FIVE

Care and Rivalry

An Untold Tale of a Sibling Dyad

Siblings Matter

On a spring morning, MC observed a brother–sister dyad interacting with another child:[1]

Pai Yan-yan [a seven-year-old girl] was standing in front of a rock with food on it. Wang Yi-kun [a seven-year-old boy] was in a hurry to go away and stuck a paper package into Yan-yan's hand and said: "Here is some face powder [for pretend play]. I give this to you."

Yan-yan: "Alright." She took it.

Yi-kun: "You have to let my [younger sister] Mei-yu play with you." Yi-kun turned and ran off.

His sister Wang Mei-yu [five-year-old]: "You let me play with you, alright?"

Yan-yan nodded her head. She put the powder package under the rubber band that was holding her purse closed.

Mei-yu had a little cosmetic box in her hand. Yan-yan took it from her and said: "We'll put this in my purse, alright? We'll put it with all my other things."

Mei-yu nodded her head in agreement.

This episode, combining elements of kinship, friendship, and gender, provides a glimpse into young siblings' moral life in peer context: The

[1] CO #1176, 04/05/1960.

young boy Yi-kun "bribed" his peer Yan-yan with the explicit goal of getting Yan-yan to accept his little sister Mei-yu as her playmate. Yan-yan accepted Yi-kun's gift – a popular play object among young girls in the community, as well as his request. Perhaps benefitting from her seniority in age or her position as the desired playmate, Yan-yan also took the initiative to lead the subsequent interactions, commanding the control of resources upon Mei-yu's agreement. Above all, we see a little boy helping his younger sister to make friends with peers, in a social world outside the home, through exchange of gifts and favors.

Sibling relations provide a unique lens through which to examine core questions of learning morality. How do young children learn their first lessons with their siblings, about relating to others and asserting oneself, about cooperation and conflict, and about negotiating parental control and love, within and beyond familial contexts? While many in other species never know or meet their siblings, humans have almost always known and lived with their siblings throughout our evolutionary history. Across cultures, instead of having adults supervise and teach them, children spend a lot of time playing with and learning from other children, and siblings are important agents in such peer learning processes (Maynard and Tovote 2010). Cross-cultural research on child development has long demonstrated that siblings always matter (Weisner 1989).

A special relationship that cuts across the peer world and the family world, sibling relation can shed invaluable light on family dynamics. Despite the fact that Chinese children also spend a lot of time with their siblings, the anthropology of the Chinese family since its inception has obscured the importance of sibling relation. Classic works, shaped by British social anthropology's lineage studies traditions,[2] rarely focused on sibling relations in childhood, only analyzing brother-brother relations as adults.[3] Later research, inspired by

[2] In particular, Maurice Freedman's paradigm (1966) on Chinese lineage.

[3] A few classic studies include the following: Maurice Freeman (1966) established the conceptual foundation for explaining the division and unity of Chinese families.

the new anthropology of kinship that emphasizes the lived experience of "relatedness" (Carsten 2000) instead of formal structures, still paid little attention to sibling experience.[4] Neglecting sibling relation reflects a broader problem in the anthropology of kinship, that is, the bias toward the centrality of parent–child and conjugal relations (Alber, Coe, and Thelen 2013).[5]

Studying sibling relations also honors and expands from Arthur Wolf's legacy in biological and evolutionary anthropology. From a bio-evolutionary perspective, sibling experience in childhood is a key component in human kin detection – detecting genetic relatedness (Lieberman, Tooby, and Cosmides 2007). Even today, Arthur Wolf's research on Taiwanese *sim-pu-a* ("little daughter-in-law") (A. Wolf 1970) and communally-reared children in the Israeli Kibbutzim (Shepher 1971) remain two classic cases of "natural experiments" that are often taken to have wider implications for human kinship in general. Drawing from demographic records in the Haishan area, Arthur Wolf found lower fertility rates and higher divorce rates of adult couples who grew up as stepsiblings compared to those who did not. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, he has written extensively to support the Westermarck hypothesis that intimate association in childhood leads to incest avoidance through

Margery Wolf (1972) described women's role, how tensions between brothers in a household were amplified by sisters-in-law and led into family division; Myron Cohen (1976) focused on large, joint families are maintained and divided in a Southern Taiwan village; Rubie Watson (1985) traced the formation of inequality among brothers in a single lineage spanning centuries in a Hong Kong village.

[4] For a critique of the inadequate attention on sibling and other sorts of kin and fictive kin relations, see (Stafford 2000). There are a few exceptions in sinological anthropology, such as "same-year siblingship" – fictive kin, friendship (G. D. Santos 2008) and elder sister's sacrifice and support for younger brother in rural China (Obendiek 2013), but these focus on young adults, instead of children.

[5] David Schneider, "the father of the new kinship studies," found that American adults valued sibling relations formed in childhood experience (Cumming and Schneider 1961). But Cumming and Schneider's explanation, that such horizontal solidarity is embedded in a social system that values a high-level of autonomy and freedom, is not generalizable to societies that value children's conformity and obedience.

sexual disgust.[6] Along these lines, later research based on laboratory experiments further established sibling co-residence experience as a key parameter for kin detection and moral sentiments related to incest (Lieberman and Lobel 2012; Lieberman, Tooby, and Cosmides 2003).

But Wolf's previous research did not explicitly address the linkage between sibling relation and kin-based morality. Sibling-directed morality as altruism, formulated in kin-selection or inclusive fitness theory (Hamilton 1964), is an important prediction of human behavioral ecology.[7] Help, care and collaboration among siblings are a major focus of this chapter. I will also delve into the dark side of sibling morality. Even though natural selection should lead to kin-based altruism at a very general level and as what's called "an ultimate explanation" (Scott-Phillips, Dickins, and West 2011), in everyday reality kinship is not always "warm and fuzzy." While classic theories on kinship in sociocultural anthropology tend to focus on dimensions of solidarity, many recent reflections have emphasized the negative sentiments, or ambivalence of kinship (see e.g., Bamford 2019; Cartsen 2013).[8] Sibling relations, especially cross-sex siblings, are constructed simultaneously as equal (shared parenthood) and as different (age, gender, birth order) (Thelen, Coe, and Alber 2013). Exploring sibling relations in childhood can help us understand the "double-edged quality of human kinship"

[6] For a review of Wolf's works and the Westermarck hypothesis in light of human biology, see (Lieberman and Symons 1998).

[7] Hamilton's rule in theoretical biology states that a trait is favored by natural selection if the benefit to others, B, multiplied by relatedness, R, exceeds the cost to self, C. Kin-based altruism is distinct from reciprocal altruism in nonkin interactions (Trivers 1971). Plainly speaking, while cooperation between non-related people is often maintained through reciprocity, reciprocity is not necessary for people to sacrifice themselves to help their close-relatives, for example, their children.

[8] Some classic works in anthropology also addressed the negative or ambivalent sentiments of kin relations, but more in the form of ethnographic materials rather than a main focus in theoretical paradigms (Peletz 2002). Within sinological anthropology, Margery Wolf's ethnography "House of Lim" (1968) portrayed vivid scenes of family disputes and conflicts among adults in Xia Xizhou.

(Carsten 2013): love and control, connection and exclusion in everyday practice of relatedness.

I rediscovered the once untold tale of a brother–sister dyad, two main characters in the opening vignette. Their family was featured in Margery Wolf's *A Thrice-Told Tale* (1992), but what happened to the children remained a mystery. This intrigued me. I recovered these children's voices in their family drama. I traced their social network and behavioral patterns. I explored how they looked out for each other and united against their peers but competed and maneuvered at home. Finally, reconstructing the story of these two children also led me to ponder the nature of fieldnotes and ethnography.

A "Crazy" Mother and Her Children

The family of Wang Yi-kun and Wang Mei-yu was featured in Margery Wolf's book *A Thrice-Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility* (1992), including its shorter, article version (M. Wolf 1990b). This family "had lived in the village for nearly ten years, but by village tradition they were still newcomers."[9] In a community bonded through kinship, although sharing the same surname, they didn't belong to the village's prominent Wang lineage (the Wolfs' landlord, the Lims of *The House of Lim*).[10] At the beginning of the Wolfs' fieldwork, this family (see Table 5.1) included father Wang Tian-lai (#47), mother Wang Chen-hsin (#48), and three children: Wang Yi-kun (#49), Wang Mei-yu (#50), and an infant boy Wang Ju-kun (#51).

The protagonist of *A Thrice-Told Tale*, Wang Chen-hsin, a woman who "went crazy," was originally from Keelung, and her mother still

[9] M. Wolf (1992): 95.

[10] Margery Wolf used the pseudonym "Tan" in "Thrice-Told Tale" as her protagonist's surname, and the pseudonym "Lim" for the protagonists in *House of Lim*. But according to the demographic data in the Wolf Archive, this newly settled family's actual surname is Wang.

Table 5.1 *Wang Yi-kun and Wang Mei-yu's family, Household #7*

Name	Person ID	Age by years (in November 1958)	Gender
Wang Tian-lai	#47	32	M
Wang Chen-hsin	#48	30	F
Wang Yi-kun	#49	6	M
Wang Mei-yu	#50	5	F
Wang Ju-kun	#51	1	M

lived there. Her younger sister Wang Hsiu-chu (#52) somehow lived nearby. Her sister and her mother were both around to look after her, during her mental breakdown, an incident featured in "*A Thrice-Told Tale*:"

> In the spring of 1960, in a then remote village on the edge of the Taipei basin in northern Taiwan, a young mother of three lurched out of her home, crossed a village path, and stumbled wildly across a muddy rice paddy. The cries of her children and her own agonized shouts quickly drew an excited crowd out of what had seemed an empty village. Thus began nearly a month of uproar and agitation as this small community resolved the issue of whether one of their residents was being possessed by a god or suffering from a mental illness.[11]

This incident was related to a fight among children. Wang Chen-hsin "had quarreled in recent months with a woman from a Lim household when her young son had been slugged by a Lim boy."[12] The "Lim" household in this quote was actually another Wang household (#15b). From multiple women's testimony during village gossip, MC learned that when Chen-hsin went to the other mom Wang Lin-hua (Household #15b) to report that fight, Lin-hua scolded her harshly: "If children fight and kill each other it serves them right. If your children get killed, then

[11] M. Wolf (1992): 93.
[12] M. Wolf (1992): 95.

you come and take your children home and bury them. You don't need to come and talk to me about it."[13] During the days of Chen-hsin's mental breakdown, when she acted like a *Tang-ki* (spirit medium), confusing many people, Lin-hua's household did not go to see Chen-hsin as other neighbors did, and Chen-hsin tormented that household.[14] Another woman, according to Chen-hsin's mother, had cursed Chen-hsin due to children's fights: "You are going to go crazy and take off your clothes." Village women also told MC that when Chen-hsin fell into the field, she lay there lamenting: "Just because of children's things other people bully me, other people bully me just because of children's things. I won't forget this! I won't forget this!"[15]

When I reapproached *A Thrice-Told Tale*, I looked everywhere to find clues about the role and experience of Chen-hsin's children. I gleaned sporadic information about her children in the raw fieldnotes section, the second tale of that book.[16] It turns out that Chen-hsin's older boy Wang Yi-kun played a unique part in the development of that story, although Margery Wolf did not write about this child in her final, ethnographic tale. First of all, the boy knew his mom's psychology quite well and seemed more perceptive than his father Tian-lai. Had his father been as insightful as he was, they might have successfully prevented Chen-hsin from "going crazy" this time.[17] On top of a grudge against other mothers accumulated recently, the immediate trigger of Chen-hsin's erratic behavior, on March 4, 1960, was her losing NT$ 90 and believing that a neighbor had stolen it. When she couldn't find the money and

[13] M. Wolf (1992): 62. These same women reported that later when Chen-hsin's child hit Lin-hua's child, Chen-hsin just said the same thing back to Lin-hua.
[14] M. Wolf (1992): 100.
[15] M. Wolf (1992): 62.
[16] *A Thrice-Told Tale* includes three sections, the first is fiction, the second is raw fieldnotes, and the third is ethnographic writing. The raw fieldnotes presented in the second section belong to note-type "G" ("general"), instead of the child-centered notes (Child Observation, Child Interview, etc.).
[17] A villager told MC that something like this had happened to Chen-hsin before (M. Wolf 1992: 62).

asked Yi-Kun about it, he told mom that his father took it to gamble. But his father denied it. She then plunged into the rice field. Neighbors criticized the husband who, they said, was aware of his wife's illness, because he should not have let her worry. He should have said that he had taken the money even if he hadn't, because she then would not worry about the missing money.[18]

Yi-kun and his mother were very close. He was her confidant. After she fell ill, she once called her son into the house and lay on the bed with him. Yi-kun told his mother that a medicine his father gave her was made of worms, prescribed by local gods. She called her son in, both to confirm that matter and to protect him from being spanked by his angry father. Upon confirming with Yi-kun, she ran out of the house and her children looked scared.[19]

As hard as it could be, her children, both Yi-kun and Mei-yu, were seen helping her when everyone else present was frightened by her possession-like behavior. On March 10, 1960, Chen-hsin drew a crowd in her courtyard, dancing like a *Tang-ki*, making *bai-bai* motions. She summoned MC, hugged her close and praised her for being kind to all the children, but the chaotic scene frightened MC and children in the crowd. Her own children, however, did not see scared. They rushed to pick her up each time she fell down.[20]

Finally, her mental breakdown strained her marital relation, and her children were inevitably involved in. When Chen-hsin found out that her husband was going to send her to the hospital again, as he had when she stumbled into the rice paddy, she kept saying that her husband was too dumb and that she wanted a divorce: "I am a woman and you are a man, so I'll take the one girl (Mei-yu) and you take the boys (Yi-kun and

[18] Neighbors thought the husband very dumb and that he could have made the wife feel better. My description of what happened on March 4, 1960 was based on raw fieldnotes that recorded what MC heard from other villagers (M. Wolf 1992: 62).
[19] M. Wolf (1992): 68.
[20] M. Wolf (1992): 76.

his baby brother). I won't have to take your boys [the heirs of the husband's family]. I'm going to take the girl home [to Keelung] with me. I am going to take my girl home with me." A neighbor said she did bring her daughter with her when she tried to run away from the house.[21]

Children's voices were mostly omitted when Margery Wolf transformed the raw fieldnotes into her ethnographic piece, "The Woman Who Didn't Become a Shaman" (M. Wolf 1990b, 1992: 93–126). But children's voices are precious in *this* ethnography: What were Chen-hsin's children like? How did these little ones cope with their life, as part of a marginalized family going through a scandalous crisis? One episode in Child Observation (CO)[22] clearly shows that children were active participants in village gossip. The next day after Chen-hsin made a scene with MC, children from other families, while playing a hopscotch game, teased their "Older Sister" observer.

A boy named Wang Shi-hui asked MC: "Did you really cry yesterday when she [Chen-hsin] caught you? Wang Hsiu-yun [a girl] told everybody that you cried loud. Did you?"

MC (indignantly): "I did not."

Wang Hsiu-yun (angrily): "Now, when did I say that? Now, when did I say that?"

[Another girl] Wang Shu-yu laughed very loud.

[The boy] Wang Shi-hui: "I heard you. Don't you think I didn't hear you." Hsiu-yun seemed quite anxious and probably did say this.

Two days later, on the way to school, MC overheard an eight-year-old girl, Chen Yu-li, telling other children this story:[23]

Last night when she (Chen-hsin) came in I was just getting ready to go to bed and my sister was studying. She banged on the door, and my aunt [a teenager] had to keep asking her to go home. My oldest sister was very

[21] M. Wolf (1992): 82.
[22] CO #1009, 04/05/1960.
[23] M. Wolf (1992): 76. Yu-li's grandmother was the one who Chen-hsin accused of stealing her money.

scared and almost fainted when Chen-hsin wouldn't go home. … She said that my grandmother had stolen her money, and that my grandmother had borrowed NT $900 from her. How could this be? My grandmother says that she gave her back all her money. And how could she steal her money?"

Anthropologists rely on gossip to gather data, for example, MC checking with villagers to understand what happened to Chen-hsin. Children also gossiped among themselves, an important way to establish their own reputation and spread information about other people's reputation. One can only imagine the kind of teasing, mocking or social exclusion Chen-hsin's own children would have experienced. One can further speculate that Chen-hsin's children might have to rely on themselves and support each other at this difficult time. Because Chen-hsin was very shy, Wolf's team did not conduct concentrated observations or interviews with her as they did with some other mothers. Fortunately, her two older children Yi-kun and Mei-yu were quite visible in the archive.[24] CO includes sixty-four timed episodes that involve at least one of the two children, of which seventeen episodes involve both children. Besides, eight episodes of other (un-timed) observations involve one child or both; in terms of projective tests, both children participated in TAT, and the sister also participated in Doll Play. Drawing from the core data, CO, the next section explores these two children's relative positioning in the context of their social networks.

Siblings in Peer Network

Social network analysis of CO reveals patterns of how Yi-kun and his sister Mei-yu interacted with each other and with other children and adults. We have already seen in Chapter 3 that household number

[24] The Wolfs' original research defined 3–11 as their target age range and they did not collect much data on infants, so Wang Chen-hsin's youngest child is not my focus here.

is the most important demographic variable for predicting network homophily, more so than gender and age. This pattern holds true in both co-occurrence network, meaning that children from the same household tend to appear together during CO episodes and behavioral-interaction network, meaning that they tend to actually interact together too. Children from the same household are mostly siblings, and some cases include cousins. It is thus clear that sibling relations are significant in children's overall social network structure.

With regards to the dyad of Yi-kun (#49) and Mei-yu (#50), they two belonged to the same clique out of the four cliques mentioned in Chapter 3, suggesting that Yi-kun and Mei-yu often appeared together in play groups. Figure 5.1 depicts a subset of Child Observation co-occurrence network, the union network of Yi-kun and Mei-yu, a regional network with these two children as the focal nodes. Each node in this union network represents a person. The size of a node is proportional to the person's betweenness-centrality, which measures how often a node occurs on all shortest paths between two nodes and represents the person's importance as a "bridge" between other people in the network. Each edge (line) between two nodes represents the co-occurrence of these two people; the thickness of edges is proportional to the frequency of co-occurrence observed.

The union network of Yi-kun and Mei-yu, which includes all the nodes and edges connected to Yi-kun or Mei-yu, displays the following features. First of all, similar to the overall co-occurrence network configuration, children occupied a central position and adults were at the periphery. Moreover, a closer look at this brother–sister dyad's network attributes (Table 5.2), in comparison to the respective maximum numbers observed in the child network, reveals these two children's different social statuses in their peer world: Brother co-occurred with seventy-nine other children in the network (measured by "degree," the number of other nodes he is connected to), many repeatedly (total co-occurrence measured by "weighted degree"), and

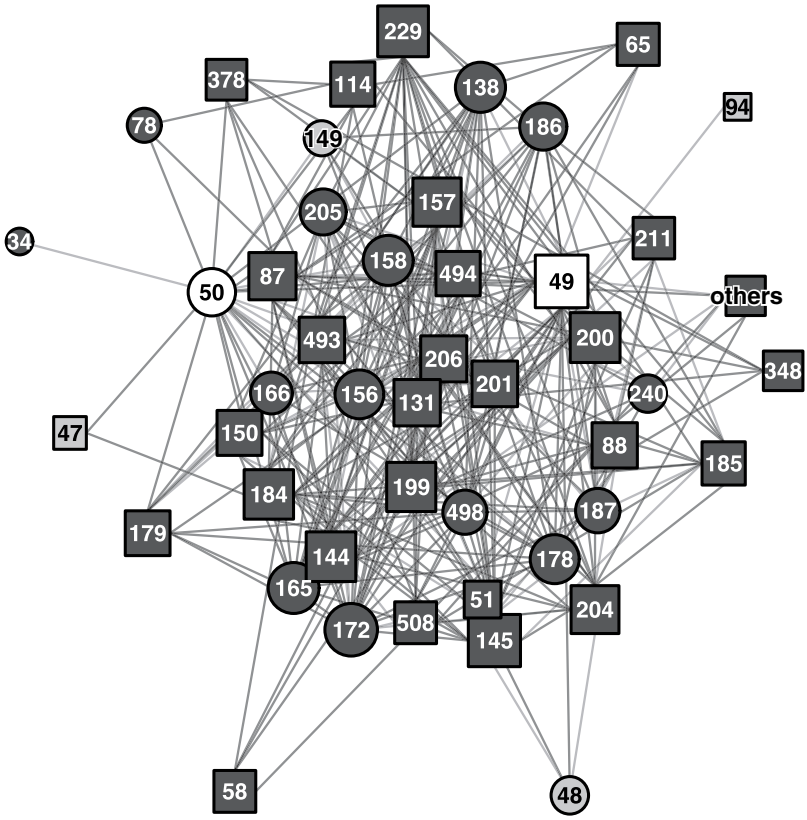

Figure 5.1 Child observation subset (#49 and #50) union network. The number on each node represents the person's ID. White nodes represent the two focal children (#49 and #50), dark gray nodes represent other children and light gray nodes represent adults; Square nodes represent females and round nodes represent males

close to the maximum values observed. This means that Brother was a popular figure in the peer network. But in terms of between-ness centrality, brother was far from being the central hub of connections. Sister ranked much lower in all three attributes compared to her brother, suggesting that she was probably a less important figure in the village play groups.

Table 5.2 *Wang Yi-kun (#49) and Wang Mei-yu (#50) in children's co-occurrence network*

Child ID	Co-occurrence degree	Co-occurrence weighted degree	Between-ness centrality
49	79	421	634
MAX*	92	424	1,312
50	56	241	160

Note: * "Max" represents the child/node who had the highest value in each of the three network attributes. The three maxima do not necessarily refer to the same child, but simply serve as references values to compare with those of Wang Yi-kun and Wang Mei-yu.

Departing from simple co-occurrence patterns, social network analysis based on behavioral interactions provides a finer-grained look brother–sister similarities and differences in social life. Figure 5.2 (a & b) juxtaposes brother's and sister's "ego networks," in which a node represents a person, an edge represents behavioral interactions between two nodes, and the arrow of an edge represents the direction of behavior between the two connected nodes (from the initiator to the recipient). In Figure 5.2, each ego network depicts the focal node ("ego")'s "neighborhood," the collection of ego and all nodes ("alters") with whom ego has direct interactions. Besides representing ego-alter ties, the "neighborhood" also includes all of the ties among the "alters" (Hanneman and Riddle 2005).

Comparing these two ego networks reveals the following patterns: (1) These two children have overlapping peer networks and they two often interacted together. But Brother seemed to be a more important character in Sister's circle than Sister was to Brother: In terms of interaction frequency,[25] while Sister was not among the top five children that Brother interacted with, Brother was the third most important

[25] See the thickness of edges between nodes in the network.

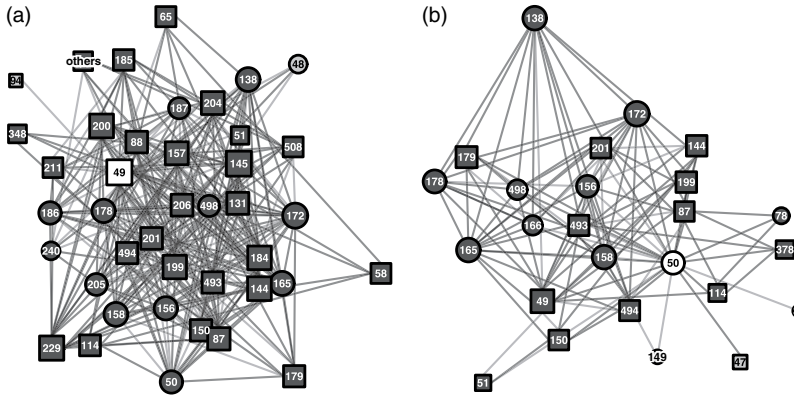

Figure 5.2 (a) #49's ego network of behavioral interactions, (b) #50's ego network of behavioral interactions. The number on each node represents the person's ID. White nodes represent the two focal children (#49 in a and #50 in b), dark gray nodes represent other children and light gray nodes represent adults; Square nodes represent females and round nodes represent males. In these behavioral-networks, the size of a node is proportional to the person's weighted degree centrality, measured by the sum of frequency of behavioral interactions this person has with all other people. The thickness and darkness of an edge is proportional to its weight, meaning the frequency of behavioral interactions between the two nodes (people) connected by the edge

child Sister interacted with. (2) Brother interacted with a wider circle of children than Sister did, measured by the number of alters in each ego network. (3) Brother was the center of his ego network, ranked #1 in weighted degrees, while Sister was not, ranked only #7, next to Brother, in her own ego network. Taken together, Brother was an active figure in the village peer network, despite his mother and family's marginal status, but Sister was a more peripheral figure in the observations and was often observed overlapping with her brother in play. Perhaps Sister was used to trailing her brother, as in MC's observation in the opening vignette of this chapter? To understand what contributed to these patterns – age, gender and/or personality, let's look at the content of observations through NLP (natural language processing) and granular-level behavioral analysis.

Play, Cooperation, and Conflict

I used NLP techniques to analyze linguistic patterns of those CO episodes,[26] where Brother and/or Sister appeared, a subset of the cleaned and preprocessed CO corpus. Figures 5.3 and 5.4 depict high-frequency words in this subset of observations: Figure 5.3 presents the top 100 high-frequency words (in wordcloud format) and Figure 5.4 presents the top 50 high-frequency words (as a bar graph).

Based on these, Figure 5.5 depicts the co-occurrence network of top twenty-two words: Each node represents one high-frequency word, and each edge represents co-occurrence of the two nodes/words. Node size is proportional to the word's frequency and edge thickness is proportional to degree of co-occurrence between the two words. These analyses identify several notable patterns: The words "say" and "play" ranked #1 and #5, indicating the abundance of verbal interactions and the overall

Figure 5.3 Top 100 high-frequency words in the Child Observation subset (#49 and #50)
Note: Analyses in this figure and Figure 5.4 were performed and visualized in the Python programming language.

[26] The cleaned corpus transformed all words to lowercase, removed punctuation, numbers and special symbols, excluded common stopwords and reduced a word to its lemma form.

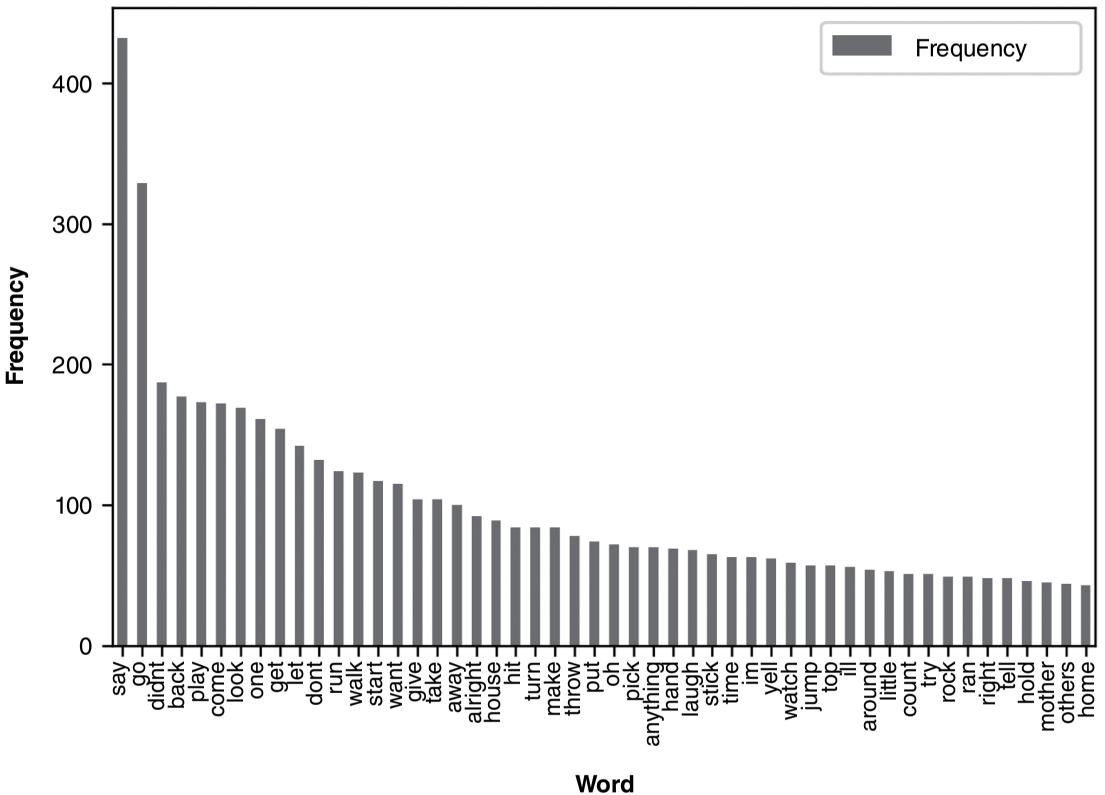

Figure 5.4 Top 50 high-frequency words in Child Observation subset (#49 and #50)

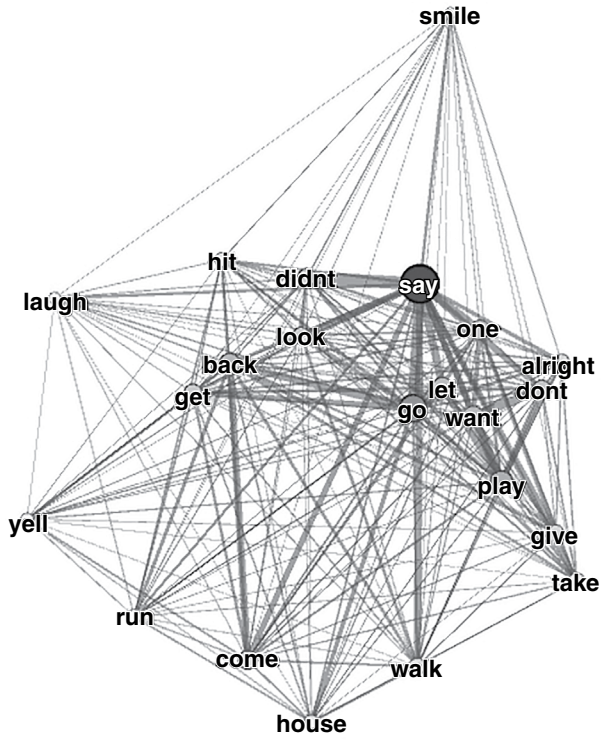

Figure 5.5 Word co-occurrence network in the Child Observation subset (#49 and #50)
Note: The word co-occurrence matrix in this figure was computed in the Python programming language, via word embeddings analysis, and then visualized in Gephi (layout: Force Atlas 2 algorithm).

prevalence of play in their interactional contexts; The word "hit" ranked #21, possibly related to children's fighting and/or pretend play; The words "laugh" and "yell" ranked #20 and #34 respectively, giving us a clue of the emotional texture of children's play; Finally, co-occurring word-pairs with the highest-frequency rankings, such as hit-smile, hit-laugh, and hit-run, offer insights into how different behaviors intertwined in children's naturalistic play.

I also analyzed this subset of CO using a standardized behavioral grading protocol and grouped peer interaction behavioral themes into

Table 5.3 *Behavioral grading results (Child #49 and #50)*

	Brother as initiator	Brother as recipient	Sister as initiator	Sister as recipient
# of behavioral partners	34	30	20	17
# of behaviors	109	108	52	43
# of positive behaviors	72	56	32	24
# of negative behaviors	37	52	20	19
Positivity score*	35	4	12	5
% of positive behavior	66%	52%	62%	51%

Note: After grading all behaviors manually, I exported the behavioral grading data to and completed analysis in R programming language. *Positivity score = number of positive behaviors – number of negative behaviors.

two main categories, cooperation (positive) and conflict (negative). Table 5.3 summarizes the behavioral analysis results. First of all, in terms of absolute numbers, Brother not only appeared in a lot more observations than Sister did, as co-occurrence social network analysis revealed. He was also involved in many more behavioral interactions than Sister was, as the initiator or recipient, and he interacted with more children than Sister did. Moreover, regarding percentage of positive behavior among all behaviors, Brother's and Sister's numbers are similar. Both initiated more cooperative behaviors than receiving cooperative behaviors. Was Brother a more popular person than Sister? Was Brother helping Sister in peer interaction, as the opening vignette portrayed? If both of them were ridiculed or bullied by peers, for what reasons then? To understand what these quantitative patterns mean and what motivated these behaviors, we need to explore the behaviors in ethnographic detail.

Personalities in Coalition

Close reading of naturalistic observation records can flesh out these two young characters and demonstrate the moral lessons these youngsters

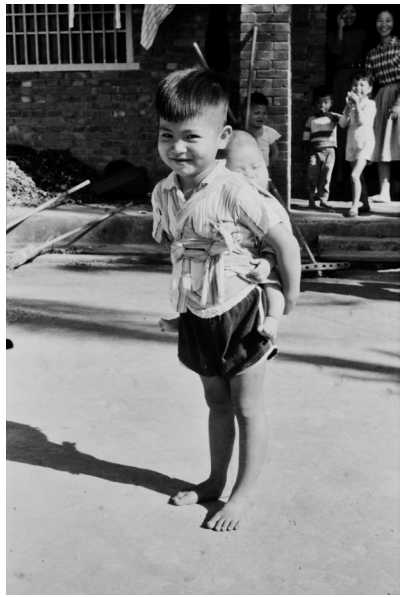

Figure 5.6 A boy carrying his baby brother
Source: Photo by Arthur Wolf.

learned. Brother and Sister had distinct personalities. Brother played with many more children and was more active in their peer network. Sister was not popular and less savvy in navigating peer network. On many occasions the sibling dyad often acted in solidarity, like a small coalition facing the world outside their home. Together they learned to coordinate with peers, negotiating fairness and ownership, adapting to respect game rules and submitting to peer leaders.

As behavioral grading results suggest, Brother Wang Yi-kun, although accused by his mother and other adults of being a troublemaker (fighting with other children),[27] was more of a cooperator than an aggressor. Although sibling care was mainly girls' responsibility, Yi-kun also helped take care of his little brother (#51). In one scenario his sister Mei-yu called the observer MS: "See? Big brother can take care of little brother."[28]

[27] See episodes of Yi-kun's conflicts with other children in the next sections.
[28] SO #59, 08/02/1959.

Of course, this scenario alludes to her assumption, the local norm that girls, instead of boys, were supposed to take care of younger siblings.

Beyond sibling care, by the age of seven, Yi-kun had already mastered clever skills in negotiating rules of games and access to group play with other kids. He used the principle of reciprocity to his own advantage, reminding playmates of his previous favors to them. For example, when he saw an older girl holding sticks with feathers, he asked: "Give me one of yours, will you? You have two in your pocket." Rejected by that girl, he insisted: "I, I, I did something for you."[29] He joined girls playing house and helped them with what they needed.[30] Across several occasions Yi-kun was found controlling his anger and yielding to other children: One girl Chang Ah-yin (#172, a year and half older than he), a leader in their small group, bullied him, but he did not fight back. That's why a bystander boy teased him: "A boy is afraid of a girl!" At another time, chased, cursed and hit by two naughty boys much younger than he, Yi-kun appeared scared. Those boys' older brother laughed: "Ha ha, the older one is afraid of the younger one."[31]

The following observation, about Yi-kun's unintended conflict with a slightly younger boy Wang Chen-jin (#508), is a vivid illustration of his personality: Chen-jin was quite a dominant character, bulky, strong and popular among boys. Initially they two were playing tag, and Yi-kun accidentally hit Chen-jin on the face. Chen-jin cried. Another older boy came by, scolded Yi-kun and pushed him down. Yi-kun did not respond or avenge. After crying for a couple minutes, Chen-jin walked over to Yi-kun and hit him four times. Yi-kun looked angry, but he still didn't hit back or say anything. Chen-jin repeated that, hitting him three times. Yi-kun just held his emotions and walked away.[32]

[29] CO #836, 02/21/1960.
[30] MO #70, 09/20/1960.
[31] CO #1655, 07/28/1960.
[32] CO #306, 11/08/1959.

Mei-yu, on the other hand, had a different personality, which helps to explain why her status in their peer network was more peripheral compared to that of her brother. She did not have many friends, even before the onset of her mother's scandalous insanity. Unlike her brother, she was not easy to get along with. She interrupted other children's play or bullied them, including her big brother. Her brother's friends saw her as a troublemaker, reluctant to include her during their play. She did want to play with other children, though. Once two boys were playing a marble game, using little rocks marbles. She asked to join but was bluntly rejected by one of them. She turned to the other boy, her classmate, attempting to manipulate him: "He (your playmate) doesn't want our Jung (*zhong*) class to play!"[33] The boy who rejected her stayed firm: "Yes, I do. I just don't want *you* to play." During a jumping rope game, one boy explicitly asked the group leader not to let Mei-yu play: "She hit my little brother." Mei-yu walked off, looking unhappy.[34] She was not popular among girls either. She really wanted to play with Pai Yan-yan (#138), the girl who appeared in this chapter's opening scenario. Yan-yan manipulated her: "Give it to me and I'll be your friend. Otherwise I won't play with you." And Mei-yu gave in.[35] Girl leader Ah-yin (#172) did not allow her to join their tree game, which is, to make "boats" out of bamboo leaves.[36]

One day, Mei-yu was excluded by her peers again. Three children were playing house. She walked up to watch, but a girl shouted at her (angrily with a threatening look): "Get out of here! I don't want you to look." She looked sad and walked away. But her brother Yi-kun happened to be there. He tattled, yelling to his mother, trying to protect his sister.[37] Yi-kun appeared as a brother with a caring heart: In dyadic interactions, he yielded to Mei-yu many times even when she grew aggressive. In

[33] CO #277, 10/29/1959.
[34] CO #492, 12/30/1959.
[35] CO #35, 08/05/1959.
[36] CO #1159, 03/30/1960.
[37] CO #313, 11/19/1959.

multi-person interactions, he used his social skills to help her. The opening vignette is a great example: He "bribed" a girl with face-powder so that she would agree to play with his little sister.

Sometimes help was mutual and cooperation was fruitful: Playing house with other children, they partnered in crime, taking away a small boy's stones and teasing him.[38] But seeing another child cheating a younger one when playing tops, Sister echoed her brother to mock and condemn the cheater.[39] In hide-and-seek games, they two coordinated together to cheat, sister on the watch for brother who was the "ghost" trying to catch hiding children.[40]

But since neither of them was a leader in their peer group, negotiating with peers could be difficult. In the following observation, their negotiations failed.[41]

Children were playing "cars" on a 2-seat tricycle. Yi-kun was in the front seat and another little boy was pushing. Sister came and sat down.

Yi-kun told the child who was next in line to get on the trike: "Come and get in your seat. Next time it's my sister's turn."

An older girl Pai Yan-yan disagreed: "No, it's not, it's mine. We have to line up."

Yi-kun countered: "No. We pretend she (Mei-yu) is my daughter so I have to give her a ride first and she doesn't have to pay for a ticket"

Yan-yan rejected: "No, you can't do that. We have to line up."

Yi-kun: "It's my tricycle!"

Note that Yan-yan, the girl quite skilled at manipulating Mei-yu, was not persuaded by Yi-kun's reasoning. Disagreement continued, until their playgroup leader Ah-yin (#172), a quite dominant girl, intervened and reinstated the importance of turn-taking rules. Brother attempted various methods to help his sister skip the line, improvising fictive

[38] CO #32, 08/04/1959.
[39] CO #497, 01/01/1960.
[40] CO #1640, 07/20/60.
[41] CO #72, 08/13/1959.

parent–child kinship (apparently the real sibling tie was not enough) and asserting his ownership. But in the end, they had to submit to more "powerful" children, even though they were playing on his tricycle. In this quite serious pretend play scenario, we not only see children's rich imaginative world – riding tricycles as cars and using leaves as tickets, but also how they learned to coordinate with peers and comply with rules.

Sibling Rivalry: Storytelling in Projective Tests

What about life inside their family? As I mentioned earlier, the Wolfs' team didn't manage to interview their mother or observe their family interactions at home, because their mother was very shy. But fortunately, these children participated in projective tests. Transcripts from Doll Play and TAT, based on verbal communication records, offer a precious window into children's thoughts and emotions. In both tests, children were asked what they thought people in the scenarios were doing. Doll Play explicitly focused on family life, but some TAT drawings were also interpreted as interactions between family members. Narratives in these two projective tests shine light on children's own perspectives about their family relations, especially sibling rivalry at home, which poses a contrast to sibling solidarity during peer interactions in the outside world.

In Mei-yu's Doll Play test, a salient theme is brother dominating and bullying sister. At the first sight of dolls, she looked carefully, checked the dolls' clothes, and started to tell this story spontaneously[42]:

A: Big sister was arguing.
Q: With whom?
A: Big brother.
Q: Why?
A: Brother ate her candy.

[42] DP #50, Session I, 10/07/1960.

Q: Then they started to argue, right? How?
A: They fought on and on. Brother hit sister; he's bad.
Q: How did they fight? Can you show me?
A: Like this, like this! (Holding B-boy doll and G-girl doll, crashing them)
Q: How's the sister?
A: She cried.
Q: Did the sister hit the brother?
A: No. Sister didn't. It was brother all the time.

Mei-yu was tested in two sessions. In both sessions, she spontaneously pivoted the conversation to the same topic: Brother is mean to sister, and he deserves to be punished. Unlike "brother eating sister's candy" or "brother hitting sister" in the earlier discussed excerpt, in some other segments she didn't even articulate a specific explanation. For example, she just repeated: "He (brother) is so bad." This deviates from the imagery of a protective brother and the pattern of brother–sister solidarity that emerged in peer play outside the home setting.

One might wonder, though, if this had anything to do with Mei-yu's real experience, or it was just purely imaginary. Yes, these utterances were a product of children's storytelling exercise, most likely reflecting Mei-yu's self-serving bias, that Brother was always the villain at home. But there are several reasons to doubt that stories she told were mere fantasies: In Mei-yu's two sessions, the names she gave the dolls mapped exactly onto her family's real situation. For example, she called the boy doll "big brother," the girl doll "big sister" and the baby doll "little brother."[43] Moreover, the scenario of brother–sister fighting, especially over candy, appeared not only in Doll Play. It also surfaced in Mei-yu's

[43] These kinship terms were translated from the Chinese transcript. Without access to the original audiotapes, it remains unclear whether she used Taiwanese or Mandarin terms in the actual conversation, although both languages have distinct terms for older and younger brothers/sisters. According to Mr. Huang Chieh-Shan, some children were better than others in Mandarin, and some might have spoken a mixture of both languages in projective tests.

TAT session conducted several months earlier, and in surprisingly similar ways. Compare the following two excerpts: The first one was from her Doll Play transcript and the second from her TAT transcript.

Doll Play excerpt:

A: Big brother wanted money for food.
Q: Who gave him money?
A: He asked her. (Pointing at M, "mother" doll)
Q: What did the brother say to mom?
A: He said, "mom, give me one cent."
Q: What did mom say?
A: Mom said, "why did you fight."
Q: And the brother?
A: And sister came told mom brother took her candy away.
Q: What did mom say then?
A: Mom said she would not give him one cent.
Q: What did the brother do next?
A: He cried.
Q: And how's mom?
A: Mom said, "why did you take your sister's candy?" Big brother stopped crying.

The following TAT excerpt[44] is especially intriguing. The research assistant Mr. Huang showed Mei-yu the fifth drawing in the set,[45] which featured a girl, a broken bowl on the floor, and an adult woman. Mei-yu interpreted the drawing as about the girl breaking a bowl and her mom reacting to it, including beating her. When the research assistant asked what the girl in the picture would feel when her mom hit her for breaking the bowl, Mei-yu went silent. Then, the research assistant repeated his question: "What will the girl feel?" Surprisingly, Mei-yu pivoted her answer to an apparently irrelevant topic, big brother taking her candy:

[44] TAT #80, P50, summer 1960.
[45] This drawing is missing in the Wolf Archive.

Figure 5.7 TAT Drawing #5
Source: The Wolf Archive.
Photo by Jing Xu.

A: She wants to fight someone.
Q: Does she want to fight someone?
A: Yes.
Q: Who did she fight with?
A: Her brother.
Q: Why her brother?
A: Because her brother took her candy.
Q: Did the brother really take her candy?
A: Yes.
Q: Why?
A: There was a lot of candy, so he took all of them.

Another detail in the story Mei-yu told, about the girl character breaking a bowl, alludes to her own family's experience. Right before the earlier segment in her TAT transcript, Mei-yu mentioned that the girl's mother found out she broke a bowl. Asked what would happen then, Mei-yu answered: "When mom found out, she didn't feel well." When asked why

mom didn't feel well, she pivoted, again, to the topic of fighting, the girl fighting with her big brother. Children fighting and mom feeling unwell was not something portrayed in that particular TAT drawing at all, but it encapsulated what happened to Mei-yu's mother in real life, as shown in *A Thrice-Told Tale*: Her estranged relation with certain neighbors, due to her boy Yi-kun's fight with neighbors' children, was a major contributing factor to her mental illness. Coincidentally, Mei-yu's TAT session was conducted in summer 1960, just a few months after her mother's "erratic behavior." Pressed by the research assistant twice to explain why, in the drawing, the mom would feel unwell upon her children's fighting, Mei-yu kept silent. This little girl's nuanced reactions, her utterances and hesitancy, hint at the lingering impacts of the chaos in the adult world on these young children's emotional and moral experience.

Mei-yu's reactions in projective tests share a similar quality to what I found in many other children's projective tests transcripts, that is, the quality of "reality-based fantasy." Sibling conflict is one of the most common themes across all Doll Play transcripts (nearly fifty children), which probably reflects its prevalence in this community. Moreover, the stories children told are closely related to, or mapped from, the reality of sibling rivalry at home. CO abounds with stories of siblings fighting for fairness in resource distribution and tattling to parents about sibling-inflicted injustices. Readers might feel sympathetic for the young mother in the following scenario, who had to settle disputes between her children over some peanuts or ten cents:[46]

Shih Mei-lin (a 7-year-old girl) was walking toward home eating peanuts. She met her younger brother Shen-min (5-year-old) on the way. Shen-min came up to Mei-lin and said: "Give me some," sticking his hands out demandingly.

Mei-lin darted away and said: "No." She went her way.

Shen-min followed her and said: "I'm going to tell mother then. I'm going to tell mother."

[46] CO #1036, 03/15/1960.

Mei-lin didn't seem to care or look worried and continued to eat. Her younger sister Mei-yun came by. Mei-lin stopped and gave her some peanuts.

Shen-min walked on into the kitchen door and said to mother: "Your Mei-lin & Mei-yun both have 10 cents. I want some too."

Mother picked up a bamboo fan and held it threateningly and said: "Haven't you had enough today? Come on. Come on!"

Shen-min looked sulky and ran. Mei-lin started to smile and quickly closed her mouth. Mother could see her.

Shen-min: "They all have something to eat. Your Mei-lin has another 10 cents and I don't!" Mother ignored him.

Mirroring observational records, sibling rivalry emerged as a main theme during children's spontaneous narratives in projective testing. Some children in their answers even explicitly inferred about parental favoritism. This sheds light on a key mediator of sibling disputes, that is, parental interference. One drawing in TAT featured one big boy (B1) standing behind a tree and watching a smaller boy (B3) playing with other kids in a ball game (see Figure 5.8). When asked to describe what happened in that scene, ten-year-old Cheng Ling-hui answered that the big boy (B1) was about to sneak out and hit the younger one (B3), and that they two were brothers.

Asked why they would get into a fight, Ling-hui told this story:[47]

A: Because of a plum.
Q: They fought for a plum?
A: Their mother gave more money to B3, and less to B1. That's why [B1] wants to hit him [B3]. … He [B1] was not afraid of their mother punishing him, therefore he would hit his little brother [B3].
Q: What do you think his mother will do when she finds out this?
A: [She] will be angry.
Q: Just angry?
A: [She] will tie him up [with ropes] and hit him.

Proceeding to another drawing in TAT (see Figure 5.9), Ling-hui again used the same lens to interpret a different scene: Three boys (B1,

[47] TAT #18, P387, summer 1960.

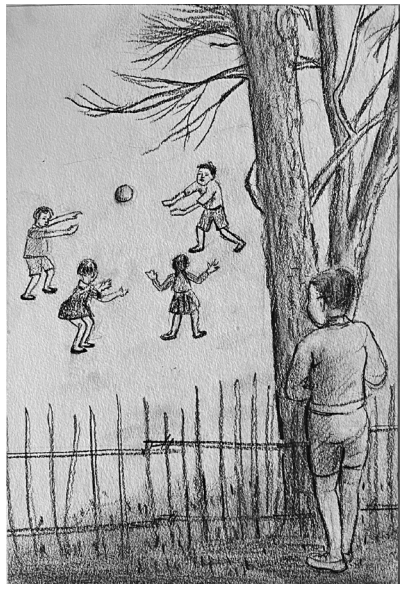

Figure 5.8 TAT Drawing #2
Source: The Wolf Archive.
Photo by Jing Xu.

Figure 5.9 TAT Drawing #8
Source: The Wolf Archive.
Photo by Jing Xu.

B2, and B3) were fighting for some fruits and their mother (F1) came out to see what happened. Mother went back home and told their dad, and dad would tie the oldest child up and beat him. Given that Ling-hui was indeed the oldest child in his family, it is reasonable to infer that this imaginative narrative was partly inspired by his real-life experience. Such storytelling experience probably provided many children like Mei-yu and Yi-kun an opportunity to express their negative sentiments toward their siblings and parents.

"A Fiercely Protective Mother"

The tragic story of Wang Chen-hsin – the mother of Yi-kun and Mei-yu, illustrates the extent to which children can disrupt adults' relationships with neighbors. In their projective tests these two children painted a picture of their mother as a ruthless punisher at home. Mother's punishment appeared in both Mei-yu and Yi-kun's TAT transcripts: For example, when shown the drawing of a girl character, a broken bowl and an adult woman character, Yi-kun mentioned the same scenario as Mei-yu did, that mother would beat up the girl; Presented with other drawings featuring multiple children, both Brother and Sister inferred that children were fighting and would be punished by the mother figure.[48] When Yi-kun or Mei-yu were playing with other children outside, however, their mother appeared more often as their defender. The following is an excerpt of one episode observed right in front of their house.[49] In this scenario a little boy attempted to tattle to Yi-kun's mother about Yi-kun's misbehavior, stealing flowers. We see Yi-kun's naughty disobedience: He ignored mom's threat and punishment. But we also see why Margery Wolf described Chen-hsin as "a fiercely protective" mother[50] – she cursed the tattler and gave the flower back to Yi-kun:

[48] TAT #56, summer 1960.
[49] CO #137, 08/25/59.
[50] M. Wolf (1992): 95.

Wang Yi-kun came back with a branch with a flower on it. Wang Ching-fu [a 6-year-old boy]: "I know whose flower that is. I'm going to tell him. I'm going to go tell that you're stealing his flowers."

Yi-kun: "I didn't steal it. I found it."

Yi-kun's mom came out and asked him: "Where did you get that flower." When Yi-kun saw his mother coming, he threw the flower on the ground. Ching-fu's brother Ching-chi [an 8-year-old boy] and another boy Wang Yu-lu ran to get it.

Ching-fu was still yelling: "You stole somebody's flower. I'm going to tell somebody. Something's going to happen to you."

Yi-kun's mom yelled at Ching-fu: "Tell your going to die! What would you get if you told? You'd get a sex organ [cursing]."

Ching-fu stopped yelling and looked a little confused. Mom went to Yi-kun and said: "Where did you get it? How could it get in there. The gate is closed. If you do it again I'm going to beat you."

Mom took the flower from Wang Yu-lu and said to Yi-kun: "Go home."

Mom and Yi-kun walked into the house. Yi-kun hadn't said a word. He looked a little bewildered. As they went into the house mom said: "Next time I'm going to tie you in the house."

Mom walked into the kitchen and Yi-kun came out again. Ching-fu stood and watched all this. Ching-fu saw a dragon fly and ran to catch. Yi-kun ran also to get it.

Ching-fu: "No. It's mine."

Yi-kun: "No. It's mine." They pushed at each other.

Yi-kun's mom had come to the door again. She yelled: "Whose? It belongs to the one who catches it."

She told Yi-kun: "Don't catch it. What do you want that for? If you don't have rice you can't live. If you don't have a dragonfly you'll live. Come back."

Yi-kun: "No!"

This episode was observed in summer 1959, nine-months before Chen-hsin' mental breakdown recorded in *A Thrice-Told Tale*. The kinds of quarrels Chen-hsin got herself into, with other mothers, probably all evolved from children's conflicts over trivial things, like this argument about a flower and a dragonfly. *A Thrice-Told Tale* only

presented fieldnotes up to March 15, 1960.[51] That ethnography did not tell us what happened to Chen-hsin after her outbursts of "insanity," but I was curious about it. The last episode of CO where Chen-hsin appeared in was March 30, 1960, twenty-four days after she plunged into the rice paddy. In this episode,[52] Wang Yi-kun was playing with Wang Ching-fu and some other children again, climbing the guava tree. Chen-hsin was commanding Yi-kun to get down, come home and do his homework. Shaking a stick, she threatened to beat him up. But when her son got caught in the tree, she laughed and came up to hold him until he could get down. A couple of weeks ago she was still jumping around and doing *bai-bai* motions like a spirit-medium, or like a crazy woman who needed to be tied up in a mental hospital.[53] Now she seemed to have restored her sanity. Wolf's "general observations" (type "G" notes), focused on adult life, also include further traces of her, although Margery Wolf did not report these in her ethnography. For example, on June 13, 1960, Chen-hsin was gossiping with a group of women about other adults and children, even teasing her own daughter Mei-yu lightheartedly.[54]

On September 20, Yi-kun climbed up a neighbor's fence to get some leaves for the girls who were playing house nearby. The neighbor, a thirty-two-year-old woman, scolded Yi-kun and reported to his mother, but Chen-hsin did not do anything about it:[55]

The neighbor came out of the house and started shouting: "You children, that fence is old and about broken down and you're always climbing it, I tell you not to do it but you won't listen this time I'm really going to hit someone!" She hurried toward the fence with a stick.

[51] Margery Wolf did not leave Xia Xizhou until the end of summer 1960.
[52] CO #1157, 03/30/1960.
[53] Chen-hsin's husband had sent her to a hospital and she was terrified by that experience (M. Wolf 1992: 62, 81–82).
[54] G-930.
[55] MO #70, 09/20/1960.

The girls all said, "It wasn't me, it's not me, it's Yi-kun, it's Yi-kun." The neighbor chased Yi-kun, but he ran away and she couldn't catch him.

She then turned angrily to the girls: "Oh, you didn't do it, you didn't do it, you just didn't get caught, I tell you not to climb up there but you won't listen, next time I catch you on there I'm really going to beat you up." She was walking away as she said this. The girls just stood and looked at her and didn't seem to be frightened.

The neighbor then went over and told Chen-hsin about what had happened: "Your Yi-kun really has to be beaten, climbing all the way up on that fence getting flowers for all of those dead children!"

Chen-hsin didn't seem to be very concerned and just asked: "Where, where is he?"

The neighbor was really mad and answered: "He already ran a long way away, I kept telling him not to climb up on that fence, it's about broken, but he never listens."

Chen-hsin just kept asking: "Where? Where is he?"

Finally the neighbor answered, very angrily: "There, there, over there!" [as though anyone couldn't see him] and then she turned and ran into her own house.

Her [the neighbor's] seven-year-old daughter followed her, saying: "That Yi-kun was always climbing on the fence, and whenever you tell his mom, she doesn't do anything about it."

Chen-hsin, "the woman who did not become a shaman" (M. Wolf 1990a), was still around in the village by the end of the Wolfs' fieldwork. She did not divorce her husband. She did not leave her boys behind and run away to her natal home with her daughter. She continued to gossip with her neighbors and sometimes quarreled with her neighbors over children's issues. She was still known as a protective mother, even by the village children.

An Untold Tale

My motivation to pursue the story of this brother–sister dyad partly originates from personal experience, growing up as a Han Chinese

daughter. Being an only child, among the first generation of singletons born under China's One-Child Policy, I always wondered what it would be like to have a sibling. I asked my mother why she did not give me an older brother. I was also terribly naïve about sibling relations. To me, having an older brother meant having someone to protect you and rely on. But my mother always jokingly warned me: "You are lucky not to have an older brother! Otherwise, your father would have favored him." My young mind could not fathom the profound sentiment of sibling rivalry: Not only did I not have the first-person experience, other children in my peer world were mostly singletons too, so I did not even have opportunities to observe sibling dynamics or hear relevant testimonies. Now my son, an only child living in America where most of his friends do have siblings, told me: "My friends all say that I am lucky not to have any siblings." From the viewpoint of this case study, both my mother and my son were half right: Many if not all families in Xia Xizhou favored a son over a daughter. In Mei-yu's storytelling, her brother was quite annoying at home. Yet when playing with other children, Yi-kun seemed like a caring elder brother and they two often supported each other. Going beyond general patterns of gender, this might reflect individual children's personalities and circumstances, but it also points to the ambiguous nature of sibling relation, tension at home and solidarity in the outside world.

This personal curiosity aligns with my scholarly interests: Prior research on "the Chinese family" or Chinese moralities rarely focused on sibling dynamics in childhood. The duality of care and rivalry in the early shape of sibling relation contributes to children's developing moral knowledge and emotions. Siblings learn to care for each other and build coalitions. Through constant negotiations of how resources and responsibilities should be distributed, they also gain intimate understanding of fairness and justice, authority and hierarchy. The contradictory dimensions of love and power are particularly pronounced in cross-sex sibling relation in patriarchal societies

due to differential statuses of boys and girls (see e.g., Joseph 1994). Therefore, the ambivalence of sibling relation in this case study can help us understand the complex, double-edged quality of human kinship more generally.

Besides weaving together various aspects of learning morality, including parent–child dynamics, peer interactions, gender, and siblings, this case study also accentuates critical reflections on ethnographic epistemology. The case recovered what was obscured from a classic ethnography, *A Thrice-Told Tale*, which was already infused with meta-reflections on ethnographic authority. In that book Margery Wolf reflected on the role of the anthropologist as writer and the position of ethnography as a genre of writing. Every ethnography has its omissions and silences (Silverman 2020). *A Thrice-Told Tale* is no exception. Not to mention that the anthropologist relied on her intermediary MC, the confidant of village women, to gather evidence concerning a scandal. To Margery Wolf, all the important characters were adults. She distinguished her ethnographic tale from both fiction and raw fieldnotes, reconstructing a plot based on selected materials from what was called "general observations" in their fieldwork, the only type of fieldnotes focused on adults. But even in these raw fieldnotes listed in *A Thrice-Told Tale*, I discovered traces of children: The protagonist's children played a role in the unfolding of their family drama. Other children witnessed that drama and participated in gossip. These traces were perhaps less relevant to Margery Wolf's question, whether the woman in question became a shaman or went crazy. But they are central to my question.

To put children under the spotlight, I systematically searched for and analyzed the voices and behaviors of Yi-kun and Mei-yu in the Wolf Archive. My narrative centered on children's agency in learning morality: The brother and sister helped each other in peer interactions, longing for social inclusion; they told stories of sibling conflicts, stories laden with moral judgments; they cared for their mother when she was going

through a difficult time; they also maneuvered against her punishment. My narrative reflects my intentional choices and implicit biases, just as *A Thrice-Told Tale* reflects the choices and biases of my predecessor. This untold tale therefore bears witness to the limitations, possibilities, and charm of ethnography.