Publicly Available and Trustworthy Too?
Social Media and First Destination

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First Destination Data on Social Media

Where do graduates land after college?

• Higher Education institutions are facing increased pressure to collect career outcomes data (e.g., where graduates work, what they do…)
  • NACE guidelines recommend 65% knowledge rate (NACE, 2014, p. 6)

• Because surveys achieve limited response rates, NACE’s guidelines also advocate for collecting data from social media websites
  • Websites such as LinkedIn contain extensive career-related information

• But is social media data trustworthy?
  • Despite differing points of view, empirical data on this question is lacking
What is “Trustworthy?”

To be trustworthy, social media data should:

1. represent the career status of graduates at the time of data collection, and
2. contribute to findings that reasonably represent the population of graduates

What might get in the way of trustworthiness?

• Social media sites reflecting old or outdated career statuses
• Social media sites reflecting idealized (rather than actual) selves
• Groups being under-represented on social media sites (posting on social media is a choice)
Study Design

Performed research study on entire 2014-2015 graduating class

- Compared career outcomes data from social media sites to survey responses
  - Two social media sites: LinkedIn and ZoomInfo

- 65% survey response rate; 59% social media knowledge rate (using HEPdata service)
  - 84% total knowledge rate with all survey and social media data together

- 3,019 cases (40%) with both data types for comparison
**Research Questions**

1. Are graduates found on social media representative of the broader college student population?

2. To what extent does social media data match survey data on fields related to employment (and graduate school)?
   - Set a target “fit rate” between social media and survey data at **90% of cases**

3. Can we improve the fit rate between social media and survey data by considering key variables?
   - e.g., source of social media data, start dates
Method

Using a coding guide, the research team assessed the fit between social media data and survey data:

- Survey data were collected following NACE guidelines; 1-month prior to graduation through 6-months past graduation.
- Social media data were collected 6 months past graduation.

Coded data fields related to:

1. Employment (e.g., employer, position title)
2. Continuing Education (e.g., institution, degree)
Research Question 1: Is Social Media Representative of Graduates?

- Examined availability of career outcomes data on social media for different groups of students

- Statistically significant differences across:
  - Gender: fewer males on Social Media (S.M.)
  - Citizenship: fewer INTL students on S.M.
  - Grade Point Average: fewer students with low GPA’s

**Take home message:** Certain groups may be underrepresented on social media.

Note: Chi-square tests of independence were used to examine differences across gender and citizenship. Logistic regression tests were used for G.P.A. analyses.
Research Question 2: Fit Rates Between Social Media Data and Survey Data

We compared social media data to survey self-reports on five employment fields.

On average, a match was found ~7 out of 10 times
- Did not meet our “trustworthiness target”

Take home message: Using all social media data, we fell well below our “trustworthiness” target.
Research Question 2: Fit Rates Between Social Media Data and Survey Data (by social media source)

Does the source of social media data matter?

- Not really!
- Only significant difference was on Location variable

![Bar Chart](image)

**Take home message:** Little difference found between different directory-based social media sites.
Research Question 3: How to improve the fit…

Does the start-date of social media positions make a difference?
- Illinois graduates unlikely to begin working prior to commencement
- Positions with start-dates prior to graduation month may be outdated

Fit rates generally increased for positions with more recent start dates
- Start date after graduation fit rates: about 8 of 10 cases
  - 85% for position title and employer
  - Much closer to “trustworthiness target”

Take home message: Start-dates matter
Summary and Take Home Messages

1. Certain groups may be underrepresented on social media
   • Especially international students and graduates with low GPA’s

2. On average, social media data matched survey self-reports just 70% of the time
   • Few differences across the directory-based social media sources we assessed (LinkedIn, ZoomInfo)

3. Fit rates improved for social media positions with start dates after the graduation month
   • 85% agreement for employer and position title
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