

“断亲” 话题上热搜，年轻人越来越不喜欢拜年走亲戚？

**“Broken Kinship” Trends: Young People Increasingly Dislike
Family Gatherings During Holidays**

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Note by Translator

It is well known that family gatherings in China during the Lunar New Year are among the most significant and cherished traditions in Chinese culture. However, in recent years, as Chinese youth contend with challenges in their everyday lives — ranging from uncertain economic prospects to limited job opportunities, from parental pressures to a general sense of disillusionment — they are increasingly unwilling to endure toxic familial dynamics. In fact, “cutting off ties” has become a social norm propelled by urbanisation, changes in finances, living spaces and lifestyles. This is an inevitable phenomenon in the process of modernisation and reflects the evolving priorities and values of contemporary society.

Translation

On the fourth day of the Lunar New Year, i.e., on 13 February, “rural families quietly cut off ties” was trending on Weibo. This theme garnered significant attention, with over 100 million views and a plethora of netizens leaving comments.

Some scholars have summarised the youth’s tendency to “cut off ties” as a phenomenon of laziness, detachment and

disdain for interaction and engagement with relatives of the second generation. It simply means that they do not go to visit their relatives, rather than formally declaring severance of kinship relations.

A netizen recollected his New Year’s Eve experience on a social media platform:

“Visiting relatives during childhood was fun. In contrast, visiting relatives as adults is a kind of concern – everyone asks me how much I earned last year, what work I do, whether I have found a partner or not, married or not, have children or not?”



Source:

https://www.sohu.com/a/676049468_121687424

In order to escape pressure from relatives and friends pushing them to marry and start families, numerous young individuals opt to travel solo to different locations or simply spend time in rented accommodations near their workplace. Some netizens argue that this is an inevitable result of social atomisation, wherein there is less and less interaction

among relatives. However, the trend of comparison prevails, thereby exacerbating social pressure on young individuals.

As a matter of fact, the phenomenon of young people “breaking off ties” has already garnered the attention of the public and academicians.

Last year, Chen Youhua, a professor at the School of Sociology at Nanjing University, and Zong Hao, a doctoral student at the same university, published a study titled, “Broken Kinship: Concepts, Problems, and Reflections”. This research belongs to a major project titled, *Research on Public Policies and Mechanisms to Achieve Positive Ageing (17ZDA120)*, under the aegis of the National Social Science Foundation.

The above-mentioned study points out that in the process of transition to modern society, the phenomenon of “cutting off ties” manifests in various ways. While considering this phenomenon from a gender perspective, it can be observed that: firstly, in foster families where there are daughters, after the daughters grow up and marry, the husband's family is considered the daughter's own family, and she regards members of her original family as relatives rather than immediate family members, seemingly severing the parent-child

relationship. Secondly, when sons establish their own families, they typically live separately from their parents, which can also be considered a form of “severing family ties”. Here, marriage and establishing separate households can be regarded as a coming-of-age ceremony, symbolising that males need to shoulder responsibilities. The “cutting off ties” caused by marriage not only includes implicit and mild aspects but also dramatic conflicts caused by customs such as high bride price.

First, when viewed from an inter-generational perspective, the phenomenon primarily involves younger people disconnecting from the relatives belonging to the previous generations. This kind of phenomenon is common in real life and media reports. The younger generation has very less interaction with relatives while growing up. Moreover, owing to the influence of values, the social security system, the market economy, and other factors, the younger generation displays indifference towards their relatives.

Second, there is intra-generational horizontal “cutting off ties”. There are two main categories: one is the “breaking of kinship” between elders. Elderly people commonly experience “difficulty in leaving their hometowns” and “miss their

relatives as if they were the same”. This is due to the common experience and common values they once shared. However, even among the elderly, due to differences in values and social status, it is difficult for them to connect. If there are conflicts that are difficult to reconcile, even if there is a scenario in which a family and the family of another relative are “at loggerheads”, this outcome can be attributed to the estrangement of kinship between the older generation.



Source:

<https://app.xinhuanet.com/news/article.html?articleId=7a9b78f6-1678-4c81-a9e4-bc2b01af27b9>

“Breaking ties” with peers is another category, i.e., alienation of relations with cousins and siblings. For instance, the description of university students in former

days as “first year a visitor, second year a foreigner, third year a resident”. Although it is a play on words, it actually implies a change of mind after receiving higher education, a shift in life goals, and a change in world outlook, i.e., making it difficult to have a common language among people with large differences. By analogy, due to the different life courses among people of the same age, although they are relatives, some young people seldom cross paths and they seldom share a common language.

The study considers that, as a product of changing times, “cutting off relatives” is not solely a result of individual rational choices, but is also influenced by elements including social structure and lifestyle. By exploring these factors, one can better understand the causes and internal mechanisms of the phenomenon of “breaking off ties”. The causes of this phenomenon include the breakdown of geographical proximity, urbanisation and population migration; diversification of values, social mobility and stratification; interpersonal relationships versus financial considerations, the development of the market economy and the establishment of the social security system; reduction of social interaction costs, life pressures and involution; digital survival, interests and networking.

The study concludes that with urbanisation and population mobility, social mobility and social stratification, the development of the market economy and the social security system, life pressures and involution, and digital survival, more and more people opt to “cut off relatives”. This “cutting off relatives” is a result of modernisation. Although “cutting off relatives” may weaken the function of family and reduce the mutual support among clan members to a certain extent, it may also reduce futile socialising for individuals. While this may cut off relatives who are unable to see each other even once a year and are only related by blood, it may nurture relationships with those who can bring comfort both economically and emotionally. This reflects a mature person’s high level of self-differentiation, and their ability to balance intimacy and independence.

The study points out that family bonds often strengthen during significant life events and after young adults start their own families. The study compares it with “retractable spring”. Regardless, it is crucial to foster shared interests, benefits, and values to improve managing kinship ties in the future. This serves as the cornerstone for sustaining enduring connections within the family.

“Broken ties” embody the tension between an individual’s rational choices and the traditional bonds of familial affection. Zooming out, we see that the maintenance of social relationships is influenced by the interplay between individuality and the cultural environment in which we exist. The study considers that an individual is shaped not only by their social connections but also by acts of kindness and indebtedness. In contemporary society, people will inevitably discover new forms of familial affection and social ties, with the most comfortable state of interaction always aligning with everyone's lifestyle and aspirations.

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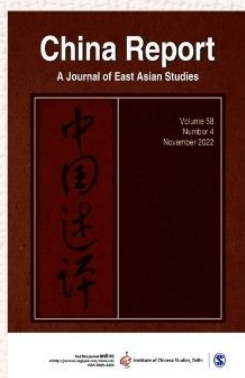


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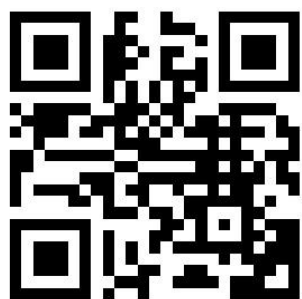
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