

CERIAS

the center for education and research in information assurance and security

Managing Identity Across Social Networks

Mihaela Vorvoreanu, Ph.D
Quintana Clark

Computer Graphics Technology
Purdue University

Abstract

Goal: Gain an in-depth understanding of online identity management among heavy social media users – people who use Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn weekly.

Theoretically grounded in social psychology and symbolic interactionism, the project inquires how people manage their identities online, where social groups and contexts are not as clearly separated as in physical space.

In-depth online surveys with a criterion sample of 39 participants revealed some patterns of mapping different social groups and identities across social networking sites, and awareness of different social norms across communities.

The relational self...

Identity management

People enact various facets of their complex selves, depending upon context and social group.

Online identity management

Online contexts don't always mirror social groups. Online, audiences merge. The unintended audience effect becomes common.

Research question:

How do people manage their identities online?

... is the self in social contexts

Results

Social Groups

	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn
1	friends	informal connections	formal connections
2	family	friends	informal connections
3	informal connections	companies	companies
4	companies	formal connections	friends

Only connect with people met IRL

	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn
SA-A	71%	5%	41%
D-SD	18%	79%	26%

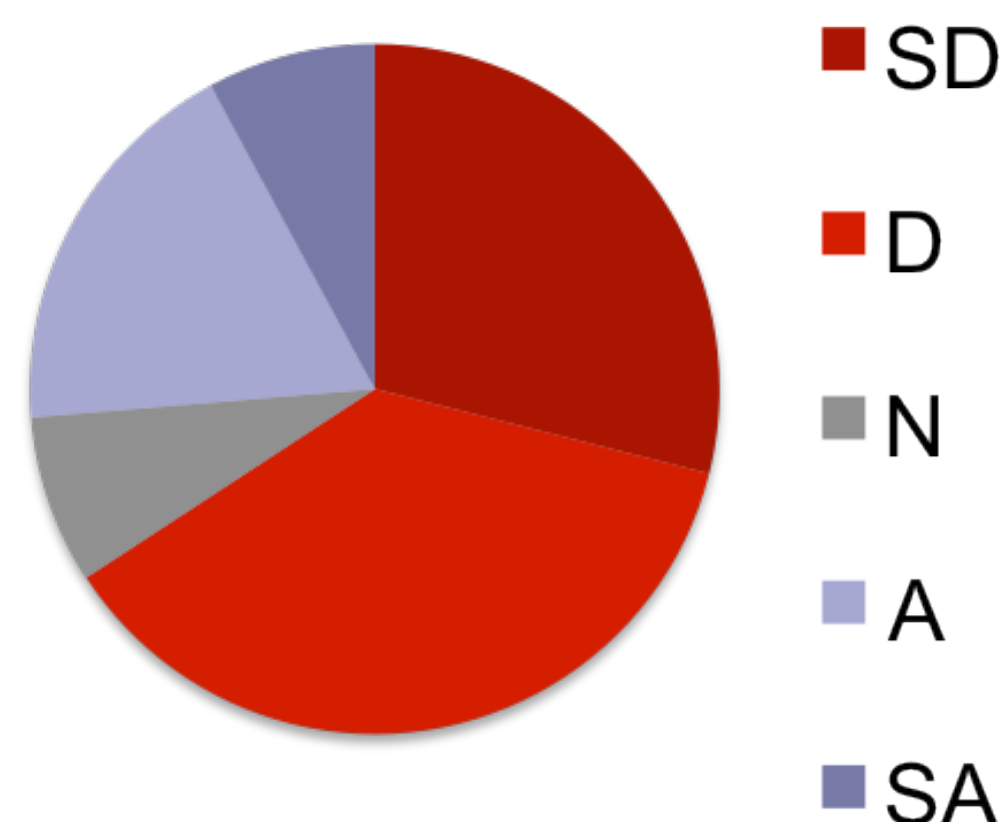
Self-portrayal

	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn
1	funny	smart	competent
2	warm	thought-leader	successful

Social roles

	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn
1	friend	working professional	working professional
2	family member	friend	friend

Social norms: Same across networks



Desirable / Undesirable behaviors

Facebook

1. Witty, funny, interactive, interesting
2. Apps & games, mundane, angry, political

Twitter

1. Interesting, diverse, conversational
2. Monotony, automation, mundane, negative, poor spelling

LinkedIn

1. Full profile, active in discussions
2. No profile info, spamming, inactive

Methods

In-depth online survey

Asked about mapping of social groups onto social networks, self-portrayal, social norms for online participation.

Criterion sampling

People who use all three social networks on a weekly basis: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn.

Sample

N=39

Ages: 19-24 (28%), 25-34 (38%); 35-40 (20%), 45-54 (10%), 55-64 (2%);

Sex: Female (54%), Male (46%);

Social media adoption: Innovator (13%), Early adopter (61%), Early majority (23%); Late majority (3%), Laggard (0%)

Enjoy using Facebook (91%), Twitter (90%), LinkedIn (54%)