

Children's Television Programs in China:

A Discourse of Success and Modernity

By

Kara Chan, PhD*

Professor

Department of Communication Studies

Hong Kong Baptist University

Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong

Telephone: (852) 3411-7836 Fax: (852) 3411-7890

Email: karachan@hkbu.edu.hk

Fanny Chan

MPhil. Graduate

Department of Communication Studies

Hong Kong Baptist University

Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong

Email: 03414329@hkbu.edu.hk

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Kara Chan (PhD, City University of Hong Kong) is Professor at the Department of Communication Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University. Her research interests include cross-cultural advertising, media discourses and consumer behavior. She is co-author of the book *"Advertising to children in China"* (Chinese University Press) and the editor of the book *"Advertising and Hong Kong Society"*. She worked over ten years in the advertising and public relations industry and as a statistician for the Hong Kong Government before she joined the academia.

Fanny Chan is MPhil graduate at the Department of Communication Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University. She graduated from the University of Hong Kong with her major in Psychology and minors in Statistics and Media Studies.

*Please send all correspondence to this author.

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Abstract

Television is an important socializing agent for children because children rely heavily on mass media to understand about the environment and to learn about acceptable norms in the society. The current study attempts to investigate how values such as success and modernity are being portrayed in Chinese children's television programs. A week of children's television programs broadcast on CCTV in May 2003 was analyzed using textual and discourse analysis. The study argued that children's media reflected the hybridization strategies adopted by the Chinese government. It showed that the Chinese authority wants to maintain traditional values of yielding to the authority while at the same time modernized values of societal progression. Major themes including the glorification of collective success, the legitimization of competition as a mean for success, and the importance of modernity to a successful nation were illustrated in the sampled programs.

Introduction

The economic development of China has been rapid and impressive in the past two decades. China's Gross National Product (GNP) reached 94,346 billion Yuan in year 2001

(China Infobank, 2003). With a 8.2 percent increase in Gross Domestic product (GDP) in the first half of 2003, China has become the country with the world's fastest growing economy. It overtook the United States in 2002 as the prime destination for foreign direct investment (Knyge, 2003). With 1.4 billion people, China is the fastest growing and largest potential market in the world (Chan & Cheng, 2002).

Since China adopted the Open Policy in early 1980s, there are tremendous opportunities for Chinese people to come into contact with Western values through mass media and personal communication. The Chinese government desperately wants to learn the Western technology but at the same time worries about spiritual pollution by the Western values. Chinese politicians also worry about the loss of traditional Chinese values to the forces of modernization (Bond, 1991).

The characteristics of modernization extend beyond an orientation towards technical mastery and scientific intelligence. Yang (1988) developed a list of modernization attributes that included anti-fatalism, egalitarianism in interpersonal relationship, an openness to innovation and change, the belief in gender equality, high achievement motivation, independence, a future orientation, a high need for information, the propensity to take risks in life and high educational aspirations. Some scholars believed that traditional Chinese values could co-exist with modernized values. A modern Chinese was perceived as someone who endorses modernized values but at the same time retains traditional Chinese values including

the virtues of sexual propriety, devotion to the family, filial piety, political inert and social introversion. A modern Chinese is believed to be different from a traditional Chinese who also values thrift, social harmony and authoritarianism (Bond, 1991). In other words, hybridization is an alternative to the sole endorsement of either traditional Chinese or Western values.

Media contents play a major role in shaping audiences' value orientation. For example, a survey has demonstrated that exposure to advertisements and media were related to audiences' acceptance of two newly emerged consumerist values -- quality consumption and innovative consumption (Paek & Pan, 2004). Television is an important socializing agent for children because children rely heavily on mass media to understand about the environment and to learn about acceptable norms in the society. The current study aims at investigating how modernized values such as success and modernity are portrayed in Chinese children's television programs. The objectives of this study are as follows,

1. to examine the major themes related with success and modernity;
2. to examine how the values related with success are framed by using Hofstede's framework of cultural dimensions.

This chapter consists of three parts. The first part examines media usage and the role of television among children's lives. The second part provides a brief profile of children's programs in China. The third part discusses the results of a discourse analysis of a typical week of children's television programs. Major themes including the glorification of collective

success, the legitimization of competition as a mean for success, and the importance of modernity to a successful nation are illustrated and elaborated.

Media usage and the role of television among children

The household penetration rate for television in China 2002 was 99.5 percent (China Infobank, 2003). This indicates that nearly every Chinese family has at least one television set. The television audience in China reached 1.1 billion in 2003 (CCTV website, 2003). In 1997, urban households can access on average fifteen channels while rural households can access on average ten channels (Journalism Publishing News, 1998). In 2005, China has 1,254 television channels (State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, 2006). Urban households now can access on average twenty channels (Zhang, 2006). China has a population of nearly 300 million children under the age of fourteen. A popular afternoon children program broadcast on the Chinese Central television (CCTV) channel 1 on average attracted over ten million children aged four to fourteen (CVSC-TNS Research, 2002). Chinese children aged 4 to 14 on average spent 2.3 hours on watching television in 2002 (Zhang, 2006).

Private television stations are strictly forbidden in China. CCTV, the national television network, is under the Ministry for Radio, Film and Television. It is the only national television broadcaster that operates thirteen channels and broadcasts 330 regular programs. It provides a variety of programs including news, variety shows, dramas and imported movies (CCTV

website, 2003). All state-approved television stations, including CCTV, broadcast children's programs from one to eight hours a day. A study conducted in 1996 showed that a typical week of CCTV programs consisted of 60 hours of children's programs, with 29 percent children's movies, 21 percent cartoon, and the remaining 50 percent songs, dances, and plays. Children's programs contributed seven percent of the total daily programs (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2000). A survey in 2003 found that television programs for children and adolescents accounted for 2.8 percent of total number of television programs in major channels (Zhang, 2006).

According to the government policy, all television programs for children should help them to develop morally, intellectually, and physically (Yang, 1996). Children's television programs were broadcast mainly on national CCTV channels 1, 7 and 8. A typical week of children's program on these three channels added up to about seven hours a day (Chan & McNeal, 2004). A survey in 1999 indicated that 89 percent of the regional television channels carried children's programs (Bu, 2001). On average, children's programs were broadcast about 30 minutes a day and four times a week on regional television channels. This indicates that national television channels dominate regional television channels in terms of program quantity. In December 2003, CCTV launched the first national channel for children and teenagers. It broadcast eighteen hours a day from six o'clock in the early morning to twelve midnight and the number of children programs increased from 15 to 28. The target of the new

channel consisted of four segments, children aged zero to six, elementary school children aged six to twelve, secondary school children aged twelve to eighteen, and parents (Yu, 2004). The launch of the new children's channel further enhances the dominant role of CCTV over regional channels in terms of number of children's programs.

Studies of media usage in China, especially among its children, appear to be uncommon and certainly not comprehensive. In 1980s, 529 high school students in Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province, were surveyed. It was found that 88 percent of the urban and 11 percent of the rural students had television sets at home. Television was regarded as the most favorite source of information, and drama and sports were selected as the most favorite television contents among the entertainment category and among the news and documentary category respectively (Research Group on Adolescence and Television, 1984). A survey of 600 sixth grade and tenth grade students conducted in Beijing in 1988 showed that young people spent on average 1.3 hours each day watching television. The time spent on radio, newspapers, and audiotapes were 0.8, 0.7, and 0.6 hour per day respectively (Greenberg, Li, Ku, & Wang, 1991). A survey of 2,288 Beijing children indicated that respondents regarded television, books and newspapers as the three most popular media (Bu, 1998). Media exposure in a week for these three popular media was: watching television (89 percent), reading books (73 percent), and reading newspapers (73 percent). A national survey of 3,173 grade 5 to 9 children conducted in 1996 found that their favorite television programs include variety shows,

action dramas, and cartoons (Bu, 2001). McNeal and Ji's (1999) survey of 460 Beijing children grades 4 to 6 reported that television viewing (97.3 percent) was much more common than readership of newspapers (72.9 percent) and magazines (60.4 percent), and radio listening (38.9 percent). On average, children spent 17.2 hours each week on watching television, which was far greater than the total time spent on reading newspapers (2.7 hours) and magazines (2.6 hours) and listening to the radio (6.3 hours). Boys watched significantly more television than girls on weekends (4.8 hours versus 3.8 hours). Heavy television viewers were less likely to read newspapers than moderate television viewers and light television viewers.

A survey of 1,977 children aged six to thirteen in four Chinese cities and four rural areas was conducted in 2003 to 2004 (Chan & McNeal, 2006). Media exposure in the past month were high for television (97 percent), children's books (80 percent), cassette tapes (60 percent), VCD (58 percent) and radio (57 percent) among both urban and rural children. In general, media ownership, exposure and usage were higher among urban children than that of rural children. The urban-rural gap between media ownership and media exposure was found to be more prominent for new media such as DVD and computer/internet. Ninety-six percent of urban children reported owning television while ninety-eight percent of rural children reported so. Ninety-five percent of urban children reported that they watched television in the past month while 99 percent of rural children reported so. Television ownership and television exposure were slightly higher among rural children than among urban children.

Television is an important socializing agent for children. It is because children have limited ability to read and television has strong audio and visual demonstration power. Children often try to model people and events that happened on television. Previous study indicated that media shape children's behaviors by providing examples and role models (Kane, Taub, & Hayes, 2000).

An overview of a week's children programs

Channels CCTV-1, CCTV-7 and CCTV-8 carry most of the national children's programs. Due to signal clash, CCTV-8 could not be received in Hong Kong. All children's programs broadcast on CCTV-1 were also carried on CCTV-7. Therefore, CCTV-7 was selected for the study. CCTV-7 is a channel with programs targeted at children and youths. Children's programs are scheduled on Monday to Friday mornings and afternoons, and on Saturday and Sunday mornings. With this scheduling pattern in mind, three days were included in the sample: two weekdays and one Sunday during the week May 26 to June 1, 2003.

Table 1 provides a list of the sampled programs and nations of origin. Duration of children's programs ranged from 10 to 50 minutes, with shorter programs targeting at younger audience. Types of program included quizzes, talk shows, news, documentaries, dramas and cartoon series. Longer programs were usually divided into three or four segments that each

lasted for 10 to 20 minutes. About two thirds of the programs in terms of time duration were broadcast in the first run and the remaining were replays (see Table 1). Nearly all the programs in the sample were locally produced and only one program (i.e. *Teletubbies*) was imported from United Kingdom. Close to eighty percent of the program time were programs for elementary school students. The rest of the program time was equally split between programs for preschool children and secondary school students. The following paragraphs describe briefly the children's programs included in the sample.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The Seven-Piece Puzzles (Qiqiaoban). It is a 10-minute program targeted at preschool children. The program was in a very slow pace with infrequent cuts and camera transitions. The host was a mother-like lady. It adopted a fantastic studio setting of a garden with a puppet boy and a puppet dragonfly.

Seasame, Open the Door (Zhimakaimen). It is a 10-minute program for elementary school children. It taught children about science through activities and competitions. Six to eight teams of students were invited to join a contest. The host proposed a scientific or technical problem and asked participating teams to construct their best solutions.

The Big Windmill (Da fengche). It is a 40-minute program targeted at elementary school children. The program consisted of four to five segments including cartoon series, quizzes, and short movies. The program had a long history since it was introduced in 1995. It was very

popular among Chinese children with rating of five percent among all children aged 4 to 14 (CVSC-TVS Research, 2002).

Oriental Children (Dongfang ertong). It is a 45-minute program targeted at elementary and junior high school children. It had four segments that broadcast on different days, including *Let's head for the schools*, *Book City*, *Strong Rivals*, and *Pocket News*. *Let's head for the schools* featured model schools across different parts of China.

Under the Same Blue Sky (Tong yipian lantian). It is a 45-minute program for elementary and junior high school children. The program featured real stories about achievements and innovations of Chinese children.

Dragon Theatre (Xiao feilong juchang). It is a 40-minute cartoon drama series. It featured a classical novel *Journey to the West*, highlighting how Xuan Zang, Monkey, Pigsy and Sandy overcame all the hurdles to seek for the holy Buddhist scripture.

The Second Starting Line (Di er qi pao xian). It is a 50-minute talk show that targeted at secondary school students. It featured an interview of a celebrity and a short drama.

Studio 12 (12 Yanboshi). It is a 50-minute talk show targeted at junior and high school students. It focused on current affairs.

Discourse of children's media contents

Media content is a reflection of the culture and also a shaping force of the culture.

Hofstede (1994, p. 4) defined culture as “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from those of another.” He identified four dimensions of culture including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, and masculinity/femininity. Power distance refers to the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept unequal distribution of power in the society. It is reflected in the values of both the less powerful and more powerful members of society and it influences the way people accept and give authority. The second dimension, uncertainty avoidance, focuses on how societies deal with unknown aspects of the future. One characteristic of a high uncertainty avoidance culture is that it has little tolerance for ambiguity in one’s perceptions. The individualism/collectivism dimension describes the relationship between the individuals. An individualistic society places higher emphasis on individual variety and pleasure whereas a collective society places collective goals ahead of personal goals. The fourth dimension is defined as the degree to which a society is characterized by masculinity (assertiveness) versus femininity (nurturing). Masculinity stands for a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material success. Its opposite, femininity, stands for a preference for relationships, modesty, caring for the weak, and the quality of life.

Previous studies found that Chinese media reflects both traditional Chinese values as well as modernized values. For example, Ji and McNeal (2001) compared children’s television

commercials broadcast in U.S. and China and concluded that Chinese commercials reflect traditional Chinese cultural values and its social and economic development levels. According to Sillars (1991, p.129), “all arguments are warranted by stated or implied values and are effective because the receiver of the message holds those values.” The study pays specific attention to the discourse of success and modernity as it indicates the desirable path for societal progress.

A snapshot of children’s television programs showed that they were highly different from those shown in Western countries. Major themes in Chinese children’s programs includes the importance of science and technology in transforming to a modern society, the glorification of success, the legitimization of competition as a mean for success, and the maintenance of high power distance. The following paragraphs elaborate each of these major themes.

First of all, children’s television programs in China are highly educational. Tons of scientific information and technological details cram in limited time schedule. For preschoolers, media contents are mainly about animals, environment, and life science. Information is transmitted through question and answer sessions, games, and storytelling. For example, the program *The Seven-Piece Puzzles (Qiqiaoban)* introduced preschool children to wild animals. The host played “I spy” game with the audience. She asked the children to guess what an animal with such clues such as it can swim; it can climb trees; it is one of the endangered species. Then, a video clip of tigers was shown and four children aged five to eight

were asked to mimic a tiger's movement. The program *The Big Windmill (Da fengche)* disseminated environmental knowledge and taught children how to engage in environmental friendly behaviors. A drama showed that all the characters could not move because they accidentally stepped on chewing gum on the floor. The characters then advised children how to dispose the chewing gum in a proper way.

For elementary school students, scientific information is communicated through questions and answers embedded in stories. Very often, the information is in such a detailed form that it seems exceeding the comprehension of a young child's mind. For example, *The Big Windmill (Da fengche)* included a 10-minute cartoon series called *Thousands of Questions (Qianqianwen)*. In one episode, the main characters told the audience that giraffes have higher blood pressure than other mammals. They explained that since giraffes have a long neck thus the distance of its brain from its heart is far greater than other animals. Giraffes need to pump blood to the head vigorously and therefore result in higher blood pressure. The characters continued to introduce theories related to evolution by linking giraffe's long necks with the concept of "survival of the fittest." In another episode, the characters explained what would happen if a bullet was shot under water.

The program *Oriental Children (Dongfang ertong)* has a 10-minute cartoon series called *The Blue Cat and its 3000 Questions*. The characters of the cartoon included a blue cat, a pig and a mouse. In one episode, it featured how an octopus ejects fluid, where its nerve system is

located, and how its brain works. In another episode, the characters stayed in a submarine and were attacked suddenly by a strong blast that originated from the bottom of the sea. The characters introduced the concept of earthquake, explained its formation and discussed its threat to living organism. It was followed by a 15-minute documentary segment called *I can see (Wo kanjian)*. It featured about eight to ten video clips that were produced and sent in by children all over the nation. It started with a still shot of a child identified as the producer, with information about his/her age, school name, and grade. The child acted as the narrator as well as reporter. Most of the clips talked about local environmental hazards. For example, a girl reported a heavily polluted river in her hometown and urged the audience to be friendly to the environment. Another video clip featured students initiated a publicity campaign by distributing leaflets with environmental protection messages on the street.

One can hardly find any media contents related to art, humanities and social sciences in the sampled programs. The emphasis of science and technology in children's programs is consistent with the nation's Four Modernization Programs, approved in the Eleventh Party Congress, that focus on development in agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology. It is believed that science and technology can improve productivity, thus serves as the driving force for a strong nation. In one episode of the "Thousands of questions," the character said, "Knowledge is power. The one who masters scientific knowledge has unlimited strength." Because of the dominance of scientific information in children's program, there are

little room left to feature fun, entertainment, music and excitement. There is little use of music except the use of songs to mark the beginning and/or the ending of a program. Programs that use music extensively like those of *Barney* in Western societies were not found in the sample. We guess that perhaps most of the classical children's songs in China were inherited from a feudalistic tradition and were considered as ideologically incorrect. There is also a lack of original and contemporary Chinese children's music in the programs that were analyzed. As a result, we do not see a strong musical presence in children's programs. Children's programs in Western countries often feature children dancing or engaging in vigorous body movement. However, these activities were not found in Chinese children's programs. Most of the children shown in Chinese programs are physically inactive. Also, most of the hosts/anchors in Chinese children's programs are motherly figures dressed in a conservative manner. No sexy celebrities appeared in children's programs.

Fun is seldom featured just for fun's sake in Chinese children's programs. This reflects Chinese positive connotation of learning and negative connotation of playing. Chinese culture is known for its strong emphasis on education and learning. Education plays the utmost role as a ladder for upward mobility. Chinese people deeply believe that education is valuable for the well being of the nation as well as for their personal advancement (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1996). Chinese parents place heavy emphasis on the educational significance of television

programs. Parents want children to watch programs that are morally uplifting or intellectually educational (Zhao, 1996).

Children's programs in China demonstrate masculine value that places strong emphasis on academic success, as well as the legitimization of competition as a mean for success. Fierce competition occurred in children's television programs in the form of contests and quizzes. The program glorifies success and achievement while at the same time shows no mercy about failure. In the scientific experiments featured in *Sesame, Open the Door*, students were not encouraged to explore scientific reasoning through trial and error. For example, students were requested to use papers to construct a foundation that can support the greatest number of bricks. The host constantly reminds the goal of finding the best solution by expressions like "will the team succeed this time?" or "unfortunately, it doesn't work." In addition, children in the programs were very concerned about the results. The program usually featured many failures before the winning scenario. The program keyed in an illustration of a sad face when a team lost and an illustration of a smiling face when a team won. The program displayed no mercy at how the failing teams suffered from frustration and disappointment. It was in a sharp contrast towards the winners who were overwhelmed by joy and excitement.

Even programs for young children contained quizzes. For example, *The Big Windmill (Da fengche)* had a 15-minutes segment called *Naughty Family (Wanpi jiazu)*. They invited grade one students to participate in the quiz. In one episode, children were asked to answer questions

after watching a short video clip about pandas. The host asked, “Does little panda like to eat sweet things?” Children indicated their answers by standing in the red circle with the letter A for the answer “yes” or the blue circle with the letter B for the answer “no”. The host announced the answer by saying that “the correct answer to this question is A.” A sticker was given to the children who answered correctly. At the end of the quiz, the child with the most stickers was the winner.

The program *Oriental Children (Dongfang ertong)* featured a 35-minute quiz show. Four teams with representatives from different elementary schools in Beijing participated in the competition. The quiz had three rounds of competition and one team would be eliminated in each round. The first round was a quiz about current affairs. The second round tested children’s art of living. Students were asked to arrange flowers. A senior manager of a Beijing florist company served as the judge. He evaluated the exhibits based on their color balance and creativity. However, students did not know the criterion of judgment beforehand. In the third round, children were given one minute to write down as many as possible the names of capital cities over the world in English. The team that gave the most correct answers was the winner.

The Big Windmill (Da fengche) featured a quiz called *Challenge for 800 (Tiaozhan 800)*. Participants were children from two elementary schools in Beijing. The incoming teams attempted to take over the championship from the winning team that survived from the last round of the game. Children went through four rounds of competitions to gain a maximum of

800 points. They were tested on knowledge, creativity as well as skills. In one episode, they participated in a quiz, a face drawing competition, a talent show and a debate. The debate question was “Does pre-historical culture exist in our world?” The debate resembled a formal high school debate and children seemed to be well prepared for the answers. They presented arguments with scientific facts, assumptions and support. A university professor, a film director and an art teacher were invited as judges.

All these television quizzes and contests remind us the fierce competitions of tests and examinations conducted in the school contexts. Children’s programs in China place strong emphasis on achievement. Achievement is often measured in terms of the ability to memorize details and competence in solving problems under stringent time stress. Even artistic expression activities, such as flower arrangement and face drawing, were evaluated according to unknown criterion and were awarded with a numeric score for performance.

The emphasis on competition in children’s media contents reflects the severe competition in the existing education system in China. The government used to identify “key schools” that received additional support in terms of funding, facilities and teachers. These schools were extremely selective in student intake (Cheng & Delany, 1999). Competition for places in the desired key schools is a fact of life for Chinese students of all grades.

Bond (1991) argued that the obsession with academic performance in Chinese society is rooted in the historic civil service examination system that used academic achievement as the

only ticket for upward mobility in the society. He commented that the over-emphasis on concrete as well as pragmatic solution and discouragement of trial-and-error approach to problem solving would reduce a person's creativity. In Chinese children's programs, we seldom find contents that encourage individual expression or the ability to produce a new but appropriate response to a problem.

The Chinese culture is dominated by a collective culture with strong emphasis on social relations. Collective values are demonstrated in collective success in children's programs. Competitions shown in children's programs are usually based on teams rather than individuals. Students participate in different quizzes dressed in the same shirt to show the spirit of unity. In the program *Seesame, Open the Door (Zhimakaimen)*, all the participants came from schools in the NingBo city and they all wore T-shirts with the NingBo-TV logo. The sense of collectivism was also demonstrated through the cooperative reward structures. When a team wins, all members in the team share the joyfulness, the fame and the honor. Only in one segment that we find explicit encouragement of self-expression. The program *Oriental Children (Dongfang ertong)* featured students' spoke out. Students were shown standing on the top floor of the school building and yelled out their wishes or expressed their gratitude toward somebody openly. A typical statement was "I want to study well" or "I would like to thank my class teacher." Their fellow classmates all gathered around in the playground and they joyfully cried out "Yes, we heard it." The program segment encouraged students to

express their private self in a public setting. However, we think that it is a twist of a collective culture as it demonstrates a member of a collective group speaking to other members of the same group in a collective manner.

Children's programs in China show high power distance. It is demonstrated in the authority of the hosts in children's program as well as how they relate to the participants. Hosts in Western television programs are usually friendly, physically attractive, and are always ready to give positive and encouraging words to children. This is not so for the hosts in Chinese television programs. Some of the hosts maintained a hierarchical and remote relation with the children. High power distance, the term that Hofstede (1994) used to describe the cultural dimension where less powerful members of organizations are ready to accept unequal power distribution, was demonstrated in the quiz show *Challenge for 800 (Tiaozhan 800)*. The host was a man aged about 40 to 45. He acted like a teacher who consistently applied methods of comparison to arouse children's enthusiasm for achievement. He performed the police role and made sure participants conform to the rules. For example, he gave discouraging comments such as "the red team is now lagging behind by five points. It will be dangerous if they continue to lose marks in the coming round of the game." The host sometimes turned out to be mean or even hostile to the participants. When a child gave a wrong answer immediately after the host reading out the question, the host said, "you give up your chance for careful thinking and your answer is wrong." The host denied a team member from getting marks

because he obtained the correct answer illegally from his team members. The boy argued that the other team was doing the same. In no hesitation, the host accused him for pointing the finger on others while he was wrong in the first place. The accused boy swallowed his anger and continued the match. It demonstrates that authority and power of the hosts should be accepted without questions.

The phenomenon of high power distance was illustrated in the program *Studio 12 (12 Yanboshi)*, a talk show supposed targeted at junior and high school students. The episode featured SARS. The host, a man about forty years old, invited three guest speakers including a Government Officer, a researcher from the Public Policy Research Center of the China People's University and a Sociology Professor of Peking University to discuss social problems that surfaced with the outbreak of SARS. They talked about housing management and proposed reform of the community organizations. The host and all the guests dressed formally in suits. It seemed that they were trying to keep a distance from the young audiences.

Many researchers characterize Chinese social relationships as maintaining harmony and avoiding conflicts. The highly competitive nature of children's television programs highlights the paradox of social harmony and competitiveness existing in the Chinese Culture. Social harmony is demonstrated through a static environment while competitiveness is demonstrated through the dynamic process. When Chinese people are settled in a hierarchical social structure, they will act according to what is required or expected in that particular position. In

such situation, everybody attempts to maintain a proper relationship with his peer, boss or sub-ordinates according to social norms. As a result, we see harmony in social relations.

However, when people are not yet settled in the social structure, they will compete to gain access to their most desirable positions. As a result, we see fierce competition. A metaphor of the musical chairs game could be used to explain the phenomena. When the music is on, we see people moving, chasing and juggling around. This reflects the competitive mode of social relation. Once the music stops, people settle and no competition is seen. This represents the harmonious mode of social relation. Children are holders of the future. With the recent opening of the economic system, there is increasing social stratification in China. In other words, children have potential to negotiate their best positions-to-be through acquisition of knowledge, skills and networking.

It was also found that television programs for teenagers were in short supply in China and contents of such programs resemble programs for adults. In the United States and other Western societies, television programs for teenagers often feature courtship and love. However, these themes rarely occurred in Chinese television programs. Chinese parents expressed strong opposition against love stories and intimate acts such as kissing, hugging, and “bedroom scenes” in television programs (Zhao, 1996). They thought that these contents are unhealthy and may divert children to think and ask about embarrassing things.

Conclusion

Children's television programs are predominately produced locally. National channels carried much more children's programs than regional channels. Major themes of children's television program reflected high aspiration for success, promotion of competition with peers, and submission to collective goals and authorities. Television programs for children in China largely reflected the masculine values, collective values, and high power distance discussed in Hofstede's (1994) framework of cultural values. It certainly does not reflect Western cultural values of low power distance where children are given high level of autonomy and respect. If the values portrayed in children's television programs were matched to the list of modernization attributes proposed by Yang (1988), the modernization values that frequently occurred are high achievement motivation, a high need for information, and high educational aspirations. It is a pity that we could hardly find values that encourage egalitarian attitudes towards others, independence, freedom of individual expression, and creativity embedded in the programs.

The sophisticated educational content in children's programs reflects the society's strong emphasis on intellectual development. There is a lack of children's programs that feature music, fun, and enjoyment. Competition for success, group activities, and yielding to authorities frequently occurred in children's media contents. There are very few programs that

target the specific needs of teenagers such as development of social relationship and self-identity. None of the programs in the sample features explicitly ways of establishing self-confidence, self-esteem and sense of achievement. Programs for teenagers resembled those for adults and themes like love and courtship were taboos in these programs. [Unlike Chinese children's commercials that seem to represent a mix of traditional Chinese values and Western values (Ji & McNeal, 2001), Chinese children's television programs in this study reflected more of its traditional Chinese values of high power distance and collectivism]. This sentence seems contradict with what the paper presented. Since the paper argued that hybridized strategies were shown in children's program content.

As all Chinese media are solely owned and controlled by the State, the findings indicate that the government has a strong desire to sustain traditional values of collectivism and authoritarian in the mist of migrating into a modern consumer society. Certainly, Western science and technology, and the high motivation for success are essential for modernization. However, the government wants to ensure that the process of modernity does not undermine some selected traditional Chinese values. The discourse analysis of children's media contents reflects the hybridized strategies adopted by Chinese government. Specifically, it reflects that Chinese authority have tried to retain some traditional Chinese values while at the same time promote certain Western values. Further research is needed to investigate what principles are adopted by the content providers in encoding the messages and how the young audience

decodes these messages as well as the embedded values.

Table 1 An overview of the sample

May 26, 2003 (Monday)	Target groups	Minutes	Origin
Sesame, Open the door	E	10	China
Cartoon City	E	30	China
Oriental Children	E	45	China
The Seven-piece Puzzle	P	10	China
The Seven-piece Puzzle	P	35	China
Sesame, Open the door	E	10	China
Oriental Children (replay)	E	45	China
The Big Windmill	E	40	China
The Seven-piece Puzzle	P	10	China
Oriental Children	E	45	China
May 28, 2003 (Wednesday)			
Sesame, Open the door (replay)	E	10	China
Cartoon City	E	30	China
Oriental Children (replay)	E	45	China and U.K.
The Seven-piece Puzzle (replay)	P	10	China
Sesame, Open the door	E	10	China
Oriental Children (replay)	E	45	China and U.K.
The Big Windmill	E	40	China
The Seven-piece Puzzle	P	10	China
Oriental Children	E	45	China
June 1, 2003 (Sunday)			
The Second Starting Line (replay)	J	50	China
Sesame, Open the door (replay)	E	10	China
Studio 12	J	50	China
Oriental Children (replay)	E	45	China
The Seven-piece Puzzle (replay)	P	10	China
The Seven-piece Puzzle	P	10	China
Sesame, Open the door (replay)	E	10	China
The Big Windmill	E	40	China
Under the Same Blue Sky	E	45	China
Dragon Theatre	E	40	China
Oriental Children	E	45	China
Total		800	100%
New		600	68%
Replay		280	32%
Origin			
Local		850	97%
Foreign		30	3%
Target groups			
Preschool children (P)		95	11%
Elementary school students (E)		685	78%
Junior high/high school students (J)		100	11%

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