

Interactive Ritual Chain in the 227 Incident: The Division of Fan Culture

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Abstract: The 227 incident was an attack and boycott campaign against Xiao Zhan and his fans. The campaign launched on February 27th, 2020 by Xiao Zhan's resisters on various social media platforms in China. Since Xiao Zhan is a famous Chinese star who owns a huge number of fans, the incident was quickly fermented, causing a wide range of social discussions. Based on Collins's theory of interactive ritual chain, this paper aims to understand the deeper origin of the conflict and the division of different fans' community in the 227 incidents. The research analyzed the fans culture and fans conflict from inside-to-outside, which brought a new insight for fans' study.

1. Introduction

227 was an online campaign launched by fandom on February 27, 2020, to boycott star Xiao Zhan. The issue arose after tensions between Xiao's different fan groups escalated, with some activist fans calling for a mass denunciation of a fan article about him which published in AO3. (A link to this article was posted to Weibo, a social networking platform, to be reposted by the CP Fans community) Then the AO3 website happened to have an abnormal login, and the same people in the cultural circle agreed that the incident was caused by a report by Xiao Zhan's fans. The situation escalated, evolving from a fight among fans to a confrontation between fan groups and the same people in the cultural circle. Subsequent incidents continued to ferment, formed the ACG cultural circle to the main large-scale movement against the war of Xiao. Since it was officially launched on February 27th, it's called event 227.

There are three reasons why the 227 incident is worth studying: First, it is no longer a simple fan dispute, it has had a certain social impact and lasted for several months, to a wide range of topics. During this period, a number of mainstream media took different positions to speak out, targeting Xiao Zhan and his fans, as well as his opponents, and launched a wide range of discussions, which spread wildly on Weibo, Wechat, QQ and other social platforms, forming a hot topic of public concern. Second, Xiao Zhan is a pop star with a huge number of fans, and he is involved in the Organization of CP fans and other different groups of fans. The structure of fans is very complicated, and both internal and external cultural divisions exist at the same time, it is very typical and representative to study the fan culture because the different fans inside and outside are hard to

understand each other. In recent years, the literature on Fan Culture has been increasing, and the rapid development of new media has provided many scholars with new perspectives. However, most of the articles focus on the culture of pop stars and fans from the perspective of external criticism, rarely from the perspective of internal organization structure of fans, from the inside out.

This paper will use interaction ritual chains as theoretical framework to analyze fans culture. In order to understand the development of the whole event from the internal perspective of the fans, to provide a research perspective from the inside to the outside for the future research of this kind of event.

2. Interactive Ritual Chain Theory

“Interactive ritual chain” theory was formally proposed by American sociologist Randall Collins in 2004 in the book “interactive ritual chain”. In his opinion, interactive ceremony is a routine activity of interactive participants through the exchange of capital and emotion. The core of the interactive ritual is whether the participants have the same focus and share their feelings to the greatest extent. Through the long-term observation of fan activity, we can find that the social culture within the Fan Circle and the isolation between the fan and the outer circle can be a good reference through the theory of interactive ritual chain. The exchange of capital and emotions is an essential activity for fans, and the resonance effect within the group caused by the sharing of some common concerns and some similar emotions is the best sign of the separation between the fans and the outside.

The interactive ceremony produces four main outcomes, the first being group solidarity: This solidarity is a sense of membership, and collective activity is a sign of the formation of mutual subjectivity. Collective concern enhances the expression of shared emotion, which in turn further enhances the feeling of collective activity and mutual subjectivity. Second, there is the emotional energy of the individual: a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm and initiative in taking action. It is a moral energy; it makes everyone feel not only good, but noble, and that what they do is the most important and valuable thing. One of the main results of the ceremony is to endow symbolic objects with meaning, or to re-endow such objects with new thoughts and feelings of veneration. In the process, each participant finds his or her place. These symbols representing the Group: Symbols or other symbols that visualize icons, words, and gestures to make members feel connected to the group. The last of the series of influences of ritual is morality: When an individual act with energy from the high experience of the group, he or she has a sense of morality. The Litmus test of morality and sacredness is what is value itself and not its utilitarian value. Respect for the sacred object and the group's thoughts and feelings behind it, it has a higher value than the “useful or harmful function” of the mere secularity and the individual. People will defend the sense of justice in the group, respect the group symbol, and prevent being violated by the violator.

These results have a high coincidence with the fan community, the fans through the unity of the group, through the emotional energy and continue to strengthen the value of the performance, through the dominant or recessive symbols to separate the circle layer, finally, through some of the internal recognition of the ceremony or activities, to constantly improve the moral sense of the group, to prevent the group from being violated by the violator.

With the theory of interactive ritual chain to study the phenomenon of domestic fan culture, there have been some research results. The research was divided into two aspects: the first aspect is to start with a certain Star's Fan community and study the inner circle structure and interaction mechanism of fans. For example, based on Collins's theory of interactive ritual chain, and taking tfboys fan community as the typical research object, Yu Ning's research linked the whole article through three dimensions of interactive ritual chain: Interactive ritual, emotional connection and identity identity, with a view to find out the origin of community cohesion and vitality, and explore the problems

exposed in the process of construction. Zhang Yizhou conducted a six-month online ethnographic survey of Wang Ju Fan community. The study probed into the interactive performance of the members of the Wang Ju community, and compared the interactive performance of the typical idol formation model and the Wang Ju Fan community. Hao's research was based on an online ethnographic survey of Han's fan base from July 2017 to February 2018. Based on Collins's interactive ritual chain, the paper combined sociology with communication science to explain teenagers' adoration of "resisting culture" and pursuit of stars.

The second aspect is to analyze the interaction between the IP itself and the fans through a variety of shows or movies. For example, based on Collins's theory of interactive ritual chain, Li Huawei and Guilin took the Fan Community of in the name of the people as the research object and adopted the participation observation method to conduct the research. Shu Peiyu used online participation observation and questionnaire survey as research method to understand the TV series Huaqianggu fans of the behavior and psychological activities. Based on the theory of interactive ritual chain, Wang Yuqi adopted the research method of participant observation. The research took the idol trainee Fan Community as example. The paper analyzed the interaction mechanism within the online Fan Community and discusses whether the interaction needs to be personally involved in the characteristics of the online fan community and its power stratification.

This article takes "227" event as the breakthrough point, selects the fans of Xiaozhan community which has the intense conflict with different circles inside and outside as the research object, and uses the participation observation and other qualitative research methods to carry on the analysis. In contrast to the previous research, this paper focuses on the inner structure and mechanism of fans group and pays more attention to the conflicts between different circles and between fans group and external groups. It's a two-way, dynamic conflict, and it's also part of an anti-embrace by outside groups of fans who don't want to lose their voice on social media platforms. These conflicts are closely related to social rituals and are essentially about identity and psychological identity. But with the development of Network Technology and the penetration of social rituals, the conflicts between inner and outer circles are intensified, and the organizational antagonism between different groups is stimulated.

3. Interactive Ritual Chain during 227 Incident

3.1 Group Unity

As mentioned above, the interactive ritual chain produces four outcomes, the first of which is what we call group solidarity. The core of this unity is the feeling, which is due to the identification of a certain point of view. In the case of 227, for example, the initial conflict was sparked by a dispute between fans and the CPF (shippers), and the central figure of public opinion, "Rabbit of Banan District", has been attacked after the fact for a very important reason is that she has feminized Xiao Zhan as well.

The same point of view is the most basic identification threshold. Although they all support the same idol, because of different views and positions, individuals will be classified into different groups of fans. Different groups of fans have great differences in psychological feelings, cognition and consumption habits.

The core of only fans lies in uniqueness, that is, to put the interests of the only idol first. In a narrow sense, only fans support and only support one idol. In a broad sense, only one idol acts, don't tie him up with a group or the other person (here the tie up of other person usually takes the form of a romantic partner, gay or straight). CPF (shippers) is a fan group that likes two people at the same time and acknowledges the existence of an emotional relationship between them. An idol may be in a relationship with more than one person, but it is usually more fixed with one person. Feminization,

which can be found in both only fans and CPF (shippers), is characterized by the feminization of male idols and use some words like sister, daughter or princess and so on to entitle one's own idols.

But the feminization of behavior is not accepted by the majority of fans. Especially for the only fan side, a lot of people for this phenomenon abhorrent. Fans with a feminine mentality are not allowed into the inner management of their fans. So after the "Rabbit of Banan District" was found to be a feminization, there was a lot of criticism from fans who refused to identify him as a fan.

3.2. Individual Emotional Energy

The second condition generated by the interactive ritual chain is the individual's emotion, energy. This energy gives someone a feeling of confidence, elation, and power when they take action. And the maintenance of this feeling is the need for fans to continue to re-create the content. By spreading the word across social media platforms, fans are stimulated to stay on a high for long periods of time. But because of the different views of the fans and the different groups within them, the platforms and content they produce are very different.

Many years ago, much of the social behavior among fans was centered on Baidu Tieba, a social platform. In recent years, micro-blog is the main communication and dissemination position. Many of the words, pictures, and commercials related to celebrities are read and reposted on Weibo. But CP fans are a relatively small group. They have a lot in common with the fan culture. And the emotional connection between the idols is not known to the public. So CP fans need a lot of emotional output between them if they want to keep the crowd going for a long time. And that output is often based only on imagination. In order to prevent those who do not know the content as a real phenomenon, CP fan's text and video content will be published in the social platforms that its has culture of the fanfiction mainly like Loft and B station. This kind of enclosure movement is similar to the only fans and CP fans of both recognition and understanding.

227 accident started off as a huge dispute between only fans and CP fans over the platform on which content was produced. Some of CP's biggest fans have taken to Weibo a novel with some controversial content. And Weibo itself is a public platform for the masses. Only fans believe that this is likely to have a very negative public impact on their own idols. And reported the controversial content of the article and the author.

As we mentioned, group interaction rituals increase the emotional energy of individuals, so this post, which calls for reporting, got a quick and positive response. And it's this kind of military "call-to-action" that makes other groups fearful of fans' whistle-blowing and concerned about the safety of their own culture, it also makes them believe that fans have the ability to report content failures. Later, some radical fans and fans to play the loft platform malicious brush low points, leading to the collapse of fan reputation. On February 27, the issue of an unusual landing on the AO3 website brought the conflict to a head, (the reason for the AO3 site's unusual logins is not clear, and there is no clear evidence that Xiao's fans have reported the site, which is not well known among fans.) AO3 users combined previous actions of Xiao's fans, it ruled that the incident was the result of a massive whistle-blower campaign against the platform as a result of an internal struggle among fans. They have no regard for the authenticity or factionalism of their fans, but they abhor cross-platform law enforcement and interference in their own interests. On February 27th, a coalition against Xiao and his fans was formed, and later the boundaries of the cultural circle were widened, sparking widespread discussion and reaching a high level of social incident.

3.3. Group Symbols

The third result is the symbol of the production representative group. These symbols are represented as graphic icons, words, or gestures. It enables members to feel connected to the group.

The special alphabet is an important symbol to distinguish different groups, flooding the major social networking platforms now. In order not to be other groups to spy on some of the internal information, will deliberately some of the text content symbols, the formation of some conventional code words. These codes do a good job of compartmentalizing groups. This kind of division includes not only the external division between fan groups and ordinary people, but also the internal division between different fan groups. Some of the visual icons are external status symbols, to announce that they belong to this group rather than others, in order to distinguish themselves from other groups. Both internally and externally, one's identity is strongly associated with the group to which one belongs.

The 227 event is related to these symbolic divisions from the beginning of the struggle with people circle to the later development of other circles. In addition to the fan group like the star side, there is a kind of anti fans (special diss a star) , they know this star is often no less than fans. Their habit of wearing fans' profiles, nicknames and other symbols to make inappropriate comments in public on the Internet has tarnished the reputation of the fan group or the star himself. For example, when arguing with people and fans, someone with a nickname related to Xiao Zhan deliberately went to the game "sword net three" channel provocation, using the tone of the Dachimawa Lee, pretending to be a fan. After the incident became public, it was discovered by the Fan community that he was not a fan, because in his speech he mentioned another idol, namely Xiao Zhan's CP (one of the emotional ties mentioned above) Wang Yibo. In the CP Fans Group, Wang Yi Bo was not mentioned in public so as not to implicate the other person, which became the iron rule for the fans in the 227 incident. And the game player does not understand this middle of the code and rules, by virtue of nicknames identified the other side is a fan, therefore, the incident escalated, from Fan Circle to expand to the game circle. External and internal for the fans of the logo and behavior of different standards to make the internal and external cognitive dislocation, and contradictions continue to deepen.

People in the outside world identify anti fans by their profile pictures and other symbols, while the real fans identify anti fans by some code words. But the code word is hard to explain to the public, so leading to internal and external misunderstanding and contradictions continue to deepen.

3.4 Moral Sense

The final result is a sense of morality within the collective. This moral sense is embodied by respecting the symbol of the group and maintaining the sense of justice in the group. Fans use these symbols to prevent infringers from infringing upon them.

Once an individual is integrated into a group, his personality will be obliterated, the group will occupy an absolute dominant position, and at the same time, the group's behavior will also show rejection of dissent, extreme, emotional and low intelligence quotient characteristics.

In a situation where the facts are not well disseminated and accepted, (the public doesn't care about the facts, and there is no point in clarifying) , fans begin a series of acts of contributing data and spending in order for idols to be unaffected. By the amount of consumption to prove to enterprises that the appeal of the idol has not been affected by the large-scale diss, and in the purchase of special notes idol name, easy data capture. This kind of behavior is influenced by Korean fans, who believe that the amount of consumption is an important factor in the future development of stars. But the fan itself is a quite blood-blooded group, in addition Xiao Zhan oneself is under the network violence situation, the fan expense enthusiasm reaches a peak. At the same time, the 227 group, as the opposing party, also launched corresponding actions, aiming at the brand side that invited Xiao Zhan to endorse, launched a series of smear brands, asking for old invoices, buying competitive products, and brought a series of troubles to the brand side. At this point, the dislike of Xiao Zhan fans rose to the Xiao Zhan Star himself, the bad language of the star extended to the attack on the brand endorsement.

And Star oneself in this farce, experienced from person to commodity, again from commodity to person of a transformation. Both pro and con groups contributed data to the term, which dominated the search for the name for two months on every major internet platform.

4. Conclusions and Practical Implications

In recent years, the Chinese fan group has been greatly influenced by South Korea, the fan scale has gradually increased, the system has become more and more systematic, the fan inner group has become more and more subdivided, and the conflicts among various groups have been increasing. The interactive rituals on various Internet social platforms have, in a way, deepened the cohesion between small groups and the estrangement from other groups. The division of Fan Culture has become particularly complex, difficult to understand from the outside world, and barriers to other cultural circles have become more and more serious.

The 227-incident related to Xiao Zhan has given us a lot of enlightenment. Xiao Zhan himself actually acted as a bull's-eye in this incident. It happened to Xiao Zhan, by chance as well as by necessity, because his data is so bright that it is enough to set an example among the stars of the flow. In essence, the incident is a long-standing cultural rift between Fan Culture and other cultures. Fan Culture has evolved over the years, and a long-standing lack of understanding on the part of the outside world has been unleashed on this one star. Xiao Zhan and his fans are paying for the entire fan base. Now, Xiao Zhan himself and most of his fans seem a little innocent in the criticism, but it's worth considering whether fan culture itself has something to reflect on.

The future of the fan base may be less complicated, simplifying some of the rules. Fans do not without reason within the group, not to impose some tasks and constraints fans, not to the development of this culture to the extreme. The media should also do the right thing and not create inappropriate, irresponsible content for the sake of traffic, deliberately causing internal or external disputes among fans.

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