

Are Chinese and Korean Families Confucian?: An Interpretive Analysis of Representation in Chinese and Korean Dramas*

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The purpose of this study is to look into how television dramas represent family as cultural institution differently in East Asia where Confucian familial culture has, as it is assumed, been imbedded historically and culturally. This study is an attempt to contest Confucian family value hypotheses which presume that East Asian countries share common family cultures and value orientations. The pre-examination of the television drama in China and Korea demonstrates that television dramas in both countries represent in very different ways. While Korean television drama personalize family conflicts, Chinese drama tend to put family conflicts in relations to social changes such as the Cultural Revolution or the Social Reform.

For example, Go-bu conflicts (mother-in-law and daughter-in-law) are the most popular theme of Korean drama. Even the class conflicts or gender issues happen in the context of personalized within-family relations. In such personalized within-family relations, drama characters are not independent subjects, but only members of family (wife and husband, mother or mother-in-law, etc.). In contrast, Chinese television represents drama characters as social actors who are connected to social changes. Major characters in Expectations which was the record-high watching rate drama after 1990s are deeply involved in historic events such as the Cultural Revolution and Social Reforms in China.

Two research questions were raised: First, what is the nature of family in television representations? Second, how have those qualities been formed culturally? The previous researches tried to answer the first question by analyzing drama texts. These studies simply assumed or interpreted that Korean drama kept the unchanged images of traditional or

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Confucian family culture and relations with no comparative analyses with other Confucian cultures. The comparative analysis of this study shed some light on the different family cultures and different family relations, rather than assuming Confucian culture underlies East Asian societies.

Keywords: Representation, Family, Confucian Cultures, Television Drama, Korea, China

I. INTRODUCTION

East Asian societies have been largely regarded as having a collective culture in contrast to the Western individualistic culture. While Western culture emphasizes an individual's right and autonomy to pursue his/her own identity, individual responsibility and accomplishment, the East focuses on an individual's role within a group or organization. Many studies have shown that such groups exist as type of extended family, and even nation states are defined by this familism culture.

To define individual roles and identities as part of an extended family in East Asian culture, patriarchy and familism are important tools. This study intends to look into the changes in the system and culture in Chinese and Korean societies, which are categorized as collective cultures of familism. Specifically, we will analyze the representations of families and family relations in Korean and Chinese TV drama programs to argue that the East Asian collective culture is not a uniform entity but a complex and dynamic one. In comparing the representations of families and family relations in Korean and Chinese TV dramas, we will focus on the meaning of such differences.

Considering the purpose of this study is to look into the cultural characteristics and changes of East Asian familism cultures, the family discourses in TV dramas needed to be compared with the actual changes of the real world. To do this, we must first discuss the epistemological problems of the relationship between social reality and media representation. An analysis of media language, text and discourse attempts to answer how a society constructs meaning around individuals and systems and what roles the discourses play. While semiotics focuses on the text itself and its linguistic

meaning-building process, historical discourse analysis in the footsteps of Foucault focuses on discourse and power relations. Thus, the former is known as the “poetics of representation” while the latter refers to the “politics of representation.”

Among the two approaches, this study focuses on the politics of representation. As such, the politics of discourses on family and family relations do not substantially take interest in the validation of the truth of whether TV dramas directly mirror changes in reality. In spite of this, many existing studies on this subject have tended to assume a direct relationship between the constructed and the real (e.g., Lee, E. 1993; Yoo, S. & Lee, K. 2001; Kim, Y. 1996; Oh, M. 1991; Ha, J. 2001).

Hence, this study aims to view family representations in TV dramas as a discursive practice within a society that creates a ‘familism’ culture and related cultural practices. Dramas provide answers to questions such as what a family means to itself, how a ‘normal’ family is defined, and what fatherhood or motherhood means through representations. Such representations construct a “regime of truth” about the family and affect the behaviors and identities of both individuals and groups. With this approach, we analyze the representations and their cultural meanings of family relations in TV dramas in the following manner.

First, the study discusses how extended families are represented in the TV dramas of both countries. In addition, the study attempts to define a “normal” family — the most desirable form of family structure. By doing this, the study will shed light on the meaning of what the family means in each society. Also, views on parent-children relationships and rearing problems are discussed in a holistic approach.

With this framework of analysis, the study intends to look into the differences and similarities between the two cultures both horizontally and vertically — focusing on the historical changes in the societies.

II. CHANGES IN FAMILY SYSTEMS

1. Historical Constructions of Family Structures

Past studies have shown that the experience of colonization was crucial to the change of the traditional Korean family. Kim (Kim, H. 2006) argues that the traditional Korean family concept was created in the mid-Chosun period. With enhanced familial laws in the 17th century, the concept of the family was extended to agnates in general in addition to immediate family members. This provided that maintaining the bloodline was the most important role of the family. When the modern nuclear family was introduced in the 1920s, it seemed to imitate the Western model but evolved into a unique Korean pattern. A hybrid model between the colonial form and the traditional Confucian ideal gradually evolved.

After the colonial era, the agricultural production community experienced a division of family and labor, of the private and the public, and a change of the family economy into a consumer-oriented pattern. As a result, the previous family bonds and concepts were weakened (Lee, D. & Ham 1996; Ham 1999). However, within the family relations, patriarchal traditions in the customs and economy were still intact and such principles remained regardless of the actual changes in their structure.

A similar case is found in China. After the 1980s, China also experienced a rapid change in its nuclear families. Traditional Chinese families were either large families including immediate and secondary members or a commoner's family comprising only immediate members. On the other hand, such father-son-based traditional families were gradually changed to more spouse-based families with the modernization efforts which took place after the communist regime.

What caused the changes of the family system in China? The most important factor was the lowered authority of the patriarch due to the land reforms passed by the communist regime. Because land was not possessed by large families, more households became independent (Lee, K. 2005). Also, an extreme birth control measure had an influence on the new spouse-based family structure. Another factor to consider is the government's pension

policy, which changed the traditional family roles of caring for the elderly by a public commune.

2. Meaning of traditional families

The traditional family structure in Korea is a multi-generational one centered on men's immediate family members. The male members are the center of the household, whereas female members are largely excluded from the family concept, which is justified by proverbs such as *ChoolGaOeIn*, which means that a married daughter becomes a member of another family. Park (Park, H. 1981; 1988) argued that a primary goal of the traditional Korean family lies in "carrying on the lineage." Households are maintained by links between ancestors and descendants. In this way, the father-oldest-son relationship was the most important tie of the family, and individual members has a little meaning in the traditional family. Each member is expected to sacrifice for the common good of the whole family and to help each other. Because the son's success was important for the good of the family in this system, the position of the daughter or daughter-in-law was insignificant. Filial piety played a crucial function but it was only limited to the father-son relationship (see Choi 2006).

Traditional family ethics in China was also centered blood lines, 'familism' and hierarchy, similar to the ethics of Korean families. However, such traditional family ethics were heavily criticized after modernization. With the diversification of family structures, the socialization of family functions and the shift in power relationships, post-modernistic patterns have emerged (Letian 2000). It is widely accepted that traditional Chinese family relations have greatly changed since the communist revolution (Cohen 2005), with differences between those in urban and rural areas. While there are many nuclear families in urban areas, there is still the responsibility to take care of parents and the concept of the family as a production unit in rural areas (Kim, S. 1993; Pung, 2003; David & Harrell, 1993/2001).

With the experience of modernization, family systems have changed according to the social and historical contexts of each country. Within the larger frame of the Confucian family system, those differences should be examined in detail. This study intends to look at the family as represented

in TV dramas in a social context. Specifically, the comparison of Korea and China will provide deeper insight to the Korean family system.

III. METHODOLOGY

To look into the importance of families as subjects, the 10 programs with highest rating during 2004 and 2006 were chosen for each country. Because China did not have a uniform authority for viewer ratings, 10 to 20 dramas were considered. In 2004, 5 out of 20 dealt with family matters after modernization, and 7 out of 20 did so in 2005. In 2006, the number was 6 out of 20. In Korea, 2 out of 10 in 2004, 5 out of 10 in 2005 and 4 out of 10 in 2006 were on this subject.

Among the daily TV dramas which aired in each country after 2001, two programs were selected for a deeper analysis. They are *Saving My Hubby* (군세어라 금순아) in Korea and *The Age of New Marriage* (新結婚時代) in China, which had a high rating and a family-centered theme. Other TV dramas on this subject were analyzed in terms of their synopses and character structures, focusing on specific episodes rather than the entire program (see the appendix).

For the analysis, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were applied by using a narrative analysis and statistics on household residences and income structures. Also, historical discourses on the family were closely examined.

IV. THE EXTENDED FAMILY

The husband-centered extended family is a common structure in Korean family dramas, in which a married couple lives with the husband's parents-in-law. Because the extended families are centered on the matrilineal side, the main conflict of the drama occurs between the wife and a husband's family.

If we look at the reality of modern Korea, extended families which more than three generations which live together account for less than 10% of all families. According to the national census in 2005, these accounted for only

7%, compared to 8.4% in 2000. It is notable that Korean dramas are showing more husband-centered extended families than reality. Although maternally extended families, widowed, divorced or remarried families are gradually being portrayed more in dramas, today's daily home dramas still heavily present husband-centered extended families.

In *Saving My Hubby*, the protagonist *Geumsoon's* family was a husband-centered one. As shown in Figure 1, in the appendix, *Geumsoon* was raised by her grandparents after her parents had died, and she lived in a large family with her grandparents, an uncle and an aunt. In her husband's family, the oldest son's family lives with their parents. In this large family structure, *Geumsoon's* mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law *Sungran* often came into conflict involving the issue of dividing domestic labor and the fact that *Sungran* kept it secret that she had been married once. *Geumsoon's* grandmother was also in conflict with her daughter-in-law due to their different personalities.

Such extended families can be found in many other dramas as well. In particular, mother-in-law/daughter-in-law conflicts are easily found when a difference in the social status exists between the two families. For example, the latter episodes of *Lady Mermaid* deal with the female protagonist and her husband's parents' process of getting used to each other after the former became an in-law despite the latter's objections. Other high-ranked dramas such as *Pretty Woman* and *Swan Lake* also dealt with tension between a female protagonist and her parents-in-law due to the difference in their social economic status.

Another finding was that the position of the mother-in-law was predominant in the husband-centered extended family. Though the patriarch in the family was still the father-in-law, in real everyday practices, the mother-in-law plays the most influential role in the drama. Most conflicts in the daily drama stem from the mother-in-law. In *Saving My Hubby*, *Geumsoon's* mother-in-law *Jungshim* had the most power in the family. After her husband retired, she exerted decision-making authority in all family matters, including the love affairs of her son. Although there were also relationships with the maternal side of the extended family, those were only marginal or secondary factors, such as sources of conflict or sub-stories exemplifying support and caring rather than a crucial part of the drama's main narrative. The female

characters' families (the wife's side of the family) were described as the space of escape for troubled wives when they were in domestic conflicts. In *Saving My Hubby*, *Geumsoon's* grandmother played this role. Whenever something happened to *Geumsoon*, she would not step forward as a problem-solver but could only worry and shed tears in her own room.

In the Chinese dramas, an extended family in which three generations live together rarely appeared. However, there were constant generational conflicts and reconciliations between the couples and their parents. In *The Marriage*, the protagonist couple *He Jianguo* and *Gu Xiaoxi* regularly got into fights with the husband's parents, who lived in a rural area, and with the wife's parents in an urban area. The main conflict rose from their different social backgrounds. While the nuclear family is the most popular form in Chinese dramas, many conflicts arise among grandparents and couples.

When the couples had different class backgrounds, the conflicts tended to be severe. The wife's side of the family was rarely a source of tension, whereas the family members on the husband's side (especially the mothers-in-law) always intervened in the couples' matters. Differing from Korean dramas, Chinese ones deal with the husband's and wife's sides of the families fairly equally. There were few occasions when the grandparents intervened in the couples' domestic matters.

Another interesting finding is that the conflict between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in the Chinese dramas was quite different from those in the Korean dramas. While the Korean mother-in-law possessed absolute power over her daughter-in-law, in Chinese dramas such conflicts were absent, as the two characters rarely lived together. Furthermore, the two were sometimes even depicted as being friendly to one another and understanding of each other, and sometimes the daughter-in-law even admonished her mother-in-law.

From the discussions above, the differences in the family structure can be summarized in the following. First, while Korean family dramas involve the extended families on the husband's side, Chinese dramas focus more on the couple themselves. As a result, Chinese dramas show a protagonist couple at the center, solving or tending to expand conflicts in their domestic space. On the other hand, in Korean dramas, family members on the husband's side tend to intervene in domestic affairs including those of their offspring, also

getting involved in marriages as well as divorces.

Second, these differences influence the interaction between the two types of extended families. In Korean dramas, the interactions among members occur mainly on the husband's side, while involving few members from the wife's side. Chinese dramas fairly often deal with family members on both sides. The couples themselves are independent from their parents, though they do show concern about them.

Third, because the conflict between the couple and the husband's parents is important in Korean dramas, there was little focus on the wife's parents. The husbands' family was more authoritative, while the wife's parents were mostly respectful of the husband's parents. In contrast, in Chinese dramas the son-in-law is usually accepted in his wife's extended family, as *The Age of New Marriage* demonstrated well.

From a comparison between dramas of the two countries, it can be concluded that Korean dramas show a strong skewed bias toward the husband's family-centered orientation, while Chinese dramas tend to represent relatively equal relations between the husbands' and wives' sides.

V. DIFFERENTIATING A "NORMAL" AND AN "ABNORMAL" FAMILY

Korean dramas have constantly attempted to define the boundaries and norms of the family by presenting ideal and problematic families as normal and abnormal, respectively. For example, divorced families in Korean dramas appeared significantly many more times than the actual figures in reality (Kim, W. 1991). The divorced families served as dramatic subjects in the dramas. Dramatizing the fetters and bonds of divorce families, Korean dramas cunningly normalized the 'normal' family. The problem of a divorced family was mainly focused on the mother-child relationship (Kim, Y. 1998), and the tension rose from education and other rearing-related matters. Extramarital relationships and unwed mothers were both portrayed negatively. Because children born out of wedlock in TV dramas bear the secret of their births, such characters are useful to exacerbate and complicate conflicts.

In *Saving My Hubby*, *Geumsoon's* sister-in-law is confronted with the

fetters of divorce. In Korea, it is not common for a remarried woman bring her child to the new husband's family. Although it is legally allowed, many conflicts can come out of it. *Sungran's* decision was regarded as a bold challenge to the traditional norm. Though *Sungran* was accepted by the family members in the drama's final narrative, she remained a controversial figure throughout the series. In terms of audiences' responses to this female character, there were many attacks against her personality in Internet forums on this drama.

Geumsoon's mother was also represented as part of an abnormal family. *Geumsoon* grew up lonely, and her mother *Youngok* could not have any children for a long time after her remarriage, out of the guilt that she abandoned her child. In *Youngok's* new family after she remarried, she had a severe conflict with *Eunja*, the daughter of her husband's ex-wife.

Such examples can easily be found in other dramas as well. In *Lady Mermaid*, the female protagonist *Ariyoung* devoted her life to gaining revenge on her father, who abandoned her through a divorce. This drama showed that a divorce means that the couples give up their child-rearing responsibility. In the drama *My Precious Child* (KBS, 2004-5), a stereotypical stepmother was introduced. The drama described the stepmother (*Young-sil*) as a troublemaker who attempted to divide the father and the son (*Jinkuk*). The remarried couple was portrayed as dysfunctional with its members going through psychological troubles. *Beside You* (KBS 2003) also dealt with a remarried couple. It was specifically about a mother who left her family due to trouble with her husband, later suffering guilt over having left her children. The dramas analyzed in this study did not show that a father felt guilty for leaving his children, and the children of such abnormal families regain happiness by becoming the member of a normal family. In Korean daily dramas, the 'abnormal' breaks down the 'normal.' Considering the high growth rate (28%) of single mothers and fathers (the National Census 2005), Korean dramas have strong predispositions to show that divorce means a broken home and a source of trouble for children and for all family members.

In contrast, out of the five Chinese dramas analyzed, only one showed grandparents which live with their offspring. Many divorced families in Chinese dramas were neither broken homes nor troublesome. In *The Age of New Marriage* (2006), the father remarried to a woman from the upper class.

However, this decision did not lead to any trouble with the wife's family. The drama *Enthusiasm* insinuated that divorce was due to differences in the class backgrounds as well as the ideologies between couples. The female character still maintained her own self-identity as a woman after her divorce, and the family was not illustrated as a broken home. In the *Chinese Divorce*, the female protagonist goes through a self-realization process and succeeds in her professional career after her divorce. It carried the message that marital status, whether married or divorced, does not interfere with a woman's career or personal life. Divorce is a given option that men and women can take on their life paths.

VI. MATERNITY AND PATERNITY

In Korean society, it is believed with certainty that child rearing is the mother's responsibility. However, Korean dramas seldom deal with a child-rearing mother. When a family is normal, the drama does not show any child-rearing issues. If a divorce ensues, the mothers in the drama suffer as a result. Many times a divorced mother is criticized as irresponsible for her failure to be a mother. Because the mother is the caretaker of the family members, many Korean dramas show that maternity scarcely coexists with a woman's own search for a career. In such a matrilineal family structure, married women are integrated into the husband's family. This in turn integrates women into the "ideal maternity model" (Cho, S. 1995). Maternity became a significant theme in Korean dramas. Daily dramas especially have tended to mystify motherhood. The traditional Confucian family model of "a strict father and an affective mother" has been idealized in TV dramas (Oh 1991).

The maternity issues in *Saving My Hubby* could easily be predicted to be represented in the relationship between the widowed *Geumsoon* and her son, but in fact they were not in the main storyline. The relationship between mother and son was normal as it was, but it became troublesome when *Geumsoon* decided to enter into a second marriage, deviating from the 'normal' family model. The real issue over child rearing here is not a question of how a divorced mother cares her child but that of a blood-line that can be kept after the parent's divorce.

In other Korean daily dramas, self-sacrificing maternity was prominent. In *Beside You* and *My Precious Child*, the mother character was depicted as a traditional Korean woman who sacrifices everything for her children and aims to act directly all through their lives to solve any problems.

On the other hand, in one episode of the Chinese drama *The Age of New Marriage*, a self-sacrificing mother figure was not present. The female protagonist went to work even when her son was sick, and the son expressed his displeasure. Regarding the male lead character, his mother was rarely shown, while he was frequently engaged with his father, emphasizing filial piety. Concerning paternity, the urban father lost his authority while the rural father maintained his. Mostly, Chinese dramas depicted paternal authority as low rather than patriarchal.

Such characteristics were visible in other Chinese dramas as well, such as *the Most Romantic Thing* and *Enthusiasm*. The parents of the male character were not the center of the storyline. His mother passed away a long time ago and hence maternity issues were not depicted. Regarding the female protagonist, she sent off her children to her ex-husband's home after her divorce. Thus, maternity conflicts were absent.

VII. CONCLUSION: THE MEANING OF FAMILY REPRESENTATIONS IN TV DRAMAS

The goal of this study was to compare and contrast so-called Confucian collectivist cultures by analyzing the family representations in Korean and Chinese TV dramas. The main purpose of the study was to look into how Korean and Chinese dramas represent family and family relations. Despite difference in intensity, a bonding between family members was still represented as a strong value and was considered as a crucial theme.

However, some major differences could be found between the dramas in China and Korea. First, while Korean dramas dealt with mainly matrilineal extended families, their Chinese counterparts showed little difference between matrilineal and patrilineal extended families in terms of their roles.

Second, the dividing line between 'normal' and 'abnormal' families cannot be fixed, as it is always changing in different historical formations of the

family. In some Korean dramas after 2000, divorce and remarriage became acceptable, although they were depicted as abnormal. Other unconventional family forms such as same-sex marriages were still considered “unacceptable.” They were depicted as something that deviates from the norm.

In the Chinese dramas, the most prominent difference was that divorce or extramarital affairs were not used as main themes. Though themes of divorce and remarriage were present in the stories of *The Age of New Marriage* and *KongJingZi*, they were not at the center of the conflict between the characters.

Third, in comparing the issues of maternity and the paternity, we achieved results that were largely similar to those of previous studies in Korea. Korean dramas represented motherhood as the utmost important value and the essence of an ideal woman. Although the Chinese dramas were similar in depicting a mother’s love for her children, they represented child rearing or domestic labor not as a natural part of a woman but rather as one of the duties to be shared between the spouses.

Thus, the representations showed more differences than similarities. In categories such as spousal relationships, extended family relationships, normality and abnormality, and maternity and paternity, Korean dramas mainly showed traditional family relationships of the so-called Confucian matrilineal model. Chinese dramas differed greatly in this aspect, treating the husband’s side and the wife’s side in fairly balanced ways. Although the main storyline involves family conflict, grandparents’ and couples’ relationships were not the major sources of those conflicts. The family is a space for intimate relations showing the symptomatic changes of the family as a social institution.

In comparing the two, it could be concluded that Chinese dramas represent more equal views on gender roles and relationships. How can we make sense of this finding that Korea, with its broader economic development and Westernization levels, lags behind China in terms of equal gender roles in family relationships? Although Korea achieved economic modernization earlier than China, the Korean family culture shows a strong bias toward the traditional Confucian culture in terms of gender relations. This shows that modernization does not necessarily lead to equal family relationships or a weakening of patriarchy.

It would be out of the scope of this study to ask why the Korean society

insists on more traditional values in family matters despite its advanced levels of economic modernization and Westernization. However, on a systematic level, we can make the assumption that the difference in this representation results from the different historical tracks the family and family relationships that have followed in the two societies. During the Korean modernization process, the family was regarded as the crucial social category that should be maintained and protected for the prosperity of the country and for the safe existence of people.

Though differing in research goals, a similar finding was presented in an earlier study by the authors, entitled “*Citizen Mobilization by the State in the Modernization Process in Korea.*” That study found that the family was a sublime object for everyone to protect and that it was chosen by the state as the main point of mobilization (Kang & Baek 2007). In Korea, the family acts as the social institution that takes care of education, child rearing, and the protection of the elderly and minors. The state, on the other hand, achieved modernization by enhancing and mobilizing the family. In this process, popular culture has played a major role in constructing the normality of family.

In China, the role of the family was quite different during the socialistic modernization process. To reform the agrarian Chinese society, the policy of the Chinese socialist government focused on the disintegration of earlier agricultural family systems by means such as restricting the possession of farming lands. Traditional familial ideologies were dissolved in the interest of the state. Foster care and the socialization of female workforces were mechanisms with which to mobilize the individual for the country, and ‘familism’ gradually faded in this process.

The family in both countries had different roles in the modernization process and took separate historical tracks under each strong state-led mobilization effort. The Korean family was considered as a social and cultural institution that supported the safe existence of people and the reproduction of the workforce during the rapid economic modernization process. The husband worked diligently as a breadwinner, while wife took care of domestic child-caring and home economics. The comfort of the family was the site of empathetic solidarity for workers during the modernization process.

In contrast, in the Chinese modernization process, traditional patriarch families were dissolved and became a space for intimate relations between the husband and wife. Village or commune types of local communities took over the child care and education duties. In addition, the socialist state emphasized female employment as well. As a result, the husband-centered patriarchy was weakened. Although the family was a material and emotional resort for its members, the importance of the family as a social institution in protecting people at all costs was not high. Thus, it is likely that the relative gender equality shown in Chinese dramas compared to Korean ones resulted from the differences in the historical trajectories of the two types of families during their respective modernization processes.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Family Structures of Korean Home Dramas

Title	Station /Year	Family Structure		
		Extended Family (paternal)	Nuclear Family	Living- alone
Nobody stop a love	MBC, 2006	1	2	3
Barefooted youth	MBC, 2005	1	2	1
Saving My Hubby	MBC, 2005	2	2	0
Female Shaman: WangKKot	MBC, 2004	2	1	2
Pretty Woman	MBC, 2003-2004	1	2	3
Swan Lake	MBC, 2003	2	2	0
Lady Mermaid	MBC, 2002-2003	1	2	0
With you everyday	MBC, 2001-2002	2	1	0
Pure Heart of Nineteen	KBS, 2006	2	1	2
Eccentric Man & Woman	KBS, 2005-2006	1	3	2
My Precious Child	KBS, 2004-2005	2	3	0
My sweet dear	KBS, 2005	2	3	0
Beside you	KBS, 2002-2003	2	3	0
Yellow Ribbon	KBS, 2003	1	4	0
Love is like this	KBS, 2001-2002	2	1	0

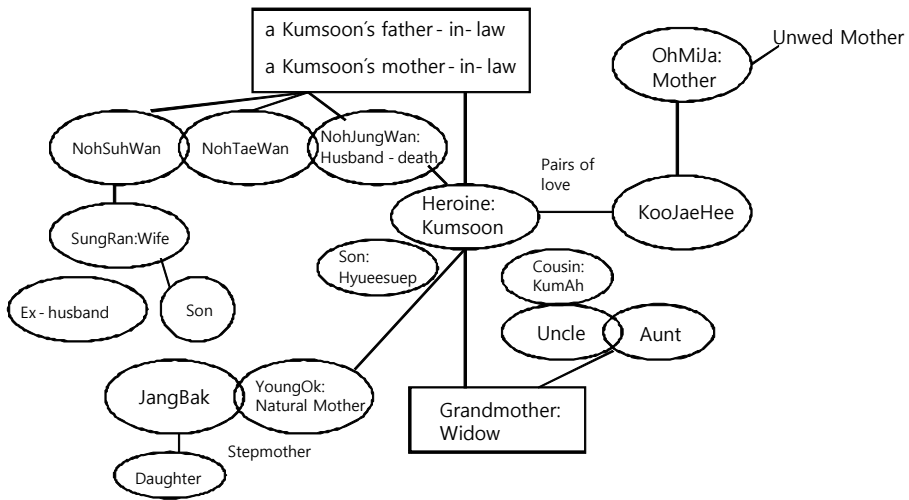


Figure 1. Family structure of the drama *Saving My Hubby*

Synopsis: Basically, *Saving My Hubby* dealt with an exceptional problem in Korea society: the remarriage of a young widow who already has a son. Moreover, the entire family of her ex-husband all congratulate her on her remarriage. This is not entirely a common case. The heroine, NaKumSoon was brought up in a poor family with only her grandmother, and she was not well educated. She marries a young university student but he dies in a car accident shortly after their marriage, after which she has a son. After the birth, she lives with the family of her lost husband. She wants to be a beauty artist. In the process of working for her dream, she meets a doctor named KooJaeHee and falls in love with him. Naturally, their love went through various hardships, as it is not common for a widow to remarry a bachelor, especially when the bachelor is a doctor. Moreover, as she had a son and did not want to part from her son, this is a complicated case in Korea. However, they overcame all obstacles eventually and she gets permission and even the blessing of her in-laws. This is the main story, and there are some sub-stories about her pervious home and her in-laws. *Saving My Hubby* is a typical home drama, as it has several family stories and deals with the theme of conflict and reconciliation within an enlarged family.

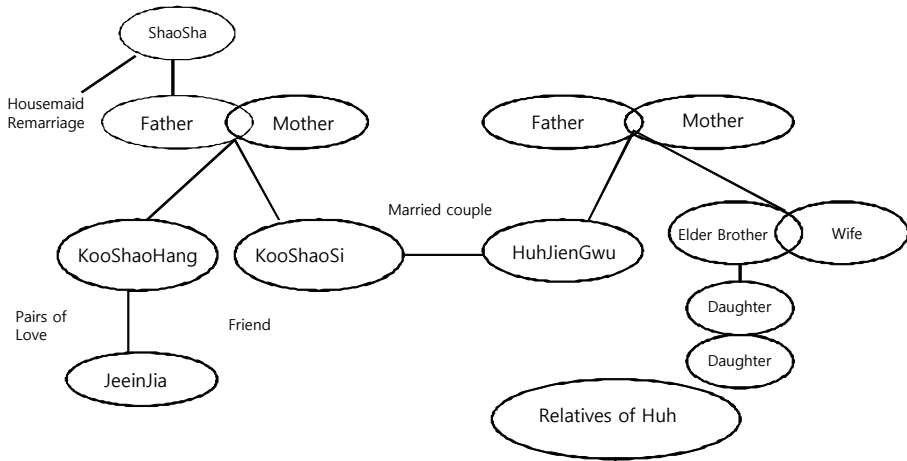


Figure 2. Family Structure of the drama *The Marriage*

Synopsis: *The Marriage* is an excellent work which dealt with a very controversial problem in modern China. The hero, He Jianguo and the heroine Gu Xiaoxi marry for love. However, they are from very different backgrounds, and this is a source of conflict between them. He Jianguo was from a rural community and his family is still ruled by tradition, but Gu Xiaoxi was from a urban community and she is a modernized woman. Gu Xiaoxi felt that the traditional norm of her husband's family was unfair, and she considered it as a burden. Even worse, she had a miscarriage due to an accident in the way to her husband's hometown, after which she was unable to have children. This is a very important source of conflict between the couple, as it is an essential duty for women to carry on the family line in China. As their conflict grew, they decided to divorce. The main theme was that the difference between urban life and rural life can become an irreconcilable difference in China. There were also some provocative themes presented in this drama. First, the drama broached the subject of love between an older woman and a younger man, which is not a common case in China. Second, it dealt with the remarriage problem, especially between older and young people. *The Marriage* showed an up-to date issue related to China families and depicted the problem of the rapidly changing Chinese family situation carefully.