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**DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES
BY CHINESE CELEBRITIES
ON SINA WEIBO**

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PhD

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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Studies

**Discursive Construction
of Personal and Social Identities by
Chinese Celebrities on Sina Weibo**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2016

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

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LIN Minfen

With love dedicated to my grandma, family, and my dearest son
Bowie.

Abstract

With increasing uses of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) for presenting self and interacting with others, studies of online identity construction are very much wanted, particularly in the field of Chinese microblogging practice. The present study has thus attempted to investigate how Chinese celebrities discursively construct their personal and social identities on Sina Weibo.

Integrating the notions of self-presentation, of “individual self” and “social self” from Symbolic Interactionism, and the approach of Interactional Sociolinguistics, the present study attempts to describe and explain how high-profile celebrities construct their “personal identities” and “relational identities” on Sina Weibo. While “personal identity” is related to the construction of “individual self”, “relational identity” is related to the construction of “social self”. It is postulated that “personal identity” and “relational identity” are always intertwined in interpersonal communication, especially in social media, i.e., on Social Networking Services sites.

The data for the present study was collected in a twelve-month period from June 2012 to June 2013 of tweets from the timelines of the six most influential public figures in Mainland China, based on the *Most Influence Ranking List* released by Sina Weibo System in July 2013. A total of 5641 microposts have been collected, via the Sina Weibo API, which contains a total number of 11323 utterances for coding.

The first part of the thesis investigates how the Chinese celebrities have constructed their personal identities for their multiple audiences, both known and unknown, on Sina Weibo. It is found that the Chinese celebrities tend to be broadcasters of their individual self on this platform. Multi-faceted personal identities have been constructed including being an expert of competence, a responsible social citizen, a reliable friend with love and care, and a sensualist, which can be grouped according to three categories of “the public self”, “the public private self”, and the “transgressive intimate self”.

Furthermore, considering the communication-immanent side of identity as relational and interactional achievements, the second part of the present study investigates what relational acts and facework the Chinese celebrities have performed on Sina Weibo. In contrast with the existing studies on speech acts on SNSs, which rely heavily on the criteria and taxonomy of Searle (1976), the present study adopts a relational perspective and redefines “speech acts” in terms of how they contribute to the “social self” in the interaction. It is found that the cluster of relational acts performed by the Chinese celebrities on Sina Weibo include daily and festive greetings, congratulations, directives, promising, promotion of assets, sharing of information, displaying stance, showing appreciation, showing concern, self-depreciation, etc. Furthermore, the characteristic linguistic features used by the celebrities represent an informal and sometimes non-standard style, a style popular among Chinese netizens. It is worthy of special notice that the celebrities on Weibo no longer adhere to the Chinese traditions of face and politeness or to the principles of power and hierarchy in interaction; instead, they focus primarily on building

affiliation and solidarity and showing politeness with their followers on Weibo, adhering to the informal and sometimes non-standard style of Chinese writing.

The study is highly significant as it has attempted to incorporate the insights from socio-psychology to build an integrated framework of analysis for describing and explaining the processes and products of identity construction by Chinese celebrities. It makes an important contribution to the research on identity construction with its significant insights regarding the multi-faceted nature and relational dynamics of identity construction on social media and the uncovering of linguistic acts and features constituting relational identity. In addition, the insights from the study can provide practical implications for personal branding and personal rapport management in the new Web 2.0 era.

Publications arising from the thesis

Book Chapter:

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Chapter 1 Introduction

In this digital age, with the exponential growing and diffusion of new media, the ways of communicating with each other has been evolved steadily, social media has become an important global medium of communication, a medium that impacts the whole social realm. Social media are now overwhelmingly used by all demographic groups of the global population, millions of users of new media interact with the world on a daily basis with a high frequency. Serving as the opening of the study, this section first provides a general glimpse of the development of social media and the identity construction in social media in the Web 2.0 era.

1.1 Development of Social Media

1.1.1 Web 2.0: User-Generated Content Social Network Sites

The impact of the Internet is so pervasive that the nature of communication and social relationships has been drastically changed. The inseparability of social life from social media, the desire for interconnectivity, the willingness to contribute, to share, and to expand online networks are also changing the media consumption behaviours of Internet users, and thus,

influencing the manner of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) (OECD, 2007).

With the advent of the new generation of CMD, a new term “Web 2.0” was coined to differentiate the new from the old. As summarized in a report of the OECD (2007, p.5), “changes in the way users produce, distribute, access and re-use information, knowledge and entertainment give rise to increased user autonomy, increased participation and increased diversity”. The web-based and subsequently mobile-device-supported technologies have provided further impetus to social media, triggering a spectrum of interactive online platforms, blogs, wikis, and social network services (SNSs), to create, edit, maintain, discuss, and share information. The shift of social attitudes from passive recipient of news feeds to active participants in self-generating of information, has become more pronounced following the emergence of Web 2.0 and the resultant web-based social media applications. Clearly, we have entered into a new world of communication while the old one as we know it is about to end.

Before the focus of the present study is presented, Social Networking Services sites (SNS), is further discussed, clarifications need to be made to operationally define the terminology such as “Web 2.0”, “social media”, and “User Generated Content” (UGC).

The term “Web 2.0” was first used to describe a brand-new way of participative use of the World Wide Web (WWW), as compared with the previous version of Web 1.0. With Web 1.0, software professionals produce,

and users consume, the content of the WWW; With Web 2.0, it is end-users of the WWW that create media content in various online forms. The appellation 2.0 is borrowed from software version numbering. The name marks the beginning of a new era in the development of the Internet. The WWW since has become a platform; content in the cyber space and even applications built upon open source are no longer the domains controlled by professional and commercial suppliers. Instead, the continuous efforts in creating and modifying content by all Web users in an all participatory and collaborative fashion contribute to the rise of Web 2.0. According to Marwick (2013, p.6), Web 2.0 is a collection of ideals (transparency, participation, and openness) rather than a set of technologies (APIs, software, and a group of websites). “User-Generated Content” (UGC) - sometimes interchangeably used with the term “User-Created Content” (UCC) as in the OECD report (2007), is gaining broad popularity and is the key feature of Web 2.0, the lifeblood of the Web 2.0 organism.

With a better understanding of the terms “Web 2.0” and “User-Generated Content”, the term “social media” can be more clearly defined as a group of web-based applications and a form of computer-mediated communication that enables the creation and exchange of information via user-generated content, to put it briefly, various types of online communication platforms. The era of social media started about 20 years ago, when online diary writing or “open diary” and “weblog” came into being. The rapid growth and diffusion of Internet access gave birth to SNS sites such as MySpace in 2003, which was closely followed by Facebook in 2004. The

most recent addition to the glamorous group of SNSs, the so-called “virtual worlds” (e.g. Second Life) is a kind of computer-simulated environment. In the OECD report (2007, p.9), “User-Created Content” is characterized by three ground-breaking requirements. Firstly, the content is made publicly available over the Internet. Secondly the content reflects creativity in varying degrees; Thirdly, content creation is no longer part of the daily routines and paid workload of professional. The first criterion excludes emails and IM (Instant Messages) as social media as they are not open to public access, while the third criterion indicates the necessity of maintaining frequent routines for creating, publishing and updating content in social media.

However, it is worth mentioning that the aforementioned definitions and criteria were developed in the infancy phase of internet development before 2010. After 2010, a much richer and diverse ecology of social media sites mushroomed and the scope and functionality of these social media, and user-generated content platforms are varied. Blogs (LiveJournal), Wikis (Wikipedia), Podcastings (iTunes, FeedBurner), SNS (MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Weibo, Instagram and Snapchat), Media sharing sites (YouTube, Flickr, Youku and Tudou), Virtual Worlds (Second Life), Instant Message Services (Lines, Whatsapp, and WeChat) are all types of platforms for user-generated content. The biggest mainstream category of social media is Social Networking Service sites. Accordingly, the advent of online media witnesses the shift of research from “Netspeak” to “Computer-Mediated Discourse”.

1.1.2 The Emerging Social Networking Services sites

Many attempts have been made to distinguish and categorize the genres of social media, i.e. the platforms of user-generated content, in the rich body of literature in computer-mediated communications. Among them, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) stand out for their classification of social media developed around social theories, social presence/social richness theories, and self-presentation/self-disclosure theories in particular.

In *Social Presence Theory*, Short, Williams and Christie (1976) argue that social presence is closely related to the intimacy (interpersonal vs. mediated) and immediacy (asynchronous vs. synchronous) of the medium, which are manifest between communication partners. The stronger the social presence, the greater extent to which the communication partners' impacts are on each other's behaviors. Daft and Lengel, (1986) put forward another concept Media Richness, which is closely related to social presence. The degree of media richness depends on the volume of information transmitted in a given period in the medium. Therefore, some media tend to be more effective than others in the resolution of ambiguity and the reduction of uncertainty, which is based on the degree of media richness and social presence.

Self-presentation and self-disclosure, notions originated from Goffman (1959)'s impression management are another aspect of social media, which provides opportunities for impression management, presenting personal identity in cyberspace (Schau & Gilly, 2003). Self-disclosure is one way of self-presentation, revealing personal information consistent with the desired

image. More importantly, self-disclosure is the very first step in online relationship development. Taking the combination of the two dimensions together, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) categorized various social media, in which SNSs (e.g. Facebook) are listed at a higher level of social presence and media richness, and also provide affordances for self-disclosure and self-presentation.

As the biggest category of new media, SNS quickly rocketed in popularity, hit the mainstream, and became a global phenomenon. The growing popularity of SNSs worldwide has attracted the attention of scholars from a range of disciplines, contributing to a large body of dynamically-evolving literature of computer-mediated communication, among which a handful body of related researches are found (Albarran, 2013; boyd, 2010, 2014; Dasgupta, 2013; Edwards, 2015; Fuchs, 2014; Lipschultz, 2014; Partridge, 2011; Ryan, 2011; Wilde, 2012, etc.). Those current fascinations with SNSs span a wide range of disciplines, e.g. sociology, psychology, education, business and marketing, communications, and sociolinguistics. The implications for culture and meaning, as well as for users' engagement, have been examined by scholars from different fields. And it is now widely accepted that SNS are used to "present a highly curated version of themselves" by users (Schwartz & Halegooua, 2015; Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010), because SNS provides the platform to enable the "possibility for more controlled and more imaginative performances of identity online" (Papacharissi, 2012, p.307). To understand this emergent phenomenon, it is

worth introducing the definition by Boyd and Ellison (2007) which has become the commonly accepted and the most cited one.

Boyd and Ellison (2007) define SNS as:

[...] web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (p.211)

The visibility of profiles varies on different SNSs and according to user settings, which is why Boyd and Ellison (2007) define the profile as ‘public’ or ‘semi-public’. LinkedIn, a professional networking and sharing SNS, limits what can be viewed by non-members, and releases more information via a paid account. In Facebook, which adopts a different system, users can choose whether their names can be searched via other search engines, and can also choose what content of their profiles and posts are viewable to the public, or to certain “networks” (friends only). Nowadays, profiles not only comprise photos and text-based self-descriptions. Some SNS, Facebook for example, allow users to offer a live video in their personal profiles. Multimodality is the trend that the affordances support to curate the public profiles of the SNS users.

This network of connections is what makes social networking sites different from other social media platforms. The connections can be “latent

ties” (Haythornthwaite, 2005) which share certain offline connections so that some users of SNSs are primarily interacting with their existing social network. Nevertheless, the label “Friends” in SNSs can be misleading. Boyd (2006) stated that the connection does not necessarily mean friendship in the everyday vernacular sense. Therefore, the second dimension of the definition summarizes the public display connection mechanism of most SNSs. By clicking into the “friends” lists, a user can view the list of “friends” within certain users’ personal profiles, traverse their networking graph, and extend their network by sending “friend’s” requests. Upon the reciprocal confirmation of a friend accepting the request, the two parties become “friends”. Another unidirectional connection enables a user to only “follow” the other user, in which case they are labelled as “followers”. Such connections typically involve leaving “comments” and clicking “like” buttons publicly, and also sending private messages/personal messages (PM).

Another English language-dominant application of microblogging Twitter focuses on offering real-time updates. Twitter was launched in 2006 and currently has an average of over 310 million¹ active individual users per month., Twitter allows 140 or fewer characters of opinions or comments to be posted in “tweets”. Twitter was regarded as the one of the top SNSs in the world, second only to Facebook in the early 2010s (Ebiz MBA, 2012; Taylor, 2012). Eighty-three per cent of users use Twitter on mobile devices, according to its company data. The real-time tweets include personal thoughts, feelings, reactions, emotions, comments on public and private issues, responses to

¹ Data from the Twitter Company’s official website, accessed on Dec.26th 2015: <https://about.twitter.com/company>.

other users, and direct reporting of live events. Twitter was considered as a web application that combines a microblogging service with the features of social networking sites.

Similar to the abovementioned, Weibo and Wechat, are two leading SNSs in Greater China Regions. According to the ranking² of most famous Social Network Site worldwide in December of 2017, the active users of Wechat reached 963 million, ranking the fifth among the SNSs worldwide, while Sina Weibo has 361 million active users, ranking the 10th after Tumblr.

With the overwhelming popularity of SNSs, the three dimensions of the definition by Boyd and Ellison (2007) of social networking sites are not enough to describe this massive phenomenon and reflect the technical and social changes that this generation of media has triggered. Therefore, apart from the three dimensions, it is suggested that there should be one more aspect that shows communication as a highlight of SNSs, which is the active practices by users in everyday expressions, conversations, and interactions. The refinement of the Boyd and Ellison (2007) definition is suggested as follows:

Social Networking Sites are: [...] web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with

²Kepios. (n.d.). Most famous social network sites worldwide as of September 2017, ranked by number of active users (in millions). In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved December 12, 2017, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>.

whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system, and also, (4) maintain a continual online existence by participation, engagement and connection with other users.

1.2 Micro-celebrity Identity Construction

1.2.1 Identity as the Core Functionality of Social Media

Identity is perception of self, the way we perceive ourselves (personal identity), and the way others- including individuals, the society and the general public perceive us (social identity). And since later stage of the modern era, the notion of identity as something people actively work on in public spheres, began to shake the original concept of identity as the fixed characteristics (Butler, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Kellner, 1992; Turkle, 1995&1997). Kellner (1992:141) summarized identity as “more mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflective, and subject to change and innovation”. Giddens (1991:53) claims that self-identity is “not a set of traits or observable characteristics, it is a person’s own reflexive understanding of their biography”. Under this proposition, Giddens (1991:81) proposes a notion “lifestyle”, which implicitly or explicitly says something about who we are, who we want to be, and very often, who we wish to be seen as being. This notion is very important in the context of the digital age, when social media

arrive with the affordances for people to curate, and present their lifestyle, perform who they are.

Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) examined the seven functional blocks of social media, and depicted seven functionalities (identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups) as a honeycomb, among which identity is the core functionality. With “identity” as the central functional block, the other functions surrounding “identity”, i.e. “presence”, “sharing”, “conversations”, “relationships”, “reputation” and “groups”, are all connections to other users, i.e. “publics” within the networked context of social media. The honeycomb identity functional block representing the extent to which users reveal their identity in a social media setting (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p.243). The idea echoes Mitchell (1995, p.49) that through networked technology identity are shaped by networks. Under the ubiquitous heading of social media, the “public” is reshaped and negotiated as “networked publics” (Boyd, 2010) so the definition of identity needs to be refined.

1.2.2 Narratives of Me 2.0 in Web 2.0

Goffman’s (1959) well-known notion of self-presentation is always the launch point for the study of identity, which we share with others, either intentionally or unintentionally. For identity in the era of Web 2.0, the

technology of user-generated content facilitates the easy publishing and sharing of content, thus, the construction of identity.

One major stream of conceptualization of online identity is self-presentation, which can be traced from the definition by Boyd and Ellison (2007) and the refined definition of SNSs in the aforementioned section 1.1.2. The four salient features of SNSs are: profiles, friend lists, connections, and continual online existence, which enable real-time status updates, and also responses to them. Profiles and status updates in social network sites, form the personal identity projection, while the connections and online communication practices facilitate the construction of social identity. Personal identity and social identity intertwine in SNSs to present a whole picture of identity to the public.

First of all, the profiles, whether public or semi-public, represent the individualities and therefore are “statements” of self, which are consciously crafted and controlled by the active users of social media. Profile is thus an explicit act of “writing oneself into being” in an SNS (Boyd, 2006). Through the locus of interaction, the profile first determines how the individual user presents themselves to the public users of SNSs, and forms the first impressions. Profiles are where the individual users/participants can have complete control over their self-crafted personae, and also who can see their profiles. As such, the profiles on SNSs are the first and the primary step towards self-presentation.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) believe that the self-presentation of a user's identity takes place through either conscious or unconscious "self-disclosure". The terms "self-presentation" and "self-disclosure" were used interchangeably by CMD scholars, but there are slight differences between the terms. Self-presentation, according to Goffman (1959), is to present some aspects of oneself only to control the perception by others. It is about impression management. Online self-disclosure extends the traditional definition of self-disclosure (verbally revealing self) to include pictures of self and favorite links posted on the web (Kim&Dindia, 2011, p.156). As a vehicle of self-presentation, selective and favorable self-disclosure, involves a conscious and intentional revealing positive rather than negative aspects of self in order to be perceived as attractive and rewarding (Kim & Dindia, 2011, p.156).

Apart from profiles, the other aspect of selective self-disclosure/self-presentation that can be manipulated is status updates. The active status update posts are self-expressions of "what is on others' minds at the moment" (Zhao&Rosson, 2009), documenting and exposing the details of their everyday life (Hass, 2010), also defined as "storytelling of the self, further curated through digital media" (Papacharissi, 2012, p.1990). Social networking sites offer the technical affordances to combine these multiple ways of presenting performances into a coherent narrative of the self, projected to known and unknown publics (audiences) in the digital world, thus motivate the performative approach of so-called microcelebrity, "an emerging online practice that involves creating a persona, sharing personal information

about oneself with others, performing intimate connections to create the illusion of friendship or closeness, acknowledging an audience and viewing them as fans, and using strategic reveal of information to increase or maintain this audience” (Marwick, 2010, p.250).

1.2.3 Networked Self: Dynamics for Social Identity Building

The key words of the identity concept to sociologists are: liquid (Baumann, 2000/2005), reflexive (Giddens,1991), and processed (Jenkins, 2004). However, from another perspective of co-constructing, as Mitchell (1995, p.49) states, through networked technology people are no longer grouped by their geographical dispersions, but by their networks; this in fact is the social identity, one essential facet of online identity.

In other words, apart from selective and manipulated self-presentation, the identity in SNSs is also performed in interactions and negotiation with others, with the self-presentation process becoming an evolutionary cycle through which individual identity is presented, compared, adjusted, or defended (Papacharissi, 2010, p.207), catering to the “public” or “audiences”. Identity is co-constructed and negotiated with the public, with the performance of self-identity being centered around public and social connections, which are “used to authenticate identity and introduce the self through the reflexive process of fluid association with social circles”. Thus, individuals and collective identities are simultaneously presented and promoted” (Papacharissi, 2010, p.

303-304). Consequently, identity is the “outcome of enactments in which the actors provide an impression of the self” (Cramer, Rost & Holmquist, 2011, p.3).

In this way, “personal identity” as well as “social identity” are reshaped in the ubiquitous context of social media. The digital media shape the identity process in a number of ways that are parallel to face-to-face communication, but somehow different, because of the technical affordances of social media which have the potential to reshape how individuals view themselves and how others, or the “public”, view them, thus affecting the performance of identity. The four affordances of persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability which boyd (2010) mentioned, introduce new dynamics to the participants (i.e. the individuals). Networked technologies introduce new affordances to amplify, record, and disseminate information and social acts.

Based on the dual conceptualization, social media have afforded us a unique opportunity to build a very visible record of ourselves through digital media, altering the roles of individuals in the networked society, and complicating the boundaries between public and private. Researchers of social media attempt to investigate the evolving dynamics of identity and social media. However, scholarship about social media, especially in English-speaking countries, predominantly concentrates on Facebook, Twitter, FourSquare, MySpace, Flickr and their predecessor LiveJournal. The current study seeks to examine the formation of identity and presentation of self

through the interactions via a leading SNS in “cultural China”³, Sina Weibo, which is introduced in the next section.

1.3 Emergence of Microblogging in Cultural China & Self-Branding

This section first gives a brief introduction of the leading microblogging platform Sina Weibo, and its unique public figure verification system, and the practice of Self-branding by celebrities on Weibo.

1.3.1 Microblogging in Cultural China

Weibo (which literally translates as “microblog”), combining features of Twitter and Facebook, is a popular microblogging service platform that launched by Sina Corporation in 2009, in use by well over 30% of Internet users, with a market penetration similar to the US Twitter (Rapoza, 2011).

³The notion “cultural China” has been defined in various ways. In this thesis, it refers to the Chinese who are using the Chinese language regularly for daily communication, including not only the ones living in mainland China, but also in Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Singapore and the Chinese diaspora more generally.

There have been many Weibo service providers in the Greater China Region, such as Sina Weibo, Tencent Weibo, NetEast Weibo, and Sohu Weibo, etc. However, Sina Weibo is the leading SNS platforms, very similar in appearance, interface, and functions to Twitter. Its overwhelming popularity made “Weibo” mean “Sina Weibo”. It has been expanding since its launch in the first decade of 21st century, and has its own domain name Weibo.com (see Figure 1.1) in 2011. In March 2014, Sina Weibo boasts 143.8 million active users per month, of whom 66.6 million are using it every day.⁴



Figure 1.1 *Log-in page of Weibo.com*

Also, similarly to Facebook, it has introduced a verification policy for celebrity users and the organization of official accounts by adding Yellow V labels and Blue V labels after the users’ names. Especially for celebrity users,

⁴ Data retrieved from Baidu, introduction of Sina Weibo, <http://baike.baidu.com/view/2762127.htm>, accessed on 13 December, 2014.

celebrity communities (名人堂) were set up with celebrities from different regions. The Sina Weibo system lists the most popular celebrity accounts every week, month and year (see Table 1.1)⁵.

The popularity of Sina Weibo in the Greater China Region is obvious. To boost its usage in the whole Greater China Region, and even in the Asia-Pacific area, Sina Weibo offers international versions (海外版) catering to users from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea; these systems are available in both Simplified and Traditional Chinese characters, as well as English versions. Users from outside mainland China can use their Facebook account to log in directly (see Figure 1.1).

As of 8 January 2016, the following ten individuals and organizations managed the most popular accounts (verified) and the largest number of followers:

Table 1.1 *List of Most popular celebrity accounts in Sina Weibo (Jan. 2016)*

User	Screen Name	Followers
<u>Chen Kun</u>	chenkun	78, 962, 639
<u>Yao Chen</u>	yaochen	78, 672, 165
<u>Xie Na</u>	xiena	76, 980, 599
<u>Zhao Wei</u>	zhaowei	76, 626, 390
<u>He Jiong</u>	hejiong	74, 228, 394
<u>Angelababy</u>	realangelababy	68, 807, 226
<u>Ruby Lin</u>	linxinru	66, 220, 985
<u>Amy Cheung</u>	iamamycheung	63, 640, 883


⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sina_Weibo , retrieved from Jan.8 2016

User	Screen Name	Followers
Guo Degang	guodegang	63, 449, 972
Jimmy Lin	dreamerjimmy	62, 914, 622

Since the object of the present study is to study how the identities of those most influential celebrities are created and crafted, some examples of tweets from one of those celebrities are presented below.

Extract 1.1

DATA20130330/ Mr. He

不不不，这不是一个做作的主持人在装忧郁，今晚，我是歌手。 [#东方风云榜#](#)

(圖略)


贊 (7184) / 轉發 (14161) / 收藏 / 評論 (10939)

2013-3-30 17:55 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 1.1

DATA20130330/ User: Mr. He

No, no, no, what you have seen is not a TV host pretending to be depressed.

Tonight, I am a singer.  # Oriental Popular Singer Award night #
(photo attached)

Like (7184) /Retweet (14161) /Archive/Comment (10939)

17:55 March 30th, 2013 from iPhone App

As shown in the extract, the post represents a high-profile TV host writing on his timeline in Sina Weibo, sharing a moment of his life with all the users of Weibo. According to his claimed identity, he is temporarily not a TV host, but on the night of the tweet posted a singer, and he used a hashtag to highlight the event he attended, to make it more visible, listed as a “searchable talk” (熱搜) within Weibo. Any Weibo user can see his post by using the search engine, as well as in the *Sina System heat search ranking list* (熱搜排行榜) and respond to it. Those topics or posts which received the most responses (likes, comments, and shares), become top “heat search”, most highly visible and “News Feeds” to all Weibo users.

From a linguistic perspective, Mr. He was using an assertive speech act to present himself as a singer, not a TV host. But the information he sent is playful: actually, he “broadcast” his job live to all Weibo users by releasing some “trailer” pictures of the Singer Award later that night. The tweet with his photo received a total of 7184 likes, 14,161 retweets, and 10,939 comments. The followers’ comments and retweets function as an acknowledgement of his claimed identity, via compliments and encouragement. In this way, by writing posts in Sina Weibo, Mr. He not only promoted his job and his program, he built up his claimed identity; also, by the relational act of “sharing his life moments” as though “speaking” to his audience, he built up solidarity with his audience, treating them as though he were talking to “friend”. The self-presentation of his personal “self” and social “self” is well-managed in Sina Weibo.

As the use of social media rapidly expands into global markets, verified celebrity users can take advantage of Sina Weibo as well as traditional broadcast media for promoting themselves. The practice of writing daily updates builds up a positive online personal identity, and supplements the offline public image; while interactions with “followers” by replying to them further increases the emotional ties with the networked audience, enhancing their social identities. By attending to these and related pragma-linguistic phenomena, the present study finds the identity of celebrity is discursively constructed through the interactions in Sina Weibo.

1.3.2 Micro-Celebrity as Self-Branding

The term self-branding has become a part of the career industry vernacular, and the rapid and overwhelming popularity of online platforms has made personal branding and identity construction accessible and seeping into each tiny space of our daily lives. The new features of social network sites have enhanced the ubiquity of information sharing and personal branding. The four affordances of persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability (Boyd, 2010), echo Bourdieu’s (1977) metaphor of the linguistic marketplace. In line with the idea of the “market”, the expertise gained in marketing has already foreseen and advocated social media as a new element of the marketing promotional mix, and addition to Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC). IMC is the guiding principle for business organizations to communicate with their target markets, to coordinate and control the various

facets of the promotional mix — advertising, direct selling, public relations, and sales promotion — to achieve various organizational objectives (Boone&Kurtz, 2007:488). Via social media “the online information is created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues” (Blackshaw&Nazzaro, 2004:2). The huge number of social media publics are the consumers, and the word-of-mouth effect makes it possible for online “self-branding” to succeed, especially for celebrity users. Self-branding regards the construction of identity online as a product to be “consumed” by others in interaction, treating the audience as a special constituency to be tapped and maintained so that social or economic benefits can be achieved (Page, 2011).

Celebrity users can take advantage of the popularity of social media for enhancing their public personae, using their strategic appeal to followers, and regarding their constituencies as fans (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Firstly, social media enables celebrities to promote their public profiles to their networked publics; secondly, social media enables celebrities to “talk” to their followers, and also enabling followers to talk to one another and thus to form a “fan base” of the celebrity. Celebrity users can embrace social media to create their online images by disclosing their lives, emotions, and providing life snapshots which are perceived as interpersonal interactions by followers. Such interactions, which are considered very powerful to the devoted fans of a celebrity, further increase the emotional ties and bonds between the celebrity and his or her fans/followers. The tremendous rate at which social media has

spread has made it possible for celebrities to promote themselves to potentially millions of other users of social media with a click of a mouse, an explosion of information that is transmitted worldwide. The content of the information is fully controlled and manipulated by the celebrity users.

On the other hand, the user-generated nature of social media content has facilitated a shift away from conventional communication by broadcasting to the users of the participatory culture of social media, and in doing so has impacted celebrity culture as well as the marketing and advertising culture. The self-presentation of celebrity has already been incorporated in various theoretical terms and notions such as “promotional culture within the media industries” (Wenick, 1991), expanding the commodification of celebrity; “personification” (Sternberg, 1998, 2006), drawing on celebrities to model “personas” conveying human virtue; and “specularization of the self” by Hearn (2006), a process of both narrating and producing a branded self enacted by the reality television, describing how “personal brands” were consciously presented by reality TV contestants. While these three notions overlap contending celebrities’ practices of self-commodification and the notion of celebrity being a person-as-brand, they are based on traditional broadcast media, like television and movies. Catching up with the online practice of self-presentation, Marshall (2010/2015) extends these understandings by proposing the concept of “presentational culture” to show that the celebrity remains a model for self-aware-online performance. However, this was not sufficient to illustrate celebrity practice in social media until the notion of “micro-celebrity” by Marwick (2010) first arose, further

updated definition to ascribed and achieved “micro-celebrities” (2013, p.117)

as:

“a self-presentation strategy that includes creating a persona, sharing personal information about oneself with others, performing intimate connections to create the illusion of friendships or closeness, acknowledging an audience and viewing them as fans, and using strategic reveal of information to increase or maintain this audience”.

Inspired by Marwick(2010/2013)’s notion of “micro-celebrity” a number of studies regarding online identity construction were carried out to conceptualize micro-celebrity as a practice, examples including the use of Twitter by technology organizations (Marwick, 2010), celebrity use of Twitter (Marwick & Boyd, 2011), and people using YouTube to gain fame (Marwick, 2013). In other words, micro-celebrity is what one does, rather than what one is (Marwick, 2013). A set of online practices in which the audience is constructed as a fan base allows popularity to be maintained through ongoing fan management (Marwick, 2013).

Since social media has become thoroughly embedded in the everyday routines of online practice (Bakardjieva, 2005) there is no simple distinction between online and offline lives. How does the celebrity use SNSs to discursively construct their personal identity and social identity, connect their offline lives, or even overlap their on- and off-line lives? These are the questions the present study attempts to investigate.

1.4 Objectives and Organization of the Dissertation

The present research attempts to investigate the processes and products of identity construction by representative active Chinesecelebrity users on Sina Weibo, the leading microblogging site in cultural China. In summary the research objectives are: to conceptualize the notion of identity in networked societies and to propose a framework for identity studies of SNSs; to illustrate the practice of Chinese micro-celebrity as online self-presentation of personal identity and networked social identity.

To support this line of research objectives, this dissertation comprises six chapters. Following this Introduction chapter, Chapter 2 presents areview of related literature, covering the study of computer-mediated communication, the overview of different scholars' definitions of identity, the study of identitywithin thecontext of computer-mediated communication, celebrity studies, and the approach of interactional sociolinguistics. The chapter also points out the research gap the present study aims to fulfill.

Chapter 3 presents the research questions, the theoretical framework for the study, and the data sampling and coding procedures. In Chapter 4, results regarding celebrities as broadcasters and their means of constructing their personal identities on Sina Weibo are presented. In Chapter 5, the speech acts and the related linguistic features that are used by reputable individuals to build relational identities with their followers on Weibo are identified and classified. Chapter 6 presents a summary of the research findings in relation

to the research questions, and discusses the implications and future direction of the research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter presents an overview of 1) the development of identity theories and identity studies, 2) studies of Computer-mediated Discourse and the evolving online identity research, 3) concerns and issues related to celebrity studies, 4) Interactional Sociolinguistic approach to CMD. The chapter ends with a summary of the review and a discussion of the research gaps this study attempts to address.

2.1 Mapping Identity Research

Identity is a crucial concept and topic that has been examined and discussed in different disciplines, such as social sciences and humanities, as well as in communication studies, resulting in a wealth of literature. As identity is an ambiguous and slippery term (Buckingham, 2008), the understanding of identity has undergone significant development. The idea that identity is a stable quality has been continually challenged in the past two decades.

From the Latin root *idem*, meaning “the same”, the term identity implies a paradox of both similarity and difference. On one hand, identity is unique to each individual. Yet on the other hand, identity also indicates the relationship with their broader collective or social group. In other words,

identity is a notion of perception of self, the way we perceive ourselves, and the way society and others understand us. Often identity is regarded as a set of components of personhood, the characters of attributes such as gender, race, class, nationality, generation, religious affiliation, etc. And today, ‘identity’ is a heavily theorized, academic concept. Smith and Watson (2014, p.82) state that “theorists have come to view identity as multiple, provisional, contextual, intersectional, and historically specific”.

There are of course many different theories that have been utilized in the study of identity. “Self”, “identity” and “face”/facework are distinct yet overlapping theoretical constructs that are relevant to the present study. Goffman (1967) defined face as image of self, while Brown and Levinson (1987) conceptualized face as public self-image; further to Brown and Levinson(1987), Ting-Toomey (1994, p.3) pointed out that face is an identity-boundary issue, and Scollon and Scollon (1995,p.34–36) discuss face in terms of “the interpersonal identity of individuals in communication” and the self as a “communicative identity”.

With the broad field of discourse and identity, numerous, near-synonymous terms of “identity” were found, including “self”, “persona”, “person formulation”, “person position”, and even “subjectivity”. Evans (2015, p.15) perceived the notion of identity as the idea, sense, and perception of self or self-concept. And Evans (2015)’s three-level construct of identity corresponds to three respective accounts of cultural life: identity may be a relatively unitary stable self or evolving and changing multiple self and subjectivities. ‘Self’ is always the term used in psychological research;

‘persona’ is usually used in discussion concerning personal branding and promotion, and impression management, while ‘person formulation’ is the term that is often used in conversational analysis; ‘person position’ is closely related to positioning theory; and ‘subjectivity’ is always adopted in psychoanalytic accounts.

2.1.1 From Subjective ‘Self’ to Intersubjective ‘Social’

Identities

The development of identity theories can be defined as being *from identity as a project of the self to identity as a product of the social*, which is closely related to the present study. According to Taylor (1989), early treatments of *identity as an internal project of the self* assert that the individual is a self-interpreting subject, and identity is an issue of agency and self-determination. Spencer-Oatey (2007, p.640) paraphrased Campbell, Assanand and Di Paula’s (2000, p.67) definition of self as follows: *The self-concept is a multifaceted, dynamic construal that contains beliefs about one’s attributes as well as episodic and semantic memories about the self.*

As reported by Benwell and Stokoe (2006, p.18), this notion of identity as a “project of the self” has a long pedigree, beginning with Enlightenment rationalism and idealism, sustained through Romantic notions of personal self-fulfillment and improvement, and nostalgically retained in everyday life,

despite theoretical challenges in recent critical accounts of ‘late’ or ‘high’ modernity, postmodernity and globalization.

In the second half of the 20th century, group or collective identities caught scholars’ interests. Then later on, in contrast to early notions of subjective personal identity, more radically social versions of identity theories, in which the self comes to be defined by its position in social practice and *identity* is considered *an intersubjective product of the social*, can be found across a range of diverse theories. Two main perspectives in the sociology and psychology fields, Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory, are representative theories of this strand.

Identity theory originated in sociology (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, p. 265) which deals with the structure and function of people’s identity as related to the behavioral roles they play in society. According to identity theorists, it is the self-defining role identities that provide meaning for the self, though meanings acquired by role identities originate in social interaction.

Social Identity Theory stipulates that the social category of a person’s identity defines who the person is but is dictated by how the self is categorized into in-group or out-group by others (Turner, 1985, 1991). The theory was eventually integrated into Symbolic Interactionism, introduced by Mead (1934), according to which individuals learnt to play roles and took on identities related to the expected roles they played. To put it another way, individuals selected roles that were congruent with the social values and attitudes, and also changed their attitudes to make them more compatible with

the publicly enacted roles (Baumeister, 1986). The role play idea is parallel to Goffman's (1959) performance theory, which remains refreshingly current and lucid according to Papacharissi (2002). According to Goffman (1959), the presentation of self as an ongoing process of information management, where a person performs a daily "information game" in controlling two forms of information, referred to as "expression a person gives", and "expression an individual gives off". By using the information expressed in "verbal symbols or their substitutes", an individual consciously controls the information he or she "gives" to form impressions. The expressions one gives are easier to manipulate than the expressions one gives off.

Goffman's idea is closely relevant to impression management and self-presentation. Schlenker and Pontari (2000, p.201) define impression management as the goal-directed activity of controlling information about some person, object, idea or event to audiences. Self-presentation is a more specific term that refers to the control of information about self.

According to this brief explanation, it can be seen that both identity theory and social identity theory treat the "self" as constituted by, rather than independent of, society; and both theories emphasize the dynamic and multifaceted nature of "self" that intervenes in the relationship between individual behavior and social expectations.

2.1.2 From ‘Essentialist’ to ‘Constructionist’ Approach

The overview of the varieties of identity theories identifies two mainstream approaches, namely, the ‘essentialist’ and the ‘constructionist’ approach, as first mentioned by Benwell and Stokoe (2006, p.9). The essentialist approach locates identity ‘inside’ persons, as a product of the mind, of cognition, of the psyche, or of socialization practices. From the essentialist perspective, identity is a taken-for-granted category and a feature of a person that is absolute and knowable. In other words, some categories of ‘identity’ could be read and descriptive, commonsensically, from what we can see, such as gender, or age; while categories, such as class, ethnicity, sexuality and so on, have to be implied or interpreted. These ‘inside’ categories of identity treat identity as an ‘essential’, cognitive, socialized phenomenon in human communications. ‘Essentialist’ theorists assume and focus on the private, pre-discursive, and stable identity underneath every communication and presentation by people, although in different contexts.

However, Benwell and Stokoe (2006,p.4) pointed out that there is a change in that identity has been relocated from the ‘private’ realms of cognition and experience to the ‘public’ realms of discourse and other semiotic systems of meaning-making. The ‘essentialist’ perspective of identity has been criticized and rejected by the ‘constructionist’ approach.

Giddens (1991) argues that with the changing nature of “constructed” identity in “late modern” societies, many of the customary practices used to define identity in traditional society are now less and less influential. In this

late modern society, identity is all about choices. By choices, Giddens means that modern individuals have to make decisions about what they do and who they should be, and be constantly “self-reflexive”; in this way, self becomes a “project” that is self-constructed as fluid and malleable, rather than fixed. Thus, identity is actively, persistently, and dynamically constituted in discourse, from a broadly ‘social constructionist’ perspective, while identity is considered fluid, dynamic, manifold, and always constantly rebuilt and negotiated in the process of social interaction.

In contrast to the ‘essentialist’ approach, the ‘constructionist’ view, or what Tracy and Robles (2013) defined as social constructionist conceptualizes identity as a socially constructed category, a public phenomenon, a performance, or construction that is interpreted by other people. Therefore, “face” or “self” are the facets of identity that are linguistically built and are firmly rooted in the social environment. In Tracy and Robles (2013)’s words, face is the view of self each person seeks to uphold in an interaction. This social ‘constructionist’ approach examines people’s understanding of identity, and how the notion of inner/outer selves is used rhetorically to accomplish social action. A discursive and postmodern change in and across research in the social sciences and the humanities underpins this shift of identity theories from an ‘inside’ or ‘interior’ account to an ‘outside’ one.

The idea that identity is built up in interaction is rooted in Tracy’s (2002) understandings of identity. Tracy (2002) states that while identity on one hand refers to core aspects of selfhood, which are stable and fixed, and can be

descriptive, on the other hand it refers to an accomplishment, and is in flux. Therefore, Tracy and Roble (2013) summarized that “identities, then, are best thought of as stable features of persons that exist prior to any particular situation and as dynamic and situated accomplishments, enacted through talk, changing from one occasion to the next” (Tracy & Roble, 2013, p. 21).

To further illuminate this idea, Tracy (2002) first conceptualized four kinds of identity through communications, namely master identities, personal identities, relational identities, and interactional identities. Master identities, such as gender, ethnicity, age, national and regional origins, are relatively stable and unchanging; personal identities, namely, personality, attitudes, and characters, are expected to be relatively stable and unique. While interactional identities are situation- and relationship-specific, relational identities are negotiated from moment to moment and are highly variable. Tracy & Robles (2013, p. 22) combined relational identities and interactional identities of Tracy (2002) into interactional identities, because relational identities and interactional identities both refer to “specific roles that people take on in a communicative context with regard to specific other people”.

The stable features of persons are considered belonging to the ‘essentialist’ approach, while the dynamic and situated accomplishments echo social ‘constructionist’ ideas. In this sense, master identity and personal identity are the descriptive, inner, essential identities. Therefore, interactional identities and relational identities, which are built up and negotiated in the interaction, should be understood from a ‘constructionist’ perspective.

Discursive practices are interactions and activities that people do in communication. Tracy (2002, p.21) also ascertains that the relationship between discursive practices and identities is a reciprocal one. On one hand, the identities a person brings to an interaction influence how that person communicates. At the same time, the specific discursive practices will also shape the communicator's identity. Tracy and Robles (2013, p.26) advanced the explanation and framework of definition of discursive practices, linking discursive practices and identity by pointing out "identity-work (or facework) always has two sides, a self-presentational side and a partner-directed one.

It is worth mentioning that Tracy and Robles (2013, p.24) closely related facework and identity work. One important facet of identity is "face", which is not only "an image self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes", according to Goffman (1967, p.5), but also "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". The idea of face and facework point to the constructionist view of identity construction which is rooted in the process of social interaction with others, and therefore it is not surprising that emergent identity research, with its focus on discourse, generally adopts a constructionist approach.

2.2 Development of Computer-Mediated Discourse

Computer-mediated discourse (CMD) is considered as an important umbrella terms, which combines the internet environment (the medium) and language(discourse), and indicated the mediated nature of the communication. As Computer-mediated discourse represent a new and dynamically evolving academic field, it does not come as a surprise to see the boom in researches of CMD.

2.2.1 The State of the Field of CMD

Generally, two slightly different terms have been used to refer to language and communication phenomena in the Internet environment: computer-mediated communication (henceforth, CMD) and computer-mediated discourse (henceforth CMD). The former term is often used by scholars from communication studies who tend to relate to it from a more macro-social perspective. The latter term is preferred by linguists and sociolinguists, for whom the role of Internet language is a central concern. CMD suggests the obvious shift of focus from “medium-related” to “user-related” and “society-related” in researches. Hence, Herring’s works (1996a, 2001, 2004) are the leading ones among researches in CMD, and her notion of CMD is highly and widely quoted. Androutsopoulos and Beibwenger (2008) point out that CMD encompasses all kinds of interpersonal communication carried out on the Internet. In the last decade, CMD has attracted a great deal of research

attention from linguists — especially from perspectives in pragmatics, discourse analysis, and sociolinguistics.

In the first stage of development of the Internet, and guided by Crystal(2001)'s definition and categorization of varieties of 'netspeak', research into CMD regarded the language of CMD as a new register, being distinct, homogeneous, and indecipherable to 'outsiders' (cf. Thurlow, Lengel, & Tomic, 2004, p.118), which features unique paralinguistic signs (emoticons and smileys), unconventional spellings, regional dialect features, and code-switching.

The 'first wave' (a term defined by Androutsopoulos, 2006) of research into CMD, epitomized by Crystal in the late 1990s and early 2000s, made great efforts in describing and analyzing its micro-level linguistic phenomena such as code-mixing, code-switching, and online language choice (Androutsopoulos & Hunnenkamp, 2001; Georgakopoulou, 1997; Paolillo, 1996), online word-formation processes (or typography and orthography), online linguistic patterns and register (Mar,2000), language variations (Paolillo, 1999), syntactic complexity(Sotillo, 2000), semiotic system, lexical choice and sentence structure (Williams & Meredith, 1996), textual, interpersonal and ideational functions of online language (Yates, 1996a, 1996b), and linguistic features (Lee, 2007). Those publications examined the linguistic features, grammar, and lexicography of both synchronous and asynchronous modes of online communications, with the vast majority of research on English-oriented CMD. Also, earlier work generally concludes that the language of CMD was a combination or the intermediate stage of

written and spoken modalities (Frehner, 2008; Herring, 2007; Stein, 2003; Weininger & Shield, 2003).

As mentioned above, the ‘first wave’ of CMD research attempted, implicitly or explicitly, to investigate the linguistic features of CMD, why they are the way they are, and how they differ from spoken and written language. The analyses and explanation of online linguistic features including emoticons, abbreviations, unconventional spelling systems, non-verbal cues, dialectical features, code-mixing and code-switching, have demonstrated that patterns of online language variation correlate with age group, gender, race, and geographic factors of the participants (Androutsopoulos, 2011; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Siebenhaar, 2006).

Classifying modes of CMD, Reid (1991) and Werry (1996) discussed communication communities and linguistic and interactional features of Internet Relay Chat (IRC); Reid (1994) and Cherny (1999) focused on conversation and community in MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons, Domains, or Dimensions); Baron (1998,2000) and Gains (1999) studied the linguistic features of emails; Thurlow and Brown (2003) examined English SMS; and Stein (2006) considered the website as a domain-specific genre. However, this mode-based approach cannot capture the full range of the constellations that have sprung up around digital communication (Herring, Stein, & Virtanen, 2013, p. 9). As a result, the definition of genre within CMD has in recent years been in greater flux than the ‘spoken vs. written’ style discussion of the ‘first wave’ of research.

The shift of focus from medium-related to user-related patterns of language use represent a trend of attention from looking at single linguistic features to the broader contextual, playful and social characteristics of computer-mediated practices. Herring (2004) proposed a very important framework for the theory and methodology of CMD research from a sociolinguistic perspective, epitomized by a growing body of empirical studies by sociolinguists and discourse analysts, making a crucial move from the language of CMD to socially situated discourse.

As the consequence of the rapidly and dynamically changing technical environment of CMD, further researches have been done into multimodal CMD with not only text, but also self-generated content such as Internet video, photo sharing, etc. New domains, such as SNSs and microblogs, or other Web 2.0 applications, have also emerged and are still evolving (Cramer et al, 2011; Dasguspta, 2013; Dayter, 2016; Eisenlauer & Hoffmann, 2010; Schwartz & Halegooua, 2015). As Herring, Stein and Virtanen (2013, p.24) ascertain in their latest released book, *Pragmatics of Computer-Mediated Communication*, “canonized knowledge is not yet available on the linguistic pragmatics of these (new domains)”.

As the emergent Web 2.0 is characterized by social interaction and user-generated content, Herring (2013, p.14) proposed three categories of classification of Web 2.0 discourse phenomena: 1) phenomena familiar from older CMD modes, such as email, and BBS forums, especially asynchronous online communication platforms with minimal differences; 2) phenomena that are reconfigured by Web 2.0 environments, such as personal status

updates and blogs; 3) new or emergent phenomena. Accordingly, the related studies for each category are presented. Examples of familiar Web 2.0 discourse phenomena include non-standard typography and orthography, code-switching, code-mixing, and language choice. As pointed out by Bieswanger (2013, p. 463), the early research into CMD often overstated the deterministic influence of the computer medium on language use, and sometimes still does. Since then there has been a trend to shift the focus from medium-related to user-related patterns of language use in CMD research from a sociolinguistic viewpoint. Therefore, research of reconfigured Web 2.0 discourse phenomena began to investigate personal updates, quoting and retweeting, story-telling, self-presentation, turn-taking and other conversational and interactional aspects. However, what Herring (2013) referred to as emergent Web 2.0 discourse phenomena did not rise to the level of public awareness, so it is not surprising that “little language-focused analysis of these new phenomena has yet been published” (Herring, Stein, & Virtanen, 2013, p.15).

2.2.2 CMD researches in China

As Chinese people are becoming an important part of the online population worldwide, CMD research in the Greater China Region is worth noting. CMD research in Chinese, which does not have a long history, has gone through three phases.

2.2.2.1 Phase 1: Internet to Standardized Language Planning and Teaching

From 1994 to 2001 is the introduction phase of the Internet to China. Studies during this period mainly focused on the attitude towards Internet language and how to standardize it for language planning and teaching purposes. Li (1998) pointed out that the Internet posed severe problems, including Internet-caused language pollution, violence in language for teenagers, obscenity on the Internet, and the translation of Internet jargon. He also expressed concern about the influence of those issues on the standardization of the Chinese language. Li's concern led to discussion of the definition of Internet language and quite a large body of internet language standards, which were published mainly in the *Journal of Language Planning* (*Yuwen Jianshe 語文建設*), discussing whether Internet language is a social dialect, or a new register (Kuang & Jin 鄺霞、金子, 2000). Jin & Qi 勁松、麒珂 (2000) tried to categorize Internet language into seven varieties, according to their observation of the language in use among Chinese netizens: emoticons, paralinguistic codes, code-mixing English, Chinese translation based on English pronunciations, abbreviations, new words, cuteness kids language. Because of these new varieties of communication modes, Shan (2000) even considered Internet language a threat to the 'purity' of the Chinese language, because there are too many mistakes in spelling, which would mislead the language learners into misuse of the Chinese language.

The meeting point of research at this time was the use of a taxonomy of Internet language, because of the beginning phase of the epistemology of the Internet. At an early stage, researchers were concerned with a superficial description of netspeak. By the end of the first decade of the development of the Internet in China, the influence of CMD in Chinese on register became evident. In 2001, Yu Genyuan (于根元) published a dictionary of Chinese netspeak (*Zhongguo Wangluo Yuyan Cidian* 中國網絡語言詞典) with a collection of the common language that Chinese netizens used. Yu(2001b) also wrote the fundamental *An Introduction to Netspeak (Wangluo Yuyan Gaishuo* 網絡語言概說). In the book, Yu(2001b) presented a systematic analysis of general and lexical features of Chinese netspeak, and in the last two chapters he put forward some ideas on how to standardize Chinese netspeak properly. This book is thus the pioneering study of Chinese Internet Language (CIL), similar to Crystal's book *Language and the Internet* in 2001.

2.2.2.2 Phase 2: A Flourishing Period of Research into Lexical, Syntactical and Textual Features of Chinese Internet Language

Yu's (2001b) generalization of Chinese netspeak opened up the second phase of CIL. The foci of the research in the second stage from 2001 to 2005 shifted from standardized language to the lexical, syntactical and textual features of Internet language, and even embraced these two dimensions. Another book that must be mentioned at this stage is Liu(2001)'s *Cyber-language* (網絡語言) in which a more detailed analysis of netspeak is

conducted, with one chapter presenting an analysis of Chinese netspeak in terms of language planning.

Influenced by Crystal's book *Language and the Internet*, Chinese researchers also began to analyze CIL as a new genre, from word formation to the whole text, as part of register theory (PengYubo 彭育波, 2001; Qin Xiubai 秦秀白, 2003; Huang Guowen 黃國文, 2005; Li Xuping 李旭平, 2005; He Ziran & He Xuelin 何自然、何雪林, 2003).

Compared to standard formal language, Peng Yu Bo (2001) listed four intertwined features of net languages, namely, creation of new forms of vocabulary, easy understanding of emotion expressions, conciseness, and also lack of certain standards. Qin Xiubai 秦秀白(2003) distinguished between Internet language and netspeak. Internet language was considered to consist of three parts: technology terms pertaining to computers and the internet, terms of cyber culture, and the language used in CMD. Netspeak is a new emerging register, a new variety of language in the Internet era, and should be studied not only at the lexical level, but also from the aspect of register. Due to the multilinearity, multi-choice and open-ended nature of digital text, netspeak also has its field of discourse, modes of discourse, and tenor of discourse, the same as ordinary text, and has the characteristics of variability and personalization. Qin 秦秀白(2003) proposes to acknowledge this new language, and at the same time create standards to discourage over-creativity, i.e. of too many new words arising from Internet usage.

Huang Guowen 黃國文 (2005) coined the new term “electronic discourse” (e-discourse) to locate and identify the new type of discourse, with regard to its characteristics as compared with those of both spoken and written discourse, and suggested that e-discourse is a new hybrid discourse, having characteristics of both spoken and written discourse. Li Xunping 李旭平 (2005) applied register theory to cyber-language, using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), echoing Qin 秦秀白 (2003) in that Internet communication and cyber language are also considered to have their field of discourse, mode of discourse, and tenor of discourse, and thus their own characteristics. He & He 何荷、何自然(2003) observed memetic phenomena in the use of Internet language, and believed that the appearance of Internet language is part of a memetic system.

2.2.2.3 Phase 3: Richer Body of Studies

The third phase of Chinese CMD studies came during 2006-2010. The foci of those studies, are not new perspectives, and compared to the second phase, no impressive theory or empirical studies stand out. Since 2006, The National Language Committee has published the *Annual Report on Chinese Language*. And especially, one chapter of the Annual Report has been set up to update the popular words and expressions on the Internet.

In 2008, two doctoral dissertations on Internet language appeared, besides numerous theses of master’s students (Chen, 2006; Chen, 2007; Gen, 2004) which indicated the Internet language became the center of linguistic studies.

Zhang (2008) summarized the style of netspeak of Chinese netizens from the angle of cognition, context, pragmatics, functions under the stylistics theory, as Zhang claimed herself. However, the register theory could be the exact term to depict the theory foundation. While Cui (2008) examined the language in e-chats via comparing Chinese and Korean chat rooms, and also comparing the chatting language style with the standard language style.

As for the mode of communications, BBS, chatrooms, and online forums are the most frequent mode among Chinese CMD studies, this trend could be traced through a series of master's theses. Lv 吕奕(2009) investigated the particular linguistic features in chatrooms and their stylist effects of netspeak at the four linguistic levels: graphology, phonology, lexicon and syntax. Wang Hui 王辉 (2009) adopted the speech community theory and register theory to analyze the language features of post-90s forums and the motivations behind such features. And among those master theses, it is worth mentioning Gao (2007)'s thesis titled *Chinese Internet language: A study of identity constructions*, which examined the linguistic construction of modern identities in Chinese BBS, but analysis of the data from lexical, sentential, and discursive levels of CIL still occupied the majority of the dissertation.

Then, Chen and Bai (2012) called out the shift of the foci of Chinese CMD research: deeper research into the process of Chinese Internet lexicons and expressions; comparing Chinese Internet language and other Internet languages, echoing the globalization trends, reflecting the heated social issues; and the possibility and necessity of building Chinese Internet linguistics.

However, compared to concerns of the researchers in their English counterpart that we discussed before, the suggestions remain still on the descriptive and the beginning stage of so-called ‘Chinese Internet linguistics’. And this is especially worrying considering that this also excludes almost all of the research done on the Chinese CMD in China itself from interacting with English-language discourses on the Chinese CMD.

2.2.2.4 Summary of CMD Studies in China

Based on review of the three phases in Chinese CMD research, the research published remains rather descriptive and exploratory, the trajectories of Chinese Internet language remain on the micro-level of linguistic features; much of it is devoted to the linguistic features of CMD in Chinese, and still focuses on describing the ‘medium-based’ internet language. Little research in Chinese CMD goes beyond the description of linguistic features of ‘online Chinese’. The common research focus could also be found in the existing research (papers written in English) on CMD in Chinese of Greater China, the vast majority of them adopted the register approach, analyzing the linguistic characteristic of online “text” (Gao, 2006; Lin, 2002; Wu, 2003; Yao, 2005; Yang, C., 2007) — not so developed as the comprehensive and fruitful ones in English language.

When it comes to SNS research in Chinese, since Microblogging is a new medium in China since 2003, the detailed researches on microblogging were found to be a quite under-studied field. In 2011, two years after the inception

of Weibo in China, He Qian(2011) investigated the linguistic features of netspeak on microblogging, as the research topic of her master's thesis; in 2012, another master's thesis by Zhang Ke(2012), who took microblog language into the area of language studies pioneered by SFL(systemic functional linguistic), and makes use of register theory and stylistic concepts, taking "field, tenor and mode" as the basis of analysis, which is similar to He Qian(2011) adopting the register approach.

2.3 Identity Studies in Computer-mediated Discourse

After reviewing the identity theories and development of social media, this section attempts to bring together the research of the online identity, i.e., the identity in cyberspace. Identity on the Internet is considered as playful, creative, impressive and limitless (Benwell &Stokoe, 2006, p.243), and the existing literatures have attempts to elucidate the concept of "virtual identity", in comparison to "real life identity".

2.3.1 From Anonymous Virtual Identity to Beyond

Anonymity Identity

2.3.1.1 Anonymous Virtual Identity and Community

An explicit inquiry into identity has taken on a new urgency and has been a significant theme in the terrains of CMD. Similar to identity in the traditional face-to-face world, where online identity is concerned, the two words ‘identity’ and ‘community’, are also always mentioned together. There has been a large and diverse body of studies underpinning the relations between individuals and group/social identity. Where online or cyber-identity is concerned, there are two pioneering publications which reflect the focus on virtual community and online identities, namely, Rheingold’s (1993) *The Virtual Community* and Turkle’s (1995) *Life on the Screen*. They opened the history of online identity academic research, as the Internet just came into people’s lives.

Based on the research on college students in MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons), Turkle (1995) claimed that due to the anonymous online environments, identity online became fluid and fragmented, and of course anonymous, too. And this is because identity can be broken into fragments, deconstructed, and reconstructed. Apart from MUDs, Turkle also argued that another facet of Internet use, the “home page”, also reflected fragmented identities. After these two publications that marked the phase of cyber-culture studies in the late 1990s, there emerged a body of cyber empirical researches

(Kennedy, 2006), which acknowledged and showed continuous commitment to the ‘fragmented’, ‘partial’, ‘never complete’ nature of digital identities or virtual identities (for example, Cheung, 2000; Haraway, 1998; Plant, 1997; Shields, 1996). Among recent publications, scholars have pinned the trend that in the expanding array of virtual environments, identities become increasingly manipulable (Smith & Watson, 2014, p.82).

As computer-mediated communication studies developed, the academic researches of ‘virtual identity’ also became numerous and fruitful, and populate the CMD area (Bell & Kennedy, 2000, 2004; Cherny, 1999; Crystal, 2001, 2006, 2011; Herring, 1996a; Jones, 1998; Turkle, 1995). Early researches focused on the potential and freedom that the Internet offers; then, later on, academic studies found the Internet had become a mundane means of communication among people (Barnes, 2003; Baron, 2004). Also, ethical and moral concerns and panics arise because of anonymous virtual identities, such as online dating, spam mails, Internet addiction, pornography, fraud online trading (Baron, 2004; Thurlow, Lengel, and Tomic, 2004). More recently, as more and more detailed, ethnographic and empirical studies have been conducted, different comprehension of virtual, digital online identity populate the research landscape.

2.3.1.2 Online Identity in Social Media: Beyond Anonymity but Synchronicity

However, as different modes of CMD arise, the generalized and enduring claim of ‘anonymous’ online identity has been questioned and challenged. In

some cases, Kendall (1999:62) found that virtual identity is not fragmented but stable, through her ethnographic study of online forums; even though in some forums, cyber-identity is relatively unified. Quite a few scholars such as (Miller & Mather, 1998; Tetzlaff, 2000; Wakeford, 1997) follow this idea by claiming that it is necessary to differentiate different types of identities in distinct Internet environments.

Tetzlaff (2000) argued that compared to more text-based forums, in which the identity may be fluid, in the home pages, where types of data (photographs, contact details, etc.) are found, identity becomes more fixed. It may be too polarized, but it is also necessary to specify which types of internet platform are under investigation in order to avoid conceptual leakage, as Wakeford (1997) mentioned, because new digital identities appear because of new digital forms.

And in some new digital Internet platforms, which are not always anonymous, not all participants engaged anonymously. And social media such as SNS sites, blogs, etc., offer online users the ability to create public profiles, and have a verification system of user identity. Under this circumstance, the term ‘anonymity’ seems too simplistic and overgeneralized for understanding and locating online identities nowadays in Web 2.0 era, which has been pointed out by earlier researchers like Baym (1998) and Akesson (2001). Also some academics (e.g. Kendall, 1999; Hine, 2001) have foreseen and stressed the importance of context in analyzing Internet identities. But they just mention those ideas as a quick glimpse, and fewer

publications have engaged the connection between online communication with offline implication and interaction, or move beyond anonymity and look at context.

Then, identity research shifted its focus to self-presentation online (Papacharissi, 2002; Baym, 2010; Boyd, 2010; Marwick, 2013). Marwick (2013:355) states that “*since there are fewer identity cues available online than face-to-face, every piece of digital information a person provides, [...], can and is used to make inferences about them*”. The online self-presentation process operates at both individual and social levels. Individuals make claims about “who I am”, and those claims have to be recognized by others, yet “who I am” varies according to “who I am with”. The defining identity combines asserting individuality with asserting affiliation with the networked publics in the computer-mediated society.

Therefore, the online identity should be considered as a social process of how the individual and the social are inextricably related.

Like its counterparts Twitter and Facebook, Sina Weibo, a leading hybrid SNS platform in Greater China region, that the present study focuses on, has a system of verification of public figures as well as corporates, the accounts of which are presenting online as who they are in real life. And Baym (1998:55) had already foreseen this trend that ‘many, probably most, social users of CMD create online selves consistent with their offline identities’.

Kennedy (2006, p.861) mentioned “it is necessary to go beyond Internet identities, to look at the offline context of online selves, in order to fully comprehend virtual life”. Baym (2009) echoed by calling for grounding in the face of the blurred boundaries of online and offline world, that online identities (i.e. face) are often continuous with offline selves. Similarly, Benwell and Stokoe (2006, p.243) assert that “identity on the Internet is playful, creative, impressive and limitless”.

In cyberspace, ‘real life’ (RL) identity and identity on the Internet may be entirely different. Nevertheless, the excessively common use of the concept of anonymity in the majority of online identity research led to the absence of being the ‘real life’ identity online, or performance online, which lay the foundation of the present study.

2.3.2 Micro-Celebrity: Online Performance and Offline Life Narration

Concerning the broader horizon of identity online, one of the key approaches is Goffman (1959). Individuals seek to create impressions on others and they may also collude with others for collaborative performances to achieve their goals. And that’s why Goffman became the root of modern impression management with his well-known dramaturgical model of social interaction. People are viewed as ‘actors’ engaging in ‘performances’ in various ‘settings’ before audiences (others).

This dramaturgical model also fits in the social networking context, and facilitates understanding of the online practice of how we see ourselves and how we desire to be perceived by others. Since creating a favorable impression (identity) on others is a natural and basic desire part of human being, then social media becomes an identity workshop, because the affordances of social media complicate the process by giving individuals more control over their information and messages of self-presentation which they exchange with other users in networked context, as well as many identity cues. By “more control”, we mean, the information or messages they choose to disclose in social media, or present online.

According to Baym (2010, p.106) most people opt for relatively similar online personas, instead of creating radically different selves. Convincing others of being wise, hardworking, trustworthy, projecting self-confidence and competence, can be the purpose of creating a favorable impression. DuBrin (2011) defines impression management as the process by which people control the impression others form of them. The term ‘control’ refers to managing, shaping or adjusting, which echoes the ‘manipulable’ identity. For celebrities, they are particularly eager to create a positive impression, legitimating positive qualities, because by positive impression and identity, they can attain outcomes such as promotion, salary bonuses, etc.

Gonzales and Hancock (2008) summarized researches about online identities that self-presentation have been investigated in a variety of online environments, including public dating sites, and personal blogs (Dominick, 1999; Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006; Papacharissi, 2002; Stern, 2004). In the

expanding array of virtual online environments, especially the emergence of SNSs identities become increasingly manipulable. By ‘manipulating’, we mean the technological affordances of Internet provide people the ability to ‘manage’ the contents that go online and are presented to the public, thus changing the way that people see each other.

From the definition of SNS by Boyd and Ellison (2007) that social network sites that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a system, articulate a list of other users and share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections, the first step of connection in SNS is the construction of the profile, either public or semi-public. In this sense, people situate themselves discursively in SNSs, beginning from their online profile, and have great control of selective self-presentation.

Gonzales and Hancock (2008, p.168) also reported in their work that “relative to offline self-presentation, self-presentation online is more easily modified, which allows for the presentation of more selective unexpressed aspects of identity (Bargh, McKenna & Fitzsimmons, 2002; Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006; Walther, 1996). Internet users also may express previous unexpressed aspects of identity (McKenna & Bargh, 1998) or even act out new identities (Hancock, 2007; Turkle, 1995).”

In his most-cited book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) developed the famous drama metaphor to represent self-presentation in human social interaction: each individual is staged as either ‘performer’, ‘audience’, or ‘outsider’, and the social behaviors of the individuals are

categorized into two systems: back region (back stage) and front region (front stage). The two lines of behavior “performance” suggested that there are two different modes of self-presentation: One when we are “on” for others (front stage), and another when we are “out of bounds to members of the audiences (1959, p.124). While on stage, people communicate two types of information: information that is deliberately communicated through language; and information that is inadvertently expressed through gesture, tone and appearance.

Furthermore, the notion of “micro-celebrity” was proposed by Senft (2008:25) who describes it as “*a new style of online performance in which people employ webcams, video, audio, blogs, and social networking sites to ‘arm up’ their popularity among readers, viewers, and those to whom they are linked online*”, when Senft studied camgirls. Then the notion “micro-celebrity” were further theorize by Marwick (2010, p. 250) in her Ph.D dissertation *Status Updates* as a way of thinking; an emerging online practice, and finally, a status seeking technique:

“that involves creating a persona, sharing personal information about oneself with others, performing intimate connections to create the illusion of friendships or closeness, acknowledging an audience and viewing them as fans, and using strategic revealing of information to increase or maintain this audience”
(Marwick, 2010, p.250).

Inspired by this development, a large stream of studies have been carried out to research micro-celebrity as a practice. Examples include the use of Twitter by technology organizations (Marwick, 2010,2013), by individual celebrities (Marwick & Boyd, 2011), and by users using YouTube to gain fame (Marwick, 2013). Marwick (2013) also points out that micro-celebrity, is what one *does*, rather than what one *is* and that micro-celebrity is considered as a set of online practices in constructing a fan base and maintaining popularity.

Arrays of Internet environments (personal web pages, online dating websites, blogs, SNS, etc.) are text-based platforms and they provide the interpersonal exchange, and facilitate communications. Then, Goffman's dramaturgical approach has been considered as a very useful foil for understanding and interpreting online self-presentation, thus, online identity construction by a number of researchers (boyd, 2004/2006/2007; Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006; Gulati, 2004; Hewitt & Forte, 2006; Lewis, Kaufman, Christakis, 2008; Menchik & Tian, 2008; Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010; Miller & Arnold, 2001/2003; Schau & Gilly, 2003; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005; Tufekci, 2008). And a common thread that runs through those publications is that individual users of the Internet would employ impression management by deliberately use of language. The playfulness of online language use adds to the performance and performativity in computer-mediated communication, as concluded in Virtanen (2013, p.269) that '*CMD provides ample evidence of the much wider notion of performance, i.e., users performing social action through discourse.*' And this lays the foundation of

online performance for high-profile celebrities in microblogging, which the present study aims at.

2.4 Celebrity Studies: From Mass Media to Social Media

The focus of the present study is the high-profile public figures or celebrities. There has been a concentration on defining celebrity during the late 1990s and early 2000s, such as Boorstin(1962)'s widely circulated 'known for being well-known'; Rein, Kotler & Stolle (1997, p.15)'s definition is "*a person whose name has attention getting, interest-riveting and profit-generating value*"; Rojek (2001,p.10) regarded celebrity is "*the attribution of glamorous or notorious status to an individual within the public sphere, or nothing more than cultural impact on a public*"; Edwards and Jeffereys(2010, p.20) used a Chinese term for celebrity, *mingliu*, literally translated as "name-flowing", to demonstrate that a celebrity is a person whose name, image, and life story has commercial value, and encapsulates the mobility of the celebrity and the celebrity effect. And Van Krieken (2012, p.10) offers an admittedly more convoluted definition: celebrity is "a quality or status characterized by a capacity to attract attention, generating some 'surplus value' or benefit derived from the fact of being well known (highly visible) in itself in at least one public arena". It can be either positive or negative, including notoriety. Gunter (2014, p.vi) connects celebrity to the

value of ‘fame’, celebrity, thus, can be considered as a state of being that follows from ‘fame’ which is, in turn, a process that embraces the communication of information about individuals to a wider population that shapes a specific reputation or image of the person being talked about. Especially in contemporary society, as Gunter (2014) points out, even without really having achieved anything else, but simply by getting a lot of media attention, any individual can attain a high profile or ‘fame’, and enjoy ‘celebrity’ status.

Finally, Turner (2004, p.10) understands celebrity in three dimensions: celebrity is a genre of representation and a discursive effect; celebrity is also a commodity, that is produced, and traded by market promotions, publicity and media industries, under which context, commercial and promotional is the primary function; last but not least, celebrity is the cultural formation that has a social function we can better understand.

Among all these versions of definition, ‘public’, ‘attention’, ‘fame’, or ‘famous’ are the key words that are best used to describe the nature of celebrity. The proliferation of celebrity that has been created simply through media publicity and followers or ‘fans’ also became symbiotic with the celebrity culture. And in social media, those high-profile celebrities both benefit from and can benefit the media (traditional media) and also social media that helped to create and promote them, in today’s extensively mediated world.

The phenomenal growth of the celebrity industry in early 20th century and the related social effect has not only captured popular tastes and imaginations, but also scholarly attention (Evans, 2005; ; Inglis, 2010; Parry-Giles, 2008; Ponce de Leon, 2002; Tillyard, 2005a, 2005b; Riall, 2007; Rojek, 2001). Ferris and Harris (2011) provided a succinct and rigorous look at the interactional dynamics of celebrity, by directing attention to the meanings of celebrity and fame that are created in face-to-face social interaction, from the perspectives of those who enact and consume it. Van Krieken (2012) reflected on the deeper significance of celebrity for our everyday life, our sense of self, and relations of status, recognition and power.

However, many existing works tend to focus on the dysfunctions of fame and celebrity as well as its connection to economic exploitation, which are within the communication studies and business management areas. The socio- and linguistic- perspective of analysis of celebrity are rare. Only Rojek (2001, p.11) briefly mentioned “[*the discursive regime of celebrity*] ...crosses the boundary between the public and the private worlds, preferring the personal, the private or veridical self as the privileged object of revelation”. However, no more support for this could be found.

Another problem is that the celebrity studies have been excessively concentrated on Western Europe and North America, as well as related countries such as Australia and New Zealand, which can be defined as English-speaking countries. And this is true and similar to the studies of CMD, which we discussed in a previous section of this chapter, although we can also find that there is a slowly growing body of studies of celebrity in other parts

of the world (cf. Van Krieken, 2012; Nayar, 2009; Bolagnani, 2011). It is not until Edwards and Jeffreys(2010) edited *Celebrity in China*, that this gap was filled, and became the first and only book-length exploration of celebrity in China, which has a collection of studies and case studies of celebrities from varieties of mainstream popular culture (film, music, dance, literature, internet),official culture (military, political and moral exemplars) business, and economic fields.

Also, Ferris and Harris (2011) argued that the bulk of contemporary research on celebrity is not empirically focused on the lived experiences and consumers. However, this argument is not fully evidence-based, since most of the recent publications about celebrity are empirical, taking an interactional approach. The gap that needs addressing and emphasizing is what distinguishes celebrities from mundane people. Therefore, as Ferris and Harris (ibid) admit “*a focus on meaning, and on interactional practices of meaning making around the topic pf celebrity, is needed*”(p.130).

As social media affects our consumption patterns and the use of social media has grown to a mainstream passion for the industry and popular culture, changes in computer technology have intensified the celebrity production and what is more important, promotion process, involving frequent television appearances, and interactions with fans, viewers, rolling speaking tours and award ceremonies. The current scholarship on celebrity, drawing from the disciplines of communications, cultural studies, sociology and psychology, are mainly analyses based on the data in face-to-face social interaction.

Except for those comparatively traditional media, celebrities now have their own way of self-promotion, presenting themselves as a brand in microblogging, a new mechanism by which celebrities are identified and promoted, rather than being arranged and provided by their companies. “Micro-celebrity”, the term which was mentioned in previous session, depicts this online practice to maintain fan base and popularity. Thus, a research into celebrity in computer-mediated communication seems to be an under-explored field of inquiry, which triggered the present study.

2.5 Interactional Sociolinguistics as an Approach to CMD

2.5.1 Approaches of Sociolinguistics to CMD

Sociolinguistics, as the name implies, is a discipline which aims to study the relationship between language use and the society. As computer technology develops, there have been great advances in the theories and methodologies as well as the phenomena in sociolinguistics study (Bayley, Carmeron & Lucas, 2013).

Wu, Li and Feng (2016) have categorized the research advances of CMD in terms of two sociolinguistic streams or approaches, i.e., variationist sociolinguistics and interactional sociolinguistics. Pioneered by Labov

(1966/1972), variationist sociolinguistics is a traditional stream of linguistic studies which mainly focuses on the examination of phonetic, lexical and syntactical variations used by different speech communities of language users. Because the research foci are the correlations between the language forms and variables of language users (for example, social classes, ages, gender, etc.), most variationist sociolinguistics studies adopt quantitative analysis, highlighting the correlations by showcasing the data processing and analysis by computer software, such as SPSS, or Excel.

In section 2.1.2 we mentioned that identity from the “essentialist” line in the first wave of identity studies. Variationist sociolinguistics is rooted in essentialism, and considers language as heterogeneous but structured and has strong correlations with language users (Coupland, 2007, p.47-48).

Herring and Paolillo (2006) are among those new media scholars adopting variationist sociolinguistics, who pinpointed a cluster of linguistic features such as demonstrative, numbers, quantifier and possessive pronouns preferentially used by male weblog users, while singulars and plurals of first-person pronouns, as well as those of third-person pronouns are preferentially used by female weblog users. Significant correlations between those linguistic features and gender of webloggers are shown in the discussion. Schwartz, Eichstaedt, Kern, Dziurzynski, Ramones, Agrawal, Shah, Kosinski, Stillwell, Seligman, and Ungar(2013a), carried out a bigger data collection of 75,000 Facebook users, and a total of 0.7 billion updates of words, phrases, and topic instances of Facebook messages, with a finding of significant correlations between lexical choice and Facebook users’ striking variables of personality,

gender and age, by open-vocabulary approach. Using same dataset, Schwartz et al(2013b) showed how social media can also be used to gain psychological insights, through exploration of language use as a function of age, gender, and personality.

Apart from the attention to the lexical and syntactic features of new media, there is also a rich body of literature of variationist sociolinguistics exploring the correlation among interaction structure and discourse strategies and variables of language users in new media. Herring (2003) in the first phase of New Media studies, located gender and power in online communication, by pointing out that males tend to use more and longer messages and their speech is more absolute and aggressive, involving more self-compliment and showing more self-confidence, whereas female ones show more hesitation, mitigation, express more personal feelings, agreement and politeness. The conclusions are in line with the traditional and well-cited Tannen (1994)'s offline daily men and women in conversation. Furthermore, In 2007, Payametheekul and Herring(2007) found a completely different picture of women, showing more involvement and receiving more replies than males, based on a total of 917 messages in a Thai online chatroom. And their findings also showed the attention of new media search not only focused on English-speaking countries. Besides, Liu and Wu (2015) use a corpus-based discourse analysis approach to investigate the corporate identity construction of 10 energy companies in China versus the US.

From the rich body of literature of variationist sociolinguistic studies on new media, it is observed that the differential language use across small-

culture differences, such as gender and age, etc. in new media have been examined widely with systematic quantitative linguistic analysis, overcoming the limitations of the approach of thematic or content analysis which is often employed by communication scholars, according to Wu and Li(2015).

The other important line of approach to CMD is interactional sociolinguistics, of which Gumperz (1982a, 1982b) is considered as the Father. Unlike variationist sociolinguistics, interactional sociolinguistics extends the units of analysis to the larger context of language use (society) and the larger scope of language use(conversation, texts and interaction). Instead of analyzing the propositional content of utterances, interactional sociolinguistics, part of anthropological linguistics, is more concerned with the place of language in its wider social and cultural context, its role in constructing and sustaining cultural practices and social structures, according to Foley (1997, p.3). In other words, interactional linguistics aims at the interpretation and function of linguistic forms in socially and culturally situated discourse (Gunthner, 2008). Gumperz (1999, p.454) coined the term interactional linguistics to forge the disciplinary links between social science and linguistics. Later, Gumperz (2001, p.215) furthered this term by explaining that it is “*an approach to discourse analysis that has its origin in the search for replicable methods of qualitative analysis that account for our ability to interpret what participants intend to convey in everyday communicative practice*”.

Therefore, grounded in earlier studies in ethnography of communication, which also relied on ethnographic observations to examine how language is

used in social events, interactional sociolinguistics for new media, on the other hand, then focused more on interpretative process in interaction and communications, and emphasized more the context-based, situated online process and the information delivery of interactants, and the interplay of language use and social process. The process is socially constructed, the proponents of interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982b; Hanks, 1996; Günthner, 2008/2011/2012) have refined it to develop aspects of the theory to the primary assumption that this social knowledge (including the communicative knowledge) is reproduced, confirmed and modified in interactions, dedicated to analyzing the complex interrelationship between language structure, language use, contexts and social/cultural knowledge.

2.5.2 Key Notions of Interactional Sociolinguistics to CMD

For the past decade, increasing concern and discussion by linguists have been over how Internet diffusion has affected language and social life in some fundamental ways and over the theory and methodology of researching language use in computer-mediated communication (Androusopoulos, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2006). Amongst the inquiry by linguists, some key notions merit our special attention, further exploration and possible utilization in this project: i) face, facework, and identity; ii) speech act theory.

2.5.2.1 Face and identity

Among the notions in Interactional Sociolinguistics, face is one that is critical to the present study. It is widely acknowledged that face is a key and invaluable analytical concept for understanding the process of human interaction and relational work in interaction. Goffman (1967:5) defined face as ‘an image of self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes’ and stated that all human interactions engage facework, i.e., people collaboratively protect and support each other’s faces in interaction. Face, according to Goffman (1967), is the interactional construct which is the result of such collaborative process. Goffman (1955) also argued that facework includes both presentation rituals and avoidance rituals. While presentation rituals refer to those approach-based rituals, such as compliments, greetings, avoidance rituals refer to actions to avoid threats and restriction to an individual’s freedom.

Further to Goffman (1955)’s influential “face” and drama theory, Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) pointed out face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced and must be constantly attended to an interaction, by defining two universal types of face: positive face and negative face. The former referring to a universal desire for approval and being appreciated by others, the latter referring to a universal desire for autonomy of action. Positive face is thus aligned with affiliation motives, such as needs for affiliation, communion, and positive regards, etc., while negative face is aligned with antonym motives, such as desire for independence,

freedom of action, and freedom from imposition, etc. Based on the theory, Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) provided a detailed mechanism for engaging face-work with a list of possible linguistic acts and strategies appealing to people's need for positive face and negative face, which are closely linked to politeness, with face as a driving force for politeness in interaction and communication, thus, building favorable identity.

Quite a few studies on CMD has devoted their attention to facework utilizing the framework by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987). For example, West and Trester (2013) indicated the uses of intertextuality for facework by individuals on Facebook. Others such as Page (2012) and Puschmann & Heyd (2012) illustrated how author-oriented personal narrative practice on Facebook and Twitter contributed to face and identity construction.

In addition, Wu and Li (2015) found that positive face and exaggerated language expressions are prevalent in the performance of Chinese Weibo users and pointed out that such behavior does not align itself with the traditional Chinese maxims of politeness which emphasize modesty and respect (see Gu, 1990).

Furthermore, Arundale (2010, 2015) criticized the limitations of the framework by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) and further conceptualized face as a relational, interactional phenomenon. Wu and Lin (2017) extended this relational, interactional perspective to study facework by Chinese celebrities on Weibo and categorized their acts in terms of relational acts. Lillqvist and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) paid particular attention to the

interactional process between Finnish corporations and their customers on Facebook and identified strategies used by the corporations in responding to customers' complaints.

Apart from the theories of face by the Western scholars who tend to emphasize the universal principles of face, Chinese scholars have suggested more culturally specific principles of face. The equivalent concept of face to Chinese is *mian zi*, which embodies the integrated 'self' in Chinese cultural value. First, According to Yu & Gu (1990) *mian zi* and self esteem are intertwined in Chinese culture, and one's self esteem is formed on the basis of others' remarks. If remarks are positive, then *mian zi* is gained, accordingly, self esteem is increased. When remarks are negative, then *mian zi* is lost. Also *mian zi* refers to 'social self' in Chinese culture, which is prestige, image, respect from others. King and Myers (1977) coined the term as 'social or positional face', and 'other' plays a very prominent part in constructing "social self" by choosing to support a person's social self by recognizing and responding to his or her need for recognition and prestige in social interactions, or vice versa. Third, *mian zi* also denotes 'relational self' in Chinese values, which include affection, friendship, mutual respect, and personal relationship with others. Apparently, much more work is needed in studying facework as relational, interactional phenomena, in Chinese Context. Apparently, much more work is needed in studying facework as relational, interactional phenomena.

2.5.2.2 Speech Act Theory

Speech act is another key pragmatic notion of interactional sociolinguistics to Computer-mediated Discourse. The notion of speech act was first proposed by Austin (1962) to refer to an utterance that has performative function in language and communication. Over the years, the term has been utilized to describe and understand the messages and their meanings in human interaction. Nonetheless, linguists differ on the means of analyzing speech acts as well as their criteria of classifying the speech acts.

Austin (1962) suggested that speech act can be analyzed at three levels: a locutionary act (the literal meaning of the utterance), an illocutionary act (the intension of the speaker of the utterance), and a perlocutionary act (the effect of the utterance on the hearer). Searle (1975) further refined Austin's idea of illocutionary act and classified illocutionary speech acts in terms of assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives.

The frameworks by Austin (1962) and Searle (1975) have been well utilized in the researches on computer-mediated discourse. For example, Hassell, Beecham and Christensen(1996) compared speech acts in three media – email, face-to-face, and telephone –and concluded that assertives were the most common speech act across all three modes of communication, while imperatives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives were more common in email and telephone communication than in face-to-face contexts, and expressives were more common in email than in face-to-face communication. Concerning social media, Carr, Schrock and Dauterman

(2012) examined the use of speech acts on Facebook status messages and found that the messages were mostly frequently constructed with expressive acts, followed by assertives. Also examining Facebook status updates, Ilyas and Khushi (2012) concluded with the frequency ranking of expressives, assertives, imperatives, and commissives. In addition, scholars such as Nastri et al. (2006) had to extend the taxonomy of speech acts by adding quotation speech act on social media, which refers to the message that the sender conveys is not originally produced by the sender.

Furthermore, in computational linguistics, speech act is also known as dialogue act or conversational acts (Bunt, 1994). Different from other linguists, computational linguists propose more specific types of speech act, such as 18 types and 43 subtypes by Verbmobil-1 (Jekat, Klein, Mainer, Maleck, Mast & Quantz, 1995) and Traum and Hinkelman's (1992) four abstract conversation acts and several concrete ones. The main goal of the computational linguists is in the automatic recognition of speech acts to model conversation (Stolcke et al., 2000), which relies on annotated corpora such as Switchboard-DAMSL (Jurafsky, Shriberg & Diasca, 1997) and Meeting Recorder Dialog Act (Dhillon, Bhagat, Carvey & Shriberg, 2004). So far, speech act recognition remains a multi-class classification problem.

It is observed that while Austin and Searle have started and oriented linguists and computational linguists who used to focus their attention primarily on the use of language for factual, truthful assertions to the affective and social functions of language, they did not provide any principles for how new illocutionary acts should be classified and exclusive. Their classification

of the illocutionary act appeared to focus primarily on the intension of the speaker, with insufficient attention to the hearer: The interactional, relational aspect of the speech act is largely belittled in their conceptualization and analysis.

Sociolinguist Hymes (1972), in his postulation of a nested hierarchy of units called the speech situation, speech event, and speech act, defined speech act as “the minimum unit in interaction”. According to Hymes, a speech act gets its status from the social context as well as from the language form: “the level of speech acts mediates immediately between the usual levels of grammar and the rest of a speech event or situation in that it implicates both linguistic form and social norms” (Hymes, 1972:57). Nonetheless, it is becoming clear to linguists today that speech acts proposed as the minimal unit of speech events are in fact not quite “minimal”. On the one hand, almost any speech act can be the performance of several acts at once, distinguished by different aspects of the speaker’s intention (Bach, 2014). On the other hand, the accomplishment of a speech act may require speech moves by more than the speaker.

Furthermore, those taxonomy of speech acts are more focused on the purpose of the speaker or the information sender. As Bach (1994) and Burkhardt (1990) claim that this kind of scheme has a number of problems. First, it does not provide any principles for how new illocutionary acts should be classified and exclusive. Also, the taxonomy assumes that each speech act belongs only to one category, which fails to account for the multifunctionality of language use (Clark, 1996). The existing body of research on the process

of communication in CMD are largely dependent upon the taxonomy of speech acts just from the information sender/speaker side, with insufficient attention to the involving and participating nature and process of CMD. The present research is attempting to further understand and analyze the two-way communication process.

2.6 Summary of Literature Review and Significance of the Study

This chapter has attempted to review the literature that bears relevance for the present project. Section 2.1 attempts to map the landscape of identity theories and related identity research from two perspectives: 1) development of identity theories: from identity as a projection of the self to identity as a product of the social; 2) two mainstream lines of identity theories, namely, the ‘essentialist’ and ‘constructionist’ lines. And the shift from an ‘essentialist’ to ‘constructionist’ approach, reflects the discursive and postmodern turn from ‘inside’ perception to ‘outside’ broader contexts.

Section 2.2 gives a brief review of empirical studies of ‘Computer-Mediated Discourse’ (CMD), followed by a discussion of CMD studies in China which is relatively short, primarily confined to a register approach,

examining the linguistic features of the Chinese Internet language. Apparently, the discourse of Chinese microblogging is largely an under-studied field.

It is observed in Section 2.3 that though the academic studies of ‘virtual identity’ are numerous and fruitful, they are related to other languages or cultures other than Chinese and furthermore, the statement of ‘fluid’, ‘fragmented’ and ‘anonymous’ online identity statements tend to be overgeneralized, as different modes of CMD arise, especially the SNSs, which are not always anonymous but may instead be asynchronic online environment, high-profile websites for maintaining interpersonal relationships. In addition, in the SNS environment, identities become increasingly manipulable discursively and “micro-celebrity” online practice has gained increasing attention in recent years. Nonetheless, as pointed out in Section 2.4, the bulk of contemporary research regarding online self-presentation and identity construction by celebrities has confined their attention to face-to-face interviews, to traditional mass media and the production system of celebrity and fame, with little attention to the interactional process of celebrity identity construction on social media.

Section 2.5 then presents an overview of two approaches of sociolinguistics for CMD, with special attention to the approach of Interactional Sociolinguistics. The key notions and methods from Interactional Sociolinguistics including face and speech acts are presented as they will be utilized and further extended in the present project.

In light of the foundation and gap in CMD research, the present study has therefore attempted to examine the process of self-presentation and identity construction of celebrities in Chinese microblogging. In the process of the examination, the study has attempted an interdisciplinary endeavor: Theoretically, it attempts to integrate the insights regarding identity construction from social psychology and the insights of face and facework from interactional sociolinguistics. Methodologically, it attempts to integrate the method of thematic analysis from communication studies and the method of speech act analysis from linguistics. Further details of the study will be presented and discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

This chapter first presents the research objectives and questions of the study; then introduces the approach and framework of analysis for the study which integrates the notions and methods from socio-psychology and interactional sociolinguistics. The rationale for data sampling and methods of analysis will also be presented.

3.1 Research Objectives and Research Questions

3.1.1 Research Objectives

The objective of the present study is to examine how discursive identity construction is managed in the Chinese mainstream microblogging and social network site Sina Weibo. The conceptualization of identity is formulated in terms of two facets, personal identity (personal self) and social identity (social self) which is actively, and dynamically constructed in the online social environment.

As pointed out in Chapter 2 of Literature Review, it is highly significant to study Chinese language-based microblogging behavior not only because it is a largely under-studied area in terms of (mostly English-language)

academic scholarship but also because there is largely a gap in researching how Chinese construct self-presentation and identity on social media. Specifically, research gaps exist regarding how Chinese celebrity users make use of the leading Chinese microblogging platform Sina Weibo for identity work (“Personal self”) and rapport building with their followers (“Social Self”).

By paying attention to the linguistic phenomena, the research objectives of this present study attempt to fill the gaps by exploring how identity work is accomplished by Chinese celebrities in Sina Weibo. The identity is understood in this study as an aggregate construct of personal identity (“personal self”) and social identity (“social self”). The study will first look into how self-disclosure, personal narratives, or personal story telling are integrated by Chinese celebrities into the process of “personal self” presentation and consequently image projection in Sina Weibo. Goffman’s conceptualization of everyday life as “personal self” performance is applied in this study of the CMD context.

Second, the approach of interactional sociolinguistics is integrated with the conceptualization by Goffman to further examine the process of social identity (social self) building by the Chinese celebrities with their followers in the whole Sina Weibo community. Speech acts are operationalized in the present study as a sub-branch of social identity rapport building and the framework of relational act analysis by Wu and Lin (2017) is adopted for the study, i.e., each utterance by the Chinese celebrities will be categorized in terms of a kind of relational speech act(s) in their process of interacting with

the audience (followers). In addition, the linguistic features that constitute the speech acts and contribute to the relational management by the Chinese celebrities with their audience (followers) will be further identified and discussed.

3.1.2 Research Questions

The present study attempts to examine how Chinese celebrities construct their online identities (i.e., personal and social identities) with their followers on Sina Weibo via exploring the intertwined aspects of identity construction with two main research questions:

RQ1. How do the Chinese celebrities construct their personal identities on Sina Weibo?

RQ 1.1 What kind of personal identities are constructed by Chinese celebrities via self-presentation on Sina Weibo?

RQ 1.2 What is the characteristic strategy used by Chinese celebrities to construct their personal identities on Sina Weibo?

RQ1.3 What are the prevalent linguistic and symbolic features used by Chinese celebrities in the tweets to construct their personal identities on Sina Weibo?

RQ2. How do the Chinese celebrities build their social identities with their followers on Sina Weibo?

RQ2.1 What are the prevalent relational speech acts performed by the Chinese celebrities on Sina Weibo?

RQ2.2 What are the characteristic linguistic and symbolic features that constitute such relational acts?

RQ2.3 How do these relational speech acts and discursive features contribute to their construction of their social identities?

3.2 The Perspective of Symbolic Interactionism

This section provides a brief review of symbolic interactionism, which addresses the complex, dynamic, and active social interaction and identity, providing the philosophical grounding of the present study. The core concepts of symbolic interactionism (closely related to “social identity”) and the contribution of Goffman to the perspective are presented in the section.

3.2.1 Central Ideas of Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interaction is a perspective within sociology of understanding reality which focuses on the human behaviors. It emphasises the uniqueness of human beings but contends that rather than responding passively to our environment, human beings act back, reacting to the environment with interactions using symbols. By acting back to the environment, human beings

project a self, which is socially created in this way, so human beings are social actors interacting with others and defining the situations, and that is how society is developed dynamically. Charon (2011:29) summarized the five central ideas of symbolic interactionism, and defines symbolic interactionism as a perspective, by recalling the point: *“To understand human action, we must focus on social interaction, human thinking, definition of the situation, the present, and the nature of the human being.”* By using the concept of “perspective” rather than “attitude”, we conceptualize the activeness of human being interactions, define situation, and act according to the present situation. Then, the human being, from symbolic interactionism’s perspective, is regarded as more complex, and dynamic and active in the environment.

Symbolic interaction theory grows out of Mead (1934/1938) who was heavily influenced and rooted in the philosophy of pragmatism, the work of Darwin, and behaviorism. SI’s basic perspective of seeing the human being as a thinking and decision-making actor, instead of a passive responder and a formed organism, comes from the influence of pragmatism; Darwin’s theory of evolution helped shape the perspectives that an individual is a dynamic changing actor always in the state of becoming, and acting, the process of being socialized. Society, on the other hand, is continuously developing, by continuous social interaction; and as a behaviorist, Mead believes that human beings must be understood in terms of their behaviors, both physical which can be observed and also the mind, of thinking within human being.

To sum up the symbolic interactionism's perspective, human beings are considered as an active thinking, dynamic social actor, and make decisions to use symbols to react and define their environment.

3.2.2 Two Themes from Goffman: Drama and Self to “Social Self”

An introduction to symbolic interactionism without Goffman could not be complete, because Goffman's idea and contributions are central and fundamental to understanding the human being as an active actor/player in social interactions, which is a perspective applicable to everyday situations.

Drama and ritual are two characteristics of social interaction, according to Goffman, and they are complementary, and both are implicated in the collaborative manufacture of selves (Goffman, 1959:253). To put it in another way, self is both the product of staged drama interaction, and the object of the society's interpersonal rituals.

3.2.2.1 Performance and Impression in Staged Drama

By a simple observation and illustration, the dramatic process of social interaction was depicted by Goffman (1959, p.1) as:

When an individual enters the presence of others they commonly seek to acquire information about him or bring into play

information about him always possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his trustworthiness, etc. [...] information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him.

And depending on readily observable appearance, expressions, manners, behaviors or “personal front” (Goffman, 1959:24) the individual forms impressions of others, influences other’s definitions and the others are doing the same. And the presentation of those “readily observable” manners or “personal front”, involves use of certain techniques to influence others. The process, according to Goffman, is described as “performance”, participants are “social actors”, and interaction is a stage where an individual acts his or her own parts that they choose to present to others. In other words, individuals take active roles in presenting to others who they are, and control actions and behaviors in order to give off the image, or impression they want, thus, to control the conduct of the other, and how the others act towards them, which is achieved largely by influencing the definition of the situation. In this way, *“it will convey an impression to others”* (Goffman, 1959:4). When engaging in interaction, one is the performer, but at the same time the audience of others’ performance as well.

By their performance, the actor gives out information of self to the audience by presenting himself or herself in the settings of interactions which consist of a front region or frontstage and a back region or backstage. And

backstage and frontstage are generally separated by barriers allowing performers to present themselves in a favorable light, while restricting the audience's access to backstage. In most cases, performers and audiences work closely to achieve a "working consensus" (Goffman, 1959:10) to define the impression of each other and also the settings.

The uniqueness of Goffman's dramaturgical perception lies in each person interacting with others being considered as an active actor who has control over the performance to influence the impression of how others define him or her. Together they dramatically construct and form impression of one another and also define the social setting.

3.2.2.2 "Social self": Self, Face and Identity in Interaction

Similar to many symbolic interactionists, Goffman also views the self, or identity as resulting from a negotiated process, and to be something built up cooperatively on each and every occasion of social interaction (Charon, 2011,p.174). Social interaction is the context within which identities are recognized and negotiated. Further to Mead (1934)'s concept of self as essentially social, Goffman contends that an individual merely outlines his or her own picture of self through performance, but still "*must rely on others to complete the picture*" (1967:84-85). Others fill in and sometimes reshape the outline through their actions towards the individual. And because of this, the individual cares how others see him or her as projected, and care about the "face", which Goffman (1967:43) defines as positive social value we claimed through performances. And he also suggests the explanation for this

emotional attachment “*to projected selves and face is the most fundamental mechanism of social control leading us to regulate our own conduct*” (1967:8) and humans try to avoid “loss of face”, that is, situations in which the others do not recognize or define what actors try to present.

As to Goffman, all are tied to interactions, and social interaction shapes identities. Social interaction is the cooperative process within which self or identity are created, recognized and negotiated. Everybody in interaction is a performer who presents his or her own self, simultaneously defining what other performers (their audience) experience and behave accordingly. The society, according to Goffman, consists of (1) self-presentations with face; (2) support of one another’s projected selves, protection of one another’s faces; and (3) ritual expression of mutual respect for one another.

To sum up, symbolic interactionism provides a perspective to look into the social identity, i.e., identity in interaction, thus, provides solid philosophical grounding for the present study into social network sites. However, it is a perspective that is too broad to investigate and illustrate the discursive construction of social identities in the social media. Therefore, the more grounded approach to the present study, interactional sociolinguistics is introduced in the coming section.

3.3 The Approach of Interactional Sociolinguistics

This section displays the central key concepts of interactional linguistics, and both lead to the two main concerns for interactional sociolinguistics: the interplay of linguistic and social forces in social interactions; and also the identity work in communicative practices in everyday interactions, both of which are closely related to the core research questions. Hence, interactional sociolinguistics offers a theoretical approach as well as methodological perspectives for our present study.

3.3.1 From SI (Symbolic Interaction) to IS (Interactional Sociolinguistics)

For Tannen (1992) interactional sociolinguistics is a major field of research at the intersection of linguistics and anthropology. Interactional sociolinguistics and symbolic interaction overlap significantly in method and orientation with the meanings in interactions. In social science, symbolic interaction theory is used to examine the meanings emerging from the reciprocal and dynamic interactions of individuals in social environment (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin, & Demirbuken, 2009). Symbolic interaction is considered to be a process which includes the interpretation of actions, while interactional sociolinguistics is concerned with how speakers signal and interpret meaning in social interaction.

Interactional sociolinguistics, by name, is to distinguish from the *Variationist, correlational or quantitative sociolinguistics* which is always related to the study focused on inquiries to show correlations of various linguistic features (social variation in speech, social dialects, pidgins and creoles, etc.) with social demographic characteristics of language users. In contrast to variationist sociolinguistics, Interactional sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics and an approach to discourse analysis that helps solve real-world problems involving communication, and “*it contributes to theoretical issues in linguistics by shedding light on the nature of meaning in language, and on the nature of language in interaction*” (Tannen, 1992,p.12).

Identity in interaction is where the symbolic interactionism and interactional sociolinguistics meet and connect. Mead (1934), pioneer of symbolic interactionism, states mind, self and society are outcomes of symbolic interaction. Identity is never performed, but is constantly being made in human interaction in a process of “making social worlds”. As the relational contexts are different, the identities that co-construct with different people are not the same. In other words, identity is a social accomplishment, always re-made, and re-negotiated in the discourse of everyday life (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005).

A shift of the investigation of interactions of interactional sociolinguistics to the identity constructions in interactions has aroused interest among scholars. A research group from Germany conducted various studies, focusing on social and linguistic development, linguistic repertoires, and communicative practices among different communities of migrants (cf.

Gunthner, 2012:70) trying to understand how interactants construct particular cultural and social identities through communicative practices, and how do they use linguistic heterogeneities to position themselves in everyday encounters (Androutsopoulos, 2000, 2003; Kallmeyer & Keim, 2003; Hunnenkamp & Meng, 2005) but their studies are mainly within the migrant contexts in Germany, because of native language of authors.

And increasingly, empirical studies have shown that interactional sociolinguistics can be applied as a method of studying communicative practices, no matter whether private, institutional, intercultural or even intracultural, which Tannen pointed out in 1992.

Interactional sociolinguistics offers theoretical as well as methodological perspectives by integrating the analysis of communicative practices with cultural knowledge and social phenomena. And topics like language and identity, linguistic performances in various social communities are challenges for research in interactional sociolinguistics as well as in applied linguistics. And the present study on the identity work of celebrities in social media fits the frames and main concern of interactional sociolinguistics, which can be used as the theoretical and methodological grounding of the present study. And that's why we shift from symbolic interactionism which is a perspective to explain social interaction, to interactional sociolinguistics as an approach to analyze the discourse in social media.

3.3.2 The Shift in Focus of IS: Identity Constructions in Interactions

Interactional sociolinguistics aims at the interpretation and function of linguistic forms in socially and culturally situated discourse (Gunthner, 2008). Gumperz (1999, p.454) coined the term interactional linguistics to forge the disciplinary links between social sciences and linguistics, and distinguish from variationist sociolinguistics. Later, Gumperz (2001, p.215) furthered this term by explaining that it is “an approach to discourse analysis that has its origin in the search for replicable methods of qualitative analysis that account for our ability to interpret what participants intend to convey in everyday communicative practice”.

By analyzing speech events interactional sociolinguistics therefore emphasizes more the interpretative process in interaction and communications, and emphasizes more the context-based, situated, online process information of interactants, and the interplay of language use and social process. The process is socially constructed; the proponents of interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982; Hanks, 1996; Gunthner, 2000, 2003) have refined it to develop the aspect of theory the primary assumption of which is that this social knowledge (including the communicative knowledge) is reproduced, confirmed and modified in interactions, dedicated to analyzing the complex interrelationship between language structure, language use, contexts, and social/cultural knowledge.

Based on these, the analyses of discourse provide a mediated process for the production part of discursive practice and also the interpretations and publicity in a more broadly social context. And this reflects the idea that identity in communication is generated, routinized and standardized, culturally segmented and socially constructed solutions to communicative problems. The approach of interactional sociolinguistics is adopted to look into how identity is managed linguistically in the interactions. Also, it is driven by the call for “*the addition of sociological and psychological research approaches from a purely linguistic analysis to microblogging*” (Puschmann, 2013, p.87) rather than variationist sociolinguistics.

By looking into the *identity* in this highly interactively computer-mediated context, symbolic interactionism provides the perspective for dealing with dynamic identities in networked interaction. For the discursive study, interactional sociolinguistics is the approach more germane to the present study.

3.4 The Analytical Framework

Based on the philosophic grounding of symbolic interactionism and the approach of interactional sociolinguistics, the present study conceptualized identity as constituting both personal and social identities and examined the process of discursive construction of identities by the Chinese celebrities on

the social media platform of Sina Weibo. An analytical model of the celebrity identity construction is depicted and presented in Figure 3.1.

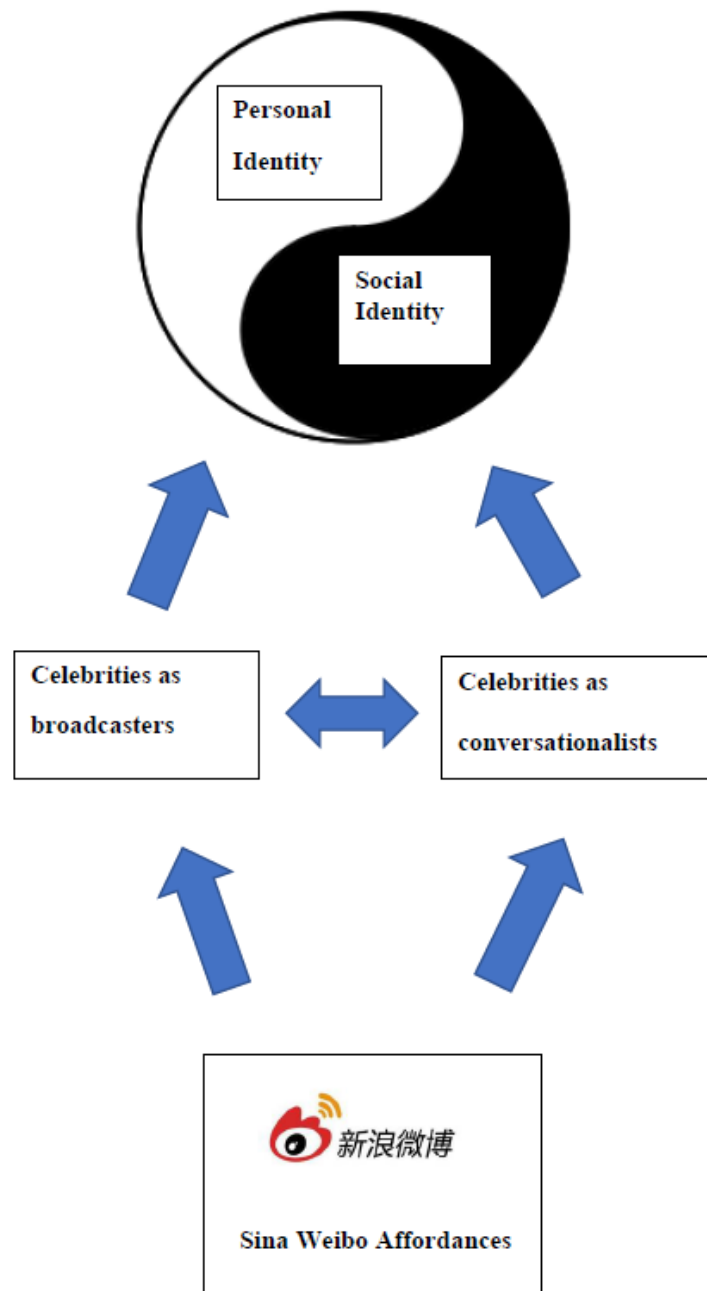


Figure 3.1 *Analytical model of celebrity identity construction on Sina Weibo*

As shown in Figure 3.1, for personal identity construction, celebrities project themselves as broadcaster of their own information through self-disclosure and self-narrative of their life and live moments. For the social

identity construction, celebrities act as conversationalists to build rapport with their followers through relational speech acts and features of phatic communication.

3.5 Data Collection and Sampling Scheme

The data for the present study was collected in a twelve-month period (June 2012 to June 2013) of tweets from the timelines of six most influential verified public figures in Mainland China: 3 males, 3 females.

The selection of six public figures as subjects was primarily based on the results of the *Most Influence Ranking List* (最具风云影响力榜) released by Sina Weibo System in July 2013. And it is interesting to see that they are all from the entertainment circle: a TV host(ess) actors, actresses, and singers. The reason why the celebrities were not chosen from the *Ranking List of Most Followers* (粉絲排行榜) is to try to ensure that the account is not a fake computer-controlled account (僵尸账户) as these owned large numbers of computer-controlled account followers, too.

Also, another concern for the selection of celebrity sample is that those selected verified ones should also be active Weibo users, at the beginning of the study. The minimum criterion was that the celebrity Weibo users should have used Weibo and published their posts for at least one year, with a minimum of five entries in any single week, i.e., at least twenty entries in a

single month. Consequently, the celebrity Weibo users selected for the present study had used Weibo for a mean of 24.4 months (SD= 22.3; ranging from 13 to 64 months).

Finally, a pre-screening of the tweets of those 6 celebrity users was carried out before the beginning of the study. As an avid Sina Weibo user myself, I made use of the access to those tweets, and the pre-screening of the contents of the tweets during the June 2012 to June 2013 was to ensure that those six selected accounts are not marketing accounts which only provide links to outside information websites, without posting any real content. Through primary observation, the contents are written and updated every day according to their lives, like a window into the backstage lives of those high-profile celebrities, and suitable for the study investigating how celebrity users construct their ideal identity on this social network platform. Another reason the six celebrity Weibo users' tweets were suitable for present study is that they were mainly born in late 1970s and 1980s, and the tweets on their timeline are not crazy selfies, which seems the norm for teenage microbloggers. More detailed personal information of the six selected public figures is shown in Table 3.1⁶. The selected celebrities from the *Most Influence Ranking List* (最具风云影响力榜) are found to match the results of reports from What's Weibo.Com.⁷ For the confidentiality of the celebrity,

⁶ 5 of 6 selected celebrities for the study match the Ranking list of Most popular celebrity of Jan.2016(see Table 1.3)

⁷ <http://www.whatsonweibo.com/weibo-super-stars-chinese-celebrities-with-most-weibo-followers/>, accessed July 13th, 2013.

pseudonyms with their surnames are assigned to resemble original names, to reflect their identification.

Table 3.1 *Overview information of selected celebrities on Sina Weibo*

Nick-name	Age group	Area of Residence	Follower s	Tweets on timeline *	Verified Identity Statement	First Joined Weibo
Ms Yao	Born in 1979	Beijing, PRC	79,421,629	8715	Actress, Ambassador of UNHCR	2009-08-28
Ms Zhao	Born in 1976	Beijing, PRC	78,769,594	4293	Actress	2009-10-28
Mr. Wang	Born in 1976	Taipei, Taiwan	56,243,460	2154	Singer	2010-08-16
Mr. Chen	Born in 1976	Chongqing, PRC	80,254,306	5091	Actor, Initiator of Charity Program “Power to Go”	2009-11-13
Mr. He	Born in 1974	Beijing, PRC	78,539,035	7523	TV anchor	2009-08-28
Ms Xie	Born in 1981	Beijing, PRC	84,269,799	8683	TV anchor	2009-08-28

(*The numbers updated till May 26th, 2016)

Given the frame of selected celebrities, a total of 5641 tweets were collected, via the Sina Weibo Open API, which contains a total number of 11,323 utterances, with each tweet assigned a DATAID. The unit of coding

by themes of content for personal identity is tweets, which will be presented in chapter 4.

Table 3.2 Overview information of selected tweets on Sina Weibo

Nick-name	Character count	Tweets	Followers	Utterance
Ms Yao	138, 202	1111	79, 421, 629	8, 715
Ms Zhao	64, 414	593	78, 769, 594	4, 293
Mr. Wang	25, 583	393	56, 243, 460	2, 154
Mr. Chen	165, 915	1311	80, 254, 306	5, 091
Mr. He	203, 151	1876	78, 539, 035	7, 523
Ms Xie	164, 996	1357	84, 269, 799	8, 683
Total	762, 261	5641	N/A	N/A

The unit of analysis of relational speech acts for social identity (shown in chapter 5) is each utterance in each post, with the whole tweet/post as the context for interpreting the relevant speech act(s). Utterances were counted as any sentence or sentence fragment punctuated like a complete sentence, and convey a set of information. There existed several utterances in one tweets, in coding of relational speech acts by celebrities. Extract 3.1 is an example of one tweets, containing three utterances: “I really do not like selfies!” “as an actor, do I really need to do like this?” and “good morning, a new day begins!”, using three different speech acts of “showing stance/ attitude of disliking selfie”, “sharing information and inviting responses” by attaching his selfie photo, and finally “daily greeting” to all Weibo users, and this tweets with selfie received 7522 likes, 5009 retweets and 5199 comments.

Extract 3.1

DATA 20130629/ Mr. Chen

我真的，很不喜欢自拍!!! 😏 一个演员，真的需要这样么? 😂😂😂 早上
好，神经病的一天开始了! (圖略)

贊 (7522) 轉發 (5009) 收藏 評論 (5199)

2013-6-29 10:06 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 3.1

DATA 20130629/ Mr. Chen

I, really, do not like selfie!!! 😏 As an actor, (do I) really need this? 😂
😂😂 Good morning, a new day of a psycho begins! (photo attached)

Like (7522) /Retweet (5009) /Archive/Comments (5199)

at 10:06 June 29th, 2013 From iPhone App

3.6 Summary

This chapter depicts the philosophic basis, and the selected approach of interactional sociolinguistics, then outlines the research objectives and research questions, then introduced the analytic framework, as well as the data sampling rationale. The present study examines the under-studied new medium of microblogging from an interactional sociolinguistic perspective, a turn of analysis from variationist sociolinguistics to new media, which has not yet been undertaken on a larger scale. Second, it is expected to draw the

findings from the two fields of social science and linguistics, and to bring new insights into the speech acts well-described by Austin and Searle. A descriptive model of relational speech acts is proposed for the interactive new media to provide a solid theoretical structure as well as identity building.

Chapter 4 Personal Identity Construction by Chinese Celebrities on Sina Weibo

This chapter examines personal, individualized identity discursively constructed by Chinese celebrities in Sina Weibo. The thematic content analysis of the retrieved Weibo posts was analyzed to decide the most popular topics and themes broadcasted by those celebrities.

4.1 Introduction

The section begins with the identity verification system of Sina Weibo, then introduces the selection of the celebrity users as representatives, to get rid of the concern of fake virtual identity.

4.1.1 Sina Weibo Identity Verification System

Information now in the Web 2.0 era is not only text on a monitor. Rather, these are visual and symbolic platforms where the users can interact and communicate with charts, buttons (like, comment, share, forward, etc.) images, video links, and other representations of each other. Social media is about participation, collaboration and collection. The user participation makes

social media a rich source of information about the ways to present “who we are” to the world. Unlike the first phase of computer-mediated communication, such as MUD, MOOs, social networking sites provide with affordances for presenting “true” identity, rather than avatar in online role-playing games. The platforms of SNSs have made the digital expression or narrative of self (identity) the main trend of social media, not only by using the designed defaults such as profiles, pictures, links, interests, but also more importantly, through producing the informational content.

For the Chinese mainstream SNS — Sina Weibo is often called the “Chinese Twitter” — although Weibo is not really similar to Twitter, it does have the same ‘follower-followee’ system. Weibo users can become a ‘fan’ (粉丝) of another Weibo user, without having to be followed back. Being someone’s ‘fan’ means their posts will show up in the “news feed” on your timeline, which you can like, share and comment on.

Another uniqueness of Sina Weibo is its verification system. For the official verification system of Sina Weibo, piles of documents are required to achieve the personal yellow-labelled V beside the account name. The documents include full name as shown in passport, passport number and country of issuance with photo, phone number to contact for verification, and most importantly, verified copies of original supporting documents including title, description of job duties, etc. And the verification process usually takes 15-20 business days. This unique system of verification of celebrity, makes Sina Weibo somewhat different its competitors microblogging services in

Greater China Regions, and prevents “role-play” identities for those V-labelled celebrities.

4.1.2 Background Information of Selected Verified Celebrities

Before the analysis, it is necessary to mention the background information of the selected celebrities. As mentioned in Chapter 3 the criteria of selection were celebrities from the *Most Influence Ranking List* (最具风云影响力榜), which is found to match the results of report from What’s Weibo.Com. And the celebrities in the list of most influence ranking, are also found to have a very large fan base in Sina Weibo.

To give the reader a frame of reference for the six Chinese celebrities, let us take a comparison look at Weibo’s counterpart Twitter. The celebrities with the most followers on Twitter are Katy Perry (75 million), Justin Bieber (67 million) and Barack Obama (63 million). As shown in Table 3.1 the top of the six selected celebrities have over 84 million ‘followers’.

Table 3.1 *Overview information of selected celebrities on Sina Weibo by numbers of followers*

Nick-name	Age group	Area of Residence	Followers	Tweets on time-line*	Verified Identity Statement	First Joined Weibo
Ms Xie	Born in 1981	Beijing, PRC	84,269,799	8683	TV anchor	2009-08-28
Mr. Chen	Born in 1976	Chongqing, PRC	80,254,306	5091	Actor, Initiator of Charity Program “Power to Go”	2009-11-13
Ms Yao	Born in 1979	Beijing, PRC	79,421,629	8715	Actress, Ambassador of UNHCR	2009-08-28
Ms Zhao	Born in 1976	Beijing, PRC	78,769,594	4293	Actress	2009-10-28
Mr. He	Born in 1974	Beijing, PRC	78,539,035	7523	TV anchor	2009-08-28
Mr. Wang	Born in 1976	Taipei, Taiwan	56,243,460	2154	Singer	2010-08-16

(*These numbers updated to May 26th, 2016)

Ms. Xie (1981) also nicknamed ‘Nana’, is famous as a TV Hostess of ‘Happy Camp’ (快乐大本管) one of China’s most popular variety TV shows. She is the colleague of Mr. He, who is also in the list and is selected for the present study. Both of them not only work as TV hosts, but also star in many popular Chinese films and television series. Ms. Xie has also released several albums and published two books, opened a restaurant, details that can be found in her posts.

Mr. He has been the well-known TV host of Happy Camp of Hunan TV station for more than ten years. *Happy Camp* is listed as one of China’s most

popular TV shows, with the first place in TV viewing ratings of over ten million.

Ms. Zhao is a Chinese actress, and currently a film director, too. She has been labelled as one of the four greatest actresses of Mainland China. She is also known as ambassador for various luxury brands, which makes her one of the world's wealthiest actresses.

Like Ms. Zhao, Mr. Chen also works in the Film industry. Mr. Chen (1979) is a famous Chinese actor, known for his roles in amongst other, Painted Skin and Flying Swords.

Ms. Yao (1976) who has been labelled the "Queen of Weibo", is a Chinese actress ranked as among the 100 most powerful women in the world by Forbes Magazine (2014). The [London Daily] Telegraph (2013) reported her as "China's version of Angelina Jolie". And she was one of the first celebrities to share her personal life on Weibo beginning in 2009. The combination of her popularity as an actress, and her frequent Weibo updates and interactions with her fans, made her the "Queen of Weibo".

Last but not the least celebrity in the dataset, Mr. Wang, is an American-born Taiwanese singer and songwriter at the beginning of his career, well known for this musical style fusing Chinese cultural elements, such as Peking Opera, and Chinese traditional instrument, with R & B and hip-hop western music elements. He has released 25 albums and his personal musical collections and concerts worldwide. In addition to his achievement in music,

Mr. Wang also became active in the film industry, after his acting in Ang Lee's film *Lust, Caution* and Jackie Chan's film *Little Big Soldier*. He is the only person in the Greater China Region to take part in the Olympics as touchbearer twice, at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and in 2012 at the London Olympics. He is also an environmental activist, his eco-awareness among Chinese youth can be found in his Weibo posts, which are updated daily. In December of 2012, he surpassed "Queen of Weibo" Ms Yao⁸ in the number of his followers on Weibo. That's why he was listed in the *Most Influence Ranking List* of the Weibo system, from June 2012 to June 2013.

It is worth mentioning that the ranking list of the Weibo system has been changed every now and then, due to changing popular culture entertainment. But the top ones have been stable for the past five years. Till the time this thesis was finalized, the top Weibo celebrities have around 80 million followers, though the order 1 to 10 in the list keeps changing. By July, 2016, Mr. Yao, Ms. Xie, Mr. He, and Mr. Chen were still among the top 5 in both the *Most Influence List* and *Top Follower List* in the Sina system.

⁸ <http://thinkingchinese.com/wang-lihong-surpassed-yao-chen-to-become-the-weibo-king>, accessed on July 13th, 2013.

4.2 Analysis of Personal Identity Through Weibo

4.2.1 Self-Disclosure of the Profile Information

Identity presentation in Sina Weibo begins with the profile information that Sina Weibo system officials approve. As mentioned in the previous section, the verification process of celebrity identity, requires the celebrity users to provide information and documents . This content analysis begins with the verified identity profile, the one-sentence self-description which the celebrity users submit to Sina Weibo system. The practice of identity construction can begin with the profile, which contains several segments: personal information, personal tags, verified identity profile, and one-sentence self-description.

The profiles, no matter whether public or semi-public, represent the individuals, and are “statements” of self, which are consciously crafted and controlled by the active users of social media. So profile is an explicit act of “writing oneself into being” in a digital environment (Boyd, 2006). Through the locus of interaction, the profile first determines how the individual users present themselves to the public users of social networking sites and form the first impressions. And profiles are where the individual users/participants can have complete control over their self-crafted persona, and also who can see their profiles. That is to say, the profiles on the social networking sites are the first step of self-presentation.

The previous research about self-presentation online used to focus on how much personal information is disclosed in the online environment, because of the anonymity of the Internet user (Spangler, 2013). However, the samples of the present study are all of verified public figures; where disclosure of authentic personal information is required, which makes the samples of this study different from the previous studies of anonymous Internet users.

Due to the verification regulations the personal information of name, gender, photo, and location should be visible in the homepage. Therefore, all the samples of the selected celebrity accounts have disclosed their real personal information in their profile homepages.

The identity description is information they gave the Sina Administration System for verification of their authenticity. Take the homepage of Ms. Zhao's account as an example, the profile descriptions: famous actress, movie and TV series: *Painted Skin*, and *Princess Pear*, etc. (著名演員，代表作《畫皮》《還珠格格》等) show up directly under the yellow Verified label. Through this disclosure of her most famous movie and TV dramas, people can understand and quickly locate the real identity of Ms. Zhao.

Ms. Yao, is also an actress in both TV series, and movies. In the identity statement, she is "an actress, in TV series of *My Own Swordsman*, and *Lurk*, and the movie *Color, me Love*" (演員，代表作電視劇《武林外傳》，《潛伏》，電影《愛出色》等). She is the only one in the selected celebrities to use an animated big-stomached cute cartoon image, instead of a real photo

herself. From the update posts selected in the timespan, it is found that she was pregnant during the period, and the animated big-stomached cartoon image serves as the pregnant Ms. Yao's image during 2012 to 2013. Later, after Ms. Yao gave birth, her Sina Weibo image has changed back to her real photo since 2014.

Similarly, Mr. Chen, a movie actor, use a profile picture of him attending a movie ceremony with many cameras as background, and the profile description for verification is "famous actor, in movies of *Painted Skin*, and *Flying Swords of Dragon Gates*", the Initiator of 'Power to Go' (著名男演員，代表作《龍門飛甲》《畫皮》等，行走的力量發起者). "Power to Go" (行走的力量) is a public campaign initiated by Mr. Chen in 2011, spreading the way of self-reflection through healthy hiking and meditation in this busy and fast-paced world. According to the official introduction of the campaign, it is expected to promote positive values and attitudes to life, recharging people with high positive vibes.

Likewise, in Mr. Wang's homepage, a panoramic view of his heated personal musical concert chamber is set and updated from time to time as the backdrop of his personal wall in Weibo. Detailed personal tags (*Love in Disguise* (戀愛通告), musician (音樂人), actor (演員) and director (導演) were added to contribute understanding of the identity. *Love in Disguise* (戀愛通告) is the latest movie that Mr. Wang Leehom appeared in as the main actor. Musician, actor and director are the identities of Mr. Wang. Also, Wang uses the theme *Open Fire* (火力全開) from his worldwide concerts as the

profile picture, and the live shoot of his *music man* concert as the profile background.

Mr. He and Ms. Xie form a team of famous TV host and hostess, who work together as a team of a well-known local satellite TV station. In their Sina Weibo homepage, the verified identity is “famous TV host/hostess” under the Yellow V label to show the authenticity through Sina Administration System, and their personal photos are provided as profile pictures.

Personal identifying profile information plays a significant part in developing and maintaining microblogging relationships because profile information reveals the spheres of influence of the celebrities and how they desire to present themselves to the public, and facilitates the fans or followers quickly locating them by searching in the system. The profile picture, the brief statement and the tags, under the Yellow V label, is a convincing combination proving identity of the celebrities to their followers.

Another area of the discursive practice of Weibo identity is the one-sentence self-description. The one-sentence self-description column is set in the Sina default system when you create a new account; some blank columns are left for the answers to the default questions. The question for the one-sentence self-description invites writing one sentence for yourself to let people quickly find you (寫一句話吧，讓大家找到你). Therefore, this ‘one sentence’ can serve to give the first impression of the personality of the celebrity. Some celebrities use an unchanging sentence. Some of the

celebrities, however, change the one-sentence self-description frequently as updates. The original one sentence self-description of Ms. Xie in 2013, is *Don't view me in your perspective, I am afraid you could NOT understand* (别站在你的角度看姐，姐怕你看不懂). Then as illustrated in Figure 4.2, it has been changed into *the power of goddess of sunshine spread everywhere* ☺(太阳女神(也可称为喜神)的光芒照四方呀嘛照四方 :)). At first glance the sentence reflected Ms.Xie's attitude and personality as a "silly sister" (傻大姐) as she personally claimed in her posts.

Mr. Chen is another celebrity in the database who has frequently updated his one-sentence self-introduction on his homepage. In the beginning of June 2012, the original sentence was "Do not lose yourself, nor hurt others" in a Chinese idiom, then "Although our bodies seems to be just small ones, but our heart can be as big as with the vast void. Endless good wishes to you", finally, in early 2013, it has been changed to "Do not lose your own way, do not disturb others". The three sentences are in the genre of chicken soup of life wisdoms, reflecting the public charity campaign 'Power to Go' he initiated, echoing the frequent topics "sharing life wisdoms" of his update posts, which will be presented in a later part of this chapter. The disclosure of personal information and profiles of the samples are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 *The disclosed personal information and profiles of the selected celebrities*

Nickname	Area	Personal tags	Verified Identity Statement	One Sentence Self-intro
Ms. Yao	Chaoyang District, Beijing	N/A	An actress, in TV series of <i>My Own Swordsman</i> , and <i>Lurk</i> , and movie <i>Color, me Love</i>	A spiced egg that sucks
Ms. Zhao	Beijing	N/A	Famous actress, Movie and TV series: <i>Painted Skin</i> , and <i>Princess Pear</i> , etc (著名演員，代表作《畫皮》《還珠格格》等)	Grateful
Mr. Wang	Taipei, Taiwan	Love in Disguise, Music man, actor, Director	Mr. Wang, Well known singer, director and actor	N/A
Mr. Chen	Chongqing	actor	famous actor, in movies of <i>Painted Skin</i> , and <i>Flying Swords of Dragon Gates</i> ”, the Initiator of ‘Power to Go’	Do not lose yourself, nor hurt others / Although our body seems to be just small ones, but our heart can be as big as with the vast void. Endless good wishes / Do not lose your own way, do not disturb others.

Nickname	Area	Personal tags	Verified Identity Statement	One Sentence Self-intro
Mr. He	Chaoyang District, Beijing	TV host	Famous TV host of Hunan TV Station	N/A
Ms. Xie	Haidian District, Beijing	TV hostess	Famous TV hostess	<i>Don't view me in your perspective, I am afraid you could NOT understand / the power of goddess of sunshine spread everywhere ☺</i>

As shown in Table 4.1, all six of the selected celebrity users disclose a small amount of personal information in their profiles. Photos, gender, names are visible to all Weibo users. Education, and contact information are less frequently revealed. This can be explained by Walther (1996)'s definition of the hyper-personal model of impression formation in computer-mediated environments, that online self-presenters may have increased opportunities to control and carefully manage information flow compared to their face-to-face counterparts.

To explain this, Jourard (1971)'s proposed term of "broadcasting self-disclosure" depicts sharing personal information in a public situation. In Weibo, any people who access Weibo can view this public information, without registering a Sina Weibo account. Different from other virtual identity presenting online environments, these celebrities chose to present

themselves as they do in the real world, rather than anonymously, because of the verification system of Sina.

Examining the background information and the information verified by the Sina System, those high-profile celebrities are less likely to “role-play” using a fake identity than others in Weibo, which answers Research Question 1.1. The profile information disclosed by celebrities, convinced the Weibo users that the accounts are used by real person. Nevertheless, the personal identities are mainly presented by the updates in the tweets by celebrities. Next section investigates the personal identity construction in tweets.

4.2.2 Personal Identity Construction in Tweets

Tweets are the main body of the study, and reveal more about the identity. In research of relationships between identity and discourse, identity as a discursive construct has been widely accepted (Ran & Chen, 2017, p.142). It is therefore worthwhile, to explore the personal identities which are constructed by celebrities through their tweets on Weibo.

By observing the access behavior and update frequency, it is expected to show the willingness of those celebrities of using Weibo to update and present themselves to public. By observing the syntactic symbols in tweets, it is expected to reveal the strategies of delivering information through tweets and attract readers (followers). Finally, through categorizing the main themes of

content those celebrities published, the study attempts to find out what kind of the identities those celebrities project on Weibo.

4.2.2.1 Access Behavior and Update Frequency by Celebrities

The session first examined the access and update patterns of how celebrities use Weibo as a self-presentation platform, through two aspects: the most popular access behavior, also the frequency of updates.

From 2009, the first introduction of Sina Weibo to Mainland China, to the time of collecting the data for this study by end of year 2013, there have been two main ways to access Sina Weibo: The Web Page of Sina Weibo, and Smartphone Weibo Applications (Weibo Apps for short). When the micropost is posted by Web Page, the end of micropost will be labelled as “by Sina Weibo” (來自新浪微博) or “by Weibo” (來自媒体版微博) at the end of the time stamp. As smartphones became a daily necessity, the other way of microblogging is to go online by Smartphones or Mobile devices, and this way of access behavior is recognized by the label of “by iPhone Weibo Apps” (來自 iPhone 客户端) “by iPad Weibo Apps” (來自 iPad 客户端) or even with detailed type and model of the smartphone. “By iPhone 6” and “By Samsung Galaxy Note II” are the two frequently used smartphone access modes of Mr. He and Ms. Xie in the selected timespan.

It is observed that microposts published via smartphone devices are significantly more common than posting via web or PC desktop. In Table 4.2,

we plot for each celebrity their access behaviors and their numbers of update tweets. In the table, the most frequent update users are Mr. He and Ms. Xie, who only use smartphone application of Weibo for updating their posts. Following them, Mr. Chen and Mr. Yao, showed a tendency of preference of using mobile device App. Besides, it is observed from the number of updated tweets, six celebrities kept the update frequency more than one tweet per day. This means, Weibo is used as a daily platform of self-presentation for those celebrities.

Table 4.2 Access Behavior & Update frequency by celebrities

Celebrity	Posted on a web or PC desktop Weibo	Posted via Mobile devices Weibo App	Total No. of update tweets
Mr. He	0	1876 (100%)	1876
Ms. Xie	0	1357 (100%)	1357
Mr. Chen	20 (1.53%)	1291 (98.47%)	1311
Ms. Yao	69 (6.21%)	1042 (93.79%)	1111
Ms. Zhao	304 (51.26%)	289 (48.74%)	593
Mr. Wang	367 (93.38%)	26 (6.62%)	393

The dominant access behavior by Mobile devices can be explained that the rise of smartphone and mobile devices use, and have huge impact on prevalence of Weibo use as daily platform for self-presentation and communication. Facilitated by portable size, digital technologic equipped with networked cameras, mobile devices create a mobile media era that users become mobile journalists who can make full use of the functionality of smartphones to record with the cameras of smartphones, illustrate, report news and stories around in their lives, narrate a sense of identity, and sociality. Increasingly, the mobile device is becoming a dominate way accessing online,

with the function of uploading the photos and videos taken, thus, shorten the “production” process of traditional mass media. In this way, updating the posts by smartphone App, is more efficient than posting via Web or PC desktop Weibo Application, enabling more live and real-time broadcasting of personal life to public, arouse the high emotional attachments from the followers, who may feel closer to their idol. The daily frequent updates help identities present themselves as easy-going and follower-friendly, always online and willing to share their lives to followers. This answers Research Question 1.2.

4.2.2.2 The Syntactic Characteristics Used in Tweets

As Yuan and Chen (2013) pointed out, “identity is not simply reflected through linguistic forms, but is constructed by strategies” (p.529). Before the conduction of content analysis of tweets, the syntactic characteristics in tweets are examined. As in the process of public presentation, “visibility” among the huge data ocean of Weibo posts is the vital factor in gaining attentions from followers and all Weibo users. The use of syntactic characteristics in tweets is the resources to promote “Visibility”. The tweet receiving most responses, will be listed in “Newsfeed” in the Log-in page, as well as the “Ranking list of Hot Search” (微博熱搜排行榜), which is updated every minute. The longer the tweets stay in the Ranking list of Hot Search, it receive more attention, consequently more responses.

For western scholars who have done study in Twitter, one of the most frequent use of syntactic characteristics is the hashtags. Page (2012) analyses

the frequency of use of hashtags in Twitter, and believes “*Hashtags are potent resources for promoting the visibility of a Twitter update*”, in which the process of self-branding and micro-celebrity depend on visibility as a means of gaining attention in the linguistic marketplace. Hashtags are used to highlight the event and keywords in posts for “searchable talk” in Twitter. URLs are website links to other external website links.

However, compared to English-language-dominant social media, Twitter, and Instagram, in selected posts, posts with hashtags(1.64%)and URLs(0.95%) are not common in Chinese Weibo context, This results match the studies by Gao, Abel, Houben and Yu (2012) who compared Sina Weibo and Twitter from sentiment, entity distribution, system access, the usages of hashtags and URLs in messages, and the research by Shuai, Liu, Xia, Wu and Guo (2014) who furthered the comparison at the topical level, exploring the hot events responses in Twitter and Weibo communities in three aspects: the degree of popularity, the temporal dynamic, and the information diffusion.

The use of syntactic characteristics in celebrities’ tweets are shown in Table 4.3. The most obvious feature of Weibo is usage with photos attached, with predominant usage of photos (99.11%) combined with narration in the microposts. An example can be seen in Extract 4.1.

Table 4.3 Syntactic characteristics of microposts in the dataset

Syntactic Characteristics	Number/Percentage
Microposts with photos attached	5591 (99.11%)
Microposts with emoticons	5254(93.13%)

Microposts with exclamation marks “!”	4737 (83.97%)
Microposts with question marks “?”	963 (17.07%)
Microposts with both “?” and “!”	645 (11.43%)
Microposts with hashtags #	93 (1.64%)
Microposts with URLs	54 (0.95%)

Extract 4.1

DATA 20130131/Ms Yao

这里是北京。



2013-1-31 13:15 來自 iPhone 客户端

收藏/轉發 6799/評論 5338/贊 1004

Translation of Extract 4.1

DATA 20130131/Ms Yao

This is Beijing.



Like (1004) /Archive/ Retweet (6799) /Comment (5338)

Jan 31st, 2013, 13:15 From iPhone Weibo App

Extract 4.1 is a micropost with a foggy picture, with linguistic description of “This is Beijing”, by Ms Yao. The brief description together with the picture enhances the effect of updating what is happening at that moment, in the eyes of Ms. Yao, through the camera of her iPhone. And revealing her

location publicly, also is a way of presenting her lifestyle as an aspect of her identity.

In response to her post, Extract 4.1a is some of her Weibo Followers' comments:

Extract 4.1a

RWW: 北京天气很牛掰滴 一般人扛不住

HSTN: 啥时候变成雾都了~

HCZM: 看出来。。。。

RYXXX: 祖国的心脏 13 亿人口向往的地方

Fantasy: 不, 这里是雾都伦敦

YWWWW V: 中国首都.- -

Translation of Extract 4.1.1 Selected Comments of Extract 4.1

Rugby_weiwei : The weather of Beijing is great, that ordinary people could not carry

Back to childhood: When it became the capital of Fog

Hongchen zhangmu: Yeah, I can see that....

Luoying xixixi ; The heart of motherland, the place 1.3 billion people yearn

Fantasyis: No, this is capital of fog London

Yiwawakaka (V) : Capital of China

Feb.2nd, 2013, 11:25

The original post was online by Ms Yao on January 31st of 2013, and the most recent comment was July of 2013. This can demonstrate the necessity of making microposts visible and keeping ranking top in the Weibo home

page. Once a post receives comment, it will be kept on the top of the Weibo Home Website.

This phenomenon could be explained as the result of attention economy, which underpins the process of updating posts in Sina Weibo with functionality of portable networked smartphones, taking photos or videos to share with followers, making it more visible to all Weibo users, rather than use of only words in posts. In order to invite responses, making the microposts more visible among the “post ocean” is the very first step. Once a post is discovered by followers, the chain reaction generates responses, and huge response rates will be detected by the Sina Weibo system, causing the post to be listed on the homepage of the whole Sina System, in the column of “what everybody is talking about” (快看大家都在看些什麼?) and Ranking list of Hot Search. Thus, the promotional goal is achieved. The discourse of microposts has become a form of “searchable talk” (Zappavigna, 2011) exploited as a resource by corporate marketing. For celebrities, this is a way of self-branding, making themselves within the eyesight among all Weibo users. In this process, self-branding and micro-celebrity are forms of labor undertaken by celebrities in order to achieve visibility in the huge marketplace of Sina Weibo, the most popular one in the Chinese Web world.

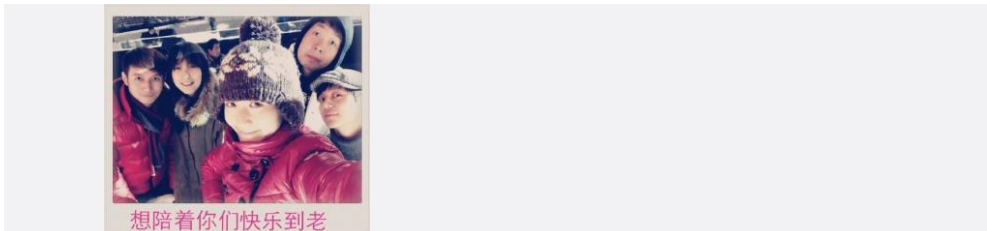
It is worth noticing the intensive use of emoticons in the tweets, which accounts for 93.13% in database. As discussed in previous section, the access behavior via Mobile devices by celebrities, is one of the important factors leading to intensive use of emoticons. Emoticons are the symbols of human

emotions by presenting human facial expressions, and also representing other life situations, and can be input by mobile handy devices. Extract 4.2, showing examples of emoticons presenting human emotions of “love” as a heart, “happy” as a sun, and family love using a face with tears. and 4.3, illustrating life situation. Extract 4.3 is an example of emoticons, representing life situation of birthday wishes with an emoticon of birthday cake with candles.

Extract 4.2

DATA20121231/ Ms. Xie

快乐家族跨年晚会彩排中，感叹时间过得好快，我们在一起八年了，忘了从什么时候开始，从搭档变成了家人，就想这样一直在一起❤️。给大家快乐，和大家一起快乐成长是我们最最幸福的事🌞！谢谢你们的支持和爱，你们都是快乐家族👨👩👧👦



贊(22068)/ 轉發(14987)/ 收藏/ 評論(3551)

2012-12-31 14:45 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.2

DATA20121231/ Ms. Xie

Rehearsing the Cross New Year Gala show, how time flies, the Happy Family has been together for 8 years, we could not remember clearly from when we became family from working partners, I wanna stay together with us like this forever❤️. Sharing happiness and growing together is the

happiest thing in the world 🌞! Thank you for your support and love, you are
Happy Family 😊 (Group photo attached)

Like (22068)/ Retweet (14987)/Archive/ Comments (3551)

At 14:45 Dec.31st, 2012 from iPhone App

Extract 4.3

DATA 20120922/Mr. Wang

27 歲 生 日 快 樂 我 的 超 級 六 顆 星 助
手 🍰 @wozaixue_hanyupinyin 🍰! 謝謝你每天陪我一起工作，一起生
活，一起 火力全開!! 希望你 每天都笑得這麼開心!!!

贊(5582)/ 轉發(10416)/ 收藏/ 評論(341)

2012-09-22 05:17 來自微博 Weibo.com

Translation of Extract 4.3

DATA 20120922/Mr. Wang

27 years, Happy birthday, to my super six-star personal assistant 🍰
@wozaixue_hanyupinyin 🍰! Thank you for accompanying me every day,
working together, live together, and full of power together!! Hope you smile
happily like this every day!!!

Like (4783)/ Retweet (7830)/Archive/ Comments(12274)

At 02:19 Mar.27th, 2013, from Sina Weibo

In Computer-mediated Discourse, where the participants are absent, emoticons serve as non-verbal gestures, facial expression in Face-to-Face interaction, helping to enrich the information conveyed in tweets and enhancing the sentiment, which can be perceived by other CMD users easily. In Extract 4.2, through the use of Heart shape emoticons, Ms.Xie expressed

her feeling friendship as family bonding with her working partners, and her gratefulness of having a great working team, rather than just using words. And from the “sun” emoticon, Ms.Xie shared her happy moods of staying with her working colleagues. In Extract 4.3, Mr. Wang used two emoticons of birthday cakes with candles, to send his birthday wishes to his assistant.

Research carried out by Yamamoto, Kumamoto, and Nadamoto (2014) compared the sentiment with sentence and sentiment with combination use of sentence and emoticons, also suggested that “the emoticons alter sentiment of the tweets by enhancing or softening their original sentiment” (p.108). Also, Yamamoto et al (2014) categorized the emoticons representing human emotions of joy, liking, relief, sorrow, dislike, fear, anger, shame, excitement, and surprise. The celebrities use emoticons in their tweets, enhance the effects of conveying messages and sharing their moods with readers.

However, Yamamoto et al(2014) emoticon-based sentiment analysis framework of ten categories of emoticons in Twitter was found too broad-brush to categorize the exclusive emoticons in Weibo. As the development of Weibo, the emoticons embedded in Weibo system currently not only have the initial smileys illustrating human Facial expressions, and hand Gestures👉👌👍👎👊👏👉, Love/heart symbols💕💔, but also smileys of animals with facial expressions and gestures, such as 🐼🐼🐼🐼🐼,etc, the cartoon characters, such as Minions series 🍌🍌🍌🍌, Doraemon series 🐱🐱🐱🐱🐱, Hero Series in Movies 🦹🦹🦹🦹🦹.

Some of smileys, directly illustrate the life situation, 🤢🤔 showing sickness; some of emoticons exaggerates the body movements, but very vivid describe the attitude, 🤢🤔 can be used to show “not acceptable”, 🤖🤔 could be used to show “embarrassment, surprise and shock” with different intension levels of mood; ❤️🤔🤔 are used to show “Oh my god. How come? I don’t want to end up like this”, while 🤔 show the user is driving mad. 🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔 is a new series of stickers in Weibo, combining the human facial expressions and also body gestures. 🤔 depicts hiding behind the wall, but still want to see what is going on. 🤔 is to show the situation when the followers saw their favorite idols standing in front of them.

In addition, some of the emoticons showing “disagree” 🤔👉, negative emotions such as “arrogant” 🤔🤔, ridicule 🤔🤔 or even “aggressive” punishment moves 🤔🤔, can be used among very close friends as a kind of informal and casual daily conversation.

Last but not least, the heat Chinese Characters and new Chinese expressions arise from social media age 赞 (as “like” or “Thumb -up”) 互赞 (reciprocal following each other), 🤔 is developed from the Chinese saying “I am watching silently as an audience of eating watermelon” (我就靜靜看著不說話，吃瓜觀眾一枚).

In addition to use of emoticons to enhance or soften their tones of expression, exclamation marks (83.97% shown in Table 4.3) and question marks (17.07% shown in Table 4.3) are also used in tweets. The authors often put more emphasis on their statements to convince their followers, or express their strong personal feelings. Examples are listed in Extract 4.4.

Extract 4.4

DATA 20120823/Mr. Chen

中间的那位是我们去年行走西藏的大学生志愿者蔡涛（北京体育大学研究生），今年他成为了我们志愿者们的领队！对于“行走的力量”团队来说，这意味着承上启下，也意味着行走不息！（行者日记 4）



贊 293/ 評論 • 1473/轉發 • 1281/ 收藏

2012-8-23 09:35 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.4

DATA 20120823/Mr. Chen

The people in the middle [of the picture] is volunteer to Tibet, Cai Tao, who is a graduate student from Beijing Sports University last year. This year, he joined our program again, can become the leader of our volunteer team! For the team of “Power to Go”, this is meaningful, this is smooth transition to pass generation by generation and keep walking! (Walker Dairy 4)

Like (1004) /Archive/ Retweet (6799) /Comment (5338)

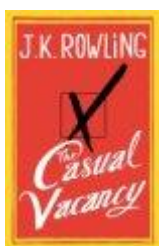
Aug, 23rd, 2013, 09:35 From iPhone Weibo App

Mr. Chen is the initiator of the charity campaign “Power to Go”, aiming to raise public awareness through hiking and walking to remote natural areas for meditation and gratefulness for their present lives. In Extract 4.4, every sentence ended with an exclamation mark. The excitement and affirmative attitude of Mr. Chen is delivered to public users.

Extract 4.5

DATA20121023/Mr. Wang

作家 J·K·罗琳，花了 10 年寫 7 本哈利波特 書... 之後寫什麼？ 很難想像吧！？
新書上架了：《偶发空缺》



收藏/轉發 8990/評論 10877/贊 452

2012-10-23 03:06 來自 微博 weibo.com

Translation of Extract 4.5

DATA20121023/Mr. Wang

The Writer J · K Rowling, spent 10 years to write 7 Harry Potter books ...
after what to write? Hard to imagine?! New books on the shelves:
"occasional vacancies"
(photo attached)

Archive/ Retweet (8990) /Comment (10877) /Like (452)

Oct 23rd, 2012, 03:06 From Weibo.com

Extract 4.5 is an example of combination use of question mark and exclamation by Mr. Wang, who tried to have a personal talk to the public by

first rising a question and then answering by himself by providing a piece of information. This kind of combination of using question mark and exclamation account for 11.43% (shown in Table 4.3) of the whole post dataset, showing the authors' stance, attracting readers' attention.

4.2.2.3 Theme of “Broadcast” Content in Tweets

Tweets are the major area of the discursive practice of celebrity users, at the same time, the main body of our study. The main body of the dataset is the content of retrieved posts, which are categorized by the theme of information provided by the post. From the theme and the content those celebrity users update in their Sina Weibo wall, an analysis of multiple identities they have been trying to construct was conducted. In daily lives (offline environment), those celebrities have been well known for who they are, what they do and what they are good at. In the Weibo tweets, celebrities present themselves as professional, caring, knowledgeable, but also easy-going and follower-friendly, from the information and content of the tweets they posted. The collectively identities of those celebrities are not only reflected through linguistic forms

The analysis included all the tweets retrieved from the six celebrity accounts in the timespan of June 2012 to June 2013. Two coders examined posts, and coded the type of the posts according to the following coding scheme of theme in tweets (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 *Broadcast Theme of Content Categories of Tweets*

Coding Categories	Theme of posts	Definition	Illustration of Tweets
IN	Information-oriented	Posts that provide information about news and events	Happy birthday to 94 year old Nelson Mandela, who is the outstanding Humanitarianism leader changing the world. (改變世界的領導，感動人類的人道主義者 Nelson Mandela (纳尔逊·曼德拉) 纳尔逊·曼德拉 祝您 94 歲生日快樂! 🎂)
OP	Opinion-related	Post that comment on social issues and news, expressing personal opinions	Following and retweeting is an attitude, no matter you have child or not. (不管你有没有孩子，关注与转发是一种态度)
AC	Action-related	Post that Call for proposals or actions on certain issues	I require a sincere apology ASAP. (我要求一份诚意的道歉尽快到来。)
PR	Private life-related	Describing user's mindset, private emotional feelings sharing, private life sharing	Tonight, my buddy @Li Yundi is visiting my house, and his skill of playing piano is so impressive! 🤩 welcome to Taipei, and wish your piano concert tomorrow a big success!! 🎵 (今晚好歌门儿 @李云迪 YUNDI 来家里玩，把我的钢琴弹到我目瞪口呆! 🤩 欢迎来台北，也预祝明晚演奏会大成功!! 🎵)
OT	Miscellaneous	Other contents (miscellaneous, banter, etc.)	We have to admit the seven facts: 1. You cannot put soap water in your eyes. 2. You cannot count how many hair you have. 3. You cannot breathe with your nose when your tongue is out. 4. You are doing the third one. 5. When you do the third, you think it is possible, but you will look like a dog having tongue out. 6. You are laughing now because this is a prank on you. 7. Share this in

Coding Categories	Theme of posts	Definition	Illustration of Tweets
			<p>Weibo, you can take “revenge” on others.</p> <p>(世界上不得不承认的七个事实：1. 你不可以将肥皂水放在你的眼睛里。2.你数不了你有多少头发。3.当你舌头伸出来的时候你不能用鼻子呼吸。4.你正在做第三条。5.当你在做第三条的时候，其实你觉得是可行的，但是你看起来会像条小狗一样。6.你現在在笑，因为我把你整了。7.分享出去，你就可以整别人报仇了。)</p>

First, the theme of 500 pilot posts were coded, and the results analysis compared for both coders to see the intercoder agreement in the dataset. Then, two coders discussed and resolved the conflicts, revised the scheme, and continued to code the remaining posts. Then all tweets has been categorized into five types, according to the themes and topics of the micropost: information-related(IN), opinion-related(OP), action-related(AC), private life-related(PR), and others(OT).

IN stands for the Information-related posts in which the celebrity users included both news and firsthand or secondhand reports. Extract 4.6, the post of Mr. Wang, is a good illustration of information-provided post, which shares information of “what happened today in history”.

Extract 4.6 Example of Information-related post

DATA20120427/Mr. Wang

今天幾位美國科學家和富商包括谷歌老闆 Larry Page 和前幾天剛來北京的 James Cameron 喀麥隆導演宣佈了很可能是未來人類最重要的工業之一，就是一家小行星採礦公司叫做 Planetary Resources (行星資源公司). 原來地球附近有 9, 000 個小行星，其中 1, 500 比月球還容易到達. 請看影片！<http://t.cn/zOjxq9G>



贊(35) / 轉發 (6502) / 收藏/ 評論 (11106)

2012-4-27 01:16 來自新浪微博

Translation of Extract 4.6

DATA20120427/Mr. Wang

Today, several American scientists and some of the wealthy, including Google boss Larry Page and the Cameroon director James Cameron, who arrived in Beijing a few days ago, announced an asteroid mining company called Planetary Resources (Planetary Resources company may be one of the most promising human industries in the future. There are 9, 000 asteroids near Earth, 1,500 of which are much easier to reach than the moon. Please watch the Video through <http://t.cn/zOjxq9G>)

Like (35) / Retweet (6502) / Archive/ Comment (11106)

Apr. 27th, 2012, 01:16 From Weibo.com

The IN posts serves like reports of the new information, both first hand and second hand. With affordance to provide the hyperlink of outside resources, some of the IN posts provide the resources of websites or videos to the users. Through IN posts, the celebrities shared the information they considered to be informative and useful to public, presenting that they are always willing to learn and explore new things not only in their career fields, but also other fields in the world.

The second type, Opinion-related posts (OP) refers to those posts, in which the celebrities' comments or opinions are expressed regarding certain social issues (see Extract 4.7 and example 4.8).

Extract 4.7 Example of Opinion-related post

DATA20120605/Mr. Wang

人要尊重歷史, 但同時也要往前看. 就像開車, 駕駛員如果只盯照後鏡怎麼開? 但不留意開過的路也不行. 最好是看清過去, 珍惜現在, 放眼未來.

贊 (92) / 轉發 (8410) / 收藏 / 評論 (17020)

2012-6-5 01:16 來自新浪微博

Translation of Extract 4.7

DATA20120605/Mr. Wang

People should respect history, but we should also look into the future, just like driving vehicles. How can you drive if you only look at the “side mirrors” ?

Yet also it is not OK to ignore the road you have already passed. It would be better to learn from the past, cherish the present, and look forward to the future.

Like (92) / Retweet (8410) / Archive/ Comment (17020) /

June 5th , 2012, 01:16 From Weibo.com

This kind of OP post is narrative of author's own feeling, like a personal diary. Extract 4.8 is another example of OP post, which serves as the "Chicksoup of soul", sharing life wisdom.

Extract 4.8

DATA20130511 /Mr Chen

君子的友誼，要有各自的觀點，即使觀點不同也要在內心尊重對方的思想，要在對方危險時仗義出手，要有距離，不要勉強對方，不要消費關係，不要把君子的情懷 消費在庸俗的談論裡。君子，不僅僅指有文化，更指的是內心的善惡原則！

贊(2841) / 轉發 (10476) / 收藏/ 評論 (9704)

2013 年 5 月 11 日 10:23 來自 iPad 客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.8

DATA20130511 /Mr Chen

The so-called Gentleman friendship, is mutual respect even if different parties have their own views, to help each other in need, to have certain distance, do

not force the other side, not consumption, and not to the gentleman in the vulgar feelings consumption talk inside. Gentleman, not only refers to culture, but refers to a principle of good and evil hearts!

Like(2841) | Retweet (10476)/Archive/ Comment (9704)

at 10:23 on May 11th, 2013 from iPad App

The third Category PR are those posts which are more personal-related, or private -related. The posts describe the mindset of the user, showing what he/she is thinking, what is happening to him/her, in real time; or the posts can provide insights into the mental or physical state of the user, how he/she is feeling now. Under this definition, the category PR serves as the self-reporting diary, the personal emotional feelings, and thoughts about life. Extract 4.9 is a post from Ms Xie, which serves as an example of self-reporting diary.

Extract 4.9

DATA20120610 /Ms.Xie

晚餐时间到啦，送两张美食图，第一张看起来样子一般，吃起来好吃啊：炸海鲜熔岩石 🍗 第二张：焗烤芝士海鲜蘑菇 🍗 @MSSugar 蜜斯蜜糖



(6477) / 轉發 (4922) / 收藏/ 評論 (5382)

2012年6月10日 18:16 來自 iPhone 客户端

Translation of Extract 4.9

DATA20120610 /Ms.Xie

Dinner time! Send you two pictures of yummy foods, the first one looks like common food, but really delicious : fried seafood lava stone, the Second one is Baked Mushroom with Cheese and Seafood [@MSSugar 蜜斯蜜糖](#)

(two photos attached)

Like (6477) /Retweet (4922) /Archive/ Comment (5382)

at 18:16 on June 10 from the iPhone App

Personal Related posts with Self-reporting diary style, are always attached with the photos and selfies especially for female users. Taking photos or videos is easier for smartphone Sina Application. Extract 4.10 is an example of emotional feelings from male user Mr. Wong's Sina Weibo account. To a great extent, this type of Personal Related posts dominates Celebrity updates in Sina Weibo (43%). Not only female celebrity users, but also male users also share their personal private lives, family dinners, friends gatherings via updates. In Extract 4.10, Mr Wang shared the photo of his family dinner and showed his gratitude to his parents publicly.

Extract 4.10

DATA20120618/Mr. Wang

今晚請了媽媽吃飯： 有機，健康的火鍋！我好開心看見她吃得比我還多，而且一直說“好好吃！”我今天就在想，我多麼 lucky, 多麼感恩


演唱會時 爸爸媽媽 夫妻兩都 坐在台下默默的支持. 突然覺得, 雖然
我是一個瘋狂的 MUSIC-MAN, 但家庭價值觀還是蠻傳統的. 謝謝爸
爸, 謝謝媽媽. 


圖 (略)

贊 (77) / 轉發 (8833) / 收藏 / 評論 (20077)

2012-6-18 01:57 來自新浪微博

Translation of Extract 4.10

DATA20120618/Mr. Wang

Invited Mummy to have dinner tonight: We had organic, healthy hot pot! I'm
so happy to see her eat more than I do, and kept saying "yummy" while eating.
I was thinking today, how lucky I am! Daddy and Mommy were sitting among
the audience supporting me in my concert. Suddenly feel that though I was a
crazy MUSIC-MAN, but still I have pretty traditional family values. Thank
you, Dad, thank you, Mum! 

Like (77) /Retweet (8833)/Archive/ Comment (20077)

At 01:57 2012-4-18 from Sina Weibo

It is observed that Private-related posts received huge responses from
followers, and it can be explained that people who follow their idols may be
likely to start search information about the celebrities in Internet and found
direct access to those Weibo post written by celebrities, and keep following
the celebrities' updates about their private lives.

Category Four AC posts stands for those action-related posts which call for support, attention, or reposting. This includes general calls to any Weibo users, and followers to take some actions, such as in Extract 4.11:

Extract 4.11

DATA20120620/Ms. YAO

一分钟可以改变一切，一个家庭会因为战争而支离破碎，妻离子散，一生毁于一旦。也只需要一分钟，你可以行动起来，向那些被迫逃离的家庭伸出援手。今天是 6 月 20 日，世界难民日，请用一分钟的时间，给予他们安慰和希望吧。❤️ 详情请见联合国难民署官方网站：
www.unhcr.org.hk



贊 (2106) / 轉發 (6186) / 收藏 / 評論 (2007)

2013-06-20 13:49 來自[新浪微博](#)

Translation of Extract 4.11

DATA20120620/Ms. YAO

One minute can make changes; a family can be destroyed and be separated (in a minute) because of the war. However, it also only takes you ONE minute to lend a helping hand to those victims who lost their home. Today is June 20, World Refugee Day, please take ONE minute to give people comfort and hope. For details, please visit UNHCR official website: www.unhcr.org.hk

Like (2106)) /Retweet (6186)/Archive/ Comment (2007)

at 13:49 on June 20th, 2012 from Sina Weibo

As the official ambassador of UNHCR, Ms Yao posted this information to ask for public attention and take actions to help those refugees, those who lost homes during the war, and also providing the information link of the organization to all public Weibo users. Other celebrities users also published AC posts advocating all users to pay attention to social issues, environmental issues and charity issues.

Action-relation posts can also be more specific to certain detail users, using @ to address the targeted users (Extract 4.12).

Extract 4.12

DATA20130519/Mr. Chen

[#关注尘肺 为爱自拍#](#)【我们只用一只眼看世界，是因为另一只眼被繁华所蒙蔽，唯有了解真相，才有关心和行动，尘肺救助便如此】让我们同处一片天空下 莫为偏见和歧视而在尘埃中躲藏 关注农民工 关注尘肺 为爱自拍。 [@王克勤](#) [@大爱清尘](#)



贊 (1761) / 轉發 (3565) / 收藏 / 評論 (1708)

2013年5月19日 16:20 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.12

DATA20130519/Mr. Chen

Attention needed# We observe the world with only one eye, because the other eye was covered and become blinded by prosperity. We know the truth, only with our concern and action, and the aid of Dusty Lungs. Under the same sky, let's rescue and concern about the dusty working environment of those migrant workers without prejudice and discrimination. Selfie and show your love and care. @Wang Keqing @ Daaiqingchen

Like (1761) /Retweet (3565)/ Archive/ Comment (1708)

at 16:20 on May 19th, 2013 from the iPhone App

The last category OT refers to Other posts that not belong to the above four categories, such as culture-specific humor, photos without content and ‘meaningless murmuring’. Extract 4.13 is an example of murmuring from Ms Yao’s account. Yao wrote the post when she was pregnant, she gained weight and her body became fatter than it used to be, with an attached visual metaphor picture of an owl. The post could easily be understood if the readers knew the situation of Yao at that time. Example:

Extract 4.13

DATA 20130508/Ms Yao

谁说圆形身材就不能够飞翔！✈




贊 (2524) / 轉發 (6604) / 收藏/ 評論 (2683)

2013 年 5 月 8 日 10:37 来自 iPhone 客户端

Translation of Extract 4.13


DATA 20130508/Ms Yao

Who said if you have a round and fat body, you cannot fly!  [look at the owl..]

(photo attached)


Like(2524) /Retweet (6604)/ Archive/ Comments (2683)

at 10:37 on May 8th, 2013 from the iPhone App

Also some culture specific humor found in the celebrity posts. Extract 4.14 is an example of a joke about the flower chrysanthemum, which is considered to be inappropriate to appear in public place, because it is a metaphor related to human anus in Chinese culture. Ms Yao also used the Weibo-exclusive emoticons  to show “ laugh loudly”, enhancing the humor.

Extract 4.14

DATA20120825/ Ms. YAO

刚才说：菊花烂漫，有博友鄙视：大姚，你木有节操。矮马，嫩想啥呢？菊花，是中国十大名花之一，在中国有三千多年的栽培历史。古神话传说中，菊花被赋予了吉祥、长寿的含义。有清静、高洁、我爱你、真情、令人怀恋、品格高尚的意思。啧啧，你看看，多正经的菊花啊！



贊 (935) / 轉發 (2872) / 收藏 / 評論 (2887)

2012- 08-25 14:38 來自 微博 weibo.com

Translation of Extract 4.14

DATA20120825/ Ms. YAO

Some of the Weibo friends responded to my compliment to the flower of chrysanthemum. OMG! What are you thinking of my words? Chrysanthemum, is one of China's top ten flowers, which has three thousand years of cultivation history in China. According to ancient mythology legend, chrysanthemum was given a meaning of good luck and longer life. It can be interpreted as clean, noble, I love you, sincerity, nostalgic, noble character, etc.. Gee, you see, not as the way you think! 🤔

Like(935) /Retweet (2872)/ Archive/ Comments (2887)

at 14:38 on Aug., 25th, 2012 from weibo.com

Some of the posts are found just like murmuring of the celebrity, who tells what he or she is experiencing, thinking and acting, with obscure purpose, neither calling actions nor sharing information (Extract 4.14), or obscure to understand (Extract 4.15) even with photo attached. Some of the posts are just photo or selfies of the celebrity Weibo Users (Extract 4.16). This kind of updates, on the other hand, showed the celebrities are users who post the

updates like ordinary people do, with an expectation of triggering followers emotional responses and attachment to celebrity.

Extract 4.14

DATA20130520/ Ms. ZHAO

我是被盗号了嘛？一些不是我发和评论的东西出现🤖！长微博是怎么发的阿？🤖

贊 (2464) / 轉發 (2895) / 收藏/ 評論 (2724)

2013 年 5 月 20 日 17:17 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.14

DATA20130520/ Ms. ZHAO

Is my Weibo account being hacked? Some posts and comments are not posted by me🤖! How to post longer microblogs? 🤖

Like(2464) /Retweet (2895)/ Archive/ Comments (2724)

at 17:17 on May 20th, 2013 from iPhone App

Extract 4.15

DATA20130221/ Mr. Chen

"生活"想找人开个玩笑。对面来了一个少年和一位老者，生活冲上去抱了一下少年，少年懵了一下，发现是生活，顺势躺在地上，眼一闭，无奈自语：妈的，生活强奸了我。生活觉得没趣，扑向老者，老者微微一笑，也往地上一躺，用手召唤生活说：快来，陪我躺会儿，要是让老子高兴了就不打你屁股了！（坤书）



贊 (656) / 轉發 (3239) / 收藏 / 評論 (1167)

2013 年 2 月 21 日 15:53 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.15

DATA20130221/ Mr. Chen

"Life" wanna look for someone to make a joke with him. Here come a teenager and an old man, "Life" first rushed and hold the teenager. The teenager was first shocked, then lay down on the ground with eyes closing, and felt that "Damn it, Life raped me". "Life" felt frustrated about teenager's response, then towards the old man. The old man also lay on the ground, but with smile, and waved to life and said "Come, and accompany me a while! If I am not happy and satisfied I will kick your ass". (Written by Kun)

Like(656) /Retweet (3239)/ Archive/ Comments (1167)

at 15:53 on Feb.21st, 2013 from iPhone App

Literally, the meaning of this personal diary is obscure, and has nothing to do with the old photo which showed a bit yellow. It is difficult to understand it without conceptualizing the context and the private experience of the author. This kind of obscure information in the post has been coded as “Others”. It is this kind of personal diary that makes the updates from the celebrity users read like a real person, close to readers, who would like to share their emotional feelings inside.

Extract 4.16

DATA20130321 /Ms Zhao

分享图片 (圖略)

贊 (3484) / 轉發 (5096) / 收藏/ 評論 (6202)

2013-3-21 21:46 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.16

DATA20130321 /Ms Zhao

Sharing of photo

(personal photo attached)

Like(3484) /Retweet (5096)/ Archive/ Comments (6202)

at 21:46 on Mar.21st, 2013 from iPhone App

Based on the operational definitions of coding, Table 4.5 shows the result of identifying all posts.

Table 4.5. *Five Category Distribution of Posts*

Type	Original Tweets dataset	Percentage	Retweets dataset	Percentage
IN	83	11%	111	48%
OP	294	39%	33	14%
AC	30	4%	53	23%
PR	324	43%	21	9%
OT	23	3%	14	6%
Total	754	100%	232	100%

Among the original tweet dataset, in which the celebrity users are the first author of the updates, Personal-related updates occupy the majority of the original tweets, accounting for 43% of the whole dataset, sharing about the personal life with public or followers, followed by Opinion-related updates sharing about the explicit personal ideas (39%).

Although Weibo is primarily used for promotion purpose for celebrities, from the dataset, celebrities use their personal Weibo accounts to communicate with their friends, their circles, and their followers. The “pure” promotion purpose is now currently run by the Official Promotion team of those celebrities. Among the six selected celebrities, Official Promotion Studio of celebrities have their own Verified accounts, except Mr. He and Ms. Xie. However, the numbers of followers and responses from followers of thoses celebrity official promotion account, are much less compared to celebrity own personal Weibo accounts, example will be shown in Extract 4.19. It is beyond the present study to compare the theme of content of

tweets from Official Promotion account and celebrities' own account, more inner thoughts and personal photos and stories are posted in celebrities' personal accounts, making followers more likely to keep following.

In this sense, for celebrities, their personal Weibo account are served as “pseudo back-stage” of getting close and reach to their fans, giving the public the sight of their private lives, which celebrities can have full control of what content to present to public, and full decision of design how to release those “back-stage” life and when to publish it to public. For people with related interest to those celebrities, Weibo is like an area where they have the perception of quick and direct access to their idols, without the propaganda of paparazzi or media, like the excitement of audiences being able to have a glimpse of what happen at “back stage”: the private life behind the screen of the idols.

Information-related updates also frequently appeared (11%) in the original tweet dataset. In comparison, among the dataset of Retweets, Information-related posts dominate the dataset (48%), due to the nature of retweet, and followed by Action-related updates (23%). This could be elaborated as the purpose of retweet is first to share the information to let more Weibo users know about the information. Based on the information shared, the celebrity may add their calls to followers to take actions to support or retweet to share to more users, with their opinions provided in the retweets (14%).

4.3 Celebrities as broadcasters of their multi-faceted personal identity

When the Internet became popular in the late 1990s, people used the Internet to explore more content and information, they read news and information, they watched videos, and they bought products and services via the Internet, etc. Traditional media (i. e. televisions, radios and newspapers) still function as “gatekeepers” due to their “strict” selection of the resources and content of information. The Internet and emerging of social media offers the Internet users more freedom to control the resources of information, and also makes it much easier to “follow” their idols just by a click of “follow” of the verified celebrities they like in Sina Weibo. For followers’ aspect, from following the celebrities’ live and real-time updates, they can quickly locate and trace the information they are interested in, and get “closer” to know more about the celebrity idols from “Back stage”. The image of those high-profile celebrities reported by traditional media is more like a performance from the “Front stage”, having more far distance compared to social media.

For celebrity Weibo users, their tweets updated in social media can reveal their private lives, i.e., the private self. Meanwhile, the affordance designed of Sina Weibo makes the “private self” exposing to the wider public world. The broadcasting of the private self to the public world with the selected and delicate editing of content of information released on the platform, is what Weibo users do to present their favorable identity. In this sense, Weibo has

the interwoven mixed affordance of “back stage” platform, however, this back stage can also be accessed by public audiences, therefore, it is not strict “Back stage” as Goffman (1959) defines. “Pseudo-back stage” would be a more appropriate term to define the Weibo platform for celebrity users. Marshall (2010:44-45) suggests three ways of looking at online production of the public version of the private self, namely, the public self, the public private self, the transgressive intimate self.

The public selves of the celebrities have been released on their profile page of Sina Weibo where all public Weibo users can access. The persona on the page gives brief information about their basic information such as career, gender to current followers and potential followers, i.e. Weibo users.

The most important level, the public private self, is the focus of the study, through analysis of their update tweets. In the tweets, celebrity Weibo users make advantage of “pseudo-back stage” platform to be the “paparazzi” of themselves, choose the preferential aspect of self to broadcast to “Front Stage” to wider public world of the “public self” and “public private self” and even the “transgressive intimate self”, which may have appeared among close friends about the temporary emotions, such as grief-stricken. Thus, a term “sensualist” by Gobe(2009) is adopted in the categorization to describe the Weibo practice of using hedonism, glamour, fame and individual expressions by celebrity Weibo users, which seeks toward the individual(followers) seeking immediate, sensual rewards(emotional connections with their celebrity idols).

In our attempt to discern the personal identities the celebrity Weibo users broadcast, three level of examining the self-presentation were adapted through a categorization scheme in Table 4.6. The multi-facet identities the celebrities constructed in Sina Weibo can be summarized as: an expert of competence in his/her field, a responsible social citizen, a reliable friend with love, care and support, and a sensualist.

Table 4.6 Coding schemes and result of multi-facets of personal identities of celebrity

Category	Identities “ broadcast ” by celebrities	Operational definition of coding
The public self	A expert of competence	Celebrities present tweets and updates concerning significant professional events or activities participated, achievements and recognition received, and continuous efforts made to gain higher level of success.
	A responsible social citizen	Celebrities present tweets and updates expressing concerns or demonstrating actions for social issues, which shows them as a responsible citizen, with noble character and sense of justice.
The public private self	A reliable friend with love and care	Celebrities present tweets and/or updates in which they accompany a friend to do sth, be a good listener to the followers, share life wisdom or healthy tips, and/or send encouragement, demonstrating love, care and support to their friends or followers.
Transgressive intimate self	A sensualist	Celebrities post tweets full of daily life moments, particularly private life and emotional ties with family and closed friends, demonstrating humor and sensualist appeals.

Through presenting the three level of multi-faceted personal identities in Sina Weibo, celebrity users try to construct an idealized image to gain followers and audiences by frequent updates of tweets, delicate editing and selecting what content to expose to public in the “self-content generated” wall.

Features of the default settings of Weibo system facilitate the management of an idealized self, which makes possible the primary goal of self and performance, and acceptance of performed identity by readers. Users can have control over the publicity of their information and posts, via setting the “privacy”, to “public”, “Friends”, “only me”, or “customized settings”. The content of self-disclosure information are framed by the celebrity’s conception of audience. If in the personal wall, the tweets/posts are set to be visible to “public”, Schmidt (2011:165) states that “as the tweets are open to public, the celebrity users never know exactly who will read their posts, but they nevertheless have certain assumptions of their readership”. And Scott (2015) confirmed that weblogs are a popular way to tap millions of consumers for marketing purposes, or to tell the world about one’s area of expertise. For the level of public self, all of the six selected celebrity users show in the profile page clear information about their career as a singer, TV host/hostess, actor/actress or director.

To enhance the public image conceptualized by audience and followers, celebrity Weibo users post updates about their job moments, the events they have been invited to and joined, the continuous efforts they have made to improve themselves in their area of expertise, and the achievement they have made, the public recognition they have received, and their knowledges about

their field to construct identity as “an expert of competence”. Examples of constructing identity as “an expert of competence” could be found in Extract 4.17 to 4.18. As shown in Table 4.7, 17.58% of the update posts are related to building the identity of “expert of competence”.

Extract 4.17

DATA 20130612 /Mr. WANG

帶 chinked-out 到全世界！HTC 的廣告登上紐約時代廣場了！



贊(26872)/ 轉發(10254)/ 收藏/ 評論(11028)

2012-12-6 00:34 來自微博 weibo.com

Translation of Extract 4.17

DATA 20130612 /Mr. WANG

[I] Brought the “chinked-out” style to the whole world! The commercial of HTC is here in New York Times Square!

Like(26872) /Retweet (10254)/ Archive/ Comments (11028)
at 00:34 on Dec.6th, 2012 from weibo.com

Extract 4.18

DATA 20130121 /Mr. WANG

在剪接室裡一坐下就不知不覺連續 12 個小時了... 真的好誇張！關機了，電腦都累了。

贊(2898)/ 轉發(14641)/ 收藏/ 評論(16892)

2013-1-21 03:18 來自微博 weibo.com

Translation of Extract 4.18

DATA 20130121 /Mr. WANG

Haven't realized that I have been continuously working in the music editing studio for 12 hours... So exaggerating! (have to) power off, the computer is also exhausted.

Like(2898) /Retweet (14641)/ Archive/ Comments (16892)

at 03:18 on Jan.21st, 2013 from weibo.com

Mr. Wang is famous for his self-created music style “chinked-out”, with integration of his own Chinese-American background. The “Chinked-out” music has a combination of African-American music and Chinese elements. In Extract 4.17, Mr. Wang attached a photo to show the successful spread of his composed music on air in New York Times Square big screen. The huge amount of response, with 26872 likes, 10254 retweets and 11028 comments from the followers supporting and congratulating him about this achievement. Apart from just announcing the achievement, Mr. Wang also updates about his overtime overnight hard working on his music career till early morning 3:18am, showing his professionalism in his expertise field, an example shown

in Extract 4.18, also triggered huge response of over 10,000 retweets and comments.

As a high-profile celebrity, the positive public image not only comes from the professionalism in the celebrity's field and career, but also comes from the awareness as a responsible social citizen as a celebrity. Another favorable public personal identity those celebrities construct is "a responsibly social citizen". Extracts 4.19- 4.21 can illustrate the concerns or calls for public actions for some social issues, which shows the celebrity as responsible citizen, with noble character and sense of justice. This facet of responsible social citizen personal identity is manifested by 20.29% of the posts shown in Table 4.7.

Extract 4.19

DATA20130620/Ms Yao

耶！谢谢难民署对过去三年的认可！以后带小土豆一起去探访难民！🤗



[@华谊姚晨工作室](#)

今天是世界难民日，联合国难民署总部发来消息，感谢@姚晨 为提高公众对难民问题的认识所做出的努力，鉴于她在过去三年中持之以恒的工作态度，对难民发自内心的真诚关怀，和她杰出的人道主义精神，以及对推动难民事业做出的努力和贡献，正式升任姚晨为联合国难民署中国亲善大使！！<http://t.cn/zH1a9pB>

贊(228)| 轉發(2052)|收藏| 評論(228) 2013-6-20 10:15 來自新浪微博

贊(1843)/ 轉發(1860)/ 收藏/評論(1614) 2013-6-20 10:26 來自 iPhone
客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.19
DATA20130620/Ms Yao

Yay! Thank you for UNHCR's recognition (of my ambassador job) the past
three years! I will visit those refugees with “little potato”!

@Huayi Ms Yao official studio:

Today is the World Refugee Day. Headquarter of UNHCR sent a
message to thank Ms Yao for her efforts to raise public awareness of the
refugee problem. Given her sincere attitude for the past three years, her
care and her outstanding humanitarian spirit, as well as her efforts and
contributions to promotion of awareness to the refugees, the United
Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) officially assign Ms
Yao as the promotion Ambassador of Refugees. Details go to link: The
Http: t.cn/zH1a9Pb

Like(228) /Retweet (2052)/ Archive/ Comments (228)
at 10:15 on June 20th, 2013 from weibo.com

Like(1843) /Retweet (1860)/ Archive/ Comments (1614)
at 10:26 on June 20th, 2013 from iPhone Weibo App

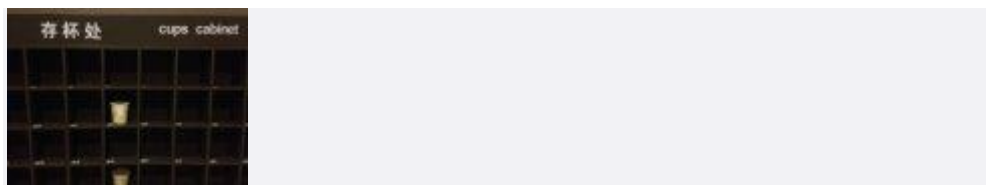
Extract 4.19 is a retweet of Ms.Yao’s official promotion studio by Ms Yao,
which reported Ms Yao’s identity as the official promotion Ambassador of

Refugees by UNHCR. Ms Yao retweeted the report and “made a promise” to bring her son “Little Potato” to visit the Refugees. It is interesting that the amount of response to Ms Yao’s updates are much more than the response to Ms. Yao’s official promotion studio. The number of “Likes” and “Comments” to Ms. Yao’s post is nearly 8 times to one to Yao’s official promotion studio. It may be explained by the numbers of followers of Ms. Yao being much higher than that of Yao’s official promotion studio. Followers are likely to prefer to directly “follow” their idol Ms. Yao about her updates.

Extract 4.20

DATA20120630/ Mr. He

你也一定见过一次性纸杯喝一次甚至喝一口就满地扔的不环保情景，这个设置可以减少浪费，赞一个！不过如果大家都带随身杯，少用一次性产品，就更好了。



贊(41)/ 轉發(2214)/ 收藏/評論(1538)

2013-6-30 17:00 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.20


DATA20130630/Mr. He

You must have seen a scene of full floor of used disposed paper drinking cups. The settings in the photo can reduce the waste, must “like” it! But if we all carry our own drinking cup, use less with the disposal cups, that would be even better. (photo of a cupboard for disposable cups)

Like(41) /Retweet (2214)/ Archive/ Comments (1538)
at 17:00 on June 30th, 2013 from iPhone Weibo App

Extract 4.21

DATA 20130122/Mr. Wang

香港 40%的垃圾是廚餘，也估計所有香港 填埋場 2018 會全滿. 提醒大家，不要浪費食物，儘量點剛剛好的份量，或吃不下的也可以帶回家再吃！



[贊\(3687\)](#)/ [轉發\(11896\)](#)/ [收藏](#)/ [評論\(14138\)](#)

[2013-1-22 01:39](#) 來自 [微博 weibo.com](#)

Translation of Extract 4.21

DATA 20130122/Mr. Wang

40% of the garbage in Hong Kong is the kitchen waste, it is estimated that all Hong Kong landfill will be full in 2018. So, to remind all of you, do not waste any food, when you order, order the right amount, or can take away the rest to eat later at home!

(photo attached)

Like(3687) /Retweet (11896)/ Archive/ Comments (14138)
at 01:39 on Jan.22nd, 2013 from Weibo.com

Extract 4.20 and 4.21 showed the concern from Mr. He and Mr. Wang towards the resource waste issue and the environment, and calls upon the public's attention and actions towards it. Through this kind of the "Action-relation" posts, the celebrity users try to use their power to influence their followers, at the same time, construct a positive public identity of "a responsible social citizen" role model.

Gobes (2009) identified three stages of emotional branding, namely: Pragmatist, Evangelist, and Sensualist. It is easy to understand Pragmatist approach of branding from the name itself, which indicates branding focus on the pragmatic functions of the promoted product or service; Evangelist emphasize promotion on virtues, positive values (such as justice, equality, concerns for social problems, sensitive to environment, etc), while sensualist branding values more on the individual lifestyle, self-expression, glamour, hedonism. From the selected posts, the celebrity appeal to the followers' emotion of recognition and admiration toward their idol as 'a responsible social citizen' by adopting "evangelist" (Gobes, 2009) approach of emotional branding,. Another example of this evangelist approach in Extract 4.22, Mr. He expressed his devotion and support to his mother country and patriotism, when he saw the flag of China hang in the street of London, constructing a public image of "A role model with patriotism".

Extract 4.22

DATA 20130623/Mr. He

中国！我看到中国！

@MADDMAN

London getting dressed for the Olympics! Look what flag is up! 🤗❤️



贊(46)/ 轉發(3274)/ 收藏/評論(624)

[2012-6-22 23: 44](#) 來自 iPhone 客戶端

贊(63)/ 轉發(2479)/ 收藏/評論(2170)

[2012-6-23 00:04](#) 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.22

DATA 20130623/Mr. He

China! I saw China('s flag)!

@MADDMAN

London getting dressed for the Olympics! Look what flag is up! 🤗



(photo attached)

Like(46) /Retweet (3274)/ Archive/ Comments (624)

at 23:44 on June 22nd, 2013 from iPhone Weibo App

Like(63) /Retweet (2479)/ Archive/ Comments (2170)

at 00:04 on June 23rd, 2013 from iPhone Weibo App

Another important aspect of personal identity that celebrity users try to construct is “a reliable friend with love, care and support”, who accompanies the followers, or certain group of followers, sharing life wisdoms, positive energy, and healthy tips, and always be a good listener, sending their

encouragement, demonstrating their love, care, and support to their followers. The identity of this accompanying friend is projected, covering about 34.72% of the Weibo posts (Table 4.7). By building close interpersonal relationship as friendship is very crucial in social media, which will be further explained in Chapter 5. Extract 4.23 and 4.24 are examples from celebrity users to specific youth groups at school.

Extract 4.23

DATA 20120626/Mr. He

查到分数了? 满意吗? 不管怎样, 其实后来是没有人可以给你的人生打分数的。
假期愉快!

贊(177)/ 轉發(9356)/ 收藏/評論(9270)

2013-6-26 14:21 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.23

DATA 20120626/Mr. He

Knew your final score already? Satisfied? Remember, no matter what, nobody can have the right to grade your life. Have happy holiday!

Like(177) /Retweet (9356)/ Archive/ Comments (9270)

at 14:21 on June 23rd, 2013 from iPhone Weibo App

Extract 4.24

DATA 20121214/ Mr Wang

聽說明天是考四六級英文的日子，有沒有要考試的童鞋啊？語言要多用就會熟悉，平時努力了考試就更要放輕鬆才能發揮，上場前來一口深呼吸，祝童鞋們火力全開、考試順利，我在溫州幫大家加油！

贊(59432)/ 轉發(28389)/ 收藏/ 評論(24489)

2012-12-14 00:08 來自微博 weibo.com

Translation of Extract 4.24

DATA 20121214/ Mr Wang

It is said that tomorrow is the examination day of CET4 and CET6 of English, are there any schoolmates who will attend the exam? The more you use, the better language you have. If you work hard before exam, just relax for the exam. Take a deep breath before the exam. I wish all schoolmates full gear, and good luck in the exam. I am in Wenzhou to cheer for everyone!

Like(59432) /Retweet (28389)/ Archive/ Comments (24489)
at 00:08 on Dec.14th, 2012 from Weibo.com

Extract 4.23 is Mr. He's words to those high school graduates who just got their University Entrance Examination results released, he encouraged those who may not have satisfied result not to lose hope, and have a happy summer holiday. The focus reader group of Extract 4.24 is to those university students who would attend College English Test Band 4 and 6, Mr. Wang showed his concern, sharing his experience of learning language, cheering for those examination candidates, like a friend accompanying them, by using the

playful and cute intimate address “schoolmates”(童鞋、童鞋們) to evoke close interpersonal relationship and emotional attachments with the university Weibo users, who are the major age group of Sina Weibo. The followers also use “Brother Two” to call Mr. Wang, because he is the younger brother in his family. The mutual intimate address forms facilitate the close interpersonal communication between Mr. Wang and his followers. The extremely huge amount of response with more than 59,000 likes towards this post. Some of the comments from the top ranking of followers, showed this kind of strategy of building the personal identity as “a reliable friend with love, care and support” could trigger the emotional attachment from followers (Shown in Extract 4.24a).

Extract 4.24a

Selected Top Comments of DATA 20121214/ Mr Wang

X Y Z: 虽然考场上被虐得很惨，但是看到二哥这几句真诚而又质朴的祝福还是好感动！刚刚去看济南的票，便宜的都卖光了，其他的档次穷学生也买不起，只能在济南眼睁睁的叹一句：我们也也曾经仰望同一片天空！ @王力宏 🙏

WSAJWSMZ: 二哥真是好贴心啊

(name of the followers have been adapted to the initial letters of their nicknames)

Translation of Extract 4.24a

Selected Top Comments of DATA 20121214/ Mr Wang

X Y Z: Although suffered a lot from the exam, felt so touched because of the sincere and simple words by Brother Two! Just checked about the tickets (of his concert), the cheaper ones have been sold out. For poor students like me, could not afford tickets of higher level. So I can only sigh: at least we share the same piece of the sky (here in Jinan) @Mr. Wang.

WSAJWSMZ: So sweet of Brother Two.

Last but not the least facet of personal identities build up by celebrities is “a sensualist”. Celebrities post tweets full of daily life moments, particularly private life, and emotional ties with family and close friends, demonstrating humor and sensualist appeals. The private life, and the personal emotions and feelings, are supposed to be shared among family members, and close friends. In Weibo this “pseudo-back stage” pseudo-public area, celebrity users become reporters of their personal lives, and daily life moments, sharing family photos and personal emotions to their followers, presenting themselves very close to the followers. The “sensualist” approach of building personal identity could be elaborated in Extract 4.25-4.30.

Extract 4.25

DATA20130120/ Mr. Wang

龍年已經走到龍尾了。今年的工作和生活都很豐富，很有成就感！ 謝謝粉絲們和所有家人的愛，正能，和高度和風度的支持。我真的很愛你們...所以很興奮地在準備除夕夜 我如何陪你們一起過 呵呵...❤️

贊(3624)/ 轉發(8893)/ 收藏/ 評論(21681)

2013-1-20 02:44 來自微博 weibo.com

Translation of Extract 4.25

DATA20130120/ Mr. Wang

The year of Dragon has come to the tail of the dragon. Review of this year, feel accomplishment of both career and life! Thank your love from all my fans and all my family members, your positive energy, and your kind support. I really love you very much... so I am very excited to prepare to celebrate New Year's Eve with you all, lol ❤️

Like(3624) /Retweet (8893)/ Archive/ Comments (21681)

at 02:44 on Jan.20th, 2013 from Weibo.com

Extract 4.26

DATA20120625/Mr.He

落幕。清洁阿姨站在侧幕看着离散的恋人最后的告别默默地抹泪。也许，每个人的心里都有抹不去的一点过往……这些年，只要你是快乐的，我就不会有遗憾。

贊(128)/ 轉發(4139)/ 收藏/評論(2590)

2012-6-25 22:39 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.26

DATA20120625/Mr.He

The end, curtain down. The cleaning aunt is wiping her tears at the side of the stage, because of the previous scene of lovers separating. Maybe, perhaps, there is a story of past in everybody's heart which could not be forgotten.....During these year, I will not regret, as long as you are happy.

Like(128) /Retweet (4139)/ Archive/ Comments (2590)

at 22:39 on June 25th, 2012 from iPhone Weibo App

Extract 4.27

DATA 20130313/ Ms Zhao

寂寞总在疲倦时～期待一个好睡眠，和妈妈亲手包的爱心韭菜饺～我飞奔过来了～[酷👉]

贊(2264)/ 轉發(3060)/ 收藏/評論(3790)

2013-3-13 21:07 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 4.27

DATA 20130313/ Ms Zhao

Loneliness always comes when you are tired～Looking forward to a good sleep, and the dumplings full of mommy's love～I am flying over～👉

Like(2264) /Retweet (3060)/ Archive/ Comments (3790)
at 21:07 on Mar. 13th, 2013 from iPhone Weibo App

Extract 4.28

Data20120731/Ms. Xie

熬夜看体操男团直播的吱一声儿嘿🍻

贊(391)/ 轉發(11777)/ 收藏/評論(14805)

2012-7-31 01:33 來自 HTC One X

Translation of Extract 4.28

Data20120731/Ms. Xie

Anyone who is now watching the Male Group Category of Gymnastics
competition overnight, let me know, hey! 🍻

Like(391) /Retweet (11777)/ Archive/ Comments (14805)
at 01:33 on July 31st, 2012 from HTC One X

Extract 4.29

DATA 20121028/ Mr. Chen

6: 30 起床，遛狗，7: 30 喂狗，之后煮饺子给儿子和侄子吃，我又把昨天带回来的剩菜煮了我喜欢的烫饭！老妈不在的日子，我是全能的！

贊(438)/ 轉發(1968)/ 收藏/評論(5416)

2012-10-28 09:29 來自 iPhone 客户端

Translation of Extract 4.29

DATA 20121028/ Mr. Chen

Got up at 6:30, walked the dog, fed the dog 7:30, then cooked dumplings for my son and my nephew, and I cooked the take-away leftover from the restaurant to be my favorite rice! While Mom is not in house, I am superman!

Like(438) /Retweet (1968)/ Archive/ Comments (5416)

at 09:29 on Oct. 28th, 2012 from iPhone Weibo App

Extract 4.30

DATA20130108/Ms Yao

“湿冷” 究竟是怎样的一种冷? 打个比方, 若北方南方同样是零度, 同样穿上羽绒服御寒。在北方, 则可保持体温抵御寒冷; 在南方, 则象穿上了一件半湿的羽绒服, 寒气入骨, 可想而知有多冷。🏠

(附照片, 略)

贊(1797)/ 轉發(38381)/ 收藏/ 評論(16700)

2013-1-8 10:36 來自微博 weibo.com

Translation of Extract 4.30

DATA20130108/Ms Yao

Do you know how we feel in this “cold and humid” weather? For example, zero degree in both north and the south. In the north, wearing a down jacket, can keep your body warm and resist the cold, however, in the southern area, wearing a down jacket, is like wearing a semi-wet down jacket, and you feel freezing into the bone. So you can imagine how cold it is (in southern area).

(Photo attached)

Like(1797) /Retweet (38381)/ Archive/ Comments (16700)
at 10:36 on Jan.8th, 2013 from Weibo.com

Presenting these kind of daily life moments for celebrities, rather than exposing their personal private lives by paparazzi, celebrity users make use of social media to present their personal identity as more sensualist, to gain their followers and public audience's emotional attachment of accompanying them. Like the examples above, celebrity users tell the public how their days begin by waking up, walking dog, what they cooked, what TV program they were watching, how they love their parents and their family, how they spend the important days and festivals with their followers together, what they feel about life, all real time self-reporting with photos. As shown in Table 4.7, 27.39% of the posts are devoted to the sensualist identity.

Table 4.7 explicitly illustrates a spectrum of personal identity the celebrity users collectively broadcast on Sina Weibo. Multi-faceted personal identities have been constructed including being an expert of competence, a responsible social citizen, a reliable friend with love and care, and a sensualist, which can be grouped according to three categories of “the public self”, “the public private self”, and the “transgressive intimate self”.

Table 4.7 Distribution Result of multi-facets of personal identities of celebrity

Category	Identities “broadcast” by celebrities	No.	%
The public self	An expert of competence	992	17.58%
	A responsible social citizen	1145	20.29%
The public private self	A reliable friend with love and care	1959	34.72%
Transgressive intimate self	A sensualist	1545	27.39%

4.4 Discussion and Summary of the Chapter

It is found that the personal identity for celebrity Weibo users are multifaceted, with the presented identity as “accompanying reliable friend with love and care” to broadcast “the public private self” to a large extent in social media. For the previous public mass media period, the celebrity seems “far away” from the public audience, only existing in big screen or behind the TV screen. But for current information explosive world, to gain followers and audience, and to keep followers’ “loyalty”, self-disclosure of the public private life as “a reliable accompanying friend” to the public audience is one of the strategy in the campaign of self-branding for those high-profile celebrities, with the aim to trigger and arouse high emotional attachments among the followers, through self-disclosure.

Apart from self-disclosure, to affirm the value of keeping “loyalty” to the followers and to attract more audience, building the personal identity as “an expert of competence” and “a responsible social citizen” in the “public self” level, is essential for performance of the professional aspect as a high-profile celebrity. Celebrities attempt to prove to their followers that they are professional in their area, presenting they have been making continuous efforts to learn, to explore, to experience, and improve themselves in all aspects. At the same time, they are also very responsible to the environment, to the charity events, to the social issues, appealing to followers’ emotion of admiration and respect. For the level of “public private self” and

“transgressive self”, celebrity Weibo users attempt to build intimate online identity with a persona’s true human nature, emotional ties as a “sensualist”, presenting them as accompanying reliable friends, listener to followers with love and care, building the interactive bonds with all the Weibo users who can access to their posts, no matter they are intimate friends, friends, acquaintances, or even unknowns in the online world. This also suggests the increased value of interactive social bonds in the online context of representational and presentational social media, which leads to the discussion of the next chapter about the social identities.

Chapter 5 Social Identity Construction by Chinese Celebrities on Sina Weibo

This chapter is to investigate how identity emerges in interactions, by analyzing the relational speech acts of each utterance the Chinese celebrities used in their update posts, aiming to identify the linguistic acts and features performed by the Chinese celebrities on Sina Weibo that represent their “social self”, i.e., contributing to their management of their relationship with their followers.

5.1 Non-anonymous networked environment of Weibo

5.1.1 Non-Anonymous Environment of Weibo

The online world is not monolithic, and new variations of new media emerge constantly in this fast-developing age, accordingly, the affordance of new media technologies in supporting interpersonal messaging capacities emerges, and attention to the process of interaction and relational management on social media has become critical (Sashi, 2012; Chambers, 2013). Recent researches on social media, also termed SNSs, have indicated that such SNSs have formed a new literary practice which reflects both

traditional and new ways of constructing a facework in non-anonymous online environments (Davies, 2012; Wu & Feng, 2015; Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008) due to the lack of online anonymity.

Weibo, as a new mode of Computer-mediated Communication, is different from the early phases of anonymous Internet, such as MUDs, Chat Rooms, BBS, etc., in which individuals tended to play-act (Turkle, 1995).

Weibo, a hybrid of Twitter and Facebook, has grown exponentially since its launch, and is a popular microblogging service platform originated in China, where it has become the leading SNS in the Cultural China¹ region. It has been expanding since its launch in the first decade of the 21th century, and has been well utilized as a social platform by celebrities as well as other individuals to construct self-presentation and interpersonal interactions (Huang, 2011; Mo & Leung, 2015). As of March 2014, Weibo boasts 143.8 million monthly active users, of whom 66.6 million are daily active users.² As an important part of those active users, celebrity users are more “visible”, because their accounts are “verified” by the system.

Verified high-profile celebrity Sina Weibo users generate and publish the content in the posts (i.e., tweets) to interact with other users, both employing and enhancing their power and influence. Our study intends to explore the identity performance and facework strategies in this named (i.e. the opposite of anonymous) online context, and how they are affected by the identified nature of this online environment. The process of the facework strategies will be presented and analyzed in the coming section of this chapter.

5.1.2 Asynchronous Mode, non-anonymous Presentation of Weibo

To begin with, the comparison between (Sina Weibo) microblogs and other modes of Internet environment can help understand the communicative affordance of microblogging and the social network site. Compared with its sibling (conventional blogs), microblogs also feature one-to-many communication, but allow speedy interaction via responses, reducing the content-generating time, and enabling frequent and timely updates in posts.

Another communicative affordance of Weibo is the asynchronous mode of communication, but non-anonymous presentation. By asynchronous, we mean users do not need to be simultaneously present in real time and space, and also the unidirectional character of the communication. The former characteristic of lack of co-presence of users, has been discussed in the previous chapter as the notions of front stage and back stage of Goffman (1967). For the latter aspect, microblog (Weibo) is considered as one-to-many communication, is not in all cases reciprocal and dialogic, as there is no necessity to react to a posted tweet, nor to react to every comment on a tweet. The explanation for this can be the fact that a post (i.e., tweet) of the microblog (Weibo) is addressed to a dispersed audience, i.e., all Weibo users(public), unless specifically addressed to a few persons in “contacts”.

Identified presentation in Weibo results from the system’s default anonymity constraints. The background information, the ‘real-life’ master

identities of those celebrities are already known to public. “Play-acting” as someone else other than the verified identity, as in Anonymous online environments (such as virtual video games) seems “impossible” in the constrained Weibo online platform.

Weibo prompts users to answer the question “Is there anything you want to share with everyone? (有什麼新鮮事想告訴大家?)” on their personal walls, as shown in the following Figure 5.1. The system has already set the “audiences” as everyone in Sina Weibo (i.e. ‘public’) by asking the default question to Weibo users to share and interact with everyone. Users answer the question by updating their lives, taking pictures and videos, reporting to audiences what is going on. And the updates which received the most responses, would be listed as “Heated posts” (熱門微博), shown in the right up corner in Figure 5.1.



Figure 5.1 *The default question of the Sina Weibo System*

Nonetheless, as pointed out in the literature review section, the accent of most studies of Chinese Weibo is put on grass-root journalism, public engagement, political-democracy communications, and corporate

communications and marketing via Weibo posts, while few investigations concentrate on interpersonal communication in Weibo. Linguistic studies on the interactional and politeness behavior of Chinese on new media are few and far between. One of the few studies which are dedicated to interpersonal communication via new media in China is about the terms of address between the online shop owner and customers in the popular online Shopping Website Taobao, carried out by He and Chen (2015). Therefore, this chapter attempts to fill the gap by identifying the types of relational acts and facework that are used to build connectedness by reputable (identity-verified) individuals with their followers on Sina Weibo. In the process, the chapter will revisit the notions of “face” and “speech acts” in linguistics, contributing to interactional linguistics in its study of social media language.

5.2 Revisiting Key Notions of Face and Speech Act

Before we get down to the Relational Speech act coding and analyzing, it is necessary to revisit these two concepts.

5.2.1 Face in Interaction

5.2.1.1 From ‘Individual’ to ‘Dyad’: Face Theories by Western Scholars

Facework theory, closely related to interaction, is important in studying Weibo, because of the “group audience” in microblogging communications (Marwick & boyd, 2011). By “group audience”, Scholars such as Zappavigna (2011, p.3) explained that in Twitter, a counter part of Weibo, that “Tweets [...] are messages presented to a virtual audience who ‘follow’ by subscribing to another user’s feed”. Weibo, has a system of operating similar to Twitter, users can choose “adding to my interest” (加關注) to follow other Weibo users they are interested in. Any Weibo users can publish content and also read Weibo posts, and become “followers” of other Weibo users. Weibo communications is *“a hybrid between the mode of “publishing” and “engaging in conversation”[...] which is both personal and public at the same time. [...] blogs are used to maintain personal relationships: personal information is disclosed to an audience of readers, which might react to postings by commenting on them or linking to them on their own blogs”* (Schmidt, 2011, p.162).

In this sense, like Twitter, Weibo *“involves negotiating [with] these multiple audiences to successfully maintain face and manage impressions”* (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p.145). And facework is understood as a form of communication skill (Tracy,2002).

As Goffman (1967) points out, there is no such thing as faceless communication. Goffman regarded face as salient in virtually all social encounters that all human interactions engage facework, i.e., people collaboratively protect and support each other's face in interaction. Face, from this perspective, can be considered as the successful presentation of identity. Further to Goffman (1955, 1967) Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) point out that face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced; and must be constantly attended to in interaction. A detailed mechanism for engaging facework with a list of possible linguistic features and strategies appealing to people's need for positive face and negative face is also provided by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987). Subsequent to Brown and Levinson, face is analyzed and conceptualized as dynamic and context-dependent, constructed and deconstructed in the process of communication (Bull & Fetzer, 2010). Face is considered to involve claiming a sense of self-respect or self-dignity in an interactive situation (Ting-Toomey, 1994). Facework, thus, involves the enactment of face strategies, verbal and non-verbal moves to negotiate face, self-presentations, and impression management.

Nonetheless, in the recent re-examination of face theory, scholars such as Arundale and Good (2002) Bargiela-Chiappini (2003) and Arundale (2006, 2010), Bargiela-Chiappini and Haugh(2009) point out that the account provided by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) is confined to an individual's wants, ignoring face as a relational and interactional phenomenon. Not only language use is an interactional achievement, but so is face. Thus, face is

regarded as a dyadic notion which encompasses both speaker and hearer, or speaker and audience. They urge a return to Goffman and attention to the “social self” rather than the “individual self”. Unlike the “individual self”, the “social self” is seen as a “person”, an individual inseparably entwined with the other individuals with whom s/he interacts (Arundale, 2006, p. 200). According to Arundale (2006, p.201) “*communicative action is both relationship-shaped and relationship-renewing*”. By the same token, there is no faceless communication; face is also brought in, and invested in the interactions. Especially, in her Face Constituting Theory (FCT) which represents a marked departure from the conceptualization of face as a summative, person-centered attribute found in existing theories, Arundale (2010, p.2085) states that face does not belong to a single individual and can only be achieved conjointly, in relation with others and is explained as participants’ interpreting of relational connectedness or separateness.

In other words, Arundale (2006,2010) conceptualized face as a non-summative, relational phenomenon. Thus, the appropriate unit of analysis in studying interpersonal communication should not be any single isolated utterance of the monadic individual, but take the dyad as the minimum unit of analysis and explain communication as the conjoint outcome of the dyad.

5.2.1.2 Face studies by Chinese Scholars

Apart from the theories of face by the Western scholars, Chinese scholars also have their conceptualization of face and politeness.

The equivalent concept of face to Chinese is *mian zi*, which embodies the integrated ‘self’ of self-esteem, and social self in Chinese cultural value. on one hand, according to Yu and Gu (1990) *mian zi* and self esteem are intertwined in Chinese culture, and one’s self esteem is formed on the basis of others’ remarks. If remarks are positive, then *mian zi* is gained, accordingly, self esteem is increased. When remarks are negative, then *mian zi* is lost. Mianzi can be achieved or lost only when an audience approves or denies (Bond & Hwang, 1986,1996). In this way, *mian zi* also refers to “social self” in Chinese culture, which is prestige, image, respect from others. King & Myers (1977) coined the term as “social or positional face”, and also ‘other’ plays a very prominent part in constructing “social self” by choosing to support a person’s social self by recognizing and responding to his or her need for recognition and prestige in social interactions, or vice versa.

Chinese scholars such as Gu (1990) and Tsou and You (2007) have also postulated maxims for Chinese face and politeness behavior. While Tsou and You (2007) emphasize the importance of modesty and respect in Chinese interactions, Gu (1990: 249) indicate the important variables of power and hierarchy governing the choice of politeness strategies in Chinese and postulate the maxim of self-denigration and other-elevation for Chinese terms of address. Nonetheless, Kadar and Pan (2013) have indicated that with profound changes in contemporary cultural China, many of these maxims of Chinese politeness have been transformed and varied, e.g., the self-denigration/other-elevation principle for Chinese terms of address has collapsed and been replaced by a single, uniform and unisex term of address

tongzhi (“comrade”). Third, *mian zi* also denotes “relational self” in Chinese values of social structure *guanxi* (relationship and networks), which include affection, friendship, mutual respect, and personal relationship with others.

However, there is no research to date examining about *mian zi* of face as “relational self” in Chinese values of social structure *guanxi* (relationship and networks), which include affection, friendship, mutual respect, and personal relationship with others. And this is something the present study tries to contribute.

5.2.1.3 Face and Politeness in Social Media

Recent studies of interaction on social media have started to pay attention to face and politeness behavior and found that positive face and its related strategies are prevalent on Facebook, Weibo and Twitter (see Lillqvist and Louhiala-Salminen, 2013; West & Tester, 2013; Wu & Feng, 2015; Wu & Li, 2015). However, the relationship between interpersonal intimacy and politeness practices in computer-mediated communications has not been properly addressed. Also, as mentioned above, the studies of politeness, and linguistic politeness in CMD have focused dominantly on Western languages, especially English (Duthler, 2006; Locher, 2010; Waldvogel, 2007). Therefore, investigation into how politeness practices are conducted to gain interaction intimacy in social media is needed, especially in lesser-studied languages, such as Chinese.

Different from the conceptualization by Chinese scholars (e.g., Gu, 1990; Tsou and You, 2007) regarding face and politeness behavior by Chinese in offline interactions, Wu and Li (2015) point out that solidarity politeness rather than power politeness is the kind largely performed on Chinese SNSs. Nonetheless, their study is confined only to the act of greeting performed by the brand corporations in China, no further elaboration has been provided on other types of relational acts performed by the Chinese on the SNSs. And the investigation of facework and politeness in social media in the present study is oriented towards perspectives which view facework as a norm-oriented interactive phenomenon and at the same time as a communicative strategy.

5.2.2 Speech Act in CMD

As new media technologies emerged in the past decades, scholars turned increasing attention to how the new tools of communication alter the exchanges of messages and meaning. The frameworks of categorizing speech acts by Austin (1962) and Searle (1975, 1976) have thus been utilized in the researches on CMD. For example, Hassell, Beechham and Christensen (1996) compared speech acts in three media — email, face-to-face, and telephone — and concluded that assertives were the most common speech act across all three modes of communication, while imperatives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives are more common in email and telephone communication than in face-to-face contexts, and expressives are more common in email than in face-to-face communication. Then, Nastri, Pena and Hancock (2006) were

the first to extend the six speech act categories to a taxonomy of seven speech acts by adding the quotation speech act, which refers to a message that the speaker conveys that was not originally produced by the speaker (sender).

Concerning SNSs, Carr, Schrock and Danterman (2012) examine the use of speech acts on Facebook status messages and find that the messages are most frequently constructed with expressive acts, followed by assertives. Also examining Facebook status updates, Ilyas and Khushi (2012) conclude with the frequency ranking of expressives, assertives, imperatives, and commissives.

However, those taxonomy of speech acts is more focused on the purpose of the speaker or the information sender. As Bach (1994) and Burkhardt (1990) claim, this kind of scheme has a number of problems. First, it does not provide any principles for how new illocutionary acts should be classified and exclusive. In addition, the taxonomy assumes that each speech act belongs only to one category, which fails to account for the multifunctionality of language use (Clark, 1996).

Furthermore, as we can observe, the definition and classification of Austin (1962) and Searle(1975,1976) paid insufficient attention to the process of relational communication by the speaker with the hearer, and largely dependent on the “individual self”, not the “social self”. This chapter attempt to provide close investigation of speech acts, used by celebrities in Weibo.

Chapter 4 analyzed and presented the narratives of multi-facet personal identity (individual “self”) that Chinese high-profile public figures broadcast in their Weibo. Based on the review of face in interaction and relational speech acts, it is aim of this chapter to identify the linguistic acts and features performed by the Chinese celebrities on Sina Weibo that represent their “social self”, i.e., contributing to their relational and rapport management with their followers.

5.3 Constructing Social Identities through Communication with Audience Awareness

The leading SNS, Weibo’s counterpart, Twitter, sets its default status question as “What are you doing”, while the question of Facebook is “What’s on your mind?”. The answer to these questions, are all related to the users’ status updates. And all the updates, or posts in chronological order are shown in a timeline, or personal “wall” under the account of the individual microblogging users. The conversational nature of SNSs have been confirmed by many scholars, who describe them as a form of “conversation exchange” (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009) or “lightweight chat” (Kate, Luo, Patwardhan, Franz, Florian, Mooney, Roukos, & Welty, 2010) or “prompting opportunistic conversations” (Zhao & Rosson, 2009) constituted by ‘dialogue acts’ (Ritter, Cherry, & Dolan, 2010). Grossek & Holotescu (2009) describe microblogging as “*a specific social dialect, in which individual users are*

engaged in a conversation". Marwick (2010) suggest the practice of "micro-celebrity" is to use the conversational interaction in microblogging to developing personal branding.

The default question in Weibo is "is there anything you want to share with everyone?" (有什麼新鮮事想告訴大家?) The question defaultly set the "audiences" or readers of the Weibo wall to all Weibo users "everyone" (大家). Sina Weibo users answer the question by updating their posts, from different access either from PCs, or mobile devices, and decide what content to share with "public" (公開), "close friends" (好友圈), "only me" (僅自己見) or certain "group" (群). For celebrity users, the "public" audience can be current users and also future Weibo users, who just log in Weibo.com and go through all the information. Any interested public audience member can become a "follower" of the celebrity users by clicking "Following" (加關注). Thus, celebrity users expand and cement their fan base by increasing the numbers of their followers, in a simple and inexpensive way of interacting and marketing.

With imagined audiences in mind, the six selected celebrity Weibo users with "the Most Influencing Powers" who have numerous "followers" (shown in Table 3.2) share their personal stories, interact with their public audiences, followers as well as the addressed audiences in their updated posts. The following extracted posts suggested the celebrity Weibo users wrote and published their posts as conversationalists, communicate with their intended

audiences as a fan base or community with whom they could connect or interact.

Quite a lot of literature shows that one of the features that characterizes the Computer-Mediated Discourse is the semiotic code, written discourse with spoken language features. The microblogging posts/tweets are also realized in written code, with characteristics of spoken language. That explains why the posts are in a conversational style, rather than diary writing.

The strength of social networking sites, like Twitter, is in their encouragement of “digital intimacy”, the term proposed by Thompson (2008). Later, “phatic communication” culture in CMD was coined by Miller (2008) to illustrate the phenomenon of “*writing with audience awareness*”. A stream of scholars supported the idea of phatic communication and network sociality in CMD (Hopkins, 2014; Radovanovic & Ragnedda, 2012; Senft, 2009). As we observe in the dataset, quite a lot of the posts are “phatic in nature” (Miller, 2008) and serve a social interpersonal interaction function, phatic communication, rather than just providing information.

It is observed in the Weibo that writing with audience awareness in “talking to the audience” style is one of the effective strategies in attention economy, sharing everyday minutiae with the world, maintaining their followers and also attracting more followers to respond on their wall.

Table 5.3 presents the categories of celebrity users “talking to audiences” in the dataset, with examples of extracts as illustration. There are three

categories of “talking to audiences by using terms of address to public”, “using terms of address to specific users”, and also “talking to all audiences without using terms of address”.

Table 5.3 *Illustration of categories of “talking to audiences” in Weibo posts*

Category	Definitions	Illustration
Talking to all audiences by using terms of address	The content of posts written by those celebrity users are to public users by using terms of address	祝大家端午节快乐! Wish you all a Happy Dragon Boat Festival!
Talking to all audiences by using pronouns	The content of posts written by those celebrity users to public users by using pronouns	我都會盡量做到所有對你們的承諾。一日一次的更博也不例外。 I will do my best to realize all my promises to you, so is updating daily tweets.
Talking to specific users by using terms of address to specific users	The content of posts written by those celebrity users are to specific users by using terms of address	靜姐靜姐，回家千万不要对着小茂叫 晓明啊🙄 //@李静 Sister Jing, Sister Jing, remember never call Xiao Mao to be Xiao Ming when you back home. 🙄 //@ Li Jing
Talking to all ‘audiences’ without using terms of address	The content of posts written by those celebrity users are to public users without using any terms of address	考完了吧？觉补过来了吧？撒丫子了吧？都注意安全别疯过头啊！结伴出门的话互相照应点啊！ So exams finished? Relax and made up sleep? Must have been having fun and crazy? Be safe. Do not be over crazy! Take care of each other when outside together.

Based on categories of “talking to audience” shown in Table 5.3, Table 5.4 shows the frequency of each category of “writing with audience awareness” in the utterances of celebrities’ updates. The first category is updates of “talking to all audiences with terms of address” is explicitly addressing all

readers/users of Sina Weibo(大家), the majority of the examples are the festival wishes that “(I) wish everybody HappyFestival”. Another frequent category is to use pronouns plural “you”(你們)directly, illustrated by “I will do my best to realize all my promises to you, so is updating daily tweets” is a selected update from Mr. Wang, who is promising allhis fans that he will update daily of his life in Sina Weibo, by addressing the fans with “all of you” (你們). This category fulfils a face-enhancing function of generating social solidarity with followers or fans by those celebrities by directly “talking” to them.

It is observed that “talking to all audience without using specific terms or @” is usually the most frequent among the updates. As mentioned that the default log-in question of the Weibo is “anything you want to share with everyone?”, the affordances of Sina Weibo allows users update reporting everyday lives in time. The illustration in Table 5.3 of “talking to all audiences without using terms of address: “So exams finished? Relax and made up sleep? Must have been having fun and crazy? Be safe. Do not be over crazy! Take care of each other when outside together” is an example that talking with certain group users. The time of posting this tweet is June 2012, right after the University Entrance Examination in Mainland China. The update, though without the terms of address, are warm tips obviously written to those high school graduates who just completed the University Entrance Examination. Through this post, Mr. He sent his carings to those young high school students, who are the main audience of his TV program *Happy Camp* (《快樂大本營》) and *Day Day Up* (《天天向上》) .

It is worth mentioning that during the the time span of collecting posts, i.e. June 2012 to June 2013, Ms. Zhao produced her first movie as the director. Ms. Zhao was famous for her role in acting in a TV series, and became an actress, then she became a fresh new movie director. In her updates, “terms of address to specific users” and @ /mentioning another Weibo users” are more frequent during the time span of June 2012 to June 2013, when the first movie she directed was on, and the relational speech act of “showing appreciation” to all public and especially to her celebrity friends who congratulated her and ‘shared’ her movie information with positive comments and feedback, was the predominant topic of her timeline.

Table 5.4 *The category of “writing to audience” in the database of each celebrity*

Category	Terms of address explicit to public	Terms of address to specific users	Talking to all ‘audiences’ without using terms of address	Total
Mr. He	183 (9.75%)	37 (1.97%)	1656 (88.27%)	1876
Ms. Xie	167 (12.3%)	56 (4.12%)	1134 (83.56%)	1357
Ms. Yao	118 (10.62%)	97 (8.73%)	896 (80.64%)	1111
Mr. Wang	151 (38.42%)	167 (42.49%)	75 (19.08%)	393
Mr. Chen	256 (19.52%)	124 (9.45%)	931 (71.01%)	1311
Ms. Zhao	63 (10.62%)	328 (55.31%)	202 (34.06%)	593

5.3.1 Terms of Address to “Public” Audiences as a Fan Base

As mentioned before, celebrity Weibo users never know who will read their posts, if the tweets/posts are set to “visible to public”, including both followers and potential followers. But the priority readers are the fans of those celebrity users. When writing the posts, “audience awareness” of the Weibo users could be traced by the terms of address to all readers.

Table 5.5 *Writing with audience awareness in dataset*

Categories of Address to public	Address in posts
Pronouns	
First Person pronouns	We/Us 我們
Second person pronouns	You 你/ You (plural) 你們
Address to all	Every buddies 大家伙兒, everybody 大家
Address to specific audiences using close terms of address	My siblings 同胞/同胞們, my friends 朋友們/盆友們, schoolmates 同學們/童鞋們, my buddies 親們

Extract 5.1:

DATA 20120927/ Mr. He

不见的行李终于飞来了。经检查被机场安检拿走的危险品是……发胶。
大家以后出行也长点心吧。谢谢大家惦记，请大家吃我们剧组昨晚四点发的宵夜：鱼丸辣酱拌面！

贊 (117) /收藏/轉發 1549/ 評論 4641/

2012-9-27 14:58 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation for Extract 5.1:

DATA 20120927/ User: Mr. He

The lost luggage finally ‘fled’ back. The so-called “hazardous” things which was taken away by airport security check is...the hair spray. Be aware of this when *you* travel. Thanks *all* for caring. Send a picture of our late night snacks at 4 am to *you* all: Spicy Fish ball noodle!

Like (117) /Archive/ Retweet (1549) /Comment (4641)

Sep.27th, 2012, 14:58 From iPhone Weibo App

Extract 5.1 is a Weibo post from Mr. He, a follow-up update of Mr. He’s “luggage accident” when he took flight to Thailand for movie shooting on Sept. 26th, 2012. The post reported that his lost luggage was found the second day and the so-called “dangerous” item in his luggage blocked by airport security was hair spray, which caused the whole “accident” (see extract 5.2). Extract 5.2 seems like murmuring to himself, but with a selfie photo to his followers of his group at the airport. In the extracts, he thanked his followers who commented in Example 5.2 for their care, and comforted his followers by uploading his picture of a late night (or early morning) snack, and said it was his treat to everyone.

Extract 5.2

DATA20120926/Mr.He

终于到了曼谷。在机场又逗留了一个多小时，居然有件行李在广州没跟着一起来。一问是机场觉得里面有危险品就没给托运。咦？这不是应该在我们出发检查行李的时候告诉我们吗？现在的解决办法是机场把箱

子打开，把觉得危险的东西拿走，明天再给我们运过来。好妙啊！不知道危险品会是什么呢？……

2012-9-26 2:16 來自 [iPhone 客戶端](#)

贊 252/轉發 2754/ 收藏/ 評論 6211/

Translation of Extract 5.2

DATA20120926/User: Mr.He

Finally arrived Bangkok. Have been staying in airport for one more hour, but there is one baggage from Guangzhou still not found. Information from the airport is that there is suspicious dangerous item in the baggage which is blocked by the airport security check. What? They should inform us before our departure check-in, right? Now the solution offered by the airport is to open the suitcase, take away the dangerous items, and ship the luggage tomorrow. So good! But wonder what is the dangerous item?.....

Like (252) / Achieve/ Retweet (2754) / Comment (6211)

Sept. 26, 2012, 2:16 from iPhone Weibo App

After the latest update about the status in extract 5.1, Mr. He sent a reminder to “all” (大家) to be aware of “dangerous” items in luggage when travelling. “All” (大家) here, apparently, is all audiences of his Weibo posts, who can access his posts publicly. The post continued with the thanks to “all” who showed concern about his experience at the airport, by uploading a picture of his food at 4 am. “All” (大家) who showed concern here, can be considered as the addressed audience of his Weibo followers, who responded

to his post of Sept. 26th, 2012 (see extract 5.2) by clicking ‘Like’ (thumb-up) (252 users) ‘Reposting’ (2754 users) or ‘Commenting’ (6211 users). This is a strategy of “follow up of self-reporting” without “reposting”.

Extract 5.3:

DATA 20130520/Ms. Zhao

有谁像我一样不敢养宠物，因为觉得生命责任太大？养一只狗或猫咪会想到至少 15 年以后能否一直照顾到终老～🤔

2013-05-20 17:24 来自 iPhone 客户端

贊 6464/轉發 7449/收藏/ /評論 7706

Translation of Extract 5.3

DATA 20130520/User: Ms. Zhao

Is there *anyone* who dares to raise pets like me, and feel the responsibility of taking care of lives? Keeping a dog or a cat, means looking after it at least 15 years ~ 🤔

Like (6464) Retweet (7449) /Archive/Comment (7706) /

May 20th, 2013, 17:24 From iPhone Weibo App

In extract 5.3, on the day of May 20th, which is a day to express “I love you” in Chinese, Ms. Zhao asked a question to all whether there is anyone who shares the same concern for pets as her, and raised a certain amount of responses from public, won 7706 comments, 7449 retweet and 6464 likes.

Extract 5.4:

DATA 20130328/Ms. Xie

大咖开始了，忘掉容嬷嬷，记住这个美丽的格格😊大家伙儿的开心迎接周末哈😊



[贊\(4926\)](#) / [轉發 \(5990\)](#) / [收藏](#) / [評論 \(5856\)](#)

[2013-3-28 22:19](#) 來自三星 Galaxy Note II

Translation of Extract 5.4:

DATA 20130328/User: Ms. Xie

Your Face Sounds Familiar is on! Please forget Rong Momo, and remember this beautiful Princess😊 hey big buddies, let's be happy to welcome the weekend😊

(Photo attached)

[Like \(4926\)](#) / [Retweet \(5990\)](#) / [Archive/Comment \(5856\)](#) /

March 28th, 2013, 22:19 From Samsung Galaxy Note II

Ms. Xie, is a famous TV hostess. *Your Face Sounds Familiar*, produced by a Provincial TV station, was an impersonation show which hit the highest rating all over China in 2013. In the show, celebrities including the TV hosts and hostess, were invited to impersonate well-known figures from TV series or movies. The show challenged celebrities to perform as different characters every week. One week before March 28th, 2013, Ms. Xie had been very successfully portraying the well-known character of RongMomo, who is sneaky like a snake in the TV series *My Fair Princess* (還珠格格) and had

received huge likes from followers, even initiated hot discussions on BBS. On the week of March 28th, 2013, Ms. Xie impersonated herself as a pretty princess. In extract 5.4, she “released” the back stage look to all Weibo users, using the vulnerable term of address big buddies in Mandarin dialect (大家伙儿的).

Extract 5.5:

DATA20121211/Mr. Wang:

謝謝各位童鞋們 對新歌的大力支持！！後天就是 12／12／12 @成龍大哥的新電影《十二生肖》首映會！！🙏 到時候在 國家體育館 我也將表演 《十二生肖》主題曲，還有首播電影版的 MV！！北京的朋友們，12 號見！！✌

贊 1860/收藏/轉發 8034/評論 10641

2012 年 12 月 11 日 00:37 來自 微博 weibo.com

Translation of Extract 5.4:

DATA20121211/User: Mr. Wang:

Thank you for your support to my newly released song, *schoolmates*! The day after tomorrow, there will be the Film Premiere of Brother @Jackie Chan's new movie *Chinese Zodiac 12*!! 🙏 By then I will sing the theme song of the movie, as well as the premiere of the MV!! See you at 12th, my friends in Beijing!! ✌

Like (1860) / Retweet (8034) / Archive/Comment (10641) /

Dec.11th 2012, 00:37 From weibo.com

Mr. Wang called his fans and followers schoolmates, and expressed his gratitude to them for their support of his newly released song, in Extract 5.4. Also, he made an announcement to the public in Beijing to keep an eye on the Film Premiere of Jackie Chan's new movie, in which he played and also sang the theme song. The post is accessible to the whole public, and Mr. Wang called people who would join the Premiere, "my friends in Beijing".

Extract 5.6:

DATA20130216/Mr. Chen:

鉴于大伙儿跑题老问偏门儿的”人在心不在”和”心在人不在”的两性关系话题，俺的回答如下：”心在人不在”的”心在”意味着一心一意、全心全意的专注你，但大部分人说的”心在”都只是说说而已，别太当真！[...略]

@陈坤

人在心不在了，人留下也没用 " 这可不是仅仅关乎恋人的话。没有了心，我们这些人也真没啥用了。静下来，听内心的声音，它真的会告诉我们一些东东。把心放在你想做的事情上，绝对是件 " 过程和结果 " 都让人愉悦的体验。这不，俺自从心手合一，微博也越写越屌丝了！[打哈气]

贊 772/轉發 3807/收藏/評論 (1537

2013-2-16 20:36 來自 iPad 客戶端

贊 276/轉發 5024/收藏/評論 601/

2013-2-16 21:19 來自 iPad 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.6:

20130216/ User: Mr. Chen:

For the heat discussion topic that *everyone* ask about the relationship, my answer would be: “‘heart here but not physically here’, ‘heart here’ means all heart devoted to you, but majority of people mentioned ‘heart here’ is just saying it, don’t take it too seriously! [...]”

@ Mr. Chen:

“There is no meaning if one’s heart is absent”. This is not a sentence for couples. Without heart, there is no use for the physical body. Stay calm, listen to your heart, which would certainly tell you something. Focus your heart on things you really like to achieve, is absolutely pleasant both in “process and result”. You see, integration of my heart and hands, my Weibo posts are more and more poetic.

Like (772) /Retweet (3807) /Comment (1537)

Feb.16th, 2013, 20:36 from iPad Weibo App

Like (276) / Retweet (5024) /Archive/Comment (601) /

Feb.16th, 2013, 21:19 From iPad App

Unlike Extract 5.1 and 5.2, Mr. Chen “retweeted” his original Weibo tweet, which was just posted one hour previously, and received a huge amount of responses and heated discussion about the topic, in Extract 5.6. In retweeting comment in such short time, Mr. Chen referred to the comments from the original tweets, and made a further explanations to everyone (大伙儿) Weibo users who had commented.

Another frequently used term of address to public users in Sina Weibo, is 親 (Qin) the abbreviated form of 親愛的 (dear) other variations include *my buddies* (親們) everyone of my dear buddies (各位親) etc.

Extract 5.7:

DATA20120731/Mr. He:

我是个不靠谱的病人！先是拔智齿的时候睡着，被大夫喝斥说 " 醒醒！张嘴！ " 然后麻药打得没知觉，觉得自己嘴好厚好性感，要我漱口，水就是放不进去嘴里，一直倒到身上，特别生气！我会是第一个因为不会漱口而翻脸的病人吗？不过各位亲，说实话看牙没那么可怕，有状况早治疗，越拖越糟！来，笑一个！

贊 357/轉發 4471/收藏/評論 8892/

2012 年 7 月 31 日 8:30 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.7

DATA 20120731/Mr. He

I am not a normal patient! First, I fell asleep when dentist tried to pull my wisdom teeth, the dentist yelled, "Wake up! Open your Mouth!" Then, because of anesthesia effects, I could not feel anything except my lips becoming so sexy and so thick, and I could not locate the water into my mouth, and water all the way down to my body, so angry! Will I be the first patience who lost temper? But *my buddies*, to tell you the truth, seeing the dentists is

not so terrible, go for treatment earlier if you don't feel good, the later, the worse! Come on, let's smile!

Like (357) / Retweet (4471) / Archive/Comment (8892) /

Feb.16th, 2013, 21:19 From iPad App

In Extract 5.7, Mr. He used his unique sense of humor to describe his funny experience of seeing the dentist. At the end of the post, he is suggesting to all his followers that seeing the dentists is not so terrible as imagined, the earlier the better and the sooner you will recover. The explicit address to all is 'my buddies'.

5.3.2 Terms of Address to Targeted Audience

Apart from the whole user base as the audience, there are also certain groups or communities that the celebrity users directly communicate with. Extract 5.8 is an example of a tweet from Mr. Wang, who is a singer. In the tweet, he is talking to the audiences as all his fans, by using the pronoun "you".

Extract 5.8

DATA20130302-T3882/Mr. Wang:

我都會儘量做到所有對你們的承諾。一日一次的更博也不例外。😁

贊 (6126) / 轉發 (8933) / 收藏/ 評論 (20635)

2013-3-2 01:18 來自新浪微博

Translation of Extract 5.8:

DATA20130302-T3882/Mr. Wang:

I will do my best to realize all my promises to you. So is updating my daily tweets. 😊

Like (6126) / Retweet (8933) / Archive/Comment (20635) /

March, 2nd, 2013, 01:18 From Sina Weibo

And quite a few of his tweets were addressed to his fans by using the pronoun in plural forms. Here is another example in Extract 5.9:

Extract 5.9:

DATA 20130531/ Mr. WANG:

在半空中想著你們！北京見！

贊 (6070) / 轉發 (4318) / 收藏/ 評論 (12064)

2013-5-31 02:05 來自新浪微博

Translation of Extract 5.9:

DATA20130531/Mr. Wang:

I miss you all high up in the sky! See you in Beijing

Like (6070) / Retweet (4318) / Archive/Comment (12064) /

May 31st, 2013, 02:05 From Sina Weibo

This tweet of Mr Wang is an update of his precious post of May 30th, 2013, which reported “today flying from US to China again” (今天又美飛中了) on

his flight from US to Beijing, and to all his fans that he was excited to see them in Beijing soon.

No matter whether in plural form or single form, the second person pronouns also serve as a strategy of involvement, to close the distance between the message readers and the writer. Extract 5.9 is an example of using a singular form of pronouns.

Extract 5.10:

DATA 20130504/ Ms. Xie.

今晚终于有新的大本营陪你开心，然后还有成人礼陪你谈心。五四青年节快乐。



贊 (7584) / 轉發 (8357) / 收藏 / 評論 (9234)

2013-5-4 18:06 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.10

DATA 20130504/Ms. Xie

Finally, tonight we have brand new (TV Programme) *Happy Camp* to accompany you for The Youth Festival, and also chat with you. Happy Youth Day!

(Photo attached)

Like (7584) / Retweet (8357) / Archive/Comment (9234) /

May 4th, 2013, 18:06 From iPhone App

In addition to the usage of second person pronouns, the first person pronouns are also used to show that the author is with the audience.

Extract 5.11:

DATA 20130507/ Mr. He

我们啊！忙活忙活，不怕忙，但可别忘了真正地活……🤔🤔🤔

贊 (7867) / 轉發 (9021) / 收藏/ 評論 (5729)

2013-5-7 17:50 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.11

DATA 20130507/Mr. He

Us! We work busily for life, Busy is okay, but don't forget work for better life, not the other way round……🤔🤔🤔

Like (7867) / Retweet (9021) /Archive/Comment (5729) /

May 7th, 2013, 17:50 From iPhone App

Mr. He expressed his life wisdom by sharing the Chinese idiom of “busy and live”, reminding his audiences, by including himself into this community, that to live our lives is a higher priority than keeping busy.

Similar address to targeted audiences for closing the distance include: addressing the specific audiences as family members, my siblings (同胞). Extract 5.12 is a retweet by Zhang Quanling, who is a front-line journalist from CCTV the biggest primary TV media in Mainland China, on the news updates about the “Apr. 21st Earthquake” in Sichuan Province. Mr. He showed

his concern that he could not fall asleep because of it, and delivered a message of keeping fighting after the earthquake for the people in the earthquake area, by addressing them as “my siblings”.

Extract 5.12

DATA 20130421/ Mr. He

睡不了。同胞，加油。

[@张泉灵](#)

目前进宝兴的消防已经有106人。分别到了灵关和城关镇 穆坪。
县指挥部说24死亡，2500受伤。因为断电断路，伤员送不出来。
体力身手特别棒的消防队员都不容易，要抬重伤员谈何容易。那儿是峡谷地带，直升机起降非常困难。凌晨3:54分又一次4.0级余震。

贊 (1269) / 轉發 (21631) / 評論 (2595)

2013-4-21 04:34 來自 iPhone 客户端

贊 (4940) / 轉發 (11832) / 收藏 / 評論 (5530)

2013-4-21 04:38 來自 iPhone 客户端

Translation of Extract 5.12

DATA 20130421/ Mr. He

Could not fall asleep. *My siblings*, fighting!

@ Zhang Quanling:

At present, the number of Fire fighters into Po Xing has reached 106.

The commander reported that 24 dead, and 2,500 injured. Because of

the cut off of power and transportation, the injured patient could not be sent out. It is not easy as imagined, to carry those heavy casualties for those firefighters. Not to mention the earthquake area is a canyon area, difficult for the helicopters to land. There is another 4.0 level aftershock at 3:54 am.

*Like (1269) /Retweet (21631) / Comment (2595) /
Apr.21st , 2013 04:34 from Weibo iPhone App*

Like (4940) /Retweet (11832) / Comment (5530) /
Apr.21st , 2013 04:38 from Weibo iPhone App

Extract 5.13

DATA 20130313/ Mr. He

回到校园做活动，看到满眼的青春才知道自己真的是上了年纪了！果然还是最爱校园！最爱和/同学们在一起！

贊 (6315) / 轉發 (10819) / 收藏/ 評論 (12714)

2013-3-13 10:23 來自三星 Galaxy Note II

Translation of Extract 5.13

DATA 20130313/Mr. He

Back to campus to join events, seeing eyeful of youth, have to admit my generation! Campus is still my favorite! Staying with my *fellow students and classmates* is my favorite!

Like (6315) /Retweet (10819) / Comment (12714) /

Mar. 13th, 2013 10:23 from Samsung Galaxy Note II

In the above Extract 5.13, Mr. He expressed that joining a university campus events made him feeling energetic among students, which recalled his memory of youth. The last sentence is a strong expression, addressed to the target audience of youth: university students, the intimate terms (my) fellow students and classmates.

Another way to address targeted audience is using @. Even for posts that are set as “visible to public”, users can @ specific Weibo users, attracting their attention publicly.

Extract 5.14

DATA 20121108/ Ms. Yao

祝所有的记者朋友，节日快乐，天天加薪，畅所欲言，永不受气！😄



@新周刊

今天，记者节，写给在路上的传媒人：可以有不说真话，但绝不说假话。

轉發 36296/評論 5531/ 贊 184

2012-11-8 09:05 來自专业版微博

收藏/轉發 1772/評論 909/贊 40

2012-11-8 09:51 來自 iPhone 客户端

Translation of Extract 5.14

DATA20121108/ User: Ms. Yao

Happy Journalists Day! Wish *all my journalist friends*, Salary increasing every day, have freedom to speak out, and never be bullied 😄👌🍻

@ New Weekly:

Today, Journalists Day, to all Media people: you can have unsaid true words, but never tell lies.

Retweet (36296) / Comment (5531) / Like (184)

Nov.8th, 2012 09:05 from Weibo.com

Retweet (1772) / Comment (909) / Like (40)

Nov.8th, 2012 09:51 from Weibo iPhone App

In extract 5.14, Ms. Yao retweeted a post from New Weekly, and sent festival greetings and wishes to all journalists, for Journalists Day, showing her concerns and care to all the new reporters in the communication field.

Ms. Yao in another post, @ directed to her friend, Ning Caishen (literally translation God of wealth), who is the famous writer of the TV series,

Extract 5.15

DATA 20130531/ Ms. Yao

财神蜀黍，礼物拿来！😄

[@宁财神](#)

[@姚晨](#) 儿童节快乐～

贊(402) / 轉發 (1863) / 評論 (430)

2013-5-31 12:45 來自 iPhone 客戶端

贊(1347) / 轉發 (1440) / 收藏/ 評論 (1132)

2013-5-31 15:13 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.15

DATA 20130531/ Ms. Yao

Uncle Wealth, where is the gift [for Children's Day]? 😊

@Ning Caishen

@Ms. YaoHappy Children's Day~

Retweet (1863) / Comment (430) / Like (402)

May 31st, 2013 12:45 from Weibo iPhone App

Retweet (1440) / Comment (1132) / Like (1347)

May 31st, 2013 15:13 from Weibo iPhone App

Extract 5.15 is a retweet plus chain-like post, which occurs in adjacent pairs. First, Ning Caishen @ Ms Yao, and sent his festival wishes “Happy Children’s Day” to Ms. Yao. In return, Ms. Yao retweeted @ Ning Caishen, and posting “Uncle Wealth, how about the gift?” It is worthy of noticing the way of Ms Yao address her friend, using the non-standard yet popular form of calling him Uncle — “shushu” (蜀黍) — which enhances the social solidarity between two Weibo users.

5.3.3 Writing with Audience Awareness without Terms of

Address

Update posts in Weibo by celebrities are written to the public, potentially asking for responses, such as “likes”, leaving “comments”, and “retweets”. The following examples of extracts of such posts, are written with audience awareness without using specific terms of address.

Extract 5.16

DATA 20130524/ Mr. He

初来乍到，请多关照！[@中国最强音 X](#)

(圖略)

贊 (19315) / 轉發 (4706) / 收藏 / 評論 (12140)

2013-5-24 22:01 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.15

DATA 20130524/ Mr.He

New here, please kindly support! @ The X factor

(Photo attached)

Retweet (4706) / Comment (12140) / Like (19315)

May 24th , 2013 22:01 from Weibo iPhone App

In extract 5.16, Mr. He used @, rather than a hashtag as in Twitter, to make his new TV programme *the X factor* visible, greeting to public that “new here, and please kindly support”, adding a photo of himself in the program.

The X factor is a Chinese version of a reality talent show live from Hunan TV station in 2013, hosted by Mr.He.

Extract 5.17

DATA20130131/Ms. Xie

这幅图求起个名儿😏 我先来两个：1 一个人的精彩😱 2 我～不～累

😏 (你们来😁)



贊 5594/收藏/評論 36323/ 轉發 46604

2013-1-31 13:09 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.17

DATA20130131/Ms. Xie

For this photo, please name it😏 let me first try two: 1. Wonderful time of one person😱 2. I am~NOT~tired😏 (Now your turn😁)

Like (5594) /Retweet (36323) /Archive/ Comment (46604)

Jan 31st, 2013 22:01 from Weibo iPhone App

Working as a team member to Mr. He, Ms. Xie also posted the TV programme she was hosting, *Your Face Sounds Familiar*, by attaching her ‘character’ photos as a trailer of the program, and asking the public to name the photos in the first sentence ‘For this photo, please name it’, together with

a smiley. After two humorous version of naming herself, she explicitly addressed the Weibo public users “Now your turn”. In this tweet, each sentence ends up with a emoticon of smiley.

5.3.4 Use of Intimate Terms of Address to Build Solidarity

Terms of address, according to Tracy (2002) can show the relational identity in communication and the choice of appropriate terms of address shows the ability to understand and to apply the rule of politeness of the interlocutors during communication. In discussing Chinese politeness, Gu (1990) has indicated the important consideration of power and hierarchy in the choice of terms of address. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the rules of power and hierarchy do not seem to be applicable and are overcome by the rules of building solidarity on Weibo: intimate address forms have been used frequently among parties of unequal power status on Sina Weibo, such as 童鞋 (schoolmate), 童鞋们 (schoolmates), 亲爱的 (dear), 亲 (dear/darling), 亲们 (my darlings), 我亲爱的们 (my darlings), 各位亲 (dear every darling), 小伙伴们 (my buddies), 小盆友们 (my little friends) etc.

Furthermore, to play cuteness, some non-standard orthography is deliberately used by the celebrities in many of these terms of address, e.g., the deviant form 盆友们 (friends) is used instead of the standard form 朋友们 (friends); 小盆友 (little friends) used instead of the standard form 小朋友 (little friends) 童鞋 (schoolmate) instead of 同学 (schoolmate) and 筒子

(pipe) used to replace the unisex term of address 同志 (comrade). It is also worth noting that in addressing people in more powerful position, non-standard orthography is also used to show intimacy or solidarity, e.g., 湿兄 (wet brother) as an intimate form to address a senior male friend of which the original standard form should be 师兄 (master brother). Likewise, 大湿 (big wet) is used instead of 大师 (big master).

5.4 Constructing Social Identities through Relational Speech Acts

In addition to the use of terms of address, linguistic acts and features are also observed to be adopted by celebrities to represent the social identities and relational interactions with Weibo users and followers. This section aims to identify the prevalent relational speech acts performed by the Chinese celebrities on Sina Weibo, analyze the characteristic linguistic and symbolic features that constitute such relational acts, and finally, leads to the discussion of how do these relational speech acts and discursive features contribute to their construction of their “social self”.

5.4.1 Coding Scheme of Relational Speech Acts

Facework for this study is defined as the cluster of speech acts and features that are used to build relational bonds by the reputable individuals with their followers on Sina Weibo. It is similar to what Wu and Feng (2015) have indicated as “solidarity politeness” and to what Arundale (2010) has defined as face strategies contributing to “relational connectedness”.

While reference to the framework of speech act taxonomy by Searle (1976) will be made, the interpreting of speech acts in this study will be conducted beyond the models by Austin and Searle which are not relation-oriented, i.e., the speech acts will be classified as to how the acts serve to contribute to relational identity construction by the celebrities. In the present study, each utterance in the collected tweets of celebrities will be examined at two levels: 1) the semantic level, in which we look into the meaning of the words in the tweets; 2) the overall intention of the act, i.e., what relational acts the celebrity users of social media are trying to accomplish with the utterance within the context of the post.

Table 5.6 presents the types of relational acts we have located as used by the celebrity figures from the present sample, with operational criteria and illustrations given for each identified relational act.

Table 5.6 Operational criteria and illustrations for relational acts by celebrities on Weibo

Relational Acts	Definitions	Illustrations
Asking for opinions/ information	Utterance by celebrity users that asks for opinions or information	有没有同学给我推荐很快记单词的方法呀？ “Is there any classmate who can recommend shortcut of memorizing vocabularies?”
Birthday greeting	Utterance by celebrity users that greets or expresses birthday wishes to the other users on Weibo.	生日快乐！青春永在！ “Happy Birthday! Always young as you are!”
Congratulating	Utterance by celebrity users that tells the other users how happy or proud they are of the others’ achievements.	恭喜啊！ “Congratulations!”
Daily greeting	Utterance by celebrity users that conveys daily greeting or wishes to the other users.	早上好，神经病的一天开始了！ “Morning, a new day of ‘psycho’ begins!”
Festival greeting	Utterance by celebrity users that conveys good wishes on a festival event	端午节快乐！ “Happy Dragon Boat Festival!”
Fierce directives; Explicit directives	Utterance by celebrity users that expresses a request directly, explicitly, and/or forcefully to the other users	請安靜，（錄音中） “Please be quiet, (recording on air) ”
Modest directives; Indirect directives	Utterance by celebrity users that expresses a request modestly or indirectly to the other users	敬请期待呀 “Please stay tuned”
Promising	Utterance by celebrity users that expresses to the others users a commitment to do or not to do something	香港见 “See you in Hong Kong”
Promoting assets	Utterance by celebrity users that promotes their own as well as other relevant works and activities	工艺与艺术完美结合！ “The perfect combination of technology and art”
Self-depreciating	Utterance by celebrity users that critiques or criticizes themselves in front of other users	居然看到有人提问姚明，郭敬明，何炅躺在地上能不能组成个三角形！更气！因为我居然还很忐忑地算了一下！

Relational Acts	Definitions	Illustrations
		When I saw a question regarding whether the three persons, Yao Ming, GuoJingming, and He Jiong lying on the floor can form a triangle, I just responded with an estimation! How stupid I am!”
Sharing information	Utterance by celebrity users that presents facts, beliefs, and/or personal stories, moods, personal moments to other users	会自嘲但不能自贱，要自信但不要骄傲。 You can deprecate self verbally, but never depreciate your self-esteem; You can be self-confident, but never be arrogant.
Showing appreciation	Utterance by celebrity users that conveys appreciation and/or gratitude	大家都尽力了，谢谢！辛苦了！未来就靠有爱的观众了！感谢！ “Everybody has made efforts. Thank you very much! And let’s see how it is going with our lovely audience! Thank you !”
Showing concern	Utterance by celebrity users that conveys concern or care to specific issues	北京的好心朋友帮忙留意这位老人。 Friends in Beijing, please help when you see this senior citizen.
Showing stance	Utterance by celebrity users that expresses explicit attitude or emotion towards people or different life issues	我喜欢这样的朋友。 “I like this type of friends.”

There is an observation from those posts that sometimes, the relational acts are quite manifest and obvious, as the utterances directly present the information or the intent of the Weibo user. But there are other times when the meaning of the utterance is not explicitly expressed and is conveyed via implications and connotations, i.e., the relational acts have to be inferred from the context of the utterance and also from the interaction with other Weibo users. Further discussion and illustrations of these relational acts are presented in the following section of analysis.

5.4.2 The Analysis of Relational Speech Acts of Utterances

Based on the categorization of Table 5.6, Table 5.7 presents a statistical summary of the relational acts we have identified as used by the celebrities on Sina Weibo.

Table 5.7 Distribution of Speech Acts by Celebrities on Sina Weibo

Speech Act*	Relational Acts	No. of Speech Acts	% of Speech Acts
Assertives	Promoting assets (e.g., events, endorsed products, personal movies)	568	4.62%
	Sharing information (e.g., life wisdom, personal stories)	2762	22.48%
Directives	Modest directives; Indirect directives	1838	14.96%
	Fierce directives; Explicit directives	348	2.83%
Expressives	Birthday greeting	374	3.04%
	Congratulating	183	1.48%
	Daily greeting	876	7.13%
	Festival greeting	407	3.31%
	Self-depreciating	393	3.19%
	Showing appreciation	964	7.84%
	Showing concern	763	6.21%
	Showing stance	2434	19.81%
Commissives	Promising	348	2.83%
TOTAL		12285	100%

*Speech acts in this column are based on Searle's taxonomy.

As discussed in previous section, celebrities update their tweets with audience awareness in Weibo. Greetings are often served as the first exchange of a conversation, or opening of phatic communication, and require the presence of audiences. Greetings could be formulaic expressions in which the speakers simply acknowledge the other presence. Address forms are often included in greetings. And in Weibo tweets of those celebrities, the daily greetings were observed with a photo or a selfie to say “hello” to users, inviting responses from followers. The interrelationship between language change and socio-cultural context are strongly demonstrated in the greetings and address forms in new media, especially in Weibo.

As with daily offline interactions, the act of “daily greeting” is performed regularly by the Chinese celebrities on Sina Weibo, constituting 876 out of a total of 12,285, 7.13 % of the collected speech acts (shown in Table 5.7). In addition, relational acts of birthday or festival greetings are also regularly used. The following extract contains all such greeting acts.

Extract 5.18:

DATA 20130601/Mr. WANG

早上好！哇？我怎么睡醒了？😴 虽然在北京但还是过美国时间。😴 祝

各位童鞋六月快乐，儿童节快乐！🎉

贊 (9001) /轉發 (6874) /收藏/評論 (15416)

2013-6-1 02:46 來自新浪微博

Translation of Extract 5.18:

DATA 20130601 from User: Mr. WANG

Morning! Wow? Why I woke up? 🤔 Though I am in Beijing, my time is still US time 🇺🇸 Happy June to every little buddy (童鞋) Happy Children's Day!

Like (9001) /Retweet (6874) / Archive / Comment (15416)

2013 June 1 from Sina Weibo.com

Extract 5.19

DATA 20130629/ Mr. CHEN

我真的，很不喜欢自拍！！！🤔一个演员，真的需要这样么？😂😂

😂早上好，神经病的一天开始了！（4 張自拍照 略）

贊 (5337) / 轉發 (8420) / 收藏/ 評論 (5022)

2013-6-29 10:06 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.19

DATA 20130629 user: Mr. CHEN

I am, really, not appeal to selfie!!! 🤔 but as an actor, do you really need to do this? 😂😂😂 *Good morning*, a new day of a “psycho” begins!

4 Photos attached

Like (5337) /Retweet (8420) /Archive/Comment (5022)

June 29 2013, 10:06 from Weibo APP iPhone

This is a post of four selfies of Mr.Chen, before shooting of his film while waiting. And the post greeted the readers with ‘good morning’.

Extract 5.20

DATA 20130429/ Mr. HE

北京有人十周年刷屏爬梯，我录完节目赶晚点飞机，航空管制我也不急，期待着明天的秘密工作，既然是秘密就暂时还不能告诉你……*晚安。好梦……*

（自拍圖 略）

贊 (5566) / 轉發 (4291) / 收藏/ 評論 (6584)

2013-4-29 23:19 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.20

DATA 20130429/ Mr. HE

There are people who keep posting their way of celebrating anniversaries. I am catching the red eye flight after the shooting of TV program, even though there are air traffic control. So excited about the secret job tomorrow. It is secret that of course that could not be released *Good night, sweet dreams……*

(photo attached)

Like (5566) /Retweet (4291) /Archive/Comment (6584)

Apr 29 2013, 23:19 from Weibo APP iPhone

Extract 5.21

DATA 20120918/ Ms. Yao

香港早晨。☀️



贊 (59) / 轉發 (832) / 收藏/ 評論 (1484)

2012-9-18 07:55 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.21

DATA 20120918/ Ms.Yao

Morning, Hong Kong!

(photo attached)

Like (59) /Retweet (832) /Archive/Comment (1484)

Sep 18th 2012, 07:55 from Weibo APP iPhone

From Table 5.7 we can also observe that the most frequent relational act found from the present collection is “sharing information”, constituting 2,762 out of a total of 12,285, 22.48% the collected relational speech acts (shown in Table 4.7). The celebrities frequently share their personal stories and life wisdom as well as various sorts of news about themselves and others with their peers or followers on Sina Weibo. An example of sharing information can be seen in Extract 5.22, in which Mr. Wang uploaded a photo of his movie cooperated with Jacki Chan *Little Big Soldier* (《大兵小將》), and explicitly used the word “share” to all users, and asked users whether remember it, and

received huge responses: over 20 thousand Comments, over 10 thousand retweets.

Extract 5.22

DATA20130303/Mr. Wang

翻了一些电脑里面过去的照片，跟大家分享一下。记得吗？ 🧐



贊(5416) / 轉發(10082) / 收藏 / 評論(20098)

2013-3-3 00:30 來自新浪微博

Translation of Extract 5.22

DATA20130303/Mr. Wang

Happened to find out some photos from past, and *share* with everyone. (Do you) remember it? 🧐

(photo from movie attached)

Like (5416) /Retweet (10082) /Archive/Comment (20098)

Mar.3rd 2013 from Weibo.com

Sharing the information of the movie/music/TV programme those celebrities involved, matches the identities of their career in public, can help promote celebrities' visibilities. Weibo is also a public platform for networking, celebrities also help share about the information of product from

their friends. Ms Xie promote a book written by her friend, and also used the relational speech acts of “promoting assets” and “showing stance” of her own feeling of reading the book in Extract 5.23.

Extract 5.23

DATA 20130624/Ms. XIE:

温暖的声音，致青春🌞

@伍洲彤

今天，我的新书「听话」终于出版了。它是你我 20 年的青春纪念册，也是一本治愈情伤的语典，里面还有一张我特别为你录制的唱片。它适合放在枕边，会给你幻想的空间和内心的温暖。真心期待你打开它，犹如你我第一次见面.....

贊 (560) /轉發 (10093) /評論 (1331)

2013-6-23 11:35 來自 iPhone 客户端

贊 (2362) /轉發 (1578) /收藏/評論 (1319)

2013-6-24 10:51 來自 iPhone 客户端

Translation of Extract 5.23

DATA 20130624: Ms. XIE:

Warm voice, to Youth🌞

@Wu Zhoutong:

Today, my new book Ting Hua finally got published. It is a collection of 20 years of youth for you and me; it could also be used for healing hurt,

with an album I have recorded for you. It is suitable to be placed by your pillow, for bedtime reading and imagination. Sincerely hope you can open it, just like the first encounter of you and me....

Like (560) / Retweet (10093) / Comment (1331)

June 23 2013, 11:35 From weibo.com

Like (2362) / Retweet (1578) / achieve/ Comment (1319)

June 24, 2013, 10:51 from Weibo APP iPhone

Apart from sharing information of business and career issues, celebrities also sharing information about their own private life stories. This is what attracted followers to keep track of their idols, just like audiences are more excited to know about “back stage” secret. Weibo makes the back-stage life revealed by celebrities themselves. Extract 5.24, is a glimpse of the life of Ms Yao’s pet dog, whose name is “Button”, gave birth to five little puppies. And in her timelines Ms. Yao keeps a habit of mentioning her pet dog and uploads pictures of Button from time to time.

Extract 5.24

DATA20120920/Ms. Yao

八家小儿：一毛，二毛，四毛，五毛，六毛。🐶



贊 (128) /轉發 (3118) /收藏/評論 (4439)

2012-09-20 13:37 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.24

DATA 20120920 / Ms Yao

Sons of Button: One penny, Two penny, Four penny, Five penny, and Six penny. 🐣

(photo attached)

Like (128) / Retweet (3118) / achieve/ Comment (4439)

Sep. 20th,2012 13:37 from Weibo APP iPhone

Similarly, Mr. Wang shared a chick named “Daobudao”, who lived and worked with him for a period while he was shooting the film *Forever Young* (《無問西東》), shown in Extract 5.25. During the film shooting period, he kept updating stories about him and the chick day by day, like TV series.

Extract 5.25

DATA 20120615/ Mr. Wang

叨不叨今天客串了《無問西東》！照片裡的旁白：“導演說你剛剛演得很好喔！明天我飛西安準備演唱會，不要太想我！”



贊 (657) /轉發 (11522) /收藏/評論 (18544)

2012-06-15 02:36 來自微博 weibo.com

Translation of Extract 5.25

DATA 20120615/ Mr. Wang

Daobudao has joined today's film shooting of *Forver Young*! Description of the photo would be "the director said you were great in acting! Tomorrow I will fly to Xi'an for my musical concert, don't miss me too much!"

(photo attached)

Like (657) / Retweet (11522) / achieve/ Comment (18544)

June 15th, 2012 02:36 from Weibo.com

In Extract 5.25, Mr. Wang not only shared the "back stage" of film shooting, but also announced his schedule of musical concert in Xi'an, indirectly promoting his movies and musical concerts.

Besides "sharing information", "showing stance" is another frequent relational act, constituting 2434 out of a total of 12285, 19.81% the collected acts. Illustration of this act can be seen in Extracts 5.19 and 5.26.

Extract 5.26

DATA20130429 /Mr. HE

你是那么的合适，放在哪儿都合适，怎么扮都合适，和谁搭都合适！合适到常常让人忘了，你毕竟是个女人！非常地爱你啊！闪电般光彩夺目的女人！@贾玲生日快乐！

贊 (5105) /轉發 (4919) /收藏/評論 (3687)

2013-4-29 00:09 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.26:

DATA20130429/Mr. HE

You can be fitted in any place: you can be fitted for any role in our TV show and perform well with anybody! You can be so fitted that often people forget that you are a woman after all! Love you very much! Dazzling woman! @ Jia Ling Happy birthday!

Like (5105) / Retweet (4919) /Archive/ Comment (3687)

Apr 29th, 2013 00:09 from Weibo APP iPhone

When coding, it is worth noticing that there can be more than one speech act expressed with an utterance. For example, the italicized utterances from Extract 5.26 can be performing not only the act of “showing stance” but also the act of “showing appreciation”.

It merits our special attention that another frequent relational act by the celebrities on Sina Weibo is “directives” and that the act of “modest directives” is much more frequent than that of “fierce directives”, 14.96% versus 2.83%. This indicates while the Chinese celebrities on Weibo like to spread their impact by persuading people to their ideas and action plans, they show special

care in managing their relations with their followers to present their directives in a modest or implicit manner. Further illustrations for a modest directive can be seen in Extract 5. 27.

Extract 5.27:

DATA 20130630/Ms. XIE

以后喝前尽量把手机藏起来🙄🙄🙄好咯，好好学习才是硬道理，发张在米国做英语作业的学生照片还可以吧😲有没有同学给我推荐很快记单词的方法呀🙄

贊(17484) /轉發 (8169) /收藏/評論 (16162)

2013-6-30 08:05 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.27:

DATA 20130630/ from Users: Ms. XIE

I would try to hide my cell phone before drinking🙄🙄🙄 Okay, should study hard, how about posting a picture of doing home assignments in US? 😲 is there any classmate who can recommend shortcut of memorizing vocabularies?🙄

Like (17484) /Retweet (8169) / Archive / Comment (16162)

June 30th, 2013 from Weibo iPhone APP

Other relatively frequently-used relational acts by the celebrities on Sina Weibo include “showing appreciation” (7.84%) “showing concern” (6.21%)

and “promoting assets” (4.62%). Further illustration of “showing appreciation” can be seen in Extract 5.28.

Extract 5.28

DATA 20130620/Ms. YAO

耶！谢谢难民署对过去三年的认可！以后带小土豆一起去探访难民！🤗



[@华谊姚晨工作室](#)

今天是世界难民日，联合国难民署总部发来消息，感谢[@姚晨](#) 为提高公众对难民问题的认识所做出的努力，鉴于她在过去三年中持之以恒的工作态度，对难民发自内心的真诚关怀，和她杰出的人道主义精神，以及对推动难民事业做出的努力和贡献，正式升任姚晨为联合国难民署中国亲善大使！！

[2013-6-20 10:15](#) 来自[新浪微博](#)

赞(228) / 转发(2052) / 收藏 / 评论(228)

[2013-6-20 10:15](#) 来自[新浪微博](#)

赞(1843) / 转发 (1860) / 收藏 / 评论 (1614)

[2013-6-20 10:26](#) 来自 iPhone 客户端

Translation for Extract 5.28

DATA 20130429 / Ms. YAO

Yay! *Thank the Refugee Agency for recognition of the past three years' work!*

Can bring “little potato” to visit the refugees in the future ! 🤗🤗🤗❤️

[@from Yao official studio:](#)

Today is the international day for refugees! The UN Refugee Agency has announced that they are grateful to Yao Chen for her efforts in getting the public to recognize the issues and phenomena of the refugees. In recognition of her persistent attitude, sincere humanity care, and contribution to the work related to the refugees, United Nations has decided to promote her to be the China Ambassador for the UN Refugee Agency!!

*Like(228) /Retweet (2052)/ Archive/ Comments (228)
at 10:15 on June 20th, 2013 from weibo.com*

Like (1843) / Retweet (1860) / Archive/ Comment (1614)

June 20th, 2013 10:26 from Weibo APP iPhone

In Extract 5.28, we can also observe the act of “promoting assets”, as it releases the information about Ms. Yao in achieving the recognition from the United Nations with the award of “China Ambassador for the UN Refugee Agency”.

Further examples of the act of “showing appreciation” can also be seen in Extract 5.29, in which Ms. Zhao who is a fresh new movie director, expressed her gratefulness and appreciation to her team.

Extract 5.29

DATA 20130429/Ms. ZHAO

超级有爱的青春团队！你们为了电影充分展示了自己的魅力才华，以及对@致我们终将逝去的青春 movie 的热爱！大家都尽力了，谢谢！辛苦了！未来就靠有爱的观众了！感谢！

贊 (3421) / 轉發 (5593) / 收藏 / 評論 (4494)

2013-4-29 20:31 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.29

DATA 20130429 user: Ms. ZHAO

Super lovely young team! You demonstrate your talents and your love for our movie So Young! Everybody has made efforts, thank you very much! And let's see how it goes with our audience! Thank you!

Like (3421) / Retweet (5593) / Archive / Comment (4494)

Apr 29th, 2013 20:31 from from Weibo iPhone APP

Finally, “showing concern” is also a relatively frequently-used relational act performed by the celebrities on Sina Weibo: see Extract 5.30 for further illustration.

Extract 5.30

DATA 20130610/Mr. HE:

考完了吧？觉补过来了吧？撒丫子了吧？都注意安全别疯过头啊！结伴出门的话互相照应点啊！

贊(23719) / 轉發 (9585) / 收藏 / 評論 (14827)

2013-6-10 08:46 來自 iPhone 客戶端

Translation of Extract 5.30

DATA 20130610/ Mr. HE:

So, the exams finished? Relaxed and made up sleep? Must have been having fun and crazy? Be safe. Do not be over crazy! Take care of each other when you are outside together!

Like (23719) /Retweet (9585) /Archive/Comment (14827)

June 10th, 2013 08:46 from Weibo APP iPhone

A series of questions showed Mr. He's concern to the focus group of high school students who just finished the crucial University Entrance Examination, and arouse quite a large amount of response, with 23,719 likes and 14,827 comments. The targeted group is one of the important user group who heavily use social media.

5.5 Discussion and Summary of Chapter

Given that Weibo, like any other types of SNSs, functions as an interpersonal medium even though the medium is embedded in the mass media of the Internet, this chapter has attempted to investigate how Chinese celebrities construct social identity through relational speech acts on Sina Weibo towards their multiple audiences, both known and unknown. Different from the existing studies on speech acts on Facebook (e.g., Carr, Schrock & Dauterman, 2012; Ilyas & Khushi, 2012) which rely heavily on the criteria and taxonomy of Searle (1976), the chapter adopts a relational perspective of

examining the terms of address in “phatic conversation” and the relational speech acts usages in interactions by celebrities and re-defines speech acts in terms of how they contribute to the social identities in the interaction.

It is found that the cluster of relational acts performed by the Chinese celebrities on Sina Weibo include daily and festive greetings, congratulating, directives, promising, promoting assets, sharing information, showing stance, showing appreciation, showing concern, and self-depreciating, etc. Furthermore, the characteristic linguistic features used by the celebrities represent an informal and sometimes non-standard style, a style popular among the Chinese netizens (see also Chen, 2008). It is worthy of our special notice that the celebrities on Weibo no longer adhere to the Chinese traditions of face and politeness or to the principles of power and hierarchy in interaction; instead, they focus primarily in building affiliation and solidarity politeness with their followers on Weibo, adhering to the informal and sometimes non-standard style of Chinese writing.

In emphasizing the communication-immanent side of facework as relational and interactional achievement, Arundale (2006) points out that “all conversational action, topic managing and turn-taking is...conjointly co-constituted” (2006:196) and that “*in the moment of talk, participants draw opportunistically on the normative resources of their language to interactionally achieve not only conventional, but also non-conventional face interpretations*” (2006:208). While the present study has attempted a relational perspective in defining and classifying speech acts performed by the Chinese celebrities on Sina Weibo, the interpretation of the relational acts has been

based primarily on the authors' analysis without access to the exchanges between the celebrities and their followers. Such analysis is only preliminary, revealing the conventional but not the unconventional interpretations which can take place between the participants in interaction. Furthermore, any potential impoliteness or other conflict-driven speech acts on Chinese social media have not been examined. Future study in this field can be conducted so as to further reveal the interactional process of facework achievement and the multi-layered characteristics of face on the Chinese social media.

Chapter 6 Discussions and Conclusions

This chapter will first summarize the significant findings of this study and discuss its unique contribution to the field, particularly regarding a relational perspective on social media communication by Chinese celebrities. It will then end with a discussion of the limitations of the study and provide suggestions for future studies in this area.

6.1 Major Findings and Contributions

The emergence of social network sites has facilitated the building of public persona by celebrities (Zesty, 2012), and furthermore, a sense of ongoing connections and intimacy between celebrities and the public (Zappavigna, 2012). The present study has thus attempted to examine and address how Chinese celebrities discursively construct their identities on Sina Weibo, where they publish updates and reach out to their followers.

Dual identity constructions have been conceptualized: 1) personal identity (related to the individual self) and 2) interpersonal identity (related to the social self), which have been and found to be actively and dynamically intertwined and constructed by the Chinese celebrities on Sina Weibo. Further

detailed discussion of the dual aspects is presented in the following sections in relation to what has been done in the field.

6.1.1 Self-presentation by Celebrities on Social Media

The existing literature regarding the practice of identity construction by celebrities on social media (e.g., Marshall, 2010; Marwick, 2013; Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Nemer, 2016; Senft, 2008) have been mainly confined to the English-speaking individuals and to the media platforms of Facebook and Twitter. It is found that a common feature of self-presentation by celebrities on social media is that positive and ideal public images are always presented online. Celebrities have deliberated preparation to present the best of them in front of the cameras, the lenses of the worldwide social media sphere, for promoting attractive persona. Furthermore, uniqueness of each persona is found to be an essential aspect for self-presentation and personal identity construction, especially in Western culture value, which makes identity impressive among the audiences, readers and social media users.

Similar to the existing studies regarding celebrity practice on Facebook and Twitter, the present study has found a deliberate craft by Chinese celebrities to present ideal positive images to public as “Front stage” performance on Weibo and personal identity construction, i.e., a focus on the “individual self”, is also prevalent by Chinese celebrities. Nonetheless, the present study has located and highlighted the multifacetedness of identity

construction by the Chinese celebrities. It is found that the collective features of the multi-faceted personal identity the Chinese celebrities have constructed online are: the identity as an expert of competence, the identity as a responsible social citizen, the identity as a reliable friend with love and care, and the identity as a sensualist. These identities are categorized into presenting “the public self”, “the public private self”, and the “transgressive intimate self”.

In the “public self” category, the identities as “an expert of competence” and “a responsible social citizen” by the celebrities’ appeal to the public with persona of competence and sincerity. Weibo celebrities attempt to show their followers that they are professional in their fields, and they are continuously attempting to improve, they are hardworking, and they care for the general interest of the people and the environment, and global issues. For the “public private self” and “transgressive self”, Weibo celebrities made efforts to build a caring and human identity with shared stories of their private lives, and of accompanying friends and families.

This “Self-disclosure” and self-narratives were found very prominent and formed the cornerstone of self-presentation of online “personal identity” for promotion benefit. It is important to note that although being reserved is valued in Chinese traditional culture, the Chinese celebrities on Sina Weibo show no reserve in presenting and broadcasting the “transgressive intimate self”, narrating their moments and share personal life stories with sensualist

expressions in profiles and Weibo tweet updates. Furthermore, it is found that the analysis of self-presentation by celebrities on Sina Weibo, suggests celebrities use their own Weibo accounts as a “pseudo-backstage” to craft deliberately their preferable personal identity to get reach to their followers and public Weibo users, who have perception of Weibo as quick and direct access to their idols, contact with them, and get a glimpse into “back stage” lives of their favorite celebrities.

It is worth noticing that different from the traditional Chinese Confucius philosophy value model of “modest”, which promotes always keeping self low and avoid outstanding among groups, it is found out that the self-presentation by celebrities on new media nowadays directly attempt to demonstrate their persona with individual success, achievement, and glamour, projecting their positive identities as professional, hard working, self-improvement, self-development, social networking, presenting their personal and social value of being an ideal idol or role models, as well as their social obligations, even freedom of enjoyment, hence, enhance more varied and complex public image of those celebrities from mass media.

6.1.2 Relational Speech Acts by Celebrities on Social Media

As discursive identity on social media not only lies in self-presentation of broadcasting personal self, but also in building interpersonal relationships and managing the rapport relations. Besides the process of personal identity

construction and different from the existing studies by celebrities on social media, the present study has paid special attention to the process of social identity construction by the Chinese celebrities, utilizing the notion of relational speech acts in CMD.

Different from the existing studies on speech acts on Facebook (e.g., Carr, Shrock & Dauterman, 2012; Ilyas & Khushi, 2012) which rely heavily on the criteria and taxonomy of Searle (1976), the examination of how celebrity users build their social identity in present study adopts a relational perspective (Arundale, 2006, Spencer-Oatey, 2007) and re-defines speech acts in terms of how they contribute to the “social self” in the interaction.

It is found that the cluster of relational speech acts performed by the Chinese celebrities in their own personal accounts on Sina Weibo, are used to communicate actively, building harmonious relations with friends, followers, other celebrities and all Weibo users, include daily and festive greetings, congratulating, directives, promising, promoting assets, sharing information, showing stance, showing appreciation, showing concern, and self-deprecating, etc. This behavior of rapport management, collectively referred to facework (Scollon & Scollon, 2001), can be reflected in the usage of relational speech acts, as face-saving and face-giving behaviors. Hence, management of facework and rapport building enhance the positive social identities of celebrities on social media.

A handful researches indicates that self-presentation aspect of online identity is usually highlighted by Western scholars. However, Guanxi, and face, two essential notions in interactions and social identity construction, have more complicated implications in Chinese culture context. It is observed that in turns of relational speech acts, the characteristic linguistic features and terms of address used by the celebrities represent an informal and sometimes non-standard style, a style popular among the Chinese netizens (Chen, 2008) and the frequent use of intimate terms of address. It is worthy of our special notice that like the reputable brands on social media (see Wu & Feng, 2015; Wu & Li, 2015), the celebrities on Weibo no longer adhere to the Chinese traditions of face and politeness, and the traditional Chinese model of “modest” or to the principles of power and hierarchy in interaction; instead, they focus primarily in building affiliations and solidarity, and establishing rapport with their followers on Weibo, adhering to the informal and sometimes non-standard style of Chinese writing.

6.2 Limitations & Directions for Future Study

The present study has attempted to explore a largely under-studied area: Chinese language practice on social network sites. Nonetheless, with escalating development in the online world and new affordances of social media, variations and novel means of identity construction can emerge. The

small size of the dataset of Weibo updates for this study displays first obvious limitation. Larger-scale sample study and preferably comparative and cross-cultural studies between the Chinese Weibo and its counterparts such as Twitter and Facebook are definitely needed for future work.

Besides, as mentioned in chapter 4 that celebrities' own personal Weibo timelines and their Official Promotion Studio verified Weibo timelines, published different content of tweets, due to the promotion nature of Official Promotion Studio Weibo accounts. Consequently, the responses from followers and patterns of interactions differ. The future work examining promotion content and comparing the interactions, and the politeness strategies with followers between celebrities' own Weibo accounts and Promotion Studio Accounts, would be another direction of study regarding power and solidarity aspect to identity construction.

In addition, it is also aware that there is an absence aspect of analysis of the body of the interactions between celebrity and their followers. While the present study has attempted a relational perspective in defining and classifying speech acts performed by the Chinese celebrities on Sina Weibo, the interpretation of the relational acts has been based primarily on the authors' analysis without access to the comment exchanges between the celebrities and their followers. Such analysis is only preliminary, revealing the conventional but not the unconventional interpretations which can take place between the participants in interaction. A crucial factor of rapport building in social identity, and the interactional goals, did not receive extensive treatment, but

should be included in the future work. Furthermore, as the recent calls for attention of difference of traditional politeness and contemporary politeness in Chinese psychology, the interconnectedness of “relations” relating to face and (im)politeness in the communication, any potential impoliteness or other conflict-driven speech acts on Chinese social media could be examined in the future work.

In addition, although a balance of the selected celebrity Weibo users gender of 3 female and 3 male celebrity users, only a few gender-related phenomena were mentioned, with no issues further examined. If there is any future study about exploration of the gender difference in celebrity use of Weibo/Wechat, the factor of emoticon use, code-mixing, and Chinese specific humor use would be taken into consideration and given more careful attention.

To conclude, identity is a complex notion that can be explored from multiple perspectives. A crucial level of identity construction at the group level, which has not received treatment in this study, can be given more attention in future work. As addressed by Spencer-Oatey (2013/2015), future study of identity and face can be conducted in broader and interdisciplinary perspectives so as to further reveal the dynamic interactional process of identity construction and negotiation, as well as rapport management on social media.

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