

**(Top) Voices of Influence: Analyzing LinkedIn Influencers
(LinkedIn Influencers) as Career Advisors with Grounded Theory and
Framing**

Student Name: Tamara Lee Kanner
Student Number: 585295

Supervisor: Dr. Khanh Yên Nguyễn

Master Media Studies - Media & Business
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the discourses of LinkedIn Influencers (LinkedIn influencers) as career advisors on the LinkedIn platform. As LinkedIn is the largest professional networking platform to date, the relevance of understanding the social norms and values of influencers on the platform has an impact on their audiences who may need career advice or support for a career-related conflict. LinkedIn Top Voice users (LinkedIn Influencers) are invited by LinkedIn particularly for being senior-level experts and leaders which help users discover new knowledge, signified with a blue badge. The influence of such users providing relevant advice and information to their audiences can have a major impact on one's career or approach to the workplace. As there is significantly less research done on the LinkedIn platform in comparison to X (formerly Twitter), Facebook and Instagram, the knowledge gap on the influencers of LinkedIn is lacking, despite the potential major impact it can have on a person taking relevant, useful advice. In this study, two research questions are proposed and later answered:

RQ 1: "What themes have been presented in LinkedIn Influencer's posts?"

RQ 2: "How have career advice frames presented through LinkedIn Influencer posts?"

Two qualitative methods are utilized, being grounded theory and framing analysis. Grounded theory will help develop initial concepts that have yet to be addressed by using inductive open coding to construct themes based on the communicative purposes of the LinkedIn posts. Furthermore, framing analysis will utilize the themes to construct frames that arise from the data, allowing a deeper, more nuanced insight towards the ideological underpinnings employed by LinkedIn Influencers in shaping career advice. Sampling method specified an inclusion criteria alongside a convenience sampling through the LinkedIn search option. The corpus contained 208 posts overall. Findings indicate that there are 62 open codes present in the data, in which half are somewhat highly saturated. Nine main themes were derived from these codes. From the categorized themes, four frames were constructed, being; the individual and organizational limitations frame, the career and personal solution-benefit frame and the social-identity frame. The discussion section further pertains to the idea that career advice on LinkedIn is rarely a stand-alone information, but is usually accompanied by storytelling leading up to the advice, the different personal and external factors that are mentioned in light of the advice, the LinkedIn Influencer's promotion of services, and the encouragement and guidance provided by the influencer to create a caring environment for the reader. Based on previous research it is clear that workplace culture, based on national culture, also likely leads to certain career advice that encourages individualistic yet feminine values. As nationality or gender was not filtered, this provides the benefit of high diversification but low in representation of the sample. Additionally, other personal, professional, and socio-political influences and social norms were present in the discourse. Future research can potentially investigate LinkedIn career advice from people in other regions which national cultures enable more feminine and collectivist workplace cultures and dynamics, to see how online public career advice differs.

KEYWORDS: *LinkedIn Influencers, career, advice, LinkedIn, framing.*

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1. Introduction

In an era where one's digital presence can help exemplify professional and personal successes, LinkedIn has become a key platform for promoting one's achievements, career advancements and personal branding. LinkedIn is the largest digital (Basak & Calisir, 2014, p. 1), professional networking platform to date (Badoer, 2021, pp. 197-198). Whilst previous research has outlined the role of Instagram, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) influencers with the significant rise of influencer marketing research since 2016 (Hudders et al., 2021, pp. 427-428), there is a knowledge gap regarding influencers on less-researched platforms like LinkedIn (in comparison to Facebook for example) (Robson & Banerjee, 2023, p. 486). Moreover, despite the large user base, there is a lack of research on LinkedIn users known for publishing career-oriented content, such as career advice. A further literature gap indicated there is a lack of research on the social world of LinkedIn and how LinkedIn influencers construct their professional identities. While some studies have looked into the self-presentation and self-promotion on the platform (van Dijck, 2013), a further understanding of what accompanies these online-presenting professional identities within the LinkedIn social world has yet to be investigated. With this in mind, the following thesis delves into the themes and frames of LinkedIn Influencer's career advice utilizing grounded theory and framing analysis. This thesis aims to reveal the nuanced understanding of LinkedIn influencers' discourses surrounding career advice, what social norms and values are communicated and presented in the posts, and how the advice is framed to further understand the career advisor identities and social world of LinkedIn influencers.

LinkedIn users can utilize the platform for short and long-term career goals, for both job seekers and those looking to advance their careers, or for those simply looking to connect with other experts (Schneiderman, 2016, p. 1). Similar to other platforms like Instagram and YouTube, LinkedIn allows content creation and sharing. As such, LinkedIn also has its own form of social media influencers, coined "LinkedIn influencers", a term used by various sites and blogs to characterize individuals who hold influencer status on LinkedIn (Mikiewicz, 2021, para. 1; Goodman, 2022, para. 1; Litterst, 2022, para. 3). Despite the fact LinkedIn has made the active change to re-brand the LinkedIn Influencer program to now be merged with what they define as "Top Voice" users, the status is still the same. LinkedIn influencers (Top Voices) feature a "global group of experts that cover a range of topics across the professional world, helping members uncover valuable knowledge relevant to them." (LinkedIn Top Voice, 2024, para. 2).

LinkedIn Top Voice is essentially a way for users to recognize who are reliable and knowledgeable members of the LinkedIn community, marked with the Top Voice Badge, otherwise known as the blue badge (LinkedIn Top Voice, 2024, para. 1). The blue badge is invitation only, featuring "senior-level experts and leaders", which are vetted and checked on a regular basis to make sure they maintain active presence on the platform and continue to share valuable insight to the LinkedIn community (LinkedIn Top Voice, 2024, para. 1-3).

Organizations on LinkedIn share content like thought leadership, case studies, and relevant business news (Mäläskä & Nadeem, 2012; Joglekar & Tan, 2022, p. 629). Industry influencers (such as Bill Gates) also utilize LinkedIn to publish their views and visions in their according industries (Cho & Lam, 2021, p. 266). Nevertheless, research has yet to investigate the sharing of content from opinion leaders who may not be “business celebrities” but still earn the Top Voice LinkedIn badge, marking their content as useful or insightful for their followers.

In terms of social relevance, Badoer’s (2021) study finds that students endorse the statement that LinkedIn is useful for career-building objectives (Badoer, 2021, p. 200). Another study by Davis et al. (2020) on the LinkedIn platform finds that networking online is associated with a variety of career benefits, such as career resources, career sponsorships, information and ideas (Davis et al., 2020, p. 11). Several studies also highlight the usefulness and trust in online advice (Briggs et al., 2002; Booth, 2006), yet there are studies that indicate that the applicability factor and digital aspect of online advice may be limited in regards to the individual guidance aspect (Watts, 2002; Booth, 2006; Lewis & Tolgensbakk, 2019). Taking into account such limitations, there is still potential for LinkedInfluencers to make an impact with their online career advice to their readers, making this study in understanding LinkedInfluencers as career advisers a relevant one.

On the platform, LinkedInfluencers partake in the role of being an expert or professional in their industry/field. LinkedInfluencers play a crucial role by providing industry-specific advice, making them significant in the digital era, particularly for graduate employability (Badoer, 2021, p. 197). The mentorship aspect is vital for career development at various stages (entry-level, associate, senior, managerial, executive, etc), and as such, the understanding and portrayal of LinkedInfluencers as career advisors is socially relevant for users in different career stages. Investigating how LinkedInfluencers frame career advice to their readers may indicate the social norms and values behind the frames of said influencers, revealing themselves not just as promotional figures, but as experts whom have a deep understanding of the career world.

Regarding academic relevance, whilst there is research regarding the LinkedIn platform, little research dives deep into LinkedInfluencer’s content. In a wider context, some studies have gone into researching how and why experts share their knowledge on social networking platforms. As part of Marin and Nilă’s (2021) study on LinkedIn (self-) branding, the authors argue that communication and marketing specialists self-promote for the purpose of influencing and being recognized, as well as to increase their self-esteem (Marin & Nilă, 2021, p. 7). The study also adds that communication specialists are aware of their professional identity in connection with their reputation in the context of LinkedIn (Marin & Nilă, 2021, p. 7). Nonetheless, the study methodology utilized a quantitative survey to identify the role of using LinkedIn for brand development (Marin & Nilă, 2021, p. 3).

Another study by Yuan and Jin (2023) looks more specifically on advice-giving in an online commercial context on the digital platform Zhihu (Yuan & Jin, 2023, p. 7). In addition to text-based communication, the platform affords users to host live-talks to share information, as does LinkedIn

(Yuan & Jin, 2023, p. 2). The study presents various discursive strategies that experts use to share advice, such as well-wishing, advice referral and general information assessments (presenting facts), to name a few (Yuan & Jin, 2023, p. 10). Whilst the study focuses on the giving of advice, purely discursive strategies were analyzed on a platform with different affordances. Additionally, as the study is based on the research of a platform with a predominate Chinese user base, LinkedIn (with a predominant North American user base) indicates different national values, therefore having different advice to the audiences. Despite the fact that both prior studies focus on self-presentation, self-promotion and discursive strategies within, there is yet to be a theorized researched on LinkedInInfluencers and their role in the digital ecosystem of LinkedIn specifically.

To address this research gap, the dual approach of both grounded theory and framing theory will be utilized in the following research, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the data. Grounded theory research helps generate theory through an iterative process of open coding of the data (Clarke et al., 2016, p. 50). Grounded theory is primarily inductive, and when approaching grounded theory within a constructivist paradigm, the researcher individually perceives and builds rather than ‘discovers’ the theory. As there is little research on LinkedIn influencers, generating themes from bottom-up is the most fitting approach for this research. Additionally, a framing analysis is used to both structure the generated themes derived from the codes as well as to help further discover the frames of career-advice specifically. Utilizing Entman’s (1993) definition of frames, the study will break down the different frames that career advice specifically entails, which will further help understand the nuanced discourses on LinkedIn. The uncovering of underlying values and norms of career advice by career experts informs about the professional world, and more specifically about how career advice is framed and communicated to LinkedIn users on the platform.

The following thesis argues that framing strategies on LinkedIn by LinkedInInfluencers for career advice specifically is not just about giving solutions and advice alone, but is richer and possibly less about self-promotion than prior research indicates, as Top Voice influencers achieve their status to share knowledge and information to their audiences. The relevance of the paper on LinkedIn career advice addresses gaps that are currently missing in existing literature. This leads me to my research questions, being:

RQ 1: “What themes have been presented in LinkedInInfluencer’s posts?”

RQ 2: “How have career advice frames been presented through LinkedInInfluencer posts?”

The following thesis will aim to answer these research questions utilizing grounded theory and framing analysis. Chapter one introduces the research questions and brief description of the topic and research gaps currently missing on the topic of LinkedIn and the platform’s influencers. Chapter two will cover the relevant academic and theoretical frameworks that give background to career advice, relevant literature to this study, and identities of LinkedInInfluencers, providing the foundation needed

to further answer the research questions. Chapter three outlines the methodology of the study, including the qualitative research design of grounded theory and framing analysis, the relevant sampling method, coding procedure, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations and operationalization of relevant concepts. Chapter four includes the complete analysis of the data in the form of findings, which utilizes examples to break down the various themes (including communicative strategies), frames, sub-frames used within the career related issue-specific frames. Additionally, the chapter takes into account the influences of cultural, personal, professional and socio-political social norms and values. Chapter five restates the research question and findings, as well as further interprets the findings in relation to the social norms and values highlighted in the data. Theoretical and practical implications are outlined and discussed in light of the findings, as well as limitations of the study, future research and implications identified as a potential expansion of the research and field.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Career advice

Whilst there is a research gap on LinkedIn career advice, there are decades worth of research on career advice and career mentoring, with various terminologies used to describe the action of providing support in a career context. The Tomprou et al. (2019) paper focuses on career mentoring in online communities, the authors define what they call valuable advice; “valuable advice refers to career advice with an acknowledged value by a person in need or through external viewers.” (Tomprou et al., 2019, p. 3). Similar terminologies are also important to define. Career guidance, as defined by the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development) and cited in Lewis and Tolgensbakk (2019), is explained as such; “career guidance refers to services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities” (OECD, 2004, p. 19; Lewis & Tolgensbakk, 2019, p. 205). Utilizing these definitions, career mentoring focusing on career advice with value (the benefit of the advice) and career guidance focusing on assisting people to manage their careers, will further help specify career advice with a guidance/mentoring aspect.

With the paper focusing on mentoring, Tomprou et al. (2019) state that career mentoring does not have to necessarily come from one specific mentor, but also from friends, family and professional coaches (Tomprou et al., 2019, p. 2). The paper compares career mentoring in online communities with e-mentoring, which is mentoring through electronic communication (Single et al., 2001; Tomprou et al., 2019, p. 2). The overlap being that both have the potential to promote a user’s career through support from others with experiences that are similar to the reader or the community the advice is shared with (Tomprou et al., 2019, p. 2). Whilst offline and e-mentoring is private or done via private digital communication, career mentoring in online communities allow mentors and mentees to publicly publish to a large audience (Tomprou et al., 2019, p. 2). In terms of listening to career advice, some research finds that people are more likely to listen to career advice of powerful individuals, whom are trusted and knowledgeable mentors (Roberts et al., 2005; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012, p. 266).

Yet, the Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas paper (2012) continue this message by saying that people follow career advice from mentors whom have the mentees best interest in mind, being able to adjust the advice accordingly to the mentee’s situation (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012, p. 266). Whilst this paper does not discuss digital career advice and the Tomprou et al. (2019) paper does specify career advice on online communities, the research for Tomprou et al. (2019) regarded a Q&A platform, a Workplace subforum in StackExchange (Tomprou et al., 2019, p. 3), pertaining to the idea that publishing career advice in response to a question publicly compared to posting career advice as independent, self-made user-generated content, will differ in the mentees trust in the career advisor

since the advice is not adjusted or applicable for specific, individual readers. This is why potentially results of this study yield to career-advice not being stand alone, but brought forth with storytelling and reflections of the LinkedInfluencer. This is because LinkedIn career advice is not a response to anything specific per say, but rather a type of content a LinkedInfluencer pushes out to their audience that they believe is helpful to the reader, or to help with self-presentation, self-promotion or promoting/marketing their services.

Several papers outline the benefits of online advice. Booth (2006) study on New Zealand high schoolers regarding career advice on Pathfinder finds that all students felt the online mentoring was useful regarding identifying career options and increasing self-esteem (Booth, 2006, p. 10). Another study by Briggs et al. (2002) regarding trust in online mortgage advice found that in the questionnaire, 78% percent of respondents took the online advice (Briggs et al., 2002, p. 329). Whilst the advice itself may be useful for advice-takers, it may be limited by the applicability factor. A study by Lewis and Tolgensbakk (2019) on different national career services based in England, which provide networking encouragement and advice for career professionals, states that such organizations are “unlikely to fill the gap left by an absence of advice and guidance at a local level” (Lewis & Tolgensbakk, 2019, p. 222). Posting online career advice to the general public without aiming for specific mentees or advice-takers may have the same effect, as some papers state that there is an inherent fear that using digital methods for career advice can potentially lead to “simplistic, quick-fix, information-based approaches where the human interaction is minimized or non-existent, rather than one where effective relationships can develop.” (Watts, 2002, p. 149; Booth, 2006, p. 12).

With this in mind, there is likely an overlap of limitations regarding the applicability factor and the digital factor. If the advice is digital and simply posted in a public website, it may have broad applicability aiming at their target audiences, but likely lacks the specificity needed to tailor the advice for the needs of the individuals within this target audience. Yet, with previous studies noting that there are people who gain useful tips and advice from online services, it is clear that LinkedIn Top Voice users have potential to influence followers and readers with their content, making this research relevant. As the new digital age is changing the way users interact with information, including learning about job positions, applying to jobs, and interacting digitally regarding career, career advice itself is also converted to being digitalized.

2.2. Workplace culture

The consideration of national culture is also vital in understanding the LinkedIn platform, which has an immense impact on workplace culture (Taras et al., 2011, p. 192). This is because LinkedIn has the most users based in the US, and it is reflected in the corpus as the location of the LinkedInfluencer is based in North America.

There are a few aspects to keep in mind when considering workplace cultures. Firstly, the individualism-collectivism degree to which people take care of themselves versus people in their community, where in the individualist culture of the US assumes that people particularly take care of themselves and their immediate family (Taras et al., 2011, p. 190). Secondly, power distance degree regards the aspects of power and status, where in the US there is a low-power distance culture and therefore employees have more flexibility and autonomy with making decisions in the workplace (Taras et al., 2011, p. 190). Thirdly, uncertainty avoidance is the extent to where people are uncomfortable in ambiguous situations. In the US, a low uncertainty avoidance is more usual in the workplace where there are fewer formal guidelines for how work is carried out (Taras et al., 2011, p. 190). Forth, the masculine-feminine scale which is the degree of masculine values (assertiveness, advancement, etc.) and feminine values (friendly atmosphere, position security and physical conditions are devalued). In a masculine workplace culture such as in places like the US, employees are motivated to deeply consider aspects such as performance, success, and competition (Taras et al., 2011, p. 190). While there are other dimensions that have been added after the development of the main four dimensions by Hofstede in the 1980s, the four outlined dimensions are the core aspects.

Workplace cultures also deeply reflect communication styles. In the case of the US with the typical masculine and individualistic workplace culture also includes self-promotion, as part of the more direct and open communication style (Stulhmacher & Poitras, 2010, p. 490; Taras et al., 2011, p. 192; Yi et al., 2015, p. 71).

To summarize, national culture does indeed have an impact of workplace culture, also affecting the promotion (or lack of) of the self, highlighting the precedented values that are likely on the platform. By far, the USA has the highest number of LinkedIn users at approximately 200 million, with India coming in at second at approximately 101 million users (Bondar, 2023), which yields to the idea that LinkedIn culture (and therefore career advice published on the platform) has strong North American values imbedded in the dominant user base of the platform.

2.3. Self-presentation or self-promotion?

Self-presentation, a concept also proposed by Goffman in the 1950's, is highly related to building identities, especially in light of online personas. Goffman illustrated the concept of self-presentation through the stage metaphor (Goffman, 1956; Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013, p. 101). In the *front stage*, the actor is aware that their behavior is visible to the audience, therefore conforming to certain social norms and expectations. Following the metaphor, the *performance* is self-presentation.

In the context of frame theory, one's self-presentation (depending on the context, actors, audience, etc.) can be framed in certain ways to show a certain reality to the audience. In relation to LinkedIn influencers, how they present themselves is directly related to how they show their expertise and experience in their field/industry. In the case of this paper, the self-presentation techniques may differ depending on how they frame themselves.

Understanding the presentation of the self differs depending on the context. Due to the social media platform nature of LinkedIn, self-presentation in the online world constitutes a unique context. Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) outline that digital, online environments provide a platform for self-presentation, giving users the front stage to ‘perform’, while the offline life is the backstage, as referring to the metaphor (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013, p. 103). Digital platforms can help create and communicate social identities, which are “large categories that may constitute points of reference for identification such as those pertaining to race, gender, age, or ethnicity” (De Fina et al., 2011, p. 2). Social media in itself creates categories of influencers such as fashion, beauty, or travel influencers (Farivar & Wang, 2022, p. 2), and as such, digital identities have now developed to be defined by category, over time. Therefore, self-presentation is inherently related to (public) social identities, and self-presenting oneself as following a social identity (such as, being a career-oriented influencer) is one way a person can frame themselves as such.

Whilst self-presentation refers to behaviors that are aimed at being perceived as likable by others (showing one’s positive face, such as; complimenting someone, agreeing with someone, etc.), self-promotion on the other hand, “...refers to behaviors whose aim is to show others how competent one is”, which aligns with behaviors that attempt to make others think the self-promoter is competent in general ability dimensions (accomplishments) and/or specific abilities and skills (superior qualities) (Tal-Or, 2010, p. 88; Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1986, p. 321). Duffy & Pooley (2017) seem to utilize the term of self-promotion as an umbrella term, in which whom they call ‘idols of promotion’ offer lessons in self-branding, and curate their personal brand (p. 3). By this definition, self-promotion does not include the promotion of services and products, but rather the person whom is promoting themselves.

In a comparison analysis study by van Dijck (2013), it was found that unlike Facebook, LinkedIn’s interface facilitates professional self-promotion rather than self-expression, typically addressing co-workers and employees (van Dijck, 2013, p. 200; Badoer, 2021, p. 198). As was noted prior, the LinkedIn interface helps shape professional and corporate images and furthermore by ‘showing off’ professional skills, users can actively increase their professional value in the job market (van Dijck, 2013, p. 209). The study summarizes that Facebooks interface stimulates self-expression first, followed by self-promotion, and LinkedIn focuses on professional performance and experience (van Dijck, 2013, p. 211).

With professional self-promotion (as a possible main goal of self-presentation in this LinkedIn context) aspect in mind, the role and influence of LinkedInfluencers cannot be generalized to other digital media and must be categorized separately, which in this time of writing, has not been thoroughly researched with non-celebrity LinkedInfluencers.

2.3.1. Self-presentation of influencers and online identities

Self-presentation of influencers must also be considered to further analyze the influencer identity of LinkedIn Top Voice users. This is because whilst one can analyze social media platforms together, this will not indicate or define the differences in uses and affordances for all types of users, even influencers. Influencers are considered by some as micro-celebrities that promote in an engaging way (Khamis et al., 2016, pp. 191-208; Tewatia & Majumdar, 2022, p. 53). In the context of influencers, Goffman's (1956) concept of self-presentation greatly applies, thereby shaping their online identities as something more appealing and engaging to their online-based audiences. As there is some discussion on what influencers on certain platforms do as a form of self-presenting or self-promoting (Tewatia & Majumdar, 2022, p. 54), there is little reliable research on LinkedIn's influencers and what their identities are shaped by, and what they are. One paper does explore self-disclosure on CEO influencers on the LinkedIn platform (Schröder & Lüdtko, 2023, pp. 99-116), but lacks in divulging the identities of these influencers as well as focusing on CEO's rather than LinkedIn's chosen influencers (with the invite-only Top Voice badge).

2.4. Grounded theory

The grounded theory (GT) approach was formulated in the 1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), it is noted as being the most popular way of doing qualitative research (Have, 2004, p. 136; Clarke et al., 2016, p. 50; Morse, 2021, p. 3). Grounded theory was born out of the interpretive turn in research (Clarke et al., 2016, p. 51) and enables interpretation to demonstrate how meaning is implied and is attributed to a certain phenomenon (Morse, 2021, p. 3). Grounded theory serves as a systematic approach to data collection and analysis with the aim of developing theory, therefore serves as both a methodology and theory in one.

To define grounded theory, it is "a research method that enables the description and identification of the significant social processes and generates concepts used to document and explain the changes" (Morse, 2021, p. 4). In simpler terms, grounded theory is the discovery of theory from data. Grounded theory is so to speak 'generating' theory from an iterative process through empirical data to be able to conceptualize the data into theory (Clarke et al., 2016, p. 50). One study by Lopez and Robbins (2022) did outline the creation of digital identities on LinkedIn through grounded theory research. Yet, this study was done on various platforms on posts by mental health professionals, and the specification of LinkedIn influencers on the discussion of career-oriented content has not yet been fully theorized or researched. This exemplifies the necessity of a grounded theory study on the topic to reveal a new research area that needs conceptualization.

On a theoretical level, Strauss developed the social worlds framework (Clarke & Star, 2008, p. 113). Social worlds are defined as ‘universes of discourse,’ and are shared discursive spaces that are profoundly connected (Strauss, 1978; Clarke & Star, 2008, p. 113). When the social worlds expand and intersect with others, Strauss calls this an arena, consisting of social worlds that have mutual concern over issues (Strauss, 1978; Clarke & Star, 2008, p. 113). What Strauss developed is indeed a framework to understand the actors within the arena such as representations, processes of work and various discourses within.

This framework has become the infrastructure to situational analyses, as extended by Clarke (Clarke, 2003; Clarke & Star, 2008, p. 114). Clarke (2003) offers a regeneration of grounded theory first set out by Strauss and Glaser, by developing situational maps and analyses as supplements to traditional grounded theory (Clarke, 2003, p. 553). This innovation is provided for researchers to draw conclusions regarding the complex situations of inquiry, such as discourse, agency, structures, images and more (Clarke, 2003, p. 554). Following Clarke’s concepts to extend Strauss’s work, she provides three main approaches to situational analyses which are briefly summarized:

1. *Situational maps*; which looks at discourse and how it enters the social relationships and interaction.
2. *Social worlds/arena maps*; which is about the production of identities through discourse and how discourses shapes/changes subjectivities.
3. *Positional maps*; which are about the production of knowledge/power, ideologies and control through discourse (Clarke, 2003, p. 554; Mills et al., 2007, p. 75).

Within this study, the author utilizes the concept of social worlds as reiterated by Clarke (2003) as was designed by Strauss (1978), which provides emphasis of the production of identities within a social world. This is necessary for such LinkedInfluencer research due to the focus on the career advisor identity of the influencer which has yet to be thoroughly researched.

As this study focuses on career advice given by LinkedInfluencers, the production of the LinkedInfluencer identity shares through their posts is present. Communication through digital discourse allows an indication of the professional identity a LinkedInfluencer portrays themselves as. Therefore, we utilize the social worlds framework within grounded theory to help build relevant concepts directly from the data, making the research theoretically grounded indeed, and helping further understand the production of the identity of a LinkedInfluencer as a career advisor based on the discourse presented in the form of a LinkedIn post. It is important to note that identity and discourse has been a topic of interest for hundreds of years (De Fina et al., 2011, p. 1). Current research on digital identity of LinkedIn users offer that identities are shaped by interface constraints and affordances of both the personal and professional persona (van Dijk, 2013, p. 200).

2.4.1. Grounded theory ontologies

Whilst there are several types of ontologies that grounded theory research aligns with, the following paper will focus on a constructivist approach to the data and discourses, as developed by Charmaz in 1995 (Charmaz, 2006). The choosing of a research paradigm that aligns with the researcher and best fits with the research is immensely important (Mills et al., 2006, p. 26). Opposing a classical grounded theory paradigm where the researcher must remain neutral throughout and having a distinct separation between theory generation and verification, constructivist grounded theory understand that one cannot simply ‘escape’ having prior knowledge and that the constructed theory is an interpretation rather than an exact representation of the data (Sebastian, 2019, p. 4). Additionally, the role of the researcher differs. Rather than being distant and detached, the constructivist approach allows the researcher to construct rather than to discover the theory, also leading to a different approach in the findings (Sebastian, 2019, p. 4). The guidance of the constructivist paradigm is utilized for the interpretation of LinkedInfluencer’s content in this study.

2.5. Framing analysis

In addition to grounded theory, framing analysis will further help understand LinkedInfluencers and the norms and values within their posts. Similar to grounded theory, framing analysis has the advantage of being both the key to the theoretical framework (frame theory) and methodology in one. Framing analysis, as popularized by Goffman in 1974, utilized frame theory which in essence is about the schema of interpretation. There are several known definitions of framing. For instance, Reese (2001) proposed a general definition of frames; “frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (Reese, 2001, p. 11, Goffman, 1974; Goffman, 1986). In simpler terms, the way Gitlin (1980) sees frames helps further define framing, being “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion” (p. 7). Framing analysis is often noted and predominantly used for news and journalism discourses (Matthes, 2012, p. 247), and different definitions of frames have been adjusted and used throughout news discourse research for the identification of problems.

The definition that best fits the approach of this study is by Entman (1993) who offers a specific definition of framing which entails the outlining and interpretation of problems, and the diagnosis of causes and furthermore focus on the selection and salience of framing; “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (for the item described)” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Entman (1993) defines four framing actions within this definition; the defining and interpreting a problem or issue, an evaluation of moralistic factors that contribute to the identified problem, and then a provision of solutions to solve the defined problem. Therefore, by defining what career issues are identified and

interpreted by the influencer, what moralistic factors contribute to this issue and what solutions are provided by the influencer in an attempt to face or solve these issues, the study's objective is to investigate how career advice is framed by the LinkedInfluencers which can indicate their role as career advisors. The definition by Entman (1993) will be the core definition used to operationalize the frames found.

2.5.1. Framing and culture

Entman (1993) also highlights the importance of culture to framing, to which he writes "culture is the stock of commonly invoked frames; in fact, culture might be defined as the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping" (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Social grouping and social norms go hand in hand, making the lack of alignment of social norms a problem that needs to have a diagnosed cause. In the case of LinkedIn, the platform has its own set of social norms and the LinkedIn platform can be seen as having its own culture. With framing analysis, we can simultaneously see LinkedInfluencers culture and norms, and how it is defined by discourse. Furthermore, we can see the relationship between national culture, workplace culture, and LinkedIn influencer culture.

To tie in with grounded theory, understanding the culture from a framing perspective can simultaneously inform us on the North American career world as well as the social world of LinkedIn digital ecosystem. More specifically, to assist in outlining the social world of the LinkedInfluencers, and further finding the cultural norms and values behind the frames derived from the grounded theory themes that are constructed and arise from the data.

2.5.2. Organizational framing literature

Since there are many varied approaches to framing, it is relevant to exhibit relevant examples of framing in somewhat similar contexts. One paper by Vardikou and Konidaris (2023) does utilize the framing theory as part of a larger research on the analysis of likes and shares of a single LinkedIn company page. Vardikou and Konidaris (2023) discuss the virality of LinkedIn social media campaign content where one finding suggests that for informational content, setting up a conflict frame helps with distribution of the content, as users seem to react and share more when content is framed as a conflict, even if it is negatively looked upon (Vardikou & Konidaris, 2023, pp. 113-114).

Another paper by Pasztor (2019) utilizes Entman's framing definition specifically in light of exploring how corporate organizations were framed as being top-ranked in diversity management on *DiversityInc's* diversity survey (p. 455). The findings are reflected in Entman's (1993) definition in defining and interpreting the issue(s) (being narratives around a lack of diversity, stemming from differences which need to be appreciated rather than eradicated), highlighting moral evaluations (no key moral factors highlighted by stereotyping or historical discrimination), and providing solutions to diversity concerns (varies from acceptance of various workplace cultures and gender-diversity, with a

focus on fostering respectful environments and enabling diversity as an appropriate course of action) (Pasztor, 2019, p. 466). Whilst this is not framing on LinkedIn or their influencers, this paper does give an example of Entman's four framing function into practice with corporate bodies.

Both papers allow us to gain insight into how prior literature has approached framing on organizations and their identities. They additionally show how framing on LinkedIn and framing using Entman's (1993) definition and four framing functions are used in practical research. The current study aims to utilize framing practices on LinkedIn's influencers through Entman's (1993) definition.

2.6. The combination of grounded theory and framing

The study will focus on a combination of qualitative grounded theory and framing as to enhance the depth of analysis of themes that arise out of the LinkedInfluencer posts. Whilst the combination of grounded theory and framing in research has been done in the past (for example: Mills et al., 2007), there is little research utilizing the combination of theories applied to career or personal advice research. In a study by Mills et al. (2007) to evaluate the experiences of mentoring by Australian nurses, the adoption of frame analysis after the initial grounded theory study was done to identify the ability of individuals to shape the world in some way (Mills et al., 2007, p. 72).

Building on this foundational approach of Mills et al. (2007), this study uses grounded theory to determine the emergent themes in LinkedInfluencers post. This systematic generation of codes and themes allows to lay a base understanding of the empirical data found regarding career-related information outlined by the influencer. Additionally, analyzing the social norms and cultural, professional, socio-political and other relevant values and factors of the LinkedIn social world will further help us divulge in the understanding of the frames of LinkedInfluencers as well as the common themes used. Thereafter, framing analysis will be used to delve more deeply into the found themes by exploring how LinkedInfluencers construct the career advice as part of their identity as career advisors.

As framing helps determine certain aspects of the social world of LinkedIn and making them more salient, the focus on issue-specific frames can further allow us to analyze how definition of career-related issues, career advice, personal advice, self-promotion, promotion of one's services and more contributes to the understanding of the career advisor identity of an influencer, in comparison to generic frames that may not give us the insight needed on career advisor identities. Issue-specific frames are typically encased by thematic limitations, such as specific topics and events (de Vreese, 2005, p. 54).

With issue-specific frames in mind, an additional frame that was not necessarily outlined within Entman's (1993) is an identity-related frame. Rengér and Zander (2011) study does outline a definition for what they call a social-identity frame in the context of business management, being: "...we suggest the social-identity frame as a socio-cognitive deduction that invokes a certain

understanding and behavior in relation to a strategy...” (Rengér & Zander, 2008; Rengér and Zander, 2011, p. 831). Whilst this definition is given in the context of organizational leaders and is based on the social-identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the frame also fits in the context of influential LinkedIn leaders, and the construction of the issue-specific frame within the findings are potentially present.

Therefore, utilizing Mills et al. (2007) methodological approach with Entman’s (1993) framing approach, the following thesis will also combine the methodology of grounded theory with the relevant social worlds framework alongside framing analysis to understand the production of the career advisor identity of a LinkedIn Influencer based on the discourse presented in the form of a LinkedIn posts. The LinkedIn interface norms require users to show off their social as well as professional skills, to both increase their professional value, but also simultaneously improve the image of the company they are working for/representing (van Dijk, 2013, p. 209).

2.7. The sociocognitive perspective

The combination of linguistic consideration of the posts as well as the context will be taken into account within the discourse-based framing analysis. While discourse has many definitions by several linguists and sociologists, Van Dijk’s (2014a) definition of discourse considers the production and comprehension of discourse; “...(discourse is) a form of social interaction in society and at the same time as the expression and reproduction of social cognition.” (Van Dijk, 2014a, p. 12; Gyollai, 2022, p. 540). Within discourse analysis, the sociocognitive domain developed by Van Dijk pertains to the idea that discourse structures function through a cognitive interface (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 23). The cognitive interface is the “mental representations of language users as individuals and as social members” (Van Dijk, 2015a, p. 64). Van Dijk argues that ‘traditional’ approaches that take into account the social influence of language use and discourse are incomplete without an acknowledgment of the cognitive interface (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 23; Gyollai, 2022, p. 540). The formulation and production of discourse are rooted in the cognitive interface of the participants, being personal and socially shared knowledge (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 23; Gyollai, 2022, p. 540). Thus, participants in discourse can infer social characteristics from speakers based on how they speak or write (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 118). Despite Van Dijk’s (2008) use of the term ‘context’ in only particular situations, he does outline that the contextual role of the participant does relate to social influence (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 115).

In regards to this paper, the social situation is the digital platform of LinkedIn and the contextual role of the communicating participant being the LinkedIn Influencer and the social norms and values they follow (such as workplace culture). Additionally, taking into account their likely position of being an expert in their field of work. This is majorly what a LinkedIn user can infer based on their profiles, and that such influencers have a high degree of expertise which gives them the ‘right’ to share their experiences and advice on the platform. In the context of LinkedIn as a social media

platform specifically for networking (Davis et al., 2020, p. 6), job searching, and self-promoting (Basak & Calisir, 2014, p. 4), the relationship between social situations and discourse is not only identifiable but there are strong social norms associated with the platform and interaction within, such as the use of explicit self-praise (Tobback, 2019, p. 653).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

The author will answer the research questions by means of grounded theory methodology and framing analysis of LinkedIn posts content. Qualitative research was used to better understand the social world of LinkedIn influencers and the discourses on LinkedIn, capturing the nuanced aspects of the popular networking platform. Focusing on LinkedIn posts as data provides insight to the communication strategies by the Top Voice users, discovering the ways and tools used to communicate career advice whilst maintaining credibility as a LinkedIn influencer.

The utilization of both grounded theory and qualitative framing analysis is ideal for the added value. As the topic of LinkedIn influencers and their role as career advisors has limited existing research, grounded theory allows the researcher to remain open to emerging themes with the benefit of iterative and inductive coding to help capture the concepts relevant qualities. As for framing, the value of further utilizing the data by being able to elaborate and discover the present themes in a deep and rich way provides insight to the LinkedIn influencer's social world. Essentially, this makes grounded theory research more relevant by going beyond just categorizing the data. Both methodologies also provide a clear organization of content where the themes are organized into frames. As grounded theory facilitates an inductive approach to theory and concepts, framing analysis provides a theoretical lens in which the researcher is able to observe the discourses within LinkedIn influencer's social world and better understand the social norms, values and other influences on the LinkedIn influencer.

Whilst there are a few ways to approach this research, the following thesis will use a text-based, qualitative content analysis approach to answer the research questions. The methodology process is influenced by the Mills et al. (2007) paper, which cleverly combined grounded theory's bottom-up theory generation methodology with framing analysis with issue-specific frames, following Entman's (1993) definition of frames and four framing functions.

Grounded theory constructivist paradigm approach will be utilized. The author will base the approach for grounded theory methodology outlined by Hare (2004), which utilizes two phases. Open coding is used to code the LinkedIn influencer posts, followed by axial coding and further structured by frames defined by the generated themes from the data. Rather than selective coding, the selective codes are replaced with frames to further categorize the axial codes. The author will partially base their framing analysis steps recommended by Hertog and McLeod (2001), which proposes a general course of actions to take before and during the analytical process of framing analysis. More specifically, the building of frames with Entman's (1993) definition of frames and four framing functions is used to observe and interpret what frames arise from the data.

The building and assignment of frames will be an iterative process done simultaneously alongside the grounded theory open coding approach, meaning that before and during the data collection and analysis the researcher will note possible patterns and frames, revisiting them

throughout the analysis process. This is to see what social norms and values (personal, professional, cultural and socio-political) are present through the career-oriented discourse and what affects the LinkedIn Influencer's discourse.

Alongside this, the analysis approach will utilize Van Dijk's (2008) sociocognitive approach. With this, the analysis itself will consider both the textual output of the data as well as the social situation of the networking platform. Taking the digital environment into account, as well as the main usage of LinkedIn (being for networking and job searching) is necessary to understand the discourses within the platform, as LinkedIn users typically align with certain social norms associated with the platform (professional self-presentation).

3.2. Sample and sampling method

The sample for this study aimed at collecting 200 LinkedIn posts by LinkedIn Influencers. The utilized sampling method was criterion sampling alongside convenience sampling in terms of finding LinkedIn Influencers. In regards to the inclusion criteria, the most vital inclusion criterion is that LinkedIn Influencers must have the Top Voice blue badge, a symbol that indicates a LinkedIn user has been specifically invited to join this elite group by the LinkedIn organization, which feature "... senior-level experts and leaders" (LinkedIn Top Voices, 2024, para. 1). This indicates that LinkedIn believes that these creators are consistently helping members uncover new knowledge, and sharing relevant insights (LinkedIn Top Voices, 2024, para. 1)..

The inclusion criteria also takes into account location, utilizing the filtering affordance of LinkedIn. The LinkedIn Influencer must be based either in the United States of America or Canada. The sampling follows a process similar to a convenience sampling method, being whomever appears on the search page gets evaluated for the inclusion criteria, and if they align with the criteria they are automatically in the corpus. In terms of location, 24 LinkedIn Influencers were based in the USA, whilst one is based in Canada. Additionally, inclusion criteria includes that profiles must be in English and have exclusive content in the English language, as majority of LinkedIn users are based in the USA, where English is the most spoken language. Gender, ethnicity and nationality were not part of the criteria. This is for diversification in results to be as representative of LinkedIn Influencer content as possible, but still all sharing a cultural understanding of the North American career world. Indeed, this does give the limitation of having lower than desired representation, yet with over 200 posts analyzed, the results can be seen as reliable. Initial sample included 27 LinkedIn Influencer's to make up 220 posts. After looking at the inclusion criteria further, 25 LinkedIn Influencers were included in the final corpus, and the final turnout of the dataset included 208 posts.

The research will focus on coding LinkedIn Influencers posts in the timeline of January to February of 2024. This timeframe was chosen as the beginning of the year is typically the 'recruitment season' (in addition to September-October) where graduates and job seekers alike start their job search (Brower, 2023). Therefore, the prediction of increased LinkedIn Influencer posting of

career advice is within this timeline. Not more than 10 posts per LinkedInfluencer may be used, to get a diversified result from at least 20 different LinkedInfluencers. In the case that the LinkedInfluencer does not consistently post within the dedicated time frame of January-February of 2024, collecting under 10 posts for said influencer is also accepted into the corpus. As LinkedIn users aiming for recognized badges typically post several times a week or even a few times a day to reach the upper limit of posts to achieve an engagement-related badge, the narrow time frame of two months is appropriate and doable for the collection of 10 posts per influencer.

The calculation of the number of posts in the dataset is made with the average number of words per piece of content based on the Methodological Guidelines (this estimation is made in combination with the average number of words per post, being 199.14). The estimated word volume of the 200 posts is 35,000 words in total, divided by 199.14 words is approximately 175. When rounding up to 200, the sample is over triple the size of articles/blogs recommended by research methodological thesis guidelines for analyzing articles (300+ words), where 30 of the posts are over 300 words, yet under 500 for the analysis of user-generated content on social media such as X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook. This large corpus leads to a diversified yet fitting sample in the limited timeframe dedicated for data collection. This highlights the fact that indeed, LinkedIn is a unique platform where long posts are not uncommon. Videos and photo attachments of the posts were not included in the research and therefore not added to the corpus, due to scope limitations.

Other inclusion criteria regard the influencer or power status of the user, having over 5,000 followers being a criterion, showing they are engaging a significant number of persons. The average number of followers of LinkedInfluencers in the corpus is 208,789. Out of the 25 LinkedInfluencers, the pronouns explicitly stated in the biographies indicated that the corpus consisted of 14 women, 4 men, and the rest did not have their pronouns published ($N=6$). How many 'experiences', or positions at different companies, were also taken into consideration. If a user worked at one organization, it may lead to biased career advice specific to one organization, therefore having at least 3 experiences at different organizations was part of the inclusion criteria. The average number of experiences per LinkedInfluencer in the corpus is 11.66. Finally, all LinkedInfluencers must not have any connections with the researcher or close connections to the researcher, to avoid any and all biases that may be present.

3.3. Data collection

Primary data is collected from LinkedIn directly through an inclusion criterion and convenience sampling method. To have unlimited searching, the researcher opened a trial period of LinkedIn Premium on a new, empty account to be able to access all the profiles without being limited by the platform. As the empty account gave no personal data or had any previous posts/experiences, the case of personalized searches or information was attempted to be negated. The researcher examined the convenient users that appear from the filtered search, being a Top Voice user and the location filter

for USA and Canada. From there, the researcher analyzed each profile individually to see if the influencers align with the inclusion criteria, as noted in Chapter 3.2. After checking that the influencer follows the inclusion criteria, the researcher finds posts within the defined timeline. After a brief reading, the post is then downloaded and saved on an external file. After this is done with 200 eligible posts from different LinkedInfluencers, the researcher then converts the data to Atlas.ti, where the coding will take place.

Initially, posts would have been selected through convenience sampling with the outcome of results from a hashtag-based platform analysis of the search hashtag #careeradvice. With this affordance, all LinkedIn users can enter a certain hashtag in their biography and profile, making it easier to find people who talk about or discuss topics through the chosen hashtag. In light of the recent interface updates, in February 2024 the removal of hashtags in the introduction section of a user's profile took place (Updates to Creator Mode, 2024). To accommodate this change of sampling method, the researcher searches for LinkedInfluencers with the term 'career' either in their headline, biography, providing services section, skills section or somewhere on their profile. More specifically, any terminology related to career advice, career coaching, mentoring, supporting personal and professional persons or career-related terms will recruit the LinkedInfluencer's post to the data collection. This is done to determine that the posts will likely be career-advice related to target their followers. Additionally, the self-presentation in the profiles as a 'career advisor' or related terms will indicate that the influencer's content also reveals the influencer in this role.

If the user is excluded by not aligning with the inclusion criteria, the researcher will continue convenience analysis by looking at the next user from the search results. This is done repeatedly until 200 eligible posts are reached, or if the posts of a LinkedInfluencer is not yet reached 10 posts within the dedicated timeline, the researcher will still include the posts that are present within the dedicated timeline in the corpus (<10 posts). Since specific dates of the posts are not mentioned (part of the interface of LinkedIn), assumption regarding the specific date of the post had to be made (eg: posted 3 days ago, posted 1 month ago, posted 2 months ago, etc.) to fill the inclusion criteria of a post between January to February of 2024.

3.4. Ethical considerations

On an ethics note, all LinkedInfluencer's must have public accounts. To protect the privacy of the influencers as well as their imagery (eg: posts and designs), no images, videos or copy of imagery of the influencers will be shown or used within the study. None of the LinkedInfluencers names, titles or the full content of their posts will be shared in this thesis, but as they are public figures posting public content, the full names and posts is shown in an external file, only accessible to Erasmus University Rotterdam staff (Appendix E and Appendix F). The names will be anonymized and numbered accordingly (example: John Doe, post #3: JD-3). Within the thesis, if names of unrecognized persons are mentioned, they will be crossed out to ensure the privacy of the person being mentioned. The full

analysis of the collected data including the names of the LinkedInfluencers will only be available upon direct request of the researcher and must be used within Erasmus University Rotterdam only. Additionally, the data or coding results where quotes or full posts are included will not be shared on any open access resources. In Appendix A, a list of the codes with a short example from the data will be used as to indicate how the codes are translated and applied to the data.

Furthermore, no AI Atlas.ti tool was utilized due to initial testing by the researcher leading to inaccurate assignment of themes, to avoid mislabeling content incorrectly which can lead to unbelievable findings.

3.5. Coding procedure

On the methodological level, grounded theory is primarily inductive (Morse, 2012, p. 4), and involves two phases as highlighted by Have (2004, p. 136). The first is the comparison of data fragments to 'catch' their analytically relevant properties through what is called a constant comparative method. This is characterized as open coding, where the data fragments become indicators of concepts they reveal themselves as. With open coding, the process is indeed 'open', meaning they are data-driven and continue being developed the more they are revealed in the corpus. This is done until the concepts are saturated and do not change through new comparisons. The second phase is used to refine the concepts defined, done through connecting codes to form more defined, hypothesized propositions and grouping similar codes under more generalized headings through the process of abstraction (Have, 2004, p. 136). The second phase develops theory more thoroughly based on the open coding of the first phase. When the two phases are taken together, they generate and test theory simultaneously, based on empirical data (Have, 2004, p. 136).

Maintaining reliability and credibility of coding to be as consistent as possible throughout the dataset is essential. After analyzing 20 posts, data fragments are then compared to previously analyzed data to be reviewed with the new open codes that are developed throughout, and later are given generalized categories which fall in an open coding system. This is done every 20 posts until the end of the data is reached and every post has been thoroughly analyzed. The use of the constant comparative method enhances reliability of the study.

Analysis is performed sentence by sentence rather than by paragraph or post due to the various discursive strategies used within one post, which can at times contain over 300 words, and therefore more likely to contain several codes within. Often times if sentences cannot stand alone and need context from other sentences, several sentences can be applied to a single open code depending on the context discussed. Since the codes are later being categorized into themes followed by the structuring of frames, the codes will be specific, making coding by paragraph or by post generalized. Once all the data is coded, the open codes are carefully categorized to axial codes, which are then further categorized into frames rather than selective codes, as a more fitting way of categorization. The axial codes indeed are reflected as themes throughout the findings.

The themes are then utilized for the framing analysis, extracting frames based on the themes, following the sociocognitive approach, the general framing analysis steps of Hertog and McLeod (2001) and utilizing the memo's written alongside the coding procedure to help with the discussion of findings (Have, 2004, p. 136; Morse, 2012, p. 13). Memo's include noting what contextualizes such codes and what role social norms and personal, professional, cultural and socio-political values play in the LinkedInfluencers career-oriented posts, used to further help maintain reflexivity. The building and assignment of frames will be an iterative process done simultaneously alongside the grounded theory open coding approach, meaning that before and during the data collection and analysis the researcher will note possible patterns and frames, revisiting them throughout the analysis process. This is to make the author "aware of the array of potential frames", as recommended by Hertog and McLeod (2001, p. 150) to understand what social norms and values are impact and contextualize the frame. As the analysis progresses, new codes and new definitions of said codes are built, also building on existing codes and adjusting the titles throughout the iterative process which will likely arise in the analysis, and will be noted for future posts

Once the analysis is completed, the author will individually go over all the data with the inductive codes in mind, to make sure all the posts are analyzed with all the codes created throughout. Thereafter, the author permitted a fellow researcher to review the codes with a subset of the data (25 posts) as a test prior to the first round to review the application of codes and make sure the data and coding are reliable. If a name, definition or application of the code is disagreed upon by the second researcher, the main researcher will pursue further inter-coder reliability and discuss a change in the codes/coding procedure or the code name, to which both the main researcher and second researcher will review the applied codes and change/edit if necessary. A codebook is then finalized and used for the results and discussion section of the paper (Appendix A and Appendix B).

3.6. Data processing and data analysis

The researcher will utilize Atlas.ti to organize the coding of the data, and will further manually analyze the data by utilizing the Atlas.ti program's affordances for organization, assigning codes and frames per sentence or utterance when necessary. This is done for a more comprehensive and detailed analysis where one can highlight and color-code certain areas of the text, rather than alongside the post in a different file format. The organization of relevant details of LinkedInfluencers are added to an Excel sheet to keep track of the aspects of the influencer that relate to the inclusion criteria per influencer. Memoing will also be done in a separate Excel sheet. This is to help with breaking down the analysis where all the coding and notetaking is done digitally. Each eligible post will be downloaded to an external drive, and the text will be copied onto Excel.

For data protection of the content creators, the researcher will give code names for each LinkedInfluencer to hide the name of the influencer for anonymity purposes. Once the coding procedure is completed, the author will statistically check how often open codes arise and

qualitatively analyze what contributes to the comprehension of the frame to appropriately answer the research questions. The findings will then be discussed in the findings section of the paper, including deviant cases and highlighting additional contexts that appeared in the analysis.

3.7. Operationalization

Grounded theory and framing theory will be seamlessly integrated. Based on the Morse’s (2021) definition of grounded theory, the “description and identification” refers to the codes constructed by the data used to “document and explain the changes” through themes (Morse, 2021, p. 4). As for framing, definitions for frames presented by Goffman (1974 and 1986), Reese (2001) and Entman (1993), where frames must be “...socially shared and persistent over time...” (Reese, 2001, p. 11; Goffman, 1974; Goffman, 1986), meaning that the LinkedInfluencers frames are found as patterns throughout the analysis, which “...work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (Reese, 2001, p. 11, Goffman, 1974; Goffman, 1986), where the social world in this context is LinkedIn.

In the context of this paper, the open codes will be transformed and combined into axial coding which will be represented as themes, and furthermore be then structured and explained by frames. More specifically, the “selection and salience” of the perceived reality that Entman (1993) refers to will be the LinkedInfluencers posts as the frames will be developed mainly through Entman’s (1993) definition of frames, utilizing his four main acts of framing; diagnosing problems, diagnosing causes, making moral evaluations and recommending treatments (Entman, 1993, p. 52). If there are other strongly noted frames that arise out of the data that do not fall within this definition, they are highlighted as such, being the social-identity frame.

Table 1

Frames found and their relation to definition of frames from different authors.

Frames	Author and date	Frame as referred to by author	Further specification in the context of the study
Individual and organizational limitations frame	Entman (1993)	Diagnosing problems and diagnosing causes (p. 53)	The main issue or problem(s) defined in the career advice, what the LinkedInfluencer considers a problem.
Career and personal solution-benefit frame	Entman (1993)	Moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (p. 53)	The LinkedInfluencer giving solutions, advice or recommendations to the defined problem. The benefit aspect of the career advice, including certain propositions

			alongside the solution to fulfil the benefit.
Social-identity Frame	Regnér and Zander (2011)	“...socio-cognitive deduction that invokes a certain understanding and behavior in relation to a strategy...” (p. 831)	The strategies the LinkedInfluencer uses to convey their identity as a career advisor, by being an encouraging and motivation person to their audience.

Additionally, as career advice is the basis of the paper, defining the term is vital to operationalizing the concept in the definition of LinkedInfluencers whom are also career advisors. Therefore, utilizing several definitions is best to specify career advice in the context of this paper, as was highlighted in Chapter 2.1. Whilst the term career advice does not necessarily include both career advice and career guidance in itself, in the context of this paper career advice will be the umbrella term used to indicated the advising, guiding and mentoring of career trajectories on LinkedIn by LinkedInfluencers. Firstly, utilizing the Tomprou et al. (2019) definition of valuable advice as well as career guidance will help further help specify career advice. Additionally, the terminology self-promotion in the context of this paper refers to the promotion of *oneself*, which greatly differs from the promotion or marketing of one’s professional services. Self-presentation is the umbrella term for self-admiration, behaviors and way or presenting oneself, usually to preserve one’s positive face.

4. Findings

4.1. LinkedInfluencer themes: Insights from grounded theory

The findings are presented to reflect the two methodologies and analysis practices used in the study. To address the first research question being “*what themes have been presented in LinkedInfluencer posts?*”, outlining of themes based on the open and axial coding of the data is the first step of introducing the findings. Overall, 62 codes were found throughout the data (Appendix A).

The most popular, or most saturated, codes being; “reflecting on present or past actions/thoughts” ($N=230$), “giving career related advice or recommendations” ($N=176$), “expressing appreciation or recognition of others” ($N=154$), “utilization of hashtags” ($N=146$), “offering general guidance or encouragement statements” ($N=118$), “posing a rhetorical question” ($N=113$) and “prompting one to join/subscribe/watch/read” ($N=103$). The various saturated codes are calculated in Appendix C and top saturated codes are represented in a bar chart from Atlas.ti in Appendix D.

After fully completing the constant comparison process, axial codes were constructed, which essentially grouped the data together under categories. Note that the codes “offering general guidance or encouragement statements”, “providing general wisdom” and “factual-styled statement from career perspective” falls under two different axial codes.

Additionally, the “utilizing hashtags” code is not necessarily a communicative purpose in itself, it is still considered as a way to promote a post or highlight the topic discussed in the post by utilizing a hashtag function to define the post. Nevertheless, due to the fact that every LinkedInfluencer used hashtags at some point in their posts, the promotional aspect must be recognized, therefore putting this code into the self-promotion category.

Whilst a full list of all the codes in alphabetical order with examples can be found in Appendix A in alphabetical order with the amount of repetitions each code, the overall categorization of the open codes into axial codes can be seen in Appendix B. The axial codes (themes) can be seen below (Table 2)

Table 2

Table showing the axial codes (represented as main themes) categorized from the open codes and selective codes to summarize the axial codes.

Number	Axial Codes (Themes)
1	Reflective and Personal Insights
2	Narratives and Storytelling
3	Career Advice
4	Personal Advice
5	Encouragement and Motivation

6	Self-Promotion and Promoting one's services
7	Engaging Audiences
8	Social Norms and (non) Career Observations
9	Identity and non-career related factors

As the themes are defined by the open coding analysis based on the communicative function of the LinkedInfluencer, frames will further help categorize the themes present in the data.

4.1.2. Communicative strategy: Storytelling

Two major themes present in the data is necessary to highlight, being “narratives and storytelling” and “engaging audiences”. Both themes are not frames but rather communication strategies utilized by LinkedInfluencers to get the information and advice across to the readers, therefore are particular themes to highlight.

In the case of storytelling, the use of storytelling and narratives play a role in building all the career-related frames of the LinkedInfluencer, but especially the personal advice frame. Storytelling is a communicative strategy to convey a message or personal insight on behalf of the LinkedInfluencer as part of a larger strategy. While that strategy could vary, it seems that implying a learning moment and conveying experience knowledge based on the LinkedInfluencers personal experience is immensely common (mainly through the “reflecting on (past) actions/thoughts” as well as the “expression of self-reflection or personal insight” codes). The content creation aspect of LinkedInfluencer is best shown in such storytelling utterances. There are various types of storytelling depending on the specific to career and general storytelling. For example:

(1) “When I first became a tech lead at Google many years ago, I was given my first big project and 3 other engineers to lead. With the enthusiasm of a naive first-timer, I got to work. I architected the solution, scoped out the work, and assigned the tasks. I thought my newfound TL title would give me the authority I needed to just tell people what to do, and that they would simply listen. News flash: they didn't.” (IS-7)

As can be seen in Example 1, the storytelling regards IS's first leadership position in Google, and how initially they thought they had authority over people in the position, but that in reality it was not the case. This storyline continues by saying that authority is not always given but rather earned with respect and time.

Even in the personal storytelling, there is sometimes a final morale that implies something has affected how one approached their career.

(2) “My father had a saying about my farm kid tendency to play with swords, axes, and saws. He would say “It's not if, it's when you will cut yourself.”... He started to lecture me and began to

yell about what had I done and how I had been so stupid. I calmly looked him in the face and said, "You can yell at me later; right now I need you to drive me to the hospital." It was like a bucket of cold water. He stopped mid-shout, got his keys, and drove... Ever since this, I have trusted myself in a crisis." (EE-2)

The post starts giving the context of the story, starting off as a 16-year-old teenager who played with sharp objects. Otherwise, there is no indication that this is in relation to career, except after the story is completed and the LinkedInfluencer proceeds to explain that since this incident as a teenager, he has trusted himself in a crisis and that all leaders must not panic in situations. Therefore, the morale of the story does play into relation to the career world, but otherwise does not particularly indicate any relation to career, simply storytelling through a narrative about staying calm in stressful situations. In this case, this is seemingly used as a strategy to give personal advice to the audience whilst sharing something about the LinkedInfluencers life, tying into the strategy aspect of the social-identity frame.

4.1.3. Communication strategy: Rhetorical questions

Engaging audiences also in a way fits in to the social-identity frame of LinkedInfluencers. Engaging audiences by proposing questions directly to the audiences, proposing rhetorical questions and prompting a follower to engage with the LinkedInfluencers content are some of the ways that a LinkedInfluencer is engaging audiences as a career advisor. In a way, the engaging audiences' theme is transcending career advice to also be a promotional and storytelling strategy. Proposing rhetorical questions was one of the highest repeated codes in the data ($N=113$), which is used to get the point of the story across rather than to get an answer. Rhetorical questions are reported in one paper to elicit agreement, and is generally more persuasive than not using it (Petty & Heesacker, 1981, p. 433). Rhetorical questions in the corpus are always used to engage with the audience by making the storytelling aspect of career advice, or other sort of knowledge, more appealing to the reader. For example:

(3) *"Is there a better business guide? Let's do this!! 🤔🇺🇸❤️📄"* (BC-2)

(4) *"Don't assume you know, find out what motivates them. How? Ask them what they need."* (HM-3)

In Example 3, the rhetorical question of "is there a better business guide" essentially helps with prompting the advice that follows, a common use of the "proposing rhetorical questions" code. In this case, is a promotional effort to provide a business guide (service/product) by the LinkedInfluencer.

In Example 4, the rhetorical question comes in a form of asking question ("how?") that already has an answer directly afterwards (being to ask people such as recruiters and hiring managers what is needed) is asked to build up the upcoming content the influencer will share.

Both examples reveal how in fact such rhetorical questions are used to engage the reader into continuing to read the post, which is a communication strategy used to help promote the LinkedInfluencer’s services or as a way to allow the audience to continue reading the following content.

4.2. Framing LinkedInfluencers: Career advice and other frames

To address the second research question, being “*how have career advice frames been presented through LinkedInfluencer posts?*”, we utilize the axial codes, now presented as main themes, and investigate the following frames (replacement of the selective codes): professional and individual limitations frame, career and personal solution-benefit frame, and social-identity frame.

The following framing analysis will focus specifically on the different frames of career advice that a LinkedInfluencer provides for their readers. As such, it is clear that within the analyzed discourses on LinkedIn posts, the theme career advice is encapsulated not just by the advice itself, but also by the storytelling leading up to the advice to explain how the advice came to be, the different personal and environmental factors that area mentioned in light of the advice, the promotion of services provided alongside the advice for the LinkedInfluencer to gain from the reader’s attention, and the encouragement and guidance to create a sense of a personalized career advisor towards the reader. This is immensely important to further understand the framing analysis, as it is clear that it’s not career advice alone which makes the LinkedInfluencer more humane and captures the attention of the audience, but rather the buildup that is part of the advice (the storytelling, engagement, etc.). Below is a table of categories of the different themes within the four constructed frames, derived from the corpus.

Table 3

Themes (derived from the axial codes) which align in each arisen frame.

Type	Career Issue-Specific Frames		
Major Frames	Individual and Organizational limitations Frame	Career and Personal Solution-Benefit Frame	Social-identity Frame
Sub-Frames	Individual limitations Frame Organizational limitations Frame	Career Advice Frame Personal Advice Frame Promoting Services Frame	Supportive and Motivational Frame
Themes present within the frames	Social Norms and (non) Career Observations Narratives and Storytelling Identity and non-career related factors	Career Advice Reflective and Personal Insights Personal Advice Narratives and Storytelling	Encouragement and Motivation Engaging Audiences Narratives and Storytelling Identity and non-career related

4.2.1. Major frame: Individual and organizational limitations frame

Often times the theme of career advice is used in the individual and organizational limitations frame, or as Entman's (1993) definition states, "...diagnosing problems and diagnosing causes..." (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Highlighting challenges or limitations that people face within their career paths is part of this frame. Addressing common issues such as job search, workplace conflicts, and overworking are common ones, whilst more personal issues such as having a feeling of stagnation in your career, or lacking a work-life balance, or feelings of stress were also presented as part of the professional and individual limitations frame. Therefore, problems are broken down into two sub-frames: individual limitations frame and the organizational limitations frame.

Within the social norms and (non-) career observation theme, career-related problems come from a variety of perspectives. The main problems being caused by personal hinderance that is affecting the work, the employer, or organization one is working for, which in this study can be defined as either; problems stemming from internalized issue of the reader the advice is directed towards, or external sources only. For example, having an internalized fear of rejection or disappointment, or one having lack of correct communication or education to be able to face and deal with the present external challenges is present in the data as well. Additionally, external issues such as companies and organizations making consequential decisions such as layoffs or toxic workplaces are some examples of external issues noted.

Beginning with the first sub-frame of individual limitations, such limitations are typically framed as internal problems or fears of the audiences. This includes examples such as; not having the confidence to do something in the workplace, or not being able to have a work-life balance, and a lack of honest and clear communication.

Root causes range and are not directly communicated majority of the time. Some root causes that are noted vary from: internalized fear of rejection or disappointment, lacking the correct communication skills/other skills to help one get what they desire (in the workplace or otherwise), past practices that prohibit one's personal development, and so on.

Whilst some individual limitations are related to career and the workplace, they are still considered individual limitations because they are internalized issues that are not professional technical limitations. In other words, these issues may have been present prior to someone entering the workplace. Such personal growth and self-perception issues are framed in a way that typically do not put blame an anything or anyone in particular, but rather is stated as just the way some people function, and having the ability to take action on these issues is promoted and leads to encouragement to do so. In other words, the locus of control here is not on any extremes, and individual limitations are often framed as being somewhere in the middle of the continuum between internal and external

locus of control. For instance, being affected by social norms or values (of an individual rather than organizationally) which indeed lead to some type of individual limitation.

It is clear that these issues are framed as such that missing out on or not having a work-life balance (for the root cause of being immensely ambitious in your career, not because the system set up the career world to make money) or not being able to determine how you want to approach a new project will have a negative impact on the reader or employee. As when such an issue is defined by the LinkedInfluencer, a solution or approach to repairing this issue is typically followed up thereafter. For instance:

(5) "Did you know that Passionate individuals may be at a higher risk of burnout due to the complexities surrounding the art of saying "no?". I've encountered this challenge more times than I can count. My overwhelming passion made it difficult to decline requests throughout my professional journey." (SN-7)

As can be seen in Example 5, the problem that the influencer defined is that she had a tendency to accept requests (work-wise) due to her passion towards the work itself. The quote continues by stating this led to states of burnout, mental fog and dissatisfaction. As we do not cover the solution in this sub-frame, solutions to this issue do not matter. What matters is the way the LinkedInfluencer framed this issue, which is as if the influencer has impression management issues leading to struggle of declining requests, which is known by the terms "my overwhelming passion" and "difficult" as if the person had to change their current approach to something different (being able to say "no" more). This is an example of a case that is influenced by social norms of overworking, as well as values of success and positive politeness, to not both not harm one's positive face but more related to this case, to continue going uphill in their career journey and maintain their passionate work-selves. In terms of communication strategy, the rhetorical question here "did you know that..." is used to engage the audience to provoke curiosity towards the rest of the information provided.

Additionally, some individual limitations are discussed in a way that if the limitation is part of someone, then it should be embraced regardless. For instance, here is an example of a collection of sentences in a LinkedIn post that discusses the duality of being an introverted person in the workplace in a world where extroverted people are highly valued in workplace:

(6) "Lately, I've been thinking a lot about how we can be ourselves at work, especially if we're introverted. The world seems to constantly tell introverts to be louder and talk more about their work. But does that work for everyone? What are we asking of introverted individuals in the workplace?" (SN-3)

Here, we can see that the problem defined by the LinkedInfluencer is that introverts are told to be more loud and more extroverted when it comes to talking about/being in the workplace. Potentially,

this could be hinting at the desire for more masculine values in the workplace (assertiveness and speaking up). More broadly, introverts are encouraged to take in more outgoing social norms to better fit in a work environment that prioritizes more extroverted values. Taking into account the context of the post, the post continues by saying that introverted people are great to be around (in the experience of the LinkedInfluencer) and providing advice specifically to introverts in the workplace. In this case, the problem is defined as a personal limitation in which should be embraced regardless be playing into the strengths of the introverted person (focus on what one is good at, being flexible and finding out who is appreciating you who value your personality).

The individual limitations frame often also utilizes storytelling and narrative to get the point of the communicative message across. Constructed using this strategy, some LinkedInfluencers directly make the connection between past mistakes (or childhood experiences) that lead to persistent insecurities reflected in their career or personal life. To be clear, the relationship between root issues and career advice differs: some proceed to outlining that a past issue impacts someone in the career world today (internal locus of control). Yet, much of the career advice is led up with personal stories from the LinkedInfluencer themselves, seemingly making a vulnerable action by sharing such stories and downfalls with the audience. On a cultural level, it is clear that the communication of such stories to lead up to career advice indeed makes the LinkedInfluencer appear honest and transparent to the reader, potentially as a way to gain trust and to relate with their audience.

Continuing with the second sub-frame of organizational limitations, this frame encapsulated all limitations that are part of career or workforce. This highly varies from toxic workplaces (“bad” or non-communicative managers), lack of transparency on the behalf of the company, lack of effective HR practices including but not limited to diversity and equity (D&E) efforts, pressure from external sources such as company decisions (layoffs), receiving incorrect/inaccurate information from elsewhere, and more. These topics of organizational limitations can be noted as external issues. External issues are often projected in a way that indirectly attribute responsibility to the “system” or company for a problem (external locus of control), a certain workplace dynamic, and some even further stating that the “this is just how this works” mentality is wrong and should be changed. Seemingly, LinkedInfluencer’s highlighting such topics regarding commenting and advocating changes of the career-related social norms, make LinkedInfluencer’s appear to be socially responsible people whom care about a more healthy and fair workplace culture. This strongly ties into the socio-political values enabled by LinkedInfluencers, as people who care about intersection of social issues and political issues of the workplace.

For example, a topic that is highlighted by five LinkedInfluencers is the topic of people of color (POC) in the workplace. Some of the five often highlight the lack of hiring or enabling POC’s in the workplace. Whilst the issue is implied, it is never clearly stated. The LinkedInfluencers define this issue as a failure of the company’s policy to provide for POC’s and/or work with Black owned businesses, highlighted at times by providing facts or asking questions to the audience with a

confrontational undertone regarding their, or their companies, work with POC's. This is a socio-political factor that must be taken into account when discussing how influencers frame organizational policies for diversity related topics.

It is not just when it comes to the topic of POC's. Very often do topics that frame problems as a system malfunctions and failures come up as part of the organizational limitations. For instance:

(7) *"With companies big and small making big changes, it's clear that the old sense of job security is gone." (IS – 2)*

Here, it is stating that because organizations are making "changes", implicitly implying that companies are having major or minor layoffs, and that job security or employees is gone. It is framed as an external issue because the attribution of responsibility is directed to the companies' making changes. Here is another example:

(8) *"The corporate world is badly broken in many ways. One way is "work/life" balance. That is because companies exist to make money, not to keep you healthy." (EE-1)*

A more explicit use of attribution of responsibility is used towards the organizations. In this specific case, a lack of work-life balance is framed as being lacking due to the larger corporate world being broken, because organizations within this world exist to make money.

Another topic that often arises is regarding toxic workplaces. Once again, toxic workplaces are framed as external issues that do not represent a safe and healthy workplace culture, and furthermore effects the employees on a significantly negative level (mainly in the mental health domain).

(9) *"My parents also had similar stories with horrible bosses who never recognized their work, and always treated them horribly." (SN- 9)*

(10) *"In one of my work roles, I experienced daily berating and mistreatment from a senior colleague whom everyone else in my organization respected and valued." (JR – 10)*

Just like the individual limitations frame, part of the organizational limitations frame is utilization of storytelling. Typically, storytelling and narratives of issues in and outside the workplace are used to make the point of the problem highlighted. For instance, a story of overworking or reflecting on (past) actions that lead to an idea or an explanation of reasoning. Whilst not all storytelling led to defined problem (some being stories to make a point for a solution), most posts in fact do create a consistent template within a post; beginning with something that the LinkedInfluencer did or noting an observation, followed by defining an issue or an idea, thereafter proving solutions or explanations and finally a prompt for self-promoting their ongoing projects.

This can also be seen with the examples above (9 & 10). Both examples from different LinkedInfluencers are discussing some kind of personal narrative of being treated badly by someone

in a seniority position in their workplaces. It is implied that it is in fact an external issue that cannot be controlled when terms to describe the seniority such as “bosses” and “senior colleague”. This is one example of how a professional limitation is framed as an external issue that in itself cannot particularly be solved but rather avoided, powering through, or speaking up about it.

4.2.2. Major frame: Career and personal solution-benefit frame

Solutions and the benefit aspect of the solutions are greatly interrelated. The career and personal solution-benefit frame, and the most compatible with career advice itself, is otherwise defined by Entman (1993) as; “..., moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation ...” (p. 52).

Solutions are typically framed as achievable, empowering strategies that one can implement to reach a desirable outcome which are furthermore enhanced by ethical implications outlined. The outcome is the benefit aspect. Benefit in the context of career and personal-related solutions are framed as desirable, for instance, having a good relationship with your co-workers and management, being able to work effectively in a healthy way, and feeling calm rather than stressed when taking time for oneself, etc. These are all appealing to the benefit of a solution given, rather than the solution itself.

What the desirable outcome is varies per LinkedInfluencer, but throughout the dataset it is clear there is an individualistic workplace culture imbedded in the solutions provided, and often times a feminine workplace approach as well.

This frame takes into account the solutions that are offered by the LinkedInfluencer. As per the data indicates, the LinkedInfluencers not only share career advice as part of a solution, but also personal advice and encouraging initiatives to do an action or take a step to support the reader in some way. Organizational trends and policies also partake in influencing the solution-benefit frame, by for example prioritizing work-life balances, soft skills, circular learning and more. In this frame, the consideration of both the provided solution itself and the benefit of the solution are immensely interrelated, therefore being put within the same frame is most fitting. Whilst a solution alone may be provided, it does not hold much power without expressing and explaining the benefit of the given solution. Alternatively, whilst a reasoning of a solution may be explained, it is in fact meaningless without outlining what the solution is.

With this in mind, the following sub-frames are present within the solution-benefit frame. Those sub-frames being defined as: career advice frame, the personal advice frame, and the promoting services frame. Each are a type of solution with a benefit attached. As each is framed differently, it is most fitting to break them apart and utilize sub-frames.

Once again, even in all the sub-frames within this major frame, storytelling is a present tool used to communicate ethical implications and solution to the proposed problems (both personal and organizational limitations). In a storytelling and narrative perspective of the LinkedInfluencer themselves, typically every story or narrative told when reflecting about their past or ongoing

situations will have some kind of morale at the end to give a meaning from the lessons learned from the narrative/story. With the commonality of the code “reflecting on present or past actions/thoughts”, every piece of career advice came with some kind of narrative of storytelling elements, likely to give the advice itself some meaning or build the humanization aspect of the LinkedInfluencer towards the audience.

The first sub-frame of career advice is a significant part of the major frame. The career advice frame entails the valuable advice for readers regarding career trajectory, goals or workplace. Career advice also often entails specific solutions, actions and initiatives, thought processes and recommendations on behalf of the LinkedInfluencer towards readers. The benefit is also attached. In the context of career advice specifically, the benefit is reflected in explaining the advantages, reasons and motivations of taking a piece of career advice, performing the action or taking the recommendation.

Emphasizing the moral dimension of career advice, the ethical values in career guidance and advice are also highlighted. Almost all career advice is in reaction or response to an individual or organizational limitation (limitations frame) that is outlined by the LinkedInfluencer in some way. For example, in the case where the defined limitation is transparency within a workplace team is missing, the recommended solution of being transparent with one’s team by making some kind of action will allow the advice takers to have a more stable, honest and understanding work relationship, a desirable aspect of a workplace and workplace relationships according to most LinkedInfluencers in the corpus. This moral framing furthermore encourages audiences to uphold high self-care standards when it comes to their career and career trajectory.

On a practical level, the advice encapsulated how to approach a situation at work, practical tips on how to look for/get a job, best ways to communicate with a team/leadership, how to best negotiate a salary, and so on. This practical career advice is usually relatively specific, and either directly related the advice to workplace or career topics or implies as such. For instance:

(11) *“Break down your week into manageable tasks and set achievable goals.” (JM-9)*

As well as:

(12) *“Negotiate with Precision: For salary negotiations, don’t just present your research on industry standards. Come with a portfolio of your achievements that align with the company’s goals. Explain how your work contributes to these goals and use this as leverage in salary discussions.” (CP-7)*

As can be seen in Example 11, the career advice given is in fact a specific action recommended to the reader to create manageable tasks to set goals. In Example 12, the recommendation of what to do within a salary negotiation comes with a more elaborate explanation of what to do with actions (to utilize a portfolio and explain how one’s work contributes in leveraging salary discussions). Indeed,

these recommendations also pertain to a more masculine career culture, where achievement and contribution, which lead to success, is a desirable benefit.

The more “generalized” advice also takes place. For example, informing people that networking or having a good team connection is important, using generalized quotes and mottos (such as “practice makes perfect”, for instance) which usually falls into the providing general words of wisdom code.

(13) “Practice this until you can do it well, because how you are evaluated as a leader will be defined in part how you respond to the big problems.” (EE-2)

In Example 13, it can be seen that indeed no specific advice is given to the reader, but rather a general guidance based on the LinkedInfluencer’s expertise. The “words of wisdom” code is based on the fact that the LinkedInfluencer is indeed an expert and that they have an understanding of the work culture and what being a leader within one’s career can lead up to. “Providing treatment” as quoted by Entman (1993, p. 52), in this case is the mentorship aspect of the influencers role as providing their professional opinion to the reader.

The second sub-frame of personal advice and solutions also fall into similar categories, specific advice being to take certain actions or keep in mind certain things, and generalized advice such as “take time for yourself”, embracing the unknown, and so on. Such advice is typically framed as actions one can do individually to enhance or add to their life that takes into account personal self-care, self-support, self-confidence, and such, usually based on personal insights from the LinkedInfluencer. Mainly, this is exhibited in “giving personal development/growth advice or recommendations” and in “giving encouragement-styled advice or recommendations”. It’s not just about the advice itself but also includes the benefits or reasonings behind pursuing the advice or recommendations outlined in the advice. For example:

(14) “If you start making friends early, without needing anything in return right away, you’ll have a strong group of people who are there for you when you do need help.” (IS-1)

In this case, the suggestion of making friends early (solution) is that the person has a support system for when assistance in life or in work is needed (benefit of the solution). In cases where a negative connotation of an issue arises, a positive benefit is still highlighted. For instance:

(15) “Limit contact gradually to reduce emotional stress.” (JM-8)

As can be seen in Example 15, even though the solution provided is to limit contact with someone, the benefit provided by the LinkedInfluencer is the reduction of emotional stress. Thus, this pertains to the idea that the benefit alongside the solution is often noted to provide a worthwhile reason to the reader, being in this case that stress is reduced.

The personal advice frame interestingly goes against the typical masculine value nature of US workplace culture. Solutions for one's personal life often come in forms that adhere to more feminine workplace cultures which prioritize work-life balances and leadership styles, for instance. Recognizing that majority of the corpus consists of predominantly female LinkedInfluencers, all genders in the corpus promote feminine (prioritization over masculine values by enabling a friendly atmosphere and taking care of physical condition) yet individualistic values (taking care of oneself and one's close-knit family is more valued in individualistic cultures than taking care of your community, for instance) which are reflected in the advice and solutions provided, although may be uncommon for more national cultures that pertain to more masculine values as the US national culture typically entails. For example:

(16) *"Give yourself time to recover from the job you just left. There is no rush to make another career move."* (LR-2)

and:

(17) *"Learn to adapt to different situations while staying true to yourself."* (SN-3)

As can be seen, the important of taking care of oneself is promoted within the personal advice. In these cases, taking time to recover before applying or transitioning to a new position, and staying true to oneself, are revealing these feminine values within the advice (solutions) provided, a surprising find within a typical more masculine work culture. It is indeed surprising that in the US national and workplace culture typically masculine workplace values are more appreciated in the US, but several of the LinkedIn posts by LinkedInfluencers communicate feminine values to their audiences.

The third sub-frame is the promoting services frame. Relating to the career and personal solution-benefit frame, promoting services does have a benefit element to go alongside the solution element. Promoting services in the context of LinkedInfluencer posts is framed as the promotion and marketing of the publishing LinkedInfluencer's services, often as a solution with a benefit for the audience. "Elaborating on the benefits of what is being promoted" is not an uncommon code present throughout, usually in the context of what will be spoken about in a course, workshop, webinar or podcast regarding what will be discussed and what will include framed as benefits to the reader. The moral evaluation of promoting services in the LinkedIn posts is that the promoting services is not merely a means for personal gain, but rather to inspire people and share relevant knowledge.

Therefore, presenting the benefit of a LinkedInfluencer's service or product is, in a way, almost trying to be in the career and personal solution-benefit frame, where joining a LinkedInfluencer's webinar or course will provide the necessary tools a user needs to succeed in whatever challenge they are facing, both on a professional and personal level, simultaneously. For example:

(18) *“If you want to learn more about how building relationships can help you build career security, Join me on Saturday, Feb 10th at 9 AM for my free masterclass ‘Build Career Security through Influence’.” (IS-1)*

As can be seen in Example 18, alongside the solution (being to join the masterclass run by the LinkedInfluencer posting), the benefit is also provided, being that going to the masterclass will in fact teach the person how to build relationships which can help build career security. Indeed, this is under the promoting services umbrella because the solution provided does simultaneously help the LinkedInfluencer gain traction of the masterclass, as well as highlight the benefit it can give to the person attending, making this example under the benefit frame as well.

Another main factor of the career and personal solution-benefit frame is the LinkedInfluencer providing themselves or their content as part of the solution of the problems faced within the career advice theme, creating a type of self-promoting services within the proposed solution of the LinkedInfluencer. This was more specifically if the LinkedInfluencer offered career coaching as a service to the readers, or other similar services like webinars, courses, one-on-one coaching, discussions and more. For example, RL’s post #3 shows a list of New Year resolutions with solutions of how to approach them, and the last point “Invest in Yourself”, the influencer outlined content, saying that the reader should hire a coach they have been eyeing, referring to themselves by promoting their service as a coach as a solution for actions to invest in oneself.

Therefore, in cases where the career advice of the post is about helping the user reach their career goals, whether as someone who needs help with starting off in a career, need support as a POC (person of color) to have a community behind you to support their career decisions, or otherwise, promoting services does become the takeaway from an overall post often times when career advice is offered. Almost always, promoting services does not replace career advice but rather is a clever way to promote one’s services when advice is given.

For promoting services, engaging audiences to watch a webinar or sign up to a course hosted by the LinkedInfluencer also pertains to career advice, as the influencer is trying to engage the audience to follow their career advice as a client and listener rather than as a follower engaging with free public LinkedIn content, which takes less effort. The engaging audience theme is one that attempts to frame the LinkedInfluencer as a strong, engaging and likeable person. Being framed as such also makes the career advice aspects of the post more appealing and engaging, creating a thoughtful approach to the advice which likely allows users to use the advice with ease.

4.2.3. Major frame: Social-identity frame

Finally, the theme of career advisor could enable a social-identity frame. This frame is regarding identity and the shaping of perception of individuals. As per the definition of Regnér and Zander (2011); “...socio-cognitive deduction that invokes a certain understanding and behavior in relation to a strategy...” (Regnér & Zander, 2011, p. 831). The social-identity of the LinkedInfluencer is most

commonly framed as someone who is relatable to the audience, having gone through similar experiences, and have been successful in their career leading to encouraging and motivating their audience to learn from them.

Deviant themes also rose out of the data in minimal numbers, being non-career related topics that were also mentioned throughout the corpus. Interestingly, codes within this theme were the only ones that were immensely diverse throughout the corpus, establishing that different LinkedIn Influencers are interested in and discuss different topics. For example, the code of “mentioning family” was discussed by four LinkedIn Influencers. The topic of family typically came from a narrative perspective, sharing about what someone’s parents have gone through or did which teach the LinkedIn Influencer a lesson. Highlighting the reliance on family and the hardworking aspect to support one’s family was also common within the theme. For both of these ways of mentioning family on LinkedIn, the strategy that Regnér and Zander (2011) refer to in this context in light of the social-identity frame is for LinkedIn Influencers to frame themselves as caring and hardworking humans. The understanding and behavior the LinkedIn Influencer may be attempting to communicate is a person whom have gone through similar experiences to others.

A sub-frame within the social-identity frame is the supportive and motivational frame. Looking at career advice and the shaping of perception of the audience, encouraging and motivating statements are present. Once again, the encouragement can be specific to what was written in the career advice beforehand, such as “you are not defined by your layoff/rejection”, or similar statements about specific cases. This can be seen as a strategy that a LinkedIn Influencer is utilizing to essentially present themselves as encouraging, motivating people, meaning that self-presentation is also shown. For instance:

(19) *“You are doing great. Keep it moving, my friend!” (SD-3)*

As well as:

(20) *“Anyways, get in babe! We’re changing the world!” ❤️ (KS-8)*

As can be seen in Example 19 and 20, using terms such as “my friend” and “we are” ties the LinkedIn Influencer to the audience. Especially after giving advice to the reader, the encouragement being placed at the end of an advice piece makes implies that the influencer is the mentor and the audience is the mentee, to which the mentor is encouraging its mentee to pursue/continue/do something. Taking into account the context of the utterance in the post as a whole, for both cases the influencers were discussing advice or promoting services in the form of advice towards the audiences, and the encouragement statements at the end of the posts provides a conclusion that shows the positive face as a supportive and motivating being towards their audience.

Majority of the LinkedIn Influencers take on this encouraging role, leading to the understanding that the audiences indeed desire this encouraging type of support, rather than support from an influencer who knows all the answers and conveys their expertise as such. Therefore, encouraging and

motivating generalized statements are put forth to empower, comfort and support the reader. For instance, “you can do this”, “you are good enough”, “go get it!” and similar directives surrounding encouragement towards the reader. “Don’t stop fighting/don’t let others control your life” and similar phrases are also often encouragement indicators.

Deviant cases within the social-identity frame are also relevant. In this case, self-promotion, referring to one’s behavior of promoting one’s own ability or skill (different from promoting one’s services) is a deviant case within this corpus, despite the fact that previous research has highlighted the presence of self-promotion on LinkedIn. In some cases, the self-promotion came from an educational point of view as if to show the audience their accomplishments as examples of solutions. In other cases, a few instances of pure self-promotion were present. For instance, in three cases, LinkedIn influencers made posts about becoming Top Voice LinkedIn members and achieved this blue badge, which other than letting their audience know they are considered by LinkedIn to be experienced and skilled people with knowledge to share, does not further enhance knowledge to their audiences on career-oriented matters. The latter can be seen in the following example:

(21) “I’m humbled to be in some great company on Recruit CRM’s list of “Top 50 Recruitment Influencers You Need to Follow in 2024”.” (JT-1)

This is an example of self-promotion of general ability, an accomplishment of being recognized in CRM’s list of top influencers. Despite the term “humble”, a term used for modesty and gratitude, the post only consists of this text followed by a call to her followers with the excitement of reaching this milestone alongside her audience, as well as the utilization of hashtags. Therefore, this is an example of self-promotion as it is exemplifying a behavior of one exclaiming their accomplishments publicly. Despite LinkedIn being known for strong self-promotional activity, in the cases of these LinkedIn influencer posts, promoting one’s services is almost always used to further exemplify a provided solution that the influencer takes upon themselves, whereas self-promotion with intentions to only self-promote (rather than for educational purposes) rarely is revealed in the corpus.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of the research was to discover the themes present in LinkedInfluencer's posts, as well as identifying the main issue-specific frames in relation to career advice. Two research questions were proposed. The first research question, being "*what themes have been presented in LinkedInfluencer posts?*" was found by examining the discourses by the LinkedInfluencer's within their posts, and coding the various communicative purposes within the texts. To summarize, 62 open codes were found in the corpus, in which 9 axial codes, represented as main themes were defined through categorizing the open codes. As the study utilizes framing analysis, the themes are then categorized into frames and sub-frames. To answer the first question, a variety of themes were revealed within the posts, those being; encouragement and motivation, reflexive and personal insights, storytelling and narratives, career advice, personal advice, self-promotion and promotion of one's services, social norms and observations, engaging audiences, and finally, identity and non-career related topics. As with grounded theory codes, most were somewhat highly saturated (as can be seen in Appendix C and D), meaning they were present and were repeated and found throughout the dataset. Whilst there were some codes that were deviant cases (specifically topics that were non-career related such as mentioning family, children and POC's), the rest were relatively saturated, especially the top 7 codes with over 100 instances of being present throughout the dataset.

The second research question, being "*how have career advice frames been presented through LinkedInfluencer posts?*", were found utilizing the axial codes developed from the open codes. The axial codes, being the themes identified, helped in constructing the present frames. It is clear that the themes contributed greatly to the framing analysis. Three frames were developed, being; the individual and organizational limitations frame, the career and personal solution-benefit frame, and the social-identity frame. Highly related to Entman's (1993) definition of frames, with the addition of the contextual definition from Regnér and Zander (2011) for the social-identity frame, it is clear that LinkedInfluencer career advice is not stand-alone advice, but is also expressed through communication strategies of storytelling and narratives, as well as rhetorical questions to engage the audience further.

The individual and organizational limitations frame has defined both problems and root causes of said problems, finding that the definition of the problems are created by internal and external issues as well as the social norms and career norm observations of the LinkedInfluencer. In addition to often utilizing storytelling and narratives to discuss these defined issues, individual limitations are framed mainly as interpersonal and psychological issues that one can change with encouragement and advice. It is found that while individual limitations are mainly framed as internalized fears or problems, the organizational limitations are framed as external influences of the organization that limits one's professional life.

Another framing of organizational limitations is system malfunctions of the career world that is affecting one's capability of being in a healthy and safe career or workplace (something typically the person in question cannot necessarily control to change, other than quit, push forward, or learn to rise above the defined issue).

The career and personal solution-benefit frame encapsulated both the solutions and the benefit of the solution provided by the LinkedInfluencer. The solution is almost always being framed as achievable, empowering strategies that one can implement to reach a desirable outcome, and this desirable outcome is the benefit of the solution framed as positive results from actions one can take from advice. For career advice, the solution is the main communication of the career advice itself with the benefit attached to the solution. This also includes personal advice, such as making sure to take care of oneself, as well as further self-promoting the actual provided "solution" of being to follow a course provided by the LinkedInfluencer to receive a plethora of assistance and solutions to best support one's career trajectory.

The career and personal solution-benefit frame is also the frame that seemingly conveys the authority, expertise and credibility of the LinkedInfluencer, leaning to the career advisor identity constructed by the discourses on the platform. As is analyzed, some of the advice is "generalized" and does not necessarily pertain to the idea that this information must come from the LinkedInfluencer themselves to be beneficial to the reader. However, it is indeed with the specific advice and recommendations, alongside the personal stories, promotion of their services and explanation which reveal their prior experiences that seemingly gives a LinkedInfluencer the additional identity of career advisor.

Finally, the social-identity frame is made up of strategies to convey the LinkedInfluencers understanding of the LinkedIn social world. This is accomplished by engaging with audiences and creating their career advisor identity as a social, understanding being as well as someone who is sharing personal and career-related stories from the LinkedInfluencer's life and has gone through potentially similar experiences and hardships of the reader. This seemingly makes the career advice more approachable for the followers, making the LinkedInfluencers social identity as a safe and publicly caring figure.

Whilst previous research has indicated that self-promotion on LinkedIn is much more prevalent than self-expression (van Dijck, 2013, p. 200; Badoer, 2021, p. 198), the findings of this research has shown that self-promotion is a deviant theme, and more presently is the promotion of one's services rather than self-promotion of themselves. Promotion or marketing a LinkedInfluencer's services is sometimes present on its own, but more prevalently as a clever by-product of career advice itself as a marketing means to learn more from the career expert through services such as webinars, courses, and more.

A surprising finding was that forms of storytelling by the LinkedInfluencer were the most common theme found in the corpus. This may lead to the conclusion that social norms and values of

LinkedIn Influencers related to career advice comes from personal experiences, explicitly shared with readers. This doesn't just include narratives regarding workplace or career decisions, but also personal stories of that are not necessarily career related but imply that a learning from one's personal life can transcend to the career world. Relaying the learning as a personal insight, personal philosophy and other "words of wisdom" that applies as personal or career advice to the reader happens smoothly, from storytelling to career advice in one post. This typically makes the post lengthy, also indicating that LinkedIn, just like X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook, must not be generalized as having the discourse norms of other social media platforms, but rather has its own norms and social world. This is partially due to the interface affordances of having 3000 characters maximum per post (Post and share updates, February, para. 1) and the discourse norms of professional writing and acknowledgements (compared to X where a post contains a maximum of 280 characters and writing style changes per user/organization) (Counting Characters, para. 3).

Additionally, LinkedIn Influencers made observations not just about the career world, but also about the social norms of the contemporary era. Often times negative associations were made with the career worlds, making assumptions or factual-styled statements about the way companies work. For instance, the disliked fact that higher-up positions in the hierarchy in workplaces are often seen as "better" than those lower, being forced to prioritize certain company goals, or highlighting the difficulty to get a job or promotion from a company. This indicates that LinkedIn Influencers are not just aware of the social world of the workplace, but also proactively share these insights with their audiences. In fact, LinkedIn Influencers also serve as commentators on the socio-political landscape and highlight such issues in a way that followers may connect with the LinkedIn Influencer.

Referring to grounded theory and more specifically the social worlds framework originally outlined by Strauss (1978) and later regurgitated by Clarke (2008), when applying the research on LinkedIn Influencers to Clarke's interpretation of the social worlds framework, it is clear that the digital sphere of LinkedIn has its own social world with its own discourses which create these online influence identities. As noted by Clarke (2008), "The (social worlds/arenas map) is about the production of identities through discourse and how discourses shapes/changes subjectivities." (Clarke, 2003, p. 554). When looking at the social world of LinkedIn Influencers and the discourses within, it is abundantly clear that the career advisor identity is produced through the strategic use of communication styles, but also by their experiences in which they learn from, and proceed to reflect and share with their followers. This is further done by outlining their expertise, as well as promoting and marketing their career-assistance podcast or classes to further enhance their professional identity as a career advisor. However, whilst measuring credibility was not in the scope of this research, seemingly having the Top Voice LinkedIn badge indicating their expertise in the professional world is part of what makes their career advisor identity even more credible, as some proceeded to self-promote their accomplishment of achieving this blue badge.

5.1. Theoretical implications: LinkedInfluencer's identity construction

As was noted in the Tewatia & Majumdar discourse analysis study (2022), Instagram influencers from their corpus presented utilized mechanisms such as self-presentation, identity reconstruction and impressions management through novel strategies (p. 68-69). Using the frames found in the LinkedInfluencer corpus, the theoretical implications extend the nuanced understanding that whilst self-presentation is utilized by LinkedInfluencers, self-promotion much less so, and promotion of one's services is performed more than self-promotion. On a self-presentation level, the identity of the Top Voice influencer is self-framed as supportive and encouraging figures that provide solutions and recommendations to their known professional and personal limitational problems, directed to their audiences. More specifically recommendations in the forms of career advice and personal advice. This identity is gathered greatly from sociocognitive approach which both considers the discourse and the context of a post. With promotion of services, LinkedInfluencer's not only enhance their own professional credibility by promoting their career-related courses and webinars, but also providing genuine solutions and valuable knowledge to their audiences, serving a dual purpose for the promotion and marketing of the services. This clever framing positions the LinkedInfluencers as prominent figures in the social world of LinkedIn, as they guide towards one's successful career, or at least, towards one's healthy and fulfilling career and personal life due to their varied advice.

5.2. Practical implications: An online career advisor

Considering the cultural factors that tie into the framing of the career issue-specific frames, we must consider this within the social world of LinkedInfluencers, and readers of this paper must consider the strong North American work culture approach highlighted by the LinkedInfluencers. As was noted by Entman (1993), culture and frames go hand in hand, "...culture might be defined as the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping" (Entman, 1993, p. 53), therefore culture must be considered when it comes to framing. As workplace attitudes and behaviors are shaped by national culture values, it is vital to understand the differences in workplace attitudes based on country or region (Taras et al., 2011, p. 195).

For example, masculine and individualistic values have been shown to be strongly related to more direct communication styles within low power-distance oriented cultures (which indeed includes self-promotion and open communication) in countries like the US (Stulhmacher & Poitras, 2010, p. 490; Taras et al., 2011, p. 192; Yi et al., 2015, p. 71). In terms of workplace culture, national culture is a huge aspect to consider for example in handling workplace conflict, work design, fairness perception and compensation, group dynamics, leadership preferences, and much more (Taras et al., 2011, p. 192). Additionally, another study comparing workplace culture in the US and China points out that national culture affects gender roles in the workplace (Yi et al., 2015, p. 71). As majority of the LinkedInfluencers in the corpus are women, the consideration of cultural influences must be taken into account.

The posts have consistently given encouragement-styled advice and recommendations to take action and initiatives within the workplace. As was shown in the mentioned studies relating to workplace culture, as North American cultures are much more individualistic in orientation, the posts have indeed reflected this insight. In addition to the presence of masculine values, advice also often pertains to traditionally feminine values, such as taking time for oneself and a maintenance of workplace relationships. Both “taking care of oneself” and “speak out and stand up” messages have been repeatedly shown by all genders the corpus, pertaining to the idea that a combination of feminine and masculine, yet individualistic values in the workplace are promoted and encouraged within the career advice posted. Typically, masculine and individualistic values fit together on a cultural level, whilst feminine and collectivist values go together in other cultural settings. This indicates that indeed, LinkedIn discourse such as career advice actually pertains to a combination of feminine and masculine values in comparison to North American cultural values as per the published posts. It can be said that potentially LinkedIn discourse needs to be further assessed to further evaluate the promotion of feminine yet individualistic values, which prior research in the context of this thesis has not yet been indicated.

Whilst researching the audiences of the LinkedInfluencers were out of scope for this study, it is likely that the audiences are in fact part of such individualistic cultures that are in countries such as the USA. This makes the advice and recommendations of the influencers applicable to these audience, but less so to those from more collectivist cultures. As the study is based on the location filter on LinkedIn and not nationality, the diversification of the study is high and potentially audiences whom share the same nationality and location of the LinkedInfluencer indeed can gain significant insight from LinkedInfluencers whom share common backgrounds and are living in North America. A new insight gained from this conclusion is that career advisors are likely directing their career advice to those who share the same cultural values.

Beyond considering the cultural factors to contextualize the frames, other factors such as social norms and values are also important and prominent within the discourses. Considering the socio-political factors mentioned, organizational policies such as diversity discussion and inclusions of POC's, LinkedInfluencers position themselves as socially responsible people, which also ties into how such influencers define organizational limitations as organizational responsibility issues.

Professional social norms, such as not discussing taboo subjects (for instance salary negotiation, etc.) are actually emphasized by LinkedInfluencers as acknowledging the social norm and attempting to advocate to indeed discuss it. This further revealed their role as honest and open influencers whom are trying to change the social norms of the professional world for what they consider to be better.

Organizational factors play a major role within the solution-benefit frame, since organizational trends within the corpus encourage circular learning and soft skills. This means that career norms of organizations are also highlighted by the LinkedInfluencers, and providing

understanding, support and evaluating social norms, (what is healthy/toxic or unprofessional/appropriate) behaviors and actions within the career world can potentially allow audiences to understand from an expert's perspective what social norms in the career world are acceptable and what norms should be argued against.

All these factors are part of the identity of a LinkedInfluencer as a career advisor, which potentially allows (prospective) employees to build a online, trusting relationship with someone who provides career advice in an encouraging and supportive format. With audiences having a place to go to understand the social norms of the career world from a career mentor whom understands this social world at play, and has experience with providing advice, potentially allows users to take actions in their careers or career trajectories, revealed mainly through the storytelling of their experiences. The themes that have been defined potentially allows audiences to feel more comfortable in discussing taboo or otherwise less openly discussed topics, gaining relevant knowledge and information about the career world that experienced career people share, such as salary negotiation, career-growth discussions with one's manager, and more. Framing LinkedInfluencers content in this way plays to the power of professional identity of the online career advisor influencer role, building their credibility on the platform. Conceivably, the combination of narratives, advice and utilization of the supportive frame increases their influence and engagement in the social world of LinkedIn. Moreover, the provision of career knowledge with North American cultural influences also allows those that are not from the region to have a deeper understanding about what is genuinely valued in the implied workplace culture.

5.3. Limitations

One limitation of the study is that while there was a high level of diversification of participants, LinkedInfluencers nationalities were not considered, leading to a low representation of findings. As the study has a strict inclusion criteria, focusing on Top Voice users with high number of professional experiences, as well as only considering users from North America, the study indicated based on previous research that the LinkedInfluencers working in this region do give career advice specific to North American career and workplace culture, being more individualistic and sometimes masculine values (Stulhmacher & Poitras, 2010, p. 490; Taras et al., 2011, p. 192; Yi et al., 2015, p. 71).

Another limitation could potentially be the subconscious bias of the researcher. Despite the fact that this was attempted to be mitigated with the presence of a second reviewer alongside the systematic analysis method. To further maintain reflexivity, as is common with the constructivist approach of grounded theory, this is acknowledged and prevented as much as possible, but still likely present regardless.

5.4. Future research and implications

Future research could potentially investigate LinkedInfluencer's in other regions and backgrounds to see if posts follow similar or different themes and communicative purposes, as a way of mitigating the limitation of having low representation of findings. Such research can potentially expand on the LinkedInfluencer database to further understand influencer research not just on the level we understand traditional influencers on social media today, but influencers who focus on professional career, specific to a career-building platform. The current research provides a deeper understanding on the social network ecosystem of LinkedIn based on the North American workplace culture, but as such, career advice differs per country and therefore differs by national culture. With this in mind, the career advice presented in the corpus will likely not suffice or adhere to the workplace cultures of other drastically different regions, but having a deep understanding of the social world of LinkedIn, which has the most users from the USA (Bondar, 2023), still yields to the deep understanding of the culture of the LinkedIn platform.

Research on US workplace culture in the contemporary era may need revisiting, as it was found that a combination of masculine and feminine workplace values are promoted by the career experts, exemplifying that prior research that define US workplace culture as mainly masculine may have changed or developed over time to accommodate more modern values.

As analyzing audiences of the LinkedInfluencers was out of scope for this study, potentially analyzing the target audiences and the influence of the provided career advice can further indicate the impact of career advice on the online platform. Although past research has provided evidence that there is trust in online advice (Briggs et al., 2002; Booth, 2006, Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012), a further study on the effectiveness of LinkedIn career advice based on audiences' opinions could further indicate the usefulness (or lack) of online career advice on the largest career-building platform.

As LinkedIn is the most popular professional digital platform to date (Basak & Calisir, 2014, p. 1; Badoer, 2021, pp. 197-198), a deep understanding of what Clarke (2003) outlines in terms of social world in this context is vital (Clarke, 2003, p. 554). The LinkedIn platform is a social world of its own, and learning more deeply about LinkedIn can potentially spread necessary, important and relevant career advice from professionals who have undergone experiences in their career world. This means they can give provide meaningful insights to job seekers, recent graduates and those stagnating in their current position with relevant advice to support them. Potentially, those who come from a different cultural background who move to North America/need assimilation to North American cultural workplace values, can benefit from the career advice provided by LinkedInfluencers who uphold such workplace values.

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Appendix A

Table of open codes with examples from anonymized LinkedInfluencers in alphabetical order.

Number	Open Codes	Example from data	Number of repetitions of code in data
1	Acknowledging limitations	“Yesterday I got blocked for asking questions about some alleged "best practices" re: insisting on CURRENT compensation (not expected, ACTUAL comp) in the UK” (AM-10)	17
2	Acknowledging past challenges	“Armed with an incredible support system, I got through a lot of "muck" and stepped into this new version of myself who is brave, fearless, and unapologetic.” (KS-5)	28
3	Acknowledging teamwork	“At Perfeqta, we thrive with a fully remote team, fostering collaboration through virtual events and constant communication.” (LB-8)	9
4	Acknowledging upcoming challenges/frustrations /difficult times	“Sure, they’ll do what I ask, but they might also become secretly resentful.” (IS-7)	14
5	Advocating a change to career-related social norms	“But understanding where human decision making can be faulty should just be part of creating sound hiring decisions.” (RW-1)	11
6	Affirming LinkedInfluencer’s self-belief	“I speak ‘broken’ English, but I am not ashamed.” (SN-2)	7
7	Asserting importance of self-belief/perseverance	“This is why I am so passionate about supporting women, specifically Black women, in navigating their careers. It’s not easy.” (MW-3)	10
8	Elaborating on the benefits of what is being promoted	“If you're looking to thrive in this tough period in Tech and stay ahead in the game, this is one you won't want to miss.” (IS-1)	42
9	Encouraging initiative/action (eg: do XYZ)	“Ask someone how they’re doing today.” (KG-4)	55

10	Encouraging/Motivating (eg: you can do this/you're the best)	“You (too) can do hard things. 🥰” (JT-2)	42
11	Establishing relatability between speaker and reader	“It’s because I once was like YOU” (RL-2)	58
12	Explaining reasons/motivations	“This entails working with individuals whose desire to want more/something different must be greater than our centuries-old bad hashtag#brain hardwiring that insists we stay within our comfort zones.” (JM-7)	44
13	Explicit self-promotion	“It was a great opportunity to be selected as a panelist in early November to discuss emerging issues in the workspace.” (SN-8)	9
14	Expressing appreciation/recognition for others	“I must give a massive thanks to, Kristian Robinson of BofA, who originated the idea for Baruch College's Success Amplified Program to engage in a multi-employer site visit trek.” (NBE-1)	154
15	Expressing career-related observation	“I'm seeing more of my network join early stage startups than ever before and I think it's the best thing that could happen to their career.” (RW-10)	33
16	Expressing personal philosophy	“I call these limited beliefs.” (SN-8)	66
17	Expression of LinkedInfluencer’s self-admiration	“Give this woman (the LinkedInfluencer posting) a medal!” (RB-2)	3
18	Expression of self-reflection or personal insight (eg: I learned that X is important)	“I say things others are too biased to admit.” (KS-1)	58
19	Expression of societal understanding or observation	“Black employees are falling through the gaps at this stage.” (DM-4)	12
20	Factual-styled statement from career perspective	“Research shows it will take 95 years for Black professionals to reach talent parity in managerial positions” (DM-4)	39

21	Giving career-related advice or recommendations	“Practice your pitch beforehand to ensure a confident and poised delivery.” (SN-5)	176
22	Giving encouragement-style recommendations	“Practice your deep breathing and remember that only the people who get you, deserve you.” (LR-3)	46
23	Giving personal development/growth recommendations	“4. Create a plan to align with who you are and who you want to be. Outgrow and unlearn simply writing vision and goals.” (DM-10)	51
24	Highlighting career achievement	“As a member of the prestigious and powerful The BOW Collective, we just inducted 70 new business owners who are at the top of their respective fields.” (DM-5)	37
25	Highlighting (lack of) effectiveness of something	“Once I tailored my services to truly match their needs and desires, though, my conversion rates skyrocketed! ☒” (CP-4)	37
26	Highlighting personal achievement	“I built a brand that helped me assist my parents with finishing their dream house in my home country” (SN-3)	5
27	Highlighting personal dedication and effort to do/achieve something	“No matter how hard I worked, how many accomplishments I had work-wise, or how much I tried to ‘prove’ myself, it seemed like it was never enough” (SN-9)	14
28	Highlighting positive outcomes	“This is something that I also think helped my brand, which helped increase the pool of people who consistently read my stuff.” (IS-6)	30
29	Identifying career-related issues/pitfalls	“However, consistently accepting emergency tasks due to others' poor planning can set a precedent that undermines the importance of strategic hashtag#timemanagement and can lead to burnout and reduced productivity over time.” (JM-1)	53
30	Identifying personal-issues/pitfalls	“Skipping this foundation hinders your ability to break free from a job that breeds discontent, perpetuating fear and overwhelm.” (SN-6)	15
31	Implicit self-promotion	“I am teaching a small group of awesome people to become career coaches, to work with individuals and organizations.” (LR-9)	19

32	Informing about career-related social norms	“Some leaders and colleagues may believe that passionate individuals willingly undertake these additional responsibilities and view the extra workload as a reward.” (SN-7)	23
33	Mentioning age	“Proudly accepting my beautiful gray highlights and acquired laugh lines from the last 38 years - I wouldn't change a thing.” (KS-5)	1
34	Mentioning childhood	“When I was 16, I cut off the end of my thumb while playing with a sword.” (EE-2)	5
35	Mentioning children	“Case in point: welcoming my beautiful daughter, Ava, into the world and shedding my baby weight.” (RL-1)	7
36	Mentioning commercials	“1. Verizon “Can’t B broken” referencing breaking the Internet with Beyonce. It was one of the best commercials I’ve seen connecting the content to the brand.” (KG-1)	8
37	Mentioning community	“That’s why I show up here everyday. It’s the community. This is the power of a community and all of us working together.” (SN-10)	2
38	Mentioning faith (God)	“5. Pray over your career, the job, your boss, your coworkers, the products and services, the consumers/clients. If you are a believer... take it to God in prayer.” (DM-10)	1
39	Mentioning family	“When I left Google to join Airbnb, my family thought I was losing it.” (RW-10)	27
40	Mentioning mental health/wellbeing	“I learned that this job wasn’t worth my mental health.” (SN-9)	3
41	Mentioning POC (people of color)	“Keep your Black History niceties until you can stand and declare your position and your action on behalf of Black talent, Black suppliers/vendors, Black partners, and the Black community.” (DM-4)	22
42	Mentioning school/education	“Helping students take part in these experiences is why I/we do this work!” (NBE-1)	14
43	Narrative of hard work/overworking/overachievement	“Let me take you back to a time when I was wandering in the maze of my career, juggling multiple talents, and trying my hand at everything just because I was good at it.” (SN-10)	10
44	Narrative of self-worth	“I learned that I could grow and reach my potential in places that would value what I bring to the table.” (SN-9)	6

45	Narrative/storytelling on behalf of someone else	“Dr. Antoinette Candia-Bailey was screaming for help. No one listened until it was too late.” (MW-3)	32
46	Offering general guidance or encouragement statements	“This decision is crucial, and I'm here to support you in making the best choice for your future.” (CP-6)	118
47	Posing a rhetorical question	“As if more work hours means having a statue built in my honor? Hard pass.” (RL-2)	113
48	Previewing upcoming content	“ If you've identified individuals who need to be subtracted from your life, here are 5 tips to live more happily:” (JM-8)	92
49	Professional opinion/prediction of what should/could happen career-wise	“Many people who get laid off or rejected let that become the definition of who they are.” (SN-1)	11
50	Promoting career-achievements or recognition	“We are a business development and advocacy community of the nation’s top 1% of most successful business owners.” (DM-5)	22
51	Prompting one to chat personally/interact	“☞ If THIS IS YOU let's schedule a discovery call! My skillset is very unique, so let's make sure I am the best resource for you.” (KS-5)	54
52	Prompting one to join/subscribe/watch/read	“To learn more about how to stand out in your job search, join me this Thursday on LinkedIn Live at 7PM CST! Register here:” (JR-7)	103
53	Prompting one to share/comment/click	“Check out today's newsletter to learn more and comment below what you think DEI will look like this year.” (LD-9)	89
54	Proposing question to the audience	“What else would you add to this list?” (SD-7)	56
55	Providing general wisdom	“Remember: not every employer deserves to have you on their team. Only the people who get you and value what you bring, deserve you.” (LR-6)	89
56	Reflecting on (past) actions/thoughts (what has been done/what I	“So when I started this role and started to work closely with founders, my first question was: "What are the non-technical	230

	thought/what I do now)	qualities that would make someone a fit for you at this stage".” (RW-7)	
57	Reflecting on social norms and expectations	“Unfortunately, for many people of color, especially women, this story holds true in organizations across the spectrum, from academia to corporate America.” (JR-10)	16
58	Self-expressing a change or realization of something	“But what I quickly realized is that if I wanted more people to learn about me, expand my reach, and find new opportunities, I had to step out of my comfort zone and highlight my expertise on different platforms.” (JR-7)	23
59	Sharing a new perspective/insight	“Remember that some of the “craziest” ideas are now the things we use the most in our daily lives (Facebook, Amazon, etc.)” (SN-5)	8
60	Sharing unpopular opinion	“This may be a little controversial, but... This year, I'm laser-focused on supporting Black women at work.” (MW-2)	4
61	Underscoring the potential of the reader career-wise	“You are in search of one – just one – hiring manager who sees and values what you bring and who deserves you on their team.” (LR-3)	4
62	Utilizing hashtags	“hashtag#mindset hashtag#success hashtag#leadership hashtag#entrepreneurship hashtag#mentalhealth hashtag#careeradvice” (RL-1)	146

Appendix B

List of inductive open codes deriving from the LinkedIn post corpus categorized into axial codes

Number	Open Codes	Axial Codes
1	Giving encouragement-style recommendations	Encouragement and Motivation
2	Encouraging/Motivating towards the reader (eg: you can do this/you're the best)	
3	Offering general guidance or encouragement statements	
4	Encouraging initiative/action (eg: do XYZ)	
5	Expressing personal philosophy	Reflective and Personal Insights
6	Providing general wisdom	
7	Sharing a new perspective/insight	
8	Highlighting positive outcomes	
9	Self-expressing a change or realization of something	
10	Sharing unpopular opinion	
11	Affirming LinkedInfluencer's self-belief	
12	Expression of self-reflection or personal insight (eg: I learned that X is important)	
13	Acknowledging past challenges	
14	Highlighting personal dedication and effort to do/achieve something	
15	Acknowledging limitations	
16	Acknowledging upcoming challenges/frustrations/difficult times	
17	Explaining reasons/motivations	
18	Narrative/storytelling on behalf of someone else	Narratives and Storytelling
19	Narrative of hard work/overworking/overachievement	
20	Narrative of self-worth	
21	Reflecting on (past) actions/thoughts (what has been done/what I thought/what I do now)	
22	Providing general wisdom	Career Advice
23	Giving career-related advice or recommendations	
24	Factual-styled statement from career perspective	
25	Professional opinion/prediction of what should/could happen career-wise	
26	Offering general guidance or encouragement statements	
27	Giving personal development/growth recommendations	
28	Asserting importance of self-belief/perseverance	
29	Identifying personal-issues/pitfalls	
30	Reflecting on social norms and expectations	Social Norms and

31	Expression of societal understanding or observation	Observations
32	Identifying career-related issues/pitfalls	
33	Expressing career-related observation	
34	Advocating a change to career-related social norms	
35	Informing about career-related social norms	
36	Factual-styled statement from career perspective	
37	Highlighting (lack of) effectiveness of something	
38	Acknowledging teamwork	
39	Promoting career-achievements or recognition	Self-Promotion and Promoting one's services
40	Expression of LinkedIn Influencer's self-admiration	
41	Highlighting career achievement	
42	Highlighting personal achievement	
43	Implicit self-promotion	
44	Explicit self-promotion	
45	Elaborating on the benefits of what is being promoted	
46	Utilizing hashtags	
47	Posing a rhetorical question	Engaging Audiences
48	Proposing question to the audience	
49	Prompting one to join/subscribe/watch/read	
50	Prompting one to share/comment/click	
51	Previewing upcoming content	
52	Prompting one to chat personally/interact	
53	Underscoring the potential of the reader career-wise	
54	Establishing relatability between speaker and reader	
55	Mentioning children	Identity and non-career related factors
56	Mentioning family	
57	Mentioning school/education	
58	Mentioning childhood	
59	Mentioning commercials	
60	Mentioning POC (people of color)	
61	Mentioning age	
62	Mentioning community	
63	Mentioning faith (God)	
64	Mentioning mental health/wellbeing	

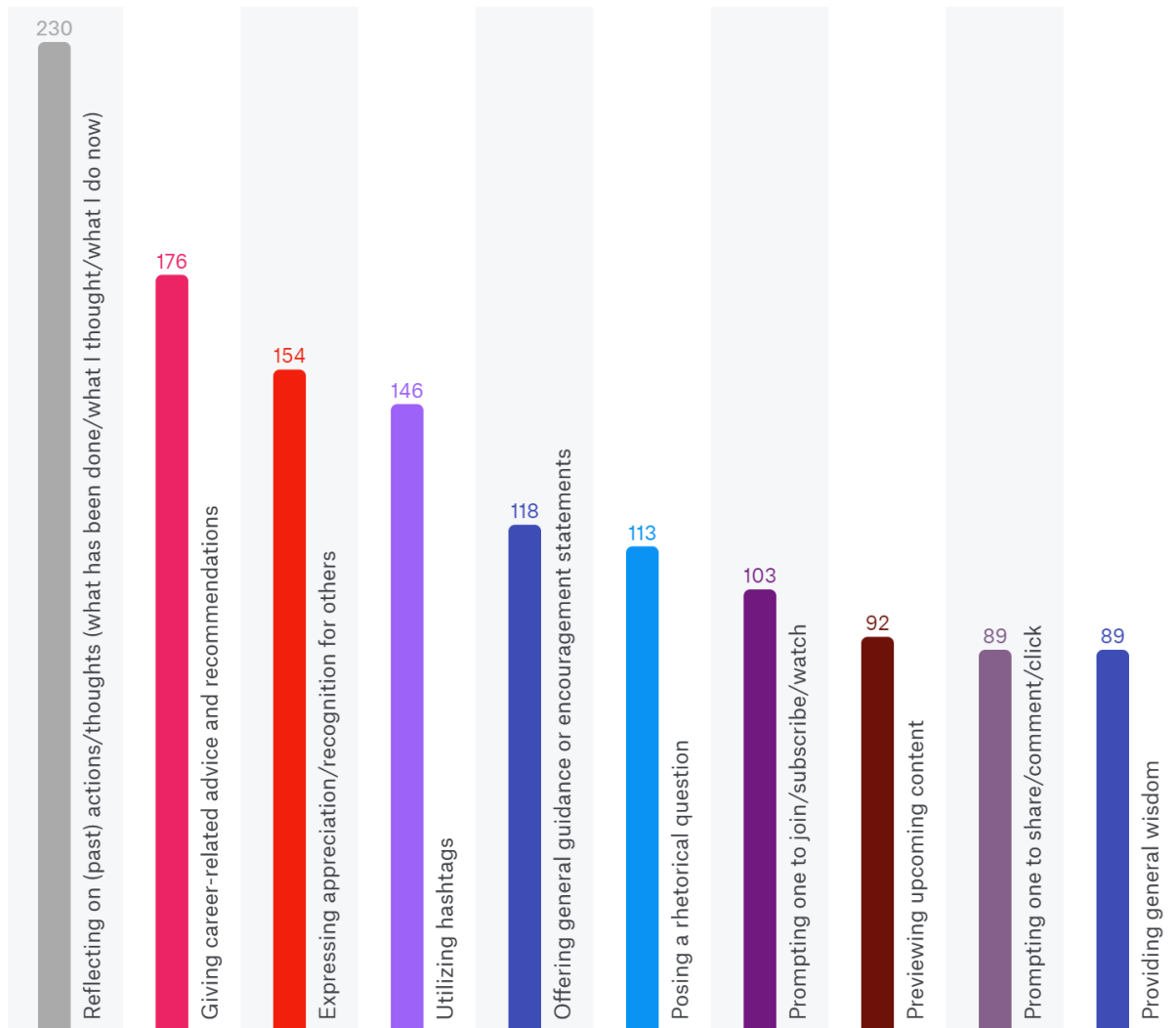
Appendix C

Table with the number of repetitions of open codes to show the saturation dispersion across the corpus

Number of codes	Number of repetitions in the data
16 codes	N=< 9
28 codes	N=10-49
11 codes	N=50-99
7 codes	N=100-199

Appendix D

Screenshot directly taken from Atlas.ti representing the top saturated codes within the corpus



Appendix E

*External Excel file with each post, full name of the LinkedInfluencer and link to the post (*will not be published and must be used internally by Erasmus University Rotterdam students and employees only)*

Appendix F

External Excel file with all coded sentences or utterances from all posts