

Diversity Statement

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As a faculty member, I understand that it is not only essential to contribute to research, but also to strive for the betterment of the wider community. I am aware of my privilege and am mindful that my choices when in a position of power can help or hurt others. I try to remind myself of this privilege and how minor gestures can help many people. I find this part of the job highly motivating. I am grateful to many wonderful people and initiatives that helped me become the person I am today, and I am indebted to return the favor in multiple ways. From my student to postdoctoral life, I have taken different roles that reflect my commitment towards service.

One of the major issues with computing is the severe under representation of women. I am aware of the lack of women in my collaborators and actively pursue supporting women in my research, with minor steps like being aware of and citing work by women academics, and providing support through providing feedback and mentoring. I am especially energized when contributing to projects that support excellence among people who aren't commonly included in academia — people who I am excited to see grow personally as their perspectives and creativity transform their institutions and their fields.

My research interests also allow me to study and develop solutions that promote diversity and fairness. Hate speech and misinformation, especially in my research in the Indian context typically target minorities and marginalized communities. In my research, I want to understand how we can build technology and make sure information ecosystems in the global south do not end up just as amplifiers of the voices of the majority (or propaganda). I am passionate about research on inequalities and how access to technology can help empower these marginalized communities.

Engagement with the research community. I believe reproducibility is important, so I often release my code and data for public, and I also contribute to open source projects and creating tools when ever possible to enable my research to be practically helpful. In addition to research, I take a fair load of community service. I have been a senior PC member and actively participating in organizing one of the top conferences in computational social science, ICWSM — as a tutorial co-chair in 2017, as the workshop co-chair in 2020 and the sponsorship chair in 2021. I'm also a reviewer for around half a dozen major conferences in computer science and computational social science.

Engagement with society. I make it a point that most of my research has a public facing component that engages with an ordinary audience. I find this activity fulfilling and at the same time challenging because it forces me to make technical content accessible in non-technical terms. This could be in terms of making prototypes of our research publicly available, to engaging with the media through press releases or interviews. My work has been widely cited by popular international media,¹ and I also wrote a piece myself in India's second largest

¹<https://users.ics.aalto.fi/kiran/media.html>

English language news paper, The Hindustan times on the role of WhatsApp in elections.² I was invited to talk about policy related issues facing closed messaging platforms by the Atlantic Council in Washington DC at the StratCom DC conference and as a panelist at the Online News Association conference.

Engagement with industry. I believe that engaging with industry, especially when working on high stakes problems like misinformation helps academic research in two ways: 1) industry allows bringing academic research into practice, thereby amplifying the impact of academic research; and 2) as an academic, I also work on evaluating and critiquing the decisions made by industry partners, to help shape policies taken up by the industry. My research constantly engages with industry in both these aspects. In my industry and nonprofit experience, I have created and chosen to work in environments that value diversity. This is evident from my collaboration with NGOs like Equality Labs,³ an NGO working on providing voice to marginalized communities in India and the Polis Project⁴ on documenting hate speech against minorities on WhatsApp in India. We collaborate closely on a report detailing hate speech against minorities on WhatsApp in India.

Diversity Issues. My predoctoral studies in India, doctoral studies in Europe, and post-doctoral studies in USA, allowed me to interact with diverse researchers worldwide, and understand the issues of diversity and the importance of creating an inclusive culture. Being a minority myself in the United States, I understand how important it is to encourage diversity. If it wasn't for this encouragement from my mentors, I would not have succeeded myself.

As a faculty member, I will strive for increased diversity in my research group as well as build a support network to ensure the success of minority members. I will continue to engage with my department, university, research community, industry and society on the important issues discussed above.

²<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/decoding-fact-free-world-of-whatsapp/story-LQ79X9600KrGo7MHuW3TMP.html>

³<https://www.equalitylabs.org/>

⁴<https://www.thepolisproject.com/>