When Inclusion Excludes

A counter narrative of open online education

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Abstract

Open education aspires to democratize education, promote inclusion and effect change through social justice. These aspirations are difficult to realise in open, online environments, which enable multiple, and often conflicting, perspectives. This paper proposes a counter-narrative that surfaces certain operational norms of the internet and foregrounds their exclusionary nature. We offer an illustrative inventory of some social media interactional patterns to examine communication used in open online education communities. This examination leads us to conclude that language online is subject to a dialectical tension that both includes and excludes. We conclude that a different language is needed in open online educational environments; one that embraces exclusionary structures and strategic ambiguity, as well as the aspirations to further democratise education via digital means.

Keywords: open education, social inclusion, online interaction, social media, social justice

Introduction

Open education has been described by Schlagwein et al. (2017) as the effect of 'openness' on the specific domain of education, where the 'opening' produces mostly a 'democratising effect'. They suggest that 'openness' can be seen as a higher order concept or philosophy characterised by "access to information and other resources; participation in an inclusive and often collaborative manner; transparency of resources and actions; and democracy or "democratization" such as the breaking up of exclusionary structures." (Schlagwein et al. 2017).

There are many definitional issues in current research in open education (Cronin 2017) which can be viewed from several perspectives, such as open access, open educational resources, open courses, open textbooks, open data, open research and open practice (Bates 2015; Jordan and Weller 2017). Our focus here is on the two questions arising from Schalgwein et al.'s (2017) definition: Is participation in open education social media environments inclusive? Does open online education succeed in breaking up exclusionary structures?

In this position paper, we share our concern that the aspirational, utopian narrative implicit in Schalgwein et al.'s definition, whilst intending to include and encourage diversity, can lead to exclusion and homogeneity. We discuss evidence for this and argue that, to enable greater understanding of these potential barriers and limitations, it may be necessary to 'look from the outside in' by drawing on the work of authors who publish outside the domain of open education. To this end, we have reviewed the work of relevant authors to propose a set of operational norms that can be hidden in the current open online education context, and contrast these with the aspirational norms regularly used to induct new participants to the online environment. We argue that these aspirational norms create a buffer that enables people to ignore what actually happens (the actuality) in favour of collaboratively 'creating a desired future' (Chun 2016); the operational norms that are at play in the background are an obstacle to 'the breaking up of exclusionary structures' that open education seeks to achieve (Schlagwein et al. 2017).

We start by questioning the aspirational narrative of open education evident in much of the literature (e.g. Surowiecki 2004; Shirky 2008; Downes 2010). Our intention is neither to displace nor to dismiss this narrative; an application of the principles of openness to education could benefit many. Instead, we advocate looking more explicitly beyond aspiration for a counter-narrative. This perspective does not deny that supporters of the aspirational narrative may be aware of operational norms; we are simply highlighting that the

aspirational is the dominant narrative and that the actuality, as defined earlier, can be lost or undervalued in grasping towards a desirable but imagined future. As McGilchrist (2017, 3.44) states: "Wisdom is being able to synthesise things that look contradictory".

Our argument is therefore presented in the form of a 'plausible counter-narrative' as defined by Pasquale (2016). His rationale for the creation of a counter-narrative to any mainstream ideology is based on Foucault's idea of counter-memory which is said "to play to resist and subvert the epistemic oppression that condemns the lives of marginalized people to silence or oblivion" (Medina 2011 cited in Pasquale 2016, 311). In this paper, we argue that open online education is an ideology in need of a counter narrative.

Pasquale (2016) suggests two potential approaches for dislodging a mainstream ideology. One approach is to critique cumulative research and challenge the premises of the mainstream narrative to cast 'suspicion' on its givens. For example, Rolfe (2015) argues that open education researchers select evidence confirming their own theories while disregarding relevant disconfirming literature. The second approach is to move outside a mainstream ideology by offering a counter-narrative. This is the approach we have taken for this position paper. To do this we have drawn on evidence from our participation in online courses and social media, our extensive online teaching and course design experience, and our reading of critical internet studies (e.g. Selwyn 2009, 2015; Mejias 2013; Chun 2016; McLuhan and Powers 1992; McLuhan and McLuhan 1992; Haidt 2016a).

Open online education as ideology

Gibbs, Rozaidi and Eisenberg (2013, 102) have characterised open online education as an ideology that can "overstate [ ] the positive impacts of social media on knowledge sharing and assume [ ] that open communication is always desirable." An ideology can be seen as a set of normative and evaluative beliefs about the nature of the domain in which it is applied. Hendricks (2017) and others (Weller 2017; Gourlay 2015) refer to open education as a 'movement', indicative that participants themselves see the desirability of openness as ideology. The ideology of 'openness' in education in this case, requires participants to take on board the beliefs it proposes (Schlagwein et al. 2017).

Several authors point out that belief is less a matter of intellect and more a matter of feeling, often driven by unconscious motivation (Gilovich, Griffin, and Kahneman 2002; Žižek 1989; Dawson, Gilovich and Regan 2002). As such, we can hold on to erroneous beliefs even when we are conscious that they are erroneous and can consciously hold two contradictory positions at the same time (Žižek, 1989). Gilovich, Griffin, and Kahneman

(2002) demonstrated that we are of "2 minds most of the time" and seek to structure and frame experience in positive ways. This consistently biases human judgement (Dawson, Gilovich and Regan, 2002). Thus, participants in public online forums can take part in a 'performance of open' whilst, at the same time, recognising its flaws. We will show how participants in '2 minds' seek to frame this experience in positive ways and that open education as an ideological 'movement' based on often-contradictory beliefs can offer a useful framework for understanding hidden aspects of open online education.

We have argued in this introduction that inclusion in open online environments is dependent on expressing belief in the ideology. This can make participants unaware of the ways in which they exclude those who do not share the ideology. Dawson et al. (2002, 1379) tell us: "People tend to approach agreeable propositions with a bias toward confirmation and disagreeable propositions with a bias toward disconfirmation". This human tendency towards disavowal is not based on knowledge but an expression of desire. This is important to our argument because open online education is an ideology based on the desire for a specific kind of education that is, to some extent, still aspirational in nature and needs acceptance from mainstream educational systems (Hamilton, Kernohan and Jacobs 2017). Put simply, these findings imply that if participants in a movement strongly believe in something they are likely to be blind to its limitations.

There is some evidence that advocates for open education are aware that open communication is not always desirable; this is shown by recent critiques of the aspirational narrative (e.g. Bayne, Knox and Ross 2015; Gaertner 2017; Hendricks 2017). We want to add to this critical voice by suggesting that the internet itself has a set of operational norms that are in many cases counter to the well-intended open education narrative. The actual and the aspirational narratives may be operating to cancel each other out and the internet as a medium may be structurally unable to embed its aspirations.

The aspirational narrative of open online education

In this section, we briefly outline the aspirational narrative behind the ideology of 'openness' in online education we have discussed. Just as there are different perspectives on the meaning of open education, there are also different perspectives on the aspirational narrative. A clear example of this is seen in ongoing discussion between Downes and Wiley, as to whether open educational resources should incur a cost (Weller 2008; Downes 2017; Wiley 2017). Downes' narrative is premised on a belief in free access to resources, open pedagogical practices and empowerment of learners to manage their own learning. Wiley's

narrative is premised on a belief in permissions related to licensing of resources. Despite these different perspectives on how the aspirational narrative should be achieved, the overarching aim of open education to democratise education (Downes 2010) is widely recognised.

The open education movement thus embraces an altruistic spirit of 'fight the good fight' and believes in the ability of online learning to free learners from constraints and increase equality of opportunity, participation, learner interest, individual agency and informal practice, by privileging open, participatory, collaborative activity. As mentioned earlier in this paper, open education is often described as a 'movement' rather than a 'discipline' (Hendricks 2017; Weller 2017; Gourlay 2015); this implies an acceptance of ideology as its ethos and hence a telos of social justice. The significance of taking on a social justice telos for the 'movement' is further discussed later in this paper.

Inamorato dos Santos, Punie, and Castaño-Muñoz (2016) also argue that open education aims to bring about social change. Distributed (as opposed to centralized and decentralized) online networks are thought to achieve such aims through the diversity, autonomy, openness and connectivity that they promote (Downes 2010). Through openness learners can freely access and share an abundance of resources and interact with a wide diversity of people from across the globe, benefiting from the 'wisdom of crowds' (Surowiecki 2004) and the 'global village' (McLuhan and Powers 1992). Learners are empowered to be autonomous and can determine their own learning paths. This narrative states that "an age of abundance is certainly preferable to an age of information scarcity" and that "it is almost impossible to see how one could argue society has not benefited from the internet and new digital technologies" (Thierer 2010).

In support of this narrative and as a way to promote the ideology, examples of acceptable norms of behaviour for open online education can be found in many course sites (e.g. Connected Courses - http://connectedcourses.net/about/community-guidelines/). These sites include introductory netiquette guidelines, encouraging participants to be 'nice' to each other, share openly, and respect alternative perspectives and diverse opinions (see also Winer 2016). Norms such as these operate to enact the ideology of open education online and induct potential participants on how to behave if their desire is to be part of the group. An exploration of the language used to enact the ideology can offer insights into what is excluded from its narrative; for example, by implication, someone not willing to share openly would not be welcomed to Connected Courses.

In this paper, open online education is discussed as a subset of educational technology because it requires digital technologies to operate; hence we argue that literature from the field of educational technology is directly relevant to the open online education movement. The desirability of open online education, as a subset of educational technology, is often presented as self-evident. Selwyn (2013 20) argues: "educational technology is now something that appears to barely require thinking about at all. In many ways, the use of digital technology in educational settings has reached a state of being 'ideologically invisible' (Nye 2007), with the basic rationality of educational technology accepted largely without question." We believe, with Selwyn, in the value of questioning that which may seem self-evident. The use of social media platforms such as Twitter, Google or Facebook for education is defined here as open online education, although we are aware that these platforms have design issues that are counter to 'openness' as having a 'democratising effect' in participation (Bell, Mackness and Funes 2016). With all this in mind, we will also be drawing from social media research as relevant and will show that research that pertains to the tools used in open online education can inform the movement 'from the outside in'.

In this section, we have described the aspirational narrative of open education as one which promotes democracy, inclusion and social justice and have suggested that this leads to particular norms of behaviour that are encouraged in order to be part of the movement. Is this an uncritical 'heterotopia of desire?' (Gourlay 2015).

A plausible counter-narrative for open online education

We borrow from and expand on the work of Chun (2016) for the thesis that the principles at the core of open education ideology can be said to overgeneralise the value of open communication and this can have an exclusionary effect. We discuss this below.

The authors we cite for our counter-narrative below (Chun 2016; Haidt 2016a, 2016b; Mejias 2013; Selwyn 2015) are aligned to our position that observers from the 'outside in' offer a better chance to help understand the limitations of narrative built from the 'inside out'.

There is an increasing concern with what is hidden in online participation (e.g. Mejias, 2013) and with the way in which online groups can retreat into filter bubbles and echo chambers. This can result in a lack of critical engagement, and undermine the ability for direct critique within the field (Rolfe 2015; Selwyn 2015). Some authors also draw a direct link between advocacy of openness and a failure to see the harm that is caused. For example, Edwards (2015a, 2015b) argues that "… all forms of openness entail forms of closed-ness and […] it is only through certain closings that certain openings become possible and vice

versa" (Edwards 2015a, 3). Bell, Mackness and Funes (2016) note the potential for social media algorithms to demote posts that lack engagement ensuring only the loudest voices are heard; this has exclusionary implications. In what follows we turn to the work of Haidt (2016a), Mejias (2013) and others to further explore these exclusionary implications.

'Safety and victimhood' in open online education

Haidt's (2016a) research into Higher Education suggests that pushing for social change as the only desirable outcome for education can result in many unintended consequences. These consequences can paradoxically result in the opposite of what is intended and work against the principles the social justice agenda seeks to encourage. We believe that the blind enthusiasm for open education noted by Selwyn (2009, 2015) can extend to the 'politics of open' (OER17 conference https://www.alt.ac.uk/civicrm/event/info?id=280&reset=1) and associated social justice agendas. Haidt (2016a) argues that pushing for social change can create a culture that:

- Is intolerant of diversity – excluding those who may want a different telos
- Encourages motivated reasoning in its members – seeking to confirm rather than disconfirm beliefs
- Is afraid of alternative perspectives – that do not support social change as the only telos
- Creates victimhood in its members – by reducing anti-fragility (Taleb 2012) in the system
- Fosters a psychology of sacredness - which disallows exploration of certain 'untouchable' topics

The danger is that in such a culture, participants lose the capacity for questioning and discomfort, seek to find evidence to support the normative view and construct narratives that are confirmatory in nature. Our reasoning is motivated by our unconscious biases. We see what we want to see. Genuine critique and debate are stifled. We become intellectually fragile, intolerant of challenge, 'walk on eggshells' and demand safer spaces. In seeking social justice via aspirational norms that are made to apply across disciplines in academia, we create a culture of conformity, self-censorship, risk aversion and increased social rigidity. Since this applies to Higher Education then, by extension, it also applies to academics operating in an online context, whether or not this is within formal settings.

Haidt (2001) further argues that an 'institutionalized disconfirmation' that seeks a criterion of 'truth' can be as valid a telos as 'social justice'. He believes that this may be the only way to counter motivated reasoning. Truth, as defined in Haidt's work, goes back to J.S. Mill's work 'On Liberty' (1859 cited in Haidt 2016a) where to know and be able to "refute the reasons on the opposite side" is seen as fundamental to forming any opinion. Psychological research (e.g. Gilovich, Griffin, and Kahneman 2002) asserts that all humans are bound by cognitive biases or what Haidt calls motivated reasoning. We argue that 'institutionalized disconfirmation' as an aim can be absent in the open online education movement and that this reduces its credibility as an academic endeavor.

A focus on social justice, which for Haidt goes back to Marx's idea that whilst "the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it" (cited in Haidt 2016a), foregrounds change before accurate interpretation. Even if we accept that open education as ideology has a telos of social justice, it is not clear that this construct has a shared meaning in the movement. Farrow (2017) argues that for "open education advocates [social justice is] at the core of the movement. But rarely do we hear about the concept of social justice being unpacked in the context of open education. There are competing visions of social justice."

Haidt's own research, which is substantial, but which we will not review here, further suggests that well-intended individuals and groups make 'a temple' of this social justice/open telos, circling around it generating a polarising effect. Participants become moral magnets, grouping in the safety of echo chambers and losing the potential for diversity in their milieu. Norms inside this 'temple' (academia in Haidt's research and the open online space in our argument), intended to include and encourage diversity lead instead to exclusion and homogeneity. Haidt (2016a) argues that we are blind to the homogeneity inherent in the attribution of social justice as the telos applicable to all disciplines. We find support for this idea in two recent events, both of which involved cancellation of speakers who might offend the social justice 'status quo'.

In July 2017, the University of Berkeley's progressive radio station, KPFA, cancelled an invitation to Richard Dawkins to talk about his newest book 'citing concerns about the tone of some of Dawkins' tweets about Muslims' (Dinkelspiel 2017). Dawkins denied using 'abusive speech against Islam'. In the same month, David Wiley, leader of the Open Education Group at Brigham Young University cancelled an arranged keynote for the 2017 OpenEd conference (https://openedconference.org/2017/) by the Associate Director of the Global Education Initiative of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This was in

response to protests on Twitter that the Church of LDS discriminates against LGBTQ people and that this community would feel unwelcome and excluded from the conference (See Table 1). Both examples illustrate Haidt's concern that an all-encompassing and uncritical acceptance of a social justice telos constrains diversity and discourages the potential for engaging with people who fundamentally disagree with the belief we hold sacred 'inside our temple'. In the UK, the government has recently "set out plans to challenge the culture of so-called safe spaces in universities, which could allow the newly created Office for Students (OfS) to fine, suspend or register universities that fail to protect freedom of speech on campuses" (Slawson 2017). This action suggests that academia in the UK is moving in the same direction as the USA, as Haidt's research suggests.

Inclusion beyond just rhetoric requires a willingness to listen and engage with 'objectionable' beliefs, including a belief that the goal of education may not always be social justice. Haidt (2016a) argues that true critique requires participants who embody opposing worldviews. It is not sufficient to put ourselves in the shoes of an opposing view; given our tendency for motivated reasoning it could be argued that we cannot fully embody an opposing view. If an alternative to the pursuit of social justice is 'truth' through a focus on 'institutionalised disconfirmation', then this implies we must bring into our 'temple' people from every 'religion'. Eliminating true opposition in the name of social justice, as exemplified by the cancellation of speakers mentioned above, means that we eliminate the possibility of seeing beyond our inherent biases to an accurate account of a discipline. Haidt suggests, and we agree, that an important tool to counter motivated reasoning is inter-disciplinary collaboration within and across educational institutions.

According to Haidt (2016b), social justice and truth as distinct teloi of the academy, have increasingly come into conflict in recent years. This is a starting point for our counter narrative to enable inquiry into potential new approaches to ideological critique in open education. The choice a discipline or community makes between these two concepts will drive the reality that is seen. Haidt believes that a disregard for truth in favour of social justice leads to education and research that confirms the ideology adopted by a given discipline. Furthermore, he argues that whilst social justice and truth can be pursued simultaneously by individuals, their conflicting values cannot be pursued simultaneously by institutions (and we would extrapolate this to 'movements'). Institutions/movements must choose (Haidt 2016b). This view is not without criticism as for some social justice is an end in itself, as discussed earlier comparing Mill and Marx perspectives. Unpacking what a telos of 'truth' as defined by Haidt's research could bring to open online education, questioning

motivated reasoning and challenging a 'psychology of sacredness', may encourage a new narrative to emerge.

The logic of the network is exclusion irrespective of aspirational norms

The aspirational narrative of open online education is further compromised by the logic of the network. Mejias (2013) has pointed out that whilst inclusion might be the default position of networks, the logic of a network is that it excludes. Overlaying the aspirational narrative of openness on social media networks, for example, does not change the logic through which the network operates, nor the requirements from individual participants that they abide by its logic in habit and action, even if not in narrative. Mejias argues that network logic excludes by privileging some nodes (individual people, actors or things) and discriminating against whatever its logic cannot reduce to a node. Nodes are organised in a hierarchy determined by the platform implementation. The implicit goal is to attract links and become a 'super node' through quantitative measures, such as numbers of followers or links to other nodes (Mejias 2013). This logic is one of homophily, not heterophily, and this is engineered, and is not an inherent state of social networks in non-technology settings (Chun 2017). The network normalises and "reproduces inequality through a hegemonic – yet consensual and pleasurable – culture of participation" (Mejias, 2012), rejecting otherness and dissent. As Beetham (2016) notes when writing of the 'crisis of democracy', "Far from connecting us with diverse others, social media can put us into echo chambers where our own values are confirmed and amplified, leading to liberal complacency ('everyone thinks like us') and illiberal 'othering' ('everyone who doesn't think like us is wrong/wicked/less than human')". In the aspirational narrative, this is 'solved' by individual digital skill development that enables participants to use the nature of the network to connect with 'diverse' others. What Mejias' work shows is that an individual's digital skills do not control the medium in which they operate and that the medium is not changed by the narrative any group overlays on it. That is, you may not be seeking fame and followers, but to 'exist' in the network you must act within it to pursue both. (See Table 1 for examples).

Open online education promotes democracy and transparency, amongst other principles as its telos. Downes (2010) has written that "At its core, democracy represents a fair and equitable distribution of power in society", yet, as we shall discuss later in the paper, it is possible for participants of an online community to promote democracy and inclusion through open access, whilst at the same time being undemocratically exclusive through their online social interactions and behaviours. Mejias and other authors such as Morozov (2011)

show that internet-based communications (the medium used in open online education) have made it harder to promote democracy. Grievances are suppressed (Mejias 2013, 113) and the 'outside' is perceived either as a threat or as something to be exploited (Mejias 2013, 12). We see this assumption among practitioners in this field who argue that 'lurkers' in educational networks should either be reprimanded and told that "Lurking = taking" (Siemens 2010) or encouraged to participate (Honeychurch et al. 2017), but not just left 'outside' the network. In the aspirational narrative, 'lurkers' need to be converted to the wisdom of open participation.

According to Mejias (2013, 13), this is the organising logic of the network; the community that buys into the ideology of open buys into an 'imagined community' that is all-inclusive. In this imagined community, the overt assumption is that it includes multiplicities of views. What is left 'unseen' or denied is the rejection of people and perspectives that challenge its aspirations (Mejias 2013, 14).

Paradoxically, the more the network creates the perception of freedom, the more elements it can covertly control; it increases proximity and creates distance simultaneously, and as it increases participation, inequality also increases (Mejias 2013, 90). This is the idea of 'dual processuality' or double affordances explored by Mejias and other critical internet studies researchers (e.g. Van Dijk 2012). If we widen our lens to include infrastructure and medium as well as aspiration and desire, the notion of 'dual processuality' can help us explore the way in which inclusion excludes.

A medium that supports the production of two sets of opposing outcomes simultaneously may not be best suited to help overcome the motivated reasoning of its participants. Participation becomes a sort of 'friendly violence' because alternatives are obscured. Amicability itself excludes or obliterates alternative ways of social organisation (Mejias 2013, 27). The logic of the network creates coercion through homophily and Chun (2017, 1) notes that whilst "homophily might be good at strengthening already existing ties, […] it also misses many other things [...] Let's start building models that take heterophily […] as the basis for connection. Even better, let's build networks based on mutual indifference. This, after all, keeps cities and communities going." Whilst this last sentence may be purposefully controversial, it contains an essential idea: homophily is not an inherent quality of all networks but an algorithmic choice of online social networks. Chun and Mejias both look beyond the internet for richer definitions of social networks, such as in the work of community sociologists, which originated in the 1960s. These insights may well have a place in any reformulation of openness in education online.

Mejias, Haidt, Chun and others have all questioned the aspirational narrative of online social networks giving us details of an alternative narrative that is far from the ideal as we have been discussing throughout this paper. If the aspirational narrative for open education cannot be attained in the actuality that is the online network, then this seems an issue worth addressing much more explicitly than the current aspirational narrative allows.

The need for new models of participation and communication in open online education

In questioning current network practices, Mejias (2013, 12) suggests that we need new models of participation that will emerge through "unsettling, undermining and even un-mapping what is oppressive in certain structures of thought". Exploring the value of mapping operational norms online to open education helps surface and un-map potentially oppressive aspirational norms from our educational work online.

One approach to this un-mapping is to unpack the way in which we communicate in open online environments and examine the influence of language on the principle of 'breaking up of exclusionary structures' presented in the Introduction. Selwyn (2015, 5) refers to this language in education environments as 'Ed-Tech speak', which he claims is what normalizes matters of oppression, inequality, and injustice, promoting some groups over others and silencing dissent (see also Snowden 2012 cited by Mackness 2012). Whilst acknowledging that not all open educators communicate in 'Ed-Tech speak', we concur with Selwyn that this language is self-serving, value-laden and obtuse; more importantly, much of it is 'bullshit' (Selwyn 2015) in that it lacks concern for truth, accuracy, reality and nuance, echoing the concerns of Haidt (2016a) discussed earlier. Where Mejias and Haidt cover social networks and the academy more broadly, Selwyn's work addresses educational technology more specifically.

Selwyn has written that "the dominant framing of education and technology blithely marginalizes, ignores and/or denies the complex and compounded inequalities of the digital age" (Selwyn 2015, 4). We want to unpack this further and his assertion that "many discussions of education and technology are the result of people talking loudly, confidently and with sincerity regardless of accuracy, nuance and/or sensitivity to the realities of which they speak" (Selwyn 2015, 4). We begin this unpacking process by working towards an inventory of social media interactional patterns that illustrate the actuality of how the internet operates.

Towards an Inventory of Social Media interactional patterns – a method

For this section, we have adopted a speculative research approach (Wilkie, Savransky, and Rosengarten 2017). Rather than empirical evidence, this approach presents emerging data to illustrate the thesis that a telos of social justice, which seeks to break up exclusionary structures instead of perpetuating them, can create a narrative that negates "the complex and compounded inequalities of the digital age" (Selwyn 2015, 4). Our method is exploratory in nature, seeking to establish the feasibility of using text-based communication online to critique ideology.

Complexity of human communication in the digital environment

We agree with Selwyn that the language used in relation to education and technology can be 'opaque, obtuse and often-self-serving' (Selwyn 2015, 2). As such our efforts to describe operational norms through interactional patterns started at the level of language analysis, in the understanding that language can offer a way to unpack behavioural norms. We started organising our data for use with Bales Interactional Analysis categories (Bales 1950). These have been automated and used in constrained domains for text-mediated communication, for example to offer comment to educators on their feedback skills (Whitelock, Watt, Raw, and Moreale 2003). We abandoned this effort as we realised that the domain of open online education is not sufficiently constrained (we wanted to use data in the wild rather than constrained data sets) and that ambiguity and lack of grounding in our domain would not lend itself to the clear categorisation required by Bales.

Our domain is ambiguous because,

1. There is a cost to communication when we deviate from face-to-face communication (Clark 1996); working to develop common ground in asynchronous communication requires effort because the potential for misunderstanding is higher when not co-present in the same space (Clark and Brennan 1991). Hence, ambiguity is more likely in text-based communication.

2. Studies of communication in organisations observe that ambiguity may be strategic or intentional: "Organizational members are not always motivated to enhance clarity and consensus. Rather they are strategic, symbolic actors who are often motivated to engage in 'strategic ambiguity' (Eisenberg, 1984) in which they intentionally foster multiple meanings of messages or communicative events to enhance their own image or goals through deceptive,

ambiguous, or covert communication" (Gibbs, Rozaidi, and Eisenberg 2013, 104).

3. As Eisenberg (1984, 6) argues, "core organizational values may have a mantra-like ability to bind a group together while at the same time not limiting specific interpretations". This ambiguity generates a 'unified diversity' where people hold very different perspectives but share common symbols of high level concepts such as 'academic freedom' (Eisenberg 1984, 7). Open education can be seen as an example of this.

4. Gibbs, Rozaidi, and Eisenberg (2013, 105) argue that "selective self-presentation [can] motivate [users] to conceal or restrict, rather than share, knowledge." This is antagonistic to open knowledge sharing online.

Intention, context, common ground, and framing are implicit and often hidden in text-mediated communication, more so than in an organisation where individuals meet face to face and build relationships over time. Strategic ambiguity is therefore a helpful construct to understand miscommunication online and can inform interaction between members of online educational groups.

The Inventory

To illustrate our position, we chose to gather more general internet communication patterns and searched for these patterns in open online education discourse, constrained for the purpose of this paper to Twitter educational hashtags and practitioners. We further included blogs mentioned in the Twitter conversations we analysed. We found many popular descriptions of interactional patterns on the internet that were examples of the theoretical perspective our counter narrative proposes. Melcher's Connectivist Think Tool (2013) enabled us to collate, map, organise, and interrogate our ideas and create a list of interactional patterns. We then manually mined Twitter and academic blogs for examples of text-mediated communication that exemplified each category. Over the period of a year (September 2016 to September 2017) we monitored open online education hashtags, such as #opened17, #ds106 and #OEP, and collated examples to a private wiki.

We collected over 30 patterns, with examples, and realised that finding unique linguistic expressions to enable a rigorous categorisation scheme of text-based communication is non-trivial. Table 1 that follows will only highlight some of the key patterns which contrast with the aspirational narrative, to illustrate our position and offer a

potential way to research hidden aspects of open online education through ideology critique via language use.

We have not attributed the sample text we are using in concordance with guidelines for ethical use of public data (e.g. Townsend and Wallace 2016). We have also paraphrased some sentences to preserve privacy, but others are verbatim and could be found in an online search. We agree with the code of practice from the British Psychological Society that states that online observation is acceptable with users who can "reasonably expect to be observed by strangers" (Sasso, Steviano, González and Rocco 2009, 13).

Our approach may appear to raise a question of balance in our choices, but the key point here is that any example we use is open to multiple, simultaneous interpretations given our ambiguity discussion. Or as Morrish (2017) succinctly explains: "One of the peculiarities of language is that the same form of words can mean entirely different things depending on the speaker/writer, the occasion, the intent and the preceding context of interaction."

In sum, we found our data on Twitter, we gathered sample tweets from open education practitioners and educational hashtags, and we followed up to blogs from these tweets to mine for further examples. We selected Twitter because it is widely used by the open education movement. We also gathered data from a new social media platform, Mastodon, as we found that some 50 educators had formed a group and were exploring it as an alternative to Twitter. Over the year, we gathered 88 pages on the wiki that used 72MB of server space. The data was composed of summaries of readings, vignettes we might use for illustration, and many linguistic expressions paraphrasing tweets with an attached URL to be able to access as needed. The context was our daily use of Twitter as a tool for text-mediated communication. We chose not to use in-course conversations for privacy reasons.

Table 1 below offers a name for each pattern, its description, and examples of text-mediated communication to illustrate the pattern. The discussion column also offers a sense of the 'both-and' nature of our argument; we explore how each pattern can be seen as inclusive or exclusionary.

Pattern Name[1]	Examples from Open Online Education Language[2]	Discussion

Fawning Adoration
 	
Or
 	
(Thankful Cheering)
	"Happy to be listed here alongside some of my #edu heroes like..."
	
	"OMG! You didn't. How wonderful you managed to finish that presentation. I love you for that"
	
	"It is so wonderful to be such close friends even though we have never met in person. I love you more!"
	
	"You rock. Big fan"
	
	"So excited to be speaking at this conference It's truly an honour!"
	
	"Thank you so much for including me with many of my heroes."
	
	A: "Big Fan. You Rock" B: "No, you rock". A:"WE rock".
	
	"Gosh, thank you Mary. Coming from one of the movement's leading visionaries, that is rather humbling."
		Potential Conceptual Frame[3]: "I love everyone who can help me become a central node"
		
		Interaction displays exaggerated flattery or affection. Emotional intensity of comments is not aligned to the actual event being commented on (a blog post, a tweeted URL, an article, a positive comment). It can hide differential power dynamics, often activated when marginal members are 'allowed' to be a central node by those with power in the network.
		
		• Inclusive: It reinforces connections and shows appreciation
		• Exclusionary:
		  o It reinforces a power hierarchy that enacts the utopian narrative.
		  o It is the job of marginal members to show fawning adoration to central nodes
		  o It is the job of marginal members over time to gain their own 'fans' by bringing new people into the network

Virtue Signalling **Or** **(Relating)**	"May be Joe does not know how to attribute photos. Maybe I can help." "Do you see this photo? The caption? I attribute even though it is my photo even though I do not have to attribute my own photos." "I imagine some people reading this will be rolling their eyes. I'd just like to point out to those people that my view will win out." "Sigh. So, in my own life, I'm trying to rectify this by advocating for a world that's more co-operative." "People need more positives, so I will tweet a long thread telling them why." "…rectify this by advocating for a world that's co-operative, sustainable, focused on collective action not on the glorification of individuals."	Conceptual Frame: "Everyone should be good like me." "It's noticeable how often virtue-signalling consists of saying you hate things. It is camouflage. The emphasis on hate distracts from the fact you are really saying how good you are. If you were frank and said, 'I care about the environment more than most people do' or 'I care about the poor more than others', your vanity and self-aggrandizement would be obvious." (Shariatmadari 2016) • Inclusive: it discloses personal information which can build relationship • Exclusionary: a supplementary frame can be "…and if they do other than I think is 'good' I will point it out. They will feel small."
Only being with counts **Or** **(Just Connecting)**	"This new social media network is so welcoming." "I know I told you yesterday, but [this] new network is really a community." "I know we have argued about this many times but…" "You might be interested in this, I have not read it yet but…" "Let me just re-tweet this for later." "I will write a post with all your responses to this question: How do you inspire others to embrace Openness?"	Conceptual frame: "It does not matter what I say, I need to be seen to interact". The network is seen as a place where 'we' must connect at any cost (Chun 2016). Connection trumps significance of message; even when I recycle old content in the service of connecting. • Inclusive: any content can be used to build connection and 'be with' the imagined community 'we' belong to. • Exclusionary: re-tweeting articles not read and re-running the same arguments and debates over and over can lead to withdrawal from community interaction due to lack of perceived useful new content.
Always be updating **Or** **(Keeping Network Informed)**	"Good morning.' "#FF my #EDU heroes x y z." "From the archive." "I posted this yesterday but posting again for US time zone." "How did I miss this?" " Re-posting this because..." "The following 20 accounts provide insight not only into the world of academia but into the right way to manage a Twitter account."	Conceptual frame: "We only exist in the network if we update our status." Wendy Chun (2016 Loc. 2913) tells us 'online, to be is to be updated'. This may explain the popularity of cats, dogs, cartoons, #FF (Follow Fridays hashtag which lists people 'worthy' of being followed on Twitter), good morning photos, anything cute or otherwise. Getting 'likes' and 're-tweets' amplifies your existence in the network. Dissemination and followers is how relationship is defined online. Only what is counted counts. Yet, Chun and others remind us that 'there is more than archiving to human relations'. • Inclusive: this is the currency for participation. Updates that get

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		likes and re-tweets mean inclusion.
	"The account sends out tweets regularly to disseminate the very latest news." "This feed is for those who are in the academic world for the long haul. It details what it is like living the life of an academic."	• Exclusionary: this interactional pattern does not allow for other forms of participation and relating in the public sphere – often the richer aspects of relating are hidden from the network. It is depersonalized Twitter streams that get disseminated and hence where nodes 'exist'.
Imagining nomads make it online **Or** **(Proud to Belong)**	"…interesting how we try to be so careful not to offend anyone for their religious beliefs…" "We CANNOT be silent about this…" "…they scrapped the keynote speaker?" "We need to consider what "open" even means. How is it best represented?" "How can we destroy the open education movement?" "Thank you so much. We're adapting and improving in the spirit of the Open movement itself. " (These examples from #opened17 [4]) Hashtags themselves as a way to imagine community: #edutwitter #opened #oer #oep #academictwitter #ds106 #openeedmooc #phdchat or #acwri #yogamooc [5]	Conceptual frame: "Imagine the community I belong to and speak to this imagined community" This community is made up of known people and an imagined large community. 'We speak not to reality but to the 'image of communion that lives in our minds' (Chun Loc. 920 2016). It dovetails well with the aspirational narrative in that the 'we' can be reinforced by the few asserting the many (even if imagined). • Inclusive: 'We' and 'They' are used liberally to assert belonging and can create the sense of a movement that many are proud to belong to. • Exclusionary: the 'imagined' community is likely to fit values and beliefs of the person imagining rather than allowing diverse perspectives. It reinforces a 'given' but does not allow questioning of the 'given' itself. In the #opened17 example the 'we' was only a few people reinforcing a social justice telos.
Got trolled? Your fault. **Or** **(They may Have a Positive Intent)**	"Why don't you send me the link to the annotation? You may have misinterpreted something." (casts doubt on the victim's account) "I saw that tweet, but it could be interpreted in this other way that would not be trolling." (victim's account is the wrong one) "It was not me saying you wished me dead, it was me creating a fictional account of our conversation." "You didn't see what you thought you saw, you didn't hear what you thought you heard." "Are you sure you are remembering things correctly?" 'What he said is not really trolling. It could be read as him trying to help you. I am sure their intention was not to harm you." "Wonderful. Such humanity. Expressed calmly and eloquently. Beautiful, measured language. Great contrast to those he references" Comment in response to a thread that contained the following language: "Might want to up the dose on those asshole pills" "I will now mute this conversation, just letting know' 'jackass'." "So you think that name-calling is justified. That's very interesting. Try looking at this from the perspective of an impartial observer." "What's most irritating is that you all behave like boors and then discover your sensitivity when someone finally pushes back."	Conceptual Frame: "You should always assume a positive intent, no matter what 'they' say. 'They' are, after all, educators". A supplementary frame is 'if topic is counter to aspirational narrative, any behavior is fair game and **not** trolling' Chun (2016 Loc. 4006) suggests, in her analysis of the case of Amanda Todd, that a frame often at play in online interaction is that of the rapist-victim. She suggests we act online as if the 'rapist' is never at fault, and victims need to take responsibility. We argue this happens in online education where participants need to become 'digitally literate' enough or something else 'enough' to manage any difficulty encountered online. Chun states this is not dissimilar to asking women not to dress provocatively or they may be seen to be 'asking for it' to illustrate this dynamic. This may seem shocking, but we argue it is an appropriate analogy. A perpetrator often uses plausible deniability to put the victim in the wrong publicly. Gaslighting (Williams 2017) is a version of this victim pattern; defined as an attempt to manipulate (someone) by psychological means into doubting their own sanity; online, 'Gaslighting' is often used with the positive intent to include somebody in 'our open education movement'; if it can be said that it is not true that somebody within the group is trying to hurt you, then it is safe for you to belong and for the perpetrator to continue within the movement without public consequence. This can result in either silencing or compliance – either way it tends to be invisible as an exclusionary pattern online as the perpetrators continue to be treated as central nodes and re-tweeted. • Inclusive: it 'keeps the individual in control' as they operate online and encourages an ideological fantasy that 'we' are all good 'guys' here with 'good intent'. The trope of 'total inclusion' cannot operate if we accept undesirable behavior. • Exclusionary: when trolling happens in the online community. Often, those who are neither 'victim' nor 'rapist' in the trolling scenario, seek to be the 'rescuer' of a situation by letting the 'victim' know they may have misunderstood the trolling behavior they are complaining about; this is done in private and hence there are no public consequences to the perpetrators. [6]

[4] https://twitter.com/hashtag/OpenEd17?src=hash
[5] Some authors refer to this as the 'hashtag classroom': 'Hashtags are ways we can classify information but, when used by communities of *invested* participants, they are also a valuable way of coordinating learning.' http://www.digitalpedagogylab.com/hybridped/hashtag-classroom/
[6] This is referred to as the 'drama triangle' in psychotherapy and defines dysfunctional relationships. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karpman_drama_triangle

Accept space as is, be popular **Or** **(Working with what 'we' can control)**	"I do not mean to be critical, but might we consider the possibility that there are downsides to open education?" "The open community needs to stick together and not subdivide into smaller hash tags." "It is risky to operate in open environments, but we must take the risk." "We can ignore the platform, and create a globally connecting worldwide community." "I can't be there, but I can always be there virtually." "This great article shows how 'closed' should not be antithetical to 'open.'" "Great article suggesting we change how we frame 'open'. We are doing that already. Here is a reference".	Conceptual frame: "To be popular, occupy the space as it is." Language that resists elements the majority accepts, or that attempts to structurally adapt the space, will be silenced or attempts made to 'bring into the fold'. Modal operators of necessity, not possibility, core to the linguistic expressions used to enact this frame: 'It is what it is, get over it.' Chun consistently suggests in her critique that rather than accept the space we need to redefine it. (Chun 2016 e.g. Loc. 418 430 438) yet open education works towards acceptance. • Inclusive: being popular is the end game of network dynamics and accepting the space as it is reinforces the aspirational narrative. • Exclusionary: suggestions of structural changes in the domain do not form part of the aspirational narrative and those who name limitations of the space are silenced. Critique is rarely direct, often tentative and apologetic. This dynamic is succinctly expressed in this (now deleted) tweet 'I find my twitter network to be homogenous. Tweet something that resonates, RTs happen. Tweet something out of scope. Crickets'.
Disclose shame, get attention **Or** **(Sharing is caring)**	The journal's 'rejection wall' grabbed attention, as it is an example of something we rarely talk about in public: [7] "I love telling people that I got rejected from my own journal – more than once." "I would start my own display, but not sure I have a wall big enough." "I'm tempted to do this for grant rejections. Though I fear for the deforestation effect." #MySelfDeprecation - a hashtag on twitter that made devaluing oneself a currency for attention and popularity. Amanda Todd and Monica Lewinsky are examples of the negative consequences of this pattern when it stops being in control of the user. [8]	Conceptual frame: "Self disclosure is the currency for getting attention." After a short time in the network new members see that what gains attention is emotional content. Shocking content will get attention, the attention may be positive or negative but re-tweets and replies will happen; even if you are @mentioned to be attacked, the mentions go up – e.g. "The Amalia Ulman Effect" (Friedlander 2014) - a fake Instagram life that ended up with 89,000 followers by disclosing progressively shocking life elements. Chun (2016 e.g. Loc. 2485) argues that the life of the network is predicated on an illusion of privacy; attention will only obtain if user 'reveals' that which 'should' be private. • Inclusive: central nodes encourage 'honesty' and 'authenticity' and new members open up about their life and practice. This can build relationships and shows a desire to belong. • Exclusionary: People will be pushed by the digital ecosystem to disclose more and more private detail in order to stand out. This can lead to real tragedy. In online education this leads to a kind of mock deprecation where the currency of interaction becomes 'I can fail better than you' as seen by the examples.
Ghosting [9] **Or** **(Not Offending)**	Just silence, no reply.	Conceptual Frame: "I do not have to explain my behavior online." Ghosting is the absence of a response after engaging in reciprocal conversation for a time. Stokel-Walker (2017) explains: " [people] can be fickle, and bore easily. My conversation with Iulia had been going well; she revelled in explaining the meanings of heart emoji. Then, the communication stopped. She was *still out there, happily tweeting away*, but my questions went unacknowledged. I had been ghosted." • Inclusive: it may be an attempt not to argue or offend through being silent. • Exclusionary: it can make the person being 'ghosted' feel they have been ignored or are now disliked, as they would have no knowledge of why the conversation was abruptly ended and, importantly, continue to see the 'ghostee' 'happily tweeting away' with others.
Collective Narcissism [10]	Long threads of users @mentioning themselves to make a point – often a normative rigid view about the world as it 'should be' accompanied by a	Conceptual frame: "My group is best."

[7] https://nickhop.wordpress.com/2017/06/21/my-wall-of-rejection-and-why-it-matters/
[8] https://misspteacherblog.wordpress.com/2017/06/17/internet-shame/
[9] http://www.wired.co.uk/article/social-medias-teenage-kicks
[10] https://digest.bps.org.uk/2016/12/09/theres-such-a-thing-as-collective-narcissism-and-it-might-explain-a-lot-thats-going-on-at-the-moment/

| Or

(Keeping the community alive) | hashtag that bounds said user to the collective 'they' belong to.

Hashtag conflict - between educational hashtags playing 'my group is better than yours'.

Awesome nodes – certain educational hashtags make it currency to tweet about how 'awesome' the central nodes in that hashtag are. It is not okay to tweet about problems, only about positive experiences.

Blog Rolls on blogs with headings such as: I learnt from, these people inspire me, informed by these, a fan of, my favorites. | "Collective narcissists say they believe that their group is special and superior, yet when asked what others think of their group, or when tested on implicit measures, such as how quickly they associate in-group symbols with positive words, there is evidence of collective doubt" (Jarrett 2017).[11] This definition highlights how collective doubt is submerged with the 'noise' of how 'awesome' the in-group is.

• Inclusive: this positive frame can bring people together. The intention in its use may be about establishing group identity. Symbols can be created to show belonging and aspirational 'lists' can increase motivation to work for the in-group
• Exclusionary: doubt is submerged people can leave the group without complaint. An exaggerated sense of superiority discourages those 'outside' the group from engaging. |

Table 1: Inventory of Social Media Interactional Patterns

Discussion

Our Inventory (Table 1) illustrates a plausible counter-narrative for open online education. It is difficult to offer counter-narratives to reigning ideologies as plausible deniability is always lurking within those with vested interest in maintaining its myth. As (Couldry 2013, 9) writes: "Myth works […] through ambiguity: through sometimes claiming to offer truth and at other times to be merely playful, providing what, in the George W. Bush era, was called plausible deniability". We offer the following discussion in the spirit of positively pushing back to enhance understanding and mindful that other narratives can always be overlaid on our argument. This position paper is more 'ideology critique' than discourse analysis. Fuchs (2017) argues that because "social media such as Twitter are still relatively new […] research about ideologies on social media has remained thus far limited".

The Inventory illustrates some of the actual operational norms of the internet which participants enact, often below awareness, alongside the aspirational norms of 'openness'. What we mean by 'alongside' is not inferred from quantitative data; it is a judgment based on our understanding of how the internet works, our data, and on having been persuaded by the strength of the argument that a detailed account of the actual tells us that the aspirational narrative is *not* attained and *cannot* be attained in this medium as it currently operates.

As we have observed, open education practitioners often deny the actual in order to push the ideology for the sake of social justice; we saw this in Farrow's work (2107) and our discussion of the #opened17 speaker cancellation. We have argued that the intent to push a telos of social justice as a goal of open education can silence and exclude and have offered a counter narrative that allows for alternative perspectives to be freely and openly voiced and for perceived bias and motivated reasoning to be challenged. This is based on a telos of truth

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[11] https://digest.bps.org.uk/2016/12/09/theres-such-a-thing-as-collective-narcissism-and-it-might-explain-a-lot-thats-going-on-at-the-moment/

(Haidt 2016a), which focusses on trying to understand the world rather than trying to change it and sees truth as "a process in which flawed individuals challenge each other's biased and incomplete reasoning" (Haidt, 2016b). Our analysis of communication patterns in open education (Table 1) can be seen as showing that these patterns are subject to a dialectical tension that both includes and excludes and that the aspirational narrative discussed in this paper *can* lead to undemocratic behaviours. We suggest that dialectical tension is something inherent in any complex educational landscape.

Gibbs, Rozaidi and Eisenberg (2013, 105) discuss the value of dialectical tension in communication. They argue that communicative tensions operate in a way that "requires *simultaneously attending* to both competing poles" (our italics). This is seen by Gibbs et al. (2013, 106) as different from simple contradiction; "dialectical tensions have been found to be productive in enabling the accomplishment of multiple goals since they enable organizational members to creatively attend to both poles of the opposition by transforming or transcending it and embracing both alternatives as 'both-and' options (Putnam & Boys 2006)".

Finding a new narrative that holds this ambiguity and dialectical tension may offer a different perspective for open online education that takes participants beyond polarisation. Our Inventory suggests that internet users are individually and collectively responsible for both *inclusion into* and *exclusion from* the network, not through intention but through their participation and use of the language validated by the ideology they wish to make actual. Membership depends on believing or pretending that 'total inclusion' is potentially something that can be realised. Mejias (2013, 8) sums this up: "The trope of total inclusion establishes hegemony by promoting the idea that the consensual acceptance of the terms of use […] is rewarded by the opportunity to have a presence in the network on the same terms enjoyed by everyone else." Yet, research by Bell, Mackness and Funes (2016) noted the potential for social media algorithms (e.g. those in Facebook) to ensure that not all voices are equal or included. Moreover, Edwards (2015a, 1) has written that selectiveness and exclusion is "inherent in all curricula and pedagogic approaches, however open", and points out that Derrida argues "that to open a space is to deny the other spaces that make that opening possible. The space opened depends on the spaces that are closed by the opening" (Edwards 2015a, 5). This reflects what Mejias (2013, 24) and others call the 'double affordances' of operating online where "networks make two sets of outcomes possible at one and the same time". These parallel outcomes can be seen as being in opposition to each other, but, as we

have discussed, text-mediated communication is ambiguous and lacking in context, and speaker or reader intentions can only be inferred.

With this in mind, aspirations for open education could include opening our attention through a discipline of noticing (Mason 2002), so making us more aware of what lies beneath and above our choice of mediated text online, and consideration of possible criteria for an 'ideal speech situation' (Morrison 2008, 27) in this context. This aligns with calls made by the authors we have discussed in this paper for claiming difference (Mejias 2013), pursuing truth as disconfirmation (Haidt 2016a), surfacing both aspirational and operational norms (Chun 2016) and putting an end to 'bullshit' (Selwyn 2015). Attending to operational norms alongside the aspirations for the domain could start to offer the 'new lexicon' that Selwyn (2015) suggests is needed by education that uses digital technologies. "Words are never 'only words'; they matter because they define the contours of what we can do" (Žižek 2009, 9).

A new narrative in conversation

In the spirit of speculative research, and in line with the argument made in this paper that open online education needs more critical voices and openness to opposing views to realise its aspirational narrative, we conclude this paper with a hypothetical interview in which our position and arguments (as outlined in this paper) are called into question.

- Are you saying that just because an aspiration to include sometimes excludes we should not be inclusive?

We have argued for no more than awareness that the actions we take to include have an exclusionary element when enacted on the internet because of the nature of the medium. Developing the ability to work with dialectical tension in its truest sense can enable a different kind of language; if we stop acting as if the 'total inclusion' trope is feasible at some point in the future, we may start to bring into the present both the actual and the aspirational, and drop the sense of being embattled and having to 'fight the good fight' to find utopia.

- If the actual implies that our aspirations are not achievable, should we just stop seeking to improve education through open practice?

On the contrary, we believe that factoring the actual into our aspirations can help us make more informed decisions about what it means to improve education and the role that technology should (or should not) play in seeking improvements.

- We can't abandon social justice as a telos for education! Can we?

We think that if we want to change the world we need reliable data on the world we are trying to change. If reasoning motivated by a desire for social justice stops us from getting a good map of what we want to change, our actions will not have the desired impact. Indeed, our actions are already not having the desired impact in education generally or open education specifically, hence the emerging calls for critiquing said actions.

- Of course, open education practitioners know that the internet can cause harm, don't they?

Yes, and our argument is that this is not foregrounded for fear that it may damage the aspirations we have for education. Also, the 'solution' in the guise of digital literacies development puts the burden of responsibility on the individual to manage potential harm; this is disingenuous at best and at worst it is just another example of profiteering.

- Are you not contradicting yourself when you say that we are unaware of our biases and that we hold on to beliefs that are erroneous knowingly?

The literature on cognitive bias is substantive; individuals are in the dark or in the realm of post-rationalisation when explaining their behaviour a great deal of the time. Individuals also operate emotionally, not rationally, for a proportion of the time; so as we discuss in the text, we are of two minds much of the time. Beliefs are problematic as they are resistant to change and do not shift in the light of evidence. This adds up to a non-heroic view of humanity; we are not as smart as we think we are but we can, with study, gain access to some blind spots via language analysis, for example.

- If we lose hope for education being inclusive, what's the point?

It is the strong desire for inclusivity and fairness that drives us when we hang on to an ideology despite the evidence. We, here meaning humanity, say we want the best for humanity. Yet, our actions keep showing us up. We, the authors, felt that maybe it is time to

challenge the unchallengeable: What if we reject the idea of a total inclusion future and instead work with the ways in which our actions both include and exclude?

In this position paper, we have explored the limits of the aspirational norm which accepts the feasibility of 'total inclusion' and have challenged social justice as an appropriate telos for open education. We have also suggested that what is lacking in research is an 'institutionalised disconfirmation' that seeks to study the actual operational norms of the internet. A research strategy that presupposes dialectical tension, and is more descriptive than normative may offer a richer language for open online education. Our belief, as scholars, is that more critical voices that *embody* opposing views from the outside and within a discipline are needed if we are to realise the early aspirations of digital networks for a more open, democratic education.

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