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# Social Networking Sites: Social Support, Motivation, and Influences on Chinese international students' intercultural communication competence

Zhibin Hong

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**SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES: SOCIAL SUPPORT,  
MOTIVATION, AND INFLUENCES ON CHINESE  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL  
COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE**

**by**

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**B.A., SHANGHAI INTERNATIONAL STUDIES UNIVERSITY,  
2009**

**THESIS**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts  
Communication**

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Albuquerque, New Mexico

**May/2013**

## DEDICATION

To all international students,

“The movement of heaven is full of power, thus the superior man makes himself strong and untiring; the earth’s condition is receptive devotion, thus the superior man who has breadth of character carries the outer world”----*I Ching*

天行健，君子以自強不息；地勢坤，君子以厚德載物——『易經』

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this study to not only Chinese international students, but also all other international students who I know or I do not know. You are never alone, and the voyage just begins.

**SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES: SOCIAL SUPPORT, MOTIVATION, AND  
INFLUENCES ON CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS'  
INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purposes of this study were 1) to examine the status quo and differences in intercultural communication competence and social networking sites use motivation between Chinese international students and U.S. students, 2) to explore the relationship between social networking sites use motivation and intercultural communication, 3) to understand the factors comprising intercultural communication competence, and 4) to develop a model to predict intercultural communication competence. Quantitative survey research was conducted to address these research objectives.

The survey research showed that compared with U.S. students, Chinese international students differ in social networking sites use time, frequency, and certain patterns. Also, Chinese international students showed an overall low score in certain factors of intercultural communication competence. The study showed no statistically significant differences between groups in total time spent on SNS and in intercultural communication competence; however, using SNS with certain motivations was correlated to changes in intercultural communication competence.

*Keywords:* intercultural communication competence, social networking sites, international students, Chinese

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Globalization, modern transportation, and online communication technology have changed individuals' perceptions of spatial boundaries and those between economies and cultures. The current era has witnessed a rapid increase in population mobility (Yang, 2010). Meanwhile, with growing travel and migration, intercultural communication has become a part of many people's daily lives (Croucher, 2004). Mitra (2005) noted that these revolutionary changes will cause "a set of unique possibilities, conditions and tensions in the history of civilization" (p. 371).

As an important part of these "geographic boundaryless" populations, international students have attracted much attention. To many international students, their trips to enter educational programs in the United States are also their "maiden voyages" to a different culture. The academic life in the United States is a new experience for them: This is a place to meet new peers and faculties and to complete academic goals and more life transitions. However, to international students, the whole process is more challenging and frustrating. Studying in a non-native language provides them with countless stresses; they also have to face the pressure of living in a different culture (Fumiko, 2005). It is taken for granted that international students have to follow host cultures, from the generalized American culture to certain subcultures within the particular universities they attend.

Among this population, East Asian students, whose cultural background distinctly differs from American culture, may experience more intense processes when adjusting to American culture (Hsieh, 2006). Compared with international students from other regions (especially those from European countries and who are native English speakers), Asian students will face more difficulty after they arrive in the United States due to the significant differences in language

proficiency, social norms, values, and communication styles (Hsieh, 2006).

Statistical analysis on the composition of international students indicates both annual new incoming ethnic Chinese students and total numbers of Chinese students in the United States are growing.

Chinese international students have become a tremendous presence in educational institutions in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and so on. (Holmes, 2005). One possible reason might be the shared approaches to higher education. A Socratic tradition means during the classroom interaction, communication is central. The knowledge is generated or co-built by questioning, debating and discussion. (Holmes, 2005; Hammond & Gao, 2002; Greenholtz, 2003)

On the other hand, social networking sites have proved their successes not only on the market, but also by changing people's daily communication methods. Many social networking sites do not only allow users to maintain existing social networks, but also provide a platform for strangers to connect with each other based on common interests, language, motivation, or similar racial/sexual/religious/nationality-based identities (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). It has been only 15 years since the birth of the first social networking site (*six degrees.com*); however, like many other applications of computer-mediated-communication, social networking sites have been proved by many scholars to enable users to 1) construct an ideal self-representation, 2) maintains and develop personal social network, and 3) improve their behavior under both personal and organizational communication circumstances.

### **1.1.Purpose of study**

The purpose of this research is threefold. The first goal is to understand the differences in intercultural communication competence between Chinese students (both those in China and in

the U.S.) and their U.S. peers. Even as mainland Chinese overseas population is growing these years, scholars sometimes remain influenced by several stereotypes from other ethnic Chinese populations (i.e., Hong Kong & Taiwan Chinese), and such misunderstanding also applies to Chinese international students. Although intercultural communication competence has been examined extensively in European countries and in Australia/New Zealand/Canada, it still is underexamined either in host countries (i.e., United States) or by the target population (Chinese international students). It is hoped that this cross-sectional comparison can reveal differences of intercultural communication competence between the U.S. students and Chinese international students under similar contexts.

The second purpose is to give a vertical comparison between Chinese international students and Chinese students (and probably future international students). In China the concept of studying abroad has dramatically changed in the past 30 years because the whole nation's perception toward it was overturned: studying abroad is no longer an elite privilege, but rather a "general fashion" because of the rising of middle class families. Under this concept, within the foreseeable future the number of Chinese international students in the United States will continue to increase. It is important for future students to prepare for the potential challenges and difficulties and for study abroad agencies to train students properly about these issues as they emerge.

The third purpose is to create a possible link between intercultural communication competence and social networking sites. Croucher (2011) mentioned a set of propositions of social networking sites linked to intercultural adaptation/adjustment; it was said that an interdisciplinary link should be built between intercultural communication and computer-

mediated-communication. And in this study, the computer-mediated-communication will focus on social networking sites.

Moreover, the uniqueness of China's Internet policy, which is a combination of trade barrier, information filtering, and post-communism/post-totalitarianism ideology, also brings other myth about the Internet use of contemporary Chinese netizens: popular social networking sites, i.e. *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *MySpace*, have no access to the mainland China due to the "Great Fire Wall"; popular online information platforms like *Google* and *Wikipedia* have limited access. In this situation, China provides an experimental yard for its own social networking sites: *renren.com*, *kaixin001.com*, *qq microblog/weibo*, *sina weibo*, and so on. Thus, it is interesting to ask such questions as what is the difference of social networking site use between an exclusive and non-exclusive Internet environment? Will Chinese international students who use "western" social networking sites like *Facebook* have better performance in real-life intercultural communication competence? And, furthermore, will the value of intercultural communication competence scale lead to a better overall patterns of intercultural communication?

Chapter 2 provides a brief history of international students, with a concentration on Chinese international students, and then reviews the important concepts in this thesis, including intercultural communication competence, the application of uses and gratifications theory toward social networking sites, and online social support. The chapter goes on to outline the theoretical framework used in this thesis, including cultivation theory, uses and gratifications theory, and Hofstede's cultural dimension. After stating the inter connections of the three theories, the research questions and hypothesis will be stated.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

Chapter 2 will review previous research related to following concepts and terms: 1) the current status quo of international students in the U.S. (including Chinese international students), 2) intercultural communication competence as one branch of the study of intercultural communication, 3) social networking sites and their history, definition, and position in this study, 4) the theories used as a framework in this study, including computer-mediated-communication, online social support, uses and gratifications theory, cultivation theory, and Hofstede's theory of cultural dimension.

### **2.1. Chinese international students in the United States**

The cultural diversity of the United States is exemplified by the population of international students in higher educational institutions (Bradley, Parr, Lan, Bingi, & Gould, 1995). Recruiting international students benefits both higher education institutions and the educational system as a whole (Lin, 2006). While colleges and universities receive financial benefits, international students also get a chance to take receive a education and to experience non-native cultures (Jaager & Burnett, 2003; Paige, 1990). These benefits, along with relatively flexible visa policies, have boosted the number of international students in the United States. According to the report released by the Institute of International Education (Open Door Policy, 2011), by mid Novemeber 2011, the number of international students at colleges and universities in the United States increased by 5% to 723,277 during the 2010/2011 academic year. While some international students afford their tuition and living costs by receiving different kinds of scholarships and assistantships, they still brought over 21 billion dollars to the universities. The sources of these dollars included their local universities, personal savings, family support, and their own country scholarships.

As a special group of sojourners, the international students have been studied by many intercultural scholars, based on their nationality, native language, religiosity, and other criteria (Holmes, 2005; Iwai, 2002; Peng, Rangsipaht & Thaipakdee, 2005; Ye, 2006). Most such studies focused on the process of intercultural communication adaptation, adjustment, and acculturation (Gudykunst, 2005, Kim, 2001; Lin, 2006). It was shown that even though international students may be regarded as a group composed of diverse individuals, they still share similar backgrounds (Thomas & Althen, 1989), since “they are a group in transition who live in a foreign country to pursue their educational goals” (Ye, p. 2). As Sakurako (2000) stated, most international students still want to eventually return to their native country. Researchers also defined several factors which influence international students’ socialization, including 1) language barriers, including both oral/daily and academic proficiency, 2) non-immigrant status (lack of feeling of belonging), 3) lack of external aid, and 4) latent discrimination, including government policy and law, and so on.

Among these students, Chinese international students have become the largest group. In the academic year 2011 to 2012, over 160,000 Chinese international students were accepted by U.S. educational institutions from K-12 schools to graduate school. The behavior of Chinese international students in intercultural contexts have attracted many scholars’ attention in different disciplines, including communication, psychology, linguistics, and sociology from many perspectives. For example, Long, Yan, Yang & Oudenhoven (2009) researched Chinese international students’ behavior in a Netherlands university and found Chinese international students have problems in coping with non-Chinese students due to low self-efficacy, which means “an individual’s belief in his or her ability to accomplish a task”(p. 3; also see Bandura, 1997). Ye (2006) also analyzed Chinese international students’ relationships among acculturative

stress, interpersonal social support, and the use of online ethnic social groups. She found that Chinese international students were influenced by four main types of acculturative stress: fear, perceived discrimination, perceived hatred, and negative feelings caused by change.

## **2.2. Culture, intercultural communication and communication competence**

### **2.2.1. Definition of culture.**

Before defining the phrase intercultural communication competence, it is important to understand the word “culture.” In this study, the word “culture” will be limited within the communication perspective, which includes the following categories: 1) symbolic cognition, i.e., the *speech codes* in the speech code theory and the conception of *face* in face theory; 2) the negotiation of *identity* transfer, i.e., identity negotiation theory and identity management theory, 3) adaptations in interactions, like communication accommodation theory (individuals usually adjust their verbal and non-verbal expressions to accommodate others), cross-cultural and intercultural applications of expectancy violations theory (individuals’ reactions toward unexpected behaviors) , and interaction adaptation theory (individuals adapt to one another in dyads), and 4) communication effectiveness, like anxiety/uncertainty management theory (how individuals manage their anxiety and also their behavior under uncertain circumstances) and effective intercultural workgroup communication theory (Gudykunst, 2005)

Philipsen (1992), argues the principle of cultural communication:

The function of communication in cultural communication is to maintain a healthy balance between the forces of individualism and community, to provide a sense of shared identity which nonetheless preserves individual dignity, freedom, and creativity. This function is performed through maintaining a balance or equilibrium between the two sub-process of cultural communication, 1) the creation, and 2) the affirmation, of shared identity. (p.5)



Echoing Philipsen's idea of "healthy balance used to provide shared identity," Hall (2002) states the "simply common sense" of culture in communication. He defines culture as "a historically shared system of symbolic resources through which we make our world meaningful" (p. 4, also see Iwai, 2002).

As a conclusion, this study will adapt Samovar, Porter and Daniel (2009)'s definition of culture as:

the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of times, roles, spatial relations, concept of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving" (pp. 12–13)

### **2.2.2. Definition of intercultural communication competence.**

The initial theoretical foundation of intercultural communication competence research was based on cross-cultural communication studies, and this approach emerged from anthropological concepts (Matveev, 2002). In 1956, Edward Hall recognized the communicative problems that occurred in the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State in the late 1940s; later, he addressed the epistemological concept of intercultural communication, which was the study of communication from the cultural perspective, focusing on the value of effective interaction between individuals of different cultures (Hall, 1956, 1976). Scholars since Hall continued theorizing and modeling of intercultural communication from both ontological and epistemological perspectives. Later, in order to evaluate the quantitative data of intercultural communication, Ruben (1976) addressed seven categories for effective cross-cultural communication, including display of respect, orientation to knowledge, empathy, role behavior, interaction management, tolerance for ambiguity, and interaction posture (Matveev, 2002).

Another theoretical perspective related to intercultural communication competence is the uncertainty reduction theory (URT), or later modified into anxiety/uncertainty management

theory (AUM) by Gudykunst (1995, 2002), analyzes which communication/interaction under intercultural contexts (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005). Reducing uncertainty was defined as “the ability to predict accurately how others will behave and the ability to explain the behavior of others” (Berger & Calabrese, 1975, p. 107). Reducing uncertainty occurs when people of different cultures try to perceive others’ values, beliefs, behavior, and attitudes. Gudykunst and Nishida (1986) defined uncertainty reduction to mean how people communicate with other to reduce uncertainty. This process involves gathering information from other’s attitudes, values, behavior, beliefs, and even previous experiences. In the AUM theory, Gudykunst established a link between management of uncertainty/anxiety and communication effectiveness by identifying six causes within the frame of intercultural adaptation: 1) self and self-concept, 2) motivation to interact with hosts, 3) reaction to hosts, 4) social categorization of hosts, 5) situational processes, and 6) connection with hosts. (also see Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005).

### **2.2.3. Measurement of intercultural communication competence.**

However, even though the proposition of intercultural communication has been established, research still faces many new challenges that mono-cultural types will not encounter (in this case, mono-cultural types refer to the communication behavior happens within mono-language countries) (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005). Furthermore, van de Vijver and Leung (1997) noted methodological biases could occur if no action was taken to erase the biases and flaws threatening the validity of the results.

One approach toward the intercultural communication competence is developing quantitative measurements. Ruben (1976) designed a behavioral approach and filled the gap

between individuals' subjective understanding towards intercultural communication competence and their real actions under those circumstances.

It is not uncommon for an individual to be exceptionally well-versed on the theories of cross-cultural effectiveness, possess the best of motives, and be sincerely concerned about enacting his role accordingly, yet be unable to demonstrate those understandings in his own behavior. (Ruben & Kealey, 1979, pp. 19-20)

In Europe, Byram (1997) and Risager (2007) theorized multidimensional models to test intercultural communication. In *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*, Byram noted that five factors could influence intercultural communication competence, including *attitude, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness*. Later, The *Multicultural Personality Questionnaire* (van Oudenhoven & van der Zee, 2001) tested psychological adjustment under the intercultural environment. Spitzberg (1991, 1994) identifies *motivation, knowledge, and skills* as three components of interpersonal competence "as an impression that behavior is appropriate and effective in a given context" (p. 347). Matveev (2002) utilized the intercultural communication competence questionnaire (ICCC) to test U.S./Russian managers' competence under an intercultural/organizational communication context. Arasaratnam & Doerfel (2005) even used an open-ended question (Q2, *Can you identify some qualities or aspects of people who are competent in intercultural communication?*) to explore the aspects of intercultural communication competence.

## **2.3. CMC (Computer mediated communication) and Internet based social support**

### **2.3.1. Computer mediated communication.**

The media play a core role in disseminating norms and values (Barnett & MacPhail, 1980). This indicates that the values, norms, and perceptions of members from any given culture

can be influenced by the media they receive. Barnett and Lee (2002; see also Cerulo, Ruane, & Chayko, 1992; Clement, Baker, Josephson, & Noels, 2005) also argued that mediated communication is becoming one important method of intercultural communication. One of the media which attract scholars' attention is computer-mediated communication (CMC), Internet based "virtual communities" in which "people meet, share interests, and exchange social support via text-based messages on computer networks" (Walther & Boyd, 2002, p. 153). As Rheingold (1993) describes them, "virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, which sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships" (p.5). Later scholars have proved the validity and utility of these personal relationships (e.g., Fernback & Thompson, 1995; Kraut et.al, 1998; Ye, 2006; also see Walther & Boyd, 2002).

### **2.3.2. Online social support.**

Among the different kinds of "virtual communities," one electronic phenomenon worthy of mention is Internet-based social support. The original social support sites have been proved to ameliorate stress in negative emotions like depression, hopelessness, and even suicide (Flannery & Wieman, 1989; Yang & Clum, 1994; also see Ye, 2006), as Barnes & Duck (1994) noted, social support "whether directly or indirectly, communicate to an individual that she or he is valued and cared for by others" (p. 176). Communication scholars also define social support as "verbal and nonverbal communication between recipients and providers that helps manage uncertainty about the situation, the self, and the other or the relationship and functions to enhance a perception of personal control in one's life experience"(p. 19). According to Cohen and Wills (1985), social support can allocate resources to individuals and help them relieved social stress; and Vaux (1988) listed several forms of social support, e.g., sending and receiving

flexible assistance, positive emotion (like empathy, understanding and verbal affirmation), and information.

This non-Internet based concept of social support can also be applied to the Internet-based ones. Sparks (1992) states that the possible benefits of being a member of online social groups include “improved availability of attendance, selective participation in entering and responding to messages, anonymity and privacy, immediate and/or delayed responding, and recording of transmissions” (p. 62). Furthermore, the restrictions of traditional face-to-face social support no longer exists, which means participation in these behaviors could be international in scope (Walther & Boyd, 2002).

## **2.4. SNS (Social networking sites): definition, expansion and popularity**

### **2.4.1. Web2.0 based SNS.**

In 2004, the O'Reilly Media Group listed the changes brought by Web 2.0, a newer, better version of the World Wide Web (Courtois et.al, 2009). The era created by Web 2.0 aimed to target potential users who want to overcome technical obstacles (Harrison & Barthel, 2009). Differing from predecessors like online forums or blogs featuring a single function, SNS provide users an instrument by the users, for the users, and to the users. Slot & Frissen (2008) listed the multi-tasking generated by Web 2.0 websites, including electronic consumer behavior (read, listen, watch, download, search, and purchase); creativity (personalize, aggregate, and contribute); sharing (publish, upload);, facilitation (tag, recommend, filter, subscribe to channels and items through RSS); and online communication (send messages, post comments, rate, and chat) (see Courtois et.al, 2009)

With the benefits brought by Web 2.0, websites are no longer static online pages, but allow interactive online communication:

Delivering software as a continually updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an ‘architecture of participation’ and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences (p. 3, Boyd & Ellison, second hand quoted from O’Reilly, 2005 :  
[http://radar.oreilly.com/archives/2005/10/web\\_20\\_compact\\_definition.html](http://radar.oreilly.com/archives/2005/10/web_20_compact_definition.html) )

Based on the features, implications, and other scholars’ definitions of social networking sites (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Mislove, 2009), the three aspects of social networking sites are self-representation, ability, and navigation. *Self-representation* could be an avatar, an ID, or a public or semi-public profile and can be constructed or customized by users. Ability to control the content means users can create, share, or delete any content. *Navigation* means users can use both internal and external links to navigate themselves and other users to visit content they created.

#### **2.4.2. SNS in the United States.**

According to the definition above, the first social networking site, *sixdegrees.com*, was launched in 1997. It allowed users to “create profiles, list their friends, and surf the friends list” (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 4). *Sixdegrees.com* absorbed several instant message applications’ features (e.g., supported lists of friends) and combined these with other functions used by static forums (e.g., setting up personal profiles).

However, *sixdegrees.com* finally closed down in 2000 due to an ineffective marketing strategy. Later, among many successful examples such as *MSN space*, *need examples*, and *Myspace* dominated the SNS market for five years until it was overtaken by *Facebook* in 2008. If we take a look at *Myspace*’s peak period from 2007 to 2008, it can be found that it featured a set

of systematic electronic interactions, including moods, blurbs, blogs, multimedia, comment function, profile customization, music, and so on. However, these over-developed, poor-quality functions later proved to be negative factors, which greatly influenced the users' experience.

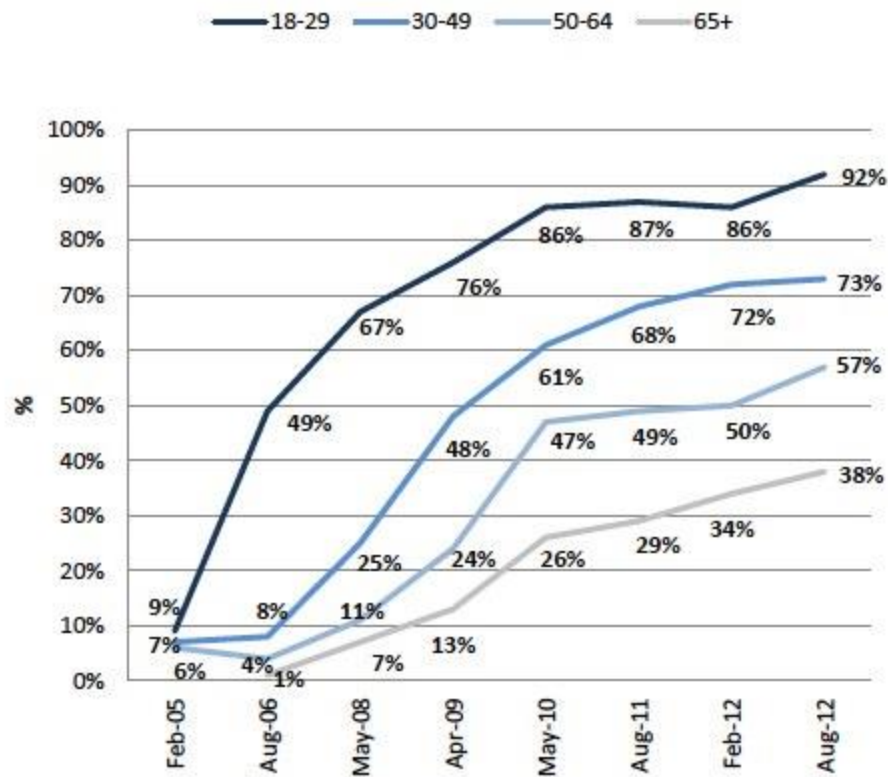
As of September 2012, *Facebook* has over one billion active users. This means if *Facebook* is a country, it is the second largest country on earth. Compared to *Myspace*'s multi-feature, *Facebook* targets a more consistent and precise group by enhancing users' experience, i.e., requiring true identity, simplifying the profile page, introducing the "wall" function (which allows a more instant, quick online discussion), and creating news feeds. In summary, although *Facebook* does not provide a customized user's interface and other multimedia functions, it cultivates visitors' loyalty to the website and makes them stay.

According to PEW Internet Project, as of August 2012, 69% of adults online use social networking sites, and those with higher education level (some college, college) use social networking sites more. Furthermore, 92% of the participants who were 18-29 years old reported using social networking sites every day. The State of the News Media 2013 (<http://stateofthemediamedia.org/2013/overview-5/>) also mentioned that social networking sites is playing a more and more important role as a news feeder: about 15% of U.S. adults get news from their friends and family based on this channel, and 77% of them will follow links to read the complete news.

This result provides this research a sufficient sample pool of college students. The detailed breakdowns can be seen below.

## Social Networking Site Use by Age Group, 2005-2012

% of internet users in each age group who use social networking sites



Note: Total n for internet users ages 65+ in 2005 was <100, so results for that group are not included.

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project surveys: February 2005, August 2006, May 2008, April 2009, May 2010, August 2011, February 2012, and August 2012.

**Figure 1. Total Internet users.**

### 2.4.3. SNS in mainland China.

Although research on mainland Chinese SNS still remains very limited, several business studies have been recently done. (CNNIC, 2011; McKinsey's, 2011; Nielson, 2012). According to Nielson's data, by December 2011, China had 513 million Internet users compared with 245 million in the U.S. Meanwhile, 50% of the Internet users have used at least one kind of SNS. This means the SNS users in China were more than the total number of Internet users in the U.S.



It was anticipated that by the end of 2014, the total number of SNS users would reach 414 million (*emarket.com*). The top Chinese SNS are Tencent's *QZone*, Tencent's *Weibo* (*weibo* here means micro blogger), *Sina's Weibo*, *Renren.com* (*renren* means "everyone" in Chinese), and *Kaixin001.com* (*Kaixin* means "Happiness" in Chinese).

McKinsey (2011) listed several unique features of Chinese netizens' use of SNS, including 1) Chinese SNS users spent more time online than Japan and U.S. users, 2) different SNS had different types of users (e.g., *Sina Weibo* attracts more tier-1 city users, *renren.com* attracts more student users, and *kaixin.com* aims at white-collars, and 3) Chinese SNS involved more commercial activities. Another unique feature worth noting was that Chinese SNS users were more likely to be "resenders" but not "commenters."

It can be foreseen that in this study, most Chinese university students will not have access to popular SNS in the U.S., like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Flickr*, and *YouTube* because of Internet censorship. However, it might be possible that Chinese international students will use both Chinese and U.S. SNS on a daily basis.

## **2.5. Theoretical perspectives toward this study**

### **2.5.1. Inspiration.**

As noted in the previous paragraphs, intercultural communication competence is composed of multiple clusters of measurable variables occurring during the process of intercultural communication. This process concludes the process of acculturation (Raman & Harwood, 2008). In the process of acculturation, individual's values, attitudes, and behaviors will be changed as a result of intercultural contact (Berry, 2001). Many scholars have looked into this process and listed different perspectives. For example, Ting-Toomey used the concept of

*face* to analyze how acculturation works during intercultural-generated conflict negotiation (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998); Collier (1998) also noted the negotiation process of identity (i.e., self-identity, group identity, national identity, and so on.) within acculturation.

Cultivation theory, in a sentence, means “the more time people spend ‘living’ in the television world, the more likely they are to believe social reality portrayed on television” (Cohen & Weimann, 2000. p. 99).

Luckily, the importance of host society media toward immigrants was studied by many scholars (e.g., Khan, 1992; Kim, 1988, 2001; Raman & Harwood, 2008). This means the media used by immigrants and sojourners cannot be neglected if people want to fully understand the process of acculturation. Studies conducted on these newcomers in U.S. society has found that “American television use and consumption are linked to acculturation needs as well as belief about American social reality” (e.g., Woo & Dominick, 2003; Yang, Wu, Zhu & Southwell, 2004; also see Raman & Harwood, 2008). Kim (2001) mentioned that host media help new immigrants/sojourners with the new culture’s history, values, and current issues, Comprising is “a variety of cultural elements and cues that aid in their comprehension of the new culture” (p. 297, Raman & Harwood, 2008). Furthermore, cultivation theory has received empirical support from various perspectives: over 2,000 articles have used this theory and tested its credibility (Bryant & Mirion, 2004; also see meta-analysis by Morgan & Shanahan, 2010).

### 2.5.2. Theoretical framework I: Uses and gratifications theory.

*Orientation and pre-Internet era.* Uses and gratifications studies typically focus on the way media satisfy both cognitive and affective needs (e.g., cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs, and tension release needs) of persons (Rubin, 2002). Differing from other media theories that put more attention on the messages and medium, this approach imagines a higher priority of the message receivers, which indicates that the media users are more important than the message and medium. (Littlejohn, 1999). In Katz, Gurevitch, and Hass (1974)'s original statement of uses and gratifications theory, the proposition of this stance is summarized as

...the uses and gratifications approach takes the media consumer rather than the media message as its starting point...it views the members of the audience as actively utilizing media contents, rather than being passively acted upon by the media (p. 12).

Katz and his colleagues later generated 35 needs and then categorized them into five groups according to this proposition: 1) cognitive needs, including the willing to obtain information, knowledge, and understanding; 2) affective needs, including the expression of emotional feelings like pleasure and love; 3) personal integrative needs (or "self-integrative" needs), i.e. individual's desire to appear credible and stability; 4) social integrative needs, meaning maintaining relationships with family members and social connections, and 5) tension release needs (escaping from the real world like by using any form of the media).

In 1973, Katz, Gurevitch, and Hass identified most of the needs listed by using one typical medium. For example, books were defined as the best medium for fulfilling cognitive needs, and film was considered to best meet affective needs. But they encountered a problem in matching a medium to social integrative needs (Yuan, 2011). And they had to use a combination of several media (film, television, newspapers, and books) to complete the rationale of their study.

Thus, before the Internet and its world-wide applications appeared at the millennium, all uses and gratifications theory studies could only focus on traditional media. The lack of appropriate on medium directly led the study of uses and gratifications theory into a deadlock from the 1980s to the middle 1990s. However, the rise of Internet use re-invigorated such studies, and numerous studies addressed social integrative needs.

***Two main stages within the post-Internet era: blogs and social networking sites.***

Disregarding the military use of Internet technology, the world-wide application of the Internet has greatly changed the pattern of daily human communication. The most widely used online communication tools, listed chronologically are: email, online forums/blogs, chatrooms, instant messaging tools, and Web2.0 based social networking sites (Waechter, Subrahmanyam, Reich, & Espinoza, 2008).

Research by many scholars supports the uniqueness of Internet-based communication tools generally. Prior (2005) noted that “today, as both entertainment and news are available around the clock on numerous cable channels and websites, people’s content preferences determine more of what those with cable or Internet access watch, read, and hear”. Pressing a link from any website, searching for information via a certain search engine, and shopping on any b2c website, are all the visitor’s decision.

The following chart summarizes several typical uses and gratifications study.

**Table 1 Important studies of Internet application.**

	<b>Concentration</b>	<b>Targeting nature of Internet application</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Kaye, 1998	motivation	general Internet use	entertainment, social interaction, passing the time, escape, information, and web site preference
Ruggiero (2000)	raised the importance of Internet in uses and gratification studies	N/A	
Tewksbury and Althaus (2000)	gratifications	general Internet use	entertainment, monitoring/surveillance, and “passing the time”
Papacharissi and Rubin (2000)	motivations	general Internet use	Interpersonal utility, passing time, information seeking, convenience, and entertainment
Parker and Plank (2000)	factors	general Internet use	Companionship, social relationship, surveillance, excitement, relaxation and escape.
Kaye and Johnson (2002)	motivations	political information web search	Guidance, information seeking, surveillance, entertainment, social, and utility
Song (2004)	motivations	Internet use, Internet addiction	Establishing “virtual community”, information seeking, aesthetic experiences, monetary compensation, diversion, personal status and relationship maintenance.
Wollfradt and Doll Internet Motivation Scale (2005 – 2006)	motivations	general Internet use	Information, interpersonal communication, and entertainment

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Concentration</b>	<b>Targeting nature of Internet application</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Ye (2006)	motivations	blogs use	Interpersonal communication cultural adaptation information seeking
Sharkman (2007)	motivations	N/A	Relation, fun, encouragement, and status
Ray (2007)	uses	social networking sites	Simultaneously fulfilling entertainment, information surveillance, diversion, and social utility needs
Leung (2009)	gratifications	N/A	Satisfying recognition needs, cognitive needs, social needs, and entertainment needs
Quan-Hasse and Young (2010)	gratifications	Social networking sites, instant messaging	Pastime, affection, fashion, sharing problems, sociability, and getting social information

### 2.5.3. Theoretical framework II: Hofstede's theory of cultural dimension

From the 1980s to 1990s, by using Ruben's model of intercultural communication competence, an epic study was conducted by surveying over 100,000 employees of the IBM Corporation over 64 countries (Hofstede, 2010). In this research Hofstede empirically determined the five cultural dimensions of intercultural communication, which are power distance, individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity, and long-term orientation. This 5-dimension scale was eventually developed into a 6-dimension one by adding dimensions of indulgence-restraint. Power-distance expresses the degree to which the less powerful social members' expectations to power distribution. If a country/culture has a higher the index of power-distance, it is more possible that the less-power member in this country/culture feel themselves being unequally treated. Individualism-collectivism can be defined as whether individual prefer a loosely-knit or closing-knit social framework. This can also indicate whether individuals should obey the whole society and put its interests over individuals'. Masculinity-femininity represents a preference for choosing "achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material reward for success", or "cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life" (<http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html>). Uncertainty avoidance to social members' tendency to handle or avoid uncertainties and ambiguous situations. Long-term/short-term orientation refers to people's attitude toward truth and their strategy in dealing with the relationship between truth and reality. Indulgence-restraint stands for society's tolerance for gratification and nature-driven joys.

The result of the whole study shows that compared with respondents in United States, East Asian respondents show 1) an absolute lower individualism index and a higher index for long-term orientation; 2) a higher power distance than their Europe and U.S. colleagues; 3) a

higher tendency to avoid conflicts and uncertainties; and 4) higher scores on femininity. However, this result remained doubtful with respect to East Asian students, especially Chinese international students in U.S. universities, because of 1) the different geographic factors (the respondents were analyzed in their own country); 2) the different communication perspective (organizational communication environment vs. personal communication environment), and 3) different motivation (Hofstede's test focuses on the cultural indexes, but not on the process of intercultural communication).

In this research, Hofstede's six dimension index will not directly appear on any of the questionnaire items. However the indexes will be used as a final reference to measure the similarities and differences among the Chinese international students, Chinese students and U.S. students. Hofstede has already provided an overall index to show the national difference in cultural dimensions (<http://geert-hofstede.com/dimensions.html>).

## **2.6. Propositions of the theories**

In this research, cultivation theory is the grounded theory, which tries to provide a exploratory perspective that not only immigrants and long-term sojourners, but also short-term sojourners like Chinese international students, could be cultivated by media exposures and their intercultural communication attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors will be changed. Cultivation theory has been thoroughly tested for certain media (TV) and certain content (violent content), but very limited research has been done to see whether "modern" social media like SNS could play a similar part in individual's intercultural adaptation and adjustment process. Can cultivation theory be applied on SNS? Can short-term sojourners like Chinese international students be "cultivated?" Or what kind of media content in SNS could play a positive/negative



role in assisting Chinese international students' intercultural adaptation and adjustment process? These are the questions that remain to be answered.

The uses and gratification theory could test whether SNS is an ideal platform to fulfill media users' (and in this case the users are also creators) various needs. As mentioned above, many scholars have provided different types of uses and gratifications brought by social networking sites. Furthermore, since very limited research has been done regarding Chinese SNS users, it would be interesting to understand their SNS uses and unique gratifications they get from SNS.

Last but not least, Hofstede's dimension of culture provides a set of indicators to determine how Chinese international students' intercultural communication competence is changed by SNS. As Croucher (2011) mentioned, "During cultural adaptation, the use of social networking sites affects immigrants' interactions with the dominant culture" (p. 261), and "during cultural adaptation, the use of social networking sites will affect immigrants' in-group communication" (p. 262.). The two untested propositions will be tested by the variables in both uses and gratifications theory and Hofstede's dimension of culture indexes.

## **2.7. Research questions and hypotheses.**

This research sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What differences in SNS use exist between Chinese international students and U.S. students?

RQ2: What differences in intercultural communication competence exist between Chinese international students and U.S. students?

RQ3: What factor(s) in SNS use will trigger the changes in intercultural communication competence?

RQ3a: How do the items on Intercultural Sensitivity Scale predict the overall intercultural communication competence?

This research sought to test the following hypotheses:

- H1: Chinese international students will spend more time on SNS than U.S. students.
- H2: Chinese international student will spend more time on SNS than traditional media.
- H3: In SNS use, Chinese international students will score higher on social motivation, while U.S. students will score higher on non-social motivations.
- H4: In SNS use, Chinese international students will score higher on SNS function/activity than U.S. students;
- H5: Compared with U.S. students, Chinese international students will score higher In intercultural interaction attentiveness, empathy, and intercultural difference Tolerance.
- H6: Compared with U.S. students, Chinese international students will score lower in intercultural interaction confidence and ethnocentrism.
- H7: Individuals' total intercultural communication competence will correlate positively with intercultural interaction tolerance, confidence, empathy and attentiveness.
- H8: Individuals' total intercultural communication competence will correlate negatively with intercultural interaction ethnocentrism;
- H9: Time spent on SNS will influence individuals' intercultural communication Competence.
- H10: Pattern 1 (using social-motivation functions of SNS) will have a positive correlation with Intercultural communication competence.
- H11: Pattern 2 (using non-social-motivation functions of SNS) will have a positive correlation with intercultural communication competence;
- H12: Pattern 3 (using function/activity of SNS) will have a positive correlation with intercultural communication competence.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This chapter explains the methods to be used in this study. This research will be a questionnaire-based quantitative study employing the survey research method. In the following sections, study design, detailed descriptions of the scales and questionnaires, and the data collection procedure will be explained.

#### **3.1. Study design**

This main goal of this study is to discover whether there is any relation between social networking site use and intercultural communication competence. The use of social networking sites will be tested via social networking sites use motivation scale, and intercultural communication competence will be tested via the intercultural communication sensitivity scale. About 150 students from the University of New Mexico and Shanghai International Studies University will be recruited. The research distributes the two measurements in one questionnaire to potential participants from December 2012 to February 2013. After collecting enough completed questionnaires, all data was transferred from paper format into Microsoft Excel file, and finally was transferred into *SPSS*. The statistical data was processed by using descriptive data analysis, analysis of variance, Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, Pearson's correlation test, multiple linear regressions, both confirmatory/exploratory factor analysis and relevant other statistical tests.

## **3.2. Data collection procedures**

### **3.2.1. Selection of participants.**

The participants in this study come from two different universities. By using equal allocation, a total of 120 participants will be recruited. Among all of them, 48 are current or former Chinese international students from the University of New Mexico and another 24 are Chinese students from Shanghai International Studies University and its branches. All students are adults and have a high school degree. Participants will be selected in two ways: 1) the networking method described by Burgess (1984), also known as the snow-ball method, in which the initial participants introduce or bring in people with similar background through their personal networks, and 2) convenience samples, for which the researcher will use his personal network in the two universities to recruit participants. Besides the 72 ethnic Chinese students, another 48 U.S. students (U.S. citizens) will also be recruited as a control group. The researcher estimated the sample size based on Cohen (1988)'s suggestions for achieving an approximate power of .80 with a medium effect size through recruiting 50 participants, however due to schedule conflict, not enough Chinese university students samples were collected.

### **3.2.2. Chinese International Students**

An email was sent to the listserv (group emails) of the UNM Chinese Students & Scholars Association (CSSA) to recruit Chinese international students, and then the researcher recruited the rest number by personal social connections and snow-ball recruiting. Each student of the study population received an initial email or instant message alerting them to the emailing of the survey instrument and asking them to participate in the study. The survey instrument then

was emailed to recruited Chinese international students, with another message instructing them about survey completion and return.

Chinese international students who responded the survey were later asked to complete and return an informed consent document along with their completed questionnaire. Those who did respond to the email were contacted by telephone by the researcher. Successful contacts with the Chinese international students were constituted by telephone administration of the survey instrument, with responses entered on a blank survey form. All responses were entered into an Excel database. Upon completion of survey administration, data was transferred into *SPSS* software for further statistical analysis.

### **3.2.3. Chinese students.**

The participants from Shanghai International Studies University were recruited with permission from the university and departments. An approval letter was received from the department director, Prof. Steve Kulich. Since there is are established human research protection rules, the researcher adapted all UNM rules. The researcher walked into a class with the questionnaire and asked students to complete it. After stating the goal of this study, students either started completing the survey or declined to participate.

### **3.2.4. United States students.**

The UNM students were recruited from UNM public speaking classes. The researcher used his personal social connections with instructors from the department of Communication & Journalism of the University of New Mexico. After gaining granted permission from the instructors, the students were asked to complete the questionnaire.

### 3.3. Research Instruments

#### 3.3.1. Social networking sites use motivation scale.

In this research, two instruments were used. The first one is the *social networking sites use motivation scale*. According to the latest scholar who used this scale (Yuan, 2011), this instrument was developed and modified from *Gratifications and Seeding Behavior of Online Adolescents* by Courtois, Mechant, De Marez and Verleye (2009); *2009 Report on Chinese Netizens' Uses of Social Netowrking Sites* by CNNIC (2009); and *PEW Internet & American Life Project* (January 2009, November 2009).

The scale of *Gratifications and Seeding Behavior of Online Adolescents* was created by Curtios et.al as described in an article discussing understanding young adolescents' behavior during the web 2.0 era. Seeding behavior means “user-generated content, conceptualizing interactivity by dividing information streams into sender and receiver.”(Curtios dt.al, p. 116) It contains three measurable variables for seeding behavior, i.e., user-to-user, user-to-document, and user-to-system interactivity. That study distinguished media, narrative and metadata generated by users; media seeding, which means user-to-computer interaction (uploading a video file, photo, and so on.); and metadata seeding meaning the user-generated content created in the process of user-document interaction. This questionnaire was tested by several scholars (Curtois et.al, 2009; Yuan, 2011) and proved to have “construct validity” (Curtios, p. 121).

#### 3.3.2. Intercultural communication sensitivity scale.

This scale was developed by Chen and Starosta (2002). Chen (1989) identifies four dimensions in intercultural communication competence: personal attributes, communication skills, psychological adaptation, and cultural awareness. Personal attributes refer to the traits

adapted by a communicator's personality (Iwai, 2002), and have four components: self-concept, self-disclosure, social relaxation, and self-awareness. Communication skills are "verbal and nonverbal behaviors that enable us to be effective in interactions with others" (Chen & Starosta, 1998, p. 246) and comprise message skills, social skills, flexibility, and interaction management. Psychological adjustment is connected with individuals' ability to face frustration, stress, alienation, and ambiguity during their adaptation/adjustment process. Cultural awareness means one's realizing of the rules and social terms of the host culture that affect their perceptions and behaviors. Finally, cultural awareness refers to one's sensitivity towards social values, social customs, social norms, and social systems. Based on these dimensions, a new scale including cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness was developed. The scale had reliability with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.88, and the whole scale was "evaluated against a number of valid and related measures and the results were satisfactory" (p.4).

### **3.4. Pre-analysis preparation**

#### **3.4.1. Independent variables and dependent variables**

In this research, the independent variables are 1) student status, 2) age, 3) language(s) spoken, 4) intercultural training, 5) time and frequency of SNS use, 6) social motivation of SNS use, 7) non-social use of SNS, 8) function/activity of SNS use, 9) time spent on SNS compared with traditional media, and 10) friends on SNS. Student status means whether the participant is a) a Chinese international student in a U.S. university or b) a U.S. student who is a U.S. citizen or c) a "regular" Chinese university student living and studying in a Chinese university. IC training means intercultural communication training; in this study, it means whether one has ever received any intercultural communication training from travel agencies or attended any

workshop/seminar, even those which are free or commercial. Other variables will be explained specifically in the following sections.

### 3.4.2. Statistical tests used in this section

**Table 1**  
*Tests used in this study*

Tests	Functions
Descriptive Analysis	Mean, total number, standard deviation, range for demographic information and all items in the questionnaire
Cronbach's Alpha	Internal reliability for each of the two questionnaires used
Exploratory and Confirmatory Factory Analysis	To determine how many items should be retained, and how many blocks/sub-scales should be developed in the modified questionnaires
Analysis of Variance	To test hypotheses that expect to find differences between groups of independent variables on a continuous dependent variable
Pearson's Correlation	To examine the linear relationship between two (or more) continuous variables
Multiple Linear Regression	To examine how multiple sub-scales predict one continuous variable

### 3.4.3. Data screening and cleaning

The original questionnaire responses collected were first input into an Excel file, then transferred into an SPSS data file. Negative responses were re-coded into positive ones. Blank answers were deleted and marked as "missing". In most continuous variables, "0" does not mean "missing."



## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

Chapter 4 presents the results of this study. The findings explain 1) the general goal of this study, 2) the Social Networking Site Use questionnaire and the demographics related to it, and 3) the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale and the demographics related to it. Chapter 4 comprises four sections.

The first part, pre-analysis preparation, introduces 1) the independent variables and dependent variables generated from the questionnaire, 2) data cleaning and screening, coding and recoding, and 3) statistical tests used to answer the research questions and hypotheses and the statistics logic behind them.

The second part presents the general demographic information of this study. The overall descriptive data of age, gender, occupation, ethnicity and nationality, language(s) spoken, intercultural communication training, and experience of traveling/living abroad are listed.

The third part presents the analysis regarding the first research question, “What is the difference in SNS use between Chinese international students and U.S. students?” This research question is based on the Social Networking Site Use Questionnaire (Appendix C). In order to answer this question, a series of statistical tests was employed to test the questionnaire’s reliability and inter-item coefficients, with results used to modify the questionnaire. Then, two hypotheses were developed. The first hypothesis examines the differences between Chinese international students and U.S. students’ time spent on social networking sites and time spent on traditional media. The second hypothesis compares Chinese international students and U.S. students’ social/non-social motivation and patterns of using social networking sites.

H1: Chinese international students will spend more time on SNS than U.S. students.

H2: Chinese international student will spend more time on SNS than traditional media.

H3: In SNS use, Chinese international students will score higher on social motivation, while U.S. students will score higher on non-social motivations.

H4: In SNS use, Chinese international students will score higher on SNS function/activity than U.S. students;

The fourth part presents the analysis regarding the second research question, “What is the difference in intercultural communication competence between Chinese international students and U.S. students?” This research question is evaluated by the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (Appendix B). By modifying the original 24-item questionnaire, a modified 17-item Intercultural Sensitivity Scale was developed. The reason why the former 24-item questionnaire was modified is because some of its items show a very low inter-item reliability, and will influence the overall reliability of the questionnaire. The modified Intercultural Sensitivity Scale has five sub-scales, which each sub-scale explains part of the communication behaviors under intercultural communication settings. Then two hypotheses were developed to further investigate the research question. The first one intends to compare the differences in intercultural communication competence between Chinese and U.S. students, and the second one tries to understand the relationship between the sub-scales and the relationship between the whole intercultural communication competence and the five sub-scales.

H5: Compared with U.S. students, Chinese international students will have a higher score in intercultural interaction attentiveness, empathy, and intercultural difference tolerance.

H6: Compared with U.S. students, Chinese international students will score lower in intercultural interaction confidence and ethnocentrism.

Finally, a model is developed using multiple linear regression to predict the influence of individuals' communication behavior toward their overall intercultural communication competence.

The final section of Chapter 4 presents the relationship between individuals' social networking sites use and their intercultural communication competence. Time spent on SNS and social motivation, non-social motivation, and function/activity use are all tested.

#### **4.1. Research question 1 (SNS)**

RQ1: What is the difference in SNS use between Chinese international students and U.S. students?

##### 4.1.1 Overall demographic information

###### *Age*

According to the PEW Internet: Social Networking (full detail), 83% of the age group (18-29) use social networking sites. Similar data was also provided by CNNIC report (2009), showing that more than half (52.5%) of SNS users in China are in this age group. In this study, 95.4% of the respondents are from 18 to 29 ( $M=22.55$ ,  $SD=3.72$ ), which echoed both previous studies.

###### *Gender*

Among the 110 responses, 37 are male (33.6%), and 73 are female (66.4%). Female respondents are the majority, so gender bias may be present in this study.

###### *Occupation*

In this category, 93.6% of the respondents are full-time students, and 3% are part time students. Fifty-one respondents are graduate level students, and 51 are undergraduates.

### ***Ethnicity and Nationality***

Sixty-two (56.4%) of the respondents are citizens of People's Republic of China, and 45 (40.9%) are citizens of United States of America. Another 2% reported nationality as Taiwanese (Republic of China).

### ***Language(s) spoke***

Among 110 valid responses, 41 (37.3%) are mono-language speakers. In this case, all mono-language speakers were U.S. students because Chinese international students are required to speak English in U.S. universities, and Chinese students in China universities are required to take English exams to enter higher institutions. Fifty-two (47.3%) are bi-lingual speakers, 16 (14.5%) are tri-lingual speakers, and one (0.9%) reported speaking four languages.

### ***IC training***

In the questionnaire and questionnaire distribution sessions, the investigator defined intercultural communication training as one of the following: 1) any workshop organized by university international studies programs, 2) any free/paid workshops, seminars, or symposiums, or 3) any free/paid service provided by travel agencies. IC training must last longer than an hour.

### ***Travel abroad & living abroad***

Among all 110 respondents, 65 (59.1%) have traveled abroad, and the rest have never been to any other country. Among those stating that they had traveled abroad, 35 (31.8%) have traveled abroad once, 17 (15.5%) reported doing so twice, and 13 (4.6%) have traveled abroad more than three times.

All Chinese international students reported "yes" regarding living abroad/traveling abroad. Their durations for living/traveling abroad are standardized from "years" into "months".

#### 4.1.2. H1: Chinese international students will spend more time on SNS than U.S. students.

The original question (Appendix C) reads *In a typical session, how long do you use SNS?* In the footnote, respondents were asked to answer how often and how long they use SNS sites. When data was transferred into SPSS, “hours” were converted into “minutes”.

In order to test this hypothesis, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the difference in time spent during each SNS session between Chinese international students and U.S. students. Participants were divided into three groups based on their student status: Group 1 -- Chinese international students; Group 2 -- U.S. students; and Group 3 -- Chinese students. There was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in time spent on SNS for the three groups:  $F(2, 81) = 5.7, p = .005$ . In addition to reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was relatively obvious. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was 0.12. As stated by Pallant (2010), .06 is a medium effect and .14 is a large effect.

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Data: Social networking sites use time per session*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Chinese International Students	32	86.7656	69.45444	12.27793	61.7246	111.8066	8.50	280.00
U.S. students	36	50.7222	64.58654	10.76442	28.8693	72.5752	3.50	300.00
Chinese students	16	115.3125	68.34883	17.08721	78.8920	151.7330	30.00	300.00
Total	84	76.7560	70.88135	7.73379	61.3738	92.1381	3.50	300.00

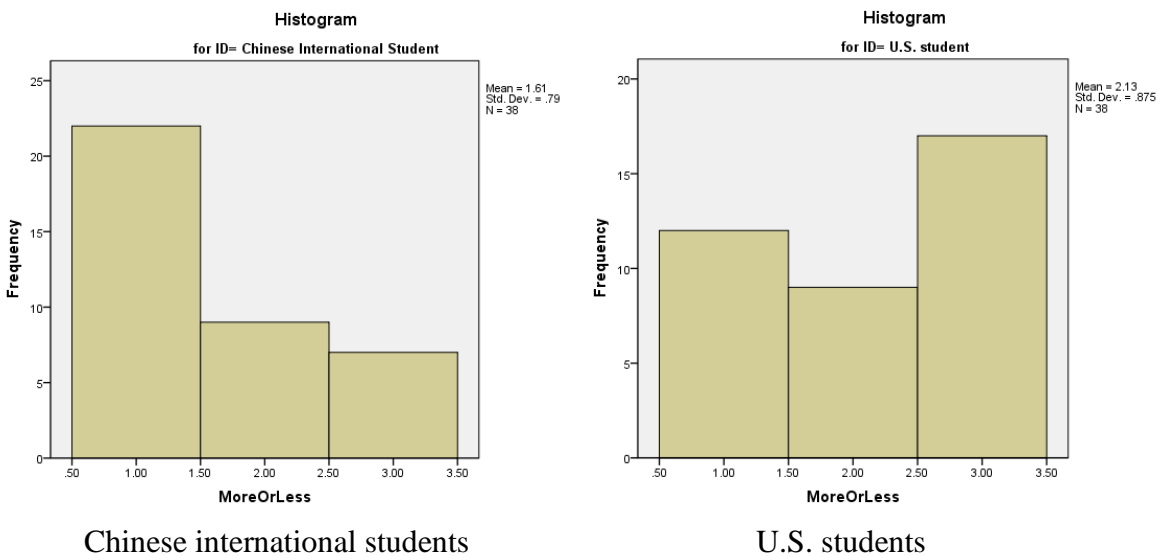
However, compared to the significant difference in time spent on each SNS session, there was no significant difference between the groups with regard to how often they used SNS.

Compared to U.S. students (N=41, M=6.9, SD= 0.62), Chinese international students spend less time on SNS (N=43, M=6.3, SD=1.72). The effect size was .06, which met the medium effect.

The results above showed that compared to U.S. students, Chinese students spent 86.77 minutes on SNS every session and had 6.3 sessions every week; U.S. students spent 50.72 minutes on SNS every session and had 6.9 sessions every week. Thus, H1 is supported here.

#### 4.1.3. H2: Chinese international student will spend more time on SNS than on traditional media

Descriptive statistics were used to examine whether compared with traditional media, Chinese international students spend more time on SNS than U.S. students. Lambda test was also employed to test whether there exists differences of time spent on SNS and traditional media between Chinese international students and U.S. students



**Figure 2. Time spent on SNS compared with traditional media (between-groups)**

According to the distribution shown above, more Chinese international students replied they will spend more time on SNS than traditional media” than did U.S. students.

**Table 3**  
*Lambda test of correlation*

			Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Lambda	Symmetric	.188	.102
		MoreOrLess Dependent	.119	.350
		ID Dependent	.263	.036
	Goodman and Kruskal tau	MoreOrLess Dependent	.054	.018 <sup>c</sup>
		ID Dependent	.094	.030 <sup>c</sup>

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
- c. Based on chi-square approximation

The Lambda test showed that there exists weak (.12) relationship between nationality and whether they will spend more or less on SNS than traditional media. However this result does not meet statistical significance ( $p > 0.5$ ).

Furthermore, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of nationality on time used on SNS, as measured by (more=1, about the same=2, and less=3). Participants were divided into three groups according to their student status: Group 1 -- Chinese international students; Group 2 -- U.S. students; and Group 3 -- Chinese students. There was a statistically significant difference at the  $p = .05$  level for the three groups:  $F(2, 92) = 3.05$ ,  $p = .05$ . Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was about the same. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .05. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Group 1 ( $M = 1.61$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) was significantly different from Group 2 ( $M = 2.07$ ,  $SD = .93$ ).

Based on these results, H2 was supported. Compared with traditional media like TV and newspapers, Chinese international students do spend more time on SNS media.

#### **4.1.4. Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha.**

Before comparing the differences in social/non-social motivation between Chinese international students and U.S. students, reliability analysis was used to examine inter-item correlations. By treating each category as one scale, the corrected item total correlation can indicate whether an individual item is measuring something different than the whole scale (Pallant, 2010).

Table 4 shows that the scale “social motivation” has reliability of .72; thus, no item need be removed. Non-social motivation has an acceptable reliability of .57; function/activity used has reliability of .58. However, “check-out friend’s updates without sharing or responding to the update” has a .283 corrected item-total correlation and needed to be removed from the scale “function/activities”. This modification also proved necessary in a previous study (Yuan, 2010). Also, “relax” was removed from “non-social motivation.” “Keep track of international/local news” also were both removed from “non-social motivation.”

**Table 4**

***Original Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)***

<b>Name of Scale</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha after removing items</b>	<b>Final N of Items</b>
Social motivation	.723	.723	5
Non-social motivation	.568	.685	3
Function/Activity used	.678	.733	3



**Table 5**  
***Inter-item reliability of SNS use scale***

SNS Use Item	Corrected item total correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted	Scale
Check-out friend's updates without sharing or responding to the update (i.e., their sharings, photos, status, and so on.)	.283	.733	Function/ Activities
Keep track of the international news*	.043	.685	Non-social motivation
Keep track of the local news	.252	.548	Non-social motivation
Relax (from pressure)	.224	.558	Non-social motivation

\* This item does not show low corrected item-total correlation in the first test. However, after removing "keep track of the local news" and "relax", this item showed a very low correlation with the whole scale.

After removing the items which greatly influenced the whole reliability, based on the three scales, three new variables were created by summing the original variables: 1) social motivation, 2) non-social motivation modified, and 3) function/activity used modified.

**4.1.5. H3: For SNS use, Chinese international students will have a higher value for social motivation, while U.S. students will have a higher value for non-social motivation.**

**4.1.6. H4: For SNS use, Chinese international students will have a higher value for SNS function/activity than will U.S. students**

Before exploring the differences between Chinese international students and U.S. students on SNS use motivation, it is necessary to examine descriptive data. Thus, based on the questionnaire (section II, III and IV in Appendix B), the N, mean and standard deviation for these three sections are provided in following charts.

**Table 6**  
*Descriptive Statistics: Social Motivation Items*

ID		SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5
Chinese International Students	Mean	2.66	3.61	2.80	3.6	3.50
	N	44	44	44	44	44
	SD	1.12	1.22	1.13	1.06	1.19
U.S. students	Mean	3.11	4.09	2.00	3.07	3.807
	N	46	46	46	46	46
	SD	1.307	.84	1.15	1.16	1.05
Chinese students	Mean	3.39	4.11	3.11	4.17	3.67
	N	18	18	18	18	18
	SD	1.14	1.23	1.23	.62	.91
Total	Mean	2.971	3.90	2.51	3.48	3.66
	N	108	108	108	108	108
	SD	1.23	1.09	1.23	1.11	1.09

For Chinese international students, the most important social motivation to use SNS is to “stay in touch with people who understand me.” The least important motivation is “to let people know I care about their feelings.” For U.S. students, the most important reason to use SNS remains the same as for Chinese international students, and the least important one is “talk about my problems.” For other details, please refer to Table 7

**Table 7**  
*Importance of social motivation between two groups*

SM Item Rank	Chinese International Students	U.S. Students
1	Stay in touch with people who understand me	Stay in touch with people who understand me
2	Feel involved with what happened	Stay informed with events happening around
3	Stay informed with events happening around	Let other people know I care about their feelings
4	Talk about my problems	Feel involved with what happened
5	Let other know I care about their feelings	Talk about my problem

**Table 8**  
***Descriptive Statistics: Non-Social Motivation Items***

<b>ID</b>		<b>NSM1</b>	<b>NSM2</b>	<b>NSM3</b>	<b>NSM4</b>	<b>NSM5</b>	<b>NSM6</b>
Chinese International Student	Mean	2.61	2.55	1.95	2.84	3.68	3.84
	N	44	44	44	44	44	44
	SD	1.26	1.19	1.03	1.38	.86	.86
U.S. student	Mean	3.17	3.00	2.21	2.37	3.59	3.35
	N	46	46	46	46	46	46
	SD	1.16	1.19	1.23	1.32	1.07	1.45
Chinese student	Mean	3.28	3.56	1.33	1.94	3.56	3.83
	N	18	18	18	18	18	18
	SD	1.13	1.04	.84	.94	.70	.86
Total	Mean	2.96	2.91	1.961	2.491	3.621	3.63
	N	108	108	108	108	108	108
	SD	1.22	1.21	1.13	1.32	.92	1.16

In this section, there is no obvious difference between the two groups from the standpoint of descriptive statistical levels. Both Chinese international students and U.S. students regard “relax/amuse oneself” as the most important factor triggering their using SNS and “escape from my responsibilities” as the least important motivator.

**Table 9**  
***Descriptive Statistics: Function/Activity Items***

<b>ID</b>		<b>SNSFun1</b>	<b>SNSFun2</b>	<b>SNSFun3</b>	<b>SNSFun4</b>
Chinese International students	Mean	3.30	3.43	3.59	3.11
	N	44	44	44	44
	SD	1.02	1.15	.82	1.02
U.S. students	Mean	2.96	3.72	3.17	3.09
	N	46	46	46	46
	SD	.94	1.05	1.04	1.074
Chinese students	Mean	3.33	3.44	3.33	3.28
	N	18	18	18	18
	SD	.84	.98	.49	.96
Total	Mean	3.16	3.56	3.37	3.13
	N	108	108	108	108
	SD	.97	1.08	.89	1.02

In this section, no obvious difference between means was found. A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the impact of student status on levels of 1) social motivation, 2) non-social motivation, and 3) function/activity used.

Participants were divided into three groups according to their student status: Group 1 -- Chinese international students; Group 2 -- U.S. students; and Group 3 -- Chinese students. However, no statistically significant results were found ( $p < .05$ ). Table 9 shows the detail of this ANOVA test.

**Table 10***Analysis of variance, three new variables, between groups.*

Scale		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
TOTALSOCIALMOTIVATION	Between Groups	80.56	2	40.28	2.74	.070
	Within Groups	1546.41	105	14.73		
	Total	3	107			
TOTALNONSOCIALMOTIVATION	Between Groups	2	2	17.66	2.52	.085
	Within Groups	736.09	105	7.01		
	Total	771.41	107			
TOTALFUNACT	Between Groups	15.55	2	7.78	1.48	.233
	Within Groups	552.77	105	5.26		
	Total	568.32	107			

Even though neither H3 nor H4 can be supported through this test, differences still exist between study groups on these items. After running ANOVA separately, SM3 (“talk about my problems”) and SM4 (“feel involved with what happens with others”) revealed statistically significant differences on both ANOVA and multiple comparisons. Table 11 shows the details of these differences.

**Table 11**  
*Analysis of variance, single items*

Single Items from Scales		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SM3	Between Groups	22.054	2	11.027	8.22	.000
	Within Groups	140.937	105	1.342		
	Total	162.991	107			
SM4	Between Groups	17.477	2	8.738	7.95	.001
	Within Groups	115.486	105	1.100		
	Total	132.963	107			

**Table 12**  
*Multiple comparisons, single items*

Dependent Variable	(I) ID	(J) ID	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
SM3	Chinese International students	U.S. student	<b>.79545*</b>	.004
		Chinese student	-.31566	.595
	U.S. students	Chinese International Student	-.79545*	.004
		Chinese student	-1.11111*	.002
	Chinese students	Chinese International Student	.31566	.595
		U.S. student	1.11111*	.002
SM4	Chinese International students	U.S. student	<b>.57115*</b>	.030
		Chinese student	-.53030	.172
	U.S. students	Chinese International Student	-.57115*	.030
		Chinese student	-1.10145*	.001
	Chinese students	Chinese International Student	.53030	.172
		U.S. student	1.10145*	.001

According to the two tables above, even though when taken as a whole the scale of social motivation cannot reach statistical significance, there was still a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in “talk about my problems”:  $F(2, 105) = 8.22$ ,  $p = .000$  and “feel

involved with what happens with others”:  $F(2, 105) = 7.95, p = .001$ . The multiple comparisons on these two items also indicated that Chinese international students score significantly higher than U.S. student on these two items. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .13 for both items, close to a large effect size. This means that even though there is no overall difference between these two groups in social motivation, non-social motivation and SNS function/activity, Chinese international students are more likely to share their problems and get involved with what happens with others on SNS than are U.S. students.

#### **4.2. Research question 2 (ISS)**

RQ2: What is the difference in intercultural communication competence between Chinese international students and U.S. students?

##### **4.2.1 Test: Reliability: Cronbach Alpha.**

According to Chen & Starosta (2000) and Iwai (2004), the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale is expected to have a high reliability because these previous studies reported Cronbach’s alpha values between .86 and .88. In this study, the Cronbach’s alpha was .88, a relatively high value.

**Table 13**  
***Case Processing Summary***

		N	%
Cases	Valid	110	99.1
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	1	.9
	Total	111	100.0

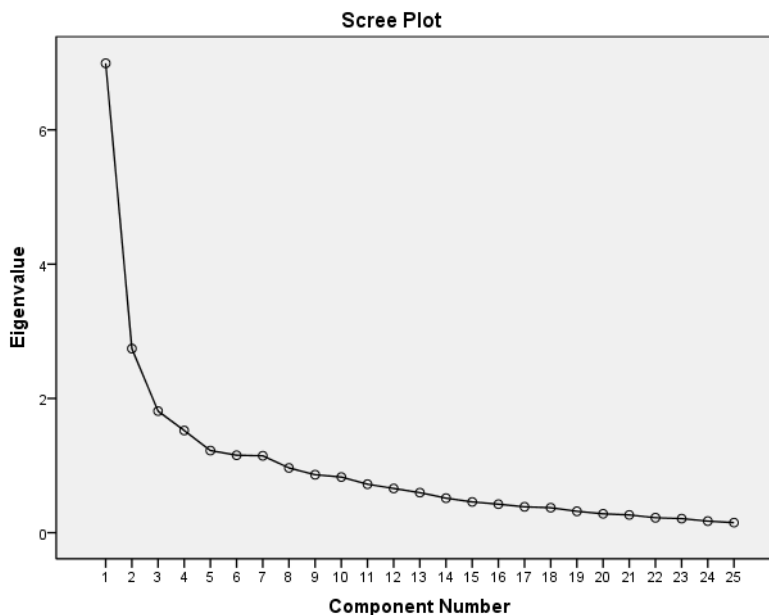
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Table 14**  
***Reliability test***

<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
.878	.883	25

#### **4.2.2 Test: Factor analysis and modified Intercultural Sensitivity Scale.**

The 24 items of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale were subjected to principal components analysis. Before performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. The resulting correlation matrix indicated the presence of many coefficients of .3 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .88, exceeding the minimum requirement of .6 (Kaiser 1970, 1974; cited in Pallant, 2010). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.



**Figure 3. Exploratory factor analysis**



After conducting exploratory factor analysis, according to the scree plot, five factors should be remained. Principal components analysis indicated the presence of five components with Eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 27.97%, 10.97%, 7.25%, 6.09%, and 4.89% of the variance respectively. An inspection of the screeplot revealed a clear break after the fifth component. Using Catell's (1966) scree test, it was decided to retain five components for further investigation. Five factors with Eigenvalues of 1.00 or higher were extracted for the 24 items of intercultural sensitivity.

The five-component solution explained a total of 57.16% of the variance, with component 1 contributing 28.97%, component 2 contributing 10.97%, component 3 contributing 7.25%, component 4 contributing 6.09%, and component 5 contributing 4.89%. To aid in the interpretation of these five components, oblimin rotation was performed. Items loading at least .30 with secondary loadings no higher than .30 were included in the scale.

The first factor accounted for 27.97% of the common variance and had an Eigenvalue of 6.99. Three items, "I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded", "I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons", and "I think my cultures is better than other cultures" were included in this factor. These items indicate participants' attitudes toward their counterparts' culture. This factor was labeled *Intercultural interacting ethnocentrism*. What needs to be mentioned is that compared with other categories, most items in this scale are negative, so responses to these items were recoded. Thus, if one has higher final value in this category, it is more likely that he/she will have a smaller tendency toward cultural ethnocentrism.

The second factor accounted for 10.97% of the common variance and had an Eigenvalue of 2.74. Four items, “I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures”, “I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures”, “I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures”, and “I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures” were included in this factor. These items are mainly about whether participants are confident or not when they encounter intercultural communication. This factor was labeled *Intercultural Interaction Confidence*. All items in this category are positive, and no recoding was needed. This means that respondents with higher final values in this category are more likely to feel confident about engaging in intercultural interactions.

The third factor accounted for 7.25% of the common variance and had an Eigenvalue of 1.81. Three items, “I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart’s subtle meaning during our interaction”, “I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures”, and “I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures” mainly indicate participants’ attentiveness and willingness to gain latent information. This factor was labeled *Intercultural Interaction attentiveness*. All items in this category are positive, and no recoding was necessary.. This means respondents with higher final values in this category are more likely to pay attention to opponents’ “hidden” information, such as non-verbal or body language, when they engage in intercultural communication.

The fourth factor accounted for 6.09% of the common variance and had an Eigenvalue of 1.52. Three items, “I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or non-verbal cues”, “I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts”, and “I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures” mainly

express participants' feeling and understanding towards others in intercultural communication. This factor was labeled *Intercultural Interaction empathy*. All items in this category are positive and needed no recoding. This means respondents with higher values in this category tend to behave with kindness, understanding, and friendliness toward culturally-distinct others in intercultural interactions.

The final factor accounted for of the 4.89% common variance and had an Eigenvalue of 1.22. Four items, "I respect the ways of people from different cultures", "I respect the values of people from different cultures", "I am open minded to people from different cultures," and "I do not like to be with people from different cultures" mainly indicate how participants respect and accept different cultures in intercultural communication settings. This factor was labeled *Respect Intercultural Tolerance*. "I do not like to be with people from different cultures" was recoded, since it is obviously different from the others. After recoding, all items became positive, which means respondents with higher values in this category are more likely to show respect for different cultures.

After removing items with low reliability, a modified Intercultural Sensitivity Scale was developed. Factor analysis and loadings for the Modified Intercultural Sensitivity Scale is listed as Table 15

**Table 15*****Factor analysis and loadings for the Modified Intercultural Sensitivity Scale***

Item	Component				
	Intercultural interaction ethnocentrism	Intercultural interaction confidence	Intercultural interaction attentiveness	Intercultural interaction empathy	Intercultural difference tolerance
I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded	.576				
I avoid those situations where i will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons	.524				
I think my cultures is better than other cultures	.358				
I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures		-.852			
I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures		-.828			
I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures		-.729			
I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures		-.678			
I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction			.698		
I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures			.641		
I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures			.591		
I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues				.736	
I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts				.672	
I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures				.554	
I respect the ways people from differnt cultures					-.861
I respect the values of poeple from different cultures					-.769
I am open minded to people from different cultures					-.603
I do not like to be with people from different cultures					-.391

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 17 iterations.

**4.2.3. H5: Compared with U.S. students, Chinese international students will score higher in intercultural interaction attentiveness, empathy and intercultural difference tolerance.**

Hypothesis 5 suggests that Chinese international students will score higher in intercultural interacting attentiveness, empathy and intercultural difference tolerance than U.S. students. In order to test this hypothesis, descriptive analysis and ANOVA were employed. The result of descriptive analysis is described in Table 16.

**Table 16**  
*Descriptive Statistics (Attentiveness, empathy and tolerance)*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
ISSattentiveness	Chinese International Students	44	10.5909	1.74300	.26277
	U.S. students	46	11.0435	2.30898	.34044
	Chinese students	18	11.4444	2.38185	.56141
	Total	108	10.9259	2.11229	.20325
	Model	Fixed Effects			2.10892
	Random Effects				.22276
ISSempathy	Chinese International Students	44	11.5909	1.38628	.20899
	U.S. students	46	11.0000	1.81353	.26739
	Chinese students	18	11.7222	2.46876	.58189
	Total	108	11.3611	1.79542	.17276
	Model	Fixed Effects			1.78418
	Random Effects				.23108
ISStolerance	Chinese International Students	44	17.1136	2.50781	.37807
	U.S. students	46	17.8913	1.91170	.28186
	Chinese students	18	16.3889	3.36310	.79269
	Total	108	17.3241	2.48295	.23892
	Model	Fixed Effects			2.44397
	Random Effects				.41174

As stated above, Chinese international students score lower in intercultural interaction attentiveness (N = 44, M = 10.59) than U.S. students (N = 46, M = 11.04). Scores in intercultural difference tolerance of Chinese international students (N = 44, M = 17.11) is also lower than U.S.

students (N = 46, M = 18.79). Only in intercultural interaction empathy did Chinese international students (N = 44, M = 11.59) score higher than U.S. students (N = 46, M = 11.00).

In order to investigate whether these differences are statistically significant, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to test whether intercultural interaction attentiveness, intercultural interaction empathy and intercultural difference tolerance are influenced by nationality. Participants were divided into three groups according to their student status: Group1 -- Chinese international students; Group2 -- U.S. students; and Group3 -- Chinese students. No statistically significant differences were found in these three categories. For ANOVA results, refer to Table 17.

**Table 17**  
*Analysis of variance, sub-scale of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale*

		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
ISS attentiveness	Between Groups	10.414	2	5.207	1.171	.314
	Within Groups	466.994	105	4.448		
	Total	477.407	107			
ISS empathy	Between Groups	10.669	2	5.335	1.676	.192
	Within Groups	334.247	105	3.183		
	Total	344.917	107			
ISS tolerance	Between Groups	32.491	2	16.246	2.720	.071
	Within Groups	627.166	105	5.973		
	Total	659.657	107			

**4.2.4. H6: Compared to U.S. students, Chinese international students will score lower in intercultural interaction confidence and ethnocentrism.**

Hypothesis 6 suggests that Chinese international score lower in intercultural interaction confidence and intercultural interaction ethnocentrism than U.S. students. In order to test this hypothesis, descriptive analysis and ANOVA were employed. The result of descriptive analysis is described in Table 18.

**Table 18**  
*Descriptive Statistics (ethnocentrism and confidence)*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
ISS ethnocentrism	Chinese International Students	44	11.9091	1.52221	.22948
	U.S. students	46	12.4565	1.45612	.21469
	Chinese students	18	12.6111	1.33456	.31456
	Total	108	12.2593	1.48116	.14252
	Model	Fixed Effects			1.46491
	Random Effects				.21987
ISS confidence	Chinese International Students	44	12.2955	2.66397	.40161
	U.S. students	46	14.2391	2.64310	.38970
	Chinese students	18	12.8333	3.09173	.72873
	Total	108	13.2130	2.85163	.27440
	Model	Fixed Effects			2.72908
	Random Effects				.68978

As stated above, Chinese international students score lower in intercultural interaction ethnocentrism (N = 44, M = 11.90) than U.S. students (N = 46, M = 12.45). The scores in intercultural interacting confidence of Chinese international students (N = 44, M = 12.30) are also lower than those of U.S. students (N = 46, M = 14.24).

In order to investigate whether these differences are statistically significant, two one-way between-groups analyses of variance were conducted to test whether intercultural interaction ethnocentrism and intercultural interaction confidence are influenced by nationality. Participants were divided into three groups according to their student status: Group1 -- Chinese international students; Group2 -- U.S. students; and Group3 -- Chinese students.

The first ANOVA focuses on whether nationality influences intercultural interaction ethnocentrism. There was no statistically significant difference at the  $p < 0.5$  level between the groups with regard to intercultural interaction ethnocentrism ( $F(2, 105) = 2.19, p = .117$ ).

The second ANOVA focuses on whether nationality influences intercultural interaction confidence. There was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < 0.5$  level between the groups with regard to intercultural interaction confidence ( $F(2, 105) = 5.91, p = .004$ ). Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was medium. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .10. Post-hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test showed that the mean score for Group 1 ( $M = 12.30, SD = 2.66$ ) was significantly different from that of Group 2 ( $M = 14.24, SD = 2.64$ ). Group 3 ( $M = 12.83, SD = 3.09$ ) did not differ significantly from either Group 1 or 3. Table 19 shows these results



**Table 19**  
***Analysis of variance, sub-scale of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale***

		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
ISSethnocentrism	Between Groups	9.414	2	4.707	2.193	.117
	Within Groups	225.327	105	2.146		
	Total	234.741	107			
ISSconfidence	Between Groups	88.073	2	44.037	5.913	.004
	Within Groups	782.029	105	7.448		
	Total	870.102	107			
ISSattentiveness	Between Groups	10.414	2	5.207	1.171	.314
	Within Groups	466.994	105	4.448		
	Total	477.407	107			
ISSempathy	Between Groups	10.669	2	5.335	1.676	.192
	Within Groups	334.247	105	3.183		
	Total	344.917	107			
ISStolerance	Between Groups	32.491	2	16.246	2.720	.071
	Within Groups	627.166	105	5.973		
	Total	659.657	107			

Thus, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported. Compared to U.S. students, Chinese international students revealed a lower score in intercultural interaction confidence.

**4.2.5. H7: An individual's total intercultural communication competence will correlate positively with intercultural interaction tolerance, confidence, empathy, and attentiveness respectively.**

First of all, using Pearson's product-moment coefficient test, the correlation between intercultural interaction tolerance, intercultural interaction confidence, intercultural interaction empathy and intercultural interaction attentiveness was tested. This process was intended to illustrate that an individual (not limited as to nationality, gender, age, and so on.) scoring high in one of these categories also will score high in other categories. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure data did not violate assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. The results is shown in Table 20.

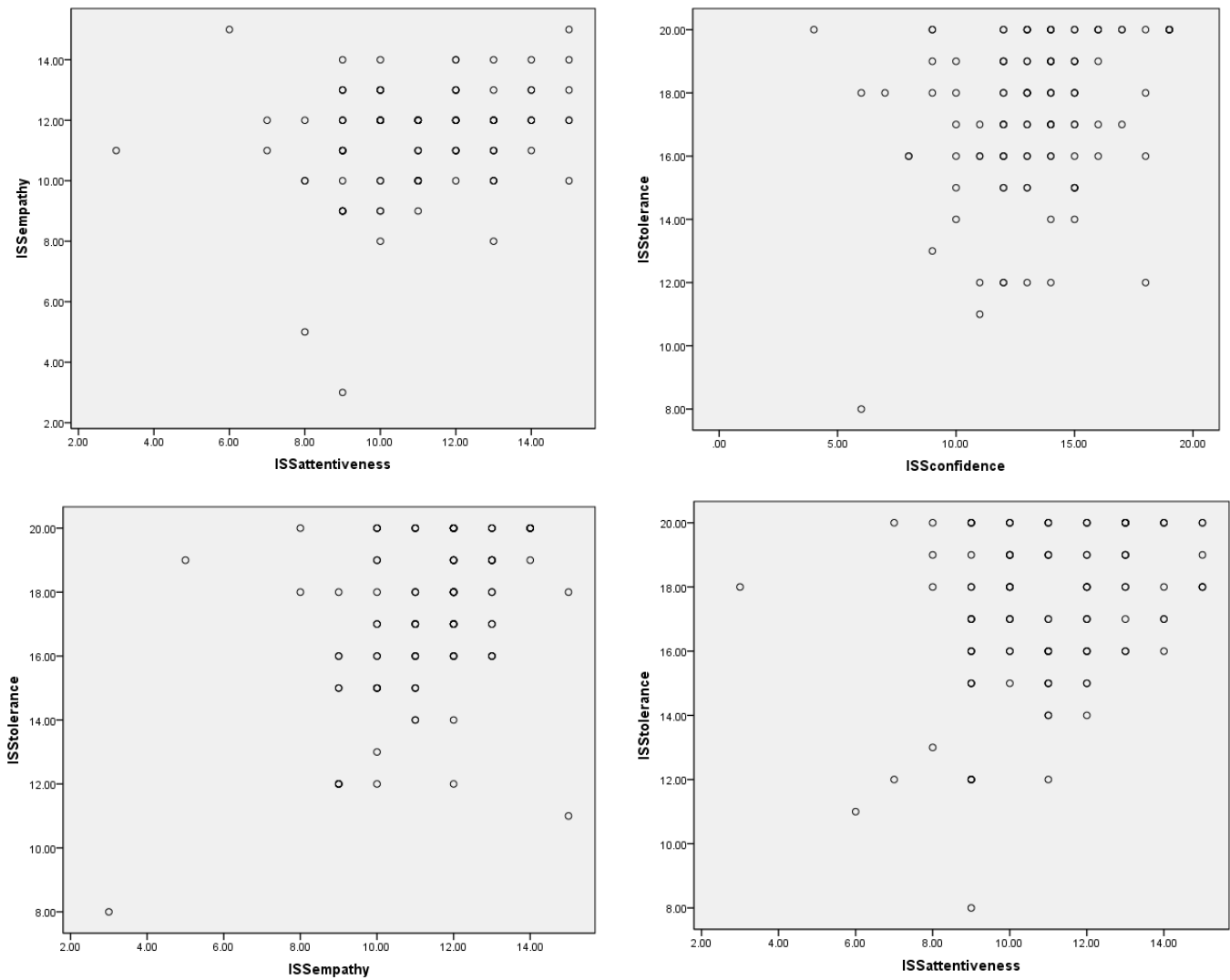
**Table 20**  
***Pearson's correlation, sub-scale of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale***

		ISSconfiden ce	ISSattentive ness	ISSempath y	ISStoleranc e
ISSconfidence	Pearson	1	.078	.156	<b>.254**</b>
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.419	.103	<b>.007</b>
	N	110	1110	110	<b>110</b>
ISSattentiveness	Pearson		1	<b>.252**</b>	<b>.311**</b>
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)			<b>.008</b>	<b>.001</b>
	N		110	<b>110</b>	<b>110</b>
ISSempathy	Pearson			1	<b>.422**</b>
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)				<b>.000</b>
	N			110	<b>110</b>
ISStolerance	Pearson				1
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N				110

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As listed above, there was a positive correlation between intercultural interaction tolerance and intercultural interaction attentiveness ( $r = .31$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $N = 110$ ). There was also a positive correlation between intercultural interacting empathy and intercultural interaction

tolerance ( $r = .42, p = .000, N = 110$ ). There was a small positive correlation between intercultural interaction tolerance and intercultural interaction confidence ( $r = .25, p = .007, N = 110$ ). Intercultural interaction attentiveness and intercultural interaction empathy also showed a small positive correlation ( $r = .25, p = .008, N = 110$ ). The distribution of these correlations is shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4. Simple chart of Pearson's correlation test, ISS empathy, ISS tolerance, ISS confidence, and ISS attentiveness.**

These results support H7.

#### **4.2.6. H8: Individual's total intercultural communication competence will correlate negatively with intercultural interaction ethnocentrism.**

Cultural ethnocentrism mainly indicates whether an individual will regard his/her culture as superior and better than the culture of others. In order to test the correlation between intercultural interaction ethnocentrism and other scale items, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was employed. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. As listed in Table 20, a small positive correlation was found between ethnocentrism and empathy ( $r = .29$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $N = 110$ ). Positive correlations were found between ethnocentrism and confidence ( $r = .36$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $N = 110$ ) and ethnocentrism and tolerance ( $r = .48$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $N = 110$ ).

As stated before, the variable ISS ethnocentrism was recoded. This means the higher the score, the lower the ethnocentrism. Thus, H8 was supported.

**Table 21**  
*Correlation analysis between ethnocentrism and other four sub-scales*

		ISS confidence	ISS attentiveness	ISS empathy	ISS tolerance
ISS ethnocentrism	Pearson	<b>.356**</b>	.121	<b>.289**</b>	<b>.484**</b>
	Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.000</b>	.206	<b>.002</b>	<b>.000</b>
	N	<b>110</b>	110	<b>110</b>	<b>110</b>

#### **4.2.7. RQ3: How will the items in Intercultural Sensitivity Scale predict the overall intercultural communication competence?**

In order to further explore how much of the variance in intercultural communication competence can be explained by the five scales on this study's survey instrument, multiple linear

regression was used to develop an overall intercultural communication competence model.

Intercultural interaction ethnocentrism was excluded from this test. The descriptive statistics of this model are described in Table 22

**Table 22**  
*Descriptive Statistics of four sub-scales*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
ICCTOTAL	65.1727	6.93199	110
ISSconfidence	13.2455	2.86448	110
ISSattentiveness	10.9727	2.13085	110
ISSempathy	11.3727	1.78093	110
ISStolerance	17.3182	2.46417	110

**Table 23**  
*Multiple linear regression of four sub-scales*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.554	1.263		3.605	.001
	isstolerance	1.378	.081	.411	17.095	.000
	issattentiveness	.966	.068	.329	14.307	.000
	issconfidence	1.143	.047	.530	24.577	.000
	issempathy	1.100	.088	.293	12.490	.000

**Table 24**  
**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.980 <sup>a</sup>	.960	.958	1.24245	1.597

a. Predictors: (Constant), issempathy, issconfidence, issattentiveness, isstolerance

b. Dependent Variable: ICCTOTAL

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3250.134	4	812.534	526.359	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	134.301	87	1.544		
	Total	3384.435	91			

a. Predictors: (Constant), issempathy, issconfidence, issattentiveness, isstolerance

b. Dependent Variable: ICCTOTAL

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the ability of four scales (tolerance, empathy, confidence, and attentiveness) to predict total intercultural communication competence. Results indicated the four scales explained 96% of variance in the data ( $R^2 = .96$ ,  $F(4, 87) = 526.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ). It was found that intercultural interaction confidence significantly predicted overall intercultural communication competence ( $\beta = .53$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The three other scales also predicted overall intercultural communication competence. Results are shown in Table 24.

Thus, the following model can be developed from this analysis:

**Overall ICC = (1.378 \* II tolerance) + (.966 \* II attentiveness) + (1.143 \* II confidence) + (1.1 \* II empathy).**

### 4.3. Research question 3 (SNS – ISS)

RQ 3: What factor(s) in SNS use will trigger changes in intercultural communication competence?

#### 4.3.1. H9: Time spend on SNS will influence an individual's intercultural communication competence.

Hypothesis 9 suggests that time spent on SNS will influence an individual's intercultural communication competence. In this study, intercultural communication competence is defined by the five categories of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale: intercultural interaction ethnocentrism, intercultural interaction confidence, intercultural interaction attentiveness, intercultural interaction empathy, and intercultural difference tolerance.

The relationship between time spent on SNS and intercultural communication competence (as measured by the five secondary scales) was investigated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure data did not violate the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. There was no significant correlation between variables.

**Table 25.**  
*Descriptive Statistics of ICC total and SNSTIME total*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
ICCTOTAL	65.1727	6.93199	110
SNSTIMET TL	524.4702	504.45671	84

**Table 26**  
***Person's correlations between ICC total and SNS time total***

		ICCTOTAL	SNSTIMETTL
ICCTOTAL	Pearson	1	.055
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.622
	N	110	84
SNSTIMET TL	Pearson	.055	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.622	
	N	84	84

Thus, H9 cannot be supported. For this data, time spent on SNS did not influence individuals' overall intercultural communication competence.

**4.3.2. H10: Pattern 1 (social-motivation functions of SNS) will correlate positively with intercultural communication competence.**

The relationship between SNS social motivation (as measured by five variables of the social-motivation scale) and intercultural communication competence (as measured by five secondary scales) was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The results are listed in Table 26.



**Table 27**  
***Pearson's correlation between items***

		SM1	SM2	SM3	SM4	SM5
ISS ethnocentrism	Pearson	.192	.227*	-.021	<b>.271**</b>	.202
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.067	.029	.844	<b>.004</b>	.054
	N	92	92	92	<b>110</b>	92
ISS confidence	Pearson	.199	<b>.230*</b>	.020	.038	.078
	Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.058	<b>.015</b>	.850	.722	.458
	N	92	<b>110</b>	92	92	92
ISS tolerance	Pearson	.020	.038	.078	.020	<b>.262*</b>
	Correlation					*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.850	.722	.458	.850	<b>.006</b>
	N	92	92	92	92	<b>110</b>

There was a small positive correlation between SM4 (“feel involved with what happens with others”) and intercultural interaction ethnocentrism ( $r = .27$ ,  $n = 110$ ,  $p < .005$ ). This means that respondents who use SNS to get involved with others will be less ethnocentric in intercultural interaction.

There was also a small positive correlation between SM2 (“stay in touch with people who understand me”) and intercultural interaction confidence ( $r = .23$ ,  $n = 110$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This means respondents who use SNS to keep in touch with others will be more confident in intercultural interaction.

Finally, there was a small positive correlation between SM5 (“stay informed of occasions and events”) and intercultural interaction tolerance ( $r = .26$ ,  $n = 110$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This means respondents who use SNS to get informed about occasions and events will be more tolerant of what is happening around them.

Overall, H10 was partially supported, even though no overall statistical significance was found.

#### 4.3.3. H11: Pattern 2 (non-social-motivation functions of SNS) will correlate positively with intercultural communication competence.

The relationship between SNS non-social motivation (as measured by six variables of the non- social motivation scale) and intercultural communication competence (as measured by five secondary scales) was investigated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

The results are shown in Table 28.

**Table 28**  
*Pearson's correlation between ISS sub-scales*

		NSM1	NSM2	NSM3	NSM4	NSM5	NSM6
ISS ethnocentrism	Pearson	.128	.059	-.059	-.165	-.024	-.121
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.222	.577	.575	.117	.820	.250
	N	92	92	92	92	92	92
ISS confidence	Pearson	.060	-.094	.267*	.091	.187	.112
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.567	.375	.010	.388	.074	.290
	N	92	92	92	92	92	92
ISS attentiveness	Pearson	-.058	-.086	<b>.214*</b>	.177	.123	.065
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.581	.416	<b>.025</b>	.091	.244	.538
	N	92	92	<b>110</b>	92	92	92
ISS empathy	Pearson	.174	.126	-.051	-.052	.054	.126
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.098	.230	.627	.619	.610	.230
	N	92	92	92	92	92	92
ISS tolerance	Pearson	-.003	-.050	-.083	-.105	.013	.087
	Correlation						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.981	.634	.429	.319	.905	.408
	N	92	92	92	92	92	92

As the results listed above show, NSM3 (“escape from my responsibilities”) has a small positive correlation with intercultural interacting attentiveness ( $r = .21$ ,  $N = 110$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This means that in this data set respondents who were motivated to escape from their responsibilities had higher intercultural interaction attentiveness.

**4.3.4. H12: Pattern 3 (function/activity of SNS) positively correlated with intercultural communication competence.**

In order to discover the relationship between Pattern 3 (function/activity of SNS) and intercultural communication competence, Pearson’s product-moment correlation was used. However, no statistical significance was found; thus, H12 cannot be supported.

## Chapter 5 Discussion, Implications and Conclusion

### 5.1. Key findings in this research

#### **Key Finding 1: Social Networking Sites Use.**

*Time and frequency.* It is not surprising that both Chinese international students and U.S. students reported spending large amounts of time in SNS use. Using SNS---checking updates, posting on walls, sharing others' postings – all are time consuming. On average, Chinese international student spent 86 minutes per session on SNS, and average SNS use totaled 6.32 hours per week. This means most of these students access SNS every day. The U.S. students reported that they usually spent 50.77 minutes per session, which is almost 30 minutes less than Chinese international students. The average weekly SNS use for U.S. students is 6.90 hours per week. Furthermore, the total time of using SNS per week reached statistical significance between Chinese international students and U.S. students ( $p < .05$ ). This means that although U.S. students do not spend much more time on SNS than Chinese international students per session, they use SNS more frequently than Chinese international students during a week.

*Time spent on SNS compared to time spent on traditional media.* Results show that compared to traditional media like TV, radio, newspaper, Chinese international students spend more time on SNS than U.S. students. The results of ANOVA indicate that U.S. students spend almost the same amount or more time on traditional media compared to SNS ( $M=2.07$ ), meanwhile Chinese students seem to be more keen on SNS ( $M=1.61$ ).

*Social Motivation for using SNS.* In this study, social motivation for using SNS was tested using five variables: 1) stay in touch with people who understand me, 2) stay informed with events, 3) let other people know I care about their feelings, 4) feel involved with what

happened, and 5) talk about my problems. According to the perspectives of uses and gratifications theory, all these items can be classified under three general needs. For example, “stay informed with event” and “talk about my problems” can be regarded as cognitive needs, because both of them are related to gaining information/understanding. “Stay in touch with people who understand me” can be regarded as a social integrative need, because it involves maintaining relationships between an individual and his/her social connections. “Let other people know I care about their feelings” can be regarded as an affective needs, by showing understanding, empathy, or support.

What differences in social motivation for SNS use emerge between Chinese international students and U.S. students? First of all, comparisons of each variable’s mean reveal that Chinese international students score higher on four out of five variables (let people know I care about their feelings, stay in touch with people, talk about my problems, and feel involved with what happens with others). Statistical significance was found for two of the variables (talk about my problems, and feel involved with what happens with others). This phenomenon echoes Yuan (2010)’s study, which focused on general Chinese SNS users. In his study, Yuan found out Chinese male SNS users were “motivated by talking about their own problems in the activity of adding content about themselves” (p. 69).

Analysis of another question, “feel involved with what happens with others”, reveals the difficulties caused by communication barriers facing Chinese international students. Social interaction is a main challenge for such students because of differences in language, culture, and communication patterns. On the one hand, they may experience difficulties communicating with their peers, and on the other hand, after they relocate to another country, physical and emotional connections with their previous friends and family members will also be weakened.

*Non-social motivations for SNS use.* If the social motivations for using SNS can be classified into “uses”, then non-social motivations basically represent “gratifications.” Only three non-social motivational variables were retained after conducting inter-item reliability tests: amuse oneself, escape from my responsibilities, and postpone tasks that I should complete first. Three items were removed from this scale: Relax was removed because it duplicates amuse, and both tracking local news (item-total correlation of .25) and international news (item-total correlation of .043) were moved into the category of “activities and functions.”

However, no statistically significance differences in non-social motivations were found between groups. This means that there is no obvious difference between groups’ non-social motivations for SNS use. Both groups’ registered relatively low scores in “postpone the job I should do” (M = 1.95, range 1 – 5) and “escape my responsibilities” (M = 2.84). Such low scores might be caused by respondent tendencies to give socially desirable answers to self-report questions.

### **Key Finding 2: Intercultural Communication Competence.**

*Modified 17-item Intercultural Sensitivity Scale.* The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) has been proved to have a high Cronbach’s coefficient (.86 to .88). In the current study, Cronbach’s alpha was .88. Chen and Starosta (2000) suggested developing better measurement concepts for "interaction attentiveness" and "interaction enjoyment." After conducting factor analysis, this study recommended retention of five Intercultural Sensitivity Scale factors. "Interaction attentiveness" was retained because the three remaining variables expressed the strong and obvious tendency of "receiving information", "giving information", or "willing to absorb information". The variable "interacting enjoyment" was eliminated and replaced by "intercultural interaction ethnocentrism" -- an individual’s

putting his/her culture at center stage when interacting with people from a different culture. The variable "intercultural difference tolerance" was originally "respect for cultural differences"; this change attempts maintain the standardization of the title.

***Intercultural Interaction Attentiveness, Empathy and Tolerance.*** The hypotheses suggest that compared to U.S. students, Chinese international students will have higher scores in interacting attentiveness, empathy and tolerance. The descriptive statistics indicated that Chinese international students scored lower than U.S. students in both attentiveness and tolerance, but scored higher than U.S. students in empathy. None of the differences mentioned above reached statistical significance.

***Intercultural Interaction Confidence and Ethnocentrism.*** ANOVA indicates that compared to U.S. students, the mean of interacting confidence of Chinese international students are significantly lower. This is the only item that reached statistical significance in Intercultural Sensitivity Scale.

One explanation for this result may lie in the differences between Chinese international students and U.S. students with regard to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, specifically individualism versus collectivism. As stated by Hofstede, citizens from collectivist cultures (including most Eastern Culture such as Japan, Korea, and China) rank high in collectivism, while U.S. citizens are categorized under individualist culture. In this situation, Chinese international students tend to be more cooperative, more other-oriented, and more "we." Being too confident is not admired in Confucian culture and as seen as detrimental to the harmony of the whole team.

Another index that can help understand this situation is masculinity versus femininity. Hofstede noted, “The masculinity side of this dimension represents a preference in society of achievement, heroism, assertiveness. . . . femininity stands for preference for cooperation, *modesty*, caring for the weak and quality of life.” (<http://geert-hofstede.com/dimensions.html>) Modesty is a core trait accepted by the Chinese. In order to maintain this modesty, most Chinese will not appear to be too confident and aggressive, but rather keep a lower profile in intercultural settings.

Intercultural interaction ethnocentrism has a negative correlation with the other three scale items. The Pearson’s correlation conducted to test this hypothesis revealed that the higher an individual’s total score for ISS ethnocentrism is, the lower his/her confidence, empathy, and tolerance will be. This conclusion reached statistical significance.

***How to Predict Intercultural Communication Competence.*** In this study, multiple linear regression was conducted to test whether an individual’s intercultural communication competence can be predicted by the five scale item blocks created from the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. Total intercultural communication competence comprised the sum of the five created variables: intercultural interaction confidence, attentiveness, empathy, tolerance, and ethnocentrism. As mentioned before, originally intercultural interaction ethnocentrism was composed of negatively phrased questions, so re-coding was employed to test this concept’s model fit. However after the first-step test, this variable was excluded by SPSS.

The result of the coefficients of multiple linear regressions shows that the rest of the four blocks can predict about 96% of the total variance; hence, the model can be established. Among the four variables, intercultural interaction confidence significantly predicted most of the overall



intercultural communication competence ( $\beta = .53, p < .001$ ). Also, tolerance proved important ( $\beta = .41, p < .001$ ). This means both interaction confidence and tolerance play important roles in intercultural communication. Furthermore, since positive correlations were confirmed between interaction confidence and empathy/tolerance/ethnocentrism, it can be suggested that a respondent with a high interaction confidence score will also score high in interaction tolerance and empathy and will be less ethnocentric in intercultural communication settings.

The final model is **Overall ICC = (1.378 \* II tolerance) + (.966 \* II attentiveness) + (1.143 \* II confidence) + (1.1 \* II empathy)**. One way to use this model is to enter the total scores of each of the four variables into this equation to calculate overall intercultural communication competence. For example, if student A scored 15 in confidence, 9 in attentiveness, 9 in empathy, and 14 in tolerance, then his final overall score would be 55.031; if another student, B, scored 4 in confidence, 15 in attentiveness, 15 in empathy, and 14 in tolerance, then his final overall score will be 54.854.

**Table 27.**  
*Comparison of total sum and final adjusted score*

	Student A	Student B
Confidence	15	4
Attentiveness	9	15
Empathy	9	15
Tolerance	14	14
Sum	47	48
Final adjusted score	55.031	54.854

### **Key Finding 3: Intercultural Communication Competence and SNS use.**

**Time spent on SNS.** RQ 3 was designed to discover the factors in SNS use that trigger changes in intercultural communication competence. Is that possible that a SNS lurker (those who stay online for hours without active interaction) could improve his/her intercultural

communication competence? Using Pearson's correlation test, no statistical significance was found between time spent on SNS and intercultural communication competence ( $R = .055$ ). This means there no relationship was shown between time spent on SNS and overall intercultural communication competence.

***SNS use patterns: Social-motivation.*** Generally speaking, social-motivation was not shown to exert significant influence on intercultural communication competence. However, by choosing certain motivation variables, it is possible that one's intercultural communication competence could be influenced by SNS use. Three out of four items on the social-motivation scale positively correlate with intercultural communication competence:

- 1) "Using SNS to get involved with others" has a small positive correlation with intercultural interaction ethnocentrism. This means the higher the ethnocentrism is, the less he/she can be ethnocentric, and he/she will not judge another culture by traits, value, and other standards.
- 2) "Using SNS to stay in touch with people who understand me" has a small positive correlation with interaction confidence. One possible explanation is that positive online information constitutes one kind of social support. Social support can enhance one's confidence and empower him/her in daily life.
- 3) "Using SNS to stay informed of occasions and events" has a small positive correlation with interaction tolerance. It is possible that after receiving related information about occasions and events, an individual will have a more comprehensive understanding of the surrounding world; thus, cognition/perception about different cultures will be enhanced.

### 5.3. Limitations

#### Questionnaire 1: Motivations for SNS use.

The first limitation of this research is the questionnaire design. Social Networking Sites Using Motivation is based on three smaller questionnaires: 1) Gratification and Seeding Behavior of Online Adolescents, 2) CNNIC's 2009 Report on Chinese Netizens' Uses of Social Networking Sites, and 3) PEW Internet & American Life Project. The first study focused on gratifications and the second and third was designed by two different organizations. CNNIC's questionnaire did not include Western social networking websites because such sites are blocked in mainland China; hence, this instrument is very Chinese-oriented and nationality biased.

PEW Internet & American Life Project also does not focus on SNS use but rather on a wider picture of Internet use. This researcher contends that several questions on this instrument need to be re-designed, including:

- 1) QIII/I a: "In a typical session, how long do you use SNS?" When this researcher was debriefing respondents, many respondents mentioned question is ambiguous: i.e., what does "a session" mean? How should I calculate the time if I "check SNS status continually on my phone?"
- 2) QIII/V: "Which of the following SNS are you a member of?" Although this question was not used in this study, its goal one remains questionable. Many respondents mentioned even though they might be a member of many SNS, most of them use only certain SNS frequently. Some Chinese students mentioned since Western SNS were blocked, even though they can "fan qiang" (de-block the Great Fire Wall by using free online proxy or paid commercial VPN, *Virtual Private Network* ) and did register with SNS like

Facebook and twitter, the procedure can still be difficult and time-consuming for regular Internet users, so most of them do not use these SNS on a daily basis.

- 3) Problems occurred with section two “non-social motivation” and “function/activity use.” The inter-item coefficient of “non-social motivation” revealed that the item “check local/international news” had very low reliability. This item should be moved to section 3, “function/activity use.”
- 4) The instrument needs to be updated for Web 2.0: in the era of Web 2.0, picture-sharing SNS may become more popular than traditional SNS like Facebook. Instagram (a picture-sharing website) has surged in popularity with many users. However, none of the main functions/activity of Instagram (picture sharing, photo taking, after-effect, and so on.) can be found in this scale.

### **Questionnaire 2: Intercultural Sensitivity Scale.**

Compared with Questionnaire I, the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale has been tested by numerous scholars. The structure and communication perspective of this scale are more reliable. However, several questions (i.e., I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded) produce significantly lower scores than others. One respondent noted “no one will answer ‘strongly agree’ even they strongly agree with this item.” This response illustrates a typical problem in survey research -- respondents tend to give socially desirable answers when they reply to negative questions. This researcher suggests that recoding should be employed before distributing the survey.

Explanations about what constitutes “Intercultural Training” should be elaborated. What is intercultural training? How long it should be? Should it be academic or commercial? What aspects should it focus on, academic, travel, daily-life, or working?

### **Sample Bias.**

This research used convenience and snow-ball sampling techniques. At the University of New Mexico, the population of Chinese students is very small. According to the names list of the Chinese Student and Scholar Association’s email listserv, total subscribers number around 600, and most of them have already graduated from UNM. Even though this researcher conducted snow-ball sampling, the final number of respondents remained small. And due to the lack of Chinese international undergraduate students, the comparison between Chinese international students and U.S. students actually matches “graduate students” against “undergraduate students.” This may cause problems because the life patterns of these two groups are different: graduate students in U.S. universities may spend more time on research or teaching, while undergraduate students may spend more time on attending classes or at part-time jobs. Thus, the intercultural communication settings of graduate students may comprise working in multicultural environments or working at home as grading assistants, communicating with U.S. students via online tools or email; undergraduate students might work with other students from different cultures to finish class projects.

Furthermore, this study also shows sample bias on certain background. For example, most U.S. students in this study have not been either living, or studying in another country. In this case, it is possible that they do not really understand what intercultural communication really

means understand this international setting. Future study could consider possible comparison between Chinese international students in the U.S. and U.S. international students in China.

## **5.2. Suggestions for Future Research**

The author recommends that future research more strictly control demographic factors such as nationality, education level, and even gender. In this way, respondents within each group will be more homogeneous, and the relationship between the variables will be more clear. Second, future research should employ larger samples. In quantitative research, the bigger the sample size, the easier to explore results and to deploy more complicated statistic tests. Related to a larger sample size, randomly drawn samples would enhance extrapolation from such studies to larger populations.

Another possibility of future research can be the comparison of the intercultural communication competence between Chinese international students and Chinese students in China. Some of the data showed problems like 1) intercultural interaction confidence will drop after living abroad for couple months, and 2) the difference of SNS using pattern between these two groups, like the time spent on SNS, certain motivation of using SNS, and so on. Since the number of the participants did not meet the minimum requirement suggested by Cohen (1988), the Chinese international students were completely excluded from the final analysis; however this can be a very interesting topic for future study.

Third, when testing intercultural communication competence, a simpler dependent variable could be used, like intercultural communication behavior, cognition, attitude, or adaptation. Finally, mixed research method could strengthen the result. Interviews, focus groups, observations, or even experiments could be a strong supplement.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

This research achieved two goals. The first goal comprised an attempt to link social network sites using motivation and intercultural communication competence. A model was built to predict how intercultural communication competence will be influenced by certain aspects of intercultural sensitivity. Two questionnaires were tested, and corresponding modifications were made to both of them. Some of the confusing survey items were removed, and the general reliability of both questionnaires was tested.

Uses and gratifications theory can be regarded as a reliable and efficient theoretical perspective with which to explain individuals' motivations and actual behaviors during SNS use, and Hofstede's culture dimension can be applied to parts of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale. Even though intercultural communication competence can only partially be explained by certain motivations in using SNS, this research still provides many possibilities for future study involving new media, Web 2.0 technique, and motivation. Also, confidence and being tolerant are two main factors contributing to better intercultural communication competence; future research could also focus on training in these two factors.

The second goal was to understand the differences in SNS use and intercultural communication competence between Chinese international students and U.S. students. The results revealed that 1) compared with U.S. students, Chinese international students usually spend more time on SNS, but access SNS less frequently; 2) the social motivation of Chinese international students using SNS is to talk about their problems online and to feel involved with others; 3) time spent on SNS will not influence individuals' intercultural communication competence, but certain motivations and the behavior driven by these motivations (get involved with what happens with others, stay in touch with people who understand me, and stay informed

of occasions and events) could enhance certain aspects of intercultural communication competence.



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## Appendix A: Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

### I. Demographic Information

- a. Age
- b. Gender
- c. Occupations
- d. If you are a student, please specify your grade
- e. Ethnicity
- f. Nationality
- g. Language speak
- h. Have you ever had any intercultural training
- i. Have you ever travel abroad? If yes, how many times?
- j. Have you live abroad? If yes, how long?

### II. *The following are statements about communication behaviors that relate to your general style of communication in social situations. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking a “√”.*

	Not at all like me 1	Not Much like me 2	Somewhat like me 3	A lot like me 4	Exactly like me 5
I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people					
At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to do or say things that others will like					
I can only argue for ideas which I already believe					
I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information.					
I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain others					
I would probably make a good actor					
In a group of people I am rarely the center of attention					
In different situations and with different people, I often act like a very different person					



	Not at all like me 1	Not Much like me 2	Somewhat like me 3	A lot like me 4	Exactly like me 5
I am not particularly good at making other people like me					
I am not always the person I appear to be					
I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone or win their favor					
I have considered being an entertainer					
I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting					
I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations					
At a party I let others keep the jokes and stories going					
I feel a bit awkward in public and do not show up quite as well as I should					
I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if for a right end)					
I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them					

III. *Below is a series of statements concerning intercultural communication. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement by putting the number corresponding your answer in the blank before the statement.*

*\* If you not sure what to check, just leave it blank so that it will be regarded as "0", which is not sure/unknown.*

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures					
I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded					
I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures					
I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures					
I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures					
I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures					
I do not like to be with people from different cultures					
I respect the values of people from different cultures					
I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures					
I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures					
I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts					

I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures					
I am open minded to people from different cultures					
I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures					
I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures					
I respect the ways people from different cultures behave					
I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures					
I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures					
I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction					
I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures					
I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.					
I think my cultures is better than other cultures					
I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction					
I avoid those situations where I will have to deal					

with culturally-distinct persons					
I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues					
I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.					

### Appendix B: Social Networking Sites Use Questionnaire

- I. First, some questions about how you use social networking sites
- In a typical session, how long do you use SNS?
  - Please select the best choice to fill in the blank in the following sentence: In a typical week, in total, I spent \_\_\_\_\_ (more, about the same, less) time on SNS compared to time I spent on all other media (i.e. TV, online news sites, mobile phone, and so on)
- II. These next questions ask about ways you might use SNS for social relations.  
*It is very \_\_\_\_\_ for me to use SNS to \_\_\_\_\_.*

	Not at all important 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Very important 5
Let people know I care about their feelings					
Stay in touch with people who understand me					
Talk about my problems					
Feel involved with what happens with others					
Stay informed of occasions and events (i.e. concerts, sports, exhibitions)					

- III. These questions ask about other ways to use SNS  
*It is very \_\_\_\_\_ for me to use SNS to \_\_\_\_\_.*

	Not at all important 1	2	Neutral 3	4	Very important 5
Keep track of the international news					
Keep track of the local news					
Escape from my responsibilities					
Postpone tasks that I should complete first					
Amuse myself					
Relax (from pressure)					

- IV. Now we would like to ask how often you use some functions on domestic SNS

*How often do you....*

	Never		Sometimes		Always
	1	2	3	4	5
Add information about yourself on your own SNS sites so that your friends can see (i.e. update status, upload photos, write a blog, and so on,.)					
Check-out friends' updates without sharing or responding to the update (i.e. their sharings, photos, status, and so on,.)					
Look at your friends' updates and share or respond to the updates					
Initiate a personal interaction (i.e. inbox message, birthday, tag a friend, initiate a post on a friend's wall, and so on)					

V. Which of the following SNS are you a member of? (select all that apply)

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- MySpace
- Twitter
- Renren.com
- QQ Alumni Book
- Douban
- Sina microblog
- Other (please specify)

VI. How many friends do you have on your SNS that you use most often?