The ‘Masculinity’ Event: Weibo Female’s Functioning Mechanism as A Discursive Group

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Abstract. The discursive power contributed by Chinese netizens upon gender issues has tremendously challenged the patriarchal speeches in recent years. An important role played by social media, which will be the main focus of this paper, is inevitable during any public discussion. One of the most successful social platforms, Weibo, is considered influential feminism opinion leaders’ content disseminator. This study examines the function and mechanism that Weibo platform works during a heated debate on the Chinese adolescent education issue. With several typical netizen information spread strategies analyzed, it is argued that the Chinese netizens have developed a highly effective way to criticize or give radical responses to some quasi-masculinity debates described as internet archaeology.

Keywords: masculinity, Weibo female, discursive group, departure, group polarization.

1. Introduction

It was not until the reform movements in 1898 that feminism was introduced from the western world, which had merely any ideological resonance of ancient China. The liberation of females was closely connected to the revolution of the nation, and was regarded as an important step of the national modernization progress. Under this circumstance, the aim of advocating feminism was to cultivate a responsible mother or a competent wife, while showing little concern with the subjectivity of females, no wonder this sort of feminism is called ‘patriarchal feminism’. Since the linkage between feminist movements and large-scale social movements or the solidification of dominant ideology has always been visible for over one hundred years, the patriarchal feature of feminism is prevalent [1].

The situation began to change since the popularization of the Internet. The fundamental difference between the new media and the traditional lies in its interactivity and multipoint communication. The role of the spreader is no longer exclusive and monopolized by social elites, but rather featured by every user who has the freedom of speech. The lower threshold and openness of the Internet dispels old-fashioned man-made control over communication. The boundlessness brought about by the new media environment gives women unprecedented opportunities to speak. This transformation profoundly affects the status of men and women, because media not only constructs the mode of communication, but also outputs ideology and social values. Traditional media has created the female image that caters to the popular aesthetic under a patriarchal society. Nevertheless, the wide application of the Internet changes the previous communication content and mode. With the increasing possibility of equal communication with the audience, women are more likely to speak for themselves than before [2].

Unsurprisingly, the discursive power of the female on the Internet gradually becomes one of the central topics. The discursive power includes right and power, namely the qualification of subject’s speech and the ability to influence others and establish their social status through discourse. Foucault, a postmodern thinker, points out that discourse means that a social group disseminates its meaning to society according to certain rules, thus establishing its social status and being recognized by other groups. Moreover, all human knowledge is acquired through ‘discourse’ and that nothing exists without discourse.

At first glance, the Internet enables the promotion of female discursive power. However, problems remain to be visible. Despite the opportunity offered by the Internet, most women's utterances stem not from their subjective consciousness, but the unconscious compromise to the media market,
indicating that the gender gap between men and women is further widened by the integration of patriarchal culture and commercial factors, and stereotypes of women have not been changed. There are several kinds of explanations concerning the reasons for the alienation of female’s discursive power. Some people attribute the phenomenon to two triggers: (1) commercialization of new media and its cooperation with traditional culture; (2) passive discourse strategies of network female expression [3], while others list three reasons: (1) the inheritance and internalization of traditional male centralism; (2) women's self-identification of gender stereotypes; (3) the catalytic role of business culture and consumerism [4]. Wang Sicong provides two reasons: the marginalization of communication content and lack of opinion leaders [5].

Obviously, past research about female discursive power in the Internet era focuses mainly on factors that nullify female utterances while ignoring problems that are innate to female utterance itself. This paper aims to fill up this blank by analyzing the remarks of Weibo females regarding the ‘masculinity’ event that caused heated debate recently. Initially, the ‘masculinity’ event will be reviewed and women’s popular comments on Weibo will be classified. Secondly, the underlying ideas that produce those remarks will be revealed. And eventually, three kinds of criticism concerning those comments are provided, concluding that the ‘masculinity’ event to some extent implies the group polarization of Weibo females and thus not the proper manner of expressing themselves. This paper tried to make out not only the epitome of female utterances nowadays accordingly, but also how figuring out the manner of female utterance on the Internet can enlighten the development of feminism in China.

2. Review The Event

On May 21st, 2020, some members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (C.P.P.C.C) during the party’s third meeting raised one proposal that advocated preventing male teenagers' feminization. And the proposal was soon submitted to the central government for deliberation. Half a year later, Ministry of Education officially concluded that the proposal would enhance physical education, health education, and psychological education.

[#Ministry of Education replied to the proposal regarding the feminization of male teenagers#: pay attention to cultivating masculinity] On January 28th, 2021, the Ministry of Education answered that to tackle the problem revealed by C.P.P.C.C members, it was necessary to increase the number of physical education teachers, reform school physical education system and move health and psychological education towards higher quality. Corresponding to the initiative, the Ministry of Education will require each province or school to enhance the ability and quality of physical education teachers, and in the meanwhile innovating teaching methods and employing more physical education teachers, which in general foster masculinity [6].

Unexpectedly, this official response to C.P.P.C.C, which PhoenixNet posted on Weibo, almost immediately attracted Weibo users’ attention and became one of the trending hashtags on January 29th. Owing to the freedom of speech and enthusiasm of Weibo users to express their personal perspectives, over 17000 comments were produced until January 31st, and the majority were produced by individual accounts. Not surprisingly, the mainstream trend was to regard the response of the Ministry of Education to the C.P.P.C.C as promoting gender inequality officially and thus firmly reject it.

Since the public attached so much importance to this response, the central government could not just let things slide. Rather, correct guidance was an urgent need. Soon after the fermentation of this event, the authoritative news platform CCTV News, one of the representatives of the central government, re-explained the position of Ministry of Education on January 31st.

[#CCTV News claimed that masculinity was not merely androphanic#] Ministry of Education’s response to C.P.P.C.C witnessed a heated discussion on Weibo. How should we understand masculinity? While it is considered beautiful if a male shows masculinity in terms of behavior, spirit, and physique, masculinity is not simply equal to virilescence of conduct. Education not only imparts
to males or females the qualities they ought to possess respectively but aims to develop a sense of responsibility in general. Thus, the focus is the enlightenment of spirit, the enhancement of the physical body, and the maintenance of well-being both physically and mentally [7].

According to this restatement's core idea, it is quite reasonable to infer that the government had realized its mistake and corrected it right away. The insight is that previous controversy was caused by abusing the misleading term ‘masculinity’, which is easily interpreted superficially as the opinion that only characters of a male are worth advocating and that those possessed by the female are negative and derogatory. The next chapter will argue that this is exactly the way that feminists comprehend the whole event. By clarifying the possible ambiguity and misunderstanding innate to the word, the central government confines public discussion within the sphere of education to eliminate any possibility of attack by a female.

The effort failed in accordance with expectations. Being sensitive and radical enough, Weibo females, as a powerful and solidary online group consists of members who share the same identity, did not compromise with ease and let go of any chance of propagating their position. It is not surprising that the female army again attacked the official restatement.

3. Methodology

The task that remains up to now is analyzing the pattern of their ‘attack’ or the manner of their utterances to investigate how feminists as allies build up space for themselves and, more importantly, judge whether the arguments they provide are convincing and aiming the right target. The research framework is as follows: above all, 50 comments that generate the most popularity from January 28th to January 31st in the two official replies are chosen. Afterward, Weibo female’s objections are divided into two sorts, with one emphasizing ‘feminization’ as a derogatory term and the other associating masculinity with socially harmful behaviors. The presence of views opposed to those of Weibo females completes the analysis by reflecting on the possibility of group polarization in the discursive community formed by themselves. Nevertheless, one crucial point concerning collecting data should be mentioned before going down to the research. Since Weibo is essentially a platform that does not demand real-name authentication, the comment-maker can conceal their real name, age, gender, occupation, and other personal information in this virtual space. Given that it is impractical to verify the validity of their personal information one by one, this paper will only quote the information presented by their personal homepage, and make speculations based on pictures and posts they previously shared if necessary.

4. The Attack of Weibo Female

4.1 Why should the term ‘feminization’ be considered derogatory?

One intuitive and typical question of women when hearing that the feminization of males should be rectified will be: why is female or feminization something bad? Out of the selected 100 remarks, those which convey this opinion explicitly are noticeable:

What’s the problem with Ministry of Education?
Is female a derogatory term?

[Female College Student]

Given that gender cannot be chosen freely, why don’t we respect everyone’s acquired thought? What does it mean to avoid feminization? When does the term ‘feminization’ become derogatory?

[Female Anonymous]
Jesus! Female is once again considered as a derogatory term! If Ministry of Education really wants to cultivate the masculinity of men, it may urge all fathers to quit their job and take care of their boys so as to instill them this inherited quality.

[Female Anonymous]

The pervasiveness of masculinity is reached by the degradation of females.

[Female Adult]

Maybe ‘feminization’ is equal to weakness and flabbiness.

[Female High School Student]

What do feminized traits refer to? Do they only refer to those negative qualities? Aren’t soft and careful good?

[Female College Student]

Either feminization of men or androphany of women is personal hobby. It is unnecessary to portray feminization as derogatory and force changing the situation for political achievements.

[Female Adult]

In the meanwhile, there are indeed other comments that express this sort of reaction in a more subtle manner:

This is correlated with the traditional view that every female must be gentlewomanly, soft and virtuous. There are always people who like to label and set rules for others.

[Female Anonymous]

The fact that men should be masculine is not necessarily followed by discrimination towards feminized men (niang pao, also known as effemination).

[Female Adult]

The phrase niang pao is worth noticing here. It originally came from a TV series in Taiwan, derogatorily denoting men who are beautiful in appearance and gentle in attitude, or men who are not masculine. Contrasting with another word nü han zi will boost our understanding of this phenomenon. This new female label is put on those females who possess a masculine personality, such as cheerful, straightforward, optimistic, responsible, decisive, calm, logical and aggressive [8]. In this sense, it is a commendatory term. Now the tension comes to light: while females who possess male characters are considered praiseworthy, males who possess female characters are regarded inferior. Why is it? We may reduce the tension to one hidden proposition: male characters are superior and female characters the opposite. And the only reasonable explanation for this proposition is that current China is still dominated by patriarchal culture.

Now we return to the remarks. The origin of them is quite obvious the conviction that Chinese society is essentially patriarchy, one in which male-related traits are praise-worthy and female-related traits exactly the opposite. Admittedly, this line of belief does not popularize itself groundlessly. Instead, it originates from the personal encountering of gender inequality, which penetrates every aspect of people’s daily lives.

A public opinion poll conducted by PhoenixNet on January 29th will be a powerful weapon for the female to justify the conviction that gender stereotypes and gender discrimination are deep-rooted. Through collecting the opinion of over 440000 respondents, three assertions can be drawn:

The majority of people think it important to cultivate male teenagers’ masculinity;
The majority of people does not attribute the emphasis of male’s cultivating masculinity to gender stereotype; The majority of people view the feminization of male or the androphany of the female as erroneous.

Table 1. What is your opinion towards the proposal raised by C.P.P.C.C?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>It Depends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think it is important to cultivate masculinity of male teenagers?</td>
<td>284487</td>
<td>158459</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(64.23%)</td>
<td>(35.77%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think the view that male must possess masculinity is a gender stereotype?</td>
<td>202328</td>
<td>237020</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(46.05%)</td>
<td>(53.95%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think the feminization of males, or the androphany of females should be corrected?</td>
<td>233282</td>
<td>130494</td>
<td>72310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(53.49%)</td>
<td>(29.92%)</td>
<td>(16.58%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though it is not nationwide poll research, the statistics to some extent manage to provide some rough portrayal of Chinese’s attitude towards gender issue, which show consistency with the overall picture of gender inequality in contemporary China. On the one hand, celebrities are explicitly insulting and depreciating on the female. Yu Minhong, the founder of New Oriental, which is ironically known as a successful education and technology company, used to propose in the Meeting of Learning Ability that the corruption of females in contemporary society directly results in the corruption of China. Besides, Ke Jie, the most famous chess-player in China, once made an ambiguous analogy about female’s giving birth to children. Both of the two events stimulated heated discussion on people’s problematic attitude towards females. On the other hand, in daily life, females continue to experience gender discrimination in the workplace concerning occupations, career advancement, etc. For instance, most women still work in lower-paid occupations and seldom enter management. Meanwhile, female discrimination in the workplace can appear at any stage from job application to treatment after retiring, the forms of which include but are not limited to glass ceilings, male-dominated work environments, and job segregation.

Table 2. Big Events Concerning Gender Issue in China in 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexuality</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>Ms. Lai was murdered and thrown into a septic tank;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>La Mu was burnt by her husband when doing live stream;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bao Yuming raped his adopted daughter for several years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misogyny</td>
<td>Yang Li ironized men by asking why they are so confident despite their ordinariness;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Some men attributed the expensiveness of sanitary napkins to female’s blind chase after high-end brand;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Tsinghua senior female student, who wrongly blamed a man for sexual harassment, was seriously railed on the Internet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Worse still, even in some official announcements, discrimination against a female is unintentionally worded. Noticeably, it is not the first time that such controversial comments regarding gender issues have been made, and the tension between masculinity and feminization is not fresh. Dating back to September 1st, 2018, China Central Television (CCTV) invited four male idol singers
to attend the opening performance of the TV program The First Class in the New Term, which was considered by both parents and netizens as inappropriate for the reason that those performers lacked masculinity, and that it would set negative examples for students to imitate. Furthermore, netizens contrasted between football players and male idols in China and concluded that “strong youths lead to a strong country, while sissy (niang) youths lead to a weak country”. Surprisingly, such an extreme position was rationalized and vindicated by numerous Weibo users since its emergence. They established a hashtag on Weibo and encouraged others to participate in rejecting the TV program. Under huge pressure, CCTV compromised and made an official apology to the broad masses of people. And it was speculated that CCTV later enacted a restraining order that male celebrities are prohibited from having a perm as well as wear earrings whenever they are on the stage. To regain the support of the audience and authority among the majority of people. CCTV didn’t just stop there. It was disclosed by its working staff that on September 11th, 2018, soon after the public discussion of the TV program, CCTV decided to abandon male artists whose appearances were female-alike in all its future evening parties and performances. And since program groups were incapable of defining niang pao systematically, they intended to exclude all those handsome young boys from avoiding any possibility of being criticized again.

Returning to the ongoing analysis, this line of remarks is essentially the authentic expression of what females perceive concerning gender inequality in China society, which is once potential but eventually triggered by the phrase ‘avoid the feminization of male teenager’. Their most deadly opposition is that the oppression of women is based on the dichotomy of gender. Although they admit that biological sex is natural, they believe that gender is constructed by a patriarchal society and originates from gender dualism: people are divided into men and women and have respective characteristics. While men are characterized by self-confidence, aggression, boldness, rationality, the ability to control emotions and so forth, women are gentle, steady, modest, helpful, compassionate, vulnerable, intuitive, sensitive, selfless, etc. [9]. And once China, a highly patriarchal country, gives higher value to male characters for its maintenance and conceals it by resorting to biological difference, discriminatory behaviors appear to be well-founded.

4.2 Associating masculinity with socially harmful behaviors

Another rejection comes to light when Weibo women interpret the connotation of ‘masculinity’ by linking it with socially harmful behaviors like domestic violence, rape and male chauvinism.

Men's masculinity means no more than despising and abusing female family members at home, discriminating against women in society, cursing females on the Internet, and bullying female students who are relatively weak. Masculinity should go to hell.

[Female Adult]

Maybe we should cultivate the virtues of man and thus reduce the crime rate.

[Female Adult]

None of the masculine men I have known about these years are not male chauvinist, rude, overconfident and looking down upon feminized men. I think Ministry of Education should focus more on cultivating the virtue of male students and their respectful attitude towards females and pluralism.

[Female College Student]

When studying in primary school, I witnessed a ‘feminized’ boy being bullied by several ‘masculine’ boys. The ‘feminized’ boy was not like the masculines ones. He was polite, gentle and lovely.

[Female College Student]
Two consequences will follow the implementation of the proposal. Firstly, school bullying will be more severe. This is so because silence and sentimental are regarded as womanish among students who are not cognitively mature, while fighting with fists is considered masculine. Secondly, what we pass on to the next generation is not the tolerant attitude towards difference, but rather the concept of gender prejudice and opposition, which will inevitably worsen the contradiction between males and females.

[Female College Student]

Masculinity is absolutely not equal to male chauvinism.

[Female High School Student]

Since they usually consider these conducts hateful and contemptuous, some remarks are made in an ironical tone, while others using the rhetorical question:

Committing a crime is the most masculine behavior! And 90% of criminals are men! And sending men to jail may confirm their masculinity.

[Female Anonymous]

The number of men is 70000000 more than that of women in China, a disparity that no other country ever counter. Is this still not masculine enough? Or is it masculine enough only when 70000000 men kill people in the street everyday?

[Female College Student]

Are domestic violence, gang war, and school bullying masculine?

[Female Adult]

What a funny phenomenon! The lack of responsibility and poor hygiene (of man) is explained to be not niggling.....Not opening an umbrella when exposed to sunshine is considered masculine, while using skill care products is considered feminine. Those whose hobby is doing sports are considered masculine, while those who are good at other aspects are considered feminine.....Gender equality can only be promising when ‘feminization’ is not regarded as a derogatory term.

[Female College Student]

When encountering this kind of remarks, one interesting question is how the connection between masculinity and socially harmful behaviors conducted by the male is possible? The core mechanism which has not been illuminated yet is the status of Weibo as one of the retrospective containers of collective memory.

Since the phrase ‘collective memory’ was invented by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs in 1925, the construction of collective memory was for a long time one of the welcomed topics in sociology. In contemporary China’s context, the research of collective memory can be roughly divided into two periods: pre-Internet era and Internet era, whose overlapping topic is the focus on how the popularization of the Internet led to a dramatic transition in the construction of collective memory. Long Bolin, a scholar of Sun-Yat-Sen University, explains the transition from three aspects: (1) in terms of the narrative framework, collective memory presents a shift from grandiose narration to daily life narration; (2) in terms of the subject of utterance, collective memory is no longer produced exclusively by social elites, but rather every user who is willing to express his personal experience; (3) in terms of the ways of inheritance, collective memory is capable of transcending time and space by combining symbolic systems like pictures, videos, and the Internet technologies [10]. The last point equips us with tools to deepen the ongoing analysis in the direction of past events' traceability, or namely ‘Internet Unburial’ or ‘Internet Archaeology’ in China’s context.
Figure 1. Memory Community Formed by Connecting the Past with the Present

The formation process of memory community by means of ‘Internet Archaeology’ is well-presented by the chart. Initially, the invention of the Internet makes it possible for past events to receive attention at any moment and thus be kept in the sight of the public, indicating that the past does not simply become stagnant but rather provide precious resources and boost critical thinking in the future public discussions, which thereby forms a memory community. And whenever similar events happen, Internet users will attempt to connect the past with the present to vindicate their personal opinion. In this sense, the existence of a continuously updated memory community has become an unlimited territory in which diverse perspectives are easily and freely made.

With respect to the ‘masculinity’ event, the analysis is no more complicated. Socially harmful behaviors conducted by males in the past like domestic violence, raping and crime are recorded by Weibo, which are recalled owing to Weibo female’ passion for entering the public discussion and expressing their own positions when the ‘masculinity’ event happens. Merely categorizing those conducts as humiliating towards females and recognizing the simple fact that they are done by males, Weibo females are so confident as to engage in the explanation of masculinity.

5. Departure and Group Polarization

Before starting to pose doubts on female’s remarks on the ‘masculinity’ event, it is necessary to clarify that they are never considered as totally wrong. Rather, they are, in any case, marvelous in two aspects. Firstly, they imply the awareness and ability of Weibo females to group themselves. On this basis, females are capable of distinguishing between friends and enemies, and thus becoming more goal-oriented in the claim of equal rights. Secondly, they indicate the awareness and ability of Weibo females to form a discursive community, making female voices powerful and easier heard by the government. Under this context, the discussion below is possible, whose intention is to point out some mistakes that are usually ignored when Weibo female function as a discursive group and gives some insights on its future development.

Stepping aside those radical criticisms on gender discrimination, some voices crying that the heated debate is essentially departing from the right target. Generally, the departure is divided into three kinds according to their respective understanding of the core of the event.

5.1 Departure from the normative connotation of ‘masculinity’

One of the most popular explanations of the event proposes that it is a farce caused by the misunderstanding or over-interpretation of the term ‘masculinity’:

This hashtag is nothing but a click-bait. How many users who engage in this verbal battle actually read the content of that response?
I cannot see any evidence of abasing female in this response. Those users are not understanding this response correctly. Will they be satisfied if men are not masculine and females not feminine?

Although I am a girl, I do not think that the original intention of Ministry of Education is promoting gender discrimination. Rather, it aims at changing the abnormal sexual orientation of teenagers......we need to create a healthy environment for the growth of teenagers.

I think the first reaction after hearing the term ‘masculinity’ is linking it with qualities like responsibility, persistence and so on. Why will ordinary people regard ‘masculinity’ as looking down upon females?

Feminists on Weibo have been equating masculinity with domestic violence, male chauvinism, and disrespect of females. I really wonder where are these misunderstandings come from. Should I buy a Modern Chinese Dictionary for them to check out the meaning of ‘masculinity’?

I think the quality of netizens still needs to be enhanced. Masculinity is not what they interpret (male chauvinism, domestic violence, rudeness, strength), but responsibility, courage, sense of justice......In general, it is a positive image that conveys a sense of security.

5.2 Departure from the right target of criticism

The second kind of view is uttered by users who support the Ministry of Education, claiming that it is the C.P.P.C.C that should be criticized for the problematic abuse of ‘masculinity’, and that Weibo female goes so far beyond the initial question as to produce a sort of misinterpretation of the response:

If read carefully the response of Ministry of Education, we will find out that there is nothing inappropriate. Rather, the problem lies in the original proposal it responds to. The erroneous usage of the word causes grievance among users, which when fueled by speculations of media leads those who haven’t read carefully the content of that response to blindly oppose and punch it.

The term ‘masculinity’ presupposes that some traits belong to males. In other words, it already admits gender discrimination, which is not appropriate in contemporary society that emphasizes gender equality......

There are also people who claim that the Ministry of Education indeed makes some mistakes concerning gender equality, but not on the considering ‘feminization’ or ‘female’ as a derogatory term. Rather, they are wrong because of ignoring the fact that all students, no matter male or female, should have equal access to different sorts of education.
Improving physical, health, and psychological education in order to cultivate masculinity among male teenagers is problematic, because both male and female students should have access to all sorts of education. Opposing the response of Ministry of Education is exactly the correct action of feminism.

[Female Anonymous]

......When it comes to the issue of improving education, we should not lay stress on a specific gender, but rather talk about it within the scope of all people who are entitled to their rights.

[Female College Student]

The title is actually misleading and controversial. It can just mention physical training, so why bother to talk about masculinity and the contrast between male and female. Does female not need to do physical training now?

[Female College Student]

5.3 Group polarization as the underlying mechanism in cyberspace

Why females in cyberspace are so powerful even though their remarks sometimes depart from the right target and digressive? Our understanding of the phenomenon may be sharpened if attending to the mechanism of group polarization.

The distinction between the real world and the virtual world is that while the former forces us to deal with diversity, the latter appears to be more homogeneous in terms of interest and attitude. The Internet gives us the opportunity to meet other people who are similar to us. Thus, numerous groups in cyberspace are essentially highly specialized interest groups. In general, interest groups are divided into two categories: Some group members insulate themselves for self-protection. They are tolerant of pluralism and do intend to proselytize others. Other groups consciously use self-segregation to strengthen shared convictions to convert others. And it is during the reinforcement of group positions that group polarization happens, indicating that through deliberation, people will move toward a more extreme point along the direction that group members are originally inclined to. Three mechanisms are necessary for the emergence of group polarization: (1) Lack of opposing voice and information. Once inclined to a specific direction, group members are likely to offer an overwhelmingly large number of arguments of that direction, and a correspondingly disproportionately small number of arguments tending the other way. Consequently, the discussion will push people further on their initial opinions. (2) Exposure to the views of others. Since people strive to be perceived as favorable by other group members, they usually transform their positions into dominant positions once hearing what others believe. The effect of exposure makes group polarization a common phenomenon in a balkanized speech market. (3) Corroboration by others and increasing confidence. People’s lack of certainty about what they think is likely to guide them towards the middle. However, personal beliefs become more extreme as people gradually gain confidence from others’ agreement [11].

Regarding Weibo, the implication will be that like-minded people, namely those who believe that gender inequality does exist, end up regarding males as more hateful and misogynous after discussing with other group members. As an information-sharing platform, Weibo equips females with the ability to assemble, form homogeneous groups, and exchange opinions with each other. Due to the three mechanisms above, females on Weibo are likely to slide into an extreme position in the direction of what they initially incline to. Consequently, the platform which intends to provide female an opportunity to speak out is unconsciously making justification for their group polarization and radicalization.

If we let the fathers bring up the children and become ‘househusband’, the children must be masculine.

[Female Adult]
Those men who are born from men’s bellies are the most masculine.

[Female College Student]

Personally, I suggest that the government develop technology that enables men to give birth to children, which can ensure children to possess pure masculinity. If children are from women’s pussy, they are congenitally feminine and not masculine.

[Female Feminist]

A real man should fuck man, and a real man should give birth to a child himself. How masculine this is!

[Male Anonymous]

The official government supports a masculinist culture!

[Female Anonymous]

The situation is that everyone has a father, but some men lack of masculinity which can be cultivated by their father. It only means that fathers do no even engage in the participation of children.

[Female Anonymous]

If the government wants to use ‘masculinity’ to provide male with a job (schoolteacher) and prevent female from teaching, it can just announce this and do not have to offer such an insulting reason.

[Female College Student]

6. Conclusion

This paper proceeded with three tasks. Firstly, the ‘masculinity’ event in the position of females is reviewed by collecting and analyzing their remarks on Weibo, which can be divided into two kinds: considering ‘feminization’ as a derogatory term, and associating socially harmful behaviors with masculinity. Secondly, the underlying ideas that dominate the two kinds of utterances are reviewed: the perception of deep-rooted gender inequality and ‘Internet Archaeology’, respectively. Finally, three kinds of departure as views that oppose those of Weibo female are provided. It can be concluded that the ‘masculinity’ event is, to some extent, their group polarization. And by defining Weibo as a platform where group polarization is rationalized, a bigger picture comes to light that there is tension between the advancement of technology and social ethics, which will be the central topic if the globe determines to release the full potential of the Internet.

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[9] (China Central Television on the hashtag that deals with masculinity and masculine)


