Application of SIDE: Different Visual Representations of Group Members and their Effects on Information Exchange

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Online Communities

- Online communities can be characterized by
  - Strong **interpersonal bonds** between the community members
  - A **common identity** of the community members
- For both, **similarities** are important
  - Basis for interpersonal attraction
  - Basis for defining a common identity
- However, individuals also need to be different
  - ➢ **conflict**

Assimilation		**Distinctiveness**
Social identity Need to belong		Personal identity Need to be different

Membership in Online Communities

- **Extent** of user profiles varies:
  - Complete freedom
  - Only some brief information requested
  - Rich collections of information requested
- **Specification** for user profiles also varies:
  - No proposals
  - Preset input boxes
  - Suggestions for input boxes

What Kind of Information can be given in User Profiles?

User-provided information

- Physical appearance
- Personal background
- Educational background & career
- Beliefs & values
- Personality
- Interests
- Dreams & goals for the future

Usage-based information

- Online behaviour (e.g., number of messages posted or number of contacts)
- Subgroup membership
- Roles within the community

USER STATISTICS

Joined: Mon Apr 16, 2007 2:41 pm
Last visited: -
Total posts: 2125 | **Search user's posts** (4.32% of all posts / 5.20 posts per day)
Most active **Gynecology** forum: (671 Posts / 31.58% of user's posts)
Most active **Miscarriage** topic: (9 Posts / 0.42% of user's posts)

Reviewer Rank: 244,792
See all 2 reviews (262 helpful votes)

(Swinth, Farnham & Davis, 20

How to Belong and be Different at the Same Time?

- Displaying specific information about the self in the user profile:
  - **Community-relevant similarities** (e.g., beliefs and values that are in line with the community policy)
  - **Community-relevant differences** (e.g., specific expertise that is important for achieving community goals)
- Adopting community **roles** or becoming member of community **subgroups**
  - Both are a functional differentiation within the community

Research Questions

- How do disclosing differences among community members affect their behaviour within the community?

- How do emphasizing similarities among community members affect their behaviour within the community?

- How do the importance of differences and similarities depend on the context of the community?

- How effective are community members in presenting themselves in their user profiles goal-oriented?

- How effective are community members in using profile information of other community members goal-oriented?

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Information Exchange as Social Dilemma

- Information exchange is often characterized by a **conflict** between individual and collective interests:

  - Individual interest: Retaining information to maximize the individual profit

  - Collective interest: Contributing information to maximize the collective profit

    ➢ Contributing information is behaving according to the **group norm**

The Effects of Disclosing Differences vs. Emphasizing Similarities

- Research about **anonymity effects** showed that
  - Under anonymity, behaviour depends on the prevalent identity
  - Under visibility, group-serving behaviour is undermined independent of prevalent identity

- The undermining effect of **visibility** is often explained by **disclosing differences** among the group members and, consequently, undermining social identification

(Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects, Reicher et al., 1995)
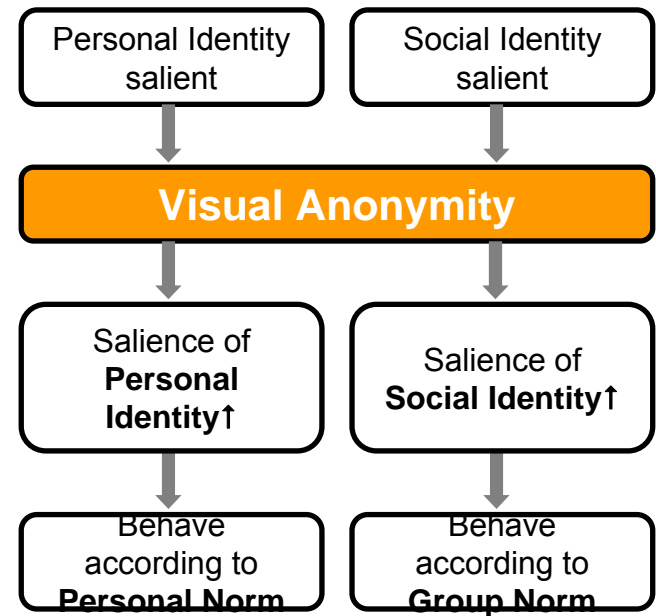
Study 1: How does Anonymity vs. **Personal Visibility** affect Information Sharing Behaviour?

Study 1: Personal Visibility of the Group Members

Participants were either represented by an personal picture or were not visible at all

(Cress, 2005)

Study 1: Main Hypothesis

Social ID Participants without portraits contribute more information than Social ID Participants with portraits and Personal ID Participants with and without portraits
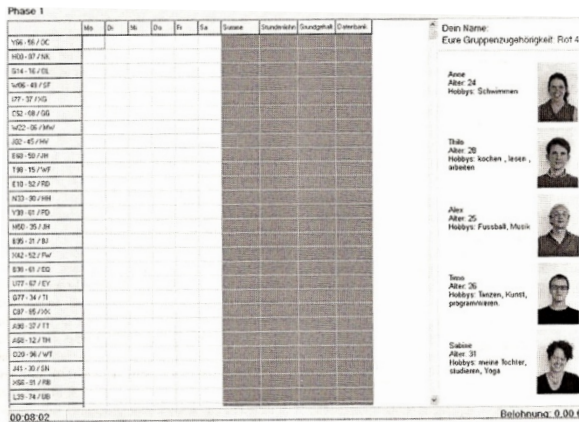
		Visual Representation	
		No Portraits	**Portraits**
Salience of Identity	**Personal ID**	- Contrib.	- Contrib.
	Social ID	+ Contrib.	- Contrib.

Study 1: Results

Consistent with the expectations, Social ID Participants without portraits contribute more information than Social ID Participants with portraits and Personal ID Participants with and without portraits.

Contrast (3, -1, -1. -1):

$F(1, 67) = 13.11$,
$p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .16$

Other contrasts (0, 0, 1, -1) & (-2, 0, 1, 1):

$F(1, 67) < 2.02$,
$p > .15$

Contributions to the database
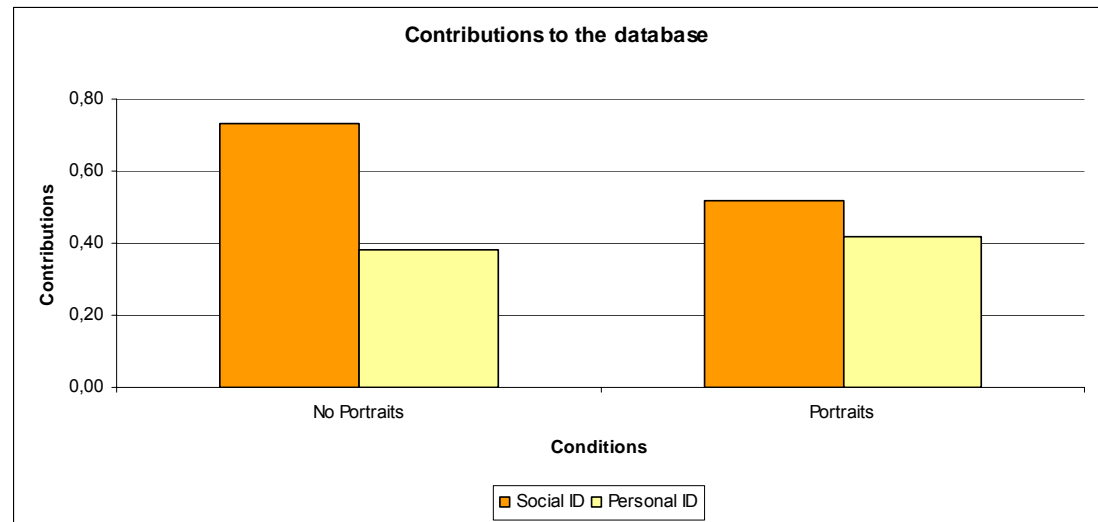
Study 2a: How does Anonymity vs. **Different-Character Representations** affect Information Sharing Behaviour?

Study 2a: Fictional Representations of the Group Members

Visual representations of the group members through pictures of well-known TV detectives (different-character representations) vs. no visual representations
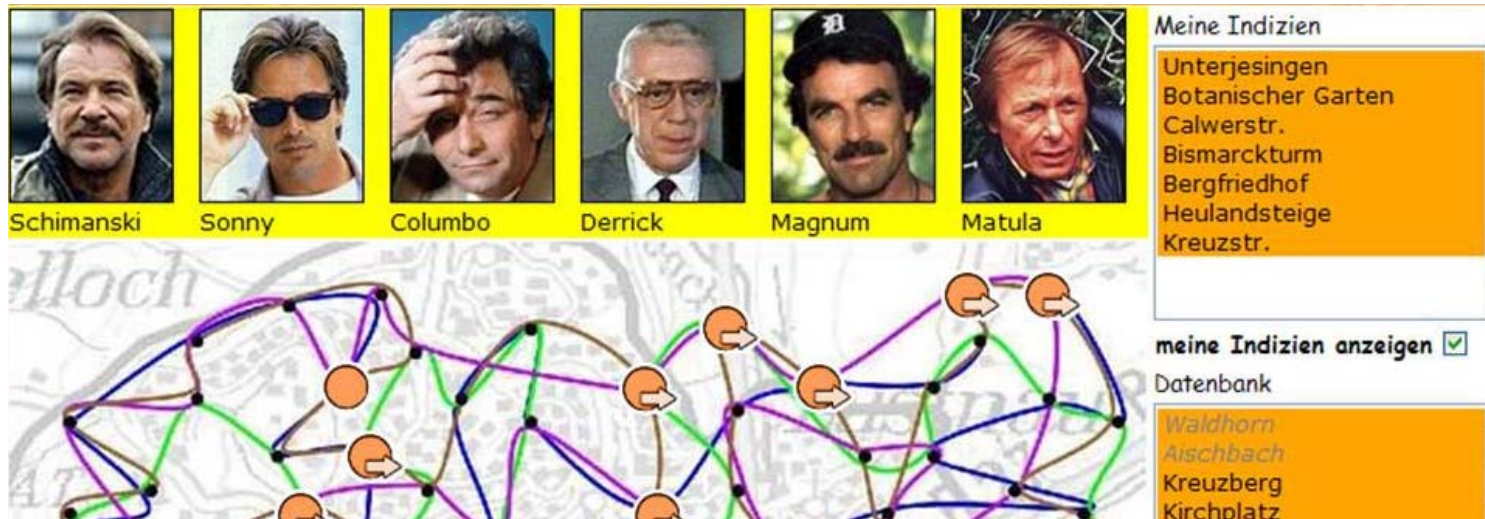
Study 2a: Main Hypothesis

Social ID Participants without representations contribute more information than Social ID Participants with heterogeneous representations and Personal ID Participants with and without heterogeneous representations

Salience of Identity		Visual Representation	
		No Repres.	Heterog. Repres.
	Personal ID	- Contrib.	- Contrib.
	Social ID	+ Contrib.	- Contrib.
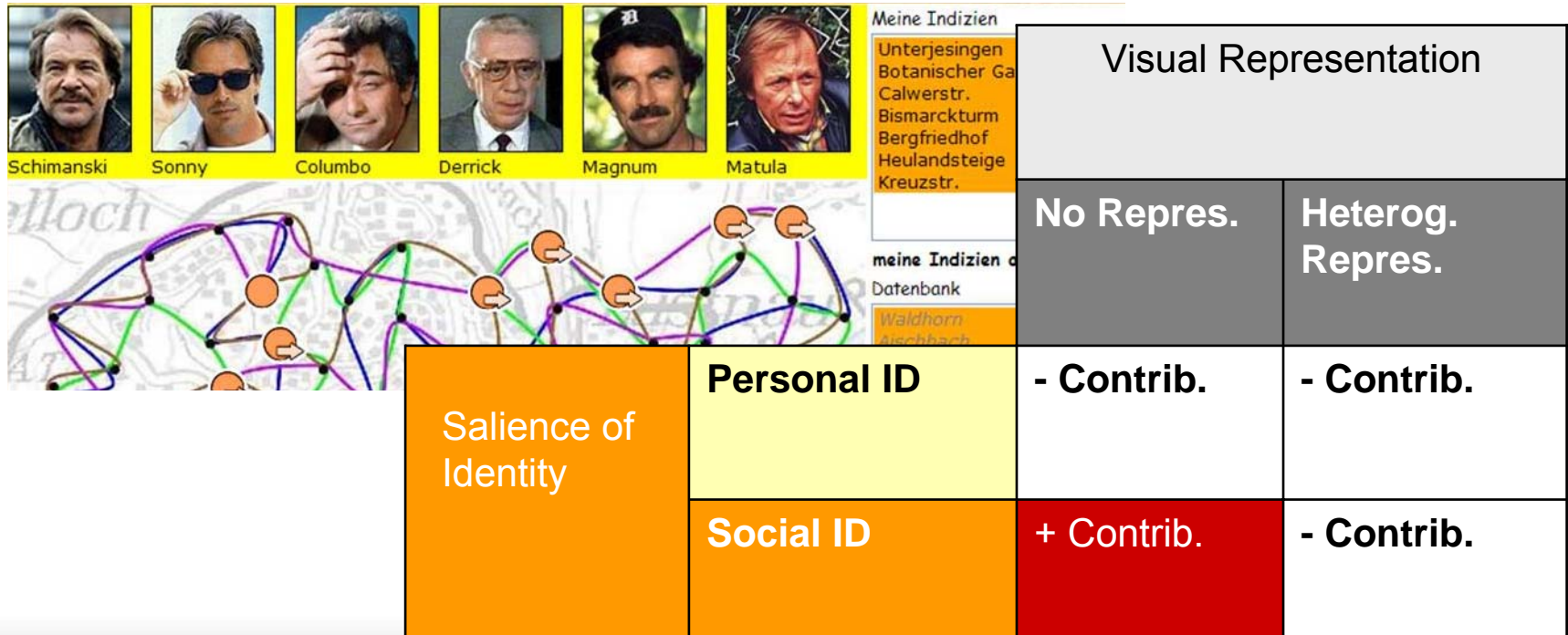
Study 2a: Results

Against the expectations, Social ID Participants with heterogeneous representations did not reduce their contributions

→ Main effect of salient identity

Contrast (3, -1, -1. -1):

$F(1, 89) = 5.39$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$

But also

Contrast (0, 1, -2, 1):

$F(1, 89) = 6.18$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .07$
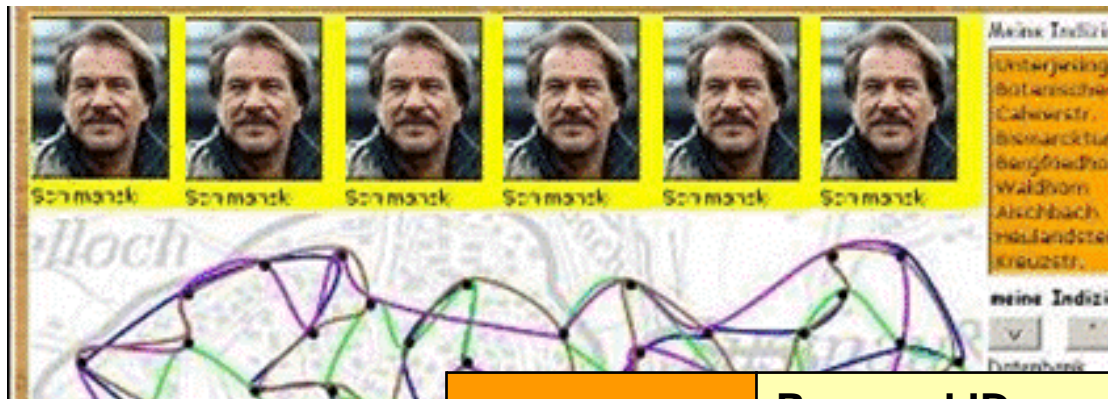
Contributions

Study 2b: How does Anonymity vs. **Same-Character Representations** affect Information Sharing Behaviour?

Study 2b: Main Hypothesis

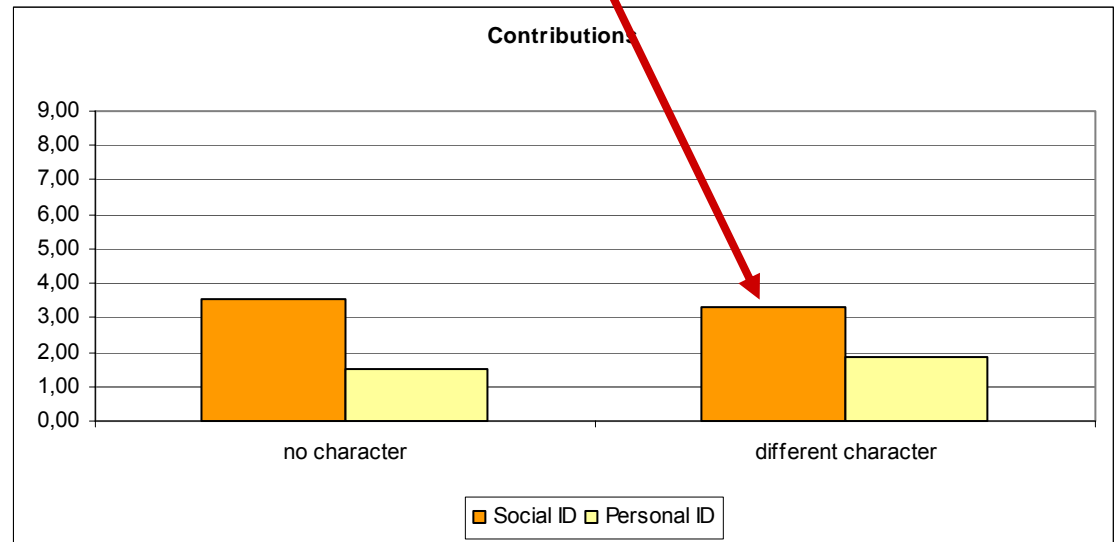Personal ID Participants without representations contribute less than Personal ID Participants with homogeneous representations and Social ID Participants with and without homogeneous representations

		Visual Representation	
		No Repres.	Homog. Repres.
Salience of Identity	Personal ID	- Contrib.	+ Contrib.
	Social ID	+ Contrib.	+ Contrib.

Study 2b: Results

Consistent with the expectations, Personal ID Participants without homogeneous representations contribute less than all other participants

Contrast (1, -3, 1, 1):

$F(1, 89) = 5.08,$
$p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$

Other contrasts
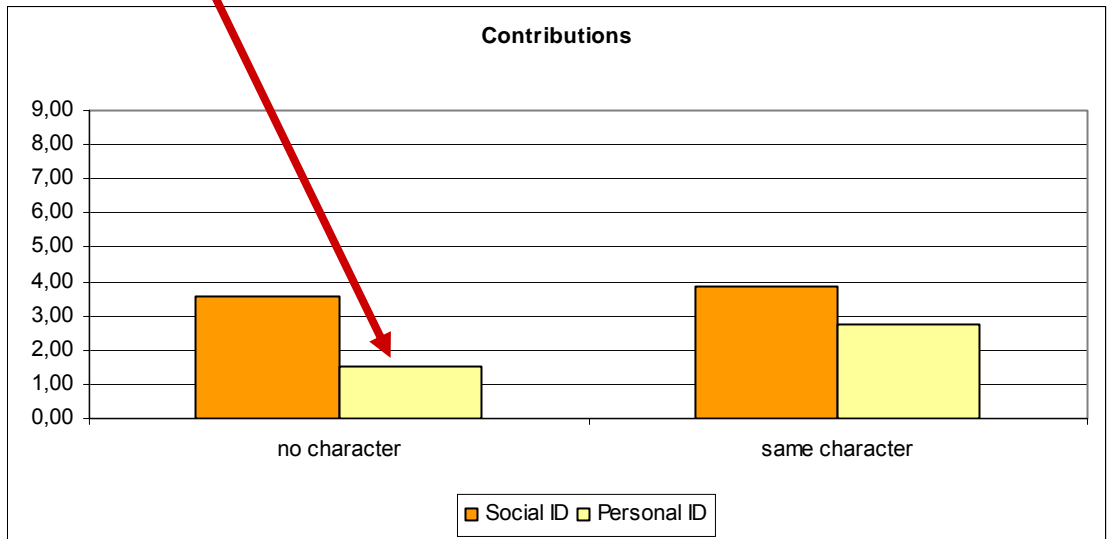(0, 0, 1, -1) & (-2, 0, 1, 1):

$F(1, 89) < 2.74,$
$p > .10$

Contributions

9,00
8,00
7,00
6,00
5,00
4,00
3,00
2,00
1,00
0,00

no character   same character

■ Social ID □ Personal ID

Conclusion of the Studies

- Fictional representations affect information exchange when stressing similarities and, thereby, fostering social identity

- Same-character representations encourage adherence to group norms in dilemma situations

- Disclosing differences might be functional in group tasks that need different expertise of group members

Future Prospects on Planned Research

- Functionality of different kinds of user profile information
  - Kinds of community-relevant similarities
  - Kinds of community-relevant differences
- Self-presentation with user profiles
  - Capability for achieving self-presentation goals
  - Feasibility for balancing assimilation and distinctiveness needs
- Usage of user profile information
  - Consequences of comparing with other community members
  - Effectiveness for finding relevant contacts or information

Thank You for Your Attention!

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