

**Cultural Identity Construction and Intercultural
Communication in a Digital Era**

—

An Exploratory Study of English Chinese Fan Subtitlers

Yijun Liu

PhD

School of Communication Studies

Supervisors: Dr Sarah Baker

Dr Jennie Watts

**A thesis submitted to AUT University in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of a PhD.**

I

June 17, 2024

Contents

Contents	2
List of Tables.....	5
List of Figures.....	6
List of Abbreviations.....	7
Attestation of Authorship.....	8
Acknowledgements.....	9
Abstract.....	10
Chapter One	12
Research Interest and Aims.....	22
Research Questions and Research Methods	25
Layout of the Chapters.....	27
Chapter Two Literature Review	30
Three Waves of Fandom and Fandom Evolution.....	32
Subordination to Resistance.....	33
Participatory Culture.....	36
Fandom Theories in the Third Wave.....	38
Explore Fansubbers' Identity Construction in the Chinese Context.....	48
Ecological Conditions of Chinese Fansubs: Political, Cultural, and Commercial	50
Copyright Predicament and Guerrilla Tactics.....	59
Operation and Power Relation.....	64
Social Identity Theory and Fansubbers' Identity	68
Fandom as Collectivist.....	71
Fandom as Resistance	73
Fandom as Prosumer.....	74
Fandom as Pirate.....	75
Fandom as Cultural Transmitter.....	76
Fandom as Narcissistic	77
Conclusion	82
Chapter Three Theory and Method.....	84
Theoretical Orientation	85
Methodology	87
The Method of Netnography.....	88
Fieldsite Identification and Entrée	90
Data Collection and Analysis.....	95

Ethical Considerations	107
Conclusion	111
Chapter Four Findings: Fieldnotes and Archival Data	114
Conducting Fieldwork	114
Membership Criteria	118
Group Values.....	123
Establishing Norms Within Fansubbing Communities.....	125
Translation Standards.....	125
Group Regulations	129
Branding for Prestige/Reputation	131
Fansubs' Educational Role.....	133
Translating Instructive Programmes	134
Open Tutorial Modules	137
Subtitling Tools Innovation and Gamification.....	138
Competing Opinions Toward Commercialisation.....	145
A Story of Navigating a Legal Grey Area.....	146
Opposing Attitudes Toward Commercialisation	154
Text Manipulation.....	161
Performativity in Creative Writing	161
National Awareness in Production	187
Compliments and Criticism on Fansubs Forum.....	197
Conclusion	205
Chapter Five Findings: Survey and Interviews.....	207
Demographics of Survey and Interviews.....	207
New Insights from Interviews.....	211
Reflective Thinking on Promoting Intercultural Communication	215
Research Cultural Items in the Original Context.....	215
Add Contextual Notes or Explanations.....	216
Developing Cultural Interest.....	220
Translation Depends on the Released Platforms.....	222
Identity Preferences	223
Collectivist or Resistance.....	223
Pirates or Reproducers	235
Narcissistic or Self-entertaining.....	238
Chapter Six Discussion: Tensions Between Identities and the 'We-ness' of Fansubbing	243
Identification Manifestation and Interaction.....	244
Establishing We-ness	244
Interplay of Identities.....	254
Layers of Tensions	258
Collectivism vs Individualism	258
Resistance vs Patriotism	263

Spirit of Sharing vs Ethical Bond	265
Chapter Seven Conclusion.....	269
Summary of Key Findings	270
Theoretical and Methodological Implications	274
Limitations and Future Research	275
Final Insights.....	277
References.....	279
Appendix A	299
Appendix B	300
Appendix C	306
Appendix D.....	307
Appendix E	313

List of Tables

Table 1 Notes for joining in YYeTs fansub	120
Table 2 Examples of fansubs' translation.....	175
Table 3 Examples from the Big Bang Theory Subtitling Work	179
Table 4 Demographics of survey participants	208
Table 5 Interviewees' personal background	209
Table 6 Identity scored by survey respondents	223
Table 7 Preferred identities by interviewees	224

List of Figures

Figure 1 Censored content of Game of Thrones in China	15
Figure 2 The workflow of a fansub	67
Figure 3 The slogan of YYeTs fansub	123
Figure 4 Subtitle conventions used by Ragbear	127
Figure 5 Subtitle conventions used by FRM	128
Figure 6 Subtitle conventions used by Sfileydy	128
Figure 7 Subtitle conventions used by YYeTs	129
Figure 8 Fansub groups' brand images	131
Figure 9 Opening credit with fansubs' information	132
Figure 10 Open courses of Yale University, translated by YYeTs	135
Figure 11 The first subtitling tool developed by Fansubs YYeTs	139
Figure 12 The corrective activity of translation organised by FRM Fansub	143
Figure 13 Liangliang's confession to YYeTs' fansub friends	152
Figure 14 A copyright announcement at the opening credit	156
Figure 15 A joint statement condemning YYeTs' plagiarism behaviour for profits	157
Figure 16 Translation conventions in fansubs' version and the professional version	162
Figure 17 Screenshots from fansubs' subtitles assembly activity on Douban	164
Figure 18 Translation techniques in fansubs' version and the professional version	169
Figure 19 Fansubs uses annotation to clear culture-specific terms	171
Figure 20 Fansubs adding comments to assist cultural understanding	173
Figure 22 Fansubs' mind-blowing translations shared by fans	183
Figure 23 Fansubs' warning against watching distorting media content	189
Figure 24 Fansubs' rewriting to maintain a positive national image	190
Figure 25 Viewers' comments on the American drama The Terror	191
Figure 26 Fansubs' video of Fight against COVID-19	195
Figure 27 Viki promotes Chinese television programmes worldwide	197
Figure 28 Bullet screen comments expressing gratitude to fansubs	202

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
Fansubs	Fansubbing groups
Fansubbing	Fandom subtitling
Fansubbers	Amateur subtitlers or fan subtitlers
SARFT	The Chinese state administration for radio, film, and television
CCTV	Chinese central television
YYeTs or Zimuzu	YYeTs fansub group / Chinese name: 人人影视
Sfileydy	Sfileydy fansub group/ Chinese name: 伊甸园
FRM	FRM fansub group / Chinese name: 风软
Ragbear	Ragbear fansub group / Chinese name: 破烂熊
FIX	For incredible fans fansub group
QQ	A Chinese version of MSN
SPP	Spectacle/performance paradigm
P2P	Peer-to-peer file-sharing networks

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: _____

Dated: 25/06/2024

Acknowledgements

This thesis was an adventure to take at a particular time—during the Covid-19 outbreak and having my firstborn child. For me, it was a leap into the void to reach new understandings, and a challenge to manage research and family life. But still, it was an enjoyable experience of learning and sharing. A thesis is a project that comes from collaboration. My sincere thanks go to my supervisory team, Associate Professor Sarah Baker, and Dr Jennie Watts. A special thank you goes to Dr Sarah Baker, who provided the practical, emotional, and spiritual support to help me build this project. Sarah, I appreciate your guidance, support, and feedback throughout this research process. Also, I would like to thank Dr Jennie Watts for joining the team at just the right time. Thank you, Jennie, for working hard to help bring this project to fruition. I also thank Amanda Rutherford. Without her unforgettable and generous feedback, this project would never have been completed. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee for granting ethical approval for this study (approval number: 19/284, date: 29/08/2019). Their support has been crucial in ensuring this research complies with the highest ethical standards.

Acknowledgement and thanks are given to all the participants of the fansubbing group who made contributions to this study and accepted me as one of their members. I am grateful to you for taking so much time to participate in the survey and share your thoughts with me; your comments enabled me to enrich my research findings. Last, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my dear family and my beloved son, who made this journey possible. I appreciate your unconditional support throughout this journey and for helping me to finally reach my research goals.

Abstract

Fandom subtitling, or ‘fansubbing’, is a form of online subtitling activity “by fans for fans”. Emerging in participatory culture, numerous Chinese fans of American movies or television programmes voluntarily subtitle and distribute media content online for their peers worldwide. In 2006, various fansubbing groups (fansubs) were formed, and members began to subtitle American television programmes and other foreign media content for Chinese audiences online. As an interdisciplinary phenomenon of fandom culture and intercultural communication, fansubbing has become a topic of interest for researchers. However, fan subtitlers have rarely been researched for several reasons, such as their subcultural nature, anonymity, legality, and ethical concerns.

This thesis critically examines the multiple identities formed by four Chinese fansubs, understood as representing an online community of practice, and explores fan subtitlers’ perceptions of their roles. The research analyses fansubs’ media texts and how Chinese fan subtitlers’ reflective thinking is played out in their identity construction, focusing on the tensions and contradictions arising from the perspectives and actions of multiple agencies, including industries, governments and fansubs. In data collection, this research applies a netnographic approach, questionnaires, and interviews to investigate six identities exhibited by fansub members: collective, prosumer, resistant, pirates, narcissist, and cultural transmitter. The findings show that fan subtitlers’ identity traits are displayed in groups through various mechanisms, regulations, development, and text manipulation. Chinese online fansubbing groups play their roles tactfully, and their members cautiously manage their identities online. The research extends the understanding of online fandom culture and the fan subtitlers’ hybrid

identities. It provides significant insights into online fan audiences and could be a useful reference for scholars interested in exploring fandom within an interdisciplinary framework. It should be noted that studying the identity construction and characteristics of fansub groups provides a new perspective on fandom communities as representing both new audiences and mass media online culture against the background of today's media environment.

Chapter One

With the extensive reach of the Internet, the way that media products are both produced and distributed has significantly changed. Empowered by new technology, many netizens actively engage in online practices and organise various online communities, contributing to the so-called participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006). This phenomenon raises interesting questions about audience identity since the boundaries between media users and producers are becoming blurred. Meanwhile, as entertainment and popular culture have proliferated in the Chinese mediascape, so, too, has fandom across contemporary China. The practice of fans who are audiences subtitling audiovisual programmes has attracted widespread attention. Unlike traditional subtitling produced by professional translators, fandom subtitling (also known as fansubbing) involves the translation being made by amateur individuals or groups. These amateurs or fan subtitlers (also known as fansubbers) are usually online audiences who love watching foreign films or television programmes and volunteer to translate and share these audio resources online.

Fansubbing, a term used to describe “a fan-produced, translated, subtitled version of a Japanese anime programme”, can be traced back to the 1980s when Japanese anime and manga started gaining success in the United States (US) market (Diaz-Cintas & Munoz Sanchez, 2006, p. 37). At that time, anime fans voluntarily formed groups to produce and distribute Japanese anime with English subtitles for their US peers. With the massive popularity of Japanese anime and manga, “the earliest fansubbing activities in mainland China came into being around 2001, at about the same time as the arrival of revolutionary digital technology and the Internet” (Kung, 2016, p. 256). Fansubbing in mainland China,

apart from the genre of Japanese anime and American drama, has now extended into various audiovisual materials such as documentaries, television shows, news reports, video clips and video games as well as into different source languages, mainly English, Korean, and Japanese (Gao, 2018). The golden years of Chinese fansubbing groups (fansubs) started in 2006. This year was an epoch-making significant for Chinese fansubs because it was not until 2006 that Chinese fansubs mushroomed online and entered the spotlight, marked by the fansubbed success of American television series such as *Friends* (1994) and *Prison Break* (2005) (Zhang, 2012). In the same year, two *New York Times* articles, titled “Love of U.S. TV spurs Chinese Thefts” and “Chinese Tech Buffs Slake Thirst for U.S. TV Shows” (French, 2006), were the first to examine Chinese fandom and introduce Westerners to this form of “theft” (Gao, 2018, p. 28). Since then, Chinese fansubs have rapidly expanded with more and more like-minded fans enthusiastically joining the group. Chinese audiences have been able to enjoy popular American television series online almost simultaneously with their peers in the United States (with just a few hours of delay). Given the increased size of their volunteer labour force, Chinese fansubs strive to improve their professionalism by developing subtitling software and training members in subtitling skills.

Chinese audiences have faced obstacles accessing American audiovisual programmes in state television and cinema since the first television network was created in China in 1958. The translation department of China Central Television (CCTV) introduced the American science fiction series *Man From Atlantis* in 1981, representing the first impact of Western popular culture on the Chinese mainland. Then, American television series such as *Hunter*, *Growing Pains* and *My Favorite Martian* were broadcast on Chinese television (in 1984,

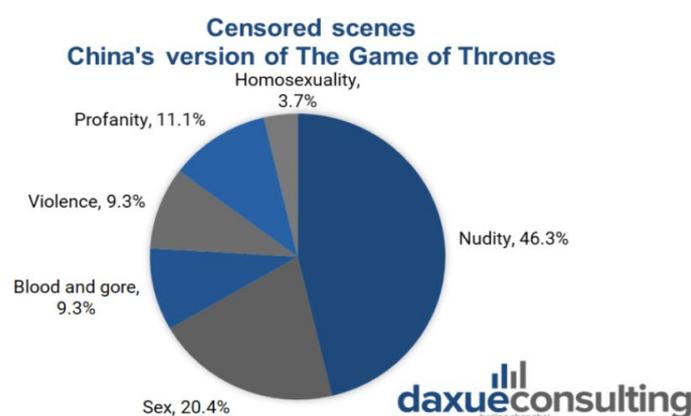
1992 and 1999, respectively), successively exposing Chinese families to Western perspectives (Xu, 2018). These American television programmes were a window into a brand-new American lifestyle and exposed Chinese audiences to soap operas for the first time. Although a growing number of foreign cultural works have been imported in recent years, Chinese authorities have imposed strict regulations on the introduction process. To limit the influence of American culture, the content of the imported films must be supportive of a healthy and positive Chinese ideology; for example, pornography, violence, and content against socialist values are prohibited. Also, for cinemas, the excessive proliferation of all foreign works is to be prevented, and imported American films should not exceed 50% of the total foreign films (Xu, 2018). Consequently, foreign programmes are under strict censorship regarding both inappropriate content and the import ratio.

Game of Thrones (2011), airing in China, is a prime example of applying a severe censorship review to ensure a healthy ideology (see Figure 1). In 2015, one of the largest Chinese video streaming websites, Tencent Video, purchased the television copyright of this series. To broadcast the series online, each episode was censored by members of the Chinese State Administration for Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT). Scenes that contained nudity, sex, profanity, violence, and blood were required to be re-edited by the sender to pass the recheck process. In total, 54 scenes in the first, fourth and seventh seasons of this series were re-processed. Some scenes were completely deleted from the original plot. Other scenes were dealt with by cropping the image (the part deemed offensive was removed) or adding shadows to hide the content, sacrificing clarity and viewability (Liu J., 2019). This censoring process was time-consuming and led to delayed broadcasting of the series on Chinese

networks and the loss of audiences. The re-editing also resulted in interest loss because the show was not as attractive as the original, and the plot was left with obvious cutting signs indicating suppressed material (Daxue Consulting, 2020).

Figure 1

Censored content of Game of Thrones in China



Note. This image summarised censored scenes in China’s version of Game of Thrones. From *Popular American TV Series in China and What They Reveal About Chinese Consumers*, by Daxue Consulting, 2020. (<https://daxueconsulting.com/american-series-in-china/>). Copyright 2023 by Daxue Consulting.

In terms of Chinese fansub audiences, the characteristics of those who prefer online films and television programmes are markedly different from those who enjoy traditional television programmes (Daxue Consulting, 2020). Chinese audiences of fansubbed American drama online are educated millennials, mainly between the ages of 20-29. They are media literate, have foreign language abilities and prefer to watch foreign cultural products rather than domestic productions. On the one hand, dramas containing drugs, crime and other themes associated with Western culture appeal to these young Chinese people as they rarely access

such themes by watching Chinese shows. On the other hand, since Chinese netizens now have more streaming media and downloaded resources, they are no longer satisfied with the lag in broadcasting time and state television's translated or dubbed programmes, which are characterised by fragmentary plots and, thus, interrupt the natural flow of foreign shows. As a result, American television series broadcast by CCTV attract small audiences compared to the popularity of the same show online.

Owing to the popularity of certain American series, fan subtitling communities have prospered over the past two decades. These communities, or 'fansubs', have become enormously popular, with a notable surge during the period 2006 to 2014, due to peer-to-peer (P2P) networks, lax online regulations (though tightened from 2009, see pp. 52-54) and the rising popularity of American dramas such as *The Big Bang Theory* (2007), *2 Broken Girls* (2011), *Game of Thrones* (2011) and so many more. Several fansubbing groups contributed to the circulation of these American series. For example, the fansubbed American sitcom *Friends* (1994) ranks as the highest-rated American drama on Douban, a Chinese social website that allows netizens to create content and give ratings related to films, books, music, recent events, and activities. In addition, the serial drama *Prison Break* (2005) led all other American programmes on China's most well-known underground downloading sites. During its broadcasting time, three of the four largest Chinese fansub groups—Sfileydy, YYeTs, and FRM—raced to publish their subtitled versions on Chinese sites. A translation of its second season received more than 2.5 million Web views in China (Osnos, 2007). Due to the spread of fansubbing, these American television series, which were not officially imported, can reach Chinese fans nationwide. Whether American producers intended to reach Chinese online

audiences or not, scores on Douban suggest that Chinese audiences broadly and enthusiastically welcome these American shows via China's fansub groups. Fansubbing has become a way for American audiovisual content to penetrate the areas where the authorised distribution of it is restricted for political and economic reasons. This proves that the Chinese audiences' demand for this content, which audiences mostly share and distribute underground, vastly exceeds that for authorised foreign products on state television. Compared to the official subtitled versions, the versions produced by fansubbers manifest differences, such as the renewal speed and text authenticity. Generally speaking, Chinese fansubs are more flexible in meeting the Chinese audience's demand for translated film and television resources. Their subtitling has the following characteristics:

1. Quick updates with broad themes: Under normal circumstances, fansubbing episodes with Chinese subtitles will appear on the Chinese Internet within 12 hours of the American television series being broadcast on the other side of the ocean. To have domestic fans watching the new American series on time, Chinese fansubs try to follow the principle of "0 days", which means publishing the subtitled work in the shortest time on the forum, that is, within a day. Meanwhile, Chinese fansubs' released versions include almost all the popular television shows and films sweeping across American television stations.
2. Subtitled versions are faithful to the original work while considering cultural differences. The subtitling competence of Chinese fansubbers is inferior to that of the professionals in the CCTV translation department. According to the fansubbers' recruitment announcement online, the required English level is

usually to have passed College English Test-6, which is far from proficiency in English. Generally, trained translators and English-major students are only a tiny proportion of fansub members, while most fansubbers' language proficiency is not as good as that of professional film and television translators. However, because of this, fansubbers are free from the professional translation norms and mainstream film and television policy restrictions. Normally, professional translation tends to remove foreignness in the source text and pursue invisible translation, while fan translators favour a foreignising approach to retain the original meaning and context as much as possible when translating foreign film and television resources (Nornes, 1999). Fansubbers' enthusiasm and devotion to cultural authenticity make them more sensitive to the modality of the television series, and their love for foreign cultures ensures that the translated dialogue's original flavours are preserved and free from the official imposed ideologies. Besides being faithful to the original text, Chinese fansubbers apply slang and sometimes humour in their renditions. In the eyes of Chinese netizens, fansubbers' vivid and lively translation is closer to daily life, enabling audiences to develop emotional bonds while watching.

The subtitle translation of American television series is different from other forms of translation. It is constrained by the general rule of synchronisation that subtitling must synchronise with pictures, the soundtrack, and subtitles. Also, subtitles are required to be positioned at a confined time and space on the screen to minimise intrusiveness and ensure the audience's viewing experience. In practice, professional subtitling sticks to restrictive

norms regarding subtitle length and duration. Usually, for English, it is “a two-line subtitle, with 32 characters per line, a display time of six seconds” or a maximum of 41 characters depending on companies’ guidelines and software used (Caffrey, 2009, p. 14). For Chinese, as stated in the Simplified Chinese (PRC) Timed Text Style Guide of Netflix, it should be 16 characters per line, two-line maximum, displaying for no more than four seconds on screen (Netflix, 2022). Moreover, professional subtitling is also constrained by the localisation paradigm, which is a template applied for all languages. According to Wilcock (2013), international subtitling companies favour generalisation to standardise subtitles and control quality. To streamline the process, large subtitling companies apply a pre-timed subtitle template to manage an audiovisual programme that needs to be translated into different languages. This template segments different source dialogues in the same way and sets the exact timing for all target languages. Slang and local expressions are also replaced with neutral ones to take into consideration broad audiences of different ages, regions, or countries. Cultural elements are substantially generalised and reduced in the rendition to save space and time, though primarily to smooth translated subtitles for easy understanding.

Consequently, professional subtitling tends to be standardised and less flexible in translation techniques (Wilcock, 2013). Besides the template and standardisation rule, commercial subtitling also complies with an invisible principle in textual practice. Professional subtitlers are expected to be as invisible and unobtrusive as possible (Wilcock, 2013). Neither the subtitlers’ names nor the subtitling companies’ information appear in movie credits. In textual practice, they are asked to be conservative for fear of distracting viewers from the plot. Standard language, non-visual elements and plain typographical rules

need to be applied in the process of rendition. The use of bold colours, “explanatory notes to the translation, such as glosses, footnotes or a prologue, has always been anathema to subtitling” (Diaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007, p. 57). As a result, professional subtitlers remain within the limits of these conventions and produce a short and easily readable translation. Fan subtitlers are not limited by either commercial interest or the commercial subtitling code since they are amateur mediators and have more autonomy concerning which show to select, what translation strategy to apply and when to distribute. Most fansubs do not set restrictive requirements for template or translation conventions; they prefer to give more freedom to subtitlers and leave their work for viewers to judge.

Regarding fans’ mediation capacity, the Internet provides an open and efficient communication channel for fansubbers to transmit foreign film and television resources. Thanks to the rising media capability and participatory culture online, fansubbers’ virtual communications, project coordination and operation are at almost zero cost and not bound by local time and place, giving them an advantage over their professional counterparts (Lee, 2011). However, this undoubtedly makes fansubs sit uncomfortably within the profit-centred global distribution business. Increasing numbers of Chinese streaming sites like Sohu, Youku and LeEco (formerly Letv) have started buying the copyrights of high-definition foreign episodes to cater to their audience interests. For instance, the video-sharing site Youku has bought *Desperate Housewives* (2010), and Sohu owns the broadcasting copyright of *Gossip Girls* (2007) and *The Big Bang Theory* (2007). The royalties of these American dramas have reached over US\$100,000 for each episode (Zhou, 2011). Due to the simpler approval process for online streaming, Chinese online video sites stream programmes faster than

television stations, which have strict quality and quota limitations. This has resulted in the Internet becoming the first choice for Chinese fans to watch their favourite American television programmes. However, even though streaming sites open more space for American programmes to enter the Chinese market, their limited importation and broadcasting speed (see pp. 56) can still not meet Chinese audiences' yearning for programmes that depict Western lifestyles. Nurtured by American television programmes via Chinese fansubs, more and more Chinese audiences are becoming members of these communities, devoting themselves to enriching the content of foreign shows available in China (Lee, 2011).

In the past decade, Chinese fansub groups such as YYeTs, Sfileydy (also known as YTET), Ragbear, and FRM have been influential and efficient in producing and distributing subtitled videos. According to the Chinese subtitle database subhd.tv (<https://subhd.tv/>), 116 fansubs are recorded as subtitling and sharing foreign films and television series in China. These fansubs function as a transfer station by introducing foreign film and television resources to Chinese networks, connecting foreign television programmes, video websites and Chinese audiences through their forums organised online, thus establishing an online communication network with the core of fansubs. The relationship between Chinese fansubs and mass audiences also has become more complicated due to fansubs' close connection in this network of foreign copyright media, domestic video websites, and domestic audiences. With the ever-expanding fansubber teams and the rising popularity of fansubbed films, most audiences prefer watching fansubbed American television shows to locally produced television programmes. This has resulted in the foreign cultures and ideologies interwoven within the film and television programmes spreading rapidly in China via fansubs, even

though copyright infringement and censorship are still obstacles. Meanwhile, the power of media also diverges in more directions since Chinese audiences are no longer confined to watching state-run television, that is, no longer solely watching authorised television series with a remote control that offers them limited options. Instead, they are empowered by making decisions themselves to access foreign television series online, albeit with some restrictions.

Research Interest and Aims

My research interests come from a personal story regarding Chinese fansubs, a story that has an element of serendipity. During my college years, a booming time for Chinese fansubs, I enjoyed excellent American television series, such as *Friends* (1994), *Big Bang Theory* (2007), and *Desperate Housewives* (2010) subtitled by Chinese fansubs. Thanks to Chinese fansubs' subtitling and dissemination, I had the first opportunity, like many college students, to access Western culture in this way and learn English through subtitles. However, I never considered joining a fansub group because I believed it required specialised translation and multimedia technology skills. In 2016, I saw a fan subtitler recruitment advertisement while watching the American Episodes of *House of Cards Subtitling Work* (FIX, 2013). Then I realised a fansub group includes different positions besides media technicians and has low entrance barriers. Therefore, I applied for a fan translator position in the group and joined the fansub FIX (For Incredible Fans) out of curiosity and my love for this American drama. After one year, I happened to see the online recruitment advertisements for YYeTs fansub, one of the largest Chinese fansub communities. The YYeTs group has extensive foreign film and television resources and massive membership in the fansubs circle with more than eight

million registered users (Reuters, 2021). I quit fansub FIX and joined the YYeTs fansub; during this time, I made many like-minded friends who inspired my research interest in exploring fansubber identities. Apart from my experience, I placed the study in the Chinese context because China has a vast number of online audiences and fansub members, as well as a complicated online environment and copyright dilemma. As Chinese fansubs subtitle various films and television programmes, this study chose to focus on American television series because these genres are at the centre of most fansubbing groups' work and contain rich norms, rules, and values of Western society—and I like them the most. The scope of my study was determined by the American television genres generally covered by the fansub groups—drama, comedy, crime, medical shows, sitcoms, and reality shows that are not limited to entertainment.

In my eyes, the vigorous development of Chinese fansubs is an essential manifestation of the media power reconstruction in this era. Fansub members are no longer film and television programme lovers in the traditional sense; they are producers and disseminators who deliver foreign programmes to domestic audiences. In a manner of speaking, Chinese fansubbers represent not only a certain kind of active audience that is knowledgeable and well-organised to provide insight into a lifestyle different from the dominant and orthodox culture, but also, they are a group of Chinese youths online that are unruly, embrace response to change, and act upon desire. They are influential in reconstructing the audience's understanding and criticism of the world in the subtitle text by deconstructing foreign films and television programmes. In the spirit of freedom, openness and sharing, fansub members devote themselves to bringing a new outlook to contemporary

audiences. Their appearance (in the cultural milieu) is symbolic of the audience breaking through the powerful restraints of mainstream media and establishing their own cultural identity.

In the academic field, fansubbing has attracted an increasing number of scholars exploring this phenomenon from different perspectives. Fandom practices are referred to in research by numerous nomenclatures, such as “self-mediation” (Chouliaraki, 2012, p. 432), “the wisdom of crowds” (Surowiecki, 2005, p. 254), “co-creation” (Banks & Deuze, 2009, p. 419), “fan prosumers” (Denison, 2011, p. 456) and “participatory culture” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 135). Among consumers of the fansubbed media, fan subtitlers are widely praised as ‘Prometheus’ and ‘Robin Hood’ by fandom followers. Similar to the folk hero Robin Hood, who steals from the rich and gives money to the poor, fansubbers operate as outlaws who use their intelligence and skills to circulate foreign audiovisual products. Their fans appreciate heroic gestures and compare fansubbers to Prometheus, the demigod who steals fire from heaven and gives it to mankind. Fans can rarely access video resources without fansubbers and claim, “Pirates are fire-bringers” (Wang & Zhang, 2017, p. 311). However, although fan subtitlers have attracted scholars’ attention (Jenkins, 2006; Dwyer 2012; Denison, 2011), exploring their identity and their significance is still an under-researched area. Generally, investigations about fandom identity usually fall into dichotomous descriptions of audiences as active or passive (Biocca, 1988; Ganesh et al., 2017) and posit a “dialectical relationship between media technologies and the participatory practices these technologies enable” (Chouliaraki, 2012, p. 227). Emphasis is rarely placed on the hybrid identity of the subjects behind the scenes—fan subtitlers. This research argues that such hybridity is the norm among

fansubbers in the mediascape.

Building on my experiences and the existing literature, this research explores fansubbing as a transnational phenomenon and investigates how Chinese fansubbers construct their identities and impact intercultural communication in the contemporary mediascape. The nature of fansubbing is transnational because fansubbers work on transnational media content: the distribution and production movement in which they are engaged contributes to transnational media flows. In addition to multinational media conglomerates, these fansubbers, though from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, can cross international borders and play a role in facilitating the complex cultural negotiations involved in transnational media encounters. Their concerted efforts herald the emergence of new discursive spaces of fandom audiences that are insufficiently captured by the dominant global media culture. Informed by the transnational nature of fansubbing, the research views fan subtitlers as new, globally conscious media users who contribute to the flow of transnational media content directly and visibly. Meanwhile, it also considers fansubbers' transnational awareness in text production as well as the foreign and domestic media politics that enable this transnational media flow of fansubbing (Li, 2009).

An overall research aim is to fill the identified research gap by moving beyond the binary discussion of fandom audiences as active or passive ones and deconstructing the hybrid identities of fan subtitlers.

Research Questions and Research Methods

This research aims to address four research questions:

1. How do fansubbers manifest the identity of the collectivist, resistant, pirate,

prosumer, cultural transmitter, and narcissist through their practice?

2. How do the six identities interact and impact each other?
3. How is fansubbers' narcissistic identity revealed in their practice?
4. How do fansubbers interpret cultural elements in subtitling and promote intercultural communication?

Driven by the research questions, this study deploys netnography to investigate the formation of fansubbers' different identities. Netnography is a "qualitative method devised specifically to investigate cultures and communities present on the Internet" (Kozinets, 1998, p. 1). It is a suitable methodology for studying fansubbers, as they are online communities associated with online culture. Extending ethnographic methods of observation and face-to-face interactions, the netnographic researcher considers a wide range of qualitative techniques and expands the fieldsite to technologically mediated interactions in online networks (Kozinets, 2010). These research techniques, such as participant-observation, interviews, discourse analysis and extended historical case analysis, are applied to collect: 1) archival data generated by group members and documented online, 2) elicited data, co-created with cultural members via communal interaction and interview, and 3) fieldnote data, observed and recorded as researchers' experiences. By having the researcher participate in and observe the daily activities of an online group, netnography emphasises deep, prolonged engagement with online participants to comprehend their daily lives and develop an in-depth description of their world. Kozinets (2010) suggests that netnographic researchers need to think carefully about how to conduct fieldwork in a particular online environment, such as how to approach the fieldwork appropriately, collect data ethically and participate in the fieldwork while remaining

unobtrusive. Regarding these elements, he produced five steps that can be adopted and tailored to meet a study's specific research aims: 1) defining research questions; 2) identifying and entering the online fieldsite; 3) collecting and interpreting data; 4) ensuring ethical standards; and 5) reporting findings. As my research questions require me to become immersed in the Chinese online community, this study follows a netnographic approach, employing participant-observation, interviews, online surveys, and archival data collection to inquire into the Chinese fansubbing community and Chinese fansubbers' identity construction.

Layout of the Chapters

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, including the introductory chapter herein. Chapter Two reviews the evolution of fandom research and identifies critical issues in current research. A range of perspectives are examined to provide a comprehensive account of the fandom field of scholarship. This chapter describes the socio-political context of Chinese fan subtitling communities, presenting fansubs' copyright predicament and the tactics they adopted in response. It also unfolds the operational mechanisms and power relations in Chinese fansubbing groups. As the study aims to inquire how Chinese fansubbers feature different roles in the identity construction process, the chapter further distinguishes the concept of social identity that is used in this research and clarifies the Chinese fan subtitlers' identity of the collectivist, resistant, pirate, prosumer, cultural transmitter, and narcissist. These set the research parameters of identities for data collection and analysis.

Chapter Three presents the theoretical orientation and methodology that underpins this research. It describes the paradigm of social constructionism and explains the reasons for adopting netnography to direct the research procedures. Drawing on the perspective of social

constructionism, an individual's perception of identity is constructed through interactions between themselves and the world, and is historically and culturally relative (Burr, 2015). This requires the researcher to understand the cultural context of the participants and the social processes and interactions in which they are engaging. Ethnography facilitates the researcher's close observation of a community in each social situation to understand members' interpretation of their behaviour. This research thus uses netnography, an adaptation of ethnography specially designed for online communities and cultures, to suit the focus on fansubs as an online community of practice. The chapter is an account of how I located and entered the research fieldsite, how I collected the data, the nature of that data and the proposed approach to data analysis. It then turns to ethical considerations, highlighting the potential issues and corresponding solutions.

Chapters Four and Five present and interpret the data gathered during my fieldwork. Chapter Four discusses the findings from archival data and field notes, providing the organisational context and procedural context of the Chinese fansubbing community. Through participant observation and archival data collection, the systematic analysis focuses on Chinese fansubs' textual conventions, daily practice, and forum communications, exploring fansubbers' different identity traits revealed through group mechanisms, daily operations, and text manipulation. Chapter Five focuses on the elicited data collected from online questionnaires and interviews. It first provides the participants' background information and reports on insights arising from the interviews. Then, it probes into fansubbers' identity preferences and links these to participants' motivations for joining fansubs. Drawing on participants' experiences and reflections, as voiced by them, the elicited

data functions to deepen the researcher's understanding of fansubbers' identities. The emphasis was placed on exploring interviewees' thoughts on their role in intercultural communication and strategies to encourage cultural communication in practice.

Chapter Six demonstrates the interplay of different identities. By examining each category of identity traits, this chapter further discusses the interaction of fansubbers' multiple identities and displays the layers of tensions in the dynamic construction process. It contrasts the collective identity, as an expression of the Chinese value of collectivism, with the other identities, which represent forms of individualism. It also discusses the resistance and patriotism in constructing fansubbers' role in cultural communication. This chapter concludes that these different identities are bonded by the spirit of sharing and a code of ethics established in the group.

The final chapter summarises the entire project. It reviews the research process and examines the unique findings of the research questions, stressing the realistic and strategic significance of studying fansubbers within a culture-specific context and the importance of using an intercultural adaptation model specific to Chinese online fandom. This chapter concludes with theoretical and methodological implications and suggested avenues for research in the future.

Chapter Two Literature Review

This literature review engages in a theoretical exploration of Western fandom studies from the 1980s, identifies critical issues of current research and discusses the reason to explore fansubbers' identity in the Chinese context. It integrates a description of Chinese fansubs around culture, politics, and commercial aspects to help understand the backdrop of these fansubbers' experience. Fansub operations and power relations involved in the group are also presented to provide context. This research uses Western fandom theories to frame the Chinese context because Chinese fandom research is still in the preliminary stage of development. I mainly draw on concepts from Western scholars such as John Fiske and Henry Jenkins because Chinese fandom scholarship lacks domestic theoretical models and largely borrows Western theories to explain the local fandom phenomena (Hu & Zhang, 2018). Chinese scholars have not placed much emphasis on the transnational and cross-cultural nature of fan circles, and the analysis of fan phenomena has not included fans' country and cultural background differences in the explanatory framework of fan behaviours. In addition to this, Chinese fandom studies have not been comprehensively analysed in the context of the global flow. Chinese fandom culture, as the main component of youth subculture, has not been incorporated by mainstream culture at the national level. It is even at risk of being undermined, which underestimates the positiveness of cross-cultural fandom for the external dissemination of local culture (Hou & Xu, 2019). Therefore, this research applies the framework of Western fandom studies to research American television series fandom in the Chinese context, and the distinctiveness of the Chinese context will then be discussed.

The investigation is divided into three sections. The first section details three waves of fandom studies with an emphasis on the first two waves, during which fandom was dramatically repositioned in the literature—from theories of subordination to resistance vis-à-vis the dominant culture. The third wave of fandom studies is explained in terms of three prevalent theories: user-generated content (Flew, 2008), peer production (Benkler, 2006), and active audiences (Biocca, 1988). By drawing insights from these concepts, the thesis generates an interdisciplinary framework for researching fandom identities in terms of active audienceship and Chinese fansubs in the contemporary mediascape. Seen together, these theories contribute to the understanding of fandom as both active and dynamic. The second section provides insights into fan subtitling communities, describing how fansub groups have developed and collaboratively organised themselves online in the Chinese social context. It suggests that external factors like cultural and political environments significantly impact the growth of Chinese fansubs and the formalisation of fansubbers' identities. The third section returns to the research focus of fandom identities to summarise fansubbers' existing roles from the perspective of social identity theory. It distinguishes the social concept of identity used in this research and explains fansubbers' identity as collectivist, resistant, pirate, prosumer, cultural transmitter, and narcissist. By clarifying each identity characteristic, this section contributes to the understanding of social identities and sets up parameters for the research question regarding how fansubbers manifest their multiple identities.

Overall, this literature review aims to situate this study within current fandom studies on cultural identity, analyse the strengths and limitations of applied theory in research, and help increase understanding of fandom evolution and fan subtitlers' multiple identities in the

Chinese context. It provides an explanation of the theory underpinning this research and lays the groundwork for understanding the development of fandom studies in the context of today's globalised media environment.

Three Waves of Fandom and Fandom Evolution

The study of fandom and fan subtitling has undergone three waves since the 1980s. During these waves, fandom studies have elevated fandom's social status, and correspondingly, various fandom activities have prompted scholars to research fandom. Over time, this dynamic between fandom studies and fandom activities has contributed to the development of both, with fandom becoming, and coming to be seen as, an integral part of our daily lives.

During the 1980s, scholars found fandom was negatively perceived in the public consciousness and had long been disempowered in the media market. The dominant culture undervalued fandom because it is usually associated with the stereotypes of agitated behaviours and low culture tastes, such as pop songs and comics, which were popularised by the working class (Fiske, 1992). Therefore, scholars taking a celebratory approach, such as de Certeau (1988), Jenkins (1992) and Fiske (1992), challenged fan criticism and its subordinate status by constructing a subcultural reading of fandom as resistance and active intervention against the dominant culture. Based on fandom's negative stereotype yet demonstrable activeness, early fandom studies endeavoured to correct this imbalance and establish a positive foundation for fandom scholarship.

The second wave of fandom studies is said to have come from the rise of Japanese anime and the advent of the Internet in the early 1990s (Gray et al., 2007; Zhang & Mao, 2013). In response to the booming market of fansubbing anime, both the public and scholars

drew attention to this new media of online fansub communities. The thriving fandom community and a large number of fan members online contributed to the emerging positive images of fandom in popular consciousness and academic circles. Fandom became more a part of everyday life during this period, fuelled mainly by the Internet and emerging online fan communities.

As fansubs and other fan communities kept proliferating online, fandom culture eventually evolved into an online participatory culture, thus attracting more researchers to engage in an ongoing exploration of fandom activeness and contributing to the third wave of fandom studies. The rise of the Internet has made fans more visible and interactive. Fans are no longer seen as passive or manipulated audiences but as active participants. The producer has recognised the importance of listening to fan audiences, considers them the primary audience and prioritises their needs (Siuda, 2010). Fandom, once viewed as having subordinate status, has witnessed a significant transformation in today's mediascape, becoming part of the mainstream.

Subordination to Resistance

The first wave of fandom studies started in the late 1980s, well before the Internet (Gray et al., 2007; Zhang & Mao, 2013). During this phase, fandom had a subordinate social status that was discriminated against by the dominant culture. Fandom was typically associated with “the cultural tastes of subordinated formations of the people, particularly with those disempowered by any combination of gender, age, class and race” (Fiske, 1992, p. 30). They favoured pop music, movies and comics, cultural forms that were denigrated by the dominant value system; therefore, fandom culture was deemed subordinate to the official dominant

culture. Also, fans were popularly portrayed in both the news media and literature as belonging to a lunatic and deviant cult (Fiske, 1992). The press coverage usually represented fandom intertwining with violent and dangerous behaviours like fan attacks on celebrities and casualties in fan stampedes. Early studies, such as those by Caughey (1978) and Schickel (1985) had criticised fandom as abnormal and pathological fanaticism. They claimed that an obsession with fan objects and fancied intimacy with celebrities had intruded on fans' real social world. Fandom would abnormally place imaginary relations and artificial experiences with media figures before real interactions with actual persons (Fiske, 1992). Given fandom's association with the more popular tastes, fandom culture was also taken as low culture in contrast to the forms of high culture favoured by small elite classes (Gans, 1999). Fiske (1992) argued, however, that fandom had been misunderstood by the media; it was often loaded with negative images as well as filtered through the pathological model provided by Caughey (1978) and Schickel (1985), who had illustrated fans as obsessed loners or hysterical crowds. Pioneering scholars in media and culture like Jenkins (1988), Michael de Certeau (1988), Frith (1990), and Fiske (1992) started to defend fandom against ridicule by interpreting fandom as a form of resistance. They argued that fandom was the disempowered victim of the dominant culture and that fandom's activeness in choosing its own media texts and showing capabilities in cultural production were tactics of grassroots resistance to media power and dominant ideologies. Centring on the reading of fandom culture as resistance, the first wave of fandom studies constituted a celebratory approach "in which fandom is beautiful" (Gray et al., 2007, p. 2, as cited in Zhang & Mao, 2013, p. 47). Their attempts to turn the stereotype of fandom from derogatory practice to active resistance contributed to

fandom activism in the second wave (Zhang & Mao, 2013).

The second wave of fandom studies started with the popularity of Japanese anime and the advent of the Internet in the 1990s (Gray et al., 2007; Zhang & Mao, 2013). During this phase, fandom manifested more positively than it had previously in the cultural industries themselves, which nourished their fan communities in a highly competitive market, and scholars frequently focused on the fans' construction of identities through the emergence of fan communities (Harris & Alexander, 1998; Grossberg, 2002; Jenkins, 2006; Kellner & Collette-VanDeraa, 2008). In China, a fast-rising fandom movement of numerous fan groups, which energetically subtitled and distributed taped anime to their overseas counterparts, also contributed to the development of fandom. Apart from animation, the increasing importation of dramas from Japan, South Korea and America also gave rise to many online fan subtitling groups, a globally connected phenomenon that attracted attention both among the public and academics. At the turn of the century, fansubs had become one of the most active communities in Chinese cyberspace and gained significance with hundreds of fan-based subtitling groups actively communicating online (Zhang & Mao, 2013). Influenced by fandom activity, the research scope of fansubbing expanded from Western popular culture and Japanese anime to other cultures and genres, such as American dramas, TED Talks, and Korean soap operas. Studies on fan subtitling, like Nornes (1999) and Diaz-Cintas and Munoz Sanchez (2006), however, continued to focus on the process and textual practice, mostly in the genre of Japanese animation. By this stage, the thriving fandom community and its exploration had built a positive image of fandom in popular consciousness. Several newer studies, such as Jenkins (2006), Gray et al. (2007) and Pérez González (2012), continued the

celebratory paradigm to defend fandom's resistance to the commercial market, arguing that the autonomous nature and volunteerism of fandom enabled fans to resist the media texts controlled by mass media corporations. Moreover, cultural scholars began to explore the fans and their identification with a community through fan objects (i.e., object-relating fandom) (Grossberg, 2002; Harris & Alexander, 1998). However, as the media and cultural studies scholar Henry Jenkins (2006) said:

I am frustrated that despite a growing number of younger scholars writing about fans, many still operate primarily in relation to the paradigms from the late 1980s and early 1990s. There are so many other potential ways of looking at the topic (p. 134).

With the transformation of fandom from an offline underground pursuit to a vibrant online activity, along with the establishment of an active image, researchers were encouraged to investigate fan participation in digitalisation and how this relates to the participatory culture and its coming of age.

Participatory Culture

Fandom as a participatory culture fully emerged in the third wave around 2006, when information was cooperatively produced and shared 24/7 as part of everyday life, and this was also the year when the work of *Convergence Culture* (Jenkins, 2006) was published (Siuda, 2010). With the flourishing of fansubs and other online communities, fandom has become a daily practice with innumerable users online. According to [statista.com](https://www.statista.com), the number of monthly active social media users was 2.65 billion in 2018, with projections to increase to 3.1 billion worldwide by 2021 (Richter, 2021). It is estimated that Facebook had 50 million

subscribers in 2021. For the same year, YouTube reported that 2.5 billion monthly active users uploaded more than 500 hours of video on YouTube every minute (Iqbal, 2023).

Facilitated by Web 2.0, online users, operating collectively as individual agents, regularly interact and update materials on social media platforms over time. Audiences in this stage of the Internet are encouraged to create and deliver media content on social media. They became *prosumers* (coined by Toffler, 1981)—producing and consuming media as engaged users, interacting with one another by sharing thoughts, rather than being passive viewers who would only take in information. The Internet increased information sharing and interconnectedness, thus, it has shaped participatory culture and brought fandom to the level of significance we are witnessing today.

The now well-rooted participatory culture has empowered fandom in its relationship with mainstream culture. Fandom is no longer viewed as a passive media culture, and fan communities are no longer the former compliant consumers as the developing technologies have brought them ever-growing levels of control over production and circulation. Some academics like Johnson (2001) and O'Hagan (2009) have begun to view fansubbing groups as communities of practice, groups of people who have shared goals, common interests and expertise that may develop a feeling of community and in-depth genre knowledge (Wenger, 1998). Meanwhile, a growing number of researchers are employing an interdisciplinary approach to the study of fandom, drawing from the fields of media, sociology, translation, and cultural studies. A range of neologisms such as “self-mediation” (Chouliaraki, 2012, p. 432), “the wisdom of crowds” (Surowiecki, 2005, p. 254), “co-creation” (Banks & Deuze, 2009, p. 419), “fan prosumers” (Denison, 2011, p. 456) and “participatory culture” (Jenkins,

2006, p. 135) have appeared to interpret the dynamic online practice of fandom in scholarship (as cited in Kung, 2016).

Fandom Theories in the Third Wave

Much of the research on fandom in the third wave has focused on one of the following perspectives: (a) user-generated content in the context of globalisation and translation; (b) peer production as an aspect of media and cultural studies; and (c) audienceship as a subset of audience study. Therefore, this section examines these perspectives and how they have been incorporated into fandom studies.

User-Generated Content. User-generated content (UGC) is the way the individual or like-minded crowds engage online in producing any form of material, serving as both consumers and direct producers (Flew, 2008). The last decade or so has witnessed the booming of online collective effort and acknowledged that users have become the centre of the Web 2.0 era. For instance, in 2006, users were featured as the Person of the Year in *Time* magazine where the cover read: “Person of the year. You. Yes, you. You control the Information Age. Welcome to your world” (Hochstein, 2006, December 25). The rising popularity of online production soon brought the concept of UGC into academic circles. Scholars like Flew (2008), Wardle and Williams (2010), and Thornham and Popple (2013) went on to explore the evolution and implications of this concept from the perspectives of culture, media genre, and economics. Further, Burmann (2010) in the field of marketing, and O’Hagan (2009) in the translation field, proposed the concepts of “user-generated branding” (UGB) and “user-generated translation” (UGT), respectively. The latter examines online fansubbing from the perspective of fandom audio-visual translation, a sub-field of translation studies. By

highlighting the nature of users as autonomous and productive, all these studies drew on insights from media studies that stressed the productive roles of fandom situated in the spectrum of consumption and production. The concept of UGC seems to have had far-reaching impacts on the interdisciplinary research that has observed prosumers' producing behaviour and the need for new insight regarding the fan communities empowered by the digital revolution.

This concept of UGC has not earned scholars enough attention in China despite having the world's most significant number of online users, with almost 1.1 billion netizens in 2024 (China Internet Network Information Centre, 2024). Chinese scholarship values topics such as citizen journalism or public journalism, and these have begun to expand. However, UGC, in relation to Chinese fandom studies, remains a somewhat undefined grassroots behaviour that has not earned enough academic attention (Luo, 2015), whereas the other two concepts peer production and audienceship, are relatively popular.

Peer Production. Peer production is formed by widely distributed individuals with common interests collectively cooperating in the creation of tangible and intangible products (Benkler, 2006). Unlike UGC, which concentrates on users' individual autonomy, peer production focuses on a pool of intelligence and commons-based collectivism. For example, before the advent of the Internet, early fansubbers would buy videotapes to record original Japanese anime and distribute them by mail. Empowered by the Internet and available applications, however, fansubbers can now interact and co-create peer-generated content much more efficiently. With numerous like-minded fans actively interacting and producing online, peer production is an ideal model for fansubbers to provide and exchange information (Benkler,

2006).

Yet, in the academic discussion of commons-based peer production, there are two competing approaches: the celebratory and the critical (Rong, 2015). The celebratory approach states that peer production is a revolutionary replacement for the traditional manufacturing process for three reasons. First, the essentials of commons-based peer production are non-market orientation and non-proprietary. This significantly distinguishes it from the business model, which, on the contrary, is market-oriented and proprietary (Lee, 2011). For instance, Wikipedia is characterised as a commons-based peer production model (Rong, 2015). Unlike traditional for-profit enterprises that employ experts on a salary basis, participants in Wikipedia are volunteers who passed over their property rights and rewarded themselves with “psychological well-being and gratification” instead of material payments (Benkler, 2006, p. 6). This non-monetary aspect has contributed to peer production meeting peoples’ spiritual needs, which have been largely neglected in modern society (Lee, 2011). Second, compared to the rigid hierarchical governance structure of industrial antecedents, the decentralised structure of peer production is much more efficient and advanced. Bauwens (2005) argues that the decentralised structure is more adaptive to the fast-paced and complex Information Age because the collaborative efforts of numerous participants are more productive in the decision-making process. Peer production can ensure product quality by pooling intelligence based on mass instead of relying on decisions made by one person in the industrial model (Rong, 2015). Third, participants of peer production can have more autonomy as they can control the flow of media to some extent. Previously, consumers were passive, and accepted information from commercial media; now, they can manage the

information production process and bring their interests, passion, and skills together by accessing media resources (Benkler, 2006). Therefore, celebratory scholars applaud peer production as an advanced, effective modern structure that enables consumers to resist commercial mass media.

In contrast, advocates of the critical approach are firmly against the utopian and technological determinist view of peer production because it lacks a Marxist perspective and has ignored the current capitalist social structures (Christian, 2009). Scholars in this camp such as Berry (2008) and Mejjias (2013) believe “the peer-production model will be ultimately tamed and incorporated into the current capitalistic system” that prioritises accumulating economic and cultural capital (Berry, 2008, as cited in Rong, 2015, p. 8). According to Terranova (2004), free labour within peer production is, in fact, “structural to the late capitalist cultural economy” (p. 53), and consumer co-creation was instigated by formal organisations and, to varying degrees, has been utilised to extract value. A typical example is the reality show, a popular type of television programme that exploits personal lived experience and the resonance this has with the public for monetary value. This kind of programme relies on participants’ input and willingness to appear on television shows. For instance, *Ellentube* is a web space with the stated goal of interacting with the public and enabling audiences to upload photos and videos. Their team integrate peers’ products from *Ellentube* into the broadcast show *The Ellen Show* (2001), thus making use of their audiences’ inventiveness for their gain. Media users are granted tokenistic autonomy and fulfilment by participating in the show, while their free labour is commoditised, thereby increasing media company profit. Moreover, scholars like Lanier (2010) have criticised

collaborative production for seeming omniscient, yet it is based on uncertain information and sources. He claims that editors behind peer production platforms who are not experts might produce unreliable or biased information. In addition, when platforms like that of Wikipedia open to anonymous contributors, it not only devalues the authority of the original data with no one bearing visible responsibility but also raises serious questions about the data, given that editors with no expertise or credentials are permitted to post on topics. As a result, the source Wikipedia is not accepted by many educational institutions in formal papers.

Moreover, peer production collapses the boundary between private pleasure and professional lives. When the recreation people used to enjoy becomes an everyday task, the potential intimate fun could fade and turn into a burden through the continuously duplicative investment (Terranova, 2004; Turner, 2009).

These competing ideas have shed light on the hybridity within peer production and encouraged a comprehensive analysis of its inner relations in a specific situation. Considering the above arguments around peer production, Rong (2015) used Chinese fansub groups as a case to investigate internal complexity within peer production. He found that technology affordance and institutional power co-exist in a dynamic negotiation process that shapes the form of peer production. He argues that the peer production mode of online communities like Chinese fansubbing is “neither a ‘technological revolution’ touted by celebratory scholars nor a ‘capitalism puppet’ criticised by pessimistic scholars” (p. 27). Therefore, Rong continued, that the mode of peer production needs to be conducted in a concrete institutional context because people’s beliefs, values, and motivations in a particular context are relevant to the formalisation of political virtues, attitudes, and behaviours. Institutional power cannot be

ignored; a contextualised understanding is needed to analyse inner relations in a specific situation. Rong's research sheds light on the internal complexity of fansubs in the Chinese institutional environment and has inspired me to explore the hybridised identities of Chinese fansubbers. To understand how these identities are formed and developed in a concrete social context, this literature review's second main section aims to discuss the reasons for exploring fansubbing identity construction in the Chinese context.

Audienceship. Fandom studies also attach great importance to audience research about participants' inner worlds. Audienceship refers to how people interact with a text within a particular context. This means that we should not think of the audience as a fixed group of people, but rather as a fluid and dynamic situation that describes various practices and engagements with cultural materials and texts (Li, X.C, 2009). In addition to fandom theories, audience research in China is also influenced by Western scholarship. Domestic scholars actively interpret and introduce Western theoretical frameworks, such as the "Spectacle/Performance Paradigm" and "Uses and Gratifications" theory, to explore Chinese audiences (Zhang, 2009; Shi, 2009). Chinese audience studies, however, are questioned to look at China from the established standpoint of Western communication studies while ignoring the cultural identity, interpretation logic, and thinking framework behind issues (Zhang & Shao, 2018; Hu & Zhang, 2018). Chinese scholars are encouraged to develop their own theoretical systems with local characteristics. They are gradually realising that communication theories are influenced by social and cultural factors such as ideology, the cultural system, and historical context. Nevertheless, audience studies in China are still in the stage of reflecting on the applicability of Western theories in the Chinese environment and constructing their own theory

paradigms (Zhang & Shao, 2018). This thesis applies Western audience theory because most extant audience research on Chinese fansub groups that are being examined borrow from the Western theoretical frameworks (Rong, 2015; Wang, 2017; Hou, Y. & Xu, P, 2019). And, as the research object of fansubbers is not only as audience but also as fans of Western television programmes, it is more reasonable to frame them in the same Western theoretical framework. This does not mean rigidly applying theories to the Chinese context, rather it acknowledges that audience research is historically, culturally, and socially situated in the West, and this research engages it in a way that is responsive to the object and global context of the study.

As the impetus for audience research responds to the technological environment and questions about culture, politics, and identity, it is appropriate to study fandom's self-recognition and to distinguish fans' specific roles (Kitzinger, 2004). Noticing that audiences have been reshaped as users and mediated publics because of media convergence, audience researchers have become interested in the participation paradigm, which explores audience forms of participation in a changing media environment (Livingstone, 2013). However, researching audience self-identification appears to have been hindered by three factors: a focus on the active-passive audience dichotomy; a neglect of the complicated roles of contemporary media users; and a lack of diverse perspectives on audience complexity in today's environment (Miller, 2017; Ganesh et al., 2017).

Most research about fandom is based on an identity-difference dichotomy of the active-passive audience because "we continue to deal with a largely Eurocentric and dichotomised set of theories of intercultural communication" (Ganesh et al., 2017, p. 355). There is ample research suggesting that audience members who were direct consumers have

changed into participative, productive, and active users, and they are described as the active audience (Taalas & Hirsjärvi, 2013). The conception that active audiences are selective, rational, and free, while passive viewers are vulnerable and gullible underpins mass communication theory (Biocca, 1988, as cited in Taalas & Hirsjärvi, 2013). This binary opposition partly explains why the social identity research of audiences is usually focused on dualism that receivers as resistant to producers, creators versus consumers, grassroots versus the mainstream, and amateurs versus professionals. A study that focuses on the culture of Chinese fansub groups' resistance is that of Sun Li (2014). His research probes into the resistant style of fansubs in terms of a binary relation: subculture versus mainstream culture. It is worth noting that his research initially investigated fansubs in the frame of youth culture. It conducted an in-depth survey of fansubbers, received 56 detailed answers to 23 open questions, and confirmed that fansubs represented a positive cultural transformation. However, the study still limited fansub identities to the aspect of resistance and drew solely on subculture theory to analyse the fansubbing practice. Thus, it lacked an interdisciplinary angle and overlooked the hybridising roles of fan subtitlers.

The second gap in the extant literature is that contemporary media users' dramatic, complicated, and changing roles as creators, developers, consumers, witnesses, reporters, and commentators have received little attention in the Chinese context (Luo, 2015). For instance, both Gao (2018) and Meng (2012) attempt to explore the influence and impact of fansubs on cross-cultural communication separately from the introduction of American television programmes and the fansubs' power relations vis-à-vis global media industries. Their studies confirm the dynamic character of fansubs in the context of globalisation and the challenges it

poses to fansub activities, but view fan communities simply as active producers and, thus, neglect their complex roles. Other research around the fan subtitling community, like, Pérez-González (2012) and Lakarnchua (2017) similarly report fandom's autonomous nature and activeness as a mode of second production and the process of language learning. A common characteristic of these studies is investigating the fansub community as solely comprising producers, stressing fandom's activeness and autonomy, while overlooking the wholeness and other aspects of fandom identity.

The third gap in the extant literature relates to the scarcity of research exploring the hybridised or logically regressive identity of fansubbers from diverse perspectives. Undoubtedly, a member's social identity may include various social roles in a group; however, it is doubtful whether the internal complexity and heterogeneity can be adequately grasped and researched (Fairclough, 2003). Since fan-based users have more autonomy, and the distinctions between receivers and senders are blurred in the current mediascape, scholars have been encouraged to conduct an audience-centred approach from diverse perspectives (Taalas & Hirsjärvi, 2013). A recent study that calls for exploring fansubbing as audienceship is Kung (2016). Researching in the field of translation studies, she discusses fansubs in terms of audienceship as community practice and claims that: "more research is needed to explore how fansubbing can be further understood as an audienceship constituting a community of practice" (Kung, 2016, p. 252).

Although studies of recent years have begun to emphasise Internet fansubs, most were from the perspective of translation studies or affirmed fansub expansion and influence without considering internal factors. One notable study shedding light on fansub identity was

carried out by Lei (2012), who researches from the perspective of communication studies within the social sciences. He points out that the majority of communication studies about forums are inclined to study Web 2.0 and media platforms rather than case analysis.

Exploring the ideological communication of transnational fandom in the context of globalisation by analysing fandom mechanisms, Lei's research contains enlightened thinking about the importance of internal factors such as forum rules and opinion leaders and the ideology of Chinese transnational communication of fandom on a macro level. Nevertheless, when Lei considers the construction of fandom group identities, the weakness of overstressing internal mechanisms is revealed; that is, external factors like the political environment are neglected.

Much research has sought to define and understand fandom by applying broad concepts to a range of areas, from cultural identities (Pérez-González, 2012; Li, 2015; Miller, 2017), fan economics and piracy (Fiske, 1992; Priest, 2006; Denison, 2011) to cultural imperialism and globalisation (Luo, 2015; Ganesh et al., 2017,). Few studies have conducted interviews to allow fans' voices to be heard and enable an in-depth analysis of fandom behaviours (Qiu, 2010; Li, 2015). The strength of these audience-centred studies is that they recognise the significantly changing role of modern fans, from passive receivers to active participators in today's media environment. However, although such research has examined fandom autonomy, fandom identities remain insufficiently explored. Existing scholarship centred on Chinese fandom's freedom is only aware of fandom's resistant behaviour, while the identities of fandom, especially fan subtitlers as producers, creators and resisters, have not received proper attention (Wang, 2017; Wang & Zhang, 2017; Li, 2015). Further, studies

conducted in the Chinese context share another common feature: they research fan identities of the fansub community as a sub-cultural phenomenon, without attending to their internal specific roles (Sun, 2014; Wang, 2017; Xu, 2018). Generally, fan subtitlers can refer to various participants who are responsible for different tasks and play different roles in the community. They can be raw material providers, timers, translators, proofreaders, or publishers. Because most research conducted in the subcultural studies field tends to concentrate on the macro level, they neglect fansubs' internal power relations and fansubbers' identity differences. Since fan subtitlers have distinctive roles in the group, it follows that their identities might be slightly different from each other.

As Zhang et al. (2016) indicate, a new online user-centred communication ecology has been formed; audiences who are more autonomous and straddling the boundary of communicators are central to this media ecology. Researchers need to evaluate viewers from the perspective of psychology and sociology, for example, studying how users self-identify and play the role of the netizen in this new digital media environment.

Explore Fansubbers' Identity Construction in the Chinese Context

The gap in the exploration of fansubbers in audience research is replicated in the Chinese context. First, although past research has examined the organisation and operation of Chinese fansub communities, research examining fansubbers' identities in the Chinese context is strikingly limited. Fandom research predominately studies the domain of Japanese animation and analyses the operational process of Japanese animation fansubbing groups (Diaz-Cintas & Munoz Sanchez, 2006). The research around Chinese fansubs either lacks contextual analysis, overly stresses fandom's autonomy, or merely mentions that exploring fansubbing's

positive meaning in intercultural communication requires an integrated approach to uncovering the roles of fan subtitlers—a gap that this research can fill. Second, as previously noted, the third wave of fandom studies and current audience research are both calling for an interdisciplinary approach to considering the complicated roles of contemporary fansubbers, as the audience's identity construction has become a complex and dynamic process such that clear-cut distinctions can rarely be made. To reflect the new hybridisation of fandom today, a fresh understanding of fansubbing identities and functions in the Chinese context is necessary. Third, the entire fan subtitling community is usually covered in general audience research. Although some research is aware that the role of fansubbers is shifting from passive viewers to active participants in audience studies, the focus is on the binary opposition and the resistant reading of fansubbing communities, leaving many facets underexplored (Wang, 2017; Wang & Zhang, 2017). It is essential to conduct a nuanced investigation to understand what fandom communities are, how their identities are shifting and how they connect to each other and the public.

Fansubbing deserves more attention because it demonstrates some crucial concepts in today's digital world, such as active audiences, peer production and participatory culture. Contrary to previous research, the attributes of new audiences prompt a rethinking of contemporary audiences' hybridisation and identity construction not limited to their activeness. Nuanced interdisciplinary research about fansubbers' identity and how fansubs function in cultural communication in the Chinese context may help us re-explore and re-evaluate contemporary fandom's composite roles and functions within the framework of audience research.

Ecological Conditions of Chinese Fansubs: Political, Cultural, and Commercial

Exploring the hybridity of Chinese fan subtitling communities requires an understanding of its complex social context, development, operational system, organisational structure, and community practice. At the macro-level, on the one hand, fansubs as a mode of peer production have such diversity and complexity, as highlighted in the earlier discussion of the celebratory and critical camps (see section Peer Production, pp. 38-41). On the other hand, Chinese fansubbing was born in a complex socio-political context that relates to a particular piracy culture and political regulation. This specific context has led to the expansion and hybridisation of Chinese fansubbing communities. At the micro-level, fansubs' hierarchal subsystem and decentralised organisation have contributed to fansubs' sustainable development and fansubbers' core cohesion. As Chinese fansub communities continuously expand and transform, significant disparities regarding, for example, regulations and attitudes toward commercialisation are emerging among and within fansubbing groups, which could also affect fansubbers' self-recognition and contribute to the variety of Chinese fansubbers' identities. Therefore, the following discusses Chinese fansubs around their distinct social context and inner operation.

Historically, the audiovisual entertainment market in China has been one of the biggest traders of pirated products for a long time due to having a vast user base and high demand for digital services. From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, the Chinese digital entertainment industry for video and music streaming was dominated by the video compact disc (VCD) and the digital versatile disc (DVD) format (Li, 2017). As significant distribution channels for audiovisual products, VCDs, and DVDs were popular in the pirated

entertainment market because of their acceptable quality and affordable price of around less than ¥10 (about NZ\$2) at that time (Li, 2017). According to legal scholar Eric Priest, “more than 90% of all music CDs, movie DVDs, and software sold in China are pirated” (Priest, 2006, p. 797, as cited in Young, 2011). By the mid-2000s, the traditional physical piracies of VCDs and DVDs were supplanted by various online piracies, which met the market need for fast-spreading media in the digital environment. Foreign dramas are usually shot live and aired weekly, the large-scale manufacturing of DVDs and CDs must wait until the entire series is aired; therefore, the physical distribution of DVDs and CDs can not beat the pace of online circulation.

Usually, there are three forms of online piracy: direct downloading, peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing networks, and streaming. Direct downloading involves the downloading of files from a server in one session, thus the process cannot be stopped midway, while the P2P model is a decentralised communications model. P2P can be processed in multiple sessions, making it easier for users to retrieve data from other sharers. The availability of download managers like BitTorrent and Emule makes data much easier to find and download without cost (Li, 2017). In addition to this, P2P technologies are suitable for the circulation of fandom works, as fansubs have abundant fan labour that can help with improving resource stabilities and increase the difficulties in locating an anonymous distributor. As for streaming, Western video websites such as YouTube, and sizeable Chinese portal sites such as Tudou.com and iQIYI.com, store foreign or domestic copyrighted materials, films, music, and dramas for subscribers to view via streaming. The streaming sites often combine a P2P model so that users can watch live-streaming channels and download programmes by installing a small

application on personal computers.

Supported by broadband services, the Internet circulates and further encourages the consumption of pirated media files. During the 1980s, Hong Kong was the centre of pirated videos and the largest pirate market in East Asia (Ballano, 2016). According to the 2010 survey from Analysis International, the Chinese had the most extensive range of Internet data analysis products and service providers. However, among the more than 1,400 digital websites, this research found that only 4.3% had an authorised license in 2010, and the “online video piracy rate in 2010 was nearly 90%” (Zhang, 2012, p. 17). The rampant piracy in the Chinese market partly reflects the high piracy acceptance and the weak understanding of intellectual property among the public. It could be related to the traditional philosophies of Confucianism that are rooted within Chinese society. In Imperial China, the supported Confucian philosophy oppressed creativity and fostered an imitation model that drew heavily from predecessors and their works in literary production (Young, 2011). Although China experienced a cultural revolution, traces of Confucianism remain in the Chinese mindset to this day. Influenced by thousands of years of Confucian values, the average Chinese person is used to piracy and has little awareness of copyright protection. With this cultural background, piracy in the Chinese sense is certainly distinct from that of the West. As such, it becomes a difficult task to develop intellectual property protection in China, as it requires a broad-based education to alter the Chinese mindset about intellectual piracy.

Politically, the attitude of the Chinese government towards unauthorised distribution in past decades was ambiguous and even somewhat favourable. From the first trademark law in 1982, patent law in 1983 and copyright law in 1990 to the recent intellectual property (IP)

rights in 2005, China has gradually recognised the value of copyright protection and enacted a series of regulations regarding copyright protection (Young, 2011). However, due to the decentralised legislative issues in China, the central government has difficulty enforcing IP laws. Since China covers an expansive land mass and thirty-four provinces, the central government's control over these areas is fragmented. The relationships between government agencies, especially between the central and regional agencies are complicated and inefficient in enforcing IP laws (McConnell, 2007). In addition, China seems to follow a “no action policy” against online copyrighted films, music, and television programmes in respect of enforcement, except for several national campaigns initiated recently by ministries. In 2004, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT) required Internet audiovisual programme providers to obtain an ‘Information Network Dissemination of Audiovisual Programmes License’. The regulation states that it is forbidden to spread films, television series, cartoons, and documentary films without cyber licenses. However, without specific enforcement measures, the audiovisual distributors ignored it and continued to engage in the unlicensed dissemination of audiovisual works. After the second warning was released in 2009, the authorities of SARFT and the Ministry of Information Industry decided to take serious actions to close P2P sharing sites such as BitTorrent China Alliance, a famous Chinese platform for distributing fansubbing materials, and other sites that provided unlicensed programmes, including the famous Sfileydy fansubbing download area (Gao, 2018). In 2010, SARFT issued the ‘Opinions on the Implementation of the Radio and Television Intellectual Property Rights Strategy’, banning online infringement and piracy of television drama. It placed restrictions on leading Chinese Internet service providers,

demanding they remove all pirated American and Korean dramas on sites. In 2014 and 2015, SARFT revised the Online Foreign Film and Television Play Administrative Regulations, further declaring that the distribution of imported films and television programmes needs to be licensed and must be registered on an official platform for broadcasting. The policy of “censoring first, broadcast later” was officially implemented, and foreign films and television series were banned from distribution without registration. In 2016, the SARFT further announced that imported films and television programmes must be stored and limited, to support and encourage original independent programmes. As such, foreign cultural productions must be limited online to less than 30% and cannot be scheduled on television during the prime time of 7 pm to 10 pm (He, 2014). Led by the government, such regulations limited piracy online to a certain degree and eliminated many small audiovisual service providers. However, the driving force behind these government actions is usually a result of political considerations, for these sites are believed to contain vulgar content that undermines social morality and damages mental health (He, 2014). The ultimate beneficiaries, however, are those media conglomerates and platforms run by state-operated media. An effective crackdown campaign against online piracy called “Sword Net Action” (剑网行动) was in place until 2017, taking a heavy hand to the spread of pirated audiovisual work. The action shut down 1,655 infringing websites, deleted 274,800 infringing links, confiscated 1.51 million infringing works, and transferred 37 cases for criminal investigation (Feng & Meuwissen, 2018). Although China planned to launch such anti-piracy campaigns every year to fight online copyright infringement, IP protection in China still had little success due to the massive push of market demands and economic incentives behind digital piracy.

Academic debates on media regulation and the Internet in China typically revolve around two central issues: censorship and regulation. According to Meng (2012), the Chinese government tends to pay more attention to censoring audiovisual content than copyright issues because the Chinese policy focuses on improving the public image and limiting the spread of foreign ideologies deemed "unhealthy". Since China does not use any film rating system, foreign film producers often have to modify the film content to ensure they are suitable for all age groups. Officially imported films are required to cleanse political and unhealthy content through multiple levels of censorship managed by SARFT (Li, 2015). Censors and translators will usually reduce or adapt sensitive political content, obscenity, and all violent plots to ensure that foreign films adhere to the country's political values and are suitable for children. As a result, the final published version can vary extensively from the original, leaving the audience confused and perplexed (He, 2014; Wang & Zhang, 2017). A notable example occurred when *Friends* (1994) was re-released on Chinese streaming platforms in 2022. Viewers noted that scenes and dialogues involving homosexual topics were altered or removed. This includes references to Carol, Ross's (one of the main characters) ex-wife, being a lesbian, as well as jokes and conversations about sexuality (Chen, 2022). This example highlights the broader implications of China's censorship and regulatory practices, which extend beyond intellectual property concerns to reflect deeper cultural and ideological considerations.

In the debate on internet content regulation in China, scholars have offered differing views on the regulatory landscape for privately owned video platforms versus state-run television. Hu (2014) argues that privately owned video platforms have historically enjoyed

greater freedom and faced less stringent regulations than state-run television. However, Luo (2022) contends that strategies such as "keeping heads down" to avoid regulatory scrutiny have become widely discussed as a means of navigating content reviews. Online regulatory authorities can include not only state institutions but also forum administrators, social media content moderation teams, or other political agencies, all of which possess the power to impose sanctions, ranging from content removal to account suspension or even legal consequences. In addition, the replacement of the SARFT with the National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA) in 2018 marked a significant shift in China's regulatory landscape, with the NRTA operating directly under the control of the Communist Party of China's (CCP) Central Propaganda Department, thereby reinforcing content control mechanisms. As Li (2022) points out, the viral, distributive, and infiltrative characteristics of peer-to-peer networks raised significant concerns for Chinese censors, given their ability to quickly spread content considered politically inappropriate. What started as a regulatory issue focused on IP and piracy has expanded into a broader political challenge surrounding the control of cross-border cultural flows. In response, the Chinese government in the 2020s has shut down more than 2,800 websites and apps involved in distributing pirated content and removed 3.2 million links (Zhu, 2023).

Moreover, a gate-keeping mechanism has been implemented to restrict the import quotas of foreign audiovisual products and to provide strict scrutiny of imported content (Li, 2015). As the second-largest global economy, China has realised the importance of soft power and is committed to improving its public image and cultural significance worldwide. The Chinese government considers the media an "important instrument of cultural policy" (Li

& Sligo, 2015, p. 182) in shaping the national image, promoting Chinese culture, and controlling Western cultural influence inward and outward. On the one hand, the Chinese government has invested billions of dollars in strengthening domestic media influence, developing its media coverage to over 200 countries, permitting media conglomerates to interact with global media giants like Times Warner and gaining favourable media perceptions and credibility by two-way communication. For instance, in 2009, the Chinese government invested 45 billion yuan (NZ\$9 million) in three media giants to expand and build a Chinese media empire (Li & Sligo, 2015). These three state-run media, Chinese Central Television (CCTV), Xinhua News Agency and the *People's Daily*, are responsible for global outreach while reducing Western-dominated voices and improving the Chinese media's global presence (Li & Sligo, 2015). At the same time, Chinese government tends to prioritise local media products over imported ones. To protect the box office revenues of domestic films, SARFT sends notifications to major file-sharing sites requesting that digital copies of newly released domestic films should not be made accessible to file sharers for the following two weeks (YM, the manager of the Internet company, from personal communication, April 18, 2009, as cited in Meng, 2012). Another measure of protecting the local film industry is to reserve a domestic film protection month. Only domestically produced films can be shown during prime movie-going times such as the Lunar New Year or students' summer vacation in the months of July and August. It is also known as the period of blackout for foreign films (Parc et al., 2022). Such protectionist measures have increased barriers for international media products to access the Chinese market. As a result, the domestic media protectionist atmosphere, along with the poor supervision of pirated

products, highly restricted market access, and sterilised published versions of foreign movies, has all created China's enormous demand for unedited foreign films and television series. These encourage the circulation of pirated works and contribute to the rise of fan subtitling groups in China.

Commercially speaking, fansubbing in China is not in complete opposition to the transnational media companies. The restrictions on imported films have not diminished the popularity of foreign films in China. Despite less than 10–15% of all movies released in China are foreign, they have accounted for about 40% of total box office revenue since 2012 (McConnell, 2007). However, USA producers only receive income limited to the approved quota set by the Chinese government. Due to the restricted channels and strict censorship, substantial amounts of foreign programmes would not reach the vast Chinese audience without fansubbing. On the one hand, fansubbed movie trailers can help promote the film and gauge its prospect in China. Foreign media companies can view their movies' popularity among Chinese consumers through clicks on sites. On the other hand, fansubbed movies help cultivate the audience's taste and nurture the local market. It makes preparation for foreign films to enter the local market should the state deregulate the market. Therefore, a sense of justification is found by fansubbers in that they are non-commercial and eventually help the rightful owners promote audiovisual products on the market (Meng, 2012). This involves commercial exploitation, state political mobilisation and consumer perceptions of plagiarism, and these tensions will be examined in Chapter Six. Regarding Chinese fansubs themselves, it is unlikely they can be run purely by relying on passion or small donations from fans given the enormous costs of the server, bandwidth, and technical maintenance with the group

expansion (Meng, 2012). A few fansub groups have actively sought business transformation to sustain their practice. One of the transformations is to seek cooperation with licensed video websites that own copyrighted foreign audiovisual works. For instance, YYeTs has cooperated with Netease, a Chinese Internet technology company, to translate the “global elite video open class” of Yale University online. Because Netease is the licensed distributor, fansubs can be free from accusations of copyright infringement and gain financial benefits, though some fansubs argue this violates the spirit of fansubbers’ volunteerism. Another business model is to profit from advertising or other commercial activities. However, most fansubs insist on their non-commercial nature and strongly object to business transformation, claiming it contaminates their voluntary sharing spirit. They will behave themselves with strict self-regulation like putting specific warnings on the website page, such as “Cease Distribution When Licensed” (Wang, 2017, p.168), and “Please Delete Within 24 h” (Gao, 2018, p. 29), and limit the number of fansubbers in the group to restrict the group’s expansion cost. Yet it is debatable whether all fansubs would comply with the code of ethics, ceasing distribution if a show is licensed and insisting on non-profit. Voices in favour of business transformation may vary among fansub groups and their members, but the development and the future of fansubs are actually in the hands of individual administrative members (He, 2017). The reason is partly related to the community’s internal structures and power relations, for fansubbing participators’ positions in the group are constantly changing and may generate new power mechanisms over time.

Copyright Predicament and Guerrilla Tactics

The development dilemma of Chinese fansubs is primarily because copyright holders, the

Chinese state and Chinese fansubs hold various perceptions and attitudes towards fan subtitling. Copyright holders of foreign media companies and Chinese authorisation are constantly searching for an ideal solution that can deal with this shadow economy. The complicated situation of China fansubs was highlighted in a *New York Times* article entitled “Chinese Tech Buffs Slake Thirst for U.S. TV Shows (French, 2006).”

A longstanding practice of strict censorship that affects all Chinese media—and covers not only politics, but sexuality, violence and other subjects that form the grist of American entertainment—also drives audiences toward alternatives like downloadable television shows. And there are sharp limits on the number of American programs and Hollywood movies that can be broadcast or screened in theaters here... Official efforts to control the market for popular culture and the shows’ contents have a prolonged effect of encouraging piracy. Cheap DVD copies of newly released American movies have been sold on street corners throughout China for years. Recent attempts to crack down on these sales, at the insistence of the United States, have coincided with the boom in television and movie downloading, which could eventually make DVD piracy obsolete.

Representatives of American television networks said they were counting on new Chinese legislation to stop the translation and downloading of their programs.

“We are aware that because of their popularity, several Fox programs are particular targets of theft and unauthorized broadcast in territories around the world,” Teri Everett, a Fox spokeswoman, said by e-mail.

“It’s an ongoing effort, and one that will be greatly aided in China once the Chinese Internet regulations are finalized, which will clarify a number of issues relating to the enforcement of content providers’ rights on the Internet.”

Members of the translation groups are aware that their efforts may be considered a violation of copyright laws in other countries, but most view it as a mere technicality because they charge nothing for their efforts and make no profits, adhering to Chinese law.

Given that this article appeared in 2006, American television networks have been concerned for some time about unauthorised distributions online, particularly Chinese online pirating activities. Although the representatives of the American television networks did acknowledge fansubs’ pirating uses, they strategically avoided revealing that fans were involved in it. It is presumed that the copyright holders of foreign media corporations have yet to find ways to profit directly from the Chinese market or to stop this pirating without hurting fans’ feelings. For example, *The Big Bang Theory* (2007) has received more than 760,000 reviews and 70 million clicks on Chinese funsubbing site YYeTs. Columbia Broadcasting System, which produced the series, probably did not expect the show to reach a sizable Chinese audience when the series was only authorised to be broadcast in America and other countries with import agreements. Another reason for foreign cultural corporations’ tolerance is that copyright owners cannot find an effective solution to stop unauthorised use. In 2014, American production companies filed a lawsuit against unauthorised translations (Wang & Zhang, 2017). They released several websites that offer links to pirated movies and television downloads. One of the listed sites is the Chinese YYeTs fansub. YYeTs’ server was shut

down in this suit, but the illicit spreading has not ceased online (Wang & Zhang, 2017).

Without effective means of containment, copyright owners will be forced to tolerate most infringements online and chase mainly commercial infringers. However, thanks to the fansub community, Chinese viewers can not only watch recent episodes at about the same time as their American counterparts, but they also do not have to pay additional advertising or subscription fees. Chinese audiences benefit from fansubbing American films and television series.

Meanwhile, provincial governments also hold similar tolerance and lax enforcement towards fansubbing. The gap in the Chinese market and commercial exploitation is the foremost reason. The Chinese market yearns for foreign cultural works because China employs a gate-keeping mechanism to restrict the circulation of foreign media products. In addition, the imported content must be scrutinised for politically correct content and cleansed of sexual and violent plots. Chinese audiences cannot access foreign products that are inconsistent with the official ideology through formal channels. Facing the limited resources and poor quality of imported programmes, most Chinese consumers count on fansub groups to consume American television products. As fansubbing can fill the Chinese market gaps and provide an emotional outlet for consumers who are unhappy about the absolutism of the local media industry, the government has to make compromises between ideological control and market operation. Another reason is that, in many parts of the nation, there is a financial inclination that encourages movie piracy. The lack of local incentives to enforce copyright rules stems from the fact that the economy of this place could depend on the money made from film piracy. Hence, there are no local incentives to police copyright rules. Moreover, no

one is motivated to enforce copyright rules on their own. First, Chinese artists are often paid a set wage by the government and are not reliant on the money obtained from copyright violations. Second, the simple economics is that the consumer pays significantly less for a pirated copy. Finally, there is no financial motivation for the government to enforce copyright rules when doing so would probably drive-up living expenses and take funds away from necessities like healthcare (Parc et al., 2022).

Although the state operates several regulations to fight illicit copies and unauthorised distribution, as mentioned above, infringing distributions keep popping up because no sterner measures were taken other than shutting down the server. As fansubs are weak and suppressed by strong forces, most fansubs resort to guerilla tactics of temporary site closing and moving their subtitling publishing site to avoid legal pressure and state enforcement. They are quick to respond when government actions interfere (Meng, 2012). A fansub's website would stop updates and clean up its published programmes online as required by the regulations. However, the clean-up is only temporary, and new file transfer methods soon emerge in an endless cat-and-mouse-type game. After several cleanses online, different fansubs started resorting to different strategies to eliminate the problems of illicit copies in subtitling. Most fansubs close their forums and move their sites to Sina Weibo, a Chinese microblogging website similar to Instagram. On this platform, fansub groups provide a link to Chinese subtitle files and uncaptioned video resources separately instead of suppressing subtitled programmes as in the old days. Moreover, the file-sharing mode through BitTorrent download is replaced by magnetic links among fan groups because BitTorrent downloads expose the Internet Protocol addresses of uploaders and downloaders and, thus, can be traced

by copyright organisations. In contrast, magnet mode allows clients to access files without going through a tracker server. It does not contain users' server or location information and can be hard to check by copyright group monitors on the Internet. Therefore, fansubs use the magnetic link in distribution to avoid legal issues (Meng, 2012). Furthermore, a few fansubs choose to take refuge from registered video online platforms, seeking joint translating projects to dodge Chinese censors and American copyright lawyers. Facing copyright predicaments, Chinese fansubs would actively adopt guerrilla tactics and consciously manage their pirates' identity in search of a way out of infringement. For these reasons, Chinese fandom had a prime time to develop online, though the controls of foreign proprietors and the Chinese state have tightened in recent years (see pp. 52-54).

Operation and Power Relation

This section describes the workflow of fansubbing and the inner relationships within the fansubbing organisational structure. This structure is central to fansub groups' daily operations, governing the behaviour and practices of fansubbers and ultimately facilitating the development of their identity. Chinese fansubs commonly use open subtitles, often shown as part of the picture with the original soundtrack as in foreign language films and television programmes. As mentioned earlier, this kind of subtitling has constraints that need to be synchronised with images and the soundtrack and comply with the subtitles' length and duration norms (see p.19). However, in my experience, each Chinese fansub group has its own adjustments around the general rules. Each fansub has its respective self-brand and may set different conventions and typographical rules as their identity difference.

Competition and conflicts exist among fansub communities, whether regarding the

speed of distribution, attitudes towards commercialisation or translation strategies. The speed of release is vital for fansubs, especially for those who work for private video websites, because it is one of their core competencies. Usually, subtitle groups lose their speed edge if the final version is not published within 24 hours of the original release. In addition, whether to collaborate with private video websites or not is controversial among fansubs and fansub members. Although some fansubs gain revenues from commercialised collaboration and advertising, they claim these incomes are minimal to maintain group servers. Most groups hold disdain as this commercial act would violate their spirit of volunteerism (Hu, 2014). Moreover, during the translation, fansubs may adopt different strategies for textual practice. A few fansubs tend to produce bold versions that add substantial notes to comment or express personal feelings in translations that depart from the original text. This strategy has been accused of distracting audiences with excessive references and losing the original flavour (Wang & Zhang, 2017). These inner conflicts are discussed in detail when analysing fansubbers' identity differences based on the collected data, as my thesis focuses on fansubbers as a collective group.

In terms of operation, each fansub has a similar workflow (see Figure 2). Diaz-Cintas and Munoz Sanchez (2006, p. 38) and Barra (2009) classify six different actors in the fansubbing process: raw material providers, timers, translators, typesetters, editors, and encoders. Taking one 40-minute episode of an American television series as an example, first, raw material providers follow and download the latest episodes from the server of the releasing group and send them to the corresponding group leaders. A fansub group has many group leaders for different genres, such as sitcoms, cartoon series, romance, mystery, and

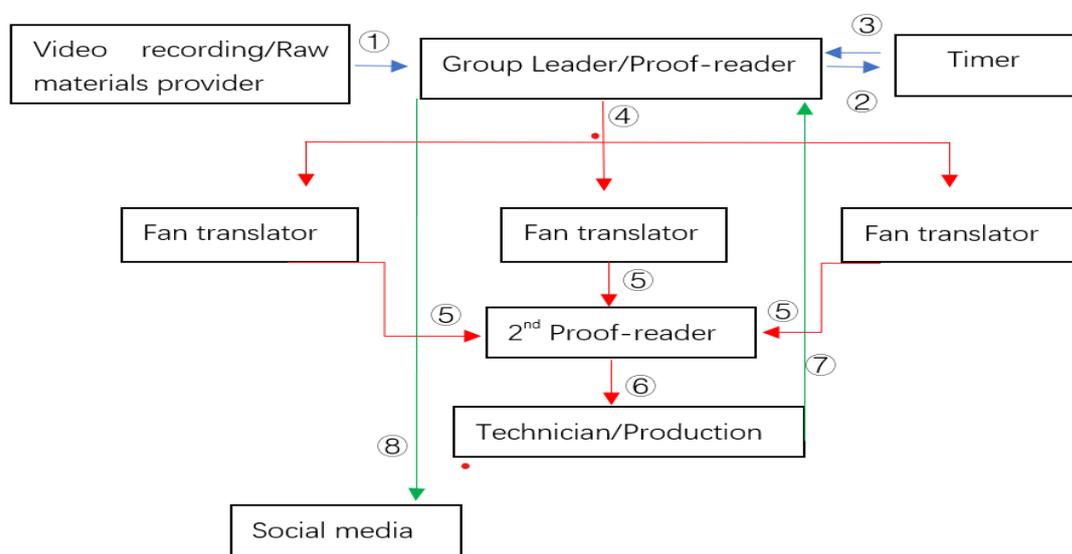
history. Once group leaders receive materials, they send them to a timer and, meanwhile, recruit interested fan translators in the group. Timers start to synchronise raw captions and original content sentence by sentence, making sure there are no intervals between subtitles and authentic voices, and then export time-coded English subtitles back to group leaders. Next, the group leader in charge of this television programme segments subtitles into manageable chunks and assigns tasks to three or four translators via online tools. Each translator may have to translate around 150 to 200 lines for each episode, depending on the duration of the programme. Then, editors or proofreaders collect all produced translations and check the format, consistency, and accuracy. From there, the technician decides on colours and fonts and adds special effects to the video clip. Finally, the encoders take over the production from the group leader for final proof and publish video files on their social media for downloading. Usually, there are two kinds of fansubbed files depending on groups: the soft subs of solely subtitle files for those who have already downloaded original video files without subtitles; and the hard subs with the subtitle files embedded into video files (Qiu, 2010). For example, the group YYeTs, who used to publish the hard subs, now provides the soft subs and the original video files separately to avoid copyright issues. Ragbear has produced the hard subs on their Weibo account. These fansubbed resources are open to download for group followers and other netzines who search for subtitled American drama.

This overall fansubbing process can be categorised into three main sections: synchronisation, translation, and sharing. Synchronisation includes providing raw materials and timing. The translation is composed of translating and proofreading to the target language before handing it to the next stage, where members in the section of sharing are responsible

for the screen effects and the conversion of downloadable video files.

Figure 2

The workflow of a fansub



Blue route: synchronization process

Red route: translation process

Green route: sharing process

Note. Figure of fan subtitling process. Own work.

The organisational structure of the whole producing process is unique, as it makes participants operate within a decentralised network with a complementary mechanism that improves the community's efficiency and helps members with emotional bonding. Unlike top-down 'telling people what they need to know' media form in the pre-digital age, a decentralised organisational structure leads to high efficiency and can adapt to convoluted Internet environments (Bauwens, 2005). Since fansubbers are independent and responsible for specific technological or textual tasks, based on their capacity and preference, they can publish a video as fast as possible by combining collective efforts to allocate the work to as many participants as possible (Benkler, 2006).

Furthermore, the inner structure of the multi-level fluid hierarchy acts as a complementary organisational mechanism. From my observation, fansub groups apply benevolent dictatorship and meritocracy to ensure subtitle accuracy and group stability. Senior fansubbers oversee the training of new members, determine whether they are qualified, ensure production quality, and control the group's leadership. Being one of these few core members requires the personal commitment of considerable time and energy, which not only helps to distinguish one's capacity and loyalty to the group but also contributes to building solid emotional cohesion. However, although core members can access more resources and make essential decisions regarding group development, entrance requirements and fansubbing rules, the group's leadership is fluid, as old members leave, and newcomers steadily evolve into core members after years of dedication. As a fansub network may gather many individuals with diverse backgrounds and life experiences, the hierarchy is mainly layered by members' contributions and the time devoted to the group.

Overall, fansub members interconnect and interact in a hierarchal subsystem within a decentralised organisational structure. Each established module in fansubs is comparatively independent and specialised, which improves work efficiency, fluid coordination and sustainable group development. The hierarchy in the community serves to tie newcomers and veterans, peripheral members, and core members.

Social Identity Theory and Fansubbers' Identity

This study takes a social identity theory approach to explore the self-actualisation of fansubber identity. It examines the various collectivist, resistant, prosumer, pirate, cultural transmitter, and narcissist identities (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998) present in the

contemporary literature on fansubbers and inquiries into how fansubbers perform their roles and manifest their identities in practice. Social identity has been a controversial topic in the social sciences and humanities, with some scholars arguing that identity is an ongoing project of self-narrative making, while others insist that researching through identity characteristics is a functional view. Giddens (1991) pointed out that self-identity is not a collection of traits but a reflective process: a person continuously reflects on themselves and their community from the past towards an anticipated future. Bauman (1992) echoes this in proposing that individuals have experienced a “liquid” sense of self that is a changeable process of self-understanding and narrative-making. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) stated that social science researchers use “identity” to refer to 1) “a ground or basis of social or political action”, 2) “a specifically *collective* phenomenon”, 3) “a core aspect of (individual or collective) ‘selfhood’”, 4) “a product of social or political action”, and 5) “the evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses” (pp. 6-8, italics in the original). However, the idea of self traits and changing identity are not contradictory; as Rainie and Wellman (2012) commented, the single self “gets reconfigured in different situations as people reach out, connect, and emphasize different aspects of self” (p. 126). The self-presentation of Internet users, on one level, is in the process of ongoing reformulation as they can engage in many identities through activities on different platforms. On another level, their identity can be momentary as users can quickly join or exit from an online group, and users’ presentations may not always be objective and accurately reflect themselves. Therefore, it seems practical to study the identity formation process following the notion of self-traits, which work as the baseline to distinguish a person or a community.

It should be noted that the connotation of social identity in American social science terminology relates to social roles and interpersonal domains such as one's popularity and reputation, while in European studies, it means the collective identity that denotes aspects of race, religion, feelings of belonging to one's community and the like (Tajfel, 1981). Since the term has these different denotations, I refer to social identity in this research as "the part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group together with the value and the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 55). From the perspective of social identity theory, many existing studies that examine fandom with fansubs as a case tend to focus on a single prominent identity characteristic or a few traits, such as collectivism, instead of the dynamic process of multiple identifications (Miller, 2017). Taking into consideration the identity traits and social science collective identity concept, this research examines fansubbers' six identities of collectivist, resistant, prosumer, pirate, cultural transmitter, and narcissist. I apply such Western terminology to a Chinese context because current Chinese fandom studies draw heavily on Western concepts (Zhang & Shao, 2018), and each of these terms is also commonly found in Chinese fandom and audience studies. Based on a review of the relevant literature, these terms appear at different stages of fandom research. Resistance and pirates come in the first two waves of fandom studies, which emphasise the social status of derogatory practice and active resistance. Collectivists and prosumers become a research focus as participatory culture emerges in the third wave. These four identity traits are scattered across previous research and can be used to theorise multiple fansubber identities. Previous studies have not analysed these identities in-depth, nor have they considered them holistically, which means

that they are open to in-depth examination in this study.

The research especially emphasises the identity of cultural transmitters and narcissists. The cultural transmitter is an identity trait in the literature that explores the phenomenon of fan culture from the perspective of cross-cultural communication. As this research examines fansubbers' identity in cultural communication, it attaches importance to the cross-cultural value of fansubbers' activities and their identification as a cultural transmitter which has been underestimated in scholarship. The last identity of the narcissist is proposed based on Abercrombie and Longhurst's (1998) Spectacle/Performance paradigm (SPP) on audience research and my experience as a fansubber. The use of the term "narcissist" in this research is a developing identity tied to issues of contemporary media engagement and therefore underused by scholarship at present. The term "narcissist" refers to a kind of normal performative behaviour of online audiences and its meaning will be explained in the section Fandom as Narcissistic. This research devised specified questions to deepen understanding of these two identities cultural transmitter and narcissist. The following sections present the categories of fandoms or fansubbers' identity traits that have emerged from the existing limited fandom research.

Fandom as Collectivist

Assessing the identity of fansubbers typically involves a discussion of the nature of their participatory and collaborative behaviour, as in O'Hagan (2009), Lee (2011), Dwyer (2012), and Kung (2016). Online participatory culture allows fans to set up a platform to express their opinions and form groups with like-minded members. In the process of participation and collaboration, fans get to know each other and engage in a practice that utilises the skills of

each member, irrespective of their physical location. With the articulation of mutual affinity and sharing practices, fandom's collective identity therefore emerges and is established.

Fansubbing is, in essence, an assembly process of collective intelligence in pursuit of shared values. Li (2015) who has researched fansubbers as a self-organising system, claimed that fansubbers are bonded into a community by a sense of "we-ness" (feeling of belonging to the same community). He believes that fansubbers share some features of a community of practice, as they are also groups of people together with shared expertise and develop their activities through collaborative learning processes. However, fansubbing networks are typified by amateur activities driven by shared passions for particular media product genres in a virtual world. In addition, sustaining a collective identity means participants must prioritise group values and interests, which may vary from an individual's expectations. For instance, in my experience, some fansubbers are firmly against the commercialisation of fansubbers; therefore, when fansubs are making profits from subtitling, these fansubbers feel the violation of core ethical values and choose to leave the community.

In comparison, Miller, in 2017, explained that the participatory image of anime fandom is constructed by media companies to serve their interests. Anime distribution companies like Crunchyroll treat anime fandom as a part of their shared community and shape fandom collectivism by sending positive messages in announcements or blogs. The company enhances the sense of community through its tone and style for the purpose of persuading fans to support the success of the anime industry and eventually contributes to the market profits from anime viewers. In any case, whether the collectivism is to be obtained internally or externally, the participatory nature of fansubbers not only increases the internal

cohesion of the community but also attracts more like-minded active members “to articulate and promote shared cultural values and practices” (Pérez-González, 2014, p. 72).

Fandom as Resistance

“Fans are the most active segment of the media audience, one that refuses to simply accept what they are given, but rather insists on the right to become full participants” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 131). Existing scholarship mainly discusses fansubbers’ resistance from three perspectives: the resistance to state domination; the resistance to capitalism, and the resistance to the textual convention (Li, 2015). First, since the original motivation behind fansubbing was to protest the limited market access to foreign audiovisual works and the poor quality of officially aired versions, the development of fansubs challenges the centralised state control over media consumption. Fansubbers, hiding behind advanced technology, form a collective voice against the traditional top-down media control and fight for the autonomy of media flows, reconstructing the relationship between media and audiences. Second, fansubbers pose a challenge to capitalism because fansubbers share the spirit of volunteerism and altruism, which opposes the principles of commodification. It challenges the commercial importation and distribution of audiovisual materials, as well as commercial imperatives that regulate professional practice (Diaz-Cintas, 2018). Third, the textual conventions used in fansub groups break from mainstream subtitling conventions. Unlike the cleansing strategy used by official subtitles, fansubbers’ textual practice keeps the foreignness as much as possible in translation while dramatically adapting it to stand for the indigenous culture and subjective voice of the fan community (Kung, 2016; Nornes, 1999; O’Hagan, 2009). Together, these three perspectives position fansubbers as resistant and make fansubbing potentially

revolutionary.

Fandom as Prosumer

The changing role of fandom from passively receiving spectators to active producing consumers brings the discussion of their new identity as “prosumers”, as there is no longer a clear-cut distinction between producers and consumers in today’s audiences. Based on their form of involvement, drawing on Jenkins (1992), two kinds of fandom are located among today’s Internet users. One is the ordinary consumers interested in the fandom objects, following fandom, seeking, and accepting the given information. The other kind is the potential contributors who produce new fandom content and engage in new forms of large-scale participation. This second type of fandom has a dual identity—consumer and producer—because they make rational choices and innovative cultural products to meet their emotional needs while consuming the products. Meanwhile, they embody self-value by means of self-production and self-consumption. Fansubbers fit well in the second category as they follow foreign audiovisual programmes as well as utilise, remediate, comment and re-circulate media content. Research investigating fandom from the perspective of user-generated content usually positions fandom as the reproducers who rework and post-produce commercial products to provide fans and the public with recreative works. Fan subtitling fits well in this identity as “the potential consumers of translations double as translation producers” that mediate the subtitling process and engage in post-original activities (O’Hagan, 2009, p. 99). Jenkins (1992) suggests a distinction between fans and followers, where fans are producers and active participants in post-production, and followers act as ordinary or active consumers following fan producers to consume the production. In this

scenario, fansubbers are fan prosumers as they produce and watch their subtitled audiovisual programmes.

Fandom as Pirate

Currently, the dissemination of media products operates under mainstream principles: disseminators must broadcast and distribute cultural products through official authorisation based on purchasing formal copyright and screening rights. The cultural behaviours of online subtitle groups obviously violate the regulations in the traditional mainstream culture and challenge the copyright law that is granted to published creative works.

Researchers such as Leonard (2004), Condry (2010) and Denison (2011) have questioned the illegality of fandom. Fandom's pirated character is unquestionable as their creation is based on subverting and reproducing the copyrighted work, and they distribute pirated products online. However, although fansubbing is illegal and it does cost copyright owners billions of dollars each year, there is a discrepancy in viewing fansubbers as pirates from Western versus Chinese perspectives. From the Western perspective, fansubbing involves distributing media content without the permission of the copyright holders, which constitutes copyright infringement. In contrast, as aforementioned, the Chinese audience seems less sensitive to unauthorised products for cultural and political reasons, and they justify that they will not ever have an opportunity to view these films due to political regulations. It makes fansub sharing more welcome and valuable insofar as fansubs comply with rules and norms like "Stop when licensed" to regulate fans' behaviour of unauthorised distribution and avoid copyright infringement issues (Lee, 2011; He, 2017).

Fandom as Cultural Transmitter

There is minimal research targeting the identity of fansubbers as a cultural transmitter and noting its significance in intercultural communication. The few existing studies are mainly concerned with how Japanese anime fans undertake creative practices to circulate anime in America and open space for cultural exchange in the discourse of Japanese animation (Denison, 2010). From the perspective of media globalisation, the transnational dissemination of the audiovisual industry cannot be unilaterally enacted because it depends on negotiations between producers, local publishers, and nation states (the latter establish policies and grant licenses). Fansubs play a vital role in intercultural communication for exchanging cultural content in various ways. First and foremost, these groups have impacted the global market by breaking national barriers, allowing foreign movies to reach domestic audiences, and enabling local people to appreciate different cultures through the addition of subtitles to media content (Luo, 2015). This is evident and acknowledged by Chinese scholars as Chinese fansub communities have created a transparent platform where Chinese fans can access different cultural content, and foreigners can enjoy Chinese entertainment products at the same time (Zhang, 2013). Moreover, fans from diverse cultural backgrounds contribute their perspectives and practices to the community, leading to a rich exchange of cultural ideas and playing a part in cultural communication. It is important to note that fans modify cultural elements from the original media and incorporate them into their practice to create something new and unique. This content often reflects the fans' interpretations, values, and cultural insights, contributing to a shared cultural experience. More attention should be paid to how fansubbers have encountered and solved cultural conflicts, shaping their cultural transmitter

identity in the process of negotiation.

An intriguing aspect of the fansubbers' cultural transmitter identity is revealed when investigating the textual practice of fansubbing: high cultural awareness. Unlike deletion and adaption used in the official versions, Chinese fansubbers keep originality and foreignness in texts and add references for an explanation (Liu. Y, 2019). Meanwhile, Chinese fansubbers also use Chinese slang to promote Chinese culture and criticise Western values by adding comments or using other mediating strategies (Nornes, 1999), which will be further discussed in this study's data analysis (see Chapter Four, Text Manipulation, pp. 158-170).

Fandom as Narcissistic

In addition to the above five identities, one that has been rarely researched is that of fan subtitlers as narcissists who perform online to receive public recognition. In their book *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*, Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) asserted that individuals have become more narcissistic. They explain that "narcissism is the treatment of the self as spectacle," and people are "performing for an imagined audience" (p. 96). Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) expanded the original concept of psychological narcissism into a social and cultural phenomenon, with an emphasis on not self-pity but self-explanation and reconstruction through daily media consumption. This paradigm addresses theoretical issues arising from changes in the media landscape driven by new technology. In this framework, the audience is seen as the product of social construction, and more attention is given to the construction of the audience's identity through their media consumption behaviour. Contextualised in today's media study, I emphasise the need to consider issues of fan subtitlers' media identity of narcissists. As

fansubbers are immersed in massive mediascapes, narcissism is related to their desire for increased visibility/knowledge as the basis for their production. Instead of only consuming media, some fansubbers put what they learn from media into daily life, then perform themselves for imaginary audiences and become narcissistic (further explained in Chapter Four).

Narcissism is closely associated with the concept of a “diffused audience” proposed by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998). The diffused audience arises from the interaction processes of the Spectacle/Performance paradigm (SPP), which entails viewing the world as a ‘spectacle’ and viewing individuals as narcissistic performers. By contrasting the relationship between audience, experience, and performance, Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) outlined three types of simultaneous audience experiences in contemporary society: the simple audience, the mass audience, and the diffused audience.

- The simple audience that emerged in pre-modern societies requires face-to-face communication between performers and audiences. Simple audiences are usually viewers in public ceremonial performances, such as concerts, festivals, and political meetings, where performers and audiences appear at the same venues at the same time. It needs immense attention from spectators at the performance.
- The mass audience emerges with the advent of mass media, which frees audiences from time and space constraints. Unlike simple viewers at the performance place, the mass audience does not have to be present at the same time and place as the performer. The mass audience can be involved in the experience using mass media communications through listening to music on the radio, watching films on

the television or reading reports in the newspaper. These forms of mass communication enforce the physical distance between audiences and performers and mediate the interaction process, for example, by enabling the interaction to happen in private. As a result, mass audiences can pay less attention as they can move in and move out of focus at any time. However, the mass audience was constrained by time schedules before the Internet and Web 2.0; for example, the television audience had to watch a programme at the exact time it was scheduled.

- The diffused audience emerges in today's media-drenched society, whereby media and everyday life are inseparable. With the spreading of the Internet and mobile phones, audiences are dispersed but attached to the media almost constantly. The distances between performers and audiences disappear as audiences do not need to be restricted by time and place. This shift has brought opportunities for audiences not to be simply viewers but to participate actively in entertainment as performers. Alternatively, performance intrudes into mundane activities because we find ourselves in a performative society. Our social life is the performance that everyone enacts as both a performer and an audience and both a cultural consumer and cultural producer, all at the same time.

Under SPP, the cultural distance between performers and audiences is virtually eliminated as media and everyday life are increasingly interwoven, and audiences are diffused online. The concept of the diffused audience in SPP proposes that audiences “not only consume the media but make use of what they learn from media drenching, put into everyday life, then perform themselves and even become narcissism” (Hsu, 2007, p. 3). Based upon Abercrombie and

Longhurst's diffused audience cycle, fansubbers are exceptional net users who devote themselves to media consumption and production, increasing the cultural consumption of foreign drama. Media drenching facilitates fansubs' interaction and emotional engagement in groups. The more they interact through online subtitling, the more they attach to their groups and convert their identity from followers to fan subtitlers. Increasingly, they desire to expand their knowledge as a basis for performance and contribute more time to raise membership levels and group reputations. And, to obtain what they desire, fansubbers are drenched in massive mediascapes again. In this cycle, fansubbers become constructed as narcissistic performers when they treat their work as a spectacle and perceive themselves as performing for the audience. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) proposed the Spectacle/Performance paradigm (SPP) to explain fan practices such as online posting because the SPP demonstrates "the construction of alternative fans' communities based on the generation of particular forms of identification and identity" (p. 121). The SPP, then, has been employed to research the narcissism of online Photo Album Users (Hsu, 2007), Haruki Murakami's online fan community (Zhang, 2005) and sports fandom (Crawford, 2004), yet it is rarely adopted to explore the identity construction of fansubbers.

Against this background, I propose that narcissism is an appropriate identity to include in this research for the following reasons. First, fansubbers are fan-based communities that fit the profile of fandom and the "diffused audience" in the SPP, because Chinese fansubbers spend a massive amount of time on media consumption, including creating several user discussion forums on various websites and using the Baidu forum and Weibo microblog to publish their works on American cultural programmes such as film

reviews, celebrity news and news of upcoming dramas. They are enthusiastic about uploading compressed audiovisual programmes only hours after release. The SPP can be seen as an additional model to recognise fan subtitlers' identity construction in a media-drenched society. Second, fansub's spirit of sharing is like the one in the online posting and other online fan communities that have been researched under SPP (Hsu, 2007; Zhang, 2005; Crawford, 2004). Third, empirical studies that investigate fansubbers' motivations have indicated that the most influential force behind fans contributing is personal interest (Qiu, 2010; Lee, 2011; Zhang & Mao, 2013). Zhang and Mao (2013) conducted in-depth interviews with 23 fan community members and found fansubbers "feel more motivated to continue or to excel in their work when they receive positive feedback and appreciation from the readers/viewers and their fellow translators" (p. 55). They consider subtitling a process of self-fulfilment and treat the sense of achievement as a valuable reward for their contribution, which the SPP can help explain. Therefore, I am curious as to whether fansubbers have an identity of narcissism and examine this trait in this research by looking into their online postings and approaching them through surveys and interviews.

The six identities of fansubbers outlined above were categorised and summarised in accordance with the fandom characteristics, roles, and images described in existing, albeit limited, fandom studies. From this, fansubbers can be understood as active audiences with multi-faceted identities that echo the complexity of today's media environment. I incorporated the fansubbers' identity categorisation into this literature review because the focus of this study is to research how fansubbers embody the six identities through practice and communication in the Chinese social context and today's media landscape. The analysis

of it is premised upon the assumptions that I discuss in the theoretical orientation section in Chapter Three.

Conclusion

This literature review presents integrated perspectives of fandom studies and audience research, discussing how fandom theories have evolved and how different concepts have been incorporated into fandom studies. The review focuses on the Chinese fansub community, examining the cultural, regulatory, and social context, and takes a social identity theory approach to investigate the various identities of fansubbers. Recognising the evolution of fandom studies helps follow and interpret the formation of fansubbers' self-conscious and active roles in the contemporary mediascape. The review also intertwines philosophical beliefs with concepts of participatory culture, user-generated content (UGC), peer production, audienceship, and fluid social identity. UGC stresses user autonomy and productivity, fostering a discussion within fandom identities between producers and consumers. Peer production focuses on the user traits of volunteer spirit and pooling intelligence, in which the concept of the collective is highlighted. This notion could be useful to explore the fansubbers' collectivism and their motives for adopting a collective identity. Furthermore, the review emphasises the use of audience research to explore how fansubbers recognise themselves and their essential roles. For this research, framing fandom in audience-centred studies is particularly helpful in examining Chinese fansubbers' self-awareness and inner relations. By employing audience theory, links can be made regarding the significant changing role of fans from passive receivers to active participators in the audience's historical context. This review also discusses the connotation of social identity and details each Chinese fan subtitler's

identity traits. It is fundamental to define these identity terms and how they will be used in the research. To set the research in the Chinese context, social contexts, and the functioning of Chinese fansubbing are also critical as they impact fansubbers' behaviours and identity formation. These factors influence the selection of the theoretical framework that guides the research design. Following these, Chapter Three provides a theoretical explanation and the methodology used in the research to justify the research approach, underpin the analysis, and interpret the findings.

Chapter Three Theory and Method

The methodology chapter begins by introducing the theoretical orientation that guides the research design based on social constructionism. Social constructionism considers that personal identity is shaped through social interactions that are influenced by historical and cultural factors. Under social constructionism, an individual's identity is a product of their particular historical, cultural, and political development in specific times and places (Burr, 2015). This is followed by a description and justification of the selected qualitative approach of netnography (Kozinets, 2010), explaining what it is and why it is chosen for this research. Following the netnography approach, this chapter explains the process of selecting and entering the fieldsite and provides the rationale for choosing the four researched fansub communities. It then discusses the type of data collected, as well as the mixed methods approach used to analyse it in order to address the research questions. Specifically, I will use netnographic techniques of observation and interviews, deploying a blended method of archival data collection and surveys to gather evidence of fansubbers' identity traits and how chosen participants describe their sense of each identity. Furthermore, ethical considerations are made to protect participants and justify the research processes that are set out, including the ethics approval details.

The research aims to address the following questions:

1. How do fansubbers manifest the identity of the collectivist, resistant, pirate, prosumer, cultural transmitter, and narcissist through their practice?
2. How do the six identities interact and impact each other?
3. How is fansubbers' narcissistic identity revealed in their practice?

-
4. How do fansubbers interpret cultural elements in subtitling and promote intercultural communication?

Theoretical Orientation

Qualitative research begins with philosophical assumptions and interpretative frameworks to inform research problems, guide the research process, and justify the research inquiry (Creswell, 2014). There are many interpretive frameworks and perspectives that qualitative researchers can use when conducting a study. This study adopts a paradigm of social constructionism to guide the research activities due to its critical stance and multidisciplinary nature. Social constructionism holds the view that our knowledge of the world is constructed through daily interactions between people, and our understandings are impacted by specific cultures and periods of history. According to Burr (2015), the inquiry of social constructionism considers “how certain phenomena or forms of knowledge are achieved by people in interaction” (p. 9) and sees “language as the prime site of the construction of the person” (p. 53). In other words, social constructionism focuses on the formation process of how specific shared knowledge is achieved through daily interactions and social practices, primarily through language. It values the social effects of people’s perspectives and is multidisciplinary in nature, making it appropriate to incorporate different viewpoints into one approach. Another focus of social constructionism is “on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural setting of participants” (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Our identity is not accidental but is socially bestowed, that is, intimately connected to institutional and social practices, which have a profound effect on the specific ways that a person says, thinks or acts. Through visiting context, social

constructionists can understand how research participants are shaped in various ways by their setting, thus supporting researcher interpretation. Moreover, a contextual view combined with available research helps overcome researchers' knowledge gaps about an interdisciplinary phenomenon associated with various social concepts. Incorporating contextual data in a study can help investigate meanings, understand potential changes, and interpret the collected data (Neumann, 2003), and therefore it is useful in this research.

Social constructionism emphasises the functions of words and contends that language constitutes social reality and human subjects (Burr, 2015). Looking at the world and a person as the product of the social process and language, social constructionism denies the essentialism of psychology, that people have a determined nature that is unified, coherent, and unchanging inside. Since language is changing and contestable, constructionism believes that the self, constituted by language, is also temporary, shifting, and constantly changing depending upon language-based social interactions (Burr, 2015).

I have selected this theoretical orientation for several reasons. First, social constructionism believes that self-recognition is an ongoing process shaped by interactions within a group (Galbin, 2014). As the research focuses on the fansubbers' identity construction process, it also involves how participants' perceptions of identities are formed through daily interactions and social practices. Second, social constructionism brings historical and cultural specificity. It emphasises the role of culture and history in constructing our knowledge. How we understand and interpret the world is influenced by the culture and context we live in. This study works together with the background of today's media environment. Chinese cultural and social contexts are closely related as they contribute to the

hybrid identities of Chinese fansubbers. Moreover, social constructionism shares assumptions with disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and linguistics (Burr, 2015). It is an approach that aims to understand the world while it challenges the objective observations of sociology; it is interested in human beings but opposes the essentialism of psychology; it focuses on language but relocates linguistics into the social realm. The goal of social constructionism is premised upon the pluralistic nature of participants' perception of a situation and requires researchers to examine the complexity of participants' beliefs that are shaped by their experiences (Burr, 2015). Social constructionism then, is a paradigm that allows a diversity of voices and ideas within interdisciplinary research and focuses on participants' experience, which in this research is fansubbers' experience. Given that the purpose of this research is to examine fansubbers' identity construction in Chinese cultural settings, this framework is appropriate to the context of Chinese fandom. The following section provides the rationale for the selected methodology – netnography - and explains the research procedures, including how I enter the fieldsite, collect and analyse data, and how ethical issues are addressed.

Methodology

My study adopts a qualitative research approach for the collection and analysis of data since this approach allows for a researcher to access study participants, hear and interpret participants' voices and explore their subjective experiences, as well as how their thoughts might affect their behaviour (Creswell, 2014). As the research is based on the description and interpretation of an online culture-sharing community of fan subtitlers, a suitable methodology to frame this qualitative study is ethnography because ethnographies focus on the shared patterns of a culture-sharing group that express their beliefs and ideas through

actions or languages and can be studied through interviews, observations, symbols and many diverse sources of data (Wolcott, 2008; Atkinson & Washiya, 2015). By relying on first-hand information that is obtained from participation, ethnography is a type of social study that enables researchers to understand and interpret social phenomena from the perspective of particular groups of people (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994).

The Method of Netnography

Within ethnographic research, many terms have been coined by academics to indicate studies that aim to adapt conventional ethnographic methodologies to a virtual site, such as “virtual ethnography” (Hine 2000), “digital ethnography” (Jones, 1999), “cyber-ethnography” (Ward, 1999), and “webnography” (Puri, 2007). In addition, netnography, which is the study of ethnography over the Internet, is used for researching online cultures and communities, because researching social groups that exist digitally differs significantly from researching groups that are physically present (Kozinets, 2010). According to Kozinets (2010, p. 60), netnography “uses computer mediated communications as a source of data to arrive at the ethnographical understanding and representation of a cultural or communal phenomenon”. He summarizes that computer-mediated interactions have characteristics of alteration, anonymity, accessibility, and archiving. Due to the limitations of the technological media, interactions can take place, suspend, and change in different ways. Users can use pseudonyms or real names that make interactions under optional anonymous. Researchers can access many online forums and social networking sites to collect automatically record online conversations without getting permission from a community-authorised person. These distinctions would raise concerns about “selection (which archived data to pursue in the sea

of information); verification (how to verify the identity of and the information created by a person in virtual settings); and validity (how to ensure that archived documents and interactions are accurately interpreted in the absence of physical and non-verbal cues of emotional expression)” (Li, 2015, p. 88). Furthermore, because technologies have caused confusion between public and private spaces, allowing users to both post and publicly access other people's private information online, ethical issues regarding user privacy and confidentiality media are also raised in online environments (Kozinets, 2010). Due to all these facts, netnography is used as the method to adapt traditional ethnographic techniques to the investigation of an online setting using computer-mediated technology.

In this research, netnography was adopted to focus on the cultural artifacts and social practices taking place online and to research how fansubbers present themselves in their online social interactions. Since fansubbing is both a phenomenon associated with online groups and culture all on its own, netnography is perfectly suited for studying it. First, the practice of fansubbing is developed and mediated by mass communication in a virtual online environment and is made up of a variety of complex human and non-human elements. These include machines, human behaviour patterns, and the symbolic meanings attached to those behaviours as expressed through computer-mediated communications. These elements are intertwined in specific configurations because of the network's organisational processes. A netnographic approach to media audiences can “develop an enriched sense of the meanings of the technology and the cultures which enable it and are enabled by it” (Hine, 2000, p. 8), as well as help researchers to develop a new and better understanding of the group being studied, which suits both the context and the purpose of this research. Second, netnography is

especially well adapted to dealing with delicate issues that are either personally or politically sensitive, or unlawful behaviours that are addressed in online groups by people who desire to maintain their online anonymity (Costello et al., 2017), and thus it is a suitable framework for this study. Third, the visibility of netnographic studies on fansubbing practices is rising. A few studies (Li, 2015; Yao, 2021; Casarini, 2014; Zhang & Mao, 2013) have employed a netnographic approach to investigate this online phenomenon of fansubbing and call for more attention to this methodology. Fourth, netnography is adaptable in that it can entail a mixed method of inquiry, such as participant-observation, interviews, discourse analysis, archival data gathering, and videography. In this case, research techniques of participant-observation, archival data gathering, survey and interviews are applied for research validity, that is, the degree to which the data measured can represent the concept to be discussed (Neumann, 2003). The specific set of netnography guidelines include 1) planning: outlining the research question; 2) entrée: locating and entering the online fieldsite of a culture or community; 3) data gathering and analysis; 4) upholding ethical standards; and 5) presenting findings (Kozinets, 2010). Having outlined the research questions earlier in this chapter, the next section follows this research procedure and explains how I identified and accessed the fieldsite.

Fieldsite Identification and Entrée

Locating the Fieldsite. According to the Chinese subtitle database subhd.tv (<https://subhd.tv>), 116 communities have been identified as Chinese fansubs online. As these groups are diverse in terms of their individual preference for a wide variety of genres and their group sizes, the method, and priorities of choosing appropriate fansubs are crucial. For

example, some fansubs are small, newly established and have frequent moving fansubbers. These groups lack stability and core members, which influences the sample selection as members may not have a clear understanding of their groups and themselves. In this research, I have selected four fansubs: Zimuzu (or YYeTs; 人人); Sfileydy (伊甸园); FRM (风软); Ragbear (破烂熊) as research samples. The reason for this selection is primarily based on the length of time the fansubs have been operating and the scale and popularity of the group. These four fansubs are some of the earliest and the most influential fansub groups in China, and thus they will have the largest group of samples to select from as well as being the most experienced in their field, with a deeper insight into personal identity (Hsiao, 2017).

Historically, the emergence of Chinese fansubs was due to the wide appreciation in China of the US television series *Friends* (1994). To discuss the plots and characters in this drama series, an online fandom was established on a forum called *F6*, which was the first Chinese online forum discussing US shows (Sina, 2018, March 17). This forum was a global gathering of *Friends* (1994) on the Internet, including fans from all walks of life. *F6* members also began to download and share within the group other popular television shows, including the latest shows from foreign video websites. However, these shows were all English language programmes, so only those members who knew English could understand them and communicate about them. Therefore, a few members proposed to add Chinese subtitles for these shows so that non-English speakers could also follow the plot. Based on this idea, people started to make Chinese subtitles for foreign shows in this forum. US television shows, with Chinese subtitles, began to appear on the Internet and this quickly set off an upsurge in China of watching USA television series at that time (Sina, 2018, March

17). To satisfy the growing demand for Chinese-subtitled US dramas, the forum members set up different fan subtitling groups where they translated their favourite US television series for fun. The fansub groups that are the focus of this study are the earliest amongst these subtitling groups, forming in 2005. Ragbear was established two years later than the other three, but the founders of Ragbear were originally core members of the FRM start-up group. They left the FRM after an internal argument with the members in the entertainment section and started Ragbear in 2007 (Sohu, 2009, December 15).

During the first few years, the established groups were not in conflict with each other as the quickest subtitling group would oversee production and share their work in the forum when a new television show came out. However, alongside the growing popularity of US shows, more and more people volunteered to join fansubbing groups to assist with making subtitles. To attract members and viewers, the fansubbing groups began to compete with each other regarding both the sources of television programmes and the speed of subtitle production (Sina, 2018, March 17). For instance, the US television show *Prison Break* (2005) swept through the Chinese Internet in 2006. At that time, there were many small English-Chinese fansubs online, of which the most significant and influential ones were YYeTs (or Zimuzu; 人人影视), Sfileydy (伊甸园) and FRM (风软). After the release of the first episode of the second season of *Prison Break* (2005) on 22 August 2006, raw material providers from different fansubs downloaded the subtitle-free sources of the series and transferred files to their group's servers in China. Sfileydy was the first to publish the subtitled episode, with FRM 20 minutes later, followed by Zimuzu. The effect of this competition to release the episodes quickly led to these Chinese subtitled works being available for downloading from

subtitle groups' websites within six hours after their airing in the United States (Sina, 2018, March 17).

Apart from similar histories and their influence online, the four researched fansubs are different in the following aspects. First, each fansub has specialities in different genres. Sfileydy is famous for translating US crime drama series. FRM is good at subtitling medical television dramas, while YYeTs fansub is skilled at producing subtitles for science-fiction shows and historical plays. Though Ragbear also translates US television series, this group is famous for subtitling British drama (Sina, 2018, March 17). Second, regarding the number of group members, Sfileydy and FRM used to outnumber other fansub groups with the most experienced subtitlers in the first two years (Sohu, 2009, December 15). After the internal conflict in FRM, however, the group lost some of its core fan subtitlers. In addition, the number of fansubbers is not stable as each fansub is continually recruiting and training new members. Third, in terms of the quantity of production and followers, Sfileydy and FRM subtitled a similar amount of US series with synchronisation, compared to YYeTs and Ragbear, which produced around one-third of their popular ones. Sfileydy and FRM have the fastest production speed and their subtitled shows outnumber other fansubs. They were the largest and earliest fansubs that had extensive followers. However, the followers of the YYeTs group seem to have multiplied; a broad base of student followers is evident. The followers of the YYeTs group seem to multiply with a broad base of student followers nowadays. The YYeTs fansub tends to produce bilingual subtitles that can help audiences compare English with Chinese translations and opens a post for viewers to give comments and advice (Sohu, 2009, December 15).

Overall, the increasing number of US television series has encouraged numerous Chinese fansubs online in the last 10 years, including FIX, EU, TLF and SCG. However, these fansubs are comparatively young and focus either on unique film genres or translating for minority interests. Being the largest in scale means that I can access more participants and improve the validity of the survey. Finally, being the most popular means that fansubs are well recognised, and fansubbers may have more profound reflections about the identity of narcissism and their roles in intercultural communication.

Accessing the Fieldsite. Kozinets (2010) points out that a netnographic journey allows an unobtrusive observation of online events and natural access to archived notes. As texts are stored online, researchers can avoid the immediacy of taking notes and transcribing interactions that traditional ethnographers require. Apart from collecting archived data from the researched online sites, this research aims to understand participants' perceptions of their own identities and how their identities are shaped by their experiences. Collecting empirical data, describing the activities actually performed in the group, as well as how these activities contribute to the construction of identity, are essential components of my study. Therefore, I needed to place myself in a similar position to the participants to further my understanding. This is important in this research because I wanted to understand the cultural context and incentives that led participants to behave in certain ways. To enter the fansub group, I contacted the leaders and forum organisers of three fansubs—Ragbear, Sfileydy and FRM through their official accounts on the Weibo social platform—to ask for their permission and support for inside observation and interviews. However, they were reluctant to participate in an interview or help to distribute surveys. “Fansub members are prohibited from taking part

in any interviews that relate to their groups” (Fansub Ragbear manager, personal communication, March 21, 2020), but the group forum is open to access. It is understandable that fansubs refused because they did not know me, and they were worried about drawing the attention of the authorities, and about being banned, as discussed in Chapter Two.

Unfortunately, to protect the fansubs and keep a low profile, these groups refused to answer further questions or discuss the legitimacy of their activities. I did, however, manage to join the YYeTs fansub, and my continued membership in this group has been a privilege as they have helped me to blend in and establish a significant degree of social intercourse with group members. Usually, fansubs rarely take any surveys or interviews because the exposure brings the potential danger of being sanctioned by the government for copyright issues. Although my group members knew my researcher-participant identity, they still welcomed and trusted my research. When I asked for the group leader’s permission to publish the survey in the forum, he was worried that it might not be noticed on the forum and offered his help by sending the research link to all members in the QQ (Chinese version of MSN) chatrooms as well as through email.

Data Collection and Analysis

Kozinets (2010) asserts that the kinds of information gathered by netnographers and the level of participation they choose to have in the online fieldsite are related. Depending on the forms and levels of research participation, Kozinets (2010) discusses three types of netnographic data: 1) archival data, i.e., the pre-existing data, like saved and shared files or documents and content generated by group members on forums; 2) elicited data, i.e., co-created materials, the researcher works as one of the group members participating in the data

production; and 3) fieldnote data, i.e., researchers' reflective accounts, and their online social experiences during the entire study.

Overall, I will be examining two levels of data. The first level is where I am the observer who collects naturally occurring data from research sites and records my online social interactions. The second level of data stems from placing myself as a participant researcher who hears and interprets participants' voices. To minimise intrusiveness, my presence there will be as an observer only. I do not take part in any forum discussion, but I will still be present on the forum. Despite not directly interacting with participants, I will provide the necessary information about the study and respect the rules and expectations of the online community. Further, I will invite fansubbers to participate in the survey by recruiting posters (see Appendix C) on the forum, which also makes my research identity transparent.

Elicited Data. The elicited data functions to examine the data on forums by probing fansubbers' self-narrating and self-understanding, and it supports the data collected via observing fansubbers' daily practice at research sites. An online survey comprising a range of questions was devised to examine each of the six identities of fansubbers (Appendix D). The survey is designed with open-ended questions to examine fan subtitlers' self-understanding of their multiple identities. According to Neuman (2003), it is appropriate to use a survey when the study aims to inquire about self-reported beliefs, opinions, characteristics, or behaviours. Also, an online survey seems more feasible when participants are widely distributed, like online users. Anonymous Web surveys used in this research will be not only more accessible for hard-to-reach fansubbers but also it can provide fansubbers with sufficient time to think

about questions as they can move back and forth in surveying. However, the limitations reside in the sample selection process, which will be down to participants' self-selection as to meeting the recruiting requirements. The main criteria for the participants' recruiting requirements are that they should be Chinese subtitle translators in one of the four researched fansubs and be over 18 to avoid ethical issues (The ethics process will be outlined later in the section on Ethical Considerations). Therefore, I set up the self-selection questions at the beginning of the survey to assist with the selection process. Specifically, the questionnaire begins with general questions about the participant's age, experience, and the group to which they belong to eliminate unexpected respondents. These are followed by semi-closed questions on fansubbers' introspections in terms of their different identities. Questions were evenly distributed with regard to the six previously mentioned identities of fansubbers and their preferred status. Qualtrics, an AUT-licensed online survey application, was the primary research instrument used to distribute the questionnaire and gather fansubbers' information. Recruiting advertisements were released on the fansub forums through two channels, Weibo (Chinese microblogging) and forums, to access the most potential participants. A web link was written for recruiting advertisements to direct participants to the survey page of Qualtrics. Participants were randomly selected in these fansubs as anyone who met the requirements and participates in the survey. The purpose of this survey was to collect a large sample of fansubbers' general responses around the issue of identification. In addition, a structured 40-minute online interview followed after the online survey to obtain direct answers to specific questions about particular identities. They were designed to investigate in depth how fansubbers understand their identification through personal experience, and how

they view fansubs' influence on intercultural communication (Appendix E). Interviews are useful for participants to provide historical information and allow the researcher control over the line of questioning (Neuman, 2003). In these online interviews, my questions explore the Chinese fansubbers' perceived role in intercultural communication and their understanding of perceived identities in subtitling. Other than questions that inquire about fansubber roles and working hours, I will work from a prepared set of questions that I can use as a memory jogger in cases where the participants and I may veer off topic or to act as an aid if there is a lull in participation. The questions are outlined below:

1. What role does fansubbing play in cultural communication?
2. In your experience, what kind of practice do fan subtitlers encourage in cultural communication?
3. If we talk about the six identities separately, collectivist, resistant, pirate, prosumer, cultural transmitter, and narcissist, which one do you prefer to describe fansubbers among these six identities?

These first two questions inquire into the interviewees' recognition of their role as cultural transmitters. The third question probes fansubbers' self-narration and self-understanding of their different identities and identity preferences. By asking about their purposeful cultural and linguistic mediation in practice, these questions correspond to the fourth research question "How do fansubbers interpret cultural elements in subtitling and promote intercultural communication?" Overall, these questions act as a guide, but the emerging themes were hoped to be more specific and relevant to the participants' revealed attitudes. Some topics should receive more attention than others due to participants comparing their

activities with those of other fansub group activities, or when participants focus solely on their own experiences. The following section presents the demographics of the survey and interview participants.

QQ was used to connect with respondents, as it is the primary communication tool for this group of fansubbers and the platform that most Chinese fansubs use to communicate and assign work. QQ has the function of a voice call, which makes it a convenient and familiar medium for connecting with participants. Participants are also required to have at least one year's experience in fan subtitling because experienced fansubbers have had time to become familiar with the community rules and norms and have a more in-depth understanding of their communities. Fansubbers under 18 were also excluded to avoid ethical issues with juveniles. The exclusion criteria will be detailed in the participant information sheets and the recruiting poster (see Appendix B and C). To understand participants' levels of group engagement, and to rule out unqualified respondents, I specifically asked about their average working hours within the group, roles in the group, and motivations for joining the group to gather background information. This kind of information was an essential element of the analysis process at the practical level because devoting time may deepen their understanding of a particular identity, and the expertise is essential too, as many fansubbers experience a broad range of roles in the group and their understanding of self-identities may change substantially over time. Due to COVID-19, the starting time for the interviewing was much later than initially projected. The identity terms used are re-interpreted in the early stages of the data-gathering process to build a researcher-participant understanding of the interview material. Consent forms and information sheets were emailed to participants before the

interviews. Ten participants were interviewed from March to April 2023 via QQ audio calls. The interview is conducted in Mandarin, as interviewees have expressed in emails that they are more comfortable communicating in their native language, and the translation has been verified by colleagues. The data was recorded with the professional recording application *louyue* and transcribed with *iflyrec* software. In comparison to data collected from research sites and surveys, interviews can attest to the collected data, and respondents can be asked to elaborate on incomplete answers in the survey. Nevertheless, an essential problem of interviews is that “respondents often do not have a clear conception of what is expected of them” (Turner & Martin, 1984, p. 282). To address this issue, interviewees are required to be survey respondents who are familiar with the survey questions (see Appendix D) and understand the research questions.

Potential participants for collecting the data were limited to fan translators for the following reasons. First, fansubbers have different jobs like providing raw material, timing, translating, editing, and publishing in groups. Among them, translating usually accounts for the largest category in the fansubbing community. To release the subtitled version within the shortest time, the community may only need one timer or encoder but have to involve five to six translators’ efforts to share one 40-minute episode of a television series. After receiving the raw material, a group leader in the translation section segments the original subtitle into five or six parts, around 120 lines for each. Then the group leader assigns parts to about five or six translators at the same time so they can work simultaneously to accelerate the translating progress. This makes translators the largest group in the production process and the largest group of samples to select from. Second, translators directly perform the textual

practice that can be analysed through their translated subtitles. As constructionism views language as the prime site in the construction of people's identity, the way of their interpretation facilitates forming a collective understanding and represents how they perceive the world (Burr, 2015). Third, translators are a more complicated and delicate category in the community. As a fansubber in YYeTs, the largest Chinese fansub group, I found that translators need to work with a subtitle translation machine named "Time Machine", which contains the function of timing, translating, proofreading, and publishing. During the training session, trainers would ask enrolled translators to acquire the fundamental knowledge of the subtitle machine. Translators must fix the problems of timing, proofread, and self-test the video with subtitles in addition to translating. Therefore, translators are at the central section in the fansubbing process and need to cooperate closely with other roles; their identities are more complicated because they are also direct producers, re-writers, and consumers of, and commenters on their translation. Due to the above reasons, and my own experience as a fan translator, it is necessary to point out that this research explores the identities of fan translators in the fansubbing community, and the identity of fandom investigated in this research refers to the fan translators.

The sample size of the above data was calculated based on two guidelines: saturation point and precedent studies. Saturation is the core guideline when determining the sample size in qualitative research (Gentles et al., 2015). It is widely accepted that the data should reach a point of saturation where little new information would be yielded. As this investigation will be made using a netnography approach to elucidate a specific cultural group, it makes common sense for the observation to cover the maximum variations until the

cultural understandings are achieved. Concerning the number of interviewees, the expected number is commonly based on the rule of thumb in qualitative research. Green and Thorogood (2004) maintain that data saturation is achieved after interviewing 20 people, where the essence of experience is understood, and few new themes are generated. Guest et al. (2006) recommend that 12 homogeneous sample units are generally found sufficient in qualitative inquiry. Considering this project is not entirely interview-based and a significant amount of time is required for observation, the initial number of interviewees is set at around 12 to ensure working with the discourse rather than numbers.

Apart from saturation, the experience of other researchers in this field informs the design of the research method and data collection. Two precedent studies have employed similar research methods on fansubs in the Chinese context. One was conducted to examine motivations behind fansubbers' engagement and the organisation of the fansub community Sfileydy, a fansub into which this research also inquired (Qiu, 2010). Qiu's research recruited 34 fansubbers to participate in a survey via Qualtrics and 10 participants in an interview via Skype™. As a result, it received 33 questionnaire responses, and seven interviews were completed from the Sfileydy community. The other study was conducted to examine the influence of fansubs' activities on the spread of US television programmes in China. The researcher distributed the questionnaire through diverse Chinese social media, such as Weibo, WeChat, QQ and RenRen, and finally received 1,576 valid responses for the survey and six for the interview (Gao, 2018).

In comparison, my research differs given that it elects to limit informants for the survey to fan subtitling translators, Respondents in this research are expected to reach around

30 from each fansub (compared to Qiu's investigation of 33 valid questionnaire responses in one fansub). The sample collected will be filtered by the researcher according to the respondents' experiences in fansubbing. To ensure effectiveness, I aimed to receive 120 questionnaire responses in total and 100 valid questionnaires after excluding bias errors, including incomplete answers, sampling errors and extremist responses.

Concerning interviews, the studies carried out by Qiu (2010) and Gao (2018) both noted that fansubbers are inclined to refuse interviews because they want to keep a low profile and that some fansub groups do not allow their fansubbers to participate in a personal interview. This is due to political concerns, as discussed in the literature review; fansubbers' work is associated with piracy issues. It is safer for the group to keep its members from making any comments that might give rise to copyright issues. As a result, these two studies only conducted seven interviews and six interviews separately. This referenced number and this project's requirement of participants having at least one year's group experience has guided the establishment of an expected number of interviewees to around 10. Besides these two principles, research methods and human resources available for this project are also a consideration. A considerable amount of time was consumed by observation, recruiting participants, and collecting and interpreting data in this netnographic research.

Archival Data and Fieldnote Data. In this study, archival data was selected and collected from fansub websites and forums and mainly includes:

1. Fansubber recruitment information that instructs the recruits about fansub joining rules, processes, and requirements.
2. Declarations that outline the forums' regulations and policy regarding the use of

subtitles created on its website.

3. Comments page on forums of praise and criticism around fansubbers' diligent work and translation quality.
4. Forums special sections, such as a group donation section and an error correction section for viewers to point out errors in subtitles and to provide suggestions.
5. Fieldnotes about my observations and socialisation experiences.

I attempted to absorb all sources of information around fansubbers' reflections on the four researched forums. Although I was not permitted to enter the other three fansubs (except YYeTs) working areas, I collected data from their forum online postings, regulations, recruitments and feedback, as this information is open to access in the public sphere. This research analyses the online environment and obtains insights regarding these four large-scale Chinese fansubbing communities' practices and activities. In this process, I had first-hand experience of fansubbing alongside the participants and recorded information as it occurred.

According to Kozinets (2010), a netnographic approach involves studying members of an online culture in an immersive and prolonged engagement to comprehend their everyday lives and develop a deep understanding of their reality. It requires researchers to conduct intensive fieldwork to obtain participants' ideas and strive to create "a tight fit between their understanding of the social world and what is actually occurring in it" (Neumann, 2003, p. 171). As netnography relies on the researchers' observations and interpretations, it is essential to have a truthful and accurate representation of the results from the participant data in my interpretation throughout the entire research process, from the data generation and analysis to the final presentation. However, fieldnotes that are made during

the observation can inevitably lead to many judgments influenced by researchers when interpreting and translating ideas. Meanwhile, the researcher, participants or other parties involved in the research may also have a direct influence over data representation. Both filtering data from online forums and conducting surveys and interviews are prone to delivering flawed insights due to data being interpreted too conclusively or unrealistically. For example, the practice of fansubbing involves intercultural communication of absorbing and translating cultures, which itself is often subject to biases and misunderstandings based on cultural disparities. Some fansubbers are studying and living abroad; they could be affected by years of living in different cultures. These all, in turn, may affect fansubbing practitioner perceptions and how they interpret foreign representations as they engage in intercultural transmission. This miscommunication exists because cross-cultural relationships are formed as part of years of the ongoing process that, in itself, needs to be examined as participants' experience in cultural communication (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Nevertheless, the judgments, biases and misunderstandings can be managed if we establish the trustworthiness of the study by using multiple data sources, engaging in reflexivity and scrutinising the sample selection process (Neumann, 2003).

Reflexivity is incorporated to contribute to research reliability by mitigating the misunderstandings or biases that are inevitably brought by my role as participant-observer in the research. Reflective researchers need to place themselves under scrutiny, consciously questioning and explaining how the project is constructed and organised (Mortari, 2015). Accordingly, I questioned my understanding of the theory and scrutinise my role within the study's key processes whenever I communicate with participants. I am aware that my

perceptions of identity may have been shaped by my personal experience of nearly four years of fansubbing activities. I was experienced in subtitling, involved with all kinds of fansubbing practices and had opportunities to discover the group's mechanisms and observe fansubbers' daily practices as an insider. This awareness of context has enhanced my sensitivity to many issues around fansubbers and assisted me in working with the collected information. Being part of the group enabled me to 1) gain first-hand experience of how fansubbers communicate and bond together under a heavy workload and 2) project myself intellectually and emotionally into the lived experience of participants. However, this experience may also affect the way that I viewed the data. I realised that my perceptions need to be questioned at all critical stages of this project to avoid incorrect assumptions and limitations.

As for data analysis, this research employed discursive psychology to analyse the pieces of speech or writing instances that manifest fansubbers' attitudes and opinions. Discursive psychology within constructionism is primarily used to answer questions about identity and subjectivity. It is a form of discourse analysis that is concerned with "how they build defensible identities, how they construct and present 'versions' of themselves and events as 'factual' and how they legitimate their action" (Burr, 2015, p. 184). In addition, because the discourse approach is underpinned by social constructionism, it also emphasises linguistic aspects such as the rhetorical categories that people use to justify their behaviours or represent an event in interaction. For this reason, discursive psychology is applicable to the netnographic method and survey techniques that collect traits of texts from online forums and speech from participants. However, this discourse analysis approach is often criticised for

emphasising and limiting its analysis to textual data alone, ignoring the social and material context, such as power relations and the social meanings of words. The issue has been identified and is addressed in this research by locating and bringing social power structures into the discussion (see Chapter Four). As there is a risk in translating research questions and survey results between English and Chinese back and forth, I acknowledge that a translation loss exists which is almost inevitable in cross-cultural research of different languages. To minimise any question of misinterpretation of findings, I invited two colleagues, a graduate in Translation studies and a professional translator, to ensure the accuracy of the translation.

Ethical Considerations

Attending to ethical issues means that it is critical to consider the status and vulnerability of participants in their context. As this study relies on participant-observation and surveys, it involves the ethical issues of two different kinds of data: 1) the field notes of activities to be carried out in the group, and 2) the survey data of online questionnaires and interviews. I am mindful that potential ethical issues may arise when carrying out risky research on an online community. Admittedly, researching online fansubbing can pose risks. It may involve copyright infringements as the collecting materials may bypasses the legal distribution channels and violates the rights of the original content creators. This can lead to legal consequences for both the fansubbers and those who access and promote the unauthorized translations. In certain extreme cases, particularly in countries like Japan, the unauthorised circulation of media content is considered a serious criminal offense. Depending on the severity and impact of the violation, individuals found guilty can face prison sentences of up to 10 years (Gino Diño, June 2018, <https://slator.com/arrested-for-translation-japan-detains->

five-chinese-nationals-for-pirate-translation/). Considering the problematic nature of fansubbers' work, which may be associated with copyright infringement, the participants in this project are given special attention in terms of the ethical principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and minimisation of risk to encourage participation.

Ethical Issues Related to Archival and Fieldnote Data. Whether computer-mediated interactions should be regarded as instances of public or private interactional communication is debatable in online research ethics. Some academics believe there is no clear distinction between public and private when it comes to the Internet because people frequently share private information in a variety of public online spaces, such as online forums and social networking sites (Bassett & O'Riordan, 2002). Online community members are aware of the public function that the Internet serves as a textual publishing medium on a regular basis (Kozinets, 2010). According to Walther (2002), any user of publicly accessible communication systems on the Internet should be aware that these systems are, at their core, methods for the storing, transmission, and retrieval of comments. It is unrealistic for some participants to expect privacy online. Kozinets (2010) further indicates that archival data online cannot be identified as private information and, analysing this data cannot be considered as human subjects research (intervention or interaction with the individual) if the researcher may legally and conveniently access these messages without disclosing the communicators' identities. Therefore, the gathering and analysis of archival data in this research is considered low ethical risk because these collected documents and asynchronous archives are stored on publicly available social platforms and the individual who made the post is unidentifiable.

Apart from collecting archival data on open forums, the potential ethical issues are mainly around me as an observer, collecting fieldnotes in the YYeTs group. Rather than being a distanced researcher, the participant-observational approach facilitates taking notes instantly and gathering the naturally generated content. In addition to group forums, where members can discuss and post adhering to forum rules, members' conversations often unfold in chatrooms through QQ Instant Messenger (each chatroom is set up to facilitate the coordination of one project in subtitling). The conversations in QQ chatrooms are more private, including the assignment of subtitling tasks, the subtitling issues encountered, and personal feelings regarding film and social events. To create genuine and respectful communications, I posted my pictures and disclose my university affiliation and research details to ensure fansubs know my identity as a participant and researcher in the group. I understand that participants may feel somewhat vulnerable if I disclose details of this private information that is supposed to be inaccessible to outsiders. I did not cajole group members into revealing sensitive information or pass judgment on the views they shared on sensitive topics. I did not quote participants' conversations or identify them in my findings. Our interactions were spontaneous, following the normative practices of ethics requirements and interactions of the researched community. The purpose of this observation is to understand the organisation structure, working operations, group policies, and record my experience.

Another ethical dilemma associated with this research is whether to credit my participants when referencing their subtitled texts (assembled as observational fieldnotes) or to withhold their identifying information. Certainly, any content producer has a right to be recognized for their originality and intelligence. However, fansubbing is seen as a copyright

violation in certain nations including China. Although fansubbers argue that what they do is non-commercial and their work aids in promoting a show for its producers, this copyright infringement issue remains contentious as the film producers are not receiving revenue for their production of the original work. Besides the copyright issue, some of the politically or sexually sensitive material fansubbers translate might place them at risk of government regulation. Considering participants' vulnerability in these situations, giving them credit for their work may put them at the potential risk of copyright sanctions or being censored by the Chinese government. This potential risk is still high when participants' credits are online pseudonyms because pseudonyms may be often traceable to actual identities by determined individuals. Also, pseudonyms on some online platforms may link to the fansubber's personal information. To protect participants, all the subtitled work cited in the analysis were anonymised, and participants' identifying information will also be hidden in this thesis.

Ethical Issues Related to Survey Data. As this research invites fansubbers to participate in surveys and interviews, the execution of this study satisfied the requirements of AUT University's Ethics Committee for protecting and respecting participants' privacy, safety, social sensitivities, and welfare. I will follow the standard procedures as per my AUT University's Ethics Application (EA1) to plan the research design with the participants in mind and obtain written consent from the participants (see Appendix A). An information sheet was sent to participants, explaining the research aim, and informing them of their rights to question the aim and progress of this project (see Appendix B). Survey participants will remain anonymous to minimise the risk, so they cannot be traced or identified. Interviewees are not required to provide names or identifiable information except for their contact details

(which will be destroyed after thesis completion) so that I can schedule an interview time and return the consent form. They are also informed in the consent form that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving reasons and without being disadvantaged in any way (see Appendix F). None of the audiovisual works will be mentioned in the survey or interview so that nothing can be used against them from a legal perspective. Although the participants are bilingual, my primary concern is whether they can fully understand and present themselves accurately in the survey and interview. Therefore, I will design an English survey with a Chinese translation to avoid any misunderstandings that may arise when reading the survey. Moreover, I will invite the participants to answer interview questions (see Appendix E) in the language with which they feel most comfortable.

Conclusion

This methodology chapter presents the theoretical orientation, the methodology and the method for this research. This research focuses on the identity construction of fan subtitlers as they undertake cross-cultural practice in the virtual environment. Under social constructionism, our identity is not accidental but is socially bestowed, that is, intimately connected to institutional and social practices, which have a profound effect on the specific ways that a person says, thinks or acts. Drawing on this theoretical perspective, this research focus requires me to enter a fansubbing online community to understand how their identities are shaped in their daily practice in this special fansubbing culture. To achieve this understanding, it is essential that the researcher has a close association and familiarity with fansubbing organisational processes. This can be accomplished by a netnographic approach of observing fansubbers in ordinary settings. Netnography is a method devised to investigate

online consumer culture and online communities. It is particularly useful to address these challenges as my study focuses on fansubbing culture and activities exist online. However, as these communities operate in a digitally and textually mediated setting, the conduction of this study encounters several methodological and ethical difficulties that set the observation in this research apart from traditional ethnography.

Different from ethnography which emphasises face-to-face observation and interviews, netnography is an approach “that is sometimes used as a stand-alone technique and, at other times, used as a part of a larger study that includes in-person interviews, fieldwork, and perhaps other methods” depending on the researcher’s theoretical stance and research objectives (Kozinets, 2010, p. 63, as cited in Li, 2015). In this research, I adopt the deployment of a survey to examine fansubbers’ identity construction at three different but related levels:

1. The textual practice level includes forum posts about subtitling practice, regulations, and experience, which may demonstrate fansubbers’ understandings or thoughts about their self-identity. This naturally occurring data can show fansubbers’ real intentions, which may not be self-noticed for a long time (Ruddock, 2001). With the researcher as an observer, this means of data collection and analysis helps avoid, as far as possible, a researcher’s subjective influence during the interview process and provides objective evidence of fansubbers’ self-identity practice.
2. The self-reflection level examines fansubbers’ thoughts about each identity and their reflections on related practices in the community. As the research goal is to

explore the identities of fansubbers, it is vital to merge the subjective voice of how fansubbers understand themselves with their involved cultural activities. A survey can standardise general reflections about fansubbers' views on different specific identities and lead to deeper insights into multiple identifications from the participants' perspectives.

3. The deeper reflection level examines fansubbers' self-recognition of multiple identities and their identity preference. Interviews with open-ended questions allow for the understanding of individual experiences and personal ideas. In this research, it also helps to understand specific insights that exhibit fansubbers' identities as cultural transmitters and their impacts on intercultural and international communication.

I follow Kozinets' (2010) netnographic research procedures for proper and ethical data collection and processing: 1) planning, 2) entering the fieldsite, 3) gathering and analysing data, 4) upholding ethical standards, and 5) presenting findings. A bulk of archival data will be drawn from the details that emerge from texts on the researched forums which will be used to provide objective evidence for this study. Elicited data from participants' reflections on general and specific identity awareness constructed during fansubbing practice will be examined at the self-narrating and self-understanding levels. The next chapter is the fifth step of netnography, where the findings of archival data and fieldnotes are presented to begin answering the research questions.

Chapter Four Findings: Fieldnotes and Archival Data

In this research, the results are presented and discussed based on data types listed in the methodology: archival data and elicited data. The chapter presents the archival data gathered on researched forums and during my observation as a participant in the YYeTs fansubbing group with the aim of examining the organisational context and mechanisms developed by the group to maintain and strengthen their identities. Netnography typically utilises observational data, a type of observational research involving the interpretation, analysis, and synthesis of observed data by a researcher (Kozinets, 2010). To find how fansubbers manifest identities of collectivist, resistant, pirate, prosumer, cultural transmitter, and narcissist through practice, the data recorded mainly revolve around several key areas: membership requirements and group values, regulating processes, activities of educating and innovating, competing opinions within members, textual manipulation and attitudes towards comments. These historical records are used to investigate the group's structural arrangements and mechanisms for shaping and sustaining each identity because these written texts reveal essential interpretations of identity formation. For instance, membership criteria and regulations represent how fansubbers identify participants and coordinate their actions to achieve the collective identity. Textual manipulation manifests how fansubbers achieve cultural transmission through languages and also answers the research question of how fansubbers interpret cultural elements in subtitling. The next chapter will discuss the surveys and interview results, examining fansubbers through their ideas of self-conception.

Conducting Fieldwork

I have participated in subtitling activities in the YYeTs group for two years since 2016. I

made the first contact with YYeTs by participating in the group's entry test. I filled out an application form and emailed it to the group's gatekeeper. Upon receiving the email, the group's gatekeepers advised the next step by emailing back the first entry test and self-study documents. These documents consisted of group subtitling tools and format instructions. Examinees must follow group instructions using group subtitling software and formats to sync subtitles with the original video. They also need to self-contact one of the group leaders to evaluate their translations and gain approval in five days before applying for the second test. Each entry test consists of around 10 minutes of video clips from an American television series with the corresponding 140 sentences of English subtitles ripped from the original films. The genres of these video clips are the applicant's favourite media product types written in their application form. In my case, the video clips sent to me were excerpted from *Fast Layne* (2019) during the time (00:16:15,046--->00:22:59,633) and *The Resident* (2018) during the time (00:06:50,767-->00:13:41,947), as my favourite genres are sitcoms and modern family dramas. These are 0-day shows, meaning the translated subtitles must be published the same day of the show's airing. Therefore, I was asked to finish the translation within 10 hours after receiving the email. I found the task very demanding, even though I majored in translation and had previous experience in subtitling. I had to become familiar with the group's subtitling software, figure out the functions of separating long sentences, translate subtitles and save the name list. Furthermore, I had to deal with technical or cultural terms in English subtitles, develop appropriate translation strategies and create Chinese subtitles that reflected the original film's tone. Moreover, I had to settle down the textual constraints and conform to the required formats in the group's guidelines, ensuring the

Chinese subtitles met audiences' reading speed, especially when various information messages, billboards, and background noises were presented on-screen simultaneously. After passing the entry tests, I received an email from the group leader and was asked to sign the following confidential agreement before joining the group.

人人影视字幕组保密及版权声明

字幕组成员在翻译过程中，对由人人影视字幕组以口头、书面、电子文本或其他形式提供的资料和数据（下称“保密信息”），负有保密义务。字幕组成员参与字幕组翻译工作所形成的任何工作成果，其知识产权归属为人人影视字幕组。未经人人影视字幕组同意不得泄漏给任何第三方。

YYeTs Confidentiality and copyright notice (Back Translation)

During the subtitling, fansubbers shall keep the confidentiality of the materials and data (hereinafter referred to as “confidential information”) provided by YYeTs in oral, written, electronic, or other forms. The intellectual property rights of any work resulting from fansubbers during subtitle group translating shall belong to YYeTs. It shall not be disclosed to any third party without the consent of the YYeTs subtitle team.

Then, I was invited to the group's QQ chatroom to introduce myself and upload at least seven photos. These photos are from daily lives, which helps other members recognise members as real people. This mandatory act of posting photos can be considered the fansub's trustworthy ritual that confirms members' identities and proves their validity to the group in the virtual network. I was asked to label myself as a trainee in the group. Other group members also have tags such as leaders, senior members, and administrators in front of their pseudonyms.

Like other group members, I used a pseudonym in the fansubbing group. This pseudonym functions to identify members during daily subtitling activities and credit me for my subtitled work. In the chatroom, we worked together on numerous subtitling projects and built a reliable and relatable relationship under semi-known identities (i.e., pseudonyms). To conduct my research in 2018, I disclosed my academic affiliation and information about my research in this group. I asked members' permission to stay to "establish a large degree of ordinary sociability and normal social intercourse with members of the community" (Walsh, 1998, p.253). After receiving permission, I observed groups' activities by gathering the content and conversations naturally generated. My stance also allowed me to access the members-only forum and QQ chatrooms and allowed me to work with samples on the fieldsite of YYeTs. A typical day in the fansubbing group would involve me translating subtitles while browsing conversations and chat records across groups' QQ chatrooms, online forums, and other fansub platforms of Weibo and Douban. By engaging in these fieldsites, I could share the same vision, and be involved in the production process, enabling me to understand and relate to my group participants. The practical management and expressions of psychological themes related to emotion, intent, and agency through online texts were recorded.

However, my dual identity as a researcher and a group member created tensions, as I also wanted to enter other fansub groups' working activities. Fansubbers are forbidden to join two fansub groups in the meantime as stated on their groups' forums. The competitiveness around resources and production speeds existing in fansub circles may have accounted for this. My identity in YYeTs could have also caused controversy if other fansubs resented the

commercialisation adopted in the YYeTs group. For all these reasons, I was positioned as an outsider and lost the opportunity to closely observe other group's activities from the inside. Without the group's permission, it was not possible to reach their members and access their working area. To protect members and IP rights, it is almost impossible for a non-member to get into these groups, especially when you belong to another group. It was disappointing but understandable to find that different fansubs, as small close circles, are very cautious and suspicious. Given these research constraints, the interview spectrum accordingly was narrowed to YYeTs fansub (my fansub) because its members would actively respond with their colleagues. Fortunately, although the leadership of the three fansubs refused the survey distribution inside the group, some of their members still answered the survey when they saw the link on the forums where it was advertised. The project collected data from the four researched fansubs' online forums, synthesised and evaluated detailed data from the YYeTs group and received the expected number of participants. The next section presents the documented data collected on fansub groups and my experiences as a participant-observation.

Membership Criteria

Based on the theory of peer production, fansubs govern themselves in a decentralised and complementary manner: members are independently in charge of their specific tasks and, at the same time, all contribute to the governance structure of their organisation, that is to follow group regulations and subtitling workflow. This structural arrangement facilitates the group's collective processes and increases fansubbers' core cohesion. Within this structure, members are required to align themselves with collective preferences by adhering to a set of common standards in the group. Fansub groups require setting up these standards to establish

group membership, coordinate individual actions, protect members' collective work, and eventually complete members' integration process. Generally, fansub groups have similar entry requirements and joining processes, such as recruiting conditions to filter potential participants, fansubbing rules to align new members' actions, and shared strategies to manage the collective work. The following data were collected from the recruitment page and group announcements on the website of YYeTs fansub (<https://yysubs.com/Translator>). Entry rules in this fansubbing group are translated and summarised in Table 1.

Table 1*Notes for joining in YYeTs fansub*

Entry rules	Descriptions
Entry requirements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Be fans or enthusiasts of foreign media products 2) Bilingual in English and Chinese 3) Have a computer and network to get online 4) Have free time to do group tasks (at least one weekday online, 9 am-4 pm) 5) Be able to balance work and hobbies (at least three-month engagement) 6) Joining two fansubs is forbidden
Joining processes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Filling in the application form (Introduction, English level, favourite themes of television series, free time range, current location, occupation, expectations from fansubs, email, pseudonym, experience in fansubbing) 2) Learn subtitling tools and subtitling conventions in a group 3) Pass three entry tests (one for formats and two for English skills by creating Chinese subtitles for assigned English video clips) 4) Take three-month probation <p>Plagiarising, Misconduct, and Task Delay Equal to Fail</p>

For every fansub member, the prerequisite of integration is passing the group's entry test and going through the internship. The entry test is the first step to becoming fansub members and probably their first contact with insiders. The next phase is the probationary period, which

could last several months, depending on a recruit's performance. During the internship, trainees are paired with an experienced member who supervises, supports, and evaluates their performance. Usually, the supervisor is a sub-team leader responsible for different themes, for example, comedy, horror, or drama. Trainees can select a leader based on their preferred themes of television series. During the production, each television programme has a chatroom set up through instant messenger QQ, where participating members can have real-time communication and engage in collaborative subtitling activities. Recruits are required to take on a certain number of tasks (180 minutes of subtitles in YYeTs) during a probationary period. The leader scrutinises the subtitles' quality and decides whether they can stay in the group. Based on my experience, this training process is a prime opportunity for newcomers to improve subtitling skills and build connections with group members. This is because the supervisor and existing members of the group help new members solve problems encountered during probation, providing constant feedback, kind suggestions, and words of encouragement. Recruits can learn subtitling skills and develop a common understanding of the fansub's values with the help of senior members.

Moreover, newcomers gain more chances to enhance their relationships with other members by interacting within and across various chatrooms. Except for discussing subtitling tasks, members in chatrooms also have multiple conversations. The topic covers their own life trivia, personal interests in favourite films, books, and food, or pressures from school, work, and family. Because members use pseudonyms rather than real names in fansubs, they feel safer expressing themselves freely in ways not possible with people from their immediate social circles. QQ chatrooms are the place where trusting relationships are created due to

anonymity, and togetherness is reinforced by more shared events. During the training practices and guidance, fansubbers complete the process of interaction and collaboration. They are gaining internal cohesion by sharing resources, experiences, topics, interests, and values and will gradually concentrate on an influential group culture and community brand identity.

Data analysis suggests that the processes of entering a fansub are multi-layered, progressing from the periphery to the community's core. To begin with, the entry requirements function as the first filtering mechanism that allows potential participants to assess whether they meet the criteria. Prospective participants who share the same qualities of being fans of foreign media products, knowing foreign languages, and having free time are identified immediately as interested people. If they satisfy the other entry conditions, then they will be selected. This mechanism ensures that future group members have commonalities and shared interests that could better bond them in a group.

The joining process can be deemed as the second filtering mechanism. Prospective participants need to go through a series of joining processes, including writing an application email and passing entry tests. Under this filtering process, many applicants who are coasting will give up after the first contact when they realise how complex and tedious it is to join the group. Proficiency in linguistic skills does not grant entry into the group. Participants must face technical challenges and be self-motivated to spend hours studying the subtitling software and group subtitling conventions before taking the entry test. They also must find different group leaders who would agree to evaluate their translations on each test and permit them to conduct the next step. After this process to successfully join a group, newcomers are

still required to take three-month probation. They need to finish more tasks during the probation to prove their competence in subtitling and their perseverance in staying in the group. Many trainees may fail on probation because they cannot finish the assigned work in the required time, or their translation quality is not satisfactory. In this case, they must wait at least six months before starting the application procedure again. The group believes that by this means, the gatekeeper verifies applicants' determination and persistence in fansubbing and ensures they fit the recruiting criteria through the great efforts being made in the joining process.

Group Values

Indicators of these group values were found in fansubs' statements online. "Welcome fans proficient in both CN and EN of English Shows to join YYeTs! The subtitles are released and shared free of charge, and all members join only by their hobbies, without any monetary reward" (as quoted on YYeTs forums). The fansub group YYeTs aims for "分享 学习 进步 (Sharing, Learning, and Progress)" which is the slogan of this group (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

The slogan of YYeTs fansub



Note. This website in the picture is no longer in use because of legal issues; the new website is <https://www.yysub.net/>. From YYeTs, Wikipedia, 2023.

On the FRM's (2010) group website, it clearly states that “FRM字幕组所有听（翻）译字幕，只是为了所有爱好英语及其它语言的热心网友学习交流之用，没有任何以赢利为目的商业用途” (Translation: All subtitles produced by FRM are for learning and sharing rather than commercial use for profits). For Sfileydy (2012), the blogging declares that “伊甸园字幕组纯为网友自发组建的非盈利小组，自愿制作字幕分享网络，无任何收入”(Translation: Sfileydy subtitle group is a non-profit group set up by netizens spontaneously. We produce subtitles and share them online voluntarily without any income). The blogging platform of Ragbear (2009) defines “Love life, love American TV series, Ragbear is with you! 爱生活、爱美剧，破烂熊与您相伴” The group leader says on the blog “互联网本来就是一个用来和所有人分享的媒介，重要的还是字幕组成员在翻译中得到的收获，学习知识、认识朋友、享受与人合作的快乐” (Translation: Internet is meant to be a medium for sharing. What's important is that the group members can gain from translation, learning knowledge, making friends, and enjoying cooperation with others.)

“Sharing”, “free”, “communication” and “learning” are the most frequent words in these group statements. These words also are the group values that fansubs strive to achieve. For instance, fansubs acknowledge one of their main goals is to share subtitles with more people, and this goal is encapsulated in the YYeTs group's slogan: “分享让世界更精彩 sharing makes the world more wonderful.” It suggests that while fansubbers' motivations for subtitling differ, they all agree upon the group values of free sharing. This common value is an integrative force, a universal and enduring goal that is agreed upon and pursued by all group members. It can guide these individuals in a more consistent and orderly action.

By sharing these common goals, fansubbers perceive themselves as a community and

develop the consciousness of togetherness and a shared identity that defines who they are as a group. The motivations behind fansubbing however, can differ, and, as such, any disagreements are often resolved by simply following the hierarchal structure as discussed in the interview. If the individual members are willing to integrate personal needs into group needs and to prioritise group values, and to compromise by balancing personal costs and collective interests, they can establish a sense of “we-ness” (Li, 2015, see p.71).

Establishing Norms Within Fansubbing Communities

Upon entering the group, newcomers encounter a set of norms to align and govern their behaviours, such as following group translation standards and peer review control in the chatroom. These norms serve as the fansub group’s governance mechanism set up with an overall goal to maximise members’ collective awareness and motivate their sustainable contribution to group activities (Li, 2015). The following section explores and discusses fansub group norms in terms of two aspects: (a) Developing a shared understanding of translation standards and (b) Aligning individual actions through group regulation.

Translation Standards

Generally, the prerequisite for taking subtitling tasks in the group is to study the group’s *Guidelines for Producing Bilingual Subtitles*. This learning material is sent back by the group leader upon receiving the individual’s application. It aims to help newcomers understand the group’s expectations and get familiar with the tools and skills required to carry out daily subtitling activities. The document explicates detailed rules regarding subtitling formats and standard translation in this guideline. For instance, the final chapter of *Translation Standards*

and Rhetoric developed by the YYeTs group is to build a common understanding of good translation for their members. Translated texts should meet three basic requirements—accuracy, neatness, appropriateness—and two further principles—faithful to the original and clear logic flow. YYeTs group members must follow the standard of not adding comments in translation and ensure the translation is in line with Chinese culture. This guideline is created to help newly joined members enhance their translation skills and ensure translation quality. The group set up this guideline to prevent immoderate individualistic actions in subtitling, such as inserting personal comments or using insulting language, which is forbidden in translation. One must learn to refrain from being thoroughly engrossed in the fun of one's creativity and pursue the commonly agreed translation.

During production, all fansub groups align their subtitlers' actions by a group inside subtitling and proofreading rules. In addition, the group leader supervises and proofreads each member's work according to subtitling rules and integrates all work into coherent and consistent outcomes. Comparing these actions with the translation standard, which is the groups' expectation for a good translation, fansubs specify subtitlers' rules that highlight the essentiality of a responsible and conscientious attitude in subtitling, requiring members to strictly follow subtitling conventions regarding format features such as the same fonts, type size and colour of translated subtitles. In this aspect, different fansub groups tend to adopt varied subtitling formats to differentiate each other. For instance, the four researched fansubs prefer to use different subtitle conventions in terms of colour (e.g., white or yellow), font and type size to produce bilingual subtitles in both Chinese and English or monolingual subtitles in Chinese, as seen in Figures 4 to 7. Each group also outlines how to deal with dialogue,

punctuation and numbers displayed in subtitles. Since large fansub groups often compete when translating the same popular content, group members reach a consensus on what their product should look like and improve viewers' recognition by adhering to these rules. It helps Chinese audiences to recognise the group's collective work from the abundance of works seen online at any one time.

Figure 4

Subtitle conventions used by Ragbear



Note. From *Motherland Subtitling Work* Season 02, Episode 04 [Screenshot], subtitled by Ragbear, 2021.

Figure 5

Subtitle conventions used by FRM



Note. From *Homeland Subtitling Work* Season 01, Episode 08 [Screenshot], subtitled by FRM, 2021.

Figure 6

Subtitle conventions used by Sfileydy



Note. From *CSI Subtitling Work* Season 12, Episode 12 [Screenshot], subtitled by Sfileydy, 2021.

Figure 7

Subtitle conventions used by YYeTs



Note. From *The Good Doctor Subtitling Work*, Season 03, Episode 05 [Screenshot], subtitled by YYeTs, 2021.

Group Regulations

YYeTs set up a series of rules to regulate their members. The following presents the prohibited behaviours on the YYeTs forum.

1. 谩骂侮辱其他会员， 恶意攻击， 涉嫌人身攻击言论者
2. 未经同意擅自发布对人人影视翻译作品有竞争的下载链接（海外网站无字幕片源链接除外）。
3. 恶意广告。
4. 发表涉嫌色情政治违规言论以及一切对网站有威胁的言论。
5. 有欺诈等行为， 被投诉且被管理员证实。
6. 一切威胁到人人影视安全的行为， 或者作弊行为。

The back translation is as follows:

1. Abusive insulting other members, malicious speech attacks, and personal abuse
2. Releasing the download link to others' subtitling works without group consent (except for original raw material from overseas websites).
3. Malicious advertising.
4. Publishing pornographic and political violations comments, and other speech threatening the site.
5. Fraud behaviours that were complained about and confirmed by the administrator.
6. Other behaviours threatening to group, or cheating.

FRM's group website also has similar announcement:

1. 禁止发布任何色情,暴力,引起会员情绪不安,反动等信息。
2. 禁止讨论任何政治 (包括历史) 敏感性话题, 特别是损国家利益话题。
3. 禁止以任何形式发布广告 (包括其他论坛的链接广告)。
4. 禁止辱骂,攻击,诋毁及影射论坛及会员的话题,严禁使用粗言秽语。
5. 不得在论坛对任何人或其它网站进行人身攻击,不得互相谩骂。
6. 对水区有不良影响, 不合适话题, 被认定后, 删。

The back translation is as follows:

1. Any disturbing content pornographic, violent, or reactionary is prohibited.
2. It is forbidden to discuss any politically (including historical) sensitive topics, especially those detrimental to the national interest.
3. Advertising in any form is prohibited.
4. Insults, attacks, denigrations and vicious allusions to the forum and its members

are prohibited. Vulgar language is strictly prohibited.

5. No personal abuse on any person or any other website, and no name-calling.
6. Identified inappropriate speech on forums will be deleted.

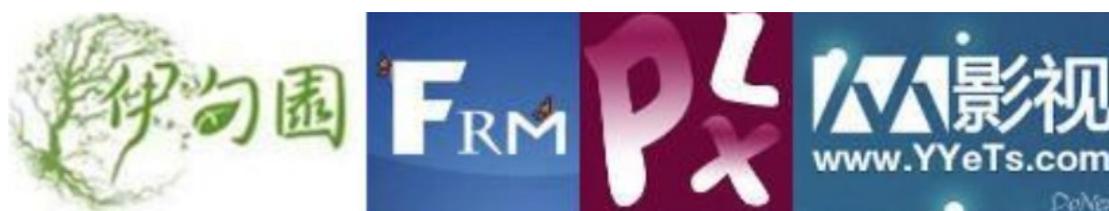
Despite the good faith and motivation of members, fansubs are still at risk of potential copyright infringement by law. To avoid getting into copyright trouble in the future, fansub communities started to impose rules on their members to self-regulate and set group norms. This self-regulation strengthens their personal and community identities.

Branding for Prestige/Reputation

Fansubs manage their collective work in two seemingly opposing models. On the one hand, Chinese fansubs mirror commercial practices, creating group logos and setting up forums for fan audiences to download productions. The image of the four fansub groups' logo in Figure 8 is a business tactic to enhance a group's brand image, ensuring their group name and collective work are easily found and recognised by online viewers.

Figure 8

Fansub groups' brand images



Note. Screenshots of four fansub groups' brand images taken from their forums. Sfileydy, FRM, Ragbear, YYeTs, from left to right.

On the other hand, unlike professional subtitling, which seldom provides subtitlers'

information, fansubs remind the audience about the subtitlers' efforts. Although fansubs avoid the attention of authorities because of copyright issues, they promote their work and take credit for their subtitling efforts in the textual discourse of fansubs. In the American series *House of Cards Subtitling Work* (YYeTs, 2013), as in Figure 9, YYeTs rewrites and replaces the expected translation of source text in the opening credit with the information of fansubs, translators and other agents. The Chinese characters below the original subtitles can be back-translated as Devoted by YYeTs, as shown in the left screenshot. The right screenshot introduces the name (pseudonym) of the subtitled translator parallel to the name of actor KEVIN SPACEY in this show.

Figure 9

Opening credit with fansubs' information



Note. From *House of Cards Subtitling Work* [Screenshot], produced by YYeTs, 2013.

The marketing strategy of creating consistent subtitles and logos is not for profit but to promote and protect a group's work during redistribution processes as well as to expand the group's exposure to wider audiences. By outsiders, fansubbers are viewed as collectivists

with shared brands, logos, values and forums. The strategy of crediting the group and participating members in the product benefits the group and fansubbers, although this paradoxical action seems narcissistic in that they are claiming their intention for good by sharing and publishing but asking for acknowledgment in practice, which will be discussed in Chapter Six. With the names of subtitlers in the show, fansubs welcome audience reviews and comments on their products as they help improve a group's work and reputation. Specifically, individual fansubbers can polish their subtitling skills by reviewing comments and boosting their reputation by having their pseudonyms and work recognised within and outside the group. A fansub group can also improve its collective reputation among fans across popular online fan communities and encourage members' participation by acknowledging their contributions. Thus, the hybrid organisational model of fansubs manifests its advantages as peer production and commercial commodity. It allows the development of a fansub community, motivates group members and enhances group collectivism.

Fansubs' Educational Role

Two forms of a public educational approach are seen in the researched fansubs: translating instructive programmes and open tutorial modules. An instructive programme—the documentary—is popular with fansubbing groups. Apart from nature documentaries such as *BBC Natural World (2011)* by YYeTs, political, historical and memoirist documentaries are also typically subtitled in fansub groups, such as *Meet the Trumps: From Immigrant to President* and *Diana: In Her Own Words (2017)* by Ragbear, and *For All Mankind (2019)* by YYeTs.

Translating Instructive Programmes

The most common form of demonstrating the educational or instructive approach is the transmission of open courses. In 2010, the leading Chinese Internet technology company NetEase launched the public platform *Netease Online Open Courses*, where people can learn for free from world-famous institutes such as Harvard University and Yale University as well as TED - Technology, Entertainment, Design conferences. A series of introductory courses, including humanities, social sciences, and physical and biological sciences from selected college lectures, are published free of charge via the Internet. These downloadable courses are warmly welcomed by netizens who wish to learn the content. A handful of fan subtitling groups saw the open courses' popularity and started translating these sessions for fans. One of the groups, YYeTs, translates a set of open courses from Yale University, as shown in the caption for Figure 10 which was captured at the beginning of each course session for "Listening to music" (<https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1F5411e7e2/>). The first caption shows that this subtitling project is produced by YYeTs members and welcomes fans to see more courses on their website, www.YYeTs.net (no longer in use). The second acknowledges the fansubbers who did the translating, spotting, and editing.

Figure 10

Open courses of Yale University, translated by YYeTs



Note. From *Listening to Music Subtitling Work* [Screenshot], subtitled by YYeTs, 2010.

The act of translating open courses received praise from the mainstream media. *China Daily*, China's national English-language newspaper, acknowledged the important and meaningful work of subtitling open courses for non-English educators. It regarded the YYeTs group as "China's top-ranked volunteer translation group", as shown in the excerpt below:

Yale professor Shelly Kagan doesn't speak Chinese, but thanks to online subtitling groups, thousands of Chinese students can now listen to Kagan's lectures. Over the past few months, China's top-ranked volunteer translation group, YYeTs, has subtitled

10 of Yale University's Open Courses for viewers to download for free, including Kagan's philosophy class on death.

...

Volunteer translation, or 'crowdsourcing,' is one solution that is increasingly popular in China, with Kagan's course receiving over 10,000 visitors per day.

Grateful viewers have applauded the translators for their dedication and hard work...

"This is a cause which will benefit mankind!" reads one online comment.

YYeTs has traditionally translated US TV shows like CSI and Grey's Anatomy, but Fang Si, an English editor who joined the group in 2008, explains that they started the Open Yale Courses project because so many of their users are students.

With this new project, the group is channelling its experience and passion for translating American entertainment.

(Tsao, 2010, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-08/21/content_11183781.htm)

This report applauds volunteers' efforts to make foreign open courses accessible to domestic non-English speakers. The practice of translating open courses broadens people's horizons and improves Chinese public literacy. The state-owned newspaper, *China Daily's* positive comment on the amateur subtitling activities undertaken by YYeTs has improved the group's public image and acknowledged fansubs in mainstream media. In addition, because open courses are educational oriented towards the wider public, the legitimacy of such activities is a minor concern in the report. This official report also went on to clarify that the fansub practice of translating foreign open courses is not resistant to the government, though the content of translated materials could be political, such as "Justice" from Harvard University,

one of the most popular courses.

The case of translating open courses and opening tutorial modules indicates that fan communities are more than entertainment-seeking. Traditionally, the mainstream media shoulders the function of social education. The instructive effect of mainstream ideology gradually expands with the expansion of the dominant media form such as newspapers, radio, television, and official websites on the Internet. Audiences are deprived of both the right to choose media content and the power of self-narration. Fansubbers' efforts in sharing knowledge and cultivating values suggest a possible turn of transferring from fan activities to civic education. Furthermore, the practice of subtitling open courses, if not mobilising public political resistance, at least highlights dominant media control over information with the message the people can choose for themselves.

Open Tutorial Modules

Another indication of fansubs' educational function is the practice of opening a teaching module. Translation tasks like the project of subtitling university-level specialised courses can be very demanding. It requires translators to be in command of translation skills and have background knowledge in the speciality. A better solution is to improve audiences' English skills so they can watch for themselves. For example, Sfileydy introduced an English Learning centre on its forum where fans can learn from all kinds of English-learning posts. YYeTs launched various programmes that help English learners. In 2014, YYeTs set up an educational platform of RenRen Xue Yuan (人人学院, 'the YYeTs Institute') which aims to make learning more fun. It provides different viewing modes for subtitled video clips, such as studying mode and challenge mode, where viewers can study the corresponding subtitles and

play quizzes in the blocks below the video window. The year I joined YYeTs, the group worked with a private developer, Beijing Wordshow Education Technology Co. Ltd, to operate an English dictionary application. The dictionary combined English words and corresponding English television shows. When you search for a word, the dictionary shows at least six associated video clips and bilingual subtitles produced by YYeTs so that people can learn and memorise that word in real English contexts. To some extent, such learning projects of YYeTs improve viewers' English listening skills and the knowledge of colloquial language usage by providing source-language cultural references.

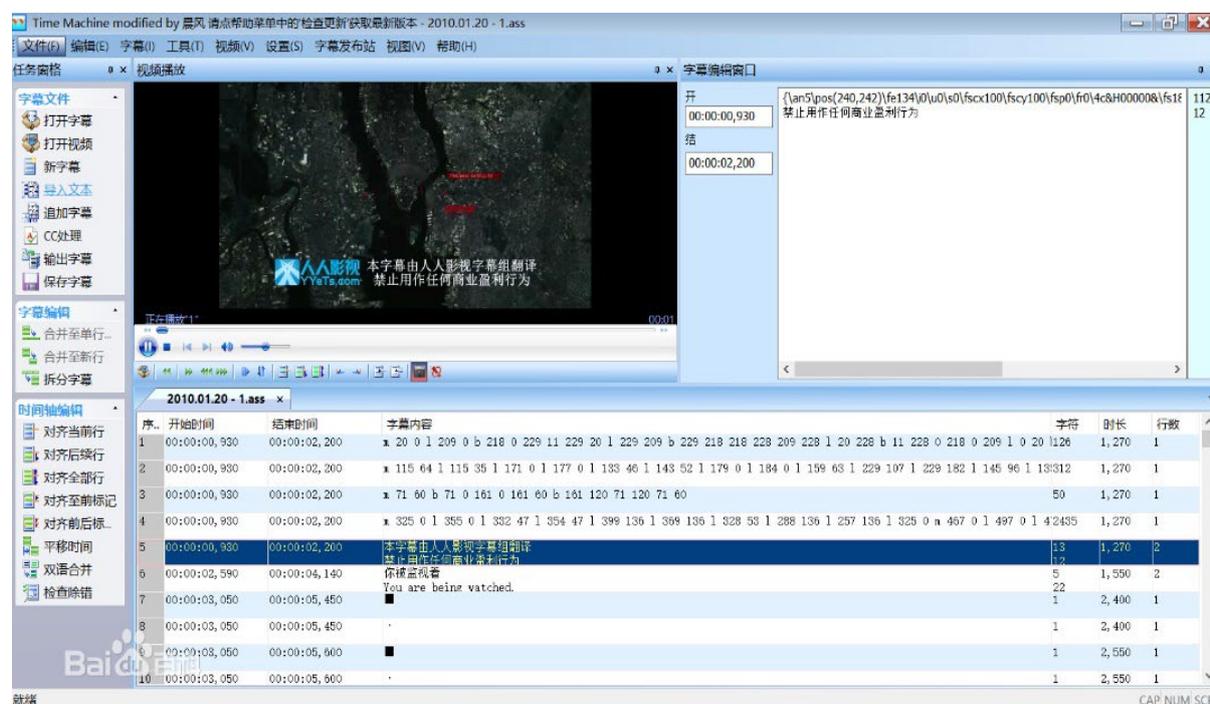
Subtitling Tools Innovation and Gamification

In practice, fansubs are found using subtitling tools and applying game mechanisms to facilitate the processing of subtitling. Subtitling is time-consuming as it involves detailed tasks and cooperative work that calls for patience and endurance. The transcriptions of closed captions extracted by raw providers are called “生肉” (fansubbers' jargon: raw meat) in the group, which requires different teams to segment, translate and convert subtitles. Editors need to mark each sentence's beginning and end time to avoid the synchronisation of subtitles, sounds, and pictures before sending them to translators. Experienced timeline coders can control the time difference between subtitles and pictures within a few microseconds. However, this process requires constant debugging, which usually takes significant time and effort. To adjust the timeline, the coder must repeatedly pause and edit the beginning time and ending time of each sentence while watching. Subtitling software allows one to set a reaction time to adjust subtitles appearing ahead or delaying a particular video playtime. The software can automatically add a parameter for people's reactions. This feature saves editors substantial time on the timeline

weaving and improves the subtitling efficiency. Moreover, machine translation can also assist in translation efficiency and accuracy. Therefore, fansub communities encourage the use of machine translation and subtitling tools to facilitate the processing of subtitling. The technical team of YYeTs fansub developed a subtitling software called “Time Machine” (see Figure 11) for group members. It was released in the group in 2011 with detailed instructions on subtitle production and timeline adjustment (<https://baike.sogou.com/v64655731.htm>).

Figure 11

The first subtitling tool developed by Fansubs YYeTs



Note. This image is the screenshot of YYeTs’ Time Machine interface. From *Sogou Baike* (like the Chinese version of Wikipedia), 2022.

The Time Machine interface is simple and functional, allowing collaborative work. The left bar is the commonly used functional zone where you can import and export the text, check for format errors, and adjust the timeline to ensure the synchronisation of the subtitles and the

original video. The upper left corner is the video play area, while the window on the right displays the corresponding format code and translations. The post-production team can edit the format in this area and add special effects codes so that subtitles can appear in different colours and forms and flexibly on screen as if part of the original. The bottom area is the translator's workbench. It shows the beginning and end times of each sentence, the translation content, and the word count of each line. Machine translation can be implemented in the software too. Usually, the imported text is segmented by time coders and automatically translated by a machine if the function is enabled. Translators can still fine-tune the timeline for synchronisation and revise translation to avoid lengthy and obscure sentences. This improves the efficiency for fansubbers to edit and translate while watching videos on Time Machine because they can simultaneously see the final presentation's effects on screen. In addition, this software can reduce the editor's tedious formatting work with a simple click. It is designed with many functions, such as automatically deleting repeated words, changing the first letter of each sentence to uppercase, checking the overlap of the time axis and marking the long sentence in the text based on word count. The software also supports many subtitle formats; documents can be easily converted into the specified format when decoded and stored. Moreover, it allows a combination of subtitles translated by multiple people and provides a platform for the collaborative work of time coding, translating, post-producing, proofreading, and releasing. Due to its convenience and multifunctionality, Time Machine is the software that must be learned in the entry test and encouraged to use in subtitling to promote translation productivity. In the spirit of sharing, this subtitling software can be downloaded online for free and has been adopted by some important international

conferences and cultural events in China and abroad (Liang, 2021).

Fansubbing groups apply gamified systems on their forums, such as rewarding members for making comments, upgrading members' levels on the forum to access better resources, and offering exclusive rights to supreme members. Group members can gain virtual rewards, rights, and recognition from peers by participating and enhancing hierarchy levels in the group, which resembles online social games. For example, all researched fansubs adopt a sign-in mechanism to encourage user participation on the forum. Each community has a different incentive system. YYeTs invented a points system called RenRen diamonds whereby users can earn tokens and upgrade levels by completing tasks. Diamonds can be obtained in several ways. The easiest way is to sign in and share the invitation link with others to register on the YYeTs forum. Another way to gain diamonds is to upload the original video for group members to view and subtitle. Members can also obtain points by watching fansubbed shows and participating in the fansub's community activities. Members can share thoughts about the American television series they have watched and comment on the fansub's posts to gain more credit. Alternatively, fansubbers can upgrade faster by completing subtitling work in the group. Depending on the difficulty levels of work, members can earn different amounts of points on the degree of involvement and length of contribution. The earned RenRen diamonds can be used to change screen names on the forum, tip their favourite subtitlers, participate in copyright crowdfunding and exchange for rights to skip advertisements while watching shows, among other things. Two thousand five hundred RenRen diamonds can be exchanged for the fansubs Golden Supreme Membership. Users in this membership can enjoy a unique identity mark and watch the drama on their mobile

phones. Considering copyright issues and security factors, YYeTs only support the Golden Supreme Members in watching by mobile because the mobile terminal needs approval from the mobile application store, and unauthorised resources would be removed if they are reported by users. An upgrade to Golden Supreme Members means having access to the latest fansubbed television resources and members' comments section in full view. These members have the unique right to post a topic and organise discussions on the YYeTs forum, which is not allowed for regular members. This mechanism is also used to organise activities that involve audiences in subtitling production. YYeTs group encourages audiences to check produced subtitles, provide opinions on fansubs outputs and advice on better translation. Suggested areas for improvement include the artistic forms of presentation, the quality of video and caption, the language style among the peer subtitlers, and other visual elements in the show. The moderator can put the viewers' comments on top or mark the comment as excellent based on the content. In this way, fansubs can receive audiences' timely feedback from forums and revise shortly after publishing subtitled work. Such an error-correction board urges fansubbers to improve production quality and provides them with more inspiration. FRM fansubs also offer a particular error correction activity to motivate audiences to participate. They apply game mechanics to reward members' contributions, as in the following activity on Weibo, in Figure 12 (FRM, 2019, <https://weibo.com/1000fr>).

Figure 12

The corrective activity of translation organised by FRM Fansub

【活动】风软字幕组作品纠错活动

相信大家也都很难拿出满分的试卷，风软字幕组跟大家也有一样的困扰，所以需要大家重亮的眼睛来纠正我们翻译中出现的错误

共同提升大家的英语翻译水平！

活动奖励：1、本活动以交流为主，奖励只是添个彩头，故有效纠错累积35积分即赠送风软2013年周年纪念品龙猫抱枕一个（包邮），抱枕总量12个，先到先得！每ID限换一个

12个发放完后视情况定其他奖品。

2、其他类别错误每个奖励10FRB

活动规则：

- 1、必须是风软字幕组译制出品的作品，即美剧连载区的和电影下载区的带风软中文字幕标识的
- 2、纠错时请保持公正，尽量不要带个人色彩的评价，以免引发不必要的误会。（例如：这错都会犯太不应该了之类的）管理员有权修改删除此类评价，只保留纠错信息
- 3、自知早期草创阶段错误量较多，而且激励目前在职的翻译和校对，做出以下设定2012-2013年作品有效纠错一处累积积分一分，2009-2011年作品有效纠错一处累积积分0.5分，2009年前作品有效纠错一处累积积分0.2分
- 4、本次活动奖励针对有效的翻译纠错（即多位校对统一认可）、其他一些错别字、笔误、时间轴错位，漏句等可能是压制和时间轴错误的将每个发放10FRB奖励
- 5、发帖前最好能阅读其他纠错，避免重复纠错。（以第一个找到错的为有效纠错）
- 6、为将机会留给尽量多的会员，故风软字幕组成员参与此活动将无法获得抱枕。

Note. FRM Error Correction Activity on Weibo. From *Webo*, by FRM, 2019.

The back translation of the content in this image follows:

[Activity] The corrective activity for FRM subtitled works

We believe that it is tough to get full marks. FRM fansubs have the same trouble as you, so we need your sharp eyes to correct the mistakes in our translation and improve our English together!

Rewards of the activity

1. This activity is mainly for communication, and the reward is just a bonus. If you accumulate 35 points in correcting mistakes, you will receive a 2013 anniversary souvenir Totoro pillow (free shipping).

-
2. Twelve pillows in total; first come, first get till all are given out! Other prizes depend on the situation. Each ID is limited to 1 pillow.
 3. For each non-translation error, you will receive 10 FRM credits.

Rules of the activity

1. Corrected works must be translated and produced by FRM, a show with the FRM logo from the American TV series area, or a film download area on the forum.
2. Please be fair when correcting errors and try not to make personal comments so as not to cause unnecessary misunderstandings. (Example: It is a shame to make such mistakes), the administrator shall have the right to modify and delete such comments and only keep useful information.
3. Fansubs' early works have more mistakes. To motivate the translator and proofreader, the group made the following decisions: Corrections from 2012-2013 works earn 1 point, Corrections from 2009-2011 work earn 0.5 points, and Corrections from early 2009 works earn 0.2 points.
4. The reward of points is for effective corrections of translation mistakes (approved by different proofreaders). Other corrections, such as a wrong character, a slip of the pen, timeline misalignment, and missing sentences, are probably from suppression. The corrections of the timeline will be given 10 FRM credits each.
5. Read other comments before posting to avoid repeated corrections.
6. To leave this opportunity to as many members as possible, subtitlers will not be able to get the pillow for participating in this activity.

Applying game mechanics in groups is intended to increase subtitlers' engagement and raise

groups' productivity. The guiding idea is to use gameplay mechanics for non-game applications, such as a rewards and hierarchical system, to engage users through fun, motivating them to constantly contribute (Wang & Zhang, 2017). The hierarchy on forums established by gamification is a vertical structure that differs from horizontal peer production. It functions as a generative force that motivates all members to contribute because the higher the levels they reach, the more resources they can access, the more rights they can perform and the better video-streaming services they can enjoy on the YYeTs' website. Members can entertain themselves not only by subtitling media content but also by gaining rewards and moving to higher levels on websites. Such virtual incentives associated with becoming more gamified assist fansub groups in creating an interactive community, deepening members' dedication, and increasing their productivity.

Competing Opinions Toward Commercialisation

Facing the double pressure of finance and censorship, fansub communities increasingly struggle to resist capitalism and develop competing attitudes toward commercialisation. Although the intention of fansubs is non-profit, legal, and economic constraints restrain Chinese fansubbing from supplying foreign cultural goods to the local market. Legally, fansubbers must rely on unauthorised distribution channels, which threatens copyright protection. The SARFT and other censorship institutions have taken steps to crack down on the fansubbing network since 2009 (Wang, 2017). Economically, fansubbing heavily relies on computer software, servers, and bandwidth technology to cope with the large amounts of data. The following story describes fansubbers' practice of navigating their pirate identities and their complicated feelings towards capitalism.

A Story of Navigating a Legal Grey Area

To get rid of the pirate identity, many fansubs are dedicated, although struggling, to bringing about business transformation in their groups. In 2009, the Chinese government began to fight against Internet piracy and copyright infringement. Several popular fansubs were prosecuted during the campaign, including Sfileydy, “BT China alliance” and local top BT websites. More than one hundred websites were shut down (Wang, 2017). To survive, YYeTs announced its website transformation only to provide subtitles instead of downloadable video clips. By 2010, with the popularity of open courses, subtitle groups started to translate some courses on the network, including Yale University philosophy class “Death”, Harvard University “Justice” and other classes such as “Listening to Music” and “The Introduction of Ancient Greek history”, and “Journal of European civilisation”. The subjects included topics on politics, history, the social world, art and culture, to name a few. By translating these open courses, YYeTs received widespread approval and high praise. At that time, the *People’s Daily* even praised YYeTs as “人人字幕组 网络时代的知识布道者 the era of network knowledge preacher” (Chen, 2011), which has been removed now.

In August 2010, YYeTs was shut down for the first time because Chinese authorities confiscated their group’s server. A few days later, YYeTs announced that they had moved the server overseas and raised funds from netizens to buy technology and equipment. In 2011, online video platforms such as iQiyi, Tencent Video, Youku and Tudou were successively established and bought legitimate copies of American drama to attract new users. This was because, compared with domestic films and television dramas, American dramas had apparent advantages in production and were popular among people with higher education and

higher incomes. According to iVideoTracker, in 2013, Sohu Video owned nearly 2,000 episodes of American television series programmes, covering nearly three million users and was once known as the first platform for American television series. *The Big Bang Theory* (2007), *Nikita* (2010), *House of Cards* (2013) and other American television series were released on these video platforms during that period. The video platforms raced to offer legitimate copies of American series, and fansubs struggled to compete and the space for them to operate became increasingly narrowed. Fansubs began to shut down because of mass reports of infringement. In the wake of intensifying official prosecution between 2009 and early 2014, Chinese fansubs were ready to cease activities at any time and try to survive by other means. Before World Copyright Day in 2013, several well-known fansubs closed their servers and web addresses temporarily to avoid risk. In contrast to its fallen counterparts, YYeTs did not provide direct links to popular films on its own website but links to other websites where those films were downloadable. YYeTs' site put up a notice written in bold characters saying, "For copyright reasons, this film does not provide download service, except the text files of subtitles and the trailer" (版权问题本片不提供下载, 只提供字幕文件和预告片). In addition, "The resources on this site are from the websites below. You can check these websites for downloadable links to the film" (本站资源来源于以下网站, 可以到这些网站查看是否有下载) (www.yysub.net/). YYeTs continued to communicate with its audiences from its IP address, acknowledging their long-standing support and continually calling for free sharing, learning and social progress (Ciweigongshe, 2021).

In October 2014, YYeTs was named by The Motion Picture Association of America for piracy in a massive lawsuit against unauthorised translations. They released the details of

several websites that offered links to pirated movie and television downloads. A month later, part of YYeTs' server was closed for spreading pirated products. On 29 November 2014, YYeTs posted a short-lived message on its homepage and its webpage on Sina Weibo with the Latin words "invictus maneo" (I remain unvanquished). Meanwhile, YYeTs posted a short message claiming that they are in a transformation, along with a countdown until the site's return.

By the end of 2014, lots of big fansubs closed their websites and ceased their fansubbing activities. However, YYeTs maintained its relationship with major companies and transformed its former website into a social network for American television enthusiasts. On 6 February 2015, YYeTs returned with investors and operated on two separate platforms. RenRen Mei Ju (人人美剧, YYeTs' American TV Series; www.rrmj.tv), operated by new management, is now a social network for enthusiasts of popular foreign entertainment. The other is SUBTITLES at www.zimuzu.tv, where the old YYeTs team continues fansubbing and free content-sharing activities. In March 2016, YYeTs started using their logo on their subtitled American dramas with the link www.zimuzu.tv. However, the partnership with commercial capital has not been as smooth as expected. Due to significant differences in values within the team, the YYeTs team and RenRen Mei Ju split in 2017. The latter changed its name to RenRen Video and worked with local entrants of Baidu Video, Xiaomi Group, and other conglomerates with capital investment. It cooperates with the government, Chongqing Radio, and Television and aims to create a "first-class streaming media platform". The former with core YYeTs group members kept its original name and continued to do subtitles. In 2020, the issue of a commercialised operation status divided YYeTs again. The

subtitling group members separated from YYeTs operators due to dissatisfaction with the group's increasing commercialisation. Unlike YYeTs, which is full of advertisements, the subtitling team left the group's operation platform and set up a new site, YYeTs Subtitle Group, to keep providing subtitles online. In the end, the original YYeTs fansub evolved into three groups: RenRen Video (working with government organisation), YYeTs (former operators at yyets.com) and YYeTs Subtitle Group (the former subtitling team at yysub.net).

In February 2021, the news that YYeTs fansub was being investigated exploded all over the Internet. In January 2021, YYeTs suddenly announced on its website that the site would be shut down temporarily and needed time to clean up its content without giving a reason. Fans were accustomed to seeing these announcements, as they understood that this clean-up was because of copyright issues. The server has been shut down multiple times over 10 years of its development due to infringement problems. The one prosecuted was the YYeTs operator Liangliang, the founder of the YYeTs fansub. As the administrator of YYeTs, Liangliang was imprisoned for three years and fined 1.5 million RMB for providing 20,000 illegal video sources with more than eight million members. Unlike most fansubs who refused commercialisation, YYeTs were found an illegal income of 16 million RMB, although this money was claimed to maintain the group servers and afford operation costs. This incident was regarded as the “end of an era for subtitle groups” by Chinese fans of American television shows in the cyberworld. Internet users reacted to the news with over 500 million views on Weibo, as detailed in the article “Chinese Arrest of Video Pirates Triggers Outcry From ‘Friends’ Fans”.

Chinese police said on Tuesday they have arrested 14 people who ran video portal YYeTs.com, which pirated foreign movies and television shows like “Friends”, triggering an outcry on social media from people lamenting the loss of the programmes.

Police in the financial hub of Shanghai said they arrested the people on charges of intellectual property infringement, adding that the website hosted more than 20,000 pieces of pirated content and had more than 8 million registered users. The suspects made more than 16 million yuan over an unspecified period from member fees and advertisement revenue generated by the website, police said on their official WeChat account.

YYeTs.com did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

The topic “YYeTs.com investigated for pirated videos” quickly became a top trending topic on the Weibo social media platform with users complaining they had lost a go-to platform for US shows such as “Friends” and “Big Bang Theory”.

China’s Netflix equivalents such as iQiyi (IQ.O) or Tencent Holdings’ (0700.HK) video platform offer a limited range of foreign shows.

China has also vowed to strengthen intellectual property rights enforcement, amid complaints from other governments that it has not been doing enough to stop copying.

“Everybody wants to watch legal copies of television works and films, but the problem is, all legal channels have been blocked or censored,” said one Weibo user.

“If the aim is to combat piracy, then please give us the platform to watch legally introduced versions.” (Reuters, 2021)

YYeTs group leader, whose group was praised by the state’s newspaper as “the era of network knowledge preacher”, is now characterised as a criminal. Following the news on Weibo about YYeTs, the comment area was flooded with voices of mourning and protest. Despite the issue of copyright infringement, most fans disapproved of the prosecution and subsequent imprisonment of Liangliang and claimed that this represents “self-seclusion in a new area”. They criticised the state for producing low-quality domestic dramas and introducing few legitimate versions from abroad. Furthermore, the cleansing move was seen as a gesture of goodwill to the Americans for copyright protection, yet many fansub members had foreseen this judgment as they disagreed with the commercial mode of the YYeTs group. This incident ended after the group founder of YYeTs, Liangliang, posted a letter (Figure 13) on the YYeTs forum in December 2021 (Liang, 2021, <https://weibo.com/u/1660646684>).

Figure 13

Liangliang's confession to YYeTs' fansub friends



致“人人影视”朋友们的一封信

各位关心人人影视的朋友们：

我是“梁良”，人人影视的创始人。

本案已做出一审判决，承蒙各位关注，此时有些心里话想与大家说，委托康相鹏律师代为转达。

分享让世界更精彩，这句话是人人影视的 Slogan，是初心，是大家坚持的动力。2004 年至今，成千上万爱好者加入并奉献热情与智慧，才成就了后来的人人影视，个中艰辛一言难尽。

随着影视资源数量的增加以及传播播放技术不断更新，人人影视在一天天壮大，而我们的版权意识和获取版权的能力没有跟上，没有意识到人人影视达到一定量级应该及时刹车。

由于对知识产权不够尊重，法律意识薄弱，造成了严重的后果。在此向版权方致歉！同时要向全体人人影视成员道歉，是我的问题造成人人影视的陷落，也导致程序员们承担法律责任。

我从未后悔创建人人影视，若不是命运让我与之交集，我将在漫长枯燥的打工生涯中碌碌无为度过一生，在失去自由的日子，我会努力学习，希望余生能有所作为。

人人影视也在努力转型，储备翻译人才，开发翻译软件，与 AI 技术结合，促进翻译领域科技进步，以助文化交流。很荣幸这些软件已被一些重要国际会议、中外文化活动所采用，相信今后会做的更好。

再次感谢每一位帮助过人人影视的朋友，感恩与您共度过一段时光。

中华文化在走向输出，期待新的“人人影视”与各位在盛世中再相见。



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name "梁良" (Liangliang).

2021 年 12 月 5 日

The translation of this letter is as follows:

To YYeTs friends

Dear friends who care about YYeTs,

I am Liangliang, the founder of YYeTs. Our law case has been made judgment in the first trial; thank you for your attention. At this time, I would like to say some heartfelt words from lawyer Kang Xiangpeng. Sharing makes the world a better place. It is the YYeTs fansubs' slogan, initial aspiration and driving force. Since 2004, thousands of fans have joined and contributed their passion and wisdom to the success of yyets.com. It is a long story to tell the hardships.

However, film resources keep increasing, and broadcasting technology keeps updating. Our copyright awareness and ability to obtain copyright cannot keep up with the group's development. We did not realise that YYeTs should stop circulating unauthorised programmes when the group reaches a certain size. Due to a lack of respect for intellectual property rights and weak legal awareness, serious consequences have arisen. I apologise to the copyright owner! Also, I would like to apologise to all YYeTs members. It is my fault that caused the group's fall and led to the legal responsibility of the programmers.

I have never regretted creating YYeTs. If it were not for the fate that brought me to it, I would have suffered from a long and boring working life. In the days without freedom, I will study hard and hope to make a difference for the rest of my life.

YYeTs is trying to transform itself by reserving translators, developing translation software, combining AI technology, and promoting scientific and technological progress in translation to help cultural exchanges. I am very honoured that important international conferences and cultural activities have adopted its software, and I believe it will be better in the future.

Thank you again to everyone who helped YYeTs. Thank you for spending time with me. China is making progress in cultural export and looking forward to seeing you again in the new YYeTs.

The story of YYeTs shows fan subtitlers' struggles with identity change. In cycles of resistance against and acquiescence to the dominant power, YYeTs survives vicariously through working with copyrighted parties, opening multifunctional virtual communities, operating external subtitles, and cooperating with private sectors. However, a controversy was ignited with the involvement of commercial capital as it rewrote the fansubs' culture and values. Gradually, the group lost its reputation in the eyes of other fansubs and its loyal members because it deviated from volunteerism.

Opposing Attitudes Toward Commercialisation

A common controversial topic among fansubs and fansub members is whether to collaborate with private video websites. Some fansubbers resolutely oppose commercialisation and online advertising. They feel a loss of core ethical values and volunteerism when fansubs profit from their work even if revenues are used to maintain the group servers. Many fansub groups disdain the use of revenue sources stemming from advertising and commercial cooperation, accusing it of overshadowing the unpaid spirit of the fansubbing group. Sfileydy

and FRM refused commercial cooperation because they believed this contradicted the voluntarism of fansubbing. On the Sfileydy website, an announcement appeared:

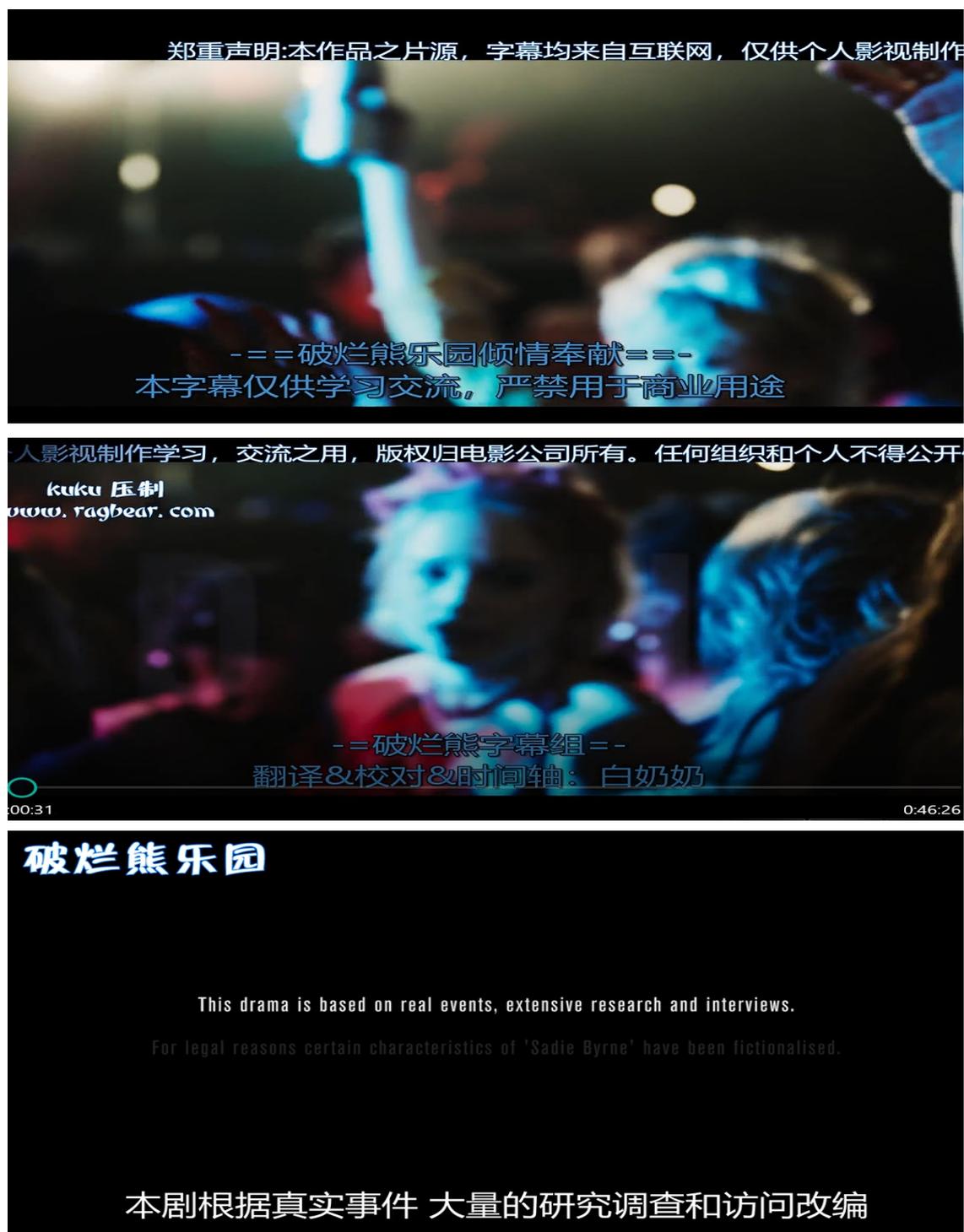
本站提供的所有资源均是网上搜集或私下交流学习之用。任何涉及商业盈利目的均不得使用,否则产生的一切后果将由您自己承担!本站仅提供一个观摩学习的环境,将不对任何资源负法律责任! All resources offered by this website are collected through the Internet and exchanged between peers for personal study. Use of any resources offered for commercial purposes is prohibited. Otherwise, you need to be responsible for any consequences produced! We only offer an environment of communion and study, and we won't bear any legal responsibility for the resources.

(Sfileydy, 2012. August. <http://bbs.sfile2012.com/>)

At the opening credit of Ragbear's subtitled drama, the group added a copyright announcement at the top of the picture. Moreover, the subtitle area displays the following: *Devoted by Ragbear, this subtitle is for learning and exchanging. Commercial use is strictly forbidden.* Furthermore, the picture presents the producer *kuku* (pseudonym) and the group's website address. The participant who produces the translation, the proofreader, and the timeline producer are also displayed at the bottom of the picture. Also, the group's logo is placed in the top left corner and constantly appears while watching, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14

A copyright announcement at the opening credit



Note. Pictures in Figure 14 From CSI Subtitling Work [Screenshot], by Ragbear, 2021.

Because of opposing attitudes to commercialisation, the YYeTs group was despised by many subtitle groups. In 2012, Sfileydy, FRM, TLF, and Flyingfantasy fansubs jointly accused YYeTs of using their subtitles to produce videos and inserting ads for profits without permission. These fansubs published a joint announcement online as below (Figure 15):

Figure 15

A joint statement condemning YYeTs' plagiarism behaviour for profits

对于人人影视未经同意擅自使用发布@伊甸园YTET字幕组 @TLF字幕组 @风软字幕组 @幻翔字幕组 等字幕组的影视资源用于商业目的，特此声明如下：

一、人人影视以营利为目的，擅自发布、使用联合声明中各字幕组的影视资源，违反了各字幕组发布时非商业用途的约定。这一行为属人人影视个人行为。

二、联合声明中各字幕组反对这种行为，并未参与其中，且没有从中获利，也不打算获利。联合声明中各字幕组要求人人立即撤除有关链接。

三、联合声明中各字幕组均为兴趣小组，作品仅供学习交流，不得用于商业营利。否则，一切后果由商业行为实施者承担，我们不承担任何法律及连带责任。

四、联合声明中各字幕组欢迎大家加入非营利性翻译兴趣小组。我们将一如既往认真负责，努力提高。欢迎大家加入，各组将努力提高翻译水平，并接受大家的批评、意见、建议和指正。我们必会虚心接受。

特此 联合声明

Note. From *ciweigongshe*, by Sina news. 2021. (<https://finance.sina.cn/tech/cs/2021-02-10/detail-ikftssap5121358.d.html?fromtech=1&from=wap>).

Back Translation of the contents in Figure 15:

For YYeTs using translated subtitles from fansubs of Sfileydy, FRM, TLF and Flyingfantasy for commercial purposes without consent, hereby declare as follows:

First, YYeTs make profits by using the resources of other fansubs in this joint statement without consent. This is YYeTs personal behaviour, and it violates fansubs' agreement with non-profits on releasing subtitles.

Second, fansubs in this joint statement object to this commercial behaviour. We did not participate in this activity and did not make a profit from YYeTs' behaviour, and we have no intentions of making profits. We demand that YYeTs delete relevant links immediately.

Third, fansubs in this joint statement are fan groups. Our work is only for learning and shall not be used for commercial purposes. Otherwise, the implementers of commercial activity shall bear all the consequences, and we do not bear any responsibilities.

Fourth, fansubs in this joint statement welcome everyone to join non-profit subtitling interest groups. As always, we will be serious and responsible and make improvements. Fansubs will work hard to improve the translation level and modestly accept criticism, comments, suggestions, and corrections.

Hereby, Joint Statement.

As evident from the joint announcement, fansubs jointly criticised the behaviour of making profits as their nature is free-sharing and fearful of being involved in legal issues. This announcement repeatedly stressed that fansubs are non-profit organisations and firmly anti-

capitalists. It cannot be denied that YYeTs had violated the volunteerism spirit of fansubbing. However, YYeTs defended that they spent far more on bandwidth and server operation than the annual advertising revenue. The rest of the difference was made by donations from group members. Also, the ads on subtitle group forums are sponsored mainly by the Internet or technology companies.

Such complaints often happen among different groups. The Sfileydy fansub group criticised the Ragbear group for using their subtitles in Season 5 Episode 5 of *The Closer* (2005). Sfileydy's subtitles came out online one day before Ragbear's. The Chinese subtitle produced by Ragbear is almost the same as Sfileydy's production, and Ragbear's English axis contained "sfileydy.com" without acknowledging the YDY group members. After the criticism was issued, multiple members responded to this incident.

Ragbear response:

1. 关于英文字幕里不删ydy的信息是为了尊重ydy时间轴组的劳动, 不然我们完全可以不发英文
 2. 翻译同学是否抄袭, 一定会调查清楚。确有此事的话, 绝对严肃处理。校对同学对此毫不知情。因为校对不会去借鉴其他字幕组的翻译, 所以才发现了这样的问题。
1. The reason for not deleting ydy.com in English subtitles is to respect the work of the Sfileydy timeline group. Otherwise, we do not have to keep English subtitles.
 2. We will investigate whether there is plagiarism or not. If there is such a thing, the translator will be taken seriously. The proofreader has no idea about it because they will not take other fansubs' work as references. (Back Translation)

Translator response:

我是那一集的翻译，当时没想那么多，因为YDY的翻译很快就搜到了，所以就有点偷懒，不想重复劳动的意思。郑重地说声对不起啦。现在知道是侵犯了你们的劳动成果,这事请不要怪到PLX的头上，老大们纯不知情。引起YDY和PLX之间的误解，很抱歉。两个都是我喜欢的字幕组，不要因为我过失而导致不和。

I am the translator in that episode. Because Sfileydy's translation was found very quickly online, I was a little lazy and did not want to do repeat work. My apologies: I know this is plagiarism. Please do not blame Ragbear for this; the leaders have no idea about it. I am sorry for causing misunderstandings between YDY and Ragbear; both fansubs are my favourite subtitle groups. Please do not quarrel because of my fault. (Back Translation)

Proofreader response:

作为校对我也给所有因为这件事而不开心的人道个歉，这两天正好有事出门了，所以没有及时给你们答复，非常抱歉。在与这名翻译的事后聊天中，认为她的行为也不是出于故意，认错态度也很好。但是这种侵犯他人劳动的行为仍十分严重，我想不论谁遇到这种事都很难作出原谅，因此我们会对她作出留组查看，短期内不会启用这名翻译。

As a proofreader, I would also like to apologise to those who are unhappy about this. I happened to be away from home these days, so I did not reply in time. Sorry. After talking with this fansubber, we believe her behaviour was not intentional, and she has

realised her mistake. But plagiarism is still a serious mistake and is hard to forgive.

Therefore, we will keep her in the group and not give her work in the short term.

(Back Translation)

There is a consensus among fansubbers that contains ambiguity: ethically, they despise pirating subtitles and value copyright protection of their own creations, yet the fansubs' slogan is "free sharing", and infringes copyright themselves. However, other than the rule of "Joining two fansubs is forbidden" at the entry requirement, as in Table 1, the community lacks a coherent set of ethics and effective measures to curb group pirating, which contributes to their pirating identities.

Text Manipulation

In practice, fansubbers favour a novel and creative rendition to differentiate it from that of commercial producers. The way they incorporate their creativity and cultural values in translation reflects their identity traits.

Performativity in Creative Writing

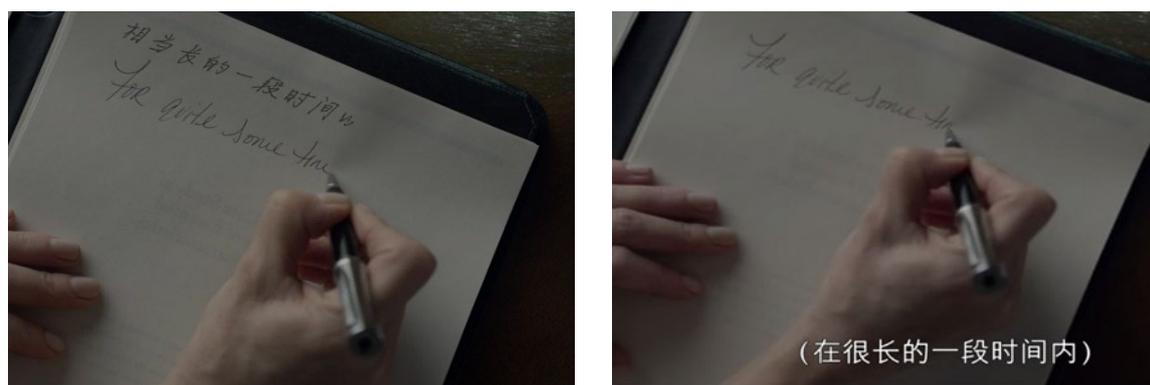
It is found that fansubs use specific conventions of translation techniques that have never been used in the professional environment in the past.

Fonts and Colours. As explained in the establishing norms, fansub groups tend to adopt varied subtitling formats to differentiate each other which includes the use of different subtitle conventions in terms of colour and fonts. In my subtitling work, I found that fansubbers actively negotiate on fonts, colours, and positions to ensure the styling of translation is compatible with the aesthetics of the original audiovisual medium in comparison to the white colour, font style and positioning of the default captions (usually at

the bottom of the screen) adhered to by professional subtitling. Figure 16 is a comparative image of the American drama *House of Cards Subtitling Work* (YYeTs, 2013) captured from YYeTs fansub version versus the professional subtitled version on Netflix.

Figure 16

Translation conventions in fansubs' version and the professional version



Note. The left screenshot is from *House of Cards Subtitling Work*, by Fansubs YYeTs, 2013.

The right screenshot is from the official version *House of Cards*, by Netflix, 2013.

As seen in Figure 16, the fansubbed version translations appear next to the original English words and use some typefaces, while the professional version shows no change in fonts and colours. Fansubs take the original English font, style, and colour into account with their rendition, adopting the same colour in black and mimicking the handwriting feeling in subtitling. It also embodies the mimetic and dynamic effect of showing each letter while writing, which re-forms the conventional presentation. In comparison, the fonts of the official translation stay normal in white colour without any dynamic effect in subtitling. Although the fansubs' sudden change of typeface may distract audiences from the standard position of subtitles, as seen in this example, it brings audiences closer to the original and raises the

viewers' enjoyment of visual aesthetics in the show.

Strategies to Deal with Cultural Elements in Subtitling. In my experience, there are two opposing strategies to handling cultural otherness in subtitling: domestication and foreignisation (Liu, 2019). The first strategy refers to tactics that smooth out the foreignness in translation, such as replacing foreign celebrities and idioms with Chinese counterparts or Chinese slang (Gonzalez, 2007). The second foreignisation is to add translation notes to explain unfamiliar culturally specific items in original scripts. Generally, when met with English cultural expressions with similar equivalents in Chinese, most fansubs chose to localise Western culture, adapting it to the Chinese context through domestication. Otherwise, fan translators add additional information in subtitles when there is a cultural discrepancy, that is, when they cannot find equivalent connotations in Chinese of English culture-loaded words such as those related to politics, myths, and historical events.

Domestication is a translation approach drawing on the deeper ideological roots of local culture, and it signals a profound understanding of audience tastes that situate translation in the receivers' background, experience, social culture, and national emotions (Diaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007). Unlike adding cultural references in subtitling, this strategy may strip foreignness from subtitles and alter the original's sense to render it more palatable for the audience. In 2011, Douban.com, China's largest online culture consumption community for books, movies, and music, launched an online assembly activity named "Your Translation is Too Considerate for the Chinese Mainland People!" The activity calls for translations of all non-China mainland films and television series to incorporate a view of mainland culture. In three months, nearly 3,000 participants provided 2,184 screenshots of

many famous translation scenes in the history of subtitle groups. These translations conform to the linguistic norms of Chinese Mandarin and the reading habits of the Chinese mainland audience. Figure 17 contains examples of Chinese fansubs' localisation tactics used in subtitling.

Figure 17

Screenshots from fansubs' subtitles assembly activity on Douban



*Note. Pictures in Figure 17 are from *Your Translation is Too Considerate for the Chinese Mainland People*, by Douban, 2011.*

Example 1: The source text “I am awesome” is translated into “我就是个活孔明”. (Back translation: I am Kongming alive). Kongming is a statesman in Chinese history who is well known as an intelligent and learned scholar.

Example 2: The source text “Heckle and Jeckle” is translated into “海尔兄弟”. (Back translation: Haier Brothers.) Haier Brothers is the longest-running Chinese domestic cartoon about a pair of brothers travelling around the world.



Example 3: The source text “you’d remember a night with me for the rest of your life” is translated into “与妾共度一夜 君将余生齿颊留香”. (Back translation: Spend a night with me, and you’ll leave your teeth and cheeks fragrant.)



Example 4: The source text “Oh, what the hell” is translated into “牡丹花下死 做鬼也风流”.

(Back translation: If I should die beneath a peony flower, I will still be charming as a ghost.)

The peony flower is a metaphor for the beautiful woman.)



Example 5: The source text “I want what you want” is translated into “愿我如星君如月 夜夜流光相皎洁”.

(Back translation: May I be the star and you are the moon; every night is

shining brightly together.)



Example 6: The source text “Do not pass go. do not collect \$200” is translated into “不成功便成仁”. (Back translation: go big or go home.)



Example 7:

The source text “You can’t make an omelette without cracking a few eggs” is translated into “舍不得孩子套不着狼”. (Back translation: You cannot catch a wolf if you do not give up on a child.)



As shown, the source sentence is simple, but the source text could be translated literally

because the meaning is easy to understand; however, instead of keeping foreignness in the source text, fansubs creatively interpreted them as Chinese celebrities to bring the translation closer to the social life of the Chinese people as in the first two examples.

The translated subtitles in Examples 3, 4 and 5 remove the original text structure and use the linguistic form of Chinese classical poems instead. The translations in examples 6 and 7 are from Chinese idioms, which keep the artistic connotation of the source text and integrate Chinese sociolinguistic culture. Fansubbers chose the classical forms of the target language and introduced Chinese colloquialisms in the translation to achieve localisation through text and cultural reproduction. As far as I can tell, the group doesn't define a specific translating strategy in subtitling because translation relates to the accumulation of translation experience, proficiency in both languages and particular situations.

It is the fansubbers' own choice regarding how to deal with cultural terms, literally or freely, perhaps to follow their group's previous work. For audiences, this localisation strategy is intrusive as foreigners express themselves in Chinese style, and this may somewhat deviate from the original meaning in translation. However, it undoubtedly strengthens the local culture, adds the humour effect in drama and makes the audience more sympathetic at a cultural level by freely erasing the foreignness in translation. The translation is also more palatable for the government because it is a subtle way of limiting foreign influence while at the same time allow consumption of foreign culture.

The more common strategy to deal with cultural terms in researched fansubs is to keep cultural idiosyncrasies. The group I belonged to tends to insert translation notes or glosses to explain cultural references or language-specific elements such as traditions, names

of places and historical events. Depending on the length of translation notes, the brief glosses, such as the explanation of a term, are inserted in the body translation, while the longer explanation usually pops up at the top of the screen. This technique also contravenes the professional norm, which prohibits any form of translator interference from being present. Figures 18, 19 and 20 demonstrate the manipulation of translators' explanatory notes in fansubbing and professional subtitling.

Figure 18

Translation techniques in fansubs' version and the professional version



Note. The left screenshot is from *House of Cards Subtitling Work*, by Fansubs YYeTs, 2013.

The right screenshot is from the official version *House of Cards*, by Netflix, 2013.

The source text is “You’ve made the Democrats relevant again in a very red state”. It is translated into “你让红州[共和党占优势的州]又一次注意了民主党” by YYeTs, for which the back translation is “You’ve made a red state [Republican Dominant States] notice the Democrats again”. Whereas in the official version, the source text is translated into “在这个共和党为主的地方 你让民主党又有了一席之地”, which can be back-translated as “The

Democrats have been taken into account at a place where Republican dominate because of you”. It can be noticed that both versions express the meaning of the political term “red state” as “Republican Dominant” in translation. However, the term “red state” is domesticated in the official Interpretation so that audiences will not be aware of that “red state” in the source text. By contrast, the fansubbed translation keeps the term “red state” and interprets it as “Republican Dominant State” by adding notes in square brackets next to the source word. The way of expressing the foreignness from the source text and simultaneously adding cultural references may be favoured by viewers concerned about foreign culture because they can look up the cultural item further by themselves.

Using annotation to provide a definition or gloss to clear culture-specific terms in body subtitles is a straightforward translation strategy in fansubbing. In the following Example1 in Figure 19, the “tooth fairy” in the source text “I never believed in tooth fairy” is explained with a headnote “如果儿童把脱落的牙齿放在枕下 牙仙会在他们睡着时把牙齿取走 留下硬币” of which the back translation is “if the children leave their lost teeth on the pillow, the tooth fairy would take the teeth and compensate the child with coins”. Considering most Chinese audiences may not know the tooth fairy story, fansubbers use headnotes to provide a cultural reference instead of leaving the term untranslated.

Figure 19

Fansubs uses annotation to clear culture-specific terms

Example 1

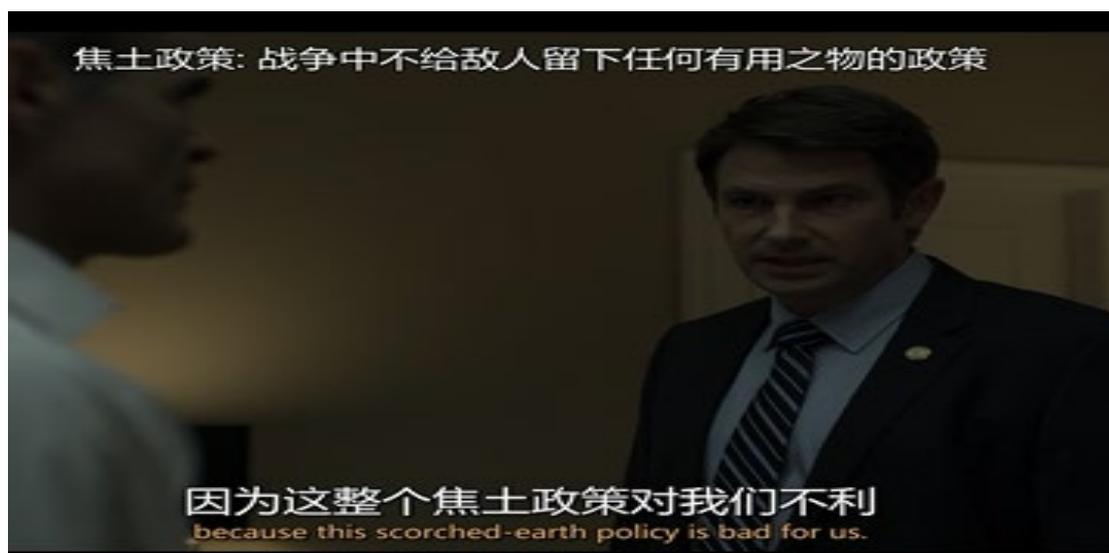


Note. Screenshots in Figure 19 are extracted from my subtitled work, *House of Cards*

Subtitling Work by Fansubs YYeTs.

Similarly, in Example 2, the source text “because this scorched-earth policy is bad for us” is translated into “因为这整个焦土政策对我们不利” (back translation: because this scorched-earth policy is bad for us). Instead of generalising the term “scorched-earth policy” simply as “政策” (back translation: policy), fansubbers inserted a headnote “焦土政策：战争中不给敌人留下任何有用之物的政策” which can be back-translated into “scorched-earth policy: a military strategy that leaves nothing useful to the enemy” to explain the cultural references further.

Example 2

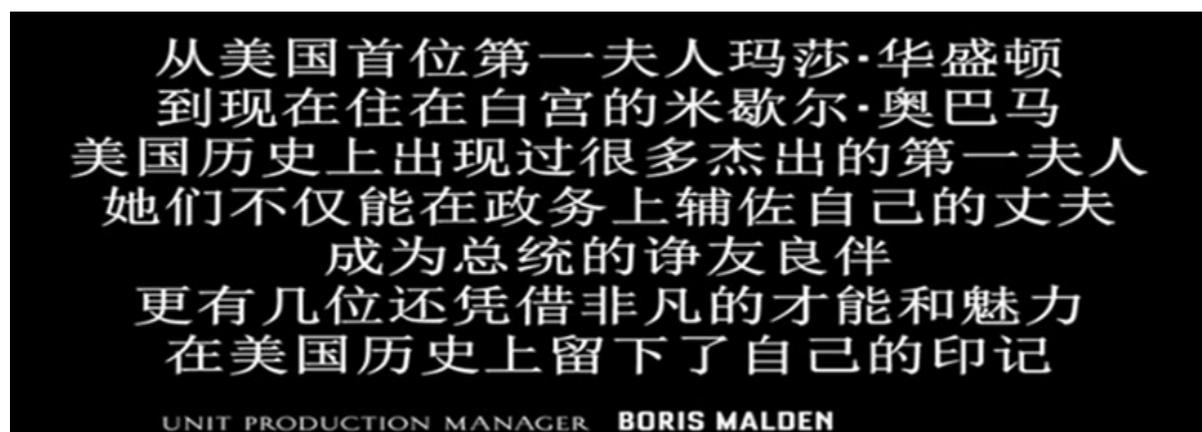


Besides this, fansubbers also like to comment to express their individual opinions, feelings, or sarcasm in relation to Western values or social affairs. In political dramas such as *House of Cards Subtitling Work* (YYeTs, 2013), which contains many political elements, comments appear at the closing credit of each episode subtitled by the YYeTs group. Figure 20 presents fansub members' feelings toward the American First Lady since this episode centred on the actress's campaign capacity. The back translation of the comment is "From Martha Washington, the first lady of the United States, to Michelle Obama, who currently lives in the White House, there have been many outstanding first ladies in the history of the United States. Some of them have not only assisted their husbands in political matters but also made their mark on the history of the United States through their extraordinary talent and charm." In fansubs' comments, the subtitlers refer to the American First Lady Michelle Obama to express admiration for that lady's charms and connect with the viewing experience of the drama. This cultural intervention of adding comments or cultural references facilitates

audiences to enjoy the show by giving a lot of knowledge about the situation. The viewers can follow the plot better when armed with relevant political knowledge.

Figure 20

Fansubs adding comments to assist cultural understanding



Note. From *House of Cards Subtitling Work* Episode 11 [Screenshot], by Fansubs YYeTs, 2013.

Imply Social Events in Subtitling. Unlike professional subtitlers who follow dominant subtitling conventions and social norms, fansubbers use colloquial language combined with hot social events in subtitling activities to express their critical irony towards certain cultures and social phenomena. Although fansubbers did not talk much about social events in the working group, their attitudes and opinions are revealed in their subtitled work, as shown in Table 2. Examples 1 and 2 imply fansubbers' attitudes toward social phenomena of food safety and abuse of power. Example 1 comes from a severe food safety incident. Sanlu, a famous dairy products company in China, produced a milk powder that was found to contain high levels of toxic melamine, causing many babies to become ill and die. In subtitling, fansubbers use “drink Sanlu milk” to express irreversible damage and brainless

decisions. Example 2 refers to another sensational social issue. A boy hit a pedestrian while drink-driving. He drove away from the crime scene, shouting, “Sue me if you dare. My father is Li Gang!” Li Gang is a senior police officer in his city. It seems to the perpetrator that he can break the law and disregard life if his father is Li Gang. Fansubbers use the phrase “My father is Li Gang” to present arrogant people and express dissatisfaction with the abuse of power in society. In Example 3, “Relax, this place has more jamming than a Santana concert” is translated by the subtitle group into “Relax, this place has more jamming than CET-4 or CET-6 test hall.” This translation would bring a smile to college students and white-collar workers who have already been through the CET-4 and CET-6, a standardised college English test sponsored by the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education involving tens of millions of students every year. Passing the CET-4 English test is one of the necessary conditions for graduation in most Chinese universities. Although many students oppose this mandatory exam-oriented English test, they still must follow the rules to get a diploma.

Furthermore, most fansubbers are or used to be obedient students in the Chinese education system. They feel repressed by the Chinese testing systems and now can freely express, mock and resist this powerful, dominant force in their translation. Examples 4-6 reflect the social impact and landscape of television news in China. The Melatonin promo is one of the most successful advertisements, and the product has won first place in healthcare product sales for 16 consecutive years. Its popularity is primarily due to the continuous playback of advertisements between television series, which causes audiences to complain. CCTV News and Focus Talk are well-known news programmes. Fansubbers borrowing them in translation can narrow the distance from the audience and deepen the audience’s impressions of their

translated work.

Table 2

Examples of fansubs' translation

	S: source language T: fansubs translation	Back translation
1	S: Did you do your hair with dynamite? T:你今天是不是喝三鹿了?	Did you drink Sanlu milk?
2	S: What? Oh, you think I'm afraid of you? I'm not afraid of you! T:你算毛? 你爸是李刚啊!	Who are you? Is your father LiGang?
3	S: Relax, this place has more jamming than a Santana concert. T:别怕,这里的信号屏蔽比四六级考场都好	Relax, this place has better signal blocking than a CET-4 or CET-6 test hall.
4	S: Penny is cuckoo for cocoa puffs. T:Penny 亲你的次数就跟脑白金广告一样	Penny kisses you as many times as Melatonin advertisements.
5	S: Ladies and gentlemen, it is now 7:00 pm Time for the news. T:女士们先生们, 现在是晚上七点, 中央台新闻联播即将开始	Ladies and gentlemen, it is now 7:00 pm Time for the CCTV news broadcasting.
6	S: He gets any nuttier, they're gonna put him on the view. T:他要是再疯点, 就能上《焦点访谈》了	If he gets any nuttier, they're gonna put him on the Focus Talk.

Note. Examples in Table 2 are from *Your Translation is Too Considerate for the Chinese*

Mainland People, by Douban, 2011.

God Translation. God Translation refers to a unique line of translated subtitles that are screen-grabbed by viewers, shared on social media, and disseminated by netizens. It follows the principle of accurate translation, combines transliteration and free translation, and fits the characteristics of a specific context and culture. Audiences refer to this subtitling as God Translation for its creativity and applaud this rendition because they can understand the meaning in a second and chuckle along with the translation as it appears on the screen. The language of God Translation in the subtitling of American television series has the characteristics of networking, being popular, localised, and entertaining.

The following examples show how fansubbers use translation skills to integrate Internet slang, buzzwords, entertainment culture and popular culture into the translation context. As shown in Figure 21, the Chinese subtitle creatively uses Chinese character components, rather than English letters, to translate the spelling of English names in source subtitles. As Chinese characters are hieroglyphic, the viewers may find them intrusive and need time to understand. Once they understand, they will be amazed by translators' creative translation strategies.

Figure 21

Examples of fansubs' recreation in subtitling

Example 1.

Original subtitle	Chinese subtitle	Back translation
And James Clerk Maxwell was his name-o, J-a-m-e-s c-l-e-r-k space M-A-X-W-E-L-L	他叫詹姆斯·克拉克·麦 克斯韦哟 詹女母斯斤 克 克 打 立 十 兄 空格 丰女十兄其斤韦	James Clerk Maxwell was his name-o (spell the name in the Chinese character component).

Note. Examples in Figure 21 are from *Your Translation is Too Considerate for the Chinese Mainland People*, by Douban, 2011.

The Chinese translation in Example 2 is a line of lyrics from a popular Chinese song and closely resembles the meaning of the source language. Fansubbers smartly use lyrics as substitute translations. However, this interpretation can only be understood and make people laugh when audiences know about this song.

Example 2.

Original subtitle	Chinese subtitle	Back translation
Can't do this by myself, buddy	该配合我的演出你视而 不见	Don't turn a blind eye to the show that you are supposed to play with me.

Example 3 should be understood in the context of film and television culture. Here, the translated subtitle is borrowed from the Chinese television series *Detective Dee Renjie* (2014). The translation is a popular Internet buzzword that spreads quickly through the network due to being recognised by netizens. Although using buzzwords and punchlines in subtitling can maximise the humour, it raises higher requirements for the Chinese audience's cognition of popular Internet culture. The rendition would appear strange and meaningless for an audience unfamiliar with this phrase or if their understanding is insufficient.

Example 3.

Original subtitle	Chinese subtitle	Back translation
So...what do you think	元芳 你怎么看	Yuanfang, what do you think

The God Translation used here reflects the characteristics of combining the current trends and the translator's re-creation. This kind of interpretation highlights fansubbers' subjectivity and manifests their creativity in reproduction. The subtitled language is either from a television show or a pop song and has distinct features of net culture. The reason is that most Chinese fansubbers are of the net generation influenced by popular and Internet culture. They have a distinct aesthetic sense of subculture, which enables them to borrow and integrate various media resources and cultural phenomena. In addition, since fan subtitlers' are free from the restrictions of commercial subtitling, they naturally tend to use popular terms, as these expressions are easy to understand, rich in connotation and full of ridicule. The following are more examples that demonstrate how fans deliberately use Internet slang in vernacular Chinese to render the meaning and register of the dialogue (Table 3).

Table 3*Examples from the Big Bang Theory Subtitling Work*

Original subtitle	YYeTs Fansubs translation	Back Translation
Example 1 Sheldon: My chair, my rules. (Season 03, Episode 23)	Sheldon:我的椅子我做主。	My chair, my zone.
Example 2 That is one tough birdie. (Season 05, Episode 09)	真是鸟坚强。	What a bird Jianqiang (Strong-willed).
Example 3 Oh my god, I'm crying already. (Season 04, Episode 13)	哦，天呐，我已经内牛满面了。	Oh my god, I am "Neinu manmian" (tearful).
Example 4 Howard: Keep reading. Raj: No, it's creepy! (Season 06, Episode 21)	Howard:继续读。 Raj:不，这太没节操了。	Howard: Keep reading. Raj: This is so unchaste.
Example 5 Bernadette: No husbands, no boyfriends, no rules. Amy: No rules? Bernadette: Fine. No husbands, no boyfriends, some rules. (Season 06, Episode 23)	Bernadette: 不带老公,不带男 友,不设下限。 Amy:不设下限? Bernadette:好吧,不带老公,不 带男友,设了下限。	Bernadette: No husbands, no boyfriends, no lower limits. Amy: No lower limits? Bernadette: Fine. No husbands, no boyfriends, have lower limits.
Example 6 Sheldon: I'm a physicist with a Nobel in chemistry. Everyone laughs at the circus freak. (Season 07, Episode 10)	Sheldon:我将是获得诺贝尔 化学奖的物理学家，大家快 来笑我这个奇葩吧。	I'm going to be a physicist who won the Nobel Prize in chemistry. Please laugh at this weirdo.

Note. From *Big Bang Theory Subtitling Work*, subtitled by YYeTs, 2007.

The bold expression in fansubs' translations is popular Internet slang among current Chinese youth. This sitcom is about the story of young people, which targets millennial adults in their twenties and thirties. Therefore, it is wise to translate subtitles corresponding to what a Chinese of comparable age and background would say in a similar situation. The sentence pattern of translation in Example 1 is from a Chinese Internet catchphrase 我的青春我做主 (My youth, my zone) initially coming from a Chinese television series. In Example 2, the pattern "...+ jianqiang" is commonly used online to describe someone's act of mental toughness. It is from a story of a pig famous for having survived buried under the Sichuan Earthquake ruins for 36 days. The pig was named Piggy JianQiang by netizens to promote the spirit of a strong mentality in distress. In the above two examples, the Chinese translation may seem strange at first glance, but it conforms to the Internet culture of the time and is within the scope of the audience's knowledge that the fansub group assumes. In Example 3, "Neiniu manmian" means "tearful". "Neiniu" is originally from the mispronunciation by Chinese southerners, as they cannot distinguish between the sound "n" and "l". Fansubs' rendition makes fun of the Indian boy's funny pronunciation and shows the speaker's dynamic personality. The subtitles in Examples 4, 5 and 6 contain the popular slang expressions *Jiecao* (节操, 'unchaste'), *Xiaxian* (下限, 'lower limits') and *Qiba* (奇葩, 'weirdo').

Among the post-80s and post-90s generation, these expressions are popular phrases in cyberculture, conveying a teasing tone, one that is not implied by the literal meaning of the words. Fansubs adopt net catchwords because they are in line with the speaking style of modern young people and can be readily accepted by the young Chinese audience. These

phrases narrow the distance between the original drama content and the young audience and can reach an entertaining effect, as in drama. However, unlike regular Internet buzzwords, the translation uses the allegorical meaning of these online phrases as the original meaning is altered to achieve amusing effects. This shift can be understood through the philosophy of humour, which help ease tensions by promoting acceptance of ambiguity and diversity, while also encouraging creative problem solving (Morreall, 2024). In situations that often provoke negative emotions—such as delivering bad news, apologising, complaining, warning or criticising—humour can introduce a sense of delight that mitigates or even neutralizes these negative feelings. It acts as a social lubricant, fostering trust and diffusing conflicts (Morreall, 2024). In this case, many young Chinese audiences are unlikely to refer to this rendition as a faithful translation. This is because Chinese audiences who watch fansubbed films and television are relatively well-educated and understand basic English and elements of foreign culture. Most of them are accustomed to different cultural elements being maintained in foreign audiovisual programmes. In this context, Internet slang obviously should not appear in the plot of the English subtitles which would violate general rules of the translation industry that require translators' invisibility on the screen to immerse the audience in the original narrative. The contradiction and conflict between different sounds, images, and translation texts emphasise the translator's intervention, adding additional meaning to the plot that does not exist in the translation. When the semantic difference between the translation and the original text is too significant to be explained by translation techniques, can the use of slang be regarded as valid? Furthermore, once translators' desire for performance overrides the function of translation to convey meaning, can they remain satisfied with being a simple

text converter?

Mind-blowing Translation. Accuracy seems to be the foremost principle in translating; as explained earlier, professionally subtitled versions are often criticised for being inaccurate due to conforming to China's state censorship guidelines. Politically sensitive and taboo expressions (such as swear words) in films and television programmes are deleted and overtly toned down by professional translators, resulting in the inaccuracy problem and compromised meaning perceived by viewers. Besides this, official subtitling is used to maintain a neutral tone of speech, which sounds gruff and inflated compared to that type of everyday speech. This officially stiff tone of translation hardly reflects the mood in the original language. By contrast, one of the fansubbers' primary motivations is to produce an accurate translation, making their own version of the translation faithful to the original text. When ordinary fans believe they could translate better, they become fansubbers by joining a fansub group. However, it was found that fansubs that used to pride themselves on making the subtitle version faithful to the original produce "inaccurate" or "mind-blowing translations" which seems a little narcissistic as their act is full of performative. These are called mind-blowing translations by fans because their meaning deliberately departs from faithfulness to the original, which differs from God Translation in nature.

Screenshots in Figure 22 were widely spread by fans who took screenshots and shared them on social media Douban. The producing group of these subtitles is untraceable and the Chinese translation in each of these examples can be hard to read as the translation of the original dialogue because it deviates from the original meaning. It is more like fansubbers' interpretation, demonstrating their disruptive practice in subtitling.

Figure 21

Fansubs' mind-blowing translations shared by fans

Example 1.



Chinese subtitles: 我不懂法语，前面的字幕都是我编的，我编不下去了。

Back translation: I don't know French. I made up all the subtitles, and I can't do it anymore...

Example 2.



Chinese subtitles: 请恕我们无能...貌似该死的恐怖分子说的是阿拉伯语

Back translation: Please excuse our incompetence... It looks like the damn terrorist was speaking Arabic.

Example 3.



Chinese subtitles: 这人就个介绍房子的, 她废话太多, 不翻译了

Back translation: This person is a house agent. She talks too much. I don't want to translate.

Example 4.



English subtitles: Thank you.

Chinese subtitle: 这句不用翻译了吧，大家英语都很好啊，哈哈

Back translation: No need to translate this sentence. Everyone knows this one.

Example 5.



English subtitles: Seven years later

Chinese subtitles: 史蒂芬 耶尔斯 莱特

Back translation: Steven Yells Wright

These screenshot examples imply fansubs' randomness and inconstancy in their text manipulation. That means they treat translation as a performance and view themselves as performers who consume, interact with, and create a culture for the audiences. This kind of behaviour conforms to the narcissistic characteristic in Spectacle/Performance paradigm (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Meanwhile, this shift in subtitling ignores both the invisible translating principle and the heavily gamified subtitling activities. The translator's image is prominent due to the original foreign cultural background being eliminated. Such

practice may be seen as unacceptable by one group and legitimate by another, depending on their ideology. While the use of vulgar and popular Internet language to replace foreign elements with overly obvious local elements is universal, there is less use of mind-blowing translation in subtitling. Because fansubs' self-censorship mostly depends on a group's generalised position rather than personal views, many fansubs have a guideline restricting extreme individualistic performance. This practice exemplifies a form of self-surveillance on the Chinese Internet, where internal regulations help maintain alignment with broader societal and political expectations. In the broader digital ecosystem, platforms, media companies, and individual users are encouraged to take active roles in mass surveillance, contributing directly or indirectly to the censorship apparatus. The extensive involvement of non-state actors, such as private companies and individuals, is essential for the system's functionality. These non-state actors are not passive enforcers but exercise agency, strategically navigating and reinforcing the censorship framework (Luo, 2022). Fansub groups, in this context, not only align themselves with authoritarian control but also actively engage in surveillance primarily to avoid government censorship and penalties. Most fansubs hold accuracy as a foremost principle in translation, and if the translation shifts far from the original; in that case, many fans may go online to criticise fansubs' inaccuracy and express their frustration with the subtitles, which is detrimental to fansubs' reputation. However, this action does show that fansubs' proofreading process is not rigorous. Sometimes, the group guidelines may take a back seat to personal desires.

The practice demonstrates that fansubbers' performative features attract audiences at the cost of faithfulness in translation. The mind-blowing rewriting makes fansubbers'

performativity even more prominent. Indeed, infusing these foreign media works with grassroots cultural elements essentially changes the meaning of these media products.

However, it catches the audience's attention online and arouses widespread discussion for its novel and amusing effects.

National Awareness in Production

In a country that highlights patriotism as one of its core values, national awareness is grounded in the consciousness of local Chinese communities and individuals. Over the last decade, the Chinese government's campaign to promote nationalism has gained significant momentum. According to data from the World Values Surveys, mass nationalism surged dramatically between 2012 and 2018, achieving an impressive growth rate of 13.7%, positioning China second among 27 selected countries and regions. This increase illustrates the powerful impact of state-sponsored efforts to cultivate a sense of national pride among its citizens (He & Tang, 2024). Fansubs' national consciousness is primarily reflected in their resistance to certain media content. The target audience of American audiovisual programmes is mainly American; therefore, the images of China and Chinese in American drama are often portrayed by stereotypes— autocracy, corruption, bureaucracy, ignorance of human rights, and theft of high-tech information from the United States (Gui, 2008). Besides this, Chinese government in American drama is depicted as one of the powerful competitors that can stand up to the United States. It is consistent with China-US relations in the real world about the underlying rivalry for influence and resources. However, the Chinese audience for American drama is well-educated and has benefited from China's reform and opening-up process. Chinese audiences are willing to learn about American culture to expand their views. They

also feel a strong connection with Chinese culture by bonding through the nation's territory and patriotic education in their early years. The consciousness of China's rising power and national pride has always been critical in contemporary Chinese nationalism. I found that even if Chinese audiences can accept the adverse content about China in American drama, they tend to emotionally maintain the existing social values. My research shows that fansubs' national emotions arise spontaneously when they encounter images that arbitrarily distort or trash China and its people in the production of cultural products. For sentimental reasons, fansub members may avoid adverse content in subtitling to subvert Western culture's discipline and maintain a positive national image, even though their group's survival depends on the import of overseas cultural products to some extent. If the foreign content in translation contains negative evaluation or false information about China, group members would analyse and rationally discuss the content to achieve self-reconciliation and collective identification. A typical example is from *Boston legal subtitling work* (FRM, 2008), Chinese fansubs collectively refusing to translate the final two episodes of Season 5 because the plot contains a misreading of and malicious attacks on China's human rights issues. The act of refusal was initiated by FRM and soon followed by all Chinese fansubs, expressing that they were emotionally unable to translate this drama (Gui, 2008). It should be noted that leaving a translating programme unfinished damages a fansub group's reputation and may cause them to lose fans. A week later, the FRM fansub belatedly continued their translating work of the final two episodes and put a warning sign stating that they strongly disagreed with the content at the beginning of the two episodes, as in Figure 23.

Figure 22

Fansubs' warning against watching distorting media content



Note. Figure 23 and Figure 24 are from *Boston Legal Subtitling Work* [Screenshot] on SubHD, by FRM, 2014.

The source subtitle in this picture is “警告:本集含有大量争议性情节强烈不建议观看你看到的所有内容与翻译、校对无关”. The back translation is “Warning: This episode contains a large number of controversial plots. We strongly recommend not watching; the content has nothing to do with the translator and proofreader”. Other than this, all the places in the plot involving China are rewritten as “Country C” to avoid a negative image, as in Figure 24.

Figure 23

Fansubs' rewriting to maintain a positive national image



Source subtitles: 美利坚合众国最终会为 C 国打工

Back translation: The United States will end up working for Country C.



Source subtitles: -你们好 -他们是 C 国人

Back translation: - Hello. - They're C's.

In this case, Chinese online subtitle groups used their way of launching a small protest to vent their frustrations about the drama. The inappropriate speech in the drama aroused the

collective emotions of Chinese fansub members to take a stand to maintain their national image and strengthen national pride. They left their work unfinished and put warnings even though they knew this act might result in netizen condemnation.

Another direct index of fansubbers' nationalism is their groups' attitudes towards audience criticism of Chinese culture and politics. Individual comments around socialist values in foreign drama quickly cause debates and verbal battles online. Of the top ten most active topics in YYeTs' comments area, six are about politics and culture—China versus America. The most active post is comments for the American drama *The Terror Subtitling Work* (2022) (https://www.yysub.net/html/top/week_comments_list.html).

Figure 24

Viewers' comments on the American drama The Terror

【美剧】《极地恶灵》

烂番茄91新鲜度, MTC76分, 这么好的剧被一帮“爱国青年”打成大毒草, 你们只适合《战狼2》, 对了这么爱国以后一定要参军上战场, 千万别逃兵役哟
[+赞 200461] [-踩 124] [举报]

回复

1 2 ...2 下一页>

65713233 普通会员 LV6 2022-07-25 01:08
这不是好剧不好剧的问题, 这是两种文化对于视角的不理解! 这跟爱国青年有什么关系~自己感觉看了外来剧就有文化了, 你才看了多少啊! 别拿爱国说事儿, 《战狼2》怎么了, 大漂亮拍了那么多也没见你们出来喷过啊! 站不起来东西, 有本事出去在骂街, 出不去就老老实实待着! 什么玩意!

sungke1234 普通会员 LV6 2020-10-25 11:02
这孙子被喷成这样很欣慰, 来大家一起来把他顶到最高赞, 让更多的人来骂

james_lee 永久金至尊 LV6 2020-10-11 18:08
看见你被喷成狗我就放心了

淡燃 永久金至尊 LV6 2020-03-27 16:31

Note. From YYeTs forum. *The Terror Subtitling Work*, by YYeTs, 2022.

The translation of the top comment:

Rating 91 on Rotten Tomatoes sites, and 76 on Metacritic, such a good drama is accused of being bourgeois poison by a group of “patriotic youth”. You are only suitable for watching *Wolf Warrior 2*. You are so patriotic that you must join the army on the battlefield. Don’t escape military service. --By FG110

Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic are film review aggregation sites. *Wolf Warrior 2* (2017), a Chinese film, is famous for its patriotic theme. This post caused nationalist sentiment in the comments area with over two hundred thousand clicks. A representative argument is from user 65713233:

这不是好剧不好剧的问题，这是两种文化对于视角的不理解!这跟爱国青年有什么关系~自己感觉看了外来剧就有文化了，你才看了多少啊! 别拿爱国说事《战狼2》怎么了,大漂亮拍了那么多也没见你们出来喷过啊!站不起来东西,有本事出去在骂街,出不去就老老实实待着!什么玩意!

Translation:

It is not a matter of good or bad drama but a perception difference between the two cultures’ perspectives. What does this have to do with patriotic youth? Feeling literate after watching foreign dramas, how much have you seen? Don’t get patriotism involved. What is wrong with *Wolf Warrior 2*? Why don’t you criticise Americans for shooting so many patriotic films?

Another poster, sungke1234, wrote that FG110’s post should be on top for more viewers to condemn. The comments area is filled up with many similar disparaging posts. These posts are mainly dominated by the preference for Chinese values, criticising militarism in Japan and calling out racism and hegemonism in the United States. There are also complaints about

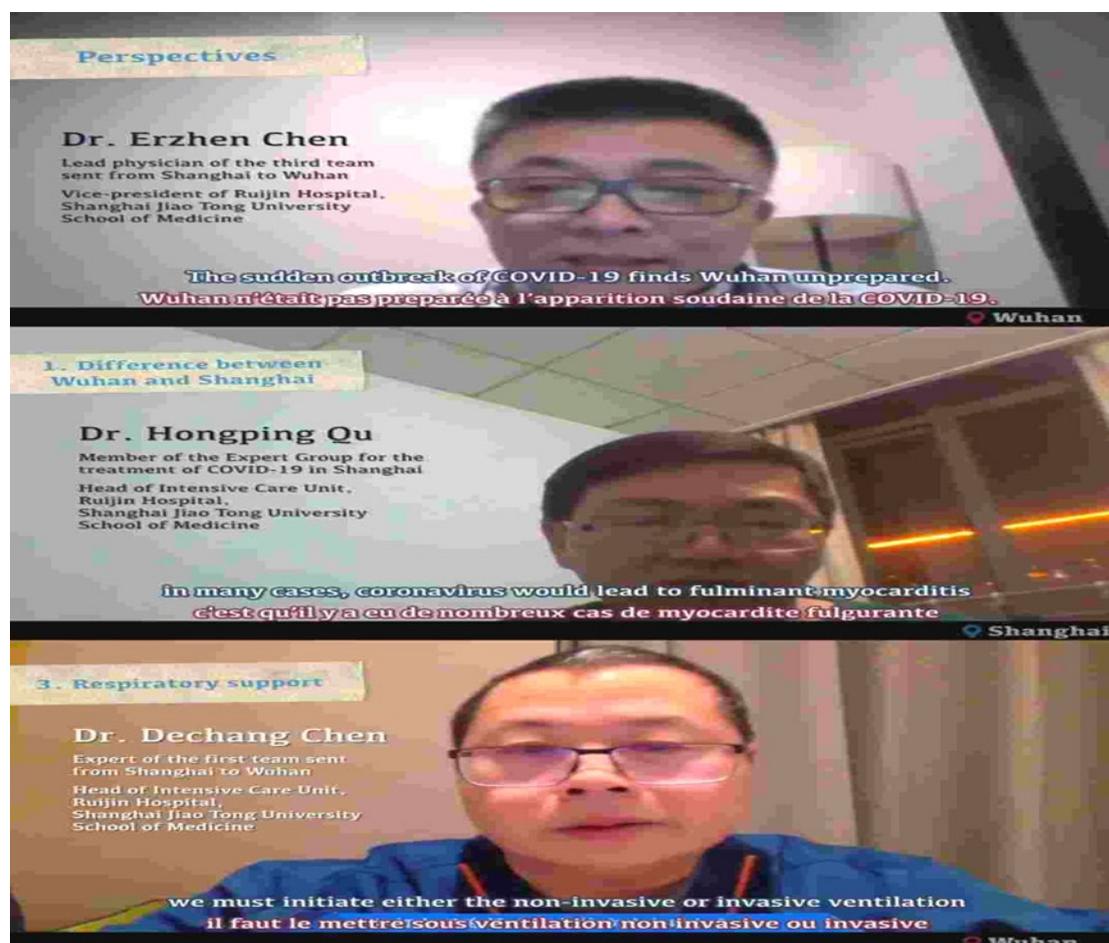
Chinese bureaucracy and the conservative system of introducing foreign films, as well as comments that mock patriots as too sensitive to take criticism. However, their criticism soon gets a strong and swift patriotic response. In fact, responses in the comments area are not only from the subtitling crew but also viewers. Fansub groups said they would immediately remove all comments and replies involving politics, insults, and personal. By contrast, this post seems to be pinned on top for condemnation with these many comments. A possible explanation for the odes to socialism in fansub comments is that the robust implementation of the dominant ideology in China and the flourishing nationalism has become the lens through which Chinese audiences understand American television series (He & Tang, 2024).

A noticeable phenomenon is the cultural export behaviour of some fansubbers. Over the last three years, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on people's lives worldwide and unpredictable adverse effects on fansubs. Hundreds of American television shows and films had to cancel broadcasting because of the coronavirus; for example, the crew of *Mission: Impossible 7* (2023) had to stop filming and were quarantined for two weeks. This situation led many Chinese fansub groups to stop updating their production. Meanwhile, the wave of unemployment caused by the pandemic may have paused members' hobby of fansubbing to some extent, causing unexpected setbacks in fansubs' development. However, in the face of this severe health crisis, many Chinese fansub members devoted themselves to subtitling videos of China's experience in fighting COVID-19, showing the outstanding contribution to mutual aid by exporting culture internationally. For instance, the Cainiao fansub, which focuses on sharing and subtitling Indonesian videos, translated a video on *如何明智的面对疫情* (2020) (*Back translation: How to deal with the epidemic wisely*) in Indonesian. Sino-

Iranica volunteers established a group online to subtitle videos of China's approach to the pandemic and posted them to Iranian people on social media. Besides these, dozens of students from the Sino-French Joint Medical School of Shanghai Jiao Tong University formed a "Fight against COVID-19 fansubs" to pass on the latest knowledge of China's fight against COVID-19 to its global counterparts during the outbreak of the virus in 2020. These volunteers posted their produced and translated video *Severe COVID-19: Frontline ICU experience from Wuhan & Shanghai (2020)*. The content of this video is a live broadcast of the clinical experience-sharing meeting held in Shanghai on 16 March. In this video, experts from Shanghai and Wuhan discuss clinical differences between the two regions, respiratory support, and inflammatory storms (Figure 26). The production involves a heavy task load and is difficult to translate because this video lasts nearly two hours and contains many technical terms. However, the volunteer group subtitled its content into English and French and completed the video's translation, editing and post-production within 10 days.

Figure 25

Fansubs' video of Fight against COVID-19



Note. From *Hardcore! The efforts of the Shanghai Anti-Virus subtitle team have meaning for all humankind* [Screenshot], by Zhu et al, 2020, March, *People's Daily*.

After the video was released at home and abroad, it received over 10,000 views in just two days. Many alumni of this university, those who have been practising medicine overseas, forwarded it to medical workers in France, the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Canada, and other countries, aiming to pass on valuable Chinese experience in the fight against COVID-19 (Zhu et al., 2020, March). These fansubbers' remarkable efforts have received positive feedback and thanks from doctors worldwide. Meanwhile, the *People's*

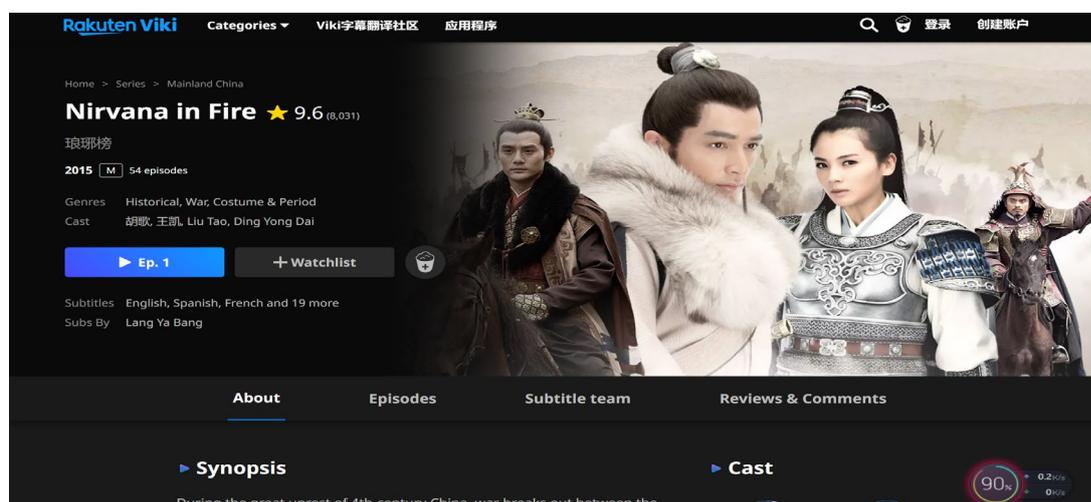
Daily published an article 硬核! 上海抗疫字幕组的努力对全人类都有意义 (Hardcore! The efforts of the Shanghai Anti-Virus subtitle team have meaning for all humankind), to praise the subtitle team's contribution and kind volunteerism (Zhu et al., 2020, March).

This cultural export behaviour, where fansubs promote Chinese culture worldwide, was also showcased on the popular online platform Viki (www.viki.com). Viki is an American video streaming website that allows users to free-watch television series, movies, and music videos. Viewers worldwide can watch and comment on the videos and join the community to translate and produce subtitles anytime. Viki's slogan is "by fans for the fans". Its most prominent feature is that all videos on the site are legally broadcast and translated by fans in its community. The main distribution content on the Viki website is Korean, Chinese, and other Asian films and television. This site hosts hundreds of Chinese television series translated by fans, including the latest popular modern urban dramas and historical dramas in China. 琅琊榜 *Nirvana in Fire* (2015), a 56-episode historical drama, has been translated into more than 20 languages, including English, French, Korean, Japanese, and even Greek and Hebrew (Figure 27). With a score of 9.6 from 8,031 netizens, it is one of the site's most popular dramas. (Viki, 2019). In the translation of *Nirvana in Fire* (2015), fan translators use cultural footing in many places to explain the translation and supplement background knowledge. The completely different history, culture and ancient language did not hinder the understanding of foreign friends. On the contrary, the costumes and music in the drama deeply attracted foreign fans who were unfamiliar with Chinese culture. Besides Chinese fansubbers, fan translators who do not understand Chinese also participated in the subtitling production. They translated the programme into their minority language through translated

English subtitles. Though their translation may lose the fidelity of the original drama to some extent because of transcription, this does speed up the dissemination. It has a broader reach, as passionate fans from non-English speaking countries can understand and watch the programme. Viki's website is a successful example of using the active audiences' power to promote and market cultural products, especially using Chinese fans to translate Chinese film and television works and promote them overseas.

Figure 26

Viki promotes Chinese television programmes worldwide



Note. From *Nirvana in Fire* (2015) [Screenshot], by Viki, 2019.

(<https://www.viki.com/tv/22943c-nirvana-in-fire>).

Compliments and Criticism on Fansubs Forum

I looked into fansubs' online postings and aimed to examine how fansubbers react to viewers' compliments and criticism. Regarding social platforms, fansub groups utilise platforms, such as Baidu Bar (百度吧) and WeChat to interact with audiences and receive feedback. Baidu Bar is a BBS forum that allows users to form discussion groups based on their preferences and

topics. It assists fansubs in creating multiple activities to engage audiences further in fansubbing media. Fans can post their questions related to wanted video resources, subtitles, and news updates, evaluate translation, and provide suggestions for group improvements. WeChat is a platform designed especially for mobile devices. It provides instant messaging, video chat, e-publishing and blogging to more than 600 million users from more than 200 countries and regions. Almost every fansub group has registered an official account on WeChat. News content shared or published by fansubs is often combined with a link to the source text and is more diverse than the information provided through official media channels. Through updates posted by fansubbing groups in blogging spaces on WeChat, audiences can learn about the latest progress in fansubbing output, receive up-to-date news on foreign entertainment media and read fansubbers' reviews of a particular show. Fans can also search groups' subtitled shows by entering the series' name on its official account, which provides a link to download the production. Sometimes, fansubbers share articles about their fansubbing experience and feelings in blogging spaces. For example, on every anniversary of its founding, the Ragbear fansub group pushes articles demonstrating how fansubbers are emotionally attached to the group. In its comments area, fans crowded to celebrate their years of passion for work and expressed their gratefulness to the group. For example:

Congratulations on your 14th birthday, dear Bears! Thanks for opening an extraordinary window to the outside world, which enables us to experience different cultures and wonderful people. Even though I never had the honour to meet any Bear in the real world, you guys already possess a special position in

my heart... I really appreciate all you've done for us fans. Wish every bear would enjoy a bright future! And, have a jolly good time! (TAO, 2021)

In addition to sending heartfelt warmth to the group on its anniversary, many fans also use social platforms to send moving and inspiring memorable posts for YYeTs fansubbers. When you search “盗火者字幕组/fire bringers” on Weibo, many supportive messages will show like the following.

感谢人人带给我的快乐，盗火者的名字会随着火焰的光芒传颂下去，感谢这束光。Thank you all for the joy you brought me. The name of the fire bringers will be sung with the light of the fire. Thank you for the light. (Cassini 2021)

今天又干什么了: 如果人人有罪,那么,人人都有罪。盗版不对,但是感谢盗火者们,让我们看见了这个世界。正道无路,莫怪歧途。他们制造了荒漠却被称之为和平。我们仍未被征服。If YYeTs is guilty, then everyone is guilty. Piracy is wrong, but we can see the world thanks to the fire bringers. You cannot blame the questionable path if the right track leads nowhere. They made a cultural desert and called it peace. We are not yet conquered. (What did you do today, 2021)

贺呵呵了:为众人抱薪者,不可使其冻毙于风雪;为自由开道者,不可令其困厄于荆棘。”人人字幕组,为我们这一代人免费提供了十年高质量的美剧英剧,让我们看见了别样的文化和世界。一声叹息,感谢你,人人影

视。我们生活在怎样的世界里面。写小说不允许碰十余种封禁题材,字幕组被查处,几乎以前所有能看的电影被下架,大荧幕为了过审不惜将台词剪得七零八碎。我们不能看裸体,不能看性爱,不能看暴力美。不能说脏话,不能谈死亡,不能犯忌讳。我们就生活在这样的世界里面,在一处高高的墙里,盗火者被抓走,给水者判有罪,振臂高呼的人不知如何赢。We cannot make the one who gathered firewood for everybody die in the blizzard. Let not those who make way for freedom be trapped by thorns. YYeTs has provided our generation with free high-quality American and British television series for ten years, allowing us to see a different culture and world. With a sigh, thank you, YYeTs. What kind of world do we live in? More than a dozen banned subjects were not allowed to write in novels. Fan subtitle groups were cracked down, and almost all fansubbed products previously available were removed. Lines in cinema movies were cut to pieces to pass censorship. We cannot see nudity, we cannot see sex, and we cannot see violent beauty. No swearing, no death, and no taboos. We live in such a world of a high wall where the fire bringer is caught, and the water giver is condemned. Those who shout for us do not know how to win. (HeHehe, 2021)

In fact, Chinese fansub groups have a strong reputation among fans. This is demonstrated in a widely quoted metaphor comparing fansubbers to Prometheus. An expression that “pirates are fire-bringers” from a comment on Sina Weibo in support of fansubbing groups on World Intellectual Property Day aptly illustrates the audience’s views that fansubbing is a quasi-heroic behaviour rather than an unlawful activity. Professor Feng Yan of Fudan University

also claimed that fansubs' grassroots behaviour in translating massive films and online learning materials is the fourth translation event that greatly impacted Chinese culture in history (Yan, 2019, as cited in Yao, 2021). Because fansubbers win audiences' hearts and have a reputation online, many audiences paid tribute to their heroes when YYeTs was accused of piracy, and the leader was given a prison sentence. They warmly addressed fansubbers as "my fire bringers" who open the world, allowing them to understand the original foreign cultures. They cited the Latin phrase "Invictus maneo", which means we remain unvanquished, as their slogan to express discontent and pay tribute to their heroes. They praised fansubs' contribution in the video comments area, sent thank-you notes on Weibo, and made videos to salute the fansubbers on different social platforms.

Many viewers tend not to evaluate the translation or give suggestions on forums, instead, they praise fansub members and express gratitude towards them in different ways. When the final season of *Game of Thrones Subtitled Work* (YYeTs, 2019) was released on the YYeTs website, the closing credit was full of bullet screen comments expressing gratitude to fansubbers' contribution, as in Figure 28, a screen captured from Weibo microblog in 2019. These bullet subtitles while the video plays allow viewers to input their thoughts and feedback in real-time watching. Audience comments will be simultaneously imposed on the original video and can be turned on/off directly on the screen. This form is typical for fans to express gratitude to fan subtitlers while enjoying their work.

Figure 27

Bullet screen comments expressing gratitude to fansubs



Note. From Game of Thrones Subtitling Work [Screenshot] on Weibo, by YYeTs, 2019.

Alternatively, many audiences send a thank-you message to fansubs in the comments area of the video posts.

Chinashe: 不知是凭着多么深沉的热爱，才能一路坚持翻译一十几年来，感谢字幕组 (Translation: what kind of love that fansubs had to keep them subtitling for more than ten years. Thanks, fansubs).

Ketchup: 感谢字幕组这么多年的陪伴！结束是为了开始，希望剧组的各演员、字幕组的众翻译、各位观众能有个新的开始 (Translation: Thanks fansubs for their company over the years. The end is for a new beginning, hope all actors, fan subtitlers and viewers all have a new beginning).

Tony: 虽然其他网站已经有了比较清晰的片源, 不过还是想等人人字幕组的片源, 不为别的, 就为他的翻译, 谢谢字幕组, 辛苦了~(Translation: Although there are good quality resources on another website, I will keep waiting for YYeTs' production, just because of their good translation. Thanks, fansubs for your hardworking).

Adun88: 人人翻译得非常到位, 很贴切很传神, 非常喜欢 (Translation: YYeTs' translation is accurate, proper and vivid. Big love).

135649005899: 多年来, 一直看人人的片子, 个人感觉人人的质量从没有下降过。看生活大爆炸和摩登家庭时, 看到字幕组人员名单, 总有莫名的感动, 就好像看到久违的老友; 感谢你们, 真心希望人人越办越好 (Translation: I have been watching the fansubs' production for many years, they are always in good quality. I was always incredibly touched when fansubbers' names were shown in *Big Bang Theory* and *Modern Family*. Seeing their names is like seeing old friends. Thank you, and I hope the fansubs become more and more successful).

These posts were collected from the old comments area of YYeTs fansub forums. However, due to the YYeTs group having been found guilty of piracy, this area can no longer be accessed. When searching YYeTs' *Game of Thrones Subtitling Work* (2019) on Weibo now, it says: “根据相关法律法规和政策, 搜索结果未予显示” (Translation: In accordance with relevant laws, regulations and policies, search results are not displayed).

Fansubbers are seen as elites in the cyberspace of China. This perception and their

audience compliments are rarely challenged, thus contributing to fansubbers developing an inflated ego. On the one hand, audiences and fan translators are in an unequal relationship where the translator is hailed as an idol or God by those non-contributing users. To a certain extent, a sizable audience depends on the free content that fansubbers produce. Fans' indebtedness may be expressed through silent gratitude or take the form of reverent praise, both of which may be at odds with critical evaluation. The public review space is used predominantly for expressing gratitude. Instead of evaluating the subtitles, many users tend to praise their producers. Because the translations, although in some ways flawed, are good enough for most fan audiences to fulfil their watching needs. These fans are more concerned with the timely availability of the subtitles than the translation quality. A rare critique post is likely to spark fans' quarrel about whether non-contributing users should be grateful. For instance, Ragbear's (2019) translated subtitles for *Downton Abbey* (2010) caused arguments among viewers for using too many Chinese idioms. A viewer posted that the fansubber's translation makes the show look like a modern Chinese drama because they use many Chinese idioms and proverbs, and many of these do not correspond with the original meaning. As a result, this British drama became a Chinese drama, and it lost its original essence. Following this post are some remarks stating the opposite: "You can load other subtitle groups' translations if you don't like Ragbear's"; "We are into Ragbear's translation style of combining Chinese characteristics and idioms"; "What is wrong with fansubs translating with Chinese characteristics"; "The produced subtitles are not only for you; if you do not like please leave"; "Fansubs are doing this for free, you should respect their labour"; and "They are producing subtitles with heart; people who enjoy have no right to criticise."

Comments like these are not only from viewers. Richard, a fansubber, also claimed, “Our members join in this fansubs voluntarily. We have no payment. If you don’t like ours, go to other fansubs. It is not compulsory. Or you can watch the original video without subtitles if you are that good” (Ragbear, 2009). Apparently, these fans are partial in their responses. Many fansubbers’ followers are expected to speak up for fansubbers before they personally intervene when receiving criticism from viewers. Even in the area of subtitle reviewing, words of praise and gratitude easily outnumber criticisms and corrections. The translation style can be defended by highlighting fansubbing’s informality and free contribution. Any mistranslations or typos can also be explained by fansubbers’ amateurism and time constraints. As a result, given fansubbers have authority and enjoy considerable fan applause in this space, they are unlikely to receive constructive criticism and critical evaluation.

Online audience’ compliments and positive comments regarding fansub groups have reinforced fansubbers’ great sense of self-worth and positive self-image. They give fansubbers a sense that they are unique and extraordinary. Although fansubbers’ primary motivation for subtitling is not to receive compliments, recognition from their fellow members and audiences has become an extrinsic motivation to show their elite status as a fansubber within the Chinese fansubbing scene.

Conclusion

This chapter presents and analyses fieldnotes and archival documents from fan forums and fan news sites. These findings show that the fansubbing group apply a series of principles to govern members’ individual acts to achieve mutual benefits. 1) membership criteria to attract and filter potential participants; 2) integration rules governing how new members are

introduced to and taught to engage in group activities; 3) translation norms governing the members' translation process and direct translating activity; 4) game mechanism characterised by a multilayered hierarchy of rights to increase users' engagement. This research investigates these materials for two reasons. First, these filtering and governance mechanisms function to form fansubbers' shared understandings of their identities and coordinate group activities to produce mutual benefits and eventually maximise members' collectivism. Second, it is crucial to understand the group mechanism and the tensions within the group because identity construction is a complex learning and socialisation process. Fansubbers' identity construction not only relates to how fansubbers participate in collaborative activities and regulate themselves, but also relates to how they incorporate their ideas into the text and react to controversial opinions. Findings derived from this archival data suggest that fansubbers' identity-building is a process that occurs through daily practice of subtitling and interactions with the social components of the group under group norms and regulations. This will be further explicated in Chapter Six. The following Chapter Five will present the results of online surveys and interviews and explore fansubbers' perspectives on multiple identities and their identity preference.

Chapter Five Findings: Survey and Interviews

In this chapter, data collected through online surveys and interviews are drawn upon to explore fansubbers' subjective voices in terms of whether their subtitling activities are driven by the existence and perception of their multiple identities. Collected information was analysed discursively, focusing on the motives, attitudes, and values underpinning conversations and interactions to explore the underlying beliefs and understandings. In a constructionist worldview, language plays a central role in the analysis of social practice (Holstein & Gubrium, 2008). The words we use, the proverbs, values, sayings, and stories all elicit meaning (Gergen & Thatchenkery, 2004). Therefore, interpreting how the participant actively creates their world through language-based distinctions can help reveal shared and possibly hidden values in practice, which may in turn reveal important insights into the construction of identity. To conceal their true identities and protect the participants from being identified, I have throughout this chapter used (A...B...C...) to refer to the interviewees instead of their pseudonyms or surnames that appeared in consent forms.

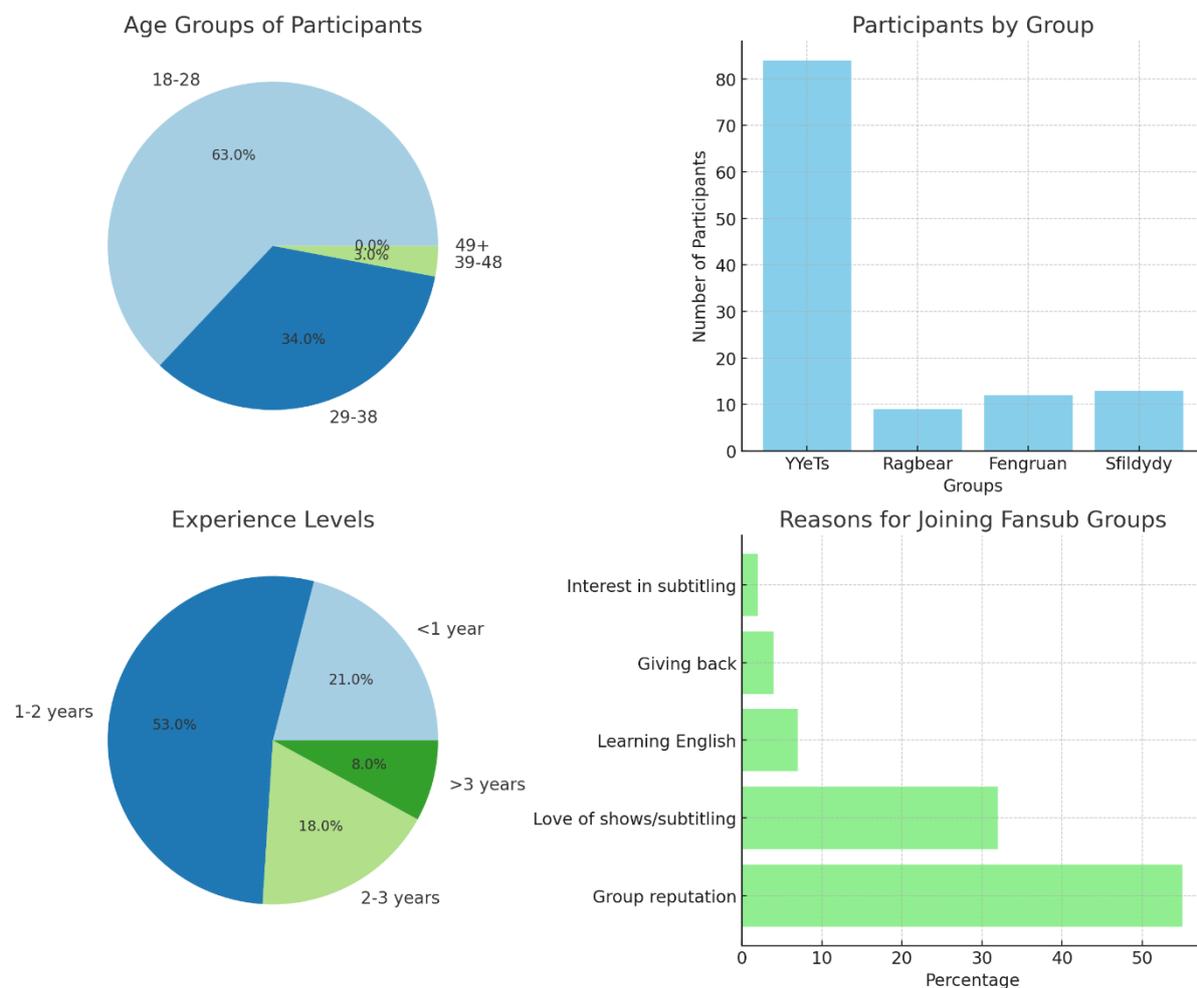
Demographics of Survey and Interviews

In total, 118 questionnaires were completed and returned. The age groups of the participants fell into the following four categories: 18-28 years old (63%), 29-38 (34%), 39-48 (3%), and 49+ (0%). In terms of groups, 84 participants were from YYeTs, 9 were from Ragbear, 12 were from Fengruan and 13 were from Sfildydy. Fifty-three percent of participants had 1-2 years of experience, 18% had 2-3 years of experience, 21% were new members with under a year and 8% had over 3 years of experience. Questions were posed about what makes fansubbers decide to join the group, and participants were asked to give reasons for their

decision to join the group. Responses to this question suggest that members join fansubs for different reasons: 1) the reputation of the group (55%) and 2) their love of American shows and subtitling (32%); other reasons given included learning English, giving back to the community and interest in subtitling activities (in descending order of relative importance). Demographic survey data (Table 4) suggests that most participants are young adults and have been in a fansubbing group for 1-2 years.

Table 4

Demographics of survey participants



The motivations that draw them into one group, or another vary, largely based on personal

desires as seen in Table 5. This table also charts the demographic information of the ten interviewees.

Table 5

Interviewees' personal background

Role	Education background	Involvement years	Hours/week	Motivations
Sub-group leader	Master student	9	4h	Love American drama
Sub-group leader	Engineering	5	10h	Sharing
Sub-group leader	Chemistry	4	10h	Sharing
Translator	Business	3	5h	Learn English
Translator	Accountancy	1	5h	Love American drama
Translator	College Student	3	3h	Learn English
Translator	Business Consultancy	3	3h	Learn English and share
Translator	Master student in Translation	2.5	3h	Learn English
Translator	Designer	2	2h	Learn English and share
Proofreader	Minority language student	2	4h	Love drama

In total, 11 fansubbers said they would love to participate in the interview. The first 10 interviewees were selected. To represent a range of experiences, these interviewees were intentionally sought out in terms of their background, their different roles, and the length of time they were involved. Participants represented fansubbers' different prominent roles and had varying levels of expertise: three sub-group leaders (leaders for a particular drama theme in fansub), six translators and one proofreader. The group leaders were all translators when they had initially entered the group, after which they were promoted to leading projects and often were also needed to proofread the translations and do subtitlers' work. In terms of educational background, four interviewees have English-related majors at the tertiary level, and at the time, three of them are college students. Seven participants are neither formally trained in translation nor have majored in a language-related field. The length of time working in the group ranges from one to nine years. In terms of average hours worked per week, participants' working hours depend on their leisure time available and the number of released video resources. A group leader reported that she could be overloaded with 20 hours a week in subtitling at her busiest times.

The results indicate that fansubbing, as unpaid work, requires fansubbers' enormous enthusiasm. Factors such as participants' educational background and the time devoted to their roles became more significant throughout the research. Throughout the interviewing process, purposeful attempts were made to obtain participants' thoughts on different identities and remain open-minded to emerging themes and questions. To assist the participants, I steered them back into their comfort zone when strong emotions enveloped them. For example, one interviewee was angry about fansubbers being called pirates, and another was

repelled by being labeled with a particular identity. She insisted that joining fansubs was for personal interest and did not like being labelled. I picked up on new topics or asked them about interesting experiences when such emotional situations arose. In the conversation, new insights came in naturally. These new themes brought me to a deeper understanding of their perspectives on the work and their role in it and added a profound depth to the questions and the answers.

New Insights from Interviews

The backgrounds of the participants are important as they reveal several interesting points. Firstly, the spirit of dedication of the first-generation fansubbers encourages the followers' ongoing contribution. It was found that although members' original reasons for joining fansubs vary, eight out of the 10 participants reported that they continue to be influenced and motivated by the first generation of fansubbers, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

其实我最开始加入就是想锻炼一下自己的翻译水平，但是后面就感觉这好像更多的变成了一种我的除了我的日常生活中的一部分，就有感觉有一种使命感，你首先就有那种因为我当时还是中学生的時候，看那些美剧就觉得那些翻译的人好厉害，然后我现在也是想尽自己的努力，能够也让更多的人看到这种不同的文化。- A

In fact, in the beginning, I joined only to improve my translation skills, but later I feel that it has become more of a part of my daily life. I have a sense of mission. When I was a middle school student, I felt those translators were awesome while watching American television series. And now, I also want to do my best to let more people see these different cultures. - A

大家其实我拿他你说当消遣也好，还是当学习资料也好，其实我享受了很多人的义务的这种付出，我觉得我作为一个学外语的人，我也愿意把这个就去自己尽自己的力回报一下。- B

The fansub's work could be a pastime or learning material. In fact, I have enjoyed the voluntary efforts of many people. I think that as a foreign language learner, I am willing to do my best to repay it. - B

互助，这也是回到我刚才说的我现在做这个事情，是因为我当年受到了人家前辈的这种帮助，我现在愿意把这种帮助再延续接力延续下去，我也没指望他赚钱，我也没想拿它赚钱。- C

Mutual assistance, this is also back to what I said before about why I am doing this now. Because I received this kind of help from other seniors, I am willing to continue this kind of help, and I did not expect him to make money. I did not want to make money from it. - C

我现在完全可以不用看字幕，可以啃生肉，但是我身边的很多朋友或者是包括可能刚开始学语言，包括学生这些，他们可能现在还没有这个能力，所以我可能还是希望可以帮助更多人,因为我自己当年是这种大家用爱发电的这种受益者。- D

I can watch the raw video materials without reading subtitles, but many friends around me or people just starting to learn languages, including students, may be

unable to do so. I hope to help more people watch American series because I benefited from this volunteering spirit. – D

Regardless of the differences between members, “volunteering” and “contributing” are commonly held core values among those interviewed. These key points are identified as essential factors in sustaining fansub members and allowing the group to prosper. It is found that most fansubbers agree that fansubbing is ultimately for the public benefit and the welfare of the community who loves watching American drama. This non-material or spiritual goal is a strong incentive to keep fansubbers working. Such spirit, which is essential to media fandom, is often inherited from long-serving members of the group. Three participants out of the ten reported that their initial motivation to join the group was purely to learn English, but what motivated and inspired them to dedicate themselves further were their predecessors’ efforts. They believe in giving back to the community by making inaccessible media products available so that Chinese audiences can enjoy the same entertainment as them.

A further insight related to the influence of personal background is that fan subtitlers’ roles and subtitle genres may change over the years. Most participants started fansubbing in college when they had lots of free time. As time went on, they graduated and had full-time jobs. They changed from subtitling American drama to subtitling other genres like documentaries and movies. A reason for this, as explained by one group leader, is that translating a series of American dramas usually takes a week. After taking on a full-time job, they no longer had the time or energy, as was the case in their college years. Therefore, they may choose more manageable tasks even though they still love American television series the most. The time sensitivity of American drama is another reason they switched genres in

subtitling. Television series often need to be subtitled just hours after the original audio programmes are released. Otherwise, audiences may lose patience and search for other groups' resources or watch another show instead. Subtitlers feel disappointed and frustrated if their hard-worked productions have no audience because the time of publishing is too late. Therefore, they prefer to subtitle the classical genres of movies or documentaries. Moreover, the roles of fansubbers are also changeable within the group. Experienced fan subtitlers often command knowledge in many aspects because the fansub group provides teaching materials and self-tests for their interested members. They can apply for a sub-group leader and be responsible for a programme after years in the group. Sub-group leaders who organise a project may have strong leadership and communication skills and be proficient in both languages; they are good at both integrating translations and post-production to improve the visual effect. Therefore, it is common for a group leader to take on multiple tasks according to the project's needs. Group leaders would be responsible for proofreading, translating and even post-producing if the project is short of hands.

Drawing from survey data regarding participants' experiences and reflections offered within the interviews, the following findings are organised around fan subtitlers' thoughts on promoting cultural communication and their identity preferences. As discussed in the Literature Review, fansubbers' identification as cultural transmitters and their importance in intercultural communication has rarely been explored (Luo, 2015), while their textual practice reveals high cultural awareness as discussed in the findings in from the previous chapter. Therefore, this research seeks to examine this identity by interviewing participants about their understandings as a cultural transmitter and their practice in cultural

communication.

Reflective Thinking on Promoting Intercultural Communication

All the respondents agreed that fan subtitling plays a crucial role in fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. When asked how often they explain cultural items in subtitling, over 93% (99 out of 118) of subtitler respondents in the survey said they explain cultural terms most times or even every time they encounter them in subtitling. Sixty-seven survey respondents believe that Chinese subtitling can largely help the viewers understand the cultural connotations of the audiovisual programme. When asked if the fansubs contribute to intercultural communication, interviewees used terms such as “certainly” (当然了), “of course”(一定) and “definitely” (肯定是). They share the common belief that the key to fansubs promoting cultural communication is to make foreign media accessible to broad audiences who cannot access the resources and who do not understand English. When asked how fan subtitlers encourage cultural communication in practice, interviewees said the following actions in subtitling may contribute to cultural exchanges.

Research Cultural Items in the Original Context

One way to promote cultural communication through subtitling is by prioritising accuracy and cultural sensitivity in the subtitling process. To be effective in cultural communication requires not only language proficiency but also cultural sensitivity. One interviewee explained that their goal is to create subtitles that accurately translate the language and convey the cultural context and meaning of the media to the target audience. Therefore, it is essential to be familiar with the cultural background of the media you are subtitling. An

interviewee explained how she always pays extra attention to mediating cultural translation discrepancies. She has noticed that some words in the lines have rich references in English, like when the character is being called “Karen”, which is not her actual name. It cannot be translated deliberately because the Chinese do not have a similar culture so cultural resonance is lost. When translating a cultural term like this, she said she would consider the context of the term in the film and find the Chinese substitution with the most closed meaning. For instance, when “Karen” was referred to a character who likes making complaints about everything in the scene, she would use “事妈” (Chinese pronunciation: shì mā), meaning a middle-aged fussy woman in translation. Every time meeting these words, she turns to Google, Urban Dictionary or Twitter to find the related references, figure out the original meaning and find the most equivalent Chinese words in the context. This is an example of when the localisation of a translation, fansubbers make it closer to the original concept by not translating literally. Group members often ask for the origins of cultural terms and search for references. For example, in a translation project on recipes and cuisine, a member asked how to translate “leek” because the leek in the film looks different from the Chinese leek. Members living abroad suggested using the references in the local Chinese market and keeping consistency in translation. In this way, researching the origins of cultural terms improves members’ cultural understanding and communication.

Add Contextual Notes or Explanations

In addition to accurately translating cultural references, the interviewees acknowledged that providing contextual notes to explain the cultural elements and allusions in the translation is a common strategy to bridge cultural gaps. However, fansubbers’ opinions vary on this

practice. It was found that experienced fansubbers are more inclined to domesticate the cultural references in the Chinese context and find a similar Chinese expression, while fresh subtitlers tend to use cultural notes. Three group leaders and one experienced translator explained that they prefer not to add notes in translation as it would disturb the audience's viewing experience. As one group member told me during an interview:

我肯定会用一种类似于国人比较通俗能理解的方式把它翻译出来，因为如果直译肯定是不对的，直译的话加硬字幕。其实加硬字幕把它解释出来实际上是一种偷懒的方法。就是你没有去进一步的想去说明，你只是说我给你点名了，这是个梗，然后我给你解释了，我就做到这了。但这是一种偷懒的方法，这不是一个能够让观众第一时间就 get 到这个点的方法，所以对我来说我就可能会用 local 的语言...你看剧看电影也好，实际上是为了轻松，你要看翻译的话,就是我一看到就要明白。如果你要加了硬字幕的时候，这个观众看到这他就会暂停，然后去仔细阅读你屏幕上这些字，你打破了它流畅感。

I will definitely translate it in a way that Chinese people can understand because the literal translation is wrong. In fact, literal translation, like adding translation notes, is a kind of lazy way. That is, you don't go further to explain. You just pointed out that something is explained, and that's all. But it's lazy behaviour because it cannot let the audience understand the meaning in the first place. So, I will adapt the translation to local language habits... You watch a show or a movie for relaxation. If audiences need to watch using the translation, they need to understand the meaning of translation meaning at first glance. If you add subtitle notes, the audience will pause and read the

extra words on your screen, which eventually break the viewing flow. (Back Translation)

The group leaders interviewed said they prefer to localise the foreign cultures in translation and enjoy this process. They pointed out that inserting translation notes means you only move words from the dictionary and do not show your translation abilities. The localisation of foreign terms does not equal word-for-word translation as the translator needs to understand its connotation and translate vividly. In their explanation, translation requires a deep understanding of language connotations, and it improves proficiency in both languages when subtitlers consider how to translate the text resourcefully. Other interviewed translators, however, said adding references can be beneficial when subtitling culturally specific content in political and historical television series such as *Madam Secretary* (2014-2019) or *The Crown* (2016-2023). They prefer to provide a cultural background or an inserted explanation as it is a way to expose viewers to Western cultures. One group leader stated the following:

我个人的倾向是愿意做个硬字...我觉得这是你看剧要接触, 或者最好是了解他的这种文化, 或者他不同的这种语言的背景。然后我觉得反正从我的角度, 我个人愿意看一些背景的东西, 我觉得这是对我知识库或者说一个兴趣点扩充, 所以我个人会比较偏向用这种形式, 当然有一些词确实比如说中文里面会有。可能有一些短语, 它其实跟中文的某一种俗语也好, 或者说是甚至是成语也好, 可能非常神似, 它可能不是逐字翻译...我个人不太喜欢一些字幕组用一些网红词汇, 这些我不太喜欢。因为说实话我知道我做的字幕不可能可能永远被人用下去, 因为它根本也不是正式版, 只是大家用来交流的一个东西, 但是我还是希望他能经得起时间的考验。

Personally, I prefer to add translation notes... I think that when you watch a foreign show, you'd better understand its culture and its different language context. From my point of view, I would like to see some background information. I think it's an extension of my knowledge, so I prefer to use this form. Of course, some cultural words do have an equivalent meaning in Chinese. Some English phrases may have similar meanings to Chinese idioms, which may not be required to translate literally... Personally, I don't like that some subtitle groups use Internet slang in translation. To be honest, I know that the subtitles I made are a thing for people to communicate and cannot be used for long because it is not an official version, but I still hope that it can stand the test of time. (Back Translation)

It is to be expected that some fansub members would not like using jokes, Chinese dialects, or Internet slang to make their translation colloquial and fun as such practice reduces translation accuracy and distorts the original meaning. However, another interviewee gave one more reason: they are worried that changes to the original would only be accepted by a small number of audience members at any one time. Subtitling of cultural references involves a hybrid model when employing translation strategies (Diaz-Cintas & Remael, 2007). The decision to add cultural explanations or to localise foreignness in Chinese translation depends largely on the meaning discrepancy in transmission and the translator's personal preferences. However, both strategies suggest that fansubbers are concerned about cultural connotations; they would not translate literally and always pay extra attention to cultural differences in subtitling.

Developing Cultural Interest

Another way interviewees considered promoting cultural communication is by developing an interest in cultures for both group members and audiences. Interviewees reported that a group's fansubbers would discuss what strategy to use and how to properly translate the uncertain cultural elements or insert cultural references. A sub-group leader stated that:

作为字幕组成员，我们会去了解很多的相关文化的这种梗，包括典故，然后包括一些新潮的这些东西。同时对于看剧的人来说也会有就像我刚才举的例子，像美剧里经常出现这种棒球的术语，然后有的人看了之后就会去了解为什么会有棒球的术语，棒球术语还有哪些，这些讲的什么意思，可能他们就会对相关文化产生兴趣。再比如说英剧，像 *Wolf Hall*，美剧像 *House of the Dragon* 这样的剧，然后可能看了之后就想去读一读原著的小说，然后确实是能够促进文化交流的，实际上前提怎么说是字幕组的成员首先他是去乐于去了解，然后乐于把这种精力投入在他的翻译里头，那么看他翻译作品的这些观众就会受到这种比如说因为他翻译的好，所以可能才会对他原著或者是相关的文化有兴趣，然后类似于促进这种正向的循环文化交流是这样子。

As members of the subtitle team, we will learn a lot about these cultural memes, including allusions and some trendy things. For television series viewers, there will be baseball terms like the example I just gave. Then some people who watch the television series may want to know why there are baseball terms, what other baseball terms and what is the meaning of these terms. Maybe they will be interested in the related culture. For example, British dramas such as *Wolf Hall* (2015) and American dramas such as *House of the Dragon* (2022) may inspire you to read the original

novel after watching it, which can indeed promote cultural exchange. In fact, the premise is that the members of the subtitle group are willing to understand these cultural references. And then, they are willing to put their energy into translation so that the good translation will affect the audience who watch their translated works. Then they may be interested in the original novel or related culture and promote a positive circular cultural exchange. (Back Translation)

Besides this, another interviewee said subtitling also helps to cultivate habits of learning foreign cultures.

就是我不翻译的时候，我去看一些东西的时候，我看到一些新词，比如看一些杂志什么看到新词我也会去查，我觉得这就是养成的一个习惯，做字幕让我知道很多东西我可以去哪儿了解。我不知道的东西肯定有很多，但是我知道方去学会它，我觉得这确实是一个收获。

Even though I am not on subtitling task, I will also look up unfamiliar words in magazines when I read. I think it has become a habit. Doing subtitles lets me know where I can learn a lot of new things. There must be many things I don't know, but I know how to learn them. I think this is truly a benefit. (Back Translation)

Interviewees feel that they have developed cultural consciousness in subtitling. Cultural awareness is crucial for intercultural communication as it enhances understanding of different cultures and fosters cultural exchange. As a cultural transmitter, this consciousness enhances subtitlers' foreign cultural knowledge and awareness and arouses the audience's interest in exploring foreign historical culture, such as reading English-language novels and learning cultural references.

Translation Depends on the Released Platforms

It is worth noting that the fansubbers' mediation of cultural elements in subtitling depends on the platforms on which the series is released. Two interviewees who participated in business projects within the group indicated that their translation submitted to the official video platforms differs from their usual fansubbed version. B was once in a group project producing subtitles for *NetEase*, one of China's three recognised portals. She said the cultural elements were localised, rather than explained in translation notes because the subtitles were distributed on official social media so must strictly follow the public release requirements. She had participated in the subtitling events for the *Shanghai International Film Festival* four times. She noted that the translations were reviewed by the organiser first. If culturally or politically sensitive content was found in the translation, rather than dropping the subtitle lines containing taboo words, the organiser removed the movie from the festival to prevent heated discussions and possible legal actions. Therefore, for videos distributed on official platforms, she took pre-emptive action by applying a range of strategies to deal with cultural content in the translation. Her preference was to remove offensive language, sexual references, or Internet slang from the translation in the official release for political reasons. However, for videos distributed on fansubs' websites, she translated vulgarity directly or found a way to *weaken* the tone. For example, the swear word "fuck" was translated into "擦" (Chinese pronunciation: cā), rather than directly translated into "操" (Chinese pronunciation: cào), which is similar to how Americans might substitute "fucking" with "freaking."

Overall, when asked about their identity as cultural transmitters, all interviewees confirmed their role in promoting intercultural communication, highlighting the positive

impacts. Not only do fansubbers broaden audience horizons by telling them what it is like outside of China, what values are out there and what the differences are between America and China, but they also make significant efforts to cultivate members' cultural awareness by teaching them about the culture of a foreign language in the Chinese cultural environment. By pursuing accuracy in languages, providing cultural references, subtitling diverse content, and engaging with fans from different backgrounds, Chinese fan subtitlers have, in a sense, become "speakers" of Eastern and Western culture.

Identity Preferences

Collectivist or Resistance

Tables 6 and 7 list identity types rated by survey respondents and interviewees' preferences, respectively. A comparison of the data in the two tables reveals that survey respondents and interviewees have similar perceptions of their different identities.

Table 6

Identity scored by survey respondents

Please rate each identity (weak 0 - strong 10)	Maximum score	Minimum score	Average score
collectivist	10	7	8.86
resistant	7	1	2.61
prosumer	10	2	7.04
pirate	9	1	2.79
cultural transmitter	10	6	8.94
narcissist	10	2	8.09

Table 7*Preferred identities by interviewees*

Identities	Number of advocators (out of 10 candidates)	Note
collectivist	8	Collective identity refers to if they have a sense of “we-ness” and how they feel connected to other fansubbers.
resistant	3	Resistance is revealed in fansubbers’ behaviours, however, most of the interviewees refuse this title.
prosumer/recreator	8	Fansubbers are prosumers as interviewees prefer to identify themselves as recreators, for their translation enables an original work’s second life.
pirate	3	Influenced by culture and personal perception of piracy of cultural products, a discrepancy in viewing fansubbers as pirates exists.
cultural transmitter	9	Fansubbers are cultural transmitters as they play a crucial role in fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.
narcissist	4	Narcissist refers to how interviewees perform their behaviour and if they desire admiration in subtitling.
self-entertaining	5	Half of the interviewees stated that their original intention was self-entertaining.

Survey and interview results indicate that collectivism is one of the fansubbers’ most prominent identity traits. Tönnies (1998, p. 69, as cited in Li, 2015, p. 20) contended that collectivism “rests in the consciousness of belonging together and the affirmation of the

condition of mutual dependence”. To investigate the sense of belonging among fansub members, participants were asked in the survey about their feelings of connection. The questions were designed to inquire about how they feel connected to other group members and the strength of their connection. Questions formulated in the questionnaire read as follows:

Q5: How do you feel connected to other fansubbers in the same community?

Q6: How strong would you say your connections are to other fansubbers?

For Q6, participant responses confirmed that a strong sense of mutual connection is shared among them. Almost 80% of respondents had experienced an intimate connection with their group members. Regarding how they build connections, respondents said they feel connected mainly through subtitling the same American television series and chatting in one group. Apart from that, several participants also stated that their connections with each other started with the training and developed with dynamic interactions over time. Some of the survey participant responses are presented below (survey participants use A+ numbering, and B+ numbering, as identifiers):

A1: 大家就像是一家人，互相爱护，互相帮助 (We are more like families. In our group, we care about each other and support each other whenever needed).

A2: 刚开始实习时，大家在群里帮我很多。后来经常做任务，日子久了，就变成朋友了 (My group members help me through the training sections. Our friendship is built on numerous tasks and gets more profound over time).

A3: We are comrades in arms from the moment I join the group. Our group is a battlefield where we finish many different tasks together. We talk in the group, help each other and encourage each other. As time went by, we became dear friends and families.

Friends, families, and comrades were descriptors often used by participants to describe their emotional connections. As expressed in their comments, these intimate relationships are strengthened with daily shared events and activities such as subtitling the same television series and chatting in one group. Participants build an emotional bond as they keep interacting with other members over time, and such emotional bonding, which results from their progressive integration into the community, as suggested by (Tajfel, 1981), is the key components of their social identity.

A discursive element that supports this was the discovery that the interviewees often used “we” rather than “I” in their answers. Especially when discussing the identity of collectivist, resistant, prosumer, and cultural transmitter, fansubbers tended to use “we” rather than “I”, taking fansubs as a group. The appearance of these markers indicates that a fansubbers’ “we-ness” was established; their reflections are therefore understood to represent shared group perceptions. During the interview, collectivist identity can be detected in the respondents’ reflections on their feelings about their community, motivations to participate, goals to be achieved, and underlying and emotional connections. Eight respondents said they established a sense of collectivism mainly through collaborative work as well as shared commitment and purposes; two interviewees reported that they feel connected only through working relationships. This corresponds to the survey responses that intimate relationships

are strengthened with daily shared events and activities such as subtitling the same television series and chatting in one group. Participants build an emotional bond as they keep interacting with other members over time. They also interact, help, and encourage each other in small chatting groups when they become more familiar. An interviewee explained that they have different chat groups, working groups on QQ and private groups on WeChat. She and her fansub friends communicate subtitling work on QQ. Privately, they regularly catch up as friends on a WeChat group, which is more convenient to use by phone. Whenever she meets problems, even if it is unrelated to subtitling, she asks her fansub fellows for advice rather than her friends in real life. She expressed her sense that fansubbers with different expertise and experiences could provide more efficient advice than her friends of the same age. Besides chatting online, they also play video games and make calls talking about their lives, despite some being overseas and having time differences.

Her story suggests that non-work-related communication also strengthens members' bonds. They help members make a vital step beyond their working relationships and play a significant role in raising collective connection, which is an essential aspect of group dynamics. However, another respondent, who joined the fansub group more than 10 years ago, believes there is a conflict at the centre of the group's collectivism. She started fan subtitling first as a translator, then as a timer, and then as a producer. At the time of the interview, she had become the group leader of movie sections and was mainly responsible for proofreading in the group. She noted that their collective work ends with individual preferences and a strict division of labour.

Here, it is worth mentioning fansubs' hierarchal system and subtitling sequences

again. Within the fansub community, the subtitling project is produced by members through a tight-knit and vertical distribution of labour, with each person responsible for a specific aspect of the production. It differs from what is commonly known as crowdsourcing, in which collaborations tend to be based on a horizontal distribution of labour involving a vast Internet population (O'hagan, 2009). The vertical structure establishes a hierarchy among fansub group members, which depends on their length of membership, the extent of their dedication and their contribution to the community, among other factors. As the final sequence of review is carried out by proofreaders, who usually are the group leaders, the final production of translation is also up to them to unify the meaning and the style in any way they like. As quoted,

我们基本上墨守成规的规则就是这个剧是谁的，最后的决策权就在谁手里，所以其实你一个剧它会有很浓的就是校对的个人的色彩，所以我们说这方面它是没有一致性的，我们只能保证这个玩意儿它是对的。

Basically, we stick to the rules of this show's group leader making the final translation decisions. Therefore, the fansubbed show could be very personal regarding translation style. We don't have consistency in aspects of style or tone in the group. We only make sure that the translation meaning is correct. (Back Translation)

Because the decision maker is different for each project, the subtitled programmes have different expressions and translation style preferences even though they are produced by the same fansubs. For example, the south and north of China have different expressions for grandma. In the south, grandma is “外婆” (Chinese pronunciation: Waipo), while in the north, it is “姥姥” (Chinese pronunciation: Laolao). In this case, the group leader who

ensures consistency and accuracy in the subtitles decides which term to be used in translation. Other than the groups' translation standards setting the tone for format features, the group leader of the project has absolute control of the translation tone.

Therefore, the formation of these fansubbers' collective identity is engaged in constant negotiation and adjustments of goals, whether to align their interests with collective benefits or leave the community (Wenger, 1998). Collectivism exists when these members adjust their goals and attach collective meanings to their actions because when group members pursue mutual value, they are more likely to make a sustained commitment to the group and establish mutual dependence over time. Apart from online activities, six interviewees also noted that offline activities also make them cohesive as a real community. Physically scattered around the world, members are not often bound by geographic proximity, but they often socialise privately, chatting about their personal lives and organising team-building activities. Not only do they engage in joint activities such as printing commemorative shirts or mugs in their fansub, but close members also travel across cities to visit others.

Overall, cooperation and communication are what make the group cohesive as a real community. Fansubbers' collectivist identity partly depends on whether they participate in group activities beyond work. For members who only focus on working relations, their sense of community is not as strong as those who participate and communicate in offline activities such as chatting and visiting members.

In contrast to collectivism, resistance was found to be the least agreed identity but one of the most controversial identities among interviewees, as shown in the survey. To

investigate Chinese fansubbers' resentful feelings about media control and their resistant identity, three questions were formulated in the questionnaire:

Q7 - What do you think about the state's control over imported audiovisual programmes?

Q8 - How do you feel about the quality of official subtitles?

Q9 - Do you think fansubbers are resistant to state regulation over imported programmes or to the officially released subtitles?

The results of Q7 revealed that fansubbers are strongly dissatisfied with state control over imported audiovisual products with over 95% of respondents thinking the state should deregulate or improve the current regulation of foreign film publications. Nevertheless, 75% of participants approve of the quality of officially released subtitles in Q8. As described in Chapter One, fansubs were initially created to protest the limited market access to foreign audiovisual works and the poor quality of officially aired versions. In contrast, the survey finds most fansubbers think the quality of official subtitles is acceptable. The question then becomes one of why they still produce their own subtitles for viewers when commercial products are available and of acceptable standards. This can be answered in the responses to the next question. That is, surprisingly, nearly 80% of respondents believe fansubbers are not resistant. Also, while some responses suggest that fansubbers are uncertain about their resistant identity, others indicate strong attitudes. For example, B1, B2 and B3 added comments in the survey as follows:

B1: 文化产品作为意识输出的形态, 被管控是无可厚非的, 但我个人认为一个健全的社会不应该把自己的公民都当作毫无判断能力的人一刀切管控,

分级制度是十分必要的。

As an output form of consciousness, it is understandable that cultural products should be controlled. However, I believe that a good society should not use a “one-size-fits-all” control system and treat its citizens as people without judgment. A film rating system is essential. (Back Translation)

B2: 不赞成完全删减，因为很多成年人其实是有辨别是非的能力，一味地删减会影响剧情从而影响观感，我认为对某些场面还是要建立合适的分级制度，政治原因禁的话无可厚非。

I disagree with complete deletion. Because many adults can distinguish right from wrong. Blind deletion will affect the plot and thus affect the viewing experience. There is nothing wrong with banning films for political reasons. However, it is necessary to establish a proper rating system for some situations. (Back Translation)

B3: 也不是说抵制吧，如果不管控也不会有字幕组存在鸭 hhh，就算在灰色地带自娱自乐吧，官字怎么说呢，不同的剧质量不同，只能说打击翻译积极性是真的，很多字幕组直接压了官方中字，观众第一时间都去看那边了，等自己辛辛苦苦做好，其他观众已经看完了，所以现在对一次性放出的网剧什么的几乎没什么积极性去制作，反而更愿意去慢慢做电视台周播的剧。

Fansubbing can't really be resistant. Fansubs will not exist if the state deregulates

the importation of audiovisual products. Fansubbers are more like entertaining themselves in the grey area. The official subtitles are highly variable in quality and discourage those fansubbers who want to translate the show. Many fansubs choose to strip off the official subtitles and publish it with the show on their forums to attract viewers first. Then the audience would have seen the show when we finished the translation. Therefore, I am willing to do a weekly television programme rather than a subtitled net play released at once. (Back Translation)

It can be inferred that Chinese fansubbers have feelings of resentment about the current state regulation system and desire improvements. This resentment serves as a subtle form of resistance, rather than a direct challenge to state regulations or official subtitles. Fansubbers are calling for a national rating system so they can access more content rather than being shut out. Similarly, interviewees represent widespread discontent with the state's control over audio-visual resources. Seventy percent of interviewees claim that they do not resist intentionally. One interviewee notes that some fansubs are rebellious in their non-compliance with traditional values; this was not the case in their fansub. As illustrated in the following transcript excerpt:

从他们的很多翻译的策略也能看得出来，其实人人影视我觉得在这方面还不是特别的明显。因为我们无论是组规还是各位校对在平时监督的时候，其实有意把大家引导向一个还比较贴近官方翻译的一个风格，比如说比较书面化的表达，然后不太建议用太多网络用语这些。同一个作品如果观察其他的字幕组，他们会更加的豪放一些，会使用更多偏激的一些词汇。我不是说这样子一定就是不好，但是如果这方面的限制更宽松的话，译者的主体性肯定是可以得到更

自由的发挥。尤其在一些比较敏感的政治话题或者是性别问题这些话题上面的时候，他们的翻译是能够看出来非常明显的反抗的色彩的。

We can also see the rebellious spirit in many of fansubs' translation strategies. I think it is not evident in our group because both our group rules and proofreaders in the supervision are trying to guide translations to a style relatively close to the official one, such as using written expressions rather than Internet slang. In fact, you will find other groups who fansubbed the same work are bolder on extreme expressions. I am not saying this is bad, but if our restrictions in this respect are looser, the translator's subjectivity will certainly be more freely played. The colour of resistance is obvious in other fansubs' translations, especially on some sensitive political topics or gender issues. (Back Translation)

Another two interviewees raised the issue of restricted resources and poor quality of official imported audiovisual programmes. They explained:

我对于限制付费和影院确实是感觉不太爽，影院可能还好，但是我其实最不高兴的就是限制这个问题，如果让我花钱的话，其实我也是愿意花钱，但他直接就源头给你切断了。

I don't feel good about the restrictions and the theatre subtitles. In fact, what I am really upset about is the restrictions on resources. If I had to, I would like to pay for the resources, but they just prohibit and cut you off at the source. (Back Translation)

我觉得这个是一种精神，就类似于说我可以付费，但是你不可以付费为我吃屎，所以这个时候字幕组就会把被删减的资源，通过私下传播的方式分享出

来，我觉得确实是一种反抗。我可以去买会员，我可以去为字幕组为爱发电给他们打钱，我得到了优质的资源，而不是说我去你们这些视频网站花了钱，去看那些剪的七零八落乱七八糟的这种片子。

I think this is a kind of rebellious spirit, which is similar to saying, I can pay, but I am not paying for shit. Fansub groups share the resources that have been cut and then spread them privately in a certain way, which is indeed a kind of resistance. Instead of going to official video sites and spending money on programmes of messy deleted pieces, I would rather pay for membership in fansub groups and donate for their spirit of sharing because I can get good resources. (Back Translation)

The criticism of professional translation quality expressed by some interviewees does not represent the opinions of the whole fansub community, as most interviewees and survey participants think the official translation is acceptable. Nevertheless, it suggests that the accuracy of official translations is still a heated discussion among viewers (including fansubbers). Because professional subtitling monopolises the film translation industry, supported by the authorities, their translation quality is unlikely to improve. From another perspective, fansubs have gained considerable prestige in online film and television communication; thus, they have become the most authoritative weathervane in the eyes of netizens. Therefore, the aesthetics and values of the fansub groups are often supported and respected by domestic audiences. With an increasing number of people who prefer to watch fansubbed media products online, it may weaken the status of the official channel in audiences' eyes. As a result, it seems that the fansubs have the potential to become vehicles of resistance and catalysts for change in mainstream culture.

Pirates or Reproducers

Another least agreed identity revealed in surveys and interviews is “pirates”. A series of questions were formulated in the survey to understand participants’ perceptions of their identity as a producer or a pirate. When asked if participants think fan subtitling violates intellectual property laws or regulations, only six out of 118 participants provided affirmative answers. By contrast, when asked if they agree that fansubbers are re-producers, almost 90% of respondents agreed with their reproducing identity. This is consistent with the interview results that eight interviewees confirmed fansubbers’ producing role and preferred to call their work a recreation. They believe subtitling a video in another language is a kind of re-creation rather than a complete production. One interviewee explained the relationship between their creation and copyright:

应该说字幕或者翻译本来就是一种二次创作，确实它是一种文字作品，但是如果说你对这种翻译或者说文字作品的版权来说，这个确实不好归属。因为视频资源不是你的，你对于他的财产就是你翻译出来的文字。英文的感觉和中文的感觉完全是不一样的，因为我自己的翻译里面加入了我自己的理解，所以出来的就完全是两个不同的东西，包括你去看字幕的话，你去看生肉，直接英文台词和英文字母给你的冲击和加上中文之后给你的冲击又是不一样的。

Subtitling or translating is a kind of recreation. It is written work, and it is hard to define the copyright owner of this written work because the video resources are not yours; your copyright is the words you translate. The feeling of English subtitled video is entirely different from that of Chinese because I have added my own understanding into translation. And what comes out is completely two different

things. For example, when you read the subtitles or watch the original video, the impact of English lines is different from the Chinese lines. (Back Translation)

In terms of pirating itself, 73% survey participants respond that fan subtitling does not exactly violate the copyright. This is a similar percentage to those who think fansubbers are producers more than consumers. It also corresponds to the interview results that seven interviewees believe that fansubbing is a grey area, and three confirmed that fansubs are pirates. This is because some interviewees have a misunderstanding of the definition of piracy or at the least a conscious decision to justify their motives to make themselves feel better. Different perceptions about the piracy of IP were revealed in the interviews. One explanation provided by the interviewees is that fan subtitlers' translation behaviour cannot be deemed as that of pirates because they only translate the subtitles instead of spreading the resources. Although acknowledging this is against the rules, interviewees feel that other members who suppress original video resources with Chinese subtitles and post them online should be accused of piracy, as group members are responsible for different tasks. An interview explained:

我觉得我们翻字幕，就只是把 CC 翻译过来，它和盗版没有关系，但是你说确实它有版权的问题，但是有版权问题我就不看了，这是不可能的，我绝对不可能看国内产的什么东西，他让我看他好意思吗。怎么讲，就规则就是用来打破的，你既然弄不出来好的东西，你也别怪我不择手段去看点就是真东西。

I think we just translated the Closed Caption; it has nothing to do with piracy. It does have copyright problems, but I will still watch it though. There's no way I'm going to watch local audiovisual programmes. The authorities should be embarrassed to let us

watch their production. Rules are meant to be broken. If you can't produce good works, you can't blame me for watching good ones by other means. (Back Translation)

Another perception that was found to be uppermost in the minds of most of the interviewees is that establishing fansubbers' intellectual piracy depends on whether or not the fansub group profits from work. One interviewee strongly resisted calling fansubs pirates, claiming:

我觉得咱们要清晰的说一下，就是说什么叫盗版行为？我对它进行了这种传播推广，而且通过这种行为获利，这叫盗版。我没有通过他获利，而且我甚至没有去传播，好比写了篇作文把它放在网上了，我觉得至少在法律界定下，他不足以给我定罪.....这下个视频我只是为了做字幕，然后做完了之后把字幕放上去，我一没有拿它卖钱，第二我也没有去传播这个东西。第三我更没有拿大家辛辛苦苦做好的东西压成了U盘，然后用这个硬盘，哪怕在咸鱼或者说网站或者倒卖给我的朋友，因此获得利润。没有。

I think we need to clarify the definition of piracy. Piracy is when you distribute and make profits from unauthorised resources. I didn't make a profit from it, and I didn't even spread it. It is like I wrote an essay and put it online. I don't think it is a crime in the legal category...I downloaded the video only because I needed to do subtitles. I didn't sell it for money or spread it when I finished. Also, I did not take the things we worked so hard on into a USB drive and put them online to sell or resell to my friends for profit. None. (Back Translation)

For fansubbers, their production of American television series is for sharing and learning purposes, which could be stretched to the concept of fair use but not considered by them to be

a copyright violation. Despite being trapped in moral dilemmas, most interviewees justify any infringement on two grounds: the group's altruistic spirit and the recreation essence of the work. This indicates that Chinese fansubbers' perception towards piracy is either a limited understanding of piracy, or a cognitive dissonance influenced by a set of moral principles shaped by socioeconomic and cultural factors. The survey responses suggest that fansubbers are optimistic about their re-prosumer role and view themselves as recreators rather than pirates because of the production and creative process, although most agree that copyright is controversial.

Narcissistic or Self-entertaining

In terms of narcissistic identity, opinions vary in surveys and interviews. Though the survey results showed that fansubbers rated themselves as narcissistic, only four interviewees aligned themselves with this identity trait. I understood that narcissism would be hard to admit in interviewing as this word is more often associated with personality disorders. Fansubbers' narcissism was not revealed in the interviews through the filter of self-perception but through how they treated their sense of achievement and the audience's feedback. To redefine narcissism and unify the standard, I asked about participants' sense of achievement and their responses to critics, exploring whether they express a deep need for attention or admiration. In the survey, almost all participants said they feel more motivated to continue or to excel in their work when they receive positive feedback from audiences. When asked if people's admiration of you being a fansubber makes you feel proud of yourself, 95% of participants responded in the affirmative. Nearly 90% of fansubbers stated they should get credit for their work. Subtitling needs perseverance and continual hours of hard work to make a timeline, translate, proofread, and

create the final productions. They are eager to be approved by audiences and require boosting their reputation in the fansub community. In return for their investment of time and effort, they seek to gain a sense of achievement, the admiration of viewers, and exclusive privilege, which, though hard to realise, becomes perceived as narcissism by people in offline social circles.

However, the results showed that interviewees have complex attitudes towards narcissism, with only four confirming fansubbers would be narcissistic in their subtitling work. They said some fansubbers may feel their work represented a substantial achievement and they should be appreciated and admired. They intend to be somewhat self-centred and refuse to take criticism. Five interviewees said they gained a sense of fulfilment and enjoyed the audience's comments but did not feel narcissistic because this feeling cannot provide continual motivation. Of these five, four further claimed that they were mainly subtitling for self-entertainment rather than seeking attention from others. One interviewee said she translated the shows she did not like yet still felt happy to subtitle because she knew her roommate would be proud of her. Another interviewee recalled:

我一开始加入的时候也是出于这种想要去为自己喜欢的电影翻译，然后字幕成型了之后会很有成就感，自己的名字会在上面这样。而且我关注一些公众号，它也是他可能是个人翻译的，他会去翻译一些自己觉得比较经典的一些电影，然后推他自己翻译的版本，我觉得这个应该就是追求就是自我欣赏或者是其他人的认同。

In the beginning, I joined the group to translate my favourite movie. And after the subtitle is produced, I feel a sense of achievement, seeing my name above. I have

followed some individual official accounts that recommend movies they thought were classics with own translations. I think they are doing this for self-appreciation or the recognition of others. (Back Translation)

This response indicates external validation is a great incentive and motivates fansubbers in subtitling. Although fansubbers' original intention is not necessarily to gain recognition, many people would certainly be happy and expect to receive compliments. More than half of the interviewees expressed that they would like to see the response after published subtitling. They mentioned that the most satisfying moment comes when they see audiences screenshot their translation and provide feedback about how good their translation is. Nevertheless, when asked about how they would respond to criticism, interviewees remained highly confident about their work, as recorded in the following transcription:

我就会觉得肯定是因为他英语水平不行，所以他才觉得我干的不好。因为我感觉我们除了自己发，不是还有审教，还有总监是层层把关的，所以我对于我们组最后这个产品的质量还是很有信心的。

I would feel they must have poor English. So, they think mine is not good. In addition to our work, we also have proofreaders and group leaders to supervise the translation quality. I am very confident about the quality of our group's final product. (Back Translation)

Despite the fact that interviewees admitted feeling a sense of achievement, they also claimed it was not their reason for joining the group. B said she had met many fansubbers who joined for audience recognition because they only wanted to subtitle popular shows. If they cannot subtitle a hit show, they will either not join the group or, if they do, they will quit the group

soon after. In her words: “如果只为了做热门剧，为了寻求别人的这种认同感，或者是字幕组大神什么，这种没有办法坚持很长” (Translation: If one only pursues subtitling for popular dramas to seek recognition or be acknowledged as a top-notch fansubber, it is difficult to maintain such dedication for long).

Another interviewee also agreed that the fansubbers' original motivation is entertainment-related because many members are unaware, or do not consider the profound social influences, of fansub groups. They joined for pleasure and relaxation, and that is what motivates them to contribute continuously. Compared to the YYeTs group, which covers diverse genres, this identity pertaining to entertainment is more evident in fansubs that revolve around a particular actor or specialise in certain types of drama. The participants believe fansub members have distinct entertaining traits because they would not subtitle uninteresting programmes. Based on their responses, most interviewees enjoy the sense of accomplishment and the audience's appreciation. However, self-perception of the narcissist identity varies from individual to individual. Narcissism appears in some cases, regarding their performative behaviour and desire for admiration, and it is normal when people enjoy the positive feedback and appreciation of peers.

To sum up, findings derived from the survey and interviews show that fansubbers readily accept their identities as collectivist, and productive, and have a role in cultural communication. They embrace their multiple identities and perceive themselves as reproducers collectively contributing to cultural communication, but they generally reject the identities of being online pirates, taking part in resistance, or being narcissistic. Unique though the interviewees may be in terms of expertise and experience, they possess a heuristic

value that is useful for interviewing other fansub members and for comparisons with the survey responses.

Chapter Six Discussion: Tensions Between Identities and the ‘We-ness’ of Fansubbing

This research was based on social identity theory and the notion of self-identity being socially constructed in groups. It has undertaken to examine the identities commonly found in fandom and audience studies (Li, 2015; Kung, 2016; O’Hagan, 2009; Condry, 2010; Luo, 2015; Crawford, 2004) in the context of a specific fan-based activity: fansubbing. Rather than focusing solely on how members of fansub groups define themselves, this study also examines how fansubbers perform their identities in groups through daily activities. In this study, fansubbers’ identities are explored as separate types due to their distinct characteristics. For instance, the pirate identity is related to the social-political environment in which the participants live and is associated with their ethics and moral values. Fansubbers’ cultural transmitter role describes the way they make an exceptional contribution to bridging cultures. Having presented my analysis of the collected data in Chapters Four and Five, this chapter sets out to answer the research questions from two aspects: the manifestation and interaction of these identities, and the layers of tensions in identification. The first section deals with two main questions: first, how fansubbers’ identities become apparent, and second, how each identity impacts the other in practice. Drawing on the concept of the “diffused audience” (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998), this section also addresses the third question: how the fansubbers’ narcissistic identity is revealed through practice, and finally, how they interpret cultural elements in subtitling and promote intercultural communication. The second section delves deeper into the layers of tension present in these identities and provides a detailed analysis of how these tensions influence the fansubbers’ identities. These tensions, which are historically, culturally, and politically relative, have a significant impact on identity formation

and contribute to the shaping of Chinese fansubbers' identity as cultural transmitters and narcissists.

Identification Manifestation and Interaction

Establishing We-ness

Among the identities being examined, Chinese fansubbers share a strong collective identity. Although fansubbers have different motivations, their most prominent and recognised features are sharing the same domain of interest, belonging to a mutual community, and organising around a core practice. Characterised by participatory culture, fansubbers construct a collective identity that helps disseminate the work to broader audiences by raising awareness of the group, setting filtering mechanisms, and establishing emotional bonds.

First, fansubbers share they feel a sense of belonging through participation in mutual engagement and teamwork. They must study group values, regulations, and translation standards to pass the entry tests before getting involved in collaborative activities. When group members pursue mutual values, they are more likely to make a sustained self-commitment to the group and establish mutual dependence over time (Li, 2015). Otherwise, fansubbing activities are driven more by an obligation to integrate personal needs into group needs and pursue group values. Their collective identity is engaged in constant negotiation and adjustments of goals, whether to align their personal interests with collective benefits or leave the community (Wenger, 1998). The results of this study demonstrate that fansubbers have different opinions within a group (such as about commercialisation, or translation strategies) and various motivations for joining the fansubbing. Nevertheless, if individual members are willing to integrate personal needs with group needs, and to prioritise group

values and compromise by balancing personal costs and collective interests, they can establish a shared sense of identity and direction.

Second, filtering and governance mechanisms in fansub groups are found to shape collective identity formation. These mechanisms were established to integrate members by providing a beneficial environment for the formation of collectivism. The filtering mechanism of membership criteria selects determined, self-motivated candidates with a mutual interest in fansubbing. Then, the governance mechanism of the fansub group involves developing translation standards to prevent individualistic actions, establishing subtitling rules to align members' actions, and promoting group features by adding the group's information to translated work. The branding strategy and game mechanism also enhance members' sense of belonging by increasing members' motivation in group activities and protecting the group's mutual benefits. Thanks to the convenience of online platforms, fansubbers' collective identity is fostered on websites, blogs, forums, and social media through branding or visual symbols and discursive strategies to differentiate them from outsiders. By exerting control over the subtitling process, fansub groups manage their subtitlers' understandings and actions, and work to achieve maximum collectivism and synergy further, improving a group's sustainability.

The formation of collectivism requires a certain degree of emotional effort that contributes to building mutual dependence and emotional attachments (Li, 2015). For instance, during the fansubbers' integrating process within groups, members make continuous emotional investments in particular shows and network relations and extend their love to producing subtitles. Experienced members impart knowledge and skills to help newcomers,

which ensures the operation and development of the group. Emotional connections are developed through the recruit integration process and sustained online interaction.

Meanwhile, the fansubs' anonymous and virtual environment encourages members to share genuine feelings with their fellow fansubbers and build trust that way. As their emotional bonds intensify, they are more willing to dedicate themselves to the group's common goals, which in turn reinforces the sense of togetherness as they expressed in the surveys.

Cultural Transmitter. Fansubbers strongly identify with their role as cultural transmitters. Not only do fansubbers agree that fan subtitling plays a crucial role in promoting cultural communication, they are also found to foster cross-cultural understanding by researching cultural items in the original context, adding contextual notes in translation, and developing cultural interest as a habit (see the section Reflective Thinking on Promoting Intercultural Communication). In practice, Chinese fansub groups tend to apply a hybrid translation approach to deal with the culture-specific terms: by adding explanations or domesticating foreign concepts in translation. New fansubbers aim to keep the foreignness of the content by retaining the basic meaning of the source texts and adding explanations. Experienced translators, who have the final control of the tone of the translation, tend to localise foreign cultures. Both pay extra attention to cultural discrepancies and research the cultural connotations in the original context rather than literal translation or standardising the term.

Moreover, the data implies that fansubs often decline to circulate foreign films and television works that go against Chinese values or misrepresent Chinese culture. Fansubbers could be described as patriotic or politically savvy and enforcing what they think are Chinese

cultural values as they know they are operating in a grey area. They tend to emphasise favourable political ideas and filter out unwanted political ideas in comments. Their revisions assign the subtitles a new meaning in the Chinese context. Their cultural modification may influence the viewers' reception and understanding of the meaning of the foreign content. It is not the intention of this research to measure what specific effect these subtitles and foreign media products have on Chinese viewers and what kind of changes in their minds have been triggered. However, the practice of text subtitling includes a certain amount of censorship. Based on the survey responses and their practice of recreating text, it has been observed that fansub patriotism has influenced group self-censorship. To maintain a positive national image, fansub members collectively avoid subtitling adverse content and criticise posts that are against domestic values. Although the extent to which fansubs defend local cultural identity varies among online groups, it can still be argued that fansubs form a multidirectional cultural identity in intercultural communication.

Meanwhile, the role of fansubbers in transmitting culture is also evident in their export of domestic cultural products to other countries. By exporting local culture, they help to increase the influence of local cultural products worldwide and further promote the development of local cultures. Whether introducing foreign cultural content or this cultural exporting, fansubs spread information to audiences who cannot access foreign cultural production, broadening Chinese audiences' horizons and encouraging understanding and exchanges between two cultures. From this perspective, the fansub community's cultural transmitter identity is established in the network world.

The Producer Identity. Another identity that most respondents agreed upon is their

producer identity in creating high-quality cultural products. In audience research, fansubbers are described as participative, productive, and active users in today's marketplace (Taalas & Hirsjärvi, 2013). The findings of this study reveal that fan subtitlers are great productive forces as they jointly complete the production of artistic works, transfer knowledge shared among small groups to the broader public and realise an expanded interpretation of cultural meanings. Some, within fan groups, gather the scattered productive powers in the virtual space, acting as cultural collaborators who voluntarily produce cultural products. With the help of open Internet and translation channels, fansub members actively deconstruct, consume, and revise other people's texts, which together constitute a post-modern reproduction and re-use of the original text. Others possess the social and cultural knowledge necessary for the execution of their role. Externally, fansubs take advantage of supporting tools such as subtitling software and machine translation to strengthen the effectiveness of subtitling. Internally, the fan community refines the group's management system to improve member participation. In practice, fan-subtitlers endeavour to use different approaches to increase productivity and mobilise fansubbers' enthusiasm for producing. These measures can mobilise members' productive capabilities and maintain their producing role, in cyberspace.

Moreover, fansubbers differ significantly from traditional content producers in terms of economics since they do not consume actual goods that can be priced (Fiske, 1992). Instead, they use commercial products as their platforms for implementing fan activities rather than pursuing economic profits. This study reveals that fansubber communities receive rewards in the form of improved skills, a sense of collectivism, accomplishment, honour, and English-language proficiency. This results in the value creation through immaterial labour –

“the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity” (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 132). Fansubbers have also contributed to this value creation by redefining terms and generating new meanings, which has led to self-expression, innovation, and a sense of happiness.

Meanwhile, fansub groups’ mode of operation online enables anyone who has enthusiasm for foreign culture and agrees with the values of a group to have an opportunity to join the community. In their role of producing, fansubs expand their production influence through collaboration, promote the rise of amateur forces, and enlarge the circle of knowledge producers beyond the traditional sense of experts, thus shaping a unique cultural ecosystem.

The Pirate Identity. In contrast to prosumers, fansubbers’ pirate identity is controversial as the notion of media piracy is complicated by varying views and conflicting practices in China. Although fansubbing has been legally charged with pirating, fansubbers’ opinions are polarised on this issue. Most respondents view themselves as recreators rather than pirates. Fansubbers’ subtitling practices are complicated by the impact of multiple forces—state political mobilisation, consumer perceptions of plagiarism, and commercial exploitation—with tensions existing among the three. First, it is agreed that policymakers hold the weapon of copyright law and believe it is an exclusive property right that can only be assigned to a third person. As previously mentioned, the American government and media companies have been aware of fansubbing practices since 2006, although they have not found effective ways to stop this pirating from the start of fansubbing, which has given fansubbing time to prosper (see pp. 58-61). In addition, the Chinese state closely controls the official

flow of foreign information and entertainment in fear of losing ideological hegemony and to boost the Chinese media industry, while local governments may intentionally or unintentionally tolerate free downloads and unofficial video websites for profit, taking advantage of foreign content from illegal channels to fulfil the needs of a niche market (Discussed in section Copyright Predicament and Guerrilla Tactics, see pp. 58-63). This greatly contributes to the growth of fansubbing which would still, under this framework, be considered pirating.

Second, cultural consumers have different conceptions regarding copyright infringement and fansubbing work. Influenced by Chinese pirating culture, research participants argue that the nature of online fansubs is for the public good. The respondents also feel that fan subtitling is far from content stealing as it constitutes a reproductive network incorporating the values of fansub and giving the original content a second life. The innovation is taking place in the fansubbers' interpretations, renditions, and aesthetic processing of cultural production rather than in the original instance of publication (Taalas & Hirsjärvi, 2013).

Third, there is a potential risk that fansubbers may be exploited and manipulated by commercial media corporations. These companies may attempt to integrate fan subtitling into their production processes by collaborating with fansubs in translating open courses or other copyrighted works. YYeTs story is a notable instance that has experienced various business transformations, cooperated with states, been divided within groups, and ultimately sentenced for operation. Although fansub communities have powerful online support and credibility among audiences, it cannot be denied that they are vulnerable to copyright laws and survive

at the mercy of the central government. The groups are in a risky position of being crushed due to authorised video platforms taking away their massive number of users accumulated over time.

The conception of copyright in Chinese fansubs is contingent upon and reconstructed by group members' interpretations. It can easily be changed since this understanding is influenced and reinforced by the local cultural formation of consumption and marketing. Meanwhile, group ethics are based on a moral dualism that despises the direct pirating from peers while tacitly admitting to circulating unauthorised audiovisual resources. Fansubs forbid fansubbers to belong to two groups and protect their work yet infringe copyright in the name of free sharing themselves. However, without proper guidance and effective enforcement, it is difficult to prevent peer pirating or commercial use. Some fansubbers may contravene group rules, as occurred in the pirating case between the Sfileydy fansub and the Ragbear group (see pp. 158-160). Although fansubbers deny their identity of pirates and justify their pirating behaviour as free-sharing or prosumer-creation, copyright infringement is an indisputable fact, as judged from a legal point of view.

The Resistance Identity. The resistant identity offered contradictory results. In contrast to survey findings that most participants stated they are not resistant, online traces revealed Chinese fansubbers' resistance in two ways. These traces are analysed in the context of existing scholarship that discusses fansubbers' resistance from three perspectives: the resistance to state domination; the resistance to capitalism, and the resistance to the textual convention (See section Fandom as Resistance, pp.70-71).

Micro-level media consumption such as that of the fansubbers resists the macro-level

state's control over media production, distribution, and interpretation. Fansubbers strive for autonomy of media flows and the self-interpretation of media products though most participants did not admit to this resistance trait, and instead claimed they are involved in fansubbing for self-entertainment and because they desire a rating system for films as explained above (See section Collectivist or Resistance, see pp. 228-230). Through fansubbing activities, fansubbers can choose what media content they want to consume, how they want to mediate and distribute and express themselves in ways that may challenge institutional power and established norms.

Second is that Chinese fansubbers also manifest resistance which used to be read as grassroots resistance to a market economy because fansubbers' spirit of volunteerism and altruism challenges the principles of commodification. However, the spirit of volunteerism does not protect Chinese fansubbers from the influence of commercialisation or exploitation by capitalists. To maintain regular operations and expand the size of the group, fansubbing incur costs related to computers, software, and servers, which need to be recouped. Some fansubs have found ways to overcome these financial challenges, such as renting forum advertising space and selling fansubbing-related products. They justified these activities as a means of survival rather than profit-making. However, most fansubs still adhere to a volunteerism philosophy and are cautious about capitalist exploitation. They refuse to conduct any economic activities with third parties, as written on their website and in the opening credits of their products. They rely on their group leaders' expenses or raising donations from group members to sustain their operations. Nevertheless, the intervention of capitalism influences the culture and the future of some Chinese fansubs, as in YYeTs' story.

Due to the hierarchy of community members, only group managers can decide on the future of the subtitle group, while the rest of the team members can either choose to leave or keep following the community into a commercial transformation that deviates from the original intention of free sharing.

The Narcissist Identity. Fansubbers' narcissistic identity is manifested when they treat subtitling as a form of performance art. According to Abercrombie and Longhurst's *Spectacle/Performance paradigm* (1998), fansubbers are a diffused audience that is strongly dispersed, fragmented, and connected on the Internet. Chinese fansubbers' performative behaviours when subtitling, and how they react to audiences' evaluations, compliments, and criticism, reveal their narcissistic identity. During their practice, fansubbers display a highly personal and performative style that may at times involve jokes in subtitling, incorporate Internet slang into the translation, and even create translations that distort the original meaning to create a spectacle for audiences and highlight the fansubbers' presence. Their creativity in the translation and subtitling work contrasts with professional subtitling, which attempts to be as unobtrusive as possible on the screen. Meanwhile, fansubbers' narcissism is fuelled by the attitudes of non-contributing audiences who gratefully await fansubbers' output. These followers depend on fansub groups' materials and treat fan subtitlers as their "saviours" and "fire bringers" because they open a window into Western cultures (Wang & Zhang, 2017, p. 311). As seen in the section of Compliments and Criticism on Fansubs Forum, audiences' appreciation and compliments drive fansubbers' narcissistic participation in creating subtitles and thwart viewers' attempts to critique the content. Although fansubbing groups strive to engage audiences by developing communication areas on their websites, the

interaction between fansubbers and viewers seems insignificant due to subtitlers' dominance in this discourse. More importantly, fansubbers' desire to be admired by their fellow members and audiences seems to be an extrinsic motivation to deepen their involvement. The motives of fansubbing activities arise partly from their pursuit of personal fulfillment and people's admiration. Some fansubbers are keen to be interviewed and are fond of browsing viewers' comments on forums. Some join fansubs to learn English and collect information to show off their translation skills. Although most fansubbers are more interested in entertainment shows, they also volunteer to translate open courses or documentary programmes that they are less interested in. A sense of accomplishment and superiority that fansubbers bring inaccessible materials to people comes from the audience's admiration, which establishes fansubbers' elite status and contributes to their narcissistic identities.

Fansubbers' identities manifest as they create, engage with, and interpret a text. In need of foreign films and television dramas, fansubbers take the initiative in searching for cultural products and re-producing them for peers rather than waiting for media conglomerates or local media companies to provide them. Fansubbing is a practice that generates complex identities beyond just being consumers or producers. It involves collectivism, productivity, resistance, and narcissism. Fansubbers also take on the identities of cultural transmitters and pirates due to the nature of the texts they encounter. The next section will explore how these identities interact and the tensions that arise from this interaction in the broader cultural and social context.

Interplay of Identities

The identities described separately above co-exist in individuals. The parsing out of each

identity, while necessary to describe the traits and behaviours of the research participants, is an artificial separation of what are closely related and interacting identities. This section brings the identities back together and describes the complex interaction and tension that occur as each identity impacts the other. Furthermore, when examined as a series of interactions, complex and contradictory tensions emerge. These are discussed later in this chapter.

The identities of resistance and pirate are related as fansubbers embody a spirit of volunteerism and altruism that resists commercialisation and justifies their pirating behaviour. Fansub groups are aware of the copyright issues and take various measures to mitigate their identity as pirates: avoiding any economic gain and staying in the legal grey area. On the one hand, American copyright law allows the fair use of translation rights to copying, recording or other forms of reproduction related to educational purposes such as academic research, class teaching, or critical discussion. It depends on whether the work is used for commercial or educational purposes, the proportion of the content and quantity used from the original work, and whether the use impacts the potential market value of the original work. Non-commercial use and educational purposes can free fansubbers from copyright infringement to some extent. However, they cannot overcome legal issues related to reproduction and translation rights (Rembert-Lang, 2010). On the other hand, fansubbers' pirating, in the form of providing audiences more access to content, is motivated by personal interest and for the public good. It can be interpreted as fansubbers obtaining value from the product—the fansubbed episode—outside its market value. Fansubbers' resistances are described in the metaphor of “Prometheus brings the fire” (Wang & Zhang, 2017), portraying their pirating as

a heroic quality, therefore making them noble in the eyes of followers.

Fansubbers' identities are often reflected and interacted with in their translation practice. In contrast to professional subtitlers, fansubbers apply abnormal conventions, such as bold translations, special effects, and added explanations, which reflect their identity and creativity. These techniques demonstrate their role as producers of media, their resistance to mainstream media interpretations, and their function as cultural transmitters. Additionally, these techniques also reveal their narcissistic traits, as they view their work as a form of performance. Fansubbers are not content with being providers of material subject to the original video and audio, cultural works; rather they see themselves as messengers of cross-cultural communication and strive for self-growth in cyberspace. Fansubs serve as an interactive channel for importing foreign cultural programmes, movies, and television series, as well as for exporting domestic ones. Furthermore, fansubbers engage in an innovative interpretation that confronts the policy of sanitising content and implants self-interpretation toward culture. For example, fansubbers adapt the translation to the local context and use translation strategies of adding cultural references synchronised with aesthetic effects to enhance the audience's experience. As agents of intercultural communication, fansubbers' cultural intervention which disturbs audiences' viewing experience often goes against professional subtitling conventions. Nonetheless, fansubs fulfil their prosumer and cultural transmitter roles by providing opportunities for cultural expression and understanding. However, it's worth noting that the excessive editing may expose the fansubbers' narcissism, turning the translation into a showcase of their individuality.

Otherwise, the active producing trait does not necessarily free modern audiences from

being passive consumers of media. Empowered by technology, fansub groups therefore represent online elite groups equipped with media literacy and skills who are no longer content with simply consuming media. They are a new breed of audience who actively participate in media production. Despite having more control over media consumption than ever before, their producing role are within very tight parameters. Fansub groups have limited resources and options when it comes to choosing what to broadcast. When accessing raw videos, groups are subject to their level of skills, the location of the resource providers and changing political winds. Since they need to copy resources from foreign television media, they have to consider their technical means, language ability, and audience demands. Fansub groups value their audiences' preferences in selecting the programmes. Without fans' attention, some niche programmes favoured by the group would soon be abandoned, even if a few episodes had already been translated. Fansubbers would turn to more popular film and television resources. This puts subtitle groups in a passive position to follow audiences' preferences rather than their interests. As a result, online fansubbing only enables domestic audiences to remove the filter of official media in the selection of video resources by providing another slightly wider zone of choices. The viewing choices are still controlled within a certain media area, though video resources provided by fansubs are richer and faster in releasing time compared with those provided by the state media. However, their behaviours would also be considered an act of resistance by both fansubbers and the audience.

In terms of media content, the Chinese political environment and group regulations dictate that fansubbers cannot take full initiative in text interpretation. As their group takes

precedence over the individual, fansub groups restrict individual freedom and autonomy when creating subtitles. Their secondary creations must not deviate from the original content or attract government attention. This means that fansubbers have limited room to create and apply individual flair to the work. Additionally, in today's media environment, the Internet has given audiences more power, but many viewers are not highly engaged in creating content. Instead, they provide feedback to content creators, such as fansubbers, requesting more resources and a greater variety of resource types. Given these factors, fansubbers' autonomy and productivity are restricted due to fansubs' awkward position and limitations on mediating online. As contemporary audiences who are empowered by the development of digital technology, their identities are constrained within certain media scop.

Layers of Tensions

After summarising the explored identities and their interplay in the previous sections, this next section examines the tensions underlying these identities in social constructionism, discussing the ways they are historically, culturally, and politically relative.

Collectivism vs Individualism

The tension between collectivism and individualism is one of the underlying factors in fansubbers' identities. Unlike Western society, where individualism is prevalent, Chinese culture is heavily shaped by Confucian principles that value collectivist interests, moral obligations, and obedient minds (Young, 2011). This belief system shapes the way Chinese audiences perceive piracy and strengthens their collective awareness. The socialist political system under this traditional culture prioritises collective rights above private rights,

emphasises the concept of knowledge sharing, and advocates the dissemination of knowledge. The popular belief that the collective owns all capital and property, such as land and natural resources, is in stark contrast to the idea of copyright protection, which gives the owner exclusive rights. In this socio-cultural context, the intellectual property right in the traditional Chinese mindset is not paralleled with its value in the present American legal system. Fansub members are driven by a normative belief that fan subtitling is a recreation of the original cultural text. Active audiences who are knowledgeable and connected recreate values in their participatory process by utilising subtitling skills, digital technologies, and free software, which fundamentally questions the static perception of creation found in copyright law. Furthermore, the core of fansub consumption ethics appears to view fansubs as recreating, non-commercial goods, and sharing activities. The non-commercial use of unauthorised content can be viewed as representing public welfare under the fair use doctrine. In the last decade, Chinese consumers' experience of witnessing a wide range of digital information generated and shared voluntarily has intensified their feeling that mediated copying and circulating is a social production of collective knowledge (Young, 2011). This relieves consumers' intuitive uneasiness about situating digital copying in a social context, as their daily life often engages various forms of unauthorised sharing. Cultural consumers share foreign copyrighted content and build up social relationships with others through consumption practices with no perceived harm to the original and are virtually free for these audiences. Therefore, it is understandable that Chinese fansubbers have reconstructed the idea of piracy, such as file sharing, based on their reasoning and beliefs as they are used to piracy. Under this subtle influence, Chinese fansubs' views and behaviour towards copyright

infringement are flexible and guided by their ethics in consuming practice.

Otherwise, one's collectivist self and obligations are emphasised over individual interests and personal feelings under the Chinese collectivist paradigm (Li, 2015). Group goals and cooperation are prioritised over independence and personal success. In this collectivist consciousness, people tend to prioritise the needs of their family and community over their own desires. This mindset strengthens the ability to collaborate and improve the efficiency of cooperation within the group, as people feel obligated to prioritise group benefits and be obedient to a structured hierarchal community. However, this emphasis on collective identity can sometimes come at the expense of individual expression and creativity, which are seen as signs of weakness in a collective society. As a result, people in collectivist cultures tend to fulfil their obligations and adhere to social expectations, even if it means sacrificing their personal interests. The self-emotional restraint makes people feel stifled by existing social circles and it prompts them to start looking for an emotional outlet that frees them of their social ties and resonates with their interests (Young, 2011). Consuming foreign audiovisual products is one of the channels the participants of this research found can fulfil self-expressions of personal needs and interests. The anonymity of online platforms allows fans to express themselves openly, away from respective offline social circles, and reach out to strangers with similar interests and backgrounds on the Internet. Fansubbers are enamoured by the accessible communication that comes with fansubbing activities because they can satisfy the need to express themselves while demonstrating their competence in subtitling. Furthermore, Chinese fansubbers gain knowledge about foreign cultures, develop new ways of thinking, and reconfigure their freer identities through accessing unauthorised

foreign media products and engaging in self-initiated subtitling activities. In a sense, the fansubbers' identity formation reveals tensions between the collectivist consciousness rooted in Chinese culture and the individualism for self-sense and resistance against the dominant norms of Chinese society.

The presence of other identity traits indicates that the fansubbers' values are also individualistic in nature. Fansubbing subjectivity and productivity are an essential part of subtitle cultural production. Compared to professional subtitling, fansubbers' output is more creative and individualistic on subtitle conventions and translations. Their self-empowered and self-commissioned practice and diverse translation skills make the role of the translator very visible. Instead of submitting to the original video work suppliers in a legitimate relationship, they directly replace and expand themselves into the workshops and operation centres for American television programmes in the cyber world. They initiatively search for unauthorised sources online to access broader foreign media products and select which content they want to consume. Individual autonomy and expressions that are suppressed in collectivist culture are prioritised here. During the translation, fansubbers express their personal opinions and perform their visibility in front of audiences. Individualism is expressed overtly by creative text manipulation that resists the dominant control over media interpretation. Besides this, the tension among fansub groups indicates individualism at another level. "It is forbidden to join two fansubs at the same time" is fansubs' general rule of entrance. The principle of no-sharing subtitles among groups reflects that fansubs value their group intelligence as one community. It also shows a group's self-contradictory, the individualistic resistance to the collectivist sharing value underpinning this community.

Their narcissistic tendencies can be seen as a form of individualism in the online world that complements their social roles in the real world. Fansubs promote the products of media industries, which focus on turning everyday life into a spectacle to be watched and consumed. Since most people suppress themselves in daily life and interpersonal networks in the traditional Chinese culture and social environment, fansub communities provide a platform for members to express their true feelings and desires behind screens. The post-production of Chinese fansubs appropriate and supplement the original texts of American television series, establish their style and individuality through performance on the Internet, and then seek audience recognition and acceptance. They consciously add their personality and creation in translation and some of them seem to take the translated video as a carnival game field. This performative behaviour is only approved of by a handful of audiences who prefer the amusing effects of the film rather than a high-quality translation; it is frowned upon by most viewers because the translation loses accuracy. However, the translation attracts young Chinese audiences to discuss its novel, dramatic, and eye-catching content. Although fansubs must lay low because of the external environment, they can market themselves to attract audiences, rendering them visible agents in the online community. Their use of various marketing strategies to make themselves known to their audiences, such as claiming credits in translation, seems inconsistent with their self-label of volunteerism. In a culture which orients toward humility and modesty, fansubbers' performative translations and sense of achievement may be treated as narcissistic by outsiders. The irony here is that although fansubbers are brought up in a culture that values collectivism over individualism, fansubbers clearly prefer the latter over the former.

Resistance vs Patriotism

The tension between resistance and patriotism that shapes the identities and social interactions of Chinese fansubbers is influenced by the social and political context in which they engage. For a long time, the Chinese government has adopted a tolerant attitude toward fan activities since fans' preoccupation with entertainment is likely to divert them from the critical political discourse that could threaten a harmonious society (Parc et al., 2022). The state exerts its control over cultural consumption through propaganda that co-opts the positive forces of popular culture in roundabout ways. For instance, the state holds its own music awards, talent shows and domestic animation to attract and cultivate its fans so that it can keep fans under control and organise activity within the party line. In addition, China's primary Internet service providers are state-owned enterprises under the direct supervision of significant government ministries. The state holds gate-keeping roles to ensure ideological control by making the media and cultural markets responsive to popular tastes (Parc et al., 2022). Furthermore, to prevent oppositional debate or radical views, the online discussion space is considerably hobbled, with sensitive political terms and speeches monitored. Any inappropriate political posts on websites are deleted, or the entire website is forced to shut down by the Chinese Internet filtering system. Individual netizens may also face severe punishment, such as a fine, detention or a prison sentence if they post sensitive speeches, especially those detrimental to the national interest (Wang & Zhang, 2017).

Therefore, Chinese fans are aware that, due to government surveillance and control, fandom cannot extend to the political sphere or translate politically sensitive content, though Chinese fan subtitling groups can translate politics-related videos like the American

president's weekly address, the American presidential election, and the Queen's speeches. Fansubbers are, therefore, cautious and limit their activism through self-censorship. They operate tactically within Chinese dominant power structures by finding alternative ways to transfer sensitive content in foreign media products. Jenkins (2006) argues that fandom's energy in choosing its own media texts and its capabilities in cultural production can transform into political activism when conditions permit, at least in the US context. However, unlike their counterparts in the American cultural context, faced with the stringent regulation of the cyber environment, fansubbers in China find it more difficult to transform their practice into political resistance, though by its existence it is resistant. While audiences in foreign countries can use foreign media, such as YouTube, Facebook, and blogs to engage in political activity, Chinese audiences cannot because such spaces are monitored. Their playful performance of using irony and satire in translation is not so much a directly political act but a call to be allowed to construct their discourse. Given their participatory culture, grown from the collaborations during the translation of entertainment content, fansubbers can easily walk into the domain of civic education, but less so about the political.

This social-political context of the restricted cyber environment hinders fansubbers' resistance and enforces their role as cultural transmitters. Instead of showing political resistance, fansubbers are aware of their grey situation and manifest patriotism in subtitling. The research findings suggest that people have a deep appreciation for their country's culture, as evidenced by their efforts to bridge cultural and linguistic differences. Various strategies are employed to achieve this cultural intervention, including localising cultural elements and filtering cultural values when subtitling foreign television programs. In addition to

prioritising domestic values in the workplace, fansubbers serve as a gateway to translate, distribute, and promote local cultural products, such as translating Chinese shows and COVID-related information to other countries, thus they constitute their role as cultural transmitters. On the one hand, fansubbers' dissemination of Chinese works may stimulate a contraflow that challenges the US-dominated culture flow at a macro level and nurtures overseas markets for Chinese products by increasing their cultural contents' attraction in the world. On the other hand, this exported subtitling effectively exposes overseas fans to culture originating from other countries and, thus, they can be seen to help in the development of an interest in discovering and exploring the country's culture, including language, food, history, music, fashion, and way of life. Although the consumption of Chinese cultural products is not as globalised as that of their US counterparts, it is still worth noticing the growing popularity of Chinese television programmes worldwide and the massive power of fans subtitling in cultural exports (Luo, 2015).

Spirit of Sharing vs Ethical Bond

The third tension is the spirit of sharing and self-bonding by a code of ethics established in the group and agreed upon by group members. The arrival of participatory culture has enhanced audiences' participation awareness and weakened authorities' control over cultural products, creating an incomparable value in sharing. Fansubs play a leading role in this cultural revolution of sharing. This spirit helps to create a pleasing sense of solidarity and set common goals to build a collective identity. Meanwhile, this spirit justifies fansubbers' pirated identity of downloading unauthorised resources and bypassing censorship in the traditional distribution chain. With the spirit of sharing, fansubbers abandon the old

regulations and cultural domination and, as producers, formulate new rules in cyberspace and create a new mode of content dissemination. In this mode, the entire production process of cultural products contains open and free discussion. Moreover, the spirit of sharing has spread beyond the limits of small organisations to a global scale. As participants are intellectuals with certain cultural abilities and independent consciousness, they decide how to produce and spread cultural products, abandoning the standards of the commercial economy society in which economic interests come first and no longer submit to the domination of authority. They are committed to creating a global sharing opportunity in cyberspace beyond the power of commercial consumption and dominant culture through their spirit of free sharing and vigorous knowledge production. As a subculture online, fansub groups' shared behaviour and sharing spirit guide their collective efforts in cultural communication and resistance to mainstream domination. Their spontaneous dissemination of overseas cultural products through collective wisdom has expanded the scope of global cultural communication and enlarged the audience's media access to foreign cultural products. It contributes to separating identity from the consistent identification of social discipline and confronts the existing mainstream norms and authoritative punishments. Furthermore, fansubbers' generalised reciprocity gives them a pronounced sense of achievement and benefits all participants. Although members of Chinese fansub groups are geographically spread and differently motivated, they are united by a mutual free-sharing spirit. It can be considered as a kind of cultural heritage that generates forces in this industry. Under this spirit and inspired by predecessors, individuals are willing to use their spare time to create value that provides personal satisfaction to participants, recognition to subtitle groups and real benefits to

audiences. It is conceivable that this spirit may be dissolved under the joint efforts of market forces and state ideology, but it embodies active social participation in the public arena so that audiences, too, can create value and make a change.

In contrast to this spirit, a code of ethics is established by fansubbers to regulate themselves and reasonably manage their identities. Participatory fandom can offer great rewards because of its highly engaged consumer base, but it carries risks in balancing the interests of the fandom community and media industry vis-à-vis content production and distribution. To avoid getting into trouble and regulating members, a form of disciplinary fandom is established, one that focuses on fans self-policing for the community's survival and the economic success of this industry. The fansub community creates its code of ethics to monitor members' behaviour, lest any observed deviation leads to losing access to content or social exclusion from the fan community. The forum's regulation of "no verbal fights" prevents arguments between commentators and fansubbers. The 0-day time limit rule ensures productivity in completing tasks. The principle of no commercial use and no advertising signals resistance to commercialisation. If a fansubber violates their group ethics, they may face suspension or exclusion from the group. Regardless of whether all members abide by the code, the existence of this regulation reflects fansubbers' clear consciousness of their different identities and the need to limit their behaviour to within the stipulated range.

To conclude, this chapter explores the identities of fansubbers and the way these identities manifest in fansubbers' pursuit of content accessibility, self-interpretation, and free sharing. The interactions among these identities are co-related and represent a certain symbiosis. Without collectivism, the other identities would be too loose to notice. Fansubbers

are collectivists, and as such, individual participants are subservient to the group's needs, generating a collective force that represents group identities. And since fansubbers are a productive force online, they can generate power in resistance and cultural communication, receive public attention and become proud, even being narcissistic. During their identification, a complex layering of tension is discovered in Chinese fansub communities. The tensions between collectivism and individualism, resistance, and patriotism, and sharing spirit and ethical bond exist due to the unique cultural and social-political context in which fansubbing occurs. This context also contributes to the fansubbers' sense of narcissism and their role in cultural communication. Under the restricted social environment, fansubbers' narcissism represents their individualistic traits empowered by the Internet. Fansubbers emphasise their visibility in recreation by performing their selectivity and subjectivity in interpretation. Aware of their risk situation and to regulate members, fansubbers uphold the spirit of sharing and are self-policed by adhering to the code of ethics in the group. Regarding how they interpret cultural elements, fansubbers apply various translation strategies in subtitling. They positively mediate the text to introduce foreign cultures and promote domestic cultures, improving intercultural communication. Their multi-faced identities together form a collaborative and efficient online organisation with a clear hierarchical structure and a production process during which members receive a sense of community and a sense of achievement in return for their investments of time and effort in the project.

Chapter Seven Conclusion

Informed by theories of participatory culture and audienceship, this study describes fansub communities as dynamic communities organised by empowered online audiences. These audiences take the initiative in navigating with different agencies (media industries, governments, and audiences) through creative producing and mediating. Although fansubbing is situated in a grey area regarding copyright laws, Chinese fansubs have bloomed online for two decades from the early 2000s until 2021, when the arrest of YYeTs marked the end of fansubbers' golden era. In previous studies, fansubbing has been described as an active fan engagement in participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) but also as a harmful activity that risks legitimate access to authorised content (Condry, 2010; Denison, 2011). Fan subtitling is a complex phenomenon comprising culture, communication, politics, and social economics, as explained in the literature review. Studying fandom identities in the Chinese context is unique because China presents a complex media landscape. The socio-political context in China, characterised by a prevalent piracy culture and strict political regulation, limits media information flows and audiences' self-expression practices.

To include this broader social context, this study has defined the four largest Chinese fansub groups, their Chinese social context, and the Chinese fansubbers' perceived identities. I formed the fundamental premise that Chinese fan subtitlers have multiple online identities in their subtitling community. Situating this research in the Chinese social environment, I have examined fansubbers' different identities primarily through a netnography approach. By collecting data from the four fansub groups, including their textual conventions, regulations, enrolment process and attitudes toward commercialisation, all of which may affect identity

construction, I gathered contextually relevant material and kept them in mind throughout the research. With a social constructionist approach, the analysis consistently cites the survey results and participants' responses within the contextual overview. It shows that fansubbers' identities are socially and culturally related and display layers of tensions in identification.

To examine the identities of fansubbers and their subjective perspectives, I conducted surveys and interviews, gathered archival data, and collected fieldnotes from within fansub communities. By understanding the various dimensions of multiple perceived identities, this thesis can better explain how fansubbers present themselves and their content within Chinese culture. At the outset of this thesis, I formulated four questions to investigate the identities of fansubbers; two of the questions were specifically aimed at examining their identity as a cultural transmitter and as narcissistic. The selection of these two identities was informed by research that identified those identities with fan communities (Denison, 2010; Luo, 2015; Crawford, 2004). These questions became interlinked as the thesis moved forward. The questions were answered by analysing the data collected during the fieldwork. The analysis revealed complex interlinking underlined identities, which increased our understanding of this social phenomenon. The remainder of this chapter summarises the key findings regarding the research questions, assesses the implications and limitations of this study, and recommends directions for future research.

Summary of Key Findings

This study addressed the overarching research question of how fansubbers manifest the identities of the collectivist, resistant, pirate, prosumer, cultural transmitter, and narcissist through their practice. Analysis revealed that fansubbers' identities are manifested through

the negotiating and textual manipulation within a group's movements. First, all the relevant data showed that a shared sense of collectivism existed, which paved the way for fansubbers' other identities regarding expression, formation, consolidation, maintenance, and negotiation during collective action. Participants widely admitted their collective identity, in the role of prosumers, cultural transmitters, and narcissists. According to this research, Chinese fansubbers do not identify strongly with resistance, although their practice is, by nature, resistant. They explained their motivation for creating subtitles is to address their unsatisfied cultural needs while simultaneously entertaining themselves rather than seeking to actively disrupt the regulatory processes. This explanation could be related to their sensitive situation, as the fansubbers want their work to be more acceptable and perceived as less renegade in the eyes of authorities. In terms of pirates, fansubbers have a different perception of their identity compared to outsiders. This difference in perspective is because fansubbers' viewpoints are influenced by their cultural mindset, which is distinct from the evolving regulatory framework informed by Western law. Fansub members are driven by the traditional culture of collectivism, which is a normative belief that fan subtitling is a recreation of the original cultural text, and they describe their activities as altruistic. Despite the legal definition, Chinese fansubbers believe they are post-producers rather than copyright plagiarists.

Second, with the research focus moving to the identity of cultural transmitters and narcissists, the study discovered the deep tensions inherent in the fansubbing phenomenon that relates to culture and the socio-political environment. These tensions play a crucial role in shaping the identities of fansubbers, particularly among Chinese fansubbers, who are notably influenced by a heightened sense of national awareness in intercultural

communication. This national awareness impacts the way they mediate the content. They not only filter out unwanted political content but also unite to resist uploading and translating subtitled videos that contain offensive content about Chinese socio-culture. This means that although the international media expands people's knowledge about other cultures and countries, fansubbers can deliberately avoid subverting their local identities. The impact on Chinese audiences' values could only be defined by fansubbers' selective integration even if cultural and information exchanges are strengthened. Second, fansubbers' narcissistic identity closely relates to fansubbers' individualism, revealed in their performance behaviour in subtitling, attitudes towards audiences' comments and a strong need for excessive attention and admiration. During their practice, they display exaggerated or performative behaviour to get attention and feel a sense of self-achievement is an essential incentive for them to work. In addition, behind the mask of confidence regarding their translation lies a fragile self-esteem and low receptivity to criticism. Although interviewees said they could accept viewers' criticism, it was universally found that fansubs crave admiration and recognition for their work, often more than they value criticism. This individualistic trait is akin to narcissism, particularly within a collectivist community like theirs. However, due to their sensitive position and the political environment, they can only express themselves in the text and construct their own discourse instead of standing in the spotlight.

The third finding is that fansubbers manage their identities through textual creation and group regulation. Fansubbers are creative in rendition, expressing their personal views and dealing with cultural otherness strategically. The fansub community implemented motivational, supervision, and restriction systems. Fansubs use gamification to inspire and

motivate users and give them non-monetary rewards at the group level to stimulate their work. Supervision and restriction systems are also applied for the group leader to check the work quality and adjust members' behaviours. This regulation is an acknowledgement on the part of the groups, that there is a need for self-protection to avoid conflict and the government's attention. Guided by the spirit of sharing, Chinese fansubbers' consumption is not haphazard but a well-organised and coordinated collective action to move fandom from passive consumption to active production. Thanks to their effort, mass entertainment products become objects of collective creation.

This research has several original contributions. First, it moves the focus away from the binary model of the 'active' or 'passive' audience and traces the direction of complex thinking to explain the phenomenon of fansubbing practice that emerges from the participatory culture and empowered audiences in the contemporary media environment. Second, taken from the scholarship, the concept of multiple identities is found and applied to Chinese fansubbers. In particular, the Spectacle/Performance paradigm (SPP) is applied to explore fansubbers' narcissistic identity and turned out to be effective for the Chinese fansub communities, so its use should be encouraged in examining fandom identities. Third, in a global media environment, we need to be more explicit about the fact that user-generated media is being shared and used in all sorts of different settings, like private and public, domestic, and international, isolated, or connected. Audiences' sense of themselves is inextricably intertwined with their social cultural settings and political environment. By uncovering the tensions and making links to fansubbers' identities, this research has deepened and furthered the scholarship of exploring identities in a specific cultural and socio-political

context.

Theoretical and Methodological Implications

This study represents an attempt to explore fansubbers' multiple identities beyond the theoretical and methodological limitations of current research. Theoretically, since much of the existing scholarship focuses on the single identity of this transnational fandom, studying their different identities in the current media environment contributes to the existing literature on identity by advancing the notion that multiple identities, controversial practices, opposing views, and complex relations can exist and be part of a shared community. It provides a close examination of fans' innovative practices and image construction through consumption of global media content. The research contributes to the field of fan studies by conceptualising the dynamic and systemic inter-relationships in this fandom community and their large-scale and spontaneous manner. It has explored fansubbers' multiple identities and uncovers the social, cultural and political tensions inherent in the fansubbing phenomenon. Understanding fansubbers through a social constructionist lens contributes to knowledge of the complexity of contemporary media consumption. More importantly, as cyberspace becomes increasingly powerful as an arena, dominant cultures and subcultures have been able to engage in new ways. Chinese fansubs, as a unique fandom culture, have emerged through this negotiation, representing a new energetic power that challenges mainstream media production and distribution frameworks. Therefore, understanding Chinese subtitlers' role in everyday media experience is increasingly important. Methodologically, this research provides a comprehensive literature review and synthesises empirical studies on the identity of Chinese online fansub groups. This foundation has allowed for a multidimensional perspective,

viewing the group dynamics at the organisational, social, and functional levels and analysing fansubbers' identities internally (within fansub groups) and externally (as prosumers on the outside of mainstream). The integrative approach of netnography adopted in the research facilitated uncovering the intertwined connection between fansubbers' everyday practices and self-perception. Moreover, this approach proved to be highly flexible in providing a nuanced understanding of how fansub communities organise and manage themselves into an efficient collective force. Netnography can function as a useful analytical tool to deeply understand the complex connections between people, organisations and the use of the technologies involved in fansubbing activities. I hope this research can help enrich the understanding of this technologically inspired activity and provide interested researchers with a holistic perspective to review the intertwined connections and changes between media production and consumption. Perhaps this research could be used to guide intercultural media companies and help practitioners understand how active audiences organise, coordinate, and communicate online and develop new identities in times of media change.

Limitations and Future Research

During my research on interviewing fansubbers, I encountered challenges in collecting data due to varying environmental conditions. The outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the motivation of fansubbers to participate in the survey because it has disrupted the production of American television series, affecting fansubbers' positivity in practice, which was within the scope of my research. Besides Covid, the closedown and the judgement of the YYeTs fansub group were also unexpected, which further impacted fansubbers' attitudes towards their work and resulted in a small number of interviewees. To address this issue, I

reviewed relevant literature, adjusted the number of interviewees and sample collection methods, and included additional variables to account for environmental fluctuations. As a result, I obtained reliable data and was able to draw meaningful conclusions. In addition, I faced difficulties in balancing my dual identities (previously fansubber and researcher). I struggled with whether adopting a participant-observer role would allow me to understand my subjects better. Ultimately, I decided to disclose my position as a former-fansubber to the participants. This openness benefited me in building trust with research participants as they welcomed my stance in the group, and I received their genuine and thoughtful responses to the survey. From my personal experience, I would recommend that scholars who wish to conduct netnographic research on online communities should be transparent about their knowledge of the community while taking into account the sensitivity of the research topic and the potential risks that it may pose for both the researcher and the research subjects. Furthermore, although my association with the YYeTs group had its advantages in obtaining insider information, it also brought difficulties to interviewing members of other fansub groups, as they may not like YYeTs' commercialisation strategy or be concerned about leaking their confidential material. Chinese fansubs are diverse in the size of members, group conventions and the content genre they choose to subtitle. Variations between groups may yield varying perspectives. In this aspect, the small number of interviewees in one group restricted my ability to gain a deep understanding of fansubbers' identities. However, I believe the researched group can reasonably represent the large, well-established fansub communities formed by Chinese fans of American media content. The material can accurately reflect the thoughts of fansubbers and add valuable insights into this unique study. Future

research on fandom could expand on the number of interviews, but having made inroads into this area is a useful addition to fandom studies.

While my research presents a theoretical and methodological model for examining fansubbers' identities, more empirical studies are required across different cultures and social contexts to examine this community and refine our understanding. However, this study is unique in exploring this important area of fandom in that cultural context. Also, it would be interesting for future researchers to investigate whether the fandom identities and community mechanisms analysed in this project differ from other fansub groups along one or more dimensions. New terrains for future research would involve investigating the transnational relationship between fans and the media industries, examining the possible consequences that arise from the involvement of fansubs as media producers in self-mediated online communities, and analysing the impact of cultural programmes imported by these Chinese amateur mediators.

Final Insights

The communication mode of foreign film and television resources on the Internet via fansubs has matured in China—the media technology has improved as far as possible in the current environment, and the audience size has plateaued, albeit at a relatively high level. In recent years, Chinese fansubs have created a new mode of avoiding legal disputes on copyright ownership: only providing subtitles instead of video resources. The biggest challenge for Chinese media fans in such participatory activities is that the Chinese government wishes to maintain authoritarian control over media content while seeking the maximum share of the media market. However, blocking fansubs' transmission of film and television resources in a

short time is not easy, as fansubbing culture is rooted and has many enthusiastic followers. The question is, what cultural landscape will subtitle groups bring us in the next few years, and how long will this cultural phenomenon last? Due to the potential threat of being shut down by the government, the future development of such networks is uncertain. In addition, the president of Crunchyroll, the world's largest Anime Company, has confirmed that generative AI (artificial intelligence) is being tested on subtitling and closed captioning (Statt, 2024). How will this influence fansubbing in the future?

Over the past few decades, fansubbing communities have played a crucial role in introducing foreign media content that has served as cultural references for the Chinese people. This content has enabled them to express themselves and fulfil audiences' desire for a more open and transparent media environment. It is speculated that the absence of a dedicated platform for voluntary subtitling could lead passionate enthusiasts to feel disinterested and indifferent, as they may have nowhere to channel their passion, expertise, and commitment to participate in fansubbing communities. This research shed light on how Chinese netizens and media consumers form multiple identities in an increasingly networked China. Fansubbing provides a platform for lovers of foreign media to construct different identities through the secondary production of texts and foster cross-national solidarity and a sense of belonging online. I hope this research can remind the community that their identities can be challenging and that they need to negotiate different tensions that arise among them. I also encourage more scholars to undertake a thorough examination of fansubbing communities online, as their members take risks for altruistic purposes.

References

- Abercrombie, N., & Longhurst, B. J. (1998). *Audiences: A sociological theory of performance and imagination*. Sage Publications.
- Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and participant observation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 248-261). Sage Publications.
- Atkinson, M., & Washiya, Y. (2015). 'Who are you, and what are you doing here': Methodological considerations in ethnographic health and physical education research. *Ethnography and Education*, *10*(2), 242-261.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2015.1018290>
- AUT Ethics. Retrieved November 21, 2019, from
<https://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics/guidelines-and-procedures>.
- Bai, S. (2013). Recent developments in the Chinese film censorship system. *Research Papers*. Paper, 377. https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/gs_rp/377
- Ballano, V. O. (2016). Tracing media piracy: Current and future trends. In Vishal Daryanomel (Eds.), *Sociological Perspectives on Media Piracy in the Philippines and Vietnam* (pp. 227-254). Springer. <https://doi.org/kmf3>
- Banks, J., & Deuze, M. (2009). Co-creative labour. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *12*(5), 419-431. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877909337862>
- Bassett, E., & O'Riordan, K. (2002). Ethics of Internet research: contesting the human subjects research model. *Ethics and Information Technology* *4*(3), 233-247.
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021319125207>

-
- Bauwens, M. (2005). The political economy of peer production. *CTheory*, 1-12.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237720052>
- Benkler, Y. (2006). *The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*. Yale University Press.
- Biocca, F. A. (1988). Opposing conceptions of the audience: The active and passive hemispheres of mass communication theory. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 11(1), 51-80.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.1988.11678679>
- Brubaker, R., & Frederick Cooper. (2000). Beyond 'identity'. *Theory and Society*, 29(1), 1-47.
- Burmann, C. (2010). A call for 'user-generated branding'. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(1), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2010.30>
- Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Caffrey, Colm. (2009). *Relevant abuse? Investigating the effects of an abusive subtitling procedure on the perception of TV anime using eye tracker and questionnaire* [Doctoral Thesis, Dublin City University]. DORAS. <https://doras.dcu.ie/14835/>
- Casarini, A. (2014). *The perception of American adolescent culture through the dubbing and fansubbing of a selection of US teen series from 1990 to 2013* [Doctoral Thesis, Università di Bologna]. University of Bologna Digital Library.
<http://amsdottorato.unibo.it/>
- Cassini. (2021, February). Renren zimuzu yin daobanshipin beicha [YYeTs being investigated for pirated video]. Weibo.

<https://weibo.com/6575796160/4600540833254136>

Chen, W. (2011, February 11). Renrenzimu zu wanluoshidai de zhishibudaozhe. [YYeTs: The preacher of knowledge in Internet age]. *People's Daily Overseas Edition*.

www.people.com.cn

Chen, Alyssa. (2022, February 17). Friends' fans in China complain of censorship after LGBTQ plotline axed. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/china/friends-fans-china-complain-censorship-lgbtq-plotline-axed-rcna16453>

China Internet Network Information Centre. (2024, March). *Statistical report on internet development in China*.

<https://www.cnnic.com.cn/IDR/ReportDownloads/202405/P020240509518443205347.pdf>

China Law Translate. (2016). *Film Industry Promotion Law 2016*.

<https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/film-industry-promotion-law-2016/>

Chouliaraki, L. (2012). Self-mediation: New media and citizenship. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 7(4), 227–232. doi:10.1080/17405904.2010.511824.

Christian, F. (2009). Information and communication technologies and society: A contribution to the critique of the political economy of the internet. *European Journal of Communication*, 24(1), 69-87. doi:10.1177/0267323108098947.

Ciweigongshe. (2021). Renren zimuzu buguan liuzheguonianma [YYeTs don't you keep it for New Year]. *Sina News*. <https://finance.sina.cn/tech/csj/2021-02-10/detail-ikftssap5121358.d.html?fromtech=1&from=wap>

Condry, I. (2010). Dark energy: What fansubs reveal about the copyright wars. *Mechademia*,

5(1), 193-208. <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:118987996>

- Costello, L., McDermott, M. L., & Wallace, R. (2017). Netnography: Range of practices, misperceptions, and missed opportunities. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917700647>
- Crawford, G. (2004). Consuming sport: Fans, sport and culture. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 6(2), 47-62.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203493922>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Daxue Consulting. (2020). *Popular American TV series in China and what they reveal about Chinese consumers*. <https://daxueconsulting.com/american-series-in-china/>
- De Certeau, M. (1988). *The practice of everyday life*. University of California Press.
- Denison, R. (2011). Anime fandom and the liminal spaces between fan creativity and piracy. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14(5), 449-466.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877910394565>
- Diaz-Cintas, J., & Munoz Sanchez, P. (2006). Fansubs: Audiovisual translation in an amateur environment. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 6(1): 37-52.
<https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1451700>
- Diaz-Cintas, J., & Remael, A. (2007). *Audiovisual translation: Subtitling*. Routledge.
- Diaz-Cintas, J. (2018). Subtitling's a carnival: New practices in cyberspace. *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 30: 127-149. <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10053377/>
- Douban. (2011). Nidefanyi taiwei dalurenminzhaoxiangle [Your Translation is Too

Considerate for the Chinese Mainland People].

<https://www.douban.com/online/10899764/>

Dwyer, T. (2012). Fansub dreaming on ViKi. *Translator*, 18(2), 217–243.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2012.10799509>

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. Psychology Press.

Feng, K., & Meuwissen, S. (2018, January 4). China: Annual online piracy crackdown campaign 2017: Results announced. *Engage*.

https://www.engage.hoganlovells.com/knowledgeservices/news/china-annual-online-piracy-crackdown-campaign-2017-results-announced_1

Fiske, J. (1992). The cultural economy of fandom. In L.A. Lewis (Ed.), *The adoring audience: Fan culture and popular media* (pp. 30-49). Routledge.

FIX. (2013). *House of cards subtitling work*. FIX.

<https://www.zimuxia.cn/portfolio/%e7%ba%b8%e7%89%8c%e5%b1%8b>

Flew, T. (2008). *New media: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.

French, H. W. (2006, August 8). Love of U.S. TV spurs Chinese thefts - Asia - Pacific - International Herald Tribune. *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/08/world/asia/08iht-china.2417343.html>

French, H. W. (2006, August 9). Chinese tech buffs slake thirst for U.S. TV shows. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/09/world/asia/09china.html>

Frith, S., & Goodwin, A. (2006). *On record: Rock, pop and the written word*. Routledge.

FRM. (2008). *Boston legal subtitling work*. MeijuTT.

<https://www.meijutt.cc/meijutt/7909.html>

FRM. (2010). *FRM official micro blog*. Weibo. <https://weibo.com/1000fr>

FRM. (2019). *FRM error correction activity*. Weibo. <https://weibo.com/1000fr>

FRM. (2021, May 13). *Homeland subtitling work*. SubHD. <https://subhd.tv/search/Homeland>

Galbin, A. (2014). An introduction to social constructionism. *Social research reports*, 6(26), 82-92. <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=161941>

Ganesh, S., Li, M., & Vaccarino, F. (2017). The bases for intercultural communication in a digital era. *Global Perspectives on Intercultural Communication*, 24, 355-365.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315716282-29>

Gao, Y. (2018). *The role of fan-subtitle groups in the process of introducing US television programs into China: A case study*. [Master's Thesis, Drexel University]. Core. <https://core.ac.uk/download/190325880.pdf>

Gentles, S. J., Charles, C., Ploeg, J., & McKibbin, K. (2015). Sampling in qualitative research: Insights from an overview of the methods literature. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(11), 1772-1789. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2373>

Gergen, K. J., & Thatchenkery, T. J. (2004). Organization science as social construction: Postmodern potentials. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 40(2), 228-249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886396324002>

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Polity Press.

Gray, J., Sandvoss, C., & Harrington, C. L. (Eds.). (2007). *Fandom: Identities and communities in a mediated world*. NYU Press.

-
- Green, J., & Thorogood, N. (2004). *Qualitative methods for health research*. Sage
- Greenwood, D. J., & Morten, L. (2008). Reform of the social sciences through action research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln. *The landscape of qualitative research* (pp. 57-86). Sage Publications
- Grossberg, L. (2002). Is there a fan in the house? The affective sensibility of fandom. In L.A. Lewis (Ed.), *The adoring audience: Fan culture and popular media* (pp. 50-65). Routledge.
- Grossman, L. (2006, December 25). You. Yes, you are TIME's person of the year. *Time*. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1570810,00.html>
- Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research* (pp. 255-286). Sage.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough?: An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Gui, Yui. (2008). Xinbo meiju beizhiniuquzhongguoxingxiang zhongwangluozimuzu ti kangyi [Chinese fansubs protest against new US TV series for distorting China's image]. *Wenxue City*. <https://zh.wenxuecity.com/news/2008/12/25/ent-43944.html>
- Harris, C., & Alexander, A. (1998). *Theorizing fandom: Fans, subculture, and identity*. Hampton Press.
- He, D., & Tang, W. (2024). Constructed community: Rise and engines of Chinese nationalism under Xi Jinping. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 1–23.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2024.2339303>

He, T. (2014). Fansubs and market access of foreign audiovisual products in China: The copyright predicament and the use of No Action Policy. *Oregon Review of International Law*, 16(2), 307-345. CORE.

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/36693301.pdf>

He, T. (2017). *Copyright and fan productivity in China: A cross-jurisdictional perspective*. Springer.

Hehehe. (2021, November). *Renrenyingshi zimuzu qinquanai yishenxuanpan* [First instance judgement on YYeTs infringement case]. Weibo.

<https://weibo.com/1176447353/4706332479587166>

Hine, C. (2000). *Virtual ethnography*. Sage Publications.

Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (2008). Constructionist impulses in ethnographic fieldwork. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research* (pp. 373–395). The Guilford Press.

Hou, Y. & Xu, P. (2019). Kuawenhua fensiyanjiu: xueshushi shuli yu qianzhan [Cross-cultural fandom: Academic history and prospects]. *China Youth Study*, 12, 87-94.

<http://www.cqvip.com/qk/82199xFriends/201912/7100477178.html>

Hsiao, Chi-hua. (2017). Pirates are fire-bringers: The gift culture in Internet-based subtitle groups. *Journal of Archaeology and Anthropology*, 86, 111-138.

<https://doi.org/10.6152/jaa.2017.6.0005>

-
- Hsu, C. W. (2007). Staging on the internet: Research on online photo album users in Taiwan with the spectacle/performance paradigm. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, 10(4), 596-600. <http://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2007.9984>
- Hu K (2014). Competition and collaboration: Chinese video websites, subtitle groups, state regulation and market. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 17(5): 437–451
- Jenkins, H. (1988). Star Trek rerun, reread, rewritten: Fan writing as textual poaching. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 5(2), 85-107.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15295038809366691>
- Jenkins, H. (1992). *Textual poachers: Television fans and participatory culture*. Routledge.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Fans, bloggers, and gamers: Exploring participatory culture*. NYU Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. NYU Press.
- Johnson, C. M. (2001). A survey of current research on online communities of practice. *The Internet and Higher Education* 4(1), 45-60.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1096751601000471>
- Jones, S. (1999). *Doing internet research: Critical issues and methods for examining the net*. Sage Publications.
- Kitzinger, J. (2004). Audience and readership research. In J. D. H. Downing, D. McQuail, P. Schlesinger & E. Wartella (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of media studies* (pp. 167-182). Sage. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412976077.n9>
- Kozinets, R. V. (1998). On Netnography: Initial reflections on consumer research investigations of Cyberculture. *Advances in Consumer Research* 25(1), 366-371.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237131093>

-
- Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. Sage Publications.
- Kung, S.-W. (2016). Audienceship and community of practice: An exploratory study of Chinese fansubbing communities. *Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies*, 3(3), 252-266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23306343.2016.1225329>
- Lakarnchua, O. (2017). Examining the potential of fansubbing as a language learning activity. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 11(1), 32–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2015.1016030>
- Lanier, J. (2010). *You are not a gadget: A manifesto*. Vintage.
- Lazzarato, M. (1996). Immaterial labor. In M. Hardt & P. Virno (Eds.), *Radical thought in Italy: A potential politics* (pp. 133–147). University of Minnesota Press.
- Lee, H. K. (2011). Participatory media fandom: A case study of anime fansubbing. *Media, Culture & Society*, 33 (8), 1131-1147. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443711418271>
- Lei, W. Z. (2012). *Online fandom and international communication*. Communication University of China Press.
- Leonard, S. (2004). *Progress against the law: Fan distribution, copyright, and the explosive growth of Japanese animation*. MIT Japan Program, Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Levy, P. (1997). *Collective intelligence: Man's emerging world in cyberspace*. (R. Bononno, Trans.). Perseus.
- Lewis, L. A. (2002). *The adoring audience: Fan culture and popular media*. Routledge.
- Li, D. (2015). *Amateur translation and the development of a participatory culture in China*:

A netnographic study of The Last Fantasy fansubbing Group [Doctoral Thesis, The University of Manchester]. The University of Manchester.

<https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/amateur-translation-and-the-development-of-a-participatory-cultur>

- Li, Jinying. (2022). Pirate cosmopolitanism and the undercurrents of flow fansubbing television on China's P2P networks, In Dal Yong Jin and Seok-Kyeong Hong (Eds.), *Transnational convergence of east Asian pop culture* (pp. 127-46), Routledge.
- Li, L. N. (2017). Rethinking the Chinese internet: Social history, cultural forms, and industrial formation. *Television & New Media*, 18(5), 393-409.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476416667548>
- Li, M. & Sligo, F. (2015). Internationalizing Chinese media. In Q. Luo (Eds.), *Global media worlds and China* (pp. 173-190). The Communication University of China Press.
- Li, X. (2009). *Dis/locating audience: Transnational media flows and the online circulation of East Asian television drama* [Master's thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology]. MIT Libraries. <https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/59732>
- Li, X.C. (2009, May 13). Audience and audienceship. Canarytrap.net.
<https://canarytrap.net/2009/05/audiences-and-audienceship>
- Liang, L. (2021, December 5). *To YYeTs friends*. Weibo. <https://weibo.com/u/1660646684>
- Liu, Y. (2019). *The 'abusive' approach to fansubbing: A case study of 'House of Cards' from English into Chinese* [Unpublished Master's thesis]. University of Auckland.

-
- Liu, J. M. (2019, May 13). *Quanyou xiaoshide wushisige jingtou toulou naxie shenchamimi* [secrets revealed in fifty-four vanishing scenes from 'Game of Thrones']. Entertainment Capital. <https://www.huxiu.com/article/298958.html>
- Livingstone, S. (2013). The participation paradigm in audience research. *The Communication Review*, 16(1-2), 21-30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2013.757174>
- Luo, Qing. (2015). *Global media worlds and China*. China University of Communication Press.
- Luo, Z., & Li, M. (2024). Participatory censorship: How online fandom community facilitates authoritarian rule. *New Media & Society*, 26(7), 4236-4254. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221113923>
- Mansoor, I. (2023, May), *YouTube revenue and usage statistics (2023)*. Business of Apps. Retrieved May 16, 2023, from <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/youtube-statistics/#1>
- McIntyre, L. (2005). *Need to know. Social science research methods*. McGraw Hill.
- Meng, B. (2012). Underdetermined globalization: media consumption via P2P networks. *International Journal of Communication*, 6, 467-483. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/43540>
- Miller, L. (2017). Access and the construction of fan identity: Industry images of anime fandom. *Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, 14(1), 49-66. <https://participations.org/14-01-04-miller.pdf>
- Mortari, L. (2015). Reflectivity in research practice: An overview of different perspectives. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5), 1-9.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915618045>

Morreall, John. (2024). Philosophy of Humor, In Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (Eds.),

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2024/entries/humor/>

Netflix. (2022). *Simplified Chinese (PRC) timed text style guide*.

<https://backlothelp.netflix.com/hc/en-us/articles/215986007-Simplified-Chinese-PRC-Timed-Text-Style-Guide>

Neumann, W. L. (2003). *Social research methods. Qualitative and quantitative approaches*

(5th ed.). Allyn and Bacon.

Nornes, A. M. (1999). For an abusive subtitling. *Film Quarterly*, 52(3), 17–34.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/1213822>

O'hagan, M. (2009). Evolution of user-generated translation: Fansubs, translation hacking and crowdsourcing. *The Journal of Internationalization and Localization*, 1 (1), 94-

121. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jial.1.04hag>

Osno, E. (2007, January 24). 'Prison Break' catches on in China. *The Seattle Times*.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/prison-break-catches-on-in-china/>

Pérez-González, L. (2012). Amateur subtitling and the pragmatics of spectatorial subjectivity.

Language and Intercultural Communication, 12(4), 335-352.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2012.722100>

Priante, A., Ehrenhard, M. L., van den Broek, T., & Need, A. (2018). Identity and collective action via computer-mediated communication: A review and agenda for future

research. *New Media & Society*, 20(7), 2647-2669.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817744783>

Priest, E. (2006). The future of music and film piracy in China. *Berkeley Technology Law Journal*, 21, 795. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24117310>

Puri, A. (2007). The web of insights: The art and practice of webnography. *International Journal of Market Research*, 49(3), 387-408.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/147078530704900308>

Qiu, P. (2010). *Audience activity in the new media era: Chinese fansubs of US TV shows* [Unpublished Master's thesis]. University of Florida.

Ragbear. (2009). *Ragbear resources sharing blog*. Weibo. <https://weibo.com/plx2007>

Ragbear. (2021). *CSI subtitling work*. Weibo. <https://weibo.com/plx2007>

Ragbear. (2021, August 7). *Motherland subtitling work*. Weibo.

https://weibo.com/1675786507?refer_flag=1001030103

Rainie, L. & Wellman, B. (2012). *Networked: The new social operating system*. MIT Press.

Reuters. (2021, February 3). *Chinese arrest of video pirates triggers outcry from 'Friends' fans*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinese-arrest-video-pirates-triggers-outcry-friends-fans-2021-02-03/>

Richter, F. (2021, February 4). *Facebook keeps on growing*. Statista Infographics.

<https://www.statista.com/chart/10047/facebooks-monthly-active-users/>

Rong, Z. (2015). *Hybridity within peer production: The power negotiation of Chinese fansub groups* [Master's thesis, University of London]. LSE. <https://shorturl.at/luBM5>

Ruddock, A. (2001). *Understanding audiences: Theory and method*. Sage.

Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2001). *Discourse and intercultural communication*. In D.

-
- Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 538-547). Blackwell Publishers.
- Sfileydy. (2012). *Sfileydy subtitle group is a non-profit group set up by netizens spontaneously* [Online forum post]. Sfileydy.
bbs.sfile2012.com/forumdisplay.php?fid=7
- Sfileydy. (2021). *CSI Subtitling Work*. Sfileydy. <http://bbs.sfile2012.com/>
- Sina. (2018, March 17). *Guanyu zimuzu de qianshijinsheng ni liaojieduoshao* [What do you know about the subtitle group].
https://k.sina.cn/article_6429959652_17f4165e40010041in.html
- Sohu. (2009, December 15). *Sida meiju zimuzu PK jiemi meiju fabu liucheng* [Four US TV series fansubs PK revealed the release process of US TV series].
<https://yule.sohu.com/20091215/n268951829.shtml>
- Statt, N. (2024, February 27). Crunchyroll president Rahul Purini on how anime took over the world. *The Verge*. <https://www.theverge.com/2024/2/26/24081180/>
- Sun, L. (2014). *The culture of fansub groups in China—From the perspective of youth subculture* [Doctoral Thesis, Wuhan University]. Wangfang Data.
<https://shorturl.at/CINQ6>
- Surowiecki, J. (2005). *The wisdom of crowds: Why the many are smarter than the few*. Abacus.
- Taalas, S. L., & Hirsjärvi, I. (2013). Fandom as a mode of second production: Active audienceship of the rising shadow. *International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy*, 7(3-4), 245-262. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMCP.2013.056503>

-
- Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories*. Cambridge University Press.
- Tang, Y. (2014, October). Yinhehuweidui fanyi beipiyeyu: ba xiaodian jihu fanyimeile [The translated subtitles of Guardians of the Galaxy were criticized for amateurism: most punchlines are gone]. *Xinhua Daily*. <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/cul/2014/10-15/6680584.shtml>)
- TAO. (2021, April). Congratulations on your 14th birthday, dear Bears! [Comment on the blog post “RAGBEAR 14 Anniversary”]. <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Bmhe7na5oxYfaUWNnlTu7Q>
- Terranova, T. (2004). *Network culture: Politics for the information age*. Pluto Press.
- Thornham, H., & Popple, S. (Eds.). (2013). *Content cultures: Transformations of user generated content in public service broadcasting*. IB Tauris.
- Tomlinson, J. (1991). *Cultural imperialism: A critical introduction*. Continuum
- Turner, C. F., & Martin, E. (Eds.). (1984). *Surveying subjective phenomena* (Vol. 1). Russell Sage Foundation.
- Turner, F. (2009). Burning man at Google: A cultural infrastructure for new media production. *New Media & Society*, 11(1-2), 73-94. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444808099575>
- Viki. (2019). *Nirvana in fire* [TV series]. <https://www.viki.com/tv/22943c-nirvana-in-fire?qId=47322790b3b4864aa146a5d77b91f26d>
- Rembert-Lang, L. D. (2010). Reinforcing the tower of Babel: The impact of copyright law on fansubbing. *Intellectual Property Brief*, 2 (2), 21-33.
- Walsh, D. (1998). Doing ethnography. In S. Clive (Ed.), *Researching Society and Culture* (pp.

217-232). Sage Publications.

Walther, J. B. (2002). Research ethics in Internet-enabled research: Human subjects issues and methodological myopia. *Ethics and Information Technology* 4, 205-216.

<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021368426115>

Wang, D. (2017). Fansubbing in China – With reference to the fansubbing group YYeTs. *Journal of Specialised Translation*, 28, 165-190.

http://www.jostrans.org/issue28/art_wang.pdf

Wang, D., & Zhang, X. (2017). Fansubbing in China: Technology-facilitated activism in translation. *Target*, 29(2), 301-318. <https://doi.org/10.1075/target.29.2.06wan>

Wang, Q. & Zhao, Z. Q. (2013, November 18). *Yingshijun zimuzu jianchi gongyi queshou banquankunrao* [Film and Television Fansubs adhere to public good but are trouble by copyright]. *Renmin Internet News*. <http://ip.people.com.cn/n/2013/1118/c136655-23572106.html>

Ward, K. (1999). Cyber-ethnography and the emergence of the virtually new community. *Journal of Information Technology*, 14, 95-105.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/026839629901400108>

Wardle, C., & Williams, A. (2010). Beyond user-generated content: A production study examining the ways in which UGC is used at the BBC. *Media, Culture & Society*, 32(5), 781–799. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443710373953>

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge University Press.

What did you do today. (2021, February). *Renren zimuzu yin daobanshipin beicha* [YYeTs

being investigated for pirated video]. Weibo.

<https://weibo.com/6621126150/4600600962534683>

Wilcock, Se. (2013). *A comparative analysis of fansubbing and professional DVD subtitling*

[Doctoral Thesis, University of Johannesburg]. ProQuest. <https://shorturl.at/hmuxJ>

Wolcott, H. F. (2008). *Writing up qualitative research*. Sage.

Xu, M. (2018). *American TV series in China: How online viewing impacts perceptions of*

reality, cultural values and identity [Doctoral Thesis, University of Canterbury]. UC

Research Repository. <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/15559>

Yan, F. (2019, May 18). *Dui tan: Zimuzu de xingqi he yizhipian de huanghun* [Dialogue: The rising of fansub groups and the sunset of dubbed films]. *Pengpai News*.

http://m.thepaper.cn/kuaibao_detail.jsp?contid=3479509&from=kuaibao

Yao, S. (2021). Love my house, love my bird: An intercultural communication perspective on

Chinese fansub practices. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 50(5),

481-505. DOI: 10.1080/17475759.2021.1935300

Young, M. W. (2011). *Online film and music piracy in China: A cultural analysis* [Bachelor dissertation, University of Oregon]. University of Oregon Scholars' Bank.

<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/23503>

YYeTs. (2006). *YYeTs subtitles group*. YYeTs. www.yysub.net/

YYeTs. (2007). *Big bang theory subtitling work*. YYeTs.

<https://www.yysub.net/resource/11005>

YYeTs. (2010). *Listening to music subtitling work*. YYeTs.

<https://www.yysub.net/resource/26222>

YYeTs. (2013). *House of cards subtitling work*. YYeTs.

<https://m.yysub.cc/resource?id=28793>

YYeTs. (2019). *Game of thrones subtitling work*. Weibo. <https://weibo.com/yyets>

YYeTs. (2020, November 1). *The Good Doctor subtitling work S03E05*. YYeTs.

<https://www.yysub.net/subtitle/65482>

YYeTs. (2022). *The terror subtitling work*. YYeTs.

https://www.yysub.net/html/top/week_comments_list.html

YYeTs. (2023, February 5). In *Wikipedia*.

<https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%BA%BA%E4%BA%BA%E5%BD%B1%E8%A7%86>

Zhang, M. (2012). *Digital piracy in China-an analysis from human rights perspective*

[Master's thesis, Lund University]. LUP Student Papers. <https://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/search/publication/3460857>.

Zhang, Y. P. (2005). Reflecting self-images in the media mirror: A study based on the spectacle/performance paradigm. *Mass Communication Research*, 82, 41-85.

Zhang, W., & Mao, C. (2013). Fan activism sustained and challenged: Participatory culture in Chinese online translation communities. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 6(1), 45-61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2013.753499>

Zhang, Z.Y. & Shao, Q.H. (2018). Zhongguo chuanboxue 40nian: yige bentuhua de shijiaoyufansi [40 years of Chinese communication studies: A localized perspective and reflection]. *Journalism Lover*, 8, 38-40.

http://221.11.163.26:8081/Qikan/Article/Detail?id=7000801768&from=Qikan_Search

h_Index

Zhang, L., Xie, J., Geng, S., & Xie, Y. (2016). *Xinmeiti shiyexia de dazhongwenhua chuanbo*.

[Mass Culture Communication in the Perspective of New Media]. SiChuan University Press.

Zhou, Z. (2011). *The impact of American television on Chinese college students*. Wake Forest University.

Zhu, F. Cao, Y.Q., & Jang, H. B. (2020, March 31). Yinghe! Shanghai kangyi zimuzu de nuli dui quanrenlei dou youyiyi [Hardcore! The efforts of the Shanghai Anti-Virus subtitle team have meaning for all humankind]. *People's Daily*.

<https://wap.peopleapp.com/article/5333782/5243321?from=groupmessage&isappinstalled=0>

Zhu, X.M., Zhou, J., & Zhou, S.Y. (2022, November 18). Zhongguohaoju quanqiuchuanbo [Good Chinese dramas spread around the world]. *People's Daily Overseas Edition*.

http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2022-11/18/content_25949827.htm

Zhu, Y., (2023) "The Therapeutic and the Transgressive: Chinese Fansub Straddling between Hollywood IP Laws and Chinese State Censorship", *Global Storytelling: Journal of Digital and Moving Images* 3(1): 2. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3998/gs.4293>

Appendix A

29 August 2019

Sarah Baker

Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Sarah

Re Ethics Application: **19/284 Cultural identity construction and intercultural communication in a digital era - an exploratory study of English-Chinese fan subtitles**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 29 August 2022.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project. For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

Yours sincerely,



Kate O'Connor

Executive Manager

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: liuyijun682@gmail.com; rosser.johnson@aut.ac.nz

Appendix B

Participant Information Sheet

This information sheet is to participants for the survey.

Project Title : Cultural Identity Construction and Intercultural Communication in a Digital Era – An Exploratory Study of English-Chinese Fan Subtitlers 跨文化交流中字幕组成员的身份构建研究

An Invitation

I am hereby inviting you to assist my research. The collected data in this survey will be academic only. This survey is optional and anonymous if you are not interested in a follow-up interview. Whether you choose to participate or not will neither advantage nor disadvantage you.

您好，感谢您参加此次研究。此问卷是自愿匿名填写，所有回答都将保密且只作学术用途。

What is the purpose of this research?

This research aims to address the multiple identities of particular virtual community members, fan subtitlers by an interdisciplinary perspective. The researcher will explore how fan subtitlers construct their own identities in intercultural communication by examining the fan subtitlers' practices of four popular Chinese fan subtitling communities including Ragbear, Zimuzu, Sfileydy and Fengruan. It will conduct a survey of a hundred participants that enrolled from the research sites.

通过搜集四个字幕组（破烂熊，字幕组，伊甸园，风软）成员的在身份构建上的自我理解和实践活动，此研究旨在解决字幕组成员多重身份构建问题。此次问卷调查旨在会招募 100 个参与者。

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You are invited to this research because you are the fan subtitlers specifically fans translators in one of the four research fan subtitling community: Ragbear, Zimuzu, Sfileydy and Fengruan.

您被邀请参加此次调研是因为您是破烂熊、人人字幕组、伊甸园、风软其中一个字幕组的翻译成员。

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, the removal of your data may not be possible.

您可以随时退出本次调研。如果退出，您可以选择撤回数据或允许继续使用。一旦调研结束，将无法撤回数据。

What will happen in this research?

In this survey, you have to complete twenty multiple-choice which examine your reflection on your identity as a fan subtitler. 此问卷包括 20 道反思字幕组成员身份的问题。

What are the discomforts and risks?

The level of discomfort or risks will be at a minimum when participants take an anonymous online survey. Before taking the survey, please aware the state regulation of fansubbing activities at the place where this survey is being undertaken.

此问卷属于匿名调查。请在参与问卷调查前，了解您所在地方对字幕组活动的相关法规。

What are the benefits?

This research will help you understand your multiple identities that is far more than a fan subtitler, and also help you understand your roles in intercultural communication. It not only helps people identify and understand the multiple identities of a flourishing online community, but also will enlighten people particularly online communities with the further understanding about audiences' changing roles today.

此项研究有助于了解字幕组成员的多重身份建构及跨文化交流中的角色。帮助大家了解字幕组群体和网络社区成员受众身份的转变。

How will my privacy be protected?

By taking only this survey, you will be fully anonymous. The data collected in this survey will be stored for six years at supervisor Dr Sarah Baker's office. Once six years have passed, the collected data will be deleted from the computer. And any paper document will be shredded.

问卷调查结果将会储存在导师办公室，时限六年。时限到期，所有数据会被删除。

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The estimated time for you to fill out the survey is around 10 minutes.

问卷调查需十分钟。

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

The survey will be open for three months. Please feel free to participate in the survey anytime from 16/12/2019 to 16/03/2020.

问卷开放时间为 3 个月: 2019/12/16 - 2020/3/16.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

The findings of this survey will be uploaded at the same forum where you find recruiting advertisements. The researcher will post an URL to link you to the summary of the findings. It will happen at 16/06/2020.

问卷结果将会于 2020/6/16 日发布。我们会在发布招募参与问卷人员的论坛上发布调查结果的链接。

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Sarah Baker, sarah.baker@aut.ac.nz, and PH: 9219999 ext. 7930.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

如您对此项研究有疑虑，可联系 Dr Sarah Baker, sarah.baker@aut.ac.nz, and PH: 9219999 ext. 7930.

如您对问卷调查方式有疑虑，可联系 AUT 学术道德委员会 Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

关于本次研究的更多详情 您可联系

Researcher Contact Details: Liu Yijun, 493862315@qq.com.

Project Supervisor Contact Details: Dr Sarah Baker, sarah.baker@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on **type the date
final ethics approval was granted, AUTEK Reference number **type the reference**
number.**

Participant Information Sheet

This information sheet is to participants for interview.

Date Information Sheet Produced:

16/ 04/2020

Project Title

Cultural Identity Construction and Intercultural Communication in a Digital Era – An Exploratory Study of English-Chinese Fan Subtitlers

An Invitation

My name is Yijun Liu. I am doing this research to pursuing PhD doctorate at Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand. I am hereby inviting you to assist my research. The interview is optional, whether you choose to participate or not will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. The data will be academic only and you don't have to

provide name unless you want. This research is confidential, and I will not expose your contacts without your permission. Please be aware that by taking this interview, a minimum requirement is that you have at least 1-year experience in fan translating.

What is the purpose of this research?

This research aims to address the multiple identities of particular virtual community members, fan subtitlers by an interdisciplinary perspective. The researcher will explore how fan subtitlers construct their own identities in intercultural communication by examining the fan subtitlers' practices of four popular Chinese fan subtitling communities including Ragbear, Zimuzu, Sfileydy and Fengruan. It will conduct a survey around a hundred participants that enrolled from the research sites. And an in-depth interview of ten participants who has undertaken the survey. The survey and interview are employed to examine fan subtitlers' reflections and their preferences on their identities in intercultural communication. This research helps understand how fan communities understand themselves against today's media environment and pave the way for scholars who are exploring this novel online community with interests into fandom culture and continue further research into this area.

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You are invited to take this interview because you have at least 1-year experience in fan subtitling and completed the survey online. The researcher either reach you via your left contacts or being reached by you for a scheduled time on interviewing.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw your data from the study at any time before the survey closed.

If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced by 16/10/2020, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

The researcher will interview you via voice call by Skype or QQ (your choice) at a scheduled time. The interview will be recorded the whole time because the researcher needs further analysing and interpreting data. The researcher will compare the data collected from interview to the data collected from the survey and online forums to examine fan subtitlers' identities preference and their view towards roles in cultural communication. Please be assure that the researcher won't match the responses of the surveys with information collected from the same participants in the interview.

In this interview, you are going to answer the researcher's six questions about identity preference and your view towards fan subtitlers' roles in cultural communication. You can refuse to answer if you feel any discomfort.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Please be aware that if you provide racist or extreme answers during the interview, the researcher will stop the interview by turning off the voice call immediately which might cause discomfort. Please also be aware of the state regulation over fansubbing activities at the place where the survey is being undertaken.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Please do not provide racists or extreme answers in interviews. If you experience any discomfort, you can directly contact the researcher at provided contacts. Or you can contact the researchers' supervisors. Please ensure this research does not include details of particular film work that participants have worked. Your data is confidential, and your contacts are safe that only the researcher can access.

What are the benefits?

This research will help you understand your multiple identities that is far more than a fan subtitler, and also help you understand your roles in intercultural communication.

For the researcher, the researcher is also an experienced fan subtitler. Conducting this research will allow the researcher to explore the interested area and understand the community that she is in as well as pursuing a doctorate at Auckland University of Technology.

For the wider community, this research will not only help people identify and understand the multiple identities of a flourishing online community, but also will enlighten people particularly online communities with the further understanding about audiences' changing roles today.

How will my privacy be protected?

By taking this interview, the researcher is able to access your contacts. Please assure that the data collected will be academic only and the researcher will not expose your contacts without your permission. You don't have to provide you name unless you want to be named in the final reports in which case you can contact the researcher. Then the researcher will consult an ethic advisor to make sure the case be properly handled.

The data collected in this interview will be stored for six years at supervisor Dr Sarah Baker's office. Once six years have passed, the collected data will be deleted from the computer and any paper document will be shredded.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The estimated time for the interview is around 40 minutes.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You have a month to consider the invitation. If you turn down the invitation or delay the response, the researcher can invite other potential participants until receiving ten earlier positive respondents for interviewing.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

The findings of this interview will be uploaded at the same forum that you find recruiting advertisements. The researcher will post an URL to link you to the summary of the findings. It will happen at 16/10/2020. If you are interested in more details, you are more than welcome to contact the researcher.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Sarah Baker, *sarah.baker@aut.ac.nz*, and PH: 9219999 ext. 7930.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz*, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Liu Yijun, 493862315@qq.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Sarah Baker, *sarah.baker@aut.ac.nz*

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTEK Reference number *type the reference number*.

Appendix C

Recruiting Advertisements for a survey.

Dear fan subtitlers,

My name is Yijun Liu. I am doing research about Chinese fan subtitlers' identity to pursuing PhD at Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

I am sincerely inviting you to assist with my research because I need your voices to help me understand your identity preferences and roles in cultural communication.

The survey has a few quick questions which takes no more than 10 minutes. I would be so grateful if you could share your ideas in this survey. Please find the information sheet at the beginning of the survey. I will upload the result findings to the same forum after 6 months of thesis completion. **Please be aware that you have to be over 18 and a fan subtitler specifically a fan subtitling translator in this research.**

If you have any concerns, you are more than welcome to contact me at 493862315@qq.com. Your ideas will be valued and appreciated!

Again, thank you so much for helping!

Sincerely,

Yijun LIU

Recruiting Advertisements for interview

Dear fan subtitlers,

My name is Yijun Liu. I am researching Chinese fan subtitlers' identity to pursue a Ph.D. at Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

I am sincerely inviting you to assist with my research because I need your voices to help me understand your identity preferences and roles in cultural communication.

You are welcome to interview because you have conducted the survey and have over one-year experience in fan translating. This interview has six questions which take no more than 40 minutes. I would be so grateful if you could share your ideas with me in conversations. If you have any concerns, you are more than welcome to contact me at 493862315@qq.com. Your thoughts will be valued and appreciated!

Please click the below link and choose one of the contacts that is suitable for reaching you. Again, thank you so much for helping!

Sincerely,

Yijun LIU

Appendix D

1. What is your age? 您的年龄是?

18 to 28

29-38

39-48

49+

2. Which fansubbing community do you belong to? 您加入了以下哪个字幕组?

Ragbear 破烂熊

Zimuzu 人人字幕组

Sfileydy 伊甸园

Fengruan 风软

3. How many years have you been in a fansubbing community? 您加入字幕组多长时间?

Less than a year

1-2 years

2-3 years

3 years+

Questions 4-6 are designed to examine Fansubbers as collectiveness.

4. Why did you join this fansubbing community? Please choose from the following answers.

您为什么要加入所在的字幕组?请在下列选项中选择。

because this community fan subtitled my favourite show 因为所在字幕组翻译了某个喜欢的

节目 because of the good reputation of this fansubbing community 因为所在字幕组的声誉

好

others please specify 其他请标明

5. How do you feel connected to other fansubbers in the same community? Please choose from the following answers. 您觉得和字幕组的其他成员是如何在情感上建立关系的? 请在下列选项中选择。

chat in one group 在同一个群里聊天

subtitle the same television series or films 翻译同一个影视节目

love the same television series or films 喜欢同样的影视节目

belong to the same fansubbing community 在同一个字幕组

others please specify 其他请标明

6. How strong would you say your connections to other fansubbers?

您觉得和字幕组其他成员的关系是否紧密?

very strong 非常紧密

strong 紧密

a little 一般紧密

not much 不是很紧密

not at all 不紧密

Questions 7-9 are designed to examine Fansubbers as resistant.

7. What do you think about the state control over imported audiovisual programs? 您如何看待当局对外来影视节目的管控 如: 限制资源, 删除敏感、淫秽和暴力情节?

the state should deregulate the over-controlling on imported audiovisual programs 应当解除对外来节目的管控

the state should improve the regulation on imported audiovisual programs 应当完善外来节目

的管控制度

the current regulation over imported audiovisual programs is good 目前的管控制度很完善

others please specify 其他请标明

8. How do you feel the quality of official subtitles? 你觉得官方字幕的翻译质量怎么样?

excellent 非常优秀

above average 中等偏上

average 一般

below average 中等偏下

poor 质量差

9. Do you think fansubbers are resistant to state regulation over imported programs or to the officially released subtitles? 字幕组成员抵制对外来节目的管控，或是抵制官方字幕吗?

resist to state regulation 抵制对外来节目的管控

resist to the poor quality of professional subtitling 抵制官方字幕翻译质量

resist to others please specify 抵制其他请标明

not resistant 并无抵制

Questions 10-11 are designed to examine Fansubbers as prosumers.

10. Would you say fansubbers are producers or consumers of the audiovisual program?

您觉得字幕组成员是影视节目的生产者还是消费者?

equally both 两者均等

producers more than consumers 生产者多过消费者

consumers more than producers 消费者多过生产者

producers 只是生产者

consumers 只是消费者

11. Do you agree that fansubbers are re-producers? 您是否同意字幕组是再生产者?

very much 非常同意 agree 同意 a little 有点同意 not agree 不同意

Questions 12-13 are designed to examine Fansubbers as pirates.

12. Do you think fan subtitling violates the intellectual property? 您认为非官方的字幕翻译侵犯了知识产权吗?

yes 侵犯了

not exactly 不完全侵犯

not at all 没有侵犯

13. Would you follow the instructions if you read the sign “Please delete it within 24 hours after downloading” on fansubs website? 如果在字幕组网站上看到“请在下载后 24 小时内删除”的标示，你会按照指示去做吗?

yes 会的

no 不会

sometimes 有时会

Questions 14-16 are designed to examine Fansubbers as cultural transmitters.

14. How strongly would you say fansubbers promote cultural communication? 您认为字幕组成员是在促进文化传播吗?

very much 非常促进

a little 有促进

not much 很少促进

not at all 并不促进

15. Do you think that subtitles can help the viewers understand the cultural connotation in the audiovisual?

program? 您认为字幕能够帮助观看者理解节目中的文化内涵意义吗?

very much helpful 帮助很大

a little helpful 有帮助

not much helpful 帮助不大

not helpful 没帮助

16. How often would you explain the cultural items in subtitling? 您会常解释字幕中出现的文化术语吗?

every time 每次都解释

most times 大多数时解释

sometimes 有时解释

few times 很少解释

never 从不解释

Questions 17-19 are designed to examine Fansubbers as narcissists.

17. Do you think fansubbers should be given credit? 您觉得字幕组成员应当受到赞扬吗?

yes 应当

no 不应当

not care 不在乎

18. Would you feel more motivated when you receive positive feedback from audiences? 当收到观众的积极反馈时，您会感到更有动力吗?

very much 非常有动力

a little 有动力

not much 不会很有动力

not care 不在乎反馈

19. Would people's admiration of you being a fansubs member make you feel proud of yourself?

人们赞赏您是字幕组成员，会让您觉得骄傲吗？

very much 非常骄傲

a little 骄傲

not much 不觉得骄傲

not care 不在乎

20. Rate your identity

From a scale 0 (weak) to 10 (strong), please rate each identity. If you don't feel one/ones, please

leave it blank. 请根据您对每种身份的强弱打分。如果您不认同某个身份，可以不做选

择。

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

collectiveness 集体

resistant 反抗

prosumer 生产消费

pirate 盗版

cultural transmitter 文化传播

narcissist 自我欣赏 寻求认同

Appendix E

1. What kind of subtitling work have you done? Are you majoring in English or doing English English-related job? How many hours do you work on fan subtitling per week?
2. What role does fansubbing play in cultural communication?
3. In your experience, what kind of practice do fan subtitlers encourage cultural communication?
4. What changes have fansubs work brought to you- personally or in your work life?
5. As a member of the fansub community, which one do you prefer to describe fansubbers among six identities in the survey: collectivist, resistant, pirate, prosumer, cultural transmitter, and narcissist? Or do you prefer yourselves to another identity? Would you describe yourself as having multiple identities in the fansub community? Please talk about it.

Tips for the terms used:

Collectiveness: a sense of “we-ness” and the feeling of togetherness

Resistant: resistance to state domination; resistance to capitalism and resistance to the official translation quality

Pirates: unauthorised distribution of copyrighted foreign audiovisual works

Prosumers: consumers as well as producers of media products

Cultural transmitters: improve cultural communication or build cultural awareness.

Narcissist: self-admiration and seeking the approval and admiration of others

1. 加入字幕组多久了，主要是做哪一项工作？是英语专业或从事英语相关工作吗？每周在字幕制作上花多长时间？

-
2. 怎么看待字幕组在文化交流方面的作用？你认为字幕组是否促进了文化交流？请解释。
 3. 根据你的经验，字幕组哪些活动促进了或阻碍了文化交流？
 4. 字幕组的工作给你带来了什么变化——个人或是工作生活上？
 5. 作为字幕组成员，你觉得问卷里所说的六个身份中哪一个更能形如你：集体、反抗、生产消费、盗版、文化传播和自我欣赏？还是你觉得有其他的身份？你会觉得自己是多重身份吗？

身份名词小贴士：

集体：集体主义，字幕组集体意识

反抗：不满资源限制，付费观看或是官方翻译质量

盗版：未经授权翻译和传播影视作品

消费生产：影视作品的消费者同生产者共存

文化传播：促进文化传播，构建文化意识

自我陶醉：自我欣赏，寻求他人的认同和赞赏