

Mobilization in Blood Bank: Mutual Assistance of “RH-”WeChat Group in New Media

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Abstract.By means of credibility authentication, collective memory, online to offline communication, “RH-”WeChat group could mobilize steadily the members. This paper takes “RH-”WeChat group as a case to analyze the characteristics of mutual assistance of mobilization based on the experience of blood donation by in-depth interviews.Although having absorbed western ingredients of reciprocal altruism, the mobilization is more likely aided by kind people. And the “panda” medal which is an annual reward also suggests that managers tend to be a traditional Chinese model of “knight-errant”.

Introduction

Academic researches view more on the way of using the Internet by groups, such as AIDS and leukemia patients, and analyze their behaviors of using media to comfort each other. Hongmei Chen analyses that the hepatitis B virus group could get a sense of belonging and a access to get social psychological support in “Gan Dan Xiang Zhao” BBS. She thinks BBS could become a framework for social gradual changes in reality^[1]. Resource mobilization is a kind of social movement theory refers to the process of mobilizing people to accomplish the movement's goals. It is a set of analysis specially which views social movements as a kind of resource negotiation^[2]. The key to success is assembling the resources to “bargain” with local governments or other agencies^[3]. There is a significant interest demand in the movement. And it also has been taken by charity generally^[4]. In 2003 after the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), a researcher analyzes the characteristics of strategies in charity resources mobilization by state and society. And the mobilization host could also be members of society. Taijiang Long believes management of crisis mobilization should be changed from “for social mobilization” (political mode) to “by social mobilization” (autonomous mode)^[5]. And the past form of “universal mobilization” has been divided into “physical performance”, “attachment return” and “independent participation^[6]”.

Youde Zhang analyzes factors and technique strategies of mobilization in the private relief on the network by the case of “light snow ling” on TianYa BBS^[7]. Compare to “RH -” group, these movements are accidental. The present situation of the lower official aid coverage and the incomplete social security system determines ordinary people are less able to enjoy the official assistance when disaster happened suddenly. These are such groups known as “panda blood” (RH -) whose blood type are rare. In hospitals and blood stations there are always insufficient blood reserves when disaster strikes. It is a great threat for their life. Although blood stations will register rare blood type information from blood donation, the loss of information such as phone number or address errors are often occurred. Encountered this situation the folk starts using the new media technology to execute mutual assistance. They established “Chinese rare blood type network” and “Chinese rare blood type Union” (called union and rare shortly) which are two of the largest organizations that both formed completely a distribution over the country. The research of Ding Wei is one of the most detailed. She views the empowerment of the group practice as a gradual process, analyses the impacts of technology on individual, group and public life space under the context of Chinese^[8]. This is a medium dimension lacking of analysis for personal mutual experience in reality. So this article attempts to focus on the perspective of individual through the specific case and text of the new media rescue and to explore the specific characteristics of the process and further reflect on

social problem.

The study found

This article mainly takes the case of an official WeChat group of Union network in Anhui by the way of personal interviews and text analysis. The interviewee including the persons with mutual blood donation experience (they are very warm-hearted compulsory blood donors too), pregnant, group members without any experience, group managers and members joined the Union annual meeting. In addition, researchers have participated and observed the WeChat group for two months. (As the limitation the chat text was collected by my classmates)

1. A clear division of rescue. Patients who need rare blood probably seek helps from blood stations; however, blood reserves of stations are often insufficient. They may seek helps from related folk groups. According to their requests, the Union would contact to local group manager. Then the manager will recruit suitable donors and finally complete the donation. Before releasing the information manager must confirm the authenticity of information and usually require patients to show the relevant hospital diagnosis. Then the corresponding announcements commonly include disease, address, gender and blood type. Volunteers who match the specific situation could offer helps. "Compared with the association of blood stations information transmission of requests in Union groups is more efficient and gets responds quickly. Castle called it "a new information technology paradigm", it provides the material foundation for social institutions^[9]. The group, hospital, blood stations and patients construct the complete mutual network on the drawing of blood type and media technology.

2. The normalization and guarantee of the new media resource mobilization. Even ratio of RH- is really rare (about 0.2% ~ 0.5%); the amount is still huge in China. Traffic accidents, the need for surgery patients and pregnant women in labor, they all need RH- blood. There are about 5 or 6 announcements in Anhui WeChat group monthly. The assistance information may come from national group and Union website, but the patients usually know local Union network group from friends. In reality blood stations have registered the information and formed the rare blood association. But many people especially the elderly didn't know the rare characteristics of RH- before they need. As they are not association members Union network often becomes the important daily salvage channel for them.

(1). The basis of resource mobilization: credibility and common will

Credibility always determinates successful rescue in network. "Anhui Rare Blood Type Group" which belongs to Chinese Rare Blood Type Union is an official certificated group. As a folk organization it is, Union established earlier and had a great recognition by having implemented rescues for many times successfully. And some medias have reported them. The total number on its website of rescues is 239 in 2013 (The publisher "little dragon" think the real number may be much more for the data loss). There is much news like "student of Hainan University donates blood and is awarded the outstanding contribution medal^[10]" and "Chinese Rare Blood Type Union won the award for Chinese public welfare action^[11]" on the website. These reports of Union enhance group's credibility and ensure the most important basis of resource mobilization.

Unlike official charities rely on government's institutional resources, folk resource mobilization is characterized by "common will". After a certain credibility, it should form a good embedded relational network with the government and form the mobilization integrated with "embedded framework". (Dongqiao Shi, 2009) Union's "common will" has two aspects: collective memory of group assistance and the visibility assistance of patients. As the same rare blood type owner, there is a natural bond for each other. Interviewee also said that there is a sense of "found the organization" when participated the group firstly. "Found the organization" and "found home" (Ding Wei, 2011) formed a similar regional identity that became the important psychological basis of "save" and "self rescue" in the group. "On distress situation, only we can help them". And the collective memory of successful salvages strengthens the emotion of members like the Union's slogan said "when others need help, I can stand out". It could bring cohesion which is the key to enhance

members' will of donation. Mobilization is aim to help others and it is clearly justice. Volunteers know where their blood goes to and there are not any commercial elements. So, Union network often recruits volunteers faster than blood stations by mobilization.

(2) Network architecture and OTO mode

a. The network architecture. The structure of normalized mobilization is a kind of "self-organization". Guihua Yang refers to self-organization as "*thing or self organizing system to realize the process of ordering behavior*". It is a dynamic process^[12]. The Union network's architectures also show some new characteristics. Its architecture is clearly based on the regional level. The number of union network's QQ group is more than 100 in 2009. (Ding Wei, 2011) And the number of official province WeChat group of Union is 20^[13]. But the quantity should be much more: "*there are quite a few rare blood type WeChat groups in Anhui, I have been dragged into several groups*" (from interviewee). In the Union network's introduction, except local province groups, there are function groups like "national RH group manager", "relief department reception" and "kind friends". With the development of new media, Union also sets up a WeChat public and a mobile application named "a rare blood type APP". Especially the latter, it likes a "rescue center" and tries to make the architecture more diversified by connecting volunteers directly.

b. The OTO mode. It is generally believed that WeChat like rooms in the hotel and is more suitable for friends to communicate privately. WeChat has been expanding the scope of the RH- members and also absorbing the characteristics of life. WeChat group is mixed with the information whose content involves all aspects of life by observing the chat logs. Members will also currently discuss the hot issues and grab a "red envelope" (it is a link that you can touch it to get the money from Publishers). Difference with QQ group which popularizes RH- information seriously, WeChat may turn the relationship of members from a rescuer to a friend by talking about daily life. Second, the manager always organizes a dinner party or a holiday party to strengthen the communication between members. Anhui group has organized dozens of collective activities in 2015: "*I also participated in several times, and we are all pretty happy in the party. The last is the Dragon Boat Festival; this activity was reported by the national group.*" And pictures of these activities will be shared to "circle of friends", the relationship of members has been consolidated and strengthened by online to offline mode.

3. The infiltration of business component and triple identity

(1). penetration of business and sponsorship. The difference between Chinese union network and Chinese rare network is whether to accept donations and to transform to commercialization. Union always insisted itself "*a public platform to provide assistances for rare blood type friends, since the public welfare, it is not a for-profit, won't charge any fees.*" (Ding Wei, 2011) For example, "D immunoglobulin" is a vaccine to prevent rare blood type pregnant women from the occurrence of hemolytic which cannot be purchased in domestic. Chinese rare network offers commodity for RH-pregnant by acting as a purchasing agency from Hong Kong. Union network lists only how to buy a pharmacy and show the price^[14], does not involve in chasing profit. But the situation is changing. Though remaining logo "*the earliest rare public welfare website and refuse to donate*", you can find information of raising money on the site in 2013 and issuing to the industry sponsorship before 2016 annual meeting.^[15] In the WeChat public, "jade lamp mountain man" donates tea cakes to sponsor^[16] the annual meeting. Union founder "little dragon" opens a WeChat-store and specially creates a group named "tea cakes booking". The responding income will be parts of funding for the annual meeting. WeChat public pushed out a message and claimed for subscription of remaining items after the annual meeting. The money will be incorporated into the Union fund, too.

(2). the triple identity. The group manager is generally a double identity. First, he is a blood donor and will help people who need RH- blood. Second, he is also the glue of volunteers and requesters in the mobilization. However, the stability existence of WeChat group can bring the potential profit-making opportunities acting as a purchasing agency. In his "circle of friends", information of purchasing agency could be found obviously. He does not directly recommend it to the members in the WeChat group; just use a "soften" way by talking about the goods to reduce dislike. Which cannot be ignored is that business practices also constitute a third identity of group manager as a

purchasing agency. Mobilization in the group daily needs enthusiasm; it is hard for manager to maintain enthusiasm and a good care quality in a long time. In a sense, gleaming business behaviors also help maintain stable operation of the group.

The research conclusion

1. The contradiction between rescue and chat. Chat will help promote the relations among group members in some ways. In fact, speeches are always a minority who has been met before and the rest of the “silent majority” is not enthusiastic. Too much content issue from life talking has nothing to do with the rescue and tends to bury rescue information. It is possible to delay the timing of the rescue if members set up a “don't disturb” function. Following contents are extracted from little dragon's text: *“most of our group is” group of China Rare Blood Type, look at the title; it is a rare blood type group, so everyone's topic should around a rare blood type. rescue and science are two priorities of Union... so many content you think good are not donations are the way to make money, but what's the meaning of this group we built^[17]“* It is obvious that there is a conflict zone between improving relationships of members and group functions. It may be difficult to reconcile them.

2. Free-rider and blood bank. There are two members in the interview and they are both graduate students. One is warm-hearted and donates blood for many times. He also donates blood by WeChat group twice and participates in the activities of group many times. Another is not enthusiastic about WeChat aid and does not participate in any activities. Most of the blood donors are from a minority in the statistical data in 2015. It is called “Free rider”. The goal of joining the group is just in case of her blood needs when having a baby. When new members join in, he should send the manager a ritualized slogan: “when others are in trouble, I'll stand”. But the effect is not well, even the active man also has his worries: *“...when I am in a difficult time, who will stand out? Because as far as I know, the emotion of blood donation in the group is not particularly enthusiastic, I joined WeChat group partly for the purpose of getting help from others.”*

Such worries may result from the “blood bank” thinking of the management. Chinese rare network originally was to build a “national rare blood type database” which is similar to “the CDMP data bank”. (Ding Wei, 2011) but the latter is organized by government and could be transferred across the country. Union would like to form group cohesion and reciprocal mode in rare blood type group by “science and aid”. The reciprocal altruism chain is a rational behavior; the prevalence of “free rider” in the group is a kind of “speculation” yet. It is worth mentioning union network did try to develop a “rare blood type” mobile application. It is trying to directly connect to the volunteers to integrate all mobilization links. But the effect is not well so far, users are few, there are only a few successful salvage cases. This attempt might inversely replace emotional components in mobilization with a tool. Secondly, the realistic sites and network groups have been established, the will of installing another application of members is not enthusiastic. Finally, some regional assistance are only executed by local group. It might be no need to submit to the Union again.

3. The knight-errant or chain of reciprocal altruism. Altruistic value is the goal when members donate RH- blood without any compensation. Group manager does not advocate common blood donation as they are unlikely to enjoy the security when they need (revealed by interviewer). Except security, volunteers only achieve comfort of moral level. *“Organizations can dock the social resources and economic resources of potential through the projects and activities; it could be charity resources.”* (Yonghong Long, 2012) Union network meeting was held in Beijing every past year. Members would be rewarded according to the number of blood donations. Members are issued by the numbered “union silver^[18]” in 2016. As shown in the figure below, on the front there are Union logos and issued time. On the back there are the panda-knight designs, the panda is a metaphor for “panda blood” knight-errant rescue.

Medals and slogans are both constituents of the normalized mobilization. The passion of blood donation of group members is much more enthusiastic than ordinary people even with “free rider”. New media technology provides the mobilization platform, a few patterns of the chivalrous enthusiastically donating blood is a more common case than the chain of reciprocal altruism.

Union still adopts a “shout slogan” mode; personal heroism is strong. It can also be found that Union seems to rely more on this mode to guide more members involved from the criteria of annual award. The reciprocal altruism relation was not been established in the original QQ age. It will become more difficult in the WeChat group which is focused more on individual rights.

4. Incorporate or harvest. Put the individual disaster to rise to social assistance by exposure of newspapers, radio, television and other media. Youde Zhang called it “traditional mode” mobilization. What traditional media pattern focused on is the interaction between people and society and government. In the view of technical empowerment theory, in the “south China tiger photos” and “PX” network events, folk groups are generally considered to use the new media technology to mobilize to negotiate with the government. In Yongnian Zheng’s opinion, interactions between state and society are not completely a zero-sum game in the field of Internet. Both sides of the interaction are more of a “mutual transformation” process.^[19] As a kind of “the institutional vulnerable groups”, RH- group takes the characteristics of community mobilization and is trying to encourage institutional changes. Folk organizers wish to obtain the official approval by establishing a larger type database. “Ling Feng” and “Little dragon” reveal “who are founder of Union and Rare net are both desirous to be institutionalized” (Ding Wei, 2011); however, it will be embarrassed that blood stations are also establishing a network group. Blood stations will register rare blood type group to form the official database. They will contact people on record if there is a demand for RH-blood. However, it is hard to be success, “*blood stations registered, Wuhu blood stations contacted me twice, said someone needs help, I hope I went to donate blood, but because my time is not match, both failed.*” It can be found that blood stations did not expect to incorporate Union, but establish their own network group and want to build their own leading status. But according to the text of interviewee, the emotion of members inside is much colder than Union.

The conclusion and deficiencies

By means of credibility authentication, Collective memory to identity, online to offline communication, the group could mobilize the members steadily. Although having absorbed western ingredients of reciprocal altruism, group of the mobilization are more likely to be aided by individuals. And the “panda” medal which is an annual production also suggests that managers tend to be a traditional Chinese model of “knight-errant”. But the “blood bank” thinking and “free-rider” phenomenon will affect the efficiency of resource mobilization inevitably. Due to the limitation of time and energy, this article does not observe other WeChat groups, the text of the collecting are not very well, its scientific reliability still needs to be improved.

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