**FIRM BOUNDED ONLINE COMMUNITIES: COLLABORATION AND COMPETITION**

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**MOTIVATION**

Previous IS research on online communities (OC) has suggested that membership overlap creates competition amongst communities because their overlapping members must choose where to allocate their limited time and attention (e.g., Wang et al. 2012).

Organization-bound OC, however, also need to seek collaboration—such as to tackle common problems together and share knowledge. Overlapping members are valuable resources because they can help overcome the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic boundaries that may exist between communities.

**RESEARCH QUESTION AND THEORIES**

What are the effects of membership overlap on inter-community and intra-community knowledge sharing?

- Social/organizational identity perspective
- Co-opetition perspective
- Boundary spanning perspective

**PRELIMINARY EXPLORATORY FINDINGS**

**Background**

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<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>N/community membership</th>
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<td>as of June 2006</td>
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<td>as of June 2010</td>
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Individuals had increasingly joined multiple communities as registered members.

As a result, OC shared more and more members with other OC over time.

The relationship between an individual’s membership and discussion participation.

Inter-community collaboration via joint discussion has been enabled since early 2008.

**Inter-Community Competition View**

Membership Overlap harms Inter-Community Knowledge Sharing

- Analysis: 2,103 community-month observations
- Fixed-effect model analysis

**Inter-Community Collaboration View**

Membership Overlap may facilitate Inter-Community Knowledge Sharing

- Analysis: 2,300 inter-community (joint) discussion threads
- Regressions

**TENTATIVE RESULTS**

- Two communities are considered sharing a member if the individual is a registered member of both communities.
- The degree of membership overlap between a focal community and another community is calculated as the sum of the degree of membership overlap between the focal community and each of the other communities with which it shares members in a given month.

**DATA**

- Two data sets of discussion threads generated by 155 OC internal to a global energy company (2010.1-7 for the individual-level analysis & 2008.1-2010.6 for the other two)
- Average community size: 162 (min. 10 / max. 1900+).
- Community membership: 2.4 / person.

**DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

- Community level - DV: # of participants / discussion thread (at the focal community)
- Individual level - DV: % of the replies a member provides in a given month that are made in his/her home community
- Inter-community - DV: # of participants (of each group) / discussion thread (in the shared discussion)

**REFERENCE**