

## Chasm Between Students and Ideological and Political Workers and Its Countermeasures: A Case Study on the Emerging Social Network Site

XIE Ou<sup>[a],\*</sup>; LIU Feng<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>College of School of History and Culture, Southwestern University, Chongqing, China.

\*Corresponding author.

Received 25 August 2014; accepted 18 November 2014  
Published online 26 December 2014

### Abstract

The electronic time has brought convenience to college students and at the same time it causes quite a number of issues. One is that the previous conventional face-to-face communication with ideological and political workers, represented by counselors has been replaced by texts, phone calls and messages, which are time-saving. These ways would diffuse awkward situations that might happen during communication but also lead to a wide gap between students and ideological and political workers. This article aims to discuss the mechanism of the problem and countermeasures to solve it.

**Key words:** Contemporary college students; Ideological and political education; SNS social network site

Xie, O., & Liu, F. (2014). Chasm Between Students and Ideological and Political Workers and Its Countermeasures: A Case Study on the Emerging Social Network Site. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 10(6), 240-244. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/5742>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/5742>

### INTRODUCTION

With the development of the times, a variety of new communication tools emerge gradually and are changing the life styles of contemporary people, especially college students with strong ability to accept new things. Contemporary college students have shown strong adaptability to the changing world. In 1967, Stanley

Milgram, professor of psychology at Harvard University, founded the “six degrees of separation” concept, which simply says, “the separation between you and any stranger will be no more than 6 persons, that is, through at most 6 persons, you can connect any stranger.” According to “six degrees of separation” concept, every individual’s social circle has continued to expand and eventually becomes a huge network. This theory has created the SNS social networking and becomes an important part of contemporary college students’ communication. In terms of ideological and political education through networking, the documents mostly analyze the impact or related parts of network environment on college students’ ideological and political education and most of them positive. In researches of the ideological and political work under new media environment, some scholars have focused on the social media, like Wechat, Renren but less on the overall study (Zhang, 2005); especially in specific areas of the research, more literature discusses about functions and features of the SNS from the angle of communication. There is only a small part of the literature referring to its importance in ideological and political education, but not as in-depth study. Previous researchers tended to note that such means of communication would enlarge college students’ social circles, make it convenient for college ideological and political workers’ relevant information push, understand the students’ updates and communicate with them without leaving their offices. However, the author believes that this trend of ideological and political education through networking sometimes would contribute to the chasm between college students and ideological and political workers.

### 1. THE INFLUENCE OF THE EMERGING MEDIA

SNS, short for Social Network Site, are websites founded on the basis of six degrees theory, aiming to create social

networks of Internet application service. Take SNS social tools as an example. New means of communication have changed the way in which contemporary college students have lived and the diversified ways of communication allow them to maintain relationships in their own way. On the one hand, the realistic relationship with friends known in real life could be strengthened through social tools by re-establishing a virtual network relationship. On the other hand, students, shying away from participating in actual social activities, would make like-minded friends through the virtual social network and therefore develop a relationship in real life. These convenient ways also bring a new problem, namely how to make proper use of such ways to make friends. There are risks in virtual social networking and of people involved with wrong intentions. This presents new challenges to ideological and political workers as how to guide students to avoid mistakes.

The application of emerging social tools changes the ways of communication not only among students but also between student organizations and individuals (Kuang, 2008). In the past, schools news could be released in ways like posting on the websites, whose number of hits depended on students' awareness. But the emerging social tools have alternated this situation since information can be pushed directly to students through these tools. Quite a number of schools have set up their own Wechat platforms, where they update news regularly so that students could deeply understand school news. At the same time, these platforms will push information that would help students develop good values, but this brings new challenges to the communication between students and ideological and political workers. For one thing, it is an inevitable trend of social development for carrying out ideological and political work through emerging social tools. But there are huge difference in the situation, content and students' participation when compared with the traditional way of ideological and political communication. The ideological and political workers are required for changing with the times and actively applying these social tools to guide college students' ideological value. For another, due to the introduction of social tools, the "subject" of ideological and political work represented by ideological and political workers and the "object" students don't communication directly, which requires ideological and political workers capable of grasping balance between the two.

However, there are more or fewer defects in the SNS social tools and one relatively huge flaw is the sedimentation and accumulation of contents. SNS community has a different feature that information is divided into every isolated island by "Friend". For a large SNS community, its users could access to only a small part of the information since much information is forbidden to users without friends' recommendation. SNS community has huge flaws in terms of content

accumulation. An SNS community is usually registered with tens or even hundreds of millions of users but fewer of them have connections with you. That is to say, information released one way of ideological and political workers or publishers without any followers' forwarding would reduce propaganda effects.

## 2. THE CHALLENGES OF EMERGING MEDIA ON IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL WORKERS

The development of SNS social service has presented various challenges to ideological and political workers and the most important lies in that the gap between college students and ideological and political workers gradually expands. It is college counselors' responsibility to strengthen the guidance and management of ideology, steadily promote healthy and positive mainstream media, cultivate and practice the socialist core values, and constantly consolidate the guiding position of Marxism in the ideological field (Duan, 2013). For one thing, college students tend to put eyes at the activities in the related field, stay in their own professional circles, and decrease communication with the people around, at the thought that ideological and political workers could not better guide them in their study and life. Besides, when doing ideological and political work through networking, the ideological and political workers would also prefer to talk about the updates to proper objects among the student group, which cuts down the communication between parts of the introversive students and ideological and political workers. Based on this, we have conducted a survey.

Among the 100 students in our survey, 85% of the students believe that they have less times of meeting with school ideological and political workers and even less of online communication with them since they are admitted to university; 20% admit that they contact with the ideological and political workers through networking and that there's less in-depth chatting; only 5% of the interviewees keep in close touch with ideological and political workers and would meet them regularly, however these students are mostly class leaders or appointed students by ideological and political workers to take responsibility of communicating with classmates. Among the numerous social networking sites, Renren is the website most interviewees would like to participate with 64.9% stating they would frequently visit. In this survey, 47.1% percent of the interviewees have spent 1-3 hours daily on social websites and only 29.2% would have the time controlled within one hour.

What is more noteworthy is that these faithful social website users would access to internet, regardless of places. 41.8% percent of respondents said they would log in at leisure time after study; 7.5% of respondents would log in during their breaks at noon and 48.5% at

night; and another 2.2% would visit these websites before work in the morning. When it comes to the question “why would you like to use social networking”, here is the top five reasons. The first is “to share with friends about life experience, interests and hobbies”, with 76.9%; the second is “to acquire more information” with 58.4%; then is “to make new friends” with 54.0%; the fourth one is “to kill time” with 47.1%; and 41.8% would like to get to know others’ way of living through networking. Besides, there are 48.6% of the students who are willing to focus on their peers’ public homepages and share the latest news; and 25.1% who take the initiative to focus on the official homepage.

Through this survey, we can draw the following conclusions.

### **2.1 SNS Social Networking Has Become the Mainstream of Contemporary College Students’ Communication**

With the development of the times, open-minded college students’ natural curiosity towards new things has encouraged them to try new modes of communication. As a group who has got leisure time, college students have abundant time for independent activities after school, and therefore have the time and energy to devote to social activities. Even quite a number of them are addicted to social networking while ignoring exchanges in reality, which seriously disorganizes the regular study and life. In addition, excessive use of electronic products will also influence the healthy development of the adolescents.

### **2.2 Some College Ideological and Political Workers Have Not Paid Enough Attention to Ideological and Political Education of Emerging Networks**

The emergence of social networking tools is a process of long periods and even all students would not adopt the same kind of social applications; which resulted in ideological and political workers’ lack of attention to these channels of communication. The main reason lies in the disunity of social applications, which should never hinder ideological and political workers’ emphasis on this communication channel. In addition to subjective factors, some universities have started building the network of ideological and political education, but the information is merely reflecting didacticism without realizing the true meaning of interacting with students. This contributes to the poor condition of the ideological and political education of colleges and universities in China. Even if there are universities advocating the networking of ideological and political education, the tasks are managed by student organizations instead of school or specially appointed ideological and political workers. In the survey, it found that few students would take the initiative to follow the official homepage of the university, let alone, interact with it.

### **2.3 The Supervision Over Ideological and Political Education Through Networking Is Not In-Depth**

The ideological and political work through networking is a complex project. Now the ideological and political workers have no energy in in-depth construction and effective supervision, so students have become the main part of implementing the task. The participation of student workers, represented by the Student Union, has made students both the object and subject of ideological and political education through networking and the purpose of having ideological and political worker to communicate with students is less notable. Moreover these student representatives are not completely capable of distinguishing right from wrong, and therefore they might go awry or forward false news when pushing information, resulting in avoidable difficulties in performing ideological and political work. In addition, students often cannot get rid of their own subjective views and opinions in information push, thus sharing inaccurate information. College students’ immaturity indirectly led to their trust of the information without any thought, which is not conducive to the students’ ability to distinguish right from wrong.

### **2.4 The Ideological and Political Workers Are Lacking Rational Planning on Ideological and Political Work Through Networking**

The mode of ideological and political education through networking based on SNS would have shown great significance, since it changed the traditional one-way communication mode from point-to-point to point-to-multiple points and even multiple points-to-multiple points. This mode would have endowed college students with broadcasting effects and enabled them to become subjective during information push, thus improving college students’ enthusiasm. However, this means would make small groups more differentiated for college students would automatically divide themselves as different groups after receiving information. They would decide what to receive based on their hobbies and subculture circles gradually came into being after rounds of selections, unfavorable in promoting the ideological and political work (She, 2010). Faced with this situation, ideological and political workers are required to have rational planning on ideological and political work through networking and try to take into thought all students’ thoughts from various interests and hobbies, thus further implementing ideological and political work through networking.

### **2.5 The Chasm Grows Wider Between Students and the Ideological and Political Workers**

The popularity of the Internet and mobile phones has gradually made social networking one of the dominating social tools, prevailing among people’s lives. The multiple

features of SNS social tools would limit individual behaviors and thoughts to smart phones and tables, causing further virtualization of college students' active zone. Just as the "Wechat Rule" currently prevalent on the networking, parents cannot be too thoughtful about their children to understand what their sons and daughters have chatted through Wechat. Under such circumstances, even students who live together would lack communication with their private space expanding further. Ideological and political workers' traditional way of knowing students' updates from the central information like student leaders is severely weakened and the chasm between the ideological and political workers and student groups further expands.

### 3. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL WORKERS

The first is to strengthen the integration of all platforms. Universities should set up multiple platforms for college students in the practical application of SNS, namely platforms of "learning", "incentive", "daily management", "communication", and "guidance of mainstream values". In this process, we should get current platforms fully integrated. On the one hand, for the lack of school platforms, colleges or student organizations should actively participate in the establishment. Public accounts of learning platforms can be created on the basis of learning groups and academic organizations in colleges. Colleges are under different situations in the development of ideological and political education through networking. In a large part of colleges, this task is relied on student associations or organizations of their own interests without the involvement of school leaders and ideological and political workers. So the conveyances in charge of information push will change along with general elections of student unions or organizations, even leading to a push fatigue (Li, 2013). Therefore, there should be ideological and political workers specified in managing and organizing ideological and political education through networking and improving the capabilities of the current platforms.

The second is to improve the quality of ideological and political information released through networking. On the basis of reasonably constructing platforms with all kinds of functions, the attention should not be paid only to the quantity but also on the quality of the information. As for the contents, while advocating mainstream values and strengthening ideological guidance, we should release social dynamics, experience materials, pictures and other information in accordance with students' interests and hobbies. In the Renren website, for example, many users who are real-name authenticated would share academic information or messages strongly connected with students'

lives, which frequently arouse a majority of students' interests and attract them to forward and share. The newly established SNS platforms can learn from these methods and share the information in close link with students' lives besides their sharing of ideological and political education. In this way, more attention will be drawn from students and the distance between the ideological and political workers and students be narrowed, thus facilitating further development of the platforms. In addition, sharing relevant professional knowledge on students' majors would help students study in time fragments besides the entertainment, deepen their professional knowledge taught in class by constantly repeating and make progresses in the study.

The third is to strengthen the supervision of the platform. General Secretary Xi Jinping at the Third Plenary Session of the 18<sup>th</sup> CCP stated clearly in "Decision of the CCCPC on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform,"

with the rapid development of Internet technology and applications, there are obvious disadvantages of the current management system, including multiple managing, overlapping functioning, disunity of rights and responsibilities, and low efficiency. Meanwhile, with the intensified property as a means of media Internet has shown, online media management and industrial management are far behind the change and development of current situation. (Wang, 2013)

Since colleges are not independent developers of social tools, relevant college departments don't take much of the initiative in its management, and in this We Media era, ideological and political workers in colleges cannot completely eliminate bad information. This requires colleges, schools, youth leagues and student unions to set up code of conduct and ethics on how to use SNS social networking in an appropriate way. For college students who spread rumors or publish illegal information on the Internet, profound education should be given; for those committing cases with gross violation or incorrigible students, judicial organs should be involved. Only in this way can college students' networking environments be purified and their ability of distinguishing right from wrong to be developed.

The fourth is to combine traditional methods and ideological and political work through networking. The traditional way of ideological and political education occupies more time, but it is the most appropriate means in carrying out ideological and political education. Although some functions can be replaced by the rapidly developing technology, its core won't change much, making the traditional communication way the best to resolve problems. Notices about ideological and political work can be displayed through networking and communication tasks to be progressed in the traditional way. This combination would guide college students' life and study more accurately and delicately and narrow the gap between them. If interpersonal communication

is merely relied on data connection through networking, there won't be real spiritual interaction, indirectly leading to the situation where the ideological and political workers cannot fully understand the college students or understand inaccurately, making ideological and political work through networking more difficult.

The fifth is to pay attention to student' SNS social updates. All SNS sites will start its business with launching an attractive application. With the end of an application's life circle, SNS sites need to continuously offer more attractive applications, provided that the target must be users with high-frequency use of designated applications. The SNS sites need to understand their cultural background, economic base, social purpose, entertainment means, psychological demands and other characteristics to cater to their tastes. By meeting their psychological needs and functional requirements, the SNS sites would provide a large variety of applications and service. This results in the disclosure of students' information from social networking sites, except from those regular and credible SNS websites. We can eliminate the possibility that some people with ulterior motives would steal students' information. College students are on their way to reaching full maturity and can't well avoid dangers in the phase of forming worldview and values. So ideological and political workers are required to watch college students' updates, exclude the potential for danger and guide them in the right direction.

---

## CONCLUSION

---

The emerging social tools have put forward new demands on ideological and political workers. Ideological and political workers should be proficient in mastering these new tools in order to better carry out the ideological and political work. For one thing, emerging social software brings convenience to ideological and political workers. The ratio between college counselors and students is about 1: 200 and one counselor needs to take care of 20 or even thousands of students, making the traditional face-to-face communication disadvantaged and reducing work efficiency.

With the rapid development of the mobile Internet, the ways of information spreading are switching from demonstrating to push and sharing, making the body of mass media through networking more diversified and more open and ways of expressing public opinions more various. The mainstream media are facing new challenges under the new transmission situation and ecological recreation. (Chen & Li, 2013)

The launching of ideological and political work through networking, based on new media will help alleviate this problem. However, ideological and political work through networking has put forward new demands on ideological and political workers at the same time.

Feedbacks of students' information acquired through communication in the virtual network cannot be transmitted to the ideological and political workers accurately and in time and the time lag is difficult to get effectively curbed, thus ideological and political workers should lay emphasis on ideological guide of students while accepting new ways. Some college students are lost in the new communication way of cellular networking, and they are in need of the workers' ideological guidance in the traditional way of face-to-face communication. In the information age, the quantity of information and its spreading channels are undergoing tremendous changes. The famous IT columnist Tangier suggested that the news media have entered the 3.0 era—We Media era, where the improving digital technology combines with the global knowledge system. It is a medium that comes into being after understanding how the public spread and share their experiences and personal updates (Gillmor, 2004). One of the We Media' features are the diversity in the body of information dissemination. As participants in the We Media Platform, everyone has a dual identity of information producer and recipient. To narrow the chasm between ideological and political workers and college students and to promote relevant workers' sound ideological and political work, the essential issue is to help college students better adapt to this dual identity.

---

## REFERENCES

---

- Chen, Y. H., & Li, X. A. (2013). Enhancing college counselors' ability and countermeasures to respond to public opinions in Internet Era. *Fudaoyuan of Colleges and Universities*, (6), 57-60.
- Duan, Y. H. (2013). Research on importance of publicity and ideological and political work under the new situation. *Industrial & Science Tribune*, (19), 212-213.
- Gillmor, D. (2004). *We the media: Grassroots journalism by the people, for the people*. O'Reilly.
- Kuang, W. B. (2008). On the concept of new media. *Chinese Journal of Journalism & Communication*, (6), 66-69.
- Li, S. L. (2013). challenges and strategies of college counselors in Wechat time. *Journal of Jilin TV & Radio University*, (6), 116-117.
- She, S. H. (2010). Features and countermeasures of contemporary social thoughts' influence on college students. *Leading Journal of Ideological & Theoretical Education*, (10).
- Wang, D. (2013). Xi Jinping attended national conference on publicity and ideological work and delivered an important speech. *Shijian (Dangde Jiaoyuban)*, (9), 4.
- Zhang, Z. X. (2005). Ten years' development of college ideological education on the internet in our country. *Studies in Ideological Education*, (7), 2-6.