Technologies for Sharing:

Lessons from the Quantified Self Movement about the Political Economy of Platforms

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Economy of Platforms

What work must social platforms do to support sharing in the digital age? Answering this

question is key for theorizing the often fraught relationship between community values and

economic values across a range of online behaviors and experiences with the rise of what has

been called a "sharing economy." In this paper we turn to the Quantified Self movement (QS) as

a model for the economic and sociotechnical platforms that support sharing in digital spaces. We

argue that such platforms provide social and technical affordances and constraints that shape

how people approach sharing, and in turn (and somewhat paradoxically) challenge the

possibilities for sharing outside of market exchanges.

Sharing in this community is organized around "asking big questions about our self-

tracking tools and what we do with them" (Boesel, 2013), and in this sense QS provides an

interesting site through which to reexamine the possibilities and limits of sharing as a form of

"soft resistance" (Nafus and Sherman, forthcoming). However, the platforms--technical, social,

and economic--that support sharing among the QS community function to help people share

what John (2013) calls "the fuzzy objects of sharing," in this case a self, a set of experiences,

narratives, data, and tools, that the community constructs as "quantified." At the heart of

exchanges in the QS community are "n of 1," individual data. Such data embody, literally,

community members' health and experience. Yet, these distinct individual data become a

resource for community building, for linking the community, for defining the boundaries of

community, and bridging different interests in tools, data, and narratives.

In this paper we take up two challenges. The first is to consider how sharing within QS

exemplifies what some are calling, after Bennett (2010), "vibrant data," the idea that data

becomes more valuable through the processes of sharing, linking, connecting, and comparing.[1]

While QS data may be at the level of the individual, sharing within QS transforms the data so

that individuals do not fully "own" the data, as implied by the common definition of sharing, nor

is it fully relinquished to others because of its origin in an individual's body and lived

experience. Sharing in QS entails sharing methods of inquiry, pitfalls, etc. along with data, so

that members may find value within another's data narrative, even when they can never fully

reinscribe another's data set into their own body. As a QS data narrative is shared, members

naturally seek a connection to their own experiences, and in doing so imbue the data with

meaning beyond the meaning assigned to it by its creator.

The second challenge that we take up in this paper is to consider how sharing is

structured within Quantified Self, the implications that this structure has on what is shared, and

on how participants themselves frame the practices of sharing. The practices among QS members

support a wide range of preferences for what is shared, and yet, taken together, the sharing of

these stories, data, and tools form the basis of the community's social capital. This is important

because it means that value sets might be considered at odds can actually co-exist and support a

community, and 2) that platforms that networked communities build for sharing can support

multiple goals and ends as we will see with the QS platforms. In this paper, we draw upon our

participation in the MeetUps and conferences of the QS community in the United States, along

with online videos of QS presentations globally to consider the following questions: (1) What

does the QS community tell us about sharing digitized objects, such as personal health data, and

the valuation of digitized objects? (2) How do the sharing practices of the QS community

contribute to a clearer understanding of the formation of social capital(s) in networked

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[1] See, for instance http://wethedata.org.

communities? In responding to these questions, we seek to argue more broadly that structural

platforms of sharing provide economic affordances and constraints that shape how people

approach sharing and how people benefit from sharing. More specifically, we argue that the

narrative structure of QS presentations produces and supports co-existing value sets that

emphasize both the self-discovery and technological development facets of self-tracking; these

value sets in turn support the circulation and accrual of social capital that benefits QS

participants. Examination of how social capital circulates within the QS community lets us see

the affordances and challenges that shape how participants approach sharing.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, we describe the Quantified Self community. Next,

we consider theories of sharing to help situate the practices of Quantified Self. Then we focus on

"self-tracking" as forming the basis of ties of community and present a model for how these ties

support community building in Quantified Self. Finally, we conclude with implications that our

case has for larger questions about platforms for sharing in the digital economy.

What is Quantified Self?

In 2007, Gary Wolf and Kevin Kelly, respectively, a former editor and the co-founder of

Wired Magazine, founded the Quantified Self (QS) as a community in which to explore self-

tracking and self-tracking devices, with the intention to "help people get meaning out of their

personal data" (Anon, "About the Quantified Self," 2012). Although it is a fraction of the greater

self-tracking community, the Quantified Self movement has grown from a single meeting of 28

people in Kelly's San Francisco Bay home to "an international collaboration of users and makers

of self-tracking tools," a global network of geographically-clustered communities participating in

self-tracking projects, discussion, and support, in 119 cities in 38 countries (Anon, 2012;

Boesels, 2013; Ferriss 2013). Community coherence is facilitated by an online QS

"headquarters" site, quantifiedself.com, which provides tools for existing and potential QS

members, such as information on tracking devices and "how-to" guides for organizing MeetUps,

as well as material to stimulate discussion of self-tracking, such as forum posts and videos of

self-tracking project presentations. Although in-person community events occasionally occur on

a large scale, such as the Quantified Self Europe Conference held in Amsterdam in May 2014 or

the U.S. national QS conferences, much of the movement relies on the enthusiasm and interests

of its members to organize and sustain local and regional chapters or MeetUps. In this sense, QS

resembles a "sociotechnical commons" in which collaboration and feedback are encouraged in

the pursuit of increased understanding of self (Turner, 2009, p. 73). Regardless of their physical

location, QS communities are united in their mission to provide a space in which "what these

new tools of self-tracking are good for. . . can be explored on a human level" (Wolf, 2011).

QS MeetUps worldwide are centered on show-and-tell presentations in which members

share their self-tracking projects, much in the fashion of a TED talk, or IGNITE presentation,

another popular technology conference format. The QS presentations are structured around the

same three questions: 1) What did you do? 2) How did you do it? 3) What did you learn? These

questions shape how community members share what they tracked, their methods and tools, and

the value of the information obtained by the presenter (Fiore-Silfvast and Neff, 2013).

There are fundamental commonalities linking the data practices of the QS community

(Fiore-Silfvast and Neff, 2013). The explosion of consumer-oriented modes of data collection

and sensors support the growth in self-quantifying practices and the QS movement (Nafus and

Sherman, forthcoming). Reasons for being in the QS movement vary, although compared to the

general population, QS members "represent a profoundly different way of knowing what data is,

why it is important, who gets to interpret it, and to what ends" (Nafus and Sherman, forthcoming,

p. 2). Within QS, these differences in approaches to data serve both to differentiate the QS define the community and differentiate (and sometimes adjudicate) among the various ways that people frame and use narratives, data, and tools for quantifying, and sharing, their experiences.

What is Sharing?

By definition, sharing is an inherently social activity in that sharing requires at least a dyad, a partner with whom the object being shared is divided. Sharing, though, "is often handled independently of what is being shared" (Stalder and Sützl 2011, p. 2). Scholars have proposed useful distinctions that aid in refining an otherwise ambiguous concept by attaching the practice of sharing to its context and content (see for example Belk, 2010; John, 2012; Hemetsberger, 2012; Wittel, 2011). Sharing may involve material objects, as in sharing an orange, or may involve immaterial concepts, as in sharing a feeling or emotion (Wittel, 2011). The functional distinction between sharing material and immaterial objects hinges on the transformation of the object being shared. Sharing an orange is an act of division, or of "distribution," in which the value, quantity and ownership of a material object are divided through the act of sharing, and are, in a literal sense, negatively impacted (John, 2013, p. 169). Sharing an idea is "an abstract and passive" means of distribution in that the immaterial object is not divided or reduced in value (John, 2013, p. 169). Indeed, sharing immaterial objects may add "value to whatever is being exchanged" (Wittel 2011, p. 5). It is this added-value nature of the stories, data, and tools being shared among QS members that we consider.

While the personal data shared among QS members is immaterial, it is still mediated. For its potential as a useful resource to be realized, data must be assigned meaning through a translation process, mediated through a set of tools and devices (and, increasingly for self-tracking, through information and communication technologies like smartphones) (Fiore-Silfvast

& Neff, 2013). Technically speaking, shared data is immaterial, and sharing does not reduce the

or diminish the data *per se*. However, the multiplicity of ways that data are mediated, interpreted

and translated may add other dimensions onto theorizing what is shared.

Sharing can imply "exchange," expectations of something either received previously or

anticipated in return, dependent upon the expectations of reciprocity within the group/community

(Belk & Coon, 1993, p. 394). This is especially important when sharing happens in group or

community contexts. Instances of sharing can "build trust, and over time they provide societal

'glue,'" maintained over time through a "system of reciprocity" which, at its most foundational,

includes an implied social contract that all involved parties will preserve the trust developed

through sharing (Eckstein, 2001; p. 830).

In addition to supporting cohesion, sharing among a group increases trust among

members. Personalized trust (as opposed to generalized trust) "results from cooperation

experiences and repeated interaction with the immediate circle of known people" (Stolle, 1998,

p. 503). Generalized trust on the other hand, is conferred onto members of the same group, like

voluntary association, without necessarily having direct personal interaction (Stolle, 1998).

Trust in networked communities does not necessarily have to be based on specific interactions

among people in the network, but can instead be built through generalized exchange within the

community boundaries. This is important because of how the platforms for sharing in a global

network like QS get built, populated, and negotiated.

In turn, this trust is a critical component of social capital, defined by Putnam (1993) as

"features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate

coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (p. 167). In a more economic sense, social

capital "describes circumstances in which individuals can use membership in groups and

networks to secure benefits" (Sobel, 2002, p. 139). These benefits include "the individual

connections a person holds," a network of individuals that is or is potentially "productive,

making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible"

(Coleman, 1988, p. s98). Variations in the degree to which participants engage (including both

the extent to which members share projects and offer feedback) and are technologically literate,

for instance, can affect accrual, resulting in "some participants hav[ing] greater intellectual,

social, financial or reputational capital than others" (Turner, 2009, p. 77). Although social

capital can be strategically cultivated through deliberately forged and maintained network

connections, the strength of these connections, and by extension the resources available through

them, may ultimately be beyond the individual's control (Sobel, 2002, p. 139).

Social capital is generally regarded as having both horizontal and vertical organizations,

referred to as bridging and bonding social capital, respectively (see Bouchillon, 2013). Bridging

social capital refers to "the strength of weak ties," or the links between diverse or significantly

differing individuals (Bouchillon, 2013, p. 3). In contrast, bonding social capital refers to "strong

ties that reinforce a person's identity in lieu of expanding it," which are generally formed

between individuals who share similar identity facets, such as familial ties, class associations, or

political affiliations (Bouchillon, 2013, p. 3).

Both bonding and bridging social capital are crucial for knowledge production (Yuan &

Gay, 2006). Bonding social capital "reinforces group cohesion" and thus contributes to a

supportive environment in which knowledge can circulate, while bridging social capital draws

upon the diversity of knowledge present in a group of individuals with dissimilar backgrounds to

"gain access to unique, diverse information" (Yuan & Gay, 2006, p. 1068). Social network

theory provides additional specificity in the context of QS by proposing a distinction between

instrumental and expressive network ties (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993). Within a network context, instrumental network ties are links that "arise in the course of work-role performance" (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993, p. 281-282), or provide "information, advice and resource exchanges that are needed to accomplish tasks" (Yuan & Gay, 2006, p. 1063). In contrast, expressive ties refer to "relations that primarily provide friendship and social support" (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993, p. 281-282) and are not necessarily related to work roles (Yuan & Gay, 2006).

Sharing within a community can lead to generalized trust, increases in social capital, and generation of bridging and bonding capital. Quantified Self as a movement benefits from, and arguably exploits, the ambiguity of bonds created through the sharing among its members. Quantified Self presents an interesting case study of social capital, as both bridging and bonding social capital could partially account for the community's cohesion. That is, the group is organized around a shared interest in self-tracking, implying the potential for strong ties and thus bonding social capital. The only guaranteed similarity between members of a QS group is tracking, but members represent a diverse spectrum of commercial sectors, genders, ages, levels of technological literacy, health status, and specific self-tracking interests or projects (such as productivity, fitness or symptoms). This variety implies the potential for weak ties and bridging social capital and the next section teases this out.

Sharing the Self, Tracking and Self-Tracking in Quantified Self

Sharing is at the core of QS, and the community is organized around members' own self-tracking projects and interests, and around their sharing the narratives and data that emerge from the process. As QS co-founder Wolf (2010) observes "Self-tracking can sometimes appear narcissistic, but it also allows people to connect with one another in new ways. We leave traces of ourselves with our numbers, like insects putting down a trail of pheromones, and in times of

crisis, these signals can lead us to others who share our concerns and care enough to help" (Wolf, "The Data-Driven Life," 2010.) It is thus significant that QS MeetUps and conferences are largely devoted to members' presentations of self-tracking projects, as such group sharing experiences sustain and elevate the valuation of community, collaboration and personal development over attention to the devices that facilitate self-tracking.

Sharing within the QS community occurs on at least three platforms (1) through in-person MeetUps, where members of a QS co-community gather in a physical space and share, through narrative presentations, experiments in self-tracking and lessons learned therein; (2) through online video and forum posts on quantifiedself.com, often circulating or expanding upon MeetUp presentations; and (3) through distribution and discussion of self-tracking data in online public spaces, such as Twitter and Facebook, with reference via hashtags and other identifiers to QS, such as #QS, #quantifiedself, or #QSNY.

Self-tracking refers to a multitude of practices that center around systematic recording of personal behaviors and responses. On a broad level, self-tracking activities maintain an aim of "converting previously undetected bodily reactions and behavioral cues into traceable and perceptible information" (Ruckenstein, 2014, p. 68). Although self-tracking is not a new phenomenon (Moschel, 2013), recent technological developments have radically expanded the range of personal objects/conditions (e.g., blood glucose levels) and behaviors (e.g., sleep patterns) that are available for tracking, deepened the level of observable nuance within our bodies and behaviors, and altered what, how and through what means we share about ourselves. In other words, these newly sophisticated technological tools have "added a computational dimension to ordinary existence" (Wolf, 2011).

Within QS, what is shared are the components of self-tracking--what we would argue are a set of values that correspond to how the presentations are structured, and to the emphases that QS members articulate within their presentations. These three values are the "self," "tracking" and "self-tracking," which bridges the other two. The three questions that structure all QS presentations correspond to these three different values present within the community and presentations can be roughly classified into three categories, 1) those that emphasize the "self" component and respond enthusiastically to "what did you learn?," 2) those that emphasize the "tracking" component and respond enthusiastically to "how did you do it?," and 3) those that view "self-tracking" more holistically and respond with consideration to both components in answer to "what did you do?" These categories illustrate additional expressions of sharing and social exchange and provide a useful means of describing the variety of behaviors and facets of self being tracked and in the devices (both rhetorical and technological) used across QS presentations.

Members of QS who emphasize the "self" essentially disclose a personal story within the community, engaging in an emotional sharing; potentially forming or seeking support from expressive ties; and contributing to a shared, community experience. Presentations that fall within this category minimize the importance of any particular tracking device, favoring instead personal understanding or transformation. Presentations emphasizing the "self" of Quantified Self may rely on data from devices with relatively low levels of technological sophistication (e.g., pen and paper) or devices with little or no post-consumer modification (e.g, an off-the-shelf consumer-oriented device like a FitBit). For example, Amelia Greenhall presented the following "gold star" method of tracking personal accomplishments such as how many books she reads, activities that "make me happy," and physical activity: She quite simply affixes gold star stickers

to a pen-and-ink spreadsheet hung on her wall (Quantified Self, 2012c). Greenhall explained that this project arose following an illness, when she began by keeping track of small accomplishments as a means of self-encouragement. Her tracking system, though lacking technical sophistication, serves to increase the visibility of incremental progress as well as to provide personal motivation (Quantified Self, 2012c). Greenhall's personal understanding and improvement is emphasized through discussion of what she learned, foregrounding the third question given to all QS presenters, "what did you learn?"

In contrast, QSers who emphasize "tracking" are also sharing a personal experience, though often it is the experience of working with or developing a tracking device. Such "tracking" presenters discuss how the device was used or modified to suit their personal project. Engagement with a device varies, and may manifest as a participant using a device as designed, "hacking" or customizing an existing device, or designing a new device or an app from scratch, while emphasizing the QS question "how did you do it?" By detailing their engagement and proficiency with technological tracking processes, presenters who focus on tracking present themselves as potential for what has been called "instrumental network ties" (Ibarra & Andrews, 2013; Yuan & Gay, 2002). Although many MeetUps include a "Demo" hour open to startups, the presentations are strictly for personal presentations, even though the boundaries within the community between technology developer and self-tracker can blur (Fiore-Silfvast and Neff, 2013).

Not surprisingly, "tracking" focused presentations are the closest direct access that Silicon Valley and other technology developers have to the QS community, and any new tool unveiled there must accompany a personal tracking experience of the presenter. For example, Dave Marvit, identified as from Fujitsu Labs, presented an iPhone app prototype in development

by his company and the Department of Veterans Affairs intended to aid patients with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by tracking a user's stress response while driving through biofeedback (Quantified Self, 2013). In a nod to the personal understanding aspect of QS presentations, Marvit and a colleague relate their experiences testing the app on their own commutes. As a result, the "self" is still a component of the presentation, though the intricacies of the app and its development are clearly at the forefront.

Many QS members combine interests in "self" and "tracking" by identifying a behavior or issue of personal importance and carefully considering the "fit" of the device as a means of gaining insight into the issue, followed by "tweaking" or modifying the device if necessary. The QS presentation "Mark Leavitt on Tracking and Hacking Sitting" provides a clear illustration of interest in both behavior modification through self-tracking and an interest in creating a device that caters to individual user needs (Quantified Self, 2013b). Leavitt cited, in the description posted with the video of his presentation, a cardiac medical issue as a "wake up call" to increase his exercise while maintaining his habit of working at a computer (Quantified Self, 2013b). Leavitt "hacked" his favorite chair through a series of modifications that allowed him to work at the computer from his chair while simultaneously pedaling on a mini-elliptical. The elliptical display was rewired with LED lights that appeared green when he was pedaling and red when he was not; the duration of each computer session as well as the amount of pedaling done while seated were recorded via a connection to his computer (Quantified Self, 2013b). Leavitt's example indicates the coexistence of both self-understanding and technological development values, as his health issue provided an incentive to closely track his behavior and increase his understanding of self, as well as to develop a creative solution that would indicate the success of his efforts. In his presentation Leavitt said, "Science usually tries to drive emotions out of data, I

think we want to drive the emotions back in. The data needs to tell us a human story—I want it

to tell my story" (Quantified Self, 2013b). Leavitt's narrative is both emotional sharing *and*

informational/instrumental sharing. Thus his presentation has the potential to circulate as both an

instrumental and expressive tie asset.

Platforms for Sharing

The value inherent in these presentations transcends the live audience as the content converges

on multiple platforms. The QS website is a repository for information on self-tracking and

associated tools, as well as a library of MeetUp and conference presentation videos and forum

posts. These posts may refer to additional (unrecorded) presentations given at QS MeetUps, or

may offer responses to news items or developments in tracking technologies. By providing a

central clearinghouse for information pertaining to QS practices and the community itself, this

platform functions as a hub through which geographically dispersed nodes are connected (at the

time of this writing, news regarding the upcoming QS Europe Conference was prominently

displayed on quantifiedself.com). In so doing, the quantifiedself.com platform offers a visible

reminder to those within and outside the Quantified Self community of its values, the emphasis

on community values, and further, the importance of self-exploration and collaboration within

this community values set, while modeling what an international networked community

movement can be.

A second function of QS's online presence is the sociotechnical affordance of reduced

cost (as compared to the effort required to attend an in-person MeetUp) for potential members to

seek information about self-tracking. That is, individuals curious about new tracking methods or

devices can consult trusted sources for advice, information and experiential evidence. In

addition, through its public availability, the site also extends and punctures the in-group/out-

group boundary of the community. That is, self-tracking enthusiasts who are unable to travel to a MeetUp or conference may forge a member identity through participation in online discussions. Alternatively, hesitant or curious individuals can "lurk," sampling from the available videos, tips and information on self-tracking, or assess how best to get involved with a QS co-community. While the QS movement emphasizes the process of personal discovery and understanding, the devices and tools that facilitate this process are often close at hand. Gadgets and devices mediate the majority of data presented in QS, comprising a visible and important component of QS presentations and discussions.

The third platform through which QS maintains a presence, networking sites outside of QS MeetUps and quantifiedself.com (such as personal Facebook pages and Twitter accounts), similarly augments the community, though is more difficult to observe. As these accounts/sites lie outside the boundaries of the QS community, the "shared interest" boundary connecting self-tracking enthusiasts is less pronounced, if it exists in a member's social networks at all. That is, a member may feel a disincentive to share outside spaces identified as QS community spaces, as those populating that member's other social networks may not share their interest in or awareness of self-tracking and QS. Quantified Self enjoys a fairly active presence on Twitter (@quantifiedself) and periodically hosts Twitter "Q&A" sessions using the hashtag "#qschat." A 2012 "Q&A" session posed the question, "Have you ever shared your experiments and results with anyone? If so how did it go? If not, why not?" (Quantified Self, 2012b). Though only a few participants directly responded to this query, responses indicate that one's enthusiasm for self-tracking, if shared outside the primary QS community platforms, may not be reciprocated:

> "@quantifiedself I shared some charts with friends and family on facebook. I got almost no response. A little disappointing. #qschat" (Ogden, 2012)

"@quantifiedself #qschat with family. they weren't impressed. ;) QSers can be nutty people. In a healthy way." (Felin, 2012)
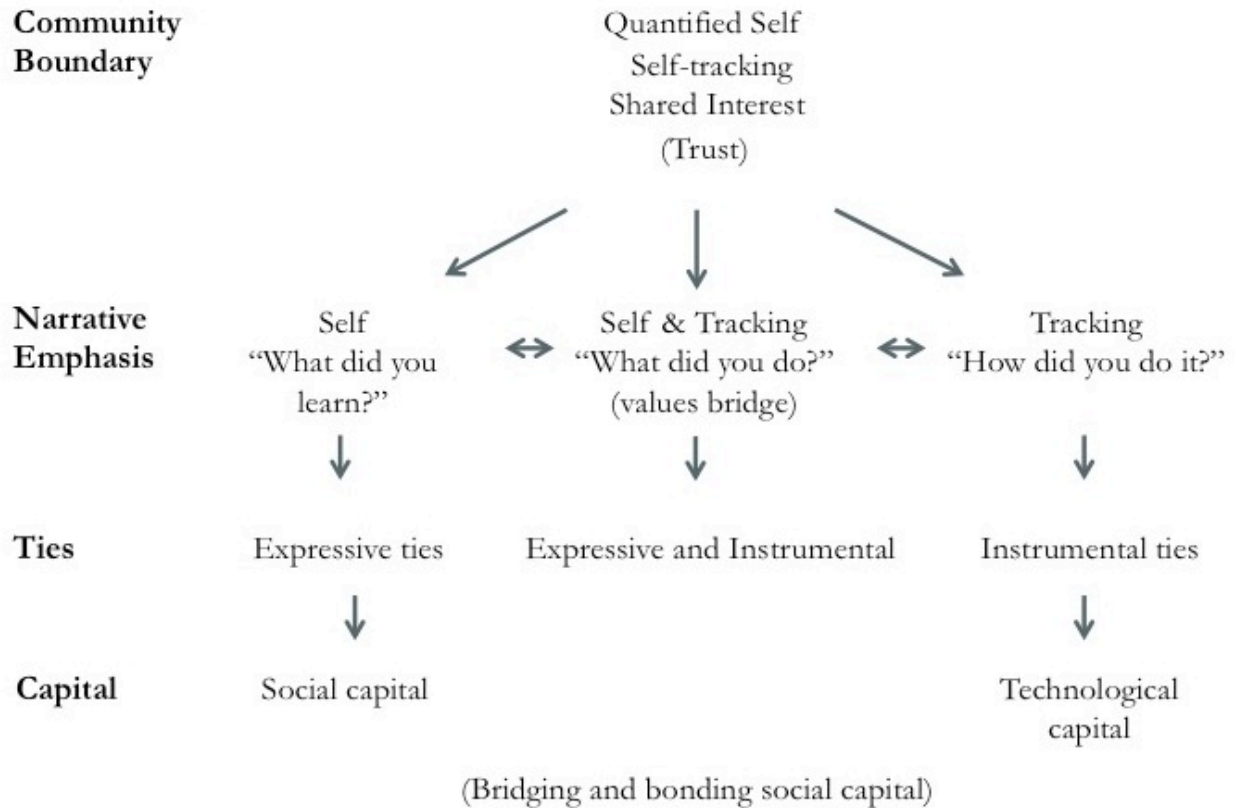
Although these reactions cannot be considered representative of QS members or members' networks outside QS, they reinforce the notion of a bounded, QS space that exists in both physical and virtual realms. Furthermore, these reactions indicate the value of reciprocity in maintaining community identity, underscoring the importance of feedback (positive or otherwise) to disclosures regarding self-tracking. Finally, these responses imply the importance of the translation process that is necessary to make sense of and assign meaning to self-tracking data, and suggests that some knowledge of self-tracking and its aims is foundational to this translation.

However, this is not to say that data presented in an online setting outside the QS community is not significant to others in the network or cannot be assigned meaning. Indeed, QS community member Kiel Gilleade provides an interesting counter-example (Quantified Self, 2012a). Gilleade designed a project wherein a wireless heart monitor tracked his heart rate and automatically posted a reading every 30 minutes to his Twitter profile for a full year. Taken in isolation, one of Gilleade's data tweets offers very little information about him and his activities. However, by updating Twitter at consistent and frequent intervals for an extended period of time, Gilleade's data paralleled the narrative arc of a working day that could be assigned meaning based on the time of his posts and likely activities. Gilleade's friends and colleagues, for example, were able to observe patterns in heart rate and roughly approximate Gilleade's activities throughout the day (e.g., slow heart rate for several hours likely indicated sleeping while rapid heart rate at 3 a.m. likely indicated stress and working late). In his presentation to the QS community, Gilleade reports experiencing friends and his supervisor checking up on him based on the data posted to Twitter (Quantified Self, 2012a). Although the individuals who

assigned meaning to Gilleade's tweets already possessed contextual knowledge of his behaviors

and responsibilities, thus facilitating this translation, his example underscores the role of the

narrative arc in interpreting and giving meaning to personal data.

Figure 1 shows a model for thinking through how the sharing of individual data and

narratives help to form the social resource required for building the platforms for sharing in the

QS community. QS membership is predicated on individuals' shared interest in self-tracking, and

this interest provides a boundary to the QS community. Their shared interest facilitates the

development of particularized trust in the community and among its members, and supports the

culture of collaboration promoted by QS. Members' interests in self-tracking more specifically

may be sorted according to the component of "self-tracking" with which they most identify.

Emphasis on "self" supports a narrative in which self-understanding is highlighted and

potentially leads to the formation of expressive ties; emphasis on "tracking" supports a narrative

focused on explanation of technological methods, including device hacking and design; and a

mixed emphasis, in which components of both extremes are present, completes the spectrum and

bridges the two extremes, which may have implications in preventing community fragmentation.

Regardless of which tie is formed, both bridging and bonding social capital are ultimately

present in the QS community, both of which are necessary for community production of

knowledge.

Figure 1: Model for sharing of self, tracking and self-tracking in QS

**Community
Boundary**   Quantified Self
                                                      Self-tracking
                                                    Shared Interest
                                                        (Trust)

**Narrative
Emphasis**   Self   Self & Tracking   Tracking
                  "What did you   ⟷   "What did you do?"   ⟷   "How did you do it?"
                    learn?"   (values bridge)

Ties   Expressive ties   Expressive and Instrumental   Instrumental ties

Capital   Social capital   Technological
                                                                              capital

                        (Bridging and bonding social capital)

Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that the values of the Quantified Self movement lend a

particular flavor to the sharing of data and narratives from individual self-tracking projects.

These projects can be classified as more heavily invested in questions of the self, matters of

tracking, or hybrid presentations that combine the two. Examination of multiple (physical and

digital) platforms for sharing shows how a community can extend both its presence and sharing

practices into digital spaces while simultaneously maintaining a community boundary. QS does

so by embracing a relative ambiguity over the types of ties that are most valuable within the

community and whether the sharing of data, stories, or techniques are the most valued by the

community. The platforms for sharing, including the questions that structure QS presentations,

encourage community values first, as in building of the movement, over the discovery or

diffusion of new technologies. These platforms for sharing also provide a means of community

coherence through differentiated but overlapping value sets and can thus adjudicate or balance

sets of values from different members. Paradoxically, the sharing of a personally significant,

intangible product (data) leads to the generation of social capital and the building of the

community. That this is occurring while self-tracking and sensing are becoming popular is a

testament to the durability of these structures for the community. In a moment when Silicon

Valley interest is high, exploiting Quantified Self as a testbed, as potential customers, or an

innovation lab, that the MeetUps still manage to keep a sense of that shared community is a

model for what sharing communities in the digital economy might look like.

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