Re-tweeting and the Theory of Middle-Status Conformity in the Post-Adoption Use of Twitter

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Abstract

In this paper, we investigate the post-adoption usage of the micro-blogging platform Twitter at the firm level, specifically the act of re-tweeting (reposting what others have tweeted) and the propensity to have one's tweets re-tweeted by others. Using a sample of tweeting activity from US colleges and universities, we demonstrate empirically that re-tweeting activity is consistent with the theory of middle-status conformity and that re-tweeting in a manner inconsistent with the institution's status in the marketplace has a differential impact on their successful post-adoption usage of the platform, which was measured as the propensity to have one's tweets re-tweeted by others. For high-status and upper middle-status colleges and universities, re-tweeting content posted by others less than normative expectations is more effective than more, but for lower middle-status and low-status colleges and universities, re-tweeting content posted by others more than normative expectations is more effective than less. Our study contributes to the post-adoption usage of information systems literature at the firm level by demonstrating empirically the importance of status to the technology, organization and environment (TOE) framework.

1. Introduction

Although it is difficult to estimate how many companies have Twitter accounts and use them actively, it is safe to say that a large majority of US based companies have adopted and are using the Twitter platform in some manner. As such, studying the 'adoption versus non-adoption' of Twitter by US firms is a relatively moot research question. However, understanding post-adoption usage of Twitter and the impact that certain practices have in terms of connecting firms with current and potential customers are still relevant and meaningful research inquiries [1]. In this manner, the adoption process is a multi-stage process that does not end when a firm chooses to adopt a specific technology or platform [2, 3]. This is even more evident with Twitter as the value of the platform is largely determined by the long-term, continuous engagement by the firm and by the firm's followers.

On social media platforms more broadly than just Twitter, value is co-created by the firm and its followers largely through social interactions after the technology has been adopted [4]. On the micro-blogging platform Twitter, members post short 140 character tweets (messages), reply to tweets posted by other members, reply to other members more generally, and/or re-tweet (repost) content posted by other members. A firm may create some initial value on Twitter by posting creative content, which may be read primarily by the firm's followers or anybody who may happen to read the tweet. The long-term (and larger) value of the platform, however, occurs when tweets are re-tweeted by others and, consequently, a message spreads (trends) throughout the network beyond just the firm's followers. As such, the act of re-tweeting is one of the primary means to generate a network effect and to (rapidly) diffuse information throughout the network [5].

On Twitter, firms are both information producers and information consumers. Firms use the platform to advertise their products and services (information production) and to participate in conversations that are happening on the platform related to the firm's product or service offerings (information consumption). There is a communal aspect to Twitter where "when you see a tweet posted by someone else that you would like to share with your followers, it has become customary and polite to re-tweet that comment" ([6], para. 6). Over the years, the re-tweet has become an integral part and a "cornerstone of Twitter use" ([7], para. 1). Furthermore, mass re-tweeting is the norm whereby those Twitter accounts that re-tweet the most often are considered the most influential nodes on the platform [8].

One common framework for investigating post-adoption usage of information technology at the firm level is the technology, organization and environment (TOE) framework [9]. The technology context may

involve any type of technology that a firm has adopted or may adopt. The organizational context typically refers to any resources that a firm has available such as its size, network linkages or available slack resources (resource-based view of the firm). The environmental context refers to the external environment such as the structure of the firm's competitors or the structure of the industry. These three factors enable or constrain a firm's adoption and continued use (post-adoption) of a particular technology [3, 9].

This framework has been used to explain post-adoption use and value creation in contexts such as electronic procurement [10] and electronic business [3]. Within this framework, however, one organizational and environmental factor that has not been considered in the post-adoption literature is a firm's status. Status is both an organizational and an environmental factor, because a firm's status is an organizational resource that may be leveraged to generate future returns (organizational factor) and a firm's status is also relative to other firms in the industry (environmental factor) [11-14]. Within this framework in the context of the successful post-adoption use of Twitter, status is an important (yet missing) variable because a firm's status in the marketplace helps determine what acceptable and unacceptable behavior is in a given context [16].

The purpose of our study is twofold. First, we investigate the role that status (at the firm level) plays in following (or not following) norms embedded in the Twitter platform, specifically the norm of re-tweeting content posted by others. Second, we investigate the impact that firms following the re-tweeting norms has on their successful post-adoption use of the platform, which was measured as the propensity to have one's tweets re-tweeted by others. In order to address these two research questions, we conducted an analysis of the tweeting activity for a sample of US colleges and universities.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: (1) define status and the theory of middle-status conformity in order to develop a set of research hypotheses, (2) discuss the research design and methods utilized in this paper, (3) discuss the results of our empirical investigation, and (4) discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our research.

2. Theory of Middle-Status Conformity & Research Hypotheses

Status is a social characteristic defined as the "the unearned ascription of social rank" [13] or a "differentiation among individuals and groups with respect to various valued outcomes" [12]. Status

characteristics theory is a branch of expectation states theories focusing on the status organizing process or processes in which evaluations and attitudes regarding competence shape interactional behavior through observable features of the interactional process [14]. A status characteristic may be conceptualized as an attribute that actors (which may be firms, groups or individuals) possess in differing degrees, but the relative merit of the status characteristic is based on attitudes and values that are shared within a group or a society [14, 15]. In this manner, a firm's social rank influences its competitiveness in the marketplace and often defines what is considered acceptable behavior [13, 16].

The theory of middle-status conformity postulates that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between status and the propensity to follow group norms [16-18]. According to this theory, middle-status actors may be expected to follow group norms more than their high- and low-status counterparts, because middle-status actors have a degree of insecurity and uncertainty in terms of possibly moving up or down within the social order of the group. Therefore, middle-status actors are bound to follow group norms, because they could lose status (fear disenfranchisement) just as easily as they may gain status and following the group norms is the safest (least risky) course of action [16]. Contrarily, low-status and high-status actors have less of a risk based incentive to conform to group norms due to their structural position within the hierarchy. Low-status actors have less at stake to conform to group norms, because actors in this status group are typically excluded regardless of whether they conform to or deviate from behavioral expectations [16]. High-status actors are generally comfortable in their position in the status hierarchy, so they generally feel more comfortable deviating from group norms [19, 20].

The theory of middle-status conformity has been used to explain a wide variety of social science phenomena, most notably the diffusion of innovations [21, 22]. The theory has been used to help explain innovation adoptions during the intermediate stage of the diffusion process [23], micro-institutional change [24], organizational structure as it relates to exploration and exploitation in the Hollywood film industry [25], contributions to open source software development communities [26], dissolution of client-firm relationships [27][i], external evaluations in French restaurants [28], and the voluntary restatement of firm earnings [29].

We suggest that the theory of middle-status conformity is applicable to the post-adoption usage of Twitter (and possibly other social media platforms) in relation to the norms embedded in the technology. We

argue that high-status firms have less of a need to follow the norms embedded in the platform (re-tweeting in the case of Twitter), because these firms can withstand external criticism if they are perceived to be appropriating the platform in a unique or non-normative manner. For example, in the field of academia there is probably not all that much risk of an Ivy League institution losing ground (status reduction) for being criticized for not using the platform in a normative manner.

We also expect low-status firms to not follow the norms embedded in the technology, but for different reasons. These firms do not have much downside risk, because they are already at the bottom of the social hierarchy [16]. As such, external negative criticism for not understanding how to use social media is not that severe (i.e. they do not have far to fall). For example, in the field of academia an institution perceived as being a 'diploma mill' (i.e. a low-status academic institution) is probably not going to rise or fall (in status) by following (or not following) tweeting and re-tweeting norms.

Middle-status firms, however, are mired in the middle. They have a relatively equal amount of upside and downside risk. As such, we argue that these firms will have a higher propensity to follow the tweeting and re-tweeting norms, because they have to balance the risk of losing status with potentially gaining status. In this manner, negative criticism for not understanding the norms associated with the platform is potentially more damaging relative to their high- and low-status counterparts. As such, we hypothesize the following:

> *H1: Middle-status firms will conform to the norms of the Twitter platform more than their high-and low-status counterparts*

Demonstrating that firms follow the Twitter norms in a manner consistent with their status in the marketplace is interesting (and quite descriptive), but does not help determine whether following the norms will lead to a more or less successful adoption of the platform. In general, high-status firms are perceived as the trend setters; these firms are perceived to be creating the norms instead of following the existing norms [21]. We expect that high-status firms that are perceived as the trend setters will be more successful on the platform relative to other high-status firms that simply follow the norms of the platform. On Twitter, for example, the act of re-tweeting is repeating what others have already tweeted. We expect high-status

firms that re-tweet less than their high-status peers will be more successful on the platform, because these firms will be generating content (leading the conversation or setting the trend) as opposed to re-posting content generated by other members. Low-status firms, on the other hand, are not expected to be the trend setters in the marketplace and may be perceived as being 'wannabes' if they act in a manner inconsistent with their social status.

Navis and Glynn [30] demonstrate that new firms in new market segments, which typically are low-status in their beginnings, seek to establish legitimacy before attempting to differentiate themselves within the marketplace. Furthermore, the establishment of legitimacy within a market segment is a resource that may be used to secure future gains after its establishment [31]. On Twitter, re-tweeting content posted by other members is a means to establish legitimacy on the platform ([5] - [8]). As such, we expect low-status firms that are making more of an effort to establish legitimacy on the platform (i.e. re-tweet more than normative expectations) to be more successful relative to those low-status firms not engaging in legitimating activities as frequently.

High-status firms, on the other hand, are more concerned with differentiation than with establishing legitimacy [30]. Additionally, re-tweeting activity may be a status reducing activity for high-status firms (especially when those tweets being re-tweeted are authored by low-status actors), because status leaks between exchange partners, which means that the mere act of being associated with a low-status actor reduces the status of the high-status actor [32]. Therefore, we expect high-status firms who engage in less re-tweeting activity will have a higher propensity to be more successful on the platform relative to those high-status actors who re-tweet more than normative expectations due to the negative effects of status flows and leakages embedded in the act of re-tweeting.

This leads to the following hypotheses:

> *H2a: Low-status firms conforming more than expected will have greater success on the Twitter platform.*

> *H2b: High-status firms conforming less than expected will have greater success on the Twitter platform.*

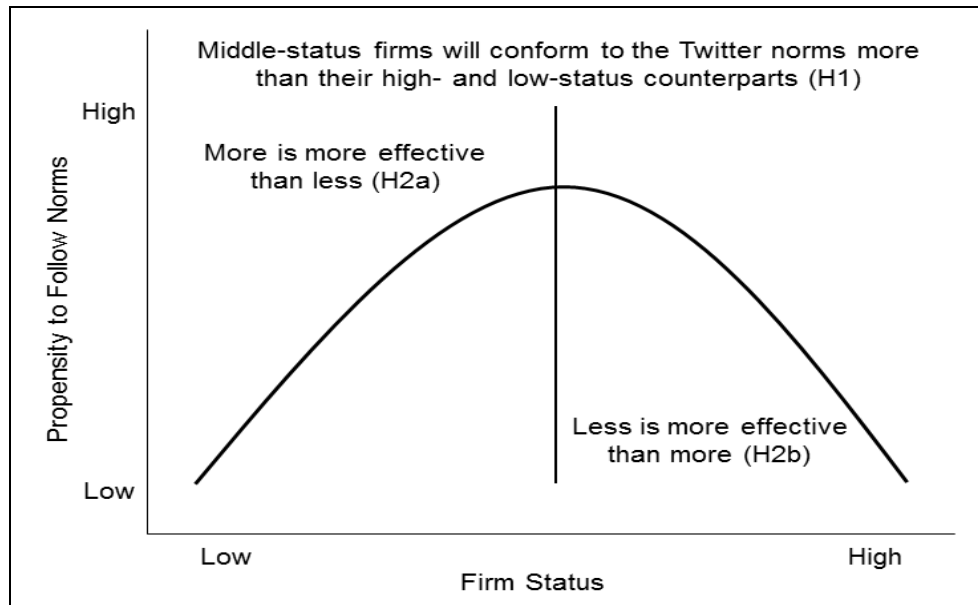The research model capturing the above hypotheses is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research model.

3. Research Design and Methods

We empirically tested these hypotheses using tweets and re-tweets in calendar year 2012 from a sample of US colleges and universities. We chose US colleges and universities and the Twitter platform for several reasons. First, the current customers of colleges and universities (i.e. their students) are typically adept at using a variety of social platforms and social media is an important tool used in the classroom [33, 34]. Second, we are investigating the post-adoption use of social media and Twitter has been online since 2006. As such, the Twitter platform is a very mature technology (in Internet time) and it is very difficult to find US colleges and universities that do not have a link to their Twitter accounts on their home pages. Furthermore, US colleges and universities are both information consumers as well as information producers (irrespective of the status of the institution). US colleges and universities use Twitter to advertise their schools (information producers) and they are also consumers of information tweeted by their current and former students as well as other institutions which they may follow on the platform.

Third, as previously mentioned, the value of social media (more broadly than just Twitter) is co-created between the firm and its network of followers [4]. The act of re-tweeting is an interesting instantiation of the co-creation of value through social media and social networks, while also representing a core interactive feature of the platform. Additionally, there is a normative expectation that users will share interesting links, pictures, and content posted by other users of the platform [5]. Consequently, re-tweeting is one of the core usage norms in the post-adoption appropriation of Twitter.

In order to determine our sample and the status of US colleges and universities, we used the 2012 US News and World Report rankings. Although there are many different rankings, the US News and World Report publication is considered the authority on the ranking of US colleges and universities and the one that most typically appears in recruiting marketing materials.[ii] They publish many different rankings from regional rankings to highly specialized rankings. We used the general national ranking, which lists US colleges and universities (primarily research institutions) that "offer a full range of undergraduate majors, plus master's and Ph.D. programs" in order to get a broad spectrum of institutions ranked using a consistent set of criteria across the entire sample.[iii]

The status of each institution was determined using the aforementioned ranking in US News and World Report (2012 ranking in the national universities category). We then grouped institutions in clusters of 25 (i.e. 1-25 was rank 1, 26-50 was rank 2, and so on), because the US News and World Report only publishes the rankings of the top 200 institutions in this particular list. The remaining institutions are labeled as either "ranked not published" or "unranked." This made using a continuous scale not feasible. Clustering in groups of 25 was chosen (as opposed to 20 or 30), because of the significance and prevalence of the 'top 25' marketing tactic used in admission's advertising in the field of academia. Clustering the data in this manner resulted in 10 status groups. Of the 281 schools in the published rankings, 8 were removed

because they did not adopt Twitter in 2012, which left 273 schools (see Table 1 for Descriptive Statistics).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

Status Group	Ranking	Sample Size	Tweets Per Day Avg	Tweets Per Day SDEV	Followers Avg	Followers SDEV	Re-tweets Avg	Re-tweets SDEV	Tweets Re-tweeted / 100 Followers Avg	Tweets Re-tweeted / 100 Followers SDEV	Tweets Re-tweeted By Others Avg	Tweets Re-tweeted By Others SDEV
1	1-25	26	3.79	1.72	35,858	46,444	188	227	18	10	852	459
2	26-50	22	3.49	1.61	17,170	14,757	282	265	21	13	549	305
3	51-75	24	2.87	1.57	20,679	16,803	160	190	21	17	558	349
4	76-100	22	2.40	2.28	14,194	15,871	180	352	18	13	377	230
5	101-125	29	2.87	1.59	12,993	11,511	245	258	20	12	429	241
6	126-150	18	3.11	1.49	12,778	12,531	253	212	21	17	440	283
7	151-175	27	2.94	2.00	8,980	8,558	167	195	19	14	447	382
8	176-200	26	2.38	1.53	5,858	3,883	149	174	19	13	306	214
9	Ranked Not Published	66	2.24	1.55	5,003	3,684	142	140	23	17	321	248
10	Unranked	13	1.95	1.81	4,319	5,237	76	108	10	6	224	262
	Totals	273	2.75	1.75	12,844	19,415	180	216	20	14	441	337

The dependent variable used to test the first hypothesis is the number of times that a US college or university re-tweeted content that was posted by another Twitter user. Using the Twitter API, we counted the number of re-tweets that each US college or university had in calendar year 2012. In this analysis, we are controlling for the number of tweets per day and the number of other Twitter users the institution is following, because there is logically an increased likelihood of re-tweeting activity simply due to having a large volume of tweets (i.e. the more an institution tweets, the higher the likelihood that one of them will be a re-tweet) and due to an institution following a large number of other users (i.e. an institution will have a higher likelihood of finding a tweet to re-tweet due to high number of following connections). We then used a simple linear regression in order to predict re-tweeting activity as a squared function of the status group and these two control variables (See Equation 1).

Equation 1: *Number of Retweets = β_0 + β_1(Status Group) + β_2(Status Group)^2 + β_3(Tweets Per day) + β_4(Following) + ε*

Colinearity between the independent variables in Equation 1 was assessed using the variance inflation factors (VIF). In our sample, all of the VIFs were between 1.06 and 1.13, which is well below the common cutoffs of 4 and 10 [35]. An analysis of the

Cook's D statistic for all institutions in our sample revealed that no data point had any undue influence on our results (at the 0.05 level).

In order to determine the successful post-adoption use of Twitter and to test the second set of hypotheses, we used the number of times that a tweet posted by a US college or university was re-tweeted by another Twitter user as the dependent variable. This was chosen as the success metric, because the act of re-tweeting is one of the primary means to generate a network effect and to (rapidly) diffuse information throughout the network beyond just the institution's immediate followers [5]. We used the Twitter API to determine this variable for each institution in our sample. This variable had to be normalized based on the number of followers, because the likelihood of a tweet being re-tweeted by others is logically dependent on how many other users have the potential to read the tweet. For example, an institution such as Harvard with over 200K followers has a much higher likelihood of having its tweets re-tweeted relative to an institution such as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute with only 2.5K followers simply due to the size of the following and the number of people who have the possibility of reading their tweets. We determined the number of followers as of 12/31/2012.

Finally, to determine how far an institution deviated from the norm based on the status of the institution, we built a curve using average followers and average tweets per day (grand averages and not group averages

for both) for each status group. We then determined whether each institution was above the curve or below the curve. Therefore, a negative number means that an institution is re-tweeting content posted by others more than normative expectations while a positive number means that an institution is re-tweeting content posted by others less than normative expectations. In this analysis, we are controlling for the number of tweets per day because there is obviously an increased likelihood of a tweet being re-tweeted by another Twitter user due to having a large volume of tweets (i.e. the more an institution tweets, the higher the likelihood that one of them will be re-tweeted by another Twitter user). We then used the following linear regression model:

Equation 2: *Number of Tweets Being Retweeted By Others Per 100 Followers* $= \beta_0 + \beta_1$*(Deviations from the Norm)* $+ \beta_2$*(Status Group)* $+ \beta_3$*(Deviations from the Norm)*(Status Group)* $+ \beta_4$*(Tweets Per Day)* $+ \varepsilon$

Colinearity between the independent variables in Equation 2 was also assessed using the variance inflation factors (VIF). In our sample, all of the VIFs were between 1.26 and 1.66. An analysis of the Cook's D statistic for all institutions in our sample revealed that no data point had undue influence on our results (at the 0.05 level).

4. Results

Table 2 shows the results for all models used to test the first hypothesis, which is that middle-status institutions will be more likely to re-tweet content (i.e. follow the norms embedded in the technology) relative to their high- and low-status counterparts. Model 1 regressed the number of re-tweets made by each institution on the status of each institution and the number of tweets per day that each institution made.

This model shows that there is not a statistically significant linear relationship between the status of each institution and their propensity to re-tweet content posted by another Twitter user. Model 2 added a squared status term to the model in order to test for a possible curvilinear relationship. This model indicates that there is a curvilinear relationship between status and each institution's propensity to re-tweet content posted by other users of the platform (while controlling for the number of tweets per day that each institution made). The inverted-U in Model 2 peaks at status groups 5 and 6 (for those institutions that have an average number of tweets per day (2.75)). The change in explained variance from Model 1 to Model 2 was roughly 1.12%, which is a statistically significant increase (F(1,273)=4.69, p=0.0312).

The number of other members that an institution is following was excluded from Models 1 and 2 due to the high kurtosis (18.37) and skewness (3.75) values. Models 3 and 4 included this term. Model 3 tested a linear relationship between status, the number of tweets per day that each institution made, and the number of other Twitter accounts that an institution was following. This model indicates (just like Model 1) that there is not a linear relationship between an institution's status and their propensity to re-tweet content posted by other Twitter users (while controlling for the number of tweets per day that each institution made and the number of other members that an institution was following). Model 4 is the full model displayed in Equation 1. This model indicates that there is a statistically significant curvilinear relationship between status and each institution's propensity to re-tweet content posted by other Twitter users (while controlling for both control variables) (See Figure 2). The change in explained variance from Model 3 to Model 4 was roughly 1.33%, which was a statistically significant increase (F(1,273)=5.67, p=0.0179).

Table 3 shows the models used to test the second set of hypotheses, which propose that deviating from the re-tweeting norm will have a differential impact on the successful adoption of the platform depending, in part, on the status of the institution. Model 5 is the main effect only model while Model 6 includes the status by deviation from the re-tweeting norm interaction effect necessary to test these hypotheses. The change in explained variance from Model 5 to Model 6 was roughly 1.41%, which was a statistically significant increase (F(1,273)=4.90, p=0.0277).

Table 4 shows the differential impact that deviating from the norm has across the ten status groups in our sample (based on Model 6). Low-status institutions that do not deviate from the re-tweeting norm can expect to have 23.08 of their tweets being re-tweeted by other users of the Twitter platform (per 100 followers), while high-status institutions that do not deviate from the re-tweeting norm can expect to have only 17.23 of their tweets being re-tweeted by other users of the Twitter platform (per 100 followers).

For status groups 1 to 5 (and somewhat in status group 6), re-tweeting less than normative expectations increases the likelihood that an institution's tweets will be re-tweeted by other Twitter users. For status group 7, there is no difference between an institution re-tweeting more or less than normative expectations. However, for status groups 8 to 10, re-tweeting more than normative expectations is a more effective means to have their tweets re-tweeted by other Twitter users relative to re-tweeting less than normative expectations. Therefore, there is support for both

hypotheses, but the impact of deviating from normative expectations is not consistent for middle-status institutions. Upper middle-status institutions deviating from normative expectations have a similar effect as high-status institutions whereas lower middle-status institutions deviating from normative expectations have a similar effect as low-status institutions.

Table 2. Conformity to Re-tweeting Content Norm Results

|	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	-16.25	-91.39*	-10.29	-91.90*
Status	0.013	37.78**	-0.29	41.05**
Status*Status		-3.45**		-3.77**
Tweets Per Day	71.56***	71.83***	74.22***	74.83***
Following				-0.0096**
Model Details				
Sample Size	273	273	273	273
Root Mean Square Error	176.62	175.45	175.75	174.28
Model F-Value	68.64***	47.91***	47.74***	37.58***
R-square	0.3371	0.3483	0.346	0.3593
Model Significance	Model 2 is significantly better than Model 1 F=4.69**		Model 4 is significantly better than Model 3 F=5.67**	
* Significant at 0.1, ** Significant at 0.05, *** Significant at 0.01				
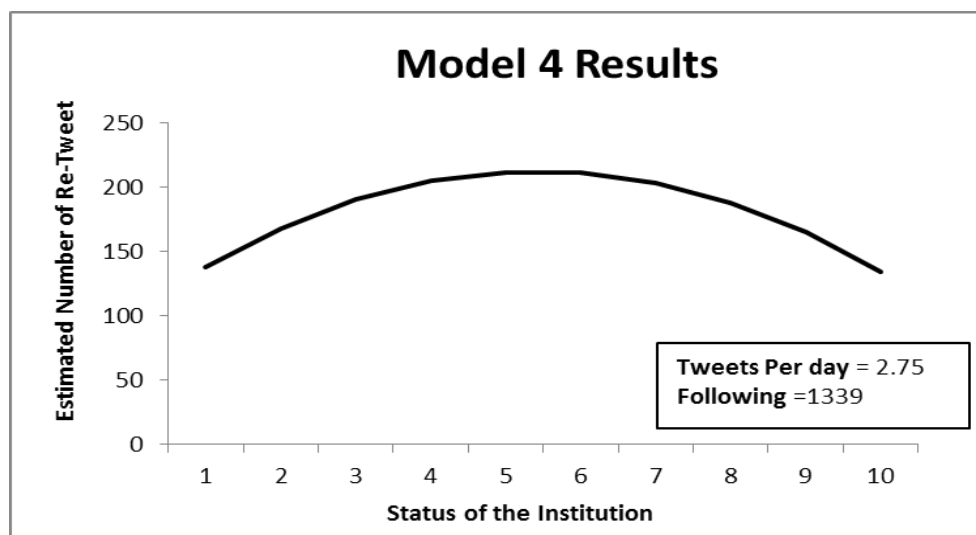
Figure 2. Model 4 Regression Estimates

Table 3. Expected Tweets Being Re-Tweeted (per 100 followers) By Other Users of the Platform

	Model 5	Model 6
Intercept	4.43*	5.23**
Deviation From Norm	0.0081*	0.022**
Status	0.67**	0.65**
Deviation From Norm * Status		-0.0032**
Tweets Per Day	4.28***	4.13***
Model Details		
Sample Size	273	273
Root Mean Square Error	12.92	12.83
Model F-Value	22.48***	18.26***
R-square	0.2000	0.2141
Note	Model 6 is significantly better than Model 5 F=4.90**	
* Significant at 0.1, ** Significant at 0.05, *** Significant at 0.01		

Table 4. Expected Tweets Being Re-tweeted (Per 100 Followers) in Model 6

Deviation From Norm (Expected - Actual)	Status Group									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
-400	9.54	11.46	13.38	15.30	17.22	19.14	21.06	22.98	24.89	26.81
-200	13.38	14.67	15.95	17.24	18.52	19.81	21.09	22.38	23.66	24.95
0	17.23	17.88	18.53	19.18	19.83	20.48	21.13	21.78	22.43	23.08
200	21.07	21.08	21.10	21.12	21.13	21.15	21.17	21.18	21.20	21.22
400	24.91	24.29	23.67	23.06	22.44	21.82	21.20	20.59	19.97	19.35
NOTE: These numbers assume the institution has an average number of tweets per day (2.75).										

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The theory of middle-status conformity is about knowing one's place in the social order and behaving accordingly [23]. In this paper, we empirically demonstrated that middle-status firms follow re-tweeting norms more than their high- and low-status counterparts. This is a significant theoretical finding in relation to the TOE framework, because the value of certain usage practices is, in part, dependent on knowing the firm's place in the social hierarchy (organizational and environmental factor) in the marketplace, which has not been theorized or empirically demonstrated before our paper. We also provide a context extension for the theory of middle-status conformity. To our knowledge, this theory has not been applied to the post adoption of any social media platform.

For social media platforms (more broadly than just Twitter), success is typically not measured in terms of system integration metrics or traditional measures of I/O utilization and efficiency metrics but rather in terms of the co-creation of value and the engagement of the firm's followers on the platform [4]. From a practical perspective, our research suggests that organizations engage their users or followers with the technology in a manner consistent with their status in the marketplace. Doing so may create an environment where its followers will be more likely to spread information and posts throughout the network. As such, managers may want to understand the social positioning of the firm along with other environmental factors such as the structure of the marketplace when developing social media practices and following norms embedded in the platform.

Like all research, our research has its limitations. First, we only investigated a single industry and have to investigate the applicability of the theory of middle-status conformity in other contexts and with

other social media platforms. Several context extensions are necessary and interesting future lines of research in order to maximize (and to test) the generalizability of our findings. For example, would the theory of middle-status conformity apply in the context of re-pinning on Pinterest or are there elements of the Pinterest platform (which are different from Twitter) that may change the applicability of this theory and the generalizability of our findings? Second, we only investigated a single success metric (tweets being re-tweeted by other Twitter users) in relation to the deviation from the norms embedded in the platform. Future research may investigate other metrics of success such as number of followers, an institution's tweets being replied to by other Twitter users, and/or other Twitter member's replying to the institution more generally. Would the theory of middle-status conformity hold with these other more peripheral interaction norms? Finally, we only investigated US colleges and universities. It might be possible that the cultural context of the institution mediates or moderates the relationships we discovered. Expanding the sample beyond US colleges and universities would be an interesting future line of research.

Nevertheless, our research provides a first step in demonstrating the applicability of status, particularly the theory of middle-status conformity, in the post-adoption use of social media platforms in relation to the TOE framework. Especially for technologies that are adopted outside of an organization's firewall such as the case with social media, our research reveals that status is an important environmental and organizational factor governing how an organization uses the technology (propensity to follow norms embedded in the social media platform) and the differential impact that usage behaviors have in terms of the successful appropriation of the platform.

10. References

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[iii] Description of ranking was downloaded from http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities on 5/13/2013.

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[i] Jensen (2006) refers to the theory of middle-status conformity as the status anxiety hypothesis, but the underlying assumptions of the two theories are quite similar with the most notable difference being the unit of analysis (individuals versus organizations).

[ii] Admissions consulting company Anna Ivey referred to the US News and World Report rankings as "the granddaddy of college rankings" (downloaded from http://www.annaivey.com/iveyfiles/2010/08/us_news_best_colleges_rankings_2011_changes_in_methodology_make_them_less_helpful on 6/8/2013).