6-2012

Cultural Influences Impact Social Networking on Chinese Students Studying in the United States

Alethea Schepperly
Union College - Schenectady, NY

Cultural Influences Impact Social Networking on
Chinese Students Studying inthe United States

Alethea Schepperly

****

Submitted in partial fulfillment

Of the requirements for

Honors in the Department of Asian Studies

UNION COLLEGE

June 2012

Alethea Schepperly

Senior Project

Winter Term 2012

Cultural Influences Impact Social Networking on Chinese Students Studying in the United States

INTRODUCTION

It is widely agreed that social networking is one of the most popular methods

of communication in today's world. One of the world's most prevalent and popular

social networking sites (hereinafter SNS) is Facebook; "Facebook holds about 130

million active users, and it is the fourth most trafficked website in the world" [1].

According to Mike Sachoff and a new survey from Prompt Communications,

"Facebook is now the most popular communication tool, followed by SMS and

email.[2] " "Facebook, Inc. operates as a social networking company worldwide. The

company builds tools that enable users to connect, share, discover, and

communicate with each other; enables developers to build social applications on

Facebook or to integrate their websites with Facebook; and offers products that

enable advertisers and marketers to engage with its users. As of February 2, 2012, it

had 845 million monthly users and 443 million daily users. [3]"

---

[1] Dunn, Haley B. "Facebook & Other Social Networking Sites: Candy- Coating Surveillance."
Commentary: The University of New Hampshire Student Journal of Communication, 2008. Web. 30
Jan. 2012. <http://www.unh.edu/communication/media/pdf/commentary/spring09.pdf#page=89>.
[2] Sachoff, Mike. "Survey Finds Facebook Most Popular Communication Tool." *WebProNews*.
WebProNews/Business, 11 Dec. 2009. Web. 28 Feb. 2012. <http://www.webpronews.com/survey-
finds-facebook-most-popular-communication-tool-2009-12>

[3] "Company Overview of Facebook, Inc." Bloomberg Business Week. Web. 3 Mar. 2012.

Many individuals have readily adapted to use this form of communication media,

however there are countries that restrict their citizens' level of access to certain

websites, and Facebook is a primary target.

> The Reporters Without Borders group has published its annual list of
> "internet enemies" that it considers unfairly restrict internet freedom.
> Censorship, harassment, lack of freedom of expression and repression of
> bloggers are all mentioned as reasons for a country being on the "roll of
> shame. Overall 13 countries have been collated including China, Egypt,
> Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and North Korea. In addition the group noted
> censorship in: Belarus, Burma, Cuba, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and
> Vietnam. [4]

In doing so these countries, and China specifically, continue to impose limitations

upon their citizen's access to the World Wide Web, and censors their ability to

readily communicate on an international basis. Further, these countries impose

restrictions on the information that can be posted and shared online, including

social network sites and companies such as RenRen in China, which operate under

restrictions and monitoring imposed by the Government. Social networking has

become an important method for communication and information sharing, because

it enables information to easily be shared and made available to millions of online

users.

   Use of online social networking in China is at its highest percentage of

---

<http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=20765463
03-51-46-dare4more.tumblr.gif>.

[4] "List Released of Countries That Restrict Web Access." *Informed*. Ihotdesk, 7 Nov. 2006. Web.
<Lhttp://www.ihotdesk.com/article/17919092/List%20released%20of%20countries%20that%20restrict%2
0web%20access>.

participation among college and high school students, and use is continuing to grow and expand to other age groups. Chinese college students predominantly use RenRen, commonly known as China's Facebook, as their social networking site because the usage of Facebook is banned in China[5] [6]. However, when Chinese students enter the United States and are immersed in this country's foreign culture, they have the opportunity to encounter and experience different online social systems that operate more openly with limited legal restrictions and little government intervention, such as Facebook. It is the hypothesis of this research report that the combination of American cultural influence and the experience of using a SNS that is free of government restriction regarding posted and shared information will affect and change the participants' online behavior(s). This study will survey and investigate the on-line habits of Chinese students who have been living and studying at Union College for at least six months, and will compare their primary usage of the Social Networks RenRen and Facebook. This research solicits self-provided responses, of Chinese students attending Union College, to a questionnaire designed to answer questions like: do they believe feel their SNS behavior has changed? If so, then has their sense of community or social network changed? This study considers the reasons they choose to use one network over the other, if they serve different purposes, and how frequently they visit Facebook and/or RenRen. Lastly, how aware are the students of cultural and political factors

[5] Pesek, William. "Mark Zuckerberg and the 'friending' of China." *Brisbane Times*. National Times, 27 Feb. 2012. Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/opinion/mark-zuckerberg-and-the-friending-of-china-20120226-1tw90.html>.

[6] . CHAO, LORETTA. "Mr. Zuckerberg Goes to China." *The Wall Street Journal*. Dow Jones & Company, 23 Dec. 2010. Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703814804576035143409583806.html>.

that influence their use of SNS? The results of this study anticipate that the

surveyed Chinese students are active Facebook users who have change their online

behavior, now that they are afforded the opportunity to become part of an online

community where they can provide online information and post more openly on

Facebook than on RenRen, because there is an absence of governmental control and

censorship. Additionally, "while the Internet is notorious for its digital dens of

deception, on Facebook, what you see tends to be what you get...online social

networks are so popular and so likely to reveal people's actual personalities because

they allow for social interactions that feel real in many ways;[7]" this supports the

claim that Facebook users freely express themselves by providing real personal

information.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations to this study consist of the lack of previous research on social

networking, especially studies comparing the networks RenRen and Facebook, and

while I would have liked to personally interview each participant, time and

academic constraints unfortunately dictate that the best method to conduct the

survey is to distribute a questionnaire via email to twenty Chinese exchange

students currently attending Union College.

Additionally, having lived in China for six months, I have limited but

---

[7] Bower, Bruce. "Facebook Users Are the Real Thing." *JSTOR*. Science News, 2010. Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25656111?&Search=yes&searchText=facebook&list=hide&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dfacebook%26gw%3Djtx%26acc%3Don%26prq%3Dadvantages%2Bto%2Bfacebook%26Search%3DSearch%26hp%3D25%26wc%3Don&prevSearch=&item=9&ttl=559&returnArticleService=showFullText>.

previous exposure to aspects of Chinese culture and traditions, and feel

somewhat biased in my predictions of what I expect this research to reveal. My

time in China was a wonderful experience, yet there were two instances during

my stay where I felt the impact of the government's online censorship power and

control. One illustrative example was this past summer when I worked as an

intern for IBM at their China Research Lab in Beijing. At the lab I was supervised

by the psychology department and asked to research privacy management issues

on SNSs in China and the United States. This assignment involved the need to

conduct research regarding Facebook and its offered privacy tools and features,

and it was necessary to access Facebook. Originally, I thought I would have no

problem accessing Facebook even in China, because I was working for a famous

international company conducting research in an attempt to understand the

online populations better, and learn the reasons behind "user" privacy behaviors.

However, I was unable to access Facebook through any of the proxy outlets that I

was given at IBM, and if I hadn't previously been to China and through Union

College installed a "Cisco Any Connect VPN Client" (VPN), then I would not have

been able to access Facebook and conduct my research. This was quite a shock

to me that an American company like IBM could not have their China based

operations access Facebook. I thought, "who (at home) would believe the

Chinese government has so much control over the media?" Facebook is not

readily accessible in China because it will not agree to the prohibitions over

information sharing and governmental monitoring required to operate in China.

Therefore, the Chinese government has refused to permit Facebook from being

used in China.

> "Mr. Zuckerberg has expressed interest in the China market, though he notes that it is a market that "is extremely complex and has its own dynamics," and noted there are only four countries where "Facebook isn't yet or on a path to win: China, South Korea, Japan, and Russia." He also observed that while "Facebook values openness it has made exceptions in some markets including Germany and Pakistan, where Nazi content and depictions of Muhammad are seen as offensive and are outlawed. Mr. Zuckerberg also expressed the desire to find a way to enter China "on our terms," an idea that hasn't worked out so well for other foreign Internet companies[8].

This experience, along with a situation when I was at Fudan University in Shanghai, and attempted to check employment opportunities with the Central Intelligence Agency, made me feel censored. Immediately after researching the CIA website, I came to realize that my internet server was suddenly frozen and all my computer functions became paralyzed for ten minutes; a demonstration of the internet control the Chinese government exercises, and of the "cyber police's" activity monitoring my web search. "There are as many as 30,000 in one estimate, of cyber police squads patrolling Chinese cyberspace, deleting politically incorrect content in real time, blocking websites, monitoring networking activities of citizens and tracking down and arresting offending individuals"[9]. I suspect that my CIA research flagged their attention. Research findings show that while the creation of the internet has provided individuals in China with a means to communicate, distribute information, and even make public statements, it simultaneously has

---

[8] Chao, Loretta, and Yoli Zhang. "Zuckerberg in China: Huzzahs from Users, Hush from Alibaba." *Wall Street Journal*. China Real Time Report, 2010. Web. 05 Mar. 2012. <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2010/12/23/zuckerberg-in-china-huzzahs-from-users-hush-from-alibaba/>.

[9] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

given the Chinese government the ability to monitor its citizens' online activities in their efforts to maintain a social order that coincides with their Communist Party worldview[10].

LITERATURE REVIEW

China's Internet media has advanced at a rapid pace since its implementation in the 1990's, when China and its citizens went from having little contact with the outside world, to engaging in the global market, where they were introduced to electronic media products and services like social network sites, mobile telephones, i-Pods, and the world wide web; products which interested many people. "The mass media serves as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to muse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society"[11]. As China's economy began its transition into a modern market, this function became more attractive as its government grew fearful its citizens would develop knowledge and information that might empower them to revolt or undermine the Communist Party's campaigns, ideas, and mandate to rule[12]. For example, the Chinese government was so concerned about loss of power in 2003, when Rupert Murdoch, media expert, "pronounced that satellite television would bring the end to authoritarian regimes

---

[10] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

[11] Herman, Edward, and Noam Chomsky. "Media and Cultural Studies." *A Propaganda Model* (2001): 280-306. Print.

[12] Chung, Jongpil, and Kyung Hee University Research Fund. "Comparing Online Activities in China and South Korea." *The Internet and the Political Regime* 48.5 (2008): 727-51. Print.

everywhere, that they (Chinese government) had him coach the top Chinese leaders

at the Central Party School in Beijing on how to calculatedly liberalize the Chinese

media market for domestic and global capital, ensuring them that the potential of

the open market doesn't represent any loss of power.[13]" Due to this worry of losing

power and the corresponding intensified effort to control media access and

dissemination of information, the struggle for control continues today.

The Chinese government regularly takes advantage of the media and

manages the media by manipulating them (the "media giant" companies) into

following a special agenda and framework that coincides with the government's

standards[14]. Not only does the government exercise its authority by influencing

media based businesses into complying with their commands, including

management of internet sites, but they also impose party propaganda disciplines on

individuals who criticize the Communist Party committee. In fact, since the Chinese

government has seen such great success in managing media production and

distribution, "the party has been able to strengthen the structural management of

the media through specialized government agencies."[15] The Chinese government

monitors all internet content and restricts on-line journalists from writing about

[13] Zhao, Yuezhi, and Robert A. Hackett. "Democratizing Global Media." *Who Want Democracy and Does It Deliver Food? Communication and Power in a Globally Integrated China*: 57-75. Print.

[14] Herman, Edward, and Noam Chomsky. "Media and Cultural Studies." *A Propaganda Model* (2001): 280-306. Print.

[15] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

issues regarding human rights, democracy, or freedom of belief, in order to ensure

the stability of their communist society and avoid potential threats[16].

The Chinese government maintains control over the nation's media

networks, and the flow of information made available to its people. Because much of

the media's information is regulated, several websites are customized or censored.

"Citizens have come to realize that there are forbidden topics in domestic media

such as press freedom and China's suppression of this liberal aspiration," which are

not to be dialogued or researched[17]. In effect, if on-line users "dare to communicate

unsanctioned information and promote dissenting ideas, then they are prosecuted

under the criminal offences of 'disclosing state secrets,' inciting to subvert state

power", and "endangering national security."[18] It is this fear of being monitored and

potentially prosecuted that may explain why many Chinese users censor their

behavior online and self-impose restrictions.

Many online users, including journalists, are well aware that they can receive

jail sentences, be physically harmed, and be subjected to harassment if they publicly

write or speak about any sort of politically incorrect remark(s). While most citizens

suffer in silence and long to speak out freely, others have risked punishment and

retribution, some even sacrificed their lives in the attempt to report sensitive news

[16] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

[17] Zhao, Yuezhi, and Robert A. Hackett. "Democratizing Global Media." *Who Wants Democracy and Does It Deliver Food? Communication and Power in a Globally Integrated China*: 57-75. Print.

[18] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

topics, which usually means politically based news content[19]. "On the ground, the police and, increasingly, thugs hired by local authorities detain and obstruct reporters, confiscate [journalists] audio and videotapes, and harass or even beat them when they try to interview protesters."[20] The government has and will continue to use punitive measures in order to silence negative information or criticism pertaining to the CCP and the Government. In order to diminish the negative information flow on the web, the Chinese government has created a list of categories that are prohibited by anyone from being disclosed; if individuals do publish such information they can expect to suffer consequences, some potentially severe. For example, topics like: protests, gathering of the masses, undermining social stability, disturbing social order, demonstrations, etc. are all forbidden from being published online[21].

> The Chinese government wants to regulate and manage the largest
> social groups in its country; therefore, they are less interested in
> regulating the elite's Internet access due to the fact that China's
> population mostly consists of the lower and middle classes[22]. The
> government wants to make sure "that the vast majority of citizens do
> not get unfiltered access. Communication has never simply been
> about an issue of free expression. It has always been an integral part
> of political organization and social mobilization.[23]

---

[19] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

[20] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

[21] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

[22] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

[23] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

The lower class makes up the largest portion of China's people and subsequently they are a target group of concern regarding use of the Internet. The government monitors every facet of the Internet and prevents access to uncensored information; "Facebook is also blocked inside China, due to government concerns that the social networking system could be a portal for Chinese citizens to see a different way of life and thus disrupt "social harmony.[24]"

On the other hand, they use the fundamental tool of "vagueness" to instill uncertainty and fear in its users, adding self-censorship to their word of control[25]. "There are four principal advantages the government gains with this policy of "vagueness:" (1) the potential of facing vague accusations to intimidate people (internet users) into moderating their behavior, (2) subtle but effective pressure causes many people to control their behavior to a greater extent, (3) being vague is "useful in maximizing what can be learned during forced confessions," and (4) it allows authorities to zero in on whomever they want.[26]" One may argue that these principals of control play a prominent role to the degree that citizens have an "online fear-factor" about the government, which in turn inhibits them from disclosing all types of information online. While China has one of the fastest growing economies in the world, it is still very clear it "holds one of the most oppressive regimes in using coercive state powers to

[24] Eaton, Kit. "Zuckerberg's Taking Facebook Into China, But It'll Be a Baidu Beast | Fast Company." *FastCompany.com*. 11 Apr. 2011. Web. 05 Mar. 2012. <http://www.fastcompany.com/1746392/facebook-china-baidu-social-networking>.

[25] Chung, Jongpil, and Kyung Hee University Research Fund. "Comparing Online Activities in China and South Korea." *The Internet and the Political Regime* 48.5 (2008): 727-51. Print.

[26] Hassid, Jonathan. "Controlling the Chinese Media: An Uncertain Business." *Asian Survey* 48.3 (2008): 414-30. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Jan. 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2008.48.3.414>.

control public communication"[27].   What's more, this is occurring during a time of accelerated capitalistic style development, where China and its people are evermore frequently facing ideological conflicts over tradition and culture, societal norms, and political ideals.

Chinese citizens, and in particular social networking users, typically don't disclose personal thoughts or information online due to fear of losing their Internet privileges and of being identified as one of the government's "targets" for Internet surveillance, where they can be subjected to punitive actions; "most users are unwilling to express their feelings about the party or the government on-and-offline due to officials' threats of harsh punishment.[28]" Due to the evolution of the Internet and technology, when a person does attempt to produce online sensitive content, they face

> ..."increasing sophisticated firewalls and filtering software, where the survival time for offensive content in cyberspace has been reduced from thirty minutes to just a few. In December of 2004, China's General Agency of Press and Publication (GAPP) announced the establishment of a '24-Hour Real Time Web-Publishing Content Reading and Monitoring Mechanism.' In addition to serving the censorship function, this system is also charged with the responsibility of gathering and analyzing intelligence regarding the general ideological and content orientation of web publishing."[29]

---

[27] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

[28] Chung, Jongpil, and Kyung Hee University Research Fund. "Comparing Online Activities in China and South Korea." *The Internet and the Political Regime* 48.5 (2008): 727-51. Print.

[29] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

The Chinese government has a significant degree of power over the entire media system; therefore, with the increasing importance placed on the Internet, the Chinese citizen's worry of producing inappropriate content online is well founded. In practice it is best for the public to say nothing and to keep their opinions to themselves, otherwise they could end up with significant consequences, as other citizens have already experienced. Failing to abide by the Chinese government's internet regulations may result similarly to a case during 2003 and 2004 "where as many as seventeen internet activists were tried and punished with jail sentences up to fourteen years, making China the top country for jailing internet activists"[30]. This is an illustration of how the government exercises their authority over the Chinese people, who have no power, and demonstrates the scope of their control over China's cyberspace.

According to Yuezhi Zhao's *Reconfiguring Party-State Power*, "the role of the Chinese government in micromanaging media structure and disciplining the media has been significantly expanded along with the role of repressive state apparatuses such as the police and the courts in the prosecution of dissent.[31]" The Chinese government has been successful in its efforts to control the information flow between people outside of China with people inside of China, and to suppress Chinese citizens from publically criticizing the Communist Party through the

---

[30] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

[31] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

establishment of its propaganda disciplines. Through its laws and regulations, it is

clear the government's goal for governing all media operations, including the

Internet, is to lessen the threat to their authoritarian regime, retain traditional levels

of propaganda control, prohibit the empowerment of citizens, maintain social

stability, and confirm that Internet users don't "deviate from the official Communist

party doctrine. This includes the Four Cardinal Principals: Socialism, the

dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the Communist Party, and Marxism-

Leninism-Mao Zedong thought.[32]" While the party has many methods of surveillance

for the media, they have also been successful in promoting self-censorship.

According to Jongpil Chung, author of *Comparing Online Activities in China and South

Korea: The Internet and the Political Regime*, there are two strategies to repress

politically sensitive or "subversive" content online. The first refers to technical

methods that involve the cyber police and legal regulations enabling screening of

online content. The second is where the government implements various types of

surveillance and takes punitive actions to boost the public's self-censorship[33]. Some

business owners are so fearful for being held responsible and liable for

inappropriate content online that they hire alternative workers to monitor their

networks information. Literature shows that "most online users are unwilling to

express their feelings about the Communist party or the government on-and-off-line

---

[32] Chung, Jongpil, and Kyung Hee University Research Fund. "Comparing Online Activities in China and South Korea." *The Internet and the Political Regime* 48.5 (2008): 727-51. Print.
[33] Chung, Jongpil, and Kyung Hee University Research Fund. "Comparing Online Activities in China and South Korea." *The Internet and the Political Regime* 48.5 (2008): 727-51. Print.

due to officials' threats of harsh punishment"[34]. These, along with several other

factors, are the reasons responsible for the general Chinese online population's

restricted behavior and self-censorship. However, as people continue their efforts

and attempts in gathering previously inaccessible information, the government will

continue to impose new laws in their endeavor to maintain media control.

METHODOLOGY AND WORK PLAN

This study is based on a heuristic questionnaire consisting of subject matter

with regard to Chinese students' online user behavior on the social network system

Facebook, while they are in the United States, and literature reviews pertaining to

the cyber social networking world. While conducting extensive research on social

network systems, with specific attention being directed to information relating to

China's RenRen and America's Facebook, I learned that the Chinese populations

impose a measure of self-imposed restriction of information disclosure regarding

their online behavior. A focused questionnaire was devised to explore whether

Chinese students, from the ages of eighteen to twenty two who are living in the USA

and studying at Union College, changed their online habits as a result of western

cultural influences, and if governmental censure or oversight influenced the kind or

amount of personal information they shared. Several online articles and journals,

written by native Chinese and Westerners, provide information as to how China's

online population self censor their behavior regarding expression, and analyze the

reasons for insight why the Chinese users behave in this manner.

---

[34] Chung, Jongpil, and Kyung Hee University Research Fund. "Comparing Online Activities in China and South Korea." *The Internet and the Political Regime* 48.5 (2008): 727-51. Print.

As for the questionnaire, twenty Chinese students were electronically sent the survey via e-mail. In order to ascertain whether the student's online behaviors have changed since they left China and came to the USA, I asked questions such as: how do you use Facebook, do you think RenRen and Facebook basically serve the same function, and do you think that you have experienced change and now share more information on Facebook than you did previously? The results and findings developed as a result of this human studies project are understood to only be preliminary, as only five students completed and returned the questionnaire; respondent participation being 25 percent, but of a very small sample population. My goal is to gain an understanding of how the Chinese students act when they are integrated into a new cultural context, one in which the government plays a less prominent role in monitoring personal online behavior. This study will help convey the participants' knowledge and opinions regarding online censorship in China, and discover if they are even aware of how excessive censoring online material has become. Once all of the participants' data is compiled and analyzed, I will use the response information, along with literature reviews, to demonstrate support or rejection regarding my hypothesis.

BODY OF WORK

Questions	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	
1	8/2011	9/2010	8/2011	9/2011	9/2008	
2	Four Years	Four Years	Four Years	Four Years	Four Years	
3	Freshman	Sophomore	Freshman	Freshman	Senior	
4	20	21	19	18	22	
5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
6	B,C	A, B,C,D	A,B,C	B, C	D	
7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
8	Less	Less	Less	The same	The same	
9	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	
10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
11	B,yes	A,B,C,D,	A,yes-b,yes-d,yes-e,yes	B,C,D,E	B,yes	
12	D	D	D	D	D	
13	A,B,C	A,B,C,D	A,B	B,C,D	B,C D	
14	B	C	C	B	C	
15	No	No	No	No	No	
16	No	No	No-c	No-a,b,c	No	
17	No	No	Yes- a,b	No-a,b,c	Yes- a	
18	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	
19	No	No	Yes, has explanation	No	No	
20	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
21	Yes	Yes	Yes	No, has explanation	No	

This section of the report focuses on the self-reported questionnaire results and analyzes the participants' behavior towards Facebook. This aspect of the report reflects only preliminary findings, as the response rate was five returned questionnaires out of a possible twenty returns, (a twenty five percent response rate) which would ordinarily allow findings to be projected with more certainty; this is not the case when the sample size and respondent numbers are so small.

Nevertheless, the preliminary findings will contribute to further research efforts, and pose additional questions and issues to be probed in subsequent research. Out of the five individual respondents who have self-reported their attitudes and behaviors on Facebook, three are freshmen, one is a sophomore, and one is a senior. As I began reviewing their survey responses, I found it interesting to note that the three freshman responses are similar to each other and different from the other two participants; this could be a result of the fact they have spent less time in the United States compared to the other students, as they have yet to complete their second trimester at Union College.

ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

All of the students arrived at Union College in August or September of their freshman year and all intend to complete four years of education; their ages are from 18 to 22 years old. All participants used the Chinese SNS RenRen prior to coming to the United States and all generally report its primary use was to: gather information about friends, to share information, and to express themselves. Now the participants use RenRen either the same (two participants) or less (three participants) amount, and they all joined Facebook and are frequent users (five participants) reporting daily, if not more often. Two of the three freshman and the sophomore reported being able to access Facebook in China, which I interpret to mean they apparently had access to some proxy outlet that provided them entry to the SNS site without coming to the attention and notice of China's cyber-police. Considering the Chinese restriction of Facebook, it seems a reasonable assumption

that the proxy must have provided secure assess, since the censors appear not to

have targeted or terminated the students' activity. However, another possibility

may also be that they simply did not bother because the content was not deemed

problematic. It has been be reported that "(a)s far as the Internet goes the

government is only interested in making sure that the vast majority do not get

unfiltered access. Communication has never simply been an issue of free expression.

It has always been an integral part of political organization and social

mobilization.[35]"

It is difficult to accurately identify the primary reason the students had for

joining Facebook, because instead of selecting only one reason as requested, there

were a total of fourteen responses in total. However, the choice "to gather

information about friends and events" was cited by each of the five students, while

"to easily communicate and express myself with friends" received three responses

and the remaining three choices each received two responses. Regarding how

Facebook is used, all five again selected "gather information about friends and

events," and then four students also cited "share information and express myself to

friends." "Expanding our social network and making friends," and "easily

communicate electronically with friends" were both cited three times.

I was somewhat surprised when I analyzed responses to the next few

questions. From my research, and my limited visits to China, I anticipated some

respondents would report they controlled the degree of personal information

[35] Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

disclosed by "self-imposed restriction," yet none reported using this method, rather all five rely on Facebook privacy tools; two relying on the standard "default" settings, while three reported they "make changes and customize the privacy settings to meet my needs."   I was particularly surprised that all five respondents reported that governmental control over a social network service is not an influence over their decision regarding posting personal information; it seems to be contrary to my literature review, which would suggest that there is concern about disclosing personal information in China due to the government's constant monitoring. However, all five again reflected that the fact that no governmental censorship of Facebook postings in the United States has no bearing or influence of these respondents' use of Facebook.

Is it possible that none of these five participants are aware of how extensive and restrictive China's control is over the Internet and its media? Perhaps they are aware and this doesn't bother them—as the Chinese government guidelines are continually in the news making these students aware of the fact that the Chinese government has in the past, and continues to engage in stringent Internet use and content regulation, which includes oversight and supervision of the public's use.

> The Internet Society of China (ISC) was founded in May 2001. It is a national organization of the Internet industry with a remit for serving the development of that industry, netizens and the decisions of the government. The ISC has issued a series of self-disciplinary regulations, including the Public Pledge of Self-regulation and Professional Ethics for the China Internet Industry, Provisions of Self-regulation on not spreading Harmful Information for Internet Websites, Public Pledge of Self-regulation on Anti-malicious Software, Public Pledge of Self-regulation on Blog Service, Public Pledge of Self-regulation on Anti-Internet Virus, Declaration of Self-regulation on

Copyright Protection of China's Internet Industry, and other
regulations, which greatly promote the healthy development of the
Internet.[36]

These pledges are efforts of the Chinese government to greatly promote the healthy

development of the internet by making appropriate conduct known. The above lists

are examples of online topics members must constantly be mindful of to avoid

coming into negative contact with the government. Perhaps these students are

unconcerned about any monitoring because their postings are essentially innocuous

and of little interest or concern to any governmental entity. Regardless, the

question of if, and how, Chinese students may be affected by governmental internet

control and posting of personal information is an area warranting further research,

at a deeper level with a statistically viable sample population, that will allow

projections to be made regarding the actions and opinions of the larger population

of college students. Regarding whether the method of selecting friends on RenRen

and Facebook differed, two respondents answered yes, and both students reported

they "accept requests from fellow students I have met," and one also noted

acceptance of "requests from all Union College students." Of the three students

saying their method for accepting friends did not change, one student then went on

to also chose each of three reasons for accepting a Facebook friend.

A discrepancy was noted in question 18 when two respondents, a freshman

and the senior, said yes that "cultural influences cause you (them personally) to

restrict the amount of personal identifiable information you make on line," and to

[36] "Govt. White Papers - China.org.cn." *China.org.cn - China News, Weather, Business, Travel & Language Courses*. Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 8 June 2010. Web. 19 Feb. 2012. <http://china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/2010-06/08/content_20207983.htm>.

which three said no; yet at question 14 none of the students reported there was any "self-imposed restriction" regarding disclosure of personal information. Absent a potential misunderstanding over "disclosing personal information" in Q-14, versus "personal identifiable information" in Q-18, I cannot reconcile the difference. Research has suggested that cultural collectivism influences Chinese people to value group orientation over individual expression, and that self-discipline is practiced to restrict the degree of personal information disclosed. Still, considering the unanimous denial answering question 14 and three of the five students denying a cultural influence, it seems to suggest that any cultural influences may have a minimal effect.

Only one of the five respondents answered Question 19 by saying yes, that he/she thinks they have experienced change coming to the United States and that they share more information than they do on RenRen; that student stated "I have more American friends now and want to share my experience with them on Facebook." [Refer to attached Chart]. Regarding whether Chinese users would "share more information in China if Facebook was available and operated in the same manner as the United States, without governmental control or censorship," two students said yes and three said no; but one that answered no was the student from Question 19, who said he/she shares more information on Facebook than they do on RenRen. It seems somewhat contrary for this respondent to say Chinese users would not share more information given the same opportunity in China, when that is what this student has done in the United States; wouldn't other Chinese online users behave in the same manner if given the opportunity, especially as this

respondent stated RenRen and Facebook serve the same function. In the final

question three respondents thought RenRen and Facebook basically serve the same

functions while two did not; one of them (Participant four) explained **...**

> "RenRen has more information than Facebook. We can easily see
> articles, pictures and videos on RenRen. We can also write blogs,
> listen to radios and get presents from RenRen Company. RenRen also
> acts as a platform for people to talk about important stuff happens in
> our country. The flow of information is very quick on RenRen. Also it
> is somewhat like an Internet supervisor of the government. It reveals
> the bad side of the society and makes netizens think deeply about the
> human nature and arises people's justice and care for others. RenRen
> provides different topics for people to talk about. For example, it is
> Chinese New Year now, the status column will automatically appear
> these words: 'what is your wishes for the New Year? Please write
> down your wishes for your family and friends.' Take another example,
> when China was undergoing the big earthquake several years ago,
> RenRen status column will show these words 'let's pray for people
> who are now suffering from the earthquake.' Also you can find articles
> about how to learn English or Spanish, the experience of Chinese
> students studying abroad and so on. RenRen is not just a network for
> people meeting new friends; it also involves politics, sociology
> anthropology and is more like a big information platform."

This student's response demonstrates some of the differences provided between

RenRen and Facebook's features. However, experienced Facebook users would

argue that they too have the ability to easily see articles, photos and videos, as well

as read and share important information or any information they choose for that

matter with their online friends. Consequently, it seems possible, if not probable,

that this user is not fully aware of all of Facebook's features, and doesn't seem to

fully grasp its online culture. It is interesting to note, this participant mentioned

RenRen "provides different topics for people to talk about," in fact a feature

Facebook does not offer, however the motivation behind the reasons why RenRen

and its staff might supply "topics to talk about" would easily be a topic for debate,

considering what the research has revealed about China's monitoring and censoring activities.

I also noted that the freshman (Participant four) provided some conflicting responses; answering question 18 and 19 saying "no" if "cultural influences cause you to restrict the amount of personal identifiable information you make available on-line," and that this student did not believe he/she had "experienced change and now share more information on Facebook than you did previously." In light of these responses, it then becomes confusing why this user would answer "yes" to question 20, which asked, "do you think if Facebook were available in China and operated in the same manner as the United States, including no governmental control or censorship, that Chinese users would share more personal information and communicate more openly online?" Perhaps the inconsistent responses reflect thinking that Chinese people may attach more importance to cultural limitations regarding self disclosure, or they might somehow be more concerned about the government knowing or potentially being aware of information they would post; there is no way of knowing the underlying basis to why particular answers were reported.

As previously mentioned in the limitation section of the report, there were time constraints and conflicting demands that precluded pursuing personal interviews that would have enabled me to delve into the "thought process" and reasons underlying particular beliefs of some of the students. According to Jongpil Chung, China exerts the most rigorous Internet censorship in the world and employs

strong, sophisticated control over what its people read, see and hear. The Chinese government is obsessed with ensuring that its people have access to the "correct" information that supports the state's propaganda[37]. It seems compelling to believe that when a government intends to control what people read, it must also control what others say; these new instantaneous electronic communication capabilities of the internet, including blogs, social network systems, are increasingly important targets of such control.

DOES TIME OUTSIDE CHINA MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A particular question of interest during this research was to examine whether or not the Chinese students who have been at Union College longer, have different responses because they have been immersed in the United State's culture for a longer period of time. If so, it would be interesting to track the current freshman respondents to see if their opinions and behaviors change by their senior year, and then to try and see if whether any differences are based in the fact that the absence of pervasive governmental oversight prompted, or allowed them to be more open. Unfortunately, the small number of Chinese Union College students (twenty), with the twenty five percent return rate of five, resulted in only two students having lived more than six months in The United States; one sophomore with a year and a half, and one senior with three and a half years.

Analyzing the sophomore (Participant two) and senior (Participant five) responses, I noted different answers: Q-8, Q-9, Q-17, Q-18, Q-20 and Q-21. On

---

[37] Chung, Jongpil, and Kyung Hee University Research Fund. "Comparing Online Activities in China and South Korea." *The Internet and the Political Regime* 48.5 (2008): 727-51. Print.

Question eight regarding current usage of RenRen, Participant two uses the SNS less while Participant five uses it the same amount. I wonder if a possible reason may be that Participant two stated he/she had access to Facebook in China, and may already have a formed a group of online friends in China using this SNS, whereas Participant five was not able to use Facebook in China, and may be continuing to "communicate and share information with his/her friends in China through RenRen. Also her four years at Union is ending in a few months and a return to China may be imminent, absent other educational or career arrangements. Interestingly both participants were the only users to select the answer choice (Question 6) they continue to use RenRen to "easily communicate electronically with select groups of friends."

Differing from Participant two and two of the freshman, Participant five's answers seem to suggest a little less online "openness" with regards to selecting friends in the manner and purposes for which Facebook is normally used. Participant answered his/her method of selecting friends on Facebook is different than that used for RenRen, and that friend requests are accepted from fellow students that he/she has met, which was the most restrictive choice. Participant two, on the other hand, reported no difference in how his/her on-line friends are selected. Moreover, while Participant five reported belief of governmental control on a SNS did not influence his/her decision whether or not to disclosed personal information on-line (question 15), yet at the same time reported that cultural influences cause him/her to restrict the amount of personal identifiable information made available online. Participant two agreed that governmental control did not influence his/her decision regarding personal information disclosed online, but also

rejected the idea that cultural influences determine what personal information he/she makes available online. Research has suggested that cultural collectivism influences Chinese people to value group orientation over individual expression, and that self-discipline is commonly practiced to restrict the degree of personal information disclosed. I suggest that governmental influences and control have direct societal impacts on the cultural norms and influences that affect today's Chinese population. The fact that the Chinese government has "imprisoned more journalists than any other country and ranks 163rd out of 168 rated countries on press freedom," demonstrates the willingness to impose measures to reinforce and indoctrinate people with government selected "cultural norms" and values[38]. Therefore, it is not surprising that one may remain silent due to the "uncertainty and vagueness of the Chinese media self-censorship regime," and it appears possible, that participant five has to a degree accepted such control as a matter of course[39]. For example, by reflecting that he/she has not experienced a change in how much personal information they share on Facebook while in a situation being afforded significant freedom of expression absent government controls, and that he/she does not believe Chinese users would communicate more openly even if Facebook was accessible with the same degree of freedom and openness in China. Perhaps such thinking might explain his/her reasoning to question 21's answer, that RenRen and Facebook do not serve the same function; use of Facebook in America is to allow users to focus on the friends/people and gathering information about

---

[38] Hassid, Jonathan. "Controlling the Chinese Media: An Uncertain Business." *Asian Survey* 48.3 (2008): 414-30. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Jan. 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2008.48.3.414>.
[39] Hassid, Jonathan. "Controlling the Chinese Media: An Uncertain Business." *Asian Survey* 48.3 (2008): 414-30. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Jan. 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2008.48.3.414>.

events, whereas RenRen (according to research studies) is used to focus on its people, to enable its monitoring of users, restriction of un-desirable information being disseminated, and to promote Communist Party propaganda.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several observations can be made from reviewing the questionnaires, but all require further research before they could be presented with any measure of meaningful validity, as the answers posed additional questions for further inquiry. This research report of Chinese students studying at Union College is based on only five electronically returned completed survey questionnaires out of a possible twenty, a respectful response rate of twenty five percent (25%). The small sample size however, does not permit any findings or conclusions to be claimed as indicative of the opinions and actions of other Chinese students studying at Union or the United States in general.   Findings in this research study can only really be related to this particular sample population, and perhaps used to preliminarily suggest issues for future studies to pursue and provide grounded answers.

Respondent's answers to the project questionnaire rejected the hypothesis which was advanced; that the combination of American cultural influence and the greater "freedom of expression" afforded to Facebook SNS users will affect and change their online behavior(s). Rather, all five students answered that they were not influenced regarding what personal information they disclose on Facebook by the fact there is no governmental censorship of the SNS postings, and all five equally denied that governmental control of a SNS influences their own decision whether or

not to disclose personal information. Yet, at the same time, two respondents

thought that users in China would share more information and communicate more

openly if Facebook operated in China without governmental censorship in the same

manner as the United States. This was a surprise; my review of research material

suggested that concern over governmental censorship causes online users to be

somewhat cautious regarding their postings. This impression is supported by some

personal, but minimal exposure to Chinese college students at Peking University

over a period of a few months. I expected that the survey would show that the

students, if not initially, then over time in this country would share more

information and post more openly than they had in China. This study was to

investigate the online habits of Chinese students who have been living and studying

at Union College for at least six months, and compare their primary usage of the

Social Networks RenRen and Facebook。

WHAT WAS FOUND

Several conflicting responses were observed during analysis of participant

answers to the questionnaire. [For example, while all five students claimed

governmental control over SNS's, does not influence whether they decide to share

certain personal information online, they do not believe they self impose

restrictions]. Participant five, who had the most time in this country, actually agreed

that cultural influences do cause him/her to restrict identifiable information he/she

makes available online. This particular piece of information is noteworthy, because

while Participant five had the same initial attitude and reasons for joining RenRen

and Facebook as the other four students; his/her responses pertaining to online restriction and personal censorship differed from the others. Participant five has been living and residing at Union College's campus for two to three years longer than the other four participants, and can be expected to have had more exposure and experience to the U.S.A.'s "individualistic culture." It would be interesting to assess the other respondents' online behavior later in their college careers to see if their answers changed over time, and study if they will be closer to Participant five's answers now. Participant five, along with Participant four, provided some validation (40%) to the study hypothesis that Facebook and RenRen do not serve the same function, as well as, Participants five and three agree, as suggested by various research sources, that "cultural collectivism influences Chinese people to value group orientation over individual expression, and that self-discipline is practiced to restrict the degree of personal information disclosed." The 20% differences in both questions that disagree represent one student, so no statistical reliability can be asserted.

The study revealed that participants one, two and three, accessed/used Facebook while they were in China. Therefore, it seems reasonable to surmise that these individuals may have had the ability to enter the SNS by a proxy server, and were not then monitored or targeted by censors; or, perhaps the individuals were in fact "spotted" by the government monitors but left alone because the manner of their use was not considered threatening to the government's propaganda. I assumed that there would be more commentary provided by the students on the questionnaire when they were responding to the survey questions; however,

according to Jens Damm, author of *The Internet and the Fragmentation of Chinese Society*, the Chinese online population today is much more concerned with the consumer lifestyle than they are politics. Damm gives a detailed explanation as to why the Chinese government has and continues to enforce control over the media and its content online, and, how the focus of many Chinese users today no longer lies with China's politics.

THE FOCUS OF TODAY'S CHINESE ONLINE POPULATION

There are many Chinese citizens who use the Internet to search for specific online information regarding the Chinese government and its activities, which is one primary reason why the government has imposed such rigid barriers denying individuals access to specific online sites[40]. China is well aware that the online communication world acts as a ready and efficient portal for all types of communication: "one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many, and many-to-one;" such portals allow for an interactive dialogue where everybody has the opportunity to become his/her own publisher with only marginal costs.[41]" The concern of easily accessing information through a number of different channels alone poses a sufficient potential threat to the Chinese government. Therefore, the government actively engages in censorship and monitoring of all online activity in order to prevent their people from using electronic means of communication where they

---

[40] Chung, Jongpil, and Kyung Hee University Research Fund. "Comparing Online Activities in China and South Korea." *The Internet and the Political Regime* 48.5 (2008): 727-51. Print.

[41] Damm, Jens. "The Internet And The Fragmentation Of Chinese Society." *Critical Asian Studies* 39.2 (2007): 273-94. Print.

could become too big a source of leverage and power in real world politics.[42] If the

mass population online did in fact become this huge source of power in their

nation's politics, then one can predict people would surely change their behavior

online in an attempt to exercise the information they post and share.

On the other hand, perhaps similar to these particular survey users, it may be

that China's young adult population of online users have different, and more

personal interests when using the Internet, as it is apparent that today's Chinese

Internet users "consider social and commercial uses of the Internet much more

important that political uses.[43]" This would surely explain their evident lack of care

when responding to the survey questions pertaining to political controls over SNSs.

The knack for embracing information technology begins at a young age, with

children imitating their parents and interacting with those who are constantly

surrounding them with technological appliances. For instance, in January of 2002,

photographer Greg Baker captured a photograph shot of a Chinese toddler playing

with his father's cell phone, emphasizing the fact that China is already the largest

mobile phone market in the world. Journalist Xie Fang wrote, "information is one of

the most efficient means by which a country can achieve industrialization, gain

economic benefits and increase production efficiency… the Internet is a critical

multiplier in China's drive toward achieving an advanced level of economic

---

[42] Damm, Jens. "The Internet And The Fragmentation Of Chinese Society." *Critical Asian Studies* 39.2 (2007): 273-94. Print.
[43] Damm, Jens. "The Internet And The Fragmentation Of Chinese Society." *Critical Asian Studies* 39.2 (2007): 273-94. Print.

development.[44]" It is amazing to see how China already has the fastest growing network for mobile phones in the world; it would not be a surprise to see the trend continue with Internet users. However, as the number of Internet users continues to flourish in China, it seems obvious that the Chinese government will place particular emphasis on promoting e-commerce and e-businesses, and to keep their citizens' attention focused on available consumer products, while continuing to steer them away from using electronic media to advocate societal changes within the country. It is possible that this process is already being experimented with on social networks, and that the government is experiencing or hoping for success among its users. That being said, this method of advertising may underlie some of the respondent "online thinking" produced in this study. These are only suppositions absent of demonstrable proof at this time however, despite some preliminary potential indications and logical assessment.

CONCLUSION

Based upon the results of this experiment, and the literary reviews regarding this topic, I wonder if the results were possibly skewed, and if these five Chinese participant were sufficiently self-aware of the level of internalized "self-imposed" restrictions that have been instilled over essentially two decades of living in China; or, do they already reflect an openness to share more information over electronic media. The data obtained from this study seems to run contrary to research citing

---

[44] Damm, Jens. "The Internet And The Fragmentation Of Chinese Society." *Critical Asian Studies* 39.2 (2007): 273-94. Print

that Chinese online users have concerns over information that they are allowed to post online in China.

This study did not produce information suggesting the five college students had concerns over how they use the Internet, SNS sites specifically, or what they posted in either China or the United States. It is not surprising then, when they state that they do not believe they act any differently since they came to Union College. The conclusion, at least regarding the beliefs and actions of these survey participants, would seem to be that there is no difference in how they use online social network systems, and that they feel little cultural influence regarding how they post and share information online; nor do they feel restricted in their decisions regarding concern over governmental actions.

This survey has left a number of unresolved questions, and it would be interesting to learn: 1) Will/would the results be replicated by a larger number of Chinese students, 2) Is the reported behavior and opinions prevalent among Chinese college students both in China as well as the United States, 3) Do the behaviors and attitudes alter after returning to China to live, and if so are they more restrictive, 4) It there a difference between college students and the larger adult population, and finally, 5) Is there any difference between those users who can use Facebook in China from those who can not and only use RenRen. Ideally, these matters would be considered in a longitudinal study designed to learn if the behaviors and opinions remain the same or change over time.

I noted that only Participant five, who has been in the country two years longer than the only sophomore and three years longer than the three freshmen, provided a number of answers "closer" to the expected responses, but this study did not develop any information to consider what motivations and beliefs might account for this fact. It would be interesting to learn if the behaviors and opinions of the other four students changed and more closely matched Participant five now.

Regarding my survey results and future projections, I do not believe the data obtained lets me make definitive conclusions and statements, nor to suggest that the results would extend beyond this particular research project. I think that the strongest conclusion that can now be cited is that there does not appear to be any meaningful difference or change in how these respondent Chinese students are influenced as users regardless of country. Production of contrasting and conflicting answers to similar questions, insufficient data, including failure to provide requested reasons to specific questions, as well as the fact that similar questions received apparently contradictory and conflicting answers, impaired the assessment results.

In summary, this survey failed to provide the type of results that would enable me to assert that particular question results produced clean and unambiguous findings that clarified the research question. The findings I could discern, as reviewed in detail in the assessment portion of this report, were somewhat unexpected, and refuted the hypothesis that the Chinese student online user behavior on the SNS (Facebook) in this country would be different, more open and more expressive that it was on an SNS (RenRen) in China.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Dunn, Haley B. "Facebook & Other Social Networking Sites: Candy- Coating Surveillance." Commentary: The University of New Hampshire Student Journal of Communication, 2008. Web. 30 Jan. 2012. <http://www.unh.edu/communication/media/pdf/commentary/spring09.pdf#page=89>.
2. Sachoff, Mike. "Survey Finds Facebook Most Popular Communication Tool." *WebProNews*. WebProNews/Business, 11 Dec. 2009. Web. 28 Feb. 2012. <http://www.webpronews.com/survey-finds-facebook-most-popular-communication-tool-2009-12>

3. "Company Overview of Facebook, Inc." Bloomberg Business Week. Web. 3 Mar. 2012. <http://investing.businessweek.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapId=207 65463 03-51-46-dare4more.tumblr.gif>.

4. List Released of Countries That Restrict Web Access." *Informed*. Ihotdesk, 7 Nov. 2006. Web. <Lhttp://www.ihotdesk.com/article/17919092/List%20released%20of%20countries%20that%20re strict%20web%20access>.

5. Pesek, William. "Mark Zuckerberg and the 'friending' of China." *Brisbane Times*. National Times, 27 Feb. 2012. Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/opinion/mark-zuckerberg- and-the-friending-of-china-20120226-1tw90.html>.

6. CHAO, LORETTA. "Mr. Zuckerberg Goes to China." *The Wall Street Journal*. Dow Jones & Company, 23 Dec. 2010. Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703814804576035143409583806.html>.

7. Bower, Bruce. "Facebook Users Are the Real Thing." *JSTOR*. Science News, 2010. Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25656111?&Search=yes&searchText=facebook&list=hide&searchUr i=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dfacebook%26gw%3Djtx%26acc%3Don%26prq% 3Dadvantages%2Bto%2Bfacebook%26Search%3DSearch%26hp%3D25%26wc%3Don&prevSea rch=&item=9&ttl=559&returnArticleService=showFullText>.

8. Zhao, Yuezhi. "Reconfiguring Party-State Power: Market Reforms, Communication, and Control in the Digital Age." *Communication in China: Political Economy, Power, and Conflict*: 20-64. Print.

9. Herman, Edward, and Noam Chomsky. "Media and Cultural Studies." *A Propaganda Model* (2001): 280-306. Print.

10. . Chung, Jongpil, and Kyung Hee University Research Fund. "Comparing Online Activities in China and South Korea." *The Internet and the Political Regime* 48.5 (2008): 727-51. Print

11. . Zhao, Yuezhi, and Robert A. Hackett. "Democratizing Global Media." *Who Wants Democracy and Does It Deliver Food? Communication and Power in a Globally Integrated China*: 57-75. Print.

12. Eaton, Kit. "Zuckerberg's Taking Facebook Into China, But It'll Be a Baidu Beast | Fast Company." *FastCompany.com*. 11 Apr. 2011. Web. 05 Mar. 2012. <http://www.fastcompany.com/1746392/facebook-china-baidu-social-networking>.

13. Hassid, Jonathan. "Controlling the Chinese Media: An Uncertain Business." *Asian Survey* 48.3 (2008): 414-30. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Jan. 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2008.48.3.414>.

14. "Govt. White Papers - China.org.cn." *China.org.cn - China News, Weather, Business, Travel & Language Courses*. Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 8 June 2010. Web. 19 Feb. 2012. <http://china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/2010- 06/08/content_20207983.htm>.

15. Damm, Jens. "The Internet And The Fragmentation Of Chinese Society." *Critical Asian Studies* 39.2 (2007): 273-94. Print.

APPENDICES

1. When did you arrive at Union College?   Month: _____   Year:_____

2. How long will you be studying at Union?

 Short term _____   One year_____   Four years_____   Other_____

3. What grade are you in?

Freshman_____   Sophomore_____   Junior_____   Senior_____

4. Age? ___

5. Were you a user of the Chinese Social Network Site RenRen, prior to coming to The United States as an international college student studying abroad?

No ____   Yes _____

6. How did/do you primary use RenRen? (Select all that apply)

To expand your social network and make new friends _____

Gather information about friends and events _____

Share information and express myself to friends _____

To easily communicate electronically with select groups of friends_____

Other:_____

7. Do you continue to use RenRen while in the U.S.
Yes____ No_____

8. After living in The United States do you still use RenRen the same amount you did prior coming to The United States.

More _____   Less_____   The same_____

9. Were you able to use Facebook in China?

Yes _____   No_____

10. Have you become a user of the social network Facebook, since coming to The United States as an International college student?

Yes____

No_____   Explain why you decided not to join and end the survey.

_____

_____

11. What was your **primary** reason for joining Facebook? (Check one answer)

       To expand your social network and make new friends _____

       Gather information about friends and events _____

       Share information and express myself to friends _____

       To easily communicate electronically with select groups of friends_____

       Because this is how American college students communicate _____

       Other:_____

12. On **average** how often do you visit Facebook?

       Less than weekly_____

       Weekly _____

       2 to 3 times a week _____

       Daily if not more often _____

13. How do you use Facebook? (Check all the apply)

       To expand your social network and make new friends _____

       Gather information about friends and events _____

       Share information and express myself to friends _____

       To easily communicate electronically with select groups of friends_____

       Other:_____

14. Research has shown that the overwhelming majority of Facebook users in The United States openly share personal information with on-line friends and rely upon the network privacy setting tools to restrict non-authorized access.   How do you **primarily** control the degree of personal information you disclose?

As a personal rule, I don't disclose personal information (Self-Imposed Restrictions) _____

I use the Default (standard) automatic privacy settings _____

I make changes and customize the privacy settings to meet my needs _____

15. Does governmental control of a social networking service(s) influence your decision whether or not you disclose your personal information?

No_____   Yes_____

16. There is no governmental censorship of Facebook postings in The United States. Does this fact influence how you function as a Facebook user?

No_____   Yes_____

I share more personal information and data_____

I use FB more frequently than I did RenRen to communicate____
I am more open to accepting and requesting friend requests____

17. Does your method of selecting friends on RenRen differ from how you choose friends on Facebook?

No_____   Yes_____

I accept requests from fellow students I have met_____

I accept requests from all Union college students_____

I use Facebook to "meet" and communicate with new friends_____

18. Research has suggested that cultural collectivism influences Chinese people to value group orientation over individual expression, and that self-discipline is practiced to restrict the degree of personal information disclosed. Do you agree cultural influences cause **you** to restrict the amount of personal identifiable information you make available on-line?

       No_____   Yes_____

19. Do you think that you have experienced change and now share "more" information on Facebook than you did previously?

       No_____   Yes_____

 If you now share more information what factors contributed to this change?

_____

_____

20. Do you think if Facebook were available in China and operated in the same manner as the United States, including no governmental control or censorship, that Chinese users would share more personal information and communicate more openly on-line?

       No_____   Yes _____

21. Do you think RenRen and Facebook basically serve the same function?

Yes _____   No_____

If No, state the difference:

_____

_____

ABSTRACT

       Research regarding Chinese online population behaviors on the Internet is limited. Social Networking Systems, such as RenRen ("China's Facebook") and Facebook, continue to become more prevalent in our world's society and afford individuals opportunities to publish and share personal information with others online. This study investigates the on-line habits of Chinese students who have been living and studying at Union College for at least six months, and compares their primary usage of the networks RenRen and Facebook. This research provides preliminary results concerning how the respondents feel regarding the combination

of American cultural influence and greater "freedom of expression" afforded to Facebook SNS users, how this affect and changes their online behavior(s). These students come from a society that focuses on community and collectivism, as opposed to individual pursuits, but Internet communications create more of a focus on the individual through social networks, even in China. The Chinese government monitors and censors all online media content. This study questions how Chinese students, who have functioned in a society that expects self-imposed restrictions, behave once they are immersed in an environment where they can openly express themselves without state censorship.