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# Self-Disclosure Relies on Social Context: Examining the Similarity and Differences of Chinese Students in the U.S. and China when Disclosing Information on WeChat

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Self-Disclosure Relies on Social Context: Examining the Similarity and Differences  
of Chinese Students in the U.S. and China when Disclosing Information on WeChat

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A thesis

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the faculty of the Department of Mass Communication

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Professional Communication

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by

Xiyan Cui

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Dr. Susan E. Waters, Committee Chair

Dr. Stephen Marshall

Dr. Robert Andrew Dunn

Keywords: Selective Exposure Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Cultural And

Social Context, Self-Disclosure

## ABSTRACT

Self-Disclosure Relies on Social Context: Examining the Similarity and Differences of Chinese Students in the U.S. and China when Disclosing Information on WeChat

by

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This research aims to fill a research gap by examining WeChat to explore whether changes of social context would exert any influence on the information disclosure of social networking site (SNS) users. Selective Exposure Theory and Uses and Gratification Theory were used as the theoretical foundation for this study.

Four-hundred Chinese college students in China and the U.S. who have a WeChat App and have logged in to use it within the last 30 days from the day administered were asked to participate in a survey about their motivations and consequences when using WeChat. Results from MANOVA showed that the motivations and consequences of female participants' self-disclosure were significantly higher than were male participants on WeChat. Moreover, the social context of Chinese students studying in the U.S. is perceived to be more individualized than the traditionally collective context that is perceived by Chinese students studying in China.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In the era of information, fast updated technology makes the world seem smaller and smaller. This can be attributable to the innovation of mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, which have become ubiquitously available. The portability of these devices makes them integral to daily life, as “one of the most important personal information-processing interfaces” (Chun, Chuang, & Shin, 2013).

“App” was voted to be the Word of the year for 2010 according to the American Dialect Society (2010). The word app mentioned by the America Dialect Society exclusively referred to the mobile app designed to run on smartphones and other mobile devices. With the arrival of app stores for a wide spectrum of operating systems for smartphones, tablets, and computers; the app has certainly exploded in popularity (Chun et al., 2013). Tscherning and Mathiassen (2010) state, “In today’s global market, smartphone apps have become the mainstream of consumer’s daily lives as the smartphone has turned out to be a major segment in the mobile phone market.” The apps have gradually turned into the platforms for a wide range of activities: purchase, information, socializing, audio-visual recreation, etc. Among all the apps, the one designed for socializing can be one of the most conspicuous as social networking is now the most popular online activity worldwide (Jackson & Wang, 2013). Jackson and Wang (2013) pointed out, in 2011, nearly 82% of the world’s Internet population has registered in a social networking system (SNS) and in America, and approximately 65% of mobile users visited a social networking app in



2011. App usage is very similar in other countries as well. For example, in China, close to 307 million Chinese Internet users used an SNS in 2012.

The most popular SNS in the USA and all over the world currently is Facebook, which has roughly 1.3 billion monthly active users (Facebook Statistics, 2015). However, other SNSs, like Twitter, Renren, WeChat, and WhatsApp, cannot be ignored. Because of the popularity of SNSs, there is considerable research literature from the past decade (e.g., Joinson & Paine, 2007; Lee et al., 2008; Waters & Ackerman, 2011).

Much importance has been given to the impact of SNSs on social interaction and network building. Much literature has focused research on the motivations of these SNSs users. For example, in Mao's article (2014), the factors of undergraduate students' WeChat usage were examined with the help of a study administered to 200 undergraduates. It was shown that friends and relaxation constituted the motives or factors that pushed undergraduate students to use WeChat frequently. Lin and Lu (2011) also examined the reason why social networking sites were used, and they applied network externalities and motivation theory to explain the motivations.

Some researchers considered the contrast between users of both sexes or of diverse cultures when studying motivations. Jackson and Wang (2013) compared the use of social networking sites in a collectivistic culture, China, and an individualistic culture, the United States, and made a conclusion that cultural discrepancy could interfere with the time spent on SNSs and "personal characteristics

predicted SNS use in both cultures, but were stronger predictors in an individualistic culture than in a collectivistic” (Jackson & Wang, 2013).

Researchers also took into consideration the information disclosure that SNSs users underwent as Waters and Ackerman (2011) did in their research about privacy management on Facebook. Still not many researchers have paid attention to the use of social networking sites among international students and different cultures. There are sparse studies about SNSs and differences between cultures. One example would be Li and Chen (2014) who released results about a comparative study between Facebook and Renren among Chinese international students in the United States. Their concentration was on the contrast of the use between the two different SNSs.

However, even fewer studies examined the impact of social environment on the usage of a social networking site. This research aims to fill the gap by examining WeChat to explore whether changes of social context would exert any influence on the information disclosure of SNSs users. The study examines the motivations and consequences of information disclosure among SNSs users and then discusses the social context’s effect on the consequences and motivations. Given the cultural differences between the United States and China, the researchers attended to the comparison between Chinese students in both countries in terms of information disclosure on WeChat.

The theoretical framework for this study is both selective exposure and uses and gratification theory. A survey was administered to active WeChat users who have accessed their account in the last 30 days while the survey was available. This

research has scholarly significance since it can lay the foundation for the future studies on the impact of social context on usage of SNSs when examining different countries and the application of Selective Exposure theory in mediated communication.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

For this study, literature from several fields was reviewed including mass communication, communication studies, psychology and technology. First, the literature on technology about mobile applications and social networking sites in communication will be discussed. Next, there will be a review of literature on cultural differences, Selective Exposure Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory. Finally, prior research on self-disclosure will be discussed, as well as research questions for the current study.

#### **WeChat as a Mobile Application**

WeChat, also called Wexin in Chinese, was released in 2011 by Tencent. WeChat is the world's fastest growing social networking application, innovating new ways to connect, communicate and share. WeChat/Wexin has become a household name for Chinese people wherever they are situated. It is a common habit for Chinese people to share photos or location in WeChat with their friends, especially when they are travelling. According to the Tencent (2015) Second Quarter and Interim Results Announcement, WeChat registered 600 million monthly active users both abroad and at home by August, 2015. The number of monthly active users increases by 37% on a year-on-year basis (Tencent, 2015).

WeChat/Wexin is a multifunctional mobile application, encompassing instant messaging, social communication, games, and even commercial services. For WeChat users, communicating with others by text or voice simply relies on a wireless

Internet connection, making it possible for users to achieve basically free communication. Aside from the socializing services, WeChat also provides entertainment services for its users, who can play some games for relaxation. In the past two years, WeChat developed some other appealing and practical services for its users, which drastically facilitated the users' life. These services include payment service and municipal service (Tencent, 2015). That means WeChat users can now use this mobile app to pay for a dinner when eating out, or can pay the electricity or water use bills without troubling themselves to go to the relevant municipal agencies. With this versatility, millions of people find themselves can't control to use this app for daily life.

### **WeChat as a Social Networking Site**

When WeChat/Wexin was introduced, many people just thought of it as a normal instant messenger with the exception of its Internet-based accessibility and its voice messaging. As numerous people began to use it, it was evident that Wexin was a variation of a social networking site, which, back to 2011, could only be accessed on computers and not on mobiles. Today it enjoys almost all the functions that a social networking site has, so Wexin is more an SNS than an instant messenger.

The mobile functions that WeChat users enjoy are many. WeChat users can share their photos or moods with others, just as people do in Facebook or other SNSs. WeChat also supports "location-based social plug-ins ("shake", "look around", "drift bottle" and "Facebook" connect) to chat with and connect with other WeChat users (Chun, 2014). WeChat can enable its users to make friends with strangers and thus

expand their social network, according to the study carried out by Chun Mao in 2014.

Furthermore, WeChat is also a popular platform for business operating, product advertising, press communication and much more. Nowadays, prestigious companies have established their own official accounts in WeChat to release new product information or relevant news about their operations to stay connected to their customers or potential customers and enhance their reputation among the public. For example, Vanke, one of the leading companies in the real estate industry in China, found its way in marketing through WeChat, advertising products to a plethora of customers with much lower costs than other existing marketing channels (Cai, 2014).

With the increasing popularity of WeChat, privacy management can be problematic. The establishment of official accounts of diverse industries and the multifunction of WeChat draw more and more people to use it every day, sharing what happened with them and possibly private information. As a social networking site, WeChat also encounters privacy disclosure problems similar to Facebook's problems with privacy (Waters & Ackerman, 2011).

### **Cultural Differences**

It is universally acknowledged that Chinese culture differs drastically from American culture. Cultural difference can be based upon the four dimensions proposed by Hofstede (1984), which are "Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity-Femininity, and Individualism-Collectivism" (Hofstede, 1984). For this study, the Individualism-Collectivism dimension is discussed to explore one distinction between Chinese culture and American culture. Hsu (2011) listed the

ways of distinguishing individualism and collectivism based on Hofstede's model in her study: 1) whether to make decisions relying on themselves or on their in-group; 2) whether the center of the culture is the individual or the group; 3) whether it is a "nuclear family structure" or "extended family or tribal structures," a basic unit in the culture; and 4) whether the economy is advanced (Hsu, 2011).

According to Gudykunst (2003, p. 79), "Individualism-collectivism incorporates cultural norms and rules related to group identities and the differentiation between members of in-groups and out-groups." Here, in-groups refers to "groups that are important to their members and groups for which individuals will make sacrifices" (Gudykunst, 2003, p.101), whereas out-groups means the groups whose members bear a very weak sense of belonging to any group and value themselves mostly as individuals in the society (Hsu, 2011).

Chinese culture, as a typical one among eastern cultures, is characterized by collectivism, which is centered on groups. In this culture, much importance is given to self-effacement rather than self-promotion, and people are told to know when to hide themselves as well as when to show themselves. When comparing themselves to others, they have already been habituated to place family, friends, and groups in the first place. Hsu (2011) argues that collectivistic cultures are thought to be involved with "high-context communication," which makes people involved value group harmony more importantly than personal emotions. Direct communication is not as strongly encouraged as it is in individualistic cultures in that direct communication is not constructive for a group's harmonious relationship and not regarded highly (Hsu,

2011). High-context cultures are apt to process information from “the environment, context, situation, and nonverbal cues” (Gudykunst, 2003, p.89).

However, American culture, as an example of western cultures, features individualism, quite opposite to collectivism in eastern culture. Freedom of choice is something that western cultures pursue, different from what eastern cultures do when encountered with decision-making. American culture is more likely to focus on self-promotion and tends to have more “friends” (Waters & Ackerman, 2011), but seems to establish looser and possibly less enduring friendships than Chinese people (Jackson & Wang, 2013). In the individualistic culture, since “low-context communication” is involved, direct communication is the preferred communication style in daily life consisting of “clear description,” “unambiguous communication,” and “high degree of specificity” (Hsu, 2011, p. 112).

Pursuit for the study of a cultural gap is continuous. Culture differences constitute the principal factor in the change of both people’s mindset and way of thinking and ways of communication. Its application in the use of social networking sites also triggered immense interest from experts of social and communication fields. In Jackson and Wang’s (2013) study of cultural differences’ impact on social networking sites use, they discovered cultural differences most likely do influence people’s social behaviors in using SNSs. Kim, Sohn, and Choi (2011) attempted to examine the impact of cultural differences in motivations for using social networking sites between American and Korean university students. They discussed what motivated the students to use the SNSs and the different patterns of using SNSs



among university students in Korean and the U.S. to find out the way cultural context shape the use of communication technology (Kim et al., 2011).

Considerable literature simply focuses on the different uses of SNSs among people of diverse cultures. The studies disregard the idea that people may change their mind and their preferences when placed in a new environment. Li and Chen (2014) noted this point and conducted a study on a social networking site use among Chinese international students in the United States comparing Facebook to Renren, a similar SNS to Facebook (Li & Chen, 2014). The study reveals that Facebook use is closely related to bridging social capital whereas Renren users are more likely to maintain home country social capital on Renren than were Facebook users.

Hofstede (2001, p. 253) argues, “cultures, especially national cultures, are extremely stable over time...change comes from the outside, in the form of forces of nature or forces of human beings: trade, conquest, economical or political dominance, and technological breakthroughs.” As America differs dramatically from China in economy, political systems, technological progress, and so on, Chinese people may be remarkably influenced when living in America for several years. Also the change of social context places most people in a situation where they need to be adapted to and fit in to the new environment, and where cultural assimilation and cultural infiltration occurs. As the environment shifts from the eastern world to the western world when Chinese students study in the U.S., Chinese students may change their social behaviors in the SNSs in accordance to the practices and values in the new strange cultural and social environment. Therefore, in this paper, the concentration will be

on the differences of Chinese students in the U.S. and Chinese students in China when using WeChat which has not been studied much if at all. Understanding this gap in research will help Chinese students and other nationalities understand how their habits might change when living and studying in a different culture.

### **Selective Exposure Theory**

The principle of selective exposure refers to the situation where “people tend to see and hear communications that are favorable and congenial to their predispositions; they are more likely to see and hear congenial communications than neutral or hostile ones” (Berelson & Steiner, 1964, p.529). In their definition, the predisposition involves “sex role, educational status, interest and involvement, ethnic status, political attitude, aesthetic position, and indeed, any way of characterizing people that matters to them” (Berelson & Steiner, 1964, p.529). It is a theory within the practice of psychology, often used in media and communication research. Selective exposure theory demonstrates the phenomenon whereby people tend to prefer the information supporting a particular standpoint, view or choice and ignore the contradictory one (Kastenmuller et al., 2010). People may actively choose to expose themselves to information in accordance with their pre-existing opinions or supporting their opinions and actively avoid the information that conflicts with or refutes what they hold in their mind (Sears & Freedman, 1967). “Individuals engage in selective exposure...If a new piece of information would weaken the existing structure of their ideas and emotions, it will be shunned ... If it reinforces the structure, it will be sought out” (Behavioral Sciences Subpanel, 1962, p.277). For example, “individuals

strongly committed to certain religions often avoid contact with information or people that can tempt them away from their doctrines” (Hart et al., 2009, p. 557). This theory is assumed to be based upon the dissonance theory which “proposes that after making a decision, individuals experience cognitive dissonance due to the potential negative implications of the chosen decision alternative, and the potential positive implications of the non-chosen one” (Fischer et al., 2011, p. 42). So when people experience cognitive dissonance, the natural response is to try to eliminate the mental discomfort, the dissonance. And the preferred method is to select the information exposed, preferring the information supporting one decision and neglecting the conflicting information, which is selective exposure.

Current literature covers the study of selective exposure theory applied in various fields. Many studies are found on the application of selective exposure in the political field. Iyengar, Hahn, Krosnick, and Walker (2008) explored the individual differences in exposure to political campaign information. They used a multimedia CD-ROM to carry out their study to check the information voters selected to encounter, and found that selective exposure theory can account for the voters’ behavior in choosing information the voter was involved with. It was shown in the study that voters tend to go for the information concerning the candidates or issues they care about, which is in accordance with selective exposure (Iyengar et al., 2008). Another example can be found in Knobloch-Westerick and Johnson’s study (2014), which examined the impact of selective exposure on the relationship between online news use and political participation. They found frequent online news use could

diminish political participation, for it can reduce selective exposure to attitude-consistent news. As early as 1984, Sweeney and Gruber implemented a survey of political preferences and attitudes during the Watergate Affair to illustrate selective exposure theory. In addition, most literature concentrated on its application in media and communication, especially in the readers' reading behavior. Another study on selective exposure investigated online foreign news during the conflict with Iraq (Best, Chmielowski, & Krueger, 2005). In the study, the authors wanted to know why Internet users would choose to visit foreign online news sources in addition to their domestic news sources in virtue of selective exposure theory. They examined the motivations of Internet users to read foreign online news, which were reported to be both the satisfaction of their demands for political news and the intention to appraise the attitude-consistent news stories.

As the era of information progresses, increasing interest has been raised in selective exposure to information and its application in diverse fields. But little was discovered to illuminate its application in social behavior in social networking sites. When international students shift to a new and strange circumstance significantly different from that of their own, their deeply rooted values and mindset could accordingly be swayed, making it possible to change their preferences and their attitudes. So when they use an SNS, they may choose to disclose the information in different depth and width from what they did in their own country, and select the information according to their new preferences, which is the foundation of this study.

### **Uses and Gratifications Theory**

Uses and Gratifications theory is defined as “a media use paradigm that inquires into the reasons why people use certain media and the gratifications derived from usage and access” (Luo, Chea, & Chen, 2011, p.22). The Uses and Gratifications perspective focuses on the demand of media users instead of the impact of media on users. It contends that media users use the media for the sake of gratification. That means media users have their own specific needs when they turn to some media and using these media can perfectly meet their demands (Hicks, et al., 2012). Uses and Gratifications theory is based upon the belief that “people’s choices about consuming media are motivated by their desire to gratify a wide range of needs” (Joo & Sang, 2013). It is centered on three principles: “1) consumers actively seek out the media to satisfy individual needs; 2) consumers’ communication choices are purposeful and goal-directed; and 3) consumers are conscious of their own motives in using the media” (Chua et al., 2012, p.13). The theory strives to illustrate the way media are used to accommodate the media users’ needs, what the underlying motivations are, and the consequences arising from the confluence of needs, motives and media use (Chua et al., 2012).

Past research on the uses and gratifications theory concentrated on its application in computer-mediated communication. Chua et al. (2012) used the Uses and Gratifications paradigm to explore mobile content contribution and retrieval, and they found out “perceived gratification factors for mobile content contribution were different from those for mobile content retrieval (p. 17).” In addition, the gratification factors for mobile content contribution had positive impact on mobile

content retrieval intention, and mobile content retrieval was more complex than mobile content contribution in terms of motivations analysis.

Recently, studies have examined the uses and gratifications theory for the analysis of motivations of media use. Hicks et al. (2012) made an analysis of why the website Yelp.com was used from the uses and gratifications perspective. The final result found out that the motivations to use Yelp.com covered entertainment, convenience, interpersonal utility, pass time and information-seeking purposes, which was the most important reason that people visited the website (Hicks et al., 2012). Another study holistically explored the motivations for people to use social networking sites, to examine whether it was for fun or not, with the uses and gratifications as its theoretical framework. Its authors, Xu, Ryan, Prybutok, and Wen (2012) created a model based on the uses and gratifications theory to decode why social networking sites were used. And finally, they draw the conclusion that “user utilitarian (rational and goal-oriented) gratifications of immediate access and coordination, hedonic (pleasure-oriented) gratifications of affection and leisure, and website social presence were positive predictors of SNS usage” (Xu et al., 2012, p. 255). Wei also explored the uses and gratifications theory’s application in the motivations for using the mobile phone for mass communication and entertainment in 2008. In his study, he utilized a telephone survey of 208 users and obtained the results that diverse motivations may determine the different way users used the mobile phone. For example, instrumental use motives decided users used the mobile phone mainly for news-seeking and web-surfing. Users with the motivation of

entertainment tended to use the mobile phone to play video games.

In this study, motivations of using WeChat will be explored to see why students tend to disclose their information on SNSs. For this research, the uses and gratifications theory is the theoretical background for motivation analysis.

### **Self-Disclosure**

As a virtual social media, social networking sites provide people with platforms for relationship maintaining, information sharing, friends making and so on. In order to achieve these purposes, SNS users are ready to disclose their personal information in SNSs like Facebook or WeChat, which can be counted as self-disclosure. Self-disclosure was proposed by Sidney Jourard, a psychologist, who initially considered self-disclosure as a behavior of disclosing information to another person and who created “Self-disclosure Theory” as a therapeutic model of humanistic treatment (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958).

Self-disclosure is the basis for interpersonal relationship (Laurenceau, Feldman, & Pietromonaco, 1998). Disclosing personal information to others is a signal of willingness to make friends and go further in their relationship. Online communication bears significant differences from face-to-face interpersonal communication and the anonymization is the most obvious difference. Anonymization enables people to disclose much about their personal selves as if they are wearing a mask so they will not be recognized, which is why people are more apt to choose online self-disclosure and communication (Livingstone, 2008).

Many studies examined the content of self-disclosure when using SNSs. Acquisti

and Gross (2006) carried out an experiment to check the type of information Facebook users disclosed and found that 84% of them presented their real birthday while only 24% released their mailing addresses. Some other literature explored the factors of self-disclosure and its consequences. For example, Xie, Sun, and Zhou (2013) discussed the positive and negative consequences self-disclosure may bring about to individuals. They noted self-disclosure was influenced by social culture, network environment, sex, age and other factors (Xie, Sun, & Zhou, 2013). Waters and Ackerman (2011) explored the motivations and perceived consequences of voluntary disclosure when using Facebook based on Communication Privacy Management theory (Waters & Ackerman, 2011). Shen conducted a study of WeChat use among undergraduates in Shanghai, China, and discovered students selectively disclose personal information. They are more willing to disclose personal information about themselves to close friends or families and not disclose personal information to both acquaintances and those who do not have familiar names (Shen, 2015).

This paper studies the self-disclosure in WeChat and attempts to observe the differences and similarities of Chinese university students in the U.S. and Chinese university students in China when disclosing information in WeChat, and find out the impact of social context on self-disclosure.

Students tend to disclose their own private information through social networking sites. This disclosure comes from specific motivations inside each individual that drives that individual to disclose information. In order to understand the reason why



they choose to self-disclose, motivations for their usage of these social networking sites is first examined. Given the past related research and theoretical foundations, the first research question is proposed:

RQ1: What are the perceived motivations for disclosure by users of WeChat in the U.S. and China?

As long as the motivations for self-disclosure in WeChat usage are discovered, specific analysis can be made on the similarities and differences of WeChat usage among Chinese students in China and the U.S. To thoroughly analyze the self-disclosure of Chinese students in both two countries, motivations of disclosure are explored along with ultimate consequences that could be discovered. Disclosure in different levels of width and depth contribute to diverse consequences. What an individual shares on social networking sites could exert influence on consequences he/she encounters. Therefore, in this study, consequences of disclosure are also important factors to draw some insight into SNS usage. The second research question is posited:

RQ2: What are the perceived consequences of disclosure by users of WeChat in the U.S. and China?

Since this study is centered on Chinese university students both in the U.S. and in China, cultural differences are taken into account. As stated before, culture can not only change people's mindset and ways of thinking, but also influence people's ways of communication. This is also true of communication in social networking sites. The change of social context, from a collectivist Chinese culture to an individualistic

American culture, may alter students' social behavior in using WeChat, including the behavior of self-disclosure. This will be examined in the methods section that follows.

Gender is academically regarded as a main dimension of demographic characteristics. Parks and Floyd (1996) stated that demographic variables influence people's media use in cyberspace, and some SNS-related studies have substantiated this claim that specifically suggested gender differences are partly affecting usage pattern of SNSs (e.g., Joinson & Paine, 2007; Lee et al., 2008; Lin & Lu, 2011; Waters & Ackerman, 2011). Therefore, the third question was proposed:

RQ3: Is there a difference between men and women when they disclose on WeChat concerning the seven motivation dimensions (i.e., self-presentation, relationship management, keeping up with trends, storing information, sharing information, entertainment, and showing off) and the three consequences dimensions (i.e., relationship management, psychological well-being, and habitual behavior)?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

To examine the similarity and differences of Chinese Students in the U.S. and China when disclosing information on WeChat, an online questionnaire was used to investigate participants' self-disclosure on WeChat. In this study, participants took a survey to indicate their level of agreement to the motivations and consequences when disclosing on WeChat. Moreover, participants were asked to answer four demographics questions as the independent variables in this study.

#### **Sample and Procedure**

The study sample is Chinese university students who are registered at large universities in the U.S. or China. This survey required participants to have active WeChat accounts in the United States or China. The university IRB process was completed and approval given for this study. The survey links were sent to the participants through QQ groups, WeChat messages and emails. 200 Chinese university students in the U.S. and 200 Chinese university students in China responded to the online survey on a voluntary basis. Four hundred respondents completed the online questionnaire: 200 Chinese students in the U.S. (i.e., 126 females and 74 males), and 200 Chinese students in China (i.e., 110 females and 90 males).

#### **Measures**

A survey questionnaire was developed with three sections (Waters & Ackerman, 2011 originally from Lee et al., 2008). The first section includes seven dimensions

to determine the motivations of voluntary disclosure. The seven dimensions are Self-Presentation, Relationship Management, Keeping Up With Trends, Information Sharing, Information Storage, Entertainment, and Showing Off. The second section contains three dimensions of Relationship Management, Psychological Well-Being, and Habitual Behavior to determine the consequences of voluntary disclosure. The third section was about the respondents' demographics (i.e., sex, age, country in which they studied and their daily time spent on WeChat). The developed questionnaire was pretested on 10 WeChat users and the result showed the instructions and questions were well understood.

Waters and Ackerman's study (2011) provided the questions for the quantitative survey tool. A 7-point Likert-type scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree was used to measure the motivations and consequences of voluntary disclosure with a total of 33 questions. Examples of the survey statements are: (1) I disclose to present myself in a realistic way; (2) I disclose to present my ideal self on; (3) I disclose to present my individual characteristics on; (4) and I disclose to keep a close relationship with others. Those participants who had not used WeChat within the last 30 days were asked not to proceed with the survey. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to analyze the relationship between educated country of the subjects and the questions about motivations and consequences of self-disclosure. SPSS was used to conduct the MANOVA. The independent variables are sex with two levels: male and female; age with three levels: 1970-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999; country they are studying in: China and the US; and time

spent on WeChat per day with five levels: less than 1 hour, 1-3 hours, 4-6 hours, 7-9 hours, and 10 hours or more. The dependent variables are the questions about motivations and consequences from the administered survey about motivations and consequences of subjects' disclosure on WeChat. In this study, the researchers focused on the relationship between the social context (i.e., educated country) and motivations and consequences when the subjects disclosure on WeChat. Thus, a MANOVA was conducted to evaluate the relationship between educated country of the subjects using questions about motivations and consequences. Data was collected in compliance with the research guidelines set by the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board. The subsequent section will present an analysis of the data gathered using SPSS.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This study examines the similarity and differences of Chinese university students in the U.S. and China when disclosing information on WeChat measured by 37 questions administered by the primary researcher. This section will include demographic results from the data, results from analysis of two research questions presented, as well as a summary of the findings.

The sample population for this study included 400 Chinese students studying in China, or in the U.S. The students were asked to answer demographic questions and questions relating to motivations and consequences of Self-Disclosure on WeChat. The survey was set up to stop collecting when the 200 surveys were completed for Chinese university students in both U.S. and China. Thus, 400 surveys were completed in the analysis, and 164 (41%) were male and 236 (59%) were female. Of the participants surveyed 200 (50%) are studying in the US, 200 (50%) are studying in China. Forty seven (11.8%) of the participants self-reported that they spend less than 1 hour per day on WeChat, 93 (23.3%) participants claimed they spend 1-3 hours per day on WeChat, 81 (20.3%) said they spend 4-6 hours on WeChat per day, 111 (27.8%) participants surveyed spend 7-9 hours on WeChat per day, and 68 (17%) participants said they spend 10 hours or more on WeChat per day. 12 (3.0%) of the participants surveyed were born in 1970-1979, while 114 (28.5%) participants were born in 1980-1989, and 274 (68.5%) were born in 1990-1999.

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to analyze the relationship between educated country of the subject and questions about motivations and consequences of Self-Disclosure on WeChat. SPSS software was used to conduct the MANOVA.

The independent variables are sex with two levels: *male and female*; age with three levels: *1970-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999*; country they study in: *China and the US*; and time spent on WeChat per day with five levels: *less than 1 hour, 1-3 hours, 4-6 hours, 7-9 hours, and 10 hours or more*. The dependent variables are the 23 questions about motivations and the 10 questions about consequences of Self-Disclosure on WeChat. First, research question one was addressed:

RQ1: What are the perceived motivations for disclosure by users of WeChat in the U.S. and China?

To answer the first research question, of the 23 variables on the motivations of the disclosure on WeChat, 6 were found to be significant related to educated country. These are: (1) I disclose to keep a close relationship with others, Wilks's Lambda = .80,  $F(23,376) = 3.89, p < .05, \eta^2 = .01$ . (2) Disclosures on my WeChat serve as a meeting place for others and me, Wilks's Lambda = .80,  $F(23,376) = 11.1, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$ . (3) I disclose in order to not to be left out, Wilks's Lambda = .80,  $F(23,376) = 12.9, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$ . (4) I disclose because I enjoy it, Wilks's Lambda = .80,  $F(23,376) = 7.4, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$ . (5) I disclose to show that I am popular, Wilks's Lambda = .80,  $F(23,376) = 37.0, p < .05, \eta^2 = .08$ . (6) I disclose to show off my ability, Wilks's Lambda = .80,  $F(23,376) = 6.9, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$ . The means and standard deviations of significant results for motivations of self-disclosure on WeChat by educated country are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Group Means and Standard Deviations for Motivations of Self-Disclosure on WeChat by Educated Country of Student*

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Educated Country Dimensions	Mean	SD
<b><i>Relationship Management</i></b>		

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Table 1. (continued)

I disclose to keep a close relationship with others	4.85	1.60
<i>China</i>	5.18*	1.68
<i>US</i>		
Disclosures on my WeChat serve as a meeting place for others and me		
<i>China</i>	4.04	2.02
<i>US</i>	4.71*	2.04
<b><i>Keeping up with trends</i></b>		
I disclose in order to not to be left out		
<i>China</i>	4.16	2.03
<i>US</i>	4.86*	1.83
<b><i>Entertainment</i></b>		
I disclose because I enjoy it		
<i>China</i>	4.83*	1.09
<i>US</i>	4.24	1.38
<b><i>Show off</i></b>		
I disclose to show that I am popular		
<i>China</i>	3.45	1.58
<i>US</i>	4.51*	1.89
I disclose to show off my ability		
<i>China</i>	3.91	1.98
<i>US</i>	4.43*	1.95

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*Note:* \*Mean of this educated country differs significantly from means of the other educated country at  $p < .05$  Total Respondents: 400

Of the significant variables, Chinese students studying in *China* had significantly higher results than *ones in the U.S.* for the following motivation: (1) I disclose because I enjoy it. Chinese students studying in *the U.S.* had significantly higher results than Chinese students studying *in China* for the following motivations: (2) I disclose to keep a close relationship with others; (3) Disclosures on my WeChat serve as a meeting place for others and me; (4) I disclose in order to not to be left out; (5) I disclose to show that I am popular; (6) I disclose to show off my ability.

Next, research question two was addressed:



RQ2: What are the perceived consequences of disclosure by users of WeChat in the U.S. and China?

To answer the second research question, a MANOVA was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the independent variable of educated country and the dependent variables about consequences of self-disclosure from the survey about WeChat. Of the 10 variables about the consequences of self-disclosure in the survey section discussing WeChat usage, 4 were found to be significantly related to educated country. These are: (1) I feel satisfaction in my relationships with those I am close to after disclosing, Wilks's Lambda = .71,  $F(10,376) = 6.61$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . (2) Trust deepens between someone and me, and I am close to after disclosing, Wilks's Lambda = .71,  $F(10,376) = 7.43$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . (3) I feel uneasiness when I am not disclosing information on WeChat, Wilks's Lambda = .71,  $F(10,376) = 6.16$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . (4) I feel that I cannot control my disclosing behavior, Wilks's Lambda = .71,  $F(10,376) = 8.84$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . The means and standard deviations for consequences of self-disclosure on WeChat by educated country are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Group Means and Standard Deviations for Consequences of Self-Disclosure on WeChat by Educated Country of Student*

Educated Country Dimensions	Mean	SD
<b><i>Relationship Management</i></b>		
I feel satisfaction in my relationships with those I am close to after disclosing		
<i>China</i>	4.49	1.23
<i>US</i>	4.95*	1.54
Trust deepens between someone and me, and I am close to after disclosing		

Table 2. (continued)

<i>China</i>	4.28	1.79
<i>US</i>	4.79*	1.72
<b><i>Habitual Behavior</i></b>		
I feel uneasiness when I am not disclosing information on WeChat		
<i>China</i>	4.42*	1.62
<i>US</i>	3.96	1.76
I feel that I cannot control my disclosing behavior		
<i>China</i>	4.77*	1.95
<i>US</i>	4.12	1.98

*Note:* \*Mean of this educated country differs significantly from means of other educated country at  $p < .05$  Total Respondents: 400

Of the significant variables, for Chinese students studying in *China*, results were significantly higher than for Chinese students studying in the *U.S.* for the consequences: I feel uneasiness when I am not disclosing information on WeChat; I feel that I cannot control my disclosing behavior I disclose to keep a close relationship with others. For Chinese students studying in the *U.S.* results were significantly higher than for Chinese students studying in *China* for the consequences: I feel satisfaction in my relationships with those I am close to after disclosing; Trust deepens between someone and me, and I am close to after disclosing.

Finally, research question three will be addressed:

RQ3: Is there a difference between males and females when they disclose on WeChat concerning the seven motivation dimensions (i.e., self-presentation, relationship management, keeping up with trends, storing information, sharing information, entertainment, and showing off) and the three consequences dimensions (i.e., relationship management, psychological well-being, and habitual behavior)?

To answer the third research question, 7 variables were found to be significantly related to sex from the 23 variables on the motivations of the disclosure on WeChat. These are: (1) I disclose to let people know my current affairs, Wilks's Lambda = .86,  $F(33,364) = 5.50$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . (2) I disclose because everybody does it, Wilks's Lambda = .86,  $F(33,364) = 15.08$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ . (3) I disclose to share my information and knowledge, Wilks's Lambda = .86,  $F(33,364) = 5.53$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . (4) I disclose to keep a personal record, Wilks's Lambda = .86,  $F(33,364) = 6.24$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . (5) I disclose to save my personal thoughts and pictures, Wilks's Lambda = .86,  $F(33,364) = 4.23$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . (6) I disclose to show I am popular, Wilks's Lambda = .86,  $F(33,364) = 8.86$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . (7) I disclose to show off by commercializing and publicizing my activities, Wilks's Lambda = .86,  $F(33,364) = 4.47$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . Of the 10 variables on the consequences of the disclosure on WeChat, two were found to be significantly related to educated country. These are: (1) I feel satisfaction in my relationships with those I am close to after disclosing, Wilks's Lambda = .86,  $F(33,364) = 8.83$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . (2) Trust deepens between someone and me, and I am close to after disclosing, Wilks's Lambda = .86,  $F(33,364) = 4.86$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ . The means and standard deviations for motivations and consequences of self-disclosure on WeChat by sex are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Group Means and Standard Deviations for Motivations and Consequences of Self-Disclosure on WeChat by Gender of Student*

Gender Dimensions	Mean	SD
<b>Motivations</b>		
<b><i>Relationship Management</i></b>		
I disclose to let people know my current affairs		
<i>Male</i>	4.34	1.43
<i>Female</i>	4.98*	1.19
<b><i>Keeping Up with Trends</i></b>		
I disclose because everyone does it		
<i>Male</i>	4.30	1.45
<i>Female</i>	5.04*	1.21
<b><i>Storing Information</i></b>		
I disclose to share my information and knowledge	4.09	1.42
<i>Male</i>	4.53*	1.18
<i>Female</i>		
<b><i>Sharing Information</i></b>		
I disclose to keep a personal record		
<i>Male</i>	4.32	1.49
<i>Female</i>	4.80*	1.24
I disclose to save my personal thoughts and pictures		
<i>Male</i>	4.23	1.12
<i>Female</i>	4.89*	1.08
<b><i>Show off</i></b>		
I disclose to show that I am popular		
<i>Male</i>	3.66	1.41
<i>Female</i>	4.21*	1.17

Table 3. (continued)

I disclose to show off by commercializing and publicizing my activities		
<i>Male</i>	4.31	1.43
<i>Female</i>	4.71*	1.19
<b><i>Consequences</i></b>		
<b><i>Relationship Management</i></b>		
I feel satisfaction in my relationships with those I am close to after disclosing		
<i>Male</i>	4.34	1.41
<i>Female</i>	4.89*	1.17
Trust deepens between someone and me, and I am close to after disclosing		
<i>Male</i>	4.28	1.38
<i>Female</i>	4.68*	1.15

*Note:* \*Mean of this sex differs significantly from means of other sex at  $p < .05$  Total Respondents: 400

*Female* was significantly higher than *Male* for the motivations when they disclose on WeChat for the following variables: I disclose to let people know my current affairs; I disclose to share my information and knowledge; I disclose to keep a personal record; I disclose to save my personal thoughts and pictures; I disclose to show that I am popular; I disclose to show off by commercializing and publicizing my activities. *Female* was significantly higher than *Male* for the following consequences: I feel satisfaction in my relationships with those I am close to after disclosing; Trust deepens between someone and me; and I am close to after disclosing.

This chapter presented results of this study investigating motivations and consequences of self-disclosure on WeChat in relation to educated country and sex.

Four hundred students participated in the study. Collected data included the participant's scores on a 7-point Likert-type scale along with demographic information. Based on statistical analysis, a significant relationship was indicated for several variables of research questions.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### **Discussion of Findings**

The results of this study concluded that when examining social context (educated country in this study) and the dependent variables which were survey questions analyzing motivations and consequences of self-disclosure on WeChat, ten significant results were obtained for the independent variables, educated country.

For the first and second survey questions, of the seven motivation dimensions, four motivations found significant results: (1) Relationship Management (*I disclose to keep a close relationship with others; Disclosures on my WeChat serve as a meeting place for others and me*); (2) Keeping up with trends (*I disclose in order to not to be left out*); (3) entertainment (*I disclose because I enjoy it*) and (4) show off (*I disclose because I am popular; I disclose to show off my ability*). The results shows two significant differences on consequences: (1) Relationship Management (*I feel satisfaction in my relationships with those I am close to after disclosing; Trust deepens between someone and me, and I am close to after disclosing*); (2) Habitual Behavior (*I feel uneasiness when I am not disclosing information on WeChat; I feel that I cannot control my disclosing behavior I disclose to keep a close relationship with others*).

Based on these significant variables, Chinese students studying in *China* had significantly higher results than *ones in the U.S.* for the following motivation: entertainment (*I disclose because I enjoy it*) and for the following consequence: Habitual Behavior (*I feel uneasiness when I am not disclosing information on WeChat; I feel that I cannot control my disclosing behavior I disclose to keep a close relationship with others*). Chinese students studying in *the U.S.* had significantly

higher results than Chinese students studying *in China* for the following motivations: (1) Relationship Management (*I disclose to keep a close relationship with others; Disclosures on my WeChat serve as a meeting place for others and me*); (2) Keeping up with trends (*I disclose in order to not to be left out*); and (3) show off (*I disclose because I am popular; I disclose to show off my ability*) and for the following consequence: Relationship Management (*I feel satisfaction in my relationships with those I am close to after disclosing; Trust deepens between someone and me, and I am close to after disclosing*).

As noted in the literature review, according to Social Exposure Theory (Berelson & Steiner, 1964), the principle of selective exposure refers to the situation where “people tend to see and hear communications that are favorable and congenial to their predispositions; they are more likely to see and hear congenial communications than neutral or hostile ones.” Based on the definition, they mentioned some dimensions will influence the social behaviors, including sex role, education status, interest and involvement, ethnic status, political attitude, aesthetic position, and indeed, any way of characterizing people that matters to them in. The Chinese students in this study are all born in China with different social context, especially the educated country in this research.

Selective exposure theory demonstrates the phenomenon whereby people tend to prefer the information supporting a particular standpoint, view or choice and ignore the contradictory one (Kastenmuller et al., 2010). Chinese students who are studying in the U.S. adapt the new culture and phenomenon, which is the American culture, as an example of western cultures, features individualism, quite opposite to collectivism in eastern culture, the Chinese Culture. The cultural differences will influences the Chinese students’ attitudes, social behaviors, and the self-disclosure on



social media. For instance, in the study on selective exposure investigated online foreign news during the conflict with Iraq (Best et al., 2005). The authors wanted to know why Internet users would choose to visit foreign online news sources in addition to their domestic news sources in virtue of selective exposure theory. They examined the motivations of Internet users to read foreign online news, which were reported to be both the satisfaction of their demands for political news and the intention to appraise the attitude-consistent news stories. As the foreigners, Chinese students prefer to accept the new culture when they came to study in the U.S. The results in this study partly significantly supported this, in which Chinese students studying in the U.S. had significantly higher results than Chinese students studying in China in Three motivations: Relationship management, Keeping up with trends, and Showing off; and one in consequences: Relationship Management. However, Chinese students studying in China had significantly higher results than ones in the U.S. for just one motivation: entertainment; and one of consequences: Habitual Behavior.

Chinese students were impacted by the Chinese culture characterized by collectivism, which is centered on groups for a long time. In this culture, Chinese students are told to know when to hide themselves as well as when to show themselves. According to the results of the study, Chinese students studying in the U.S. prefer to show off their life and experiences more than Chinese students studying in China, which reflected Chinese students studying in the U.S. are more individual instead of being collective. For another aspect, studying in the US provided more free space for them to manage their relationship rather than center on groups.

Educated country is just one dimension of the social-contexts. In this study, we found out there are some significant differences between Chinese students in different

educated countries. However, the results among students in China and the U.S. reveal more similar motivations and consequences when disclosing on WeChat. Social content impacts partly, but not totally on the self-disclosure on WeChat.

For the third question, *Women were significantly higher than Men* for the motivations when they disclose on WeChat: Relationship Management (*I disclose to let people know my current affairs*); Storing Information (*I disclose to share my information and knowledge*); Sharing Information (*I disclose to keep a personal record; I disclose to save my personal thoughts and pictures*); Showing off (*I disclose to show that I am popular; I disclose to show off by commercializing and publicizing my activities*). *Women* also were significantly higher than *Men* for the consequences: Relationship Management (*I feel satisfaction in my relationships with those I am close to after disclosing; Trust deepens between someone and me, and I am close to after disclosing*).

As noted in the literature review, gender roles are regarded as a dimension of social contexts (Berelson & Steiner, 1964). Self-disclosure is the prerequisite of relationship forming in social life and the foundation of human communication (Laurenceau et al., 1998). Some studies explored the factors of self-disclosure and its motivations and consequences. One study discussed the positive and negative consequences self-disclosure may bring about to individuals (Xie, Sun, and Zhou, 2013). They noted self-disclosure was influenced by social culture, network environment, sex, age and other factors (Xie et al., 2013). Waters and Ackerman (2011) explored the motivations and perceived consequences of voluntary disclosure when using Facebook based on Communication Privacy Management theory and found results that females were more motivated to disclose private information on

Facebook for storing information or using it as a form of entertainment than were males (Waters & Ackerman, 2011).

Similarly, one of the results in this study shows that motivations and consequences of female participants' self-disclosure were significantly higher than were male participants on WeChat. Baym, Zhang, Kunkel, Ledbetter, and Lin (2007) stated small differences in how women and men understand and evaluate their personal relationships on and offline could lead to the differences in interactions through self-disclosing on SNSs. In other studies about the differences between men and women when disclosing information claimed that women are more accurate receivers and senders of non-verbal communication messages than are men (Hall, 1998). Women have been found to disclose information more often than men. In my study, all the significant results proved females are significantly more likely to disclose on WeChat with the motivations: Relationship Management, Storing Information, Sharing Information and Showing off; and one consequence: Relationship Management. Online self-disclosing is a better way for females to expose information (Baym et al., 2007). Possibly, men prefer to speak publicly instead of disclosing on SNSs.

### **Conclusion**

The most popular SNS in the U.S. and all over the world currently is Facebook, which has roughly 1.3 billion monthly active users (Facebook Statistics, 2015). However, other SNSs, like Twitter, Renren, WeChat, and WhatsApp, cannot be ignored. According to the Tencent (2015) Second Quarter and Interim Results Announcement, WeChat registered 600 million monthly active users both abroad and at home by August, 2015. Much literature has focused research on the motivations of these SNSs users considering the contrast between users of both sexes or of diverse

cultures when studying motivations and information disclosure. Still not many researchers have paid attention to the use of social networking sites among international students and different cultures.

However, even fewer studies examined the impact of social context on the usage of a social networking site. This research aims to fill the gap by examining WeChat to explore whether changes of social context would exert any influence on the information disclosure of SNSs users on their motivations and consequences of information disclosure and then discusses the social context's effect on the consequences and motivations. Additionally, the researchers attended to the comparison and contrast between Chinese students in both countries in terms of information disclosure in WeChat to fill the cultural gap between the United States and China. The researchers also did a further study about the gender difference of self-disclosure on WeChat. Four-hundred University Chinese students in China and the U.S. who have a WeChat App and have logged in to use it within the last 30 days from the day administered participated in a survey about their motivations and consequences on WeChat. Results from MANOVAs showed that motivations and consequences of female participants' self-disclosure were significantly higher than male participants on WeChat. Moreover, there were significant differences in some motivations and consequences between the two different social contexts, China and the U.S.

### **Limitations, Directions for Future Research**

There are several limitations associated with this study. First, this study examines WeChat Chinese students' disclosing motivations and consequences in the U.S. or China. There are some WeChat American users in the U.S., and this context was not examined. Second, the seven motivation dimensions are Self-Presentation,

Relationship Management, Keeping Up With Trends, Information Sharing, Information Storage, Entertainment, and Showing Off. There are three dimensions to determine the consequences of voluntary disclosure: Relationship Management, Psychological Well-Being, and Habitual Behavior. The seven and three dimensions may not fully reflect Chinese users' motivations. Third, this study specifically investigates university students. However, it is noted people working in different contexts or people using WeChat besides university students might have different behaviors that could be studied. Additionally, there is no independent variable about how long have the students studied in the US. The different lengths of time Chinese students stay in the U.S. (e.g., one month, four years) disclosing on WeChat might have different results from Chinese students studying in China disclosing on WeChat and will be measured in the future.

For future research, assessing other age groups besides the groups this study surveyed (i.e., 1970-1979; 1980-1989 and 1990-1999) could be investigated. A study could consider making a comparison and contrast between the natural-born citizens in the U.S. and China. Moreover, a study about the relationship between hours spending on WeChat and the motivations and consequences when they disclose on WeChat could produce interesting significant results.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Informed Consent and Questionnaire

Informed Consent Letter for a Research Study entitled,  
“Self-Disclosure relies on social context: Examining the similarity and differences of  
Chinese Students in the U.S. and China when disclosing information on WeChat”

You are invited to participate in a research study to learn about the effects of sex, age and nationality on relationships when using WeChat, a messaging app. This study is being conducted by Xiyan Cui under the direction of Dr. Susan Waters in the East Tennessee State University Department of Mass Communication. You were selected as a possible participant because you are age 18 or older and a Chinese university student who uses WeChat. Taking part in this study involves completing a web survey that will take about 5 minutes. This survey contains questions about your opinions and perceptions about social relationships when using WeChat.

Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. Only the principal investigator, her advisor and the ETSU IRB will have access to the data. The data will be password protected. Only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in publications.

There will be no direct benefits to you, but the findings will be useful to the mass communication profession and educators for understanding social relationships when messaging with WeChat. The chief risk is that possibly some of the questions may make you uncomfortable. You may skip any questions you do not want to answer.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Xiyan Cui at [cuiX01@goldmail.etsu.edu](mailto:cuiX01@goldmail.etsu.edu) or Dr. Susan Waters at [watersse@etsu.edu](mailto:watersse@etsu.edu). A copy of this document can be printed for you to keep.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you cannot reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

**YOUR PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY.** You are free not to participate or you may stop participating any time before you submit your answers.

If you understand the statements above, are at least 18 years old, and freely consent to be in this study, click on the survey link to begin: [\(link here\)](#).

Thank you!  
Xiyao Cui

## Questionnaire

(Waters & Ackerman, 2011 originally from Lee et al., 2008)

### Demographic questions

#### Sex

Male—1

Female—2

#### Age

1970-1979—1

1980-1989—2

1990-1999—3

#### Which country do you study in now?

China—1

The US—2

#### How many hours do you spend on WeChat per day?

*less than 1 hour*—1

*1-3 hours*—2

*4-6 hours*—3

*7-9 hours*—4

*10 hours or more*—5

#### How do you agree with these motivations and consequences for self-disclosure on

**WeChat?** (*Click one level from a 7-point Likert-type scale of 1 = strongly disagree to*

*7 = strongly agree*)

#### \*Level of Agreement

1 – Strongly disagree

2 – Disagree

3 – Somewhat disagree

4 – Neither agree or disagree

5 – Somewhat agree

6 – Agree

7 – Strongly agree

### MOTIVATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY SELF-DISCLOSURE

#### Self-Presentation on WeChat

I disclose to present myself in a realistic way

I disclose to present my ideal self

I disclose to present my individual characteristics

#### Relationship Management

I disclose to keep a close relationship with others

Disclosures on my WeChat serve as a meeting place for others and me

I disclose to let people know my current affairs

I disclose to communicate with friends

#### Keeping Up with Trends

I disclose to keep from falling behind the times

I disclose because it is hard to feel sympathetic to people around me unless I use WeChat

I disclose because everybody does it

I disclose in order to not to be left out

### **Information Sharing**

I disclose to share my information and knowledge

I disclose to share my experience

I disclose to share information about a certain issue

### **Information Storage**

I disclose to keep a personal record

I disclose to save memorable information

I disclose to save personal thoughts and pictures

### **Entertainment**

I disclose because I enjoy it

I disclose because it is fun

I disclose as a source of an entertainment

### **Showing Off**

I disclose to show that I am popular

I disclose to show off my ability

I disclose to show off by commercializing and publicizing my activities

## **CONSEQUENCES OF VOLUNTARY SELF-DISCLOSURE on WeChat**

### **Relationship Management**

I feel intimate with others after disclosing

I feel satisfaction in my relationships with those I am close to after disclosing

Trust deepens between someone and me, and I am close to after disclosing

I have met new people through disclosing

### **Psychological Well-Being**

Disclosing helps me get rid of my stress

I feel psychological stability after disclosing

I feel psychological freedom after disclosing

### **Habitual Behavior**

I feel that I must self-disclose on WeChat

I feel uneasiness when I am not disclosing information on WeChat

I feel that I cannot control my disclosing behavior

## Appendix B

### Chinese Informed Consent and Chinese Questionnaire

#### 知情同意书

关于题为 “Self-Disclosure relies on social context: Examining the similarity and differences of Chinese Students in the U.S. and China when disclosing information on WeChat” (自我表达取决于社会环境：验证中国学生在中国和美国使用微信表达自我的异同)

您被邀请参加一项研究关于性别，年龄和关系国籍如果影响即时通讯工具的使用。这项研究是东田纳西州立大学大众传媒系的苏珊·沃特斯博士指导的崔溪妍提议并进行的。由于您年满 18 周岁并且是一位中国籍的大学生，您被选定作为一个可能的参与者。这项研究将以网络调查的形式进行，需要大约 5 分钟。本次调查包含使用微信时的有关意见和看法基于自身的社会关系。

您提供的信息将完全保密。只有首席研究员和她的顾问以及东田纳西州立大学 IRB 有权利获得数据。这些数据将被密码保护。只有汇总数据会发布在讨论会议或刊物。

这项调查对您没有直接的好处，但调查结果将对于大众传播界和教育界对于理解社会关系有着重要的意义。可能有些问题您可能不理解或者不想回答，您可以直接跳过您不想回答的任何问题。

如果您有关于这项研究的问题，请联系崔溪妍（邮件：[cuix01@goldmail.etsu.edu](mailto:cuix01@goldmail.etsu.edu)）或，苏珊·沃特斯博士（邮件：[watersse@etsu.edu](mailto:watersse@etsu.edu)）。您可以打印此知情同意书。

如果您有作为研究参与者的权利的问题，您可以联系的机构审查委员会的主席在 423-439-6054。如果您有任何关于该研究的问题或疑虑，（例如：关于您的人权，无法继续参与研究），可以联系 IRB 联络员（电话：423-439-6055 或 423-439-6002）。

提示：您的参与是完全自愿的。您有权利不参加，您可以在未完成时随时停止您的回答。

如果您理解此知情同意书的内容，并且已年满 18 岁，并自由地同意将在该研究中，[点击链接调查开始](#)：

感谢您的参与！

崔溪妍



## 调查问卷

个人信息统计

性别

年龄

目前就读国家

每天使用微信小时数

以下为微信使用中自我信息公开的动机和结果，请选择您对各个动机和结果的支持程度（本问卷使用李克特式 7 点量表，请从 1 到 7 中进行选择，其中，1 代表强烈反对，7 代表强烈支持）

支持程度

1 - 强烈反对

2 - 反对

3 - 轻微反对

4 - 即不反对也不支持

5 - 轻微支持

6 - 支持

7 - 强烈支持

### 使用微信公开自我的动机

表现自我

我使用微信是为了展现真实的自我

我使用微信是为了展现理想中的自我

我使用微信是为了展现我的个性

维护关系

我使用微信是为了维持与他人密切的联系

我把微信当做与他人交流的平台从而发布信息

我使用微信是为了让他人了解我目前的状况

我使用微信是为了与朋友交流

紧跟潮流

我使用微信是为了不被时代潮流所摒弃

我使用微信是为了能与周边人在使用微信上产生共鸣

我使用微信是因为其他人都在这么做

我使用微信是为了不被周边人所排斥

分享信息

我使用微信是为了分享我的信息和知识  
我使用微信是为了分享我的经历  
我使用微信是为了分享我对某些问题的看法

#### 信息储存

我使用微信是为了留作个人纪录  
我使用微信是为了保存难忘的记忆  
我使用微信是为了保存个人的想法和图片

#### 娱乐自我

我使用微信是因为我喜欢它  
我使用微信是因为它好玩  
我使用微信是将它作为一种娱乐方式

#### 炫耀自我

我使用微信是为了展现我的受欢迎程度  
我使用微信是为了炫耀我能力卓越  
我使用微信是通过用来炫耀我的日常活动

#### 微信上自我公开的结果

##### 维护关系

使用微信后我觉得跟他人更为亲密  
使用微信后我对跟我亲近的人之间的关系感到很满意  
使用微信后我跟他人之间、以及我跟我亲近的人之间的信任加强了  
使用微信后我认识了更多的朋友

##### 心理幸福感

在微信公开自我有助于压力的减轻  
使用微信后我从心理上感到很平静  
使用微信后我从心理上感到很自由

##### 习惯养成

我觉得必须要在微信上公开自我  
如果不使用微信，我会很不安  
我觉得我很难控制自己使用微信的行为

## VITA

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