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# Chapter Seven

## FOCUS GROUP

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### 7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has portrayed the profile of my sample population: the majority of the *Xin Lao NiangJiu* (新老娘舅, XLNJ) show viewers appear to be middle-aged (over 35 years) in the economic classes with relatively little education. The cultural closeness of identity through language employed on this programme appears to be one main reason that attracts the audience. Respondents also watch the show particularly to learn or to spend time with their families, but less for relaxation purposes such as passing time or entertainment. Seemingly, television consumption would motivate respondents to watch a specific programme. The results suggest that people might enjoy the show without initially seeking entertainment. The results also indicate that the show might be better able to achieve its social and political aims among female respondents of lower education. Contrary to conventional wisdom, Confucian culture seems to have little influence on respondents' judgements of reputation-based issues on the show. Having gained an idea about who is watching the mediation show and why they watch, the next step of the audience study is to further explore what audiences get out of the show and how they deal with the contradictions suggested in previous chapters.

Focus groups are particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences because they not only allow us to examine what people think, but how they think and why they think that way (Merton, Fisk, and Kendall 1956). It also has the advantage that it can encourage participation from people reluctant to be interviewed on their own or who feel that they have nothing to say (Kitzinger 1995). Participants of the focus group consist of both frequent viewers and not-so-frequent viewers of the Shanghai

mediation show<sup>225</sup>. In total, four sessions have been carried out (see Chapter Four). Twenty-four respondents (12 males and 12 females, age 20-65 years; all from Shanghai) participated in four mixed-gender focus groups: one higher education and one lower education group for frequent and non-frequent viewers, respectively. Each group consisted of six participants, allowing me to control the discussion and encourage everyone to talk. As the show broadcasts six days a week, people who had watched twice or more in a week were considered frequent viewers. Similarly, non-frequent viewers were those who had watched the show on average once a week or less during the past six months. People who had not watched the mediation show before were excluded because they knew too little to participate in the focus group discussion.

This composition is planned for two reasons: firstly, the survey results made clear that heavy viewers and non-frequent viewers differed in their views. Secondly, gender and educational 'separation' were applied to make respondents feel comfortable in the discussion. It is likely that people of a lower education level might be less encouraged to talk when they are put in the same group with those of higher educational level, and the same could be true for gender categorisation. In the survey, the average age of respondents is 34 years (min.=16, max.=73, M=34.29, S.D.=12.486), and average educational level is between college and bachelor's degree. Therefore, college/university education is used as the dividing point between the higher and the lower education groups, i.e. the higher education group includes university students and those with college/bachelor's or higher degree, while the lower education group includes participants with high school education or lower.

In this chapter, I will firstly discuss how respondents say they make use of and obtain gratifications from the show. Then, I will analyse audiences' perceptions of the show in three steps. Firstly, why do they watch? One contradiction raised in the survey analysis regarded the entertainment aspect: people enjoy watching the dispute mediation on TV, but they did not think that *XLNJ* is a show that they watch for fun. So, what, for them, is the entertaining appeal of the show? Secondly, the social and political aspects are considered. While the audiences acquire legal and mediation knowledge from the show,

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<sup>225</sup> Originally, I categorised the audience into two groups: fans and non-fans. Since the categorisation was difficult to define and not feasible when recruiting the participants, I now categorise the audience into frequent viewers vs. non-frequent viewers.

do they consider this as a goal established by the programme makers, and how do they deal (if they do) with the tension between the entertainment and the social harmony aims? Thirdly, the cultural aspect is assessed. While the audiences did not find discussing private disputes on TV a losing-face issue, why are they themselves unwilling to go on TV with their own disputes?

## 7.2 Understanding Viewers' Uses and Gratifications

In this section, I will discuss the frequent and non-frequent viewers' motives and uses of the mediation show, which allows us to understand what use audiences make of the show as well as their likes and dislikes<sup>226</sup>.

In the previously conducted online survey, I used statements to measure five gratifications, i.e. (1) perceived closeness; (2) information seeking; (3) social utility; (4) passing time; and (5) entertainment<sup>227</sup>. The survey result shows that most respondents are attracted to the show because of the dialect used being familiar to them, while at the same time, they also seek information. Respondents hardly feel or admit that they watch *XLNJ* for fun or for killing time. During the focus groups, participants were asked why they choose to watch *XLNJ* over the programmes aired at the same prime time slot. The participants' explanations to some extent reflect their personal uses of the show, which can deepen our understanding of the survey findings.

### 7.2.1 *Dialect and Cultural Identity*

As the survey results suggest, perceived closeness through language is the major reason why respondents are fond of watching *XLNJ* ( $M=4.60$ ,  $S.D.=1.380$ ). Focus group participants also note that the local dialect spoken on the show has enhanced its competitiveness for attracting viewers. Indeed, some viewers have a preference for

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<sup>226</sup> Appendix 14 provides a description of participants.

<sup>227</sup> Five statements were (1) I watch *XLNJ* because I find this programme interesting, it can make me laugh;(2) I watch *XLNJ* because my family member or other people I know watch it, so I can discuss it with them; (3) I watch *XLNJ* because it's a habit, and I have no other things to do; (4) I watch *XLNJ* because it shows how other people deal with the same problems I have; so I could learn about what could happen to me.; (5) I watch *XLNJ* because people speak Shanghainese in the show, which is close to real life and make me feel very close to those people on television.

Participants were asked to indicate whether they find these statements were Very much like me; like me; somewhat like me; a little like me; not like me; and not like me at all.

programmes spoken in the same dialect that viewers happen to speak. In addition to *XLNJ*, other programmes that these frequent viewers often watch include *Happy Three Brothers* (*Kuaile Sanxiongdi*), *A Qing's Story Time* (*A Qing Jiang Gushi*), and *The Bai Wanqing Talk Show* (*Yihu Baiying*), which are all in local dialects. Apparently, most of our viewers prefer programmes using a familiar dialect. Given the fact that few programmes are produced in Shanghainese, shows like *XLNJ* then become popular especially for viewers who sympathise with a sense of group identity. The same language makes the show more accessible for local audiences as it provides them with a sense of cultural closeness, i.e., a sense of 'us'.

Some frequent viewers seem to tune in to *XLNJ* for a language environment that is familiar to their native tongue. Many frequent viewers appreciate this feature of the show and regard the dialect as an important part of their identity. Indeed, dialect or, sometimes, slang, is a strong marker of cultural identity (Cavalli-Sforza 2001). The use of dialect certainly brings the disputants closer to the audience, making them just like 'those ordinary people that you meet every day in your neighbourhood, in the market, or on the street'<sup>228</sup>. This comment is echoed by several other participants. A man in his fifties<sup>229</sup> reports that *XLNJ* 'minimises the distance between the audience and the television station, by speaking the same dialect and involving the spectators in the mediation process'. It seems that by 'closer', the participants refer to the familiar feeling generated by the shared cultural background and the same regional identity. Born in Shanghai, the ability to master the local language appears to be an important part for their Shanghainese identity, even though they do not necessarily speak it every day. Using the same dialect to a certain extent makes our participants feel that they belong to the same (regional) community as the disputants and audience commentators on the show.

Mastering the dialect therefore becomes an important passage to integrate into the society. Perhaps that explains why one participant<sup>230</sup> uses the show as 'educational material' to familiarise her child with the language environment. Although not intended for language teaching, this suggests another function of programmes in dialect. This is somewhat evident from the programmes that participants preferred. Despite the variety

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<sup>228</sup> Participant #4

<sup>229</sup> Participant #7

<sup>230</sup> Participant #12

of shows they frequently watch, they do not mention mediation programmes broadcast on other provincial channels. Most TV programmes are broadcast in Mandarin Chinese due to the SARFT's restraining the amount of dialect programmes in order to promote the official Mandarin language<sup>231</sup>.

The dialect element seems to be an important factor for attracting audiences. Most programmes and teleplays broadcast in Shanghai are in Mandarin Chinese, which makes the few programmes that use Shanghainese particularly popular among local audiences. Not only elderly viewers, but also some young participants agree that mediation carried out in Shanghainese makes these shows more interesting to watch. Speaking the same language attracts the audience and draws the programme closer to them, which also allows the audience to feel empathy for the disputants. It seems the same dialect used in the programme helps to construct these participants' identity. It seems that 'the construction of identity ... involves establishing opposites and others whose actualities are always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from us' (Said 1995, 332).

Not everyone appreciates the feature of local dialect, however; one man's meat is another man's poison. Some non-frequent viewers assert that the use of local dialect has made the show even more vulgar. One of them states in a critical manner that television in Shanghai 'has been decreasing in both refinement and artistic aspects. Programmes such as *XLNJ*, *Bai Wanqing Talk Show*, *A Qing's Story Time*, are neither knowledgeable nor thoughtful...' <sup>232</sup>. To him, the show is vulgar regardless of its claim of promoting civil mediation. Another participant presumes that the limited choice is the crux of the matter, which explains why 'the few programmes speaking Shanghainese become particularly popular' <sup>233</sup>. These participants appear to be more in line with the governments' Promoting Mandarin Campaign. It seems that they consider slang as inappropriate language for public media to employ.

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<sup>231</sup> See, for example, an article on the restraining of dialect programmes: SARFT requires producers to promote Mandarin, while people request protection of specific dialects (Huashang 2014).

<sup>232</sup> Participant #13

<sup>233</sup> Participant #14

### 7.2.2 Learning from Others' Stories

Learning experiences and seeking information through *XLNJ* appears to be common among survey respondents ( $M=3.98$ ,  $S.D.=1.502$ ). Likewise, the majority of frequent-viewer focus group participants give credit to the show for its educational undercurrent. Participants find that they are sometimes enlightened by certain cases in the show. A retired middle school teacher who is now a contented grandma<sup>234</sup> believes the show is particularly helpful to people of her age, as she says:

‘They (the mediators) have done a good job when disputes [are] related to inheritance distribution, prenuptial and postnuptial assets... They convinced disputants by explaining relevant rules and regulations in a simple and clear way... For example, Bai often says ‘sophisticated elders should be cautious enough not to get their properties off their hands easily’ (*shulian bu tuoshou, tuoshou bu shulian*)’.

Indeed, this quote by popular mediator Bai Wanqing is well known among nearly all of the focus group participants, both frequent and non-frequent. Bai has repeated it many times, when warning the elderly to deal with their properties cautiously. This terse and forceful saying clearly allows the audience to quickly memorise it.

The participants' observations suggest that the audience's *information seeking* is not confined to legal or policy-related knowledge. Watching issues on TV can sometimes trigger self-reflection on the viewer's own life. Frequent viewers learn various lessons; for example, that ‘women must be financially independent... never be greedy for your husband's family properties, otherwise you put yourself in a weak position at home’<sup>235</sup>. This opinion is echoed by other female participants in the same group. The show seems to make a girl in her early twenties consider issues that she might encounter in her future marriage.

Some male frequent viewers take a more broad perspective. They feel that ‘the show is enlightening’ and ‘not only mature grown-ups, but also young people should pay more attention to this show and take warning from it’, so as to ‘learn how to prevent

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<sup>234</sup> Participant #11

<sup>235</sup> Participant #10

conflicts if similar situations happen to them in the future<sup>236</sup>. They believe that one could benefit from real-life examples. Some participants acknowledge the show's potential edifying function, though they themselves do not obtain information from it. As one non-frequent viewer<sup>237</sup> said,

I watch this show occasionally, and among the few issues I have watched were misunderstandings and conflicts between mothers and daughters-in-law. Disputes between in-laws seem to be an eternal topic in Chinese society. I think both the married and the unmarried shall watch this show and learn some lesson. After all, as an old saying goes: only the family members can appreciate the complexities and difficulties within the family'.

It seems that people can learn from the programme, without necessarily seeking information. In this sense, the mediation show seems unintentionally educational to them. Indeed, knowledge and learning are intrinsic to factual television (Hill 2007). On the other hand, the collaboration with the Shanghai Justice Bureau created an image of the show being intentionally educational and informative. The audience may acquire different kinds of information presented in multiple ways through formal and informal learning experiences, such as learning about world events or social issues, and about emotions or practicalities (Hill 2007, 146). When watching the show, participants can extract information that is relevant to them personally.

### **7.2.3 Viewing as Social Bonding**

The survey result indicates that watching with other family members ( $M=3.39$ ,  $S.D.=1.422$ ) is also a motive to watch *XLNJ*. This finding is only partially confirmed in the focus group discussions. All frequent viewers reported that they sometimes watch the show together with their family. As one male participant<sup>238</sup> said, he watched the show as his wife always tunes in to the Entertainment Channel during dinner, and gradually he thought that 'well, I think one can see many real-life examples from the show'.

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<sup>236</sup> Participants #1 and 2

<sup>237</sup> Participant #22

<sup>238</sup> Participant #9

Similarly, another male participant<sup>239</sup> was initially reluctant but was made to watch the show by his mother's request for companionship. Reflecting on cases he saw on TV, the participant felt that bonding can be close to learning:

‘...The most recent one I watched tells disputes between a hard-working husband of humble birth and a spoiled wife. In the past twenty some years, they were brought up in two families of different lifestyles and the different habits and customs in their lives brought about conflicts and unhappiness in their marriage. My conclusion will be, as our ancestors once said, it is important that a couple shall come from families of equal social status’.

Apparently, this participant's attitude towards the show has shifted positively when his view of life and value was affirmed. This sense of approval caused him to discuss issues with his mother. Indeed, most other frequent viewers say they discuss certain cases with family, friends, or colleagues. Some families' differences of opinion, in this way, serve as topics for personal conversations. This suggests that watching the show at times becomes a ritual that brings the family members together and thus promotes a better family relationship. For this purpose, it seems acceptable to some participants to watch the mediation show together with their family, even if it is not necessarily to their own liking.

While frequent viewers enjoy watching and discussing an episode with family, most non-frequent viewers express disapproval. Some of them complain that their parents watch the show every night, their arguments being noisy and disturbing them. One participant said<sup>240</sup> ‘Sometimes I tell my mum that such programmes are not good for her emotional balance because they show the negative aspects of human nature, but she wouldn't listen’. Another participant encountered a similar situation, being more or less forced to watch the show from time to time. ‘My parents love this show, always at dinner time. I watched several episodes with them because I have no choice... The elderly compose the majority audience of this show, I suppose.’<sup>241</sup> The participant's speculation

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<sup>239</sup> Participant #3

<sup>240</sup> Participant #23

<sup>241</sup> Participant #20

about the possible demographic feature of the show's audience is used as an argument to distinguish himself from the supposed audience orientation.

#### 7.2.4 *Filling the Time Gap*

As discussed in Chapter Six, the audience does not have a strong intention to watch the mediation show just to pass time ( $M=3.10$ ,  $S.D.=1.434$ ). During the focus group discussion, a smaller minority<sup>242</sup> say they sometimes watch the show when they have nothing else to do. A young female participant<sup>243</sup> said she would watch *XLNJ* if she feels uninterested in other programmes. Another female viewer<sup>244</sup> usually tunes in to the show while doing her daily exercises. In her words, 'when I am doing my work-out exercises, I am in the mood for watching something, and watching *XLNJ* makes exercising less boring'. In a similar way, another male participant<sup>245</sup> said his mother watched the mediation show when she is doing the cleanup after dinner. Some audience members use the show as background while they do something else. They are not really watching, but would pause what they do when certain cases or arguments attract them. In addition to passing time, *XLNJ* also functions as background to some participants' monotonous household chores.

While watching television sometimes functions to fill the time gap, not many participants publicly admit this. They sometimes happen to tune into the show when watching other programmes, but they will not watch a complete episode of *XLNJ*. Tuning in is more to fill the time gap during advertisements<sup>246</sup>. Frequent viewers seem more likely to watch the show with a certain purpose, while the non-frequent viewers tend to watch the show almost accidentally to fill or pass time gaps.

#### 7.2.5 *Entertainment*

The survey result suggests that respondents do not seek relaxation or amusement from the show to a significant degree ( $M=2.88$ ,  $S.D.=1.456$ ). Frequent viewers in the focus groups seem to have different ideas. Most frequent viewers are to a certain extent amused

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<sup>242</sup> Participants #6, 4, 11, and 15

<sup>243</sup> Participant #6

<sup>244</sup> Participant #4

<sup>245</sup> Participant #15

<sup>246</sup> Participants #15, 20, and 24

or attracted by ‘dramatic’, ‘moving’, or ‘sensational’ plots of various dispute stories. In fact, some participants<sup>247</sup> make no secret of their enjoyment of the show by frankly admitting that they sometimes have a good laugh. For them, ‘arguments over trivial matters’ between couples and some issues that are ‘not common in life’ seem like ‘dark comedy’ or are ‘more interesting than soap operas’<sup>248</sup>. One of them provided an example when recalling a recent case:

‘...a remarried couple, when their child was born, the new dad’s ex-wife paid a visit to the new-born baby with her current husband whose ex also came along. (It is) like a complicated chain, which was so hilarious.’<sup>249</sup>

Such extraordinary and bewildering situations the participants find amusing. It seems that surprise and inconceivability give rise to curiosity, which in turn provides a certain contentment of prying into others’ secrets. Situations that elicit laughter vary according to individuals’ preferences. It could be the plot of a dispute story, a specific personality of some disputant, or sometimes, it could be some sharp commentary provided by the presenter or the mediator. For instance, another frequent viewer finds commentaries from the mediator and the audience sometimes incisive and equally, if not more, witty, making him smile. As he said,

‘...(the mediator) Huang Feijue<sup>250</sup> is funny and will sometimes become very emotional. You can tell from his face whether he is about to lose temper and scold someone. There was one time he even snapped at the co-presenter Haiyan<sup>251</sup>. I think it is interesting...but I like Pei Zhen<sup>252</sup> particularly, I think maybe because of his occupation (as a lawyer), he often gives clear and concise advice, sometimes with a sense of humour.’<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Participant #1, 6, and 9

<sup>248</sup> Participants #1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12

<sup>249</sup> Participant #6

<sup>250</sup> Huang Feijue, co-founder of the *Shanghai Times* (*shenjiang fuvundaobao*), often appears on the XLNJ show as a mediator.

<sup>251</sup> Haiyan is one of the two presenters of the XLNJ show.

<sup>252</sup> Pei Zhen, lawyer and also is one deputy to the National People’s Congress (NPC).

<sup>253</sup> Participant #9

Compared with the findings from the survey chapter, it seems that participants might not necessarily have entertainment in mind when they tune into the show, but are being entertained while watching. The fun they get out of watching might function as a reason to sustain their interest in watching. This enjoyment of entertainment, however, only becomes evident when you probe people. They tend not to admit when asked, but this admission comes out naturally during discussions of other matters.

Not everyone would watch *XLNJ* with the intention to seek entertainment. The majority of frequent-viewer participants, however, admit that they have some fun when watching the mediation show, whether deliberately or inadvertently. Most frequent viewers also watch similar programmes, such as *Bang Nvlang* and the *Jiafang Yifang Show*<sup>254</sup>. They claim to have a preference for programmes showing real people's lives, which they think is close to ordinary citizens' real issues. But it is also possible that such preference has its root in the natural curiosity of humans. As revealed in early audience research (Nabi et al. 2003, 2006), the feeling one gets from peeping into others' lives is associated with the enjoyment of reality TV. Also, in this study, participants seem to enjoy watching what happens in others' families, as an experience of entertainment.

On the other hand, most of the non-frequent viewers believe that the show downplays the seriousness of real mediation and makes use of it so as to attract (and entertain) the audience. With respect to them, the show is like other dialect programmes such as *Baijiaxing* and *Yihubaiying* on the same channel that present non-representative stories without any artistic refinement. Comparing with frequent viewers, non-frequent viewers appear to be more suspicious about the authenticity of the show. As indicated in many audience studies, reality TV viewers do not naively believe the authenticity claim made by the industry (Cui 2005, Hill 2005, Lynch 2005, Macartney 2005, Marquand 2005, Yardley 2005, Zhou 2005). Our respondents do not accept at face value the implicit claim that the shows are real. Some viewers are aware that the cases mediated are carefully selected, and others often suspect that the stories presented on the show are staged or manipulated by producers.

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<sup>254</sup> The *Jiafang Yifang Show* (literal meaning is Party A vs. Party B) is a newly emerged mediation show broadcasted through Shanghai satellite channel Dragon TV. Similar to *XLNJ*, the show claims to help in solving disputes between people by providing legal as well as psychological advice.

Moreover, some participants feel that the participants' behaviour on the mediation show is affected by the presence of the cameras. They suspect that some cases might not come to an agreement had they been mediated off-screen. In this sense, this particular medium of television to some extent exerts certain pressure on the disputing parties and accordingly helps to bring about the agreement.

## 7.3 Tensions and Contradictions

### 7.3.1 *Perceiving Entertainment*

In this section, I will analyse our discussants' views on the entertaining appeal of the mediation show. This analysis is based on the participants' discussion of the following question during the focus group: *What makes you choose to watch this mediation show over other programmes?* Subsequent questions regarding the entertainment appeal are also assessed. The analysis in this section also tries to understand one contradiction raised in the survey analysis, that people enjoy watching the dispute mediation on TV who nevertheless claim that the show is not fun to them. So, in the audience's opinion, what is the entertaining appeal of the show? And how do they align the seriousness of conflict with the fun of watching it on TV?

Generally, frequent viewers watch the show because they find it interesting. The word 'interesting' seems to contain various meanings to participants. Some of them are curious to know what happened between disputants, which they sometimes find quite dramatic, even more than soap operas. Some participants say that they are interested to see what the mediator would say, particularly their reaction to sometimes seemingly absurd issues; these mediators include Bai Wanqing, Pei Zhen, and Wan Feng, who are known for being tough and impartial.

In two frequent viewers groups, some participants enjoy watching *XLNJ* because dispute stories in the show are often told in an attracting way with twists and turns, and at times are very dramatic. Some of them feel that some cases are like 'a live version of *Gushibui* (collection of stories)<sup>255</sup>, it is much more interesting than watching TV plays'<sup>256</sup>,

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<sup>255</sup> *Gushibui*, literally *collection of stories*, is a widely circulated magazine in the People's Republic of China, published by Shanghai Literature & Art Press (*shanghai wenyi chubanshe*). It includes short stories of different types,

and sometimes the storyline could be ‘comparable to that of mystery films’ or even ‘more impressive’ than some popular movies<sup>257</sup>.

The show is regarded as dramatic, and almost theatrical, partly because stories are edited in a way to create a cliff-hanging effect and each story is given a sensational or thrilling title to generate the audience’s interests. A heavy viewer<sup>258</sup> notices that episode titles sometimes fail to represent the actual issue, and she feels that exaggerated titles are used only to attract eyeballs. In that sense, entertainment does not only or does not necessarily refer to fun and laughter, but also to drama and dramatisation. Programme producers occasionally adopt editing techniques to enhance emotional conflicts between disputants. Nevertheless, they realise that some dispute stories per se are unbelievably dramatic. For example, many frequent viewers<sup>259</sup> were shocked after learning about a case of a 19-year-old mother<sup>260</sup> as they had never heard about such things before and such a situation is beyond their imagination, and quite dramatic. One participant thinks that such a story ‘could be made into a fairly good play’<sup>261</sup>. It suggests that such unusual issues in the show sometimes might serve as good conversation topics.

Another example that deeply impressed the participants is the one titled *Papa Has A New Home, Mama Has A New Home, Where Is My Home?*<sup>262</sup> This episode told a pitiful story about a 10-year-old abandoned boy whose parents remarried respectively and left him to stay with his grandfather, who suffered a myocardial infarct. Most frequent-viewer participants had watched this episode, and were profoundly touched by the boy’s sufferings. They express their pity for the boy and accused his parents of being selfish, irresponsible, and heartless. This story reminds many participants of a TV play, *Unpaid*

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such as love stories, overseas stories, humour stories, and so on. Usually, stories were written in a way that tend to generate a vivid and sensational effect for their readers.

<sup>256</sup> Participant #2

<sup>257</sup> Participants #3 and #5

<sup>258</sup> Participant #10

<sup>259</sup> Participants #4, 5, 8, 9, 11, and 12

<sup>260</sup> On Aug. 19 & 20, 2013, XLNJ broadcasted two episodes titled 19-year-old young mother was forced to work at night club by her birth mother (19sui xiaomama jingbeishengmu tuiruhuokeng?).

<sup>261</sup> Participant #12

<sup>262</sup> Papa has a new home, Mama has a new home, where is my home? (babayigejia, mamayigejia, hechushiwojia?)

Debts (*Nie Zhai*<sup>263</sup>), depicting the story of five children who went to Shanghai from Xishuangbanna, Yunnan to look for their *zhiqing*<sup>264</sup> parents who were sent down there. The once-popular theme song for the series moved a wide audience with the heart-touching lyrics: ‘Father has got a home, Mother has got a home, I have been left on my own, feeling I am a redundant one’.

Participant #9 empathised greatly with the boy, saying that,

‘(this episode) make me recall the song for *Nie Zhai*. Though I am now nearly 30 years old, the thought of that lyric still make me feel sad. I quite understand this boy’s feeling as I once went through a similar situation. Marriage requires thorough consideration, and divorce needs even more mature deliberation. The divorce set you free. But even if you can hardly tolerate your imperfect marriage, how can you expect a child to suffer a broken family... ‘

Other participants in the same group have sympathy with this point of view and they are indignant about such irresponsible parents. Indeed, the show employs an anything-goes format including both common and uncommon issues in society.

Focus group participants are sometimes moved by others’ pitiful experiences. Some participants<sup>265</sup>, however, also frankly admit that they watch the show for relaxation and entertainment. Sometimes, the show could cheer them up. ‘There are all kinds of arguments and extremely strange people (on that show), you will suddenly realise how beautiful your life is, and instantly you get back into a good mood’<sup>266</sup>. The audience

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<sup>263</sup> *Nie Zhai*, first aired in 1994, is a TV series based on the novel of the same name, by author Ye Xin. The novel portrays five *zhiqing* families, among which four were marriages between Shanghai *zhiqing* and local people, and one was between *zhiqing*. In order to return to Shanghai, they divorced their local spouses and left their children. The *zhiqing* couple gave their son away to a local family. Those *zhiqing* all began a new life after they returned to the city. About ten years later, the children from these five broken families came from Yunnan to Shanghai to look for their parents. They were not looking for a better life in the city, but for an answer from their parents about why they disliked them. They wanted their parents to repay their emotional debts.

<sup>264</sup> *Zhiqing* (rusticated youth), literally ‘educated youth’, refers to approximately 17 million middle or high school graduates who were sent down to live and work in rural regions during the Cultural Revolution to ‘be reeducated by peasants’, as a revolutionary act by the government to reduce the difference between rural and urban residents. Many of those rusticated youth spent ten or more years in rural areas and then returned to their native cities in the early 1980s.

<sup>265</sup> Participants #1, 4, 6, 9, and 11.

<sup>266</sup> Participants #6 and 22

members compare their lives with others' troubles through the process of watching a mediation show, which seems to make their current situations less hard to bear. Moreover, it also seems that watching mediation shows may help to reduce stress and make people less depressed<sup>267</sup>. Knowing that others are experiencing a similar or even worse situation might provide one with some comfort and courage to face one's own issues. Compared with those disputes on television, the participants feel that they should be grateful to have a better life than the show participants.

For frequent participants, it seems that they are entertained by the dramatic plotline, and sometimes they also obtain a pleasant and fortunate feeling when comparing their own life with others' misery. As for non-frequent viewers, however, opinions differ. In contrast, frequent viewers might take the mediation show as a stress reliever and do not see the entertainment side. Participant #18 complains that it somehow irritates her that the show is broadcast on a daily basis: 'It is already exhausting after a day's work or study. So we want some relaxing and pleasant programmes rather than loud wrangles'. Contrary to frequent viewers, non-frequent-viewer participants are not interested in others' domestic issues that, actually, seem provoking and unpleasing to them.

Besides, some participants<sup>268</sup> are still sceptical that the show is staged by amateur actors despite efforts by the programme makers to emphasise the genuineness of the show. They doubt if there are so many families' disputes every week and suspect that all disputants are actually played by actors<sup>269</sup>. Other participants do not question the realness of the show; however, they dislike it as they consider it as vulgar, revealing the ugly side of human nature, and especially 'amplifying selfishness and shallowness of those at the bottom of society in Shanghai'<sup>270</sup>. It seems to them that the show is not intended to amuse the audience by revealing people's disputes and arguments over marriage, custody, or heritage. The style can be a joy to them, but the content is not. Entertainment ends where vulgarity begins. For them, the audience would expect to see something more 'positive' on television. Here by 'positive', they seem to refer to inspiring or encouraging stories that can reflect the good of humanity; arguments are negative to them.

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<sup>267</sup> Participants #4, 6, and 9

<sup>268</sup> Participants #18, 21, and 24

<sup>269</sup> Participants #21 and 22

<sup>270</sup> Participant #18

Interestingly, it seems to the audience that domestic disputes and those involved somehow become certain reference points. They can compare their own life or relatives with it, and consequently obtain some consolation by realising that their situation is not that difficult to bear. On the whole, both frequent and non-frequent viewers at times exhibit a sense of feeling smart or feeling better by watching the show. From the disputes of others, they sometimes feel that they would deal with the current case more skilfully if they were in the same situation. In this way, one is able to define oneself as ‘sophisticated’ and ‘mature’ by judging or criticising the reactions of disputants on TV. The fun of the programme lies then almost in the possibility to show off and feel superior to others.

The entertainment appeal of the show is perceived in a complex way. Apparently, the audience enjoys the show in terms of its sometimes dramatic content, which they find extraordinary and somewhat ‘beyond their imagination’. It seems to them that some cases are comparable to television drama. They enjoy this kind of drama, but at the same time they can empathise with those having disputes on television. This complex process of entertainment in a certain sense is similar to the audience’s perception of television drama (Zhu 2008). To them, it is not difficult to enjoy the story and at the same time learn from the mediation. In fact, the structure of the mediation show facilitates this process of enjoyment. The show tells a story, a drama, during the first half and carries out the mediation during the second, which can make the televised and more serious mediation more acceptable.

### ***7.3.2 Social Influences and Political Implications of XLNJ***

So far, I have explored the audience’s perception of the *XLNJ* show in terms of its entertaining effects. In this section, I will explore participants’ opinions on issues revealed on the show, and how they consider the social and political implications. Analysis will be based on the participants’ discussions on the following topics: What kind of issues are frequently seen on the show?; What case gave you a deep impression?; and How do you think about the mediation show as a solution for family issues? Moreover, as the survey finding indicated that the audiences learn about legal and mediation knowledge from the show, would they consider it a goal established by the programme makers or some authority to achieve a harmonious society?

First of all, according to the focus group participants, disputes involving properties are frequently seen on the show. They see house property as the most common cause of

family disputes on the mediation show, which is true according to the content analysis in Chapter Five. As discussed, although programme makers wish to reduce the number of house-related issues, the tight resources make it difficult. Disputes over money matters and marital problems come second. According to most of our participants<sup>271</sup>, including both frequent viewers and non-frequent viewers, the majority of disputes on the show are either about estate properties or problems in marriages. Given that house prices have been rising rapidly, it is true that house property has played a crucial role in many disputes. For instance, relocated families often have disagreements on the distribution of allocated houses and compensation<sup>272</sup>. In some other cases, siblings have different ideas of caring for aged parents and inheritance distribution. Cases of this sort are often seen on the mediation show, and perhaps that is why Bai Wanqing often says that ‘sophisticated elders would not get their properties off their hands easily, otherwise is a lack of caution’ (*shulian bu tuoshou, tuoshou bu shulian*). One regular viewer who has been watching *XLNJ* since its first broadcast asserts that,

‘“house property” (*fangzi*) is the key word to all arguments on *XLNJ*. In spite of the fact that a variety of issues were talked about on the show including disputes between siblings, husband and wife, or parent and children, most of them would more or less involve issues over personal or real properties... we often see one party to the dispute request the other to add their name on property ownership certificate or move their *hukou* (household registration) from other regions to Shanghai, not surprisingly, the other party usually refuse such requirement as they worry that by adding name on the deed the requester will become the co-owner of the house property which may jeopardise their own interests in the future. And this oftentimes gives rise to the conflicts between couples, in-laws, or siblings’.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Participants #1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, 15, 17, and 23

<sup>272</sup> Urban constructions required demolitions of many old houses in order to construct modern business or commercial buildings. The original inhabitants were relocated in the outer suburbs, and some of them also received a certain amount of money as compensation.

<sup>273</sup> Participant #1

Some participants mention a case aired not long before the day of the focus group discussion<sup>274</sup>. The dispute was between a couple who had been married for just two years. The wife asked for a divorce for the reason ‘emotional incompatibility’. However, the husband suspected that his wife had some scheme because she moved back to stay with her parents nine days after their wedding. Since he had added his wife’s name to the ownership certificate of the house that was supposed to be his pre-marital property, he will have to pay his wife about 300,000 RMB (about 36,700 euro) if they divorce. The focus group participants were impressed by this incredible case, and they felt quite aggrieved and accused his wife of utilising marriage for personal interest.

In addition to conflicts originating from disagreements over house properties, poverty seems to be another main cause of unhappy arguments. Some frequent viewers assume that ‘99 percent of those issues have their roots in poverty’<sup>275</sup>. And nearly half of the frequent-viewer participants mentioned an old saying in China that ‘When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out at the window’. As they see it, poverty is a powerful catalyst that magnifies unhappiness in life and turns family squabbles into serious conflicts.

And recently, the audience noticed that domestic violence appears to be an increasingly common origin of disputes between couples in addition to extramarital affairs. Some participants are surprised that sometimes family violence ‘even happened to highly-educated people’<sup>276</sup>. The participants are somewhat stunned to find so many violent cases on *XLNJ*, as it seems to them that family violence is uncommon in their life.

Focus groups participants have their own opinions about disputes mediation that are sometimes not accordant with the mediators’ ideas. In particular, some frequent viewers reported that sometimes they are not in complete agreement with the mediators’ suggestions, though they are loyal audience members and fond of the mediators. One of them experienced domestic violence during her childhood, and she found that,

‘it is particularly incomprehensible to me that the mediator still attempt[s] to make peace in domestic violence cases. Maybe the elder generation has different

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<sup>274</sup> Titled *My Wife Stays at Her Parents’ Home 5 Days in One Week, What Plot is She Brewing?* (qizi yizhou wutian zhu niangjia, jujingyouheyimingou), aired on September 16<sup>th</sup> 2013.

<sup>275</sup> Participants #4, 5, and 9

<sup>276</sup> Participant #11

understanding of life and love than us the younger generation. In my opinion, they can tolerate for the sake of life. While for us, we choose to stay together because of love, material pursues family reason, or a bit of everything. However, family violence is absolutely unforgivable.<sup>277</sup>

Indeed, the mediators seem to adhere to the belief that ‘one shall not destroy a marriage no matter how (*ning chai shizuo miao, bu po yizhuang hun*)’. In both frequent-viewer and non-frequent-viewer groups, participants<sup>278</sup> remarked that the aim of the programme is to make peace. Specifically, some frequent viewers<sup>279</sup> consider this acceptable because ‘Chinese people usually suggest couple[s] to tolerate rather than to divorce (*quan he bu quan li*)’, and that is why the programme makes every effort to pull couples together. To some of them, the medium of television makes it possible for some cases to be solved. It seems to them that disputants would keep their promise made on the show because it is broadcast to the public: ‘under the surveillance of the public, they will have to do what they promise on the show’<sup>280</sup>. They give high credit to the show for its ability to solve disputes, suggesting that, to a certain extent, they lack confidence in their own ability to make a change. It seems that our panel participants believe the show can make a change because they cannot. This somehow confirms what is found in Chapter Six that those who have lower political efficacy are likely to be convinced by the show’s ability to promote harmony.

But non-frequent viewers have different opinion; about one-third of them<sup>281</sup> believe that the show’s slogan ‘building and maintaining a harmonious society’ suggests that it is a political goal of the programme makers to foster peace in society and create a harmonious impression for the audience. While they seem to be aware of the aim established by the show, they are not necessarily convinced. In other words, some non-frequent viewers indicate that it is hardly possible to reduce the number of disputes by the efforts of some mediation shows. To them, the show’s slogan seems to push this programme towards the ‘mouthpiece’ role of the Party.

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<sup>277</sup> Participant #12

<sup>278</sup> Participants #3, 13, and 19

<sup>279</sup> Participants #3, 5, 7, and 11

<sup>280</sup> Participant #9

<sup>281</sup> Participants #13, 18, and 19

### 7.3.3 Cultural Perception

With respect to the cultural aspect, I will look into participants' attitudes towards discussing personal issues publicly on TV, i.e. face-saving/losing issues or whether participants find that the show is promoting traditional cultural values. This part of the analysis is based on the participants' discussion about their opinions towards revealing family issues on television, the motivation behind disputants' choice of televised mediation, and the assumed power of the mediation show in solving disputes.

The survey result indicates that the audience does not find it humiliating to watch family disputes on television, but at the same time, they do not consider it a solution to their own issues. They differentiate between themselves as viewers and disputants as objects, suggesting a third-person effect of communication. The boundary between them is clearly divided by participants' using 'they' to refer to disputants and 'I' or 'we' to refer to themselves. To them, it seems acceptable to watch others' disputes on television, but it is a disgrace if they have to go on the show themselves. So, while they regard televised mediation as acceptable, this does not necessarily mean that they perceive it as unharmed to the reputation of the family.

The focus group discussion showed that participants, particularly frequent viewers, hold a somewhat self-contradictory view towards mediation on TV. On the one hand, for most heavy-viewers, mediation TV has become a utilisable option to solve civil domestic disputes as it is 'legally binding' and 'free of charge'. As a dispute solution, it has little to do for them with face-issues, especially 'given the fact that *XLNJ* has broadcast for more than five years, and programmes of a similar type have been more common now, fewer people would make a fuss'<sup>282</sup>.

On the other hand, however, the behaviour of airing dirty linen in public did give rise to the concern about issues related to reputation. The majority of participants—including both frequent and non-frequent viewers—see it as dishonourable, if not humiliating, to describe domestic disputes on the show. Nearly all of the participants believe that revealing family conflicts to the public would make oneself the subject of ridicule and bring embarrassment to one's family. They believe that people put their family honour at stake when they pour out their discontent and fight with family on

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<sup>282</sup> Participant #4.

TV, seeking consolation and solutions. Such face-losing concern became especially obvious when participants found that they could identify with the disputant.

For instance, Participant #6 once spotted a disputant couple living in a neighbourhood in which she used to live, and she felt that the couple had subjected themselves to ridicule by other neighbours by telling their private issues on the show: ‘...apparently, our past neighbours –those who love chit-chat–must have been gossiping about them behind their backs for weeks’. Similarly, another participant, #8, was surprised when he recognised a teacher from his old school on a recent episode about domestic violence<sup>283</sup>. He felt sorry for her being a victim of family violence for many years and believed that she must have gathered her courage to seek mediation on *XLNJ*, as he speculated that ‘many other schoolmates would recognise her, now she is known to everyone in Shanghai...’. Both participants’ words suggested their concern for the disputants’ being the object of gossip. It appears that participants distinguish televised mediation as a solution from the act of revealing domestic disputes per se. The former was regarded as an acceptable option, while the latter was seen as less honourable. Many frequent-viewer participants showed empathy with disputants, believing that they must have encountered unsolvable difficulties and had no better choice than turning to the television programme.

Unlike frequent viewers, the majority of non-frequent-viewer participants judged mediation on TV and the revelation behaviour as generally disgraceful. Many of them did not understand why someone would reveal private issues to an unknown audience, as for them quarrelling in front of relatives was already embarrassing, not to mention complete strangers<sup>284</sup>. Therefore, in their eyes turning to *XLNJ* was certainly not a wise, but rather a humiliating, decision. Participants’ discussion displayed various reasons for this disapproval, which could be summarised into two main reasons: *disfavour of vulgarity* and *ethical and legal concerns*. Firstly, with disfavour of the vulgarity, most non-frequent-viewer participants thought that TV programmes like *XLNJ* lack culture and taste. They thought the show ‘was playing to the gallery by displaying the ugliest side of the human nature’ and its purpose was to attract the audience and accordingly ‘profiteer from advertising’<sup>285</sup>.

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<sup>283</sup> Titled University teacher suffered domestic violence for ten years.

<sup>284</sup> Participants #15, 16, 21, and 24

<sup>285</sup> Participants #13, 15, 16, 21, 23, and 24

Secondly, a majority of the non-frequent participants expressed their doubts about the *ethical and legal concerns*. They alleged that the show stepped over the line when pursuing higher ratings at the expense of people's privacy and misfortune<sup>286</sup>. In their opinions, carrying out civil mediation in private rather than in public is a more appropriate manner, as much as a mark of a civilised and progressive society. In fact, they felt that *XLNJ* tends to present a harmonious result of mediation on TV, but fails to solve the actual problem. After the seemingly happy ending, disputants would continue to 'fight again when they get back home'<sup>287</sup>.

When asked their opinions on the value implication of the show, contrasting perceptions were found between frequent and non-frequent-viewer participants. About three-quarters of the frequent participants felt that the show could be seen as positive in terms of its representation of mainstream moral and social values as well as the enlightenment it grants in dealing with family disputes. In contrast, almost all non-frequent viewers accused the show of its allegedly negative implications about social values that more or less impugned the reputation of Shanghai residents.

In the heavy-viewers' opinion, mediators on *XLNJ* were generally able to base their mediation on the law as much as on ethical and moral standards. In other words, given that family disputes were inevitably concerned with interpersonal relations, the mediators' ability to grasp the disputants' psychological point was as important, if not more, as their applicable legal knowledge because logic can convince, but only emotion can motivate. For such cases, emotional persuasion sometimes proved more effective in bringing disputants together again. All of the frequent-viewer participants mentioned that the show reflected real human nature, good and evil. And most of them enjoyed watching mediators 'give the wrong party – such as those who have cheated on their family – a serious moral lesson'<sup>288</sup>. It seemed to them that the show performed its claimed obligation to praise virtue and punish vice, adhering to the social value orientation.

Moreover, the majority of frequent-viewer participants observed that many cases on the show were worth thinking about. The show, to some extent, was like 'a social

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<sup>286</sup> Participants #15, 21, and 24

<sup>287</sup> Participants #17, 19, and 21

<sup>288</sup> Participants #2, 4, 6, 7, 10, and 11

university<sup>289</sup> where one can learn dispute-handling skills from others and then reflect on their own. Participants shared the same opinion that the lack of communication skills was a common problem for the disputants. Nearly half of the frequent viewers would reflect on their own habits of communication sometimes after watching certain episodes of *XLNJ*, because ‘the way you express yourself is particularly important when there is difference of opinion with others, sometimes you can make others happy or angry with just a single word.’<sup>290</sup> It seemed to them that such edifying function could benefit ‘both the old and the young’ and ‘people in different occupations’<sup>291</sup>.

By contrast, almost all of the non-frequent viewers hold the opposite view. They remarked that the show was ‘vulgar’, was characterised by a ‘lack of taste’, and had the sole purpose to ‘attract eyeballs’ by ‘playing to the audience’s curiosity of others’ privacy’<sup>292</sup>. For them, no positive values—such as grace, courage, honesty and loyalty—were presented on the *XLNJ* show. Rather, some participants worried that the show would have undesirable consequences. For example, one participant<sup>293</sup> indicated that such mediation programmes should be cut off and removed from the prime time period, because the content was ‘not enlightening or motivational, nor does it help to widen our horizon’. Furthermore, other participants made the accusation that too many disputes over the distribution of family property showed on TV would ‘wipe out interpersonal trust and bonding’<sup>294</sup> as if ‘your wife or children are only concerned about your money’<sup>295</sup>.

Moreover, some participants commented from a broader perspective that ‘It gives a misleading impression (of Shanghainese), people from outside the city think Shanghainese are stingy and narrow-minded when they watch the show. But in fact, the show only represents a small percentage of people in Shanghai’<sup>296</sup>. It seemed that non-frequent viewers felt that *XLNJ* presents a partial and unjust image of people from

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<sup>289</sup> Participant #5

<sup>290</sup> Participant #6

<sup>291</sup> Participants # 1, 3, 6, 8, and 9

<sup>292</sup> Participants # 13, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 24

<sup>293</sup> Participant #16

<sup>294</sup> Participant #18

<sup>295</sup> Participants #18, 20, and 24

<sup>296</sup> Participant #14

Shanghai. They accused that such misrepresentations would affect the image of the Shanghainese.

Most participants in all four focus groups believed that they have the ability to communicate with their family members and resolve family issues. Only one in the frequent-viewer group mentioned that he might consider *XLNJ* as an option if one day he has serious family issues. Most non-frequent viewers did not consider televised mediation as a desirable choice for themselves, because people will talk behind your back when they recognise you on TV.

## 7.4 Conclusion

The discussion above has demonstrated the findings from frequent viewers and non-frequent viewers, who were grouped according to their obtained education level. In general, not many differences are found between higher and lower education groups, but there are evident differences between frequent and non-frequent viewers in terms of their perceptions. The differences might be explained by how much time they spend on watching the show, as the degree of familiarity with the show accordingly leads them to look at it from a different perspective. This confirms the finding from the Chapter Six that media consumption is a significant variable in explaining respondents' perceptions of the show. By and large, frequent viewers' perceptions appear to be more in line with the programme makers' aim, while non-frequent viewers seem to be more suspicious and even tend to doubt the realness of the show. This finding perhaps is not very surprising, as Chinese audiences have been found to be longing for media credibility since the 1980s (Zhang 2009)<sup>297</sup>.

One significant feature of the show is its use of dialect, which turns out to be what frequent viewers love and non-frequent viewers hate. Being one important part of culture, speaking and understanding dialect shorten the distance between disputants and television viewers by giving them a feeling of closeness. The need for a familiar native lingual environment appears to be the major reason why our frequent viewers watch the show.

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<sup>297</sup> In a 1982 audience research study conducted by Chinese academics and entertainment enterprises, only 24 percent of the 1,966 people surveyed believed that news broadcasts were credible. See more detailed account in Zhang (2009).

But this cultural element is what non-frequent viewers dislike. It seems that they have been more convinced by the Promoting Mandarin Campaign, and consider slang inappropriate to be used on television. These opposite attitudes towards the dialect might be explained by their opinions associated with Shanghai becoming a migrant metropolitan centre, which requires further research.

Compared with the findings from the survey chapter, where education was identified as a factor explaining the respondents' different perceptions of the show, those with lower education are more likely to be convinced by the show as promoting social harmony, but less likely to watch it for fun or consider it to be associated with a loss of reputation. This difference in education is not evident in the focus group research. In fact, the finding suggests that frequent viewers, regardless of their education, obtain enjoyment—but not necessarily fun—from the show. The difference between the survey and focus group findings may be explained by the terms used in the questions; entertainment may have more dimensions than 'making you laugh' or 'having fun'. Both frequent and non-frequent viewers appear to be curious—more or less—to learn others' stories. The complex enjoyment process of watching consists of various purposes such as 'voyeuristic needs', 'socialising, and 'learning'. This suggests that sometimes viewers' needs and the gratification they obtain from watching a specific show are not necessarily consistent. In this case, the audience might not watch *XLNJ* specifically for fun, but they obtain certain entertainment as a consequence.

The focus group discussion allowed me to approach people and explore not only their uses and perceptions but also their perspectives on issues of contention in the three aspects. As Chapter Five has indicated, it is challenging for programme makers to integrate entertaining elements in the educational aim in the form of making the otherwise serious civil mediation fun and interesting to the audience. This seemingly contentious combination of entertainment and dispute resolution, however, does not appear to be a significant problem for programme viewers, especially the frequent ones. The frequent viewers in this study do not hide their curiosities about others' disputes, which might make good topics in their social life. It seems that blending entertainment with civil mediation does not necessarily prevent the viewers from obtaining information. In fact, the focus group discussions suggest that (frequent) viewers might still obtain information gratification. The programme makers' educational aim seems to reach the audience with this form of entertained mediation.

As indicated in Chapter Six, the mediation show manages to establish a harmonious image among the respondents; on the whole, our focus group participants were also aware of the political aim of promoting social harmony. This aim seems obvious to them, as it is used as a slogan by the show. But frequent and non-frequent viewers hold different opinions regarding how this aim is implemented. In other words, frequent viewers appear to be more convinced by it and tend to believe that the show has 'positive' influence in society, while non-frequent viewers are more likely to be concerned about its 'negative' influence in publicising domestic disputes. Perhaps frequent viewers are more likely to be interested in learning about disputes in others' families (see Chapter Six), and accordingly, it is not surprising that frequent viewers are more likely to consider televised mediation as a helpful solution. Unlike the producer's concern, frequent viewers do not seem to get bored of house-related issues. To them, the frequently occurring disputes over properties to a certain extent reflect the common issues in society. These viewers seem able to reconcile harmony with disharmony.

With respect to the cultural aspect, i.e. the face-saving matters, though frequent viewers exhibit understanding of disputants' choice of public mediation, they would not see it as a choice for themselves. They share the similar opinions as non-frequent viewers with regard to family reputation. Since the onset of media marketisation, various types of television programmes have been focusing on ordinary people's lives, such as a conventional talk show mentioned in previous chapters. It is likely that people might be receptive to the new genre of programmes such as televised mediation and, again, accommodate the contradictions. But this does not mean that they do not care about 'face' issues. On the whole, they are traditional in terms of dealing with their own issues, but become tolerant of others' choices.

In general, these viewers seem to be tolerant of the contradictions, though they are aware of them. In other words, the audience pays more attention to what they get from the show, including information and entertainment, rather than caring whether others lose their reputation or not.