Research on the Identity Construction of Korean Pop Music’s Fandom Groups on the Weibo Platform, Exemplified by G-Dragon (Kwon Ji-Yong)

Department of Informatics and Media
Master Program in Digital Media & Society
Uppsala University
Author: Yifan Chang
Advisor: Göran Svensson
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I. Abstract

In this thesis, I take a research on the identity construction of G-Dragon’s fandom group on the Weibo platform. Through the blended netnography, which consists of online participant observation and offline in-depth interview, I analyze the process of how the self-identity constructs among those fans through their online practical activities and how the fandom group forms their cultural identity from the cross-cultural perspective. In my analysis, I find that the construction of self-identity is realized in several ways, which are self-evaluation and the other’s evaluation, the projection of intention and emotion, anti-group consumption and cosplay. Also, I try to discuss the identity construction from the cross-cultural perspective. Because the K-pop music is a cross-cultural media product, so the fans have to face two identities: Chinese and Korean pop music fans. Through an analysis of cultural similarity and cultural conflict, I aim to discuss how the cultural similarity affects the construction process of self-identity, how the fandom group struggles in the cultural conflict in order to construct their self-identity and how we consider the abroad fandom group constructing their self-identity from the cultural hybridity perspective. In my discussion chapter, I will try to set some further prospects for the future research field.

Keywords: Self-identity, Korean Culture, Chinese fandom study, Weibo, Cultural Identity
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1. Introduction

Currently, if you ask people what is the most popular online music, I think most people will answer you ‘Gangnam Style’ without hesitation. Apparently, Korean pop music is rising to become popular and even occupies some part of marketing what used to belong to Western pop music. The media calls this cultural phenomenon Korean Wave (Hallyu), which means it is influencing the surrounding countries as a wave. Nowadays, in East Asia, a k-pop (Korean pop) band BIGBANG is going to become much more popular, and its captain G-dragon (stage name, real name is Kwon Ji-yong) especially becomes a new business card for Korean music in order to boost Korea’s national image in the world. Because of his luxurious and unique stage style, G-dragon attracts an army of Chinese fans during the last two years. In addition, with the rapid development of social network platform (such as Weibo and Baidu Tieba), the fans are developing to a strong and considerable cyber community on the Weibo platform. Meanwhile, their active communication and sharing experiences create a unique online phenomenon and fandom culture. Here, I may clarify that fandom culture study consists of two aspects, the social science and the film studies, since the aim of my research is on the identity, so I will use social science perspective as following relevant texts shown. Furthermore, through a literature review on relevant research, I found that there is nearly a blank of the online fans’ identity construction research in China, especially aiming on the Chinese social network, so this impels me to this research as well. Another reason I choose this topic is that because my cousin, a fan of G-Dragon, has followed his account on Weibo for almost three years and never changed her idol target, so this partly pushes me to do an exploration on this topic.
2. Research Objective and Meaning

In a certain sense, with the popularization and application of Internet, the sociological individuals are changing into the ‘networked individuals’; people start to use Internet and different kinds of mobile media platform into all aspects of their life. According to the Identity theories, social individuals will be only in social communication and through mutual communication behavior to construct a real identity; in this process, the individual is constantly looking for the group, which he ought to belong to, positioning himself in the group judgment and joining in the group. Manuel Castells argued that identity is people’s source of meaning and experience (Castells, 2010, 6). While, to find ‘what I am’ and ‘what I belong to’ on social network platform can also be regarded as a process to construct an identity subjectively. In the meantime, I summarize few approaches for the fandom identity construction through the review on the previous researches and literature. Hence I am willing to discuss two research questions as follow:

The first research question is in which ways do the Chinese G-Dragon’s fans construct their self-identity though the practical activities on the Weibo platform?

The second research question is how do the Chinese G-Dragon’s fans construct their cultural identity from the cross-cultural communication perspective?
3. Background Overview

The formation of Korean pop music (K-pop music) fans and fandom community cannot appear in one step. It is ascribed to various social changes caused by the blossom of SNS and cultural globalization. To discuss the development of K-pop music and the function of microblog (Weibo) in China is significant and meaningful for the deep analysis of fans and formation of fandom group. Therefore, this chapter will be focused on the formation and current situation of K-pop music and its fandom group, also the “catalyst” Weibo, which provides fans to form an online community.

3.1 The Increasing Popularity of K-pop Music

When we talk about Korean culture, there are a few labels that etched into our minds such as Korean wave, Korean series, and Korean pop music. Korea first began to export cultural products to surrounding neighbors like Japan, Taiwan and China. Later the destination of the exports reached wider. More than half of the exports go to Asia. North America is the second largest continent that imports Korean goods (Tuk 2012, 16). Japan has been the largest importer of Korean cultural content. China and Southeast Asia are growing export markets and closing in on Japan. In 2006 Japan was responsible for 27.2% of the total cultural content export of Korea. China and Southeast Asia were at 18.5% and 8.7%. In 2008 this had changed to Japan being 20.6%, China 20.1% and Southeast Asia 19.7% (Tuk 2012, 16). But in what way the Korean culture starts to become the limelight in the public?

3.1.1 Historical Background of K-pop music

Korean pop music is a musical genre created in South Korea that is presented by a variety of audiovisual elements. After few years’ evolution, it comprises dance-pop, pop ballad electronic, rock, hip-hop, modern blues and R&B, etc. Although those
music forms above are totally not originated in South Korea, but due to the integration of those various music forms, the K-pop music starts becoming a new modern music genre.

In 1996, a male band called H.O.T made their debut in Seoul. In some way, this band can be regarded as a representative of early stage. It became famous because their wild, flashy performance, which corresponded to the 1990s youngsters’ emotions. Their songs were mostly relatively fast pace and rhythm strongly, suitable for dancing. So their music video will be glutted with dance, this special performance enables the K-pop music to be unique compared with Japanese pop music and American pop music. With their five albums published, it kept a new record, which was that they became most representative "cultural commodity" of South Korea in the late 1990's (Lee 2011, 4). H.O.T. also led the development direction of K-pop music. Excellent behind the scenes designing, elaborate packaging, the H.O.T. easily became a top status in the youth Korean pop music group. Every time when they published the new record, their team tailored a highly fit volume of production music to them, and the second is to show the popularized songs, making them more attractive to other’s attention on the stage. In the meanwhile, their modern popular music is mixed with the criticism to reality, so that all reasons above push this youth group and also K-pop music to their unprecedented success.

After the success of H.O.T, numerous pop music singers realized the importance of ‘resource integration’ and originality, so did the South Korean government. Since 2000, South Korean government promoted a policy relating to spread the K-pop music to her neighbor countries and U.S. From this perspective, the government has acknowledged that the cultural products can be used as a way to benefit the country’s export sector. According to government estimates, a US$100 increase in the export of cultural products results in a US$412 increase in the export of other consumer goods (Tuk 2012, 12). On the other hand, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism tried to expand the popularity of K-pop such as established thousands of Korean Cultural
Centers worldwide. Those measures contribute to Korean culture and K-pop music becoming a wave that named Korean wave.

Additionally, the rapid growth of Internet promotes the K-pop to get popular as a boom. As we know, the appearance of K-pop dovetails nicely with the flourishing period of SNS website. This means that the SNS website like Facebook, Twitter and even video sharing website YouTube provide the K-pop music a perfect platform to make the K-pop star’s music video have a viral spreading. In 2012, Psy and his EP “Gangnam Style” can be regarded as a good example for K-pop’s online marketing. From July until December 2012, “Gangnam Style became the first YouTube video to reach a billion views. On May 7, 2013, at a bilateral meeting with South Korea’s President Park Geun-hye at the White House, U.S. President Barack Obama cited the success of “Gangnam Style” as an example of how people around the world are being “swept up” by the Korean Wave of culture (“Hallyu could be a stepping stone for peace”, 2014).

Besides those reasons above, we cannot ignore that the solid fan base is the other one decisive factor of the K-pop getting popular. According to the Korean Daily’s investigation, in 2011, 75% fans of BIGBANG band have attended its overseas concerts or fans meeting event. During BIGBANG’s concert in Barcelona, it is worth to note that there are approximately 7,000 fans following them from Seoul to Spain and half of fans in that concert are from out of Asia (Lee 2011, 13). The fans used to hold some light sticks and wear the same color clothing as the concert’s theme color. Colors of their clothes play an vital role in fandom group, as fans express their unity and loyalty as a big “family” in this way, especially during some K-pop singer’s competition concert where other artists also perform: fans from a certain fan club will sit in their own area with the same represented color, usually with light sticks or official LED pad and create a "K-pop Ocean" to prove how popular their idol is. Hence we can assume that in some way, the fandom group can create more value than a K-pop song itself.
3.1.2 Who is G-Dragon?

If we talk about G-Dragon, we have to introduce his band BIGBANG, a South Korean male group formed in 2006. The group consists of G-Dragon, T.O.P, Taeyang, Daesung and Seungri. Due to their unique urban-originated, electronic music and fashion style, the group members get dozens of fans worldwide.

In this band, Kwon Ji Yong is the captain as a bandleader, better known by his stage name G-Dragon. He was born and grew up in Seoul. He began his artist career at the age of 5 as a kid star in YG Entertainment, one of the biggest record companies in South Korea. Actually, in South Korea, almost all singers were trained by diverse youth projects. Those projects are similar as the youth recruitment training in football clubs. The scouts of YG Entertainment Company will seek for the talented youth artists and analyze their merits and demerits in order to give them a proper position and direction for their future career development. In terms of G-Dragon, the scout found his talent on the rap and introduced him to the famous American rapper band Wu-Tang Clan. After that cooperation, he developed interests in rapping and urban electronic music, also got a great opportunity to study in New York’s music school (Lee 2011, 5). When he was only 13 years old, G-Dragon became the youngest Korean rapper who published a Korean hip-hop album. Six years later, the YG entertainment decided to build a male group focusing on original K-pop music. Relying on a great success of his written music, G-Dragon got a dozen of contracts to be advertising endorser. At the same time, he has been invited to the Paris Fashion Week for promoting some famous luxury brand’s new products. In a word, his talent and diligence on music field enabled him to strengthen his top status in K-pop music field (Lee 2011, 6).
3.2 The Key Functions of Weibo Platform for Fandom Group

Weibo is an online platform to provide the service of micro-blog sites same as Twitter.com. Users can post messages or upload a picture by browser, WAP page, smartphone’s app and even SMS or MMS. Different from the Twitter, Weibo’s client is mainly aimed to Chinese and Chinese speakers. Also in 2009, the Chinese authorities blocked most of oversea SNS websites, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. So those two preconditions make Weibo play as a regional SNS platform, it can filter and narrow down my research objectives only to the Chinese group. Functionally, Weibo platform provides an online information center full with entertainment and leisure and free service to the public of information sharing and interacting platform. In August 14th 2009, Sina.com started to run a beta version testing of Weibo.

At the beginning of Weibo running, most of users have to face a one-way information-pushing platform, which seems “dull” to them. In September 25th, Weibo formally added the @ function (reminding) and private message function, in addition to providing a "comment" and "retweet" functions, for users to interact. Besides those basic functions above, I have to mention few features here since those are relevant to the formation of our fans group.

Heated topic: users can use two pound signs to set a key-word topic, such as #iphone5s#, #MalaysiaAirline# and #G-Dragon#. So that if the other users are interested in this inserted topic, after clicking this, it will automatically show all related tweets that contains the topic. So this function enables the users to discuss the heated topic and achieve the aggregation of information.

Real-time and real-place search: users can search all real-time content on Weibo, even
the person who tweeted content is not your follower. This feature makes Weibo like a first time news center, and it empowers the users to be a citizen journalist. Whenever or wherever the event happens, the users can tweet the real-time and real-place content at the first time. Meanwhile, the others are able to search it through this function.

140 words limitation: all tweeted content on Weibo will be limited within 140 Chinese characters or 280 English letters, 9 attached pictures. Thanking to this special feature, it is easy to make the users notice the core content with a brief glance, that is to say, when users aim to tweet something, this limitation will force users to filter the most useful and core content themselves.

Label yourself: this feature enables users to classify themselves to different categories. For instance, an account called @littlemomo shows few labels, such as Pisces, Beijinggirl, Lawstudy, GuoanFCfans (one of the biggest football club in Beijing), Phtographer, and Lesbian. After labeling yourself, Weibo will kindly give you some recommendation on the account owning the same labels. As we can see, it is much easier for the fans to seeking for the same person who own same interests. In some ways, this feature simplifies the process of fandom group’s formation.

Wei Group: Wei Group is a short name of Weibo group, which gathers the people who have the same label or interest together and the topic that is corresponding to the relevant interest. This feature makes like-minded friends become more convenient for participation and communication on Weibo. In the Wei Group part, users can create their own Wei group, or choose their own interested micro group to join. Meanwhile, the system can recommend random heated micro group to the non-joined users. Some research institute conjectured that according to the recommended mechanism of Weibo, the mechanism might depend on the relevance labels, location and done discussion. In the Wei Group speech interface, participating users can communicate with each other privately, and simultaneously share their own words to the public-saw
Weibo interface.

3.3 The Formation Process of Fans Group on Weibo

Apparently, since the features were mentioned above, we can agree with that the development team of Weibo creates an adaptable environment for the fans to get a multi-path news sources and communicate with each other. However, I may present the developing process of online community in China.

Initially, I would like to discuss the formation of fans group in pre-Weibo period. Before 2009, most of Chinese K-pop fans were all gathered in a BBS-like online platform named Baidu Tieba (贴吧 Translation: Post Bar). The core feature is almost like BBS did, the previous users can apply for their idol’s ‘bar’ and become an administrator. Then the fans can search their idol’s name to enter different ‘bar’ to post texts, pictures, videos or links. The more active ‘bar’ is, the more bonuses their ‘idol’ will get. So with the online reward system, the top-bonus idols can be invited to an award gala at the end of year, which is sponsored by Baidu Inc. and MTV music. Furthermore, the solid fans can be invited to the gala close with their idols and talking with the idols. Those measures encourage a growing number of fans to participate into the online events rather than offline. So in a word, Baidu Tieba is the first online platform in China that creates a closed environment for the fandom group.

Zhang has mentioned Baidu Tieba plays a vital role in the process changing the Chinese fandom events from offline to online (Zhang 2012, 12). It also means that the Baidu Tieba was changing the fandom group’s behavior in some way. In terms of Weibo, it is not difficult to attract the fans since they have already formed a habit to make a use of different SNS platform contacting each other. Through my participant observation, I decide to categorize five types of approaches to describe how the fandom group gathered and communicated on Weibo. In addition, for each approach,
there are three ways for information transmission, which consist of reply function, retweet function and ‘Like’ function. The first approach is G-Dragon’s official verified account, which is claimed running by G-Dragon himself. According to my participant observation, there has never been any interaction between G-Dragon and his fans. Secondly, the fans club account plays a vital role on Weibo, advertising the G-Dragon’s participative events and posting some G-Dragon’s video and pictures. The following one is some famous fansub’s (fansub: the team to translate idol’s video in the fandom community) account, which will push the recent G-Dragon’s concert video or recreational program. Through posting some exclusive news or gossip news on Weibo, some fans will attract an impressive number of fans to follow their accounts. At this time, they will play a role as a fans leader to guide the public opinion. The eventual one is the Wei Group, which offer the G-Dragon fans an intimate place to share their opinions and ideas. So in my research, the online field study will mainly focus on those five approaches mentioned above.
4. Previous Research

In the West, the research of identity has experienced thousands of years and most of the researches are concentrated on the philosophical perspectives. In the modern time, the philosophers argue that the identity can be considered as a promise and confirmation of the values and meanings. For instance, the Canadian communitarianism researcher Charles Taylor wrote a book named *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, which is a representative in the field of philosophy about identity theories. After researched of historical theoretical background, Taylor sketched a picture of the formulation through the identity process. In his article, he thought that “To know who I am is a species of knowing understand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of thinking a stand (Taylor 2001, 27).”

Since the 1960s, an army of social theories appeared flourishingly and some provided the scholar a new direction and skeleton for the research of social behavior and identity. As we know, in 1970s, with the influence of western feminist campaign and active participation of the modern feminist movement enabled the scholars to make a comprehensive study on the feminist agenda. In 1980s, the blooming of the neo-conservatism triggered a legion of studies to study on the ethnic identity and the realism. At the same time, queer studies change the concept of identity studies’ aiming on the understanding of the individuals relative to the group identity recognition. Because the queer study during that time based on psychological and sociological aspects, researchers of identity study tried to realize both of the sociological perspective and psychological perspective were worth to research, which makes the studies turn into a new era.
In the field of sociology, Tajfel Henri, one of the founders of social identity study, has already argued that self-concept includes the differentiation of the group and the personal identity in his social group. Furthermore, it also points out that people make effort to achieve or maintain positive identity in order to improve their self-esteem. Those positive identities are coming from the group’s internal identity and external comparison (Henri 1978, 2). Moreover, the Chinese scholar Weihua Zou deems that the identity is a personal cognition process to integrate and disperse his or her own characteristics and features (Zou 2007, 43). Other famous scholars such as Paul Gay and Stuart Hall also present similar discussion in their book *Questions of Identity Culture* to discuss why the identity studies become much more popular in the sociological and cultural fields. Both authors in this book want to explain the reason and provide us a new point of view and analytic direction on the identity studies (Gay and Hall 1996, iii).

In terms of the psychological approach, we cannot ignore that the Sigmund Freud is the first scholar to put forward the concept of identity from the psychological perspective. Freud argues that identity is a process of that the individual try to become converging with the others, groups or the imitated persons by the emotional and psychological effects (Freud and Strachey 1966, 25). After the American psychologist, Eric H Erikson advances a concept of “ego-identity” to claim his understanding on the identity. In his book *Identity, Youth and Crisis*, he sets out a question ‘who am I’ and discusses the question by the issues of personal identity or ego-identity (Erikson 1968, ii). Hence, later scholars think Erikson plays a vital role on the effort of leading the identity study into the field of psychology. On the other hand, the psychoanalytic deconstruction school lead by Jacques Lacan and elaborated upon by Judith Butler that launches a dismantlement of the traditionally conceived identity, namely, the unified, self-contained, singular identity. It is under the disentanglement of the unified identity with the multiple selves that the conception and discussion of the identity studies more flexible and stimulating. Through the discussion of the constructing process of feminist and gender agenda in depth, they conclude that the identities are
not given by nature or simply represented or expressed in culture, but culture is the process of identity formation, the way in which bodies and selves in all their differences are produced. Therefore, we can judge culture is a process, a kind of making, and we are what is made and remade through that process (Butler 1997, 45).

As far as I am concerned, those scholars mentioned above are from the different subjects like philosophy, sociology, psychology and even linguistic. To a certain extent, they are focusing different kinds of emphasis in their studies. Nevertheless, both of main arguments are from two aspects: the cognition of ‘who I am’ and the research of that the mutual cognitions on the similar individuals, things and even communities. Hence, it is important noting that those former studies above create a creditable approach to inspire the current scholars to research on the identity studies in the cyber culture.
5. Theoretical Background

5.1 Research of Identity upon the Discourse of Traditional Society

The concept of “identity” is widely and frequently mentioned and studied in different disciplines and different research fields. Although it is a fixed called concept, but it is not eternal on its definition, actually changing with development and evolution of academic field. The research on “self identity” has also been studied by a number of scholars; the concept of “self” is far more complex and difficult to sort out rather than “identity”. Goffman thinks that the concept of “self” is the central concept of interactive image theory, but by no means is a psychological solidified, rather than a product of social interaction properties and process (Goffman 1959, 12). so this chapter attempts to explore how the fandom individual constructs self-identity at the online fan community through its related activities.

The research essence of self-identity is to discuss the problem of human subjectivity, the personal subjective sense is actually a sense of identity or consensus, and it is embodied in the construction process of self-recognition. Anthony Giddens thinks that self is not decided by external influences by passive entity, but the product of reflection. On this basis, Giddens defines the concept of “self-identity”. He argues, “Self-identity is not only given, as individual action system’s continuous result, but also some certain thing that is created and maintained during the individual reflection. The self-identity’s supporting linguistic feature is used to focusing on the linguistic differentiation of ‘I, me and you’. Self-identity is not the individual's traits, or a combination of a special. It is formed on the basis of individual experience, as a reflective understanding of self-identity, here is still set continuity across time and space. It includes the cognitive ingredient based on concept of becoming a ‘person’. To become a ‘person’, and is not only a reflective actor, also must have some
individual concept (such as used when the concept of self and others) (Giddens 1990, 32).” In other words, the self-identity is mainly presented through both self-reflection and referring to the others. And the “ideal self” is the core part of self-identity, because it created the channels for the expression of the self-identity narrative and ideal ambitions, making us to become “the one we want to be”. This opinion is based on the “self-reflection”. But if we change our mind to the perspective of “referring to the others”, self-identity is that in some certain social environment, through interaction with the others and the society, individual behavior and thought gradually formed and developed into a consistent state. Charles Taylor argues that a person cannot be based on himself but ego. He also declares that only two types can present core value of self-identity on individual perspective. A person's identity and comprehensive definition, usually not only with his affairs moral and spiritual standpoint, but also have some relationship with the identified associations. Therefore, the “identity” problem can be understand and grasp at two levels. On the one hand, it discusses the relationship between “I” and “me”, namely the relation between body and mind, is in the psychological projection level; on the other hand, it discusses the relationship between “I” and “the other” problem, a person is not based on his own but self, only in relation to certain interlocutors since “I” is I (Taylor 2001, 71). To sum up, “identity” is in a certain social environment, individual through self-reflection and interaction with others, and gradually formed the subject’s own sense of identity, recognition and a sense of identity.

In order to discuss the subject’s own sense of identity, we have to mention the Lacan’s “mirror stage” theory. In mirror stage theory, Lacan takes an experience that makes the 6~18 months babies to recognize their bodies and realize the integrality of limes. The mirror stage theory shows us Mirror image shows the existence of a vision for the baby, it not only looks complete, and can be used a more consistent, more coordinated, more coherent motion to move. According to Lacan’s theory, on the surface, the subject’s building depends on the self alienation, but in fact, self construction cannot exist without self-image and the image of “the other”. Here this
“the other” is from the mirror image of self, which is realized by the identity of mirror image (Zeng 2012, 3). In other words, if we try to apply this theory into the fandom society, the appearance of fans’ identity is based on “the other”, that is to say, fans’ identity is always formed in reference to “the other”. So “the other” is not someone else, it is the self-image according to the narcissistic identification and self-linking in the mirror. In Lacan’s view, the mirror stage is the moment of self-deception, fascination caused by illusion, and the start of imaginative mode of thinking. Moreover, everyone has the similar illusory and ideal self-imagination, although it is not real, and it can only be close to the real self-realization. But as mentioned above, it is a way to push your personal motivation towards your idea; that is to say, it is an inherent individual psychological demand.

In the book Discourse and Identity, the authors point out that self-identity has some features, which are multiple but not single; existence in the real world and having moral and social consequences; negotiating process of individual and society; utilization of discourse. Hence, we can find that the construction process of self-identity cannot be done without the interaction between self and “the others” (Benwell and Stokoe 2006, 15). Furthermore, Charles Horton Cooley believes that self-identity is based on an individual’s imagination, which is like to yourself by “the other’s” comments. Then according to these images, it will produce the satisfactory or unsatisfactory mood, and taking an effect of our actions. Cooley also thinks our ideal personality is based on the interaction of development of thought and feeling, largely depending on our image in the eyes of our respecting people's imagination (Cooley 1998, 3).

From the psychological perspective, we have to mention about a psychological phenomenon “projection”, the word “projection” literally means to throw something outward or forward, or to transfer the human’s thought, emotion, image and desire to the external environment. The concept of projection is originally derived from psychology, and then widely used in other areas. According to Freud’s perspective,
psychological projection in its narrow sense is a psychological protection mechanism, or we may explain in another way like people making their unsatisfactory ideas, wishes, motivations or emotions project on someone else, or even on animal or non-living objects. However, psychological project in broad sense includes personal positive emotions, like to project personal preferences, emotions onto the object body (Freud and Strachey 1966, 121). In fact, “projection” is a behavioral process, which makes the personal main body project onto the object. In the research field, the scholars categorize “projection” into various types. In my research, I will mainly focus the projection of emotion and intention and corresponding with the online fandom group to analyze.

5.2 Research of Identity on the Modern Society

As Friedman argued in his book Cultural Identity and Global Process, in general sense, the consumption is a specific way to create identity, an achievement in time and space to realize matter rearrangement. Moreover, one of the importance of sociological significance for consumption is used for “raw material” in constructing the identity, also the identity symbols and symbolic expression. As anthropologist Friedman said, “the consumption in the scope of the world system is always the consumption of identity (Friedman 1994, 7).” Actually, we can divide up the concept of consumption into two parts: first of all, “I” am the thing and the way I consume; secondly, what do we consume and how do we consume depends on our own thought of “who are we”. So as we can see, the way we consume is actually that we create, change and maintain ourselves. In other words, what I consume and how I consume show that my understanding and evaluation of my own taste, habits and status. The content and patterns of consumption is tightly connected with the identity, in some way, the individual identity is the work created by the consumer self. So here we can note that the fandom’s online practical activities are various consumptions, no matter the content of consumption, like downloading the video or music from the online
communities, or the pattern of consumption, like post some tweets to declare their ideas, those are all the process of self understanding and evaluation.

In the meantime, Erving Goffman states a view in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* that social life is a large stage, and this stage is divided into stage and backstage; the stage provides the individual a platform to keep social order and communication rules to play the formal role in the reality. While the backstage is the place makes people to relax, and to vent their emotions, full performance of their behavior styles place (Goffman 1959, 37). People judge the backstage as a warm, easy, relaxed atmosphere, so as we see it is totally different with the stage, which makes them perform serious behaviors. So the stage and backstage theories provide the scholar a new perspective on the dual-identity research.

In terms of dual-identity, after viewing a large list of relevant literature materials, I surprisingly find that most of the researches are focusing on the cross-cultural communication. Through the literature review, I find that if the identity is labeled by a religious, national, or ethnic meaning, it may lead into a discussion on the colonialism or neo-colonialism agenda. Therefore, in the following part, I may discuss how the Korean culture spreads and the fans switch their roles during their identity formulation process. In this point, a phenomenon called new diaspora comes into my view. An author called Raka Shome does a field research in Indian call center from a view of a new politics of hybridity. This article describes the staffs in the call center have to train themselves on British accent, give themselves a British name, watch all the British dramas and movies, and even know every county’s customs. Moreover, after their office time done, they have to switch their ‘British identity’ back to their Indian identity. During Shome’s research, she points out that some scholars even sharply criticized the call center as a new East-India company, a symbol of neo-colonialism (Shome 2006, 105). Here we can witness that her argument depends on the Indian authentic identity. Oppositely, the representative scholar of Birmingham School, Stuart Hall, argues, “The logic of identity is the logic of something like a
‘true self.’ And the language of identity has often been related to the search for a kind of authenticity to one's experience, something that tells me where I come from. The logic and language of identity is the logic of depth --in here, deep inside me, is my self, which I can reflect upon. It is an element of continuity. I think most of us do recognize that our identities have changed over time, but we have the hope or nostalgia that they change at the rate of a glacier (Hall 1991, 15).” “There is no identity that is without the dialogic relationship to the other. The other is not outside, but also inside the Self, the identity. So identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point, Identity is also the relationship of the Other to oneself (Hall 1991, 16).” For this view, it enables me to combine Hall’s theories with Butler’s theory, which I mentioned above. So I may set a question that “how does the fans perform their identity through a switching of different identities?”

**5.3 Fan Study (Fandom Study) Research**

With the rapid development of cultural industries, when the cultural products are accepted, fans appear in a rash. However, what are the fans and how the fandom culture form? Apparently, people are not clear for the concept of fandom identity construction when the fans study starts to come into our view. If we aimed on the fandom concept, a scholar cannot be ignored named Henry Jenkins, who published a book *Textual Poachers* in 1992. In his book, it is interesting to note that there is an ethnographical study on the specific media fans group to mainly describe the social mechanism, cultural practice, and the complex relationship between the mass media and customers. In addition, Jenkins did the ethnographical study within two roles both a fan and researcher (Jenkins 2004, 73-76). Critically, those two roles may partly affect academic neutrality and justice in his participant observation, because his actions and even status in that group may cause a change on the objectives’ behavior or mind. However, we cannot deny that his theoretical foundation, which primarily discusses the connection between fans group as the media audience and the media
texts, is very clear.

After those former theories published, it provides us a clear research direction; a growing number of scholars realized the blank of the fandom study. Due to importance of the fandom study, a growing number of new theories are by some researchers. Cheryl Harris, in her book *A Sociology of Television Freedom*, sorts an organization called ‘Watching High Definition Television’ fans group for a 5-year study. Furthermore, Harris tries to discuss the interaction between the television program strategies and the fans group. From the sociological perspective, fandom study is used for discussion how the fans are influenced by the object and how the fans group tries to change the object. In addition, Harris mentions that it is important to find that the participation is unavoidable if you constructed an identity and the others in the fandom group accept. So his research contributes a clear result of how important the relationship is between the individual and the other members in the group for the identity construction (Harris 2003, 2). As there is an other journal written by Murphy, Tankel and Smead, *Collecting Comic Books: A Study of the Fan and Curatorial Consumption*, which set the fandom group to collect comic books as a quite complex process. The process was described as the capital meet the demand for the consumers. For those studies, the scholars attached more importance to that the fandom study as a cultural consumption and capital consumption is corresponded to the consumption sociology (Murphy, Tankel and Smead 1990, 20).

Since the research question is relevant to the cyber community, we cannot ignore that the fandom study on the web. Nancy K. Baym is one of the scholars who insist on focusing the online fandom culture. In 2000, his book *TUNE IN< LOG ON: Soaps, Fandom, and Online Community* was published and used a quite new view to discuss fandom through the online community and interaction. The theoretical background and methodologies are totally based on the former scholars’ contributions, hence to research on fandom on the social network platform is much more meaningful (Baym 2000, 1). So here Baym has set a new research framework for the following scholars
who will take a research on the fandom group in the cyberspace.

In the book *The Field of Cultural Production*, Pierre Bourdieu suggests that the specific forms of cultural capital is the accumulation individually cultural labor, basically, the cultural capital is always with the individual subjects together, and accumulation of cultural capital in general through the culture, education, training and conduct, these acts are process specific subject costing the labor, which contains change and assimilation of labor’s main body. It also needs the subject to take time, energy and financial resources (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993, 76) So for this view, I will try to connect it with the fandom study, which means that the fans can be regarded as a cultural labor and they are producing the cultural products in order to create cultural capital.

Currently, the fan study has not only aimed on the consumption culture, psychoanalysis, and TV or film studies, but also provides us a new research direction on the social media platform. Like Matthew Hills pointed out in his book *Fan Cultures* that the fan study enables us to adopt the way of case study, and outlines the cultural phenomenon, which can create many about the new media development, and all of these new cultural phenomena (Hills 2002, ii). Therefore, I decide to use the fan study’s theories and achievements to help me understand the process of fans group’s identity construction from a new approach.

However, all those researches above are all focusing on different fields. For example, Matthew Hills’ research is more about how the rapid media development provides the different fans to In terms of fandom research, it is interesting to note that most of scholars mentioned above has ignore the combination of media’s feature and identity construction. Also, like Baym’s research, she pays more attention to what kind of effects the fandom group will get through in-group interaction. So compared with my research objects, one of my contribution is to argue in which ways the fandom group’s identity constructed and how the diverse features of new media platform like
6. Research Methodology and Research Framework

6.1 Research Methodology

In this research, I prepare to use three main sociological research methods to analyze, which are documentary analysis, online ethnography (netnography), and interview.

Normally, in the former research, the scholars used to do a relevant research through the traditional ethnography. The definition of the ethnography is an anthropological approach that has gained popularity in sociology, cultural studies, marketing and consumer research, and many other fields in the social sciences. The term refers both to the act of doing ethnographic fieldwork and to the representations based on such a study (Kozinets 2010, 54). As we can see, the traditional ethnography provides researcher a method to observe the researched objects meticulously. However, in the new century, with the rapid development of Internet, the cyber concepts such as network society, Internet society and Cyberculture society start to attract our attention. So there becomes an unignorable question for the sociologists, that is, how to do a research on the new platform scientifically?

Howard offered a ‘network ethnography’ that pragmatically combined a social network analysis with ethnography. Differently, the ‘network ethnography’ is continually being refashioned to suit particular fields of scholarship, research questions, research sites, times, researcher preferences, skill sets, methodological innovations and cultural groups (Howard 2002, 39). However, what is the netnography? In Kozinets’ book, he defines the netnography as a participant-observation work but based on the online computer-mediated platform.
According to the former studies, it is interesting to note that there is a dichotomy on my research object, which includes ‘community online’ and ‘online community’. Normally we can define that research that is interested in the social processes that govern the behavior of newbies entering online hobbies-based communities would, by this definition, be research on ‘online communities’. It means that a study of a specific group, a social network site, a linguistic pattern in a twitter and a specific pattern on blogs can be regarded as a research on ‘online communities’. On the other hand, to research on ‘communities online’ is a particular social phenomenon as an interaction on the group memberships through the Internet or other technic way. The scholar Kozinets looked at the wider phenomenon of Star Trek culture and community, and more generally, how fan cultures and communities created and distributed alternative meanings and social structures relating to commercially produced products (Kozinets 2001, 67). In my research, I will try to weaken the differentiation on those two core concepts above but not ignore them. Because the main propose of my research aims to argue how the fans form a group and how the Weibo make them relate together. So from this perspective, both ‘online community’ and ‘community online’ can be relevant to my research, and both of them are based on the netnography. Here is also a main reason why I think this method is fit for my research.

Furthermore, we must ask ourselves, if we want to study an online community, or focus on the research that is based on some online culture or any elements by ICT-related phenomena. Depending on my research, to discover the members of online community for their identity construction process can be classified to two aspects, which are corresponding to online elements and human behaviors. As we can see from the figure 1, the pure ethnography is suitable for the offline activities’ research, as entirely face-to-face interaction and data collection. And as I mentioned above, in my research, one of the goal is to make the former identity theories link to
Judith Butler’s ‘performativity’ theory. Therefore a face-to-face interview is a reasonable and meaningful precondition for my research. So I have to lead a new methodological concept into my study, which is named the blended ethnography/netnography. In Kozinets’ book, he use the figure 1 to argue that a sociologist should have to take advantage of diverse sociological methodologies or even the methods from the other subjects. As we can see, the blended research method can be defined as a study of communities or cultures online (important online elements), which meet all requirements to my former thought.

**Figure 1 ‘Pure’ Ethnography/Netnography and Blended E/N methods**

(Kozinets 2001, 169)

Hence, a planned research methodology that obtains face-to-face research, online ethnography (netnography) will be used in my research and analysis process.
6.2 Data Collection

When I decide to use the blended netnography method, I should have to face and think over some inevitable preconditions before my research design. Actually, during designing my research plan, I find that to study an online fandom community is literally different to the former relevant researches due to its unpredictable anonymity, artificiality and falsification. So here we can notice that the people may present themselves untruthfully. For the researchers, the only thing we can do is to avoid the unpredictable pseudonymity influence of data collection.

In my research, I decide to divide up the data collection approach to the two steps, which are defined as step A and step B. Therefore I will define and discuss how the two steps work through the data collection. First of all, a core of netnography and ethnography is a participative approach to study on the online culture or communities.

According to the Step A, it will focus on the online participant observation. The comments and tweeting or retweeting content on Weibo will be aimed as a core approach in this part. On the other hand, the content in Weibo group will also be a main field for the online observation. Apparently, those fields can be judged as a core part on Weibo, especially for those interactive features. So first of all, I have used my account on Weibo and then get their permission to join some G-Dragon fans Wei group. Secondly, I have participated in their discussion and try to get close to the fans. The reason I have done those measures is because I am concerned about that if I will make some influences on their thoughts, behaviors and words. To keep a neutral and scientific online group atmosphere is important for fandom studies. Here I have to declare that the online observation will be precise to aim at my assumptions that are proposed through my literature review. All assumptions will include the former researcher’s fandom study achievement and my inferences. So for those assumptions, the participant observation is not only a test and verification process, but also an important approach to propose some new inferences. In addition, we may notice that
to entre an online fandom group may make us concern about the ethical issue. So my ethical consideration will be mentioned in the next section.

In the meanwhile, the step B will include the face-to-face in depth interview, in which I will select five G-Dragon fans to be my interviewees. The interviewee will meet some specific demands, which will be mentioned in the next chapter. As Jennifer Mason pointed out, the interview methodology begins from the assumption that it is possible to investigate elements of the social by asking people to talk, and to gather or construct knowledge by listening to and interpreting what they say and to how they say it (Mason 1996, 25). Besides, some key factors should be considered in my interviews, such as where is the social phenomenon or process which is being investigated thought to be located (the location question)? And second, on what basis can the interviewee and the interview illuminate it? Is the relationship of interviewee and interview to knowledge construction more complex than this? In fact, the questions in my interviews will be correspondent to my former assumption, evaluation and online participant observations. That is the reason why I set the interview part as the step B, which is after the step A’s work. Personally, I deem this measure will promote my research objects to narrow down and also be more precise to the analysis part. And all the materials collected in both steps will be absolutely useful and accords with my research analysis. After the two steps mentioned above, the collected data will be documented and translated from Chinese to English.

Also, I have some general requirements for the five interviewees are shown as followed; (1) A person (Chinese) who has only one active and valid Weibo account. (2) A person has followed G-Dragon for more than one year. (3) A person who has at least followed ten relevant G-Dragon official news accounts and G-Dragon’s fans group account. The whole process will be in Chinese mandarin. The reason why I set this requirement for my interviewee, because this three requirements can filter the most of inactive Weibo users and the fans follow more than one K-pop music singer at the same time. And I have to point out that the education backgrounds, ages or
genders etc. are not considered in my interview, since the interviewees' names will be presented by their Weibo account’s names. So a part of basic background information of the interviewees will not be used or connected to my analysis.

6.3 Participation and Ethical Considerations

Good interviewing is clearly in no small part about an interviewer's skills in asking, listening and interpretation (Mason 1996, 12). According to this view, I personally think that a good interview should depend on the both interviewer and interviewees’ faith, also present their real thoughts through language communication, and eventually build a trust between interviewer and interviewees. By asking questions and conversation, both of two sides can transcend themselves, getting close to the integration between the different perspective of subject in order to construct a new and meaningful social reality. But if a researcher want to achieve "close" and "fusion" from the deep layers, an in-depth interview is very important for the research. But how can we enter the strange community to observe them or even to take an interview with them?

Since both of my data collection steps in research will be surrounded by my participation, there are some preconditions I have to declare. Initially, to build a stable “bridge” between researcher and research objectives is a key to do an in depth interview. Lynne Haney has pointed out that the qualitative research in the fieldwork is a ‘physical contact’ movement. Namely your research objects constitute a contact through the study approach; oppositely, you will constantly reconstruct the relationship by contacts between you and your participant. In some qualitative research book, these relationships are defined as “gaining access” or “negotiating entry” (May 2002, 121). In qualitative research, researcher can be regarded as a research tool in the research, and research relationship will be regarded as a bridge to get access to the final achievement. As we can see, ‘gaining access’ will not only need
to negotiate and renegotiate with the participant, also hard to get full access into the research object. However, it is interesting to note that the successful research does not have to get full access into, but an ethical approach to get the correct research material under the participant’s permission. In this case, it will not be a difficult work to get close to the fandom group’s online activity and doing the interview. But the vital issue is how to found a decent and honest research relationship with the researched people, and to get a chance talking with them besides the virtual world.

A particularity of this study is that, the former evaluation of researches and journalism articles for those fans of mass cultural product, whether from the academic circles or from the sociological field, seems to be not very positive. In some research, the fandom group is thought as “irrational, non-work and no resistance to the fetishist”. Therefore, when the researcher wants to participate into their group as a scholar, they will instinctively present conflicted emotions, and they will be deliberately to beautify their own groups during the interview’s conversation. Some of them will probably make the whole research lack of objectivity and authenticity, directly affect the conclusions of the study. In order to gain objective and creditable content, Matthew Hills successfully uses a dual combined fan-scholar role to get access into a fandom group. He defines himself as “acceptable marginal man”, which means a person who participates only slightly in the life of two cultural groups without feeling identified with either group. In this condition, I think I can refer to this form experienced approach and play a role as “marginal man” to get into online G-Dragon fans group.

According to the presupposition above, I decide to change my personal Weibo name and profile picture. Here I may explain more on this act. Obviously, as I argued above, to found a proper research relationship with the G-Dragon fans and to enter their community is the first urgent thing for my research. The reason why I do not create a new research anonymous account is that on my page wall, it will show how many Weibo you have tweeted or retweeted. Normally, a generally acknowledged active Weibo account should have 1,000 tweets at least. If you use a new account to get
attach with the fans, they may probably doubt on your intention. So I deem that it will not be any trouble for me to tell them part of my personal background to earn their trust. Furthermore, the account name will be add “GD” in front of my former name, because all the fans will add their favorite idol short name before their individual name, so my former name was “changbigfan” and my new name is “GDchangbigfan” instead.

After disguising my research account, the only thing I have to do is to enter their group softly. On account of that I have gotten enough knowledge of G-Dragon’s background and pay close attention to the G-Dragon and BIGBANG’s relevant news, I can smoothly participate into their discussion and let me become “marginalized”. After some positive talk, I have found some solid dual-followed (follow each other’s account) contact with some G-Dragon fans. It’s surprised to note that they do not resist my research when I tell them my purpose. By contraries, they accept me into group. However, for keeping my research more accurate and neutral, I decide to observe them rather than discuss with them. Because I do concern if I encourage them participate into my research, they will beautify their own image and so their idol’s. In summery, I consider my “gaining access” can be regarded as a reasonable entry.

6.4 Data Analysis

After the online participant observation and in-depth interviews, I have collected some data for my following analysis. I try to divide up the data into two parts, the data from Weibo and the data from interviews. In terms of data from Weibo, most of data is like the post and the post’s attached comments. Because the data from Weibo is all opening sources, so the data will be presented with the accounts’ names. But here we may notice that since the data from Wei Group is not opening sources, so I decide to make the presentation of data be half-anonymous, which means I will ask the used post’s writer for the permission to use his or her name. In the meanwhile, the attached
comments will be presented in my following text anonymously. For the interview’s materials, I will also try to present the material with the Weibo account’s name, not the real personal name. Since even the interviews are partly processed in the offline society, but I find my five interviewees are all from the Weibo platform.

After the data collection and summarization work, I will try to use the data for analysis in the way of theoretical reading and coding. The theoretical reading refers to “a researcher may read through his or her interviews again and again, reflect theoretically on specific themes of interest, write out interpretations, and not follow any systematic method or combination of techniques. (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, 236)” So as we can see, after the method of the theoretical reading we can reflect our collected material on our reviewed theories in order to combine the theories and materials together to analysis.

On the other hand, Auerbach and Silverstein defines the process of coding into three steps: “making the text manageable, hearing what was said, and developing theory (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, 31).” In the first step, we should filter the data with the theoretical framework, which data can be used for the specific theories. In the second step, the material is combined with similar ideas, and similar ideas will be classified into more general categories. For the final step, the diverse categories will be constructed into some general concepts by the different theories, and these concepts are applied in the creation of theoretical narration upon participants’ stories (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, 42–43). So those three steps above enable us to follow a clear guideline to manage our collected data, and the filtered data can be easily combined with the theories in my research. So in some way, the coding is constructed beyond my theoretical framework.

However, we may notice that there are still some limitations for application of those two methods above. The theoretical reading and coding process are all based on the researcher’s specific ideas, which means the researcher’s subjective thought may lead
us to a more subjective results for my analysis. But since a part of my data is collected by the face-to-face interviews, so if I combine the interviewee’s specific and clear answers to the theoretical framework. It will reduce the risk of the limitation on the subjective analysis. Secondly, since I will not consider the following or mutual following relationship in the presentation of my data on Weibo platform, so the Weibo’s comments or texts may not present the real ideas from the fans. For example, if we know each other in the offline society and meanwhile we are mutually following each other on the Weibo. Even though I do not agree your idea, because we are friend offline, I may make a comment to pretend to agree with you this time. Since the author is not able to ask all online community’s fans to testify their real ideas, so I cannot guarantee the data I collected is all neutral or precise. This limitation might be also concerned in the future relevant online fandom group researches.

7.1 The Online Practical Activities of Fandom Group

Through this chapter, I will pay attention to the online G-Dragon’s fandom group, and make a comprehensive view on them. This part of study will start from how the fans go through online practical activities to construct their self-identity to explain. Before analysis on the ways of identity construction, I will investigate some specific cases about the G-Dragon fandom group primarily in details. Meanwhile, I am aiming to discuss the practical activity section in a few categories as following.

7.1.1 Exchange Information

Since I mentioned in the former chapters, K-pop music fans will not only satisfy for getting the one-way information, for instance, to download music, relevant picture and movie, but they are willing to participate into various online fandom activities. One of the most basic and most common reasons is that in this group, they can exchange information, learning about the information that they do not know but want to know. What say here “exchanging” intended for the fans in this group is not only getting information, also taking the initiative to provide information, which is a two-way communication. According to the “information” types, this kind of practice is divided into two parts those consist of the external information and internal information about relevant G-Dragon news.

Primarily, due to the limitation of broadcast territorial copyright, the Korean entertainment companies do not empower the Chinese TV station to broadcast G-Dragon or BIGBANG’s video or movie synchronously. The Weibo provides fans a free and open environment to share and exchange their thoughts and information.
On 9\textsuperscript{th} April 2012, one of fans club account post a tweet about a new video of G-Dragon. “@BaiduonlyGDbar: ['original subtitle "special" ALIVE DVD MV", making+ GD CUT [JP_CN] “live”], designed with DVD, including MV Making and G-Dragon Making, the only right for everyone present GD’s part of the word. Please click here. → → http://t.cn/zOCLzve, please according to the requirements of a station is reproduced, thank you for cooperation [love you]”

For the content of this tweet, we can see that there is some special language in this whole tweet. The pictures and some specific sign will easily attract the fans’ attention and to construct a semiotics building. It uses cue and clues to assemble situated meanings about what semiotic communicative systems, systems of knowledge, and ways of knowing, are here and now relevant and activated (Gee 1996, 12). Here we can notice that in this tweet, for the context part, it uses a lot of diverse signs to attract the fans attention on the important information, for example, the name of this video and download link of the video.

Under the video, there are 41 comments made by G-Dragon fans. Most of the comments state the feeling after the fans took the view of the video showing above. For example:

“@Freezing-L: GD’s back hair so cool! @kkk-JY"
As we can see, they use the function @ to tag each other in the comments. In the first example, @FreezinG-L was trying to remind their fan friend to take a view of the video and gave her own opinion in her comment. Besides the fans’ interests on the video, “the star-chaser work” is a core part of fandom activities; here the “star” refers to G-Dragon naturally. Unlike the other idol’s fans, the G-Dragon fans cannot easily collective to a domestic city or province for following their idol singer’s concert. They all know that G-Dragon, an international K-pop star, has to take a global trip concert in order to get worldwide reputation. So what the Chinese fans can do is to exchange their feelings and opinions through Weibo platform. Through the exchange of text, pictures and video information, in order to follow G-Dragon’s trend, the other work activities and became the main performance of G-Dragon’s fans in hot pursuit of their favorite idol.

In addition to notice the new songs and the star anecdotes, some other information associated with the recreational TV program, series, award’s gala, media comments as well as some derivatives are also the object of fans attention. There are numerous examples for proving those factors above, so here I will only take slight description and make one example on this.

7.1.2 Discussion Confusion

On Weibo platform, due to the limited sources, many G-Dragon’s fans have a doubt or uncertain attitude on the provided information. Through posting a help tweet, it can attract other fans to answer the questions. But the main purpose of this kind of practical activity is based on the initiator’s purpose; for instance, some problem is
willing to attract fans attention, some problem is willing to find a proper answer to explain something, some problem can lead the fans to a consensus. In terms of answers, each fan can give their own views and individual answers without any redundant considering.

“@CarrieCC0212Butterfly: GD&DONY... This part, I do not understand, GD holds the Hendon hand, and Hendon is saying ‘I am sorry for you’... Is the intermediate cut in whole content? Or what? ... Recording more than 4 in the morning must cut off many content!”

In the comments, some other G-Dragon fans gave their own views on this doubt.

“@PowerStar1815540411: cut the things should not cut, if they also produce a highlight, which will be good.”
“@keshi1718: I want the master tape.”
“@CarrieCC0212Butterfly: reply @PowerStar1815540411: The part of buying ring is the most wanting part in Song Festival, if the program can provide us a highlight video, that will be nice, but they cannot!”
“@CarrieCC0212Butterfly: reply @keshi1718: I want that too! If they can offer that! I believe we all buy it.”
“@PowerStar1815540411: reply @CarrieCC0212Butterfly: Of course! I believe it will be the best seller DVD ever, and all fans will get mad on the video.”
Through those comments, we can note that through the discussion under the question tweet, the different fans begin to think of the same issue in different perspectives, but finish it by a consensus.

### 7.1.3 Make Comments

As we know, at one's leisure time, to comment the heated TV series is an enduring topic for the audiences. No exception for the K-pop music fandom group, before the appearance of online SNS platform, the fans will launch the discussion with their friends, or talking some gossip news in the office. There are some fans even organizing an Alcoholics Anonymous-like meeting, which provides fans an initial community. As one of interviewee @Evaxxxi mentioned, she has participated into an H.O.T fans AA-like community for one year during her high school period.

“The meeting is completely anonymous, the main purpose on anonymity is to protect the enthusiasm of all the fans to speak. During the meeting, the leader will show us some concert video or MV firstly, and then we will discuss the detail of performance in the video. At the end of meeting, we used to make a comment on the idol’s news in some magazine or newspaper. Most of time, we will give a solid support for our idol; no matter it is a positive news or negative news.”

Since the Internet society, “online community” starts to replace the function of offline fandom meeting gradually and make a different type of fandom group. Like Weibo and Baidu Tieba, the fans in China have a good platform to speak their mind freely and anonymously, that is to say, they can communicate with each other through the comments, and most of comments are subjective, is their external manifestation of personal thoughts and feelings, which there are both positive and negative comments. Here I will give some typical examples collected through the participant observation.
Agreement: “@ZhuziDeer: I agree with your idea, GD is a hero!”
Disagreement: “@Eyuzhang: No! No! No! His next concert should be in Tokyo.”
Criticism other: “@JingWeiFormulation: You cannot say this to the other fans, even they are wrong, we need to support GD together.”
Compliment other: “@Jojo&Catcat: Nice job, man! Next time you should come with us to the BIGBANG’s conference.”

Besides those four examples, there are also some other kinds of comments such as criticism self and compliment self. Here I will not give a specific example on those two types of comments.

7.1.4 Conjecture and Assumption

The love of fans for G-Dragon is not only performed as a spectator’s understanding, discussion and comment, but more than a devoted assumption and forecast the purpose of G-Dragon’s activity. Hence I decide to define the conjecture and assumption of fandom group as an online practical activity. The so-called conjecture and assumption are not to invent some story or wild guess, but a careful and an immersed result. The conjecture and assumption is actually based on the content of G-Dragon’s video and music, adding their own understanding and interpretation, fully used the fans’ own knowledge and experience to fill the knowledge gap and lack of information sources, getting rid of the limitation of single received information, according to their own consensus and identity to be a “virtual pop-star agent”.
7.1.5 Creative Cultural Products

This kind of online “creative” practical activity is distinguished with the former offline activity. Before the Weibo, we can see that the information, comments, discussion and assumption can be passed through the enthusiastic fans mouth to mouth. But if there are no fans to take a depth of participation, passion or loyalty, “creative cultural products” cannot get a blossom results. According to my participant observation and interviews, I try to categorize the creative cultural products into few types as following.

7.1.5.1 Subtitle Translation (Subtitle Translation Group)

In difference with the other music fandom group, the G-Dragon’s fandom group has a major contribution to organize and operate a subtitle group. In the GD subtitle group, most of members in subtitle group are G-Dragon fans, who hold a spirit of “love it and want it more perfect and excellent” to serve for all fans voluntarily. Furthermore, there are many subgroups in the subtitle group, which are responsible for TV programs, music videos, song’ lyrics and so on. Many videos and songs are completely translated into Chinese 2 hours after shown on Korean music channels, that is to say, the subtitle group plays an important role in the fans’ online practical activities, which enables fans to enjoy audio-visual feast together in a very short time.

As we all know, subtitle translation work is developing from nothing, and it is completely produced by subtitle members creatively. Although sometimes there are some original English subtitles as a reference, but it still needs some translators depending on their understanding of Korean cultural background and the previous episode to do a deductive translation. Hence most of former Korean pop music communities have their own subtitle groups, so that because of a large number of fans followers, the GD’s subtitle group has become one of famous online subtitle groups.
7.1.5.2 Online Music Radio

During 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., there is an online music radio channel called “GD Mix Music 40” to broadcast some G-Dragon’s singles or BIGBANG’s relevant news. When you click the links of online music radio, you will listen the online music prepared by the host. According to the interviewee @Jojo&Catcat (worked for online radio group voluntarily) mentioned, the radio station from the establishment, host, program planning and broadcast is completely done by the fans themselves, mainly dominated by music and relevant news. All kinds of programs are improved and innovated by the fans. At the peak time, approximately 2500 users listen to the GD’s online radio channel synchronically.

7.1.6 Organizing Activities (Online & Offline)

The other creative function in fandom group is to organize various activities by fans’ subjective initiative, which can be regarded as another function to show how the online community presents. Also, this function shows us the inherent demand of fans’ cohesion. Fandom group activities in the online community used to divide into two parts, which are online and offline activities. Because to organizing activities is based on the online platform and those organized activities are both online and offline, so in some way it will also broke the limitation or boundary between virtual world and real society.

7.1.6.1 Online Activities

As I mentioned above, the Weibo platform offers an opening and equal environment for the development of fandom group. In order to attract more fans following their accounts, most of fan clubs organize various activities to promote their reputation. For example:
“@ChinaEntertainmentReport: #Fans surprise# our host @LiuTong recently went to Korea to prepare a lot of gift for you. Oh, here give popular Korean male band @BIGBANG-YG member G-Dragon’s @GDRAGON_OFFICIAL posters, and of which he was the cover new year calendar. Is it good? Really want? Follow @ChinaEntertainmentReport retweeting and tag three friends for this tweet, have the chance to get this ‘from South Korea's gift’.”

From this tweet, we can find that the account of China entertainment report is trying to attract some particular followers, which are G-Dragon’s fans. First of all, if you want to get the gift in this lottery draw, you have to follow its account and tag three of your friends. As we can see, there are 261 individuals retweet this tweet and tag their friends, so it should be approximately 600 fans see this tweet. In those 600 fans, some of individuals will follow its account but not retweet it. So this successful online activity will expand the impact and popularity of China entertainment report’s account on Weibo.
7.1.6.2 Offline Activities

“Looking for like-minded friends” is an important reason that leads a lot of fans to join in the online community. However, the virtual space is not able to satisfy some fans’ demand, like face-to-face meeting. Therefore the online extending to the offline, from the virtual world to the real world will be some fans wish. From this perspective, the Weibo platform provides them an opportunity to make it come true.

For example, the @YoukuGDfansclub, a G-Dragon’s fans club based on Youku.com, organizes few pre-concert meeting with BIGBANG. The club uses its official account to inform all fans to book the tickets online, so in some way, Youku.com will play as a sponsor to improve its reputation among fans, also provides a chance to make all members meet each other.

Through my participant observation on those practical activities above and my interviews, I find that the fans’ self-identity construction has a multiple ways, which can be categorized into different aspects. So in the following sections, I will try to analyze the different aspects and combine the collected material and theories respectively.

7.2 Self Evaluation and The Other’s Evaluation

The G-Dragon fans form a large fandom group through the online community, so that they can enjoy showing their interests on their idol freely, and this performance of the external representation is the fandom group’s practical activities mentioned in last chapter. During the process of participant observation and in-depth interviews, I found that all fandom activities, no matters if it is voluntary work or obligated work, are processing and done without any economic benefits. However, from this point, we cannot deny that there is nothing to produce by the fandom group through the whole
process. The products might be a pleasure, a significant or also a construction of some kinds of self-identity. In this chapter, I will discuss how a fan’s ego identity constructs through the fandom group’s practical activities. In the book of *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*, Henry Jenkins mentioned that the identity construction process need to rely on some intermediaries to achieve, i.e. the subject need to get an intermediary to complete the construction of self-identity (Jenkins 2004, iii). Hence in this chapter, I will try to discuss how the G-Dragon’s fans unify themselves between self-image and the other’s evaluation through the practical activities, so as to realize the construction of self-identity, this selection will be in accordance with the construction of concrete process sequence.

### 7.2.1 Self in “Self-image”

In Lacan’s view, the mirror stage is a moment of self-deception, is a fascination caused by illusion, and is the start of imaginative mode of thinking. Moreover, everyone has the similar illusory and ideal self-imaginaion, although it is not real, and it can only be close to the real self-realization. But as mentioned above, it is a way to push your personal motivation towards your idea; that is to say, it is an inherent psychological demand individually. In terms of G-Dragon’s fans, no matter how deep they participate into the fans practical activities, they all have an ideal and illusory part in their self cognitive components. But in their real life, they have to use a “virtual community” to meet their demands, because they cannot find “the other” in the mirror to construct their self-image. One of my interviewee mentioned, “Most of the fans who are active in the online community are not popular in the reality. Sometimes we have to find individuals in our community to prove ourselves we are not alone in the community. To be frank, I know it might be an excuse for seeking a psychological balance and satisfaction.” So we can see that the fans are pursuing a “self-image” through seeking for a mirror image of “the other”, which is the member of the fandom group.
7.2.2 Realizing the Way: The Presentation of Cultural Products

G-Dragon’s fans want to demand the achievement of their self-image through the fandom group’s practical activities. However, from the practical activities to the final psychological satisfaction has a large gap, which is hardly to bridge it. To bridge this gap, it needs “realizing the way” and “measuring standard” in order to achieve the ideal self. Therefore, during the abundant practical activities in the fandom community, it will produce some cultural products, which can be regarded as a process of “realizing the way”. According to Pierre Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory, fans are the one to do labor and produce the cultural products. They spend their time, energy and money on subtitle translation, post, comment, reply and organizing the activities. Although in some way, all is for the sake of the group, or results presented as a group, but these are all relying on the individual subjective cultural labor (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993, 54).

On the other hand, concretized and individual cultural products own the valuable character, which is internalized personal quality’s external wealth, also, the transformation of the external wealth. In other words, the concretized and individual cultural products are not like the tangible assets or honorary titles, which can be given or inherited, or transferred as a gift, a deal. To get a specific cultural capital always have the subject's individual brand, the value of these stamp gives unique cultural capital is different from “the other” (Deng 2012, 10). In this case, it is easy to note that all tweets on Weibo platform have an individualized brand, which is the users’ account name. When we retweet some tweets, we can find that at the beginning of the tweets, there is the original person’s name. Also on the subtitle group’s Weibo page, you can find the volunteers’ name to express gratitude. In the movie’s, there are also the subtitle group staff’s names besides the original Korean staff names. In the meantime, those measures enable the fans notice that the originality and individuality
is important in the fandom group. This cultural product cannot go beyond its subject and its functions, so it exists with physiological function, mental function and its characteristics. In this sense, the individual subjects own concretized cultural products, is often considered and expected as a kind of cultural ability (Deng 2012, 9). For instance, some member of fan club can find the timely relevant news from the Korean newspapers and television media; they use their Korean ability to translate the original news into Chinese on Weibo. Hence their translation ability can also show the core part of cultural products; in addition, there are some fans even can rewrite the original novel about G-Dragon or BIGBANG, which makes them become the objects of fans’ worship. So these examples mentioned can be judged as cultural abilities.

7.2.3 Measuring the Standard: Unify with “the Other’s” Evaluation

According to Cooley’s theories, he believes that self-identity is based on an individual’s imagination, which is constructed by “the other’s” comments. Then according to these images, it will produce the satisfactory or unsatisfactory mood, and taking an effect of our actions. Cooley also thinks our ideal personality is based on the interaction of development of thought and feeling, largely depending on our image in the eyes of our respect people's imagination. In this chapter, I will discuss those arguments by the interaction from fan to fan, and the interaction between fandom group and fans.

G-Dragon’s fandom group is a specific professional group, which is formed by the G-Dragon’s fans. The mentioned interaction between individual and society is actually same as the interaction between fans and fans and interaction between the group you belong to and you. In terms of fandom community, the relationship between different fans cannot reach to Cooley’s “respect” level, but at least are like-minded friends, or “comrades”. So the fans actually concern about the internal fandom group’s evaluation very much. Sometimes they even hope to unify the
self-image and “the other’s” evaluation through this process in order to realize the construction of self-identity. For example:

“@Zhizishou: This MV is very good interpretation of the rumors exist everywhere in the world today, faith and pure mind is almost the annihilation, but after defeated again and again we will learn to mask ourselves to preserve the thing or people we loved, but it is a lonely life, but dear fans, if put aside all this illusion, you can still I see inside the hot and persistence! This is G-Dragon taught us @Reneepaocaituan”

Under this tweet, there are 34 comments from the fans. Here I will show some examples of their comments and @Zhizishou’s reply.

“@Alizakeb: This is really good, thanks for your words.
@GD-Tracy: I learn all this from this MV too, but I cannot write this beautiful words like you.
@CaryHill: Very nice, I will watch this MV everyday.
@DragonARS: After read your words, I feel like a warm embrace from G-Dragon. I broke up with my boyfriend yesterday, but this MV is a cardiotonic for me.
@Zhizishou reply @GD-Tracy: I am glad someone admiring my words, but believe me you can write this too.
@Zhizishou reply @DragonARS: So sorry hearing your story, but I believe G-Dragon will love us forever. I will continue to write my feelings on MV.”
The biggest difference between the G-Dragon’s fandom group and the other groups is that the objects of fans are labeled by abroad cultural element, which is spread in Korean. So the audience’s Korean level and understanding ability is quite critical, therefore the one has the ability to use Korean will become a lot of fans to show their cultural ability in some way. After getting the praise and worship from the other fans, so it will encourage the cultural ability owned fans to cost more time and energy on produce the individualized cultural products. Like the example mentioned above, the original tweet can be regarded as made by the self-imagination, but it cannot complete the construction process of self-identity. It needs “the other’s” evaluation to finish the process, those praises andworships are “the other’s” evaluation in the online society. When @Zhizishou presents her own cultural products, and her self-image is unified with “the other’s” evaluation, her self-identity is finally constructed.

Besides the appreciation between fans and fans, the appreciation from the fandom group can also help the fans to complete their self-image and “the other’s” evaluation. All G-Dragon fans are willing to participate into group because they want the whole group can accept and recognize them, also they believe they should be one of the member in the group. So from this perspective, we can note that the recognition of the fandom group is the fans’ caring about. According to the functions of Weibo, to retweet and recommend the fans’ original tweet by the fans club’s official account becomes every fan’s reference standard. Through those retweeting and recommending actions, the fans, who produce the cultural products, accomplish the unify between self-image and “the other’s” evaluation in order to complete the construction of self-identity.

7.3 Intention and Emotion Projection

The self-identity has to achieve in the process of interaction with the others, here the
so-called “interaction” can be realized through many ways, and the interaction between each other in the G-Dragon’s fandom group on Weibo basically relies on posting tweets, retweeting and comments to show their ideas and feelings. In addition, to construct self-identity has to be in the process of reflective activities, that is to say, thinking the relationship between “self” and I, also we may notice that the online reflective activities among fandom group is carried out through producing online community’s cultural products. Through my observation and analysis, this study will show that in the two mentioned processes, fans achieve a “projection” through their practical activities, and realize the two aspects including self-reflection and reference to interact with “the other’s” identities.

7.3.1 The Projection of Intention

The projection of intention is that people make their consciousness tension project onto the external objects as a content projection. Here intention means the people’s psychological demands for a specific direction or target concepts, including the need, purpose, dream, value and so on. People project their own intention onto the external objects in order to make the external objects own “intention of characteristics”. Therefore, the projection of intention consists of projection of human needs, projection of purpose, projection of ideal, projection of value.

During the BIGBANG’s theme series filming, a lot of fans are looking forward to watch this series and G-Dragon’s performance in the series. In the Wei group, there is an original blog link named “The words to BIGBANG”. Here I will extract some texts from the blog as follows.

“I heard the series are filming, so as a representative of all G-Dragon fans, I will discussion something with you guys.”

“To G-Dragon: Please do not depress any more, you are the most handsome person
ever."

“To T.O.P: Take your best dude G-Dragon, go to a vacation in Hawaii, and then to Las Vegas to pull a few slot machines, make up for the lost years, don't give your brother trouble, your breast muscle doesn't mean you can do anything you want.”

“To Taeyang: I heard you won the mercy from the writer, which makes you reborn. But you are no longer my hero any more. I just want to see how the writer takes you back. I hope the writer will not blame your death to G-Dragon; he is so poor in last episode.”

“To Seungri: The love-struck man, God will spoil you with pity. Hope that the Seoul prison food is good, hope you haven't worn that yellow vest. I do not understand that how to get your vest. Why not broken?? Maybe I should tell the one who charge on stage property to change a broken vest for you, even this vest is given for a gift by G-Dragon. I know you love him!”

This is the fan @Keke1388’s original written texts for the key roles in BIGBANG’s TV theme series, in some ways, we can judge those texts as her expects for the storyline of new episode. But if we regard this thing in the “projection” perspective, we can see that @Keke1388 uses her intention to this post about the new episode’s hope and prediction, in the form of texts to express. For example, the words she writes for T.O.P show her attitude to life, demand and ideal, because from the post, we can see that she is not agree with T.O.P’s attitude, because in the former episode, T.O.P makes a lot of troubles for G-Dragon and suffers in a family bereavement situation. As a G-Dragon’s fan, @Keke1388 has to put herself in G-Dragon’s place to concern about his situation. In her view, the best solution in the new episode is to make T.O.P travel with G-Dragon, enjoying their lives rather than making troubles for mates. Moreover, the words for Taeyang show that she believe G-Dragon is innocent in last episode and because of Taeyang’s death, G-Dragon has to be blamed by a lot of fans. Here we can see that she believe the justice will win the evil and if you are good man, the god will give you a nice end. For the words to Seungri, it also shows her attitude to the friendship. In a word, the interpretation of the TV text makes him
the face of some value in her mind, and through the projection onto the post, it makes her aware of self, but also through the interpretation of TV text, it makes her rethink and consolidate her own values.

7.3.2 The Projection of Emotion

During the online practical activities, the G-Dragon’s fans have the empathy periodically. Nancy Eisenberg defines empathy as a kind of emotional reaction and the feelings of others in the same or similar, this emotional response is from the emotional state of others or situational awareness (Eisenberg 1987, 29). Chinese psychologist Zheng Peixiu thinks that the empathy is an alternative emotional response capabilities, not only sharing the other’s emotion, empathy for others in situation, but also an objective understanding, analysis of the other emotion, is a real or imagined in the emotional state of others caused and consistent emotional experience (Zheng 2011, 3). In my view, we have put our experienced things, our strength, our efforts, and our will, active or passive feelings out of our main body, into the external objects. So I think the empathy is not only for the performance of emotional perfusion from the subject to the object, more important is to a certain extent it makes the subject realize the knowledge and understanding of the object, which the purpose of the empathy is the subject knows object.

However, the ultimate goal of “the projection of emotion” is not the subject knowing the object, so the empathy is not completely same as the projection of emotion, it is only a part of the projection of emotion. In addition, it can only be transferred in this process the emotion transfers in the flow. Although “the projection of emotion” is transferring someone’s emotion, but it works not as the purpose of the subject knowing the object. Here we can judge it the empathy as an intermediate stage, and the projection of emotion is a process to make the subject knowing the object, and then the subject evaluates the object, making the subject’s projection of emotion onto
the subject’s evaluation on the object, so it is willing to make the subject know him or herself through the evaluation on the object in order to show the real image of the subject. So those are the whole process to make the subject realize the construction of self-identity. If we connected those steps with the G-Dragon’s fans online practical activities, we may find that the fans understand and feel the connotative meaning of the main characters’ words or emotion through empathy, then through some original written texts, they will express feelings and evaluation of the content and connotation, and the experience and evaluation is the object of the G-Dragon fans’ projection of emotion. Those texts make the person who post the texts understands him or herself, also let the other fans recognize him, and also the fans who follow or comment the texts will show their recognitions, thus, the post person will complete the construction of self-identity through identified by self and recognized by the others.

For example, a very famous G-Dragon’s fan on Weibo called @BeckstrGD posts a paragraph of his own feeling in the Wei group.

“Every one is licking own wound alone.

GD is lonely, the lonely from persistent. A doctor, means no abandon. The leader, means not give up. Life made persistent, persistent evaluated commitment, and commitment covers the fire of love. Everyone can see his love, but no one can afford his heavy love.

T.O.P is lonely too, the loneliness from the fickle. Stealing means evil. Fickle contains a free and easy. Unfortunate life will create two endings, go to the extreme, and learn to compromise. He lies, walking into the world, but it is because he tries to escape the fate of the whirlpool. He never promised, just because he could not. He gives Kim (an actress in the TV series) a passion and free and easy love, let a person not able to fathom.

Seungri is lonely, the loneliness destroyed self-trusts. As G-Dragon said, Seungri only believes in himself. Beloved woman is just his tool. Even though he adopted a daughter, it cannot cover his sin. The island he has worked, will eventually abandon
him. I wonder whether he has not asked himself, why always me? Actually he cannot blame all to the others, all are derived from his desire, playing with others, calculating with others, with no love, only to end up miserable solitude. All things are just about his nature.

I am lonely, the loneliness destroyed my confidence, and I lost a good opportunity for a good university’s enrollment when I was in high school. As I said, when I lost, no one care about you made how many efforts, the people only focus on the winners. Parents? No. Families? No. Friends? No. I really cannot understand what is love, and what the love is using for. Two years ago, I fell in love with a girl, but she has never responded my love. Such a loser, am I?”

Even though I am not a G-Dragon’s fan, but I still believe @BeckstrGD tries use a good comments to show his own feeling and understanding on the TV series. We used to say that there are a thousand Hamlets in a thousand people's eyes, so do the fans. Obviously, there are different comments or understanding on the BIGBANG’s TV series, through the projection of emotion, that mentioned author realize himself, also let the other fans experience “himself”. Based on those posts above, we can see a variety of emotions in the texts, such as the approval and praise for G-Dragon, the critique and blame for T.O.P, the query and contempt for Seungri. But whether it is the praises or complains, these feelings are just on surface of the projection of emotion, the real projection is @BeckstrGD’s “lonely” and “love” feelings on the journey of his own life. In @BeckstrGD’s world, he seems to feel deeply lonely, so as to whether a positive or negative role, whether it is good or evil, or self-reliance and helpless, the author realize from the so-called “lonely” life experience. Here I will explain that my research goal is not to discuss whether he feels lonely or not, but to discuss whether he takes his negative “lonely” feeling projecting on the objects. After @BeckstrGD posts the texts in group, there are a hundred of following comments from various fans. For example:

“@Zangdimima: I have to say that this is such a good job for your comments, even
though some of comments I cannot agree with, but I still believe your words are coming from your heart.

@KingDong: Normally I will not make any comments in the group rather than watching the other’s conversation. But I have to say, you are a real fan of G-Dragon indeed.

@Comingintomylove: This is why I follow BIGBANG and G-Dragon many years, they are not only my idol, also teach us some stories of grownup. I can see sincere words in your texts, thank you Beck.”

Those examples above can prove that those comments from the fans promote the subject’s (@BeckstrGD) projection of emotion in order to construct her self-identity through the group’s interaction.

7.4 Anti-group Personality Consumption

Actually, we can divide up the concept of consumption into two parts: first of all, “I” am the thing and the way I consume; secondly, what do we consume and how do we consume depends on our own thought of “who are we”. So as we can see, the way we consume is actually that we create, change and maintain ourselves. In other words, what I consume and how I consume show that my understanding and evaluation of my own taste, habits and status. The content and patterns of consumption is tightly connected with the identity, in some way, the individual identity is the work created by the consumer self. So here we can note that the fandom’s online practical activities are various consumptions, no matter the content of consumption, like downloading the video or music from the online communities, or the pattern of consumption, like post some tweets to declare their ideas, those are all the process of self understanding and evaluation.

All the members of the online fandom communities also have the individual
consumption, because they are doing diverse kinds of personal activities in the online communities. Also, they have their own unique cultural consumption, and differentiate with the other members to complete a personal, different, and unique consumption in order to show their quality of life and self-realization. Here I have to mention that the fans doing the individual consumption will not take effect on his or her self-identity and the other’s evaluation for him or her. Because the individual consumption is used for differentiating the individual and the other members, not set a barrier with the others. Since the individual consumption here is more like a path to make the fan easily enter the group and attract the other fans. Through my participant observation, I find that some fans are doing the individual consumption in the way of anti-group.

Because of interests on G-Dragon, the attitude of fans treating their idol is always positive. Most of the posts in Wei group are about praising and encouraging G-Dragon’s performance or jobs, which belong to the internal way of G-Dragon’s group for the consumption. But there are still a part of G-Dragon’s fans to do some anti-group individual consumption through their own practical interactions. Some of them even cost a lot of time and energy to “carp” the details of the other’s work in order to show the differences between themselves and the group.

For example, in the Wei group, a fan called @ChenxiaoqiloveGD posts some texts for “carp” in the BIGBANG’s TV series.

“When GD find the book on the beach, he remembers last year he lost his book under the bench in the park, but last time the book front page’s color was white, but this time the book’s color turns into the floral.”

“When T.O.P cooks food in the room, and after he talks with GD, we can find that the bottles in the kitchen’s shelf are different. But T.O.P does not move, right?”

“When GD is locked in the abbey, we find that two polices are coming to save him, the one wearing a uniform and the other one wearing a vest, but after enter the house,
“we can see they change their uniform and vest. LoL”

“When Seungri talks with GD in the poison, when can see that their are some Korean texts on the back wall, but when the scene changes to close shot, the Korean texts disappear.”

Those texts above are just part of the texts, she mentions around 40 “goof mistakes” in her post. And for every mistake she uses a picture to show she is correct. After having a view of this post, I find that it is really a large work for a person to find such a lot of little “goof mistakes”, it can prove that @ChenxiaoqiloveGD has cost a lot of time on this work. Those “goof mistakes” above can be judged as a way of individual consumption for her. First of all, after a brief private message interview, I notice that she watches this series for more than 20 times, the other fans are all focusing on the storylines, but she focuses on the “goof mistakes”. The reason why she wants to expose those mistakes is not she does not like BIGBANG, but she wants to encourage the fans watch their series carefully and understand every storyline and every shot they perform. Secondly, when the most of fans praise the new TV series, this kind of anti-group consumption will distinguish the one post those words and the other fans, and this is the core part of constructing self-identity. First of all, @ChenxiaoqiloveGD is a rational G-Dragon fan, in the former researches, some of scholars point out that the fans are all following the beloved object blindly without any distinguish ability. However, we can see from the example above that some fans use the criticism perspective on their idol and we cannot deny that this anti-group individual consumption is also a part of the construction of self-identity. On the other hand, she gives up the normal analysis way of general fans, he choose the way spending a lot of time and energy, and reflected his extraordinary media literacy and ability, so she uses this individual consumption to affirm her ability and value in order to realize the construction of self-identity in the fandom group.
7.5 Cosplay

In China, there is an old cliché called “Life is like a drama and vice versa.” If we assimilate life to the stage, then everybody is an actor, but no matter what role you acting, or how good skills you have or not, there is a core problem: can we present “self” on the stage? And what kind of “self” we are performing? Is the current “self” the essence of life? If we correspond to the construction of self-identity for G-Dragon fans, the “stage” should be the online communities, and the fans are the actors and actresses. But in what kind of relationship are this “stage” and the reality? Also for the G-Dragon’s fans, how do they realize the construction of self-identity through the “cosplay”? In this chapter, I will mainly discuss those questions above.

7.5.1 To Present Self in “Backstage” and “Stage”

According to Goffman’s theory, the stage of G-Dragon fans is the daily life, which enables them contact the reality society, such as their workplaces, school or families. Moreover, the backstage is the online communities, which provides them to know the people with same interests.

In terms of the stage, Goffman points out that it is easy to choose but difficult to create or change the individual’s stage. For instance, the G-Dragon’s fans have a certain reality to live, although their age mostly belong to the students or young white-collar workers, there is plenty of time for them, however, the stage is based on the reality, which has a more normative and standard system to make them obey. So the stage can only be selected to enter it or not, but not be recreated or changed. Oppositely, as we all known, the backstage is forbidden for the audiences, so without any “straitjacket” the fans can easily and freely communicate and interact with each other. All G-Dragon’s fans take off the chain of real world through the online communities and obtain infinite creativity in a new virtual environment. Those
creativities come from their authentic self-ideal, which is what Goffman called the “human nature” self in his book, but on the stage, all people perform the “social” self.

In psychological fields, a large number of researches show that everyone has multiple personality, is a complex of multiple personality. In the real world, due to limitations and constraints of social norms, the individuals can only perform in the “stage-style” standard performance, most of their real personality or self-repression being under controlled, so as not to release. When the G-Dragon fans in the “stage” cannot find the space to release the real self or not satisfied for the performance, they will try to turn to the “backstage” for self-presentation and extension. The virtual community constructed by the G-Dragon’s fans provides them a place to make the concept specific and to express their different perceptions of space, so that every fan can change their personality easily from the “stage” to the “backstage” for showing the self-presentation. At the same time, the fans make up the stage’s defects, further extending the ideal self demands.

During the interview, I also find that all five interviewees mention that in their daily life, their friends or families are not interests on G-Dragon or even K-pop music. Hence, the fandom group of G-Dragon is a specific and relatively closed environment; most of interviewees have to seek a way to finish the process of self-identity construction. As @MelonTayLoveGD answers in her interview, “In my family, I am the only one loving G-Dragon, and my cousins also just heard about him, never mentioned if they have listened to his songs. There may be only one or two friends around me are G-Dragon’s fans, but we cannot meet everyday talking about him, so only on the Weibo, we can share our news and interact with each other, let each other know the latest news from the G-Dragon.” From those words above, it is easy to note that @MelonTayLoveGD cannot meet some her demands on the “stage”, so she has to turn into the online community to realize her expectations. The backstage enables them to ensure their self-identity and complete the process of construction. Therefore, only when the fans realize their identity can be achieved through the “cosplay” from
the online community, which they expect but not get from the “stage”, then their identities can be smoothly constructed.

7.5.2 The Fans’ “Career” Cosplay

In my interview, I notice that most of the G-Dragon’s fans are high school or university students, but there are still some fans have a stable job such as manager, sales representative and even financial analyst. However, those jobs may be decent in the other’s view, it cannot still meet demand of self-ideal pursuit, in one of interviews among the fans, there is a fan @TibboTSui worked for an advertisement company in Beijing. Even though he works for an art relative company, his occupation is not very satisfactory for him. “I hope I can get a ‘ideal job’ beyond the real job to make a living demand. So I decide to become a photographer in the fan club. This is really amazing, even I do not get any salary, but I am willing to do it and I can get satisfaction and value through the club’s work.” In addition, I notice that there are two types of “career” cosplays in the fandom group: first one is the real job is independent from the backstage “career” cosplay’s job. Secondly, the real job will be relative to the backstage ideal job. Hence I will try to focus on those two types of “career” cosplay in my follow analysis.

7.5.2.1 The Stage and The Backstage Relatively Independent “Career” Cosplay

As I mentioned above, there are some fans creating an online music radio station “GD Mix Music 40” based on Weibo platform. The G-Dragon fan creates this online radio station spontaneously. Through my interviewee and the administrator @Jojo&Catecat introducing, all the staffs in the radio station are not from the media relative industry, that is to say, their “stage” and “backstage” are totally distinguished.
“I was a civil servant, because the selection of career development, I chose public management subject to be my major in the university, someone says it is with high employment rate, of course, my current the job also can be relevant to my subject, someway. But people will become tired and bored if they do a thing longer, so I always feel that the political system of things than their own good. We can see many bright occupations in daily life, such as star, hostess, these are through a variety of media transmitted to us, so I has been holding a mysterious and envy to this career. Now has the opportunity to realize this ideal here, very interesting, so I would like to spend a lot of time to do it, also I have a chance to a radio DJ on the Weibo for other G-Dragon’s fans to broadcast. Something I want to say, I love to let the other fans listen to some music in the BIGBANG TV series, which I like. I feel very well indeed.”

Those texts above are the interviewee @Jojo&Catcat’s answers after I asked her “Why did you choose the online radio DJ’s work?” From her answers, we can see that she seems to be very dissatisfied about her “stage” job, but from a personal appeal, she is looking forward to the supplement and extension of “backstage” career. Because in her opinion, the job in the reality is a way to make her survive in the established social norms as the living tools, but the “backstage” job can be used to extend and good spatial self ideal pursuit of satisfaction. When the other fans audiences listen to the radio station, she will get a sense of achievement and then construct her self-identity through the other’s approval.

7.5.2.2 The Backstage Relative to the Stage “Career” Cosplay

In general, the online community as the “backstage” is independent with the reality as the “stage”. Most of the fans in the online community are pursuit of the self-presentation and extension, that is the thing they cannot do or dare not to do in the “stage”. The job in the reality as a living tool will strictly follow in the social
system standards and norms in the real world most people can only have one job, so the backstage will become the place for the fans who pursue self ideal job. However, in the interview, I also find the example, which is that the “backstage” job’s self-identity affects life in the reality.

“I have worked in the subtitle translation group, also made the video processing work, then I do feel those works are very interesting, because those works are very far away from my reality, as never touched. I used to study mechanical industry professional, after graduation, my job is also related to this, such as engineering design class, never come with the media relative industry. Then after a while in Weibo, I find myself quite interested in these jobs, and feel more and more handy, and accumulating enough experience, and other members also felt I did a good job, and I began to feel that the former job is bored, and not interested in any more. So I switched my job to Sina.com, now my occupation is an online editor about K-pop music news, now I think my current job makes me feel very happy.”

Those are the words from the @Dubercola, she is used to work for the subtitle group. To do some media relative work is the most of works for the G-Dragon’s fandom online community. In her view, those works determine the accumulating experiences she gets. Perhaps from the beginning of the work, the subtitle group’s work is just to meet her demands of “backstage” in order to realize her self-presentation and extension. However, with the approval from the other fans, she gradually completes the construction of self-identity from the “backstage”. And then she becomes unsatisfied on her “backstage” identity, so she decides to extend her identity to the reality. That is the unity of her “backstage” and “stage”, the unity of “self” and “ideal self”, from the sentence of “Now I think my current job makes me feel very happy” we can see her self-identity is constructed through switching job.
8. The Construction of Fandom Cultural identity under the perspective of Cross-cultural Communication

In my study, the research object is the Korean pop music fandom group. However, the difference between K-pop music fandom group and the other fandom groups such as Chinese music or sports is that K-pop music fans have to face both two cultures, which are the culture of their pursuit object and the Chinese culture. The process of to accept this cultural product is a cross-cultural communication, and this kind of cross cultural communication is realized by the new media technology platform. In the academic field, the cross-cultural communication refers to the information transmission or cultural communication between various people, organizations or countries. In terms of my study, the export of K-pop music is the way of cross-cultural communication, and the cross-country transmission of K-pop music is actually the process of different cultures’ mutual tolerance and mutual exclusion. Hence in this chapter, I will mainly discuss that how the cultural similarity affects the construction process of self-identity, how the fandom group struggles in the cultural conflict in order to construct their self-identity and how we consider the abroad fandom group constructing their self-identity from the cultural hybridity perspective.

8.1 Cultural Similarity

8.1.1 Language Behavior

According to Stuart Hall, in general, the cultural identity is a sign of defining the self, differentiating the other by the individuals or groups, and condensing into a common cultural connotation in the common sense. Hence, in some way, cultural identity is often required to base on the common culture. In terms of Korean culture, it is very
similar with Chinese culture due to the geographical and historical reasons. So to a certain extent, it will make Chinese fans have a sense of intimacy on Korean culture.

First in the language, because the pursuit object of K-pop music fans is the Korean music or singer, Korean language has become a very important skill during their practical activities. With the difference from the other fandom groups, such as American TV series fandom group or western music fandom group, English is a compulsory course in Chinese middle school's education, so those American TV series fans will have a cordial feeling on the English-spoken cultural products. While Korean is regarded as a lesser-known language in China, non-professional individual cannot really understand Korean. On the contrary, many K-pop fans learn to understand and even speak Korean through a large number of original Korean music videos or concert videos. According to my interviews, @TibboTsui have pointed out that:

“Before we do not have any subtitle group, so all fans have to watch the original concert video without any subtitle’s help. We can only focus on what they are singing and dancing, but we do not understand some speeches during the concerts. Since we have a subtitle group, the staffs will make the subtitle voluntarily and quickly. Sometimes, the subtitle can help us understand the interaction between BIGBANG and the fans.”

“I am really willing to learn Korean, and my parents support me to do this. But they are thinking about that Korean-spoken is good for my career development; I am caring about it will be easy for me to get some first hand news.”

From the words above, we can see that the fans want to learn Korean with a strong motivation. But the motivation depends on the demand of star chasing rather than promoting the personal ability. Although Korean language is not popular among K-pop music fans in China, but the spread of K-pop music still has its own unique
advantages. In addition, before 15th century, Korean was using the traditional Chinese characters to be official language. In 1446, the king Joseon Sejong created the Korean characters and change their written language. But until now, there are also a lot of words in Korean have same pronunciation as Chinese (Yim 2007, 2). So the similarity of those two languages seems to bridge those two countries together and make the Chinese fans easily accept the Korean cultural products.

### 8.1.2 Musical Fields

In general, South Korea has many similar culture or customs with China, or in other word, the Chinese traditional culture has influenced Korean culture in the history. The homology of culture let the fans understand some elements in K-pop music easily. Many elements in Korean music for Chinese music fans are quite familiar, for example, in both Chinese and Korean traditional folk rhyme, there are same five music notes, which are Do, Re, Mi, Sol and La. And the usage of ancient Chinese instruments such as Cheng, Chinese lute are also widely used in K-pop music currently. John Tomlinson has pointed out in his book *Globalization and Culture*, cultural form (cultural products) in the local range spreads better than in the global range, because of the similarity of language and culture, it can make more clear and easy for our understanding and appreciation (Tomlinson 1999, 13). Hence, because of the similarity of musical performance or instrument’s application, the Chinese fans will be more clear and easy to appreciate the K-pop music. Through the interview, @MelonTayLoveGD mentioned her feeling about K-pop music:

“Very familiar! This is the only adjective I want to describe K-pop music. When I heard the G-Dragon’s music, you will feel it is mixed with the trendy electronic music and traditional music together. For example, a traditional singing way in Korean language is called ‘Trot’, which is similar as the Chinese folk song singing way. So I will not feel any strange on those songs.”
Furthermore, @Jojo&Catcat pointed out that: “K-pop music’s lyrics is written in similar way as Chinese music, most of theme are about love and memory, which are familiar to East Asian fans. Also, the rhyme and rhythm are in line with the standard of Chinese songs, so many Chinese fans will not feel difficult to understand. Moreover, some BIGBANG’s songs are translated into Chinese version, due to the similarity of Korean and Chinese, the translated lyrics keep the original meaning so it will make fans notice the implications of the lyrics.”

The above answers show that for both singing way and lyrics, the K-pop music does not make the Chinese fans unfamiliar. Like @Jojo&Catcat said, translated easily makes the fans be close to the core content of a song. Colin Hoskins declares a phenomenon called cultural discount, which means during the global spreads of cultural products, because of the diversity of culture, it will make the value of culture product has a discount. Audiovisual products have a lower cultural discount than the written text products. So the K-pop music and its music videos as the audiovisual products will face less cultural discount than the other products. Hence in some way, those examples above can demonstrate that the success of K-pop is not occasional, but reasonably.

8.1.3 Multicultural Society

The essence of cultural values is the pursuit of freedom, human beings have been looking for a deep understanding of freedom and pursuing the ultimate freedom, thus during the process it forms numerous kinds of cultural values, and after these values blend and collision, it produces a continuous power to promote the development of human culture (Zhang 2012, 28). In terms of a free society, a decisive factor is the social inclusion for cultural diversity. Hence, behind the K-pop music, the situation of South Korean society can also attract Chinese fans’ attention. In the G-Dragon’s Wei
group, there are some discussions about the multicultural society.

“If we compared South Korea and our country (China), which one is more free for the acceptance of foreign culture?”

“Definitely South Korea, look at their media environment, so free to broadcast everything they want. But how about ours?”

“I don’t agree with the above comment, there is no barrier for our country to import the foreign culture. Like our government does not limit us to listen K-pop music or watch the American TV series. So I think most of Chinese are willing to accept the multicultural environment and even believe it is good for developing our own culture.”

“Well, it is hard to answer. In South Korea, they have a censorship too, but it is about the political issue. For the music or film, I think South Korea and China are in the same level.”

“I agree with those ideas, I think we can easily accept the foreign culture coming, we eat sushi, we watch Hollywood movie, we listen to G-Dragon’s music. It is all about the multicultural society, right?”

Those comments above demonstrate that in this discussion, most of fans agree with the multicultural society provides the fans to appreciate the foreign culture. In the meantime, they all believe that we cannot confuse that the freedom of multicultural society depends on the level of government censorship. But to judge a multicultural society should depend on whether the people accept the foreign culture or not. In most of comments, they all agree with that China and South Korea has the same level of acceptance of foreign culture. From the above discussion we can see that Chinese K-pop present an approval for the free and open cultural values through the comparison. Also they satisfy the similarity between the Chinese and South Korean cultural value, so this comparison of diverse cultures presents that the fandom group’s cultural identity construction.
In the concept of cultural identity, the common cultural identity perception is the basis of cultural identity. Because of the historical perspective, Korean culture was influenced by Chinese culture to a large extent, so this cultural homology makes Chinese K-pop fans have a sense of intimacy during the process of self-identity construction. Compared with the western culture, Chinese music fans can easily understand and accept the K-pop’s audiovisual content. Also if we compared the audiences from the other countries, Chinese music fans reflecting the cultural closeness are far higher than that of the other countries. So combining of those two aspects, Chinese music fans compartmentalize themselves to the group that is closed to Korean pop music. Here, the music fans highlight their self-identity into “K-pop fandom group”, so the similarity culture also plays a very important role to promote constructing fandom group’s self-identity.

8.2 Cultural Conflict

In any country, the exported cultural products will be deeply branded her cultural values, and meanwhile shoulder the historical responsibility for spreading its national culture. From China in Middle Ages to U.S. in the present age, it seems every powerful nation cannot ignore the cultural exports besides the economic trade. As we know, culture can not only preserve a nation’s culture and history, but also have a function in order to spread the culture and fuse the surrounding countries to form a cultural circle. If this function once becomes stronger, it will be easy to form the cultural hegemony. As Hart and Negri mentioned in their book Empire, the ruling class in the Empire will pursue the values and beliefs that be advantageous to their ruling to the various classes of society (Hart and Negri 2000, 21). Korean pop music as a mess cultural product can easily spread to the whole world, especially the country with cultural similarity such as China and Japan. Even though the cultural similarity helps the K-pop music getting a success in Chinese marketing, but it still makes the fans realize that the K-pop music is the music branded by Korean culture. In my
participant observation, I find that when the fans are facing the “China Image” issue, they will firmly become a strong group to defend their own culture. So in some way, we can see that the cultural conflict still exists and the fans still believe they are belonging to one group, which is “Chinese nation”. In this section, I will analyze that how the fandom group struggles in the cultural conflict in order to construct their cultural identity from few aspects as following.

8.2.1 The Concept of Family: Children’s Education

Family is everyone has or would like to own, the happiness of family is regarded as the goal of life both in China and Korea. However, some questions like what is the happiness of family, and how the family members live together present different cultural values in different forms. Actually, like the fans concerning about their idol, those issues above also attract the fans attention during the appreciating BIGBANG related musical drama.

There is a discussion in the G-Dragon’s Wei group about the Korean family hierarchy:

1st: “Is a South Korean family really in the hierarchy?”

2nd: “I heard about in South Korea, after your grandparents touching the chopsticks, you can start your dishes, otherwise you will be blamed on your parents’ home training. So the Korean parents will teach their child table manners when they start to use chopsticks.”

3rd: “They are doing the right thing, nowadays a lot of Chinese parents ignore those education, and their children become rude and uneducated.”

4th: “Oh, in my family, my grandpa used to let me eat first, because he loves me. And my parents will not blame anything.”

5th: “True! My parents teach me when I was a child, but I think your grandparents will not care about those manners. I do not agree with the 2nd floor’s idea, we are not
rude. First of all we are Chinese, not Korean, we should have our own customs, secondly we are children, not educated adults. So I think it is ok.”

6th: “I agree with the 4th floor’s idea, we should not blame our own customs, in our culture, the elder generation in family will care about the children’s feeling. If they want to eat, then do it.”

At the beginning, the discussion topic is about the family’s hierarchy, but since in the first comment the fan mentions about the table manner in South Korea as a good example on the family’s hierarchy. In general, the elder in one family will decide the starting of meals by raising the chopsticks in East Asian culture. With the loss of traditional culture, some China families change to the free and open table manner, which is the old man will give children a right to decide the start time of meals. From the comments above, we can see that except the second comment, the other comments are all preserving the good reputation of children’s education way in China. They argue that the Chinese way for the table manner is broadminded for children, not like the second comments’ critique “rude” and “uneducated” showing. So this kind of “children’s table manners education” interpretation coincides with the external characterization of K-pop fans in the process of appreciating cultural products with the imagination and searching for their nation's ideas, values, and trying to express a sense of national pride and a strong ethnic feelings through this process.

8.2.2 The “Chinese Elements” in Musical Drama

Although some K-pop fans held negative views on some of the existing social problems in China, but as part of the “Chinese nation”, they are seeking for the highlights and positive image of Chinese culture in every foreign cultural products.

“Recently two BIGBANG musical dramas have mentioned about Chinese elements, personally I feel very excited ... ... In the Seoul’s drama, Chinese restaurant owner
says Xin Nian Kuai Le (Happy Chinese new year) make me think very kindly, also G-Dragon standing by him talks about this year is the year of Chinese the mice year! In another series, it also said repeatedly on the Olympic topic, also mentioned Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee a lot, although I often criticize the government, but I am happy with our motherland being respected.”

1st: “So proud of it!”

2nd: “Chinese element is more and more trendy, but they also want to keep up with the trend.”

3rd: “That good, this means the Chinese culture gives the foreigner a good impression. In fact, I see Chinese New Year’s conversation, my heart is warm when I heard it.”

4th: “As is a very proud things Chinese. Don’t forget, the world now, Chinese.”

For those comments, we can find that the fandom group forms a consensus on the fandom group, which is when they find the Chinese elements in the Korean musical drama, it is happy to make themselves feel proud of being a Chinese. “Nationalism” emotion and consciousness make Chinese fandom group create a sense of national pride in the cross-cultural communication, and by such a sense of pride to makes a positive construction of the group cultural identity. However, during my observation, it is interesting to note that, after the 7th comment, the discussion topic seems to be changed into the negative emotion.

7th: “Hey, everyone. Did you find that in the BIGBANG New Year special drama, T.O.P’s American buddy Rutherford wearing a T-shirt printed ‘Free-Tibet’?”

8th: “Really? I will check it.”

9th: “That’s true, also in the Running Man (A Korean entertainment TV series), Seungri read the news paper, that news paper front page is talking about the Chinese human right issue, I make a screen print and try to translate it. It’s about the ‘Falun Gong’ protesting in Seoul.”

10th: “I really hate this feeling, when we try to understand the world, some country still prejudices on us, only because we are Chinese.”
11th: “Take it easy, our economics is better than those countries, we should not concentrate on those details. Just enjoy the dramas.”

12th: “In fact, the more plots like this attacking China, the more we can notice our country is becoming powerful. South Korea, as a U.S.’s ‘messenger’, they are still immersed in the past glory and discuss why the great America will begin to fall. These negative elements are not a kind of self-reflection, but a struggle for the future’s uncertainty. In addition to the BIGBANG, I am not actually interested on the Korean cultural values in the drama very much.”

Those comments show us in the view of Chinese K-pop fans, this is not only the one or two sets of K-pop musical drama, not only an entertainment media products, but South Korea as a cultural group taking an exclusive slander to the other cultural group as an insult to the “Chinese nation”. In the face of such cultural oppression and aggression, China fandom group members’ “national consciousness” is awakened, and actively maintains in-group image and dignity. Even though there are few positive Chinese elements in the drama, but when they face the negative evaluation on the motherland, they will form a strong “national consciousness” independently.

Through the rethinking of the Chinese elements in Korean cultural products, they strengthen the pride of “Chinese nation”, meanwhile they critique and satire of the other country’s weakness and powerless in essence. Through comparison of positive and negative Chinese elements, the in-group cultural identity is successfully constructed. A “national consciousness” was awakened when the other group becomes aggressive on the group’s consciousness, intrinsic motivation is transformed into a construction of the group’s cultural identity positively, and this power may only appear when affected by external shocks.
8.3 Cultural Hybridity and Diaspora

In the previous research, a large number of scholars have discussed the process of identity construction from the cultural hybridity and diaspora perspectives. As I mentioned in previous research chapter, the scholar Raka Shome takes an ethnographic observation in Indian call center about the outsourced customer services. In this research, Shome tries to connect the cultural hybridity and diaspora with the computer-mediated research. In that research, she argues about the accent training, role-playing and new regimes of hybridity. As she pointed out, “Race has always been central in studies of diaspora and hybridity” (Shome 2006, 108). In my view, I believe Shome’s research provides the following scholars a new perspective to do a study on the dual-identity individuals’ cultural hybridity and diaspora.

In the view of Birmingham school, the cultural hybridity and diaspora of fandom group show us the resistance of mainstream culture, and this resistance is a way for a subcultural group to construct cultural identity. If we connect this viewpoint to the G-Dragon’s fandom group, we may find that the fans are trying to avoid labeling themselves to be a mainstream culture’s follower. As @MelonTayLoveGD mentioned in the interview, “In my family, I am the only one loving G-Dragon, and my cousins also just heard about him, never mentioned if they have listened to his songs. There may be only one or two friends around me are G-Dragon’s fans...Actually, I do not think for our fans we need a lot of people recognize us, those activities are our self entertainments, only for satisfying ourselves, not for the other’s...He is a pioneer of Korean pop music, only the one who understands the essence of Korean pop music will be worth to follow him.” For those words, we can see that the fans of G-Dragon are not requiring the individuals from the outside of the fandom group to accept them. Like the other fans of subculture, such as heavy metal music, horror films or Japanese anima, today the fans of subculture are not aiming on the resistance of mainstream culture, but evolved into a resistance of a mainstream type of cultural consumption. In their view, they do not expect the society understanding and accepting their pursuits.
of subculture, because the culture has been already labeled by sub and minority of culture.

In the meantime, the resistance of mainstream culture also makes the K-pop music fans live in the “cross culture” survival situation, they have to live in a multiple cultural reality to create their cultural identity through the contradiction and conflicts. In the current China, the people are facing a social interaction between modernization and globalization: on one hand, compared with the past time, the development of modernization has made a considerable progress. So with rapid development of society, we have to handle with an issue that is “it is Chinese, but different from the past” cultural identity. On the other hand, we are all in the era of globalization, which enhances the spreading speed of our unknown culture. In addition, the content of cultural products is not only focusing on our indigenous culture, also we can perceive and confirm the similarity and conflict between diverse cultures. Hence, in some way, the globalization enables cultural hybridity not to be abolished, but more prominent. In terms of K-pop fans, we can notice that under the influence of Korean wave, they are trying to construct a new cultural identity “a fan of Korean pop music” beyond their previous identity “Chinese”. Such as the Birmingham school’s famous British scholar Jorge Larrain said, “regardless of aggression, colonial or other derived forms of communication, as long as conflict and asymmetry exist in the collision of different cultures, there should be an issue of cultural identity.” (Larrain 1994, 125) According to my previous two sections, the Korean pop music fans are constructing the identity of “Korean pop music fans” with the help of the similarity of Chinese and Korean culture, but meanwhile they are struggling with the conflicts of culture by strengthening the identity of “Chinese”. If we combine the fandom culture to Shome’s research, they learn the Korean language for star chasing. They switch their “two stages” for seeking and constructing the ideal self. The phenomenon is presenting that the fans are suffering under a cultural diaspora, which is that the Korean culture is occupying the identity of “Chinese”; meanwhile they are accepting the cultural hybridity, which means that the K-pop fans are trying to seek an explanation of their
However, if we change our discussion to another perspective, we can see that the K-pop is also a cultural product made by the cultural hybridity. Under the globalization, the Korean culture is influenced by the “stronger” culture, like mainstream Western culture. Through the cultural hybridizing, more and more different Western labeled music elements add into the performance of Korean pop music. In the meantime, the integration and blending promote the Korean pop music to create a separate new style. As we can see, when the domestic culture and international culture has to be blended, there will be a cultural hybridization phenomenon, in which during producing cultural products after cultural hybridity, South Korea constructs their own cultural a space so that their culture is not disappeared but becoming the mainstream culture to influence the hegemonic culture. Thus, the hegemonic nation’s culture and the culture of other countries seem not to be unequal. During the collision and reproduction, it can produce some unique hybrid culture, so that the local culture to maintain the subjectivity in the context of globalization.

During the appreciation of K-pop music, fans will construct their dual cultural identity. As we can see, South Korean popular culture enables the Western and East Asian traditional values flexible mixed together, in order to creating a culture of their own, regardless of economic and culture, Korean culture and its derivative Korean wave are the exemplary role models, which are worth for the following scholars to research on them.
9. Discussion

Through the online participant observation, in-depth interviews, analysis, interpretation and induction, the process of identity construction among Chinese Korean pop music fans on Weibo platform has been clearly presented. During the literature review, the author decided to divide up the identity construction process into two perspectives, which are the fans’ self identity and cultural identity. Moreover, my research is done through the “social culture” perspective, which is to set the whole research under the background of the current culture and society. As we all know, with the rapid development of society and SNS platforms, the fandom group might have some new approaches to construct their identity. So in my research, the author only focuses on the “social culture” perspective, but for the whole research of “fandom culture” and “identity construction”, we may expand the space of research even larger. During my 6 months research, I find there has been a lot of interesting and worthy issue to study on, but since my research objects are mainly aiming on the self-identity construction and cultural identity construction, also the limitation of space and time, I cannot make the range of my research much wider. So at this chapter, I will make a discussion and some prospects in order to set a new perspective and solution for the future research work.

First of all, part of theories I used during my research can be considered as the “old theories”, which means the scholars like Freud, Lacan and Goffman set the theories in last century or even before last century. But as I mentioned in the section of research object, my research objects are all based on the new media platform like Weibo, which is developed recently. So here I have to declare that personally those theories enable a large number of following scholars to have a clear direction or foundation to take a study on the relevant research in different ways. Or even we can use a critical view to rethink the theories in order to contribute to the sociological field. Furthermore, personally I think we should not be scared to use the “old theories”, by
contrast, the use of “old theories” can also be a critical process to testify if the theories can be used in the online sociological research. For example, in my research, I try to use the Goffman’s self-presentation “stage” theory to discuss how the online platform provides the fans a “backstage” to extend the fans’ emotion or thought freely and how the fans switch two “stage” lives or even extend the online “backstage” life to the reality “stage”. So during the application we may find that through the combination of “old theories” with the online fandom activities, it seems that the combination provides me to discuss the fandom cultural phenomenon and make a conclusion of those discussion easily. Since I think this is one of my contributions in my research, which is that I give the “old theories” some “fresh blood” and provide the following researchers a new perspective on the relevant online fandom group research.

Secondly, the fan culture in the fandom group seems to be a fixed concept, but actually in the online fandom community, they are presenting a changing and dynamic feature. During my in-depth interview, I notice that some interviewees mentioned they have to go through few steps before they become a real fan, which means they have already constructed the identity of “I am a fan”. For example, if a person wants to be a fan, he or she has to get enough knowledge of what kind of culture the chased target (idol) belonging to, then to notice the core value of their idol, after this they should join into the practical activities actively. The whole process of transformation and development is not accidentally happened; some of its ultimate reason perhaps can be discussed at the level of psychological mechanism, social mechanism, cultural mechanism and even the ICT-technological mechanism for the further exploration and discovery.

Thirdly, through my research, it is interesting to note that some fans own one more account to present their opinions. So why do those fans have to present themselves in two accounts on one online platform? Here I may argue this kind of accounts like a second identity or second “speaking trumpet”. So it is worth to discuss this phenomenon by the Goffman’s self-presentation theory or even connected with
Walter Lippmann’s public opinion theory. Since my research object is fan in the fandom group, as Matthew Hills presents in his book *Fan Cultures*, any so-called “fan culture” cannot be regarded just as a community, but also a social hierarchy, to share a common interest by the activities. In order to pursuing in-group power and reputation, the fans also have an in-group competition with each other. (Hills 2002, 2) Therefore, the “how” and “what is” to establish the fan’s status is also worth for further exploring more problems; at the same time, the online fandom community can be regarded as a virtual society, many of its features are similar to the real society, so that the interpersonal relationship in “fans to fans” and “fans to group” can also belong to the same category for further investigation and analysis. As @Jojo&Catecat mentioned in her interview:

“This is like a small community, and it is very similar to real life in our society, sometimes people are aim to escape from the real world to the virtual world, but you will find out there are still interpersonal relationship, also have social hierarchy, and even the scheme against each other, sometimes to participate into the group really makes me learn a lot.”

Actually, I also find that in the online fandom community, it has the hierarchy or status to differentiate various fans. However, this hierarchy is not determined by the economic capital but connecting with “fandom cultural capital” and “fandom social sources”. Hence to discuss the reason why the so-called “social status” and “interpersonal relationship” or maybe the influence of “fandom cultural capital” and “fandom social sources” on the identity construction can be some other interesting research objects too.

Fourthly, from my title of this thesis we can see that the online Chinese K-pop music fandom group is based on the “online virtual space”, so the online society should be different between the realities that they live in. Critically, I think in terms of my research, it seems not quite reasonable to focus the study only on the fandom group’s
online practical activities but without the offline activities. In terms of the construction of self-identity, it must be various factors in the fans’ real life, which can affect their thought or behaviors for activities in the online community and interpersonal relationship and vice versa. The long-term participant of practical activities in the cyberspace also enables the fans take an influence on the social behavior of the reality, as I mentioned in my analysis part, the example of changing job. Hence, the dialectical relationship between online fandom group in real society and virtual society can be explored and discussed in the further research too.

Eventually, as I mentioned in the theoretical chapter, the psychoanalytic deconstruction school lead by Jacques Lacan and elaborated upon by Judith Butler that launches a dismantlement of the traditionally conceived identity, namely, the unified, self-contained, singular identity. It is under the disentanglement of the unified identity with the multiple selves that the conception and discussion of the identity studies more flexible and stimulating. Through the discussion of the constructing process of feminist and gender agenda in depth, they conclude that the identities are not given by nature or simply represented or expressed in culture, but culture is the process of identity formation, the way in which bodies and selves in all their differences are produced. Therefore, we can judge culture is a process, a kind of making, and we are what is made and remade through that process. However, if we try to set this theory in my above analysis, I may question myself that “Does an cultural identity exist?” In terms of K-pop music fans, they are like the mediation to spread the culture. So if we try to use Judith Butler’s “performativity” theory to explain it, we may find that the “identity” of fandom group may be regarded as an example to prove her theory in some way. So we could argue that the identity of fan may be judged as an individual performance by the fan’s personal choice. With the influence of subjectivity, the individual will choose the way they perform. So that the identity presented by the fans has fiction, which is constructed and maintained through the physical and symbolic discourse. After all, the performativity theory was set by the discussion of gender issue, which combines the identity construction with a
congenital physical significance. Here since the formation of fandom group’s identity is mainly based on the acquired experiences or private psychological activities, the performativity theory might be not proper to be used in my research. The reason why I still insist to discuss this argument because I believe this theory may bring the further researchers or me a new approach to do a study on the relevant topic in the future.

Every research is just a beginning for the scholar field, as famous American poem Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said in his poem *A Psalm of Life*: “Not enjoyment, and not sorrow, Is our destined end or way; But to act, that each tomorrow. Find us farther than today (Longfellow, 190).” As a master student or a sociological researcher, I have to step by step as all the previous researchers did, but since I make my contribution on the Chinese online fandom study and the identity study, I am looking forward that more and more scholars can follow my step to take a deep study on those issues and make their own contribution as well.
10. Conclusion

In my research, the research objects are the Korean pop music fans, that is to say, my research is mainly based on the study of human, and the human is not normal people, they are the fans that do a star chasing and present their interests through the online community, in a word my research is doing a kind of audience study. The British famous scholar Denis McQuail has categorized the audience study into three types, which are structural, behavioral and social cultural study (McQuail 2010, 5). And my research is focusing on the behavioral and social cultural study. There are two things I have to declare: firstly, my research is based on those two types of audience study because through my research I find that the Korean pop music fans are not only producing the cultural products in order to have a relationship with “texts”, they also use behavior to promote the significance of constructing identity through the online media platform; Secondly, in the previous research, a large number of scholars are discussing the audience study from the perspective of spreading information. They try to study on how the diverse media platform is powerful for communication, but from another point, they ignore the importance of active and practical audiences themselves. No matter which points or perspectives we are focusing on, the audience always plays a vital role in the research, the subjectivity of the audience is visible at both media use behavior and media consumption. Moreover, one of the contributions of my research is to present the process of positive and active cultural production through my collected material and analysis.

As a part of the audience, the Korean pop music fans are consuming and producing the cultural products synchronically. If we compared with the other Chinese fandom groups like TV series fans or Japanese anima fans etc., there are two special points, which are worthy for us to study on. First of all, the Chinese Korean pop music fans can produce and consume all cultural products such as album, concert, singer, music video, subtitle’s texts and even gossip news through the heated online platform, as I
mention in the former chapter like Baidu Tieba and Weibo. It means that they are using the online platform keep pace with the times. Secondly, in some way, during my review on the previous researches, I find that a certain number of scholars like McQuail argue that the fandom culture is one of the elements, which are produced by the media, that is to say, the media creates the fandom group. But during my research, I kindly find that the media does not dominate the fandom group, oppositely, the fandom group is active and positive to keep step with the development of media, and make a full use of different functions that media enables us to enjoy, so it can demonstrate that the fans are active to construct the identity. In my research, the discussion on the identity construction of K-pop music fans on Weibo is based on two perspectives, which are the “self-identity” and “cultural-identity”.

Through the observation and the literature review, I find that the G-Dragon fandom group on Weibo platform uses multiple ways to construct their self-identity construction. Initially, everyone has a very ideal and good self-imagination, although it is not true, perhaps only infinitely close to the real self realization, but it is a power or encouragement to push the people going forward to their ideal states. In the meantime, it is also a person’s inner psychological needs, and when the others have approved your ideal state, it means that the self-evaluation and the other’s evaluation has been unified, thus it constructs self-identity. Therefore, when people cannot realize their ideal state or demands in the real world, they will instinctively realize it in some other spaces or groups, a part of K-pop music fans is same as this case. Through my research, I find that some of fans do not have any friends or families with the same interests on the fans’ idol. So they are willing to get the approval or agreement from the group that has the same interests as them. The ways to realize this goal is presented as producing the fandom cultural products or capital. For example, the fans can rely on their own abilities or sources in different aspects such as seeking the news the level of Korean and media literacy. With these abilities, they can post their own works on the Weibo platform and attract the fans or some fandom organizations attention to get the evaluations. When the fans’ original work get the
approval from the others, and then they unify the other’s evaluation with self evaluation, the whole process of identity construction can be eventually presented.

Secondly, the K-pop music fans try to project their own interests, emotion, feeling or thoughts on the objects, making some subconscious things unconsciously transferred to the external object. Also, the psychological projection mechanism makes the subconscious things appear on the objects and the subjects will never realize this, then the subjects will establish a self consistent, so as to realize the construction of self-identity. Through my analysis on the K-pop music fans, they mainly do the projection of emotion and projection of intention, and those two types of projection are all done on the specific use of online media platform. For example, the fans will firstly interpret the cultural products (the G-Dragon’s songs or video) and transfer their own subconscious “intention” and “emotion” into the texts written by them, and then their own interpretation of the texts are presented in the form of text display, and through the Weibo platform to present the text display to the other fans. In this case, the texts are the projected objects, through the posted texts, the fans are doing self-reflection activity, and it is very important process for constructing their self-identity.

Thirdly, I argue that the use of media for the fandom group can be regarded as a consumption of culture. The reason why I connect the consumption of culture to the construction of self-identity is that “what we consume and how we consume” can show “our” understanding and evaluation of taste, habit and status. Furthermore, to do a personal way of cultural consumption, which is different with the other members, can be regarded as an approach to realize the self-identity. Through my observation and analysis, I find that the fans can create an “anti-group” way to present the process of self-identity construction. For instance, when the most of members in the fandom group praise one video, some fans will use a critical thinking to reproduce the cultural products in order to create personality, difference and independence. No matter how the most of fans judge on them, as long as the most of members respond the
anti-group cultural product, it will promote the fans that do the anti-group consumption to realize their self-identity.

Eventually, in the virtual space, most of fans will do a “cosplay” work without any doubt to realize the self-presentation. The cyberspace is a “backstage” for the fans, so it will make up the lack, which they cannot realize in their “stage” reality. This process is the way to unify the “real myself” and the “ideal myself” together in order to construct self-identity. Through the diverse functions of Weibo, the G-Dragon’s fans organize the online video or subtitle groups. So that they perform as the “DJ” or “editor” works, which they have never played in the reality in order to achieve the dream they have never realized in their “stage” life. So the cosplay (self-presentation) is also a vital way for the fans to construct their self-identity.

From the cross-cultural perspective, I try to argue the phenomenon of dual-identity in the fandom group. For example, between the cultural identities of “Chinese” and “Korean popular music fans”, the fans can easily get access to their second identity by the cultural similarity between Chinese and Korean culture. In addition, when the fans face the cultural shock, they will automatically form and strengthen their original cultural identity “Chinese” to defend themselves. Those approaches above enable the fans construct and also switch between different cultural identities. In the final section, I try to lead the phenomenon among the fans into the viewpoints of cultural hybridity and cultural diaspora in order to argue if the cultural hybridity and cultural diaspora exist or not in the cross-cultural fandom group.

Above all, I conclude that the Chinese Korean pop music fandom group is not only an extremely active audience group, also a positive group for constructing identity. And the active performance and positive construction are all based on the use of new media platform Weibo. In my research, I have tried to connect the diverse functions of Weibo with the K-pop fandom group in order to argue how the identity constructed through those online practical fandom activities and even extending to the offline. In
my view, I believe that I have successfully finished my research objects and make my own contribution to both fandom study and identity research fields.
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Appendix I

The five interviewees’ background information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account Name</th>
<th>Career</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Active SNS Platform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>@MelonTayLoveGD</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Baidu Tieba, Weibo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@Jojo&amp;Catcat</td>
<td>Civil Servant</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Weibo, Renren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@Dubercola</td>
<td>Engineer (Then change to Online news editor)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Baidu Tieba, Weibo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@TibboTsui</td>
<td>Photographer</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Weibo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@Evaxxxi</td>
<td>CCTV choreographer</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Baidu Tieba, Weibo, Renren</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix II

Interview Guide

Question list

1. Personal Background
   Age, education, career, Weibo’s name, use habit of SNS platform

2. Weibo use
   When did you start using Weibo?
   Why did you start using it?
   How much time do you spend on Weibo and how often?
   Please give two main purposes for using Weibo.
   Retweet and make comments habits? Share it out, share it in?
   Have you joined any Wei groups?
   How often you pose some comments there in the Wei group?
Will you reply the other’s comments in Wei Group?
Will you be active to follow the other fans? Will they follow you back after that?

3. Idol
How many Idols have you ever followed?
What kind of role does an idol play in your life?
Are there any differences between you and those who do not follow an idol?
How did you know G-Dragon?
Why do you like G-Dragon?
Which personality can attract you from G-Dragon?
Will you invite or suggest the others to become GD fans? What if they are following any other K-pop stars?
Do you learn to sing his songs or dance?
How much money have you spent on G-Dragon (including online and offline events)?
Do you learn some Korean words by following him? How much?
Are you attracted to Korean culture because of G-Dragon? If yes, say three cultural elements (dress, foods, travel, design) you are interested in.

4. Online activities
How many G-Dragon’s relevant account you followed? How many accounts are verified accounts?
Do you often make comments under the relevant G-Dragon tweets?
Do you often discuss under some relevant G-Dragon tweets?
Do you often post some news on your own Weibo page?
Will you defeat back when you find some rumors or negative news on G-Dragon? Or what if the negative news is on G-Dragon fans?
Will you ask for your online GD fans mates to support you or defeat back with you?
If G-Dragon tweets a new tweet in Korean, will you reply him in Korean? If so, why?

5. Offline activities
Will you actively talk to any stranger who might be a GD fan?
If you decided to label yourself as a GD fan in real life, how will you do that?
Have you attended any G-Dragon’s fans offline event? Can you describe it briefly?
As a Korean pop star’s fan, what do you think of the abroad culture? Have you feel
any culture shocks?
Do your families and friends know that you are a G-Dragon fan? If not, why don’t
you tell them? If so, how do they know this?

6. Other questions and Suggestions
Do you have anything else to say?
Do you have any suggestions or questions for me?

Some other questions will be questioned through the interviews individually.

Appendix III

The letter for the fans in the G-Dragon’s Wei Group

Hi Everyone:

I am Yifan Chang, a master student from Uppsala University. I am currently writing
my master thesis in how the K-pop fandom group constructs identity.

My cousin is a fan of G-Dragon, so that is the reason why I choose G-Dragon to be
my research example.

So after a brief talk with the administrators in this Wei Group. They kindly allow me
to ask all the fans here to do a research on your discussion and conversation. But do
not worry about it, I will only record the texts here and I will not participate into your
discussion. If I decide to use your conversation or discussion, I will ask the users if I am allowed to show their account names in my thesis. If anyone have problem to ask me, welcome to send me a private message or tag me on the Weibo. I will be absolutely glad to answer your questions and solve your concerns.

After the paper gets approved, I will also inform everyone here in this Wei group. I will be glad to share my thesis to the one who is interested on this research.

Thank you very much!

Yifan Chang

Chinese Version:

大家好！

我是瑞典乌普萨拉大学的研究生常轶凡。我现在正在做一项关于韩国流行音乐粉丝身份认同建构的研究。

由于我的表妹是权志龙的粉丝，所以我决定用我权志龙粉丝群作为这项研究的研究对象。

刚刚和群内的管理员已经达成了共识。他们同意我在这里征求大家的意见来决定是否我可以利用这个微群进行研究。但是请大家不用担心，我只会在群里观察和记录大家的讨论和对话。如果我决定使用某位同学@在群中的内容，我会和您进行联系并且使用您的微博名在我的论文里。如果大家有什么意见或建议欢迎与我联系或者微博@我，我会尽自己所能回答大家问题或者担心。

在这篇论文完成后，也欢迎感兴趣的同学对我论文提一些建议。

谢谢大家！

常轶凡