

Methods for Studying Non-U.S. Television

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I study a wide range of programming on Chinese television, including both entertainment and news programs, with a focus on how television in China intersects with the dual forces of state censorship and market control. I further look at the competing roles of state media and popular culture in shaping China's evolving state and society relations. An ongoing analysis of the shifting Chinese state-society relations through the lens of an evolving contemporary Chinese culture landscape as it navigates forces of state, commerce, and globalization, my work is interdisciplinary in its approach that engages several subfields within the larger confines of sociology, political economy, political communication, ethnography, and historical research.

Funding has not been a particularly challenging issue as I was fortunate enough to have received an NEH Fellowship for my early work on Chinese TV dramas, which came out in one research monograph, *Television in Post-Reform China: Serial Drama, Confucian Leadership and the Global Television Market* (2008) and four edited volumes *TV China* (2009); *TV Drama in China* (2008); and *Comparative Studies of Chinese and US Television* (2005), I later received an ACLS Fellowship for my recent work on China Central Television (*Two Billion Eyes: The Story of China Century Television*).

While *TV China* offers a comprehensive overview of Chinese television as a site of cultural production, consumption, and circulation, my monograph looks exclusively at the politically charged primetime serial TV dramas, particularly historical dramas set in the dynasty era. I treat dynasty drama as a form of political discourse, linking the thematic transformation of dynasty dramas with China's overall popular and intellectual discourses concerning the path, steps, and speed of China's economic and political reforms. I further compare the textual and institutional strategies of transnational Chinese language TV dramas with similar dramas from the three leading production centers, the US, Latin America, and East Asia.

My most recent TV book is on China Central Television, the state run and only network TV that is financially self-reliant, operationally autonomous, and yet politically dependent. The book teases out the complex functioning of a state run media and argues that CCTV is a microcosm of the so-called China model, i.e. the Chinese style state capitalism that combines market economy with authoritarian control in the name of national stability and unity, i.e., the one party rule. It is an interview-based book that utilizes Clifford Geertz's "thick description" as the framework in capturing the struggle of China's salaried cultural practitioners in their ongoing negotiation with forces of state censorship, market imperatives, and public sentiment. It further discusses Chinese media's effort in promoting its culture abroad.

So far most of the funding for my research came from Foundations and Institutions in the US, including a Fulbright for my new book on the Sino-Hollywood relation. To maintain my independent research agenda, I'm wary of receiving funding from Chinese institutions. That said, my access to materials, archives, people, and production companies in China has benefited from the relationship I cultivated with Chinese scholars and media practitioners throughout the years. As I noted in my NPR interview, being a Chinese native, I bore no linguistic barrier, which made it easier to establish personal relationships. Digital tools have certainly made it easier to access TV material from afar.

Last but not the least, my research on Chinese television, together with my ongoing work on Chinese cinema further benefited from wider media exposure as I frequently contribute op-eds to, and are quoted by various noted venues such as *The Atlantic*, *ChinaFile*, *CNN*, *Foreign Policy*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, etc. The exposure in turn opens up more access and recognitions. So making research relevant to the larger society is both exciting and rewarding.