

CULTURALLY CONDITIONED PRIVACY IN ONLINE PHOTO-SHARING:
A COMPARISON BETWEEN AMERICAN AND CHINESE USERS OF SOCIAL
NETWORK SITES

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ABSTRACT

This research is a cross-cultural examination of how American and Chinese social network site (SNS) users deal with privacy in online photo sharing. It discovers that American subjects share more about private lives and execute less stringent privacy control in photo sharing on Facebook than Chinese subjects on Renren.com. It also discovers that in consistency with the correlation between privacy and social distance as proposed by the social distance theory, American subjects show a higher level of intensity of feeling in Facebook friendship than Chinese subjects in Renren.com friendship. Those differences of online privacy and friendship are not only conditioned by the ingroup-based differences between individualistic American culture and collectivistic Chinese culture, but also attributed to the mediation of social network sites on American culture and Chinese culture.

INTRODUCTION

Including personal information from social network sites in news stories has become an increasing tendency in journalism. The influence of this journalistic practice on online privacy should be subject to careful consideration, when it involves people from different cultures and sub-cultures. In January 2009, shortly after the murder of a Chinese student, Xin Yang, by another Chinese student, Haiyang Zhu, at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, news media included the description of their online friends and photos on Facebook (Schulte & Vargas, 2009). In September 2009, Annie Le, a Yale student of Vietnamese descent, was murdered on campus. The murder attracted a great deal of media attention. The murder coverage publicized many of the victim's Facebook photos that contained images of herself and her family members. The Vietnamese family of the victim insisted to the media that they wanted privacy (Goldman & Ennis, 2009). These events raised the long-debated issue of cultural specificity of privacy in the new context of social network sites.

This research examines the culturally conditioned privacy in social network sites by comparing the online photo-sharing behaviors of 10 American undergraduate journalism students who are Facebook users and 10 Chinese undergraduate journalism students who are Renren.com users. Building on the social distance theory, which pointed out the link between people's mutual knowledge and their intensity of feeling towards each other (Shibutani, 1991; Simmel, 1950), and the theory of psychological homeostasis, which suggested that the major cultural-psychological difference between

American and Chinese culture is found in the intensity of feeling in various social relationships (Hsu, 1985), this research tries to answer the following questions:

*How do American and Chinese social network site users share photos with online friends about their lives (relationships, activities, feelings and thoughts)? Do they do it in the same way or differently?

*How do American and Chinese social network site users treat their friends on social network sites in terms of the intensity of feeling? Do they treat their friends on social network sites with the same intensity of feeling or differently?

*If there are any differences in the previous two groups of questions, how can those differences be understood in reference to cultural differences between America and China?

Cultural specificity of privacy has been under discussion for a long time. Some scholars held a dualistic view that there is an imperative need for privacy in some societies, while in some other societies, there is “no privacy and no sense of shame” (Dorothy, 1959; Mead, 1949, p. 137). But other scholars later contended that norms of privacy could be called by other names, and each society must be studied in its own terms (Westin, 1967). This research contributes to the understanding of cultural specificity of privacy by making a cross-cultural comparison in the context of social network sites.

Speaking of privacy on social network sites, one of the major causes of controversies is that people do not agree on the public-private border in social network sites. Some users believe that the information they post to Facebook should be protected as personal correspondence (Jones & Soltren, 2005). But other users might use their

personal homepage as a tool of self-publicity and a professional badge of entry into job market (Erickson, 1996; Tufekci, 2008). That controversy about public-private border in social network sites can be further complicated in the cross-cultural context. A privacy choice that is appropriate in one culture might not be so in another culture. Given the increasing cross-cultural communication on the Internet, it is necessary to study online privacy in reference to cultural differences. Although there were some studies about privacy in social network sites, those studies did not focus on the linkage between privacy and culture. Some studies suggested a few sub-cultural differences of personal information disclosure, but lacked in-depth description and interpretation (Tufekci, 2007; Tufekci, 2008). This research seeks to provide a rich description and an in-depth explanation of American and Chinese social network site users' privacy in reference to their cultural differences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of culture is all-encompassing. Which part of culture can serve as the point of comparison for this cross-cultural study of privacy on social network sites? This literature review is organized towards determining the point of comparison in this study. The first section looks at the evolution of the definition of privacy in philosophy, anthropology and sociology. Previous research suggested that, to study privacy in cross-cultural context, researchers should examine social relationships. The second section looks at the concept of “friendship” in the theories of individualism vs. collectivism cultural differentiation, because the key social relationship in this study is online friendship on social network sites, and also because Chinese culture is usually considered highly collectivistic while American culture is considered typically individualistic. The third section looks at the theory of psychological homeostasis, and the social distance theory which reveals the connection between the intensity of feeling between people and their mutual knowledge. Both theories point to the intensity of feeling in online friendship as the most potential point of comparison for this study. The last section examines the basic differences of privacy legislation between American and China, which also affect privacy expectations of social network site users of the two countries.

Privacy

According to Schoeman (1984), “despite the fact that privacy has been identified by contemporary philosophers as a key aspect of human dignity, ... there was no major

philosophical discussion of the value of privacy until the late 1960s” (p. 1). A crucial part of the philosophical discussion of privacy was around how privacy should be defined.

The most famous definition of privacy was formulated by Warren and Brandeis (1890), who considered privacy as the right to be let alone. However, some philosophers took issue with regarding privacy as a *right*, which presumes the moral significance of privacy, and leads to the conclusion that people should always desire for more privacy, and privacy is always to be protected; nevertheless, it is not necessarily so in reality (Schoeman, 1984).

Another frequently used definition of privacy is the control an individual has over the access of the self to others. This definition is not satisfactory to philosophers either, because the definition over-emphasizes the individual’s role in privacy. According to Schoeman (1984), privacy should be better understood in relation to the society, and will lose its relevance if it is not considered in the social world. For example, “a man shipwrecked on a deserted island ... has lost control over who has information about him”, but “ironically, ... he has too much privacy” (Schoeman, 1984, p. 3).

Privacy is also identified as a *condition* of limited access to a person. This notion of privacy constitutes a social concept. “A person has privacy to the extent that others have limited access to information about him” (Schoeman, 1984, p. 3). This concept stresses the applicability of relevant social norms (Benn, 1971). But this definition of privacy, as opposed to the second definition, underestimates the individual’s role in privacy.

Benn & Gaus (1983) argued that the concept of privacy represents something more complex than the previous definitions. By synthesizing the second and third definition, Benn and Gaus (1983) contended that

“An adequate account of privacy must include the agent’s own understanding of what he is doing, and ... the conceptual universe within which he acts ... he must perceive the situation ... and he must also be able to conceive of some action as fitting or appropriate” (Benn & Gaus, 1983, p. 6).

Similar to Benn & Gaus (1983)’s philosophical definition of privacy that emphasizes both the role of the individual and the influence of social norms, sociological definitions of privacy well demonstrate how the individual maintained privacy in reference to social and cultural contexts. Simmel (1950) considered privacy as a contextualized variable. For an individual, the body is usually treated as privacy, but not so in the intimate relationship of marriage. However, even “in the most intimate relationship that comprises the total individual”, there still needs to be respect for each other’s “innate private property”, so as to maintain “the fertile depth of relationship” (p. 406). Altman (1977) emphasized the process-modeled definition of privacy. Privacy is “a set of interpersonal boundary-control processes” (p. 66), by which a person asserts control over access of the self to the others, and the mechanisms of privacy optimization are culturally specific.

As to the relation between privacy and culture, early cultural anthropologists often held a dualistic view that privacy is a modern and advanced value largely absent from primitive society. That contention was a consequence of their field observation of high respect for privacy in some societies and indifference to privacy in some other, often

primitive societies. In the writing of the Tlingit Indians of North America, Jones (1914) argued that “privacy is hardly known among them, ... it cannot be maintained very well under their system of living” (as cited in Schoeman, 1984, p. 60). In her famous study of Samoa, Mead (1949) noted that “little is mysterious, ... little forbidden ... there is no sense of privacy and no sense of shame” (p. 137). Likewise, Lee (1952) found that in the life among the Tikopia of Polynesia, people considered privacy intolerable.

However, some later anthropologists argued that the mechanisms of people maintaining privacy in different cultures are very complex, which was found to consist of physical as well as psychological mechanisms, and therefore, each society should be studied in its own terms. Geertz (1959) found that although “the Javanese have literally almost no defense against the outside world of a physical sort, ... their defenses are mostly psychological ... people speak softly, hide their feelings” (as cited in Schoeman, 1984, p. 65). Based on the findings of Geertz (1959), Westin (1967) wrote that

“One could compile a long list of societies, primitive and modern, that neither have nor would admire the norms of privacy found in American culture ... Yet this circumstances does not prove that there are no universal needs for privacy ... It suggests only that each society must be studied ... to see whether there are norms of privacy called by other names ... and there are psychological ways of achieving privacy...” (Westin, 1967, p. 60).

On the basis of synthesizing previous anthropological research on privacy in different cultures, Altman (1977) proposed the sociological theory of culturally specific privacy optimization, contending that privacy involved “culturally unique regulatory mechanisms” (p. 66). Altman (1977) also suggested that the potential approach to examine privacy in cross-cultural context is to examine the context of social

relationships. For example, that approach “could involve an analysis of privacy mechanism used by males and females, husbands and wives, in-laws, and so on, to facilitate openness and closedness” (Altman, 1977, p. 72).

Building on sociologists’ contribution to the conceptualization of privacy, this study defines privacy as a culturally specific, optimizing process of selective control of access to oneself in the context of communication on social network sites. In this study, the key social relationship that needs to be examined is the friendship between social network users and their online friends.

Online Privacy

With regards to online privacy, some characteristics of the Internet are likely to make it difficult for the individual to optimize privacy in response to contexts. Palen and Dourish (2003) outlined three characteristics of the Internet world which could influence people’s online privacy optimization. First, whereas the audience in the world is limited by spatial boundaries and distance, those boundaries disappear and the audience is obscured online. Secondly, because of the “recordability” and the subsequent persistence of information, temporal boundaries also disappear on the Internet (Palen & Dourish, 2003, p. 2). Thirdly, the networked world is the "intersections of multiple physical and virtual spaces, each with potentially differing behavioral requirements" (Palen & Dourish, 2003, p. 2). Because of those characteristics, defining the situation of online communication becomes a complex task for the individual, making it hard for the individual to decide on a desired level of privacy.

Therefore unsurprisingly, people often have ambiguous or even contradictory opinions about privacy in online social network sites. Some people believe that their information posted on social network sites should be protected as personal correspondence (Jones & Soltren, 2005). But in reality, many social network site users use their personal homepage as a tool of self-publicity as well as a professional badge of entry into the job market (Palen & Dourish, 2003), and some employers even ask about the social network site homepage address of job seekers. However, as Tufekci (2008) pointed out, a photo posted on one's social network site homepage about a birthday party might not be representative of that person, nor is it necessarily appropriate for a job interview. Moreover, although in western history the concept of privacy represents the struggle to limit surveillance by authorities, there is not a social consensus on the boundary of surveillance in social network sites. For example, some students who are Facebook users believe that they conduct personal communication in social network sites. But Dean of Residential Life Programs, Andrew Ryder, believed that Facebook data would be admissible in Committee on Discipline hearings (Jones & Soltren, 2005). These contradictions and ambiguity about privacy in social network sites could be further complicated in the intercultural contexts because of the differences in relevant social-cultural norms.

Most studies on privacy in social network sites were conducted in the forms of surveys, case studies and philosophical reflections (Jones & Soltren, 2005; Palen & Dourish, 2003; Tufekci, 2007; Tufekci, 2008). Those studies did not focus on privacy and culture, and although some of those studies did touch a little upon privacy and sub-

cultures in America, the analysis lacked in-depth description and interpretation. For example, Tufekci (2008) found racial differences of Myspace information disclosure. Compared to African and Asian American students, white students are more likely to use their real names and indicate their romantic status and interests. Compared to Asian and white students, African American students are more likely to indicate their religion. But the research did not provide a racial-cultural explanation of why the information disclosure would vary by race. To summarize, more studies need to be conducted on privacy in social network sites, especially in reference to culture, not only to find features and patterns but also to provide detailed description and cultural interpretation.

Privacy in Visuals

Privacy is linked with visuals mainly in two ways. First, various personal space arrangements in social life are living forms of visual cues about privacy (Goffman, 1971). Secondly, visual products such as photographs, paintings and other forms of art can reflect personal, social and cultural beliefs about privacy (Halle, 1993). Both the previous studies of personal space arrangements and those about the representation of privacy in visual products can be used to inform this study.

From Goffman (1959)'s dramaturgical perspective, privacy optimization should be compared to a social performance where individual actors choose to play their parts in the front stage or the back stage, or off the stage. Goffman (1959) looked at social behaviors from the Shakespearean perspective, "All the world's a stage; and all the men and women merely players" (as cited in Goffman, 1959, p. 50). A performance has only

one focus of visual attention, which could be at one of the three positions: front stage, back stage and off the stage. Front stage is a formal position where an individual performs to the audience in accordance with all decorum. In this situation, the individual does not share much access of the self with the audience. For example, as Goffman cited Simone de Beauvoir, a woman in the male world needs to obey the rules of men and will feel not being herself. Back stage is an informal position where one can step out of the character and expect that no member of the audience will intrude. The off-stage position means the actor leaves the official stage and gives a specific performance only for some of the audience members.

From the dramaturgical perspective of the above-described theory, the behaviors depicted in the photos that a social network site user posts for online friends can be considered as “performances”, and the different “positions” in reference to the “stage” have different implications for privacy (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). When the focus of visual attention is at or close to the front stage, the user actually shares much more access of the self with online friends, compared to when the focus of visual attention is at or towards the back stage. Off-stage performances should be considered separately, because in that case the behaviors are intended for some specific persons, that is to say, the photos are posted for some specific online friends to view.

Goffman (1971) also identified eight “territories of the self”, among which three territories are of most relevance to visual research of privacy – personal space, the stall, and the turn (p. 40). Personal space is “the space surrounding an individual ... anywhere within an entering other causes the individual to feel encroached upon” (Goffman, 1971,

p. 34). “The stall” means “the space to which individuals can lay temporary claims” by “marking” the space in a certain way, such as placing a sweat shirt on a vacant chair (Goffman, 1971, p. 33). “The turn” refers to the situation of socially organized practices (Goffman, 1971, p. 40). From the perspective of these territories of the self, a social network site user shares more access of the self with online friends in those photos that depicts him or her in a close-up shot than in those photos that depicts him posing with several friends in a wide shot. Or, if a photo depicts any personal things with which the user lays claim to a public space temporarily, the user shares more access of the self in this photo than in another photo that might show the same user in the same space but without marking the space.

Halle (1993)’s research about paintings and photographs in American families discovered that those two-dimensional visual data mirrored the rise of privacy in American social life. Halle (1993) conducted a semiotic analysis to compare the themes of the paintings and photographs and found several privacy-relating patterns. For example, the landscape that is void of people is the most common form of paintings displayed on walls, which shows a preference for privately enjoyed leisure. Most photographs in the houses are family pictures, while few of them depict non-family members. This pattern shows a clear sense of family border. Halle (1993)’s research revealed some visual themes of privacy in American social life, including family, religion and space of leisure.

Based on the previous visual studies of privacy, this study analyzes photos according to the region behaviors as presented in the photos (front-stage, back-stage, and

off-stage behaviors), the types of spaces as depicted by the photos (personal space, public space marked as private space, and public space), and the themes of the images (various relationships, activities, feelings and thoughts).

Friendship

According to the above literature review, the cross-cultural examination of privacy needs to focus on social relationships. In this study, the specific type of interpersonal relationship that the researcher is most concerned about is online friendship, because both American and Chinese social network site users post photos for the purpose of sharing with their online friends. Hays (1988) defined friendship as the “interdependence between two persons over time” that is intended to “facilitate social-emotional goals of the participants, and may involve varying types and degrees of companionship, intimacy, affection, and mutual assistance” (p. 395). To compare friendship in American and Chinese culture, one of the most frequently cited theories is that of individualism vs. collectivism.

Hofstede (1990) defined individualism and collectivism as follows:

“Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (Hofstede, 1990, p. 51).

Hofstede (1980) considered the national culture of America as highly individualistic and national culture of China as typically collectivistic. That difference on the cultural level will in turn bring about differences on the level of interpersonal

relationships and social behaviors (Kagitcibasi, 1990; Triandis, 1994). Kagitcibasi (1990) described collectivistic cultures as “cultures of relatedness” and contended that this type of cultures will maintain ascribed relationships and interpersonal relatedness (as cited in Kim, 1995, p. 10). With regard to friendship, Kim (1995) contended that collectivistic societies stress the need for stable and pre-determined friendship, while individualistic societies stress the need for specific friendship as defined by the individuals. As to privacy, Kim (1995) also contended that collectivistic societies stress that one’s business is also the business of the group, while individualistic societies stress the right to privacy and even have the preference for being alone.

Friends are considered as an important type of ingroup. The ingroup-relating differences between individualistic culture and collectivistic culture influence friendship in the two cultures. Triandis (1988) defined ingroups as groups of individuals “about whose welfare a person is concerned, with whom that person is willing to cooperate without demanding equitable returns, and separation from whom leads to anxiety” (p. 75). Triandis (1995) held that in individualistic societies, individuals are expected to improvise ingroup norms and can also enter and exit ingroups with great frequency, while in collectivistic societies, people have few but tightly-knit ingroups and are inclined to see ambiguous groups as outgroups.

Kagitcibasi (1990) emphasized the influence of ingroup loyalty on social relationships. Kagitcibasi (1990) contended that in collectivistic societies, ingroup loyalty often leads to ingroup favoritism and even outgroup derogation. For example, if in a collectivistic culture a social network site user often posts his or her group photos online

and does not share much access of the self with online friends, the reason could be the fear of outgroup derogation in that culture.

But using the individualism vs. collectivism model to compare the American and the Chinese people could lead to this doubt -- given the rapid social change in today's world, is the individualism vs. collectivism differentiation still capable of explaining those differences in interpersonal relationships and social behaviors in America and China? Yang (1996) discovered psychological transformation of the Chinese people towards the individualistic orientation as a result of societal modernization, but Yang (2004) still contended that the influence of collectivism is still larger than that of individualism on the social life of Chinese people. Kim (1995) considered that new social forces, such as industrialization, urbanization and capitalism, have not significantly altered the underlying cultural value system that emphasized collectivism in East Asia. Kim (1995) also discovered that East Asian countries that are traditionally agrarian are able to develop strategies that are compatible within their traditional cultural values. In this sense, the individualism-versus-collectivism differentiation can still be used to explain the general differences of interpersonal relationships and social behavior between America and China, but the researcher also needs to consider the influence of rising individualism in China, which may provide explanations for negative cases.

Online Friendship

Boyd and Ellison (2007) considered the word "friend" to be misleading in online context because online friendship may not mean friendship in the everyday vernacular

sense (p. 2). An Internet user's online friends could include those friends they know face-to-face, those they know only through the Internet, and also an intersection of the two types of friends because purely online friends may become off-line friends later. Chan and Cheng (2004) compared offline friendship and online friendship through a survey of Internet users in Hong Kong, and found online friendship and offline friendship become more alike over time. According to their findings, although offline friendship involves more breadth, depth and understanding than online friendship, the differences of the quality between the two types of friendship becomes minimal after more than a year of online relationship development.

Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) examined the online friendship in social network sites specifically. Their study examined the connection between Facebook usage and social capital, which means the resources accumulated in interpersonal relationships, through a survey of undergraduate students. The results showed that social capital was significantly predicted by the intensity with which students used Facebook. The interaction between Facebook usage and social capital is stronger in loose connection between individuals than for emotionally close relationships.

These studies about online friendship were conducted either in an Asian context or in an American context. Because of the great influence of social culture on interpersonal relationships, their results cannot be generalized to different socio-cultural contexts other than that where the samples came from. This limitation makes it necessary to take a cross-cultural look at online friendship.

Intensity of Feeling in Online Friendship

The previous review demonstrated that the potential approach to examine privacy in cross-cultural context is to examine online friendship. This in turn raises another question: how to examine online friendship? According to Shibutani (1991), the basic unit of analysis for the study of interpersonal relations is the *sentiment*. Sentiment, “in common parlance”, means “feelings” such as love, hatred, jealousy, pride, resentment, etc (Shibutani, 1991, p. 332). Shibutani (1991) defined sentiment as a comprehensive and relatively enduring orientation in a wide variety of relationships.

Sociologists usually use the term “intensity of affection”, or “emotional closeness”, to describe the positive types of sentiment. In the same way that sentiment is a comprehensive orientation composed of various responses towards a given person, affection is composed of five dimensions (Stevens, 1955): (1) empathy (one feels with another person in an interpersonal relationship), (2) respect (one recognizes and appreciates the individuality of another person), (3) sharing (one is willing to seek participation in another person’s activities and experiences), (4) loyalty (one is supportive of another person), (5) responsibility (one is concerned for the happiness and general well-being of another person).

Social distance theory claims that, on the one hand, the social distance between people was inversely related to the amount of knowledge of each other (Simmel, 1950), and on the other hand, the social distance between people was inversely related to the intensity of affection towards each other (Shibutani, 1991). Therefore, the intensity of affection between people is positively related to the amount of information of each other.

In other words, when people have more intensive positive feelings towards each other, they would like to share more information about themselves with each other. This study does not directly use the positive correlation between intensity of feeling and mutual knowledge among people to form its assumption. But rather, this study draws upon the social distance theory in the sense that the theory reveals the connection between privacy and intensity of feeling. From this perspective, it could be assumed that on social network sites, when people share privacy with their online friends in a different way, it has something to do with the different intensity of feeling in their online friendships. This study is organized around this assumption.

Intensity of feeling is also an underlying concept that explains the major cultural-psychological difference of human existence between Western and Chinese culture. According to Hsu (1985), the major cross-cultural difference of human existence between Western and Chinese culture lies in that Chinese human existence follows a “kinship-based” paradigm, while Western human existence is in a “dynamic” paradigm, and attachment is central to the difference (p. 50).

Hsu (1985) considered the self as a social and cultural entity, and the existence of self in society and culture as composed of many different layers, including “intimate society and culture”, “operative society and culture”, and “wider society and culture”, etc. A human individual will seek to maintain a satisfactory level of psychic equilibrium (PSH: psychosocial homeostasis) within and between those layers (p. 28). The Chinese psychosocial homeostasis is kinship-based, and the Chinese are able to feel enough attachment and maintain the equilibrium in “intimate culture and society” (Hsu, 1985, p.

28). For example, the traditional Chinese were deeply attached to not only kinsperson but also the land because it embodies ancestors. However, because the Western people value standing on one's feet, they can neither feel enough attachment nor maintain the equilibrium in "intimate culture and society" (Hsu, 1985, p. 28). Consequently, the western psychosocial homeostasis features a dynamic effort of reaching outward and inward from the layer of "intimate society and culture", for the purpose of compensating for the loss of attachment. For example, the compensatory sources of attachment can be found in having intense relationships with other non-kin beings, such as god or peers (Hsu, 1985, p. 28).

From the combined perspectives of psychosocial homeostasis theory (Hsu, 1985) and social distance theories (Shibutani, 1991; Simmel, 1950), it could be assumed that when American and Chinese social network site users treat their online friends with different intensity of feeling, they also share photos with online friends about their own life (relationships, activities, feelings and thoughts) somehow differently, and these differences are related to the underlying cultural differences between America and China. This research tries to examine the assumption.

Privacy Legislation in America and China

The differences in privacy legislation of America and China may provide an alternative explanation for the different online privacy choices of people in the two countries. The most cited legal definition of intrusion upon privacy in America was given by Prosser (1960) in his essay about privacy published in California Law Review.

There is no succinct definition of intrusion upon privacy in Chinese law, except for some mention of privacy in two documents issued by the Supreme Court of China, Advices on the General Provisions of the Civil Law 140 (1993) and Judicial Interpretation of Torts 1 (2001).

Prosser (1960) contended that intrusion upon privacy was composed of four torts:

“1. Intrusion upon the plaintiff’s seclusion or solitude, or into his private affairs. 2. Public disclosure of embarrassing private facts about the plaintiff. 3. Publicity which places the plaintiff in a false light in the public eye. 4. Appropriation, for the defendant’s advantage, of the plaintiff’s name or likeness” (Prosser, 1960, p.389).

In the Chinese law, Advices on the General Provisions of the Civil Law 140 (1993) provides that “public disclosure of private facts about the plaintiff in the oral form or writing ... which leads to a certain degree of negative influence, is considered an infringement upon the plaintiff’s *honorus*”. Judicial Interpretation of Torts 1 (2001) provides that “Torts that violate social public interests, social ethics and the plaintiff’s privacy right or other personality rights, ... the People’s Court shall consider as admissible”. Noticeably, the threshold of privacy protection in Chinese law, which emphasizes the “a certain degree of negative influence” and the violation of “public interests”, is higher than that implied in the American legal definition (Advices on the General Provisions of the Civil Law 140, 1993; Judicial Interpretation of Torts 1, 2001). That higher threshold of privacy protection in China might make Chinese social network site users to be more aware of their privacy when they share photos with online friends.

In spite of the differences in privacy legislation, this research remains focused on the social cultural dimension of online privacy. First of all, people do not necessarily

always think about law in such activities of daily communication as photo sharing on social network sites. Secondly, for any society, its legal structure is in essence embedded in the social culture. Therefore, in this study, the differences in privacy legislation serve as an alternative explanation to enrich its data analysis and interpretation.

Research Questions

Privacy involves not only an individual's control of access to the self, but also a social process in which an individual achieves the desired level of privacy according to social and cultural contexts. The purpose of this research is to make a cross-cultural explanation of privacy optimization by comparing the online photo-sharing behavior of American and Chinese social network sites users. Specifically, this research seeks to further the understanding of the following research questions:

*How do American and Chinese social network site users share photos with online friends about their lives (relationships, activities, feelings and thoughts)? Do they do it in the same way or differently?

*How do American and Chinese social network site users treat their friends on social network sites in terms of the intensity of feeling? Do they treat their friends on social network sites with the same intensity of feeling or differently?

*If there are any differences in the previous two groups of questions, how can those differences be understood in reference to cultural differences between America and China?

METHODOLOGY

The users of social network sites (SNS), such as Facebook in America and Renren.com in China, often post photos about their private lives to share with online friends. But different users may differ about which private facts they would like to share and how they control over them, and the differences could be culturally conditioned.

Altman (1977) contended that privacy is a culturally universal process, but the mechanism of interpersonal privacy optimization is culturally specific. Building on this contention, this study examines the cultural specificity of privacy optimization in the context of photo-sharing behaviors of social network site users. Hsu (1985) contended that human existence in American culture and that in Chinese culture mainly differ in the intensity of feeling people feel in various interpersonal relationships. According to social distance theorists (Shibutani, 1991; Simmel, 1950), people's knowledge of each other is also linked with their intensity of feeling toward each other.

Informed by these theories, the study tries to answer the following research questions:

*How do American and Chinese social network site users share photos with online friends about their lives (relationships, activities, feelings and thoughts)? Do they do it in the same way or differently?

*How do American and Chinese social network site users treat their friends on social network sites in terms of the intensity of feeling? Do they treat their friends on social network sites with the same intensity of feeling or differently?

*If there are any differences in the previous two groups of questions, how can those differences be understood in reference to cultural differences between America and China?

Privacy: Operational Definition and Measurement

According to Simmel (1950), privacy is contextualized. People define different personal facts as privacy and feel the need for privacy to different degrees in various relationships and situations. Altman (1977) emphasized that privacy is “a set of interpersonal boundary-control processes”, by which a person asserts control over access of the self to the others (p. 66). Altman (1977) enriched the conceptualization of privacy as “a multi-mechanism process” of privacy optimization, in which the optimization mechanisms are “culturally specific” (p. 66).

Building on these sociologists’ contribution to the conceptualization of privacy, this study defines privacy as a culturally specific, optimizing process of selective control of access to oneself in the contexts involved with photo-sharing behavior in social network sites. Privacy was measured in three ways: context, optimization, and cultural specificity. To understand context, the researcher conducted the photo-elicitation interview to learn how a social network site user defined the contexts involved with his (or her) online photo-sharing behavior. For example, the photos were posted exclusively for some close friends, or for all the online friends. To measure the optimization of privacy, the researcher examined the types of spaces (such as personal space depicted with clarity, personal space depicted with ambiguity, public space temporarily marked as

personal space, public space with group organized activity, purely public space, etc.), the types of behaviors (front-stage behavior, back-stage behavior, and off-stage behavior), and the themes of photos (interpersonal relationships, activities, feelings and thoughts). To understand cultural specificity, the researcher analyzed the shared patterns of privacy optimization for social network site users from the same cultural background (American or Chinese culture) in online photo-sharing, and conducted photo-elicitation interviews to find out whether there could be the cultural explanation for what the photos depicted, or some photos might only be the results of idiosyncrasy.

Intensity of Feeling: Operational Definition and Measurement

To measure intensity of feeling, this study adopts the sociological definition of sentiment as “emotional closeness” (Lawton, Silverstein, & Bengtson, 1994, p. 57), which is composed of five dimensions (Stevens, 1955): (1) empathy (one feels with another person in an interpersonal relationship), (2) respect (one recognizes and appreciates the individuality of another person), (3) sharing (one is willing to seek participation in another person’s activities and experiences), (4) loyalty (one is supportive of another person), (5) responsibility (one is concerned for the happiness and general well-being of another person).

A general measurement of “emotional closeness” was made possible by asking questions such as “how close do you feel to another person, and why is that” (Lawton, Silverstein, & Bengtson, 1994, p. 57). More questions about specific circumstances corresponding to the various dimensions were asked to attain a deeper understanding of

emotional closeness, and to cross check the reliability of self report about emotional closeness. For example, “how would you feel and do if a Facebook (Renren.com) friend who used to write on your wall regularly has not shown up for a month” for the dimensions of responsibility and empathy, and “what do you communicate in wall-to-wall posting with your online friends” for the dimension of sharing. In this study, the combination of the general measurement of “emotional closeness” and more detailed questions is justified by the social distance theorists’ conceptualization of “sentiments” as the configuration of various responses toward a given person all selectively oriented to move in a general pattern (Shibutani, 1991, p. 332).

Phase I: Auto-photography

The researcher applied auto-photography in the first phase of the study by recruiting a group of American social network site users from the undergraduate students in Missouri School of Journalism and their Chinese counterparts from the undergraduate students in Journalism Department of Huaqiao University, China, and letting them carry out the same instruction to take photographs of the significant events in their lives during winter vacation for the purpose of sharing with their online friends. The goal of auto-photography is to highlight the abstract process of privacy in the vivid form of photographs that are created specifically for social needs in online social network sites.

The design of auto-photography is based on the consideration of information richness of data and comparability. Goffman (1979) suggested that behavioral configurations which the researcher finds it difficult to articulate could be unambiguously

introduced with words and should be supported by using photographic materials. Ziller (1990) pointed out that there is a quality of rich “revealingness” about self-presentation by asking subjects to take photos, because it often reveals values, attitudes and concerns that lie beyond the conscious control of the maker (p. 35). The rich “revealingness” of auto-photography makes it a good research method for this study, which seeks to investigate into the abstract relationship between privacy, sentiment and culture (Ziller, 1990, p. 35). Comparability is guaranteed by the experimental design of recruiting subjects with similar demographic features and letting them follow the same instruction for auto-photography, thereby being able to highlight the cultural differences.

The researcher recruited 10 undergraduate students who are Facebook users from the Missouri School of Journalism, and 10 undergraduate students who are users of www.renren.com from the Journalism Department of Huaqiao University in Fujian province, China. The Chinese social network site www.renren.com was established in 2005, only a year later than Facebook. Like Facebook, most Renren.com users are college students. The Renren.com webpage format is also very similar with that of Facebook.

The researcher asked his friend in the Journalism faculty of the Huaqiao University to help with the recruitment in China. The only recruitment criterion was that the participants need to have used social network sites for over a year. This criterion was intended for guaranteeing that the participants have a basic understanding of relationships on social network sites. The researcher also saw to that the sampled students were not predominantly male or female, and not photographic journalism students.

The sample of 20 journalism students might not establish a basis for generalizing the findings beyond the sample. But in qualitative research, the researcher pays great attention to transferability rather than generalizability, by providing “thick description” (Geertz, 1973, p. 27) to demonstrate the validity of the findings and to make the reader decide whether the findings are transferable to other situations of interest.

The recruitment was carried out by sending recruitment emails via the undergraduate email listserv in the two institutions, noting that each participant would be rewarded with a 5-dollar (or 30-yuan) Starbucks gift card after the photos were sent over to the researcher. When interested students sent their replies to the recruitment email, the researcher emphasized once again that some of them would receive a 30-45 minutes’ interview later and some of their photos could appear in published research reports. The Phase I study began only after they sent back their emails of informed consent.

The students followed the instruction that asked them to take 10 photos of “the significant events in your winter vacation which you would like to post on Facebook (or renren.com) to share with online friends”. They were asked to start the task on the beginning of winter vacation and send the photos to the researcher’s email box by the end of the vacation.

The winter break in American universities lasted from late December to late January. The winter break in Chinese universities lasted from late January to early March. Both the winter vacation in American universities and that in Chinese universities featured a common feature of festivity. The Christmas in America and the Spring Festival in China were both the time of family reunion for most college students. The research

used the Starbucks gift card as the incentive, because it was impossible to reward participants with extra credits in winter vacation.

When the photographs were sent to the researcher, the subjects also sent a profile picture that only contained the subjects' images in order to help the researcher identify them. The subjects also needed to add a brief caption to each of the photographs so that the researcher could understand the photos. Two email boxes were set up for receiving the photos from American and Chinese participants, AmericanPhotoStudy@gmail.com and ChinesePhotoStudy@gmail.com.

The researcher conducted a qualitative content analysis of those auto-photographs. The photos were analyzed in two steps. In the Level I analysis, the photos were analyzed according to the types of region behaviors the photos depicted (front-stage behavior, back-stage behavior and off-stage behavior), the types of spaces the photos depicted (personal space depicted with clarity, personal space depicted with ambiguity, public space temporarily marked as personal space, public space with group organized activity, etc.), and the themes of photos (interpersonal relationships, activities, feelings and thoughts). The analysis was conducted by the researcher, with the help of his American friend, who helped examine the analysis results from the American perspective. Different opinions about analysis results between the researcher and his American friend were discussed to agreement.

The level II content analysis of the auto-photographs was conducted after photo-elicitation interviews in the second phase of this study. In the interviews, the researcher asked the participants to describe the contexts of photo taking and photo sharing, and

discuss the meaning of those photos with the researcher. The researcher especially asked participants about those photos the meanings of which were too ambiguous or unusual to make a reliable analysis. After the interview, the researcher analyzed the photos once again, based on the findings that emerged from the interviews. The two-level analysis could help the researcher to understand how the participants themselves looked at their photos and thereby to keep the content analysis grounded in the narratives of the participants. The two levels of analysis also helped the researcher to rule out those idiosyncratic factors that influenced the photographic content and caused a problem for the validity of cultural explanation of privacy.

Phase II: Photo-elicitation Interview

The second phase of the study was in-depth photo-elicitation interviews by choosing five American subjects and five Chinese ones based on the consideration of representativeness of their photographs, and conducting photo-elicitation interviews. Through the Level I content analysis of the auto-photographs, the researcher picked out five American subjects and five Chinese subjects whose auto-photographs were most representative of the whole American sample of photos and the whole Chinese sample of photos in terms of themes and types of spaces. Those subjects whose photos were different from most other subjects' photos in terms of themes and types of spaces were not chosen as interviewees.

The interviews were semi-structured. On the one hand, the interviews were theory informed and organized around some pre-conceived constructs such as “intensity of

feeling”, “friendship”, and “privacy”, therefore giving the interview a structure. On the other hand, the interviewer needed to readily pick up and consider any new constructs that emerged from the subjects’ interpretation of the photos at any time, because photographs would probably generate some data invisible to the researcher but apparent to the interviewee (Clark-Ibanez, 2004). Each interview lasted around 30-45 minutes. The interviews were conducted in a face-to-face manner in America, while the interviews with the Chinese interviewees were conducted via the web conference software Skype, by which the researcher could show the interviewee his computer desktop and therefore was able to guide the photo-elicitation interviews.

The interview questions were grouped under four topics, self and cultural orientation, friendship and online friendship in social network sites, the intensity of feeling towards online friends, and privacy in the relationships with online friends. The interview started with letting the participants talk about their photos for a while, before asking them interview questions. That discussion helped inform the Level II content analysis of the photos in the Phase I study, and also helped build rapport between the interviewer and the interviewees.

Group 1 questions consisted of general questions as to self and cultural orientation. For example, “what are a number of ways you would complete the phrase ‘I am ...’”, and “I notice that you said (or did not say) American (or Chinese), and why is that”. Group 2 questions consisted of the questions about friendship and online friendship. For example, “what does friendship mean to you”, and “what does online friendship mean to you”. Group 3 included questions about intensity of feeling towards

online friends in social network sites. For example, “how close do you feel towards online friends”, and those questions about specific circumstances corresponding to those dimensions of sentiment, such as “how would you feel and do if a Facebook (renren.com) friend who used to write regularly on your wall does not do so for a month” for the dimension of empathy and responsibility, “what do you usually write on Facebook (renren.com) friends’ walls” for the dimension of sharing, “in what circumstances did you or would you delete Facebook (renren.com) friends” for the dimension of loyalty, and “how would you feel and do if Facebook (renren.com) friends have different views from yours” for the dimension of respect. Group 4 included questions about privacy, such as “what kind of photos will make you feel uncomfortable to share with your online friends”, “what is the major issue that you consider when making decisions about privacy in social network sites”, and “why is that”.

Most questions were asked in a photo elicitation manner, because the specific settings of life in the photos could help the interviewer to generate more in-depth data. The researcher, who is an international student from China in Missouri School of Journalism, also tried to guarantee that the Chinese translation of the interview guide was the equivalent of the original English.

Validity

The study’s validity was improved through using low inference descriptors and conducting a piloting study. Low inference descriptors are defined as “the use of description phrased very close to the participants’ accounts and researchers’ field notes”

(Johnson, 1997, p. 283). The auto-photographic research design and the interview guide were also pilot tested. In the piloting study, the researcher recruited 8 female undergraduate students who are Facebook users in the Missouri School of Journalism, and 8 female undergraduate students who are Renren.com users in the Journalism Department of the Huaqiao University in China. Each participant was instructed to take 5 photos in a week to describe the significant events in their lives that they would like to share with online friends. In both groups of participants, 3 students were selected out to receive in-depth interviews. The piloting study was approved by campus IRB, and was already completed in November 2009. The piloting study demonstrated that the female Chinese subjects shared less privacy in their photo sharing on Renren.com than the female American subjects on Facebook, and the female Chinese subjects have a lower level of intensity of feeling in Renren.com friendship than the female American subjects in Facebook friendship. These results justified the research design of this study. The piloting study also led to restating of some originally designed interview questions and adding follow-up questions in order to facilitate the effective gathering of data.

The researcher also conducted some initial examination of the photos in the social network site homepages of his friends. The researcher examined the Renren.com homepage of his friend, Tianhao (21-year-old Chinese male), and the Facebook homepage of his friend, Jacob (23-year-old American male), by comparing how they posted photos to describe a similar event (a party with friends). One of the most significant differences turned out to be the number of group photos. For Tianhao, 10 out of 36 photos contained more than 3 people. While for Jacob, 4 out of 40 photos contained

more than 3 people. Although it would take more detailed analysis of the photos to decide whether that was a result of different privacy choices, this preliminary examination suggested that the cultural specificity of privacy optimization was likely to be visually presented in photos, which justified the research design of auto-photography.

RESULTS: AMERICAN SUBJECTS

Interviewee: “I would only share certain information with my real friends. I wouldn’t post it on Facebook.”

Researcher: “Like what?”

Interviewee: “Like ... I don’t know. Are you my friend?” (personal communication, February 25, 2010)

This quote was provided by the subject when asked to describe the intensity of feeling he felt towards his Facebook friends. His statement has two characteristics that are pertinent to this study. First, his reaction to further interrogation by the researcher is a direct demonstration of the process of privacy, which involves deciding whether to provide the access to one’s personal information based on interpersonal relationships. In addition, the subject made a distinction between the information for real friends and that shared on Facebook, which indicates that for him, interpersonal relationships on Facebook are somehow different from what he calls friendship. This quote exemplifies the process of privacy control and the Facebook friendship for American Facebook users. It serves as a starting point for presenting the results from American subjects in this study, including the content analysis of 100 photos that 10 American subjects took to share with Facebook friends, as well as the photo-elicitation interviews of five most representative subjects.

This chapter is broken into three sections. The first section provides a description of the process of privacy control executed by American subjects in Facebook photo sharing. The second section reveals the linkage between American subjects’ privacy control in Facebook photo sharing and their intensity of feeling toward Facebook friends.

The third section suggests the way that American subjects' privacy in Facebook photo sharing and their Facebook friendship are conditioned by individualistic American culture. In all the three parts, the results of content analysis and photo-elicitation interviews are interwoven and triangulated with each other, for the purpose of making a rich and valid description.

Privacy in Facebook Photo Sharing

This study analyzes the sample of 100 photos taken by 10 American undergraduate college students (five male and five female), and the interviews with five of them (three male and two female). Out of 100 photos, more than half (53 photos) depict family life (Table 1). Four out of five interviewees indicated that family was their major privacy concern on Facebook. When asked about what types of photos he would feel uncomfortable about sharing on Facebook, a male interviewee said, "family photos are the only ones in that realm" (personal communication, February 17, 2010). A female interviewee even deleted a Facebook friend because of "derogatory captions" underneath one of her family photos (personal communication, February 15, 2010). Moreover, most of the privacy arrangements as reported by the interviewees, including thematic selections, spatial selections and regional behavioral arrangements, are executed upon family photos. Therefore, this chapter focuses upon the description of the process of privacy in sharing family photos on Facebook.

Photo sharing in Facebook friends involves two steps: sampling reality by taking pictures, and publicizing the pictures on Facebook. In the first step, privacy is reflected in

the themes of pictures (activities, relationships, feelings and thoughts), and the types of spaces in pictures (public space, private space or public space temporarily marked as private). In the second step, privacy is reflected in intended audience for the pictures. Audience characteristics include not only the general composition of one's Facebook friends, but also the specific groups of Facebook friends who are allowed to access pictures, when privacy settings are applied. Perceived from Goffman (1959)'s dramaturgical perspective of social behavior, this control of intended audience is compared to region behaviors that include front-stage, back-stage and off-the-stage performances.

In the first step, sampling the reality by taking pictures, American subjects make thematic and spatial selections to control the access to their family life. Most interviewees are inclined to sample positive themes of family life. A female interviewee said that she would never publicize people's "vulnerability" online (personal communication, February 15, 2010). Another female interviewee admitted that she would only take pictures of the events that are "appropriate" (personal communication, February 24, 2010). A male interviewee chose his family photos for Facebook sharing, all based on the criterion of being "fit for a Christmas card" next year (personal communication, February 20, 2010). Among the sample, the only exception is a photo taken by a male subject, which is about his grandmother bedridden in a nursing home due to Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA) infection. He has his own standard for thematic selections. He said he would guarantee there was not "anything wrong with what's on there", and by "anything wrong", he referred to the privacy of children in the family.

“There are smaller children. They could be in bathing suit or something. And I know there are strange people out there. One right click, one link and paste, it could be in the hands of the wrong people” (personal communication, February 17, 2010).

Table 1

Numbers of Facebook Photos Categorized According to Themes, Types of Spaces and Region Behaviors

Themes	Family life	53
	Hanging out with friends	33
	Romantic relationships	6
	Traveling	10
	Religion	2
Types of spaces	Public space	30
	Private space	56
	Public space marked as private	14
Region behaviors	Front-stage	95
	Off-stage	5
	Back-stage	0

Note. The numbers of photos in the thematic categories add up more than 100 because a few photos belong to several thematic categories at the same time.

In terms of spatial selections, while inevitably most family photos depict private space inside a family residence, the subjects mostly share photos of living rooms or kitchens, which are the types of space intended for social life in American families. There

is only one photo depicting the bedroom, taken by a female interviewee. She has her unique standard for spatial selections. She said that she seldom posted pictures that show the exact location. “Like I posted the pictures of my Dad’s house. But no one really knows where my Dad’s house is” (personal communication, February 24, 2010). For her, this standard is an “ignorant” way of privacy control. Even she herself could not provide an explanation for the idiosyncratic choice.

To summarize, most American subjects resort to thematic and spatial selections for the purpose of privacy control in family photo sharing on Facebook. Some participants have differently defined standards for thematic and spatial selections than others, but they apply thematic and spatial selections as well. As the ways of directly deciding what aspects of reality to sample and what else not to, thematic and spatial selections are apparent means of privacy control, compared to the more complex and subtle regional behavioral arrangements as explained in the following paragraph.

In the second step, publicizing photos on Facebook, Goffman (1959)’s definitions of front-stage, off-stage and back-stage behaviors can translate well into sharing photos with all Facebook friends, sharing photos with some specific Facebook friends, and posting photos only for self-expression with real meanings inaccessible to Facebook friends. The sample of photos shows that a large majority of them (95 pictures) are front-stage behaviors. Only five photos are off-stage behaviors (Table 1). However, the American participants’ regional behavioral arrangements for privacy control are not as simple as that. The interviews reveal that the region behavioral arrangements take more complex and subtle forms. Besides sheer off-stage behavior, the participants also execute

privacy control through using online photo sharing for self-expression and managing the overall composition of Facebook friends.

Only five photos out of the sample are off-stage behaviors, all of which belong to a male subject. Before looking into them, a brief summary of the Facebook photo sharing practice is necessary. There are three ways to share a photo on Facebook. First, one can upload a photo in news feed, and the photo will appear instantaneously in the news feeds on all Facebook friends' pages. Secondly, one can upload the photo in a Facebook album accessible to all Facebook friends. Thirdly one can upload the photo in an album with certain privacy settings, allowing some specific Facebook friends to view. One of this subject's off-stage photos is of the third type. He intends this photo, which depicts him and his friends tee-peeing a tree, only to be viewed by those friends involved in that activity, because he didn't "want to get any people in trouble" (personal communication, February 17, 2010). Four others of his off-stage photos are all family photos, which he put in a separate album. The album is accessible to all, but specifically labeled "family album", which is, according to him, only intended to be shared by family members on Facebook. He claimed that, through his Facebook experience, people are only interested in those photos that they have "some sort of connection to", and he couldn't recall any non-family Facebook friends commenting on this album (personal communication, February 17, 2010). Therefore, these four family photos should also be considered as off-stage behaviors in his situation. The subject has two other family photos, which he chose to upload in news feed. Different from the four off-stage family photos, these two photos do not depict family members' appearances, one about Christmas cookies made by his

family, and the other depicting the crowd in a concert attended by his family. To summarize, for this subject, regional behavioral arrangements could be realized in the form of off-stage behavior, through applying privacy settings or by establishing a specifically labeled photo album.

However, it is worth noting that other interviewees do not find the latter way of regional behavioral arrangement as off-stage behavior. As long as they do not apply a privacy setting, they considered the album to be intended for all Facebook friends. But this does not mean that the other interviewees do not make any regional behavioral arrangements at all. Actually, most interviewees mentioned a variety of other means that could serve to “move” front-stage behaviors more towards back stage or off the stage.

First, regional behavioral arrangements could be related to motivations for online photo sharing. When a photo is posted on Facebook for both sharing with Facebook friends and self-expression, the photo might convey a deeper layer of meaning beyond its visual cues and captions, and be understood only by the person itself. For example, a female subject posted three Facebook photos that respectively depict a pet dog, a painting she made for her parents’ wedding anniversary, and a cake she made for her sister’s birthday. She explained her motivation: these photos are “not really like for any friend in particular on Internet. It’s more a self-reflection on who I am ... painting is what I love. And I am a huge animal lover. ... I would do anything for friends and family” (personal communication, February 15, 2010). In other words, she posted the picture as an attempt to reaffirm her self-definition, which speak more for her individualized self rather than her social self. From the dramaturgical perspective, this subject resorts to the motivation

of self-expression for Facebook photo sharing and moves front-stage Facebook photo sharing a bit towards back stage to be understood only by herself, or at least towards off the stage for real meanings to be accessible only for those few people who already know her very well.

The other type of regional behavioral arrangements is to manage the composition of Facebook friends. Facebook users are actively engaged with building Facebook communities to fit their privacy needs. Three out of five interviewees said they would delete a friend if the friends' posts and photos are totally unrelated to themselves and they cannot "benefit" from that friend (personal communication, February 17, 2010; personal communication, February 24, 2010; personal communication, February 25, 2010). One of them explained, "I find it annoying. It's like you are just posting about yourself. My life is terrible and blah-blah" (personal communication, February 17, 2010). In another example, a female subject tried to separate her "personal life via Facebook and business life via LinkedIn". She set up a LinkedIn account for "people in the business world", so that she can use her Facebook community only for her personal connections (personal communication, February 15, 2010). In dramaturgical terms, these attempts of managing the composition of Facebook friends could be considered as choosing the audience for front-stage performances, which also serve the purpose of privacy control.

To sum up, various types of thematic selections, spatial selections and regional behavioral arrangements are represented in most interviewees' family photo sharing behavior on Facebook. Although more than half of the sampled photos are family photos, the participants execute privacy control actively to protect the family border.

The Linkage between Privacy in Photo Sharing and Social Distance

According to social distance theory developed by Simmel (1950) and Shibutani (1961), people's mutual knowledge is positively related to the closeness they feel towards each other. The previous section describes the general pattern of privacy control in American participants' family photo sharing on Facebook. However, there are also individual differences among them. Some participants shared more family photos than the others; some applied more stringent means of privacy control than the others. The results suggest that social distance is related to motivation, practice and effect of Facebook photo sharing, and the relation between social distance and privacy can account for these individual differences between participants with regard to family photo sharing on Facebook (Table 2).

In the interviews, three out of five interviewees pointed out the link between Facebook photo sharing and social distance they feel towards Facebook friends. Talking about sharing photos with Facebook friends, a female interviewee said, "I do feel that closeness with my (Facebook) friends to share the experiences ..." (personal communication, February 15, 2010). For a male interviewee, the decision of Facebook information sharing is based on the closeness with his friends. "If I am close to them already, obviously I can share more information" (personal communication, February 25, 2010). Another male interviewee talked about how online sharing reinforced his closeness with Facebook community. "That can stimulate comments, communications and connections as well". For him, close relationships lessen the chances of misunderstanding, because "when you know somebody, the more things you know about

that person wouldn't change what you think of that person". Therefore, "if I am showing this picture to you, I would be like why I am showing this to you? That would be a check to me" (personal communication, February 17, 2010).

These reflections reveal the relations between Facebook photo sharing and social distance: the closeness with Facebook friends not only motivates one's Facebook photo sharing, underlies the privacy control decision in Facebook photo sharing, but also gets reinforced through Facebook photo sharing.

The linkage between social distance and privacy not only exists in the interview results, but also emerges from the content analysis of photos. Table 2 considers social distance and interviewees' family photo sharing together (Table 2). Here, the instruments to measure social distance involve one general question "how close do you feel towards Facebook friends" and four specific questions about various dimensions of social sentiment (sharing, loyalty, respect, and responsibility and empathy). According to Shibutani (1961), one's sentiment towards a given person should be the configuration of various responses toward that given person, all selectively oriented to move in a general pattern. Therefore, the comprehensive ranking of interviewees' social distance on Facebook is based on their general description of closeness toward Facebook friends, and also on the responses towards Facebook friends concerning four specific questions. When general description and specific responses contradict, the ranking is primarily based on the specific responses, because these responses speak more about the reality of Facebook communication. The ranking results are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Family Photo Sharing on Facebook Compared with Closeness of Facebook Friendship

	Subject A	Subject B	Subject C	Subject D	Subject E
Family photos	9 photos	6	4	3	4
Family photos depicting space inside family residence	5	5	4	0	4
Region behaviors in family photos	9 front-stage	2 front stage; 4 off stage	4 front stage	3 front stage	4 front stage
All FB friends	500 friends	800	500	500	431
Purely online friends	0	50	10-20	75	15-20
Responsibility & Empathy: How would you feel & do if a FB friend who used to write regularly on your wall doesn't do so for a month?	Send a check-up message on FB, but not write on the wall in case it is something personal	Think it could be my fault; ask "I haven't heard from you. What is going on"	Wouldn't be a shock; contact them if knowing them in real life & having their phone numbers	Would expect that; may not be inclined to have friendship with him or her later on	Not mind; not contact them unless I really need to talk to them
Sharing: What do you write on FB friends' walls? What do you share with them?	Organize personal encounters; greetings; sharing my own life & values	Recall events in physical world; greetings	Organize personal encounters; share music, videos & articles	Share news, videos & articles	Catch up; share mutual interest;
Loyalty: In what circumstances did you, or would you delete FB friends?	Deleted a friend before; not have to delete FB friends if a problem could be talked out	Deleted a few friends, because they just posted about themselves	I will delete a friend if they don't have anything to offer me.	I will delete a friend if the relationship doesn't have much future.	Deleted a friend before, because she always posted pictures and it was annoying
Respect: How would you do feel & do if FB friends have different views from yours?	Not look for conflicts, because our friendship isn't worth fighting over	Say something if I feel strong enough; there is more effective arena for discussion than FB	Not go into an argument because that makes you look childish	Let my voice be heard; feel the inclination towards those with the same ideas	Let it be; not like someone with a very strong opinion
Closeness	Close	Close	Not very close	Close	Not very close

Note. "FB" is the abbreviation of Facebook. Interviewees are code named as Subject A (B, C, D, E) to protect their confidentiality.

Table 2 lists the statistics of five interviewees' family photos sharing on Facebook, the composition of their Facebook friends, and their descriptions and responses concerning social distance on Facebook. From left to right, the five interviewees are ranked in the descending order in terms of their closeness with Facebook friends. As the table shows, the numbers of family photos that interviewees shared on Facebook also follow a general descending pattern. This points to the relation between social distance and privacy as supported by social distance theory: in the context of Facebook photo sharing, when the participant feels closer towards Facebook friends, he or she is inclined to share more family photos online.

Table 2 also throws light on the connection between social distance and the spatial selections and regional behavioral arrangements in family photo sharing. Two male subjects both have a much larger number of purely online friends than the others. In their cases, some extra spatial selections and regional behavioral arrangements are applied for the purpose of family privacy control. One of them, with 50 purely online friends, established specifically labeled "family album" to make most of his family photos off-stage social behavior, only intended for family members on Facebook to share (personal communication, February 17, 2010). Another male subject, with 75 purely online friends, chose not to share any picture depicting the interior of the house of his family. These examples both reverberate with the influence of social distance on Facebook users' privacy control in photo sharing. As one of them was quoted before, "if I am showing this picture to you, I would be like why I am showing this to you? That would be a check to me" (personal communication, February 17, 2010).

To summarize, the family photo sharing on Facebook is closely related to social distance on Facebook. The participants who feel closer to Facebook friends share more family photos online. The participants who have more purely online friends are inclined to execute extra spatial selections and regional behavioral arrangements to further guarantee their privacy. As the justification of these relations, the participants consider the closeness with Facebook friends as both the motivation and the underlying standard of decision for Facebook photo sharing.

Facebook Photo Sharing Conditioned by Individualistic American Culture

Hofstede (1980)'s cross-cultural study of work-related values put forward the individualism vs. collectivism cultural differentiation between countries, considering American culture as highly individualistic. In this study, the intensity of feeling in Facebook friendship and the privacy control in Facebook photo sharing are conditioned by the individualistic American culture as well.

First of all, the individualistic feature is reflected in the ways American subjects described themselves. For example, an interviewee said,

“I would focus on my identity rather than the all-encompassing word (of America) ... how you define a typical American girl ... I feel like that idea has definitely evolved in the past 200 years of America even being a country. I am finding myself very different, and having different morals and values than the people I am surrounded with ...” (personal communication, February 15, 2010).

This quotation reflects the individualistic American culture in two ways. First, as an American individualist, she is inclined to describe herself by her identity, which is different from the people she is surrounded with, rather than her country. This way of

self-description as a unique individual rather than a member of a certain collective is a typical feature of individualism (Triandis, 1995). As Table 3 shows, four out of five interviewees would not define themselves by their country, and three out of five interviewees used “different” or “not fit in” to describe themselves (personal communication, February 15, 2010; personal communication, February 17, 2010; personal communication, February 24, 2010; personal communication, February 25, 2010). This pattern demonstrates the individualistic, unique self that is commonly existent in most American subjects.

This quotation also reveals that this individualistic identity is a result of social cultural evolution through American history. As the metaphor of “melting pot” describes, the pluralistic tolerance of different cultures is the social cultural foundation of the United States, which has been formed by migrants from all over the world. Since 1960s, the Civil Right Movement and various other movements that advocated the rights for women, gays and others have pushed the social culture of pluralistic tolerance even further, and made a most friendly social environment for unique individualities (Donohue, 1990). The individualistic American culture encourages not only uniqueness of individual identities, but also the curiosity in diverse cultures. In this study, three out of five interviewees expressed the hopes of traveling and getting “the world view”, going “outside America’s borders”, meeting people who are “non-native to America”, and even actually moving to another country (personal communication, February 10, 2010; personal communication, February 15, 2010; personal communication, February 17, 2010; personal communication, February 24, 2010). These hopes precisely demonstrate

the pluralistic nature of American culture, which actually serves as the cultural commonality for heterogeneous American individualists.

Table 3

Features of individualism on Facebook

	Subject A	Subject B	Subject C	Subject D	Subject E
Composition of FB friends	High school friends; friends in college; friends in various professional organizations; those who have mutual friends with me and I know; my sister	High school friends; friends in college; friends with similar interests; those who have mutual friends with me and I know; some relatives; some professors	High school friends; friends in college; friends with similar interests; those who have mutual friends with me	High school friends; friends in college; friends with similar interests; friends who send me add friend request; my sisters, parents' friends	High school friends; friends in college; friends with similar interests; my Mother
Self-description	Would focus on my identity rather than America; find myself very different; have different morals & values than people of my age	My personality ... is what defines me; Could be south African or Australian, but my personality ... will still be the same	Lead a different life than most people that go to MU; would rather people judge me by my personality than ... by my country of origin	Native to America; at the same time, ... have the ambition that one day I will go outside America's borders	Not tend to fit in with people who are very American
Loyalty: In what circumstances did you, or would you delete FB friends?	Deleted a friend before; not have to delete FB friends if a problem could be talked out	Deleted a few friends, because they just posted about themselves	I will delete a friend if they don't have anything to offer me.	I will delete a friend if the relationship doesn't have much future.	Deleted a friend before, because she always posted pictures and it was annoying

Note. "FB" is the abbreviation of Facebook.

Interviewees are code named as Subject A (B, C, D, E) to protect their confidentiality.

Secondly, the individualistic culture is also reflected in the ways American subjects treat Facebook friendship. On the one hand, their Facebook friends are mostly made up of high school and college friends. On the other hand, four out of five interviewees emphasized that they would also add friends' friends or purely online friends based on similar interests (Table 3). In this way, their Facebook friendships include not only pre-existing offline relationships, but also friendships improvised according to their individual interests, which is a demonstration of individualistic culture (Triandis, 1995, p. 110). Moreover, in the dimension of loyalty in Facebook friendship, all interviewees acknowledged that they had deleted or would delete Facebook friends (Table 3). Their reasons are mostly related to their individual needs. For example, posts and pictures are unrelated to themselves, have nothing to offer them, disturb their Facebook space, or annoy them. This reflects the freedom to enter and exit ingroups because of individual needs, which is another major feature of individualistic culture (Triandis, 1995, p. 110).

Lastly, American subjects' process of online privacy control also demonstrates individualistic features. Their practice of deleting Facebook friends, which essentially reflects the individualistic freedom to exit from ingroups, serves the purpose of privacy control in the form of controlling the audience who can access their private lives. Moreover, through various spatial and regional behavioral arrangements, American subjects try to designate different types of spaces in real life and on the Internet for different social purposes. For example, living rooms and kitchens are the private spaces that can also be used for social activities, but usually bedrooms are treated as purely

private spaces. Facebook is used for non-business friends, and LinkedIn is used for business connections. These inclinations are consistent with the customary practice of space partitioning in individualistic cultures (Triandis, 1995).

However, there are two points worth noting, when the results are considered in reference to individualistic American culture. First, even though individualists consider themselves in the center of the stage, family life is still an important component of the individualized self, which accounts for the importance of family privacy in the American life. Secondly, besides the above-listed individualistic traits, American subjects show a sense of community that is also related to their Facebook friendship and photo sharing.

First, although individualistic culture encourages standing on one's own feet and being autonomous, the individualized self in this culture is not totally separated from family. In Hofstede (1990)'s definition of individualism, individualism features the concern for self and the immediate family. Family, especially the immediate family, is particularly important to the subjects in this study, because as undergraduate college students, they have not set up their own family units, most of them live on parental financial support, and some of them still live with parents. Some interviewees considered family as a major influence upon, or an important part of their individualized self. A male interviewee said that he dreamed of going outside the American border, because his sister and uncle already did so (personal communication, February 20, 2010). A female interviewee said the value that "I would do anything for ... family" defines "who I am" (personal communication, February 15, 2010). The importance of family for American subjects explains their effective privacy control in family photo sharing on Facebook, as

described in the first section. Halle (1993)'s research of photos in American families revealed a clear sense of family border in American life, claiming that family is one of the primary visual themes of privacy for Americans. In family photo sharing on Facebook as well, American subjects resort to thematic selections, spatial arrangements and regional behavioral arrangements for the purpose of protecting that family border in the Internet space.

Secondly, besides the individualistic traits, American subjects also show a strong sense of online community. For them, the social network site is their "Facebook community" (personal communication, February 17, 2010). Although it is a typically individualistic, loose "community" which people feel free to enter and exit, they conduct interactions to reinforce the communal bond. An interviewee said that he conducted online sharing because it "can stimulate ... connections" (personal communication, February 17, 2010). Moreover, although they consider themselves "different" and "not fit in", they chose not to express their opinions that are different from those of Facebook friends. As Table 2 shows, three out of five interviewees chose not to look for conflicts. One of them clearly indicated that "our friendship isn't worth fighting over" (personal communication, February 15, 2010). Their concern for Facebook community actually explains why American subjects share many photos about private lives, especially family lives (53 photos), although they execute various means of privacy control in online photo sharing. These American social network site users feel the need to share each other's personal life to maintain the online communal bond. Just as a female subject said, "I do feel the closeness with my friends when I share the experiences" (personal

communication, February 15, 2010). In this sense, the privacy control of American subjects in family photo sharing on Facebook could be seen as an attempt of striking the balance between the need for protecting family border, and the necessity of maintaining the communal bond on Facebook.

To summarize, this results chapter analyzes the 100 photos that 10 American subjects took to share with Facebook friends, and the in-depth interviews of five most representative subjects, which are primarily about their privacy control in Facebook photo sharing and their Facebook friendship. The results show that, while American subjects share their family life in over half of the photos in order to maintain the communal bond in Facebook, they also execute effective privacy control through thematic selections, spatial selections and regional behavioral arrangements in those family photos for the purpose of keeping the important family border on the Internet. The results also suggest that various levels of intensity of feeling that American subjects feel towards Facebook friends can account for their individual differences in family photo sharing. The privacy in their photo sharing is not only conditioned by the individualistic culture on Facebook, but also related to their concern for maintaining the Facebook community. The sense of Facebook community, although seemingly inconsistent with individualism, actually represents a less conspicuous aspect of the predominantly individualistic American culture, which is encouraged in the situation of social network sites. The conclusions chapter provides a detailed explanation of the interplay between individualism, the sense of community, and the mediating effects of Facebook.

RESULTS: CHINESE SUBJECTS

“When I was at home, having my Dad, my Mom and my sister by my side, I was really happy. But if I post photos about that on Renren.com, I would feel as if I am exposing my happiness. I would have the same feeling, if I post photos of me and my girlfriend on Renren.com. About those stuff, with a little bit selfishness, I still hope to keep everything to myself. ... For stuff like family, I always like keeping it in the depth of my heart. Probably that is an aspect of me being a typical Chinese man.”
(personal communication, March 7, 2010)

This quotation from a Chinese subject gives a glimpse of major privacy concerns of Chinese social network site users, family life and romantic relationships. The subject also suggested that these privacy concerns reflected his Chinese character. This quotation points out some central interests of this results chapter about Chinese subjects: privacy control in photo sharing on Renren.com which is the Chinese “Facebook” and how the privacy control is conditioned by Chinese culture. This chapter also looks at the linkage between privacy control in Renren.com photo sharing and the intensity of feeling in Renren.com friendship. Similar with the previous results chapter about American subjects, this chapter presents the results of content analysis of 100 photos taken by 10 Chinese subjects (five male and five female) to share with their Renren.com friends and the findings from in-depth interviews with five most representative subjects (three male and two female) together, in order to make a rich, well-triangulated description.

Privacy in Renren.com Photo Sharing

Most of five interviewees indicated that family photos and photos about romantic relationships are their major privacy concern in Renren.com photo sharing. As Table 4

shows, only one photo depicts a romantic relationship and about one-third of the sample (33 photos) depicts family life. Most interviewees provided detailed description of their privacy control in family photos. Therefore, the first section of this chapter focuses upon privacy control in family photo sharing by Chinese Renren.com users. This section also makes a brief summary of several other privacy-relating patterns in the sample of photos.

Four out of five interviewees considered family as one of their primary privacy concerns in Renren.com photo sharing (personal communication, March 7, 2010; personal communication, March 8, 2010; personal communication, March 9, 2010; personal communication, March 10, 2010). Only a female interviewee did not indicate that privacy concern. But she added that she did not often post photos on Renren.com (personal communication, March 6, 2010). The 33 family photos shared by Chinese subjects depict various aspects of family life, including Spring Festival dinners, visits to family relatives, ancestral worshipping, and family members cooking, shopping and in some rural families, working together in farmland.

However, Chinese subjects execute stringent privacy control in these photos through thematic selections, spatial selections and regional behavioral arrangements. The most important means of privacy control involved in the 33 family photos is hiding the images of family members, which is a combination of thematic selection and regional behavioral arrangement. Besides hiding family members' images, with only a small portion of the photos (4 photos) depicting the interior of their homes, Chinese subjects also apply strict spatial selections in family photo sharing on Renren.com.

Table 4

Numbers of Renren.com Photos Categorized According to Themes, Types of Space and Region Behaviors

	Family life	33	
	Hanging out with friends	21	
Themes	Romantic relationships	1	
	Religion	1	
	School activity	20	
	Social issues	16	
	Part-time jobs	2	
	Self-portrait	7	
	Landscape	4	
	Types of spaces	Public space	58
		Private space	40
Public space marked as private		2	
Region behaviors	Front-stage	100	
	Off-stage	0	
	Back-stage	0	

Note. The numbers of photos in the thematic categories add up more than 100 because a few photos belong to several thematic categories at the same time.

When asked about “which types of photos would make you feel uncomfortable about posting on Renren.com”, three out of five interviewees specifically referred to the photos depicting family members’ images. An interviewee said, “There are photos of me and my family members together. But after some consideration, I decided not to post

them online, because they are my family. And it is not necessary” (personal communication, March 10, 2010). One of his photos depicts him and his father posing together for a Spring Festival photo. But he explained, “when I put this type of photos on Renren.com, I would use Photoshop to cover my Dad’s head with a cartoon image” (personal communication, March 10, 2010). Another interviewee, who also considered family as her major privacy concern in Renren.com photo sharing, did not directly talk about the concern of family members’ images. But she demonstrated much caution with family members’ images, too. When she tried to decide whether to share the photo about her cousin’s wedding on Renren.com, she first asked the cousin for permission. “I asked her if she wanted to publicize her image online, and if I could share the photo with my Renren.com friends. She said OK. Then I posted it.” (personal communication, March 9, 2010)

In a consistent pattern with the interview results, 11 out of the 33 family photos do not have family members’ images, although their captions stated that these photos are about family life. In four out of the 22 photos that include family members’ images, those images are imperceptible, being placed in the distance or with faces turned away from the camera. Moreover, only eight out of the 22 photos depict the image of members of immediate families, such as the subject’s parents and siblings.

Both the interviews and the photos point to the pattern that Chinese subjects tend to hide their family members’ images in photo sharing on Renren.com. They treat the images of immediate family photos with even more caution than they deal with family members’ images in general.

Hiding family members' images should first of all be considered as a form of thematic selection. In this study, thematic selection refers to the selection of activities, interpersonal relationships, feelings and thoughts in photo sharing. The photos that depict family life but feature the absence of family members avoid family activities. The feelings captured by these photos are characterized by formality and even seriousness, rather than informality and festivity. The thematic selection by hiding family members' images could be well illustrated in the following example. An interviewee shared a photo about him and his family members shopping at the market of Spring Festival couplets. Without showing either his or his family members' images, he chose to take an empty shot of what the market looked like. In this way, the activity recorded in the photo was changed from family shopping to the business of couplet market. The relationship depicted in the photo was changed from family relationships to the relationship between an objective observer and the market. The feeling of festivity was also replaced by seriousness and formality to a large extent.

The absence of images of family members also serves for the purpose of regional behavioral arrangement. For instance, an interviewee posted a photo about his visit to his uncle. The photo is tightly framed to expose only the interviewee himself and a bit of decoration in his uncle's living room. Although the photo in this example was uploaded by the interviewee into an album that was accessible to all his Renren.com friends, and intended as the front-stage photo, the "front-stage performance" was "moved" towards the back stage of personal memory, because of the absence of images of family members. In some cases, it could also be understood as a front-stage photo being "moved" toward

off the stage to be shared only by some very close friends on Renren.com, who can envision the event despite the absent visual cues of family members' images. An interviewee who also put all his photos in albums accessible to all his Renren.com friends said, "I am more concerned about these photos being seen by those who I am very familiar with. About other friends on Renren.com, I don't really care." (personal communication, March 7, 2010)

Chinese subjects also apply strict privacy control through spatial selections in family photo sharing on Renren.com. Among 33 family photos, 23 photos depict private space, six photos depict public space, and four photos depict private places marked as private space. However, only seven out of the 23 photos of private space are depictions of the interior of families' apartments, and only four photos are depictions of the interior of the subjects' own homes. In other words, most of the 33 family photos depict either the types of space that are essentially public, or the private space outside families' apartments, such as courtyard or rooftop. The space inside homes of family members is seldom shown. When asked "what types of photos would make you uncomfortable about sharing on Facebook", an interviewee directly cited public space as the standard for online photo sharing. He said, "Photos recording events in public places won't make me feel uncomfortable" (personal communication, March 8, 2010).

To summarize, Chinese subjects show some obvious tendencies to hide family members' images and conceal the private space inside family members' homes in family photo sharing on Renren.com. These means of privacy control become even more stringent, when the images of immediate family members and the private space of their

own homes are involved. These means of privacy control are executed in the procedure of sampling the reality, which is the first step of photo sharing on social network sites. In the second step of publicizing photos online, none of Chinese interviewees would apply further privacy settings to make their photos accessible only for themselves or for some specific Renren.com friends. As an interviewee said, “If I don’t want some Renren.com friends to view the photo, I wouldn’t post it” (personal communication, March 8, 2010).

Besides family photos, the results also suggest two other privacy-relating patterns in Renren.com photo sharing of Chinese subjects, including the privacy concern over photos depicting romantic relationships, and the general tendency of depicting public aspects of life in Renren.com photo sharing. First, three out of five interviewees indicated that romantic relationship was one of their major privacy concerns in Renren.com photo sharing. The two other interviewees without this concern explained that they do not have a boyfriend, or a girlfriend (personal communication, March 8, 2010; personal communication, March 9, 2010). Among the three interviewees with this concern, two cited the reason that they like “keeping it in the depth of my heart”, or “appreciating the photos and feeling happy inside my heart” (personal communication, March 6, 2010; personal communication, March 7, 2010). Another interviewee said he had this concern because of the fear of “becoming the topic of gossips” (personal communication, March 10, 2010). In the sample of 100 photos, only one photo is about romantic relationship. But even that photo depicts romantic relationship in an indirect way. In a similar fashion with how Chinese subjects deal with family members’ images, that photo did not include the image of the subject’s girlfriend, although he did meet her during the winter break.

The photo shows the subject holding a toy bear, only with captions that read “I am thinking about her”. The absence of the girlfriend’s image “moves” the front-stage photo accessible to all Renren.com friends towards the back stage of the subject’s personal emotional world.

Secondly, the photos show a general tendency of sharing the public aspects of life on Renren.com. Among the sample, altogether 29 photos from eight subjects are depictions of school-organized activities during the winter break and social issues, such as a local school being rebuilt two years after an earthquake and the issue of local peasant workers taking trains. An interviewee stated that usually most of the photos she shared on Renren.com are school-organized activities (personal communication, March 9, 2010), although five out of her 10 photos are about family life. An interviewee who shared the photo about local peasant workers taking trains explained that she did so because “everyone is concerned about the railway traffic in Spring Festival season” (personal communication, March 6, 2010). These photos about public aspects of life do not reflect conscious privacy control. But the existence of these photos enables Chinese subjects to maintain photo-sharing interactions with their Renren.com friends while provide fewer photos about their own private lives.

In sum, the results reveal that Chinese subjects are mainly concerned about family privacy and the privacy of their romantic relationships in photo sharing on Renren.com. Although about one third of the sample (33 photos) that they shared are about family life, they execute stringent privacy control in family photo sharing on Renren.com. Their means of privacy control include thematic selection and regional behavioral arrangement

by hiding family members' images, and spatial selections by obscuring the private space inside family members' homes. Beside these consciously executed privacy control, the tendency to share photos that depict public aspects of life also reduces the amount of privacy in Chinese subjects' photo sharing on Renren.com.

The Linkage between Privacy in Photo Sharing and Social Distance

Social distance theory proposed by Simmel (1950) and Shibutani (1961) reveals the relationship between people's mutual knowledge and the closeness they feel towards each other. For Chinese subjects, the linkage between Renren.com photo sharing and social distance in their Renren.com friendship is existent in a unique way. None of the interviewees indicated the closeness, or intensity of feeling in Renren.com friendship had to do with their photo sharing practice. However, their individual differences in family photo sharing on Renren.com are related with their various levels of intensity of feeling in Renren.com friendship in a way that matches social distance theory very well (see Table 5).

When asked about the motivations of photo sharing on Renren.com, none of the interviewees brought up the consideration of Renren.com friendships in their answers. The interview results suggest that their major motivations for photo sharing on Renren.com are either inner-oriented or society-oriented, both of which are unrelated with their friendships on Renren.com.

The inner-oriented photo sharing serves for personal memories and the confirmation of individual identities. For example, a female interviewee took digital

photos of several old photos from her childhood and shared those images on Renren.com. In her explanation of the reason for doing so, she said, “This is a procedure of my growing up. These photos record the changes in my appearance” (personal communication, March 9, 2010). A male interviewee posted a self-portrait on Renren.com, because “I look more masculine in it” (personal communication, March 10, 2010). He also posted a photo of attending a concert with friends. But his reason for sharing that photo on Renren.com is that “the color of my coat is exaggerated in this photo. It is magenta” (personal communication, March 10, 2010). Another interviewee shared a photo of her Spring Festival dinner with family members. When asked about the motivation for photo sharing on Renren.com, she only answered, “it makes me feel warm” (personal communication, March 6, 2010). In these examples, the photos were rather kept than shared on Renren.com, although they were uploaded into albums accessible to all online friends. The subjects posted these photos on Renren.com, partly because the photos recorded the moments that were warm, exaggerated, personally important and therefore memorable, and partly because looking at the photos help them confirm their identities of being an adult woman or man, or a member of family.

The society-oriented photo sharing serves the purpose of sharing information or attitudes about the society that one thinks others need to learn of. The previous section already reveals the tendency of Chinese subjects to sample social issues in Renren.com photo sharing. But besides that, the society-oriented motivation is even obvious when the shared photos are about private lives. As described before, an interviewee shared a photo of shopping at a Spring Festival couplets market with family members, which showed the

situation of the market but not family members' images. He explained that "these days young people seldom go to couplets market. I want to show everyone the form of such a market" (personal communication, March 8, 2010). Another interviewee shared a photo of her mother attending the community dancing exercise on Renren.com, in which her mother's face was almost imperceptible. Her reason for doing so was that "now urban dwellers pay more attention to health. Dancing and singing together with others in every evening has become a new way of living" (personal communication, March 6, 2010). In these examples, the photos shared on Renren.com not only serve the purpose of providing important social information, which could be a new tendency or a tradition, but also convey the subjects' attitudes about the society that they hope to persuade or even educate others with, such as the calls for understanding traditions or for accepting a healthy way of living.

Chinese subjects considered inner-oriented or society-oriented reasons as their major motivations for Renren.com photo sharing, while none of the interviewees mentioned Renren.com friendships as the reason for Renren.com photo sharing. This pattern seems to suggest that there be no connection between privacy in Renren.com photo sharing and the social distance in Renren.com friendship. However, as Table 5 illustrates, that linkage still exists when family photo sharing and the intensity of feeling towards Renren.com friends are considered together. Table 5 provides the ranking of five interviewees by their levels of intensity of feeling in Renren.com friendship. The measurement of intensity of feeling in Renren.com friendship is primarily based on interviewees' responses to questions about various dimensions of social sentiment.

Table 5

*Family Photo Sharing on Renren.com Compared with Closeness of Renren.com**Friendship*

	Subject F	Subject G	Subject H	Subject I	Subject J
Family photos	9 photos	5	4	2	2
Family photos depicting space inside family residence	2	0	3	0	1
Family photos depicting immediate family members	4	3	1	0	0
All RR friends	174 friends	539	130	200	400
Purely online friends	0	60-70	Very few	0	50
Responsibility & Empathy: How would you feel & do if a RR friend who used to write regularly on your wall doesn't do so for a month?	Check his RR page; send a mobile phone message; leave a RR message to ask	Not mind; normal because college students are busy	Wouldn't have any feeling; check his RR page; leave a message "I came"	Wouldn't think about it	Not mind; they had enough of me
Sharing: What do you write on RR friends' walls? What do you share with them?	Sharing others' video, pictures, and notes that are useful to me; writing notes about my life	Sharing others' notes to learn knowledge; share my photos & notes; set password to some notes	Chat with some close friends; share music & study experience; read others' funny notes & gossips	Share photos, pictures & funny videos; remark on others' funny things	Share pictures, videos and beautiful sentences; write notes, but set password to some notes
Loyalty: In what circumstances did you or would you delete RR friends?	Never did it	Never did it; might delete someone who says vile and vulgar things	Did it before; but would not do it later	Did that only once	Never did it
Respect: How would you do feel & do if RR friends have different views from yours?	Let my voice be heard; then keep silent, because argument isn't meaningful	Think by myself; or give my different opinion in a friendly tone; not argue	Keep silent unless the remarks are abusive; OK to have different opinions	Ignore it; confirm my opinion online if not sure about it	Have a discussion; feels good when I conclude the discussion
Closeness	Very close	Very close	Close	Close	Close

Note. "RR" is the abbreviation of Renren.com.

Interviewees are code named as Subject F (G, H, I, J) to protect their confidentiality.

As Table 5 shows, from left to right, five interviewees are ranked in the descending order in terms of their intensity of feeling towards Renren.com friends. At the same time, the Table 5 shows that, from left to right, the numbers of family photos that the interviewees shared on Renren.com also follow a descending pattern. Moreover, from left to right, the numbers of family photos depicting images of immediate family members also are also ranked in a descending order. These results suggest that in the context of Renren.com photo sharing, when the Chinese subjects feel a higher level of intensity of feeling towards Renren.com friends, they are inclined to share more family photos online and depict more images of immediate family members online.

Table 5 also throws light on the connection between social distance and spatial selections in family photo sharing. One of the interviewees code named as Subject G has a larger number of purely online friends (60-70) than the others. Although half of the photos she shared are family photos, but none of the photos depict the private space inside the homes of her family members.

To summarize, although the major motivations of Renren.com photo sharing by Chinese subjects do not include the consideration of Renren.com friendship, the relationship between their privacy in photo sharing on Renren.com and their Renren.com friendship still exists. The subjects who feel closer to Renren.com friends are inclined to share more family photos online. Their family photos also include more images of their immediate family members. The subject who has more purely online friends executed some extra spatial selections to further guarantee her privacy.

Renren.com Photo Sharing Conditioned by Collectivistic Chinese Culture

Collectivism is “a social pattern consisting of closely knitted individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives” (Triandis, 1995, p. 2). In this study, the results show Chinese subjects as parts of their ingroups with Renren.com friends, their country and most importantly, their families (see Table 6).

Table 6

Features of collectivism on Renren.com

	Subject F	Subject G	Subject H	Subject I	Subject J
Composition of RR friends	Friends from primary school & middle school, & in college	Friends from primary school & middle school, & in college; some friends of my friends	Friends from primary school & middle school, & in college; Very few purely online friends who are also college students	Friends from primary school & middle school, & in college; some family members who are also in school	Friends from primary school & middle school, & in college; some purely online friends who have the same home town with me
Self-description	I am quite Chinese; the idea of family is strong in Chinese tradition, which is shared by everyone	I am not typically Chinese in some aspects; some of my opinions are not purely eastern	I love my family; I am quite typically Chinese; sometimes, I think I am traditional	I am typically Chinese; most Chinese are introverted	I am typically Chinese; I am considerate for my girlfriend and family members
Loyalty: In what circumstances did you, or would you delete RR friends?	Never did it	Never did it; might delete someone who says vile and vulgar things	Did it before; but would not do it later	Did that only once	Never did it

Note. “RR” is the abbreviation of Renren.com.

Interviewees are code named as Subject F (G, H, I, J) to protect their confidentiality.

First of all, their Renren.com ingroups are essentially homogeneous collectives of people in schools and colleges. As Table 6 shows, Renren.com friends are mostly made up of friends from elementary schools, middle schools and colleges, and do not often include people outside schools and colleges. All the interviewees demonstrate a high level of loyalty towards their Renren.com collectives. When asked “in what circumstances did you or would you delete a Renren.com friend”, three interviewees said they had not deleted any friend before. An interviewee only deleted one Renren.com friend under an extreme situation. “My ex-girlfriend did something unforgivable to me. So I deleted her. But I don’t do that to others” (personal communication, March 8, 2010). Another interviewee who deleted some Renren.com friends before said he would not delete any friends later (personal communication, March 10, 2010). The tightness of the school-based Renren.com collectives actually affects photo sharing on Renren.com. Among the 100 photos, one fifth (20 photos) depict school-organized activities during winter break. An interviewee even said, “most of the photos I share on Renren.com are about school activities” (personal communication, March 9, 2010).

Secondly, the Chinese subjects also look upon themselves as parts of their countries and families. The national identity is often defined by the family identity. For example, an interviewee said, “I think I am quite Chinese”, and followed up explaining that “the thing that I think is common to the Chinese is that we all share the tradition of having a strong sense of family” (personal communication, March 6, 2010). As Table 6 shows, in this study, four out of five interviewees acknowledged that they were typically Chinese, and three of them explained their Chinese identity with their family attachments

and obligations (personal communication, March 6, 2010; personal communication, March 7, 2010; personal communication, March 8, 2010; personal communication, March 10, 2010).

The collectivism in China is characterized by the dominant position of family system. In his analysis of traditional social relationships of China, Fung (1948) pointed out that “family system” was “the social system of China” so much so that even non-family relationships, such as those between sovereign and subject, and friend and friend, were also conceived of in terms of the family (p. 21). In this sense, although the Chinese subjects consider themselves as parts of various collectives including Renren.com ingroups, the country and their families, the familial identity still forms the central parts of their collectivistic selves. The familial identity is even further strengthened as one goes into adulthood. For example, an interviewee said, “Now I am getting older. I was often like a kid before. But now I am feeling the increasingly stronger sense of family. I also start to realize that as a man, I need to shoulder the responsibility for family” (personal communication, March 10, 2010).

The Chinese collectivistic culture especially emphasizes the bonds with parental families. In the five traditional social relationships of China, the relationship between father and son is ranked before all the other family and non-family relationships (Fung, 1948). Moreover, according to researchers of individualism and collectivism, the cultural factors that provide the most separation between individualistic samples and collectivistic samples are two factors of parental familial bonds, including “children should live at home with their parents until they get married” and “aging parents should live at home

with their children” (Triandis, 1995, p. 192). Unlike the individualistic culture that emphasizes reaching out from parental families, in the collectivistic Chinese culture, the close bonds with and strong obligations towards parental families make up the theme of one’s whole life. In this study, the Chinese subjects have not formed their own family units and most of them still live on parental supports.

Given these facts and the above-described cultural reasons, it is no exaggeration to say that parental familial attachments and obligations form the most important parts of the collectivistic identities of Chinese subjects. This importance of families, especially parental families, to their identities actually account for their stringent privacy control with the images of family members, especially their immediate family members, in photo sharing on Renren.com. Although there are 33 photos about family lives, only eight photos contain images of the subjects’ immediate family members and only six photos contain perceptible images of their parents. Just like an interviewee said, “for stuff like family, I always like keeping it in the depth of my heart” (personal communication, March 7, 2010).

But the above-described importance of family privacy seems to contradict how researchers of collectivism considered privacy in collectivistic culture. Collectivism is considered to feature a low level of concern for privacy, because “collectivists hold that one’s business is also the business of the group” (Triandis, 1995, p. 76). However, as the results of interviews show, that claim about privacy in collectivism is oversimplifying. In social interaction on social network sties, the relationship between privacy and collectivism plays out in a much more subtle way.

First of all, it should be admitted that disclosure, the opposite of privacy, can be conducive to maintaining the collectives. An interviewee described how he dealt with persons who do not abide by public virtues. “When I watched the Olympic torch relay, I saw someone sit or stand on the national flag. Images of these persons must be uploaded online” (personal communication, March 8, 2010). In this example, disclosure serves for the purpose of defending the national collective.

Secondly, although disclosure serves for social good in the previous example, it could also exert a chilling effect upon photo sharing on Internet. The same interviewee in the previous example demonstrated the chilling effect. He said, “You never know someone around you might have done something that others would like to know. So I pay particular attention to this. I would not share photos depicting people’s images. For ... my family members, I am always like that” (personal communication, March 8, 2010). For him, hiding family members’ images is not just based on consideration of family privacy, but also the result of the chilling effect of well-justified public disclosure in collectivistic culture.

Thirdly, sharing less private life with others could also help maintain collectives. An interviewee said, “I somehow look down upon those who always post photos about their own lives. They are concerned about themselves all the time. Shame on them.” (personal communication, March 7, 2010) For him, sharing too much about one’s personal life is a symbol of egocentrism and not belonging to his Renren.com ingroup. This example further explains the reason why Chinese subjects not only tend to conceal family members’ images and family space, but also tend to emphasize public aspects of

their life in Renren.com photo sharing. This pattern applies to family photo sharing as well as the sharing of photos depicting romantic relationships. An interview explained why she did not like posting photos with her boyfriend on Renren.com, “You know. I am very low-profiled” (personal communication, March 6, 2010).

Therefore, although one’s business is the business of collectives in collectivistic culture, people tend to feel wary of their privacy under the pressure of public disclosure and also tend to share less private life in social interaction for the sake of keeping low-profiled to maintain cohesive collectives. The importance of family and family privacy in collectivistic Chinese culture accounts for Chinese subjects’ stringent privacy control in photo sharing on Renren.com, while the pressure of public disclosure and the hope for keeping low-profiled further reinforce that tendency.

However, there is one point worth noting, when the results are considered in reference to collectivistic Chinese culture. The Chinese people are in the process of psychological transformation towards individualistic orientation as a result of societal modernization, although the influence of collectivism is still larger than that of individualism in the Chinese social life (Yang, 1996; Yang, 2004). In this study, in spite of all the above-described highly collectivistic features, Chinese subjects still demonstrate some individualistic tendency at the same time. This is primarily reflected in the ways they treat Renren.com friends with opinions that are different from theirs. Only one out of five interviewees chose to ignore the difference of opinions (personal communication, March 8, 2010). Two interviewees chose to express their opinions conditionally “when the remarks are abusive” or only “in a friendly tone” (personal

communication, March 9, 2010; personal communication 10, 2010). Two others chose to join the argument, and one of them even said that he feels good “when I conclude the discussion” (personal communication, March 6, 2010; personal communication, March 7, 2010). Disagreeing with ingroup opinions is a sign of bad character in the collectivistic culture, and collectivists usually feature conformity of opinions (Hofstede, 1982). The ways Chinese subjects treat different opinions on Renren.com demonstrate the individualistic freedom of expressing one’s own opinions, rather than the collectivistic feature of conformity. The individualistic tendency of Chinese subjects, although seemingly inconsistent with collectivism, actually represents a less influential aspect of the predominantly collectivistic Chinese culture, which is encouraged in the situation of social network sites. The conclusions chapter provides a detailed explanation of the interplay between collectivism, the individualistic tendency and the mediation of Renren.com, and its influences on online friendship and privacy.

To summarize, this results chapter analyzes the 100 photos that 10 Chinese subjects shared with Renren.com friends, and the in-depth interviews with five most representative subjects. The results show that Chinese subjects execute stringent privacy control in Renren.com photo sharing mainly through hiding family members’ images, obscuring private spaces of family and emphasizing the public aspects of family life. The results also suggest that privacy control in photo sharing is linked to the intensity of feeling on Renren.com friendship, and conditioned by the collectivistic Chinese culture.

RESULTS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN AMERICAN AND CHINESE SUBJECTS

This results chapter compares American and Chinese subjects in two ways. The first section summarizes the comparison of privacy in American subjects' photo sharing on Facebook and that in Chinese subjects' photo sharing on Renren.com. The second section sums up the comparison of the intensity of feeling in American subjects' Facebook friendship and that in Chinese subjects' Renren.com friendship. The results suggest that American subjects have a higher level of intensity of feeling towards their Facebook friends than Chinese subjects do towards their Renren.com friends. The results also demonstrate that American subjects disclose more about their private lives and execute less stringent privacy control in photo sharing on Facebook compared to Chinese subjects on Renren.com. These patterns are not only in line with the correlation between privacy and social distance as proposed by social distance theory, but also in keeping with the empirical findings from the previous comparative study on social distance and social behavior between America and China that was conducted by researchers of individualism and collectivism.

Privacy in Photo Sharing on Social Network Sites

According to Altman (1977)'s process-modeled definition of privacy, privacy is "a set of interpersonal boundary-control processes" (p. 66). That is to say, privacy refers to not only that a person provides more or less access of self to others, but also the

“mechanisms of privacy optimization” that are involved in the process. Therefore, this section compares both the amount of private information provided in photo sharing on social network sites between American and Chinese subjects, and their means of privacy control. The section focuses upon family photos and the relating means of privacy control, because family life is the major privacy concern for both groups of subjects according to the previous two chapters.

First, in terms of the themes of photos, both American and Chinese subjects provide a rich representation of various interpersonal relationships in their photo sharing on social network sites. Those include the relationship with immediate family members and relatives, friendship, acquaintanceship, and romantic relationship, etc. But as Table 7 shows, American subjects share more photos in almost all the aspects of their private lives (family life, hanging out with friends, romantic relationship and religion) than Chinese subjects. Moreover, Chinese subjects share many photos about school-organized activities and social issues, which are essentially public life, while American subjects do not share that type of photos.

Secondly, the types of spaces depicted in the photos shows that American subjects share more photos depicting private space (as Table 7 shows, 56 photos of home space, and the space inside houses or apartments of relatives and friends) than Chinese subjects (40 photos). American subjects also share more photos of public space marked as private (14 photos) than Chinese subjects (two photos). Chinese subjects share more photos depicting public space (58 photos) than American subjects (30 photos).

Table 7

Themes, types of spaces and region behaviors in Facebook photo sharing of American subjects compared to those in Renren.com photo sharing of Chinese subjects

	American subjects		Chinese subjects	
Themes	Family life	53	Family life	33
	Hanging out with friends	33	Hanging out with friends	21
	Romantic relationships	6	Romantic Relationships	1
	Religion	2	Religion	1
			School activities	20
			Social issues	16
			Part-time job	2
			Self-portrait	7
			Landscape	4
		Traveling	10	
Types of spaces	Public space	30		58
	Private space	56	Private space	40
	Public space marked as private	14	Public space marked as private	2
Region behaviors	Front stage	95	Front stage	100
	Off stage	5	Off stage	0
	Back stage	0	Back stage	0

Note. The numbers of photos in the thematic categories for both American and Chinese subjects add up more than 100, because some photos belong to several thematic categories at the same time.

Thirdly, speaking of region behaviors of photo sharing, Table 7 shows that all the photos (100 photos) shared by Chinese subjects are front-stage photos that are intended for all friends on Renren.com. American subjects share slightly fewer front-stage photos

(95 photos). The other five photos in the American sample, all belonging to one of American subjects, are off-stage photos that are intended only for some specific friends on Facebook. Neither American nor Chinese subjects post back-stage photos that are accessible only to the subjects themselves.

According to these results, when privacy is considered as the amount of private information that one allows to be accessed by others, American subjects obviously disclose more in photo sharing on Facebook than Chinese subjects do on Renren.com.

The process of privacy control is best illustrated in family photos for two reasons. First, for both American and Chinese subjects, there are a considerably larger number of photos depicting family life than the photos of the other themes. Secondly, as the interview results show, family life is the major privacy concern in photo sharing on social network sites for both groups of subjects. Most reported means of privacy control are executed upon family photos, too. Due to these reasons, family photos provide a vantage point to observe the process of privacy control.

The first step of online photo sharing is sampling reality by taking pictures. In the first step of their family photo sharing, one of American subjects' major means of privacy control is the thematic selection by sampling positive aspects of family life. Most of American interviewees said they would take pictures that are "appropriate" or "fit for a Christmas card", or avoid people's "vulnerability" (personal information, February 15, 2010; personal information, February 20, 2010; personal information, February 24, 2010). This thematic inclination is also reflected in Chinese subjects' family photos, all of which depict the positive aspects of family life. However, only one of Chinese

interviewees indicated this inclination as intentional privacy control. “I would rather put this type of pictures, which represent the happy side of life, the lively side, the positive side” (personal communication, March 7, 2010). Therefore, for Chinese subjects, the thematic selection by sampling positive aspects of family life is reflected in their photos, but weakly supported by their interview results, which is capable of two explanations. First, Chinese subjects execute the thematic selection unconsciously. Secondly, Chinese subjects execute the thematic selection, while they find it unnecessary to mention it, because their privacy control is more stringent. The latter explanation is supported by the results of Chinese subjects, as is showed in the following analysis.

For Chinese subjects, one of their major means of privacy control in the first step of sampling the reality by taking pictures is the thematic selection by hiding family members’ images. Among their 33 family photos, about half of the photos (15 photos) do not contain family members’ images or only contain imperceptible family members’ images. Only eight photos depict the images of immediate family members. By contrast, among 53 family photos shared by American subjects, about seventy percent of the photos (36 photos) depict family members’ images clearly. About half of the photos (24 photos) depict the images of immediate family members. Therefore, compared to American subjects’ thematic selection by sampling the positive sides of family life, Chinese subjects’ thematic selection by hiding family members’ images is a more stringent way of privacy control. As a Chinese interviewee said, he would not like to publicize family members’ images online, because of his fear of the pressure of public disclosure (personal communication, March 8, 2010). This throws light on the different

explanations in last paragraph. The latter explanation makes more sense. Under the pressure of public disclosure, Chinese subjects would hesitate to publicize family members' images, let alone the negative aspects of family life.

In the first step of sampling reality by taking pictures, another important means of privacy control by American and Chinese subjects is spatial selection. For American subjects, among their 53 family photos, 37 photos depict private space. Most of the 37 photos depict the interior of family members' houses or apartments, such as living rooms and kitchens. Bedrooms turn out to be the type of private space rarely shared on social network sites, with only one of the family photos depicting the bedroom.

By comparison, among the 33 family photos shared by Chinese subjects, 23 photos depict private space. But only seven of the 23 photos depict the interior of family members' houses or apartments. The other 16 photos depict the types of space that are private but outside family members' houses or apartments, such as rooftops or courtyards. The interior of family members' homes turns out to be the type of private space rarely shared by Chinese subjects on social network sites. A Chinese subject even considered public space as the necessary condition for his photos to be posted on social network sites (personal communication, March 8, 2010). Therefore, compared to American subjects, Chinese subjects apply a more strict way of spatial selection in their photo sharing on social network sites.

The second step of online photo sharing is publicizing photos on social network sites. In this step, privacy control is mostly reflected in regional behavioral arrangements. The direct form of regional behavioral arrangement is to apply further privacy settings

and share photos only among some specific friends, thereby making it an off-stage performance. For American subjects, four out of the 53 family photos, which all belong to a male subject, fall into this category. But the subject does not make those photos off the stage by applying further settings. He created a specifically labeled family album, and considered the photos in that album as off-stage ones, because he did not recall anyone outside the family ever comment on photos in this album. In other words, those photos could be considered off-stage in his specific situation, but not necessarily for other American subjects. By comparison, none of the 33 family photos shared by Chinese subjects are off-stage photos that involve further privacy settings. All the photos are front-stage ones. Therefore, as to the direct form of regional behavioral arrangement, American subjects execute more strict privacy control than Chinese subjects, but only to a very small extent.

There is another form of regional behavioral arrangement, which is related to the self-expressional motivation of online photo sharing. Some American subjects publicize photos for all friends on the social network site, but they intend those photos mainly as a form of self-expression. The full depth of meaning in those photos, which is beyond the apparent visual cues, is only accessible to themselves or people who know them really well. In other words, those front-stage photos are “moved” toward back stage or off the stage due to the self-expressional motivation. Similarly, Chinese subjects’ major motivations for sharing photos on the social network site also included the inner-oriented motivations of personal memory and the confirmation of individual identities. Take their family photos where family members’ images are absent or imperceptible for example.

The full depth of meaning of these photos could be comprehensible to the subjects themselves or people who know them very well, although the photo captions state that these photos are about family life. Therefore, similar with American subjects, Chinese subjects move some front-stage photos towards back stage or off the stage, because their motivation is inner-oriented.

This form of regional behavioral arrangement by American and Chinese subjects essentially represents the self-knowledge need of disclosure. Petronio (2002) pointed out that disclosure could not only fulfill “an individual’s need to express feelings and thoughts to others”, but also help an individual “know more about themselves” (p. 49). In other words, besides revealing to others, disclosure could also serve the purpose of seeking self-knowledge about oneself. In this study, both American and Chinese subjects are all college students about 20 years old, who are in the stage of starting to assume the identities of being adults. Posting photos on social network sites provides them with a visual way of identity expression, contemplation and confirmation, which meets their strong need for seeking self-knowledge. The significance of self-knowledge in their photo sharing could be only accessible to themselves, or people who know them very well. This form of regional behavioral arrangement exists for both American and Chinese subjects.

Besides these two forms of regional behavioral arrangements, American subjects also execute a unique form of regional behavioral arrangement through deleting friends on the social network site to keep the composition of their online audience as they need. Most American interviewees said that they had the experiences of “unfriending” someone

on Facebook one time before, while the few American interviewees who did not have that experience said that they would do so in certain circumstances (personal communication, February 15, 2010; personal communication, February 17, 2010; personal communication, February 20, 2010; personal communication, February 24, 2010; personal communication, February 25, 2010). However, for Chinese subjects who show a high level of loyalty to their friends on the social network site, this form of regional behavioral arrangement scarcely exists. Most Chinese interviewees said that they did not delete anyone on Renren.com, while one Chinese interviewee who did that before said that he would not do so again in the future (personal communication, March 6, 2010; personal communication, March 7, 2010; personal communication, March 8, 2010; personal communication, March 9, 2010; personal communication, March 10, 2010). Therefore, in terms of this form of regional behavioral arrangement, American subjects execute more strict privacy control than Chinese subjects. But since American subjects do not often delete friends on Facebook, this form of regional behavioral arrangement does not cause a big difference of privacy control between American and Chinese subjects.

To sum up the whole process of privacy control in family photo sharing, Chinese subjects execute more stringent thematic selections and spatial selections than American subjects, while American subjects apply some forms of regional behavioral arrangements that Chinese subjects rarely execute. On the whole, the comparison reveals the pattern that the privacy control executed by Chinese subjects in family photo sharing is more stringent than that of American subjects.

The same pattern in family photo sharing of American and Chinese subjects is reflected in their photos that depict hanging out with friends. Among American subjects' 33 photos that depict hanging out with friends, 29 photos show friends' images, and 14 photos show the interior of houses or apartments of the subjects and their friends. Only one photo is about the negative aspect of life, which depicts the subject and his friends tee-peeing a tree. But this photo is an off-stage photo only shared by people attending that activity.

For Chinese subjects, among their 21 photos that depict hanging out with friends, only 16 photos show friends' images, and only four photos show the interior of houses or apartments of the subjects and their friends. All those photos are front-stage photos that depict the positive aspects of life. Therefore, compared to American subjects, Chinese subjects execute more stringent privacy control in their sharing of photos that depict hanging out with friends, which is especially reflected in their spatial selection of hiding the private space of friends' homes.

The same pattern is also reflected in American and Chinese subjects' photos that depict romantic relationship. Among the 100 photos shared by American subjects, only six photos depict romantic relationship, all of which belong to a female subject. But the six photos form a very rich representation of the relationship, depicting the subject and her boyfriend going to concert, museum and the beach, and cooking together in kitchen. Among the Chinese subjects, only a male subject shared a single photo about romantic relationship. This photo does not show the image of his girlfriend, although they did spend some time together during the winter break, because "being a typical Chinese

man”, he would rather “keep it in the depth of my heart” (personal communication, March 7, 2010). Another Chinese subject said he would not publicize the images of his girlfriend, because of his fear of gossips (personal communication, March 10, 2010). Therefore, compared to American subjects, Chinese subjects execute more stringent privacy control in their sharing of photos that depict romantic relationship, which is reflected in the thematic selection of hiding their lovers’ images.

To summarize, this section reveals that American subjects share more private life and private space on the social network site than Chinese subjects. Moreover, both American and Chinese subjects execute various means of privacy control, including thematic selections, spatial selections and regional behavioral arrangements, in their family photo sharing on social network sites. American subjects’ regional behavioral arrangement by deleting Facebook friends hardly exists for Chinese subjects, who do not tend to delete Renren.com friends. But generally speaking, the results show the pattern that American subjects’ privacy control is less stringent than Chinese subjects in family photo sharing, which is strongly reflected in their thematic selections and spatial selections. The same pattern is also found in their sharing of photos about romantic relationship and photos that depict hanging out with friends.

Intensity of Feeling in Friendship on Social Network Sites

According to Altman (1977), the potential approach to make a cross-cultural examination of privacy is to examine interpersonal relationships. In the context of this study, interpersonal relationship refers to friendship on social network sites. Shibutani

(1961) proposed that the basic unit of analysis for the study of interpersonal relationships is sentiment, which is conceptualized as the configuration of various responses towards a given person all selectively oriented to move in a general direction. Similar with Shibutani (1961)'s conceptualization of sentiment, Stevens (1955) suggested that positive types of sentiment such as friendship should be comprehensively described by the intensity of feeling in various dimensions including sharing, respect, loyalty, and empathy and responsibility. Correspondingly, this study compares American and Chinese subjects' friendship on social network sites by looking at the intensity of feeling in their friendship in the dimensions of sharing, respect, empathy and responsibility, and loyalty.

American subjects on Facebook feature a high level of reciprocity and the informality of purpose on the dimension of sharing, while Chinese subjects feature a low level of reciprocity and the formality of purpose. For American subjects, one of the most important sharing activities on Facebook is sharing articles, videos, photos and music that they create or feel interested in. They also consider if "that person would also find it interesting" (personal communication, February 17, 2010), a demonstration of reciprocity and sharing. Another important sharing activity of American subjects on Facebook is recalling personal encounters or sending each other messages to organize personal encounters, most of which are informal activities such as dinner parties (personal communication, February 15, 2010; personal communication, February 17, 2010; personal communication, February 25, 2010). This type of sharing is closely related to the American subjects' informal personal lives, therefore featuring the informality of purpose.

For Chinese subjects, one of their most important sharing activities on Renren.com is also sharing articles, videos, photos and music. But most often, they share “stuff shared by others”, and the criterion for selecting what to share is that they find it “useful” (personal communication, March 8, 2010). Moreover, most of them mainly share “study experience”, or “things I can learn knowledge from” (personal communication, March 9, 2010; personal communication, March 10, 2010). Compared to American subjects who share things based on their own interest as well as others’ interest, Chinese subjects show a lower level of reciprocity, because they mostly share things from others they find useful. Chinese subjects also display a higher level of formality in sharing information for learning purposes compared to American subjects, whose sharing is closely related to informal, real-life personal encounters. Therefore, in the dimension of sharing, American subjects show a higher level of intensity of feeling towards friends on the social network site than Chinese subjects.

In the dimension of respect, American subjects show a higher level of respect towards friends on the social network site than Chinese subjects. To measure the intensity of feeling in this dimension, interviewees were asked how they would feel and do if their friends on social network sites expressed different views from theirs. For American subjects, three out of five interviewees all chose not to look for conflicts. One of them indicated that “our friendship isn’t worth fighting over” (personal communication, February 15, 2010). This not only displays her high level of respect in Facebook friendship, but also shows that her respect towards Facebook friends is directly linked with the importance of that friendship for her. Only one of five interviewees indicated

that he would express his opinions (personal communication, February 20, 2010). The other interviewee said he would “say something” only if he feels “strong enough” (personal communication, February 17, 2010).

Comparatively, for Chinese subjects, only one out of five Chinese interviewees chose to “ignore it” (personal communication, March 8, 2010). Two interviewees indicated that they would let their voice be heard. One of them even said that he “feels good” when he concludes the argument (personal communication, March 7, 2010). Two other interviewees would express their opinions conditionally. One of them said he would “keep silent unless the remarks are abusive” (personal communication, March 10, 2010). The other of them said she would only give her opinion “in a friendly tone” (personal communication, March 9, 2010). Therefore, compared to American subjects, Chinese subjects show a lower level of respect towards friends on the social network site.

To measure the intensity of feeling in the dimension of empathy and responsibility, American and Chinese interviewees were asked “how would you feel and do if a friend on Facebook or Renren.com who used to write regularly on your wall does not do so for a month”. Compared to the previous two dimensions, the difference between American and Chinese subjects in this dimension is even bigger.

Three out of five American interviewees chose to contact and ask the friend. One of them said that she would not “write on their wall”, but would “send ... an message just between myself and that person in case it is something personal they don’t want to share” (personal communication, February 15, 2010). This clearly shows the responsibility she felt towards the privacy of her Facebook friends. The other two American interviewees

even blamed upon themselves. “I probably think it was my fault. There hasn’t been any communication because I haven’t instigated any” (personal communication, February 17, 2010). “... probably because I haven’t hanged out with them in real life” (personal communication, February 25, 2010). Their responses show the inclination to empathize with their Facebook friends. In a sharp contrast to American subjects, a large majority of Chinese interviewees (four interviewees) said they would not mind, or would not have any feeling about the situation. This contrast reveals a much lower level of empathy and responsibility of Chinese subjects towards their Renren.com friends, compared to that of American subjects towards their Facebook friends.

Chinese subjects show a higher level of loyalty towards friends on the social network site than American subjects. For Chinese subjects, a majority of Chinese interviewees (three interviewees) never deleted any Renren.com friends. An interviewee who deleted a friend did so in a very special circumstance. Betrayed by his girlfriend, he “unfriended” her in real life as well as on Renren.com (personal communication, March 8, 2010), which should be considered as an extreme case. Another interviewee who deleted friends said he would never do so in the future (personal communication, March 10, 2010). These results show a very high level of loyalty of Chinese subjects towards their Renren.com friends. By contrast, a majority of American interviewees (three interviewees) had the experience of deleting a Facebook friend. The two interviewees who did not have that experience said that they would do so if Facebook friends “don’t have anything to offer me” or “the relationship doesn’t have much future” (personal communication, March 20, 2010; personal communication, March 25, 2010).

To sum up, friendship on social network sites is described as the comprehensive configuration of the intensity of feeling towards friends on social network sites in the above-listed various dimensions. Although Chinese subjects show a higher level of loyalty towards friends on the social network site than their American counterparts, they display a lower level of intensity of feeling than American subjects on all the other dimensions, including sharing, respect and especially empathy and responsibility. On the whole, the comparison reveals the pattern that the intensity of feeling of American subjects' Facebook friendship is at a higher level than that of Chinese subject's Renren.com friendship.

This chapter compares the results between American and Chinese subjects and reveals two patterns. First, American subjects share more about their private lives and execute less stringent privacy control in Facebook photo sharing than Chinese subjects on Renren.com. Secondly, American subjects show a higher level of intensity of feeling in Facebook friendship than Chinese subjects do in Renren.com friendship.

These patterns are highly consistent with social distance theory and previous studies about social behavior in reference to the cultural differences between America and China. Hsu (1985) described western culture as a dynamic type of culture, in which individuals are encouraged to become independent from their parents and kin members, stand on their own feet, and establish compensatory sources of attachment in other non-kin beings, such as friends. Hsu (1985) also described Chinese culture as a kinship-based type of culture, in which individuals maintain the relationships of attachment with parents and kin members, without necessarily reaching outward to other social members. In this

study, American subjects' Facebook friendship features a higher level of intensity of feeling than Chinese subjects' Renren.com friendship. While American subjects indicated that they "do feel the closeness" with Facebook friends and would like to share photos to "stimulate ... connections", Chinese subjects expressed a lack of trust on "stuff on the Internet" (personal communication, February 15, 2010; personal communication, February 17, 2010; personal communication, March 7, 2010). This difference in their friendship on social network sites is consistent with Hsu(1985)'s description.

According to social distance theory by Simmel (1950) and Shibutani (1961) who theorized about social behavior as a general human phenomenon, the intensity of affection between people is positively related to their amount of knowledge of each other. Triandis, McCusker and Hui (1990) brought this theoretical claim into the perspective of individualism vs. collectivism cultural differentiation, empirically comparing association, intimacy and social distance between an individualistic sample in mid-west America and a collectivistic sample in Chinese mainland. Their study discovered that the negative correlation between association and social distance, and that between intimacy and social distance exist for both American and Chinese samples. Their study also discovered that the curves of correlation for the two samples are about the same. These findings are exactly reflected in this study, which reveals the co-existence of the difference in friendship on social network sites, and the difference in privacy for online photo sharing between American and Chinese subjects. When American subjects feel a higher level of intensity towards Facebook friends than Chinese subjects do to Renren.com friends, they also execute less stringent privacy control and share more private lives in online photo

sharing than their Chinese counterparts. However, the above-mentioned theory and studies had been put together well before the great influence of Internet became a reality. Moreover, even the Internet has been developing. In the virtual world, social network sites such as Facebook and Renren.com have become an influential new trend. In America, Facebook has recently replaced Google as the most-visited website (Daily Mail Reporter, 2010). Different from other Internet functions such as Internet advertising and commerce, websites like Facebook and Renren.com advocate a culture of informal interaction and sharing. Due to the increasing influences of Internet and social network sites in social life, cultural analysis should necessarily incorporate their influences as well. In the following conclusions chapter, Internet and social network sites are considered as mediating factors on American and Chinese cultures. The differences of privacy and friendship on social network sites between American and Chinese subjects are not only conditioned in the individualism vs. collectivism cultural differentiation, but also related to the mediation of social network sites on American and Chinese cultures.

CONCLUSIONS

This study, which explores the culturally conditioned privacy in online photo sharing, concentrates on the following research questions:

*How do American and Chinese social network site users share photos with online friends about their lives (relationships, activities, feelings and thoughts)? Do they do it in the same way or differently?

*How do American and Chinese social network site users treat their friends on social network sites in terms of the intensity of feeling? Do they treat their friends on social network sites with the same intensity of feeling or differently?

*If there are any differences in the previous two questions, how can those differences be understood in reference to cultural differences between America and China?

The previous results chapter answers the first two groups of research questions. First, the results suggest that both American and Chinese social network site users execute effective privacy control through thematic selections, spatial selections and regional behavioral arrangements in online photo sharing. The execution of privacy control is primarily reflected in family photo sharing. The results reveal the pattern that American subjects share more of their private lives and private space, and execute less stringent privacy control in online family photo sharing than Chinese subjects. The same pattern is also found between American and Chinese subjects in their sharing of photos that depict other themes, such as romantic relationships and hanging out with friends.

Secondly, the study considers the intensity of feeling in friendship on social network sites as the comprehensive configuration of the subjects' responses in various dimensions: loyalty, sharing, respect and empathy and responsibility. On most dimensions (sharing, respect, and empathy and responsibility), American subjects reported a higher intensity of feeling towards friends on the social network site than Chinese subjects. But Chinese subjects reported a higher level of loyalty towards friends on the social network site than American subjects. Taken as a whole, American social network site users' intensity of feeling in online friendship is at a higher level compared to Chinese users.

The previous results chapter also compares the above-mentioned differences between American and Chinese social network site users with previous studies. These differences are highly consistent not only with the social distance theory, but also with the empirical study conducted by Triandis, McCusker and Hui (1990) who compared social distance and social behavior between America and China in reference to the individualism vs. collectivism cultural differentiation. The consistency suggests that the differences revealed in this study are conditioned in the individualism vs. collectivism cultural differentiation between America and China. But a thorough explanation of how these differences are culturally conditioned has yet to be made.

The conclusions chapter tries to provide the cultural explanation in three sections. The first section describes how the differences of friendship and privacy in photo sharing on social network sites between American and Chinese subjects are conditioned in the individualistic American culture and the collectivistic Chinese culture. The second

section describes how social network sites mediate the American culture and the Chinese culture, which also relates to the differences of online friendship and privacy between American and Chinese subjects. The third section provides an alternative legal explanation, which is also essentially culturally embedded.

Online Privacy and Friendship Conditioned by Individualistic American Culture and Collectivistic Chinese Culture

Researchers of individualism and collectivism often used the definition of ingroup to delineate the differences between individualistic culture and collectivistic culture. According Triandis (1988), ingroups are “groups of individuals about whose welfare a person is concerned, with whom that person is willing to cooperate without demanding equitable returns, and separation from whom leads to anxiety” (p. 75). All cultures have ingroups. But the importance of various ingroups is different between the individualistic culture and the collectivistic culture. The connections between ingroups and the self-definitions, social relationships and social behaviors of the individuals are also different between the individualistic culture and the collectivistic culture.

As to the self-definition of individuals, “collectivists define themselves as members of ingroups, while individualists define themselves as autonomous entities” (Triandis, 1995, p. 155). As to social relationships, individualists have relatively many ingroups and are expected to “improvise” the norms of social behaviors in ingroups (Triandis, 1995, p. 110). Collectivists have “relatively few ingroups”, some of which “dominate social life” and become the sources of norms of social behaviors (Triandis,

1995, p. 59). Collectivists “have so many obligations” towards the dominant ingroups that they do not “have the interest or energy” for other relationships (Triandis, 1995, p. 177). As to social behaviors, individualists enter and exit ingroups with great frequency (Triandis, 1995), while collectivists feature the strong sense of ingroup loyalty, which often leads to ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation (Kagitcibasi, 1990).

Hofstede (1980) considered American culture as highly individualistic and Chinese culture as highly collectivistic. In this study, the differences of friendship and privacy in photo sharing on social network sites between American and Chinese subjects are conditioned in the above-listed three aspects by the individualistic American culture and the collectivistic Chinese culture.

First of all, the subjects of this study defined themselves in the ways that reflect their cultural types precisely. The Chinese subjects described themselves as parts of their national culture and their families. Their national cultural identity is closely linked with their family identity. Among five Chinese interviewees, four interviewees described themselves as typically Chinese. Three of them cited family attachment as the reason why they considered themselves typically Chinese. An interviewee said, “I think I am quite Chinese ... the thing that I think is common to the Chinese is that we all share the tradition of having a strong sense of family” (personal communication, March 6, 2010). Their self-identity in reference to national culture and families is even further confirmed along with the process of growing into adulthood. For example, an interviewee said, “Now I am getting older. I was often like a kid before. But now I am feeling the increasingly stronger sense of family. I also start to realize that as a man, I need to

shoulder the responsibility for family ... I think I am still a traditional man” (personal communication, March 10, 2010). The self-definition of the subjects reveals their strong sense of belonging to their national culture and their families. Their self-definition also highlights family as the dominant ingroup in the collectivistic Chinese culture. The important of the family ingroup resonates with Fung (1948)’s claim that “family system” is “the social system of China” (p. 21). In this sense, the self-definition of the subjects actually reflects their strong sense of belonging to the family-based Chinese national culture.

By contrast, American subjects described themselves as autonomous individuals. They would not define themselves by their country. For example, an interviewee said, “I feel there is so much more to me than the word ‘American’ can explain” (personal communication, February 15, 2010). Another interview expressed the same opinion, “... I am an American male, but I don’t think that is what defines me” (personal communication, February 17, 2010). Instead, they would define themselves by their personality. Most interviewees consider themselves as “different” or “not fit in”. An interviewee said, “I am finding myself very different, and having different morals and values than the people I am surrounded with” (personal communication, February 15, 2010). Another interviewee said, “I don’t tend to fit in with people who are very American” (personal communication, February 24, 2010). A male interviewee even directly said, “I don’t want to be thought of as an American”.

On the one hand, the self-definition of American subjects reflects the strong willingness to establish the individual identities for themselves, who are all about-20-

year-old college students. On the other hand and on a deeper cultural level, their unanimity in defining themselves by their autonomous personalities reveals the characteristic of American culture that is common to the subjects. What underlies the autonomous individual identities is the pluralistic American culture, which features the tolerance of cultural diversity. The pluralistic American culture not only makes the social cultural environment that is most friendly to autonomous individual identities, but also encourages the individuals to explore into diverse cultures with curiosity. In this study, most interviewees also expressed the hope of going outside the American borders, meeting people from other cultures, and cultivating the view of the world (personal communication, February 10, 2010; personal communication, February 15, 2010; personal communication, February 17, 2010; personal communication, February 24, 2010). In this sense, although American subjects described them as autonomous beings different from each other, the heterogeneity of individual identities nonetheless precisely throws light upon their cultural homogeneity embedded in the pluralistic individualistic American culture.

Moreover, family is considered as an important part of the individualized selves of the subjects, but it does not occupy the dominant position as it has in Chinese society. For example, in her reflection of “who I am”, an interviewee listed the important aspects of her personality, “... painting is what I love ... And I am a huge animal lover ... I would do anything for friends and family” (personal communication, February 15, 2010). For her, the importance of family is almost parallel to that of friends, and even considered together with her pets and hobby.

In short, in consistency with the collectivistic Chinese culture, Chinese subjects defined themselves as parts of their families and the family-based national culture. Unlike Chinese subjects, American subjects defined themselves as autonomous beings, which is in consistency with the pluralistic feature of the individualistic American culture. Family is still an important part of the individualized selves of American subjects. But family does not play the dominant role in American social culture as in Chinese social culture.

Secondly, American and Chinese subjects are inclined to establish friendships on social network sites in the ways that are consistent with their cultural types. On the one hand, for both American and Chinese subjects, their composition of friends on social network sites features a continuation of pre-existing relationships in real life. As is illustrated in Table 3 and Table 6, the majority of online friends are friends from schools and colleges that they have attended. On the other hand, most American subjects also tend to add friends based on their individual interests, who can be their “friends of friends” or purely online friends. For them, the common interests are no less emphasized as the preexisting relationships in their friendship on social network sites. An American interviewee described his Facebook friends, “... we have similar interests ... not just purely we go to the same school or the same dorm” (personal communication, February 17, 2010).

By contrast, few Chinese subjects emphasized the necessity of having common interests with friends on social network sites. The existence of pre-existing relationships seems to be the predominant standard, even in the rare circumstances when they add purely on-line friends. A Chinese interviewee added 50 purely online friends on

Renren.com, but he emphasized that he added them because most of them were from his hometown (personal communication, March 7, 2010). The pre-existing hometown fellowship is the condition for him to establish purely online friendship on the social network site. Therefore, compared to individualistic American subjects who tend to improvise Facebook friendship according to their personal interests, Chinese subjects tend to stick to their pre-existing ingroups on Renren.com.

Moreover, the intensity of feeling in friendship on social network sites is also different between American individualists and Chinese collectivists. The results of the study shows that on most dimensions of friendship, American subjects have a higher intensity of feeling towards friends on the social network site than Chinese subjects. This pattern has three potential explanations. First, according to Triandis (1995), collectivists have so many obligations towards their dominant ingroup, which is family in the Chinese social life so that they do not “have the interest or energy” for other relationships (p. 177). Secondly, according to Hsu (1995), western culture advocates standing on one’s own feet and the individuals in western culture tend to reach out from their families to form other intimate relationships; while Chinese culture is kinship based, and Chinese individuals are so deeply attached to kin members that they do not tend to form other intimate relationships. Third, as previously described, compared to Chinese collectivists who tend to stick with their pre-existing relationships on Renren.com, American individualists are more inclined to improvise Facebook friendship according to their personal interests. In this sense, American individualists are more motivated to conduct deeper interactions with and develop a higher intensity of feeling towards Facebook

friends, because it could be to the benefit to their own interests. All the three explanations boil down to the ingroup-based difference between the collectivistic Chinese social culture, in which family is the dominant ingroup with almost overriding importance, and the individualistic American social culture, in which individuals could form ingroups according to their individual needs.

However, American subjects display a lower intensity of feeling in their friendship on the social network site than Chinese subjects only on the dimension of loyalty. This difference is also conditioned in the individualism vs. collectivism cultural differentiation between America and China. Triandis (1995) pointed out that compared to collectivists who feature ingroup loyalty, individualists can enter and exit ingroups with great frequency. This explains why all five American interviewees in this study said that they deleted Facebook friends before or would delete Facebook friends in the future (Table 2), while most Chinese interviewees said that they never deleted Renren.com friends before, and a Chinese interviewee who did it before said that he would not do it in the future (Table 5). But the results also show that even American subjects do not delete Facebook friends with great frequency. Some of them deleted one or a few Facebook friends before. One of them even said that she would not delete a friend if a problem could be talked out (personal communication, February 15, 2010).

In dramaturgical terms, the attempts of deleting online friends can be considered as choosing the audience for the photos that they share online, which serve the purpose of privacy control in the form of regional behavioral arrangement. Chinese subjects rarely resort to this means of privacy control because of the collectivistic characteristic of strong

ingroup loyalty. This difference is relevant to the third aspect in which the comparison of American and Chinese subjects is conditioned by the individualistic American culture and the collectivistic Chinese culture. The ingroup-based differences between the two cultures not only accounts for the differences of self-definition and friendship on social network sites between American and Chinese subjects, but also explains those differences of privacy control in their online photo sharing.

The difference of ingroup loyalty is central to the explanation. Individualists' low level of ingroup loyalty facilitates American subjects' privacy control through the regional behavioral arrangement of deleting Facebook friends. Collectivists' high level of ingroup loyalty and the ensuing inclination of outgroup derogation justifies Chinese subjects' privacy control by hiding the images of family friends online. Chinese subjects resort to the privacy control of hiding family members' images in photo sharing on social network sites. This means of privacy control embodies the strong sense of ingroup loyalty that characterizes Chinese collectivists. In the collectivistic Chinese culture, sharing too much private life is looked down upon, because it is considered as egocentric and harmful to ingroup cohesion (personal communication, March 7, 2010). To show their loyalty to ingroups, Chinese subjects tend to be "low-profiled" in sharing their private lives, especially family life and romantic relationships (personal communication, March 6, 2010).

This means of privacy control by Chinese subjects also serves the purpose of avoiding outgroup derogation, which is often caused by ingroup loyalty in collectivistic culture (Kagitcibasi, 1990). For example, a Chinese subject said that he would publicize

the images of persons who do not abide by public virtues on the Internet. “When I watched the Olympic torch relay, I saw someone sit or stand on the national flag. Images of these persons must be uploaded online” (personal communication, March 8, 2010). But at the same time, he never publicized his family members’ images online, because “you never know someone around you might have done something that others would like to know” (personal communication, March 8, 2010). For this Chinese subject, public disclosure is a form of outgroup derogation against persons who do not abide by the rules for members of their national collective. While at the same time, the pressure of outgroup derogation leads him to hide family members’ images online.

In the above-mentioned example, the co-existence of the willingness to disclose others’ images for the sake of maintaining the public virtue and the inclination to hide family members’ images for the sake of avoiding the possible public disclosure is a meaningful demonstration of the situation of collectivism in current China. Since 19th century, the Chinese society has experienced waves of profound changes, including the challenges of foreign invasions and civil wars, the political and cultural revolutions, and the economic developments. Each step of transformation has been achieved with great impact upon the original system of norms in Chinese society. The Internet, where there are fewer limitations upon the freedom of expression, provides the platform for the Chinese people to actively engage with a collective norm-confirming process. To disclose others’ images to maintain the public virtue is obviously part of the norm-confirming efforts. But to hide family members’ images to avoid public disclosure is also part of the norm-confirming process, in the sense that it embodies the return to the family-based

Chinese tradition. During the cultural revolutions, people were required to denounce their parents and vow loyalty to the Communist Party, which undermined the family basis of collectivistic Chinese culture. The Chinese subjects' privacy control by hiding family members' images online actually represents the social cultural inclination to reestablish family as the primary source of norms, which is best summarized by Chi'en Mu (1979): "The Chinese people ... must have a place to train their human hearts ... This place is family ... Family is the church for the Chinese people" (pp. 19-20). Given the dominant position of the family ingroup in the collectivistic Chinese culture, the return to the family-based Chinese tradition is a return to the root of the collectivistic Chinese Culture.

To summarize, this section describes the differences in self-definition, friendship on social network sites and the means of privacy control in online photo sharing between American and Chinese subjects as conditioned by individualistic American culture and collectivistic Chinese culture. First, in the collectivistic Chinese culture, family is the dominant ingroup that overrides all other ingroups; Chinese collectivists do not tend to form close relationships with non-family members. In the individualistic American culture, family is an important ingroup, but does not enjoy the dominant position as in Chinese culture; American individualists tend to reach out from families and improvise ingroups according to their individual needs. This cultural difference accounts for the pattern that American subjects in this study have a higher level of intensity of feeling in the friendship on the social network site than Chinese subjects. As Triandis, McCusker and Hui (1990) discovered, American individualists and Chinese collectivists have the same curve for the negative correlation between social distance and intimacy. American

subjects, who have a higher level of intensity of feeling in online friendship than Chinese subjects, should share more private information with friends on the social network sites than their Chinese counterparts, which the results of this study support.

Secondly, in the individualistic culture, individuals feature the low level of ingroup loyalty, entering and exiting ingroups more frequently than individuals in collectivistic culture. This individualistic characteristic facilitates American subjects' privacy control through regional behavioral arrangement of deleting Facebook friends. In the collectivist culture, individuals feature the strong sense of ingroup loyalty, which often leads to outgroup derogation. This collectivistic characteristic explains why Chinese subjects hide family members' images in online photo sharing to appear less egocentric and avoid public disclosure.

Online Privacy and Friendship in Reference to American Culture and Chinese Culture Mediated by Social Network Sites

The previous section describes that the results of this study are highly conditioned by the ingroup-based differences between the individualistic American culture and the collectivistic Chinese culture. However, the real social life is not completely consistent with the individualism vs. collectivism theoretical framework, as Triandis (1995) explained that

“We might examine some classic cases of particular societies in light of the I- and C-factors. In doing so it is important to stress, once more, that there is considerable within-culture variation. ... In addition, every culture has both individualistic and collectivistic attributes. It is only when a culture has more collectivist than individualistic attributes that we can call it collectivist, and vice versa” (Triandis, 1995, p. 89).

Both American and Chinese cultures contain within-culture variations. Besides individualism, American culture also features the concern for community traced back to its republican and biblical traditions, which nonetheless has appeared less conspicuous in the predominantly individualistic American culture. Besides collectivism, Chinese culture also contains some degree of individualistic tendency as the consequence of various social changes, which is still considered to be less influential in the predominantly collectivistic Chinese culture. On Facebook and Renren.com, these within-culture variations are allowed, encouraged and stimulated by the specific situation of communication on these social network sites, which in turn influence the online friendship and privacy of the subjects in this study. This section tries to delineate this process in three segments. The first segment concludes the features of Internet culture on social network sites. The second segment describes the mediation of American culture by the social network site, and its relation with American subjects' online privacy and friendship. The third segment describes the mediation of Chinese culture by the social network site, and its relation with Chinese subjects' online privacy and friendship.

Internet Culture on Social Network Sites

Johnston and Johal (1999) concluded two major characteristics of the Internet culture by using the cultural schemes of Hofstede (1980). First, in terms of power distance, the Internet promotes informal and equal interaction, with “no emphasis on status” (Johnston & Johal, 1999, p. 184). Second, in terms of the individualism vs. collectivism cultural differentiation, the Internet features a “clash of culture” (Johnston &

Johal, 1999, p. 184). The Internet was “born and bred in the collectivistic atmosphere of sharing”, but the later settlers of the Internet space pursue the individualistic goal of profit making in Internet advertising and commerce (Johnston & Johal, 1999, p. 184).

The first characteristic of Internet culture as described by Johnston and Johal (1999) applies to most forms of computer-mediated communications, in which informality and equality are attained through the anonymity of users. But the second characteristic of Internet culture, the clash of culture between the collectivistic atmosphere of sharing and the individualistic goal of profit making, is over-generalized.

Speaking of Internet culture, it is fair to say the Internet was “born and bred in the collectivistic atmosphere of culture” (Johnston & Johal, 1999, p. 184). Although the technology of Internet indeed originated from military research during the era of cold war, the full development of the Internet started up with the National Science Foundation (NSF)’s construction of NSFNET between American universities during 1980s. The purpose of the NSFNET was sharing the university resources to promote research and education. Serving the common good of academic research and university education, this sort of sharing could be considered as collectivistic sharing.

However, Internet sharing is no longer limited to the information sharing between universities, as the usage of Internet becomes increasingly popularized and personalized. An Internet user’s message of concern could be sent to a stranger on an online community. This form of sharing serves the need of maintaining a virtual community, which is communitarian in essence, rather than collectivistic. Therefore, although there is a clash of culture between sharing on Internet and profit making on Internet, it could not

be over-generalized as a clash between a collectivistic goal and an individualistic goal. But the conclusions of Johnston and Johal (1999) could be adapted for describing the specific situation of communication on social network sites such as Facebook and Renren.com. As comparatively recent additions in the Internet space, these social network sites obviously features informal and equal interaction, and the atmosphere of sharing.

First, both Facebook and Renren.com began as a university-students-only social network sites. Users needed to have university email addresses to join the websites. This threshold of membership further enhances the informality and equality of interaction. In most other forms of computer-mediated communication, informality and equality are only attained through the anonymity of users. But on Facebook and Renren.com, most users are university students, whose equal status and informal way of communication in their real-life encounters continue online as well. Although Facebook and Renren.com have expanded to incorporate everyone, the characteristic of informal and equal interaction has been preserved. The results of this study show that the subjects' friends on social network sites are still predominantly made up of schoolmates (Tables 3 & 6). Some subjects also have their parents and professors on the social network site, but these persons are still marked as online friends. Therefore, compared to other forms of computer-mediated communication, the communication on Facebook and Renren.com features an even greater degree of informality and equality.

Secondly, the social network sites of Facebook and Renren.com feature the highly emphasized atmosphere of sharing. One of the most important services of Facebook and

Renren.com is the sharing of notes and photos. The results of this study show that American subjects reported a very high level of intensity of feeling on the dimension of sharing. Their sharing features a high level of receptivity towards each other's needs and a close connection with their personal lives. For Chinese subjects, who reported a much lower intensity of feeling in the dimension of sharing, sharing is still one of their most important activities in Renren.com interaction. A male Chinese interviewee even said that he came to Renren.com "usually for sharing" (personal communication, March 8, 2010). Another male Chinese interviewee said, "Funny stuff, good stuff. I will always share those stuff" (personal communication, March 7, 2010).

Social network sites have even turned out to be incompatible to the function of advertising and profit making for a long period of time. Take Facebook for example. Although the website was launched in 2004, it did not become cash flow positive until late 2009 (Clark, 2009). Until very recently, the major form of Facebook advertising has been banner ads on the side of the page (MacLean & Zhang, 2007). But some companies complained that this form of advertising was potentially harmful to their brands, because their products could be promoted on pages with negative user-generated content. These companies ended up removing their advertisements from Facebook (BBC News, 2007). Up until now, some advertising professionals continue to insist that "the real value of websites like Facebook lies not in advertising but in engagement and participation" (Clark, 2009, para. 13). Therefore, in spite of the cultural clash between sharing and profit making on the Internet, the culture on social network sites such as Facebook and Renren.com obviously features a highly emphasized atmosphere of sharing.

Triandis (1995) suggested that researchers of individualism and collectivism should also consider the “situational specificity” of social life under examination (p. 46). As is described above, the situational specificity of social network sites such as Facebook and Renren.com is made up of two features, the especially informal and equal interaction and the highly emphasized atmosphere of sharing. The following two segments explore into the mediation of American and Chinese cultures by the specific situation on social network sites, and the influence of the mediation on online friendship and privacy of the subjects in this study.

Facebook-mediated American Culture and Online Friendship and Privacy

American culture is often considered as typically individualistic, because “the United States is a large mega-democracy, heterogeneous in its ethnic and religious traditions, and characterized by a striking pluralism and geographic mobility” (Conover, Crewe & Searing, 1991, p. 804). In American culture, individual freedom and choice are highly emphasized (Triandis, 1995). However, individualism is the major aspect, but not the only facet of American culture. In *Habits of the Heart*, Bellah et al. (1985) argue that besides individualism, American culture also featured the concern for community that was traced back to republican and biblical traditions. According to the biblical tradition inherited from “first Puritans”, the criterion of success is “the creation of a community in which a genuinely ethical and spiritual life could be lived” (Bellah et al., 1985, p. 29). In the republic thinking of Thomas Jefferson, the principle of citizen participation was insistently stressed, because “the best defense” for individual freedom was “an educated

people actively participating in government” (Bellah et al., 1985, p. 31). As to modern American culture, Bellah et al. (1985) acknowledge that there is a tension between individualism and the concern for community, the latter of which is less emphasized, but still existent in American life. For example, people long to live in a nice neighborhood where they could “work for the community and meet people” (Bellah et al., 1985, p. 180). Individuals are still expected to “get involved”, especially when their individual and community interests are threatened (Bellah et al., 1985, p. 167).

The concern for community is a less conspicuous aspect of the primarily individualistic American culture. But this aspect could be encouraged in the Internet communication, especially in the communication on Facebook, which features the informal and equal interaction and the atmosphere of sharing.

Some researcher expects the Internet to contribute to “rebuilding community in the face of America’s loss of a sense of a social commons” (Rheingold, 1994, p. 283). The online accumulation of expertise, by which people can solve questions easily and quickly, and the establishment of online social networks, by which people can receive words of concerns from those they have not met, are considered to be able to make the Internet a community (Rheingold, 1994). But meanwhile, some researcher finds that loneliness is associated with increased Internet user (Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, 2003). The anonymity of Internet users is considered to be the major reason why people cannot satisfy their need for attachment in online communication as much as in face-to-face communication. According to the studies, the Internet not only features the functions that encourages the sense of community, but also contains the factor that discourages it.

However, most Facebook users do not communicate anonymously, because Facebook friendship is usually a continuation of pre-existing social relationships in real life. Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) found that Facebook is mainly used for maintaining and solidifying offline connections, as opposed to making purely online friends. On Facebook, users usually know their online friends in real life, or at least have access to their real names and profile information. Therefore, Facebook does not lead to the potential danger of alienating anonymous users from each other. In this sense, Facebook, where the users know each other well and engage actively in various sharing activities, makes a most conducive environment for the formation and growth of the sense of community.

In this study, some inconsistency between the results of American subjects and the individualistic American culture is actually embedded in the much-emphasized sense of community of American subjects on Facebook. Researchers of individualism vs. collectivism cultural differentiation claim that individualists motive structure reflects their internal needs, rather than receptivity (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). But according to the results, American subjects share things with Facebook friends not just based on their own interests, but also based on their Facebook friends' interests. The high level of receptivity demonstrated in this inclination is actually an embodiment of the sense of online community of American subjects. The social network site is the "Facebook community" for the subjects (personal communication, February 17, 2010). They are concerned about this online community. As Chapter 4 describes, stimulating the Facebook community bond even makes their primary motivation for sharing posts and

photos on Facebook. The sense of Facebook community not only further explains American subjects' high intensity of feeling in online friendship, but also further accounts for their privacy control in online photo sharing, which is very effective but not as stringent as Chinese subjects. Although individualists have high regard for personal privacy, the American subjects would like to "share the experiences", including their personal lives, on Facebook in order to "feel the closeness" with Facebook friends, and maintain the Facebook community (personal communication, February 15, 2010).

However, the Facebook community for American subjects is in essence a private community, rather than a civic community. The foundation of their Facebook community is still their private interest, but not any kind of public good. As Chapter 4 describes, the subjects would delete a Facebook friend, if they cannot benefit from the communication with that friend. The utilitarian individualistic interest is still central to the subjects' Facebook community membership. Although the Facebook space is filled with a wide range of advocacy groups, from anti-abortion groups to environmental awareness groups, none of the subjects reported the participation in these advocacy groups as a noteworthy part of their Facebook communication. In this sense, the much-emphasized sense of community on Facebook is still a far cry from Bellah et al. (1985)'s vision of transforming American individualists into concerned citizens.

Renren.com-mediated Chinese Culture and Online Friendship and Privacy

Chinese culture is highly collectivistic (Triandis, 1995). In its thousands of years of history, Chinese society has featured family as its dominant ingroup, with a strong

emphasis on family obligation. Besides the social cultural tradition, the communist central government of China has a powerful socio-economic control, which is especially represented in the enormous state-owned economy and national bureaucratic system. Moreover, nearly seventy percent of Chinese people are rural population, who are relatively poor. With their livelihood closely tied to land, they are very inclined to cooperate with each other to be competitive.

However, Chinese culture has also shown the tendency of shifting towards individualism, due to the influences from the political movement, the development of modern economy, and the policy of birth control (Triandis, 1995). The Cultural Revolution forced people to denounce their parents and vow loyalty to the Communist Party, which weakened the family foundation of collectivistic Chinese culture. The family-based social system has been further fragmented later, because of the population migration necessitated by economic development. Most importantly, the policy of birth control has brought forth a whole generation of young people who grew up as “the onlies” for two parents and four grandparents. Most Chinese subjects in this study belong to this group. Jing (1994) found that the generation of “the onlies” is more egocentric and less cooperative (as cited in Triandis, 1995, p. 86). However, despite all these influences, researchers of Chinese collectivism insisted that the impact of collectivism was still larger than that of individualism in the social life of Chinese people (Yang, 1996; Yang, 2004).

Chinese researchers found that Internet users were more individualistically oriented than non-users (Zhu & He, 2002). The major reason is that the collectivistic

hierarchical structure does not exist on the Internet that features informality and equality of interaction. Without the limits of hierarchical norms in the off-line social life, Chinese individuals feel more freedom to show their individualistic aspects on the Internet. This individualistic tendency is even more obvious on the social network site of Renren.com, where the user's social network members are all addressed as friends. For Chinese subjects in this study, their Renren.com friends are mostly their schoolmates. Their informal and equal interaction in the off-line interaction with schoolmates is continued on Renren.com, which serves to encourage their individualistic aspects.

This mediating effect further explains why the Chinese subjects have a low level of intensity of feeling in the dimension of respect of Renren.com friendship. They are active in expressing their individual opinions on Renren.com, because this is a situation where it is "OK to have different opinions" (personal communication, March 10, 2010). Moreover, this mediating effect further accounts for Chinese subjects' privacy control of hiding family members' images in online photo sharing. The first section of this chapter describes that hiding family members' images online to avoid public disclosure is the demonstration of the overriding importance of family obligations. But family members' images also form a crucial part of their individual privacy, because the family is the primary part of their individualized selves as their self-definition reveal. Although they are obligated to publicize private information for comrades in the Communist Party or colleagues in work places, the absence of hierarchical norms on the social network site allows them to keep private life from public scrutiny, so that they can protect their individual privacy and the interest of family members.

The above description of how social network sites mediate American culture and Chinese culture reveals the interesting contrast that the mediation of Facebook stimulates the sense of community for American subjects, whereas the mediation of Renren.com encourages the individualistic tendency of Chinese subjects. The difference in the mediating effects is actually embedded in the social culture itself. The highly family-attached Chinese collectivists do not tend to establish close relationships with non-family members, and therefore make it possible for the social network site to further loosen their connections with online friends. In the individualistic American culture, the individuals are expected to reach out from family and establish close relationships with non-family members. This characteristic allows them to form the Facebook community.

To summarize, this section describes how online friendship and privacy of American and Chinese subjects are conditioned by American culture and Chinese culture as mediated by social network sites. This section provides an enriched understanding of culturally conditioned privacy in online photo sharing by American and Chinese subjects. For American subjects, the ingroup-based mechanisms in individualistic culture provide the explanation for their high intensity of feeling in Facebook friendship, which lead them to share a good amount of personal information in online photo sharing. Moreover, this inclination of privacy in online photo sharing is further strengthened due to the much-emphasized sense of community of American subjects on Facebook. For Chinese subjects, the ingroup-based mechanisms in collectivistic culture provide the explanation for their low intensity of feeling in Renren.com friendship, which lead them to share a small amount of personal information in online photo sharing. Moreover, this inclination

of privacy in online photo sharing is allowed on Renren.com, where individualistic choices of holding back personal information from public disclosure are allowed due to the absence of hierarchical structures. Therefore, for American and Chinese subjects, their differences in online privacy are essentially the results of the combined influences from not only the individualism vs. collectivism cultural differentiation between American and China, but also the mediating effects of social network sites on the two cultures.

An Alternative Explanation: Privacy Legislation in America and China

This study provides a social cultural explanation of privacy in photo sharing on social network sites. But an alternative legal explanation could also be made for the privacy differences between American and Chinese subjects through comparing the legal definition of intrusion upon privacy in America and its definition in China. In his essay *Privacy*, Prosser (1960) provided the most cited legal definition of intrusion upon privacy in the United States. Intrusion upon privacy is composed of four torts, including “intrusion upon the plaintiff’s seclusion”, “public disclosure of embarrassing private facts”, “publicity which places the plaintiff in a false light”, and appropriation of privacy “for the defendant’s advantage” (p. 389). Compared to the high regard for the individual right to privacy demonstrated in this definition, the definition of intrusion upon privacy in Chinese legislation features ambiguity and a higher threshold of privacy protection. The definition is only given in two documents issued by the Supreme Court of China, rather than any statute law. According to Advices on the General Provision of Civil Law 140

(1993), disclosure of privacy is ambiguously defined as intrusion upon privacy when it leads to “a certain degree of negative influence”. According to Judicial Interpretation of Torts 1 (2001), torts are considered as admissible by the People’s Court when both plaintiff’s privacy and “social public interests and social ethics” are violated. In other words, the latter definition justifies the behaviors of public disclosure in the name of “social public interests and social ethics” (Judicial Interpretation of Torts 1, 2001).

The differences of the legal definitions of intrusion upon privacy between America and China could lead to the difference of privacy expectation between American and Chinese subjects in this study. In America, the legal definition gives a very clear-cut explanation of various punishable behaviors of intrusion upon privacy and demonstrates the high regard for the individual right to privacy. American subjects could expect their privacy to be under some reasonable degree of legal protection, and therefore tend to share many photos about private lives with Facebook friends. In China, the legal definition gives an ambiguous explanation of punishable behaviors of intrusion upon privacy and even justifies the behaviors of public disclosure in the name of public interests and social ethics. Chinese subjects could expect their privacy to be under threat of the well-justified public disclosure, and therefore tend to be reluctant to publicize family members’ images online.

This study does not focus on the legal explanation for two reasons. First, people might not necessarily consider the legal environment while conducting such daily online interactions, such as photo sharing, with their friends on social network sites. Secondly and more importantly, the laws of a nation are also essentially conditioned in its social

culture. Just as Hofstede (2001) pointed out, legislation is based on “norms that are accepted by masses” (p. 243). In her article about online disclosure and privacy legislation in China, Wen (2009) held that privacy legislation in China represented the Chinese public-oriented legal culture, amidst which individual rights are subject to social obligations. The predominance of social obligations over individual rights exactly reflects the characteristic of collectivism. Likewise, the high regard for individual right to privacy as demonstrated in the American legal definition of intrusion upon privacy also exactly reflects the feature of individualism. Therefore, even if the legal environment indeed affects the subjects’ online privacy control, the differences of privacy legislation are still conditioned by the individualistic American culture and the collectivistic Chinese culture.

In conclusion, this study makes two contributions to the cross-cultural research of privacy and online communication. First, this study provides a better understanding of privacy in reference to the individualism vs. collectivism cultural differentiation.

Researchers often claim that individualistic culture has a high regard for privacy, while collectivistic culture treats one man’s business as everyone’s business (Triandis, 1985).

But the privacy of American and Chinese subjects turns out to be a far more complex process than the over-simplistic theoretical claim. Under the combined influences of cultures and the mediation of social network sites, the actual patterns of privacy control are contrary to the claim, which suggests that Triandis (1985)’s claim makes much sense on the institutional level (law and public policy), but not on the individual level.

American subjects share more photos about family life for the purpose of maintaining the Facebook community. Chinese subjects share fewer photos about family life and hide

family members' images for the purpose of avoiding public disclosure. The complexity and subtlety of these subjects' culturally conditioned privacy control resonate with the suggestion by Westin (1967) for privacy research that each society should be studied in its own terms.

Secondly, this study explores how social network sites mediate American culture and Chinese culture. Due to the mediation of Facebook, the concern for community, which is the less conspicuous aspect of the predominantly individualistic American culture, is much encouraged. Due to the mediation of Renren.com, individualism, which is the less influential aspect of the predominantly collectivistic Chinese culture, come into effect with less limitation. These patterns seem to testify to the impact of the Internet in eliminating cultural borders and pressing the world into a homogenized global network.

There are several possibilities for future research. First, this study provides the thick description of undergraduate journalism students' online photo sharing during the winter break for readers to decide whether the findings are transferable to other populations and situations. But a researcher could conduct questionnaire surveys to test the generalizability of the findings for wider samples of social network site users and more various situations. Secondly, this study collects data by letting subjects follow the same instruction to take photos for online sharing. A researcher could consider conducting online participatory observations to further examine the findings of this study in a completely naturalistic manner. Thirdly, a research could follow the future changes of social network sites. The websites such as Facebook and Renren.com are looking to realizing and maximizing their profit-making potentials. The increasing

commercialization of these sites might undermine the sense of community for American Facebook users, and further loosen the online friendship of Chinese Renren.com users. The long-term mediation of the commercializing process on national cultures is worthy of a continued examination. Lastly, based on the social distance theory, this study focuses on the linkage between social network site users' privacy decisions and their online friendship, without looking at the relation between privacy decisions and the perceived government control of information. Actually, privacy is not only a variable relating to interpersonal social distance, but also a citizen's reaction to government surveillance. Chinese government is often criticized for its tight control of information on the Internet. American government has also tightened the online control of information after the September 11 terrorist attack. The cross-national differences of privacy control on social network sites in reference to the different levels and forms of government control of information on the Internet are also worthy of some further research.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEWS TRANSCRIPTION: AMERICAN INTERVIEWEES

This appendix contains the transcription of semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews with five American interviewees. Interviewees are code named as Subject A (B, C, D, E) to protect their confidentiality.

Subject A. Recorded on February 10, 2010.

So here is the first photo. Could you tell me why you took this photo?

“That is a photo from New Year's eve, when the clock struck midnight. And that's me in the foreground, my sister in the background, and a very good friend in the corner. It was actually on the back patio of my one friend's house. She was recently back. She had been on a peace corps, and was in Africa for about eleven months. She got her one month off in December. So we all got together at her house. This is probably the main reason why I took it, just because it was the first time in a long time that we all get together.”

Did you shoot it to share with some specific Facebook friends, or with all of them?

“I don't block any of my friends from any of my photo albums, because I don't friend people with those whom I don't want to share it with anyway. So I am not one of those people on Facebook who has you know 1200 friends, you know I don't talk to.”

So this is through the glass (Photo 2)?

“Yeah, it's through the glass. I am from Chicago. We had a pretty good snowfall. And that is our collie. Her name is tipper because of the white tip on her tail. And of course my sister and I named it when we were very little. We got it in 96. She's actually 14 years old now. Yes, she's an old dog. And she didn't feel like venturing very far out into the backyard. But it was really a picture I shot, I love ... We have two dogs. I love them both to death. I just thought it was very pretty with the snow on her back piling up.”

So still the same, you took it to share with all Facebook friends?

“Yes, I took it A. because I love animals, and B. I want all my friends to see, maybe some friends from a warmer climate, shows the heavy snowfall, shows the dog, and gives a little bit inside into my life, and what I value, and to share with my friends.”

The painting you made for your father, right (Photo 3)?

“Yes. That photo, well the painting, I did for my Dad for Christmas. Because over this next summer, it will be my parents' 28th wedding anniversary. They haven't done anything big for their wedding anniversary for a very very long time. My Dad travels a lot on business. He has wrapped up a lot of points in frequent flyer's miles, that he was able to get an expense-paid trip to Tahiti for both him and my Mom over the

summer for I think like 4 days. Both of my parents love traveling. So my Mom found out. She was just ecstatic about it. So I think it will be a great opportunity to give my something to always remember that trip by, even though it hasn't happen yet.”

But compared to the previous pictures, this one is more intimate in terms of the feelings in it. Do you still want to share it with all Facebook photos?

“I guess in a sense, the past photos and this photo. It was not really like for any friend in particular on Internet. It's more a reflection on who I am, what I value, something like painting is what I love. It's one of my favorite hobbies outside of sports. And I am a huge animal lover, as shown in the last photo. I would do anything for friends and family. So those three values and those three characteristics about myself are things that ... I don't put a lot on the Internet. But the things I do put out there on the Internet, people should know if they know me.”

It is a form of self-expression?

“Yes, I think it's definitely a form of self-expression.”

It's a pink cake (Photo 4)?

“Well, our red food dye didn't turn red. It ended up being a pink apple. But I figure there are so many different types of apples out there. We'll say it's a pink-lady apple, which is actually delicious. That day, I watched ... I don't know if you watch the Ace of Cakes on Food Networks. I watched a whole bunch of episodes. And it was my sister's 24th birthday coming up. And I wanted to do something special for ... She's a teacher. She's at school all day. So I baked a sheet cake. I cut it out. I did all of that all day, so that when she got home, she had this on the table with some of her presents around it. It was just a unique thing. I mean no one in my family had ever had. A cake like that, let alone it was homemade. It was really special between her and I, 'cause she's probably my best friend.”

Is she among your Facebook friends?

“Yes. “

You shared this photo also with all the Facebook friends, but not just your sister?

“I did really want to show it to my sister. But then she was there, and she saw it, and she ate it. She knew about it. But by posting it online, showing the rest of the friends my love to cook and I do that a way to make others happy. It's like my drawing, my painting skills as well as my cooking skills. It combined those to make people around me happy. So I feel like a people pleaser. Food and memories usually do the trick.”

What is this photo about (Photo 5)?

“That is my entire family on Christmas eve before we went to our Church service. It was just a very special time. I just love the holiday season, because I absolutely love my family. I would do anything for them. And by putting that on Facebook, I mean my parents don't have Facebook, it was not really for them. But for me, it was just a very special moment to me. That's my Mom.”

Tell me more about this photo (Photo 6).

“That photo was right before I came back to Missouri. My Mom and I had a mother-daughter day, so to speak. And we spent the entire day together. My Mom wanted to treat me something special. So we both got pedicures at a local salon. Just had a good mother-daughter bonding day. It was a lot of fun.”

So you still shared this with all the Facebook friends?

“Yeah.”

It seems to me like conveying something beyond the image (Photo 7). Does it?

“It's definitely more open to interpretation, because it's more an artistic shot. It was taken in Pennsylvania, when I was visiting my grandparents. My grandparents have traveled to six of the seven continents. They've gone to thirty plus countries. They traveled the world when they could. They don't anymore. But it's a tradition both for my grandparents and for my immediate family, for our Christmas tree to have no regular ornaments. All our ornaments are from places where we traveled. When we were visiting them, we helped them decorating their tree. There were two ornaments in particular that I thought were very interesting and very unusual. Just to show different cultures all on one tree from all over the world. I think it's really an eye-opener to ... the way of life a lot of people could have around the world people are not really aware of unless they get there.”

Could you tell me where this comes from and also this?

“I think the one in the background was from Norway. And the one in the foreground probably from Mexico, south America? But I don't know the exact country.”

What do you want to say to your Facebook friends by showing this photo?

“This photo is to a degree an encouragement for all my freinds to get that worldly view of what is going on around the world today, an inspiration to travel. I think traveling really is crucial to having an open mind to lots of the issues that are affecting us today. If you are ignorant about what's going on around you, it definitely affects your perspective. I think traveling really helps to open that up.”

This is in the airport (Photo 8)?

“Yes. My dad grew up in Pennsylvania. And my grandparents opened up a bakery. And so his Dad, my grandfather used to drive a truck and deliver those giant bins of sugar, flour and all of that between Philadelphia and New York. Well it was a tradition for him going up. He always stopped to get Philadelphia pretzels. And he swears that there's no pretzel like it in the entire US. This pretzel was unique to Philadelphia. For the longest time, we didn't really believe him. But I want to tell you I don't want to sound crazy. But those pretzels are absolutely delicious. I never had one like it anywhere else. And of course we just have to document the yummy pretzels from Philadelphia.”

So you flew from Chicago to Philadelphia?

“Yeah. We stayed with my aunt and uncle. My sister and I flew out. We stayed with them and we visited my grandparents. We stayed there fore 4 or 5 days.”

Tell me more about this photo (Photo 9).

“That was my grandfather. That is in the assisted loving facility where they now stay. It has the atmosphere kind of like a dorm room. But it's more apartment-styled, and has all the medical assistance on the side if they need it, but still gets some independence to feel like you are still able to do things. They are not so old that they can't take care of themselves. That confidence is really important for choosing that facility. He absolutely loves his little chair. That's his license plate with his initials. Berman Thomas Grey is the full name. So he has B. T. G. He loves it. And the other people he lives with love it. He just makes jokes about it all the time. It was just a cute photo to capture the moment.”

Would you hesitate to take photos of your grandparents because they may not want to show in your photo?

“I love my grandfather. I just have a really close relationship with all of my family. He is really important to me. I have no shame in showing my grandparents. Photography runs in my family. Taking photos is not uncommon during family get-togethers. And my Dad owns his own photography business. And my sister absolutely loves it. I do a little bit when I am with my friends, or at an event and such ... More a little bit of a hobby than anything else. They had stacks of albums we went through during the entire visit. We actually compiled our own little album of the photos we took from that visit and sent it to them, because we knew it was really important memory, since they are getting older, they lost their memory. But if we have the photo to jog it, that really helps.”

Is that the famous Christmas tree in Columbia (Photo 10)?

“Yes, it is. It's the magic tree. You know I am not sure where exactly it is. I think it's off Nifong. I went there with a friend. Her name is Erin Gran. I love her to death. She's like my adopted sister. We both love the holidays. We found out there was a Christmas tree with over 9 thousand lights or something. I was really excited. So we went. We took a whole bunch of photos, because it was really cool and I've never seen anything like it before.”

It seems that you want to share all the 10 photos with every friend on Facebook. Am I right?

“Yes. I do have pretty every privacy setting set to my Facebook, so I am unsearchable. People can only find me unless they are friends with some good friends of mine. So in that respect, I don't share these photos with the entire online public. But I do feel that closeness with my friends to share the experiences that I had with them.”

How do you define yourself with an "I am" sentence?

“I feel like I am a lot of things, because of a lot of different experiences that I have throughout my life. Sports really defined who I was, who I am. I came very close to playing college soft ball. And the experiences that I have had all through growing up. The challenges and the struggles really help define my drive. My sense to always please everybody around me. If someone is unhappy, I'll try to do something, some small little token, whether it's give them a get-well card, anything, if that can put a smile on their face, I will try to do it. And helping other. I really love the feeling of seeing someone

who maybe feels down in the gutter, and struggling, and someone coming in and helping them. I love the feeling of giving back to society. So that's a huge part of my life. And I would also say that I am ...It might sound awkward. But I am a very outgoing introvert. So contradicting. I am very outgoing amongst my friends. I love to have fun, sing Karaoke and do goofy things. But if you put me in a room full of new people, I'm fine sitting in a corner and observing the group until I get to know people. Having a sort of a wall up to protect myself from being vulnerable from people I don't know. And in the same token, when they break through that wall, it's completely gone.”

Why don't you use the word America in that self-definition?

“I feel like being American encompasses so many things. There are a lot of stereotypes connecting with that word. While I do identify myself with America and I am very passionate about that. Being an American, one of my peeves is that people don't stand for the national anthem, and things like that do bug me. But I feel there is so much more to me than the word American can explain that I would focus on my identity rather than the all-encompassing word that will leave someone to make their own conclusions.”

In spite of that, do you still consider yourself a typical American girl?

“It depends on how you define a typical American girl and at what time. I feel like that idea has definitely evolved in the past 200 years of America even being a country. I am finding myself very different, and having different morals and values than the people I am surrounded with, who are of my age currently. So in that aspect, I don't see myself as a typical American girl. Especially on the college campus, I don't drink, I don't do drugs, I am not into that party thing as stereotypically thought of. In that aspect, it definitely sets a firm line between myself and those other girls who I am associated with and who I am hanging out with. Because people are always shocked when they say ‘you don't drink’. And you are like ‘No’. It's just not my thing. I don't know.”

How do you define friendship?

“Friendship is for me being with someone through the good times and through the bad times, and everywhere in between. I feel like friendship is kind of like creating your own little family. I mean I would consider all of my friends kind of like adopted sisters and adopted brothers. I love them to death. I would do anything for them. Because of that, I feel like I have very strong friendships. Maybe not quantitatively a ton of friends. Comparatively, you know, on Facebook people have 1000. But the friends that I do have, I feel I am very intimate with. And that I can sit together and have a deep discussions about what's going on in their lives, things they struggle with, and things they are successful with, rather than just ‘Hey how is your day’, ‘it's snowing outside’. It goes much deeper than that.”

How many friends do you have on Facebook?

“On Facebook, I think it's 500. It's a lot. I have a lot of friends here on campus. I joined a lot of the groups, because I am involved with a lot of outside organizations. And it's a lot easier to keep in touch by sending mass messages over Facebook, or creating groups like that to reach everyone you are trying to reach.”

Could you give me a few examples of those outside organizations?

“Actually the top three are the rock campus church. I am also on the executive board for a society of professional journalists. And the national association of collegiate scholars. I am the publicity chair for the society of professional journalists. And the public relations officer for NACS.”

Among the 500 friends, how many are purely online friends?

“I don't have any friends who I have never met face-to-face. I don't accept people if I don't know who they are. I mean when I have people asking to be my friend, I would send them a message, you know ‘I am sorry. I don't remember. I don't know who you are. How do I know you again’. They will be like ‘I am just friends with so and so, and just thought your profile picture looked fun’. And I am like ‘sorry, but I don't know you’.”
So even though there are mutual friends, you don't accept them?
“If I don't know them, I haven't met them, no.”

How do you define friendship in Facebook? Would you define it somehow differently than you do friendship, or about the same?

“I would say Facebook unfortunately is much more shallow than my idea of friendship in real life. Just because I am friends with a lot of acquaintances. Out of the 500 people I am friends on Facebook with, I don't communicate with them on a regular basis. Not all of them. My close friends, yes. So other than the occasional happy birthday wish, or check up on how is it going, it doesn't really go much deeper than that for probably a lot of people on Facebook.”

Talking about all the friends on Facebook in general, how close do you feel towards them? If there is a scale with five points on it, extremely close, very close, close, not very close and unclosed? Which point would you choose?

“I would say on average, close, because it gives room then others close, and others not so close.”

How would you feel and do if one of your Facebook friends who used to regularly write on your wall hasn't showed up for a month?

“I would probably send them a message. I probably wouldn't post on their wall. I will just check up on maybe something is going on in their life, and you know, they've been really busy, or something is going on. I just want to make sure everything is OK, and just send them a check-up message to see if they are all right.”

On their wall?

“Not on their wall. I would send them an message so that it is just between myself and that person, because I wouldn't want that to be public between all our friends in case it is something personal they don't want to share.”

What do you usually write on Facebook friends' walls?

“A lot of the times, I would use Facebook for networking, like organizing events, or setting up time to meet in person.”

Events like what?

“Just kind of group get-togethers every Monday night. A bunch of us get together for ... we call it 8-10. Everyone meets at a central location at 8 o'clock. There's card games. There's always food, of course. Facebook makes it very easy to reach people. So I would say Facebook is definitely one thing I utilize in order to set up that personal encounter. It's kind of like it's the first step to take that relationship closer, rather than just keeping it at the Facebook level. Though with long distance friends, I do admit that I will tell them all about my day, either on their walls, or if it is more personal, via message.

Which is more often?

“I would say the majority of my Facebook activity is like ‘Hey, let's go meet colleagues for a cup of tea’, and hang out, or ‘Hey, I really need to study for the exam. You wanna get together in the library’, or ‘Hey I saw your photo. It was awesome. Where did you go?’ Kind of things like that.”

What if a stranger adds you as friend?

“I would initially send them a message, because I am kind of notorious for being bad with names. I would send that individual an message, ‘I am really sorry. I am really bad with names. But how do I know you again?’ You know and if they respond, “Oh, I am so and so from this class, this organization, or from high school, whatever. And that brings back my memory that I do remember the person. I will accept them. But if I don't know them, I would respond ‘I am really sorry. I don't remember you.’”

In what circumstances did you delete a friend or would you considering doing so?

“I have only deleted, blocked, and unfriended one individual. That was because of some intensified cyber-bullying, bullying via the Internet. She took a photo from one of my albums. It was myself with my family members. And made it her profile photo, and put very derogatory caption underneath it. It was a profile photo for a decent amount of time. A bunch of people commented on it. And I was very hurt, and disrespected. I asked her ‘how could you do something like this’. She offended me, I offended her, and I blocked her, because I don't want to associate with anyone like that. As far as inappropriate photos and all that, if I was for some reason in a situation like that which I normally avoid. When I was tagged in a photo I didn't want to be, I will untag myself and talk to the person, like ‘Hey, don't tag me in these. Don't post these. It's inappropriate. It's the Internet’. But I honestly don't see any friends posting anything that bad about me, that I have an issue with. And I think it will be just solved with us talking that out. I don't have to unfriend them.”

How would feel and do if your Facebook friends have very different opinions from yours?

“I am friends with quite a number of people who have very different views than myself. Definitely makes some good conversations. That's for sure. But I would in no way hold that against them, or judge them, or use their views as a way to define their personality. Because it's just who they are and their opinion. They are entitled to it. I am entitled to mine. As long as it doesn't get nasty, I think two people can share different opinions. If one is more stubborn than the other, and they are not willing to listen, and you know the

conversation isn't going anywhere, then I will probably just drop it. I am not a fighter. I don't look for conflict. Everyone has a different view. We try to talk it out. If either of us is convinced, I would just drop the conversation, because our friendship wouldn't be worth fighting over.”

What types of photos would make you feel uncomfortable to share on Facebook?

“I would never post photos that I feel are unflattering physically or in a whole overall picture sense, of myself or someone else. Like I travel somewhere, and I took a photo of a place that is struggling, and very much in poverty. You know. There's a line that can't be crossed when you make people vulnerable in publicizing people's vulnerabilities. It's different for each individual. But I myself would never post photos of myself drinking, or look like I was, 'cause I don't want people to come to that conclusion. And I would never post any revealing photos of myself. That's not just me. I am a very conservative person in that sense. You know same thing with friends. I wouldn't do that to them. It's disrespectful. And to people I don't know. You need to have boundaries. I don't think Internet is a place where you can exploit people.”

Do you have any other privacy concerns on Facebook?

“I think a lot of the activities on the Internet can definitely come back to bite you in a sense when you graduate college and you are job searching, because it's now very common for your employers to search you on Facebook, twitter, Flickers, all those online communication sites. It's dangerous. It could get you into trouble by being unemployed for a while, because something you did a couple of years ago that you published for the whole world to see, unless you take some precaution to either what you put on line, or block those who are able to see it. Then that's your choice.”

Will you delete friends when graduating?

“The only reason I would probably have for deleting a friend would be I haven't talked to them like 4 years, some obnoxious long period of time. We are not really even friends in Facebook. But I started a linkedin account, which is kind of the Facebook version of the business world. It allows for the people in the business world to connect within their industry and connect that way. So I feel as if I will do a good job by separating my personal life via Facebook and my business life via LinkedIn. If the employers can find my Facebook page, the only thing they will see will be my profile photo and that I graduated from Mizzou. I don't even have my full name. I only have my first name and middle name as my Facebook title. I have the privacy settings. So I should be unsearchable. So if they find me, they would need to be my friend to see anything more in-depth. Otherwise, they would call me for an interview.”

Subject B. Recorded on February 17, 2010.

When did you take this photo (Photo 1)?

“This was one evening soon after new year's. I was at a friend's house. He has invited a lot of people over. I was literally dragged into a situation, where we were going to sense of incriminating myself. Go to teepee one of the old coaches. They are graduated from high school now. They dragged coach. So I was dragged into it. And I had the camera too. So in terms of the thought process behind it, I was documenting what we were doing, beyond memory, just to remember it. In terms of sharing, it was no so much with the Facebook community. You don't want to get any people in trouble. So just the people that I knew, that were there. Those are the ones I allow to see it. So I set different privacy settings.”

What is tee-pee?

“It was bizaar. usually you go in the night for two reasons. One, celebration. Two, 'cause it is a pain. Basically we get a bunch of toilet paper rolls and you throw them over the trees. So in the next morning somebody woke up to see the giant mess. People use it when somebody wins a state competition, you know athletics. Or somebody people don't like for some reason. Basically in the morning, the dew causes it to get wet. And it is impossible to clean up.”

Where did you take this photo (Photo 2)?

“The camera was in the kitchen. This was after one evening we were all in my kitchen. I was just taking pictures of the camera. This is my family's house. We were home for Christmas. You can tell from the photograph it was very impromptu. He was out of focus. It is not very visually interesting, besides it is that moment. The reason for uploading this is that the mass load of photos in the four weeks of vocation is the reason. This was another moment that happened though. Not tons of significance to it. But just important time.”

So you posted this for all the Facebook friends?

“Yeah. The first one was the only one with that kind of restriction.”

Who is the little girl in this photo (Photo 3)?

“This is my cousin. This was we as a family meet each Christmas. On my Mom's side, there are four sisters and a brother. They all have families. We meet at one of our houses every year. We always take our Christmas pictures, family pictures. This is my youngest cousin. She is pretty photogenic. She is lively and active, so she makes great subject. This was just one of those silly moments. I like it. She is expressing her joy. She is also having fun with it. Fun day and fun moment. Just for remembering all that. I put it in al album labeled family album. Wasn't meant to share with everybody. Just focused on our family.”

Your family members are also on Facebook?

“A lot of my cousins are, but my parents are not, 'cause the technology they don't understand.”

Is she?

“No she is not. She is too young. But her older sisters are.”

So you put it in an album that is accessible to all Facebook friends, but you meant it for your family members?

“The reason why I didn't put a privacy setting is that if I set this, some of my friends would feel it offensive. That is for me a step that is not necessary.”

I really like this one (Photo 4).

“This one, I was kind of have the camera on my shoulder. As a family we don't get together except once or twice a year. Really all of us together. that happens only a few times. Somebody got work. I don't think we are a really religious family, or we are strongly religious. Just wish that few of us have a family issue, a health issue. Just a nice moment. It is not like this is Johnny and soccer. This is a family picture. Like the second one, I was documenting that whole day. I also put it in that same album meant for the family.”

So this photo was about the same party (Photo 5)?

“This was also from that day. That is my Mom in the middle and my two aunts, two more energetic aunts because I lack a better word. Behind them is a I-pod Speaker player. They have a lot the Prince, Michael Jackson music that are playing. A lot of younger kids are in the basement. The older kids are on the couch. I was in the kitchen. They just get crazy, enjoying themselves. So this just captures the moment when they let their guard down, they are just pure happiness. A lot of the time, they just have to be in a state because they have younger kids. The parents have to be the adult. So for a little brief moment, they just let it go, and have fun just as sisters. Again, it was in that same folder of pictures meant for the family.”

Do a lot of friends outside your family circle also view that album?

“No, in terms of the comments, on the top of my head, I can recall a specific instance that somebody commented on it, that is not a family member. Unless it was ... I honestly can't recall the specific situation. I think somebody will drive somebody to comment on a photo if they have some sort of connection to it. Like they are in the photograph. Or it is an event they are part of. Or they find the photograph visually interesting in some way, stimulating in some way. They are connected either emotionally or they are interesting, funny, or just outrageous to drive somebody to take that moment to write something out. If they don't have that, they are not gonna comment on that.”

Tell me more about this photo (Photo 6).

“We do, several days before, our Christmas in our house. Christmas cookies, every year, they get more extravagant. The photo itself is not very good. It was just the final result, or

at least part of the the result of that evening. It is a few hours. We start early and end late. It is for documenting that completion. Here is what we did. And only sharing it. The cookies last only for a few weeks. After that, the Christmas is over. For people who can't come over. That is the reason behind that. That is reason we share these. Here is what we did. Check this out. This is kind of cool.”

This is in the same family album?

“No this is probably in the same album with the second photograph.”

This is in the kitchen of your family's house?

“Yeah.”

This photo isn't as clear as the other photos (Photo 7).

“This was taken actually on my cellphone, and uploaded immediately to Facebook. This was at a concert the day following Christmas. An orchestra called Trans-Siberia orchestra. They basically play rock-and-roll Christmas music. They have a string section. They also have two guitars, a base player, keyboardists, major drumsets. The whole idea behind what they do is kind of ... over the top, they have pirate techniques, lasers, and a spacecraft to kind of end their show. But it is all classical Christmas music they are playing. This was my second time. The fist time my father, my sister, they had gone with us. So it was the four of us, me, my borther, my father, my dad. This was probably the climactic moment. The point was almost two outrageous, almost overboard. But the reason for sharing it is because it IS so overboard. It is one of those events you want to bring as many people to get into it, because of the overboard, the craziness, the extravagance of the whole event. For me, I just want to bring this to share with everybody, 'cause it is so enjoyable, it is so fun. There is a feature in your cell phone, the Facebook application, that allows you to take photo and share immediately. It is a mobile upload so. As it was happening, somebody sitting at their computer or having the cell phone could see it immediately and know what is going on.”

This was also by cellphone (Photo 8)?

“This was also taken with my cellphone. 'cause this was also kind of impromptu. This was the Christmas party. I was with a bunch of my friends from high school the week following Christmas. We were all together. It was getting kind of late. This was a strange moment when everybody was tired, and I think just, they are wrestling and I don't know why. I am not that type of person who would do that. It is just a kind of the male instinct, maybe. I have a friend who is playing piano by there, not even faced to me. Just their personality types. For me, the reason I am taking it is that they are not the type of person I am. It is different. I would never start wrestling with my friend. It is just not my personality. So the reason why to take it is it was different. It was also that instinct upload. Llike saying hey this is what is going on right now. The situation is right there. I don't have my camera. I just have my cell phone. The easiest way to post it is to directly through the phone.”

Why did you take this photo (Photo9)?

“There are a few reasons for this one. When we were all together at my aunt's house celebrating Christmas, my Dad couldn't be there, 'cause he was with my grandmother, who was not photographed in this. She was in the case of MRSA at a nursing home. Everybody had to wear masks. So we are using the Skype program on my laptop and my Dad's laptop to kind of say Merry Christmas to them and talk with my grandmother. There was a comedy to it. Just the way they looked, kind of peering in, what's going on. Like an alien looking at us and us looking at something strange in a jar. It struck me as kind of strange. Why I still remembered that. So I think I just kind of took the picture. In terms of sharing it, it was one of those strange moments. It was different. I feel a lot of photos people take is just they are with their friends with the camera in front of them. Profile picture, holding it up in front of the faces. At this place I think it was just more like documenting a situation. You look at this and think why is this. You start to ask questions. I think it is probably in my mobile upload.”

Why didn't you let your grandmother appear in this photo?

“She is bedridden. So she is behind them. It is probably just the timing. I am sure the bed is set up with a table, the roller table you can bring up to the bed. So they probably have the laptop there and probably set it up. I don't remember when specifically. But I think this is either saying good bye or saying hello. You can see it from my facial expression. My Mom is kind of leaning in. She is not really sitting down yet. She is kind of looking at us. It is not really like a conversation yet.”

Here we have you and your friend in this photo (Photo10).

“This one is really the standard Facebook picture. People are at an event and they were taking pictures together. It was at that Christmas party that I had hosted. Somebody took a picture of us with my camera. And I put it online with all the rest of the pictures. This is when people come together what they expect to take picture of.”

Why do you set the privacy setting to this particular photo (Photo 1)?

“I am friends with these friends, but also I am friends with my acquaintances, my teachers from high school, and the professors here. And I am friends with a lot of people we don't keep contact with. There is a negative connotation with doing this. I don't want to share it with everybody. I just want to remember it personally and also with the people who were there. Because I know the have the same or close to the same feeling about why this was happening. Well if somebody hasn't seen me or talked to me for a while, would think negatively about me. I am that sort of person who worried about that, worried about what perception of who I am as a person. That's why. To protect myself. The reason for posting it but just not posting it entirely is kind of two fold. Facebook is a safe place to document things. Libraries and libraries of photographs don't go anywhere. People use I-Photo or different programs. But I like the Facebook side of it, because the pictures are the ones that you like, the picks, or the photo you choose to share. So they all have a special meaning for every photo you take here. So here I want to share it with people, because we all have a similar feeling about the whole event. That can stimulate comments, communications and connections as well.”

How do you define yourself with an "I am" sentence?

“I am somebody who is trying to bring people together. I am someone who enjoys company more than solidarity. But I am also very introverted instead of extroverted. I like when everybody is together, being happy and enjoying each other's company. But I have a very strong inner voice constantly judging the situation which I am going through.”

Why don't you use the word American here?

“I was thinking about my personality. You know I am an American male, but I don't think that is what defines me. I could be South African, or Australian. But my personality, my way of going about life will still be the same. That is not the first criteria that makes me me.”

How do you define "friendship"?

“I define friendship in the ... like the term has been around forever, the term friendship ... I am looking for the word ... A friend is somebody you can let your guard down to. Friendship is a comfort zone, a safe zone, where you can share pretty almost everything to that person. You know they are not there to be judging you, they'll respect what you got to say and they'll listen to what you got to say. I think with that, it takes a few steps to get there. Friendship is a process. No offense to you, but I wouldn't consider you as a friend. I wouldn't tell you my plan for this weekend, my homework, my activity schedule or my religion. I wouldn't think you would shape me as a person or try to figure out what I really am by getting that information. Hypothetically down the road, you become a good friend. I wouldn't feel strange about telling you my things. You would know about me. Like he is a religious person and so he is this or that, starting to make connections. And when you know somebody, the more things you know about that person wouldn't change what you think of that person.”

How many friends do you have altogether on Facebook?

“Almost 800.”

How many of them are persons you know face to face in real life, and how many are purely online friends?

“I would say, to be safe, 750 of those.”

How about the other 50?

“You know it's basically a social networking. Those people I know purely online are either professionals in a field. We don't really chat all the time. But there would someone posting some interesting information. There is also a DJ from this area that I eventually became in contact with, and involved with a professional relationship. It's not just Hey Let's be friend, because we both have mutual friends. Or Hey, we have similar interests. We are in proximity with each other. But also we should have similar professional interests. We do collaborate together. But not just purely we go to the same school, or the same dorm. I mean just one or two of those, but not the majority of the 50.”

How do you define Facebook friendship? Would you define Facebook friendship somehow differently from friendship?

“I would definitely define it differently. I actually organized my friend list, based on how I know the person. There is a feature that allows you to group people in different friend groups. So I have neighborhood friends, kids I know from my high school but who are not my close friends, people in Mizzou. I think what makes a Facebook friend instead of just a "friend-friend", is somebody you have met or you have cross path with in some way, felt some kind of connection, like you are an interesting person ... you are in the same event, or you have similar interests. And you want to just keep at 'cause there are something there. Who knows five or ten years down the road, we may work for the same employer. Hey do you remember five years ago we read this ... I think there is a lot of ways you will make Facebook friends. You all went to high school together. Or you were at a summer camp or something. Traditionally a lot of those friendships can die out. Before Facebook there was letters, or email, or phone calling. And I think time requirement for that is larger now in terms of that in Facebook you just need a friend's comment, a news feed, just to know the person exists. There is not a direct connection like you are talking to them, they are talking to you. Like my math exam is today. I am gonna bomb it. You know they are still alive. They are still living and breathing. There is still the connection. You call upon it. You could rekindle that kind of acquaintance. I don't want to use the word friendship. It may not be a true friendship by the point you met them. But you could definitely say, hey what's up. They are gonna remember that. Like that 750 out of the 800 friends ... they had to get your name somehow. There must be in some way that Casey Berner got on their radar and clicked the "add a friend" button. So that is a conscious decision for me to confirm it. That is a very laid out ... a very visual way of seeing friendship process happen. I think there is an 'add an friend' and an 'confirm' button in your real life, but obviously there is not button in space that we are clicking ourselves. But that is a visual way to see the friendship process work similarly in real life.”

How close do you feel towards Facebook friends in general?

“I think it varies. In general, I think it is another medium of communication. You can learn a lot from people, depending on how much they share. If I am sharing a lot of information with you through Facebook, I think you could definitely get a very strong picture about me if that picture is correct. I don't know that is up to the person sharing the information, and if they are sharing it correctly, then am I interpreting it correctly. Or there are some missed cues in there.”

So which point would choose on a five-point scale of closeness, with extremely close, very close, close, not very close, and unclosed?

“I think it would have to be the 3, just because it varies. There are some people I am very close to. But I don't think it's because of Facebook. Then there are people I am close to, because of Facebook. Some people find it easier to communication by typing, because it's not a direct feedback and they can think about what they are saying.”

What would you do, and how would you feel if some of your Facebook friends who used to regularly write on your wall hasn't showed up for a month?

“I would probably think it was my fault. There hasn't been any communication because I haven't instigated any. I would think if I said ‘Hey, I haven't heard from you. What is going on’. That would restart something.”

You would send them an message, or write on their walls?

Yeah, something like that.

Would you consider using some other forms of communication other than Facebook?

“I think that depends on the person. If it's a good friend of mine, and I have their cell phone number, I'll get back and say I haven't heard from them for a month and we all get back to my hometown and we are all in the same vicinity. Would you feel comfortable calling then? But I think that is inherent, because I am always feeling comfortable calling them. If it is somebody who is just strictly Facebook and I don't really have their phone number, I don't think so 'cause I don't know if I would have another way of contacting them. So I would probably use their wall, or message. In some situation, maybe chatting, if drawn to that for some reason. I don't think there would be ... you know... if we don't really have anything to talk about, maybe we should just say ‘Hey what's up. what's going on’. Basically I feel comfortable about doing that, 'cause I feel like what is the worse thing that could happen.”

Usually what do you write on your Facebook friend's walls?

“Usually it is recalling an event that has happened in the physical space. You know, if we got together, and did something or there was somebody who said something very strange, very funny, or some event that has happened. You know like ‘tonight was awesome’. Most messages are wall posts with people I have physically met with. But there also is some distant relationship with those people who I have met with and are now in different colleges or moved away. That would be kind of ‘how are you doing’, instead of sharing things.”

If a stranger whom you have never met with in real life added you as a friend, how would you respond to that?

“If it is somebody I didn't know at all, didn't go into the same school, I wouldn't probably want to look at the mutual friends. When you get a friend request, there is the mutual friends information. And if there is no mutual friend, I probably would just outright ignore them. They accidentally added me, or there is some computer issue that just added you for spam, or something. If there is a significant number of mutual friends, I would look at their profile. Maybe I do know this person, but I don't know how. Kind of stimulate something that way. If it's somewhere between the two, probably just leave them in that friend request. I have a tendency of just leaving people in that what I call ‘limbo’. Just because I don't know them. But I may know them down the road. I don't wanna ignore them, 'cause I feel like if I friend request somebody they should accept that. If they ignore me, I would think what have I done wrong. So I will leave them there.”

Did you even delete one of your Facebook friends? Or would you even consider that?

“I have done it a few times. Probably no more than 10. People who are ... you know, obviously friendship changes. I don't think anybody would be angry and mad and that I am not your friend any more. The instances that I have are some of the friends I had by accident. I thought I knew them, which was not what it was. Or a situation where we did meet at some thing, but we didn't know each other that well in the first place. I don't feel like keeping this connection, 'cause I am not getting anything from you and I am sure you are not getting anything from me. And I find it annoying. It's like Ok, you are just posting about yourself. My life is terrible and blah-blah. I am not getting anything from this. I'll either hide them or unfriend them completely, 'cause there is no point.”

What if your Facebook friend have a different opinion on issues, which could be small issues like the favorite football team, or big issues like a political topic? What would do to react to such differences?

“I know people have difference in opinions. And I know people, a lot of times, post those different opinions with friends who have similar opinions. To give you an example, last night, I read something. A friend of mine on Facebook had posted to another friend of mine about a CNN report that 52% of Americans feel that Barack Obama should not be reelected. There were simple comments such as ‘Thank god’. I support more of the Democratic Party than I did Republic Party. And I felt like that I needed to say something. Like you know, what is gone so wrong that you feel that this person is just complete unfit to lead. The world is worse than it was because of this person. I just wanted to know. In terms of my curiosity level, what part of their thought process, interpretation process has skewed them to think that this person is so unfit to lead that he shouldn't be reelected at all. Did they make the world, the county, worse than it was before Nov. 2008? So that kind of stimulated me to want to say something. I eventually didn't because I know this sort of thing will start to become heated. One person comments, and then another person comments. Then five people start commenting. It becomes crazy, sometimes even skewed documentation of information. Somebody gets something here, but there is no validation for what somebody is saying. I don't want to deal with that and get 40 notifications because people are angry about the political situation. Sometimes, if I feel strong enough, I would say something. You know, make a post for something like that. But it is more like only I feel strong enough, then I am gonna voice my opinion while knowing that it could be just in vain. There is more effective arena for that sort of things.”

What types of photo will make you feel uncomfortable about sharing with all Facebook friends?

“If there are family photos or there is a little bit more ... Like we have our lake house. We are all kind of at the beach or something. There are smaller children. They could be in bathing suits or something. And I know there are strange people out there. One right click, one link and paste, and it's in the hands of the wrong people. So family photos would take a front seat of that. The reason why some of those are not is that I don't feel like there was anything wrong with what's on there. If there is something on there somebody is gonna ... I feel that the friends I am friends with ... I'll start from this put it.

My entire profile is only visible to people I have friend requests with. If say you went out to search on Facebook right now for my name, you could find me with my picture and add me. That would be it. I think maybe University of Missouri is on there. But that's it. I think family photos are the only ones that are sort of in that realm. Where I would feel when I am showing them to random strange people that would be awkward. That is just a gauge for myself. If I am showing this picture to you. It would be like why am I showing this to you? That would be a check to me.”

What other matters in Facebook would make you feel concerned about privacy?

“For me, personally, I take my Internet security pretty seriously. Not like I am setting all these blocks and checks, those sorts of things. I just think a lot of people don't take it seriously. And I feel like there are a few quick easy things I can do to protect somebody from getting my information. To be honest, I don't think when somebody is going out to stock somebody else, I would become the target. You know thirteen-year-old girls are stereotypically the target. But that doesn't say I shouldn't protect myself. Like I said, if you were a random strange person searching on Facebook for my name, you would find very limited information on me. And the other is the picture. We've reached a certain part of the society in which a profile picture isn't revealing a lot of security information about you. You can't really learn a ton about a person from that specific picture. Once we have become friends, you do learn a lot of information about me very quickly. I do put my phone number on there. It's a direct cell phone number. I've never had a problem with that. I never had, so far, any identity information taken from me. My identity duplicated. So there is a part in me that says ‘Hey, you think you are invincible until you find something happens?’ That is a thought. But nothing has come across my path that makes me think I need to take even more precaution.”

Subject C. Recorded on February 25, 2010.

What were you doing in this photo (Photo 1)?

“This is ... we are recording music and going over all the music we just recorded. My friend was recording it on his computer. I just like it, because the computer is really bright and in focus and we are like hazy.”

Where was it?

“This is at Dominick's ... He plays drum in my band. This is the basement at his house in Columbia.”

So he's Dominick. And that is?

“That's me.”

You are just sharing your hobbies with online friends?

“Yeah, hobbies. And I just like the photo.”

When you posted it on your Facebook, did you share it only with some music friends, or all the friends?

“All of them. I usually just share all the pictures with everyone.”

Could you tell me more about this photo (Photo 2)?

“This is my friend, Matt. We were just hanging out in St. Louis. He just had a baby. It's really weird, because he's my age. I haven't hang out with him for a while, because he has a daughter. It's really just great to see him again.”

Where was it?

“It's in Evan's basement in St. Louis.”

Still, you shared it with?

“Everybody.”

He's a friend from high school?

“Yeah.”

Let's look at Photo 3.

“This is my friend Evan. It's at his house, the same place like the last picture. You know what rapping is, like rap music. That's what he's doing. It's a good picture because you can see his veins popping up on his neck. You can see the intensity of it.”

Why did you take this photo to share with Facebook friends?

“Just it was the beginning of winter break. Just no pressure. Just hanging out. Nothing to do. I haven't seen him in a while either.”

So this is in the living room?

“It's in the basement. It's actually the music studio where we recorded music.”

What is on the wall?

“His girlfriend painted the walls.”

Who is the kid in this photo (Photo 4)?

“This is my cousin. We finally have young children in the family now. Before everyone was just growing up. Now the children from before having their own children. He's got a backpack. He is about to start school in a year or two.”

Do you mind telling me who these persons are?

“This is my cousin. That's her boyfriend. She's the youngest one in my generation. That's her brother, my cousin. This is their mother, my aunt. This is another one of my aunts, Cherry. That's his grandma. That's my mother. That is the boy. His name is Lucas.”

So although it's a family photo, you still want to share it with all Facebook friends?

“Yeah.”

It's in?

“My sister's home. The extended family spent the Christmas eve in my sister's house.”

Let's look at the Photo 5.

“I just think it's funny, because they are all wearing pajamas. I remember being in that position.”

So it's in the same place?

“The same place, yeah.”

They are all children of your cousins?

“Yeah. Lucas was the first one.”

The other two are the younger ones?

“Yeah, exactly.”

So for this photo, still the same, you want to share it with every Facebook friend?

“Yes, because it's just winter break, Christmas and everything.”

Now here is Photo 6.

“This is just a picture of the Christmas tree at my mother's house. I just took it to have something to remember for Christmas. I visited her house, which is in St. Louis. I visit it every Christmas. I live in an apartment by myself.”

And your father?

“Just my mother. My father died.”

What do you want to tell your Facebook friends with this photo?

“It's nice to be home. You know, being away for so long. Something you can always count on. The Christmas tree is something I'll remember about being home.”

Your mother did all the decorations?

“Yeah.”

Who are these persons in this photo (Photo 7)?

“This is my sister and my brother-in-law. They had just got married a month before. So this is memorable, because they married and I saw them for the first time after they got married.”

Is this at your mother's home?

“My mother's home.”

So even for this kissing photo, you shared it with every Facebook friend?

“I guess so.”

Where and when was this photo taken (Photo 8)?

“This was taken like the 28th of December, I think. I was taking the bus to Chicago. I planned to call my friend when I arrived, so that he could pick me up from the train station. But when I got there, my phone was dead, and I forgot my phone charger. So I have no way to get hold of him. So I was stuck in the train station for a couple of hours. Just stranded wondering when he could get arrived at the train station for a couple of hours. That picture just reminds me of being stranded at the train station.”

Why did you share with Facebook friends?

“I don't know. I gave it a little caption of what happened.”

What were the comments?

“Just that's something they expect me to do, because I always do stupid things like that.”

Could you use one or two sentences to explain why your took this photo?

“It's a funny story from the break that I don't want to forget. I don't want to be in the same situation again. This is a reminder. I don't do that again.”

How old are you?

“20.”

This photo is about you with your band members (Photo 9)?

“This is the band that I play with. We went on a tour throughout the United States. We played in different cities. This is in Colorado when we first started doing the tour. These are just the mountains behind it. It's not a really good picture. But you could see big mountains behind this. It's just a good memory. Colorado wasn't the only place where we

went. We went to Colorado, Chicago, Wisconsin, Kansas, Iowa, and the states in between, St. Louis.”

How long did it take?

“It took about three weeks out of the winter break. So I had one week free. We did one session of this at first. Then we took a break. So we went to Colorado, and then we came back. And then we took a break. That's when I went to Chicago. And then we came back. And then we finished the northern part of the tour. The tour happened after Christmas, in between Christmas and New Year.”

Could you tell me who these guys are?

“Brandon, base guitar; Andy, he plays guitar; Dave, he plays drums; that's me, the piano.”

Now the last photo (Photo 10).

“We were playing a concert in Chicago. This is ... he played with us in the concert. His name was Shawn. We played before. So it's just that ... Are you familiar with the backstage? This is where we were hanging out before we went on. They gave us free alcohol, free food and stuff. So we would party a little bit. The room was like bright blue, and with graffiti. I just liked it. It's the Abbey Pub, a music hall.”

Why did you post this photo about drinking on Facebook?

“I am not drinking in any of the pictures. They are over 21. I don't see any problems with this, because I am not showing myself drinking.”

Would you worry that people will take for granted that your friends are drinking, and so you should be also drinking?

“Guilty by association? No, it'll prove it. I don't think it's a big deal to worry about. As for my reputation, it doesn't really matter. As far as my professional life, if they see it, sorry, it's not me doing it. I don't really worry about it.”

I noticed that in almost all these photos, you either showed half of your face, or were wearing sunglasses. Why is that?

“Usually over the winter, I just want to document the memory for myself, even if I weren't in the picture. Just then I could look back and remember what I did, and the people that went into my life. I took most of the pictures myself. So that's why. Usually I am taking the pictures. I can't be in it.”

Could you define yourself with an “I am” sentence?

“I am a sophomore in college. I am wholly in my youth before it disappears from me. I am just trying to enjoy life before I have to get a job and get too serious.”

Why don't you use the word America to describe yourself?

“I don't consider myself a typical American.”

In what way?

“I don't know. I think I led a different life than most people that go to MU. I like to travel. I don't want to be thought of as an American. I would rather people judge me by my personality than have them judge me by my country of origin, because I think America has some negative stereotypes these days I don't want to be associated with.”

Is it fair to say, in spite of that, you are still a typical American guy in many ways?

“What do you think?”

In your self-assessment?

“I would say no.”

How many friends do you have on Facebook?

“510. Something like that. Over 500.”

How many of them are friends you know face to face in real life?

“Probably 95 percent or more.”

That many?

“I mean not people I am hanging out on a routine basis. I wouldn't add a person if I haven't met them and hang out with them in real life.”

How many of them are purely online friends?

“Probably 10-20.”

How did you get to know them?

“I don't know how it happens. Well, I don't usually go and add people. And if they send me the request, and I see that we have mutual friends, I would just usually accept them, thinking that I would eventually run into them face to face anyway. Usually that's how it happens. But sometimes it doesn't. But I try to delete them from my friends if I never meet them. I don't see a point of just having it online. Just to show that I have friends. I don't see a point in that, you know. Because in Facebook, it will come up upon the news feed. You just have that one more person sharing information that is not relevant to your life. Then you can just delete it, because you can pick and choose what to see and what not to see in your news feed.”

How would you define Facebook friendship?

“Facebook friendship can be useful in college when you don't have time for a full conversation on the phone. Or if you are in a quiet place like the library, you just want to catch up with someone. It's also good for events, to invite people to an event, a party or something, spreading the word really quickly. If you want to spread the word really quickly, it's a good tool. But as far as developing a friendship, I wouldn't say it's still a good tool.”

How do you define friendship?

“Friendship maybe ... would be more of a face to face thing. If you run into someone on the street, he will stop and talk to you. Rather than a Facebook friend ... You could be friends with them in Facebook. But when you see them, they could just be passer-by. You won't stop to have a conversation. Maybe I would, if i have the time, I would stop, and talk with them. I wouldn't avoid them.”

So you think there is a difference between friends and Facebook friends?

“Yes, there is a difference. Obviously some of your friends are you real friends too. But more of the Facebook friends are ... a social network. Like I said, to invite to an event. Kind of have networking purposes.”

Could you give me an example?

“A lot of people that you know, say Hi with in a class a semester ago, or two semesters ago. You have on Facebook talked about class, or whatever. Afterwards, you don't have class any more. So the friendship should just fade away. But you are still friends with them on Facebook. You still want to invite them to a party, and to your concert. So you just stay on Facebook for social purposes like that.”

So you would define Freindship and FB friendship somehow differently?

“I would say, yes, in the same way you define a word friendship different from personal friendship; and an intimate relationship different from acquaintance and co-worker; it's in the same sense.”

How close do you feel towards FB friends?

“Well, I posted pictures like that. But I don't consider that regulatory in any way about anything I wouldn't want to share. I would only share certain information with my real friends. I wouldn't post it on Facebook.”

Like what?

“Like ... I don't know. Are you my friend? Some people use the Facebook as a venting mechanism. You know, ‘Oh I am so mad today’, or personal things and status. But I don't do that, because I don't think that is what Facebook is for. I don't get any satisfaction from putting my personal information on the Internet.”

Personal information, you mean like your cell phone number?

“No, like matters in my life, girlfriend problems, family problems, school problems.”

So which point would you choose on a scale of closeness of the Facebook friendship which has five points: extremely close, very close, close, not very close, unclose?

“One being the least close. Two, I would say two, because I don't feel comfortable. I just don't think the Internet can get you really close to a friend. It takes real-life interaction. If I am close to them already, obviously I can share more information. But it is not Facebook that brought us together. It takes the real life interaction first.”

What if one of your Facebook who used to regularly write on your wall hasn't showed up for a month?

“It will be probably because I haven't hang out with them in real life recently either. So it wouldn't come as a shock to me. If I miss them and I miss hanging out with them, then I will hang out with them in real life. Like I said, Facebook interaction comes due to the real life interaction. It's not the opposite. I wouldn't be like I miss you.”

Would you consider sending them an message on Facebook?

“If I had attempted to contact them by phone in real life, I could get a hold of them, then I would. But other than that, I wouldn't.”

What do you usually write on FB friend's walls?

“I'll post video links, something I think is funny, music video, a good song, maybe write a little bit about, or just ... I don't really write too much on people's walls. I just share the links, articles I read, or something.”

What kind of music and articles?

“I listen to electronic music. Usually just youtube videos, NY Times articles that I read, skate boarding magazines, music magazines.”

By articles in NY Times, you also mean music articles?

“Just any articles I read online. It could be about anything. If I think that person would also find it interesting, I would share with him. And make the events. You just select which friends you want to invite, and send them invitations.”

If a stranger wants to add you as friend, how would you respond?

“I would usually not accept their friend requests, unless I saw that we had a lot of mutual friends. Because there is a chance that I met them before, and I just forgot or something. That could happen. I could have drunk that night. And I couldn't remember their faces. So if I don't know them, I wouldn't accept. But there may be a chance that I would.”

Besides the reason mentioned before, what are the other reasons that may make you delete a Facebook friend?

“If I am not talking to them for two years, or really see no benefit from continuing to talk to them, it wouldn't really make sense to stay in contact with them.”

What do you mean by benefit?

“I am a musician. A lot of my friends are kind of like connections. They offer the benefit to what I want to get out of life. So if I see that they really don't have anything to offer me, it seems selfish, but I don't see any point of being their Facebook friends.”

How would you feel and do if your Facebook friends have different points of view from yours?

“I definitely wouldn't go into an argument over Facebook, because anyone can see that. That just makes you look confrontational. If people see a big long line of photograph of

just you too arguing, it just makes you look childish. I am not a very argumentative person when it comes to Facebook. I don't want the public to see my opinion. I wouldn't want to look immature to everyone else.”

What types of photos would make you feel uncomfortable about sharing those photos on Facebook?

“Well, photos of me in doing things that may prevent me from getting a job in the future. Or, anything, like I am not really a violent person. If I were caught doing something violent, if I go into a fight, I wouldn't want that to be put on FB.”

What may prevent you from getting a job?

“Like I went to a party, got drunk, party, doing stupid, I wouldn't like that to happen. It didn't happen, but hypothetically, if it did, I wouldn't want people to see it.”

Is it related to age, because you are below 21?

“Well it depends on the way you are behaving in the picture. I mean if I am 21, and there is a picture of me with the beer, acting calm, not being an idiot, that wouldn't be a problem. That's perfectly legal.”

Are there any other Facebook privacy issues?

“I don't really think so. I think the way it's designed ... you can customize your settings to your own preference. And whatever you don't want people to see, you can set to private. You can set it like you can approve the comments before it's displayed. It's really what you want to make of it, that it will become.”

What do you want to make of it?

“I don't put it as private. But that's because I don't really put anything I consider too private to share.”

Speaking of unsharable things, could you give me two or three general examples?

“Maybe like me making out the girl, kissing intensely, or me doing a drug that I don't want people to see. Or what else? If someone were asking me very personal question, like ... I don't know. That's about it.”

Subject D. Recorded on February 20, 2010.

It's inside the car, right (Photo 1)?

“That's right. It's myself, my sister, and I believe my other sister who took the picture. We are on our way back from a wedding in Dallas, Texas. It is just another picture with my sister. You know holding on to the memory from a wedding, the experience we had there and everything.”

Did you share with all Facebook friends? Or you intended to share it with some special friends only?

“I would intend to share with everyone. Just as a memory we had and also a compliment to the woman whose wedding we were coming back from in the sense that we had a great time there and we still have a great time on our way back.”

Both of your sisters are also your Facebook friends?

“Absolutely.”

Where was this photo taken (Photo 2)?

“This one was actually taken at my friend's house at St. Antonio. It is just a bunch of guys getting together. A lot of guys from the cross-country team. We are just very close-knit. This was a lunch at a friend's house. His name was Taylor. His Mom took the picture. She is like the Mom to all of us. She has the Facebook as well. She took the photo and decided to share it with her fellow teachers, talking about schools as well. The mother who took the picture was a teacher. She needs to share it with everyone else. Just to show how we are all doing.”

Did you share with all Facebook friends? Or you intended to share it with some special friends only?

“Probably for everyone. Just to show how close we are with each other. All the guys just hanging out and having a good time.”

Why did you take this photo (Photo 3)?

“This was actually before the wedding. My Mom wanted to take the picture. But my 's Mom ended up taking it. My Mom's motive was actually to make the Christmas card for next year. Since we created such a card for this last one. There we have the Christmas tree behind, and we are trying to see what we could do with it.”

It's the living room?

“That was her living room.”

And, her wedding?

“I am sorry. It is her living room, but it's a friend of ours' wedding. She was just another guest to the wedding.”

Would you share it with all the friends?

“Again, I would share it with anyone who wants to see it, based on the idea I want to make it into a Christmas card, even via Facebook.”

There is a similarity between Photo1 and Photo3, both of them with you and you sister in it?

“Well, this is more of a formal picture in the environment we are in, with a Christmas tree in the background, while for the previous picture, it is more of a kind of intimate environment. You know inside of a car, there is not much environment or scenery. So definitely I feel like sharing this photo with more people than I do that photo.”

Could you tell me more about this photo (Photo 4)?

“It was actually my neighbor who took the photo. You know she came over. As you can see, we have a very large Christmas wreath around our front door, that my Dad and I made. We just thought it would be special to take a picture of this. Actually there are four of us and two dogs. However, my another sister was still in Dallas. So she was unable to be there at that time. This could be made into a Christmas card as well, I felt. So it's just one of those ideas behind it.”

It was the day before Christmas?

“Sure it was. I believe so anyway. It was either Christmas eve or the day before Christmas eve. December 23rd or 24th.”

Most people will take their Christmas pictures insides of the living room, before the Christmas tree. But your picture was taken outside of the house. Do you have special consideration behind this?

“Well, again I think it just ties into memory. My Dad and I, we made the wreath. It was an offer to my Mom on the right. We felt inclined to do so, to make it special to ourselves. That was the thought why we put it up.”

So this was the most special Christmas decoration for your family?

“Yeah, definitely. That was in St. Antonio, Texas. While the previous one was in Dallas. We went to Dallas for the Christmas Day. So we don't have a Christmas tree in our house. So that also tied into why we took the photo outside of the house.”

So still that same question. Do you want to share it with all the Facebook friends?

“Yeah, I will definitely share it with everyone, because we are the only house in the neighborhood with a wreath that large. I think probably everyone who already know who we were would recognize the wreath symbol. Absolutely we will share with everyone.”

Are they your friends (Photo 5)?

“This was the New Year. It was myself and my two friends, Sherry and Taylor. The one on the right, the guy, he is a high school friend as well. That girl in the middle ended up in Mizzou as well. You know, in high school, we are just good friends, close friends. It's just a good memory to have.”

So still the same question. Would you share it with everyone?

“Yeah. Definitely. You know just to recollect how we spent the New Year.”

Where is it?

“I think I was in the kitchen. You know I was at my friend's house. The house was just pretty full of friends from high school. We were just hanging out to watch the ball dropping in New York. That dropped at 12.”

This was a special picture (Photo 6).

“Yes, it is. It was her idea.”

She is a girl?

“Yes, she is. It is hard to tell, due to the contrast. It was a kind of darn great picture. At the time we were trying things on the computer, things we never tried. We just forgot to smile. She took it with a Macbook as well. You know it was in the house. We were just hanging around.”

Where did you take the photo and when was that?

“It was in her kitchen as well.”

The same kitchen as the previous one?

“No, it was actually in a different friend's house. We took it days before Christmas. There were just she and I hanging out one night. Just trying to find something to do.”

When you post this photo, did you get any comments from Facebook friends?

“We got just a couple of rather small comments like "you are not smiling", "scary". Kind of comments.”

So what was your real intention after it? Really to scare others?

“No definitely not. We just thought we would give it a shot.”

Where was this taken (Photo 7)?

“This was taken at my neighbor's house. We had an interesting time making a ginger bread house. But ours was definitely the worst ginger bread house there. We had a contest with a couple other friends. I believe there were groups of four. I am not sure how many groups there were. But each group has four people. We all collaborated and made the ginger bread house with a water bottle, two cans of tomato I believe, tweezers and some ginger bread, and some frost. We definitely got comments like "we are energetic", "surprisingly funny". But we don't mind it at all. We just had a good time dealing with it. We also had a good time talking ourselves up, and making our break house look like the best. But ironically it wasn't at all.”

So for these two photos, do you share with all Facebook friends?

“Yeah. We sure did.”

Could you tell me more about this photo (Photo 8)?

“This was actually the day I got back from Columbia, when I flew back to St. Antonio. We were just hanging out at a friend's house. It was great for all of us just to be back and see everyone. The girl on my left was actually in my English class of my senior year high school. I sat behind her in a row of student. We just got to be pretty good friends. She's at University of Texas in Austin.”

It looks a little bit more intimate than others. You still want to share it with all the Facebook friends?

“Yeah. It is a more intimate kind of photo. Honestly it is just friendship behind it. I felt like it is a group I was part of. We are just close friends. We are comfortable with each other with intimacy and stuff.”

This was in the same kitchen (Photo 9)?

“Yeah, that's right. This was the New Year's Eve. The same people I had in the previous photo as well. I just pointed at the camera, acting funny, kind of absurd at the same time. And the woman in the middle, smiling normally, probably the only one in the photo looking as if acting normally.”

Now let's look at the last photo (Photo 10).

“And in this one, again it was New Year's Eve in the kitchen as well. It's funny. It's like everyone is hanging out in the kitchen. All these photos. Just kind of interesting. We all just got a group photo, hanging out.”

So for these two photos, also you want to share them with all Facebook friends?

“Yeah.”

How would you define yourself with an "I am" sentence?

“I feel I am a very outgoing human being that enjoys the environment with people. I am extroverted because I love being around with people. Meeting different people. Getting to know them. Creating friendships, intimate relationship. These are just great experiences.”

Why don't you use the word "America"?

“I am native to America. At the same time, I also have an uncle who used to live in South America and his job took him to Australia. My sister actually had been to China over a summer. That was a program at an orphanage I believe. You know, hanging out there. With all these familial, family relations that have been outside America's borders, I do have the ambition that one day I will go outside America's borders. The idea behind that was that I feel very inclined to meet everyone, whether native or non-native to America.”

Can I say although you have the ambition to go outside America, you still consider yourself quite a typical American guy in many sense?

“I would say so. That's safe to say. Absolutely.”

How do you define friendship?

“Between myself and the other persons, that type of friendship, I feel it's ... you know an intimate one, able to share everything in regard to how close the bond is, and the trust that's behind that bond. And there is the other type of friendship that is in a ‘commotary’, in a group of people, a team, with the same values or beliefs, and even the same sense of humor. We all have the same personality traits, or characteristics. Those are all the imperative factors for a ‘commotary’ type of friendship.”

What do you mean by “commotary”?

“A group of individuals with bonds that are closely tied. It is kind of a sports team. Through sports, and practice, and the time they all put together, they grow closely together almost in a sense to the previous type of friendship that I mentioned, with the one-on-one intimate relationship. So we all just have the same bond with one another that create into a group relationship in a sense.”

Do you mind telling me how many Facebook friends do you have on Facebook?

“Absolutely. I believe at least 500. Because I was actually at a ... are you familiar with Hotbox Cookies in Columbia. It's a cookie shop. They have a promotion going on, where if you invite friends to notice Hotbox Cookies, they'll give you a free cookie, maybe two free cookies I believe. Because I told people about Hotbox Cookies using Facebook, they gave me two cookies, but I had to give it to at least 500 of my friends. So that's how I interpreted the amount of friends I think I have on Facebook.”

How many of them are friends you also know face-to-face in real life? How many of them are purely online friends?

“I would say, face to face, I know more than 250, so more than half of them. I would say you have known all of them face to face. However, I would say 425 probably. Excuse me. I probably know face to face in a relationship ... actually friendship. I am sorry I am using the wrong word.”

How do you define Facebook friendship? Would you define it somehow differently from you did friendship just now?

“You know. I would. Friendship needs to be ... It does need ... factors of medium such as Facebook to get to know people however I feel that before the media of Facebook, Instant Messenger, or even the previous I believe it's called MySpace. All of those definitely are important for friendship. However, I feel it's imperative for one to meet someone face to face and create that friendship where Facebook friendships can serve as a reinforcement of that friendship that was previously created. So I feel that the face-to-face friendship of meeting someone is definitely more important than friendship over Facebook.”

If you are asked to use 2 or 3 sentences to conclude what kind of friendship you have on Facebook in general, what would you say?

“In general, Facebook friendship ... I would say, for myself, definitely it is important to have those people. And Facebook in general creates the opportunity to grow in a

relationship or friendship with another human being. So I feel that it definitely allows one to get to know another person. But at the same time, I feel that there needs to be an equilibrium between Facebook the World Wide Web, and the aspect of face-to-face earthly relations.”

Still talking about Facebook friends in general, how close do you feel towards them?

“I feel it varies with those I am close with from a real life on earth. On a Facebook aspect, I feel I am close through that realm. However, on Facebook, there are those I may not be close with earthly, and those whom I am close with in an earthly environment and I can still be close with and grow with over Facebook, because we have the same motives, the same beliefs, in a sense in various situations, and the same sense of humor that we were able to interpret each other over an Internet medium. Whereas, if I don't know someone very well from an earthly standpoint, and they try to share that sense of humor over Facebook, I may interpret it differently. So that in a sense could serve as a deficit to a friendship that I might not necessarily have a strong bond with, from the earthly aspect.”

So if here we have a five-point scale of closeness, from extremely close, very close, close to not really close, unclosed, which point would you choose to define your closeness in Facebook friendship?

“I would say ... Is close right in the middle. I would use ‘close’ with my Facebook network anyway, people that I share friendship with.”

If one of your friends who used to regularly write on your wall hasn't showed up for a month?

“I would feel ... I would definitely ... I would have wonder as to where that connection, or that comment might have been. However, I still have understanding because for instance, friends I feel close with are at different universities throughout the nation, they still have their college experience in front of them. So every once in a while, those comments and messages that they leave I definitely value. However, if I am not close to that person in general, and they leave me a comment and they go a month without leaving another comment, I would in a sense expect that, due to my past relations that I had with them. That I may not be inclined to have a friendship with later on down the road.”

What do you write on Facebook friends' walls? Which topics do you communicate about?

“Well, we communicate about various things. Things we have seen in the news that happened and we share with each other, you know, inside on those news, standpoints. We also share humorous topics. The YouTube, videos we see on YouTube. Songs that we hear about and we share with each other. Or even, you know, I just talk about what friends we have. Just in general, I just talk about, other friends sharing memories or ... I don't want to use the term ‘gossip’, because I don't feel that I gossip over Facebook. But I feel that I definitely share information about people. But I make sure that information is valid and correct and appropriate to be shared.”

Do you organize events, like there is a party when and where, over Facebook?

“Yes, definitely. Organization is definitely. Definitely yeah. At the same time, I feel that Facebook in general doesn't allow one to completely build a communicating bond in a sense. So I feel it is Ok in different times to use Facebook to organize daily lives. But I feel that face-to-face, or even one can hear another's voice, is definitely important. So you know over the phone or face-to-face in organization is more important than organization over Facebook. However, I feel it can still be done in a certain point.”

What if a stranger wanted to add you as friend on Facebook? What is your response to that?

“Well, I think there are different types of strangers. There are two, I guess. There are strangers I have never heard of in my life. I would probably try to figure out who that person was, by possibly looking at their Facebook to see if they have mutual friends with myself. But if they don't, I still, every once in a while, I found myself sending them a message, seeing what it was that drew them towards asking for my friendship over the Internet. But then there are those that are people that I have heard about through my friends that I feel more comfortable or inclined towards accepting them. As long as I have the idea who the person is, I will accept their friendship over Facebook, and then also in a sense accept their friendship here on this earth, and try to get to know them face to face. So I feel that Facebook could serve as an invitation to draw near, or closer to a stranger that I might not know too well.”

You said you would send a message asking what drew them to you. Is that before your accept the invitation or after that?

“That was before.”

Would you ever consider deleting a Facebook friend in some circumstances?

“I feel that's appropriate in different circumstances, one being ... one being a... a ... how to put this. I guess a struggle or a problem that is been ... I feel it doesn't have much future for lack of a better word. And I feel that that tie over Facebook should be temporarily taken away. However, I still need to ... I still find myself making the decision in a ... from an earthly idea just being you know still drawn to strengthening that friendship or relationship and trying to reinforce the idea of friendship with that particular person I am thinking about deleting or not deleting.”

Did you ever do that before?

“I have yet to do that.”

Usually people have very different points of view on various issues, which could be serious issues like the political news, or small issues like the favorite dress style, the favorite football team. When such differences come up on Facebook, how would you respond to this?

“Well I definitely will let my voice be heard over Facebook. But I don't let it hinder my relations over Facebook, or even in real lives, from the real life's stand point. I definitely acknowledge or notice the differences that we all have. I mean we are human, we are not

similar. But I definitely feel an inclination towards those that have the same ideas, or views that I have. I feel those in particular involves a stronger bond with me in Facebook.”

Are there any photos that would make you feel uncomfortable about posting them on Facebook?

“Well I feel that some definitely. I feel it should be a universally accepted motive. For my situation, I have parents who have Facebook as well, and I have parents' friends on Facebook that are friends with me. And I feel I don't have anything to hide. However, I don't want as we saw one of the photos, there was alcohol paraphernalia involved. However, I wasn't involved with that, because that is not what I stand for. However, I feel pictures people will get different ideas, or have different interpretations due to the environment surrounding in a sense of guilty by association. So I don't want Facebook, which I feel for many people today, Facebook seems to hinder relationships due to photos that are posted over the Internet. So I definitely feel if one doesn't know another person well from an earthly standpoint, the environment that Facebook photos might serve as could definitely hinder, or create a deficit for the relationships. “

Could you give me one or two more examples of those types of photos?

“I could. One that I just mentioned, with my friend next to me, and kind of around me. People in the background have alcohol involved. That alcohol involvement, definitely, as I myself being a minor, I don't wanna. Well not only because I am a minor, but what alcohol in today's society seems to involve, I feel that people do things when they are under that influence too much. They do things that they regret. Different things occur. So I don't want to, I wouldn't want people as I said in the earlier questions, I don't want them interpret that fact on myself as well. So that is one example. Another example, I have to say, let's see ... just some of the ... Let's say for instance, one time I wore a speedo to the beach, because I thought it would be funny, because it's not normal for people to wear a speedo to the beach. It's more normal to wear swim trunks. I seem to have drawn the attention. My friend actually took the photo. She put it on a Facebook and tagged me. At first I didn't want every people to see everything, because it is not normal. But I learn to accept that you know that is just one of the many facts. Photos such as that don't necessarily matter as much as the one example that involves illegal stuffs for one as myself now at the time. Honestly the examples that involve alcohol I definitely wouldn't want to share on Facebook. That is possibly the No. 1 thing.”

When you say minor, do you mean under 21?

“That's right.”

Besides the things we talked about just now, are there any other matters on Facebook that would make you feel concerned about online privacy?

“Honestly I am trying to think of, you know, to me it wouldn't matter to share political views, religious views, books that I enjoy reading, or groups I am part of ... or interest that I have. Well, I couldn't think of other issues that involve privacy other than you know privacy with the photo, that standpoint. Does that serve as a legitimate answer to

your question? Honestly I feel that photo privacy is definitely my No. 1 issue for privacy, you know, that I might be involved with. Various things I don't want people noticing. Honestly I don't have any other issue for privacy for people to see, to get information about me that I put onto my homepage.”

Subject E. Recorded on February 24, 2010.

What was this photo taken (Photo 1)?

“That is in my Dad's kitchen. It's a pretty small kitchen. It's like one isle. It was next to the door.”

This is your half sister?

“Yes.”

Why did you share this photo with Facebook friends?

“Well, I am friends with my Mom on Facebook. I just like her to see what my sister is doing, how she is. It's kind of like for that reason. I don't really think about my friends so much. I just think she's cute. So I kind of put it for the purpose like to share with people. But I didn't expect them to have a response to me.”

Could you explain a little bit about your family structure?

“Yeah. My Dad and my step Mom live in El Paso, Texas. They had my sister Jill. She is my half sister. She doesn't have the same Mom as I do. And then, my Mom is in Virginia. So that's how that works.”

You did post this photo on your Facebook, right?

“Yeah.”

Did you share it with all Facebook friends, or only with some family members?

“I shared it with all of the people.”

So still her (Photo 2).

“Yeah. I shared that with everyone too. I don't have any friends on Facebook, whom I would want to see pictures. I only friend request people whom I think it would be safe to be friend with and to see my pictures. I don't really mind put pictures for everyone to see.”

So it's still in the kitchen?

“Yeah. That was on Christmas Eve. It's tradition to eat chips and Kasso dip. So that is what we were doing.”

Is that your father?

“Yeah, that's my Dad.”

You took it with your mobile phone or camera?

“Camera. But it's just a little digital camera.”

When was this photo taken (Photo 3)?

“That was I think right after Christmas. We were just all relaxing. We were playing with the dog Spencer. We were taking pictures for fun.”

This is in the living room?

“Yes, in the living room.”

Your Dad's living room.

“Yeah.”

For these two, you also shared them with all the friends?

“Yeah.”

What was this photo taken (Photo 4)?

“This was in my bedroom, or their guest bedroom. My sister, she is five years younger than me. She likes to use my Macbook to do the photobooth. We were doing that during this picture.”

You took the photo with Macbook?

“Yeah.”

So here should be the computer on the study desk?

“Exactly.”

So still the same, you shared it with all the friends?

“Yeah.”

Could you tell me more about this photo (Photo 5)?

“This was in Los Angeles. And we went to see the Walter Disney Concert Hall. That's my boyfriend. And I shared that one with everyone, too.”

What's his name?

“Grant.”

Is Grant native to California, or you went there just for traveling?

“He was born there. We lived in Virginia together. We went to high school together. And then he moved back to California. So I went to visit him over the Winter Break. He hasn't been there since he moved there. So he wanted to see it, too.”

So LA isn't where he lives now?

“He lives in Venice Beach, which is part of LA. But the concert hall is in downtown. It's like 45 minutes from where he lives. So he hasn't got a chance to go to that part of the city yet. He took a year off because of the man-in-state condition. And then he got into the Santa Monica State College. So that's what he is doing.”

I was trying to figure out whether this image should be upside down (Photo 6).

“Yeah, it is weird. We went to the museum. It's like some museum in LA. This is a box of mirrors. So this is just a reflection of us standing and looking at it. It's kind of hard to tell from that. That's what it is. And I shared that one with everyone, too.”

And also the fifth one?

“Yes, that one too.”

This is Grant and this is you.

“Yes, and that is just the reflection.”

You took the photo by yourselves (Photo 7)?

“We took that one. He has longer arms than I do. You know when people hold a camera in front of you and take a picture. That's what we did. And it came out really good actually. That was on the beach obviously. I shared it with everyone.”

The beach was near to Grant's house?

“It was a couple of blocks from Grant's house.”

You shared it with everyone?

“I shared all of them with everyone.”

Where was this photo taken (Photo 8)?

“This was in Grant's Kitchen. We decided to try to make soup. So we were trying to take pictures of the soup and the spaghetti that didn't really work. So that was what that is. And that one I shared with everyone, too.”

This is a great photo (Photo 9).

“It's such a pretty sunset. That was on the Venice beach. Kind of like a boardwalk. But not really. They have all the shops, and people set up their music, set up things to sell. These people are just setting up to play for the night, I think.”

Could you tell me about this photo (Photo 10)?

“We were taking a walk. He just picked up this shell. I don't remember. He said it looked like a snail or something. A snail shell. That one I just took from ... I don't know. I think I just took a lot while walking and clicked randomly. It came out like that.”

About Photo 6 and Photo 10, do you want to express some other meanings beside what it looked like?

“When we lived in Virginia, we lived very close to D.C. And so we always would go to museums. We really like to go to art museums. That's just kind of like something we do. This was the only museum where we went to. I took a lot of pictures. That's maybe why I took a lot of pictures in the museum. I don't know why. But maybe it's because pick this one I just want to capture all the art, just not forget about it. Other than that, there was no other significant meaning. I really like museum going.”

Is museum going one of your biggest hobbies?

“Yes, I really like museum going.”

And what about this one (Photo 10)?

“I don't think there is any special meaning there. I just like the way that picture came out and the angle. That's not the normal angle. That's why I put the thing up, because it is a good picture. I don't think it says anything about me or Grant or anything.”

How do you introduce the photo to your Facebook friends?

“I think I just put what we found on the walk or something like that.”

How would describe yourself with an “I am” sentence?

“I am very artsy. I like to express myself through writing and taking pictures. I like museums. I like music. I am very like into the art thing. I am very outgoing. I am very driven and have goals for myself. Probably that's how I would describe myself.”

Why don't use the word America to describe yourself?

“I don't know. It seems ... Don't take it the wrong way. Some people take the offense to this. But I am not like in love with America. I would definitely love to move to Europe someday and live there. I don't tend to fit in with people who are very American, and like do everything for their country. I never really fit in with people like that. I am not really sure why that is. Maybe that's why. I don't take it personally to like being an America.”

Is it fair to say, although without try hard to fit in with people like that, you are still a typical American girl in a lot of ways?

“Yes that is very true. I think, living here, obviously you develop a certain traits, just because of where you are, who surrounds you, and all of that. There is something to the way people think, and not just the way they act. So that is more how I look at it.”

How would you define friendship?

“I have always been a believer of having a few close friends. Probably friendship to me is somebody you share everything with. You don't have to be with that person all the time. But you have a certain connection with them that isn't something you feel with everyone else.”

How many Facebook friends do you have?

“431, that's not too many.”

How many out of the 431 are friends you know face to face in real life?

“A lot of them are from high school. I knew a lot of them, 'cause I don't talk to them a lot anymore. I never friend request ... I never accept a person whom I don't know the person. I do have a certain friends who are like ... I am really interested in fashion. So this person, Rachel Zoe, she has a Facebook. So I am like friends with her. But that's obviously just like that's not a real friend. Just style tips kind of thing. Probably about the majority of those, I actually have known them face-to-face.”

You have never met Rachel, right?

“Yes.”

How many friends are this type of friends?

“15 or 20.”

So they are all people sharing the same interest with you?

“Right.”

How did you get to know these people?

“A lot of them are like ... Like she has a show that I watched on the channel Bravo. So that's how I found out about that. Actually from that show, I learned about a lot of other fashion things. I just look those upon Facebook. It turned out they had a page as well.”

So as a magazine student, you want to focus on fashion magazine in the future?

“Yeah. I am doing a minor in textile and apparel management, too. So I am looking to do fashion magazines. Something like that.”

So is knowing friends like Rachel part of your career moves?

“Her page isn't so much like her. It is her business kind of thing. It's not really a career move. I guess it could be. I am not directly talking to her. I am learning from the things she posts on there. So it's kind of like a learning opportunity.”

How to define FB friendship? Would you define Facebook friendship differently from how you define friendship in general?

“Yes, definitely. I think Facebook friends are just like people you've known, maybe not even very closely. You want to see what they are doing, and to see how their life is. Maybe once in a while, you want to talk to them. I see those people more in that kind of friendship.”

Considering all the Facebook friends as a whole, how close do you feel towards them?

“Not really close. I have some friends. We used to be very close. They went to different colleges. We don't really talk so much about anymore. On Facebook, there are probably 10 of those people. I will talk to them once in a while on the facebook chat. But other than those, there is not any I am close with.”

Which point to choose on the closeness scale with five points, extremely close, very close, close, not very close, unclosed?

“Not very close.”

Most of them from your high school?

“Yes.”

How would you feel and do if a Facebook friend who used to write regularly on your wall hasn't showed up for a month?

“I wouldn't really mind. I don't really. I have a bad habit of not really writing on people's walls. So a lot of the times, when people write to me, I just forget that they wrote on my wall or I forget to respond. So I probably wouldn't take any offense to it.”

Would you send them a message to ask?

“Maybe. I probably wouldn't unless I was really wanting to talk to them about something. It sounds mean, but until I really needed to talk to them, I wouldn't send them a message or anything.”

What do you communicate with Facebook friends? What do you usually write on their walls?

“A lot of the times, it's just like catching up. Like some people I used to work with. We are writing on each other's walls a lot. It's just like how are you doing, how is school, do you like work. That kind of thing. That's really all that I use it for. Maybe, once in a while. I recently posted one of my papers that I wrote as a note on Facebook. So a lot of my friends commented on that. Like ‘Wow, this is really good.’ ‘I really enjoyed writing it.’ I like responded, ‘thank you’.”

What is the paper about?

“It's an English short story. A lot of my friends always posted like poems they wrote. Stuff like that.”

Many users organize events, like parties, on Facebook. Are you doing the same?

“I don't really party a lot. I haven't used for that. But for people's birthdays, we've done that to organize a birthday event.”

It happens a lot?

No, just once in a while.

If a stranger want to add you as friend, how would you respond to the invitation?

“Deny them. I like never add people.”

That is the only choice you make?

“Yeah. I don't know. My Mom has got me really paranoid about people I don't know. So I am always careful of whom I add.”

Some people would click to see how many mutual friends. Would you do that?

“I have done that before. But it's weird. Sometimes because it will say, the mutual friends are people from my high school, but I still don't know who that person is. It's all just really strange. I think maybe they added him because they added everyone. So I always end up ignoring their requests.”

Did you ever consider deleting a Facebook friend in some special circumstances?

“Yeah, I have. If they are always messaging me weird things, or something like that, I would delete them. Some people are always posting pictures and stuff, and I've never really talked to this person, but I know who they are. And they are always coming up into my news feed. I would just delete them, too, because it's just annoying to have these pictures of people I don't even know them.”

Could you give me an example?

“This one girl. She went to my high school. She was into modeling. She's always putting pictures about herself. It was like everyday, multiple times, her pictures would be coming up in my news feed. I always just looked at them, because they were there. Then after a while, I was like this is really annoying. This keeps popping up. I don't even know her really. So I just ended up erasing it, 'cause I didn't like having it always coming up in my news feed.”

So she was from the same high school. But you did not know her personal?

“No. I maybe talked to her once. It wasn't like a personal conversation. It was just like ‘Hi, how are you’. That kind of thing.”

How would you treat your Facebook friends who have very different opinions from yours?

“I haven't really had that be a problem for me. Just because I am generally like a very open person. I understand everyone has their own opinions, like politically, and whatever that is. So I don't take it personally if people have different opinions than I do. The only thing that I don't like is someone who has a very strong opinion. Like always commenting on somebody else's walls or something. About how much they don't like them, or something like that. There was just one case where my boyfriend in my high school made this rap, and he posted it on Facebook. It was just like for fun, nothing mean. Then this another boy who's a year older, for some reason, decided to make a rap against the other rap. He was like being really mean to this kid. It was just really unnecessary bickering. That I really don't like. I mean I wasn't directly involved in that. So I just observed. I don't like stuff like that.”

So when one of your Facebook friends have very different views on Fashion, would you speak out your opinion, or just let it be?

“I will just let it be.”

What types of photos will make you feel uncomfortable about posting on Facebook?

“Not really. There hasn't been a situation where I have pictures like something I really wouldn't want people to see. I never had that being a problem.”

So whatever pictures, you would not hesitate at all to share with Facebook friends?

“Yeah.”

Or you only take the photos that you think would be appropriate?

“Yeah. That's true. I don't know if I am thinking of it while I am taking pictures. The only time I don't post picture is when I am going through my camera, some came out really bad. I just completely delete them. There's not anything I have and wouldn't share.”

What do you mean by bad?

“Just really blurry, bad lighting, something like that.”

Are there any other matters of Facebook privacy for you?

“I've never posted pictures that show exactly where I am staying, or anything like that. Like I posted the pictures of my Dad's house. But no one really knows where my Dad's house is. I don't really consider I am under any sort of danger from that. And I've never posted anything like my phone number or anything like that. I have my email. But that's the only personal information that I have on Facebook.”

You never show where your Dad's house is? That means the outside environment?

“I have shown pictures of the backyard. I mean maybe this is ignorant. But I did have the picture with a friend. The likelihood of somebody finding out where that actually is very slim. That's just the way how I look at it. Besides being at a tourist spot, or for the concert hall for example, I wouldn't post my exact location. That's the only thing. That is the only thing I can think about I wouldn't post on Facebook.”

Then, why also no phone numbers on Facebook?

“In the past, I have a lot of people who prank call or something like that. This one in high school. These people who have my phone number would just call me. They wouldn't say who it was. They would just say inappropriate things. And they would like call from a private number. And so I would never knew who it was, why they were calling me, and how they got my phone number. Things like that. I don't like to deal with them. I would rather have people not have my phone number, unless I like need to talk to them. So the groups that people have. Like I lost my phone when I need the phone numbers, 'cause I got a new phone, I would never post my phone numbers on the walls. I would just send the phone number to that person directly.”

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEWS TRANSCRIPTION: CHINESE INTERVIEWEES

This appendix contains the English translation of the transcription of semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews with five Chinese interviewees. Interviewees are code named as Subject F (G, H, I, J) to protect their confidentiality.

Subject F. Recorded on March 6, 2010.

Where was this photo taken (Photo 1)?

“This is a park near my home. Every evening I went there with my father and mother. It is actually a little dance place. Every evening people play music, dance and do some exercise together there. It is my mother dancing in the photo. Most people that dance there are middle-aged or old. Our life style used to be watching TV and chat at home after dinner. It has changed now. People don’t want to just stay at home. They want to go outdoors, do some exercise, and have a walk. Some middle-aged or old people, whose sons and daughters don’t live with them, can communicate with others and feel better.”

The photo contains the image of your mother. You still posted it on Renren.com?

“My privacy setting is only for my Renren.com friends to see. So it is all right. Those Renren.com friends are all my previous or current schoolmates.”

Who are the persons in this photo (Photo 2)?

“The old man in the middle is my grandpa. To his left are my aunt and her husband. The one wearing the sweater is my older cousin. She is the daughter of my aunt. To the other side of my grandpa are my parents. There were also the twin sisters, too. They are the daughters of my uncle. They just started going to kindergarten.”

Why did you share this photo on Renren.com?

“It is our custom to have the dinner of family reunion for Spring Festival at home. Every household should gather together at that moment. But as far as I know, now there are not many families doing so. The old persons of the big family passed away. Their sons and daughters will spend Spring Festival with their own small family then. Or some families only gathered at a restaurant. But all my family members still gather at my grandparents’ place every year.”

You also have two other photos that are group photos of family members (Photo 3 and Photo 4).

“Yes. The people in the first photo are my grandparents, my parents and my uncle. The people in the other one are my grandparents and my younger cousins.”

Why did you post these photos on Renren.com?

“The first day of the lunar new year was a snowy day. We finished the lunch, and went downstairs to hang out in the courtyard. I took my camera at the same time. They wanted to take some pictures. So I took these photos. These photos make me feel warm.”

Where was it?

“It was the courtyard outside the apartment building where my grandparents live. We had the lunch the day before at my grandparents’ place. Then we stayed until night when we had dumplings together. After eating dumplings, we returned to our own homes and watched the CCTV Spring Festival Gala. On the morning of the next day, my father and my uncle went back to my grandparents’ place pretty early to light crackers for them. People of my home town light crackers not just on the lunar new year’s eve, but also on the first day and the third day of the new year. That is our local custom.”

And you also took a picture of your grandparents with the same background (Photo 5)?

“Yes. It seems that they never took pictures with each other. So I really wanted to take one for them. The other reason was that my grandmother was diagnosed with esophagus cancer last September. We all felt sad then. But she went to Nanjing to receive the operation as soon as she knew the result of diagnosis. She recovered pretty well later. That made us feel happy. My grandmother looked healthy now.”

You also post these types of photos to share with all your Renren.com friends?

“Yes.”

This was about pasting the “Fu” character (Photo 6)?

“Yes. This was my father. It was at our own apartment. This is the door of the bedroom. But the bedroom isn’t shown here.”

You also post this photo to share with all your Renren.com friends?

“Yes. Usually I just upload photos to my Renren.com albums. Then they will see the photos. If you write notes or upload photos, your Renren.com friends will know those changes. They will come to your page to take a look.”

This was about the railway transportation during the Spring Festival, right (Photo 7)?

You also share this type of photos on Renren.com?

“Yes. The railway transportation becomes a hot social issue during the Spring Festival of every year. My hometown is the Fuyang city. The CCTV comes here to report on railway transportation at this time every year, because the railway in our city is famous for the huge passenger flow volume. On the peak day, the city railway must carry almost 100 thousand passengers.”

Why did you share this photo on Renren.com?

“I want everyone to know the situation of railway transportation during Spring Festival. Actually everyone is concerned about that. You see this was in the waiting hall. There were a lot of people there. It was extremely crowded.”

You also have three photos about paying tribute to ancestors (Photo 8, Photo 9 and Photo 10).

“Yes. That was the ninth day of the lunar new year. We went back to our home village to visit the graves of those deceased family members. There were three of them. The grave with the gravestone was the grave of my mother’s grandparents, who were buried together. The grave without the gravestone belongs to my grandmother on my mother’s side. This graveyard belongs to our family.”

Who was the guy burning paper as sacrificial offerings?

“That was my mom’s uncle.”

Who was kneeling down there?

“That was my mom’s brother.”

Who were the people lighting crackers there?

“That was my mom’s brother, my mom’s sister and her son.”

Why did you share these photos on Renren.com?

“I wanted to show the others how the ceremony of ancestral tribute was conducted. The customs for that seem to vary from place to place. The custom in my hometown was spreading out the paper like a flower, and then pressing the paper with a real RMB bill. That was to tell the deceased ones that I came to visit you and bring you money. The Spring Festival at my hometown is also the time to visit the graves of deceased family members. We actually live quite far from the home village. We were supposed to go there shortly after the lunar new year celebration. But the snow delayed us up until the ninth day of the new year. Otherwise we should have returned there earlier.”

So you shared the photos to show you Renren.com friends the unique customs at your hometown?

“Yes. There is a big difference between places. Take Fujian Province for example. They hold very grand ceremonies for paying ancestral tribute.”

Could you define yourself with an “I am” sentence?

“I am a college student. I am a huge fan of sports and music. I am a girl who is feeling very happy now.”

Happy?

“Yes. The study and the life are both going well. There is nothing to worry about for.” family members.”

Would you use the word “Chinese” to describe yourself or not?

“Yes. I think I am quite Chinese. The thing that I think is common to the Chinese is that we all share the tradition of having a strong sense of family. We are all like that. I am typical in that aspect. I just don’t want to emphasize that.”

How would you define friendship?

“You don’t need many real good friends. When you are happy, you may not think of contacting them. But when are helpless, they will be by your side. That friendship is valuable.”

How many friends do you have on Renren.com?

“I have 174 Renren.com friends.”

How many of them are friends you know in real life and how many are purely online friends?

“All of them are schoolmates or someone I know in real life.”

How would you define the Renren.com friendship?

“Everyone is on the Internet now. The communication on the Internet is an important part of friendship. Even my mother and me don’t call each other any more. We chat on the Internet every evening. Although we still use phones or mobile phones a lot, you may have a new mobile phone number one day. But your account on Renren.com may never change. Also, the Internet is widely accessible today. It is more convenient to contact friends on the Internet.”

Would you define the Renren.com friendship differently from the friendship you just described?

“If that is someone you are close with, then there is little difference. The online friendship is a part of the friendship. I call you, or send SMS. This is just a different means of maintaining the friendship. But if that is someone I know only online, I may not tell them my real thoughts. It possibly has to do with my personality. Purely online friends are just a casual acquaintance. Even though I add them as friends, we won’t have in-depth communications.”

How close do you feel towards the Renren.com friends, if we consider them as a whole? Which point would choose on a scale of closeness with five points, extremely close, very close, close, not very close and unclosed?

“I would choose “very close”. But it is not exactly so. I have very different Renren.com friends. I communicate with some of them for all the time, while never exchange a word with some others. But still I would say “very close”, because I spend most of my time being logged onto Renren.com. The Internet is my major means of communication with others.”

What do you do on Renren.com?

“I usually just look here and there. I don’t often write notes or post my photos. But I share a lot of stuff shared by others, such as video clips, photos and notes. I look at the stuff that I am interested in or I find useful. I just finished someone’s notes on skin care. People share all kinds of things on Renren.com.”

How would you feel and do if one of your Renren.com friends who used to regularly write on your wall hasn't showed up for a month?

“I would think that he might be busy. I will take a look at his page. If I have his mobile phone number, I will send a message to ask. Then I will write on his wall to ask how he is doing. I would do that for most Renren.com friends. If that friend is a very close friend, I won't wait for a month.”

What do you write on Renren.com friends' walls?

“Usually when they change the “what's on your mind” status, I would feel interested. If I have something to say, I will write on their walls then. But if I am worried about something, or I haven't felt well recently, or I have been in a good mood recently, I will try to talk to them one-on-one by Internet chatting, rather than writing on their walls.”

Do you also share other things?

“I also write notes about important events in my life. In the past few days, I wrote that I got sick. I also wrote about my computer hardware problem before the winter break. I also wrote about going to dance at a school-organized party. I had never danced before that. I also wrote some travelogues. There are also notes on sports, like watching games or the latest news about an athlete, because I am interested in sports. Many of my friends and I are not at the same place. So we share information like that, which is faster than sending messages and making phone calls.”

If a stranger wants to add you as friend, how would you respond?

“Usually I just pay no heed to those invitations. I just let the invitations be there. There used to be a guy who wants to go after me. I haven't added him until now.”

Did you ever delete any Renren.com friends?

“No.”

How would feel and do if your Renren.com friends have very different opinions from yours on some issues?

“At first you don't know the divergence of opinions. But after you have expressed your opinions, there will for sure be some argument. I will let my voice be heard and then keep silent, because I think argument isn't meaningful.”

What types of photo will make you feel uncomfortable about sharing on Renren.com?

“Those photos in which I don't look good, and those photos of me and my boyfriend hanging out. Actually we share photos that we like ourselves. We like those photos and so we want to show them to others. That is why.”

Why don't you share photos of you and your boyfriend hanging out?

“You know, I am very low-profiled. We don't live at the same city. He goes to college at another place. I am here in Fujian. So we only spend some holidays together. He was an introverted person. We don't take many pictures together. For those photos we have, I just enjoy looking at those photos by myself, and feel happy deep within. That is it.”

How do you look upon others sharing photos about their romantic relationships on Renren.com?

“I would feel that is really sweet. But for myself, I just don’t want to do that.”

Do you have other privacy concerns on Renren.com?

“Some of my schoolmates had that experience. To register at Renren.com, you need to fill in the information about your mobile phone number, your college, your class and your dorm address. Sometime, the information gets publicized before you know. My schoolmates received SMS, because someone sees their mobile phone numbers on Renren.com. Also, you never know how someone on Renren.com might gossip about you. Someone may write notes gossiping about your privacy. Then everyone will know it. I don’t have that experience. But there used to be someone writing notes about his girlfriend’s abortion. He didn’t take caution. So he included that girl’s name in his notes. Usually people take caution with each other’s privacy. But still there is the risk. Those gossips on the Internet revealed many people’s privacy. Those dangers do exist.”

Subject G. Recorded on March 9, 2010.

Who is the girl by your side in this photo (Photo 1)?

“This is my adopted younger sister. Not real sister. We were in the same class in elementary school. She has been always calling me sister. So we naturally become sisters. This was a day before the Spring Festival. The five of us are friends from elementary school who keep in contact with each other. We gathered at the home of one of the friends. That friend, who is a guy, prepared all the food. We also helped. We ate a lot and chatted. We can only meet each other during the breaks. It was not easy to hang out together like this. So I took a picture.”

Is this in the living room of that guy's apartment?

“Yes.”

Why did you share this photo with Renren.com friends?

“I took the photos, because it was a rare chance to meet each other. We go to colleges in different cities and provinces, and can only see each other once every half year. I uploaded the photos to Renren.com to preserve them, and also to show my current college friends how my old friends look like, what I did during the winter break, and whom I hung out with.”

Is this photo accessible to all Renren.com friends?

“Yes, it is for all Renren.com friends. I don't apply further privacy settings to my photos. I do that to my notes sometimes. When I write notes on my personal feeling, I may only want to share it with some Renren.com friends.”

Could you give me an example?

“I am too sentimental sometimes. When I write notes on some sad things, I would set a password for those notes. But photos are shared with every friend.”

This was about the same event, right (Photo 2)?

“Yes. The five of us knew each other since the first grade in elementary school. We are still in contact now. But we went to colleges in different places. That girl goes to a college in Wuhan city. This guy goes to Yantai city. The other guy goes to Nanjing city. They are all my best friends.”

This was a picture of high school friends (Photo 3).

“Yes. I was wearing a red coat. It was in the home of a high school friend. After finishing the lunch, we sat and chatted together. I said, ‘let's take a picture. It's not easy to meet you guys’. This was also in the living room of his home.”

This photo was about a marriage (Photo 4)?

“Yes, I took a snap shot of my older cousin. She is the daughter of my aunt. This was in a photography studio in the city. The studio made an album of wedding photos for her and the bridegroom. The studio also helped with the make-up of the bride.”

Why did you share this photo on Renren.com?

“Because I think she was really beautiful. I took the photo when she was finished with hairdressing. She was so pretty. I like the photo.”

Usually how do you post photos on Renren.com?

“I just upload photos to Renren.com albums, and shared it with all Renren.com friends. I used to put a photo directly in my news feed, but that was not an important photo.”

Did you take this photo by yourself (Photo 5)?

“No. I made a copy of their wedding photo. I asked her if she wanted to publicize her image online, and if I could share the photo with my Renren.com friends. She said OK. Then I posted it.”

You think it's necessary to get her approval?

“Yes. You never know how someone on the Internet will treat the photo. This photo was also a personal one for my cousin. So I asked her. I took it with her approval.”

You often do this? I mean getting approval for posting photos on Renren.com?

“Not very often, because most of the photos I shared on Renren.com are like formal wedding photos like this.”

Could you tell me more about this photo? It seems to be a photo of a photo (Photo 6).

“This is a photo of my parents. I was looking for something in all the drawers that day. Just accidentally I found this old photo. I was afraid it might get lost someday. So I took a picture of that old photo. I have very few photos from those old times.”

Why did you share it on Renren.com?

“I just wanted to let my Renren.com friends see what my parents looked like when they were young. They were pretty good-looking then. My relatives all say that I don't look like my parents.”

This photo is entitled “the two-year-old me” (Photo 7).

“This photo was taken at my uncle's home. I think it was also a Spring Festival many years ago, because only during the Spring Festival do we paste couplets. I found the old photo at my uncle's home. There isn't such a photo at my home. So I took a picture of it.”

This is a picture of you when you were in the third grade of primary school (Photo 8).

“The boy is my younger brother. He will go to high school soon. This photo is pasted on the wall at my home. In this photo, we were in front of the small photography agency in our town. The photographer took a family photo for us. We had better landscape outside of the studio. That was why we took the picture outside. For the previous two old photos, I posted them because I was afraid that the photo might get lost. This one was pasted on the wall at my home, along with several other group photos with my schoolmates. I was thinking at that time that I had better take pictures of these old photos, too. This is a procedure of my growing up. This also records the changes in my appearance.”

This is the photo about your “graduation” from kindergarten (Photo 9).

“That was on the evening of the first day of lunar new year. Some friends from elementary school came to visit me at my home. We talked a lot about childhood. I said I didn’t have the group photos from then. I asked my mother, too. One of my friends said she had that photo. So I asked her to bring it to me so that I could take a picture of that old photo. She brought it over the next day.”

This is the group photo with classmates when you were in the third grade of primary school (Photo 10).

“I borrowed that old photo from my friend and took a picture of it. This is the picture I took. I lost all my photos from the time before my fifth grade in primary school. So I had to borrow them from friends and took pictures of them.”

Could you describe yourself with an “I am” sentence?

“I am an outgoing girl. I cherish my friends. I am calm.”

Calm?

“Yes. I mean I like things to go with their natural tendencies.”

Would you use the word “Chinese” to describe yourself?

“I was thinking about my own characters when you asked me. I am typically Chinese in some aspects. Meanwhile I am not typically Chinese in some aspects. Some of my opinions are not purely eastern.”

How would you define friendship?

“Friendship is extremely important. Sometimes people say ‘friends make your paths wider’. That sounds like friendship has a purpose. But for me friendship should be simple and free. Friendship means treating someone sincerely. Don’t consider it as a purpose or a means for getting anything else. Just be simple.”

How many friends do you have on Renren.com?

“I have 593.”

How did you get to know them?

“Most of them are friends from primary school and middle school, and friends in college. There are also some friends of my friends. They are the friends that my friends have met later. They saw me in the lists of their friends’ friends and added me. There are also some I don’t know in real life. But they are also students in my university.”

How many of them are these type of purely online friends?

“Some sixty or seventy.”

How would you define Renren.com friendship?

“No matter I have met the friend or not, this friendship is real friendship for me, but not the hypocritical sort of relationship. If the friend is already my good friend, Renren.com

draws us even closer. If the friend is someone I don't know, Renren.com makes it possible to have a process of knowing each other."

Would you define the Renren.com friendship in the same way as you defined friendship?
"Of course I cherish the friendship in real life more than I do the Renren.com friendship, because there are some people I don't really know in real life after all. But I still cherish Renren.com friendship quite much."

How close do you feel towards your Renren.com friends? If there is a scale of closeness with five points, extremely close, very close, close, not very close, unclosed, which point would you choose for your Renren.com friendship?

"I would feel it should be 'very close'."

Could you explain why you chose "very close"?

"The closeness in friendship is mutual. If I treat my friends well, they will treat me well too. I cherish my friends very much in my real life. Most of my Renren.com friends are also my friends in real life. So our friendship on Renren.com isn't very different from our offline friendship."

How would you feel and do if one of your Renren.com friends who used to regularly write on your wall hasn't showed up for a month?

"I would go to his page, and leave a message on his wall to ask about it. If he wouldn't reply, I will send a message via mobile phone or make a phone call, because he might have some troubles. But that is for Renren.com friends who are also my good friends in real life. For the general type of Renren.com friends, I would not mind. It is normal to disappear for a while because college students are busy."

Usually what do you share with Renren.com friends? For example, what do you write on their walls?

"If we talk about photo sharing, most of the photos I share are school-organized activities. I also share photos about my travels. I don't usually write on their walls. What people usually do on Renren.com is just coming to your page, adding your page and looking at your photos. That is about it. Another important reason for me to log into Renren.com is to share the stuff that others share. There are many things that can teach me new knowledge. So every day after I log into Renren.com, I will share a lot of things, including photos and notes."

Could you give me a few examples?

"For example, I have been preparing for the graduate school entrance exam these days. I have joined a group about that exam. People in that group share the exam materials or some relating websites frequently. I share stuff like that. Also, when someone shares knowledge about health or methods of study, I will also take a look and share it."

If a stranger wants to add you as friend, how would you respond?

"Usually I would accept the invitation."

Could you tell me why?

“I will first check how many friends are the friends for both of us. Usually those strangers add me because we have mutual friends. They are actually the friends of my friends, or the schoolmates of my schoolmates. They add me perhaps because they want to help me. I am honored to get their invitations. After all I don’t have anything to protect on Renren.com.”

What if there are no mutual friends between you and that stranger?

“I would still accept the invitation, because I am feeling honored. There is no secret on my Renren.com. I am afraid that someone will take something away.”

Did you or would you delete any Renren.com friend?

“No I never did it. Not until now. But it is possible in the future. I might delete someone, if he says vile and vulgar thing on my page.”

How would feel and do if some of your Renren.com friends have very different opinions from yours?

“I would either think by myself or express my opinions. I would give him my feedback that I don’t agree with you. But I wouldn’t go into argument. I would give my different opinion in a friendly tone, but not have an argument. It has to do with my personality. I have almost never fought with someone since my childhood.”

What types of photos will make you feel uncomfortable about posting them on Renren.com?

“There are those types of photos. Sometimes, I posted the photo but found out that the photo had already been posted by someone else. Then I would take it off. Sometimes, you looked at the photo you posted a few years ago and thought that was really ugly. Then I would also delete it.”

Do you have concerns about posting photos about your romantic relationships?

“No, I don’t, because I don’t have a boyfriend.”

What are the other privacy concerns you have on Renren.com, beside those concerns about photo sharing?

“I would say computer virus. When I was on Renren.com one time, someone added me as friend, and so I accepted that invitation. Just at that time, I had a computer crash. I didn’t know why it crashed. But it happened just at the moment when I accepted the invitation on Renren.com. That intruded upon my privacy somehow, because computer is my private possession. Also, some of my friends may send me message via Renren.com, saying that they lost my mobile phone number. I will send my number back using the one-on-one chatting function of Renren.com. Sometimes, when I leave messages about something that I only want to share with that friend, I will also use that private conversation function.”

Could you give me an example?

“For example, I want to give my friend some suggestion on a certain situation. But I think that my friend may not want others to know about the situation. In that case, I wil use the private chatting on Renren.com.”

Subject H. Recorded on March 10, 2010.

What did you want to share this photo with Renren.com friends (Photo 1)?

“I hope my Renren.com friends to see a different side of me during the break. I look more masculine in it. I am sharing it with all Renren.com friends without setting a password.”

This is a photo of you holding the snow (Photo 2).

“Yes. My hometown is in Anhui province. But my university is in Quanzhou city, where it never snows. When I went back, Anhui had already seen several snowstorms. I thought it would be wonderful if I could also have a snowy day. Eventually the snow really came on the lunar new year’s eve and the first day of lunar new year. So I went to the rooftop of my home to take this picture.”

Why did you share it with Renren.com friends?

“Because my university is in Quanzhou city, where it never snows. Many of my college friends are native to Quanzhou and many others are from Hong Kong, Macao and Malaysia. They have never seen snow.”

Where was this photo taken (Photo 3)?

“It was in the living room of my uncle’s apartment. The background is the wall behind TV. I took this picture with my mobile phone. Everyone went back to hometown for the Spring Festival. So we visited him.”

Why didn’t you take a group photo of all of your family members gathering that day?

“I did. There are photos of me and my family members together. But after some consideration, I decided not to post them online, because they are my family. And it is not necessary. Wherever there are human beings, there would be troubles. I had that experience. A photo that I posted online led to gossips. It is all right for me and my family members to see those photos.”

Why did you share this photo on Renren.com then?

“Perhaps because I look pretty good in this photo. The Internet is different from the reality. It allows some exaggeration. This one is a bit exaggerated, because I wore a little make-up. Just a little. You won’t notice it if I don’t tell you.”

This is a photo of going to concert with friends (Photo 4).

“Yes, the guy sitting by my side is my friend. There were five or six of my friends that day. My university invites some good orchestras to hold concerts on campus every year. One of my classmates gave me several tickets. So I invited my friends to go to this concert together.”

Why did you share this photo on Renren.com?

“The color of my coat is exaggerated in this photo. It is magenta. I wear this coat on festivals, but not on the other days.”

Did you share all these photos we talked about with all you Renren.com friends or only with any specific friends?

“With all friends. I selected those people I know well to be my Renren.com friends. So I can let all of them see my photos.”

Could you tell me more about this photo (Photo 5)?

“This is my father. It was at our home. My mother took the picture. But it was my father’s idea to take the picture. He is a huge fan of photography. There are thousands of photos at my home, all belonging to him. He loves fun. He loves photography. So I take this photo with him. This is the living room of our duplex.”

Why did you share this image of your father on Renren.com? And wasn’t there any photo with my mother?

“My father loves ‘showing off’. Actually I didn’t really want to post this photo on Renren.com. I also wanted to hide my father’s face with Photoshop. But I gave it a second thought and realized that it was not really necessary. So I posted it like this. But usually when I put this type of photos on Renren.com, I would use Photoshop to cover my Dad’s head with a cartoon image. But that sounds like a little bit disrespectful to him. So in most of the cases, I won’t post this types of photos on Renren.com.”

Where was this photo taken (Photo 6)?

“It was inside a car. The winter break this year was longer than previous years. We had a break of over thirty days. My aunt, who lives in Shanghai, just got pregnant. She is thirty six years old. So I went to Shanghai to visit her. They went to pick me at the Shanghai airport.”

Did you take any photos with your aunt?

“Yes, there are the photos of me and my aunt together. But I didn’t upload them on Renren.com.”

Why did you share this photo with Renren.com friends?

“Because of the coat. That coat makes me look younger.”

Tell me more about this photo (Photo 7).

“This was after I returned to Quanzhou. The new semester started before the Lantern Festival on the fifteenth day of the lunar new year. But actually we didn’t have much school work at that time. There was a lantern show in Quanzhou. So I went there with my schoolmates, with my roommates.”

Why did you share this photo on Renren.com?

“Because it was my first time to spend my Lantern Festival in Quanzhou. So I went out to spend the evening looking around.”

Where was this photo taken (Photo 8)?

“It was in my bedroom. It looked scary, because of the light. I looked scarily white.”

Let's look at the next photo. Why did you share this photo on Renren.com (Photo 9)?

“Because of the contrast of colors. My hair was dyed bright yellowish. But the background is bright whitish. This one was taken when I left the college for hometown. It was taken in the hallway of my dorm. The light was very strong there.”

Could you tell me more about this last photo (Photo 10)?

“This was at the home of a college friend. I love these two puppies very much. One of them used to be very sick. Almost dead. But it recovered later. The bigger puppy is Kobe. The smaller one is Mew. I used to spend a month in that friend's home. We got Kobe, which is a male dog. We decided to find a wife for him. So we got Mew. But Mew became seriously ill. We spent a lot of time taking care of her. She was almost dead, but still recovered well later. These two dogs are happy together now. It always arouses feelings within me to look at them.”

When did that happen?

“It was during the summer break of my first year in college. He was a native to Quanzhou city. I spent a month living at his home.”

Could you define yourself with an “I am” sentence?

“I am a simple person. I am a person with good quality of life. I am a person who would like to try new things. I am a person who loves my family and all the family members.”

Would you use the word “Chinese” to describe yourself or not?

“I think I don't have to emphasize that aspect. No matter where you are from, as long as you have compassion and the love for life, I would be glad to make friends with you. There are many students from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, Malaysia and Philippines in my university. That is probably why I don't want to emphasize me being a Chinese. But I am still a typical Chinese. Now I am getting older. I was often like a kid before. But now I am feeling the increasingly stronger sense of family. I also start to realize that as a man, I need to shoulder the responsibility for family. As far as social responsibility, I may not make some important contributions to the society. But I will be a useful person. Sometimes, I think I am still a traditional Chinese man.”

How do you define friendship?

“One of my favorite saying goes as ‘people live to provide warmth to each other’. Friends are those who make you feel the warmth. Friendship is mutual. You can get the sincere return only if you give your sincere heart out. It is a mutual relationship. Now the saying that ‘people live to provide warmth to each other’ is my principle of life. I try to give the warmth to others and I get a lot of warmth from others, too. I have always been doing so. I think if everyone can do so to other people, then we can all get friendship.”

Could you explain what the warmth means?

“For example, Sumei is one of my best friends. Last year, I was so busy preparing for an exam that I didn't have enough time to go to eat at the dining hall. I asked Sumei for help. I told her just to buy me some rice. But when she appeared in front of me, she took

a whole bag of food, including the rice, the soup and the beverage, everything. I was so deeply touched.”

How many Renren.com friends do you have?

“I have about 130 friends on Renren.com. I only add my schoolmates and the friends whom I know pretty well.”

How do you define the friendship on Renren.com?

“Most of the friends on Renren.com are people I knew pretty well. Using Renren.com, you can know how they are doing, and what have happened in their lives recently. You can express your concern for them and help them if you can offer that help. That is a wider channel of mutual understanding.”

What kinds of friends do you have on Renren.com?

“Many different kinds of friends. Schoolmates from primary school, elementary school, high school and college. If they are on Renren.com, they will add me. There are some others I don’t know very well. They are students of other universities.”

Would you define the Renren.com friendship in the same way as you defined the friendship?

“Why not in the same way? It is an extension of the friendship in real life. I can know how they are doing, I can show my concern, and I can offer my help. Some friends are not in the same city with you. The existence of Renren.com makes it convenient for me to know how they are doing and express my concern for them. This is consistent with my definition of friendship.”

How close do you feel towards your Renren.com friends? If there is a scale of closeness with five points, extremely close, very close, close, not very close, unclose, which point would you choose for your Renren.com friendship?

“If I consider all the Renren.com friends together, then it should be not very close.”

How would you feel and do if one of your Renren.com friends who used to regularly write on your wall hasn’t showed up for a month?

“I wouldn’t have any feeling. I may check his Renren.com page and ask. I will just leave a message on his wall, ‘I came’. That is OK then.”

What do you communicate with Renren.com friends about? What do you write on their walls? What do you share with them?

“I used to go after a girl on the Renren.com. I also often chat with friends on Renren.com. Sometimes when I find some Renrne.com friend write really funny notes, I will also click on it to take a look totally because I am interested. I also like gossips. If some Renrne.com friends post some gossip news, I will go to take a look. As for sharing, I share quite boring things. I used to share a lot of underground music. Now I mainly share those tips about preparing for graduate school entrance exam.”

If a stranger adds you as friend, how would you respond to that invitation?

“Usually I neglect it. But if that is a beautiful girl or a handsome guy, I will look at their pages to see what they share. If they only share boring things, I will neglect their invitations. If they write something really good, I will consider accepting their invitations.”

Something really good? Could you give me any examples?

“For example, posts about how to get along with others, posts about ancient poetry, or posts about my favorite music. Sometimes, gossip news too, because we need a bit of that joy so that our lives won’t get too boring.”

Gossip news?

“Just like what someone and someone are doing lately. It could be about celebrities or about ordinary persons, or even about the Renren.com friend herself.”

Did you ever delete any Renren.com friends?

“I did it before, but would not do it later. I used to have a Renren.com account to communicate with a girl I know online. I deleted her when we broke up. I cancelled that Renren.com account also. On my current Renren.com page, all the online friends are also my friends in real life. It is not necessary to delete any of them.”

How would feel and do if one of your Renren.com friends has very different opinions from yours?

“I would keep silent. But I would express my opinions only if someone made abusive remarks. Usually I would keep silent, because argument is meaningless. It is OK to have different opinions, and to have their own opinions. But if it is personal attack, that would be too much. In that situation, I would choose to let my voice be heard. If he only made a statement of what he thinks, I would keep silent.”

What types of photos will make you feel uncomfortable about sharing on Renren.com?

“I don’t share photos about my romantic relationship, because I don’t want to become the topic in others’ gossips. Sometimes the college students like gossips pretty much. Also I don’t show some private photos. For example, I used to take some photos in which I had no clothing above the waist, or even had more of my body exposed. I had the courage to take such photos, but won’t dare to upload it onto Renren.com. I took those photos because I wanted to record what I looked like as a young man for my memory. But if those photos are uploaded on the Internet, my friends would for sure say, ‘Wow, blah-blah’. Photo sharing is one of the major functions of Renren.com. There would be more and more people who would see those photos. I really don’t want to become the topic of gossips. I also don’t share photos in which I am ugly. You take many photos. And then you get only one or two photos in which you look good. I only upload those good ones.”

What are the other privacy concerns of yours on Renren.com?

“Sometimes writing notes would make me feel uncomfortable. If you mention an argument with someone in your notes, or mention too many random thoughts in your

notes, that might offend some people. Some of them might even curse you directly. So I wrote some of those types of notes when I first used Renren.com. But I stopped writing them later. Now most of my notes are movie reviews or reading notes. I also had the experience of being harassed by some weird guys on Renren.com. They saw your profile picture and came to your page, saying weird things. Renren.com is complex. There might be very rude remarks. Some beautiful girls also have that experience.”

What kind of rude remarks? With sexual hints?

“Not hints. But very graphic sex description.”

What type of photo is the profile picture you are using now?

“I am using Photo 1 as my profile picture. My image in that one is a bit different from what I usually look like. I look more masculine in it.”

Subject I. Recorded on March 8, 2010.

Where was this photo taken (Photo 1)?

“It was outside the apartment buildings where the top officials of my home city live. I was hanging out with my younger cousin. My younger cousin told me that. So I went over to take a look. People are not allowed to enter there. I took the photo of the buildings through the iron railings. A land-cruiser was parked near the railings. I took a photo of that vehicle too (Photo 2).”

When was this photo taken?

“That was on the ninth day of the lunar new year. I went to my younger cousin’s home to help him with his homework. We took a walk around noon. I didn’t know the majors and other city officials live there. So I uploaded several pictures of what I saw on the Renren.com, so that my friends from elementary school and high school could take a look.”

Why did you share this photo with them?

“Because this was the first time I knew where the majors live. There were three apartment buildings connected with each other. The mayors, and the assistant mayors all live there. The major reason is that it was the first time I saw those things.”

The next photo is about wedding cars (Photo 3).

“That was on the some day and near the same apartment buildings. Many people on Renren.com share photos of wedding cars. There were quite many luxury cars in the photo I took. I took the photo because I thought I could also have the chance to look at those cars. Most people living there are city officials. So the plates are mostly government plates. This is what makes these wedding cars somehow different.”

Could you tell me more about this photo (Photo 4)?

“This was at a company that belongs to a clothing manufacturer. As new interns, we were receiving training. This was in the conference room that was used for our training. At first I didn’t have the courage to take pictures. They mainly talked about how to deal with customers and how to communicate with customers. This was on February 5. I started the part-time job two weeks after the winter break began. I just wanted to let people know that I was working.”

For these photos you shared on Renren.com, would you apply any privacy setting to make it accessible only to yourself or to some specific friends?

“Everything on my Renren.com page is only accessible to my Renren.com friends. Those who are not my friends can’t see my page.”

Could you tell me more about this photo (Photo 5)?

“That was on the day when I took shuttle bus to return to my university. I was waiting for the bus with my schoolmates then. The building with the waiting hall was newly erected. We entered the ticket hall and found that it was full of people. Some people who stood in

line to buy tickets had to stand outside the hall. So I didn't take pictures of the ticket hall. This photo was taken at the ticket entrance in the waiting hall."

Why did you share this photo with Renren.com friends?

"It was about the transportation during Spring Festival. I just wanted to show how busy and even chaotic the situation was."

Could you tell me more about this photo (Photo 6)?

"That was a day before the lunar new year's eve. I went to buy couplets with my aunt and older cousin. Usually people do the couplets shopping in the daytime. But we went to the couplets market in the evening. The light inside gave you a wonderful feeling. Nowadays, people hardly feel any atmosphere of festivity during the Spring Festival. But you can definitely feel that in the couplets market."

Why did you share this photo with Renren.com friends?

"These days young people seldom go to couplets market. I want to show everyone the form of such a market."

Why didn't you put a photo of you and your aunt and older cousin shopping together instead?

"I don't like taking pictures like that. I also don't like putting pictures of myself on Renren.com. I am just not used to doing that. First I don't like taking pictures of myself. Then naturally I won't put that type of pictures on Renren.com. For example, I also shared a photo about my grand grandfather's ninetieth birthday, which didn't contain any human images either. I don't like posting people's images on Renren.com. I feel that is not a good thing to do. Nowadays, many people are conducting the human flesh search on the Internet. If someone's image that you posted online is searched, you would be to blame. The human flesh search has become many people's habit. If someone wants to find a person, he will ask people on the Internet to help him look for that person. You never know someone around you might have done something that others would like to know. So I pay particular attention to this. I would not share photos depicting people's images. For my friends, and my family members, I am always like that. Usually on my Renren.com page, there aren't the photos depicting people's images."

This photo was about the new dorm building under construction (Photo 7).

"Yes. That was on the day when I returned to the university. A new dorm building was under construction near my dorm building. I am pretty interested in architecture. So I took this photo. Our university has a newly established campus in Xiamen city also. I live on the Xiamen campus. I am taking this photo to share with those friends on the Quanzhou campus to show the progress of construction in Xiamen."

Most of your Renren.com friends are schoolmates?

"Yes, definitely. I don't add strangers as friends. There aren't any strangers among my Renren.com friends."

Even if you have mutual friends with the strangers?

“No. The reason is that I have nothing to talk about with them. If you make purely online friends, you need to spend time communicating with them and getting to know them. But I don’t like that sort of communication. So I don’t add strangers as friends.”

This photo is also about construction (Photo 8).

“Yes, that was an underground street in building in my home city. I searched on the Internet and found out that there were only four underground streets like this in the whole China. So it construction was quite a big piece of news. My hometown, the Putian city, isn’t considered a major city. Not even in the Fujian province. So I was feeling quite proud of this construction project.”

Why did you share this photo on Renren.com?

“Because some of my friends in college might haven’t seen anything like this. As far as I know, there isn’t an underground street in Xiamen city. But our Putian city is going to have one. This is something worth feeling proud of.”

Could you tell me more about this photo (Photo 9)?

“I went to look at the Lantern Festival floats in Xiamen with my schoolmates. I shared it on Renren.com mainly because I wanted to show them what the lantern floats look like. But I was not a good photographer. So I wasn’t really capable of capturing that spectacle.”

So the last photo was about the ninetieth birthday of your grand grandfather. Why did you share this photo on Renren.com (Photo 10)?

“The ninetieth birthday is such a happy occasion. I wanted to let everyone know of this and celebrate my grand grandfather’s birthday.”

Did you ever share any photos only with some specific Renren.com friends?

“No. If I don’t want to share the photo with some of my Renren.com friends, I won’t upload it then. Usually I just put my photos in my Renren.com albums.”

Could you define yourself with an “I am” sentence?

“To those good friends, I am a responsible person. I am also a quiet person. That’s about it.”

Would you describe yourself with the word “Chinese” or not?

“When we are talking, I suppose you know me as Chinese. Yes, I am a typically Chinese guy. Most Chinese are quite introverted.”

How would you define friendship?

“Except for the family bonds, friendship is more important than other relationships. With friendship, you can have someone to console you when you feel helpless, depressed, or painful.”

How many friends do you have on Renren.com?

“There are my schoolmates from elementary school, high school and college. Altogether there are about 200. I know all of them in real life, too. There are also some relatives who are my Renren.com friends. But they are students, too.”

How would you define Renren.com friendship?

“There are some friends on Renren.com, who are my good friends. I can tell them my innermost feelings and thoughts. When I am with my best friends, I can basically talk about everything. There is no limit. But if I am with the casual acquaintance, I won't mention those things.”

What do you mean by “those things”?

“For example, things that happened in my family and things about my romantic relationships.”

How many Renren.com friends are such good friends?

“Two of them are from college. Two guys are from high school. The other good friend is from elementary school. I have five very good friends on Renren.com. The other type of Renren.com friends are just persons that you have met before.”

How close do you feel towards Renren.com friends? If there is a scale of closeness with five points, extremely close, very close, close, not very close and unclosed, which point would you choose?

“I would choose the point in the middle, ‘close’, because there are still some Renren.com friends whom I don't communicate with. I just check their statuses occasionally. These friends are the majority of my Renren.com friends. I only communicate frequently with a few Renren.com friends.”

How would you feel and do if a Renren.com friend who used to regularly write on your wall hasn't showed up for a month?

“I would judge the situation by considering how he acts usually. Usually I should know something about his life, if he is my good friend. If he has an exam in that month, that would be a normal thing. But if he is that type of friend whom I don't communicate with very often, I wouldn't think about it. If he is a very good friend, I would probably know what he is probably busy doing. If I can't think about any reason, I would make a phone call to ask why he hasn't showed up online recently.”

Usually what do you write on your Renren.com friends' walls? What do you share with them?

“I come to Renren.com usually for sharing things. I share things that are useful to me, or some funny video clips. Most of the things I share are useful things. For example, very beautiful desktop pictures. I think everyone may find it useful. I will share it then. And funny video clips. As to writing on walls, I will leave messages on their walls when they said something weird or did something special. Or someone is participating an activity. I will vote for him to express my support.”

If a stranger adds you as friend, how would you respond to the invitation?

“Usually I just ignore it.”

What if he has mutual friends with you?

“Only unless some of my current friends recommends him. Otherwise, I won’t accept the invitation. Of course I won’t reject it either. I just ignore it.”

Did you ever delete Renren.com friends?

“Yes, I did it once for a very special reason. For example, someone betrayed me and did something to harm my benefit. I would delete that friend. Well, actually it was my ex-girlfriend who betrayed me and did some unforgivable things. So I ‘unfriended’ her. I haven’t deleted any others.”

How would feel and do if one of your Renren.com friends has very different opinions from yours?

“I would ignore it. If I think I am correct, I would stick to my correct opinion. If I am not sure about it, I will try to confirm my opinion on the Internet. To double-check. Usually I just ignore it. He has his opinions. I have mine. I don’t bother with such things.”

What types of photos would make you feel uncomfortable about sharing on Renren.com?

“Usually just the photos that depict others’ images, and also photos about others’ private life. Usually photos recording events in public places won’t make me feel uncomfortable. For example, when I watched the Olympic torch relay, I saw someone sit or stand on the national flag. Images of those persons must be uploaded online. They were immoral and uncivilized.”

What are the other privacy concerns you have on the Internet?

“You need to be careful about what to say on the Internet. If what you want to say might hurt someone, you should make sure to say it. Usually I don’t tell everything I want to say to those Renren.com friends I don’t know well. Especially other persons’ private lives. If someone asks you about it, you should try your best to avoid saying that. But if someone tells me that, I will listen then, because that means that person trusts you.”

Subject J. Recorded on March 7, 2010.

This photo was about going to mosque (Photo 1).

“I am a Muslim. I went to mosque to attend a religious service with a friend. That day, I was having a complex feeling, because the new semester would start soon. Once again, I needed to leave home for a distant city. I went to that mosque very often when I was a child. I just felt that time never returned after it passed me. So I asked that friend to take a picture of myself. An important purpose for taking this picture was for my personal memory. At first, I posted photos on Renren.com more or less for the purpose of showing off. But later I wouldn't do that, because that's just necessary. Sometimes I do want to share photos with others. For example, if there are those people in the photos, I will want to share the photos with them. I also want other friends to know of this. I really hope those Renren.com friends I know well to see the photos. I don't really care about whether others will look at them or not. Those photos represent some particular stage, and some particular memory. I think they will certainly like those photos when they look at them.”

Do you apply any privacy setting so that some friends can't access the photos?

“I set passwords for some notes, but not for photos. My page is open to all friends.”

This photo depicts the farm field (Photo 2).

“Yes, the field belongs to the guy in the middle. This is the field of his family. Spring is coming. Farmers need to get prepared for the irrigation in Spring. He went to the field to make ridges out of the soil so that the irrigation water won't flow out of furrows. Two friends and I went to see him. We were childhood playmates. We talked a lot and had a lot of fun. My home is in the countryside. I thought about the upcoming new semester. Although there is a lot of fun in college, that is still different from life in the countryside. So I took this photo when they weren't looking. I told them that I recorded this moment so that I could take a look at it in the future. We played together in childhood. They were my neighbors. But they are no longer students.”

This photo was about your friends seeing you off at the railway station (Photo 2).

“Yes, those friends were still my childhood playmates.”

This photo was about him, the grandson of your aunt (Photo 3).

“Yes. I am an emotional guy. Every time when I leave home for college, I will stay a night at the home of my aunt, who lives in Liaocheng city. I will take the train the next morning. I remember when I was a sophomore, he was an extremely little baby, who didn't know how to speak and walk. But he was so different this year. He was so energetic and naughty. He threw everything. He threw the pot onto ground. A funny, naughty little man. So I took a picture of him. On Renren.com, I would rather put this type of pictures, which represent the happy side of life, the living side, the positive side.”

Could you tell me about this photo (Photo 4)?

“This year's winter break started earlier. So when I arrived at home, many friends hadn't returned yet. I felt quite bored. Then my older sister came over with her dog. I really

didn't know she had such a dog. He loves food. The other dogs can protect homes. But this one only wags his tail when you feed him. I just thought he was so lovely. I loved playing with him. I took a lot of photos of him. He was always wagging the tail like this. I chose this one to share on Renren.com."

Is your older sister married?

"Yes, she is married. She keeps the pet dog in her home."

What was this photo taken?

"In the courtyard of my home."

This photo was about having some fun in the field (Photo 5).

"I took the photo. The guys are still those childhood playmates. I spent the whole winter break with them."

Could you tell me more about this photo (Photo 6)?

"This is especially funny. I went out of the shuttle bus station that day. But we couldn't figure out where to take the city bus. So we took the tricycle. He is also a college student. We sat in the tricycle and listened to the extremely loud noise it made. That was really ironic and fun. We carried lots of stuff, looking just like refugees. We took the broken tricycle, riding in a crowded street. We hadn't seen each other for a semester. So I went to hang out with him for several days."

Why did he cover his face with hands?

"That was for fun. He said jokingly, 'It is embarrassing'. Then I said, 'Let's record this moment. We don't often have this experience'. I was teasing him."

In this photo entitled "me holding the teddy bear", the caption goes "I am missing her". Is she your girlfriend?

"Yes, I referred to my girlfriend. We have a long distance relationship, seeing each other once every half semester. When I took the photo, I didn't get the chance to see her."

Why didn't you share the photo with you and her together?

"I wouldn't like to share things about my romantic relationships with others. Usually if the photo contains the images of both of us, I won't share it on Renren.com, because I think that is just unnecessary."

Could you define yourself with an "I am" sentence?

"I am a pretty nervous person. I often think a lot. I also often negate my own thoughts. It is really contradictory. I don't look like a serious man. But when you set me a task, I will work on it like a perfectionist."

Would you describe yourself with the word "Chinese" or not?

"I didn't think about that aspect when you asked me. I thought of the question from a personal perspective. I think I am typically Chinese, although I am not really sure what it

means to be typically Chinese. Chinese people have very subtle feelings. I am like that. I am considerate for my girlfriend and family members. I often think a lot for others, although I am not always able to help others a lot. For example, if someone sets me a task and tells me what I should do, I might not do it exactly as he says. If he is my good friend, I will consider different results of handling that matter in different ways. Then I will find the best way for him, which might be different from what he tells me. I will do it in that way.”

How would you define friendship?

“Friendship is a part of the self. It is in my heart. Without it, I feel incomplete, as if I am missing a sort of spiritual support.”

How many friends do you have on Renren.com?

“About 400. I only add those people that I know pretty well as friends. But there are also those people who added me as friends. Some of them are strangers to me in real life.”

How many among the 400 Renren.com friends are purely online friends?

“About 50. I added most of them when I just came to Quanzhou for college. They are my hometown fellows, who are also from Shandong Province. I never met them before. I added them mainly because they were my hometown fellows. I checked their information. If they were from the Liaocheng region of Shandong Province, their names were normal, and their profile photos looked pretty neat, I would add them.”

How do you define Renren.com friendship?

“Sometimes it is a form of compensation. No matter it is a big university or small college, everyone is busy. We can seldom talk face to face. A greeting on Renren.com, the communication by typing words, makes it almost like a face-to-face encounter. In this way, it is a form of compensation.”

So the majority of your Renren.com friends are your schoolmates in Huaqiao University, right?

“In terms of the proportion of numbers of friends, yes, there are more Renren.com friends from college than those from middle school. For a period of time, I did use Renren.com almost as a Huqiao University website. I even sent out the university notices by Renren.com and somehow neglected those other friends.”

Would you define Renren.com friendship in the same way as you defined friendship?

“They are the same in some sense. If that people is already your good friend, you will still communicate with him very often on Renren.com. That is not different from your interactions in real life. But there is another type of friends. You don’t actually know them very well in real life. They are just acquaintances. You need to say hi to them, but that is about all the communication with them. But you probably have a very close chat with them on Renren.com. If they change their statuses, you will send them a message. You also check each other’s page frequently. But your relationships with them in real life are not actually very close. I would say the real-life relationships are still the most

important. Some of my best friends change their Renren.com statuses, but I won't necessarily send them messages. That doesn't affect our friendship though. To be honest, I still can't feel like counting on and having trust in things on the Internet."

How close do you feel towards Renren.com friends? If there is a scale of closeness with five points, extremely close, very close, close, not very close, unclosed, which point would you choose?

"I would choose 'very close' if I were still a sophomore. But now I would choose 'close'. On Renren.com, you need to go to others' pages quite often and make frequent remarks on others' statuses to attain that feeling of closeness. If you don't often show up online, people will forget you. When I was a sophomore, I didn't really worry about my future. I joined the student union and did a lot of work for the student union. I often needed to send out university notices. Sometimes I also needed to release my emotions by changing my status on Renren.com. But after that, I have concentrated on study, and started to feel that playing on Renren.com is pretty meaningless."

How would you feel and do if a Renren.com friend who used to regularly write on your wall hasn't showed up for a month?

"I did have that experience. If that friend is someone I care about and I have been used to his regular visits to my page, I would have all sorts of speculations about his sudden disappearance. I am inclined to guess randomly. If that is really unendurable to me, I would go to his page to see others' messages to him. Or I would send SMS or make a phone call. I wouldn't directly ask. But I would just worry that something bad might happen to him. But if that friend is just the general type of Renren.com friend, they would think that they had enough of me. Well, it is up to them. I would not mind. He doesn't show up. That doesn't have any influence on me."

What do you write on your friends' walls? And what do you share with them?

"Funny stuff, good stuff. I will always share those stuff. I don't often write on my friends' walls. Mostly I am sharing pictures. I am interested in graphic design. I like playing with Photoshop. So I never wait to share those beautiful graphic designs on Renren.com. And, those beautiful sentences, those literary sentences on Renren.com. I will also share those sentences and save them in my computer. And, also those interesting video clips."

Is your girlfriend your Renren.com friend?

"No. Most of the time we contacted each other by mobile phones. She is not sociable."

If a stranger wants to add you as friend, how would you respond to the invitation?

"My initial reaction would be thinking that we may have met each other before, but I didn't remember him. But sometimes when I go to check his page, I would suspect his motive, because some people add friends simply to have many friends and show off. But maybe I am thinking too much. Adding friends could be a normal thing. Usually I would reject or ignore the invitation."

Did you delete any Renren.com friends?

“No, I never did it on Renren.com.”

How would you feel and do if some Renren.com friends have very different opinions from yours?

“I would usually have a discussion, and argue with the. Similar things happened before. Usually it was me who concluded the argument, and they kept silent. It feels good to conclude the discussion. We didn't argue over big issues, but small issues like whether it is fair for the university to do this or that. A very good friend of mine and me often discuss on Renren.com. He often changes his status and writes his complaints. On seeing that, I will first leave a message of one or two sentences to him, expressing my opinions politely. Usually he will refute my opinions. Then I will keep on trying to persuade him even in a slightly ironic tone. Usually I will win the discussion. But that doesn't mean that I convinced him.”

What types of photos will make you feel uncomfortable about sharing on Renren.com?

“Yes, there are. For example, last year, one older sister had her wedding ceremony. One of my friends also had his wedding ceremony at about the same time. I took some pictures of the two weddings and posted them on Renren.com. But I had a big blister at the corner of my mouth at that time. So I didn't look really good in those pictures. That was a small thing. I somehow hesitated to put those pictures online. I thought it might be unnecessary to post that bad image of mine on Renren.com. But I uploaded the photos eventually. I wanted to share that happiness of weddings with everyone. I also like using Photoshop to retouch photos. One time, I merged many photos into one big memory photo in black and white. But I worried that people would look down upon me if I uploaded this stuff on Renren.com, because they would consider me as someone too immersed in his own little world. I somehow look down upon those who always post photos about their own lives. They are concerned about themselves all the time. Shame on them. But when I finished that photo of mine, I really wanted to upload it. But at the same time, I felt that I might become like those guys.”

Why didn't you share a single photo of you and your family members together?

“To be truthful, I asked myself that question many times. First, I think some deep attachments should be kept deep within my heart. When I was at home, having my Dad, my Mom and my sister by my side, I was really happy. But if I post photos about that on Renren.com, I would feel as if I am exposing my happiness. I would have the same feeling, if I post photos of me and my girlfriend on Renren.com. About those stuff, with a little bit selfishness, I still hope to keep everything to myself. I would very much like to share with everyone my happiness like hanging out with my good friends. But stuff like family, I always like keeping it in the depth of my heart. Probably that is an aspect of me being a typical Chinese man.”

What other privacy concerns do you have on Renren.com?

“I think Renren.com has three major functions, the 'what's on your mind' status, notes and photo albums. I don't have any privacy concern about the status, because people

don't really believe what you said. Sometimes if people ask you, you can say that you quoted someone else. But notes are different. What you write in notes certainly reflects your real experiences and thoughts. Usually when I want to release my emotions, my descriptions of those emotions would be quite implicit. If that is some emotion relating to my girlfriend or family members, then I would not write it in my notes. I think privacy is important for me."