

Community Commitment

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Online Communities Are Everywhere

- Social collectives with particular themes
 - Connecting virtual and real
 - Focusing mainly on virtual

- Rapid growth

- Online activity key to success
 - Empty communities with stale content cannot accomplish their purpose
 - For text-based communities, this means message activity

Members Are The Community

- Why contribute instead of free-riding?
 - Altruism, reciprocity, reputation, ideology
- Why this community and not another?
 - Loyalty in the face of abundant alternatives
 - Variance in behavior across communities
- Is contribution all that matters?
 - People do much more than just post messages
 - What motivates different behaviors?

Organizational Parallels

- Similar problem in past research
 - Not just “Why do people work?”
 - Money, status, socialization, boredom...
 - Instead, “Why do people work HERE?”
 - Organizational commitment
 - And, what do people do at their jobs?
 - Expected behaviors, citizenship behaviors, etc.

- Online communities similar to volunteer organizations, but with weaker glue
 - Mobility, visibility, geography

Commitment Research

- Distinct Types of Individual-Organization Bonds
 1. Affective Commitment – “want”
 - *I love working here*
 2. Normative Commitment – “ought”
 - Working here is the *right* thing to do
 3. Continuance Commitment – “need”
 - *I have no better alternatives than to work here*

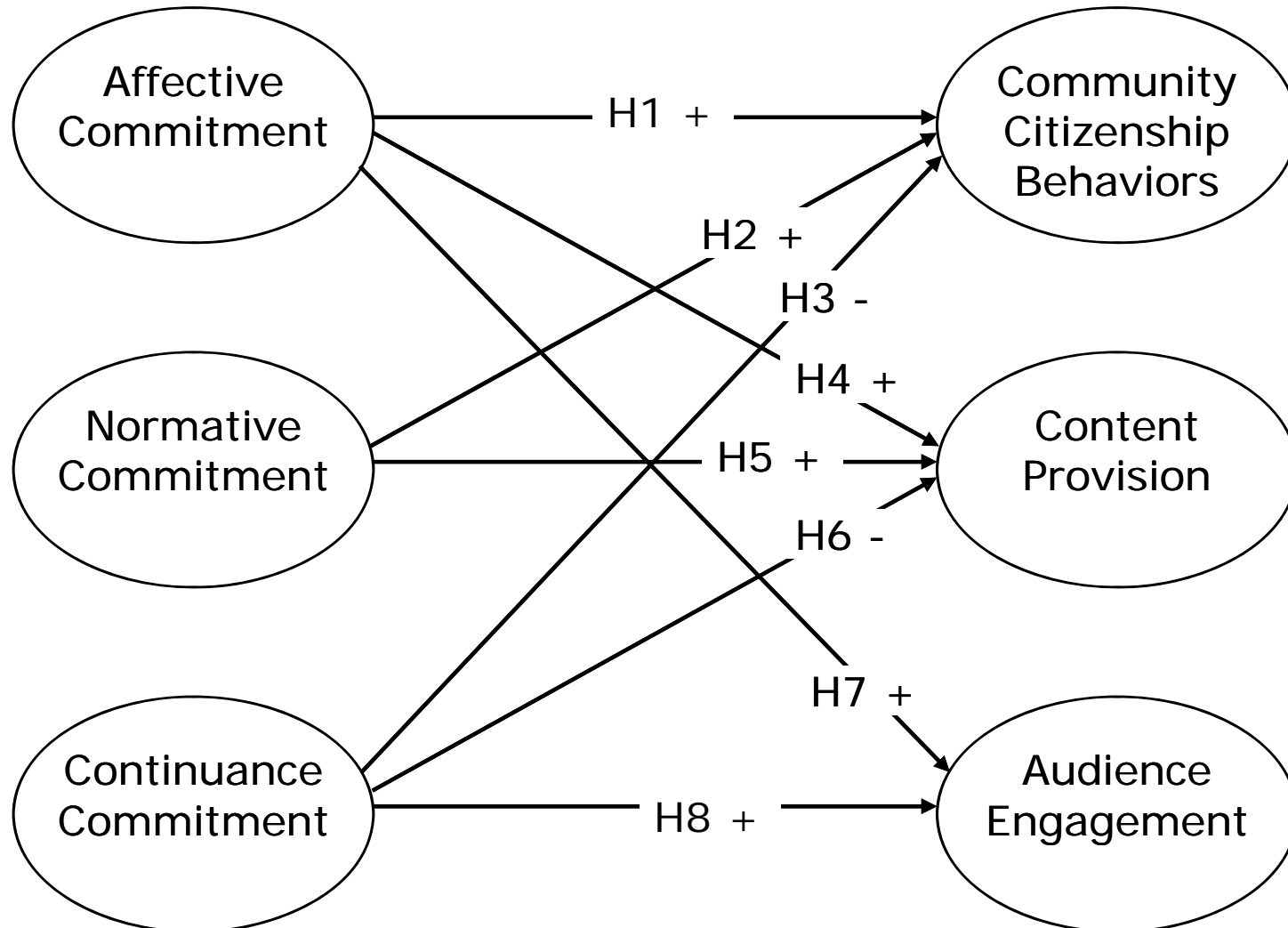
- Found to influence key organizational behaviors

Online Behaviors



1. Community Citizenship Behaviors
 - Propagation of community norms about socially appropriate conduct
2. Content Provision
 - Posting information and/or knowledge
3. Audience Engagement
 - Consumption of community resources

Research Model



Research Site



- Contacted owner of large, general discussion community
 - current events, entertainment, fashion, politics, technology, many more
- Invited participation via posting
 - Sample of 192 members
 - Average age 23.5, tenure 360 days

Data

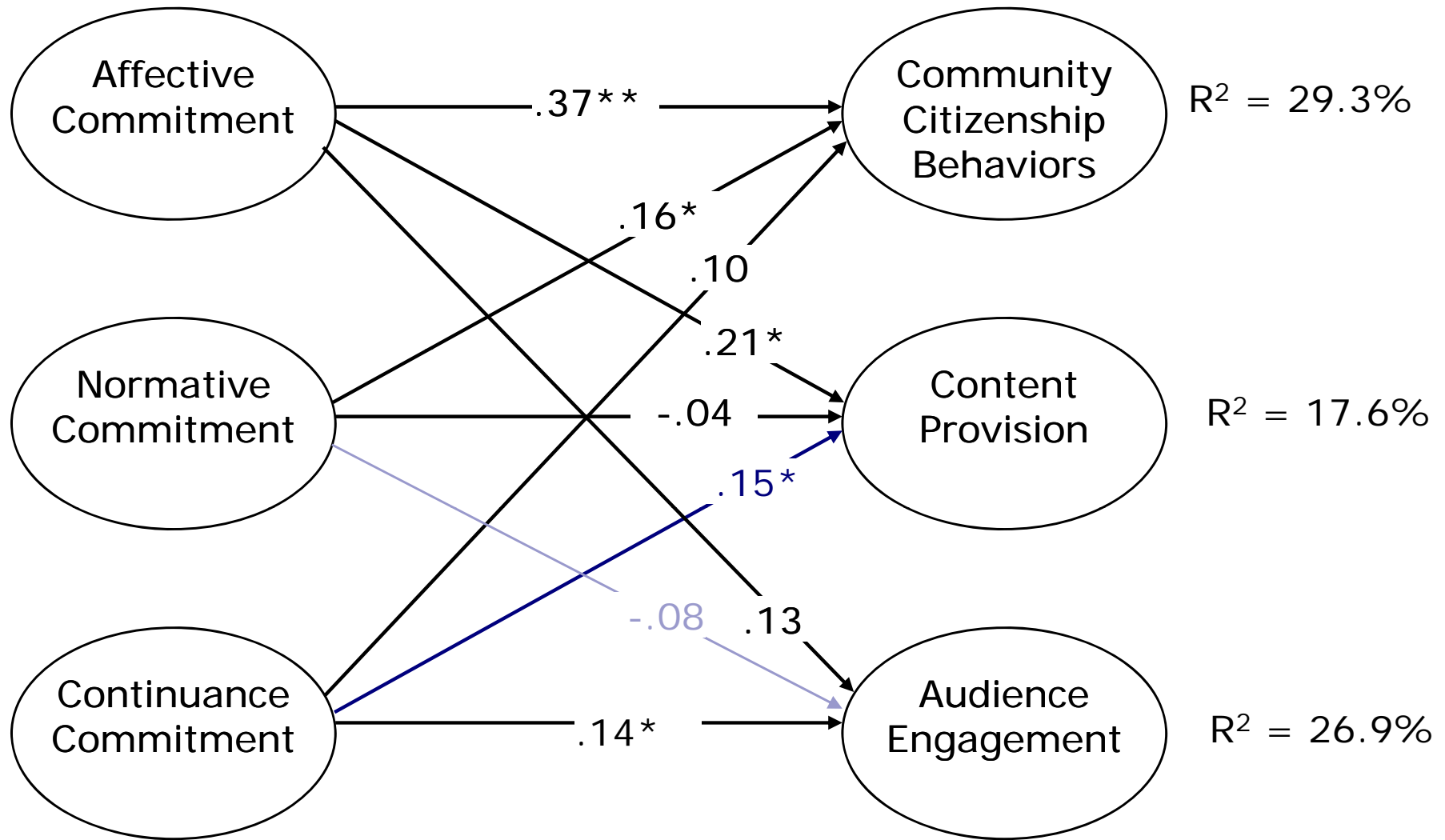
- Affective Commitment (5 items)
 - “I have a real emotional connection to this site”
- Normative Commitment (4 items)
 - “I visit this site partly out of a sense of duty”
- Continuance Commitment (3 items)
 - “If I stopped coming to this site, it would take me a long time to find a site that could replace it”
- Community Citizenship Behavior (6)
 - “I praise users when they post an informative message or comment”
 - “I reprimand other users’ inappropriate behavior”

- Content Provision (3)
 - Thread starts, replies, views on own threads
- Audience Engagement (2)
 - Visits, threads viewed

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Results (* = p<.05, ** = p<.01)



Implications for Research

- A more integrative theory for explaining online behaviors
 - Compatible but non-interchangeable
- Multiple kinds of bonds can arise, each producing different behaviors
 - Affirms importance of AC
 - Questions importance of NC
 - Reveals significance of CC – typically ignored or downplayed
- Suggests different styles of community involvement

Implications for Administrators

- Forget about “ideal member”
 - Diversity may be necessary to keep community growing and ensure that it does not become too introspective and exclusionary
 - No one type of member does it all
- Attracting vs. developing members
 - Importance of cultivating members
- Balancing efforts to develop different kinds of members
 - Not all types of work need to be performed by everyone
 - Align efforts with desired outcomes

Conclusions



- Member-community bonds as drivers of behaviors
- Set of key behaviors
- Helps explain community success in ways that managers can act on



Thank You



Controls



- Gender → Content provision, audience engagement
- Tenure → Audience engagement
- Age → nothing

Community Description

- 54,000 registered members
- 230,000 threads
- 3.4 million posts
- viewed 42 million times

Response Rate

Accessed Survey

- 192 completed surveys out of 741 who accessed survey site (= 25.9%)

Read Invitation

- Invitations were viewed 3,618 times
- 741 people looked at the first page of the online survey (which was detailed description of the study)
- 591 started the survey, from which 324 (9.0% response rate based on number of invitation views) completed the survey,
- 192 were usable (5.3% usable response rate based on number of invitation views)

Details

		# of Items	Response Mean	Std. Dev.	Cronbach's Alpha	Internal Consistency	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Affective Commitment	5	4.70	1.40	0.92	0.94	0.76	0.87								
2	Normative Commitment	4	3.50	1.64	0.90	0.93	0.78	0.52	0.88							
3	Continuance Commitment	3	5.13	1.42	0.81	0.89	0.72	0.51	0.30	0.85						
4	Community Citizenship Behavior	2	4.87	1.13	0.67	0.86	0.75	0.27	0.12	0.22	0.87					
5	Content Provision	3	n.a.	n.a.	0.90	0.95	0.87	0.51	0.39	0.35	0.24	0.93				
6	Audience Engagement	2	n.a.	n.a.	0.96	0.98	0.97	0.19	0.05	0.16	0.13	0.76	0.98			
7	Gender	1	0.84	0.36	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.00	0.01	-0.08	-0.07	0.28	0.40	1.00		
8	Age	1	23.5	7.37	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	-0.03	0.00	0.04	0.00	-0.17	-0.26	-0.39	1.00	
9	Tenure (days)	1	360.0	208.7	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.13	0.09	0.02	0.04	0.16	0.35	0.33	-0.17	1.00

¹ Diagonal elements are the square root of Average Variance Extracted

² All correlations less than -0.16 or greater than 0.16 are significant at the p<0.05 level

Measurement Model

- Good convergent validity
 - Loadings > 0.7 (after 3 items dropped)
 - Internal consistencies > 0.7
 - AVEs > 0.5
- Good discriminant validity
 - Items most strongly correlated with intended construct
 - $\sqrt{\text{AVE}} > \text{interconstruct correlations}$