

The Rise of “Doll-Mommies” and “Doll-Daddies” in China:
Chinese Youth Meet BJD Culture

by
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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the contemporary Chinese youth group, “doll-mommies/daddies,” who are involved in Ball-Jointed Doll (BJD) culture. The thesis is based on a content analysis of popular social media used by “doll-mommies/daddies”, specifically BJD Bar and BJD Tsukkomi Bar on Baidu. I have incorporated reflections of my own experience as a BJD player as a supplementary source of data. I contend that the BJD culture in contemporary China has become a virtual space for “doll-mommies/daddies” to explore and understand self-representation, social stratification, Chinese culture, and gender and sexuality. The thesis contributes to the sociology of toys and studies of youth culture with a focus on analysing the BJD culture in China. It also contributes new insights to China studies, providing a window to understanding Chinese youth culture and contemporary Chinese society, which has experienced profound changes due to the government’s introduction of market economy, globalization, and information technology.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I will admit that before thinking about the project for my master thesis, I never really thought about the Ball-Jointed Dolls (BJD) culture critically. My engagement and fascination with BJDs have been ongoing for almost four years, and now I have purchased over thirty dolls. In China, there is no shortage of ways to find someone with a similar interest in BJDs. If I want to share personal experiences about BJDs or find related information, I could go to BJD-centered social media websites such as “BJD Bar” and “BJD Tsukkomi Bar”; or if I wanted to take my dolls out for photography and needed some assistance, I could easily find someone from the local online chatting group about BJDs. I could also count on my friends who know me and my dolls well to go with me.

However, my world changed when I moved to Ottawa. In Ottawa, I no longer could find any local communities about BJDs online. I now had to purposely seek related information on Chinese, Japanese, Korean or American websites. Moreover, once I took my doll to Pink Lake in Gatineau Park for photography, I heard a young man say, “Oh creepy!” when he walked right past me. BJDs in Ottawa are uncommon and, to this day, I don’t know any Canadian BJD owners in Ottawa yet. In retrospect, I was so foolish ever to take for granted the idea that “BJDs are very common in the contemporary society and I know them very well”. It was during this research that I embarked on a journey to (re)discover that the BJDs and the BJD culture are still unfamiliar and unusual in the majority opinion, and the BJD culture is far more than

what people understand as “playing with these dolls.”

Unfortunately, I could not find much literature on the BJD culture as there are very few scholarly works published both in English and in Chinese, which in a way reflects the reality that BJDs are still unfamiliar and unusual in the majority opinion. Instead, reflecting on my own experience, I make use of the theories of toy study, youth study, and Chinese study; I also explore specific aspects of self-representation, social stratification, cultural identity, and gender and sexualities, based on my observations and experience. Regarding my research into BJD culture, my intimate experience with the culture not only has provided more opportunities to gather data but also has offered significant benefits apropos of accessing minor and semi-private cultural spaces with their specific terms that would be unfamiliar to outsiders.

I contend that the BJD culture in China has become a virtual space for Chinese BJD owners - “doll-mommies” and “doll-daddies” - to explore and construct their self-identities, social and economic status, cultural identification, and gender and sexuality consciousness in the contemporary network-based, stratified, market-based, and globalized context.

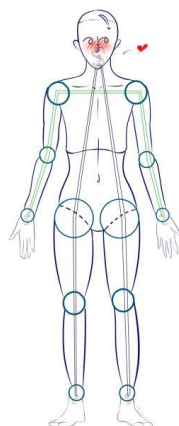
In this chapter, I provide an illustration and background of BJDs, as well as its history and community. Then, I do an empirical literature review. Further, I explain the theoretical perspectives and the methodology of this project. At last, I draw an outline of this whole thesis.

1.1 Illustration and Background: Welcome to the Zone of BJDs

BJDs

Generally speaking, a ball-jointed doll (qiuxing guanjie ren'ou¹) is any doll that is articulated with ball and socket joints (Qin, Gao, and Zeng, 2016, p.117). In contemporary usage when referring to the acronyms BJD and discussed in this project, it usually refers to modern Asian ball-jointed dolls, which are commercial casts in polyurethane synthetic resin, a hard and dense plastic, and thick elastics which make the parts of dolls strung together and highly poseable² (see Figure 1.1). BJDs are readily customizable because their wigs and eyes are easy to remove and replace, as well as their outfits, face make-up, heads, and even other body parts. Through the process of customizing these dolls, BJD owners create space for self-expression without little restraint (Chen, 2014, p.257).

Figure 1.1: The main internal structure of a BJD (TheDollSecret, 2013).



Most BJDs tend to follow a distinct Asian aesthetics, as demonstrated in He's work (2009).” He observes that they rarely present apparent differences in race and sex, but

¹ In this thesis, all translated terms are based off the Chinese language, and followed the set of format as “translation in English (Chinese phonetic alphabet)”, or “official English translation (Chinese phonetic alphabet; literary meanings)”.

² According to the *English Oxford Living Dictionaries* (2018), the word “poseable” means “able to be posed; especially (of a model figure or doll, or its limbs) that can be moved into various postures”. Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/poseable>

emphasizes the attractiveness of loveliness and aestheticism (p.18). Gonzalez, in a rare piece of journalist writing on BJDs in English, also noted that the designs and styles of BJDs are diverse and range from highly anime-inspired to hyper-realistic (Gonzalez, 2008, p.332). Compared to the earliest ones, contemporary BJDs are more refined with more sizes to select from, which are summarized into three main size categories: large full-size, mini and tiny (see Table 1).

Table 1: Common sizes of contemporary BJDs (based on author's research).

	Large Full-Size	Mini Size	Tiny Size
Height	about 60cm (24 in)	about 40 cm (15.5 in)	about 25 cm (10 in)
Chinese Size³	1/3 scale	1/4 scale	1/6 scale
Japanese Size⁴	SD	MSD	YOSD
Body Types	Grown-up teenagers or adults	Teenagers around 11-15 years old	Children around Under ten years old

BJDs neither belong to traditional toys like stuffed animals designed for preschool children with a relatively low price, nor belong to extravagant art collectibles whose ornamental values are far beyond their practical significance. Generally speaking, BJDs are a kind of high-end, or even luxury toy with both aesthetic and practical values. Taking examples from a medium-priced Chinese BJD company, Dollzone, the price of a large full-sized doll range from 2920 yuan to 4280 yuan (approximately US\$440 to 650)

³ In China, the height and size of BJDs are calculated by “scale” (fen), that is, 180cm divided by X points is the approximate height of a doll. For example, the size “1/3 scale” approximately refers to 60cm. However, at the same size range, the boy's height is generally higher than the height of the girl.

⁴ Generally, the standard BJD sizes take reference from the Super Dollfie models from Volks.

including face makeup, eyes, wig, outfits and shoes⁵, while mini sized and tiny sized ones each priced at 1800 yuan (approximately US\$270) and 1460 yuan (approximately US\$220.)⁶ Additional services like choosing particular skin colors of the doll or adding body makeup may cost extra. Usually, the price of BJD and BJD products from a Chinese company is much lower than the ones from other countries (Zhu & Du, 2016, p.22).

However, having a doll is just the beginning of “raising a BJD.” Purchasing various wigs, eyes, outfits, accessories, and even changing face make-up for dolls is the most basic task, as well as the most fun for a BJD owner. Chinese BJD owners address each other as “doll-mommies” (wa ma) or “doll-daddies” (wa die) whatever their age, experience, and marital status (Zhu & Du, 2016, p.21), further reflecting the interactive mode and emotional bond between these BJD owners and their dolls.

The History of BJDs

Hans Bellmer was a German artist who in 1934 created the first ball-jointed doll in the modern sense, which was a life-sized detachable wooden doll with spherical devices as joints, and paper and plastics as the body (see Figure 1.2, p.6). Bellmer also introduced the idea of artful doll photography, which continues today, most notably among Japanese doll artists as well as BJD hobbyists (Japattack, 2008, para.5).

Additionally, both the principles of the ball-jointed structural system and his attitude

⁵ Doll Zone (n.d.). *List of Large Full-Sized Dolls*. Retrieved from <http://www.dzdoll.com/test/products.asp?cid0=46&cid1=84>

⁶ Doll Zone (n.d.). *List of Mini-Sized Dolls*. Retrieved from <http://www.dzdoll.com/test/products.asp?cid0=43&cid1=44>; Doll Zone (n.d.). *List Of Tiny Sized Dolls*. Retrieved from <http://www.dzdoll.com/test/products.asp?cid0=49&cid1=89>

toward the doll have had a far-reaching influence to the later doll art in East Asia, especially the Japanese ball-jointed design which often puts Bellmer's work as a reference object (Qin et al., 2016, p.117).

Figure 1.2: The first BJD in the modern sense made by Hans Bellmer (Qin et al., 2016, p.117).



Influenced by Bellmer and the rich Japanese doll tradition, Japanese artists began creating strung ball-jointed art dolls. The history of commercially produced Asian resin BJDs began in 1999 when a Japanese sculptor named Akihiro Enku sculpted a one-off 57cm doll for his wife, and the Japanese company Volks commercialized his design to create the Super Dollfie line of dolls (SD doll). The first Super Dollfie release comprised of four different models, Kira, Nana, Sara, and Megu (see Figure 1.3), which all shared the same head mold, the standard SD Four Sisters head (Tang, 2008, p.11).

Figure 1.3: The first commercially produced Asian resin BJDs (Volks, 2011).



Around 2002 and 2003, South Korean companies started creating and producing BJDs. Customhouse and Cerberus Project were among the first Korean BJDs companies (He, 2009, p.14), and since then the Korean market has expanded with many more. It is also worth mentioning that the first American company to produce a BJD but

with more of an American artistic influence was Goodreau Doll in 2007 (He, 2009, p.14). This line of dolls highlights the various races and sexes, and emphasizes the attractiveness of youthful maturity (He, 2009, p.18).

Since 2005, toy manufacturers in China and Hong Kong have also begun to produce similar human-like figures. However, the earliest Chinese produced BJDs were nondurable and cheap knockoffs, which were direct recasts or slight modifications of Super Dollfie or Korean BJDs with plaster, low quality resin or polystone (He, 2009, p.14). The first Chinese company to release their own original BJD sculpts in high-quality polyurethane resin was Dollzone whose dolls hit the market in 2006 (SpottJane, 2006, para.1). Since then, several other Chinese companies followed suit, putting their own BJD creations on the international market. According to incomplete statistics, over 30 Chinese BJD companies/studios have been established so far⁷.

BJD Communities

Even though still relatively unknown, especially to the older generations, BJDs have caught the attention of young people in the last several years with the help of network technology developments such as the establishment of Bulletin Board System (BBS), and have gradually transformed a specific group of BJD fans into doll-mommies/daddies. There is a sizeable international community dedicated to BJDs. The most significant English language BJD internet community, Den of Angels, has

⁷ BJD Collectasy (2013, January 28). *Companies & Other Links*. Retrieved from <http://bjdcollectasy.com/companies-other-links/>

over 43,000 members as of February 2016⁸, while the Facebook group called “BJD Addicts” has over 14,800 members⁹. In comparison, the largest and the most popular internet community related to BJD in China, BJD Bar, has over 250,000 members as of September 2017¹⁰.

In addition to interactions on the internet, enthusiasts also have offline BJD meet-ups. In the US they organize conventions, like BJDC in Austin¹¹, Texas and GoGaDoll (previously Dollectable) in San Francisco (Mullane, 2008, para.3). In Japan, the BJD company named Volks usually organizes Dolls Party conventions.

Additionally, some enthusiasts also meet and take pictures of their dolls at doll-friendly maid cafés (Galbraith, 2008, para.46). In China, there are also offline BJD meet-ups like private tea parties and organized conventions such as BJDP, SHDP, and CDDP.

Due to these dolls’ high cost, most BJD owners in China are college students from economically comfortable families and young white-collar workers who have a stable economic base, and middle-aged people with high incomes (Zhu & Du, 2016, p.22). Drawing from Pan’s survey of BJD consumer groups in China (2014), the leading consumer groups are people between 15 to 30 years old. Usually, these people have a relatively high degree of education and income. Specifically, most of them are economically well-off youth between 20 to 28 years old. They usually live in major

⁸ Den of Angels (n.d.). *The Homepage of the Den of Angels*. Retrieved from <https://denofangels.com>

⁹ BJD Addicts (n.d.). *The Homepage of the BJD Addicts Group*. Retrieved from www.facebook.com/groups/195691940459711

¹⁰ BJD Bar (n.d.). *The Homepage of BJD Bar*. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/f?kw=bjd&ie=utf-8>

¹¹ AUSTIN BJDC (n.d.). *The Homepage of Austin BJDC*. Retrieved from <http://bjdctexas.com/>

cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and urban centers in provinces such as Jiangsu, Zhejiang and other economically developed areas. It is also mentioned that female, students and the only child are in the majority of BJD owners (p.15).

1.2 Empirical Literature Review

For my literature review, I have chosen to focus on how scholars have examined toy culture and BJD culture, in particular. Further, I will draw on literature concerning youth and contemporary Chinese society. I have grouped the discussion into five aspects: BJD culture and toy culture, internet and youth self-representation, social stratification and consumption in China, Chinese cultural identification, and gender and sexuality in China.

BJD Culture and Toy Culture

On the specific kind of dolls under examination – BJDs – I have not been able to locate any scholarly work in English-language, and, at present, there is no substantial amount of literature available on Chinese youth culture and BJDs. Contemporary scholarly works on BJDs in Chinese focus on the illustration, history, and design of BJDs, BJDs and marketing, as well as the relationship between doll-mommies/daddies and their BJDs.

Scholars have described the illustration, history and design of BJDs, and give a detailed introduction of the size and characteristic of BJDs. They highlight the contribution of Hans Bellmer, a German artist who in 1934 created the first ball-jointed doll in the modern sense (Qin et al., 2016, p.117; Yu & Li, 2017, p.88), Japanese

traditional dolls (Yu & Li, 2017, p.88), the Super Dollfie line of dolls (SD doll) (Qin et al., 2016, p.117; Yu & Li, 2017, p.89) and the rich cultural histories of dolls in Chinese history, especially in religious traditions (Tang, 2008, p.9; Liang, 2011, p.8; Chen, 2014, p.257) to contemporary BJD design.

Many scholars have examined BJDs and marketing. Although the BJD market in China is criticized because of its extravagant profits and the underlying market bubble (Liang, 2008, p.112), both collection value and commodity value of BJDs are quite promising. Meanwhile, the BJD culture is gradually becoming a unique sub-culture (Yu & Li, 2007, p.89). Further, some studies focus on the competitiveness of Chinese local BJD industry. Specifically, production technology levels, original creative capability, brand values, service quality, and package design help promote the customer loyalty and the commodity/culture exportation of BJDs (Zhou, 2008, pp.8-10; Pan, 2014, pp.45-50). These ideas help inspire the discussion of cultural commoditization and the development of “Chinese BJDs” in this project.

Other scholars have discussed the relationship between Chinese BJD owners and their dolls, especially female BJD owners. They argue that there is a unique social psychological and emotional connection between doll-mommies/daddies and BJDs. Generally, people who purchase or possess BJD products can fulfill their psychological, aesthetic and self-actualization needs (Zhu, 2012, p.21, Zhu & Du, 2016, pp.23-24). Especially, BJDs are seen by their owners as providing them with empathy which can help them release the psychological stress generated from the high-paced work and

life in modern society (Qin et al., 2016, p.118). To doll-mommies, the changing relationship between themselves and their BJDs (especially male BJDs) also reflects the impacts of ideas about maternal instinct, the burgeoning androgynous aesthetic and the awakening of consciousness as women (Tang, 2008, pp.18-19). The old male-centred visual culture assigned men and women in the mode of "to see and to be seen," compelling women to become decorative objects in men's eyes and to live in the aesthetic activities dominated by men. However, now Chinese female BJD owners can also grasp the initiative and become the master of their male dolls' destiny. I will discuss the meanings of BJDs (and BJD-related social media sites) and doll-mommies' performance of femininity and feminism in BJD playing later in the thesis.

In Western literature on the sociology of toys, scholars have done more research on the function and meaning of toys. Ball (1967) argues that toys, especially dolls, are socializing devices and perform this function in two ways: as rehearsal vehicles for the practice of role-associated activities and as role models (p.450). Besides, some scholars have examined how racial and cultural identification are embodied in doll consumption. For example, MacDougall (2003) demonstrates the indigenization process of Barbies in Mexico is about representing local identity, especially local aesthetics (p.263), gender role traditions and family identity (p.268), as well as moderate resistance to the forces of globalization (p.258). Guerreiro (2009) notes that the use of race as a form of fashion within the Bratz doll line is problematic (p.190). Bergner (2009) indicates a more flexible racial subjectivity whereby children playing with both white-skin and

black-skin dolls embrace aspects of blackness and whiteness without incurring psychological damage. She further argues that, although white preference behavior may indicate a subjective split or double consciousness stemming from children's understanding that the dominant culture denigrates African Americans, it may also be an adaptive response that allows for positive self-concept through multiple, shifting, and negotiated processes of identification (p.302). These studies help deepen the analysis of BJD's functions and meanings to doll-mommies/daddies in this project, and enlighten the discussion of embodied cultural and racial issues in the Chinese BJD Zone.

Internet and Youth Self-Representation

Scholars have argued about the rising Web 2.0 and social media sites, in which internet users are audiences as well as content creators in this virtual world. Without geographical or temporal boundaries, the internet provides a place where individuals can present themselves to potential audiences from around the world, as well as highlight desirable aspects of their personality in self-representations that may be appealing to online audiences (Sanderson, 2008, pp.912-914). By utilizing these social media sites, youth are improving their aesthetic ability and hands-on practical work and capacity to interact with other youth and to create meaningful relationships within these communities as a unique form of socialization (Abrahams, 2008, p.iii; Zhang et al., 2018, p.1262; Perret-Clermont et al., 2003, pp.3-10; Lee et al., 2013, p.344).

Many works have examined the approaches, meanings, and values of youth's

self-representation, especially of their online-identity performances. Generally, according to Goffman (1959), self-representations are composite results influenced by social and cultural factors as well as individual preferences, as “front stage performances” and “back stage performances” (p.28). Specifically, youth rely on strategies for self-enhancement with positive and favorable claims about themselves (Chu & Choi, 2010, p.415); they use a unique “internal language system” so as to establishes the foundation of a common cultural memory that is vastly different from the discourse of “outsiders” (Falk, 2005); They can maintain and reinforce their aesthetic views, interests, language habits, lifestyles and other aspects of their offline lives, as a supplement to reinforce their real lives (Buckingham, 2008, p.25; Valentine & Holloway, 2002, p.302). Alternatively, some may even rebel against or attempt to escape from traditional parental power, distinct consumption or aesthetic values among peers, and even societal legal or moral norms of their real lives (Lincoln, 2012, pp.193-199; Fu, 2017). Following these studies, I examine the background of BJD-related social media sites in contemporary China, then figuring out their characteristics and meanings to doll-mommies and doll-daddies in this project.

Social Stratification and Consumption in China

Many scholarly works examine social stratification in contemporary China, which can be related to these consumption patterns and consumption values. Some scholars demonstrate that the social stratification in China between the rich and poor takes on a pyramidal structure (Du & Fang, 2005, p.18; Li, 2005, p.55). In contrast, other scholars

argue that what they see is a rising olive-shaped structure in which the middle-income group is the majority in contemporary China (Du & Fang, 2005, p.18; He, 2007, p.123; Han, 2009, p84). Besides, some scholars argue that social stratification and mobility are of importance for China's middle-class consumers in shaping and maintaining their lifestyles and consumption patterns (Gao & Zhao, 2011; Song et al., 2016, p.646). In this project, I take on these ideas and demonstrate that the Chinese BJD market fits in with the characteristic olive-shaped structure of “great in the middle, organized in the structure”, but fails in the other characteristics of “small at both ends, no great disparity between them” (He, 2007, p.124), which also reflects the remaining restraints of a traditional pyramid shape.

Further, Wang (2016) examines the interrelationship among social stratification, materialism and consumption values, Wang demonstrates that objective social status (such as income, power and social status) has an adverse effect on post-materialism, whereas subjective social status (such as higher consumption levels and more sophisticated cultural taste) has a positive effect (p.580). From another perspective, many studies have examined contemporary Chinese consumption, especially the rising luxury fashion consumption and materialism in urban China. They argue that brand consciousness, social comparison, and fashion innovativeness have a significant impact on attitudes towards purchasing luxury fashion goods among Chinese consumers. Specifically, luxury brands evoke a greater sense of perceived self-worth, that is, stronger self-identity, higher status, and more conspicuousness and hedonic value

(Zhang & King, 2013, p.68; Shan, Jiang, & Wei, 2016, p.953). Additionally, as noted by *The Economist* (2004; 2012), in the pursuit of high status, younger consumers are more likely to mix cheap fakes with genuine products, and may even prefer pirated versions. In this project, by examining the controversial tuhao (nouveau riche) and conspicuous consumption in the BJD Zone, I analyze the influence of materialism on contemporary Chinese BJD owners.

Chinese Cultural Identification

The literature on Chinese's preference for lighter skin provides a unique perspective to analyze the contemporary Chinese cultural identification. Scholars have examined the history of Chinese's preference for fair skin and how Chinese traditional cultural ideas, the impact of class, the remaining influence of colonialism and ideas of race (Jahansson, 1998; Hunter, 2005; Leong, 2006; Glenn, 2008). These studies can help explain the embodied factors of the light skin tones preference in the current Chinese BJD market. Further, drawing on perspectives of globalization, many studies on Chinese cultural identification have argued about the tension between local/traditional culture and foreign/global culture in various domains in the process of cultural globalization. Scholars highlight that, Chinese youth are living the encounter of Chinese and foreign/Western/global cultures. They face diverging views on this encounter, whether to universalize/westernize, to oppose the western culture, or to take elements from both to make their own (Knight, 2006, Chen, 2009; Su, 2011).

Furthermore, some other studies focus on the changing society in China. For

example, according to Zhang (2008), to squarely confront the fact that globalization is inescapable and conditions daily life in China, two mythologies regarding globalization and China must be avoided. The first is the romanticization of globalization (e.g. insisting on “universal” values as an all-purpose solution to China’s problems); and the second is the denial of globalization (e.g. denying that globalization is happening in China and is not affecting the daily life of the Chinese people, but is rather a process occurring elsewhere) (p.733); Flew (2016) notes that, in terms of cultural “soft power” strategies, China has considerably greater scope to expand in the entertainment field than in news and information, particularly in Western markets (p.32); Wu (2009) highlights that the traditional culture must follow the corresponding mechanism change in accordance with the need of the times and markets. Otherwise, it is gradually disappearing and will eventually be replaced by a more competitive heterogeneous culture (pp.34-36). In this project, based on these studies, I discuss two critical strategies in the process of inheriting and constructing Chinese cultural identity in the context of globalization.

Gender and Sexuality in China

Some scholarly works have examined the changes in Chinese’s understandings of sexuality, and gender. In ancient China, there are two sets of ideas about having sex circulated. One came out of the literature of Daoism and yin-yang thoughts, which stressed the importance of the role of sex as improving health and prolonging life. The other set of complementary ideas came from the stringent interpretations of

post-Buddhist Confucianism that managed sexual desire as a mode of moral self-discipline (Mann, 2011, pp.84-92; Harper, 1987, p.548; Pan, 2006, p.28). The most recent change in Chinese sexual culture and Chinese youth's rising interest in body started in the early 1980s and was related to the introduction of the Open Door Policy and hence Western influences (Braverman, 2002, para.1; Pan, 2006, p.29; Clark, 2012, pp.57-59). Tao (2011, p.181) and Jacobs (2012, p.42) cautioned that the tolerance of nudity, especially in a relatively public domain, is still minimal. Both of them have highlighted the Chinese government's censorship in the name of wiping out pornography. These studies provide background and context on Chinese sexuality and gender culture, which help me to better understand the current context of such issues in contemporary Chinese BJD Zone.

Studies on how sexuality and gender are presented and understood in contemporary China, primarily by Chinese youth, are also enlightening. In the history, the literary attainment vs. martial virtue (wen-wu) framework has been used as an analytical tool to conceptualize masculinity and femininity in Chinese culture (Louie, 2002, p.139; Wang, 2003, pp.41-42). Wen (2014) examines the "diversity" of masculinity represented by super girls, happy boys, cross-dressers, and real men on Chinese media, and argues that Chinese media have created a discourse in which marginalized masculinity and hyper masculinity coexist. The former exists only in newer genres, and the latter has evolved and become more compelling in the older and more traditional genres, resulting in a tactful reinforcement of mainstream cultural

norms and values concerning masculinity, while appearing to do the opposite (p.16)

Further, applying the queer theory, Li (2000, p.5) challenges the dichotomy structure of male and female, seeing identity as a constellation of multiple and unstable positions instead of a single and perpetual concept. According to Li, gender identity is not static but continuously shifting in meaning, following Butler (1990, p.25). In another perspective, some examined the phenomenon of Chinese straight young women's intense interest in the Boys' Love story genre, a genre of fictional fantasy story that describes romantic relationships between men). They demonstrates that, on the one hand, it reflects a resistance to inequality in heterosexual romantic relationships and the pursuit of equal power; On the other hand, the practice of feminism in China has been overstated, and heteronormative gender stereotypes still exist (Yang, 2006; Zheng & Wu, 2009; Zhou, 2014 & 2018; Zhu & Zhao, 2015). In this project, I examine the changing meanings of sexualities and argue that doll-mommies' and doll-daddies' BJD playing represents both liberation and limitation in the realms of gender and sexuality.

Overall, this project fills a critical gap in the literature. I have not located scholarly work on BJDs in English-language literature, nor, scholarly work on Chinese youth culture or Chinese studies from the perspective of BJDs. Studies on BJD culture and toy culture have so far provided information about the history and design of BJDs, BJDs marketing, as well as the relationship between doll-mommies/daddies and their BJDs, but neglect to examine doll-mommies and doll-daddies' constructions of self-identities with respect to gender, sexuality, and culture.

This research project places importance on the role of doll-mommies/daddies and the context of ongoing informatization, marketization and globalization as reflected by the BJD market development. Thus, this project addresses a gap in the literature by contributing to critical scholarship on Chinese youth's identities, marketization and consumption, globalization and cultural identity, gender and sexuality, through a novel empirical case.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives

This thesis's theoretical framework derives from the four bodies of literature: Goffman's dramaturgical approach (1959), social stratification and consumption studies, cultural identity and globalization studies, and queer theory in order to analyze the complexities surrounding the contemporary Chinese youth culture and Chinese society, as reflected by BJD culture. I use these theories as conceptual lenses to understand and articulate the lived experiences of contemporary young Chinese doll-mommies/daddies and how they are shaped by a complex range of social, historical, and economic processes.

Goffman's Dramaturgical Approach

I draw upon Erving Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach to frame my arguments and analyze how youth make online self-representation in contemporary China. Goffman (1959) uses the metaphor of an actor performing a role in a play at both the front of the stage and the back of the stage, to explain how people communicate or express themselves to the audience. Self-representation is likened to a performance,

whereby individuals present themselves employing a repertoire of symbols. According to Goffman, “front stage performances” are regulated by the social and cultural constructs of public spaces, and there is a system of codes and conventions that regulate these spaces within which the “standardized performance” takes place. Meanwhile, “back stage performances” are regulated by the codes and conventions of the private realm, within which the individual has arguably more control (p.28). He argues that in social interactions, individuals present themselves in such a way as to best further their agendas within this interaction and interpret the self-representation of others according to the same criteria.

Goffman (1959) also considers how self-representation can be subject to conflict. He considers that actors must keep control over what the audience sees, and modify his/her wants according to the shared meanings that emerge to attain his/her goals. He explains, a “veneer of consensus” is often exchanged among individuals, giving the individual the response he/she desires while concealing true feelings. Individuals “temporarily” honor others' claims in exchange for the same courtesy, and to avoid conflict and achieve what Giddens (1991) calls “ontological security.” Interaction thus appears as a game of maintaining impressions, and in turn, probing the impressions presented by others, a practice Goffman terms Impression Management (p.9).

In this thesis, applying Goffman’s (1959) “front stage performances” and “back stage performances” metaphors, I inquire how young Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies mediate social factors and individual factors in their online

self-representation. Through these presentations, how are doll-mommies' and doll-daddies' self-identities being articulated? In what ways do these presentations of "front stage performances" and "back stage performances" differ? Drawing on Goffman's dramaturgical approach, I contend that the way young Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies making self-representation and impression online is both public (front stage performance) and private (back stage performance). In such a process, boundaries between public and private life are conceptualized, crossed, and eventually blurred.

Social Stratification and Consumption Studies

I use two perspectives of social stratification and consumption studies to frame my arguments and analyze the current social stratification embodied in Chinese doll-mommies' and doll-daddies' BJD consumption. Explicitly, I draw perspectives of two typical social structure models, as well as materialism and conspicuous consumption.

Two typical types of contemporary social structures have been proposed: a pyramid shape, characterized by relatively large income gaps, in which the poor form the vast majority at the bottom (Du & Fang, 2005, p.18; Li, 2005, p.55); and an emerging olive-shaped structure in which the middle-income group is the majority (Du & Fang, 2005, p.18; He, 2007, p.123; Han, 2009, p.84). In this thesis, I also use these two social structure models to analyze social stratification patterns in China, as presented by doll-mommies' and doll-daddies' BJD consumption.

Additionally, the literature on materialism and conspicuous consumption are also helpful. Initially demonstrated in Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (2007; originally published in 1899), conspicuous consumption refers to behaviour which displays wealth through a high degree of luxury expenditure on consumption and services (Trigg, 2011, p.101). In other words, conspicuous consumption is a tendency of the wealthy as well as the not-so-wealthy to buy expensive products, not because they need them but because they show off the wealth of the user. Specifically, contemporary Chinese consumers have a strong motive driven by social status seeking and position enhancement (Podoshen et al., 2010, p.17; Jin et al., 2015, p.877; Jinkins, 2016, p.115). The appearance of BJDs Holding (Fake) Owner Cards' consumption reflects a variant of conspicuous consumption among contemporary young Chinese BJD owners. In another perspective, materialism is a value orientation emphasizing physiological sustenance and safety, whereas post-materialism focuses on non-physiological needs such as freedom of self-expression and aesthetic gratification (Inglehart, 1990, p.66). In this thesis, applying these understandings of materialism and conspicuous consumption in the specific context of the BJD market, I will showcase distinct consumption behaviors and consumption values of doll-mommies and doll-daddies from different social strata in contemporary China.

Cultural Identity and Globalization Studies

According to Lustig & Koester (2013), cultural identity refers to a person's sense of belonging to a particular culture or group. This process involves learning about and

accepting traditions, heritage, language, religion, ancestry, aesthetics, thinking patterns, and social structures of culture. Typically, people internalize the beliefs, values, norms, and social practices of their culture and identify with that culture. The culture becomes a part of their self-concept (pp.133-135). Scholars studying cultural identification have argued about the tension between local/traditional culture and foreign/modern/global culture in various domains in the process of cultural globalization. Specifically, Friedman (1994) argues that the crisis of identity consists in the weakening of former national identities and the emergence of new identities (p.86). He also observes that the practice of identity encompasses a practice of consumption and even production (pp.115-116). Zhang (2009) argues that although global forces can be oppressive and can erode local traditions and identities, they can also provide a new framework for people to rework their identity and make them well equipped to create new ones. It is also worth mentioning that China's involvement in the process of globalization is often characterized by "pull-more-than-push" patterns, in other words the process is typically characterized by Chinese people's enthusiastic embracing of western cultural elements than by the west imposing culture on them (p.187).

By using the notions of cultural identity, especially Chinese culture identity, I examine the globalization context and cultural identity adaptations as reflected by contemporary Chinese BJD market. In this thesis, I highlight the importance to balance the local/traditional culture and foreign/modern/global culture in the current Chinese BJD Zone, so as to explore doll-mommies' and doll-daddies' shared Chinese cultural

identity.

Queer Theory

I also draw on the queer theory to analyze the notions of gender and sexuality in BJD owners' doll playing.

According to De Lauretis (1991), the term “queer” is intended to avoid all of the distinctions in terms such as “homosexual,” “gay,” and “lesbian.” Instead of adhering to any one of these terms and assuming their ideological liabilities, “queer” transgresses and transcends them, or at the very least problematizes them (p.v). Butler (1999) focuses centrally on gender as the organizing axis of hetero-normativity, but further argues that the inevitable instability of gender is “a constitutive failure of all gender enactments for the very reason that these ontological locales are fundamentally uninhabitable (p.186).”

Similarly, the notion of bisexuality transcends the binary logic of hetero-homo (Garber, 1995; Rust, 2000; Udiss-Kessler, 1991) and highlights “fluidity and transgressive nature,” whereas lesbian, gay and straight identities are be seen as “static and conservative” (Hemmings, 2002, p.5), bisexuality has also been employed in the service of loosening polarized gender norms and expanding the range of acceptable attitudes and behaviors. For example, the presence of bisexual identifications makes it possible for a woman to exhibit the traditionally masculine characteristics of competitiveness and assertiveness (Bassin, 1996; Stimmel, 1996; Elise, 1997). And further, gender queer (Austin & Goodman, 2016; Frohard-Dourlent et al., 2016) may

finally evolve to normalize non-binary for individuals who do not identify as male or female (Hein & Cox, 2017).

In this thesis, applying notions of queer theory, I inquire how polarized masculinity and femininity are transformed and constructed in contemporary young Chinese doll-mommies' and doll-daddies' playing, and examine the possibility of breaking away from traditional performances of masculine and feminine identity.

1.4 Research Methodology

Methodological Approach

This study adopts a virtual ethnography methodology. Virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000, p.5), an online research method that adapts ethnographic methods to the study of the communities and cultures created through computer-mediated social interaction, is also sometimes referred to as: cyber ethnography (Robinson & Schulz, 2009, p.685), digital ethnography (Murthy, 2008, p.837), internet ethnography (Sade-Beck, 2004, p.45; Boyd, 2008, p.212), ethnography of virtual spaces (Burrell, 2009, p.181), ethnographic research on the internet (Garcia, Standlee, Bechkoff, and Cui, 2009, p.52), internet-related ethnography (Postill & Pink, 2012, p.123), and even "netnography" (Kozinets & Kedzior, 2009, p.3).

As modifications of ethnography, the common denominator for these approaches is that they all designate particular variations regarding the conduct of online fieldwork that adapts ethnographic methodology (Varis, 2016, p.55). These approaches focus on online life by examining blogs, chat rooms, and other online interactions (Hallett &

Barber, 2014, p.309).

Additionally, there is an emergent strand of online ethnography that focuses on the embodied experience of the online researcher as a vital source of insight in its own right (Hine, 2017, p.408), that is, autoethnography. Autoethnography has been established as a means to tap into subjectivity and expose hidden structures of feeling not amenable to the more conventional ethnographic accounts which are always limited by what participants can verbalize and recount to ethnographer (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Ellis, 2004; Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, 2010). Accordingly, the goal of my endeavor in this project is not only to describe the BJD culture and Chinese youth culture presented on social media sites such as BJD Bar and BJD Tsukkomi Bar, but also make an account of my personal experience of that culture.

In the following paragraphs, I reflect on my methodological practices and decisions informed by a virtual ethnography approach to do qualitative research.

Research Design

In this project, I endeavored to illustrate the lived experiences of “doll-mommies” and “doll-daddies” in a network-based, stratified, market-based, and globalized context. I started with the following questions: How do these young doll-mommies and doll-daddies engage in BJD culture? Also, how does their engagement in BJD playing presented online reflect the current situation of Chinese society in various domains?

When choosing the research sites for this study, I took into consideration that BJDs, as well as doll-mommies and doll-daddies, can be found on many social media sites in

contemporary China, such as BJD Bar (bjd ba) and BJD Tsukkomi Bar (bjd tucao ba) under the site of Baidu Tieba (Baidu post-bar), Sina Weibo (Sina micro-blogs), Sina Blogs (Sina boke), LOFTER (lehu), Meipai (meipai), Tik Tok (douyin), Bilibili (bilibili), and even Facebook and Instagram. However, Facebook and Instagram are currently blocked in mainland China, and there is no highly-organized community of doll-mommies/daddies on these sites. In contrast, BJD Bar, which is the largest and the most popular internet community related to BJD in China, has 292,442 members and 12,527,900 topics¹², while BJD Tsukkomi Bar has 100,513 members and 2,743,434 topics¹³ as of August 2018. Thus, BJD Bar and BJD Tsukkomi Bar - two BJD-centered online forums - were chosen as the primary social media sites for my research, because of their relatively large population of Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies. The target population for this research project was mainly members of BJD Bar and BJD Tsukkomi Bar. Taking into account of registered members who own multiple accounts on both sites and people who have no registered account but own BJDs, the estimated number of doll-mommies/daddies would be around 220,000 to 230, 000. Meanwhile, Sina Weibo and other resources such as QQ Chatrooms and Taobao Online Stores related to BJDs were consulted when needed, to offer additional information about social contexts and additional examples of Chinese BJD culture.

In this project, I applied the thickening strategies proposed by Latzko-Toth,

¹² BJD Bar (n.d.). *The Homepage of BJD Bar*. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/f?kw=bjd&ie=utf-8>

¹³ BJD Tsukkomi Bar (n.d.). *The Homepage of BJD Tsukkomi Bar*. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/f?ie=utf-8&kw=bjd%E5%90%90%E6%A7%BD>

Bonneau, and Millette (2017) for facilitating long-term online observation and manual data collection (p.199).

According to Latzko-Toth et al. (2017, p.202), the term “thick data” resonates with “rich data” used by Howard Saul Becker (1970) to refer to dense, highly textured and contextualized sociological data, by which the credibility of findings is achieved and maximized (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p.237). As highlighted by Wang (2016, para.1), thick data may be small in terms of sample size, but it offers “incredible depth of meanings and stories.” Long-term observation and manual data collection are two typical applications of thickening strategies. Through long-term observation, researchers can collect a vast amount of data about the language, culture, rituals, symbols, and values of the community (Latzko-Toth et al., 2017, p204). Meanwhile, manual data collection is applied when researcher’s study is not circumscribed to a well-defined community, or if data search criteria cannot be predefined around a specific socio-demographic profile (Latzko-Toth et al., 2017, p.204).

In this project, over 12,000 topics under the “Pics (tietu)” category from January 1, 2016 to August 31, 2017 in BJD Bar, as well as all topics from page 1 to page 100 in BJD Tsukkomi Bar, were reviewed and collected as primary data. Since the number of comments/replies under each topic can reflect the popularity and topicality of the topic, the top 10 topics with the highest number of comments in each month were then selected to constitute a sample of 200 topics (see Appendix A: Number of Comments and Sites of 200 Sample Topics in BJD Bar). Additionally, some specific subjects were

frequently mentioned each month (or on each page) for over five times in the last twenty months, such as the sexuality of BJD owners, the relationship between doll-mommies/daddies and their BJDs, and offline meetings. Accordingly, another 30 related topics from BJD Bar and 20 related topics from BJD Tsukkomi Bar were also selected for analysis in the thesis as supplements (see Appendix B: Sites of 50 Supplement Topics in BJD Bar and BJD Tsukkomi Bar).

I then conducted a qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980; Bell, 2001; Mitchell, 2011). I took both text (such as subjects and comments) and non-text contexts (such as photographs of BJDs produced by BJD companies or individuals) in the selected topics as examples. I also produced the codes or themes through inductively analyzing in detail (Julien, 2008, p.121) in this thesis. In this way, I was not only able to bring readers knowledge about the appearance of BJDs and how BJD owners interact with them, but also to offer my analysis of these texts/photographs and related issues.

Research Reflection

Regarding insider-outsider roles, an insider is usually defined as someone who shares similar characteristics, roles, or experiences with those being studied (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.54) and who “can provide insights, inner meanings, and subjective dimensions that are likely to be overlooked by outsider (Hamdan, 2009, p.381)”. In contrast, outsiders are researchers who are not seen as similar to their participants and being argued as lacking empathetic understanding (Couture, Zaidi, and Maticka-Tyndale, 2012, p.90). Accordingly, in this BJD-centered research, my identity

as a 25-year-old Chinese doll-mommy with 33 BJDs so far and a registered member in both BJD Bar and BJD Tsukkomi Bar has made me an insider researcher.

There are particular pitfalls facing insider researchers. Judie Taylor (2011) highlights the concerns for role displacement or confusion and the vulnerability of friendship elements. Researchers' connectedness to their culture, and indeed their emotional attachment to their friends, may make them resistant to an unsympathetic critique of the field. Or if they brave an unsympathetic critique, they may be at risk of damaging or losing their closeness to the field or someone within it. She argues that it is essential to create a sufficient distance between researcher and culture and to provide full disclosure of research's aims and intentions (p.15). Thus, the relationship should be viewed as multiple and fluid, rather than as a fixed binary between "insider and outsider (Sultana, 2007, p.377)". In this vein, researchers must acknowledge that one can never be entirely an insider among their research participants due to the power dynamics between the researcher and researched (Berger, 2015, p.219) and other possible differences between them.

In my case, two years of living and studying in Canada and being influenced by Western culture consciously and unconsciously has helped create a physical and emotional distance. A more difficult aspect is that there remain some "terms" and "common sense" in the BJD Zone, which are accepted among Chinese doll-mommies/daddies, concerning how they relate to and communicate with each other, it becomes so "natural" among BJD owners as to become virtually invisible.

However, such rudiments are still unfamiliar to the public who have never been in contact with BJDs and doll-mommies/daddies before.

In the case of my project, I have paid attention to ensuring that terms used by doll-mommies/daddies in daily communication are precisely translated from the Chinese vocabulary and explained. Self-critique and reflexiveness have allowed me to gain some distance from the familiar and to unlearn the seemingly natural ways of my own and other doll-mommies' and doll-daddies' behavior and vocabulary that relate to the BJD culture.

1.5 Thesis Outline

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. The first chapter is the introductory chapter which provides a detailed explanation of what research project entails and includes the following: the illustration and background of BJDs, empirical literature review, theoretical perspectives, research methodology, and the thesis outline.

The second chapter is the first of the four analysis chapters. It examines the value of BJD-centered social media sites as new spaces for doll-mommies and doll-daddies, and how these BJD owners represent themselves and manage their identities online. I briefly provide some background discussion about Web 2.0 and "the Great Union of BJD-Centered Bars", and their meanings to doll-mommies and doll-daddies as a virtual space which breaks the limitation of time and space and provides a unique form of socialization. What follows is an analysis of the characteristics and meanings of doll-mommies' and doll-daddies' self-representation online. Drawing on Goffman

(1959), I contend that the way they are making self-representation and impression online is both public (front stage performance) and private (back stage performance).

The third chapter discusses consumption stratification in relation to BJDs and BJD-related products, which, I contend, reflects consumption stratification in China more broadly. Drawing on an online survey and four categories of BJD owners' consumption stratification in the Chinese BJD market, I argue that doll-mommies/daddies in higher social strata are more likely to engage in consumption for recreation and fulfillment as opposed to survival, the so-called development-oriented consumption. Meanwhile, the social structure in China is taking an ongoing transformation into an olive shape. Further, by examining the controversial tuhao (nouveau riche) and conspicuous consumption in the BJD Zone, I argue that how materialism influences contemporary Chinese BJD owners.

The fourth chapter discusses how Chinese cultural identification presents and constructs the contemporary Chinese BJDs and BJD-related products. First, I analyze the fair skin preference in the current Chinese BJD market to argue that it is shaped by Chinese traditional cultural ideas, class, political and racist perspectives, as well as the blurring boundary between "self" and "other" owing to the growing cultural globalization. Second, by analyzing three primary applications and two critical strategies of inheriting and constructing Chinese cultural identity in the current BJD market, I argue that the Chinese cultural identity as seen in the BJD market absorbs elements from traditional culture, popular culture and multicultural interaction. It is a

situation that could be described as “global-minded” but “Chinese-hearted”.

The fifth chapter focuses on how gender and sexuality issues arise for both male and female BJD fans in contemporary China. I argue that doll-mommies’ and doll-daddies’ BJD playing represents both liberation and limitation of gender and sexuality. I analyze the controversial understandings of gender and sexuality in three aspects: the changing thoughts of the sexuality in China, the ways in which doll-mommies perform femininity and project imaginations about masculinity, and the ways in which doll-daddies express their masculinity when engaging in BJD playing.

In the sixth and final chapter, I summarize the main findings of this thesis and key takeaways from this research. I reflect upon this thesis’s contributions to scholarship. I end the thesis with some discussions about the study’s limitations and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Space and Self-Representation of Doll-Mommies and Doll-Daddies

In this chapter, I explore the value of social media sites like BJD Bar and BJD Tsukkomi Bar as new spaces for doll-mommies and doll-daddies, and how these BJD owners represent themselves and manage their identities online.

Firstly, before describing the meanings of BJD-centered social media sites to doll-mommies and doll-daddies, I will provide some background for Web 2.0 and “the Great Union of BJD-Centered Forums”, in order to better understand how Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies represent themselves and manage their identities online. As I will later demonstrate, doll-mommies and doll-daddies visiting these virtual world bars are not only audience members but also content creators (Craig, 2013, para.1; Brake, 2014, p.591). I argue that social media sites, such as the BJD-centered bars, not only establish a virtual space breaking the limitation of time and space, but also provide a unique form of socialization for doll-mommies and doll-daddies. Notably, youth can improve their aesthetic abilities and hands-on practical work (Abrahams, 2008, p.iii; Zhang et al., 2018, p.1262), as well as the capacity to interact with others (Perret-Clermont et al., 2003, pp.3-10; Lee et al., 2013, p.344). Following Pearson (2009), I further argue that the boundary of the virtual space provided by social media sites is blurring the public and the private.

Secondly, drawing on Goffman (1959), I contend that the ways young Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies making self-representation and impression online are

both public (front stage performance) and private (back stage performance). In the context of this section, I examine two typical meanings of self-representation in the BJD-centered bars: 1) navigating to search for identification and belonging, which enables users to feel more self-aware and connected; 2) supplementing users' physical worlds with an escape from the restraints of their real-life identities.

In the mutual selection process of making self-representation and expression online, doll-mommies and doll-daddies rely on strategies for self-enhancement with positive and favorable claims about themselves (Chu & Choi, 2010, p.415). They use an "internal language system" to establish the foundation of a shared cultural memory and sense of belonging (Falk, 2005, pp.207-212). They can maintain and reinforce their aesthetic views, interests, language habits, lifestyles and other aspects of their offline lives (Buckingham, 2008, p.25; Valentine & Holloway, 2002, p.302). Alternatively, some may even rebel against or attempt to escape from traditional parental power, distinct consumption or aesthetic values among peers, and even societal legal or moral norms of their real lives (Lincoln, 2012, pp.193-199; Fu, 2017).

2.1 BJD-Centered Bars as Space for Doll-Mommies and Doll-Daddies

Web 2.0 has given rise to a series of new internet products and services in China, such as social media sites like Teiba (post-bars), blogs (boke), and Weibo (micro-blogs), through which Chinese internet users can interact and collaborate with each other. Scholars have argued that the rise of Web 2.0 means that internet users are audiences as well as content creators in this virtual world (Craig, 2013, para.1; Brake, 2014, p.591).

According to *the 30th Statistical Survey Report on the Internet Development in China* (CNNIC, 2012), the main body of netizens in China consists of young people under the age of 30, who constitute over 55 per cent of the total population of Chinese netizens (pp.10-18). Highlighted by Qu (2016), compared to their parent's generation, young Chinese people have experienced not only the most prosperous 30 years in the history of modern China but also the most profound transformation in mass media from the age of traditional media to new media (p.133). With the rapid development of Web 2.0, more and more young internet users in China have begun to participate in the kinds of internet performance that were dominated by professional artists and even propaganda departments in the past. Therefore, these performances on the internet, especially on social media sites, have offered a window through which we can understand what Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies are thinking about.

Among various social media sites in contemporary China, the most popular one to BJD owners is established on Baidu Tieba (Baidu Post Bar). Established on December 3, 2003, it is the largest Chinese communication platform provided by the Chinese search engine company Baidu, and its slogan reads, "Born for Your Interests" (wei xingqu er'sheng)¹⁴. Since then, a series of bars centered on BJDs such as BJD Bar (BJD ba; 2008), BJD Sales Bar (BJD jiaoyi ba; 2011), BJD Tsukkomi Bar (BJD tucao ba; 2012), BJD Handmade Bar (BJD zizhi ba; 2012) and BJD Flea Markets Bar (BJD tiaozao ba; 2013) have been established and ultimately they have formed "the Great Union of

¹⁴ Baidu Baike (n.d.). *Tieba*. Retrieved from <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E8%B4%B4%E5%90%A7?fromtitle=%E7%99%BE%E5%BA%A6%E8%B4%B4%E5%90%A7&fromid=95221>

BJD-Centered Forums” (BJD tieba da lianmeng)¹⁵. As the most popular bar in this union, BJD Bar has more than 251,000 members, 12,096,800 topics, three moderators (da bazhu) and eight vice-moderators (xiao bazhu) as of September 2017¹⁶. In these bars, doll-mommies and doll-daddies visiting these virtual world bars are not only audience members but also are content creators. For example, on the BJD Bar networking site, moderators and vice-moderators group topics into five major categories as per established rules: 1) “Pics” (tietu), where doll-mommies and doll-daddies can present photographs of their BJDs and record her or his daily life with dolls; 2) “Birth” (chusheng), which allows the recording and celebrating of the “birth” or moment a BJD comes home; 3) “Recording for Personal Handwork of BJD Products” (zizhi), where doll-mommies and doll-daddies represent their handwork skills and achievements of their BJDs as well as BJD-related products; 4) “Sample Work by BJD Makeup Artists” (zhuanglou), where BJD makeup artists can exhibit their work and attract doll-mommies and doll-daddies; and 5) “Sales of BJD and BJD Products” (fanshou), for BJD sellers to announce media campaigns for new products. General doll-mommies and doll-daddies in the bar can participate in internet presentations that were dominated by topic originators and even moderators or vice-moderators who manage these topics, thus further promoting and contributing new content by leaving comments and communicating with each other.

¹⁵ Fu, H. (2015, October 1). *Rules: Survival Manual in BJD Tsukkomi Bar (Updated Edition)*. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4089633733>

¹⁶ BJD Tsukkomi Bar (n.d.). *The Homepage of the BJD Tsukkomi Bar*. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/f?ie=utf-8&kw=bjd%E5%90%90%E6%A7%BD>

It is worth mentioning that BJD owners in China comprise a hobbyist community established by their shared fascination with BJDs, regardless of their relationships and physical distances in real life. On the one hand, the estimated total number of contemporary Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies, based on the membership of “the Great Union of BJD-Centered Forums” is around 250,000, which accounts for only 0.10 per cent of the Chinese population between the ages of 15 and 24 years old in 2010, according to *United States Population Division* (2014)¹⁷. As a result, searching for like-minded friends in real life is far more difficult for doll-mommies or doll-daddies than on BJD-centered bar sites, where anyone with a shared interest in BJDs can establish a virtual space. Considering the shared interest in BJDs is the basis for online communication, instead of the degree of intimacy that might exist in real life, doll-mommies and doll-daddies can effectively find more partners online, as well as explore different style preferences and various experiences related to BJDs. On the other hand, distinct from the primary activity of American and other Western young people’s social media behaviour, which Boyd (2007) calls “friending” or searching for pre-existing friends (p.213), Chinese youth tend to explore a self beyond the realm of what they can exhibit in front of people they know so as to avoid shame or judgment (Wang, 2013, p.24). In this process, young Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies develop these BJD-centered bars as space that gives them the confidence to form ideas about themselves and their dolls outside of the primary institutions of family and school

¹⁷ According to Population aged 15-24 (Thousands) (2014) (*United Nations Population Division, 2014*), the population of youth between 15 to 24 years’ old was 242, 244,150 in 2015.

that have shaped their lives.

Although the ongoing censorship of political content on the Chinese internet means that most web services in China focus on entertainment (Wang, 2013, p.23), this does not mean that contemporary youth are only using the internet for casual fun. Instead, social media sites supported by entrepreneurial efforts and innovative individuals make the Chinese internet a lively venue for the young “internet generation” to inhabit. In other words, by using entertainment platforms such as BJD Bar to share and admire photographs of BJDs, doll-mommies and doll-daddies can improve their aesthetic abilities and hands-on practical work (Abrahams, 2008, p.iii; Zhang et al., 2018, p.1262). Meanwhile, they can also improve their capacity to interact with others and to create meaningful online relationships as a unique form of socialization (Perret-Clermont et al., 2003, pp.3-10; Lee et al., 2013, p.344). Specifically, apart from the expertise obtained through the exchange of manual skills and experiences with making BJD-related products and BJD photography, these practitioners are honing communication skills by describing their unique ideas in the comments section of BJD Bar, setting goals for adjusting interpersonal relationships and protecting their individual personality as well as discussing interests in BJD Tsukkomi Bar. Of the 45 samples selected from the first one hundred pages of BJD Tsukkomi Bar, more than 40 revolve around how to deal with relationships with parents, relatives, peers and other acquaintances who do not respect or understand their roles as doll-mommies/daddies. By discussing and attempting to resolve such problems in their daily lives,

doll-mommies and doll-daddies learn ways to mitigate loneliness (Pole & Steven R, 2009, p.273) and to relate to peers (Tran & Lee, 2011, p.456) through their daily communications and access to emotional support from interested friends with similar online experiences. Additionally, offline BJD meet-ups, such as a private tea party (see Figure 2.1) and organized conventions such as BJDP, SHDP and CDDP also offer Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies the opportunity to engage in face-to-face communication and interaction, which further strengthens their relationships within the community beyond the internet.

Figure 2.1: A private tea party for BJD owners held in a café in Chengdu (Gao, 2016).



Further, the boundary of the virtual space provided by social media sites is currently blurring between public and private. Pearson (2009) discusses the “glass bedroom metaphor” that social media sites have become, that is, a bedroom with walls made of glass and a bridge that is partially private and partially public, constructed online through signs and language (see Lincoln, 2012, p.193). BJD Bar, for example, contains content and comments posted for viewing by strangers, which represents the public sphere, as well as private conversations and intimate exchanges between

doll-mommies and doll-daddies, which represents the private sphere. Both spheres contribute to more deliberate and constructed external displays. While the public realm seemingly affords greater status and a mark of independence for a young person, there is by no means complete separation of the public and private realms as spaces of identity, and there appears to be an interplay between the two spheres (Lincoln, 2012, p.199). In such a process, boundaries between public and private life are conceptualized, crossed, and eventually blurred. The notion of boundary crossing is not merely a physical strategy of connecting one space to another, but also a metaphorical strategy where new media and internet communication technologies (ICT) play a key role in the reformulation of cultural and social boundaries for young people. As Abbott-Chapman and Robertson (2009) note, the cultural understanding of “free time” and “free space” is rapidly changing (p.422). While ICT help increase the confusion and distortion of space and time expressed in post-modern pop culture, ICT such as Web 2.0, Web 3.0 and now Web 4.0 also create new subjectivities as interactive tools, enabling users to explore personal ideas and test theories of self in continually changing spaces.

2.2 Doll-Mommies and Doll-Daddies’ Self-Representations and Online-Identity Performances

As emerging media such as Tieba becomes prevalent in China, younger generations, especially doll-mommies and doll-daddies, who find it difficult to find companions in real life due to negative attitudes towards young people who own BJDs, are increasingly turning to internet-mediated communication for relationship formation

and maintenance as well as self-representation and identity management.

Self-representation or impression management refers to a process by which individuals engage in managing impressions others form of them and controlling information in their everyday lives (Goffman, 1959; Schlenker & Pontari, 2000, p.199). Goffman's (1959) work has established the presentation of self as a critical theoretical framework for understanding how one's identity gets communicated to others. In explaining his work, he uses the metaphor of an actor performing a role in a play on both the front of the stage and the back of the stage, to explain how youth communicate or express themselves to the audience. Goffman also notes, "front stage performances" are regulated by the social and cultural constructs of public spaces and there is a system of codes and conventions that regulate these spaces within which the "standardized performance" takes place, while "back stage performances" are regulated by the codes and conventions of the private realm, within which the individual has arguably more control (p.28).

Accordingly, Chinese BJD owners' online self-representations are composite results influenced by social and cultural factors as well as individual preferences. On the one hand, BJD-centered virtual bars can provide doll-mommies and doll-daddies the confidence to form ideas about themselves and their dolls outside of primary institutions such as family and school, as well as the application of anonymity, thus making the space relatively private and free for doll-mommies and doll-daddies. On the other hand, due to the free access of these bars to all internet users and censoring by the

Chinese government, doll-mommies and doll-daddies must follow specific rules when posting content and leaving comments. Thus, the ways young Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies making self-representation and impression online are both public (front stage performance) and private (back stage performance).

In what follows, I summarize two typical modes of self-representation in BJD Bar and BJD Tsukkomi Bar: 1) navigating to search for identification and belonging, which enables users to feel more self-aware and connected; 2) supplementing users' physical worlds with an escape from the restraints of their real-life identities.

Navigating for Identification and Belonging

BJD owners explore their identification and sense of belonging through the virtual world of BJDs, which enables them to feel more self-aware and connected. Without geographical or temporal boundaries, the internet, in general, provides a place where individuals, with control over the amount and type of information disclosed, can present themselves to potential audiences from around the world (Jung, Youn, and McClung, 2007, p.24; Sanderson, 2008, p.912). Meanwhile, the internet also allows individuals to highlight desirable aspects of their personality in self-representations that may be appealing to online audiences (Dominick, 1999, p.35; Kim & Papacharissi, 2003, p.100; Sanderson, 2008, p.912). In this sense, the process through which doll-mommies and doll-daddies present themselves, by selecting subjects and content in BJD Bar, is a two-way process: firstly, doll-mommies and doll-daddies control their BJD Bar audience by posting in such a way that filters out of future comments made by

“outsiders” (people who know nothing or very little about BJDs). In other words, the audience can be chosen. Similarly, an audience can choose to read topics from specific categories, such as “Pics,” “Birth,” “Personal Handwork of BJD Products,” “Sample Work by BJD Makeup Artists,” and “Sales of BJD and BJD Products,” which are also consolidated according to specific rules in the bar, thus filtering out content that does not interest them. Since this is a mutual selection process, initiators and readers in BJD Bar develop and maintain a sense of identification with each other.

Because the younger generation in China enthusiastically forms relationships with strangers via social media sites, they are more likely to rely on strategies for self-enhancement with positive and favorable claims about themselves (Chu & Choi, 2010, p.415). Taking examples from the five major categories of topics in BJD Bar, initiators of content in “Pics” and “Birth” can display their love and care of dolls, as well as their techniques for doll decorating and photography. Meanwhile, those who post in the categories of “Personal Handwork of BJD Products,” “Representation for BJD Makeup Artists,” and “Sales of BJD and BJD Products” can play up their strong creativity, great manual skills and rich experiences in BJDs and BJD-related product creations. In addition, the establishment of a “boutique area” (jingpin qu) in BJD Bar, where high-quality photographs of BJDs are posted, further emphasizes a sense of identification that only works with high approval ratings and appreciation from others within the community, and motivates doll-mommies and doll-daddies to present self-enhancement with positive and favorable claims about themselves. By creating

new cues to stimulate supportive exchanges (Wang, 2013, p.227), doll-mommies and doll-daddies can establish relationships of understanding and trust between strangers gradually and strengthen mutual connection within the community eventually.

Furthermore, language usage by these youth in the BJD-centered bars also establishes the foundation of a shared cultural memory that is vastly different from the discourse of “outsiders,” which further strengthens doll-mommies’ and doll-daddies’ sense of belonging. There remains a unique “internal language system” (Falk, 2005, pp.207-212) in the contemporary Chinese BJD Zone. For example, use of slangs in the BJD Zone can be categorized into three groups according to the context: 1) referrals to specific sizes of BJDs, such as “one-third scale” (sanfen), which means large full-sized dolls; 2) referrals to specific groups of people in the BJD Zone, such as “a small piece of pure white paper” (xiaobai), which refers to neophytes who know little about BJD-related things; and 3) terms used during BJD-related product sales. Interestingly, when talking about monetary units, doll-mommies and doll-daddies use the word “rice/metre” (mi) instead of “yuan” (the monetary unit of China).” In all these contexts, language is used by doll-mommies and doll-daddies as a means for distinguishing the Self (as an insider) with specific knowledge about BJDs from others (outsiders) who do not know about BJDs. In the process, doll-mommies and doll-daddies maintain an identification that is recognized and marked by other people within the community based on their shared “internal language system.” (Falk, 2005, pp.207-212)

Subsequently, the common set of behaviours, such as usage of same slangs, can further

solidify the foundation of shared cultural memory among doll-mommies and doll-daddies in China, and strengthen their sense of belonging.

Supplement and Escape of Identities in Offline Space

Online identity performance is also employed by Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies both as a supplement to reinforce their real lives and as an escape from the restraints of their real physical identities.

On the one hand, doll-mommies and doll-daddies' performance online is an extension of their self-representation and impression in the virtual world, but is also mutually constitutive with their identities in real life. Typically, their online self-representations on social media sites like BJD Bar can be understood as performances according to norms and expectations of different contexts (Buckingham, 2008, p.7). Resonating with the study of Valentine and Holloway (2002), participants' identity performances on social media are mutually constitutive with their identities in real life (p.302). In this way, doll-mommies and doll-daddies tend to perform deeply normalized identities through "lightweight" content (Itō & Okabe, 2005, p.257) such as presenting a new costume bought for a BJD, celebrating a "birthday party" for a BJD's coming home anniversary, or exchanging experiences of applying BJD facial makeup. In this way, doll-mommies and doll-daddies can maintain their relationships with friends from different social contexts of their real lives. In this case, online self-representations are used to maintain and reinforce their aesthetic views, interests, language habits, lifestyles and other aspects of their offline lives, as a supplement to

reinforce their real lives.

On the other hand, doll-mommies and doll-daddies also are inclined to perform a value-based identity in BJD Bar topics instead of exhibiting it in front of parents or peers (Fu, 2017, p.137), so that distinct value judgments of BJDs and other unusual aspects cannot disrupt their relationships with people in their real physical worlds. In this case, online self-representations incorporating their ideological values are used to escape from the restrictions of the social contexts of their offline lives. More specifically, doll-mommies and doll-daddies rebel against or attempt to escape from traditional parental power, distinct consumption or aesthetic values among peers, and even societal legal or moral norms of their real lives. For example, although same-sex unions are not legal yet in China, a doll-daddy named Mi dresses his two female BJDs in wedding dresses and posts series of photographs of the lesbian BJD couple at their wedding ceremony (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: A lesbian BJD couple at their wedding ceremony (Mi, 2017).



Overall, social media sites like BJD Bar and BJD Tsukkomi Bar are like a “glass bedroom.” With the blurring boundaries between private and public domains, Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies can employ entertainment platforms, as well as interact with other youth and create meaningful relationships with strangers as a form of socialization. As noted by Goffman (1959), identity management and self-representation are everyday practices that involve both front and back stage performance. In such process, doll-mommies and doll-daddies on social media sites can also achieve a sense of identity and belonging through deliberate performances and specific language usages, in order to reinforce their real lives or to escape from the restraints of their real identities.

Chapter 3: The Increasing Social Stratification as Embodied in the BJD

Market

In this chapter, I discuss consumption stratification in relation to BJDs and BJD-related products, which, I contend, reflects consumption stratification in China more broadly.

I argue that the consumption capacity of young BJD owners is rising and shifting from traditional survival consumption to leisure consumption (Ren, 2013, p.208; Wei, 2014, p.102), especially for those in urban areas (Su, 2018, para.6).

Drawing on an online survey of 650 respondents regarding the societal background of BJD owners and their BJD consumption on Wenjuanxing¹⁸, as well as four categories of BJD owners' consumption stratification in the Chinese BJD market, I see consumption stratification as an extension and embodiment of social stratification in contemporary China. On the one hand, doll-mommies and doll-daddies from different social strata have different consumption patterns (Rich & Jain, 1968, p.41; Zhang, 2017, p.7). The higher social strata they are in, the more importance they place on fashion, and the more likely they will be participating in private customization or so-called "Quality Goods" consumption, rather than "Cabbage consumption". On the other hand, consumption stratification in the Chinese BJD market also reflects the ongoing transformation of the social structure into an olive shape (Du & Fang, 2005, p.18; He, 2007, p.123; Han, 2009, p.84), in which the middle class is expanding. It fits in

¹⁸ Wenjuanxing (n.d.). *A Questionnaire Investigation to BJD Fans*. Retrieved from <https://www.wjx.cn/report/5078937.aspx>

with the characteristic olive-shaped structure of “great in the middle, organized in the structure”, but fails in the other characteristics of “small at both ends, no great disparity between them” (He, 2007, p.124), which also reflects the remaining restraints of a traditional pyramid shape (Du & Fang, 2005, p.18; Li, 2005, p.55).

To better understand meanings surrounding doll-mommies’ and doll-daddies’ consumption, I examine the controversial tuhao (nouveau riche) and its various consumption values. Ao (2014) has identified the different meanings of tuhao in Chinese society: in the narrow sense, it refers to those who are ostentatious with their wealth and yet are culturally unsophisticated; in the broad sense, it characteristics of being low-key and cultured rich people (p.71). I discuss the appearance of BJDs Holding (Fake) Owner Cards’ consumption as a particular poignant form of conspicuous consumption among contemporary young Chinese BJD owners (Podoshen et al., 2010, p.17; Jin, Wang, Wang, Li, and Deng, 2015, p.877; Jenkins, 2016, p.115). In contrast, the broader tuhao are represented by doll-mommies and doll-daddies engaging in private customization consumption and Quality Goods consumption, especially ones in the upper class. Furthermore, I argue that BJD owners in the upper class are more likely to cultivate their class distinction (Bourdieu, 1984) by paying more attention to the emotional and social values of BJD-related products, compared to functional values (Sheth, Newman, and Gross, 1991, p.159; Lee, Levy, and Yap, 2015, p.597).

3.1 Mapping Consumption Stratification in the BJD Industry

Generally speaking, doll-mommies’ and doll-daddies’ rising consumption of BJDs

and BJD-related products is in line with the increasing consumption level in China. Ren (2013) classifies consumption patterns in China as conspicuous consumption, fashion consumption, leisure consumption and survival consumption (p.208). In addition, in 2005, McKinsey Greater China, a well-known global management consulting firm in China and corporate advisor to some of the region's major businesses, governments, and institutions¹⁹, categorized Chinese youth into four groups in terms of their consumption levels and behaviours: "youth pursue the fashion" (zhuiqiu shishang xing), "youth from poor families" (jiajing pinhan xing), "youth pursue the comfort" (zhuiqiu anyi xing) and "youth follow and conform to conventions" (xungui daoju xing) (see Wei, 2014, p.104). Under these descriptions, the mainstream of contemporary Chinese BJD consumption fits into the categories of youth fashion and leisure consumption. Moreover, the level of BJD owners' consumption is beyond basic physiological and safety needs, to borrow Maslow's (1943) conception of human needs; instead, it corresponds to belonging, esteem and self-actualization, as well as aesthetic pleasure and spiritual values (pp.394-396).

Meanwhile, it also reflects the growing consumption capacity of Chinese youth, especially those in urban areas. According to Su (2018), the per capita disposable income (PCDI) of Chinese residents in 2017 was 25,974 yuan (approximately US\$3,915) (para.4); in other words, a BJD owner spending between 500 and 10,000 yuan (approximately US\$75 to 1,500) on each BJD would account for 1.92 to 39.5 per

¹⁹ McKinsey & Company (n.d.). *An Introduction to McKinsey Greater China*. Retrieved from <http://mckinseychina.com/about-us/>

cent of the average annual PCDI of Chinese residents. An online survey of 650 respondents regarding the societal background of BJD owners and their BJD consumption on Wenjuanxing, the most established online survey platform in China²⁰, provided more detailed statistical references²¹:

--Initial purchases: 13.54 per cent of the respondents spend less than 500 yuan on their first BJD, 60.46 per cent (the majority) spend 1000 to 2000 yuan, 16 per cent spend 2000 to 3000 yuan, 5.69 per cent spend 3000 to 4000 yuan, 2.46 per cent spend 4000 to 5000 yuan, while 1.69 per cent of respondents spend more than 5,000 yuan, which equals a quarter of the PCDI in China;

--Number of dolls: It is worth noting that BJD owners typically have two to five dolls (excluding ball-jointed animal dolls), which comprises 57.23 per cent of the respondents, 25.54 per cent have only one doll, 13.08 per cent have five to ten dolls, and 4.16 per cent have more than ten;

--Monthly expenditures: 76.46 per cent of the respondents spend less than 500 yuan on average per month on other BJD-related products such as costumes, wigs, and eyes, while 16.77 per cent spend 500 to 1000 yuan, 5.35 per cent spend 1000 to 3000 yuan, and 1.38 per cent may spend more than 3,000 yuan a month.

The wide range of expenditures by BJD owners on BJDs and BJD-related products reflects a more specific consumption stratification in the contemporary Chinese BJD market. Here, I summarize BJD owners' consumption stratification in the Chinese BJD

²⁰ Wenjuanxing (n.d.). *About Us*. Retrieved from <https://www.wjx.cn/html/aboutus.aspx>

²¹ Wenjuanxing (n.d.). *A Questionnaire Investigation to BJD Fans*. Retrieved from <https://www.wjx.cn/report/5078937.aspx>

market into the following four categories: 1) private customization consumption; 2) Quality Goods (haowu) consumption; 3) Cabbage (baicai) consumption; 4) and personal handmade, according to the price level, rarity (or quantity, which reflects the primary supply and demand relationship), sales model (custom-made, quantity-limited, time-limited, or perennial sales) and producers of BJDs and BJD-related products (overseas BJD companies, overseas studios and individuals, local BJD companies, local studios and individuals, or personal handmade).

Private Customization Consumption

In the first category, there is a market for private customized BJDs and BJD-related products, such as a BJD head part that imitates a celebrity, one-off BJD facial makeup, and customized BJD costumes/accessories from original designs by doll-mommies and doll-daddies. Usually, the price of customized products is higher than those in mass production because of their uniqueness.

As reported by Cong (2017) in *Sina News*, Chinese actor and director Jerry Lee ordered a one-off ceramic BJD model (see Figure 3.1, p.54) of his girlfriend Bingbing Fan, a famous Chinese actress and singer and doll-mommy, from Russian Canadian BJD artist Marina Bychkova. The doll was a marriage proposal gift and cost US\$300,000 (para.3). It is an extreme example of private customization consumption and the hierarchy of the BJDs and BJD-related consumption in the contemporary Chinese BJD market.

Figure 3.1: The one-off ceramic BJD ordered by Jerry Lee (Cong, 2017).



Quality Goods Consumption

In the second category, branded, high-quality, marketable hot items are named “Quality Goods” (Haowu) by Chinese BJD owners and are widely accepted in the contemporary BJD market. Quality Goods items vary from limited versions of BJDs produced by the most famous BJD brand in Japan, the Volks, or by other famous overseas BJD brands; high-quality and limited-quantity BJD wigs known as “SK Wigs” (SK Mao) designed and handmade by Chinese doll-mommy Master Wang (Wang Shifu); to BJD facial makeup services provided by famous BJD artists in China such as Kingnut Donkey (Kingnut Lv) and Yige Zongzhi who seldom offer their services to the public.

There is not necessarily a connection between Quality Goods items and their prices. For example, the price of an SK Wig at about 180 yuan (approximately US\$28) is higher than the market price of other ordinary wigs, which sell for about 80 to 120

yuan (approximately US\$12 to 20), while the price of Pool Eyes at about 45 yuan (approximately US\$7) per pair is lower than the market price of other ordinary eyes, which sell for about 50 to 80 yuan (approximately US\$8 to 13). Instead, the standard of Quality Goods emphasizes the added value of rarity and popularity, which are influenced by the sales model and brand impact of these BJD-related products. Generally, Quality Goods items are quantity-limited or time-limited, thus making them more difficult to access than other products. Meanwhile, the choices of specific BJD producers reinforce doll-mommies' and doll-daddies' brand awareness, guaranteeing the quality of the products from another point of view.

Cabbage Consumption

The third category of Cabbage refers to BJDs and BJD-related products that are moderately priced, of reasonable quality and easily accessed, named for the lowly Chinese cabbage in local markets. Generally, items in this category sell well and occupy a significant share of the Chinese BJD market because of their affordability and convenient purchasing channels. Thus there is no economic or competitive pressure in the purchasing process for doll-mommies and doll-daddies who engage in Cabbage consumption. At the same time, Cabbage is also very common in the second-hand BJD market due to availability and fair price. Additionally, there are more detailed sub-categories of Cabbage called Good Cabbage (hao baicai) and Rotten Cabbage (lan baicai), based on the quality and state of preservation of the items.

Personal Handmade Products

In the last category, it is difficult to summarize personal handmade BJDs and BJD-related products, such as individually applied BJD facial makeup or handmade BJD clothes, because usually, items under this category are more like practicing than producing. BJD owners who are producing these handmade items keep them as personal belongings or give them as gifts or low-priced commodities without making a profit. In this situation, doll-mommies and doll-daddies are making these items themselves generally to save money or to reduce the competitive pressure in the purchasing process. Their consumption mainly consists of handcrafting materials, tools, and reference books of manual skills, rather than ready-made or customized BJDs and BJD-related products produced and sold by others.

The consumption stratification in the Chinese BJD market is an extension and embodiment of social stratification in contemporary China. Many scholars argue that different social strata have different consumption patterns. For example, Rich and Jain (1968) classify respondents into different social classes according to Warner's Index of Status Characteristics (ISC) (Warner, Meeker, and Eells, 1949) and demonstrate that the importance placed on fashion varied with social class. Concretely, the higher the class, the more importance is placed on fashion as well as shopping frequency (p.46). Tsang (2014) examines Chinese youth consumption practice as a symptom of inauthentic forms of individualization expressed in their preferences for branded luxury goods, mobile phones, portable computers, and so on (p.5). Zhang (2017) argues that the survival-oriented consumption is relatively high among peasants, the working class,

and the old middle class, whereas the pattern among the new middle class is the opposite, showing a relatively low level of survival-oriented and a relatively high development-oriented consumption (p.1).

Similar conclusions are reflected in doll-mommies' and doll-daddies' daily consumption habits. Firstly, doll-mommies and doll-daddies in the upper class who consider fashion and brand as significant factors of BJDs and BJD-related product consumption prefer private customization and Quality Goods items, on which they may spend more than 3,000 yuan per month. Doll-mommies and doll-daddies in the middle-upper class prefer Quality Goods and Good Cabbage consumption, while those in the middle class prefer the moderately-priced products of moderate quality of Cabbage consumption, and doll-mommies and doll-daddies in the middle-lower class tend to Rotten Cabbage consumption. The influence of fashion remains, but the practicability and availability of products are also considered when making consumption decisions. Finally, doll-mommies and doll-daddies in the bottom class prefer personal handmade BJD-related products to save money without consuming ready-made or customized products sold by others. In a word, doll-mommies and doll-daddies from different social strata have different consumption patterns. Concretely, the higher social strata they are in, the more importance is placed on fashion, and the more likely they will be attempted in private customization/Quality Goods consumption represented high development-oriented consumption, rather than Cabbage consumption and personal handmade represented survival-oriented consumption.

The consumption stratification in the Chinese BJD market also reflects the ongoing transformation of the social structure into an olive shape, in which the middle class is expanding. There have not been specific statistics of each category's share in the contemporary Chinese BJD market so far; however, based on the content in BJD Sales Bar, 128 related topics are found when searching the keywords "customization" (dingzuo), 1,167 related topics are found for "Quality Goods" (haowu), 8,091 related topics are found for "Cabbage" (baicai), and 264 related topics are found for "handmade" (shougong). The overwhelming number of topics related to Cabbage items (83.84 per cent of the 9,650 topics in BJD Sales Bar), which symbolizes middle class spending, fits in with the characteristic olive-shaped structure of "great in the middle, organized in the structure" (zhongjian da, fen cengci) (He, 2007, p.123).

However, the other characteristics of a completely olive-shaped societal structure of "small at both ends, no great disparity between them" (liangtou xiao, bu xuanshu) (He, 2007, p.123) are not yet apparent in contemporary BJD market. The vast expanding gap between the wealthy and the poor is noteworthy when considering Jerry Lee's US\$300,000 private customized BJD purchase, compared to doll-mommies and doll-daddies in the bottom class who choose to make BJD-related products by themselves to save money. In this sense, the consumption stratification of the Chinese BJD market can only reflect the ongoing transforming social structure into an olive shape, while the restraints of a traditional pyramid shape remain.

3.2 Controversial Tuhao in the BJD Industry and Conspicuous Consumption

In contemporary Chinese society, there remains a misunderstanding that possessing BJDs is symbolic of being a tuhao. In the narrow sense, the word tuhao comprises tu (literally: earth) for things that are rural or peasant-like and hao, which means rich, refers to wealthy peasants who have earned their money through entrepreneurial means (Ingebretson, 2017, p.243) and are ostentatious and lacking in cultural taste. In a broader sense, tuhao refers to all the rich regardless of their cultural or living standards (Ao, 2014, p.71). A particular group of Chinese youth are influenced by inaccuracies spread by contemporary media. For example, claims such as, “BJDs are definitely over-luxurious toys for civilians” (Liang, 2008, p.112) and “The price of BJDs will not be capped, but only keep rising” (Qilu Evening News, 2014, para.1), have generated doubts that “If I am not a tuhao, can I still have BJDs?”²²

Not all doll-mommies and doll-daddies are tuhao in the sense that they are rich, contrary to stereotypical views about BJD owners. However, the pattern of conspicuous consumption is nonetheless widespread. This is evident in the rising phenomenon of “BJDs Holding (Fake) Owner Cards (Wawa Jupai)” in the contemporary BJD market. BJDs Holding (Fake) Owner Cards refers to the genre of photographs depicting BJDs of holding a card indicate their owner’s name, except it’s not the real owner’s name (see Figure 3.2, p.60). This is to pretend the dolls belong to someone else. What consumers of BJDs Holding (Fake) Owner Cards purchase is the

²² Zhihu (n.d.). *If I am not a Tuhao, can I still have BJDs?* Retrieved from <https://www.zhihu.com/question/30221720>; similar questions can also be found in Zhihu (n.d.). *Are BJD Owners all Tuhao?* Retrieved from <https://www.zhihu.com/question/22220179/answer/113471306>; and Ai, W. (2016, May 8). *Can I Play with BJDs if I am not a Tuhao?* Retrieved from <https://zhidao.baidu.com/question/370632091064305324.html>

right to use the photograph, rather than the BJDs in the photograph. Such sales of BJDs Holding (Fake) Owner Cards are quite common on Xianyu, a famous second-hand online market in China, with prices ranging from 0.1 yuan (approximately US\$0.015) to 10 yuan (approximately US\$1.50) per photograph. By purchasing BJDs Holding (Fake) Owner Cards from the actual owners of expensive dolls, less affluent consumers can express a pretend ownership of BJDs with a relatively low investment, to further satisfy their vanity of being a tuhao, or the false pride of being rich.

Figure 3.2: The BJDs Holding (Fake) Owner Cards by the doll-mommy Qian (Qian, n.d.)



The appearance of BJDs Holding (Fake) Owner Cards consumption and young consumers' desire to be a tuhao reflect a variant of pretentious conspicuous consumption among contemporary Chinese youth. Originally demonstrated in Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (2007; originally published in 1899), conspicuous consumption is behaviour by which an individual displays wealth through a high degree of luxury expenditure on consumption and services (Trigg, 2011, p.101). In other words, conspicuous consumption is a tendency of the wealthy as well as the not-so-wealthy to buy expensive products, not because they establish a sense of fulfillment. Specifically,

contemporary Chinese consumers have a strong motive driven by social status seeking and position enhancement (Podoshen et al., 2010, p.17; Jin et al., 2015, p.877; Jinkins, 2016, p.115). The difference between BJDs Holding (Fake) Owner Cards' consumption and conspicuous consumption is that these young consumers have not engaged in actual luxury expenditures, but rather have chosen an economical way to purchase photographs of BJDs instead of the actual dolls. However, the emphasis is on neglecting the real value of the BJD and on the exaggeration of the meaning of the display, which concurs with specific tuhao characteristics in the aforementioned narrow sense of being ostentatious and ignorant of cultural taste. These young consumers lack specific knowledge of BJDs, believing that possessing a BJD is a tuhao symbol, which further indicates that they do not have the similar cultural taste to understand and appreciate the BJD culture. Meanwhile, they also want to display their wealth beyond their actual reality falsely. Thus, the consumption of BJDs Holding (Fake) Owner Cards can also be understood as young consumers fulfilling their illusions of being a tuhao.

To sum up, the consumption capacity of Chinese youth is rising, as reflected by activities of doll-mommies and doll-daddies, and it is shifting from traditional survival to leisure status. Focusing on consumption stratification categories of private customization consumption, Quality Goods consumption, Cabbage consumption, and personal handmade production and consumption, the contemporary Chinese social structure reflects the ongoing transition to a trending olive shape, although still restrained by the remaining pyramid-shaped structure characteristics. BJD owners'

consumption behaviours also reveal forms of conspicuous consumption in contemporary China.

Chapter 4: Chinese Culture from a BJD Perspective

This chapter examines how Chinese culture shapes contemporary Chinese BJDs and BJD-related products. I contend that Chinese traditional culture as well as foreign (or global) cultural characteristics informs the final business decisions (i.e., dolls' skin tone, character and costume design). To understand how Chinese culture discursively constructs Chinese BJDs and BJD-related products, we need to take into account various historical, political, racial, and commercial dimensions.

To better understand how Chinese cultural identification constructs and how it influences the contemporary Chinese BJD market, I draw from literature on Chinese whiteness preference (Johansson, 1998; Leong, 2006; Glenn, 2008; Zhang, 2012), cultural globalization (Wang, 2004; Bayart, 2005), and cultural commoditization (Scott & Dominic, 2004; Bao, 2008) to help contextualize the fair skin preference and other phenomena in the current Chinese BJD market.

I argue that contemporary composite Chinese cultural identity in the global context is shaped by Chinese traditional cultural ideas (Johansson, 1998; Zhang, 2012), class, political and racial perspectives (Hunter, 2005; Leong, 2006; Glenn, 2008), and the blurring boundary between “self” and “other” owing to the growing cultural globalization (Wang, 2004; Bayart, 2005). In essence, the contemporary Chinese BJD market reflects a relational production of cultural identities originated from traditional Chinese culture, popular culture and multicultural interaction in the contemporary globalization context.

Further, by analyzing three primary examples of the Chinese cultural identity in the local BJD market, I describe two critical strategies in the process of inheriting and constructing Chinese cultural identity in the context of globalization. These strategies attempt to balance the traditional, popular (or modern) culture, and foreign cultures, and to balance the state's requirement of patriotism and everyday cultural exchange. Overall, the cultural identity of contemporary Chinese youth can be described as “global-minded” but “Chinese-hearted”.

4.1 Traditional Chinese Cultural Ideas in Contemporary BJDs

Although the standard of beauty in China has changed dramatically, the aristocratic-styled male or female BJDs exhibit specific physical features, such as skin tone, eye size and shape, hairstyle, leg length, body shape and even proportions of head-to-body. Probably the most visible feature and critical element in judging beauty and attractiveness of beautiful BJDs is the light skin tones.

To map attitudes towards dolls' skin tones in contemporary Chinese BJD market, I have taken dolls from 15 original Chinese BJD brands as examples, and collect the options of their skin tones offered by these 15 brands currently (see Table 2).

Table 2: Skin tones of dolls from 15 original Chinese BJD brands (based on author's research).

Skin Tone Brand	White		Normal		Special		
	Beauty/Milky White	Pale	Normal Yellow	Normal Pink	Tan/Sunburn	Gray	Green
Dollzone	√		√	√	√	√	
Doll Chateau	√		√	√	√	√	√
Angell Studio	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Loong Soul	√		√	√	√		

Asleep Eidolon	√	√	√			
Xaga	√		√			
Ring Doll	√		√	√		
Dikadoll	√	√	√	√	√	
Mystic Kids	√		√			
Angel of Dream	√		√	√		
AkagiDoll	√		√			
GemOfDoll	√		√	√		
Kids-sky	√		√	√		
Doll Family-h	√		√	√	√	√
HuaJingDoll	√		√			

From the statistics in the table, the common skin tone of BJDs provided by these all fifteen is white/normal (regular). More precisely, three of them further sub-classify the white into beauty/milky white and pale, and nine of them classify the regular into normal yellow and normal pink. Meanwhile, other options for skin tones such as tan/sunburn, gray and green are classified as “special skin colors”. However, only seven brands in the form have put these special colors into options of dolls’ skin tones. It is also worth mentioning that, fewer doll-mommies and doll-daddies choose to order dolls in these special colors, which makes the average production cost of these dolls much higher than those in white or normal colors. Indeed, doll-mommies and doll-daddies who prefer tan or gray dolls have to pay an additional fee as the “toning charge (tiaose fei)”. For example, the toning charge of any BJD with tan skin from Dikadoll is 300 yuan (approximately US\$45)²³.

The options for BJDs’ skin tones in these Chinese BJD brands’ official online

²³ Dikadoll (n.d.). *The Toning Charge of BJDs with Tan Skin*. Retrieved from <https://item.taobao.com/item.htm?spm=a1z10.1-c.w4004-18737919705.6.48a12acezAfc0g&id=574751026912>

stores reflect a clear preference of Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies, that is, these young consumers favour dolls with white/ “normal” skin. It is interesting that when pale and beauty white/milky white BJDs have a pronounced difference from a real person’s complexion, especially Asian complexion, the skin tone of normal pink and normal yellow BJDs are still lighter than real Asian (see Figure 4.1). So, in general, BJDs feature lighter skin tones which are favoured by most of contemporary Chinese BJD consumers.

Figure 4.1: The six options for the skin colors of BJDs (Dikadoll, n.d.).



The preference for light skin tones demonstrated by contemporary Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies’ consumption has a historical background and a traditional cultural root in China. Light-colored skin, hairless and without blemishes, has been praised by the Chinese since antiquity, as the old Chinese saying goes: “One white skin can cover three kinds of ugliness (yibai zhe sanchou)”. Traditionally, this whiteness standard of attractiveness applied to both females and males among the Chinese. In classic Chinese poems, the skin of beautiful women was often compared to “snow”, “ice”, or “jade” to indicate the qualities of transparency, delicacy, smoothness,

and whiteness (Zhang, 2012, p.440), while whiteness was also a vital standard of handsome men in Han Dynasty. One example is the description in *Han Book: Biography of Chen Ping* (hanshu: chenping zhuan): Chen's light skin is as white "as the jade ornament on a man's cap" (ru guanyu) which makes him "a handsome mature man (mei zhangfu)" (see Sun, 2012, p.7). Attitudes to skin color naturally led to all sorts of "treatments" for achieving a desirable skin color or improving an undesirable one (Leong, 2006, p.168). For example, a traditional Chinese myth claims that pearls lighten one's complexion, and a small intake of pearl powder mixed with hot water every day will 'improve' the radiance of one's skin. In a similar vein, pregnant women are advised not to drink too much chocolate milk, or their children will be born dark-skinned, just as it is believed that consuming too much soy sauce will gradually turn fair skin darker (Lilley, 2001, p.140). Influenced by this traditional Chinese aesthetic, most Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies choose to purchase dolls with fair skin, to achieve a desirable skin color for them.

As feminist scholars have argued, beauty is historically and culturally constructed rather than biologically determined (see Zhang, 2012, p.439). Two possible perceptions may further explain Chinese's contemporary taking light-colored skin as a standard of beauty.

Firstly, light skin tones are associated with youthfulness, purity of soul, and nattiness of appearance. As Peng (1998) shows, traditionally the dark or yellow tone of the skin is a typical feature of being ugly and repulsive (chou'e) in Han Dynasty (see

Sun, 2012, p.33). People's skin shows their age through dark spots and the lackluster complexion, accordingly, the preference for whiteness reflects the aversion to old looks and the worshipping of youthful beauty in Chinese traditions. In the meantime, the white color also expresses a sense of innocence and flawlessness, so that people with light skin tones are considered as ones with pure heart and integrity as well.

Secondly, throughout Chinese history, having light-colored skin has also been associated with high social class/status and refinement. As early as in pre-Qin China, laborers were called the "black-headed people" (Johansson, 1998, p.60), illustrating the symbolic distance between landlords and peasants, as well as the association between class and skin color (Dikotter, 1992, p.10). Pale skin proves that people born into wealthy families do not need to engage in manual work in hot and sunny farmlands, while females from these wealthy families are not even allowed to have outdoor activities. Even though the subsequent communist regime demolished the feudalistic social hierarchy and class system, China's market reform and consumerism in the 1990s have also brought back the bias due to the expanding economic divide between the metropolitan area and the countryside. People with fair skin associated with urban residency and the likelihood of being from wealthy and privileged families, while people with dark skin face difficulties and even discrimination because of negative connotations. In other words, the fair skin turns into a trait separating middle-class urbanites from the majority of peasants.

Overall, the whiteness preference has taken on two distinct meanings from a

historical and cultural perspective, as a symbol of physical beauty and inner beauty, or as a symbol of higher social status. In this sense, it offers an alternative interpretation of Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies' preference for whiteness, owing to the Chinese aesthetic pursuits driven and shaped by Chinese traditional cultural ideas.

However, in the current global consumerist context of contemporary China, white skin no longer signifies class and wealth in a domestic context but is now used to construct identity in a globalized culture. In the next section, I further explain the preference for dolls' skin tones.

4.2 Composite Chinese Cultural Identity in the Global Context

In the preceding section, I argued that Chinese traditional cultural ideas offer an alternative interpretation of Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies' preference for whiteness. However, the whiteness preference also reflects colorism and the remaining influence of colonialism. Colorism, standing for the preference for and privileging of lighter skin and discrimination against those with darker skin remains a persisting cultural force in the twenty-first century. Sociologists and anthropologists have revealed that people often make judgments about others on the basis of skin tones, so that darker-skinned individuals are viewed as less intelligent, trustworthy, and attractive than their lighter-skinned counterparts (Herring, Keith, and Horton, 2003; Hunter, 2005; Maddox, 2004). The yearning for lightness, as evident in the widespread and growing use of skin bleaching around the globe, can be seen as "a legacy of colonialism", a manifestation of "false consciousness," and the internalization of "white is right" values

even by people of color, especially women (Glenn, 2008, p.298). After the Opium Wars in the mid nineteenth century, China gradually changed into a semi-colonial society. Since the Incident of September 18, 1931, when the Japanese imperialists started their armed aggression, China was subjugated even more (Mao, 1939, para.13). Although Chinese scholars prefer to attribute the whiteness preference to Chinese traditional cultural ideas, it cannot be denied that European colonialism also played a specific role in the process.

The whiteness preference is deep-seated in contemporary China. For example, in Mainland China, global photo-processing companies compete with each other to produce photographs that make human skin look whiter (Leong, 2006, p.168). According to a report by Asia Market Intelligence (AMI), AMI surveyed people's skin color preferences, questioning 2,350 people in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea and Malaysia. A majority of Hong Kong men (68 per cent) thought their partners would be more attractive with a lighter complexion. Similarly, this phenomenon applied to women's preference in men, many Hong Kong women (45 per cent) also expressed the preference for their partners to be "whiter", though to a lesser extent than men (Leong, 2006, p.168). As Miles (1989) highlights, the meanings of skin-whitening are complex, as they imply not only simple aesthetic preferences, but also "racialized" statements when considered in a broader sociopolitical context (pp.75-77). Fusing traditional and modern ideas of beauty, the preference for dolls with light-colored skin is effectively equating whiteness with modernization. The white skin has become a sign for

desirable “Chineseness”.

Generally, Chinese BJD consumers’ choice of dolls’ skin tones reveals its relationships with class and race in various sociocultural contexts, as well as many possible meanings and symbolic functions of fair skin in forming identities of “other” and “self”. Following Bayart (2005), the culture to which people appeal and on which they draw itself consists of borrowings, and exist only in relation to the other (p.96). The relational production of cultural identities reflects a relationship to “other” as much as a relationship to “self”, especially in the current global context. One of the overarching similarities between the skin color preference and the developing BJD market in China is that both domains appeal to forming identities of “other” and “self”. However, in contrast with the overwhelming whiteness preference in most Chinese’s aesthetics, sometimes, the boundary of “other” and “self” becomes blurred due to the inescapable process of cultural globalization.

The developing Chinese BJD market is also an output of Japanese pop culture to China according to Zhu and Du (2016, p.22). Specifically, Japanese animation, comic and game (ACG) culture and the unique Japanese “nijigen (er ciyuan; literally: two-dimensional space)” aesthetic characteristics are another source of inspiration for contemporary Chinese BJDs’ prototypes. In comparison to real human beings, BJDs usually have proportionately larger heads and eyes and smaller noses and mouths, and show an aesthetics that blurs the boundary of sexualities, which are in line with the current popular styles in Japanese ACG culture.

In short, the contemporary Chinese BJD market reflects a relational production of cultural identities drawing from traditional Chinese culture, popular culture, Japanese and Western influences. In the next section, I will further analyze how such composite Chinese cultural identity adapts, learns, integrates and develops through cultural commoditization process, as the ultimate aim of BJD market is to make greater commercial interests.

4.3 Cultural Commoditization and the Development of “Chinese BJDs”

Currently, there are three primary ways in which Chinese culture is incorporated by in the local production of BJDs: directly transforming Chinese traditional cultural elements into BJDs or related products; fusing Chinese traditional culture and contemporary popular culture in BJD-related products; and taking references from multiple foreign cultures in a creative way.

For example, in the first category, a native Chinese BJD brand Angell Studio has launched a series of original BJD characters based on the Four Beautiful Women (sida meiren) and Four Handsome Men (sida meinan) in Chinese history, as well as characters from one of China’s literary classics *Journey to the West* (xiyou ji) in the last two years²⁴. Additionally, inspired by Chinese traditional set of twenty-four terms about seasons (ershisi jieqi), a large full-sized female BJD named Xia Zhi (the Summer Solstice) was launched in June 2017 (see Figure 4.2, p.73). The designing of these dolls was inspired by Chinese traditional culture.

²⁴ Angell Studio (n.d.). *Display of AS’s BJD Full Collections*. Retrieved from <http://www.as-doll.com/home.php/category/index/pid/2/cid/2/type/new/p/2.html>

Figure 4.2: The BJD named Xia Zhi from Angell Studio (Angell Studio, 2017).



Then, in the second category, we see an intense fusion of Chinese traditional culture and contemporary popular culture in the BJD field. A good example is Fan's original BJD costume named "Meng Bi" Costume Patch (mengbi tuozhan bao) in 2016 (see Figure 4.3, p.74). On the whole, it still follows the traditional patterns of Chinese gown in Han Dynasty in its style and texture²⁵. However, the cloth features a popular emoticon among Chinese youth named "Meng Bi (literally: stunned, off-guard, and confused)". Fan's costume not only elaborately remixes traditional styles and modern patterns but also conveys Chinese youth's current sensibilities. Sometimes, when traditional culture and popular culture integrate as a mature cultural products in popular literature or game domain, they get picked up in the BJD market. For example, one of

²⁵ Fan, L. (n.d.). *The Description of "Meng Bi" Costume Patch*. Retrieved from <https://item.taobao.com/item.htm?spm=a1z10.3-c.w4002-11298364081.35.29e632d7RPhRUz&id=523979395830>

the most famous contemporary Chinese novel series named *Grave Robbery Notes* (*Daomu Biji*) which showcases Chinese traditional burial culture and fengshui knowledge (literally: geomancy) through the grave-robbing adventures of Xie Wu and his companions, has drawn several million fans and sold over 20 million copies from 2007²⁶. In 2016, it authorized an original Chinese BJD brand named Ringdoll to distribute the other lead character, Qiling Zhang in a BJD version (see Figure 4.4, p.75) priced at 4899 yuan (approximately US\$740). Eventually, it achieved a sales record: fourteen Qiling Zhang dolls were sold online within a minute²⁷. Chinese traditional burial culture and the unique fengshui culture provide a rich cultural and historical background for the marketing. This success reflects a growing possibility of cross-border cooperation in contemporary Chinese cultural industries.

Figure 4.3: Fan's "Meng Bi" Costume Patch and the emoticon "Meng Bi" (Fan, n.d.).



Figure 4.4: The BJD version of Qiling Zhang (Ringdoll, 2016).

²⁶ Wikipedia (2018, August 11). *Daomu Biji*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daomu_Biji

²⁷ Ringdoll (2016, November 14). *Express-News of the BJD Qiling Zhang*. Retrieved from <https://m.weibo.cn/1735403893/4041865873606940>



Last but not least, in the third category, BJD designers and producers also take references from multiple foreign cultures in creative ways. For example, the Chinese original BJD costume brand named Yamashita House (shanxia zhai) takes the inspirations from Japanese Lolita fashion and Gothic fashion in its design of doll costume named *The Butterfly Effect* (see Figure 4.5, p.76). On the whole, the design reflects Japanese fashion aesthetics featured by the combination of cute and cool (He, 2009, p.27), but some exotic elements such as gears, representing the Steam Punks style in the West, create a “hybrid” of Western and Japanese fashion styles.

Figure 4.5: Yamashita House’s BJD costume named *The Butterfly Effect* (Yamashita House, n.d.).



Generally speaking, these three main ways to apply Chinese cultural elements in the local BJD market indicate a rising trend of commoditization of elements from Chinese traditional culture, Chinese popular culture, and multiple foreign cultures. In Bao's study (2008) on contemporary Chinese commoditization, he summarized two forms of cultural commoditization, the one as the cultural phenomenon of meeting spiritual demands with information and adopting commodity forms (Cultural Commoditization I), or "Industrialization of Culture (wenhua chanye hua)"; and the other as carrying out commodity marketing and capital appreciation by the auxiliary or main means of information (Cultural Commoditization II), or, "Cultural Added Value (wenhua fujia zhi)" (p.134). In the first form, spiritual and manual works such as designing and creating an original BJD can express BJD artists' thoughts, feelings, opinions and propositions, as well as meeting doll-mommies and doll-daddies' needs. In the second form, cultural products are endowed with more profound cultural

attributes, such as BJDs of the twenty-four Terms of Seasons Series mentioned before, which further adds values by making them “Chinese”.

There are also two critical strategies in the process of inheriting and constructing Chinese cultural identity in the context of globalization. The first is to balance the traditional, popular (or modern) culture and foreign cultures. Generally, the cultural commoditization of Chinese traditional culture is performing three functions simultaneously: preserving traditional culture, transmitting traditional culture, and creatively producing new culture (see Li, 2016, p.434). However, there arises a problem of authenticity of cultural transmission. That is, catering to the tastes of a diverse audience, Chinese traditional culture may transform into a non-original form for the sake of commercial success. Drawing on this concern, Wu (2009) analyzes the relationship between cultural commoditization and the preservation, transmission and development of traditional Chinese culture. Wu further demonstrates that when traditional culture such as folk-customs has lost its origin societal environment, it must follow the corresponding mechanism change following the need of the times and markets; otherwise, it is gradually disappearing by its own limitations and eventually replaced by a more competitive heterogeneous culture (pp.34-36). In 2011, *China Daily* published a series of reflections in “what ails China’s cultural industry” and argued that Chinese cultural industry projects should display innovation and creativity (see Li, 2016, p.438).

From the perspective of commercial values, BJDs embodied with Chinese

traditional cultural meanings recognize, develop and create potential resources in the traditional culture and conform to the needs of the times and markets for greater commercial profits. Meanwhile, from the perspective of Chinese cultural identity, they can still express the embodied unique Chinese traditional aesthetical, historical and cultural backgrounds, which benefits to maintain and promote the cultural identity of specific communities.

Additionally, it is also improper to accept everything passively and even to copy foreign cultures in the process of Chinese cultural creation and production (Zhang, 2009, p.187; Zhao, 2009, p.5; Venturino, 2010, p.219). People do absorb different thoughts and techniques of other countries selectively.

Overall, the BJD world shows that "tradition" is not a concept of stagnation, but an adaptable and flexible one.

The second strategy is to balance patriotism and regular cultural exchange. Even in the domain of dolls, issues such as protecting the dignity of state come up when dealing with controversial BJDs involved in sensitive historical events. For example, in 2013, a Chinese BJD brand Ringdoll launched a BJD named Ijyuin Hayato (yijiyuan sunren), who was a Japanese soldier in the Second Sino-Japanese War. Designers from Ringdoll intended to create the image of a victim of this war from a unique perspective, to appeal for world unity and world peace. However, Ijyuin's identity as an invader has drawn sharp condemnation from Chinese BJD fans. It was accused of ignoring the pain and suffering of Chinese victims in the history and hurting Chinese doll-mommies' and

doll-daddies' national sentiment. Eventually, Ringdoll had to discontinue the product line and made a public apology on January 31, 2013²⁸. The failure of Iuyuin indicates that the Chinese cultural identity is inseparable from the nationalist sentiments.

At the same time, there is also a huge difference between national pride and chauvinism, which may drive calls for categorically boycott foreign BJDs and BJD-related products. China cannot develop in isolation from the world, and its involvement in the process of globalization brings forth social stability and economic prosperity to the country (Zhang, 2009, p.25). It is imperative that China should continue to introduce, communicate and learn from cultures of foreign countries, instead of overestimating itself and pursuing the undesirable ambition of global hegemony.

In a word, through looking at BJD owners' practices around traditional Chinese culture and other cultures, it is safe to say that contemporary Chinese youth can be described as "global-minded" but "Chinese-hearted". Today, although traditional culture as one of the primary pillars in Chinese people's sense of identity is still dominant, its importance is tempered by desires for recreational and commercial satisfactions.

²⁸ Jiu, Y. (2013, February 1.) *News: The Apologize Announcement from Ringdoll*. Retrieved from https://tieba.baidu.com/p/2133227456?red_tag=1275328689

Chapter 5: Gender and Sexuality in the BJD Zone

In this chapter, I discuss Chinese BJD fans' attitudes and practices around gender and sexuality issues. Before describing the changing attitudes, I will provide some background and context on Chinese sexuality and gender culture in order to better understand the current context of such issues in contemporary Chinese BJD Zone. I suggest that the coexistence of sexuality/gender liberation and restrictions in contemporary Chinese society, in a certain extent, has shaped daily online communications between BJD owners. However, at the same time, their practices also indicate transgressing attitudes towards sexuality, suggesting a development of consciousness about gender equality. In this chapter, I have developed analyses in the following aspects.

Firstly, to understand contemporary notions of the sexuality and gender circulating among BJD owners, it is necessary to understand attitudes towards such issues in Chinese history. Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist beliefs on sexuality and bodies (Mann, 2011, p.84), China's sexual revolution triggered by the Open Door Policy in the 1980s and Western influences (Braverman, 2002, para.1), and the Chinese government censorship and public control (Jacobs, 2012, pp.27-42) all contribute to the changing attitudes towards sexuality. On the one hand, my study shows contemporary Chinese youth's intense interest in bodies and encourages youth to experiment with sexuality, instead of evading it. On the other hand, we can also see that the overly-reactionary Chinese government censorship and public control in the name of wiping out

pornography based on the old Law of Obscenity continue to constrain young people in China.

Secondly, as Chinese BJD fans are mostly young women, practices around BJDs are a fertile site for studying young women's performance of femininity (Doucet, 2006, p.35) and social/family roles (Ball, 1967, p.450) and understanding about gender more broadly. The pursuit of female aesthetic needs and the higher societal status (Tang, 2008, pp.18-19; Zhu, 2014, pp.113-115), the changing perspectives of queerness and gender stereotypes (Li, 2000, p.19; Li, 2002, p.26) and the notions of sexual liberation and breaking secular taboos (Yao, 2012, pp.81-83; Liang, 2015, pp.63-64) are demonstrated in playing with BJDs. Furthermore, doll playing can also reveal doll-mommies' conceptions about masculinity, which as I will show indicate a growing sense of gender equality.

Thirdly, in contrast, male BJD owners – doll-daddies – have been pushed to an awkward position due to heteronormativity. Doll-daddies are a minority in the contemporary Chinese BJD Zone shows their marginalization. Instead of expressing a parental love or aesthetic preference directly as most female BJD owners do, some doll-daddies have transformed their obsessions with BJDs into fulfilling their honing of practical skills in BJD art, or, conforming to normative masculinity. Ultimately, the absence of masculine discourse and alienation of Chinese doll-daddies are attributable to the force hegemonic masculinities and stereotypes (Constantinople, 1973, pp.400-404; Bem, 1974, pp.156-162; Bosson & Michniewicz, 2013, p.425)..

5.1 Examining Nudity of BJDs: Liberation and Restrictions of Sexuality and Gender in China

Contemporary notions of the sexuality and gender in the Chinese culture have been profoundly shaped by ideas from ancient China. Specifically, the decoupling of sexual bodies and sin in China's classical tradition made the unclothed physical body inconsequential, as a site of virtue, morality, or beauty (Mann, 2011, pp.84-92). Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist beliefs all contributed to classical ideas about the body as the site of cultivating sexual health and longevity (ibid.). In the classical text recording the teachings of the philosopher Mencius (Mencius 6A.4.), Mencius engaged his disciple Gao Zi in a conversation about human nature: "Gao Zi to Mencius: The need for food and sex is innate to human nature (gaozi yue: shise, xingye)" (see Mann, 2011, p.86). Gao Zi cited appetites for food and sex as "human nature" and therefore "innate", in contrast to "external" or "socially acquired". His words summarized a widely accepted understanding of human nature in early Chinese thoughts: sexual appetites are as "natural" to humans as appetites for food and drink. Such ancient ideas about bodily health produced particular modes of beliefs and practices about sexual difference that came to define "civilization".

The primary objective of such classical instructions was not much sexual pleasure but sexual practice to promote health and long life for men (Harper, 1987, p.548). Sometimes, another objective is also to produce a male heir to continue the family line (Pan, 2006, p.28). In other words, there was also an emphasis on

reproductive orientation in traditional Chinese sexuality, owing much to the prevalence of ancestor worship. This concern encouraged conceptions of loyalty and steadfastness in sexual relations and “seriousness” in sexual behaviors. Although the Taoist rendition of conjugal skills allowed and even encouraged a variety of sexual techniques, Confucian and Buddhist sages of the Chinese past never mentioned any particular method of the sexual act (Pan, 2006, p.28). In late imperial Confucianism, the strict injunction to “watch oneself when alone” produced agonized self-criticism and introspection among men struggling to master their sexual desires (Mann, 2011, p.91). Sexual desire had to be suppressed and restrained, and sexual intercourse was strictly for the moral purpose of having children. In the seventeenth-century school there was a time when a school of Confucian thought condemned the suppression of sexual desire affirmed the intrinsic value of the human body; however it ran into trouble with practitioners (Mann, 2011, p.91). During this period, people’s - especially women’s - sexuality was thrust into the moral discourse. For example, Confucian scholars took caste widows (jiefu) and faithful maidens (zhennv) who pledged a lifetime of loyalty or committed suicide for their deceased fiancés as subjects of commemorative writing. In late imperial times, local and central government gave these caste widows and faithful maidens court testimonials (jingbiao) as recognition and even established state-financed building of stone arches and memorial shrines for them (Lu, 2010, p.183).

In sum, two sets of ideas about sex were pervasive in ancient China. One came out

of the literature of Daoism and yin-yang thoughts, which stressed the importance of the role of sex for improving health and prolonging life. The other set ideas came from a fundamentalist interpretation of post-Buddhist Confucianism that managed sexual desire as a mode of moral self-discipline.

Scholarly works on the sexual revolution in China generally attribute China's changing sexual culture to the introduction of the 1980s Open Door Policy and hence Western influences. According to Braverman (2002), "When China opened its doors to international markets in the early 1980s, it inadvertently let in another modern phenomenon – the West's sexual culture (para.1)." Chinese youth are often described as beings characterized by an obsession with bodies (Clark, 2012, p.57). Clark argued the emergence of rebellious art, bodybuilding, fashion, and even ancient Chinese conceptions of bodily/physical well-being rose in the late 1980s. The contested place of nudity in Chinese art has given China's contemporary artists an opportunity to attribute multiple meanings to the human body.

As well, the traditional equation of sex with reproduction in China began to change with the introduction of the one-child family policy in 1981. The policy completely undermined this traditional notion. After all, the only reason for married people to maintain a sex life after the birth of a single child is for mutual affection and/or pleasure (Pan, 2006, p.29). Consequently, the concept and practice of "sex for pleasure" has emerged and developed in present-day China. Moreover, Pan's (2006) nationwide survey on sexual behaviors and relationships in China in 1999 and 2000,

revealed that what has happened is best described as a sexual revolution, rather than a gradual evolution in sexual behaviors and relationships (p.22).

However, tolerance of nudity in a relatively public domain is still minimal. Although semi-nude bodies has become more present in commercial advertising since the 1990s, especially in foreign advertising, there is still a general absence of nudity in Chinese art, which is usually chalked up to prudishness or government censorship. Tao (2011) discussed a case in 2009: t when someone posted a few Renaissance paintings including *Venus* and *David* on the website the Chinese government censors deleted them in the name of “wiping out pornography”. The web pictures became acceptable only after putting Chinese dresses on these nude figures (p.181). The Chinese government has adopted policies which are aimed at “preventing minors from overindulging on the internet, prohibiting any organization or individual from producing, selling, renting or providing by other means electronic publications and internet information containing pornography, violence, murder, terror, gambling or other contents harmful to minors (Xinhua, 2010, para.7)”. However, bloggers and activists are tired of such censorship and have derisively complained that the Chinese internet has been restricted by the “walled culture” (Jacobs, 2012:41) and called it “a net to catch people” (Jacobs, 2012:42). China’s most prominent sex researcher Dr Yinhe Li, a professor at the Chinese Academy of Social Science, explains that contemporary China is characterized by a rift between its capitalist-utopian visions and its ancient obscenity laws that the ban on online materials is based on the old obscenity laws

(yinhuipin fa). According to Li, the law of obscenity is “obviously outdated and erroneous, but still in effect”, and “for quite a long time there have been two kinds of attitudes crashing against each other: people who want to support these obscenities; and government who doesn’t want them to release their desires.”²⁹

Reflecting the Chinese society, there are various attitudes towards sexuality and gender also present in the BJD Zone. On the one hand, the fact that the BJD bodies have visible sex characteristics seems to indicate Chinese youth’s openness to nudity. Whatever the size of BJDs, large full-size, mini or tiny, these dolls’ genitalia and breast are not deliberately erased like other categories of dolls such as Barbies. For example, a Chinese BJD brand named Loong Soul has launched a 73cm male BJD new body with a “five-piece suit (wujian tao)”, that is, five detachable penises in different states for BJDs (see Figure 5.1). Loong Soul is not the only brand that feature elaborates genitalia design of BJDs in contemporary China. One of its competitors, Doll Chateau, has launched an adult BJD body with a switchable penis (see Figure 5.2, p.87). This innovative design not only effectively ensures the easy switch between erection and lowered conditions of the BJD penis, but also reduces the risk of losing these little widgets.

Figure 5.1: The “five-piece suit” from Loong Soul (Loong Soul, n.d.).

²⁹ The interview with Dr Yinhe Li was carried out in 2010, March 2; see Jacobs, 2012, p.41.

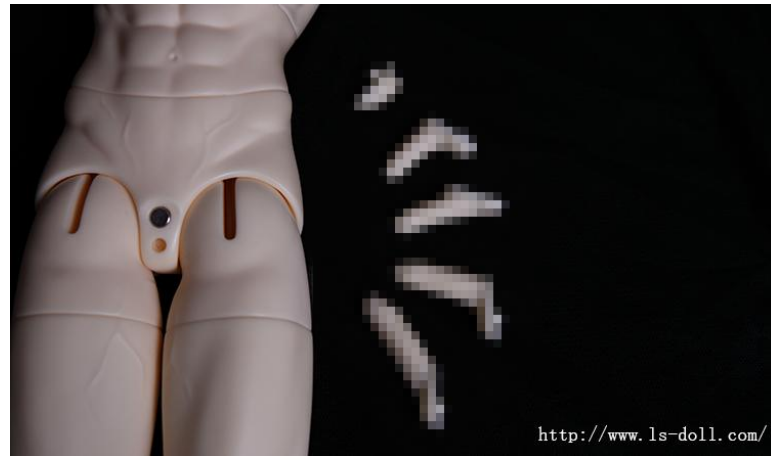


Figure 5.2: The adult BJD body from Doll Chateau (Doll Chateau, n.d.)



On the other hand, the restriction of nudity by Chinese government affects the contemporary Chinese BJD Zone, resulting in deletion of pictures of nude BJDs and disguising of specific terminologies of sexuality on social media. In the face of Chinese government censorship, online BJD sellers have to modify pictures of BJDs' nudity such as covering or blurring sensitive body parts (see Figure 5.3, p.88), in order to avoid being reported and deleted. Meanwhile, a group of banned terminologies of sexuality including “naked, adult, censorship, lust, mistress, and sperm” are on a list of sensitive keywords and are automatically banned by Chinese major search engines (see Jacobs,

2012, p.30). In 2014, the Citizen Lab from the University of Toronto collected 13 lists of sensitive Chinese keywords containing 9054 unique keywords from various sources, for censorship testing and searching for sensitive content³⁰. On these lists, words such as cock (jiba), sex (zuo'ai), anal (gangmen), sperm (jingzi) are included. Moreover, to make a quick examination of some prohibited keywords that may be shielded automatically, Zilaishui and CHurricane developed a non-profit online platform named *Anti-Disguised Device for Online Speaking* containing 9378 terms as of January 2018³¹. Through this device, users can easily find the “sensitive words” in their texts and convert them into legal contents by inserting specific characters, so that these keywords would not be identified and disguised. For example, when some BJD owners complain about their dolls' body figures, the sentence “My doll's ass is too big to fit the trousers I prepared for her” usually displays as “My doll's ** is too big to fit the trousers I prepared for her”, because the word “ass” is identified as a “sensitive keyword”. However, the Chinese word “pigu (ass)” can be translated into “pi^猪gu (a^猪ss)” automatically by the *Anti-Disguised Device for Online Speaking*. In this way, doll-mommies and doll-daddies can continue their daily communications about dolls freely.

Figure 5.3: Myou's BJD tiny-sized girl body in Quan Quan Qiu BJD physical store (Quan Quan Qiu, n.d.).

³⁰ Q. Ng, J. (2004, December 10). *Repository of Censored and Sensitive Chinese Keywords: 13 Lists, 9,054 Terms*. Retrieved from <https://citizenlab.ca/2014/12/repository-censored-sensitive-chinese-keywords-13-lists-9054-terms/>

³¹ Fang He Xie (2018, January 19). *Anti-shielded Device for Online Speaking*. Retrieved from <http://fanghexie.sourceforge.net/>



In the face of Chinese government censorship and public control, two representative groups of doll-mommies and doll-daddies come up with opposite responses. The first group chooses to take designs of BJD's genitals as merely symbolic rather than functional sexual organs. In an interesting case in BJD Tsukkomi Bar, a doll-mommy Da complained that her BJD's detachable penis was always stuck on the stainless material-doll stand because it had a magnet inside³². In the 550 replies under the topic, besides feeling funny or showing sympathy for Da's experience, doll-mommies and doll-daddies agree that they usually do not put on these "useless" parts and are happy with their BJDs being a "eunuch (taijian)". However, despite voicing the view that those erectile penises are "useless", these BJD owners still would like to buy male BJDs with the five-piece suit, rather than choosing nonsexual "angel bodies". Instead of implementing the sexual function, the sex characteristics of BJDs are designed to make them more authentic, more vivid, more detailed, and, more "human-like".

In contrast, the other group chooses to take full advantage of the designs of BJD's

³² Da, A. (2015, June 13). *How Can I Deal with My Doll's Penis?* Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/3825069442>

sex parts, and take suggestive images of their dolls which are called “driving (kaiche)”³³ on the internet. In BJD Bar, there are over 500 topics with the keyword “driving” in the content, and there are also more topics and pictures of BJDs with strong hints of sex (see Figure 5.4, p.90). In these pictures, BJDs are designed to be even more human-like and express more feelings and desires. However, doll-mommies and doll-daddies still have to follow specific rules that “in the pictures of BJDs, male dolls are not allowed to expose his genitals, while female dolls are not allowed to expose her genitals and nipples³⁴”. Generally, the sexual nature of such pictures reflects a strong interest in keeping dolls’ sexual features. This further reveals that these BJD owners are comfortable with nudity and keenly interested in expressing and experimenting with sexuality.

Figure 5.4: Qin’s photography series *Lust* (Qin, 2016).



Overall, I see such various attitudes on BJDs’ sexuality as a compromise between

³³ According to Yang, R. (2017, para.3), the words “sophisticated drivers (lao siji)” and “driving (kaiche)” as Internet buzzwords are always linked together. With the popularity of a Yunnan folk song named *Pick Me Up Please, You Sophisticated Driver* (Lao Sji Daidai Wo) in China, the keyword “sophisticated drivers” is used to refer to people who are experienced and sophisticated in specific fields, especially in sexual relationships. The word “driving” refers to providing erotic resources, such as uploading pornographic pictures, texts or videos on the Internet.

³⁴ Ru, M. (2016, November 11). *The General Guideline of Rules, Documents, Gallery and Resources in BJD Bar*. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4295838907>

Chinese youth's interest in bodies and the Chinese government's censorship. The debates on BJDs' bodies have still inspired young Chinese artists to take bold innovations to design BJDs' body and to encourage doll-mommies and doll-daddies to be open to the sexuality.

5.2 Doll-Mommies' Performance of Femininity and Gender in BJD Playing

Most Chinese BJD fans are young women and the typical relationship mode between these doll-mommies and their BJDs is more like a family connection between the mother and her children. In other words, they are more likely to perform femininity and maternity, or, to do gender, by "raising" and expressing the "maternal love" to their BJD children. For example, there are 5,815 topics in the BJD Bar as of July 2018 with the keyword "son (erzi)", "daughter (nv'er, or guinv)" in the headings referring to their BJDs. In these topics, doll-mommies take care of their BJD sons/daughters by dressing up, providing customized furniture, and even preparing food for them. As highlighted by Doucet (2006), gender-binary women and men participate together to construct the meaning of gender and distinguish themselves from each other as women or as men (p.35) by partaking in activities and expressions that befit their gender (see Doucet, 2014, p.361). In Chinese culture, the parent-child relationship is typically characterized by intense emotion, control, and mutual dependency. The relationship between mother and child is even more intense. Although Wolf (1985) observes that the recent socialist changes make it no longer necessary for urban women to foster this type of parent-child dependency (p.207), the mother-child bond has never disappeared.

According to Jankowiak (2002), contemporary Chinese mothers continue to exercise tremendous psychological control over their offspring and continue to cultivate bonds of the intense emotional dependency (p.375). This pattern is mirrored by Chinese doll-mommies. In other words, doll-mommies' emotional attachment to their BJDs is sustained through a Chinese tradition that legitimizes and promotes an intense lifelong emotional bond between mother and child.

The strong bond between doll-mommies and their BJDs can also be interpreted as the preview of social roles, very like the game of “playing family (guo jiajia; similar to playing house in North America),” in which children act as members of a family and imitate the daily activities of adults. Ball (1967) highlights that toys are socializing devices. They perform this function as rehearsal vehicles upon which role-associated activities are practiced, or as representatives of various social role categories (p.450). BJDs certainly perform these two roles. On the one hand, doll-mommies are prepared for the performance of social roles as “the parent” by “raising their children”. On the other hand, the “life” of their dolls also reflects doll-mommies' different stages of their own life.

For example, there is a frequent subject of topics in BJD Bar named “short plays (xiao juchang)”, in which dolls assume different personalities and interact with each other and with doll-mommies. Specifically, when searching the keyword “short plays” in BJD Bar, 317 topics are about celebrating the birthday for BJDs, 194 topics are about the marriage/wedding between BJDs, and there are even 5 topics about BJDs

getting pregnant and having children. In these topics, doll-mommies can preview future life stages from the perspective of BJDs, such as growing up, getting married, starting and extending their family. As Ball (1967) proposes, while doll play may involve elements of fantasy, it is a fantasy firmly grounded in the social reality of the people upon which it is modeled (p.450).

Chinese doll-mommies' play with BJDs not only performs femininity and previews social roles but also indicates a consciousness for gender equality in China.

Firstly, the pursuits of female aesthetic needs and higher societal status are embodied. Since ancient times, when relations of production and social relations China transformed into the paternal clan mode, women's pursuit of beautiful appearances of men has been regarded as "a violation of feminine virtue (bushou fudao)" (Zhu, 2014, p.113). The society requested women to focus on men's social attributes while ignoring their pursuit of aesthetic attributes. BJDs, especially male BJDs, have offered doll-mommies an alternative approach to fulfill their aesthetic needs. Additionally, the rising popularity of "male beauty consumption (nanse xiaofei)" in the BJD Zone also indicates that women have transformed from aesthetic objects to aesthetic subjects. As Tang (2008) argues, the old male-centered visual culture has assigned men and women in the mode of "see and be seen", urging women to become ornamental/decorative objects in men's eyes and to live in the aesthetic activities dominated by men. However, with the progress of society and the awakening of women's consciousness, this situation has been changed gradually (pp.18-19). Now Chinese doll-mommies can make full use

of their initiative as consumers and determine the “fate” of their male BJDs. Such behaviors transform them into viewers, manipulators and even dominators of male characters, and express a strong effort to subvert the male chauvinism in the contemporary Chinese social reality.

Secondly, some doll-mommies’ behaviors also reflect the changing notions of queerness and gender stereotypes. Despite retaining male genitals and muscle structures, a group of androgynous male BJDs have been created with feminine appearance and dressing/styling. Thus, the boundary between male and female BJDs is getting blurred. For example, the male BJD Olive from Beyours Doll (see Figure 5.5, p.95) which was designed as a wallflower young man incipiently, has been transformed into a powerful female character by her doll-mommy Wu. Wu also assigns a boyfriend for Olive who consciously accepts Olive’s full domination in their relationship (see Figure 5.6, p.95). Wu’s behaviors reflect a notion of the Queer theory, which challenges the connection between sexes, genders, and sexualities, as well as the dichotomy structure of male and female. It is figuring of identity as a constellation of multiple and unstable positions instead of a single and perpetual concept (Li, 2000, p.19; 2002, p.26). Transgender and cross-dressing are both important forms of queer expressions. In the previous case, now Olive is a heterosexual transgender character because Wendy has changed a female body for her. However, when she was a male, her self-identity of gender and sexual orientation was antagonistic to her original “biological” sex. In other words, at that time, Olive’s sex was male while her gender

was female; she was heterosexual psychologically but homosexual physiologically. Olive's case reflects the transcendence of sex and the blurring of gender characters. Following Li (2000), "Queer Theory is a word of a multitude of things, and fundamentally comes to, free to live (p.5)." When the specific classification of male and female, heterosexual and homosexual disappears eventually, then the problems of sex, gender and sexual orientation may also be solved. Additionally, it is surprising that doll-mommies can still accept male BJD characters with full "femininity" such as androgynous appearance and obedient character, and regard them as "men" naturally, which also embody a feminist victory in China.

Figure 5.5: The 65cm male BJD named Olive from Beyours Doll (Beyours Doll, 2014).



Figure 5.6: Olive and her "boyfriend" Guang Ma (Wu, Y., 2017).



Last but not least, we also see practices that seek sexual liberation and taboo-breaking, as shown by doll-mommy Qin's photography series *Lust* (see Figure 5.4, p.90) which was discussed in the previous section. Among 550 topics with strong hints of sex in BJD Bar as mentioned before, over 500 of them are posted by female BJD owners, and over 400 topics are about gay sex with thousands of comments from other doll-mommies. On the one hand, the prevalence of these "sophisticated drivers" among Young Chinese women reflects that the body has become a breakthrough for women's rebellion against contemporary male-dominated societal norms. As some aggressive scholars in China demonstrate, "Think with the body. And it should be the principle of life and the guide of spirits (Liang, 2015, p.63)". On the other hand, there also emerges a particular group of young female BJD fans - "Fujoshi doll-mommies (funv wama)" - referring to doll-mommies who are fans of gay love stories and arrange their male BJDs falling in love with each other, just like Qin. Traditional Chinese philosophy advocates the harmony between Yin (female) and Yang (male) (yinyang tiaohé), and believes that "having no male heir is the gravest of the three cardinal

offences against filial piety (buxiao you san, wuhou wei da)” (Yao, 2012, p.82), which are opposite to the homosexual love designed by Fujoshi doll-mommies. Moreover, Fujoshi doll-mommies’ fascination also reflects a relatively high acceptance of LGBT among contemporary Chinese youth.

Overall, the solid fact that Chinese BJD fans are mostly young women does not unilaterally corroborates the gender stereotypes that girls love playing dolls, but reflects that BJDs can function as a performance of femininity and a preview of social roles for Young Chinese doll-mommies, and further indicates an embodiment of feminist developments in contemporary China.

5.3 Locating Marginal Doll-Daddies in the BJD Zone

Today, young Chinese doll-daddies have been pushed to an awkward position that being marginalized and alienated. Fundamentally, from the total number and proportion of members, male BJD fans are a minority in the contemporary Chinese BJD Zone.

According to Pan’s (2014) online survey on the structure of BJD consumers in the BJD Bar, only 4.33 per cent of respondents are male (p.14). Also, according to my collected data of around 12,000 topics under the “Pics” category in BJD Bar from 2016, January 1 to 2017, August 31, only 35 doll-daddies have posted photos of their BJDs in BJD Bar (0.325 per cent), and only 4 of the Top 200 topics with the highest number of comments were posted by male BJD owners (2 per cent). It not only indicates the gender imbalance of Chinese BJD owners as argued by Pan but also reveals that doll-daddies may lack a desire to present their dolls (and themselves) on social media

sites.

The absence of masculine discourse in the BJD Zone has dramatically influenced the alienation of male BJD owners. In the topics with the highest number of comments posted by doll-daddies, some typical comments from doll-mommies can be found, such as “It is so adorable! Why can’t I decorate my BJDs as perfectly as a raunchy doll-daddy does?”³⁵, “Congratulations! I cannot imagine that I have just caught a “wild” doll-daddy!”³⁶, and “Go, “Master Ball”!”³⁷. The term “Master Ball” comes from a famous Japanese video game series *Pokémon* in which players are traveling around the world, collecting and evolving fictional creatures named Pokémon, and “Monster Ball” is a spherical device for players to capture and store wild Pokémon³⁸. Reflected by these comments, female BJD owners show a remaining sense of superiority in the aesthetic field that they may take doll-daddies as “raunchy” for granted. Additionally, doll-daddies are even dehumanized by doll-mommies as “a rare and valuable Pokémon” in the BJD Zone.

More seriously, some male BJD owners named “fake doll-daddies, but true hooligans”³⁹ have further deepened doll-mommies’ fear and antipathy towards the whole doll-daddies community. Usually, they judge BJDs as a kind of sex toy or

³⁵ Ming, J. (2016, June 24). *About My Daily Life*. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4630507124>

³⁶ Sheng, X. (2017, May 1). *My New-Born Little Daughter is so Adorable!* Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5096703334>

³⁷ Zuo, M. (2016, April 20). *A Long-Term Record of a Doll-daddy and His Daughter*. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4493850487>

³⁸ Wikipedia (2018, August 19). *Gameplay of Pokémon*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gameplay_of_Pok%C3%A9mon#Pok.C3.A9_Ball

³⁹ Luo, L. (2016, February 13). *Although the Creatures Called Doll-Daddies are Rare...* Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4351199419>

utilize BJDs as an approach to narrow the gap between themselves and female BJD owners. Sometimes, they may even harass these doll-mommies. For example, Mei recalls her experience of knowing a doll-daddy who often puts his BJDs in the posture of sexual intercourse in a vulgar and indecent way. Moreover, the doll-daddy has also released several doll-mommies' personal information on some pornographic websites⁴⁰. Another doll-mommy Kel narrates her unpleasant experiences that a doll-daddy impolitely asks for her personal information and claims "to get prepared for their marriage certificate in the future"⁴¹. There is a popular saying in the Chinese BJD Zone that, "among any ten doll-daddies, at least nine of them are freaks (shige wadie, jiuge jipin)", which reflects the current tension between male and female BJD owners. Although these doll-mommies understand it improper to target their hostility to the whole doll-daddies community, they highlight that "The *True Doll-Daddies* are rare in the BJD zone, but there still exist so many freaks who have ruined the reputation of the whole community. As a result, other innocent male BJD owners are usually being misunderstood and attacked."⁴²

Instead of expressing a parental love or aesthetic preference directly as most female BJD owners do, some doll-daddies have transformed their obsessions with BJDs into fulfilling their honing of practical skills in BJD art. For example, the doll-daddy Ji

⁴⁰ Mei, D. (2016, January 21). *Terrifying! Something about Freak Doll-Daddies again*. Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4314065981>

⁴¹ Kel, T. (2015, December 14). *There Must Be Something Wrong with the Doll-daddy I Met*. Retrieved from https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4213047126?pid=80612726016&cid=0&red_tag=0470656266#80612726016

⁴² Nao, D. (2016, February 13). *Although the Creatures Called Doll-Daddies are Rare...* Retrieved from <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4351199419?pn=2>

Ye combines his fascination with BJDs and professional manual skills in his career. That is, to be a BJD jewelry designer (see Figure 5.7, p.100). Ji has 8,222 fans on Sina Weibo as of 2018, April⁴³, and his success reflects contemporary Chinese doll-daddies' struggle in maintaining masculinities when playing with BJDs. Connell (1995) argues that traditional forms of masculine display are centered around toughness and manual skills, and they have become fetishised in a way as to “protest masculinity” (chap.3). In Ji's example, the way he engaged in BJD playing reflects a combination of artistic and athletic skills, which protests his masculinity. However, in the process, his manual skills in precious metals processing for BJDs are more emphasized, other than his identity as a doll-daddy.

Figure 5.7: Ji's original handmade ring and bracelet for full large-sized BJDs (Ji, 2018).



The absence of masculine discourse and alienation of Chinese doll-daddies attribute to the remaining hegemonic masculinities and stereotypes. Constantinople (1973) defines “traditional masculinity” and “traditional femininity” as relatively enduring characteristics encompassing traits, appearances, interests, and behaviors that

⁴³ Ji, Y. (n.d.). *The Homepage of Ji Ye*. Retrieved from <https://m.weibo.cn/2129053143>

have traditionally been considered relatively more typical of women and men (pp.403-404). Bem (1974) has designed a series of scales for measuring traits of “typically male” and “typically female”. For example, aggressive, ambitious, athletic, competitive and dominant belong to masculine items, while affectionate, gentle, sensitive, shy and understanding belong to feminine items (p.156). Women/men who score high on both scales were called androgynous (pp.161-162). Bosson and Michniewicz (2013) argue that masculine identification may enhance the exclusion of “feminine traits” in men’s behaviors, occupation, physical appearance, and sexuality from male gender identity (p.425). Accordingly, doll-daddies’ obsession with doll playing is classified as one of these traits, or, as being “feminine”. Since Chinese historical resistance to women’s exercise of power derives from “notions of essential gender differences and fears for the consequences of blurring these distinctions (Edwards, 2006, p.153)”, young doll-daddies regarded as “feminized male” are believed to imply the weakness of men in male-coded space and generate social instability.

However, the identity as being a doll-daddy does not clash with the concept of masculine. Traditionally, Chinese masculine exemplars have been categorized into literary attainment (wen) and martial virtue (wu). Also, literary attainment generally has enjoyed a higher status than martial virtue (Louie, 2002, p.139). Wang (2003) also states, the “soft” masculinity still appeal to Chinese women and the Chinese audience in general. Although Chinese men have aspired to achieve both literary attainment and

martial virtue, and either was considered acceptably manly (pp.41-42). In this sense, doll-daddies' behaviors can be examined as a combination of literary attainment (i.e., decorate and play with BJDs) and martial virtue (i.e., make accessories for dolls by hand).

In recent years, traditional measures of masculine/feminine traits have often failed to find between-gender differences in self-ascriptions of gender stereotypical traits (Sczesny, Bosak, Neff, and Schyns, 2004, p.631), which is presumably due to changes in gender roles across the decades (Diekman & Eagly, 2000, p.1171; Ebert, Steffens, and Kroth, 2014, p.359). It may indicate that gender differences in masculinity and femininity are a thing of the past (Alvesson, 1998, p.1001). Alternatively, it may also mean that such scales do not tap the most relevant aspects of the constructs on which gender differences continue to exist. Additionally, the traditional gender order in which males are superordinate and females are subordinate is not static and continuously shifts in meaning. The meanings of sexualities and genders, and how they are also valued vary over time and across societies. As Butler (1990) argues in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*:

“There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; ... identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results. ... Acts, gestures, enactments, ... are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means (p.25).”

From this point of view, “raising” a BJD by doll-daddies is not an expression of their masculine/feminine identity. Instead, it is an embodiment of their pursuit of personal aesthetics and pleasure. Since gender is constructed from a series of repeated actions learned within cultures, and both social culture and gender/sexuality concepts have transformed gradually, there exists the possibility of breaking away from traditional performances of masculine/feminine identity which are constructed from biological sex. Gender Queer (Austin & Goodman, 2016; Frohard-Dourlent, Dobson, Clark, Doull, and Saewyc, 2016) or non-binary (Hein & Cox, 2017), the term for individuals who do not identify as male or female, includes a vast array of gender expressions. Furthermore, maybe one day, both Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies as subjects can be liberated from restrictions associated with their sex and take on multiple gender identities.

Discussion and Conclusion

This thesis works to draw the lived experiences of a Chinese youth sub-culture group, “doll-mommies” and “doll-daddies”, in a network-based, stratified, market-based, and globalized context. The findings of the thesis suggest that the BJD culture has provided doll-mommies and doll-daddies a virtual space to explore and construct their self-identity, social and economic status, cultural identification, and gender and sexuality consciousness, although some limitations remain.

From the perspective of self-representation, I argue that doll-mommies and doll-daddies visiting these virtual world bars are not only audience members but also are content creators (Craig, 2013, para.1; Brake, 2014, p.591). I argue that social media sites, such as BJD Bar and BJD Tsukkomi Bar, not only establish a virtual space which breaks the limitation of time and space, but also provide a unique form of socialization for doll-mommies and doll-daddies. Notably, youth can improve their aesthetic abilities and hands-on practical work (Abrahams, 2008, p.iii; Zhang et al., 2018, p.1262), as well as the capacity to interact with others (Perret-Clermont et al., 2003, pp.3-10; Lee et al., 2013, p.344). It is also worth mentioning that the boundary of the virtual space provided by social media sites is currently blurring between public and private, following Pearson (2009). Drawing on Goffman (1959), the ways young Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies making self-representation and impression online are both public (front stage performance) and private (back stage performance). In the mutual selection process, doll-mommies and doll-daddies rely on strategies for

self-enhancement with positive and favorable claims about themselves (Chu & Choi, 2010, p.415) and use an “internal language system” to establish the foundation of a shared cultural memory and sense of belonging (Falk, 2005, pp.207-212). Furthermore, these BJD owners can reinforce their real lives, as well as rebelling against or escape from traditional parental power, distinct consumption or aesthetic values among peers, and even societal legal or moral norms of their real lives.

From the perspective of social stratification, on the macro level, I argue that the consumption capacity of young BJD owners is rising and shifting from traditional survival consumption to leisure consumption (Ren, 2013, p.208; Wei, 2014, p.102), especially of those in urban areas (Su, 2018, para.6). The consumption stratification in the Chinese BJD market also reflects the ongoing transformation of the social structure into an olive shape (Du & Fang, 2005, p.18; He, 2007, p.123; Han, 2009, p.84), in which the middle class is expanding to encompass most of society. It fits in with the characteristic olive-shaped structure of “great in the middle, organized in the structure”, but fails in the other characteristics of “small at both ends, no great disparity between them” (He, 2007, p.124), which also reflects the remaining restraints of a traditional pyramid shape (Du & Fang, 2005, p.18; Li, 2005, p.55). Then, on the micro level, doll-mommies and doll-daddies from different social strata have different consumption patterns. Concretely, the higher social strata they are in, the more importance is placed on fashion, and the more likely they will be attempted in private customization/Quality Goods consumption represented high development-oriented consumption, rather than

Cabbage consumption and personal handmade represented survival-oriented consumption. As some BJD owners affected by conspicuous consumption, BJD owners in the upper class are more likely to pay more attention to the emotional and social values of BJD-related products, compared to functional values.

From the perspective of Chinese cultural identification, I argue that the fair skin preference in the current Chinese BJD market is constructed by Chinese traditional cultural ideas (Johansson, 1998; Zhang, 2012), class, political and racial perspectives (Hunter, 2005; Leong, 2006; Glenn, 2008), and the blurring boundary between “self” and “other” owing to the growing cultural globalization (Wang, 2004; Bayart, 2005). I further summarize two key strategies in the process of inheriting and constructing Chinese cultural identity in the context of globalization, as to balance the traditional, popular (or modern) culture, and foreign cultures, and to balance the patriotism and regular cultural exchange. In the end, I argue that the cultural identity of contemporary Chinese youth should be “global-minded” but “Chinese-hearted”.

From the perspective of gender and sexuality, I argue that the coexistence of sexuality/gender liberation and restrictions in contemporary Chinese society, in a certain extent, has affected daily online communications between BJD owners, as well as mutual understandings between doll-mommies and doll-daddies. However, it also indicates the changing notions of sexuality, an embodiment of feminist developments, and the possibility of breaking away from traditional performances of masculine and feminine identity. Specifically, I argue that BJDs can function as a performance of

femininity (Doucet, 2006, p.35) and social/family roles (Ball, 1967, p.450) to doll-mommies. Some doll-mommies' projecting imaginations about masculinity and displaying male dolls also indicate an embodiment of feminist developments in contemporary China, as the pursuit of female aesthetic needs and higher societal status, the changing perspectives of queerness and gender stereotypes, and the notions of sexual liberation and breaking secular taboos. Meanwhile, the absence of masculine discourse and alienation of Chinese doll-daddies attribute to the remaining hegemonic masculinities and stereotypes. However, in the end, I highlight that since the meanings of sexualities and genders, and how they are valued vary through time and across societies (Butler, 1990), both Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies as subjects can be liberated from restrictions associated with their sex and take on multiple gender identities one day.

This project presents an interpretation of doll-mommies/daddies' behaviors and the BJD market's situation, in a contemporary Chinese context, as I see it, demonstrates that contemporary Chinese youth and Chinese society are still in a period of transition today in the current societal context of informatization, marketization and globalization, as both progressive and conservative. With advanced network technology and open global market system, BJDs provide a virtue space to young Chinese doll-mommies and doll-daddies, especially those millennial generations who grew up in a more open and prosperous environment. Concretely, these BJD owners can assert their self-representation, adapt to the changes of contemporary Chinese society and market,

construct their understandings of Chinese cultural identities, and reflect their notions of gender and sexuality directly or indirectly.

Overall, this project fills an essential gap in the literature, since I have not located scholarly work on BJDs in English-language literature, and at present, there is no substantial amount of literature available on Chinese youth culture or Chinese studies from the perspective of BJDs. Studies on BJD culture and toy culture have provided information of the illustration, history, and design of BJDs, BJDs and marketing, as well as the relationship between doll-mommies/daddies and their BJDs, but neglect to speak doll-mommies and doll-daddies' self-identities and Chinese cultural identity embodied in their BJD playing; studies on internet and youth self-representation, social stratification and consumption in China, Chinese cultural identification, and gender and sexuality in China have provided multiple perspectives of the contemporary Chinese youth study in China's specific environment, but very few of them have noticed the group of doll-mommies and doll-daddies and the unique BJD culture in China.

In contrast, this research project places importance on the role of doll-mommies/daddies and the context of informatization, marketization and globalization in progress reflected by the BJD market development. Thus, this project responds to a gap in the literature by contributing to critical scholarship on Chinese youth identities, generation gaps, gender and sexuality, education, informatization, marketization and globalization, through a novel and interesting lens of BJDs.

This project is my interpretation of the influences of self-representation, consumption stratification and social stratification, cultural identity, gender and sexuality, and the current network-based, stratified, market-oriented and global context on doll-mommies and doll-daddies community, mainly derived from my analysis of the topics in BJD Bar and BJD Tsukkomi Bar, while some from related information via Sina Weibo. A limitation to this research is the exclusion of the community of young Chinese BJD owners who seldom use these social media or are not willing to get involved with the online BJD zone, as I have focused my project mainly on the doll-mommies and doll-daddies who usually express themselves in Baidu Tieba.

Besides, the theme of BJDs in China is still unfamiliar to Western scholars, and even to some Chinese youth. Thus, my analysis of Chinese doll-mommies/daddies' behaviors and the current Chinese societal context is largely representative of personal experiences and observations and presented present in an introductory/descriptive way. In this project, although all directions are concentrated in two areas as Chinese youth and BJDs, the related information and backgrounds are still miscellaneous and inaccessible to people from other cultures and have never contacted to BJDs before. In this sense, my hope in sharing this project is that it can also provide a comprehensive review and preparatory work for people who are curious about the BJD kingdom and today's situation of Chinese youth and society, in a social-science way.

BJDs have become an increasing concern among Chinese youth, especially doll-mommies and doll-daddies, and have formed a unique subculture and a

comparatively mature market in the last two decades. As I have shown, in this project, I aim to situate BJDs as a virtual space for doll-mommies/daddies to explore and construct their self-identity, social and economic status, cultural identification, and gender and sexuality consciousness, although some limitations remain. Since shadows in the current Chinese BJD zone and BJD market have emerged and gradually expanded, is there a need to criticize those doll-mommies/daddies who are getting impacted?

In my view, it is unrealistic to force doll-mommies and doll-daddies' behaviors under compulsion, as asking them not to participate in conspicuous consumption and to get rid of the impacts brought by the contemporary remaining male-centered social reality. Shifting the focus of reform to the level of government and institutions can be relatively standing and effective. For example, the Chinese government should set up a formal gender and sexuality education course in primary and secondary schools, and figure out a better way to balance the pursuit for harmonious online society and the freedom of information, other than controlling the internet by setting a group of banned terminologies of sexuality and deleting the pictures of nudity.

Importantly, this work is not meant to criticize the work that scholars on Chinese youth studies, the Chinese government and related institutions are doing. Instead, by reflecting how Chinese society transforms and Chinese youth culture embodied from the perspective of BJDs, I hope to highlight the potential attention of this novel field. Further, I hope that the analysis of Chinese doll-mommies/daddies and contemporary Chinese BJD market will be valuable when analyzing how Chinese youth adapt to the

network-based, stratified, market-oriented and global context.

Appendices

Appendix A: Number of Comments and Sites of 200 Sample Topics in BJD Bar

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February, 2016

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- (294) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4335796257?pid=83437312056&cid=0#83437312056>
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March, 2016

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July, 2016

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December, 2016

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January, 2017

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February, 2017

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 (264) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4975790990?pid=103891569553&cid=0#103891569553>
 (257) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4962350224?pid=103353492659&cid=0#103353492659>
 (251) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4982122540?pid=104105479352&cid=0#104105479352>

March, 2017

- (361) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5009343041?pid=104926404213&cid=0#104926404213>
 (330) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5019015627?pid=105123227680&cid=0#105123227680>
 (257) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5044068866?pid=105640711983&cid=0#105640711983>
 (240) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5017376950?pid=105087344538&cid=0#105087344538>
 (233) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5016018122?pid=105058556864&cid=0#105058556864>
 (221) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5034573150?pid=105439276048&cid=0#105439276048>
 (219) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5008434854?pid=104904583722&cid=0#104904583722>
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 (216) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5012304428?pid=104986461449&cid=0#104986461449>
 (214) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5027303006?pid=105288519598&cid=0#105288519598>

April, 2017

- (523) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5055019740?pid=105880155658&cid=0#105880155658>

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- (297) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5073457611?pid=106263457515&cid=0#106263457515>
- (260) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5082516442?pid=106458469002&cid=0#106458469002>
- (250) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5062461720?pid=106034678940&cid=0#106034678940>
- (206) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5084571461?pid=106498305073&cid=0#106498305073>
- (179) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5087307829?pid=106555026114&cid=0#106555026114>
- (159) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5053745946?pid=105851230917&cid=0#105851230917>
- (157) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5083853873?pid=106484614912&cid=0#106484614912>
- (156) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5079277198?pid=106387923066&cid=0#106387923066>

May, 2017

- (380) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5115499712?pid=107095591271&cid=0#107095591271>
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- (239) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5137682798?pid=107574417798&cid=0#107574417798>
- (231) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5097621551?pid=106750837228&cid=0#106750837228>
- (214) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5096703334?pid=106733154680&cid=0#106733154680>
- (203) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5110677090?pid=106995683516&cid=0#106995683516>
- (184) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5106688373?pid=106917764123&cid=0#106917764123>
- (178) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5101586229?pid=106818616167&cid=0#106818616167>
- (167) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5105678349?pid=106896625583&cid=0#106896625583>
- (166) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5120620808?pid=107205325243&cid=0#107205325243>

June, 2017

- (300) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5185340202?pid=108562238436&cid=0#108562238436>
- (278) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5147701154?pid=107797521823&cid=0#107797521823>
- (172) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5167023749?pid=108200171997&cid=0#108200171997>
- (155) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5159026631?pid=108035438389&cid=0#108035438389>
- (153) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5155535496?pid=107963234446&cid=0#107963234446>
- (141) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5142671917?pid=107689207240&cid=0#107689207240>
- (139) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5149643932?pid=107838574032&cid=0#107838574032>
- (134) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5182956673?pid=108521236555&cid=0#108521236555>
- (133) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5151101544?pid=107869464117&cid=0#107869464117>
- (132) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5146655400?pid=107774047749&cid=0#107774047749>

July, 2017

- (645) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5244291451?pid=109839901080&cid=0#109839901080>
- (328) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5250441801?pid=110000016561&cid=0#110000016561>
- (255) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5230679055?pid=109538978953&cid=0#109538978953>
- (220) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5215531812?pid=109199829474&cid=0#109199829474>
- (210) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5240550587?pid=109748234840&cid=0#109748234840>
- (181) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5213018382?pid=109138288831&cid=0#109138288831>
- (165) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5217436096?pid=109242581299&cid=0#109242581299>
- (162) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5200664272?pid=108835029719&cid=0#108835029719>
- (159) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5244807104?pid=109853094596&cid=0#109853094596>
- (157) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5249800904?pid=109984161744&cid=0#109984161744>

August, 2017

- (360) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/525962222?pid=110232673569&cid=0#110232673569>
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 (178) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5290028837?pid=111055566980&cid=0#111055566980>
 (176) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5299253474?pid=111325516678&cid=0#111325516678>
 (168) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5252141294?pid=110043297114&cid=0#110043297114>
 (165) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5271256287?pid=110537668502&cid=0#110537668502>
 (163) <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5257309871?pid=110171199812&cid=0#110171199812>

Appendix B: Sites of 50 Supplement Topics in BJD Bar and BJD Tsukkomi Bar

Doll-Daddies

- <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5096703334?pid=106733154680&cid=0#106733154680>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4493850487?pid=88006091158&cid=0#88006091158>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4630507124?pid=92499378406&cid=0#92499378406>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4935041736?pid=102438599122&cid=0#102438599122>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5083620495?pid=106479423655&cid=0#106479423655>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4875359067?pid=100628393257&cid=0#100628393257>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/2603471375>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4351199419>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/1937531580>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4351199419>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4314065981>
https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4213047126?pid=80612726016&cid=0&red_tag=0470656266#80612726016

6016

Relationship with “Outsiders”

- <https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5292186873?pid=111118061376&cid=0#111118061376>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/1727515991>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/1834545454>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/1920655409>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/3864773832>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/2347543115>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/3269489407>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/3614112270>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/3343685120>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/1623087551>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/1632802469>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/1634508165>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/1681547834>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/1729907112>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/1713628237>

Offline Meetings

<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4407546078?pid=85547718324&cid=0#85547718324>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4410322124?pid=85618265187&cid=0#8561826518>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4532172513?pid=89186541272&cid=0#89186541272>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4520360520?pid=88834421259&cid=0#88834421259>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4662523698?pid=93595341241&cid=0#93595341241>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/3518439892>

Taking BJDs as “Children” or “Boy-Friends”

<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4756081536?pid=96974344066&cid=0#96974344066>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5295632216?pid=111220905142&cid=111229322186#111229322186>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4966540168?pid=105118122830&cid=0#105118122830>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5169531065?pid=108449238853&cid=0#108449238853>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4475698645?pid=87474485338&cid=0#87474485338>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5007163923?pid=104875397724&cid=0#104875397724>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5198066317?pid=108784363683&cid=0#108784363683>

Queer BJDs

<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4351364676?pid=83945256243&cid=0#83945256243>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4352304979?pid=83973368730&cid=0#83973368730>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4368577361?pid=84466322610&cid=0#84466322610>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5107285172?pid=106928982395&cid=0#106928982395>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5292281243?pid=111120880600&cid=0#111120880600>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/5296736772?pid=111250977889&cid=0#111250977889>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4955380715?pid=103083092775&cid=0#103083092775>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4353524749?pid=84010704452&cid=0#84010704452>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/4403292060?pid=85425515414&cid=0#85425515414>
<https://tieba.baidu.com/p/2917215486>

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