

Background, Introduction, and Motivation

Queer people are longing for shelters in the cyberspace, where **expressive hashtags**, are frequently employed by queer users on all-audience social media to represent their identities and connect with relevant communities.

The **#w/w (women-loving-women)** emerged in the late 2010s as a relatively **safe and inclusive** hashtag that embraces various identities under the queer female spectrum (lesbians, bisexuals, pansexuals, and transgenders).

In January 2025, the hashtag **#w/w** entered the Chinese lesbian community on RedNote, following a wave of TikTok users seeking alternatives during the U.S. TikTok ban. It rises and stayed viral on RedNote even after the immigrants left (**360 million views** as of May 12, 2025).



Methods

We analyzed **418 #w/w posts on RedNote** — 218 from January (immigrant influx) and 200 from April (after efflux). Creator of the posts were labeled as TikTok immigrants or RedNote natives, and posts' hashtag composition (with native hashtags like #le) were also marked.

Then, we conducted **inductive content analysis**. Our final **19-code codebook** was applied to examine theme and code distribution in January posts (RQ1) and to compare April posts with January to identify changes in content composition (RQ2).

several thousand

47 million

TikTok Ban

First Two Days Upon Entering in January

RQ1: The usage of #w/w by both immigrants and natives upon its ingress?

360 million

530 million

after the Hashtag Diffusion in April

Oct 6, 2025

RQ2: current manifestation of #w/w's hashtag diffusion after the efflux?

Upon Ingress (in January): Bold Landing, Mutual Interpretation, and Passionate Learning (RQ1)

- 1.1 Natural Transplantation of #w/w:** TikTok immigrants brought #w/w content dominated by Personal Showcase and Socializing, aiming to connect within the community.
- 1.2 Mutual Interpretation:** Immigrants and RedNote natives integrated #w/w through native lesbian hashtags (#le), building cross-cultural understanding with the help of local language.
- 1.3 Literal Meaning Discussions:** Natives adopted #w/w via #le usage patterns, while exploring its deeper conceptual meaning within queer knowledge.

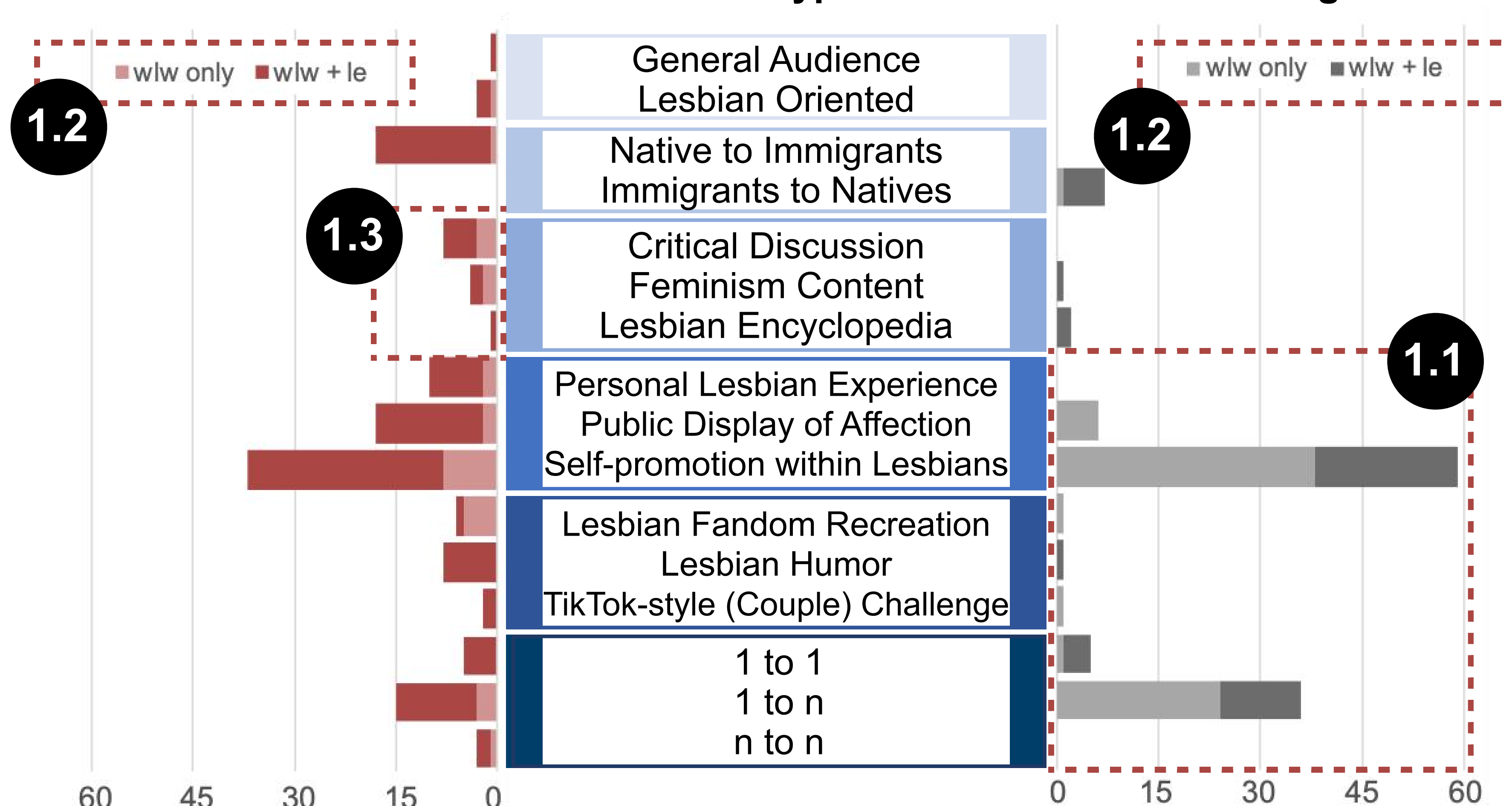
Current Manifestation of the Diffusion (in April): Fostering #w/w with Local Culture (RQ2)

- 2.1 Local Dominance:** By April, natives accounted for ~100% of creators, with stable high daily views (~5M) and active discussions (~30K).
- 2.2 Content Shift Aligning with RedNote's Nature:** *Socializing* posts fell sharply, while *Personal Showcase* stayed dominant but changed in focus (From self-promotion to showcasing couple moments). *Recreational Content* also grew, diversifying #w/w through humor, fandom, and art contents.
- 2.3 Extended Knowledge Use:** Rise in *Knowledgeable Content*, including new instructional lesbian entries and expanded topics beyond queer themes.

RedNote Natives Posts Number

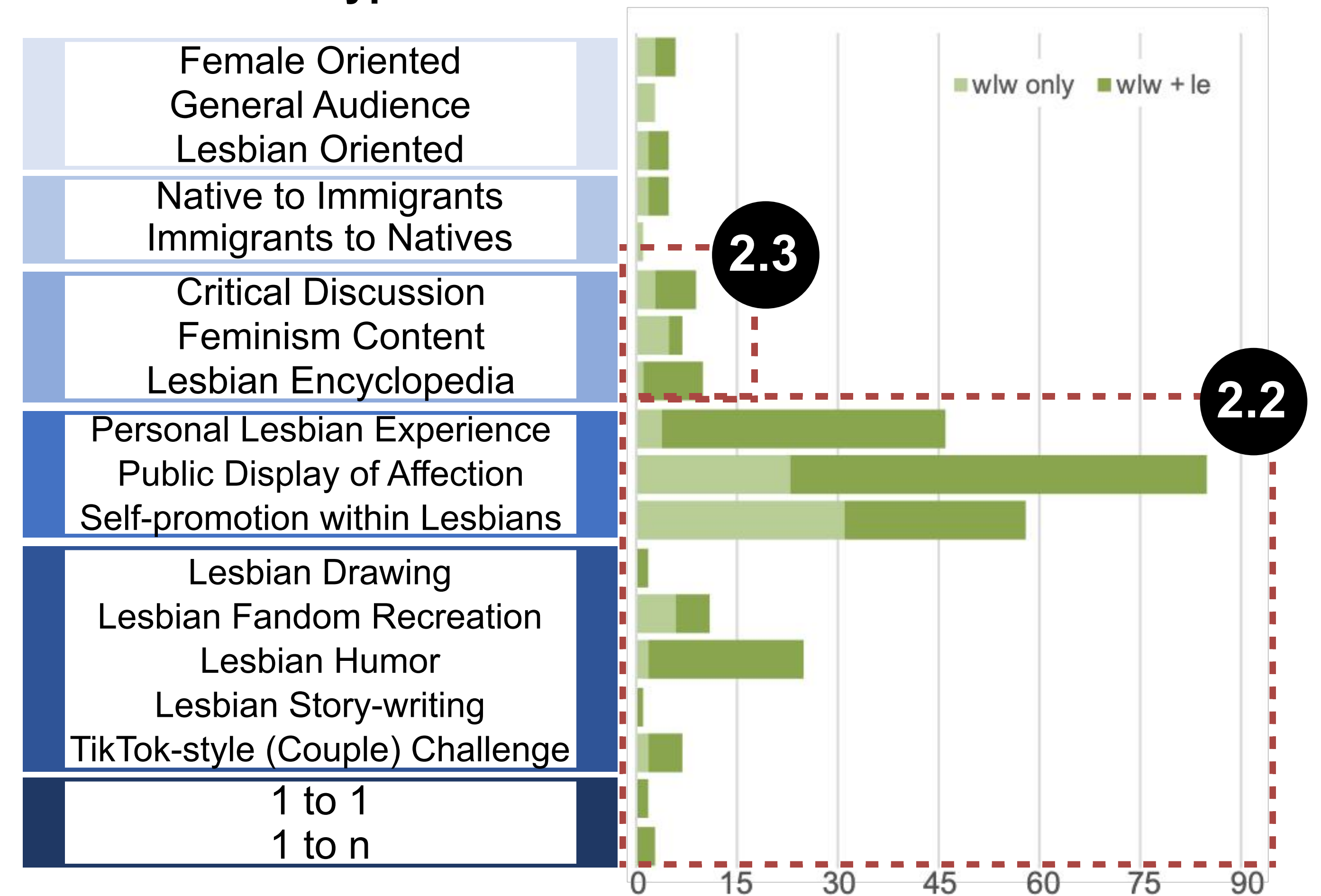
Post Types

TikTok Immigrants



Post Types

Posts number



Discussion and Future Works

Cross-cultural Arrival Reshaped Queer Self-expression: #w/w entered RedNote via TikTok immigrants and was warmly embraced by natives, sparking a revival in the Chinese lesbian community. Western openness boosted direct self-representation, but occasional hashtag misalignment calls for platforms to support shared digital language and cross-cultural understanding.

Localized Semantic Expansion of #w/w with Risks to Inclusivity: After immigrants left, #w/w merged into RedNote culture, blending native lesbian terms, feminist discourse, and broader womanhood themes. While visibility grew, broadening its sexual-minority focus risks dilution, marginalizing bi/pan-sexual and transgender identities.

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