

# Information and Marginality: Ethical Issues

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## Abstract

The purpose of this session on the topic of “Interaction and Engagement” is community building and an exploration of the ethical dimensions of information and marginality. We will examine challenges, methodologies and theoretical frameworks related to work with immigrants, and other underrepresented communities. We will use Performative Social Science (PSS) (combining oral history and auto ethnography) (Guiney Yallop, Vallejo de Lopez, & Wright, 2008) to tackle some potential limitations that stem from our privileged positions and ability to border cross in both the physical and metaphorical sense. Our goal is to foster the creation and dissemination of new knowledge in order to investigate deeper information issues and challenges with underrepresented groups. The session will appeal to scholars, researchers and practitioners interested in development work, digital divides, digital inclusion, underrepresented communities, marginality and immigration studies.

**Keywords:** ethics, marginality, engaged research, underrepresented communities, immigration

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## 1 Introduction

This workshop is on “Interaction and Engagement” as community building, an exploration of the ethical dimensions of information and marginality. We will examine challenges, methodologies and theoretical frameworks related to work with immigrants, and other underrepresented communities.

We will use Performative Social Science (PSS) (combining oral history and auto ethnography) (Guiney Yallop, Vallejo de Lopez, & Wright, 2008) to tackle some potential limitations that stem from our privileged positions and ability to border cross in both the physical and metaphorical sense. Our goal is to foster the creation and dissemination of new knowledge in order to investigate deeper information issues and challenges with underrepresented groups. The session will appeal to scholars, researchers and practitioners interested in development work, digital divides, digital inclusion, underrepresented communities, marginality and immigration studies.

Dr. Gomez, a talented group facilitator, acting as a “talk show host”, will moderate the event. It will be organized in three parts (approximately 30 minutes each).

## 1.1 Workshop Part I

Participating panelists will share specific questions/issues that they have faced when dealing with sensitive immigration and information related work (2-3 minutes each person). The goal of this exercise is to sensitize the audience to the kinds of theoretical, methodological, and ethical problems and complexities that emerge in information-related research and issues of marginality (Hughes, 1949).

Questions that they can draw on can include but are not limited to:<sup>1</sup>

- In what ways to my racial and cultural backgrounds influence how I experience the world, what I emphasize in my research, and how I evaluate and interpret others and their experiences? How do I know?
- What is the historical landscape of my racial and cultural identity and heritage? How do I know?
- What are the cultural and racial heritage and the historical landscape of the participants in the study? How do I know?
- In what ways do my research participants' racial and cultural backgrounds influence how they experience the world? How do I know?
- How do I negotiate and balance my own interests and research agendas with those of my research participants, which may be inconsistent with or diverge from mine? How do I know?
- What are and have been some social, political, historical, and contextual nuances and realities that have shaped my research participants' racial and cultural ways or systems of knowing, both past and present? How consistent and inconsistent are these realities with mine? How do I know?

Additional Questions:

- Talk about a time in which you realized you were an outsider with regards to information (at the margins).
- What did it mean to you at that time?
- How did you feel? What did you do about it in the research context?
- How did you resolve it?
- How do you approach it now when faced with border crossing challenges in research?
- Experiences with alternative methodologies to deal with insider/outsider navigation?

As the topics are being discussed, key themes will be captured and displayed on a computer screen for the audience to see. This will be important for the next part.

## 1.2 Workshop Part II

The Moderator will invite all panel and audience participants to discuss one of the key topics related to Information and Immigration, per the preceding discussion. The points presented on the computer screen will serve as starting points for these discussions. The panel participants will serve as discussion facilitators during the small group discussions.

Tentative topics include:

- Sharing Data Collection Experiences
- Ethics
- Developing new methodologies along the line of Elfreda Chatman's work (i.e., Chatman, 1992)
- Pros and cons of Translocal Analysis (Cvetkovich & Kellner, 1997)
- Local Development (Engaged Scholarship, Partnerships)
- Breaking down walls and seeing blind spots

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<sup>1</sup> (Questions1-6 based on Milner (2007))

### 1.3 Workshop Part III - Plenary Discussion

The Moderator will elicit some of the key issues discussed in each group, and facilitate a wrap-up discussion with the panel participants. The panel participants will serve as boundary spanners during wrap-up session, expanding and connecting ideas discussed in small groups to larger concepts. Notes will be taken in real-time on a Google Docs spreadsheet that all participants can access and can also be shared via Twitter for people outside of the panel to add information and interact with participants (Quan-Haase, 2013).

## 2 Conclusion

**Breaking down walls** is the perfect theme for this interactive and engaging session that fosters the power of reflection to navigate the complex space of Marginality and Information. The focus of our proposal is to create a dynamic, engaging and thought provoking session to reflect and develop skills as an iSchool community, particularly those working with underrepresented communities. The provocative nature of the topics of margins, transnational immigration, border crossing (physical and metaphorical), legality, fear and context in this space will certainly interest members of the iSchool community interested pushing the boundaries of scholarship as we take on storytelling modes to reflect on our confines and privilege as we navigate the delicate area to see what is behind our own research walls.

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