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Constructing Cultural *Self* and *Other* in the Internet Discussion of a Korean Historical TV Drama: A Discourse Analysis of Weblog Messages of Hong Kong Viewers of Dae Jang Geum

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In this paper messages from viewers of the popular Korean historical TV drama--*Dae Jang Geum* (*Da Chang Jin*)--in a Hong Kong web-based discussion forum will be analyzed to see how some Hong Kong viewers construct their Chinese cultural identities through discursive moves of positioning (Harre and Langenhove, 1999). Different subject positions are adopted by these forum discussion participants to draw, maintain, and shift the boundary between 'self' and 'other' in different storylines projected in their messages. In asserting their Chinese cultural identities they also seem to be engaged in discursive construction of cultural others (e.g., Japanese, Koreans). We problematize these constructions as double-edged in their possible consequences: while they seem to cultivate a sense of Chinese cultural solidarity (albeit only temporarily), they also show the danger of constructing a hegemonic, Sino-centric discourse of Great China culturalism. The cultural identification patterns of these Hong Kong viewers also seem to be unstable, ambivalent and contradictory, perhaps reflecting Hong Kong people's general sense of ambivalence and fluidity in their negotiation of cultural identities.

Introduction: Discursive Construction of Identities through Projecting Subject Positions in Discourse

Identities are 'points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for (people)' (Hall, 1996). Identities are thus not fixed but are constantly being constructed, contested and renewed in discourse. People are selecting, constructing, and negotiating identity categories at different times and in different contexts.

In this study we draw on the analytical resources of positioning theory (Davies and Harre, 1990; Harre and Langenhove, 1999) to analyse weblog messages to see how different participants use discourse to construct cultural *self* and *other*. In typical

colonial encounters, the colonizer discursively positioned the colonized as a cultural, ethnic and linguistic 'other', establishing binary separation of the colonizer and the colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the ==former== (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1998). In both our daily conversations as well as public discourses such discursive construction of self and other and of different subject positions for self and other routinely occurs. Positioning theory (Davies and Brown, 1990) proposes that such subject positions are linked to our discursively constructed storylines which are constantly being negotiated by different parties:

> One speaker can position others by adopting a story line which incorporates a particular interpretation of cultural stereotypes to which they are 'invited' to conform, indeed are required to conform if they are to continue to converse with the first speaker in such a way as to contribute to that person's story line. Of course, they may not wish to do so for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes they may not contribute because they do not understand what the story line is meant to be, or they may pursue their own story line, quite blind to the story line implicit in the first speaker's utterance, or as an attempt to resist. Or they may conform because they do not define themselves as having choice, but feel angry or oppressed or affronted or some combination of these. ==(Davies and Harre, 1990: 7)==

The construction of storyline is central to the establishment and articulation of collective and personal identities, which involves assigning different subject positions (or 'characters') to different people in a certain context according to a storyline projected by one's discourse. By 'giving people parts in a story', a speaker makes available 'a subject position which the other speaker in the normal course of events would take up.' (Davies and Harre, 1990: 5). Below we shall quote Davies and Harre (1990) to delineate the key concepts of positioning theory for analyzing discursive acts of identity construction and negotiation through analyzing the kinds of subject positions and storylines being enabled in discourse:

> We shall argue that the constitutive force of each discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions. A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. (Davies and Harre, 1990:3)

In projecting storylines, people routinely draw on culturally available stereotypes (or recurring storylines) as resources to position themselves and others. Stereotypes are not preexisting mental entities or inevitable outcomes of human cognitive functioning; instead they are rhetoric devices that people can use to position themselves and others. As Langenhove and Harre (1999b) put it:

> They are best viewed as located in the rules and conventions of the discursive practices of distinct cultural worlds from which they can be appropriated whenever useful in certain conversations. (Langenhove and Harre, 1999b: 137)

In this study we shall analyze how some Hong Kong web forum message writers draw on, modify and reproduce cultural stereotypes in their discursive acts of constructing cultural identities for themselves and others. We shall focus on a TV drama fangroup website arising from the Korean TV drama *Dae Jang Geum*. An open discussion forum is created in the cyberspace, where world-wide drama fans can share their feelings, affections and reflections arising from and beyond the drama. As positioning involves the process of the ongoing construction of the self through talk (Davies and Harre, 1990; Harre and Langenhove,1999), the discursive practices of these fans show their discursive strategies and tactics in constructing their different/multiple identities with several collective storylines that they co-constructed and sometimes contested.

In the following sections we shall first describe the website organizational structure and activities, and then our analysis of different discursive acts of cultural and national identities construction in this virtual space. Storyline analysis will be conducted to reveal the 'characters' (or subject positions) being projected in their discursive acts, as well as the implications behind the big 'story' that they seemed to be co-constructing. Concluding the paper we shall discuss implications of multiculturalism, and the importance to promote respect for cultural diversity in modern day society.

Data Corpus: **The TVB Web Discussion Forum of *Dae Jang Geum***

Historical and costume genres of TV dramas in general do not travel far beyond their country of production and there might be barriers to transnational reception due to their encoding of historical and cultural specificities which are believed to be difficult to decode for transnational audiences. The recent great popularity of the Korean TV drama, *Dae Jang Geum* (Chinese title *Da Chang-jin*, English title *Jewel in the Palace*, first aired in South Korea in Autumn 2003 by MBC, 54 episodes), in two Chinese societies, Taiwan and Hong Kong, thus requires an interpretation, if not an explanation, from cultural studies researchers. *Dae Jang Geum* (hereafter *Dae* for short) is based on a true story in Chosun Dynasty in Korea's history, which tells the tale of Suh Jang-geum, the first Chosun woman to become the emperor's personal court physician in mid-16th century. It achieved a high rating of 57.8% in Korean television history and continues it popularity with its march through East Asia and even diasporic Asian communities in America.

Dae was aired between late January and early May in 2005 by the leading Hong Kong broadcast TV station, HK TVB, and has broken all local and foreign TV drama ratings records in Hong Kong. The average ratings reached 40% and at peak times to 50% for the final episode (e.g., The Oriental Daily, 2 May 2005; The Sun, 2 May 2005). That means approximately 2.4 million viewers on average (out of a 7 million population) were watching it every night Monday to Friday from 10 to 11 pm. As a hybridized TV drama genre that has incorporated features of historical, informative and romance genres, *Dae* has attracted diversified audiences that cross gender, age, education and social class boundaries (Lin and Kim, 2005). HK TVB has established a website for Dae, which includes many new sections specifically designed for the program, such as 'Background and History of the *Dae Jang Geum* Period' (大長今時代的背景與歷史), 'Dictionary of *Dae Jang Geum*'(大長今字典) and 'News of *Dae Jang Geum*'(大長今最新消息), etc.

In this paper, we shall focus on the TVB's web-based discussion forum of *Dae Jang Geum* (http://tvcity.tvb.com/drama/jewel_in_the_palace/story/index.html). We observed the activities of the website regularly from January 2005 to May 2005. The web forum discussion topics and interactions among members are analyzed to understand the discursive positioning strategies of the members, especially when they are discussing issues concerning national and cultural topics. All messages related to

cultural and national topics, and construction of identities and storylines are selected for in-depth textual analysis.

Although the age of individual members is not specified in their profiles, it is believed that most of them (approximately 80%) are young students. This observation is made based on the content of their messages, and the self-reported age group in certain voting sections. Many of them claimed that they are aged between 10 and 18, and a few of them aged 30 or above. In terms of gender, both female and male members are attracted, with similar proportions of each gender (however, such personal information is only self-reported). On the other hand, these members come from different countries including Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, Australia, Singapore, U.S.A. and Canada. Nevertheless, most of them are from Hong Kong, and both Cantonese-style Chinese and Mandarin Chinese seem to be the most frequently used language styles in the forum.

In this paper, different kinds of storylines and subject positions are offered in the discourses of the fans, which enable them to position different parties (including themselves) through different subject positions created in the storylines. These subject positions available for different parties are also linked to different sets of norms/moral orders associated with different storylines (Davies and Harre, 1990). In the next section we shall present our textual analysis of the messages in the forum.

Analysis

As a web group originating from the Korean TV drama *Dae Jang-geum*, the drama text itself provides material for the main part of discussion. However, the discussion is not confined to *Dae* or Korean TV dramas. According to Hamelink (2000), the cyberspace is similar to an 'unregulated market place' providing information, and it guarantees a creative and competitive marketplace with a diversity of contents. In this case, a variety of themes such as TV dramas, Korean history and culture, current political and social issues are also passionately discussed and analyzed by the members of the forum. In analyzing the messages, the discursive construction of Chinese cultural and national identities, the discursive acts of cultural and national demarcation, and the projection of storylines and characters constitute our major focus.

We set out with three main research questions: first, how does this group of members construct the identities or subject positions of different characters (embedded in their projected storylines), mainly through discursively setting up the dichotomy of 'self' and 'other'? Second, what is (are) the storyline(s) being constructed by them and what are the implications? Third, what kind of ideological resources (e.g., in the form of cultural and ethnic stereotypes) do they seem to draw on in the process of cultural identification and demarcation?

In the following sub-sections, the textual messages of the members will be analyzed to understand their discursive acts of constructing self and other, and their discursive moves in drawing and shifting boundaries of different subject positions within the 'storylines' they created/offered. (With some exceptions, almost all of the original messages analyzed were written in Chinese characters and we have translated them into English in this paper; the original Chinese message was placed underneath the English translation). Viewing rates (number of times the message is read by clicking the topic title) of each message will be shown to indicate its popularity.

Re-constructing/re-producing Historical Narratives of a Strong Cultural China as the Centre of Cultural Civilization

Dae Jang Geum is transnational both in its textual construction and in its ultimate circulation. In its dramatic text is encoded the historical sociopolitical influences of both ancient China and Japan, of (the sometimes confrontational) encounters with these neighboring powers, and of the historical crossing-over of Chinese cultural norms and practices to its neighbours (Lin and Kim, 2005). *Dae* readily draws on the political tension between Chosun and its neighboring imperial powers as plot devices to create crises or problems for the main characters. For instance, references are made to the arrogant Ming Dynasty emissaries who created a crisis (or a difficult situation) for Jang-geum and her master and teacher, Lady Han, although the arrogant, difficult Ming emissary finally becomes impressed by Han and Jang-geum's sincere care for his health and deliciously made vegetarian food and praises them. As a plot device to create crises and difficult situations for the male main character, Min Jung-ho, reference is made to the Japanese 'waegu' (sea pirates) invading Chosun and a female Japanese spy infiltrating the lands of Chosun, charting out a strategic map of Chosun

for future invasion, and using fatal poison darts that almost took the life of Min if not for the kind act of Jang-geum, who saved his life by nursing his wound with medicinal herbs.

The drama is thus set in the political backdrop of Chosun being sandwiched between two strong aggressive powers, China and Japan. These dramatically encoded historical cultural memories and encounters might make popular audience reception difficult in modern-day Mainland China and Japan. However, in the consumption practices of Hong Kong viewers, they seem to exercise selective attention to the dramatic texts and choose to focus on those aspects that they can readily identify with culturally and emotionally. Here is an opening message for the topic: 'Stella, there are things which you do not know, Chosun is greatly influenced by Chinese culture, Chosun people have been…' (「Stella，你有所不知，朝鮮深受中國文化影響，朝鮮人一直…」). This message shows the writer's Sino-centric attitudes toward the 'Great China' in history:

> 'Korea is greatly influenced by Chinese culture. Koreans always consider Korea to be 'small China'. They are very familiar with Chinese history. Therefore, there are many Chinese literary allusions in the drama.' (Posted by 'Aviao' on 30/1/2005, viewing rates<100).
> 「朝鮮深受中國文化影響，朝鮮人一直以來以小中華自居，非常熟悉中國歷史，所以劇中會出現很多中國的典故。」

This reproduces and reaffirms the common discourse among Chinese people that China has been historically influencing Korea with its relatively strong and superior culture and loaded with this discourse seems to be the speaker/writer's sense of cultural pride. Another member feels a strong sense of 'Chinese-ness' in the drama. He/she wrote, 'It can lead people into the story…it has a strong Chinese feel.' (Posted by Suh Jang-geum 徐長今 on 24/1/2005, viewing rates<100) (「都好引人入勝啦~~~~ 好有中國 feel 呀!」). When one of the members discovered that the Korean writing used in the dramas looks 'exactly like the Mandarin characters', another member called Aviao replied in this way:

> 'Yeah, (I) noticed that too. Not really sure but back in those days, China was

considered 'the centre of the world' so a lot of countries in the vicinity adopted Chinese ways. That's how Confucianism got spread to Korea and Japan. And I think the writing too. Even the current Japanese writing still incorporate Chinese characters.' (Posted on 25/1/2005, viewing rates<100)

The term 'center of the world' expressed the Sino-centric storyline (or narrative) of historical China being the centre of the world and the origin of high civilization in Asia. This seems to be a storyline strongly held and affirmed by the fans in reproducing a kind of 'Great Cultural China' discourse. As discussed above, it is true that historically Koreans (and many other East Asian peoples) have been influenced by the spread of Chinese culture (e.g., language, writing script, architecture, customs, Confucianism), but China has equally been on the receiving end of other Asian cultures, e.g., Buddhism from India. The historical political power (and domination, as often perceived by its neighbors) of China might be drawn upon proudly by many Chinese people as a resource for constructing their Chinese cultural identities. However, in the polycentric, multicultural world of today it can be problematic for Chinese people to continue to draw on such a Great Cultural China discourse for constructing cultural *self* and *other,* especially when such a discourse is mobilized to culturally denigrate other Asian peoples and cultures. This danger is evidenced in some forum members' criticism of South Korea's decision to change the name of its capital city in 2005. Under the message topic 'Why did South Korea change the name of the capital city from 漢城 to 首爾?' (「點解南韓要將個首都個名由漢城改名為首爾), a member called 'citysniper' described this act as 'meaningless'. Another member, 'Siu Ting'(小丁) agreed with him/her. Here are the responding messages:

> 'After establishing its own nation, Korea tried to get away from the shadow of being controlled by China (Han). First (they) gave up the use of the Han writing system, now even do some meaningless thing, changing the name of the capital city which is originally of Han language...this name of 'Seuol' ('Shou Er', 首爾) is without sense and order, (they) will soon re-adopt the name 'Han City' ('Han Cheng', 漢城)!! ' (Posted on 7/2/2005, viewing rates: 500).
> 「因為韓國(大韓民國)自立國以來一直都想擺脫被中國(漢人)控制的陰影,先有棄用漢字,而家仲做埋 d 無謂野, 更改漢字首都名......首爾呢個名不倫不類, 遲早改回漢城!!」
> 'It's an undeniable fact that Japan and Korea have been greatly influenced by Chinese culture. Cheer up, Chinese people!' (Posted on 24/2/2005, viewing rates: 500)

「日韓受中國文化影響是不爭o既事實。中國人加油啊!」

From the above discussions, we can see that even amidst their popular adoration of recent Korean media products and culture (the Korean Wave), many Hong Kong fans are still oriented towards the hegemonic image of 'Great cultural China' and are blind to the historical cultural domination of China often perceived by other peoples in East Asia. The abandonment of the Han writing system by other Asian countries received harsh criticism from these Hong Kong 'Korean drama fans', and the Chinese influence on/dominance over Korea is frequently emphasized in their discourse. In this sense, they perform the 'othering' process by differentiating themselves (i.e. Chinese) from Koreans drawing on and reproducing the historical Great Cultural China storyline and discourse. In this storyline projected in their discourse, Korea was positioned as (at least historically) culturally inferior and Koreans as cultural minors who kept imitating a Great Cultural China.

As positioning involves the process of the ongoing construction of *self* and *other* through talk and collective, folk stories (Harre and Langenhove, 1999), the forum members co-construct their subjective positions by positioning themselves in their 'Great Cultural China' storyline as a proud member of the constellation of being 'Chinese', and not as isolated individuals. The fans create and assign themselves the position (or the character in our storyline analysis) of 'culturally superior Chinese', and at the same time, offer the 'culturally inferior' subject position (or characters) to Koreans and Japanese. This othering strategy is made possible by drawing on resources from the historical narratives/discourses, and also the collective social imaginaries (Taylor, 2002) held (both implicitly and explicitly) by many Chinese people.

One important point is that these members draw on another legitimation discourse which has prevented them from having to confront with the ethnocentrism of their discourse. They adopted one of the useful strategies of communication, the metaphor of 'father-like principles', as suggested by Berman (1999: 145). This strategy involves positioning the empowered as 'benevolent father-figures through such widespread metaphors as 'the nation of family' and 'the voice of authority is your father'.'(Berman, 1999:145). In their messages, some members co-construct their cultural 'Chinese identity/subjectivity' by positioning China as a 'strong', 'influential'

and 'well-established' country—the 'central kingdom', the 'centre of the world', a source of high culture or civilization. At the same time their discourse positioned Korea as both a cultural 'offspring' who was described as constantly learning from Chinese culture. In this discursively constructed storyline and moral order (of China as the cultural father with a constellation of cultural offsprings hierarchically positioned under him), Korea (or ancient Chosun) was given a junior part to play as a people who called themselves 'small China'. The ethnocentrism was legitimized (at least as it seemed to appear so to the members themselves) by their 'benevolent father-and-filial-sons' storyline (with corresponding rights and obligations between each other), which is in turn situated within the traditional Confucianist social order (or social imaginary) implicit in their discourse. This storyline, as we shall see in the next section, is further extended and elaborated in these members' discourse to position the Japanese as not just an inferior cultural other but also an 'amoral non-human'.

3.2 Discursively Constructing Different Characters in their Storylines

The real-life drama of China-Japan conflict seemed to be drawn upon by the web forum members to further construct their storyline in their discourses. In March 2005, Japan revised their History textbooks, omitting the mention of their invasion of China during the Second World War[i] (this will be described as the 'textbook incident' throughout this paper). This act sparked many protests in Chinese communities in China and Hong Kong as well as great anger among some of the web forum fans of *Dae Jang Geum.*

When TVB planned to broadcast the Japanese drama, *Oh Oku* (*Tai O* in English) after *Dae*, many of the fans were opposed to this decision and posted messages with harsh criticisms of Japan and Japanese people. Below are some quotes under the topic 'TVB is going to broadcast Oh Oku, the rating will drop; support TVB to broadcast Dae Jang Geum, isn't it? Everybody???' (「TVB 播大奧，收視一定下降，支持 TVB 播大長今，係咪，大家???」) (Posted on 26/3/2005, all with viewing rates: 600) (Pronouns are in bold to highlight those fans' discursive construction of self and other):

'What do you guys think of the Japanese drama 'Oh Oku'? I agree that **all of us** hate Japanese most; so **I** won't watch it; I'll support **all of you**, (let's) fight against the Japanese…' (Posted by 'Support Young Ae'支持英愛 on 10/4/2005, an opening message for the above topic)

「大家點睇大奧套日本劇？我認同大家最憎日本仔，所以唔會睇，支持大家，一同打倒日本仔…」

'How can Japanese be good? Because **they** kill us the Chinese, I definitely won't watch the Japanese drama Oh Oku.' (Posted by 'Jang-geum'長今 on 10/4/2005, a responding message to the above topic)

「係點（點會）日本仔好？因為又殺我的中國人，我一定唔會睇大奧日本劇。」

Summarizing Japan's invasion of China in the Second World War in a short powerful sentence, 'they [anaphorically referring to Japanese] kill us the Chinese', the quote highlights the tension between 'we/us' and 'they/them'. Positioning involves the process of the ongoing construction of the self through the discursive construction of personal stories, which are not just individual but also involve collective and group storylines/histories/memories (Tan and Moghaddam, 1999). In their messages, many fans positioned, implicitly and indiscriminately, *all* Japanese as 'bad' and even as 'dogs' by making reference to the invasion of China by Japan—the cruel ways in which Japanese soldiers killed many Chinese civilians in the Nanking Massacre during its invasion of China. This is the most frequently cited historical event and provides the most convincing resource in establishing the major storyline of 'all Japanese are bad' in the forum members' discourses.

As a member of Chinese community, one's history as a subjective being includes his/her story as a member of the constellation of the nation (Harre and Langenhove, 1999). The collective history (which can also be considered as an 'imagined collective memory') is thus the best resource they can draw on to express and justify their hatred towards all Japanese people indiscriminately. For instance, when the fans discussed the content of the Japanese TV drama, *Oh Oku*, under the topic 'What is *Oh Oku* about?' (「'大奧'講咩架？」) (Posted by 'Ivy' on 16/4/2005, viewing rates: 200),

one of the fans with the net-name 'ans' satirized Japanese, and re-invented the storyline of *Oh Oku* by incorporating Sino-Japanese war history into the Japanese TV drama. He/she wrote:

> It's (a drama) about the damn Japanese guys who used some dishonorable ways to harm Chinese, and then didn't admit their fault, and even idealized their immoral conduct, then all the damn Japanese were killed by the Chinese at last! (Posted on 22/3/2005, a responding message to the above topic, viewing rates: 200, c38)
>
> 「講 d 死日本仔用 d 卑鄙手段去害中國人,之後就唔認錯,仲美化自己既惡行,到最後俾中國人打死哂 d 日本人。」

By combining the textual subject in the drama with the social subject in history, this kind of integration has already extended beyond the pure discussion of the drama text and re-constructs/re-presents a part of the unforgettable collective memory of war history of the Chinese people. Besides drawing on their collective memory of war history, the fans also linked their anger to current affairs. In view of the conflict between Japan and China in the 'textbook incident', many of them requested that Japan admit their fault and apologize to China. Another fan criticized Japan for 'robbing' the natural gas resources of 'ours'. Some of them are more radical and proposed forming a 'counterattack alliance' to 'fight against' Japanese. Here are some of the messages related to both 'past history' and 'current issues':

> '**They** didn't come out (to admit their fault); that shows **they** believe that the invasion of China in the past was correct! That means most Japanese are **bad** people.' (Posted by 'Angry'憤怒 on 16/4/2005, a responding message to the topic 'Will all of you watch *E-Dou*' 「大家會唔會睇醫道呀?」, viewing rates: 2600)

> 'Do **you** think it's correct for **them** to change the (content of the) textbook? Do **you** think it's correct for **them** to rob **our** natural gas?' (Posted by 'Sigh'唉 on 16/4/2005, a responding message to the topic 'What is the *Oh Oku* about?' 「'大奧'講咩架?」, viewing rates: 200)

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「你覺得佢改教科書係啱既？你覺得佢搶我地 d 天然氣係啱既？」

'**China** and **Korea** are always humiliated by Japan, (let's) form a counterattack alliance to fight against Japan!' (Posted by 'Physician Lady Seo' 徐醫女 on 10/4/2005, a responding message to the topic 'TVB is going to broadcast Oh Oku, the rating will drop; support TVB to broadcast Dae Jang Geum, isn't it? Everybody???' 「TVB 播大奧，收視一定下降，支持 TVB 播大長今，係咪，大家???」)

「中國和韓國一直受日本欺凌，一於組成聯盟反日！」

'Japan is so bad, yes, Physician Lady Seo, China and Korea are always humiliated by Japan, (let's) form a counterattack alliance to fight against Japan, yes, yes…' (Posted by 'Support Young Ae' 支持英愛 on 10/4/2005, a responding message to the topic 'TVB is going to broadcast Oh Oku, the rating will drop; support TVB to broadcast Dae Jang Geum, isn't it? Everybody???' 「TVB 播大奧，收視一定下降，支持 TVB 播大長今，係咪，大家???」)

「日本 so bad, yes, 徐醫女，中國和韓國一直受日本欺凌，一於組成聯盟反日，yes, yes…」

In order to highlight China as a historical victim of Japanese aggression, the fans tried to amplify the 'goodness' of the Chinese and also the 'badness' of the Japanese. When the subject is produced, the other is the 'excluded' or 'mastered' subject created by the discourse of power and thus the construction of 'other' is fundamental to the construction of the 'self' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1998). This 'othering process' ensures that they can put Japan in an unprivileged position. To be a person in the fullest sense in a society, we have a mastery of a complex of interrelated social practices, some social and some linguistic (Muhlhausler and Harre, 1990). Below are two illustrating examples of the linguistic 'othering' practice engaged in by the fan; both are under the topic 'Will all of you watch *E-Dou*' (「大家會唔會睇醫道呀？」)(Posted by 'ccc' on 16/4/2005, viewing rates: 2600)

'Do you think that it's good to learn the ways of treating **other** viciously with a friendly exterior? (It) requires **us** to learn how to hurt／kill others! **The damn Chinese traitor** and **Japanese dog** will like this! **We Chinese** won't be so vulgar…we Chinese are simple and honest… we have love and honor, better than the Japanese dogs, who use deceitful and treacherous ways to harm others! (Posted by 'Chinese people'中國人 on 16/3/2005, a responding message to the above topic, viewing rates: 2600)

「你估學 d 死人勾心鬥角陰濕招好咩？要我地學完去整死人呀？d 死漢奸 and 日本狗咪會鍾意囉，我地中國人就唔會咁賤格啦…我地中國人忠厚老實…我地有情有義，好過死日本狗陰陰濕濕用 d 死奸招去害人害物呀！」

'I am so happy that I am a Chinese. I am so proud of my identity as a Chinese. I agree with what a friend called octopuzzz said before, very meaningful, he/she said there are some bad Chinese, they have fault too…but many good Chinese people have taken the responsibilities of those bad people…but how about Japan? They did something wrong, didn't apologize, and even didn't admit their fault…if I am a Japanese, I won't act like those Japanese, who just escaped from the responsibilities. I will apologize to China, and also teach my next generation not to commit the same fault again…not like a cold-blooded animal without feelings.' (Posted by 'Chinese people' 中國人 on 16/3/2005, a responding message to the above topic, viewing rates: 2600)

「我好開心我係中國人。我為我係一個中國人而感到驕傲，我好鍾意之前一位朋友 octopuzzz 所講既說話，好有道理，佢話中國人都會有衰人，佢地都會犯錯…但係其他好既中國人都有為呢 d 衰人承擔責任…但係日本呢？佢地犯左錯，冇道歉不特止，仲唔肯承認自己所犯既錯…即使我係日本人，我都唔會好似其他日本人咁逃避責任，我會向中國道歉，亦會教導自己既後代唔好再犯當年既錯誤…而唔係一隻冇感覺既冷血動物。」

We can see that some fans used the term 'we Chinese' who are 'simple and honest', in comparison to the 'Japanese dogs' who were described as using 'deceitful and treacherous ways to harm others'. The choice of the solidarity words of 'we Chinese', as well as the claim of being 'proud of my identity as a Chinese' produced a clear and privileged (through victimhood, as occupying the moral highground) subject position of a Chinese. Other examples of adjectives, names and pronouns used are summarized in Table 1. All these together made up a stable storyline with three main collective

characters (or cultural personas/stereotypes): The first one is the 'good', 'honest' and 'simple' Chinese, regarded as 'I', 'we' or 'us'; the second one is the 'bad', 'damned' Japanese 'dogs' who treat others 'viciously with a friendly exterior', who are indexed by the deictic words: 'they', 'them' and 'other'. The third collective character in this storyline is the Korean, who is positioned as playing a supporting role (i.e. a 'weak' victim humiliated by the Japanese) whose function is to <mark>magnify</mark> the 'badness' of the Japanese.

Table 1: Discursive construction of three collective characters (cultural personas/stereotypes) in the storyline projected by some of the weblog messages

Nation	Pronouns	Names	Adjectives	Characters/positions
China	• I • We • Us/ All of us • You/ All of you	• Chinese people • Good Chinese • My next generation • Centre of the world	• Simple • Honest • Good	• People having love and honor • Willing to take responsibilities for the bad Chinese • A country humiliated by Japan
Japan	• They • Them	• Japanese dogs • Japanese guys • Bad people • Those Japanese • Small China	• Bad • Vulgar • Deceitful • Treacherous • Cold-blooded	• People treating other viciously with a friendly exterior • People who are vulgar, using

				• deceitful and treacherous ways to harm others • Cold-blooded animals without feelings • A country using dishonorable ways to harm Chinese • Refuse to admit their fault and even idealize their immoral conduct
Korea	• They	• Korean people • Small China	• Subtle • Serious	• A country humiliated by Japan • People influenced by China, but trying to get away

				from the shallow of being controlled by China (Han) • People with outstanding media performance and high quality production

There are however diversity of voices in the weblog messages. Some messages offer a different storyline from the above one by reversing it: praising Japan's technological achievement while admonishing both historical and contemporary China's corruption. One of the fans protested on behalf of the Japanese drama in this way, 'Oh Oku is so good, Japan is so good. The Chinese were too weak, that's why they were beaten by others!' (Posted by 'That is lo'咪係 lo on 16/4/2005, a responding message to the topic 'What is the *Oh Oku* about?' 「'大奧'講咩架？」, viewing rates: 200). Some fans draw on other historical events to invalidate the 'truth claims' of the previous messages posted by the other fans. For instance, one of them pointed out the 'dark' side of the Chinese by referring to some historical figures:

'You're just pretending to be superior to others! The Empress Dowager was that evil too! If Chinese people are honest, there will be no poisonous milk powder, bad quality food…and corruption! In short (they are) greedy for money…and use every means to strive for money…He-kun was exactly like that…' (Posted by 'Betty' on 16/4/2005, a responding message to the topic 'Will all of you watch *E-Dou*' 「大家會唔會睇醫道呀？」, viewing rates: 2600, c42)

「係度扮上菜，懶係清高咁！慈禧太后咪又係咁惡毒！中國人咁老實就唔會有毒奶粉、劣質食物…同貪污啦！講到尾又係貪錢…和坤咪就係囉…」

By providing counter-evidence related to the 'immoral conduct' of some infamous Chinese historical characters (the Empress Dowager who spent more money on a summer palace than on building up the navy of China, leading to the defeat of China to Japan in the late 19th century; He-kun who was a very corrupt court official in the Ching Dynasty), and also the on-going social issues in contemporary China (in 2004, there were many news reports of bad food merchants in China producing and selling poor-quality milk that led to the death of many babies in poor villages), a forum participant, 'Betty', challenged the 'simple and honest' image of Chinese constructed for the 'Chinese people' by other forum participants. This shows that the dominating storylines and characters set up in the forum might not be welcomed and accepted by all fans. There can be alternative voices. This is in line with the suggestion of Pinkus (1996) that there are possibilities of a second speaker refusing the original positions being articulated in a storyline projected by a first speaker and they can pose alternative storylines as a kind of 'resistance'. Such resistance is illustrated by some fans who demonstrate agency in listing counter-evidence to 'invalidate' the original one-sided cultural storylines/images built by other fans in their messages.

On the other hand, there are some fans who seemed to be more practical and they tried to point out the practical contemporary realities of co-existence and co-dependence among different nations, especially in the economic, material and pop media domains of modern city life. Here is one of the responses to the topic 'TVB is going to broadcast *Oh Oku*, the rating will drop; support TVB to broadcast Dae Jang Geum, isn't it? Everybody???' (「TVB播大奧，收視一定下降，支持TVB播大長今，係咪，大家???」) (Posted on 26/3/2005, all with viewing rates: 600):

'(You) haven't boycotted Japanese goods until today? Since you all received education, (you) knew Japan had invaded China, (you should) boycott Japanese goods immediately! So pretentious, hypocritical…think about what kinds of Japanese goods you now have at home, then throw them onto the street at once! Don't eat Japanese noodles, sushi, sashimi…instant noodles…don't use the stationery of Hello Kitty…just say boycott Japanese goods in the mouth. I don't believe that you didn't watch *Long Vacation, Tokyo Love story…Good*

Luck…don't be so pretentious here! In fact, Japanese culture has been so firmly rooted in Hong Kong…Even Mainland Chinese people have to buy Japanese goods…' (Posted by 'Annie' on 10/4/2005, viewing rates: 600)

「今時今日先抵制日貨?自從你地接受教育以來,知道日本侵華,就即刻抵制日貨啦!係度扮晒野，假仁假義，話唔睇唔睇，遲早咪又係睇，自己諗下屋企有 d 乜野係日本貨，即刻擲落街羅，出街唔好食拉麵,壽司,刺身...公仔麵....唔好用 hello kitty 文具...口口聲聲抵制日本貨..我又唔信你地之前無睇悠長假期....東京愛的故事....good luck...唔好係度扮野啦!事實上日本文化係香港根深柢固啦....內地人都買日本貨啦...」

The above message seems to represent the voice of many practical-minded Hong Kong people who are well aware of the contemporary realities of both the deep-rooted popular cultural influence of Japan in Hong Kong, and the technological dependence of Hong Kong (and Mainland Chinese) on Japanese products. In the message the forum participant used the 'deep-rooted Japanese culture' to expose the slogans of the 'boycott' action as 'pretentious' and 'hypocritical'. However, such kind of alternative discourse and storyline seem to be rather marginal in the forum, and is often obscured by the voices of other messages projecting the culturalist and nationalist storyline of 'Good Chinese' versus 'Bad Japanese' (as illustrated by the claims in some messages like 'we Chinese are simple and honest', 'most Japanese are bad people'). The above discussion shows that despite some alternative voices, the participants in the web forum generally hold a common, collective storyline that constructs the identity of a 'good Chinese'. Some of them show a very strong emotional attachment to this identity, and seem to be reinforcing this 'self' identity/image by labeling Japanese as extremely bad 'others'. However, this seemingly stable construction of Chinese identity is not that stable, especially when some of the Hong Kong forum participants are comparing themselves with Mainland Chinese. In the next section, we shall discuss the internal diversity within this collective membership, which is illustrated by another discursive 'othering' process engaged in by some 'Hong Kongers' vis-a-vis 'Mainlanders'.

3.3 Setting Up an Internal Hierarchy among 'Chinese': 'Educated and literate Hong Kong Chinese' vs. 'Stupid and brainless Mainland Chinese'

Previous research in Hong Kong has generally focused on the dichotomy of a 'Hongkongese' identity vs. a 'Chinese' identity. In the early 1980s, researchers focused on finding the specificity of Hong Kong identity, on how being 'Hongkongese' differs from being 'Chinese' (Lau and Kuan, 1998; Abbas, 1997; Ma, 1999). In analyzing the web forum messages, we found that some apparently Hong Kong participants (we make this inference from their using classical Chinese characters instead of simplified characters, which are used in Mainland, though some Mainlanders might also use classical characters) called themselves 'Guangdong people', which seems to be set up as a category to be differentiated from the general category of 'Mainland Chinese'. In response to the topic 'I don't believe people will like this drama! Such kind of topic…'(「我根本唔相信有人喜歡呢齣戲！呢種題材呢…」), one of the fans with the web name 'Highly educated intellectual' (高級知識份子) wrote: 'As a highly educated Guangdong-person intellectual, I think (the drama) is great.' (「自問係廣東人既高級知識份子，我覺得好好睇 wor」)(Posted on 2/2/2005, a responding message to the above topic, viewing rates: 4600). This claim reveals the pride and superiority of being 'Guangdong-person Chinese'.

In the mid-1990s, especially preceding the 1997 handover of Hong Kong to China, there was a set of binary oppositions inscribed in public discourses in Hong Kong: Hong Kong is associated with 'democracy', 'modernity', 'freedom' and 'economic development'; on the other hand, China is associated with 'authoritarianism', 'conservatism', 'backwardness' and 'traditionalism'. (Lee and Chan, 2005). In this study, we also discovered some 'binary identity oppositions' being set up in the web forum messages which reproduce the 'Hong Kong versus Mainland' discourse. On top of the collective identity of 'Chinese' (which seems to be discursively constructed in some messages as a homogenous and united group as shown in the above section), many forum messages written by apparently Hong Kong participants seem to assert that they have distinctive cultural tastes (and also cultural capital) as compared to Mainland TV audiences.

This type of messages showed a strong Hongkong-centricism and often explicitly demanded the Mainland participants to 'go away'. Their discursive acts seem to be

rather contradictory here, as some of those people that many messages previously constructed as 'good' and 'honest' (Mainland) Chinese are subject to serious criticism and even sometimes personal attacks and insults. For instance, when the fans discussed about the appropriate time for airing *Dae Jang Geum*, some Hong Kong fans excluded a message posted in simplified characters (from a Mainlander) from the discussion, although this message was also a bit provocative by saying that *Dae Jang Geum* is too boringly informative and moralistic and he/she has never watched it. Any anti-fan discourse appearing in a fangroup forum will invite strong criticism but the way other fans protested to this anti-fan message indicates heavy use of the specific ideological resources and binary and hierarchical subject positions (of superior Hongkongers vs. inferior Mainlanders) set up in their Hongkong-centric storyline. Below are some of their very unfriendly messages in response to the topic 'The rating of Jang-geum is bad, the management level is confused and hysterical.' 「長今收視差高層心慌意亂」(All posted on 24/3/2005, viewing rates: 1900):

> 'Ignore those Mainland guys! Ask them to watch Mainland channels!' (Posted by 'ERIC')
>
> 「唔好理 d 大陸仔啦,叫佢睇番大陸台算啦！」

> 'Do you really know the situation in Hong Kong? I wonder what (who) you are, you always suppose (post) these stupid topics, what you want or (are) you just a brainless guy?' (Posted by 'stupid ocation', originally in English with corrected words)

The binary oppositions and stereotypical images are often used by the Hong Kong fans to label and stigmatize the Mainlanders in the forum (calling them names such as 'Mainland guys' or 'brainless guys'). For instance, when some Mainland fans tried to analyze the meanings/messages of *Dae* and suggested that TVB air another Korean TV drama which they described as very meaningful and good, one of the Hong Kong fans with the self-given web name 'Mainland West'(大陸西) described them as 'pretentious'. He/she wrote in a very slangish Cantonese style, 'Shut up! Mainland guy! Don't show off any more!' (「收皮啦!大陸仔!唔好扮哂野呀!」) (Posted on 1/4/2005, a responding message to the topic 'Hopefully the drama division of TVB

will consider importing and broadcasting…' 「希望 TVB 劇組可能夠考慮引進播放…」, viewing rates: 1100). This message implies that Mainland fans do not possess the cultural capital/taste to decode the real meanings of the drama, and what they said were just 'pretentious' (as 'impostors', see Bourdieu, 1991) and should be excluded from the discussion. The self-chosen web name of this Hong Kong fan, 'Mainland West', also has a mocking, negative implication which seems to be meant to be impolite/insulting to Mainland Chinese people.

Stereotypes are in general defined as 'a set of consensual beliefs of one group about the attributes shared by members of another group: (Langenhove and Harre, 1999b: 129), and are often regarded as distortion or exaggeration of reality. 'Cultural stereotypes' are considered as belonging to the public/collective domain, as subject positions in everyday discourse which individuals can appropriate or impose on others. In this case, many local fans made use of 'cultural stereotypes' to stigmatize the Mainland fans and to impose negative subject positions on them. For example, some fans described the Mainland people as 'Mainland pigs' whenever they expressed a different opinion. The word 'pigs' refers to a group of 'uncivilized', 'underdeveloped' and 'stupid' people, which Hong Kong people used to attach/relate to Mainland people in the past (and some still do it today, like some of the fans in the forum). Such kind of stereotypes/stigma was drawn upon and reproduced in the Hong Kong fans' rhetorical devices to discursively push others into a highly negative subject position.

All these seem to be some Hong Kong people's discursive acts of binary demarcation and hierarchicalization in their discursive construction of 'Hongkongese' versus 'Mainland Chinese' identities. In many messages, these Hong Kong fans asserted their higher status, both in cultural and moral respects. Cultural stereotypes can act as a resource for developing storyline (Davies and Harre, 1990). In this case, the originally collective and united group of 'Chinese' is now divided into two categories, and the Mainland Chinese are losing the credits they gained in the earlier part of the storyline. It in turns generates a set of discourses/subject positions that are internally contradictory, and we shall elaborate this point in the discussion section.

Despite the dichotomy of a 'Hongkongese' identity versus a 'Mainland Chinese' identity, as suggested by Lee and Chan (2005), Hong Kong identity is no longer necessarily defined in terms of its distinctiveness from China in recent years. Since Hong Kong is now part of China, social interaction between Hong Kong people and Mainlanders has become more regular and popular in different arenas like education and business. As a result, the trend is toward greater integration with Mainland which leads to an emergence of the 'Chinese of Hong Kong' identity (Lee and Chan, 2005:4). A Hong Kong fan seems to be drawing on this recent integrative discourse in the following message:

> 'Hong Kong and Mainland are getting closer, you should learn about the simplified Chinese characters of our great Fatherland. It's called 'simplification of the complicated things'.' (Posted by 'A person that never give up'永不放棄 的人 on 4/3/2005, a responding message to the topic 'I don't believe people will like this drama! Such kind of topic…'「我根本唔相信有人喜歡呢齣戲！呢種 題材呢…」, viewing rates: 1100)

This Hong Kong participant seemed to recognize the changing social/political conditions, and proposed a cooperative and welcoming attitude towards 'our great Fatherland'. We should thus be reminded that discursively constructed identities are fluid rather than fixed, which can and do change (Langenhove and Harre, 1999a). This enables people to adopt different subject positions and identities to cope with different situations. In our study, some local fans did change their standpoints when serious quarrels occurred. Originally a local fan called 'Betty' ignored the comments of the Mainland fans, but when she is accused of lacking intelligence (like the Japanese), and that she has failed to fight against the 'Mainland Chinese', Betty retorted and emphasized her Chinese patriotic attitudes in her message: 'I think you are real Japanese, and pretend to be a Chinese here! I really like Chinese culture!' (Posted on 16/4/2005, a responding message to the topic 'Will all of you watch *E-Dou*' (「大家 會唔會睇醫道呀？」, viewing rates: 2600).

It seems that Hong Kong has no stable discursive formations about 'patriotism' at the moment (Lee and Chan, 2005). Some Hong Kong people may distance themselves

from the 'Mainland Chinese identity' sometimes, but adhere to it on other occasions. One of the illustrating examples is shown in the case of Betty. When someone described her as shifting position in saying 'I really like Chinese culture', she replied to the criticism in this way: 'I didn't shift my position! Because Chinese culture is broad and deep! I like it so much, now I need to work on a thesis about Chinese classical culture.' (Posted on 16/4/2005, also a responding message to the topic 'Will all of you watch *E-Dou*' (「大家會唔會睇醫道呀？」, viewing rates: 2600).

Though she didn't admit the act of shifting her position, her attitude did seem to be changing throughout the discussion. This is to ensure an attachment/alignment with a privileged and collective identity in changing contexts. Betty's ambivalence in her cultural identification seems to indicate the ambivalence of many Hong Kong people about their identity: they sometimes position themselves as 'Hongkongers' vis-à-vis 'Mainlanders'; however, when the context calls for a larger cultural identity, they might readily change their position into a 'patriotic Chinese' embracing a hegemonic worldview of a 'Great China', constructed as the cultural origin, the cultural 'father', of other Asian cultures.

4. Coda: Understanding the Construction of *Self* and *Other* in Discursive Acts of Positioning

Traditional role theory sees roles as isolated and fixed, whereas positioning theory sees all these being in a flux, being constantly negotiated, shifted, modified and renewed. Positioning is the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversation (and in this case the online written messages of the fans) as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced and accepted 'storylines' (Davies and Harre, 1990; Harre and Langenhove, 1999). By providing a cast of different persons in the storylines offered, a speaker/writer makes available different subject positions for different parties involved in the storyline, which is in turn linked to different moral orders (with different sets of norms about what counts as right/appropriate to do).

The self that is positioned in relation to the storylines is articulated around different categories, with particular images, metaphors and concepts relevant within the discursive practices. In our study, the TVB fans of *Dae Jang Geum* collectively constructed a storyline with 'good Chinese', 'bad Japanese' and 'weak Koreans'. The frequent use of 'we' as an addressee-directed device (e.g. 'we Chinese') constructs an in-group sense of social bonding and solidarity. Co-constructing a well-defined collective identity of 'Chinese' might help this group of fans to articulate a desirable personal identity with confidence (Taylor et al., 2003).

At the same time, this collective/personal identity of self is differentiated from that of the 'other'. As Ma (1999: 63) suggests, 'Identity demarcation is constructed by the dual socio-cultural process of exclusion and confirmation'. The construction of 'self' and 'other' distinction is the best tool in outlining one's own identities. In this discursively co-constructed storyline, both Japanese and Koreans were assigned the subject positions of cultural 'others'. Japanese have been assigned a coherent set of attributes of 'bad', 'aggressive' and 'immoral', and cultural stereotypes were drawn upon and reproduced in the web messages. One speaker can position others by adopting a storyline which incorporates a particular interpretation of cultural stereotypes to which they are 'invited' to conform (e.g. the position of 'bad Japanese'). In this storyline, a sharp contrast was set up between a set of collective negative attributes of one group vis-a-vis another set of collective positive attributes of another group, as shown in the following table:

Table 2: The collective attribute structures of Chinese and Japanese in the storyline discursively constructed in the weblog messages

Chinese	Japanese
Moral	Immoral
Civilized	Violent
Honest	Deceptive
Simple	Pretentious
Willing to love and forgive	Ambiguous to harm/cold-blooded

The above 'binary opposition' between the discursively constructed attributes of Chinese and Japanese is relatively consistent throughout the forum discussion. The recent 'textbook incident' highlighted the growing conflict with Japan, and many Chinese people (including the Hong Kong fans in our study) expressed their anti-Japanese positions. Most of the fans seemed to draw on this membership category for managing national and cultural identities. This construction of social type by discursive tools of membership categorization involves identities which carry rich inferences of category-bound activities (Ma, 1999). In our study, the immoral history of Japan's invasion of China has been drawn upon as a powerful signifying nexus of symbols indexing the common features of a whole group of people (i.e. all/most Japanese were constructed as 'bad' and 'cold-blooded' and all of them were held responsible for that historical atrocity).

However, the 'us versus them' dichotomy built around Chinese and Japanese can be dangerous, as it results in polarizing cultures and peoples, constructing a victimized *self* occupying moral high ground and an immoral *other*. This polarizing effect selects the worst section of outsiders and generalize the bad characteristics to the whole group of 'other' and at the same time, selecting the best section of the established group and generalize the good characteristics into the category of 'us' (Ma, 1999). Then the two categories involved will push in different/opposite directions, as we are 'focusing on the minority of the worst and the best of the respective groups' (Ma, 1999: 93)**.** Applying this concept to our study, the binary, absolute polarization of 'extremely good' Chinese and 'extremely bad' Japanese is problematic, and can distort the reality with the constructed dichotomy of 'us' versus 'them'.

We propose here that there is at least one risky consequence -- the emergence of the 'great China cultural sphere discourse', which is constructed with the storylines/social imaginaries of the Chinese fans, may promote a kind of 'Chinese cultural imperialism'. This is similar to the history of Japan, which tried to establish a 'great Japanese cultural sphere discourse' through popular cultural and media penetration in other Asian countries. Iwabuchi (2002) explores how Japanese popular culture circulates in Asia and critiques Japan's position as the intermediary between Asian pop cultural formations. He shows how Japan tried to de-center the globalization processes and demonstrates how Japan's extensive flow of cultural products to other parts of Asia

implies a sense of 'superiority' over these regions. This act of Japan has been subject to serious critique, as it tries to produce a legitimatized discourse to explain or mask the cultural imperialism it brings about.

In our study, many of the Hong Kong web forum participants seemed to be repeating this hegemonic cultural and discursive practice of Japan, albeit in a less organized and structured manner. Some of them expressed their China-centric/Hong Kong-centric identities through the discussion of Korean dramas, getting all the credits and placing Chinese in the highest, privileged position (e.g. good virtues of Confucianism, such as honesty and willingness to love). These discursive practices might contribute to the reproduction of the 'great Chinese cultural sphere' discourse. Instead of fearing the 'Korean cultural imperialism' of the Korean Wave, which we understand to be a legitimate concern, what we should equally be worried about is the tendency to promote and construct the 'great China cultural sphere discourse' and Chinese culturalism through the consumption of Korean TV dramas by some Hong Kong Chinese. This is like a re-incarnation of the specter of cultural imperialism created by Japan in the past (and also in the present, see Iwabuchi, 2002), accompanying the growing economic and international position of China in recent years. We can see that this 'great China' discourse is not confined to 'top-down' public, official discourses, but also seems to be emerging among the grass-root discourses, as evidenced in the Internet messages we analyzed.

Compared to the absolutely 'bad character' of Japanese in the storyline constructed by the fans, both the collective characters/personas of Koreans and Chinese are much more fluid. Koreans were sometimes portrayed as 'outstanding media performers' (especially in the field of drama production), and sometimes as a 'weaker nation' who has to keep 'learning from China', and occasionally became recruited as an 'ally' of China in fighting against Japan. Nevertheless, these shifting positions are all useful for casting the role of 'Chinese' or 'HongKongese' (i.e. 'us') in different discursive contexts, so as to meet different/changing demands associated with a larger moral system. As Davies and Harre (1990) put it,

> 'In making choices between contradictory demands there is a complex weaving
> together of the positions (and the cultural/social/political meanings that are

attached to those positions) that are available within any number of discourses; the emotional meaning attached to each of those positions which have developed as a result of personal experiences of being located in each position, or of relating to someone in that position; the stories through which those categories and emotions are being made sense of; and the moral system that links and legitimates the choices that are being made.' (Davies and Harre, 1990: 15)

In the case of the discursively constructed collective character of 'Chinese', its position is also in flux with shifting boundaries. Discourse and positions can shift within varying storylines, which allow multiple selves that can be internally contradictory with other possible selves in different storylines (Davies and Harre, 1990). This possibility of choice also implies the possibility of acting agentically. When the fans were engaged in the discussion of China-Japan conflicts, nearly all of them adhered to a discursive construction of the big family of 'Chinese' and assigned all good qualities to this collective identity. However, when the big category of 'Chinese' is further divided into 'Hongkongese' and 'Mainland Chinese', another dichotomy occurs within this group and tension between the sub-categories is created through discursive acts of demarcation and othering.

We all struggle with our experience to produce a unitary and consistent story of self, demanded by both others and ourselves. (Davies and Harre, 1990). At the same time, struggle in membership category collections results in ambivalence in identities/positions. As indicated in previous studies (e.g. Tu, 1991; Yee, 1992)., there was a feeling of antagonism among many Hong Kong people towards the Chinese communists in an 'us vs. them dichotomy'—the 'authoritarian', 'brutal', 'barbaric' Mainlanders were contrasted with the 'democratic', 'humane', and more 'modernized' Hongkongers. In our study, most of the Hong Kong fans seemed to believe in and reproduce the notion that being a 'Hongkongese' is superior to being a 'Mainland Chinese'. Paradoxically, Hong Kong people are bound by ethnic, cultural, economic and political ties with the Mainland Chinese people. This has resulted in the ambivalence of the cultural identity of Hong Kong people and it is said to be 'historical and has fluid and shifting boundaries' (Ma, 1999: 57).

What we would like to propose in this paper is that the contradictory/shifting positions and boundaries might actually reflect the lack of cultural confidence of some Hong Kong people. Some argue that a lack of self-esteem is central to most personal and social ills in the contemporary society (e.g., Talyor et al., 2003). It seems that the writers of the web forum messages that we analyzed were searching for a comfortable position, an identity position in which they can feel proud of themselves through the construction of storylines with both consistently 'good Chinese' and 'bad Japanese' characters. On the one hand, they seemed to show cultural identification with the values of traditional Chinese culture (e.g. Confucianism worldviews, traditional virtues of goodness); on the other hand, they located a negative reference point on Mainland Chinese people and stigmatized them as an outsider group, associated with underclass and cultural inferiority. All these suggest the mixed feelings and ambivalent cultural identification practices of some Hong Kong people, and urge us to deal with the insecurity/unstable identities associated with the problematic and potentially destructive 'Hong Kong-centric' and 'Chinese-centric' discourses and discursive practices of constructing a superior cultural *self* and an inferior cultural *other* in their everyday social interactions. How to design multiculturalism and anti-racist education programs/activities to help more people to become more critically self-reflective of discursive acts of symbolic violence will become a challenging but worthwhile goal for all of us.

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[i] In 1937, the Japan's Imperial Army entered the Chinese capital city and collectively committed the 'Rape of Nanjing'. Within the six-week time, 340,000 civilians were killed and 10,000 women were raped. This was called 'Nanjing Massacre' in history.