



The Enlightenment of the Education of the Jia Family in the *Dream of the Red Chamber* to Modern Education Based on the Satir Iceberg Model

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Abstract. As one of the ‘Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese Literature’, *Dream of the Red Chamber* by Cao Xueqin depicts the various social life based on the complex family relationship in ancient China during the Qing Dynasty with the rise and fall of Jia, Shi, Wang, and Xue families as the background. As classic literature, it has specific enlightenment significance to contemporary reality. This paper aims to analyse and explore the Jia House parent-child relationship and educational methods in *Dream of the Red Chamber* from the Satir Iceberg perspective and give in spiration to modern family education, which can fill the research gap of the past research that only focused on external conditions and educators. Through the analysis of the characterization of the protagonist Jia Baoyu, the educational situation in the Jia House is examined based on the Satir Iceberg Model as a theoretical tool to explore his ‘self’. Finding that Jia Baoyu’s unsatisfied desire due to his father Jia Zheng’s education led to the failure of education— a disharmonious parent-child relationship without love and Jia Baoyu’s downtrodden nature, it can be inferred that modern educators should appropriately satisfy those being educated people’s desires and life pursuits.

Keywords: Satir Iceberg theory, Dream of the Red Chamber, modern education.

1 Introduction

The intricacies of parent-child relationships and family structures based on the feudal system in ancient China in Chinese classic literature can bring some discoveries and insights for contemporary family education. As one of the representatives of the Qing dynasty literature, *Dream of the Red Chamber* portrays the rise and collapse off our aristocratic families in ancient China from the viewpoint of the main character Jia Baoyu, highlighting the romantic tragedies of the younger generation in these illustrious

families. As the most influential of all Chinese novels, it is often regarded as an encyclopaedia of feudal China (Mair, 2010) [8]. Based on its far-reaching influence, a field dedicated to the study of the *Dream of the Red Chamber* has been extended into the world of Chinese literary criticism and other subject areas, known as 'Hongxue' (Honglougong Studies; Redology), with over a hundred years of history (Liu, 2013) [7]. However, previous studies of education in the Jia House have focused on the external model of education or the educator's perspective, neglecting to analyse the psychological needs of educatees. Hence, emphasising family-of-origin work, the Satir Iceberg Model can be a practical, theoretical lens to explore the characterisation of Jia Baoyu and the parent-child relationship in the book (Banmen, 2002) [1].

According to a survey of 2,000 people conducted by the Social Survey Center of China Youth News in 2016, 86.7 percent of respondents were aware of the influence of their family of origin on them, 23.7 percent were fully aware of it, and 63.0 percent were somewhat aware. According to the respondents' responses, over-protection (43.4%) and over-high pressure (32.7%) were the two most common undesirable characteristics of the respondents' family of origin. Others included indulging (27.1 percent), perfectionism (24.1 percent), excessive punishment (19.2 percent), neglect (15.9 percent), bad parental relations (7.1 percent), and denial of love (6.0 percent). In modern society, the original family education has been more and more widely concerned and valued by people. Exploring the advantages and disadvantages of traditional family education model can bring vigilance and enlightenment for modern family education.

In this paper, the protagonist of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, Jia Baoyu's growth process and his relationship with his father, Jia Zheng, are explored as a representative of the education of prominent families in the Qing Dynasty. Based on Satir's Iceberg theory, the paper draws the roots of Jia Baoyu's failure in his family upbringing through an analysis of the longings of his heart that were not fulfilled by his father and his thwarted quest for self, such as the longing for freedom, human goodness, recognition, and love. This leads to the inspiration for modern education that educators should pay attention to the aspirations of the hearts of educatees and the pursuit of self.

This paper is divided into four parts:

The first part, Introduction, to the article research background, research significance, research objects, research ideas are briefly explained.

The second part, literature review, mainly describes the definition of concept, research status, research corpus, research methods.

The third part, the main part, based on the text of *A Dream of Red Mansions*, uses Satya's iceberg theory to analyze the psychological needs behind Jia Baoyu's behavior of not pursuing official career and not making friends with officials, discusses the failure factors of Jia Zheng's education, and then draws the enlightenment of modern family education.

The fourth part, the conclusion, mainly explains the research conclusions, research innovation points.

2 Literature review

2.1 The conceptual definition of " Satir Iceberg Theory"

Satir model, also known as Satir communication model and Satir joint family therapy, is a complete theoretical system proposed by Ms. Virginia Satir. The joint family therapy pioneered by Satir selects the family, social and other systems to cut into, allowing patients to receive psychological treatment in daily life, improve interpersonal communication, and improve the quality of life [10]. Satir model has been extended and developed in many fields. It is no longer limited to dealing with family problems, but can also intervene in individual psychological problems and self-growth.

Satir iceberg theory is actually a metaphor, it refers to a person's "self" like an iceberg, we can see only a small part of the surface - the behavior, but a larger part of the inner world hidden deeper, just like the iceberg. Including seven levels: behavior, coping style, feeling, opinion, expectation, desire and self. The theory states: "A person cannot grow up without his or her family of origin, and the influence of his or her family of origin persists. The root cause of a person's unhappiness may be that childhood expectations have not been met." In the process of children's growth, parents often can only see the outcome expressed by the event and the expected development trend, so as to explain the growth experience of children and produce different feelings.

2.2 Research status

2.2.1 Research status of "Satir Iceberg Theory".

As one of the important theories of Satir model, the iceberg theory of Satir provides important theoretical reference for native family education. As shown in Figure 1, according to the data provided by CNKI, the research directions of "Satir Iceberg theory" mainly focus on Satir model, family therapy, parent-child relationship and other aspects, and there are few studies combining family education in literary works.

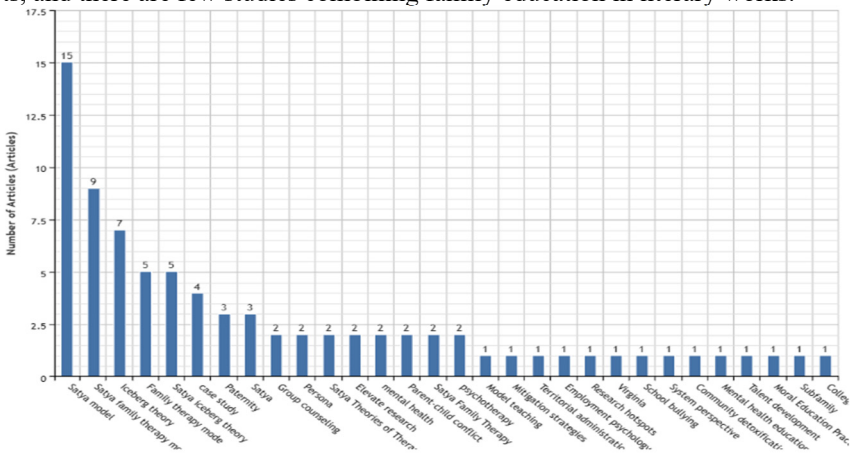


Fig. 1. Bar chart of CNKI's "Satira Iceberg Theory" research topics

2.2.2 Research status of Family Education in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*.

The study of the Jia family’s education is a significant study field. As shown in Figure 2, previous research on the traditional view of education focused on family education model and family education concepts,, such as the ‘emphasis on prestige and fame, but not on moral education’ (Liu, 2019)^[6]; the three modes of education, namely, discipline, mutual assistance, and enlightenment (Jin, 2011)^[4]; the educational environment of first and second degree of affinity and mixed education (Hu, 2013)^[3]; the discussion of the influence of environmental factors on character (Wang, 2014)^[12]. However, most of the analysis starts from the external, objective form of education, and the studies emphasizing the behaviour and psychology of both sides of education are relatively lacking. Although Wei and Wang’s (2015)^[13] ‘On Jia Zheng’s Family Education and Jia Baoyu’s Life Choices in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*’ analyses the basis of Jia Zheng and Jia Baoyu’s individual behaviours—arguing that the essence of the conflict between the father and son is a conflict of values—it still talks about how to educate children from a ‘God’s perspective’, ignoring the significance of psychological needs of children’s education.

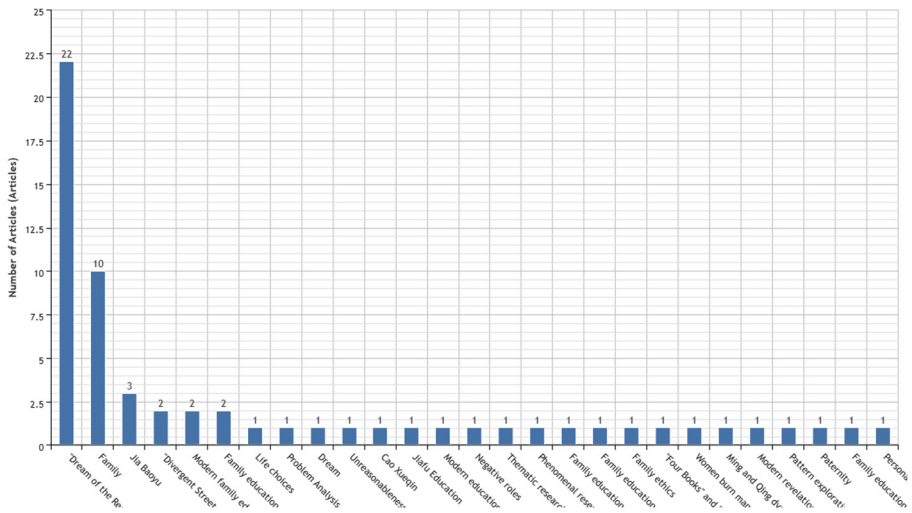


Fig. 2. Column chart of family education research theme of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* in CNKI

2.3 Research corpus

This paper takes "*Satir Family Therapy Model (Second Edition)*" and "*The Dream of the Red Chamber*" by People's Literature Publishing House as research material.

2.4 Research method

This paper studies Jia Fu's family education in *The Dream of the Red Chamber* from the perspective of Satir by using Document analysis and induction method.

2.4.1 Document analysis.

First of all, databases and library resources are used to search relevant literature and research results on the theory of Satya Iceberg and family education in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, so as to form a targeted literature review, understand the current research level of the academic circle on the research issues in this paper, and find the space for research.

2.4.2 Induction method.

According to the literature review and the definition of Satir iceberg theory in this study, based on *The Dream of the Red Chamber* as the text, the family education plots related to Jia Baoyu in the work are first screened and summarized, and the author uses Satir iceberg theory to analyze Jia Baoyu's personality and mental state. Secondly, the author makes a comprehensive analysis of Jia Baoyu's psychological needs and Jia Zheng's educational behavior, and concludes the reasons for Jia Zheng's educational failure. Furthermore, the enlightenment to modern family education is summarized.

3 Discussion and Analysis

Education is the education of people, and the education for children aims to become adults, so it is necessary to understand the psychological needs and aspirations of children, first and foremost. Satir's iceberg theory treats the human self as a metaphor for an iceberg: only the small part of the visible person — the behaviour — is observable. In contrast, the neglected 'inner' role is often invisible as a massive mountain beneath the water. The iceberg theory consists of seven levels, from top to bottom: behaviour, coping styles, feelings, opinions, expectations, aspirations, and ego (Satir, 2018) ^[11]. As the only living first son of Jia Zheng, Jia Baoyu's upbringing epitomises the educational problems of the Jia family.

The exposed part above sea level in Satir's iceberg theory is behaviour. Baoyu's behaviour can be summarised as not following the career path and not associating with timeserving and peacockish influential people. These two points of rebellion are the two educational requirements of the upper and lower levels of the Jia family, especially Jia Zheng: one to study for the imperial examinations and the other to befriend officials.

Using the iceberg theory, the true self of Baoyu's "rebellious" behaviour to break through the previous academic research on the "God's perspective" of the Jia family can be restored. Furthermore, starting with the psychology of education, this paper explores the mistakes of the Jia Family's education and the enlightenment it can give to modern family education. This is a breakthrough from the previous study of the Jia family's 'God's perspective of education, which can fill the research gap to some extent.

3.1 The Refusal to the Career Path and the Imperial Examinations

After the death of his eldest son, Jia Zhu, Jia Zheng pins all of his expectations for the imperial examinations from his ancestors on Baoyu.

In the ninth chapter, Baoyu went to the study to greet Jia Zheng and said he would go to school. Jia Zheng first sneered, “If you mention the word ‘school’ again, even I will die of shame” [2] then he called Li Gui to ask what Baoyu had read; Li Gui replied that Baoyu had read the third book, the *Book of Songs* (Cao, 2008). “Even if you read thirty books of the *Book of Songs*, you are merely deceiving yourself and other people. You should go and pay respects to the master of the school and say what I said: It is not necessary to deal with any of the ancient texts of the Book of Psalms in a perfunctory manner, but it is most important that the Four Books are first explained and memorised at a stretch.” (Cao, 2008) [2]. From Jia Zheng’s perspective, the literariness of work is not essential, and only the books that meet the requirements of the imperial examinations are readable.

Baoyu does not hate the Four Books. As he says in the third book, “There are too many made-up fictions other than the Four Books.” (Cao, 2008) [2]. This shows that he recognised the orthodoxy and seriousness of the Four Books. However, Baoyu does not read the Four Books properly in front of Jia Zheng, preferring to read the *Book of Songs*. The *Book of Songs* is China’s first general collection of poetry, which mainly contains folk songs reflecting love, labour, home sickness, resistance to oppression and other moving, more authentic, spiritual and human content. It is not the Four Books that Baoyu opposes, but the repressive, utilitarian and corrupt feudal imperial examination system that the Four Books represent. In opposition to the Four Books, the *Book of Songs* reflects Baoyu’s desire for freedom and true love, representing the supreme truth and goodness of his heart and his unyielding self. Baoyu is not anti-Jia Zheng; he is actually anti-everything that goes against his quest for self. Therefore, Jia Zheng cannot get what he wants because his aspirations are anti-freedom and anti-humanity, which is contrary to Baoyu’s heart—He cannot receive Baoyu’s acceptance.

Although Jia Zheng could have forced Baoyu to take the imperial examinations by force and tyranny, education that is not spontaneously received and accepted by educates is like aspring that will leap up and return to its original state once the pressure is relaxed. This is evidenced by the fact that Baoyu, having passed the imperial examinations, eventually became a monk.

3.2 The Resistance of Befriending the Peacockish and Snobbish People

There is a big drama in *Dream of the Red Chamber*—Baoyu is beaten due to his dating trouble. In the thirty-second chapter, Jia Yucun comes to meet Jia Zheng, who summons Baoyu to accompany him, and Baoyu says: “I do not dare to call myself elegant, but I am a vulgar person in the vulgar world, and I do not want to deal with these people.” [2] And Xiang Yun persuades Bao Yu, “It is time to meet these people who are officials...to talk about the economy of the world...to socialise.” (Cao, 2008) [2]. Xiang Yun’s words can precisely describe what Jia Zheng had hoped to make friends with officials and develop a career. However, Baoyu refers to these high-ranking officials as “worldling”, so what are the “noble people” in Baoyu’s eyes is worth mentioning. The two other reasons Baoyu is beaten—are the slutty actress Qi Guan and the obscene maidservant Jin Chuaner. In the twenty-eighth chapter, it is known that Qiguan is Jiang Yuhuan, whom Baoyu sees as ‘charming and gentle, and whose heart is very much in love

with him^[2], and they give each other a keepsake as a gift; in the thirty-second chapter, Jin Chuaner is insulted by Madam Wang for seducing Baoyu. She is scolded, expelled, and eventually commits suicide by throwing herself in to a well to prove her innocence (Cao,2008). It can be seen that the ‘noble’ people whom Baoyu befriends are either not interested in fame and fortune or are unique in their temperament. They insist on themselves and are superior to worldly affairs. Therefore, it can be inferred that Baoyu aspires to the liberty to be free from material constraints, to be self-willed and natural. Secondly, Baoyu rebukes those who advise him to follow the career path or represent it and gets close to those who do not yield to secularity. It manifests his aspiration to be recognised and accepted and his passion for like-minded companions. Thirdly, in the *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the author points out in many places that Baoyu was “infatuated”, an infatuated man who was fascinated with his “elder sister” and “younger sister” and “likeable”. Both Qi Guan and Jin Chuaner are people with whom Baoyu has an emotional connection. Baoyu’s closeness to them, drowning in love, also embodies Baoyu’s desire to love and beloved. It can be inferred that the essence of Baoyu’s life lies in the word ‘love’. Those people who accept and approve of Baoyu love him, and Baoyu loves those people who share his heart and help him be himself.

Jia Zheng, for onething, does not approve of Baoyu’s ideology; for another, he forces Baoyu to violate his heart, which leads to that Baoyu having a father but no paternal love. Jia Zheng cannot have Baoyu’s approval and love as well. Education is not about how much the educator outputs but how much education receives. If education does not help a person to be himself, it is doomed to failure.

3.3 The Inspiration of Jia House Education for Modern Education

“Use bronze as a guide to correct your clothes; use the past to know the rise and fall; use man as a guide to understanding the gains and losses.” (Ouyang&Song,1975) ^[9]. The significance of reading the classics lies in their inspiration for real life. Jia Zheng’s failure to understand Baoyu’s behaviour, his inability to respond to the longing behind it and his lack of approval from Baoyu lead to the ultimate failure of his education.

"*The Dream of the Red Chamber*" is located in the late feudal society of China. At this time, the utilitarian goal of family education is to glorify the ancestors, and the long-term goal is to cultivate talents for the rulers. The contents of family education mainly include feudal ethics and morals, the Four Books and the Five Classics. The subjectivity and special value of children as human beings are extremely oppressed under the social and utilitarian value of "clan is big".

Entering the modern society, the modernity and core of human includes two aspects: human dignity and autonomy. That is to say, man is independent and unique. Human subjectivity and particularity should not be constrained by the utilitarian values of society.

Therefore, there are two insights for our modern education: firstly, “people are the main focus”, and the child—educatees—is the main subject of education. The education accepted spontaneously by educatees has vitality and can take root to achieve long-lasting educational results. The German educator Jaspers (1991) mentions in *What is Education*, “the essence of education is that one tree shakes another tree, one cloud

pushes another cloud, one soul calls another soul.”^[5] In the process of obtaining the approval of the educatees (the child), it is essential to build the inner influence of the educator (the parent), not to reprimand with words, not to oppress them with power, but to be close to another heart with one heart and to instil another love with love.

Secondly, in “the search for the self”, education should be helpful for a person to become himself, instead of being compelled by educators to become other people. The application of Satir’s iceberg theory manifests the way to success in education by noticing the external behaviour of the person being educated, understanding his inner desires, satisfying them and helping educatees to become the person they crave to be.

In modern society, although the feudal system in the sense of national system is being gradually replaced, feudal thought still exists in the thoughts of many educators. Such an educator pushes the child to study by bullying, ignores the child’s psychological needs, and builds an “authoritative” parent-child relationship, which ultimately leads to psychological problems. The case of Wu Xieyu, who murdered his mother in China in 2016, shows the crisis of family education. Therefore, modern family education should effectively use the theory of Satya iceberg to guide family education: fully understand the psychological needs of children, with love into the whole process of education, help children to pursue their own, become an independent person.

4 Conclusion

Through the analysis of the characterization and experiences of Jia Baoyu in *the Dream of the Red Chamber* based on the Satir Iceberg Model, the origin of Jia Zheng’s failure in family education of Jia Baoyu is examined—the neglect of Jia Baoyu’s desire and the pursuit of self in his heart. Drawing on Satir’s Iceberg Model, this research demonstrates that in a family, a child’s psychological needs are not met for a long time, which will lead to parent-child relationship tension. The child’s future development is blocked in the case of Jia Baoyu, including his resistance to political careers and connections with snobbish influential people. Different from previous studies, this paper confirms the findings through Satir Iceberg Model to explore the deep desire of the educatee’s heart in Chinese classic literature and analyses the origin and factors of the failure of family education from the family therapeutic perspective. This study is helpful for us to analyze the disadvantages of feudal traditional family education and apply modern family education theory to guide family education practice.

Although the findings provide the enlightenment of family education in the *Dream of the Red Chamber* to the modern family education, more effective studies on family education in various Chinese classic literature based on the Satir Iceberg Model need to be conducted to further test and refine these findings. A further study could explore the implications from other Chinese ancient literature such as *The Analects of Confucius*, *The Orphan of Zhao*; Chinese modern and contemporary literature such as *Moment in Peking*, *The Ordinary World*, and *The Muslim’s Funeral* with different Modern psychological therapy theories.

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