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Cross-cultural differences between American and Chinese college students on self-disclosure on social media

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to figure out the cross-cultural differences between American and Chinese college students in self-disclosure on social media sites. In particular, it will examine the influence of culture (especially collectivism and individualism dimensions) in both content (breath) and depth of self-disclosure on Facebook and Renren. Also, this study aims to ascertain gender differences in the influence of self-disclosure (breath and depth). This study applied collectivism versus individualism, one of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and self-disclosure from social penetration model to examine the cultural differences between U.S. and Chinese college students in self-disclosure on social media sites. The results showed that there exits the nationality difference in self-disclosure's width and depth, implying that Chinese students self-disclose more in width and depth than American college students. Gender differences in self-disclosure's width and depth were also found and supported by previous study. Females prefer to self-disclose more in width and depth than males in SNSs. But the gender differences across nationality were only partially supported by the study; only U.S. females tend to self-disclose in more width than U.S. males.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As computer-mediated communication (CMC) has diffused, people tend to use the internet to build or maintain their interpersonal communication. Computer-mediated communication can be supplemental to offline, face-to-face relationships (McQuillen, 2003). It is an unprecedented historical trend that social network sites have become parts of our daily life, and participants manage their online presentation of self in order to accomplish the goal of building their own image through virtual interpersonal networks.

With further development of Internet-hosted technologies, people can garner information about one another in direct online give-and-take (Walther, Brandon, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008), specifically, "information seekers can mine static repositories of individuals' prior interactions or deliberate profiles in archives of discussions or in personal and institutional web page"(Ramirez, Walther, Burgoon, & Sunnafrank, 2002). In addition, many individuals are now "googleable." "The relative value of various kinds of online information may depend on the extent that any item appears to be involuntarily associated with the person to whom it refers" (Walther & Parks, 2002).

Social networking sites, defined by Boyd and Ellison (2007) as web-based applications have three functions:"1) users construct a public or semi-public profile; 2) present a list of users to whom an individual is connected; 3) view and follow that list and the lists of others within the system"(p.211). The main purpose of social networks is to make new friendships or to maintain those that already exist (Sheldon, 2008).

Social networks such as the Facebook (http://www.facebook.com) or Renren (http://www.renren.com), which are most-trafficked social media sites respectively in U.S and China, offer a blend of interactive and static features in any individual's online profile, consisting of the image they uploaded, the discussion they were involved in, or the person or institution they followed (Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008). The most active members of Facebook or Renren are college students, who are born between roughly 1980 and 1994. They have been characterized as the "Digital Natives" (Prensky, 2001) or the "Net Generation" (Tapscott, 1998). Prensky described the Digital Native as "surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cameras, cellphones, and all the other tools of the digital age" (Prensky, 2001, p.1). In this study, the targets are the college students who use social media sites (Facebook, Renren) to establish intimacy and connect with friends.

SNS (social networking site) users connect with each other via social networks' platform based on shared interests and values, which are on opposite from other users' self-disclosed personal information (Elmi, Iahad, & Ahmed, 2012). Self-disclosure is the act of communicating personal information about oneself to another person. That information can contain facts, opinions, or feelings (Carolyn, 2010). Adler and Proctor (2007) pointed out the characteristics of self-disclosure information were intentionally shared, meaningful, and not known by many other people. "SNS self-disclosure is any message or information about the self that a person communicates within the sites"(Boyd & Ellison, 2007), such as SNS users' name, photo, phone number, location, affiliation, job, interests and so on.

Studies found that self-disclosure played an important role in constructing what kind of relationships individuals have with each other (Harvey & Omarzu, 1997; Prager, 1995; Reis &

Shaver, 1988), and in validating self-worth and personal identity(Greene, Derlega, Yep, & Petronio, 2003).

To date, prior literature has explored self-disclosure in online social networks along the lines of privacy concerns and risks (Krasnova et al., 2009), liking and self-disclosure (Shaw, 2004), and social values and self-disclosure (Jacki et al., 2006). Elmi, Iahad, and Ahmed (2012) investigated the factors that influence users' self-disclosure on SNS platforms, such as the perception of ease of use, perceived trust, as well as perceived enjoyment. Other researchers contributed to the self-disclosure literature by comparing face-to-face interactions and online communication. One clue might come from Tidwell and Walther (2002), who found that people self-disclose more online than they do face-to-face. Another came from research by Pavica Sheldon (2010), who investigated the similarities and differences in self-disclosure and friendship development between face-to-face communication and Facebook.

Yet, there has been relatively little emphasis upon cultural differences in self-disclosure. Yum and Hara (2006) pointed out that a lot of empirical studies on self-disclosure focused on a single country, especially in western contexts, meaning that "they may be valid and useful in Western sociocultural contexts but fail to work outside non-Western contexts" (p.133), which limits the applicability of their findings in cross-cultural contexts.

The comparative study of self-disclosure among different cultures has gradually gained popularity in recent years. Nakanishi (1987) pointed out that culture and communication may lead to different patterns of self-disclosure. Chen (1997) conducted a study comparing the effects of different cultures in America and China on the degree of self-disclosure in the field of intercultural communication. The findings of the study suggested that there exists a cultural difference in self-disclosure, and he assumed that the two nations' cultural values, especially

individualism and collectivism, contributed to the different degree of self-disclosure on different conversational topics and selected target persons.

To investigate the differences in self-disclosure patterns between Americans and the Chinese, it is necessary to compare the American and Chinese culture. Geert Hofstede initially developed the dimensions of cultural diversity, and other research indicates that the most important of Hofstede's dimensions for distinguishing among national cultures is collectivism versus individualism (Durand, 2010; Kim et al., 2011).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to figure out the cross-cultural differences between American and Chinese college students in self-disclosure on social media sites. In particular, it will examine the influence of culture (especially collectivism and individualism dimensions) in both content (breath) and depth of self-disclosure on Facebook and Renren.

Besides, sex differences also influence self-disclosure in both face-to-face and computer mediated communication. Sheldon (2010) reviewed previous studies and found that college women discussed intimate topics with friends more frequently and in greater depth than college men do. Women disclosed more than men on the Internet (Peter, Valkeburg, & Schouten, 2005). This study aims to ascertain gender differences in the influence of self-disclosure (breath and depth) on social media sites between U.S. and Chinese college students.

This cross-cultural study aims to enhance the current theory on self-disclosure, switching from offline interpersonal communication for computer-mediated-communication. On a practical level, it offers suggestions for online organizations to better understand how cultural differences influence their products, and develop online applications catered to their local audiences.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brief description of cultural differences between American and Chinese

Cross-cultural research is a methodology most commonly used in the social and psychological sciences. Hantrais and Mangen (1996) defined it as "an approach where one or more units in two or more societies, cultures or countries are compared in respect of the same concepts and concerning the systematic analysis of phenomena, usually with the intention of explaining them and generalizing from them."

The two countries examined in this study, America and China, are diametrically different in terms of culture. The Chinese traditional social value system is based on Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, which socialized them to be more restrained, humble and more likely to frown upon verbal expression (Henriksen, 2009; Chen, 1995). Besides, Mak et al. (2009) pointed out that concerns about "saving face" may be particularly salient in understanding cultural difference. Face refers to social image and social worth that are garnered based on one's performance in an interpersonal context (Choi & Lee, 2002). Jackson and Wang (2013) stated that "Chinese value family, friends, and their groups over self, and are more likely to engage in self-effacement and self-promotion" (p. 910). Members of Eastern cultures tend to have fewer, closer and more enduring friendships (Wang & Leichtmann, 2000).

In contrast, Western cultures, such as the U.S., emphasize individualism as a value, which teaches them to value the self more than family, friends, and other groups, and were engaged in self-promotion and self-effacement (Jackson & Wang, 2012). Members of Western

cultures tend to have more friends but looser connections and friendships are less enduring (Wang & Leichtmann, 2000).

Over the last two decades, China has been rapidly adopting Western technology and culture in everyday life. This can be seen in their wide acceptance of everything from cell phones to American TV shows and fast food. Modern China is in a period of transition, and under the modern Western acculturation, its social orientation is derived from traditional conceptualization of the self and now exposed to the individual orientation (Feldman et al, 1992).

Nowadays, many urban Chinese have an overseas experience, whether in studies, work or just vacations, which no doubt broaden their horizons and have a profound influence on lifestyle, values or attitudes (Lu, 2008). Pierre Xiao Lu (2008) called the current Chinese value system a "melting-pot," shaped by the values of traditional Chinese culture, religions and philosophies and the influence of Western cultures, religions and standards of living. More specifically, college students in China may be influenced by western values and behaviors, thus arousing the need of individualism and personal freedom (Tsai et al., 2000).

2.2 Hofstede's cultural dimensions

The way individuals think is somewhat shaped by the environment and the culture. Geert Hofstede (1994) believes that each individual' thinking and behavior patterns are influenced by the their early childhood environment, bit of background about Hofstede and his research that aims to enhance international communication and understanding. It is safe to point out that the behavior of each person is determined by patterns programmed in their subconsciousness, mainly by the culture which they are descended from (Krawczyk, 2012).

Geert Hofstede initially developed four central dimensions of cultural diversity: power distance (PDI); collectivism versus individualism; femininity versus masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1983). Later, Hofstede and Bond (1984) added a fifth dimension, long-term versus short-term orientation. In 2013, Hofstede replaced the long-term and short-term orientation with two new dimensions, pragmatism and Indulgence. Gallagher and Savage (2012) stated the theory developed by Hofstede dominates cross-cultural analysis in online community research.

Power distance (PDI) expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede Center, 2014). For the large power distance, it has centralized authority and paternalistic management style, and people accept that power inequality and privileges; while for small power distance, it has decentralized authority and tends to be consultative or participative management style, and people display rights consciousness. China (80) sits in the higher ranking of PDI compared with United States (40), which means individuals in China are more influenced by formal authority and sanctions.

Collectivism versus individualism refers to the strength of the ties people have to others within the community. Collectivism shows a strong group cohesion, and there would be a large amount of loyalty and respect for members of the group. Individualism indicates a loose connection with people, and there is a lack of interpersonal connection and little sharing of responsibility, beyond family and perhaps a few close friends (Hofstede Center, 2014). At a score of 20, China is a highly collectivist culture where citizens belong to "in group" that consider their members instead of themselves. Whereas United Stated (91) is a highly individualistic society, in which people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only.

Femininity versus masculinity refers to how much a society sticks with, and values, traditional male and female roles (Hofstede Center, 2014). Highly masculine societies are more competitive, caring for success. Its opposite, femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. China (66) and American (62) got the similar score on Femininity versus masculinity, indicating these two countries are masculine society-success oriented and driven.

Uncertainty avoidance (UAI) concerns the level of acceptance for uncertainty and ambiguity within a society. High UAI-scoring nations try to avoid ambiguous situations whenever possible. Low UAI scores indicate the society enjoys novel events and values differences (Hofstede Center, 2014). China had a low score at 30 on uncertainty avoidance, however United States got 46, which shows Chinese people are more comfortable with ambiguity than Americans.

Pragmatism refers to how people in the past as well as today related to the fact that so much that happens around us cannot be explained. High Pragmatism score means most people don't have a need to explain everything, as they believe that it is impossible to understand fully the complexity of life. Low Pragmatism score means people in the normative society had a strong desire to explain everything. China (87) got a higher score than America (26), indicating China is a pragmatic society.

Indulgence is defined as the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised. Low Indulgence score means strong control, called "restraint", while high Indulgence score means weak control, called "indulgence". In contrast to indulgent society such as U.S. (68), China (24) is a restrained society, and people with this orientation have the perception that their actions are restricted by social norms.

Other research indicates that the most important of Hofstede's dimensions for distinguishing among national cultures is collectivism versus individualism (Durand, 2010; Kim et al., 2011). Asian cultures such as China exhibit higher levels of collectivism, while individualism is more prevalent in Western cultures such as U.S. (Cho et al.,1999). Triandis (1995) states that collectivistic cultures care about family integrity and in-group membership, therefore people tend to attach value to group identity, expecting to build long-term relationships (Parks & Floyd, 1996); while individualists are more self-reliant, independent, resulting in fragmented and short-term relationships (Hall, 1976).

According to Yum & Hara (2006) the cultural differences are evident in self-disclosure in terms of topic variety (breath) and intimacy (depth). Ting-Toomey (1991) pointed out individualists tend to self-disclosure more than collectivists do.

2.3 Self-disclosure

Self-disclosure was originally introduced by Sidney Jourard in 1958, and defined as "the process of making the self known to other person" (p. 91-98). Rossiter and Pearce (1975) described self-disclosure as intentionally sharing personal information with certain people while the others would not normally know. Lustig and Koester (2006) emphasized the "personal information about oneself and to explain one's inner experiences and private thoughts" (p. 280).

Among previous scholars, the definition of self-disclosure was slightly different, thus in this study, it will blend the previous definition into it: self-disclosure is the process of communicating personal information about oneself, explaining one's inner experiences and private thoughts to others, and intentionally sharing information consisting of facts, opinions, or feelings, which is not known by the others.

Self-disclosure differs among cultures in terms of "breadth, depth, valence, timing and targets of self-disclosing events" (Lustig & Koester, 2006, p. 280). From the social penetration model, it exhibits two elemental dimensions of self-disclosure, breath dimension and depth dimension. Altman and Taylor developed the social penetration model in 1973 and used the metaphor of a multilayered onion to describe self-disclosure as the gradual sharing of information about oneself. Altman and Taylor (1973) pointed out that when people tend to know each other, the layers would "shed away" to reveal the core of the person.

The breath of self-disclosure refers to the range of the topics people disclose about themselves. Topics can include personal experiences, feelings, studies, religion, hobbies, body, and so on. It can be everyday or even superficial information about oneself, denoted as "less serious information" or "highly sensitive information," such as personal fears (Kathryn, Valerian, & Alicia, 2006, p. 411) According to Jourard's Sixty-Item Self-disclosure Questionnaire, which was widely used in self-disclosure difference measurement, the topics involved six dimensions: Attitudes and Opinions, Tastes and Interests, Work or Studies, Money, and Personality.

The depth of self-disclosure refers to "the degree of intimacy that guides topic discussions" (Sheldon, 2010, p.16). In the depth dimension, it includes very strong feelings, beliefs, and concerns and also includes secrets, regrets or hurtful experiences, and painful memories. Information at the depth level is more significant and more central to individuals (Doyle, 2003). Self-disclosure is a dynamic process. Altman and Taylor (1987) stated that in the initial stages, relationships have narrow breadth and shallow depth, and as the degree of intimacy increases, a wider range of topics would be discussed (breath), as did the depth.

A previous study has tested the relationship between topics of conversation and the depth of self-disclosure. Adler & Prodctor (2007) proposed that lighter topics, such as hobbies and interests, are easier for self-disclosure than serious topics, such as feelings.

2.4 Self-disclosure on social media

Computer- mediated communication (CMC) opens up new possibilities for self-disclosure. Without doubt, social networking sites (SNSs) are one of the most popular online activities worldwide. Both United States and China have widespread adoption of Internet and SNSs. According to the eBusiness knowledgebase's report (March 2013) titled "Top 15 most popular social networking sites," Facebook is the most popular SNS in the US and worldwide, with 750 million users, followed by Twitter (250 million), and LinkedIn (110 million).

In 2012, The China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) released its "Chinese Netizen SNS Usage Research Report." According to the report, the domestic Internet users reached 564 million, with the total number of SNS users expected to reach 215 million by the end of 2012. According to Nielsen (2012) report on China social media users, SNSs' penetration is about 70%, and students are very active on SNSs, and they tend to use their real name. In a 2011 report titled "China's top 15 social networks" (Lukoff, 2011), the top five most popular China-based SNSs included Qzone (190 million), Renren (95 million), and Pengyou (80 million) and so on.

The rapid growth of SNSs on a global scale promotes the development of SNSs focusing on local audiences. For example, Renren is a Chinese-based SNS with around 95 million active users. Due to its "almost identical user interface and functionality as Facebook", Renren is

considered as the "Facebook of China" (Marshall, 2008). This study will use Renren and Facebook to examine the cultural difference between China and U.S. in self-disclosure.

For SNS users, the sharing behaviors contain two types. The first type is self-centered and includes individuals who post status updates, pictures, videos, or comments about themselves for self-disclosure; the second type consists of useful information to benefit others (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). Prior research supports the conclusion that online culture would be affected by the offline culture (Abeele & Roe, 2011). Qiu et al. (2012) found cultural differences in sharing behaviors: the culture of Renren is perceived as more collectivistic, thus the users tend to be more restrained, especially for the information about self; the culture of Facebook is perceived as more individualistic, and users have a greater investment in self, more self-talk and self-interested behavior.

Other researchers based on Eastern culture also support the view that cultural differences influenced self-disclosure on social networking sites. Cho (2010) showed users of Korean-based SNSs (e.g., Cyworld) have fewer friends, exhibiting lower amount of self-disclosure (less width), but more personal and intimate self-disclosure (high depth), and using more non-verbal communication means (e.g., graphics or icons), whereas users of American-based SNSs (e.g., Facebook) have more friends, exhibit more frequent self-disclosure, and rely more on direct text-based communication.

Chapman and Lahav (2008) observed SNSs' users from different cultures, and found that "users of American SNSs like to broadcast information about themselves by writing blogs and sharing personal pictures; users of Korean SNSs like to share pictures with only their close friends; and users of Chinese SNSs like to play games and share resources with other users."

Previous studies on self-disclosure mainly focus on a single country, particularly in western contexts. Yet, there has been relatively little emphasis upon cultural differences in self-disclosure between American and Chinese. Based on the conclusion made by Qiu et al. (2012), which is "Asian-based SNSs tend to have tighter social relationships, with their practices reflecting an indirect communication style and less open self-disclosure; American-based SNSs tend to have wider social networks, with their practices reflecting a more direct communication style and bolder self-disclosure," the following hypotheses are proposed:

> **H1: Cultural differences (nationalities) affect college students' self-disclosure (both width and depth) in SNSs.**
>
> **H1a: On SNSs, American college students self-disclose on a wider range of topics than Chinese college students.**
>
> **H1b: On SNSs, Chinese college students self-disclose in more depth than American college students.**

2.5 Gender differences in self-disclosure

Gender differences in self-disclosure have been examined in both face-to-face communication and computer-mediated communication. Although the results of gender differences are not consistent with each other, most studies indicate women appeared to self-disclose more than men do (Papini et al., 1990; Hargie et al., 2001).

In the motivations for using SNSs, Jackson and Wang (2013) found regardless of culture, females considered SNS use to be more personally important than males, and were more likely to use SNSs to keep in touch with friends. Sheldon (2008) studied Facebook and found women have more Facebook friends than men, as well as spend more time on it.

The explanation for gender differences in self- disclosure may be due to other variations such as target or trust. Dindia and Allen (1992) found the target affected men's and women's

disclosure differently. When the target has a relationship with the discloser, such as friends, parents, women disclose more than men. Also, females tend to disclose more to same sex targets than to opposite targets. Steel (1991) pointed out having trust in individuals increased the likelihood of self-disclosure. Since women display more trust than men, they also disclose more. Peter et al. (2005) found that on the Internet, women disclosed more intimate information than men. Overall, women disclosed more than men.

In Jourard's (1971) early discussion of gender differences, he attributes them to sex-role expectations. Especially for men, he argues that "the male role requires men to be tough, objective, striving, achieving, unsentimental, and emotionally inexpressive…The male's self-structure will not allow men to acknowledge or to disclosure the entire breath and the depth of his inner experience to himself or others (Jourard, 1971, p.35)." Rubin and Shenker (1978) argue that men are traditionally taught to be restrained in sharing feelings, while women are socialized to be more expressive and open in communication.

As for gender interact with cultural contexts, several scholars have examined Chinese and U.S. college students in computer-mediated-communication. Durand (2010) discovered that Chinese females disclosed more than Chinese males in both face-to-face and email contexts, and as for American participants, females disclosed more than males in face-to-face communication, but less than males in email. Wang, Jackson et al. (in press) found Chinese male users reported more SNS friends than Chinese female users. On the contrary, females were more likely to upload self-photos and update statuses than male users.

However, some researchers found controversial results. For example, Chen (1995) examined the national and gender differences of self-disclosure on five topics (opinions, works,

finance, personality and body) from American and Chinese students, and he found no significant differences between Chinese females and males on these five topics.

Owing to the limited studies focusing on gender differences under the cultural contexts, and the inconsistent results from previous studies, it's essential to examine the nationality and cultural interaction on self-disclosure on social network sites. Based on the literature review above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Gender differences affect the college students' self-disclosure (both width and depth) on SNSs.

H2a. On SNSs, American female college students tend to self-disclose on a wider range of topics than American males.

H2b.On SNSs, American female college students tend to self-disclose in more depth than American males.

The same gender differences are expected among the Chinese students:

H2c. On SNSs, Chinese female college students tend to self-disclose on a wider range of topics than Chinese males.

H2d. In SNSs, Chinese female college students tend to self-disclose in more depth than Chinese males.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Several of the studies discussed in this review of literature utilized various questionnaires and surveys to measure the cultural difference in self-disclosure in terms of breadth and depth (Jackson & Wang, 2013; Cho, 2010; Chen, 1995), which could be beneficial to this study. As Kurt Johnson (2011) pointed out, "surveys are a popular and systematic approach to collecting quantitative data that will provide statistical collecting quantitative data that will provide statistical information about a population" (p.2). This quantitative study hence relies on a survey to collect the data.

3.2 Participants and procedures

The study sample consists of American and Chinese college students who are registered at large universities in their respective countries. This survey required participants who have active Facebook accounts in the United States and Renren accounts in China. A total of 376 college students in two different nationality groups responded to the online survey on a voluntary basis. 334 responds completed the online questionnaire: 225 Americans (145 females and 80 males), and 109 Chinese (64 females and 45 males).

3.3 Measures

The self-administered survey was originally created in English. It was translated into Chinese and then back-translated into English to assure comparability as recommended by

professors in the Greenlee School from Iowa State University. The original English questionnaire was used for the North American sample, while a translated version was used for the Chinese sample.

The questionnaire consisted of four primary sections. In the first section, the use of SNS (Facebook and Renren) was measured. First, respondents were asked to answer questions on Facebook/ Renren usage (Sheldon, 2010). These questions included the amount of use per day, the duration of use (i.e. how long they have been using Facebook and Renren), the motivation of using SNS, and the number of friends on Facebook/Renren.

Second, it examined privacy and trustworthiness of Facebook/Renren. (1) The Privacy variable gauges whether respondents used the privacy setting in the profile of Facebook/Renren). (2)The Trustworthiness measure, uses a five-point scale to rate the trustworthiness of Facebook/Renren, where 1 means not trust at all, and 5 means trust it very much.

Third, respondents were required to use a Likert-type scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree to report their attitudes about Facebook/Renren use. Two items were using, such as "I feel comfortable sharing personal or intimate feelings with friends on Facebook/Renren," and " I think SNS can help others to know me better" as inspired by a study about internet using habits of Hong Kong teenagers (2013).

The second part of the questionnaire assesses individualism and collectivism. The scale is modified from Singelis and Triandis (1995). Ten statements about participants' cultural values were chosen from the original scale (e.g. I often do "my own thing", I feel good when I cooperate with others.). The scale measures 10 domains, where five domains represent individualism, and five domains represent collectivism. Then, participants use a five-point Likert scale (1 means not at all, 2 means not very well, 3 means somewhat, 4 means well, and 5 means

very well) to value each item. According to Triandis (2001), people from collectivist cultures would emphasize value to promote group goals, and people in individualist cultures tend to be self-effacing and pursue personal interests.

In the third section, a revised version of The Self-Disclosure Scale developed by Sidney M. Jourard and Paul Lasakow (1958) was used in this study to gauge breadth and width of self-disclosure. The original SDQ was composed of 60 items covering self-disclosure on six main topics (attitudes and opinions, tastes and interests, work or study, money, personality, and body). A shortened version was utilized in the current study; five items from five domains (without "money" topic) were selected, creating a final scale of 25 items. Considering that all the participants are college students, the money topic was little discussed on SNSs, thus prompting the researcher to get rid of the money topic. For example, the category of attitudes and opinions included topics of politics, social problems, entertainment, and technology (e.g., I have discussed my personal views on the present government on Facebook.). Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire by rating the depth of self-disclosure, (0 means have never discussed this item; 1 means have talked in general terms about this item; 2 means have talked in full and complete detail about this item). Then, the numerical entries were summed, yielding totals which constituted the self-disclosure scores.

In the last section, participants were asked to answer standard demographic questions, such as gender, age, school status, nationality and the area they live in.

3.4 Independent and Dependent variables

Nationality (the United States and China), culture (individualism and collectivism), and gender (male and female) were the independent variables used in this study. The topics of self-

disclosure (attitudes and opinions, tastes and interests, work or study, personality, and body) in both width and depth were the two dependent variables. Independent-samples t-tests will be used to measure the cultural (nationality) and gender differences between American and Chinese college students in self-disclosure width and depth. In addition, crosstabs will be used to compare the media use background between two countries.

3.5 Measuring instruments

The survey questionnaire is attached (Appendix A).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The results presented in this chapter describe the differences between U.S. and Chinese college students' self-disclosure on social media. It starts with the descriptive information on SNS usage among survey respondents from the U.S. and China, followed by the results for each research question.

4.1 Participants

A total of 376 college students in two different nationality groups responded to the online survey on a voluntary basis. 334 responds completed the online questionnaire: 225 Americans (145 females and 80 males), and 109 Chinese (64 females and 45 males). The completion rate was 88%, the respondents who do not have a social network site account (Facebook for U.S. participants, and Renren for China participants) or dropped in the middle of the questionnaire were excluded from the sample.

The participants in U.S. were enrolled in the class JLMC 101 Mass Media & Society at Iowa State University. Instructors announced the 10-minutes survey in class and briefly described its purpose, and sent the survey invitation letter with the questionnaire link to the students. Extra credit was offered for participating in the survey. The participants in China were college students at Fujian Normal University, in South–East China, and they received the Chinese version online questionnaire. Faculty at FNU helped distribute the link to the survey. In both countries, the survey was administered during the spring semester of 2014.

4.2 Respondent demographics

For the participants (N= 334) who completed the online questionnaire, the demographic information was collected in the Part four (Table 1).

Table 1.
Demographic Information

		U.S. N=225	**China** N=109
Gender	Female	64.4%	58.3%
	Male	35.6%	41.7%
Average Age		19.3	21.4
Class status	Freshman	49.6%	15.7%
	Sophomore	33.9%	25.9%
	Junior	11.6%	23.1%
	Senior	4.9%	20.4%
	Graduate	0.0%	14.8%
Living areas	Urban	20.4%	74.1%
	Suburban	55.6%	13.0%
	Rural	23.6%	11.1%
	Other	0.4%	1.9%

According to the demographics information, more female students (64.4% in U.S. and 58.3% in China) than male students (35.6% in U.S. and 41.7% in China) participated in this research. Participants' age ranged between 18 and 25 years, and the mean for the entire sample was close to 20 years. Age means for the individual countries were: M=19.3 for American participants, and M=21.4 for Chinese participants.

In the U.S., the dominant undergraduate students who contributed to the online questionnaire were Freshmen (49.6%) and Sophomores (33.9%). While in China, the main participants were Sophomores (25.9%), Juniors (23.1%), and Seniors (20.4%). For the living

areas, 55.6% of American college students came from suburban areas, while 74.1% of Chinese college students lived in urban areas.

4.3 Social Media Use

The Facebook and Renren use background was collected in Part 1 of the questionnaire (Table 2).

Table 2.
Facebook/ Renren Use Background

		U.S. N=226	**China** N=108
Average number of Friends		783	402
How much time do you usually spend average day?	Less than 1 Hour	47.3%	70.4%
	1 Hour to 2 Hours	36.3%	18.5%
	3 Hours to 4 Hours	11.5%	5.6%
	More than 4 Hours	3.1%	1.9%
	I don't know.	1.8%	3.7%
Average years of Use		5.6	4.63
Who can see your profile?	Only me	1.3%	3.7%
	Friends	77.9%	51.9%
	Public	14.2%	38.9%
	I don't know.	6.6%	5.6%
What percentage do you trust with personal information?	Hardly any	0.4%	0.9%
	A few	19.9%	11.1%
	Less that half	11.9%	23.1%
	Half	15.5%	13.0%
	Almost all	43.4%	48.1%
	All of them	8.8%	3.7%

The average friends number on Facebook for American group is around 783, more than the Chinese group, which reported an average of 402 friends on Renren. More Chinese participants (70.4%) than U.S. (47.3%) reported using SNS less than 1 hour per day, followed by 36.2% of U.S. participants and 18.5% of Chinese who spend 1-2 hours on average a day.

As for the duration of Facebook and Renren usage, American respondents have used their Facebook for over 5.6 years, whereas Chinese reported having used Facebook for about 4.63 years on average.

In the profile setting, more American college students (77.9%) than Chinese (51.9%) only allowed their friends to see their profile. While 38.9% of Chinese participants permitted public to see their profile, which is different from American (14.2%).

American and Chinese college students showed a similar pattern of trusting in online personal information: nearly half of respondents in U.S. (43.4%) reported they trust almost all personal information on Facebook, same as 48.1% of respondents in China did on Renren.

To examine the attitudes about the SNSs, such as sharing intimate feelings and helping others to know them better, an independent-samples t-test was used to compare U.S. and Chinese students, and we used an alpha level of .05 for all statistical test (Table 3).

Results indicate a significant effect of nationality on intimate feelings sharing, $t(332)= -8.911$, $p=.000$, with Chinese college students feeling more comfortable in sharing their deeply thoughts with Renren friends than U.S. college students. There was also a significant difference between two countries in understanding me better, $t(332)= 2.458$, $p=.014$, demonstrated that more American college students agreed with Facebook help others to know me better.

Table 3.
Differences between U.S and Chinese students in attitudes about Facebook/Renren use (Independent samples t-test)

	U.S. N=226	China N=109	T-test
I feel comfortable sharing personal or intimate feelings with friends on Facebook/ Renren.	2.15 (.961)	**3.09** (.756)	-8.911**
I think Facebook/can help others to know me better.	**3.31** (.849)	3.06 (.857)	2.458*

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.
1-5 rating scales were used in which 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree.
*p <.05, **p< .001

4.4 Self-disclosure Topics Measures

(1) Nationality difference

H1 predicted that cultural differences affect college students' self-disclosure topics' width and depth on SNSs. In this study, no variance was found between the U.S. and Chinese college students in terms of collectivism and individualism, which goes against findings from a previous study (Cho et al., 1999), which indicated that China exhibits higher levels of collectivism, while individualism prevails in U.S. Hence, this study switches to examine whether nationality affects the self-disclosure on both width and depth.

A. Self-disclosure Width

Self-disclosure width consists of different conversational topics. To measure the differences on conversational topics between two nationalities, a Chi-square (X^2) test of independence has been used. As can be seen by the frequencies cross tabulated in Table 4, there is a significant difference between U.S. and Chinese students on the self-disclosure of various

conversational topics, $X^2(10, N = 353) = 25.063$, $p = .005$.

Table 4.
National Differences in Self-disclosure on Different Conversational Topics (Crosstabs)

What Topics did you usually discuss on Facebook/Renren?	**U.S.** N=226	**China** N=109
Attitudes and Opinions	19.90% $_a$	29.40% $_b$
Tastes and Interests	40.30% $_a$	42.20% $_a$
Work or Studies	12.40% $_a$	17.40% $_a$
Personality	13.30% $_a$	3.70% $_b$
Body and Health	0% $_a$	9% $_a$
Other	14.20% $_a$	6.40% $_b$

Note: Chi-square =25.063, p=.005 <.001
Each subscript letter denotes adjustments for mutiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Both Chinese and U.S. respondents prefer to discuss tastes and interests on SNSs, with 42.2% and 40.3% respectively. The less popular online self-disclosure topic is attitudes and opinions, as around one third of Chinese college students usually talked their views on Renren, whereas 19.9% of American did the same thing. For American respondents, they seldom posted body and health topics on Facebook, and only 9% of Chinese spoke about their appearances on Renren. In order to assess whether these differences were statistically significant, the Bonferroni method was used to compare each pair of topics. Post hoc comparisons using t Test with Bonferroni indicated that the topics such as attitudes and opinions, personality and others were significantly different between U.S. and Chinese students. Compared to the U.S.(13.3%), Chinese students (3.7%) talked less about personality online, but discussed more about their work or studies. 14.2% of American gave specific description on the other topics they often discuss on Facebook, such as religion, cool things they did, humorous pictures or just occasional

thoughts.

To test the self-disclosure width from the individual 25 items in five general topics, the study firstly combined the rating scales (1= have talked in general terms, 2= have talked in full and complete details) recorded as 1= have talked before, and remained 0= not talked. Then summed up 25 items results as their self-disclosure width score.

An independent-samples t-test was used to compare U.S. and China college students' self-disclosure width score. Chinese college students (M=13.17, SD= 5.57) got a higher overall self-disclosure width scores than American, (M= 2.22, SD= .645), t(326)= -9.683, p=.000, indicating in SNSs, Chinese college students self-disclose on a wider ranger of topics than American college students (Table 5). The findings failed to support H1a.

Table 5.
Differences in Self-Disclosure Width and Depth between U.S and Chinese college students (Independent samples t-test)

	U.S. N=224	**China** N=104	**T-test**
Topic Width	9.68	**13.17**	-5.816**
	(4.62)	(5.57)	
Topic Depth	0.4655	**0.6298**	-4.884**
	(.258)	(.312)	

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.
Topic Width: scores range from 0 to 25, and the higher score, the broader topics they've discussed.
Topic Depth: 0-2 rating scales were used in which 0= have never discussed, 1= have talked in general terms, 2= have talked in full and complete detail.
*p <.05, **p< .001

B. Self-disclosure Depth

Depth of self-disclosure consists of the mean depth of five different conversational topics, average overall depth score, and personal views on 25 items classified into five general topics.

To test the mean difference of self-disclosure depth in five topics, an independent-samples t-test was used to compare the two nationalities. The mean of self-disclosure depth for each topic was computed by dividing the average mean of 5 items for each topic by 5, such as Depth of attitudes and opinion = (government + entertainment + technology + justice system +minority)/5; Depth of Tastes and Interests = (sport + food+ music + cloth + spare time use)/5.

From the results, only the tastes and interests topics did not differ by nationality, t(319)=.261, p=.795. For the remaining four topics it was found that there exists significant variance between Chinese and American students. Surprisingly, Chinese college students got higher scales in the depth on all these four topics: attitudes and opinions, tastes and interests, work or studies, personality and body and health (Table 6).

Table 6.
Differences in Self-disclosure Depth in different topics between U.S and Chinese students (Independent-samples t-test)

	U.S. N=226	**China** N=109	**T-test**
(1) Attitudes and Opinions	0.4682	**0.618**	
	(.366)	(.372)	-3.374**
(2) Tastes and Interests	0.882	0.8687	
	(.4223)	(.422)	0.261
(3) Work or studies	0.4054	**0.598**	
	(.345)	(.413)	-4.375**
(4) Personality	0.3973	**0.6154**	
	(.322)	(.421)	-5.155**
(5) Body and Health	0.1867	**0.4245**	
	(.265)	(.413)	-6.305**

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.
0-2 rating scales were used in which 0= have never discussed, 1= have talked in general terms,
2= have talked in full and complete detail.
*p <.05, **p< .001

The scales go from 0-2, in which 0 = have never discussed, 1 = have talked in general terms, and 2 = have talked in full and complete detail. Chinese college students (M= .618, SD= .372) self-disclose deeper than American (M= .4682, SD= .366) in the attitudes and opinions topic, t(318)= -3.374, p=.001; work or studies, t(322)= -4.375, p= .000; personality, t(327)= -5.155, p= .000; and body and health, t(329)= -6.305, p= .000.

The Self-disclosure overall depth score was computed with the equation: total_depth= (depth of opinions + depth of tastes + depth of work discussion + depth of personality + depth of body)/5.

Besides, an independent-samples t-test was used to compare U.S. and China college students' self-disclosure depth score. Chinese college students (M= .6298, SD= .312) got higher overall self-disclosure scores than Americans, (M= .4655, SD= .258), t(314)= -4.884, p=.000, supporting H1b, which predicted that on SNSs, Chinese college students self-disclose in more depth than American college students.

(2) Gender Difference on Self-disclosure

A. Self-disclosure Width

H2 predicted that gender differences affect college students' self-disclosure topics' width and depth on SNSs. To measure the differences on conversational topics between female and male, a Chi-square (X^2) test of independence has been used. As can be seen by the frequencies cross tabulated in Table 8, there is a significant difference between female and male students on the self-disclosure conversational topics, X^2 (5, N = 351) = 17.597, p = .003.

In order to assess whether these differences were statistically significant, the Bonferroni method was used to compare each pair of topics. Post hoc comparisons using t Test with

Bonferroni indicated that the topics such as attitudes and opinions, and tastes and interests were significantly different between female and male students. According to the Table 7, twice as many men discuss attitudes and opinions (32.8%) compared to women (16.8%). However, nearly half of females prefer to talk about tastes and interests on SNSs, whereas only 32% of men do so.

Table 7.
Gender Differences in Self-disclosure on Different Conversational Topics (Crosstabs)

What Topics did you usually discuss on Facebook/Renren?	**Female** N=220	**Male** N=131
Attitudes and Opinions	16.80% $_{a}$	32.80% $_{b}$
Tastes and Interests	45.00% $_{a}$	32.10% $_{b}$
Work or Studies	13.60% $_{a}$	15.30% $_{a}$
Personality	11.40% $_{a}$	8.40% $_{a}$
Body and Health	0% $_{a}$	1.50% $_{a}$
Other	13.20% $_{a}$	9.90% $_{a}$

Note: Chi-square =17.597, p=.003 <.001

When analyzing gender differences across nationalities, results found no significant difference between U.S. female and male on the self-disclosure conversational topics, X^2 (4, N = 225) = 4.712, p = .318; neither does Chinese female and male, X^2 (5, N = 108) = 10.147, p = .071.

An independent-samples t-test was used to compare female and male college students' self-disclosure width score. Females (M=11.3, SD= 5.13) got a slightly higher self-disclosure scores on topic width than males, (M= 9.91, SD= 5.26), t(343)= 2.364, p= .019, indicating in SNSs, female college students self-disclose on a wider ranger of topics than male college students (Table 8). The findings support H2.

Table 8.
Gender differences in Self-Disclosure Width and Depth (Independent-samples t-test)

	Female N=214	**Male** N=130	**T-test**
Topic Width	**11.3**	9.91	2.364*
	(5.13)	(5.26)	
Topic Depth	**0.5423**	0.4774	1.997*
	(.2877)	(.2832)	

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Topic Width: scores range from 0 to 25, and the higher score, the broader topics they've discussed.
Topic Depth: 0-2 rating scales were used in which 0= have never discussed, 1= have talked in general terms, 2= have talked in full and complete detail.
*p <.05, **p< .001

Also, results indicate a significantly higher self-disclosure width score for American females (M= 10.14, SD= 4.45), over American males (M= 8.82, SD= 4.85), t(223)= 2.022, p= .044, supporting H2a, which indicated in SNSs, American female college students tend to self-disclose on a wider range of topics than American males. But for the Chinese group, gender has no significant effect on self-disclosure width score, t(102)= 1.75, p=.083. The finding fails to support H2c, which predicted that Chinese female college students self-disclose on a wider range of topics than Chinese males (Table 9).

Table 9.
National and Gender Differences in Self-Disclosure Topic Width and Depth (Independent samples t-test)

	U.S. N=223			China N=104		
Topics	**Female** N=143	**Male** N=80	**T-test**	**Female** N=60	**Male** N=44	**T-test**
Topics Width	**10.14**	8.82	2.022*	13.98	12	1.75
	(4.45)	(4.85)		(5.68)	(5.25)	
Topic Depth	0.483	0.4306	1.439	0.675	0.563	1.776
	(.254)	(.266)		(.321)	(.29)	

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.
Topic Width: scores range from 0 to 25, and the higher score, the broader topics they've discussed.
Topic Depth: 0-2 rating scales were used in which 0= have never discussed, 1= have talked in general terms, 2= have talked in full and complete detail.
*p <.05, **p< .001

B. Self-disclosure Depth

To test the mean difference of self-disclosure depth in five topics, an independent-samples t-test was used to compare the two gender groups.

According to the results, two topics: Attitudes and Opinions, t(335)= .532, p=.532, as well as Personality, t(344)= 1.814, p=.074, did not show significance in gender differences, but the rest of the topics are significant: Tastes and Interests t(336)= 1.966, p= .05, Work or Studies t(339)= 2.052, p=.041, Personality and Body and Health, t(346)= 2.406, p=.017 (Table 10).

Table 10.
Gender Differences in Self-disclosure Depth on different topics (Independent samples t-test)

	Female N=218	**Male** N=130	**T-test**
(1) Attitudes and Opinions	0.5052 (.348)	0.5317 (.419)	-0.625
(2) Tastes and Interests	**0.9132** (.409)	0.8206 (.432)	1.966**
(3) Work or studies	**0.4991** (.373)	0.4126 (.381)	2.052*
(4) Personality	0.4944 (.373)	0.42 (.363)	1.814
(5) Body and Health	**0.3037** (.345)	0.2123 (.338)	2.406*

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.
0-2 rating scales were used in which 0= have never discussed,
1= have talked in general terms, 2= have talked in full and complete detail.
*p <.05, **p< .001

Specifically, female college students got higher scales in the depth on all these three topics. Female students (M= .9132, SD= .409) have talked Tastes and Interests in general terms, slightly higher than male students (M= .8206, SD= .432). Also, females (M= .4944, SD= .373) discuss deeper than male (M= .4126, SD= .381) in the Personality topic, same as Body and Health topic, in which female got average mean on .3037 (SD= .345), but males got the mean 0.2123 (SD= .338).

When examining gender differences across nationalities (Table 11), the American female and male groups present a significant difference in self-disclosure depth on Work or Studies, t(219)= .318, p=.27, with more U.S females (M= .4434, SD= .332) speaking in more depth about Work or Studies on Facebook than U.S. males (M= .3359, SD= .362), which indicated

American female college students tend to talk more about Work or Studies than American male. There is no significant difference in any of the other four topics.

Table 11.
National and Gender Differences in Self-disclosure Depth on Different Conversational Topics (Independent-samples t-test)

	U.S. N=224			China N=106		
Topics	**Female** N=144	**Male** N=80	**T-test**	**Female** N=62	**Male** N=44	**T-test**
(1) Attitudes and Opinions	0.4397	0.5154	-1.468	0.6517	0.5714	1.063
	(.327)	(.424)		(.346)	(.406)	
(2) Tastes and Interests	0.9014	0.8456	0.94	0.931	0.7805	1.767
	(.406)	(.452)		(.423)	(.409)	
(3) Work or studies	**0.4434**	0.3359	2.224*	0.6271	0.5581	0.831
	(.332)	(.362)		(.4401)	(.3743)	
(4) Personality	0.4181	0.355	1.406	0.6733	0.5364	1.651
	(.328)	(.308)		(.4132)	(.4243)	
(5) Body and Health	0.2111	0.1425	1.861	**0.5129**	0.3	2.687*
	(.272)	(.248)		(.402)	(.401)	

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.
0-2 rating scales were used in which 0= have never discussed, 1= have talked in general terms, 2= have talked in full and complete detail.
*p <.05, **p< .001

For Chinese college students, only Body and Health shows a significant depth difference among five different topics, t(104)= 2.687, p< .05. Chinese female college students (M=.5129, SD= .40265) talked in more depth than Chinese male college students (M= .3, SD= .40116) on their appearance and health.

Besides, an independent-samples t-test was used to compare gender group from U.S. and China college students' Self-disclosure average depth score. No significant difference appears in the result, t(215)= 1.439, p=.152 for American gender group; and t(96)= 1.776, p=.079 for

Chinese gender group. The finding fails to support H2b, which predicted U.S. female students self-disclose in more depth than U.S. male students. Besides, H2d is also not supported, as Chinese female college students do not tend to self-disclosure in more depth than Chinese males.

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Conclusions

5.1 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the differences between the U.S. and China college students on self-disclosure on social media (Facebook for American respondents, and Renren for Chinese).

In the study, SNS use backgrounds were primarily investigated. Based on the results, American college students reported more virtual friends (average 783 friends) and longer duration time (around 5.6 years) on Facebook than Chinese students did (average 402 friends) on Renren with 4.63 years. In SNS use attitude, students in China feel more comfortable sharing personal or intimate feelings with friends on Renren than American students, however more U.S. participants think Facebook helps others to know them better.

Although the use habit differed slightly between two countries, the overall pattern appeared to be very similar. The majority of American (47.3%) and Chinese (70.4%) college students usually spend less than 1 hour per day in SNSs, set up their profile as "Friends can see only", and trust almost all with their friends' personal information on SNSs.

This study does not support the assumption from previous research that China exhibits higher levels of collectivism, while individualism prevails in U.S. (Cho et al., 1999). H1 aims to investigate the cultural difference between two countries. No variance was found between the U.S. and Chinese college students in terms of collectivism and individualism, but according to the result from independent sample T-test, we were surprised to find that Chinese students got higher scores on both collectivism and individualism, which was inconsistent with previous research.

These results might reflect the cultural integration in the context of globalization. As asserted in the literature (e.g., Feldman et al., 1992; Lu, 2008; Tsai et al., 2000), China's rapid economic growth, modernization and globalization have led to astounding social changes, which includes the ideologies such as individualism. Under the western acculturation, young people may be shaped by western cultures, thus reporting high score on individualism orientation. Also, capitalism in China's competitive market facilitate individualism, Chinese people are not necessarily collectivistic in their work as their ancestors did in the farmland. It seems that pursuing personal freedom as well as respecting each individual's value affect new generations' social value. There exits the generation gap in social values between older generation and younger generation, Ralston (1999) found that older generations prefer to hold collective values and work as groups, while new generations are more independent and self-sufficient.

In addition, China's adoption of the One-Child Policy radically impacted the traditional family structure and resulted in a generation that grew up in a family environment of high expectations. This could be another explained reason for individualism growing in China. Chinese young adults become more individualistic and self-centered when they have been raised as the center of the whole family. Deutsch (2006) found that China's next generation are more likely to live on their own, and pursue their own ambitions rather than depends on their families.

Another reason might be because the 10 Individualism-Collectivism items selected from Singelis and Triandis (1995) was not the best fit for this study. In the original study, the researchers divided 32 items into the Vertical and Horizontal Individualism and Collectivism Items, as Horizontal Individualism (H-I), Vertical Individualism (V-I), Horizontal Collectivism (H-C) and Vertical Collectivism (V-C). While In this study, the 10 items were only selected from H-I and H-C, ignoring the rest V-I and V-C items might affect the results. Hence, this study switches to examine

whether nationality (as a proxy for cultural difference) affects the self-disclosure on both width and depth.

Overall, the results fully support a clear difference between self-disclosure's width and depth between two different nationalities. The results fail to support H1a: American students self-disclose on a wider range of topics than Chinese student, but support H1b: Chinese students self-disclose in more depth than American students. Inconsistent with the previous studies (e.g. Cho, 2010; Qiu et al. 2012), we found Chinese participants self-disclose in more width and depth on Renren than American participants do on Facebook.

In topic's width range, compared with U.S. college students, Chinese students discussed less about the personality online, but talked more about on the rest four topics: attitudes and opinions, tastes and interests, work or studies, and Body and Health.

That could be due to the growing trend in the United States of focusing on risks of self-disclosure related to privacy and personal brand management. A recent study Madrigal (2013) shows 71% of Americans do self-censor on Facebook. Before posting on Facebook, they will think again, and make sure their posting does not seem boring or repetitive, neither offends or hurts someone. For Facebook users, they come to realize that their self-presentation on social media would leave main impression on online visitors. In this study, American participants reported they feel less comfortable in sharing their deep thoughts with Facebook friends, and agreed with that FB help others to know them better, which can be explained as one of the reasons for self-censorship. On the other hand, online job hunting is widespread, and connecting professional Linked-In accounts with Facebook is also popular for developing and maintaining relationships. It seems risky to self-disclose too much personal information or post negative comments on their profile walls, thus Americans decide to hold back on self-disclosure on social media.

On the contrary, social media on China was active, especially for Sina weibo, Renren or Weixin. According to the 2012 China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), SNSs' penetration rate was around 70%, and students are very active on social media to share information or self-disclose. In the study, Chinese people viewed social media as a way to escape form their daily life, which make them feel less lonely, thus they are more willing to share opinions on SNSs.

In topic depth, only the Tastes and Interests topics did not differ by nationality, more specific, Chinese college students self-disclose deeper than American in the Attitudes and Opinions, Work or Studies, Personality, and Body and Health.

Inconsistent with previous study, Qiu et al. (2012) concluded that cultural difference would affect sharing behavior online: Renren is perceived as more collectivistic, therefore the users tend to be more restrained or cautious. The result of the study indicates that Chinese self-disclose wider and deeper than Americans, which could be explained by several reasons. First of all, modern China is in the period of transition, influenced by Western cultures and values, thus Chinese college students may adopt similar ideologies and values during the process of modernization.

Second, traditional media in China was under surveillance, making it difficult for Chinese to express or publish their opinions in newspapers, televisions or radios. Social media was very popular in China, especially for college students; moreover, it affords a platform and affords the freedom for self-expression. Despite the fact that strong censorship still exists on the Internet, young Chinese people find a way to speak out their opinions and express their viewpoint.

Third, the 74.1% of respondents in China live in urban areas, whereas 55.6% of American participants live in suburbs. Based on Lu (2008), many urban Chinese have an overseas experience, which no doubt broaden their horizons and have a profound influence on their values and attitudes. It is no surprise that in this study, Chinese students self-disclose in more depth than Americans.

Lastly, the self-disclosure width score was calculated by the average mean for the frequency of disclosure about the five topics (i.e. How often do you discuss this topic on Facebook/Renren?). Besides, the depth score was computed by the mean of self-disclosure depth for each topics (Scales from 0-2, in which 0 = have never discussed, 1 = have talked in general terms, and 2 = have talked in full and complete detail). The average width and depth scores may be affected by each individual topic. For example, if U.S. students did not like Body and Health topic, they may have marked a 1 indicating that they never self-disclosure this topic, which may lower their total average width score, no matter how high their other topics' width scores are.

Further, the results for the second research question also revealed there are significant difference between gender in the self-disclosure width and depth. Most previous scholars agree that women appeared to self-disclose more than men do (Papini et al., 1990; Hargie et al., 2001). In the study, it was found that female college students self-disclose on a wider ranger of topics and in more depth than male college students, which supports Rubin and Shenker 's (1978) statement that men are traditionally taught to be restrained in sharing their inner feelings, whereas women are socialized to be more expressive and open in communication.

As for the gender difference across the nationality, only H2a was supported, which indicated that American female students tend to self-disclose on a wider range of topics than American males, whereas there is no significance difference for U.S. female and male in topics' depth. Yet, we found neither self-disclosure's width nor depth was significant difference in Chinese group. The finding was inconsistent with previous study (Durand, 2010), which reported Chinese females disclose more than Chinese males in both face-to-face and email contexts.

The reason can be explained that the samples selected in this study were not representative for the whole college population. The main participants in this study are chosen from the Journalism

and Mass Communication major, not the typical college students. Besides, the sample size for gender group is not equal, as more females than males participated in the online survey.
In sum, the results imply that there exits the nationality and gender difference in self-disclosure's width and depth.

5.2 Implications and limitations

The findings of this study shed light on how nationality and gender play a role in influencing college students' SNS use habits and self-disclosures' width and depth. This study expands self-disclosure research from offline communication to the computer-mediated communication, e.g., SNSs in a cross-cultural context between the United States and China. The findings suggested that U.S. and Chinese students might be similar in social values and self-disclosure patterns due to the cultural integration in the context of globalization. This study also highlighted the nationality and gender difference among five different topics.

The results of these studies may be limited by the selection of samples. In this study, the sample size for U.S. and China group is quite small and unbalanced, American group has 225 participants, and Chinese group has 109 participants. It is better to have a larger sample size, ideally 300 participants for each group. Besides, the unequal sample sizes chosen from two countries will causes confounding, in order to solve this problem, a commonly applied correction technique named weighting adjustment could be used. Future research could expand our knowledge of nationality differences on self-disclosure to more countries. Because of the limited resources, this study only compared U.S. and China. To better understand the cultural differences on national level comparison, more countries represent Western culture (e.g. British, Italy, France, or Canada) and

Eastern culture (e.g. Japan, Korea), should be involved in the future study. Also, future studies should look at other diverse samples, such as teens, working people, or older adults.

Second, the current findings might be limited by the measurement scales chosen from previous studies. As referred in the discussion, in the original study, the researchers used 32 items to measure Individualism and Collectivism (Singelis & Triandis, 1995), while in this study, only 10 items was selected to prevent participants from tediousness. Future research further needs to consider the credibility within the measurement scales.

Besides, in Hofstede's cultural dimensions (1994), he came up with other four dimensions of cultural diversity, such as power distance (PDI), femininity versus masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, pragmatism and indulgence. In this study, the collectivism versus individualism scales fail to examine the cultural differences between American and Chinese, perhaps other dimensions such as Pragmatism dimension could explain the cultural differences. According to Hofstede's (2014) country comparison, China has a distinguish difference with America in Pragmatism dimension, which got a higher score at 87 than America (26), indicating China is a pragmatic society. Future research should be directed to look at other four dimensions, and come up with a complete scales to measure the cultural difference.

In addition, the Hofstede's five culture dimensions was developed 20 years ago, it might be less effective in the new era, hence it would be better to update Hofstede's culture dimensions, so that it could work better in computer-mediated communication. Also, the numerical scales from 0-2 (0 means have never discussed this item; 1 means have talked in general terms about the item; 2 means have talked in full and complete detail about the item) were used to measure their self-disclosure topic depth. Open-ended questions could be adopted in the future study, which may provide more detailed information and avoid response bias by predefined.

Third, the present study only focused on Facebook and Renren as the platform to examining social penetration model, while, actually, there are other active and popular SNSs in America, such as Twitter, Linkedin, Pinterest, Tumblr or Instagram; and for China, such as Sina weibo, QQ zone, or Weixin. Individuals may vary in the specific needs and purpose when self-disclose in different types of SNSs. Future study should take other SNSs into consideration.

Practically, the findings of this research suggest that SNS companies should apply culture-strategies to attract more users, and satisfied their needs by investigating consumers' SNS use background.

5.3 Conclusion

This study applied collectivism versus individualism, one of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and self-disclosure from social penetration model to examine the cultural differences between U.S. and Chinese college students in self-disclosure on social media sites. In particular, it examined the influence of culture (especially collectivism and individualism dimensions) in both width and depth of self-disclosure on Facebook and Renren.

The results showed that there exits the nationality difference in self-disclosure's width and depth, implying that Chinese students self-disclose more in width and depth than American college students.

Gender differences in self-disclosure's width and depth were also found and supported by this study. Females prefer to self-disclose in more width and depth than males on SNSs. But the gender differences across nationality were partially supported by this research, as only U.S. females tend to self-disclose in more width than U.S. males.

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APPENDIX A

Invitation Letter

Dear ISU students:

I am writing on behalf of the Greenlee School of Mass Communication and Journalism to request your help with my final thesis. I am conducting a survey about Cross-cultural differences between American and Chinese college-students on self-disclosure on social media. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Iowa State University (IRB ID: 13-601).

You can participate in this research only if you are American citizen or Chinese citizen. This survey will be conducted among participants who have active Facebook account in United States or Renren account in China.

You were selected to be part of this project, and I hope that you could take around 10-15 minutes to participate in this online survey. To complete the survey online, please go to the link below, and then follow the online survey instructions:

https://iastate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_agBscxOyjZj9IuV

Be assured, your answers will be completely confidential, and your survey responses will be anonymous and your contact information will NOT connected to the previous survey you completed. Your participation is voluntarily, and you may choose to withdraw at any time.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this online survey. If you have any questions about the study, contact Shan Luo (rosan@iastate.edu) or Dr. Cozma (rcozma@iastate.edu). If you have any questions about the administration of the survey, please contact Roxanne Bappe (irb@iastate.edu), IRB Administrator from Office for Responsible Research at Iowa State University.

Sincerely,

Shan Luo
Greenlee School of Mass Communication and Journalism
Iowa State University
Email: rosan@iastate.edu

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire (American Version)

The purpose of this research is to better understand how American and Chinese college students self-disclose on social media sites. This survey requires participants who have active Facebook account in United States and Renren account in China.

Part One:

1. How many Facebook friends do you have? ___
2. How much time do you usually spend on Facebook on average day?
   A. Less than 1 Hour
   B. 1 Hour to 2 Hours
   C. 3 Hours to 4 Hours
   D. More than 4 Hours
   E. I don't know
3. How many years have you been using Facebook/? ____
4. Who can see your Facebook profile?
   A. Only me
   B. Friends
   C. Public
   D. I don't know
5. Why do you use Facebook? Choosing the statements best describe you.
   1) Keep in touch with friends and family.

1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

2) To meet new people.

1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

3) It's entertaining.

1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

4) It relaxes me.

1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

5) To get information from Facebook.

1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

6) To share information from Facebook.

1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

7) It makes me forget my problems and worries.

1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

8) Because everyone else is doing it.

1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

9) Because it is cool.

1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

10) It is a habit, just something I do.

1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

11) It makes me feel less lonely.

1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

12) It gives me something to do to occupy my time.

1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

6. What percentage of your total friends do you trust with personal information?
   A. Hardly any
   B. A few
   C. Less than half
   D. Half
   E. Almost all
   F. All of them
7. I feel comfortable sharing my personal or intimate feelings with friends on Facebook

   1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
8. I think Facebook can help others to know me better.

   1-Srongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

Part Two:

Read each of the statements in this instrument and select the response that you believe best indicates how well these statements describe you.

1. I often do "my own thing".

   1- Not at all 2- Not very well 3- Somewhat 4-Well 5-Very Well
2. One should live one's life independently of others.

   1- Not at all 2- Not very well 3- Somewhat 4-Well 5-Very Well
3. I prefer to be direct and forthright when discussing with people.

   1- Not at all 2- Not very well 3- Somewhat 4-Well 5-Very Well
4. What happens to me is my own doing.

1- Not at all 2- Not very well 3- Somewhat 4-Well 5-Very Well

5. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways.

1- Not at all 2- Not very well 3- Somewhat 4-Well 5-Very Well

6. To me, pleasure is spending time with others.

1- Not at all 2- Not very well 3- Somewhat 4-Well 5-Very Well

7. I feel good when I cooperate with others.

1- Not at all 2- Not very well 3- Somewhat 4-Well 5-Very Well

8. It is important to maintain harmony within my group.

1- Not at all 2- Not very well 3- Somewhat 4-Well 5-Very Well

9. I like sharing little things with my neighbors.

1- Not at all 2- Not very well 3- Somewhat 4-Well 5-Very Well

10. My happiness depends very much on the happiness of those around me.

1- Not at all 2- Not very well 3- Somewhat 4-Well 5-Very Well

Part Three:

1. What topics did you usually discuss on Facebook/ wall posts.

A. Attitudes and opinion

B. Tastes and Interests

C. Work or studies

D. Personality

E. Body and Health

F. Other. Specify_____

2. How often do you discuss attitudes and opinion on Facebook/?

1-Always 2-Often 3- Sometimes 4-Never

3. Using the rating scale to describe the extent that you have discussed each item.

The rating scale for the question was as follows:

0: have never discussed this item on Facebook.

1: have talked in general terms about this item on Facebook.

2. have talked in full and complete detail about this item on Facebook.

1) My personal views on the present government- the president, government policies, etc. _____

2) My personal views on the entertainment- fashion/style, automobile, travel, etc. _____

3) My personal views on the technology- cellphone, computer, camera, video games, etc. _____

4) My personal views on the criminal and the justice system. _____

5) My personal views on the gay marriage or minority groups- racial, ethnic, gender, religion. _____

4. How often do you discuss Tastes and Interests on Facebook?

1-Always 2-Often 3- Sometimes 4-Never

5. Using the rating scale to describe the extent that you have discussed each item.

The rating scale for the question was as follows:

0: have never discussed this item on Facebook.

1: have talked in general terms about this item on Facebook.

2. have talked in full and complete detail about this item on Facebook.

1) My favorite sports. _____

2) My likes and dislikes in foods/beverages. _____

3) The kinds of music/books/movies/TV shows I like. _____

4) My tastes in clothing. _____

5) My favorite ways of spending spare time. _____

6. How often do you discuss work/study on Facebook?

1-Always 2-Often 3- Sometimes 4-Never

7. Using the rating scale to describe the extent that you have discussed each item.

The rating scale for the question was as follows:

0: have never discussed this item on Facebook.

1: have talked in general terms about this item on Facebook.

2. have talked in full and complete detail about this item on Facebook.

1) The enjoyment and satisfaction from work/study. _____

2) The pressure and strains in the work/study. _____

3) My ambitions and goals in my work/study. _____

4) How I really feel about the people that I work for, or work with. _____

5) My feelings about the salary or rewards that I get from my work/study. _____

8. How often do you discuss personality on Facebook?

1-Always 2-Often 3- Sometimes 4-Never

9. Using the rating scale to describe the extent that you have discussed each item.

The rating scale for the question was as follows:

0: have never discussed this item on Facebook.

1: have talked in general terms about this item on Facebook.

2. have talked in full and complete detail about this item on Facebook.

1) The kinds of things that make me happy/crazy. _____

2) What it takes to hurt my feelings deeply. _____

3) What it takes to get me real worried, anxious and afraid. _____

4) The kinds of things that make me especially proud of myself, self-esteem or self-respect. _____

5) Things in the past or present that I feel ashamed and guilty about. _____

10. How often do you discuss body on Facebook/Renren?

1-Always 2-Often 3- Sometimes 4-Never

11. Using the rating scale to describe the extent that you have discussed each item. _____

The rating scale for the question was as follows:

0: have never discussed this item on Facebook.

1: have talked in general terms about this item on Facebook.

2. have talked in full and complete detail about this item on Facebook.

1) My feelings about the appearance of my body- face, legs, hips, weight, bust chest. _____

2) My ideals for overall appearance. _____

3) Any problems and worries that I had with my appearance in the past. _____

4) Whether or not I have any health problems- eg. Trouble with sleep, digestion, female complaints, heart condition, allergies, headache. _____

5) Whether or not I now make special efforts to keep fit, healthy, and attractive, eg. Yoga, dance, sports, diet. _____

Part Four: Demographic questions

1. What is your gender?
    A. Female
    B. Male
2. What is your age? _____
3. What is your class status?
    A. Freshman
    B. Sophomore
    C. Junior
    D. Senior
    E. Graduate student
    F. Other
4. What is your nationality?
    A. American
    B. Chinese
    C. Other
5. Which of the following best describes the area you live in?
    A. Urban
    B. Suburban
    C. Rural
    D. Other

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire (Chinese Version)

调查问卷

本问卷旨在了解中美大学生在社交媒体上自我披露的差异。被调查者需要拥有人人网的使用帐号。当您开始填写问卷前，请登录人人网帐号，帮助您回答以下问题。完成问卷大约需要 10-15 分钟。

本问卷将严格按照相关规定，对填写内容和私人信息进行严格保密，并且此问卷的成果不会用于任何商业用途。谢谢您的参与。

第一部分：

1. 在人人网上，你拥有的好友数量？ _____
2. 平均每天你在人人网上花多少时间？
   - A. 少于 1 个小时
   - B. 1 个小时 — 2 个小时
   - C. 3 个小时 — 4 个小时
   - D. 多于 4 个小时
   - E. 不知道
3. 你注册并使用人人网的时间有几年？ _____
4. 你的人人网的浏览权限？
   - A. 仅自己可见
   - B. 好友可见
   - C. 所有人可见
   - D. 不知道
5. 使用人人网出于以下哪些原因？请根据符合程度选择相应选项？
   - （1） 与朋友家人保持联系
   - （2） 结交新的朋友
   - （3） 使用人人网令我愉快。
   - （4） 使用人人网令我放松。
   - （5） 帮助我获得资讯与信息。
   - （6） 帮助我分享有用的信息给他人。
   - （7） 让我忘记烦恼。
   - （8） 因为大家都在使用人人网。
   - （9） 使用人人网很 cool。

（10） 我习惯了使用人人网。

（11） 使用人人网，让我觉得没有那么孤单。

（12） 人人网帮助我消磨时间。

A. 非常不符合

B. 比较不符合

C. 介于两者之间

D. 比较符合

E. 非常符合

6. 你在多大程度上相信人人网上发布的信息？

A. 几乎不相信

B. 相信一些

C. 少于一半

D. 相信一半

E. 相信绝大多数

F. 相信所有信息

7. 在人人网上和朋友们分享自己的内心感受，我感觉舒服。

A. 完全不同意

B. 不同意

C. 中立

D. 同意

E. 完全同意

8. 我觉得人人网帮助别人更好地了解我。

A. 完全不同意

B. 不同意

C. 中立

D. 同意

E. 完全同意

第二部分：

仔细阅读以下信息，请根据符合程度选择相应选项。

1. 我常常一个人做事。
2. 人应该独立解决问题，尽可能不要靠别人。
3. 我偏好直接了当与他人沟通。
4. 发生在我身上的事，是我自己的事，与他人无关。
5. 我喜欢独特与众不同。

6. 快乐来源于大家在一起。
7. 合作让我觉得开心。
8. 小组之内维持和谐很重要。
9. 我喜欢与旁人分享信息。
10. 我的快乐跟周围的人快乐与否有关。

A. 非常不符合
B. 比较不符合
C. 介于两者之间
D. 比较符合
E. 非常符合

第三部分：

1. 在人人网个人主页里，你常常讨论哪个话题？

A. 态度与观点
B. 品味与兴趣
C. 学习与工作
D. 个人特征
E. 身体与健康
F. 其他，请指出_____

2. 在人人网里，你的话题涉及态度与观点的频率是？

A. 没有涉及
B. 几乎不涉及
C. 偶尔涉及
D. 经常涉及
E. 总是涉及

3. 根据你在人人网讨论以下信息的程度，将它们拖拽到数字 0-2 对应的描述框里。

0：从来没有在人人网讨论此类信息。
1：有时会在人人网大致讨论此类信息。
2：详尽地在人人网讨论此类信息的细节。

（1） 对于政府、政治人物、政策法规的个人意见。
（2） 对于娱乐、流行、生活方式、旅行的个人意见。
（3） 对于电子产品：手机、电脑、相机、游戏的个人意见。
（4） 对于犯罪与司法制度的个人意见。
（5） 对于同性恋、种族、少数民族、性别、宗教的个人意见。

4. 在人人网里，你的话题涉及品味与兴趣的频率是？

A. 没有涉及

B. 几乎不涉及
C. 偶尔涉及
D. 经常涉及
E. 总是涉及

5. 根据你在人人网讨论以下信息的程度，将它们拖拽到数字 0-2 对应的描述框里。
0：从来没有在人人网讨论此类信息。
1：有时会在人人网大致讨论此类信息。
2：详尽地在人人网讨论此类信息的细节。
（1） 我喜欢的运动。
（2） 我对食物、饮料的喜好。
（3） 我对音乐、图书、电影、电视的喜好。
（4） 我对服装的喜好。
（5） 我如何安排自己的闲暇时间。

6. 在人人网里，你的话题涉及学习与工作的频率是？
A. 没有涉及
B. 几乎不涉及
C. 偶尔涉及
D. 经常涉及
E. 总是涉及

7. 根据你在人人网讨论以下信息的程度，将它们拖拽到数字 0-2 对应的描述框里。
0：从来没有在人人网讨论此类信息。
1：有时会在人人网大致讨论此类信息。
2：详尽地在人人网讨论此类信息的细节。
（1） 学习工作中的满足与成就。
（2） 学习工作中的压力与负担。
（3） 学习工作中的目标与追求。
（4） 与同学同事相处的感受。
（5） 学习工作得到的报酬与奖励。

8. 在人人网里，你的话题涉及个人特征的频率是？
A. 没有涉及
B. 几乎不涉及
C. 偶尔涉及
D. 经常涉及
E. 总是涉及

9. 根据你在人人网讨论以下信息的程度，将它们拖拽到数字 0-2 对应的描述框里。
0：从来没有在人人网讨论此类信息。
1：有时会在人人网大致讨论此类信息。

2：详尽地在人人网讨论此类信息的细节。

（1） 让我开心疯狂的事。

（2） 让我悲伤难过的事。

（3） 让我担心焦虑害怕的事。

（4） 让我自豪骄傲自信的事。

（5） 让我自责内疚的事。

10. 在人人网里，你的话题涉及身体与健康的频率是？

A. 没有涉及

B. 几乎不涉及

C. 偶尔涉及

D. 经常涉及

E. 总是涉及

11. 根据你在人人网讨论以下信息的程度，将它们拖拽到数字 0-2 对应的描述框里。

0：从来没有在人人网讨论此类信息。

1：有时会在人人网大致讨论此类信息。

2：详尽地在人人网讨论此类信息的细节。

（1） 对于自己外貌和身体（脸、腿、体重、胸……）的感觉。

（2） 理想的外貌与身体。

（3） 有关外貌和身体的困扰。

（4） 有关疾病与身体不适的话题：失眠、消化不良、妇科问题、心脏状况、过敏、头疼……

（5） 有关健康瘦身的话题：瑜伽、健身、营养、节食……

第四部分：

1. 请问你的性别是？

A. 女性

B. 男性

2. 请问你的年龄是_____？

3. 请问你在大学的就读年级是？

A. 一年级

B. 二年级

C. 三年级

D. 四年级

E. 研究生

F. 其他

4. 请问你的国籍是？
   A. 美国
   B. 中国
   C. 其他
5. 请问你的家庭居住地是？
   A. 城市
   B. 城市郊区
   C. 农村
   D. 其他