

SOCI 32073: Sociology of China

The differential mode of association

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The
differential
mode of
association
差距格局

Rural people are selfish

Most Chinese are rural people,
or their parents are rural people

So most Chinese are selfish

Why so? Let's take an example

Suzhou City (苏州) – Chinese Venice



Public in Chinese minds

Once labeled public

- It means people can take advantage of it without fulfilling any obligations
- Imagine you visit two or three families sharing one corridor, you will see dirty corridor (public space) but clean households (private space) once you enter the individual household.

Selfishness drives out social consciousness

Negative stereotype of Chinese

Corruption

Incompetency

By nature, Chinese are not corrupted or incompetent,

- Managing family business
- Making personal connections
- Earning monies

Chinese selfishness is what make a distinction here

What explains the selfishness

- Western social structure



Western social structure

Individuals are rice straws

Bundles are organizations

Stacks are blocks of society comprised of organizations

Western social structure is featured as organizational mode of association

- (团体格局)



Chinese social structure

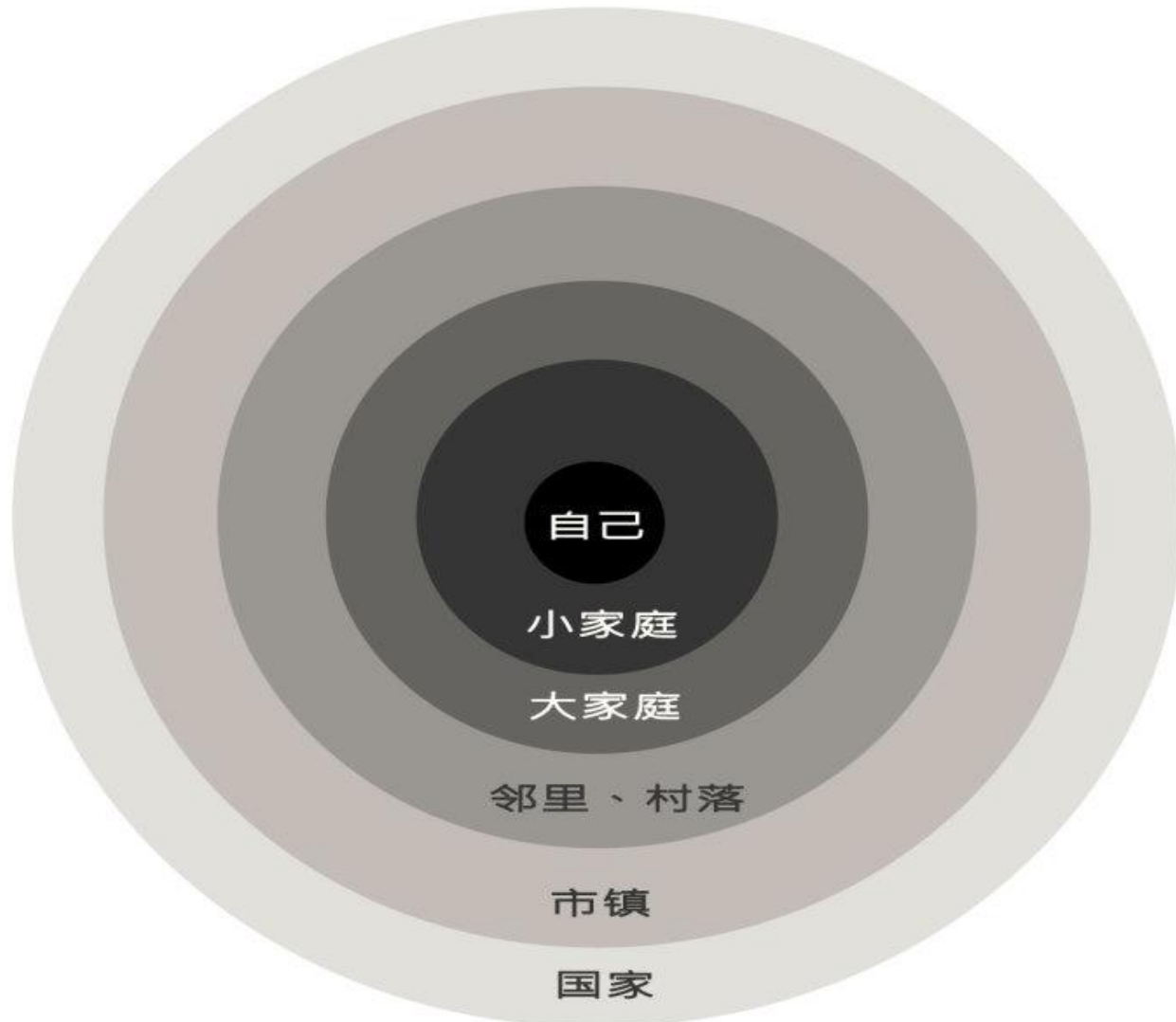
Social structure that links individuals to society

In China, individuals occupy the centers of the rippling circles.

Everybody's circle are interrelated, one touches different circles at different times and places.

The most important network is kinship network – “everybody has a cousin three thousand miles away.”

Concentric network



Understand Social Network in China

图 1: 从“差序格局”看“工具——混合——情感”

关系分类图

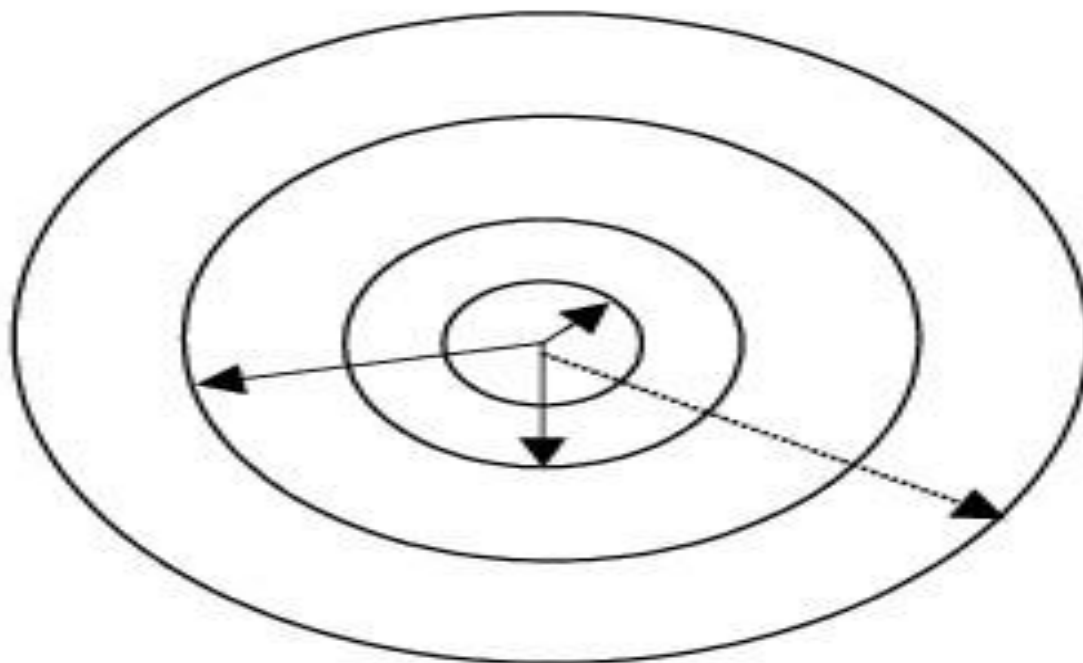


The operating logic of Chinese social networks



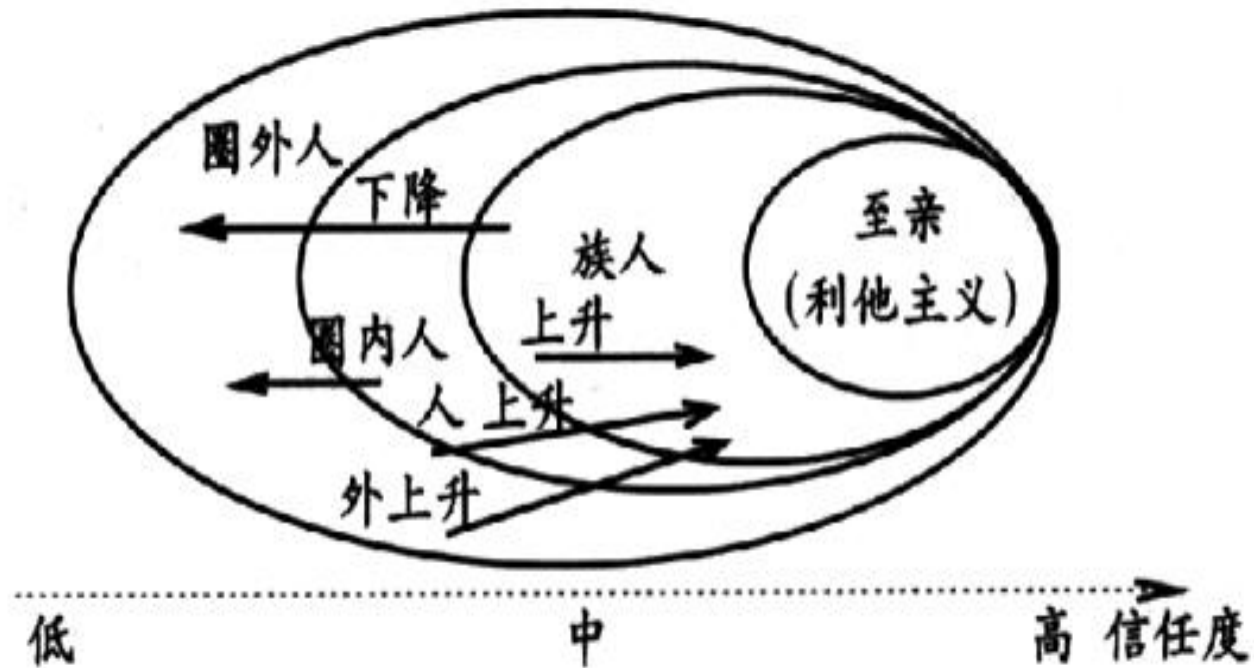
Interpersonal relations

图：差序格局下的“人”。



图注：自我处在同心圆的中心，每一层同心圆代表一种私人关系。同心圆距我越近，与我的私人关系越亲密。

Inter-personal trust in Chinese organizations



家族企业信任结构图

Interlocking of concentric circles

Each circle identifies an individual in the center of the circle.

But no two individuals occupy the same circle

Circles overlap, but no one has the same identical circle with anybody else

- Two brothers may have the same parents, but they have different wives, different sets of in-laws, different groups of nephews, and relatives

Size of circles

Much like the size of rippling circles, the concentric circles in Chinese social structure can be large or small, depending on the power of the centers.

- For common families in rural Chinese village, their rippling circles do not go beyond two to three households of their closest neighbors.
- For families with wealth and power, their rippling circle is very encompassing, stretching afar to include everybody in the village

The elasticity of the social circles makes Chinese people very sensitive to inter-personal relations.

Between individuals and organizations

In west, individuals are like straws, and organizations bundles.

Individuals are held with equality and being bundled together to form organizations.

Organizations control individuals through legality that individuals are willing to give up partial rights, in exchange for benefits for working for the organization.

Individuality or Egocentrism in Chinese Society

In China, individuals always occupy the centers of the ripples, and their relations with others are governed through ripples.

Ripples are also called Lun (轮), which has the following 10 categories

- Gods and ghosts
- Monarchs and subjects
- Fathers and sons
- Noble and base
- Intimate and unconnected
- Rewarded and punished
- Husbands and wives
- Public and private affairs
- Seniors and juniors
- Superiors and inferiors

Lun (轮)

So Lun is the order based on classifications.

The entire Chinese society rests on such hugely ambiguous classification and orders.

Such order of classification also permeates organizations to regulate personal relations within organizations. In particular, the order is

- “Toward the intimate, there is only intimacy; toward the respected, only respect; toward supervisors, only deference; between men and women, only differences.”

Tui (推) – pushing or extending out

- Per Confucius, one should control oneself and conform to rituals (克己复礼)
- By exercising self-restraint, one cultivates moral character.
- Attaining self-control, one then can Tui – extending oneself out into other circles of human relations.
 - When inner person is established, the way is born. A man who is a good son and a dutiful brother will seldom be disposed to quarrel with those in authority over him. ... when this foundation is laid, wisdom will follow. The path run from self to the family, from the family to the state, and from the state to the whole world.

Individualism and Egocentrism

- Individuals occupy the center of the ripples does not mean individualism. It means egocentrism,
 - Individualism: individuals make up the organizations the same way parts make up the whole.
 - The balance between parts and whole produces concept of equality.
 - That one person can not encroach on the others produce concept of constitutionality.

Individualism and Egocentrism

- Egocentrism
 - People need to extend themselves in order to achieve their own interests. It is because even if one extends itself as far as possible, one is still the center of the ripple.
 - A ruler who uses government to achieve virtue is like the North Star, which makes all the other stars surround it
 - A benevolent man, in forming his own moral life, forms the character of others, in enlightening himself, he enlightens others.
 - What the superior man seeks is in himself, what the petty man seeks is in others.

Selfish in Chinese sense

Once we
establish the
rippling and
egocentrism

- Chinese would sacrifice their families for their own self interests
- Their party for their families' interests
- Their country for their parties
- The whole world for their country's self interests

Put things in
order

- Wishing to order their state, they first regulate their families
- Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their own self.

The relativity of public and private

The rippling social structure makes the public and private relative – the circle immediately outside of another circle is public, whereas the another circle is private

When an individual sacrifices the interests of his state to gain advantage for his clan, he is guarding the public interests.

When an individuals dump wastes into Suzhou Canals, he is acting on behalf of his family interest, which is public.

State and individuals

Self restraints,

Achieve/cultivate inner self

Extending outwards

The Chinese are unable to ensure a state that does not infringe upon individual rights,

Individual rights are not an issue (irrelevant).