

MASTER'S THESIS

Disappointment as an effect of curiosity and political apathy: modernation of self-efficacy and mediation of media selection

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Disappointment as an Effect of Curiosity and Political Apathy:

Moderation of Self-efficacy and Mediation of Media Selection

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Philosophy

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Hong Kong Baptist University

June 2015

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work which has been done after registration for the degree of MPhil at Hong Kong Baptist University, and has not been previously included in a thesis or dissertation submitted to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

Signature: _____

Date: June 2015

ABSTRACT

The study adopts Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory as the framework to test antecedents and consequences in using *fanqiang* (bypassing Internet censorship) as an alternative medium along with accessible Internet, TV, newspaper and radio as mainstream media in a Chinese context. By online between-group experimentation ($N = 132$ in the experimental group, $N = 127$ in the control group), the study shows that curiosity about forbidden political content and political apathy predict *fanqiang* and most accessible media use tendencies. Moderation effects exist between curiosity and self-efficacy in predicting *fanqiang* tendencies. Disappointment as an emotional effect is directly related to curiosity and political apathy, where the mediation effects of media use tendencies are not salient. Explicit Internet censorship increases curiosity about forbidden political content and decreases the dimension of lack of interest in political apathy. However, it does not change accessible media use tendencies and disappointment levels. Still, participants show fewer of *fanqiang* tendencies than with accessible media, except radio. The results highlight the cognitive roots of motivations and emotional constructs as a part of gratification in U&G research, that self-efficacy as a necessary requirement for curiosity to drive media use, and that information attributes can change motivations. We urge future scholars to build broader explications of political apathy when applied to different societies, to try diverse methods like experimentation in U&G research, and to adopt a sociopsychological approach when studying the influences and effectiveness of Internet censorship.

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INTRODUCTION

This study contrasts curiosity about forbidden political content and political apathy as a source of motivation for online media selection within the framework of Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G). Assuming that audience members can and do respond to message stimuli irrationally at least as often as they do rationally, our research extends the traditional U&G approach by incorporating an emotional factor into the gratification obtained end of the model. Particular attention is paid to disappointment as a specific type of affective outcome following media use, given that curiosity-driven expectations, typically associated with the gratification sought end of the continuum, are likely to generate fulfillment or its opposite. In addition, self-efficacy would be an accompanying condition to curiosity in realizing media use. Clearly, the centrality of media use is manifested in its conceptual role as a mediator that is determined by message selection and determines, in turn, subsequent emotional effects.

Meanwhile, the driving force of curiosity can be especially salient in unique social and political contexts like that of China. China launched the Great Firewall project to censor the Internet; circumventing the “Wall” via software and service is technologically possible and metaphorically called “*fanqiang*” in Chinese (Harwit & Clark, 2001; MacKinnon, 2011; Wallis, 2011). The blocking mechanism indicates a high level of uncertainty, namely an information gap, that motivates curious users to *fanqiang* and to access forbidden political content. This driving force can be enhanced if users present high levels of self-efficacy in performing the task. By contrast, political apathy implies low levels of such motivation, as apathetic users are indifferent to political information and believe that *fanqiang* is troublesome. For them, the domestic mass media and accessible cyberspace tend to dominate as their source of political information. The

distinction can be especially significant among young adults, who are perceived to be more politically apathetic than other clusters of media audience. By testing relationships among curiosity about forbidden political information, self-efficacy, political apathy, online media selection and disappointment in a sample of college students, we expect to explore what cognitive and social characters drive *fanqiang* behaviors or domestic media use, how people use circumventing services, what they see when they *fanqiang* and how they respond emotionally to the content outside the Great Firewall.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chinese Internet censorship

China has adopted the most sophisticated Internet censorship system in the world (Wright, 2014). Under the umbrella goal of social harmony, an online monitoring system metaphorically known as the Great Firewall filters the Chinese Internet technologically, institutionally and psychologically. Technically, a wide range of websites and webpages are completely or partially banned, including those on topics like pornography, gambling, democracy, Tibet, Taiwan etc., which are considered to be “counterrevolutionary” and therefore politically and ideologically sensitive (Harwit & Clark, 2001, p. 394; Zittrain & Edelman, 2003, p. 72). “Internet police” monitor cyberspace manually (Harwit & Clark, 2001), while the system cultivates self-censorship mechanism among users, who believe politically sensitive topics should be avoided in online discussion (Jujaroen, 2010). Although online censorship is increasingly labor-intensive and time-consuming to maintain given constantly revolutionizing information technology, it is still feasible in both institutional and technological terms (Bailey & Labovitz, 2011; Goldsmith

& Wu, 2006). Prior research has tended to map the interaction between the controlled online world and Chinese society (e.g., Kalathil & Boas, 2001; Lacharite, 2002; Herold & Marolt, 2011); however, on a micro level, how individual Internet users respond to online censorship cognitively and behaviorally remains foggy.

When confronted by inaccessible webpages possibly blocked by censorship, Chinese Internet users have their own coping strategies. According to a 2005 survey in five major cities in China, nine percent of participants admit to sometimes, often, or frequently bypassing censorship and getting to see blocked websites (MacKinnon, 2008, p. 33). Circumventing censorship is technologically practical with proxy servers, mirror sites, etc. (Tsui, 2003; Wright, 2014). *Fanqiang*, literally “scaling the Wall,” is the metaphorical name for bypassing the online censorship corresponding to the system’s name, “the Great Firewall.” College students are the social group that is most aware of *fanqiang* practices (MacKinnon, 2008, p. 33). Though to *fanqiang* typically takes a series of technological steps not easily understood by less tech-savvy people, detailed instructions and constantly updated services are available on online forums and blogs, carefully crafted to avoid online censorship screening.¹

Meanwhile, when talking about accessing forbidden information via *fanqiang*, it has long been presumed that the pursuit of “political truth” drives it, as politically sensitive information is believed to be the main type of content censored. However, empirical evidence is rarely seen that would dig out and test underlying psychological and behavioral reasons for *fanqiang*. Why would people bear technical inconvenience to see blocked information? Is it because of a desire to pursue truth, or out of pure curiosity? Would the legally inaccessible areas of cyberspace

¹ An example of online VPN sharing can be seen at <http://www.weibo.com/1711479641/BDfDKgzsn?ref=>

overturn Chinese people's media use routines and dominate their information sourcing? Is the deviant behavior politically and socially threatening, just as the government suspected when it initially employed censorship? The micro picture is thus critical when discussing the impact, effectiveness and justification of online censorship.

Although applying to just a small proportion of Chinese media users, *fanqiang* is a significant behavior that deserves academic exploration in the field of communication research not only because of its relationship to Internet governance, as elaborated above, but also because it signals a unique way of selecting and using media, considering that successful *fanqiang* attempts require substantial cognitive effort. Unlike mass media and the accessible Internet, which can be conveniently reached, *fanqiang* is apparently a more active, intentional, and motivated behavior. In the current study, we focus on antecedents and consequences of *fanqiang* from a cognitive and behavioral perspective to explore why Chinese Internet users are motivated to get forbidden political content via *fanqiang* and accessible media, the differences between the blocked Internet and traditional information sources for these users, and how the differences exert emotional effects. Considering the active status of the audience discussed here, Uses and Gratifications Theory can be an appropriate theoretical framework.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

U&G theory is an audience-oriented approach in media effects studies that is intended to answer why audiences engage in different forms of media behaviors (Ruggiero, 2000). It descriptively clusters the social and psychological origins of needs and expectations that motivate media use and exposure, which subsequently leads to gratifications gained (Ruggiero, 2000; Sundar & Limperos, 2013, p. 506). The theory has been developed based on several assumptions. The first

assumption is that the audience is rational and intentionally chooses to use media to reach particular goals, the process of which is logical and sequential (Galloway, 1981, p. 436; Lometti, Reeves, & Bybee, 1977; McQuail, 1984, p. 185). The second assumption is that the audience enjoys an active status and that the influence of media content is limited (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Third, methodologically, it is assumed that media use motives can reflect crucial features of an audience's media experience, and that the motives can be reported by the audience (Babrow, 1988; Katz, Haas, & Gurevitch, 1973). U&G is thus an appropriate tool with which to study Chinese *fanqiang* not only because *fanqiang* can be perceived as an alternative medium to the accessible Internet and mass media, but, more importantly, because blocked webpages are not automatically available to users; they must actively seek technological solutions and invest a large amount of cognitive effort into screening information if they are to *fanqiang* successfully. This indicates that in selecting and using media inside and outside the Great Firewall, users must have rational cognition (consistent with the first assumption), as well as great motivation and intentionality (consistent with the second assumption).

More support for applying U&G theory to *fanqiang* can be found in discussions on the fit between the Internet and the theory. The interactivity and demassification attribute of the Internet corresponds to individualism and the notion of an active audience in U&G research (Ruggiero, 2000, pp. 15–6, 20). Internet users have significantly more control over their roles in online communication and discourse compared with users in the mass-media era (Williams, 1988, p. 10). In terms of the current research, we believe U&G theory is one of the best theoretical frameworks in the communication research area because *fanqiang* is basically a behavior based on cyberspace, and the fact that U&G can and should fit Internet use indicates its feasibility in application to *fanqiang*. The highly active information screening and processing involved in

fanqiang attempts further strengthens the explicatory power U&G could have in the context of the censored Internet.

In the meantime, we attempt to extend, enrich and update the theory by responding to previous criticism of it. Our contributions to the theory have four aspects, in line with critiques of U&G that revolve round the basic assumptions outlined above. First, U&G studies are not sophisticated enough to explain the root of individual needs from both sociological and psychological perspectives (W. R. Elliott & Quattlebaum, 1979; McQuail, 1984). For example, surveillance is not the fundamental motivation that drives media use; rather, surveillance could derive from the audience's cognitive needs for security, curiosity, and exploration (Katz, Blumler, et al., 1973). In response to criticism, many U&G studies have pointed out that media use can be emotionally gratifying for an audience because it helps maintain a pleasant mood, gives people a sense of achievement when they successfully cope with fear or anxiety (e.g., while watching a horror movie), and boosts self-esteem if the media content improves an audience's perceived social status (Bartsch, Mangold, Viehoff, & Vorderer, 2006, pp. 263–72). More general propositions for future U&G research are to integrate sociological, psychological, structural and cultural factors into antecedent, mediation, and consequence of media use (Ruggiero, 2000). These studies mark U&G researchers' attempts to reconceptualize media use as the integration of communication and social conditions (Rubin, 1983). Following this proposition, in the present study, curiosity and political apathy as cognitive constructs represent the roots of information needs, and drive or disengage people respectively in online information seeking. Meanwhile, self-efficacy equips individuals with the necessary perceived technological capability. We further incorporate disappointment, an emotional factor on the gratification

gained side, as an effect of media use. Therefore, the study tests the underlying motivations and consequences of media use on both cognitive and emotional levels.

The assumption that an audience's needs are pre-existing, and that corresponding gratifications are achieved based on innate needs, has been attacked. Our second contribution to U&G studies is related to this. In fact, users do not always have conscious intentions at the beginning of media exposure; ritualistic and habitual media use points to this (Ruggiero, 2000; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Researchers thus generally try to de-emphasize audience-determinism in U&G research, and argue that needs can actually develop during media use and be shaped by media content (Katz, Blumler, et al., 1973, pp. 514–5; Ruggiero, 2000; Sundar & Limperos, 2013, p. 510).² In other words, the level of activity varies at different stages of the media use process, and gratifications sought can be induced by the process itself, rather than coming entirely from needs (Ruggiero, 2000). This indicates that both media content and the use process can exert an impact on motivation, and that they should be taken into consideration in U&G research (Windahl, 1981). In the current study, we intend to respond to this critique by exploring the extent to which gratification can be aroused and shaped by knowing that a particular kind of information is censored online. Specifically, curiosity about forbidden political content or political apathy can increase or decrease when Chinese people encounter inaccessible web pages once they realize the pages have been forbidden by state censorship. The *fanqiang* behavior in this circumstance therefore implies that gratifications sought and media use motivations are substantially strengthened by the media use process and related experiences. As well, self-efficacy is a prerequisite for *fanqiang*, as circumvention of censorship requires

² Vincent and Basil (1997) provide empirical evidence of differences between print and broadcast media use. In their studies, surveillance and escapism show positive relationships to print and broadcast news consumption respectively.

considerable effort and some technical knowledge, further weakening the determinant role of the users. Meanwhile, particular attention is paid to political information because political sensation is an important part of human interest in screening information. In the Chinese context, filtered political information is rather intriguing for Internet users, as it arouses greater levels of expectation. In summary, our study highlights the effects of both the media use process and media content on gratifications sought by users, and we argue that while Internet users do enjoy an active status in choosing online media, the intensity of the gratification they seek may also be determined by the media and content themselves to a certain degree.

Our third contribution to the field is related to the fact that typical operationalization in U&G does not clearly distinguish between motivations and outcomes of use; rather, it surrogates gratification to needs (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). For example, previous studies have measured gratifications obtained by following the self-report approach, asking respondents the extent to which specific media or media programs provide them with the things they need. This widely adopted measurement has attracted much criticism for not empirically distinguishing needs from motivations. Meanwhile, methodologically, contrasting gratifications sought and gained presents greater predictive power in media selection and use than examining gratifications sought alone (Larose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001). In response to such criticism, Palmgreen and colleagues (1980, pp. 171–2) measured gratifications sought by people watching TV news by letting respondents rate how much “keeping up with current issues and events” applied to them, and gratifications gained by asking them to what extent “the network evening news programs” provided the thing they had just rated. For his part, McQuail (1984) proposed a media-cultural approach to media gratification. He contended that as audiences can experience diverse mental and emotional states like joy, anger, sadness, and curiosity (McQuail, 1984), emotional effects can therefore

practically specify gratification gained and distinguish it from gratification sought (e.g., surveillance). Accordingly, in the current study, we pinpoint disappointment as a key construct to indicate gratification gained. We chose disappointment because it can be a corresponding emotional reaction to curiosity, which conceptually involves expectation and anticipation. More importantly, in theoretical terms, the emotional factor is clearly different from curiosity and political apathy, as the latter two are cognitive mechanisms. In other words, we can circumvent the measurement problems often present in U&G research. Disappointment thus can and should be grouped with media effects.

Self-reporting in measuring media use motivations and gratifications can have serious validity problems (Babrow, 1988; Ruggiero, 2000), leading to our fourth contribution to U&G studies. The reasoning here is essentially built on a critique of the assumption outlined above that the audience is rational and intentional, and well-aware of goal and motives in selecting a specific medium. Evidence shows that people are often barely aware of the higher order or subconscious cognition that mediates behaviors when stimuli are not salient (Babrow, 1988, p. 472; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977, p. 231; Ruggiero, 2000, p. 12). Meanwhile, their needs can also be so fundamental that individuals take them for granted and therefore do not recognize them as a motivation for media use (Babrow, 1988). In addition, perceptual biases like social desirability can distort self-reports (Babrow, 1988). These all pose threats to validity and reliability in U&G research. Having noticed this, some researchers, particularly when dealing with emotional approaches to media gratifications, employ experimental designs complemented by introspective methods (Bartsch et al., 2006). This combination provides a better reflection of complex subjects. In line with this improvement, we adopt experimentation as the primary method in the present study and

rely less on self-reporting in measuring both gratifications sought and gained so as to achieve better validity.

When adapting U&G theory to the Internet, however, researchers have found three additional problems, and, we intend to explore theoretical solutions to these problems in the current study. First, although U&G has the advantage of being flexible, it may be more fruitful to be more concentrated and narrow when studying Internet use, as user experiences may change with different digital applications in a way so latent that the broad U&G paradigm cannot effectively reveal it (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). In the current research, we try to maximize specification by dividing the Internet into the accessible sector and the forbidden sector available only via *fanqiang*, while cognitive constructs and emotional factors represent our attempt to discover underlying motivations and gratifications, rather than using the overly general typology. Additionally, we further the effort by segmenting the audience by social and indigenous conditions, as different groups of users may have distinct patterns in selecting and using Internet applications.³ If we took the audience as a whole, less-involved users could cover significant features of heavy users. In the current study, we focus especially on college students as a user group. This is because college students tend to be early adopters and heavy users of the Internet, and have greater technology literacy and curiosity about the unknown world than many other groups (Diddi & LaRose, 2006). *Fanqiang* is also more popular among college students than other social groups (MacKinnon, 2008, p. 33). Such students thus have potentially powerful motivations (i.e., curiosity about forbidden political information) and higher potential accessibility (i.e., access to the Internet and capacity to *fanqiang*), making it possible for us to

³ For example, young people tend to be heavy users of the Internet, while penetration rate among the elderly is much lower.

explore relationships among motivation, *fanqiang*, and effects. In addition, college students have been an especially important group in media-use research, as they are in the formative period of what will become relatively stable patterns of information consumption in their later lifetimes, and information, news and knowledge are perceived to be particularly important to future engagement in political and public affairs (e.g., voting), democracy and social progression (Diddi & LaRose, 2006, pp. 196–7). However, the present study does not mean to imply that college students are the only group of users that deserve academic exploration related to *fanqiang* and U&G theory; rather, the study indicates that future research could focus profitably on younger and older people to fill in research gaps and present a clearer overall picture.

The second problem related to U&G research as applied to internet use addresses criticism of the influence of use processes, as new functionalities of emerging digital media can trigger new motivations and gratifications (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). The evidence supporting the argument is that new media have cultivated new rituals and instrumental activities, such as checking Facebook updates or watching movies on tablets while commuting on public transit (Sundar & Limperos, 2013, pp. 506, 511; see Reeves & Nass, 2000 for a more systematic introduction). *Fanqiang* as a unique online application in the Chinese context gives rise to the possibility of new motivations and effects. The *fanqiang* process is special primarily because of its functionality, which enables Internet users to see forbidden information, accompanied by new routines, interface experiences and senses of presence in cyberspace. For example, people have to engage the *fanqiang* service whenever they want access to forbidden web pages; they may experience lowered loading efficiency as a result, and begin to think that the “outside” Internet is a different world from the domestic Internet. We presume that curiosity about forbidden political content and disappointment are the new motivation and effect, respectively, tailored to the

fanqiang function and the context. Meanwhile, cognitive and emotional differences may be induced when people are in censored or uncensored cyberspace yet exposed to the same content, as new features increase difficulty of use, which subsequently elevates audience expectations and disappointment levels.

Researchers have encountered a third problem related to U&G research and the internet. An insufficient explanation of key notions results in a further lack of accuracy in concepts and makes conceptualization in the U&G approach rather vague and general, casting doubt on its theoretical statement-building capacity, especially when applied to the Internet (P. Elliott, 1974; Lometti et al., 1977; Ruggiero, 2000). Many gratification clusters in traditional media continue to drive media use in the cyber context (e.g., surveillance). The criticism of the U&G theory here is thus not surprising considering that its unclear conceptualization makes it so broad that most seemingly unique gratifications in specific Internet applications can also be categorized under labels in mass media (Rubin, 2002; Sundar & Limperos, 2013, pp. 509, 520).⁴ This further highlights the need to specify the gratifications at a more nuanced level (Rubin, 2002). As briefly illustrated above, we intend to employ a particularly focused perspective in explaining gratifications sought and gained through *fanqiang*. We specify the information needs by two

⁴ In reviewing previous studies on uses and gratifications of the Internet, video games, social networking services, YouTube etc., it is obvious that the results are fairly consistent and that the motivations and satisfactions people experience in mass media use overlap to a great extent with those experienced in the cyber context (Sundar & Limperos, 2013, pp. 507–8). As this line of research mounts, several types of motivations in media selection and use appear to remain robust and reliable across media and cultures, including escapism social utility (i.e., acquiring information for conversations), personal identity (i.e., enhancing attitudes and values), and surveillance (i.e., keeping informed about community and events) (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 26). Katz, Haas & Curevitch (1973) and W.R. Elliott & Quattlebaum (1979) have attempted to integrate clusters of gratifications sought to cover needs in different media and use conditions. The former study identifies 14 clusters of needs, ranging from strengthening self-knowledge or knowledge of society to weakening contact with self to strengthening contact with others. The latter study employs two more general clusters of needs: one is needs related to the individual's desire to maintain contact with society; the other one is more individual-oriented. Clearly, the clusters make it quite difficult not to label any gratifications emerging from contemporary U&G research into them.

cognitive factors and the gratifications gained by an emotional factor. Although many other detailed constructs can be potentially powerful predictors of media selection, use and effects, here we are focused on curiosity about forbidden political content, self-efficacy, political apathy, and disappointment, and expect future research to enrich the theoretical framework further in other directions.

To summarize, by involving curiosity about forbidden political information, self-efficacy and political apathy in motivation for online media selection, and subsequent emotional effects, i.e. disappointment, as gratification gained in the context of the Chinese Internet, this study will respond to prior critiques of U&G pertaining to conceptualization, measurement, and application to new media contexts. We intend to extend the theory to a censored Internet context and build a clearer theoretical statement.

Curiosity as motivator in media selection

As a cognitive construct, curiosity is the desire for new knowledge and sensory experience, and can motivate exploratory behavior (Reio Jr., Petrosko, Wiswell, & Thongsukmag, 2006, p. 118). We presume that curiosity can be a significant predictor for *fanqiang* motivations in the present study because, first, curiosity has intense motivating power in driving behaviors. It has been identified as a developmentally vital and biologically helpful human desire for information and experience that motivates exploratory behaviors in most domains of human operation, including education, occupation and recreation, and contributes to evolutionary fitness and evolvment, achievement, social competence, etc. (Gordon & Ahissar, 2012; Gottlieb, Oudeyer, Lopes, & Baranes, 2013; Hartung & Renner, 2013; Harvey, Novicevic, Leonard, & Payne, 2007; Reio Jr. et al., 2006). Curiosity can even be quite influential in motivating people to expose themselves

consciously to situations with potentially harmful consequences (Guo, Zhang, & Zhai, 2010; Litman, 2005; Loewenstein, 1994). *Fanqiang* is an exploratory behavior because users actively deal with technological difficulties and afford possibly negative consequences for such deviant attempts; more importantly, they intentionally search for information online. Such activity, therefore, is likely to be driven by curiosity.

Second, situations that can induce strong curiosity would include those in censored cyberspace; in other words, curiosity about forbidden political content is likely to be induced in the censored context, thus making curiosity a significant predictor for *fanqiang*. Previous studies show that curiosity triggers tend to be novel, uncertain and complex (Rotgans & Schmidt, 2014; Wu & Miao, 2013). Uncertainty is found to be more effective in triggering curiosity and exploratory behaviors than is novelty (Charlesworth, 1964, pp. 1169–70). In our study, people could be made quite curious when they were confronted with inaccessible web pages presumably filtered by state censorship because the inaccessibility conflicted with their expectations and they were uncertain about what the banned information was, making this a seductive circumstance.

There is overwhelming agreement on the motivating power curiosity can have in human behavior, and different approaches have been adopted to conceptualize curiosity. In the current study, we try to build the notion of curiosity about forbidden political information based mainly on research by Berlyne and Litman, and conceptualize curiosity via intolerance to political information gaps (intolerance) and expectations regarding probable outcomes (expectation). The conceptualization can be further elaborated in the following four ways: first, information gaps mean uncertainty, which induces the impulse to uncover the unknown information. For Chinese Internet users who are aware that certain political information is forbidden, the uncertainty and information gaps could invoke curiosity and a desire to know what the banned information is and

what banned web pages contain. This intolerance can subsequently lead to behaviors like *fanqiang* to fill the information gaps. An intolerance for information gaps is referred to as “the principle of closure” by early Gestalt psychologists, who held that an individual’s tendency to close a cognitive gap in the external world played a key role in motivating exploratory behaviors (Berlyne, 1954, p. 181). Following this line of research, Loewenstein (1994) constructs an information-gap theory, in which curiosity is conceptualized as the feeling of deprivation in circumstances in which individuals are conscious of a gap in knowledge. The information gaps that cause uncertainty also result in tension or frustration that enjoys influential power in motivating behaviors (Silvia, 2012). Building on Loewenstein’s research, Litman proposes a feeling of interest (I-type) and a feeling of deprivation (D-type) typology to define curiosity (Litman & Spielberger, 2003). I-type curiosity implies that people are intrinsically motivated by the desire for novelty and exploration itself, with no rewards or consequent aims (Silvia, 2012). D-type curiosity, in contrast, is a “need-to-know” inclination with moderately unpleasant feelings induced by information gaps (Litman, 2010, p. 397; Silvia, 2012). D-type curiosity is also proven to drive more intense information-seeking behaviors compared with I-type (Jirout & Klahr, 2012; Litman, 2010). More evidence on the link between the deprivation feeling and *fanqiang* can be seen in reactance theory in psychology study, which states that when individuals believe that some of their freedoms are threatened, they will be motivated to maintain the free situation (Miron & Brehm, 2006). In the Chinese case, users are deprived of the freedom to access to sensitive information; this threat is likely to invoke reactance like *fanqiang* to restore the freedom. In the current study, we narrow down the information to that which is political. Although not all web pages banned by the Chinese state and accessed via *fanqiang* are political in nature, political scandal and sensation are inherently part of human interest, and thus may

attract the strongest curiosity in Chinese Internet users seeking to access forbidden content. In this context, curiosity is basically the feeling of deprivation, as certain kinds of information are known to be intentionally blocked, deleted and filtered by Internet censorship in China. The information absence induces feelings of tension and intensifies the urge to see the information. To satisfy the emotional and cognitive needs, getting rid of the block to see the banned information, namely *fanqiang*, is one of the solutions. Therefore, curiosity about forbidden political information can be quite powerful in motivating Internet users to bypass censorship, access the banned information, close the information gap and reduce feelings of tension.

The second way in which conceptualization is further developed here relates to the recognition that the driving power of an information gap is more salient when individuals have prior experience to which to refer. For Chinese Internet users, forbidden political events that appear not to exist online are believed to be available in the cyberspace outside the Great Firewall, which is the basis of the perceived information gap. Berlyne (1954, p. 180) argues that novel situations are always composed of elements that resemble previous experiences to some extent. Stimuli with an intermediate degree of unfamiliarity and novelty, therefore, are the most curiosity-arousing settings for many people, as they are confronted by uncertainty, yet may also refer to similar situations in previous experiences (Berlyne, 1954).⁵ Further evidence may be found in psychological research on the relationship between stimuli and humans' hedonic values. An inverse U-shaped curve shows that feelings of pleasure peak at medium levels of stimulus; when the stimulus intensity continues to increase, aversive experience will occur (Wu & Miao, 2013). The relationship between the behavioral intensity of closing an information gap and the size of

⁵ In contrast, higher levels of stimulus will lead to anxiety, tension and frustration rather than curiosity (Berlyne, 1954).

the information gap itself presents a similar curve (Jirout & Klahr, 2012, p. 157). Curiosity is thus more powerful in circumstances involving moderate information gaps that lack perceived correct, accurate and relevant information (Gottlieb et al., 2013; Litman, 2008; Loewenstein, 1994). In the Chinese case, people are aware that some political information is blocked by censorship only when they know what is not blocked, i.e., they have some degree of prior knowledge, because forbidden cyberspace does not confront users in an unsolicited way. For example, if people have heard some political news, search for it online and find it cannot be accessed, this block would represent an information gap; in this case, hearing about the political news is the premise for searching, and represents prior knowledge to which they can refer. This implies that the curiosity induced by missing information in the Chinese context tends to have high levels of driving power. Curiosity about forbidden political content is thus likely to motivate *fanqiang* efforts.

The tendency to close an information gap is changeable, subject to stimuli (Loewenstein, 1994, p. 76; TenHouten, 2006). This leads to the third way in which this study further develops conceptualization. Although being curious is a personality trait, intensity of curiosity may be substantially enhanced given the appropriate stimuli, as illustrated above, and confrontation by inaccessible websites is a typical case right to the point. Regarding the situational vs. constant nature of curiosity, research on trait-state curiosity provides supporting evidence. This approach differentiates individual differences in curiosity intensity and consistency across situations (Kashdan & Steger, 2007). Whereas high trait curiosity indicates that people are more readily curious, in more situations, with greater intensity and for a longer time (Beswick, 1971; Day, 1970), state curiosity emphasizes subjective feelings of curiosity in very particular given

circumstances (Boyle, 1983).⁶ The difference implies that curiosity can be quite variable and therefore significantly enhanced in certain situations by stimuli; greater behavioral tendencies to close information gaps are the corresponding consequences. In the Chinese case, if people encounter forbidden web pages, especially those seeming to contain political content in which they are interested, curiosity levels will be higher than the average trait curiosity level. This enhanced curiosity about forbidden political content, therefore, has greater power in motivating exploratory behaviors, accompanied by a sense of intolerance for information gaps.

There is a fourth and final way in which this research elaborates U&G conceptualization. Curiosity is also perceived to be an interaction between desire and expectation. This argument is built on two assumptions: one is that uncertainty and absence of information result in an information gap (Litman, 2010); the other one is that people are rational and make decisions based on benefit maximization. The two indicate that individuals will not intentionally choose to experience aversive situations; in other words, when actual exploratory behaviors are triggered, they are likely to be the result of expectation that potential outcomes will be positive. In curiosity research, Litman (2010), for example, argues that although I- and D-type curiosity show different levels of intensity of desire (i.e., driving force), they indicate similarly high levels of expectation. To be more specific, when curiosity is aroused, people who detect an information gap will want

⁶ Specific-diversive curiosity, proposed by Berlyne, also shows the changeability of curiosity. It is distinguished by the “direction” of curiosity (Berlyne, 1954). Whereas specific curiosity is aroused by a particular kind of information, diversive curiosity does not have such direction and mainly aims at reducing boredom (Wu & Miao, 2013, p. 18:3). Put another way, information-seeking behaviors sparked by specific curiosity are intended to seek answers and knowledge to a question; those emerging from diversive curiosity instead try to search for generally novel stimuli to keep the searcher interested (Reio Jr., Petrosko, Wiswell, & Thongsukmag, 2006, p. 120). Although the controversy over whether curiosity can truly be diversive and whether the contrast between specific and diversive curiosity is naturally salient or artificial is still underway (Litman & Spielberger, 2003; Schmitt & Lahroodi, 2008; Wu & Miao, 2013), many subsequent studies have been built on this conceptualization because of its clear distinctions between different types of curiosity and, more importantly, it reveals the optimized exposure to novel stimuli that the two types can motivate by working together (Loewenstein, 1994; Reio Jr. et al., 2006).

to discover the missing or new information, with an expectation that gaining that information will be enjoyable. The pleasant feelings are expected to lie in both reduced uncertainty, and thus lower tension levels, and in the (presumably interesting) nature of the information itself.

Based on the four aspects of elaboration mentioned above, it is apparent that intolerance to information gaps will drive behavioral tendencies with positive expectations. Therefore, in the Chinese case, when users are online and encounter a political site, they will be more curious about what information it contains if the content is blocked by censorship. This is likely to motivate *fanqiang* to uncover the content. The likely correlations between curiosity and *fanqiang* can be further seen in prior research on curiosity-driven media use. In communication research, curiosity has been a salient cognitive construct that drives media selection and use. For example, morbid curiosity, which is defined as the desire “vicariously [to] experience tragic events,” can predict physiological arousal from negative news stories (Hoffner, Fujioka, Ye, & Ibrahim, 2009, p. 199; Pinkerton & Zhou, 2008).⁷ Curiosity about others’ opinions is also proven to motivate social media or instant messaging use as a complement to TV viewing (Han & Lee, 2014). The findings imply the strong driving force that curiosity can exert in media selection and use. Use of the “forbidden Internet” can be seen as an alternative media choice to that of the accessible Internet and mass media; therefore, it is likely that curiosity can motivate *fanqiang*.

As demonstrated above, the notion of curiosity can be conceptualized by intolerance to political information gaps and corresponding expectations about the probable results of overcoming such gaps. In the Chinese case, users encountering a political website will be more

⁷ Physiological arousal is also proven to be positively related to news interest and intentional exposure to tragic news (Hoffner, Fujioka, Ye, & Ibrahim, 2009). In addition, curiosity about sexual and morbid events has attracted much exploration in terms of its association with film preferences (Zuckerman & Litle, 1986) and with risky behaviors like aggression, smoking and drug use (Arnett, 1994).

curious about the information it contains if the content is blocked by censorship (triggering intolerance), and will tend to assume that the information must be interesting and sensational (piquing expectation). Subsequently, this will stimulate *fanqiang* behaviors and other media use to uncover the content, as media are one of the most effective and convenient ways to solve the problem. Hence, we hypothesize:

H1: People will be significantly more curious when they are kept from information that they believe to be deliberately blocked.

H2: *Fanqiang* tendencies are positively correlated with curiosity about forbidden political content.

H3: Tendencies to use accessible (a) Internet, (b) TV, (c) radio and (d) newspaper to obtain political information is positively correlated with curiosity about forbidden political content.

H4: People tend to use (a) *fanqiang*, accessible (b) Internet, (c) newspaper, (d) TV and (e) radio more frequently when they confront explicitly censored information than that which is more subtly, implicitly censored.

However, when comparing *fanqiang* to domestic media, the latter will still prevail in usage. Although curious users are strongly motivated to *fanqiang* and access forbidden political information, *fanqiang* is far more time-consuming and requires more mental, financial and technological effort compared to that required by accessible media that are conveniently available all the time. Thus, given the choice between *fanqiang* and accessible online media, people will use the latter more. We therefore hypothesize:

H5: People tend to use accessible media more frequently than *fanqiang*.

Self-efficacy as a moderator of curiosity in predicting fanqiang

Originally proposed and tested by Bandura, self-efficacy refers to individual judgment regarding how well one can perform a behavior required to achieve a particular goal, and the degree to which they are confident of succeeding (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). In other words, self-efficacy is not the faculties that people actually have, but their belief regarding what they can do with what they perceive they have in a variety of circumstances (Bandura, 1997, p. 37). Hence the construct should be understood in personal perceptual terms (Rodgers, Conner, & Murray, 2008). We thus believe that the self-efficacy notion in the current study covers Internet users' confidence in successfully executing *fanqiang* tasks. This could be especially crucial when it comes to predicting *fanqiang* in the current study, considering the great technological difficulty with which users are constantly confronted. Users can easily abandon *fanqiang* attempts if they do not think they can actually succeed in circumventing censorship.

We believe that self-efficacy is likely to be related to *fanqiang* primarily because self-efficacy has been a significant predictor of both behavioral intentions and behaviors in various domains, such as social behavior, achievement strivings, etc. (Bandura, 1982, p. 129). The predictive power of self-efficacy remains consistently high; however, the tasks are difficult for individuals (Bandura, 1977, pp. 206–7, 1982, p. 122; Rodgers et al., 2008; Zimmerman, 2000). The mechanism of self-efficacy's impact, according to Bandura, operates on cognitive levels (Bandura, 1993). In the cognitive process, judgment of self-efficacy, whether accurate or not, determines personal goal setting and commitment to achieving the goal (Bandura, 1982, 1993). The greater self-efficacy individuals have, the more likely they will successfully use their skills and accomplish the tasks they set for themselves, while the fact that behavior will change along

with a change in perceived self-efficacy level provides evidence for this assertion (Bandura, 1982, p. 127, 1993).⁸ Therefore, on a cognitive level, judgment of personal capability and controllability in bypassing online censorship is likely to determine the degree of commitment in executing the behavior.

The probable correlation between self-efficacy and *fanqiang* is further shown when the domain of self-efficacy intersects with information technology. Technology self-efficacy is defined as the belief that “one has the sufficient and correct abilities and skills to be successful when dealing with a technology-related task” (Huffman, Whetten, & Huffman, 2013, p. 1780). Internet self-efficacy significantly predicts Internet usage ($r^2 = .425$) (Larose et al., 2001), and online applications use, such as online shopping (Perea y Monsuwé, Dellaert, & de Ruyter, 2004).⁹ These studies provide further evidence of self-efficacy as a driving force, because *fanqiang* is not only an individual behavior, but involves knowledge of information technology, and self-efficacy shows consistent power in predicting both a variety of behaviors and information technology use, as illustrated above.

Apart from self-efficacy’s predictive power, we further reason that forbidden web pages and applications are not convenient media options available like mass media, with free entry; instead, both technological literacy and cognitive effort are required to search for available technological resources, figure out how to use them, and persist when they fail if one is to *fanqiang* successfully and get access to blocked cyberspace. This particularly highlights the important role

⁸ Experimental evidence supportive of the argument is that among students with the same level of mathematical ability, those with higher self-efficacy show consistently higher accurate solution rates (Bandura, 1993, p. 119). Similar results are also found when dealing with solving conceptual problems (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 87).

⁹ In addition, people with high computer self-efficacy are found to adopt more high-technology products and innovations (Compeau & Higgins, 1995), and perform better in computer training (Webster & Martocchio, 1992).

that self-efficacy can play in Chinese Internet users' selection and use of online media, because the more efficacious and confident Chinese Internet users perceive themselves to be, and the less difficult they think *fanqiang* is, the more they will *fanqiang*. We therefore hypothesize:

H6: Self-efficacy is positively related to *fanqiang*.

We argue, however, that the predictive power examined in the present research is not direct; curiosity may interact with self-efficacy in predicting *fanqiang*. This potential moderation derives from the expectation factor shared by both notions. More specifically, a behavior will be activated if individuals expect it will produce anticipated benefits (Bandura, 1977, p. 193).¹⁰ Thus, confidence of success is developed based on practicability appraised according to a person's aggregate experiences, ranging from personal performance accomplishment to vicarious experience to verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1977, pp. 195–200; Baum, 1973). This cognitive processing of information from stimuli takes up the central role in behavior initiation and change, maintaining perseverance in adverse circumstances and resilience against failure (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1993, p. 131; Compeau & Higgins, 1995). The appraisal of confidence is initiated after the individual forms anticipation regarding the potential benefit of the behavior. This is because assessment based on prior experience takes cognitive effort; if one cannot see the reward, and thus lacks essential incentive, then confidence in judgement needs not to be triggered. Anticipation, however, builds when a person becomes curious, building expectations that the

¹⁰ Representation of future events, which mainly covers prediction of potential behavioral outcomes (Bandura, 1977, p. 192), is incorporated into the current cognitive appraisals in three ways: causal attributions, outcome expectancies and cognized goals (Bandura, 1989, 1993, p. 128). Individuals with high self-efficacy attribute failures to insufficient effort, not low ability (Alden, 1986; Bandura, 1993, p. 128); expectations regarding potential outcomes that can motivate behaviors are processed based partly on people's beliefs about what they can do, i.e., self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993, pp. 128–30); cognized goals that can strengthen and maintain motivations function primarily via the self-influence process, in which people assess the discrepancy between goals and their current status, and persist in effort until they match (Bandura, 1993, p. 130; Locke & Latham, 1990).

outcome of the curiosity could be positive. In the current study, expectation regarding the potential mental benefit of and information gained from *fanqiang*, therefore, becomes a crucial trigger for cognitive appraisal. When curious people are denied access to information, self-efficacy functions by cognitively assessing the feasibility and possibility of trying to overcome the access obstacle, based on individuals' previous experiences with bypassing technological blocks. In other words, self-efficacy is influential in predicting *fanqiang* only when curiosity about forbidden political content is present.

The moderation of the relationship between curiosity and *fanqiang* by self-efficacy is further evident from the angle of curiosity as a part of motivation. Only when people present both motivation and ability are they likely to engage in effortful thinking and the performance of difficult tasks (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Self-efficacy concerns individuals' assessment of their own capabilities and, subsequently, the perceived possibility and feasibility of achieving their goals. If self-efficacy is absent, chances are that people will execute attempts ineffectively, regardless of whether or not they are actually competent (Bandura, 1982). *Fanqiang* is essentially a complex technological task that many people may find difficult and lack sufficient confidence to attempt. Such people may withdraw from the effort of bypassing online censorship, even when their curiosity is aroused by an information gap and they are curious about political Internet content that is forbidden them. This implies that self-efficacy is more powerful than curiosity about such content when correlated with *fanqiang*. Hence we hypothesize:

H7: Self-efficacy moderates the relationship between curiosity about forbidden political content and *fanqiang* tendencies.

Political apathy in motivation to select media

Political apathy is largely a concept in the domain of public affairs, defined as a disinterest in political participation, and particularly in voting, a function that is seen to be especially important for democracy (Bennett, 2000, p. 12; Dean, 1960, p. 187; Thompson & Horton, 1960). Research more broadly describes political apathy as citizens' unwillingness to exert effort to be engaged in political activities in even the most basic forms (Pinkleton & Weintraub Austin, 2004, p. 322). Basically, as a cognitive construct, political apathy signals indifference and inattentiveness to public affairs, with the belief that making any effort is troublesome. For instance, apathetic citizens tend to think voting "is a hassle" and keeping informed about political affair "is too much trouble" (Pinkleton & Weintraub Austin, 2004, p. 326). In the current study, we presume that political apathy could be another predictor of *fanqiang* and domestic media use primarily because it essentially stands in contrast to the curiosity about forbidden political content that indicates high levels of interest and motivation. In comparison, political apathy would negatively predict *fanqiang* and domestic media use tendencies, and be negatively associated with curiosity about forbidden political content. Another reason we chose political apathy as an independent construct is its close relationships to media consumption. According to previous studies, political apathy has predictive power in media use. High levels of apathy correlate to lack of political media use (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). Earlier research also found that alienated individuals use more "fantasy-oriented" electronic media (i.e., radio and television) than "information-oriented" ones (i.e., print media like books) (Pietilä, 1970, p.

239).¹¹ When considering *fanqiang* as an alternative medium to more accessible ones, political apathy is likely to show similar relationships with use tendencies.

We expect to make three additional contributions to our research field in the theoretical development of political apathy. First, we attempt to extend the concept by broadening the notion of public engagement to searches for and use of political information, and by applying and adapting it to an Asian or, more specifically, Chinese context. The notion has been constructed based on Western democratic contexts and voting systems, those of the U.S. in particular, given that voting has remained consistently important in conceptualizing and measuring political apathy in previous studies (e.g., Dean, 1960).¹² In essence, the most critical point in constructing political apathy lies in the disengagement from political affairs, in which citizens are supposed to assume public responsibility. When it comes to China, which does not use a democratic voting system, actively searching for and using political information from the Internet should also be considered significant because staying informed about political events, facts and history is a prerequisite for making political decisions, and keeping oneself up-to-date by getting political information from media weighs more heavily in the public engagement domain when voting is basically absent.

In our second contribution, we take political apathy as an independent factor that determines media use patterns, as political apathy seems to be more widely treated as a social problem and

¹¹ When serving as a dependent variable, political apathy is positively predicted by media satisfaction, because when users believe the information that news media provide is already satisfactory, they feel less need for additional media use and political information, thereby enhancing political apathy (Pinkleton, Austin, Zhou, Willoughby, & Reiser, 2012).

¹² In Dean's (1960, p. 187) study, Voting Apathy is pinpointed as one of the dimensions in conceptualizing and operationalizing of political apathy. It refers to the lack of actual voting, measured by voting records on 12 consecutive election occasions.

studies tend to examine what constructs predict it (e.g., Bynner & Ashford, 1994; Yamamoto & Kushin, 2014). We have demonstrated above the predictive power political apathy has in media use. Clearly, apathetic individuals are less-curious about political information, less-motivated, and less-intentional in their media choices. Therefore, political apathy will negatively predict selection and use of accessible media, to say nothing of *fanqiang*, which takes substantial intentionality and cognitive effort to execute. When contrasting mainstream online media with *fanqiang*, politically apathetic audiences are more likely to be exposed to the former, given its convenience and ease of use.

In the current study, particular attention is given to Chinese college students because, compared to mature and middle-aged citizens, young adults, who are increasingly more individualistic and materialistic, are found to be particularly apathetic when it comes to political engagement, such as voting, political news viewing and participating in political parties (Snell, 2010; Thompson & Horton, 1960, p. 192). Political apathy among the young is also shown to have increased since the 1970s in the U.S., according to ballot records (Bennett, 2000). Our study thus makes a third contribution to our research field in choosing young adults as subjects because they are thus presumed to be the most apathetic cluster in terms of political activities, including searches for and use of political information. Political apathy thus can be contrasted with curiosity about forbidden political information to the fullest extent, and we are also more likely to detect more clearly these subjects' relationships to online media use. We expect to be able to inform future research on young adults about their political information use habits so that scholars may further discuss relationships between media consumption and public engagement.

We adopt a social psychological viewpoint in approaching the conceptualization of political apathy. We believe that political apathy involves lack of interest in political activities, perceived

irrelevance of public affairs and a lack of attention to political events. First, lack of interest in political activity is a cornerstone in defining political apathy. In prior research, political interest has been held up as one of the dominant dimensions in approaching political apathy. Psychological involvement in public affairs – in other words political interest – is defined as “the degree to which politics arouses a citizen’s curiosity” (Bennett, 2000, p. 13; Deth, 1990, p. 278). In the current study, individuals who are apathetic to political information will evince an uninterested attitude when confronted with forbidden political websites. To them, being censored or not makes no difference, and they are less likely than curious people to explore what is blocked.

Second, perceived irrelevance indicates individuals’ beliefs that they are not capable when it comes to determining political affairs, so they do not have a sense of personal connection and commitment to public activity. Social psychologists argue that individuals become uninformed about and apathetic to public engagement because they are convinced of their powerlessness by bureaucratized and isolated social structure (Seeman, 1966, p. 355). The mechanism happens when individuals believe that external control (e.g., chance) dominates political affairs, and thus become less likely to participate in control-relevant learning (Seeman, 1966). Similarly, a sense of futility is proposed by some qualitative research to be an antecedent for political apathy (Bennett, 2000; Rosenberg, 1954). Individuals may be reluctant to participate politically because they believe they are insignificant, powerless or incompetent, or that political forces such as political representatives, the political “machine” and government itself are unmanageable (Rosenberg, 1954, pp. 355–7). The argument is supported by evidence showing that an acute sense of powerlessness is consistently correlated with low political knowledge, and less interest in discussing politics and keeping up with international affairs; this relationship is believed to be

generalizable cross-culturally and to a wide range of behavior-relevant information (Seeman, 1966, pp. 356, 358, 362). When it comes to the Chinese context, apathetic individuals tend to believe that the nation's course is determined by the dominant political party and that they are not able to participate in any change. In this circumstance, keeping informed about political events, knowledge and information is believed to be meaningless. Therefore, apathetic people are less likely to use either domestic media or *fanqiang* to access political content.

Third, lack of attention to political information and public affairs is a key dimension in terms of behavior. Political apathy is reflected in less time spent in political discussion, less money allocated to political activities, less thought invested in public affairs, a lower level of emotional involvement and the predominance of fatalism and feelings of helplessness (Bennett, 2000; Rosenberg, 1951). The mechanism begins when individuals are not able to internalize the framing of mass media, while their sense of helplessness increases (Pietilä, 1970, p. 248). In this stage, individuals may try to keep up with political events and to compensate for the feeling of helplessness (Pietilä, 1970, pp. 248–9). If this fails, they will react instead with complete withdrawal (Pietilä, 1970, pp. 248–9). In this phase, apathetic people pay less attention to political information, let alone to *fanqiang*, which requires a great deal of cognitive investment.

In sum, we intend to adopt political apathy as a social psychological concept to describe lack of interest, perceived irrelevance and lack of attention to political information. We presume that it has negative relationships with media use and with curiosity about forbidden political content. We thus hypothesize:

H8: Political apathy is inversely associated with curiosity about forbidden political information.

H9: The *Fanqiang* tendency is negatively related to political apathy.

H10: The tendency to use accessible (a) Internet, (b) TV, (c) radio and (d) newspaper to obtain political information is negatively related to political apathy.

H11: People will be significantly less apathetic when they are kept from information that they believe to be deliberately blocked.

Disappointment as an emotional outcome of media use

The study identifies disappointment as an effect of media use. The appointment has both theoretical and practical concerns. In theoretical terms, we chose disappointment because it corresponds to the expectation dimension in curiosity and political apathy constructs. Disappointment represents failed expectations. In the Chinese case, people would expect the content they access after successfully bypassing censorship to be enjoyable, informative and pleasant. Yet when the actual outcome fails to meet the initial expectation, potentially strong disappointment will present. In addition, as we have demonstrated, disappointment is one of the possible emotional outcomes of media selection and use under the Uses and Gratifications framework. This is not intended to imply that disappointment is the only emotion that *fanqiang* use could elicit; rather, it could be one of the most probable results considering the curiosity motivations.

In practical terms, we believe disappointment is important in discussing longitudinal impacts of Internet censorship. Disappointment acts as a negative feedback to the individual active motivations and behaviors. When the negative experiences increase, users are presumably discouraged to further the *fanqiang* attempts; or, possibly, they locate the reasons to themselves and more actively try different *fanqiang* and information searching strategies. While the unsettled discussion calls for future studies, it is closely related to the effectiveness of the

Internet censorship. The Great Firewall is psychologically effective if future research shows that the negative experiences discourage *fanqiang* use; and if the discouragement does not present, then the question becomes how the censorship system maintains its stability and overall influence when more and more users attempt to circumvent it.

Absence of expected outcomes has formed the core of disappointment conceptualization. Disappointed people experience feeling of powerlessness, and tend to do nothing but seek to escape a disappointing situation (Zeelenberg, van Dijk, Manstead, & vanr de Pligt, 2000, p. 524). Several dimensions, including unexpectedness and the motivation to access something pleasurable are proposed to characterize the notion of disappointment (Zeelenberg et al., 2000, pp. 523–4).¹³ When individuals make decisions under circumstances of uncertainty, they anticipate outcomes, including emotional feelings, before taking actions (Delquié & Cillo, 2006a; Zeelenberg et al., 2000). If the actual results they get are not aligned with or, more specifically, are worse than what was expected, the disconfirmed expectations will induce disappointment (Bell, 1985; Zeelenberg et al., 2000). In other words, disappointment is derived from the absence of positive outcomes, not necessarily the presence of negative outcomes (van Dijk, 1999, p. 129). The intensity of disappointment is positively related to the disparity between actual and expected results (Delquié & Cillo, 2006b; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 1999, p. 88). Therefore, in the current study, disappointment is assumed to indicate expectation fulfillment levels. Media use driven by either curiosity about forbidden political information or by political apathy contains expectations regarding what the content looks like and that the information gained is likely to be enjoyable.

¹³ Alternatively, outcome-related disappointment (ORD) and person-related disappointment (PRD) are proposed to distinguish the emotions felt regarding situations and people respectively, with the former presenting significantly higher levels of unexpectedness because individuals hold much more explicit expectations for enjoyment regarding events than regarding people (Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002).

When positive outcomes are absent, people experience disappointment, the intensity of which will increase in accordance with the disparity between reality and expectation. Accordingly, the more curious people are, the greater expectation they have when using media, and, in turn, the more disappointed they may possibly be.

The relationship between anticipated emotion and behavioral tendency also confirm the possibility of disappointment being an effect of media use. Anticipated disappointment, in addition to experienced disappointment, is found to be taken into consideration in information processing and decision making (Zeelenberg et al., 1998). This is especially the case when people are uncertain about outcomes, as they will choose less-risky options or deliberately dampen expectations if they foresee potential disappointment or/and have greater levels of disappointment aversion (Brandstätter & Kriz, 2001, pp. 370–1; Guttentag & Ferrell, 2008; van Dijk, 1999; Zeelenberg et al., 1998).¹⁴ The correlation has been empirically confirmed between anticipated disappointment and health-related decisions (Chua, Gonzalez, Taylor, Welsh, & Liberzon, 2009), risk aversion (Brandstätter & Kriz, 2001), and post-choice valuation (Inman, Dyer, & Jia, 1997). In the present study, the tendency to *fanqiang* and thus obtain forbidden political information is driven by curiosity that carries expectations of positive experiences – in other words, anticipation of a non-disappointing outcome. Hence it is quite clear that disappointment is the corresponding indicator of the extent to which the initial motivation, namely the curiosity about forbidden political content, is satisfied. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H12: Disappointment is positively correlated with curiosity about forbidden political content.

¹⁴ Specifically, the mechanism begins with cognitive appraisals in choosing between options. Individuals will assess the situation, predict possible outcomes and emotional consequences, and then choose the option that is believed to minimize as fully as possible the possibility of negative results and emotions (Zeelenberg et al., 2000, p. 531).

In contrast, politically apathetic individuals are not motivated as curious ones in selecting and using political media content, but this does not mean they do not have expectations or assess political information; all audiences have some degree of common sense, basic knowledge and innate values drawn from education, life experiences, previous media exposure etc. regarding what the political world is. Yet higher levels of political apathy could indicate lower levels of disappointment, in that less knowledge and previous political experience afford apathetic people less complete, explicit and direct perceptions of public affairs, and thus less-clear expectations regarding political content. For people considered sophisticated, yet who are apathetic to politics, their indifference could still prevent them from being stirred when hearing political information that could disappoint less-apathetic individuals to some extent. In a relative sense, the expectation level for politically apathetic people is lower than that of curiosity about forbidden political information, indicating a smaller disparity between information gained and expected, and thereby less intense disappointment. Given that politically apathetic audiences may accidentally or passively be exposed to political information, as mentioned above, we expect that they may also experience disappointment when information is incongruent with their expectations. We thus hypothesize:

H13: Disappointment is negatively correlated with political apathy.

Meanwhile, the possible link between media use and disappointment can be demonstrated by referring to prior research on emotions and media. Media use elicits emotions. As elaborated in the U&G theory review above, researchers have extended the theory based on mood management theory, which states that people select things that can maximize positive emotions (Bartsch & Viehoff, 2010; Hoffner et al., 2009). Empirical evidence shows that both reality and fictional TV programs can evoke both positive emotions like happiness, pensiveness, pity and

relief, and negative ones like anxiety and anger (Nabi, Stitt, Halford, & Finnerty, 2006). Negative emotions like anger and disappointment can also result from exposure to political satire in news media (Lee & Kwak, 2014). This goes against the implicit assumption in U&G research that people seek gratification that is predominantly positive, rewarding and enjoyable (Bartsch & Viehoff, 2010, p. 2248); if users do not intentionally select and consume media for the negative emotions it evokes, then how users can actively filter out the negative outcomes should be questioned (Nabi et al., 2006, p. 444). In other words, negative emotions can be part of media use effects off initial intentions.¹⁵ We thus expect that the relationship will remain constant between forbidden/accessible media and disappointment, as the correlation is similar to those between mass media selection and negative emotions. More specific, *fanqiang* and the accessible media uses are likely to elicit disappointment. While audiences are less likely intentionally to seek information that induces negative emotions like disappointment, they could be disappointed when the forbidden political content they get through active *fanqiang* and accessible media use does not live up to their anticipation. Since people are motivated by curiosity that elevates expectation levels, the correlations between disappointment and media use tendencies tend to be positive. Therefore, it is quite clear that:

H14: Disappointment is positively correlated with (a) *fanqiang*, and accessible (b) Internet, (c) TV, (d) newspaper and (e) radio.

Moreover, we attempt to extend the emotional approach to media effects in U&G research to a censored online context, and fill in the gap represented by the fact that disappointment has rarely been explored in previous media studies. Specifically, in censored circumstances, Chinese people

¹⁵ Other studies focusing on video games (Reinecke et al., 2012), comedy and drama (Weaver & Laird, 1995), sad films (Oliver, Weaver, & Sargent, 2000), etc. also provide evidence of this.

are assumed to experience significantly higher levels of disappointment, because when the *fanqiang* tendency is motivated by curiosity about forbidden political content, expectations regarding how interesting the content will be are higher than those regarding material available on the accessible Internet and in mass media situations. We thus hypothesize:

H15: People are more likely to be more disappointed when exposed to content that is believed to be available only after *fanqiang* than when exposed to more easily available content.

Media use as a mediator in relationships among curiosity, political apathy and disappointment

In the above review, we draw certain conclusions from previous studies on the potential relationship among curiosity about forbidden political content, political apathy, media selection, and disappointment. To be more specific, curiosity about forbidden political content and political apathy are argued to be possible predictors of Chinese people's inclination to *fanqiang* and their use of other domestic media, while disappointment is the potential emotional effect of being exposed to blocked political content. Media selection and use tendencies could be a mediator between the predictors and emotional effects; that is, media use could channel the influence of curiosity and political apathy on disappointment. When people are motivated to seek forbidden political content, they anticipate what the information will be like and the enjoyment that they could get from it; meanwhile, information seeking of any sort is predominantly made possible through media use, which, in the current study, ranges from the accessible Internet and mass media to alternatives like *fanqiang*. This implies that media use tendencies carry the predictive power of curiosity and political apathy, and subsequently relate it to disappointment. We thus hypothesize that *fanqiang* and accessible selection and use tendencies can mediate the

relationship among curiosity about forbidden political information, political apathy, and disappointment:

H16: *Fanqiang* mediates the relationship between curiosity about forbidden political content and disappointment.

According to the above hypotheses, we construct the conceptual model seen in Figures 1 & 2:

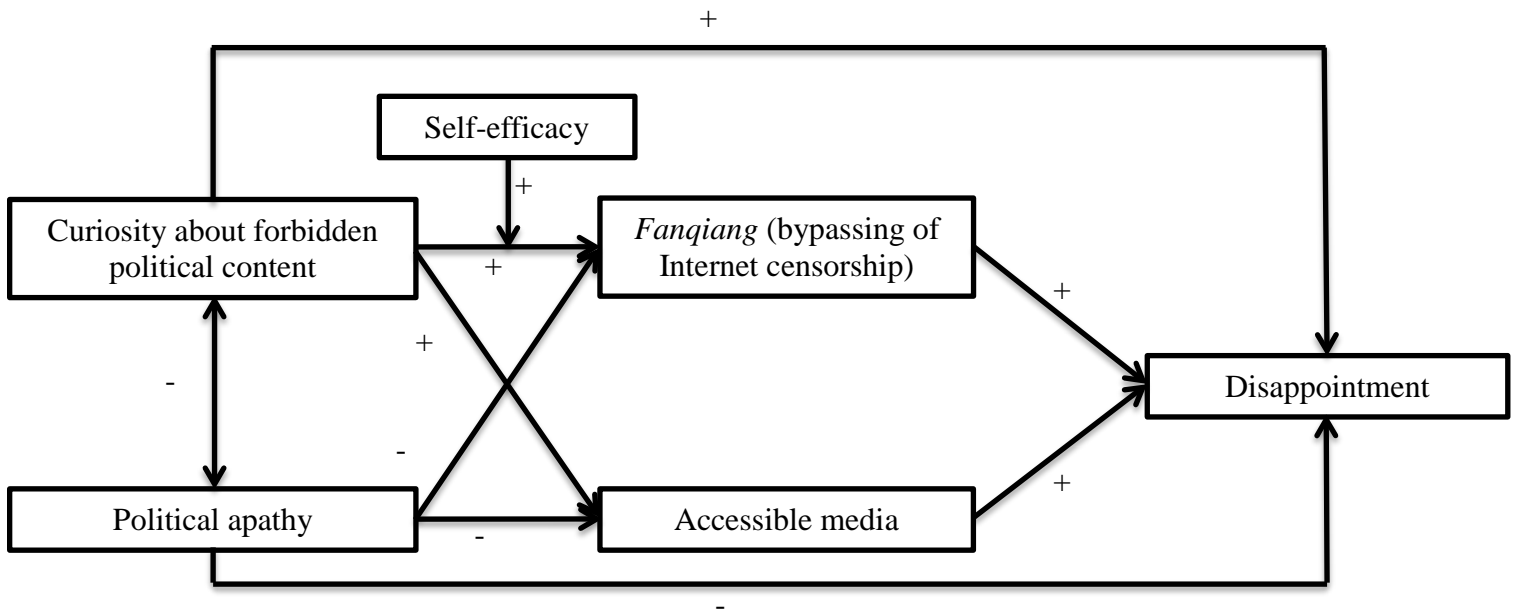


Figure 1: Conceptual mediation model of curiosity, political apathy, online media selection and disappointment

METHOD

Design

To test our hypotheses, we conducted web-based between-group experimentation. The reasons why we chose experimentation over alternative research methods are threefold. First, compared with other methods, experimental design can establish causal relationships to a greater extent. Experiments are thus seen to be a good fit for explanatory research (Babbie, 2012, p. 229). Confirming causality among cognitive predictors, censorship, and emotional effects not only makes a greater theoretical contribution, but more importantly forms a promising stepping stone for further studies on the impact of Internet governance. Second, due to the sensitive and private nature of the research topic, artificial experimentation is more likely to gather valid data. In alternative settings that rely largely on self-reporting, it is possible that participants will not be willing to talk about the issue at hand and may be reluctant in self-disclosure. This reluctance could be pronounced in the Chinese context, considering that *fanqiang* represents a more private media use pattern. In experiment design, participants are brought to artificial contexts. The measurement of cognitive and behavioral tendencies in this circumstance does not rely merely on subjects' memories, while participants are comparably more willing to report in the imagined setting. Third, we developed experiments on the Internet because our target subjects are Internet users. We presume that differences in contexts will not seriously distort control if randomized, and respondents can react more naturally if they can take the test and confront stimulus in their daily life settings.

Procedure

259 students at a southern Chinese university participated in the experiments during December 2014. We collaborated with the lecturers and sent email invitations to their students. Students were randomly assigned to the experiment group ($N = 132$) or the control group ($N = 127$) by student number. Students received email invitations containing the web link to their corresponding group. They were informed in the invitation that no personal information that could directly identify them would be recorded and that they could choose to participate and complete the test at their convenience in their own devices. Both designs on the web were locked by password, which was provided in the email invitation. This ensured that only subjects with invitations could access the experiment and no unsolicited participants would be included. In total 1074 invitations were sent and reached a response rate of 24.12%.

In the experiment group, participants were shown the first stimulus, a piece of political information, with the implication that the accompanying link could not be accessed. Following the stimulus, we took measurements of curiosity, political apathy, self-efficacy and media use tendency. After the test, the second stimulus was shown, which was the article corresponding to the information in the first stimulus. Participants were instructed to read the article and then measured disappointment. Finally, they reported on demographics. The procedure and measurement for the control group were exactly the same, except that with the first stimulus, subjects were not told that the information could not be accessed.

Stimulus

The first stimulus (Appendix 1 and 2) was a mock-up layout showing a search result for Baidu.com using the keywords “Yongkang Zhou Case.” This was a political event in which a senior Chinese official was investigated and arrested for corruption in 2014 (BBC, 2014). The result’s headline states “CCDI dig out Zhou’s case.” This case was chosen because it was one of the most current political events at the time of the experiment, was influential, and was filtered by Internet censorship. A mock-up of Baidu.com was made because it is the most commonly used search engine available on the Chinese domestic Internet (Helft & Barboza, 2010). In the experiment group, participants were then shown a mock-up stating, “This page is not available.” The mock-up was made with a screenshot of the typical layout Chinese users see when they encounter blocked websites. In this way, the participants in the experiment group were convinced that the link they had just seen could not be accessed, and was possibly blocked by censorship. This page was not shown to the control group, so they were not explicitly told that the information was blocked.

The second stimulus (Appendix 3) was the article corresponding to the first stimulus. The article was grabbed from a news website and can be actually accessed from domestic Chinese Internet.¹⁶ It discusses Zhou’s relationship with several other powerful officials. We edited the article down to a shorter version for use in the experiment. We also visualized the procedure in both groups as shown in the Figure 2:

¹⁶ The link to the original article is <http://i.ifeng.com/4g/video/zixun/pinglun/pdetail?vt=5&aid=86901646&mid=3bgxng&all=1&p=2>.

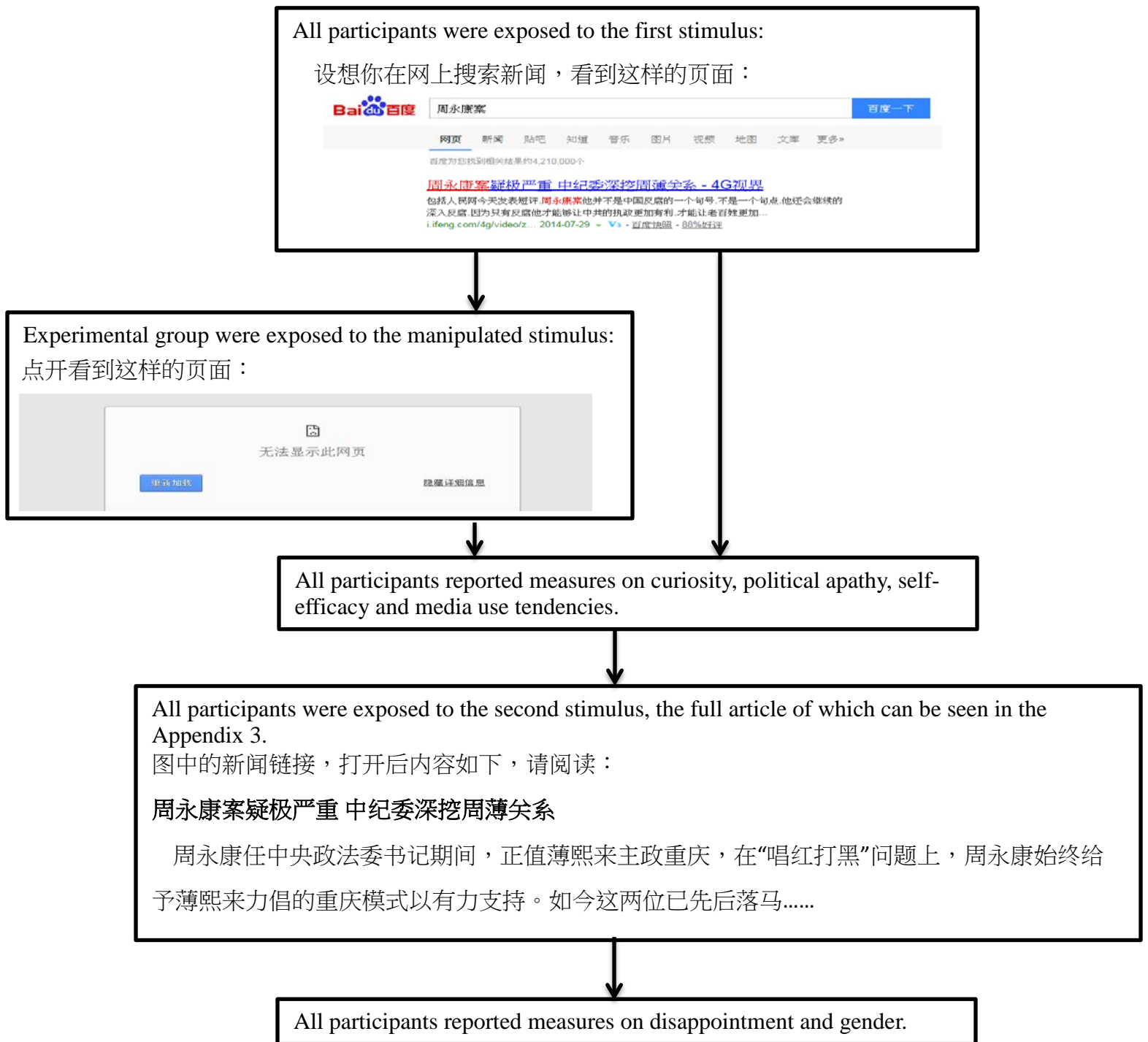


Figure 2: Procedure of the experimentation

Curiosity about forbidden political content

According to the conceptualization elaborated in the literature review, curiosity about forbidden political content is specified by two dimensions: (1) intolerance of political information gaps, and (2) expectations regarding probable outcomes. Correspondingly, we developed a scale: (1) “I want to see the webpage” (representing Intolerance “ (我) 想看到这个新闻页面”); and (2) “I think the news in the picture could be very interesting” (representing Expectation “ (我) 觉得图中的新闻可能很有意思”). This was designed to measure curiosity about forbidden political content. We then asked participants to what extent they agreed with the statements, measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (absolutely agree). The correlation between the two items was .66, $p < .001$ in both groups.

Political apathy

Prior research widely employs established measurements of political apathy that ask to what extent respondents agree that “voting takes too much time,” “participating in elections is more trouble than it’s worth,” “staying informed about the government is too much trouble,” and “keeping up on political issues takes too much time” (e.g., Pinkleton, Austin, Zhou, Willoughby, & Reiser, 2012; Pinkleton & Weintraub Austin, 2004; Yamamoto & Kushin, 2014). Although the developed scale shows consistently high reliability, some note that the items seem to measure political laziness instead of lack of interest in or attention to public affairs (Yamamoto & Kushin, 2014).

In line with the three dimensions illustrated in the above conceptualization, we let participants report the extent to which they agreed that (1) “I am not much interested in it [the article about

Zhou]” (lack of interest, “ (我) 不感兴趣”); (2) “The case is not relevant to me” (perceived irrelevance, “此事跟我没什么关系”); and (3) “Keeping informed about it is more trouble than it’s worth” (lack of attention, “不值得花那么多时间了解此事”). The items were also measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (absolutely agree). In the meantime, we expected that, compared with the established scale for political apathy, the indicators in the current study would respond to previous criticisms and better reflect lack of interest and attention to political information. Reliability analysis shows the scale reached Cronbach’s $\alpha=.77$, $M=7.95$, $SD=2.42$ in the experiment group; and Cronbach’s $\alpha=.81$, $M=8.33$, $SD=2.48$ in the control group.

Self-efficacy

As explained above, self-efficacy is the cognitive assessment of how well people believe they can execute a task, which in turn determines the effort they are likely to invest in the execution of that task. We thus measure the construct with a single item: “I could *fanqiang* if I try hard,” (“如果我尽力去做，就可以成功翻墙看到被屏蔽的页面”) measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (absolutely agree). The item reached $M=3.69$, $SD=1.08$ in the experimental group; and $M=3.83$, $SD=.92$ in the control group.

Fanqiang and domestic media use

In both groups, after participants were shown the first stimulus, they were instructed to assess to what extent they were motivated to use *fanqiang*, the domestic Internet, TV, newspaper and radio to find the information in the stimulus (e.g., “ (我会) 翻墙去看相关新闻”). The

items are measured by a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The mean and SD to all kinds of media use is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of all media use

	Mean		SD	
	EG	CG	EG	CG
<i>Fanqiang</i>	2.99	3.16	1.08	1.03
Accessible Internet	3.81	3.80	.97	1.00
TV	3.40	3.51	1.02	1.04
Newspaper	3.22	3.30	1.07	1.16
Radio	2.77	2.71	1.08	1.08

Note: EG-experimental group; CG-control group.

Disappointment

Given that disappointment is indicated by unmet expectations, we developed a two-item scale to measure this emotional construct. The participants responded to the following statements: (1) “It [the Zhou article] is not as interesting as I had thought,” (“没我预计得那么有意思。 ”) and (2) “It is nothing to be surprised about.” (“没有想象中那么轰动。 ”) All were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (do not agree at all) to 5 (absolutely agree). The two items significantly correlated with each other at $.77, p < .001$ in the experimental group and $.70, p < .001$ in the control group.

Demographics

We recorded gender as the only demographic variable, because we believe the study sample is homogeneous in terms of education, income, and age. Among 239 participants, 132 are female (51.00%, 43 non-reporting). In the experiment group ($N = 132$), female = 60, 45.50%, 24 non-reporting, while in the control group ($N = 127$), female = 72, 56.70%, 19 non-reporting.

RESULTS

To test the hypothesis 1 that the participants in the experimental group should be curious, ANCOVA was conducted controlling for gender. As shown in Table 2 the experimental group showed significantly higher levels of curiosity. Thus H1 was supported.

Table 2: Between-group comparison of curiosity about forbidden political content, political apathy, media use tendencies and disappointment ($N = 259$)

	$F(1, 216)$	EG (Mean)	CG (Mean)	Partial Eta Squared
Curiosity				
Expectation	9.44**	3.59	3.20	.04
Intolerance	11.80**	3.71	3.24	.05
Political Apathy				
Lack of interest	4.94*	2.48	2.80	.02
Perceived irrelevance	.57	2.74	2.87	.00
Lack of attention	.20	2.62	2.69	.00
Media use				
<i>fanqiang</i>	6.07*	3.01	3.11	.03
Internet	.47	3.82	3.74	.00
Newspaper	1.81	3.19	3.27	.01
TV	3.33	3.41	3.49	.02
Radio	.06	2.80	2.67	.00
Disappointment	.32	3.52	3.47	.00

Note: EG—experimental group; CG—control group; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; all entries are controlled for gender; curiosity, political apathy, self-efficacy and moderator variables are additionally controlled for in *fanqiang* comparison; curiosity and political apathy are controlled additionally for all other accessible media use tendencies; all predictors and media use tendencies are controlled for in comparing disappointment levels.

To test the hypotheses 2 and 3 that curiosity predict *fanqiang* and accessible media use, we ran a series of hierarchical regression analyses. Gender, curiosity, political apathy, self-efficacy and the moderation variables were entered in order into separate blocks. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, after controlling for gender, the independent variable significantly predicted media use

tendencies in the hypothesized direction except in the relationship between Intolerance and radio use tendency. Therefore, H2 and H3(a)(b)(d) were supported, H3(c) was rejected.

Table 3: Impact of curiosity about forbidden political content, political apathy, and self-efficacy on media use tendencies in the experimental group ($N = 132$)

	<i>fanqiang</i>	Internet	Newspaper	TV	Radio
Gender (female)	-.09	.16	.11	.19*	.12
R^2 (%)	0.80	2.50	1.20	3.80*	1.40
Curiosity					
Expectation	.45***	.37***	.25**	.33***	.20*
Intolerance	.49***	.40***	.20*	.27**	.15
Incremental R^2 (%)	27.20***	17.90***	6.60*	11.30***	4.20
Political Apathy					
Lack of interest	-.47***	-.30***	-.20*	-.20*	-.17
Perceived irrelevance	-.28**	-.16	-.13	-.13	-.13
Lack of attention	-.47***	-.23*	-.22*	-.15	-.17
Incremental R^2 (%)	8.20**	0.50	1.80	.30	1.20
Self-efficacy					
Incremental R^2 (%)	.39***				
Moderator 1					
	.52***				
Moderator 2					
	.52***				
Incremental R^2 (%)	.50				
Final R^2 (%)	41.30	20.90	9.60	15.30	6.80

Note: Entries are hierarchical regression coefficients controlling for gender; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Moderator 1–Expectation x Self-Efficacy; Moderator 2–Intolerance x Self-Efficacy

Table 4: Impact of curiosity about forbidden political content, political apathy, and self-efficacy on media use tendencies in the control group ($N = 127$)

	<i>fanqiang</i>	Internet	Newspaper	TV	Radio
Gender (female)	-.07	.14	.04	.06	.02
R^2 (%)	0.50	2.00	.20	.40	.00
Curiosity					
Expectation	.44***	.46***	.43***	.34***	.26**
Intolerance	.44***	.49***	.25**	.41***	.10
Incremental R^2 (%)	22.70***	26.90***	18.60***	17.70***	7.60**
Political Apathy					
Lack of interest	-.34***	-.53***	-.31***	-.41***	-.20*
Perceived irrelevance	-.34***	-.40***	-.25**	-.34***	-.29**
Lack of attention	-.35***	-.37***	-.16	-.31***	-.11
Incremental R^2 (%)	3.70	8.00**	2.30	4.80	5.80*
Self-efficacy					
Incremental R^2 (%)	.25**				
Moderator 1					
	.44***				
Moderator 2					
	.46***				
Incremental R^2 (%)	1.30				
Final R^2 (%)	31.00	36.90	21.20	22.80	13.50

Note: Entries are hierarchical regression coefficients controlling for gender; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Moderator 2–Intolerance x Self-efficacy

In testing H4 that the experimental group should show more media use tendencies, as seen in the Table 2, after controlling for gender and all independent variables, i.e., curiosity, political apathy, self-efficacy, and curiosity x self-efficacy, the control group showed surprisingly more *fanqiang* tendencies than the experimental group, while the other media use tendencies were not significantly different. Hence H4 was rejected.

Regarding H5 that the audience will show more accessible media use tendencies than *fanqiang*, paired-sample T-tests (Table 5) show that, in both groups, *fanqiang* tendencies were lower than domestic media use tendencies, except for radio. The radio use tendencies in the experimental group and the newspaper tendencies in the control group did not present significant differences from *fanqiang*, yet the directions of difference made rankings identical in both groups – that is, the accessible Internet use tendencies were the highest, followed by TV, newspaper, *fanqiang* and radio. Hypothesis 5 was thus supported.

Table 5: In-group comparison of *fanqiang* with accessible media use tendencies

		Media use tendencies	T
EG	<i>Fanqiang</i> (2.99)	Internet (3.81)	-8.07***
		Newspaper (3.22)	-2.14*
		Radio (2.77)	1.90
		TV (3.40)	-3.72***
CG	<i>Fanqiang</i> (3.16)	Internet (3.80)	-6.52***
		Newspaper (3.30)	-1.31
		Radio (2.71)	3.75***
		TV (3.51)	-3.33**

Note: EG–experimental group; CG–control group; $N = 132$ in the experimental group, $N = 127$ in the control group; entries are group means; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

H6 predicts that self-efficacy is positively related to *fanqiang*. The hypothesis was supported. As shown in the Table 3 and 4, positive correlations were salient in both groups ($\beta = .39, p < .001$ in the experimental group; $\beta = .25, p < .01$ in the control group).

H7 predicts the moderation effects. It was also confirmed (Table 3 and 4). In fact, the interaction variables of curiosity and self-efficacy appeared to be the strongest determinants for *fanqiang* tendencies in the current model, as the coefficients were .52 in the experimental group and about .45 in the control group.

Pearson correlation analysis was employed to test the Hypothesis 8 that curiosity inversely correlates with political apathy. As seen in the Table 6, the negative correlations were significant.

This was consistent across all dimensions of curiosity and political apathy in both groups

Table 6: Correlations between curiosity about forbidden political content and political apathy

		Political apathy					
		Lack of interest		Perceived irrelevance		Lack of attention	
		EG	CG	EG	CG	EG	CG
Curiosity	Expectation	-.50**	-.50**	-.19*	-.38**	-.37**	-.30**
	Intolerance	-.57**	-.57**	-.19*	-.42**	-.38**	-.45**

Note: EG—experimental group; CG—control group; $N = 132$ in the experimental group, $N = 127$ in the control group; entries are Pearson correlations; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

In terms of H 9 and 10 that negative relationships will be shown between political apathy and media use tendencies, the perceived irrelevance dimension of political apathy did not significantly relate to the four media use tendencies in the experimental group (Table 3 and 4). Meanwhile, the determinant effects of political apathy were the weakest in radio use, with only and lack of interest and perceived irrelevance significant in the control group. Therefore, H9 was supported; H10 was partially supported.

H11 expects a significant between-group difference in political apathy. ANCOVA was conducted controlling for gender, as seen in the Table 2. However, only the lack of interest dimension returned a statistically significant difference, $F(1, 216) = 4.94, p < .05$. The experimental group thus scored significantly lower in lack of interest compared to the control group. H11 was partially supported.

To test the H12 that predicts significant correlations between disappointment and curiosity, regression analysis was employed controlling for gender, which is shown in the Model 1 in Table

7 and 8. The positive relationships were salient only in the experimental group. Therefore, H12 was partially supported.

The same techniques were also adopted to test the H13. As can be seen in the Table 7 and 8, after controlling for gender, lack of interest and perceived irrelevance appeared to be significantly correlated with disappointment in only the control group. Between the two, perceived irrelevance was the stronger predictor, with all beta values higher than .32. However, the directions of the relationships were positive, opposite to our hypothesis. Therefore, H13 was rejected.

H14 expects positive correlations between media use and disappointment. This hypothesis was rejected. In the Table 7 and 8, Model 2 controlled for *fanqiang* in addition to gender; accessible media use acted as the mediator in Model 3. However, no media use tendency shows significance in its relationship with disappointment.

H15 asserts that the experimental group will show higher levels of disappointment. As seen in the Table 2, ANCOVA revealed no significant difference in disappointment levels between two groups. Hence the hypothesis was rejected.

Table 7: Impact of curiosity about forbidden political content, political apathy, and mediator variables on disappointment in the experimental group ($N = 132$)

	Disappointment			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender	.10	.10	.10	.10
R^2 (%)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Mediators				
<i>fanqiang</i>		.02		.02
Incremental R^2 (%)		.00		.00
Internet			.08	.08
Newspaper			-.00	-.01
Radio			-.11	-.13
TV			.04	.03
Incremental R^2 (%)			3.50	3.40
Curiosity				
Expectation	.19*	.23*	.19*	.21*
Intolerance	.17*	.22*	.17*	.19
Incremental R^2 (%)	4.00	4.90*	3.40	3.90
Political Apathy				
Lack of interest	.00	.01	.00	.03
Perceived irrelevance	.11	.12	.11	.13
Lack of attention	-.02	-.01	-.02	-.01
Incremental R^2 (%)	3.60	3.10	3.20	2.90
Final R^2 (%)	8.60	9.00	11.00	11.20

Note: Entries are hierarchical regression coefficients controlling for gender; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Models 2 and 3 additionally controlled for *fanqiang* and accessible media use tendencies respectively; Model 4 controlled for all media use tendencies.

Table 8: Impact of curiosity about forbidden political content, political apathy, and mediator variables on disappointment in the control group ($N = 127$)

	Disappointment			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender	-.08	-.08	-.08	-.08
R^2 (%)	.70	.70	.70	.70
Mediators				
<i>fanqiang</i>		.05		.05
Incremental R^2 (%)		.20		.20
Internet			.10	.10
Newspaper			.12	.12
Radio			-.04	-.05
TV			-.05	-.08
Incremental R^2 (%)			5.00	4.90
Curiosity				
Expectation	.06	.05	.00	.00
Intolerance	-.02	-.05	-.06	-.07
Incremental R^2 (%)	1.00	.90	.50	.50
Political Apathy				
Lack of interest	.18*	.22*	.30**	.31**
Perceived irrelevance	.32***	.38***	.42***	.44***
Lack of attention	.12	.15	.16	.17
Incremental R^2 (%)	13.4**	14.10***	15.10***	15.30***
Final R^2 (%)	15.00	15.90	21.40	21.60

Note: Entries are hierarchical regression coefficients controlling for gender; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Models 2 and 3 additionally controlled for *fanqiang* and accessible media use tendencies respectively; Model 4 controlled for all media use tendencies.

Regarding the H16 of mediation effects, as shown in the Table 7 and 8, we additionally put all blocks into Model 4. In the experimental group (Table 7), no mediators showed a significant relationship with disappointment, and curiosity was the only salient predictor. After *fanqiang* and gender were controlled for, positive relationships with disappointment were marginally stronger, increasing by .04 and .05 respectively. In Model 3, the mediators clearly showed no influence on the correlations between curiosity and disappointment, as the coefficient beta values of

expectation ($\beta = .19$) and intolerance ($\beta = .17$) remained the same. Model 4, which involved all mediators, fell between the two extremes, with a slight increase in curiosity coefficient beta values, yet the significance of intolerance disappeared. The four models explained variance in disappointment by 8.60 percent to 11.20 percent. Strikingly different results were presented in the control group (Table 8). Compared to the first model, when mediators are additionally controlled for, the beta values on lack of interest increase by .04, .12 and .13 in the second, third and fourth models respectively, and, correspondingly, by .06, .10 and .12 for perceived irrelevance. In other words, the increased margin was the greatest when taking *fanqiang* and all accessible media use tendencies into consideration. This incremental trend was also seen in the final *r* square. The total variance in disappointment increases from 16.90 percent in the first model to 22.00 percent in the fourth model. Therefore, H16 was rejected.

DISCUSSION

This study adopted Uses and Gratifications Theory to explore antecedents and effects of *fanqiang* vs. mainstream media use. We tested curiosity about forbidden political content, political apathy and self-efficacy as the cognitive predictors and disappointment as the emotional result. The study confirmed the moderation effects between curiosity and self-efficacy, the negative relationship of political apathy to media use tendencies, the priority given to accessible media use, and the influence of message attributes on cognitions. However, the hypotheses on mediation effects and between-group differences of accessible media use tendencies and disappointment were not supported.

The predictive power of the intolerance dimension of curiosity and political apathy was less-consistent in radio use. This implies that people are not motivated to use radio even when they

are interested in political information. This is possibly because of the audience's media use habits. Among the five kinds of media investigated in the current study, radio use was the lowest-ranked, even lower than *fanqiang*, which that requires far more technology literacy and cognitive effort. There may be two possible reasons for this. First, people now have convenient access to many kinds of media (i.e., TV, Internet, newspaper) that present rich information, and the alternatives are capable of integrating visual and audio information, which radio cannot do. It is thus perhaps understandable that people use radio less-frequently. Second, Chinese college students rarely own cars, which could provide constant radio access. These two facts help determine audience preference in prioritizing media use to get information. When people are intrigued by forbidden political content, they seek corresponding information mainly through the domestic Internet, TV, newspaper and *fanqiang*. Hence people show fewer tendencies to use radio whether or not they are interested in political information. The dimension of perceived irrelevance in political apathy consistently showed insignificant relations in predicting domestic Internet, newspaper and TV use in the experimental group only. This could be contingent, as the directions of the coefficient beta values were the same as we expected; at this stage, however, we are not able to provide more reasons to explain the insignificance.

The accessible Internet ranked first among the five types of media provided by the researchers as means of seeking political information, followed by TV, newspaper, *fanqiang* and radio, though the differences between *fanqiang* and radio were not statistically significant. The ranking was consistent across both groups. The unexpectedly low scores for radio have been explained above. Putting aside radio use, the study shows that although the uncensored Internet (*fanqiang*) seems tempting as a source of political information, it remains an alternative medium. Technical difficulty, with the lack of convenience or accessibility that implies, is likely the reason why

fanqiang cannot overturn the dominant role mainstream media play in China right now.

Mediation effects as hypothesized were not salient. In other words, *fanqiang* and other media use tendencies did not channel much effect from predictors to disappointment, indicating that the direct effect from independent variables is quite pure. This possibly implies that it is content, rather than the media use process, that has the greatest influence on individuals' emotional responses. That is to say, for the particular message of the current study, wherever the respondents got their information, they would be disappointed if the content did not match expectations. In fact, *fanqiang* tendencies showed suppression effects in the experimental group, and so did all media use tendencies in the control group, although the media use variables showed no statistical significance. Media uses thus marginally blocked the direct impact of curiosity and political apathy on disappointment. Interestingly, the suppressed predictors were distinct in both groups, with curiosity being the only salient one in the experimental group and political apathy the only salient one in the control group. This could indicate that curiosity turns out to be more influential when people are informed of online censorship, which was partially supported here by the higher curiosity levels and lower lack of interest in the experimental group. Meanwhile, the relationships between lack of interest/perceived irrelevance and disappointment were positive, instead of negative as proposed in our hypothesis. Since higher disappointment indicates higher expectation, the positive relationships imply that the more politically apathetic subjects in the control group expected the information to be more interesting. One possible explanation for this could be that for the political message to be perceived to be irrelevant and uninteresting, people are unfamiliar with the specifics of the information, and thus do not have a relatively clear "baseline" of what the content might be. This means that they may subsequently overestimate the sensation levels of the information, resulting in more unfulfilled expectations,

and thus disappointment.

When people are told that certain online political information is censored, they are significantly more curious and less politically indifferent. However, censorship has little impact on the other two dimensions of political apathy (i.e., perceived irrelevance and lack of attention). The reason censorship of political information online does not change perceived irrelevance and lack of attention probably lies in the nature of the construct and the stimuli in the current study. Lack of interest and perceived irrelevance tend to be situational, and thus could change case by case; lack of attention, on the other hand, is more trait-like. When certain politically sensitive news is censored online, lack of interest may decrease because the information gap induces presumptions and expectations about the content of the news. Perceived irrelevance, in contrast to lack of interest, is dependent on the attributes of the information itself. More specifically, audiences may perceive information to be more relevant when the event discussed happens geographically close to them (e.g., Morton & Warren, 1992; Ruigrok & van Atteveldt, 2007), or when they care about the topic as a matter of personal interest (e.g., Lang, 2006). Following this line of reasoning, perceived irrelevance could decrease in cases of, for example, local and explicitly censored political information rather than national and non-censored material. Of the two dimensions, lack of attention is more embedded in human nature and is less changeable with situation. The indifference shown by an absence of attention to political information indicates a constant tendency, like a habit or lifestyle. In this context, censorship or the content of political information would not change attention level.

Significant between-group differences were shown in *fanqiang* tendencies, but the direction was not congruent with expectation. We presumed that more *fanqiang* tendencies would be shown in the experimental group, as they might be more curious and accordingly more motivated

to *fanqiang* and get access to forbidden political content, yet the data analysis indicated exactly the opposite; curiosity, however, remained substantially higher in the experimental group. This is probably because when people are not explicitly informed that a certain political message is banned online, they undergo extra cognitive processing that includes, for example, judgment of whether the news is politically sensitive, and presumption that the news is probably censored online and that information available on the forbidden part of the Internet is more interesting. In other words, self-assessment regarding whether information is forbidden by Internet censorship could be more powerful in motivating people to *fanqiang*, compared to an explicit message indicating censorship.

The hypothesized between-group differences regarding domestic Internet, newspaper, TV and radio use were also not statistically significant in the results. In other words, users showed no difference in domestic media choices, probably because mainstream media are easily accessible and people are more familiar with the way such media present political information. In contrast, the audience tends to expect the forbidden online media to provide richer and uncensored political information, driving the differences in *fanqiang* tendencies. Confronting information perceived to be politically sensitive, whether censorship was implied or not, would thus not drastically alter the audience's motivation in using accessible media.

No salient difference was detected in disappointment scores between the two groups. We expected that participants in the experimental group would be significantly more disappointed about the article shown to them. Given the close positive relationship between political apathy and disappointment in the control group, it was clearly the higher political apathy level that elevated disappointment scores.

Despite the unexpected data results, the current study contributes to U&G theory and methodology in communication research in five ways. First, we confirmed that curiosity, political apathy and self-efficacy may be motivations that drive media use. As cognitive constructs, they explain the psychological root of gratification sought. We tried to test the emotional construct, disappointment, in terms of gratification gained. Although we were not able to link media use tendencies with disappointment in the current study, we did, however, correlate the emotional construct with cognitive ones, i.e., disappointment with curiosity, political apathy and self-efficacy. This implies that media use tendencies exert little to no effect in determining disappointment levels, and that cognitive processing may influence emotional reaction. It is thus possible to specify gratifications sought and gained with distinct and separate constructs. Cognitive and emotional factors can be incorporated into motivations and effects, and possibly vice versa.

Our second contribution is confirming that information attributes can shape motivations. The change in curiosity and lack of interest observed here indicate that explicit online censorship of messages can intrigue cognitive processing, which subsequently leads to information seeking tendencies and media use. This also responds to prior critiques of U&G research that the theory overemphasizes the active status of the audience. Audiences do not always lead in terms of how and when media use and information seeking are initiated. Information attributes and content, presumably media attribute, can determine cognition and motivation to a significant extent.

Third, we have established that audiences have particular preferences in choosing among different types of media. As shown in the data analysis, the Internet was prioritized by participants in the current study when they sought political information, and radio was their last choice. This implies that the U&G approach may be helpful in comparative studies. Previously,

researchers compared different gratifications between Facebook use and instant messaging (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010) and international differences in the same media use (Karimi, Khodabandelou, Ehsani, & Ahmad, 2014). The current study, therefore, shows that contrasting traditional mass media and Internet/mobile applications could help researchers determine whether new gratifications sought and gained emerge from preferring new media, whether and how the motivations that drive traditional media use are changing in the digital era, and whether people avoid things like radio because they lack the intentions that motivate users of the Internet, or because of other reasons.

Finally, we applied the U&G theory to a Chinese context and compared the use among college students of a particular Internet application, *fanqiang*, with that of traditionally convenient types of media that include the accessible Internet. Along with the cognitive and emotional constructs, we attempted to circumvent the overly general and flexible typology and approach of U&G theory. Clearly, the theory should and could be further refined, as this kind of specification could be fruitful and promising in showing dynamic relationships among motivations, media use and gratifications, instead of covering all with vague umbrella terms. This is especially the case when it comes to emerging new media like *fanqiang*, that may possibly cultivate new rituals and satisfy more segmented and underlying needs in the audience.

Finally, we innovatively employed experimentation in testing relationships among gratifications sought, media use tendencies, and gratifications gained. The experiment design involved participants in artificial situations that allowed them respond to specific stimuli. This can avoid methodological problems such as ambiguous memory in self-reporting that have been widely evident in previous surveys in U&G theory research.

In conceptualizing curiosity about forbidden political content, we integrated prior research by Berlyne and Litman, and believe that the construct contains intolerance and expectation dimensions. Explication is tailored by different situations' specific attributes and by the information an audience may confront. When Chinese Internet users are made aware of missing information that they perceive to be blocked by online censorship, an information gap is presented that leads to a sense of deprivation (i.e., intolerance) in cognition, while the expectation that the blocked information may be tempting subsequently becomes the key to linking curiosity and disappointment in the model. The fact that explicit censorship substantially increases curiosity levels implies that the construct is a situational one, rather than a trait-like one, and is thus subject to changing stimuli.

The moderation effects highlight the role of perceived capability in *fanqiang* use. Being motivated is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for *fanqiang*; rather, individuals must also be able to bypass online censorship successfully, or at least believe that they are capable of doing so. This implies that *fanqiang* is not like convenient and easily accessible mass media and the Internet, as technological literacy and self-efficacy are required. This is more understandable and apparent if we take *fanqiang* as a complex task; the study shows that being confident in one's abilities is the necessary condition for the motivation, and for curiosity about forbidden political content in particular, to drive behavioral tendencies. From a more practical perspective, constantly emerging digital media that build on information technology may exclude motivated but incapable people, such as the less-educated and the elderly, from using them; put differently, information and communication technology should take users' literacy and faculty into consideration and lower technical skill requirements for use if designers wish to involve a broader range of the public.

We adopted a broader-than-usual approach in building the political apathy concept. We believe that public affairs engagement is not limited to voting, which has been the core of Western democracy; political information seeking and consumption can also be a form of public engagement in a politically changing society like China. When voting systems have not been appropriately implemented, people actively searching for political information and keeping informed about political events becomes crucial. This is made possible primarily through media use. As the current research has shown, lack of interest has a consistently close relationship with all media use, including *fanqiang*, while perceived irrelevance and lack of attention show negative correlations with some media use. This not only implies that political apathy could be another predictor of media use, but also shows that the construct should and could be re-conceptualized when applied to non-democratic countries.

The fact that lack of interest, as one dimension of political apathy, decreases when people are exposed to explicit censorship indicates the situational nature of this dimension. In contrast, lack of attention, which remains constant, is a more trait-like feature. In other words, in developing an explication of political apathy, it may be promising and plausible to distinguish the construct by consistency across different situations, and divide it into changeable situational types and constant trait-like types. Issues that could drastically change levels of political apathy could include the presence of an information gap like the one in the current research, and, possibly, closer geographical proximity of the reported events to the media users.

We also adjusted previous measures in operationalizing political apathy. Although many indicators and scales have been repeatedly tested in previous studies, we created our own in the current research because, first, the conceptualization of political apathy has traditionally been constructed in a substantially different context from that of China, where democratic voting is

absent; and second, prior scales have been challenged by some scholars as measuring political laziness, not political indifference or lack of attention. The scale we built in the present study attempted to avoid such invalidity and showed acceptable reliability.

In addition, we enriched the research on Chinese Internet censorship and provided empirical reference for issues of Internet governance. Being more curious is one typical response to online censorship. Despite the difficulty in bypassing censorship mechanisms, users are motivated to do so as long as *fanqiang* is technologically possible. It thus seems to be a dilemma that, on the one hand, China's sophisticated online monitoring system actually does not completely isolate Internet users from connecting with "outside" cyberspace, and on the other hand, self-efficacy, or the individual belief in ability to *fanqiang*, may prevent some motivated users from actually taking action. Circumvention behaviors and users' exposure to forbidden political content on the Internet do not pose obvious threats to Internet governance, as pure curiosity, or a pure desire for knowledge rather than activism predicts a significant percentage of *fanqiang*. Online censorship is thus both effective and ineffective. This study is thus an interesting reference for Internet governance and media censorship studies, in that the complex and costly Great Firewall cannot assure complete blockage of sensitive information, yet socially and psychologically still achieves governors' intentions.

The study has several implications for future research. First, the links between cognitive and emotional constructs should be further tested in U&G research as motivations and gratifications, and the correlations across distinct types of factors may be also extend to those among social and cultural ones. Media use did not have salient mediation effects in the current study; however, emerging new media such as mobile phones and tablets, which have different interfaces and use rituals and environments that presumably cultivate different motivations and gratifications from

computer and mass media, could be more significant in channeling effect from antecedents to results.

Second, future research could explore how and to what extent the content of message changes motivations levels. Instrumental attributes, namely whether a message is censored or not, have been tested in the current study and show drastic powers; only one piece of information, however, is involved in the stimuli. Comparing stimuli that have different content, on the other hand, could provide specifics on their influence on motivations. To differentiate stimuli, one possible approach is going topic by topic, such as forbidden political, cultural, social and economic information; another way is differentiating by proximity, such as national vs. local information.

Third, re-conceptualizing political apathy in non-democratic contexts deserves further academic attention. We have broadened the construct by involving political information seeking that predicts forbidden media use tendencies, considering the absence of a democratic voting system in the Chinese context. Scholars could think of other possible dimensions and according indicators in adapting the construct properly to fit particular contexts. The situational or constant nature of different dimensions of political apathy is yet another area for further exploration. To what extent such dimensions may be changeable by external stimuli should matter to policy makers, educators and media practitioners who seek to engage more people in public affairs and train politically responsible citizens.

Fourth, for future research on Internet governance, online surveillance, media censorship and freedom of expression, it is interesting to explore the cognitive and emotional consequences that result from monitoring. It is difficult and costly to control online information flow. Yet the study shows that online monitoring does not necessarily have to be sound and tight to be effective; as

long as leaked information is consumed out of the complete desire for knowledge, governance is under control. This highlights possible psychological effects such as self-monitoring and impression management that may be more subtle, underlying, and effective controllers of individual deviant behaviors like *fanqiang*. Future research could therefore test other cognitive and emotional constructs cultivated by censorship that actually govern audience behaviors and thus become a part of the censorship system. Also, curiosity as one of the drivers of *fanqiang* appears to be a neutral term. Although political communication could never be discussed in a fully neutral context, we intend to imply that scholars could achieve more diverse and fruitful results in studying deviant and activism behaviors when de-emphasizing some taken-for-granted political assumptions like *fanqiang* is largely driven by political truth pursuits.

Limitations of this study include the conceptualization of political apathy assumes its relationships with *fanqiang*, whereas many other factors, like political affiliation could also disengage people from using *fanqiang*. The same problem exists in the assumed correlations between *fanqiang* and disappointment. More studies are required to present other emotional impacts of *fanqiang*. Also, non-random small sample in the current study is less-representative and generalizable. Social desirability is another potential harm to validity, considering that participants may have been reluctant to give personal responses to politically sensitive information, although the online experimentation minimized the problem to the greatest extent possible compared with in-depth interviews or face-to-face surveys. In addition, while the instant report approach in the experimental design attempted to circumvent the inaccurate memory problem in general self-reporting surveys, the method in the current study is still based on the assumption that respondents are conscious of what they are thinking and what they desire, which does not solve the problem of subconscious and higher-level cognition that cannot be easily

detected by the self. A neuroscience approach could be a possible solution to this. The experiment used here also took participants into an artificial situation that may have been different from real ones; however, this is a compromise between vague surveys and nearly-impossible ethnography because of *fanqiang* being a highly private behavior. Moreover, in the experimental design, we measured behavioral tendencies, not real behaviors. Despite the fact that tendencies indicate behaviors, it would be more interesting and promising to induce, test and study real actions, if we could combat methodological problems like designing an artificially censored Internet environment and tracking technical response and cognitive change, as well as participants' unnatural responses in artificial experimental settings.

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Appendix 1: The first stimulus in the experimental group

你在网上搜索新闻，看到这样的页面：



点开看到这样的页面：



Appendix 2: The first stimulus in the control group

你在网上搜索新闻，看到这样的页面：



The image shows a screenshot of a Baidu search engine result page. At the top left is the Baidu logo. A search bar contains the text '周永康案' (Zhou Yongkang case). To the right of the search bar is a blue button labeled '百度一下' (Search on Baidu). Below the search bar is a navigation menu with links for '网页' (Web), '新闻' (News), '贴吧' (Tieba), '知道' (Zhidao), '音乐' (Music), '图片' (Images), '视频' (Videos), '地图' (Maps), '文库' (Library), and '更多' (More). Below the navigation menu, it says '百度为您找到相关结果约4,210,000个' (Baidu found about 4,210,000 related results for you). The main search result is a link titled '周永康案疑极严重 中纪委深挖周薄关系 - 4G视界' (Zhou Yongkang case suspected to be extremely serious, Central Discipline Inspection Commission digs deep into Zhou Bo's relationship - 4G Vision). The link text is partially red. Below the title is a snippet of text: '包括人民网今天发表短评,周永康案他并不是中国反腐的一个句号,不是一个句点,他还会继续的深入反腐,因为只有反腐他才能够让中共的执政更加有利,才能让老百姓更加...'. At the bottom of the snippet, it says 'i.ifeng.com/4g/video/z... 2014-07-29' followed by a 'V3' icon and '- 百度快照 - 88%好评' (Baidu Snapshot - 88%好评).

Appendix 3: The second stimulus in the experimental and control group

图中的新闻链接，打开后内容如下，请阅读：

周永康案疑极严重 中纪委深挖周薄关系

周永康任中央政法委书记期间，正值薄熙来主政重庆，在“唱红打黑”问题上，周永康始终给予薄熙来力倡的重庆模式以有力支持。如今这两位已先后落马。

2009年6月，在薄熙来的部署和时任重庆市公安局局长王立军的主持下，重庆市展开打黑除恶专项斗争，截至当年10月25日，累计抓获涉案人员2915人，刑事拘留384人，逮捕1567人，其中重庆市各级检察院批准逮捕的涉黑涉恶犯罪嫌疑人700人。

重庆“打黑除恶”开始一个多月后，中央政法委就于7月29日发布消息，称近日已出台《关于深入推进打黑除恶专项斗争的工作意见》，要求各地区、各部门继续抓好专项斗争各项工作，始终保持对黑恶势力主动进攻的高压态势，确保专项斗争向纵深推进。

2009年10月26日，重庆市委领导向社会各级通报重庆打黑相关工作时称，这一行动是为了贯彻落实中央政法委打黑除恶的要求，推进“平安重庆”建设。三天后，重庆市委常委、市政法委书记、市打黑除恶专项斗争领导小组组长刘光磊更在打黑除恶新闻通气会上说：“深入开展打黑除恶专项斗争……是中央的‘规定动作’。”

目前尚无公开资料或报道显示，中央政法委为何要求重庆开展此项行动，以及为何迅速将重庆“打黑除恶”专项斗争的“经验”向全国铺开。但从后续反映来看，周永康对此相当满意。

根据当时重庆市对外通报，2009年9月25日，周永康曾对此重庆打黑专门做出批示：“打击铲除黑恶势力，是让老百姓过上安定日子的‘民心工程’。近期在重庆市委、市政府领导下，政法机关加大工作力度，见到了明显效果，为人民办了一件好事、实事。”

除在“两会”期间接见重庆团外，周永康还在2010年11月到重庆调研，再次肯定了打黑的成绩，并称“唱读讲传”汇报演出“太令人感动了，是新形势下加强干部思想教育、做好群众工作的有效载体”，并现场要求，全国政法战线也要开展这项活动。

肯定的范围也不止限于政法领域，就薄熙来力推的“五个重庆”建设、公租房建设、农民工户籍制度改革等，周永康称都是实实在在的改善民生之举，在全国也有很强的示范意义。这些支持，都成为薄熙来和王立军等人重要的政治筹码。重庆打黑型社会管理方式，构成了曾经赫赫有名的“重庆模式”核心支柱之一，法学家童之伟将其概括为：公权力组织以打黑为契机，以公安等强力部门对有关打击黑社会组织犯罪的刑法第294条进行极端的扩大化运用为基础，将追诉黑社会性质组织罪的活动，转化成了权力者对社会政治、经济和社会文化事务进行管理控制的一种基础性抓手或策略。在这种打黑型社会管理方式下，执政党地方党委领导人及其下属机构（如政法委），将整个公权力的国家机器组织一体化，统一指挥公法检机关行使职权，将刑事司法手段转化为社会管理方式，突破法治底线，脱离监督制约，以寒蝉效应控制社会经济秩序。周永康对这种严重违背法治与人权精神的社会治理模式的赞许，有多大程度是出于政治结盟的考虑，又有多大程度是一种价值观的认

同，我们不得而知。但直至“王立军夜奔”事件发生后，周永康还是在2012年3月“两会”期间到重庆代表团，专程为已经危若累卵的薄熙来站脚背书。

Appendix 4: Chinese wording of concepts measurement

对于图中的新闻，你觉得：

1=非常不同意；2=不同意；3=没意见；4=同意；5=非常同意。

Curiosity: (1)觉得图中的新闻可能很有意思；(2)想看到这个新闻页面；

Political apathy: (1) 不感兴趣；(2) 此事跟我没什么关系；(3)不值得花那么多时间了解此事；

Self-efficacy: 如果我尽力去做，就可以成功翻墙看到被屏蔽的页面。

对于图中的新闻，你是否会：

1=一定不会；2=不会；3=没意见；4=有可能；5=很有可能。

Fanqiang: 翻墙去看相关新闻；

Domestic Internet: 会查看国内网上如何报道；

Newspaper: 会去查看国内报纸报道；

TV: 会看相关的电视新闻报道；

Radio: 会留意国内广播报道。

以上文章阅读后你的感受是：

1=非常不同意；2=不同意；3=没意见；4=同意；5=非常同意。

Disappointment: (1) 没我预计得那么有意思；(2) 没有想象中那么轰动。

CURRICULUM VITAE

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- Received the Bachelor's degree from Sun Yat-sen University, June 2013.

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