

Call for Abstracts: Mini-Conference on Digital Sociology

Eastern Sociological Society

New York City

February 26-March 1, 2015

Millennium Broadway Hotel

In keeping with the Eastern Sociological Society's theme of "Crossing Borders", the Digital Sociology Mini-Conference seeks papers that address the many borders crossed – national, disciplinary, theoretical, methodological, epistemological – in digital ways of knowing. As Daniels and Feagin (2011) have observed digital technologies have offered both challenges and exciting possibilities for the ways in which sociologists do their work. Yet, as Lupton (2014) notes, the field of sociology has only just begun to take account of the broader implications that the digital has raised about the "practice of sociology and social research itself." Similarly, Clough and colleagues (2014) suggest that the "datalogical turn" underway in the social sciences poses not only serious challenges to sociological methodologies, but requires more robust theorizing of the social itself.

Digital Sociology as a field is gaining more traction in Australia, Canada and the UK than the US, but the burgeoning field of digital sociology is still "before the beginning" in theorizing and articulating the digital turn for the social sciences (Wynn, 2009). Despite the fact that many of the social implications of the Internet were articulated more than a decade ago by leading sociologists such as Castells, DiMaggio and colleagues, Sassen, and Wellman, (Castells, 1997; DiMaggio, et al., 2001; Sassen, 2002; Wellman, 2001), North American sociology overall has been less concerned with defining its relationship to the digital and has instead been content to cede this terrain to those working in communication, cultural and media studies, library and information science, and journalism.

We maintain that the field of sociology has insights to offer the questions that emerge from the proliferation of digital technologies and that a sociology without a thorough understanding of the digital will be a discipline that is irrelevant to the most pressing issues of the 21st century. The digital spaces where we increasingly interact, learn, and work lack fundamental sociological frameworks that might help us better understand such spaces (McMillan Cottom, 2014). Sociologists who wish to make sense of the social and the digital are faced with developing research methods that can account for lived realities, as well as articulate structural shifts in the nature of labor, economy, politics, and governance (Gregory, 2014). Therefore, we are convening this Mini-Conference on Digital Sociology as a way of sharing new forms of knowledge creation, connecting sociologists engaged in this work, and strategizing the future of "digital sociology" within the discipline in ways that "cross borders" of North American sociology.

We will consider abstracts on a wide range of topics, including - but not limited to - the following themes:

- **Digital Sociological Methods:** How do traditional, analog sociological methods become digital? Are there new, “born digital” sociological methods? Will big data replace survey methodology? What are ethics of doing digital sociology?
- **Critical Theories of the Digital Itself:** How have we theorized the digital? What challenges does the digital pose to epistemologies underlying sociological methods?
- **Digital Structures, Digital Institutions:** The datafication of everyday life is posing unique challenges to the composition of social institutions and giving rise to new instantiations of education, finance, labor, and governance. How do we theorize, study, and conceptualize the recomposition of these institutions?
- **Identity, Community, and Networks:** How do sociological concepts of micro and macro, personal and public, “front stage” and “back stage,” evolve as digital and mobile technologies increasingly blur these boundaries? How do case studies of networks further the field of digital sociology?
- **Race, Racism and Digitally Mediated Spaces:** How do existing sociological concepts of race and racism expand our understanding of digital diasporas, racist video games, regulating hate speech in a global era, hashtag activism, racial justice social movements and racist countermovements, the ways that racialization “happens” in digitally mediated spaces?
- **Queering Digital Technology:** How do we deploy – and queer - sociological theories to make sense of the twined realities that historically marginalized groups (like LGBTQ people) use digital technologies to connect across geographic distances, share resources and to work for social change while simultaneously experiencing the expanded practices of digital surveillance, loss of privacy, and identity-based harassment, even leading to violence?

We encourage submissions from scholars at all levels, and are particularly enthusiastic to support the work of graduate students and early career researchers. We welcome submissions for individual papers and for entirely constituted sessions. The organizers share a commitment to creating a field that honors diverse voices, and as such are excited to see scholars from groups that are typically underrepresented in sociology. When proposing entirely constituted sessions, please keep this commitment to diverse voices in mind.

Because we aim to foster dialogue beyond the parameters of the meeting, papers presented will be considered for inclusion in an open-access, peer-reviewed volume on Digital Sociology. If you have any questions about proposals, topics, or session ideas please contact one of the organizers: Karen Gregory (kgregory@ccny.cuny.edu), Tressie McMillan Cottom (tcottom@emory.edu) or Jessie Daniels (jdaniels@gc.cuny.edu).

For papers, please submit an abstract of no more than **250 words**, as well as the title of the paper, name of presenter, institutional affiliation and contact details. For wholly constituted sessions, please include a short description of the concept behind your session, and then

include all of the abstracts (along with names and affiliations of presenters) in one document. Please email your submissions to: ESSDigitalSociology@gmail.com. Proposals not accepted for the Mini-Conference will be submitted to the ESS general call for submissions.

Deadline: October 1, 2014

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Clough, Patricia, Karen Gregory, Benjamin Haber, and R. Joshua Scannell. "The Datalogical Turn." Pp. 182-206, in *Nonrepresentational Methodologies: Re-Envisioning Research*, ed. Phillip Vannini (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2014).

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