Chapter 7 - Identity at the core: open and digital scholarly leadership

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THE ACCIDENTAL TWEETER

I never set out to be an open educational researcher. Rather, my emergence into the world of open education was both accidental and gradual, if rewarding. It has led to opportunities at a global scale that I did not imagine at the outset of my academic career and has been an education in the power relations of social media platforms and their intersection with more conventional academic prestige economies.

This chapter is a personal reflection structured through scholarly analysis. It details how I came to develop a relatively open practice as a digital scholar and traces important lines of connection between open identity and new forms of academic status, both in my own trajectory and in the broader field of higher education. I will explore the operations of open identity in contemporary higher education, as well as some of the challenges that emerge for open scholars. I will also posit that sustained engagement and identity development in the space colloquially known as 'academic Twitter' offers a hands-on education in participatory engagement.

When I joined Twitter in June of 2007 my only frame of reference for openness in education was the 'Open Learning' distance education office I'd worked for during my MEd nearly a decade before. At the time I signed up for Twitter I was a blogger as well as the manager of a large educational research project at my local university. I had spent the year or so previous blogging about my journey to parenthood and my shifting identity in that first year of my son's life. I had already developed a practice of open sharing about my life but had not yet integrated my professional digital identity with my personal one.

Twitter was not immediately interesting to me. I was new to Facebook at the time and busy reconnecting with old high school and college friends I hadn't seen in years. I found it harder to see an immediate use for Twitter, as – unlike Facebook – it did not connect me to people I had no other channels of communication for. I live on a small island on the edge of North America, in Canada's smallest province, and so I was keen to expand my world, but didn't initially see how Twitter could offer me something I wanted.

My blog, on the other hand, had opened up a network of contacts – mostly other parents and life-writers – spread around North America and elsewhere. While my Twitter account sat relatively dormant in the first few months of its existence, some of the earlier adopters within that blogging circle still chose to follow me, as did a few local contacts. Thus, while I engaged minimally in that space, I was nonetheless passively building a Twitter network of people who knew my voice and who were known to me. This passive circulation of identity and influence – and its implications for a field as identity-focused as academia – would eventually become a focus of my scholarship and career.

PROFILES IN VISIBILITY

Twitter, Facebook and many other social networking sites (SNS) operate through the circulation of profiles or what boyd and Heer (2006) called 'public performances that are limited by... visibility constraints' (boyd and Heer, 2006: 6). Profiles are individual users' selective and performative presentations of self (boyd and Heer, 2006) on a given platform. In my case, my initial Twitter profile had the same handle as my blog and so my presentations of self in the two spaces became linked.

Online, individuals often become known to others through the sum of engagement traces that their profiles leave, through content shared and relationships built in participatory exchange. In these cases, profiles serve, effectively, as identities or stand-ins for the embodied self that may not be physically accessible. Walther's (1996) work on hyperpersonal communications showed that digital identities can sometimes forge even more intimate connections than those established via face-to-face contact, since irrelevant or distracting information can be minimized online and commonalities amplified. In my own case, the hyperpersonal connections being formed via the open sharing of my blog carried over to Twitter, since I was recognizable in that space even when I was not present there.

Online as off, individuals can also become known by reputation rather than by direct exchange. Heavy Twitter users often show up in the feeds of others who may not follow them, particularly if they share common ties in a participatory network. Virality – or extreme levels of circulation and visibility – can also enable users to become known by reputation without participatory engagement, through circulation of their own content or what is said about them by others in their networks, whether visible to them or not. Some users of SNS and other digital platforms intentionally cultivate their digital identities and reputations as a form of microcelebrity (Marwick,2014; Abidin, 2015).

Digital platforms make discrete, recognizable, circulating identities a currency of sorts (Birch, 2014), wherein recognition and scale on one platform can turn into ambient engagement on another – social capital that can be spent on a site before effort is even made to accrue it.

But while capital can transfer from site to site, to an extent, within common overlapping networks, it can only do so if recognizable digital identity is first built and developed. Sites such as Facebook and Instagram cannot be browsed or navigated except from the perspective of a logged-in profile or account; users without an identity on those sites can search and view public profiles, but platform design demands identity – and accompanying collection of personal data – for full navigability. If one wishes to engage with the web as a participatory space rather than merely a consumption space, as Web 2.0 exhorts us to do, some form of visible identity is the price of admission.

THE IDEA OF THE FEED

Additionally, identities – presented as profiles – shape and filter a great deal of digital engagement, even if one only consumes and does not contribute. SNS not only circulate the contributions of a given identity, as blogs do, but do so through a centralized and individually-curated feed or scrolling list of content contributed to the network. Feeds organize the web by identity; contributors' visibility is profile-based and known nodes or faces in a given network become familiar. Familiarity helps users navigate the sheer scale of information available to us in an age of abundance. Thus, what content a user sees in his or her feed is contributed primarily by the profiles he or she has chosen to follow or friend.

However, as SNS platforms have been developed and tweaked to optimize usage, engagement and data collection, comments and other public signals such as 'likes' have become rendered increasingly visible and part of the consumable product that the feed creates. Thus, users of a platform can be regularly exposed to profiles that they have not chosen to follow or friend, through engagements with mutual network connections. Profiles can be clicked and expanded from inside a feed, if a user wishes to see another's self-presentation and public contributions; they serve as circulating calling cards for identity. Profiles on many SNS platforms also feature metrics, so that the user's scale of connections and usage can be in some way estimated or read. These can be read by experienced users as complex status signals (Stewart, 2015a), with each platform and each sub-community within a platform valuing particular types of measures. As a result, even where individuals may be interested in participatory engagement rather than in cultivating micro-celebrity, their circulating profiles may build reputation and capital for them based simply on whom they engage with and become visible to.

When I opened that first Twitter account I described myself in vaguely wry terms, uncertain of how to encapsulate a complex identity into a brief public description. I added a profile photo, a significant commitment given that my phone did not yet have a camera and so I had to transfer and crop and upload the chosen photo. And then I followed the bloggers I knew who were on the site or who had followed me and I followed a few of my partner's circle and some local colleagues and friends. When I remembered to go to the site, sporadically, I engaged mostly with users who engaged with me. But it was the feed that started me branching out. And it was my partner – and his separate but welcoming network – that made the feed and its functions visible to me.

EARLY EDUTWITTER

While my blogging community initially built up my Twitter follower account, at least into numbers I could no longer count on my fingers, it was my partner who introduced me to the professional learning possibilities of Twitter and its emergent education community. In 2007, my partner had been co-hosting a weekly livestreamed podcast called EdTechTalk for a number of years. EdTechTalk explored new developments in educational technology; he and the other hosts interviewed leaders and critical voices within open education and ed-tech. I knew his circle of friends and colleagues and he mine, but the two of us had separate digital communities and networks that centred on our respective blogs and digital output. Because our conversations occurred on distributed platforms in very separate parts of the so-called blogosphere, there was minimal mutual visibility between our worlds. Until Twitter.

My partner found a use for Twitter quickly within his education circles. In late 2007 and early 2008, when I first began spending time in the space, educational Twitter seemed to be a relatively small community populated primarily by people who read each other's' blogs. With long-form blog conversations as the basis of many of the relationships and reputations that people brought into the space, the character limit of Twitter served as a constraint that seemed to encourage different, more playful forms of conversation. Twitter provided a platform for casual sociality and witty replies that neither blogging nor Facebook were designed to foster at that time. It lent itself well to banter and performative humour.

My partner enjoyed the camaraderie of the space and – perhaps as encouragement – sometimes included my @ handle in his tweets. Replies came to both of us. When I bothered to check in, therefore, I had conversations to be in – and they sometimes entertained me. These bursts of engagement were short and public, at least to mutual followers and they did not require the same level of effort or attention that a blog post did. However, they still offered a sense of audience, without

significant commitment. I began to follow people back and to show up more often. These educators' presence on my centralized feed changed the scope and scale of the network I was exposed to, expanding it significantly and shifting some of the locus of things I usually talked about online.

That breadth of conversation was exciting and welcoming to me. My willingness to engage with – and egg on – the teasing that my partner's colleagues enjoyed directing at him essentially served to build visibility for my own profile and to build relationships based on humour and trust, outside my own blogging circles. I had remained peripheral to his network while its discussions were distributed and blog- and podcast-based, but the Twitter feed brought those conversations directly to me. Nonetheless, his early adopter status and visible profile in those circles benefited me, as his relationships with highly-visible influencers meant that those people extended welcome and belonging to me. I began to contribute and became an active user.

EMERGING SCHOLARLY PRACTICES

Over my first few years on Twitter, then, I connected with open educators and academic bloggers, particularly if not exclusively in edtech. I began to regularly read their linked blog posts as well as those of my own circle and became familiar both with their work and with the themes that drove conversation and controversy in online education-based networks. My circle – and my own profile – began to shift accordingly and as I discovered an audience for different kinds of discussions, my writing on my blog shifted. I continued to write personal narrative but also to begin to examine and analyse some of the trends and practices I was seeing in networks, so that meta-commentary on the operations of digital networks, SNS, and Twitter in particular became part of what I wrote about. And the breadth of my conversational circles meant that my emerging Twitter presence was a dually-situated identity, both writer and educator, with a foot in more than one network and a window on how different digital communities operated.

The practices that I developed in that first year or two of using Twitter were practices that laid the groundwork for the development of an open scholarly profile. Content promotion had not yet become the norm within what was then a primarily participatory space. In group conversations, profiles unknown to me but clearly familiar to some members of the discussion would often engage, thus becoming visible to me. I developed a practice of following people that my peers seemed to know, extending trust based on shared ties. At the time, this appeared to be a relatively common practice and it meant that I developed a broad and geographically-diverse Twitter network.

About two years into active Twitter use I was embedded deeply enough in conversations and choral examinations of digital networked practice that I decided I wanted to explore it formally. As an educator and a higher education professional, I was curious about what emerging models of networked participation and open practice might mean for academia and how open models of teaching – including the early Canadian Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that my partner had helped spearhead – could be used to build digital literacies. I was also curious about whether the forms of knowledge-sharing I was seeing in educational blogs and academic Twitter could be considered emerging forms of scholarly practice, in spite of their lack of gatekeepers.

I entered my local university's first PhD cohort in Educational Studies in the autumn of 2010, aiming to explore the implications of digital networks for higher education. By that time, I had a few thousand Twitter followers of my own. I actively began to seek out and follow a greater number of academics and academically-focused identities on Twitter. I used my existing education network as a base, perusing the public 'following' lists of colleagues I knew and trusted and following their peers and

contacts accordingly. I treated this as unofficial early research into understanding how Twitter was being used by higher education professionals and took notes on the patterns I found, as well as on how I was responded to when I engaged in particular ways. Eventually, I formalized my research questions and conducted an in-depth ethnographic investigation into academic leaders on Twitter.

LEADERSHIP IN THE OPEN

My interest was in the idea of open scholarly practice or individuals engaging in the educational and academic work of research, knowledge production and idea-sharing on open, digital platforms. My hypothesis was that research and scholarship in the open shared many principles and practices with conventional research and scholarship, yet operated on different terms. I was curious about what those terms might be and how academic identities, relationships and perceptions influence were all affected by the different practices that dominated open, digital engagement.

Willinsky's (2010) assertion that scholars learn to read status and reputational cues adeptly within the academy was my starting place for examining terms of status and influence:

> Those who work within the academy become very skilled at judging the stuff of reputations. Where has the person's work been published, what claims of priority in discovery have they established, how often have they been cited, how and where reviewed, what prizes won, what institutional ties earned, what organizations led? (Willinsky, 2010: 297)

My sense was that different 'stuff of reputations' counted in academic Twitter and in the blogging circles surrounding it. Even while digital scholarship is shared and evaluated by peers, which is sometimes framed as an alternate form of peer review (Tennant, 2017), the distinct channels and lack of gatekeeping around open engagement mean that reputations are not cultivated based on having met gatekeeping standards. Thus, selfpublished or blogged ideas do not gain value from being hosted in a particularly prestigious publication, but rather gain value from being seen and recognized and hopefully used. I wanted to explore this in greater depth. In my early notes on the subject of digital scholarship and open practice, from which my dissertation proposal was eventually honed, I focused particularly on scholars whose work was openly available on blogs and Twitter. Facebook also became a player in digital scholarship with the advent of group functionality, but was not a site that I investigated in my 2010–2012 observations or my formal 2013–2014 research.

The people whose practices I framed as open scholarship or open research profiles were not conventional public intellectuals, with audiences in mainstream mass culture and platforms in the New York Times or the BBC. Rather, they tended to have smaller but still sizable audiences cultivated primarily through social rather than mass media channels. Not all engaged with their audiences using a participatory or collaborative approach, especially as the scale of their audiences grew, but all had developed their initial digital presence based in part on many-to-many rather than one-to-many communications.

Amongst these relatively early adopters of academic Twitter, the leaders and most visible identities did not all have (or at least advertise) institutional affiliations in their profiles. The voices that were most visible in these ongoing, interwoven blog and Twitter discussions were not necessarily senior faculty or administrators. In fact, self-identified mid-career and senior faculty did not appear to be especially present in Twitter conversations related to higher education, at least in my observations; rather, early-career researchers, PhD students, instructional designers and institutional staff, journalists and rare high-profile academics made up most of the conversation, though it was not

always clear what a contributor's relationship to academia might be. Thus, those who were leading conversations about the intersections of higher education, digital technologies and scholarship in the open in the first six or seven years of Twitter seldom appeared to be the people directing those conversations in institutions. Rather, leadership as enacted in participatory digital networks, represented by academic Twitter and higher education blogging, emerged as a separate sphere or trajectory of influence, largely uncoupled from formal academic status markers and based primarily on contribution and visible engagement.

'THE CONVERSATION'

My 2013–2014 doctoral study (Stewart, 2015a), suggested that the concept of 'the conversation' was central to that separate trajectory of academic leadership and status. My study was a small ethnographic investigation of scholars from a variety of locales and institutional status positions within the English-speaking academic sphere. In it, I concluded that sustained visible participation in open digital conversations on higher education themes created opportunities to engage in what Boyer (1990) called scholarship of integration and application (Stewart, 2015b). I found that all participants 'appeared to be engaged in curating and contributing resources to a broader "conversation" in their field or area of interest rather than merely promoting themselves or their work' (Stewart, 2015c: 305). This concept of contribution to the 'conversation' – which varied from user to user in my study but was repeatedly cited as valued, both for self and in others – was the channel by which academic Twitter users developed perceived leadership status via open scholarly profiles and recognizable contributions.

There are many different sub-networks of conversation in academic Twitter. While my study included scholars from disciplines – and thus conversations – as diverse as business and chemistry, the conversations I engaged with personally included those loosely organized around edtech and open education themes, but also Digital Humanities, K-12 teaching, PhD studies and higher education itself as a topic. Along with engagement from and within the sciences, those appeared to be among the dominant disciplines and conversations in academic Twitter in my early years, and many of the most visible scholars on the platform came in some way to be connected to conversations on those themes, at least temporarily.

As the conversations were necessarily cross-institutional and often transnational, their focus was seldom operational – except in the case of how-tos about particular teaching or technical projects – and more likely to focus on theories, possibilities and ideals that could be developed and debated by people across differing contexts. Thus leadership status in Twitter and blogging tended to bear some relationship to a person's topical engagement and capacity to contribute to ideas beyond disciplinary specialization.

Many of the participants in my formal doctoral study of 2013–2014 were connected to ongoing conversations and sub-networks tied to the themes above, particularly about the state of the digital in higher ed and/or the state of higher ed in contemporary society. Most though not all individuals framed as open scholars in my research had at least some semblance of a tie to institutional higher education and participants and volunteer sample profiles came from a broad spectrum of academic disciplines, as well as from locations around the globe. Canada, the US, Mexico, Ireland, Italy, South Africa, Singapore and Australia were all represented among my participant sample, with the UK additionally represented among sample profiles used to examine perceptions of influence and identity.

Additionally, both in my research and my experience more broadly, there tended to be a common critical orientation among the most visible profiles and identities, wherein technologies in education were generally approached from an informed and informing analytic perspective. Some open and online leaders whose academic status was divulged either in their profiles or in open conversations acknowledged that their digital networks enabled them to engage in a level of critical learning and innovation regarding technologies that their departmental colleagues could not provide. For them, as for the sizeable network of PhD students I (happily) discovered, who had found each other through the #phdchat hashtag and other means, blog networks and Twitter feeds were referred to as ways of connecting with others over areas of mutual interest and inquiry. These areas of interest were not necessarily shared or deemed valuable by their face-to-face colleagues.

But those networks also allowed many contributors to build leadership profiles – basically, becoming known as recognized and valued thinkers in a given area – that they might have struggled to develop in solely faceto- face or institutional contexts. Essentially, the academic Twitter feed and the distributed network of blog posts that it linked to served as a hub of interdisciplinary and public intellectual engagement for professionals interested in emergent and topical issues in the broad field of higher education. Active and sustained participation in 'the conversation' and the network sustaining that conversation created visibility for the identities under whose profiles contributions circulated. The international scope and scale of the conversation and network and the fact that both were somewhat open and thus permeable by new profiles, meant that open participation could facilitate greater connections and name recognition for a contributing scholar – over time – than any single department or faculty or conference experience could.

Thus 'the conversation' in digital networked participation appeared both in my study and in my personal experience as an informal participatory leadership sphere, a public in which the critical issues of higher education and change are aired and debated and important narratives about those issues shaped.

During the years of my introduction and research into academic Twitter and the conversation it enabled and sustained, that participatory leadership sphere seemed to serve as a relatively collegial public. Many participants in my study referenced Twitter as more intimate and supportive, than their institutional environments, and often less competitive or cutthroat (Stewart, 2015c). Since digital scholarly practices are not as bound to gatekeeping and formal prestige hierarchies as practices tied to academic publishing or to formal tenure and promotion procedures, notions of leadership in the open developed outside a zero-sum economy. To be recognized as a leader in a conversational, collegial public does not require credentials nor preclude the recognition of other people. While attention and engagement are not infinite, they are more plentiful than permanent academic positions and spaces in prestigious peer-reviewed journals. The capacity to self-publish and share ideas openly, within a broader conversation, creates an environment in which scholars can be seen to have greater control over what they become known for than they do when blind review and limited resources are givens. Additionally, in the participatory leadership sphere of early academic Twitter, reputations were developed in part based on performative relationality, and the hyper-personal model of communications (Walther, 1996) common in digitally-mediated engagements. As a result, scholarly leadership in this sphere tended to privilege collegial behaviours during that early period.

IDENTITY AT THE CORE

That idea of open scholarship as a separate sphere or trajectory of academic influence and leadership status, uncoupled from formal markers, was one I both investigated and personally experienced during the course of doctoral research.

In my study, I found that developing open or network-based leadership roles appeared to hold particular benefits for graduate students and early career researchers. This did not mean that more academically established open scholars did not necessarily experience the same benefits, but that those perks would generally not have been extended to junior colleagues without the visibility and name recognition that open engagement created. Open research profiles circulate differently from purely institutionally-focused research profiles, particularly among early career researchers. Through ongoing participation and contribution via blogging and Twitter, a number of participants in my study found that their work became known within their field or within the field of open scholarship in general, thus achieving visibility and recognition among both peers and media. Their circulation in the open attention economy allowed their work to be seen and taken up as the work of leading peers, rather than the work of junior colleagues. The perks of this recognition meant that they tended to report a sense of respect for their work in the open that they did not necessarily feel amongst institutional colleagues, but also that new trajectories opened for them, as identities in an open scholarship marketplace. Some reaped academic benefits such as keynotes and book contracts thanks to work done in the open; others experienced media coverage of their work or benefited by being able to engage in research grants and projects with leading scholars they'd encountered in their network.

These benefits of circulation – connections, name recognition and visibility – hold true at least within fields and disciplines related to open practice and digital technologies. These areas tend to receive perhaps broader-than-usual interest from media and from conference organizers, due to the fact that all fields are impacted by digital change and thus expertise in this area has particular cache. Additionally, the broader network of open educators does tend towards a practice of collaboration and support of its junior colleagues rather than competition, at least in my own experience and that reported by my study participants. Not all experiences or areas of open scholarship necessarily operate identically.

Within this sphere, however, I see the aforementioned benefits of open participation and leadership as rooted in the way identities and profiles are foregrounded in digital engagement. The only way to circulate and engage is through the cultivation of a visible identity, which may or may not be tied publicly to any form of institutional role. Thus, if a profile accrues visibility and perceived legitimacy as a contributor to 'the conversation', the individual behind that profile can become known to some extent within the network, regardless of whether or not the individual carries influential institutional signals of status.

However, as Phipps (2013) notes, a network 'does not diminish the importance of the institution to the individual . . . the structures to support individuals form the platform upon which profiles are built' (Phipps, 2013: 14). While this is not true for every digital scholar or open educational researcher, many do have at least one foot in institutions, in no small part because that's where the money is. While employment in higher education is increasingly precarious, the monetization of open and digital educational spaces by practitioners has been minimal; opportunities for compensated work in open scholarship tend to be limited to writing or to compensated workshops or talks. Often it is institutions or occasionally digital companies, offering the contracts to give these workshops or talks and network visibility appears to be one of the key pathways through which speakers and presenters are invited. When institutional committees look for fresh voices for keynotes and invited talks, members who are also open scholars may think of and suggest leading profiles from their networked engagement.

Once an individual is seen to circulate as a leading thinker, a keynote or simply a name in a given field, they end up benefiting from that academic reputation even if they do not have formal academic status to match. During my study some sample Twitter profiles without any institutional status at all were nonetheless recognized as leaders in the higher education field by participants. This recognition and esteem was based on the name these profiles had built through public writing and through keynoting and other freelance work that intersected with institutional academia.

I benefited similarly: based in part on my network connections and in part on the MOOC hype that brought that aspect of my research to mainstream visibility, I began to be offered keynote opportunities and invitations to contribute to events as a leader or expert, rather than as a graduate student. After the 2015 conferral of my PhD, those invitations have continued, even though I do not at the time of writing hold an academic position and have taught as an adjunct while working in higher education and government education staff roles. For me, as a graduate student in a small faculty in a regional university, my open research profile and visibility in the network gave me academic connections and status I simply could not have achieved without that digital access, no matter the excellence of my scholarship or the efforts of my supervisors. It offered me a collegial community of scholars interested in my area of research and translated into material benefits and privileges that keep me connected and visible in the realm of institutional scholarship, even while my day job does not.

THE DIGITAL IS NOT FLAT

The fact that collegiality and increased visibility were common both in my own and my participants' experience does not, however, mean that academic Twitter is or was ever an ideal participatory space, without mitigating power relations. Nor does it mean that participation in digital academic networks is inherently or entirely democratizing.

Admittedly, open leadership and scholarship practices do differ significantly from the hierarchy of institutions. Leadership in higher education is often highly stratified, both in academic hiring and in senior management. That stratification by academic role is far less visible in open leadership circles. Amongst the blogging and Twitter communities I observed, senior academics and administrators regularly engaged with junior academics and graduate students in relational terms that served to emphasize commonality and shared learning rather than status differentials.

But, while role hierarchies may be less visible in digital and open engagement, due to the emphasis on identity rather than role, societal biases – particularly racism and sexism – are replicated powerfully in digital spaces. Particularly since 2014's #gamergate, the systemic social hierarchies that govern whose ideas – and voices – are received as natural and neutral have been aggressively defended in SNS and digital spaces. Women and especially women of colour who engage in the open have been shown to have their voices and opinions received very differently depending on how their profiles present their race and gender (Nesbitt-Golden, 2014).

Additionally, social media metrics can create stratification and power imbalances of a different kind. Metrics include the number of followers or friends a profile may have. My own research found that those engaged in participatory, open scholarship were aware of their own metrics and those of others, but that metrics were not seen as ends in themselves (Stewart, 2015c). Rather, metrics tended to be understood within open leadership circles as part of a more complex calculation of influence, while also standing as shorthand for the amount of engagement and attention a profile can generate from the network. However, in recent years, with the rise of call-out culture (Ahmad, 2015) or the use of

scale and viral sensationalism for the purpose critiquing, shaming or otherwise directing the behaviour of others, rather than for peer engagement, having the capacity to reach large audiences becomes disproportionately valuable. Users with large-scale metrics in effect have a structural power position over those whose follower counts are small, due to the capacity to wield scale and visibility within the platform.

To an extent, the platforms and networks themselves are neither inherently hierarchical or a hierarchical, they simply privilege different structures of power than institutions do. But when used for participatory purposes, the relationality of open engagement may to an extent mitigate hierarchy at the metrics level. It is highly questionable whether even well intentioned participatory engagement among open scholars mitigates the systemic racism and sexism that marked bodies experience both offline and on.

THE PRESTIGE ECONOMY OF OPEN

In essence, open and digital practices comprise a scholarly leadership sphere that is complex and fraught in very different ways from the complex and fraught world of institutional leadership, both in its scholarly and administrative trajectories. The 'stuff of reputations' (Willinksy, 2010) in academic Twitter and blogging is what I eventually labelled in my research as a 'scholarship of abundance'. (Stewart, 2015b); a sphere in which leadership and status stem from the capacity to stand out. This capacity is based in the cultivation of a recognizable profile within an influential network.

The prestige economy of open scholarship revolves around circulation. While in conventional institutional scholarship, those who wish to contribute must navigate the tacit tyrannies of hierarchy and blind peer review, in the open, scholars need to navigate the fraught sphere of getting their work seen and read. Prestige, therefore, becomes tied to capacity to generate legible forms of visibility.

Even in an attention economy, visibility in scholarly spheres is not just about being seen, but about what one is seen to be. In both conventional and open academic spheres, legibility and legitimacy remain tied to what is recognizable to others. Open scholarship is not an environment without standards, though it does have to be more open and flexible in its standards than any institutionalized set of criteria would be. Visible connections to entities familiar to the beholder often serve as legitimating, especially in participatory environments where contributors tend to be open to exchange.

In open scholarship, connections also confer legitimacy and prestige, while helping get work seen and read. My research found that most active open scholars share the work of peers as much or more than they share their own (Stewart, 2016), which serves to both circulate work and to circulate their own profile in connection with others, increasing visibility and recognition. While open scholarly leadership tends to be less tied to particular institutional or journal-based status markers as signals of prestige, connections to well-known media entities and to the names of other well-known scholars do appear to confer legitimacy and recognition within open networked participation.

Additionally, for open scholars who continue to contribute to conventional forms of scholarly dissemination, networked participation can have additional circulation benefits. As Terras (2012) and Mewburn and Thompson (2013) have shown, profiles with high networked engagement can generate high levels of circulation and citation for their work, whether it originates in the open or in traditional academic formats. Given the low reading and citation rate that is reputedly the fate of so much academic output (Eveleth, 2014), this capacity confers a double advantage on open scholars who

remain tied to institutions and to conventional academic publishing. They can build a name for their open work, while amplifying readership and citation for their traditional papers, thus establishing a high citation rate.

Prestige and influence within open circles, then, does end up overlapping with institutional status even though the terms are different. This happens because ultimately open scholarship's rewards and status cues remain tied to institutional reward systems. While open scholars can generate new forms of attention based on circulation of blog posts and other media contributions, they can also leverage this attention into institutionally-based rewards such as keynotes and generate higher readership and citations for their conventional journal articles.

This does not mean that success in the prestige economy of open necessarily translates clearly into any kind of institutional success. McMillan Cottom (2015) has analysed microcelebrity within contemporary academic capitalism. While she notes the deployment of 'engaged academics as an empirical measure of a university's reputational currency' (McMillan Cottom, 2015: para. 3), she also observes that critically engaged scholars are disproportionately from marginalized groups, societally and institutionally and that their precarity 'makes them vulnerable in knowledge production that traffics in digital attention economies' (McMillan Cottom, 2015: final para.). Similar, Costa (2015) asserts that digital and open scholarship can be perceived institutionally as a deviant trajectory, both illegible and illegitimate to colleagues or superiors unfamiliar with the terms of the alternate prestige economy.

In spite of the fact that open scholars face risk for their engagement, both in viral attention economies and in institutions that may not understand their version of academic identity, the benefits of developing status and a leadership profile in 'the conversation' in one's field do still seem to hold for many active, participatory open scholars. In a time of limited academic hiring (Clawson, 2009) and debated oversupply of PhDs (Else, 2015; Griffey, 2017), open practice offers scholars who wish to contribute a sphere in which they can do so and a prestige economy they can enter and later leverage into forms of recognizable academic prestige, if successful.

CONCLUSION

Overall, my personal experience with open scholarly practices and academic Twitter seem to align with those of many of my participants and colleagues observed in the open. Scholarly participation in open digital networks – and particularly the sustained development and performance of identity through open profiles – appeared to serve to acculturate scholars to a participatory model of practice and leadership that builds capacity for engagement and contribution not consistently available through institutional academic participation. As open scholars build profiles and networks they engage in a prestige economy significantly from the model of credentialing and externalized status signals of formal academia, while often accruing benefits within institutional scholarly circles as well. Ultimately, leadership in open educational spaces is based in circulation and represents a trajectory of influence and reputational development based primarily on contribution and visible engagement. However, while this trajectory's entry points sit outside the academy, its destination can end up overlapping with the prestige economy of conventional institutional academia, in the form of influential contacts, keynotes and other monetized contracts and name recognition for one's work.

If you had told me when I started on Twitter more than a decade ago now that it would become the site and source of my eventual scholarly career, I'd have laughed. But ten years on, as challenging as I find Twitter in an era of Trump-generated sensationalism and constant outrage, I remain and (mostly)

thrive. This is less thanks to Twitter as a specific platform than to the legion of bloggers and scholars and thinkers and friends that I have encountered there, as well as through my blog, during my years of engagement and circulation. I have had some experiences of harassment, sexism and vulnerability and am wary of recommending that new scholars take a path that looks exactly like my own. But the trajectory of openness and acculturation to participatory practice that I happened to find in particular digital spaces is not solely limited to – or perhaps even centred on – those platforms. It is that trajectory of contribution, community and leadership capacity that I believe matters for emerging scholars and thinkers in a world where institutional participation is increasingly regulated and constrained. I encourage others to seek spaces where they, too, can contribute to open, participatory communities of knowledge-building, both in and outside institutions.

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