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 topics. 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

The study of Digital and Social Media today often overlooks its relation to culture(s), identity(ies), access, and inclusion. As digital technologies continue to emerge and the 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 large number of submissions for this year's edition of the minitrack, we are able to present six papers that highlight various key dimensions of this dynamic research community.

Two papers provide a comparative perspective between India and the U.S. or North America. In “The Impact of Culture on Online Toxic Disinhibition: Trolling in India and the USA,” Pnina Fichman and Maanvi Rathi analyze trolling in comparative perspective, exploring Twitter posts and concentrating on both gender and national culture. Focusing on “Understanding Toxicity In Multiplayer Games: The Roles of National Culture and Demographic Variables”, Bastian Kordyaka and colleagues highlight significant cultural differences, as well as age and education differences in their findings.

Another paper, “Intersectional Identities and Machine Learning: Illuminating Language Biases in Twitter Algorithms”, written by Aidan Fitzsimons also looks at tweets. Here, the authors study those tweets annotated as “abusive,” hateful,” or “spam” and analyze whether there may be race and gender associations with non-normal language identification.

Turning to Chinese culture and social media, Yinan Sun and Dan Suthers, in their paper “Examining Culture and Technological Change: A Study of Cultural Affordances on We Chat” use interview methodology and a grounded theory approach to explore culture’s connections with toxic behavior on social media.

The final two papers focus on online learning. In “Understanding Cyberslacking Intention During Covid 19 Online Classes: An fsQCA Analysis”, Jinnatul Raihan Mumu and colleagues use a fuzzy dataset for qualitative comparative analysis to examine cyberslacking among college students and include a gender dimension. Moving to a focus on informal learning, Zixing Shen and colleagues explore “Educative Sensemaking on Social Media: An Empirical Investigation of Informal Learning on YouTube”. Their findings have implications for improved design of informal learning videos to foster sensemaking and informal learning.

These papers, taken together, along with the extraordinary context we continue to experience 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, several papers in this year’s minitrack focus on culture and on gender, yielding data-informed insights and opportunities.

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 and experiences. 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 a broad range of 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, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual and Augmented Reality 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? We look forward next year to more submissions grappling with these challenges.

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? Equitable 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. As we have argued over the years in this minitrack, to truly understand the implications of new technologies we must also focus on and work with people. Here, there are opportunities to use 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.