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Abstract

Few studies have explored the relationship between globalization and emotional expression. One prominent means through which physical forms of emotional display circulate globally is through the mass media, and specifically through the reality television format trade. Whether local people can successfully perform globally circulating forms of emotional display depends, in part, on how local audiences receive their performances. Globally circulating forms might convey meanings that conflict with local public values or media regulators' ideologies. Audience approval is facilitated through textual framing strategies that reflect producers' directorial and editorial choices. I describe three strategies that frame emotional displays in ways that align their meanings with local ideologies and cultural values: (1) define what caused the feelings that led to the emotional display as culturally appropriate, (2) portray the emotional display as not reflecting the performers' true feelings, and (3) ensure that the performers' feelings are resolved within the show's narrative in an appropriate manner. Framing strategies are mechanisms through which global formats and local culture jointly shape mass mediated emotional performances.

Keywords

globalization, emotions, mass media, reality television, China, hybridity

Disciplines

Communication | Other Film and Media Studies | Social Psychology and Interaction | Sociology | Sociology of Culture | Television

Mass Media and the Localization of Emotional Display: The Case of *China's Next Top Model*

Junhow Wei¹

Abstract. Few studies have explored the relationship between globalization and emotional expression. One prominent means through which physical forms of emotional display circulate globally is through the mass media, and specifically through the reality television format trade. Whether local people can successfully perform globally circulating forms of emotional display depends, in part, on how local audiences receive their performances. Globally circulating forms might convey meanings that conflict with local public values or media regulators' ideologies. Audience approval is facilitated through textual framing strategies that reflect producers' directorial and editorial choices. I describe three strategies that frame emotional displays in ways that align their meanings with local ideologies and cultural values: (1) define what caused the feelings that led to the emotional display as culturally appropriate, (2) portray the emotional display as not reflecting the performers' true feelings, and (3) ensure that the performers' feelings are resolved within the show's narrative in an appropriate manner. Framing strategies are mechanisms through which global formats and local culture jointly shape mass mediated emotional performances.

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Introduction

Sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists have conducted cross-cultural research on emotions for decades (Mesquita, 1992). But few have studied the relationship between emotions and globalization (Svašek, 2007). Most research linking globalization and emotions focuses on globally migrant people and the emotional challenges associated with migration (Baldassar, 2007; Gopalkrishnan, 2007; Ramirez, 2007; Ryan, 2008; Tillbury, 2007). For example, some researchers explore how material objects and fine arts evoke feelings of nostalgia in or function as emotional outlets for migrant people faced with issues like lack of belonging or longing for home (Svašek, 2012; Wulff, 2007).

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Other scholars have analyzed how different social groups react emotionally to changes brought about by globalization that affect their power and status. Kenway and Fahey (2011) discuss how national feelings of loss and longing around the “brain drain” or diaspora of academics from Australia influence and are influenced by national public policy. Appadurai (2006) argues that national majority groups fear and hate minorities because social changes caused by globalization remind majorities that their dominance is precarious. Moisi (2009) discusses how crises and opportunities arising from globalization have created cultures of fear, humiliation, and hope in the US and Europe, among Muslims and Arabs, and in Asia respectively.

Unlike the above-mentioned studies, I am not concerned with individuals’ or groups’ emotional experiences or reactions to social or economic changes brought about by globalization. Rather, I am interested in the global spread of emotions themselves via the global spread of culture. Specifically, emotions are guided by globally circulating cultural scripts that include norms and templates for how feelings should be experienced and expressed. I thus employ a dramaturgical view of emotions (Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 1983; Turner and Stets, 2006), which emphasizes how emotions are physically performed for audiences and shaped by the meanings and impressions conveyed to those audiences, particularly with respect to how much performances conform to or veer from cultural scripts.

Globally circulating cultural scripts include forms of emotionally expressive artistic performance, such as dance, song, and dramatic play. Previous scholars have suggested that global forms of artistic performance are used to express local

sentiments. Skinner (2007) argues that although salsa is danced globally, salsa teachers and students derive different meanings and emotional experiences from their participation: a source of fantasy and escape to Latin America, exploring personal feelings, following passions, pursuing imagined identities. Magowan (2007) describes how the Yolngu, an Australian Aboriginal group, express sentiments related to attachments to kin and land in their traditional ritual performances. These sentiments persist in Yolngu performances of global Christian music, and performing such music at Christian gatherings with other Indigenous groups creates translocal affective ties.

Globally circulating cultural scripts also include *display rules*, norms that guide everyday forms of physical emotional expression, such as crying, laughing, screaming, and squabbling (Eckman and Friesen, 2003; Hochschild, 1983). Previous scholars have described how display rules are circulating globally in interactive service work settings. Some argue that service work settings around the globe have adopted uniform standards of an ever-present “friendly smile” (Bryman, 1999; Hallowell et al, 2002). Others have suggested that the meaning of emotional display is not consistent when display rules are localized. Grandey et al. (2010) found that although various countries share the expectation that customers should receive service with a smile, such beliefs are more strongly held in the US. Otis (2008) argues that although Chinese luxury hotels import interactional repertoires and emotional displays based on Western norms, local actors also interpret and revise them according to their local setting. For instance, although some hotel workers conform to Western norms of smiling and looking clients in the eye during service

encounters, they re-imagine such actions as ways in which they are helping their clients “save face,” a Chinese interactional courtesy.

While these studies offer some clues as to how global forms of emotional display are localized, they are limited to analyzing emotional performance in live and micro interactional settings. However, a long line of research has emphasized the important role of mass media in the global spread of culture (Appadurai, 1990; Boyd-Barrett, 1977; Kraidy, 2003; Lerner, 1964; Schiller, 1976; Schramm, 1964; Straubhaar, 1991). In this article, I call particular attention to the global television format trade. Although images of emotional performances are also spread globally through the syndication of completed television programs, television formats speak to the issue I have outlined above, in which *local* actors perform under globally circulating emotional display rules.

Television Formats and Emotional Performances on Reality Television

What exactly constitutes a television format is difficult to define. Most academics and industry executives agree that one part of a format’s definition is “the sum of those elements that are characteristic of the program” (Esser, 2010: 274). The second part is that a format is tradable. The global television format trade has grown tremendously in the past decade because media producers perceive formats to be less commercially risky than producing completely new shows. Unlike new programs, formats have already found success in established markets and thus have been commercially vetted. Moreover, format sellers export knowledge of various kinds to ease production and ensure quality in new locations. Such knowledge may include pragmatic advice, such as script and shooting order, financial guidelines,

how to involve audiences, and promotional material (Moran, 2008). Equally important are aesthetic and dramatic guidelines, such as for set design, music, graphics, narratives, and casting (Bielby and Harrington, 2004).

The global export of proven commercial hits has long been part of the market-driven television industry. However, syndication of completed shows allows for little adaptation to fit local culture. On the other hand, television formats allow various elements of programs to be localized. Thus, television formats have received particular attention among global media scholars. Most academic analyses of television formats focus on reality TV, since unscripted genres dominate the format trade.

Previous scholars have argued that emotional performances are a particularly salient facet of reality television text and that creating such performances is a prominent part of reality television production. According to Grindstaff (2002, 2011), reality television and talk show producers direct onscreen performers into particular emotional displays through their routine production practices. For example, she describes how camera people working on the reality television show *Sorority Life* expressed disappointment in subtle ways to prompt the cast to be more emotionally expressive. Beyond the physical site of filming, reality television is shaped in pre- and post-production through editing and scripting. Such production processes manage emotional performances through narrative form and visual style. Aslama and Pantti (2006) argue that reality television's main attraction is its disclosure of true emotions. Particularly, the

narrative convention of participants delivering monologues directly into camera is used as a means to access authentic feelings.

Previous global media research has certainly discussed emotion in analyses of reality television formats. However, many do not engage the topic of emotional display. Some have focused instead on emotional reactions of audience members, particularly discussing how reality TV inspires feelings of solidarity or tension among people of different nations and political persuasions (Kraidy, 2010; Punathambekar, 2010; Volcic and Andrejevic, 2011). Likewise, others have focused not on physical emotional display, but rather analyze how television shows propagate neoliberalism worldwide by offering advice on how individuals' can successfully overcome negative internal feelings as part of managing their own social welfare (Illouz, 2003; Lewis, 2010).

Among scholars that do discuss emotional display in global reality TV, some emphasize how physical displays are similar across local versions of the same format, suggesting that particular formats promote particular emotional display rules. For instance, Njus (2009) argues that uniform production practices create predictable moments of emotional release and recurrent emotional displays among contestants across numerous local versions of the singing competition *Idol*. Similarly, Simon Cowell's acerbic and blunt criticisms of singers were a hallmark of *American Idol* and the format's original series *Pop Idol*. Subsequent localized versions of the show continued to feature one judge with a similarly cold emotional style (Baltruschat, 2009). Indeed, specific forms of emotional display have become

emblematic of particular television formats. For instance, both Jersey Shore and its UK adaptation Geordie Shore feature rowdy, drunk, and bickering characters.

Other scholars have described the hybrid nature of localized reality television show texts, arguing that they contain both formatted and local elements (Frau-Meigs, 2006; Roscoe, 2004; Tay, 2011). Some of these studies suggest that culturally specific emotional display is one element that makes shows locally distinct (Grimm, 2010; King, 2009; Campaiola-Veen, 2012). For example, Livio (2010) argues that British and American versions of *Idol* encourage contestants to have resistant and impertinent attitudes when interacting with judges while *Canadian Idol* encourages politeness and deference. Aslama and Pantti (2007) argue that *Extreme Escapades*, a Finnish reality show similar to *Survivor*, features typically Finnish forms of everyday talk that eschew heated debates and argumentation that might be seen on an American version. Generally, these studies are concerned with describing how and to what extent particular *programs* are localized. They suggest programs are more or less localized due to either the presence or absence of, among other textual features, particular emotional displays.

On the other hand, I will argue that particular emotional displays *within* programs can be localized textually. While previous studies have focused on the overall presence or absence of particular forms or styles of emotional display, I propose that scholars must also pay attention to how mass media texts frame the *meaning* of emotional displays. I draw on Goffman's (1986) *Frame Analysis*, which discusses how the meanings of particular micro-interactions are shaped by the contextual information available in a given situation. The meanings of emotions

displayed during particular micro-interactions within television texts are shaped by what information and activities surrounding that display producers haven chosen to include, exclude, or emphasize.

Specifically, I describe how emotional performances are localized textually by focusing on the case of *China's Next Top Model (CNTM)*, a local version of the reality television program *America's Next Top Model (ANTM)*. After describing the reasoning behind my case selection and methods, I argue that *CNTM* emulates scenes from *ANTM* that showcase dramatic emotional displays when the causes and resolutions of those displays do not violate local cultural values and ideologies that emphasize social harmony. However, sometimes *ANTM* characters enact dramatic emotional displays that unabashedly conflict with such ideals. Rather than simply exclude similar scenes and forms of emotional performance, *CNTM* instead (1) defines what caused the emotional display such that the meaning of the characters' behavior promotes local ideology, (2) portrays the emotional display as inauthentic, or (3) ensures that characters' feelings are resolved in a way that is culturally appropriate. These framing strategies allow *CNTM* to highlight the same physical forms of emotional display seen on *ANTM* in similar scenarios, yet also bow to local cultural ideals. Thus, ultimately, such strategies are mechanisms for how display rules within globally circulating formats and local culture jointly shape mass mediated emotional performances.

Case Description and Method

Various reality television formats could be appropriate cases to examine how performers' emotional displays are localized textually. *China's Next Top Model* is

one very well-suited case because there are sharp differences between the emotional display rules promoted on *ANTM*, the template for local versions around the globe, and ideologies and emotional norms promoted by the Chinese government, which has strictly regulated reality shows. Such differences are methodologically beneficial because they make it more likely that localization is necessary, and thus localization strategies may more readily reveal themselves to the researcher (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Traditional Chinese culture, influenced by Confucian values, emphasizes interpersonal social harmony. Psychologists have argued that Chinese people moderate and suppress inflammatory emotions and interactions to avoid conflict and maintain harmonious relationships (Bond, 1993; Bond and Wang, 1983; Chen, 2005). The collectivist nature of traditional Chinese culture is explicitly promoted by the Chinese government. Around 2005, then President Hu Jintao launched the “harmonious society” campaign, which strongly influenced the content of Chinese television programs (Hawes, 2013; Zhu, 2008). Although scholars have acknowledged that Chinese media is functioning less and less as a government mouthpiece, and content is more influenced by commercial pressures, media producers continue to self-censor in order to please government regulators (Chan, 2009) and television remains a government propaganda tool (Hong, 2009). Although exact criteria are vague and not always consistent, series that show “problematic” content, such as excessive interpersonal conflict and self-interest, receive warnings or may even be terminated (Di, 2011). In 2007, the State Administration for Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT) cancelled reality talent

competition *First Heartthrob* after a conflict between a contestant and judges aired that resulted in one judge bursting into tears. SARFT subsequently ordered that no similar reality competition shows be broadcast in China during primetime (*Xinhua*, 2008; Yang, 2014). SARFT criticized the “vulgarization of television shows on human feelings,” including those that showed “bitter emotions” that have a negative impact on social stability (Hawes, 2013).

Previous scholars have suggested that Chinese reality television programs indeed reflect ideologies related to social harmony. For example, on *Into Shangrila*, a competition series set in the wilderness, similar to *Survivor*, participants form teams and cooperate to succeed rather than simply try to outdo each other (Keane, 2004). Similarly, *Super Girls*, a singing competition similar to *American Idol*, emphasized contestants’ perseverance, determination, and support from fellow contestants, rather than plots and maneuvers to advance in the competition (Wang, 2009). Chinese producers recognize the commercial appeal of conflict (Di, 2011; Hawes, 2013). For instance, tabloid news program *Just in Nanjing* showed family disputes and neighbor arguments. However, in such cases producers are careful to also promote social harmony. Di (2011) argues that censors tolerated *Just in Nanjing* because, despite its sensationalism, it also introduced the concept of citizen news, which is concerned with ordinary peoples’ livelihoods.

America’s Next Top Model (ANTM) has completed 20 cycles (seasons) and has been broadcast in over 170 markets worldwide, including China. Domestically, it has aired at either 8 pm or 9 pm on UPN and later the CW television networks. Created, executive-produced, and hosted by supermodel Tyra Banks, the show is a

modeling talent competition. Each episode follows a predictable structure. The first third of the show involves a modeling challenge, after which the winner may receive a prize. The challenge is also sometimes preceded by a “teach,” in which the contestants learn or practice a skill associated with modeling. During the second third of the show, the contestants go on a photo shoot. Their “best picture” from the photo shoot is then evaluated before a panel of judges during the last part of the show, where one contestant is eliminated based on her performance. Between these segments, we see the contestants interacting with each other while traveling between locations or at the house where they live together. On most cycles, there is also a casting episode in which about 12 finalists are chosen to move into the house from about 30 semi-finalists.

The *Top Model* format, however, is characterized by more than the structure of its episodes. Particularly, *ANTM* is known for depicting extreme emotional displays, making the format an ideal case for studying such performances. Although crying and bitter confrontation are modes of emotional expression seen in many reality shows in America, they are not prominently featured on all formats. Competitions series such as *Chopped*, *Shank Tank*, and *Dancing With The Stars* show little or no interaction between contestants, let alone them fighting amongst each other. *Iron Chef* presents its competitors as strong and focused professionals, rather than either crying or fighting. Docu-series such as *Duck Dynasty* and *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* are modeled off of situation comedies that tell stories of close bonds between family members. While they may show playful bickering and rare

instances of crying, the appearance of these displays matches the humorous and lighthearted tone of the programs.

On the other hand, throughout all seasons of *America's Next Top Model*, rarely does an episode pass without at least one contestant crying. *ANTM* producers and audiences acknowledge, discuss, and promote crying as a significant and predictable feature of the series. Producers have named individual episodes after crying contestants: "The Girl Who Can Cry At The Drop Of A Hat" (Cycle 2, Episode 3), "The Girl Who Cries When She Looks In The Mirror" (Cycle 3, Episode 5), "The Girl Who Cries All The Time" (Cycle 8, Episode 3), "The Girl Who Cries Home" (Cycle 19, Episode 2), "The Guy Who Cries" (Cycle 20, Episode 8). Previews, commercials, and re-caps of the show frequently feature crying. In a teaser at the beginning of Cycle 14 (Episode 1), Tyra asks the audience incitingly, "Who will cry at our makeovers?" This is followed by video of contestants Cassandra, Elina, and Catie from Cycles 5, 11, and 2, respectively, all crying while getting their hair cut. For thirteen cycles, popular blogger Rich Juzwiak counted and discussed instances of crying in his satirical recaps of each episode. Prior to his first recap he wrote, "Since Tyra's (fierce!) emotional manipulation and editing suggests that a model must be ready to blubber at a moment's notice, I'll be documenting the tear-shed every step of the way" (Juzwiak, 2005).

In addition to crying, aggressive confrontations, open "catfights" between contestants, are also consistently seen in every season and have become identified with the show. In Cycle 14 alone, there are 14 unique confrontations, occasions in which verbal fights break out, usually due to rivalry in the competition or conflicts

related to sharing a house and living in close quarters. Previews, commercials, and re-caps of the show focus heavily on fighting, insults, and angry outbursts. Just as producers named individual episodes after crying contestants, they too named episodes after scenes of angry confrontation: “The Girl Who Goes Ballistic” (Cycle 3, Episode 10), “The Girl Who Retaliates” (Cycle 5, Episode 11), “The Girl Who Has A Temper” (Cycle 6, Episode 7), “The Girl Who Picks A Fight” (Cycle 8, Episode 9), “Highlights and Catfights” (Cycle 16, Episode 9). Popular websites have even published lists of memorable fights from the series (Bull, 2010; Carlson, 2009).

The *Top Model* format has local versions in 17 countries. *China's Next Top Model (CNTM)* first aired in 2008 and has completed three cycles on Sichuan Satellite TV, airing at 10:30 pm. It was the first localized version of *Top Model* in Asia. Structurally, the show follows the same format as *ANTM*, with challenges, photo shoots, and judging each episode. *CNTM* was the first new reality series permitted to air after the 2007 SARFT ban on primetime reality shows. Producers were thus likely under particular pressure to please government regulators. The *Shanghai Daily* reported that according to David Tumaroff, a producer on both the Chinese and American versions of the show, although Chinese reality shows “face a lot of regulations, they still have a place in its television industry and they should be carefully and tastefully produced.” Moreover, he said, “Among all the reality shows in the United States, ‘*America's Next Top Model*’ is the only one that doesn't try to promote fighting” (*Shanghai Daily*, 2008). As I have already stated above, and will further demonstrate below, this is clearly not the case. However, Mr. Tumaroff's statement to the press does illustrate that *CNTM* producers, while using *ANTM* as a

template, are uniquely aware that conflict should not be promoted. They, therefore, face a unique challenge in dealing with how their show might feature the conflict-ridden emotional performances that are in fact a hallmark of the format.

It should be noted that it is not my goal to make any broad arguments about American cultural dominance.² The *Top Model* format, modeled off of the American version, does propagate one set of globally circulating display rules. However, I take *ANTM* not as representative of a broadly American way of emotional expression, but rather as representing a distinct format with particular display rules. Furthermore, *Top Model* represents only one among many other sets of globally circulating display rules attached to other formats, originating from a variety of nations. Rather, I analyze the Chinese localization of *Top Model* because the relative difficulty of adapting the format makes it all the more necessary for *CNTM* to employ innovative localization strategies, which are the focus of my study.

In order to analyze emotional performances on *ANTM* and *CNTM*, I watched every episode of every completed cycle of both series (Cycles 1-19 of *ANTM* and Cycles 1-3 of *CNTM*). In an exploratory analysis of discourses and types of emotional display featured on the shows, I found crying and confrontation to be two of the most visible, consistent with evidence I have already discussed above. I re-

² Recent global media scholarship has argued against the idea of American and Western dominance in Asian markets, pointing to the popularity of regional media products from Japan and South Korea (Iwabuchi, 2007; Lim, 2005; Shim, 2004). Scholars argue that regional media products are more easily adaptable to China than Western products because other Asian countries are more culturally similar. This argument extends beyond Asia. More generally, scholars have claimed that the idea of a powerful center working to homogenize local culture is too simplistic. Rather global, local and regional influences all shape the content and flow of media and culture (Kraidy, 2003; Straubhaar, 1991).

viewed Cycle 3 of *CNTM* (12 episodes) and Cycle 14 of *ANTM* (13 episodes) and systematically coded all instances of crying and confrontation in each episode of those cycles, paying attention to how the show frames the causes and consequences of these emotional displays. I focused on Cycle 3 of *CNTM* because it was the most recently aired season. I focused on Cycle 14 of *ANTM* because it aired at about the same time as Cycle 3 of *CNTM* and thus shared similar format production standards. For instance, both series updated their opening credits at this time and used the same theme song and background graphics. Although I primarily draw examples from those two cycles, I base my analysis on all cycles of both series and note where I found variation between cycles.

Emulating Emotional Performances: Self Improvement and Crying

On *America's Next Top Model*, contestants undergo many modeling tests and challenges, often crying in reaction to success, failure, and struggle when undertaking these tasks. Some challenges are as simple as getting an unexpected haircut, while others are more elaborate. For example, contestants have been challenged to model while holding tarantulas (Cycle 3, Episode 8), standing on top of crocodiles (Cycle 4, Episode 9), wearing bikinis in extremely cold temperatures (Cycle 1, Episode 1), and hanging upside down (Cycle 6, Episode 9 and Cycle 20, Episode 14). Images of contestants crying dramatize the trials they must endure to reach their dreams of becoming top models. Successfully completing challenges shows that contestants are hard working and tenacious. Moreover, they illustrate contestants' willingness and desire to improve themselves and become better models. These are values that do not conflict with ideals of harmonious relations,

and in fact conform to media regulators' calls for inspirational reality television. Thus, *China's Next Top Model* readily borrow ideas for emotion inducing modeling challenges from *America's Next Top Model*, and similarly frames the meaning of crying around those challenges as lessons about the importance of hard work, tenacity, and self-improvement.

Every season of both *ANTM* and *CNTM* features a makeover episode during which contestants go to an upscale salon and receive new haircuts. Often times, the haircuts contestants receive are extremely different from their previous looks. Contestants cry because they do not personally like their haircuts or because they fear that their new hair will undermine their modeling ability. However, both shows emphasize that in order to improve as professional models contestants must learn from experts' advice and adapt to any look they are given. For example, in Cycle 14 of *ANTM* (Episode 1), one contestant, Brenda, cries when her long red hair is cut to only a few inches in length. Jay Manuel, the show's creative director, explains to her firmly as she is crying, "Your hair, it made you look a little older and you need something that gives you some edge." Brenda says in an interview, "My hair was in my mind my best asset. So, to have that taken away is really painful for me." Brenda is then shown smiling at the mirror, looking at her hair, before saying in another interview, calmly and confidently, "I've got to relearn. I have to reprogram my mind." Another contestant, Ainslee, also cries in the same episode over her haircut and explains, "I'm crying because I'm leaving a part of me behind, and I'm progressing. I'm moving on. I'm changing."

Likewise, in each cycle of *China's Next Top Model* contestants cry at their makeovers and the show emphasizes that they must work through these emotions and towards self-improvement. For example, in Cycle 3 of *CNTM* (Episode 6), one contestant, Zue Yue, cries while a stylist is cutting her hair. Han Yi, one of the show's judges approaches and speaks to her sternly:

Han Yi: When things do not go your way you cry.

Zhu Yue: [Tearfully] No, that's not it.

Han Yi: If you want to be a model, there will be a lot of things that don't go your way. If you cry in another country people will just tell you, "Get out of here."

Zhu Yue: [Resolutely, but still crying] It isn't that I don't like it, Han Yi.

Han Yi: With regard to these things, it is like you are putting down this place [the salon]. People are working hard to do your makeover and you still cry.

Zhu Yue: Han Yi, you misunderstand me. Han Yi, its not that I don't like it.

Han Yi looks at her sympathetically and speaks to her softly.

Han Yi: Then it's all right. It's all right.

The segment ends with before and after photographs of Zhu Yue's makeover, in which she smiles happily with her new hair. In various seasons of both America's and *China's Next Top Model*, judges tell contestants who are crying at makeovers that they are disrespecting the professionals working on their hair and that models must learn to adapt to various hairstyles. Like other contestants' makeover tears, Zhu Yue's crying dramatically illustrates her growing pains, difficulties that she must tenaciously work through in order to improve as a fashion model.

Beyond makeovers, contestants on both series undergo various difficult modeling challenges that often result in tears. For example, on *ANTM* Cycle 14 (Episode 2) contestants take part in a fashion show in which they walk through a series of giant swinging pendulums that could potentially knock them off the runway, all while being scrutinized by runway coach Jay Alexander, famous fashion designer Rachel Roy, and a packed audience. After being knocked off the runway, contestant Alexandra fights back tears and says, choking through her words, "I'm really competitive and I let things really get to me and that's something I never saw happening to myself." After the runway show, Rachel Roy tells Alexandra, "Models fall all the time but you get up. You keep going and you keep selling the clothes." Later in the episode at judging panel, Alexandra cries again when Tyra brings up her falling at the runway show. Rachel Roy repeats her advice, "On the actual runway, we could see your actual anger and sadness and that is something you need to keep on the inside. Models fall all the time. It's how you react afterwards." Alexandra smiles, nods in understanding, and says earnestly through her tears, "Right."

Similarly, on *CNTM* Cycle 3 (Episode 4) the models walk a treacherous runway, although rather than avoiding swinging pendulums, they stomp down a narrow plank suspended over a swimming pool while wearing high heels. While she does not fall into the water, Zhu Yan walks particularly slowly and awkwardly, visibly nervous. In an interview, Zhu Yan, sobbing, explains through tears, "I saw the other contestants walking so well over the water... When I got to the end, I really wasn't afraid of falling, but I really... really was very scared." After the challenge, runway coach Rosa bluntly but constructively tells Zhu Yan, who is still crying, "You

now must be brave and confront your fear.” Zhu Yan is eliminated at the end of the episode. In her final interview she says, “Actually, I learned a lot. And a lot was for the first time, including formally learning runway, walking over water, taking photos in an ice box under five degrees. These are all firsts. I think getting kicked off doesn’t mean I don’t have potential or whatever. Perhaps, I have some aspects that after the competition I should practice more or continuously learn. By doing these things I’ll improve myself much more.”

CNTM emulates scenes in *ANTM* that showcase dramatic emotional displays, specifically crying, but do not violate ideologies of harmonious relations. Hard work, tenacity, and self-improvement are acceptable values in China. On both series, contestants cry in response to difficult modeling challenges. The shows similarly frame these emotional displays as representing fears and insecurities, feelings that contestants resolve by diligently working to improve themselves.

Defining Emotional Antecedents: Crying for Self versus Crying for Friends

Unlike the case of crying and self-improvement, display rules promoted in a global format might communicate meanings that conflict with local cultural values or ideologies. On *America’s Next Top Model*, strong emotional displays often promote values related to ruthless competition and self-interest. Such values are in direct conflict with Chinese ideals of a “harmonious society.” Curiously, *China’s Next Top Model* presents contestants displaying the same emotions in similar situations. However, *CNTM* re-frames the meaning of these emotional displays to align with values related to friendship and social harmony. One framing strategy the show

employs is defining emotional antecedents, what caused the feelings that led to the emotional display, so that the performance is culturally appropriate.

Besides crying during grueling modeling challenges, both American and Chinese *Top Model* contestants most frequently cry at eliminations. However, their emotional displays have distinctly different meanings due to differences in what the shows emphasize is causing their tears. In each cycle of *ANTM*, contestants consistently cry at eliminations due their own successes and failures. In Cycle 14, not once is any contestant seen crying when someone else is eliminated. Instead, the camera focuses on contestants shedding tears of relief when they advance to the next round of the competition, or tears of sadness when they are eliminated themselves. Every episode of *ANTM* includes exit interviews with eliminated contestants, who are often crying. *ANTM* contestants discuss their own experiences, failures, and missed opportunities at this time. During the semi-final round of Cycle 14 (Episode 1), one eliminated contestant, Danielle, says through her tears, "I can't breathe right now. I just wish that I could say something to Tyra for just like two seconds and just be like what don't you want, you know?" Danielle is then shown curling up on the floor, head between her knees, sobbing alone. Some contestants speak negatively of others when justifying their tears. After a contestant named Naduah is eliminated (Cycle 14, Episode 3), she is shown crying and packing alone while saying in her exit interview:

I really don't feel like the judges gave me the opportunity that I deserved. I have experience, and just a passion in general, but it is surprising that they didn't see

more in me. I'm insulted that some of the girls were not having more of a desire like I do, and they are still here and I'm not.

Rather than praise, thank, or miss her fellow competitors, Naduah instead says they are not as worthy as her. The show does tell stories of contestants forming friendships during the competition, but such relationships are not discussed as antecedents to crying upon elimination.

On the other hand, crying at eliminations on *CNTM* is most often due to contestants' sympathy for friends or sadness that they must say goodbye. Previous scholars have noticed similar emotional displays in the Chinese reality show *Super Girls*. Xiao (2006) argues that crying for eliminated contestants on *Super Girls* illustrates concern among competitors and thus reflects governments' ideals of social harmony. Wu and Wang (2008) suggest that crying for both participants and audiences is an emotional outlet. The Chinese government had historically suppressed crying, particularly during the Cultural Revolution, as harmful to the revolutionary optimism the Communist Party preached. However, in modern, commercialized China where crying is allowed and commodified, memories of prior suppression makes such performances valuable and attractive.

After almost every elimination throughout each of the three cycles of *CNTM*, contestants cry for others leaving the competition. During the semifinals of *CNTM* Cycle 3 (Episode 3), after forty contestants are reduced to twenty, the eliminated and remaining contestants immediately move towards each other in a sea of hugs and tears. One crying contestant, Lin Jia Yi, is shown saying to her eliminated friends, "Nooo, I can't let you go." The scene continues for over three minutes,

showing nothing but contestants crying, embracing, and discussing how sad they are to leave each other.

Like *ANTM*, *CNTM* also features exit interviews, during which eliminated contestants cry while reflecting on their experiences. However, instead of focusing on themselves, *CNTM* contestants describe how much they appreciate their friends. For example, after a contestant named Zhu Yue is eliminated (Cycle 3, Episode 8), she says in her interview, “I’m crying not because of the competition, but because I cannot let go of them, cannot let go of my sisters. I want to thank them and everyone working on the show, because they were all so good to me.”

Still, as I have discussed already, *CNTM* was produced at a particularly turbulent time. The 2007 SARFT ban on “bitter emotions” in reality shows, including crying, surely placed particular pressure on producers to ensure that the meaning of crying on *CNTM* would not be inflammatory. Painful separations during eliminations on *CNTM* might be viewed as tearing apart friendships or causing psychological distress. However, every cycle ends on an uplifting note when eliminated contestants reunite for the finale runway show. When the girls are reunited, tears of sorrow are replaced by excitement to be seeing their friends again. Eliminated contestants also return for the finale runway show on *ANTM*. However, rather than focusing on contestants reuniting, instead producers interview them and they discuss who they believe should win the competition.

Certainly, given the preponderance of evidence the show supplies, contestants on *CNTM* genuinely cry for their friends. However, the amount of time and attention the show spends emphasizing this point signifies that tying the

meaning of crying to friendship is also an editorial choice. While on *ANTM* the girls are shown quickly saying goodbye to each other, tearful departures on *CNTM* can extend for minutes and the camera lingers on crying faces while friends hug each other. Theoretically, *CNTM* producers could ask contestants questions during exit interviews on topics unrelated to their friendships and choose to focus on those responses. But instead the show emphasizes contestants' close relationships as the reason behind their tears.

Localizing Aggressive Confrontation

While contestants frequently cry on both *ANTM* and *CNTM*, aggressive verbal fights are much more common on *ANTM*. On Cycle 14 of *ANTM* alone, there are 14 unique confrontations between contestants. Usually such fights are related to rivalries in the competition, personality clashes, squabbles over household chores, and other difficulties of living in close quarters. For example, in Cycle 14 (Episode 2) a contestant named Ren is increasingly annoyed at another contestant, Alasia, for talking loudly. "Alasia, she's really getting on my nerves. Shut the [censored word] up for one second, *please*," Ren pleads to the camera in the confessional booth. She is then shown confronting Alasia in the kitchen:

Ren: [Calm annoyed voice] Alasia, shut the [censored word] up.

Alasia: What? [Raising her voice and accentuating words with a sharp point of the finger] You need to check that, cause you don't say [censored word] like that to people...

Ren: [Calm and condescendingly] Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah

Alasia: [In Ren's face, shouting] You need to calm the [censored word] down because you don't tell me to shut the [censored word] up!

Ren: [Calmly, slightly patronizing, to others in room] I need to calm down?

The fight escalates to the point where Alasia throws a kitchen utensil harshly into the sink, threatening that she could have hit Ren if she wanted to do so. Ren is eliminated from the competition in the following episode without explicitly reconciling with Alasia. While *CNTM* emphasizes harmonious relations and strong friendships between contestants, *ANTM* does not take a strong ideological stand on such values. Thus, on *ANTM* aggressive confrontations are unapologetically exploited for entertainment.

Fighting between contestants is not only accepted but also sometimes celebrated on *ANTM* as a display of competitive spirit. For example, in Episode 6 of Cycle 14, three contestants, Angelea, Raina, and Brenda, are at the house, eating in the kitchen. Angelea looks at Raina and Brenda disdainfully and says, "So, how does it feel to be in the bottom, Raina and Brenda? It don't feel good, do it?" They ignore her, talking to each other and eating. Angelea continues preparing her food and glaring at them, "Yeah, you all can ignore me, all that false confidence." The scene cuts to Brenda interviewing, saying, "You know, I'm above her. She's below me. I'll be damned if I let somebody like Angelea beat me in this competition." Angelea then interviews, saying, "It's fun to instigate catfights. All I have to do is say one word and it's already being instigated. I'm gonna enjoy every minute of it." Later in the episode, at judging, Angelea is praised for her performance in that week's photo shoot. One of the judges, Andrea Leon Talley, tells Angelea that he loves her

photograph and adds earnestly, “And I hear you are very wonderful in your personal life.” The camera cuts to Brenda giving a skeptical expression. Another judge, Nigel Barker, then points out, smiling amusedly, “What’s interesting, when you just said—I don’t know anything about your personal life, but you mentioned it and every girl behind you just went, ‘Uh huh.’” Andre Leon Talley laughs, “They hatin’ on you Miss Thing!” Angelea responds casually with a smile, “I got haters. I am the way I am. So, people don’t understand that. But I can only be me.” Andre Leon Talley replies in approval, “What I always get from you is realness.” Nigel Barker adds, talking to the skeptical contestants in back, “Ok guys, I have to say watch out, because this shot [her photograph] is really, really good.” While the judges, in theory, could chastise Angelea or the other contestants for their unfriendly relations, instead the acrimony between the girls, as dramatized by the confrontation earlier in the episode, is laughed off.

ANTM producers have even placed contestants in challenges and tests that require that they act aggressively (Cycle 6, Episode 6 and Cycle 12, Episode 7). Although these are artificial situations, and are framed as such, the show has also inferred that some feelings could be genuine. For example, in Cycle 6 (Episode 6), the girls participate in an acting challenge in which they throw insults at each other through freestyle rapping. One contestant, Jade, looks at another contestant named Furonda coldly as she raps, “My name is Jade the ace of spades. Furonda, my dear, I know your skin is bumpy, but my skin is flawless, and you look really lumpy.” Although Jade is performing in an acting exercise, the producers insert commentary from another contestant, Joanie, to indicate that Jade’s animosities reflect her

genuine feelings. Joanie says disdainfully, “I feel like Jade tries to make you feel low, so she can bring herself up.”

Surprisingly, despite mandates to promote harmonious relations, *China's Next Top Model* also features aggressive confrontations. These catfights occur much less frequently than on *ANTM*. There are only four scenarios in which contestants aggressively confront other people in all three seasons of the show. However, rather than simply edit out these emotional displays, *CNTM* instead strategically frames the meaning of these outbursts in ways that simultaneously exploit their dramatic appeal and maintain ideals of social harmony.

As I explained in the previous section, crying can either signify self-interest or friendship depending on what causes characters to cry. However, no matter what it's cause, aggressive confrontation signifies one party's anger towards another, and thus it's performance creates social disharmony. The meanings that particular emotions convey thus require different framing strategies. *CNTM* is able to feature confrontation by framing such emotional displays as inauthentic, not representative of contestants' true feelings, or by ensuring that the feelings that led to those emotional displays are resolved in a culturally appropriate manner.

Framing Confrontation as Authentic/Inauthentic

China's Next Top Model employs two types of framing strategies to present confrontation as either authentic or inauthentic. The first is what Goffman calls *fabrication*: “[T]he intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one or more others will be induced to have a false belief about what it is that is going on” (1986: 83). Two situations in which contestants engage

in aggressive confrontation appear in *CNTM* Cycle 3. In both of these cases, the emotional displays are featured in teasers to promote upcoming segments of the show. The teasers give no indication that the emotions are inauthentic. However, when the actual scenes play out, the show reveals that the angry confrontations are merely acting challenges and also emphasize that contestants' actions do not reflect how they genuinely feel.

For example, one of these fabrications takes place during an initial casting episode (Episode 2). In these episodes, girls enter an audition room one by one and introduce themselves to a panel of judges who decide who should advance. Also present is a young male host. A teaser during the episode shows one contestant standing in the middle of the audition room, angrily scrunching her eyebrows and saying brusquely, "How can you do that. I'm also very diligently preparing. At least you can give me a chance." After the commercial break, the angry contestant is seen fighting with the young male host:

Contestant: I'm treating this very seriously. At least you can give me a chance. I'm already trying my very best.

Host: Are you trying your very best? When we got back from Guangzhou I kept trying to call you. [Raising his voice] Where were you?!

Contestant: [Angrily raising her voice] How can that be? I never got your call. When did you call me? If I got your call, how would I have not returned it? It's impossible! How could you guys be like that!

Host: Forget it. Forget it. I don't feel like arguing with you. You're always like that.

Suddenly, the judges observing this performance clap and the contestant bows, indicating that the entire fight was actually a means to evaluate the contestant's acting ability. The judges say it was a great performance. The two combatants shake hands, as the host says, "I beg your pardon," before both smile at each other happily. Even though a contentious verbal fight is offered as entertainment, the meaning of the emotional performance is shifted and the truth of the situation is revealed, thus preserving harmonious relations.

The second type of framing strategy that *China's Next Top Model* uses to manage the authenticity of contestants' confrontations is what Goffman calls *keying*: "[A key is] the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else." (1986: 44). One type of keying is performing a theatrical play. In that situation, actors behave in ways similar to the way people behave off stage, but everyone observing the play sees it as a spectacle rather than reality. In one episode, the contestants take part in an acting lesson, and as an exercise are asked to pretend to yell at and insult each other (Episode 5). Dramatic music with a pulsating drumbeat and shrieking strings elicits feelings of anger during the scene, and signals that the emotional displays are as exciting as real fights. However, at the same time, there are images and dialogue interspersed to confirm that the emotions expressed are not to be taken seriously, but are rather just an act:

Shi Yu tells Lin Jia Yi, "You're so fat, how can you be a model?" As Shi Yu continues to throw insults, Lin replies with skeptically raised eyebrows, sassily

pointing at Shi Yu's body, "You are so skinny. Do you have potential? Where is your waist? Where is your waist? Your waist is so long." The music becomes increasingly dramatic. The next close up, however, shows Shi Yu smiling through Lin Jia Yi's insults, followed up close up shots of Huang Qi amusedly laughing in the audience. The shot turns back to Shi Yu and Lin Jia Yi arguing in wide shot, continuing to quarrel aggressively. Then Lin Jia Yi comes over voiceover and producers cut to her in an interview, nonchalant and scratching her nose casually, saying, "She said I am too fat. I said she was too thin. But really, I don't think there is anything wrong with her." The scene turns back to them bickering in raised voices as we see another shot of an audience member, Wang Sheng Jie, laughing at their performance. The runway teacher Rosa ends the scene and Shi Yu breaks out in laughter as the other contestants clap.

Despite the dramatic music and the explosive nature of the girls' emotional displays, images of people laughing and a statement from Lin Jia Yi about her true feelings ensures that the confrontation should be regarded as completely inauthentic.

Resolving Inappropriate Emotions

Besides framing confrontation as inauthentic, *CNTM* also justifies featuring confrontation on the show by depicting the show's judges as mediators, intervening in and resolving contestants' feuds. In doing so, the show frames confrontation as inappropriate behavior and ensures that harmonious relations are restored. Legal scholars Hawes and Kong (2013) argue that Chinese reality TV mediation programs simultaneously promote the government's ideal of harmony while also showing sensational conflicts. Rather than resolving disputes in a court of law, mediators

blend law with psychology, moral and social pressure, and persuasion to resolve disputes through workable compromise and diffusion of tension. On *China's Next Top Model*, the show's main judge, Li Ai, acts like a mediator, actively involving herself in resolving contestants' squabbles.

In Cycle 1 (Episode 3) a catfight between two contestants, Wu Mei Ting and Chen Chen is presented in the following manner:

Tanya wins a challenge and her prize is going to a bar and taking two other girls with her. Tanya chooses Wu Mei Ting and Chen Chen. They arrive at the bar and sip champagne while sitting beside each other on a couch. Suddenly, Wu Mei Ting says flatly, glaring at Chen Chen, "My speaking English doesn't bother you, right? Whether I speak English or not is none of your business." The scene cuts to Chen Chen as a talking head, commenting, "I actually quite wanted to speak openly with her, but the way she looked at me made me unable to look at her. Her eyes made her look very mean." We return back to the bar scene as Wu Mei Ting continues to glare at Chen Chen, saying, "Like my not being an ABC and speaking English, I don't think you need to interfere or do anything. You can speak directly to me, not behind my back." The scene then cuts to Wu Mei Ting as a talking head, commenting, "I think she has a bad habit, hiding things. If she is unhappy with someone she'll talk behind their back." When the girls return to the house, the fight escalates. Chen Chen is sitting in bed when Wu Mei Ting enters her room and the girls begin to quarrel. Wu Mei Ting snarls as she continues to accuse Chen Chen of talking about her behind her back.

The quarrel is resolved later in the same episode when the judges evaluate Wu Mei Ting's photograph:

Li Ai [cheekily]: Hmm, fake White person.

Cut to Chen Chen rolling her eyes with a soft smile, and Wang Jia in front of her glancing back and smiling.

Li Ai: Have you heard that?

Wu Mei Ting [softly, pointing back lightly to the line]: Mmmm, I heard it.

Li Ai: Who?

Wu Mei Ting: Chen Chen. You mean the thing between me and Chen Chen?

Cut to Chen Chen smiling sheepishly.

Li Ai: Ok, lets do this. Chen Chen, come up here.

Chen Chen stands beside Wu Mei Ting in front of the judges.

Li Ai [smiling]: The two of you—How about this? Chen Chen actually studies out of this country. She studied in Australia. Wu Mei Ting, you use English to say something good about Chen Chen.

Wu Mei Ting [in English]: Alright. She's tall. She looks pretty. She looks cute. Um, and she's slim as well. And I do like her skin. It has the, um—the environment in Australia is really pure and fresh. So, that's why I can't even see any pimples or anything unnecessary on her face unattract. So, that's why I'm kind of envy. It's nice. And she speaks very good English as well. She knows—

Li Ai [cheekily]: Better than yours?

Wu Mei Ting [smiling pleasantly, in English]: Of course.

Chen Chen: It's different. I have an Australian accent. Hers is American.

Li Ai: Then good, she used English to say good things about you, now it's your turn. Use Mandarin and tell us her good points.

Chen Chen: Ok. Like how I said to the photographers, like normally she is very quiet, but when she gets in front of the camera she is very wild. She really goes for it. She puts a lot of imagination in her movements. My imagination is not quite good. She is my model, so I want to learn from her well because I think my imagination just comes to here [pinches her fingers an inch wide]. But her imagination is very big. [Li Ai smiles]. Looking at her like this, she has improved a lot, improving more and more.

The two girls hug, smiling.

Neither the fight nor any residual tension is ever brought up again on the show. The issue, apparently, is satisfactorily resolved.

Similarly, the one angry confrontation in Cycle 2 (Episode 3) is resolved in the judging room. The argument breaks out when one contestant, Lili Anna, accuses another, Zhang Yang, of hogging the bathroom. Later in the episode at panel, when Zhang Yang is standing in front of the judges, Li Ai breaches the issue, asking her, "Do you think that you do not really get along with everyone else?" Zhang Yang replies to Li Ai, "I think I'm not a particularly friendly person, because I don't like to approach people first. I like to gradually understand people, so this has caused people to misunderstand. So, I have to apologize to everyone. In my regular life maybe I should approach people more positively, and be more sociable." Then she turns around to face the other girls and begins to cry, saying, "Do you guys forgive me? I'm very sorry. Do you guys forgive me?" All of the other contestants look at

her sympathetically. One is crying. Zhang Yang hugs Lili Anna and another contestant. Once again, the issue is resolved.

Conclusion

I have proposed that one prominent means through which forms of emotional display circulate globally is through the mass media, and specifically through the television format trade. Whether local people can successfully perform such global forms in the media depends, in part, on how local audiences receive their performances. Some forms of emotional display that are emblematic of a format might also convey meanings that conflict with local values or media regulators' ideologies. Audience approval is facilitated through textual framing strategies that reflect producers' directorial and editorial choices. I have described three framing strategies that shift the meanings of emotional displays to align with local ideologies and cultural values, (1) define what caused the feelings that led to the emotional display as culturally appropriate, (2) portray the emotional display as not reflecting the performers' true feelings, and (3) ensure that the performers' feelings are resolved within the show's narrative in an appropriate manner.

This study supports theoretical perspectives on globalization that emphasize the hybrid nature of global culture and the impact of both global and local forces in shaping cultural content (Appadurai, 1990; Kraidy, 2005). However, I have conducted a more fine-grained analysis than most scholars analyzing the glocalization of television formats. Most textual analyses of local reality television formats conclude that particular *shows* are hybrid because they contain some discrete elements (set design, styles of behavior, music, etc.) from local culture and

other discrete elements from foreign culture. On the other hand, I have shown that some discrete elements *within* shows may also be conceptualized as hybrid because although they have a “global” look, they convey a local meaning. Specifically, the peculiarities of a television format might create similarities in which physical forms of emotional display are seen in local television series. However, the meaning of those emotional displays, as indicated by what the show suggests caused them and how they are resolved, may continue to vary due to cultural differences between countries.

The decoupling of meaning from physical display has important implications for the social effects of emotional performances in global media. Illouz (2003) argues that the global distribution of the *Oprah Winfrey Show* circulates images of individual suffering and a “therapeutic narrative,” that suggests resolving suffering through self-therapy, relying on standardized norms of mental and psychological health. However, the case of *Top Model* illustrates that audiences may see the same emotional display performed in similar scenarios across the globe, but those emotional displays do not always communicate the same underlying feelings, nor do the performances necessarily suggest resolving feelings in the same manner.

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