

Research on "Stealth Socialization" and "Persona" Construction of Youth Groups under the Perspective of Communication Psychology

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Abstract: Under the background of increasingly prosperous social media, online socialization has gradually become an important way of socializing between people. Compared with the traditional "face-to-face" socialization, online socialization is favored by young people because of its invisibility, convenience and other outstanding advantages. The "invisibility" behind the anonymization of the network allows young people to immerse themselves in multiple role-plays on the network platform, realize the presentation of their self-image, and form a unique digital identity construction, and the phenomenon of "social anxiety on the network" has gradually come to the forefront, and poses a challenge to the creation of a harmonious social environment. The phenomenon of "online social anxiety" is gradually emerging and poses a challenge to the creation of a harmonious social environment. The reason why "stealth" has become a social phenomenon cannot be separated from the promotion of economic and social, cultural and psychological conditions. In this paper, we intend to interpret the psychological motivation behind "stealth" from the perspective of communication psychology, combining Maslow's need theory and classical communication theories such as compensation psychology, herd psychology, social anxiety, etc., and taking the social content of microblogging as the research object.

Keywords: Communication Psychology; "Stealth Socialization"; Social Anxiety; "Persona" Construction; Social Media.

1. Introduction

As an important part of the Internet industry, social platforms have become an indispensable part of people's daily lives. Currently, the number of users of social networking platforms has reached billions worldwide, making it a huge market. The medium of "online social networking" has become one of the most important ways for people to socialize. The phenomenon of online "stealth" refers to the fact that when communicating, transferring information and engaging in activities on the Internet, users can not reveal their real identities and personal information, even though others cannot easily access the real identity of the user. This anonymity can be achieved through a variety of technical means, such as the use of anonymous accounts, encrypted communications, the use of proxy servers, etc.

In early October, it was rumored that microblogging would soon implement a real-name system, from the background real name to display IP belonging to the foreground real name, every small step of the social media we rely on is closely related to all of us, originally belonging to the peeping behavior of hiding in the dark bushes, but instead, it was put under the spotlight to accept the scrutiny of others. In an era where everyone has a microphone, the relative flattening of information dissemination has further weakened the cost of socialization, but such online malpractices as traffic supremacy, eyeball economy, and over-exposure, while affecting the overall media environment, have also had a negative impact on the social environment dependent on the Internet. Therefore, in the face of the ever-changing media field, "online social anxiety" is gradually showing brand-new features and manifestations. As the main force of network socialization, young people have gained the channels to fully show themselves and express their opinions on network social platforms, but the network media environment is very

complicated, and the constantly emerging new things, while bringing rich individual social experiences, also provide the soil for the emergence of new social problems. Convenient channels for the expression of opinions make young people pay more attention to the construction of self-identity on social media, and are more eager to obtain self-identity. The huge amount of information makes it more difficult to select and filter information. Screening becomes more and more difficult. As the young generation witnessing the change of socialization, their views are of great reference value for the study of the specific manifestations and brand new features of online social anxiety and self-identity construction on social platforms.

2. Integration of Theories Related to Communication Psychology

2.1. "Stealth Socialization" and Maslow's Needs Theory

Maslow's hierarchy of needs structurally divides human needs into five levels, from basic to advanced, namely survival needs, security needs, emotional and belonging needs, respect needs and the pursuit of self-actualization. According to this theory, individuals can only pursue higher level needs after satisfying lower level needs. In the current society, most of the individuals who adopt the "stealth socialization" mode no longer face significant challenges in their basic survival and safety needs, and their needs have been elevated to a higher level. However, the use of low-cost means to help individuals achieve their needs more efficiently at the "art" level has become a more direct approach than the accumulation of wealth and experiences over time to realize higher-level needs. Individuals adopting the "stealthy social" mode gain a sense of security on the platform through anonymization and "stealthy" social strategies, temporarily

escaping from situations that do not correspond to their real lives, and taking advantage of the asymmetry of information to gain the recipient's recognition and respect, thus realizing the pursuit of self-worth on the virtual level. The pursuit of self-worth is realized at the virtual level.

2.2. "Persona" Construction and Compensatory Psychology

In the process of individual adaptation to society, it is inevitable that there will be some degree of deviation. In order to seek balance and compensation, individuals tend to develop their own strengths and advantages in other aspects, in order to catch up with or surpass others. This psychological adaptation mechanism is known as psychological compensation (Psychological compensation). This kind of compensation, in essence, can be regarded as a kind of psychological level "shift". For those individuals whose self-actualization in the real world is not up to expectation, they may choose to rebuild their self-confidence by remodeling their characters through virtual social platforms to make up for the deficiencies in their real lives and to compensate for them on the psychological level. For example, if a person's career development in real life is not as good as he or she would like and fails to reach his or her ideal achievement, he or she may adopt the "persona socialization" approach, using such means as purchasing materials, to build an ideal life blueprint for himself or herself.

2.3. "Persona" Construction and Herd Mentality

The phenomenon of people choosing to "socialize by stealth" is closely related to the trend of "ostentatious display of wealth" that is widely spread on social media today. Many netroots publish pictures and videos of fancy clothes, gold and silver jewelry, and luxury cars and houses on social platforms such as Xiaohongshu, Weibo, and Jiyin, aiming to attract more attention and likes. This form of symbolic display directly conveys the value of gold-worshipping to the onlooker audience. Due to the high exposure of such content, audiences are susceptible to its influence, forming the illusion that most people in the world are rich, which in turn intensifies the identification with gold-worshipping and the anxiety of pursuing an affluent life. As the audience lacks a comprehensive perspective when acquiring information, it is easy for them to develop an irrational "herd mentality" in a particular situation. This mentality is accompanied by a "comparison" mentality, which prompts individuals to imitate the behavior of the rich and try to fit into the so-called "mainstream group".

2.4. "Stealth Socialization", "Persona" Construction and Social Anxiety

Social anxiety, as a psychological phenomenon, refers to significant and persistent worry and fear exhibited by an individual while participating in one or more social or performance situations. Individuals show strong feelings of apprehension, nervousness, or fear about specific interpersonal situations, accompanied by avoidance behaviors. Major manifestations include fear of eye contact, fear of being watched, fear of making inappropriate comments in front of others, and fear of performing everyday activities such as eating and writing in front of others. The causes of social anxiety are often complex and varied and may be related to an individual's low self-esteem or low level of

social achievement. This group of people tends to have a greater desire for the approval of others. In real-life social relationships, they may face negative challenges such as difficulty in emotional advancement and frustration. However, in online social environments, they may be able to alleviate this anxiety to some extent by constructing a "persona". By carefully planning and posting content to create an idealized and controllable self-image on social platforms, they achieve a higher level of control over their friends' evaluations, rebuild their confidence in their friends' likes and comments, and even reposition their self-worth.

3. Specific Presentation of "Stealth Socialization" and "Persona" Construction

3.1. Superficial Task-oriented Socialization

One of the typical manifestations of social anxiety and self-construction among young people is "superficial socialization", i.e., they are able to establish interpersonal relationships conveniently, but in reality the substance of these social relationships is shrinking. This social situation is characterized by a state of "co-existence". As digital natives, the real portrait of the youth is more like that of "isolated and dispersed "hidden youth" sitting alone in front of a computer screen or staring at a cell phone interface. In short, at the level of physical connection, young people have realized arbitrary connection at any time and any place, but at the level of spiritual communication, although individuals talk warmly on social media, their hearts are becoming more and more distant.

3.2. Saturated Self and Self-concept Differentiation

In the process of social anxiety and self-construction of young individuals, there exists a significant and unique cognitive phenomenon, i.e. "self-concept differentiation". This cognitive feature is gradually formed through the continuous interaction between individuals and others, which enriches the individual's cognition of self roles and creates a fuller self-image. However, it is worth noting that this saturation of roles does not mean that the self-perception is complete and stable. On the contrary, it is often accompanied by the emergence of a large number of new self-evaluation indicators, which in turn shakes the previous self-assumptions. This shaking makes self-perception fragmented and the integration of "self"-related information more difficult. Further, "self-concept fragmentation" is seen as one of the intrinsic drivers of loneliness. When individuals are unable to construct a stable and consistent self-concept, they tend to perceive differences between themselves and others, which may lead to feelings of loneliness. This loneliness may further exacerbate their social anxiety and challenges in self-construction. In addition, "self-concept differentiation" is also a typical manifestation of social anxiety and self-construction process. In social settings, individuals may feel anxious due to their inability to accurately predict the evaluations of others. At the same time, they may make continuous efforts to shape their own image in order to gain recognition and acceptance from others. This process fully demonstrates the core feature of "self-concept differentiation".

3.3. Immersive Multi-role Play

Under the current social environment, the specific manifestations of social anxiety and self-construction are

becoming more and more significant, especially in the socialization mode of "active online and withdrawn offline". With the popularization of social media, it has become an important tool for people's communication, but its potential negative impacts need to be highly emphasized. Especially for the young generation, the problems faced in real life, such as "reduced social participation and weak social skills", are closely related to the use of social media. Many young people are highly active and seemingly comfortable in the virtual social space, but they seem to be more restrained when they return to real life. This social phenomenon of "active online and withdrawn offline" has become a common social tendency among contemporary youth. The anonymity and immediacy of social media make it easier for individuals to express themselves in the virtual world and gain recognition and appreciation from others. This positive feedback exacerbates their self-confidence in the virtual world, which in turn increases their reliance on social media. At the same time, the fast-paced life of modern society also makes it difficult for people to invest enough time and energy to maintain social relationships in real life.

4. Motivations for "Stealth Socialization" and "Persona" Construction

4.1. Weakening the Practice of Numeracy Training

In today's society, big data algorithms are having a profound impact on people's lives and shaping the way we live. Foucault's concept of "discipline", whereby people are bound by social discipline to behave in the "right" way, is being replaced by algorithmically-enabled discipline. In the age of big data, people's technologized lifestyles have immersed us in an "information cocoon" influenced by technological spatial rights translations and AI edited transcripts. These technologies are able to push users' accounts, posts, likes, etc. to acquaintances with precision and accuracy, and the penetration of strong real relationships affects self-presentation on social platforms. These uninvited guests from real relationships can break the established performance scripts and undermine the idealized performances of individuals, so many people begin to experience social burnout and are afraid to reveal themselves in social platforms. In order to circumvent the control brought about by the rules and regulations, some people choose to erase their personal information, turn off the guest system, and practice "snooping", circumventing the algorithmic recommendation mechanism based on identity tags in a stealthy manner.

4.2. Self-protection in Digital Interactions

Digital communication breaks the time and space limitations of traditional communication, strengthens the free interaction between people, and thus forms the motivation of communication based on subjective desire and interest. However, this kind of interaction also brings the negative impacts of questioning, quarreling and abusing that may occur in traditional interaction, etc. The emergence of the IP positioning function has revealed many "labeled users", whose real identities seem to have been uncovered in an instant, gradually revealing their original faces. Some bloggers who claim to have settled abroad are actually at

home; some bloggers who claim to be living in big cities are actually working in small cities in the third and fourth tiers. In this "IP reveal war", every user has become a watcher, they shuttle in various comment areas, exposing the real identity of some false bloggers, and some people even escalate to the "regional war", to refute the regional phenomenon that they think is incorrect. The phenomenon of everyone watching seems to have become the norm. Traceable node-based information storage and instantaneous dissemination have exacerbated this negative impact, and "cyber archaeology", "home visits", and "cyber violence" are becoming more and more frequent, with the degree of freedom in cyberspace shrinking. Freedom in cyberspace is shrinking. Behind the consequences of cyber violence in reality is the manifestation of the right to digital violence. Every piece of information posted on social platforms can be retrieved and collected at any time and any place, and surfing on the Internet can lead to cyber violence because of an inadvertent sentence, all of which makes young people begin to retreat in fear. The implementation of "snooping" makes cyber violence useless, so as to avoid unnecessary trouble, and thus obtain greater freedom and security in cyberspace.

4.3. Seeking Group Identity in a Social Setting

Research by the famous anthropologist Robin Dunbar points out that the development of the human brain is influenced and driven by socialization. Against the background of the complex and changing social environment, accelerated pace of life and increased pressure, people have developed a dual psychological and physiological need for socialization. On the one hand, identity labels such as occupation, social status, age, etc. bring specific requirements and expectations to people, and people want to get rid of these labels in the Internet space, temporarily escape from the responsibilities and expectations brought about by their identities, show their true selves, and pursue their real hobbies and interests. On the other hand, the rapid development of modern society makes people feel anxious and fatigued, and in order to adapt to the demands of the living environment, people have to hide their true will and play various roles. In the long run, inner emotions cannot be released, leading to emotional instability and other mental health problems. Therefore, people urgently need a way to hide their identities so as to release their inner emotions authentically and seek spiritual fulfillment. In this case, "snooping" behavior emerges. People are more willing to separate social acquaintances from private life, and the behavior of hiding identity makes the social interaction between users weaken gradually. The "snooping" anonymous behavior can precisely meet the needs of users, users can freely control the social distance and frequency, do not need to cater to the social behavior of others, social behavior has become a user can actively choose the mode of behavior.

5. Conclusion

The construction of "stealth socialization" and "persona" is essentially an evolving and dynamic process, which centers on how individuals understand, evaluate and shape their own image. For many individuals, they may tend to closely associate their value with how they appear in the social environment. In the current social context, social anxiety has become a common challenge in the daily lives of many individuals. This anxiety mainly stems from uncertainty about self-performance and hypersensitivity to others' evaluations.

As a result, they tend to be overly concerned with external perceptions and try to maintain an ideal self-image by meeting external expectations. However, this excessive attention tends to exacerbate their anxiety level in social situations. In order to effectively alleviate social anxiety and construct a healthier, more positive self-image, we need to adjust individual self-perceptions, cultivate positive self-evaluations, and seek professional psychological assistance when necessary. We need to be more confident and comfortable in interacting with others in our daily lives, so as to realize the goal of harmonious coexistence.

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