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# Cultural Adaptation and Maintenance: Chinese International Students' Use of Facebook and WeChat

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Cultural Adaptation and Maintenance:  
Chinese International Students' Use of Facebook and WeChat

by

Mengni Wang

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
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## **Abstract**

In terms of Uses and gratification theory, this study examined the relationships between the usage of social networking sites and acculturation among Chinese students who are studying in U.S. colleges (N=246). By comparing two different SNSs, American SNS (Facebook) and ethnic SNS (WeChat), it was discovered that Chinese students exposed differential needs and gratification achievement in these two SNSs. This study applied a quantitative method, and data were collected with an online survey platform “Qualtrics,” which was carried out on February 2018. The present study found that the degree of Facebook gratification can lead to the increasing of use intensity. In contrast, the degree of WeChat gratification cannot be reflected in use intensity. Intriguingly, Facebook and WeChat indeed act as important roles in adaptation to U.S. culture and maintenance to Chinese culture respectively.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

In the past decade, the social media has become part of our lives. Especially for young people, social media plays an important role in their social relationships and cultural adaptation. It allows people to acknowledge this world, attain information, and interact with friends. With the development of technology, traditional media are failing to meet people's needs. The audience no longer is a passive receiver, but an active producer of information. These new phenomena signify the importance of social networking sites (SNSs).

Facebook is one of the popular social media sites. Facebook has over 2.07 billion monthly active users around the world in 2017 and has an increase of 16 percent annually (Facebook MAUs, 2017). Although Facebook, is one of the most popular social media sites in the world, there are a few countries that prohibit Facebook access, some examples are China, Iran, North Korea, ex cetera (Censorship of Facebook, 2017). Therefore, most Chinese students have no Facebook account before they study abroad. The Great Firewall, a national Internet filtering system, is applied by the Chinese government to cut off access to negative political topics and activities (Talbot, 2010). Although Facebook is prohibited in China, there are other social media that have similar functions to Facebook. WeChat, is one of the popular mobile social media among Chinese people, has "963 million monthly active users, closing in on 1 billion users" (WeChat, 2017). According to the report, currently, people spend nearly 80 percent of social media time on mobile devices, while Facebook dominates all other social networks among American users (Sterling, 2016).



Although WeChat and Facebook both have many active users and similar functions, these two social media sites are totally different both socially and culturally. WeChat is situated in China's cultural context and, notably, most users are Chinese (Chen & Hanasono, 2016). However, Facebook has a wider variety of users in an environment where users have the freedom of speech in North America. Hence, when Chinese students access these foreign social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, their perceptions and attitudes toward the world will change with the increase of time they reside in the United States.

According to the data from the Institute of International Education (2014), the number of international students has increased continuously since 1952. The number of enrolled international students in 2013–2014 academic year was a new record at 886,052 students (Forbush & Foucault-Welles, 2016). In the meantime, China exports the highest number of students to America to pursue higher education. Most Chinese students study in America at the college and university level, which means that most of them already have their own culture and inherent perceived system. Therefore, this inherent ideology and traditional culture, to some extent, will impede acculturation of Chinese international students to mainstream American culture.

There are two phenomena that emerge in the previous studies. The first one is that students experience a different acculturation process (Chen & Hanasono, 2016). Students are forced to adjust and adapt to the new culture and new environment as well as they have to accommodate host culture and home culture (Berry, 1997). Secondly, when Chinese students use more than two social media simultaneously in different cultures, such as Facebook and WeChat, the similarities and differences of foreign and ethnic social media may be identified (Chen & Hanasono, 2016).

Based on uses and gratifications theory, users actively seek out the specific media for achieving satisfactions (Ye, 2005). For example, individuals use social media to obtain information, enlarge social circle, and play games. According to the research, maintaining interpersonal communication, seeking social approval and receiving peers' support are the main purposes of using social media (Urista, Dong, & Day, 2009). In view of the cultural background of social media, WeChat allows users to contact Chinese friends and family members, while Facebook provides an opportunity that helps these international students to adapt host culture and create a new social circle. For these reasons, some relationships emerge between social media usage and acculturation models.

During the process of acculturation, individuals need to obtain various resources to cope with their depression and frustration. Social support plays an important role in cross-culture adaptation (Adelman, 1988). A lot of previous studies revealed that there are some benefits for sojourners to use social media, such as knowing host culture and maintaining home culture (Berry, 1997). A noteworthy phenomenon is online ethnic social groups that usually are established by people who come from same countries. The purpose of this kind of online ethnic groups is to increase dialogue about some common issues that have happened in the current residing country (Ye, 2006). These online ethnic social groups will help newcomers to adjust to local culture and life. Given these benefits of the social networks, we can clearly identify whether Chinese international students can effectively use social media to involve in host life and study.

## **Study purpose**

This study mainly attempts to discover the relationship between the use preferences of social networking sites and the degree of acculturation among Chinese international students. The United States is one of the most popular countries in which to study abroad. At the University of South Florida (USF), international students from at least 50 countries can be seen in the USF Tampa campus. Students from India, China, and Saudi Arabia make up the largest groups of international students (USF Main Campus International Student Report). With the number of Chinese students trending upwards in United States, the degree of acculturation will be varied based on different personalities and life styles.

The prohibition of several foreign social media in China, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, creates an opportunity for Chinese students to access these foreign social media when they arrive in America. Accordingly, this study concentrates on Chinese international students' gratification in using both ethnic social media and host mainstream social media. Through the change of the degree of gratification, this study will to explore different acculturation process and seek out internal relations.

## **Chapter Two: Literature review**

### **Acculturation**

Acculturation refers to a kind of change in a new environment and a new cultural context. In the beginning, newcomers need to learn new cultures and new lifestyles, which is related to adaptation. In the adaptation period, some newcomers may abandon original culture or maintain both home and host culture. Thus, it is an ability of coordination between original culture and new culture (Phinney, 1996). When people enter a new country, they may experience some shifts of their social circle, lifestyle, language, media preference and social identity (Stephenson, 2000). Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936, p.149) stated, “acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups”.

Although acculturation is a neutral word, in real life, to some extent, changes may be different in groups and individuals (Berry, 1997). For example, generally, extroverts are more likely to actively adapt to a new environment and a new culture. In contrast, introverts may encounter more difficulties in the process of acculturation. Recently, with the increase of immigration in countries all over the world, the number of academic articles related to acculturation have seen a significant increase (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). However, most articles only focus on the individual level rather than the group level (Berry, 1997). According to empirical research, the changes in the group level are more significant than the individual level (Berry, 1997).

In addition, Graves (1967) pointed out that there are two aspects of acculturation: collective or group-level phenomenon and psychological acculturation. Collective or group-level phenomenon emphasizes the process of cultural changes; while the latter one focuses on the process of psychological changes (Berry, 1997). This definition is very profound. Firstly, it can help us to identify these variables and then divide them into two aspects of acculturation (Berry, 1997). Second, individuals' acculturation may experience different periods based on their groups (Berry, 1970; Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

### **Multicultural Societies**

Currently, with the development of globalization, many countries have formed a multicultural society, that has people with different cultural backgrounds living together in a diverse society (Berry, 1997). In many places, no matter immigrants or sojourners, their unique cultures and customs are preserved and developed. For example, in San Francisco, Chinatown and Little Italy can be clearly identified. People living in this city not only can develop harmoniously but also can respect each other's culture. Based on their original cultural background, people gradually form different cultural groups, such as Cuba street and Greece town. Unfortunately, these individuals and groups do not have equal economic and political power (Berry, 1997). Because of these unequal powers in politics, economy and culture, mainstream, minority and ethnic groups are divided in the society (Berry, 1997). Although some minorities have already become a part of majorities, this scenario does not always happen in our society. Kymlicka (1995) pointed out that sometimes minorities are resisted by mainstream and other cultural groups. Thus, until now many countries also remain culturally diverse.

Some cultural groups get involved in the mainstream culture voluntarily, such as immigrants. Others accept mainstream culture as going with the flow, such as indigenous inhabitants. In addition, some people from their original countries migrate to a new country. While others such as a minority must learn mainstream culture for better involvement and development, even if they have never left their original country. Furthermore, some individuals may settle down permanently in other countries, while others just stay for a short period of time, such as international students. A lot of factors can influence the process of acculturation. In terms of these three situations discussed above, Berry (1997) identified three main factors of acculturation, that is “voluntariness, mobility, and permanence (Berry, 1997, p.8).”

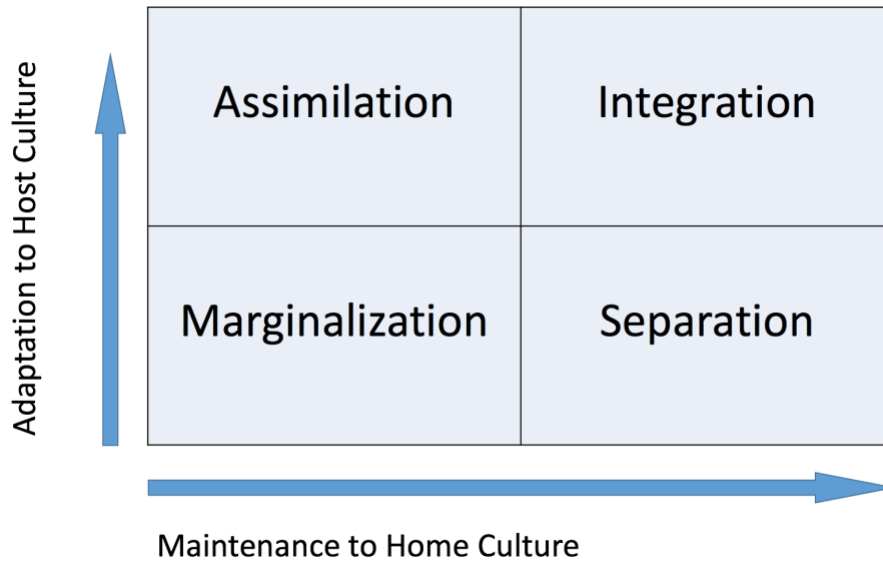
Historically, acculturation is conceptualized in two approaches, unidimensional model and bi-dimensional model (Chen & Hanasono, 2016). Unidimensional model refers to a process of a single continuum, which demonstrates that people discard their original culture to adopt the host culture. Another model is bi-dimensional which theorizes that people remain and coordinate these two different cultures in two separate continua (Chen & Hanasono, 2016). Berry (1997) contended that cross-culture adaptation does not abandon home culture when people accept a new culture. In contrast, these two cultures can be well identified and used in life. Therefore, bi-dimensional modeling is a more comprehensive and effective way to understand the process of acculturation than unidimensional modeling (Ryder, Alden, & Pauhus, 2000).

### **Acculturation model**

How to become involved in a new culture is a common issue for all newcomers. People have tried different ways to deal with relationships for adapting to the new culture and environment. Maintaining their original culture and practicing the new culture represent two

prominent factors in the process of acculturation (Guimond et al., 2013). According to the level of maintaining an original culture and adapting to a new culture, different models of acculturation are signified.

Berry (1997) concluded there are four models of acculturation including Assimilation, Integration, Separation, and Marginalization. Assimilation refers to people that try to get involved in the host culture but refuse to maintain home culture identity. Integration suggests that people advocate to hold both cultures and appropriately use two different cultures. Separation implies that a person insists on the home culture, but he or she refuses to interact with the host culture. The last one is marginalization which describes that people neither involve in host culture nor keep the home culture (Chen & Hanasono, 2016). Generally, the most ideal model of these four is Integration (Berry, 1997). However, some scholars pointed out that for Chinese international students, the process of acculturation tends to be Separation (Deng & Walker, 2007). This means that they prefer to stay in the context of, and keep their home culture. Nevertheless, no matter the psychological factor or the influence of ethnic groups, no one can ignore the impacts of high-technology, such as social media. Therefore, scholars assume that computer-mediated communication may play some significant roles in cultural adaptation.



Figures 1. Acculturation model from Chen, Lanming., & Hanasono, L, K. (2016). The Effect of Acculturation on Chinese International Students' Usage of Facebook and Renren.

### **Cross-cultural adaptation**

Cross-cultural adaptation becomes an increasingly common phenomenon in current societies. In view of the growing capability in people's mobility, persons who have different cultural backgrounds live together and attempt to understand and respect each other (Ellingsworth, 1988). Kim and Ruben (1988) pointed out that most people have adapted to the pressure of cultural differences in most social environments.

Current researchers have already explicitly illustrated the issue of adaptation from long-term adjustment to cultural differences (Freedman, 1986; James, 1992). For example, when people experience the process of adaptation, their cross-cultural communication skills will increase as time goes by (Kim & Ruben, 1988). In the process of cross-cultural adaptation, people need to adjust their communication behaviors and language skills to facilitate understanding between each other (Cai & Rodríguez, 1996). When people start a new life in an



unknown country, the strategy of communication behaviors will become very significant, which can effectively reduce the possibility of misunderstanding when talking with the natives (Cai & Rodríguez, 1996).

Dillard (1990) contended that the process of cross-cultural adaptation is goal orientated. Put another way, people intentionally interact with someone for accomplishing their goals or obtaining some skills. This kind of active actions in the process of cross-cultural adaptation will be represented in mental and behavioral aspects (Klinger, 1985). Through examining in psychological phases, Gumperz and Tannen (1979) argued that people from different cultures need to make more effort toward adaptation than people from the same culture. The ideal process of cross-cultural adaptation is two-way. When foreigners endeavor to adapt to mainstream culture, indigenous people, at the same time, try to adjust communication behaviors for helping foreigners get involved in mainstream society.

### **Uses and Gratifications theory (U&G)**

Uses and gratifications theory suggests that individuals actively look for media outlets based on their motives and needs (Rubin, 1994). Baran and Davis (1995) contended that individuals are active users who positively choose and select media outlets to meet their needs. Therefore, media use behaviors are analyzed both for social context and psychological motives (Mo & Leung, 2015; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Currently, the competition to satisfy users' media needs is becoming more and more intense. Mo and Leung (2015) noted that people are goal-oriented and purpose-driven to use different media. Through analyzing media use, it can be seen that users are aware of their agency in choosing different media platforms and can actively state their demands in the process of use.

Although uses and gratifications theory is derived from the research of traditional media (McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972), it provides a framework for the study of modern media, such as computer-mediated communication. Stafford, Stafford, and Schkade (2004) argued that U&G theory can not only be well applied in the context of Internet use, but can also be used to study social network sites (SNSs). SNSs allow for two-way communication between people via online media. A large number of users become content creators, and produce user-generated content (UGC). In SNSs, individuals are senders as well as receivers. Users can actively participate in media activities and develop preferences. Consequently, uses and gratifications theory, to some extent, can predict users' attitudes, perceived importance and affinity with some media (Park & Lee, 2014). In particular, many scholars posited that the motivations behind media use can predict people's media use based on their choice of media and time spent on them (Anderson & Meyer, 1975; Dhir & Tsai, 2016).

In view of previous studies, there are different classifications about users' gratifications in media use. McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972) concluded four main clusters of gratifications: diversion, personal relationships, surveillance, and personal identity. Diversion explains that people escape from the burdens of routine life and desire to get the emotional release (Katz, Blumle, & Gurevitch, 1974). Personal relationships mention that social support and emotional support (Chen & Hanasono, 2016). Surveillance relates to people's curiosity and desire to follow other people. Finally, personal identity refers to "personal reference, reality exploration, and value reinforcement" (Katz, Blumle, & Gurevitch, 1974, p.513). In addition, Joinson (2008) advocated seven key factors of gratifications in Facebook use, that is the social connection, photographs, share identities, status updates, content, social network surfing, and social investigation (Mo & Leung, 2015).

While, Dhir and Tsai (2016) argued that the users' gratifications derived from social network sites should be classified in three categories, respectively content, process and social uses and gratifications (Stafford, Stafford & Schkade, 2004). Content gratification refers to the messages carried by a medium, such as information achievement or exposure (Cutler & Danowski, 1980); whereas process gratification related to the medium itself when people actually use it, for example, entertainment (Cutler & Danowski, 1980). The third gratification in the Internet environment is social gratification that concentrates on interpersonal communication and social networking, such as connecting and coordination (Stafford, Stafford & Schkade, 2004).

Sheldon (2008) first studied the relationships between Facebook U&G and use intensity. The process (escape and entertainment) and social (connection and companionship) U&G of Facebook can predict tendency of Facebook use (Sheldon, 2008). After that, a lot of literature about the intensity of media use were published. Alhabash et al. (2010) identified that the content (information seeking) U&G also is a key factor to predict intensity of Facebook use. In another research, Alhabash et al. (2014) found that the process (e.g., entertainment and self-expression) U&G is a very significant factor to influence intensity of Facebook use. All prior studied consistently exposed that process U&G have neither direct or indirect influence on intensity of Facebook use.

In addition to the process U&G, the content and social U&G also play an important role in the intensity of SNSs use. The intensity of SNSs use is related to process, content, social and technology U&G. Mo and Leung (2014) pointed that the intensity of Weibo use can be predicted by content and social U&G of Weibo, but no process U&G of Weibo. Although different computer-mediated platforms are associated with different U&G, the uniqueness of medium

itself cannot be neglected. Weibo as a social network platform serves as the role of information exchange and socialization, which is rarely to satisfy people's needs of entertainment.

Furthermore, cultural differences also should be paid attention. Because of U&G as a global theoretical framework, the factors of U&G that can be used to predict intensity may change according to the cross-cultural differences (Dhir & Tsai, 2016).

### **Intensity of SNSs use**

In the prior studies, the use of medium often was measured by time spent and frequency (Dhir & Tsai, 2016). However, this traditional method fails to consider the richness of the user experience derived from computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Valenzuela et al., 2009). In order to address this issue, Facebook intensity scale was created for the better measure of Facebook use (Ellison et al., 2007). In this scale, the behavior of Facebook use and the extent of engagement are assessed and self-reported (Ellison et al., 2007). Some scholars argued that this measurement is a holistic concept to scale the connection between emotion and Facebook use, for example, "I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook" (Ellison et al., 2007, p1150). Moreover, when it comes to the penetration of Facebook in our daily life, this scale also represents a complex integration that Facebook activities involve in our routine life (Ellison et al., 2007).

Comparing the traditional approach, the scale of intensity of Facebook use (IFU) are more comprehensive to reflect usage of SNSs. In other studies, IFU has already been tested in response to different users' behaviors and been verified internal consistency (Dhir & Tsai, 2016; Steinfield et al., 2008). In recent years, IFU has been used broadly by scholars to measure the intensity of SNSs use. Binder et al. (2009) use IFU scale to probe and understand the online

tension. Two aspects were presented prominently, that is traffic intensity (how many posts are sent and received in a period of time) and time spent on SNSs (Binder et al., 2009). Furthermore, in other SNSs, IFU scale also can be applied extensively to measure the intensity of use by slight modification. Mo and Leung (2014) applied this scale in Weibo. Alhabash and McAlister (2014) use it to scale the intensity of Twitter users.

### **Social Network Sites and international students**

Social network sites (SNSs) are identified as two-way communication tools which promote interpersonal communication based on computer-mediated communication (CMC). Culnan and Markus (1987, p.745) stated that “through written text, recorded or synthesized voice message, graphical representation of communicators and/or data, or moving images of the communicators and/or message content,” people can get an alternative way to do social interaction. For example, newcomers not only can use traditional communication, face to face, but also utilize high technology to actively involve the host culture, hence, new technology can facilitate information exchange in a reduce cost. Besides, the online communication also can allow people to discuss their opinions and reduce unease and embarrassment caused by temper and personality differences (Baym et al., 2012). These prominent characters of SNSs, to some extent, promote communication and culture exchange.

Further, SNSs have some unique advantages beyond both interpersonal and mass communication in the cross-cultural adaptation process (Ju, Jia & Shoham, 2016). Interpersonal communication, such as face to face communication, may frighten certain newcomers who are introvert with minimal language skills. SNSs can potentially help newcomers to involve in host culture through anonymity, image message and time control (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Users

are able to express their ideas and thoughts by SNSs and get comfort in psychology. In addition, SNSs allow us to use different communication styles, such as text, images and voice messages. In brief, new methods of communication ease some uncomfortable symptoms happening in communication, especially for these newcomers, SNSs can provide them a huge platform to understand host culture.

### **Chapter Three: Research Hypotheses**

Aforementioned, U&G theory told us that users no longer are the passive receivers, they are actively choosing different types of media based on their needs. This phenomenon becomes more prominent in SNSs, such as WeChat and Facebook. These two online social platforms offer the venue for their use to produce contents and exchange message. In the context of SNSs, users can achieve a variety of gratifications, such as process gratification (e.g., escape and entertainment), content gratification (e.g., information seeking and exposure), and social gratification (e.g., social influence and connecting). Therefore, different kinds of gratifications or different degrees of gratification may play some pivotal roles in behavior, choice and time spent. In addition, U&G theory provides further insights into the underlying principle of mediating process between U&G and SNSs use.

As discussed in prior chapters, Intensity of SNSs use, as a current comprehensive measurement, can better reflect people's time spent and updating frequency on SNSs. Therefore, we proposed that if users can achieve more gratifications from their experiences of SNSs use, they may spend more time on SNSs and integrate actions or contents that happened in the SNSs into their daily life, vice versa. Put another way, in order to achieve a kind of gratification, people actively choose different SNSs and voluntarily evolve in a certain type of social network. The general issues emerge from these perspectives: namely, what the relationship between U&G and intensity of SNSs use? What kinds of U&G can influence the intensity of SNSs use? Which types of U&G can be the strongest predictor of the intensity of SNSs use? In view of these issues, we will draw forth several research hypotheses.

For Facebook gratifications and intensity of use.

H1: Facebook gratifications will be positive predictors of usage intensity.

H1-a: Escape gratification will be a positive predictor of Facebook use intensity.

H1-b: Entertainment gratification will be a positive predictor of Facebook use intensity.

H1-c: Information seeking gratification will be a positive predictor of Facebook use intensity.

H1-d: Exposure gratification will be a positive predictor of Facebook use intensity.

H1-e: Social influence gratification will be a positive predictor of Facebook use intensity.

For WeChat gratifications and intensity of use.

H2: WeChat gratifications will be positive predictors of usage intensity.

H2-a: Escape gratification will be a positive predictor of WeChat use intensity.

H2-b: Entertainment gratification will be a positive predictor of WeChat use intensity.

H2-c: Information seeking gratification will be a positive predictor of WeChat use intensity.

H2-d: Exposure gratification will be a positive predictor of WeChat use intensity.

H2-e: Social influence gratification will be a positive predictor of WeChat use intensity.



According to Chen and Hanasono's (2016) study, SNSs (Facebook and Renren) as a buffer zone can help Chinese students to mediate their acculturation stress. In the previous literature, acculturation generally is related to two types of process, namely, maintaining the original culture and adapting new culture (Phinney, 1996). When people leave their familiar culture and get into a totally different culture, media are likely to serve as a mediator that help newcomers to integrate into a new culture and maintain their original identity. In this scenario, the U&G of media will be highlighted. Similarly, SNSs that have different cultural backgrounds will play different roles in the process of acculturation.

As mentioned above, Chinese students are more likely to use Facebook to evolve in America culture; whereas, in order to keep a kind of bond with Chinese culture, they are more willing to communicate in WeChat. Therefore, we proposed that there should be some strong relationships among U&G, the intensity of use and acculturation. The following are the hypotheses and the research structure.

For the intensity of Facebook use and cultural adaptation.

H3: The intensity of Facebook use will be a positive predictor of the level of adaptation to American culture.

For the intensity of WeChat use and cultural maintenance.

H4: The intensity of WeChat use will be a positive predictor of the level of maintenance of Chinese culture.

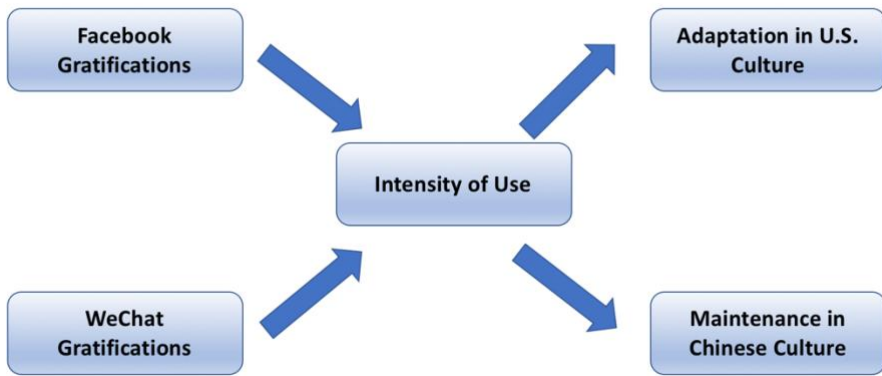


Figure 2. Hypotheses Model

## Chapter Four: Methodology

### Sample

An online survey was conducted among 246 Chinese students during the spring term of 2018 at the University of South Florida (USF). Qualtrics, an online survey platform, was applied for collecting data. Respondents in this study were recruited from members of the USF Chinese Students Association and researcher's circle of friends. Participation was strictly voluntary and all respondents read and signed an informed consent at the beginning of this survey.

Among the 246 respondents, 207 were using both Facebook and WeChat (Table 1). All analyses and results presented henceforth were thus based on these respondents. Table 2 to 4 show the demographics of the respondents.

Table 1: Sample Social Media Use

	Frequency	Percent
Use WeChat	239	97.2
Use Facebook	208	84.6
Use Both	207	84.1
Total	246	100.0

Table 2: Sample Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	112	45.5	46.9	46.9
	Female	127	51.6	53.1	100.0
	Total	239	97.2	100.0	
Missing	System	7	2.8		
Total		246	100.0		

Table 3: Sample Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-22 years old	41	16.7	17.1	17.1
	23-30 years old	171	69.5	71.3	88.3
	31-40 years old	18	7.3	7.5	95.8
	41 years or older	10	4.1	4.2	100.0
	Total	240	97.6	100.0	
Missing	System	6	2.4		
Total		246	100.0		

Table 4: Sample Education Level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Some high school, no diploma	1	.4	.4	.4
	High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent	4	1.6	1.7	2.1
	Some college credit, no degree	9	3.7	3.7	5.8
	Bachelor's degree	133	54.1	55.2	61.0
	Master's degree	86	35.0	35.7	96.7
	Doctorate degree	8	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	241	98.0	100.0	
Missing	System	5	2.0		
Total		246	100.0		

### Survey instrument

The survey questionnaire contained 75 questions and took about 15-20 minutes to complete (see Appendix). Measures of the variables in this study included the following:

**Cultural adaptation and maintenance.** Measures of cultural adaptation and maintenance were adapted from the Vancouver index of acculturation (VIA) (Lefringhausen & Marshall, 2016). The original VIA contains twenty items: Ten items designed to measure the level of host culture adaptation and ten items designed to measure the level of heritage culture maintenance. The 20 items were slightly modified to serve the purpose of the present study. Specifically, ten Likert-scaled (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree) items were used to measure the level of adaptation to American culture:

1. I often participate in mainstream American cultural traditions.
2. I would be willing to marry a white American person.
3. I enjoy social activities with typical American people.

4. I am comfortable interacting with typical American people.
5. I enjoy American entertainment (e.g. movies, music).
6. I often behave in ways that are typically American.
7. It is important for me to maintain or develop American cultural practices.
8. I believe in mainstream American values.
9. I enjoy white American jokes and humor.
10. I am interested in having white American friends.

Ten Likert-scaled items used to measure the level of Chinese cultural maintenance were:

1. I often participate in Chinese cultural traditions.
2. I would be willing to marry a person from the same Chinese culture as myself.
3. I enjoy social activities with people from the same Chinese culture as myself.
4. I am comfortable interacting with people of the same Chinese culture as myself.
5. I enjoy entertainment (e.g. movies, music) from Chinese culture.
6. I often behave in ways that are typical of Chinese culture.
7. It is important for me to maintain or develop the practices of Chinese culture.
8. I believe in the values of Chinese culture.
9. I enjoy the jokes and humor of Chinese culture.
10. I am interested in having friends from Chinese culture.

**Gratifications of Facebook and WeChat Use.** Adapted from Dhir and Tsai (2016), five types of gratifications of Facebook and WeChat use were measured, including escape, entertainment, information seeking, exposure and social influence. The Likert-scaled (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree) items used to measure these gratifications were as follows.

Escape:

1. I use WeChat/Facebook to play roles different from those played in real-life.
2. I use WeChat/Facebook to put off something I should be doing.

Entertainment:

3. I use WeChat/Facebook because it is entertaining.
4. I use WeChat/Facebook because it is fun.
5. I use WeChat/Facebook because I enjoy it.

Information seeking:

6. Through WeChat/Facebook, I can get information.
7. Through WeChat/Facebook, I can provide others with information.
8. Through WeChat/Facebook, I can learn how to do things.
9. Through WeChat/Facebook, I learn about the latest news.

Social influence:

10. I use WeChat/Facebook to look stylish as it matches my lifestyle.
11. WeChat/Facebook broadens my thinking and lifestyle.

Exposure:

12. One gets to learn about colleges of higher education using WeChat/Facebook.
13. One can get to know about educational opportunities using WeChat/Facebook.
14. WeChat/Facebook provides a wide range of exposure (lots of information).

**Intensity of WeChat and Facebook use.** Intensity of Facebook and WeChat was measured by six Likert-scaled (1-strongly disagree, 5-strongly agree) items adapted from Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007). These six items measured not only the frequency, duration and time spent but also the emotional factors of social media usage.

1. WeChat/Facebook use is part of my everyday activity.
2. I am proud to tell people I am on WeChat/Facebook.
3. WeChat/Facebook has become part of my daily routine.
4. I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto WeChat/Facebook for a day.
5. I feel I am part of the WeChat/Facebook community on the campus.
6. I would be sorry if WeChat/Facebook shut down.

The last part of the questionnaire was demographic questions that contained age, gender and education level.

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?



## Chapter Five: Results

Table 5 displays the means, standards deviations and internal consistencies (Cronbach's alphas) of the averaged composite measures of the variables in the study. All Cronbach's alphas were greater than .70, indicating acceptable levels of internal consistency (Berman, 2002).

Table 5: Descriptive and Reliability Statistics

	N of Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
American Adaptation	10	2.9808	.75252	.911
Chinese Maintenance	10	4.3110	.59100	.900
Facebook Intensity	6	2.6410	.93480	.919
WeChat Intensity	6	4.4187	.60944	.847
Facebook Escape	2	2.4648	.96445	.824
WeChat Escape	2	3.7365	1.00627	.739
Facebook Entertain	3	2.7841	.94380	.912
WeChat Entertain	3	4.1259	.75542	.818
Facebook Info Seeking	4	2.9204	.97910	.914
WeChat Info Seeking	4	4.3102	.67855	.828
Facebook Exposure	3	2.8253	.96207	.886
WeChat Exposure	3	4.0360	.78386	.821
Facebook Influence	2	2.7171	.93159	.818
WeChat Influence	2	4.0187	.91894	.800

Table 6 shows results of paired samples t-tests that compared the differences between Facebook and WeChat in terms of gratifications, intensity of use, cultural adaptation and cultural maintenance. The results indicated that respondents were more gratified by WeChat than Facebook use. Specifically, respondents reported higher escape gratification from WeChat

(Mean = 3.73, SD =1.01) than Facebook (Mean = 2.46, SD = 0.96); more entertainment gratification from WeChat (Mean = 4.13, SD =0.76) than Facebook (Mean = 2.78, SD = 0.94); greater information seeking gratification from WeChat (Mean = 4.31, SD =0.68) than Facebook (Mean = 2.92, SD = 0.98); higher expose gratification from WeChat (Mean = 4.04, SD =0.78) than Facebook (Mean = 2.83, SD = 0.96); and more social influence gratification from WeChat (Mean = 4.02, SD =0.92) than Facebook (Mean = 2.72, SD = 0.93). The intensity of WeChat use (Mean = 4.42, SD = .61) was also significantly stronger than the intensity of Facebook use (Mean = 2.64, SD = .93) ( $t = 24.54$ ,  $df = 205$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Moreover, the level of Chinese culture maintenance (Mean = 4.31, SD = .59) was significantly higher than the level of American culture adaptation (Mean = 2.98, SD = .75) ( $t = - 20.62$ ,  $df = 201$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 6: Paired Samples t-test

	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	p
Pair 1 WeChat Escape – Facebook Escape	1.38235	1.22711	.08591	16.090	203	.000
Pair 2 WeChat Entertain – Facebook Entertain	1.36260	1.25428	.08760	15.554	204	.000
Pair 3 WeChat Info Seeking – Facebook Info Seeking	1.43350	1.19322	.08375	17.117	202	.000
Pair 4 WeChat Exposure – Facebook Exposure	1.28268	1.23316	.08634	14.856	203	.000
Pair 5 WeChat Influence – Facebook Influence	1.36829	1.28899	.09003	15.199	204	.000
Pair 6 WeChat Intensity – Facebook Intensity	1.81472	1.06129	.07394	24.542	205	.000
Pair 7 American Cultural Adaptation – Chinese Cultural Maintenance	-1.39109	.95876	.06746	-20.621	201	.000

## Measurement Model Results

Table 7 and 8 show the standardized regression weight estimates, standard errors, critical ratios and significance levels of latent construct indicators for Facebook and WeChat respectively. The regression weights for all the indicators in both measurement models were statistically significant ( $P < .001$ ). Additionally, the standard errors were small, which indicated acceptable validity of the measurement models.

Table 7: Measurement Model Results (Facebook)

			Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
fes2	<---	Escape	.846			
fes1	<---	Escape	.819	.071	13.518	***
fso2	<---	Influence	.842			
fso1	<---	Influence	.795	.069	13.813	***
fen3	<---	Entertain	.891			
fen2	<---	Entertain	.887	.051	19.321	***
fen1	<---	Entertain	.864	.055	18.322	***
fin4	<---	<u>Infoseeking</u>	.858			
fin3	<---	<u>Infoseeking</u>	.835	.061	16.160	***
fin2	<---	<u>Infoseeking</u>	.868	.057	17.303	***
fin1	<---	<u>Infoseeking</u>	.840	.061	16.339	***
fex3	<---	Exposure	.827			
fex2	<---	Exposure	.873	.063	15.944	***
fex1	<---	Exposure	.877	.063	16.039	***
fint1	<---	Intensity	.818			
fint2	<---	Intensity	.630	.068	10.274	***
fint3	<---	Intensity	.879	.067	16.270	***
fint4	<---	Intensity	.843	.072	15.244	***
fint5	<---	Intensity	.849	.069	15.421	***
fint6	<---	Intensity	.828	.071	14.856	***
aad1	<---	Adaptation	.684			
aad2	<---	Adaptation	.688	.106	9.580	***
aad3	<---	Adaptation	.776	.112	10.692	***
aad4	<---	Adaptation	.811	.106	11.127	***

Table 7: Continued

			Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
aad5	<---	Adaptation	.639	.108	8.950	***
aad6	<---	Adaptation	.626	.110	8.783	***
aad7	<---	Adaptation	.665	.113	9.289	***
aad8	<---	Adaptation	.773	.106	10.653	***
aad9	<---	Adaptation	.703	.117	9.774	***
aad10	<---	Adaptation	.766	.114	10.570	***

Table 8: Measurement Model Results(WeChat)

			Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
wes2	<---	Escape	.778			
wes1	<---	Escape	.791	.071	13.518	***
wso2	<---	Influence	.880			
wso1	<---	Influence	.835	.069	13.813	***
wen3	<---	Entertain	.833			
wen2	<---	Entertain	.818	.051	19.321	***
wen1	<---	Entertain	.703	.055	18.322	***
win4	<---	<u>Infoseeking</u>	.805			
win3	<---	<u>Infoseeking</u>	.762	.061	16.160	***
win2	<---	<u>Infoseeking</u>	.679	.057	17.303	***
win1	<---	<u>Infoseeking</u>	.735	.061	16.339	***
wex3	<---	Exposure	.669			
wex2	<---	Exposure	.853	.063	15.944	***
wex1	<---	Exposure	.871	.063	16.039	***
wint1	<---	Intensity	.703			
wint2	<---	Intensity	.645	.068	10.274	***
wint3	<---	Intensity	.693	.067	16.270	***
wint4	<---	Intensity	.697	.072	15.244	***
wint5	<---	Intensity	.781	.069	15.421	***
wint6	<---	Intensity	.707	.071	14.856	***
cmn1	<---	Maintenance	.538			
cmn2	<---	Maintenance	.627	.106	9.580	***
cmn3	<---	Maintenance	.587	.112	10.692	***
cmn4	<---	Maintenance	.649	.106	11.127	***

Table 8: Continued

			Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
cmn5	<---	Maintenance	.744	.108	8.950	***
cmn6	<---	Maintenance	.688	.110	8.783	***
cmn7	<---	Maintenance	.750	.113	9.289	***
cmn8	<---	Maintenance	.741	.106	10.653	***
cmn9	<---	Maintenance	.745	.117	9.774	***
cmn10	<---	Maintenance	.754	.114	10.570	***

### Structure Model Results

Table 9 and 10 showed the results of the structural models obtained through SPSS AMOS. An initial question is whether the structural equation analysis estimates for the models provide adequate fit to the data. Although the Chi-square test indicates lack of model fit ( $X^2$  Facebook = 362.495,  $df = 179$ ,  $p = .000$ ;  $X^2$  WeChat = 962.875,  $df = 389$ ,  $p = .000$ ), it should be noted that the Chi-square test is sensitive to large sample sizes, like the one employed in the present study. Assessment of the model's fit thus relied on other goodness-of-fit indices. Bryne (2001) suggests that models with GFI, AGFI, and CFI values greater than .90, and a RMSEA less than or equal to .10 be judged as providing a reasonable fit to the data. Similarly, Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend RMSEA values below .06.

Table 9: Structural Model Results (Facebook)

			Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Intensity	<---	Infoseeking	-.111	.167	-.627	.530
Intensity	<---	Exposure	.424	.137	3.028	.002
Intensity	<---	Influence	-.279	.221	-1.313	.189
Intensity	<---	Entertain	.319	.145	2.193	.028
Intensity	<---	Escape	.644	.104	6.248	***
Adaptation	<---	Intensity	.509	.056	6.687	***
Entertain	<-->	Infoseeking	.864	.085	8.594	***
Infoseeking	<-->	Exposure	.847	.089	8.200	***
Influence	<-->	Exposure	.855	.083	8.077	***
Escape	<-->	Entertain	.720	.076	7.537	***
Escape	<-->	Influence	.691	.075	7.019	***
Escape	<-->	Exposure	.547	.073	6.063	***
Escape	<-->	Infoseeking	.601	.076	6.595	***
Entertain	<-->	Exposure	.711	.077	7.547	***
Influence	<-->	Entertain	.839	.078	8.284	***
Influence	<-->	Infoseeking	.884	.085	8.393	***

Table 10: Structural Model Results (WeChat)

			Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Intensity	<---	<u>Infoseeking</u>	.581	.187	1.669	.095
Intensity	<---	Exposure	-.204	.144	-1.027	.304
Intensity	<---	Influence	-.221	.113	-.995	.320
Intensity	<---	Entertain	.386	.165	1.274	.203
Intensity	<---	Escape	.278	.119	1.278	.201
Maintenance	<---	Intensity	.572	.101	5.904	***
Entertain	<-->	<u>Infoseeking</u>	.850	.064	7.885	***
<u>Infoseeking</u>	<-->	Exposure	.842	.054	7.048	***
Influence	<-->	Exposure	.853	.055	7.322	***
Escape	<-->	Entertain	.759	.063	7.059	***
Influence	<-->	Entertain	.822	.064	8.057	***
Escape	<-->	<u>Infoseeking</u>	.528	.057	5.483	***
Influence	<-->	<u>Infoseeking</u>	.836	.067	8.005	***

Table 10: Continued

			Standardized Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Escape	<-->	Exposure	.624	.047	5.836	***
Escape	<-->	Influence	.731	.065	7.044	***
Entertain	<-->	Exposure	.739	.049	6.719	***

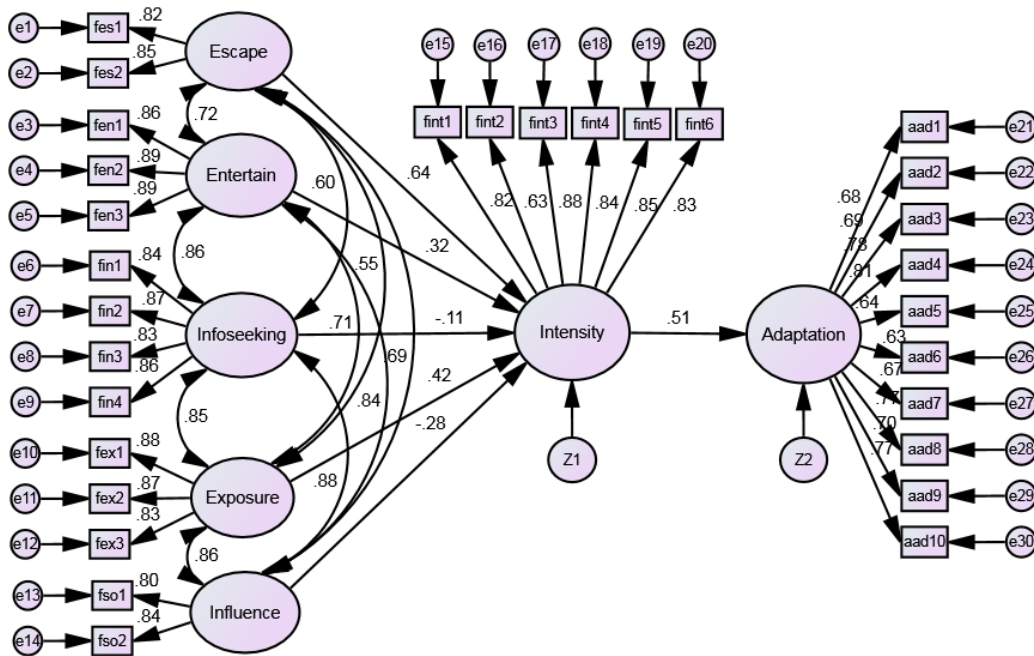


Figure 3. Structural Equation Model Results (Facebook)



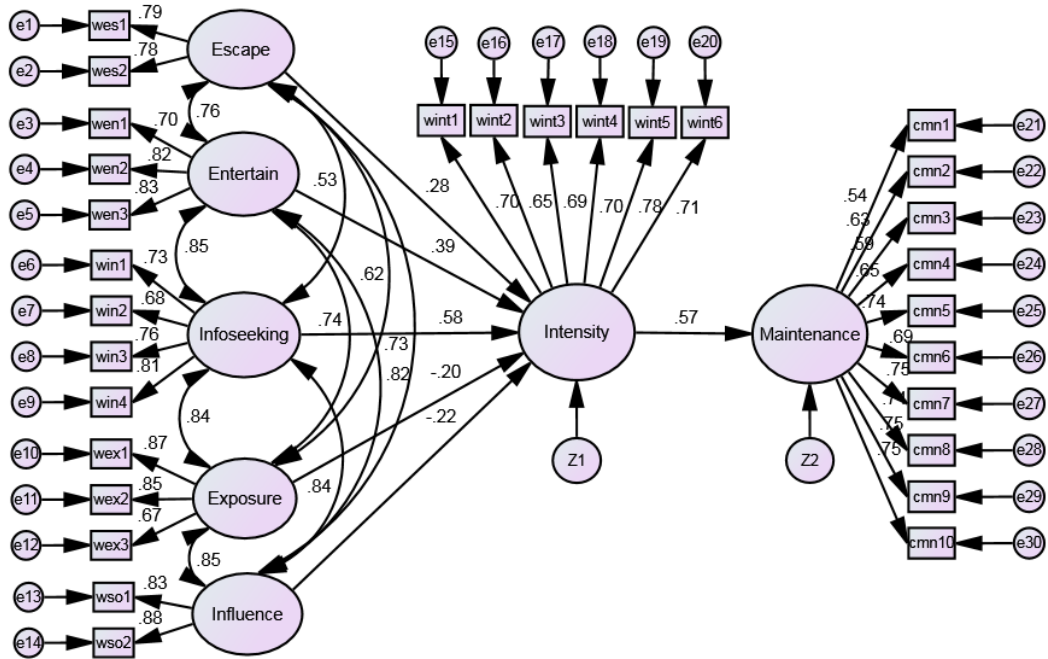


Figure 4. Structural Equation Model Results (WeChat)



## Hypotheses Testing

H1 indicates that Facebook gratifications are positive predictors of the intensity of Facebook use. H1a-H1e are specific hypotheses of the relationships between the five types of gratifications and Facebook use intensity. H1a states that escape gratification is a positive predictor of Facebook use intensity. Results showed that H1a was supported ( $\beta$  Escape  $\rightarrow$  Intensity = .644,  $p < .001$ ). As Chinese international students achieve more escape gratifications from Facebook, so is their intensity of Facebook use. Likewise, results supported H1b that entertainment gratification is a positive predictor of Facebook use intensity ( $\beta$  Entertainment  $\rightarrow$  Intensity = .319,  $p = .028$ ). As the entertainment gratification from Facebook goes up, so does the intensity of Facebook use. Results failed to support H1c which states that information seeking gratification is a positive predictor of Facebook use intensity ( $\beta$  Information seeking  $\rightarrow$  Intensity = -.111,  $p = .530$ ). In regards to exposure gratification, the results supported H1d that exposure gratification is a positive predictor of Facebook use intensity ( $\beta$  Exposure  $\rightarrow$  Intensity = .424,  $p = .002$ ). That is, Facebook use intensity would increase when Chinese international students obtain more exposure gratifications. Unsupported was H1e which prescribes that social influence gratification is a positive predictor of Facebook use intensity ( $\beta$  Exposure  $\rightarrow$  Intensity = -.279,  $p = .189$ ), however.

H2 proposed that WeChat gratifications are positive predictors of WeChat usage intensity. Similar to Facebook gratifications, hypotheses (H2a-H2e) pertaining to the five types of gratifications were tested respectively. Results indicated that all of the five hypothesis were not supported at the .05 level of significance ( $\beta$  Exposure  $\rightarrow$  Intensity = -.278,  $p = .201$ ;  $\beta$  Entertainment  $\rightarrow$  Intensity = .386,  $p = .203$ ;  $\beta$  Information seeking  $\rightarrow$  Intensity = .518,  $p = .095$ ;  $\beta$  exposure  $\rightarrow$  Intensity = -.204,  $p = .304$ ;  $\beta$  social influence  $\rightarrow$  Intensity = -.221,  $p$

= .320). In other words, none of the five gratifications of WeChat was significantly related to the intensity of WeChat use.

H3 states that the intensity of Facebook use would be as a positive predictor of the level of adaptation to American culture. SEM results showed that the hypothesis was supported ( $\beta$  Intensity  $\rightarrow$  Adaptation = .509,  $p < .001$ ). As the intensity of Facebook use increases, so does the level of adaptation to American culture.

H4 states that the intensity of WeChat use is a positive predictor of the level of maintenance of Chinese culture. The hypothesis still was also supported ( $\beta$  Intensity  $\rightarrow$  Maintenance = .572,  $p < .001$ ). The higher the intensity of Chinese international students' WeChat use, the higher their maintenance of Chinese cultural heritage.

Figures 3 and 4 are the pictorial displays of the hypothesis testing results.

# Facebook

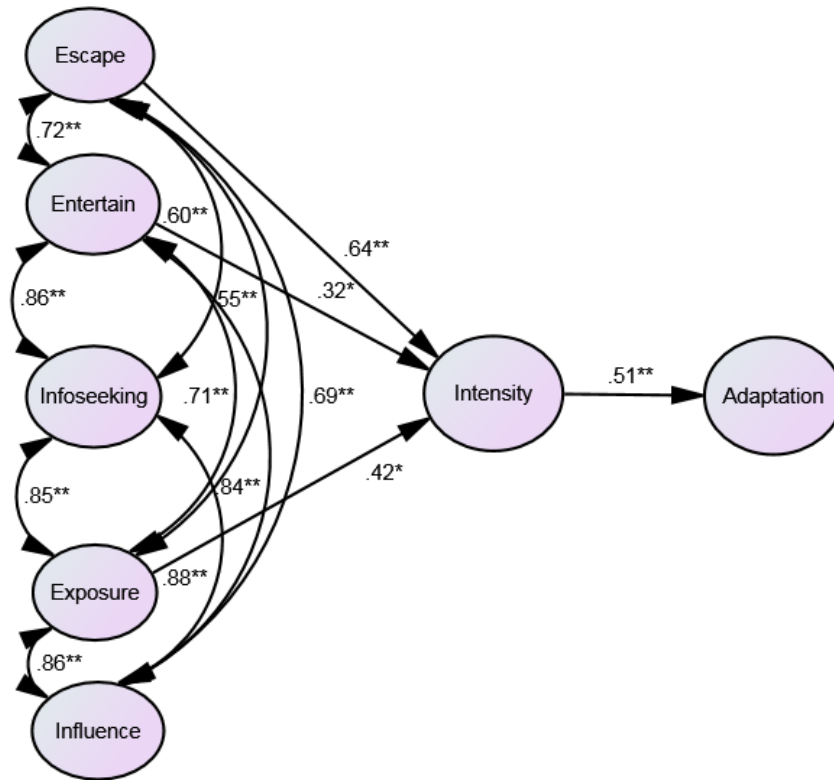


Figure 5. Significant Paths of Facebook  
\*\* p<.001, \* p<.05

## WeChat

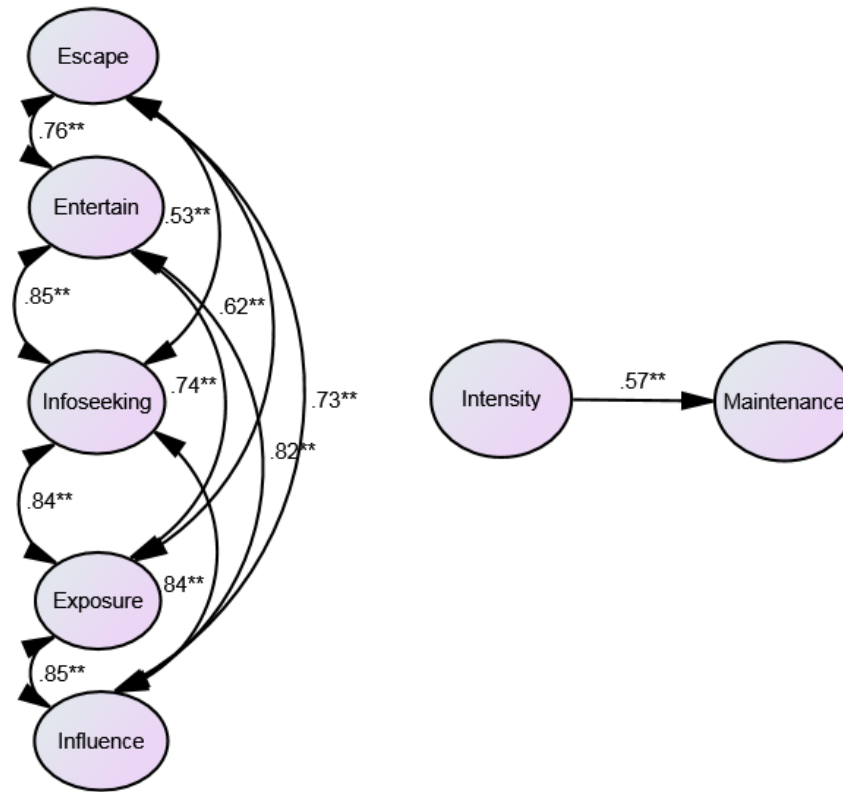


Figure 6. Significant Paths of WeChat  
\*\* p<.001, \* p<.05

## Chapter Six: Discussion

This study mainly explores the influences of Facebook and WeChat on the acculturation among Chinese students studying at an American university. Through comparing the usage of Facebook and WeChat that originated in totally different cultural backgrounds, the relationships between usage of Facebook and WeChat and acculturation were disclosed. Drawing on U&G theory, individuals actively seek out and use different media for attaining different gratifications (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Five different SNSs gratifications were identified based on the behaviors of college students, namely, escape gratification, entertainment gratification, information-seeking gratification, exposure gratification and social influence gratification.

It is justified that these five types of gratifications have strong and positive correlations ( $r > .53^{**}$ ) between each other in both the Facebook test and the WeChat test. The results suggested that each kind of gratification achieved from these two SNSs can give rise to other gratifications positively, as shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4. Although these five types of gratifications have been tested in Facebook (Dhir & Tsai, 2016), it is the first time that these gratifications were measured in WeChat. From the results, it can be inferred that Chinese international students can achieve same gratifications from both Facebook and WeChat. However, based on the difference in culture, the degree of the gratifications may change with the usage of Facebook and WeChat.

In terms of these five types of gratifications, the relationships with intensity of Facebook and WeChat are used to gain further insights. In the results of Facebook, although every gratification has correlation with others, not all gratifications have influence on intensity of

Facebook use. The results indicated that only the gratifications of escape, entertainment, and exposure have a significant and positive impact on intensity of Facebook use. Karimi, Khodabandelou, Ehsani, and Ahmad (2014) pointed out that user needs are fulfilled by SNSs among different cultures. For Chinese students who are studying in American colleges, Facebook can be regarded as an emotional and pressure outlet. They can get a series of gratifications from Facebook, such as escaping an unsatisfactory reality, pursuing entertainment, and getting exposure. With the increase of gratifications achievement, the intensity of usage, accordingly, is improved.

Contrary to Facebook, the results of WeChat indicated that none of the five gratifications has a significant effect on intensity of WeChat use. Although 98.8% of participants identified themselves as WeChat users, the results did not show any significant relationships between gratifications and WeChat use. Three reasons should be taken into account. First of all, the sample size may not be large enough to reveal a comprehensive attitude. It is hard to reflect the actual situation of WeChat use among Chinese students. Secondly, in demographics, 55.2% of participants responded saying that they are doing a four-year degree. Some of them have already lived in America for several years and have built their own American social circle. The need for WeChat use is not as strong among those Chinese students who have just arrived in America.

Third, the ceiling effect may influence the results. The scores usually are limited at the top of a scale in which the situation is called “ceiling effect” (Wang et al., 2008). Generally, the ceiling effect can be directly observed with an abnormal variable distribution that is positively skewed over the possible maximum score range (Taku, Iimura, & McDiarmid, 2017). According to Wang et al. (2008), “ceiling effects can lead to serious artifactual parameter estimates in most data analysis” (p.476).

In terms of the usage situation of WeChat among Chinese students, 72.5% of participants strongly agree with the idea that WeChat is a part of their daily routine. This data sufficiently suggested that WeChat is playing an important role in Chinese students' lives. Based on the ceiling effect, WeChat has already been used too much to increase the intensity from U&G. In addition to this reason, most Chinese students rely heavily on WeChat to maintain and develop their social relationships and their social life. In the second quarter of 2017, WeChat had 963 million active monthly users, closing in on 1 billion users (Statista, 2017). These data expressed that WeChat is viewed as a necessary communication tool rather than only as a social network site for achieving gratification. It is worth noting that this intriguing score that indicated the relationship between information seeking and WeChat intensity ( $\beta$  Information seeking  $\rightarrow$  Intensity = .581,  $p = .095$ ). If  $p < .05$ , this relationship will be significant. Put differently, the value derived from this study is very close to .05. If the sample size is large enough, information-seeking gratification will lead to the increasing of WeChat use intensity. Consequently, although responders admitted that they can achieve these five different gratifications through WeChat use, these gratifications cannot give rise to an increase in use intensity.

The absence of a direct relationship between WeChat gratification and use intensity did not impact the form of relationships between use intensity and Chinese culture maintenance. The results are aligned with some scholars' statements that cultural differences will determine users' choices for social network sites (Karimi et al., 2014). In this study, cultural differences were identified as American culture and Chinese culture. Through intensity of Facebook and WeChat use, the degree of cultural adaptation (American culture) and cultural maintenance (American culture) were exposed among Chinese students in American universities.

It is not surprising that the intensity of Facebook and WeChat use improve in response to the enhancing of the level of acculturation. According to Berry (1997), acculturation not only emphasizes adapting and accepting a new culture, but also pays attention to cultural maintenance. As a social network site originating in the United States, Facebook serves as a cultural mediator. The Facebook results showed that the use intensity has a direct and positive impact on adaptation toward American culture ( $\beta = .374, p < .001$ ). This strong relationship suggested that Chinese students have a higher chance to know American culture with the increasing intensity of Facebook use. Figure 5 shows the positive relationship between Facebook use intensity and adaptation toward mainstream U.S. culture.

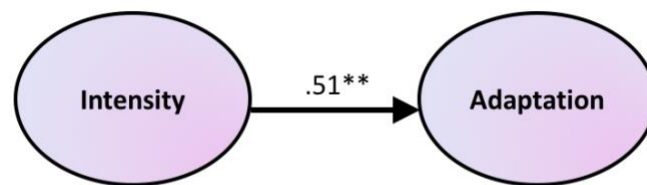


Figure 7. Relationships between Facebook intensity and adaptation

\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*  $p < .05$

An opposed to Facebook, WeChat originated in Chinese culture and it provides more information about Chinese mainstream values and cultures. In other words, WeChat provides a venue that allows Chinese students who study in America to retain their ethnic identity. The results ( $\beta = .572, p < .001$ ) reflect the extent of reliance on cultural maintenance. The higher the intensity of WeChat use Chinese students have, the higher their level of cultural maintenance will be. Figure 6 shows this relationship.



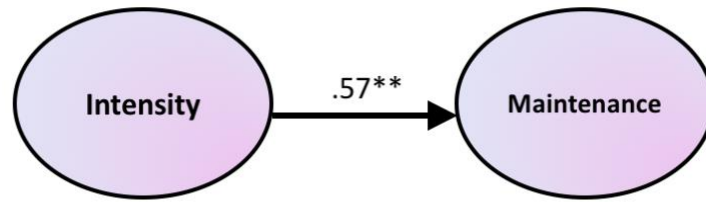


Figure 8. Relationships between WeChat intensity and Maintenance

\*\* p<.001, \* p<.05

Together, U&G theory and the process of acculturation, the use intensity as a mediator is conducive to cultural adaptation and cultural maintenance. Chinese students use different SNSs to get involved in local culture or stay in touch with their original culture. These phenomena are derived from the growing popularity of SNSs in the world. Gallion (2010) posited that individuals' social behaviors have been transformed from offline to online. From this study, respondents exposed their degrees of U&G in Facebook and WeChat. The results showed that entertainment (Cronbach's Alpha = .912) and information seeking (Cronbach's Alpha = .914) are the main purposes for Facebook use. Similar results were reflected in WeChat. However, the interesting finding is that escape gratification (Cronbach's Alpha = .739) was indicated as the lowest purpose in WeChat. This result exposed indirectly that WeChat is an indispensable social network site in Chinese students' life.

The line from use intensity to acculturation was confirmed in both Facebook and WeChat. The results reflect adequately the strong influence of SNSs on acculturation. Currently, with the development of global media and diversity, the phenomenon of acculturation is accepted widely (Berry, 1997). Because of the accessibility of SNSs, the process of acculturation has been

changed in psychology and sociology. Indeed, many factors at the group level and the individual level, such as age, education, settlement, and coping strategy etc., can moderate the process of acculturation (Berry, 1997). However, social media must be an indispensable factor in the acculturation. In the present study, it was found that Facebook and WeChat use intensity have a direct and significant effect on cultural adaptation and cultural maintenance.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusions**

This study verified some relationships between U&G, use intensity, and acculturation in Facebook and WeChat. As a result, U&G as an important theoretical framework mediates some relationships between acculturation and SNSs use intensity. Therefore, this study also indirectly reflects how important U&G theory is in internet media. As a traditional media theory, U&G also can be applied appropriately to SNSs and represent a landscape in cross-culture communication. Users can play more than one role in different SNSs to identify themselves culturally.

If Facebook U&G plays a vital role in use intensity, then this use intensity has positive mediating impacts on adaption to American culture. However, WeChat U&G did not represent a significant role in use intensity. However, this absence did not impede the development of another relationship between WeChat use intensity and maintaining one's Chinese culture. In line with Facebook, with the increase in WeChat use intensity, the level of cultural maintenance also grows accordingly. Unlike former research that just focused on the influence of U&G on users' motivations and behaviors, the present study found some deep insights in plural cultural communication.

Compared to American SNS (e.g., Facebook) and ethnic SNS (e.g., WeChat), Chinese students studying in U.S. exhibited their preference of SNSs use based on cultural background. In Facebook use experiences, respondents signified they can achieve these five gratifications (escape, entertainment, information seeking, exposure, and social influence). However, only escape, entertainment, and exposure can give rise to the increase in use intensity. In contrast,

although respondents also identified that they can attain these five different gratifications from WeChat, none of gratifications can be viewed as a significant influential factor in WeChat use intensity. Perhaps Chinese international students have already formed a stable use pattern that cannot be transformed easily before they arrive in America. Whereas, Facebook use and the process of adaptation to U.S. culture almost are synchronous. Consequently, the intensity of Facebook use is more likely to be changed with the growing of individuals' experiences in American culture and society.

Another finding in this study is that use intensity has positive and important effects on cultural adaption and cultural maintenance. From another perspective, Facebook can represent a kind of American culture, while WeChat is representative of Chinese culture. In terms of users' characteristics, WeChat provides a virtual space for Chinese international students to contact people from their home culture, such as family, friends, and classmates. Nevertheless, Facebook enlarges Chinese students' social circles and allows them to communicate with local people and other ethnic people. This kind of attribution of SNSs comes from the initial cultural background that was created. Thus, it is easy to see a relationship that Facebook use, to some extent, is conducive to adapting to American culture. For WeChat use, people are more likely to use it to keep Chinese culture.

This study also provided a practical suggestion. In the prior studies, acculturation stress can be relieved through positive social activities and social support in social media. Consistent with this opinion, the present study also presents similar results. Many Chinese students expressed that they joined in the WeChat local group before or after arrival in the U.S. These behaviors happened in WeChat in response to past research. In general, SNSs can be regarded as

an effective communication tool that can help foreign students to adapt to local life in American colleges and universities.

This study has several limitations. First of all, most participants are undergraduate students at the University of South Florida. Although our sample includes other students in other states, due to lack of questions related to living in those states, we cannot state the distribution of participants. In future studies, the number and diversity of samples should be enhanced. Second, this study only measures two SNSs, Facebook and WeChat. Although remarkable relationships are discovered between Facebook and WeChat use and acculturation, the researcher needs to do more studies in other for SNSs to reinforce this relationship between SNSs and acculturation.

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## Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

Thank you for participating this questionnaire. Please answer the following questions to reflect your opinions as accurately as possible. All of the questions are related to Chinese culture and American mainstream culture. Although you can choose questions to answer, you are expected to complete all of them. Your information will be kept strictly confidential.

Q1. Do you use WeChat?

[1] Yes [2] No

Q2. Do you use Facebook?

[1] Yes [2] No

**[IF “NO” to both Q1 and Q2, skip to Q63]**

**First, please answer the following questions about your use of Facebook:**

Q3: Facebook use is part of my everyday activity

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q4: I am proud to tell people I am on Facebook

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q5: Facebook has become part of my daily routine

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q6: I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a day

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q7: I feel I am part of the Facebook community on the campus

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q8: I would be sorry if Facebook shut down

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q9: I use Facebook to play roles different from those played in real-life

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q10: I use Facebook to put off something I should be doing

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q11: I use Facebook because it is entertaining

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q12: I use Facebook because it is fun

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q13: I use Facebook because I enjoy it

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q14: Through Facebook, I can get information

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q15: Through Facebook, I can provide others with information

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q16: Through Facebook, I can learn how to do things

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q17: Through Facebook, I learn about the latest news

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q18: I use Facebook to look stylish as it matches my lifestyle

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q19: Facebook broadens my thinking and lifestyle

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q20: One gets to learn about colleges of higher education using Facebook

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q21: One can get to know about educational opportunities using Facebook

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q22: Facebook provides a wide range of exposure (lots of information)

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

**Please answer the following questions about your use of WeChat:**

Q23: WeChat use is part of my everyday activity

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q24: I am proud to tell people I am on WeChat

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q25: WeChat has become part of my daily routine

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q26: I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto WeChat for a day

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q27: I feel I am part of the WeChat community on the campus

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q28: I would be sorry if WeChat shut down

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

- Q29: I use WeChat to play roles different from those played in real-life  
[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree
- Q30: I use WeChat to put off something I should be doing  
[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree
- Q31: I use WeChat because it is entertaining  
[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree
- Q32: I use WeChat because it is fun  
[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree
- Q33: I use WeChat because I enjoy it  
[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree
- Q34: Through WeChat, I can get information  
[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree
- Q35: Through WeChat, I can provide others with information  
[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree
- Q36: Through WeChat, I can learn how to do things  
[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree
- Q37: Through WeChat, I learn about the latest news  
[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree
- Q38: I use WeChat to look stylish as it matches my lifestyle  
[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree
- Q39: WeChat broadens my thinking and lifestyle  
[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree
- Q40: One gets to learn about colleges of higher education using WeChat



[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q41: One can get to know about educational opportunities using WeChat

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q42: WeChat provides a wide range of exposure (lots of information)

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

**Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement to the following statements.**

Q43: I often participate in mainstream American cultural traditions.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q44: I would be willing to marry a white American person.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q45: I enjoy social activities with typical American people.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q46: I am comfortable interacting with typical American people.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q47: I enjoy American entertainment (e.g. movies, music).

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q48: I often behave in ways that are typically American.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q49: It is important for me to maintain or develop American cultural practices.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q50: I believe in mainstream American values.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q51: I enjoy white American jokes and humor.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q52: I am interested in having white American friends.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q53: I often participate in Chinese cultural traditions.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q54: I would be willing to marry a person from the same Chinese culture as myself.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q55: I enjoy social activities with people from the same Chinese culture as myself.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q56: I am comfortable interacting with people of the same Chinese culture as myself.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q57: I enjoy entertainment (e.g. movies, music) from Chinese culture.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q58: I often behave in ways that are typical of Chinese culture.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q59: It is important for me to maintain or develop the practices of Chinese culture.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q60: I believe in the values of Chinese culture.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q61: I enjoy the jokes and humor of Chinese culture.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

Q62: I am interested in having friends from Chinese culture.

[1] strongly disagree [2] disagree [3] neutral [4] agree [5] strongly agree

**Three final questions:**

Q63: What is your gender?

[1] Male [2] Female

Q64: What is your age?

[1] Under 18 years old

[2] 18-22 years old

[3] 23-30 years old

[4] 31-40 years old

[5] 41 years or older

Q65: What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

[1] Some high school, no diploma

[2] High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent

[3] Some college credit, no degree

[4] Bachelor's degree

[5] Master's degree

[6] Doctorate degree

**END OF SUREY. THANK YOU!**

## Appendix B: IRB Exemption



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE  
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669  
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799  
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

2/20/2018

Mengni Wang  
Communication  
4202 E. Fowler Ave.  
Tampa, FL 33620

RE: **Exempt Certification**

IRB#: Pro00034082

Title: Acculturation and Social Media Usage among Chinese College Students in the U.S.

Dear M. Wang :

On 2/19/2018, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that your research meets criteria for exemption from the federal regulations as outlined by 45CFR46.101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

As the principal investigator for this study, it is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted as outlined in your application and consistent with the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report and with USF HRPP policies and procedures.

Please note, as per USF HRPP Policy, once the Exempt determination is made, the application is closed in ARC. Any proposed or anticipated changes to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB review must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant an amendment or new application.

Given the determination of exemption, this application is being closed in ARC. This does not limit your ability to conduct your research project.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have

any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A. Schinka, Ph.D." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'J'.

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson  
USF Institutional Review Board