

# Analysis of Westernization Trend of Youth Idol Drama from the Perspective of Cross-cultural Communication

## *A Case Study of A Smile Is Beautiful*

Lu Chen

Xiamen University Tan Kah Kee College  
Xiamen, China

**Abstract**—Nowadays, the youth idol drama containing western pop culture, idea, value and ideology has become a indispensable part of entertainment culture, which is influencing the ideology of the generations after 90s and 80s, by means of its characteristic youth story, beautiful love, personalities of the hero and heroine together with distinct social style. From the perspective of cross-cultural communication, cross-cultural communication and westernization trend have become common features of youth idol dramas, which is forming a new cultural trend that is driving television play culture and internet culture to transit to pan-consciousness of humanity. In view of this, the paper makes a detailed analysis of westernization trend of youth idol drama from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, and puts forward specific research strategies for others' reference.

**Keywords**—*cross-cultural communication; youth idol drama; westernization trend; problem research*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural communication refers to cultural exchange activities among individuals and groups from different social and cultural background. Although having not been extensively applied in mass communication yet, Cross-cultural communication, as a discipline, has a long history, and for instance, many foreign cultural exchanges in Chinese history are embryonic cultural communication. At present, US TV series and western variety shows are popular with Chinese young people, which also provide opportunity for Chinese youth to learn western culture. With the rapid development of Chinese culture industry, the insiders realize that cultural products blending with western elements are winning the favor young people, such as films and TV shows. To increase market competitiveness, cultural products with obvious trend of westernization spring up all over the country. Centering on the influence of gradual westernization concept of Chinese youth, the paper gives in-depth and systematic analysis and research, hoping to help people to understand America-led western cultural invasion of China and its influence in the context of globalization, so as to

guide the young to know, accept and apply western culture in a proper and rational manner.

### II. CONCEPT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

#### A. *Meaning of Cross-cultural Communication*

1) *Interpretation from the perspective of sociology:*  
From the perspective of sociology, cross-cultural communication means that in social activities, the individual participants are independent of their habit of thinking, way of act and ideology, but are unconsciously influenced by, experience and accept the habit of thinking, way of act and ideology of the individuals from other cultural scopes. During the period, the individual participants from different cultural horizons are understanding the cultural concept and ideology of each other and finding the relationship of them. Simply, cross-cultural communication refers to the cultural exchange and communication activities involving individual participants from different cultural horizons.

2) *Interpretation from the perspective of communication:*  
Cross-cultural communication refers to the cultural activities involving social individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds and also are the contact among people and information spreading activities. Thereinto, language, words, artistic symbols are the results of civilization evolution. Cross-cultural communication is the course of contact, collision and fusion of different cultures, the course of cultural exchange and also the course of ideology conversion based on cultural system, and its essence is the pursuit of belief and value. In Chinese history, westward expedition of the King Mu of Zhou Dynasty, Xu Fu's eastward sailing, Zhang Qian's visit of Western Regions, Gan Ying's visit of Roman Empire, etc. are the typical examples of cross-cultural communication between China and foreign countries. You can say that cross-cultural communication is a intrinsic property of human civilization,

and cultural exchange and fusion is driving human civilization forward.

#### *B. Characteristics of Cross-cultural Communication*

In this multi-cultural world, different regions, countries and cultures have distinctive national and regional characteristics, so commercial contacts and cultural communication of different environment will inevitably bring the culture of a region and a nation to another region and country. Over the course of such cultural communication and exchange, carriers of culture including TV shows, publication, newspapers, broadcasts, etc. will bring the culture and ideology of region and country to another region and country, and the specific culture influence will further affect social communication, Radio & TV and internet culture in the locality, and change the original cultural output mode. In terms of information output mode at present, video carriers such as computer networks and Radio & TV are the mainstreams of cultural media, also including various mobile video terminals, PC terminals, TV broadcasting interfaces. Such video carriers enables people to access video information any time and any place, and internet-based video interactive mode creates favorable information media environment for cross-cultural communication.

### III. THE RISE OF THE INTERNET AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING MEDIA PROVIDES INFORMATION MEDIA FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

As a platform for cultural communication and display, the Internet and television broadcasting media provide a good medium for intercultural communication, including the youth idol drama, the ancient costume drama, the emotional drama, and so on. They can all be transmitted on television. Different cultural bodies show through TV broadcast media and cultural consciousness is exported. From the point of view of information dissemination, television is not only a carrier of cultural information, but also a product of cultural development. Television provides a platform for social culture, while the multicultural and ideological social culture also endows the TV media with different cultural qualities, and then influence TV audience groups to form different ideology. As an important way of social and cultural communication, television reflects the folk customs, cultural habits and aesthetic tastes of a country and a nation in essence. As the concentrated reflection of the national and national specific ideology, the TV plays have a specific cultural influence factor. This cultural influence factor changes the ideology of the TV audience in a subtle way and makes the TV audience form different cultural awareness. In fact, the audience measures the quality of TV plays, not from personal preferences, but from the cultural identity. When the TV play can bring the audience to the shock of culture, the audience will be naturally fond of the TV play from the heart.

### IV. THE MAIN REASON FOR THE HOT BROADCAST OF A *SMILE IS BEAUTIFUL*

*A Smile Is Beautiful* is one of the most successful youth idol dramas based on the online article IP in the TV industry

in China in recent years, which mainly tells the campus love story between the youth idol Bei Weiwei and Xiao Nai. One is from a senior intellectual family and has good appearance and high IQ, the other is from working-class families and has good appearance and excellent talent, although the first meeting was slightly awkward, the near-perfect love story on campus and the first love between them became the highlight of the show.

#### *A. Strong Audience Concept and Cultural Spirit*

From the perspective of the hot broadcast trend of *A Smile Is Beautiful*, it not only highlights the changes of aesthetic value of the audience group, but also permeates with a strong audience concept and cultural spirit, which stems from the psychological identification of the social epidemic culture [2]. *A Smile Is Beautiful* tells a beautiful campus love story featuring the green years of first love of the youth, sincere love on campus and the understanding and identification of mutual support and mutual help between couples, finally, due to the desire for love and marriage, the two combined to form a happy family, which reflects the change of the role status of youth idols in campus from youth love to social and happy marriage. The love, friendship and family are the themes of the whole show, and also the core content that move the audience's feelings. There are mostly small potatoes and small events in the drama, which is mainly about the life of the protagonist and the surrounding people, of which the expression technique is simple and plain, and there are no many strange plots. Although the story may seem plain, the performance of the characters in love, responsibility and conscience is well received by the audience and it also fits the audience's emotional scale. One of the key reasons why this show is popular among the majority of young people is that it fully takes into account the value idea, moral standard and aesthetic trend of collective identity of the youth culture circle, and reconstructs the scene in a plain way [3]. The love story between Xiao Nai and Bei Weiwei is the highlight of the whole show, however, the common love handles are more reserved, there are very few nauseating passion play, which produces a purely aesthetic effect, combined with the open campus ethos and beautiful background music, the emotion, shyness, bravery and hopes of the youths' first love strike the hearts of the audience.

#### *B. Young People's Expectation and Satisfaction of the Affection and the Entertainment Emotions*

Young people's expectation and satisfaction of the affection and the entertainment emotions are also the main reasons for the hot broadcast of the youth idol drama *A Smile Is Beautiful*. The modern life is full of confusion and pressure, the fast pace of life, the daily stress and challenge make the young people become exhausted. Based on the mentality, TV series has become the main way for young people to engage in spiritual recreation [4]. The lifestyle campus atmosphere, classic character dialogue and the change in the living conditions and styles of the characters in *A Smile Is Beautiful*, all leave room for people to think. In particular, the simple living scenes in the show reflect the simplest life philosophy, which can give people endless

imagination. The art comes from life, it is the prosaic of life that has inspired these creators, who present the beautiful love of life, the beautiful years of youth and the simplicity of campus love in the form of TV dramas, which can better give the young people the emotional touch and give people beautiful love hopes. There is a development context of affection in *A Smile Is Beautiful*, there is a touching warmth in the plainness, the classic character dialogue, the touching and simple campus feeling, the simple and warm classmates friendship, the youth love, the sentimental affection all moves the young people from the bottom of their hearts. Specifically, the youth idol drama *A Smile Is Beautiful* pursues the “beauty of first love in the plain life”. This kind of “beauty” sincerely depicts the commonness and helplessness of the young people in their green years, the simple love, compassion and care of humanity are easy to be understood and touched by the general audience, and it is also more likely to arouse the emotional resonance of the young group, which truly achieves the purpose of entertaining the public.

### C. *Based on the Value Orientation of the Psychology of the Modern Young People*

Basing on the value orientation of the psychology of the modern young people is also a main reason for the hot broadcast of *A Smile Is Beautiful*. Modern social psychology has too many material elements and value orientations, and the diversified social consciousness determines that the aesthetic orientation of the modern young people is diverse and varied. The social and cultural psychology includes the traditional thinking mode, life experience and value orientation accumulated through inheritance. After years of reform and opening up, the rich material life has promoted the modern youth to pursue more freedom, independence and individuality. The western education defines individuality as the value orientation that an independent individual should have, which is not bound by the collectivism and the moral and ethical thinking compared with the traditional education concept in China. Pursuing the independence of life and choosing their own life are the common features of the life consciousness of the modern young people. The story mode, social style and campus scene of *A Smile Is Beautiful* are in line with the value orientation of the modern youth and can well cater to the aesthetic vision of young people, which gets the attention of the youth group with the orientation of friendship, love, trust and family affection and encourages the youth group to be positive, have a individuality and pursue the true self.

## V. WESTERNIZATION TREND CHARACTERISTICS IN A *SMILE IS BEAUTIFUL*

### A. *The Integration of MV Elements*

From the hot playing trend of *A Smile Is Beautiful*, the use of a large number of video music MV elements is the main feature of its Westernization. MV styled audio-visual elements and rendering emotions are all derived from popular culture, and with the same target of audience which are the young group that loves popular culture. A lot of popular songs and lyrics are used in TV dramas in *A Smile Is*

*Beautiful*. The songs, the lyrics are all related to the plot, often appear in key narrative links. When the song is linked with the silent Hero and heroine's romantic love, the TV series has the style characteristics of MV. The silent narrative plot, the picture, editing technique which taking emotion as the rhythm, the picture content only comes out simple emotional information. But music songs strengthen the information in the picture, form a poetic emotional space conforming to the plot of the story to achieve a lyric purpose. At the same time, it is a good interpretation of the non-verbal symbols in cross-cultural communication, which can sometimes better convey the theme of the story to the audience. In the MV paragraph, the feelings of Bei Weiwei and Xiao Nai can be sublimated in the music space, showing an aesthetical campus love story. This MV style element originates from the western pop music culture and is the most important expression of western pop music. Integrating this MV style elements into the modern youth idol drama can effectively enhance the meaning and expressiveness of the story plot, condense and sublimate the theme sentiment and let the picture be more beautiful and moving. The meaning symbols of the epidemic are often expressed in the epidemic of music. Choose the popularity music, which is the most consistent with the story, as background music. Wang Sulong's “a little sweet” is used as the background music in *A Smile Is Beautiful*. The popular song expressed love for the first time not only depicts the feeling of first love between Xiao Nai and Bei Weiwei, but also accords with the aesthetic trend of modern young pop music culture. Express the love characteristics of young people effectively.

### B. *Element Characteristics of Fairy Tales*

The characteristics of the elements of the fairy tales are also the main features of the westernization of the current young idol drama. Fairy tales are important stories in the system of children's Literature and it originated from the folk tales and myths and legends of all countries. For example, “Andersen's Fairy Tales” and “Green Fairy Tales” are the earliest book of fairy tales. Fairy tales express people's yearning and pursuit of beauty and often recite the reality of life. There is a simple and clear idea of good and evil in fairy tales and the hero is portrayed as a perfect image. Especially the love fairy tales, there will always be a perfect image of the man who are good, brave, intelligent, talented and handsome. The image of the prince and the perfect love story created by the youth idol play are the most popular forms of love in the modern young group. For example, in *A Smile Is Beautiful*, the hero, Xiao Nai, came out in the image of the perfect man, high IQ, talented, high face value, looking handsome and coming from a senior intellectual family, with an entrepreneurial heart, setting up a company, making games and going up to the peak of life, etc. These are all showing the hero, Xiao Nai who is the perfect man. As a heroine, Bei Weiwei, beautiful and talented, is a typical goddess image. The combination of gods and goddesses, romantic and aesthetically beautiful love ends meet the characteristics of love fairy tales, and cater to the value orientation of young audience in pursuit of good love. Therefore, it was a hot pursuit by the young people.

### C. Idols Narrative Features

Idols narrative features are also the main features of the Westernization of the present youth idol drama in China. Japan and South Korea drama is called idol drama in our country earliest. This is because the Japanese and south Korean dramas boomed a large number of idol stars' popularity including Suzuki Honami, Yuji Oda, Takuya Kimura, etc.

Their success, apart from their packaging and their own efforts, relies heavily on the iconic narrative characteristics of idol dramas. Idol narration is a narrative method centered on characters. The aim is to support TV ratings by establishing a sense of identity and affection for the protagonist. The two typical characters Bei Weiwei and Xiao Nai created in *A Smile Is Beautiful* have used the molding technique of idols narrating.

The actor of Xiao Nai and Bei Weiwei are the 90 popular the young man's role and the young woman's role Yang Yang and Zheng Shuang. Regardless of the effect of TV series shooting, Yang Yang and Zheng Shuang's popularity and fan effect can keep the TV drama in high popularity and audience rating. Yang Yang's handsome and cool appearance, Zheng Shuang's high stature and beautiful appearance were all very according with the demands of the human idol. In addition, the whole script is set around the two protagonists of Xiao Nai and Bei Weiwei's appearance, expression, appearance, and character. The character of the idol narrative is vividly expressed in the TV drama. This caters to the popular trend of today's youth idol drama and maintains the higher ratings of TV dramas with the effect of idols.

### D. The Value Orientation of the Westernized Youth Group

The value connotation of the young idol drama in modern China is manifested in the pursuit of material, love, self, individuality and epidemic culture in the youth group. They ignore the social status and role of young people. Xiao Nai and Bei Weiwei in *A Smile Is Beautiful* all are the good scholars in Qing University. As the top school in China, the cultural atmosphere and academic atmosphere is extremely strong in Qing University.

However, the stories in the TV series are mainly about college students and the hero's love, the performance of College Students' study and life is not obvious enough. Chairman MAO once said, "Young people are the sun at eight or nine o'clock in the morning." "Young are strong, the country strong" is the truth. The drama overemphasizes the concept of freedom, individuality and independence, and lacks the connotation of traditional culture and morality. So the play does not express patriotism, national spirit, traditional culture, social core values and other aspects.

As Zheng Qiang, the former vice president of the Zhejiang University said: "College students who lack ethnic and national faith do have no perfect personality consciousness". Although this is one-sided and absolute, but for young people, moderate freedom, personality and independence are conducive to their growth. Otherwise, they will become arrogant, conceited, and arrogant and have other negative emotions, which will affect young people's values,

world outlook and outlook on life. Therefore, the excessive westernized value orientation of young idol drama is not conducive to the growth of young people. Only by keeping the characteristics of young people on a moderate scale, integrating traditional culture elements, moral norms and secular ideas, showing the cultural atmosphere, free and open academic environment of university life, can we guide young people to establish correct values and ideology, let young people or college students to maintain the basis of independence on the basis of the formation of the right faith, hard work hard to study and make them grow up with talent.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In summary, at present, the trend of Westernization of youth idol drama in the view of cross cultural communication is too obvious. This popular idol culture with western ideology has an important impact on the growth of young people and determines the cognitive form of thinking of young people. The advanced and excellent western cultural consciousness should be vigorously promoted. For example, the personality, individual consciousness and the pursuit of rational quality in western education should be the key content of the development of youth idol drama. The role of the over described hero, the love element, the popular element should be properly adjusted. Let the young people appreciate the youthful idols rationally, and there is no perfect man in the world. While maintaining the fresh vitality of the youth idol drama, it should be integrated into the core values, the spirit of benevolence, the national consciousness and the patriotism. Reflect the positive and healthy value orientation and spiritual style of the new generation of young people.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Meng Panpan. A study on the Chinese audience of youth idol drama in Korea[D]. Yangzhou University, 2016
- [2] Wu Yiran. *A study of Taiwan youth idol drama[D]*. Nanjing Normal University, 2016.
- [3] Yang Lei. The influence of youth idol drama on young people [D]. Jinan University, 2015
- [4] Yin Jinfeng. Reasonableness analysis of pluralism of idols creating[J]. Search, 2012(08)
- [5] Yin Jinfeng. Moral vacancy in the molding of mass media idol and its countermeasures[J]. Morality and civilization, 2012(03)
- [6] Chen Wenmin, Hong-Sheng Ouyang. The construction of domestic TV idols for 30 years — a reflection on the sub culture of young people[J]. Modern communication (Journal of Communication University of China), 2011(05)
- [7] Larry - A - Samowa, Richard - E - Potter, Edwin - R - Mcdaniel. *"Cross cultural communication" (Sixth Edition) [M]*. Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2013 (05)
- [8] Sun Yingchun. *An introduction to intercultural communication[M]*. Beijing: Peking University press, 2008(10).