ARTYKUŁY

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CRISIS OF FAMILY REALITIES IN TAIWAN: CHIARA LUBICH'S CONCEPT OF 'UNITY' AS THE POSSIBLE CORE PATH OF RECONCILIATION

Summary: From the Past to the Present, Taiwan, as part of the Chinese cultural circle, has experienced distinct changes in family reality. Politics, economy, migration, and globalization have been or are the crucial factors influencing families. Polygamy, extended family, nuclear family, transnational family, same-sex marriage and diversified family construct the contexts of families in Taiwan. These multi-family forms seem to ingratiate themselves with the popular concept of 'diversity', which has been articulated since the 21st century. Many people think that 'diversity' could eliminate conflicts, because not any part will be ignored; 'diversity' shows tolerance and social progress. In fact, there are at the same time, increasing conflicts and problems occurring because of diversity. What would be the potential causes of problems? And how could these problems and conflicts in the families be dealt with? The core solutions seem not easy to find. Since the 1960s, Chiara Lubich's concepts: 'unity', 'mutual love', and 'the model of the new family' have spread into Taiwan. Her concepts have influenced many families to live in a new way. In this paper, several historical and current family models in Taiwan as well as the relationship between Chiara Lubich's concept of 'unity' and families will be explored to see whether her concepts could be a possible path to reconcile the conflicts of families, and how it could be possibly put into practice.

Keywords: new family, Chiara Lubich, unity, diversity, same-sex marriage.
(新家庭、盧嘉勒、合一、多元、同性婚姻)

Introduction

Regarding the crisis of family realities in Taiwan, there might be diverse understandings and perspectives. In 2019, the "Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights" (TAPCPR, Banlymeng 伴侶盟), which was founded in 2009, won a *same-sex marriage* case ("Judicial Yuan Interpretation No. 748"). It legalizes same-sex marriage with a specific law which is separate

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from the Civil Code. It made Taiwan the first country in Asia to legalize same-
-sex marriage. After the approval of this act, families in Taiwan were confronted
with earth-shaking changes and challenges. Why was the approval of this act
treated as a triumph for TAPCPR? And why was it treated as a challenge for the
families in Taiwan? First of all, it is necessary to clarify what the TAPCPR
proclaimed.

TAPCPR proclaimed and drafted three bills of diversified family formation,
i.e. "Same-sex Marriage", the "Civil Partnership System", and the "Multiple-
-person Family System". Their main appeal was "endeavor to gain support from
all political parties, legislators and politicians for diversified family formation
bills". (TAPCPR, 2021) Among these three bills, the request for "Same-sex
Marriage" attracted lots of people to follow. The followers asked for the right to
have same-sex marriage. In 2019 after the Act was approved, there were already
2,939 couples in same-sex marriages. The success of this draft made TAPCPR
possess more confidence to go further in obtaining more supports to legalize the
other two bill drafts.

In fact, the triumph of TAPCPR was supported by the Taiwan government,
the civil rights movement and the same-sex movement. Although there was
another organization, the "Family Guardian Coalition" (Hujiameng 護家盟)
formed by different religious communities opposed to same-sex marriage who
insist that the family should be built by a man and a woman, not by persons of
the same sex, TAPCPR still got its legalization. These two organizations now
constantly battle with each other.

The success of TAPCPR for same-sex marriage could not have been
achieved without the support of the Taiwanese government. In 2018, the
referendum for same-sex marriage was combined with the Taiwanese presidential
election. It was the first attempt of the government to help TAPCPR, although
most of the citizens in Taiwan refused same-sex marriage in this referendum.
Soon thereafter, the Legislators supported the bill of same-sex marriage by
ignoring the result of the referendum and passed the Act, which was obviously
not in line with public opinion. That was the second try of the government to
give a hand to same-sex marriage. Many young people in Taiwan saw this Act
of same-sex marriage as progress for civil rights. The government supported the
young people because they are the most important 'sources of the mandate' in
the election. Therefore, the Taiwanese government was thus treated as the
prominent 'driving force behind' the Act of same-sex marriage[1].

Although same-sex couples obtained only partial rights under the marriage
law, TAPCPR and its followers were satisfied with the first step to success.

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[1] Most of people who were against with the same-sex marriage, thought that the support of the Taiwan
government to the same-sex marriage was related to "ticket source" of presidential election.

(Hsu, 2016) To date, they have made consistent efforts to make the other two bill drafts to be legalized[2]. Apparently, there is still a long way to go, and conflicts constantly arise in the society of Taiwan.

I. Change of family forms and its impact on the society

The success of TAPCPR encouraged people who hope to have multi-family forms. Most of them believe that multi-family forms show tolerance and social progress. In their opinion, if a family which consists of a father and a mother could be accepted, why should a family which consists of two men, two women, or a human and a dog not be accepted? Or friends together building a family? Or any kind of possible combinations of members?[3] For them, family members do not necessarily have genetic connection. The most important thing in the family is 'love', and the form does not play an essential role.[4] (Foundation of Children Welfare, 2020, p. 10) Why do people agree with these concepts of families? It might be related to the changes in the economy and society. During the past 20 years, there have been more and more foreign workers from Southeast Asia in Taiwan, such as workers from Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. They worked in Taiwan and married Taiwanese partners. Therefore, families with different nationalities also increased. Furthermore, busier parents, increasing divorce rate and domestic violence in the family have led to an increase in single-parent families and grand-parenting families. Currently, a same-sex family through marriage has become officially accepted. All of these changes have pushed the government to take the initiative to put these issues into fundamental education, so that the concept of same-sex marriage or multiple families, which are so-called *up-to-date realities*, become accepted and even rooted in education and society. In the textbook of elementary school and junior/senior high school in Taiwan, gender equality, same-sex marriage as well as multiple families are crucial issues for students. There are topics such as "Sexual Assault Prevention", "Respecting Multi-Gender Expression", and "Respecting Multiple Genders, such as LGBT". (Fang, 2018)

What the government is trying to do in the educational sphere is *de facto* forced acceptance by the parents of the children and thus causes demonstrations.

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[2] In civil law, relatives by marriage are not yet admitted, and couples are not allowed to adopt children who lack a blood relation with one of them legally. In the law, heterosexual couples possess more rights.

[3] Cf. Stella Matutina Social Welfare Foundations, see "Multifamily, friendly Taizhang", Gender Equality Issuei, p. 17.

[4] This organization is founded for the children who lost their parents. They support the children to be adopted by a so-called multiple-form family.

The protest mainly comes from the parents. The parents have a fear that their children will become confused and might choose the 'wrong way in the future'. (Fang, 2018) Of course, there are also some people who agree with this policy because they highly support the concepts of multi-gender or cross-gender principles.

The attitude of the parents shows their worries about this issue. They are not opposed to same-sex marriage and multi-gender, but they do not hope that their children become part of these groups. In other words, people might support same-sex couples to have their civil rights to get married, but most of them believe that this kind of 'special' family form will cause social cleavage, destroy the stability of families and make the families abnormal. The "Family Guardian Coalition" gives explanations of same-sex marriage the families:

> 'This kind of family form will damage the stable structure of families, and a same-sex family will have a higher risk of falling. Moreover, it is hard for the parents of same-sex marriage couples or a multi-couple family to explain all of this to others'. (Zu, 2014)

Obviously, the explanation of 'Family Guardian Coalition' indicates the social perception of same-sex marriage or a family which is not *on the right track* for them. In fact, from the government's point of view, making the three family forms legal seems to be a modern and revolutionary decision which could receive more international visibility and attention. However, to support the same-sex marriage family, many problems *de facto* need to be solved, for example, fertility issues, social perception and ways of raising children.

II. Layer upon layer: the family dilemma

Regarding fertility issues, same-sex marriage couples do hope to have their own children. However, according to the current law, only a 'heterosexual couple' and 'a wife who has a womb and can bear children' have the right to apply for artificial reproduction. A same-sex couple are basically prohibited from bearing children in this way. As for adoption, same-sex married couples are not allowed to adopt children who have no blood relationship with them. That means that their marriage is legalized, but there are strict limitations to them to having children. For a female same-sex marriage couple, they require IVF (*In vitro* artificial fertilization) to have children. Male couples need to go abroad to find a surrogate mother to bear children for them. Although these methods are accepted and legal in other countries, they are not in Taiwan. In

fact, same-sex married couples in Taiwan always need to find a balance between their families and social perception, or they might live in a dilemma because their family form is often not accepted by their own family and society.

It is obvious that society is not yet ready to accept these kinds of family forms. In the past, homosexuality was treated as a disease. Since 1993, the WHO has eliminated homosexuality from the list of diseases. Over twenty years, the perception of family forms has been changing. Homosexuality is now treated as a symbol of modern society by more and more people. That is why same-sex marriage could be admitted by people and by the law. The law catches up forthwith, but how about society? It is known that there are different voices about these issues. Although the law now partly supports same-sex married couples in Taiwan, the reality and difficulties which come with this issue are urgent matters which should be considered.

Along with history, family forms have changed, both in Europe and in Asia. In the Chinese cultural circle, 'family' is not only a private category but also a political one. The country is *the highest 'family'*, and the emperor is the 'father' of the family. It was a system that an 'emperor takes the whole country as his own property and passes it down from generation to generation'. (Jia Tienxia 家天下; cf. Chen, 2021, p. 105) Therefore, *family ethics* was treated as a crucial concept and the way to maintain the stability of the families, for the emperor and for the common people. (Zhu – Zhang, 2001, p. 3) Confucianism could be seen as the adhesive to strengthen this family stability and family ethics indicates the norms that all members of the family should follow. This kind of concept of family is rooted in the mind of Chinese people from the past to the present, in China, Taiwan, some south-east countries, and even in Korea and Japan, which were influenced by Confucianism in the past. The father was the 'heaven' (天 Tian) in the family[5]. He dominated everything in the family. The wife and the children were his property. In Taiwan, until the 1970s, the role of the father in the family presented a similar image to the image of the father in Chinese traditions. Nowadays, the concept of family is changing with the new economic and social conditions. There are different family forms. For example, a small family form (father, mother and children) or mixed family form (Three generations family-parent-grandparent and children). (Yang, 2009, p. 22)

According to the definition of the Taiwanese government, the current family forms in Taiwan are 'single family', 'husband-wife family', 'single-parent family', 'core family' (father, mother and children), 'grand-parenting family',

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[5] The father being the 'heaven' in the family indicate that he dominates and decides everything in the family.

'Three generation family' (father, mother, children and grandparents), 'other family forms'. (Executive Yuan, 2021) Among them, 'single-family', 'husband--wife family', 'single-parent family', 'grand-parenting family' and 'others' increased yearly, and 'core family' and 'three generations family' decreased. (Executive Yuan, 2021) Moreover, the family forms proposed by the TAPCPR are to be put in the category of 'others', because these new family types have been difficult to classify until now. The families of new immigrants are categorized into the family groups of 'heterosexual couples'.

For the Taiwanese people, detaching from the traditional family form is not easy. In comparison with the Western world where children are expected to be independent, and normally live away from their parents, children in Taiwan are mostly expected to live with their parents as long as possible. Even if the children get married, the parents still hope that the children's families will live with them. Even though society is now changing, and the family forms are becoming more diverse, the Taiwanese people hope to maintain the traditional family form. (Zhu; Zhang (朱瑞玲; 章英華), 2001, p. 18) Any change in the family form makes a parent anxious. If a family member hopes to have their own way of life, then they need to proceed with some 'revolutions' in the family. Same-sex marriage is now accepted by the government but not always by families, and dilemmas often exist between a same-sex marriage and their families.

Therefore, it is not difficult to understand why same-sex marriage and multi-family forms make parents and most people at a loss for what to do. In short, the dilemma between the new family and the traditional family forms increases layer upon layer. If the 'single family', 'single-parent family', and 'grand-parenting family' make people nervous, then 'same-sex marriage', 'Civil Partnership System', and a 'Multiple-person Family System' will definitely shock them. Nevertheless, the opposite attitudes between TAPCPR and 'Family Guardian Coalition' toward the family forms did cause a new social disruption in which the unity and harmony of the families might be destroyed. There is a crisis in family relations in Taiwan which most people are not able to prevent and do not know how to solve.

III. Chiara Lubich's concept of 'unity' as the possible core path of reconciliation

What actually are the problems of the families in Taiwan? As it is mentioned, the value of families relies on the structure of Confucianism or so-called 'tradition'. Confucianism focuses mainly on the collectivity of the patriarchal

clan system, not individuality. (Chen, 2013, p. 25–26) Therefore, each member of the family has a duty and behavior norms. If one of the family tries to break with the norms, then conflicts in the family will not be avoided. Moreover, each member needs to fulfill the expectations of their parents, or at least they should try to fit the expectation of the family of them. The same model might also apply to the relationship between the government and its people. In Taiwan, even though people do not mention a lot about Confucianism, their ways of life are influenced by the tradition which mixed Chinese and Taiwanese cultural elements which were often called 'Confucianism'. The tradition in Taiwan means that the parents are the center of the family, and the individuality of children is restrained[6]. Along with the change in the global world and 'modern values'[7], more and more people desire to have their individuality. They want to be themselves without any burden or control from their families. They always long for something 'new', which is normally hard to be accepted by families and society. Two different concepts of life between generations are often in a struggle. Conflicts and domestic violence occur, and the extreme case might be the suicide of young people because they failed to fulfill the expectations of their parents. 'Pressure', 'coldness' and 'domestic violence' are often the main problems of the family in which the parents insist that their children should follow Confucian value. (Jiao, 2017, p. 133) Unfortunately, there are still many families who are still suffering in this situation.

It seems that families need some key elements to bridge the different values of life among generations. What are the 'core problems' and the 'key elements'? In many families, there are obviously 'power struggle' between parents and children. They do not know a way to communicate with each other. Even though they love each other, something seems to be missing, namely 'unity' and 'mutual love'. In my opinion, without *unity* and *mutual love* in the families, any kind of family form would be Fata Morgana (a mirage).

There might be many possible ways to improve these problems in families. In Buddhism and other religions, the destiny of the family and an individual in the family are treated as a kind of result of Saṃsāra (reincarnation.) All efforts and mistakes in this generation will have an influence on the next generations. Most of the people in Taiwan are believers in religion. They believe that all difficulties are related to their previous life. If there are any problems or difficulties in the family, they go to temples to inquire about their previous life and beg for help from the Gods. They ignore that most of the problems in families actually come from *deficiency of love, unity and respect*.

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[6] The Confucian tradition which was adopted in the daily life present its difference facets in China and in Taiwan.
[7] The *modern value* means here *individual-oriented*.

How to improve it? Chiara Lubich[8] states that 'unity' could appropriately offer a possible path for people to build harmony and unity in their families. Chiara Lubich has also expressed her point of view about the family:

> "The family is indissolubly interlinked with the mystery of the very life of God, which is *Unity and Trinity*...when God created humankind, he formed a family, that is, a man and a woman called to communion in the image of the mystery of love of his own being". (Lubich, 2007, p. 185)

Chiara described the problems of modern society and families and criticized the individualistic culture of the world. This kind of culture intends to promote "man and woman in view of needs and consumption", and the children will be the first victim. (Lubich, 2007, p. 185) Moreover, in this situation, people will "base their lives on emotions and see sexuality as a kind of game in which couples change partners, thus undermining the basic trust in the stability of sentiments which is indispensable to family life". (Lubich, 2007, p. 188) In her opinions:

> "The stable marriage appears to be almost in contradiction with personal freedom. More than relational values, differences and incompatibilities are emphasized (…) The crisis of the family institution can be interpreted as a social phenomenon (…) the family can try to return to the original splendor of the Creator's design, drawing from the source of love which Christ brought on earth". (Lubich, 2007, p. 185)

Chiara pointed out that "the family can try to return to the original splendor of the Creator's design" (Lubich, 2007, p. 193), which might be relevant for a discussion of same-sex marriage, but her opinions about the problems in families and society reflect an indisputable reality today. What kind of family forms will be the best, belongs to another question; however, one thing fits for all family forms: "Married couples should be collaborators of God in giving life and love to humanity". (Lubich, 2007, p. 185–186) Each kind of family form could contribute to society if there is unity and love in it.

If there is a theory, there can be concrete action. In 1967, the *New Family Movement* was founded in Focolare "with the aim of living the spirituality of unity within a familial context and to advance their cause to other families throughout the world". (Looney, 2015, p. 9) They try to bring the ideal of unity into the families. In Taiwan, the branch of this New Family Movement organizes regular meetings with families. They accompany the parents, and there are also certain persons to regularly care for the children. These families might not know

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[8] Chiara Lubich is the founder of the Focolare Movement.

a lot about Christianity, but they know that *unity and love* are important in their daily life. These families often gather together, discuss their life experiences and problems in the families and together find the solution. There is an example which presents the influence of Chiara Lubich's ideal 'unity' and 'mutual love' on a Taiwanese family:

There is a family in which the son is homosexual. He told his mother that he would not be able to have a normal family and bear children because of his sexual orientation[9]. This violates the Chinese tradition. (Zhong, 2012. p. 45) His mother was shocked and did not know what to do. At first, she asked God why all of these things happened in her family. Had she done anything bad, and was therefore being punished? She was confused and thus asked for help from members of the New Family in the Focolare Movement. She was encouraged to love her son first instead of blaming him. She tried to build unity with her son which means to put their mutual love in the middle of them. In the beginning, it was difficult, but gradually, she accepted her son and gave him her deepest prayers and understanding. Their family thus became 'new born again', and all conflicts thus disappeared. She was grateful and said: 'unity and mutual love gave them a new family'.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned experience was one example of Chiara Lubich's ideal of 'unity' having a positive influence on a family. Whether Chiara's Ideal of unity could improve the problems of the families or not, there are already many good examples. Surely, her ideal of unity might not be known by all families in Taiwan, but its influences are increasing through the New Family Movement in Taiwan. I have even conducted a course, the "Culture of Unity", which was based on Chiara Lubich's concept of unity at the university. In this course, Chiara's ideal was not only studied, but also put into practice. The students practiced building unity and mutual love in their families. At the very beginning, they were skeptical about these two concepts, but the changes became clear by the end of the semester. A student shared his experience. He said that he often had conflicts with his wife, and they did not talk with each other for quite a long time. However, he tried to build unity with his wife,

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[9] In Taiwan and in many Confucian families, it is a serious mistake if a son cannot have his own family and children, because that means that there will not be posterity for the family. It was treated as a 'crime' in the past, and still is in some traditional families. This kind of concept was described in the Confucian Classics Mengzi: *There are three ways to be unfilial, having no sons is the worst*. The mother in this experience belongs to the generation who was influenced by Confucian tradition as she herself said.

listened to her and shared experiences with her. He was very happy that harmony had finally come to their family. The other students had similar experiences.

There might be different possible ways to reconcile family crises. Solving such problems in families requires treating 'love' and 'unity' as the core path. It is not based on rational consideration or persuasion but is based on 'experience' and 'practice'. We need to put 'love' at the center of the families. Moreover, there are already many experiences among families in Taiwan that the relationships in their families were improved because they tried to build 'unity' and 'mutual love'. As Chiara states, it is not about changing the family forms but trying to let God's love and unity be rooted in the family. The scholar Edward L. Looney commented on the Influence of Chiara's Ideal of unity on the family. He said: "The spirituality of unity is the work of Mary, for she desires the unity of all believers, and she is the model of the life proposed by Chiara Lubich". (Looney 2015, p. 21) For solving the crisis of family relationss in Taiwan, Chiara Lubich's Concepts of 'unity' and 'mutual love' could be possible core paths of reconciliation. As she said:

> "A new type of family – Today the family needs a potent injection of that love (…) every family need to revitalize the love that is inherent in them, because love is the pure gift of God. In other words, love must reawaken love". (Lubich, 2007, p. 180–181)

In the meanwhile, there are lots of conflicts due to gender issues and politics in Taiwan. Many children or family members suffer from traditional and modern gender concepts. Moreover, it seems that the global world is now not able to prevent the 'modern values', such as the multi-gender concept, same-sex marriage, artificial reproduction or artificial intelligence, etc. Relativism has become a crucial tendency that we should confront. All of these ruin the order of society and challenge families. The appropriate way is not to fight with them but to encounter them through *unity* and mutual love. Then , real and deep relationships can be built. The problems in the families could possibly be solved. At least, through the practice of the New Family Movement of Focolare Movement in Taiwan, there are already some positive results. What was proposed in this article does not mean that Chiara's ideal is the only way to solve the problems of the families, but it already has an influence on many families in Taiwan. From their experiences, we know that, it works. For this reason, there should be more surveys and further research in the near future.

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Kryzys rzeczywistości rodzinnej na Tajwanie: Chiary Lubich koncepcja „jedności" jako możliwej podstawowej ścieżki pojednania

Streszczenie: Od przeszłości do teraźniejszości Tajwan, jako część chińskiego kręgu kulturowego, doświadczył wyraźnych zmian w rzeczywistości rodzinnej. Polityka, gospodarka, migracje i globalizacja były lub są kluczowymi czynnikami wpływającymi na rodziny. Poligamia, rozszerzona rodzina, rodzina nuklearna, rodzina transnarodowa, małżeństwa osób tej samej płci i zróżnicowana rodzina budują konteksty rodzin na Tajwanie. Te wielorodzinne formy zdają się inkryminować popularne pojęcie 'różnorodności', które jest artykułowane od XXI w. Wiele osób uważa, że 'różnorodność' może wyeliminować konflikty, ponieważ żadna część nie zostanie zignorowana; 'różnorodność' pokazuje tolerancję, postęp społeczeństwa. W rzeczywistości jest jednocześnie coraz więcej konfliktów i problemów wynikających z różnorodności. Jakie byłyby potencjalne przyczyny problemów? A jak te problemy i konflikty w rodzinach można rozwiązać? Podstawowe rozwiązania wydają się niełatwe do znalezienia. Od lat sześćdziesiątych XX w. koncepcje Chiary Lubich: 'jedności', 'wzajemnej miłości' i 'modelu nowej rodziny' rozprzestrzeniły się na Tajwanie. Jej koncepcje wpływają na nowe życie wielu rodzin. W niniejszym artykule zbadane niektóre historyczne i aktualne modele rodziny na Tajwanie, a także relacje między koncepcją 'jedności' Chiary Lubich a rodziną, aby zobaczyć, czy te koncepcje mogą być możliwą drogą do pogodzenia konfliktów rodzinnych i jak można by je ewentualnie zastosować w praktyce.

Słowa kluczowe: nowa rodzina, Chiara Lubich, jedność, różnorodność, małżeństwa osób tej samej płci.