

SOCIAL EXCHANGE OF CULTURAL CAPITAL: A STUDY OF KNOWLEDGE POWER ON TWITTER

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While it has long been known that use of online networking communities is associated with an increase in social capital,^a neither the volume of that increase nor the content triggers that instigate an increase in new social media networks have been thoroughly researched. Twitter, a high-volume online social network, presents measurable opportunities to demonstrate increases in social capital (virtual followers) and the various information strategies users employ to increase such follower-ship through deployment of their cultural capital. Drawing from data gathered through virtual ethnography and interviews of technology architects in New York & San Francisco social media firms, this study documents an inductive model of cultural capital exchange for social capital and verifies its validity through computational structural analysis of English-speaking twitter users across the globe (n=20,287,198).

Contrary to expectations, the results demonstrate that users view content as a form of symbolic capital; a medium for exchange that's surface has little to do with underlying social strategies. As a result, content least oriented towards marginal utility has the highest cultural to social capital conversion rate. Objects of communication oriented towards products, technologies or services have little cultural-social conversion rates, while those oriented towards arts, entertainment or people have the highest. In sum, the findings demonstrate how cultural knowledge is currently being deployed to increase historically low levels of social capital through technological infrastructures.

^aKavanaugh, A. L., D. D. Reese, J. M. Carroll, and M. B. Rosson (2005). Weak ties in networked communities. *The Information Society* 21(2), 119–131.