

# Gendered Manifestations of Para-social Interactions between Female Fans and Male Idols in China

Min Li

Department of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK.

---

**Abstract:** This study aims to reveal the gendered manifestations of para-social interactions between female fans and male idols in social media platforms in China, to clarify in which aspects they serve to reinforce the traditional gender order and in which aspects they deviate from the traditional gender norms, with a view to contributing positively to the optimisation of the relationship between female fans and male idols. Digital ethnography approach is used in this work, based on the Sina Weibo platform, to conduct a 15-day online observational study of seven Chinese male idols, namely Ma Jiaqi, Liu Yaowen, Song Yaxuan, Deng Jiabin, Tang Yuzhe, Zhu Yilong, and Yang Yang, as well as their female fans. The blind consumption and unpaid labour of Chinese female fans for their male idols, as well as the polygamous "courtly love" relationship between the two, reaffirm and reinforce the traditional gender order. At the same time, the transformation of Chinese female fans from erotic objects to erotic subjects, their love for multiple male idols, their concern for ambiguous relationships between male idols, and their adherence to self-principle and subjectivity have rebelled against and even subverted traditional gender norms. However, the power to counteract the traditional gender order is not strong enough, and is still limited by factors such as exclusivity within the fan community, heterosexual hegemony, and idolatry that is as crazy and irrational as religious beliefs.

**Keywords:** Female Fans, Male Idols, Idolatry, Para-social Interactions, Traditional Gender Order.

---

## 1. Introduction

With the development of the Internet, social media and the digital economy have brought great changes to society, affecting people's daily lives and contributing to the rapid development of the idol industry. Through social media platforms, fans have had more "intimate" and diverse para-social interactions with their idols. Digital platforms and social media have presented fans as a "labour force" [1] that can benefit musicians and the industry, rather than as "sponsors, co-creators of value, stakeholders, investors and filters" [2]. At the same time, online social platforms also give fans greater mobility, they can carry out group activities more freely and have more opportunities to express their opinions openly. Therefore, they also become the main body receiving services from idols, with a stronger sense of self and subject. As a result, in the digital media environment, the new type of para-social interaction between fans and idols is the focus of fan research. Also, the number of women in the fan group is much more than men [3], female fans as a category with a considerable base and special group, its two-way interaction with male idols has been paid attention to by many feminist scholars, and a lot of feminist scholars have noticed the existence of the traditional gender oppression order in it [4]. Therefore, there is a need for a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the online interactions between female fans and male idols.

This paper builds on the foundation of existing research, selects female fans in China as the research object, employs the method of cyber ethnography to collect valid data on female fan activities on the Sina Weibo platform, and applies thematic analysis method to summarise and analyse the relevant data information. The aim is to reveal the gendered manifestations of para-social interactions between female fans and male idols in social media platforms in China. In order to fulfil this research objective, this paper addresses the following two main research questions:

RQ1: What are the para-social interactive behaviours of Chinese female fans and male idols that reaffirm and reinforce the traditional gender order?

RQ2: What are the para-social interactive behaviours of Chinese female fans and male idols that rebel against and even subvert traditional gender norms?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Relationship between Fans and Idols

In the Web 2.0 era, based on the popularity of the Internet, the improvement of mobile communication devices, and the rapid development of social media, a relationship of para-social interaction has gradually been established between fans and idols. According to Horton & Wohl [5], para-social interaction provides fans with the illusion of face-to-face communication with celebrities, and fans often think they know the celebrities, but in fact they do not have any relationship with them. Social media-based para-social interaction between fans and idols is a form of two-way interaction [6], the low-cost nature of social media to obtain information about idols effectively inspires fans to participate in para-social interactions [7], and the more celebrities share with their fans, the higher the level of fan participation in para-social relationships [8]. From the perspective of affective connection, there is an emotional attachment between fans and their idols [9]. Kirchner et al. [10], in their ongoing participatory observation of fan communities, further argue that the nature of this affective attachment is "heteronormative". However, this 'heteronormative' relationship is not part of a hegemonic regime, and instead of relying on dominant monogamy and sexual exclusivity, it has a certain space of avoidance and emancipation that allows for alternative heteronormative bonding patterns and non-binary gender arrangements. Wu [11] adds that fans have strong, exclusive feelings towards their idols. On social media, fans' priority is to unite to defend their idols from challenges from

other idols and to exclude those idols from competition [11, 12].

In addition to the emotional connection, there is also an unequal labour relationship between fans and idols, in which the labour of idols towards their fans is paid labour oriented towards pleasing and pandering to the fans [3], whereas the labour that fans do for their idols is referred to as “love labour” which is unpaid labour performed for the love associated with idols [13]. Moreover, the unpaid labour of fans is often considered ineffective or even illegal because of disputes over copyright ownership of the content generated, and the value created by fan labour is seen as coming from the media, while the fans, who are the real subjects of production, are largely ignored [4].

In addition, “fan economy” is also an inevitable and important concept when exploring the fan-idol relationship. The fan economy is a collective subculture that represents a dynamic business model that thrives on two-way interactions between fans and idols, capitalising on their emotional and intimate relationships to generate economic and social benefits [14, 15]. The increasing popularity of digital media has facilitated access to “emotional capitalism” [16, 17], which means that the traditional business model has shifted to a commercial or marketing operation targeting an active fan community, which can provide lucrative business opportunities [18]. Ford [19] suggests that fan engagement in the digital sphere can be incorporated into corporate logic and lends itself to monetisation and measurement models - from an economic perspective, stimulating widespread emotional investment based on relationships. Research on the ‘fan economy’ has focused on the impact of idolatry on fans’ purchasing decisions and brand loyalty. celebrity endorsement may bring brand awareness, reputation, expertise, trustworthiness, and liking to a brand [20]. Idolatry positively influences an individual's preference and willingness to purchase certain products [21]. Collaborating with idols is an effective marketing strategy that many companies use to enhance their appeal to fan-consumers and increase brand equity [22, 23]. When idols wear or use products of a certain brand, fans try to imitate them and the corresponding purchase behaviour occurs to achieve self-improvement and self-actualisation [24]. At the same time, fans can get closer to their idols by purchasing their idols’ endorsed products to gain satisfaction from fulfilling their relational needs [25]. From the viewpoint of social identity theory, companies working with idols promote specific brands and encourage fans to develop a strong sense of identity and a positive emotional connection with their idols. Fan customers may confirm their true loyalty by participating in the fan community, thus forming and enhancing a sense of belonging to the fan community [26]. Chen et al. [22] concluded that idol endorsement may influence fan consumers’ brand loyalty and purchase behaviour in four ways: brand personality claims, perceived emotional value, brand-based self-actualisation, and associative need satisfaction.

## 2.2. Female Fans

Women were one of the first groups of people to use the Internet for fan purposes [27]. In China, the number of female fans in the fanbase exceeds that of males [28] and Chinese female fans have been shown to be an active producer and consumer. Therefore, female fans have long been a hot topic in fan studies.

Gerrard [29] and Kirchner et al. [10] make it clear that devaluation and discrimination against female fans is prevalent, both in the social system and within the fanbase. In societies dominated by mainstream culture, “Fangirl” is a term commonly used to demean young female fans, fan circles and fan behaviour [30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35]. As Click [31] points out, female fans are often ridiculed in the mass media for their irrational behaviour and unacceptable desires in mainstream society [35]. Their behaviour was often disparaged by the news media and labelled with “discriminatory Victorian gender terms” such as “obsessive-compulsive”, “febrile”, “mad”, “hysterical”, and “obsessive” [31, 36]. The term “groupie” emerged in the 1960s to refer to devoted fans of male musicians who were more interested in having sex with their pop idols than in their pop idols’ music. In the early 1990s, feminist scholars criticised the discursive construction of groupie, critically pointing out that groupie is a heteronormative term used to demean female music fans [37]. Subsequently, the term “shipper” emerged, which is an abbreviation of “relationshipippers”, referring to female fans who are interested in fictionalised romantic relationships in media texts [38]. The discourses of “Fangirl”, “Groupie” and “Shipper” are often used to position fan discourse and behaviour as feminine, thus to achieve a double devaluation and discrimination of both women and fans [29]. Within the fan community, Kirchner et al. [10], through semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group interviews with male fans, found that male fans are often critical of traditional binary gender arrangements. However, when it comes to the supposed lack of knowledge and irrationality of female fans’ frenzied adoration of their idols, they themselves argue according to the logic of this binary gender. This reflects the traditional sexist logic that is also prevalent within the fan community: male fans are rational and intelligent; while female fans are crazy, irrational and unhinged.

While it is generally true that in general, contemporary society at large holds largely negative attitudes towards female fans, the reputation of female fans is gradually undergoing a positive shift with the advent of feminism in the digital age [39]. Based on female fans’ more active forms of self-expression and cultural exchange, Lammers [40] argue that female fans’ dedication, knowledge, and creative problem-solving make them well-positioned to become teachers or experts in the field of digital literacy. Even during the amendment protests of “Draft Hong Kong Extradition Ordinance” in 2019 and during the Covid-19 epidemic, female fan groups in China used their organised management experience and familiarity with social media platforms to successfully mobilise two large-scale cyber-nationalist actions. Constructing the country as an idol, they used digital Internet technology to form a powerful unorganised organisational force by accessing blocked foreign social networking sites and attacking posts critical of the Chinese government therein, making a significant contribution to defending the image and interests of the country as an idol [41, 42].

In addition, an increasing number of female fans have become interested in the creation and appreciation of gay male texts, which is called “Fan Fiction”, and the discursive realm of fan fiction has been referred to as the “queer female space” [43]. A significant number of female fans focus on the creation and reading of fan fiction, with a focus on “boy love” (BL), which caters to female fans’ interest in romantic or erotic relationships between male characters [44]. Most

scholars of fan fiction studies agree that fan fiction is an act of rebellion against traditional masculinity, patriarchal culture and heterosexual hegemony [45, 46, 47]. As a result, female fans have developed an interest in men and homoerotic relationships between men in order to update their social status [48]. These female fans express their dissatisfaction with the patriarchal social system and their desire for freedom and equality of sexuality in an implicit way through the re-creation of an intimate relationship between two male characters [44].

In summary, existing studies have focused more on the para-social interaction, labour relations and economic relations between fans and idols. Although they have focused on the diversified ways of presenting the relationship between fans and idols, they have seldom critically viewed the negotiated relationship between the two from a gender perspective. Meanwhile, research on female fans has focused more on reflecting the discrimination against female fans in society and within fan circles, but less on the dynamic nature of female fans and the diverse ways in which they subvert the traditional gendered hierarchical order. Therefore, from a gendered perspective, this study will focus on what aspects of the para-social interaction between female fans and male idols in China consolidate the traditional gender order and what aspects serve to rebel against or even subvert it, with a view to contributing positively to the optimisation and improvement of the para-social interaction between fans and idols.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1. Research Method**

The methodology of digital ethnography was used in this study. Digital ethnography is a methodology used to study societies and cultures in digital space, where digital field sites can contain any of the content that makes up a network, such as texts, videos, pictures, platform infrastructures, user behaviours, social relationships or information networks. Unlike traditional fieldwork, digital ethnography is not geographically constrained and does not require clear boundaries. It can be open-ended and decentralised, with the researcher being the binding force of the fieldwork [49]. The specific use of digital ethnographic methods can be subdivided into three categories [50]. The first is the auto-ethnographic approach to understanding online giftsonline/offline connections in online gifting networks. The second is the "insider" study of the emerging field of Bioinformatics. The third category is known as unobtrusive methods, which is a type of online participant-observational research, a digital ethnographic approach that does not involve direct interaction with research subjects [51], which is mainly applicable to research in areas such as fan forums and online discussions. The research object of this paper is the para-social interactions between Chinese female fans and their male idols. Therefore, from the perspective of applicability, this study chooses to implement digital ethnographic research by unobtrusive methods, through online observational research that does not involve direct interaction with the research object.

Sina Weibo is one of the most frequently used social media by female fans in China, and the main place where their para-social interaction behaviour with male idols occurs. As a result, Sina Weibo was chosen as the survey platform for conducting the study. Subsequently, after considering factors

such as idol popularity, fan base, and research tractability, seven Chinese male idols, namely Ma Jiaqi, Liu Yaowen, Song Yaxuan, Deng Jiabin, Tang Yuzhe, Zhu Yilong, and Yang Yang, as well as their female fans, were selected as the research sample for this study. The study lasted for half a month, from 26 April 2024 to 10 May 2024, and focused on observing the para-social interaction behaviours of Chinese female fans and male idols in Weibo platform.

### **3.2. Data Collection and Analysis**

The data collection method of this study mainly consists of online observation of the daily activities of female fans and male idols as samples in the Weibo platform and simultaneous recording of field notes. These online daily activities mainly include posting tweets, participating in discussions on relevant hot topics, interacting in the fan community, and communicating with other fan groups.

Subsequently, all the qualitative data collected were manually screened for validity around the research questions of this paper. Next, selected data messages were grouped and coded according to differences in modal types. Finally, the valid data messages were categorised into refined themes according to their different roles in either reaffirming or rebelling against the traditional gender order, the final results of which are presented in Appendix, see Appendix A and Appendix B.

### **3.3. Treatment of Ethical Issues**

Boellstorff et al. [52] identified eight fundamental ethical issues that should be considered when applying digital ethnography methods: "informed consent, mitigating institutional risk, anonymity, deception, sexuality and intimacy, compensation, leave, and accurate portrayal". Therefore, this paper first obtained informed consent from the sender of the information before conducting digital ethnography to collect the information. Also, in order to protect individual privacy, this paper will follow the norms of anonymity, and all data information presented will hide the identity of the information sender. Meanwhile, the study will use and present the relevant qualitative data information in an objective and truthful manner to ensure an "accurate portrayal" of the data information and avoid "deception". Additionally, as the study does not involve any real sexuality and intimacy, nor any activities that violate institutionalised rules, there will be no inappropriate disclosure of sexuality and intimacy, and no institutional risk.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1. Reaffirmation of the Traditional Gender Order**

#### **4.1.1. Female Fans Blindly Spending for Male Idols**

Fans' high trust in their idols and the satisfaction of fans' "voyeurism" by their idols' self-disclosure have always been the main motivation for encouraging fans to buy products endorsed by their idols [53, 54, 55]. Moreover, in the digital media era, based on the emerging media experience model, fans can more effectively interact with celebrities and members of the Weibo virtual community. In this way, the pursuit of a deeper emotional connection with idols and the need to enhance self-identity and a sense of belonging to the fan community will further stimulate the implementation of individual fan purchasing behaviour [15].

Under the effect of such fan consumption psychology,

managers of organised fan circles tend to encourage members to share their consumption records, so that under the appearance that almost all group members have carried out purchasing behaviours for their idols, individual fans will be affected by group pressure and trigger herd mentality and behaviours to participate in purchasing activities. At the same time, individual fan members will also stimulate the consumption of other fan members by means of rewards and competitions. For example, in a peripheral purchasing activity on 5 May, 32 female fans who have a greater say in Deng Jiaxin's fan base all initiated a consumption-reward activity in Deng Jiaxin's Weibo Super Topic, all of them promising that by purchasing a certain number of peripherals, they could obtain various customised peripheral products or idol's same clothes and hats, which stimulated many individual fans to consume in an unrestrained manner. Furthermore, Deng Jiaxin's fanbase also stimulated the purchasing desires of its fan members through consumption competitions with other fanbase groups, further inciting the irrational consumption of female fans.

In addition, individual idols will also promote their endorsed products through more self-disclosure, further promoting fan consumption with a more immersive and interactive relationship. For example, male celebrity Zhu Yilong promotes his endorsed products in real time in the live broadcasting room, and interacts instantly with the fans who send pop-ups, answering their questions and disclosing more

information about his personal life, and even making various small expressions of happiness or frustration from time to time during the promotion process to satisfy the voyeuristic desires of female fans, establish a stronger emotional connection with them, and stimulate female fans' consumption.

The implementation of these techniques and strategies invariably provoked irrational consumption by female fans, such as a female fan of Deng Jiaxin who spent a cumulative total of 1,723 yuan on a simple peripheral purchase, see Figure 1. There was even a female fan of Deng Jiaxin who opened 15 official member accounts at one time in order to purchase peripheral products, spending a total of 4,470 yuan. Such blind spending behaviour undoubtedly reinforces the female stereotype that arose in the late 19th century. In it, women as fans are depicted as depicted as shopping machines, trapped in a web of materialised images, alienated from their true identities, and unable to control their impulses, always wanting to squander money to possess more goods [56]. However, men as idols become the actual controllers who can manipulate and dominate women's desires through different marketing techniques. This stereotype clearly reshapes the traditional gender hierarchical norms in patriarchal societies, asserting that men are rational and intelligent subjects in a dominant position, while women are emotional and blind objects in a dominated position.

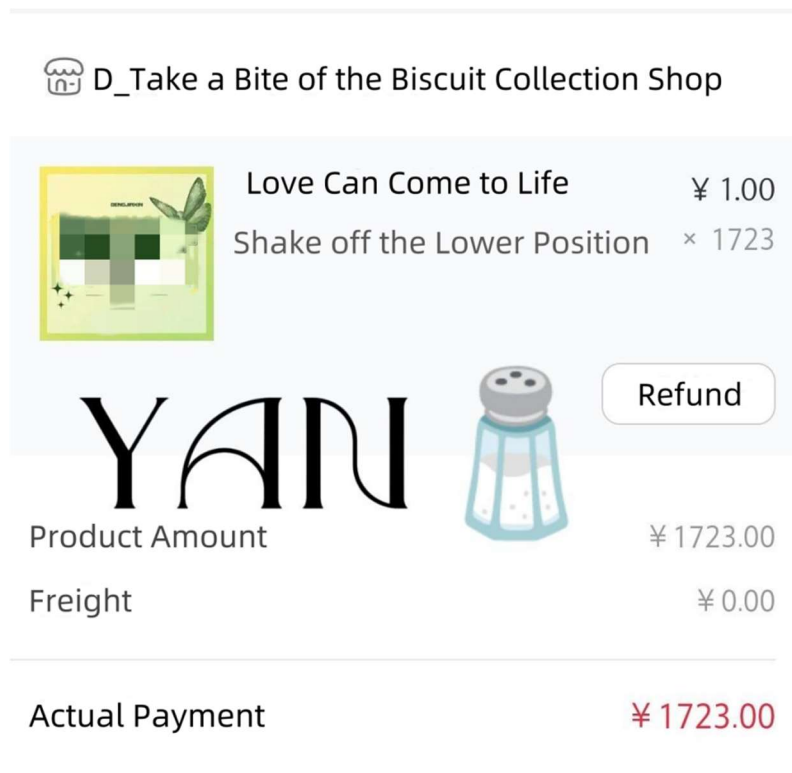


Figure 1. Blind Consumption by Female Fans of Deng Jiaxin

#### 4.1.2. Unpaid Labour of Female Fans for Male Idols

Chinese female fans' devotion to their male idols follows a logic of "generating power for love," in which they try to explain their fervent and gratuitous devotion to their idols in terms of "love" similar to that of a mother or a close relationship. For example, Chinese female fans on Weibo platforms often describe their idols as their ideal sons or boyfriends, and call themselves "mother fans" or "girlfriend

fans". Following this sense of Internet "son" or "boyfriend" identification, avid female fans will unconditionally pay for their male idols, and the main manifestation of this unpaid labour in the digital media era is to make data for their idols [57]. Figure 2 is a partial screenshot of a female fan obtained from Ma Jiaqi's microblogging fan group who does data for Ma Jiaqi every day in various aspects, such as video promotion, music charting, etc.

💎Ma Jiaqi's Super Topic 🍀Ma Jiaqi Breaks through the Clouds

This world is chaotic, but only you are clean and can hang on my heart as the sun and moon.

Ma Jiaqi @Captain of the Times Youth League - Ma Jiaqi



💎Ma Jiaqi's Super Topic 🍀Ma Jiaqi Breaks through the Clouds

For me, you are the one with infinite beauty, and it is also you who has fallen into the dust. The focus is on you, not what kind of you you are.

The number of fans has exceeded 17 million! Ma Jiaqi is really great and excellent.

Be sure to work hard and take good care of yourself.

Good night.

@Captain of the Times Youth League - Ma Jiaqi



**Figure 2.** Unpaid Labour of Ma Jiaqi's Female Fans

### 🔍 Yang Yang . Hot Search Overview

Number of Times on the List	580 Million Reading Volume	185 Thousand Discussion Volume	1.1148 Million Interactive Volume
Hot search terms in the past 30 days, sorted by listing time			
1	Yu Linling Yang Yang		
2	Yang Yang Military Uniform Poster		
3	Yang Yang's Profile Appearance		
4	Original Picture of Yang Yang's Shanghai Banquet		
5	The Initiator of Online Violence Apologizes to Yang Yang		
6	Yang Yang Tiger Head Hat		
7	Youth Journey 5 Director Welcomes Yang Yang Back Home		
8	Yang Yang Invites Xin Zhilei to Participate in a Variety Show Together		
9	Yang Yang's Variety Show		
10	Xin Zhilei Apologizes to Yang Yang that she Heard the Wrong Thing		
11	Xin Zhilei Heard Yang Yang will not Participate in Variety Shows for 20 Years		

**Figure 3.** Yang Yang's Personal Buzz in April 2024

The implementation of these behaviours appears to be the spontaneous behaviour of female fans based on their personal will, but in essence, it is the result of the joint incitement of media platforms and idol teams. Both media platforms and idol teams need traffic, so they coincidentally initiate the incitement of fan behaviour. Media platforms regularly launch idol data rankings, such as the Weibo platform, which

displays under each star's personal homepage the personal buzz of the past month, including the number of times Weibo hot searches have been listed and the amount of discussion and other data, see Figure 3, so as to intensify the fans' desire to win or lose and promote their unpaid labour behaviours, generating more traffic on the platforms. The idol team, on the other hand, will strengthen the para-social interaction

between fans and idols by allowing idols to share their lives, update their dynamics, and produce works from time to time, thus promoting fans' unpaid labour. As a result, fans' frenzied unpaid labour is merely the result of double exploitation by media platforms and idol teams, and is a reflection of a pessimistic, controlled and 'colonised self'. They are unconsciously dominated by idol teams and social media platforms, becoming their digital labourers, exploited and anaesthetised by them, and even willing to be controlled [57]. Even the fantasies of "mother fans" and "girlfriend fans", although reflecting the female fans' vision of escaping from the small and controlled reality and pursuing power and status enhancement through imagination, are essentially nothing more than placing the desire for their own status enhancement on the idealised "sons" and "boyfriends", which is a re-emphasis of the traditional gender relations in which sons and husbands are superior to their mothers and wives. In addition, the unpaid labour of women as fans also implicitly reaffirms the unequal situation of women before the nineteenth century, when they could only engage in unpaid labour such as domestic chores in the family but could not go out to pursue a career in the labour market.

It can be seen that the phenomenon of Chinese female fans' unpaid labour for male idols once again reinforces the

dominant and subjective position of men and recasts women as objects who are dependent on their husbands or sons and can only make unpaid contributions to the family, upholding the traditional ideology of patriarchy.

#### 4.1.3. The Relationship Between Female Fans and Male Idols in the Category of "Courtly Love"

In China, due to the competitive relationship between different fan groups, there is a strong exclusivity within fan groups, and the access rules of most fan circles require that individual fans must be loyal to one idol and cannot like more than one at the same time. For example, the entry requirements of Yang Yang's official fan group stipulate that they cannot like any other actor or actress besides Yang Yang, and they cannot even follow or like their microblogs, see Figure 4. This has led to a pattern whereby individual Chinese female fans are mostly devoted to one male idol, while behind a male idol there is often a group of female fans who follow him. This pattern is clearly analogous to the polygamy of ancient courtly love where a king had multiple consorts. Kirchner et al. [10], for example, point out that while the fan-idol relationship has heteronormative connotations, it is not dependent on monogamy.

#### Group Introduction

Welcome all fans to join the official Yang Yang fan group 1  
Group Entry Criteria:

1. Search for "Yang Yang" on Weibo with no less than 700 entries.
2. Follow @ Yang Yang on Weibo for no less than 3 months, and follow the official blog of @ Yang Yang National Support Association, @ Yang Yang Information Station.
3. Disliking other actors (including following and liking).
4. Prohibit inviting others to join the group, only focus on Yang Yang in the group.
5. Check in daily and actively participate in activities organized by administrators.

Figure 4. Entry Rules of Yang Yang's Official Fan Group

The structural model of "polygamy" embodied a double standard of sexual morality in which men were free to pursue their sexual desires without moral constraints, while women had to repress their sexual desires and be faithful to only one man. Before the 19th century, men were able to unleash their sexual desires and have sex with more than one person as they pleased without social censure, whereas women had to suppress their sexual desires and premarital sex, as well as sex with more than one person, was considered shameful. It is for this reason that many women who have been raped often dare not speak out about the fact that they have been raped or accuse their rapists openly for fear of social condemnation and secondary victimisation. Until now, rape convictions still have a tendency towards victim guilt, and people seem to believe that rape victims are themselves problematic women, blaming them for not keeping clean and not taking enough precautions [58].

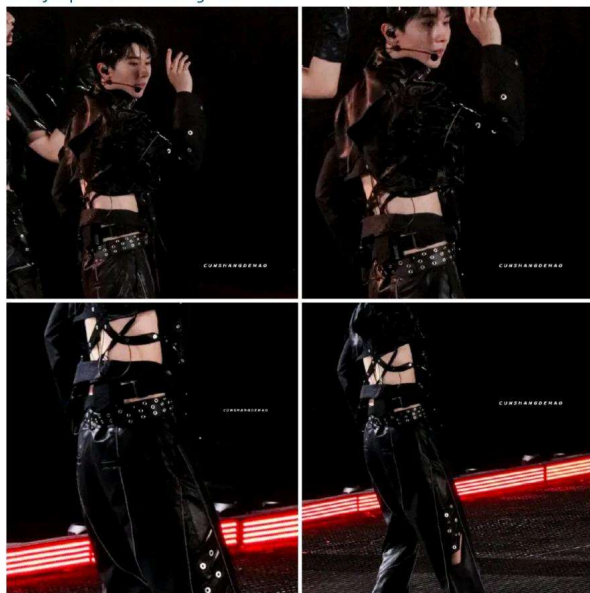
It can be seen that the structural pattern of "polygamy" reflects the hegemonic culture of men and implicitly treats women unfairly. Therefore, the structure of the "courtly love" relationship between female fans and male idols in China undoubtedly carries the risk of exacerbating gender discrimination and oppression, and reinforcing the traditional relationship of gender inequality. If we want to effectively mitigate this risk and threat, we have to start from the root, only by effectively easing the competing interests or even hostile relationship between different fan groups, and gradually eliminating the strong exclusionary orientation within the fan groups.

## 4.2. Rebellion Against the Traditional Gender Order

### 4.2.1. The Shift from Erotic Object to Erotic Subject

In the para-social interactions between female fans and male idols in China, female fans tend to openly and boldly express their feelings of "love" and their sexual desires, becoming sexual subjects. In contrast, male idols tend to become shy, or even overtly shy, sexual objects. This kind of mismatch between male and female relationships is common in the relationship between fans and idols. For example, a female fan of Ma Jiaqi tweeted that she called Ma Jiaqi her "husband," boldly revealing her love for him, and at the same time accompanied it with a picture of Ma Jiaqi half-naked and writhing his waist, in order to further intensify her love for him by using such a sexually-charged visual impact, see Figure 5. This phenomenon clearly shows that female fans have now become sexualised subjects and are able to reveal their sexual desires for their idols in an unapologetic manner. On the other hand, in a Weibo video, in response to a female fan's discussion of kissing, Yang Yang, as a male idol, immediately displays a shy look and smile, and quickly turns his head to avoid looking at the camera, showing his avoidance of, and shyness towards, the topic of sexual desire, which should have been presented by a woman as a sexual object in the traditional gender order.

Husband...  
#Ma Jiaqi's "Inter Building" Concert#



**Figure 5.** A Female Fan of Ma Jiaqi as an Erotic Subject

The natural flow of female fans' emotions about their sexuality shows the return of their subjective consciousness and the awakening of their self-consciousness, and women as fans have begun to use social media to release their repressed eroticism and proclaim their subjectivity. This is undoubtedly a clear manifestation of women's elevated status and power. Meanwhile, the shy attitude of male celebrities reflects a new gender temperament that emerged in the late nineteenth century, that is, the characteristics of feminised masculinity. On the one hand, Felski [56] argues that the feminised male is the archetypal 'dandy', who is committed to the production of the self as an aesthetic object, and who is the ultimate representative of fashion, embodying the 'absolute modernity of beauty'. On the other hand, they are artefacts and therefore often considered worthless. They value appearance over essence and decoration over functionality as a resistance to utilitarian and instrumentalist masculinity. According to this argument, these icons of feminised masculinity often become objects to be viewed and played with. Their appearance clearly means that the male figure is gradually coming down and being demystified, and that the boundaries between femininity and masculinity are gradually dissolving.

In this way, the transformation of the Chinese female fan from erotic object to erotic subject not only swears the status of being a female subject, but also signals the blurring of gender boundaries between the two sexes, all of which has brought about a powerful impact on and undermined the traditional binary gender order.

#### **4.2.2. The Shift from Polygamous Heteronormative Structures to Polygamy and Queer Sexual Fantasies**

Kirchner et al. [10] point out that celebrity worship by fans, on the one hand, shows parallels with socially normative heteronormativity. On the other hand, it also serves as an evasive and emancipatory space that allows for the realisation of non-binary gender arrangements and non-monogamy. In line with this claim, the preferences of Chinese female fans today show a pluralistic development, with not only the type of celebrity worship belonging to the heteronormative structure of feudal polygamy, but also the emergence of

subversive heteronormative structures of monogamy and polygamy, as well as gay fans based on the imagination.

Nowadays, based on the prosperity of China's idol industry and the development of fan culture, although the traditional stargazing model of polygamy still dominates, the type of celebrity worship of polygamy has also gradually developed. For example, a female fan's Weibo homepage shows that she likes a number of male idols such as Wang Junkai, Ma Jiaqi, Deng Jiaxin, and Xiao Zhan. In the monogamous celebrity cult, female fans are no longer suppressed in their sexual desires and can only be devoted to one male idol, but have absolute freedom to follow and express their sexual desires, not only being able to like and express their "love" to multiple idols at the same time, but also being able to change their idols at any time and freely change the objects of their love. Such a structural form of one female fan to multiple male idols undoubtedly breaks the traditional male hegemonic position and realises the subversion of the traditional hierarchical order of men and women. It gives women greater freedom in their erotic desires, and women as fans become the decisive subjects in the relationship between men and women, while men as idols are unable to control women's sexual desires but can only be passively selected by the female subjects. However, in China, compared with the traditional celebrity worship structure of polygamy, the idol worship structure of monogamy is still at a disadvantage, and female fans who like more than one male idol at the same time are often excluded from the organisational structure of the fan circle by female fans who are exclusively devoted to one male idol, and are not recognised as fans.

In addition, the vast majority of gay male fans are women. These women are called rotten girls. Since the establishment of the first gay Weibo super-topic "Kaiyuan" in 2013, rotten girls have also grown rapidly on the Chinese Internet. For example, the Weibo super-topic "Wenxuan", which is about the same-sex relationship between male idols Song Yaxuan and Liu Yaowen, had 2.42 million posts and 2.6 million followers as of 10 May, with daily interactions at a steady level of around 20,000, see Figure 6. These rotten girls often fantasise the friendship between two male idols as a lover's relationship, and through their fan fictions they make a big fuss about the fantasy lover's relationship. The emergence of rotten girls is not only an alternative fulfilment of women's erotic desires, but also an act of protest and rebellion against the hegemonic mechanisms of heterosexuality in traditional patriarchal societies, and as such, they act as a rebellion against the traditional gender order.

However, according to the data shown on the Weibo platform, the status of rotten girls is at the bottom of the fanbase, and they are often ridiculed by other fans. For example, Liu Yaowen's female fans and Song Yaxuan's female fans often criticise and defame Liu Yaowen's and Song Yaxuan's homoerotic female fans in the relevant Weibo entries under the pretext that they are unable to treat their idols fairly. Figure 7 shows a female fan of Liu Yaowen using the excuse that rotten girls did not participate in Liu Yaowen's fans' rights defence activities to send tweets blatantly denouncing and accusing these homoerotic female fans of being biased and treating Liu Yaowen unequally. Moreover, due to the existence of a strict homosexual taboo subterranean network in China, topics about ambiguous relationships between men and men cannot become trending topics and do not qualify to compete with other fan groups for traffic, but can only entertain themselves in the circle of homoerotic fans.

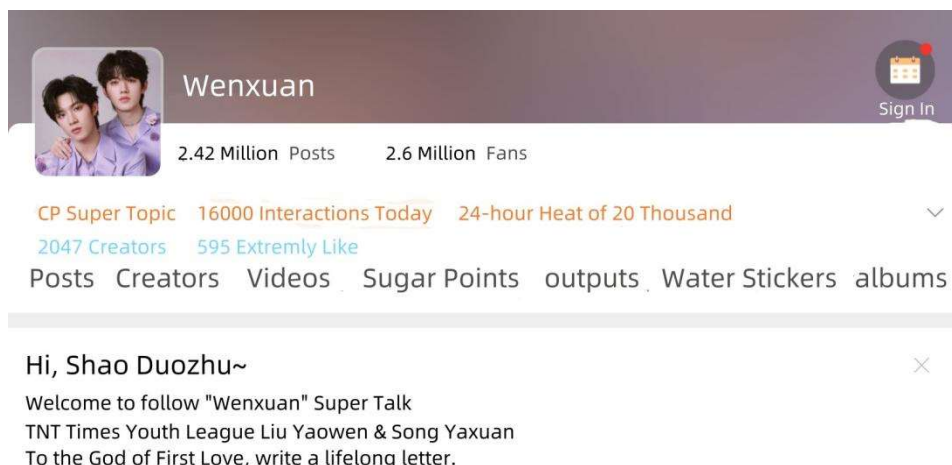


Figure 6. "Wenxuan" Weibo Super-topic Homepage



Figure 7. Rotten Girls are Treated with Prejudice

As can be seen from the above, the structure of polygamous idolatry and the emergence of rotten girls in China both rebel to a certain extent against the structure of intimacy in traditional patriarchal societies. However, the force of this rebellion is still developing, and it is not yet able to compete with the dominant model of polygamous celebrity worship that reinforces and reaffirms the traditional gender order.

#### 4.2.3. The Shift from Irrational Pursuit to Adherence to a Rational Position

Under normal circumstances, Chinese female fans are religiously loyal to their male idols, giving them their free time and praising them. However, once a male idol is accused of having some kind of moral or legal problem, most Chinese female fans will reverse their attitude, strongly accusing them of their behaviour and regretting their former loyalty. For example, when the male idol Tang Yuzhe was exposed for his morally corrupt behaviour, most of his female fans immediately expressed that they no longer liked him and publicly condemned the male idol Tang Yuzhe's morally undesirable behaviour on the relevant microblogs and hot searches. Also, some of them even sent out multiple microblogs to strongly criticise and condemn the male idol Tang Yuzhe's behaviour, and to regretted their previous pursuit and obsession with him, see Figure 8.

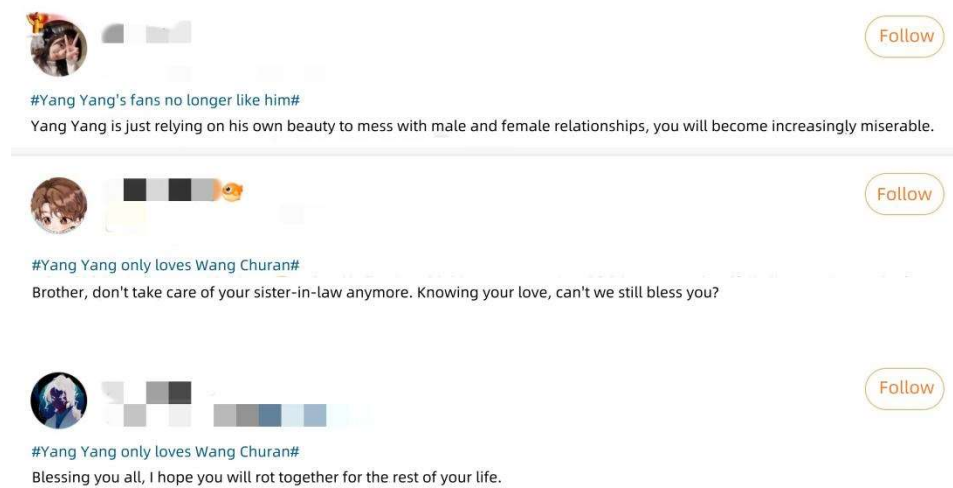
From this, we can see that the worship behaviour of Chinese female fans towards male idols nowadays is not

unprincipled obedience and pursuit, but celebrity worship based on adherence to personal principles and self-subjectivity. This reflects a reversal of the traditional stereotypes of femininity, in which women as fans are not objects with low intelligence, no judgement, lack of self-consciousness, unconditional dedication, and emotionalism, as traditional women in gender stereotypes, but are subjects with self-consciousness and judgement, adherence to principles and stances, and rationality.

However, there is a limit to the rationality and self-principle of female fans in China today, which often only manifests itself when a male idol is revealed to be of clear moral turpitude or delinquent behaviour. Most of the time, they still see their idols as religious deities and show extreme passion and madness inspired by them [59, 60]. For example, they may show anger and dissatisfaction towards the idol's possible normal romantic behaviour based on their own sexual fantasies, and even openly abuse and denigrate the idol and his rumoured girlfriend. When the male idol Yang Yang was revealed to be suspected of being in a romantic relationship with the female celebrity Wang Churan, some female fans with greater power of speech began to send out microblogs to express their anger and state that they would not like Yang Yang any more. Some other female fans began to publicly abuse Yang Yang and his rumoured girlfriends on Weibo hotspots, see Figure 9, and even shared images that deliberately scandalised their image.



**Figure 8.** Tang Yuzhe's Female Fans with a Subjective Consciousness and Self Principle



**Figure 9.** Extreme Behaviour of Yang Yang's Female Fans

Female fan groups may also compete for traffic and other benefits, which can lead to group extremist behaviour, mutual denigration and abuse. For example, female fans of Deng Jiaxin had abused each other in the Weibo platform with female fans of Zuo Hang, another male idol. In the tirade, Deng Jiaxin's female fans mocked and humiliated Zuo Hang's height and hairline. At the same time, Zuo Hang's female fans also insulted Deng Jiaxin without any bottom line, intentionally sharing the deformity of his body shape to satirise Deng Jiaxin's shortness and fatness, and mocking Deng Jiaxin's defective nose shape through the nickname "Niu Mowang".

In addition, there are even a few female fans who remain loyal to their idol even when he is revealed to have some moral misconduct or illegal behaviour, and are willing to believe in him unconditionally, even at the expense of fighting

against public power or mainstream values for this reason, thus forming a blind worship of male idols who have lost their reasoning. For example, when the male idol Tang Yuzhe was exposed for his morally despicable behaviour, although the majority of female fans chose to leave and strongly condemned his inappropriate behaviour, a minority of female fans chose to believe in him and expressed their unconditional support for his practices on Tang Yuzhe's Weibo super-topic, which was a blatant departure from the mainstream morality of the society, see Figure 10.

Therefore, in order to completely overturn the traditional negative perception of femininity, Chinese female fans need to further improve their rational thinking ability, clarify their principles and positions, and strengthen their sense of personal subjectivity in their para-social interactions with their male idols.

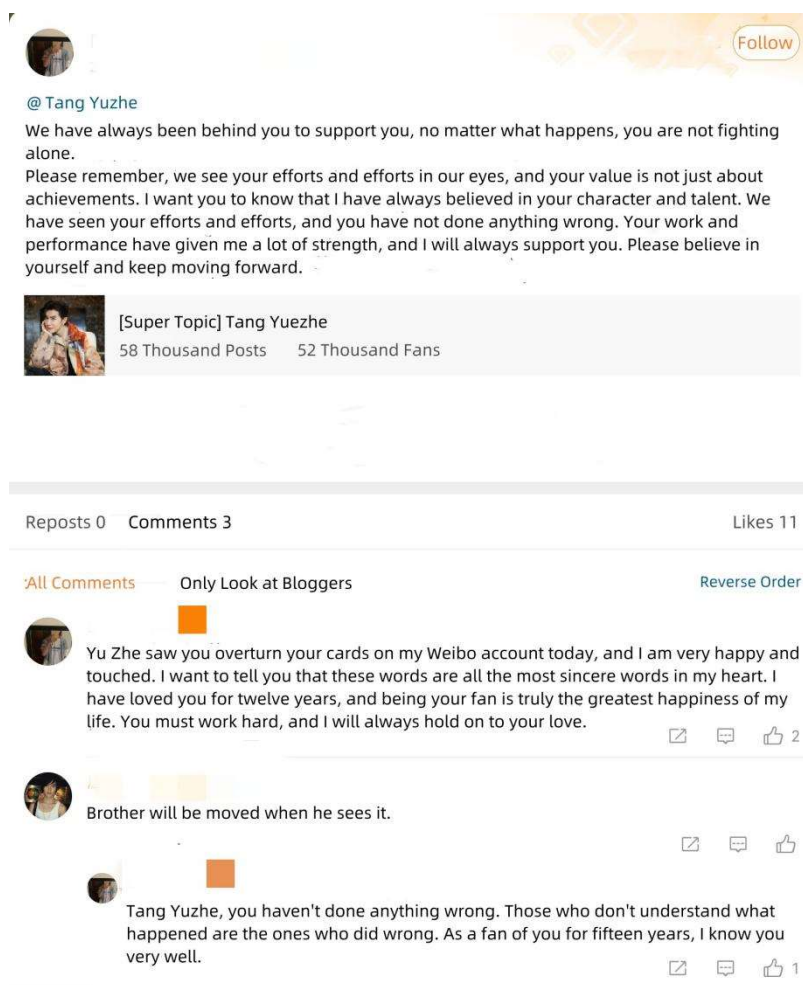


Figure 10. Tang Yuzhe's Female Fans' Blind Admiration

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, the para-social interaction between Chinese female fans and male idols based on social media platforms has the negative impact of reaffirming and reinforcing the traditional gender order in patriarchal societies in terms of female fans' blind consumption, unpaid labour, and the structural pattern of polygamy with male idols. At the same time, however, female fans' open expression of sexuality, free love for multiple idols, fantasies of homosexual relationships with male idols, and adherence to self-principles and subjective stances reflect the fact that the para-social interactions between female fans and male idols in China also have a side that rebels against and subverts the traditional gender order.

However, the power to rebel against the hegemony of the traditional patriarchy is not yet stable and strong enough, and is still largely restricted by the strong exclusivity within the fan community, the hegemony of heterosexuality, and the frantic and irrational idolatry of religious beliefs. Therefore, in China, only by consciously clarifying their own subject position and enhancing rational thinking in celebrity worship, as well as consciously breaking through the heterosexual hegemony of patriarchal society, and adopting a more open and pluralistic attitude to tolerate different sexual orientations and multiple perspectives on gender in society, can female fans more effectively contribute to the society as a whole to break down gender stereotypes, break down the traditional concept of gender confrontation and eliminate the prevailing phenomenon of gender discrimination.

Of course, this study also has some limitations. On the one hand, the data information collected in this study comes from a single social media platform, namely, Weibo, which may lead to the problem of unrepresentative research materials, and thus the reliability of the study may be affected. On the other hand, due to the limitation of manpower and time resources, this study only collected the relevant multimodal information in the last 15 days, which has the problem of insufficiently rich and comprehensive research materials, and to a certain extent, affects the validity of the study. Therefore, in future research, under the condition of sufficient time, cost and manpower, the reliability and validity of the research results can be effectively improved by collecting data information on multiple social media platforms simultaneously and extending the time of online observational studies and data collection, so as to make up for the shortcomings of this study.

## References

- [1] J. W. Morris: Artists as Entrepreneurs, Fans as Workers, *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 37 (2013) No. 3, p.273–290.
- [2] P. Galuszka: New Economy of Fandom, *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 38 (2014) No. 1, p.25–43.
- [3] J. Zhang: The Reception of Thai Boys Love Series in China: Consumption, Imagination, and Friction, (2021).
- [4] K. Busse: Fan Labor and Feminism: Capitalizing on the Fannish Labor of Love, *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 54 (2015) No. 3, p.110–115.

- [5] D. Horton, R. Wohl: Mass Communication and Para-social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance, *Psychiatry*, Vol. 19 (1956) No. 3, p.215–229.
- [6] T. Xiao: *Revolutionary Waves : The Crowd in Modern China* (Harvard University Asia Center, United States 2017).
- [7] Y. Zhu: A Case Study on Habitual Gender Conceptions of Bilibili Anime Devotees, 7th International Conference on Humanities and Social Science Research (Arab, Dubai, May 20, 2021), p.1183-1189.
- [8] J. Lee, I. B. Hong: Predicting Positive User Responses to Social Media Advertising: The Roles of Emotional Appeal, Informativeness, and Creativity, *International Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 36 (2016) No. 3, p.360–373.
- [9] X. D. Yue, C. Cheung: Selection of Favourite Idols and Models among Chinese Young People: A Comparative Study in Hong Kong and Nanjing, *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, Vol. 24 (2000) No. 1, p.91–98.
- [10] B. Kirchner, J. Wustmann, M. Meuser, et al. Queering Gender Boundaries and Redoing Heteroamorous Desire: Youth Scenes as a Social Field for (Re-)negotiating Gender Arrangements and Sexuality, *Young*, Vol. 32 (2023) No. 1.
- [11] X. Wu: Fan Leaders' Control on Xiao Zhan's Chinese Fan Community, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, Vol. 36 (2021).
- [12] S. Chen: *The New Generation Chinese Cinema Animation (1995-2015): Industry and Aesthetics* (PH.D., University of Southampton United Kingdom 2018).
- [13] P. W. Galbraith: The Labor of Love: On the Convergence of Fan and Corporate Interests in Contemporary Idol Culture in Japan, *Media Convergence in Japan*, (2016), p.232–264.
- [14] K. Xu: A Study on the Correlation and Interaction between Celebrity Effect and Fan Economy, *Economics and Management*, Vol. 27 (2024), p.133–137.
- [15] A. Yang, K. Shim: Antecedents of Microblogging Users' Purchase Intention toward Celebrities' Merchandise: Perspectives of Virtual Community and Fan Economy, *Journal of Psychological Research*, Vol. 2 (2020) No. 2.
- [16] A. Fung, A: Book Review: Chinese Fans of Japanese and Korean Pop Culture: Nationalistic Narratives and International Fandom, (2018), p.488-490.
- [17] T. J. Yoon, D. Y. Jin: *The Korean Wave: Evolution, Fandom, and Transnationality* (Lexington Books, United States 2017).
- [18] L. Yang: Reality Talent Shows in China: Transnational Format, Affective Engagement, and the Chinese Dream, *A Companion to Reality Television*, (2013), p.516–540.
- [19] S. Ford, S: Fan Studies: Grappling with an "Undisciplined" Discipline, *The Journal of Fandom Studies*, Vol. 2 (2014) No. 1, p.53–71.
- [20] O. Nelson, A. Deborah: Celebrity Endorsement Influence on Brand Credibility: A Critical Review of Previous Studies, *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, Vol. 7 (2017) No. 1, p.15–32.
- [21] C. C. Wang, C. Chen, S. Yang, et al. Pirate or Buy? The Moderating Effect of Idolatry, *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 90 (2009) No. 1, p.81–93.
- [22] L. Chen, G. Chen, S. Ma, et al. Idol Worship: How Does it Influence Fan Consumers' Brand Loyalty, *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 13 (2022) No. 850670.
- [23] J. Zhuang: I'm Your Fan-engaging in Celebrity's Social Media Page with the Mediation of Parasocial Interaction and Parasocial Relationship (University of South Florida, United States 2018).
- [24] R. O'neill, O. Limerick: Impact of Celebrity Endorsement on Brand Image, Available at SSRN 1444814, (2006).
- [25] M. Thomson: Human Brands: Investigating Antecedents to Consumers' Strong Attachments to Celebrities, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 70 (2006) No. 3, p.104–119.
- [26] Y. F. Kuo, J. R. Hou: Oppositional Brand Loyalty in Online Brand Communities: Perspectives on Social Identity Theory and Consumer-brand Relationship, *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, Vol. 18 (2017) No. 3, p.254.
- [27] R. Bury: *Cyberspaces of their Own : Female Fandoms Online* (Peter Lang, 2005).
- [28] M. Lavin, L. Yang and J. J. Zhao: Boys' Love, Cosplay, and Androgynous Idols: Queer Fan Cultures in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (Hong Kong University Press, China 2017).
- [29] Y. Gerrard: Groupies, Fangirls and Shippers: The Endurance of a Gender Stereotype, *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 66 (2021) No. 8, p.1035–1172.
- [30] K. Busse: Geek Hierarchies, Boundary Policing, and the Gendering of the Good Fan, *Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, Vol. 10 (2013) No. 1, p.73–91.
- [31] M. Click: (2009). December 18 "Rabid", "Obsessed", and "Frenzied": Understanding Twilight Fangirls and the Gendered Politics of Fandom, *Flow*, Vol.11 (2009) No. 4.
- [32] A. Morey: Genre, Reception, and Adaptation in the "Twilight" Series (Taylor & Francis Group, United Kingdom 2016).
- [33] R. Pande: *Squee From the Margins: Fandom and Race* (Lowa City University of Lowa Press, German 2018).
- [34] H. Savigny, H. Warner: *The Politics of being a Woman Feminism, Media and 21st Century Popular Culture* (Springer, German 2015).
- [35] M. Stanfill: "They're Losers, but I Know Better": Intra-fandom Stereotyping and the Normalization of the Fan Subject, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, Vol. 30 (2013) No. 2, p.117–134.
- [36] H. McCann, C. Southerton: Repetitions of Desire: Queering the One Direction Fangirl, *Girlhood Studies*, Vol. 12 (2019) No. 1, p.49–65.
- [37] L. A. Lewis: *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group, United Kingdom 1992).
- [38] R. Williams: "Wandering off into Soap Land": Fandom, Genre and "Shipping" The West Wing, *Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, Vol. 8 (2011) No. 1, p.270–295.
- [39] J. Williams: Screaming, Crying, Writing up: Literary Music Journalism Books as a Legitimization of Contemporary Fangirl Practices, *Popular Music and Society*, (2024), p.1–19.
- [40] J. C. Lammers: Fangirls as Teachers: Examining Pedagogic Discourse in an Online Fan Site, *Learning, Media and Technology*, Vol. 38 (2013) No. 4, p.368–386.
- [41] Y. Wang, T. Luo: Politicizing for the Idol: China's Idol Fandom Nationalism in Pandemic, *Information, Communication & Society*, Vol. 26 (2022) No. 2, p.1–17.
- [42] Y. Zhuang, S. Huang and C. Chen: Idolizing the Nation: Chinese Fandom Nationalism through the Fangirl Expedition, *Chinese Journal of Communication*, Vol. 16 (2022) No. 1, p.1–24.
- [43] A. Lothian, K. Busse and R. A. Reid: "Yearning Void and Infinite Potential": Online Slash Fandom as Queer Female Space, *English Language Notes*, Vol. 45 (2007) No. 2, p.103–111.

- [44] S. Zheng: Gendered Fandom in Transcultural Contextfemale-dominated Paratexts and Compromised Fan Culture, *Journal of Consumer Culture*, Vol. 23 (2023) No. 4, p.1017–1035.
- [45] C. Bacon-Smith: *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (University of Pennsylvania Press, United States 1992).
- [46] K. Busse, K.: 9. My Life is a WIP on My LJ, *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*, (2006), P.207.
- [47] C. Penley: *NASA/TREK: Popular Science and Sex in America* (Verso, United States 1997).
- [48] K. A. Yost: *Academia Explores the Final Frontier: A Look at Fandom Theses and Dissertations, Focus on Fandom: Strange New Worlds*, (1994), p.14.
- [49] J. Burrell: The Field Site as a Network: A Strategy for Locating Ethnographic Research, *Field Methods*, Vol. 21 (2009) No. 2, p.181–199.
- [50] P. Hetland, A. I. Mørch: *Ethnography for Investigating the Internet, Media, Technology and Lifelong Learning*, Vol. 12 (2016) No. 1, p.1–14.
- [51] E. J. Webb, D. T. Campbell, R. D. Schwartz, et al. *Unobtrusive Measures: Revised Edition* (Sage Publications, United States 2000).
- [52] T. Boellstorff, B. Nardi, C. Pearce, et al. *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Methods* (Princeton University Press, United States 2024).
- [53] S. Chung, H. Cho: Parasocial Relationship Via Reality TV and Social Media: Its Implications for Celebrity Endorsement, *Proceedings of the ACM International Conference on Interactive Experiences for TV and Online Video* (New York, United States, 2014), p.47–54.
- [54] T. Kirvesmies: *Parasocial Relationships between Gen Z and Social Media Endorsers* (MS., University of Tampere Finland 2018).
- [55] J. Knoll, J. Matthes: The Effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsements: A Meta-analysis, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 45 (2017) No. 1, p.55–75.
- [56] R. Felskil: *The Gender of Modernity* (Harvard University Press, United States 2005).
- [57] Q. Zhang, K. Negus: East Asian Pop Music Idol Production and the Emergence of Data Fandom in China, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 23 (2020) No. 4, p.493–511.
- [58] G. W. Leefiel: *Sentiment: Civilization Level and Temperament and Interest* (Times Literature and Art Publishing House, China 2001).
- [59] D. Giles: *Illusions of Immortality: A Psychology of Fame and Celebrity* (St. Martin's Press, United States 2000).
- [60] J. K. K. Liu: *Idol Worship, Religiosity, and Self-esteem Among University and Secondary Students in Hong Kong*, (2013).

## Appendix

**Appendix A: The Performance of Reaffirmation and Reinforcement of Traditional Gender Order**

Thematic	Texts	Pictures	Combination of pictures and texts	Videos
<b>Blindly Spending</b>	<p>A. Deng Jiaxin: Check out the 5.5 raffle roundup!</p> <p>B. Deng Jiaxin: May outside the building pk all in group! Progress is slow, full spread!</p> <p>C. Deng Jiaxin: Insert a small flag, 200 for 7.23 yuan pulling 723 yuan. Counting from the microblogging issued, please make more orders.</p> <p>D. Deng Jiaxin: After this microblog is sent out, the amount in the comment area is full of 14,460 yuan, pulling 7,230 yuan.</p> <p>E. Yang Yang: Yang Yang fans' purchasing power is also obvious to all, OK. Endorsement Guerlain directly sold out of goods throughout Asia, a quarter to complete the annual kpi, endorsement of the Piao-Rose 12 hours over 40,000 sets, endorsement of Montblanc list from head to tail brush not the head!</p>	<p>A. Deng Jiaxin: Official Peripheral Sales Statistics Table.</p> <p>B. Ma Jiaqi, Song Yaxuan and Liu Yaowen: Comparison table of sales volume of products jointly endorsed by Ma Jiaqi, Song Yaxuan and Liu Yaowen.</p>	<p>A. Deng Jiaxin: Spending Record 1723 yuan.</p> <p>B. Deng Jiaxin: Spending Record 4,470 yuan.</p> <p>C. Deng Jiaxin: Spending Record 80 yuan.</p> <p>D. Deng Jiaxin: Spending Record 2,000 yuan.</p> <p>E. Yang Yang: Spending Record 4,059 yuan.</p> <p>F. Ma Jiaqi: Spending Record 168 yuan.</p> <p>G. Ma Jiaqi: Spending Record 109 yuan.</p>	<p>A. Deng Jiaxin: Video tutorial on consumer transfers.</p> <p>B. Zhu Yilong: live band video throughout.</p>
<b>Unpaid Labour</b>	<p>A. Deng Jiaxin: In order to let more fans do data, special open May activities, this activity task a total of four, play free, many prizes!</p> <p>B. Deng Jiaxin: everyone with an account try to raise more effective out, do data can be used to.</p>	<p>A. Deng Jiaxin: official fan group daily fixed share do data screenshots.</p> <p>B. Ma Jiaqi: The official fanbase regularly shares screenshots of the data being done on a daily basis.</p> <p>C. Song Yaxuan: The official fanbase regularly shares screenshots of the data being done on a daily basis.</p> <p>D. Liu Yaowen: The official fanbase regularly shares screenshots of the data being done on a daily basis.</p>	<p>A. Ma Jiaqi: a female fan daily tweets in Super Topics.</p> <p>B. Deng Jiaxin: a female fan for a month to do data screenshots to make a credential.</p>	<p>A. Deng Jiaxin: Video tutorials for doing data are released in the official fan group.</p>
<b>A "Courtly Love" Kind of Relationship</b>	<p>A. Yang Yang: official fan group access rules "can not like the same period of other actors, even attention or likes are not allowed" Zhu Yilong: official fan group norms "prohibit mentioning other artists' names".</p> <p>B. Ma Jiaqi: official fanbase access rule "Ma Jiaqi content on the front page is higher than 90% in the last 2-3 months".</p>			<p>A. Deng Jiaxin: Every day, multiple female fans in front of the company followed Deng Jiaxin's commute video and screamed.</p> <p>B. Yang Yang: A large group of female fans followed him on the spot at the endorsement event on 10 May, screaming and expressing their love for him.</p> <p>C. Ma Jiaqi: Several female fans at the concert shouted out their love to him.</p> <p>D. Liu Yaowen: Many female fans waited for hours outside an award ceremony just to have a look at him.</p>

**Appendix B: The Performance of Rebellion and Subversion of Traditional Gender Order**

Thematic	Texts	Pictures	Combination of pictures and texts	Videos
<p><b>Becoming a Sexually Active Subject</b></p>	<p><b>A.</b> Yang Yang: Yang Yang's face is enough for me to crave for the rest of my life.  <b>B.</b> Yang Yang: It's the middle of the night, and I sincerely invite you all to appreciate my husband.  <b>C.</b> Zhu Yilong: Zhu Yilong just charm me, why are you so good at smiling, husband.</p>	<p><b>A.</b> Liu Yaowen: concert site fans held up a sign reading "Yaowen husband, eat well, healthy, smooth and happy, receive please than OK".</p>	<p><b>A.</b> Deng Jiaxin: Text: It's so beautiful ..... My baby, give me a quick bite! Picture: Deng Jiaxin wearing a sleeveless shirt  <b>B.</b> Ma Jiaqi: Text: Husband ... Picture: Ma Jiaqi half naked and twisting his waist.  <b>C.</b> Zhu Yilong: Text: my husband, don't run away. Picture: close-up shot of face refining.</p>	<p><b>A.</b> Zhu Yilong: Zhu Yilong's ears went red after being called husband.  <b>B.</b> Yang Yang: In response to female fans' discussion on the topic of kissing, Yang Yang immediately showed a shy look and quickly turned his head away from the camera.</p>
<p><b>Liking Multiple Male Idols at the Same Time or Following Chemistry Relationships between Male Idols</b></p>	<p><b>A.</b> Liu Yaowen and Song Yaxuan: Liu Yaowen and Song Yaxuan you are the two cutest little pigs in the world!  <b>B.</b> Liu Yaowen and Song Yaxuan: Liu Yaowen do you know how cute your wife Song Yaxuan is?</p>	<p><b>A.</b> Tang Yuzhe: A female Tang Yuzhe fan's Weibo page shows that she also likes both Xiao Zhan and Wang Yibo, two male idols.  <b>B.</b> Deng Jiaxin: A significant number of fans in the official fanbase also like male idols such as Zuo Hang and Zhang Junhao at the same time.  <b>C.</b> Liu Yaowen and Song Yaxuan: A female fan at the concert openly held up a sign that read "Liu Yaowen, Song Yaxuan, kiss one".  <b>D.</b> Liu Yaowen and Song Yaxuan: two embracing together manga images created by rotten girls.  <b>E.</b> The homepage of the "Wenxuan" super topic shows that as of 10 May, it had 2.42 million posts and 2.6 million fans, with daily interactions stabilised at about 20,000.</p>	<p><b>A.</b> Deng Jiaxin: A female Deng Jiaxin fan posted a tweet stating that she likes multiple male idols.  <b>B.</b> Ma Jiaqi: A female Ma Jiaqi fan posted a tweet stating that she likes multiple male idols.  <b>C.</b> Deng Jiaxin: A certain female Deng Jiaxin fan posted a tweet sharing her trip to see another male idol Ding Chengxin in concert.</p>	<p><b>A.</b> Liu Yaowen and Song Yaxuan: video of the two interacting during a performance.</p>
<p><b>Adherence to the Principle of Subjectivity and Self</b></p>	<p><b>A.</b> Tang Yuzhe: honestly, if only because of the character of low-profile not public is no excuse, but all the details plus it seems to be really scum, was exposed only like squeezing toothpaste to squeeze a little bit, and also to the ex-girlfriends family is also very unfair, originally from the debut of his face is very much like his face, and now decisive cancellation of attention, scummy man!  <b>B.</b> Tang Yuzhe: The posting was accompanied by a cool photo of</p>			

Thematic	Texts	Pictures	Combination of pictures and texts	Videos
	<p>himself underneath, I'm drunk.</p> <p><b>C.</b> Tang Yuzhe: I think Tang Yuzhe is just like this in his life, and it's hilarious that career fans are still begging him to come out and be active. If he really had a career he wouldn't have knocked up a woman in his twenties. In his view, Career is not as important as sex.</p> <p><b>D.</b> Tang Yuzhe: No matter how much you love him, you can't get pregnant out of wedlock ...</p> <p><b>E.</b> Tang Yuzhe: I've decided to stomp on you from now on, I'll curse you every time you're on the hotspot.</p> <p><b>F.</b> Tang Yuzhe: What's wrong with castrating a man who can't control his penis without a condom?</p> <p><b>G.</b> Tang Yuzhe: So this brother is all kids and no marriage?</p>			