DEVELOPING CRITICAL RACE THEORY TO STUDY RACE AND RACISM IN CHINA’S MEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHOCOLATE GIRL’S BITTERSWEET STARDOM ON *GO ORIENTAL ANGEL*

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Abstract

of

DEVELOPING CRITICAL RACE THEORY TO STUDY RACE AND RACISM IN CHINA’S MEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHOCOLATE GIRL’S BITTERSWEET STARDOM ON GO ORIENTAL ANGEL

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This study discusses the history, tenets, and evolution of Critical Race Theory (CRT), and how the theory can be developed for use in a mediated context and a Chinese context. This paper employs Lou Jing’s (a mixed-race reality show contestant in China) story as a case study while reflecting upon the role that China’s history, socio-economic influences, and politics have played in shaping the country’s contemporary outlook on racial identities and racism. The analysis shows that most CRT tenets have a multitude of uses in exploring race, racism, classism, and European and U.S. influence in Chinese society, and how power is manipulated by the government in China’s media outlets.

___________________________, Committee Chair
Michele Foss-Snowden, Ph.D.

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Date
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

China has been continually evolving over the centuries to meet a variety of challenges that shaped the nation and led it from imperial rule to communism, and to its subsequent economic development that opened its doors to the rest of the world. In the twenty-first century, more foreigners are making China their home, resulting in Chinese people marrying foreigners and giving birth to mixed race children. The data from the Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau show that, from 1994 to 2008, there was an average of 3,000 mixed race marriages a year in Shanghai. Even with the increasing mixed race marriage rate, China still likes to think of itself as monocultural instead of a multicultural nation (Elegant & Jiang, 2009). A popular televised singing competition in China called Go Oriental Angel featured a mixed race African American and Chinese contestant in the 2009 season. Lou Jing was born and raised in Shanghai by her Chinese mother, and essentially identifies as Chinese. However, her appearance on a nationally televised show caused a major uproar in China and brought about international attention to China’s issues of racism and the Chinese identity. If a reality-based television star had been criticized for her/his race by audience members in the United States, scholars from different fields including communication, sociology, and ethnic studies would have studied the phenomenon. Some of those scholars might have chosen a theory that could clarify why and how the United States’ history with race could lead to the audience reacting so negatively to the reality star’s race.
Although a relatively new theory, academics and activists across the United States have employed Critical Race Theory (CRT) in legal, healthcare, education, criminal justice, and sports to examine the relationship between race, racism, and power. CRT is a specifically American theory based upon the socio-political history of the United States and mainly applied to study and change the policies that affect unequal treatments based upon race, especially in education and criminal justice issues. This thesis is a theoretical discussion on CRT, its history, implications, and the evolution of its scholarship; this theory also raises two questions about CRT: how can CRT be developed for use in a mediated context and how can it be developed for use in a Chinese context? This thesis employs the reality television program *Go Oriental Angel* and the story of Lou Jing as a case study to answer the two questions.

First, this thesis will briefly investigate the socio-political racial history in Europe and in the United States to explain how race was created and used to justify slavery and segregation, and the relationship between race and the global capitalistic system. It will then introduce CRT and delve into its history, concepts, and tenets, as well as the critiques, applications, and evolution of the theory. To better understand how China perceives race and what it means to be Chinese, this thesis will investigate the myth of the Yellow Emperor that helped China develop and proliferate the notion of the monocultural Han Chinese identity, and it will then briefly discuss the issues in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries that shaped China’s Chinese identity. It also will examine contemporary China’s economic growth and how that growth has impacted the social and media environment of China particularly in the area of reality-based television
programming. The show *Go Oriental Angel* and the treatment of its mixed-race contestant, Lou Jing by the show’s hosts and the Internet audience will be discussed. Based upon the literature review of CRT, China’s history, contemporary issues, and media environment, and utilizing *Go Oriental Angel* as a case study, this thesis will answer the questions of how CRT can be developed for use in a mediated context and how it can be developed for use in a Chinese context. Finally, this thesis will explore possible future studies of CRT that would accommodate a global perspective and a communication focus.
Chapter 2

BACKGROUND OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY

This chapter discusses the global socio-political and economic issues that culminated in the development of race constructs that justified slavery, and also examined the history, tenets, critiques, applications, and evolution of CRT.

The History of Race

In the landmark 1978 case *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, Justice Harry Blackmun eloquently captured the veracity of contemporary American society by his oft-quoted conclusion: “In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race” (Hair, 1999, para. 4). Thus, before examining the foundation and factors of CRT, this thesis must first introduce the concept of race (including its status as a social construction) through past research on sociological factors, global economics, and political dynamics.

According to Dikötter (2008), “races” are population groups that have assumed boundaries based on biological traits, whereas socially constructed “ethnicities” group people together based on similar culturally acquired characteristics. Racial classifications are prevalent simply because they appear real due to theories based on science, linking social groups with biological elements such as body height, eye color, hair texture, and skin tone. Dikötter (2008) argues that this form of “scientific racism” no longer signifies the leading form of discrimination; references to such nineteenth century scientific claims have mostly disappeared, even though new scientific claims of racial differences constantly emerge. Furthermore, explicitly racist statements are no longer tolerated in
most contemporary mainstream global societies, even though racism as such is still very much alive and hiding behind concepts of “culture” and “difference” (Dikötter, 2008, p. 1479). Ultimately, racism is a “limited historical, ideological and political phenomenon,” an organized belief structure that is used as a tool by human beings to “demean, oppress or exterminate each other” (Dikötter, 2008, p. 1480). Other discourses reconstitute race by using culture instead of heredity to note differences. In various cultural contexts, be they historical or contemporary, racial discourses amalgamate with ethnocentrism, and may further integrate with narratives of social status, gender, age, and region to construct new meanings and consequences (Dikötter, 1994; Sautman, 1997).

Winant (2000) analyzed the theoretical components of race throughout history and found that since the nineteenth century, the study of race has evolved reflecting changes in significant political developments. The concept of race only acquired its contemporary connotations with the emergence and growth of modernity, and one cannot study race and racism without acknowledging the profound connection between the advent of the modern global system which consists of “capitalism, seaborne empire, and slavery,” and the advancement of a worldwide development of racialization (Winant, 2000, p. 170). Global racism is entrenched in the philosophies and constructs of global capitalism in which unequal systems of social relationships were created and sustained as Europeans conquered other nations to exploit cheap labor to work in their colonies and plantations (Rabaka, 2007). Rabaka adds that in order to justify the buying and selling of human beings, colonial masters perpetuated racist ideologies to ensure that colonized people were seen as commodities instead. Those influenced by Marxist theory believe
that racism has more to do with political economy than cultural differences, noting that
the terms of “Whites” and “non-Whites” did not exist prior to Europe’s imperial
development that led to its modernity (Dikötter, 2008). Du Bois (1999) critiqued globalized
White supremacy through researching its origins in the European global imperialism and
colonization; he argues that Europe derived its strength from the contributions and
cultures of the people of color it colonized, and then claiming these contributions as their
own offerings to human civilization. Thus, Du Bois (1999) argues that because people of
European descent do not see themselves in racial terms, they are able to degrade non-
European people to the point where they can steal from or kill the “uncivilized” people.

The history of the United States is rife with racial issues: the establishment and
abolition of slavery, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act that was eventually repealed in
1943, racial segregation laws, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, among others. All these
events set the stage for the creation and development of CRT. In the last third of the
nineteenth century, the development of racial inequality in society, politics and law was a
result of a combination of “laissez-faire capitalism in the economic sphere” and
“jingoism and imperialism in foreign relations” (van den Berghe, 1967, pp. 86-87). In
this early stage of the growth of monopoly capitalism in the United States, there was an
immense expansion of the heavy iron and steel industry, as well as railway transportation,
preparing the country to become the first major non-European industrial power (van den
Berghe, 1967). This period of time also was described as the “Golden Age of Racism,”
because Social Darwinism (or the notion that certain groups of people were biologically
more fit than others) and economic leniency merged to rationalize and protect the
continued existence of the wealthy and a scientific reasoning for racism (van den Berghe, 1967). African Americans bore the brunt of racism, as they were the largest and most visible group of minorities; however, other minority groups also faced extreme prejudice (including anti-Oriental protests in the West Coast and anti-Semitism and anti-Catholic programs in the American East) (van den Berghe, 1967).

After the abolition of slavery, the United States experienced rapid urbanization and modernization, and citizens had greater mobility between cities and states, resulting in White farmers feeling threatened by equal status contact with former slaves (van den Berghe, 1967). In order to preserve social distance, racial segregation was employed as a “second line of defense for maintaining White supremacy” (van den Berghe, 1967, p. 89). In 1896, the Supreme Court endorsed the “separate but equal” doctrine advocated in the \textit{Plessy v. Ferguson} decision and it was enforced in the South through numerous laws resulting in separate and unequal resources in every segment of life (van den Berghe, 1967). Therefore, it was punishable by law for Whites and Blacks to “travel, eat, defecate, wait, be buried, make love, play, relax, and even speak together” unless it was within the context of servant and master interaction (van den Berghe, 1967, p. 90). In the North, segregation was less blatantly obvious in the mainstream society, since it was relegated to ghettos with their separate organizational structures (van den Berghe, 1967).

Du Bois (1903) captured the human essence of that time period and how slavery and segregation mentally and spiritually affected an entire population of people. Blacks in the North and their counterparts in the South represented “divergent ethical tendencies, the first tending toward radicalism, the other toward hypocritical compromise” (Du Bois,
For African Americans, political defense became less available and economic defense was only partially effective; therefore African Americans in the South used “the defense of deception and flattery, of cajoling and lying” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 204). The outcome of this defensive strategy is a generation of Southern Blacks who were taught that in order to succeed in life, they should not be outspoken, honest, self-assured, and confident. Rather, they aimed to be quiet, guarded and pleasant, “endure petty insults with a smile” and not criticize nor complain (Du Bois, 1903, p. 204). Du Bois notes that Blacks in the North were intellectually and radically awakened through education, lectures, and discussions. But, because of the lack of career opportunities due to discrimination and segregation, they became bitter and pessimistic, and in extreme cases, some fell to gambling and prostitution, while the better-off segregated themselves from everyone, Black and White, and created their own aristocracy with a sense of culture and pessimism (Du Bois, 1903).

According to Hylton (2010), this foundation of racism “catalyses a racialized power rooted in historical events and micro-aggressions that emphasizes even further the complexities and dialectical nature of everyday racism” (pp. 350-351). Therefore, it is imperative to reflect on these socio-historical events and the human consequences that set in motion the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. All these events led to the eventual creation of CRT; the theory recognizes that racism is prevalent in U.S. society and it explores and seeks to transform the relationship between race, racism, and power.
The History of Critical Race Theory

According to Du Bois (1903), “the silently growing assumption of this age is that the probation of races is past, and the backward races of to-day are of proven inefficiency and not worth the saving” (p. 262). This quotation embodies the spirit of CRT as it speaks to the hidden realities of everyday racism, and the persistence of the illusion that racism is a matter of the past. The ideas that led to the creation of CRT were born in the legal field. Critical Legal Studies (CLS) emerged from the principles of Legal Realism, which holds that certain dominant groups (White, male) maintained power over an unequal status quo; therefore, change was needed in the social and political spheres. CLS argues that law’s logic and reasoning are based on decisions and categorizations that mirrored and furthered societal power relationships by employing legitimate means to conceal injustices (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 2009). CRT can be perceived as a sub-division of CLS scholarship about race that developed out of a number of significant events. In the mid-1970s, activists, lawyers, and legal scholars across the United States realized that the robust progress of the civil rights era of the 1960s that dismantled discrimination in hiring, schooling, and housing had come to a standstill and, in many cases, had even been rolled back due to backlash against progressive reform (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In particular, school integration that was supposed to take place due to Brown v. Board of Education did not materialize, educational institutions hesitated in the hiring of non-White faculty, and White flight occurred in newly integrated neighborhoods restoring old norms of social and racial divisions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 2009).
Cole (2009) argues that CRT was a response to CLS, or a critique of “its undue emphasis on class and economic structure” (p. 247). Instead of focusing on class and economics, CRT argues that race is the more critical social aspect (Cole, 2009). A group of legal scholars such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, frustrated by the regression of reform and the failure of traditional civil rights theories, came together to assess the role of law in the construction and preservation of race-based societal and financial oppression; these scholars aimed to transform the relationship between race, power, and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). In the summer of 1989, the group held its first conference at a convent outside Madison, Wisconsin and gave their association the official name of Critical Race Theory. The CRT pioneers held closed meetings where they hashed out internal problems and labored to detail the theory’s central issues; the group also held public meetings and conferences with panels, discussions, and keynote speakers, soon finding themselves joined by scholars from a multitude of disciplines (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998; 2001). According to Taylor (2009), one of the seminal events in CRT history occurred at Harvard University where one of its founding fathers, Derrick Bell, was the first African American professor to be tenured in the School of Law. He resigned in 1980, in protest of Harvard law school’s failure to hire female faculty of color; some of Bell’s students, including Kimberle Crenshaw and Mari Matsuda, appealed to Harvard to hire a person of color to take over his popular class, but their request was denied (Crenshaw, 2002). Instead, Harvard administrators invited Jack Greenberg (who was White) and Julius Chambers (who was Black), prominent civil rights activists to co-teach Bell’s former class. Bell’s former students, disappointed that
the class would even be co-taught by a White teacher, boycotted the class, organized their own alternative course focusing on Bell’s book, and invited leading civil rights academics and activists to teach a chapter each week (Crenshaw, 2002; Taylor, 2009). This alternative course was one of the first established manifestations of CRT; progressive White law professors provided advice, support, and approved credits for students taking the class as an independent study (Taylor, 2009).

True to its multi-disciplinary nature, CRT reflects on similar concerns that traditional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses assume, but CRT examines these issues with an all-encompassing perspective that includes history, economics, context, and group- and self-interests (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). So, even though it has its beginnings in law, CRT has been applied in the research of other disciplines such as education, politics, ethnic studies, and American studies, but unlike some of these disciplines, CRT has a necessary activist element to it when applied in legal discourse.

Over the years, the CRT movement built a collective identity and a body of academic work that deviated from the conventional definitions of objectivity, allegations of colorblindness, and the use of empirical methodologies for authentication (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Hylton, 2010; Taylor, 2009). Critical race theorists not only attempt to comprehend how society divides itself along racial boundaries and hierarchies, but they also endeavor to revolutionize the status quo by centralizing race and racism in their scholarship and activism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In fact, according to Hylton (2010), CRT is a “series of critiques seeking to positively disrupt and transform racialized power relations regardless of the actors involved” (p. 338).
The Basic Tenets of Critical Race Theory

Racism is Ordinary

In addition to investigating and challenging the causes and connectivity of broad societal and institutionalized racism, CRT also delves into the invisibility of everyday racism. The “everydayness” of racism serves as a challenge to critical scholars and activists as it focuses “not only the more obvious, often overtly racist politics of the Right, but also the more complex nuances finessed by the liberal Left” (Hylton, 2010, p. 350). Such racism benefits from “ingrained cultural attitudes” which are slower to change than “the social and economic structures with which they were once associated in a direct and transparent way” (Fredrickson, 1997, p. 59).

According to Rabaka (2007), these ingrained attitudes are a result of a global system, molded from years of racial colonialism and capitalism that rewards those who adopt White hegemonic views and values. According to Taylor (2009), however pervasive White supremacy holds, “Whites cannot understand the world that they themselves have made” (p. 4). They do not see the economic, social, political, and educational advantages bestowed upon them, and cannot understand the non-White experience in a White-dominated world (Taylor, 2009). Furthermore, non-Whites have a clear outlook of the oppression created by White supremacy, having gathered multigenerational experiences of the political, educational, historical, and social disadvantages of being non-White in a White-dominated world (Taylor, 2009).

To be clear, when CRT scholars use the terms “Black” and “White,” they are not labeling individuals or group identity. Instead, they are pointing to a specific legal and
political organization embedded in the ideology of white European hegemony as well as the consequences of colonialism on a global scale (Taylor, 2009).

In that respect, CRT allows scholars to analyze race and racism from a wider social perspective that includes how racism is pervasive, the numerous expressions of racism, and the ambiguity and diverse consequences of racist acts (Rabaka, 2007). Those acts that may appear small and unimportant gather emotional costs over time, and they can be simply brushed aside or misunderstood by those who do not experience them on a daily basis (Hylton, 2010). Even though these acts may appear to be caused by individuals, CRT scholars recognize that everyday racism is saturated in the “larger, systematic, structural conventions and customs that uphold and sustain oppressive group relationships, status, income, and educational attainment” (Taylor, 2009, p. 4). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) argue that the ordinariness of racism makes it difficult to address and dispute. CRT addresses the more nuanced forms of racism that are not blatantly obvious and are harder to be legally contested.

**Interest Convergence**

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), Bell’s theory of interest convergence or material determinism had a strong influence in the early scholarship of CRT and is still a major factor today. The theory recognizes that racism enhances the interests of the White population, both elites and working class, in different ways. Delgado and Stefancic explain that White elites are rewarded materially from racism, for example, by exploiting the labor pool, whereas the White working class is rewarded psychologically, by feeling superior to African Americans. They also argue that the financial rewards that
White elites gain from racism and the psychological rewards that the White working class receives result in large segments of the population having very little incentive and desire to eliminate racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This concept has its roots in the Marxist notion that the “bourgeoisie will tolerate advances for the proletariat only if these advances benefit the bourgeoisie even more” (Taylor, 2009, p. 5). Basically, the interests of Blacks or other minority groups in gaining racial equality will only be accommodated when they have converged with the interests of the White elites (Taylor, 2009). The most prominent example of interest convergence happened when Bell (1980) theorized that Brown v. Board of Education, the most celebrated American race-remedy law that desegregated public schools, was more about the self-interests of elite Whites than about equalizing the system. Bell (1980) argues that the United States government passed the law to improve the global political image of the United States when news of racist acts against Black servicemen was broadcasted around the world. Although Brown v. Board of Education helped elevate the image of the U.S. government, the actual situation did not change at all (Bell, 1980). Facing massive opposition to desegregation, White schools simply closed for the year, and numerous Black schools were shut down indefinitely, causing their Black teachers and staff to lose their jobs (Taylor, 2009).

**Social Construction of Race**

The third tenet of CRT is that race is socially constructed and not at all based on biology or genetic differences. Instead, race categories are manipulated and invented by society to fulfill specific purposes (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). For example, racial categories were used to justify slavery, colonialism, and segregation, as discussed at the
beginning of the thesis. The differences in physical traits such as skin color, hair texture, and build make up only an extremely small element of human genetic constitution, and we are much more biologically similar than we are different. These physical traits also have nothing to do with “distinctly human, higher-order traits, such as personality, intelligence, and moral behavior” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 8). CRT scholars are particularly interested in why societies across the globe choose to ignore scientific facts and confer certain characteristics and hierarchical rankings to racial categories (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Race was constructed in the court of law to confer or deny rights to certain groups of people. In 1790, Congress passed a ruling that restricted American citizenship to “free White persons” and the Whiteness requirement for citizenship continued for 150 years until 1952 (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). Until 1952, the U.S. Supreme Court assigned and denied Whiteness to certain ethnic groups, which affected their chances for citizenship. For example, according to the Supreme Court, Chinese are not White based on “scientific and common knowledge,” Mexicans are White because of “legal precedent and hazy treaty considerations,” Asian Indians are judged on a “case-by-case basis, requiring an examination of skin tone each time,” and “Filipinos are not White, no reasons given” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998, p. 480).

Popular media have perpetuated many racial images and stereotypes over the years. During periods in history when the mainstream felt threatened by Asians, Hollywood portrayed Asians in a negative and sometimes menacing manner (Nakayama, 1994). The most blatant and racist film, according to Chung (2007), is the 1942 film,
Little Tokyo, U.S.A., wherein most of the Asian characters were portrayed by Caucasians. The film, portraying Japanese Americans as spies, was used to justify the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II (Chung, 2007). Studies have shown that mediated representations can affect viewers’ perceptions of race; therefore, these mediated representations position the construction of race as a real category (Deo, Lee, Chin, Milman, & Yuen, 2008; Lee, Bichard, Irey, Walt, & Carlson, 2009; Murphy, 1998).

**Intersectionality and Anti-Essentialism**

The concept of intersectionality and anti-essentialism is associated with differential racialization which is “the idea that each race has its own origins and ever evolving history” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 8). Intersectionality recognizes the fact that people have more than one easily confirmed unitary identity. A White woman can be a feminist, a single mother, Jewish, and working class, all at the same time, and a Latina can be affiliated with any political party; these individuals can have possibly contradictory and intersecting identities and loyalties (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007).

In legal matters, an intersectional person may be discriminated against at work because she is both Black and female, but anti-discrimination law only redresses two types of discrimination (race and gender) and neither one may work for her if the arguments from her employer show that he is neither racist nor sexist (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). African American women also are “absorbed, made invisible, and marginalized” within predominately White progressive movements, as are lesbians in feminist movements, and gay minorities in White-dominated
gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered (GLBT) movements (Cho & Westley, 2002, p. 53). CRT scholars apply intersectionality and anti-essentialism analysis to “examine how race, class, and other categories interact” as well as to discover more about “the role of double or multiple consciousness” when two or more identities overlap (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998, p. 474).

**The Use of Narratives and Storytelling**

The last tenet of CRT involves the distinctive voice of color. From a CRT perspective, people of color have different histories and experiences with oppression and are therefore able to communicate to their White counterparts ideas from a perspective those counterparts cannot see or comprehend by themselves. According to critical race theorists, legal storytelling and narrative analysis have two important functions: for individuals to tell their own stories of discrimination and also to “shatter complacency and challenge the status quo” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2414). The first goal of storytelling is to acquaint readers with how it feels like to be a victim of discrimination which could then inspire feelings of sympathy and incite conscience (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The second goal is to cast doubt on the naively optimistic view that most Whites have that the U.S. has made sufficient progress in terms of racial equality (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998).

Each racial minority group has its own histories and encounters with discrimination and may be able to communicate its point of view to their White counterparts, especially on issues those counterparts might not understand (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 2009). One of the rationales of narrative is to “redirect the
dominant gaze” and “make it see from a new point of view what has been there all along” (Taylor, 2009, p. 8). Another vital purpose of narratives is to refute the concepts of colorblindness and merit which have been difficult to counter with conventional research methods, legal processes, and statistical data (Taylor, 2009). Narratives can illuminate how individuals reconcile their ethnic, sexual, religious, or political identities with their American-ness. Duara (1995) illustrates this “powerful challenge to hegemonic nationalism” by comparing how two Americans, Joallyn Archambault, a Native American activist and Perry Radecic, a lesbian activist, perceive the Fourth of July (p. 10). Duara notes that their stories may be different but they do not dictate on how “American” they are when compared to each other and to the larger society (Duara, 1995).

The main tenets of CRT are the invisibility of racism, interest convergence, the social construction of race, intersectionality and anti-essentialism, and storytelling and narratives. These tenets converge on the premise that racism exists and hegemonic perspectives must be challenged by different viewpoints in order for change to occur. Although CRT keeps evolving to meet new global challenges, these tenets are the main structures that laid the foundation for this theory.

**Criticisms of Critical Race Theory**

As with other critical forms of theory, the controversial nature of CRT has attracted critics dissatisfied with some of its tenets and assertions. Litowitz (2009) has issues with CRT’s discontent with liberalism, which is understood by CRT as civil rights proceedings characterized by incrementalism and confidence in the legal system.
However, he claims that, to liberals, law’s main purpose is to protect its citizens from harm so that they can be free to pursue their own plans, and in exchange for the protection, citizens agree to obey the law and not harm others (Litowitz, 2009). He also takes issue with CRT scholars faulting liberalism for the “oppression and inequality of blacks or for the mistreatment of Native Americans and Chinese immigrants” when liberals have been widely regarded as active supporters of minority rights (Litowitz, 2009, pp. 298-299). Some CRT theorists like Mari Matsuda also fault liberalism for tolerating racial epithets under free speech, claiming that such tolerance actually promotes racist speech; however, Litowitz (2009) maintains that the state provides a “neutral forum for speech,” regardless of the type of speech (p. 299).

Litowitz (2009) takes further issue with CRT’s tenet of narratives, arguing that it is narcissistic for lawyers to inject their own life stories into legal cases, and that stories and narratives lead to nowhere in constitutional law. He asserts that personal stories are “private issues” whereas the law “turns on public issues” (Litowitz, 2009, p. 301). He also says that storytelling can lead to dangerous territory because lawyers must remain neutral instead of relying on their emotions (Litowitz, 2009). Storytelling may lead to undesirable consequences, such as causing individuals to become less sensitive rather than increasing feelings of empathy toward the experiences of people of color (Litowitz, 2009).

Cole (2009) has concerns with the term “White supremacy” because it distracts society from the realities of global neoliberal capitalism and the term “homogenizes all White people together in positions of power and privilege,” and does not explain “non-
color-coded racism” or Xeno-racism (p. 248). Such homogenization does not acknowledge the millions of working-class White people who lack the resources and clout necessary for power (Cole, 2009). Cole acknowledges that there are three times more Black people living below the poverty line as White people, but that still leaves 16 million White people living in destitution in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007, as cited in Cole, 2009). According to Cole (2009), U.S. poverty statistics are “indicative of a society predicated on racialized capitalism, rather than indicative of a White supremacist society” (p. 249). He views societal problems as a result of class warfare, asserting that “neoliberal social policies” have slashed “job training programs, welfare and public housing of Whites as well as Blacks and other people of color” (Cole, 2009, p. 250).

In an attempt to apply CRT to the United Kingdom, Cole (2009) argues that it is too focused on the traditional views of racism (with focus on biological traits) and not enough on “non-color-coded” racism that is based on cultural or religious differences. Citing the example of Islamophobia, Cole (2009) states that racism certainly can be color-coded, but it also can be symbolic, as it is when people of any “biological” race become singled out because they are wearing Islamic clothing (Cole, 2009). As CRT is based on color-coded racism, it fails as a way to analyze the Islamophobia spreading throughout the U.K. (Cole, 2009).
The Evolving Nature of Critical Race Theory

CRT proponents Delgado and Stefancic (1998) offer their own critique of the theory and argue that, as racism has changed, moving from the more subtle forms it took when the theory was established, to the “blatant, in-your-face variety” of the 1940s or 1950s, so too must the theory be ready and able to change (p. 490). The early period of CRT focused on power and the way White elites controlled Black fortune focusing on language and legal matters (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). Beginning in the late 1990s, CRT began to evolve and expand into new territories of discourse, research, and activism. Even CRT’s own scholars recognize the theory’s need to grow and adapt if true societal change remains an important goal.

One relatively new focus is the study of Whiteness. Examining Whiteness from a range of multidisciplinary viewpoints, CRT scholars find that the rhetoric of deflection and avoidance demonstrates the very problem of Whiteness in its refusal to name itself, how it remains concealed, and how it refuses to recognize the benefits received by the everyday organization of social and cultural structures (Burton, 2005; and Shome, 2000). The most important task of Whiteness studies is to show how Whites are socially constructed and maintained as “White” and to acknowledge the invisibility of White privilege (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995; Shome, 2000).

CRT has also evolved to include movements catering to legal matters affecting specific racial subgroups, including Asian Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans; each subgroup cultivates its own body of literature and has its own focal interests. Another subgroup of CRT is Critical Race Feminism, which tackles the
relationships between men and women of color, the sterilization of Black women, and how changes in welfare laws impact Black and Latino families (Delagdo & Stefancic, 1998). These movements are a way for CRT to evolve to meet new challenges in race and racism in the United States.

Although CRT has obvious U.S. roots, some subgroups have formed in attempts to apply CRT tenets to international settings and concerns. For example, the Critical International Human Rights subgroup of CRT was formed to question and challenge the role of international law in global critical/racial issues such as honor-killing, slavery, international prostitution, bride-burning, forced pregnancy and abortion, female infanticide, and female genital surgery (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998; Gunning, 2002). Traditional human-rights advocates also address these issues but “crits and fem-crits…caution against reposing too much faith in rights, treaties, and other traditional remedies” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998, p. 488). Gunning (2002) concurs that international law is inadequate to address the needs of oppressed women globally. CRT can also be used to study and transform global issues of class and power, such as the World Bank situation and how it affects investments in countries with limited power and resources (Iglesias, 2002).

Another emerging international concern for critical race theorists is immigration law. Due to past colonialism and plundering of wealth of small countries by the United States and European nations, citizens of these countries are often left with repressive regimes and economic despair, and many want to immigrate to wealthy industrialized countries (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) argue that people
who flee from repression, poverty, and potential deaths in their home countries are
treated harshly by the United States government because Congress is granted unlimited
power to regulate immigration. CRT scholars call the immigration situation a “magic
mirror” that “shows how American society really thinks of its own citizens of color and
would treat them if it were not for the courts” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 113).

Although CRT has been growing to include subgroups designed to address the
concerns of a specific racial population, gender and sexual-orientation, and international
settings and issues, it has not been fully and successfully removed from its U.S. ancestry.
Issues of race, racism, and power vary across countries. To successfully apply CRT in a
non-U.S. context, scholars need to incorporate the country’s socio-political history and to
be aware of CRT tenets that may or may not work in each context.

Applications of Critical Race Theory

Even though CRT was created within a U.S. context, it should not be limited to
U.S. concerns. Similarly, CRT also was created within a legal context, but it should not
be limited to legal matters. CRT has been used to answer questions in a wide range of
disciplines, particularly education (Brown, Souto-Manning, & Laman, 2010; Laughter,
2011; Roberts, 2010; Rodriguez, 2010), politics (Hawkesworth, 2010), history
(Anderson; 2008; Tillery, 2009), sports (Agyemang, Singer; & DeLorme, 2010; Hylton,
2010) and communication (Allen, 2007; Brock, 2009; Griffin, 2010; Squires, 2008).

In education, CRT has been used to raise critical questions about resegregation
through tracking, raising questions about the dilution of multiculturalism and diversity,
and uncovering race and class bias (Brown et al., 2010; Laughter, 2011; Roberts, 2010;
Taylor, 1998). Compared to the other tenets of CRT, counter-storytelling has been used extensively to uncover racism in education through the underrepresented voices of teachers and students of color (Boylorn, 2011; Rodriguez, 2010; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Hylton (2010) explores how CRT can be used to counter racism in sports particularly in the racial abuse that dehumanizes, reconstructs, and objectifies the athlete as a mythical object. Agyemang et al. (2010) also utilize CRT in studying the perspectives of African American male university athletes on racial and athletic activism in the United States.

CRT has not been applied as extensively in communication studies as it has been in other fields, but some CRT research in communication research does exist. Allen (2007) argues that mainstream communication studies rarely mention the power dynamic of race and reflect mainly Eurocentric values and experiences, impeding the discipline “from effecting social change related to race” (p. 259). There have been developments in the discipline pertaining to mass media studies of racial representations, cultural studies, and critical rhetoric studies, however these studies are infrequent and scattered. Allen (2007) challenges communication scholars to attempt “alternative constructions of race and race relations” by “informing disciplinary practices, including how we conceptualize, conduct, report, and disseminate research” (pp. 261-262).

There are several studies that applied CRT in the research of communication topics such as computer-mediated communication, television, and movies. In a computer-mediated communication study, Brock (2009) employs CRT to examine how individuals construct their online racial identities through the influencing forces of
popular culture, Web blogs, old media, and other Internet users. In particular, Brock
(2009) argues for increased application of CRT in information studies research to
comprehend how racial viewpoints shape the presentation and analysis of Internet
content.

There are numerous studies on the stereotyping and underrepresentation of people
of color on American television; however, the ones that specifically apply CRT principles
in their research are few and far between. Squires (2008), and Railton and Watson
(2005) discuss the developments of research in race and reality television, looking at
representations of Blackness and Whiteness. In particular, Squires (2008) notes how
reality television exploded in popularity just when Gen X and Y started to use the
Internet daily in fan Web sites, chat rooms, and blogs, and she challenges researchers to
study how race is negotiated in these interactions. In the same token, Chidester (2008)
explores the position of Whiteness and how it is negotiated and maintained through
media texts, particularly though the television situation comedy *Friends*. Yosso (2002)
draws on CRT to link media literacy to social justice by using entertainment media as a
pedagogical tool to examine the connection between race, gender, and class
subordination. Finally, Dennis (2009) uses CRT to analyze the representation of Black
male characters on television programs aimed at adolescents and older teenagers using
the lens of CRT. Findings show that young Black male representations were most often
portrayed as uninterested in sports, as harmless tricksters and nerds, and far less
proficient at heterosexual practice than their White peers (Dennis, 2009).
In terms of international scholarship on racism, CRT is applied by Anderson (2008) to study Australian Cultural Geography with a critical eye. The research focuses on how the social construction of race and racism are used to justify European expansion into the New World from the 1600s onwards, highlighting the classification of Aborigines in colonial Australia (Anderson, 2008). In a study of contemporary global human rights issues, Chin and Rudelius-Palmer (2010) employ first-person storytelling to create a shared space for past experiences and advance racial justice. The CRT tenet of counter-narratives is explored in Kessaris’ (2006) research in exposing the usually hidden and unconsciously performed Mununga (White) racism on Blekbala (Indigenous) people in Australia. Using counter-narratives by Mununga allies participating in anti-racism and decolonization practices, Kessaris, a Blekbala, describes and critiques the covert, social practices uncovered by the narratives. Han (2010) applies CRT’s tenet of social construction of race to analyze how government policies and social prejudice came together to produce race-like status for rural migrants in Chinese cities.

CRT has been extensively used in studying race and racism in educational settings in the United States and is being developed for use in global issues of classism, human rights, and gender exploitation. A few studies employed CRT to study race in U.S. media but they mainly focused on the representations of Whiteness and Blackness, and did not address all the tenets of CRT in their research. Additionally, none of them linked their studies to the legal and historical foundations of CRT, and no studies have used CRT in researching race in a non-US-based mediated setting. Save for Han’s (2010) study on the racialization of rural migrants in China’s cities, CRT has not been applied in other areas
of study in China, especially not in media and communication studies. However, the literature also shows the potential of CRT to be applied and studied in an extensive range of topics on a global scale, which speaks to its significance in critical scholarship. As this thesis deals with CRT and its development in the study of racial discourse in China’s media environment, it will explore the racial history of China to create an understanding of the factors that may have influenced contemporary Chinese people’s racial mindset and helped build their Chinese identity.
Chapter 3

BACKGROUND OF CHINA

This chapter investigates the notion of and the reasons behind the development of racial nationalism in China. Spanning more than 3.7 million square miles and boasting 5,000 years of history and 3,000 years of literature, poetry, and philosophical scholarship, China is one of the world’s greatest civilizations (Lathan, 2007). With 5,000 years of history to contend with, this chapter’s focus is on the issues that China faced in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century that were the catalysts for the development of the Han Chinese identity. This chapter also discusses contemporary China’s racial identities, media environment, and reality television programming.

The Racial Homogeneity Myth

According to Dikötter (1994), narratives of race attempt “to root culture in nature, to equate social groups with biological units, to primordialize the imagined or real congenital endowments of people” (p. 404). There is a considerable body of work stressing the historical and contemporary dimensions of racial identities in Europe and the United States. From the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, there was a racial nationalist hegemony in the United States that assisted the acceptance of pseudo scientific claims that the Anglo-Saxon “race” had an “inbred value system propitious to development, leadership, and the subjugation of ‘backward races’” (Sautman, 1997, p. 78). Similarly, Japanese elites also had their own theories of racial superiority in the early twentieth century, arguing that the “Yamato Race” was intellectually superior to other East Asians, such as the Chinese and the Koreans (Sautman, 1997, p. 78).
The ancient Chinese believed that the world was one homogeneous community called *datong* (great community) and that China was the Middle Kingdom possessing cultural superiority over everyone else (Dikötter, 1990). Those who did not follow the “Chinese ways” were regarded as “barbarians;” however, if they were to be culturally assimilated into the Chinese ways, they could “become Chinese” and in the “Age of the Great Peace,” the barbarians would be transformed and the world would once again be unified (Dikötter, 1990, p. 420). Dikötter (1990) notes that when Westerners arrived in China at the end of the eighteenth century, they failed to pay homage to the Chinese court and snubbed the tribute system the Chinese employed when in contact with barbarians. The Westerners refused to culturally assimilate into the Chinese way of life, and ultimately failed to become Chinese, thereby contradicting China’s traditional conceptual framework of *hanhua*, or becoming Chinese (Dikötter, 1990). The presence of the Westerner rocked China’s world-view and caused a realization that the symbolic universe they operated in “was neither total nor absolute” (Dikötter, 1990, p. 422). Dikötter (1990) notes that the Chinese were ultimately unfamiliar with people who were physically different from them, and intellectuals who had the most contact with foreigners were the ones who developed an emerging racial consciousness. Dikötter (1990) also states that the Chinese saw both Whites and Blacks as devils and ghosts, even though they described them with different color-based stereotypes in this process. Their physical attributes were repulsive to the Chinese and thus seen as the external materialization of an inner deficiency (Dikötter, 1990).
Before the events of the late nineteenth century, ancient Chinese thought of the world as *datong* (great community) and that China was the Middle Kingdom possessing cultural superiority over everyone else. They would invite non-Chinese “barbarians” to become Chinese by adopting their ways so as to unite the world and create a peaceful utopia (Dikötter, 1990). However, as the events unfolded in later centuries with the threat of Japanese and European imperialism in China, the Chinese elites adopted a racial nationalism approach to protect their interests, unite the country, and create a homogeneous Han Chinese identity.

**Late Nineteenth Century and Racial Nationalism**

In the late nineteenth century, Chinese elites began utilizing racial nationalism to unite the people when China was defeated in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894. This defeat caused a surge of patriotic campaigning in China led by the intellectual elite whose main concern was the “survival of China as a racial unit and as a sovereign state in the face of foreign aggression” (Dikötter, 1990, p. 423). China also was aware of the strength of Western nations and how it was under the threat of colonization and racial extinction, causing Chinese intellectuals to be fixated with the concept of an international struggle between the Whites and the “Yellows” (Teng, 2006). The most prominent and outspoken intellectual on race-based world views, Yan Fu (1853-1921) divided up humankind into five main races: “the white, the yellow, the red, the brown and the black races” and such association, prevailing until 1949, was a result of the Chinese elites’ view of the world in “well-defined colors corresponding to clear-cut continents” (Dikötter, 1990, p. 424). Various terms were used to represent the country as a biologically specific unit: “*zu*
(lineage, clan), zhong (seed, breed, type, race), zulei (type of lineage), minzu (nationality, race), zhongzu (breed, race) and renzhong (human breed, human race)” (Dikötter, 1994, p. 406). Revolutionary and political leader Sun Yat-sen was a proponent of a Chinese minzu. In his famous *Three Principles of the People*, he declared that:

The greatest force is common blood. The Chinese belong to the yellow race because they come from the blood stock of the yellow race. The blood of ancestors is transmitted by heredity down through the race, making blood kinship a powerful force (Dikötter, 1994, p. 406).

Yan Fu cautioned the Chinese against Western aggression and the potential enslavement of the entire Chinese race, just as they had enslaved the Africans: “They will enslave us and hinder the development of our spirit and body…The brown and black races constantly waver between life and death, why not the four hundred million of yells” (Yan Fu, 1959, as cited in Dikötter, 1990, p. 424). Chinese scholars used a “process of positive differentiation between themselves and other non-Western people” in order to “enhance their own identity” and they used Africans as a negative identity for those who attempted to depart from the traditional Chinese cultural norms (Dikötter, 1990, p. 423). In addition, although the Chinese did not have much contact with darker people, they had an interest in them as a tool in the ranking of races (Dikötter, 1990). By demeaning the darker races, they were able to raise their collective self-esteem; their negative perception of Africans was a way to compensate for their feelings of inadequacy
when faced by threats of foreign aggression by European nations and Japan (Dikötter, 1990).

The Chinese had contact with Africans in the early dynasties through seafaring merchants and travelers. Li (2005) states that China’s Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E. – C.E. 220) took part in cultural exchanges with Egypt and Du Huan from the Tang Dynasty was the first Chinese to have left a written documentation about Africa. Sullivan (1994) states that during the Song Dynasty (1127-1279) Chinese merchants made contact with Africans and noted positive perceptions about them and their customs. Sullivan (1994) adds that in the late eleventh century, China welcomed a delegation from a state on the East African coast, and treated them with honor “equivalent to ambassador status” (p. 441). Before China’s negative impressions of Africans in the late nineteenth century came to a head, the country had already began to have negative perceptions about people of African descent when Arab traders brought African slaves to Guangzhou in the early twelfth century (Sullivan, 1994). Sullivan (1994) notes that the Chinese called them “devil slaves” and considered them “sub-human savages,” and such perceptions were established before the country closed itself from the rest of the world in the Ming Dynasty (p. 441). The negative perceptions of Africans carried from the early twelfth century into the late nineteenth century, when the threat of European imperialism led China to differentiate themselves from Africans to avoid becoming slaves themselves (Sullivan, 1994). Chinese scholars acknowledged and were afraid of European military strength and its potential colonization of China and enslavement of its people (Dikötter, 1990). Scholar Lin Shu impressed upon his fellow citizens that if China stayed stagnant
in its practices while the West continued to develop, China would regress and become a weak country that could not defend itself against Western and Japanese invasions (Bai, 2008; Dikötter, 1990).

In addition to the threat and fear of European imperialism, Chinese elites also embraced Western race theories imported from scholars returning from their studies abroad to categorize and rank different races. The Western racial theory that influenced the Chinese intellectuals the most was Social Darwinism, which arrived in China in the 1880s and 1890s (Teng, 2006). Chinese scholars identified with the idea of the “Darwinian struggle for racial survival” of the five races -- “the black, the red, the brown, the yellow and the white” (Sullivan, 1994, p. 442). Republican revolutionaries such as Wang Jingwei and Zhang Binglin, and reformers such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao combined the scientific elements of Social Darwinism with Confucian and Buddhist philosophies to create their own nationalistic Chinese racial theory (Sautman, 1997; Teng, 2006). Liang declared that the Chinese were “people of exceptional intelligence” and that “yellows and whites are not far removed from each other,” while “all black, red, and brown peoples are in the micro-organisms of their blood and the slope of their brains quite inferior” (Sautman, 1997, p. 80).

Some Chinese scholars also were indoctrinated in Euro-American imperialistic ideas of Caucasian superiority and the idea of hybridity. Late-nineteenth-century Western racial theory was fixated with the amalgamation of races, arguing that “the crossing of proximate races would produce fertile offspring, whereas that of distant races would produce degeneration” (Teng, 2006, p. 135). Chinese intellectuals adopted the
Western racial theory in their own terms; rather than reflecting on the Euro-American focus on White-Black amalgamation and the fear of racial decline, they focused on the Yellow-White racial intermixing and how to move the Chinese race up the Social Darwinian racial ladder (Teng, 2006). Scholar Yi Nai advised saving China through the intermarriage of Chinese and Whites because their offspring “would necessarily be big and strong, healthy, good looking and intelligent” (Sautman, 1997, p. 80). Chinese philosopher Kang Youwei (1858-1927) also advocated the amalgamation of the Yellow and White races to create the “eugenically perfected Eurasian race” that would “possess the superior physical strength, beauty, and fair skin of the white race, combined with the superior intelligence, moral character, and fertility of the yellow race” (Teng, 2006, pp. 138-139). Teng (2006) also notes that the scholars believed that the Chinese and White races were similar in appearances and intelligence, but Blacks and Browns were too different to be amalgamated with the other two races.

In addition to their belief in Social Darwinism and their fear and recognition of European supremacy, Chinese scholars also were fixated on the nonracial sense of white as fair skin, “a quality long prized by Chinese as a sign of beauty and class status, whereas blackness or darkness were despised as ugly and low class” (Teng, 2006, p. 141). The idea of White-Yellow amalgamation lasted into the twentieth century. Philosopher Zhang Jingsheng (1888-1970) idealized European women and men and encouraged the Chinese to marry them (Teng, 2006). He also added that if there was no other choice, Chinese men could marry women of darker races, but it was unacceptable for Chinese women to marry men of darker races. Because China is a patriarchal society,
wives follow and assume the status of their husbands; therefore, if a Chinese man marries a woman of a darker race, he could pull her status up, but if a Chinese woman marries a man of a darker race, her status will be dragged down (Teng, 2006). Teng (2006) notes that as to negotiating the Chinese identity in an age of European and American dominance, some Chinese intellectuals saw the Eurasian as an alternative to the Han Chinese racial nationalism that was promoted by leading Chinese revolutionaries of the time. The Eurasian symbolized a solution as to how China could “Westernize and still maintain a distinctively Chinese character, a question that had preoccupied many Chinese intellectuals since the 1860s” (Teng, 2006, p. 154).

**Twentieth Century & the Myth of the Yellow Emperor**

In the beginning of the twentieth century, leading intellectuals and revolutionaries insisted that as China as a racial nation should be based on a “single descent group, (zulei), the Han Chinese, who would assimilate the minorities” (Sautman, 1997, p. 81). Philosopher Kang Youwei illustrated a utopian view of the world in his writing *Datongshu*, or “One World.” In this world, “inferior” darker races were lightened in order to achieve universal harmony by “dietary change, intermarriage, and migration,” and those who refused to cooperate should be sterilized (Dikötter, 1990, p. 425). This time period also saw the emergence in the Han Chinese “ethnonationalism” which venerated a “national Han Chinese purity” and conceived differences between the Han Chinese from both the Manchus and Whites (Teng, 2006, p. 14). Revolutionaries consecrated race as the ultimate group definition in order to unite the country. The Han Chinese ethnonationalism was employed by the revolutionaries as an ideological
foundation to defeat the Manchu Qing Dynasty in 1911 and for modern Chinese anti-imperialism (Teng, 2006).

In the early 1900s, racialized implications of identity were taught in lower levels of education (Dikötter, 1994). Dikötter (1994) adds that the New Culture Movement that started in 1915 saw the return of new scholars who were educated in Japan, Europe, and the United States. They injected new vigor in educating the youth of China, challenging them to reject traditional cultural ideas and to embrace foreign science, culture, and democracy (Dikötter, 1994). They also used Social Darwinism to progress the idea of race and advance racial identity, intermingling science and ancient stereotypes “to accommodate ethnocentric feelings of biological exclusiveness” (Dikötter, 1990, p. 428). Furthermore, the Western theory of evolution led to the projecting of the concept of original racial purity into an idealized past to counteract China’s subordinate position in the new world order led by Europe and the United States (Dikötter, 1990). In 1920, middle school textbooks included a chapter on “human races” that proclaimed that “among the world's races, there are strong and weak constitutions, there are black and white skins, there is hard and soft hair, there are superior and inferior cultures” (Dikötter, 1994, p. 408). Primary school children also were taught about racial politics and distinctions. Their curriculum stated that the world has five races: Yellow and White, which are strong and smart, and the others, which are stupid and weak and being exterminated by the White race (Dikötter, 1994, p. 408).

The twentieth century proved to be a time of major political and social transformation and upheavals in China. Latham (2007) notes that China’s imperial rule
had disintegrated and the country faced decades of civil war as well as Japanese occupation and the subsequent revolution against it. China’s political ideology transformed from nationalism to communism with the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. The architect and leader of the PRC, Chairman Mao Zedong’s authoritarian style brought about the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966 that rocked the nation with violence and chaos when supporters of the communist party destroyed cultural artifacts that reflected the ideology of imperialism and the bourgeoisie (Latham, 2007). China was transformed once again after the death of Mao in 1976, when military leader and reformer Deng Xiaoping led the country towards a market economy, reforming the country economically and socially with China’s own version of capitalism, which took over from the state socialism that regulated the country under Mao’s rule (Latham, 2007). Under Mao’s rule, China was closed off to the rest of the world except for relationships with other communist nations such as North Korea, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union (Latham, 2006).

However, the Chinese Communist Party did make an effort to establish ties with newly independent African nations, beginning in the late 1950s, to strengthen its international standing and influence (Sullivan, 1994). These new relationships (including scholarship programs for African students wishing to study in Beijing) encountered resistance from ordinary Chinese who were not only harboring racist perceptions but also resentful that the government was providing scholarships for “the supposed inferior African” students while “valuable and patriotic Chinese lived on meager government stipends in crowded and dingy dormitories” (Sullivan, 1994, p. 444). African students
often clashed with Chinese officials and local residents over their attempts to date
Chinese women; the African students were allowed to organize dances but no Chinese
could attend, and Chinese women who befriended African students were questioned by
the police (Sullivan, 1994).

After Mao’s death, the country slowly opened its doors to foreign businesses,
tourists, and students, an act that had a clear impact in China’s culture and lifestyle
(Latham, 2007). Sullivan (1994) notes that the government restored the African
scholarship program in the mid-1970s and continued to admit African students into the
late 1980s. The racist attitudes of the Chinese toward the Africans continued over the
decades and came to a head when Chinese students led several demonstrations against
by a “Chinese Students’ Association” sent to all African embassies in Beijing illustrates
their thoughts on their perceived inferiority of the Africans:

We are walking towards our great aim on a broad road opened to [the] advanced
and civilized world. It doesn’t mean, however, that we will feed the whole
uncultured Africa with the results of our efforts and we will allow any Negro to
hang about our universities to annoy Chinese girls and to introduce on our
academic grounds manner[s] acquired by life in tropical forests, offending our
traditional hospitality and broad mindedness (Sullivan, 1994, p. 445).

Racial nationalism in China is constructed through the propagation of myths of
origin and lineage. Myths are used to bestow pride through the link to ancient origins,
and lineage is used to build connections to well-known ancestors and suggest nobility and unity (Sautman, 1997). Part legend and part historical figure, the Yellow Emperor (2704 B.C.) was considered the first ancestor of the Zhonghua minzu (Chinese nationality) and his reign 5,000 years ago resulted in the creation of the Chinese state and culture (Sautman, 1997). Since the mid-1980s, the Chinese government, building on the idea of group and linking group to race as well as the Confucian values of ancestor worship and filial piety, cultivated a sense of national spirit by exalting the Yellow Emperor as the father of the Chinese people (Dikötter, 1990; Leibold, 2006; Sautman, 1997). The government linked the Chinese race to one ancestor through infusing kin terms into a “racial rhetoric that called forth emotional dispositions usually reserved for close relatives,” ultimately correlating racial loyalty to family loyalty (Dikötter, 1990, p. 427). The nationalists’ popular propaganda emphasized the “linear and unbroken genealogy of Zhonghua racial provenance,” maintaining that people from the former Qing empire could trace their ancestors “back through the various Chinese dynasties to the inhabitants of the ancient Three Dynasties, and then ultimately through the Five Emperors directly to a single, ancient founding father – the Yellow Emperor” (Leibold, 2006, p. 193). Sautman (1997) notes that the Yellow Emperor propagated the Chinese race through his 25 sons and the assimilation of the central plains people into his Hua Xia tribe. In reverence to the Yellow Emperor, April 4 was proclaimed a national holiday and party officials would congregate at the tomb of the Yellow Emperor in the city of Huangling in the Shangxi province to pay their respects (Leibold, 2006). Deng evoked the Yellow
Emperor in the hopes of China’s reunification with Taiwan and all ethnic Chinese throughout the world are attached to China through this lineage (Sautman, 1997).

**Contemporary China’s Racial Identities**

Contemporary People’s Republic of China (PRC) scholars still believe in “domestic and international racial hierarchies of intellect and behavior” (Sautman, 1997, p. 81). In a survey regarding racial beliefs, they rated China’s ethnic groups in descending order from Han to Tibetan, and globally, they ranked the Chinese and Caucasians in the top spot, “brown” people such as Southeast Asians, Arabs, and Indians behind them, and ranked in the extreme rear of progress were the Africans (Sautman, 1997). To most observers, China gives the impression of a “uniquely bounded and indivisible entity with a long and unbroken history as a single, united civilization” (Leibold, 2006, p. 181). The leaders of the PRC still propagate the meta-myth that since prehistoric times, the Chinese people have been a homogeneous people known as the zhonghua minzu (Chinese nationality) (Sautman, 1997). PRC nationality law employs the notions of race through the tenet of blood lineage, which is similar to the ancient European principle of *jus sanguinis*, which is the right of the blood (Sautman, 1997, p. 80). “Chineseness” was, and still is, “seen to be primarily a matter of biological descent, physical appearance, and congenital inheritance” (Dikötter, 1994, p. 404). In addition, based upon the historical issues China faced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Teng (2006) argues that “Chineseness” is constructed not just in opposition of “Westernness,” but also on the idea that “Chinese and Caucasians are racially similar relative to the darker races” (p. 153).
Contemporary PRC leaders talk of race as a form of “nations-cum-races” and they use the concept for the reunification of China with Taiwan, as Taiwanese are viewed as the same race and as speaking the same language as the Chinese (Sautman, 1997). In 1996, the Beijing-selected Preparatory Committee for the Hong Kong transition advised that Hong Kong residents of Chinese origin born in Hong Kong should be considered Chinese citizens, even if they had foreign citizenships; if they returned to Hong Kong, they could keep their foreign passports and still be regarded as PRC citizens as a privilege of their Chinese blood lineage (Sautman, 1997). The Chinese racial identity may have persisted over the years; however, after 1949, racism was explicitly forbidden by the Chinese Communist Party (Dikötter, 1990). The leaders propagated the notion that only Westerners could partake in racism because “the Chinese were now the leaders of the victimized colored people in the historical struggle against White ‘imperialism’” (Dikötter, 1990, p. 430). Racial discrimination in China tends to resurface during times of internal and external conflict. For example, when the relationship between China and the Soviet Union was in discord, the Chinese Communist Party argued extensively for the recognition of the biological differences between the Soviets and the Chinese (Hanser, 1993; Dikötter, 1990).

Today, the Chinese Communist Party officially recognizes 56 different ethnic groups. The Han Chinese (hanzu) makes up the dominant majority while the other 55 groups are labeled as ethnic minorities (shaoshu minzu) (Han, 2010). This classification is the product of a length process of “ethnic identification” (minzu shibie), established using the Stalinist standard of common language, economy, territory, and culture (Han,
This classification resulted in the government creating autonomous zones for the ethnic minority groups (Kuhn, 2009). However, recent unrests by the Tibetans and the Muslim minority Uighurs demonstrate that not all of these policies are beneficial or fair, and critics claim that the autonomous zones and separate policies make it difficult for minorities to develop a Chinese identity (Kuhn, 2009).

Han (2010) states that the universal mission of the datong (One World) is now expressed in concepts of class struggle rather than in racial terms. The upsurge in rural ethnic minority migration to city centers resulted in the government creating and strictly enforcing hukou, the temporary employment pass that allows migrant workers to live and work in city centers (Han, 2010). Han’s (2010) study exposes a form of racialization unique to the Chinese context of hukou. The police force, responsible for checking identification cards to ensure that rural migrants have the authorization to live and work in the city, uses “visible/audible identity markers like hair, apparel, personal hygiene and dialect” to single them out from the urban residents (Han, 2010, p. 596). These biased identity markers include wearing shabby clothing, having unkempt hair and poor personal hygiene, and speaking in a non-local dialect (Han, 2010). As these rural migrants are from the impoverished countryside, they are facing Dikötter’s (1990) description of a class struggle but based upon racialized undertones that are unique to China (Han, 2010).

**Contemporary China and its Media Environment**

Deng’s economic development policies set in motion the transformation of China’s economic situation. By 2004, there were more than 236,000 Chinese citizens with more than $1 million in financial assets, not including home real estate, and today,
China boasts a multitude of “multimillion and multibillion dollar businesses, both state-owned and private” (Latham, 2007, p. 14). According to Latham (2007), “China has re-imported capitalism after decades of socialism, but it is a capitalism with Chinese characteristics,” and its economic reform has impacted the lifestyles of Chinese citizens, encouraging “new forms of consumerism, individualism, and independence completely unimaginable 30 years ago” (pp. 14-15). To remain competitive and relevant in the marketplace, today’s full-service advertising agencies follow American-style branding and marketing theories (Wang, 2008).

Media in China differ from the United States media in one crucial aspect – media outlets are state owned and state controlled (Wang, 2008). However, over the past 30 years, the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party have given up monopoly over the media, and beginning in 1979, they permitted magazines, newspapers, and radio and television stations to sustain themselves through selling advertisements and competing in the market (Shirk, 2011). The self-funding of Chinese mass media helped reduce the government’s financial responsibility and modernize China’s economy (Shirk, 2011). In addition, Shirk notes that to help propel China into the ranks of technologically savvy nations, the government funded the construction of an Internet network, resulting in an explosion of information to the public, which the government may not have anticipated. Today, there are more than 384 million Internet users in China, more than in any other country, and 145 million bloggers (Shirk, 2011). However, watching television is still the most popular leisure pastime in contemporary China with more than 2,200 terrestrial television stations and 1,300 cable stations broadcasting an average of 242,146 hours of
programming every week (Latham, 2007). The national television audience in China is 1.17 billion at a 98.2% penetration rate and the average viewer spends two to five hours watching television everyday (Latham, 2007; Wang, 2008). In the countryside, more than 90 percent of the population has access to a television set and the figure is close to 100 percent in the cities (Latham, 2007).

The media in China are complex and multilayered (Latham, 2007). Even though the media are market and audience driven, the government still has complete control over broadcasting of news on television and radio, and other content it considers politically sensitive (Wang, 2008). Since the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921, Party members have used the media as a mouthpiece, following Leninist ideas of propaganda, and the media control continued as the Chinese Communist Party came into power in 1949 (Latham, 2007). However, interestingly, even though there may not be the concept of “free press” in China, the media still may be able to offer a critical analysis of the Chinese Communist Party or government officials, as long as they know how, when, and to whom they are directing their critique (Latham, 2007).

**Reality Television in China**

The earliest form of reality television in China originated from “socialist realism documentary” and pedagogy was the main goal for documentary making (Fung, Moran, & Keane, 2006, p. 7). In the 1980s, the Chinese Communist Party viewed the media as its tool for “truth-telling to the masses” and early reality programs included court shows depicting a petty criminal being admonished by a judge and serious criminals being duly punished (Fung et al., 2006, p. 7). Because corruption was rife in society, with a shady
police force and underground black market activity, citizens were struck by these programs showing swift justice to criminal activities (Fung et al., 2006). According to Liebman (2011), over the past 15 years, the media in China “have undoubtedly become one of the most important actors in the legal system” by calling out official abuses, assisting victims of injustice, and putting pressure on courts for fair verdicts (p. 151). However, the media only expose transgressions committed by low-ranking officials whose administrative rank is lower than that of the media that are reporting the story (Liebman, 2011).

Chinese television regulators do give preferential treatment to programming featuring “politically non-sensitive topics such as finance and economy, science and technology, leisure and lifestyle,” and they allow the broadcast of “ideologically neutral mass-market” programming such as “game shows and talk shows, sports, and drama” (Wang, 2008, p. 250-251). China has opened its doors to certain U.S.-based channels, including the Discovery Channel, CNN, HBO, and Bloomberg, with the stipulation that they are heavily censored and are only broadcasted in the Guandong province, foreign diplomat compounds, and luxury hotels in urban cities (Wang, 2008). On these channels, the Chinese audience has been exposed to the television genres created by outside sources.

The first domestic reality television for entertainment purposes appeared in China in 1996 when a provincial network sent a camera crew to film a group of college students who managed to travel long distances with only a few dollars in their pockets (Wang, 2009). It ended up as a special episode of the program Big Challenge to Survival, and it
received so much media attention that the producer developed a full-fledged program with the same title in June 2000. The show’s second season, inspired by the success of the U.S. reality show *Survivor*, introduced competition among its players, and was soon emulated by a number of programs all over China. The introduction of competition was handled delicately, and the show emphasized comradeship and teammate bonding rather than cut-throat rivalry. As with *Survivor*, elimination was a factor in the show but it was managed by a scoring system rather than contestants voting one another out, which saved them from targeting one another and softened the blow on the losers (Wang, 2009).

A few years later in 2005, reality television reappeared in China with new genres. In particular, televised singing competitions such as *Super Voice Girls* were particularly successful. Modeled after *American Idol*, *Super Voice Girls* was the first time that members of the audience could vote for their favorite contestants via the mobile communication’s text message system; the system “triggered an avalanche of input from fans and supporters who were keen to have their favorites win” (Wang, 2009, p. 133). *Super Voice Girls* became the top-rated show in China with more than 3.5 million votes flooding in during the final night of the competition, jamming Hunan’s telecommunications system (Wang, 2009). According to Meng (2009), “with the aid of new communication technologies like mobile phone or the Internet, the interactivity that reality shows promote appears to turn passive audience into active participants” (p. 258). The final contest attracted 400 million viewers, making it one of the most successful shows in China’s history. This show was produced by a provincial television station instead of the state-run Central China Television (CCTV), making its success even more
astonishing (Meng, 2009). *Super Voice Girls’* success paved the way for other televised singing competitions, including *Go Oriental Angel*, which is the program featured in this study. These televised singing competitions present opportunities for unknowns to become professional singers instead of offering a huge cash award that other types of programs might offer. Instead of focusing on the competition aspect of the program, the producers chose to focus on the personal struggles and stories of the contestants (Wang, 2009).

This chapter explored China’s developments of a racial consciousness and eventual Chinese Han identity, which were strongly influenced by foreign threats and internal upheavals China faced in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. It also examined China’s perceptions of people of African descent by looking at China’s historical encounters with Africans, which were positive in early dynasties but became negative from the first observations of African slaves brought to China by Arab traders. China’s media outlets and their complex relationships with the Chinese Communist Party are examined, as is the development of reality television programming in China.
Chapter 4

METHOD

Critical Race Theory, or CRT, has evolved over the years, it has been applied in a variety of studies, and it continues to evolve to meet present and anticipated issues in the United States and globally. However, CRT has not been used to study international media products, and this thesis attempts to discover how the theory could be applied to accomplish such a task, especially when the international media product is a reality-based television program in a country with a long and complicated racial history like China.

China’s social construction of the Chinese race began in the late nineteenth century, and challenges from European powers helped shape “Chineseness” and sparked a denigration of people from “darker” races. China’s media have changed much in the past 30 years, as has China’s popular reality television industry. Delgado & Stefancic (2001) state that the future of CRT has a global focus particularly on human rights issues, globalization, and the issues of poverty. Although Han (2010) applied CRT to study how Chinese rural peasants become racialized and discriminated against by urban policies in China, CRT has not been applied in other areas of study in China, particularly on the social construction of “Chineseness” and racism in China toward people of “darker” races. Thus, two questions arise based upon the literature review: how can CRT be developed for use in a mediated context, and how can CRT be developed for use in a Chinese context? Focusing on developing the theory, this thesis employs the story of Lou and her experience in the show Go Oriental Angel as a case study to answer both questions.
According to Kumar (2005), a case study is an approach to studying a social phenomenon through analyzing an individual case. A qualitative method, each case is seen as both unique and common at the same time, and understanding a case requires an understanding of other cases as well as realizing each has its own critical uniqueness (Stake, 1995). Merriam (1998) argues that what makes case study different from other research methods is that by seeking “holistic description and explanation” from real-life situations, it aims to “uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (p. 10). More importantly, Merriam maintains that the case study presents insights and implications that can play a part in developing a field’s knowledge base (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam (1998) notes that a case study “is a basic design that can accommodate a variety of disciplinary perspectives, as well as philosophical perspectives on the nature of research itself” (p. 2). Case studies have been employed in a number of disciplines such as medicine, law, psychology, anthropology, sociology, political science, social work, and education (Merriam, 1988). Bercovitch, Kremenyuk, and Zartman (2009) and Merriam (1998) note that social science scholars have progressively come to view case studies as methodology to aid in theory development and advance theoretical aims. There are various types of case studies that are classified based on the theoretical goal or use. This particular thesis is interested in building CRT to enable the theory to be applied in studying China’s mediated contexts. Thus, hypothesis generating case studies are compatible with this thesis as it aims to contribute to theory development by “suggesting
additional causal variables, causal mechanisms, and interaction effects” (Bercovitch et al., 2009, p. 73).

Data Collection

According to Merriam (1998), there is no particular approach to data collecting in a case study (unlike other research forms such as surveys or experimental studies), and all methods of gathering data can be used in a case study, from interviews to observations. For this particular thesis, the data were collected from various documents about the situation from a radio interview transcript to various journalistic accounts (Merriam, 1998). First, Lou’s name and the name of the show (Go Oriental Angel) were entered in Google’s online database search engine. There were more than 36,000 results but most of the same stories were replicated in different Web sites. Lou’s name appeared in thousands of blog entries. The bloggers’ opinions, although useful for future research, are not necessary for this particular thesis as the sole purpose of data gathering was to build a case study of Lou’s story and her appearance on Go Oriental Angel.

The researcher narrowed the results down to entries from ten online news and magazine articles from China, Great Britain, the United States, and Australia. The news and magazine articles were chosen for their detailed coverage of Lou’s story, and a few of them include interviews with Lou herself. The articles appeared in the following internationally renowned news media: British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service, China Daily, China Hush, Cable News Network (CNN), National Public Radio, The Age, The Guardian, Telegraph, and Time Magazine. Originally in Mandarin, the articles in China Hush also are available in English, and China Daily is China’s national
English-language newspaper, created to inform the global audience about stories in China. The researcher selected the articles from these Chinese Web sites because one of the articles had a lengthy interview with Lou and the other articles gave the perspectives of the Chinese population and well-known Chinese media personalities regarding Lou’s controversy. The researcher first became aware of the story of Lou through English-language international news Web sites. As the researcher is not fluent in written Mandarin Chinese, she chose to focus solely on English-language Web sites to gather data for the case study. The thesis is centered on the development of CRT and the story of Lou is meant to enhance the theory’s development. Therefore, the researcher came to the conclusion that it was adequate to gather data for Lou’s case study from English-language Web sites. For future research specifically focused on Lou’s story, especially in utilizing the method of audience ethnography, it would be essential to gather details and opinions from Mandarin-language blogs and Web sites as well.

Themes that correspond to CRT tenets were identified and they include: Chinese identity, mixed race, general racism, skin color, and racism towards Africans. These themes assist in the development of CRT to be applied in future research on race, racism, and power in China’s media environment. After identifying the themes, qualifying words and phrases that complement each theme were tallied from every online article and totaled in the corresponding table (Table 1). For example, whenever the words “skin color” or statements describing light or dark skin tones appear in an article, they were designated to the theme of skin color. The themes of general racism and racism against Africans were separated because some articles make it a point to talk specifically about
Chinese society’s discrimination against people of African descent, whereas other articles did not make such specific distinctions.

Table 1

*Frequency of Themes in Online Articles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>CRT Tenet Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Identity</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Social Construction of Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Social Construction of Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Racism</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Racism is Ordinary Storytelling and Counter Narratives Interest Convergence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin Color</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Social Construction of Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism towards Africans</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Racism is Ordinary Storytelling and Counter Narratives Whiteness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Chocolate Girl Case Study**

In 2009, a popular singing competition television program in China, Shanghai-based Dragon TV’s *Go Oriental Angel* featured a contestant who was unlike any other. Twenty-year-old Lou Jing was one of five representatives from Shanghai chosen to appear on the show, which featured contestants from all over the country. She did not win the competition and did not even make it to the top 30, yet she was catapulted to the national spotlight because of the color of her skin (Vines, 2009). According to Vines (2009), Dragon TV had reservations about allowing Lou to perform but then realized that her appearance would generate publicity for the show (it did); however, executives might not have expected the anger and negativity in online posts regarding her skin color.
Born to a Chinese mother and an African American father whom she had never met, Lou’s skin color and single-parent family background became a source of scrutiny by the program’s hosts and news media, as well as the scores of viewers who boosted ratings for the show. The show drew attention to her background because she was very unusual for China, and the hosts delved into her personal life, and asked probing questions about her mother’s relationship with her absent father (Vines, 2009). The hosts of the show and the media dubbed her “Chocolate Girl” and “Black Pearl,” and viewers posted negative comments on Internet discussion blogs criticizing her dark skin color and her mother’s supposed pre-marital relationship with an African American man (Elegant & Jiang, 2009). In addition, many argued that she should not have been chosen to represent Shanghai in the national competition nor should she have qualified to compete in a Chinese show. They pointed out that she did not have fair skin, which is the most important quality for Chinese beauty; the fact that she was born out of wedlock made her mother’s life choices morally questionable, and many viewers commented that this sort of behavior should not be publicized on national television (Elegant & Jiang, 2009; Lim, 2009; Shi, 2008; Vines, 2009). In essence, Lou’s participation in this reality show “provoked a storm of abuse on the Internet, a rare debate on racism in the media, and a bout of self-examination in a country where skin color is a notoriously sensitive subject” (Vines, 2009, para. 2).

The intense spotlight on Lou’s mixed-race background sparked a nationwide debate on what it means to be Chinese and drew international media attention on Lou and her treatment by the audience and Internet bloggers (Vines, 2009). Even with the
increasing mixed-race marriage rate and growing numbers of foreigners living, working, and studying in China, the country still likes to think of itself as monocultural instead of a multicultural nation. As recently as the 1970s, foreigners were barred from living in China and marrying a Chinese person. Even in contemporary times, China does not easily accept mixed-race children as true-blooded Chinese. When a child is born, the parents have to register with authorities as to which of the government-approved 56 ethnic groups their child belongs, and there is no mixed-race category (Elegant & Jiang, 2009). Lou was born and raised in Shanghai by a Shanghainese mother, she speaks fluent Mandarin and Shanghainese, and she has never lived anywhere else. Yet, some Chinese people still questioned whether she is truly Chinese due to the fact that she physically looks remarkably different from the standard Chinese appearance (Elegant & Jiang, 2009; Lim, 2009). Chinese bloggers posted malicious comments such as “yellow people and black people mixed together is very gross” and most of them asserted that this biracial dark-skinned woman could not be regarded as a “real” Chinese (Vines, 2009, para. 4). One of the most popular comments that appeared on the Internet boards was titled: “Wrong parents; wrong skin color; wrong to be in a television show” (Zhou, 2009, para. 1). Zhou (2009) argues that the uproar over Lou’s appearance is due to the fact that she is not “pure-blood” Chinese, and that the Chinese consider someone who marries outside of the race a traitor, especially those who marry African Americans (para. 6). Zhou (2009) also argues that much of China’s prejudice is color-based, not just race-based, and that Chinese people with darker skin, especially women, are also looked down upon in China as having a lower social class.
The intense spotlight and interest in Lou and her family situation afforded her opportunities to tell her side of the story through several interviews with Internet news sites and in a short video segment on *Go Oriental Angel*. In an online interview, Lou discussed being called “Little Black” when she was a child in school; however, she felt that it was not malicious, unlike how she was treated during the singing competition (“NetEase News,” 2009). In another interview, Lou states that people on the street would talk about her appearance not expecting her to understand the language, and that before the competition she did not realize their remarks were discriminatory (Lim, 2009). In an on-air interview with the *BBC World Service*, Lou said that the most popular comment people posted on the Internet was “get out of China” and people also called her a “black chimpanzee” who should not be on a show about oriental angels since she does not look oriental (“BBC World Service,” 2009). She also said that the first time she read the comments online, she cried all night because she did not expect such a substantial negative reaction to her appearance on the show (“BBC World Service,” 2009). In the same *BBC* interview, she also discussed the growing number of mixed-race children in China, and observed that White-Chinese mixed-race children are praised for looking like dolls, whereas Black-Chinese mixed-race children are called chimpanzees and black babies. Lou notes that the media treats them differently because Chinese attitudes about Africans are that they come from a less-developed and less-advanced part of the world (“BBC World Service,” 2009). As far as her identity goes, Lou states that she regards herself as Chinese, even though people stop her on the streets asking her why she can speak Chinese so well, expecting her to be a foreigner (Elegant & Jiang, 2009). Lou also
adds that, since her experience in the show, she feels that she does not belong in China; she says, “I’ve always thought of myself as Shanghainese, but after the competition, I started to have doubts about who I really am” (Lim, 2009, para. 20).

Not all comments and attention on Lou were negative or malicious; a number of Chinese media commentators and ordinary Chinese bloggers came to her defense and also joined the online debate on the Chinese and race (Vines, 2009). Newspaper columnist Zhou (2009) wrote that although he believes that aesthetics are about personal choices, “it is high time we introduced some sensitivity training on races and ethnicities if we are going to latch on to the orbit of globalization” (para. 19).

This chapter discussed the use of case studies as a methodology in this thesis’ aim to develop CRT for use in a Chinese and mediated context, and detailed the case of Lou and her experiences with racism when she appeared on *Go Oriental Angel*. 
Chapter 5

ANALYSIS

Although the United States and China were both impacted by the global system of capitalism, industrialization, and colonialism, they each have distinctive outcomes on racial identities, race relations, and racial policies. Most research about race has over-emphasized Western-related issues and scholars often assume that racial prejudice “can only be a ‘white’ phenomenon under which other people, lumped together under the heading ‘colored,’ had to suffer” (Dikötter, 1990, p. 421). Dikötter (1990) cautions that such a narrow focus of study will only lead to Euro-centrism and a distortion of “our comprehension of racial matters in non-Western countries” (p. 421). This critique is echoed by Allen (2007) who claims that current communication scholarship reflects Eurocentric viewpoints and rarely mentions the relationship between race and power. Challenging scholars to center the issues of race in their research, Allen (2007) argues that “race merits theoretical and practical attention because it is an enduring, contested phenomenon with important implications for communication studies, and for transforming society” (p. 259). Although CRT has been utilized a great deal in education, sports research, and feminist studies, it has been quite sparse in the field of communication (Griffin, 2010). He challenges communication scholars to “pay close attention to power; context; culture as a site of struggle; historical, social and political macro contexts; hegemony; and ideology” (Griffin, 2010, p. 3). Communication scholars can also use CRT in conjunction with other critical theories such as Black Feminist
Thought, Chicana Feminism, and Queer theory, as well as in fields of study including philosophy, psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Griffin, 2010).

This thesis aims to develop CRT for future research about China by describing the different ways the theory can be used in a Chinese mediated context, using Lou as a case study. Certain CRT tenets have been applied individually to study race and racism within certain countries or in a global context. For example, Anderson (2008) employed the social construction of race to study the colonization of Australian Aborigines by the British, and Chin and Rudelius-Palmer (2010) employed storytelling as a means to highlight racial justice issues in human rights education. Even though these particular tenets have their roots in American political culture, they have the flexibility to be applied in different countries to study individual cases of race, racism, and power in those countries. Furthermore, CRT has proven itself to be an ever-evolving scholarship. Its focus in the 1970s began with the critique of liberalism and the legal system in the United States. As the theory entered the 2000s, CRT scholars expanded their studies and activism into a wide variety of issues including classism, environmentalism, immigration, gay rights, power, and poverty (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). CRT has even delved into international issues such as human rights, female infanticide, human trafficking, and globalization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). As much as CRT is an evolving theory, China itself has experienced major changes throughout its history from imperial rule to communism, to a post-Mao period of economic reform that led to its economic development resulting in changes in social attitudes and behaviors as well (Latham, 2007).
Even though CRT is conceived from U.S. legal and social history, the idea of adopting foreign concepts is not new in China. Historically, China has managed to shape foreign concepts to suit its ideology and the country then adopts these concepts as its own. For example, Buddhism was imported from India but has been transformed into a religion that many consider fundamentally Chinese, the Chinese racial theory was inspired and adapted from the Western race theory of Social Darwinism, Mao adopted the Western concept of Communism to lead the Chinese Communist Party to rout imperialism and feudalism, and Deng’s economic reform resulted in a form of capitalism with Chinese characteristics (Latham, 2007; Teng, 2006). Thus, it is possible for Chinese communication scholars, as well as scholars from other fields such as sociology, ethnic studies, and education to adopt and adapt CRT to study the interplay of race, racism, and power in contemporary Chinese society.

Latham (2007) notes that China plays an increasingly prominent role in contemporary world economics and politics, and there is more incentive to learn about its society and people. The case study of Lou and her experiences in Go Oriental Angel reflects modern-day Chinese society and demonstrates the variety of ways that CRT can be employed in this context to study the issues of the Chinese identity, racism in China, and the prevalence of U.S.-based influence in China. This analysis is accomplished by examining CRT tenets that include: racism is ordinary, interest convergence, the social construction of race, intersectionality and anti-essentialism, the use of narratives and storytelling, and the more recent tenet of Whiteness. Each of these tenets is explored via Lou’s story to create an argument about CRT’s applicability in a Chinese mediated
context. Furthermore, in developing CRT’s discourse in a Chinese and mediated context, this thesis also reflects upon the role that history, socio-economic influences, and politics play in shaping the Chinese society’s outlook on racism and racial identity.

**Racism is Ordinary**

In 1949, the Chinese government officially banned racism and propagated the idea that only Westerners could be racist because the Chinese were now the “victimized colored people” in the global struggle against White imperialism (Dikötter, 1990, p. 430). Even though the government officially outlawed racism, it has not stopped racist comments from appearing online regarding Lou, her dark skin, her African American ethnicity, and even her Chinese mother’s past relationship with Lou’s African American father. One of Hong Kong’s leading cultural commentators, Chip Tsao notes that a child of a Chinese woman and a Black man “hits all the buttons that cause prejudice among Chinese” as the whole situation is “an obnoxious novelty” for the public (Vines, 2009, para. 10). Lou says that before the national attention, people on the street would ask her why she could speak Chinese so well and they would also make comments about her appearance, but she claims to have never suffered obviously racist attacks until she appeared on the show (Chang, 2009; Lim, 2009). CRT can be employed in this case to examine if perhaps racism is typically a normal occurrence in China and Lou was the conduit for the racist comments to be exposed publically and in such a widespread manner due to the reach of the Internet.

With CRT scholarship, the socio-cultural history of China must be considered to understand the online vitriolic reaction against Lou’s partial African American ethnicity.
As illustrated earlier, China had contact with African nations since the early dynasties through merchants and travelers who made positive observations on Africans and their customs (Li, 2005; Sullivan, 1994). However, after the Chinese first encountered African 
slaves in the twelfth century, they started to develop negative perceptions about Africans; these negative sentiments boiled over in the late nineteenth century when China faced the threat of European colonization in the midst of civil unrest and discord (Sullivan, 1994). This account proves that CRT can be used in China because there is a shared history with slavery. CRT explains that slavery in the United States contributed to the shaping of its contemporary policies and social attitudes, especially concerning people of African descent. In the same vein, slavery also contributed to contemporary Chinese people’s social attitudes toward people of African descent. In the late nineteenth century, Chinese elites encouraged and propagated negative attitudes about people of African descent to stir up racial nationalism among the population. Chinese elites adapted Social Darwinism to create their own Chinese racial theory, and ranked different races with the Chinese and Whites at the top and Black people at the lowest level (Sautman, 1997; Teng, 2006). The prejudice against Africans was vocalized again with angry student protests when African students were given scholarships to study in Chinese universities by the Chinese government during the 1960s to the late 1980s (Sullivan, 1994).

Patriarchal assertions that a Chinese woman should not marry an ethnically dark-skinned man arose around the late nineteenth century and continued to the late twentieth century when African students were barred from making friends with Chinese female students (Sullivan, 1994). In Lou’s situation, she was not the only one attacked with
racist comments. Her mother was viciously attacked for having a relationship with an African American man, and the attacks became even more vicious when a Chinese newspaper published a libelous article suggesting that her mother cheated on her Chinese husband with Lou’s father (Lim, 2009; Moore, 2009). Lou was not the only mixed-race Chinese given such media attention. In 2008, Ding Hui, a young man of African-Chinese ethnicity, roused nationwide interest when he was called up to play on the national volleyball team, with detractors asking if a half-Chinese man should be allowed to represent China alongside “pure-blooded” Chinese (Elegant & Jiang, 2009, para. 7).

Taking China’s historical experiences and social outlook into account, CRT can be used to analyze Lou’s situation and the racist attacks on her and her mother, as well as analyze the situations of Ding and other people with a Black-Chinese background. Although the online racist comments about Lou were written by individuals, CRT scholars recognize that racism stems from a larger system possessing a set of organized principles and traditions that maintain and support prevalent racist attitudes and unequal relationships in a society, while rendering racism as ordinary (Taylor, 2009).

CRT also looks at the more nuanced forms of racism that may not be as obvious as angry racist rants on the Internet. As demonstrated by Kessaris’ (2006) research in exposing the usually hidden and unconsciously performed White racism Indigenous people in Australia, the White participants do not even realize they are participating in racist practices because they are so covert and ingrained in everyday customs. Ultimately, the ordinary nature of these interactions “is consistent with CRTs assertion that White dominance is so ingrained in societal structures and practices, that it is
normalized, and therefore difficult to recognize” (Kessaris, 2006, p. 349). This Australian study shows that the CRT tenet of “racism is ordinary” can be used outside of the U.S. to study other countries’ experiences with normalized and hidden racism. Through Lou’s story, CRT can uncover the more veiled forms of prejudice in China, such as when people on the street asked Lou how she could speak Chinese so well, and when she heard comments about her skin color by people who thought Lou could not understand them. Newspaper columnist Moore (2009) claims that these are not racist comments but rather the Chinese people’s way of making friendly conversation by pointing out physical traits. However, to employ CRT in a discourse about racism in China, one cannot ignore China’s long history of Han racial nationalism, fear of European imperialism, perpetuation of racial hierarchies, and racial and class prejudice against darker skin. The culmination of these factors could show that these “friendly conversations” might not be as innocuous as Lou or Moore might think.

**Intersectionality and Anti-Essentialism**

Since CRT was developed in response to racial inequalities in a post Civil-Rights United States, some of the tenets may be too “Americanized” to be applied in studying race and racism in China, as its political landscapes is far too different. Intersectionality and anti-essentialism have their roots in American anti-discrimination law and political movements. They were developed by critical race theorists to study how a person who has intersecting traits (Black, woman, and lesbian), might be able to navigate through the legal setting of an anti-discrimination case, and how political movements might not address her unique issues (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). These tenets may not be as
easily applied to China because its political and legal landscapes are drastically different from the United States.

**The Social Construction of Race**

As evidenced by Han’s (2010) study on the racialization of rural migrant workers in Chinese cities, at least one of CRT’s tenets can easily be applied to study race and racism in China. Using the CRT tenet of the social construction of race, Han proved that racial attributes were used to discriminate against a lower class group of people. Taking China’s media into context and the particular experience of Lou in the televised singing competition, CRT’s tenet of the social construction of race can be applied to expose Chineseness and its construction by the audience, the show’s hosts, the executive producers, and the Chinese press. CRT maintains that race is a social construction, not a biological actuality. Therefore, when it comes to racial prejudice, society can “unmake it and deprive it of much of its sting by changing the system of images, words, attitudes, unconscious feelings, scripts, and social teachings” that conveys the idea that certain groups of people are better than others (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 17).

Lou’s appearance on the television show may have been a calculated move (on the part of the producers of *Go Oriental Angel*) to boost ratings, as suggested by local Shanghainese bloggers who wrote online that Lou’s inclusion in the show had “more to do with the novelty factor of her skin color than with her talent” (Moore, 2009, para. 5). Lou’s appearance on the show projected another image of Chineseness to television and Web audiences, challenging their socially constructed idea of who can be regarded as Chinese. She is a Shanghai-born, raised, and educated young woman who speaks fluent
Mandarin and Shanghainese, and the only difference between her and the other contestants in the show was the color of her skin (Elegant & Jiang, 2009). Globalization has created human movements throughout the world, and in this era, more people are traversing national and cultural borders than ever in the history of civilization (International Organization for Migration, 2006, as cited in Sorrells, 2008). Would a person with two Chinese parents born and raised in the United States, be considered more Chinese than Lou based on purely on biological attributes, even if that person could not speak the language or identify with the Chinese (instead of Chinese American) culture? Because the attribution of race is socially constructed, it can change on an institutional level because of economic needs or political pressures. When Jews and Irish immigrants first arrived in the United States, they were considered non-White, and as they progressed economically and socially in the U.S., they were regarded as White legally and socially (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). The Chinese government regards races as “nations-cum-races” and as forms of political manipulation for the reunification of China with Taiwan, as Taiwanese are viewed as the same race and as speaking the same language as the Chinese (Sautman, 1997). As China becomes more multicultural due to immigration and the rise in mixed marriages, CRT can be used to analyze if the social construct of Chineseness will evolve with the times or stay stagnant because of the strength and influence of the Han majority.

CRT can be used in a variety of ways to analyze the media in China, just as it has been used in the United States; one of these ways is the use of CRT to analyze and uncover stereotypes or the under-representations of minorities on television. CRT notes
that it is important “to study the ways in which people are represented within and by a culture” to both understand “how discriminatory practices are legitimated” and also employ it as a way to expose those practices as discriminatory (Railton & Watson, 2005, p. 53). As discussed in the literature, Squires (2008) employed CRT in the study of the representations of Blackness and Whiteness in shows like Survivor, The Real World, Flavor of Love, and The Bachelor, and Railton and Watson (2005) also explored Blackness and Whiteness in music videos, focusing on the articulations of race and sex. Both studies found that Blackness and Whiteness are stereotyped in their representations, especially when the dimension of gender is added in. According to hooks (1992), as a stand-in for what is real, stereotypes are a form of representation that is an invention and a “projection onto the Other” to make racial minorities seem less threatening (p. 170).

Go Oriental Angel showcased Lou because of the novelty of her skin color and mixed-race background, and ratings shot up as controversy swelled around whether she should be on the show as a Chinese contestant representing Shanghai (Elegant & Jiang, 2009). Other televised singing competitions and other reality programming in China can be examined using CRT as an application. Studies can examine how the audience receives minority and mixed-race contestants, and how other contestants, judges and hosts treat these contestants. However, if these television programs do not include minorities and mixed-race contestants, CRT can be used to examine the invisibility of other types of Chinese racial categorization and citizenship in China’s reality programming.

CRT also can expose how the media socially construct racial groups by ascribing a positive or negative image to the groups, while being influenced by the changing forces
of domestic political climates and significant global social issues (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). The 1960s image of the Black American was of a “noble warrior, like Martin Luther King or Malcolm X” but in contemporary times, this image has been replaced by “stereotypes of criminals or welfare cheats” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998, p. 477). During periods in history when the mainstream felt threatened by Asians, notably during World War II and Japan’s rise to economic prominence in the 1980s, Asian men were depicted in the media as the dangerous gangster or the asexual nerd (Nakayama, 1994). Such portrayals reinforce the cultural coding of the threatening “Other,” especially the coding of Asian masculinity as threatening and negative (Nakayama, 1994). By singling out Lou’s complexion and calling her a “Chocolate Girl” and “Black Pearl,” the hosts of the show put a spotlight on how different she was from the other contestants. Subsequent media attention also focused on her mixed race background and how the audience reacted to her difference (Elegant & Jiang, 2009; Lim, 2009). Lou became the “Other” as illustrated by Edward Said in Orientalism. Said (1978) asserts that political visions promoted the difference between “the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the ‘strange’ (the Orient, the East, ‘them’)” and that “the Orientals lived in their world, ‘we’ lived in ours” (p. 43). The strength of Western culture (as described by Said, in 1978) allowed it to give itself a certain privilege to be able to scrutinize, label and give meaning to the mysterious “other” culture as well as constructing it as inferior. Even though the “Western” consumer belongs to a statistical minority as compared to the rest of the world, “he is entitled to own or expend (or both) the majority of the world resources…because he, unlike the Oriental, is a true human being” (Said, 1978, p. 108).
Although Said (1978) was writing about Western colonialism, China has now become a global economic powerhouse and the “other” construct can be used by the dominant group in the Chinese society to dehumanize minority groups. The Han Chinese have the power and influence in society, as they make up 90.5% of the total population as of 2005 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2006, as cited in Han, 2010). CRT can expose how China’s media socially construct Chineseness and how they assign an “other” notion to people who do not fit the image of what they consider Chinese. According to Delgado and Stefancic (1998), the dominant group in society assigns the out-group traits that can change from positive to negative according to their needs. The out-group also puts out positive images of itself in a “constant negotiation in which one side holds most of the cards” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998, p. 477). In China, the government elites hold all the cards in terms of media control, justifying that they are protecting the Chinese culture from the effects of Westernization, so it may be more difficult for out-groups to project positive images of themselves (Knight, 2006).

Squires (2008) notes that reality television’s rise in popularity coincided with the increased use of the Internet in fan Web sites, chat rooms, and blogs, and researchers are challenged to study how race is negotiated in these online interactions (Squires, 2008). In a computer-mediated communication study, Brock (2009) employed CRT to examine how individuals construct their online racial identities through the influencing forces of popular culture, Web blogs, old media, and other Internet users, as well as how racial viewpoints shape the presentation and analysis of Internet content. Today, China boasts more than 384 million Internet users, more than any other country, as well as 145 million
bloggers, and the speed of the Internet allows users to share and get information about events that are happening domestically or internationally in an almost instantaneous fashion (Shirk, 2011). Lou’s detractors and supporters took to the Internet blogs to voice their negative or positive opinions of her appearance on Go Oriental Angel, and some of them launched into discussions about racism against minorities and people of mixed-race backgrounds in China and what constitutes a Chinese identity. A limitation of a study focusing on Internet use in China would be the broad scope and anonymous nature of the Internet, as well as the difficulty in gathering information due to potential government censorship and banning of certain Web sites, if the issues delved into politically sensitive zones.

Han’s (2010) study utilized CRT’s tenet of the social construction of race to show how the Chinese racialize the rural population, in an obvious class separation situation. Similarly, CRT scholars can develop the social construction tenet to analyze how the Chinese media proliferate or denounce the idea that the shade of skin color can denote social class standing. The idea of skin shade and class distinction has been ingrained in Chinese society for thousands of years, with darker skin associated with poorer rural farmers, and fairer skin associated with scholars, officials, and wealthy families who were sheltered from the sun (Zhou, 2009; Mak, 2007). Lou was attacked for having an African American parent (a matter of race), but there also were attacks on the darkness of her skin (a matter of color). Zhou (2009) and Mak (2007) also note that fellow Chinese with darker skin often face class discrimination, and Chinese women often face pressure to maintain fair skin as a sign of beauty. A common Chinese proverb yi bai zhe san chou
(fair skin can hide facial flaws) has been used over the years by the Chinese to reinforce the idea that fair skin is considered a mark of beauty and high social status (Mak, 2007). International brands including Olay, Neutrogena, SK-II, Shiseido, L’Oreal, and Ponds promote whitening creams in China through television and beauty magazine advertisements featuring extremely pale celebrities and models (Leong, 2006; Mak, 2007). In Leong’s (2006) study on skin-whitening cream advertisements in Hong Kong, he notes that models used in commercials for expensive beauty products tend to be Caucasian or pale-skinned Asians, evoking a visual sense of “purity, cleanliness and sophistication” (p. 169). The pale skin appeal is not limited to the Chinese society; a survey by Asia Market Intelligence reveals that approximately half of Asians across Asia aged 25 to 34 years old use skin whiteners, contributing to its billion dollar industry (Bray, 2002). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) challenge CRT scholars to delve deeper into class discrimination issues. Lou’s particular case brings to light how the Chinese view class and skin tone, and CRT can be employed to study how social class and the social construction of race are merged when the media perpetuates the belief that pale skin equates to beauty and status.

In regards to the CRT tenet of the social construction of race, the analysis shows that it can easily be developed for use in China, and as applied specifically to the Chinese media institutions.

**Interest Convergence**

The Chinese media are “organs of the party-state apparatus” and since television is the most important source of information for most of the population as it reaches into
both rural and urban areas, it remains “the most tightly controlled type of media in China” (Miao, 2011, p. 96). Even though the Chinese government has control over the media, it does relax its censorship when it comes to issues that are not politically sensitive such as entertainment, science, and business-related topics (Latham, 2007; Wang, 2008). CRT’s tenet of interest convergence also can be employed to study when and if the Chinese government gets involved in stories in the media about racism that are not politically sensitive by nature but may harm the image of China internationally. Even though Lou’s story was perpetuated in international media outlets, the government did not get involved, and instead, the producers of Go Oriental Angel stepped in to try to stem the negative comments online through their network partners (Shi, 2009).

Chidester (2008) explores the position of Whiteness and the invisibility of minorities in the television program Friends. The author discusses how Whiteness is negotiated and maintained through media texts, and in order to challenge hegemonic forces, one will need to “out” Whiteness as a structure of privilege and power (Chidester, 2008). Similarly, CRT can be used to “out” the Han Chinese majority’s structure of privilege and power in China, especially when it comes to government censorship of news regarding minority uprisings and other race-related news that the government might deem embarrassing for China. As Latham (2007) explains, China’s media landscape is complicated due to the fact that government control of the media is not completely totalitarian (a system in which all aspects of media production are guided by officials to indoctrinate unsuspecting audiences), nor can it be judged in terms of Western-style freedom of speech and the press. Each medium has different levels of control and there
are many elements at play “in the complex configuration of political, economic, social, and cultural practices that make up the Chinese media landscape” (Latham, 2007, p. 41). Additionally, Chinese journalists have learned to navigate the complicated landscape especially when it comes to criticizing or commenting on a government issue, knowing how, when, and to whom they should direct their critique (Latham, 2007). At the same time, the Chinese government are beginning to treat the media and Internet as “the voice of the public and to respond to it accordingly,” seeking a “power maximizing balance between censorship and propaganda on one hand, and responsiveness on the other” (Qian & Bandurski, 2011, p. 39). There are, however, central-level media organizations (such as China Central Television (CCTV), the People’s Daily, and China People’s Radio) that are strictly monitored because they are the national and international mouthpiece for the government (Latham, 2007).

The Chinese government did not get involved in Lou’s media situation but it does intervene in issues that could threaten national and Party interests. Until 100 years ago, the Hans were the only ones who were considered Chinese, and although China now recognizes the 55 minority ethnic groups, minorities find it difficult to develop a Chinese identity because the government created autonomous zones for them (Kuhn, 2009). On top of not identifying as Chinese, minorities also claim to experience unfair treatment in terms of religious, economic, and minority government policies (Kuhn, 2009). CRT can be used to examine how the Chinese government utilizes the media to present a one-sided view of violent minority unrests to protect their interests and global image, in particular
censoring national and international media coverage regarding the Tibetans and the Uighur uprisings against the Han Chinese (Ford, 2009; Sweney, 2008).

Even though Lou was in the media limelight, she was also aware of the difficulty of coming up against the powerful force of the government-controlled media and doubts that she could change the minds of the Chinese people (Chang, 2009). Even though CRT advocates change and the transformation of the relationship between race and power, Lou understands that this result may be difficult to achieve in China because the government controls the media. Historically, when the Chinese government faced resistance from outside forces, they fanned the flames of nationalistic fervor, as evidenced by their use of a Chinese racial theory and the Yellow Emperor racial homogeneity myth to unite the country during periods of hostility from powerful nations such as Japan or Western countries (Dikötter, 1990). With the advent of technological advances, the government is able to quickly garner widespread support for its interests by using the media to ignite nationalistic fervor (Shirk, 2011). A good example is the way the Chinese government used the media to boost nationalistic pride during the Tibetan unrest. CRT can be employed to analyze the way the government presented a one-sided view about the Tibetan unrest to its citizens while blocking international news coverage of the situation from appearing in China (Sweney, 2008). News coverage focused on reports that Tibetan monks physically attacked Han Chinese merchants, which incited fury among the Han majority that the “ungrateful Tibetans had turned against their Han Chinese benefactors” (Shirk, 2011, p. 246). Lou’s case did not attract government censorship and propaganda because they did not see the audience’s online racial attacks against her as a threat to their
political interests. However, in cases like minority unrests in Tibet, the Chinese government takes immediate control of media images and reports, to proliferate stories that are advantageous to its political gain.

The CRT tenet of interest convergence has great applicability in both Chinese and mediated contexts, as it can be used to study the complex relationship between China’s government and the media; particularly in how the government uses media outlets to advance its interests while allowing them a certain degree of economic and content freedom.

**The Use of Storytelling and Counter-Narratives**

Storytelling and counter-narratives showcasing the distinctive voice of color have been used in legal activism even before the formal organization and naming of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). There are several objectives to the use of storytelling and counter-narratives: to challenge the dominant ideologies and myths; to give the point of view of minorities; to incite sympathy and consciousness from the dominant group when stories of oppression are shared; and to illuminate how individuals reconcile their contrasting identities (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998; Duara, 1995; Taylor, 2009). Counter-narratives and storytelling have been employed extensively by education scholars to investigate the various types of racial and gender discrimination faced by minority students and teachers in the United States (Rodriguez, 2010; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Boylorn (2011) also uses the same method with African American students in the classroom, as well as autoethnographic storytelling recalling the author’s own childhood experiences. However, storytelling has never been employed in a mediated context to
study how mediated-dissemination of stories about minorities facing discrimination may affect people’s view on race and racism. Neither has CRT (and especially the tenet of narratives and storytelling) been used in a Chinese context to study narratives of minorities in China. The case of Lou opens up the extensive possibilities storytelling and counter-narratives can offer in contributing to the scholarship about race, power, and identity in an international and mediated context.

The majoritarian tales and myths that the Chinese elites perpetuate are that racism can only be perpetuated by Westerners, and that the Chinese are victims in the global resistance against Western imperialism and therefore cannot possibly be racist themselves (Dikötter, 1990). Using the example of Lou, the CRT tenet of counter-narratives can show that racist attacks very much exist against those who are not Han Chinese, and through storytelling, minorities are able to humanize a racist situation to stir sympathy, cultivate support, and perhaps even instigate change. In a CRT and U.S. perspective, minorities have different histories and experiences with oppression and therefore are able to communicate to their White counterparts ideas from a perspective Whites cannot see or comprehend by themselves (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). Similarly, Lou was able to communicate her experiences to the Han Chinese population who may not comprehend standing out in a physically obvious manner from the majority of the population.

Through her appearance on Go Oriental Angel, Lou essentially became a recognizable public figure due to the popularity of the show and the attention given to the novelty factor of her mixed-race background (Elegant & Jiang, 2009). She was able to communicate her story to the masses through her appearance on the show as well as
through interviews with Chinese and international media. In particular, she was able to talk about her childhood, growing up with a single mother, and her feelings regarding the online racist attacks on her and her mother. In an interview with NetEase (2009), Lou questioned her own identity after reading the vicious Web comments. She said she had always felt Chinese, but these attacks had made her realize her differences from everyone else around her. Storytelling has the capabilities to acquaint the receiver with “how it feels to be the victim of discrimination” and to “kindle conscience and awaken sympathy” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998, p. 475). Another important function of storytelling is to challenge society’s dominant mindset of the “shared stereotypes, beliefs, and understandings,” and storytelling also can “at once, describe what is and what ought to be” (Taylor, 1998, p. 122). Lou’s story caused the Chinese to have a fierce debate about Chinese identity and racism in a country with a population consisting of more than 90% Han, causing those who look different to stand out (Chang, 2009).

Counter-narratives also can raise consciousness among people on the hidden and seemingly harmless racist acts and utterances they perform every day without realizing it. Kessaris’ (2006) used counter-narratives to research and expose the usually hidden and unconsciously performed Mununga (White) racism on Blekbala (Indigenous) people in Australia. Similarly, CRT storytelling and counter-narratives can be applied in a Chinese context to uncover the Han dominance that is ingrained in their every day practices. Lou had mentioned in interviews that people would ask her why she could speak Chinese so well, they would make remarks about her skin color, not expecting her to understand them, and they would call her “Little Black” in school and “Black Chimpanzee” in online
comments (NetEase, 2009). Lou learned how to take many of the remarks in stride, even the harsh racist insults from the Internet, but when the insults were directed at her mother, she said that it caused her and her family a great deal of harm (NetEase, 2009). Her story in interviews garnered her support from ordinary Chinese as well as leading cultural commentators and journalists. Zhou (2009) argues that Lou did not deserve the online cruel lashings and that he admires the maturity she has shown throughout the intense scrutiny about her family life as well as personal attacks. Talk show host and magazine publisher Hung Huang chided racist bloggers; she says, “we Han people are given to severe racial discrimination. It is the evil within us” (Zhou, 2009, para. 16). An anonymous online blogger expressed frustration at the racist abuse against Lou by writing: “Americans, who we accuse of racism, elected a Black president. We are supposed to have grown up on the teachings of equality, yet we cannot accept a half-Black contestant” (Zhou, 2009, para. 17). In response to Lou’s story, some Chinese are looking at the U.S. as a model of behavior; it makes perfect sense then, that scholars would look to a U.S.-based theory, such as CRT, as a model for comprehending race and racism in a Chinese mediated context.

Storytelling and counter-narratives allow minorities like Lou to tell their side of the story, but not all of them are afforded the opportunity to speak out in such a public manner. As reality television gains in popularity in China due to the success of Super Voice Girls and Go Oriental Angel, producers are focusing on the personal struggles and stories of the contestants rather than solely on their singing abilities (Wang, 2009). If producers showcase other mixed-race individuals or people from minority groups in
China, it may also present them with opportunities to tell those stories and show another
face of the Chinese identity to foster tolerance and mutual understanding with the
majority Han population. Equipped with CRT, scholars analyzing the stories of
minorities and mixed-race people can add richly to the discourse on racism and identity
in China.

**Whiteness**

CRT acknowledges that there are specific legal and political organizations
embedded in the ideology of White European hegemony, and these organizations are
consequences of colonialism on a global scale (Taylor, 2009). China’s late nineteenth
century encounter with European powers ignited its fear of colonization and racial
extinction, significantly raised its racial consciousness and shaped its national identity
(Sautman, 1997). CRT was developed as a response to the invisibility of White supremacy
and its effects on non-Whites in the United States, especially in law, education, and the
media. In developing CRT for use in China, it would be erroneous to ignore the
influence of White supremacy in China based upon its history with Europe, the effects of
Deng’s economic reform that opened China’s doors to the rest of the world, and the
impact brought about by technological advances and modern globalization.

Today, due to globalization, ever-expanding technological advances, international
migration, and the circulation and availability of information, the world is faced with the
collision of diverse and contradictory ideas and beliefs (Shome & Hegde, 2002). The
American empire, in particular, has an impressive global dominance in the economic,
political, military, and cultural spheres, which allows it to flood the world with
Americanized cultural images and ideology (Park & Schwarz, 2005). In fact, several of China’s popular reality television shows are inspired by and modeled after successful American programs. In 2005, reality television reappeared in China with new genres. In particular, singing competitions such as *Super Voice Girls* were modeled after *American Idol* (which was based on the U.K.’s *Pop Idol*) (Wang, 2009). Taking on the *American Idol* concept of voting, it was the first time that the audience could vote for their favorite contestants via the mobile telephone’s text message system, triggering an avalanche of messages which jammed Hunan’s telecommunications system (Wang, 2009).

Lou’s story also exposed who might be considered beautiful in China, which, through CRT, might be heavily influenced by White standards. Lou has said that she understands that her dreams to be a television host may be thwarted by the fact that she does not possess a traditional Chinese beauty, explaining, “ever since I appeared on TV, I realized that maybe I don't fit the image of a TV host. Many believe a TV host should have white skin, high nose and big eyes” (The Age, 2009, para. 18). In a radio interview with the *BBC World Service* (2009), Lou talked about the growing number of mixed-race children in China, observing that White-Chinese mixed-race children are praised for looking like dolls, whereas Black-Chinese mixed-race children are called derogatory names like chimpanzees and black babies. CRT can be employed to study how and why the beauty ideals of the Chinese are influenced by Caucasian attributes, and if these concepts are a combination of China’s historical encounters with the European countries and contemporary influences from U.S. media.
In the late nineteenth century, Chinese scholars believed that the intermarriage of Chinese and Whites could create the eugenically perfect offspring with the physical strength and fair-skinned beauty of the Whites, and the superior intelligence and moral character of the Chinese (Sautman, 1997; Teng, 2006). Teng (2006) notes that there are similarities between the late-Qing writings glorifying Eurasians and the contemporary “fetishization of Eurasians as a superbreed in contemporary Chinese transnational media” (p. 154). Lauded Eurasian celebrities include models Maggie Q and Lucy Leston, actress Li Jiaxin, former Miss Hong Kong Michelle Reis, and soccer player Xie Hui, among others (Teng, 2006). In China, billboards and magazines feature Chinese models with Caucasian attributes of fair skin, double eyelids, sharp noses, and light-colored hair (Chan, 2008). Some of them are mixed-race (Caucasian and Chinese) models, but others might have had plastic surgery to attain a specific Eurasian look (Chan, 2008). According to Rabaka (2007), these ingrained attitudes are a result of a global system, molded from years of racial colonialism and capitalism that rewards those who adopt White hegemonic views and values. Taking this principle into account, CRT can be applied to examine the ways Eurasians are treated in China as opposed to people like Lou who are Black and Chinese; this theory can be used to study the ways Eurasians might be rewarded for their partial White heritage.

Another result of European and/or U.S. influence in China is the proliferation of plastic surgery to attain a certain standard of beauty, especially when it comes to the eyes. Fifty percent of Pacific Asian women are born without an upper-eyelid crease, and for those who do have a crease, it falls about seven millimeters above the lash line; for
people of European descent, the crease falls about eleven millimeters above the lash line (Cullen, 2006). In their quest to achieve larger eyes, some teenage girls and women based in Asia and the United States use double eyelid tape, or eyelid glue to create a temporary crease on their lids, and put on circle contact lenses that make their irises appear larger, which in turn, make their eyes appear larger (Cullen, 2006). Others who prefer a permanent solution undergo a cosmetic surgery procedure called the Asian blepharoplasty, also known as the double eyelid surgery. This procedure includes making a crescent shaped incision along a new crease line on the upper eyelids, and cutting away a small amount of skin, tissue, and fat; when the two ends are sutured back together, the incision is hidden under the newly shaped crease (Azam et al., 2007). In 2006, almost 300,000 Asian American women had the surgery in the United States and it has been the number one cosmetic surgery procedure performed in Asia (Azam et al., 2007). According to Louie (2005), double eyelid surgery is more controversial than other cosmetic surgeries such as breast implants because unlike breast size, which is not race-specific, single-lidded almond-shaped eyes are distinctly associated with the Asian ethnicity. Undergoing surgery to modify these eyes to make them appear larger is akin to altering the race a person wants to be viewed as. As a result, “instead of changing the ‘faults’ of one individual body, one would be changing the ‘faults’ of a whole race” (Louie, 2005, p. 4).

Classically Chinese-looking celebrities like Lucy Liu with single-lidded almond shaped eyes are not considered physically attractive by the majority of young people in China (Chan, 2008). According to Cullen (2006), a tight labor market causes more
people to get cosmetic surgery to stand out from other job applicants; she interviewed an owner of a cosmetic surgery clinic in Shenzen, China, who said, “China has too many people. How do you make yourself stand out from 1.3 billion people? Imagine your boss sees two people of similar ability. He will definitely pick the person with the better appearance” (p. 2, para. 5). In previous studies, researchers interviewed Asian women who chose to undergo double eyelid surgeries and found that they did it to make their eyes appear bigger and to appear more attractive, fit in with the rest of society, and gain credibility with their peers (Kaw, 1993; Darling-Wolf, 2004; Cullen, 2006). However, there are no studies specifically employing CRT in understanding the scope of Western influence, specifically the influence of European and American media products, on Chinese society and its plastic surgery industry.

CRT’s tenet of Whiteness can be used to look at the effects that globalization has on the Chinese perception of beauty. According to Kaw (1993), the alteration of Asian ethnic features is not so much a transformation as it is a normalization in the Foucauldian sense. The normalization of Asian ethnic features conforms them to “patriarchal definitions of femininity and to Caucasian standards of beauty” (Kaw, 1993, p. 78). hooks (1992) examines the images of race and representation in the media, particularly directed at African Americans, but all non-Whites as well. She asserts that the structures of power, colonization, racism, and imperialism have influenced African Americans to “internalize negative perceptions of blackness, to be self-hating,” resulting in some of them imitating whites in speech, values, and habits while still regarding whiteness with fear, anger, and suspicion (hooks, 1992, p. 166). Similarly, White hegemony has
inadvertently affected the perceptions of beauty in China, and through the case of Lou, CRT scholars can expand their research to study perceptions of Eurasians in China as well as the proliferation of plastic surgery to attain bigger eyes with double eyelids. In addition, CRT also can explore the role that media and popular culture play in the production and securing of Whiteness in order to protect White hegemony, and through them, one can see the world constantly constructed in the White image (Shome, 2000).
Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

CRT has come a long way since its inception in 1989. It has evolved from its use in legal matters and proved to be a valuable resource in studying race and racism in a wide range of disciplines from education to communication studies. Furthermore, CRT continues to grow and evolve to meet new challenges in the U.S. and global communities.

To answer the research questions of how CRT can be developed for use in a mediated context and in a Chinese context, this paper brought the reader on a journey of major historical events that helped shape contemporary policies and social attitudes in the United States and in China. First, this paper explored the socio-political racial history in Europe and in the United States to explain how race was created and used to justify slavery and segregation. It highlighted CRT’s history, concepts, and tenets, as well as the critiques, applications, and evolution. To better understand how China perceives race and the Chinese identity, this paper discussed the issues in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries that spurred China to create a Han Chinese identity to unite its people against foreign threats. It also examined how contemporary China’s economic growth impacted the social and media environments of China particularly in the area of reality-based television programming. This paper discussed Lou’s experience as a mixed-race African American and Chinese participant in a televised singing competition in China, and her experience was utilized as a case study to discuss the different directions
individual CRT tenets can be developed to study race and racism in a Chinese mediated context.

A review of past studies shows that CRT has the flexibility and creativity to be applied in a mediated context in China. In answering the first question of how CRT can be developed for use in a mediated context, the literature proves that CRT has already been applied in mediated contexts in the United States. Specifically, research has been conducted in studying representations of Whiteness and Blackness on reality television (Chidester, 2008; Dennis, 2009; Railton & Watson, 2005; Squires, 2008), analyzing entertainment media as a pedagogical tool to study race (Yosso, 2002), and examining representations of online racial identities (Brock, 2009). Nevertheless, these studies did not address all the tenets of CRT in their studies, nor were their studies linked to the legal and historical elements of CRT. Additionally, no studies have employed CRT to answer questions about racial representations or racism in mediated contexts outside of the United States.

This study discussed how each of the major CRT tenets can be individually applied in China’s mediated environments, using Lou’s story as a case study and reflecting upon the role that history, socio-economic influences, and politics play in shaping the Chinese society’s outlook on racism and racial identity. The analysis shows that most of the tenets have a multitude of uses in exploring race, racism, and classism in Chinese society, and how power is manipulated by the government in China’s media outlets. However, the tenet of intersectionality and anti-essentialism may be too
politically “Americanized” for application in China as the U.S. political landscape is drastically different from China’s.

**Future Studies**

As CRT continues to evolve, scholars can employ CRT to study race and racism in a multitude of communication, cultural, and international settings (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998; 2001; Gunning, 2002). Specifically, scholars can use the CRT tenets of Whiteness and the social construction of race to analyze the casting of White actors to play *anime* (Japanese animation) characters that were originally Japanese, when *anime* such as *Akira* and *The Last Airbender* are transformed into live-action movies. Scholars interested in GLBT issues can employ CRT to understand the relationship between the heterosexual majority and the homosexual minority featured in U.S.-based situation comedies that feature gay characters. Narratives and storytelling by domestic workers (who are mostly from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka) can expose issues of racism and classism in Singapore. Similarly, scholars can employ this tenet to answer the question of whether stories of oppression are as effective if they are told by a member of the dominant ethnic group on behalf of the oppressed minorities; for example when White authors or movie directors convey stories about an African American’s experience with slavery. Lastly, scholars can apply the CRT tenet of Whiteness with post-colonialism and classism to study how and why fair skin in India is equated to success and beauty; that notion is propagated by television commercials promoting skin-whitening creams for men and women.
Ultimately, CRT is based on the relationship between race, racism, and power. Both the United States and China were impacted by the global system of capitalism and industrialization, and both have a shared history with slavery. Each country may have distinctive outcomes on racial identities, race relations, and racial policies, but as the analysis shows, most of the CRT tenets have the capabilities and flexibility to be applied in both contexts. Dikötter (1990) and Allen (2007) challenge scholars to look beyond Eurocentric viewpoints in regards to race and racism in order to understand racial matters in countries such as China. As CRT evolves to meet the global challenges of the twenty-first century, China also has transformed itself to meet major changes throughout its history and continues to evolve to thrive in a globalized society. As the world changes through globalization, China should take into account how international human movements may affect the Chinese identity. Through uncovering issues of race, racism, and power in China, CRT can help the country take its first step in transforming its citizens’ relationships with one another and with foreign residents, and start building a new vision of the utopian datong (great community) that Chinese intellectuals have desired for thousands of years.
REFERENCES


