

Individual, Family and Female Identity: Chinese Social Media and Understanding of the Family Relationship in the Film *the Godfather*

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ABSTRACT

In China, many nuclear families are policy-driven one-child families from the 1980s to the 21st century, which resonate particularly in symmetrical comparison for the Italy immigrant Corleone family of United State of America, in the film series *the Godfather*. This study describes the comparison between the two trends of popular cultures with a focus on the contextual analysis of the movie narrative. In addition to the focus on the storyline from the perspective of the Chinese audience, the study discusses family relationships including gender relations. The source of cultural conflict comes from One-child Policy of China in 1982. This research attempts to summarize the main views combined with film lens analysis, indicate the most important point from the social media platform *Douban*, and explore the patriarchal context that this film brings to modern individuals, which will give people from different backgrounds a better understanding of conflicting cultural views.

Keywords: Family Relationship, Film Lens, Social Media Platform, Patriarchal Context.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many previous studies have been done on the film the Godfathers. These studies focus on the critique of the Godfather's cinematic techniques, and the value, and significance of the Godfather films [1-3]. In the aspect of culture, several studies have analyzed Italian Sicilian culture in the culture of the Godfathers, others have analyzed the Godfather and American gangster culture, and many others have used the Godfather to criticize patriarchy, analyzing its concrete manifestations and the masculinity of patriarchy [4, 5]. Under the topic of family relations and feminism, similar studies and discussions are even more numerous. There are some studies on the state of development of the feminist and affirmative action movements. It is undeniable that in the contextual research field of a famous movie, the concepts of feminism, gender issue, and sociocultural constitution are always intertwined [6].

However, not much research has been done on the reaction between the Godfather film and the cultural context of China. The contrast between the Italian Sicilian culture of the Corleone family and the American

and Chinese cultures in the Godfather film has not been mentioned in many studies. Similarly, the contrast between the family situation in 20th century America and 21st century China has not been studied much. It is, therefore, necessary to analyze the cultural response to the Godfather film in contemporary China from the perspective of visual and social media and to compare the cultural differences between China today and the United States in the era of the Godfather.

The purpose of this study is to examine the plot of *The Godfather*, and the impact of its plot on family relationships and relationships between men and women in the context of Chinese society in the 1920s, as well as the perceptions of Chinese audiences in this era, using the Chinese social media *Douban*, which is also a well-known Chinese film rating and review medium, as a 'mirror'. It also intends to analyze the plot of *The Godfather*, and the characters in it, and dissect how these shots and episodes represent family relationships and gender relations.

2. FILM LENS ANALYSIS

2.1. *The status and influence of Don Vito Corleone*

In the first appearance of Don Vito Corleone, the film uses close-up shots and low key to stretch out before the audience, with black and white strong comparison caused by the visual impact to let the public feel the mystery of the protagonist. When the bright wedding party is held on the outside, the godfather is dealing with business in dim, people would feel he can operate everything because he is calm and his eyes were always focused and determined. The low angle shows his tall position, everyone in the movie is very respects him. When he was killed in the street, a high angle like God's perspective breaks the image of Don Vito Corleone, his life is threatened by his opponent in the hospital, there are peeking lenses to give people a sense of tension, and the Montage of empty hospital corridors, combined with the music to bring heavy presence, make one wonder if the godfather is safe or not. The coverage shot image of the godfather negotiating with other families leader is like a western famous painting, the godfather is standing in the center, welcoming the eyes of others, He has absolutely powerful words and status. When he dies, he is in a high key image instead of a low key, maybe he is an umbrella for too many people, but he is just like an ordinary person who will forget, nag his children over and over again, and die.

2.2. *Michael Corleone's first time he experienced*

The film depicts Michael Corleone's life experiences as three first-time experiences. They are discussed as follows, Michael's first love, Michael's first murder, and his first loss of his relative.

Michael's first love is the perfect case to show how Michael is featured as the main motive of the whole story. Compared with his brother Sonny Corleone, at first, Michael is a very shy, pure boy, when he faced his favorite girl Kay Adams who asked about his family, He told her all truth and his kin. Even his eyes are down, not very straightforward to see the girl. He took time to meet Kay Adams at the sensitive time of his father's injury, he does not stay for long, the camera does not change at this point, but he moves to the right, proving that he wants to get close to the comfort she.

Michael's first murder serves as a plot to showcase how a man was cultivated in the culture of an Italian family with strong masculinity and patriarchal emphasis. Michael is a favored youngest son in Corleone's family, When he puts forward the assassination plan of another family person feels ridiculous, the lens is slow from long shot to close-up this represents his status in gradually expanding, and his plan is to be practiced, not a joke. In the round table discussion, everyone has a medium shot

lens. Everyone is planning Michael's first murder, that view is good for little boy Michael, guarantees the success of the assassination, and people in the family are contributing to their power.

In the meeting with an opponent, the picture is turned back to the main three perspectives. Especially when Micheal took the gun, and shoot from the toilet, Capt. Mark McCluskey turns round twice, and Micheal returns to the seat, it is tight to feel that moment. The close-up of the face can see the change in Michael's eyes, He went to count which suitable time to shoot, and was alert to himself being discovered by an opponent, It is the first time he affords so heavy responsibility for his family, nobody knows whether he could succeed. That lens adds the clip is real and absurd to show the process of the incident.

Finally, it comes to the first time experience of personal loss, which is Michael's first loss of his wife. Michael's life experience has suffered the threat of losing his beloved father, for once, yet the threat was dissolved by his well alert action and courage. He is making friendly inquiries about the men who had been protecting him in Sicily. He is unsuspecting of the betraying subordinate, the camera perfectly shows Micheal's view. There are two screen switches between his wife and subordinate. Finally, the betrayer ran away, his wife start the car and it exploded.

2.3. *Female role in the family*

There are not many female shots in this film, but it is also extremely important, the first mention is the godfather's daughter, Connie Corleone. The Italian party in front of the story is held for her wedding. There were many friends and family members, as well as politicians. In addition, the big star Channing also came to congratulate. Her father made sure that she was well clothed and fed, but after getting married, she was not happy, she was blue around her eyes, obviously abused by her husband. Her brother Sonny loves her so much, so it is indirectly contributed to Sonny's death. She loved her husband and children that later Micheal killed her husband, then she became so hysterical and despairing.

The second female role is Micheal's second wife, Kay Adams, who is a new era, American woman. At Connie's wedding, she is pulled by Micheal to take family photos together, which could look their minds for each other, she is dressed in bright colors that stand out in the picture, which provide a strong contrast, it shows that she is important in the film, her dazzling style of dress and makeup reflects her charm as well as her personality. At the end of the first work, Kay is isolated from Micheal's world, when the door is gradually closed, It means that Michael and Kay are now separated.

The third female role is Don Vito Corleone's wife, who is also Sonny and Micheal's mother. She was Italian and does not involve in the affairs of the family but she

is still high and majestic, Don Vito Corleone respected and loved his wife, and stood in his wife's arms in public. Her children also respect her and dare not talk back.

3. A BRIEF EXPLORATION OF FAMILY NARRATIVES IN PATRIARCHY

3.1. The exclusion of women from discourse and power

In the patriarchal system, females are seen as subordinates of males, they are excluded from power [7]. This is extremely evident in *The Godfather*, where none of the female characters play a major role in the film, and their roles are not comparable to those of the male characters in the film [8]. Neither Don's wife nor Michael's wife, Kay, is ever involved in the decisions and planning of the family business, as in the final scene of the film, where Kay watches a young but maturing Michael accept the subservience and worship of the other gang leaders in his room, while the door slowly closes and Kay is ultimately unable to see what is happening inside or to hear their conversations. The door to the room slowly closes, and Kay ends up unable to see what is happening inside or hear their conversation.

3.2. The objectification that occurs in female

Objectification of females happens in patriarchy at all times. Traditionally, the objectification theory refers to the study that holds certain explanations of the female body are disrespected. It is widely accepted that sexual objectifies the female body and equates a woman's worth with her body's appearance and sexual functions [9]. Sociocultural context verifies in several conditions. In the film, the body appearance and the woman's worth are not expressed in the way of direct sexual functions. The lack of obvious expression of sexual appearance and female body gaze from masculinity is not necessarily proving that there is no objectification of the Corleone family or the film narrative. The sexual appearance and female body gaze are modified into a relative relationship and apart from the members of the Corleone family, most of the other women who appear in the film are prostitutes who provide sexual services to the gang members and become sex toys for the male characters. Such objectification is something of which people are unaware. Even if they are aware of it, they do so willingly.

The different ending between son and daughter shows the destiny and sociocultural comparison between the two genders. Michael and Connie grew up with Corleone family love, but with different experiences and endings. Michael experienced too much for the first time in that time and completed tasks in thrilling environments and survived, he grew into the new godfather and took on the responsibility of the whole family. Connie could only seek help from her brother, when her brothers were unreliable, she was close to breaking down.

4. FEEDBACK FROM DOUBAN ON *THE GODFATHER*

4.1. An introduction to Douban, a successful Chinese social media platform

Douban is a social networking platform. It was created on March 6, 2005. The site started as a book and video site, providing information about books, films, music, and other works, both in terms of descriptions and reviews provided by users (User-generated content (UGC)). The site also offers a variety of services such as book and video recommendations, offline crosstown events, group topic exchanges, etc. It is more like an innovative online service that combines a taste system (reading, movies, music), an expression system (I read, I watch, I listen), and a communication system (crosstown, group, friends and neighbors). Douban is regarded by a significant number of web users as a very authoritative film rating site, very similar to the Internet Movie Database (IMDB), and it also provides a space for discussion of film content for a large number of film watchers, it is also the largest film sharing and review community in China, with millions of films and filmmakers' profiles. This essay based on the sharing and short comment of the movie *godfather* in Douban intends to map how the domestic culture of Italy and the United States in the last century is evaluated in the context of twenty-first-century China through the comments of the twenty-first-century Chinese internet users.

4.2. Analysis of Chinese cultural context

It is important to get a clear picture of The family planning policy in China, and then to start with The analysis of short comments and sharing in Douban. In 1982, the central government introduced the "family planning" policy as a response and macro-control to the population boom, and it was successively made a national policy and enshrined in the constitution [10].

The family planning policy is also known as the one-child policy, and it has had a huge and far-reaching impact on the social life of China. It is not the intention of this paper to look at the macroeconomic development, demographic and other perspectives, but rather to focus on the so-called 'post-80s', 'post-90s' and 'post-00s' modern Chinese people. By looking at the group of people who were affected by the family planning policy, the film reviews left by these people show how family planning has affected people's perceptions at an individual level, and analyse the differences between it and the cultural context of the family in the film *The Godfather*. It is through these people that the impact of the family planning policy on Chinese people's perceptions of family and patriarchy is observed.

For the selection of short reviews, this article focuses on those that refer to relationships between men and women and family relations.

This essay first looks at the short reviews of the film based on the recommendation system of the Douban app, which displays the shortcomment in terms of the number of likes, with the higher the number of likes, the higher they are placed. In this essay, the first 25 short comments were selected to represent the observation of the users, most of which focused on the plot, the camera work, the actors' performances, and their personal opinions and feelings about the film, while 8 reviews focused on the relationship between men and women and the portrayal of men and women in the film, and 6 of them focused on the portrayal of the status and power of men and women. They all considered the film to be a male perspective full of neglect and vilification of women.

After screening and observing the short comment, this article found that attitudes towards the film were sharply divided by gender, with the majority of male users (as indicated by their statements) praising the film, saying that it taught a great deal about human interaction, norms and attitudes that men should learn, and some reviews even praised the film as "the bible for men". Conversely, female reviewers did not give the film too much credit, and many were very disgusted by the patriarchal ideology of the film and its portrayal of women. A section of the review that focuses more on family relationships suggests that *The Godfather* is the story of how the younger son of a family takes control of the family.

4.3. To view the family relationship from a Chinese perspective

This study divides family relationships into three categories, which are parents and children, brothers and sisters, and husband and wife relationships. When it comes to parents and children relationships, boys get more rights in the family business, it can be called work. The same is the beloved child of the godfather, Michael can become the new godfather in power, strategize in a changeable situation, inherit his father's position and guard the Corleone family, but Connie got married and moved out of the original house to take the kids.

In terms of brothers and sisters' relationships, the Corleone family is united and has a strong affection, they have a vendetta, for example, The enemy takes advantage of the eldest brother Sonny's love for his sister and unites with Carlo Rizzi, for years Micheal pinpoints to kill Sonny. Family members will think of each other and will not be self-centered. As to husband and wife relationships, Don Vito Corleone and his wife are very affectionate, his wife never would be involved in his work. Connie and her husband, Carlo Rizzi, Connie were domestically abused by Carlo, but because Michael killed Carlo, she still hated her brother. Michael and Kay drift apart on their emotional path.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has presented a complete discussion of the movie *godfather*. It can be argued that through the observation of the review of the film *Godfather*, the women's affirmative action movement in China has developed somewhat, with more and more people becoming aware of the existence of patriarchy and pointing out its irrationality, although this paper does not, therefore, argue that the feminist movement in China should not continue to develop. But unexpectedly, no one realized that the family relationships reflected in the film were different from those in China. As a result of the research, this paper found that Chinese Douban users are more sensitive to gender relations than family relations, and most of them are aware of the misogynistic and patriarchal overtones in the *Godfather* films, yet being in a society practicing family planning they do not react much to the family relations in the films. Through this study, it can be concluded that in fact, some Chinese internet users do not particularly reflect on family relationships in comparison to those in the film *Godfather*, however, there are many views on gender relations. Researchers of Chinese film and television media and researchers of women's equality in China should pay attention to our research, and in addition, researchers of contemporary Chinese families and family relations, as well as researchers of family relations in film and television productions, should also pay attention to the issues reflected in this paper. As an important vehicle for cultural transmission, cultural researchers must pay attention to how it reflects and portrays gender relations and family relations. An examination of the classics of the past helps to identify changes in social life and the cultural environment.

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