SOCIAL STUDIES

Popular Culture

Access: Who has access to your chosen popular culture, and how do they have access?

Consumption: To purchase or otherwise acquire the products of your chosen pop culture

Ideology: Coherent set of ideas that binds together a set of beliefs

Influence: The effect the pop culture has on you and the forces that impact upon pop culture

Institutional Power: Power that is an inherent and accepted part of the society. Can be a widely recognised institution (eg. Parliament) or an accepted group

Media: Types of mass communications that reach large numbers of people, such as radio, TV, internet and film

Mythology: Concept applies to development of ideas and beliefs surrounding the pop culture. May be rooted in truth, but have developed a life beyond truth. May be deliberately cultivated to support commercial exploitation.

Self: You. Interaction with pop culture, effect of pop culture on development of self.

Popular culture is an aspect of society that appeals to the majority of the population. Certain practices and beliefs are shared by the majority of people to create large scale acceptance, understanding and experience.

The opposite of popular culture was originally termed 'high culture' and included activities such as attending the opera or ballet, playing croquet or polo and engaging in literature or poetry. Conventionally, it attracted those from more privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. The activities were considered superior, more intellectually rigorous, and required higher costs. Today the boundaries are blurred between high and popular culture. Some would argue that the explosion in popular culture has resulted in high culture activities becoming outdated and redundant. There have been concerned in the past that popular culture is a rebellion or opposition to high culture.

The Nature of Popular Culture

- Difficult to define because of its constantly changing nature

- A social construct

  Causes interactions between persons, societies and their environment

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- Mass appeal- shared by a large number of persons regardless of age, sex and ethnicity

- A process as well as a product- closely associated with consumerism

- Communication and access is important- technology, especially the internet and global media has improved access and knowledge about popular culture

- Globalisation has had both negative and positive impacts on popular culture

Examples:

- Rock'n'roll – Commercial products include CD's, magazines, videos, films and TV programs. Since 1954 it has progressed from a local fad in towns like Memphis (Elvis Presley) through to national success as TV shows gave teenagers across the US access to the new sounds. Through tours, films and international record releases the music became global. Consumers around the world had access through direct concerts, TV shows, movies, magazines and records. Rock music has changed and evolved – Elvis gave way to the Beatles, who gave way to Michael Jackson, who evolved into Nirvana, who evolved into the modern Kings of Leon etc.

- Teen Music- Evolved from Hollywood to American to Global success.

- Surfing

- Football

- Kids music

- Disney

- Animation/Cartoons

- Hip Hop

- Barbie

- Harry Potter

- Star Trek

Distinguishing characteristics:

- Being associated with commercial products: Whether they are accessories, upgrades, magazines or other paraphernalia. The profit motive is a key factor in perpetuating popular culture, and merchandise is just another medium to enhance income for the manufacturers.

- Developing from a local to a national to a global level: For something to become a popular culture, it has usually been developed at a local level. After success on a small scale, it then moves to a national level where consumers from the same society with similar cultural norms, and who perhaps share similar psycho-graphic characteristics, are able to guarantee the rising popularity of the product. After generating the interest of a nation, a popular culture then realises its potential in the international market where the profit motive again plays a huge role in expansion overseas.

- Allowing consumers to have widespread access to it: Environment is highly influential- more developed nations have easier access to popular culture than others. Greater affluence provides the population with the capacity to adopt popular cultures due to their heightened ability to meet the costs involved. Major urban centre also have increased access to popular culture fads compare to rural and remote settlements given the number and wider range of commercial outlets. Institutional power can also affect access to popular culture. Governments have more control over access than individuals and enforce codes of practice, mainly with the aim of preventing access to unwanted, unsafe or offensive material. Other reasons may be the preservation of traditional culture.

- Constantly changing and evolving: In order to satisfy consumers, popular cultures need to adapt to societies changing trends and preferences.

Personal Interaction

Because a large amount of my childhood years were spent travelling, and I wasn't settled permanently in a country, let alone a school, my early interaction with popular culture was limited. When I moved permanently to Australia, however, I felt the need to interact with popular cultures in order to connect with my peers, learn the language and the culture of my new environment. I did this by watching Disney movies (and later teen movies) listening to popular movies and engaging with cultures such as harry potter. As I formed my own strong personal and social identity in Australia I lost the need to assimilate to my peers and lost interest in the majority of popular cultures.

Changes:

- Technology

- Globalisation

- Genre has become more relevant to modern audiences – changing and evolving

- Important individuals – Bruce Lee & Jackie Chan

- Commercial aspect – business expansion out of China and HK

- New social values such as the role of women

- Spread of Buddhism to the west increases relevance of Buddhist ideals – discipline and concentration

Origins

Kung Fu

The use of Chinese martial arts for military strategy dates back to the pre-Qin to early Han dynasty.

Traditional Chinese theories of natural science and religion, along with legends, customs and pictographic symbols, have been incorporated into Chinese martial arts, extending their range beyond more military of self-defence purpose into a form of knowledge.

Emphasis has been placed on self-strengthening, therapeutic exercise and performance. Music, dance and acrobatics have combined with martial arts to occupy an important place in Chinese theatre. Even non-martial artists have been required to train in martial arts in order to develop and refine their body movements.

Kung Fu Cinema

Kung Fu cinema is a specific film genre containing numerous fights between characters, usually as the film's primary appeal and entertainment value, and then as a method of storytelling and character expression and development. Traditionally based on myths and legends associated with Chinese cultural and Buddhist tradition, myth and legend.

The Chinese film industry was founded when traditional values – under siege by western culture – forced annihilation. Interest in authentic martial arts, both as cultural component and daily practice, was in decline.

- Martial arts are frequently featured in training scenes and other sequences in addition to fights.

- Commonly include other types of action such as stunt work, chases and gunfights.

- Dominated by action. Many have only minimal plot and amount of character development in favour of focusing almost exclusively on the action while others have more creative and complex plots and characters along with action scenes- considered to be artistically superior although the former type are also commercially successful and well received by fans.

- Contain characters who are martial artists, often played by actors who are real martial artists, and if not, actors frequently train in preparation for the role. The action director may also rely more on stylised action or film making tricks like camera angles, editing, doubles, wire work and computer generated imagery. Springboards and trampolines may also be used.

- Most professional directors were not actually familiar with martial arts techniques- with the emphasis on martial arts techniques as the new backbone of the genre, contribution from actual martial artists became increasingly significant. Martial arts instructors soon not only arranged fight scenes, but planned shots, essentially taking over the role of director in some cases.

- Films have been produced all over the world but have been dominated by Hong Kong action cinema, peaking from 1971 with the rise of Bruce Lee until the mid-90s with a general decline in the industry.

Mandarin Martial Arts film:

HK's mandarin dominated cinema had traditionally disdained the violence of the Wuxia and prided itself on the 'literary arts films', melodramas or adaptations or novels or plays. By the 1960's, HK society had become a hybrid of new and old ideologies and east and west cultures. Filmgoers demanded fresher subjects.

The Shaw brothers were part of the Mandarin-speaking Shanghai filmmaking industry that relocated to Hong Kong. They captured the elegance of ancient Chinese martial artistry through inventive cinematic techniques. The mandarin martial arts films set the tone for much of Hong Kong's present day historical and fantastical films, using settings far removed from today to provide an uninhibited romantic version of the world of martial arts. There were new codes for character behaviour – moving away from Wong Fei Hong Confucian attitudes, the films tended towards the Buddhist and Taoist. While earlier Wuxia presented complex relationships, the Mandarin martial arts films emphasised sword based combat, romance and the fantastic, with fights erupting on the slimmest excuse. Full of bloodshed, the presentation of the duel was the highlight of the films.

Two types of fighting:

1. **Kung Fu film – physical fighting style unarmed**

   Uses recent and realistic setting often featuring foreign aggressors. Travelled more easily to the west than Wuxia. Bruce Lee.

   Karate Kid, Kung Fu Panda

2. **Wuxia film – Swordplay**

   Originates in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Modern form of film originated in 60's but the story and philosophy is much older, dating back to 2nd or 3rd century BC. Often set in ancient mystical settings featuring magical elements and sword fighting. Wuxia heroes are usually bound by a

code of chivalry that requires them to right wrongs, especially when the helpless or poor are oppressed. They fight for righteousness, seeking to remove an oppressor or to achieve retribution for past misdeeds. Typical Wuxia plot features a young male protagonist who experiences a tragedy and undertakes several trials and tribulations throughout his adventures and learns several forms of martial arts from several sources. At the end he emerges as a powerful individual. Wuxia was introduced to Hollywood studios in 2000 by Ang Lee's 'crouching tiger hidden dragon'

Matrix, house of flying daggers

Development locally nationally and globally

200BC	Ancient china used martial arts as a military strategy Legend of Shaolin Temple	
1847-1924	Life of Wong Fei Hung- Chinese martial arts teacher who became inspiration for many martial arts films and HK production as a whole. Very influential, became a folk hero.	
1911-1930	Period of conflict and civil war. Japanese invasion and many chinese fled to HK. Much of the mainland mandarin film talent, much of it centred in Shanghai, relocated to Hong Kong. Reasons: • Political restrictions in china under new communist party • Investment and opportunities in Hong Kong. Here filmmakers tested and developed techniques that have since had a large impact on martial arts filmmaking: • Wire work • Trampolines • Under cranking Mandarin and Cantonese are different dialects of the spoken Chinese language. In the early days of Chinese silent films, no differentiation existed between dialects. With the introduction of sound, the recorded voice had to be in either the Cantonese or the mandarin dialect. Chinese subtitles allowed both markets to access the films.	**1920's-1950's:** The first golden age of Chinese film. Most Kung Ku films of the period were adapted from novels about gods and spirits, with lots of supernatural elements. During the 1950's the Hong Kong and Taiwanese film industries established two types of Kung Fu films. Adaptations of heroic stories & ghost/god films.
1920's	Chinese film industry established. Northern: Mandarin Southern: Cantonese (HK) 1928-First Chinese film of Cantonese hero – silent. Burning of the red lotus monastery – first major success in the genre	

1949	First Kung Fu film produced – WONG FEI HUNG FILMS Wong Fei Hung: Was a famous martial artist and doctor of the late Qing Dynasty and early Republican China. Lovingly remembered as a legendary fold hero largely because of the success of the films that have maintained the legend. They rejected the fantasy element of earlier martial arts films in favour of genuine weapons and authentic Chinese styles. Weak plot but with strong moral core, a deliberate attempt to record and pass on Cantonese culture, providing a connection between the displaced citizens of HK with their native artistic heritage. The series helped document, promote and preserve authentic Chinese martial arts. Republic of China established- shift in political attitudes of government. Wuxia fiction was banned by the Chinese Communist Party. The ban was lifted in the 80's, but during the ban Wuxia writing continued in Taiwan and HK. The Chinese government encouraged the term wu shu- traditional, and began a type of performing arts designed to showcase Chinese culture to the world. Programs of reform introduced, in some areas aimed at breaking the tradition of instructor-student – a change where instructor were no longer revered masters passing on unique traditions but simply coaches.
1960's	Chinese cultural revolution- saw resurgence of martial arts films. HK also experienced violence and cultural upheaval, and the fights onscreen mirrored those on the city's streets. 1967-Cantonese produced Wong Fei Hung films returned to join in the struggle to protect the tradition of the story
1970's	Period of new ideas Hong Kong film industry gains recognition and begins to enter the international market place, who was largely unaware of this film genre BRUCE LEE - 'hero'. Unique fighting style based on simplicity and speed - 'enter the dragon' Lee's ability to synthesise various national martial techniques sparked a new trend in unarmed combat martial arts films. Bruce Lee can be credited with bringing the films and HK films to international prominence. Plot and style changed from bloody wordplay →unarmed conflict with a focus on reality and flighting. Fighting styles came to depend less on cinematic techniques and more on plausibility. This represented a return to more credible, authentic martial arts.

	Training, victory and vindication were new themes.

Set in the present rather than the historical past, the presentation of martial arts incorporated many different forms including thai and western boxing, and judo.

Plot:

• Often based on relationship with shifu
• Motive is often revenge, driving plot
• New themes of training, discipline and victory
• Hero is taken in by shifu and undergoes strict training
• Fatal end

1973: Bruce Lee's Death- acquired legendary status as a hero, icon and mythology.

Who would replace him? Difficult. After his death KF films struggled for a while but were revitalised by the industry turning to new ideas- comedy.

Films increase across different cultures

TV series, comics and magazines increase
mandarin films dominate cinemas while Cantonese dominate TV

1974: Shaolin Temple cycle films |
| 1978-1980's | JACKIE CHAN – infused new life into the genre. Western adaptation- mix of new style Kung Fu, mishap and luck.

Establishment of new genre - Kung Fu comedy.

Traditional films decreased and output of HK & Taiwan films decreased greatly.

Shaolin Temple – first movie to use martial arts athletes as actors. Use of steel wires, spring beds and stand ins were abandoned.

Jet Li |

1990's	Genre remains popular but is changing

The influence of KF cinema has extended far beyond the physical boundaries of HK, the genre remaining a unique creation of Chinese history and culture.

Local/national → global recognition

Futuristic using more technology but set in historical past

Emergence of new look films, glamorous stars and western modernity

Ancient costume film regained the audience's attention with their powerful and unconstrained fighting and rich imagination. |
| 21st century | Success of enter the matrix, kill bill, crouching tiger hidden dragon, house of flying daggers, Kung Fu panda, karate kid

Increasing new styles of Kung Fu emerging

Further adaptation of Kung Fu film through animation and blending genres. |

Role of mythology

Mythology refers to the associated story and legend associated with a cultural practice or belief system.

Mythology relates to the traditional stories perhaps lacking in factual basis but held as truth by followers.

Traditional stories make up many of the storylines and settings in KFC but modern myths, especially about the stars of KFC, help to maintain the mythology so important in this film genre.

In relation to KFC it is linked to the traditional stories, settings and environments which have inspired the making of the films and production of the associated products.

Mythology also includes stories about the key persons (heroes and icons), challenge stories and moral lessons which feature in many of the films plot lines.

Mythology enables a wider audience, not just Chinese, to appreciate the film while providing a sense of identity for those who can relate to this subculture.

- Creates interest and memorable storylines for consumers to engage with, remember and relate to

- Deepens links to the past and to traditions

- Provides a basis for the stories

- Enables persons who enjoy the popular culture to share a similar identity

- Teaches consumers a moral lesson and respect for past traditions

- Buddhist origins and teachings

- Mythology and legend associated with KF master

- Wong Fei Hung

- Shaolin Temple

- Wuxia swordplay in magical fantasy settings

- Themes: discipline, respect for shifu, mental and physical strength

- Bruce Lee – iconic, legend status, mythology, Training, victory, discipline, self-sacrifice, respect, dignity. Charismatic and highly skilled

- Furious five (animal inspired fighting styles) Kung Fu Panda

MONK BODHIDHARMA

Kung Fu cinema was created out of the need to pass on stories. According to ancient folklore, Buddhism travelled to China with the monk Bodhhidharma who found the monks of the shaolin temple as in such bad physical shape he instructed them in techniques to maintain their physical condition as well as teaching meditation- these techniques became part of the Kung Fu art. Kung Fu Cinema has utilised many of these myths in film storylines.

SHAOLIN TEMPLE

The Shaolin monastery/Shaolin temple is a Buddhist temple in mid-eastern China. Of the many Kung Fu schools found within China, Shaolin KF is the most known and most influential. Shaolin is a sect of Mahayana Buddhist. Shaolin Kung Fu is considered to be one of China's cultural treasures, famous for its animal imitation styles.

- Dragon – develops spirit
- Tiger – develops bones and tendons
- Snake – develops internal energy
- Crane – develops the essence
- Leopard – develops strength

The praying mantis, duck, toad, monkey, dog and scorpion are also well known.

Shaolin drunken boxing style uses fist, sword and staff- difficult and deadly, only for advanced students.

GOOD/EVIL FOLKLORE

Ancient folklore about spirits- many films are set in a mythological time. The excellent cinematography and special effects have enabled a world-wide audience and have a new connection with KF mythology and therefore perpetuate the popular culture

WONG FEI HUNG

Storylines based around the most revered folk hero in china. In Chinese Kung Fu, one's martial arts lineage is of nearly equal importance to one's family lineage. The handing down of techniques from shifu to student is of grave importance, as are forms and techniques- can be traced back to a single figure- Wong Fei hung. This mythological status of the figure is perpetuated in the popular culture.

BRUCE LEE

Power, agility and ability have become immortalised. His death brought many rumours:

- Killed by Hong Kong gangsters

- Killed by an angry martial arts strike

- Cursed – he had just bought a house in Hong Kong that was supposed to be haunted

- Died while making love to his actress mistress

- Angered Chinese martial arts community by teaching foreigners

- Victim of too much intense training

- Drug use

- Fate sealed at birth

- Staged

All of these myths have made any film, release or documentary about Bruce lee a success, perpetuating the culture.

GOOD VS EVIL, SHIFU-STUDENT, TRAINING & DETERMINATION CAN SAVE THE UNDERDOG

These universal themes have helped in the globalisation of the culture. Poorer communities in the USA have found hope in these themes and the culture has been perpetuated

KUNG FU PANDA

Set in ancient china, highlights Chinese culture, mythology and architecture. Training, patience and discipline. Storyline revolves around the search for a mythical object. Panda learns from animal teachers representing Kung Fu styles. Mythological setting and time help tell the story. Success of film and associated mythology and art of Kung Fu have been perpetuated and reached a newer, younger and international audience.

Kung Fu styles are based on animal styles- natural attack and defence mechanisms. It is believed if you mimic the movements of the animals you'll inherit their physicality and special spiritual qualities.

CHINESE CULTURE – Past & Present

The cinema form's survival depended on a variety of factors. Martial arts films were artistically unique, influenced by all the artefacts of Kung Fu culture, both high and low, comic books and Chinese literature, TV serials and traditional Chinese painting, superstitious beliefs, pulp novels and so on. For most people, the films reinforce common superstitions about childhood myths and legends, underpinned by a historical tradition of institutions such as the Shaolin temple and personalities whose attributes and occasionally existence can be neither proved nor disproved.

The martial art film plays on beliefs suspended somewhere between historical legend and contemporary fact.

KF films cannot be too divorced from either myth or reality. The audience's preference for the modern is tempered by conservatism that demands at least the guise of tradition. Few films are located in a precise time or place, rather they take place on an abstract historical plane like a fairy tale, which is then given the trappings of contemporary life.

In the films audiences like to identify with chivalrous knights, swordsmen, or heroic fighters of the past- but only if their values are tuned to the modern world.

CULTURAL CONNECTION WITH CHINA – immigrants

Almost all post war films have been produced by and for the Chinese communities outside mainland china. They can be read as films of mythic remembrance, an emigrant cinema for an audience seeking not only its identity and links with an often imaginary cultural past, but also its legitimisation.

Lee is able to inspire a national pride.

Film settings are meticulous reconstructions and create for their audiences dreamy ideals of china. We are presented with a china that all immigrants dream about- more comforting than real.

The martial arts cinema has always been an escapist, but the fantasy to an audience 'far from home' is a kind of reality that satisfied a more tangible cultural need: the desire for a link with tradition. The films have fulfilled this function with the plausibility and appeal of fold takes. And like the story of oral tradition, the martial arts cinema does not run out of stories or dreams, it just repeats them until they too become part of the myth.

KFC functioned as a means of catharsis for the overseas Chinese, who have come to terms with their experiences of colonialism and imperialism and reconfigure their cultural identities outside mainland communist China. The message of nationalism and anticolonialism in Lee's films can find ready audiences amongst the once-colonized nations and racialised enclaved – the advocation of national identity was congenial not only to Chinese but literally to all people who felt that they had been degraded by western imperialism.

The china portrayed in Lee's films is a remote space emptied of social and political reality, an imaginary and void china with which Hong Kong inhabitants can associated. China in Lee's films does not correspond to any space of historical or cultural specificity but only serves as a moment of cultural imagination in which the inhabitants of HK have been able to identify. Cultural dislocation among the inhabitants of HK, who do not identify themselves with either mainland China or the British empire, but who live in a space of anxiety, ambiguity and contradiction in between. Such a sense of uncertainty can be easily turned into anticolonial sentiments. Lee's films play out the discontent of HK's inhabitants toward British colonial rule and associate that feeling with the racial and cultural memory of a distant chia. The films also situate this sense of Chinese nationalism in some dramatised tension and confrontation with colonialism. Lee reinvents the Asian masculine body and reinscribes it with political and cultural significance, making his films relevant as an expression of Asian American politics and culture.

Consumers

- Almost exclusively male (80%)

- Many from minority groups and those from ethnic backgrounds (Asian migrants and African Americas in the US)

- Young adults – 18-34 age group

- No kids

- Lower socio-economic background

EXCEPTIONS: Kung Fu panda marketed to children, modern Wuxia films such as house of flying daggers and Charlies angles appeal to female western audiences

African-Americans:

- Bruce Lee was probably the greatest African-American star in the 70s, and that culture persists

- Lee was a rare non-white leading man

- His creed of self-righteous self-reliance appealed to black audiences, who were emerging from the civil rights struggles, but were still subject to plenty of prejudice

Minimalist cinematography- a conscious attempt to expose Lee's own humanity and in doing so affirm the capacity for individual action. The violence Lee inflicts upon socially and ethically dominant figures is at once relevant to HK's own geopolitical situation and globally appealing. The arts iconic power restored hope amongst millions of oppressed youth- films are seen to appeal to certain groups.

Kung Fu film has a direct appeal to inner city audiences. The films develop an aesthetic of 'dirty fighting' that gracefully depicts violence within a ritual pattern. But violence in this special circumstance allows a certain dignity for the minority protagonist and serves as a form of redressing the problem of social injustice.

Lee's kung Fu films were produced and released in the US when the country was experiencing unprecedented racial violence and political turmoil. In the late 60's and 70's, the African American civil rights movement began challenging institutional racism and articulating the need for racial equality; the anti-Vietnam war protests questioned the essence of American democracy and the capability of American moral leadership in an international context; and the assassination of the Kennedy brothers, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X complicated the political and racial landscape of the US.

Bruce Lee and his KFC became a possible scenario for Asian Americans to rethink and reinvent the Asian male body – break away from the Asian 'soft body' represented in American popular culture and to remasculinise the male Asian body as tough, aggressive and competitive. It doesn't mean all Asian Americans can really identify with lee's characters in the films. At a time when Asian Americans emphasised their American roots, they tried to keep some distance from Lee and his rendition of a remote China.

Processes involved in consumption & nature of the product

Consumption refers to the way persons interact with popular culture – access, money spent, use of items.

- Hong Kong's filmic history attests to the inextricability of the ties between Kung Fu movies, Hong Kong's ever changing geopolitical situation, and local and international perceptions of HK identity.

- Bruce Lee & Jackie Chan – globalisation has impacted local artistic production and global consumption

- Success of Wong Fei Hung series led to a high demand for more Wuxia films. It would not only fulfil popular demand but reaffirm martial arts' mainland roots and extend the ideological ties between the people of HK and the city's Chinese past.

Continuity & change in consumption

- Bruce Lee's rise to stardom marked a drastic shift in the representation and implications of martial arts for both local and international audiences. Lee's films, which diverged from Wuxia, were comparatively minimalist and realistic depictions of martial artistry, ushered in a new cinema that simultaneously disassociated martial arts from the fantastical imagined past of mainland China and projected a modern and politically conscious construction of Hong Kongess – Bruce Lee increased global access and consumption. → American made 'Enter the dragon'

- Lee's philosophy marks a significant divergence from the martial arts divisions of the Wuxia world. For Lee, martial arts were meaningful not in their ties to an imagined past, but rather in their capacity to aid human expression and growth. Anti-imperial implications – actor's challenges western hegemony.

- Lee's films are marked by the abandonment of traditional editing in favour of shots of the human body in motion. Traditional fight scenes relied on heavy editing and wirework.

- Chan's characters represent a conceptualisation of heroism that both encourages the subversion of traditional Chinese social constructs and demonstrates the capacity of Hong Kong's youth to adapt to and identify with their increasingly cosmopolitan surroundings. Chan's reinvention of Kung Fu explores the vast potential for individual action to bring about change in the community as a whole, affirming Hong Kong's strengthening sense of nationhood both in relation to and outside of its historical associations with China and current status as a British colony.

- Consumption has become global – globalisation, increases in trade and commerce and technology have seen larger scale production and distribution of the popular culture not just from Asia and HK but from 'western' environments.

- Jackie Chan's success in the US should be understood in terms of the transformation of Kung Fu comedy from its preoccupation with racial politics envisioned by Bruce Lee to its current embracing of multiculturalism stipulated by Chan's Kung Fu comedy. Chan's sense of multiculturalism has nothing to do with racial politics or cultural diversity but points to the fact that Kung Fu comedy now aims to accommodate the tastes and needs of the middle class on a global scale for profits and entertainment.

- Since the late 20th century, Hollywood has witnessed a renewed interest among American audiences in Kung Fu comedy.

- By giving Chan so much publicity, he became not just a Chinese Kung Fu master but a possible cultural icon who could fit into America's conception of multiculturalism.

- Chan invented Kung Fu comedy as a point of departure from Bruce Lee's Kung Fu tragedy, toning down Lee's politics concerning race and the working class, gearing more towards the broader audiences of the middle class in Europe, Asia and America.

- Chan deconstructs the hard bodies of masculinity projected by both Kung Fu tragedy and the US action cinema as he demonstrates the vulnerability of the male body in a way that would appeal to the female viewership as well as the male viewer.

- In highlighting his personal skills and talents against the backdrop of an increasingly dominant global economy, Chan has paradoxically presented his films as transnational as well as individualistic, multicultural as well as political, and chronological as well as historical.

- If Chan's original intention was simply to reinvent himself and market himself in a landscape that had been dominated by Lee and his unfading image, Chan actually started a new wave of KFC that would change the philosophy of the genre as well as challenge Lee's image of toughness, which had been grounded in both Asian and American cultural contexts.

- Chan's adoption of humour and comedy changed the KF genre formalistically and shaped the genre politically and culturally. In his comedy, Chan humanises the hero of KF tragedy, whose rigidity might be ironically be construed as stubborn, inhuman and superhuman, confirming another aspect of the Orientalist representation of Asians and Asian Americans.

- Chan inadvertently deconstructs the hard body of Bruce Lee. Whereas Lee's character waits until the right moment to fight and kill his opponent, Chan's first impulse is to stay away from any trouble and avoid confrontation unless it is absolutely necessary. Chan humanises the Asian male and unwittingly challenges the stereotypes perpetuated by orientalism in the process.

Role of the media in consumption and interaction

Media refers to how the popular culture is distributed- TV, film, newspaper, magazine, internet

The KF film industry is no longer controlled by just one company – Paramount/Dreamworks → Kung Fu Panda. Studios seek content that can move fluidly across media channels.

Roles of heroes and mythology

- The link between Chinese martial arts and popular entertainment is evident in stories from as far back as 2BC – tales have been revived again and again throughout China's long history.

- Lee and Chan's films are in part accountable for growing international success of HK cinema's in the 70's and 80's- fusing eastern and western film techniques and aesthetics, directors strayed from the conventional plotlines of the Wuxia and KF genres, adapting martial arts both to construct contemporary plotlines and incorporate Hollywood techniques and trends into their globally marketed films.

Associated paraphernalia

The use of paraphernalia and memorabilia assist in the perpetuation of the popular culture of Kung Fu comedy. As technology helps to revitalise old movies as well as creating new ones, the associated paraphernalia keeps the market alive.

- Kung Fu clothing

- Martial arts uniforms

- T-shirts

- Mugs

- Posters

- DVD

- Sweatshirts

- Baseball caps

- Infant bodysuits

- Bumper stickers

- Journals

- Greeting cards

- Wrapping paper

- Colouring in books

- Gift bags

- PlayStation games

- Xbox games

- Nintendo games

- Pencil cases

- Children's clothing

- Playing cards

- Puzzles

- Furniture

- Fridge magnets

- Soft toys

The deliberate production of additional commodities associated with motion pictures has become more common since the 70's, and accelerated tremendously during the last few decades of the 20th century.

Merchandising practices of modern films, especially those relating to the children and teen market, is as orchestrated and planned as the actual movies. Eg. Kung Fu Panda

McDonalds signed a deal with DreamWorks animation to develop Kung Fu Panda themed Happy Meals – online component- kids who clicked to the happy meals website learnt about the movie, getting active, pandas and the environment.

American Airlines, Bank of America, Hubba Bubba, Wrigley's, Kelloggs, Energizer, Safeway, ebay.

Bruce Lee – Time's Most 100 Influential People of the 20th Century. Lots of paraphernalia. Bruce Lee action museum, biography, documentary 'How Bruce Lee Changed The World', statues.

Role of technology in the interactive process

The spread of technology of the popular culture from local → national → global has been assisted by the advances of technology. Improvements in trade and commerce, advances in technology and the process of globalisation has led to an increase in access and consumption of the popular culture. Technology has also increased production of, access and consumption of associated produced paraphernalia connected to the popular culture.

- Internet – Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, YouTube, Kungfucinema.com, Kfccinema.com. Increased availability of more diverse products and enabling enthusiasts access to online discussion forums

- Machinery/robotics

- Film production techniques

- Software

Impact of technology on the creation and production of KFC

- Use of cameras, voice recognition, colour, layering sound

- Depiction of storylines made possible through technology. Wuxia films were shown in mythological/ancient times where characters were able to perform defying feats and possess magical qualities. These scenes were made possible through technology.

- Use of trampolines and ropes

- Digitally advanced technology

- Use of computer generated techniques- slow motion, reverse motion

- Animation software

- Dubbing and use of subtitles has changed the nature of the popular culture – use of new language technology has enable the films to meet national and global demands but has changed the nature.

Technology has changed the nature of this genre from being a budget, low quality, Chinese based form of entertainment, to a globally marketed, high budget, multi-million dollar industry. Technology has infiltrated the production and consumption of Kung Fu comedy to a point where it may not survive without it.

Influence of business, marketing and advertising the control of popular culture

Marketing: refers to the promotion, design and distribution of products.

Product, promotion, price, place.

Marketing of films and associated products now occurs with the sale and distribution of associated merchandise or paraphernalia. E.g. Kung Fu Panda release

Marketing media:

- Traditional marketing

- Twitter

- Facebook

- Internet sites by companies and fans

- Home video box sets, DVD's, Blu ray

- Theatre trailers

- Fake films

- Half price Tuesdays

Chollywood is China's growing film industry.

Hollywood has two seasonal high times for film releases: the summer rush when school goes out, and the holiday rush after Black Friday. Chollywood has another – Chinese new year in February.

Jackie Chan: Jackie has been a major recording star in Asia for years- trained in traditional Chinese opera, often sings for charity fundraisers and served as the cultural ambassador at the Beijing Olympics, singing the warm-up anthem. The biggest problem for Chollywood is that Americans hate subtitles. Jackie is fluent in Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean and English, putting him in a prime position to grab all those markets.

Chan has risked his own life in fighting sequences and escaping episodes – constitute an important part of his strategy in reinventing himself and reconstructing masculinity.

Chan deploys his body's vulnerability as a strategy to market himself and promote his uniqueness in the action cinema.

By glorifying his injuries and foregrounding his courage in facing real-death situations despite his status as a superstar and multimillionaire in East Asia, Chan makes another gesture to appeal to global audiences and to challenge his American counterparts.

Karate Kid: Hollywood film made in China. A spectacular showcase of China with postcard locations like Beijing's Forbidden City, Olympic architectural wonder the birds nest, the Great Wall of China. The original Karate Kid was a classic film. Initially the Karate Kid drew a fire on two fronts: Why remake a classic? And the title – karate in china? Even if Chinese distributers bothered to evoke the Karate Kid franchise, given the storyline of the original, it's unlikely that it would be successful in China. Chinese moviegoers are accustomed to a much higher level of martial arts choreography.

Stakeholders in the control

Stakeholders refer to any person/organisation who has an interest (financial, social or personal) in the access, production and/or consumption of the popular culture.

Various businesses and stakeholders control and influence access and consumption to this pop culture:

- Production companies – Shaw Brothers, Golden Harves, Warner Brothers, Wachowski Brothers, DreamWorks

- Institutional powers – eg. Government (Chinese – censorship and propaganda), and film regulating bodies

- Actors and persons involved in production- local → national → global

- Businesses who distribute the popular culture- eg. Cinemas

- Businesses who distribute and sell associated products and paraphernalia linked to the film- Eg. McDonalds, Toy Stores, Big W, Hoyts

- Consumers themselves (from purists who crave fight scenes and bloody motives of honour and revenge, to the mainstream who were left wanting more after fast and furious, crouching tiger hidden dragon and Kung Fu panda)

- Media

- Family/peers of consumers

GOVERNMENTS:

Governments refer to the formal institutions who hold authority over a social and geographical environment and who can influence behaviour and social actions.

Impacts production and level of consumption

Industry shift to Hong Kong marked a move away from government control →greater flexibility
1997 – Marked shift of control from British to China.

FILM PRODUCTION COMPANIES:

1920's & 1930's: dozens of small production companies in Shanghai

1940's: a number of larger production companies established

1960's & 1970's: Establishment of two main production companies – Shaw Brothers and Golden Harvest – controlled 90% of production out of Hong Kong

Late 1970's-1980's: Rise of Bruce Lee, Jet Li, Jackie Chan – globalisation of the industry.

NOW: Dozens of production companies and influence of western producers. Blending of film genres. Modern films characterised by high budgets, high levels of special effects and editing, translation/subtitles into many languages.

AUDIENCE

Although censors, government, producers, directors and actor all have a degree of control of KFC, it is the audience who have ultimate control. If a film is not popular, it will not be considered part of popular culture. As long as KFC responds to developing and changing tastes of the audience, it will continue to be popular.

Ownership

1.   The distribution and production companies – eg. Shaw brothers, golden harvest, celestial pictures, DreamWorks. Their role is to financially support and provide access to the films to the public.

2.   The actors who feature in the films – eg. Bruce Lee, Jet Li, Stephen Chow, Keanu Reeves etc. Their role is to fulfil the demands set by the production companies/directors and audience

3.   Audience/consumers – Role is to consume and access the popular culture. Without consumption there wouldn't be a popular culture.

Issues of access

Factors of class, age, gender, location, ethnicity, socio-economic status may affect access and consumption of the culture.

Role of official and unofficial censorship

Censorship refers to the control of information and/or communication which may be considered objectionable, harmful, sensitive or inconvenient to the general body of persons as determined by a government, media outlet, or other controlling body.
The role of censorship is to control aspects of the production, distribution and therefore access to a form of communication.

Governments play a key role in controlling access through censorship regulations and guidelines.

China:

Kung Fu movies are very traditional and distant from real life and so this type of movie is not too hard to get approved.

There is no rating system in China, so they have to make changes on certain scenes and shots. Chinese censors also commonly act to prevent the distribution of films and books that raise awkward, non-political questions or that draw attention to lifestyles and social trends that are not considered to be desirable, without offering criticism of such lifestyles and trends.

Films are often censored for showing some of the harsh realities of Chinese life: men gambling in messy rooms, people cleaning their bed pans on the streets. The censors feel that this reveals the undeveloped, negative side of China and would be damaging to China's reputation abroad. Films that deal with contemporary problems such as corruption, land grabs and environmental problems are also sure to get axed.

Discouraged:

- Poverty

- Sexuality

- Nudity

- Graphic violence

- Adultery

- Ghosts

- Gambling

- Criticism of the communist party

- Alternative lifestyles

- Drug use

- Rape

- Social conflict

- Marriage and divorce

While most critics of Chinese media censorship tend to be involved with human rights, voicing that blocking freedom of expression through film censorship has damaged china by helping to create a monoculture.

In 2003 the government began looking at film as more of industry and a way to make money than a propaganda device.

Often, fans of foreign cinema look to the international market as an antidote to bland Hollywood productions that are geared to the lowest common denominator.

Wuxia fans of the 1920's were looked down upon by the reforming classes as superstitious or sensation seeking. Intellectuals sneered that movies about martial arts and ghosts typified everything that China must leave behind on its march into the modern world.

Many production and distribution networks were organised along regional affiliations. Merchants invested heavily in the film industry, founding small independent studios and financing branches of established production houses. As the nationalist government attempted to consolidate its hold on the entire country, movies were increasingly seen as a propaganda tool. Regional control and regional distribution were a threat to the central government.

Both the communist intellectuals and the nationalist government condemned Wuxia films for their superstitions and feudal attitudes. The nationalist launched an anti-superstition campaign and set up a film censorship bureau. Critics joined the attack, accusing the genre of promoting immorality and anarchy.

A further blow to the Wuxia genre fell with the introduction of sound technology to the Shanghai film industry. The nationalists were promoting mandarin Chinese as the new 'national language' whiles a significant portion of the Wuxia audience spoke Cantonese.

In the end, it wasn't really the government that finally crushed the Wuxia film industry in Shanghai. Parts of the city were bombed by the Japanese and suddenly the Nationalists and Communists had more pressing issues than kung fu movies to deal with. Audiences also lost their taste for fantasy. The boom was over.

West:

The BBC removed all clear sights of nunchakus from the Teenage Ninja Mutant Turtles programs before screening them.

Control of popular culture power and authority

- Wuxia banned in mainland China, but continued to thrive in Taiwan and Hong Kong as newspaper and magazine serials opened opportunities for Wuxia authors to gain new readership.

- 1997 – year the British handed over Hong Kong to the Chinese – meant that Chinese government could now directly influence film industry

Power refers to the ability to influence, control and persuade another person in their beliefs, behaviour or action.

- Producers – hold much power as they have control over what to create and make available for distribution

- Actors

- Businesses – Hold power in relation to when and where to distribute and how much to charge

- Media – hold much power and influence over the access, knowledge and consumption of the popular culture

- Consumers – issues of downloading and accessing films illegally also show how the power held by consumers can change significantly, and have a negative impact on the production companies.

Authority refers to the legitimate accepted use of power. Usually held by an institutional source of power, government, controlling body etc.

- Government- the government of China has traditionally held authority over the production, distribution and access to the popular culture. Western governments also now hold authority in relation to the popular culture. Governments can introduce film viewing regulations and rating systems and film censorship regulations which can impact the access and distribution of a film, game and book. Governments can also promote a film or business industry through the media/and or propagation

- Production companies

Resistance to popular culture

The HK film industry has been in severe slump since the mid 1990's. The number of local films produced and commercial success of production companies has decreased significantly.

US based films and production companies now dominate the industry – film genre is changing dramatically.

Collaboration between the HK and Chinese film industries is common to ensure financial success

Different perceptions and interpretations of popular culture are the result of differences in culture, language, education, class, location, gender, socio-economic status etc.

The worldwide success of KF films reveal that the films have different meanings for different audiences.

- Traditional audiences have loved hand to hand combat, danger, blood and violence- now not always the case

- Traditionally audiences have also enjoyed the comfort and identity with traditional stories retold such as Wong Fei Hung- not understood by western audiences

- Objection to parody and blending of genres

- Two sub-genres, Kung Fu wushu and Wuxia have had traditionally different audiences who expect different elements – but commercial success of Wuxia films has changed aspects of film production to suit new global audiences

- Acceptance/rejection of subtitles and dubbing

- Widening of audience to include African-American sector of US society- attracted to films by the fact that they were action films featuring a non-white Caucasian protagonist/hero

- Emerging concept of feminism and new roles of women on western screens. Recent changes to presentation of women in films has allowed more women to appreciate and relate to these films.

Acceptance and rejection of popular culture

ACCEPTANCE

- Film is largely accepted across various societies and cultures.

- Films that are recognised and accepted can be nominated and win various awards and receive national/global recognition. Eg. Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon won over 40 awards globally.

- Success of recent films like Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and Kung Fu Panda reflect the popular cultures overall acceptance.

- The translation and dubbing of films from traditional mandarin to other languages reveals increasing demand and acceptance.

- The blending of film genres is also evidence of its increasing acceptance and appeal.

Form of artistic expression and creativity (actors, designs, film production crew, musicians, costume designers, lighting, tech personnel) is rewarded through industry recognition, fan sites, consumer run discussion forums etc.

REJECTION

- Sometimes resistance to the popular culture can occur to the content portrayed or as a result of the method/mode of production/distribution.

- May be rejected because of personal values, tastes and preferences.

- Some consumers may resist modern or western versions or adaptations of traditional stories.

- Rejection can occur on a macro scale (rejection of Cantonese and Wuxia films by Chinese government under the communist party) or on a micro level (parents, siblings, peers).

- Rejection can occur through the introduction of ratings, restrictions, censorship laws by governments.

- Counter-culture of westernised versions of traditional films may be rejected by Kung Fu enthusiasts as offending the origins and traditional heritage, elements of the film genre and fighting style.

China:

- Chinese shamed- debate centered on who should have the right to promote the iconic animal identified with China

- 'All elements in the movie are distinctly Chinese but why was it presented by foreigners?'

- 'Movie has stolen China's national treasure and its martial arts'

- 'Movie was a sheer cultural invasion'

- 'clumsy panda, though funny enough, was an insult to the animal's original image that should be handsome and sentimental

- Despite controversy, the film was a box office hit in China

- 'the movie had caused many Chinese martial arts movie directors to feel ashamed'

Tensions between producers, owners and participants

A tension can be defined as a conflict of opinion, struggle or disagreement. Can be direct or indirect.

Tensions can be caused by financial or personal conflicts:

- Differences between interpretations of producer and owner

- Differences in interpretations of martial artist/athlete and actor

- Tensions between producers and consumers in terms of story, setting, themes, connection with the past etc.

- Tensions between consumers and distribution companies- eg. Box set or limit release (drag it out)

Positive and negative aspects of popular culture that have become part of society

POSITIVES

- Recognition of Kung Fu comedy worldwide giving audiences an alternative to Hollywood domination

- Almost all post-war martial-arts films that constitute the genre have been produced by and for the Chinese communities outside mainland China. And to this end, they can be read as films of mythic remembrance, an emigrant cinema for an audience seeking not only its identity and links with an often imaginary cultural past, but also its legitimisation.

- Bruce Lee's contribution – ability to inspire a national pride

- Genre is escapist – possibly a necessity in the modern day

- Helped the west accept diversity

- Lee became simultaneously the quintessence of man and every man, and, as his philosophy implies, the violence he inflicts upon socially and ethnically dominant figures functions as the symbolic expression of his own, and every oppressed man and nations' capacity to triumph over hegemony

- Hong Kong filmmakers not only portrayed martial arts as a viable mode of human expression, but also exhibited the extent to which martial arts could be transformed in cinema in order to reflect and address both contemporary local issues and the increasingly important reality of globalisation.

NEGATIVES

- In some films, Kung Fu is dissociated from its ideological ties to inner strength, discipline, self-control and humanity and rather comes to be associated with either one or both of two extremes the abnormal and the superhuman.

- Too much violence. Young bombarded with videogames and films which take the Kung Fu violence link to the extreme.

- Many films depict Kung Fu as the stereotypically mystical and superhuman thing that western pop culture has established it to be rather than the deepening concept of skill, training and control

- Some enthusiasts do not agree with CGI and special effects which have taken over the real skill hence devaluating it

- Different countries rating systems have treated films differently- international standards are missing

- Due to a globalised market, many Asian film producers have had to de-Asianise their films

- The new, western code of taste has largely rendered Kung Fu an exotic, spectacular and hyper-masculine product for consumption. Forces of globalisation within the entertainment industry influencing local constructions of self-identity.

Ways in which popular culture may have contributed to social change

Social change refers to a shift or alteration of a society's values, attitudes, beliefs or acceptance of a cultural practice.

- Western view of Asians – Bruce Lee as an agent of change for Asian masculinity

- That violence and fighting can also have a spiritual side – a person cannot have physical strength without mental strength

- Perpetuated stereotypes about fighters away from negative

- Globalisation of the stories and recognition of the powerful themes discussed- vengeance, mental and physical strength, skill and respect

- Use of traditionally inspired themes by modern producers

- Allowed disenfranchised persons in America such as migrants and African-Americans to be inspired that if they work and trained hard they can overcome disadvantage in opportunity

- Recognition of actors on a global scale

- Global branding of the genre

Even though Kung Fu comedy films have represented social change within China and Hong Kong especially, by their very presence, they may have added to the social change they have depicted.

Themes in movies, particular story lines and settings can be used to remind the audience about things that need changing and things that have changed in the past.