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Francke, Helena

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The academic web profile as a genre of 'self-making'

Helena Francke
ORCID: 0000-0001-5572-856
Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences, Lund University, Sweden *and*
Swedish School of Library and Information Science,
University of Borås, Sweden

Abstract

Purpose: The activities of academic researchers are increasingly regulated by neo-liberal ideals, including expectations that researchers are visible online and actively promote their output. The study explores how researchers take on this responsibility. It uses the concepts of genre, authorship, and self-writing in order to understand how the story of an academic life is constructed on academic web profiles.

Design/methodology/approach: A qualitative content analysis was conducted of material on 64 profiles belonging to 20 researchers on institutional and personal web sites, as well as on ResearchGate, Academica.edu and Google Scholar.

Findings: The study shows that while institutional web sites primarily contain researcher-produced material, content on commercial platforms is often co-constructed through distributed authorship by the researcher, the platform and other platform users. Nine different ways in which the profile of an 'academic self' may be said to highlight the particular strengths of a researcher are identified. These include both metrics-based strengths and qualitative forms of information about the academic life, such as experience, the importance of their research and good teaching.

Social implications: This study of academic web profiles contributes to a better understanding of how researchers self-govern the story of their academic self, or resist such governance, in online environments.

Originality/value: The study furthers the knowledge of how researchers make use of and respond to digital tools for online visibility opportunities and how the story of the 'academic self' is 'made' for such public presentation.

Keywords: academic web profiles, academic social network sites, distributed authorship, self-writing, researchers

Type of paper: Research paper

1. Introduction

The activities of academic researchers are increasingly regulated by neo-liberal ideals. As a result, the researchers' work – and the researchers themselves – become subject to market ideologies and to evaluations which often are based on various types of metrics (e.g. Hammarfelt *et al.*, 2016; Duffy and Pooley, 2017; Delfanti, 2017). Researchers are expected, by employers, funders, publishers and themselves, to be visible online and to actively promote their output. Apart from other possibilities this may provide the researcher, such as a chance to provide access to publications which are difficult to find or behind paywalls, previous research has indicated that academic web profiles (Bukvova, 2012) and social media (Nicholas *et al.*, 2014) are used by researchers for such visibility. This study will explore how researchers take on the responsibility of sharing information about themselves in academic web profiles. The study thus contributes to knowledge about how researchers make use of and respond to digital tools that provide opportunities for online visibility, and how the story of the self is 'made' for such public presentation.

The study concerns how public researcher 'selves' are constructed in academic web profiles. Focus is mainly on dedicated platforms including institutional web sites and the commercial services ResearchGate, Academia.edu and Google Scholar. These platforms in many cases include not only information uploaded by the researcher but also mash-ups and user-generated as well as system-generated content. Consequently, the academic web profile will be investigated as an example of a genre which is co-authored by the researcher and the platform (see Feinberg, 2015). A distinctive feature of this genre, where an important aim is to market the researcher, is the portrayal of the researcher as remarkable. How this feature is constructed will be explored by considering the genre as producing a narrative of academic 'self-making' (Bruner, 2001).

Although the profiles and the platforms display distinct differences, they are approached here as belonging to the same genre. By applying a social perspective on genres, these academic web profiles can be viewed as displaying certain regularities in their content and style, in the processes through which they are composed, in how they are interpreted, and in "the social roles performed by writers and readers" (Paré and Smart, 1994, p. 147). Studying the web profiles as a genre from this perspective can build further knowledge about how the genre is constructed at a particular point in time and, as an extension of this, how it may come to shape the practices in which it plays a role (comp. Feinberg, 2015).

Melanie Feinberg (2015) develops a convincing argument that there are genres today which are produced through 'distributed authorship', by human actors but also by non-human actors through "algorithmically produced content" (Feinberg, 2015, p. 53). Her examples are information systems such as catalogs and databases. Although this study does not provide evidence that the academic web profile genre as such is formed or changed by the system, the analysis of the profiles is inspired by the idea of distributed authorship and the profiles are viewed as formed through a combination of what the researcher (or someone acting on their behalf) adds to the profile and contributions to the content made by the system or which the system invites others to add.

The ways in which the self is constructed in text has been explored in studies of self-writing (e.g. Bruner, 2001; Sauter, 2014). Jerome Bruner emphasizes that a narrative, and an autobiographical narrative in particular, should show how the narrator('s story) is in some way out of the ordinary, and thus how his or her story is worthy of being told: "[n]ot only must a narrative be about a sequence of events over time, structured comprehensively in terms of cultural canonicality, it must also contain something that endows it with *exceptionality*" (2001, p. 29; emphasis in original). Displaying exceptionality, though always in a culturally accepted way, becomes crucial if the academic web profile is to function not only as writing which serves the purpose of self-making, but also the purpose of self-branding.

The study explores these views of genre, authorship, and self-writing in order to understand how the story of an academic life is constructed in web profiles. This is done firstly by investigating how various types of content contribute to form the 'academic self' in the profiles, and secondly how that academic self may be portrayed as exceptional in ways that conform to expectations in the academic community.

2. Studies of Self-writing

2.1. Features of Academic Web Profiles

There is a growing body of research on how and why academics use social media (see Kjellberg *et al.*, 2016), and a more limited literature on their use of social network sites that specifically target researchers, such as ResearchGate, Academia.edu and Mendeley (Lupton, 2014). Studies indicate not only varying uptake of such academic social network sites within different disciplines, but also differences with regards to how often publications are viewed (Thelwall and Kousha, 2014; 2017a).

A few studies of academic web profiles or researcher web presence have looked into what characterizes the profiles. Bukvova (2012) found the most common type of content on both institutional web sites and social network sites to be what she terms "visit card, curriculum vitae", but common were also "visit card, personal identification". Both were mainly oriented towards factual information. Furthermore, on social network sites it was common that researchers merely indicated "presence"; that is, the profile had so little information on the site that it served primarily as a place holder rather than contributed information.

The visit card is similar to one of five online personas described by Barbour and Marshall (2012), namely the formal self, which are fairly formal and static presentations, primarily found on institutional web sites. The authors also identified the networked self, which has a focus on interaction and is often spread across platforms, and the comprehensive self, which are personas that include both professional and personal information. Finally, the uncontainable self describes personas created by someone other than the researcher because the researcher has not taken an active role in constructing a persona. Although Barbour and Marshall do not mention the system-created profiles that some social network sites construct without the researcher's input (see Duffy and Pooley, 2017), they could be an example of this category.

Hammarfelt *et al*. (2016) add to this a quantified academic self, aligned with a broader discourse on the quantified self (e.g. Lupton 2016), to capture how academic accomplishments are displayed through metrics and other quantified measures. An analogue version may be to emphasize in a description or CV how much research funding one has attracted. However, the quantified academic self refers primarily to the ways in which many platforms use algorithms to provide indicators of number of publications, citations or amount of attention attracted. The concept of a quantified academic self can thus be used to highlight how some of the platforms aid or push researchers to display metrics on their profiles, and how, by doing so, the platforms co-construct the self.

In an older study, Fry and Talja (2007) found differences between academic fields when it came to the design and role played by academic homepages. The field's level of 'mutual dependence' (Whitley, 2000) was found to impact how homepages were designed and used. According to Whitley, fields with high mutual dependence are characterized by high agreement among researchers on which are the key research problems and which methods and procedures should be used to study them. Fields with low mutual dependence are, on the other hand, characterized by higher diversity in research problems, methods and theories. Fry and Talja (2007) found that research group web pages played an important role in fields characterized by high 'mutual dependence', such as high-energy physics and environmental biology, whereas individual scholars' web pages were more common, but still not viewed as very important, in fields with low 'mutual dependence' such as history, literature and cultural studies, where research is more individualistic. Interestingly, the latter fields were also more prone to using standardized institutional formats to create the web pages, which could be because the value of having a web profile was considered low, whereas personal web pages with less structured and controlled content was more common in biology and physics. Research group or departmental web pages often focused on describing research objectives, projects and priorities aimed at convincing actors such as funding bodies of the importance of the work. Researchers in fields with a high 'mutual dependence' were also more likely, at least at the time, to distribute publications through their web pages. Although details may have changed, it is reasonable to expect similar field differences in how academic web profiles are used and evaluated today.

2.2. Technologies of the Self

Foucault's writings on governmentality and technologies of the self are frequently used to understand self-writing and self-presentation as tools of control and self-control, as tools to improve and motivate oneself (e.g. Lupton, 2016; Haider, 2016; Rettberg, 2014; Sauter, 2014). Early examples of such self-writing include the self-reflective accounts by Christians (Rettberg, 2014) and the Ancient Greeks (Foucault, 1988). A more contemporary example is how people communicate their environmentally friendly living through social media (Haider, 2016). Haider's Foucauldian analysis positions these accounts as "an individualized politics of the self" (2016, p. 487) set within a neoliberal society where responsibility for a good society is construed as a question of individual choice. This is also relevant in the context of academic web profiles, where the presentation is not primarily used

for self-reflection but for visibility and, possibly, auditing purposes. Furthermore, the metrics available on social network platforms provide means for comparison with others, sometimes with the aim to improve one's own metrics, at other times to be monitored by others, such as current and future employers or reviewers (Hammarfelt *et al*., 2016; Hammarfelt and Rushforth, 2017). In an academic culture where funding is increasingly tied not only to the prestige and brand of the academics but also to publishing and citations, for the researcher to have a visible online presence becomes constructed not only as a matter of promoting one's own career but also as a moral obligation to the employer.

3. Material and Methods

The material included in this study were researcher profiles on web sites connected to their institutional affiliation, personal web sites that were in some way connected to the researcher's professional persona and the profiles on three commercial platforms (ResearchGate, Academia.edu and Google Scholar). The three commercial platforms were included because they all provide professional presentations of researchers, are widely used, and well-known. Researchers also often use other platforms for visibility and networking, such as Twitter and Facebook. However, since the logic of these platforms is different enough for them to arguably belong to a different genre they will not be investigating in this study.

Two broad disciplines were selected: Biology and Communication studies. The purpose was to make possible some limited comparisons between disciplines. There are reasons to believe that the commercial platforms have a fairly high uptake in the two research areas. Biologists have been mentioned as a group that has eagerly adopted ResearchGate (Crawford, 2011) and the life sciences are better represented than the social sciences and the humanities on the platform (Thelwall and Kousha, 2017a). Communication studies researchers, on the other hand, can be expected to have a professional interest in how one presents one's professional self online, as well as an interest in new media forms. Furthermore, social science researchers show a higher uptake of Academia.edu than researchers in the natural sciences (Thelwall and Kousha, 2014). The choice of the two disciplines was further motivated by the fact that they represent the natural and social sciences respectively, and can be expected to display different degrees of 'mutual dependence', with Communication studies having a lower degree of mutual dependence than Biology (Whitley, 2000; Fry and Talja, 2007). However, the method used to identify researchers had as a consequence that researchers included came also from neighbouring disciplines within the social sciences and natural sciences.

Potential researcher profiles to be included in the study were sampled using a method aimed to capture researchers at different stages of their careers and active in different countries. An adaptation of the technique used by Bar-Ilan *et al*. (2012), who sampled the presenters at a particular conference, was used. In order to select researchers from the two disciplines, author names and affiliations were collected in late spring 2016 from the recent issues of the two most highly ranked journals in Clarivate Analytics' Journal Citation Reports for the categories Communication and Biology: *Journal of Communication*, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *PLoS Biology* and *eLife*. Using prestigious journals is

likely to have biased the selection of researchers, not least with regards to their countries of affiliation, but such bias is difficult to avoid in a small sample. In total, 155 authors were sampled in this way and their professional online presence was mapped.

In order to generate a sample small enough to proceed with for more detailed data collection, five researchers per journal were selected randomly. Researchers who lacked either a ResearchGate or an Academia.edu profile and/or an institutional web site were excluded. There is no ambition in the current study to make comparisons across countries, but it is important to acknowledge that such differences likely exist and are present in the sample. Even though disciplines are compared to some degree, national differences most likely exist as well, which could mean that a larger study could have identified even more features and practices.

Slightly more of the researchers were male than female and they represented varying seniority, albeit with a fairly high concentration of senior researchers. A partial explanation to this was that it was in some cases difficult to identify institutional web sites for PhD students, which led to their being excluded. For the twenty researchers, a total of 64 profiles were analyzed, taken from one (18) or two (2) institutional web sites maintained by the researcher, lab web sites (3), personal web sites (2), and profiles on ResearchGate (17), Academia.edu (10) and Google Scholar (10). The researchers were not asked to participate in the study, so for ethical reasons, no details will be used in the paper which can be used to identify individuals. Rather, pseudonyms will be used to refer to individual researchers in the paper. The pseudonyms are based on journal discipline (B or C) and seniority: Senior (Professor and Associate professor), Junior (Assistant professor, Lecturer, PostDoc, and Research Fellow) and Student (PhD student).

Data were collected in spring and summer 2016 and analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Altheide and Schneider, 2013). The data were generated while logged onto the commercial platforms and based on a data collection sheet designed to capture quantitative as well as qualitative information on the sites. The following questions served as a starting point to identify items and categories: What information about the researcher and her work is available? What information does the infrastructure encourage the researcher or others to add? What information does the system produce for the researcher? How are the affordances in the system utilized by the researcher? The types of data gathered included metrics (e.g. number of citations, co-authors, publications, and h-index), particular features (e.g. existence of a CV, social media links, or news items), and descriptive notes on, for example, photos and text sequences. The data collection sheet was developed by moving between example profiles and the literature and, later, codes were constructed based on the sheet and input from the sample profiles.

The analysis aimed to capture narrative strategies used to tell the story of the academic self; how self, others and system contributed to the composing process; and which features were particularly distinctive in the profiles. Elements from both qualitative and quantitative data were used to illustrate how co-construction of the academic self was achieved and to identify features which emerged as characteristic when "key differences" were compared and contrasted within categories (Altheide and Schneider, 2013, p. 71).

4. Co-construction of the Academic Web Profile

The presentation of the analysis has been organized according to the contributions made to the academic web profile by the researcher her-/himself, by others, and by the system's algorithmically produced content in order to illustrate how the profiles are in many cases constructed as a result of distributed authorship.

4.1. Self-writing: What Makes Up the Story and How Is it Told?

To varying degrees, researchers tell a story about themselves on the academic web profiles. There are examples in the sample, such as B-Junior2 and B-Junior4, where the information on the institutional web site is limited to a photo and contact details, whereas others contribute very extensive CVs, descriptions of their research, and publication lists. The researcher's self-writing is often most extensive on personal (e.g. C-Junior1 and B-Junior1), institutional, or lab web pages, but there are some examples of fairly extensive self-writing on ResearchGate (e.g. B-Junior2) and Academia.edu (e.g. C-Senior4). Of course, some of these contributions may have been added or edited on behalf of the researcher, by an assistant or communications officer, but here they will be considered as endorsed by the researcher as part of the researcher's story of the academic self.

The profiles contain primarily four types of building-blocks, all more or less extensive: descriptive text, CVs, and lists of publications and projects. Publications make up the dominating content on the commercial platforms. ResearchGate actively encourages the researcher to add "Research experience", which may be a reason why more than half of the sample profiles on the platform also contain some type of CV. Such information on the researcher's academic development is very rare in the Academia.edu profiles in the sample.

The institutional web sites, on the other hand, contain quite a few instances of descriptive text, sometimes combined with a CV; sometimes there is only a CV. In many cases, the descriptive text serves a purpose similar to the CV in that it tells a story about the researcher's academic career. Such a story, focused on academic development, often has a temporal, chronological structure characteristic for most autobiographies, as well as for the CV genre. The descriptive text also quite often outlines research interests and current activities, such as ongoing projects. For instance, the text about C-Senior2 briefly outlines where she has worked before she took up her current position, her research specialties, funding agencies that have supported her and service to the research community. Further on in the text, her research is described in more detail, including a list of current and past projects and an account of the reception her books have received. C-Senior2 is also typical of the senior researchers in the sample in that she lists her teaching and supervision activities and interests on her institutional profile. The lab web profiles focus mainly on the research problem tackled as a group achievement (comp. Fry and Talja, 2007), but to some extent also on the academic development of the group members and on current activities.

Rarely do the researchers in the sample describe their personal life. However, the two researchers who maintain personal (non-institution-based) web sites for professional purposes do say something about their private lives and interests. One of them, C-Junior1, also includes descriptions of both her private and her professional, non-academic background on her

institutional web site. One of the senior researchers, C-Senior6, narrates the dramatic journey which brought him to his current professorial position, and also says something about current personal interests. This researcher's story forms a mini-autobiography with clear turning-points (Bruner, 2001) highlighting incidents in the researcher's life that had significant impact on his career.

It is mainly in the descriptive texts, and thus primarily on the institutional and personal web sites, that the researchers refer to themselves through an explicit *voice*. The choice of voice has consequences for the presentation's level of formality. No clear pattern can be seen in the sample. Only in two cases, both in the Communication group, do researchers speak of themselves in the first person on their institutional web site, whereas it is used in both examples of personal web sites. It is more common to use the third person singular to refer to oneself on the institutional web sites. Sometimes this is combined with referring to oneself by first name or by last name. These three different ways of portraying oneself (first name, last name, s/he) influences how the relation is constructed between researcher and reader. On three occasions, all in the Biology group, the first person plural is used to refer to the work of a research team or lab rather than to the individual researcher. The eight institutional web sites where there is no clear voice are characterized either by very brief or no content, or by primarily containing information in list form. The explicit use of a voice is also very rare on the commercial platforms, with only occasional occurrences on Academia.edu and ResearchGate in combination with fairly extensive descriptive texts.

In an academic climate where researchers are expected to promote themselves, maintaining a presentation which gives the impression of being written by somebody else (even if it is not), as when using the third person voice, suggests an ambition to achieve trustworthiness associated with a certain level of formality and expectations of 'objectivity'. Such objectivity may be inferred by a heterodiegetic, third-person voice rather than the subjectivity associated with an autodiegetic, first-person, protagonist voice, to speak in narratological terms (Genette, 1980). It also mirrors sentiments expressed in response to social media in the study by Nicholas *et al*. (2014), that informal language is unsuitable for academic discourse.

Rettberg (2014) notes that visuals have become central to how we construct ourselves in social media and in the current digital world. In a world of selfies, Instagram and Snapchat, the academic profile image seems to be surprisingly standardized. A number of the researchers in the study use the same or very similar photos across several of the platforms studied, but some use different photos or different versions of photos, such as colour and black-and-white, on the various platforms. Some profiles do not even include a photo. Photos are most common on the institutional web sites and on ResearchGate, where more than three quarters have uploaded a photo. The photos are almost always head-shots, with only a few exceptions that show the full upper body. The researcher is also almost always smiling. Out of 41 photos (some of them are duplicates), only four were coded as showing a straight-faced person. The portrait is also often showing the person in a still position; only a couple of photos have been coded as containing a moving subject. Quite a few of the researchers use photos that portray them in an informal manner rather than a formal, institutional photo.

Given that most universities today provide the option of having one's picture taken, the choice of using another photo may be because it gives the researchers more control over the way they are portrayed or possibly because of uncertainty about copyright. There were no clear differences of patterns between disciplines or gender when it came to the choice of an informal picture.

It is primarily on the two personal websites that a wider variety of images can be found, introducing the researcher more clearly within a particular setting. B-Junior1 includes a picture of himself from a conference setting as well as some more aesthetic photos, whereas C-Junior1 has a large number of photos on the web site. Two are portraits used across several platforms, but the site also has a separate page with photos from memorable work-related occasions and entertaining pictures of the family pet.

Although there are differences in how rich the stories on the profiles are, and where they place emphasis, both across platforms and across researchers, it can be concluded that the information which is primarily contributed by the researchers themselves (or by somebody on their behalf) is partly in the form of descriptive text but also to a large extent in list form: CVs, publications and projects. This may be influenced by prompts from the platform designs, both in terms of available fields to add information to and in terms of active requests that the researcher adds more information. As will be explored further in the discussion, the stories have different emphasis, but are mostly about professional activities, phrased in an objective, third-person voice but accompanied by a photo which portrays the researcher as friendly and not too formal.

4.2. Other-writing of the Academic Self

The composing process (Paré and Smart, 1994) of academic web profiles involves not only the researcher or somebody working on their behalf. The profiles are in many cases manifestly co-written by others and by the system. In the case of the commercial platforms, but also increasingly on CRIS-based institutional web sites, the profiles constitute a mash-up of researcher-submitted content and content contributed by others or algorithmically created by the system. In order to structure these types of distributed authorship, this and the following section draw on a framework for "classifying social media events and metrics" proposed by Haustein, Bowman and Costas (2016, p. 374). The framework makes a distinction between three different levels of interaction with scholarly documents and scholarly agents: accessing, appraising and applying. These are used to describe types of acts on which various metrics can be based. It is primarily ResearchGate and Academia.edu that provide examples of what may be termed "other-writing", that is, how other human actors contribute to the authoring of the profile without doing so on behalf of the researcher. On the commercial platforms this mainly takes the form of acts that can in some way be measured and presented as lists or metrics.

By following researcher profiles on ResearchGate and Academia.edu, others could be said to access scholarly agents through "bookmarking" their profile page. This becomes visible on the profile, not only to the person being followed but also to other visitors to the profile page, as well as to the visitors of the follower's page (in which case it is a form of

academic self-writing: "these are the researchers I follow"). On ResearchGate and Academia.edu, it is possible to see how many followers a researcher has and also who they are. The profiles studied display a wide range when it comes to number of followers, from 468 to one. A difference in activity is also visible in the fact that some researchers follow quite many researchers (almost 200) while others follow no one. A large number of followers may indicate that the researcher is well-known, has a large network and/or actively shares interesting publications on the platform.

Appraising a scholarly document or agent takes place when they are mentioned in some way (primarily in social media) without the deeper engagement with agent or document which comes from applying the work, for instance by basing an argument on it. The appraisal can sometimes be associated with or imply a value statement. This is the case with endorsements on ResearchGate, which can be considered a type of appraisal of a scholarly agent. Most of the researchers who have ResearchGate profiles have at least some endorsements, although the number of people who are endorsing them differs quite a bit (up to 17), as do the number of skills and expertise for which the researcher has been endorsed. Both following a researcher's profile and, even more so, endorsing them for particular skills and expertise, can be viewed as examples of nurturing relationships by actively showing an interest in, or publicly supporting, another researcher.

Finally, the question-and-answer feature on ResearchGate can be considered an example of applying scholarly agents, by engaging them in intellectual discussion. This function is used very sparingly by this sample of researchers. As a consequence, it is difficult to say very much about how agents are applied in the profiles. However, one of the researchers (B-Senior2) has a substantial record of posing and answering questions, primarily as part of a group he has started and mediates. In this way, the researcher is not only endorsed by others who interact with him, but also actively nurtures his relationship with others through posting and answering questions in the group; interactions which also become visible on his profile page.

4.3. System-writing of the Academic Self

A significant part of the content on the academic web profiles is algorithmically produced. Such system-written content is often based on content that the platform has collected or which has been uploaded by the author at some stage. The prime example of this is lists of publications, both in the form of metadata and as full-texts. Publications make up an important building-block on the commercial platform profiles, and institutional web site profiles increasingly display lists of publications directly from an institutional repository. The publications, along with interactions on the site, form a basis for providing measures and indicators of various types. In this way, the profiles combine traditional metrics based on publications and citations with altmetrics or social media metrics (Haustein *et al*., 2016).

Whereas narrative or descriptive content provided by the researcher is most commonly found on institutional, personal, and lab web sites, metrics are distinctive of the commercial platform profiles. As on general social network sites, the system quantifies views, endorsements and followers as well as, more typical for academia, number of publications and

citations. Even though most researchers are well aware of an element of randomness in how these metrics come about, the system may nevertheless tempt the researcher to play 'the game' of research so as to improve their metrics. This may lead to changes in publishing behavior or, not least, tie the researcher more closely to a commercial platform provider by investing the effort to upload content to the platform (Hammarfelt *et al*., 2016). An example is ResearchGate's question to the researcher viewing another's profile 'scores' logged into the system: "Want to know how you measure up?"

To continue drawing on Haustein's *et al*. (2016) framework, platform algorithms can be said to measure access to scholarly documents when they count and display the number of 'reads' or 'views', that is, the number of times someone has clicked on the link to see the publication metadata or get access to the actual file. Similarly, the system measures the access to scholarly agents in terms of 'profile views' or 'total views'. In the sample profiles, these figures vary greatly and there is no correlation between the two.

"Act[s] of collaboration" (Haustein *et al*., 2016, p. 37) are made visible in the form of lists of co-authors on ResearchGate and Academia.edu as a way to display on the profiles how a scholarly agent has been applied. However, even though seven of the researchers in the sample have more than fifty co-authors listed on ResearchGate, it is their identities rather than the number which are of importance. The co-authors are shown with their names, profile pictures from their own profile, as well as affiliation. In this way, the researcher is situated in the context of those with whom s/he has collaborated (as far as this is registered on the platform). To interpret these figures and names in many cases requires the viewer to have subject knowledge, because of the need to be familiar with disciplinary and geographical patterns of co-authorship as well as well-known researchers in the field.

Citations, a key source of metrics on Google Scholar and ResearchGate, are a way to apply scholarly documents, and despite the critique that may be voiced in relation to viewing citations as an indicator of quality, the citation-based metrics are arguably the most influential of the systems-written metrics. Google Scholar provides not only metrics, but also lists of cited and citing works. In the case of the nine authors who maintain a profile on both Google Scholar and ResearchGate, the number of publications and citations listed are generally higher on Google Scholar than on ResearchGate. This is in line with the results in a study by Thelwall and Kousha (2017b), which showed that Google Scholar found more citations than ResearchGate for articles in the area of Library and information science. It is primarily the authors with high h-index on ResearchGate that also maintain a Google Scholar profile, although there are a couple of exceptions. There is a great variety in the number of publications and citations listed. For example, the number of citations span from 2 to 3481 on ResearchGate and from 63 to 7641 on Google Scholar (keeping in mind that many of the researchers with few citations on ResearchGate do not have a Google Scholar profile). The author with 7641 citations (C-Senior3) is quite an outlier, however. The h-indices span from 1 to 24 on ResearchGate and from 4 to 43 on Google Scholar, where C-Senior3 equally scores much higher than the other authors in the study. The average h-index for scholars in the Communication group is slightly lower (10.9) than in the Biology group (11.9). As expected, most of the researchers with high impact or a high number of citations (as measured by h-

index, i10-index or citations on ResearchGate and Google Scholar) are established researchers (mainly full professors or associate professors).

Furthermore, the commercial platforms provide various platform-specific metrics, such as 'impact points' and 'RG Score' on ResearchGate, Academia.edu's 'Author Rank' and 'Paper Rank' and Google Scholar's i10-index. The various measures and indicators which are displayed, often prominently, on the researcher's profile contribute to the making of the academic self on the profile. Indicators are, at least so far, more prominent on the commercial platforms than on the institutional or personal web sites, although it is not unlikely that this will change with the increasing use of current research information systems (CRIS) to create institutional web profiles.

5. The Exceptional Academic Self

The profiles analyzed in this article display a great deal of variation in terms of how much the researcher engages with the site, the levels of measures and indicators, which platforms are preferred, and so on. Some researchers are well established in their fields; others are just starting out. Some are very active in forming their own profile; others seem uninterested or reluctant and appear to mainly react to system input or encouragement rather than actively forming the expression of their academic self online. A number of the profiles in the sample do show a certain amount of resistance or disinterest, shaped as passivity on a site, which means that the researcher hands over the narrating of the academic self to others or to the system. This is similar to what Bukvova (2012) terms 'presence' and comes close to what Barbour and Marshall (2012) speak of as 'the uncontainable self'. This could be interpreted as a form of resistance to the expectations placed on researchers to be visible and productive, either in the form of active avoidance of contributing material to the profile or of a more passive prioritizing of other tasks.

Whereas the example of the disinterested researcher profile could hardly be considered a successful approach to self-making of the academic self online, the richer profiles in the sample show a number of ways that may be interpreted as strategies to portray the academic self as exceptional (comp. Bruner, 2001), in ways that will make the academic self noticeable in comparison to peers. Below, a categorization of presentations of the academic self based on traits that became apparent in the previous analysis is presented. These presentations were not necessarily construed by the researcher (or in the co-construction of the profile) with the intent of making the profile appear exceptional, but they are features that stand out when comparing the profiles to each other. Barbour and Marshall (2012) and to some degree Hammarfelt *et al*. (2016) have suggested ways to categorize researcher online presence which are related to the categories below, but they do so either with a more general or a narrower focus. Hammarfelt *et al*. (2016) and others (e.g. Duffy and Pooley, 2017) point to expectations on the researcher to market oneself, to boost both the researcher's own career and the employer's brand. In order for that marketing to be successful, however, there is a need to show why a story or presentation is worthy of telling, what makes the portrayed academic self different and, in this context, more attractive than other academic selves within the boundaries of what is accepted or expected within the particular disciplinary culture. The

following desirable profile features in the sample make them somehow different from other profiles. As in other autobiographical accounts, each academic self may be portrayed as exceptional in more than one way. The profile types are summarized in Table 1. [Insert Table 1 here or below]

The researcher self profile describes in some detail the research conducted and has a focus on the importance of the work, either for the development of the research area, for the sake of particular groups or for society at large. The skills of the researcher/team or the advantages of a particular approach are emphasized. For instance, B-Junior5 describes what is known about a research problem and what still remains to solve. The problem is portrayed as difficult to study, but it is emphasized that the research group has come far in resolving some of the obstacles.

The experienced self profile is constructed as exceptional through a very rich and extensive CV which indicates long experience as a researcher. Qualifications and experiences are often presented in great detail. For example, C-Senior4 has a very detailed CV on her institutional web site, which presents projects, for instance, with title, abstract, participants, time and funder. In some cases, even more junior researchers present an academic self which is experienced in relation to what can be expected of them.

The recognized self profile highlights information about grants, acknowledgements, prizes and honors received. A common focus is on major project grants won in competition. However, recognition can also be gained through the acknowledgement and popularity of publications, as in the case of C-Senior1 who points out that an edited book is frequently used as course literature. The examples identified in the sample are all senior researchers.

The quantified self profile has a focus on high metrics and indicator scores and is often the result of the system-writing of the academic self, although there are cases where the researcher will point to h-indices or journal impact factors in a CV or a descriptive text. The term 'quantified academic self' was introduced by Hammarfelt *et al*. (2016) to capture how academic accomplishments are displayed through metrics. Some researcher profiles stand out in comparison with their peers, for example with regards to a large number of publications or citations or a high h-index. An example is C-Senior3 with the highest number of citations and h-index in the sample, which is particularly exceptional since this is a researcher in the Communication group, whose publication practices generally result in lower citation numbers than in Biology.

The connected self profile shows that the researcher is well connected in the academic community, for example by pointing to various assignments. Examples are when contacts are highlighted that may lead or have led to invitations to do peer review and keynotes or to sit on panels or editorial boards (e.g. B-Senior1). Such qualifications are often listed as part of an extensive CV, which indicates that this category has connections to the experienced self. There are also some overlaps with the recognized self, since to be asked to serve the community in various ways indicates recognition and trust. Another example is when important others are emphasized, for instance supervisors or lab leaders. The connected self was most commonly occurring in the Biology group in this study.

Type of academic self	Profile features	Overlap with other types	Examples
The researcher self	Describes the research conducted with a focus on the importance of the work		C-Senior2, C-Senior3, B-Senior3, B-Junior1, B-Junior5
The experienced self	Rich and extensive CV which indicates long experience as a researcher		C-Senior2, C-Senior4, B-Senior1, B-Junior3
The recognized self	Highlights information about grants, acknowledge-ments, prizes and honors received		C-Senior1, C-Senior2, C-Senior4, C-Senior5, C-Senior6, B-Senior2
The quantified self	Focus on high metrics and indicator scores	the quantified academic self (Hammarfelt *et al.*, 2016)	C-Senior3, C-Senior4, C-Senior5, B-Senior1, B-Senior2, B-Senior3, B-Junior4
The connected self	Shows the researcher as well connected in the academic community, e.g. through various assignments	the experienced self; the recognized self	B-Senior1, B-Senior2, B-Senior3, B-Junior1
The teaching self	Emphasizes dedication to excellence and innovation in educational activities		C-Senior1, C-Senior4
The professional self	Shows experience and expertise from non-academic professions or in relation to society at large		C-Junior1, C-Junior2
The private self	Includes information about the researcher's private life and interests	the comprehensive self (Barbour and Marshall, 2012)	C-Junior1, C-Senior6, B-Junior1
The responsible self	Describes a particularly strong engagement with rights issues or social responsibility		B-Senior2, B-Junior3

Table I. Characteristics and examples of types of academic self

The teaching self profile points out teaching activities and emphasizes a dedication to excellence and innovation in educational activities that goes beyond listing the courses taught. For instance, C-Senior1 points to membership in an organization aimed at promoting high standards in teaching in higher education.

The professional self profile shows experience and expertise not only within the academic world, but also from non-academic professions or in relation to society at large. Examples from the Communication group include researchers who point in descriptive text or in their CV to relevant non-academic work experiences, primarily within the media industry. Within an academic field which also has a closely associated professional field, this may serve to broaden legitimacy for the researcher.

The private self profile invites the reader to learn more about the researcher's private life and interests, to get to know the person better. The researcher is portrayed as a 'whole person', as someone with a life outside of academia. This category has similarities to Barbour and Marshall's (2012) comprehensive self, which they describe as personas that include both professional and personal information. Examples include B-Junior1 who writes

about an artistic career parallel to the academic career, and C-Senior6 who describes the dramatic life story which brought him to his present position.

The responsible self profile describes a particularly strong engagement with rights issues or social responsibility. For instance, B-Senior2 details how the research group has a gender and minority awareness approach to their outreach-activities in schools and B-Junior3 points to the social relevance of their research.

These possible 'academic selves' indicate that there are many ways in which a researcher may shape the story of the academic self as exceptional. This can be done more or less consciously, and more or less actively. Most of the strategies outlined are self-written, although the quantified self is primarily dependent on system-writing and the connected self can be partly other- and system-written.

6. Co-construction of Self-making in Academic Web Profiles

This study has shown how the genre of academic web profiles is characterized by 'self-making' of an academic public self in ways which allow for, or even rely on, distributed authorship. The academic web profile is an important means for the construction of the public researcher self – for self-making – but it is also a means which is often not fully controlled by the researcher. Although there are clear similarities in how the stories are told, there are variations in the stories which influence how the self is portrayed as exceptional, trustworthy and productive on an academic market.

The profiles are in many cases developed through a composition process which combines self-, other- and system-writing to form a story and a public representation of the academic self. Such a combination of authorships is most evident on the commercial platforms, where the platforms invite others to contribute and make use of algorithms to form the researcher profile. Although the level of other- and system-writing of the academic self differed between the institutional web sites and the commercial platform profiles included in the study, the platforms were primarily used as tools for visibility, as shown by Bukvova (2012). There was fairly little indication of differences that originate in the commercial platforms being used for networking, an affordance which is less pronounced on institutional web sites. The commercial platform profiles are largely constructed around publication lists and the various metrics that build on them; examples are most prominent when it comes to the accessing and applying of scholarly documents, that is, when metrics are provided for the number of 'reads', 'views' or citations. In particular Academia.edu and Google Scholar profiles were primarily built around publications and, to some degree, contact information. Publications are also a very important building-block on the institutional and personal web sites. These profiles, as well as those on ResearchGate, have CVs as another common building-block. Although ResearchGate encourages the inclusion of CV information, the CVs are generally more comprehensive on the institutional web sites, and more often accompanied by descriptions which complement and provide richer information than the CV. In line with the affordances offered on the platforms, institutional, personal, and lab web sites are thus characterized primarily by self-writing, while the Academia.edu and Google Scholar profiles are to a large degree built on system- and other-writing. ResearchGate profiles combine

content from all three types of producers. The nurturing activities associated with accessing and appraising scholarly agents, that are largely associated with other-writing of the self, are almost exclusively present on the commercial platforms. This can be seen as an inheritance from their social media ancestry (comp. Francis, 2010).

The focus on publications as the main building-block of the profiles can be seen as an indication of the significance of publications (and citations) as currency in today's academic system in most parts of the world. As a researcher, you are *what* you publish and, sometimes, you are *how much* you publish. Distributing those publications is a way to make research available for implementation in industry, innovations and policy, as emphasized in several policy documents (e.g. European Commission, 2012), but it is also a way to brand and display oneself – to oneself and to others – as a productive researcher and employee, as someone who conducts oneself as expected, to speak with Foucault (2007). At the same time, of course, uploading a reference or full-text, or even having it imported to the page, often requires relatively little effort on the part of the researcher.

The study shows that even though metrics and indicators are increasingly important features on academic web profiles, ones put to use in many parts of the academic world (see e.g. Hammarfelt and Rushforth, 2017), more traditional and qualitative forms of information about the academic life are also present to a large extent, as evidenced by the profile features of the researcher self, the experienced self and the connected self. Features which may serve to break down hierarchical boundaries between the scientist as expert and the society in which the scientist is active, including professional, entrepreneurial, and student communities, can also be seen when the professional or private self is described in the profiles. Several of the profiles in the study sample exemplify such more or less deliberate constructions of exceptionality in the story of the academic self. However, those profiles with little content, or where the other- and system-written content indicates very low levels of output or little access or application of the scholarly agent or documents, illustrate the complexities and potential risks involved both in distributed authorship of the public presentation of self, and in resistance to conform to expectations on public self-making in the current research climate. This study of academic web profiles contributes to a better understanding of how researchers self-govern the story of their academic self, or resist such governance, by use of institutional and, voluntarily used, commercial platforms which invite authors to present their work. Discussing the profiles in terms of self-, other- and system-writing points to the fact that various parts of the profiles are more or less possible for the researcher to influence and to a need to monitor and, in some cases, try to impact also the parts that are other- or system-written. By thinking analytically about which aspects of a career are highlighted in the story of the academic self, researchers as well as scholars studying them can become more attentive to how these narratives are constructed. Which aspects are put forth as exceptional and how this is done may have consequences, for instance, for how trust in the researcher is built as well as for how potential self-branding takes place.

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About the author

Helena Francke is Associate Professor at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science, University of Borås, Sweden. This paper was written as part of a project employment at the Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences, Lund University, Sweden. Her research interests concern the credibility and authority of sources, scholarly communication, information literacy and document studies. Helena Francke can be contacted at: Helena.Francke@hb.se