



# A Study of the Social Transmission of Online Youth Subcultures

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**Abstract.** The increased pressure of competition within the society has contributed to the psychosocial imbalance of the young generation, and "subculture" has come into people's view under the dissemination of network media. Youth subculture is flourishing, and various cultural forms such as Netflix culture, spoof culture, and secondary yuan reflect the value deficiency and other social symptoms of contemporary youth groups. With the development of the Internet, online youth subculture is constantly changing, which profoundly affects the values and value realization of youth groups, and at the same time there is a crisis of deviation from the mainstream ideology. Internet media technology determines the rapid dissemination of network youth subculture, and analyzing its dissemination mode, content and group structure is conducive to a more in-depth understanding of network youth subculture.

**Keywords:** involution; lying flat; online youth subculture; social communication;

## 1 Introduction

Cultural values may hinder or accelerate human progress.<sup>[1]</sup>As of June 2023, the number of Internet users in China had reached 1.079 billion, and the number of youth Internet users was nearly 200 million. Network media has become an important way for youth groups to obtain information and disseminate information, and youth groups, as a positive "network factor" in society, resist the mainstream values of society in the Internet era with the help of cultural power and the construction of subcultures in the form of cultural reconstruction, and at the same time, the buzzwords "involution", "lie flat", "Buddhist" and so on were born. At this time, at the same time, "involution", "lying flat", "Buddhist" and other hot words were born, and widely spread on various social platforms<sup>[2]</sup>. Behind the emergence of youth subculture is a profound social objective reason, as well as the subjective reason of youth psychological imbalance. By analyzing the logic of the emergence of youth subculture on the Internet, we will explore the substantive needs and real social mentality of the youth group, pay attention to their mental health problems, and guide the youth to set up correct values and actively cultivate a good mentality.

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## 2 Representation and Symbolic Presentation of Youth Subculture on the Internet

Youth subculture is booming, and various cultural forms such as Netflix culture, spoof culture, and secondary yuan reflect the value deficiency and other social symptoms of contemporary youth groups. Internet youth subculture and youth subculture belong to two different cultural forms in the same direction, and are mainly distinguished from each other by their representations and symbolic presentations.

### 2.1 Characterization of Youth Subculture on the Internet

Internet youth subculture is a discourse expression system developed by youth groups, of which "inward scrolling" and "lying flat" are two manifestations.

"Involution" is different from the concept of "involution" used in the academic literature, which explores cultural patterns and mechanisms of development, whereas the term "involution" used by youth groups refers to the internal evolution of competition, with people in the same sector competing with each other. The term "involution" refers to the internal evolution of competition, in which people in the same department compete with each other and are subject to internal conflict<sup>[3]</sup>. The emergence of "involution" is related to the psychological imbalance of young people and social competition. Objectively speaking, in the period of social transition in China, the competition in various industries is fierce, which leads to the emergence of "involution" phenomenon; subjectively speaking, the social competitiveness of some young people is low, and they do not establish the correct employment system. On the subjective level, some young people have low competitiveness, have not established a correct concept of employment, and show a sense of helplessness in the face of fierce competition, and an imbalance of mentality, which makes the term "involution" popular.

Layflat" is the complete opposite of "involution", under which the pressure of life of young people is doubled and their sense of happiness is lowered, while "996" and "007" work mechanisms represent the prevailing overtime culture in enterprises, and this social distortion culture has provoked another subculture of resistance among young people, namely "layflatism". The work mechanism of "996" and "007" represents the prevailing overtime work culture in enterprises, and this distorted social culture has provoked the resistance of the youth groups, and another subculture has emerged, i.e., "lie flatism"<sup>[4]</sup>. "Lying flat" refers to mental relaxation and slackness, choosing to ignore the pressure of life and resting on the status quo, which is also a soft confrontation made by some youth groups due to "involution".

The prevalence of youth subculture maps out the working and living conditions of contemporary youth groups, as well as their attitudes when facing social pressure, from the point of view of the characterization of youth subculture on the Internet. From the viewpoint of the substantive demands of the network youth subculture of "inward curling" and "lying flat", it reflects a desire of contemporary youth for a

comfortable and happy life, and also shows that some young people want to find their own sense of identity in the network.

## **2.2 Symbolic Presentation of Online Youth Subculture**

In online social media, online youth subculture is mainly spread through symbols, such as cartoons, emoticons, films and TV works, etc., and youth groups join the group in a self-deprecating way to get a sense of identity. Internet youth subculture is mainly composed of images, texts and other symbols and presented.

Textual symbols refer to plain text, which is also a relatively direct way of discourse expression as well as presentation on the Internet. For example, the textual discourse of some self-media is full of all kinds of negative energy information, spreading anxiety, negative emotions and so on. Network communication and information transfer is gradually visual, with the help of image symbols. In the communication of network youth subculture, image symbols are a major means of communication, such as emoticons, which are presented in a negative and decadent style, and humorous and playful to negative emotions. These emoticons are popular with youth groups, which not only shows that youth groups are in pursuit of negative images, but also presents their sense of identity and helplessness for the state of decadence<sup>[5]</sup>.

## **3 The Social Impact of Online Youth Subcultures**

With the development of the Internet, the network youth subculture is constantly changing, which profoundly affects the values and value realization of the youth groups, and at the same time, there is a crisis of deviation from the mainstream ideology.

### **3.1 Impact of Youth Values**

In the Internet era, network youth subculture has been spreading rapidly, which has an important impact on the formation of youth values, and youth is really a critical moment for the shaping of values. First of all, the prevalence of network youth subculture has lowered the sense of identity of some young people towards socialist core values. The rapid development of the Internet has given rise to the era of traffic, and some marketing numbers use youth subculture to spread widely, causing anxiety among youth groups, turning to negative resistance to socialist core values and falling into the wrong value perception<sup>[6]</sup>. Secondly, the emergence of youth subculture on the Internet, the youth's negative attitude towards the practice of socialist core values, for example, "consumerism", "exquisite egoism", all kinds of borrowing and lending software and "0" purchases, inducing young people to fall into the trap of consumerism and develop a bad lifestyle, which seriously violates the requirements of socialist core values. Finally, the difficulty of practicing socialist core values has greatly increased. Take the example of "inward scrolling" and "lying flat" for example, due to its own controversial and two-sided nature, how to treat different youth network

groups separately, respectively, need to take targeted measures such as tolerance and guidance, which has made socialist core values difficult to practice. This makes it more difficult to promote socialist core values.

### **3.2 Impact of Mainstream Ideology**

Network youth subculture is the rapid spread of youth subculture on the Internet. Youth subcultures on the Internet, ranging from "inward curling" to "lying flat", have seriously impacted the mainstream ideology of China. On the one hand, the network youth subculture has gradually evolved into the effect of blind entertainment, "everything can be rolled" and other youth subculture viewpoints, although it is a kind of satire on the pressure that can not be released by the real society, but it has been contrasted with the mainstream ideology emphasizing the spirit of craftsmen, scientists, Lei Feng spirit, and so on. On the other hand, the youth subculture of "lying flat" has gradually evolved through online marketing to the idea that as long as one lies flat, one will not fall into the trap of the capitalists, which may seem to be a counter to consumerism, but it also alludes to the lack of competitiveness of some young people themselves, who give up on their own initiative in the face of fierce competition<sup>[7]</sup>. From the point of view of social productivity, if we are deeply affected by this idea for a long time, the lack of material and spiritual creation of the main body, the development of society will lose the impetus to move forward.

### **3.3 Impact of Youth Value Realization**

The sweep of youth subcultures on the Internet, including the subculture of "involution" and "lying flat", has caused the resonance of youth groups, creating a tacit understanding among individuals who were originally independent, and in the subculture circle, youth groups have found a sense of existence and identity. However, at the same time, some young people, when facing the lack of their own social core competitiveness, may attribute all of their own reasons to the social "involution" of this subculture, and then categorize themselves as the "lying flat" group, and attribute the reasons for "lying flat" to the times. "The reason for this is attributed to the era<sup>[8]</sup>". For this part of the youth group, they just take this "involution" "lying flat" subculture as an excuse for not taking the initiative to struggle, not taking the initiative to realize the value of life, leading to the decadence of young people, practice has proved that the network youth subculture of young people's value. Practice has proved that network youth subculture has a certain impact on the realization of youth value.

## **4 The Social Transmission of Online Youth Subcultures**

Internet media technology determines the rapid dissemination of network youth subculture, and analyzing its dissemination methods, content, and group structure is conducive to a more in-depth understanding of network youth subculture.

#### **4.1 Modes of Communication: Symbolization**

With the development of Internet technology, the ability of human beings to transform the objective world in a dynamic way has been enhanced, and the age of intellectual media has had a profound impact on the dissemination of online youth subculture, which is characterized by symbolization. Symbolization refers to taking images as the core, focusing on sensory stimulation, communicating with virtual symbols as well as transferring emotions, which has also become a way of network youth subculture communication. Due to the low threshold of access to the Internet, the threshold of using network technology has dropped, giving youth groups the space to create symbols, and this intuitive and visualized form of symbols has been accepted by the majority of youth groups. Under the influence of postmodernism, network symbols have been disassembled, collaged, and reshaped. Collage has become a way of coding for network youth subculture, by adopting collage, adapting or improvising, and transplanting symbols into different cultural contexts to obtain new meanings<sup>[9]</sup>. In social media, online youth subculture reconstructs the original symbols by means of collage, giving them new meanings and realizing symbolic expression. For example, netizens use "Pepe the Sad Frog" with the words "orphans and widows" as a kind of playful existence for the Tanabata Festival, and the anthropomorphic frog with a sad expression has gradually evolved into a kind of self-deprecating existence after countless spreads, used by netizens to express their feelings of "being tired of love" and "not being in love". The anthropomorphic frog with a sad expression gradually evolved into a self-deprecating existence after countless times of dissemination, and was used by netizens to express emotions such as "tired of feeling unloved", becoming a subcultural symbol chased by everyone.

#### **4.2 Communication Content: Fragmentation and Generalized Entertainment**

The development of media technology is subversive, showing the current fragmentation of information dissemination, people are in fragmented time, and the information transmitted is also fragmented. The most crucial thing that enables the network youth subculture to gradually form a network subculture from simple words only in a relatively short period of time is technology. Information transmission in the new media era is different from the previous narrative information transmission, and fragmentation and virtuality provide a broad space for the discourse expression of the majority of youth groups. For example, the fragmented content of short videos has become a kind of popular culture, with many types of performances and diverse contents, which is centered on the record of instantaneous "flow" life and the pursuit of fun, and some meaningful video contents will appear while relaxing the emotions of young people and displaying their cultural vitality. However, due to the excessive entertainment content in short videos, they are characterized by "generalized entertainment", resulting in more homogeneous content without much incremental value.

### 4.3 Structure of the Communication Community: Circling the Wagons

The continuous updating of media technology has led to the "tribalization" of the communication group structure of network youth subculture, and the centralized information acquisition mode is difficult to adapt to the new media environment, which expands the autonomy of individual information acquisition, and then appears the tribalization characteristics. The emergence of mobile social media has undoubtedly boosted the development of subculture, leading to the emergence of various subculture tribes, and the communication group structure of network youth subculture is also characterized by stratification. In virtual social media, unfamiliar individuals with great differences in the real society are gathered, thus forming a long tail of demand, making the non-mainstreamed demand market much larger than the mainstream market. With the support of emerging media technology, individuals can find their personal subculture circles in social media, forming a cyberspace carnival.

## 5 Conclusion

Culture is the way we know ourselves and understand each other, culture is our personal network, culture is the image and abstraction that enables us to live together in society and in the country. <sup>[10]</sup>Culture affects people's values, and the network youth subculture should tend to avoid harm, form a correct guide, and promote the construction of a beautiful society to play a positive role.

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