

Phoenix Man, An Example of Stigmatization Phenomenon in the China Social Media

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ABSTRACT

With the rapid transformation and development of contemporary Chinese network society, the phenomenon of stigmatization is becoming more and more common in social media communication. The theory about the social stratum and the mobility of society could give us a good theoretical explanation, it could help us understand why a group is stigmatized and excluded. The purpose of this article was to find out the formation mechanism of stigmatization with Phoenix man through literature review and qualitative analysis, linked this phenomenon to social mobility and anxiety of middle-class in China, and finally point out the existing deep-seated social inequality problems and hazards in China. Through the network search engine "Baidu" and literature review, get the network search index and some other social media information about Phoenix Man, found the process (initial, development and final) of stigmatization phenomenon of Phoenix Man, and made reasonable analysis. By compared Phoenix Man with the two groups, Zhuanjia and Gongzhi, it easily to find that Phoenix Man have always been highly concerned in Chinese social media. Finally, this study found that the stigmatization was originated from the anxiety caused by differences in cultural, customs and habits between middle-class and the lower-class. The stigmatization made the people who came from lower class groups been marginalized, also damaged social justice and harmony.

Keywords— Social Media, Communication, Stigma, Social Mobility, Phoenix Man

I. INTRODUCTION

The internet makes the transmission of information show the characteristics of instant, but also brings about the change of the way of human social interaction, that is, the network of social interaction. The promotion of network social tools and others made people identify the Internet as a platform of infinite equality, the daily life of individuals becomes the cross extension of network social communication, the Network society and the Real society affect each other and develop together. Authoritative survey showed that "As of January 2018, in the month, the size of

Chinese netizens reached 0.72 Billion".¹ China's internet users have a large base, a variety of ways to surf the internet, and through the mobile phone internet rate can be seen more convenient way to surf the internet, ordinary netizens are easy to participate in the interaction of the network community through mobile phones, so netizens in the network to express their interests, express opinions, participate in the network trend of thought has become easier, And a large number of netizens also make the interaction in the network full of uncertainty, risk and uncontrollable.

According to Goffman, stigmatization is the process by which society gives certain individuals or groups a demeaning, insulting label (characteristic), which in turn leads to consequences such as social injustice. Stigma is a social trait that causes the identity, social credibility or social value of its owners to be impaired in their daily interactions and social interactions(Goffman , 2009).² Stigma is a means of social exclusion that labels the behavior of stigmatized holders and then causes the exclusion and resistance of most people in society to stigma holders. Link & Phelan (2001)³ used the term symbolic to define stigma, defined the individual as the product of a flawed, deviant in a social environment, and describes the stigmatization as a process of relationship. The concept of the term "stigmatization" in this paper is similar to the definition of Goffman, that is, the behavior of stigma holders (an individual or group) is "labeled" by other members of society in social interaction, negatively evaluates the behavior patterns of stigma holders and gradually becomes the will of most people in society, this leads to the process by which stigma holders are reduced in status, impaired in reputation and unfairly treated in social interactions.

The research on the stigma phenomenon in the network social communication in academic circles started late, but

¹ Data source: China Internet Network Information Center issued by the "36times Statistical report on the development of Internet in China.

² Erving Goffman. Stigma: Notes on damaged identity management [M] . Lihong Song Translation, Beijing: Commercial Press 2009. P5-P6.

³ Bruce G. Link, and Jo C. Phelan (2001). Conceptualizing Stigma. Annual Review of Sociology 27, 363–385.

also realized the seriousness of the phenomenon. The emergence of the Internet to the people to express their views to provide unprecedented convenience, the stigmatization and the 'tyranny of the majority' are typical forms of repulsing phenomena in the social media communication. (Wang, 2011)⁴

Phoenix man, the man who grew up poor also in the countryside, but thanks to their efforts and the support of others, could move to a big city and become successful, has been one of the representatives of stigmatization in social media communication on the Internet. This article was to find out the formation mechanism of stigmatization with Phoenix man linked this phenomenon to social mobility and anxiety of middle-class in China, and finally point out the existing deep-seated social inequality problems and hazards in China. With the daily average search times 2460, the positive image of Phoenix Man from the beginning, but had gradually been stigmatized, attacked and ridiculed by the network.

II. METHODOLOGY

This article mainly adopts the qualitative research method, qualitative synthesis was defined as a methodology where by study findings are systematically interpreted through a series of deep observes and theoretical judgements. Through literature review and qualitative analysis. In this qualitative synthesis, the process of qualitative studies included the quantitative research sometimes, but the conclusion was draw by Judgement-based not data-based. As for the data which used to help understanding the judgment of this article, we use the search engine Baidu to select the search index of "Phoenix Men, Zhuanjia (brickers in Chinese, refer to experts), Gongzhi(a pejorative term refer to public intellectuals)," from January 2011 to January 2019, and made a comparison to illustrate the stigmatization and attention of Phoenix Man in the whole network. Then, according to the fluctuation of search index and related cases at that time, the paper had made in-depth analysis and judgment.

III. RESULT AND APPROACH

With the prevalence of modern network entertain culture in China, the phenomenon of network stigma was also emerging the same time. Some emergences of hot

words had appeared in social media communication, such as Zhuanjia (brickers in Chinese , refer to experts), Gongzhi (a pejorative term refer to public intellectuals), Phoenix Man and so on, had exacerbated the division and distrust among all sectors of society. By using search engine Baidu to search the keyword Phoenix Man, for this result has a total of more than 7.65million related links, according to the click-through rate ranking, the top 10 click-through news links are to the Phoenix Man Group of negative evaluation, Phoenix Man group While constantly being labeled. The influence of related negative news on netizens is greater than that of positive news of this group, and netizens ' understanding of this group is dominated by negative social evaluation. According to Baidu Search index, Phoenix man Average daily search number is 2460 times from January 2011 to January 2019, which was much higher than the average number of searches for the word Zhuanjia (186 times), and in December of 2017, the Baidu Search Index of Phoenix Man had appeared in the search peak, Highest daily average search near 10 thousand times. The data show that the stigmatization of the Phoenix Man is more serious and more vulnerable to social attention than the Zhuanjia.



Figure 1: the Search Index of “Phoenix Man”⁵

The word, Phoenix Man was first seen in Tianya forum, a married white-collar, because of all kinds of discord in her marriage, put their emotional experience and family life on the forum to communicate with netizens, because of the privacy, with Phoenix Man to refer to their husbands. Her husband came from a poor background, but by his own hard work, became a citizen finally. But with the women who grew up in the city had a large difference in many aspects with her husband, and a lot of frictions had been appeared, each other full of suspicion and distrust. Phoenix Man, is *the Golden Phoenix fly out of the ravine*

⁴ Wang Mei. The "stigmatization" effect of network public opinion and the "tyranny of the majority" [N] . Chinese social Science journal,2011(12).

⁵ Data collection time interval : 2011/1/1—2019/1/1 ; Data source Baidu Search Index.

(an old Chinese saying goes, also *chicken transfer to the Golden Phoenix when had flown out nest*). Those born poor, studied hard to have the chance into the university, after graduation to work and live in the city, they experienced the cruelty and hardship of life, the mind left a deep imprint, which makes them generally have the hard-working spirit, which brought them the development of the career. Although the Phoenix man leaves the rural natural living environment, but still retains many rural simple and traditional ideas, when they choose the city women around them into the marriage, then sometimes have different ideas, most of the family conflict constantly.

With the growth of the reading volume of Complaining Phoenix Man, through the characteristics of widespread communication in the network, called a lot of women with the same kind of emotions, had come to share their husband's humble experience, Phoenix Man group gradually labeled in the social media communication. A group dedicated to stigmatization was also forming, and some women who have had such a bad experience share the shortcomings of the Phoenix Man they encounter with others on the social media. Phoenix man had been affixed to one ugly label step by step, and ultimately make the Phoenix Man in the society suffered discrimination, formed a status quo if something refereed to Phoenix Man, netizens will come and criticize them together, and completed the Phoenix Man stigmatization of the process finally. Phoenix Man image of public opinion has been molded into: low self-esteem and pride, stingy and sensitive, has become a lot of girls online to denounce their reasons. Too much care for his parents is considered by many to be the culprit of Phoenix Man to destroy marriage. Under the hint of public opinion, Phoenix Man shrewd snobbery, love to take advantage, selfish and exclusive image has been constantly strengthened, so that it has become a social and cultural consumer goods, and even some people have compiled a lot of stories, so that Phoenix man into the target of public opinion. Currently, Phoenix man's background was their original sin. Phoenix man lacks a discourse power in the social media, and coupled with their sensitive character, rarely comes forward to respond to questions about them. At this point, they are often only passively receptive to social prejudices.

The direct consequence of the social stigmatization of the network is the destruction of the current social moral evaluation criteria, the reduction of the overall trust of society, the impact on social development, leading to social actors with the ability or potential in a certain social field to reduce their enthusiasm for action and social participation activity. The stigmatization of the Phoenix Man group in the current society is that Phoenix Man has become a group of critics and discrimination of the network people, lost the status and dignity as intellectuals, and no longer respected by the public, from the elite to become "inferior citizens".

The stigmatization of Phoenix Man easily lead to the spread of the idea of "Knowledge Was Useless " , and will further reduce the national quality, also affect the transformation process from traditional to modern. The netizen was easy to the ordinary reality society unfair question anger vent on the network.

Today's society in China, social stratification had been agreed in official discourse, but the social stratification of pedigree, background, environment still not to be accepted by most of people. The stigmatization of Phoenix Man was the curing of social stratum, the upward flow of this group is resisted by the upper echelons of society, and class curing was the trampling of the principle of individual ability and effort. Phoenix Man, as the elite among the rural elite, is the most promising group of peasant children to achieve a leap in class, but because of the monopoly of vested interests on resources and power, it is difficult for them to jump, their social status has a solidified trend, in the current social gap between the rich and the poor in the context of widening, and breed social discontent.

IV. DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of stigmatization in network social communication is not caused by a certain unilateral factor, but the result of the joint promotion and function of many factors, this article mainly analyzed the phenomenon of stigmatization in network social communication from four aspects, included traditional social concept, post-modern social ideological trend, social conflict and unconstrained Internet.

Before modern times, the traditional concept is that the officeholder is the first of four careers (officeholder, farmer, worker, businessman) in the whole life of a man, victory in the Imperial Examination can serve the Emperor, even frustrated in the exam, the scholar also can be the local squire, and playing the important role in the State. They're on the responsibility of the big family is regarded as committed, with rich cultural capital returns as the support for education. Nowadays, the social structure has undergone great changes in contemporary society, the scholar no longer has the legal social governance privilege, and the society is more and more inclined to the legal governance without the humanization. In order to adapt to the change of production and way of life, the family transformed from extended family to small family in city. In the culture of city, Individualism values was respected, using relationship is a capacity flaw. Therefore, the Phoenix Man help ability is generally smaller in modern society, real returned difficult to achieve, Phoenix Man used social relations to help the relatives appear increasingly

anachronistic. That's why they tend to drag down families and attract resentment from their wives.

The non-reality and anonymity of network social communication make the social structure of network society not as perfect as the real society, each individual or group in the cyberspace to find the location, and the symbol meaning consumed by individuals or groups is the yardstick to complete the social stratification. Through the consumption of symbolic value between people and groups, the netizens could build the self-identification, cultural identity and meaning integration. When the symbolic meaning produced by an individual or group or the symbolic value consumed is not the same as their own, people will classify it into the category of other groups, gradually erected a barrier of isolation between groups. And in the network social communication, each other's symbol system difference has produced the dissemination value, the other group's stigma becomes a kind of consumption symbol, and frequently manifests in the entertaining way, through the network social communication mutual attack, to satisfy their own spiritual entertainment demand. Phoenix Man had become a kind of women in the network communication talk and entertainment consumer goods, with being continued stigmatized of the Phoenix Man, to achieve certain women's psychological needs.

With the deepening of the development and transformation of society, the upper class of the city has further expanded its stratum advantage through the heredity and monopoly of high income, high status and high reputation positions, so that he and its descendants have more capital in the social competition and can better complete the flow to the last class. This hierarchical status depends on the continuation of social capital with family origin, which makes the middle and upper classes increasingly closed and exclusionary to the inflow of other strata. As Phoenix Man is actively moving up and down in the class flow, the middle and upper classes have always ostracized the Phoenix Man group in order to maintain their class advantage. And China's marriage pursues the principle of realism, which is the most important rule, the marriage between different classes will generally be excluded, and the stigmatization of Phoenix Man is a manifestation of this resistance. Moreover, the stigmatization of Phoenix Man focuses on their living environment and background, and helps to find the legitimacy excuse for the resource heredity and class monopoly of the middle and upper classes.

China's Internet is unconstrained as long as there is no political criticism or news of officers' corruption, and even Hot Spot (Focus Events) transfer was a strategy of the government that lighten the pressure of supervision from netizens, many unconfirmed information into the cyberspace, was heavily forwarded to spread. Some network media reports with tinted glasses, in order to win

the attention of the relevant people for the purpose of the Phoenix Man group and some negative social news linked together, to push the public, exacerbating the "Phoenix Man" stigma.

V. CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this article has been to provide socio-psychological insights into social identity in China, Phoenix Man, some kind like caste in Indiana. The social mobility of lower classes has brought anxiety to the middle or higher class, and the social and spatial segregation not only exists in daily life but also appears in social media.

Taking part in the stigma construction is no longer the purpose and driving force of entertainment consumption of netizens. In the network social communication, the phenomenon of pan-stigma is also closely related to the level of public network media literacy. But from all sorts of cyber stigma and cyber-violence can be seen in the current network communication of most netizens on the media rational understanding of the existence of deficiencies, from some public opinion events reflected in the moral level to be improved, lack of objective judgment and critical rationality.

While social and spatial segregation may be threatening for identity among the Phoenix Man, it seems to have positive implications for identify processes among the higher classes. The conflicts in value and behavior between Phoenix Man and his wife, which is implicated in the maintenance of "tradition". But with the "shortcomings" of Phoenix Man spread in the social media that may enhance segregation and distrust, either Phoenix Man or their wife all who are perceived as transgressing social norms through cross-class marriage.

When individuals or groups are excluded from those social contexts (social media communication, etc.), it will be harming harmony of society. At the beginning of the founding of a socialist country, most of the people were poor. but with the Reform and Opening Up, a small number of people become rich, and the discourse power were mastered by these rich people. Though China is a single-party country, but the Internet is full of freedom unless you criticize the government's incompetence and corruption of officials. In some cases, the quarrels in the social media, also is the way to divert the attention of the people. But the Phoenix Man, People who change their class through hard work, they would habitually expect to perceive feelings of acceptance and inclusion, not stigma or distrust. Accordingly, cross-class marriage should be permissible, and there will be also a harmonious and healthy development of society.

The development of society includes not only the improvement of material life, but also the progress of

concept. The stigmatization of the Phoenix Man group requires the society to constantly change the traditional concept, understand the living environment of the group, and recognize the value and role of the Phoenix Man group in the contemporary era.

In conclusion, it is evidently that qualitative research into Phoenix Man will give an attempt to explain how the social class identified by using stigma. Given the social and political hegemony of the higher-classes, the stigmatization of Phoenix Man, will be maintaining for a long time. It is hoped that this article will be useful in research on Chinese social strata and calling for the sociologists paying attention to the psychological segregation between social-classes in China. It is also hoped that there will be quantitative research later, in order to enhance observations of the process of stigma (especially the discrimination and prejudice).

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