The Persistence of "Participation": Representation of the Disability Community on Facebook

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Background

- Social spaces, places, networks and media
- The aging of tech users
  - Not just for the young
  - Usability vs. accessibility

Gender	As of 6/18/08			As of 1/04/09		
	Users	Percentage	Growth	Users	Percentage	Growth
US Males	10,095,740	38.1%	25.0%	17,747,880	42.2%	75.8%
US Females	12,520,760	47.3%	28.0%	23,429,960	55.7%	87.1%
Unknown	3,864,600	14.6%	84.2%	911,360	2.2%	-76.4%
Total US	26,481,100	100.0%	**32.7%**	42,089,200	100.0%	58.9%
Age	Users	Percentage	Growth	Users	Percentage	Growth
0-17	4,378,120	16.5%	14.8%	5,674,780	13.5%	29.6%
18-24	14,258,160	53.8%	15.6%	17,192,360	40.8%	20.6%
25-34	5,584,260	21.1%	97.6%	11,254,700	26.7%	101.5%
35-54	1,856,680	7.0%	**172.9%**	6,989,200	16.6%	**276.4%**
55+	324,420	1.2%	97.1%	954,680	2.3%	**194.3%**
Unknown	79,460	0.3%	-40.8%	23,480	0.1%	-70.5%

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Community/Social Media

- Isolation, community, engagement
  - Workplace major source of community, especially for men
  - UK survey: 36% men, 31% women - little local contact
  - Perceived lack of social support

- Social spaces, places, and networks
  - New trends and applications
  - Accessibility of online communities

Platform Characteristics

- Average Facebook user connected to 80 community pages, groups, or events

- 150M Facebook users access mobile devices/month

- Demographics
  - Facebook: 55% female   12% 50+   53% college+
  - LinkedIn: 48% female   32% 50+   75% college+

- User Base
  - Facebook: ~320M Users   ~620M groups
  - LinkedIn: ~75M Users   ~625K groups

Methodology

- **Social media platform**: Facebook & LinkedIn (for comparison) chosen based on user base/activity
- **Search criteria**: employment, aging, and disabled-focused online communities (groups)
  - keywords + >5 members
- English focused groups

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Search Criteria

- Groups > 5 members
- Formal business/group (no individuals)
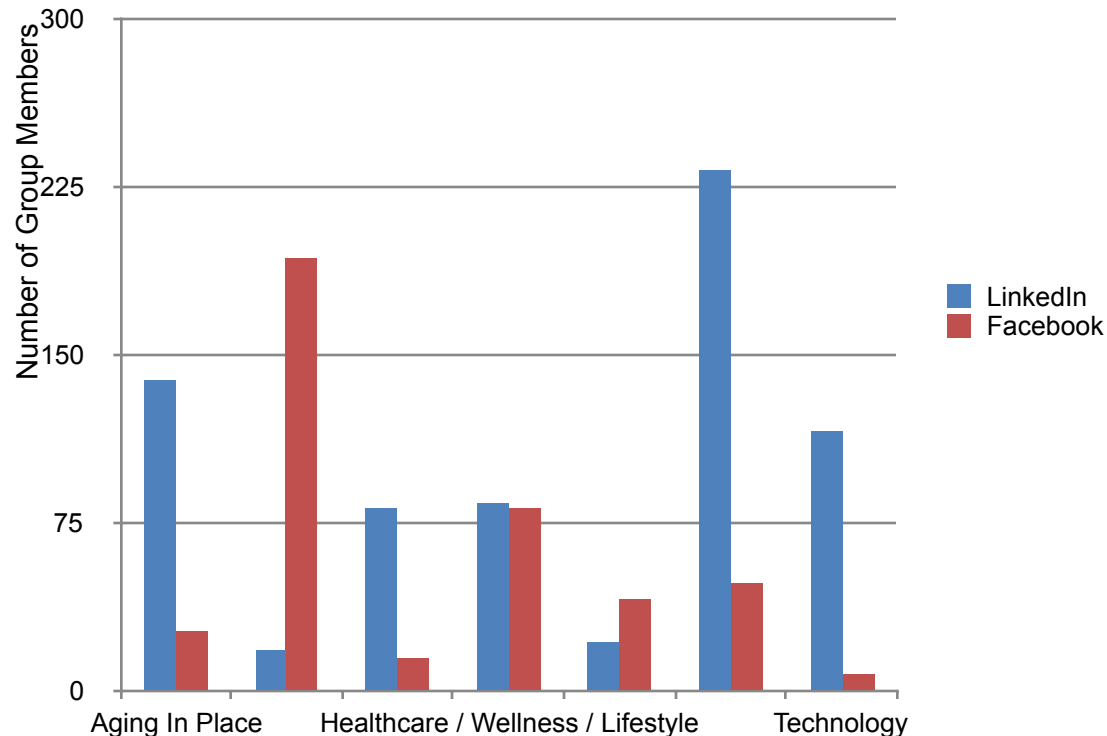- Groups had to be focused in the areas in question

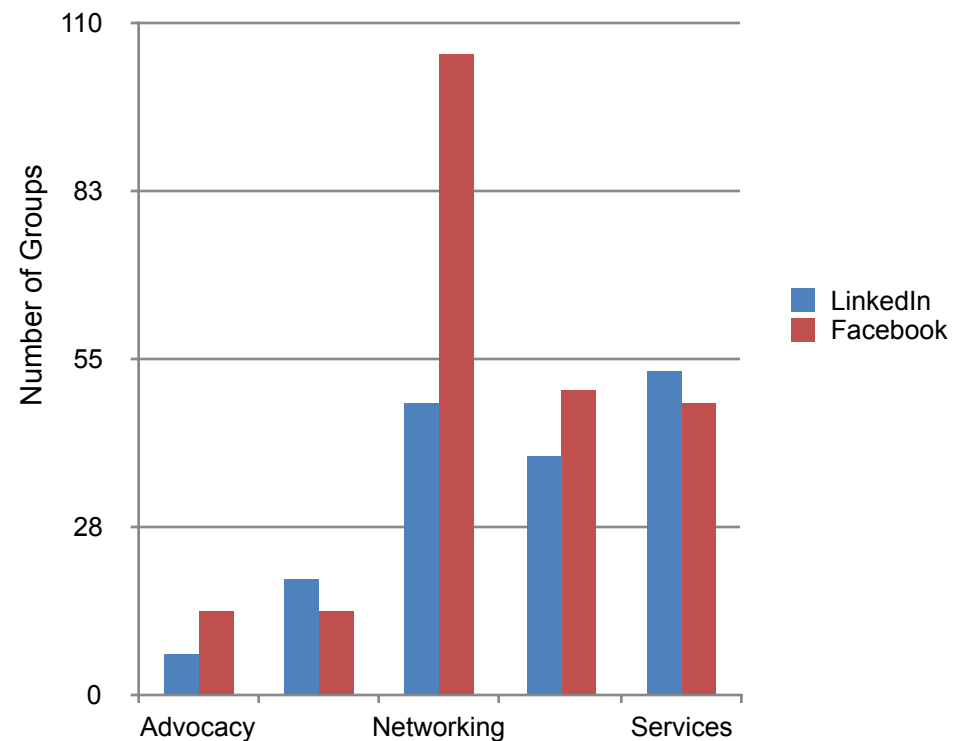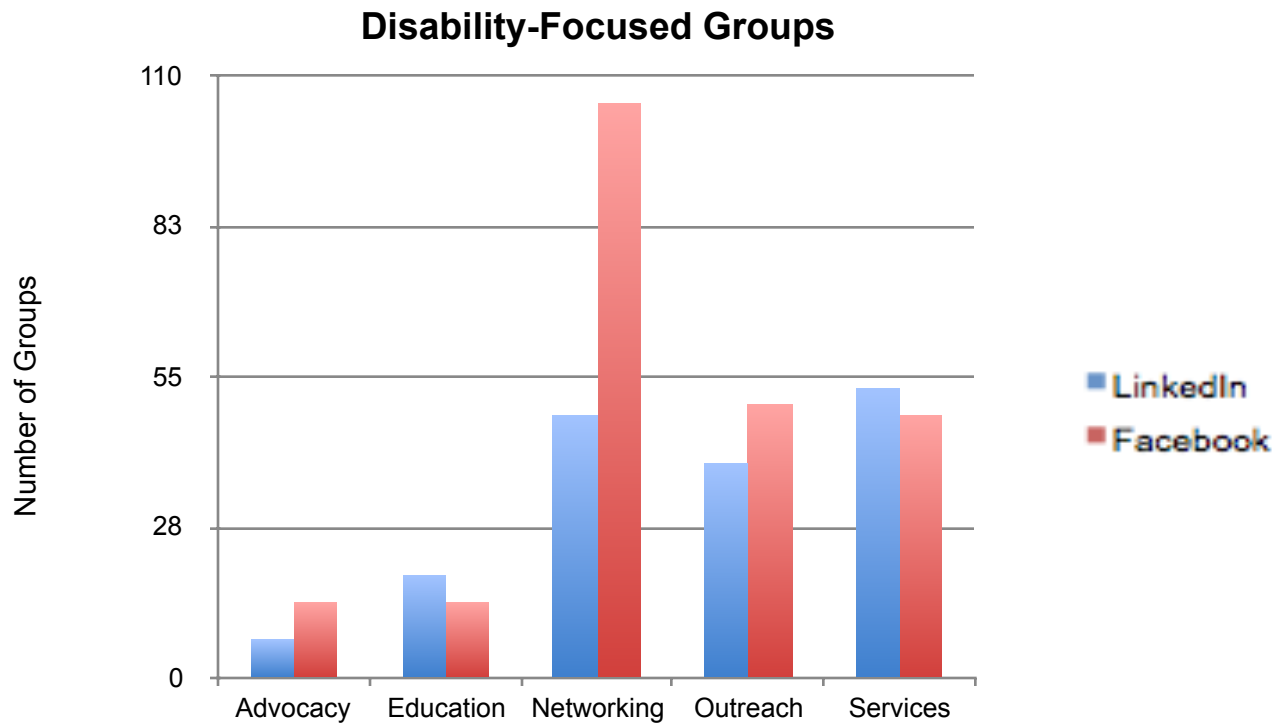|	LinkedIn	Facebook
Total hits (groups)	1458	3449
Total hits (valid groups)	343	190
Total hits (invalid)	1115	3259
% false hits	75.98%	91.79%

Methodology – Search Terms

Group categories:
- Aging in Place
- Community
   Participation
- Employment
- Healthcare/Lifestyle
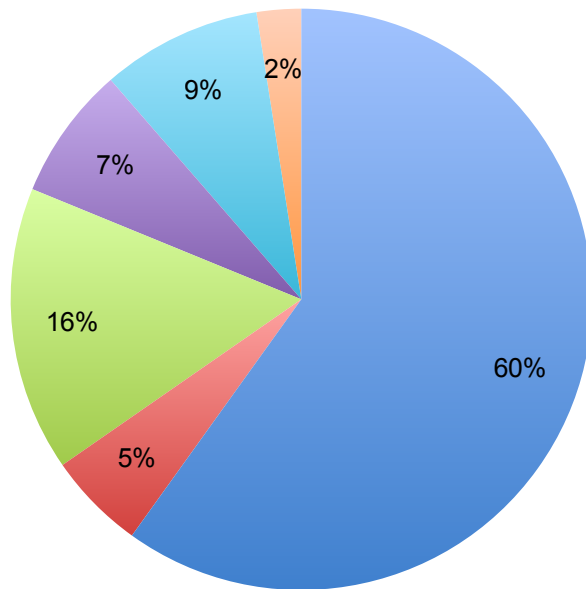- Politics/Gov/Civic
- Professional/Business
- Technology

Average Group Participation

Number of Group Members

300
225
150
75
0

Aging In Place   Healthcare / Wellness / Lifestyle   Technology

■ LinkedIn
■ Facebook

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Methodology – Function

Group categories:
- Aging in Place
- Community Participation
- Employment
- Healthcare/Lifestyle
- Politics/Gov/Civic
- Professional/Business
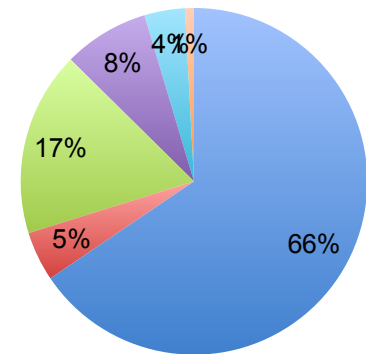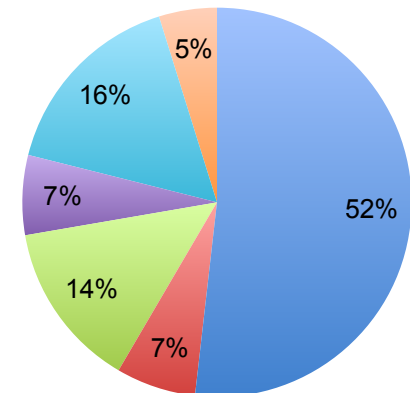- Technology

Group Activities

Function (Continued)

Disability-Focused Groups

Data Analysis:
Disability Groups

Data Analysis: Disability Groups

- Percentage of groups returned that met search criteria
  - **Facebook – 17.3%**   LinkedIn – 28.9%

- Average size of groups: 146.3

- Total number of groups in both platforms: 394

- Most common groups: legal advice, employment opportunities, and hobby-based.

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Disability/Work Groups: **Facebook**

- Groups did not vary greatly in focus
  - Most focused on general tips/networking of jobseekers
  - Few focused on a specific sub-group (people with Aspberger's)

- Disability-focused Groups had lower participation
  - 98 members versus 267 members (Disability/general)

- Majority created in the last 24 months

- **Facebook = community-focused**
- LinkedIn = business-focused

- **Facebook > active group participants** vs. LinkedIn
  - LinkedIn, 3x healthcare related groups vs. Facebook

- **Aging** (0.025%) & **disability** (0.027%) of LinkedIn
- **Aging** (0.00003%) & **disability** (0.00004%) of **Facebook**

Conclusions –
Disability community on Facebook

- Increasingly complex social and economic context of society reflected in online (social media) communities

- ICT diffusion, technology as barrier **and** opportunity

- Social media facilitates and enhances community as well as access to information

- Currently somewhat low uptake by targeted demographics

- Uptake trends are rising rapidly

- Growth of networking/info sharing = tremendous unmet potential

- Social policy implications – new channels for community support and advocacy, new participation and employment opportunities

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