

Research on Gender Issues in Popular Culture Based on Angela McRobbie's Feminist Theory

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Keywords: Angela McRobbie; Feminist Theory; Popular Culture; Gender Issues; Social Reality

Abstract: Based on Angela McRobbie's feminist theory, this paper studies gender issues in popular culture. Through literature research, this paper deeply analyzes the origin, core viewpoints and characteristics of this theory, and accordingly examines the presentation of gender issues in many fields of popular culture, such as movies, music and fashion. It is found that although pop culture has a progressive trend in presenting gender issues, traditional gender stereotypes and narrow definitions of female roles are still outstanding. From the perspective of McRobbie's theory, there are many problems in the construction of gender identity, the presentation of power structure and the spread of ideology in popular culture. In addition, pop culture and social reality influence each other, pop culture spreads specific gender concepts, and social reality changes promote the evolution of gender issues in pop culture. This study provides theoretical and practical reference for understanding gender relations and popular culture and promoting gender equality.

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, popular culture, as a powerful communication force, has deeply penetrated into all levels of people's lives. It is not only a carrier of entertainment, but also an important field for shaping social concepts, value systems and cultural identity [1]. Among them, gender issues occupy a prominent position in popular culture, which has aroused widespread concern and discussion. From the role setting in movies and TV programs, to the expression of music lyrics, and then to the image conveyed by fashion trends, gender concepts are presented in various forms and affect public cognition [2]. As an important scholar of contemporary feminist theory, Angela McRobbie's theory provides a unique and insightful perspective for understanding gender issues in popular culture [3]. McRobbie's research focuses on the position of women in the cultural and social structure. Through in-depth analysis of consumer culture, media and youth subculture, it reveals the complex operation of gender power relations in the context of popular culture [4]. In an era when popular culture dominates information dissemination and cultural consumption, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to use McRobbie's feminist theory to study gender issues.

The combination of popular culture research and feminist theory is helpful to expand and deepen the academic discussion in the two fields [5]. McRobbie's theory enriches the dimensions of pop culture research and enables researchers to gain insight into the power structure and ideology hidden behind pop culture from a gender perspective. At the same time, popular culture, as a vivid and widespread cultural phenomenon, provides abundant empirical materials for feminist theory and promotes the continuous development and perfection of feminist theory in the contemporary social context [6]. In reality, pop culture has a subtle influence on the formation of values of the public, especially teenagers. An in-depth study of gender issues in popular culture is helpful to reveal the possible problems such as gender inequality and stereotypes. Through critical examination of popular culture, cultural producers can be prompted to reflect and adjust their creative content more consciously, spread positive gender images and concepts, and contribute to building a more equal and harmonious social and cultural environment.

2. Angela McRobbie's feminist theory

Angela McRobbie's feminist theory is famous for her unique views on the relationship between pop culture and gender. The origin and development of this theory are closely related to the cultural changes of western society and the evolution of feminist movement in the second half of the 20th century [7]. At that time, the traditional concept of gender was impacted, and popular culture gradually rose and became an important part of social culture. Under this background, McRobbie launched a study on gender issues. The core point of his theory emphasizes that popular culture is an important field of gender power relations. McRobbie believes that popular culture does not simply reflect social reality, but actively participates in the construction and reproduction of gender identity and power structure [8]. In consumer culture, women are often portrayed as specific consumers. Through advertising, fashion and other media, female images are commercialized, which strengthens the stereotype of traditional gender roles, thus consolidating the power relationship dominated by men.

McRobbie pays attention to the female groups in the youth subculture. She pointed out that the youth subculture provides women with a space to challenge traditional gender norms. In the practice of subculture, women express themselves through unique styles, music, costumes, etc., and construct a female identity different from the mainstream culture. Although this challenge may be limited, it is still of great significance [9]. In addition, McRobbie emphasizes the role of ideology in the gender issues of popular culture, and thinks that popular culture conveys specific gender ideology through various symbols and narratives, which affects the public's cognition and understanding of gender.

3. The presentation of gender issues in popular culture

In the field of film and television, gender issues are mainly reflected in role shaping and story plot. For a long time, there have been obvious gender stereotypes in film and television dramas. Take the common settings in action movies as an example. The hero is usually a lonely hero with strong martial arts and extraordinary wisdom, while the heroine is more a beautiful but helpless hostage or an assistant who needs protection. The comparison of male and female characters in some classic action movies is shown in Figure 1. This stereotype limits the audience's multiple cognition of gender and strengthens the traditional gender power relationship. Despite the improvement in recent years and the emergence of some independent and powerful female roles, gender stereotypes still exist.

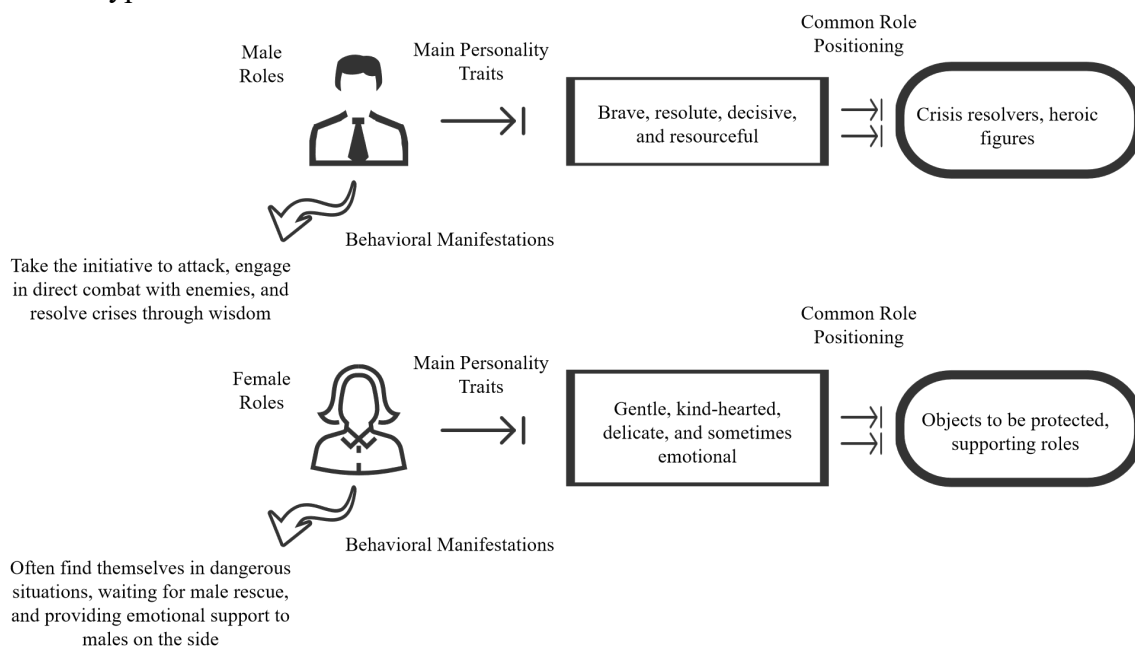


Figure 1 A comparative study of the roles of men and women in some classic action movies

There are also gender issues in the music field. The content of lyrics often conveys a specific gender concept. In some popular songs, women are often portrayed as lovers or materialized objects. In some male singers' songs, women are regarded as the existence of satisfying men's desires, and the lyrics are full of descriptions of women's appearance, while ignoring women's internal qualities and abilities. On the contrary, some themes of songs featuring women are limited to emotional categories such as love and lovelorn, and less involve broader issues such as society and politics. To some extent, this reflects the narrow understanding of women's roles and issues in music creation.

Gender issues in the fashion field are mainly reflected in clothing styles and advertising. The traditional fashion concept defines men's wear as formal and simple, emphasizing functionality; Women's clothing pays attention to decoration and curve display, highlighting the feminine characteristics of women. Fashion advertisements reinforce this gender difference. In advertising images, men often appear with authority and self-confidence, while women often show people with sexy and charming images and become the visual focus to attract consumers' attention. This way of presentation affects people's cognition of their own gender image, and also consolidates specific gender aesthetic standards at the social level, making gender stereotypes more deeply rooted in people's hearts.

4. Interpretation of gender issues in pop culture based on McRobbie's theory

Angela McRobbie's feminist theory provides a profound perspective for us to interpret gender issues in popular culture. This theory emphasizes the important role of popular culture in constructing the relationship between gender identity and power, and pays attention to the infiltration of ideology in it. From the perspective of gender identity construction, popular culture shapes male and female identities through various media and forms. Table 1 analyzes the presentation of male and female images in different types of fashion magazines.

Table 1 Comparison of the Presentation of Male and Female Images in Fashion Magazines

Magazine Type	Presentation of Male Images	Presentation of Female Images	Values Conveyed by Images	Audience Guidance Direction
High-end Fashion Magazines	Business elites in suits, with authoritative postures, high-end backgrounds, and resolute expressions	Wearing gorgeous or trendy women's clothing, with elegant and sexy postures, fashionable backgrounds, and soft, accommodating expressions	Men prioritize career and status; women prioritize beauty and charm	Men pursue careers; women shape their images
Lifestyle and Leisure Magazines	Casual and neat, enthusiastic about sports and outdoor activities, in natural and vibrant settings	Engaged in home shopping and beauty, wearing comfortable and well-coordinated outfits, with gentle and virtuous images	Men value vitality and health; women value family and consumption	Men enjoy outdoor activities; women manage the household
Mass Popular Magazines	With diverse styles, such as street and artistic styles, in trendy and creative settings	With diverse roles, including professional and artistic women, in rich settings	Men showcase individuality and trends; women seek diverse selves	Men pursue individuality; women seek self-value

McRobbie's theory also pays attention to the embodiment of power structure in popular culture. In the film and television industry, directors, screenwriters and other key creative positions are mostly occupied by men, which makes it inevitable that film and television works tend to be male in terms of theme and role shaping. Take Hollywood movies as an example. For a long time, the core

stories of mainstream movies such as action movies and science fiction movies often revolve around male roles, and female roles are mostly in a subordinate position. Even in some films featuring women, their narratives often follow the aesthetic and value judgments from the perspective of men. This power structure leads to the continuation of gender inequality in popular cultural works, and it is difficult for women's voices and experiences to be fully expressed.

There is also a profound gender ideology hidden in popular culture. Advertising, as an important form of popular culture, conveys a specific gender ideology all the time. For example, in advertisements for household goods, women are often portrayed as the main undertakers of housework, implying that this is the natural duty of women. In the advertisements of automobiles and technology products, men are portrayed as rational and professional consumers, highlighting the dominant position of men in these fields. The spread of this ideology exerts a subtle influence on the public's concept of gender, which consolidates the concept of gender inequality in society.

5. The interaction between gender issues in popular culture and social reality

When discussing the interaction between gender issues in popular culture and social reality, we can easily find that there is a dynamic and interactive relationship between them. Popular culture, with its extensive dissemination and strong penetration, has a great influence on the concept of gender. As the soil of pop culture creation, social reality also profoundly shapes the presentation of gender issues in pop culture.

In the process of spreading, popular culture spreads certain gender concepts in a subtle way. Stereotypes of gender roles are common in all kinds of advertisements. Advertisers often portray women as caring about appearance and keen on housework, while men are portrayed as representatives of successful careers and rational decision-making. This long-term and repetitive presentation makes the public unconsciously accept and strengthen these gender concepts. The results of the investigation on the cognition of gender roles in advertisements by people of different ages in a certain area are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Gender Role Perceptions in Advertisements among Different Age Groups

Age Group	Percentage (%) Who Believe Household Chore Advertisements Should Feature Female Leads	Percentage (%) Who Believe Technology Product Advertisements Should Feature Male Leads
18-25 years old	65	70
26-35 years old	70	75
36-45 years old	75	80
46 years old and above	85	85

The change of social reality is also constantly promoting the evolution of gender issues in popular culture. With the development of society, the improvement of women's education level and the increase of social participation, women's roles in society are gradually diversified. This change in social reality is reflected in popular culture, that is, the increasingly rich female images. In the past, women's roles in film and television dramas mostly appeared as weak and attached to men. However, in recent years, more and more images of "big women" have appeared on the screen. They are independent and show great ability in the workplace and life. This change reflects the promotion of women's status and the awakening of women's consciousness in social reality, and pop culture reflects these changes in time to meet the needs of the public for new cognition of gender roles.

There is a more complicated interaction mechanism between popular culture and social reality. Some innovative expressions of gender issues in popular culture sometimes lead to extensive discussions in society, which in turn leads to changes in social concepts. The change of social concept will be fed back to the creation of popular culture, and the creator will adjust the presentation of gender issues in his works according to the change of social public concept, and

create content that is more in line with the social development trend.

6. Conclusions

Based on Angela McRobbie's feminist theory, this paper makes a systematic study of gender issues in popular culture. Angela McRobbie's feminist theory provides a unique and profound perspective for the study. His theory emphasizes that popular culture is an important field of gender power relations, and pays attention to the challenge of female groups in youth subculture to traditional gender norms and the role of ideology in gender issues.

Through the analysis of film and television, music, fashion and other fields in popular culture, it is found that gender issues present complex and diverse situations in these fields. On the one hand, pop culture has made some progress in presenting gender issues, such as the emergence of some independent and powerful female roles in movies and TV shows. On the other hand, problems such as traditional gender stereotypes and narrow definition of female roles are still obvious. For example, in film and television dramas, men are often portrayed as strong dominant, while women are often weak subordinate; Music lyrics depict the female image one-sidedly; Strengthen gender-specific aesthetic standards in the fashion field. Based on the interpretation of McRobbie's theory, it is found that pop culture defines male and female identities according to traditional concepts in the construction of gender identity, and there is gender inequality in the power structure, which consolidates some concepts of gender inequality in ideological communication. At the same time, pop culture and social reality influence each other. Popular culture spreads gender concepts and affects public cognition, while social reality changes promote the evolution of gender issues in pop culture. This study is of great value for understanding the complex relationship between gender relations and popular culture, and provides a useful reference for subsequent related research and practice.

Acknowledgements

2024 Xinjiang University Outstanding Doctoral Student Innovation Project Project Name: A Study of Angela McRobbie's Cultural Theory Project Number: XJU2024BS033

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