

OCCIDENTALIZING QUEERNESS

Understanding the Internalization of Queerphobia on the Chinese Internet

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| INTRODUCTION

01

In February 2024, a debate started in a group chat on the Chinese communication platform QQ. When one person criticized the use of the derogatory term “tranny” (ren yao) and expressed acceptance of non-binary gender identities, the other members immediately labeled this acceptance as “foreign” or “Western” and decried the perceived “threat” posed by the LGBT movement to China



| RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

06

Conceptualizing Queerness:

- Participants disagreed about what “queerness” means
- Participants differentiated between “sexual minorities” (private choice) vs “LGBTQ+ activism” (political, foreign).
- Not queerness itself that is occidentalized → but its politicization.

Discourses Identified:

- Disruptive: activism as destabilizing governance & economy.
- Liberal: admiration for Western openness, but coupled with fears of contagion.
- Coercive: West forces queerness onto “normal” people.

Affects:

- Fear → queerness linked to foreign infiltration & destabilization
- Disgust → queerness seen as contamination, threat to cultural purity.

Contextualizing Affect:

- State narratives of “foreign threats” shape suspicion of grassroots politics → predisposes rejection of queerness as Western

| KEY DEFINITIONS

02

- Occidentalization: The framing of ideas, practices, or identities as “Western” and therefore alien.
- Queerphobia: Negative attitudes, emotions, or discourses that stigmatize non-heteronormative sexualities and gender identities.

| METHODOLOGY

04

- Semi-structured interviews with 8 Chinese internet users (ages 18 – 22).
- Focus on language, tone, metaphor, and affect in responses.
- Supplemented with QQ case study.

| RESEARCH QUESTION

03

- Core Question: Why do Chinese internet users accept discourses that frame queerness as “Western” ?
- Specific aims:
 - Identify rationales behind framing queerness as Western.
 - Examine the affective mediation (fear, disgust).
 - Contextualize within the suspicion of grassroots politics.

| THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

05

- Homonationalism (Puar, 2007) → The selective incorporation of queer subjects to distinguish a “civilized” national self from a “backward” other.
- Affect Theory (Massumi, 1995; Ahmed, 2014) → pre-conscious emotions (fear/disgust) shape discourse uptake.