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The Influence of American Drama Series on Chinese Online Viewers

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The Influence of American Drama Series on Chinese Online Viewers

Yue Wu, PhD

University of Connecticut, 2015

The American copyright industry constitutes one of the fastest growing sectors in the U.S. economy, and the narratives of Hollywood productions, as a typical example in the field of movies and television, carry universal appeal to the audience throughout the world (Atkin, 2003; Tunstall, 2007). Based on Uses and gratifications theory, Social cognitive theory, Cultivation theory, and the Reactance effect, the current study will investigate any influence of American drama series on Chinese Internet viewers by taking advantage of viewer exposure and involvement (viewing motivation, perceived realism, perceived relevance, affinity, and negative attitude towards censorship) as central independent variables to predict multiple impacts (knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors), particularly in a relatively less-controlled yet still censored online environment.

Keywords: American Drama Series, China, Uses and gratifications theory, Social cognitive theory, Cultivation theory, Reactance effect

Yue Wu – University of Connecticut, 2015

The Influence of American Drama Series on Chinese Online Viewers

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B.A., Central University of Finance and Economics, 2009

M.A., Michigan State University, 2011

A Dissertation

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2015

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Yue Wu

2015

APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

The Influence of American Drama Series on Chinese Online Viewers

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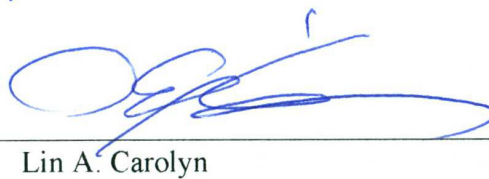
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2015

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Noted director and producer David Fincher once indicated that the best writing only existed in the television industry (Sepinwall, 2013). Hollywood movies, due to their fixed formulae (Suderman, 2013) and universal marketing strategies (Sparviero, 2013), are becoming increasingly mediocre. Television drama series, by contrast, spare no effort to make further exploration of acting, shooting skills, aesthetic values, and plots (Lin, 2014). Originally aired in the U.S. and Western world, those series have strongly influenced the Chinese audience because of their availability, accessibility, simplicity, and persuasive ability (Dong, Tan, & Cao, 1998).

As increasing program flows enable Chinese audiences to become consumers of American television drama series, a question arises as to how such fare might influence their values. In addition, given that access to American series in China mainly relies on the Internet instead of television networks, will audience attitudes towards online censorship facilitate or impede any media effects stemming from such viewing?

Based on Uses and gratifications theory, Social cognitive theory, Cultivation theory, and the Reactance effect, the current study will investigate any influence of American drama series on Chinese Internet viewers. In particular, we assess viewer exposure and involvement (viewing motivation, perceived realism, perceived relevance, affinity, and negative attitude towards censorship) as central independent variables to predict multiple impacts (knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors), particularly in a relatively less-controlled yet still censored online environment.

A Short History of American Drama Series in China

The American copyright industry constitutes one of the fastest growing sectors in the U.S. economy, and the narratives of Hollywood productions, as a typical example in the field of movies and television, carry universal appeal to the audience throughout the world (Atkin, 2003; Tunstall, 2007). In 1980, NBC's *Man from Atlantis*, as one of the Sino-American Cultural Exchange programs, was the first American series aired in China. Not only did the show cause an upsurge of interest in such subjects as science fiction, marine life and computers, but sunglasses worn by the leading actor also became a fashionable icon for young people in China (Sun, 2014a). In 1990, Chinese people began to be aware of ordinary American's lives by watching *Growing Pains*, the first American sitcom series aired in China. The show played a critical role in guiding domestic directors for shooting family-themed comedies (Sun, 2014a). Since 2001, a voluntary group called fansub further facilitated the popularity of American dramatic series. Rather than being translated by professionals, each episode was received by many ordinary people with bilingual abilities (Chen, 2006). In fact, the translating work is minute and complicated, considering the fact that some series consist of numerous academic expressions. In 2005, nearly all Chinese media were commenting on the *Prison Break* phenomenon: the program had already dropped out of the Top Twenty list in the U.S. while, as an underground success without official approval, it enjoyed an enthusiastic welcome in China's online communities; Wentworth Miller became the first American series actor to make commercial speech and celebrity endorsements in China (Sun, 2014a).

In 2010, Youku, a commercial video-sharing website based in China, established an American series channel. Soon, its competitors -- including Sohu, iQiyi, Tencent, and LeTV -- launched their own strategies to purchase licenses from American companies (Sun, 2014b). The

total amount of investment in importing American television shows exceeded 200 million dollars from 2010 to 2014, and the number of shows streaming online was between 300 and 400, a great portion of which won Emmy or Golden Globe Awards (Sun, 2014b). From 2011 to 2012, the viewership of American series on Youku Tudou increased an estimated 400 percent and the channel of American shows fully deserved the “fastest-growing content category” in China (Feng, 2014). Based on the estimates from iResearch, a market research firm based in Shanghai, China’s online video revenue increased 41.9 percent in 2013, reaching two billion dollars (2014). Because the audiences are mainly college students, white-collar employees or people with an overseas educational background living in urban cities, most advertising clients own high-end brands such as BMW and Chanel.

The Regulations about Movies and Television Series in China

In China, the authorities will implement complicated censorship -- both before and after the production of any local movie and television show -- before the show can be exhibited legally. In order to undergo the procedure smoothly -- without much censorship and cater the government’s needs -- producers and directors have to actively give up any controversial stories but produce more family-friendly soaps, revolutionary dramas, or costume dramas set in Imperial China reflecting “conservative ideals” (Feng & Wang, 2014). In addition, regarding the quotas for imported cultural products, the government allows the importation of 34 foreign movies each year and certain number of television shows (Feng & Wang, 2014). By contrast, since there was no specific law or policy restricting on the number of foreign programs broadcasted on commercial websites, those websites enjoyed more freedom to purchase licenses from American networks and then offer the latest shows with Chinese subtitles to Chinese Internet users.

Unfortunately, these relatively open policies did not last long. The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television -- China's top broadcast regulator -- announced that all unlicensed foreign television shows must be removed from commercial websites (Feng, 2014). Later, even those shows with legal contracts could not be continually aired. Instead, only a message "This video can't be viewed due to policy reasons" was left in the middle of a black screen (Sun, 2014b). Observers anticipated that some contents might attract governmental scrutiny, particularly those related to ethnic relations, violence, and sexual topics; in fact, ideological issues attracted the most concern. Although more than 130,000, or 95 percent of respondents voted against blocking American television dramas (Feng, 2014), Chinese Internet users were forced to resume the previous method to download pirated versions in order to watch any banned series.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The effects of American television shows on foreign audiences have been investigated by two meta-analyses. The first (Wang & Dupagane, 1994) collected 17 quantitative studies, among which two and three papers focused on any influence on Korean (Kang & Morgan, 1986; Choi, 1989) and Taiwanese people, respectively (Tsai, 1970; Tan, Li, & Simpson, 1986; Wu, 1993), but neither addressed China. Three studies focusing on Chinese audiences were included in the second meta-analysis (Elasmar & Hunter, 2003), but two of them were unpublished conference papers (Chaffee & Pan, 1995; Tan, Dong, & Li, 1994) and the other presented in 1989 (Zhao, 1989) only addressed the effects of foreign media on Chinese women's values (social contribution, family, and self realization).

Further searching found that, although it is not rare to see quite a few qualitative studies (e.g. Yang, 2011; Wilson, 2011), quantitative research accounted for a very limited portion in this domain. For instance, based on social cognitive theory, cultivation theory, and categorization effects from social psychology, Willnat, He, and Xiaoming (1997) chose three typical Asian regions (i.e., Shenzhen, Hong Kong, and Singapore) to explore the relationships between respondents' foreign media exposure and their perceptions of Americans; however, they did not detect any impact of audience viewing motivation on their attitude change. By contrast, Jiang and Leung (2012) identified whether respondents' motivation to learn English, American culture and fashion predicted their television viewing, but they did not further explore any outcomes caused by frequent viewing. Zhou's study (2011) included five dimensions of cultivation effects for American television as dependent variables--encompassing knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and values--only using one single independent sample t-test to explore any differences between light and heavy viewers. Although he found some significant

results (e.g., heavy viewers had higher level of knowledge about English and America culture and had more desire to visit America), the study results were rather limited.

To sum up, little research has been conducted in applying uses and gratifications theory, social cognitive theory, cultivation theory, and reactance effect together to investigate the influence of American drama series on Chinese Internet viewers. Besides, past work did not consider specific Chinese online contextual factors (e.g., censorship policies). The current study, by contrast, will fill the void by taking advantage of both viewing amount and viewer involvement (viewing motivation, perceived realism, perceived relevance, affinity, and negative attitude towards censorship) as central independent variables to predict multiple influences (knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors), particularly in a relatively less-controlled yet still censored online environment.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory asserts that audiences will make decisions to select and use the media content that will help fulfill a set of cognitive, affective and behavioral needs. In this selection process, users play an active role and are goal-oriented in selecting the channels and content that can best meet their consumption needs. There are three fundamental objectives in the U&G theory: (1) explaining how people use media to fulfill their needs, (2) locating the motivations for individuals' media consumption, and (2) identifying the functions or consequences of an individual's media use (Rubin, 2009). In terms of specific motivations, there is no single of fixed list; instead, multiple categorizations were identified by prior researchers, encompassing such categories as entertainment, relaxation, acquisition, arousal, passing time, diversion, escape, and sociality (Rubin, Rubin, Graham, Perse, & Seibold, 2009).

In 1974, Greenberg created the first Viewing Motivation Scale to delve into children's television viewing in Britain. Later, Rubin (1981) adapted Greenberg's scale and the two are most widely used to identify audience motivations with different respondent demographic backgrounds, such as children (Rubin, 1979), adults (Rubin, 1983), and old people (Rubin & Rubin, 1982). This research also considered different media conditions, such as newspapers (Lin, Salwen, & Abdulla, 2005), magazines (Payne, 1988), television (Rubin, 1983), Facebook (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008), and Twitter (Ballard, 2011), etc.

Unlike audiences in the U.S., who can access cable, DVD and other modalities to watch the latest episodes of television series, most Chinese audiences can only watch programs online (legally or illegally). Although some American series were broadcast on television channels after official censors eliminated inappropriate scenes, people still favor watching programs online, since each episode is complete and more importantly, people have more freedom to set up customized schedules filled with preferred programs instead of following a fixed one.

There is a richness of qualitative research concentrating on the effect of imported television programs on Chinese audiences and most of them utilized focus groups (e.g., Wilson, 2011) and individual interviews (e.g., Yang, 2011). Zhou's quantitative study (2011) only asked a one-item question to investigate respondent motivations, in the absence of more solid analyses extending beyond frequency analyses. Based on uses and gratifications theory and with using focus groups and factor analysis, Jiang and Leung (2012) identified four motivations for viewing American television, namely entertainment, sociability, learning, and escape. Not surprisingly, people watch American shows for entertainment, relaxation, and passing time. Besides, in order to join a casual conversation with family members and friends, people watch these shows for sociability. Learning is the third most common motivation, indicating that people want to learn

about American English, foreign culture, and the latest fashion trends. Lastly, watching American television can enable viewers to escape from the burden of their daily reality.

Social Cognitive Theory and Cultivation Theory

A considerable amount of research examining media effects on audiences was based on Bandura's social cognitive theory and Gerbner's cultivation theory. Social cognitive theory, which was designated as social learning theory previously (Bandura, 1977; Tan, 1985), accentuates the importance of observing and imitating others' behavior, attitude, and emotional reaction in order to form personal values and beliefs. According to Bandura (1977), "most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one form an idea of how new behaviors are performed and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" (p. 22). Thus, social cognitive theory explains how human beings' acquired cognitive skills or new patterns of behaviors are learned from continuous and mutual interaction between personal and external factors. By modeling other people who are rewarded or are not punished due to their behaviors, individuals can vicariously expand their skills and knowledge.

Mass media, especially television, offer numerous symbols, information, and models to audiences, and during this long-term accumulation of cultivating experiences, the televised world and human affairs finally appears to be authentic according to the audience's perception. According to Gerbner (1990), "cultivation means the specific independent (though not isolated) contribution that a particularly consistent and compelling symbolic stream makes to the complex process of socialization and enculturation" (p. 249). Facing the two worlds -- televised versus genuine -- people will be divided into two groups based on their viewing exposure. The orientation of the world from heavy viewers tends to be closer to the televised reality due to their

frequent exposure to stable and distorted images from mass media; however, light viewers are not prone to be impacted by cultivation effects (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980).

Previous research has detected various impacts of imported television on foreign audiences. After analyzing 27 quantitative studies in Communication, Elasmr and Hunter (2003) summarized five dimensions of effect: knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviors. These dimensions are summarized in turn.

Knowledge. The Knowledge Gap hypothesis predicts that the knowledge disparity between people with different socioeconomic backgrounds will be more obvious as the information of mass media continually flows into the society. While scholars argued that knowledge should be considered as the structure or organization of facts rather than the recall of facts (Eveland, Marton, & Seo, 2004), previous studies concentrated on specific questions. For instance, researchers found that heavier Canadian consumers of American television had higher levels of knowledge on U.S. issues (Payne & Caron, 1982). In terms of language learning, Dutch children who watched subtitled television programs had higher English vocabulary scores than children who only watched Dutch television programs (Koolstra & Beentjes, 1999).

Beliefs. The belief outcome dimension assesses perception(s) or opinion(s) such as the perceptions of how open-minded Americans are (Elasmr & Hunter, 2003). In contrast with knowledge, beliefs are subjective when people are asked what they think about a topic/object/place (Elasmr & Hunter, 2003). In the case of watching imported cultural products, Willnat, He, and Xiaoming (1997) put forward that when foreign people are frequently exposed to American television, particularly those foreigners who have fewer opportunities to reach Americans in reality, the frequent exposure will play a critical role in the formation and maintenance of stereotypes of Americans among overseas audiences. Specifically, the results

revealed that when exposed to more Western media, while respondents from Shenzhen had more positive stereotypical perceptions of Americans, respondents from Hong Kong had more negative ones; respondents from Singapore did not exhibit any significant relationships between the two variables, although they were exposed the most. Likely, Korean students with more exposure to the U.S. televisions significantly predicted their higher estimates of the prevalence of violent crimes in the U.S. (Lee & Park, 2014). Although viewers have been accustomed to seeing any shortcomings in American society through serious news programs, fictional characters--particularly leading heroes--are generally portrayed in a very positive light (Willnat, He, & Xiaoming, 1997). Through content analysis of 20 Hollywood blockbusters, researchers found that 68% of leading heroes or heroines were described with positive features (Willnat, He, & Xiaoming, 1997). Consequently, in contrast with Gerbner's "mean world syndrome," positive beliefs about Americans will be predicted by exposure to American television drama series.

Values. Values are beliefs commonly held by a vast majority of people in a society. While it is not rare to see multifarious values coexist in a society, we focus on either a value only existing in Society A, rather than in Society B, or a value held by people in Society A, which differs from that held by people in Society B (Elasmar & Hunter, 2003). A typical example is "filial piety." In a high-context culture like China's, filial piety exceeds all other cultural ethics. By contrast, in low-context culture like the U.S., this value is less dominant compared with others. Dong, Tan, and Cao (1998) identified that the more frequently a value (e.g., wealth) in American dramas was recognized, and the more importantly a value was evaluated by foreign audiences, the more likely a value was to be accepted. In line with this finding, Zhang and Harwood (2002) studied the relationship between television viewing and perceptions of traditional Chinese values (i.e., values of interpersonal harmony and hierarchical relations), and

they found the total viewing of imported programs, imported movies, and imported sports negatively predicted viewers' endorsement of interpersonal harmony values.

Attitudes. Attitude refers to an affective belief when people are asked how they feel towards a topic/object/place such as whether they like the United States (Elasmar & Hunter, 2003). It is worth noting that attitudes differ from beliefs, since one person may agree with the belief statement that Americans are open-minded, but they may not like this country (Elasmar & Hunter, 2003). In fact, among assorted foreign media channels such as television, newspaper, radio, music, comics, videos, books, magazines, and cinemas, Western television exposure had the strongest impact on respondents' feelings towards Americans (Willnat, He, & Xiaoming, 1997). That said, American media exposure did not predict Malaysians' foreign culture orientation, as the results revealed that religion contributed powerfully to international cultural exchange (Tamam & Abas, 2006); since only 58 million Protestants and nine million Catholics live in China (Anderlini, 2014) (4.81% of the population), we expect that exposure to American programs will influence attitude change.

Behaviors. Imported cultural products can also influence foreign audience behaviors. Drawing on previous studies, the current study outlines three aspects: purchasing behavior, intention to visit, and nonverbal language. Since the introduction of reforms and "opening up" policies, Chinese people have enjoyed more economic freedom and less political restraint by the government. Through exposure to foreign media content, audiences tend to welcome new social behaviors consisting of consumption involvement and activity (Dong & Cao, 2006). In terms of intention to visit, Korea is a typical example of a country that takes advantage of its cultural products to attract foreign visitors. Over 1.4 million tourists from other Asian countries, lured by

the Korean romantic TV drama series *Winter Sonata*, have visited Korea (Kim, Kim, Agrusa, & Lee, 2012).

Similarly, the Frodo Economy--spawned by the success of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy--provides two billion dollars to New Zealand tourism industry yearly, surpassing the dairy industry; this now represents the country's leading business (Beeton, 2010). Finally, in low-context cultures, in order to express accurate feelings or opinions, westerners rely more on physical contexts--including their emotion, facial expression, body language and environment--but less on the verbal portion of messages (Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998). When Chinese audiences watch each character using nonverbal language, we expect they harbor intentions to imitate those behaviors and then apply them in reality. More formally:

H1: Time spent with American drama series online will predict increased knowledge about America (H1a), positive beliefs about Americans (H1b), lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values (H1c), positive attitudes towards Americans (H1d), and pro-American behaviors (H1e).

Other Five Dimensions of Viewing Involvement

Nevertheless, considering the fact that it is a varied and complicated procedure to shape audience attitudes and values by watching television, there exist some other factors taking effect as well, besides sheer viewing time. In fact, some previous research did not detect any significant relationship between viewing amount and acceptance of value (e.g., Dong, Tan, & Cao, 1998). Consequently, other aspects of viewing need to be taken into consideration in order to explore the effect of television exposure more comprehensively. Ward and Rivadeneyra (1999) contended that people who feel more connected with television programs and who feel more involved in the viewing experience will be more likely to be affected by the televised content.

Drawing on several theoretical perspectives from previous studies, we will introduce five dimensions of viewing involvement.

One critical dimension of involvement is viewers' gratification sought, or their viewing motivation. Based on uses and gratifications theory, people are actively seeking media content in order to meet their specific needs. Regarding watching television, some viewing is more ritualized when a medium is used to pass time, escape, or offer company; other viewing is more instrumental when medium use is more purposeful. Our expectation is that instrumental motives will predict people's increase in knowledge; that is, past studies have pinpointed that viewers who were intentionally watching programs to learn knowledge experienced greater attitude change (Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999); however, in order to analyze people's motivations and potential outcomes thoroughly, we pose the following research questions:

RQ1: Which motivation(s) for viewing American drama series online (entertainment, sociability, learning, and escape) will predict the following effects: increased knowledge about America, positive beliefs about Americans, lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values, positive attitudes towards Americans, and pro-American behaviors?

RQ2: Which motivation(s) for viewing American drama series online will predict overall time spent with U.S. content?

The second dimension of viewing involvement encompasses the perceived realism of the televised contents. Although a considerable number of television dramas are fictional, some elements -- such as costume, physical setting, conversation, and situation -- can remind viewers of the counterparts occurring in real world contexts (Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999). Thus, if people have more intention to perceive the artificial material as realistic, they will experience a

stronger impact during the socialization process. For instance, Speck and Roy (2008) found that perceived realism of programming and advertising content positively influenced materialism in Latin America and the Far/South East. Based on these dynamics, we posit that:

H2: Perceived realism of American drama series online will predict: increased knowledge about America (H2a), positive beliefs about Americans (H2b), lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values (H2c), positive attitudes towards Americans (H2d), and pro-American behaviors (H2e).

H3: Time spent with American drama series online will predict perceived realism.

Since perceived realism has yet to be addressed in this context, we pose the following research question:

RQ3: Which motivation(s) for viewing American drama series online (entertainment, sociability, learning, or escape) will predict perceived realism?

The third dimension of involvement emphasizes viewers' perceived relevance of the televised material. Viewers holding a greater personal connection with the television content will determine the television influence more powerfully than overall amount of exposure to television (O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997). Ward and Rivadeneyra (1999) found that people who perceived the sexual situations they watched on television as more likely to happen -- particularly in their real lives -- reported higher levels of experience with dating and sexual relationships. More formally:

H4: Perceived relevance of American drama series online will predict increased knowledge about America (H4a), positive beliefs about Americans (H4b), lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values (H4c), positive attitudes towards Americans (H4d), and pro-American behaviors (H4e).

In addition, the following research question is posed:

RQ4: Will perceived relevance of American drama series online predict perceived realism?

Expectancy value theory indicates that attitudes predict the gratifications sought, and gratifications sought cause changes in attitude or behavior (Palmgreen, 1984). Television affinity, an attitude towards television use, refers to the degree of significance of television in one's daily life (Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011). People who have higher levels of television affinity will take television viewing more seriously. Past studies identified a moderately positive relationship between television attachment (affinity) and motivations (arousal, escape, and entertainment) (Rubin, 1981). Later, Conway and Rubin (1991) substituted the term "attachment" with "affinity" and found that it was highly correlated with passing time, entertainment, and relaxation. Based on the assumption that content affinity motivates viewing, we posit that:

H5: Affinity for American drama series online will predict time spent viewing American drama series.

In addition, since much of this work is exploratory in the Chinese context, we pose the following research questions:

RQ5: Which motivation(s) for viewing American drama series online (entertainment, sociability, learning, and escape) will be predicted by affinity?

RQ6: Will affinity for American drama series online predict the following effects: increased knowledge about America, positive beliefs about Americans, lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values, positive attitudes towards Americans, and pro-American behaviors?

Lastly, people will experience an unpleasant psychological state when they feel a threat to the freedom of information, and then the undesired response will lead them to form a motivation to restore the threatened freedom (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Reactance theory explains how individuals respond to social influence. People who have higher involvement will be more likely to form reactance arousal (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). There are various behaviors through which people express their reactance. For example, people may intentionally participate in the prohibited activity or form more extreme feelings towards the challenging attitude; people may enjoy observing others be involved in the prohibited activity or form stronger feelings; people may develop an aggressive attitude towards the source of the threat to freedom (Kinnally, 2008).

In the case of media censorship, researchers have found that even though perceived censorship was stricter in Iran than in the U.S., Iranian people's score for international knowledge is significantly higher than that of their American counterparts (Behrouzian, 2011). Using reactance theory to interpret this counterintuitive result, the researcher put forward that "such repression of media may trigger the reactance instinct, which contends that individuals will seek out the information that is being concealed from them; thus, creating a more active and knowledgeable population" (p. 4). In the case of online viewing in China, after the government eliminated inappropriate shows from portal websites, people either stopped watching such content or had to look for alternative online viewing platforms or downloading links, which prompted anger due stemming from the cost of time and energy. Based on the assumptions stemming from reactance theory, we posit that:

H6: Time spent viewing American drama will predict negative attitude towards censorship.

H7: Negative attitudes towards censorship will predict increased knowledge about America (H7a), positive beliefs about Americans (H7b), lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values (H7c), positive attitudes towards Americans (H7d), and pro-American behaviors (H7e).

Since theory provides little guidance regarding the influence of individual motivations in this context, we pose the following research question:

RQ7: Which motivation(s) for viewing American drama series online (entertainment, sociability, learning, and escape) will predict negative attitudes towards censorship?

The Relationship between Knowledge, Beliefs, Values, Attitudes, and Behaviors

After locating 36 quantitative articles focusing on the effects of foreign television on viewers, Elasmr and Hunter (2003) categorized those studies based on their measures of the dependent variables. Although the media effects covered knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behavior, none of those articles examined the causal correlations between those five aspects.

Except for one qualitative article -- which attempted to analyze the impact of commercial gambling advertising on youth knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behavioral intentions (Korn, Hurson, & Reynolds, 2005) -- we did not find any other study incorporating the five aspects in the field of mass communication. Nevertheless, in the area of marketing, particularly involving environmentally friendly businesses, researchers have explored the causal correlations between the five constructs.

One function of knowledge is to maintain strong attitudinal consistency, as strong attitudes are constantly resistant to change over time. Thus, well-informed people with powerfully built attitudes are “careful, expert processors of information (p. 62)” (Barber, Taylor, & Strick, 2009). Most studies pointed out that knowledge has contributed a lot to the

development of strong attitudes. Eagly and Chaiken (1993) stated that well-organized knowledge provides the foundation for creating a strong attitude. Barber, Taylor, and Strick (2009) found positive relationships between people's objective environmental wine knowledge and attitudes, which suggested that the more substantial environmental wine knowledge that people held, the greater the magnitude of their attitudes towards environmental issues was. By contrast, people's subjective environmental wine knowledge negatively predicted their attitudes.

In the field of social psychology, it has been suggested that attitude predicted behavior or behavioral intention (Kotchen & Reiling, 2000). Krarup and Russell (2005) found people with more favorable attitudes towards environmental issues tended to take more environmentally friendly actions. Thus, marketing research always seeks the strategies to determine or change consumers' attitudes towards certain brands, products, or services (Barber, Taylor, & Strick, 2009). Only by understanding consumers' attitudes, can researchers or business people better predict their consequent behaviors.

Although previous scholars pointed out that consumers' knowledge played critical role in guiding them to develop environmental responsibility (Shim, 1995) and purchasing behavior (Peattie, 1995), Kaiser, Wolfing, and Fuhrer (1999) argued that the relationship between environmental knowledge and behavior was weak or nonsignificant. Schahn and Holzer (1990) grouped such knowledge into two categories: abstract and concrete knowledge. The former refers to the awareness of environmental issues, such as problems, causes, and solutions, while the latter means any specific knowledge that can be employed to solve environmental issues. Many studies found that concrete knowledge was a better predictor of the consequent behavior. For instance, Sparks, Ajzen, and Hall-box (2002) indicated that when young people

comprehended what steps they took could reduce environmental threats, they would develop a sense of an internal locus of control by taking the right action to protect the environment.

When it comes to the relationships between knowledge, attitude, and behavior, Arcury (1990) identified that increased knowledge could change the attitude toward the environment, and the latter continuously impacted on environmental purchasing behavior. Likewise, Bradley, Waliczek, and Zajicek (1999) pointed out that less environmental knowledge resulted in an unconcerned environmental attitude, and the attitude led to any irresponsible environmental behavior.

In terms of the relationships between audience knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors during their exposure to American drama series online, drawing on the aforementioned literature in marketing, we expect that people with more knowledge about America will develop favorable attitudes towards Americans, and the latter will predict consequent pro-American behaviors. More formally:

H8: Level of knowledge about America will predict positive attitudes towards Americans.

H9: Positive attitudes towards Americans will predict pro-American behaviors.

H10: Level of knowledge about America will predict pro-American behaviors.

In the past, although scholars proposed theoretical correlations between values and attitudes, and between attitudes and behaviors (e.g. Carman, 1977), a lack of empirical analysis left no support for this assumption in question. In the meantime, Skinner believed that values had no influence on attitudes or behaviors, and instead, values are merely words children learnt (1971). Other scholars attempted to use quantitative analysis to detect the correlations between

the three constructs and Homer and Kahle (1988) utilized structural equation model to unravel these causal relationships.

Homer and Kahle (1988) proposed a value-attitude-behavior hierarchy, where the influences “theoretically flow from abstract values to midrange attitudes to specific behaviors (p. 638).” In the context of natural shopping, the value dimensions had impact on attitudes towards nutrition, and favorable attitudes towards nutrition and natural foods predicted both consumers’ more frequent visit to natural food store and their greater expenditure levels for natural foods, relative to those with less favorable attitudes.

Researchers have distinguished distinct dimensions of values and each dimension is of importance in the formation of attitudinal and behavioral intentions. Homer and Kahle (1988) detected three dimensions in consumers’ values: self-respect, sense of belonging, and fun and enjoyment. They found that people who prized the internal value of self-respect were more likely to look after themselves more carefully and concentrated more on the food additives and crucial nutrition needs. In addition, people who thought highly of external values regarding a sense of belonging tended to comply with the culturally presiding attitude of objection to natural food stores or natural food in order to have a feeling that they belonged to the culture of the majority. Last, the value of fun and enjoyment influenced the attitude about the taste of food, from which people could earn enjoyment, and that attitude in turn impacted shopping behavior.

Even though values are believed to have a fixed influence on attitudes and behaviors because they are constantly held and resistant to change, Schlater and Sontag (1994) argued that the change of external environment might result in an alteration of personal values. When people are frequently exposed to certain issues through mass media, they will feel the salience of that issue and then certain values, attitudes, and behaviors, which are logically relevant to that issue

will be vulnerable to alteration (Rokeach, 1974). For instance, Embley (1993) found that in the 1990s personal values of Americans experienced transformation, moving from self-centered to a more societally-centered point.

When people watch American drama series and are exposed to American values simultaneously, on the one hand, we expect that their perceptions of traditional Chinese values will be impaired. On the other hand, as discussed above, those values will have an influence on their attitudes towards American and any further behaviors. Based on the reverse relationship between valuation of traditional Chinese and Western values, we posit that:

H11: Positive perceptions of traditional Chinese values will negatively predict favorable attitudes towards Americans.

Since the link between attitudes and behaviors in this domain is less clear, the following research question is posed.

RQ8: Will positive perceptions of traditional Chinese values negatively predict pro-American behaviors?

Another important pragmatic consideration of this study is whether beliefs about Americans will cause or be caused by other constructs. Negatively stereotypical beliefs about minorities were found to be predictive of people's discriminatory attitudes. For instance, since people held the view that older workers had less motivation to improve their skills, respondents were reluctant to recommend them for training but were more likely to consider them suitable for dismissal (Rosen & Jerdee, 1977). Similarly, McCool, Cameron, and Petrie (2001) reported that adolescents with positive stereotypes about smokers had favorable attitudes towards smoking.

When examining the correlation between knowledge and beliefs, Pettigrew and Troop (2008) believed that increased knowledge about an out-group is a cognitive variable and it can reduce prejudice. However, Hemyeri (2015) did not find significant relationship between Americans' knowledge about Iran and any dimensions of prejudice, and the author attributed this finding to the measure of knowledge, which had little variance.

We assume that Chinese viewers with more knowledge about America will have more positive beliefs about Americans, and their positive beliefs will continually predict their positive attitudes towards Americans. More formally:

H12: Knowledge about America will predict positive beliefs about Americans.

H13: Beliefs about Americans will predict positive attitude towards Americans.

Since previous literature seldom examined the correlation between beliefs and values, we have decided to leave the correlation between the two constructs as a research question.

RQ9: What is the relationship between beliefs about Americans and perceptions of traditional Chinese values?

Expected Model

Based on literature reviewed, a path model is proposed (Figure 1). First off, viewing amount (H1), certain motivation(s) (RQ1), perceived realism (H2), perceived relevance (H4), affinity (RQ6) for American drama series online will predict increased knowledge about America, positive beliefs about Americans, lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values, positive attitudes towards Americans, and pro-American behaviors. In addition, negative attitude towards censorship will predict increased knowledge about America, positive beliefs about

Americans, lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values, positive attitudes towards Americans, and pro-American behaviors (H7).

Secondly, affinity (RQ5) will predict certain motivation(s) for viewing American drama series online. Affinity (H5) and certain motivation(s) (RQ2) will predict viewing amount. Viewing amount (H3), certain motivation(s) (RQ3), and perceived relevance (RQ4) will influence perceived realism. Viewing amount (H6) and certain motivation(s) (RQ7) will predict negative attitudes towards censorship.

In terms of the relationships between knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors, knowledge about America will predict positive attitudes towards Americans (H8), which in turn will predict pro-American behaviors (H9). Moreover, knowledge about America will predict pro-American behaviors.

In addition, perceptions of traditional Chinese values will negatively predict favorable attitudes towards Americans (H11), and negatively predict pro-American behaviors (RQ8).

Finally, knowledge about America will predict positive beliefs about Americans (H12), which in turn will predict positive attitudes towards Americans (H13). The last research question (RQ9) inquires what the relationship is between beliefs about Americans and perceptions of traditional Chinese values.

Chapter 3: Method

Procedure

An online survey was conducted based on a purposive sample, which was recruited via a snowball sampling procedure. Given the sensitive nature of materials addressed in the survey (e.g., respondent attitudes towards censorship), a snowball sample represents an appropriate data collection modality. After Internal Review Board approval was secured, we posted the survey access link on Sina Weibo, the biggest microblogging platform in China, to invite Internet users to participate in this study. In order to ensure sufficient sample size, influential television reviewers and critics were invited as well to share the message with their colleagues, readers, and other targeted populations. The willing participants were further asked to distribute the message to their connections. No formal consent form was used; instead, participation in the survey was considered as consent from each participant. The anonymous nature of the survey was stressed in the recruitment message.

Sample

The qualified participants were Chinese citizens currently residing in Mainland China. There was no anticipated age range or sex ratio for potential respondents.

After responses offered by two respondents living in Hong Kong and 11 respondents living overseas were removed, in total, 346 valid responses were collected. Of all respondents, 218 (63.4%) were female and two people did not provide the information. Respondent ages ranged from 11 to 60, with an average age of 25.3 years ($SD = 6.05$). Almost half of respondents were students (45.7%) and 223 respondents (64.8%) had a college degree. The average monthly household income was between 3,501-7,000 RMB Yuan. Nearly all of the respondents (97.1%)

were living in provincial capitals or large municipalities. In addition, most of the respondents were unmarried (78.4%).

Measures

The original survey was constructed in English. Once the IRB approved the study, the survey announcement, consent form and survey questionnaire were translated into Chinese and back translated to English. This procedure was implemented to check the semantic validity before these documents were utilized for data collection purpose.

Demographic characteristics. Demographic factors, including sex, age, geographic location, education level, monthly household income, occupation, and marital status, were assessed using commonly accepted measures.

Online viewing affinity. Based on the previous studies focusing on general attitudes toward television content (Conway & Rubin, 1991; Rubin, 1981), the present study adapted the original batteries to assess the importance of online American drama series viewing. For example, “I would rather watch TV than do anything else” in the original index was changed to “I would rather watch American drama series online than do anything else.” Response options ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The original reliability coefficient for the four measurement items combined was .63, and after we removed three items, the coefficient rose to .80.

Viewing amount. Online American drama series viewing was measured by asking respondents to recall the length of time they spent on watching those shows yesterday, on average per day last week, and an average per day last month. By merging the three

measurement items, the Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .63, and after we removed the first item, the Cronbach's alpha was .68.

Online viewing motivations. Drawing from the Television Viewing Motives Scale (Rubin, 1983) and focus group data, Jiang and Leung (2012) identified four factors, including 18 items to tap respondents' gratifications sought from watching foreign dramas. For example, the entertainment motive is represented by five statements: "they entertain me," "they relax me," "they allow me to unwind," "they pass the time, particularly when I'm bored," and "they give me something to do to occupy my time." We adapted these questions using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree (1)" to "strongly agree (7)" to assess respondents' motivations of entertainment, sociability, learning, and escape.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) (Table 1) using principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was first conducted to re-identify the factors of motivations for watching American drama series. After cross-loaded items were removed, the result indicated four factors for which the initial eigenvalues were greater than one, which included the gratification of entertainment (22.98% of variance explained), the gratification of learning (22.16% of variance explained), the gratification of sociability (21.18% of variance explained), and the gratification of escape (12.60% of variance explained). After that, Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Table 2) using AMOS 20 with a maximum likelihood algorithm was then conducted to ascertain the validity of the factor structure of this measure. After two items with low loadings and a high modification index (MI) were removed, the goodness of fit indices indicated a relatively good model fit: The overall chi-square test of model fit was significant, $\chi^2 = 85.23$, $df = 41$, $p < .001$ (CFI = .986; RMSEA = .056; PCLOSE = .264). The reliability tests conducted for entertainment,

learning, sociability, and escape showed a high Cronbach's α value: $\alpha=.92$, $\alpha=.87$, $\alpha=.92$, and $\alpha=.83$, respectively.

Attitude towards censorship. Respondents' attitude towards the censorship on American television drama series online -- consisting of violent content, political content, religious content and pornographic content -- was measured by items modified from Gunther and Ang's (1996) scale. All four items were measured on a scale ranging from (1) strongly agree to (7) strongly disagree. The reliability coefficient for the four measurement items combined was .90.

Perceived realism. The Perceived Realism Scale (Rubin, 1983) was used to determine how close to reality respondents perceived American television drama series. Respondents reported their agreement on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree), in conjunction with five statements about the realism with which television portrays life. One sample statement is "American series let me see what happens in other places as if I were really there." The original reliability coefficient for the five measurement items was .35, and after we removed the reversed items, the coefficient rose to .75.

Perceived relevance. Schaap's scale (2009) was adapted to measure this dimension. One example of those six items was "The content in most American series I watched is relevant to me." The items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree." By merging the six measurement items, the Cronbach's alpha for the scale reached .90.

Perceived knowledge. Zhou's perceived knowledge scale (2011) was adapted to measure respondents' perceived familiarity with America and the language. One sample

statement was “I know about American political system.” The items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (7) “strongly agree.”

Exploratory factor analysis (Table 3) using principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was first conducted to re-identify the factors of different types of knowledge. The results indicated two factors for which the initial eigenvalues were greater than one, which tapped knowledge about America (47.81% of variance explained), and the knowledge about the language (33.56% of variance explained). After that, Confirmatory factor analysis (Table 4) using AMOS 20 with a maximum likelihood algorithm was then conducted to ascertain the validity of the factor structure of this measure. The goodness of fit indices indicated a relatively good model fit: The overall chi-square test of model fit was significant, $\chi^2 = 61.66$, $df = 33$, $p = .002$ (CFI = .993; RMSEA = .050; PCLOSE = .468). The reliability tests conducted for knowledge about America and knowledge about language were .95 and .95, respectively.

Beliefs about Americans. Willnat, He, and Xiaoming’s (1997) scale of stereotypical perceptions of foreigners was adopted to ask respondents’ perceived attributes of Americans, such as courageous, honest, and smart. All items were measured on a scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. After we removed the reversed items, the coefficient was .86.

Perceptions of traditional Chinese values. The Chinese Value Survey (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987), containing 40 items, were used to assess respondents’ endorsement of traditional Chinese values. Respondents were asked to indicate how important each item was -- such as “filial piety” and “humbleness” -- from 1 “of supreme importance to me” to 7 “of no importance to me at all”.

Exploratory factor analysis (Table 5) using principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was first conducted to re-identify the factors of perceptions of traditional Chinese values. After cross-loaded items were removed, the result indicated two factors for which the initial eigenvalues were greater than one, which included the traditional Chinese values of development of self (31.86% of variance explained) and the traditional Chinese values of relationship with others (21.78% of variance explained). After that, Confirmatory factor analysis (Table 6) using AMOS 20 with a maximum likelihood algorithm, was then conducted to ascertain the validity of the factor structure of this measure. Three items with low loadings and a high modification index (MI) were deleted and the goodness of fit indices indicated a relatively good model fit: The overall chi-square test of model fit was significant, $\chi^2 = 198.67$, $df = 154$, $p = .009$ (CFI = .988; RMSEA = .029; PCLOSE = 1.000). The reliability tests conducted for the traditional Chinese values of development of self and the traditional Chinese values of relationship with others showed high Cronbach's α values: $\alpha = .93$, $\alpha = .86$, respectively.

Attitudes towards Americans. Marcus's "circumplex model of emotion" (1988) was used to measure whether Americans make respondents feel: (1) afraid of them, (2) angry at them, (3) disgusted about them, (4) uneasy about them, (5) hate them, (6) happy about them, (7) admire them, (8) like them, and (9) sympathetic toward them. All items were measured on a scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. After we removed the reversed items, the coefficient was .83.

Behaviors. Zhou's scale (2011) was adapted to assess respondents' pro-American behaviors. One sample statement is "I tend to buy American products when I am given options". The items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree."

Exploratory factor analysis (Table 7) using principal component analysis with Varimax rotation was first conducted to re-identify the factors defining different types of pro-American behaviors. The results indicated three factors for which the initial eigenvalues were greater than one, which included the behavior of purchasing American products (24.48% of variance explained), the behavior of imitating American non-verbal language (23.63% of variance explained), and the intention to visit America (23.55% of variance explained). After that, Confirmatory factor analysis (Table 8) using AMOS 20 with a maximum likelihood algorithm was then conducted to ascertain the validity of the factor structure of this measure. The goodness of fit indices indicated a relatively good model fit: The overall chi-square test of model fit was significant, $\chi^2 = 40.14$, $df = 26$, $p = .038$ (CFI = .991; RMSEA = .040; PCLOSE = .745). The reliability tests conducted for the behavior of purchasing American products, the behavior of imitating American non-verbal language, and the intention to visit America showed high Cronbach's values: $\alpha = .80$, $\alpha = .84$, $\alpha = .84$, respectively.

Data Analysis

After cleaning the data, we reported descriptive analysis of respondents' demographic information such as age, sex, and monthly household income. Main measures were subjected to exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis, and then averaged into variables. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure reliability of each variable. Collinearity statistics using the variance inflation factor (VIF) were tested by including the online viewing affinity, viewing amount, online viewing motivations (four factors), attitude towards censorship, perceived realism, perceived relevance, perceived knowledge level (two factors), beliefs about Americans, perceptions of traditional Chinese values (two factors), and attitudes towards Americans as independent variables, and behaviors (three factors) as dependent variables in a

multiple regression model. The results showed that VIF scores did not exceed 2.475, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern.

Before the expected model was tested, a correlation matrix of all variables was constructed (Table 9). Then each hypothesis and research question was tested through linear multiple regression to determine paths for research questions in the tested model. The hypothesis model was tested using AMOS 20. Since the software does not allow for missing data if the feature of modification indices is to be selected, we replaced all missing data with means in SPSS before utilizing AMOS for consequent analysis.

In order to gain satisfactory goodness of fit, model was further adjusted. For instance, we removed non-significant paths from the expected model, and added additional paths we ignored before, but were suggested by the literature and modification indices in AMOS software.

Chapter 4: Results

Descriptive statistics indicated that only 6.1% of respondents very frequently watched traditional television, but 32.7%, 65%, and 80% of respondents preferred using tablets, smartphones, and computers online to consume media content. Compared with serious news programs, nearly half of the respondents (42.5%) were heavy viewers of drama series or movies. In terms of American drama series, 14.7%, 20.8%, 25.4%, and 26.3% of respondents would rather watch the shows with computer client software, via downloading from files sharing websites, from commercial video sharing websites, and with smartphone applications. By contrast, only .6%, 1.4%, and 5.2% of respondents chose DVD, traditional television, and TV box to watch those shows frequently.

Tests of the Hypothesized Model

The proposed hypothesized model was tested with the structural equation modeling procedure with AMOS 20. As the original model suggested a relatively unsatisfactory model fit, in order to obey the principle of parsimony and to increase model fit -- based on literature review and modification indices provided by the software -- the model was then re-specified by eliminating the non-significant paths and adding significant paths. After that, a revised model (Figure 2) with satisfactory fit emerged ($\chi^2 = 105.081$, $df = 95$, $p = .225$; CFI = .995; RMSEA = .018; PCLOSE = 1.000).

Next, based on the outputs generated for the structural equation model, we will make a description of each research hypothesis and research question testing result.

Tests of Each Hypothesis and Research Question

The first hypothesis in this study tested the assumption that time spent with American drama series online would predict increased knowledge about America (H1a), positive beliefs about Americans (H1b), lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values (H1c), positive attitudes towards Americans (H1d), and pro-American behaviors (H1e); however, none of them was validated due to the statistically insignificant result.

The first research question inquired which motivation(s) for viewing American drama series online (entertainment, sociability, learning, and escape) will predict the following effects: increased knowledge about America, positive beliefs about Americans, lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values, positive attitudes towards Americans, and pro-American behaviors. Results from the structural equation model produced several significant correlations. First off, motivation for learning was positively correlated with knowledge about America ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$) and knowledge about language ($\beta = .40$, $p < .001$). While no significant correlations were found between any motivation and positive beliefs about American, motivation for escape ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$) and entertainment ($\beta = .10$, $p < .001$) were correlated with positive attitudes towards Americans, respectively. In addition, although motivation for entertainment was negatively correlated with perception of traditional Chinese values of relationship with others ($\beta = -.15$, $p = .001$), which met our expectation, motivation for learning and motivation for escape were positively correlated with perception of traditional Chinese values of development of self ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$) and values of relationship with others ($\beta = .17$, $p < .001$), respectively. Finally, motivation for learning was found positively correlated with the intention to visit America ($\beta = .14$, $p = .002$).

The second research question considered which motivation(s) for viewing American drama series online would predict overall time spent with U.S. content. Based on the structural

equation model, only motivation for learning was positively correlated with time spent with American shows ($\beta = .20, p < .001$).

Hypothesis 2 posited that perceived realism of American drama series online would predict increased knowledge about America (H2a), positive beliefs about Americans (H2b), lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values (H2c), positive attitudes towards Americans (H2d), and pro-American behaviors (H2e). The model indicated that perceived realism only had positive correlations with positive beliefs about Americans ($\beta = .31, p < .001$) and the behavior of purchasing American products ($\beta = .21, p < .001$). Thus, H2b was supported and H2e was partially supported but H2a, H2c, and H2d were not. The third hypothesis predicted that time spent with American drama series online had positive correlation with perceived realism; however, no significant correlation was found and this caused H3 not supported. The third research question asked which motivation(s) for viewing American drama series online (entertainment, sociability, learning, and escape) would predict perceived realism. Two significant paths were identified between motivation for learning and perceived realism ($\beta = .35, p < .001$), and between motivation for escape and perceived realism ($\beta = .14, p = .001$).

Hypothesis 4 anticipated that perceived relevance of American drama series online would predict increased knowledge about America (H4a), positive beliefs about Americans (H4b), lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values (H4c), positive attitudes towards Americans (H4d), and pro-American behaviors (H4e). The results pointed out that perceived relevance had positive correlations with both knowledge about America ($\beta = .28, p < .001$) and knowledge about language ($\beta = .29, p < .001$). Thus H4a was supported. In addition, while no significant correlation emerged between perceived relevance and positive beliefs about Americans, a significant path between perceived relevance and positive attitude was recognized ($\beta = .24, p$

< .001). What's more, perceived relevance was positively correlated with behavior of imitating American non-verbal language. Thus H4e was partially supported. Finally, contrary to our expectation, a counterintuitive correlation between perceived relevance and positive perception of Chinese traditional values regarding relationships with others was verified ($\beta = .12$, $p = .010$). Thus H4c was not supported and it deserved further discussion in the next chapter. The issue of whether there was a positive relationship between perceived relevance of American drama series online and perceived realism was addressed in the fourth research question. The standardized regression weight for the path between the two variables was statistically significant ($\beta = .37$, $p < .001$).

The fifth hypothesis postulated that affinity for American drama series online would predict time spent viewing American drama series. The relationship between the two variables was positively significant ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$), lending support for H5. The fifth research question attempted to examine which motivation(s) for viewing American drama series online (entertainment, sociability, learning, and escape) would be predicted by affinity. The results indicated that affinity predicted all motivations: motivation for learning ($\beta = .27$, $p < .001$), motivation for sociability ($\beta = .27$, $p < .001$), motivation for escape ($\beta = .37$, $p < .001$), and motivation for entertainment ($\beta = .22$, $p < .001$). Research Question 6 inquired whether affinity for American drama series online would predict the following effects: increased knowledge about America, positive beliefs about Americans, lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values, positive attitudes towards Americans, and pro-American behaviors. The results confirmed three speculated relations between affinity and knowledge about America ($\beta = .13$, $p = .013$), affinity and lower perception of traditional Chinese values of development of self ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .001$), and affinity and behavior regarding the purchase of American products ($\beta = .10$, $p = .02$).

A positive relationship between time spent viewing American drama and negative attitude towards censorship was posited in the Hypothesis 6. The standardized regression weight for the path between the two variables was not statistically significant, rendering H6 without support. Hypothesis 7 addressed the influence of negative attitudes towards censorship, but the results only confirmed that negative attitudes towards censorship would predict lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values of relationship with others ($\beta = -.25, p < .001$). Thus, only H7c was partially supported but all the others were not. The seventh research question aimed to investigate which motivation(s) for viewing American drama series online (entertainment, sociability, learning, and escape) would predict negative attitudes towards censorship. While there existed a significant correlation between motivation for entertainment and negative attitudes towards censorship ($\beta = .29, p < .001$), another counterintuitive finding emerged. The results pointed out that motivation for social negatively predicted negative attitudes towards censorship ($\beta = -.16, p = .005$).

Hypothesis 8 presumed that knowledge about America would predict positive attitudes towards Americans; however, neither knowledge about America, nor knowledge about the language was significantly correlated with attitudes towards Americans. Thus, H8 was not supported. Hypothesis 9 posited that attitudes towards Americans would predict pro-American behaviors. The regression weight supported this hypothesis. Specifically, attitudes towards American predicted the behavior of purchasing American products ($\beta = .38, p < .001$), the behavior of imitating American non-verbal language ($\beta = .18, p < .001$), and the intention to visit America ($\beta = .42, p < .001$). Hypothesis 10 assumed that Knowledge will predict pro-American behaviors. Results from the structural equation model offered three significant correlations. First, knowledge about America predicted the behavior of imitating American non-verbal language (β

= .12, $p = .022$) and the intention to visit America ($\beta = .12$, $p = .007$). Second, knowledge about language predicted the behavior of imitating American non-verbal language ($\beta = .23$, $p < .001$). Thus, H10 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 11 posited that perceptions of traditional Chinese values would negatively predict favorable attitudes towards Americans; however, the insignificant correlation between the two variables suggested that H11 was not supported. Research Question 8 aimed to validate whether perceptions of traditional Chinese values would negatively predict pro-American behaviors. Although the results showed that perceptions of traditional Chinese values of development of self indeed negatively predicted the behavior of purchasing American products ($\beta = -.13$, $p = .005$) and the behavior of imitating American non-verbal language ($\beta = -.10$, $p = .038$), perceptions of traditional Chinese values of relationship with others positively predicted the behavior of purchasing American products ($\beta = .12$, $p = .009$).

Hypothesis 12 presumed that knowledge would predict positive beliefs about Americans. H12 was supported since two significant correlations were identified: knowledge about American and positive beliefs about Americans ($\beta = .10$, $p = .046$), and knowledge about language and positive beliefs about Americans ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$). A positive relationship between beliefs about American and positive attitude towards American was posited in Hypothesis 13. The standardized regression weight for the path between the two variables was statistically significant ($\beta = .49$, $p < .001$), rendering support for H13. The last research question made an inquiry of the relationship between beliefs about Americans and perceptions of traditional Chinese values. The result, unexpectedly, indicted that beliefs about Americans positively influenced perceptions of traditional Chinese values ($\beta = .20$, $p < .001$).

Additional Paths in the Revised Model

Based on the feature of modification indices provided by AMOS 20 and literature review, the revised model also suggested a few additional paths indicating the relationships between variables we did not hypothesize in the original model. First off, the standardized regression weight for the path between affinity and perceived relevance was statistically significant ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$). In addition, three types of motivations were found to be positively and significantly correlated with perceived relevance. Specifically, motivation for escape ($\beta = .17$, $p < .001$), motivation for learning ($\beta = .16$, $p = .004$), and motivation for sociability ($\beta = .15$, $p = .006$) predicted perceived relevance, respectively.

Using structural equation modeling to empirically examine the causal relationships between Chinese viewer involvement and American drama series impacts, we identified quite a few significant paths. In the discussion section, we will explore the results of the final model in more details and give reasonable explanations. In addition, limitations of this study will be examined and ideas for future research in the area of effects of imported cultural products on viewers' different aspects will be offered.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Perhaps initially producers of American drama series did not anticipate that one of their largest markets was in China. No sooner had a latest episode been broadcast in the U.S., than Chinese audience could watch it with subtitles on commercial video sharing websites in China. To some extent, this phenomenon has validated the terms of “flat world” and “amusing ourselves to death” (Hu, 2014). However, when it comes to the effects of imported cultural products, although there was no empirical research focusing on this issue in the context of China previously, some government employees have warned about the existence of a cultural invasion imbedded in American televisions and its potentially harmful effects. For instance, one member of the national committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) once indicated his concern that young adults who frequently watched American shows would develop individualistic heroism and become more aggressive (Zhang & Zhao, 2015). The present study set out to move beyond such conjectural anecdotes and empirically verify the effects of attendance to American fare on the knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors of Chinese audiences.

The Influences of Viewer Exposure and Involvement

As the first research with using structural equation modeling to empirically examine the causal relationships between Chinese viewer involvement and American drama series impacts, we identified many compelling results. First, affinity for American shows positively predicted four viewing motivations, viewing time, perceived relevance, knowledge about America, behavior of purchasing American products, and negatively predicted perceptions of traditional Chinese values of development of self. It is a very limited number of hardcore television fans who take note of any good shows and then spread the word and create guideposts for other

people (Johnson, 2006). This effect of amplification occurs more often on the Internet. Without an official approval, *Prison Break* -- as the first American series many Chinese viewers watched online -- became popular was due to the campaign of word of mouth created from the show's loyal fans, who became its evangelists. In addition, a great number of viewers composed fanfic, a fiction about characters or settings of the original story, for the show spontaneously. After people were aware of a rumor that the Fox network was considering cancelling the show, an open letter to object the decision was released in the Chinese online community, which gathered thousands of supports (Chen & Liu, 2006). Thus, it is not surprising to observers that this oft fanatical fondness of American shows can exert great influence on people's knowledge, values, and behaviors.

Viewers' time spent with American drama series online did not have any consequent impact on other constructs, which echoed previous findings (e.g., Dong, Tan, & Cao, 1998). By contrast, viewers' motivations for watching American shows played critical roles in this causal mode. Among the four motivations, both viewers' gratifications sought for entertainment and escape predicted their attitudes towards Americans. In addition, viewers' motivation for escape predicted their perceived realism of the shows they watched. We maintained that, when people want to unwind themselves or to divest themselves of any issues in reality by watching shows, they may develop a sense of indulging themselves in the virtual world and their attitudes are more likely to be influenced without resistance.

Viewer motivation for entertainment and sociability influenced their attitudes towards censorship. Although as we expected that people who sought amusement would develop more negative attitudes towards censorship since the removal of certain content or the shutdown of a show owing to inappropriate content may result in strong resentment -- particularly for those

audience members who regularly watch each episode -- people who watch the shows in order to socialize with others have more positive attitudes towards censorship.

On the one hand, it is reported that more than 450 million online video viewers watch 5.7 billion hours of videos every month in China (Millward, 2014). As the target audience, they are younger, more educated, more open to Western culture, and they can easily comprehend the theme, background, and dialogues with western slang or punch lines in American shows and are very accustomed to any controversial content (Cao, 2012). On the other hand, most people who still regularly watch traditional television programs during prime time every evening are older and prefer domestic shows, including the genres of history, family, and Chinese revolution. They are not familiar with American culture and feel distant to the physical settings (Cao, 2012). Another issue worth noting is that there is no rating system in China, and in fact, most people did not have any awareness of rating system until they firstly saw the warning label on each American show. As introduced above, Chinese viewers have been categorized into two groups and when they have the opportunity to share one American show, in order to avoid any unpleasant embarrassment, they all want to watch a clean or green show, in which any improper information was removed before being aired.

Viewer motivations for escape predicted the perceived relevance of American series to their ordinary lives. The underlying reason we assumed was that people who attempted to escape from the reality would think the virtual world more genuine and then embrace it. In addition, viewers' motivation for sociability predicted the perceived relevance as well. Perhaps even though people have different taste in American series, when they watch together or talk about certain shows, they attempt to pick the show with shared interest among friends and that one with mutual preference is close to their life. For instance, when young adults have the

opportunity to share an American show with their parents or relatives, they may pick a family-themed show rather than a cult.

During the exposure to American series, people who had more gratification sought for entertainment would be imperceptibly influenced and then had lower perceptions of Chinese values of maintaining harmonious relationships with others. It is expected that typical values such as individual heroism in American shows could impair Chinese values. Nevertheless, we also identified some abnormal findings pertinent to the variables of Chinese values. To be specific, both motivation for escape and perceived relevance positively predicted perception of traditional Chinese values involving relationships with others; motivation for learning and beliefs about Americans positively predicted perception of traditional Chinese values of development of self; and perception of traditional Chinese values involving relationships with others positively predicted the behavior of purchasing of American products.

The rationale under those counterintuitive results may be attributed by the Chinese subtitles embedded in each American episode. Fansub groups and professional translators both contributed their bilingual abilities to bridge the language gap. However, in order to transfer the message in American shows more smoothly, they made every effort to do the secondary processing to mitigate extreme American-style lines. For instance, one original line in the show *Shark* was “I swear to God” but it was translated to “I swear to Chairman Mao” in Chinese. Another example occurred in the show *The Big Bang Theory*, in which the line “I don’t need PBS specials” was converted to “I don’t want to watch educational program on CCTV (CCTV refers to China Central Television, the largest state-run television media).” Consequently, while watching American shows with familiar Chinese culture, audience perceptions of traditional

Chinese values would not be weakened effortlessly. Future research may explore any influence on Chinese viewers' American values.

Viewer motivations for learning predicted their knowledge about American and language. Numerous articles talking about how to learn English through watching American shows can be found in Chinese online communities. People are delighted to share any aspects from American shows, such as advertising campaigns from *Mad Man*, journalism ethics and standards from *The Newsroom*, and American politics from *The West Wing* or *House of Cards* (Lin, 2014). Besides, motivation for learning also predicted viewing time, perceived relevance, perceived realism, and the behavior of intention to visit the U.S.

Perceived relevance facilitated knowledge about America and language as well. If the virtual world American shows constructed was quite similar to people's daily life, they would absorb each aspect more easily. Moreover, perceived relevance influenced perceived realism, attitudes towards Americans, and the behavior of imitating American non-verbal language.

People's negative attitudes towards censorship only reduced their perceptions of traditional Chinese values of connecting their relationships with others. Although the government authority removed some shows, online users could still find alternative options to watch them, such as downloading a pirated version. Thus people's negative attitudes towards censorship did not exert any influence on other aspects such as knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors as we expected.

The Relationships between Knowledge, Beliefs, Values, Attitudes, and Behaviors

Both of the two factors of knowledge impacted two kinds of behaviors. Interestingly, the comprehension of verbal language predicted the behavior of imitating non-verbal language.

Chinese audiences aimed to adapt their speech and deportment to native speakers. People with more knowledge about America had an insatiable appetite for vicarious experience; they wanted to visit this country in person.

Such an improvement in knowledge could influence people's beliefs about Americans. This finding confirmed that the more knowledge about out-group people an individual holds, the less negative stereotype he or she has. Furthermore, perceived realism predicted beliefs, which in turn had impact on attitudes toward Americans.

In the area of marketing research, consumers' attitudes cannot be over-emphasized (Barber, Taylor, & Strick, 2009). In line with that, we found that viewers' attitude had positive influence on all three dimensions of pro-American behaviors: purchasing, imitation of non-verbal language, and intention to visit the U.S. All companies in the field of television drama production should take advantage of this finding. While exporting cultural products, companies should develop the audience's positive attitudes and then seize new business opportunity for tourism or other profitable industries.

People's perceptions of the traditional Chinese values of development of self had a negative influence on purchasing behavior and imitation of non-verbal language, which to some extent proved the formidable force of Chinese culture. The behavior of purchasing American products was affected by perceived realism, which suggested that watching American shows related to the audience's ordinary life would encourage their desire to purchase in order to undergo a similar experience. That may help explain why *Central Perk*, a *Friends*-themed program set coffee store in a Chinese metropolis, attracted countless consumers (Lim, 2013).

Limitations and Future Research

This study is not without its limitations. First, the measure of viewing time needs improvement, since the current reliability coefficient is relatively low (.68). Future research may consider utilizing more subjective measures such as respondent perceived frequency of watching American shows. Secondly, in terms of sampling methods, a stratified random sampling is recommended, since such results would command strong generalizability. Third, we did not take American values (e.g., freedom) into consideration. One article published on the website of People's Tribute, operated by China Daily, an official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, warned people about American shows consisting of individual heroism, hedonism, and the propaganda of the American dream (Li, 2013). Further research may empirically examine this argument. Last, there is insufficient research on media effects to draw any firm conclusions about Chinese viewers' potential for aggression or intention to endorse recreational sex attitudes after being exposed to American drama series. Further research in this area may include such additional factors such as the arousal-inducing properties of media content to examine the correlations.

Summary

Although it is widely accepted that imported cultural products may exert certain influences on foreign audience, this present study is the first one to empirically examine the causal relationships between Chinese viewer involvement and American drama series impact. Based on Uses and gratifications theory, Social cognitive theory, and Cultivation theory, we identified which motivations viewers hold (entertainment, sociability, learning, and escape) predicted five dimensions of effects (increased knowledge about America, positive beliefs about

Americans, lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values, positive attitudes towards Americans, and pro-American behaviors).

In addition, this study considered the consequences of other dimensions of viewer involvement that were overlooked in past work. Both perceived realism and perceived relevance played critical roles in the relationship between motivations and media influences.

Lastly, this study is concerned with the issue of censorship. While online portal websites took advantage of loopholes of regulations to import American drama series as much as possible -- without worrying about official approval -- they had to obey the latest regulations to remove any inappropriate shows. According to reactance effect, people who lose information freedom will devote themselves more to the restoration of threatened freedom. We confirmed that people who held stronger negative attitudes towards censorship had lower perceptions of traditional Chinese values of relationships with others.

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Appendix

Items	Entertainment	Learning	Sociability	Escape
Because they relax me	0.891			
Because they allow me to unwind	0.878			
Because they entertain me	0.858			
Because they help me relieve my boredom	0.661			
Because they help me learn about the popular culture in the West		0.875		
Because they help me pick up many things about American culture		0.842		
Because they keep me updated about what is in the Western fashion now		0.834		
Because they offer a good way to learn a foreign language		0.703		
So I can share things I watch from the TV dramas with my friends			0.815	
Because my friends often talk about the TV dramas that they watch			0.815	
So there is something to do when friends come over			0.787	
So I can watch the programs with other members of my family			0.781	
Because they help me forget about my problems				0.899
Because they help me escape from my real life				0.889
				12.60
Variance explained	22.98%	22.16%	21.18%	%

Table 1. Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation on the Scale of Motivations for Watching American Drama Series Online

Items	Entertainmen t	Learnin g	Sociabilit y	Escap e
Because they relax me	0.927			
Because they allow me to unwind	0.911			
Because they entertain me	0.853			
Because they help me learn about the popular culture in the West		0.956		
Because they help me pick up many things about American culture		0.879		
Because they keep me updated about what is in the Western fashion now		0.874		
Because they offer a good way to learn a foreign language		0.681		
So I can share things I watch from the TV dramas with my friends			0.91	
Because my friends often talk about the TV dramas that they watch			0.855	
So there is something to do when friends come over			0.712	
Because they help me forget about my problems				0.875
Because they help me escape from my real life				0.81
Model fit: $\chi^2 = 85.23$, $df = 41$, $p < .001$ (CFI = .986; RMSEA = .056; PCLOSE = .264)				

Table 2. Factor Loadings for Confirmatory Factor Analysis on Motivations

Items	Knowledge about America	Knowledge about language
I know about American legal system	0.885	
I know about American political system.	0.858	
I know about American medical system.	0.854	
I know about American traditions.	0.846	
I know about American education system.	0.84	
I know about American culture.	0.835	
I know about the way Americans live.	0.831	
My English speaking skills have been improved after watching American TV shows.		0.922
My English listening skills have been improved after watching American TV shows.		0.918
My vocabulary has been broadened after watching American TV shows.		0.906
My English has been improved after watching American TV shows.		0.887
Variance explained	47.81%	33.56%

Table 3. Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation on the Scale of Perceived Knowledge

Items	Knowledge about America	Knowledge about language
I know about American legal system	0.748	
I know about American political system.	0.753	
I know about American medical system.	0.72	
I know about American traditions.	0.952	
I know about American education system.	0.877	
I know about American culture.	0.913	
I know about the way Americans live.	0.901	
My English speaking skills have been improved after watching American TV shows.		0.908
My English listening skills have been improved after watching American TV shows.		0.924
My vocabulary has been broadened after watching American TV shows.		0.914
My English has been improved after watching American TV shows.		0.913
Model fit: $\chi^2 = 61.66$, $df = 33$, $p = .002$ (CFI = .993; RMSEA = .050; PCLOSE = .468)		

Table 4. Factor Loadings for Confirmatory Factor Analysis on Perceived Knowledge

Items	Development of self	Relationship with others
Trustworthiness	0.846	
Courtesy	0.846	
Self-cultivation	0.81	
Persistence	0.781	
Rituals	0.773	
Sincerity	0.768	
Patience	0.729	
Industry/hardworking	0.726	
Righteousness	0.677	
Personal steadiness and stability	0.669	
Sense of shame	0.653	
Intimate friend	0.65	
Harmony with others	0.646	
Being conservative		0.779
Chastity in women		0.705
Few desires		0.696
Disinterested and pure		0.682
Loyalty to superiors		0.675
Relationships by status		0.675
Moderation		0.67
Noncompetitiveness		0.605
Thrift		0.605
Cultural superiority		0.525
Prudence		0.453
Variance explained	31.86%	21.78%

Table 5. Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation on the Scale of Perceptions of Traditional Chinese Values

Items	Development of self	Relationship with others
Courtesy	0.825	
Self-cultivation	0.766	
Persistence	0.77	
Rituals	0.701	
Sincerity	0.733	
Patience	0.749	
Industry/hardworking	0.746	
Righteousness	0.64	
Personal steadiness and stability	0.798	
Sense of shame	0.716	
Intimate friend	0.682	
Harmony with others	0.68	
Being conservative		0.639
Chastity in women		0.813
Few desires		0.473
Disinterested and pure		0.52
Loyalty to superiors		0.618
Relationships by status		0.702
Moderation		0.741
Noncompetitiveness		0.545
Cultural superiority		0.507

Model fit: $\chi^2 = 198.67$, $df = 154$, $p = .009$ (CFI = .988; RMSEA = .029; PCLOSE = 1.000).

Table 6. Factor Loadings for Confirmatory Factor Analysis on Perceptions of Traditional Chinese Values

Items	Purchasing of American products	Imitation of American nonverbal language	Intention to visit the U.S.
I tend to buy American products when I am given options.	0.795		
I buy American food a lot.	0.79		
I prefer clothes with American brands.	0.737		
I want to buy an American car.	0.635		
Sometimes I act like Americans, e.g. shrugging.		0.845	
Sometimes I use facial expressions commonly used by Americans to express myself, e.g. eyebrow lift.		0.839	
Sometimes I use gestures commonly used by Americans to express myself, e.g. air quote.		0.829	
If I had to decide whether I would choose the U.S. as my tourist destination			0.86
I will recommend the U.S. to friends and relatives when they want to take a vacation			0.842
I hope I can (re) visit the U.S. someday			0.76
Variance explained	24.48%	23.63%	23.55%

Table 7. Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation on the Scale of Pro-American Behaviors

Items	Purchasing of American products	Imitation of American nonverbal language	Intention to visit the U.S.
I tend to buy American products when I am given options.	0.714		
I buy American food a lot.	0.716		
I prefer clothes with American brands.	0.751		
I want to buy an American car.	0.669		
Sometimes I act like Americans, e.g. shrugging.		0.841	
Sometimes I use facial expressions commonly used by Americans to express myself, e.g. eyebrow lift.		0.839	
Sometimes I use gestures commonly used by Americans to express myself, e.g. air quote.		0.719	
If I had to decide whether I would choose the U.S. as my tourist destination			0.904
I will recommend the U.S. to friends and relatives when they want to take a vacation			0.914
I hope I can (re) visit the U.S. someday			0.6
Model fit: $\chi^2 = 40.14$, $df = 26$, $p = .038$ (CFI = .991; RMSEA = .040; PCLOSE = .745)			

Table 8. Factor Loadings for Confirmatory Factor Analysis on Pro-American Behaviors

	Mean	SD	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
A	2.64	1.39	1																	
B	5.02	1.38	.270**	1																
C	4.25	1.48	.272**	.556**	1															
D	5.26	1.28	.217**	.552**	.369**	1														
E	3.69	1.57	.368**	.274**	.334**	.228**	1													
F	1.82	1.11	.289**	.260**	.172**	.180**	.157**	1												
G	3.34	1.15	.424**	.365**	.374**	.226**	.369**	.121*	1											
H	4.70	1.38	.104	.109*	-.049	.233**	-.028	.108*	-.007	1										
I	4.16	1.07	.320**	.520**	.368**	.357**	.372**	.136*	.546**	.049	1									
J	3.75	1.21	.317**	.321**	.258**	.268**	.202**	.170**	.401**	.069	.354**	1								
K	4.29	1.31	.298**	.500**	.294**	.339**	.209**	.216**	.435**	.06	.385**	.469**	1							
L	4.68	.85	.111*	.381**	.215**	.298**	.125*	.036	.279**	.123*	.423**	.307**	.360**	1						
M	5.72	.83	-.163**	.312**	.109*	.183**	-.084	.042	-.033	.029	.121*	.023	.124*	.246**	1					
N	4.42	.98	.02	.073	.095	-.122*	.133*	.073	.105	-.296**	.097	-.017	.055	-.049	.448**	1				
O	4.25	.86	.257**	.411**	.330**	.334**	.318**	.104	.456**	.135*	.452**	.330**	.340**	.607**	.123*	-.018	1			
P	3.77	1.14	.305**	.317**	.261**	.174**	.221**	.105	.374**	.108*	.410**	.315**	.281**	.308**	-.025	.03	.487**	1		
Q	3.70	1.39	.276**	.275**	.218**	.176**	.188**	.116*	.371**	.113*	.234**	.363**	.403**	.265**	-.046	-.063	.344**	.441**	1	
R	4.30	1.36	.182**	.371**	.284**	.240**	.109*	.054	.298**	.123*	.319**	.335**	.263**	.402**	.108*	-.091	.509**	.552**	.393**	1

SD: Standard deviation; A: Affinity; B: Motivation for learning; C: Motivation for sociability; D: Motivation for entertainment; E: Motivation for escape; F: Viewing time; G: Perceived relevance; H: Negative attitude towards censorship; I: Perceived realism; J: Knowledge about America; K: Knowledge about language; L: Belief about Americans; M: Traditional Chinese values of development of self; N: Traditional Chinese values of relationship with others; O: Attitude towards Americans; P: Behavior of purchasing American products; Q: Behavior of imitating American non-verbal language; R: Intention to visit the U.S.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 9. Correlation Matrix of All Variable

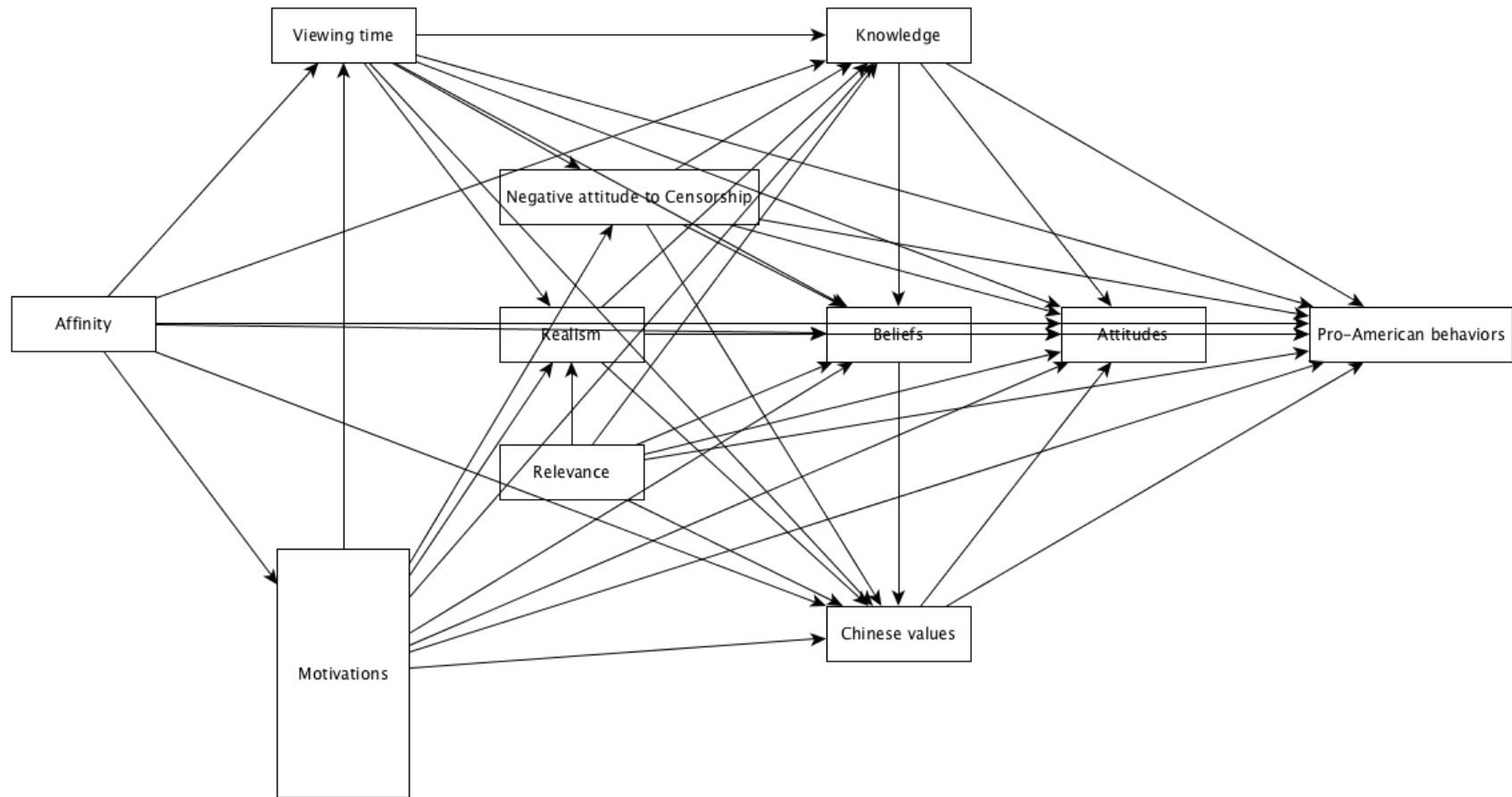
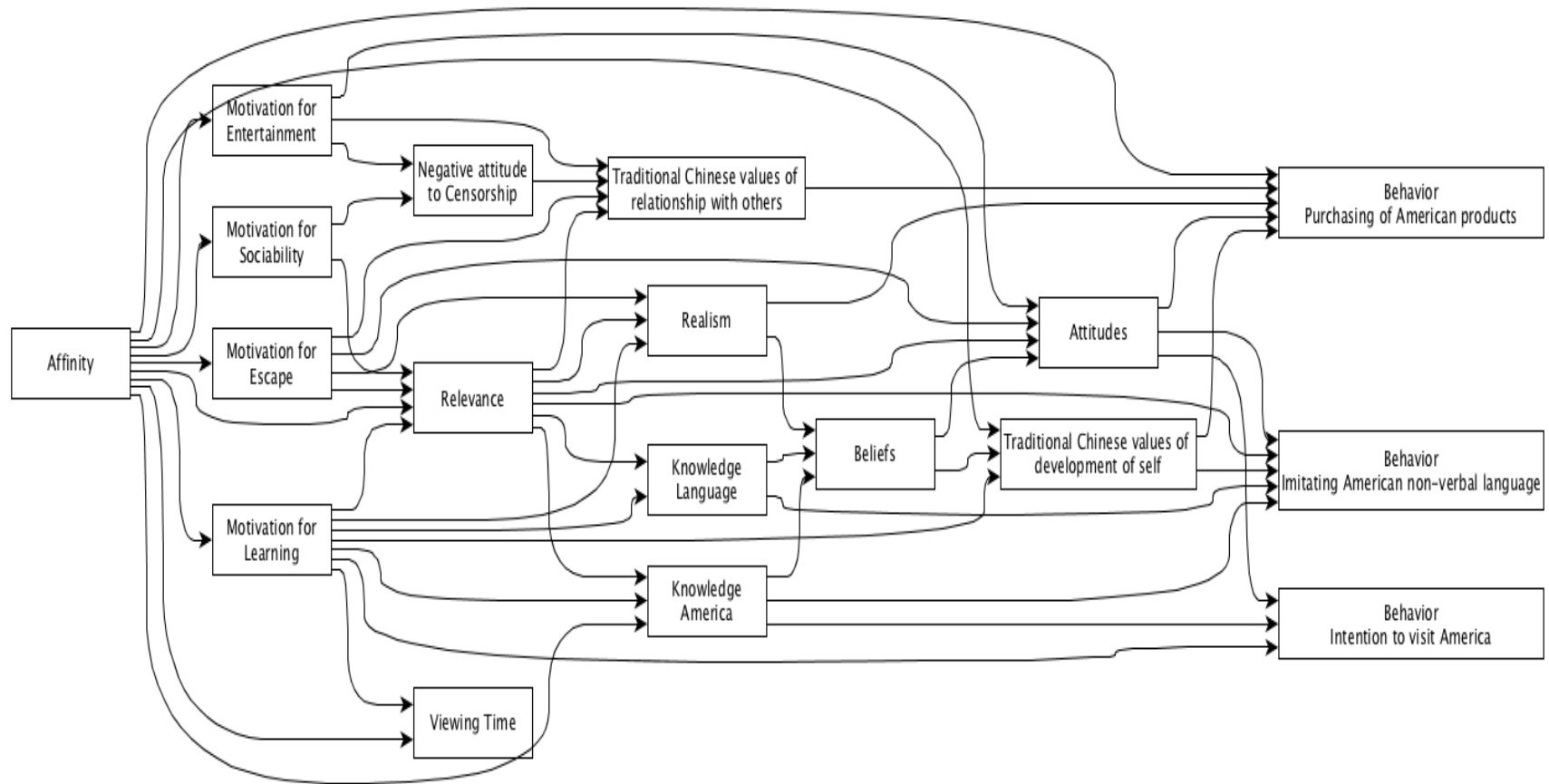


Figure 1. Expected Model



Model fit: $\chi^2 = 105.081$, $df = 95$, $p = .225$; CFI = .995; RMSEA = .018; PCLOSE = 1.000

Figure 2. Revised Model