



A Discussion of Bilateral Rearing Based on *The Institutions for Reproduction*

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Received 7 August 2023; accepted 20 September 2023
 Published online 26 September 2023

Abstract

As mentioned in the book *The Institutions for Reproduction* (Shengyu Zhidu in Chinese) written by Fei Xiaotong, physiologic rearing is unilateral (i.e., physiologic rearing is fully conducted by the mother) while social rearing is bilateral (i.e., both parents foster their child jointly). Because parents have different divisions of labor in life, they may have different levels of influence on the perception, personality, mind, character, and other aspects of their child. The absence of any parent in rearing may leave regrets for the child's childhood. Nowadays, some typical phenomena are destroying the completeness of the bilateral rearing structure. For instance: Owing to the high divorce rate, many children have to live with one parent; with the heavy pressure of life, one parent or both parents work away from home constantly, while leaving the child at home; some parents even entrust the task of looking after children to a babysitter or child-care center. These social facts are inevitable, but it is quite necessary to try to create a good, healthy, and complete bilateral rearing growth space with mental interaction for children.

Key words: *The Institutions for Reproduction*; Marriage system; Bilateral rearing; Triangle relationship in a family; Family education

Yang, H. L. (2023). A Discussion of Bilateral Rearing Based on *The Institutions for Reproduction*. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 19(3), 81-85. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/13165>
 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/13165>

The operation, maintenance, and development of a society

are inseparable from human beings. Social duties must be undertaken by specific persons to come into play. Hence, humans are essential to maintain the integrity of the society. The lifetime of a person is limited while each social duty requires a basic number of persons to perform.

To keep the social division structure of labor cooperation complete, the only way relies on the institutions for reproduction. Through childbearing and childrearing, newcomers can be supplied unceasingly for the social division structure of labor cooperation to undertake specific duties. Only after receiving a long-term education can the newcomers acquire the ability to accomplish social affairs. Therefore, Fei Xiaotong pointed out, “*the institutions for reproduction* include two parts: childbearing and childrearing” (Fei, 2016). Childbearing and childrearing can be realized through culture, namely can be guaranteed by marriage. Through marriage, a man and woman form a family. The core function of the family as a social group is to give birth to a child and foster the child. “The institutions for reproduction are not for satisfying individuals’ sexual needs but establishing the social roles of a couple, children, and relatives so that everyone can live as planned” (Fei, 2016, p.123), interpreted by Fei Xiaotong. Childbearing is to meet the living needs and keep the social division structure of labor cooperation complete; childrearing is to have the new social member receive education and acquire survivability. Parents in the family are the key figures educating their kids. Although educational institutions have been improved day by day and assumed more and more responsibilities in children’s education, parents’ rearing effect cannot be replaced fully at least at present and in a period in the future regardless of the long-term development. Family is the first environment in which a child perceives the culture. Parents carry out their duties in the family separately and rear their child jointly. Due to the intrinsic difference between a man and a woman, they serve in different units under the social division of labor and engage in social

production in relatively separate works and thus form their specific physiological properties. Children can understand all aspects of life only if they live under the effect of the specific living characteristics of their parents. Therefore, childrearing needs the joint force of both parents.

1. THE CONNOTATION OF BILATERAL REARING

Men and women are different both biologically and socially. Biologically, the most significant property is a new life cannot be reproduced by the father's body but by the mother's unilaterally. "In our culture, a father's sense of responsibility for his child is indeed maintained by the common concept of blood lineage." (Fei, 2016) Physiological rearing begins unilaterally. A new life is bred and taken care of by the mother's body rather than the father's, which however cannot block out the father's social rearing. The biological property, sociality, and emotionality of humans are three distinctive personality characteristics that can be treated both in parts and in one. Fei Xiaotong cited the example of fathers in Trobriand Islands and Toda men: they do not necessarily have a biological connection with their children but still undertake the responsibility for their children's social rearing. This example denies that the pure biological connection and the fatherly instinct can explain the relation to childrearing. Mr. Fei also denies that a man is willing to foster the child of his mate because of love. Because emotion is unstable, it is theoretically lame to explain social rearing by emotion. After all, it is under cultural conventions a man and woman are tied in wedlock, form a family, and give birth to and foster a child.

The entire social operation is the sum of social production formed under the cooperation of men and women. Similarly, childrearing also requires the cooperation of both parents. As talked about by Mr. Fei in *The Institutions for Reproduction*, "In human society, a healthy member requires many qualifications. A child must learn for a long term to obtain these qualifications. In a simple society, the knowledge and skills required in life and the attitude toward life can be learned in the family. At least, a child should have a family to obtain these qualifications. If not, the child's daily life is hard to sustain. A boy cannot acquire all the modes of life he needs from his mother and a girl also cannot receive a complete education from her father separately. An all-round life education can only be received from a social unit containing all ways of life. In a simple society, this unit is a cooperative group formed by a man and a woman. Thereby, the responsibility of childrearing cannot be assumed by a man or a woman separately but by both parents." (Fei, 2016) In short, bilateral rearing requires that a man and woman get married, form a family, and rear their child jointly in the long term. What the bilateral rearing

emphasizes are both parents. That is, a child should be provided with a complete mode of rearing and all-round life education by both parents; a child relies on not a part but all of his/her parents' life to acquire the holistic life experience. A father often affects his child with a sense of responsibility and potency, while a mother mostly influences her child with a loving and tender image. The family environment and parenting style have a large influence on a child's character. Life education cannot be accomplished in one action but over a long time. When a child is born, a triangle relation in the family has been formed. The parent-child relationship also contributes to the conjugal relationship, making the structure of the couple stable relatively.

Marriage is a way to determine the social father of a child by culture. Mr. Fei cited the right of the first night, the religious goddess, wife lending, the system for lovers, and other cases available in anthropology to prove that a biological parent-child relationship is not always a social parent-child relationship. The obligation to rear a child cannot be determined based on a sexual relationship as childrearing is not started from amphimixis. Marriage is the condition in which a man and a woman rear their child jointly. Before the child is born, the rearing group has been formed. The basic community life formed by the couple is the initial education environment of the child. Meanwhile, a good living environment promotes the healthy development of the child both in mind and body.

2. THE FADING OF BILATERAL REARING

With the fast development of society, the division of labor between men and women has become not that distinctive. Females are liberated from domestic work and walk into offices, engaging in 9-to-5 jobs not significantly different from males. In terms of childrearing, they provide economic support to make up for the lack of rearing support. Some parents even cannot provide both economic support and rearing support. More and more parents become busier and busier. As a natural result, a group of people takes the full-time position of taking care of children, because where there is a need, there are people to do relevant work. Only in this way can the normal development order of the society be maintained. The work of this group of people is a supplement to the fading bilateral rearing, namely to take care of and educate children, but does not involve the affair of rearing in bilateral rearing. Such rearing is reflected not only in the superficial form but also in the care, communication, and mutual influence in spirit.

2.1 Social Development-led Fading of Bilateral Rearing

The fast pace of life accelerates all activities of humans. In the context of fast food, fast-fashion clothes, quick ways of communication, fast means of transportation, and all

other fast modes of life, the original mode of childrearing conducted by a man and a woman is impacted ineluctably. It is not hard to find that there are many common social problems leading to the fading of bilateral rearing.

Now in China, full-time housewives are becoming less and less, which does not mean that those females are unwilling to take care of their children but assume more and more social division of labor so that they have to sacrifice the time of childrearing for working to increase family income and relieve family burden. However, when they are working, their children need to be looked after. Some young couples choose to send their children to educational institutions or hire a babysitter to take care of their children at home. However, babysitters or full-time staff in educational institutions can only make up for the children's life education or more for their intellectual learning. A more effective way for children's social learning is parental rearing. Some young couples whose parents are healthy and willing to take care of children may ask their parents to rear their children during their working time. This childrearing is the so-called generation-skipping education. However, there is a large age gap between the young couple and their parents. The aged parents' mode of life education may be disharmonious with the partial life of the young people's child. Even if the young couple comes home from work, the time spent on rearing the child is just a little for two reasons: first, after work, young couples often feel tired both mentally and physically, let alone rearing their children; second, children often sleep early and leave less time to receive life education from their parents. Some young couples, particularly those in rural areas, need to go out as migrant workers owing to poverty. Their tasks of rearing children are almost fully entrusted to the children's grandparents. These children cannot receive direct rearing from their parents. Moreover, their grandparents often have low education levels so that the children can be satisfied only with material needs and just a tiny mental education. These children are called stay-at-home children. Some couples even divorce in haste due to marriage break-up caused by early marriage, early fertility, and the like factors, destroying the family environment for the growth of their children. Most divorced parents fail to handle the childrearing problem properly. All the above cases would cause weakening or vanishing of bilateral rearing so that parents cannot provide their child with a comprehensive life education.

2.2 School Education and Social Education Development-led Fading of Bilateral Rearing

With the development of society, children's education cannot be finished only in the family, because parents' ability to rear children is limited, hence the emergence and expansion of school education and training agencies. To present, these institutions have been improved both in the school running conditions, hardware and software

facilities, environment, and teaching quality. The institutions for early education have been flourishing. However, in this circumstance, parents should not judge their children's education quality as per these conditions, not transfer the responsibility of childrearing to school and educational institutions fully, and not hope that the school and educational institutions can provide an integrated life education for their children. As reported in *The Institutions for Reproduction*, "After the social life becomes complicated, the division of labor becomes finer, knowledge becomes more accurate, and techniques become more specialized. Some rearing functions have to get apart from the family and be handled by special educational institutions. These educational institutions were just for supplementing the rearing in the family at the beginning but often have the trend of assuming the rearing responsibility of parents with their unceasing development." (Fei, 2016) Yet, in children's life education, bilateral rearing should not fade even with the increasing development of educational institutions. After all, educational institutions can only provide school education that does not involve all parts of family education, let alone providing children with an all-round life education. Educational institutions are incapable of fostering children to grow but are merely a supplement to the form of bilateral rearing.

3. THE NECESSITY OF BILATERAL REARING

The growth of a child not only requires nutrient supply but also needs appropriate education, while parents are obligated to provide their child with these two basic needs. Parental rearing is both a concrete form of the institutions for reproduction and the most common and effective form. Childbearing and childrearing are intrinsically a matter of helping others at the parents' own expense. No matter during pregnancy or after birth, the parents need to sacrifice themselves to feed their child. Hence, from a personal point of view, it is naturally beneficial to avoid reproduction. However, people not only live for survival but also are social members who need to sustain their social lives jointly. A single person may be able to make a living in a limited lifetime, which however is stiff. To keep the social structure complete, each social member has corresponding social responsibilities and has to bear and rear a child even if this matter is disadvantageous.

3.1 Social Succession

Success in the social division of labor is inseparable from people who engage in production, living, and working as per this division. "The social structure of labor division relies on people to take effect, while a person cannot live forever. A person only has a limited lifetime. Of course, personally speaking, a dead man cannot feel anything.

However, before he dies, his life may be hard to sustain if others die one by one so that the completeness of the social structure of labor division cannot be maintained. The living people cannot be indifferent to others' death. The social completeness must be kept still if they want to sustain their lives... The completeness of the social structure is vital to a person's life. To seek social completeness in the world where people live and die in succession, it is necessary to hold the lower limit of population" (Fei, 2016) So, a family is an agency that guarantees childbearing to make society complete. A new social member is supplied by a family. If the new members do not work all the time, they may be a burden to society because they cannot create production benefits for society but consume the surplus of production. Hence, they need to receive education within a period to acquire the ability to deal with social affairs gradually. Naturally, the task of educating the new social members is undertaken by their parents, which is also effective. Parents have to provide their children with the necessary clothing, food, shelter, transportation, and supplies for living and also educate them for social survival in the future because the parts of society are linked to one another; failing to supplement the population available for social production will disenable the society to operate normally and effectively. In addition to giving birth to children, parents must also provide them with a comprehensive life education to maintain the sustainable development of society.

3.2 Consolidation of the Conjugal Relation

A sexual relationship is difficult to last stably merely depending on emotion except that the parties jointly rearing a child. The significance of marriage is to establish a bilateral rearing relationship. It should be noted that marriage is not a private matter and the marital relationship can hardly be maintained only by love. "The selection of marriage partner is not only subjected to social interference but also subjected to others' interference somewhat from time to time since the day a man and a woman get married and during the marriage. So, the marital relationship becomes a public event." (Fei, 2016) The marriage may be interfered with not only by others but also economically and religiously. In a small-scale society, the marriage between a man and a woman is supported by a clan. The significance of the alliance is embodied in the fact that "the marriage between a man and a woman is actually between lands, between vineyards, between cattle and cattle, or even between families or clans. Therefore, the relational alliance and exchange of material in the group of exogamy are both important adaptive strategies... Marriage is not only a matter of the couple but also related to the key social relations between two families." (Zhuang, 2015) Dowry, betrothal presents, and clan-based marriage are all guarantees beyond the marriage. To some extent, these guarantees deny that a couple can sustain their marriage merely by emotion.

Mr. Fei mentioned, "Instead of saying 'a man and a woman are willing to rear a child jointly because of love', 'a man and a woman need to have an everlasting emotional correlation to rear a child jointly'" (Fei, 2016) As easily discovered in the existing culture, a man and a woman get married by cultural means to ensure the long-lasting of bilateral rearing. It is the responsibility of rearing a child that motivates a couple to make a living for their child. As often found, even if a couple does not love each other any longer, they may live together and not divorce, or divorce but keep the fact secret from their child and live in the same home just to provide their child with a complete family. More or less, the child becomes a bond between the parents, and rearing the child also becomes a common topic between the man and wife in the long term. The parent-child relationship stabilizes the conjugal relation. Parents and the child constitute a stable triangle relationship in the family. However, this triangle relationship is not always invariable. When the child grows up and can undertake social responsibility independently, the child may create a new family with a new triangle relationship. The triangle relationship between father, mother, and child can be established only if both parents devote all their hearts and emotions to rearing their child. Only by affective communication between the three parties in the family can a communication bridge be established and a stable family and marital relationship be formed.

3.3 Children's Mental Health and Saneness

Family is the first environment a person gets in touch with before he/she enters society. His/her socialization is enhanced continuously in the family. "Family is the first environment where a person is socialized. The person's personal opinions as well as mental and behavioral habits are influenced by the family environment unconsciously." (Zhuang, 2015) Family is vital for the development of a person. The triangle relationship in the family and the interaction between parents and the child all guide the socialization of the child. Only under the joint effect of the family and society can a child build up a social role for him/herself.

In a stable family relationship, the child can receive a comprehensive education from both father and mother. Bilateral rearing is considerably a perfect way of taking care of children. As reported by Mr. Fei, "assigning the task of rearing a child to a basic unit composed of a man and a woman can be regarded as the principle of having a small group take responsibility... In this principle, the rearing task may be tackled better. At least, compared with nursery schools, the children growing up in the family are sane in general." (Fei, 2016) In the early stage of growth, children need to be under parental discipline. A child may perceive special moral emotions from the emotional relationship between parents and the child and gradually have self-discipline. "Emotion centers on

the 'complex' in the family at the very beginning and expands with the enlargement of the social relationship. Originally, moral emotion relies on an external holy authority that can evoke one's obedience to the kinsfolk merely. Gradually, it becomes mutual respect and benefit-oriented. This influence independent of the self-center effect is particularly deep and long-lasting in our society." (Piaget & Inhelder, 1981) The "complex" in the family is not only the emotional formation center of a child but also the basic unit for the child to expand his/her social relationship. Hence, bilateral rearing is crucial for cultivating a sane child in the family and is key for the child's socialization in the future. Besides, during the rearing, social authorities need to perform the affairs of rearing children through parents. There will surely be conflicts between the educator and the educatee. In this case, parents should conquer the child's original nature unsuited to society. ^(Fei, 2016) To solve this conflict, parents need to have a clear division of work, namely one should be strict and the other one be kind. Traditionally, the father is often severe while the mother is compassionate. But with the emergence of the term "tiger mother" in today's society, the mother may be the one strict in educating the child. Anyhow, either the mother or the father should be strict. The responsibilities of social rearing and physiological rearing of a child must be undertaken by the father and the mother separately and cooperatively to realize a sound bilateral rearing and provide the child with a comprehensive life, which is beneficial to the child's development.

Regarding sexual relationships and other interpersonal relationships, the largest specialty of a child growing up in a single-parent family is that his/her life lacks a healthy attachment style; such children cannot see the communication mode between parents and have no model

concerning the positioning of the relationship between a man and a woman in the marriage. (Shen, 2019) They are easy to become depressed, unsociable, eccentric, self-contemptuous, pessimistic, offensive, paranoid, and jealous. They are only affected by and only rely on one parent so that they only have the character of a single parent. Lacking a good image of harmony between parents, such children cannot acquire a healthy and good style of attachment.

For individual growth, bilateral rearing is significant for the socialization of an individual. A happy childhood can cure the whole lifetime of a child. For rearing a child, bilateral rearing is not a must but at least now an efficient and convenient method. Children growing up in a rearing environment created by both parents are sane. This rearing mode is indeed positive and necessary. Parents should understand the importance of providing their children with a complete and comprehensive environment of life education.

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