Negotiation and Consensus: Research on College Students' Online Community Governance*

Huang Yi-ning, Yang Yu-ke, Fu Zhou-yi
Central China Normal University, Wuhan, China

College education is facing a new subject of college students' online community construction and governance. At present, there are still some problems in college students' online community, such as low efficiency of information dissemination, poor sense of belonging among members, lack of sense of security on members' network appeal, and prominent phenomenon of emotional and irrational expression. Based on this, to improve the construction and governance of college online community, we should promote a three-dimensional interaction among colleges, teachers, and students, strengthen communication and cooperation, and jointly create a harmonious community atmosphere.

Keywords: college students, online community governance, three-dimensional interaction

Introduction

The development of the Internet and information technology has enriched the way people interact and spawned a large number of virtual communities. The virtual community refers to the aggregation of society. It comes from the network with enough people, long-term public discussion, sufficient human emotions, and a net of relationships formed in cyberspace (Rheingold, 1993). Now, second to dormitories, the virtual community has become the major learning and living community for college students.

As a common platform of sharing, co-construction and co-ownership, the virtual community should have become a "safety field" for teachers and students to communicate with each other. However, there are still many problems in the management of college students' online communities. It is of far-reaching practical significance to analyze the existing problems and explore strategies for the betterment of governance and construction.

The Existing Problems of College Students' Online Communities

"Field" is a living space (Liu, 2005), and a community is a "field". Expression behavior, membership, and member conflicts are the main driving forces in the field of college students' online communities. This paper

***Acknowledgements:** This study was the phased research result of General Project of The National Social Science Fund of China "Research on Virtual Video Community under the Background of Participatory Culture" (Project No. 18BXW101). It was also the phased research result of the project "Research on the Expression and Guidance of College Students' Online Community in the New Era" supported by "the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities" of Central China Normal University (Project No. CCNU19ZY0031). The article was also funded by the "Central China Normal University Youth Research Center Project".

Huang Yi-ning, G.M.A., lecturer, School of Journalism and Communication, Central China Normal University.

Yang Yu-ke, undergraduate, School of Journalism and Communication, Central China Normal University.

Fu Zhou-yi, undergraduate, School of Journalism and Communication, Central China Normal University.

mainly focuses on expression behavior, membership, and member conflicts in the virtual community of college students to analyze the existing problems.

Unstable Expression and Information Receiving Rate

With the immediacy and high interactivity of the Internet, the virtual community provides a disembedding platform for college students (Anthony, 2011), where the behavior of members separates temperately, spatially, and regionally. As a “field” for college students to exchange and discuss members of the online community have strong arbitrariness between “entry” and “departure”, which makes the expression in the virtual community very unstable: Firstly, the topic changes rapidly. Any member’s interruption may cause a shift of the topic; secondly, the topic can be highly repetitive. Topics often appear repeatedly.

In the new media era, the contradiction between the explosive growth of information and the limited attention resources becomes more and more prominent. The randomness of members’ expression in the virtual community has led to the fragmentation of topics. Different semantic spaces are cut rigidly, which directly leads to the fragmentation of the information dissemination process affecting the direct expression of information. At the same time, multiple topics simultaneously going on will distract members’ attention, which greatly reduces the possibility that other information is received, affecting the reception efficiency of the information.

Low Sense of Belonging and Identity

Different from the traditional virtual community, the college students’ online community is a cyberspace where “strong ties” and “weak ties” relationships coexist. On the one hand, the establishment of the community depends on the offline relationship of the members. Teachers and students are familiar with each other and it is a “strong ties” network. On the other hand, the virtuality of the Internet deconstructs the “power relationship” in the real society, leading to the reversal of the online and offline roles of members, and making the connection among members a “weak tie”.

Under such circumstances, the virtual community provides a space for some members to fully express themselves. But on the other hand, this aggregation of “weak ties” reduces the involvement of community members. The majority of the network community is still “silent majority”, and the lack of belonging and identity of college students’ online communities is serious.

Low Security and Universal Conflict Expression

College students are in the critical period of the formation of their outlook on life and values. They are still immature in terms of value choice and emotional management. It is inevitable that there will be emotional and irrational tendencies when expressing opinions in the cyberspace.

In the conflicting expression, most members of the community adopt an anonymous form. The disintegration of the “spiral of silence” and the lack of the role of “gatekeeper” are particularly evident. The development of anonymity functions in the social environment makes people’s fear of social isolation hidden under the “protective umbrella” of anonymity. The reduction of perceived risk promotes the diversification of expression of opinions and appeals, which helps to create a democratic expression atmosphere. However, at the same time, due to the adoption of anonymity, the actual identity of individuals in the online community is unknown. Other members cannot distinguish the specific identity of the speaker, nor can they punish those who make undesirable and irrational comments. In this way, the role of “gatekeepers” is dissolute, the uncontrollable factors of speech increase.

Three-Dimensional Interaction

As an important place for college students to self-manage and educate, when the online community is governed, the school and students should actively interact. Based on tips, this paper puts forward the following suggestions from the perspectives of colleges, teachers, and students for the existing problems of college students' online communities:

College: Construct a “Safety Valve” Mechanism

First of all, colleges should promote the transformation of college community construction from “management” to “negotiation”, giving students a platform for appealing expression. When conflicting expressions occur, colleges should adhere to the concept of “consultation and co-governance”, understand the rationality of their existence and actively participate in solving problems. At the same time, colleges should also face up to students' demand-expressions and starting from the source, conduct targeted guidance to students' opinions and emotions. Secondly, colleges should also strengthen the quality education of virtual communities for college students and improve their sense of rational participation and self-management ability in virtual communities. Finally, colleges should do a good job in information gathering and crisis warning.

Teacher: Create a Secure Network Environment

College teachers (especially virtual community administrators), who serve as a “bridge” between students and school and have close ties with the student groups, should strive to create a virtual community environment with a sense of “security” and give full play to its guiding role of “connecting the preceding and the following”. First of all, they must use the anonymity function reasonably to promote the free expression of community members' opinions. But, at the same time, the spreading of irrational and emotional speech must be prevented. Secondly, they must strengthen the information collection and overall planning to improve the efficiency of community information reception, such as by setting up and issuing weekly tasks, etc. Finally, they must actively pay attention to the “silent majority” in the community, take special note of its psychological state, and strengthen communication and dialogue, so as to improve the sense of belonging and collective identity of this part of the group.

Student: Increase Participation

The student group should give full play to their awareness of initiative and enhance their awareness of information sharing in order to maximize the effectiveness of communication in virtual communities. First of all, we must improve our sense of “ownership” and actively participate in the information interaction among community members. The enthusiasm and initiative of collecting and acquiring information as well as the awareness of personal information sharing should be improved to achieve “information win-win” for both individuals and groups. Secondly, it is necessary to take up the leading role in voicing their opinions that express the collectively reasonable appeals with rational words, and provide some constructive suggestions for improvement.

Conclusion

As a main platform for the interaction between teachers and students in colleges, the college students' online community takes on important functions. It is of great practical significance to discuss the current development status and future development direction of college students' online community by analyzing the existing problems, such as low efficiency of information dissemination, poor sense of belonging among

members, lack of sense of security on members' network appeal, and prominent phenomenon of emotional and irrational expression. This study makes an exploratory analysis of the expression phenomenon in college students' online communities. However, due to the media environment and the individual characteristics of college students, there are still many academic problems in the college students' online community that need to be explored and discussed, which will be further investigated in future research.

References

- Anthony, G. (2011). *The consequences of modernity* (p. 18). Nanjing: Yilin Press.
- Liu, H. L. (2005). Introduction to contemporary media field research. *International Journalism*, 2.
- Rheingold, H. (1993). *The virtual community*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Wang, Y. (2018). Types of "irrational interaction" and its influencing factors in virtual virtual space. *Modern Communication (Journal of Communication University of China)*, 40(10), 69-73.
- Wu, F. C. (2000). Reflections on the concept of symbiosis. *Philosophy and Dynamics*, (6), 21-24.
- Wu, W., & Gu, C. L. (2004). Research on regional tourism competition and cooperation based on symbiosis theory—Taking Huaihai Economic Zone as an example. *Economic Geography*, (1), 104-109.
- Xia, L. P. (2015). On the construction of the "belt and road" from the perspective of symbiosis system theory. *Journal of Tongji University* (Social Science Edition), 26(2), 30-40.
- Xie, X. Z., & Huang, Z. M. (2018). Research on college students' virtual appeal in the age of media convergence. *Journal of Chifeng University (Chinese Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 39(4), 128-130.