

Transnational Esports Fans as Reflexive Audiences: The Identity Construction of Chinese Fans in the League of Legends Champions Korea (LCK) Fandom

跨國電子競技粉絲作為反身性體育迷：

英雄聯盟韓國冠軍聯賽(LCK)的中國粉絲的身份認同研究

ZHANG Jinyi 張錦儀

Introduction: In recent years, esports has developed rapidly around the world and become an emerging digital sports industry. League of Legends (LOL) is currently the most successful esports program in the world. The League of Legends Champions Korea (LCK) is the most popular league in terms of LOL. Chinese fans constitute the main part of LCK's transnational fandom. However, due to the development of the local league- League of Legends Pro League (LPL) in mainland China and the dominant ideology of nationalism in Chinese society, Chinese fans who support the LCK encounter identity conflicts. Method: This article draws on reflexivity theory and employs qualitative research methods, namely participant observation and semi-structured interviews to examine the identity process of Chinese fans in the LCK fandom, including the reasons for becoming transnational fans and their responses to nationalism in turn. Result: The study finds that Chinese fans adore LCK's elite athleticism, professionalism and female-friendly environment. The appreciation of LCK is also largely indicative of Chinese fans' reflexive thinking about the problems of domestic esports culture and sports nationalism. They critiqued the radicalization, commercialization, and sexualization of nationalism in sports field. Conclusion: The study concludes that Chinese fans' support for LCK reflects a new development in Chinese esports fandom. Firstly, Chinese fans have gone beyond national symbolism to explore the alternative value of sports. Secondly, Chinese fans resist commercialization and strive for autonomy in the landscape of the sports industry. And thirdly, Chinese female fans resist gender inequality in the sports fandom and sports industry. As a political concept arising in modern times, nationalism is particularly supported by the discourses of the Chinese government, industry capital

and some male fans in Chinese esports culture. It's indicated that Chinese nationalism is complex and polysemous, overlapping, intersecting and diverging in different contexts. The resistance or acceptance of nationalism requires more detailed contextualized analysis.

近年來，電子競技實現快速發展，成為新興的全球數字體育產業。其中，英雄聯盟是目前世界上最成功的電子競技項目，英雄聯盟韓國冠軍聯賽（簡稱 LCK）是最受歡迎的英雄聯盟聯賽，而中國粉絲是 LCK 國外粉絲的構成主體。由於民族主義觀念在中國社會佔據主導地位，支持 LCK 的粉絲遭遇到身份認同矛盾。本文借鑒反身性的理論視角，採取參與式觀察和半結構化訪談的定性研究方法，去考察 LCK 的中國粉絲的身份認同過程，包括他們成為跨國粉絲的原因以及反過來對民族主義的回應。研究發現，中國粉絲身份認同源於對精英競技魅力、職業熱愛精神和女性友好環境的感知，而對 LCK 的欣賞在很大程度上也表明了對國內電競文化存在的問題和民族主義的反身性思考，他們批判了體育領域中的民族主義激進化、商業化和性別化問題。研究認為，中國粉絲支持 LCK 折射了中國電競粉絲文化的新發展：其一，中國粉絲超越國族象徵性去探索競技體育的本真價值；其二，中國粉絲在體育產業化佈局中從被動客體向積極主體轉變；其三，中國女性粉絲努力打破體育的傳統男性領域局面。民族主義/愛國主義作為近現代產生的政治概念，在中國電競文化中特別體現為：國家政府的價值引領、行業資本的話語利用和部分男性粉絲的立場依附。可以看到，民族主義在中國具有複雜多義性，會在不同情形下重疊、交叉或分化，人們對其的抵抗或接受還需要更細緻的語境化分析。