

# A Study on the Changes of Gender Morality in China: Centered on the Male Experience in the "Love Letter" Incident (1900-1930)

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[www.ijrah.com](http://www.ijrah.com) || Vol. 4 No. 2 (2024): March Issue

Date of Submission: 03-03-2024

Date of Acceptance: 08-03-2024

Date of Publication: 13-03-2024

## ABSTRACT

In the 20th century, China was an era of significant social changes, experiencing the impact of abolishing old and establishing new in politics, economy, culture, and other aspects. In terms of sexual morality, traditional sexual morality was criticized by Chinese youth and intellectuals, while new sexual morality was disseminated among young people. The love letter incident that occurred in such a social context is a representative event of young men and women actively breaking traditional sexual morality and constructing new sexual morality. This article takes two love letter events that occurred in China in the early 20th century and the 1920s as research objects, focusing on the experiences of young men in the love letter events. Using the method of seeking differences, it first clarifies the thoughts and expressions of young men on the issue of love in the love letter text. Secondly, it analyzes the views and debates of public power and social elites on the events in the love letter events, thereby revealing the end of the old sexual morality and the development of new sexual morality in modern China. In the two love letter events, the content of the young man's love letters both demonstrated his longing for new sexual morality. Qu Jiang faced criticism, while Qiu Gongyi received sympathy. The different experiences of the male protagonist in the two love letter events reflect the progress of China's modernization process in terms of neutral moral concepts.

**Keywords-** New gender morality, Free love, Modern China, Gender equality, Male Experience.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the Opium War (鸦片战争) in 1840, Western missionaries have established many women's schools in China, but until the early 20th century, there were not many women's schools established in China. The traditional gender morality in China believes that a woman without talent is virtuous, and entering schools for education does not conform to traditional gender moral norms. In the 1895 Sino-Japanese War (甲午中日战争), China was defeated, and the reformists drew lessons from the Westernization movement's focus on Western technology, elevating social change to the

level of institutional change. Liang Qichao (梁启超), a representative of the reformist movement, believes that revitalizing women's education is very important for cultivating excellent citizens (Liang, 2002). Although The Reform Movement of 1898 (戊戌变法) ultimately failed, women's schools were established in various parts of China. The purpose of these schools was to cultivate qualified female citizens with strong physical health and patriotic sentiments. But the fundamental purpose of women's schools is to cultivate a qualified next generation, essentially to cultivate women into new virtuous wives and mothers who meet the requirements of the times. Although the educational goals of women's

schools have compromised China's Traditional gender Morality, there are still negative voices in society, such as Zhang Zhidong (张之洞), an important politician in the late Qing Dynasty, opposing the establishment of women's schools. Nevertheless, the establishment of a large number of women's schools is an important symbol of breaking Traditional gender Morality.

The background of the love letter controversy in 1907 was the successive establishment of the Women's School in Beijing, and there was controversy in society over whether to establish a women's school. In 1907, Du Chengshu (杜成淑), a female student at the Sichuan Female School (四川女子学堂) in Beijing, received a love letter from Qu Jiang (屈疆), a student at the Beijing Translation School (京师译学堂). Du Chengshu handed the letter to the principal of the Beijing Translation School, Zhang Qin (章稂), and published it in a newspaper. Qu Jiang was expelled from the Beijing Translation School and eventually left Beijing. The love letter incident between Du Chengshu and Qu Jiang has been reported multiple times in major newspapers and magazines in Beijing and Tianjin (天津) and has sparked discussions among intellectuals, with major newspapers opposing Qu Jiang's actions. After the May Fourth Movement (五四运动), the ideas of Western freedom, science, and democracy were widely spread among Chinese youth, and breaking down outdated gender Morality was the wish of young men and women at that time. In 1921, Qiu Gongyi (邱功义), a male student at Male Normal School (男子师范学校) in Anhui Province (安徽), wrote a love letter to Yang Yichun (杨宜春), a female student at Female Normal school (女子师范学校). The female teacher discovered the incident and informed the male teacher, demanding heavy punishment for Qiu Gongyi. Eventually, the male normal school expelled Qiu Gongyi. The love letter incident between Qiu Gongyi and Yang Yichun attracted widespread public attention, and many intellectuals expressed their opinions in newspapers, Some people feel unfair about Qiu Gongyi's experience.

In these two love letter incidents, men were the first to deliver love letters, the initiator of the love letter controversy, and the focus of public opinion attacks. In previous discussions on gender morality in China, many have revealed the pressure and unfair treatment women face in terms of gender morality but ignored men as male protagonists in male-female relationships. The evaluation of their behavior by society reflects the changes in gender morality between new and traditional. By exploring social attitudes towards male behavior, analyze the changes in gender morality. These two love letter incidents have similarities, as both boys wrote love letters to girls, resulting in boys being expelled from school. However, in the 1921 Qiu Gongyi incident, Qiu Gongyi gained sympathy in the media, while in 1907, Qu Jiang received criticism in the newspapers. This article compares the experiences of the male protagonist

in the love letter incident between Qu Jiang and Qiu Gongyi and explores the transformation of gender morality in China from Traditional to new.

## II. CONCEPT DEFINITION

### 1. Traditional Gender Morality:

In the private sphere, traditional Chinese women need to obey the three obediences and four virtues (三从四德) and follow the arrangements of their father and husband before and after marriage, and after the husband's death, they need to follow the arrangements of their son (在家从父, 出嫁从夫, 夫死从子, 即三从). "Male leads outside, female leads inside" (男主外, 女主内) refers to the participation of men in social and public affairs, women in household chores, and the need for women to be husband's "virtuous assistants" (贤内助) in the private field. The traditional discipline of "women without talent are virtuous" (女子无才便是德) deprives women of the right to receive equal education as men. "Women's Virtue" (女德) and "Women's Training" (女训) were textbooks for ancient women, aimed at educating them to become qualified wives and mothers (ZHANG&LI,2024).

### 2. New Gender Morality:

Gender morality includes two aspects: the private sphere and the public sphere. In the private sphere, Chinese women achieve personal independence, no longer being subordinate to their husbands and sons, and men respect women's personalities. In the public sphere, men view women with an equal perspective, and women receive equal treatment compared to men in politics, economy, education, chastity, and other aspects. This is reflected in Chinese society in the first half of the 20th century, where young women were able to enter universities and study the same courses as men, rather than taking courses related to being a good wife and mother. In career development, it will not become a decorative vase for the company or a reservoir for the social labor market. In politics, obtaining basic political rights such as the right to vote and the right to be elected will not become a goal of political exploitation.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Xia Xiaohong's (夏晓虹) work takes Lin Shu (林纾) and Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培), male intellectual elites of the late Qing Dynasty, as the research objects. Through the study, knowledge elites represented by Cai Yuanpei hope their wives can be good wives and mothers in the family, and have the spirit of saving the nation and striving for survival in society (Xia, 2016). Yang Jianli (杨剑利) pointed out through discussions with officials in the late Qing Dynasty that although they appeared to support the establishment of women's schools and the abolition of foot binding, in reality, they

all prioritized the country's transformation over the true liberation of women (Yang,2020). Women's liberation was dependent on the social transformation issue of national salvation and survival. Women did not achieve true liberation under the agenda of social change in the late Qing Dynasty. Zhou Huimei (周慧梅) takes the famous women's issue newspaper "Women's Magazine" (妇女杂志) in modern China as the research object (Zhou,2020). By sorting out the content and tendencies of articles published by Zhou Jianren (周建人) during his editing period, the study points out that to increase the circulation of the magazine, editors will cater to her preferences and publish content that the public likes to read.

Jiao Jie (焦婕) took the bigamy case of Wang Xiling (王锡龄) as the research object, analyzed the attitudes of newspapers, public opinion, and schools towards men in bigamy cases, and proved that in modern China, men faced fewer gender moral judgments than women (Jiao,2021). Li Ronghe (李荣合) analyzed the divorce case between Liang Daishan (梁岱山), a humanities professor at Peking University, and his wife in 1934, and pointed out that some men often use their pursuit of new sexual morality as a reason to divorce their wives (Li,2019). In the process of developing new sexual morality, in the analysis of divorce cases in modern China in the 1930s, Hu Wei (胡伟) took the divorce case of Emperor Puyi (溥仪) and Wen Xiu (文绣) in the late Qing Dynasty as the starting point, pointing out the influence of the free love trend since the May Fourth Movement on the marriage practice of

Chinese youth (Hu,2019). Hao Zhaoli's (郝昭荔) article discusses the difficulties encountered in publishing the love story between Yao Zuobin (姚作宾) and Xu Yingxi (徐颖溪) (Hao,2020). Zhou Ning (周宁) analyzed the love letter dispute between Han Quanhua (韩权华) and Yang Donglin (杨栋林) at Peking University in 1923 (Zhou, 2015), but his analysis of male and female discourse in the field of newspapers was superficial and did not reveal the considerations of the new and old gender ethics of young men and women in the issue of love letters.

Tracy Ying Zhang (Zhang,2019) explored the group of Chinese female magicians in the public sphere at the beginning of the 20th century, revealing the role of female magicians in shaping the image of women in the public sphere. Xia Shi's article tells the story of diplomatic officials in the late Qing Dynasty who began to take their concubines (mistresses) abroad to attend the evening parties of foreign envoys, and these concubines played the role of public wives in social occasions (Xia,2021).

The academic investigation into Chinese sexual morality during that period is presented in Table 1.

In summary, current research on the issue of new and old sexual morality in modern China has focused on the evolution of new and old sexual morality, as well as the issues arising from the development of new sexual morality in China, such as the disorder of free love and divorce caused by the development of new sexual morality.

**Table 1: The academic research on Chinese sexual morality in those years.**

Women in the Public Sphere	Male Gender Concept	Divorce incidents under the influence of new gender morality	Love Letter Reporting in Newspaper Public Opinion
Zhou Ning, Tracy Ying Zhang, Xia Shi	XIA Xiaohong, Yang Jianli,Zhou Huimei	JIAO Jie,Hu Wei,Li Ronghe	Hao Zhaoli,Zhou Ning

Source: Created by Author

#### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The third volume of Mill's "System of Logic" expresses five rules: "finding similarities", "observing differences", "finding similarities and observing differences and using them together", "residual method", and "common transformation method". Mill's five methods of finding causality can be expressed as follows: observing differences, if there is A1, there are C and D... and B; If there is non A2, there are C and D but no B; And so on and so on; Then B is the result or cause of A or the indispensable part of the cause.

This article uses Mill's method of seeking differences to compare two love letter events that occurred among young people in 20th-century China. These two love letter events are the love letter events between Qu Jiang and Han Quanhua in 1907, and the

love letter events between Qiu Gongyi and Du Chengshu in 1921. Using the text of the love letter, the public disclosure of the love letter event, and social evaluation as two comparison items, this study explores the process of the development of modern Chinese sexual morality based on the experiences of the male protagonist in the love letter event. Although the two love letter events occurred at different times, the text of the love letter and the outcome of the male protagonist after the love letter was made public are the same. In these two love letter events, public opinion has different evaluations of the two male protagonists in the love letter event. Based on the above research logic, this article explores the process of the development of new sexual morality in modern China by comparing the Qu Jiang Love Letter Incident with the Qiu Gongyi Love Letter Incident.

## V. RESULT

This section examines the content of the love letters between Qu Jiang and Qiu Gongyi, using Qu Jiang and Qiu Gongyi as case studies to explore the views of young men in the early 20th century and the 1920s on love, and to reveal their attitudes towards Traditional gender morality.

Qu Jiang enrolled in the Beijing Translation School in 1905 and was a top student at the only university in China that trained diplomatic talents at that time. He studied at the Foreign Language Institute and received Western ideas. In terms of gender Morality, he opposed the social etiquette of gender segregation in China and hoped to break traditional gender Morality. Qu Jiang wrote a love letter to a female student at Sichuan Female School, which was eventually sent to the principal of the Beijing Translation School. The principal expelled Qu Jiang from school, and his love letter was published in the newspaper. Qu Jiang's approach has been ridiculed and ridiculed by the media. Qiu Gongyi was a student at Anqing Male Normal School in Anhui Province. In 1921, Qiu Gongyi wrote a love letter to Yang Yichun, a female student at Anqing Female Normal School. This love letter was discovered by a female teacher's school and handed over to a male teacher's school. Eventually, Qiu Gongyi was expelled from school, and Qiu Gongyi's love letter was also exposed in newspapers. People at that time had different evaluations of Qiu Gongyi. Some believed that Qiu Gongyi's behavior was bad and that being expelled was within the normal punishment range, while others believed that the female teacher's school opened student letters without permission, It is wrong to demand that the men's normal school drop Qiu Gongyi out of school. In these two love letter incidents, although they occurred at different times, the gender moral views held by the two were consistent, that is, they both had open gender morality, and the ultimate result was the same, that is, they were both expelled from school. However, in terms of public opinion evaluation, Qiu Gongyi gained sympathy from some intellectual elites.

### 5.1 The 1907 Qu Jiang Love Letter Incident

#### 5.1.1. The Content of Qu Jiang's Love Letter Text

In terms of gender morality, Qu Jiang tends to break the social norms of gender segregation. In Qu Jiang's love letter writing, Qu Jiang talked about the current situation of gender segregation in China. He said: *Apart from the communication between opposite-sex relatives in the private sector, there are no public and legal opportunities for communication between men and women in the public sphere* (Pei Ching Jih Pao,1907). In the letter, Qu Jiang expressed his hope to release the restrictions on communication between men and women, which reflected Qu Jiang's support for the new gender morality. Qu Jiang also compared the customs of the North and the South: *The South was already more open-minded in men's and women's communication, but the*

*North was relatively conservative.* Qu Jiang pointed out that there were signs of public social interaction between men and women in the South today. He said: *I have made friends with female friends in Suzhou (苏州) and Shanghai (上海)* (Pei Ching Jih Pao,1907). Qu Jiang positioned the letter to Du Chengshu as a normal category of heterosexual communication between men and women and pointed out that there should not be too many restrictions on heterosexual communication.

Qu Jiang believes that learning Western male-female communication is also an important part of China's modernization. Qu Jiang's love letter conveys the hope for the modernization of Chinese male-female communication, which reflects the synchronization of Qu Jiang's public morality and gender morality (Zhang & Li,2024). Qu Jiang's love letter text expresses his views on what a new woman is, indirectly reflects his expectations for an ideal partner, and also reflects his support for new gender morality. Qu Jiang hopes to find a girl who matches his soul. A girl who only focuses on appearance and does not pay attention to knowledge learning is not a new woman. Only a girl who values knowledge and learning and has an independent spirit is a new woman. (Qu, 1907)

#### 5.1.2. The Publicity and Social Evaluation of the Qu Jiang Love Letter Incident

After receiving a love letter from Qu Jiang, Du Chengshu handed over Qu Jiang's original letter to the principal of the Beijing Translation School, marking the beginning of the publicity of the Qu&Du incident. On 22 February 1907, Du Chengshu received a handwritten letter from Qu Jiang, a student from the Beijing Translation School, while selling books to raise funds for the disaster area. On 23 February 1907, Du Chengshu submitted Qu Jiang's original letter to Zhang Qin, the supervisor of the Beijing Translation School, and wrote a letter to Zhang Qin outlining the negative impact of Qu Qiang's behavior of seducing girls. (Chin Pao,1907). On the afternoon of February 24th, Principal Zhang Qin replied that Qu Jiang had violated Article 8 of the Student Code of the Translation School and was punished with dropping out of school. The punishment of Qu Jiang by the Beijing Translation School was publicly posted in the school on the morning of the 24th (Sheng Ching Shih Pao,1907).

The criticism of Qu Jiang's behavior by Sheng Ching Shih Pao (盛京时报) is lighter compared to that of Chung Kuo Hsin Nü Chieh Tsa Chih (中国新女界杂志). The annotation of Qu Jiang's love letters by China New Women's Magazine adds personal likes and dislikes of the editor, and the criticism of Qu Jiang goes beyond the principle of dealing with facts and rises to the level of personal attacks. The Chinese New Women's Magazine added annotations after each sentence of Qu Jiang's original text. The editor of the Chinese New Women's Magazine believes that Qu Jiang's so-called study abroad in Shanghai, Suzhou, and other places is not a real study abroad. Qu Jiang

mentioned in his love letter that he has several female close friends, and the editor of the Chinese New Women's Magazine believes that people with excellent qualities will not make friends with Qu Jiang (Chung Kuo Hsin Nü Chieh Tsa Chih,1907). The degree of criticism towards Qu Jiang varies among newspapers due to their different positions, But all the newspapers

were against him,as shown in table 2. This is because under the blending of new and old ideological trends, the definition of new and old sexual morality by the general public is still being explored, and the boundaries between new and Traditional Gender Morality are not yet clear.

**Table 2: The evaluation of Qu Jiang and Du Chengshu in various newspapers.**

	Chinese Women's Association	Beijing Translation School	Chinese New Women's Magazine	Ta Kung Pao and other media
Qu Jiang (Male)	against	against	against	against
Du Chengshu (Female)	against	support	neutral	support

Source: Created by ZHANG&LI (ZHANG&LI,2024)

**5.2. The Love Letter Incident of Qiu Gongyi in 1921**

**5.2.1. The Content of Qiu Gongyi's Love Letter Text**

In terms of mate selection criteria, Qiu Gongyi's love letter shares similarities with Qu Jiang's love letter, that is, they hope to find an ideal partner to communicate with their souls. In Qiu Gongyi's love letter, he analyzed his personality and said, "I know I am not an outgoing person. If you could be willing to sincerely enter my heart, I would be very grateful."From this statement, we can see that Qiu Gongyi's setting of ideal love is that both men and women need to have soul and spiritual communication and resonance to be considered true love. In terms of love philosophy, Qiu Gongyi believes that only the resonance that rises to the soul in the relationship between men and women is true love. Therefore, he wrote to Yang Yichun not only because she is beautiful, but also she is intelligent, he said: I think you are different from other girls who only focus on dressing up (Shao Lizhi, 1921). The concept of love discussed by Qiu Gongyi in his love letter represents the ideal expectations of Chinese youth in the 1920s.

In terms of attitude towards women, in the letter, Qiu Gongyi showed great respect for Yang Yichun and referred to female students as "sir" (usually the term "sir" is a respectful term for male intellectuals), which reflects Qiu Gongyi's respect for women. Given that at that time, men in society often regarded objectifying women as their concept of love, and the so-called "respect" constructed by Qiu Gongyi towards girls seemed precious and easy to win their favor. Qiu Gongyi maintains an open attitude towards traditional gender Morality. In his love letter, Qiu Gongyi expressed his longing for Yang Yichun without hesitation. He said, "*I dreamt of you at night, and you told me you wanted to fall in love with me, but you suddenly disappeared. When I woke up, I missed you very much.*" (Shao, 1921) In his attitude towards traditional gender Morality, Qiu Gongyi expressed dissatisfaction with schools preventing communication between young men and women. Qiu Gongyi hopes that Yang Yichun can overcome the obstacles of the school, bravely reply to him, and not let others discover this letter: *In the current harsh*

*environment of China, writing to you violates the discipline of the school. I believe that you have the courage and wisdom to respond to the discipline of the school* (Shao, 1921). Qiu Gongyi voluntarily wrote a love letter to Yang Yichun in violation of school discipline, and encouraged Yang Yichun to be brave like him, which reflects Qiu Gongyi's challenge and contempt for traditional gender morality.

**5.2.2. The Publicity and Social Evaluation of Qiu Gongyi's Love Letter Incident**

Like the punishment suffered by Qu Jiang, Qiu Gongyi's love letter was discovered by the supervisor of the teacher of the Female Normal School, who ordered the teacher of Male Normal School to deal with Qiu Gongyi. Eventually, the teacher of the Female Normal School was forced to dismiss Qiu Gongyi and requested the Education Department to notify all secondary schools in Anhui not to take him in. After Qiu Gongyi's love letter incident was exposed in the newspaper, there were differences in the evaluation of Qiu Gongyi among various parties. Dao Hai (道海) sympathizes with Qiu Gongyi's plight and believes that schools and teachers should inquire and persuade young people to admit and correct their mistakes, rather than directly expelling them. If they are expelled from school, it will only add to social instability. Dao Hai believes that the correct approach should be to hold class meetings with students, publicly criticize Qiu Gongyi in public lectures, and let students know that this is wrong. Dao Hai believes that it is too hasty to rely solely on a letter to negate all the qualities of Qiu Gongyi (Shao, 1921). From the perspective of the educational purpose of the school, Dao Hai believes that it is inappropriate to dispose of Qiu Gongyi as a dropout. At the same time, he also opposes the behavior of the female teacher checking the letters of female students. Dao Hai commented that the behavior of the female teacher opening the letters of students is "*like a prison-style Female school*".

Wu Xi (吴熙)have different views. In her article, she criticizes Qiu Gongyi's behavior. She believes that on the surface, the management of students at the Women's First Normal School is very dictatorial

and arbitrary. However, considering that after the May Fourth Movement, more and more boys have been deceiving girls emotionally under the banner of free love, the management method of women's schools is based on the perspective of considering female students. Wu Xi talked about hearing comments from her male classmates on the school, age, and appearance of her female classmates during the summer tutoring class. The boys exchanged information and learned about the gossip of the girls, which made her very proud. Wu Xi pointed out sharply that the portrayal of pure-hearted men in Qiu Gongyi's letters was only forged for the convenience of getting close to girls. (Wu, 1921) Furthermore, Wu Xi pointed out that if Qiu Gongyi's behavior is not seriously judged, more unscrupulous young men with bad morals will be more reckless. Using

Qiu Gongyi's behavior of writing love letters to girls as an example will cause more girls to be harassed, disrupt campus order, and be detrimental to the healthy development of male and female social interaction.

We cannot verify whether Qiu Gongyi truly believed Yang Yichun, but from the evaluation of Qiu Gongyi's behavior in public opinion and newspapers, it can be seen that Qiu Gongyi's behavior received support from some intellectuals. Such as Xiao feng (晓风) and Ke Ying (克瀛) (Xiao feng, 1921 & Ke Ying, 1921). It can be seen that after the May Fourth Movement, the trend of free love resonated more in society, reflecting the reverence for new gender morality in that society. The attitude of the authors of newspaper articles towards Qiu Gongyi is shown in the table 3.

**Table 3: The attitude of the authors of newspaper articles towards Qiu Gongyi.**

Xiao Feng	Dao Hai	Wu Xi	Ke Ying
support	support	Opposite	opposite

Source: Created by the author

## VI. DISCUSSIONS

The above discussion focuses on the male protagonist in the love letter incident and outlines his experiences. As the female protagonist's experiences are not the focus of this article, they were not discussed in the previous text. Existing research results have shown that women in love letter incidents will face stronger public opinion attacks than men. In the Qu Jiang incident, Du Chengshu, the female protagonist of the story, was caught up in the controversy of the Chinese Women's Association (ZHANG&LI, 2024). In the Qiu Gongyi incident, Yang Yichun's academic performance and student work were also affected. Yang Yichun is the student representative of the Student Union of the Women's Normal School. After the love letter incident, the comments were full of controversy. Originally, women's normal school students were very enthusiastic about student and social movements, but after this incident, the attitude of the Women's Normal School towards student movements became opposing. Other girls in girls' schools have also been affected. This reflects the oppression of women by traditional gender morality. In an era where gender Morality was still strict, it was not uncommon for girls involved in love letters to suffer from scandals. However, Yang Yichun in 1921 was luckier than Du Chengshu in 1907, and she received social support. This reflects the loosening of traditional gender Morality in China.

By comparing the love letter incident between Qu Jiang in 1907 and Qiu Gongyi in 1921, it can be seen that gender morality in the 1920s has made progress compared to gender morality in the early 20th century. Traditional gender morality denies free love between men and women, but both Qu Jiang and Qiu Gongyi hope to find partners through free love. Qu Jiang and Qiu Gongyi hold a supportive attitude towards the new gender morality. They believe that the new gender morality that supports free love between men and women is in line with the development laws of modern China and should break the restrictions on male-female communication in the public sphere. In terms of their attitude towards women, both Qu Jiang and Qiu Gongyi expressed their respect for women through the respectful words and titles in their letters. They both believe that only women who receive education and possess knowledge can be called new women. In terms of mate selection criteria, both believe that knowing is more important than appearance. The love letters of Qu Jiang and Qiu Gongyi reflect the attitude of young people towards free love in the early 20th century and the 1920s. Their criticism of traditional gender morality and expectations for soul compatibility with partners expressed in the love letters reflect the support of young men for new gender morality. But in the end, both of them were punished by the public power, that is, they were both expelled from school. The attitudes of Qu Jiang and Qiu Gongyi towards the traditional and new gender morality are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: The attitudes of Qu Jiang and Qiu Gongyi towards the traditional and new gender morality.**

	Traditional gender morality	New Gender morality	Attitude towards women	Standard of spouse selection	Outcome
QU Jiang	Against	Support	Respect	Spiritual	Drop out

				resonance	
QIU Gongyi	Against	Support	Respect	Spiritual resonance	Drop out

Source: Created by the author

Although the male protagonists of both love letters were punished for dropping out of school, Qiu Gongyi's situation was better than Qu Jiang's. When the love letter incident was exposed in newspapers, Qu Jiang faced a harsh moral judgment. All newspapers reporting on the Qu Jiang incident held an opposing attitude towards Qu Jiang. However, in the Qiu Gongyi incident,

Qiu Gongyi's plight received sympathy from some people who believed that a man's character could not be completely denied by just one letter. In the two events, the attitudes of individuals, social cognition, and public power toward the new gender morality are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: The attitudes of individuals, social cognition, and public power toward the new gender morality.**

	Personality	Social cognition	Public Power (School)
QU Jiang	Supporting new gender morality	Negating new gender morality	Oppose new gender morality
QIU Gongyi	Supporting new gender morality	Some people support it, some people deny	Oppose new gender morality

Source: Created by the author

## VII. CONCLUSION

In the process of China's evolving sexual morality, previous studies have predominantly focused on women's issues such as foot binding, education, and career development, while neglecting a comprehensive examination of men's thoughts and behaviors in the changing landscape of gender morality in modern China. This paper aims to address this gap by specifically analyzing the love letter event as a significant entry point for understanding male sexual morality. While Xia Xiaohong analyzes Qu Jiang's love letter event, there is no specific analysis from the perspective of men's experiences regarding their influence on the transformation of new sexual morality. This article uses the method of seeking differences to compare the love letters of Qu Jiang and Qiu Gongyi, focusing on the experiences of the male protagonist in the love letters, and exploring the evolution process of gender morality in China from the early 20th century to the 1920s. From the love letter text, it can be seen that young boys from the early 20th century and the 1920s held a supportive attitude towards new gender morality and a worried and skeptical attitude towards traditional morality. The male protagonists in the two love letter incidents are both college students who are ultimately expelled from school for writing love letters. However, Qiu Gongyi was luckier than Qu Jiang, as he gained sympathy from some intellectual elites in society. This reflects the influence of new gender morality in society in the 1920s, and the recognition of new gender morality by some intellectuals has increased. However, traditional gender Morality still has a great influence in China, and free love between young men and women is still considered unethical by public power.

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