Chapter Two

Applying Cultural Discourse Analysis to an Online Community

LinkedIn's Cultural Discourse of Professionalism

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LinkedIn has a strong presence in the online lives of adults around the world; according to the Pew Research Center, 25% of all Americans use it (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). However, with its nearly 500,000,000 members worldwide at the time of this writing (LinkedIn, 2017a), over 70% of which are located outside the United States (LinkedIn, 2017a), LinkedIn is arguably the most popular social media site for work-related purposes. According to the company itself, the primary purpose of LinkedIn "is to connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful" (LinkedIn, 2016a). As ethnographers of communication, we were intrigued by LinkedIn's emphasis on the concept of *professionalism,* not only as applied to the nature and purpose of its network, but also in relation to the identities of its users and the ideal communicative behaviors to be performed in its virtual community. Having done work in the area of usability research and design (Milburn, 2015), we were also interested in how the LinkedIn platform was implicated in ideas about—as well as the performance of—professionalism. Using the theoretical and methodological tools of the ethnography of communication (EC) and cultural discourse analysis (CuDA), we studied what it meant to be professional and to perform professionalism on LinkedIn. In so doing, we discovered that a particular *cultural discourse—a discourse of professional communication*—was expressed and promoted via the LinkedIn platform. In this chapter, after reviewing literature on professional talk and its settings, we will present our analysis of this discourse and the way it was encoded into the LinkedIn platform. Specifical-

ly, we will show how an ideal LinkedIn user performs a professional self, engages in professional communicative behaviors, and connects with other professionals via LinkedIn.

PROFESSIONAL TALK AND ITS SETTINGS

Among discursive research about institutional talk, we find descriptions about how individual employees' identities are shaped and displayed (Drew & Heritage, 1993; Dyer & Keller-Cohen, 2000; Holmes, 2006; Holmes, Stubbe, & Vine, 1999). The two main ways professionalism is characterized are within an expressive system of work (see Carbaugh, 1996) or as a display or performance of speaker competence (see Blazkova, 2011). Mada and Saftoiu (2012) summarize the way "professional communication" can be accomplished through either individual speech acts or joint, pragmatic actions. However, still missing are descriptions of professionalism in general, i.e., how professional selves are displayed outside of the organizations in which they work. Is professionalism an identity category that transcends a specific organization? Can one's professional identity be shaped by an organization for which an employee does not work?

Creating a professional self is not done in isolation. It presumes at least a community of like-minded professionals or what has been theoretically described as a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) who will understand one's display of personhood. LinkedIn is such a community, albeit an online one, providing a *setting* where participants can display their membership and their professional identities in a specific, locally comprehensible way. Approaching a technological platform as a setting is a useful way to make sense of it as a scene for social activity, one replete with roles, rules, premises, and norms. By setting we refer to Hymes's SPEAKING heuristic (1964, 1972), which helps ethnographers of communication categorize different *facets* or aspects of communication situations. Each letter of the mnemonic (S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G) represents different communication-related variables or categories, with the "S" referring to "setting" or "scene," i.e., the "place of a speech act and, in general [its] physical circumstances" (Hymes, 1972, p. 60). While in Hymes's time the setting and scene denoted the physical location in which communication activity took place, the concept is valid in describing online spaces as well (Beneito-Montagut, 2011; Herring, 2007; Pfister & Soliz, 2011), whether immersive multidimensional virtual worlds or significantly "flatter" online spaces (Boellstorff, 2008; Hart, 2015; Paolillo, 1999; Tosca, 2002).

Approaching LinkedIn's technological platform as a setting makes sense from an EC perspective, because it foregrounds the assumption that such spaces have their own particular rules, norms, premises, and meanings per-

taining to communicative conduct. Hymes's concept of a setting was a "psychological" space linked with "cultural definition[s] of an occasion" (Hymes, 1972, p. 60). Settings are cognitive as well as spatial (or physical) places, and they are intricately linked with scripts and rules of communicative conduct. Settings are mental constructs that we associate with guidelines for communicative behavior. In other words, the people present in a given setting generally have ideas in mind about their roles there, as well as the norms, rules, and premises governing communicative conduct in that place. What's more, in an online environment, the norms, premises, and rules guiding communicative conduct may actually be encoded into the platform itself (Hart, 2016). This is because interfaces are a means not only of presenting information, options, and activities to the user, but also of organizing information, options, and activities. The very design of an online platform serves to enable and/or constrain communicative action, allowing some activities and restricting others; in this way interfaces are implicated in users' interpretational and sense-making processes (Beer, 2008; Gane & Beer, 2008; Manovich, 2001, 2003). Whether explicitly or not, the technological platform supporting user interactions is implicated in local understandings of sanctioned communicative behavior.

METHODS

Data Collection

When people make use of an interactive online platform such as LinkedIn, they must navigate what is possible, what is permissible, and what is not. This is especially true within an unfamiliar online community where a user might be a new and/or novice member, and/or when the protocols for engaging in that community are frequently changing. For users and researchers alike there is a learning curve to determine how interactions are supposed to proceed and what they are supposed to signify. In our case, applying CuDA to LinkedIn's community required carefully investigating users' experiences as well as the online setting on and through which those experiences occur (here, an interactive, technology-mediated platform). Drawing on Hart's (2015) methods for analyzing the ways in which digital interfaces enable and constrain users' experiences, we therefore engaged in a two-pronged approach to data collection.

First, we collected users' stories of and perspectives on their experiences of professionalism on LinkedIn. To do this we circulated a call for interviewees among our own social and professional networks, using Facebook, LinkedIn, and other networking tools that we had access to, such as intraorganizational Listservs. Once we began interviewing those who responded to our initial calls, we used snowball sampling to identify other likely interview

candidates. In total we interviewed 20 LinkedIn users who, when geographical location as well as linguistic/cultural backgrounds were taken into account, represented a variety of different countries, including Australia, Britain, Canada, China, Estonia, Germany, Japan, and the United States.

In conducting the interviews, we learned that our interviewees ranged from experts who used LinkedIn frequently for complex communication tasks, to novices who used the platform infrequently and were not familiar with many of its functionalities. Because our purpose in conducting the interviews was to elicit all types of user experiences with the platform, as well as a range of perceptions on it, we utilized open-ended interview questions that allowed users to discuss actions and/or emotions. To this end, we asked questions that began with their origins of use, addressed specific goals and purposes, and concluded with thoughts on future expectations.

All the interviews were conducted in English and were done either in person or remotely using Skype. When participants granted us permission, we recorded the interviews using either Apple's Voice Memos app (in person) or Audio Hijack Pro (remote). All recordings were transcribed; in those cases where no recording was made, we transcribed our notes. All recordings, notes, and transcriptions were added to our data set.

In the second phase of data collection, we focused on the LinkedIn platform itself. Drawing on our training in the ethnography of communication, we engaged in participant observation by spending time on LinkedIn using our own accounts, from which vantage point we studied the platform. We collected screenshots and jotted down notes, paying attention to the various communication options and protocols for what LinkedIn terms a basic account. We also pored over the public LinkedIn help pages at https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin, which provided detailed descriptions of the platform's functionalities, as well as protocols for its use. Finally, we collected other materials pertaining to the platform and its use, including LinkedIn's terms of service, the account-related emails that we (as LinkedIn users) received, and how-to materials for LinkedIn account holders from other professional development sites. All these materials were added to our data set.

Data Analysis

Our data analysis process was multistep. The initial data analytic tool that we used in our examination of *professionalism* is what Carbaugh (1989) described as *terms for talk* or "communication codes for talk and pragmatic action" (Carbaugh, 2017; Carbaugh, Nuciforo, Saito, & Shin, 2011). We used this conceptual frame to determine what counted as *professional* talk on the LinkedIn platform. Accordingly, we asked, "are there cultural terms for communication" in use and if so, what kinds of communication-based practices do those cultural terms point to (Carbaugh, 2017; Carbaugh et al., 2011,

p. 88)? To discover cultural terms and their concomitant cultural practices, we began by scrutinizing the data set for particular terms suggesting a way to communicate properly and *professionally* on LinkedIn, such as "networking," "connecting," etc. Specifically, we examined terms related to professional talk as they occurred in the interview data, including how such terms figured into our participants' accounts and experiences. Additionally, we examined the LinkedIn platform to identify which forms of professional talk existed there, which practices they involved, and how they were enabled or discouraged by the platform's build. In essence, we analyzed how local ideas and practices of professionalism were encoded into the LinkedIn platform itself.

Next, we applied the conceptual suite of *meanings, premises, and rules pertaining to communicative conduct*, drawn from both speech codes theory (Philipsen, 1992, 1997; Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias, 2005) and CuDA (Carbaugh, 2017). In speech codes theory (SCT), a speech code is defined as "a system of socially constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules, pertaining to communicative conduct" (Philipsen, 1997, p. 126). EC researchers use SCT and the concept of *speech codes* to examine situated communication within particular communities, and to understand the ways that its strategic use enables community members to develop shared understandings and coordinate their activity (Fitch, 1998; Philipsen, 1997; Schwartzman, 1989). Similarly, in CuDA all communication practices involve underlying (cultural) meanings and premises, the discovery and the description of which is a foundational step in the research venture (Carbaugh, 2017). For our study, we examined patterns in the meanings (i.e., significance) of professional talk on LinkedIn, the premises underlying professional talk (i.e., the assumptions about its value, operation, etc.), and the rules governing its execution.

Finally, we used CuDA to direct our attention to three particular discursive hubs—being/identity, doing/action, and relating (Carbaugh & Cerulli, 2018; Carbaugh, 2017)—as they emerged from the data. Discursive hubs refer to previously identified sites of cultural meaning. To address questions about identity we focused on the being hub, analyzing what it meant to be professional on LinkedIn, including how a professional self ought to be displayed. To address questions about action we focused on the doing hub, asking what "professional" behavior entailed, including what specific acts a professional ought (or ought not) to engage in on LinkedIn. Finally, to address questions about how people interact we focused on the relating hub, studying how users were expected to engage "professionally" with one another. From there, evidence of a cultural discourse emerged, conveyed both explicitly and implicitly by the company, applied by our interviewees, and encoded into the LinkedIn platform itself.

FINDINGS

The purported utility of having a LinkedIn account is to become "more productive and successful" in one's professional persona (LinkedIn, 2016a). Here, *professional* is equated with labor and employment. Of course, LinkedIn users need not be employed to use the site; however, LinkedIn is explicitly designed to showcase those facets of a user's life that relate to their careers, whether past, present, or future. The three CuDA hubs that directly pertained to professionalism on LinkedIn as reflected in our data were strategically displaying one's professional self (identity); connecting with other users (action); and engaging with other users in professional ways (relating). Here we will describe our findings on each hub, including how each hub was encoded into the platform.

Displaying the Professional Self (Identity)

Creating a profile is the first step to using LinkedIn; without one only a limited amount of information on the platform can be searched for or viewed. To create and modify one's profile, LinkedIn offers a worksheet-style interactive web page with which a LinkedIn user can add, edit, or remove information simply by clicking on the relevant section of the page. The key information shared via a LinkedIn profile is featured at the top of each profile page, i.e., what LinkedIn terms the "Intro" section. The Intro section highlights information that is foundational to a LinkedIn profile: a profile photo, first and last name, current position, geographical region, and professional industry. Beneath the Intro is the "Experience" section, where users can list their past and present positions; for each one, users can enter the job title, the company, start and end dates, and a brief description of the position. Following the Experience section is "Education," where users can list any degrees earned. Progressing down the profile page, other possible sections to include in a user's profile are "Featured Skills and Endorsements," "Recommendations" (received and/or given), Accomplishments, Interests, and so on. Additional sections in a user profile can include things like Publications, Certifications, Courses, Projects, Honors & Awards, Test Scores, Languages, etc.

The more information users include in their profiles, the greater their "Profile Strength": a built-in "Profile Strength meter" measures "how robust [one's] profile is" and provides "recommendations on which profile sections to add to improve the discoverability of [one's] profile in search results and increase profile search appearances" (LinkedIn, 2017e). When a user's profile is deemed complete, LinkedIn rates it as "All-Star." Taken as a whole, the profile sections available to LinkedIn users affirm what facets of a person's life are relevant to their professional identity. Simultaneously, the categories that are omitted from a LinkedIn profile—such as marital and/or fami-

ly status, hobbies, interests outside of work, etc.—make an explicit statement about what is considered to be irrelevant to one's professional self in this environment. As one interviewee reported (all names have been changed):

> If somebody sets up a LinkedIn profile in the way that it was probably designed to be done—it's an online resume—so you are seeing everybody's skills and everybody's work they have done throughout their career. You are basically seeing what somebody's skills or somebody's interests, or somebody's talents are. . . . You are not seeing whether Joanie has three kids, how much Ginny loves to bake bread, how much Joanie loves watching *Dancing with the Stars*. It's all about their professional—all their career based skills and talents. (Trisha)

In this way, the LinkedIn user interface is encoded with expectations for what comprises a professional identity, and it explicitly directs users to display the appropriate facets of that identity, and to suppress (omit) those facets that are irrelevant.

As users build out their profiles, a key rule in operation is that they must portray their professional self *truthfully*. This is explicitly communicated in LinkedIn's User Agreement, where under section 8.2 (Don'ts) it states that each user agrees not to "create a false identity on LinkedIn"; "misrepresent [their] identity (e.g., by using a pseudonym), [their] current or previous positions, qualifications or affiliations with a person or identity"; or "create a member profile for anyone other than [themselves] (a real person)" (LinkedIn, 2017h). This rule was not lost on our interviewees, all of whom expressed the assumption that LinkedIn should only be used to display one's real professional self. As another interviewee explained:

> Everything that I want expose[d] professionally in my real life, in my real professional life, would go onto my [LinkedIn] profile So anything I would reveal in a professional encounter I would also consider putting it on my LinkedIn profile. My photos, what skills I have, what my goals are, what my education is, my professional background, my previous jobs, maybe even my stance on certain technologies. . . . I would stress that [people] should use LinkedIn in such a way that it reflects their professional life and not something else, and that they don't use it as—that they don't lie on their profile or that they don't exaggerate and that they try to have it reflect their true business and their true professional person-personality. (Matthew)

In fact, in the event that a user detects "inaccurate" or false information on another user's profile, they may "file a formal complaint" using LinkedIn's Notice of Inaccurate Profile Information form, on which they must assert how they "know [the] account or other information to be inaccurate or false" (LinkedIn, 2017c). All such forms are said to be reviewed by the company's "Trust and Safety" team (LinkedIn, 2017g).

Although the platform is not equipped to automatically verify the truthfulness of a user's LinkedIn profile, it does include built-in mechanisms that could encourage honesty in the portrayal of one's professional self. There is, for example, LinkedIn's Skill Endorsements feature, which allows users to list their own proficiencies, which can then be "endorsed" by any 1st-degree connections. Users can also use the Recommendations feature either to elicit recommendations from and/or give them to 1st-degree connections (a feature that we will return to shortly). Here again, the expectation of our interviewees was that users be honest in their evaluations of one another, such that these profile features would represent their "true" or "actual" skills and qualities. Some interviewees took this so seriously that they refused to endorse their connections unless they were absolutely certain of the genuineness of their purported qualities. Without this honesty, one interviewee said, she would "just [be] adding mush" to someone's profile. (Trisha)

Connecting with Others (Action)

As a social networking site, LinkedIn's explicit purpose is to connect its users with one another. On the LinkedIn platform, to *connect* means to establish a symbolic link with another user, thereby demonstrating an association or a relationship. LinkedIn displays only three types of connections: 1st-degree (users are directly connected to one another); 2nd-degree (users are not directly connected to one another, but they share a 1st-degree connection); and 3rd-degree (users have a 2nd-degree connection in common). If two users are not connected in any of these ways, then the default status of their relationship is "Out of Network," which means that the two users have no recognized connection on LinkedIn. The number of connections that a user has is prominently noted at the top of the profile page, up to 500 (beyond that the number is displayed simply as 500+).

Knowing the local rules for how and when to connect with other LinkedIn users is fundamental to being a competent member of this community. On the one hand, as our interviewees reported, it can be tempting to make connections less discriminately with the simple aim of enlarging one's network. However, from the administrative viewpoint, it is not appropriate to connect with just anyone. On the contrary, LinkedIn explicitly instructs users to connect only with "contact[s] you know personally and who you trust on a professional level" (LinkedIn, 2017b). LinkedIn's User Agreement goes so far as to forbid connecting with unknown users, also prohibiting "solicit[ing] email addresses or other personal information" from unknown LinkedIn users, as well as "us[ing] LinkedIn invitations to send messages to people who don't know you or who are unlikely to recognize you as a known contact" (LinkedIn, 2017h). According to LinkedIn, this rule is in place because only known and trusted contacts can be considered "quality connections," and

only they can be "trust[ed] to be part of [one's] network" (LinkedIn, 2017d). This underlying rule of knowing and trusting one's connections was also communicated by our interviewees:

- I choose not to allow connections of anyone that I have not personally done business with, or have shared information, or provided resources to in some form or shape. (Dustin)
- My own policy [on having LinkedIn connections] is people I have actually worked with are the only people I have [in my network]. (Adam)
- [In my network] it would probably be past colleagues that I actually worked with, within the same company [and] customers that I worked with. . . . I don't know if I would use it initially to contact an unknown person. I probably would contact people that I've had, you know, a previous relationship with somehow. (Molly)
- I tend not to connect with people who I don't know, even if I know them through somebody else. I tend not to have too many connections with people who I vaguely know. When I get connection requests, unless I know them or they are familiar to me I tend not to accept, unless they are people who I've heard about. For example, I might have heard about somebody mentioning a chap who is the HR director or the L&D director at HP or Nokio, or something, and they've mentioned this guy's got really interesting ideas, and then if I come across them, or they have asked to connect to me, then I'll accept. But if it's just some guy I've never heard of before then I tend to ignore them. (Charles)
- Do I know them and have I worked with them for over, let's say, a year? In other words I might have to write a reference for them—do I have the capability to do that? People that I've worked with for a week or whatever, or maybe someone [from a] company [that] once sold me something—I just ignore those people. But people that I have worked with for more than a year, I accept their LinkedIn requests. (Richard)

As the excerpts above illustrate, our interviewees recognized and followed LinkedIn's suggested strategies for making network connections.

The expectation that LinkedIn networks must be comprised only of known and trusted others is encoded into the platform in explicit ways. For example, when users click on the "My Network" tab, LinkedIn displays a "people you may know" field, listing other people who might be "known" to that user. Beneath each person's name and information is a direct invitation to either "Connect" with them or "Invite" them to join LinkedIn. Users are also asked to consider importing their email address books from their devices into LinkedIn via the "Grow Your Network" page, a feature described by LinkedIn as "the fastest way to grow your network," with known (and presumably) trusted people. Using these data, LinkedIn also makes suggestions

for additional known contacts by inferring relationships from "shared connections or shared managers, employers, educational institutions and other such factors." While users can make connection requests to anyone, asking unknown people to connect on LinkedIn does have a potential penalty. Specifically, if the person receiving the request chooses to click "Ignore" in response to the request, they then have the chance to report that rejected invitation as, "I don't know this person." If enough invitees make this report about the user issuing invitations, then the offending user's account may be suspended. These features, encoded into the platform, impose norms for connecting on LinkedIn, the most prominent of which is that users should connect only with those people who are known to them, ideally in a professional context.

Engaging with Others Professionally (Relating)

The third hub of communicative activity that we explored was relating with other LinkedIn users; specifically, with one's connections, i.e., the people within one's LinkedIn network. A key rule operating on the platform is to be positive and constructive in one's communication. This rule is strongly expressed in LinkedIn's user guidelines, which exhort members to be "nice," "courteous," "professional," and "respectful." Users are told not to "promote negativity" or "be rude"; this would, in fact, be grounds for removal from the platform. Users must also "keep comments, postings, and interactions constructive." This entails "shar[ing] ideas and opinions openly," "answer[ing questions] with thoughtful and friendly contributions," and "shar[ing] best practices, ideas, and knowledge with other users." By offering up "constructive feedback," the LinkedIn community can purportedly become a better and more professional space (LinkedIn, 2013, 2015, 2016b).

The expectation to be positive and constructive was also visible in LinkedIn's user interface (UI). For example, the Endorsements feature allows users to list their skills directly on their own profiles. 1st-degree connections can offer endorsement by clicking on a skill; thereafter the skill displays the text, "Endorsed by [1st-degree connection name]." Users cannot endorse themselves—they can only be endorsed. Furthermore, negative endorsements, i.e., those representing opposition or censure, are not supported by the platform. Similarly, the Recommendation feature gives users the chance to "recognize or commend" a 1st-degree connection (LinkedIn, 2017f); here too, the emphasis is on positivity, with users encouraged to "be as specific as possible about [the recommended person's] strengths and skills . . . and the positive effects [of what they did]." Conversely, the UI does not afford any means of directly critiquing one's connections. The only possible way to complain or critique a fellow connection is through omission, i.e., not offering any endorsement or recommendation.

DISCUSSION

In this chapter we described three main hubs of communicative activity pertaining to professionalism on LinkedIn: strategically displaying one's professional self (identity); connecting with other professionals (action); and engaging with other users in professional ways (relating). Taken as a whole, these three hubs indicate that a cultural discourse is in play, which we will refer to as LinkedIn's cultural discourse of professionalism. The cultural discourse of professionalism is localized within LinkedIn's particular online setting, and points to associated practices for enacting professionalism (locally defined) within this setting, including how to relate to or connect with other users, and how to communicate appropriately while doing so.

Interestingly, the cultural discourse of professionalism relies upon, but also transcends, specific organizational affiliations that LinkedIn users reference in their profiles. Nevertheless, the discourse of professionalism as it is enacted through and on the LinkedIn platform affords limited—even restricted—possibilities for being, acting, and relating. When users compose and display their online professional selves, contextualized only within the limited setting of the LinkedIn platform, a fragmentary picture emerges. A LinkedIn profile cannot encompass a professional identity, even when it is of "All Star" quality. Similarly, by limiting what users can display about themselves on the platform (i.e., who users can "be" in this setting), LinkedIn effectively limits how users can relate with one another. For example, by omitting any additional information included in a user's profile, 1st-, 2nd- or 3rd-degree connections may feel prevented from knowing a more "authentic self" with facets beyond job skills and experiences. Furthermore, by prescribing a limited type of interactions, the site does not encourage what we might have deemed as important relationship-building activities in other interpersonal settings, such as greeting sequences, going through stages of relational development, and sustaining interaction in ongoing ways (also see Scollo and Poutiainen's chapter, this volume).

Although we didn't apply the CuDA hub of dwelling per se, by examining a Hymesian *setting* we approach a dwelling-like hub. People do not live on LinkedIn, as the term *dwelling* might suggest, but the UI is constructed as a place within which shadow-selves—users' profiles—reside, and a particular type of being and relating by these professional selves makes sense. What is more, our investigation of the cultural discourse of professionalism on LinkedIn included analysis of how the discourse itself is encoded into (and promoted by) the setting itself, here the LinkedIn platform or UI. We illustrated how the LinkedIn UI plays a significant role in cuing users to engage in professional conduct in a manner deemed appropriate to this online setting. Put differently, the LinkedIn UI "encodes" (cf. Katriel, 2015) a particular notion of professional communication, and is intended to guide users

through the actions determined to be correct and legitimate for this setting. By providing users with limited (and limiting) functionalities, the UI also blocks users from engaging in activities that would be considered unprofessional or inappropriate in this space. Users learn about legitimized and non-legitimized ways of being and communicating as they become more expert members of this community. The LinkedIn platform encodes ideas about the professional self and how that self should be expressed; it also serves to regulate professional communication in this space.

Finally, we want to address the notion of cross-cultural comparisons. In our findings we noticed that what is conceived of as professional communication on LinkedIn resonates with the way expertise typical of North American culture is enacted (Dyer & Keller-Cohen, 2000). These practices also resonate with some features of what Carbaugh (1988) referred to as "Talking American." In particular, the preference for "honest" communication on LinkedIn is similar to the American practice of "being honest" designated by "truthful and open talk where individual rights are exercised and self is displayed" (Carbaugh, 1988, p. 110). The difference might be that on LinkedIn, individual rights are limited; we did not find users describing their communication on LinkedIn as "open" (although some interviewees described "sharing" on the platform). Further, what we observed was akin to Carbaugh's (1996) discussion of working selves articulated through and implicating communication practices. We conceived of LinkedIn as a rich, cultural site where professional selves (who may be working in a particular organization at the moment) connect with known others via invitations and acceptances to form a network. It was through these cultural practices that the relationship between communication and professional identity became noticeable.

In sum, our study illustrates the utility of using CuDA to examine how LinkedIn users present themselves, connect with others, and establish (and maintain) professional relationships in this online environment. How people further interact with others on LinkedIn, and the possibility of what they do there transcending and/or blending into other settings certainly warrants further exploration.

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