kids and the family ethical order is reversed. Instead, the elders are obedient to their children. Adults abandon their parents after they set up a family and start a business. Even if some people provide their parents with rich material, they do not care about parents’ spiritual life. They are unwilling to accompany their parents under the pretext of “busy work”, which makes the elderly lack of emotional communication with their families. It caused them to live alone in their later years and even suffered from mental illness.

In order to make the culture of filial piety better integrate with society and individuals in the post-modern society, we must find a theoretical basis in philosophy to prove the rationality of its existence. It is worth noting that the thought of filial piety is basically not seen in Western society. They do not consider filial piety as a major virtue, nor do they regard it as the source of all personal virtues like Confucianism. However, we should understand that the awareness and culture of filial piety are depended on the basic human production methods. Before the children are close to the age of twenty, they cannot live independently. This state of existence makes the close contact between parents and children infinitely prolonged. Furthermore, filial piety is not existing alone, but to obtain its own value in the concept of “kindness”. It is in human nature and instinct, while filial piety comes from acquired cultivation and a kind of “nurturing” consciousness. The “kindness” of parents in family life will rise to a life experience due to the rational thinking of human nature. When there is a setback in life or the specific period of raising

children by oneself, it will cause the return of “filial piety”. (Li Jingjing, 2016, p. 23)

The essence of the traditional filial piety culture should be carried forward, and the feudal ignorance should be revised in accordance with the characteristics of the times, adding new blood to the traditional filial piety culture, so that it can conform to the social trend and better guide people's lives. Firstly, criticize “While one’s parents are alive, one should not travel to distant places. If it is necessary to travel, there should be a definite direction.” Confucius’s words in *The Analects of Confucius Liren* (BC 540-400) were misunderstood by many people: they believed that young people should not abandon their parents and leave their hometown to study, and they should stay by their parents' side and fulfill the responsibility of taking care parents. This concept is no longer feasible in modern society. The development of transportation and the Internet allows students to keep in touch with their parents from time to time, and no longer worry about being heard nothing like the ancients. Secondly, the new filial piety advocates equality of personality, and the past principle of “absolute obedience” to parents should be broken. Parents should be good teachers and helpful friends in their children's life, and give advice and support in marriage, work and study, instead of completely controlling their lives. Finally, promoting freedom and responsibility, and paying more attention to substance. The traditional filial piety procedure is lengthy, and the tedious etiquette does not fit into the fast-paced modern life. The thick burial and long funeral after the death of the parents also caused a waste of human and material resources. When parents are alive, they not only meet their material requirements, but also provide as much spiritual comfort as possible. After their deaths, simplifying the funeral procedures and giving regular condolences are also a manifestation of the new culture of filial piety.

4.3.3 Domestic education

An important part of family education is to establish the correct family trait tutor. Family trait tutoring is promoted by the parents or grandparents in the family and is used to restrain and regulate the behavior and morals of every family member through personal practice and precepts. (Wu Longquan, 2016, p.7) Good family trait tutoring can not only ideologically restrict the behavior

of family members, but also promote their common development and progress in a harmonious family atmosphere, thereby driving the whole society upward and good. Specifically, family trait tutoring should include the following two aspects:

- i. Cultivating oneself. Many minds in history have attached great importance to the development of personal ethics, believing that only through continuous learning and training can they give full play to the edifying role of human ethics. Personal ethics include lofty ambitions. People's ideals and ambitions are at the core of their outlook on life and values. They are the spiritual command of the people's various actions, and they are also the primary element of a person's moral recuperation. (Wu Longquan, 2016, p.13) Therefore, people should be determined wherever they go, and their ideals must be lofty and magnificent, so that they can clarify their direction and make continuous progress. Secondly, we must establish the idea of ethics. The essential difference between humans and animals is the moral part. Only through continuous moral restraint and self-examination can we correct our own shortcomings. Thirdly, the importance of strengthening regulation and thrift. Historical experience tells us that too much emphasis on material will damage our own temperament, and thrift helps the cultivation of virtue, we could be rich but not extravagant.
- ii. Conducting oneself in the world. The way of conducting in the world is the way of people's social life or family life and the rules of behavior that people follow when encountering things. (Wu Longquan, 2016, p.14) As a part of society, human beings have to communicate with other people every day, such as families, friends or even strangers. When we get along with them, we must follow the exact life ethics. First of all, we must pay attention to integrity. What you say must be true to your heart, and the promise you made to yourself must be fulfilled. Furthermore, upholding the idea of being lenient to others. Learn to forgive others' faults, do not demand strictly others for your own self-interest, and try to satisfy other people as much as possible. Finally, advocating harmony. Traditional Chinese national trait education emphasized "harmony is the most precious". When confronting things, do not aggravate the contradictions, but seek a relatively peaceful and beneficial solution for both parties, and minimize the loss. The idea of "harmony" directly

affects the Chinese people's way of life and ideas. The reason why a relatively harmonious and stable social state can be maintained is inseparable from its impact on society and individuals.

In addition to moral education, parents also put their focus on quality education for their children. Improving personal qualities has become a need for survival and development. According to the current situation of more and more single-child families, the family's investment in children's education has also increased significantly. Parents are also aware that education is no longer solely the responsibility of the school and teachers, and family education has become an indispensable part of improving the quality of members. In order to create a more harmonious education atmosphere, parents' educational concepts and methods are constantly changing. Some families even include all family members in the scope of learning and education. Therefore, family education is no longer the repetition or overweight of school homework, but the selection of different educational content and forms as a useful supplement to school education according to the personalities of family members. In addition, the education level of parents is much higher than that of the previous generation, which makes family education gradually correct some of the mistakes of the first generation of single-child family. More and more attention has been paid to members' self-care ability education, specialty education, moral and responsibility training and education. (Peng Yan, 2009, p.24)

4.4 The influence of postmodern trends on adolescents

4.4.1 Concepts and basic propositions of postmodern trends

Social trends reflect the thoughts that people's interests or requirements have a wide-ranging influence on society in a certain period of time. The Western postmodern trends that originated in the 1960s were "aspiring to challenge everything that mankind believed to be the ultimate so far, and to destroy the traditionally closed, simple, and rigid Western way of thinking." (Du Lina & Li Baogeng, 2014, p. 11)

As a tool to awaken the bourgeoisie, rationalism has greatly promoted the development of

capitalism. With the emergence of scientific management theory, productivity has been improved, and at the same time it has caused the world's "singularization" trend. "People are immersed in a prosperous material civilization, and they have not obtained the complete liberation of humanity that corresponds to it. On the contrary, People have become a tool of rationalism, and the phenomenon of alienation of human nature appears." (Du Lina & Li Baogeng, 2014, p. 12) Postmodern thinkers advocate replacing rationality with sensibility, advocating freedom of spirit and thought. In addition, the preconceived judgment between right and wrong and holism are also replaced by multiple value orientations and individual liberation. The diversified value orientation provides an open evaluation system for people to pursue liberation, so that people no longer stick to a single logic of right and wrong; the reason for opposing holism is that it restricts the development of individuals and makes individuality subject to the group. Under pressure and being unable to gain free publicity, individual liberation becomes inevitable. This scheme applies to the structure of the family, but especially to sexuality, as Rabot (2010, p.261) has shown: "There is, however, a form of freedom that owes nothing to state regulation. It is sexual freedom. But it is by no means the liberation that we have seen since the late 1960s and that is part of the teleological scheme of the emancipation of man, an emancipation that extends inherently and on its own merits to all peoples, all age classes, all social strata, and both sexes, etc. Rather, it is a freedom that springs from the plural manifestations of sexuality in our postmodernity and that can be seen as the sign of a rejuvenated sociality."

However, the above proposition also highlights the characteristics of postmodern trends. First of all, postmodern trends that dare to challenge traditional theories can easily lead to unprincipled criticism. Criticism only focuses on the surface, rarely touches on the essence, and is unwilling to recognize the objective regulations of the development of things, resulting in a lack of depth in criticism; secondly, multiple value orientations will also make the value orientation lack center point, showing a valueless position, leaving features without core values. "On the surface, the non-centered value orientation demonstrates social fairness, justice, freedom and equality; in essence, it has found a reasonable basis for derailing human behavior." (Du Lina & Li Baogeng, 2014, p. 12) Finally, the behavior is arbitrary and "non-mainstream". Teenagers under postmodern trends like to be free and unconstrained. They are obsessed with their own world,

unwilling to take responsibility, chasing fashion, and becoming cynical.

4.4.2 The effects on adolescents of postmodern trends

The subculture spawned by postmodernism, also known as collective culture, refers to those non-mainstream, partial cultural phenomena that correspond to the main culture, or belong to a certain culture in the context of the main culture or the comprehensive culture with concepts and lifestyles being unique to a region or a certain group. (Yan, Xinmiao & Liu, Yinqiao, 2008, p.37) It not only contains the same values and concepts as the main culture, but also has its own characteristics. The youth subculture represents the interests of marginalized youth groups. It often takes a subversive attitude towards the social order of adults. Therefore, the most prominent feature of the youth subculture is its marginal, subversive and critical nature. (Yan, Xinmiao & Liu, Yinqiao, 2008, p.37) However, in the face of complex postmodern ideological and theoretical systems and the media's exaggeration of consumerism or historical nihilism, the rebellious psychology of teenagers relies on various forms of expression has been magnified, causing confusion or distortion in their ideology and value orientation. In today's rapid development of material civilization, people ignore the importance of building spiritual civilization, which leads to the lack of post-modern family ethical education, leading to a series of family tragedies.

The Hong Kong movie "Somewhere beyond the mist" was issued in 2017. It told us about the daughter was raped by her father and ignored by her mother and finally killed her parents in order to escape the family. The fathers is responsible for all the living expenses of the family, and at the same time, they are facing various pressures of society, which makes them cruel and indifferent. While the mothers in movies are housewives. They live by their husbands, but they rarely get the respect of their children and husbands. For example, the mother in "Somewhere beyond the mists" never speaks or prevents her husband from assaulting her daughter. She called for help until she was strangled to death by her daughter. This reflects the chaotic state of postmodern family ethics: the father/mother who should be responsible for guiding and sheltering is not only a failed educator, but also a conniver of evil. What they give their children

is chaos, disaster and despair. The child/daughter becomes the victim of the family—the parental authority emphasized in traditional ethics and the ethical foundation that conforms to human nature have been dismantled. (Mou Xuan & Huang Jin, 2014, p.114) The ethical situation of postmodern society is constantly refreshed, and finally ushered in the post-obligation era that only recognizes the minimum morality. In the face of numerous social problems, people's ethical cognition and concepts have broken away from the traditional comprehensive and holistic moral norms and emotional structure and have moved towards the contradictions of division and diversity. (Mou Xuan & Huang Jin, 2014, p.117)

The fleeing and killing of relatives of the younger generation shows that on the one hand, their resistance is not pure revenge, but a resistance with a strong sense of autonomy; on the other hand, it also shows that they hold good intentions in their hearts and cannot identify with the sins and mistakes of their parents. Thinking that the family is a hopeless cage, and you will lose yourself if you continue to stay. (Mou Xuan & Huang Jin, 2014, p.115)

We should realize that postmodern trends still have a positive impact on the young generation. In the face of rationalism's obliteration of nature and the blind adherence to tradition, postmodern thoughts help to cultivate the skepticism of young people who are boldly seeking knowledge and daring progressing. It is conducive for young people to utilize critical insights to discover problems and gradually form a duality critical spirit of history and reality. However, the negative factors in postmodern thoughts are also eroding the values and world outlook of young people. Postmodernism is youthful but decadent at the same time; it is talented, but evil; it is analytic, but romantic; it is familiar but novel at the same time, that is to say, it is contradictory. (*cf.*, Lodge, 1993, p.518) Therefore, how to produce high-quality cultural products, how to guide people with correct public opinion, and shape people with a noble spirit so as to enrich their spiritual life, is the one of most urgent issues in Chinese society.

5. Conclusion

Family is the cornerstone of traditional Chinese society and the carrier of traditional Confucianism. A sound and healthy family can continue to effectively perform family functions that have not yet been socialized and lay the foundation for the stability, tranquility and sustainable development of the country and society. If there is a problem in the family, the society will be in trouble; if many families have problems at the same time, it may cause social unrest and the country's restlessness. The ancients took self-cultivation and family harmony as the basis and prerequisite for governing the country and the world, which fully reflects the ancients' understanding of the importance of family. (Yang Juhua & He Zhaohua, 2014, p.49)

In the process of modernization, Chinese families are inevitably affected by Western thoughts: family structure tends to be single; family functions are gradually externalized and socialized; family members' relationships are close but alienated; dink families, cohabiting families and same-sex families increasingly grew. Although all aspects of Chinese society have undergone tremendous and profound transformations, and the continuation of family structure and family functions is greater than the changes, the Chinese family is still based on marriage, and the emergence of multiple new family forms cannot change the status quo: nuclear family and main family. It is still the most important model, and the number of generations in the family tends to stabilize. The population changes caused by the childbirth policy have not changed China's family structure. The proportion of main families remains high. In fact, it is because "China's modernization process is a highly concentrated basic process that can shake the social welfare and public services of the family have not been effectively prepared, and the traditional family concept has not yet been substantively eliminated." (Yang Juhua & He Zhaohua, 2014, p.50) In other words, this is the family's low level of economic development and social publicity, a strategic choice when welfare and public services are insufficient.

The development of the women's liberation movement liberated women from the oppression of the feudal class. They went out of the family and participated in the distribution of social wealth. Family relationships have changed from male superiority to female inferiority to equality, and the two sexes have developed from antagonistic relationships to mutual respect and equal

corporation. The improvement of women's status fully shows the level of civilization of a country. Chinese young people who were born under postmodern society, on the one hand, dare to question authority and tradition. They are independent, good at thinking, and dare to say no to the bad habits and rules that hinder human progress; on the other hand, the rapid development of society, the constantly emergence of new thoughts and the lack of family education have left them at a loss and unable to distinguish between right and wrong. They are eager to succeed, but they also tend to go to extremes. The complexity and variability of postmodern trends has prompted society and families to teach young people to pay more attention to value experience, to improve their spiritual realm, to cultivate their rational thinking through excellent traditional culture, and to establish a thoughtful consciousness that integrates personal ideals into the process of national development.

The most essential difference between family and other social organization is that its members have continuous kinship. No matter where the family members live, they are inherently firmly bound together by kinship, and it is difficult for any external force to break them. This feature makes the family have super resilience and will not easily decline with social changes. (Yang Juhua & He Zhaohua, 2014, p.49) The changes in Chinese families have a distinct epochal character, with both changes and continuations; although there are signs of disintegration, but there is no decline. Facing the risks and challenges, it needs country, society, and family to cope with it together.

Due to the limited space, there are some deficiencies in this article. Firstly, the family model under the postmodern trend is diversified, such as DINK family, same-sex family or cohabiting family, etc. This article does not discuss the current development of these families in the postmodern society. In addition, the relationships between the sexes under the postmodern trend is complex and changeable. Chinese men and women influenced by traditional thoughts hold different attitudes towards open sex relationships, and this part is rarely covered in this article. The Ph.D. study will allow me to read more literature and do more investigation in related fields. Therefore, considering to the shortages above, I look forward to continuing to carry out research on Chinese family during my Ph.D. period and to complete my research content and enrich it. I expect to contribute my own meager efforts in family research.

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