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

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Abstract

Technology facilitated social media offer opportunities for new frontiers of research as they interact with cultures, identities, and diversity. 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 in this minitrack sets the scene for understanding better how digital and social media can foster (or serve as hindering factors for) diversity and inclusion in multiple settings in a world that is increasingly local and global at the same time. In sum, this minitrack includes research 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, indeed, 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, 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

This minitrack invited proposals 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, indeed, impact human lives.

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 Intergenerational Social Media Use
- 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 & 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. The following five papers highlight various and key dimensions of this dynamic research community.

The first paper ("Cross-Cultural Differences of User Connections in Various Social Networks") examines inclusion/exclusion in terms of individual users' social media connections (on three different platforms) to those with cross-country vs. intra-country connections. In contrast, the second paper ("Coping Strategies for Youth Suffering from Online Interpersonal Rejection") focuses in on the individual young consumer of social media and provides a rich qualitative analysis of what it means to be a recipient of online rejection. Following the first two papers, our min-track will innovate with a 'Mini-Ignite' session, allowing HICSS participants an opportunity (in a two minute, impromptu format) to share their research in progress and/or identify a gap in the field.

Moving back to a network focus, the third paper ("Social Media and the Black Travel Community") highlights a network crafted to ensure inclusion in a broader setting of explicit and/or implicit bias. It studies those who are excluded and the ways in which they utilize online social media to "subvert the architecture of the Internet…to evolve autonomous (online) spaces into liberated spaces." Similarly, the fourth paper ("Media Accessibility Policy In Theory and Reality: Empirical Outreach to Audio Description Users") provides a snapshot of another set of users, those who are visually impaired or blind. Here the research explores the relationship between a technology type and a group of excluded users. Surveying visually impaired and blind users to identify responses to audio description technologies, this paper helps us to understand to what extent, if any, a specific on-line technology type can improve the accessibility of visual media for this group. The final paper in this minitrack ("Technology and Grassroots Inclusion in Global Governance: A Survey Study of Disability Rights Advocates and Effective Participation") considers whether technological solutions can help the global disability community participate more effectively in the U.N. system and other relevant international forums. This paper discusses a global survey study of Disabled People's Organizations' leaders that focused on the use of webconferencing technology and social media platforms vis-à-vis local cultures and disability identity.

4. Towards a research community on digital identity and social inclusion

This minitrack has tremendous potential to catalyze the creation of a robust, interdisciplinary research community within HICSS focused on the intersection of identity, culture, access, and inclusion. Given the growth in the use of digital and social media, 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 mobile technologies, the Internet of Things, Robotics, or 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 social, technical, ethical, and political implications of such trajectories for research and practice?

The overall future of our field itself is also open and provides plentiful research challenges. Continuation of technology-facilitated collaboration processes and the trends of multistakeholder participation in policy-making pose significant research questions for those studying identity, inclusion and social media. 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. These developments presage increased collaboration across disciplines with a focus on internet, identity, and inclusion as they intersect with transformational social media and, indeed, as noted earlier, impact human lives.