Re-Envisioning Twitter

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Design Challenge_

How might we add a feature to Twitter's Profile Page to operationalize Self-Presentation Theory on the platform?

Design Goals:

1. **Reduce user singularity**

2. **Incentivize community over self**

3. **Allow for a diverse "social self"**

Self Identity In Twitter

The actor in a social setting; what you are doing is because of how you think others perceive you.

Self Identity within Twitter is mainly centered around the **Social Actor**

❏ A user customizes and creates their profile beginning with how they view themselves
❏ Composing Tweets with the thought of how their audience thinks about themselves
❏ The option of a public or private profile is a reflection of the user's desire to be exposed or esoteric.

The social actor storyboard
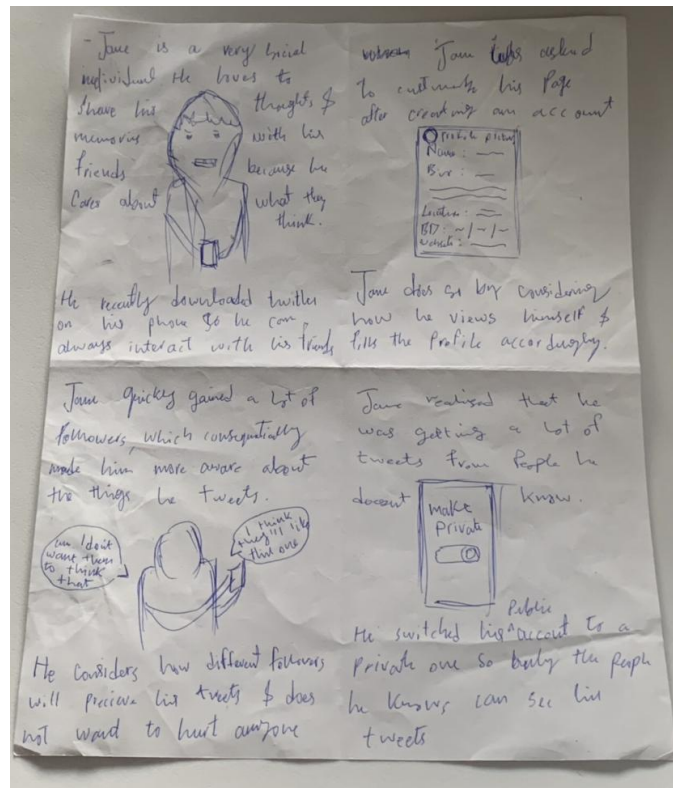
Motivated Agent in Twitter

The self acts upon inner desires and formulates goals, values, and plans to guide behavior in the future

Although Twitter is mostly built around the social actor, the **motivated agent** can be seen:

- ❏ When retweeting, the user considers if the tweet aligns with their beliefs
- ❏ Writing a bio that reflects their identity and its values
- ❏ Pinning a tweet that shows their goals and values in twitter

The motivated agent Workflow diagram

Autobiographical Author in Twitter

The "Author" creates a story with understanding of how the past self lead to the present self and the present to the future self

A user scrolling through their feed and looking at past tweets, media, likes, followers and following over a period of time provides a temporal understanding of their past, current, and future self.

Still, the autobiographical author is not as evident as the social actor and the motivated agents are in Twitter.

The autobiographical author scenario

- Jane is a student in his early twenties and has been a twitter user for almost 6 years, he spends a lot of time either scrolling through his feed or interacting with his friends under his tweets. He usually tweets about his day or minor/major changes in his life, he likes to keep his friends in the loop and he also considers his profile page as his journal that keeps record of his life events. Every few months, Jane reads scrolls down his profile and reads all the tweets he had made in the past few months, the media he tweeted, new followers/following, and the tweets he had liked. This process usually triggers Jane' self awareness as he gets to view himself over a period of time and see how he has changed sine. This practice provides jane with an understanding of his past self (past tweets), current self (what he currently tweets), and future self (how he thinks his profile/tweets will change in the future).

Self-Presentation

- We are players in a stage
- We are always performing in the way we choose to portray ourselves
- The existence of a frontstage where we perform
- Different performances based on different conditions (different audience, different context, etc)
- Exhibition approach to interactions
- The existences of a private backstage where there is no pressure to be performing (where suppressed facts make an appearance)
- The backstage is where performances are criticized and scrutinized for flaws

Self Presentation in Twitter

❏ Twitter facilitates real-time interactions, much like a real-life performance, where the user produces content (ie; a performance) intended to reflect a tacit guise of their social-identity.

❏ Replies to tweets made by the user's friends/followers are considered a performance as the user is explicitly interacting with one user, implicitly determining which 'performance' to display.

❏ Users produce content that instigates a reaction from their following, inherently promoting high performing content and dissuading poor performances. Therefore, a user will feed into well performing content, shaping their social identity as the residue of their decisions and the feedback of the platform.

Redesigned Twitter for Self Presentation

❏ *New '**backstage**' space where users share their personal thoughts and can allow specific users to join into a private community*

- A communal space for select users, free from twitter's discourse norms.
- **Q**: To what extent might additional privacy erode interactions on twitter?

❏ *Splitting the user's followers into communities, based on how the user expects to perform when interacting with them.*

- Users can interact with different groups privately without having the worry of being out of character/performance to 'outsider' groups.
- **Q**: A user can have thousands of different performances and splitting them will be messy. Would breaking up communal interactions on twitter isolate users, strengthen social trends, or both?

Redesigned Twitter for Self Presentation

❏ *Adding community badges to twitter profile page*
- Badges account for different communities the user is a part of and appears on their profile page to embrace performance within those communities
- **Q**: What about private communities where the user does not feel comfortable putting their badge of their profile picture?

❏ *New real-time service that will build on the current twitter spaces*
- Users can now have live events for a specific group or community on top of the current twitter spaces audio service.
- **Q**: Would the real-time live user performance affect how other users view their digital performance on twitter ?

Similarities: Discord

Discord's format procures a diverse set of "backstage" communities for its users.

By displacing the responsibility of moderation and communal expectations to independent communities, the user's performances vary according to each.

- ❏ Impact on **Autobiographical self**:
  The self's idea of past, future, and present becomes fragmented. The influences of one's social actions become unclear when viewed through many social lenses.
- ❏ Impact on **Self Identity**:
  A user may choose to emphasize various facets of their identity depending on the group they are participating in at any given time. As such, the frame of one's self identity becomes more fluid, and perhaps more expressive.

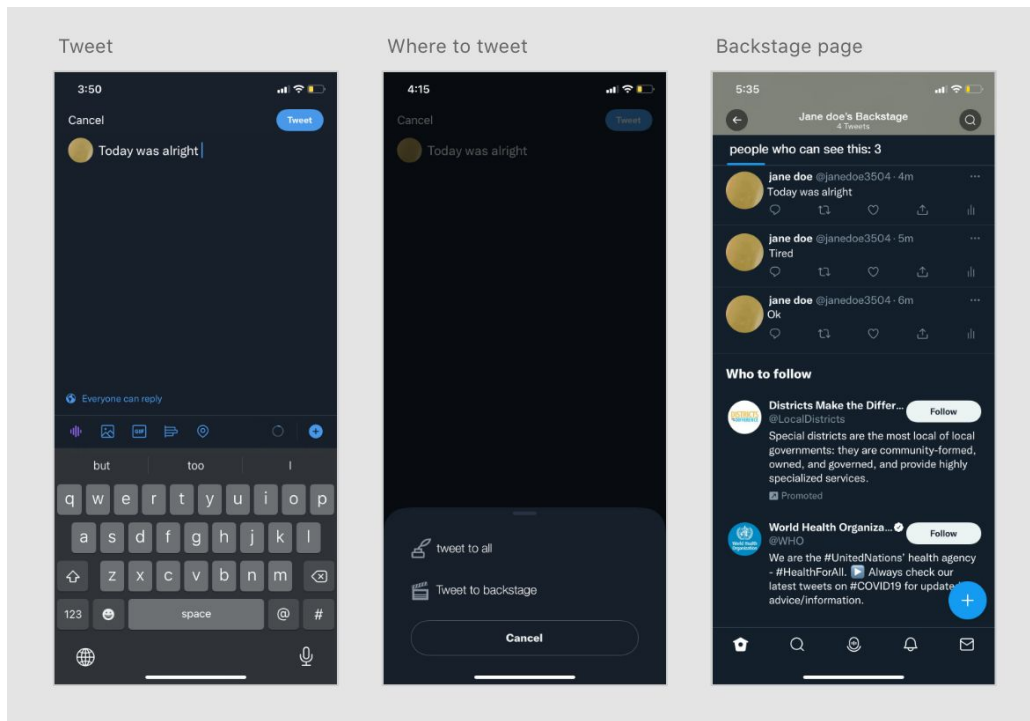# Artifact: Splitting followers into communities on Twitter - prototype
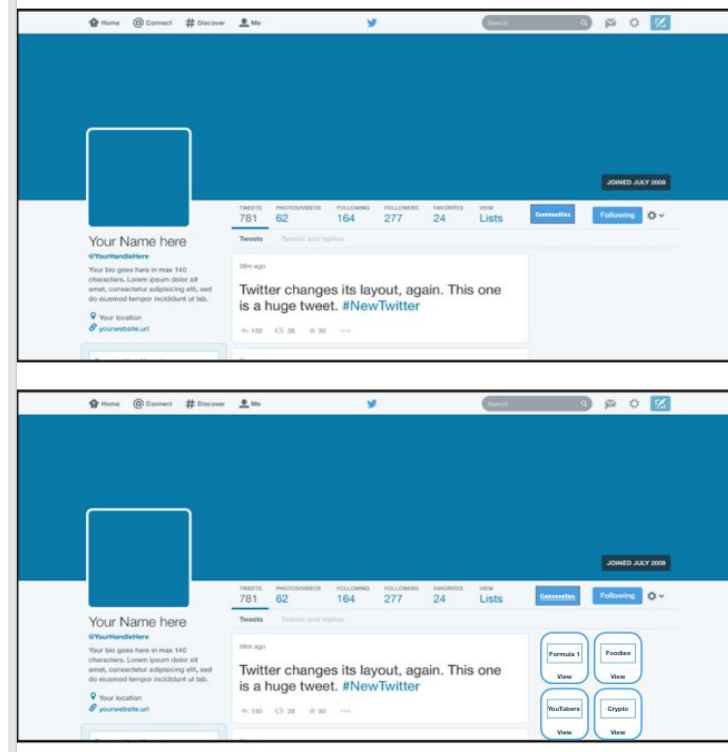
Artifact: backstage in Twitter - prototype

XD link to prototype:

https://xd.adobe.com/view/6ca16eb9-8d6c-4f3c-a3fd-399335edac62-39f2/

Artifact: Community badges on twitter - Scenario

- Jane recently heard about the new twitter update that would focus on Self-presentation and was excited to see the changes. The most feature that Jane was excited about was the new community badges that you can add on your profile page because he thought it would make users recognize each other. He also believes that adding badges to the communities he feels he belongs to because he thinks it would clarify the different behaviors and approaches he has towards different people. He also believes that by putting community badges to a profile page, he can give his followers and people who view his account a sense of how he might perform on twitter, he thinks it would fix a lot of problems where he is called out for acting differently in different communities. Additionally, Jane believes that badges will allow for easier performance as he would not have to always be aware how he performs. However, Jane does realize that there are communities he is a part of that he would not want to share on his profile page, which could be a problem.

Artifact: real-time (live) service on Twitter - Storyboard
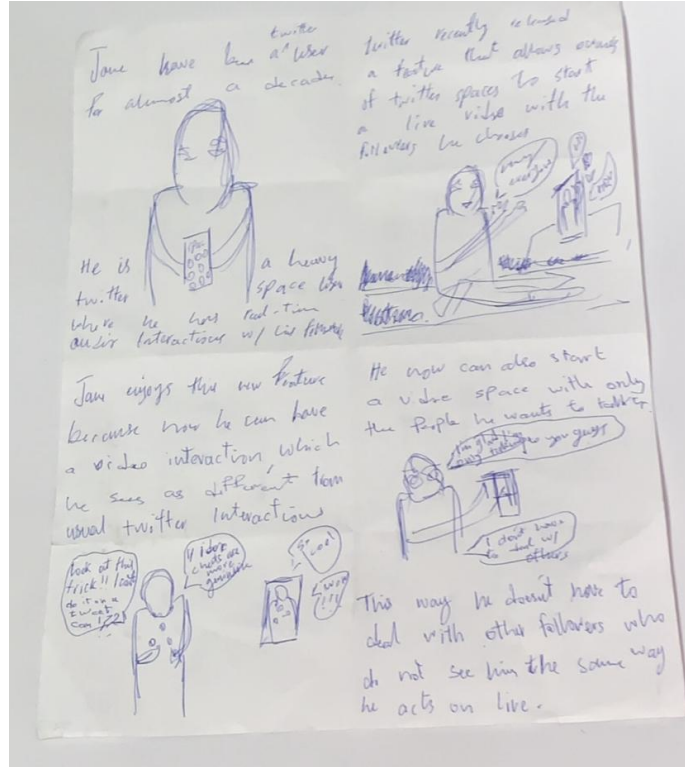
Conclusion/Final Thoughts

❖ How does the fragmentation of the social self on twitter lead to differing social interactions?

- The social actor, motivated agent, and the autobiographical author all trigger different types of social media awareness and different twitter features are associated with one or few more than the other. Tweeting can trigger the social actor and retweeting can be seen to trigger both the social actor and the motivated agent etc.

Conclusion/Final Thoughts

❖ Would this change succeed on twitter, or does it stray too far from the existing format?

- We believe that the features added based on the Self-Presentation theory would not align with twitter's current social goal. Although we do think that some of these features might be more fitting for twitter than other features are. For instance, we believe that we can see at some point a live-video feature similar to twitter audio spaces but we don't think that splitting twitter's followers into communities would ever happen.

Conclusion/Final Thoughts

❖ To what extent does the diversification of identity theories in a platform strengthen or erode a social community?

- We think that the diversity of different theories can strengthen a social community in a platforms to a degree. Select features from different identity theories can create an environment for a community to thrive in, however it is a slippery slope, adding different and wide features from different theories (similar to how we redesigned twitter) can defeat the main purpose of the platform and can be less functional for the communities.