Youth Subculture Performance from the Perspective of Emotional Communication——A Study Based on the Phenomenon of "Crazy Literature"

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Abstract: Since the year of 2022, the subculture of "crazy literature" has become increasingly popular among young people, and the discourse characteristics of its texts and the emotional motivations behind them have also begun to be concerned and discussed. Through discourse analysis, in-depth interviews and questionnaires, it can be found that in terms of discourse characteristics, "crazy literature" frequently uses rhetoric such as repetition and piling up, and constructs a clear sense of picture with logically disordered discourse; in terms of emotional motivation, "crazy literature" reflects the strong needs of youth for emotional catharsis and self-regulation; in terms of interaction mode, "crazy literature" is not an isolated emotional expression of individuals, but a carrier of youth's social desires, showing the characteristics of a "carnival" interactive ritual.
Key words: emotional communication; subculture; crazy literature

1 Introduction

Since 2022, the epidemic situation across China has shown a trend of spreading from multiple points, which has affected my country's economic growth rate, and young people are facing the status quo of fewer jobs and a surge in academic pressure. In this context, young people are more inclined to express their dissatisfaction with the social structure in the form of "laying flat", "Buddhism" and "going crazy", forming a subculture with distinctive features and rich connotations. Among them, "crazy speech" characterized by illogical, nonsense, and strong sense of imagery has become increasingly popular among young people, and has gradually evolved into "crazy literature" like Qiong Yao's drama. We have observed that more and more young people are participating in the creation and dissemination of "crazy literature", and through pure emotional expression, they have achieved a successful game of discourse space. In this regard, we are wondering: why do contemporary youth produce "crazy literature", and what are the specific motivations and spiritual needs behind it? Why can "crazy literature" spread so widely?

2 Literature review

2.1 Literature review on youth subcultures

The subculture of youth groups has aroused research from multiple perspectives in the academic circle. The study of "subculture" originated from the Chicago School of Sociology. American scholars such as Robert King Merton focused on marginalized youth groups in society, and derived youth's rebellious subculture from social structural conflicts. Subsequently, the Birmingham School introduced the concept of "class" and summarized the characteristics of subcultures as "resistance", "stylization" and "marginality". However, in the 1980s and 1990s, the "post-subculture" represented by David Muggleton (2000) criticized the subculture theory of the Birmingham School, and "subculture" gradually shifted from a political concept to "An orgy of symbols with no meaning attached".

In addition to generally sorting out the development and evolution of the theoretical connotation of "subculture", domestic scholars pay special attention to combining the concept of "subculture" with the creation and communication activities of contemporary youth. The hot issues of research include the "involution" of youth, hot words such as "lay flat" that project the image of youth cultural life, as well as "consumer subcultures" , such as blind boxes and virtual idols. However, most of these studies are limited to the consumption and re-creation of existing cultural products by young people, and there are few studies on original communication phenomena with distinctive text characteristics such as "crazy literature" from the perspective of emotional communication.

2.2 Literature Review on Emotion Communication Theory

The concept of emotional communication comes from psychology. Western scholars Gendron M, Lindquist K, and A BarsalouL proposed in Emotional Lexicon Shapes Emotional Perception that "emotional language can provide context for emotional perception", which laid a psychological foundation for the theory of emotional communication. In the 1990s, the social sharing of emotion theory gradually emerged, focusing on the perspective of social sharing to explore the process of emotional transmission from individuals to groups.

In domestic research, Yunze Zhao and Zhen Liu, scholars from Renmin University of China, sorted out the concept and principle of emotional communication as a whole, and believed that "emotional communication" has the potential to promote the vertical development of public opinion studies, and should be studied from multiple perspectives of news communication. However, most of the existing relevant research focuses on public crisis or public opinion management, and seldom combines it with youth groups with complex and diverse emotions to further explore the transmission mechanism of emotions among youth groups.

Therefore, this article will start from the theory of emotional communication and try to answer the following questions: Why do contemporary youth produce "crazy literature" and what are the specific motives behind it; What kind of psychology meets the spiritual needs of contemporary

youth; why is "crazy literature" spread so widely;

3 Research methods and data analysis

3.1 Research Methods

This study firstly conducted pilot research using in-depth interview method. The interview questions are mainly divided into three parts. The first part mainly involves the basic situation of the interviewees, including their gender, age, ethnicity, education level, location, etc. In the second part, the research questions are reduced to interview questions, including the motivation and method of creating "crazy literature", the frequency and platform of disseminating "crazy literature", etc. The third part, we mainly involves the issues that may be deeply explored, including the understanding of "crazy literature", the most impressive examples,the feelings before and after publishing "crazy literature", the expected audience of "crazy literature", etc.

According to the sampling principle of "strength sampling" and the sampling method of "snowball", this study conducted 30-minute semi-structured in-depth interviews with 15 interviewers who participated in the creation and dissemination of "Crazy Literature". The interviews started in December 2022 and ended in February 2023. According to the principle of maximum sampling in qualitative research methods, when the 10th interviewee is recruited, the content of all interviews is sufficient to answer the research questions, and the degree of homogeneity of the interviewees is low, so the sample collection ends. The interview results were compiled into a verbatim draft, with a total of 2,770 words in the interview draft. The basic information of the respondents is shown in the table (Table 1).

Table 1 Basic Information of Respondents

Serial	Screen name	Gender	Grade	Region	Frequency of disseminating "crazy literature"
1	The Lancet	Female	Sophomore	Tianjin	1 time/month
2	Xiaofangyuanyuan	Female	junior	Chengdu, Sichuan	2-3 times/week
3	Jia G	male	junior	Tianjin	2-3 times/month
4	Xiao Pan	male	junior	Yingtan,Jiangxi	1 time/week
5	Ritz	Female	junior	Hangzhou, Zhejiang	2-3 times/month
6	Pigs in Zone	male	first year graduated school student	Dalian Liaoning	1 time/day
7	Xiaoshuai	male	senior	Guangzhou, Guangdong	2-3 times/week
8	Avocado	Female	freshman	Wuhan, Hubei	4-5 times/week

9	An Muxi	male	sophomore	Quanzhou, Fujian	2-3 times/month
10	Tangerine	Female	second year graduated school student	Beijing	1 time/week

Afterwards, hypotheses were put forward based on the results of the interviews, and through questionnaires, the use, dependence, emotional attitudes, and motivations of young people on "Crazy Literature" were obtained more comprehensively and extensively for further qualitative research. Based on the above questions, the corresponding hypothesis is put forward here:

H1: The higher the interactive emotional needs of young people, the higher the frequency of "crazy literature" produced.

H2: The more young people need self-regulation and persuasion, the more they are immersed in "crazy literature".

H3: The more young people need emotional relief, the more they rely on "crazy literature".

The research object corresponding to this hypothesis is college students. The author chooses all the students of Tianjin Foreign Studies University as the research population, draws up a sampling frame based on the students' student ID numbers, and conducts stratified multistage sampling on the sampling frame with a 95% confidence interval and a 3% sampling error, and selects 500 students as a sample, the process of data collection, collation and analysis will be completed on February 6, 2023. This questionnaire contains 14 questions, including 10 multiple-choice questions and 4 matrix questions. Using a combination of online and offline methods, the questionnaires are distributed through WeChat Moments, Qzone, Questionnaire Star sample database and offline.

3.2 Data Analysis

A total of 226 samples were collected in this questionnaire survey. Among them, there are more female respondents (182 respondents, accounting for 80.53%), and fewer male respondents (44 respondents, accounting for 19.47%). The age of the interviewees is 18-24 years old, from the freshman to the third year of graduate school.

3.2.1 Analysis of the correlation between youth social needs and the release frequency of "Crazy Literature"

Regarding the publishing frequency of "Crazy Literature" by young people, nearly half (45.58%) of them publish at least once a month, 29.3% publish at least once a week, and 7.96% publish more than five times a week. In terms of the usual social needs of the respondents, nearly half (43.5%) of the audience said that their social needs were "generally strong", accounting for the highest proportion; nearly 30% (30.97%) of the audience said that their social snowballs were "relatively strong" or "very strong".

The author further conducted a Pearson correlation analysis and found that there is a

significant positive correlation between youth's "social needs" and "publishing frequency of crazy literature" (correlation coefficient is 0.285**, p<0.000). It can be seen that the higher the interactive emotional needs of young people, the higher the frequency of "crazy literature" produced, and the research hypothesis H1 is supported.

3.2.2 Correlation analysis of youth self-regulation and persuasion needs and immersion in "Crazy Literature"

From the descriptive analysis, in terms of self-regulation and persuasion, only less than 10% of the people said that they did not need to adjust and persuade when encountering difficulties, and nearly 50% of the people said that they needed it, which shows that contemporary youth self-regulation needs are stronger when they facing difficulties. In terms of youth's immersion in "crazy literature", 35.4% of young people said they were "relatively immersed" or "very immersed", and felt relatively strong emotions when creating and disseminating "crazy literature".

The author further conducted a Pearson correlation analysis and found that there is a significant positive correlation between youth's "needs for self-regulation and persuasion" and "immersion in crazy literature" (correlation coefficient is 0.225**, p<0.001). It can be seen that the more young people need self-regulation and persuasion, the more they are immersed in "crazy literature", and the research hypothesis H2 is supported.

3.2.3 Correlation analysis between youth's emotional catharsis needs and dependence on "crazy literature"

From the descriptive analysis, in the venting of emotions, only 15.7% of the audience expressed "not strong" and "not too strong", indicating that young people also have a relatively strong need for emotional venting. As for the degree of reliance on crazy literature, most said they were not too dependent, and less than 20% showed a tendency to rely.

However, the author further analyzed the youth's "demand for emotional relief" and "dependence on crazy literature", and found that the two were significantly positively correlated (correlation coefficient 0.403**, p<0.000). It can be seen that the more young people need emotional relief, the more they rely on "crazy literature", and H3 is supported.

4 Analysis and discussion

4.1 Picture shaping and chaotic stacking——The rhetoric of language symbols in the discourse of "crazy literature"

According to Hebdige's subcultural theory, meaning is not expressed directly, but expressed at the symbolic level through "style". As a typical youth network subculture, "crazy literature" has its own unique discourse and symbolic representation.

On the one hand, unlike the straight-forward "intertextuality of language and pictures" of traditional emoticons, many "crazy literature" tend to abandon the traditional rhetoric of emotional expressions such as modal particles, degree words, and emotional words, and pile up exaggerated and primitive verbs repeatedly, showing a strong sense of imagery that is difficult to achieve in traditional communication narratives, and then forms its unique and extensive mode communication effect. For example, "turning into a monkey" and "crawling gloomy" left a deep impression on many interviewees:

(roaring) (turning into a monkey) (flying into the virgin forest) (swinging vines) (flying monkeys eating bananas) (roaring) (turning into a monkey) (flying into the virgin forest) (swinging vines)

(screaming) (twisting) (crawling gloomy) (crawling) (twisting) (dark creeping) (tumbling) (crawling furiously) (ghost growling) (crawling) (splitting) (walking ashore) (Writhing) (spasticity) (creeping) (twisting walk)

On the other hand, the repetition and stacking of vocabulary and sentences have the effect of strengthening emotion and tone. According to the American linguist Sapir, repetition is a "self-evident and symbolic" grammatical procedure whose popularity is most natural. Therefore, another part of "crazy literature" tends to repeat a series of discourses that are logically disordered, creating a strong sense of "collapse" and "dementia", thus giving the audience a strong emotional impact. As mentioned by many interviewees, "mental stability", "going to college is not crazy", etc.:

It doesn't matter, a minute of mental stability is also very powerful! If you are not energetic, even a minute of stable relationship is amazing! Even if you don't have the energy, it's great to stabilize for a minute!

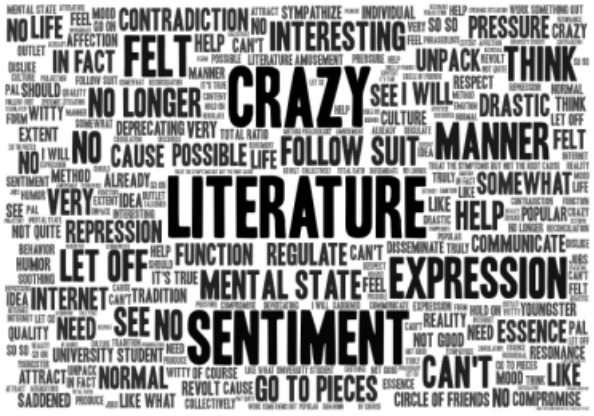
How can people not go crazy when they go to college? Just hold on! How can people not go crazy when they go to college? Just hold on! How can people not go crazy when they go to college? Just hold on!

Therefore, by repeatedly piling up discourses with disordered logic and a strong sense of imagery, "crazy literature" conveys strong emotions and resonates with a large number of young people with its unique symbolic style, and gradually develops into an exclusive subcultural circle.

4.2 Emotional catharsis and self-regulation—the need for self-reconciliation behind the "crazy literature"

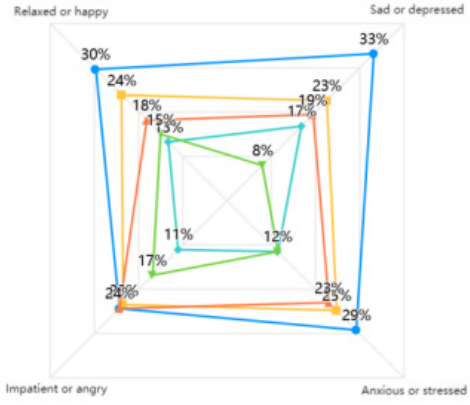
In the pilot interview of this research, the author compiled the interviewees' understanding of the motivation of "Crazy Literature" into a manuscript, and used the Weici Cloud platform to perform word segmentation and word frequency statistics, and visualized keywords as the following word cloud map (Figure 1) . It can be seen from the figure that words such as "collapse", "stress", "vent", "emotion" and "regulation" appear frequently, pointing to the needs of young people for emotional catharsis, self-regulation and persuasion behind "crazy literature". According to the results of the questionnaire, H2 and H3 are clearly established, which further verifies the hypothesis: behind the popularity of "crazy literature", in addition to its unique rhetorical representation of discourse, there is also the need for "reconciliation with oneself" such as emotional catharsis and self-regulation among contemporary youth.

Figure 1 High-frequency word cloud map of respondents' motivational understanding of "Crazy Literature"



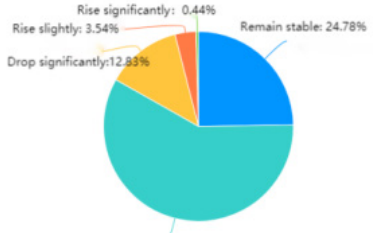
The reason is that in the classification of the motives of media communicators and audiences by the scholar Katz, emotional needs, needs for self-integration, and needs for stress relief play an important role. At the same time, under the historical and cultural background of East Asian collectivism culture that encourages emotional suppression[], the increasingly "atomized" survival mode in modern society has exacerbated interpersonal alienation, making young people more in need of emotional catharsis and self-regulation. The author draws the emotional types of young people in the questionnaire when they create and disseminate "crazy literature" into a radar distribution map (Figure 2), and finds that "depression" and "irritability and anger" account for the largest proportion, which are the main emotional types that young people need to vent; followed it is the "Easy and happy" , which indicates that young people tend to vent their emotions and regulate themselves in a humorous way.

Figure 2 The emotional radar chart of the respondents when they published "Crazy Literature"



Investigating its effect, the author plotted the changes in the psychological pressure of young and middle-aged people after the questionnaire published "Crazy Literature" into a pie chart (Figure 3), and found that 71.24% of young people's psychological pressure can be reduced through the creation and dissemination of "Crazy Literature" . However, it is worth noting that the psychological pressure of nearly 60% (58.41%) of the young people is only "slightly reduced", while 24.78% of the young people said that the psychological pressure "has not changed". The demand for self-regulation arises, but the actual effect is relatively limited. In the interviews, nearly 70% of the interviewees said that "crazy literature" is purely emotional catharsis, not a solution to the root cause of the problems behind the emotions, and its self-regulation effect only stays at the level of emotional balance.

Figure 3 Pie chart of changes in psychological pressure of respondents after publishing "Crazy Literature"

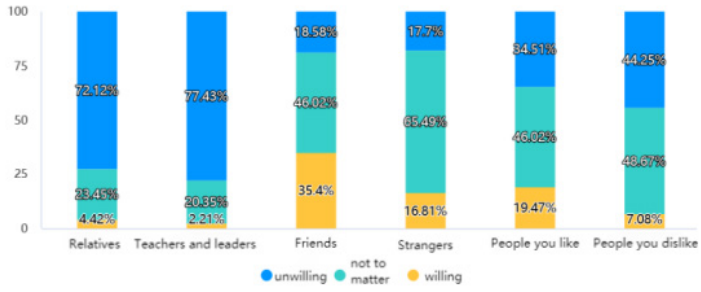


4.3 Interactive Ritual and Banter Carnival——The Empathic Interaction Mode of the Text of "Crazy Literature"

Although "Crazy Literature" does not have the typical features like aggregation and circles of other subcultures (such as "fan circle culture" and "beating workers"), nor is it an individual independent emotional catharsis, but it has its specific interaction rituals, showing Its unique carnival landscape.

First of all, the above verification of H1 has concluded that behind the "crazy literature" is the strong interactive emotional needs of young people. However, this social need has obvious group differentiation. According to the survey results (Figure 4), 72.12% of the audience do not want their relatives and elders to see their "crazy literature", and 77.43% of the audience do not want teachers and leaders to see it. In the interviews, almost all the interviewees were worried that their elders and leaders would "misread" the emotional message of "Crazy Literature", thus further deepening the generation gap.

Figure 4 Histogram of respondents' expected audience for "Crazy Literature"



According to Koslin's theory of interaction rituals, four basic elements enable interaction rituals: physical presence, mutual attention and limitations on outsiders, a shared focus of attention, and a shared emotional experience. Therefore, young people with a strong desire to socialize create, comment on, and repost "crazy literature" on social networking platforms, immerse themselves in "crazy" emotional expressions, and separate other groups with their rebellious text characteristics, forming a grand "carnival" interactive ceremony. In this ceremony, the participants take the initiative to "uncrowned themselves", dissolving their own uniqueness in the dwarfed "crazy" identity, thereby narrowing the distance with other participants; while as an "informal carnival language","crazy literature"has aroused strong emotional resonance in a playful, humorous and self-deprecating way, forming what Bakhtin called a "carnivalized" communication landscape.

4.4 Summary

To sum up, "Crazy Literature", with its unique rhetoric of discourse symbols, has become a window for contemporary young people to vent their emotions and a means of self-reconciliation, forming a "carnival"-style group communication effect. However, "Crazy Literature" is not only a rebellious deconstruction and game in against mainstream culture, but also a portrayal of some young people's anxiety. Therefore, there is still a long way to go to think deeply about the living conditions and specific anxieties of young people behind the "crazy literature", and to prevent "crazy literature" from becoming a "negative culture"[] that is "deconstructed for deconstruction".

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