

The Representation of the Power and Dynamics of Modern Media: The Mainstream Cultural Communication Mode for Youth-Subcultural Discourse from the Perspective of Communication Adaptation Theory

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Abstract: *When discussing the mainstream cultural communication mode of youth-subculture discourse, communication adaptation theory emphasizes how individuals or groups adjust to different audiences' communication styles and modes in the communication process, providing a new perspective to find a balance between instrumental rationality and value rationality. In the context of fluid modernity, mainstream culture shows its acceptance and integration of youth-subculture elements through meticulous adaptation of discourse and adjustment of communication strategies. At the same time, it demonstrates its mainstream status through the dynamic representation power of modern media, and jointly builds a diverse and inclusive cultural ecology with youth-subculture amid cultural diversity and differences.*

Keywords: *Youth-Subculture; Discourse transmission; Communication adaptation; Mainstream culture*

1. Introduction

The origin of relevant research on youth-subculture can be traced back to the academic discussion on the subculture phenomenon of the Chicago School, for instance, Albert Cohen's "problem-solving" theory [1] and Howard Becker's "label" theory [2], etc., focusing on marginalized groups such as delinquents and immigrants and revealing how subcultural groups construct their unique social status and cultural identity through analysis. While explaining the behavior logic of subculture groups, it also deeply reveals the formation and definition of subculture by social structure. Subsequently, the discourse turn of the Birmingham School opened up a new path for the study of youth-subcultures, focusing on working-class youth and revealing how youth-subcultures express themselves through symbolic resistance through the "style" analysis [3]. Under the theoretical framework of the "resistance-assimilation" [4], the Birmingham School deeply explored the interaction mechanism between subculture and mainstream culture, and how power intervened and shaped subculture phenomena in this process. The innovation of information technology and the advancement of globalization have injected new vitality into the discourse practice of youth-subculture. In the post-subculture period, the focus of subculture research has gradually shifted from emphasizing deviance or resistance to emphasizing the differences, pluralism, or contradictions displayed by group autonomy, focusing on the reconstruction and expression of culture, identity, and values of youth-subculture groups under the new social background. The youth-subculture has changed from the traditional opposition to a more decentralized way of expression, integrated into daily expression and cultural consumption, and formed a unique cultural attitude. At the same time, the shift from the identity circle to the interest circle also reflects that the youth-subculture pays more attention to self-expression based on common interests and cultural experiences in the process of seeking identity and cultural belonging. Discourse plays an irreplaceable role in defining, interpreting, and shaping subcultures. At the same time, the youth-subculture continues to evolve and develop in its interaction with the economic, social, political, and cultural environment, becoming an indispensable cultural landscape in the contemporary era.

Discourse communication is generally regarded as a deep and multi-dimensional social and cultural communication phenomenon. Based on the background of globalization and the rapid development of Internet technology, the youth-subculture group has built a unique vocabulary system and cultural

expression paradigm with its unique acuity and creativity. In the context of youth-subculture, discourse is not only a direct reflection of attitudes, thoughts, and emotions but also a key medium for youth to realize deep communication and interaction with the outside world. Discourse communication goes beyond simple information transmission and becomes a key mechanism to shape, maintain, and strengthen the identity, values, and other deep cultural connotations of youth-subculture groups. The dissemination of youth-subculture discourse is a critical interpretation and creative reconstruction of mainstream culture and traditional discourse, and it is also a concrete embodiment of the positive role played by youth-subculture groups in cultural inheritance and innovation.

Communication adaptation theory, also known as communicative adaptation theory or communicative adaptation theory. The Socio-Adaptation Theory (SAT) was proposed in the 1970s against the backdrop of social psychologists' dissatisfaction with sociolinguistic research, which described language changes in social contexts rather than explaining them. The theory was first elaborated in propositional form in 1982. In 1987, it was expanded and named Communication Adaptation Theory (CAT) [5]. The theory mainly focuses on how individuals or groups adjust their communication methods to adapt to the communication styles and modes of others or groups in the process of communication, which involves not only the adaptation at the linguistic level, but also the adaptation of non-verbal behaviors, and how to effectively communicate in different social backgrounds and cultural environments.

The theory of communication adaptation points out that the result of adaptation will be affected by many factors, including the degree of appropriateness and the change of rules in the adaptation process, and the communicator will adjust their communication strategy according to the response of the receiver in the communication process. This adaptation mechanism is particularly prominent in the mainstream cultural communication of youth-subcultural discourse. In-depth discourse nature can fully reveal the mode of self-identification and expression of youth-subculture groups in cultural exchanges, and help the mainstream culture to update its understanding of cognitive structure when weighing the actual situation of the diverse landscape of youth-subculture. In the process of establishing effective communication with youth-subculture groups, the prominent tension in the field of youth-subculture under the background of continuous development of modern media is fully considered, and the optimal communication effect is achieved through flexible adjustment of discourse expression modes and communication strategies to innovate experience.

2. Discursive Practices of Dynamic Representation and Meaning Reconstruction

Only by conceptualizing the discourse of youth subculture as a dynamic representational practice can we foreground the processes of information transmission alongside the cultural values, social significance, and psychological dynamics that inform such information, thereby elucidating the underlying mechanisms and roles through which modern media shape and influence youth subcultural formations. Previously dominant media languages with clear meanings are being replaced by dynamic, open discourse systems that continuously record and rewrite the real world and make themselves increasingly complex and creative in the field of human representation [6]. Specifically, the discourse communication of youth-subculture is to express and convey the meaning and value of youth-subculture through language, symbol, and practice, and reflect the unique values, life attitudes, and aesthetic orientation of young people. At present, the discourse communication of youth-subculture has gone beyond the scope of simple transmission of information and is more of a collective display and resonance of cultural symbols, values, and lifestyles. The rise of new media technology has endowed the communication practice of the youth-subculture with an unprecedented new dimension.

2.1. The representational activities in the process of modern media communication are dynamic

By examining the formation and evolution of youth subculture, it becomes evident that its discursive communication undergoes processes of resetting and recontextualization across distinct historical epochs and socio-cultural contexts. On the one hand, it identifies and separates as many elements as possible from their unconscious acceptance to objectify them, separates symbols from their original physical, social, and cultural locations, and places them in new environments or contexts, focusing on how symbols can be interpreted and given new meanings in the youth-subcultural environment, that is, reset; On the other hand, it focuses on the meaning evolution of symbols in new social or cultural contexts, and studies how symbols interact with new contexts to make them go beyond the original definition and become tools for youth-subcultural groups to express their

self-values, that is recontextualization. It is through the rearrangement and combination of symbols that the youth-subculture group successfully constructs its identity in the way of collage.

The dynamic nature of discourse representation of youth-subculture is not only reflected in the changes in the relationship of social power structure emphasized by reflection theory, but also in the changes in people's understanding and judgment of representation concerned by intentionalism, but also in the independent ability and innovative spirit of media emphasized by constructivism.

2.1.1. The representational power of modern media is relatively independent

When modern media represent things, they are not completely under the direct control of external power relations. The representational power of modern media is relatively independent, which is particularly evident in the dissemination of youth-subculture discourse. Traditional slogan-style propaganda discourses have been rejected by subculture groups. From the perspective of the theory of use and satisfaction, the construction of mainstream discourses in subculture circles can only generate real identity by reflecting the accepted concepts of subculture groups, following the deductive ways of discourse of subculture groups, and catering to the ideological reality of subculture groups. Relative independence enables the youth-subculture to maintain its unique cultural characteristics in the process of communication, and at the same time, it can dynamically influence and shape the representation of modern media.

2.1.2. Separation of mechanical replication from human perception

Modern media copies and spreads the information that human beings originally needed to obtain through direct perception through mechanical reproduction, which separates human perception from information acquisition to some extent, and people begin to rely more on media to perceive the world. The separation of mechanical reproduction and human perception is also reflected in the spread of youth-subcultures. Modern media is spreading the discourse of youth-subculture through mechanical reproduction, which makes people rely more and more on media to perceive this cultural expression. This separation has changed people's traditional way of perception to some extent and also shaped young people's unique understanding of the world.

2.1.3. New cognitive levels and ways of perceiving

Different from traditional direct perception and pure rational cognition, it is a unique way of perceiving and understanding the world shaped by modern media. The realization of media technology provides a broad space for the discourse transmission of youth-subculture. Through different media channels, youth-subculture can show its unique values and lifestyle in an indirect way. However, media representation is not completely objective but is affected by many factors such as material conditions and changes in dissemination and diffusion. While expressing themselves, youth-subculture groups can also have a deeper understanding and feeling of the diversity and complexity of modern society.

2.2. Youth-subculture discourse is dynamic in its interpretation of reality

In the context of mainstream culture, youth-subculture is often regarded as heterogeneous and non-mainstream. It is through this difference and conflict with the mainstream culture that the discourse of youth-subculture can be highlighted, and then self-identification and group cohesion in the process of communication. As a new force in society, the discourse of the youth-subculture group aims to challenge the traditional concept and realize the examination and reshaping of cultural values through the criticism and reflection of social phenomena, thus shaping their own identity. Innovation and uniqueness are the core characteristics of youth-subculture discourse dissemination, and also an important reason why it occupies a place in social culture. Under the double expectation, the youth-subculture not only longs to be accepted and recognized by the mainstream culture but also tries to maintain its unique cultural identity and expression. This inherent contradiction tension is particularly evident in discourse communication, which requires both self-presentation and avoiding being confined by mainstream culture. Therefore, youth-subculture groups only accept content communication that is in line with the concept of youth-subculture under the premise of adapting to the discourse of youth-subculture, to stick to their cultural attitudes.

3. Strategic Adjustments for Integration and Coexistence through Dynamic Adaptation

Mainstream cultural communication for youth-subculture discourse is a dynamic process, and discourse expression methods and communication strategies will constantly adjust and change with the

changes of time and situation. This dynamic nature is what the communication adaptation theory emphasizes. The core of communication adaptation theory is that individuals or groups adjust their communication mode according to the behavior and speech of the other party in the process of communication, to adapt and promote effective communication. Based on maintaining the self-identity of the youth-subculture, the mainstream culture explores the possibility of coexistence and integration, which not only reflects the respect and understanding of the youth-subculture but also demonstrates the tolerance and promotion of multiculturalism in the stable development of the mainstream culture. At the same time, modern media, as a dynamic representational force, provides indispensable guidance and correction for this adaptation process.

3.1. The adjustment of discourse expression

The mainstream culture pays attention to the use of language styles and expressions close to the youth-subcultural groups and makes the information easier to accept and understand through the interactive function of modern media. Under the representational power of modern media, mainstream culture's communication adaptation to youth-subculture is embodied as Convergence, Divergence, and Maintenance.

Convergence is when individuals change their language patterns to suit others in response to different interactions. To show the approval of others in an interactive environment, individuals sometimes tend to converge. Through the extensive dissemination and coverage of modern media, the mainstream culture can quickly absorb and learn from the elements of the youth-subculture. At the same time, the representational power of the media also accelerates the phenomenon of convergence, making the assimilation between different cultures easier and more common. Actively use new media platforms to absorb and learn from popular elements of youth-subculture, such as Internet hot words, emoji, etc., seek, interpret, and reconstruct in the ruins of discourse, excavate forgotten fragments for their own reshapes, integrate topics and elements closely related to the life of youth-subculture groups, and make mainstream culture more easily accepted and recognized by youth-subculture groups.

The media provides a broad communication platform and audience base for the youth-subculture, showing its unique cultural characteristics and values. At the same time, the representation of the media also strengthens the expressive force of divergence, making the difference and conflict between the mainstream culture and the youth-subculture more obvious and prominent. Although it absorbs the elements of the youth-subculture, it never gives up its original cultural identity and position. On the contrary, it expresses its social status and cultural identity in the mainstream through specific symbols, languages, behaviors, and forms a certain distinction with the youth subculture, establishing the mainstream image and authoritative status in the youth subculture group.

Maintenance refers to the trait of maintaining transmission stability. Communication adaptation theory states that there is always a situation in which an individual does not change a particular communication behavior or performance. When the mainstream culture uses modern media to spread cultural elements and values, it also pays attention to maintaining some traditional and classic elements. The representational power of media enables mainstream cultural elements to be disseminated and recognized in a wider range and becomes a bridge connecting different cultures and groups, thus promoting cultural diversity and richness. At the same time, the maintenance also reflects the responsibility and mission of the media in inheriting and carrying forward the mainstream culture.

3.2. The change in communication strategy

When discussing the mainstream culture communication strategy for youth-subculture discourse, we must carefully examine and respect the independence of the media itself, and abandon the single and rigid communication paradigm.

With the advent of the era of mechanical reproduction, replicas are produced on a large scale, and the way of human perception is also changed. This separation poses a new challenge to the dissemination of youth-subculture discourse. Therefore, on the one hand, it is necessary to deepen cultural understanding. When disseminating mainstream culture, it is necessary to deeply understand the perception mode and aesthetic needs of youth-subculture groups, avoid simple copy and paste, and through innovation and transformation, make the content of mainstream culture fit with the perception mode of youth-subculture groups; On the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen cultural resonance by telling universal and resonant stories to stimulate the sense of identity and belonging of the youth-subculture group to the mainstream culture, while paying attention to their real life and

emotional needs, and providing targeted cultural services.

Under the new media environment, electronic media has created a new form of immersion, changed people's perception and cognitive level, and put forward new requirements for the dissemination of mainstream culture. On the one hand, the use of new media technology, with the help of virtual reality, augmented reality, and other new media technologies, creates an immersive mainstream cultural communication experience, so that youth-subculture groups more intuitively feel the charm of mainstream culture. On the other hand, it strengthens interaction and participation. Social media, online forums, and other platforms encourage youth-subcultural groups to participate in mainstream cultural discussions and dissemination, forming a positive interaction and feedback mechanism. At the same time, online and offline cultural activities can be carried out to enhance participation and a sense of belonging.

3.3. *Integration beyond coexistence*

Mainstream culture and youth-subculture are not completely opposed and resistant, but learn to integrate and jointly shape a more diversified and rich cultural landscape. In the face of the uniqueness and value of youth-subculture, mainstream cultural communicators, with an attitude of respect and understanding, reduce estrangement, promote coexistence, communicate with youth-subculture groups on an equal footing, listen to their voices, enhance mutual understanding and trust, promote the harmonious coexistence and integration of mainstream culture and youth-subculture, and inject new vitality into social harmony and stability.

At the same time, cultivate the multi-cultural consciousness of the youth-subculture group, and enhance their cultural accomplishment and aesthetic ability. In addition, to ensure the healthy development of the youth-subculture, it is necessary to strengthen supervision and prevent the spread of bad information. At the same time, new media platforms are encouraged to actively fulfill their social responsibilities, play a positive role, and provide strong support for the healthy development and dissemination of youth-subcultures.

4. Conclusions

Modern media, amidst extensive technological advancements, has constructed an unparalleled communicative platform and discursive space for youth subcultures, while its dynamic representational capacity exerts a profound shaping influence on the very constitution and expression of these subcultural formations. Under the framework of communication adaptation theory, mainstream culture shows excellent adaptability and flexibility in the communication process of youth-subculture discourse, continuously delving into the discourse characteristics and cultural connotation of youth-subculture, and carefully adjusting communication strategies and expression modes. It also shows the adaptation and integration of youth-subculture in many dimensions such as cultural values and social concepts. The mainstream culture must fully respect the youth-subculture in the process of disseminating the youth-subculture discourse, and encourage the growth of value and multiple expression, always give full play to the core role of mainstream culture in cultural integration and communication, and promote cultural diversity and inclusiveness.

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