

Introduction to the Minitrack on Culture, Identity & Inclusion in Digital and Social Media

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Abstract

Technology-facilitated social media present opportunities for new frontiers of research as they interact with cultures, identities, and diversity. As digital inequalities are on the rise globally, the current pandemic makes understanding the internet and the related myriad divides more vital than ever. Recognizing the kaleidoscope and intersectionality of culture, gender and identity, this minitrack presents innovative research across a wide range of methods and subjects. Exploring how social media technologies become interconnected with and embedded in existing socio-cultural contexts is essential to assess how these platforms affect key power dynamics in society. The work here sets the scene for analyzing better how digital and social media can foster (or serve as hindering factors for) diversity and inclusion in multiple settings, especially in a world coping with renewed calls for social justice and a pandemic likely to have long-term impacts. In sum, this minitrack highlights papers from a range of disciplines and methodologies that focus on the three I's of internet, identity, and inclusion as they intersect with transformational social media and perhaps now more than ever impact human lives.

1. Introduction

One of the understudied and vital aspects of Digital and Social Media today is its relation to culture(s), identity(ies), access, and inclusion. As digital technologies continue to emerge and the current pandemic makes them increasingly central to many aspects of life including work, education, and politics, the interrelationships among such technologies and identities at the individual, group, and additional levels as well as cultures must be examined. There is the nuanced potential for both inclusion and exclusion.

2. Minitrack Topics and Themes

The papers presented here serve as exemplars of this cutting-edge research community and reflect a range of methodologies. These works incorporate and highlight the voices of groups and individuals whose lives have been profoundly impacted by technology but are seldom heard in research. Potential topics for this minitrack included:

- Inter-cultural and Cross-cultural use of Social Media
- Crowdsourcing Processes and Inclusion Issues
- Designing Social Media for Inclusion
- Social media, identity and collective action
- Gendered Social Media
- The construction and circulation of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion and disability through the use of social media
- Online Harassment
- Identity Enactment, Adoption, and Policing
- Reproduction of biases
- Governance and Rules in Action
- Aging and Social Media
- Inter-generational use of Social Media
- Impact and influence of social media on diversity
- Social Media, MOOCS, & Inclusion
- Social Media & Implicit Bias
- Social Media, Culture & Change/Social Innovation
- Social Media & Intersectionality
- Social media, Access and E-Learning
- Social media, accessibility and digital disability
- Social Media, Disruptive Innovation, and Capacity-Building For All

3. Sessions and Papers At A Glance

As co-chairs of the HICSS minitrack on Culture, Identity and Inclusion, which is part of the Track on Digital and Social Media, we are delighted to share this

year's papers with you. Having received a record number of submissions for this year's edition of the minitrack, we are able to present seven papers that highlight various key dimensions of this dynamic research community.

Two of the seven papers tackle head on social media in its complex relationships to racial and social justice. "Examining the Social Media Antecedents of Racial Justice: Evidence from Twitter" presents a rigorously researched answer to questions regarding social media factors that influence the development of a sense of racial justice. Adding to a growing body of visual research in digital politics and activism, a second paper, "Doing Visual Activism: A Practice-based Approach to the Study of Visual Media Use by Kia'i Mauna Kea" focuses on how a specific social action group uses Instagram to gain political traction.

Turning to the issue of how social media use can foster inclusion, three papers explore the experience of marginalized and potentially vulnerable people with these technologies. The first two papers focus specifically on refugees. "Technology As A Sense of Power: Exploring How ICT Contributes to the Social Inclusion of Refugees in Germany" examines how Syrian refugees in Germany use social media and to what extent this usage fosters empowerment and social inclusion. Examining websites dedicated to providing answers to refugee questions, the paper entitles, "Thanks for Your Help!—The Value of Q and A websites for Refugee Integration" finds that while such websites provide information, they do less to foster inclusion and community building. The third paper, "Content and Social Network Analyses of Depression-Related Tweets of African American College Students," focuses on an identity subset and provides data that can help design social media interventions for such students.

The two final papers in this year's minitrack examine the role of social media in promoting access to scientific communication – a key issue during the ongoing pandemic – and address social media and identity writ large respectively. "The Frequency of Using Websites and Social Media by Various Age Groups To Form Opinions about Scientific Findings from the European Context" covers five European countries and three different age groups (18-34, 25-54, and 55+). This paper's findings regarding the various age groups use of social media can help in combating misinformation. Finally, "Identity In The Digital Age: A Review of Information Technology Identity (ITID) Research In Information Systems" provides the first systematic review of identity-related literature in this field.

These papers, taken together, along with the extraordinary context we now are experiencing both locally and globally, set the scene for crafting a powerful research agenda ahead for this minitrack and our field. As Co-chairs, we encourage vibrant discussion and, indeed, co-creation of our community's research opportunities ahead. This is a particularly compelling time, one marked by growing inequalities and divides, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and by social and racial justice calls. The interactions with social media related to culture, identity and inclusion are becoming even more central as is the concomitant need for rigorous research and analysis. Crucially, many of the papers in this year's minitrack include the voices of marginalized people and communities, which too often have been excluded from research so far but whose meaningful participation is essential for realizing the inclusive potential of social and digital media going forward.

4. Towards a Research Community on Digital Identity and Social Inclusion

This minitrack continues to have tremendous potential to catalyze the creation of a robust, interdisciplinary research community within HICSS focused on the intersection of identity, culture, access, and inclusion. There are many opportunities for continued expansion and for serving as a valuable resource for the broader HICSS community.

We need to remember (as do papers in this minitrack) the culture kaleidoscope (the myriad levels of culture from small group and occupational to organizational, interorganizational and national) as well as the intersectionality of culture, gender and identity. Similar to the culture kaleidoscope, there are also multiple and complex identities including cultural, age, generational, racial, ability, and gender identities. Most importantly, the intersections among social media and the culture and identity kaleidoscopes presage additional research agendas, as we examine social media usages and their outcomes in myriad contexts. The papers in this minitrack set the scene for understanding better how digital and social media can foster (or sometimes hinder) diversity and inclusion in multiple settings in a world that is increasingly more local and global at the same time.

Emerging technologies including blockchain, the Internet of Things, Robotics, and Artificial Intelligence present cutting edge opportunities for new social-media related research, as these technologies interact with cultures, identities, and diversity or inclusion over time. What shapes will these interactions take in the future;

and what are the implications including the ethical of such trajectories for research and practice?

The overall future trajectory of our field itself is also open and provides plentiful research challenges. The likely continuation of technology-facilitated collaboration processes in the post-pandemic future and the trends of multistakeholder participation in policy-making pose significant research questions for those studying identity, inclusion and social media. Can social media foster information flow in multistakeholder settings? Who has access? Real access remains an

issue. As noted earlier, developments in media-related technologies as well as the interstices among internet, social media, and network neuroscience highlight rich research arenas for future work. More attention needs to be focused on rigorous yet appropriate research methodologies. There is an opportunity for the use of experimental methods, indigenous research methods, and participatory research. These developments presage increased collaboration across disciplines with a focus on internet, identity, and inclusion as they intersect with transformational social media and, indeed, impact human lives.