

Exploring the Roles of Narcissism, Gratifications of Microblog Use, and Affinity-seeking on Social Capital

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine how psychological attributes such as narcissism, affinity seeking, and gratifications of microblog (i.e., Sina Weibo) use can influence interpersonal relationship especially in perceived social capital. Data were gathered through online survey with a sample of 431 Weibo users in mainland China. Results show that (1) narcissism, Weibo use, and Weibo gratifications are positively related to affinity seeking; (2) Weibo use, Weibo gratifications, and affinity seeking are positively associated with bonding and bridging social capital; and (3) Weibo gratifications may play an important role in social capital gained from Weibo. Implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Affinity-seeking; Mainland China; narcissism; Sina Weibo; social capital; uses and gratification

INTRODUCTION

The first microblog in the world, Twitter, launched in 2006, has already attracted 100 million active users -- users who log in at least once a month -- with half of those users signing in at least once a day by September, 2011 (Costolo, 2011). However, in June 2009, Chinese government blocked Twitter and shut down a Chinese Twitter clone, Fanfou, for the political purposes. A new Chinese version of Twitter, Sina Weibo, was initiated in August 2009 and was considered as the most significant Internet phenomenon in China in 2010. According to the report of the China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC), by the end of June, 2011, the number of Sina Weibo users has reached 195 million, with a growth rate of 208.9% in only half a year.

As the popularity of using microblog is soaring in recent years, it has been a growing concern to explore the social and individual effect of Weibo. Facebook and twitter are primary representatives of social network sites (SNS), both of which are the milestone of web2.0. However, compared to studies of Facebook (SNS), the number of studies on twitter (microblog) is relatively small. Although there were still some literature related to microblog, most of them focused on the use of twitter. Considering the unique environment of China, it is worth studying the effect of microblog in China. As to Sina Weibo, the most representative microblog in China, little attention has been paid to this widely popular SNS tool..

Previous studies have examined the relationship between affinity-seeking and some dispositional or situational attributes in dyadic interpersonal communication. However, as a function of communication, affinity-seeking is lack of research attention in recent year when new media is gradually transforming the way people communicate. As we see, interpersonal

conversations happen on SNS is more often than that in a face-to-face situation; friendship and other social outcomes can be developed and maintained through SNS. So it is of great value to study affinity-seeking in new media environment.

Therefore, current study adopts the theoretical framework on Sina Weibo use by constructing a model taking personality, motivation and behavior factors into consideration.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Theory of use and gratification

Use and gratification theory, emerging around 1940s, incorporates social context and psychological motives into analyzing people's media behavior. Early researches worked primarily on the categorization of gratifications and needs, integration of psychological variables from a functionalist perspective, and investigation into the source and effect of need and gratification. After the 1970s, scholars advanced the U&G to a more systematic form with strong theoretical grounding. The U&G assumes that audience would actively and rationally choose medium and content to gratify their needs. Scholars stressed the audience-oriented perspective to distinguish U&G from traditional approach. The nature of internet---being interacted, demassified and asynchronous-----requires scholars to investigate media use from the angle of individual. Therefore, U&G is more appropriate than mass theory to analyze internet use.

As the modern technologies facilitate the penetration of new media, scholars began to identify the gratifications of new technologies. According to Pappacharissi & Rubin (2000), the internet gratifications includes: information seeking, pass time, entertainment,

convenience and interpersonal utility. As for social media, things may be different in that it is a platform blurring the boundary between the senders and the receivers. Wunsch-Vincent and Vickery (2006) noted that the primary nature of social media is the convenient way of using UGC (user-generated content). They argued that the reasons for people to use UGC are producing (needs for self-expression and self-actualization), participating (needs for social connections), and consuming (needs for information, entertainment, and mood management). Johnson (2008) identifies Facebook gratifications as social connection, photographs, share identities, status updates, content, social network surfing, and social investigation.

Drawing on the three motivations of internet use claimed by Stafford and Schkade (2004), Liu et al. (2010) tailored them to the study of twitter use by adding technology gratification. They structured twitter gratifications into 4 categories: content gratifications (self-documentation, information sharing), process gratifications (entertainment, passing time, self-expression), social gratifications, and technology gratifications (medium appeal, and convenience). Content gratifications concern the *information* carried by the medium; process gratifications refer to *actual use* of the medium itself, being involved in the process of behavior (Cutler & Danowski, 1980); social gratifications is defined as the interactivity with other parties through media (Williams et al. 1988); and technology gratifications is the convenience and suitability of the environment (smart phone application, interface of the system) in which people use media, as new media are recognized as a technology tools (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The difference between content gratification and process gratification is that content gratification derived from the use of mediated message for intrinsic value while process gratification derived from the use of mediated message for

extrinsic value.

Grounded in the U & G theory, current research seeks to expand previous studies to mainland China milieu by addressing the following questions:

RQ1: What gratifications do users obtain from Sina Weibo use?

H1: The more subjects find Weibo gratifying, the more they will use Weibo.

Narcissism

Narcissism is characterized by a highly inflated, positive but unrealistic self-concept, tendency to seek out many superficial, empty relationships (Campbell, 1999), attention seeking, and concerning about physical appearances (Vazire et al., 2008; Ong, et al., 2011), and an engagement in self-regulatory strategies to affirm the positive self-views (Campbell & Foster, 2007). Narcissists are often skilled in dealing with new social settings and starting new relationships, using them to seek networks which can enhance their status and attractiveness (Campbell & Foster, 2007; Ong et al., 2011). Building on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), Zhou et al. (2009) made the narcissism scale on a sample of adolescents in the China context, including three dimensions of authority, superiority, and self-admiration.

Narcissism is a newly introduced psychological attribute to analyze CMC as we enter the era of social media. Such psychological attribute is manifested specifically in social media. Buffardi and Campbell (2008) pioneered the narcissism study in social media. The result confirmed that narcissism predicted higher intensity of online social activity and more self-promoting content. As Buffardi and Campbell pointed out, the prevalence of narcissistic

individuals on Facebook might lead to a rise in narcissistic behavior among users in general. Bibby (2008) also indicated that SNSs cater to the characteristics of attention seeking and self disclosing. Based on Buffardi and Campbell, Mehdizadeh (2010) further investigated the gender difference in the effect of narcissism on self promotional content of Facebook. Male narcissists present more descriptive self-promotion to reflect intelligence, while female narcissists disclose more superficial self-promotion content to show physical appearance. More specifically, two studies have tested the relationship between narcissism and certain Facebook usages: Ryan and Xenos (2011) found preference for photos is positively related to narcissism and preference for the status update feature is positively related to exhibitionism, a sub-factor of narcissism; Ong et al. (2011) demonstrated that narcissism predicted higher self-generated content (profile picture rating and status update frequency) over and above extroversion, but not system-generated content (social network size). Besides, in the study of the relationship between narcissism and celebrity, Young and Pinsky (2006) showed that there is no any relationship between NPI scores and years of experience in the entertainment industry, suggesting that celebrities may have narcissistic tendencies prior to entering the industry. This may support the notion that narcissism is a stable inborn personality rather than tendency influenced by postnatal experience. Drawing on the previous studies, I hypothesize:

H2.1: The more subjects score on narcissism, the more they will use Weibo.

H2.2: The more subjects score on narcissism, the more they find Weibo gratifying.

Affinity seeking

Affinity seeking (AS) is “the process by which individuals attempt to get other people to

like and to feel positive toward them” (Bell & Dally, 1984). This concept is mainly used in interpersonal communication as McCroskey and Wheelless (1976) noted that obtaining affinity is one of the basic functions of human communication. Through communicating with others, people actively manipulate some social behavior to increase others’ liking towards. Therefore, many communication scholars have examined such social behaviors that people express, or strategies adopted during interpersonal communication. McCroskey and Wheelless (1976) identified seven categories of strategies that people used to gain affinity: control physical appearance, increase positive self-disclosure, stress areas of positive similarity, provide positive reinforcement, express cooperation, comply with the other person’s wishes, and fulfill the other person’s needs. Following up on this work, Bell and Daly (1984) expanded the strategies to 25 categories and further explore the influence of dispositional difference and situational contingency on the strategies people used.

According to Bell and Dally (1984), two assumptions guided to model affinity-seeking: AS is an important communication skill; AS is a strategic activity. Based on the two assumptions, they developed the affinity-seeking instrument (ASI), including two dimensions: affinity-seeking competence and strategic performance. Affinity-seeking is a person’s ability to develop positive relationships effectively and appropriately, the ability to communicate in a way that makes one seem attractive to others. Strategic performance is “the ability to play roles, even to the point of misrepresenting one’s self, to gain the liking and approval of others.” Woltjen and Zakahi (1987) distinguished the two dimensions by noting that affinity-seeking competence includes habitual social routines while strategic performance involves premeditated social acts.

Drawing on this instrument, Bell et al. (1987) found that ASI scores were related to affinity behaviors (e.g., making new friends, being asked for date). Therefore, they indicated that the competence or skills ASI measured can bring about positive social outcomes such as friendship. The study of Bell et al. (1987) shows that, in dyadic communication, affinity-seeking competence was positively associated with their partners' liking them, and strategic performance was positively related to their own communicator image, animation, and dramatic nature. Woltjen and Zakahi (1987) examined the relationship among communication apprehension, loneliness and affinity-seeking, resulting that communication apprehension is negatively related to both affinity-seeking competence and strategic performance, loneliness is only negatively related to affinity-seeking competence. Consistently, the result of Rubin et al. (1993) supported a linear relationship between self-disclosure and affinity-seeking. In certain contexts, when compared with non-narcissistic individuals, narcissistic individuals find it is easier to be liked as friends or acquaintances (Oltmanns, Friedman, Fiedler, & Turkheimer, 2004). Their extraverted behavior and desire to be liked lead them to act out affinity-seeking behavior and make them enjoyable to work with initially. Therefore, I expect that:

H3.1: Narcissism and affinity-seeking are positively related.

McCroskey and Wheelless (1976) showed that affinity seeking primarily occurred in dyadic communication. Since microblog is a platform that allowed not only "one-to-one" but even "one-to-many" communication, it is reasonable to expand the result to "one-to-many" communication, articulating that on micro blog people will express behavior to seek affinity not only with "another" but also with "others". This notion is indirectly supported by Jones'

(1990) study. He integrated impression maintenance strategies (ingratiation, competence or self-promotion etc.) into self presentation on blog. Such impression maintenance strategies have some overlapping with the affinity-seeking strategies raised by Bell and Daly (1984). Hence, as people get familiar with microblog (accumulate experience of how to use this new tool), they are more willing to get affinity on the platform. Thus, we hypothesize and ask:

H3.2: The more people use Weibo, the more affinity-seeking competence they have.

H3.3: Gratifications obtained are positively related to affinity-seeking.

RQ2: How do demographics, narcissism, gratifications obtained, and Weibo use predict affinity-seeking?

Social Capital

Social capital broadly refers to the resources accumulated through interaction in social networks to provide individuals certain benefit or value. The identity of social capital is still not clearly defined as it may serve as either a cause or an effect (Resnick, 2001; Williams, 2006). Putnam (2000) defined social capital as social networks and their associated norms of reciprocity, confirming both the roles of cause and effect of social capital. In the scale developed by Williams (2006), the operationalization of social capital is an outcome rather than the network itself. "This does not preclude network analysts' use of the measures. It simply suggests that the networks are the causal agents or moderators of the social capital measured by the scales."(Williams, 2006)

Putnam (2000) distinguishes two sub-types of social capital in his social capital theory----bridging and bonding. Bridging social capital refers to "weak ties" between

individuals, stressing the breadth of connection. Individuals in weak ties are from different backgrounds because the loose connection that lacks in-depth may broaden social networks to absorb useful information and resources.

Alternatively, “bonding” social capital refers to the “strong ties” between individuals, stressing the depth of connection, such as family and close friends. The characteristics of individuals in a “bonding” relationship are more homogeneous, which means they are common in each other and therefore form stronger and deeper connections in which exchange emotional and substantive support.

There are two research levels of social capital: individual and relationship level and community level. Community level stands on a relatively macro point to explore the relations between social capital and some social outcomes such as social disorder, civic activities, crime rate etc. At the individual level, scholars use social capital to study individual’s connections with others and the within benefits. In the present study, we focus on individual level of social capital.

The conflicting findings on the relationship between internet and social capital are fully presented. The extant literature was categorized into three main arguments: the Internet transforms or increases social capital (Kraut et al., 1998); the Internet diminishes social capital (Bargh and McKenna, 2004); and the Internet supplements social capital (Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2004, Wellman et al. 2001). The reason to explain such difference is that the effect of internet use may depend on the intensity of internet use and the usages of internet.

As SNS becomes popular, some researchers have studied the relations between SNS and social capital. Valenzuela, Park, and Kee (2009) found positive relationships between

intensity of Facebook use and indicators of social capital, such as life satisfaction, social trust, civic engagement, and political participation. Since SNS serves to create and maintain larger, loose networks of relationships from which they could potentially draw resources, it may be desirable to augment social capital (Donath & boyd, 2004). They stated that although SNS might not increase strong ties, it could greatly increase the weak ties one could form and maintain in an easy and cheap way. Moreover, the findings of Ellison et al. (2006) showed that students who use Facebook more intensely report higher bridging social capital as well as higher bonding social capital, suggesting that Facebook is used to maintain both loose acquaintances and close friends. Pfeil, Arjan, and Zaphiris (2008) further explored potential differences in social capital among older people compared to teenagers, showing that teenagers have larger networks of friends compared to older users of MySpace, while the majority of teenage users' friends are in their own age range; older people's networks of friends tend to have a more diverse age distribution.

In summary, previous literature focused on the relationship of social capital and Facebook, theorizing that Facebook use help adolescents increase social capital. However, the causal direction could be reversed by the plausible argument that those with high social networks would present more motivations to use Facebook. However, the effect of microblog on social capital captures less research attention. Therefore, based on the prior work, I raise the following hypothesis and questions:

H4.1: The more subjects use Sina Weibo, the more social capital they will report.

H4.2: The higher subjects score on affinity-seeking, the more social capital they have.

RQ3: How do demographics, gratifications obtained, Sina Weibo use, affinity-seeking, and

narcissism predict social capital?

METHOD

Data collection

Data were collected via online survey with a random sample of 431 internet users in Mainland China. The self-administered online survey was hosted on Wenjuanxing (www.wenjuanxing.com) during March 2012. The questionnaires were distributed in random to Weibo users by the survey website. The response rate was 80 percent with a total of 540 questionnaires sent out.

The sample consisted of 44.4 percent males. Over 41 percent of the respondents were aged 21—25, 28 percent were aged 26—30, 23.5 percent were aged 31—40. More than 68 percent were undergraduates or bachelor degree holders and about 12.5 percent were postgraduates. The education distribution is consistent with the common sense that most of microblog users were undergraduates and white collars with high education experience. In terms of monthly income, the median was between 3001 to 5000 RMB per month. This online survey method was considered an appropriate and efficient way to access the target people to conduct the study on micro blog.

Measurement

Gratifications of Weibo. To identify specific gratifications obtained from Weibo use, a focus group was conducted to collect new opinions on Weibo gratifications and to refine the twitter gratifications from previous studies. The final instrument consisted of 12 gratification

statements with a five-point Likert scale (where 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 = ‘strongly agree’). We labeled the four major Weibo gratifications as content need, social need, process need and convenience need, with respectively reliability alphas of .87, .83, .75 and .81.

Narcissism. Three dimensions of narcissism, authority, self-admiration and superiority, were measured using a 9-item, short version of Narcissism Personality Questionnaire developed by Zhou et al. (2009) in this study. A 6-point Likert scale was used with 1 = strongly disagree, and 6 = strongly agree. Sample items included “I want to be a leader”, “I like to take responsibility for decision making”, “I love to be the centre of people’s attention”, “I like to look at mirror”, “I seldom rely others to do things”, and “I feel better than others”. The Cronbach’s alphas of authority, self-admiration and superiority are .89, .78 and .72.

Social Capital. To assess perceptions of social capital, the Social Capital Scale (SCC: Williams, 2006) of 20 items was used. However, 6 items are adapted with wording change to reflect the context of the study. SCC comprised two parts, respectively measuring two types of social capital: bonding and bridging. The scale items were used on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Table 1 shows an exploratory factor analysis of social capital with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and reasonably acceptable reliability scores.

(* Insert Table 1 about here *)

Affinity seeking. Affinity seeking was measured by a short version of ASI (affinity seeking instrument) developed by Bell, Tremblay, and Buerkel-Rothfuss (1987). Five items were adopted from the original 13-item scale. An exploratory factor analysis was run to

characterize the two dimension of affinity seeking: affinity seeking competence and strategic performance. Table 2 shows the result of factor analysis of affinity seeking.

(* Insert Table 2 about here *)

Hypothesis testing

H1 hypothesized that subjects who report higher on Weibo use will feel Weibo more gratifying. Results in Table 3 show that the intensity of Weibo use is significantly related to Weibo gratifications. This indicates that the more individuals use Weibo, the more they will satisfy the need for process, convenience, content and social. Therefore, H2 was largely supported.

H2.1 and H2.2 hypothesized that the more individuals score on narcissism, the more they will use Weibo and find Weibo gratifying. The correlation results in Table 3 indicate that intensity of Weibo usage was significantly linked to three dimensions of narcissism personality traits: authority ($r = .26, p < .001$), superiority ($r = .35, p < .001$) and self-admiration ($r = .33, p < .001$). And the four gratifications of Weibo are respectively significantly related to three dimensions of narcissism: authority to process gratification ($r = .29, p < .001$), convenience gratification ($r = .14, p < .01$), content gratification ($r = .16, p < .01$), social gratification ($r = .27, p < .001$); self-admiration to process gratification ($r = .41, p < .001$), convenience gratification ($r = .31, p < .001$), content gratification ($r = .36, p < .001$), social gratification ($r = .42, p < .001$); superiority to process gratification ($r = .39, p < .001$), convenience gratification ($r = .27, p < .001$), content gratification ($r = .35, p < .001$), social gratification ($r = .42, p < .001$). These relationships support the notion that the more narcissistic

individuals are, the more they will use Weibo and find Weibo experience gratifying. Thus, H2.1 and H2.2 were largely supported.

H3.1, H3.2, and H3.3 hypothesized that narcissism, Weibo use, Weibo gratifications are positively related to affinity-seeking. Results in Table 3 demonstrate that all bivariate relationships between each dimension of narcissism and affinity-seeking were significantly and positively related (Pearson's r coefficients ranged from .47 to .59); relationship between Weibo use and affinity-seeking is positive and significant ($r = .42, p < .001$); bivariate relationships between each kind of Weibo gratification and affinity-seeking are also significant and positive (Pearson's r coefficients ranged from .33 to .48). Thus, H3.1, H3.2, and H3.3 were all supported.

H4.1 hypothesizes that the more intensively subjects use Weibo, the greater their social capital they receive. H4.2 hypothesizes that the more individual feel affinity-seeking, the more social capital they will have. The results shown in Table 3 also support these hypothesis because: bivariate relationships between Weibo use and social capital were significant and positive ($r = .32, p < .001$; $r = .29, p < .001$); relationship between affinity-seeking and social capital is also significant ($r = .45, p < .001$; $r = .38, p < .001$). This shows that those who interact frequently on Weibo gain more social capital and feel more affinity-seeking, and affinity-seeking will further affect their social capital. Thus, H4.1 and H4.2 were also fully supported.

(* Insert Table 3 about here *)

Predicting affinity seeking

To examine the relative influence of demographics, narcissism, and Weibo use on affinity seeking, a hierarchical regression was run.

As for the affinity competence, in the first block of predictors, demographics explained most of the variance at three percent. When authority, self-admiration and superiority (three dimensions of narcissism) entered into the second block of the equation, self-admiration ($\beta = .27, p < .001$) and superiority ($\beta = .21, p < .001$) were found to be significant predictors. This indicates that the more people admired themselves and the more they feel superior to others, the more affinity competence they will have. The second block explained 28% of the variance. The third block is intensity of Weibo use, and the results show that people use Weibo more frequently tended to possess more affinity competence ($\beta = .17, p < .001$). This block explained 2.3% of the variance.

As for strategic performance of affinity seeking, the results show that older people tend to have more strategies to be liked by others ($\beta = .12, p < .05$). The first demographic block explained 5.1 percent of the variance. In the second block, self-admiration ($\beta = .20, p < .001$) and superiority ($\beta = .33, p < .001$) significantly predict strategic performance of affinity seeking. This block explained 31 percent of the variance. When entering intensity of Weibo use in the third block, I found that the individuals with greater intensity of Weibo use tended to have more affinity strategies ($\beta = .19, p < .001$).

(* Insert Table 4 about here *)

Predicting social capital

To examine the relative influence of narcissism, Weibo use, affinity seeking and Weibo gratifications on social capital, a hierarchical regression was conducted.

In the result of predicting bridging social capital, the block of demographics did not explain any variance. When three dimensions of narcissism entered into the second block of the equation, self-admiration ($\beta = .24, p < .001$) and superiority ($\beta = .18, p < .01$) were found to be significant predictors. This block explained 14% of the variance. When entering Weibo use in the third block, I found that Weibo use can significantly predict bonding capital ($\beta = .16, p < .001$) with two percent of variance explained. When affinity competence and affinity strategy entered into the third block, only affinity strategy existed significant prediction ($\beta = .17, p < .05$), while superiority became insignificant. This block explained two percent of the variance. When entered four Weibo gratifications into the last block, only content gratification and social gratification are significant while all the above variables became insignificant. This block explained 8 percent of the variance.

(* Insert Table 5 about here *)

In the result of predicting bonding social capital, the block of demographics explained 2% variance. When three dimensions of narcissism entered into the second block of the equation, only superiority ($\beta = .32, p < .01$) were found to be significant predictors. This block explained 13% of the variance. When entering Weibo use in the third block, I found that Weibo use can significantly predict bonding capital ($\beta = .20, p < .001$) with 4 percent of variance explained. When affinity competence and affinity strategy entered into the third block, only affinity strategy existed significant prediction ($\beta = .29, p < .001$). This block

explained 6 percent of the variance. When entered the four Weibo gratifications into the last block, only convenience gratification is significant while Weibo use became insignificant. This block explained 5 percent of the variance.

(* Insert Table 6 about here *)

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Use and gratification of Weibo, narcissism and affinity seeking

One major goal of this study was to confirm the newly introduced personality emerge in SNS, narcissism. The result supports the findings of Bibby (2008) and my previous study, indicating that narcissists are more likely to be heavy users of Weibo. Among the three dimensions of narcissism, the self-admiration and superiority are connected more closely with Weibo use, when compared with authority. This may be because that Weibo is an open platform for equal communications while authority underscores a sense of social hierarchy which impedes the equal communication. It is interesting to note that the relatively high correlation between superiority and Weibo use which can be explained that most of the posts are about food, travel and play. The underlying mechanism is that people want to show they are different and superior than others by posting what and where you eat, travel and play to let others know that “hey, I am better, cooler, luckier or happier than you because I have been to such place to eat, travel, play etc.” It is easy to imagine that if something makes you inferior to others or seems common to others, it is less likely to be posted on Weibo.

Turning to the relationship between narcissism and gratification obtained in Weibo, this

study found that the more narcissist individuals are, the more they will find Weibo gratifying. More specifically, those who admire themselves are more likely to gratify from using Weibo as the correlation between self admiration and Weibo gratifications are all higher than those of authority and superiority, suggesting that Weibo is more suitable for self-admiration individuals to express and amplify their merit. The more people use Weibo, the more they find themselves admirable. Thus, to some extent, it is inferred that Weibo can act as catalyst to let users to focus on their advantages and develop the confidence. All the three dimensions of narcissism have higher correlation with process gratification than with content gratification. According to the definitions made by Cutler & Danowski (1980), process gratifications refer to actual use of the medium itself for extrinsic value, being involved in the process of behavior (eg., use Weibo to pass time or express self) while content gratification concerns the intrinsic value of the information carried by the medium. Therefore, it can be concluded that narcissists concern more about the extrinsic value of the information (the use of the information for some extrinsic purpose) than the content of information.

Another aim of current study is to explore the effect of Weibo on interpersonal relationships. In terms of that people with the knowledge and skills to master interpersonal relationship and the network to access resources may have a different personality, cognitive and motivational attribute, this study combine motivations of using Weibo and narcissism personality to investigate whether there are personal and motivational differences in individual's interpersonal skills when using Weibo. As affinity seeking is a good indicator of interpersonal skills, integrating it into current study will offer more insights into the effect of Weibo on interpersonal relationship. According to the correlation result, those who are skilled

in seeking affinity are more likely to perceive more social and content gratification than process and convenience gratification. The reason for it may be that those with strong affinity seeking ability know how to take advantage of the content of message to gain affinity in social activities on Weibo. Further we can even infer that maybe the strategy for them to increase affinity through Weibo is sharing useful information with others, making themselves helpful, instead of merely having fun with others. The findings in regression shows that those who admire themselves and feel superior to others tend to have affinity competence, knowing how to be attractive, and that Weibo use also can predict the ability of developing positive relationship. In a sense, the “many-to-many” nature of Weibo makes it a media for both interpersonal communication and mass communication, so those who practice more on Weibo are likely to develop a habitual routine to be viewed positive. As to strategic performance dimension of affinity seeking, findings suggests that older people tend to have more strategies to be viewed attractive. This is easy to see that as people grow older, they accumulated more social experience that enables them to act some premeditated or pretending performance. And the significant prediction of self-admiration and superiority also indirectly supports some of the affinity strategies developed by Bell and Daly (1984). Those who perceive self-admiration and superiority often express “physical attractiveness” (try to look and dress attractive in the presence of target), “present interesting self” (present himself as someone who would be interesting to know) and “rewards association” (present himself full with resources so target can be rewarded for association with him). While cause and effect cannot be determined from this research, it does suggest that (1) if using Weibo is helpful to increase one’s capability to become more attractive and positive in interpersonal

communication; (2) those heavy user of Weibo may be more narcissistic.

Social capital, Use and Gratification of Weibo and Affinity seeking

In order to gain more insight into effect of Weibo on relationship, the concept of social capital was incorporated in this study. Former studies of social capital was related to the SNS which stressed the social and relationship, while social media, which underscore the media and information, receive less research attention. The findings expand the conclusion in past researches that SNS activity is positively related to social capital (Donath & boyd, 2004, Ellison et al., 2006) from social network sites (SNS) to social media (Weibo), showing that the more people use Weibo, the more social capital they will have. The findings that Weibo use has more predictive power to bonding social capital than to bridging social capital also confirm the result of my previous study. It is worthy to note that when Weibo gratifications enter into the equation, the prediction of Weibo use became insignificant. Statistically speaking, this only happens in the situation that the two IVs correlated closely with each other and IV that enter later may be mediated between the one enter first and the outcome. So it is also theoretically feasible for us to assume that the Weibo gratifications mediated between Weibo use and social capital. The more one use Weibo, the more they will be gratified from it; and the gratifications obtained from Weibo use may lead one to perceive high social capital. As the result shows, content and social gratifications are mediated between Weibo use and bridging social capital while convenience gratification may be mediated between Weibo use and bonding capital. This may be because that, according to Putnam, the in weak relationship (bridging), people usually get into social activity to

exchange useful information while in strong tie, people are closely enough and do not need to social or absorb information for utilitarian purpose. Therefore, in weak tie, Weibo is used to gratify needs of engagement in social interaction for exchange useful information; in strong tie, Weibo is mainly used to conveniently keep in contact with close friends. This structure, however, need to be further tested.

With respect to the relationship between affinity seeking and social capital, results indicate that affinity seeking have significant predictive power to bonding social capital. This finding can be explained by the impression management theory (Erving, 1959). Those who have the ability and strategies to be viewed attractive would be skilled in shaping and maintaining impressions that are compatible with the perceptions one wants to give to the public, which is a vital way to establish interpersonal relationship. The results also correspond to the famous sentence "All the world is a stage, and all the men and women merely players" by Shakespeare. Individuals act as role players performing strategic interpersonal behavior to shape positive impressions by others. Besides, this study also found that social gratification and content gratification may be mediated between strategic performance and bridging capital because when gratifications enter into equation, the predictive power of strategic performance became insignificant.

Although such mediation effects mentioned above should be confirmed in the future, it does offer us some insights of the importance of gratifications obtained from Weibo in improving people's social capital.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

First, due to the limitation of research fund, only the short version scales were used and most of the items were deleted from the original scales to make respondents more willing to fill in the questionnaires. So the short version scales may impair the reliability and validity.

Second, the assumed mediation effect of Weibo gratifications should be further tested. In the present study, I only conjecture the mediation effect from a theoretical view to explain the result of hierarchical regression. However, it can not sufficiently demonstrate mediation effect; further rigorous methods are needed to confirm the mediating effect.

As Weibo is a continuingly growing social media, new features and functions are being added. So the gratification obtained from Weibo would be varies as people could experience other things on Weibo. Maybe Weibo could gratify more needs as technology develops. Therefore, further research should keep focusing on identifying Weibo gratifications and explore its influence.

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Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis of Social Capital

	Factors		Mean	SD
	1	2		
Bridging social capital				
1. Interacting with people makes me want to try new things, new people	.84		4.02	.68
2. Interacting with people makes me interested in what people unlike me are thinking	.86		4.07	.66
3. Talking with people makes keep in contract with outside world	.80		4.04	.72
Bonding social capital				
4. There are several people I trust to help solve my problems		.76	3.95	.66
5. When I feel lonely, there are several people I can talk to		.83	3.92	.75
6. The people I interact with would be good job references for me		.77	3.58	.83
Eigenvalue	3.04	1.13		
Variance explained	50.73	18.97		
Cronbach's alpha	.73	.82		

Scale used: 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree; N = 431.

Table 2. Exploratory Factor Analysis of Affinity Seeking

	Factors		Mean	SD
	1	2		
Strategic Performance				
1. When necessary, I can put on an act to get important people to approve of me	.94		4.58	1.45
2. I am very good at putting on a show to impress others	.80		3.90	1.50
3. I can present myself as more likable than I really am	.77		4.41	1.40
Competence				
4. I know what to say and do to let others like me		.97	4.64	1.16
5. I know what to say and do to make myself popular with others		.94	4.82	1.15
Eigenvalue	3.04	.97		
Variance explained	60.87	19.41		
Cronbach's alpha	.81	.91		

Scale used: 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree; N = 431

Table 3. Correlations among Key Variables

	Authority	Self-admiration	Superiority	Strategic Performance	Competence	Bonding	Bridging	Process	Convenience	Content	Social
Weibo Use	.26***	.33***	.35***	.36***	.40***	.32***	.29***	.46***	.40***	.54***	.54***
Narcissism											
Authority		.62***	.58***	.42***	.41***	.24***	.28***	.29***	.14**	.16**	.27***
Self-admiration			.63***	.51***	.49***	.32***	.37***	.41***	.31***	.36***	.42***
Superiority				.49***	.56***	.39***	.34***	.39***	.27***	.35***	.42***
Affinity-Seeking											
Strategic performance					.52***	.36***	.31***	.43***	.25***	.34***	.34***
Competence						.46***	.37***	.41***	.34***	.43***	.45***
Social Capital											
Bonding							.45***	.33***	.38***	.42***	.40***
Bridging								.40***	.38***	.45***	.45***
Gratifications											
Process									.62**	.67***	.60***
Convenience										.65***	.55***
Content											.77***
Social											

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$; N = 431

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression of Affinity-Seeking

	Affinity-seeking	
	Competence	Strategy
Block 1: Demographics		
Gender	.02	.03
Education	-.02	-.02
Age	-.03	.12*
Salary	.03	.02
ΔR^2	.03**	.05***
Block 2: Narcissism		
Authority	.08	.03
Self-Admiration	.27***	.20***
Superiority	.21***	.33***
ΔR^2	.28***	.31***
Block 3: Weibo use		
Weibo Use	.17***	.19***
ΔR^2	.03***	.03***
R^2	.34	.40
Adjusted R^2	.33	.39

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$; N = 431

Table 5. Hierarchical Regression of Bridging Social Capital

	Model				
	1	2	3	4	5
Block 1: Demographics					
Gender	-.02	-.05	-.04	-.05	-.02
Education	.01	.01	.01	.02	.02
Age	-.06	.02	.01	-.01	-.01
Salary	.12*	-.00	-.02	-.02	-.03
Block 2: Narcissism					
Authority		.03	.03	.02	.08
Self admiration		.24***	.210**	.16*	.08
Superiority		.18**	.14*	.07	.04
Block 3: Weibo Use					
Weibo Use			.16***	.12*	-.04
Block 4: Affinity-Seeking					
Competence				.06	.05
Strategic performance				.17*	.09
Block 5: Uses and Gratifications of Weibo					
Process					.03
Convenience					.09
Content					.18*
Social					.14*
ΔR^2	.00	.14***	.02**	.02**	.08***
Adjusted R^2	.00	.14	.16	.18	.26

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$; N = 431

Table 6. Hierarchical Regression of Bonding Social Capital

	Model				
	1	2	3	4	5
Block 1: Demographics					
Gender	-.00	-.03	-.02	-.03	-.02
Education	.04	.03	.04	.04	.05
Age	-.11	-.05	-.07	-.10	-.10
Salary	.20**	.09	.07	.07	.06
Block 2: Narcissism					
Authority		-.04	-.04	-.06	-.00
Self Admiration		.12	.08	-.01	-.06
Superiority		.32***	.28***	.16*	.14*
Block 3: Weibo Use					
Weibo Use			.20***	.13**	.03
Block 4: Affinity-Seeking					
Competence				.10	.11*
Strategic Performance				.29***	.24***
Block 5: Uses and Gratifications of Weibo					
Process					-.11
Convenience					.18**
Content					.13
Social					.07
ΔR^2	.02**	.13***	.04***	.06***	.05***
Adjusted R^2	.02	.15	.19	.25	.30

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$; N = 431