The parallel rise of Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, and the so-called alt-right suggests that in 2018, political realities still vary significantly by race and gender. As ever-greater shares of our time are spent online, it is important to ask whether these realities are mirrored in the digital public sphere or whether—and how—they differ. How do women and/or minorities experience political interactions online? What is the relationship between social media / technology, the representation of women and/or minorities in the public sphere, and democratic governance? How have digital media, once lauded as “liberation technologies,” become efficient tools to harass and silence already marginalized groups?

WORKSHOP THEME

The Media & Democracy program at the Social Science Research Council invites submission of abstracts for a research workshop to be held at the University of Texas at Austin on April 25–26, 2019. This workshop will convene social scientists and humanities scholars whose work explores the intersection of race, gender, and the digital public sphere. Substantive research themes may include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

Toxicity and incivility online:
- Are women and minorities more frequent targets of toxicity and inflammatory speech online (compared to other internet users)? What role does anonymity play in explaining variation in the intensity and targets of online toxicity/incivility? To what extent have targeted groups been able to carve out “safe spaces” online?

Representation and the public sphere:
- Online spaces can simultaneously enable speech by previously unheard voices and be hostile to underrepresented minorities. How has the overall representation of voices in the public sphere changed in the era of the internet and social media? What are the consequences for public discourse and democracy?

Coordinated harassment campaigns:
- How does the prevalence and impact of targeted harassment compare to past efforts to silence minority groups from asserting themselves in the public sphere? How have online tools of harassment evolved and changed over time? How centrally coordinated/encouraged are social media harassment campaigns? What can be done to reduce their prevalence or impact?

TO APPLY

To apply, please send the following materials to mdapplications@ssrc.org by December 10. Please include “Application for Race, Gender, and Toxicity Online” in the subject line.

- Current C.V.
- An abstract of 250–500 words, describing your proposed paper submission