Reputation and Identity in Scholarly Networked Publics

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Abstract

This dissertation proposal outlines a participatory ethnographic project exploring how academic identity and reputation are circulated, enacted, and understood within scholarly online networks. Both academia and social networks can be said to be 'reputational economies' (Willinksy, 2010), but whereas conventional scholarship and concepts of "academic impact" are codified and indexed, the practices and indicators by which active networked scholars build reputations are often tacit or invisible. And while scholars and educators are increasingly exhorted to 'go online,' those who do often find that their work and efforts may not be understood within institutional contexts. This research project will utilize ethnographic methods and a material-semiotic theoretical approach to explore and detail the ways in which networked scholarly reputations operate, circulate, and intersect with contemporary concepts of 'academic impact.' The study aims to articulate the signals that 'count' towards scholarly reputation in networked circles, and to explore the benefits and challenges that networked scholarly participation poses for contemporary academics.

Reputation and Identity in Scholarly Networked Publics

This dissertation proposal outlines an investigation of the ways in which scholars at a variety of career stages enact and understand scholarly reputation- and identity-building within online participatory networks.

Over the last decade, the ways in which people can connect with one another and share ideas online have multiplied dramatically. Social network platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become commonplace means of communication and interaction. The proliferation of free blog platforms such as Wordpress and Tumblr has led to unprecedented self-publishing, and the rise of camera-enabled phones combined with platforms such as Youtube and Instagram has meant that images and videos can be easily shared. Online self-presentation and participation in networked interactions has become a feature of contemporary life.

Many forms of online participation are becoming visible within academia, as well. Since the first computer-based courses in the 1980s (Mason 2005), learning management systems such as Blackboard and Moodle have been widely adopted by institutions, enabling both fully online and hybrid courses, which combine face-to-face facilitation with supplemental online engagement. Pressure on institutions to deliver courses online has risen recently as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have become a buzzword in higher education.

The proliferation of online learning in higher education, however, goes far beyond the rise of online and hybrid classes and formal learning opportunities. The phenomenon of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) has begun to permeate higher education. Scholars themselves are going beyond teaching and searching online to building public bodies of work via participatory media; self-publishing, sharing ideas via multiple platforms, and engaging with emergent issues in higher education and society at large. Within this public, participatory sphere, networks of scholars and

emerging scholars have developed across multiple technological platforms, engaging with each other and each other's work. Many scholars who use social networking sites (SNS) will cultivate scholarly identities, networks, and audiences via online participation: this study will explore how these identities, networks, and the reputations that develop within them differ from the same scholars' experiences of reputational development in institutions.

There are multiple platforms available for open scholarly networking. SNS such as Academia.edu have emerged specifically for scholars, while reference tools such as Zotero and Mendeley have gradually integrated networking capacities for scholars to recommend, share, and tag resources. Twitter is a general but very adaptable platform: hashtags such as #highered and #phdchat aggregate input from interested parties all over the world. Google Hangouts are utilized to host informal open discussions and learning experiences, and Facebook groups focused around specific disciplinary and research interests enable real-time public discussion of issues and ideas. Nor are SNS the only means by which scholars connect and share their ideas: major media outlets and higher education news forums host blogs that amplify scholars' opinions and voices; many academics share their own emerging ideas and observations via independent blogs.

It is not the technological platforms, however, that are the focus of my proposed study. This investigation builds on a tradition stemming back through Rheingold's (1993) "virtual communities" to Hiltz and Turoff's (1978) exploration of online work relationships, focusing on the social and cultural shifts that mark emergent academic practices as a form of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006). This project will utilize ethnographic methods and a material-semiotic theoretical approach to explore and detail the ways in which networked scholarly reputations operate and circulate.

Both academia and social networks can be said to be 'reputational economies' (Willinksy, 2010; Hearn, 2010) in which communications are "the principal mechanism for creating knowledge and establishing reputation" (Hyland, 2003, p. 252). The two spheres have similarities: the user-built growth of the internet as we know it incorporated much from the academic model of knowledge-sharing, and the Google search engine was designed on the same principles as academic citation (Brin & Page, 1998). Terms of entry to the two spheres are not identical, however: while many influential members of participatory scholarly networks are affiliated with universities, networked contributions to knowledge extend beyond formal peer review channels to public, iterative, communications. Networked scholars may post ideas online long before they commit them to an academic format, opening their work to input and comment from what is colloquially known as the 'wisdom of crowds' (Anderson, 2006) model. Peer review still has a place of privilege within many networked scholars' vitae, but is no longer the sole means by which bodies of work can be shared with media, the public, and peers.

In this study, the complex techno-cultural relationship between scholarly networked practices and the reputations and identities they privilege will be framed using the concept of networked publics. Networked publics are "the space constructed through networked technologies, and the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice" (boyd, 2011, p. 39). The digital properties that structure networked publics are distinct from the properties of analog publics. Persistence, replicability, scalability – the possibility of exponential visible growth or reach of mass audiences – and searchability are all hallmarks of digital content (boyd, 2011, p. 46): each of these properties shape the ways in which individuals within networked publics intersect, interact, and engage. Livingstone (2005) invoked 'public' as synonymous with 'audience,' in the sense of "a group bounded by a shared text, whether a

worldview or a performance" (boyd, 2011, p. 40).

Just as 'the academy' refers, imperfectly, to a broadly-understood confluence of practices, norms, and outlooks as well as to the historical public concept of the university, so the participatory subculture of 'networked publics,' in this research, is invoked to identify both a conceptual space and the practices that distinguish it. Neither term is intended to refer to any single representative entity but rather to a particular form of social imaginary. All scholars who participate in this study will be active both in networked publics and in the academy: rather than framing the two spheres as dichotomous, I will explore both parallels and distinctions.

Research Problem and Purpose

Networked practices can create new opportunities for public engagement with ideas (Weller, 2012), but they demand the construction, performance and curation of intelligible public identities as a price of admission. In SNS, the core of this identity production occurs via profiles (boyd, 2006); on blogs and other personal web spaces, "bios" may provide identifying information or link to the individual's social network profiles. Within the complex, interconnected mesh of searchable discussion and knowledge artifacts that constitute scholarly networked publics, these identities and the artifacts associated with them circulate, creating reputations and differential positions. How do scholars within networked publics judge whether another scholar's work – and by extension, identity – is credible, or worthy of engagement?

Research into computer-based interactions has, for decades, suggested that online group members develop signals for status and credibility: Walther (1992) found "electronic communicators have developed a grammar for signaling hierarchical positions" (p. 78). More recently, Kozinets (2010) framed this status differentiation less in terms of hierarchy than "various strategies of visibility and identity expression" (p. 24). Within the academy, identity strategies and

concepts of what 'counts' as legitimate scholarship are made manifest – and, to an extent, codified – in broadly understood tenure and promotions requirements and in indices like the h-index, which rank output. Within scholarly networked publics, however, the existence of such strategies as distinct from those of the academy, and the ways in which they may be constituted and enacted, has yet to be articulated. This project will explore and make explicit such positioning strategies as they manifest within scholarly networked publics.

Utilizing the ethnographic methods of participatory observation and semi-structured interview, the proposed study will explore the ways scholarly reputations and identities are produced, enabled, and constrained by participation in the context of scholarly networked publics. It will focus particularly on status positioning practices, the perception and circulation of influence, and the ways in which online networks open up new possibilities for scholarly engagement, identity expression, and reputational development that may not be visible, legible, or available within the academy. It will trace distinctions and commonalities between the two spheres, from the perspectives of scholars who actively straddle both worlds.

The purpose of the project is twofold: first, to determine the ways in which and terms on which status positions and influential reputations are developed, circulated, and understood among active participants in scholarly networked publics, and second, to articulate the practices and indicators by which active networked scholars build reputations for open, public scholarly work. The former will be explored primarily through semi-structured interviews as well as extensive reading and reflexive analysis, while the latter will involve sustained and overt participant observation within scholarly networked publics. The substantive goal of the research is to provide an ethnographic portrait of the ways in which scholarly identities and reputations are formed and taken up within this participatory sub-culture.

Significance of the Study

As participatory networked publics emerge as a sphere in which scholars can participate and build networks, identities, and reputations, there emerges a parallel need for scholarly inquiry into the terms by which participatory scholarly networks take up and circulate concepts of influence, reputation, and credibility. Contested frameworks of scholarly identity and legitimate practice – sometimes made explicit in terms like 'academic impact' – shape the context within which this research will take place. Scholars today must navigate multiple and mixed messages regarding 'what counts' as scholarship and as impact: frameworks include digitally-driven notions of public, networked communications, calls for public accountability to taxpayers for research dollars invested (van Every, 2011) and tenure and promotions conventions. As Veletsianos and Kimmons (2012) have stated, "(S)cholars are part of a complex techno-cultural system that is ever changing in response to both internal and external stimuli, including technological innovations and dominant cultural values" (p. 773).

Against this backdrop of change, this proposed study has two key relevant contributions to make to contemporary scholarship and to scholarship's understanding of itself. The first relates to the professional value and visibility scholars may find in networked public participation. Hurt and Yin (2006) found that online networked practices such as blogging allow pre-tenured scholars to network with more established faculty in their areas of teaching, increasing emerging scholars' visibility and reputation in their field. Such advantages are increasingly valuable in the academic job market: Tirelli (1997) noted that higher education faculty are not immune to the broader cultural "trend toward low-paying, part-time, and temporary work" (p. 75), while MacFarlane (2011) has shown how the traditional tripartite teaching/research/service role of scholarly identity is being unbundled and increasingly replaced by specialized para-academic opportunities. The

decline in tenure track job opportunities is regularly detailed both in higher education publications (Pannapacker, 2009) and mainstream media (Weissman, 2013, Schuman, 2013). This confluence of narrowing academic opportunity (Clawson, 2009) with increasing potential for scholarly visibility and contribution via non-institutional participation is a significant shift that warrants research. The relationship between networked participatory practices, the increase in visibility that can occur in networked publics, and work horizons for scholars has as yet been minimally investigated. For graduate students and early career scholars endeavoring to establish reputations and careers within this increasingly competitive and precarious work environment, this study will serve to detail possible new paths towards reputation-building in a quickly-changing field.

Networked reputations and artifacts can only begin to be counted as scholarship, however, if they can be shown to relate to what institutions already understand as scholarly practices. The second relevant contribution this study stands to make, then, is in detailing the specific practices and understandings that 'count' towards the development of a successful scholarly reputation in networked publics. In 2005, the US Computing Research Association asserted that fewer and fewer individuals would be able to carry out their work without connecting to peers, experts, and mentors using electronic networks. Yet within the academy, as Harley, Acord, Earl-Novell, Lawrence, and King (2010) reported, "Experiments in new genres of scholarship and dissemination are occurring in every field, but they are taking place within the context of relatively conservative value and reward systems that have the practice of peer review at their core" (p. 13). Even where digital practices are considered, they are seldom taken up on their own terms, but rather as shadows of conventional practices. As Weller (2011) has shown, the approaches by which universities have begun to recognize digital scholarship often replicate existing models, making conventional journals more open or instituting online equivalents and "alternative recognition measures" (Blaise,

Ippolito, and Smith, 2007) for scholarly promotions criteria. Yet, "the current system of measuring scholarly influence doesn't reflect the way many researchers work in an environment driven more and more by the social web" (Howard, 2012, para. 2). A clearer, research-based picture of how reputation and positioning operate within scholarly networked publics could help bridge the gap between digital practices and those which academic institutions validate or reject.

The research could also make a contribution to the ways in which open, public, participatory practices count within academic funding frameworks focused on public communications. Adler and Harzing (2009) and van Every (2011) have emphasized the proliferation of administrative frameworks of accountability and value-for-research dollars over recent decades, under labels such as research productivity, knowledge mobilization, knowledge translation, and academic impact. These frameworks reflect an increasing emphasis on public communications and dissemination beyond traditional academic audiences (van Every, 2011). Yet such calls for public communications often neither recognize nor validate participatory practices on their own terms, but rather focus on traditional media as public communications channels. This study's potential to make public, participatory practices visible could enable them to be embraced by emerging frameworks for academic impact and public communications.

The study itself will be an act of knowledge translation. Instead of expanding research communications beyond a scholarly audience to a public one, it will operate in the opposite direction: it will explicate the scholarly practices of networked publics to an institutional audience. One of the unique attributes of online scholarly networks is that participants are doubly immersed: many cultivate networked *and* institutional identities and are invested in scholarship, research and reputation-building within both spheres. This study will make visible the practices, values, and challenges of networked scholarly participation from the perspectives of research subjects who can

speak experientially to both networked *and* institutional frameworks. As Veletsianos and Kimmons (2013) claimed in their review of the literature on SNS usage within scholarship, analysis of SNS use from critical and positivist perspectives has tended to "maintain a progressive or moralistic tone to the research endeavour (e.g. adopting certain SNS use would be laudable for certain purposes or to achieve certain goals)…skimming over subjects' explanations of their own actions or experiences" (Review of Relevant Literature section, para. 8). This ethnographic study will focus on subjects' own explanations and understandings of networked reputation, as well as the intersections of networked reputations with the versions of academic impact privileged by funders, publishers, and promotions committees. These multiply-situated perspectives may offer a reflexive lens through which to view contested concepts of academic impact and reputation within contemporary scholarship.

Theoretical Perspective

This investigation is rooted within the tradition of qualitative inquiry: it aims to access human perceptions in-depth, and to describe, analyse and understand human experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) within the context of scholarly networked publics. My approach to this research is centered in the premise is that people's practices and their understandings of those practices are meaningful objects of scholarly inquiry. The study's epistemological framework or theory of knowledge is a constructionist one, wherein "meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). It is located within the tradition of non-positivist ontological frameworks that "invite people to weigh our interpretation, judge whether it has been soundly arrived at and is plausible (convincing, even?) and decide whether it has application to their interests and concerns" (Crotty, 1998, p. 41). This non-positivist, qualitative, constructionist approach asserts that research is always a value-laden process of

meaning-making rather than discovery; one in which contextualized understandings rather than universal truths are the ultimate goal.

In selecting such an approach to this exploration of reputations and identities within scholarly networked publics, I aim overtly to investigate those phenomena *as* constructions; ones which my research process may in turn affect. However, I do not necessarily see them entirely as social constructions. Where Denzin and Lincoln (2003) have asserted that within the qualitative paradigm, researchers "stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry (p. 13), I hesitate to concur entirely, at least with the first point. My position is that our social and discursive practices are the lenses through which we understand reality, but that materiality also plays a role in shaping the meaning we ascribe to objects and experiences. This research will therefore be grounded in the constructionist assumption that "truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of the world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8), but not that all interpretations are individual or entirely social.

This research is also located within what Rosaldo (1989) described as the shift towards research in cultural borderlands: the study's focus on scholarship on the margins of the academy aligns with what Rosaldo (ibid) framed as a trend towards "questions of conflict, change, and inequality" (p. 28) instead of classic norms. As borderland research at the boundaries of the officially-recognized cultural unit of the academy, the study will explore the ways in which scholars cross social borders between academic norms and networks.

Material-Semiotics

Instead, I will draw on what Law (2007) called the "disparate family of material-semiotic tools, sensibilities and methods of analysis that treat everything in the social and natural worlds as a

continuously generated effect of the webs of relations within which they are located" (p. 2). In particular, the material-semiotic approach elucidated in Haraway's (1988) idea of situated knowledges will frame both my perspective on the research and my relationship to it. A material-semiotic approach builds, as Lenoir (1994) has asserted, on an understanding of language as both sign and object:

> Saussure defined semiotics as `the life of signs in society.' The semioticians most relevant to our concerns, it seems to me, are persons whose work follows Roland Barthes in extending Saussure's structural linguistics to concerns about representation, images, codes, media, and culture in everyday life. (para. 4)

In this study, a material-semiotic approach means that I will take up concepts of reputation, scholarly identity, and academic impact as signs circulating within both academia and networked publics, but not solely as linguistic signs. Rather, as Beer (2013) has advocated, I will also consider the material context of new media infrastructures to try to make visible the ways in which reputation and identity operate within networked publics.

At the same time, I do not approach scholarly networked publics as more homogeneous than academia, with its multiple disciplines and ontological distinctions. The idea of "situated knowledges," rather, foregrounds knowledge as multiple and located, instead of singular or universalized. As non-positivist research, this study and the broader dissertation will shy away from claims of neutral, generalizable knowledge – what Haraway (1988) called "the view from above, from nowhere" (p. 589) – and will instead focus on the ways in which scholarly reputation-building is experienced by specifically-located individuals within particular webs of possibility and material-semiotic structures. Those experiences will be taken up neither as disembodied truths nor as relativist, subjective assertions, but as perspectives shaped by particular social locations, material

realities, and power relations. I am not interested in claims of neutral knowledge or disembodied, positivist objectivity, but in patterns, relationships and power relations. Haraway (1998) framed accountability, positioning, and partiality as key to this approach:

(O)bjectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and

responsibilities…Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated

knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It

allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see. (p. 583)

Personal Framework

If I, as a researcher, am to become answerable for what I learn to see during this dissertation process, I need to begin from a place of owning and locating my own "partial perspective" (Haraway, 1988, p. 582). Adherence to Haraway's framework of situated knowledges demands that researchers confront our positions, our situations, and the complexities and partialities that shape our perspectives on our objects of study in order to produce "better accounts of the world" (p. 590).

I approach this research from multiple and multiply-situated identity positions and perspectives. I have a long history in both academia and in networked publics. As a Ph.D candidate, I am overtly engaged in the early – some might say aspirational – stages of scholarly reputation- and identity-building within the academy. At the same time, higher education has been my professional location for fifteen years: I've taught sessionally within Faculties of Arts and Education since 1998, and have held a variety of project-and program-management positions in universities throughout much of that time as well. I am accustomed to navigating the roles of student, faculty, and staff, sometimes all at once.

My sense of belonging to the academy, however, has ironically become somewhat more tenuous since I became a Ph.D student: this is, in part, related to increasing hiring constraints and my awareness of dwindling tenure prospects in general. As a mid-career student in my forties, with financial and family commitments, I am situated very much in the midst of the precarity detailed in the Significance section of this proposal. Thus, I feel an urgent pressure to develop an effective scholarly reputation and thereby maximize my strengths within the narrowing neoliberal academic market. Yet, the strategic "Me, Inc." concept of scholarly identity that underpins that neoliberal discourse of academic impact or success is not what drew me to doctoral study or to the idea of an academic career. From this uncertainty about what it means to become a scholar at this juncture came the initial curiosity that led to this project.

It also comes from my participation within networked publics. I've spent more than seven years actively cultivating identities online, though only recently have I made an active foray into the scholarly networked publics which this research will explore. I initially took up blogging as an avenue to work through and speak aloud aspects of my identity that I had no other voice for: as those needs ran their course I became interested in the phenomenon of online communities and identities more broadly. I opened a second blog for my academic pursuits, and began to shift my relatively-established online identity towards a new networked public audience. Thus I am now situated online as a scholar of sorts, or at least one of MacFarlane's (2011) public para-academics, though my sense of community and audience do stretch beyond scholarly networked publics. Nonetheless, my scholarly participation and growing network and reputation have yielded opportunities in terms of visibility and publishing, as well as a valuable forum for working through ideas aloud, in conversation with sometimes global peers interested in similar issues. Participation also yields surprises, as when I wake up to find that a remark on Twitter is the opening quote in a

column in *Inside Higher Ed* (Reed, 2013), and sometimes is a source of tensions, distractions, and added obligations. For me, networked scholarly participation is a rich, complex, and generally rewarding field of engagement, as much a part of my sense of scholarship as my institution. I also engage in and value conventional, institutional scholarly practices: I submit work for publication in scholarly journals, have been a reviewer for a number of journals and academic grants, and teach when sessional postings are available.

My double-situatedness means that I live much of my scholarly life in the midst of the afore-detailed tensions around scholarly identity- and reputation-building practices. If I were approaching my research from a positivist perspective, this embeddedness within my ethnographic field(s) of study would be problematic, as would the differentially-positioned voices I speak from within the power relations of the two spheres. The idea of an embedded, non-isomorphic and multiply-located researcher compromises the premise of what Haraway (1988) would call an unmarked field of vision, the detached, reductionist "conquering gaze from nowhere" (p. 581) that science has traditionally valourized as signifying objectivity. From a material-semiotic approach wherein feminist objectivity is constructed from situated knowledges, though, that neutral research perspective is an inherently impossible fiction that reinforces status quo power relations. Instead, embeddedness and partiality are assumed: my responsibility as a researcher is to make them visible. As Haraway (1988) claimed:

> We are not immediately present to ourselves. Self-knowledge requires a
> semiotic-material technology to link meanings and bodies. Self-identity is a
> bad visual system…The split and contradictory self is the one who can interrogate
> positionings and be accountable, the one who can construct and join rational
> conversations and fantastic imaginings that change history (p. 585-86).

The proposed research and writing process will be, in a sense, the semiotic-material technology by which I explore and interrogate my own dual positioning within scholarly networked publics and the academy itself. As Kozinets (2010) has asserted, ethnographers "cannot write about cultures we do not truly understand" (p. 182), thus I approach my embeddedness within scholarly networked publics and the academy itself as advantages for this research project. I bring multiply-situated understandings and positions to the inquiry, and will, with my research participants, be multiply accountable to complex and potentially variant audiences whose strategies of visibility and identity will be sites of discussion. At the same time, much as I am familiar with navigating scholarly identity strategies in both the academy and in networked publics, I am not, in Haraway's words, immediately or ever entirely present to myself. This inquiry is genuine and open-ended: the positioning and reputational strategies I hope to tease out from the ethnographic observations and interview process are, in many ways, tacit processes that will likely only become visible to me during the research journey.

Performativity and Positioning Theory

In addition to utilizing a material-semiotic approach mindful of situated knowledges within this study, I will also draw on specific theories of human action, interaction, and meaning-making in order to explore scholarly networked publics. Broadly, this research will be situated within Hess' (1997) cultural constructivism, which considers actors "as suspended in webs of meaning which structure the possibilities of their action" (p. 83). The focus of inquiry in this research is precisely the webs of meaning understood by participants within scholarly networked publics, and the ways in which these webs of meaning – as shared realities – are experienced and continually constructed and re-constructed in their practices. In order to examine these practices, I will draw on theoretical frameworks that emphasize relationality and meaning, including the interrelated but distinct frames

of positioning theory and performativity. Congruences and incongruences between them are expected, but both frames emphasize relationality and the reframing of traditional binary categories. Haraway positioned her "political-fictional (political-scientific)" (1991. p. 151, brackets original) analysis within what she called three crucial boundary breakdowns: that between human and animal, organism and machine, and the physical-nonphysical (p. 151) In this research, I will attempt to foreground those blurred and broken binaries as I approach the research questions, participants, process, and the subject of scholarly networked publics.

Both positioning theory and performativity have roots in the speech-act work of Austin (1962). Baert (2012), writing on positioning theory, has claimed that a performative perspective on the intellectual realm "analyses what intellectual interventions *do* and *achieve* rather than what they represent" (p. 310) whereas positioning refers to "the process by which certain characteristics are attributed to an individual or a group or some other entity" (ibid). My intent is to utilize both to try to construct a rich and complex picture of what is done, achieved, *and* represented within scholarly networked publics, though from a reflexive position cognizant of the crisis of representation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) and the partiality of situated knowledge.

Over the past few decades, within both self-styled "late modernity" and post-modernity, many theories of self have take a performative – or at least performance-focused – turn. Early work by Goffman (1959) defined performance as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (p. 15). Giddens (1991) claimed the "reflexivity of the self" and Gergen (1991) emphasized the self-monitoring of the "mutable self" focused on process. In the era of social networks, the concept of performance is sometimes used as a way of addressing, acknowledging, or positing multiplicity of self. Papacharissi's (2012) work has treated performance as the norm of self-presentation within social

media:

> Information communication technologies, such as Twitter, further augment
>
> these tendencies by saturating the self with ever-expanding networks of people,
>
> relations, and performance stages…. As a result, each self contains an ever-
>
> increasing multiplicity of other selves, or voices, that do not harmonize and are
>
> presented in contexts that frequently lack situational definition (Meyrowitz,
>
> 1985). Networked technologies might thus be understood as enabling access
>
> to multiple voices or aspects of one's own personality. (p. 1992)

Performativity, then, offers an analytic framework for the ways in which scholars enact their identities *as* scholars within networked publics. The study is intended to make visible patterns and norms circulating within networked scholarly environments, as well as those that participants report utilizing in more institutional academic circles. Both overlaps and distinctions will be explored.

Butler's work on performative identity, which she has defined as "instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (1988, p. 519), may be particularly valuable in the analysis. Butler (1990) asserted that the subject/object dichotomy of Western epistemology means that notions of the subject – even as situated self – have been discursively constituted within an epistemological frame of opposition. The "I" is established through signifying practices that at the same time create the "Other" as a necessary and unknowable opposite to the inner self, "concealing the discursive apparatus by which the binary itself is constituted" (Butler, 1990, p. 197). This process of constitution and apparent naturalization by concealment gives rise to the individual's sense of inner self as differentiated from the Other. In Butler's work, then, performativity is both the repetition or citation of cultural norms and the means by which hegemonic norms can be subverted.

I am interested in exploring how identity construction and performance are understood by subjects actively straddling two spheres of signification: the practices that are intelligible and reinforced within social network circles are, as noted, sometimes practices that academic circles would condemn as "Other." The extent to which subjects experience or recognize this subversion of binary hegemony via dual participation, the meaning(s) they make of it, and the implications it holds for academic norms of scholarly identity and reputation are all aspects of inquiry in this research project.

It is important to note that in its emphasis on discourse, performativity is not a reduction of everything – or anything – to language. Theories of performativity stand in contrast to theories of representationality, which are premised on an ontological distinction between entities and representations of entities. Within performative ontologies, this separation is challenged or collapsed, and emphasis is placed on practices that produce particular representations. As Karen Barad has noted, "Performativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real: (Barad, 2003, p. 802).

I will also draw on positioning theory (Davies and Harre, 1990: Harre and Van Langenhove, 1991) to explore reputation and identity in scholarly networked publics. Positioning theory focuses specifically on multiplicities of self (Davies and Harre, 1990), and on how subject positions are produced through speech acts and actual interactions rather than formalized or pre-determined roles. Positioning theory emphasizes interactions and identities as dynamic, continually-negotiated constructs shaped both by structure and agency: as with performativity, the factor of social intelligibility plays a part in determining the acts available. In positioning theory, intelligibility is primarily framed through concepts of narrative and discourse. Davies and Harre

(1990) stated that "the discursive production of oneself or another as an agent requires the appropriate story line" (para. 9; Contradiction, Choice, and the Possibility of Agency section). I am interested in whether the spheres of academia and scholarly networked publics appear to offer differing story lines or narratives of possibility to scholars, and what forms of agency, if any, scholarly networked publics may open up.

At the theoretical level, then, this investigation is effectively an exploration of the narratives and discourses of scholarly identity and reputation that circulate in networked publics, with an emphasis on how these are shaped by the particular material, social and semiotic norms of participatory culture. Positioning theory appears to offer a rich framework for approaching this investigation, in part because of its focus on how people understand their own relational construction as selves within field(s) of power relations. In Bullough and Draper's (2004) examination of mentorship in higher education, they drew on positioning theory to explore various parties' understandings of both their own responsibilities and obligations *and* the broader power context:

> Thus, speakers (principals, teachers, university supervisors) bring to their
> interactions different claims or rights to speak, and they perform different
> duties and have different responsibilities and obligations that reflect differences
> in the distribution of power and authority. Shifts in position bring with them
> different ways of being with others and open or constrict the range of possible
> ways of making sense of interaction and relationship. Moreover, positioning may
> be tacit or intentional, unrecognized or strategic. (p. 408)

Positioning theory's recognition that positions can be multiple, seemingly contradictory, and both

tacit and strategic will be important in guiding the sorts of questions I pose to participants in the interviews, as will its capacity to take up issues of action in relation to power contexts.

Positioning theory, like performativity, is primarily a tool of discursive analysis (Tirado and Galvez, 1998) and originates within social constructivism. My intent is to utilize it from a material-semiotic perspective: to consider whether and how the material affordances or action possibilities (Gibson, 1977) of digital technologies shape the positions and reputational spaces available to scholars who engage with them in participatory networked publics. This will entail mindfulness of my own partial perspective as well as the partiality not only of participant accounts but also of analytic constructs, and ongoing interrogation of the assumptions and conclusions that emerge from the research process. Nonetheless, I believe there is great potential here: the idea of positioning and of multiple, located, embodied understandings of the world is a central concept within Haraway's (1988) framework of feminist objectivity. She asserts, "Positioning is, therefore, the key practice in grounding knowledge organized around the imagery of vision…(P)ositioning implies responsibility for our enabling practices" (Haraway, 1988, p. 587). It is the Harawayian vision of material-semiotic partial perspective that I commit to keeping in mind as I utilize the more detailed but discursively-focused frameworks of performativity and positioning theory to approach this dissertation project.

Literature Review

Research into the relationship(s) between reputational practices and networked technologies has begun to emerge in recent years. Marwick (2005) found that SNS users employed complex strategies for navigating the prescribed boundaries of profile development, while Donath and boyd (2004) explored the ways in which articulated or visible peer connections serve as identity markers for profile owners, and are selected in part for impression management purposes. The affordances

of given platforms have been shown to play a role in users' practices: Lampe, Ellison, and Steinfield (2007) have argued that profile fields which reduce transaction costs and are more difficult to falsify are most likely to be connected to greater numbers of peer or friendship links. Baym (2010) noted that shared resources and support manifest in online communities around what are sometimes otherwise marginalized identities, thus offering individuals a variety of support and belonging benefits (pp. 82-86). The work of both boyd (2010) and Kop (2012) has shown that within networks, reputation functions to allow particular individuals to act as hubs or information brokers, becoming powerful distributors and filters of knowledge within their particular publics.

In terms of the specific intersection of scholarly reputation and networked technologies, scholarship to date has focused primarily on the broader transformation of publishing and other scholarly practices. Weller (2011) explored the publishing, tenure and hiring, and pedagogical implications of networked scholarship in detail, but his focus was not on the ways in which networked practices relate to individual scholarly reputations. Likewise Veletsianos and Kimmons (2012, 2013) framed the practices of networked academics as 'networked participatory scholarship,' but did not focus primarily on reputation development or circulation.

Weller and Veletsianos and Kimmons have grounded their analyses of networked scholarship in Boyer's (1990) concept of scholarship, which advocated expanding beyond the traditional 'scholarship of discovery' to include such activities as integration, or synthesis across disciplines and time, application or engagement, and the systematic study of teaching and learning in a format that allows for public sharing and evaluation. I intend to draw on Boyer and on Veletsianos and Kimmons' (2012) framework of networked participatory scholarship in particular in this proposed dissertation.

Defined as "scholars' participation in online social networks to share, reflect upon, critique, improve, validate, and otherwise develop their scholarship" (p. 768), the concept of networked participatory scholarship emphasizes the techno-cultural pressures surrounding the use of digital technologies in academia. It asserts that technological innovation and the way technologies are taken up at a societal level influences the ways in which scholarly subcultures such as academic publishers and research communities operate. Veletsianos and Kimmons (2012) defined scholars as any "individuals who participate in teaching and/or research endeavours (e.g., doctoral students, faculty members, instructors, and researchers)" (para. 2). My study will utilize that same definition, inviting participation from graduate students as well as early career scholars and full professors. My research will, however, re-frame the population under study to a specific subset actively engaged in the participatory culture of networked publics: whereas Veletsianos and Kimmons focused broadly on the myriad of ways scholars utilize digital and networked tools to enhance scholarship, I will focus on scholars who are engaged in reputational development within scholarly networked publics. This focus on reputation represents a gap in existing literature on networked scholarship. The specific framework for participation will be explored in detail in the Methods section of this proposal.

The traditional terms on which an academic reputation is developed are relatively codified. They can vary depending on a scholar's discipline or area of specialization, there exist a variety of indices by which reputation – also framed as academic visibility or academic impact – is judged. Many are closely tied to the practice of peer-reviewed publication, often referred to as the "gold standard" (Herron, 2012) or primary currency of scholarly quality. Bibliometric indexing systems quantify the value of publications and research artifacts hierarchically: the impact factor (IF) of particular scholarly journals is linked to the citation

rates of the papers it publishes. The IF measure is often taken up as a proxy for paper quality (Lozano, Lariviere, and Gingras, 2012) in tenure and promotions contexts. Indices like the h-index (Hirsch, 2005) and databases such as Scopus and Web of Science propose to quantify and rank the research output of individual scientists.

Within this indexed system founded on the primacy of peer-review, then, the reputation of a scholar is linked at least in part to the reputations of the institutions, the funding and research agencies, and the journals with which he or she is affiliated or has published in. By comparison, the social ecosystems in which scholars circulate in networked publics represent a new sphere of academic impact. The emerging phenomenon of altmetrics (Priem, Taraborelli, Groth, & Neylon, 2010) does attempt to capture the ways in which scholarly impact operates within social networks, offering a complement to traditional indicators rather than a replacement (Bar-Ilan, Haustein, Peters, Priem, Shema, & Terleisner, 2012z). However, altmetrics focuses primarily on new forms of publication and on collating and counting contributions, rather than investigating the cultural circulation of identity and reputation, thus its focus of inquiry is different from that of this research.

While there is minimal research literature on the operations of reputation and positioning within scholarly networked publics from a non-altmetrics perspective, the topic is increasingly visible within the scholarly popular media. This suggests that the proposed research is timely. For example, in the London School of Economics blog during the summer of 2013, what Beer (2013) called "the politics of circulation" (para. 1) of networked media cultures was stated as having implications for scholarship, while a strong critique of peer review and a call for open, networked review (Perakakis, 2013) was featured only a few weeks later. But neither the potential nor the challenges represented by this intersection of academic and networked culture can be explored fully without a more explicit, researched-based understanding of what 'counts' within networked circles

As Hyland (2003) noted, Hagstrom's (1965) work likened the peer review system to a form of barter, wherein a contribution of information is exchanged for the motivating factor of individual recognition (Hyland, 2003, p. 252.) Credibility is key within this system. Willinsky (2010) asserted that scholars learn to read the status and reputational cues of peers, at least within their own disciplines:

> 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? (p. 297).

The work of Latour and Woolgar (1979) posited that scientists engage in the circulation and conversion of various kinds of 'credit' within the reputational economy of scholarship, in a cycle designed to maximize their own scholarly credibility. The proposed research project will attempt to tease out whether a similar system of credit operates within scholarly networked publics, and if yes, what cues and signals are understood to 'count.' Kling and McKim (1999) have shown that the trustworthiness of scholarship tends to be assessed based on a combination of institutionalized practices and readers' personal knowledge of writers' reputations. In online contexts where institutional cues may not be available, the ways in which visibility and reputational reach contribute to perceived credibility is important to understand.

Research into both the benefits and challenges scholarly networked publics offer academics will also inform my study. Dissemination, relationships, and reputation are all connected within networked publics, as they tend to be within academia. Thus networked publics not only connect scholars to each other across disciplinary lines, they create new opportunities for public engagement with ideas, encourage institutional innovation (Weller, 2012), and can offer junior

scholars and graduate students opportunities alternate channels for participation, leadership, and development of scholarly reputations. Gruzd, Wellman, & Takhteyev (2011) found that social media helps scholars strengthen existing relationships and build new ones in their areas of research. Kirkup's (2010) study of academic blogging cited development of voice and the capacity to explore questions in a public but informal atmosphere as key benefits of the practice. Yet, Gruzd, Staves, and Wilk (2012) have found that scholars using social media tend to see it as a complement to traditional dissemination channels, particularly for promoting more conventionally-published research. A scholar whose work – whether peer-reviewed article or blog post – makes the first page of Google search results in his or her area of study gains visibility that may serve to increase general awareness of that work, and by extension, citations. Name-recognition within areas of inquiry can lead to scholars being introduced to others who share their interests, or to invitations to collaborations and events that further increase both visibility and network connections.

For scholars, however, there can be hesitation about the risks (King and Hargittai, 2013) and commitments involved in cultivating online presence or sharing intellectual property. Collins and Hide (2010) found that copyright issues are a major concern for academics, while Ulrich and Karvonen's (2011) survey of faculty instructional attitudes found that the biggest barrier to technology adoption in general was lack of time. In spite of the fact that both academic and networked practices rely on collaboration and communication, online participation may be perceived as a separate sphere of engagement and thus an extra pressure.

Neither does the ethos and practice of mass participation align entirely with the institutionalized traditions and operations of academia. While networked scholarly publics almost always intersect with academic publics in terms of individual scholars' audiences for their work, the different affordances of the two spheres create tensions around issues of legitimacy, privacy,

and expectation. Jenkins et al (2006) have described participatory cultures as marked by low

barriers to expression and engagement, strong support for creating and for sharing one's creations,

informal mentorship of newer members, belief among members that contributions matter, and some

degree of social connection and caring what others think of their creations (p. 7). Not all these

factors correlate with the hierarchies and bureaucracy that define institutional practice. Daniels

(2013) noted: "We have our own "legacy" model of academic scholarship with distinct

characteristics…analog, closed, removed from the public sphere, and monastic" (Legacy academic

scholarship section, para. 3). While Daniels has acknowledged that this legacy model is neither as

dominant or closed as it once was, she suggests its retreat is still piecemeal (Legacy academic

scholarship section, para. 2).

Weller (2011) claimed that the modern university is "a solution to the economics of

scarcity" (p. 4). Its institutional structures and practices are historically situated in a context

wherein material constraints limited the availability and replicability of knowledge artifacts. As

Eye (1974) asserted in his seminal article on knowledge abundance, there has historically been a

clear distinction between "the laws of material and the laws of learning. Material can be

transformed from one state to another but the original state is diminished…materials are

exhaustible" (p. 445). Academic practices have their origins in the assumption and unavoidability

of scarcity: manuscripts and books as knowledge artifacts are exhaustible, and costly to produce

and distribute.

Digital content, on the other hand, is neither exhaustible nor costly in the ways that material

is. Infrastructure is still required, but digital knowledge artifacts can be replicated and distributed

without cost to originator or user, and without being consumed or diminished in the process.

Immense libraries can be accessed 24 hours a day, from a device that can be carried in a pocket.

Widespread and increasingly mobile access to digital knowledge artifacts in "an abundant and continually changing world of information" (Jenkins, 2006, Networking section, para. 1) marks the shift from an era of knowledge scarcity to an era of knowledge abundance, even though access remains inequitably distributed.

Yet the practices of scarcity do not simply dissipate in the face of abundance. While the research and teaching functions of the university have both, to an extent, incorporated digital knowledge artifacts, the practices and identity roles cultivated via participation can appear transgressive or inconsequential when viewed through the lens of the academy. Academics may not see participatory engagement as compatible with their roles, especially in the context of scholarly reputation. Esposito's (2013) small-scale study of Italian academics found that many scholars do not perceive benefits in participatory practices, particularly around open publishing. Participants underlined issues of validity and quality in the context of digital research and digital profiles, with one interviewee noting that a digital reputation is perceived as "other with respect to the core competencies of a researcher" (Esposito, 2013, How 'digital reputation' is perceived section, para. 3). Cheverie, Boettcher, and Buschman (2009) even suggest there is "entrenched professional prejudice against digital scholarship and its role in the hiring, tenure and promotions process" (p. 220). As Weller (2011) has noted, this indicates the strength of the relationship between journals and what currently counts as academic recognition:

> It is through publishing in well-renowned journals that researchers are likely to gain tenure or promotion and also to be recognized in their own institution…this is also related to reputation and identity. If other forms of output are perceived as frivolous then early stage researchers in particular will be discouraged from engaging with

them. (Researchers and New Technology section, para. 8)

The academic publishing system ties individual academic reputations tightly to the status quo, in spite of the fact that networked technologies have made the scarcity-based distribution practices of that system archaic.

Finally, this project will draw on research into digital literacies in order to frame the possibility of scholarly practices based in knowledge abundance rather than scarcity. Lankshear and Knobel (2007) have suggested that there is, in effect, a new and different ethos guiding practices and literacies rooted in the premise of knowledge abundance rather than scarcity. They distinguish between the use of digital technologies for what they call "new technical stuff," ie. the technological expansion beyond analog and typographic means of sound, image, and text production to digital means (p. 9), and "new ethos stuff" (ibid). New ethos practices emphasize "mass participation, distributed expertise, valid and rewardable roles for all who pitch in" (Lankshear and Knobel, 2007, p. 18), whether or not digital technologies are utilized. These new ethos practices rely on particular literacies, and in some contexts have been framed as an immersive literacy (Savin-Baden, Gourlay, Tombs, Steils, Tombs, & Mawer, 2010) in which understanding is experiential.

> The more a literacy practice privileges participation over publishing, distributed expertise over centralized expertise, collective intelligence over individual possessive intelligence, collaboration over individuated authorship, dispersion over scarcity, sharing over ownership, experimentation over "normalization," innovation and evolution over stability and fixity, creative-innovative rule breaking over generic purity and policing, relationship over information broadcast, and so on, the more we should regard it as a "new" literacy.
> (Lankshear and Knobel, 2007, p. 21)

Literacies are distinct from skills: Belshaw (2012) has defined a skill as "a controlled activity (such as a physical action) that an individual has learned to perform," whereas "literacy depends on context and particular mediating technologies" (Literacies section, para. 2). Belshaw (2012) also noted that skills are subject to objective thresholds, whereas "literacy is a condition, not a threshold ... you cannot become literate merely through skill acquisition – there are meta-level processes also required" (Conclusion section, para. 1).

As demonstrated by this review of available literature, reputational and positioning literacies and strategies within scholarly networked publics represent as yet a minimally-discussed gap in the research. This research will investigate reputational strategies and practices within networked publics from a new ethos/new literacies perspective, exploring the contexts, understandings, and mediating technologies that have contributed to the development of participants' outlooks and specific practices. Relational ineffables such as social capital (Bourdieu, 1984), and the goodwill and esteem of peers will also be included in the study. It is important to note that I conceive of the two spheres of academia and networked publics not as polarized nor as entirely separate, but rather as ways of identifying and articulating practices along a continuum of scarcity and abundance. Still, the premise of this research is that the terms on which reputations are built, enhanced and taken up within the ethos of mass participation exemplified by scholarly networked publics demand specific attention and articulation.

Research Questions

1. By what actions, practices, and cues are scholarly identity, reputation, and credibility communicated, circulated, and understood to function within networked publics?

2. How do day-to-day networked practices of the self differ from more institutionally-centered academic practices?

3. What value do participatory scholarly networks offer scholars?

4. How do interactions within scholarly networked publics intersect with conventional forms

   of scholarly networking and academic impact, and with what effects?

Methodology

This dissertation study will utilize ethnographic inquiry as a methodological approach to

investigating reputation in scholarly networked publics. Since the project approaches scholarly

networked publics as a particular subset of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006), ethnography's

cultural emphasis and its focus on systems of meaning within cultures makes it an apt

methodological choice:

> ethnographic research enables the researcher to gain a detailed and nuanced understanding
>
> of a social phenomenon…(I)t provides a sense of the lived experience of culture members,
>
> as well as a grounded analysis of the structure of their group, how it functions, and how it
>
> compares to other groups. Social practices are carefully attended to and systems of meaning
>
> delicately unpacked (Kozinets, 2010, p. 55).

Ethography also aligns well within the theoretical and ontological framework already

outlined for the project: ethnography is described by Marcus (2012, in Boellstorff et al) as "the

premier modality of qualitative research" (p. xiii). They also asserted that "ethnographies typically

seek to produce detailed and situated accounts of specific cultures in a manner that reflects the

perspective of those whose culture is under discussion" (Boellstorff et al, 2012, p. 14). This focus

on situated accounts of participants fits with the emphasis on situated knowledges that will guide

my approach to the study.

Ethnography's emphasis on culturally-based meaning-making fits especially well with the

theoretical framework of this study. The premise of this research project is that scholarly networked

publics are, in Geertz's (1973) terms, "suspended in webs of significance" (p. 2) that may not be visible to non-members who perceive them through the lens of conventional academic practices and concepts. Haraway's (1988) framework of situated knowledges emphasizes the gaze: from the gaze or perspective of the academy, or an individual acculturated to the practices of the academy, the ways in which reputation and position are enacted and circulated within scholarly networked publics may be unaccustomed and even appear arbitrary as compared against institutionally-legitimated concept(s) of academic influence and reputation. Yet as Geertz (1973) noted, "(L)ooking at the ordinary in places where it takes unaccustomed forms brings out not, as has so often been claimed, the arbitrariness of human behavior…the degree to which its meaning varies according to the pattern of life by, which it is informed" (p. 7). The thesis of this dissertation is that participatory practices are simply informed by a different – if increasingly ordinary to many – pattern of life, one whose webs of significance have implications for higher education. This study will focus its gaze on reputational and positional practices within scholarly networked publics in hopes of constructing an understanding of networked scholarly reputations not merely as random byproducts of time spent online, but as signifiers of specific interactive patterns and meanings within networked scholarly culture.

Historically, ethnography's roots are in anthropology, though it has been utilized widely in sociological circles and more broadly since the later twentieth century (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Within my own discipline of education, ethnography has a rich history that includes the work of Anyon (1981) and the institutional ethnography pioneered by Smith (1987). My choice of the methodology is rooted in Boellstorff et al's (2012) description of three powerful threads informing sociological use of ethnography:

a fundamental assertion of the valuable knowledge of participants as meaning-

making actors, an attention to grounded (even mundane) practices, and a

commitment to understanding the ways larger social considerations or forms of

social order shape everyday lifeworlds (p. 19-20).

In attempting to make visible the practices and strategies of reputational development in scholarly

networked publics, I am asserting that these practices are forms of valuable meaning-making,

attending to them even in their apparent mundanity, and attempting to outline the ways in which

they may complement and conflict with the familiar scholarly lifeworld and social order of the

academy.

As digital technologies have become integrated into cultural practices – and indeed become

sites of cultural practice on their own – ethnography has also been adopted and adapted extensively

for research into online practices. Turkle (1995) examined interactions within early online multi-

user environments; Green (1999) conducted an ethnography of virtual reality; Baym (1999) used

ethnography to study an online community of soap opera fans. Ethnography in the digital sphere

has given rise to neologisms: the work of Hine (2001) is heavily associated with the term 'virtual

ethnography,' while the work of Schau and Gilly (2003) and Kozinets (2010) framed its own

ethnographic investigations into online practices as 'netnography.'

Hine (2001) employed the qualifier 'virtual' in part to signal the partiality and limitations of

online ethnography. While I am inclined to see *all* research perspectives and possibilities as partial,

from the vantage point of situated knowledges, I will not apply the 'virtual' qualifier to this

research project. This research is not grounded in a binary view of the 'virtual' as a less-whole or

less-authentic companion to the 'real,' nor do I see my methodological approach as fundamentally

altered by the fact that my object of investigation manifests online. As Boellstorff et al (2012)

framed their own rejection of the 'virtual ethnography' designation, "the ethnographic research

paradigm does not undergo fundamental transformation or distortion in its journey to virtual arenas because ethnographic approaches are always modified for each fieldsite" (p. 4). In the same vein, though this study fits tidily with Kozinets' (2010) definition of netnography as a "participative approach to the study of online culture and communities" (p. 74), I do not see my approach as requiring separate terminology.

This study, then, will be ethnographic in its focus on lived experiences, social practices, and systems of meaning: it will explore particular aspects of "everyday life as lived by groups of people," (Boellstorff et al, 2012, p. 1). It will, certainly, take into consideration the distinct ways in which the affordances of digital media and norms of networked practice shape the systems of meaning that scholars produce around reputations and positions within networked publics, just as it will consider the ways in which institutional structures, scarcity model practices, and hierarchic norms may shape more traditional notions of scholarly reputation and impact. The material-semiotic research gaze I employ within it will not allow me to frame either context as naturalized or neutral, but rather as particular, constructed, and always partial.

Nonetheless, the ontological boundary issues that guide Hine's (2001) and Kozinets' (2010) usage of methodological neologisms are questions I too grapple with. The boundaries and frameworks around my intended investigation will not be fully predetermined or planned until the participants and I are underway, which is fitting within the flexible frameworks of ethnography (Boellstorff et al, 2012) but my sense of what exactly will be studied and where those concepts begin and end is likely to be fluid and open to reflexive reframing. In this sense, my study draw on Marcus' (1995) framework of multi-sited ethnographies, which asserts that complex connections are not always well-represented by traditional, place-based or singularly-located ethnographic studies. Instead, "multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or

juxtapositions of locations" (Marcus, 1995, p. 105) and tracks subjects across spatial and temporal boundaries, focusing "attention on the construction of the ethnographic object" (Hine, 2007, p. 655). Multi-sited ethnography is sometimes used to follow a commodity item through global capital networks, or to trace communities in diaspora. In relation to my research, it raises questions of the boundaries of identity and reputation: tracing the chains, paths, threads, conjunctions and juxtapositions between the ways in which these are constructed, positioned, and taken up within networked publics as compared to academia. My intent is to "follow the I" within the multi-sited imaginaries of both spheres:

> In short, within a multi-sited research imaginary, tracing and describing the
> connections and relationships among sites previously thought incommensurate
> is ethnography's way of making arguments and providing its own contexts of
> significance. (Marcus, 1998, p. 14)

Two further frameworks for ethnography may inform my approach to the research. Smith's (1987) aforementioned institutional ethnographic approach foregrounds issues of ruling relations, or the translocal power relations that coordinate people's daily activities within contemporary institutional contexts. I am interested in taking up this issue of ruling relations within scholarly networked publics: in a sense, following Smith, my goal with this research is to make visible participants' knowledge(s) about the relations of ruling that coordinated scholarly networked reputations and people's positions within networked publics. I will also need to make visible my own position(s) and role(s) within those relations and the relations that my study itself. This is the territory of referential reflexivity, or the study of relations and positionality between researcher and researched (May, 2000). Yet reflexivity may not suffice to offer a situated interrogation of the positions this research will ultimately represent.

Rather, Lather's (2007) framework of post-critical ethnography and 'working the ruins' (1997) of "the science ethnography has wanted to be" (Lather, 2001, p. 478) has suggested that "reflexive ethnography authorizes itself by confronting its own processes of interpretation as some sort of cure toward better knowing" (ibid, p. 486). The premises of feminist objectivity and situated knowledges on which this research is based call into question the very possibility of such a cure: they therefore lead me to reach beyond reflexivity to Haraway's (1992) and Barad's (2007) concepts of diffraction, or the mapping "of where differences appear" (Haraway, 1992, p. 17). Diffractive methodologies are a "critical practice for making a difference in the world" (Barad, 2007, p. 90) and a "commitment to understanding which differences matter, how they matter, and for whom" (ibid). A diffractive, post-critical ethnographic approach to this research, then, will scaffold a critically reflexive space for participants to consider the ways their positions and reputations are enacted within scholarly networked publics, but also speak to the differences between those positions and those that circulate within the academy in hopes of effecting change within the ruling relations that govern both. These intentions and frameworks will guide my approach to the research.

Methods

The study's investigation of reputation and identity development within scholarly networked publics will utilize participant observation, interviews, and document analysis as its primary ethnographic methods. In keeping with traditions of ethnography, I as the researcher will participate "in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 2). As Boellstorff et al (2012) have defined it, "ethnography is the written product of a palette of methods, but also a methodological approach in

which participant observation is a critical element, and in which research is guided by experience unfolding in the field" (p. 15). This participant observation process will be central to my development of a situated understanding of Geertz's (1973) 'webs of significance' surrounding the reputational economy of scholarly networked publics and positions therein. The participant observation section of study will, as previously stated in the Purpose section of this proposal, articulate the practices and indicators by which networked scholars build reputations for open, public scholarly work. That articulation will be an interpretive – and, as noted, hopefully diffractive – process. Kozinets' emphasis on the importance of "profound knowledge and experience of the cultural context" (p. 75) for successful netnographic interpretation foregrounds the importance of my sustained engagement within the online publics I plan to investigate.

Semi-structured interviews will also be central to this investigation: they will, as the Purpose section indicates, explore the ways in which and terms on which status positions and influential reputations are developed, circulated, and understood within scholarly networked publics. As I am already familiar with and established within the research site, so to speak, I intend to embark on interviewing and participant observation relatively simultaneously. I hope to be able to utilize the semi-structured interviews to untangle some of the performances and positions I encounter – and perhaps enact – during participant observation.

As Baym (2010) and Stone (1995) have both noted, our cultural concepts surrounding the accountability and validity of actions are deeply tied to bodies. The ways in which scholars' embodied and material identities intersect with their experiences of reputation and positioning in both the academy and in networked publics will be of interest within this research, and efforts will be made to secure the participation of a diverse group of scholars with regards to gender and ethnicity, as well as geographic location and stage in academic career. However, the focus will not

be on specific marginalized groups or Others, but on networked scholars within the English-speaking mainstream.

The study will focus specifically on scholars whose networked participation is a central, sustained aspect of their scholarly work, identity, and reputation development. The practices under investigation will be those of scholars actively developing and sustaining a networked participatory identity and reputation while simultaneously engaged in institutional scholarly work. I want to ensure that the study's participants are embedded in the culture being studied, and thus enable ethnographic exploration of the practices and indicators shaping identities and reputations within that culture of networked publics. To identify potential participants, I propose a framework that brings Veletsianos and Kimmons' (2012) work on networked participatory scholarship into conversation with particular concepts of networked practice.

The first of these concepts is White and LeCornu's (2011) visitors and residents typology for online engagement, which offers a means of framing participation and buy-in beyond Prensky's (2001) much-critiqued "digital natives" model. Prensky's construct suggested that young people use technologies in an inherently different manner from older generations; his premise that age is the primary factor in determining digital propensities has since been refuted (Nasah, DaCosta, & Seok, 2010). This study will focus instead on what White and LeCornu have called residents, or regular, active users. If participants identify as resident within the publics they will be asked to reflect on, the study will be better able to explore the identity and reputational strategies that 'count' in scholarly networked publics.

I also want to ensure that the study focuses on scholars for whom networked participation involves ongoing production and sharing of ideas and resources related to their own scholarship: scholars who engage in the reputational economy of social media. To operationalize this

distinction, I draw on a second concept of networked practice: Bruns' (2007) produsage economy, in which production and consumption are collapsed and combined. Produsage is premised in the capacity of networks to create reciprocal audiences. Ritzer's (2010) notion of prosumption further contextualizes the combination of production and consumption into a prosumption model that takes into account societal trends towards abundance and unpaid labour. All participants in the research study will need to be engaged in the unpaid labor of produsage, sharing their work reciprocally with peers and building reputations within scholarly networked publics.

Preliminary public conversations discussing and shaping this research study and the larger dissertation have been ongoing on my own research blog: many networked scholars have expressed interest in or volunteered to be part of this study. From the expressions of interest, my intent is to invite potential participants to be interviewed, emphasizing that they are free to decline without penalty, guilt, or diminishment of goodwill. These potential participants are themselves connected to diverse and disparate networks of their own, so if they identify other potential interested parties who have publicly explored concepts of digital identity, those persons might also be approached. Eight interview participants from a range of geographic locations and academic career stages will be sought, with mixed gender representation. Participants who identify outside culturally-dominant groups in terms of ethnicity, sexual orientation, neurotypicality, class origins and other markers will be preferred: reflection on the ways in which marginalities intersect with reputational practices will be important.

Once participants have agreed to be a part of the study, I will engage in ongoing observation of their day-to-day SNS engagements and will make arrangements to begin the semi-structured interview process as well. Because I will be observing public behaviours and conversations in non-contained environments, I expect that the data collection process will also include contributions or

references to persons not overtly involved in my study. I may choose to extend the invitation to participate in interviews to scholars who emerge within those conversations as having particular relevant contributions to make.

Research will be conducted primarily online. Twitter is expected to be the primary SNS utilized in the participant observation process, though if preliminary conversations with participants suggest that alternate platforms are sources of ongoing scholarly reputational positioning for them, I will connect and observe via those platforms as well. If participants have blogs, I will subscribe to any RSS feeds and will ask them to identify any posts in their archives exploring issues of identity, reputation, or position in relation to academia and/or networked participation. Interviews will take place via email and Skype calls; direct messaging may be used to coordinate or clarify plans. In-person interviews may also be used if proximity allows. The scope of the research will explore participants' reputational and positioning practices within both scholarly networked publics and academia, and will detail the strategies and understandings participants employ in making sense of networked publics as a field.

Step 1: Participants will be asked to identify in writing the SNS and online platforms that they use as sites of scholarly engagement, communications, and identity or reputational development, and to give a short description of why and how they use each platform.

Step 2: Participants' interactions within the identified networked publics will be observed and engaged with over a three-month period, during which semi-structured interviews will also be conducted. The observations may lead to iterative follow-up interviews.

Step 3: Participants will be asked to choose a 24-hour period for which their scholarly participation across SNS will be closely interrogated in the ensuing interview. I will also ask them to provide screen captures and/or other records for interactions not publicly visible or coherent (activities

within shared networks will be part of my observation).

Step 4: I will interview each participant, either face-to-face or via Skype, about his or her identity and reputation as a scholar, his or her reasons for engaging in networked scholarly participation, and his or her understandings of the practices by which people signal their positions and reputations within networked publics. My goal is to learn how users understand and strategize their own practices of identity performance, reputation, and relational connections, and how the different affordances and structures of various SNS and online platforms affect practices. Interviews will be recorded.

The research instrument for the interviews will be a semi-structured series of questions related to practices, relationships, networks, reputation, and scholarly identities. Day-to-day practices and longterm observations and interpretations will be explored. Conversations will be encouraged to emerge and diverge from the interview script.

Step 5: After the interviews, participants will be invited to blog or email any written contributions they'd like to make reflecting further on their practices, participation, reputations, or identities. They will also be asked to identify any posts in their blog archives that take up issues surrounding networked scholarly participation.

Step 6: I will transcribe salient excerpts from the interviews and any blog posts identified, looking specifically for themes regarding position and reputation, both in academia and in networked publics. I will also conduct follow-up interviews to explore particular questions in greater depth if necessary.

Step 7: I will identify key themes emerging the interview data and code them in order to try to trace commonalities, distinctions and relationships between them. I will do the same with my participant observation data, and see how the two compare and contrast, and how they can be taken up in the

context of the guiding literature and theoretical framework outlined for the research. In this

process, I will attempt to discern the contours of shared reputational practices, and will continue to

verify my conclusions in an iterative fashion with participants and broader scholarly networked

publics (see Step 8).

Step 8: Rigour within this research will mean accountability, credibility and confirmability to my

participants and to our respective networks, as well as to the research's epistemological and ethical

tenets (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As this is a qualitative study, I seek believability, based on

coherence, insight, and instrumental utility (Eisner, 1991) and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba,

1985) through a process of verification rather than through conventional validity and reliability

measures. This verification process will involve sharing themes and preliminary conclusions first

with participants and then within scholarly networked publics, inviting discussion, input and

critique of key conclusions before including them in the dissertation.

Ethical issues will be considered and addressed at all steps within the study. Permission for

conducting the research will first be obtained via the University of Prince Edward Island's

Research Ethics Board (REB), which follows national standards for research involving humans

(UPEI). The application for research permission will outline the proposed project and its

methods and procedures, participants, and significance. The topic does not fall into the sensitive

category and the participant population is over nineteen: the issue of anonymity is the likely the key

area where extensive consideration will be needed. The option of pseudonymous participation will

be offered to all interviewees, though participants may be partially identifiable to members of their

own networked publics, since public conversations, statements, and written work will comprise

part of the data and may be familiar to a participant's existing audience. An informed consent form

outlining this level of risk and offering alternative paths for managing pseudonymity if desired will

be developed for the study, stating the terms on which the participants agree to be involved and acknowledging their rights. Individual interviews with be conducted will be conducted using participants' existing Skype or email identities unless they choose to create new accounts for the purpose of the research, but raw study data, including the interview files and transcripts, screen captures, and other communications will be kept on my password-protected computer or within locked metal file cabinets in my home office and destroyed after a reasonable period of time.

Conclusion

In this research proposal, I have identified questions and tensions surrounding the changing field of scholarship and the practices of networked scholars in particular. In spite of increasing pressures for scholars to go online, and growing engagement within scholarly networked publics, the immersive literacies (Savin-Baden et al, 2010) and strategies by which reputations, status, and positions are created and circulated in networked environments remain tacit and unarticulated. Literature on networked scholarship is growing but has not as yet delved deeply into questions of how networked reputations, credibility, and status positions are produced, nor what implications these hold for conventional academic practices. This gap in the research, combined with the fact that the relevant strategies have not been made visible, precludes institutions and non-networked academics from even considering whether or where networked scholarship can be 'counted.' My goal in this research is to contribute a thoroughly-researched articulation of reputational networked practices and understandings to the emerging scholarly conversation about networked scholarship. While I recognize that this contribution may not effect actual change in the ways in which many within the academy view networked scholarship, the fact remains that without formal research articulating the reputational economy of scholarly networked practices, there will be little possibility of such a change occurring. My intent is that my research open up that possibility and

increase the opportunity for shared understanding among networked and non-networked scholars amidst the shifting cultural boundaries of higher education.

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