

# From Social Phobia to Social Bullishness: Possibility and Realization of "Transformation" of Young College Students in Internet Mediated Communication

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## Abstract

The meaning of "social phobia" has been gradually generalized, and it is becoming a social group psychology from the overflow of clinical psychological diseases, which mostly occurs in young college students. The Internet has inspired a new social form - the communication mediated by the Internet has the potential to ease or even change the real interpersonal communication situation of "social phobic" youth. Defocused presence in digital communication scene, the pseudo exploration of emerging adulthood, and the multi-modal self-presentation enable the "social phobia" youth to ease their anxiety in the intermediary communication and participate in social construction more freely and easily.

## Keywords

**Social Phobia; Internet Mediated Communication; Absence Communication; Self Presentation.**

## 1. Introduction

"Shekong" is the abbreviation of "social phobia", which mainly refers to that the behavior subjects dare not conduct face-to-face social communication, or that they feel pressured and uncomfortable when conducting normal social communication in front of people, and cannot express their opinions or attitudes in a normal way [1]. In recent years, more and more young people have labeled themselves as "social phobia". The meaning of "social phobia" has gradually spread, and it is becoming a social group psychology from clinical psychological diseases. "Probing" on China Youth Daily, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and social media platform jointly launched a survey on young people aged 18-35 in 2020. The results show that 40.2% of people said they had "social phobia" to varying degrees, 52.7% thought they lacked social skills, and 55.6% were not confident about their own conditions [2]. In 2021, "social cow syndrome" (short for "social cow syndrome"), which forms an extreme opposite to "social fear", will become a hot word on the Internet. It means that individuals do not have any pressure or burden in social interaction, and they are not afraid to show themselves confidently when socializing. The typical phenomenon of "social cattle" has aroused heated discussion, and has evolved from the hot Internet to a complex social mentality and group psychology [3], which reflects the concern and expectation of contemporary youth for building good interpersonal communication and integrating into social relations.

Some studies believe that the social generalization of social phobia is affected by the complex social background and systematic changes to micro individuals, which originates from the comprehensive factors of social structure, social system and college students themselves, and is caused by factors such as accelerated social rhythm, centrifugation of interpersonal relationships and insufficient social trust [4]. At the macro level, it is affected by structural factors such as technology, education, culture, and economic development [5]; From the

perspective of individual development, social consciousness withdrawal, social ability degradation and social will decline are the real state of social phobic youth. Some scholars believe that if the "social phobia" mentality is continuously strengthened, anesthetized or transformed into "social boredom", it will harm the physical and mental health of young people and the cultivation of young people. It is worth noting that some studies have shown that the Internet stimulates new forms of social interaction - communication mediated by the Internet can ease or even change the real interpersonal situation. The higher the level of social anxiety, the greater the use of social networking sites [6]. People with real social anxiety prefer to participate in online communication to relieve social pressure, discomfort and fear [7]. They are more secure in social experience. Anxiety people also have a higher sense of online social efficacy and self-expression [8]. The higher the degree of social anxiety, the more comfortable people get from online communication, while people who are not troubled by social anxiety are more willing to make online friends [9].

Based on this, in the two different social life scenarios of "online offline", there is a contrast in the nature and degree of social mentality, which is more likely to lead to "social phobia" in the real environment. In online communication mediated by the Internet, the traditional social model of "people to people" has been broken through, and has been transformed into a new social model of "people to social media to people", with the help of the infinity and availability of the Internet, The social space of young college students can be extended, and they can even weave a net to build a nest here, attract friends and friends, and build their own home of interest and affinity. As Negroponte said, "in the vast universe, digital survival can make everyone more accessible, so that the weak and lonely can also voice their hearts" [10]. What is the social scene of social phobic youth in the intermediary world of Internet manufacturing? How does intermediary communication alleviate the social anxiety of "social phobic" youth, and even stimulate their communication initiative and efficiency? This paper attempts to analyze the possibility and realization of the transformation from "social terrorism" to "social cattle" from the perspective of intermediary communication under Internet technology.

## 2. Defocused Presence in Digital Communication Scene

Social phobia is a kind of "situational" psychological reaction, that is to say, the environment, atmosphere context and "presence" experience will have a huge psychological and behavioral impact on the individual of social phobia. In the traditional social interpersonal communication, a communication or a dialogue often occurs face-to-face in the physical environment of a real place. The subject of communication expresses meaning and interacts through the "live performance" of the body senses. As Giddens once pointed out, in the pre modern society, space and place are always the same, because the spatial dimension of social life is dominated by "presence", that is, regional activities. In such a communication context, the sense of directness, immediacy and focus of offline face-to-face communication is strong, and the oncoming situational experience makes the sense of social fear easy to spawn. However, modernity has gradually separated space from place through breeding various elements of "lack of field". When Internet technology finally separates "body" from "presence", "space" becomes "virtual space" [11], and the "presence" of "lack of field" appears - a virtual presence. In the Internet mediated communication, communication can be conducted through the screen, and individuals use multimodal digital technology to create "avatar me" instead of "physical me".

In the Internet era, college students' social scenes exist in two fields: offline reality and online network. Internet mediated communication based on new media technology has profoundly affected the general social communication form and its constituent elements: time and space, that is, "communication space" and place appear meaning separation, and time can be controlled artificially. With the support of data transmission technology and mobile intelligent

terminals, it breaks the sense of presence of communication elements such as real scene space and face-to-face communication subject that traditional interpersonal communication relies on. It only requires contacts to manipulate intelligent devices to open social software, switch "space" in rectangular windows of different social platforms, and allocate resources in screen areas with different functions within the platform. From then on, "cloud based" exchanges have occurred quietly. As the "network aborigines", young college students have long been used to wandering in the instrumental communication space, identifying the symbolic communication objects, using multimodal communication discourse, feeling the infinite communication experience, and communicating easily in the screen space. The ever closer integration of information technology and human society has given birth to the Internet mediated communication, a new form of interpersonal communication and communication. People show their life styles, talk with people or talk about formal or private topics through the "rectangular screen" of the Internet intermediary, which is to simulate the self-report and interaction of interpersonal communication in the Internet mediated space.

### 3. The Pseudo Exploration of Emerging Adulthood

The young college students are at the beginning of their adulthood. As a period of gradual transition into the adult society, the adaptation from knowledge to socialization is an important issue they need to face. The socialization development of college students includes adapting to social norms, playing social roles, forming social skills, accumulating social resources, etc. That is to say, at the university stage, under the premise of independent life, college students should complete their studies on time and practice their experience in life. In the former university stage, most students shuttle between home and school almost every day, and communicate with "acquaintances" among parents, children, teachers and students, and peers. As Fei Xiaotong described, the form of social relations in China is a social relationship circle formed by taking individuals as the center and spreading out the relatively natural and stable differential relations such as blood, industry and marriage. It is a "acquaintance society" relationship form with a sense of permanence and order. Unlike the natural emotional relationship dominated by parent-child teachers and students in the middle school stage, university social interaction extends into the interpersonal relationship of benefit utilization, such as the relationship of club rank, internship, dormitory living together, etc. The social environment of strangers and "pan" social environment is coming, and the elements and operating mechanism of social interaction in the university have been more consistent with the real modern social structure. In modern society, the logic of social interpersonal communication has changed from emotional type to rational type.

After entering the university, the logic of responsibility and self responsibility after independent life makes young people's sense of self-consciousness develop rapidly, their sense of risk increases, their desire to control uncertainty increases, and their daily interactions become more cautious, even fear of making mistakes, resulting in fear and anxiety. In the face of intertwined social relationships, making accurate relationship judgments, controlling mentality and playing roles in different situations may be one of the main sources of social anxiety for college students who are still young. However, socialization is a complex process, and there is no standard answer to interpersonal communication. College students are constantly exploring, trying and growing in the adaptation and "negotiation" with social norms to find their own social path. Therefore, in the real social environment, whether it is "breaking the ice" or relationship maintenance when meeting for the first time, it is a social relationship battle again and again. Whether the communication process is smooth and harmonious, whether the results are maintained or even heated will greatly affect the self feedback and other people's evaluation of young college students. Therefore, social phobia in young student groups

has gradually become a common phenomenon and a challenge that needs to be overcome in the minds of college students.

In the information age, compared with other organizations highly involved in the flow of social information, university campuses still exist like ivory towers. The communication space of college students is limited and localized, while the Internet breaks the regional space restrictions, opening a "window" of the world for them, enabling them to have a glimpse and integrate into the online "pseudo" social environment to achieve unlimited connectivity. At the same time, in the intermediary communication with empty space, the scene and embodiment naturally no longer exist. What remains unchanged is interactive action and discourse expression. Everything revolves around the meaning of communication and interaction. That is to say, the Internet intermediary communication refines the form and process of interpersonal communication, and gazes at the "pseudo ego" in the digital intermediary environment, and the space distance of personal perception with the other person in communication is reduced to the invisible distance of "one line leading", thus pushing interpersonal communication to the essential connotation of "spiritual communication".

#### **4. Multimodal Self-Presentation under Differential Relationship**

In the rich and diverse social scene of universities, young college students who are in the emerging stage of adulthood are eager to explore, active in thinking, and willing to accept new things. They tend to show an open and catering mentality in social interaction, but at the same time, they are anxious and cautious about the "quasi socialized" group integration, rule adaptation, and impression management of universities. In reality, the limited campus communication space and relationship make every real social interaction become a kind of self limitation. The embarrassment of "social phobic" young people stems from their worries about "self" performance and the consequent damage to social relations. In the real social environment, the communication parties express their feelings through the language and expression, body posture, tone and other paralanguage, which requires the body to coordinate the expression at the same time while mobilizing consciousness. It is not easy to properly complete this set of communication operation system under the control of the "social phobia" mentality. Moreover, in Chinese culture, the Chinese self can be called "the self in relationship". A new pattern of differential relations is formed due to the different nature and development stages of the relationship. With individuals as the center, differential differences are formed according to the hierarchical nature of the relationship. Here, using Huang Guangguo's classification method, interpersonal relationships are divided into "instrumental" interpersonal relationships, "emotional" interpersonal relationships and "mixed" interpersonal relationships [12]. Affective relationship mostly exists in intimate relationship, mainly emotional communication, such as family and close friends; Instrumental relationship exists in the relationship between strangers or the relationship based on the use of interests, mainly based on rational communication. Mixed relationship is between emotional type and instrumental type, such as relatives and classmates. Different relationship judgments lead to different social conventions, and "the principle of needs, the principle of fairness and the principle of human relations" are adopted in communication.

In the daily communication of college students, it is the basic content of dealing with interpersonal relationships to identify the differential relationship and maintain it with appropriate attitude and behavior [13]. As the extension and evolution of real interpersonal communication, intermediary communication still follows the communication norms of politeness, meaning coordination and cooperation. At the same time, different from the real interpersonal communication, the interlacing of "absence" and "presence", the filtering of communication clues, the richness of intermediary media and other intermediary interpersonal

communication characteristics "soft focus" the real social conventions, and derive new social rules and etiquette. In Internet mediated communication, differential practices based on different principles and norms are clearly visible. Emotional interpersonal relationship, long-term and stable, meets the emotional needs of both parties, and the dialogue is casual, symbolic and emotional, and communication is based on personal needs; Instrumental relationship is transient and unstable, which should be carefully and rationally controlled; The mixed relationship is between the above situations. The nature of the relationship is dynamic and procedural, and the interaction features are both in different situations. The communication between people creates an extremely real pseudo communication picture through multimodal communication elements. The comprehensive use of words, symbols, expression packs, dynamic videos and other elements can even expand the means of relying only on personal "physical expression" in real social interaction, and enhance the image richness and social appeal of the communication subject, The use of these nonverbal cues (such as pictures, audio, video and expression packs) enables self presentation in communication to achieve active control and even collage. In this way, "social phobic" young people guard their inner acceptable social distance, and the perceived social space becomes wider and richer, so as to obtain the most ideal interpersonal communication effect and improve the communication quality and social efficacy of "social phobic" young college students.

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