

A study on the changes of China's parenting labor system from the perspective of legal culture theory (1949-1957)

Kajian perubahan sistem pengasuhan tenaga kerja Cina dari perspektif teori budaya hukum (1949-1957)

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Abstract

In the early years of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Communist Party then referred to as CPC implemented a series of equality policies in favor of women. This type of policy is reflected in the allocation of childcare labor resources, emphasizing the construction of women's social welfare. However, China's women's welfare policies are influenced by overall political decision-making and exhibit an unstable state. This study discusses the changes in the CPC's childcare norms from 1949 to 1957. Using the laws and regulations issued by the CPC government from 1949 to 1957 and the news materials published from 1949 to 1957, this study classifies and discusses these first-hand historical materials in different periods using the method of literature analysis. This study uses Friedman's legal culture theory to analyze the interaction between the internal legal culture of the government representatives of the CPC and the external legal culture of the people's representatives. This study finds that by exploring the process of the construction of women's welfare policy of the PRC from 1949 to 1957, it can be clearly seen that under the condition of limited financial capacity, women's welfare work is easily abolished due to other more important national socio-economic work. From these results, this study finally concludes that women's liberation become a tool to serve the national construction under the discourse construction of the CPC.

Keywords: communization in China; housework politics; legal culture; parenting labor; women's liberation

Abstrak

Pada awal hari pembinaan Republik Rakyat Cina, Partai Komunis kemudian seterusnya disebut dengan CPC menerapkan serangkaian kebijakan persamaan untuk wanita. Jenis kebijakan ini terrefleksi dalam alokasi sumber daya kerja perawatan anak, menekankan konstruksi kesejahteraan sosial wanita. Namun, kebijakan kesejahteraan wanita Cina dipengaruhi oleh keputusan politik secara umum dan menunjukkan negara yang tidak stabil. Studi ini mendiskusikan perubahan dalam norma CPC perawatan anak dari 1949 sampai 1957. Menggunakan hukum dan peraturan yang dikeluarkan oleh pemerintah CPC dari 1949 hingga 1957 dan bahan berita yang diterbitkan dari 1949 hingga 1957, studi ini mengklasifikasi dan mendiskusikan bahan sejarah tangan pertama dalam periode yang berbeda menggunakan metode analisis sastra. Studi ini menggunakan teori budaya hukum Friedman untuk menganalisis interaksi antara budaya hukum internal dari perwakilan pemerintah CPC dan budaya hukum luar dari perwakilan rakyat. Studi ini menemukan bahwa dengan mengeksplorasi proses pembangunan kebijakan kesejahteraan wanita Republik Rakyat Cina dari 1949 hingga 1957, jelas dapat dilihat bahwa di bawah kondisi kapasitas keuangan terbatas, pekerjaan kesejahteraan wanita mudah dihapus karena pekerjaan sosio ekonomi nasional yang lebih penting lainnya. Dari hasil tersebut, studi ini pada akhirnya menyimpulkan bahwa pembebasan wanita menjadi alat untuk melayani konstruksi nasional di bawah konstruksi wacana CPC.

Kata Kunci: komunisasi di Cina; politik pekerjaan rumah tangga; budaya hukum; pengasuhan buruh; pembebasan perempuan

Introduction

Housework socialization refers to the socialization, professionalization, and marketization of certain family responsibilities. Parenting labor, as a key aspect of housework, also plays a significant role in reproductive labor. The socialization of parenting labor refers to the socialization, professionalization, and

marketization of parenting labor, transferring parenting labor from within the family to outside the family, transforming unpaid childcare work into paid labor with recognized social value. There are two primary approaches to achieving the socialization of housework: either government departments assume the cost organizing and supporting these services, or the market to provide high-quality domestic services. Chizuko Ueno pointed out that both implementation methods have certain conditions and limitations (Ueno 2020).

In the process of building political power in the early rural revolutionary base areas of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the liberation of women has always been an important part of political power construction (Zhang & Li 2024a, 2024b). The CPC has helped rural women gain autonomy in marriage by breaking the traditional marriage system and establishing a new one. Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the new government faced instability, economic blockades, and military pressure from capitalist nations, primarily led by the United States. As a family, it faced enormous pressure to revitalize the impoverished social economy.

The welfare work for women and infants is a relatively difficult task in overall women's work due to its time-consuming nature, high costs, and slow effectiveness. To better evaluate the complete process of the establishment, development, and decline of the CPC's welfare work for women and infants, it is more appropriate to use the whole country as a research area. Yang believes that household chores are assigned to women by default, thus depriving them of the opportunity to participate in market labor (Yang 2017). At the same time, Chinese women have long been considered irrational and lacking the ability to engage in political and economic activities in the public domain (Wang 2020).

This study focuses on the work of the CPC with women and children from 1949 to 1957. It attempts to explain the rapid weakening of the previously effective parenting policies during that period. Meanwhile, this study also aims to examine the effectiveness of China's women's liberation policy from 1958 to 1960. Unlike previous studies, this one argues that the issue of China's women's equality policy is related to the adaptation of legal culture. Before 1949, China was in a period of transition from a traditional to a modern state. Despite its attempts to learn from Western legislation to protect women's civil rights, these measures were not effectively implemented. After 1949, China sought to emulate the Soviet Union and promote socialist laws. However, due to the lack of a solid legal culture before this period, there were some resistance reactions when trying to transplant Soviet laws.

Chiako Ueno discussed the concept of housework within Marxist feminist theory (Ueno 2020). Gail Hershatter's work included oral history interviews with Chinese women in Shaanxi, revealing the political and economic lives of rural women in China during the collectivization period (Hershatter 2017). Hershatter points out that women improve their status in patriarchal families by serving the family (Hershatter 2004). Wang Zheng argues that the CPC assigns women to do community work, which appears to give them a public-sphere worker identity, but essentially extends women's gender roles from the private sphere (Wang 2005). Traditional gender relations within the family are not easily dismantled by the emphasis on women's national identity (Zuo 2013). Women's rights, promoted by CPC ideology, and the women's equal rights movement is an important factor related to national development (Hu 2016) Song Shaopeng has discussed the relationship between the liberation of women in the Communist Party of China and the socialization of domestic labor (Table 1). Her series of studies have documented the construction process of the Beijing Street Thor Institute and the labor wages of urban worker wives. Song Shaopeng's research provides a historical basis for exploring this study (Song 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2018).

In studying China's childcare system, some scholars have examined the childcare institutions, funding sources, and enrollment patterns in different regions during the early days of the PRC, as summarized in Table 1. These studies take Beijing, Shandong, Shanxi, and other places as research objects, comprehensively using archival literature and oral historical materials to explain childcare institutions' management systems, construction principles, and low-cost operation modes from the perspective of daily life history. Hung argues that daycare can help shape children's collective consciousness. These studies provide a basis for understanding the funding sources and operational mechanisms of childcare institutions in this study (Hung 2021).

Table 1.
Research on nurseries

Author	Issue
Zhai Jing (2017)	Nursery Organization during "The Great Leap Forward"
Song Shao-peng & Xu Mingqing (2018)	Beijing Street Nursery Organization
Wan & Zhu (2020)	Group of rural kindergarten teachers in Shandong province

Source: Created by Author

Some scholars have studied the healthcare work of Chinese Communist Party women and infants as their research object, focusing on the dissemination of health knowledge related to women's childbirth and infant care. Tillman pointed out that daycare has played a positive role in the prevention and treatment of childhood infectious diseases such as smallpox and chickenpox (Tillman 2018). These studies examined the popularization of modern gynecological knowledge in the early days of the establishment of New China from the perspective of medical and health history, providing insights into the overall health conditions of that period.

However, the above research has mainly focused on the empirical aspects of history, without sufficiently analyzing the relationship between the rise and fall of women's welfare undertakings and national strategies. It has not clearly revealed that in the early days of the founding of the PRC, women's welfare initiatives were not primarily aimed at benefiting women's welfare but rather for the overall development strategy of the country.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative research method. It organizes the CPC's government documents on the socialization of parenting labor according to the timeline and sorts out the basic context of the CPC's women's welfare system. The newspaper text is the auxiliary historical data of this study. The newspaper text presents the public's reflection on the parenting labor socialization system. The focus on news reports from newspapers and periodicals provides support for understanding the CPC's parenting labor socialization system. This study uses the process-tracking method to analyze the development, institutional settings, and institutional changes of the Chinese Communist Party's parenting labor socialization thought and explains the reasons for the process from vigorously developing public nurseries to reducing public nurseries. (1) This study sorts out the institutional documents of the CPC's women's welfare policy from 1949 to 1958 according to the timeline and discusses the transformation of the CPC's women's welfare policy; (2) By combining the reports of typical cases in the party newspaper, combined with the background of the times, this study analyzes the public's response to women's welfare policies; (3) By comprehensively comparing the official document policies of The CPC and the reporting tendency of the party newspaper, this study analyzes the mutual transmission relationship between the internal legal culture and the external legal culture.

Lawrence M. Friedman categorized legal culture into internal and external legal aspects. Internal legal culture refers to the legal principles held by the government's legal departments, while the external legal culture refers to the legal concepts and habits held by the public. Friedman discussed the relationship between external legal culture and internal legal culture from the perspective of social change. He believed that social change caused the change of people's ideas, and the original law could not meet people's new needs. In a law-governed society, the external legal culture takes the lead to change under the stimulation of social change, and then the external legal culture exerts pressure on the internal legal culture (Friedman 2023). However, external legal culture cannot independently evolve into a reliable system. Only through the discussion, verification, transformation, and confirmation of the internal legal culture can it be processed into a legal system.

Friedman argued that while external legal culture exerts influence and pressure on internal legal culture, the internal legal culture controls the extent to which the legal system accepts such influence and pressure, to grasp the development direction of the legal system. In a modern society ruled by law, the central government gives citizens the freedom of choice. Citizens can carry out social activities according to their own needs, and their private interests are within their control. To maintain the controllability of the interests of all citizens, the government authority bears the risk responsibility beyond the individual choice of citizens, so the public interests of the government authority are uncontrollable. The ideal state of justice in the modern society ruled by law is the balance between the private interests of citizens and the public interests of government authority.

Friedman’s division of legal culture is an effective model for analyzing the logic of the formation of the legal system, but Friedman too idealistically presupposes the role of state authority and underestimates the control of internal legal culture over external legal culture. In the actual operation of the rule of law society, the public interest operated by the state authority should have assumed the most basic role of protecting the private interests of citizens, but the state authority often encroaches on citizens’ rights under the pretext of safeguarding citizens’ private interests. The public interests and private interests of the operation of state authority often need to play a game to reach an agreement and realize the rule of law and justice. The legislative process embodies the game process of both sides. The formation of the legal system not only goes through the interaction between the external legal culture and the internal legal culture but also requires the government to take the lead in conducting open negotiations on relevant issues. The process of open negotiations is the process of mutual game and compromise between public interests and private interests.

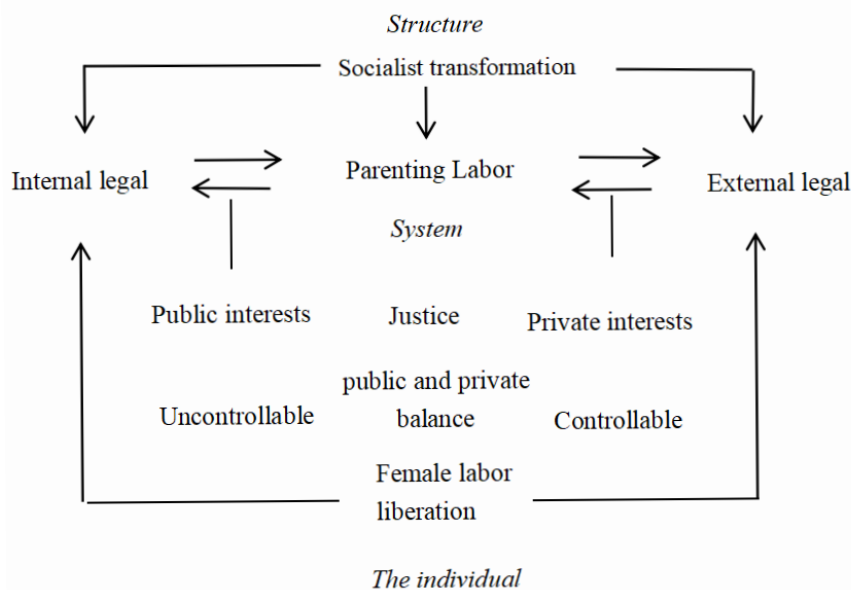


Figure 1.
Diagram of logic
Source: Created by Author

Divergent institutionalism posits that communicative discourses is essential for citizens to reach a consensus with the state. Communicative discourse refers to the discourse system in which the government authority conveys internal legal thoughts to the public through newspapers and other public media before legislation. Discourse is not only limited to the text itself but also includes the place, time, way, reason, transmission object, and reception object (Roy 2023). The internal legal culture consists of state authority and the will of the intellectual elite and bears the responsibility of safeguarding public interests. In contrast, the external legal culture is the will accumulated by the people in the process of implementing the legal system, which is oriented by safeguarding private interests. A legal system is an

entity that responds to the expectations of public interests and private interests. Before the formation of a reliable and perfect legal system, the government authority representing the public interest took the lead in persuading and negotiating with the people through certain communicative discourse, which is the external embodiment of the internal legal culture of the government authority.

This study proposes the following assumptions, and the logic is shown in Figure 1: (1) The rise of social change and the development of a new legal system align with the shared expectations of public and private interests, and the internal legal culture and external legal culture have reached an agreement. The internal legal culture responds to social changes by setting up legal systems. (2) The external legal culture reacts to legal system reforms and feeds back the legal system by the principle of private interests. (3) The legal system receives the feedback from the external legal culture and evaluates and chooses the feedback from the external legal culture according to the standard of public interest. (4) When public and private interests reach an agreement or compromise, the internal legal culture should be adjusted accordingly to respond to the needs of the external legal culture.

Results and Discussion

This section discusses in detail two main things and has been explained very informatively, including: Firstly, the formation of the nursery system in The People's Republic of China (1949-1956). Second, the introduction of the policy of "building a country through thrift and hard work." For China, gender equality has always been tied to political issues, and women's autonomy has been well dealt with at one point.

The formation of the nursery system in The People's Republic of China (1949-1956)

After 1949, when the CPC unified the territory of China and established the PRC, the political, economic, and cultural landscape underwent a significant transformation new. The relevant assumptions of the CPC's women's emancipation of the mind and its commitment to the masses also need to be fulfilled as soon as possible. At the same time, rural and urban women were widely mobilized at the beginning of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). To meet the needs of the construction of the PRC, the government needs to mobilize women to go out of the private sphere, and women need to work in the public sphere to contribute to the construction of the country.

To enable women to enter the workforce and participate in social labor, the CPC formulated a series of women's welfare policies to help solve the pressure of women's parenting labor. On March 30th, 1949, at the first National Women's Congress of the CPC, Kang Keqing made a report on childcare, advocating that all localities establish nurseries according to their actual needs (Yang 1957, Stacey 1975). Kang Keqing stressed in his report that the government's purpose of establishing nurseries is to serve working women. In terms of the form of nurseries, various forms of nurseries should be established according to the actual situation to meet the needs of the masses. Establish day nurseries and full-time nurseries in cities. Day nurseries are open to female workers and staff in factories and agencies. The government can set them up in conjunction with multiple factories and agencies to help solve the problem of female workers' childcare. In some public and private primary schools, kindergartens can be set up to recruit children aged 4-6. When the local financial and economic situation is loose, a full-time care institution can be set up, mainly to absorb the orphans of martyrs and children whose parents are busy with work. The form of "mutual help for female workers with children" applies to factories and rural areas. The specific organization method and the calculation of kindergarten teachers' work points are as follows: female workers can gather their children together. These female workers take turns looking after their children for one day in order. The work points lost by female workers due to taking care of children are made up by other female workers from their work points. The organization mode of "mutual aid, changing work, and taking care of children" is widely used in rural areas. During the busy wheat harvest season in rural areas, children from various families can be gathered together, with some elderly women helping to look after the children, while other young women go to work in the fields. They establish nurseries according to their actual needs (Zhang 2007, Van Houten 2015).

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Kang Keqing focus on establishing nurseries demonstrated the CPC government's commitment to supporting working women. On April 1st, 1949, the first National Congress of Chinese Women passed the constitution of the All-China Women's Federation (中华全国民主妇女联合会, for short ACWF), which made arrangements for women's work after the founding of The PRC. The General Assembly formally stipulated that the Women's and Children's Welfare Department set up by the Women's Federation was specifically responsible for guiding the establishment of nurseries in various regions. At the same time, the Department also attached importance to the development of other women's and children's welfare undertakings (ACWF 1949). Since the first women's congress held by the CPC, women cadres of the Women's Federation of the CPC have delivered speeches at various working meetings to guide the work of nursery organizations in various regions.

On August 20th, 1949, Cai Chang (蔡畅) proposed at the trade union working conference that greater attention should be given to the welfare of women workers. Cai Chang highlighted that women workers occupy a considerable number of the working class and are the main force of socialist production. To help women balance family responsibilities with work, new nurseries should be established to reduce the burden of nursing labor for women workers. As for the source of funds, Cai Chang believed that the funding for these nurseries should come from a shared contribution by the government, factories, and parents. On the issue of who should lead the nursery, Cai Chang believed that it should be completed through consultation between the Women's Department of the trade union and the Ministry of Welfare (Yang 1957, Van Houten 2015). In October 1951, the All-China Women's and Children's Federation held its first working conference on women's and children's welfare. During this conference, the welfare guarantees for women and children (中华全国妇女儿童联合会) were emphasized again. The guiding principle of women's and children's welfare was to "take production as the center and serve the majority of manual working women, mental working women, and their children." At the meeting, the work of women and children's welfare is the work of "changing the old and building the new" and "changing customs," which is an important work of social reform and ideological transformation. The General Assembly deployed the work of children's welfare and proposed a systematic approach to childcare (Lu 2021, Hong 2023).

The General Assembly's approach to childcare included several strategic points. First, it emphasized that the organization and management of nurseries should be based on the actual situation of various places. The ways and methods of establishing nurseries in urban and rural areas are different. At the first women's and children's welfare work conference of the All-China Women's Federation, Kang Keqing stated that solving the childcare problem for working women should be a priority. For the scattered working women in the city, the Welfare Department of the Women's Federation should engage housewives to set up regular or temporary childcare centers in urban neighborhood. As for the subsidy

for the work points of kindergarten teachers in rural areas, it is necessary to adopt the method of mutual aid and job exchange appropriately according to the actual situation of local agricultural development, members, and childcare parents, and quantify the childcare workload of childcare workers.

There are distinct methods for organizing childcare facilities in factories, rural areas, government agencies, and cities, which need to be tailored to each context. Secondly, the Women's Federation should pay attention to strengthening cooperation with health and education departments, and all parties should unite and cooperate to run the trust. At the same time, childcare workers should strengthen communication and cooperation with parents, publicize correct parenting knowledge and scientific parenting experience, and help parents perform their family parenting duties. Thirdly, the government should encourage the masses to run nurseries independently when the finance has not spared the strength to run nurseries (Xiang 2018, Hong 2023).

Table 2.
Books promoting the work of childcare

Author	The title of the book	Public Time
Zhou JS	The RPC and Nurseries	1952
Zhou JS	A History of Nurseries	1951
Zhou JS	Childcare in the Soviet Union and the New Democratic Countries	1951
Zhou JS	Economic issues in pediatric nutrition	1951
Beijing Maternal and Child Health Experimental Nursery	How to run a nursery	1958
Political Department of Northeast Military Region	Nursery Work	1949
All-China Federation of Trade Unions Women's Department	Strive to run a good nursery for workers	1955
Women and Children's Welfare Department, Northeast Women's Federation	In the work of Soviet Nurseries	1951
All-China Federation of Trade Unions, Women's Work Department.	Experience in Factory Nurseries	1953
Jiangsu Province (Jiangsu People's Government)	Vigorously Develop private kindergartens and nurseries	1958
Shen Yuanhui	Nurseries in luoshanji	1949
Shanghai Municipal Health Bureau	The recipes of Nursery	1957

Source: Created by Author

After the CPC issued its directive for regions to establish nurseries, there was a mixed response across the country. In many rural areas, traditional beliefs still firmly control farmers' thoughts, many rural women are not willing to put their children in collective nurseries. Women workers in some factories are afraid that they cannot afford the expenses of public or private nurseries and take evasive measures to the call of the CPC. Based on various objective and subjective factors, these women prefer to put their children in a family to be raised by their relatives (Chen 2016). The way of the collective raising of infants and young children advocated by the CPC has been resisted by some women. The nursery system promoted by the CPC has not been smoothly and rapidly implemented. To break the resistance of the masses to the collective raising of children and to improve the professional knowledge of nursing workers, the Chinese Communist government published a series of books on childcare to popularize books on the collective raising of children and maintaining children's health. Refer to Table 2 for a list of these nursery books.

These books can be divided into three categories. The first category provides a brief overview of the history of Chinese nurseries and Soviet nurseries. The second summarizes the experiences of nurseries established by factories and organizations in cities to help women workers and cadres reduce the burden of parenting labor and introduces the experience of running excellent nurseries. The third category introduces the knowledge of raising children, covering topics such as how to pay attention to children's health, diet and nutrition, mental health, etc. Most of these books were published between 1949 to 1957, which indicates that the growth of the quality and quantity of folk nurseries was from 1949 to 1957. This shows that China's nurseries developed from 1949 to 1957. The conservation practice of the masses was reported in the party newspaper of the CPC. The report in the party newspaper mainly praised the establishment of nurseries in various places. By 1950, 21,000 urban women in Lushun (旅顺) and Dalian (大连) were participating in industrial production, accounting for 18% of the total workforce in the region. Due to the increasing participation of women in production, childcare is also being carried out. According to the statistics of The CPC, Lvshun Dalian has set up 16 regular nurseries and enrolled 643 children (LvDa of Xinhua News Agency 1950). Maternal and child health and welfare work in Shandong has also made progress. Women in Shandong were heavily oppressed by feudalism.

As economic conditions improved, children's welfare in Northeast China developed rapidly, and the number of nurseries and nurseries has increased. The CPC reported that there were 59 nurseries or nurseries in factories and institutions in major cities in Northeast China, providing care for about 2,600 children (Cantin 2009). Female factory workers, in particular, were in urgent need of reducing parenting burdens. To solve the problem of childcare for female workers, cotton mills in some regions set up nurseries in the factories and reasonably adjusted the value of parenting labor using "mutual aid and job exchange." The "contact contract" system in the nurseries of Shanghai's first cotton textile factory (Cai 1955) and the nurseries in Chengdu, Taiyuan, Heilongjiang, and Shanxi are shown in Table 3.

Table 3.
Nursery cases in different places

The Area	Factory name, village name	How to arrange for the delivery
Shanghai	State-owned Shanghai's first cotton textile factory	The "contact contract" system
Chengdu	Chengdu Yuhua Yarn Factory	Factory nursery
TAIYUAN	Jinsheng Textile Factory	The childminders made contracts with the mothers in the competition
Heilongjiang	Mengkeli village, Zhaoyuan county	Farm busy childcare group
Shanxi	The "Sino-Soviet Friendship" collective farm in Changye, Shanxi	Farm busy childcare group

Source: Created by Author

It can be seen from the above discussion that although the number and quality of nurseries in urban and rural areas in various regions of China have developed to a certain extent, there are also many problems in the process of running nurseries. The journal *Women of the PRC* published an article titled "Experience of Child Care Work," which analyzed common problems in childcare. Shao Jun (少君) identified three main types of childcare workers. First, rural women who were often illiterate and lacked scientific knowledge of child-rearing, though their care attitude was very sincere and they love their children meticulously, they cannot achieve the "integration of care and education." The second is that educated intellectuals who are out of school or unemployed have devoted themselves to nursing work to make a living after liberation, but they are often frustrated when they encounter difficulties in work. These workers think that the care work is just like the old maid, and they feel inferior. Third, college students in the Department of Family Economics or Education (Manning 2006, Hong 2019).

There are many problems in the operation of nurseries in various places. Taking the situation of nurseries in Beijing as an example, Wangjiaojiao's (王娇娇) master's thesis summarized the shortcomings of nurseries in Beijing: in terms of leadership, the roles and responsibilities of the Education Bureau, the Health Bureau, and the Civil Affairs Bureau are unclear, leading to shifting of responsibilities among them. Regarding the quality of work in nurseries, due to financial difficulties, the wages of kindergarten teachers are low, and the working attitude and nursing knowledge are backward, so the children in nurseries are often ill. In terms of availability, the limited number of nurseries cannot meet the growing demand for childcare services. Public nurseries have fewer beds, and it is difficult for children from ordinary families to get access to nurseries. On the other hand, private nurseries are costly, and ordinary families cannot afford the cost (Wang 2017). Some mothers are reluctant to send their children to collective nurseries. Some parents think that there are too many children in nurseries to be taken care of by nursing teachers, and their health condition is not good. The weak and young children are prone to illness (Cantin 2009). Many women prioritize their children over participating in formal election activities or meetings and are unwilling to put their children in nurseries.

The introduction of the policy of "building a country through thrift and hard work"

After the Third National Women's Federation Representative Conference was held in 1957, the frequency of reporting on hardworking and frugal housewives in the People's Daily, a newspaper of the Communist Party of China, increased. In a report by the People's Daily, these hardworking and frugal housewives were praised as contributing to the country's socialist economic construction. A new trend of "not being more hardworking than eating and clothing, not more frugal than enjoying" was gradually forming among working-class families across the country (People's Daily 1958, Yu 2008). The Chinese Communist government pointed out in the process of propaganda that people cannot ignore the value of household chores, and doing good household chores is equally important as doing good work in factories. The focus on women's domestic roles led to the celebration for virtuous wives and mothers in party newspapers.

Wives of government officials and workers were praised as good wives because they all share the common trait of being diligent and frugal and doing all household chores themselves. In 1957, the wife of a general was publicly praised in the People's Daily, and she has always adhered to the quality of being diligent and frugal in managing a household. This lady raised seven children, and as a housewife of more than ten people, she did not hire a nanny and did all the household chores herself (People's Daily 1957). Similarly, the story of a family member of an employee who worked diligently and frugally at home was publicly praised in the People's Daily. Li Chunpei is a housewife who lives on her husband's lower salary, but with her proper arrangements, the family's life is going well. The story of Li Chunpei's meticulous budgeting has been reported in the party newspaper, and it is argued that all housewives in the country should learn from Li Chunpei.

Tianjin held a commendation conference for hardworking and frugal housewives, recognizing them for their dedication to taking care of their husbands and children, despite their low salaries. They gave up dressing themselves up and didn't spend money on beautiful clothes. The clothes they wore were all made from old clothes (Tianjin People's Daily 1958, Manning 2006). Urban housewives were encouraged to take good care of their husbands and children's lives in the family so that husbands do not delay work for trivial family matters and teach children to be diligent, thrifty, and study well.

The transition from requiring women to leave their homes and enter factories to contribute to socialist economic construction at the beginning of the founding of the PRC to requiring women to do household chores at home is based on the adjustment of the national economy. At that time, urban employment positions could not absorb urban labor, and surplus urban labor was sent to rural areas to participate in agricultural labor. In this context, urban women were among the first to be required to do household chores in the private sector.

After urban labor was transferred to rural areas, the rural labor force tends to become saturated and no longer requires rural women to engage in agricultural labor. Rural women are required to do well with household chores and raise children. In 1959, the number of kindergartens in rural areas of Shanghai decreased by half compared to 1958, and the number of children admitted decreased by 20,000 (Zhang 2014, Zhong 2020). Rural women do not trust their children to be raised in collective daycare, and even when working in the fields, they pretend to have stomach pains in order to go to the collective daycare and see if their children have been bullied (Freeman 2002).

Women's work is a subsidiary of other central work; women's work in the family is to assist their husbands in the factory; and women's work in the public sector is to serve the country's economic development. Women's work in both the public and private spheres is a way to serve the country's economic development. However, due to the adjustment of the national economic structure, women are required to take on the role of a virtuous wife and mother in the private sector. This positioning has shifted from the tone of encouraging women to step out of their families and into the public sphere in the early days of the founding of the PRC. After the formation of the Great Leap Forward in May 1958, the two-diligence policy was abolished. In the Great Leap Forward movement of 1958, large-scale agricultural cooperatives and collective canteens were established in rural areas.

Although this focus was interrupted during the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1960, it was reinstated in 1961 and remained unchanged until the Cultural Revolution. The establishment of the Two Diligence Policy reflects the failure of the experiment on the distribution of women's childcare labor at the beginning of the establishment of the PRC. The personal interests of women have been replaced by the public interests of the country, and women's welfare has been reduced due to economic and political changes in the country.

This study has been explained very informatively in the above two sub-chapters. For China, gender equality has always been tied to political issues, and women's autonomy has been well dealt with at one point. In the experiment of the establishment of nurseries by The CPC in the 1950s. The CPC's implementation of the women's welfare system was, on the one hand, in response to the assumption of the CPC's leaders and female intellectuals on the distribution of parenting labor in the 1940s, and, on the other hand, was influenced by the policies of the Soviet socialist countries on women. The establishment of nurseries has indeed helped female workers in some factories to solve the problem of childcare, helping them to focus on their work and gain social value in their work.

However, the quality and quantity of nurseries in some regions cannot meet the needs of parents of young children, so it is still difficult to carry out the beautiful idea that parenting labor can be shared by families and society on a large scale. Gender policy has sometimes become a tool for factional struggles within the CPC (Leader 1973). The gender line was a tool of political policy during the Mao era (Wang 2010). In the construction of the maternal and child welfare system, the external legal culture can't be effectively transferred to the internal legal culture. The internal legal culture based on the principle of safeguarding public interests takes the political interests of the state rather than the interests of women as the principle of consideration in the process of setting up the maternal and child welfare system.

Conclusion

Parenting labor is an essential aspect of household chores, and due to its unique nature, it is challenging to achieve the ideal state of shared responsibility between the private and public sectors. In the early days of the establishment of the PRC, in order to fulfill the requirements of Marxist feminism, the Chinese Women's Federation actively began to carry out experimental construction of women's welfare in accordance with Marx's ideas on women's liberation. However, as the economic development of the PRC progressed, the government's financial pressure increased, forcing women's work to make concessions in favor of other priorities.

Ultimately, the Communist Party of China began to glorify women's unpaid household chores as an important component of the Chinese revolutionary cause, warning them that doing good household chores and raising children at home is a contribution to the development of the country. Women who are diligent and frugal in keeping their homes were praised by the Communist Party. Since 2019, China's fertility rate has continued to decline, and in 2022, China's population will experience negative growth. Exploring the distribution of childcare labor can provide a solution to China's current low fertility rate. The government, society, and families should recognize and reward the childcare efforts undertaken by women. Within the family, husbands should help the wife with childcare, and the community can provide childcare services for the family.

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