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Identity Reconstruction in Online Survival: Challenges and Thoughts on Youth Political Identity



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Abstract: Young groups are at a critical stage of political socialization, and the Internet environment has a significant impact on them. Currently, the deep integration of online pan-entertainmentism and youth subculture has brought about changes in communication characteristics, cognitive transformation and value reconstruction risks, resulting in the triple dilemma of de-systematization of cognitive awareness, de-politicization of emotional connection, and de-centering of value identity in shaping the political identity of young people. Therefore, from the perspective of systematic management, it is necessary to realize cognitive structure through the development of “light communication” products and “algorithmic politics” matrix, emotional connection through the construction of ceremonial scenes and the improvement of opinion leader mechanism, and value cohesion through the development of IP-based symbols and the establishment of an early-warning mechanism for ideological currents, in order to break the difficulties.

Keywords: identity reconstruction, youth political identity, challenges, pondering

1. The Problem: Identity Reconstruction in Networked Existence

“Ideological is the heart of the country and the soul of the nation” (Xi, 2022). This reveals profoundly the core position of ideological work in the development of the state and the nation. According to the 55th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development, the number of Internet users in China has exceeded 1.1 billion, the Internet prevalence rate has reached 78.6%, and the per person weekly Internet time is 28.7 hours (China Internet Network Information Center, 2025). Such a large group of Internet users and long-time Internet contact make the Internet environment have far-reaching influence on individual's ideology, value orientation and behavior. And the youth group, as the future of the country and the hope of the nation, is in a critical period of political socialization. “The construction of the knowledge system has not yet been completed, the shaping of values has not been

completed, and the emotional psychology has not yet matured” (Central Literature Research Office of the CPC, 2017). In this context, the deep fusion of network pan-entertainmentism and youth subculture is very easy to generate new types of culture such as “fan culture” and “secondary politics.” Bringing new challenges to the shaping of young people's political identity. To analyze these phenomena and their underlying influences is an urgent and highly significant task for the ideological educators in colleges and universities.

1.1 Changes in communication characteristics

From “the death of entertainment” described by Neil Bozeman in 1985 to the current algorithm-enabled “the death of immersion”, the dominance of entertainment in the field of information dissemination has been shown to be strengthened. In the era of traditional media, although entertainment content also occupies a certain percentage, the dissemination of information is relatively more diversified, and audiences are still exposed to a wealth of political, cultural, educational

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and other kinds of information. However, with the rapid development of Internet technology, especially the rise of short video platforms, entertainment content has rapidly occupied the attention of the public with its unique form and powerful dissemination. Data show that the number of short video users reached 1.040 billion, accounting for 93.8% of Internet users as a whole; the number of micro short series users reached 662 million, accounting for 59.7% of Internet users as a whole (China Internet Network Information Center, 2025). Under the support of popular supremacy and business, pan-entertainment has become the invisible label of short video (Ai, Sun & Ma, 2023). The application of algorithmic recommendation technology has exacerbated this trend. By analyzing the user's browsing history, search records, likes and comments and other data, the platform precisely pushes the entertainment content that the user may be interested in, making it difficult for the user to immerse in the “information cocoon” of entertainment. For example, when users watch a few funny videos on a short video platform, the platform will continue to push similar funny content, and users tend to spend a lot of time watching these entertainment videos without realizing it, while turning a ignore to other information such as politics. This “death of immersion” mode of communication not only reduces the spreading area of political information, but also greatly reduces the attention and acceptance of political content among youth groups.

1.2 Cognitive pattern transformation

The acceptance of political information by youth groups presents “three-micro features”, i.e. micro-minute, micro-content, micro-narrative. In the fast-advanced modern life, youths pursue efficient and convenient ways of information access, and the emergence of short videos precisely meets this need of them. Micro short series and short dramas emerged from short video platforms, and quickly became an emerging force in online audiovisuals by virtue of their light volume, short cycle, and pro-people plot design (Huang, 2024). However, this

fragmented way of information acquisition also brings many problems.

First, it is difficult for micro-minute short videos to give a comprehensive and in-depth account of complex political events. Political events often involve various factors such as historical background, social environment and multiple benefits, and require systematic analysis and interpretation before they can be accurately understood. However, a 15-second short video can only present a fragment of an event or a simple conclusion, and it is difficult for young people to form a complete understanding of a political event after watching it. For example, for some hot topics in international politics, such as the trade friction between China and the U.S., the short video may simply report the trade data of the two sides or some superficial conflicts, while the deeper economic, political, cultural and other reasons behind it cannot be explored in depth.

Second, micro-content makes political information highly simplified and one-sided. In order to attract viewers' attention in a short time, short videos often select the most topical or exciting parts of political events to present, while ignoring other important information. This is likely to lead to a biased understanding of political events and the formation of one-sided perceptions among youth. For example, when reporting on some domestic policies, short videos may only emphasize certain benefits brought about by the policies, while avoiding the difficulties and challenges that may be faced in the process of implementing the policies, making the youth's understanding of the policies not comprehensive enough.

Third, micro-narratives lack in-depth excavation of the logic and meaning behind political events. The occurrence and development of political events have their own internal logic and far-reaching significance, and in-depth narratives can help young people better understand the essential nature and value of politics. However, the micro-narrative of short videos often simply recounts the passage of events, and cannot lead young people to in-depth thinking. For example, when telling the history of the CPC, the short video

may only list some important historical events and time nodes, while failing to present fully the CPC's original spirit and mission of seeking happiness for the people and rejuvenation of the nation, as well as the great wisdom and tenacity of the CPC in the course of history, which are embedded behind these events.

1.3 Value deconstruction risk

The concept of “funny is right” (Chen, 2018), which has become very popular in the online pan-entertainment picture, and entertainment, playfulness and fun have become important criteria for measuring the value of things. Under the influence of this concept, youths are more inclined to pay attention to things that can bring entertainment and pleasure, and lack interest in serious political content and mainstream of values. For example, when facing political issues, some young people do not analyze and think from a rational perspective, but judge them by the criteria of whether they are interesting and whether they meet their entertainment needs. This change in value preferences makes young people under-recognize the seriousness and importance of politics, and easily overlook the far-reaching impact of politics on social development and personal life. A playful attitude toward mainstream political discourse reflects a crisis in the youth group's identification with mainstream values. Mainstream political discourse is an important embodiment of national ideology, carrying the core values and development concepts of the country. However, under the influence of online pan-entertainmentism and youth subculture, some youths have spoofed and joked about mainstream political discourse, treating politics with a playful and cynical attitude. For example, some youths make flirtatious interpretations of some important political documents on the Internet, and such behavior not only undermines the authority and seriousness of mainstream political discourse, but also easily misleads other youths, leading them to misunderstand and resist mainstream values.

To conclude, under the background of networked existence, the deep fusion of online

pan-entertainmentism and youth subculture has brought serious challenges to the shaping of youth political identity. The change of communication characteristics, the transformation of cognitive paradigm and the risk of value deconstruction have led to the triple dilemma of de-systematization of cognitive system, de-politicization of emotional connection and de-centering of value identity in the shaping of youth political identity.

2. Dilemma Deconstruction: The Three Dimensional Impact Mechanism of Pan-entertainmentism

In today's society, the trend of pan-entertainmentism is so strong that its influence spreads to all levels of society, causing a profound impact on the fields of knowledge, emotion and value, and forming a unique three-dimensional impact mechanism.

2.1 Knowledge fragmentation: de-systematization of cognitive systems

The fragmented dissemination of information brought about by the fusion of Internet pan-entertainmentism and youth subculture and the “three-micro” acceptance of political information by young people have led to a trend towards systematization of the cognitive system. Under the traditional mode of education and information spreading, youth can build up a relatively complete political knowledge system through systematic learning and reading. However, in the networked survival environment, the political knowledge acquired by youth is often fragmented, lacking systematicity and coherence. The political events that some youth learn about through short videos are just isolated fragments that do not form an organic whole. They may be aware of the happening of a certain political event, but they lack a comprehensive understanding of the background, causes, development process and impact of the event. Such fragmented knowledge cannot help young people establish a correct political cognitive framework, and it is difficult for them to develop an in-depth understanding of political phenomena and the ability

to analyze them. Being in such a fragmented information environment for a long time, the way of thinking of youth will also gradually become fragmented, making it difficult for them to engage in systematic thinking and logical reasoning. This poses a great obstacle to their correct knowledge of the political world, understanding of national policies and participation in political life.

2.2 Emotional generalizations: depoliticizing emotional connections

Under the influence of network pan-entertainmentism, there is a trend of depoliticization in the emotional connection of youth, which is expressed in the generalization of emotions. Political emotion is an important foundation of political identity, which embodies an individual's love, loyalty and sense of belonging to the political system, political regime and political philosophy. However, in the current network environment, youth's emotions are more attracted and mobilized by entertainment content, and their emotional attention to politics gradually decreases. For example, in the process of following celebrities, youths invest a lot of emotion and energy in charting and supporting their favorite celebrities, and even get into heated arguments with others in order to defend the image of the celebrities. This emotional investment far exceeds their concern for political events and political figures. At the same time, emotional expression on the Internet has become increasingly serious. Instead of expressing their views and opinions rationally, some young people are led by their emotions and engage in emotional outbursts when confronted with political issues. This kind of emotional generalization makes it difficult for young people to establish stable and healthy political emotions and form a deep emotional connection with the political system, thus affecting their identification with and participation in politics.

2.3 Meaninglessness: the decentering of value identity

The popularity of the concept of “funny is right” and the playful attitude towards mainstream political discourse reflect the trend of decentering the value

identity of youth groups, and even the emergence of the meaninglessness phenomenon. In traditional societies, mainstream values dominate, providing people with a clear value orientation and code of conduct. However, under the impact of network pan-entertainmentism and youth subculture, diversified values conflict with each other, causing youth to fall into confusion in their value choices.

Some young people are no longer oriented to traditional mainstream values, but pursue individualized and diversified values. This diversification of values is not a negative phenomenon in itself, but if there is a lack of correct guidance, it will easily lead to confusion in value identity. For example, some young people pursue individualistic and hedonistic values, neglecting social responsibility and collective interests. When facing political issues, they start from personal interests and lack concern for the overall development and long-term interests of the country. At the same time, the playfulness and denial of the mainstream political discourse have made the youth doubt the meaning and value of politics and fall into the dilemma of meaninglessness. This phenomenon of decentralization of value identity and meaninglessness has seriously affected young people's sense of identity and belonging to the country and the nation, to the disadvantage of the country's stability and development.

3. Solutions: Efficiency Strategies for Systemic Governance

In the face of the many dilemmas brought about by pan-entertainmentism, we need to start from the perspective of systematic governance, develop effective enhancement strategies, and carry out all-round repair and reconstruction from the cognitive, emotional and value levels.

3.1 Cognitive construction: frame narrative reconstruction.

Firstly, the development of “light communication” political education products. In the fast-paced information era, it is usually difficult for traditional political education methods to attract the

attention of the audience. “Light communication” political education products, instead, incorporate serious political knowledge in a light and interesting form. For example, the Communist Youth League Central Committee launched “Year Hare Affair”, which uses cute animal images to represent different countries, and tells the story of China's modern history and diplomacy through witty and humorous animation. This novel narrative has successfully attracted the majority of young people, breaking the dullness of traditional political education, and allowing the audience to subconsciously accept political education and build up a correct view of history and political cognition in a pleasant viewing experience.

The second is to establish an “algorithmic politics” communication matrix. Make full use of algorithmic technology to accurately push political education content based on user interests, behavioral habits and other data. For example, by analyzing the topics that users are concerned about and the discussions they participate in on social media, we can push out articles and videos related to political thinking and interpretation. At the same time, various media platforms are integrated to form a communication matrix, such as collaboratively releasing content on WeChat Publishing, Weibo, Tiktok and other platforms to expand the coverage of political education. Different platforms have different communication characteristics, WeChat Publishing is suitable for pushing in-depth content, Weibo facilitates topic discussion and dissemination, and Tiktok attracts young users in the form of short videos. Through multi-platform links, political thinking education is more targeted and influential, breaks the “information echo barrier”, and guides users to contact diversified viewpoints to promote the cognitive comprehensive development.

3.2 Emotional connection: deepening the cultural area

The first is to create a ritualized participation scene. Ceremonies have a powerful emotional cohesion effect, and the “Youth Heart to the CPC” feature on bilibili video platform builds a ceremonial

participation scenario through online live broadcasting and interaction. The feature includes activities such as singing red songs and party history knowledge contests, attracting a large number of young people to participate, with a broadcast volume of more than 100 million. In the process, young people feel a strong sense of collective belonging and mission through joint participation in the activities, which inspires their passion and faithfulness to the CPC. This ceremonial participation scene allows youth to experience real emotional connection even in virtual space, and enhances their sense of identification with mainstream culture.

Second, improve the cultivation mechanism of network opinion leaders. Network opinion leaders have an important influence in the network cultural field. Their views and behaviors can guide the attitudes and behaviors of their followers. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on cultivating positive online opinion leaders, such as inviting experts, scholars and outstanding youth representatives as online opinion leaders to spread positive energy on online platforms. Through their professional knowledge and charisma, these opinion leaders can interact with followers, answer their questions, and guide them to establish correct values and emotional orientation. At the same time, a training and management mechanism for opinion leaders has been established to standardize their words and actions, ensuring that they can play a positive role in the online cultural field and promote emotional connection and cultural identity.

3.3 Value cohesion: consensus production innovation

First, developing IP-based mainstream value symbols. IP-based mainstream value symbols can enhance their communication power and influence. The “CCTV Boys” group has attracted a large number of fans with the professional image of CCTV hosts and humorous style, with more than 40 million Weibo fans. By participating in variety shows and live broadcasts, they convey the values of mainstream media to the public in a fun and relaxed way. Their dedication and cultural awareness have

become the vivid embodiment of mainstream values. This kind of IP-based mainstream value symbols breaks the serious and stereotypical image of traditional mainstream media, brings them closer to the public, promotes the dissemination and recognition of mainstream values, and builds up social consensus.

Secondly, it establishes a dynamic early-warning mechanism for ideological currents. In the era of diversified thinking, it is crucial to grasp the dynamics of thinking in a time and provide early warnings for thinking that may lead to value confusion. Through big data analysis, public opinion monitoring and other technical means, we can track online public opinion hotspots in real time and analyze the direction of ideological trends. Once the first sign of an undesirable trend of thought is detected, early warning information is released in time, and experts and scholars are organized to interpret and guide it. For example, when erroneous trends such as historical nihilism emerge, authoritative articles and videos are quickly released through media platforms to expose their essentials and dangers, and guide the public to establish a correct view of history and values. Through the dynamic early-warning mechanism, we can effectively prevent the dissolution of values and maintain the stability of social value consensus.

Conclusion

The deconstruction of young people's political identity by online pan-entertainmentism is essentially a mirror projection of the anxiety of modernity in digital existence. Breaking this dilemma requires the establishment of a systematic protection mechanism from the three aspects of cognitive support, emotional connection and value consensus, so that the construction of mainstream ideology not only maintains theoretical thoroughness, but also possesses the affinity of dissemination. For the political thinkers in higher education, it is necessary to pay great attention to these problems and actively explore strategies to deal with them. On the one hand, it is necessary to strengthen the guidance and

management of the network environment, standardize the dissemination of network information, and reduce the influence of undesirable information on young people; on the other hand, it is necessary to innovate the methods and approaches of political education, and make full use of network platforms and new media technology to improve the relevance and effectiveness of political thinking and education. For example, through the production of high-quality short videos on ideological education and the development of political practice activities combining online and offline, we can guide young people to establish correct political awareness, cultivate positive political emotions and firm value identity. This is not only an inevitable requirement for maintaining social security, but also a strategic choice for realizing the talent support for Chinese-modernization.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest to this work.

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