STEREOTYPES OF FEMALE FAMILY ROLES
IN CHINESE AND ENGLISH PROVERBS

The object of this study is the linguistic representation of the traditional female family roles of the Han and Anglo-Saxon peoples through proverbs. It is based on the theory of “linguistic stereotypes” and explains the characteristics of Chinese and English proverbs as a linguistic stereotype in terms of language form and content semantics. We aim to analyse the traditional family types of Han and Anglo-Saxon peoples before the 20th century, identify the types of female family roles and the corresponding female family role stereotypes in Chinese and English proverbs, and reveal the ethnic and cultural basis for the formation of female family role stereotypes. We identify 10 types of female family roles in Chinese and English proverbs in the context of which we analyse the types of Han and Anglo-Saxon family structures in the period between the 16th and 20th centuries. We summarise the stereotypes of female family roles in Chinese and English proverbs and the reasons for their formation. Finally, we analyse the ten types of female family role stereotypes at the level of the content of stereotypes and explore the cultural reasons for the formation of female family role stereotypes in proverbs based on the linguistic stereotype theory in linguistic culture. The female family role stereotypes summarised in this paper are all linguistic responses to the Sino-British ethnic community’s perception of women. On the whole, Chinese and Anglo-Saxon women are subordinate in the family, and their status, words, actions and thoughts are influenced by the different living environments and humanistic customs of the two nations, resulting in different ways of thinking, which is reflected in the language through the proverbs that exist in the contemporary Chinese and English languages.

Keywords: language and culture, Chinese proverb, English proverb, female family role, language stereotype.
Introduction

In the 1980s, Chinese scholars began to dabble in the study of women in proverbs. With the rising status of women, more and more scholars have shown a keen interest in proverbs about traditional women. The research of the linguistic literature on women from 1987–2021 on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) reveals at least 71 relevant research studies published in recent decades. Chinese scholars’ research mainly focuses on the comparison of women in Chinese and English proverbs, with a total of 14 published papers, accounting for about 19.7% of the total, followed by the interpretation of female figures in English, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Uyghur proverbs, each accounting for about 15.5%, 9.9%, 5.6% and 7% (Current status of research before 2021).

Research on female-related proverbs in Chinese linguistics has been conducted mainly on the basis of theories from the sub-disciplines of linguistics, such as grammar, rhetoric, cognitive linguistics and language and culture. In grammar, scholars have mainly studied the syntactic structure and grammatical function of female-related proverbs [孙文娟, 2013; 阳利, 2007]; in rhetoric, scholars have focused on the rhetorical patterns of female-related proverbs [罗福腾, 1997]; in cognitive linguistics, scholars have mainly used the conceptual metaphor theory as the basis, taking
female-related proverbs as the corpus, comparing the conceptual metaphors in female-related proverbs of different ethnic groups, and exploring the reasons for the commonality and individuality between the two ethnic groups in the context of social culture [石吉梅, 2011; 郭晋豫, 2014].

In recent years, the hot topic of scholars' research is to combine female-related proverbs with social culture, based on the theory of linguistic culture, to explore the female issues of various ethnic groups from different perspectives, including the perspectives of gender discrimination, female image, marriage view and social relationship, with the research focusing on the perspective of gender discrimination. Scholars have produced a wealth of research on female sexism, and there is a relatively complete body of research on the vocabulary, content and reasons behind female discrimination reflected in proverbs [杨青, 余祥越, 2003; 赵玲, 2012]. From the perspective of the image of women, scholars have mostly studied the image of women as a whole across ethnic groups [王兰霞, 1996; 龙千红, 2000]; in addition, scholars have also slightly covered the study of the image of women's social and family roles [常辰晨, 2010; 王尧, 2011]. In terms of the concept of marriage, scholars have mainly analysed men's criteria for choosing a spouse: when choosing a fiancée, men focus on appearance and character, age and genus, family traditions, etc. [谭俊蕾, 2010; 白艳, 2011]. In terms of social relationships, scholars have mainly studied women's family relationships as traditional women's lives were confined to the family [高玉霞, 2007]. Scholars of folklore use proverbs reflecting the customs and traditional habits as a corpus from which to unearth the traditional practices followed by women of different ethnic groups [木克代斯, 2011; 张艳, 2012; 张艳萍, 鞠娟, 2013].

When scholars from various countries other than China study women in English proverbs, most of them focus on comparing English with various European and American national languages. The analysis of the literature collected by scholars from various countries reveals that scholars from various countries have studied women in English proverbs in two main directions: linguistic and ethnographic. Scholars of female proverbs in English in various countries have based their research on theories of cognitive linguistics, gender linguistics and linguistic culture [Li, 2008; Nikolaeva, Yakovleva, 2015].

In cognitive linguistics, scholars have mainly explored the world picture behind the proverbs by analysing the metaphorical and lexical components of the proverbs [Honeck, 1997; Kaplan, 2002; Iakovleva, Nikolaeva, 2016]. In gender linguistics, scholars mostly study the distinctions and connections between masculine and feminine concepts in proverbs in
terms of conceptual metaphors manifested as linguistic metaphors [Kimberly, Winick, 2004; Lau, 1996].

Scholars of English female proverbs in various countries have done a lot of research on female-related proverbs in the context of linguistic culture, focusing on the overall image of women reflected in proverbs and analysing the overall female image of a nation from multiple perspectives, such as appearance, character and marriage [Lauhakangas, 2014; Mieder, 2010].

Most of the scholars’ studies on the female image of proverbs in the linguistic and cultural field have focused on the analysis of the female image as a whole, and through their research results we can only grasp the female image in general terms and have only a general understanding of the women of the nation.

**Methods and material**

In order to appreciate the unique image of women’s roles in the family in a more concrete and intuitive way, and to understand women in a holistic way, this paper will use the theory of linguistic stereotypes, based on the research results of Chinese scholars and scholars from various other countries, to analyse the different role stereotypes of Chinese and Anglo-Saxon women in the family and the socio-cultural reasons for their formation, using the corpus of Chinese and English proverbs as a basis.


Through the documentary research method, we study the relevant literature and identify 10 types of female family roles in Chinese and English proverbs in the context of which we analyse the types of Han and Anglo-Saxon family structures in the period between the 16th and 20th centuries. Finally, inductive analysis is used to summarise the stereotypes of female family roles in Chinese and English proverbs and the reasons for their formation [Jessie,1975].

**Research Results**

1. **Stereotype theory in the context of linguistics and culture.**

We consider stereotypes to be the fixed perception of the surrounding reality by a certain national cultural community, which is culturally
differentiated and is divided into thinking, behavioural and linguistic stereotypes [赵爱国, 2006].

People use language to express emotions, exchange information and convey ideas, which in turn form culture. People put their emotional attitudes and subjective evaluations of things into their language, which gives it a unique worldview, outlook on life and values that reflect the stereotypes specific to that people [Maslova, 2005]. Language stereotypes are therefore linguistic combinations with fixed referential meanings, which reflect a fixed set of judgments of a certain ethnic cultural community about phenomena, things, people and other objects in the world.

According to Song Hongying, language stereotypes not only have a fixed referential content, i.e. the content expresses a specific national cultural meaning, but also have fixed connections between words, so that language stereotypes contain both a content level and a form level. The form of the language stereotype, i.e. the fixed expression, is divided into words, phrases, sentences and chapters according to the size of the linguistic unit: ‘words’ can include words without equivalence, words with accompanying meaning, and contextual words [宋洪英, 2011]. Language stereotypes are thus expressed formally as words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs, which are fragments of the conceptual system in the picture of the linguistic world, with evaluative features and emotional overtones. The use of linguistic stereotypes in communication can save the participants time and effort and achieve perfect communicative results.

A proverb is a short, educational statement commonly accepted by the people of a given nation, which records and reflects the nation's perception and evaluation of the world, i.e. it contains the most complete understanding of the world by the people who speak the language, reflecting the nation's history, customs and worldview, etc. The content of a proverb is the knowledge, experience and judgement accumulated by the people of a particular nation in the process of understanding and transforming the world, and its form is a closed sentence structure, a more fixed and familiar language. Therefore, a proverb is a linguistic stereotype [赵艳芳, 2000].

2. Female family role stereotypes in Chinese and English proverbs.

The roles of women in Han and Anglo-Saxon families are: wife, mother, daughter, sister, widow, (maternal) grandmother, (maternal) granddaughter, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law and mother-in-law—ten roles in all. Therefore, in this article we will analyse the Chinese and English proverbs that are centred on these ten types of roles.

After collecting proverbs related to women's family roles from the selected dictionary material, it was found that the proverbs were about wives (40%), mothers (10%), widows (9%), daughters-in-law (9%),
mothers-in-law (15%), daughters (8%), sisters (7%), grandmothers and granddaughters (6%). This paper will use the collected proverbs as a corpus base to analyse these ten types of female family role stereotypes.

[1] Wife and widow stereotypes

The Han and Anglo-Saxon nations’ women are similar in three respects: the status of husband and wife in their relationship, the way of choosing the wife’s appearance, and the role of wife as the key player in the family, as can be seen from the following proverbial comparison.

The subordinate position of a wife

(1) 妻跟夫走，水向东流。（if the wife and her husband walk at the same pace, the water flows in the direction of her husband.）
(2) 嫁出去的女儿，泼出去的水。（A daughter who marries is like water that spills out.）
(3) All women can be caught, spread but your nets.
(4) A good wife and health is a man’s best wealth.

The importance of a wife’s physical appearance

(5) 女为悦己者容。（a woman keeps her face beautiful to please herself and her husband.）
(6) 孔雀美丽在羽毛，妻子美好在性格。（A peacock is beautiful in its feathers, a wife is beautiful in her character.）
(7) A fair face is half a portion.
(8) Plain women are as safe as churches.

The role of wife as the key player in the family

(9) 无梁不成屋，无妻不成家。（No house without a beam, no home without a wife.）
(10) 花卉是草原的装饰，妇女是家庭的光辉。（Flowers are the decoration of the grassland, women are the glory of the family.）
(11) 死了家主妇，折了擎天柱。（When the wife of the family dies, the life of the family is in disorder.）
(12) 妇女能顶半边天。（Women have great potential, whatever men can do, women can also do.）
(13) A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband.
(14) Men make houses, women make homes.
(15) A tent without a wife is like a fiddle without a string.
Widow discrimination

The social group of widows is highly discriminated against and loathed, often ridiculed and often the target of gossip. The following proverbs show how difficult this image can be in life.

(16) 寡酒难吃, 寡妇难当。(it’s hard to drink without food to go with the wine, and it’s hard for a widow to live with a dead husband.)
(17) 再耐无好布, 再嫁无好妇。(A tattered cloth is still bad even if it is mended, and a widow who remarries will not have a better home, but will be disliked after all.)
(18) He who married a widow and three children marries four thieves.


Since ancient times, the relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law has been in a tense atmosphere among the Han Chinese, and the issue of getting along with them has become a major problem in every family. The daughter-in-law is not only subordinate to her husband, but also to all her relatives who are older than her. The Anglo-Saxons, on the other hand, have fewer, if any, problems with mother-in-law-daughter-in-law relations, as after marriage most of them build their own families and do not live with their mothers-in-law, so there are few, if any, problems in this area, and thus the English proverbs are rare in this respect.

(19) 婆婆打媳妇天下有。(A mother-in-law beats her daughter-in-law. This is very common in usual life.)
(20) 丑媳妇早晚都得见公婆。(An ugly daughter-in-law will have to face her parents-in-law sooner or later, you can not hide your ugliness if you want to marry.)
(21) Mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are a tempest and hail storm.
(22) Happy is she who marries the son of a dead mother.

Han Chinese mothers-in-law began preparing dowries for their daughters from the time they were small. When choosing a wife, men are tempted by wealth and expect a generous and unstinting mother-in-law who can give them a large dowry, as well as expecting her not to ask for a very high dowry money outlay and to interfere with their family affairs on a regular basis. At the same time the man will maintain a good relationship with his mother-in-law. Anglo-Saxon mothers-in-law, on the other hand, rarely interfere with their married daughter’s family and do not expect much from their son-in-law, as long as their daughter is happy. Therefore, no English proverbs were found in the selected corpus sources and only the Chinese proverbs are listed here.
岳母既不是母亲，也不是对手。（A mother-in-law is neither your mother nor your rival.）
丈夫爱富妻和慷慨的岳母。（A husband loves a rich wife and a generous mother-in-law.）
女婿就是丈母娘的儿子。（The mother-in-law will treat her son-in-law as if he were her own son.）

[3] Mother and daughter stereotypes versus sister stereotypes

Both traditional Han and Anglo-Saxon peoples put family and children first in their lives, and mothers always love and protect their children and dedicate their lives to them. In traditional Han families, boys are favoured. The reason is that the boy is the future breadwinner of the family. Girls, on the other hand, are meant to be other people's wives and labourers in other people's homes. The mother spends a lot of energy teaching her daughter to master all female domestic matters in order to prepare her daughter to be a good wife, mother, and matriarch in the future. The Anglo-Saxon people had no particular preference for their children, but valued and loved them all equally. Mothers are just as likely to teach their daughters to master female domestic matters in preparation for their own independent lives and for marriage. These are reflected in the following proverbs.

要想赢得女儿的欢心，必须先从她母亲着手。（To win a daughter’s heart, you must first start with her mother.）
女儿是父母的贴心小棉袄。（Daughters are the sweethearts of their parents.）
姐妹们一起就像河和水。（Sisters together are like a river and water, they can match well for each other.）
姐姐现在穿的衣服，妹妹以后也要穿。（The clothes worn by the sister will be left to the sister to wear.）

Sisterhood stereotypes

Sisters in both Han and Anglo-Saxon families are taught by their mothers from an early age how to do household chores and are therefore very good at them. They are good helpers for their mothers. In addition, the sisters have to look after the younger siblings. If a parent dies, then the older child takes on the responsibility of the parent and raises the younger brother and sister.

姐妹们一起就像河和水。（Sisters together are like a river and water, they can match well for each other.）
姐姐现在穿的衣服，妹妹以后也要穿。（The clothes worn by the sister will be left to the sister to wear.）
姐妹们一起就像河和水。（Sisters together are like a river and water, they can match well for each other.）
姐姐现在穿的衣服，妹妹以后也要穿。（The clothes worn by the sister will be left to the sister to wear.）

You are a second self.
The (maternal) grandmother and (maternal) granddaughter stereotype

Both Han Chinese and Anglo-Saxon (maternal) grandmothers have a similar affection for their (maternal) grandchildren. Even though they are getting older and weaker, they are always thinking of their children and grandchildren, trying not to be a burden to them and helping to look after them. Grandmothers are the protectors and companions of their grandchildren, and they care for and protect their grandchildren, so that they can grow up happy and healthy. The (maternal) grandmother usually has a close relationship with the children and loves them. Unlike their parents’ approach to their children, they do not treat them harshly, but are usually gentle and caring towards their grandchildren, turning a blind eye to their mischief, forgiving them for minor faults and soothing them when they are sad. For the children their (maternal) grandmother is their support and guardian.

家有一老，如有一宝。 (If there is an old person in the family, it is like there is a treasure at home.)

女儿的女儿们比谁都可爱。 (Granddaughters are lovelier than anyone else.)

I think of you as the eternally young grandmother.

The analysis of the examples provided above shows that stereotypically the two nations’ wives, mothers, sisters and (maternal) grandmothers and (maternal) granddaughters are only stereotypically positive, while the other five family roles are both positive and negative.

Discussion

1. Analysis of the common reasons for the formation of female family role stereotypes in Chinese and English proverbs

One of the reasons for the similarities between Chinese and English female family role stereotypes in proverbs is the influence of the patriarchal societies of the Anglo-Saxon and Chinese peoples. In addition to economic power there is also the social promotion of the idea that men are inferior to women. The story of Adam and Eve is a widespread Christian story in Western countries, where God created the man Adam and the woman Eve was created from a rib of Adam’s body (Adam’s rib). This conveyed the status of women as self-evident; a man could survive without his rib, but a rib was meaningless without its support, and the story took hold with Christian preaching.
During the Han Dynasty, Confucianism became the orthodoxy of feudal society, with the patriarchal system, the core concept of the family, sharply dividing men from women and influencing the Han nation for thousands of years. This dominant ideology heavily influenced the role of women in the family, which was largely confined to domestic affairs, limiting women’s activities to the home.

This is also true in marriage, where double standards of chastity and the three virtues of submissiveness for women shackle women and deprive them of their natural qualities, leaving Han and Anglo-Saxon women in a subordinate position in their marital relationships.

Both the Han and Anglo-Saxon traditions were unkind to widows, discriminating against them, ridiculing them and conditioning them to be subordinate to men by harsh regulations. Neither ethnic group placed much importance on the education of women, and even discouraged them from attending school. When women are stereotyped, men discriminate against them for having ‘long hair and short wisdom’ and ‘When an ass climbs a ladder, we may find wisdom in women’.

Since both peoples are in the same global village, share a common understanding of the objective world and subjective experience, and exist in the family of ‘human beings’, the perception of many things is the same. Proverbs come from life, and the fact that these everyday experiences are incorporated into proverbs passed down leads to the fact that there are Chinese and English proverbs that have many similar conceptual stereotypes of female roles in the family. For example, women are susceptible to the influence of their thinking and emotions due to their biological peculiarities, and are smaller and less physically capable than men. For example: ‘Men make houses, women make homes.’ The pursuit of beauty is the same for all human beings, and the beautiful appearance of women is a constant pursuit for men in a patriarchal society. It is also the pursuit of women for themselves, as the saying goes, ‘A fair face is half a portion’.

2. Analysis of the reasons for the individuality of women’s family roles in Chinese and English proverbs

While there are similarities between the family roles of women in Chinese and English proverbs, their differences cannot be ignored. The reasons for variability can be attributed to experiential differences, regional differences and so on, and are explained in two ways.

[1] Survival environment

The development of a language is inextricably linked to the local context, which is both geographical and human. It influences every aspect of
the production and life of its people, and naturally this influence permeates the proverbs.

As the English proverbs in this paper are selected from the Dictionary of American Proverbs, the Anglo-Saxon nation of the United States has been chosen for analysis. When it comes to proverbs, Americans use the full array of English proverbs inherited from British English during the early colonial period of the American history. These proverbs commonly reflect the insular character of Great Britain and the close connection of its inhabitants with sea and maritime shipping, as well as reflect the importance of the proximity of the ocean in the early colonial period of the history of the United States. For example, the phrase ‘All women can be caught, spread but your nets’, for example, relates to the daily fishing life of the fishermen, treating women as fish to be caught. The phrase ‘Mother’s love will dash up from the depths of the sea’ is a metaphor for the depths of the sea and the greatness of a mother’s love. Wind is an important consideration in sailing, so wind is also often found in the metaphorical thinking of Anglo-Saxon peoples, ‘A woman is a weather-cock’.

China, on the other hand, has been a vast country since ancient times, with its people mainly concentrated on the plains surrounded by mountains and dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. This is why there are many Chinese proverbs relating to mountains and land, such as “An ugly wife is a treasure in her home” and “Land is a man’s wing, and a man is a woman’s wing”, which express the dependence of women on men because land was the only source of income for the ancient working people. This is because land was the only source of income for working people in ancient times. This is because land was the only source of income for the working people in ancient times, and there is also a saying related to the mountains: “A tiger relies on a mountain, an official relies on a seal, and a woman relies on a man”. There are also many proverbs related to agricultural products, such as “A child never leaves his mother, and a melon never leaves its seedlings”. In addition, the topography of China is high in the west and low in the east, so there are many proverbs that correspond to this, such as “Wives follow their husbands, water flows eastwards”. Proverbs like that are all unique to Chinese and reflect its geographical specificity.

In China, the influence of Buddhism and Taoism on the Chinese people is unparalleled. Buddhism was introduced to China during the Han Dynasty and reached its peak during the Sui and Tang Dynasties. For over 2,000 years it has quietly influenced traditional Chinese culture and has created unique words and phrases associated with it. Buddhism, which preaches great compassion and the universalisation of all beings, has cre-
ated many images, such as the ‘living Bodhisattva’ and the ‘God of Wealth’, which have had a huge impact on Chinese folklore, culture, art as well as aesthetics and thinking, and in proverbs Chinese often uses demons as the source domain, for example: “A woman does not fight to become a demon”. A demon is also the opposite of a Bodhisattva, the personification of evil. Taoism was founded by Laozi and further developed by Zhuangzi, whose ‘theory of Yin and Yang’ holds that the world we live in is a unified whole and that materiality is its foundation, and that everything in the world has two sides, Yin and Yang, which are opposed to each other and at the same time unified. The contradictory movement of Yin and Yang is the fundamental cause of the occurrence, development, change and demise of all things in the world. Yin represents the female in Taoism, and Yang represents the male. The balance between Yin and Yang is a balance between men and women that will last, as in the saying “women can hold up half the sky”.

In terms of religious beliefs, the different religious influences of the English and Chinese speaking peoples have led to differences in their metaphorical thinking. The English-speaking peoples are mainly influenced by Christianity and use a lot of Christian source domains, while the Chinese peoples are profoundly influenced by Buddhism and Taoism and only use source domains with Buddhist and Taoist overtones.

[2] Customs and traditions

Over thousands of years of human history, each nation has developed its own distinctive customs and traditions, which are a source of centredness for a people and which encourage people to understand cultures with different perspectives and different thinking. Food culture is an important part of national customs and traditions. Wine has been flourishing in European countries since around the 6th century BC, and people love to taste and drink wine, and regard good quality wine as a treasure. This is why there are many proverbs that use wine as a source domain and project it onto women as a target domain. “Commend not to your wife, wine nor house”.

China, with its vast land and climate, grows a large number of grains and cereals, and the Han Chinese love to eat grains and their products. The earliest wine was made from grains fermented in vats over time, and in Chinese proverbs, when wine is used as a metaphor for women, it is this white wine that is referred to: “漂亮而无德的女人，是一缸醉人的酒” (A beautiful and immoral woman is a vat of drunken wine). [徐宗才, 应俊玲, 2004] It is not surprising that such an important ingredient appears in proverbs as a source domain concept, as rice is an indispensable
ingredient at the dinner table, especially in the southern regions. Tofu is also one of the more representative of Chinese food culture, having been invented 164 years ago by Liu An, the grandson of China’s Han Gaozu Liu Bang, and is made from the beans of the five grains. It has been an important food for the Han Chinese since ancient times. Such eating habits permeated the creation of the language, ‘女人三十豆腐渣’ (A woman’s face become older and older every year from the age of 30 onwards, it looks like bean dregs.)

In summary, the similarity between Han and Anglo-Saxon social history and the same cognitive base, as well as the fact that both groups of women themselves have the same physical and psychological make-up, have led to a considerable number of similarities in the proverbs on the role of the Chinese and English women in the family. The main reasons for the differences are the different environments in which they existed, the different beliefs and ideas that the people were taught, and the very different human customs of the two peoples. This has influenced the creation of the language in every way and is reflected in the proverbs.

**Conclusion**

When it comes to stereotyping wives in proverbs, only a good, faithful, virtuous and hard-working wife can be called a good wife, otherwise she will only bear the name of a bad wife. To be a good wife, she must always put her husband first, obey him and listen to his teachings, and he must love and care for his wife in order to bring harmony to the family.

Although there is sympathy for widows, the image of widowhood is still predominantly negative in both cultures. Both ethnic groups believe that widows are completely free and in control of their own lives because they are free from the discipline of their husbands.

The Han Chinese believe that mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law will always be the cause of conflict in the family. The Anglo-Saxon people, on the other hand, have few problems with their mothers-in-law because they leave their mothers after marriage and their wives and mothers-in-law do not live together.

The Han Chinese love their generous mothers-in-law, who treat their sons-in-law like their own sons for the sake of their daughters. However, once the mother-in-law demands a lot from her son-in-law and starts to interfere with her daughter’s housekeeping, this peaceful relationship is broken, and she will be complained about by her son-in-law. The Anglo-Saxon mother-in-law does not interfere in the married life of her daughter and son-in-law and asks little of her son-in-law, as long as her daughter is happy.
Both peoples have great respect for the mother and she has a very high status. Because the mother loves her children very much, she is also adored by them. They never bother with their children, they can sacrifice themselves for their children, and she is a wonderful, selfless, warm and beloved woman.

On the one hand, the Han love their daughters very much and protect them until they marry them; on the other hand, the dowry they have to prepare when they marry makes them feel that their daughters are money losers. The daughter has to learn how to handle the household from her mother from an early age in order to become a proper hostess, which makes her act in a very similar way to her mother. The Anglo-Saxon people always loved and liked their daughters and did not need to prepare a dowry for their married daughters. The mother likewise taught her daughter from an early age to learn all kinds of household chores, so this would also make her act in a similar way to her mother.

The stereotype of the sister in Chinese and English proverbs is that she is a second mother, for she has to look after her younger siblings for her mother, she depends on her brothers, and people compare a sister without a brother to being as lonely as a bare branch. For the Chinese, sisters are also among their closest relatives.

The Chinese and English proverbs reflect the stereotype of the (maternal) grandmother who, although old and living in hardship, still looks after her family, exists for her children and grandchildren, working for them all her life and protecting them like a shield, and the (maternal) grandchildren respect and love their (maternal) grandmother as much as they love their mother. Granddaughters are loved by their elders in both peoples.

The female family role stereotypes summarised in this paper are all linguistic reflections of the ethnic cultural community’s perception of women. Generally speaking, women of the two ethnic groups are subordinate in the family, and their status, words, actions and thoughts are influenced by their own specific cultures, i.e. their different living environments, religious beliefs and humanistic customs result in different ways of thinking, which makes each of them present individual characteristics when choosing their source domain.

The overview of the proverbs on the role of women in the family from both peoples shows that there are far more positive than negative attitudes towards the status of women in the family, but we cannot exclude that there are still negative aspects. Although the status of women is now significantly higher and they are increasingly moving out of the home and into society, with freedom and choice, the traditional images of women
have not disappeared, but remain more or less intact, as evidenced by the survival of these images in proverbs that remain in active use.

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