

FACE, ITS CORRELATES, “RETICENCE”, AND ALIENATION: THE  
COMMUNICATION OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE U.S.  
CLASSROOM

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **FACE, ITS CORRELATES, “RETICENCE”, AND ALIENATION: THE COMMUNICATION OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE U.S. CLASSROOM**

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This study investigates how face concerns influence Chinese international students (CISs,  $n = 137$ ) who study in the United States. The study argued that different face concerns (positive, negative, collective) determine whether Chinese students remain “reticent” or choose to actively participate in classroom communication. The majority of results were found in the collective face condition and collective face concern is referred as CISs’ concern with how Americans generalize from CISs’ classroom performance to judge the image of entire CISs group and of China. Correlations between perceived CISs’ feelings of alienation, perceived CISs’ reticence, and typicality of CISs were also found. The results will be helpful for future research about how CISs’ classroom communication is associated with their perception of the image of all CISs and of China.

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## INTRODUCTION

Many Chinese international students (CISs) choose to study in the United States each year. According to Institute of International Education (2012), nearly 194,029 Chinese students were in the United States during 2011 to 2012, and this accounted for 25.4% of the whole international student population in the United States. Because of cultural differences between the United States and China, CISs may face several problems with their academic life abroad. A common problem experienced by CISs is their “reticence” or apparent “unwillingness to communicate” in the U.S. classroom, which tends to frustrate American instructors who expect students to speak up and participate actively in class. Such cultural differences in terms of classroom communication have been explored by many scholars from different perspectives. Some scholars explain that highly-valued face concerns for Chinese students make them “reticent” in class (Wen & Clément, 2003; Hwang, Ang, & Francesco, 2002). Chinese students may not contribute comments or ask questions in class simply because they want to protect their face from being criticized or being ridiculed by their instructors/classmates. However, the majority of studies that have described CISs’ face concerns in the classroom context didn’t provide measurement of face (and its correlates) and very few studies have empirical data to support their assumption about the influence of face on CISs’ “reticence”. In addition, such studies have not investigated the psychological consequences of CISs’ face concerns in classroom. It is possible that alienation may be theoretically associated with Chinese students’ reticence/unwillingness-to-communicate in the U.S. classroom because social alienation may result from communication denial (Giffin, 1970). Alienation has been shown to be theoretically



related to the construct of unwillingness-to-communicate (Burgoon & Burgoon, 1974; Burgoon, 1976). If face concerns somehow determine whether CISs are reticent or not, then face concerns may also relate to CISs' feelings of alienation. This study adopts an experimental design to study face concerns associated with remaining reticent in class discussion and investigate whether and how these face concerns may contribute to feelings of alienation. Some face concerns that is examined include positive, negative, and collective face concerns. The study also explores the relationships between face concerns and correlates of face. These correlates are: typicality, social approval, perceived sensitivity to others' face, and CISs' identifications with other CISs. This study provides scenarios designed to manipulate three levels of face concerns in the classroom context and it also examines the psychological consequence of CISs' face concerns. The study investigates the influence of face on classroom communication and how CISs understand their own communicative classroom behavior.

In the following section, the conceptual framework of "face", CISs' "reticence" and feelings of alienation is presented. The hypotheses and research questions is derived from previous work reported in the conceptual framework section. Then the research methods are discussed. The results are reported next. After that, the implications and limitations of this study are presented in the discussion section and the conclusion is provided at last.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Western Conceptualization of Face

In the West, the concept of face originated with Goffman (1959) when he defined face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [or herself] by the line others assume he [or she] has taken up during a particular concept” (p. 213). Later on, Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed politeness theory which divided face into two types: positive face about desirable self-image seeking for *social approval* and *appreciation* and negative face concerned with *autonomy*, *rights to non-distraction*, and *freedom of actions* without being imposed on. The concept of positive and negative face was extended later by Lim and Bowers (1991) and they provided three types of face: autonomy face, fellowship face, and competence face. Tracy and Baratz (1994) argued that Brown and Levinson’s two-dimensional face model “decontextualizes individual utterances and facework strategies” (p. 291). Although Brown and Levinson’s classification of face has been criticized, it continues to be widely used to test face in different contexts (See Ting-Toomey & Cocroft (1994) for a detailed discussion). In addition, negative (autonomy) and positive (approval) face can combine themselves with both self-concern and other concern dimensions to become a more complex model of facework according to the face-negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey & Cocroft, 1994). Both negative and positive face can include self and other concern dimensions and individualistic/collectivistic cultures interact with self/other face concerns differently (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey & Cocroft, 1994).

Brown and Levinson’s face framework provides the conceptual framework for discussion of face in the current study. For example, the concept of positive and negative

face was applied to Park and Guan's (2006) study of apology in American and Chinese cultures and their findings showed Americans are more likely to apologize if their acts threaten others' negative face while Chinese are more likely to apologize if they threaten others' positive face. Positive and negative face are also used in Cai and Wilson's (2000) study of interaction goals and facework and in Aloia's (2009) investigation of face, politeness and investment in relationship after a relational offense. Another reason to choose these two concepts of face in this study is that other face frameworks (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Lim & Bowers, 1991) have their limitations in the context of this study or they are not clearly defined. Although Ting-Toomey's facework typology is useful in intercultural communication, her face-negotiation perspective is mainly concerned with conflict between two parties (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey & Curoft, 1994). Therefore, Brown and Levinson's face framework is more appropriate in this study.

### **Chinese Conceptualization of Face**

Another approach to explaining CISs' reticence in the U.S. classroom is to investigate how the Chinese concept of face influences CISs' communication. Chinese face is like a mask for idealizing self-presentation in some situations while it may function as a moral guideline to regulate improper behaviors. It works in a subtle way so Chinese can somehow "trade" the quantity of face as favor for bargaining and negotiation. Hu (1944) divided Chinese face into two main categories: *mien-tzu* and *lien*. As Hu noted, *mien-tzu* can be defined as a kind of social prestige based on success and ostentation while *lien* is like moral reputation which can function as a social sanction. *Mien-tzu* can be quantified and "the amount of *mien-tzu* one can enjoy is proportionate to the social and relational status one possesses" (Chang & Holt, 1994, p. 100). On the other hand, *lien*

is associated with decency and integrity so a person with *lien* will be respected and honored in Chinese society (Hu, 1944). However, the boundaries between these two types of Chinese face might be blurred. According to Ho (1976), in some contexts, *lien* and *mien-tzu* may have a similar meaning and they can be used interchangeably. Ho (1976) investigated the features of face by distinguishing “face” from behavioral standards, personal traits, status, dignity, honor, and prestige and he also discussed face-gain and face-loss. However, Ho’s conceptualization of Chinese face still didn’t provide a clear definition of Chinese face. Other scholars examined how Chinese face is applied to social interaction in Chinese society. For instance, Hwang (1987) discussed how facework interacts with favor (*renqing*) in the Chinese *guanxi* (relation) system to help people make decisions in order to solve conflict and foster social exchange.

The current study considers how the Chinese concept of face influences CISs’ communication practices in the U.S. classroom. An interesting phenomenon is that Chinese students may be over-concerned with their face simply because their face can reflect something more than themselves like the image and capability of their country. “Many Chinese are hardworking and ambitious; a deep psychological explanation is face because they simply do not wish to let China, Chinese people, or Chinese culture down” (Fang, 2003, pp. 356-357). According to Hu (1944), “Many Chinese feel particularly embarrassed when meeting Americans in this country: they fear that by unwittingly breaking conventions they may ‘lose the face of their country’” (p. 50). Many studies are concerned with how Chinese (Confucian) self is associated with a macro-level construct like state, country, even heaven (Chai & Chai, 1965; Fei, 1992; Ho, Peng, Lai, & Chan, 2001; Shen, 2001; Yang, 2001). Zhai (2011) described how Chinese athletes were

criticized and threatened by other Chinese because they didn't win gold medals in the Olympic Games. As a result, they were losing the face of China and the face of all other Chinese people who had high expectancy of these athletes' performance (Zhai, 2011). Lee et al. (2010) conducted a study investigating cultural differences in terms of how 2008 Olympic athletes attribute their success and failure and their data showed that Chinese athletes were likely to make external attributions for their success (like giving credits to China and the Chinese Communist Party). On the other hand, compared with Korean and Japanese athletes, Chinese athletes were less likely to attribute their success to their internal abilities (Lee et al., 2010). Gries (1999) discussed a Chinese "face nationalism" and he argued that Western policy makers should allow Chinese elites to maintain the national face of China to satisfy domestic Chinese people. Although his study focused on international relationships, it still can account for why Chinese place value on macro-level face (collective/national face).

This study proposes a new idea of face focusing on CISs in U.S. universities: *collective face*. Collective face is defined as the face concern that an individual's image is tightly related to the image of his/her home country and the image of entire social group so that individual performance reflects the capabilities of one's country and group. This definition is based on the previous conceptualization of Chinese self. According to Fei's (1992) idea of "the differential mode of association" and Yang's (2001) idea of "the boundary-permeated self-construal", Chinese self may expand to a macro national level. Chinese face, which plays an important role in Chinese life, may also expand to a macro national level. According to Zhai's (2011) report of Chinese athletes and Lee et al.'s (2010) study of Chinese athletes giving credits to their country, in most Chinese people's

eyes, Chinese athletes' excellent performance reflects the positive image of China so their incompetent performance results in criticism and threats. For CISs, they may also believe that their own image is associated with the image of their country and the entire CIS population. Therefore, CISs' class performance in the U.S. may reflect the capabilities of China and the entire CIS population.

The concept of collective face proposed in this study is different from Ting-Toomey's idea of "mutual face" (Ting-Toomey & Cole, 1990; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). Mutual face is between self-face and other-face concerns (Ting-Toomey & Crockford, 1994) while collective face is a macro-level face emphasizing the ultimate extension of an individual's self-concept. A Chinese international student with high collective face concern overly focuses on his/her country's image while possibly ignoring his American instructors' face and mutual face with instructors. This suggests that collective face is not same as mutual face. However, more empirical data is needed to examine the boundary between these two constructs.

### **The Correlates of Face**

For this study, three scenarios were devised to illustrate different face concerns guiding a Chinese international student in the U.S. we call Zhang. The student described in each scenario has different face concerns in the classroom described in the three scenarios. The details of each scenario will be discussed in the methods section and Appendix. In scenario 1, this student has high concern with his positive face and low concern with his negative face. In scenario 2, he has high concern with his negative face and low concern with his positive face. In scenario 3, he has high concern with collective face.

**Perceived typicality of face concerns.** The first correlate of face examined is the perceived typicality of Chinese students' face concerns. Chinese are really careful before they present their opinion simply because they do not want to be disapproved by others (Yang, 1993), which indicates that Chinese are so aware of their positive face. According to this result (Yang, 1993) and collective identities (Lee et al., 2010; Zhai, 2011), the first hypothesis will be investigated:

Hypothesis 1: In other CISs' eyes, the Chinese international student 1a) who has high concern with his positive face and low concern with his negative face or 1b) who has collective face concern in the U.S. classroom (described in scenarios 1 and 3 respectively) will be seen as more typical compared with the student who has high concern with negative face and low concern with positive face in the U.S. classroom (scenario 2).

This hypothesis is tested both in the scenario manipulations and in scaled items developed to measure perceived typicality for each scenario as explained later in the methods section.

**Social approval of face concerns.** Although Chinese may sometimes over-concern themselves with expressing their own ideas or not in order to avoid social disapproval (Yang, 1993) or they may associate their own face with collective image (Lee et al., 2010; Zhai, 2011), it's unclear whether other Chinese will approve of such behaviors. So a research question is asked:

Research Question 1: In which scenarios will Zhang earn more social approval from other CISs?

This research question is tested both in the scenario manipulations and in scaled items developed to measure CISs' social approval of face concerns described in each scenario as explained later in the methods section.

**Perception of Zhang's sensitivity to others' face.** Another construct measured in this study will be perceived sensitivity to other's face because in different scenarios Zhang shows different types of face sensitivity. Those students with concern about collective face are likely to be more sensitive to other CISs' face needs in their class and to the face of China. In addition, for CISs who have high concern with positive face and low concern with negative face, they may also be sensitive to the face needs of other CISs (in their class) and their country's face because this type of CISs hope their own image can be appreciated/approved by other CISs and their country.

Hypothesis 2: In other CISs' eyes, the Chinese international student who 2a) has high concern with his positive face and low concern with his negative face or 2b) has collective face concern in the U.S. classroom (described in scenarios 1 and 3 respectively) will be judged as more sensitive to the face of other CISs in his class and of his country compared with the student described in other scenario who has high concern with negative face and low concern with positive face (scenario 2).

This hypothesis is tested both in the scenario manipulations and in scaled items developed to measure perceived face sensitivity in each scenario as explained later in the methods section.

However, it's still unknown about CISs' sensitivity to their American instructors' face and to American classmates' face because of the lack of relevant studies. Hence, a research question is asked:



Research Question 2: In which scenarios do other CISs think that the Chinese international student described is more sensitive to the face of American instructors and American classmates?

This research question is tested both in the scenario manipulations and in scaled items developed to measure perceived face sensitivity in each scenario as explained later in the methods section.

**CISs' identification with Zhang.** According to Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory (1979), CISs' identification with Zhang may make CISs more likely to perceive Zhang's behavior as normal and acceptable. Hence, they may believe that such face concern among CISs is more socially approved and face-sensitive.

Hypothesis 3: If CISs identify with Zhang, they will rate Zhang 3a) with more social approval and 3b) as more face-sensitive in general regardless of the scenario.

This hypothesis is tested in scaled items developed to measure CISs' identification with face concerns described in each scenario, their social approval of face concerns described in each scenario, perceived face sensitivity in each scenario as explained later in the methods section.

### **Chinese International Students' "Reticence"**

Chinese students, although they might be good at reading comprehension or writing, appear to prefer less involvement in oral communication in class (Wen & Clément, 2003).

There they sit, perhaps right in the front row, looking very attentive, making copious notes, but hardly saying a word. Chinese students may show interest in a subject and do well on tests and assignments in class, but they are often reluctant to speak up within the classroom environment.  
(Hwang et al., 2002, p. 70)

This quote accurately depicts Chinese students' "reticence" in the classroom. It is possible that what appears to be "reticence" or "unwillingness-to-communicate" is a misinterpretation or misunderstanding of Chinese values in terms of learning. According to Burgoon (1976), "individuals with communication reticence exhibit the predisposition of unwillingness to communicate" (p. 62). This perspective characterizes "unwillingness-to-communicate" as an internal trait rather than a certain psychological state or the preference of certain cultural-relevant values (like Chinese emphasis on face). In other words, if Western scholars only consider Chinese international students' unwillingness-to-communicate as predispositions or traits, then they may completely ignore the complexities of contexts and cultural values in intercultural communication. As Wen and Clément (2003) noted, "Chinese students' unwillingness to communicate in public is not a language phenomenon that is specific to learning the English language. It is deeply rooted in Chinese philosophy and culture" (p. 19). For Western instructors, CISs' lack of active verbal participation in class may result in a misunderstanding that Chinese students don't want to participate in class. For Chinese international students, "[t]hat they do not often ask questions does not necessarily mean that they are not actively thinking or learning" (Huang & Brown, 2009, p. 647). An interesting phenomenon is that Chinese international students may consider classroom discussion as improper behavior and show their resistance to discussion. For example, according to Wan (2001), one Chinese international student even thought that the American classroom is both interactive and chaotic. Another study about Chinese international students who study MBA pointed out: "Chinese students viewed discussions within lectures towards which students were expected to contribute as 'a time-wasting unnecessary' sideshow" (Currie, 2007, p. 544).

As noted by Huang and Brown (2009), Chinese students feel a strong need to respect their teachers and they feel really uncomfortable about American classmates' "impoliteness" (such as asking questions, interrupting lectures, challenging instructors, and making jokes in class). One fundamental factor is identified by those who study Chinese students' "reticence" or resistance to classroom discussion-- Chinese students' behavior is regulated by their face concerns which are tied to Chinese culture and interpersonal values about communication.

Many studies have investigated Chinese students' "reticence" in classroom from a "face" perspective. For example, according to Wen & Clément (2003), Chinese students may feel reluctant to communicate because they want to protect their self-face. As noted by Huang and Brown (2009), inability to answer questions in class may result in face loss, embarrassment, and shame. Currie (2007) discussed isolation and silence of Chinese MBA students in the U.K. and he emphasized one case about a Chinese international student's feeling of losing face caused because of her classmates' criticism. According to Currie (2007), Chinese international students may confuse critical analysis in classroom discussion with criticism and personal attack, which makes them feel that their face gets hurt. Hwang et al. (2002) found that Chinese students keep silent because they think that other students and instructors might perceive their opinion as unacceptable and they also found that Chinese students care about their face-gain and face-loss. However, most of these studies didn't provide empirical data to support their assumptions about the influence of face on CISs' reticence except for one study conducted by Hwang et al. (2002). Although Hwang et al. (2002) measured face-gain and face-loss and provided empirical data to support their assumptions, the measures were not included in their

article so it remained unclear about how they measured face and related face to Chinese students' reticence in classroom.

In terms of negative face and positive face, Chinese may consciously oppress their need of negative face in order to gain more positive face. For example:

To avoid criticism, ridicule, rejection, or punishment (simply for having different opinions), and to win approval, acceptance or appreciation, they [the Chinese] need to make sure whether or not their opinions, before being prematurely disclosed, are safely the same as those of others.  
(Yang, 1993, p. 44)

Other scholars like Wen and Clément (2003) argued that Chinese fear being ridiculed by others. Yang (1993) and Wen and Clément (2003) explained that for Chinese, personal opinions (which express a person's negative face) is not as important as positive face-wants to be approved and accepted by peers or authority. If CISs express their opinions which are different from their instructors' opinion or ask questions which may interrupt an instructors' lecture, they may also feel afraid that their instructors will not approve of them anymore. In addition, according to Tracy and Baratz (1993, 1994), sometimes participants in public colloquia have face concerns to be not seen as someone who likes to show off. Therefore, Chinese students might be concerned with how their classmates think of them when they express their personal opinions (or ask questions) because their classmates may think that they just want to "show off" or be a "know-it-all" by actively expressing opinions (or asking questions). These Chinese students may lose their classmates' social approval. As a result of high concern with not being disapproved by their instructors or classmates, these Chinese students will forfeit their personal autonomy needs. Hence, high concern with positive face (to get social approval from the instructors

and the classmates) and low concern with negative face together may partially explain why Chinese international students keep reticent in class.

Collective face may provide another explanation for CIS reticence in the U.S. classroom. CIS who have high concern with collective face may choose to keep silent because they believe that others will judge their country's (or the entire CIS population's) capabilities based on their own classroom performance. If they make mistakes while expressing their own opinions or if they ask "stupid" questions then others will think that all Chinese people (or all CISs) are incompetent so it's better to keep silent in classroom. Even if they ask competent questions, they may worry that Americans will think that Chinese are egotists and require high interpersonal maintenance. So that even competent classroom performance might be seen as reflecting negatively on country.

In addition, Shepherd, Spears, and Manstead (2013) examined how group-based emotions (guilt, shame, and anger) influence collective action because sometimes people believe certain acts can bring shame on their whole nation. It is possible that CISs may have similar group-based emotions and such emotions result in CISs' concern with their collective face (so they remain reticent for not bringing shame on their country). Because of CISs' concerns with their collective face, CISs would rather remain "reticent" so they won't bring harm to their country and the entire CIS population.

According to the discussion above about how positive, negative, and collective face concerns interact with CISs' reticence in the U.S. classroom, it is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 4: In other CISs' eyes, the Chinese international student 4a) who has high concern with positive face and low concern with negative face or 4b) has collective face concern in the U.S. classroom (described in scenarios 1 and 3 respectively) will be

more likely to remain reticent in class compared with the student described in other scenario who has high concern with negative face and low concern with positive face (scenario 2).

This hypothesis is tested both in the scenario manipulations and in scaled items developed to measure perceived “reticence” level during class discussion in each scenario as explained later in the methods section.

In the following section, the author will provide a detailed review about how CISs’ face concerns is associated with their feelings of alienation in the U.S. classroom.

### **Feelings of Alienation**

In a seminal work on alienation, Marx (1930/2007) described that workers are alienated from their productive activity, their product, their fellow workers, and their human potential. Modern sociologists provide a more precise definition of alienation. Hajda (1961) defined alienation as “an individual’s feeling of uneasiness or discomfort which reflects his exclusion or self-exclusion from social and cultural participation. It is an expression of non-belonging or non-sharing, an uneasy awareness or perception of unwelcome contrast with others” (pp. 758-759). According to Seeman (1959), alienation can be used to refer to five different meanings: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement (self-alienation). Dean (1961) provided a scale to measure alienation based on three of Seeman’s five-dimensions including powerlessness, normlessness, and social isolation. Burbach (1972) developed a three-dimensional alienation scale for school alienation which has powerlessness, meaninglessness, and social estrangement dimensions. This study will focus on self-

estrangement of alienation because this concept may be related to CISs' experience in U.S. classrooms.

Seeman (1991) argued that self-estrangement can refer to "either (1) the despised self, (2) the disguised self, or (3) the detached self" (p. 339). In terms of the detached self, it means that people feel detached when they work because their work "is not intrinsically rewarding" (Seeman, 1991, p. 340). This study will investigate CISs' feelings of alienation because they cannot find their study intrinsically rewarding for themselves. CISs may ignore the cultural differences in terms of teaching and learning between China and the U.S. (Xu, 2002). So CISs may experience self-estrangement because they are unable to find Chinese values rewarding in a U.S. classroom, which results in their feelings of alienation. On the other hand, if CISs apply American values, they may be criticized (by their CISs peers) as "being Americanized", which also leads to self-estrangement because they cannot find rewards by adopting American values. Based on Seeman's (1959, 1991) original definition, self-estrangement in this study is defined as *an inability to find study experience self-rewarding (due to cultural differences) so CISs feel self-detached, frustrated, and estranged.*

**Alienation and its relevant research.** Keating (1987) introduced several strategies for instructors to reduce classroom alienation based on Seeman's (1959) five dimensions of alienation. These strategies are: to give students more responsibilities, to tell students the purpose of lectures, to provide students with a clear syllabus and guidelines for assignments, to encourage class interaction among students, and to recognize and reward students if they accomplish some goals (Keating, 1987). However, Keating did not consider international students' feelings of alienation because these

international students' feelings of alienation might be influenced by other factors (like Chinese emphasis on face) rather than what Keating discussed. Whether the strategies that she proposed would be helpful for international students has not been investigated. Klomegah (2006) conducted survey research to explore international students' feelings of alienation through the students' perspective, and he found that lack of social contact between international students and other international students from the same geographical region or between international students and students from any region plays a significant role on the international students' feeling of being alienated. However, he did not examine the classroom situation and the contact between instructors and students. While there have been several studies of Chinese international students' adaptation and acculturation in the West (Guan & Dodder, 2001; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Wei et al., 2007), so far no research has studied face and feelings of alienation together to investigate CISs in the U.S. classroom.

**Face and alienation.** This section describes three different situations when CISs keep silent because of their face concerns. In the first situation, CISs may keep reticent in the classroom because they do not want their instructors and classmates to disapprove of them. In this situation, they sacrifice their negative face in order to maintain their positive face (which helps them to maintain harmonious relationship with others). However, such discrepancy between high concern with positive face and low concern with negative face may cause discrepancy between socially desirable and polite self and the autonomous, independent, free self, based on individual willingness without being imposed/constrained by others. In other words, there may be perceived discrepancy



between a performed self for the sake of social approval from others and a free self for these international students. Such discrepancy is likely to create a sense of alienation.

In the second situation, CISs may be overly-concerned with their relation to their country. Some may believe that everything they do in a foreign country is associated with their own country's image/face. They may fear that their American instructors and classmates may judge the image of China and the image of the entire CIS group based on their performance. If they perform incompetently, they are afraid that Americans may think all Chinese or all CISs are incompetent. If they perform over-competently, they are afraid that Americans may think all Chinese or all CISs are egoistic. Therefore, this type of CISs are excessively concerned with protecting their country's face so others (like American instructors and classmates) will not underestimate the capabilities of CISs and the image of China. However, Chinese students in this situation find themselves in a dilemma between their over-concern with their country's image and their personal willingness and freedom to express their thoughts, which may lead to feelings of alienation.

On the other hand, if CISs choose to focus on their negative face rather than positive face in the U.S. classroom, they somehow violate Chinese values about how to behave properly as good (Chinese) students. CISs with high positive/collective face concern may think that the CISs with high negative face concerns are egotistical or that they don't care about their country's face and other CISs' face. So these CISs in the former two situations may criticize the CISs who have high concern with negative face and low concern with positive face as being "Americanized" or even isolate them. As a result, the CISs in the third situation may feel self-estranged also because their concern

with negative face (like their freedom and autonomy) in the U.S. classroom is supposed to be rewarding in individualistic culture. However, their Chinese classmates disapprove of them, reject and resent them, which makes them find their concern with negative face unrewarding. So these CISs feel self-estranged too and they may also experience self-detachment, frustration, and estrangement like CISs in other two situations.

According to the previous discussion about CISs' feelings of alienation, three problems are identified: 1) discrepancy between CISs' desire for social approval and their desire for a free/autonomous self; 2) the dilemma for these students to choose between presenting collective face and presenting individual willingness; and 3) the frustration for CISs who try to promote their autonomy while being rejected by other CISs. These three problems may make Chinese international students unable to decide how to reward their study experience intrinsically when they are in the U.S. classroom. CISs (in the first two situations) feel self-estranged because their face concerns in class are supposed to be rewarding (such as getting approval from others or maintaining the image of their country and group) at least in the Chinese context while they may no longer find this approach self-rewarding because American instructors and classmates in fact don't understand their face concerns. This misunderstanding and possible negative evaluation of CISs' behavior may also result in anger and alienation. For CISs who have high concern with their negative face and low concern with their positive face (in the third situation), their concern with autonomy is supposed to be rewarding in American contexts while these students are rejected by their CIS classmates, which leads to alienation too. As a result, CISs in all situations described above finally trap themselves in a self-estranged situation and they may feel self-detached, frustrated, and estranged.

According to discussion above, Chinese students (no matter what kind of face concerns they have) cannot find their behaviors self-rewarding, which leads to their alienation. In order to more fully investigate this phenomenon, three research questions are asked:

Research Question 3: In which scenarios will participants judge that the Chinese international student is most likely to feel self-estranged? In which scenarios will this student be seen as least likely to feel self-estranged?

Research Question 4: Do face concerns illustrated in the three scenarios, correlates of face, perceived “reticence”, and feelings of alienation interact with each other? Is there any relationship between these variables?

Research Question 5: Does CISs’ own satisfaction level with their general experience in a U.S. university influence their judgment about the Chinese international student’s (described in each scenario) feelings of alienation?

These research questions are tested in scenario manipulations, scales developed to measure alienation, correlates of face, perceived reticence, and CISs’ own satisfaction levels. The details are explained later in the methods section.

## **METHODS**

### **Participants and Procedures**

The participants in this study were recruited from the CIS population at a Midwestern university in the U.S. with a large enrollment of Chinese international students. The author contacted the university staff working with international students and asked for their support (incentives were offered to encourage these students' participation). The author collected a sample of 137 CISs by snowball sampling and convenient sampling. The sampling inclusion criteria include the following.

First, CISs for this study had to have Chinese citizenship (of People's Republic of China) so Chinese students who come from Hong Kong or China Taipei will be excluded. Hong Kong and China Taipei have different educational systems from Mainland China. In addition, the questionnaire used in this study will be written in simplified Chinese while students in Hong Kong or China Taipei may find it difficult to understand simplified Chinese.

Second, the sample of CISs should be randomly selected from the whole CIS population in this university so the sample won't be collected from a single department or college. This criterion is needed to guarantee the representativeness of the sample because it is totally possible that the sample from the same department may not be representative enough.

Third, Chinese international students in this study include only undergraduate and graduate students while high school/junior high school students are excluded from this study.

Participants obtained access to the questionnaire online (the link was sent to their email address and they were randomly assigned to one of three conditions) or they randomly received hard-copy of questionnaire in one of three conditions. In each condition, participants first provided demographic information and answered some questions about their satisfaction levels with general experience as a Chinese international student in this university. Then they started to read one of three scenarios describing a Chinese international student's situation and they were asked to rate this student's 1) alienation, 2) reticence 3) typicality, 4) their social approval of this student's face concerns, 5) this student's sensitivity to others' face, and 6) their personal identification with this student. All scenarios describe a Chinese international student called Zhang (who is studying in a U.S. university) and Zhang's face concerns in the U.S. classroom. Zhang has high concern with positive face and low concern with negative face in scenario 1 and he has high concern with negative face and low concern with positive face in scenario 2. In scenario 3, Zhang has collective face concern. These scenarios are included in the Appendix. Except for the face concerns which are different across three scenarios, everything else described in the scenarios is the same. The final results showed that there were 46, 47, and 44 participants in scenario 1, 2, and 3 respectively.

### **Manipulation Check/Realism**

After reading the message, participants completed a few questions for a manipulation check and appraisal of realism (before they begin other questions) to know whether the scenario inductions worked or not. These questions are measured by scaled items and sample questions included:

This scenario says: Zhang wants to be approved by his instructors and classmates rather than whether he can maintain his independence or not (scenario 1).

This scenario says: Zhang cares more about his independence rather than whether he can get social approval from his instructors and classmates or not (scenario 2).

This message says: Zhang believes that his image is somehow associated with the image of China and the image of entire Chinese international student group (scenario 3).

Zhang described in scenario is like a real Chinese international student.

Zhang's concerns described in scenario are real.

Zhang's situation is real.

(Realism---all three scenarios)

All items are measured by a 7-point Likert Scale. The average of all three manipulation-realism items was calculated. The final data showed both scores of the manipulation and realism check in all three scenarios are above the middle score of 4.

## **Measures**

All scaled items are measured with seven-point Likert scales in which "1" means "extremely disagree" while "7" means "extremely agree" ("4" means "Neutral").

**Measure of alienation.** The initial ten-item alienation scale was developed by the author. With the help of scale reliability analysis and exploratory factor analysis, the first four items in the original scale were deleted so a six-item unidimensional scale (Cronbach's Alpha = .88) was used in the study (see Appendix for details). These six items were derived and adapted from several scales including the Job Involvement scale (Lorence & Mortimer, 1985), Dean's alienation scale (1961), and Burbach's school alienation scale (1972). Sample items are: *Chinese cultural values which made Zhang*

*feel self-rewarded when he was in China may not help to make Zhang feel self-rewarded now since he came to the U.S. to study, which has him confused and bewildered; Zhang may think that because of confusing and complex cultural differences affecting him, he found it difficult to effectively make decisions in this university.*

**Measure of perceived “reticence” level during class discussion.** This variable will be measured by three items developed by the author (Cronbach’s  $\text{Alph} = .95$ ). These items include: *It looks like Zhang won’t ask too many questions during class; It looks like Zhang won’t actively engage in class discussion; It looks like Zhang may keep reticent during class.*

**Measure of perceived typicality.** Typicality is measured with three items developed by the author for this project based on previous studies of Chinese reticence in the classroom (Cronbach’s  $\text{Alph} = .90$ ). These items for typicality include: *In this scenario, Zhang is behaving as a typical Chinese international student; There are many Chinese international students in the U.S. I know who behave like Zhang when they are in class; Zhang is just like most of my Chinese classmates here.*

**Measure of social approval.** Social Approval is measured by six items developed by the author (the scale is unidimensional and Cronbach’s  $\text{Alph} = .92$ ). The items for social approval include: *I think Zhang’s behavior in class is appropriate; I think Zhang is behaving respectfully; I think this is how Zhang should behave when he is in class; I approve of Zhang’s behavior; I think that Zhang behaved properly in his classroom.*

**Measure of perception of Zhang’s sensitivity to others’ face.** Face sensitivity is measured with a four-item scale devised by the author. The first two items are used to measure Zhang’s sensitivity to his CISs classmates and his country’s face and the other

two items measure Zhang's sensitivity to his American instructors and classmates' face: *I think Zhang is showing concern for the face needs of other Chinese International students in his class; I think Zhang's behavior shows concern for the protection of the image of his country; I think Zhang is showing concern for the face needs of his American professors; I think Zhang is showing concern for the face needs of other American students in his class.*

#### **Measure of participant identification with Zhang in the scenario.**

Identification is measured by 3 items developed by the author (Cronbach's  $\text{Alph} = .91$ ). The items for social approval include: *I personally identify with Zhang's behavior in the US classroom; I feel that I am just like Zhang; I find that I have some features in common with Zhang in terms of how to behave in the US classrooms.*

Demographic information will be measured including gender, age, length of stay in the U.S., length of stay in their current institution, major, how many credits they currently have, and whether they are undergraduates, masters or PhD students. Three questions at the beginning of the questionnaire (after demographic information) ask about the participant's satisfaction level with their general experience as a Chinese international student in this university: *Please describe your general feelings about your experience as a Chinese international student in this university (measured by a seven-point scale in which "1" indicates "extremely unsatisfactory", "7" indicates "extremely satisfactory", and "4" means "neutral")*; *I am so proud that I belong to my university community; I believe that choosing this university is a great and worthy choice (the latter two items are measured by a seven-point scale in which "1" indicates "extremely disagree", "7" indicates "extremely agree", and "4" means "neutral" ).*



## RESULTS

### Perceived Typicality of Face Concerns

Hypothesis 1 predicted Zhang1a) who has high concern with his positive face and low concern with his negative face or1b) who has collective face concern in the U.S. classroom (described in scenarios 1 and 3 respectively) will be seen as more typical compared with the student who has high concern with negative face and low concern with positive face in the U.S. classroom (scenario 2). An Analysis of Variance was used to examine the effect of face concerns on perceived typicality. The analysis did not reveal a significant effect for face concerns,  $F(2, 134) = 1.35, p = .26$ . There was no significant difference in terms of CISs' perceived typicality of Zhang who has different face concerns in different scenarios. So it is concluded that the data were not consistent with Hypothesis 1a and 1b.

### Social Approval of Face Concerns

Research Question 1 asked in which scenarios Zhang will earn more social approval from other CISs. An Analysis of Variance was used to answer this question. The results showed an insignificant difference in terms of CISs' social approval of Zhang's face concerns in different scenarios,  $F(2, 134) = 2.80, p = .06$  while an independent 2-tailed t-test showed that there is a significant difference of social approval between scenario 3 and scenario 2,  $t(89) = 2.13, p < .05, r^2 = .05$ . So the data indicated that CISs' social approval of Zhang's face concerns is significant higher in the collective-face condition (scenario 3) ( $M = 4.36_a, SD = 1.24$ ) than the condition in which Zhang has high negative face concern and low positive face concern (scenario 2) ( $M = 3.81_b, SD = 1.20$ ).

### **Perception of Zhang's Sensitivity to Others' Face**

Hypothesis 2 predicted, in other CISs' eyes, Zhang who 2a) has high concern with his positive face and low concern with his negative face or 2b) has collective face concern in the U.S. classroom (described in scenarios 1 and 3 respectively) will be judged as more sensitive to the face of other CISs in his class and of his country compared with Zhang described in other scenario who has high concern with negative face and low concern with positive face (scenario 2). An Analysis of Variance was used to examine the effect of face concerns on perceived sensitivity to others' face. The results showed a significant effect of Zhang's face concerns in different scenarios,  $F(2, 134) = 6.52, p < .01, \eta^2 = .09$ . Post hoc comparison using Tukey's HSD test at  $p < .05$  showed that Zhang who has collective face concern (scenario 3) was rated to have higher face sensitivity to the face of his Chinese classmates and of his country ( $M = 4.49_a, SD = 1.49$ ) than Zhang who has high concern with negative face and low concern with positive face (scenario 2) ( $M = 3.47_b, SD = 1.30$ ), whereas Zhang who has high concern with positive face and low concern with negative face (scenario 1) ( $M = 4.09_{ab}, SD = 1.29$ ) did not differ from other two scenarios. So it is concluded that the data were consistent with Hypothesis 2b while the data were not consistent with Hypothesis 2a.

Research Question 2 asked in which scenarios other CISs think that the Chinese international student described is more sensitive to the face of American instructors and American classmates. An Analysis of Variance was used to answer this question. The results showed a significant effect of Zhang's face concerns in different scenarios,  $F(2, 134) = 4.76, p < .05, \eta^2 = .07$ . Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test at  $p < .05$

showed that both Zhang who has high concern with his positive face and low concern with his negative face (scenario 1) ( $M = 3.87_a$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ) and Zhang who has collective face concern in the U.S. classroom (scenario 3) ( $M = 3.90_a$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ) were rated to have higher face sensitivity to the face of American instructors and American classmates than Zhang who has high concern with negative face and low concern with positive face (scenario 2) ( $M = 3.07_b$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ). However, there is no significant difference between scenario 1 and scenario 3. So the data indicated that Zhang with high positive face concern and low negative face concern (scenario 1) and Zhang with collective face concern (scenario 3) showed higher sensitivity to the face of American instructors and American classmates compared with Zhang with high negative face concern and low positive face concern (scenario 2) in other CISs' eyes.

### **CISs' Identification with Zhang**

Hypothesis 3 predicted that if CISs identify with Zhang, they will rate Zhang 3a) with more social approval and 3b) as more face-sensitive in general regardless of the scenario. The Pearson Correlation between identification and social approval was significant,  $r(135) = .48$ ,  $p < .01$ . The Pearson Correlation between identification and face sensitivity in general was significant,  $r(135) = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ . The data indicated that the more CISs identify themselves with Zhang, the more social approval Zhang would earn and the more face-sensitive in general he was perceived regardless of the scenario. So the data were consistent with Hypothesis 3a and 3b.

### **Perceived Reticence**

Hypothesis 4 predicted that, in other CISs' eyes, Zhang 4a) who has high concern with positive face and low concern with negative face or 4b) has collective face concern in the U.S. classroom (described in scenarios 1 and 3 respectively) will be more likely to remain reticent in class compared with Zhang described in the other scenario who has high concern with negative face and low concern with positive face (scenario 2). An Analysis of Variance was used to examine the effect of face concerns on perceived reticence. The analysis did not reveal a significant effect for face concerns,  $F(2, 134) = .40, p = .67$ . So it is concluded that the data were not consistent with Hypothesis 4a and 4b.

### **Feelings of Alienation**

Research Question 3 asked in which scenarios participants will judge that Zhang most and least likely to feel self-estranged. An Analysis of Variance was used to answer this question. The results did not reveal a significant effect for Zhang's face concerns in different scenarios,  $F(2, 134) = 1.81, p = .17$ . So the data indicated that Zhang's feelings of alienation are not different across scenarios.

Research Question 4 asked do face concerns illustrated in scenarios, correlates of face, perceived "reticence", and feelings of alienation interact with each other. As shown in Table 1, most of these variables correlated significantly. The Pearson Correlation between alienation and perceived reticence was:  $r(135) = .33, p < .01$ ; between alienation and perceived typicality,  $r(135) = .38, p < .01$ ; between alienation and CISs' identification with Zhang,  $r(135) = .19, p < .05$ ; and between perceived reticence and perceived typicality,  $r(135) = .61, p < .01$ . The data also showed that perceived typicality is (significantly) positively correlated with perceived sensitivity to

the face of other CISs and China, the face of American instructors and American classmates, and the face in general (see Table 1). Meanwhile, there is a (significant) positive correlation between social approval and the perceived sensitivity to these three types of faces (see Table 1).

Research Question 5 asked how CISs' own satisfaction level with their general experience in a U.S. university influence their judgment about Zhang's feelings of alienation. The Pearson Correlation showed that there is a negative relationship between alienation and CISs' own satisfaction levels,  $r(135) = -.18, p < .05$ . Further analysis showed that feelings of alienation only correlates with satisfaction levels in the collective-face condition (scenario 3),  $r(42) = -.39, p < .01$ . In the other two conditions, the correlation between alienation and satisfaction was not significant:  $r(44) = -.01, p = .94$  in high-positive and low-negative face condition (scenario 1) and  $r(45) = -.16, p = .30$  in high-negative and low-positive face condition (scenario 2). Similar patterns were observed in terms of 1) the correlation between CISs' own satisfaction levels and Zhang's perceived reticence and 2) the correlation between CISs' own satisfaction levels and perceived typicality of Zhang. These differences may result from chance while it is also possible that the collective face concerns did effect participants' perception of other CISs' feelings of alienation, reticence, and typicality (see Table 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 for details). These results may suggest that the collective-face condition somehow prompted CISs to generalize from their own experience (satisfied or not) to rate Zhang.

### **Other Findings**

Splitting the file by condition allows observation of some noteworthy correlation patterns in the collective-face condition. The correlations between perceived typicality

and perceived sensitivity to 1) the face of other CISs and China, 2) the face of American instructors and American classmates, and 3) face in general were only significant in the collective-face condition. Likewise, the positive correlation between CISs' identification and perceptions of Zhang's feelings of alienation was only significant in the collective-face condition. In addition, the correlations between CISs' own satisfaction and perceived sensitivity to 1) the face of American instructors and American classmates and 2) face in general were significant only in the condition in which Zhang has high negative face concern and low positive face concern (scenario 2) (see Table 2.1, 2.2. and 2.3 for details). These differences may result from chance or it may be that face concerns in different scenarios could moderate the relationships between these variables.

## DISCUSSION

### Major Findings and Implications

This study investigated the relationships between different face concerns, correlates of face, “reticence” levels, and feelings of alienation. Several findings are noteworthy for discussion.

**Collective face concern.** As a new construct introduced in this study, collective face concern will need further investigation to examine how CISs’ communication behaviors are influenced by their perception about the relationship between their own self, other CISs, and their country. Some correlations were significant only in collective-face condition. This may indicate that CIS participants are somehow primed by collective face concern described in the third scenario to re-consider their own identity and how their own identity is associated with their country. Due to Chinese Confucian values, Chinese self could be extended to a macro-level construct like state, country, even heaven (Chai & Chai, 1965; Fei, 1992; Ho, Peng, Lai, & Chan, 2001; Shen, 2001; Yang, 2001). Zhai (2011) and Lee et al. (2011) also reported similar patterns about Chinese athletes in modern China who related their identity with their country. As a result of Chinese Confucian values and modern Chinese patriotism, collective face concern may become the most favored and realistic type of face concern. Although one-way ANOVA did not show a significant difference in terms of perceived typicality across the three scenarios, the representativeness/realism of collective face concern might be too subtle to be measured overtly. For CISs, the realism of collective face concern of Zhang in this scenario may prime them to show that they are real Chinese just like Zhang, which makes them rate Zhang’s feelings of alienation according to their own experience. Hence, this

can explain why 1) CISs' own satisfaction levels were only negatively correlated with perceived Zhang's feelings of alienation, Zhang's reticence level, and the typicality of Zhang and 2) CISs' identification with Zhang was only positively correlated with perceived Zhang's feelings of alienation at significance-levels in the collective-face condition.

So it is possible to assume that collective face plays an important role for CISs' communication behaviors in the U.S. classroom and such collective face concern may also subtly influence CISs' perception and attribution about other CISs. However, the effect of collective face concern on these variables is still unclear and needs for further analysis.

**Negative face concern and perceived sensitivity to face.** The study found that, only in second condition in which Zhang has high negative face concern and low positive face concern, there are significant positive correlations between CISs' own satisfaction and perceived Zhang's sensitivity to the face of American instructors and American classmates and face in general. In other conditions, the correlations are either insignificant and positive (in scenario 1) or insignificant and negative (in scenario 3). It is possible to assume: Zhang in scenario 2 is most similar with typical American classmates (who are concerned with their independence rather than social approval), so the relationship between CISs' satisfaction and the perceived sensitivity to the face of American instructors and American classmates became greater in this condition. This may indicate that CISs' own satisfaction levels may relate to whether they are sensitive to Americans' face in the classroom when CISs adapt themselves with American learning style (like what Zhang did in scenario 2 to focus on his own independence rather than



social approval). However, American students are also concerned with social approval and many American students are reticent too in classroom. More research should be conducted in this area to explore 1) how CISs (once adapted themselves with American styles) relate their own satisfaction with their sensitivity to other Americans' face and 2) the cultural difference in terms of Chinese and American students' sensitivity to their instructors and classmates' face.

**The myth of CISs' reticence.** The results of this study also confirmed Western scholars' findings of Chinese learners' reticence. Interestingly, some Chinese scholars questioned these findings about Chinese cultural influence on Chinese learners' reticence. For example, Cheng (2000) argued that Asian students' reticence results from situation-specific causes rather than cultural differences. Liu and Jackson (2008) used Burgoon's Unwillingness-to-Communicate Scale to test domestic Chinese learners of English and their findings showed "more than half the respondents were willing to participate in interpersonal interactions" (p. 76). The problem for their findings is that they used a trait-oriented scale to measure a state. The descriptive data in this finding showed that perceived reticence scores in all three conditions are above the midpoint (see Table 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 for details), which implies that Zhang in all conditions is more likely to remain "reticent" in the U.S. classroom. The opposite results in these two studies may be caused by the differences of research design (because the former asked respondents to self-report while the latter asked participants to rate a fictional character) or the difference between participants (the former were domestic Chinese students in English language classrooms while the latter were CISs at the U.S. classroom) while it is more possible that the Unwillingness-to-Communicate Scale is not valid to measure Chinese

students' reticence-related behavior in an English-speaking classroom. A Chinese learner's reticence is not a trait. Instead, the reticence is more like a specific state binding with classroom context and such state may be pre-determined by Chinese (Confucian) culture.

On the other hand, respondents may underreport their unwillingness to communicate so Liu and Jackson's findings (2008) got lower scores. For this study, participants may underreport perceived Zhang's reticence level too because Zhang is one of CISs. Zhang is an in-group member for CIS participants (although he is a fictional character) so according to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) Zhang would be rated as social desirable by CISs. Even so the data still showed higher scores of perceived reticence in all conditions, which reinforces the existing Western literatures that CISs' reticence is influenced by culture rather than other factors.

What makes this CISs' reticence more problematic is the correlation between perceived typicality and perceived reticence. That may indicate: the more reticent CISs are in the U.S. classroom, the more typical they are as CISs. CISs are reticent even in CISs' own eyes (and CISs are supposed to rate Zhang favorably to protect the face of all CISs and China, or in other words, the collective face). So more research should be conducted in this area to explore how to overcome CISs' reticence.

Meanwhile, the data showed the perceived reticence is negatively correlated with CISs' social approval and CISs' own satisfaction while such correlations are not significant (see Table 1). Once split file, the perceived reticence is negatively correlated CISs' own satisfaction significantly only in collective-face condition (see Table 2). This may imply that CISs themselves did not approve of being reticent in classroom and they

feel unsatisfied when they are reticent. However, more data is needed to clarify such relationship.

**Alienation, perceived reticence, and perceived typicality.** The positive and significant correlation between feelings of alienation, perceived reticence, and perceived typicality may also indicate that 1) reticence in the U.S. classroom is related with CISs' feeling of cultural estrangement and 2) the more typical CISs are, the more likely they feel culturally-estranged.

Also, in all three research inductions, the variable with the highest mean score was personal satisfaction with studying at this university. It may well be that satisfied students experience lower feelings of alienation so Zhang in all three scenarios were rated as less alienated (because mean score of alienation in all three conditions are below the midpoint of 4. See Table 1).

**Reticence and face concerns.** The data did not support the original assumption that face concerns result in CISs' reticence, which may result from small sample size.

### **Limitations**

First of all, this study only investigated CISs' perception of a fictional character without measuring CISs' own feelings of alienation, reticence level, and typicality, etc. However, due to social desirability and collective face concern, CISs may underreport if the study asks their own feelings directly rather than a fictional character's feelings. Future studies should find a more practical way to deal with this problem.

Second, the mean score of alienation is lower than midpoint of 4 in all three conditions. This may imply that cultural-estrangement as one of dimensions of alienation may not be a proper dimension to be measured. Further studies should investigate

different dimensions of alienation rather than only focusing on the cultural-estrangement dimension. Or the data indicated that CISs in general have low feelings of cultural estrangement in general so they rated Zhang's feelings of alienation based on their own feelings. It is also possible the most culturally-estranged CISs chose not to participate in this study. On the other hand, the low score does not mean that alienation for CISs is not a serious problem. The low score only means that majority of CISs believed that Zhang did not experience alienation. The correlation between perceived typicality of Zhang as a CIS and Zhang's feelings of alienation may imply a serious problem of CISs' cultural estrangement that the more typical CISs are, the more likely they feel culturally-estranged.

Third, due to questionnaire design, the items measuring perceived reticence and perceived typicality were put into the same section, which may lead to greater correlation between these two variables.

Fourth, collective face concern might be a culturally-universal phenomenon so more cultural comparison studies are needed to test this construct in different cultural backgrounds. The collective face concern might become greater only for international student group so studies to compare and contrast domestic and international students' collective face concern are also needed.

### **Practical Application**

This study is valuable for U.S. universities which have many CISs. The study suggested that the university staff working with international-students/scholars affairs should pay attention to CISs' alienation and reticence problem because the data indicated great correlation between alienation, reticence, and perceived typicality for CISs.

Meanwhile, CISs' collective face concern should be emphasized because CISs perceive high realism and high face-sensitivity of collective face concerns. If university staff wants to solve problems in terms of CISs' reticence and alienation, they may use CISs' collective face concern as a key to solve CISs' problems.

Meanwhile, more subtle scales to measure CISs or domestic Chinese students' reticence in English-speaking classroom can be developed based on items used in this study instead of only relying on Burgoon's Unwillingness-to-Communicate Scale. The cultural-estrangement scale is the first scale developed to measure international students' feelings of being culturally alienated so it may be used in future studies with international student population.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study investigated the relationship between CISs' face concerns, feelings of alienation, perceived "reticence" level, and the correlates of face. The findings revealed that there are complex relationships between these variables. A new construct, collective face concern, was discussed in this study and this construct may help to contribute to future scholarship in terms of CISs and other international students' classroom communication.

## **APPENDIX**

## Questionnaire Items and Scenarios

### Demographic Information

Gender:

Age:

How long have you been in the U.S.?

How long have you been in your current institution?

What's your major?

Your study level: freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior, Master student, Doctorate student

Are you currently a Chinese international student in the U.S.? (Y/N)

### 背景信息

请问您（曾经）是来自中国大陆的赴美留学生吗？(是/否)

性别：

年龄：

您在美国待多久了：（）年

您在目前的学校学习了多久：（）年

您的专业：

您是：大一，大二，大三，大四，硕士生，博士生

### Participants' satisfaction level with their general experience as Chinese international students at this university.

参与者对自己作为中国留学生在这所学校的经历的满意程度

1. Please describe your general feelings about your experience as a Chinese international student in this university (measured by a seven-point scale in which “1” indicates “extremely unsatisfactory”, “7” indicates “extremely satisfactory”, and “4” means “unknown”).

(I feel satisfactory about my experience as a Chinese international student in this university

我对自己作为中国留学生在这所学校的经历感到满意)

请描述您对自己作为中国留学生在这所学校的感受：

极其不满意                      不知道                      极其满意

1      2      3                      4      5      6      7

2. I am so proud that I belong to my university community (measured by a seven-point scale in which “1” indicates “extremely disagree”, “7” indicates “extremely agree”, and “4” means “neutral”).

我非常骄傲自己属于这所学校。

极其反对                      即不反对也不赞成                      极其赞成

1      2      3                      4                      5      6      7



3. I believe that choosing this university is a great and worthy choice (measured by a seven-point scale in which “1” indicates “extremely disagree”, “7” indicates “extremely agree”, and “4” means “neutral” ).

我相信选择这所学校是个非常好而且值得的决定。

极其反对                                      即不反对也不赞成                                      极其赞成

1            2            3                                      4            5            6            7

**Please read scenario below (Participants will be randomly assigned to read one of these three scenarios):**

请阅读以下情景（参与者会随机阅读其中之一的情景）

#### **Scenario 1**

Zhang is a Chinese international student studying at MSU. He’s really friendly and polite towards his instructors and classmates. Zhang is a good student. He believes that it is better to get social approval from his instructors and classmates in his classroom performance even though he may compromise maintaining his independence.

#### **场景图 1**

张明是在密歇根州立大学学习的中国留学生。他对老师和同学们都很友善很礼貌。他是个好学生。他相信最好能通过自己的课堂表现来获得老师和同学们的认同，即便他可能得放弃维持自己的独立性。

#### **Scenario 2**

Zhang is a Chinese international student studying at MSU. He’s really friendly and polite towards his instructors and classmates. Zhang is a good student. He believes that it is better to maintain his independence in his classroom performance even though he may compromise getting social approval from his instructors and classmates.

#### **场景图 2**

张明是在密西根州立大学学习的中国留学生。他对老师和同学们都很友善很礼貌。他是个好学生。他相信最好能通过自己的课堂表现来维持自己的独立性，即便他可能得放弃获得老师和同学们的认同。

#### **Scenario 3**

Zhang is a Chinese international student studying at MSU. He’s really friendly and polite towards his instructors and classmates. Zhang is a good student. He believes that his American instructors and classmates will generalize from his classroom performance to judge China and the entire Chinese international student group.

#### **场景图 3**

张明是在密西根州立大学学习的中国留学生。他对老师和同学们都很友善很礼貌。他是个好学生。他相信他的美国老师和同学将通过他的课堂表现来概括以评判中国和全体中国留学生。

#### **Manipulation Check/Realism (measured by a seven-point Likert Scale)**

This scenario says: Zhang wants to be approved by his instructors and classmates rather than whether he can maintain his independence or not (scenario 1).

这段文字说：比起是否能维持自己的独立性，张明更希望自己能被老师和同学们认同。

This scenario says: Zhang cares more about his independence rather than whether he can get social approval from his instructors and classmates or not (scenario 2).

这段文字说：比起是否能得到老师和同学们的认同，张明更在乎自己的独立性。

This scenario says: Zhang believes that his image is somehow associated with the image of China and the image of entire Chinese international student group (scenario 3).

这段文字说：张明相信自己的形象在某种程度上是与中国的形象以及全体中国留学生的形象联系在一起的。

Zhang described in scenario is like a real Chinese international student.

Zhang's concerns described in scenario are real.

Zhang's situation is real.

(These three items above measure realism---all three scenarios use same three items)

这段文字里描绘的张明像一个现实中的中国留学生。

这段文字里描绘的张明所在意的事情是真实的。

张明的处境很真实。

**After reading Zhang's experience, please imagine Zhang's personality, his behavior in classroom, and what will happen in his life and then answer the questions below.**  
在您阅读完张明的经历后，请想象张明的性格，他在课堂上的表现，和他可能会遇到的事情，然后请完成以下的问题。

**Items for Zhang's Feelings of Alienation (self-estrangement) in Scenario (measured by a seven-point Likert Scale) (The first four items were deleted after scale reliability analysis and exploratory factor analysis. The last six items were used for the study)**

1. Zhang cannot find his university life in the U.S. to be self-rewarding (developed based on Seeman's conceptual framework, 1959). 张明不会觉得他在美国的学校生活是对自己有价值的。
2. Zhang may find that cultural differences here make his university life too complicated to be handled by himself (developed based on Seeman's conceptual framework, 1959). 张明可能会发现这里的文化差异使得他的学校生活过于复杂难懂以至于自己无法应付。
3. What is supposed to be valued in the Chinese educational system is not valued in the American educational system, which makes Zhang feel bewildered (developed based on Seeman's conceptual framework, 1959). 由于中国教育系统中被重视的事情不被美国教育系统重视，张明感到不知所措。

4. Zhang may find that he adapted to American values while ignoring Chinese values, which may make him feel confused. 张明可能会发现自己适应了美国的文化价值观但是忽略了中国的文化价值观，这一点会让他感到困惑。
5. Chinese cultural values which made Zhang feel self-rewarded when he was in China may not help to make Zhang feel self-rewarded now since he came to the U.S. to study, which has him confused and bewildered (modified from Burbach, 1972). 自从张明来到美国学习，那些当年在国内曾让他感到对自己生活有价值的中国文化价值观如今不能继续让张明感到价值了，这一点让张明感到困惑而不知所措。
6. Zhang cannot obtain main satisfaction from his study experience due to cultural differences about how to behave in class properly (modified from Lorence & Mortimer, 1985). 因为中美两国对于如何在课堂上适当表现这一问题上有着文化差异，张明不能够从自己的学习经历里获得足够的快乐了。
7. Zhang may think that there is little or nothing he can do about what happens in his classroom due to cultural differences (modified from Dean, 1961). 张明可能会认为，因为中美两国间的文化差异，自己对课堂上所发生的事情几乎是无能为力的。
8. Zhang may think that his life is so confusing in this university that he hardly knows what to expect from day to day due to cultural difference (modified from Burbach, 1972). 因为中美两国间的文化差异，张明可能会认为他的生活是如此的令人困惑以至于他几乎不知道每天去期待些什么。
9. Zhang may think that his life in this university is so chaotic and frustrating due to cultural differences that he really doesn't know where to turn (modified from Burbach, 1972). 因为中美两国间的文化差异，张明可能会认为他在学校里的生活是如此的混乱和令人不快以至于他真的不知道该何去何从。
10. Zhang may think that because of confusing and complex cultural differences affecting him, he found it difficult to effectively make decisions in this university (modified from Burbach, 1972). 因为中美两国间令人困惑且复杂的文化差异影响着自己，张明可能会认为，自己在学校里很难有效地做出决定。

请想像张明的性格和他在美国课堂上的表现，考虑下您对张明的看法。然后回答以下的问题。

**Please imagine Zhang's personality and his behavior in a U.S. classroom and think about your opinions about Zhang. Then complete the questions below about your judgment and attitude towards Zhang.**

**Perceived "Reticence" Level during Class Discussion (measured by a seven-point Likert Scale)**

1. It looks like Zhang won't ask too many questions during the class.
  2. It looks like Zhang won't actively engage in class discussion unless his instructors ask him.
  3. It looks like Zhang may keep reticent during the whole class.
- 看上去张明在课堂上不会问太多问题。  
看上去除非被老师叫到，张明不会主动地参与课堂讨论。

看上去张明可能会在整堂课上都沉默不语。

**Perceived Typicality of Zhang's behavior in this scenario (measured by a seven-point Likert Scale)**

1. In this scenario, Zhang is behaving as a typical Chinese international student.
  2. There are many Chinese international students in the U.S. I know who behave like Zhang when they are in class.
  3. Zhang is just like some of my Chinese classmates here.
- 根据对张明的描述，张明表现得像一个典型的中国留学生。  
我认识很多表现得像张明一样的在美国的中国留学生。  
张明就像大多数我在这里的中国同学一样。

**Social Approval (measured by a seven-point Likert Scale)**

1. I think Zhang's behavior in class is appropriate.
  2. I think Zhang is behaving respectfully
  3. I think this is how Zhang should behave when he is in class.
  4. I approve of Zhang's behavior.
  5. I think that Zhang behaved properly in his classroom.
- 我认为张明的课堂表现是恰当合适的。  
我认为张明表现得有礼貌。  
我认为张明就应当如前文描述的那样去表现。  
我认同张明的行为。  
我认为张明在课堂上表现得合乎体统。

**Perception of Zhang's Sensitivity to Others' face (measured by a seven-point Likert Scale)**

1. I think Zhang is showing concern for the face needs of other Chinese International students in his class.
  2. I think Zhang's behavior shows concern for the protection of the image of his country.
  3. I think Zhang is showing concern for the face needs of his American instructor.
  4. I think Zhang is showing concern for the face needs of other American students in his class.
- 我认为张明在意课堂上其他中国留学生的面子需求。  
我认为张明的行为展现了他在意保护他的国家的形象。  
我认为张明在意课堂上美国老师的面子需求。  
我认为张明在意课堂上美国同学的面子需求。

**Items about Participants' Identification with Zhang (measured by a seven-point Likert Scale)**

1. I personally identify with Zhang's behavior in the US classroom.
  2. I feel that I am just like Zhang.
  3. I find that I have some features in common with Zhang in terms of how to behave in the US classrooms.
- 我个人对张明在美国课堂上的表现很有同感。

我感到我就像是张明。

就如何在美国课堂上表现而言，我发现自己与张明有很多的共同点。

Table 1

*Means and Correlation between Feelings of Alienation, Perceived Reticence, Correlates of Face, and CISs' own Satisfaction*

Measure	<i>M (SD)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. ASE	3.62 (1.17)								
2. PRE	4.33 (1.56)	.33 <sup>**</sup>							
3. PTY	4.68 (1.30)	.38 <sup>**</sup>	.61 <sup>**</sup>						
4. SAP	4.12 (1.15)	-.06	-.11	.08					
5. CHF	4.00 (1.41)	.06	.13	.25 <sup>**</sup>	.53 <sup>**</sup>				
6. USF	3.61 (1.50)	.12	.09	.25 <sup>**</sup>	.40 <sup>**</sup>	.78 <sup>**</sup>			
7. FGE	3.80 (1.37)	.10	.12	.26 <sup>**</sup>	.49 <sup>**</sup>	.94 <sup>**</sup>	.95 <sup>**</sup>		
8. IDT	3.86 (1.47)	.19 <sup>*</sup>	.20 <sup>*</sup>	.36 <sup>**</sup>	.48 <sup>**</sup>	.31 <sup>**</sup>	.21 <sup>*</sup>	.27 <sup>**</sup>	
9. SAT	5.02 (.92)	-.18 <sup>*</sup>	-.16	-.19 <sup>*</sup>	.06	.05	.02	.04	-.02

*Note.* Means and correlation between feelings of alienation, perceived reticence, correlates of face, and CISs' satisfaction are presented above ( $n = 137$ ). ASE = alienation (self-estrangement); PRE = perceived reticence; PTY = perceived typicality; SAP = social approval; CHF = perceived sensitivity to the face of other CISs in classroom and of China; USF = perceived sensitivity to the face of American instructors and of American classmates; FGE = perceived sensitivity to face in general; IDT = CISs' identification with Zhang; SAT = participants' own satisfaction levels as CISs.

<sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < .01$ ; <sup>\*</sup>  $p < .05$

Table 2.1

*Means and Correlation between Feelings of Alienation, Perceived Reticence, Correlates of Face, and CISs' own Satisfaction at High-Positive and Low-Negative Face Condition (Scenario 1)*

Measure	<i>M (SD)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. ASE	3.80 (1.19)								
2. PRE	4.44 (1.55)	.31 <sup>*</sup>							
3. PTY	4.80 (1.21)	.38 <sup>**</sup>	.64 <sup>**</sup>						
4. SAP	4.20 (.96)	-.02	-.13	.10					
5. CHF	4.09 (1.29)	-.05	.22	-.03	.51 <sup>**</sup>				
6. USF	3.87 (1.35)	.02	.12	.05	.42 <sup>**</sup>	.79 <sup>**</sup>			
7. FGE	3.98 (1.25)	-.02	.18	.01	.49 <sup>**</sup>	.94 <sup>**</sup>	.95 <sup>**</sup>		
8. IDT	3.83 (1.34)	.18	.32 <sup>*</sup>	.31 <sup>*</sup>	.42 <sup>**</sup>	.22	.12	.18	
9. SAT	4.89 (.98)	-.01	-.02	-.04	.11	.20	.14	.18	.02

*Note.* Means and correlation between feelings of alienation, perceived reticence, correlates of face, and CISs' satisfaction in scenario 1 are presented above ( $n = 46$ ). ASE = alienation (self-estrangement); PRE = perceived reticence; PTY = perceived typicality; SAP = social approval; CHF = perceived sensitivity to the face of other CISs in classroom and of China; USF = perceived sensitivity to the face of American instructors and of American classmates; FGE = perceived sensitivity to face in general; IDT = CISs' identification with Zhang; SAT = participants' own satisfaction levels as CISs.

<sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < .01$ ; <sup>\*</sup>  $p < .05$

Table 2.2

*Means and Correlation between Feelings of Alienation, Perceived Reticence, Correlates of Face, and CISSs' own Satisfaction at High-Negative and Low-Positive Face Condition (Scenario 2)*

Measure	<i>M (SD)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. ASE	3.68 (1.12)								
2. PRE	4.17 (1.64)	.32 <sup>*</sup>							
3. PTY	4.43 (1.34)	.25	.71 <sup>**</sup>						
4. SAP	3.81 (1.20)	-.27	-.20	.07					
5. CHF	3.47 (1.30)	.10	.03	.18	.35 <sup>*</sup>				
6. USF	3.07 (1.34)	.08	.01	.07	.26	.79 <sup>**</sup>			
7. FGE	3.27 (1.25)	.09	.02	.13	.32 <sup>*</sup>	.95 <sup>**</sup>	.95 <sup>**</sup>		
8. IDT	3.74 (1.40)	.09	.19	.48 <sup>**</sup>	.38 <sup>**</sup>	.09	-.13	-.02	
9. SAT	5.22 (.73)	-.16	-.13	-.05	.14	.28	.32 <sup>*</sup>	.32 <sup>*</sup>	.02

*Note.* Means and correlation between feelings of alienation, perceived reticence, correlates of face, and CISSs' satisfaction in scenario 2 are presented above ( $n = 47$ ). ASE = alienation (self-estrangement); PRE = perceived reticence; PTY = perceived typicality; SAP = social approval; CHF = perceived sensitivity to the face of other CISSs in classroom and of China; USF = perceived sensitivity to the face of American instructors and of American classmates; FGE = perceived sensitivity to face in general; IDT = CISSs' identification with Zhang; SAT = participants' own satisfaction levels as CISSs.

<sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < .01$ ; <sup>\*</sup>  $p < .05$



Table 2.3

*Means and Correlation between Feelings of Alienation, Perceived Reticence, Correlates of Face, and CISs' own Satisfaction at Collective-Face Condition (Scenario 3)*

Measure	<i>M (SD)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. ASE	3.35 (1.19)								
2. PRE	4.39 (1.52)	.39 <sup>**</sup>							
3. PTY	4.82 (1.34)	.56 <sup>**</sup>	.46 <sup>**</sup>						
4. SAP	4.36 (1.24)	.15	-.05	.14					
5. CHF	4.49 (1.49)	.23	.13	.46 <sup>**</sup>	.64 <sup>**</sup>				
6. USF	3.90 (1.67)	.28	.09	.50 <sup>**</sup>	.43 <sup>**</sup>	.74 <sup>**</sup>			
7. FGE	4.19 (1.47)	.27	.12	.52 <sup>**</sup>	.57 <sup>**</sup>	.93 <sup>**</sup>	.94 <sup>**</sup>		
8. IDT	4.02 (1.67)	.31 <sup>*</sup>	.10	.29	.60 <sup>**</sup>	.54 <sup>**</sup>	.49 <sup>**</sup>	.55 <sup>**</sup>	
9. SAT	4.94 (1.02)	-.39 <sup>**</sup>	-.31 <sup>*</sup>	-.37 <sup>*</sup>	.05	-.11	-.17	-.15	-.05

*Note.* Means and correlation between feelings of alienation, perceived reticence, correlates of face, and CISs' satisfaction in scenario 3 are presented above ( $n = 44$ ). ASE = alienation (self-estrangement); PRE = perceived reticence; PTY = perceived typicality; SAP = social approval; CHF = perceived sensitivity to the face of other CISs in classroom and of China; USF = perceived sensitivity to the face of American instructors and of American classmates; FGE = perceived sensitivity to face in general; IDT = CISs' identification with Zhang; SAT = participants' own satisfaction levels as CISs.

<sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < .01$ ; <sup>\*</sup>  $p < .05$

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