



Are our families still Confucian? Representations of family in East Asian television dramas

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Abstract

Given the changes of the modern family, this study seeks to compare the ways in which television dramas of four East Asian societies, namely Korea, China, Japan and Taiwan, represent the family and family relationships. By analysing their similarities and differences, the study attempts to explore changes of family in these supposedly Confucian East Asian societies. Three analytic categories were proposed: the structure and form of the family as represented in dramas; family relationships; individuality and the family. The study found that the historical trajectories of East Asian countries are articulated in the different familial representations across the television dramas of the countries in the region surveyed. The common assumption that all East Asian countries have the same model of the Confucian family therefore needs to be re-examined along the more specific national conditions.

Keywords

China, Confucian family, East Asia, family, Japan, Korea, representations, Taiwan, television drama

This study seeks to explore how television dramas of South Korea, China, Japan and Taiwan have represented familial relations, and how they construct symbolic realities of the family, realities coded with socio-cultural norms, ideals and tensions through which audiences can relate against their own experiences. In our research, we juxtaposed the convenient cultural suppositions of East Asian societies as predominantly

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unchanging collectivist, paternalist and 'Confucian' and of the West as more individualistic (Cho, 2007; Moody, 1996; Triandis, 1989; Zakaria, 1994). Even with conflicting narratives (Kim et al., 1994; Hofstede, 1980), these convenient cultural accounts have remained strongly embedded, in spite of contradictory findings. In shifting the research away from the 'Christendom'/'Confucianism' dichotomy to a comparison between East Asian societies, we intend to use locally based soap operas to problematize the culturally homogeneous labels that have been attached to the region.

Based on these presuppositions, this study was conducted with the sample materials from the top 20 productions (in terms of viewership) from the genre of family dramas. Here, we seek to detail the extent of changes in the different East Asian countries regarding televisual portrayals of the conflicting relations within extended and nuclear families, and the negotiating of the individuality of members within the collectivistic emphasis on the family unit as screened in these dramas.

Researching family dramas: a review

In her study on the recent pattern of transformation of the Korean family system, Lee (2007) points out that much of the research addressing family crises is trapped in a fallacy as it fails to describe precisely the family that is in crisis, and thus, consciously or unconsciously, presupposes a 'normal family' and discusses its disintegration. In a similar vein, family discourses represented by the media are under continuous change; and, as such, the difficulty lies in the process of simultaneously interpreting and contrasting both the symbolic and social interpretations of the meaning of family without presupposing any sort of standard family forms. With the rapid pace of modernization, industrialization and urbanization from the post-war era onwards, family structures in South Korea, China, Japan and Taiwan have shrunk from previously extended networks of three to four generations under one roof, and clans carrying the same surname, to the smaller and seemingly more precarious nuclear arrangements. Just recently, a further transformation of the family structure has taken place, both in South Korea and in Japan, with striking increases in divorce rates, single households, single-parent families, senior citizen households, and so-called 'sprout families' headed by juvenile parents.

Although the number of single households has been gradually increasing in the four societies since 2000, the nuclear family remains dominant. In South Korea, two of the biggest changes since modernization are a drastic rise in the number of single households and a reduction in the number of extended families. In China, the share of two- and three-person households has increased by about 10 percent between 1992 and 2002 (China Annual Statistics, 2005), increases attributable to compulsory land reforms and the single-child ruling, which has significantly weakened the traditional patriarchal feudal household structures (Selden, 1993). Across the straits in Taiwan, which has not been subjected to the same upheavals as the People's Republic of China, traces of the old order still remain, though nuclear families are more prevalent (Central Institute for Sociology, 2005). In contrast, Japan has shown more drastic changes, with the proportion of single-person families matching that of the modern nuclear family since 2000, as separations, divorces and child-bearing out of wedlock have registered gradual increases (Nakagawa, 2003: 314).

Despite changing demographic profiles, the ideology of Confucian filial piety based on the systematic reciprocity between subservient children deferring to paternalistic

parents in return for support and resources is still prominently subscribed to, particularly in South Korea (Park, 2007). The dominant social trend towards the nuclear family does not automatically mean the disintegration and weakening of the family. On the contrary, as a haven against the violence of colonial rule, fratricidal warfare, dictatorship and rapid industrialization, the family precedes the state in Korean society and forms the core unit of support and stability (Choi, 1992; Kim, 2004; Lee, 1997; Sohn, 2006). The centrality of the home over that of the state places the family, ideologically at least, as the principal unit of social support. Again, the South Korean experience would be less applicable to Mainland China's family relations, which are increasingly centred on more equal spousal rather than traditional patriarchal parental ties (Kim and Oh, 2005:177). Lu (2007) argues that the economic liberalization of post-Mao China has been instrumental in the intense de-collectivization and privatization of social relationships into smaller urban nuclear family units. In Taiwan, meanwhile, the household is framed by the concept of 'family businesses', a concept which is often credited with laying the foundations of Taiwan's economy (Gallin, 1994; Yang, 2008). For this reason, there is a substantial difference in family structures between classes, where middle-class parents with businesses have much greater power over their children than their working-class counterparts.

In general, the changing trends in the portrayals and symbolic constructions of the family on the small screen in East Asia have attracted increasing scholarly attention as part of the recognition of the broader socio-cultural significance of television studies. In the case of South Korea, the visibility of the family in local television dramas has been evident. 'Home Dramas' are broadcast in prime-time morning and evening slots thrice weekly by South Korean terrestrial television stations. Drawn initially from US and other examples in the 1970s (Hwang, 1999), some of these soap operas have stretched for over a year, and they have attracted scholarly interest across disciplinary boundaries from media and cultural studies to studies of gender, the family and society (Cho et al., 2007; Ha, 2003; Hong, 1998; Jang, 1998; Jeong, 2007; Kim and Kim, 1996; Lee, 1993; Song, 2006).

Similarly, the family in China emerged as a popular topic for soap operas by the late 1990s, alongside the locally produced and imported television dramas that filled the television airwaves with the commercialization of the mediascape. Family-based soap operas in post-Mao China are mainly concentrated in the dramas of 'Everyday Life' (*pingmin ticai ju*; 50 minutes per episode), aired daily on mainstream television. Since the late 1990s, together with 'Love-affairs in the City' (*dushi yanqing ju*) and 'Idol Dramas' (*qingchun ouxiang ju*), the productions classified as 'Everyday Life' focused on relationships, marital matters and household obligations have taken precedence over the more masculine genres of 'Historical dramas' (*lishi guzhuang ju*), 'Military dramas' (*junshi ticai ju*) and 'Crime' (*xingzhen fanfu ju*) (Lu, 2001; 2003). Scholars such as Lu (2007), Dai (2005), and Hu and Zhang (2004) have generally attributed the popularity of these dramas to the realistic portrayals of family issues. In these drama series, the stability of the family is maintained despite the discords and betrayals resulting from the social uncertainties and rapid changes brought about by market reforms (Lu, 2007; Dai, 2005; Hu and Zhang, 2004).

It was difficult to obtain the sample data from Taiwan because of relatively low audience ratings for family dramas, stemming from the reduction in the influence of terrestrial broadcasting stations in the face of competition from cable and new television stations that have proliferated in the post-martial law years. In general, Taiwanese soap

operas can be categorized as 'Idol dramas' (*qingchun ouxiang ju*), 'Heroic drama series' (*yingxiang ju*), 'Martial Arts' (*wuxia ju*), 'Folk', 'Historical' and 'Detective' (*tuili ju*). It is the 'Folk' dramas – dealing with love, betrayal and conflicts surrounding the family business – that are the closest to the genre of family-centred drama. According to Yean (2000), Taiwanese family-centred drama series are encapsulated in 'Folk drama' soap operas, set in recognizably provincial contexts and transmitted through the extensive use of the local Taiyu (Minan) language. In contrast, the family depicted in Japanese dramas has evolved from images of the 'happy home circle' in the late 1970s (coinciding with the period of rapid economic development and prosperity) to the post-family arrangements of the single-parent or divorced-parent households (Mazdaira, 2003; Sioya, 1995). Most Japanese 'trendy dramas', which have been the mainstream since the 1990s, tend to focus on youthful characters not as members of traditional family households but as individuals in urban settings of the public sphere (Hirata, 2005: 30).

While these dramatic depictions of families have been compared to actual households, there have been few comparative accounts of family dramas going beyond the national and local contexts. Given the voluminous transnational circulation of Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese and, more recently, Korean soap operas within the Asia-Pacific region, it would be timely to establish more common yardsticks for assessing the construction of 'families' and 'family values' on the small screen. In light of these difficulties, we attempt to narrow the criterion of the field of inquiry to one factor, namely the popularity of the dramas, based on television viewership rates for dramas with a considerable audience share between 2002 and 2008 in the four countries. For this study, the audience response is a crucial criterion on the presumption that these drama series are popular because they are successfully attuned to the real-life emotions and experiences of the audiences of the day. This is not based on the assumption that audiences watch dramas because they reflect reality. Rather it presupposes that the dominant pattern in the family constructs our image of social reality.

Structuring the family in television drama

For a comparative deduction to be made possible, we have structured our findings along three fundamental categories, namely, the social arrangements of families in Table 1, the parties involved in family conflicts in Figure 1, and more specifically, the areas of contention, particularly between parents and their adult children in Figure 2. Based on the analysis of popular television dramas in the four countries concerned, Table 1 shows how the types of families represented in these dramas are distributed. Overall, with 48 identified productions, the presence of the family is most salient in South Korean productions, where substantial interactions among members of a household are evident in the narratives compared. In contrast, there are only 21 Japanese soap operas showcasing kinship and blood ties.

Within the same period, China and Taiwan respectively screened 28 and 33 family-centric soap operas. The widespread use of Mandarin (Putonghua) renders these productions accessible across the Taiwan Straits, and among the Chinese diaspora as well. This means there is a total of 61 Mandarin family dramas for the 1.3 billion members of the Chinese diaspora compared with the 48 Korean productions catering to the 50 million

Table 1. Family structure represented in dramas

	Three generations			Two generations			One generation			Alternative family
	Paternal	Maternal	Married couple – married offspring	Married couple – unmarried offspring	Single parent – child (juvenile)	Sibling	couple	Orphan, divorced, other		
Korea (48 families)	10 (20.8%)	3 (6.3%)	1 (2.1%)	17 (35.4%)	5 (10.4%)	1 (2.1%)	2 (4.1%)	9 (18.8%)	NIL	
Japan (21 families)	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)	6 (28.6%)	7 (33.3%)	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)	2 (9.5%)	
China (28 families)	2 (6.6%)	NIL	NIL	13 (43.4%)	NIL	1 (3.3%)	10 (33.3%)	2 (6.6%)	NIL	
Taiwan (33 families)	NIL	NIL	16 (48.5%)	9 (27.3%)	7 (21.2%)	1 (3.0%)	NIL	NIL	NIL	

television-watching public of South Korea. Nonetheless, given the popularity of South Korean television dramas in East and Southeast Asia since the late 1990s, these figures should not be casually indicative of the decline of interests in family dramas as a whole in the region.

Aside from the quantitative output, the types of families portrayed also underscores the difference in family structure of the four localities under scrutiny here. Whereas South Korea and Japan showcase a wide range of family structures, from the 'three-generation family' (26.3% and 9.6% respectively) to the 'alternative' family (9.5% for Japan and close to one-fifth of 'divorced and orphaned families' for Korean dramas), more than half of the Chinese and Taiwanese serials surveyed here have their contexts within the 'two-generation' family structure. As pointed out in previous studies (Kim et al., 2007), the representation of paternal extended families with more than three generations is relatively distinct in Korean dramas, in which the proportion of extended families on screen seems higher than demographic estimates. In Japan, the single-parent household is depicted in more than a third of family dramas, commanding a disproportionately larger presence on television than in official statistics. Aside from the volume of the productions, there are also differences in the narrative styles in relation to single-family households in Japanese and South Korean television dramas. Whereas the latter seem to the arrangement the tragic outcome of either widowhood or disastrous extramarital affairs, the former, often by not elaborating on such backgrounds, tend to normalize the existence of the single parent in contemporary Japanese drama series.

The findings also reveal Chinese and Taiwanese dramas to be predominantly centred on the family with two generations. Popular Taiwanese 'folk' dramas including *Worrywart*, *Farewell*, *Arang*, *Achung*, *The Road between Time (Shi jian lu)*, *Eternal Love (Tian di you qing)* are scripted around the tensions arising from the competition among siblings over the inheritance of family businesses (usually overseen by the patriarch) or are rags-to-riches narratives based on the extraordinary personal struggles of certain members of the impoverished households to gain success and prosperity. Though both Chinese and Taiwanese dramas concentrate on the modern two-generation nuclear family, the plot in the former usually centres on the couples' efforts to maintain their relationships (e.g. *Golden Wedding Anniversary*, *The Marriage*, *Chinese Divorce*, *Empty Mirror*, *Married for Ten Years* and *Wrong Love*). In these dramas, parents and children become peripheral in the unfolding dramatic marital tensions between the husbands and wives, tensions that frequently result in divorces.

In sum, one is able to trace a spectrum over the dramatic depiction of the composition of families on television dramas in the four societies examined here, ranging from the more traditional and complex 'three-generations' arrangement in South Korean productions to the smaller nuclear and even post-family units in Chinese, Taiwanese and Japanese serials. While the television stations hoped audiences were able to intimately identify with screen families through their own experiences, this study discovers that the family arrangements in these dramas tend to 'over-represent' either extended households where grandfather to grandchildren live under one roof, or the struggling single mother. Whereas nuclear families are still predominant statistically, scriptwriters favour a narrative which highlights the conflicts and struggles arising from such seemingly dysfunctional and incomplete households.

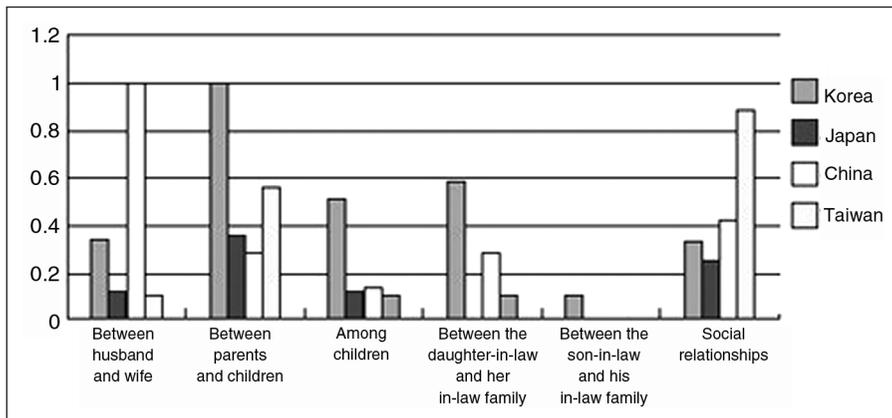


Figure 1. Representation of family conflicts in dramas

Screening family conflicts

To uncover the trends through which family conflicts are represented in these dramas, Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the parties involved and the areas of contention respectively, based on the frequency of occurrence (one being the total number of dramas for analysis in each society).

Figure 1 indicates that conflicts between parents and their adult children are a central theme in East Asian television soap operas, particularly in all Korean dramas as well as a high proportion of Taiwanese dramas, while conflicts between spouses are seemingly more significant in Chinese productions. In the case of South Korea, discord is represented within the family, with relatively high rates between parents and their adult children, and between daughters-in-law and their husband's family. On the other hand, the main source of bitterness in Taiwanese dramas lies in the competition of protagonists, not just with their immediate relations but also the broader social circle incorporated into the family business.

As seen in Figure 1, Japan is an exception. Its record of screen family discord is generally lower than that depicted in the drama series of its East Asian neighbours. In contrast to South Korea and Taiwan, Japanese dramas tend to avoid overt depictions of tensions within the family and with society at large. While Japanese dramas have moved towards the era of the post-family, they continue to portray a visible generation gap between parents and their adult children, thereby suggesting that the traditional family has yet to wane completely. One of the common trends discovered in this survey is the general absence of tensions between the man and his in-laws. Less than 0.1 percent of South Korean dramas touch on the issue, and the matter is not depicted on the small screens of Taiwan, China and Japan. In many respects, this absence either reflects or reinforces the abstraction of the men from the politics of domesticity where, in the minds of the in-laws, his responsibilities lie mainly in the formal sphere of the workplace, as a breadwinner, rather than as an active participant in the domestic household.

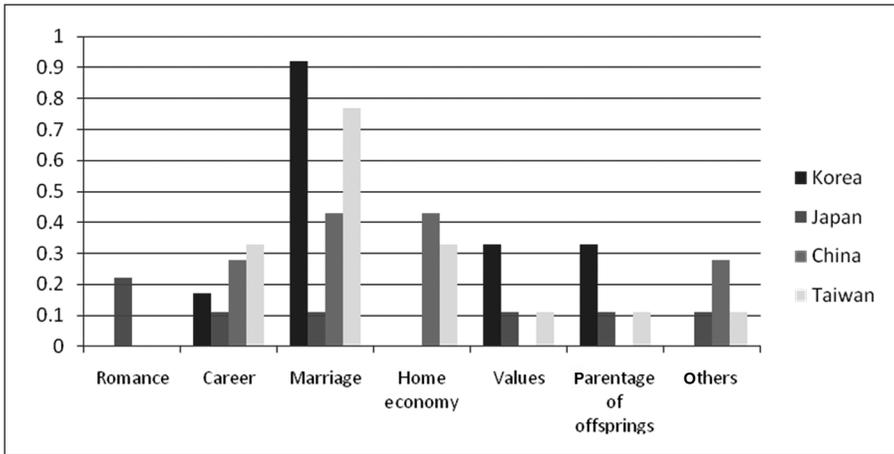


Figure 2. Issues of contention between parents and children in dramas

Figure 2 highlights the depiction of conflict between parents and children. Marriage tops the list, especially in Korea, China and Taiwan. Under these circumstances, the family relationship represented in Korean dramas could be dubbed as ‘interventionist’. The fundamental reason for the conflict among family members is attributed to parents feeling the right to be closely involved in their children’s marriage and way of life. In Korea in particular, parents and offspring are not deemed to be independent individuals but parts of a collectivistic body sharing a common fate; hence ‘successful’ educational achievements and marriages with ‘good’ families lead to social advancement for the entire family (Song, 2006). An individual in the western context is someone capable of exercising independent decisions. In contrast, his East Asian counterpart is generally construed to be bound into a nexus of relations within the family (Kim, 2003).

Therefore, all the individuals in the families represented in especially South Korean television dramas exist only as beings-in-relation to the greater whole of society and not as individual persons. For example, the eldest daughter, Yeongsu, in *Mom is Upset*, declares that she will marry a divorced man and her mother opposes the match. Yeongsu argues that she is an individual who is entitled to make her own decision, but she cannot ignore her family entirely. According to Jang (2001), such considerations within the familial relationship are welded into the discourses of the highly functionalistic ‘instrumentalist family’ that deliberates affairs based on highly pragmatic considerations of wealth and status. However, this does not seem to be the case for most of the popular Japanese dramas, where family relationships are not pivotal to the larger plot. The plots in Japanese dramas are mainly centred on the romances between individual male and female protagonists, and these romances may or may not result in other broader matrimonial engagements.

In Chinese dramas, the parents–offspring relationship plays a mediating role and is the source of conflict resolution rather than discord. The elders are depicted as reconciling, supportive, encouraging and on the side of their children, as seen in productions like

Golden Wedding Anniversary and *Married for Ten Years*, where the sisters and parents of the female protagonists provide advice and support in times of discord with their mothers-in-law. Even when the female protagonist of a Chinese drama is at odds with her mother-in-law, the friction between them neither escalates into open conflict between husband and wife nor does it provoke active interference from parents. These dramatic portrayals reflect the diminishing role of the extended family as significant resource providers to emotional communities. The fading importance and diminished role of the extended family in the People's Republic of China is a result of decades of socialism wherein the family is subordinated to the state.

On the other hand, Taiwanese folk dramas centre the family's economic and moral clout on the figure of the patriarch who heads the often lucrative family business. The patriarch presides over all conflicts within the family, and it is from him that all conflicts within the household originate. Within this structure, his male children either attempt openly to contest the father's authority to win their freedoms, or scheme behind his back to take over the family wealth and business. It is evident that such supposedly feudal family structures do not mirror the social realities of Taiwanese society. Indeed, modern-day Taiwan is increasingly characterized by nuclear families and low fertility rates. Rather, the popularity of these dramas stems their ability to dramatically fuse and intertwine corporate struggles and domestic tensions so as to create a climate that is both entertaining and distant from the mundane frictions of the average Taiwanese family.

In contrast to the highly interventionist families in South Korean and Taiwanese productions, Japanese dramas on the contemporary family seem to be relatively muted, to the point where relationships among members are effectively negligible and therefore devoid of dramatic open conflicts aside from the occasional exchange of opinions. Rather than being riveted into the social roles in the family, protagonists tend to be regarded on screen more as autonomous individuals; here, as Giddens (1992) points out, individualized family members who seek 'post-familial intimacy' emerge as characteristic of a post-capitalistic society where the extension of selves and the expression of inner selves in the private sphere has become more important. This post-familial family is in stark contrast to the Korean instrumentalist family. The former emerged as a reaction against the notion that social stability and familial serendipity is predicated on women sacrificing themselves for the greater good of the family (Lee, 2007).

The relationship between parents and children is not rife with any particular tension in Japanese dramas. 'Support' is the best word to describe their relationship. Figure 3 analyses the relationship between parents and children by examining the family dynamics depicted in the different East Asian countries' drama series. It studies these relationships by determining whether the family structure in these programmes is 'Interventionist' or 'Paternalistic' in nature. The 'Interventionist' family is supportive and empathetic at best, but intrusive and severe when the advice of its elders is not followed. The 'Paternalistic' or 'Authority-submission' family is characterized by the patriarch's obsessive control of everyone around him. Failure to submit to the patriarch leads to punishment. In the televised drama series, both the interventionist and paternalistic forms of parental guidance invariably result in friction as well as dramatic showdowns and confrontations between parents and their adult children. Another popular template in drama series involves the display of the sentimental familial bonds of 'Care', 'Unconditional love' and 'Support'.

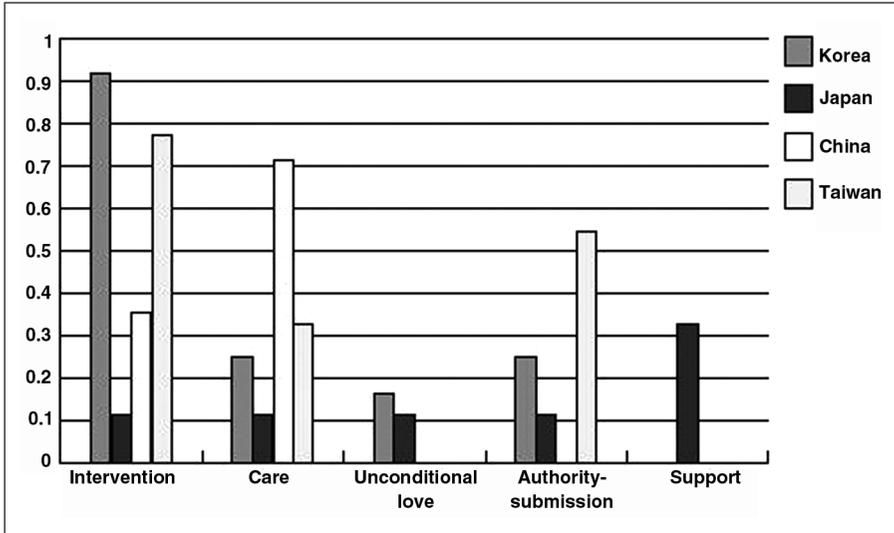


Figure 3. Screen relationship between parents and children

Families depicted with these traits are typically less problematic, as all the family members have informal and reciprocal relationships with one another.

As Figure 3 demonstrates, South Korean productions are characterized by ‘Interventionist’ and ‘Authority–submission’ families, with a few isolated cases of families bonded together by ‘Care’. There also appears to be an absence of families founded on ‘Unconditional love’ and ‘Support’. In contrast, Japanese on-screen parents are portrayed as being more supportive, caring and loving. Taiwanese dramas depict families that ‘Care’ as well as families built along the ‘Authority–submission’ model. In contrast, parents in Chinese dramas are depicted as more caring and less prone to imposing their will on their adult children. In this respect, family members in Japanese dramas are not restrained by collectivistic relationships. For example, the mother of the female protagonist in *Last Friends* suggests that she gets an abortion as she is not married. Nonetheless, the story closes with the mother supporting the protagonist’s decision to keep the baby. Regardless of whether parents are portrayed as domineering or detached, their presence in dramas highlights the anxieties underpinning the shifting nature of family politics in East Asian societies. In grappling with the seemingly contradictory concepts of collectivity and individuality, family units are often depicted as torn between resisting and accepting change.

According to Max Weber, an ideal family is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view, and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which ‘are arranged into final analytical construct (*Gedankenbild*)’ (1949 [1904]: 90). In this respect, phenomena are analysed in the historical context and explained in terms of relationships. Figure 4 plots the families represented on East Asian television dramas against the ideal types.

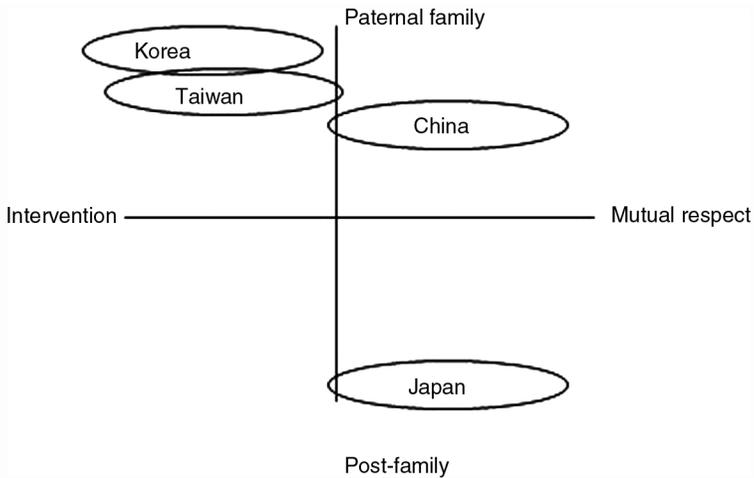


Figure 4. Family in East Asia represented in TV dramas

The horizontal line indicates the level of involvement by parents in the affairs of their adult children. This involvement can take the shape of invasive intervention or less oppressive forms of care and support wherein there is mutual respect for each other's private spaces. The vertical line gauges the prevalence of kinship and blood ties in the dramatic portrayals of the family in the countries surveyed with the strongly familial 'Paternal family' at the top to the 'Post-familial' arrangements and outlook at the bottom. In South Korean dramas, nuclear or extended families are the standard source of all final decisions, as well as the root and solution of conflicts. Antagonism between parents and adult children tends to be resolved when the former consent to the latter's romantic relationships, thus leading to the eventual expansion of the family network wherein three or four generations would then coexist harmoniously under one roof. In the 'Paternal family-Intervention' quadrant are Taiwanese 'folk dramas' revolving around competition for resources, capital and affection within the socially complicated context of the wealthy patriarchal household.

Straddling a comparatively more central position in Figure 4 are Chinese television dramas depicting predominantly less imposing and more mutually respectful relationships within the nuclear family (married couple and unmarried children). Though the problems of divorce and extra-marital encounters are continuously presented, there is a strong tendency to emphasize the economic as well as the emotional functions of the family in these shows. Japanese television dramas are at the bottom right of Figure 4 because families are either absent or exist on the margins, with very little actual involvement in the development of the narrative. Here, the modern nuclear family is not automatically assumed to be ideal. In these dramas, single, divorced, orphaned and widowed households may become sites of emotional support for the protagonists.

Nevertheless, while alternative families, in the absence of the modern nuclear family, are variously imagined in the forms of acquaintanceship, homosexuality, unmarried

mothers, none of them has been presented as being satisfactory in these stories. From the divergent placement of countries in Figure 4, it would be difficult to place the convenient cultural ideological labels of 'Confucianism' and 'familism' on the television dramas (and their viewers) in which the staging of the ideals of what constitutes the family varies significantly across countries in East Asia.

Conclusion

It is necessary to take into consideration several contextual matters when we interpret differences between family dramas across national boundaries. While a significant number of South Korean dramas depict the family as an instrumental force governing the lives of individuals, they may not reflect the lived realities for ordinary Korean viewers. Rather, this on-screen portrayal is little more than an instance of the television stations catering to the viewers' fantasies of a harmonious patrilineal extended family. In contrast, families in Chinese television dramas are represented in a more egalitarian manner. Husbands and wives are often depicted as having equal rights, and parents and children are shown to respect and support one another. However, this progressive image may also not be representative of a large part of Chinese society, which is still evidently highly traditional, patriarchal and repressive. Similarly, the high drama of confrontations between the wealthy patriarch and his scheming children prevalent in Taiwanese television dramas are mere soap operas and not an accurate indicator of the island's demographic profile.

Lastly, the general marginality of the 'complete' heterosexual family on Japanese small screens does not necessarily indicate the pervasiveness and the legitimacy of the 'post-family' in Japan (Beck-Gernsheim, 2008). All in all, these differences in televised family representations in Taiwan, China, Japan and South Korea demonstrate that East Asian societies should not be treated simplistically as a single aggregate of highly collectivistic Confucian societies. Neither should it be assumed that these East Asian societies place the same symbolic importance on the family. Our research has proven that the meanings and the importance of the family are constantly changing. Likewise, we have demonstrated that on-screen depictions serve as both a mirror of the prevailing social order as well as an escape from reality.

Appendix: List of dramas

South Korean drama series

- Lady Mermaid* (2002–3)
- All-in* (2003)
- Lovers in Paris* (2004)
- My Lovely Samsun* (2005)
- Letters to the Parents* (2004–5)
- Saving My Hubby* (2005)
- Haneul-i-siyeo* (2006)
- Famous 'Chil' Princesses* (2006)
- Money War* (2007)
- Pure Heart of Nineteen* (2007)

I Hate You, But It's Fine (2008)

Mom Is Upset (2008)

Mainland Chinese drama series

Chinese Divorce (2004)

Romantic Affairs (2004)

Married for Ten Years (2004)

Empty Mirror (2005)

The Marriage (2006)

Wrong Love (2006)

Golden Wedding Anniversary (2007)

Japanese drama series

Me and Her and Her Life Road (2004)

At Home Dad (2004)

Dangerous Sister (2005)

Divorce after Long Marriage (2005)

14-year-old Mother (2006)

The Road I Take (2006)

The Grand Family (2007)

Tokyo Tower (2007)

Last Friends (2008)

Taiwanese drama series

Worrywart (2002–3)

The Unforgettable Memory (2005–6)

The Golden Ferris Wheel (2005–6)

The Prince Turns into the Frog (2005)

Achung (2006)

Farewell, Arang (2006)

It Started with a Kiss (2006)

I Will Win (2007–8)

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