



# Gender Stereotypes in the NiShuiHan Mobile Game: Reflections and Challenges

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**Abstract.** At present, the game space has become an important expression space, in the specific situation of the mobile game world, the interaction between the player and the game, the interaction between the player and the player, to a certain extent, it shows the players' cognition of gender culture in the game culture space. On a certain level, players will transplant the gender cognition in real life to the mobile game world, and show it through exercises in the game space. In order to reveal how the game shapes the reality perceived by the players, what kind of gender exercises the players perform in the game, and what kind of gender bias is behind this behavior. From the perspective of personal communication, based on the theory of gender performance, this paper starts from the gender performance of game players by means of in-depth interview, participatory observation and text analysis. the purpose of this paper is to explore the discipline and rebellion behind the gender exercise behavior of game players along the two paths of discourse and technology. The study found that the realistic gender cultural tendency still dominates the gender culture in the game space, and the gender performance behavior of game players in the game is still affected by the gender order in the social culture. In addition, the discipline from technology affects the gender cognition and performance behavior of game players in a more covert way.

**Keywords:** Cold hand swimming against the current; Gender stereotype; Sexism; Embodied communication; Gender exercise

## 1 Introduction

In today's society, gender equality and gender stereotypes have become topics of widespread concern. As a part of popular culture, video games also play an important role, reflecting the gender concept in society. In the virtual social space, the stereotype of male and female roles has become the focus of research. According to the role design, task allocation and interaction mechanism in the game, we intend to explore in depth how the Internet platform constructs, strengthens or subverts the social construction of gender roles[1]. Gender representation, division of labour in gender roles and interaction with the social system will also be included to reveal the deeper impact of gender stereotypes in this Internet social environment[2-3].

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We will analyze the mechanisms by which male and female stereotypes are formed in the game. This includes the setting of gender roles by game developers, the acceptance and shaping of these stereotypes by players, and social feedback on gender stereotypes inside and outside the game community. Through this in-depth study, we aim to more accurately understand how Internet entertainment affects and reflects gender concepts in real society.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Gender Discrimination**

Both the content of video games and the role of video games in popular culture have changed profoundly since the first games appeared in the 1970s. The content of video games is linked to technological advances, with increasingly striking and realistic images. Video game characters have the potential to influence players' perceptions of gender roles. Through the process of social comparison, players can learn about social expectations of appearance, behavior and roles. Males are more likely to be heroes and major characters, use more weapons, have more abilities, are more muscular, and have greater strength. Women tend to be supplementary characters, more attractive, sexier, more innocent, and more scantily clad.

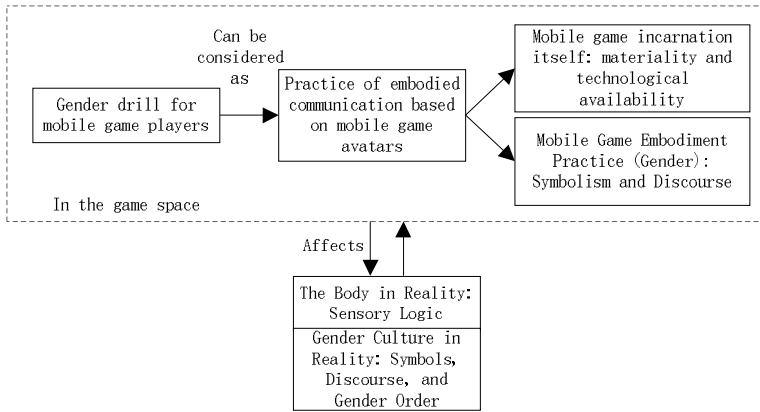
### **2.2 Gender Stereotype**

A stereotype is mental "shorthand which helps to convey ideas and images quickly and clearly". For example, the "Cinderella Complex" is talk about women depend on men in the pursuit of a happy, fulfilling life. The "Cinderella complex" denotes a psychological pattern where individuals, usually women, harbor an unconscious longing to be rescued or cared for by someone else, often awaiting a fairy-tale-like figure to fulfill this role. This phenomenon persists across different historical periods and cultural contexts, underscoring the deep-seated influence of gender stereotypes on societal norms and behaviors. According to different community surveys, Chinese mobile games enjoyed big success in Korean game market in 2017. There are gender differences in the types of games played by Koreans, with most young males playing fleet games and females playing casual games. In addition to this, regardless of gender, Korean gamers preferred the charging and management policies of Chinese games, as well as the emphasis on fantasy sexism.

### **2.3 Mobile Games Is One of the Important Fields in the Practice of Embodied Communication**

In mobile games, the communication practice of game players is based on the game avatar, and the interaction between game players is also realized through the game avatar, which, as the basic component of game communication, plays an indispensable role. From this level of understanding, it is not difficult to see that in game practice, the

game avatar is not only an important intermediary for players to narrate, but also an important carrier in the production and dissemination of gender culture in the game space. Generally speaking, in terms of embodied communication, from the perspective of communicators, it can be understood that communicators bring a unique communication experience to users: embodied communication creates an immersive feeling, provides a variety of sensory stimuli for users to enter it, and makes users deeply immersed in the scene. During this period, game designers plan the content and process of game players' participation in game practice based on the principle of mobilizing more sensory participation. From the user's personal point of view, it can be understood that embodied communication refers to the stimulation that acts on the senses of the virtual body in the virtual field, which, to a certain extent, follows the sensory logic of reality, and will bring similar and personal feelings to users. Users in this kind of feeling, in this kind of personal experience, open their practical behavior in the game. The detailed incarnation communication-gender exercise relationship is shown in Figure 1.



**Fig. 1.** Schematic diagram of the relationship between embodied communication and gender performance

The words with gender bias in "NiShuiHan" have been extended to the reality, strengthening the gender stereotype in the game to a certain extent, and the game capital has gradually extended to the reality and become an important consideration of the real communication between the game players. The game space and the real space permeate each other, and the gender culture and communication culture in the game also have a great impact on the real life. The mainstream gender culture in the game often places women in unequal prejudices. "CP", "bringing a sister" and "asking for a belt" are often ways for male or female players to use the gender stereotype in the game to obtain game capital or social capital. In the game, when some male players form a team with female players, they will automatically bring in the role of the protector to show their masculinity, while some male players will change their gender by means of voice changer and voice package. game image, game bar gender symbols and other

enhanced construction of the "female player" role, and with the help of this role identity to enhance their capital in the game. Specific players will also use male players who intend to show masculinity in the game to serve themselves, using gender conversion as a strategy to actively strive for rational or perceptual benefits.

### **3 Research Contents and Methods**

#### **3.1 Research Content**

This study mainly aims at the problem of gender performance in mobile games, from the perspective of personal communication, along the two paths of discourse and technology, and analyzes it from three parts: the text of gender exercise, the behavior of gender exercise and the norm of gender exercise. First of all, pay attention to the basic elements-symbol elements of gender performance in the game, analyze the content of gender symbols in the game and the gender symbol violence behind them; secondly, pay attention to the specific gender practice behavior of game players in the game. This paper discusses the technical availability of game players in the establishment of game avatars, and then discusses the incarnation interactive narrative of game players [4]. In addition, in the third chapter, we will focus on the norms of gender performance of gamers in the game, in addition to discourse norms, but also discuss technical norms and other contents. Finally, in addition to the restrictions on gender performance in the game, it will also explore the possibility of "real" gender performance in the game, under the background of the sustainable development of the media, when the gender restrictions in the game are removed.

#### **3.2 Research and Design**

##### **1. Participatory observation**

The author makes a participatory observation through the game public chat bar information and participation in the game, and regularly squats down on the popular live broadcasts of "NiShuiHan" Douyin players to observe the online community interaction around the live broadcast. In addition, the author will also squat in the Douyin live broadcast of "Game Group CP" derived from "NiShuiHan", explore which factors in the game will become the game capital to attract members of the opposite sex, and observe the online community actions around this content.

##### **2. Text analysis.**

Look for the content in the highly popular game video related to gender topics in the game and the popular comments in the comment area for text analysis, and explore what kind of gender bias exists in the secondary processing of gender in the game. What kind of gender order is hidden after this bias.

##### **3. Depth interview**

In the form of in-depth interviews, you can get to know the interviewees more deeply. The in-depth interviews of this study will focus on the experiences, preferences and choices of female and male players in video games and their interaction with players of the opposite sex, focusing on the details of their game behavior. they also pay

attention to their self-cognition, orientation, preference for the opposite sex and imagination of intimacy in the game. In this study, 10 male players and 10 female players were selected from 18 to 25 years old, a total of 30 people were interviewed. When determining the interviewees, in order to ensure the effect of the interview, we choose the players who have been playing in the high level of "NiShuiHan" for more than two years, and cover as many types of players as possible, which enriches our perspective to a certain extent.

Interviews will last from August 2023 to January 2024. Online Wechat voice interviews are the main methods, with each interview lasting from 50 to 90 minutes. The interview focuses on the gender identity, gender relationship and gender bias of the game players in "NiShuiHan", in order to guide the interviewees to talk about their own game experiences, to obtain relevant information, to explain the construction process of gender identity in the game with Judith Butler's gender exercise theory, and to further analyze the game players' performance behavior in the game process (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Basic Information of Interviewees

Number	Gender	Age	Occupation	Education level
M1	Male	25	Migrant workers	Junior high school
M2	Male	20	Student	Undergraduate course
M3	Male	18	Student	Undergraduate course
M4	Male	19	Student	Undergraduate course
M5	Male	21	Migrant workers	High school
M6	Male	21	Student	Undergraduate course
M7	Male	21	Student	Undergraduate course
M8	Male	21	Migrant workers	High school
M9	Male	18	Migrant workers	Junior high school
M10	Male	21	Student	Undergraduate course
F1	Female	20	Student	Undergraduate course
F2	Female	19	Student	Undergraduate course
F3	Female	18	Student	Undergraduate course
F4	Female	22	Student	Undergraduate course
F5	Female	24	Student	Undergraduate course
F6	Female	20	Employees	High school
F7	Female	23	Student	Undergraduate course
F8	Female	21	Employees	High school
F9	Female	25	Employees	High school
F10	Female	25	Student	Undergraduate course

#### 4 The Text of Gender Exercises: Gender Symbols in Mobile Games Space

To some extent, the mobile game space is a space full of many symbols. Game designers encode different symbols in this space and extend their values to the symbols in the coding process. Game players decode different symbols in the game and understand

themselves in the decoding process. The symbol in the game is not only the representation of the intention of the encoder, but also the medium of the value tendency of the symbol internalized by the decoder [5]. In the gender exercises of online game players, these symbols become the basic elements for online players to perform gender exercises in the game space, and mobile game players unconsciously absorb the gender orientation behind these symbols in the process of play. and show it in the follow-up exercise process.

After entering the game field, the participants will use the same set of codes and share the same meaning world under the rules of the game. As a symbolic activity, game not only contains the process meaning based on self-entertainment, such as the participants convey self-intention, explain the behavior of others, and control the meaning of the whole environment, but also can extend the meaning generated in the game field to other fields, such as forming self-cognition, establishing social relations, and guiding social practice . A game field is a micro-society, in which there is cooperation and competition, domination and confrontation, and people who enter the field share the same meaning world. In this meaningful world, gender bias is quietly implanted in coding and decoding.

#### **4.1 Symbolic Content in the Game Space**

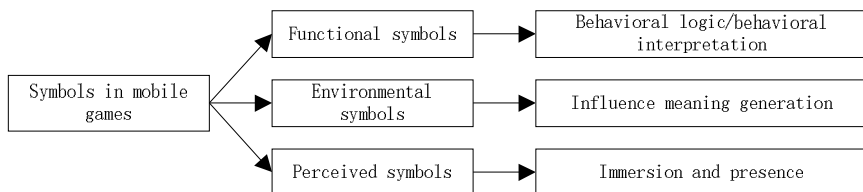
In "NiShuiHan", character symbols include nicknames, gender, skin color, hairstyle, voice, clothing, imprints, grades, etc., which are symbols that mark the identity of players and constitute the identity of players in the game. For gamers, these character symbols are not only important factors for their own personalized expression, but also the main elements of their own gender exercises. At the beginning of the game, players need to complete the basic game settings, and the game nickname is not only an important personality sign, but also an important symbol for players to present themselves. Some players will make fun of their names, such as "4th wife has beriberi", "pure mother monkey", "unrestrained love", "Jia teammate big kidney" and so on. Some players will also highlight their own gender image content, such as "sexy fashion beauty", "Prince Peng Yuyan" and so on. Players are free to edit their own game nicknames in the game, as long as they are not the same as the existing game nicknames (the same game nicknames are not allowed in the game, from this level, the game nicknames are exclusive) [6-7]. If players want to change the game nickname later, they need to buy a rename card before they can change the game nickname, which will reduce the willingness to change the game nickname to a certain extent and realize the binding between the game nickname and the player.

In terms of voice setting, game players can show their personality by purchasing voice packages and choosing modes such as "uncle sound" and "Loli sound". This kind of voice package only provides the voice style of the specified text, and the player's choice is limited. You can't create at will. If you need to change the sound style presented in the game, you can choose the voice conversion that comes with your mobile phone. Or choose to buy a silencer (a plug-in that can be used in the game to convert the speaker's voice content into a specific style of voice content, and the speaker is free to create a voice with a "royal sister" or "Lori sound" style. Used to talk to teammates in

the game and shape their own image) to achieve voice style conversion [8]. In addition, in the game, players also have voice effects after being killed, which will be linked to the player's body image. If the body image is male, it is masculine sound effect, and if it is female, it is feminine sound effect.

## 4.2 Perceptual Symbols: Deep Immersion in Player Interaction

Bai Yin scholars believe that perceptual symbols such as three-dimensional animation, game music and tactile operation can endow characters with personality characteristics and personality charm, and guide players to be deeply involved in online game situations. In "NiShuiHan", the trigger of 3D animation is mostly based on the key operation of the player's hand. When the player clicks on a specific key, or when the player's body is in a specific scene, it will trigger the 3D animation effect in the game. For example, when the player triggers the New year's Eve dinner scene with his teammates in the classic mode island map, the player needs to click on the screen button in this scene, on the basis of interacting with the electronic screen. It will trigger the three-dimensional animation effect of the player's incarnation in that scene in the game, and the player can watch the scene of having dinner together. In this three-dimensional animation, the player's game avatar will also be involved in it. This will also bring a more immersive experience for players. In addition to three-dimensional animation, game players can switch the screen perspective by sliding the game avatar's perspective to adjust the keystroke. At the same time, game players can also manipulate the game avatar to achieve different interaction with the environment. Under visual feedback, game players will also get a more immersive experience, and the game will also have a stronger interaction.



**Fig. 2.** Symbol division and main functions in mobile games

Music in the game, as an auditory symbol, plays an indispensable role in game interaction. In "NiShuiHan", the sound effect triggered by the game avatar in the game scene can bring more immersive effects for players. In the game, almost all sounds are related to the interaction of gamers. At the beginning of entering the game, players can adjust the volume of music and sound effects. In addition, you can also use vibration settings to achieve game sound, game feedback and real tactile feedback [9]. If the vibration master switch is turned on, many kinds of vibration effects can be set, such as sound visualization vibration intensity, character vibration intensity, weapon vibration intensity, vehicle vibration intensity and so on, which is actually a more in-depth embodiment of the interaction between hearing and players. Of course, the interaction

between the game player and the game is no longer only reflected in the visual and auditory presentation in the game space, but also in the real body of the game player. This function is set, the interaction between the game avatar and the game space, the interaction between the game avatar and the game player, from the visual and auditory, and then to the sense of touch, this change will bring a deep sense of interaction (Figure 2).

### 4.3 Gender Symbol Violence in Mobile Games Space

Symbolic violence is a milder and more covert means of power domination based on legalized expression, which constructs reality through words, controls character relations, and adjusts grammatical structure and expression. Game developers can not only cover up the real intention, but also expand the meaning potential of discourse, and imperceptibly achieve the goals of power domination, player relationship maintenance, consumption induction, cultural brainwashing and so on. When gamers are in the game space, it is often difficult to realize the symbolic violence in the game space. One of the ways to realize the symbolic violence in the media is the inequality of gender relations reflected by gender reproduction. In the game, it can be shown as the different presentation of different game avatars, the potential discrimination against players of different genders in the game, the guidance of players' consumption in the game and so on.

First of all, the masculinity and femininity in the incarnation of the game are completely different. In the models of masculinity and femininity in the game, only the face, skin color and hairstyle can be adjusted, and the players' bodies cannot be changed. In fact, the default male figure and female figure are the different imagination of the society to "masculinity" and "femininity" [10]. The second is the setting of players' own business card tags. Players can set their own game tags in the game. On a certain level, this game tag can become a consideration for adding strange friends. In "NiShuiHan", from the given game tag category and the player's own game tag selection, we can see that the symbolic violence in the game has been built into these game presets, such as sister experts, natural nerds. Cute girls and so on actually imply gender bias.

The following (Table 2) are the more obvious gender stereotyped tags selected from the preset options for business cards and their own labels, and further analyzed at the gender political level:

**Table 2.** Player tag analysis

Label selection	Player Gender	Preset image	Analysis of Gender Politics
Flower Protector	Male	A skilled male who plays a protective role	Male - Guardian, Female - Once Guardian
Mature Uncle	Male	Older, mature and attractive men	Male guardianship, image
Imperial	Female	A mature type of young woman in terms of appearance,	Women - Image

Sister		figure, personality, and temperament, generally more dominant	
Cute girl	Female	Cute, soft and cute, a girl who can stimulate boys' protective desire	Women - Being Guarded
Kawaii	Female	A lovely girl	When women are guarded

On the whole, when it comes to the selection of tags involving gender, game designers expect players to take the initiative to receive these stereotyped tags in the game, to be seated, and to obey the gender politics in the game space when using different tags to mark themselves. play the "right role".

## 5 Conclusion

With our in-depth discussion of gender stereotypes in NiShuiHan mobile games, it is not difficult to find that these stereotypes not only limit the diversity and richness of game characters, but also have an imperceptible influence on the cognition and behavior of players. In this ever-changing era, we should realize that gender is not the only factor that determines a person's role, ability or destiny.

Reviewing our discussion, we raised questions about gender stereotypes in the game and discussed the reasons and effects behind them. We call on game developers to pay more attention to gender equality and diversity in the creative process, break the traditional gender framework, and present a more real and diverse game world for players.

At the same time, we also hope that players can maintain an open and tolerant attitude and not be bound by gender stereotypes in the game. Each of us has the right to choose the role we like, regardless of gender. Only when we work together can we promote gender equality and pluralism in the gaming industry.

Finally, we look forward to the future. With the continuous progress of society and the continuous development of game technology, we believe that NiShuiHan mobile games and other games will pay more and more attention to gender equality and diversity. We look forward to a more fair, inclusive and diverse game world, so that every player can find their own fun and value. Let's work together to contribute to gender equality and pluralism in the gaming industry.

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