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HALLYU:

DISCOURSES OF KOREAN DRAMA VIEWERSHIP IN CHINA

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By
Nichole S. La Torre

Thesis Committee:

Ricardo D. Trimillos, Chairperson
Ming-Bao Yue
Theodore Jun Yoo

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We certify that we have read this thesis and that, in our opinion, it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Asian Studies.

THESIS COMMITTEE:

Ricardo D. Trimillos

Chairperson

Theodore Yu

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Abstract

The Korean Wave gained widespread audience attraction in China through the use of attractive plots combined with popular music, high production value, and successful marketing techniques. In China, the popularity of Korean drama created a market for a multitude of consumer goods from cell phones to cosmetics. Several people have claimed that there is an "addictive" quality inherent in these dramas. While several scholars have attempted to determine the root cause of this widespread attraction to Korean dramas, most analyses are over-simplified in their explanations as to the cause of this phenomenon. Many arguments name a "Confucian root" or a "Pan-Asian identity" as the basis of this trend. However, this thesis argues that it is not *only* Confucianism which drives fanaticism, but a complex and interwoven process of emotional investment, similar social expectations, global market forces, and a need to confront the constant clash of modernity and tradition which permeates both Korean and Chinese culture as a result of modernization. The "addictive" qualities of Korean drama viewership in China can be adequately analyzed and explored only when one uses a method which acknowledges opposition and individual agency. Cultural issues inherent in these dramas relate to social conditions and contradictions inherent in both Chinese and Korean society. Myriad interpretations and individual perceptions derived from dramatic series can facilitate an open dialogue about certain dramas, stars, and associated cultural products. South Korean television dramas depict the lives of ordinary people in a society where social expectations are in a state of flux. One must recognize the many facets that prompt viewer attraction, and that individual identification on the part of audience members as well as the extraction of personal interpretations of media is immeasurable.

Introduction

The term "Korean Wave" or "Hallyu" (韩流 *hanliu*) describes the sudden, large-scale demand for commodities from South Korea in Asia. The unprecedented popularity of South Korean products was due to an increase in the amount of Korean television dramas exported to countries all over the Asian region. Through the use of attractive plots combined with popular music, high production value, and successful marketing techniques, these dramas achieved high viewer ratings and a fan base of considerable size. Whether through the use of official imports or illegal distribution, Korean dramas launched a "wave" of culture which spread rapidly throughout China, Japan, Thailand, and many other countries. In China, the popularity of Korean drama created a market for consumer goods from cell phones to cosmetics.

Several people have claimed that there is an "addictive" quality inherent in these dramas (Park, 2005). In order to demonstrate the "power" of these dramas over their fans, one can point to an incident which occurred in Nanjing, China, where a woman threw herself into a river after arguing with her husband over control of their television. The woman acted in protest to her husband's insistence on watching a soccer game during the same time in which the popular drama "A Jewel in the Palace" was aired. Fortunately, the woman was saved by her neighbors who then made her husband change the channel.[1] Another interesting effect of the Korean Wave phenomenon is a simultaneous growth in China and South Korea's cosmetic surgery industries. Each year, there is an increase in

[1] Park Chung-a, "The Power of Korean Dramas," *The Korea Times*, 27 October 2005.

the number of middle to upper class women who travel from various cities in China to Seoul to have their faces "remodeled" to look like their favorite Korean drama stars.[2]

Since China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, there have been significant changes for the Chinese economy, political outlook, and a general "opening up" of Chinese culture to foreign influences. These changes have been reflected in China's acceptance of foreign business ventures, banking facilities, and various subsidiary companies, as well as in China's music and television industries (Zha, 1995). For the past 15 years, China has imported television programming from several foreign networks. Given the ability to watch television dramas from many different countries, what is it about South Korean drama that attracts Chinese audiences? Who are the primary viewers? Why do some people prefer foreign dramas to those produced in mainland China or Hong Kong? My aim is to explore how attraction to various types of media has changed in China, and how these changes have been influenced through this process of "opening up". My goal is to analyze the common arguments used to determine the root cause of this phenomenon and to identify several more reasons why Korean drama has such attractive or "addictive" qualities. In this thesis I will focus on the role of both viewership practice and consumption shape the Chinese experience of Korean Wave culture.

In chapter one, I will focus on the history of television in China and the role of mass media in Chinese culture. In chapter two, I will discuss specific facets of Korean Wave culture in China, namely fashion and fan culture. Chapter three is entirely devoted to discussing the controversial practice of plastic surgery, which has been cited as an attempt to look more "Western" (Brownell, 2005). However, people who have undergone

[2] Park Chung-a, "The Power of Korean Dramas," *The Korea Times*, 27 October 2005.

cosmetic surgery procedures as well as Korean surgeons link this practice to the Korean Wave and assert that the process focuses on an Asian aesthetic rather than a Western ideal. This subject has warranted much scholarly research, on the part of both Chinese and Korean researchers and reporters (Brownell, 2005; Chen, 2007; Chen, 2008; "China braces...", 2004, "Chinese women under knife...", 2006; Fairclough, 2005; et.al). In chapter four, I will attempt to discuss the "Confucian root" argument, and why it may or may not apply to Korean drama viewership in China. In my final chapters, I hope to address personal responses to the medium gleaned from Korean drama fan interviews and ethnographies. Throughout this thesis I will discuss various discourses on Korean drama viewership in China, and how it relates to the audience.

There are several important factors at work in this Korean Wave phenomenon which influence the everyday lives of people in China. First and foremost, television viewing is considered to be a pleasurable experience. Television drama and soap opera viewing allows audience members to temporarily escape real life social conditions and pressures in order to delve into "reel life" drama. In her analysis of drama viewership Ien Ang asserts that, "entertainment belongs to the domain of leisure, and leisure is regarded in the everyday experiential world as 'time for yourself', as liberation from the chafing bonds of the official world of factory, school or office, or from the worries of running the home." [3] People may be lured into watching certain programs through advertisement or promotions, but it is a sense of self recognition and pleasure which keeps audience members devoted to certain types of television shows.

[3] Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 1985), 21.

While several scholars have attempted to determine the root cause of this widespread attraction to Korean dramas, most analyses are over-simplified in their explanations as to the cause of this phenomenon. Many arguments name a "Confucian root" or a "Pan-Asian identity" as the basis of this trend. However, it is my belief that it is not *only* Asian values which may drive viewership and consumptive practices, but a complex and interwoven process of emotional investment, similar social expectations, global market forces, and a sense of idealized modernity projected in each drama series. The maintenance of South Korean cultural identity inherent in these dramas is also attractive in that it offers the possibility of preservation or hybridization of Asian culture in the wake of modernization.

Chapter One:
A Brief Overview of Television in China 1958-present

The early role of television in Chinese society was not entertainment, rather it served to "educate" and "inform" the people. The first Chinese television station began broadcasting in 1958 to a select group of elites, who were only able to watch a few hours of television in the evening. Under the early Communist system, "little attempt was made to please the viewer; this was not the role of the medium".[4] Television shows were of a purely political nature and news broadcasts consisted chiefly of propaganda pieces. Following the Communist takeover of China in 1949, a Ministry of Culture was established in order to regulate and control all forms of print and broadcast media.

A system was established wherein film and television scripts were passed from the writers to an organized network of reviewers and revisionists who would alter the original script until it could pass the highest censors. Likewise, pre-existing documentaries and films were edited for content; a process which is still used on television shows imported from foreign countries to this day. The bulk of early television programming included government approved imports from the Soviet Union and political or scientific documentaries. The only other forms of entertainment available to both elites and common people were revolutionary ballet and eight plays. These plays were adapted from folk tales, which were significantly altered to reflect Communist ideologies. Any movies or programs intended for a common audience were viewed in large groups.

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[4] Huang Yu and Andrew Green. "From Mao to the Millenium: 40 Years of Television in China (1958-98)," in *Television in Contemporary Asia*, eds. David French and Michael Richards (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000), 273.

The first television drama was broadcast in China in 1958 to a limited audience of privileged viewers. This single episode drama, *A Mouthful of Vegetable Pancakes* (一口菜饼子 *yikoucaibingzi*), primarily concerned recalling the bitterness of life before the Communist "Liberation" of China. Like many other forms of broadcast media used by the Chinese Communist Party, the goal in creating this drama was, "'contrasting past misery with present happiness", in order to "educate people to be frugal with their grain."[5] Despite the tendency toward imbedded social and political messages, television was not as valuable to the Communist Party as were other mediums.

Since few people were able to view television programming, it was not a particularly effective method for disseminating propaganda, and certainly not indicative of popular culture. From the period 1958-1966 a total of 180 television dramas were broadcast, yet it was not until 1980 that a drama was produced for the purpose of sheer entertainment and viewing pleasure.[6] This nine episode drama, *Eighteen Years in the Enemy Camp* (敌营十八年 *diyingshibanian*), was enjoyed by a wide audience but ultimately condemned as "capitalist spiritual pollution" for a lack of political connotations. [7] Although television is a popular form of media in China at present, its content is still debated, censored, and often criticized by the government.

Despite the efforts of media control groups and over 20 years of carefully regulated propaganda, new concepts of ownership and prosperity emerged with the end of the Cultural Revolution, and the arrest of the Gang of Four, in 1976.

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[5] Hong Yin. "Meaning, Production, Consumption: The History and Reality of Television Drama in China," in *Media in China: Consumption, Content and Crisis,* eds. Stephanie Donald, Michael Keane, and Hong Yin. (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002), 29.
[6] Ibid, 28-30.
[7] Ibid, 30.

> "The first wave began in the 1970s, when people bought necessities such as bicycles, watches and sewing machines. The second wave began in the middle of the 1980s with purchases of television sets, refrigerators, and washing machines....now is the third wave, with consumers buying air conditioners, telephones, and VCRs." [8]

Changes in the affordability and consumer demand for televisions can be evidenced by the amount of television sets owned by Chinese families over the past 50 years. The chart below labeled "TV Ownership in Chinese Households" demonstrates that television ownership among Chinese families increased one hundred fold from the year 1978 to 1997.[9]

TV Ownership in Chinese Households [10]
(TV= one unit per household)

Year	*TV Ownership*
1958	50
1960	1200
1978	3 million
1988	125 million
1997	300 million

From 1949 to the mid 1970's, Chinese television broadcast several documentaries extolling the virtues of the Party, as well as several updated and revised versions of the eight plays and revolutionary ballets. "It was not until the 1980's that the medium was liberated and allowed to consider its audience".[11] A decade of development and change would render television the most popular and easily obtainable form of entertainment.

In the 1980's China's strict Communist regime was drastically altered through Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms. While the initial idea was to "construct socialism with

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[8] Junhao Hong, *The Internationalization of Television in China: The Evolution of Ideology, Society, and Media Since the Reform.* (Westport: Praeger, 1998), 120.
[9] Junhao Hong, 271-273.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Michael Keane. "A Revolution in Television and a Great Leap Forward for Innovation?" in *Television Across Asia.* eds., Albert Moran, and Michael Keane, (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 92.

Chinese characteristics", in an effort to develop China's technological and scientific capabilities, these economic reforms also served to slowly open Chinese business and culture to foreign entrepreneurs and ideals. "Once the door to the West opened, even a government notorious for control could not keep up with the number of things and thoughts flooding the country".[12] Due to the policy changes enforced under Deng Xiaoping, and the subsequent influx of foreign goods and services, television was significantly altered in response to transformations in social views.

> "Television has evolved from a purely political tool in the hands of the ruling Communist Party to a thriving commercial enterprise - although it remains under the umbrella of the party institution. Television growth is also symbolic of the economic, political and social change that has enveloped China over the last 40 years, both mirroring and even leading to some of these changes."[13]

This evolution is due in part to a change in the increasingly important role of consumers in Chinese society, and a shift from collective to individual oriented goals and values.

During the mid 1980's, imported dramas from Hong Kong stimulated demand for television drama from foreign countries. These imported dramas ultimately shaped popular taste and created a large market for family dramas. Television dramas such as *Doubtful Blood Type* from Japan, *Woman Slave* from Brazil, and *Slander* from Mexico were broadcast at the end of the 1980's.[14] As a consequence of the decentralization of television in China during the early1990's, several new stations were established. In 1991, the State Council recognized the importance of both cable and broadcast television, and by the end of that year there were a total of 11,486 cable stations and channels, including 451 regional, 1,098 industry owned, and 10,037 local.[15] Simultaneously, the six day

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[12] Jianying Zha. *China Pop: How Soap Operas, Tabloids, and Bestsellers Are Transforming a Culture.* (New York: New York Press, 1995), 43.
[13] Zha, 267.
[14] Hong Yin, 31.
[15] Junhao Hong, 116.

work week system which had been implemented since the 1950's was shortened to a five day week. Transition to a five day system resulted in, "...changes in the lifestyle and leisure-time structure of the ordinary people, which has resulted in a higher demand for more and better television programming"[16] Television, as a cheap and relatively easily obtained medium, gained importance as a method for spending one's leisure time.

In 1990, *Yearnings* (渴望 *kewang*) broke ground as the first television drama series ever made in China inspired by foreign models from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and Brazil. *Yearnings* achieved popularity by using, "a standard conflict resolution formula, these popular dramas describe social contradictions and power struggles, and the strategies that people use to survive and learn through experience."[17] This "standard model" is suitable for addressing a variety of social issues including family conflict, maintaining tradition, morality, class conflicts, etc. Comedy-dramas inspired by foreign imports also became popular during this time. "In re-creating and making fun of people's fantasies and embarrassing situations, and by using comic behavior to make light of people's frustrations, expectations, and antagonisms, these everyday secular comedies became very popular.[18] The growth in demand for such television programming reflects changes within Chinese society during this period of "opening up" on both an economic and social level. As China developed economically and the government control of all sectors steadily eroded, the lives of ordinary people were changed as well.

Zha Jian-Ying, a writer who spent much of her life between the United States and China, asserted in her 1995 book *China Pop*, "indoor drama is as new as China's television culture itself...up to the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, the sight of a

[16] Junhao Hong, 116.
[17] Hong Yin, 35.
[18] Ibid.

small black-and-white television set in a Chinese living room had been a sure sign of luxury and privilege".[19] Zha describes how during the 1980's, millions of Chinese citizens chose to relax on the weekends by viewing their favorite television programs. For the emerging middle class, prosperity and demand for more commodities are reflected in the growth of importation and even the content of television dramas. She views citizens of China as individuals, "caught in the transition from an era of 'class struggle' to a new era of economic construction, people were experiencing social turmoil as well as personal tribulations."[20] During this time audience appeal shifted from politically inspired socialist realism to dramas which reflected personal conflicts arising from new systems, with which audience members could identify. "Although these new situations may represent different aspects or dimensions, they all have pushed television stations to struggle for more programming, more attractive programming, and more theme-diverse and style-diverse programming"[21] As the demand for more attractive television programming increased, so did the desire for more foreign dramas and commodities associated with them.

Rather than serving the function of "mouth-pieces of the Party" television programs have taken on an important role during China's push for development. As more diverse programming has allowed for greater viewer agency, viewership has become "a commodity that can be owned, bought and sold." [22] Through product placement and the incorporation of music as an original soundtrack (OST), foreign advertisers have been able to market products and associated lifestyles to Chinese audiences. Although

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[19] Zha, 33.
[20] Hong Yin, 31.
[21] Junhao Hong, 121.
[22] Ran Wei. "China's Television in the Era of Marketisation," in *Television in Contemporary Asia*, ed.s, David French, and Michael Richards. (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000), 338.

television in China has become more audience oriented and a major component of market forces and advertising, is not yet completely commercialized. The state administration and Chinese television administrative authorities are said to have a "symbiotic" relationship. Under this system, television is partly controlled by administrative authorities, but must raise its own revenue, and yet cannot be a totally profit-oriented enterprise.[23] Television stations are said to serve three masters, the advertisers, the viewers, and the government authority. It is widely believed that although this system will continue to be enforced for a number of years, the commercial momentum will weaken this control over time.[24]

While there are many critics of commercialism and capitalist tendencies due to the influence of globalization, there are also some who believe that consumerism is not necessarily a negative result of China's policy changes. "Importing foreign television programming has now become necessary not only for the television industry but for the country's economy as well." [25] Zha Jian-Ying, for example, has argued that although commercialism and private sectors have created some conflicts in China, this process of change has granted individuals more agency. In her book, she discusses modernization and development of the Chinese economy as beneficial to the individual by asserting that, "as life gets easier and people get richer, old frustrations may dissipate".[26] Consumerism certainly allows for more freedom and individual agency when it comes to purchasing power, but has also changed the way Chinese people consume products, and what they consume.

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[23] Ran Wei, 343.
[24] Huang, 279.
[25] Junhao Hong, 121-122.
[26] Zha, 22.

Until the mid 1970's, it was impossible for people in China to view foreign shows and buy foreign products that were not from socialist countries. In the early 1980's, duplicated tapes of rock and love ballads were smuggled into the mainland from Hong Kong and Taiwan, and were circulated around college dormitories. Now, due to the ease with which one can purchase or download illegal duplicates of DVD's and CD's, Chinese nationals are able to view media deemed 'unfit' by the government authorities. These social transformations lead to a new era of autonomy from the Party, whereby individuals were able to pursue their own tastes and interests, as well as to express desire for material objects and status. "Of equal importance, millions of Chinese now articulated goals and values across a whole range of issues, from sexual relationships, to citizen's rights, with a high degree of freedom in their everyday lives".[27] These newly articulated goals were largely shaped by consumerism and media influences.

By the end of the 1990's, it became more difficult to capture ratings as people's leisure time activities became more selective. After a decade of foreign imports and the ensuing comparable techniques used in domestic programming, television audience tastes were more discerning. In the year 2000, the national average of color television owners per 100 households was 48.74, which rose to 67.8 at the end of 2003.[28] Despite more selective tastes, Chinese audiences and consumers still used television viewership as a primary form of entertainment. The increased number of television viewers and the concurrent acceptance of China into the World Trade Organization, as well as a push for rapid growth and modernization created a larger audience for the global media market.

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[27] John Gittings, *The Changing Face of China: From Mao to Market.* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2005), 261-2.

[28] China Statistical Yearbook. "Section 10:30: Number of Durable Consumer Goods Owned Per 100 Rural Households of National and 12 Western Provinces (Autonomous Regions, Municipality) at the Year-end". (National Bureau of Statistics of China: China Statistics Press), 2004.

During the time in which the Korean Wave began in China, there was a significant growth in the number of televisions owned nationwide as well as an increase in the number of channels. When Korean dramas began airing on Chinese television at the beginning of the new millennium, several factors contributed to their steady growth in popularity. First, these dramas were originally aired with Chinese subtitles and dubbing, provided by censors from the Chinese Ministry of Culture. Subtitling and dubbing, as well as the insertion of these dramas into domestic broadcast and primetime slots aided in their ability to reach a wide audience (Sung, 2008). A greater demand for television programming which could adapt to consumer needs and satisfy pleasure-oriented viewership created a great opportunity for South Korean programming to succeed in China. Yet another reason for viewership was the growing interest on the part of Chinese government and society on achieving a "modern" state. A combination of inherent qualities, such as family values, idealized modernity, economic appeal in the form of cultural products, and recognition on the individual level, Korean dramas fulfilled viewer demands. A booming market for televised entertainment ensured the success of Korean dramas and products in later years.

Nevertheless, Chinese censors are still strict about which foreign imports can be broadcast in China. Those shows which are deemed subversive by the authorities are not aired on national television, and those that receive a marginally passing grade are edited so that all of the controversial scenes are cut out. This is due to the fact that the national government, "has recognized the importance of television...and fear the consequences of cultural and media imperialism as potentially subversive threats to their power..."[29]

[29] Michael Richards. "Television, Development and National Identity," in *Television in Contemporary Asia.* ed.s, David French and Michael Richards, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000), 34.

Several foreign programs have been exported to China and failed to achieve wide viewership when ratings suffered due to harsh censorship.

When ABC exported the popular U.S. series *Desperate Housewives* to air on Chinese television stations it was not well received among local Chinese audiences. Distributors blamed the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television's refusal to promote and advertise foreign shows, as well as the fact that censors chopped out controversial scenes in the drama, which left audiences confused. One reporter suggested that another reason for low ratings is that the show was, "teeming with contemporary American cultural references alien to almost all Chinese".[30] Other viewers were unsatisfied with the theme of dysfunctional families and the lack of morality. "According to one Chinese viewer, 42-year-old sales manager Zhang Haihong, the scenarios are implausible: a harried mother constantly takes abuse from her four children; a rich, married woman has an affair with a teenage gardener; a single mother takes sex advice from her adolescent daughter."[31]

Yet, another viewer, 23 year old Beijing resident Meng Juan said, "I can't guess what's going to happen, like I can with Chinese television serials. I want to keep watching this to see what's next."[32] Clearly not all foreign programming has a specific audience base in China, and censorship does render some programs indecipherable. However, if one has interest and a means by which to obtain certain programs, continued viewership is a possibility.

Despite state controls and censors, the demand for foreign programming of all varieties exits and is proliferated through word of mouth as well as access to online file

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[30] Peter Goff,"Desperate for Housewives? Not in China". *South China Morning Post*, January 11, 2006.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Alexa Olesen, "In China, Not Quite So Desperate". *Washington Post*. December 20, 2005. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/19/AR2005121901441.html (15 October 2006), C09.

sharing forums. That certain downloaded files are illegal does not curb the desire for free movies, music, and TV shows, especially those deemed unfit for China's television stations. Due to the fact that purchasing a set or even individual copies of DVD's or CD's can be relatively expensive, especially for teenagers and college students, illegal downloads and file sharing have become a popular method of obtaining media. Although obtaining these materials is not government sanctioned and technically illegal, ease of distribution and rampant piracy are beyond the control of Chinese authorities despite their efforts to curb disc sales and close internet forums.

Clearly the internet has become a powerful force for the dissemination of both approved and unapproved forms of media. "Legally or illegally, the spread of new communication technologies has made the Party's control over foreign media extremely difficult". [33] Several efforts have been made to limit the demand for foreign programming, especially in the form of import restrictions and quotas. Regardless of efforts to draw from foreign models, television dramas from China have not been as well received by the domestic audience as expected. In order to balance the amount of foreign and domestic programming aired on Chinese television, officials have limited the amount of imported television series more and more each year. Instead of inhibiting the domestic audience desire for foreign programming, constraints only serve to create more sharing forums.

In China, national identity is extremely important to the administrative authorities as the Communist system gradually erodes with the steady influx of foreign people and products. "There is no doubt that the dynamic changes in the mass media business – particularly television- have had a profound impact on the daily lives of people in China."

[33] Junhao Hong, 117.

[34] Chinese media plays upon the idea of national identity as a method for the creation and distribution of advertisements and entertainment. Yet, as capitalism creates the opportunity for individuals to have greater agency in deciding forms of entertainment and leisure, as well as to obtain those prohibited forms of media, state control over society is weakened. The Chinese national identity, "is not a fixed entity, and is built on both fact and fiction, which together constitute the basis of a sense of who we are and equally, what we are not." [35] Ideas concerning what it means to be Chinese are shifting as the country experiences rapid development and social change. In order to maintain power, the government must promote a national identity and control media on the basis of potential exposure to "spiritually polluting" foreign ideas. "Chinese government has always maintained that television drama is an ideological enterprise for which it must provide guidance, management and supervision" [36] Although the production of television dramas is granted more freedoms than film and other industries, Chinese authorities have acknowledged that television plays an important role in society and is therefore in need of regulation.

Consumption does indeed affect global cultures in many different ways, and despite endeavors to maintain national identity, one must recognize that cultural uniformity in the age of marketization is almost impossible. In essence, there is a larger cultural identity at work, yet individuals act upon their own agency to support or oppose those things they see in the media. While many attempts have been made to explain the impetus for the Korean Wave in China, few people have acknowledge that there is more than one reason for the success of Korean dramas. The Chinese people as individuals and members of

[34] Huang, 284.
[35] Richards, 30.
[36] Hong Yin, 36.

different social sub-groups construct their own meaning from media and associated commodities.[37] For example, while most Chinese television viewers are aware of traditional family values, some of them may watch a show based around this theme and some will choose to watch something else. This is based on individual likes and dislikes, as well as age, gender, and the way in which the product, in this case, a television show, is marketed.

In this way the content or culturally based themes reflected in Korean television drama and other imports can either positively or negatively influence Chinese consumers. The ways in which audiences can relate to media include, "gender, social class, age, sexual orientation, and education, for instance, interact dynamically with language, religion, family, rituals, and a wide range of everyday habits and customs to play crucial, but less and less predictable, roles..."[38] Further, consumer response to media has become increasingly difficult to measure. Due to the overwhelming amount of pirated media and media sharing platforms, statistics which calculate television viewers and music patrons are not as reliable as they once were.

Although Chinese authorities have made several attempts to limit the amount of foreign dramas on television, the internet has proven to be effective in circumventing these regulations. "The explosion in human migration patterns, together with the transnationalization of symbolic forms - programs, genres, styles, and stars – and the interactive qualities of many new media, all help to further divide the overall audience into niches."[39] Although it is impossible to state one singular factor that creates demand

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[37] Richards, 27.
[38] James Lull, *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 121.
[39] Ibid, 123.

for Korean television drama in China, we can analyze several trends in the form of audience, dramas and their related commodities, and gender. There are several different reasons why people choose to participate in various forms of leisure or pleasure-seeking activities. My aim is to explore these issues and to discuss why Korean television drama is such an "addictive" or engrossing genre, in an effort to refute previous arguments for why South Korean drama is so popular in China.

Chapter Two:
The Korean Wave in China

In China, television programs and music are imported from several countries annually, however South Korean dramas and recording artists have achieved widespread popularity in recent years. As China shifts from a socialist economy to a consumer based economy, greater emphasis is placed on the role of the consumer. Thus, when compared to the 20th century, consumers have greater agency over which activities they choose to participate in and what products they consume. Demand for dramas from South Korea follow this trend, in that despite government attempts to regulate consumer behavior Korean drama is widely sought after and easily obtained by those with enough money to purchase DVDs (legal or illegal) or view these dramas online. Why are audiences attracted to the format or themes expressed through this medium, and are there other avenues through which viewership is linked with consumer activities? What are the primary components of Korean drama? This chapter will provide an analysis of consumer activities linked to Korean Wave culture, including fashion and fandom, as well as a background on audience and viewership practice in China.

Each television drama series, spanning 16-24 episodes, is usually aired within a period of several weeks and features a number of aspiring Korean recording artists, actors and actresses. Reasons for the rapid growth and consumption of Korean dramas in China and Asia have been attributed to the Asian economic crisis of the 1990's and the low cost, yet high production value, of Korean television series (Sung, 2008).The Korean Wave began in China in 1997, when the show "What Is Love" achieved an above average rating of 4.2

percent.[40] Over the next several years, there was a dramatic increase in Korean drama viewers in China. Sales of (legal) Korean dramas throughout Asia rose 58.8% in the year 2001-2002, with a profit of about 17.7 million US dollars.[41] "In 2004, imports of South Korean television drama series reached another apex with 104 [televised] shows, and 13 Korean films participated in the Shanghai International Film Festival."[42]

According to sources, once Korean dramas achieved popularity in China and Japan they spread like wildfire throughout the rest of Asia. In 2005, New York Times reporter Norimitsu Onishi asserted: "A weepy love story, "Winter Sonata", became the rage in Uzbekistan after it drove the Japanese into a frenzy last year. In Thailand and Malaysia, people devoured "A Tale of Autumn", and Vietnamese were glued to "Lovers in Paris".[43] One young woman he interviewed, Candy Hsieh, 22, stated that she "...used to think that Korea was a feudalistic, male-centered society...now I don't have the same image as I had before. It seems a like an open society, democratic."[44] Not only has the Korean Wave caused an enormous growth as far as consumer demand for Korean commodities, but it is also changing ideas about Korean culture within China.

Korean dramas reflect the complexities and contradictions in societies within Asia who are undergoing the process of modernization and urban development. Many of the social issues within these dramas relate to contradictions evident in modern Chinese society. Inherent in the dramas are a rich vs. poor, old vs. new, tradition vs. modernity,

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[40] Zhou, Raymond. "S. Korean Soap Opera Sparks Boom in China". *China Daily*. September 9, 2005. http://www.china.org.cn/english/international/143972.htm (15 November 2006).
[41] Leung, Lisa Y.M. "An Asian Formula? Comparative Reading of Japanese and Korean TV Dramas." 13th JAMCO Online International Symposium 2004: http://www.jamco.or.jp/2004_symposium/en/. (05 October 2007).
[42] Ibid.
[43] Onishi, Norimitsu. "South Korea adds Culture to its Export Power". *The New York Times*, Wednesday, June 29, 2005. http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/06/28/news/korea.php (12 November 2007).
[44] Onishi, "South Korea adds...".

and urban vs. rural dichotomies. Locations within the dramas themselves generally include a mix of night clubs, local karaoke bars, fancy or "Western" themed restaurants, local eating establishments, popular music, designer clothes, new technology and cars. Plot lines follow similar patterns as one female, who is typically viewed in a lower position, meets one or two men who she must choose from, resulting in tragedy or a "Cinderella" type story. Family and opposition within the family are also common themes, which add more elements of constraint to character relationships. All of these facets render Korean drama a multi-layered medium with an abundance of possible interpretations.

Due to the success of Korean dramas in China, there was an explosion of all things Korean – South Korean fashion, food, and language, to name a few. In China, South Korean movies, stars and products have had dramatic turnovers and Korean restaurants can be found in almost every neighborhood in Shanghai. Beijing has a "Korea City" where a "warren of tiny shops sells hip-hop clothes, movies, music, cosmetics and other offerings in the South Korean style".[45] Norimitsu Onishi pointed out the fact that some of the Korean fashions, such as the wearing of New York Yankees baseball caps, are not necessarily derived from South Korea. The fact that most of these hats originated from China, and used a symbol associated with an American baseball team, does not deter consumers who choose to wear Korean fashions. One Chinese youth who favored Korean fashion stated, "We know that the products at Korea City are made in China... to many

[45] Onishi, Norimitsu. "A Rising Korean Wave: If Seoul sells it, China craves it." *The New York Times*, January 10, 2006. http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P1-116929397.html (02 February 2008).

young people, 'Korea' stands for fashionable or stylish...so they copy the Korean style".[46]

It is interesting to note that although South Korean dramas may be viewed in suburban and rural areas in China, the purchase of Korean style clothing and cultural products is not as prevalent in those regions as in major Chinese cities on the east coast. Although areas of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong and Hong Kong have an abundance of such commodities, it is decidedly more difficult for those people living in China's central and western regions to obtain these products. This may be due to the fact that, "China's emergent liberal market regime gives urban residents greater civil rights, labor market freedom, and resources than rural residents and rural migrants to cities".[47] Regardless of the availability of Korean products for purchase in the central regions, Korean television programming reaches a widespread audience throughout China, and websites detailing the most popular Korean styles keep fans informed about new trends. Due to the high circulation of pirated VCDs, however, an exact figure for the amount of people who regularly view Korean dramas and participate in Korean Wave culture is unable to be defined accurately.

While Korean Wave fans span a wide age spectrum, teenage girls and middle aged women are often identified as two key demographics. Increased spending power on the part of Chinese youths has resulted in a wealth of opportunities for various companies who sell Korean dramas and associated soft commodities. A study of consumer practices among Chinese families, "Commercializing Childhood: Parental Purchases for Shanghai's Only Child", outlines household budgets and expenditures specifically related

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[46] Onishi, "A Rising Korean Wave..".
[47] James Farrer, *Opening Up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai.* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2002), 3.

to children. Within the study the authors address various experiences of childhood, including the growing demand and class-related status of eating at fast food restaurants Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonalds. Children could easily identify through brand association a popular product or trademark. English classes, music lessons or other extracurricular activities as well as video games, clothing, toys and other entertainment were included as aspects of Shanghai childhood which added on to an average 600 RMB parents used to provide basic childhood necessities for their children.[48]

Parents interviewed stated that they spent more on their child's needs, both basic and extraneous, than their own and that of their household. [49] Frequent indulgences as a reward for good grades or behavior rendered children active decision makers when purchasing goods. This study describes a realignment of social structures and consumer behavior. Children as consumers may be a new phenomenon in China, but the potential for growth in this area is limitless. Middle class Chinese youth have more "pocket money" than former generations, and the increasingly consumer based economy grants these youths more freedom to pursue leisure activities. As informed consumers, children and teens alike actively participate in consumer markets. With the increase in spending power for China's urban, middle class children and teens, consumer demand for soft commodities like those associated with the Korean Wave experienced tremendous growth.

By evaluating consumer activities and emerging social systems one can view how Korean dramas and their related commodities have permeated various areas of the Chinese market. Viewers as consumers simultaneously inform and create demand for

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[48] Deborah S. Davis and Julia S. Sensenbrenner. "Commercializing Childhood: Parental Purchases for Shanghai's Only Child". in *The Consumer Revolution in Urban China,* ed. Deborah S Davis, (Berkeley:University of California Press, 2000), 59.
[49] Ibid, 59-62.

associated commodities through their viewership practices. The desire to purchase clothing, cell phones, cosmetics, and jewelry can stem from marketing techniques within the dramas, but the consumer ultimately makes an informed decision about which items to purchase as well as whether to buy dramas legally or otherwise.

The Internet and Fan Communities

The internet plays a large role in the disbursement of Korean Wave products and related social networks. Fans can buy clothing and other commodities as well as post drama related discussion threads on a variety of websites. These discussion boards provide viewers with the opportunity to voice their opinions on any number of topics, including but not limited to asking other viewers questions about the dramas, discussing particular characters, favorite dramas, and star gossip. By 2004, the internet was regularly accessed by 79.5 million Chinese viewers, 53 percent of which were below the age of 25.[50] Although not many can afford to own a personal computer, the omnipresence of internet cafes throughout China creates opportunities for teenagers or adults with a few spare yuan to access the internet for hours at a time.

The low cost of competing internet cafes creates a welcome prospect for those unable to afford the regular cost of internet access, and simultaneously acts as a gathering place for youths. Through QQ and other instant messaging sites with webcam access, Chinese people can communicate across several national and international boundaries without having direct access through their homes.

> "After accessing information, entertainment was the second most common use of the internet in China: 19 percent of users regularly accessed bulletin boards, 40 percent spent

[50] Rowan Pease, "Internet, Fandom, and K-Wave in China". in *Korean Pop Music: Riding the Wave*, ed. Keith Howard, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006),179.

> time in chat-rooms and, with almost 17 million using broadband, 7.8 percent regularly used MP3 and Flash to enjoy films, cartoons, music and gaming."[51]

The internet has been named as the most vital aspect of Korean Wave culture, especially when consumer demand is not met by conventional media. [52] The lack of face to face contact and general ambiguity of users creates an opportunity for Chinese consumers to explore a space where identity is secondary to interest. As Rowan Pease has stated, "generally young, geographically dispersed and relatively immobile, the Internet was a vital tool for them [fans of Korean drama] to pursue their passion and form a community."[53] One such group, the *Hahanyizu* or "crazed for Korea clan" have received much criticism from the media and other social groups for their active involvement in internet forums.

Hahanyizu reverence for and dedication to Korean culture is considered unpatriotic and excessive. The media depicts *Hahanyizu* as "deviant, hysterical, passive manipulated dupes, and the depth of their gratification and engagement is trivialized."[54] These fans are singled out as antisocial or obsessed outsiders whose identities as passionate members of this group fill a social void. In an article about *Hahanyizu* and internet fandom, Rowan Pease asserts that these behaviors deserve the same acknowledgment of urban, male fans of rock music, and supports the theory that *Hahanyizu* fandom can be seen as an act of rebellion against social repression.[55] While conducting research in 2003, Pease found that hundreds of websites operated by *Hahanyizu* and Korean drama or music fans were updated daily and often short lived. Those websites whose moderators censored messages

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[51] Pease, 179.
[52] Pease, 177.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid, 180.
[55] Ibid.

deemed subversive or politically incorrect were able to prevent government intervention and other unwelcome attention. Government concern over *Hahanyizu* groups caused monitoring or a complete ban on several *Hahanyizu* sites. Several online bulletin boards closed after disputes between Korean, US, and Japanese music fans turned into a heated debate about Japanese war history.[56]

Hahanyizu have also alerted Chinese government forces with their strict allegiance to Korean culture outside of the internet arena. When the Korean band H.O.T. failed to win the title "best foreign band" in a competition hosted by Joy Entertainment channel and Shanghai Dongfang Radio in 2001, an estimated group of 40 *Hahanyizu* marched to the broadcast building claiming the result was "unjust".[57] The internet and internet based discussion boards have created a network where fandom is not a passive experience but an active and potentially mobilizing platform. These thriving online communities offer a social outlet for the exchange ideas, news and gossip, but also maintain the identity of those fans who wish to be associated as a *Hahanyizu.*

The ways in which websites about Korean dramas, stars or music are diligently maintained by their moderators were also profiled in Pease's study. One particular site for fans of the South Korean singer Kangta was maintained by three moderators from three different provinces in central China, whose only connection was through their online relationship. Instead of using advertisers, these three fans had successfully managed the site through user donations and volunteers who contributed pictures, lyrics, news, and audiovisual clips to the site.[58] In this way, the site was managed through a collective effort and demonstrates the power of the fan community to extend across geographic and

[56] Pease, 179.
[57] Ibid,179-180.
[58] Ibid,185.

possibly socio-economic borders. One fan, who used the screen name Eugene, explained that using the internet made it easier to connect with other fans, and that if the internet did not exist fans would still find a way to communicate and circulate materials. Eugene wrote, "...we who like Korean stars are completely different from those who like Chinese stars...every *Hahanyizu*, whatever they are like, has a very uniting heart, to support the people they like."[59] The identity of these fans is entrenched in the idea of a community which supports those dramas or artists they like as active participants in a culture of their own. Although the *Hahanyizu* are emulating Korean culture, their existence as an organized and potentially mobilized internet based culture in China separates them from other Korean Wave fans.

Among the one hundred or so fans Pease corresponded with on Korean Wave bulletin boards, 97 percent were female.[60] The fans Pease communicated with discussed why they liked their idols, and their attraction to Korean stars. Answers Pease received included the following topics: 1. Because I do/because I love them: "Does liking them need a reason?"; 2. They are good looking, "cute" or they sing/dance well; 3. They sing about topics relevant to my/our lives; 4. They are sincere or authentic; 5. They offer comfort or release.[61] Far from being unpatriotic, these fans expressed interest in Korean Wave culture due to their personal identification with certain songs, stars or dramas. In these responses, Pease found that Koichi Iwabuchi's theory of "pan-regional modernity" did not apply, in that music was never compared with Japan or the U.S. but national forms of popular music and Chinese artists. Korean music was considered to be less commercial

[59] Pease, 187.
[60] Ibid, 181.
[61] Ibid, 181-182.

and a stronger "essence".[62] Yet, there is something to be said for Koichi Iwabuchi's interpretation of cultural proximity as a defining factor in why dramas are popular in general. That the music is not necessarily compared to Western artists does not undercut Koichi's underlying argument for an Asian identity which can be both shared and interpreted at many levels of nationality or personal interest. In fact, widespread consumption of Korean drama in the East Asian region does imply a kind of shared modernity between these nations. In this way, Iwabuchi's arguments for "temporality" do, in fact, relate to Pease's reading of *Hahanyizu* and the Korean Wave phenomenon. The various ways in which fans were able to relate to Korean music are articulated through comparison with local artists and personal mediation as well as preference for specific forms. Instead of constructing an identity based on "pan-regional modernity" it would seem that fans generally participate in a shared sense of Asian identity and community, which is mediated through personal bias and individual tastes.

On the "Korean drama community" website (*hanjushequ* 韩据社区) Chinese fans discuss their reactions to dramas and trade news about upcoming events or gossip about new dramas. In discussing how particular dramas made them feel, the drama fans share their experiences under the heading, "Which drama series made you not want to watch any other drama series?" One fan admitted that after watching one series, "for the better part of a month I didn't want to watch anything else, I was constantly immersed in feelings of sadness." (*zuilichungui* posted May 11th, 2005) [63] Another fan responded to this post by admitting, "I am more serious than you...for a full four months I was unable

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[62] Pease, 182.

[63] "Which drama series made you not want to watch any other drama series?". from Korean Drama Community Discussion Board (韩据社区) May 11th, 2005. http://www.krdrama.com/bbs/index.php. (9 October 2007). Fan review.

to watch other television series." Still another fan responded "I'm not like this, if I finish watching a really good drama, I am eager to go to forums and see all of our recommendations, then continue to sink into my vices!" (*xiaoerguo* posted May 11th, 2005) [64] By discussing their experiences and adoration of certain stars or programs, these people interact in a way which legitimizes and informs their identity as a Korean Wave participant. Not only are questions welcome, but recommendations of certain dramas or artists and an active discussion about cultural issues related to Korean drama enable participants to react or learn from a variety of discussion platforms.

Internet piracy has also contributed in a large part to the distribution of Korean dramas and music to fans in China. Hao Fang, senior manager of New Corp's Starry Sky TV has been quoted on the issue of piracy and illegal publishing. She stated that, "without piracy, there would be no Hanliu (Korean Wave)".[65] Strict controls on Korean and other foreign commodities in China did not curb audience demand for Korean dramas and associated products. The ease of disseminating pirated materials in China facilitated and fueled Korean Wave culture's sustainability. The importance of internet downloads and the circulation of illegal copies of CDs, DVDs or VCDs to the availability of Korean drama is immense. Although fan sites are frequently sought out and shut down by the Chinese government, fans find new and creative ways to maintain new sites to continue disseminating pirated materials as well as general discussions (Pease, 2006). Fan communities and other distributors actively contribute to the vitality of Korean Wave culture in spite of government quotas.

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[64]Which drama series...". Fan review in response to first comment.
[65] Pease, 182.

The Korean Wave Backlash and the "Anti-Korean Wave"

As in all popular media, along with supportive viewership and consumer practices are opposing forces which must be acknowledged and assessed. The popularity of Korean drama and the Korean Wave generated criticism from those who did not wish to participate in Korean Wave culture. In 2006, the Chinese government announced that it was cutting the quota of Korean drama imports by half in order to curb Korean domination over Chinese television broadcast in order to protect domestically produced television programming.[66] Government limitations on Korean commodities and media aided in these criticisms as some began to link Korean drama viewership and patriotism or, in the case of teenage girls, maturity. Chinese academics have been critical of South Korea's motives as far as cultural imperialism is concerned. Some are especially critical of Korean drama characters that constantly travel abroad or "worship" foreign (Western) economies. [67] They consider urban appeal and aestheticized lifestyles as promoting excess, in that cars, new technology and fashion are idealized.

A comic book from Japan, translated as *Kenkanryu*, aided in the launch of "Hom-hallyu" or the "Anti-Korean Wave" in Japan and much of Asia. *Kenkanryu* and its sequel attempt to reveal the true "ugly nature" of Korea and tell the story of a Japanese student who learns the "truth" about Korea. What began as a web-comic was published in 2005 and had sold well over 300,000 copies by 2006.[68] The book discusses many Korean-Japanese disputes, including the Japanese occupation of Korea, the 2002 World Cup, territorial disputes and the accuracy of their historical relationship. Cartoonist Sharin

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[66] Park Chung-a. "Korea: Hallyu phenomenon faces backlash in East Asia." *The Korea Times.* Monday, January 16, 2006. http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=37127 (28 February 2008).
[67] Han Yang Xi. "Reflections on South Korean television series." Hebei Province: *DaWuTai Journal.* Vol.1, 60.
[68] Park.

Yamano and others who have contributed to *Kenkanryu* and related web-comics are most often quoted for the line, "It's not an exaggeration to say that Japan built the South Korea of today!" [69] Although this revisionist history did not achieve widespread commercial success, creation and consumer demand for this book are examples of a negative, ethnocentric platform against Korean Wave culture.

Along with supporters of an "Anti-Korean Wave" in Japan, China based groups of "Anti-Korean Wavers" have also been active on Chinese websites and other forums. On a discussion site called "Asia Finest Discussion Forum", open to participants from all over Asia and the world, a Chinese participant who claimed to have lived in Korea for about one year posted a thread in Chinese with the heading, "I'm telling you the truth". In this discussion posting, the author stated,

> "Now, so-called *Hahanyizu*, without economic capabilities, children who have never been to Korea, don't know what Korea is really like. But, I may offer a bit of advice to the *Hahanyizu* who either really or don't really want to go to Korea...when you know Korean mainstream media have such evil intentions as to play down and vilify China, you can on account of yourself, once a *Hahanyizu,* feel extremely ashamed...will you continue to retain in your mind a positive impression?"[70] (zxp1 630 October 31, 2005)

The discussion poster went on to discuss that individual Koreans don't actually hate China, but that they have a cultural complexity which acknowledges some of China's ancient historical role. This poster's biggest contention was that he or she felt that Koreans do not accept that Chinese culture has played a very large role in constructing modern Korea, which is entirely subjective and not quite relevant to what the *Hahanyizu* are truly about. Like many arguments, this one aims to link television and media viewership with nationalism and historic balances of power. In reading the rest of the

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[69] Norimitsu Onishi. "Ugly Images of Asian Rivals become Best Sellers in Japan". *The New York Times.* November 19, 2005. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-11/21/content_496553.htm (17 January 2008)

[70] "I'm telling you the truth". Asia Finest Discussion Forum: Chinese Chat. October 31, 2005. http://www.asiafinest.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=53601 (13 January 2008)

discussion posts, it becomes clear that this one poster was not alone in their observations, but more often than not received criticism from both English and Chinese speaking fans on Asia Finest Discussion Forum. The fact that such criticisms exists points not only to an Anti-Korean Wave movement but to arguments over historical accuracy which brings to light two points. The first point is that opposition within popular or mass culture will always be a major factor in fandom and viewership, and the second that the historical legacy of East Asia is extremely controversial, even among young people.

In order to maintain an audience in China, some South Korean producers are seeking localized television programming production. Korean drama producers are finding it increasingly hard to reciprocate media with the Chinese government's efforts to boost domestic interest in media and related soft commodities. If they were to work with Korean producers, Chinese staff and local production could re-stimulate growth in Korean television dramas and facilitate co-production and cultural exchange on Chinese terms.

Determining "Addictive" Qualities in K-drama

The effects of the Korean wave, namely the consumption of television series, purchase of Korean commodities, and a fascination with pop idols have prompted a lot of scholars to determine the social and economic underpinnings of this attraction. There exists a conflicted view of South Korea as a "cool" and modern, yet tradition-oriented society which values familial ties and responsibilities. One Chinese scholar asserts that South Korean society maintains and projects the "essence" and "marrow" of Confucian culture as it has "preserved traditional values" while achieving great economic and

developmental success.[71] There are several interpretations as to why Korean drama has achieved overwhelming popularity, but the most common among these is the assumed Confucian connection between Korean and Chinese audiences. Since so much scholarship has been dedicated to proving the Confucian connection, this issue will be discussed in the following chapters. However, there are several issues which can be attributed to the popularity or "addictive" quality of Korean dramas. Among them are music or original soundtracks (OST's), aestheticized lifestyle in the form of luxury and wealth, as well as the opportunity for a cathartic release of emotion.

Korean dramas were originally intended for a South Korean audience, and their expansion into foreign markets was not an original objective. [72] Positive international audience response has created a need for media and culture studies analysts to examine how this phenomenon was fueled by audience attraction to this medium. There are several theories for what piques audience interest, however by watching several dramas one can note similar themes. The idealized lifestyles of Korean drama characters include urban appeal, an emphasis on fashion and new technologies, as well as the depiction of various luxury services, yet they are differentiated from Western forms of drama in that they are situated in an Asian context. While the same could be said of some Japanese or Hong Kong dramas, Korea has replaced both the former and the latter due to a divergence in historical legacy and the idea that Korean dramas are a relatively new phenomenon. The role of plastic surgery in shaping star appearances are reinforced through close-up shots of characters' faces and also represents a type of service associated with middle to

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[71] Pu Yi Dan. "Using Korean Drama to View the Influence and Inspiration of "Hallyu"". *Gansu Agricultural Digest*: China. Vol. 236 ,No. 3, 2003, 200.
[72] Zhang Guo Tao. "South Korean Drama: Miracle of Salted Fish Turns Over". *China Business Update.* April 1, 2006, 50-51.

upper class consumers and cosmopolitanism. Each series includes multiple stories which are hinged upon the romantic love triangle or rectangle as a point of conflict. Terminal disease and other medical conditions are common issues protagonists must face.

Throughout each series, a range of emotions are dealt with, including jealousy, conspiracy, retribution, remorse, elation and love. Most of these emotions are revealed in characters' expressions as the camera pans from face to face. Through body language and intimate knowledge of characters' true intentions the observers are offered special insight which aids in the construction of dramatic tension. Music elicits emotion from the audience and is a crucial facet in guiding dramatic tension, as a few songs are used per drama to highlight the alternately light and dark moods in each scene. The same slow or sad song is generally used to stimulate emotion for distressing scenes and an upbeat song is used for cheerful scenes.

Use of music in this way creates a powerful subconscious emotional trigger. When an audience member hears the song, certain visual aspects of the drama are recalled. A teenager, Alice, who was interviewed for a study of Korean Wave culture, asserted that, "Korean TV dramas are very sad and romantic. This special feeling is expressed very well in the background music, and I always long to hear the music of the drama over and over to recall my memories of the feeling I had while watching it." [73] For this reason, original soundtracks, or OST's, are considered the "lifeblood" of Korean dramas. Songs associated with certain dramas can be downloaded from various websites or fan sites, and fans use these songs as background when creating slide-shows featuring their favorite scenes.

[73] Sung Sang-Yeon, "The Hanliu Phenomenon in Taiwan: TV Dramas and Teenage Pop". in *Korean Pop Music: Riding the Wave,* ed. Keith Howard (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 174.

Dramatic series and other television series create the opportunity for a variety of discourses which allows the program to live on in the minds of the audience. While OST's permit viewers to re-live the drama, fan sites and blogs as well as social groups on a micro-scale can also provide the viewers with a chance to do so as well. The denouement of a series does not mean that the story has necessarily achieved a state of resolution, as media theorist John Fiske argues, "even without physical presence, the departed characters live on in the memory and gossip both those that remain, and their viewers." [74] By discussing and comparing their experiences as audience members, the internet Korean drama fan community maintains a perpetual dialogue about certain recurring character types or stars which ultimately reinvigorates dramas and emotions associated with them. Likewise, fans who meet on an individual or group basis in person can also relate their feelings and expectations about certain dramas and make recommendations about which dramas elicit a desired response (for example, a sad drama vs. a "Cinderella" type drama).

Korean dramas often prompt a release of emotion on the part of the viewer, particularly those which end in tragedy. This release is often cathartic, and seemingly part of what makes a drama "addictive". Although one may be escaping real life and indulging in "reel life", the emotions elicited from drama watching may well be related to pressures in one's own life. As one Chinese man, General, observed, "my girlfriend loves to watch Korean drama...she watches it day and night and laughs with the players and cries with the players...they are like her friends."[75] In those responses posted by members of the "Korean fan community" website, discussing which drama series made one not

[74] John Fiske, "Gendered Television: Femininity". in *Gender, Race and Class in Media,* ed. Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez, (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications,1985), 341.
[75] Personal interview. "General" 将军. June 6th, 2007.

want to watch any other drama, viewers related their experiences and actively engaged in a discussion about which drama held the most cathartic properties. Although each contributor listed a drama and the different emotional effects that drama elicited, almost all of them listed only a brief period of time where they did not watch Korean dramas, which means that at some point they were watching or "addicted" to another drama later. There are several factors which enable viewers to identify with Korean dramas; however there are many theories which attempt to pinpoint specific reasons why international audiences may relate.

Koichi Iwabuchi addresses intraregional media flows and "cultural proximity" as key factors which mitigate viewer practices.[76] He offers insight as to why Asian audiences favor Japanese and Korean dramas, but focuses on Japanese popular media and respective "cultural flows". Iwabuchi believes that this kind of media influence points to a "diminishing temporal lag".[77] He explains that most Asian countries are experiencing shared desires of modernity and a "dynamic process of becoming" modernized. [78] Without labeling media consumption as a modernizing force, Iwabuchi focuses on regional drama consumption as a process of yearning as it shifts toward realization. This means that those dreams of modernity and affluence once imagined in the social consciousness of Asian countries is becoming a reality and aestheticized lifestyles set in urban locations meet the needs of audiences who identify with or idealize this lifestyle. Instead of identifying with countries in terms of power relationships, Iwabuchi suggests

[76] Koichi Iwabuchi, "Discrepant Intimacy: Popular Culture Flows in East Asia". in *Asian Media Studies: Politics of Subjectivities* , ed.s, John Nguyet Erni and Siew Keng Chua, (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 19-36.
[77] Ibid, 21.
[78] Ibid, 28.

that the attraction stems from, "a sense of living in the same temporality, a sense of being equal".[79]

Yet, Iwabuchi contends that global consumption of such commodities is not without an "Asian flavor".[80] According to Iwabuchi, urban Asian youths have "learned to cope with the meanings of their own modern experiences through the urban lives depicted in Japanese TV drama".[81] Inherent in these dramas is the juxtaposition of modernity and cultural difference which then stands in opposition to Western models. Koichi points to the expansion of middle class and changing gender relationships as well as the availability of global media and market forces as other facets which unite Asian viewers, particularly those in urban settings. "Diffused images of modern living are dynamically re-worked and its meanings are re-situated in a specific local context at the site of production, representation, and consumption."[82] Using Koichi Iwabuchi's approach, one could determine that Korean dramas and the inclusion of family ties as well as romantic relationships which may enable younger viewers to sympathize with characters. He asserts that this is because drama within the family, as depicted by Korean dramas, seems more "realistic".[83]

Iwabuchi's take on Korean drama in Japan is well suited to China's current economic and social situation, as idealized modernity is a shared value among East Asian cultures. Billboards and state sponsored advertisements all over Chinese cities and the countryside tout economic development as the cornerstone of a successful society. "Modern living" is

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[79] Iwabuchi,"Discrepant Intimacy..", 27.
[80] Koichi Iwabuchi, "Introduction: Cultural Globalization and Asian Media Connections". in *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV dramas,* ed., Iwabuchi, Koichi, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 1.
[81] Iwabuchi, "Introduction: Cultural Globalization...", 2.
[82] Ibid, 9.
[83] Ibid, 17.

resituated in the Chinese context and can quite possibly extend to an "Asian flavor" or an Asian take on "modernity". This is not to say that Japanese and Chinese audiences have experienced similar histories or social situations, nor that all of East Asia is experiencing modernity on the same level, but that an idealized modernity is a shared experience.

In the article, "*Forced Invisibility to Negotiating Visibility: Winter Sonata, the Hanryu Phenomenon and Zainichi Koreans in Japan*" the author Min Wha Han discuss the impact of Korean dramas and associated cultural receptions among Korean residents in Japan as well as the resulting "visibility" of this minority within Japanese culture. In the section concerning cultural consumption of television drama the authors discuss gendered receptions of and cultural identification with televised dramas. They discuss how the, "...nature of 'infinitely extended middle" in a television series enables viewers to actively participate in reading, interpreting and reflecting on the ongoing narrative."[84] Individual audience members as well as those who participate in fan communities are able to derive a number of interpretations and conclusions due to this "extended middle". Simultaneously this "middle" enables viewers to identify with television dramas and empathize on various levels.

As was discussed earlier, Korean drama viewership can be seen as reflective of the complexities and contradictions in modern Chinese society. As an Asian "power house", Korea represents facets of modernity through aestheticized lifestyles portrayed in Korean dramas, which have yet to be realized by the average Chinese consumer. While some agree that media studies should be "de-westernized", Eric Kit-wai Ma argues that since media in China has moved away from the "mouth piece of the party" format to a more

[84] Han Min Wha, "Forced Invisibility to Negotiating Visibility: Winter Sonata, the Hanryu Phenomenon and Zainichi Koreans in Japan". Keio Communication Review, No. 29. 2007. p. 159.

liberalized and consumer driven medium, despite residual state control of content, this media serves as "breathing spaces" for Chinese as a form of leisure consumption.[85] As such, this media format has simultaneously been shaping and opening up arenas for a "work and spend culture".[86] Ma doubts that Asia needs new media theories and suggests that acknowledgement of China's divergent political structures and organization from socialist to market based economies creates the opportunity for "unique" analyses.[87] The most important aspect of Ma's argument is that an acknowledgement of China's special situation must be made in order to utilize Western theory when evaluating Chinese media. Although this means that certain aspects of Western theory may not necessarily apply to Chinese audiences in a political or historic context, I do not believe that aspects of Western theory are completely unrelated to Asian viewers and consumers. Viewing Korean dramas then, according to Ma's theory, allows Chinese audience members to experience forms of leisure which depict lifestyles they may or may not aspire to, but idealize overall. In this respect, viewing Korean dramas offers audience members a space of fantasy.

In this analysis, Ma discusses "weekend fever", which was propagated by government forces in an effort to ameliorate high levels of unemployment and increase average household expenditures through consumptive practices. The result was that China instituted a five day work week and two week-long national holidays. These efforts, along with the period of economic reform and increased spending power of average families, created a consumer culture which gravitated away from political debate

[85] Eric Kit-wai Ma, "Rethinking media studies: The Case of China". in *De-Westernizing Media Studies,* ed.s, James Curran and Myung-Jin Park, (London: Routledge, 2000), 21-34.
[86] Ibid, 27.
[87] Ibid, 32.

and etc toward consumption of entertainment such as: soap operas, dramas, crime dramas, talk shows, music television, etc.[88]

The ability for professors, students, employees of foreign companies and other people in positions of power or influence and those who read in English have easy access to a variety of Internet and print media resources from Hong Kong and international press enables "competing communities of discourse".[89] These have limits dissimilar from Western models as liberalization of Chinese media and market forces have created a large arena for pop culture. ".... music television, soap operas, and weekend consumer reports carry values such as individualism, consumerism, and skepticism of authority...These popular texts have opened a modest , albeit tentative, space outside the power of the state, where the audience can explore their dreams and aspirations." [90] Ma describes these as "cultural intermediaries" which develop a longing for individuality and personal freedom.

Within the Korean drama fan community there are several manifestations of fandom and viewership based consumer activities. The avid fan blogger and "Anti-Korean Wave" poster have little in common save the Korean Wave. After analyzing the many facets which may create an "addiction" to the Korean Wave it is difficult for one to pin down any one specific reason for why Chinese audiences are attracted to Korean culture. Aestheticized lifestyles and a desire for modernity are two theories as for why fans appreciate and participate in Korean Wave culture. The multiple meanings one can derive from dramatic series aid in an open and never ending dialogue about certain dramas, stars, and associated cultural products. Although there are oppositional forces, there are very

[88] Ma, 30.
[89] Ibid, 30.
[90] Ibid, 31.

real social and economic factors stemming from Korean Wave associated commercial activities, including economic, social and aesthetic practices.

Chapter Three:
Cosmetic Surgery, Beauty Industries, and the Korean Wave in China

One major aspect of Korean Wave influence in China are emergent commercial enterprises such as the cosmetic industry. Plastic surgery clinics and the beauty industry both experienced tremendous growth during the Korean Wave phenomenon. The increase in purchasing power of China's burgeoning middle class combined with media saturation of cosmetically enhanced stars lead to a significant expansion of beauty industries. Although the technology to perform plastic surgery and other aesthetic procedures has been available in China since the mid-twentieth century, consumer demand for these procedures escalated at the same time in which Korean television dramas were televised in China. As imports and consumer demand for dramatic series increased, concurrent interest in cosmetic surgery grew among China's middle to upper class consumers.

The Korean Wave acted as a catalyst for these consumer practices, yet some would argue that cosmetic procedures such as blepharoplasty (double-eyelid surgery) creates a more "Western" appearance. I would argue that these cosmetic procedures are not due to an attempt to look more "Western", but match ideals of beauty popular in China held prior to Western influence. Others point to social discourses which encourage particular standards of beauty, but ignore the power of middle class consumers to alter their physical features using methods that were previously unavailable. In discussing the role the beauty industry and social expectations that inform women's decisions to undergo these procedures there are two key themes which must be addressed: Eastern aesthetic vs. Western ideal and empowerment vs. subjugation.

The emergence of cosmetic surgery and the beauty industry in China was unprecedented. After Deng Xiaoping's reform period in the 1980's, and the steady growth of business and economic endeavors in the late 1990's, the consumer culture and spending power of ordinary Chinese people were drastically altered. The mid 20th century was a period of intense political turmoil, starvation and widespread poverty. By the end of the 20th century, consumers were being lead by nationalist rhetoric to push for the modernization and rapid development of China. With increased spending power, many consumers have turned to soft commodities for the pursuit of pleasure. In modern China, altering one's appearance using cosmetics, surgery or other methods is a sign of middle to upper class status, as well as an investment in one's future, and a realization of self image.

Development of Plastic Surgery Practice in China

China's Nationalist government during the Anti-Japanese War recognized a need for reconstructive surgery for those soldiers who suffered burns or were otherwise extremely malformed as a result of serious injury. Professor Song Ru Yao (1914-2003) was selected by the government to attend medical school in the United States with the purpose of securing a degree in reconstructive surgery. Despite his efforts, Song returned to China during a period of political turmoil and the Nationalist retreat. As such, his opportunity to practice reconstructive surgeries was limited until, in an ironic twist, the beginning of the Korean War, where he treated Chinese soldiers wounded by American forces.[91] As more surgeons studied reconstructive methods, knowledge in the field of plastic surgery

[91] Susan Brownell, "China Reconstructs: Cosmetic Surgery and Nationalism in the Reform Era," in *Asian Medicine and Globalization,* ed. Joseph S. Alter, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 136-137.

increased and new developments allowed for the implementation of innovative techniques.

While cosmetic surgery was requested in other Asian countries, notably Japan, during the mid-20th century, the political climate in China stood in harsh opposition to "bourgeois" beauty practices.[92] Unless one had been rendered physically malformed by participation in war efforts, the process of undergoing cosmetic surgery was dangerous in that cosmetics were viewed as superfluous and subversive. During China's Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), surgeons who had practiced reconstructive surgery as an aesthetic practice were sent to labor reform camps and harshly criticized. Professor Song Ru Yao and his wife endured several attacks during this time for their association with such practices, and allegations stemming from this association lead to internment in labor camps.[93] Ten years later, dynamic changes in political and economic reforms lead to the acceptance of plastic surgery as a legitimate sector of medicine. Professor Song Ru Yao, now considered the "father of plastic surgery in China", continued to develop new techniques after re-opening his hospital.[94]

Simultaneously, doctors in China and other parts of Asia discovered that Western methods did not aesthetically suit Asian faces. Methodology gleaned from Western institutions had negative effects on Chinese and other Asian consumers. In fact, widening of the Asian eye requires extreme caution in the practice of skin and fat removal from the eyelid.[95] If these controls are not carefully monitored, natural loss of fatty tissues in the

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[92] Brownell, 139.
[93] Ibid, 139.
[94] "A Tribute To Professor Song Ruyao". *Fast Track*. Vol. 3, No. 1, Page 7. http://medpro.smiletrain.org/medpro/ publications/ft_sp2003.pdf (22 February 2008).
[95] Frank Meronk, Jr. M.D. "Asian Double Eyelid Surgery and Fat Preservation". 2006-2008. http://www.drmeronk.com/video-pagesqt/fatpreservation.html (12 February 2008).

eyelid which occur with age can create distortions. New techniques which enhance Asian features have been used in lieu of Western methods for blepharoplasty and other surgical procedures. Endemic acceptance of new beauty practices and related forms of consumption have been attributed as a "backlash" against the former repressive regime.[96]

Although plastic surgery in China was a legitimate form of medicine by the 1980's, images of beauty popularized by Korean media created a large scale demand for surgical procedures in the mid-1990's. With new techniques adapted to suit local needs, cosmetic surgery shifted to highlight Asian beauty aesthetic instead of copying Western models. In an article titled, "New Wealth Buys a Fresh Face in Modern China", fashion magazine publisher Zhang Xiao Mei asserted that surgeons have learned from the "European-style double eyelid" surgery practiced almost 10 years ago, and have developed new techniques suited specifically for Asian consumers.[97] In 2004, the government reported that China's surgery industry grossed 2.4 billion dollars. [98] The Korean Wave and attainability of such cosmetic procedures has created a large market for this industry.

In China, the act of undergoing cosmetic procedures does not have the same social stigma as in the West. The words used in the English language "plastic" and "surgery" literally describe an artificial, invasive procedure. The Chinese generally use the terms "zheng rong" (整容) and "zheng xing" (整形) to describe plastic surgery instead of the literal translations for the word "plastic", which are "su jiao" (塑胶) or "su liao" (塑料). The character "zheng" (整) used in both terms, means to arrange, or repair. [99] The

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[96] Brownell, 141.
[97] Alexa Olesen, "New Wealth Buys a Fresh Face in Modern China." *China Daily*. March 8th, 2007, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-03/08/content_822563.htm (23 February 2008)
[98] "China Crowns Miss Plastic Surgery". *BBC News*. 18 December 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4107857.stm (15 October 2006).
[99] John DeFrancis, ed. ABC Chinese-English Dictionary. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000)

character "rong" (容) of "zhengrong" (整容) can refer to looks or appearance, and the dictionary definition of the characters "zheng" (整) and "rong" (容) together is to "spruce up".[100] Likewise, "xing" (形) of "zhengxing" (整形) refers to the body, form and appearance. By analyzing these terms, one can see that the connotation is unlike English in that it does not refer to something artificial, as in the term "plastic", but instead focuses on body transformations. In this way, these terms are not laden with the idea of falsehood in the same sense as the English term, in that by "sprucing up" one is only modifying the appearance or form of the body.

The Korean Wave and Plastic Surgery Practice in China

First and foremost, cosmetic surgery is a largely urban phenomenon. "China's emergent liberal market regime gives urban residents greater civil rights, labor market freedom, and resources than rural residents and rural migrants to cities."[101] While many of the consumers of cosmetic surgery and related beauty services are female, there is a growing trend among young men who seek these procedures as well. The growth of China's middle class has created a relatively large amount of disposable income per consumer. As opposed to the former egalitarian ideal, "the market society creates new winners and losers and new popular conceptions of class divisions."[102] Many young, urban Chinese youths are seeking cosmetic surgery as a method of "investing" in their physical attributes, using Korean models as a standard form of beauty aesthetic.

Some popular Korean actresses have openly discussed their procedures, and before and after pictures and montages are available on YouTube and various other websites

[100] DeFrancis.
[101] Farrer, 10.
[102] Ibid, 12.

which cater to global audiences. Audiences are well aware of surgical procedures their favorite stars have completed. Wang Ke, a young woman from China, recently completed eyelid surgery. When asked why she chose to alter her appearance, she mentioned several Korean actresses who had completed that surgery and expressed that she wished her eyes looked, "more open...like those Korean stars".[103] Wang Ke also stated that after the surgery she felt much better about her appearance and was confident about her job search.

Cate Siu, a woman from Hong Kong hoping to gain employment as an actress, was interviewed for an article in the Eastern Edition of the *Wall Street Journal* about her decision to travel to South Korea for cosmetic surgery. As an admitted fan of South Korean television shows, Cate Siu admired the physical attributes of popular Korean drama actress Song Hye Kyo, whose features were also surgically altered. [104] In order to secure her future career, Cate decided to travel to South Korea in order to undergo several operations including rhinoplasty (surgery to raise the bridge of her nose), blepharoplasty, and a chin augmentation. Cate Siu, Wang Ke and other young women like them, see cosmetic surgery as a way to secure their futures by improving their outer appearance, and as a method for achieving personal ideals of physical perfection.

Dr. Chung Jong Pil of the Cinderella Plastic Surgery Clinic in Seoul, who has been interviewed for several news publications, asserts that there has been a 30 percent increase in patients from abroad during the last few years. Dr. Chung stated, "a lot of my patients bring a picture of a Korean star from a magazine and say 'I want to look like

[103] Personal Interview. "Anco" Wang Ke. September 4th, 2007.
[104] Fairclough, Gordon. "Korea's Makeover From Dull to Hip Changes Face of Asia: Popularity of Country's Stars Spurs Plastic Surgery, Seeking a Prominent Nose". *Wall Street Journal: Eastern Edition*, (20 October 2005) A.1.

that'."[105] In another interview Dr. Chung asserted, "it's all because of the Korean Wave...a lot of Chinese and Japanese have surgery to make themselves look more like Koreans." [106] He estimates that about 10% of his patients come from abroad, mostly from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Another surgeon at a Seoul clinic, Dr. Jung Dong Hak, stated that around 15% of his patients are foreign and that the number of customers from abroad has shown a steady increase. He acknowledged that, "the increase has been very big since the Korean Wave started."[107]

Lee Bing Ping, another woman interviewed by the *Wall Street Journal*, hailing from Guangdong province, in southern China, travelled to Dr. Jung's office in 2004 to undergo cosmetic surgery. She claimed that Korean actresses were beautiful because of Korean plastic surgery techniques. In her opinion, "if you have the money and the resources, you should try to look as good as possible."[108] Many women from China contend that Korean surgeons have superior skills to Chinese practitioners and actively seek Korean surgeons in China or abroad. Striving for the highest quality surgical procedures is not an easy task, nor is it a luxury available to all of China's middle and lower class consumers. Yet, a growing number of consumers are going to great lengths to achieve their desired physical attributes.

Lee Yih Siu of the Taipei office of International Plastic Surgery, matches patients from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong with clinics and surgeons in South Korea. With an ever increasing amount of customers, the Taipei office has achieved exponential growth.

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[105] Fairclough, A.1.
[106] Louisa Lim, "South Korean Culture Wave Spreads Across Asia". *NPR: Weekend Edition Sunday*. 26 March 2006. http://www.npr.org/ templates/story/story.php?storyId=5300970 (5 September 2007).
[107] Fairclough, A.1
[108] Ibid.

Ms. Lee asserts that, "Korean pop culture has made plastic surgery fashionable." [109] Several companies like the one Ms. Lee represents advertise "plastic surgery tours" to Korea, many of them utilize the internet to operate and explain their services. One such website asks: "Why doesn't Korea have any "ugly women"? Because of the rise of the plastic surgery industry." [110] The text reiterates the title question, "Why are Korean women all so beautiful? Actually, most of these beautiful Korean women rely on plastic surgery. The following brief statement on the home page describes the areas where Korean surgeons excel, and about meticulous, "micro-treatment" of procedures, which is said to have lasting effects on one's appearance. Lack of regulation in China's cosmetic surgery industry has caused a great demand for surgeons from South Korea, who are perceived as more experienced and skilled.

Other websites, such as "Korean Cosmetic Surgery Net" include featured articles for various surgical processes which explain how the procedure is done, how to care for your face and body after the operation, as well as a listing of various clinics and surgeons of notoriety. The first page of this website includes a brief analysis of why customers should choose Korean surgeons over domestic clinical services. This site asks: "Why choose Korean cosmetic surgery? Answer: Korean plastic surgery's superiority rests in qualified physicians and a superior sense of service". [111] The text goes on to describe the qualifications Korean surgeons must possess, including: 6 years of medical school, 1 year of internet technology training, 5 years of specialty training, and required approval

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[109] Fairclough, A.1

[110] "Why Doesn't Korea Have any "Ugly Women"? Because of the Rise of the Plastic Sugery Industry." *Elle BelleCosmetic Surgery Tour- Korea* (高尚韩国整容整形美容). http://www.i-eb.com/index.html (20 October 2007).

[111] "Why Choose Korean Cosmetic Surgery?" *Korean Cosmetic Surgery Net* (韩国整形美容网), 2005. http://korea.nowyousee.com/ (17 November 2008) .

through a series of exams and assessments. Although not technically an ad for one surgery clinic, this webpage expounds the superiority of Korean surgeons, with a special focus on their qualifications. On the top of each page within the site is a brief statement which asserts that the page is not in the service of any one provider or clinic, but that specialists and professionals from South Korea could take questions from Chinese consumers.

Both of these websites identify Korean surgeons as superior in quality than their Chinese counterparts, and are specifically targeted to Chinese consumers interested in plastic surgery procedures. Building on the Korean Wave and the resulting demand for physical features popularized by the media, websites such as these reinforce the idea that Korean aesthetic procedures are superior to Chinese. Such websites do not, however, support the notion that Korea is superior to China in any other way, in that their sole purpose is to stimulate interest in certain procedures and clinics. Consumer demand for the highest quality has created a niche market for Chinese men and women with enough income to invest in a trip to Korea specifically for the purpose of undergoing surgical procedures. Those consumers who do not have enough time or capital to travel to Korea can seek Korean surgeons who have established practices in China, or those Chinese surgeons who have studied in Korea.

The Korean government and a reported 35 hospitals are spending 1.2 billion won ($1.3 million) to market Korea as a cosmetic surgery destination.[112] "The aspiration to resemble Korean stars is creating a big following from Asia," asserted Kim Byung Gun, a cosmetic surgeon in Seoul who plans to replace his five-story complex with a 15-story

[112] Kim Kyoungwha, "Chae Rim's Eyes, Nose Make Korea the Place for Asia Double Lids", *Bloomberg.com*. 26 August 2007. http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601101&sid=aw2niXeJMPIQ&refer=japan (19 February 2008)

tower.[113] While some Korean surgeons have opted to provide surgical services in China, an increasing amount of Chinese surgeons are choosing to complete training courses in Korea. Consumer demand for high quality surgical procedures reveals aesthetic ideals related to Korean stars, new wealth among Chinese consumer classes, and the desired perfection of self image related to admired physical attributes. For example, if a young woman, such as Cate Siu admires Song Hye Kyo's eyes, lips or chin, it is easier for her to bring a photographic reference to her appointment than to explain what kind of surgical outcome she desires. If procedures such as these are considered risky in China, and the consumer is able to afford the procedure in Korea, more often consumers will spend extra to ensure the desired appearance.

New Wealth, New Opportunities: The Beauty Industry and Chinese consumers

Along with the unprecedented wealth of young urban Chinese consumers and significantly altered social expectations and beauty ideals, more young people are undergoing extreme treatments to transform their physical appearance. *China Daily* published a story about a young woman named Sha Sha, who suffered from a lack of confidence stemming from her "ordinary looks". Although she boasted stellar academic accomplishments at prestigious universities, she was unable to find a job. She asserted that this was because "better-looking applicants seemed to be getting all the good jobs".[114] For young women pursuing careers in China, the required photograph on their resumes is a source of anxiety. In a society where equality in the workforce is still a controversial issue, beautiful women are thought to make relatively rapid advancements. Therein, cosmetic surgery has become a method by which college graduates attempt to

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[113] Kim Kyoungwha.
[114] Chen Zhiyong. "Nip/Tuck Reality Cuts to the Bone". *China Daily*. 10 January 2007. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-01/10/content_779641.htm (21 February 2008)

ensure future success in China's workforce. In order to solve Sha Sha's "dilemma" her parents agreed to send her to South Korea for surgery after graduation, promising to pay for all surgical processes needed up to 100,000 yuan.[115]

Discrimination in the Chinese workplace stems from the high cost of providing for maternity leave, and married women, older women and women with young children often face the possibility of dismissal.[116] In the mid-1990's, surveys revealed that urban women were most often employed in "light industries", such as textiles, handicrafts, and piecework.[117] "The number of opportunities has surely risen, but the new opportunities of reform rhetoric have not been lived by all."[118] However, an increasing amount of urban women who hold college or graduate degrees have been applying for highly competitive jobs outside of the "light industry" sector in recent years. While most women still occupy these lower paying jobs, pressure to break into business, research, scientific or technology related sectors has put great stress on China's female graduates.

In order to gain the competitive edge, some women seek cosmetic surgery to boost employers' perceptions. Women are still expected to care for their husbands and family while pursuing a career. "These contradictory demands on women are increasing in the freer labor markets of reform-era society. Young Chinese women face increased discrimination from employers who prefer not to hire women of childbearing age." [119] In order to vie for employment in this competitive market, more Chinese women are pursuing the beauty industry as a means of self-improvement. Those women who are able

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[115] Chen, "Nip Tuck reality…".
[116] Elisabeth Croll,*Changing Identities of Chinese Women: Rhetoric, Experience and Self- perception in Twentieth century China*, (London: Hong Kong University Press, 1995) 120-121.
[117] Ibid, 122-123.
[118] Ibid, 177.
[119] Farrer, 15.

to afford surgical procedures seek these measures in order to match their physical appearance to their qualifications, and by doing so increase their self confidence. "These times have made Chinese women's lives sweet and sour. For some their jobs are less secure sometimes and their opportunities fewer, but for others, their futures are more promising and are of their own choosing."[120] This phenomenon mirrors a South Korean phenomenon where women believed that cosmetic surgery would significantly alter their ability to gain employment.[121]

Besides career opportunities, some young women seek plastic surgery as a way to secure a husband. Those who feel they are lacking in physical attractiveness can alter their faces and bodies to suit their personal beauty ideals. "People these days regard plastic surgery as an investment as it will help them to get a good job or attract a man of their dreams," stated surgeon Lee Jong Won, a Korean plastic surgeon working at Shanghai's Beauty China Medical Center. [122] Physical beauty enables educated women who feel they are lacking in beauty to embody the complete package: a beautiful, smart, modern woman who is attractive to not only potential mates but can also gain employment in her chosen field with ease.

Dr. Chan Kin Man, deputy professor of sociology at Chinese University of Hong Kong, relates the escalating rate of plastic surgery to economic development and the push for modernization. "As China moves to a post-industrial from an industrial society, in which most people work in factories, looks become more important because of the

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[120] "Young Chinese Women Taste the Sweet and Sour of Modern Life". *Women of China*, 01 May 1994.
[121] "Frustrated Korean Job Seekers Ready To Turn To Cosmetic Surgery". *Asia Pulse News*, 12 March 2002. http://goliath.ecnext.com/comsite5/bin/pdinventory.pl?pdlanding=1&referid=2750&item_id=0199-1588058 (7 November 2007)
[122] "Chinese Women Under Knife in Race for Jobs, Husbands". *China Daily*, 13 January 2006. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2006-01/13/content_512105.htm (13 November 2007)

growing role of services."[123] Ben Chang, marketing director of Fu Hua Aesthetics, a private clinic in Shanghai with over 8,000 patients a year, stated, "I'm very optimistic about the future....the field is ever-improving and there is a developing 'beauty economy'".[124] A survey shows that money spent on beauty products and services by urban residents is on the rise, "they more turn to themselves and spiritual enjoyment than material comforts before. It's reported that the beauty service has become the 4th consumption hotspot following housing, auto and travel."[125] Significant changes in China's social and economic landscape have lead to new concepts of beauty and aesthetic service industries which are available to any person who wishes to alter any area of their bodies they consider flawed.

Most Popular Procedures and Average Cost [126]

Procedure	Description	Cost
Blepharoplasty	Crescent shape is cut from skin on top of eyelids, then stitched shut to create a wider eye	2,000-5,000 Yuan ($256-$625)
Nose	Enhances the height of one's nose	5,000-15,000 Yuan ($625-$1,875)[127]
Chin	Implants added to alter chin shape, jawbone shaving	2,000-10,000 Yuan ($256-$1,282)
Cheek	Cheekbones are shaped so that they appear more angular and the face slender	6,000+ Yuan ($769+)
Eyebrow	Reshapes the brow to create longer eyebrows	1,800-10,000 Yuan ($231-$1,250)

[123] "Chinese women under knife..."
[124] Lee, Bridget. "Plastic Surgery and Attitudes of Beauty and Success". *That's Beijing*. 07 July 2004. http://en.ce.cn/Life/entertainment/fashion&beauty/EFBab/200407/06/t20040706_3714959.shtml (4 March 2007)
[125] Shan, Echo. "Hyped Beauty Takes Girls Under Knife". *China daily*. 7 July 2004. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-07/07/content_346300.htm (12 November 2007)
[126] "Love Surgery Net".爱容网. http://www.iface.com.cn/article/22521/. (06 November 2007)
[127] The exact amount depends on the quality and experience of the surgeon, as well as location (China or Korea, as well as those Korean surgeons who practice in China).

A survey of university graduates conducted in 2002 revealed that 54.3 percent of female university graduates determined that physical appearance was a primary factor in gaining employment, due to the fact that a photo of each potential employee is required on employment applications. [128] Not all people are interested in undergoing plastic surgery for the pursuit of future success in the business world, however, as one *China Daily* interviewee, 45 year old divorcee Sun Qing Mei, asserted, "I am just looking for an honest man to marry. I need help paying my mortgage and my son's school fees. I want to lift my eyes to look younger."[129] The pursuit of a career and one's "future", as well as one's ability to attract a potential partner, is entangled with new ideas of aesthetic beauty, modernity, and success.

The more extreme surgical techniques have been well documented within the Chinese media. In 2007, a fashion retailer from Guangzhou reported undergoing bone lengthening surgery to alter her height. The procedure involved breaking her legs and using pins to stretch the bone as it healed. [130] One television show based in Changsha, China, "Lovely Cinderella", broadcast cosmetic surgery procedures in graphic detail. The audience observed the surgery and the transformation of each contestant as they undergo several cosmetic procedures. [131] One female contestant on "Lovely Cinderella", when asked whether or not Chairman Mao would have approved of these surgeries asserted, "I think that people today, with their more liberal ways of thinking, are at a place where if

[128] Lee, "Plastic Surgery and Attitudes...."
[129] Lee, "Plastic Surgery and Attitudes...."
[130] Olesen, "New Wealth Buys..."
[131] "Chinese Women Under Knife..."

someone has an opportunity to change their life and become more confident, then everyone would want to support that." [132]

Zhang Wei of the Shanghai Kinway Plastic and Cosmetic Surgery, asserted that, "as people become richer, they start to strive for more beyond the basic needs of filling their stomachs....now people will proudly admit they had done plastic surgery as it's perceived as a sign of affluence and sophistication."[133] Now that women are pursuing careers outside of the domestic sphere, they feel a competitive edge is needed in order to secure jobs from male counterparts. New ideals and standards for beauty dictate a norm which may be considered atypical of the natural beauty of young Chinese women. As such, some women pursue aesthetic standards evident in the idealized and aestheticized world of Korean drama, while others base their personal aesthetic ideals on a combination of Korean aesthetics and areas which they personally view as "flawed".

The internet plays a large role in educating Chinese consumers about products and services available. Many websites without Korean affiliations describe surgical procedures meant to inform Chinese consumers of available domestic services. The website "Love Surgery Net", describes surgical processes such as double eyelid, breast enlargement or sex change operations in numerous articles, as well as lists current prices of various surgical procedures in China. Along with these features, these websites include featured news articles about certain hospitals and clinics, methods for easing the pain of cosmetic procedures, living as a transsexual, and personal accounts from experienced patients.[134] Such websites explain procedures available in China, as well as surgeons who have received notoriety for their work in the cosmetic industry. These websites provide

[132] "Chinese women under knife..."
[133] Ibid.
[134] "Love Surgery Net".

consumers, young and old, with vital information which may inform their decisions to pursue surgeons located domestically.

China's First "Man Made Beauty"

China's widely publicized media support of cosmetic surgery began with China's first "Man Made Beauty", Hao Lu Lu, a fashion writer and aspiring actress who agreed to act as a "live advertisement" for Beijing's Evercare clinic. Ms. Hao agreed several years ago to use her body as a marketing tool for idealized beauty, and in the process wrote an autobiography documenting her experiences. After undergoing at least 10 different surgeries, including blepharoplasty, chin augmentation, hairline repositioning and liposuction, Ms. Hao became the physical manifestation of Evercare's various services. Following her final procedure she completed several interviews with Chinese news sources, explaining her desire to act in movies and television series.

In a live interview for YNET.Com in conjunction with Beijing Youth Daily, Ping Li Zhe and Zhao Yan Ling, both of the Evercare beauty treatment center, met with Hao Lu Lu to answer "netizen's" questions about cosmetic procedures.[135] In this interview, Hao Lu Lu spoke of her reasons for undergoing extensive surgery and the experience of successive surgeries. Chinese participants were encouraged to send questions to the host, who then posed the questions to Hao Lu Lu or the Ever Care representatives. Netizens asked about the risks of surgeries as well as the methods used to achieve certain cosmetic procedures. Ms. Hao admitted that she did not tell her parents about her agreement to the drastic cosmetic overhaul at first, citing her parents worry as a major source of

[135] The term "netizen" refers to "net citizens"; a term popular in China for describing members of the internet community.

pressure.[136] That people asked how her family felt reveals some lingering doubts in the social consciousness about the safety of cosmetic procedures.

There were several questions about whether candidates for cosmetic surgery were restricted by age or other limitations. The Evercare professionals interviewed assured their internet audience that age was not necessarily a limiting factor, and that undergoing more procedures to "fix" problems from previous surgeries was not at all hazardous. One person asked Hao Lu Lu, "if you have a child in the future, and after it is born that child resembles you (in your former state), would you wish to (give your child) plastic surgery?" Ms. Hao responded that if she did have a child, she wouldn't hold them back from obtaining the desired surgical procedures, but she would not force them to undergo surgery if they declined.[137] In many cases, interviews of this nature are thinly veiled advertisements for clinical services, which serve to "educate" the public about the possibilities of new surgical procedures. However, public concern over several aspects of plastic surgery and potential interest in pursuing cosmetic alterations are evident in questions posed by those "netizens" who participate in such interviews.

Chen Li Li is another famous "live advertisement" for the Jiangsu Sirrim clinic, who has agreed to give her free surgeries in exchange for media interviews conducted in their clinic. Chen is a singer who entered the Miss Universe Contest in 2004 and was disqualified due to the fact that she was born male. After her disqualification, Chen gained a lot of attention from the Chinese media where she shared her stories and explained her numerous surgeries. While still in the process of achieving her perfect body, Chen asserts that, "every knife used during the surgeries is paving the way for my future

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[136] "Evercare Professionals and Hao Lulu Guest Appearance". Web Interview. YNET.com and *Beijing Youth Daily*. 12 February 2004. http://www.ynet.com/view.jsp?oid=2976475 (7 October 2006).
[137] Ibid.

happiness". [138] Both Chen Li Li and Hao Lu Lu demonstrate a new form of advertisement in China, where the physical body is seen as a product of the cosmetic industry. Widely publicized pre-surgery and post-operation pictures of each woman enable Chinese consumers to view these surgical transformations, which may inspire individual aspiration to alter areas considered unsatisfactory.

Miss Plastic Surgery

Formerly, beauty pageants were prohibited after the Communist takeover in 1949, because they were considered bourgeois and overly decadent. Yet, new policies at the turn of the century have lead to a social acceptance of such contests. Beauty pageants have gained popularity in China since the town of Sanya in Hainan province was chosen for the location of the Miss World Contest in 2003.[139] Although Chinese contestants were officially allowed to enter the Miss World Contest in 2001, hosting the Miss World Contest for the past 5 years has created a "beauty epidemic" which has propelled the beauty pageant and cosmetic industries.[140]

In 2004 China held the first "Miss Plastic Surgery Contest" (人造美女比赛), otherwise translated as the "Miss Man Made Beauty Contest". This contest was organized in response to other beauty pageants which barred women who had "man made" features from entering. In order to participate in the "Miss Plastic Surgery Contest", women were required to have completed at least one surgical procedure. Nineteen women ages 17 to 62 competed for first place in this contest, among them was transsexual Liu Xiao Jing, who had undergone several surgical enhancements and gained

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[138] "Chinese Transsexuals Gaining Acceptance". *Taipei Times*, 08 March 2004. http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/ taiwan/archives/2004/03/08/2003101639 (02 February 2008), 4.
[139] Tim Luard, "China Warms to Miss World". *BBC NewsOnline*. 02 December 2003. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/ asia-pacific/3235850.stm (17 November 2007)
[140] Luard, "China warms..."

a large fan base. One of the most popular contestants by internet poll and winner of the Best Media Image prize, Ms. Liu explained that although the operations had caused her a lot of physical pain, "...I'm a girl at last. I have fulfilled my dream, I've become the person I wanted to be and that's my biggest reward." [141] That both Liu Xiao Jing and Chen Li Li have gained such popularity highlight changing attitudes toward transsexuals in Chinese society.

When asked about her entrance in this competition, 62 year old contestant Liu Yu Lan asserted, "I want to send a message to society that the love of beauty is not limited by age". [142] Besides the top prize, other prizes such as "Best Transformation", "Most Intelligent", "Best Feature", and "Best Plastic Surgery Idea" were awarded. Feng Qian, a 22 year old student, won the "Miss Plastic Surgery Pageant" and received 50,000 yuan ($6,000) in prize money.[143] Several articles about the pageant point to China's growing prosperity as the catalyst for the rapid increase in cosmetic and beauty industries. Contestant organizer Han Wei asserted that, "this contest shows women's strong pursuit of beauty." [144] These contests demonstrate current interest in physical modifications and the normalization of plastic surgery in China.

Dangers of Cosmetic Surgery

With so many clinics operating, both legally and illegally, it is hard for the Chinese government to keep tight controls on surgeon's qualifications and registration. Inadequate machinery or unsanitary conditions also increase the risk of infection in many patients.

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[141] "China Braces For First Miss Plastic Surgery". *China Daily*, 17 December 2004. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-12/17/content_401180.htm (12 October 2007)
[142] Ibid.
[143] "China Crowns Miss Plastic Surgery..."
[144] "China Crowns Miss Plastic Surgery..."

According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 85 percent of China's cosmetic clinics are privately owned, which further compounds government intervention.[145]

Many women share harrowing accounts of botched surgical procedures with news sources. Liu Xing Mei, a teacher in her 50's, published her story in a magazine article for *That's Beijing*. Liu had completed her final surgical procedure after three visits to the operating room. She thought her lifelong issue of drooping eyelids would be corrected with her initial surgery, however, "one eye ended up bigger than the other. The second time, I had it done at a salon but the stitches got infected. This time, I went to the hospital, and it looks good" [146] Stories like Ms. Liu's reflect the need for stricter regulations in China's plastic surgery industry, which is infamous for its many unregulated or unlicensed practicing surgeons. The China Consumers Association reported an average of 20,000 complaints of disfigurement from surgical procedures in 2006.[147] For these reasons, people who can afford to travel to expensive clinics in Seoul, Korea, for plastic surgery can enjoy the benefit of a highly regulated beauty industry. Other consumers seek Korean surgeons working in China, or those Chinese surgeons who have been licensed or trained in Korea. While there are qualified surgeons in China, unknown numbers of unregulated clinics lead consumers to weigh economic capabilities with risk factors.

In an effort to demonstrate the graphic and invasive nature of cosmetic surgery, MTV China broadcast a television show which displayed bloody scenes where the surgical procedure rather than the transformation was the objective. In many television shows featuring cosmetic transformations, the reveal is the main focal point yet this program was dedicated to displaying the surgical procedures. Most advertisements only show

[145] "China Crowns Miss Plastic Surgery".
[146] Lee.
[147] "Chinese Women Under Knife...".

before and after shots, and even though Hao Lu Lu's autobiography described the pain of the procedures she endured, seeing the surgeries made some audience members think twice before undergoing surgical procedures. Broadcast every evening at 10pm from September 4th to September 25th, 2006, this controversial show was aired at the same time in which Chinese authorities began banning certain "misleading" advertisements for plastic surgery from published materials.[148]

Chen Huan Ren, one of the most sought after plastic surgeons in China, began his career working with transgendered patients and became a pioneer in his field. Recently he revealed his own mental distress in creating these "man made beauties", and admitted that China has entered a "crazy age of plastic surgery".[149] Dr. Chen stated that his career obsession with perfection began slipping into his normal life.

> "The media is crazy, publicizing plastic surgery so much. The capital is crazy, investing heavily in the business for its huge profits. The doctors are crazy, dermatologists, orthopedists, or even veterinarians now want to be plastic surgeons. The beauty seekers are crazy. They don't know that many of them will become victims."[150]

Dr. Chen explains that although some patients want to improve their looks, psychological issues can lead to dissatisfaction with one's body image, even after several surgeries. According to Dr. Chen, plastic surgery is not worth the pain of the procedure.

Wang Si Mei, vice general affairs director of the All-China Women's Federation, agrees that the focus on beauty and aesthetics could result in long-term psychological damage for women who link physical beauty and success. "Korean culture is something worth studying," Ms. Wang says, "but we might have paid too much attention to their

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[148] "Plastic Surgery Reality Show Sparks Debate". *China Daily,* 15 November 2006. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-11/15/content_734234.htm (05 October 2007)
[149] Chen Zhiyong, "Slice of Heaven: One Surgeon's Duty to Beauty". *China Daily,* 06 March 2007. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2007-03/06/content_820235.htm (11 November 2007)
[150] Ibid.

soap operas and pretty actresses."[151] Dr. Du Su Zhen, of the Beijing Association of Medical Cosmetic Industry Members, cites that clinics' publicity campaigns are a major source of misinformation, "you can see ads on busses, in magazines, and the content of these ads is not always true...all ads should be examined by competent authorities before they are released."[152] It is in this spirit that Chinese officials have now placed strict guidelines on advertisements for hospitals and clinics which perform cosmetic surgery and began banning ads from certain locations.

Eastern Aesthetic vs. Western Ideal

There are several theories for why Chinese consumers undergo painful, expensive cosmetic surgery procedures. Inherent in all of these debates are theories of Eastern vs. Western aesthetic. Critics of plastic surgery and Korean beauty aesthetics point to high bridged noses, wide eyes and angled chins as a marker of Caucasian features. They argue that the appeal of Korean stars lies in replicating "Western" standards of beauty. Many of these critics point to blepharoplasty as a key indicator of this Western ideal. Susan Brownell's article, "China Reconstructs: Cosmetic Surgery and Nationalism in the Reform Era", describes ways in which medicine, specifically plastic surgery, can be viewed as a transnational form. She claims that plastic surgery as an "empty frame" is malleable, in that it can have various cultural meanings.[153] In her analysis of shifting political and social ideologies surrounding the beauty culture in China, she argues that plastic surgery practices in China are not devoid of Western meanings.

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[151] Fairclough, A.1

[152] "Journey into Artificial Beauty". *Women Of China.* 11 November 2004. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-11/15/content_391613.htm (14 September 2006)

[153] Brownell, 134.

In determining whether or not a double eyelid is an attempt to "Westernize" or look more Caucasian, Brownell favors the theory that "the European face is the norm and the Asian face is typically defined in terms of deficiencies relative to it..."[154] However, several surgeons she interviewed and quoted asserted that variations in blepharoplasty procedures developed in Asia, specifically the manner in which the eye is widened, render them divergent from Western medical approaches. Further, double-eyelids exist naturally within a small percentage of the Chinese population. She asserts that medical discourses attached to plastic surgery value double-eyelids and Western features.[155] Brownell also states that modern medicine is rendering race a flexible condition, in that "it is easier to undergo an eyelid operation than to learn English". [156] While this statement may be somewhat true in that language acquisition is decidedly difficult, the blatant assumption that the Western ideal, or an attempt to Westernize the Asian self, is the sole influence in plastic surgery attainment is unfounded. One might question, if the desired result of surgery is to look "Western", why do Chinese consumers choose to get surgery in South Korea instead of Europe or the United States?

If consumers prefer reconstructed eyelids which play up Asian features, despite the ability to undergo a "Western style" procedure, then this transnational method becomes rooted in local standards of beauty. Plastic surgeon Li Fan Nian asserts that Chinese ideals of aesthetic beauty are derived from former models found in pre-20th century Chinese literature and art, especially fair skin and wide eyes. [157] Li Fei, a young woman interviewed for the magazine *That's Beijing*, explained that her eyelid surgery was not

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[154] Brownell, 148.
[155] Ibid, 149.
[156] Ibid, 150.
[157] Olesen, "New Wealth Buys a Fresh Face..."

inspired by admiration for Western aesthetics, "I am not trying to look like some American celebrity. I am just trying to be a better version of myself."[158] Women interviewed for newspapers, magazines and journal articles are not actively pursuing Western aesthetics, nor do they name Western models as idealized figures. While an Eastern aesthetic does have to be acknowledged, it is the belief on the part of the Chinese consumers who strive for a popular "Korean look" which warrants more attention in the analysis of these discourses.

In her book *Beauty Up*, Laura Miller analyzed Japanese aesthetic salons and the cosmetic industry in modern Japan. In the text, she discusses the interplay between globalization and localization evident in aesthetic salon techniques, as well as methods used to mechanize and commercialize body reform.[159] Miller rejects the idea of globalization and consumption as imperialism and supports local adaptation of global market forces, especially in the beauty industry.[160] She explains that double-eyelid surgery does not always lead to de-racialization among Japanese women. Miller divulges beauty secrets of Japanese women from the 1970's, namely tapes and glues meant to pull the eyelid up slightly and give the appearance of a double lid. Miller describes the process of application as time consuming, costly and having a great risk of losing adhesion, and explains that having an eyelid crease surgically created might save time and money.[161]

Miller contends that the critical view that Japanese women, like Chinese, try to look more "Western" rarely gives legitimacy to the claims of the women themselves. Some

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[158] Lee.
[159] Laura Miller, *Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 41.
[160] Ibid, 67.
[161] Ibid, 115.

women Miller interviewed asserted that it was "too much trouble to put on eye makeup with the single-eyelid shape". [162] Their decision to pursue cosmetic surgery was not influenced by Western aesthetics but a sense of self satisfaction stemming from personal ideals. "...the normalization of the double eyelid has occurred within the context of Japanese culture and is not simply a comparison within the context of Japanese culture and is not simply a comparison of an individual's self to Euroamerican media." [163] In this way, Brownell's assertion that plastic surgery is not divorced from Western contexts cannot be upheld. In China, as in Japan, the normalization of cosmetic surgery and developments indigenous to Asia have re-interpreted methods and meanings of these idealized aesthetic procedures.

The desire to stand out in a society where homogeneity is the ideal, as well as social expectations play a large role in identity construction and consumer practices. "In many cases, the capitalist body becomes a locale for the expression of social manners...beauty therefore is not simply a personal issue but a problem of public etiquette."[164] Miller questions why eyelid surgery and hair bleaching, available for at least half a century, are only now beginning to achieve widespread popularity in Japan. She identifies shifting changes about the possibility of altering the body to suit one's aesthetic desires.

Women are not the only gender undergoing aesthetic processes, attending clinics, or using cosmetics in Japan and Korea. In China, male beautification techniques are relatively new phenomenon. "For many young men, consumer culture and the construction of masculinity are tied to body presentation and female desire."[165] Miller

[162] Miller, 120.
[163] Ibid, 121.
[164] Ibid, 102.
[165] Ibid, 126.

argues that women are rejecting body shapes which symbolize fertility, as well as traditional roles of wife and mother, and that men must actively consume cosmetic goods and services in order to attract modern women.[166] The text supports the idea that beauty is culturally and historically molded, and that categorizing beauty practices as either Western or Japanese is not particularly helpful in that it discounts creativity and individual agency. [167] Likewise, arguing for Eastern aesthetics vs. the Western ideal does not necessarily take into account personal objectives asserted in interviews and further complicates the issue as an East vs. West debate. Since various methods and techniques have been developed locally and the aesthetic ideal is based on a standard which serves to heighten Asian beauty instead of imitate Western models, these surgical processes are essentially Asian in nature. Not only are these techniques re-invented to suit an Asian ideal, the construction and discourses of "plastic surgery" within Asian society are very different from Western critiques. As an attempt to "spruce up", these surgeries provide consumers an attempt to shape natural features as they see fit.

Empowerment vs. Submission

In discussing the beauty industry and modern Chinese consumers, there is a common argument that people who undergo cosmetic procedures are duped by global media forces or are satisfying a patriarchal ideal of beauty. However, I would like to argue that those consumers who have the ability to alter their physical appearance to their liking actually achieve a sense of empowerment. Pursuit of cosmetic surgical procedures is a result of self awareness and personal expectations relative to modern consumer culture. In China, capitalist culture and commercialization have created an opportunity for individuals to

[166] Miller, 174.
[167] Ibid, 205.

participate in aesthetic treatments or processes which alter their physical appearance, using methods previously unavailable. Maintaining an idealized sense of self identity is important in a capitalist society, as evidenced by numerous studies in consumer research.

Bryan Turner, author of *The Consuming Body* argues that "for the self in a consumer society, it is the body image that plays the determining role in the evaluation of self in the public arena. The surface of the body is the target of advertising and self-promotion, just as it is the body surfaces which are the site of stigmatization". [168] Clinics and advertisements actively transfer cultural constructions of standard beauty ideals which may or may not inform personal aesthetic critiques. Although consumers have the ability to pursue cosmetic procedures, not all consumers are willing to undergo surgical treatments. Further, women in China who undergo surgical procedures in order to resemble their favorite Korean stars do not necessarily feel more Korean following their procedures. Instead, they gain an improved sense of self confidence as a direct result of consumer satisfaction.

Laura Miller asserts that the power of the beauty industry is the ability to alter one's appearance through the consumption of cosmetics and cosmetic procedures. "The beautification process's inherent optimism and potential for human agency are attractive to consumers..." [169] While transnational corporations and various agencies do tailor surgical and cosmetic processes to suit local needs, the success of these industries lies in consumer agency. Plastic surgery is not seen in this light as inherently Asian or Western, nor subjective, but as a method for the individual to achieve desired aesthetic pursuits of cosmetic surgery stemming from personal critiques.

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[168] Turner, Bryan S. *The Consuming Body*. (London: Pasi Falk Sage, 1994), vii-xvi
[169] Miller, 206.

The article, "The Effects of Product Symbolism on Consumer Self-Concept", identifies mediating processes in which consumers use product symbolism to define themselves in the context of a specific situation. "Self-evaluation involves a comparison between a perceived self-image outcome and a self-expectancy; however, the objective is an evaluation of the relative "goodness" of the perceived self-image outcome, and this process is mostly guided by the need for self-esteem." [170] The article asserts that self image is more important in consumer decisions than previously perceived. Recognition of the formulation of a self image within the individual is of crucial importance when analyzing consumer choices. Personal ambitions and reflections on one's body are socially reinforced with positive and negative responses to aesthetic changes. Personal objectives can include permanent procedures which are not necessarily socially accepted or positively reinforced, such as the art of tattooing individuals with personal, symbol-laden forms. In the case of both tattoo and plastic surgery, the self image of the individual achieves a state of fulfillment due to the completion of a desired aesthetic process.

If those aesthetically altered areas encourage a positive social response from a specific social group, personal fulfillment is enhanced and the self image empowered. In discussing consumption of clothing as related to social response the authors assert that if a woman is complimented on her clothing and, "if this message matches her assessment of herself (the consumer), it will consolidate her image of herself as a fashionable person."[171] In this way one's self image can be informed by both personal ideas and positive social response. This study holds that consumers create private meanings of

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[170] Newell D. Wright, C. B. Claiborne, and M. Joseph Sirgy, "The Effects of Product Symbolism On Consumer Self-Concept". *Advances in Consumer Research,* Vol. 19, 1992, 311-318.
[171] Ibid.

symbolic representations, such as fashion and aestheticized beauty ideals, which are *then* reinforced through social critiques, and not vice versa.

This idea that the self and consumer activities are linked to a notion of personal satisfaction and empowerment are echoed in the article, "Personal Rights of Passage and the Reconstruction of Self". In the text, the author addresses several ways in which self-concept is created and upheld through "symbolic acts of consumption", and that, "changes in self-concept that accompany human development may be wrought at least partially through the disposition and acquisition of consumer goods."[172] People respond to ideas of self through a series of actions or inactions, depending upon desired states of being. Through this analysis, if one is not satisfied with oneself, the possibility and formulation of "another possible self" occurs. Until this possible self comes to fruition, the psychological state of the consumer as self can achieve varying states of stigmatization.[173] Once the possible self is realized through cosmetic procedures, the consumer achieves personal fulfillment. Consumption of various cosmetic services leads to a restoration of harmony and the resolution of dissatisfying self concepts.[174]

Self stigmatization as a result of dissatisfaction with one's physical appearance can be proven using statements made by young women who have chosen to complete cosmetic procedures. Wang Yan, a woman who was interviewed after her surgery at Beijing Shijitan Hospital by *China Daily* reporters, asserted that, "discomfort with the flaws in body image for women was similar to that of people with tumors".[175] The realization of the possible self occurring after the surgery usually leads to a state of elation and

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[172] John W. Schouten, "Personal Rites of Passage and the Reconstruction of Self". *Advances in Consumer Research*. Vol. 18, 1991, 49-51.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Chen, "Nip/Tuck Reality..."

consumers report increased self confidence. Hao Lulu, China's first "man made beauty" stated that her repeated surgical procedures, "made me happy and much more self-confident".[176] As evidenced in the many testimonials of satisfied consumers, the final result of these procedures is a sense of empowerment.

Yet, there are critics who contend that undergoing cosmetic surgery points to a submissive nature, rather than a process of self actualization. "All across Asia the art of sawing and sewing is being sold as a tool for empowerment: get your legs lengthened and improve your career prospects. Sadly, plastic surgery often has little to do with vanity or self-determination."[177] This theory supports socially reinforced notions of a beauty standard which is transmitted to the consumer via marketing tools. Instead of the consumer agency as the main factor in determining whether or not to undergo cosmetic procedures, this idea points to the need for consumers to conform to a beauty ideal in order to ensure their success. "Consumer culture bombards us with images of perfection because they're the most effective marketing tools around."[178] However, not all women receive surgical treatments in order to boost their careers. The second oldest Miss Plastic Surgery contestant, 47 year old Long Yan, stated that, "after the operation, everyone around me said I have become more beautiful and I feel younger too...becoming beautiful is everyone's right, it's a very natural desire."[179] Although media is a powerful force for disseminating images of beauty, strict controls over advertisements on the part of the Chinese media have not severely impacted the number of consumers who undergo

[176] "Journey into Artificial Beauty".
[177] Allison Jones,"It's Ugly, But the Idea That You Can Buy Beauty Won't Die". *South China Morning Post*. 01 February 2004. http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-20182057_ITM (15 November 2007)
[178] Ibid.
[179] "China Braces For First Miss Plastic Surgery".

cosmetic procedures or travel to Korea in pursuit of aesthetic perfection. The argument that plastic is a submissive act by nature ignores consumer agency and the ability of the self to create a personal beauty image or ideal.

Psychologist Bi Shu Min asserts that the boom in plastic surgery reflects the swift pace of modernization, where first impressions have become increasingly important.[180] As such, many people are choosing to seek cosmetic enhancements as a form of personal enhancement. Having the economic power to change one's appearance is a luxury which generally urban middle to upper-class consumers can enjoy. It is not only a sign of economic achievement, but a new opportunity for Chinese people to permanently alter those aspects of their physical appearance with which they are unsatisfied.

People who complete successful cosmetic procedures report increased self confidence and optimism. Consumers regard the process as one which enables them to realize potential self image as a real possibility. While a few of the women interviewed by *China Daily*, *Reuters*, *Women of China*, and *That's Beijing*, admitted to undergoing cosmetic surgery to achieve success or find potential husbands, many of them assert that having the procedure resulted in increased self assuredness. Although their motives were influenced by a desire for future opportunities, these procedures ultimately boost esteem and allocate the positive self image necessary to pursue these prospects.

These surgical procedures have embedded local techniques and different methods in cosmetic constructions, which render them divergent from Western techniques. This is not to say, however, that Western cosmetic surgery and Asian surgery are completely different, but that the social constructions surrounding the practice and desired effect are dissimilar. While undergoing cosmetic surgery for aesthetic purposes is controversial in

[180] "China Braces For First Miss Plastic Surgery".

the West, in China it as viewed by middle to upper class consumers as "sprucing up". While one could assert that media and social discourses dupe consumers into following socially accepted methods of beautification, it is ultimately consumer agency and the ability to change one's physical attributes on an individual basis which leads to empowerment.

Chapter Four:
The "Confucian root" and Other Theories for Audience Attraction

As was mentioned in previous chapters, academics and journalists have posited several theories for why Chinese audiences are attracted to Korean drama. The "Confucian root" argument is the most widely asserted reason for why Chinese audiences actively consume dramas and participate in Korean Wave culture. Inherent in this argument is the assumed need to fill the void of traditional culture within modern Chinese society, resulting from various political movements and campaigns throughout the 20th century. In this approach, the essence of South Korean culture, a "living fossil" of Confucian values, is broadcast in television series and acts as a figurative "filial son" towards China by replenishing the facets of identity and culture that are lost or were changed.[181]

Other arguments for the "Confucian root" are markedly different in that they claim an attraction to similar social orders with historically Confucian parallels. While these arguments would seem to provide an easy answer for widespread attraction to Korean dramas in China, they are complicated and controversial theories. In order to understand why this assumed "Confucian" connection is unsubstantiated it is helpful to survey manifestations of Confucianism in China and Korea and to determine what, if any, shared Confucian heritage exists between these modern nations. Whether discussing Confucianism through the avenue of Korean drama or the historical progression of Confucianism, one can see that this "Confucian root" argument does not address crucial aspects of audience viewership.

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[181] Zhan Xiao Hong. " The Foundation of "Korean Wave" Popular Culture in China". China: *Modern Korea.*

Confucianism in Korea and China

Arguments for the past and present applications of Confucianism in East Asia are outlined in *The Confucian World Observed: A Contemporary Discussion of Confucian Humanism in East Asia* which reviewed a series of workshops conducted at the East-West Center, where participants discussed manifestations of Confucian ethics and practice in East Asia (Tu, 1992). In exploring Confucianism as a scholarly discourse, these workshops focused on the influence of Confucian values in Asian societies and respective social, political and cultural institutions. The contributors problematize using Confucianism as a cultural indicator and discuss whether or not academics can reject the idea that the terms Chinese and Confucian are synonymous. Several presenters who focused on China asserted that Confucian and Chinese are two distinct categories. While the discussants confront these ideas they also offer the balanced view that the tradition which arose from Confucian writings is a powerful social and political force, which may have "nurtured" social ambitions that contributed to the success of current rapid economic development. The participants presented on dissimilarities in historical and contemporary social interpretations of Confucianism in Japan, Korea and China.

Several scholars acknowledged that Confucianism was necessary for agrarian societies, but that modern industrial and democratic practices mark a departure from traditional ethics as the use of education for profit or fame is in direct conflict with Confucian morality. However, by linking capitalism with the idea of nationhood, Korean intellectuals were able to attach a moral overtone to a theoretically amoral system (capitalism). This demonstrates one of the ways in which Confucianism is susceptible to

change, yet always includes the elements of moral order, individual responsibilities or "self-cultivation". Kim Kwang-ok asserted that the influence of Confucianism in South Korea should be discussed in the context of social class and questioned the re-invention or re-emergence of Confucian organizations. Kim attributed this to presidential endorsement and renewed concern for nationalism as a method for preserving culture in the face of modernization and Western influence. Each participant argued over how to apply Confucian ideas to the modern landscape, while some held that these ideas were instrumental in building a modern economy, others favored a more critical approach.

Several scholars raised questions about cultural practices in modern Asia and individual identity. Changes in social practices reflect the idea that although there are some semblances of Confucianism left in China and Korea, society and cultural identity have been altered according to modern ideologies. One scholar referenced late 19th century campaigns in China and identified that Confucian values had been under "vehement attack" since 1895.[182] What Confucianism has meant in terms of government, law, and society were drastically redefined over the course of the 20th century. Tu Weiming explained that Confucianism in China should be viewed as a restless landscape instead of a static structure.

Some scholars posited that identity and culture relative to Confucianism is a historical creation. One anthropologist asserted that the "Confucian" label is suspicious because, "it tends to be a catchall phrase, a kind of box that will hold almost anything."[183] In discussing family structures and hierarchy, contemporary family structures in East Asia do not match the ethical standards or formations put forth in the *Analects*. To these

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[182] Tu Weiming, *"The Confucian World Observed: A Contemporary Discussion of Confucian Humanism in East Asia,"* (Honolulu: The East-West Center, 1992), 44.
[183] Ibid, 92.

scholars, the construction of Chinese-ness through Confucian history and external forms such as rites and hierarchy are the key to an assumed link between Confucianism and Chinese-ness. One could regard the attribution of Korean drama viewership to a "shared" Confucian legacy similarly, in that this argument is commonly used to explain widespread audience attraction to Korean drama without acknowledging cultural and historical differences between China and Korea. Moreover, Confucianism as the root cause does not consider the audience as independent, informed viewers and instead points to a generalized ideology.

In summarizing the conference, Tu Weiming asserted that the ebb and flow of Confucian tradition is dynamic. Without these myriad manifestations of Confucianism, the meaning of tradition and history in both Korea and China would be fundamentally challenged. The identity of both nations is ultimately entangled in each individual interpretation of Confucian morality and values throughout the ages. Therefore, regarding Korean drama viewership as a phenomenon based on Confucianism is unfounded, as each country and individual citizens have unique interpretations of this ideology. The dynamic of "family" in East Asia is constantly changing regardless of social taboo, and "Confucian ideology" as it relates to the individual is both a shared and individually interpreted experience.

The widely divergent theories for the relevance and general practice of Confucian ideologies discussed in *The Confucian World Observed* are helpful in understanding various manifestations of Confucianism in China and Korea. The argument that modern Confucian practice is linked to a set of activities which hold significance within respective societies is a common argument for why the Korean Wave had such a heavy

impact in China. However, the argument for Confucianism as a dynamic, ever-changing ideology is stronger than the former assertion in this text, and supports the idea of Confucianism as a floating signifier. Although there are some moral overtones in Korean drama, the characters are inherently flawed, dysfunctional families abound, and tradition is often seen in conflict with modernity; moreover, viewers do not always seek morality in their television programming. Understanding that Chinese consumers have individual agency and choose to interpret social values in different manners deconstructs the idea of a uniform mass culture.

In order to explore the transformation of Confucianism in Korea, one can review Robert T. Oliver's *A History of the Korean People in Modern Times: 1800 to the Present.* This text attempts to provide an overview of political and social changes occurring in both North and South Korea, with particular emphasis on the 20th century. Oliver discusses how in order to prevent western encroachment a mix of historic traditions, including Confucianism, were esteemed in order to reject change to intellectual and ethical values. Oliver's view of shifting Confucian values and cultural identity interprets the era between Buddhist and Confucian influenced government systems from the Koryo dynasty (circa 918-1392) to the present. Corruption of government figures in the Koryo period lead to the eventual eradication of Buddhist officials and the implementation of Confucian ideology.

According to Oliver, two figures of particular importance were 15th century monarchs, King Taejong and King Sejong, who replaced Buddhist officials with Confucian scholar-officials and directed these scholars in a variety of endeavors, such as improving astronomical observation, taxes, and the Hangul writing system. Although these activities

successfully merged politics, government and social ideologies, the implementation of this doctrine and the political climate where Buddhism was supplanted by revitalized Confucianism rendered these "traditions" varied from the Chinese manifestation.

Oliver states that Korea's early political and social systems were shaped by Shamanism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. These ideologies were highly politicized during certain eras, but they were gradually harmonized and reinvented to suit the needs of Korean society and government. Contact with Western societies during the late 19th century lead to questioning of the role of Confucianism in Korean society. Ultimately, Confucian principles were maintained in order to resist Western encroachment and various movements arose during this time as intellectuals re-interpreted and expanded their analysis of Confucian teachings to include modern ideologies. Under Japanese rule the study of Confucianism was encouraged in order to continue behavior that was an "esteemed model for good subjects."[184] A Declaration of Independence read during the March 1st, 1919 movement signed by various groups in an effort to free Korea from Japanese colonial powers demonstrates the various ideologies ingrained in Korean society.

> "All of us, men and women, young and old have firmly left behind the old nest of darkness and gloom and head for joyful resurrection [the Christian theme] together with myriad living things [the Buddhist theme]. The spirits of thousands of generations of our ancestors protect us [the Confucian theme], and the rising tide of world consciousness assists us."[185]

Under Japanese rule the study of Confucianism was also encouraged; however, Oliver asserts that Confucianism had different modes and applications in Japan than in Korea, and that Koreans were forced to conform to the Japanese method. With the introduction

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[184] Robert T. Oliver, *A History of the Korean People in Modern Times: 1800 to the Present.* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 115.
[185] Ibid, 135.

of Christian groups following the Japanese and American occupations, the ideologies of Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity all exerted varying degrees of influence on Korean society. During the establishment of the Republic of Korea, the constitution granted women the same legal and social rights as men in a change that broke with patriarchal Confucian traditions. These historic re-creations of state ideology and the introduction of foreign religions reinforce the idea that modern Korea was built upon a foundation of several philosophies, including an indigenized and consistently reformed Confucian logic.

By analyzing the uses of Confucian ideologies in past and present we can see how markedly different Korean Confucianism is from its Chinese predecessor, especially given historical and social contexts. Understanding how progress and morality were entwined during this early period enhances the complexity of modern Korean cultural identity and the various roles of Confucian influence. The history of Confucianism in Korea as provided in this volume proves that the plethora of theories addressed in *The Confucian World Observed* are a result of divergent histories in which Confucianism played many different roles in influencing morality in East Asia. In this way, we can dispel the myth that Korean culture is a "living fossil" of Confucian values. Instead of asserting similar "Confucian roots", Confucianism in Korea should be seen as a result of centuries of reconstruction and modification.

In Mark T. Fung's chapter "Confucianism, Modernity, and Restoration in Contemporary China" from *Tigers' Roar: Asia's Recovery and Its Impact,* argues that re-animation of Confucian ideologies was linked with the rise and fall of dynastic cycles as well as periods of political or social turmoil (Fung, 2001). Despite his assertion that

Confucianism in Chinese society has tended to be cyclical, he also acknowledges that through all of these social and political changes Confucianism has remained the only constant in the foundation of China's political thought. Fung also argues that classic theories of modernization cannot explain China's recent economic and developmental success. He cites that Confucianism is not a static or rigid set of rules, but ebbs and flows depending upon how Confucian precepts are interpreted at any given time.

The broad nature of the Confucian ideology enables governing powers the ability to shape certain principles in order to suit current needs. Fung argues that understanding modernity in China means acknowledging the complex interplay between Confucianism, social mobility, technology and development. For the purpose of relating Confucianism and Korean Wave viewership, the most effective part of Fung's chapter is the introductory argument that Confucianism is cyclical and constantly reinterpreted. Used in conjunction with Oliver's demonstration of indigenous modes of Confucianism which evolved in Korea, Fung's argument provides vital insight as to how the "Confucian root" argument cannot be upheld. As discussed in these two texts, Confucian traditions and ideologies had local characteristics in both China and Korea and evolved under different historic political regimes. Modern Confucian practice, as acknowledged in Fung's chapter, is markedly different from its original form and as such it is unlikely that viewers of Korean drama in China relate solely on the basis of Confucian ideals.

Like Oliver and Fung, Donald Stone MacDonald describes modern Korea as a blend of historical influences. In *The Koreans: Contemporary Politics and Society* MacDonald acknowledges that China and Japan have impacted Korean culture, he also asserts that Korean society should be examined in terms of both fixed traditions and rapidly changing

present. MacDonald examines several aspects of Korean culture where Confucianism has played a role in construction, and names the family as a fundamentally Confucian structure where seniority is tantamount to authority. Along with industrialization, economic improvements, and mass migration to urban centers, television viewing, fixed hour employment, consumerism and other activities changed the ways in which individuals interacted and spent their time. China has undergone similar changes in an effort to modernize and reinforce economic development, and also maintained some hierarchical organization. However, this hierarchy, which is often referred to as a primarily Confucian construction, co-exists with modern ambitions and individual principles.

MacDonald argues that Korean behavior and social practices are due to three main factors: traditional ethics, underlying individualism which conflicts with traditional expectations, and modern or Western ideas.[186] MacDonald addresses changes occurring in Confucian practices and implementation in Korean culture and acknowledges that although strict adherence is no longer practical for modern ambitions, Confucian attitudes continue to influence Koreans because these philosophical views and values are established in the Korean consciousness. These arguments can be used to underscore differences in the Confucian method between China and Korea, but also focuses on the role of Confucianism in constructing the family with particular emphasis on hierarchical practices.

Using this analysis, one could assert that even though a person in China viewing a program from Korea may have a different understanding of Confucian practices, familial

[186] Donald Stone Macdonald, *The Koreans: Contemporary Politics and Society*, (Colorado: Westview Press,1988), 80.

structures are shared and understood. This does not, however, substantiate the "Confucian root" argument because there is no evidence that the modern Korean family is a completely Confucian structure. Further, state intervention and the One Child Policy renders China's family structure completely different from the Korean family, and while emphasis on hierarchy is crucial to both it is difficult to qualify which areas are influenced by Confucian values and which are simply hierarchical. While some families may adhere to hierarchical methods of thinking in a very conservative manner, others may not follow the same standard.

An analysis of "Confucian" rhetoric within Korean media was performed by Nam Kyoung-Ah in 1998 through the analysis of television commercials, which were given a rank on a point-scale chart for Confucian content based on specific criteria. In the article, "Confucian-Based Cultural Values and Influences on Portrayal of Women in Korean Television Commercials", Nam examined Confucianism related to female roles in Korean society through television commercial analysis. Nam originally identified that advertisements often include socially engrained cultural norms and assesses strict gender role specialization and deference to age as key components to patriarchal practice. The largest percentages of female models in Korean television commercials served a traditional role as housewife or mother in a domestic setting. Nam did not expect to discover, however, that a large percentage of the sample included women in university or office settings, which Nam used to analyze changing gender roles.[187]

According to Nam this high percentage of females outside the domestic arena reflects the increasing number of educated women in Korea, yet does not address the variety of

[187] Nam Kyoung-Ah."Confucian-Based Cultural Values and Influences on Portrayal of Women in Korean Television Commercials". ASPAC Conference, Spring 1998.

roles they are now expected to maintain as contributors to the household, wife, mother, and daughter-in law. Nam acknowledges that the position of women in Korean society is changing, especially among younger generations, whose family structures differ greatly from traditional households due to the increasing role of women as providers. Despite the fact that more women were seen in traditional roles, the surprising numbers of women in non-traditional environments were promising to Nam, who concluded that an increase in such commercials reflect non-traditional gender constructions and significantly altered social expectations.

Nam Kyoung-Ah's article is helpful for determining a quantitative amount of Confucian values seen in Korean commercial culture. The commercials where women do not embody typical roles or adhere to traditional values are significantly less, but the fact that the amount of such commercials is increasing does reflect shifting gender roles and resulting familial structures in Korean society. While the results provided by Nam are given in terms of percentage and points by a specific scale, the parameters by which "Confucianism" are defined is not static, and in fact could also be considered "patriarchal". If Nam had more information as far as distinctions between Confucian values, existing only in Asia, and patriarchal values, which exist worldwide, then the argument for the changing of traditional roles would be more helpful in discussing Confucianism in Korean media. However, the information given in the article does point to another fallacy in the "Confucian root" argument, in that if Korean media is depicting a non-traditional view of women, then the patriarchal Confucian expectations for the role of the female as wife and mother are not represented. That these women are educated, and situated outside of the domestic environment, is not at all "Confucian" in the purest

sense and depicts modern women as complicated figures whose lives are a mix of familial expectation and individual ambition. The increasing portrayal of these "modern" women in Korean media and their common occurrence in Korean drama negate the idea that Korean culture is a "living fossil" of Confucian culture which serves as a unifying feature between these two countries.

Chinese Scholars and the "Confucian root"

Why are so many scholars quick to point out a Confucian link between China and South Korea? There has been a resurgence in Confucian study in China during recent years, in response to a perceived threat of Western cultural encroachment. Under the Communist regime, the terms Confucian and Confucianism were considered "feudal", and politically subversive. Now scholars are looking to China's past in an effort to solidify and strengthen Chinese-ness in an attempt to preserve social mores in the face of foreign influence.

Yang Chaoming, professor of Confucian studies at Qufu Normal University in China's Shandong Province has stated that, "it is vital for this country to have its younger generation know that benevolence and trust [found in Confucian ideologies] are the foundation of a harmonious society."[188] Yang argues that it is essential to China's modern development to explore Confucian values in order to resituate the people's moral and social standards. He believes that by sending Chinese college students abroad, parents are unknowingly supporting a form of Westernization. "They think the West stands for advancement," he said. "It shows we have no confidence in ourselves. We should know

[188] "Confucian studies return, hailed as relevant". *China Daily*. 06 October 2006. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2006-10/06/content_702181_3.htm (01 April 2008)

the essence of our own culture and be proud of it."[189] Like professor Yang, many scholars who write about the Korean Wave feel it is important to acknowledge Confucian roots. Yet, perhaps we can view "Confucian" culture as referring to high value of family and social mores, instead of Confucianism as an exact ideology. In this next section, I would like to discuss those scholars who claim that the "Confucian root" is the deepest level of attraction to Korean drama.

Although many who analyze Confucianism in China and Korea acknowledge divergent historical applications and revisions, many scholars who attempt to address the question of Korean drama viewership in China use the "Confucian root" argument despite these differences. One such scholar, Pu Yidan, discusses how the Korean Wave has permeated aspects of Chinese society and questions viewership practices in an article entitled, "Using Korean Drama to View the Influence and Inspiration of "Hallyu". This article questions how to address Korean culture represented through these dramas and the impact of the Korean Wave on consumer culture. The emergence and rapid growth of cultural commodities and industries, such as fashion, cosmetics, technology, tourism, in China are discussed.

There is a brief analysis of *Hahanyizu*, those young, middle-class consumers who spend time and money purchasing dramas and related commodities and were addressed in chapter 3. Pu also addresses several explanations for the success of Korean drama in China including talented actors, well written scripts, music, and Confucianism. The author asserts that the reason why Chinese audiences like Korean drama is because Chinese and Korean culture share the same cultural roots, and Korea is repaying filial

[189] "Confucian studies return..."

duties to China.[190] Pu feels that this is necessary for modern China because in the face of foreign powers China's Confucian spirit needs to be refreshed. Pu argues that a lack of traditional culture beneath the surface leads to social corruption and economic stagnation.

Pu Yidan's argument is typical of "Confucian root" theorists in that it focuses on China's need to re-establish traditional culture in order to cope with the pressures of modernity. While Pu acknowledges some features of Korean drama viewers, this argument rests solely on a historic link between China and Korea and does not consider individual agency or audience response. The author attempts to find a deeper reason behind widespread viewership but does not determine the root cause based on the plot or content of these dramas nor modern audience needs.

Another Chinese scholar, Zhang Guo Tao, argues this phenomenon in a different manner. Zhang's article, "Korean drama: The Miracle of 'Salted Fish Turns Over" addresses the fact that the Korean Wave was an unexpected phenomenon because Korea's film industry and economy were "inferior" to that of other Asian and Western countries until the turn of the century. Zhang asserts that Korean dramas do not necessarily stress an individual indigenous culture, but that melodrama is easily relatable across cultures and can harmonize with various national identities and ideologies. That Korea's popular culture that was not necessarily profitable or well recognized to begin with is significant because it highlights the fact that these dramas were not intended for an international audience. Zhang recognized the family as the most widely depicted model in Korean dramas, and argues that most scenes take place in the areas where

[190] Pu, Yi Dan. "Using Korean Drama to View the Influence and Inspiration of "Hallyu"". *Gansu Agricultural Digest*: China. Vol. 236, No. 3, 2003, 200.

families encounter most such as the living room or the kitchen. According to Zhang, tension within the family is often the core concept of these dramas.

Zhang's assertion that melodrama is universal makes the "Confucian root" argument harder to substantiate. That these dramas do not focus on Korean-ness or Asian identity and the fact that the Korean Wave was popular in countries around the world demonstrates that acceptance is relative despite non-specific regional identification. If Zhang had included a variety of areas where modern Chinese viewers could identify with Korea or Korean dramas specifically, these facets would have strengthened this argument. Zhang's argument stands in direct opposition to Pu Yidan's assessment in that Korea is not seen as paying cultural homage to China. In fact, using Zhang's approach, the Korean culture is seen as both independent of Asia, yet easily relatable across various social and territorial boundaries. As was discussed in chapter 1, melodrama from Japan, Brazil and Mexico were popular in China during the reform period of the 1980's, thus proving Zhang's idea that melodrama is easily translated across regional and cultural boundaries. That Korean drama achieved widespread viewership in China may then be related to the effectiveness of melodramatic content, and not a shared sense of Confucian values.

In the article, "Cultural Exchanges Between South Korea and China – More Than A Trend?", Gu Wen Tong attempts to explain why Chinese audiences might be attracted to Korean media. Gu discusses how globalization and increasing economic and political connections between Korea and China create culture waves which reinforce these relationships. In analyzing why Korean dramas like "A Jewel in the Palace" have achieved such massive popularity, Gu argues that lack of traditional culture in China has created a need for historic dramas. Cultural inheritance is acknowledged as a tie that

binds the two countries in modern times. Yet, Gu recognizes that contemporary Korean culture is a mixture of traditional Korean values as well as a product of Western influence. That these Korean dramas house both Western and Korean values, according to Gu, makes them more marketable to Chinese audiences.

Gu Wen Tong's argument concerning globalization and increasing connections between China and Korea work well in conjunction with Zhang Guo Tao's assessment, due to the fact that both acknowledge global market forces. Yet, Confucian tradition described as similar practice between these two countries is unfounded. That the article does not acknowledge the divergence in traditional practices could be due to its brevity, yet the assumption that "tradition" developed from Confucian ideologies in the same manner is not substantiated. The theory why Korean drama may appeal to both Korean and Chinese audiences is an interesting twist in that Western influence is incorporated. Yet, whether "Western" in this sense means influence derived from Western countries or refers to modernization is unclear.

In her article, "An Asian Formula? A Comparative Reading of Japanese and Korean TV Dramas", Lisa Leung conducted research among focus groups in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan concerning audience response to Korean drama. While she agrees that proximity can be highlighted as a marker for the regional success of entertainment in Asia, she claims that "Confucian" values are very generalized, as well as the conservatism evident in Korean dramas. Leung argues that to settle for an "Asian reading" would tempt one to generalize reading, the danger of which would be similar to

"sub-Orientalism" [191] This is not to say that *all* arguments for the common "Confucian root" are damaging or Orientalist. However, it is hazardous to assume that the basis of Chinese viewership stems from an interest in Confucianism. According to Leung's assessment, to sum up this phenomenon as a movement rooted in Confucian values is too vague and implies a lack of discretion on the part of the viewer as to the matter of choice.

Lisa Leung's group research and findings reveal that the audience does have agency in determining whether they watch Korean dramas because of a void of Confucian tradition or simply because they enjoy them. That she used viewers of Korean drama from mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan is crucial in that each area has a completely different historical point of reference. Leung's acknowledgment of Korean drama as a phenomenon that goes beyond roots or traditional ties is particularly helpful in dispelling the "Confucian root" argument, especially where actual viewers were interviewed. Leung's view of "Confucianism" as sub-Orientalism is unprecedented but has some legitimacy in that those scholars who do not regard audience agency often assume that traditional ties are the basis of viewership practices.

While it is difficult to determine whether or not these scholars should be seen as sub-Orientalist, Leung's research with Korean drama viewers provides insight to the phenomenon without pointing to historic social mores as the only possible cause. As the authors quoted at the beginning of this chapter have argued, Confucianism in China and Korea in their most modern incarnations are widely divergent and were influenced by various periods in each country's history and re-created for government or scholarly use as a method for political and social control.

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[191] Lisa Y.M. Leung, "An Asian Formula? Comparative Reading of Japanese and Korean TV Dramas." 13th JAMCO Online International Symposium 2004: http://www.jamco.or.jp/2004_symposium/en/. (11 January 2008), 13.

During the latter half of the 20th century, China and South Korea both experienced rapid growth in development and subsequent changes in social structures. Within popular media, especially Korean drama, there is a reflection of this constant clash of tradition and modern expectations. As these texts have demonstrated, some vestiges of Confucianism still exist, while others aspects have shifted dramatically or are still undergoing the process of change. Although the bedrock of Confucian ideals arguably remains a part of the Chinese and Korean national consciousness, it cannot be the *only* reason audiences identify with Korean drama. There is nothing inherently or morally Confucian about youth driven markets or direct commercialization as discussed in chapter 3. Nor are Korean dramas a paradigm for moral systems or one by which families or individuals submit to Confucian hierarchy. In fact, the very essence of drama in these television series is the characters' subversion of standard moral discourses.

In this way, what Chinese viewers are watching is not a portrayal of traditional Confucian values, but a reflection of the efforts of modernization and Korean society's attempt to deal with the consequent shift of social expectations. Therefore, the primary reason for viewership cannot solely be to experience and "fulfill the void" of traditional culture. While several of the arguments analyzed had valid assessments concerning this phenomenon, understanding Confucianism as a fluid force may be the key to understanding why Chinese audiences might empathize with Korean characters. In Kim Youna's book *Women, Television & Everyday Life in Korea* Kim asserts that in Korea, "there is a complex interplay and co-existence of tradition and modernity" in women's everyday lives.[192] Kim attempts to identify where Korean women's everyday lives are

[192] Youna Kim, *Women, Television & Everyday Life in Korea: Journeys of Hope.* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 31.

infused with and complicated by Confucianism and traditional gender roles, which are in direct conflict with education and modern expectations. Similar to other scholars mentioned in this chapter, Kim acknowledges that although Confucian family values are present in Korean society, other forces such as modernization, individualism, and a series of complex ideologies are omnipresent in the lives of Korean women and that drama viewership is a multifaceted process of identification, viewer attraction, individual audience member identification and a leisure activity.

The application of Confucian ideology to viewership practice is difficult to prove, but also difficult to completely disregard. In order to express traditional Asian values which encompass respect for authority, hierarchy, filial piety, and family values, it is easier to place it under the signifier of "Confucianism". If those scholars who support the Confucian root framed their argument with a definition of what "Confucian roots" they are considering, it would be easier to decide whether or not the link exists. The argument for Confucian ties becomes problematic when one attempts to unravel the ideology itself.

Still, the revival of "Confucianism" as an ideology is important for scholars who research or comment on contemporary Chinese society, so we cannot simply discount this theory. For the Chinese government, "Confucianism is a way to encourage order and bring more legitimacy to its rule -- the philosophy's emphasis on respect for authority, for example, is appealing to Communist Party leaders...those leaders have nonetheless promoted a return to traditional values as an alternative to the Chinese preoccupation with financial gain."[193] By analyzing how scholars use this "Confucian root" argument in a variety of ways, one can determine that Confucianism is not the only reason for Korean

[193] Maureen Fari. "Confucius Making a Comeback in Money-Driven Modern China". *Washington Post*, 24 July 2007. http://www.washingtonpost. com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/23/AR2007072301859 pf.html (24 March 2008)

drama viewership. Perhaps some of the values invoked by using the term "Confucian" may apply to viewership and audience identification with social constructions such as hierarchy. While Confucianism may have something to do with audience identification, however, it is important to note that viewership and individual taste are mediated by various factors and that "Confucian roots" cannot fully explain the phenomenon.

Economic Ties

While economic ties and the steady influx of Korean products in China have, in some ways, been affected by Korean drama viewership – especially those medicinal, cosmetic, and electronic products – success of Korean dramas is the cause rather than the result of their availability. Nevertheless, Chinese economist Zhan Xiao Hong claims that the success of Korean drama in China is contingent upon trade between China and Korea as well as other economic ties.[194] He asserts that consumer demand for Korean products in the years following the surge in TV drama viewers is due to the fact that Korea was merely "selling the image before selling the product".[195] While this is one facet of this phenomenon, it cannot be singled out as the only factor.

The appeal of Korean stars within the dramas has created an opportunity for cultural products in China –especially fashion and cosmetic oriented commodities. In order to encourage consumption of these products, department stores and billboards in Chinese cities portray beautiful, smiling Korean women holding or displaying cosmetic creams, makeup or medicinal products. Although trade between China and South Korea may have increased, trade alone cannot directly influence or inspire desire on the part of the consumer. Just as audience members choose to watch Korean dramas, they choose to buy

[194] Zhan, 69.
[195] Ibid.

Korean products for a number of reasons. To conclude that television viewership and economic trade agreements are intimately linked is risky, in that it does not take into account individual audience member preferences.

While television in China has become more audience oriented and a major component of market forces, advertising is not yet completely commercialized. The state administration and Chinese television administrative authorities are said to have a "symbiotic" relationship. Due to this relationship television is partly controlled by administrative authorities, and must raise its own revenue but cannot be a totally profit-oriented enterprise, as was discussed in chapter 1. Not just any foreign program can make it into China without passing the censors. Korean dramas are edited so that any nationalist sentiments are cut out of dubbed dialogue and subtitles. After achieving great success all over China, imports of Korean dramas have been curbed in order to promote Chinese dramas from the mainland and Hong Kong.

The continuous sale of pirated VCDs and DVDs as well as internet downloads of television programming serve as methods for circumventing any economic forces which may give consumers incentive to buy Korean products, as was acknowledged in previous chapters. As far as the distribution of pirated DVD's smuggled in from abroad, while there have been several attempts to crackdown on distributors, there is still an overwhelming amount of material in China. Using internet forums and pirated VCDs fans download uncensored TV dramas which are censored or banned from China's television broadcast stations. Economic ties between the two countries are based on legal marketing tools which effectively disseminate information about media broadcasts such as dramatic series. The fact that an illegal market for Korean dramas exists reflects that economic

endeavors are not the only feature which draws audience attention to this medium. Clearly economic ties in the form of trade agreements and effective advertising cannot influence the entire market, nor can they serve as a large part of Chinese consumer attraction to Korean commodities.

In Search of the "Pan-Asian Identity"

A Weekend Edition of NPR in March of 2006 inquired as to whether the Korean Wave is "...an attempt to forge a Pan-Asian identity to compete with mainstream U.S. culture".[196] While this question is more a theory and less an assertion, this same idea that the Korean Wave stands in opposition to U.S. media culture is not singular. The Korean Wave was not an attempt to compete with American media. As was formerly asserted, the Korean Wave was an unprecedented and unpredictable phenomenon. Although Korean dramas have made significant impact in the Asia-Pacific region as well as a widespread global audience, they were originally intended for a Korean audience. The rapid acceptance of Korean media in this region does not stem from an aura of anti-Western sentiment within these television dramas nor direct competition with American media. In this light, to assume that the reason for the popularity of the Korean Wave in China is completely hinged on competition with mainstream U.S. culture is unreasonable and unfounded.

While the competitive concept included in this argument is unsubstantiated, the idea of a "Pan-Asian Identity" or a kind of regional awareness is not necessarily erroneous. As was previously discussed, this Pan-Asian association is not based on "Confucian roots" or any particular sense of Asian-ness. Modernization in the Pan-Asian region has had

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[196] Lim.

both positive and negative affects in cultures and economies. As individuals undergo similar processes of change, recognition of and identification with various forms of art and media is possible. Through the aestheticized world of Korean drama, Chinese audiences can look to Korea as a paragon of a successful, modernized nation which has achieved stability in a short time. In working to develop the Chinese economy, Chinese citizens are viewed by some as cultivating a renewed sense of Asian pride. "The sense of 'West is best' has undergone a psychological transformation...A great deal of Asia has started to rediscover Asia, to begin to have faith in Asia, to begin to be proud of being Asian".[197] Given that both Korea and China are each in various stages of achieving modernization and stimulation of economic and developmental processes, individuals may relate to a Pan-Asian identity, so we cannot necessarily rule out this aspect of the "Pan-Asian" theory.

That this identity is situated in opposition to Western culture is not entirely correct, as aspects of global culture have some influence. As was previously discussed in chapter 2, certain aspects of American culture (i.e. New York Yankees baseball caps) can be considered a part of Korean fashion and are construed by Chinese consumers to be typical Korean style. Through the process of glocalization, such products and global commodities are redefined by the various local societies and cultures to which they are introduced. "Accounts of globalization are often too quick to identify foreign influences without considering the local cultural landscapes in which imported concepts are given meaning".[198] These "cultural landscapes" shape foreign influence and improve upon already existing themes. Neither China nor Korea should be seen as "characteristically

[197] Aihwa Ong and Donald M. Nonini, *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism,* (New York: Routledge), 1997, 265.
[198] Farrer, 12.

different from any other nation such that "foreign" cultural influences are absorbed and transformed by (dominant) cultural genes".[199] The incorporation of globally recognized symbols, mediated through the avenues of popular culture, situates this identity in a way that does not actively oppose the West.

Widespread viewership throughout Asia and consumption of products and styles from South Korea, however, be linked to a regional identity in the same way in which Koichi Iwabuchi discusses "cultural proximity" (Iwabuchi, 2005) Koreans as Asians are still seen as an "other", but are not quite as culturally distant from China as Western culture. The success of Korean programming in China over Western television shows suggests that for a greater number of viewers Korea is a more domesticated "other". One cannot deny the influence of Western culture on Korea, but the process of glocalization infuses media with values suited for a Korean audience.

New York Times reporter Norimitsu Onishi has suggested that, "South Korea is acting as a filter for Western values... making them more palatable to Chinese and other Asians".[200] While still not entirely accurate, the "filter" argument does not carry the same antagonistic flavor as the "competition" conclusion theorized by NPR. Given South Korea's recent historical ties to the United States, one writer has claimed that South Korean society is," deeply influenced by Confucian culture, and has been baptized in American culture."[201] While producers of Korean media may not consciously insert Western values into television dramas, prolonged exposure to Western media and culture in Korea has created the opportunity for non-traditional values and original themes in television programming. However, because Chinese audiences and viewers across Asia

[199] Keane, 89.
[200] Onishi, "A Rising Korean Wave..."
[201] Gu, 61.

can relate to Korean television serials, it does not necessarily mean that Western dramas are soon to follow.

It is important for scholars and others who analyze the Korean Wave to remember that writers, musicians and actors are artists, who draw their inspiration from the world around them, in both global and local arenas. The increasing ease with which individuals can access global popular culture ensures that cultural meaning given to values and social expectation will shift from time to time. There is not an inherent "Asian formula" nor can one assume that South Korean producers are striving to render Western values more palatable to Asian viewers. Michael Richards has asserted that, "If one has to assert the "Asian-ness" in Korean dramas, it might be the corporeal proximity, as well as stress on familial values, as well as the subtle or "conservative" expression of love and sexuality that are rich in the dramas." [202] Yet, even these aspects of "Asian-ness" have not rendered Korean drama so different from other forms of melodrama that they cannot be enjoyed elsewhere. The fact that so many global cultures consume Korean dramas points to alternative reasons for identification.

Although the Korean Wave has held mass appeal for people and cultures throughout Asia, Korean dramas do not necessarily reinforce a "Pan-Asian identity". Rather, they reveal the complexity of social interactions within a rapidly changing mass culture; which in turn appeals to a wide audience. "The erosion of structures, previously taken for granted, often leads to a search for a new social identity that can become the construction or reconstruction of a sense of national identity".[203] The fact that many Asian countries import these dramas does not support the idea of a "Pan-Asian identity" which is

[202] Leung, 13.
[203] Richards, 30.

diametrically opposed to Western ideas and influences, rather it identifies an attempt to deal with rapid modernization and the simultaneous need for support of local culture.

The "Confucian root" argument, "Pan Asian Identity" and the theory of economic ties cannot *fully* explain viewership practice because they do not take into account historical and social accounts of Korean drama viewership. That Confucianism developed in distinct ways from the original Chinese manifestation has had a crucial and significant impact on the Korean Confucian tradition, and renders it divergent from its predecessor. To theorize that modern audiences are attracted to these dramas *only* because of a historically shared link is unsubstantiated in that these audiences are undergoing varying processes of change, and have encountered varying shades of modernization and economic development. However, the idea that melodrama relates across national and cultural boundaries is crucial in that this conclusion acknowledges individual audience readings and the possibility of a multitude of interpretations. As will be addressed in the next chapter, assessing the audience as a shifting, individual oriented fan base is a crucial part in deconstructing essentialist arguments for drama viewership. Overall, the "Confucian root" argument does not completely define viewership activities, nor does it confront individual agency in choosing one's leisure activities or active participation in the Korean Wave movement. However, we cannot completely rule out a similar sense of "Asian values" or a pan-Asian sense of modernization which may be a part of audience attraction to Korean drama.

Chapter Five:
Identifying Key Factors of Viewership Practices

Often, over-simplified theories or those used as a catch-all method for determining audience attraction are insufficient in explaining the phenomenon of the Korean Wave. The insufficiency of arguments such as the "Confucian root" theory stems from disregard for the heart of this issue: why people watch television in the first place. Melodrama is easily relatable across cultures, as in the Japanese and Brazilian dramas which were popular in China (discussed in Chapter 2). As Gans acknowledges, "creators of popular culture, faced with a heterogonous audience, must appeal to the aesthetic standards it holds common and emphasize content that will be meaningful to as many in the audience as possible."[204] Gans' idea of taste cultures challenges notions of "high culture" and gives legitimacy to melodrama and other forms of "popular culture" (which are often seen as "low culture"). In agreement with Gans, in this chapter I would like to argue that audience agency and the ability to identify with characters within each melodrama is of more importance than the "Confucian root" argument in shaping viewership and activities based on fandom.

In Ien Ang's *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination,* Ang searches for the key aspects which guide audience members in the Netherlands to watch the American TV drama "Dallas". In her research, she acknowledges that, "nobody is forced to watch television; at most, people can be led to it by effective advertising. What then are the determining factors of this enjoyment, this pleasure?"[205] Although Ang's

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[204] Gans, Herbert J. *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste.* New York: Basic Books, 1999.
[205] Ang, 9.

analysis deals primarily with a predominantly Western culture, the methods she uses to confront the issues of audience and viewership are fundamental for a broader understanding of why people in China may choose to watch Korean drama.

In her analysis, Ang cites Pierre Bourdieu's theory concerning popular consumption as being characterized by emotional involvement. In this way, emotional investments and identification are central to the idea of "pleasure-viewing". "What matters is the possibility of identifying oneself with it in some way or other, to integrate it into everyday life. In other words, popular pleasure is first and foremost a pleasure of recognition."[206] Ien Ang's *Watching Dallas* and *Youna Kim's Women, Television & Everyday Life in Korea*[207], both incorporate women's recognition and "pleasure-viewing" of TV dramas as a main part of their analysis. As was discussed, there are several similarities between Korea and China in that both societies are confronted with a mix of traditional values and modern expectations.

In watching Korean dramas, Chinese women achieve recognition by identifying with the same pressures and concerns of the female protagonist and sharing in her triumphs and tribulations. TV drama and soap opera viewing allows audience members to temporarily escape real life social conditions and pressures in order to delve into "reel life" drama. "Entertainment belongs to the domain of leisure, and leisure is regarded in the everyday experiential world as "time for yourself", as liberation from the chafing bonds of the official world of factory, school or office, or from the worries of running the home." [208] People may be lured into watching certain programs through

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[206] Ang, 20.
[207] Youna Kim. *Women, Television & Everyday Life in Korea: Journeys of Hope.* (New York: Routledge), 2005.
[208] Ang, 21.

advertisement or promotions, but it is a sense of self recognition and pleasure which keeps audience members devoted to certain types of television programming. In many cases, this medium serves as a private space for projected self analysis and provides the opportunity for a cathartic release of emotion.

In conducting her research, Youna Kim interviewed a sample of women in their 20's, 30's, and 50's, across various socio-economic backgrounds. In this ethnography of Korean women watching Korean dramas, Youna Kim addresses the lack of audience oriented research and "women as audiences" in general.[209] Within her sample, the most dominant type of Korean drama was family or "home dramas", which may be due to the age range of her informants. Mini dramas, which are shorter and focus on young women, also include a variety of popular themes which address the modern working woman. Kim believes that this reflects changing gender roles and shifting desires.[210] According to Kim, "Korean drama fascinates as its familiar and recognizable form meets the socio-psychological needs and desires of the women viewers struggling to make sense of the human condition of modern life." [211] That these dramas tend to focus on the trials of ordinary life, despite the affluence of some of the main characters, is part of their attraction in that the audience can empathize with humanistic qualities therein.

Although women in their 30's and 50's increasingly turned toward television as a means of leisure and "pleasure-viewing", younger audiences were more critical of the content. Dramas "trigger a debate on changes in the gender regime....and feminism found in young women's critical engagement with television drama." [212] Women in their 20's

[209] Kim, Youna, 19.
[210] Ibid, 23.
[211] Ibid, 96.
[212] Ibid, 109.

preferred "real life" situations to "reel life" situations and discussed areas of each drama where they disagreed with character portrayals. These women were seen as, "manifesting a sharply critical and cynical stance towards the stereotypical, impotent images of women on primetime drama." [213] Acknowledging opposition within the audience is important in that these young women are actively engaging in an analysis of the drama. Whether this analysis is positive or negative reveals the agency of individual audience members and the power of personal interpretations. For these women, "real-life desires in this context are interwoven with the particular ways in which they experience and interpret television dramas."[214] Those young women who are active consumers of television dramas, and even those who are not, form an opinion based on certain characterizations, personal experience, level of engagement, prominence of television viewing in one's leisure activities, and other factors.

In Kim's study, women in their 30's and 50's watched television as a "ritualized practice" and were seen as being directed by a "discursive defense of tradition". [215] In Kim's view, these women were searching for emotional intimacy and the ability for dramas to "always be there" for viewers. Husbands are seen as having "socio-cultural power" over television and media viewing within the household. Women carve spaces for self reflection and criticism through their viewership practices. In particular, women's discussion of television viewing is a "displacement of internal private talks" and addresses the issue of emotional intimacy, or lack thereof. [216] Comparing older and younger audience member interpretations expose different needs and meanings derived

[213] Kim, Youna, 107.
[214] Ibid, 107.
[215] Ibid, 202.
[216] Ibid, 58-9.

from Korean drama viewership. Older women are more sympathetic towards mother figures and maternal characters. Kim writes that this identification with her powerlessness is a "symbolic mirror of ourselves."[217] These sites of struggle over generational difference and family crisis invoke exchanges on morality, whether on an individual basis or during group discussion. "These women's complaints, an expression of acute pain and hopelessness, reflect the misery of everyday life". [218]

Kim's theory of the "misery of everyday life" lies in the depiction and reality of the traditional Korean mother figure, who is marked by "self sacrifice" and whose existence is in constant conflict with modernity.[219] Tradition embodied in female character identity is constantly reconfirmed and emphasized in family dramas, through identification with the home and specific domestic activities such as food preparation, cleaning, and maintaining peace within the family. Kim's study supports the idea that television is an extension of social organization which reveals cultural and familial patterns. While women in their 50's were depicted as relying upon television programming as a method of symbolic power, women in their 20's and 30's as transitioning from tradition to modernity or rejecting tradition in favor of modernity. Opposition to viewership practice is seen in all age groups, but the most crucial facet of Kim's study is the multitude of interpretations, possibility of cathartic release, and the role of discussion in analyzing dramatic content as self or social reflection.

Similar to the women Kim interviewed in Korea, Chinese audiences also exhibit a skewed demographic when comparing type of drama watched with age range. Typically family dramas are preferred by older women, while younger women prefer mini dramas

[217] Kim Youna, 73.
[218] Ibid, 59.
[219] Ibid, 72.

which feature couples in their late teens to early thirties. While the "misery of everyday life" theory may not necessarily apply to Chinese wives, similar trends of resistance can be evaluated. The incident mentioned in chapter 1 which occurred in Nanjing, China, is one such form of resistance against male domination over leisure activities – particularly television viewership. That the woman threatened her husband with her own mortality in protest to his domination over her leisure activities is an active method of struggle. The women in Kim's study used discussion. based methods of symbolic power, and the woman from Nanjing also acted against her husband through the symbolic act of potential drowning. While not all married Korean or Chinese women resort to such drastic measures, active communities of Korean drama participants who can relate their experience of viewership create an outlet for real life stresses by relating their "reel life" critiques and praise.

In China, commercialization of media and the introduction of foreign dramas are seen as creating "new spaces of expression" or "breathing spaces" for audience members. [220] Within this space, the audience has room for individual pursuits of pleasure and leisure. However, "this is not to entertain a naïve idea that market forces have initiated a process of peaceful evolution in China where the media have modeled themselves on the liberal media in Western capitalist societies."[221] As was discussed in chapter 1, the media industry is regulated through the state and censorship is still practiced on media the government deems unfit or morally corrosive. However, pirated materials and even those dramas shown on Chinese television offer viewers a site upon which to relax, reflect and relate. "There are reports of high levels of emotional investment in watching soap operas,

[220] Ma, 26.
[221] Ibid.

even to an extent that an intermitted broadcast of a drama serial leads to demonstrations in the street."[222] Popular culture has opened an avenue of social expression and room outside of the state. Media as a cultural intermediary is introducing new lifestyles and various forms of freedom. The freedom to dissent or rebel against male authorities in the case of drama viewers, whether symbolically or literally, is a form of autonomy provided by media forces for women in both China and Korea. Rebellion is not necessarily the only freedom offered through Korean drama viewership, however, as cathartic releases of emotion, identification with various characters or situations, music, acting and other aesthetic techniques can also be attractive features.

Korean Drama and Gender

Modern gender hierarchy has been attributed to the masculinization of skilled labor under militaristic rule, which created new concepts of femininity and masculinity between the 1960's and 1980's in South Korea.[223] Modern notions of the male as provider and females as consumers and housewives were actively employed in textbooks and other state controlled institutions. "The mass media also tended to represent women primarily as housewives...prime-time sitcoms or soap operas, for which women made up the majority of audience, depicted married women as housewives." [224] The typical heroine in fictional stories published in women's magazines were unhappy, single women who performed household duties or worked a low status job.[225] Single and married female characters in these melodramas dealt with relationships and family in the

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[222] Ma, 30.
[223] Seungsook Moon, *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 64.
[224] Ibid, 65.
[225] Ibid.

same manner as those portrayed in Korean drama today. These gender hierarchies are said to have become firmly entrenched in Korean culture by the end of the 1980's. Perhaps tension from these highly gendered constructions of social organization is released through Korean drama viewership. The emotional and melodramatic tales of ordinary women both reinforce these gendered roles, and create an outlet for female viewers to reflect on these social conditions.

In analyzing gendered audiences and female viewership, John Fiske asserts that meanings derived from television programming are widely divergent as audience members read the "text" differently. Decoding this text is determined by audience members' past experiences and expectations. Mediated in this fashion, media takes on different meanings for these "active audiences" who interpret them. "To be popular, the television text has to be read and enjoyed by a diversity of social groups, so its meanings must be capable of being inflected in a number of different ways" [226] In this way, labeling Korean drama viewership as a "Confucian" practice takes away from the fact that the audience is engaging in an activity with personal meanings, different areas of knowledge, prejudice or as in the case of anti-Korean wave viewers, opposition. Subcultural, subjective viewer identification with a particular television program is not a direct result of dominant ideologies imbedded in the text. "Resulting meanings will thus be determined more by the social situation of the decoder than by that of the encoder." [227]

However, Fiske acknowledges that different textual strategies may be used to target a specific demographic and that soap opera represents an area where although viewers can ascertain personal meanings television producers have succeeded in creating a gendered

[226] Fiske, John. *Television Culture.* (London: Routledge, 1987), 66.
[227] Ibid, 65.

form of media. Fiske explains that the multiplicity of soap opera formats and plots work through an "infinitely extended middle" which enables the narrative to follow a series of disruptions that forces the characters into a world of continuous disorder where "the equilibrium of a happy, stable family is constantly there in the background but is never achieved." [228] He explains that double evaluations and the multiple lenses through which one can view situations within the dramas create an open space for evaluation and identification on the part of the viewer.

Drama and soap operas are further gendered, according to Fiske, in that they often consider the theme of subverting patriarchal powers and body language, which is generally considered a feminine characteristic. In soap operas, "the screen is full of close-ups of faces...The camera lingers on the telling expression, giving the viewers time not just to experience the emotion of the character, but to imagine what constitutes that emotion." [229] Similarly, close-up expressions between Korean drama actors and actresses, close-up faces streaming with tears, twisted in anger, or fraught with longing heighten audience awareness as to the characters' true intentions. Fiske also identifies different "regimes of watching" wherein viewers have multiple modes of reception based on the context or situation and level of attention they attribute to the act of viewing. Those people who are reading, cleaning, talking or leave their televisions on as "background noise" are experiencing different "regimes" and therefore will have different experiences and may draw different inferences to interpret what they are viewing.

These gendered constructions do not necessarily rule out males as audience members. Although women are the primary and target audience for melodrama, some

[228] Fiske, 180.
[229] Ibid, 183.

dramas have attracted the attention of male viewers. Despite the fact that an overwhelming majority of Korean drama fans are women, the most widely viewed Korean drama in China across all age groups captured the attention of both men and women. "A Jewel in the Palace", a story about a woman who rises from the position of royal cook to the position of royal nurse, achieved the highest ratings of any Korean drama ever broadcast on Chinese television. Some attribute the success of "A Jewel in the Palace" to the fact that it captures the spirit of ancient times and customs, dating back to a period where Chinese and Korean values were very similar.

Chinese President Hu Jintao, as well as Hong Kong film stars Chow Yun Fat and Andy Lau publicly announced that they were fans of this drama. "The heroine's struggle for overcoming hierarchy of the society and struggle for victory is fascinating male viewers."[230] Since this series topped the TV ratings chart until its final broadcast, China Youth Daily went so far as to declare that, "all Chinese people love it".[231] . Although this popular Korean drama deviated from the standard 16-24 episode format, and invoked Confucian rhetoric and hierarchy, as well as period costume, it achieved overwhelming success due to identification and interest in "pleasure viewing" on the part of the audience. Although most married women prefer family drama, and single women prefer dramas targeted for youth driven markets, this drama fit the niche between both by situating the female protagonist outside of the domestic arena in an environment where she must constantly strive to prove and improve her skill.

Many Korean dramas are told from the female protagonist's point of view, or are sympathetic to her plight. For the most part, men are portrayed as either cold and

[230] Park, "The Power of..."
[231] Ibid.

dominating, or overtly immature. Although they shake these negative qualities toward the end of the series, their actions serve to enhance the female protagonist's struggle. While it may be easy for women to involve themselves in the "reel lives" of women in romantic comedy or melodrama oriented television programs, most men are not attracted to this kind of "pleasure-viewing". "It is in the actual confrontation between viewer and programme that pleasure is primarily generated." [232] This general plot line enables women to place themselves in the female protagonist's place and share in her feelings. "To watch a serial is much more than seeing it: it is also involving oneself in it, letting oneself be held in suspense, sharing the feelings of the characters, discussing their psychological motivations and their conduct, deciding whether they are right or wrong, in other words living "their world".[233]

The ability to laugh and cry with the characters renders this medium pleasurable and allows for personal recognition. It is for these reasons that most Korean TV dramas featuring family-centered or romantic stories are enjoyed by women in China and Korea. The reason, according to Lisa Leung, why Korean dramas are so appealing to women is that,

> "They are rich with urban scenes as representations of 'modernization', while infused with portrayals of familial values, demonstrating the example of "Asianized modernity". On the other hand, their slow pace appeals to those (often older audience) who need nostalgia in a fast tempo reality; but manage to attract the bored younger audience with rich visuals and idols, with romance that bespeak innocence and intensity. In this way, Korean dramas manage to "provide something for everyone", combining age-old formulae of melodrama and romance with elements necessary to different target audience: young and old, urban and rural, most often women, but also for cultures of different stages of economic development." [234]

Inherent in Korean drama is a symbolic representation of modern social issues. "[Within Korean drama and Korean society] there is a complex interplay and co-existence of

[232] Ang, 10.
[233] Ibid, 28.
[234] Leung, 11.

tradition and modernity."[235] Both family dramas concerning family and those which cater to the tastes of younger women have the same underlying features. In family dramas, the mother figure attempts to deal with the conflict between traditional social expectations and individual desires. One of Youna Kim's interviewees explained, "While watching [a Korean drama] I can feel *myself* there. Like her, I also lived oppressed under the order of my husband. I feel, "she's just like me!" I see myself in her."[236] Likewise changing expectations as to the role of wife and mother, especially contentment in marriage, appeal to women in China.

As women in China attempt to deal with a modern identity while confronting traditional obligations, there is a need for support on the part of the family. No longer is a Chinese woman expected to devote her entire life to her family. Over the past twenty years, an increasing number of women have sought careers outside the home, rendering the institute of marriage one of partnership rather than self-sacrifice. While there are several women who actively engage in careers, many still occupy the traditional roles of wife and mother. Divorce rates in China are at their highest, due to shifting perspectives and new expectations of married life.

Although women no longer face social stigmatization after divorce, it is significantly harder for women than men to remarry. "Part of the broader problem, both women and men say, is that Chinese society does not teach men to treat their wives well."[237] In an interview for the New York Times, Ms. Lan, 40, explained why she had decided to divorce her husband, "My husband was a good worker, a good son to his parents, a good

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[235] Kim, Youna, 27.
[236] Ibid, 72.
[237] Seth Faison,"Divorce in Modern China". *New York Times*, 22 August 1994. http://acc6.its.brooklyn.cuny.edu/~phalsall/texts/chinwomn.html (04 August 2007)

father to his son, and a terrible husband." [238] Although Ms. Lan was confident that she had made the right decision, she advised friends not to follow her example due to subsequent difficulties in raising her son alone and finding another husband. Another woman who was interviewed described how her husband attempted to pacify her with gifts when she found out he was having an affair. "I don't know what do...I want to rely on myself, but I don't want to have a less comfortable life."[239] For these women, viewing Korean drama can be seen as a method of both identification and escapism. In viewing Korean dramas, they may either identify with the character of the harried housewife, or seek the independence and freedom of younger female protagonists. In either situation, there is an emotional investment in the characters on the part of the viewer.

Foreign Representations and Drama Viewership

Ien Ang suggests that, "any form of pleasure is constructed and functions in a specific social and historical context"[240] In this way, we can understand how individual values, commercial culture industries, and television viewing as an "object for pleasurable consumption" intersect on various levels. One might ask why Korean dramas were able to enter the Chinese market whereas programs from other foreign countries could not achieve this level of success. Prior to the Korean Wave, Hong Kong dramas and cinema, as well as Japanese products occupied this particular niche. Lisa Leung explains why the Japanese Wave did not attract as widespread an audience as the Korean Wave by acknowledging historical animosity, especially on the part of older audience members. "Apart from this comparative advantage, Korean dramas seem to somehow enjoy the sense of solidarity that some audience have towards a country that shared a similar

[238] Faison.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Ang, 19.

colonial past."[241] Although Japan was formerly looked upon as the pinnacle of Asian modernization, a combination of several economic slumps and a complicated past have caused the decline of the Japanese Wave in China.

Although Hong Kong period dramas tend to be popular among older television viewers, especially diasporic audiences, the appeal of Hong Kong has diminished for younger viewers. Lisa Leung interviewed one woman in her 30's who confessed that,"...the actors and actresses are too real to me. In Hong Kong when we know so much about their private life, there is nothing mysterious about them. On the contrary, the Korean characters are distant."[242] According to Ms. Leung, dramas serve as a space for extending fantasy within a global perspective. As her research has shown, Korean culture is "distant" as far as Chinese people are concerned. Areas with historical enmity or those of close proximity are harder to identify with whereas Korea represents a modernized society with a similar past.

American dramas are considered to be too alien, or too controversial for Chinese audience identification. When Desperate Housewives was aired in China, racier parts of the drama were cut out and the remaining script "teeming with contemporary American cultural references" left most Chinese viewers confused.[243] While this earned Desperate Housewives poor ratings nationwide, there is a small community of fans who are able to discuss unedited versions they have seen on pirated VCDs and internet downloads. As reported in a newspaper article for South China Morning Post in 2006, "according to one Chinese viewer, 42 year old sales manager Zhang Haihong, the scenarios are implausible: a harried mother constantly takes abuse from her four children; a rich, married woman

[241] Leung, 11.
[242] Ibid, 12.
[243] Goff.

has an affair with a teenage gardener; a single mother takes sex advice from her adolescent daughter."[244] If television drama viewership were primarily concerned with escapist fantasy, then surely a drama featuring a distant, unfamiliar culture would attract high ratings. Since viewership is hinged upon a variety of factors, one of which is identification or personal appeal, a television series cannot be too irrelevant to people's everyday lives. As Zhang explained in his interview about Desperate Housewives, "it's not like that in China. America is very different" [245]

Korea, on the other hand, has had more historically amicable ties with China. Although South Korea is adjacent to China, Korean culture is construed as neither familiar nor completely foreign. Lisa Leung accurately describes the "the somehow deemed "Korean formula", which is "slow pace, glamorized professions, intense serendipitous romance, and tragedy, but packaged with the coating of aestheticized and idols-laden setting..."[246] However widespread the attraction to Korean drama among female viewers in China, there are still some who protest or otherwise criticize the Korean Wave. Hong Kong actor Jackie Chan and popular singer Chang Na-ra insisted that Chinese media support more Chinese programs and actors, in order to compete with the Korean Wave. [247] Chang Na-ra, stated, "many times, I found that Chinese dramas or entertainers are neglected or unwelcome in Korea as opposed to Korean entertainers who are well received in China. It is important to give more attention to cultural products and stars from other Asian countries."[248] Regardless of the popularity of Korean drama among other stars and Chinese viewers, these critics express a growing concern for the

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[244] Goff.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Leung, 13.
[247] Park, "The Power of Korean..."
[248] Ibid.

fate of Chinese media in the wake of global market forces. New quotas on Korean dramas have not curbed demand, however, as piracy discussed in chapters 1 and 2 ensures that fans can access Korean media using a variety of methods.

Does Korean Drama Exploit Women?

Along with critics who aim to protect Chinese media, some claim that Korean drama viewing actually reinforces negative values. The plot of Korean dramas which feature young women who fall for powerful but naïve men is a frustration for Khang, Hyun-sung, of the South China Morning Post. He writes,

> "against his better instincts (and all rationality), however, the man succumbs to the irresistible charms of the girl. He marries her, saving her from poverty, and they live happily ever after. These dramas involve not only a willing suspension of disbelief, but also require viewers to place reason, logic and intelligence on temporary hold." [249]

Aside from the numerous explanations for viewership cited in this paper, the obvious reason that some people like to use television as a form of relaxation, as an escape into the "reel world", make Zhang's statement about a "willing suspension of disbelief" true. However, to combine television and cognizance in the form of "reason, logic and intelligence" is a poor attempt to extract a deeper meaning from a form of leisure and relaxation, as well as to criticize Korean drama fans for their choice in entertainment. The fact that women *choose* to watch Korean drama and enjoy doing so rules out many chances for exploitation.

Moreover, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, these dramas provide sites for reflection, discussion and rebellion for those viewers who choose to participate in Korean wave culture. "The source of phenomenal pleasure from Korean drama comes from its particular relevance to the everyday life and greater emotional affinity to their everyday

[249] Khang Hyun-sung. "The Fairer Sex." *South China Morning Post*, 24 June 2000, 23.

experiences." [250] If there is any suspension of belief, this escapist practice does not necessarily create mindless dupes, who are incapable of separating reality from "reel life". Despite the tendency toward fantasy, these dramas allow viewers to engage both favorably and critically about what they have watched.

An ethnographic study of soap opera fans reveals that women, although discouraged from viewing dramas by their husbands, still actively engaged in drama viewership and discussed their "pleasure-viewing" with other women. Researchers found that some husbands made their wives feel shameful about watching Korean dramas, which prompted women to watch them late in the evening after the family had gone to bed.[251] Relating drama viewing to the "choice of a housemaid" lead women to seek alternative methods of viewership pleasure, which is a symbolic act of rebellion against the dominant patriarchal figure. [252] Ethnographers Lee and Cho also found that many women had formed a video club as a "potential means of resistance". During these meetings, women discussed drama plots, star gossip, and personal concerns, and admitted to talking throughout the drama and re-watching episodes later by themselves.[253] Lee and Cho concluded that oral culture plays a large role in constructing meanings from these pleasure-oriented viewing activities and that participation in movie clubs were an opportunity for fans to relate their social experiences through the avenue of drama.

Similarly Chinese women are able to relate their experiences with Korean drama viewership through the avenues of personal conversation and alternative outlets such as

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[250] Kim, Youna, 99.
[251] Lee Minu and Chong Heup Cho, "Women Watching Together: An Ethnographic Study of Korean Soap Opera Fans in the United States." in *Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Text-Reader,* ed.s, Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez, (California: Sage Publications, 1995), 356.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Ibid, 356-7.

fan boards and internet fan sites. Sharing the emotional or critical response to melodramatic content is a cathartic and escapist arena where personal convictions regulate a space of freedom. Women are not simply brainwashed by global or local media forces in that they have the choice to view or not view Korean dramas. In analyzing why Chinese people might watch melodrama, Timothy Craig asserted,"...cross-cultural studies have demonstrated, teledramas (or telenovellas) appeal to popular tastes worldwide by telling stories of community life in the vernacular, and in doing so they organize social reality as a shared experience. [254] These dramas reflect normative behavior and values, yet offer a modernized and aestheticized view of South Korea with which women can invest emotion in particular characterizations of the modern female condition.

One must wonder about the role of media programmers in constructing fan-based consumption of Korean dramas. It is true that agency can be constructed through the media, but individuals ultimately choose what to watch. Brand marketers use what they call "brand personality" to attract a target audience based on a certain age and gender.

> "Brand personality influences the benefits of consumer attributes and further stimulates brand attitude. Therefore, a general attitude of overall satisfaction/liking toward the brand may be derived from relevant brand personality dimensions) and image (brand image as a subjective, perceptual phenomenon of brand that is reflected by a network of associations in the memory of the consumers) are key factors in affecting consumer response." [255]

While these factors do have some effect on consumer response, not all of that response is positive. In any niche market, a certain brand "personality" or "attitude" may sell more than any other image, theme, or type. However, individuals may choose to follow this

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[254] Craig, 131.
[255] Chang Pao Long and Ming Hua Chiang. "Building Consumer-Brand Relationship: A Cross-Cultural Experiential View". *Psychology & Marketing* (Volume 23, November 2006), 934.

standard or deviate. Individuals, as active consumers, have varied responses to "brand personality".

Regardless of several attempts to identify key reasons why Korean programs achieved high ratings in China, none consider the basis for why viewers choose to watch television in the first place. While global influence leads to glocalization, the viewer's draw to examine foreign media is not merely curiosity or escapism, but to find satisfaction in areas where domestically produced entertainment may be lacking. Many South Korean television dramas depict the lives and circumstances of common people in a society where tradition, expectation and modern obligations are in a state of flux. No one claims that the media doesn't affect people, but the media's effect on viewers is not absolute and the catalyst for fads and fashions cannot be completely resolved using one theory or another. Instead, one must recognize the many facets that prompt viewer attraction. Identification on the part of audience members and the ability to extract unique interpretations from a "textual" analysis of the medium are infinite and unable to be explained using one theory or another. The fact that people choose to watch certain forms of entertainment and create personal meanings and critiques rules out the arguments that television can be completely gendered or controlled by mass market forces. Television viewership as a pleasure oriented activity grants its participants an opportunity to construct distinctive meanings and experiences through individual reflection and group discussion.

Conclusion

Korean television drama and other imports can either positively or negatively influence Chinese consumers. Viewer response to media has become increasingly difficult to measure and cannot be fully explained with theories such as the "Confucian root" and other arguments. Due to the overwhelming amount of pirated media and internet databases and sharing sites, those rating indexes formerly used to determine audience reception are not as dependable as in previous years. Although Chinese authorities have enforced quotas on the content and availability of Korean drama, methods to circumvent these limitations remain powerful methods for disseminating dramatic content to fans. It is almost impossible to state why such a widespread audience is attracted to a particular form of television viewing, particularly as a leisure activity. However, the "addictive" qualities of Korean drama viewership in China can be analyzed and explored as long as one uses a method which acknowledges opposition and individual agency.

Korean dramas reflect the complexities and contradictions in Asian societies which are currently experiencing the process of modernization and urban development. Cultural issues inherent in these dramas relate to social conditions and contradictions inherent in both Chinese and Korean society. Korean drama as a multi-layered medium with an abundance of possible interpretations renders it easily relatable across many socio-economic boundaries. Within the Korean drama fan community there are several outlets for fandom and viewership based on consumer activities and participation in fan communities. Myriad interpretations an individual can derive from dramatic series aids in

an "infinitely extended middle", which incorporates and facilitates an open dialogue about certain dramas, stars, and associated cultural products.

The emergence of cosmetic surgery and the beauty industry as a result of Korean drama viewership and Korean Wave culture is one manifestation of a cultural product which has become normative due to popular media and reinforcement of beauty ideal. China's burgeoning middle class and the push for modernization has propelled the beauty industry in ways previously unacceptable or unavailable. With increased spending power, many Chinese consumers are able to purchase goods and services which enhance their own sense of self awareness and esteem. A realization of one's self image, whether through the use of plastic surgery techniques or Korean drama dialogue associated with drama watching groups and internet forums has become an important social outlet for Chinese women of middle to upper class status. Empowerment related to these procedures stems from embedded local techniques, and cosmetic constructions, which are divergent from Western forms. It is ultimately consumer agency and the capability to alter one's appearance which leads to this self-actualization.

Arguments for why women choose to participate in Korean Wave associated consumer practices, such as the purchase of Korean style clothing or plastic surgery, cannot be explained by the "Confucian root" argument nor any other theory posited by those scholars mentioned in chapter 4. These theories do not take into account cultural and social accounts of Korean drama viewership, nor do they grant audiences agency to oppose or re-create meanings on an individual level. To posit that modern audiences are attracted to Korean dramas because of a historic link is unsubstantiated given the present effort to modernize and promote economic development. Acknowledging an individual

oriented fan base is the keystone for understanding the Korean Wave phenomenon in China, as well as in deconstructing essentialist assertions for drama viewership.

Although there have been several theories for why Korean dramas achieved such widespread success in China, none consider the audience as a primarily pleasure or leisure oriented group of individuals. South Korean television dramas depict the lives of ordinary people in a society where social expectations are in a state of instability. One must recognize the many facets that prompt viewer attraction, and that individual identification on the part of audience members as well as the extraction of personal interpretations of media is immeasurable. That audience members create their own meanings from dramas yet can relate across various planes of attraction is part of a complex and often contradictory system by which media viewers relate to the medium. Korean drama viewership is a platform upon which those who participate can construct distinctive meanings and experiences through personal interpretation and group discussion.

To relegate this form of leisure oriented activity to an ideology as conflicted and historically altered as "Confucianism" is not only unsubstantiated but completely disregards audience agency. Korean drama viewership in China is as complex and intricate as the viewers themselves. It is impossible to pin down one method for attraction, yet we can identify that a combination of aesthetic lifestyles, musical interludes, star presence and acting, ability to provide cathartic release and the very possibility of rebellion or symbolic power, as well as the opportunity for the audience to extract various meanings from the medium, renders these dramas open to audience interpretations and attractive or "addictive" in a multitude of manners.

In viewing these many discourses concerning the Korean Wave in China, one can positively assert that the reasons for viewership are complex. A mix of shared values and individual attraction fuel viewership practices, as well as an idealized sense of modernity all play a part in some viewers' preference for melodrama. Is melodrama, then, a medium that permeates many different boundaries? Perhaps melodrama as a somewhat formulaic and ultimately emotional medium appeals to viewers on a wide spectrum, but I believe that in the case of Korean drama viewership is derived from a sense of cultural proximity and aesthetic value which drive viewership practices.

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