RESEARCH ARTICLE

Identity Reconstruction in Networked Existence: Challenges and Reflections on Youth's Public Identity

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Abstract: Young people are at an important stage of shaping positive values, and the Internet environment has a profound influence on them. At present, the deep integration of online pan-entertainmentism and youth subculture has brought about changes in communication characteristics, cognitive paradigm transformation and the risk of value reconstruction, resulting in the triple difficulties of de-systematization of the cognitive system, de-public of emotional ties and de-centralization of value identities in shaping the mainstream value identity of the youth. Thus, it is necessary to start from the perspective of systematic governance to solve the dilemma by creating new communication media and intelligent guidance systems to realize cognitive integration, constructing ceremonial scenarios and perfecting opinion leader mechanisms to realize emotional connection, and developing IP-based signs and establishing value monitoring mechanisms to realize value coherence.

Keywords: identity reshaping, identity in public, challenges, reflections

1. Presentation of the Problem: Identity Reconstruction in Networked Survival

Young people are the pioneering force in the development of society and the most dynamic, ambitious, energetic and pioneering group in society. The ideological trends and identity movements of young people have a significant influence on the future development of the nation and the country. According to the 55th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China, the number of Internet users in China has exceeded 1.1 billion, the Internet penetration rate has reached 78.6%, and the per capita weekly Internet access time is 28.7 hours (CNNIC, 2025). Such a huge group of Internet users and continuous Internet integration make the Internet environment form an unnoticeable shaping effect on the cognitive framework, value benchmark and behavior of individuals. As the future of the country and the hope of the nation, the youth group is in the critical period

of socialization. Youth groups have not yet completed the construction of knowledge system, value shaping has not yet been completed, emotional psychology has not yet matured, in this context, the deep integration of network pan-entertainmentism and youth subculture is very easy to generate a new type of discourse, such as "fan culture" and "secondary public discourse", giving young people public identity shaping effect, which is not only a problem for them, but also for the youth. This has brought brand new challenges to the shaping of youth public identity. To analyze these phenomena and their influence is an urgent and practical task for higher education ideological educators.

1.1 Communication characteristics changes

From Neil Bozeman's critique of pan-entertainment in 1985 to the phenomenon of digital odyssey spawned by contemporary algorithmic technology, the entertainment in the field of information dissemination has shown a geometrically intensified trend. In the era of

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traditional media, although entertainment content also occupies a certain proportion, the dissemination of information is relatively more diversified, and audiences are still exposed to a wealth of cultural, educational and other types 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. According to the statistics, the number of short video users reaches 1.040 billion, accounting for 93.8% of the overall number of Internet users; the number of micro short videos users reaches 662 million, accounting for 59.7% of the overall number of Internet users (CNNIC, 2025). Under the support of flow supremacy and capital logic, pan-entertainment has become the invisible label of short video (Ai et al., 2023). The application of algorithmic recommendation technology has exacerbated this phenomenon. By analyzing users' browsing history, search records, likes and comments and other data, platforms accurately push entertainment content that users may be interested in, making users form habitual reliance on the self-constructed information filtering effect. When users watch multiple interesting videos on short video platforms, the algorithm system will continue to recommend similar leisure content, and users often spend a lot of time watching these entertainment materials without realizing it, while showing a blind spot in receiving information on current affairs and other information. This "inertial absorption" communication mechanism not only squeezes the communication field of public issues, but also leads to a significant shift in the allocation of youth groups' attention to policy information, which not only compresses the space for the dissemination of public information, but also dramatically reduces the attention to and acceptance of the public content of youth groups.

1.2 Cognitive paradigm transformation

The youth group's acceptance of public information presents "three micro features", i.e. micro duration - micro content - micro narrative. In the fast-paced modern life, young people pursue efficient and convenient ways of obtaining information, and the emergence of short videos precisely meets this need. Micro short videos 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 kind of fragmented information access also brings many problems.

First, micro-length short videos are difficult to provide a comprehensive and in-depth exposition of complex public events. Public events often involve historical background, social environment, multiple interests and other factors, and require systematic analysis and interpretation to 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 public event after watching it. For example, for some popular issues in international, such as the trade friction, the short video may simply report the trade data of the two sides or some superficial conflicts, while the deeper economic, political, and cultural reasons behind them cannot be explored in depth.

Second, micro-content makes public 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 social events to present, while ignoring other important information. This can easily lead to a biased understanding of public events among youth and the formation of one-sided perceptions. For example, when reflecting administrative initiatives, short video platforms often focus on presenting the positive results of institutional innovation, while the actual constraints and implementation difficulties in the specific implementation process are rarely involved, which is easy to let the youth audience form one-sided cognition.

Third, micro-narratives lack in-depth excavation of the logic and meaning behind public events. The occurrence and development of public events have

their own internal logic and far-reaching significance, and in-depth narratives can help young people better understand the nature and value of public. However, the micro-narrative of short videos often simply recounts the passage of events, and cannot lead young people to think deeply. For example, when explaining the historical practice of China's modernization process, short videos often focus only on the timeline of landmark events, but lack in-depth deconstruction and systematic presentation of the core concept of the ruling party, which takes the well-being of the people as its core goal, the overall blueprint for the country's development, as well as the overall vision and strategic determination of decision-makers at key points in history.

1.3 The concern of value remodeling

The concept of "fun is perfect" is spreading rapidly in the online pan-entertainment scene, and witty expressions (Chen, 2018), interactive attributes, and novelty and creativity constitute the core elements of content selection. Under the influence of this concept, young people, as digital natives, are more likely to be dominated by instant pleasure and sensory stimulation, and show a progressive detachment from in-depth ideological issues and positive social value guidance. For example, when facing important issues, some young people do not analyze and think from a rational point of view, but judge them by whether they are interesting and whether they meet their entertainment needs. This shift in value orientation makes young people insufficiently aware of the seriousness and importance of social, and they are prone to ignore the far-reaching impact on social development and personal life. The tendency to hold a non-serious interpretation of public affairs expression reflects the cognitive gap that exists in the process of convergence of the value system of the young generation. Mainstream discourse is an important manifestation of national ideology, carrying the core values and development concepts of the country. However, under the influence of online pan-entertainment and youth subculture, some young people tend to adopt deconstruction and humorized

expression when participating in the discussion of public affairs, reinterpreting serious issues from non-traditional perspectives. Informalized deconstruction of authoritative texts by young people is occasionally seen in online discussions. This expression phenomenon is characterized by two main features: first, the use of a deconstructionist framework for the secondary creation of policies, which may result in semantic deviation in recreational communication; second, the symbolic reorganization of official discourse through playful translation techniques, which creates a special interpretation in subcultural areas. Such behavior not only undermines the authority and seriousness of mainstream political discourse, but also tends to mislead other young people and lead to misunderstanding of mainstream values. This new media contact behavior objectively reflects the transformation of the youth group's public participation, but the communication bias in it requires more positive guidance from the mainstream media.

In summary, 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 public 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 public identity.

2. Dilemma Resolution: the Three-dimensional Impact Mechanism of Pan-entertainmentism

In today's society, the wave of pan-entertainmentism is rapid, and its influence goes 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 the cognitive system

The fragmented information dissemination brought about by the fusion of network pan-entertainmentism and youth subculture, and the "three micro" acceptance of political information by young people, has led to a trend of de-systematization of their cognitive system. Under the traditional mode of education and information dissemination, young people can build up a relatively complete knowledge system through systematic learning and reading. However, in the networked survival environment, the knowledge acquired by youth is often fragmented, lacking systematicity and coherence. The public events that some youth learn about through short videos are just isolated fragments that do not create an organic whole. They may be aware of the occurrence of a certain public 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 framework of public cognition, and it is difficult for them to develop an in-depth understanding of public phenomena and the ability to analyze them. Being in such a fragmented information environment for a long time, the way of thinking of young people 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 our life.

2.2 Emotional generalization: de-valuing of emotional connection

Under the influence of online pan-entertainmentism, there is a trend of post-politicization of youth's emotional connection, which is manifested in the generalization of emotions. Political emotion is an important foundation of political identity, which embodies an individual's sense of love, loyalty and belonging to the public system, regime, and philosophy. However, in the current network environment, youth's emotions are more attracted and mobilized by entertainment content, and their emotional attention to public gradually decreases. For example, youths invest a great deal of emotion and energy in the process of chasing stars. They use precise data analysis tools for traffic support, invest systematic emotional labor to maintain the image of their idols, and show strict organizational discipline. In contrast, youth groups are more likely to fall into the dilemma of emotion-driven expression in the discussion of public issues. The Internet has constructed a public sphere for the expression of multiple opinions, providing a discourse space for citizens to participate in public issues and carry out dialog and negotiation (Du, 2020), but it is also very easy to become an outlet for public emotional catharsis and emotional expression. This polarization of emotional expression is particularly significant on social platforms such as Weibo and Douban. Taking hot social events as an example, some young people often make heated statements based on their emotional stance without fact checking, and create public opinion through "spectator" and "team" interactions. Emotional mobilization instead of rational dialogue. The entertainment-oriented "spectatorship" of public events not only weakens the seriousness of public issues, but also weakens the critical spirit of the public, which gradually loses the ability to make rational judgments and think (Liu & Pan, 2024). This kind of expression hinders the benign cultivation of social emotion, and it is also difficult to form a deep value resonance with the system design.

2.3 Meaningful illusion: decentering of value identity

The popularity of the concept of "fun is right" and the deconstructive interpretation of mainstream authoritative narratives reflect the trend of decentralization of the value identity of the youth group, and even the illusion of meaninglessness. In traditional societies, mainstream values occupy a dominant position, providing people with a clear value orientation and code of conduct. However, under the impact of network pan-entertainmentism and youth subculture, diversified values collide with

each other, causing youth to fall into confusion in their value choices.

Some young people are no longer guided by traditional mainstream values, but pursue individualized and diversified values. This diversification of values is not a bad thing 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, and overlook social responsibility and collective interests. When facing social issues, they start from personal interests and lack concern for the overall development and long-term interests of the country. In the current Internet environment, youth groups have deconstructed and re-examined the mainstream political discourse through subcultural practices, which has also made some of them skeptical about the meaning and value of politics, and has fostered a tendency of value disorientation. This phenomenon of decentralization and meaninglessness of value identity has weakened the sense of collective bonding and social responsibility of youth groups to a certain extent, which may slow down the endogenous impetus of social development and is not conducive to social stability and development.

3. Solutions: Efficiency-enhancing Strategies for Effective Systemic Governance

When facing the many dilemmas brought about by pan-entertainmentism, we need to formulate effective synergistic strategies from the perspective of systematic governance, and carry out all-round repair and reconstruction from the cognitive, emotional and value levels.

3.1 Cognitive construction: reconstruction of framework narrative

First, the development of "light communication" education products. In the fast-paced information age, it is often difficult for traditional political education to attract the attention of the audience. "Light communication" education products, on the other hand, integrate serious political knowledge into them 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 ideology and political thinking" communication matrix. Make full use of algorithmic technology to accurately push political education content according to users' 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 Civics and Government. At the same time, various media platforms are integrated to form a communication matrix, such as collaboratively releasing content on WeChat public number, Weibo, TikTok and other platforms to expand the coverage of Civic and Education. Different platforms have different communication characteristics, WeChat public number is suitable for pushing in-depth content, Weibo is easy for topic discussion and dissemination, and TikTok attracts young users in the form of short videos. Through multi-platform linkage, Civic and political education can be more targeted and influential, break the "echo wall of information", and guide users to contact diversified viewpoints to promote the cognitive Comprehensive development.

3.2 Emotional connection: deep exploration of cultural fields

The first is to build a ritualized participation scene. Ceremonies have a powerful effect on emotional cohesion, and the "Youth to the Party" feature on Bilibili video platform has constructed a ceremonial participation scene 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 love and loyalty to the Party. This ritualized participation scene allows youth to experience real emotional connection even in virtual space, enhancing their sense of identity 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 fans. 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 fans, 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 arena and promote emotional connection and cultural identity.

3.3 Value cohesion: innovation in consensus production

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 lighthearted way. Their dedication and cultural literacy 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 an era of diversified thinking, it is crucial to grasp the dynamics of thinking in a timely manner 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 signs of an undesirable trend of thought are detected, early-warning information is released in a timely manner, and experts and scholars are organized to interpret and guide them. For example, when inappropriate tendencies such as one-sided view of history appear, authoritative interpretations are disseminated through media platforms in a timely manner to clarify the essence of the issue and its adverse effects, and help the public form a scientific understanding of history and core values. A dynamic monitoring and assessment mechanism has been established to prevent and address the risk of weakening mainstream values, and to consolidate the mainstream value system that the entire society follows.

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. Cracking this dilemma requires the construction of a systematic protection system from the three aspects of cognitive supply, emotional connection and value consensus, so that the construction of mainstream ideology not only maintains the thoroughness of theory, but also possesses the affinity of communication. For higher education ideologists, they must pay great attention to these problems and actively explore coping strategies. 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 of education, make full use of network platforms and new media technology, and improve the relevance and effectiveness of public education. For example, through the production of high-quality short videos on ideological education and the development of public practice activities combining online and offline, we can guide young people to establish correct public cognition, cultivate positive public sentiment and firm value identity. This is not only an inevitable requirement for maintaining thinking security, but also a strategic choice for realizing the support of talents for Chinese-style modernization.

Conflict of Interest

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

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