Abstract:

Gender stereotypes are an important hurdle on the way to gender equality, but it is difficult to quantify the problem, as stereotypical believes are often subconscious or not openly expressed. User-generated content (UGC) opens up novel opportunities to overcome such challenges, as the anonymity of users in online discussion forums may eliminate social pressure. In this paper, we use a unique dataset of six million anonymous comments from a major German discussion forum to study the prevalence of gender stereotypes in UGC, and how gender stereotypes are affected by the #MeToo-movement. Using an innovative combination of modern machine learning techniques, we show that men are much more often discussed in the context of work or money than women, and that women are much more often discussed in the context of family, home, and physical appearance than men. The impact of the #MeToo-movement is substantial but constricted: while women are less likely to be mentioned in the context of domestic topics (family and home) after the movement, gender stereotypes in other domains persist.