

Media Mirror: A Study of Behavioral Logic in Z Generation's Accompanying Learning Live Broadcast

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Abstract. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, people's social distance has been forced to extend. At the same time, the development of media technology has broken through the limitations of physical time and space to a certain extent. New media has catalyzed the formation of new situations, and online learning has become the norm for many people. In recent years, accompanying learning live broadcast has gradually emerged. In the exploration of the behavioral logic root of the rise of the phenomenon of accompanying learning live broadcast, the author believes that the learning scene of the audience gazing at the anchor through the screen is very similar to the scene of the baby seeking self-confirmation in the mirror, and the process of their identity identification is in line with Lacan's mirror stage. Based on Lacan's mirror theory, this paper aims to interpret the behavioral logic in the accompanying learning live broadcast from the perspective of psychoanalysis and reflect on this media phenomenon. This paper adopts participatory observation and case analysis to collect data, analyzes how the audience and the anchor mirror each other, which constitutes self-identification in the process of accompanying learning live broadcast. This study puts forward some suggestions on how to treat this media phenomenon correctly.

Keywords: Self in the mirror; Mirror image; Media technology; Accompanying learning live broadcast; Media situation.

1. Literature review

Since Lacan put forward "The mirror stage of the formation of the function of 'I' -- a stage revealed by psychoanalytic experience", the mirror-image theory has attracted the attention of many scholars. Previous studies collected by the author include the research on theoretical ontology, as well as the discussion on movies and other media based on this theory. The paper Viewing the Mirror Function of Movies and Other Media Images from Lacan's Mirror-Image Theory discusses the function of films and other media images as mirrors, which provides a new research perspective for understanding the relationship between media and the real world.

As the accompanying learning live broadcast is a relatively new media phenomenon, there are few professional scholars studying this field at present, and the literature about live broadcast accompanying learning collected by the author in the database is few. The three papers Accompanying and Learning Together: A Study on the Use Motivation of Learning Live Broadcasting, Psychological Analysis of Audiences in Accompanying Learning Live Broadcasting under the Theory of Use and Satisfaction-- Taking bilibili's Accompanying Learning Live Broadcasting as an Example, and Analysis of bilibili's Hot Topic of Learning Broadcasting based on the Theory of Use and Satisfaction are conducted from the perspective of use and satisfaction theory, analyzing the reasons for the rise of the topic of learning accompanying learning live broadcasting from the perspective of audience psychology. The paper Perspective of Learning Live Broadcasting from the Perspective of Interactive Ritual Chain holds that this form of accompanying learning live broadcast arouses emotional resonance within the group by creating interactive ceremonies to be present together. The Behavioral Logic and Reflection on Youth Live Study Room of the Z-Generation explores the behavioral logic of the learning broadcasting of the Z Generation and holds that the youth groups conduct self-discipline and group promotion with the motivation of supervision and companionship.

The innovation of this paper lies in the Lacan-style interpretation of the new media phenomenon of accompanying learning live broadcasting from two angles of audience and anchor, and explores

the behavioral logic root of the rise of accompanying learning live broadcasting from the perspective of psychoanalysis, and reflects on this media phenomenon.

2. Introduction

Learning bloggers originated from the circle of study account in Instagram, where a group of people with learning tasks or learning purposes gathered to gain resonance by showing learning tasks, exchanging learning experiences, spreading learning experiences, and recommending good learning supplies. Nowadays, learning bloggers have extended from the initial graphic sharing and short video sharing to the live broadcast field. The live broadcast, which shows the whole learning process by the anchor and is usually accompanied by white noise or light music, is called accompanying learning live broadcast. According to a survey conducted by CCTV News, as of 2018, this type of live broadcast has been broadcast 1.03 million times in bilibili, with a length of 1.46 million hours, which has become the longest type of live broadcast in bilibili. Different from other types of live broadcast, the anchors in the accompanying learning live broadcast seldom interact with the audience, and some anchors even show only hands that constantly flip through the learning materials and take notes, showing the characteristics of accompanying slow live broadcast.

To some extent, the development of media has broken through the limitation of time and space. This breakthrough is not only manifested in the breaking of physical scenes, but also in the boundless and free information scenes. With the formation of new situations, people adopt new behaviors to adapt to specific situations, and accompanying learning live broadcast emerges in the media situations spanning time and space. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, online learning has become the norm for many people, and the popularity of accompanying learning live broadcast has reached its peak. Not only in bilibili, but live learning has also spread to many applications such as Xiaohongshu and Tik Tok. Through data investigation and analysis, at present, this kind of accompanying learning live broadcast is mostly found on the platforms of bilibili, Tik Tok and Xiaohongshu. Most of the anchors and audiences of this kind of live broadcast have phased goals to be achieved, such as taking the national civil service examination, postgraduate entrance examination, and certificate examination.

3. The Early Stage of the Audience Mirror

3.1 Chaotic State --the Audience's Perception of the Lack and Inadequacy of "Self"

In the context of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, people's social distance has been forced to extend. Some people with learning goals such as taking civil service examinations, postgraduate entrance examinations, and certificate examinations are prone to realistic anxiety in this environment, which is similar to the chaotic state of babies who are younger than six months old.

Lacan put forward that "when a baby is born, it is an undifferentiated, non-subject natural being, in the pre-mirror stage of nothingness, selflessness, and chaos. Babies in this stage do not have any sense of wholeness and individual unity but only have broken physical experiences". Therefore, in the pre-mirror period, the baby cannot recognize itself in the mirror. Zhao Lan, as an anchor who has been transformed from a live audience of accompanying learning, was in the stage of preparing for the postgraduate entrance examination when she contacted such live broadcasts. The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 made her study plan completely disrupted. She said, "I am an extremely self-disciplined person. If I do not go to the library or study room, it is hard for me to have the motivation to learn." At that time, she accidentally entered the accompanying learning live broadcast room recommended by bilibili's homepage and found that the average daily study time of the anchors of the same major in preparing for the examination had been more than 10 hours. Zhao Lan felt nervous and immediately started her own study. According to her statement, "there seems to be a secretly competitive thought." As the audience, after entering the live broadcast room, they have entered a process of examining the other in the mirror. It is easy for the audience to compare the anchor with

themselves and reflect on their own existence in the mimetic environment of the live broadcast room. This lack and insufficient cognition of self leads to the audience's increased willingness to construct their ideal self, thus establishing the foundation of self-construction.

3.2 “Peeking into the Private” -- the Impulse of the Self

Freud believes that people's desire to peek into private affairs comes from an impulse of self, and the venting of this desire often brings people an instinctive pleasure. Among this kind of live broadcast anchors, they often indicate their academic qualifications and status in the live broadcast room. For example, in Taozi Jun's live broadcast room, she indicated that she was from an ordinary family in the fifth-tier city in the northeast region, and indicated her education background, major, experience, target university, and other related information. In the comment area of the live broadcast room, there were often questions about the anchor's own situation such as “Can you study well in this situation?” and “Why did the anchor drop out of school?”. Exposing the anchor's personal information in the live broadcast room and showing her learning state through live broadcast can satisfy the audience's peeking desire to a certain extent. Driven by this impulse from the self, the audiences click into the live broadcast room, and it is possible that they will enter the middle of the mirror stage -- the process of self-construction.

4. The Middle Stage of the Audience Mirror

Lacan called the baby's 6-18 months the mirror stage. With the increase of physical movements in front of the mirror, the baby begins to associate the mirror with itself and find himself in the mirror as a complete unity. When the baby recognizes that the person in the mirror is itself, he has completed his first self-construction. With the continuous progress and development of media technology, more and more media devices act as mirrors. It is easy for the audience to regard the anchor on the screen as the other in the mirror image, and to construct their ideal selves through their yearning for the other. Especially in the background of the COVID-19 pandemic, the others present in reality become more difficult to reach, and the rise of live broadcast technology makes the media situation across space form and become the content scene of information sharing. Therefore, more and more people turn to the screen to find and establish the mirror role.

“Whether it's the baby in the mirror stage, the subject prescribed by the other, or the subject prescribed by ideology, we are all empty and insignificant in front of the other, but the mirror, the other, and the ideology they agree with are complete and unified”. When a baby recognizes its own image in front of a mirror for the first time, it begins to stare at itself. When it loves itself in the mirror, it falls in love with itself in the mirror. Out of the desire for self-improvement, the audiences will often choose people who are similar to themselves and have the qualities that they lack as their ideal selves, thus imagining themselves as images in the mirror. When they watch the live broadcast, like babies, they will project their own desires and visions to an anchor in the live broadcast room, and then identify with the motives and values they embody. This is the process that the audience seeks role identification on the screen. Therefore, when the audience establishes an anchor as their ideal selves, they will become his or her fans and imitate his or her behavior, which also deepens the audience's self-identification to a certain degree.

5. The Late Stage of Audience Mirror

5.1 The Identification of Others -- the Satisfaction of “Ideal Self”

“Human generates the function of self by identifying a certain image. A person's life is a process of continuously identifying a certain characteristic. This continuous identification process enables a person's self to be formed and constantly changed”. When the audiences in the live broadcast room have established their ideal self, their desire for the identification of others is an important means to increase user stickiness.

In the live broadcast room, the audience cannot only watch but also like and leave messages, forming a virtual social situation. In this situation, the live learning picture of the anchor is presented together with the danmu and comments sent by the audience, creating a common presence where many people learn and communicate synchronously. Such positive “watched by many people” and “clocking in and leaving messages” events mean the affirmation of the ideal self by others for the audience watching the live learning. This kind of ideal identification of others can give them spiritual encouragement. When the audiences participate in the live broadcast of accompanying learning, they will have a feeling of recognition and support, which will encourage them to devote more attention to their own study, clocking in and leaving messages. When the audiences show users’ stickiness to an anchor, they will pay more attention to the results and destiny of the anchor as “self in the mirror”. When they get their ideal results and social recognition, the audiences will have a certain degree of pleasure because their ideal self is satisfied.

5.2 Double-edged Sword -- the Realistic Extension Effect of “Ideal Self”

“The subject does not seek to comfort others simply but to dissolve his otherness by making oneself become himself or herself in his or her mind” . When the audience watches this kind of accompanying learning live broadcast, for the purpose of dispelling otherness, there will be a tendency to imitate their ideal self. Therefore, the ideal self established by the audience on the screen will extend in reality, thus producing positive effects and warning functions in reality.

Some live broadcast anchors can succeed in examinations, which encourages the audience watching their live broadcast to be more enterprising, identify with their own efforts, and play a positive role. However, some live broadcast anchors do not pass the examination, and long-term focused study has become a kind of performance live broadcast of showing anxiety. In addition, they regard learning live broadcast as a gimmick and embark on the road of live broadcast to sell goods or gain flow. The collapse of the ideal warns the audience to concentrate more on learning itself, and never let learning become a performance. All in all, the role of the ideal self in reality is like a double-edged sword. Only when the audience and the anchor both establish correct values and take the live learning process as a moderate incentive way can it have a positive effect.

6. The Early Mirror Stage of the Anchor: The Foundation of Self-construction

Through the above interpretation of the mirror stage of the audience, it can be seen that the audience experience three different stages in the process of participating in the accompanying learning live broadcast, namely, the early, the middle, and the late of the mirror stage, and finally gained self-identification in the identification of others. And the anchor in this kind of live broadcast room had to go through the same three stages. First of all, under the pandemic situation, many students who are taking postgraduate entrance examinations and national civil service examinations lack the motivation to urge themselves to study, and an anxious state of mind prompt the anchor to decide to broadcast his or her learning process by live broadcast. At this time, he do not have a clear understanding of his own personnel and was in the early mirror stage.

On April 20th, 2022, when the author interviewed a student W (the abbreviation of his family name) who was broadcasting learning, he said, “broadcasting learning with mobile phones is because of lack of self-control. Using mobile phones for live broadcast can make me stop playing mobile phones, and feel that someone is supervising me invisibly.” Because of the lack and hardship, W student did not establish his own cognition at this time but had a desire to construct himself. After entering the virtual social situation of the live broadcast room, the anchor will enter the next mirror stage.

7. The Middle Stage of the Anchor: Self-positioning Confirmation

Through the screen of the anchor to identify themselves, most of the accompanying learning anchors have established a personal who studies hard, works hard, and changes his life eventually. In the process of live broadcast learning, under the influence of multiple functions such as self-confirmation, audience confirmation, and group confirmation, the anchor gradually has a clearer and deeper understanding of self-positioning in the mirror stage.

According to Ge Tao, a first-year PhD student at the Heilongjiang University of Chinese Medicine, when he broadcast his learning process live for the first time, he felt very uneasy and curious about everyone's reaction in the live broadcast room. However, once he distracted, the audience in the live broadcast room would immediately send danmu such as "anchor, why are you not studying" and "keep on". Ge Tao gradually realized that he was being supervised by the audience, so his learning efficiency was much higher. Soon after the live broadcast, he received some private messages from loyal audiences, including those who reported their learning achievements, asked questions about the postgraduate entrance examination, and even those who bluntly said, "following him, and when I want to give up and if I watch his broadcast, I will be motivated again." Ge Tao also became more self-disciplined under the influence of others and established an inspirational and diligent anchor image. It can be seen that taking Ge Tao as an example, at this stage, the anchor clearly defines his own position through the screen, and establishes an idealized self in the imaginary world.

8. The Later Mirror Stage: The Formation of Self-identification in the Identification of Others

According to Lacan's interpretation, the subject's viewing is not the subject's own viewing but is constructed through the gaze of others. In the live broadcast room, positive danmu, fan attention, and gift reward are the recognition of others for the anchor. During the live broadcast, the video images of the live broadcast of the anchor are presented together with these identities from others, creating a common presence where many people learn and communicate at the same time. During the live broadcast, the anchor has the feeling of "not studying hard by himself". As more audience join this virtual social scene, the anchor has a deeper understanding of the content and form of his live broadcast, and the anchor gradually forms a clear self-identification in the identification of others. In order to make their behavior more in line with the ideal orientation, many anchors continue to prolong their learning time and increase their learning intensity, construct self-identification in the process of others' identification, and make continuous efforts to perfect their own ideal personnel.

9. The "Self-identification" of Mirror Image

Lacan put forward: "we only need to understand the mirror stage as a complete process of identity, that is, the change of the subject after identifying a mirror". Based on Lacan's psychoanalysis, we can analyze that the anchor and audience mirror each other in the live broadcast room, a media field spanning time and space, and construct self-identification. In the process of accompanying learning live broadcast, the anchor's cognition of self-positioning comes from the audience's self in the mirror image, and the anchor adjusts him/herself against the ideal self through the audience's self in the mirror image, finally completing the self-image construction in the accompanying learning live broadcast room. In the process of interactive communication and accompanying learning between the audience and the anchor, the ideal self is gradually constructed, and self-identification is formed. The extension of the ideal self also has a realistic effect. Thus, the audience and the anchor are mirror images of each other in this process, playing a role in their own self-construction and stimulating learning.

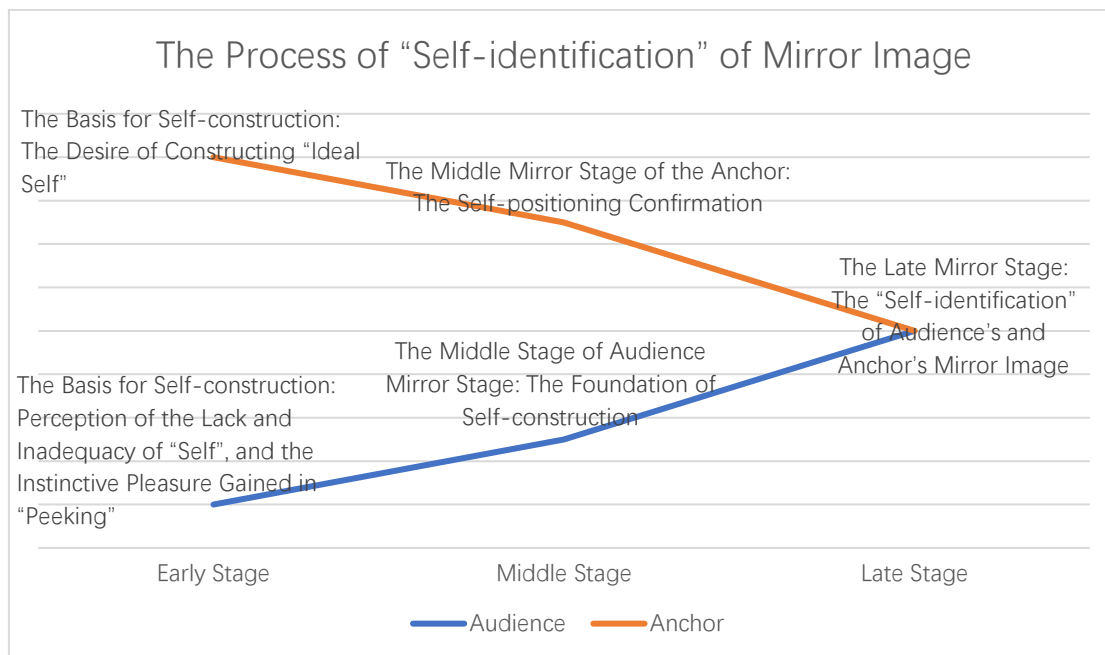


Figure 1. The Process of “Self-identification” of Mirror Image

However, the anchor and the audience confirm their identity, gain recognition and construct their ideal self through the screen. In this circular closed loop, they are easy to fall into the trap of narcissistic identity and other identities, leading to infatuation and misunderstanding of self-image. “From the mirror stage, people are always looking for certain traits and images and regard them as themselves. The motive force of this search is the desire of human beings. Starting from the desire, the image in one’s mind is regarded as ‘self’, which will lead to illusion and alienation, and all this is due to the mechanism of identification”. The mutual gaze between the audience and the anchor draws the individuals who have already acquired the language into the symbolic world back to the imaginary world, and the anchor and the audience return to the mirror image under the closed loop of the live broadcast. Some anchors with the label of “24-hour live broadcast” seem to have worked very hard, but failed examinations one after another, And they finally fell into imaginary learning that showed anxiety about the length of study. In addition, the mutual gaze between the anchor and the audience forms self-identification. When the direction deviates, they cannot easily detect it. Therefore, they are easy to get into the misunderstanding of pursuing learning duration without pursuing learning efficiency and learning quality. This kind of phenomenon is accompanied by the mirror image of the audience and the anchor, and its influence cannot be ignored.

10. Conclusion

Through Lacan-style interpretation of the anchor and the audience in each stage of the accompanying learning live broadcast process, it can be seen that the audience and the anchor mirror each other in the virtual presence of the live broadcast room, and gradually establish their self-identification. In the process of accompanying learning live broadcast, the anchor and the audience construct their ideal selves through screen mirroring and make continuous efforts to gain the identity of others and improve their ideal selves, which can play a role in stimulating learning to a certain extent. However, the mutual gaze between the audience and the anchor makes it easy for both sides to have some infatuation and misunderstanding under the closed loop of the live broadcast, and some directional deviation occurs. Therefore, we also need to treat this kind of media phenomenon rationally, distinguish it carefully, and try our best to reduce the infatuation and misunderstanding of mirror images caused by narcissistic identity and other identities. Finally, we should also be wary of stepping into the misunderstanding of performance learning.

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