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2023 Research Advisor Profiles and Projects

Daniel L. Gardner, PhD

Grand Challenges Initiative Postdoctoral Fellow
Grand Challenges Initiative, Fowler School of Engineering
Chapman University

About Me

I conduct interdisciplinary research at the intersection of Human-Computer Interaction, Media Studies, and Social Science. I study how features on the periphery of digital media and games can enable or enforce a variety of inequitable interactions and outcomes that disproportionately affect historically underprivileged groups. I aim to provide analytical tools and resources that help designers and researchers alike better reflect on the media artifacts they create or observe. I practice collaborative/participatory methods to amplify the perspectives of those least represented in—or with the least access to—digital media, platforms, and technologies. I often use digital game software and platforms as a microcosm for examining broader socio-technical phenomena. Currently, my work primarily focuses on leveraging collaborative research-through-design to explore more inclusive modes of character and identity construction in games and virtual spaces, and more accessible controllers. I received my PhD in Informatics from University of California Irvine, but I have an MA in STS and a BA in Anthropology.



I began working with i3 in 2017 as a teaching fellow, co-teaching the research methods module. I served as a research mentor in 2018 and 2019, though continue to collaborate with some members of those teams.

Research Interests

- Observing, identifying, and critiquing systematic *defaults*, assumptions, or patterns of exclusion (most recently/commonly having to do with representation in media, accessibility, and access controls/privacy/data).
- Amplifying the voices of those most excluded by media/systems to identify opportunities for intervention.
- Co-/counter-designing with those most excluded by media/systems to create critical design prototypes and principles.



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Potential Projects

Depends on the team. I offer topical, methodological, and logistical/project management expertise but, ultimately, I encourage my teams to develop their own research questions. Again, topically, I tend to do research related to representation in media, accessibility, privacy & security, but have also done work related to teaching design and on communication in massive chats (e.g., in streaming contexts). Methodologically, I rely on a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods (though not advanced quant), and have relied on ethnography, surveys, interviews, content analysis, hermeneutics or close-reading, and participatory and/or collaborative approaches. Rather than suggest projects I think we could do, I will briefly describe the projects my previous teams have done:

1) 2018 - “Skins for Sale” or “Having Skin in the Game”

This team researched representation related to the purchase of “skins” in games (alternative appearances for characters), and the premium they can put on diversity. They began by publishing a literature review but followed up with a survey project eventually resulting in a journal publication. The literature review largely had to do with identifying some of the more critical dimensions of the practice of skins for sale in relation to the medium of digital games itself. Their survey findings, on the other hand, identified statistically significant differences in the experiences of diverse players in relation to skins, and they analyzed how this influences the medium and diverse players.

2) 2019 – “First Impressions”

This team chose to study *impressions* of representation on digital game covers, and the influence these covers may have on diverse participant experiences. This team developed a unique form of survey that asked participants to collectively conduct content analysis and reflection on a series of collections of covers of best-selling games. Their study moves beyond previous scholarship identifying poor representation on covers and IN-games to consider how diverse individuals *interpret* and *respond* to that representation. They also observed a variety of significantly different perspectives, feelings, and practices related to covers between white participants who felt represented, and participants of color who on average did not.

Whether by coincidence or not, both these teams developed projects related to representation in games and I am happy to mentor a team interested in some aspect of these or adjacent topics. However, I am also open to mentoring projects related to inequitable interactions with games or digital media and technology more broadly, or in adjacent spaces.



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Morgan Klaus Scheuerman, PhD

Postdoctoral Associate

Identity Lab, University of Colorado Boulder

About Me

I am a postdoctoral associate in the Identity Lab in Information Science at CU Boulder researching identity representations in technical infrastructures. I recently graduated with my PhD in Information Science at CU Boulder, where I was supported by a Microsoft Research PhD Fellowship. Broadly, I am interested in identity theory, infrastructure studies, AI ethics, and digital identity. I focus primarily on machine learning infrastructures that operationalize human identity characteristics, like gender and race. In particular, I explore the real-world implications of machine learning for those with historically marginalized identities. I am both queer and a first generation college student and greatly value working with students from historically marginalized backgrounds. You can find more about me and my research at: <https://www.morgan-klaus.com/>



Research Interests

- Responsible / ethical AI
- Representations and experiences of marginalized / stigmatized groups
- Human values in technical systems
- Data infrastructures
- Data work (annotation / collection) and labor rights
- Exploring technical harms
- Intersectionality and positionality

Potential Projects

Below are some broad areas I am interested in exploring. However, I am open to research projects which fall under the Research Interests highlighted above. I encourage i3ers to come up with their own research project ideas. I primarily use qualitative methods, such as interviews, text/content analysis, and ethnographic observations. I would also be interested in advising projects that use design methods, such as participatory design or user evaluations.

1. Exploring methods for improving identity representations in machine learning datasets

Identity representations (e.g., gender, race) in datasets used to train machine learning systems (e.g., facial recognition, Chat GPT) often rely on static, discrete, binary representations. Yet these



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representations are laden with the subjective assumptions of the humans who design them, like engineers and annotators. What would it mean to design datasets differently than the current approaches? Are there more inclusive, contextual, malleable ways to design datasets? This project might focus on uncovering ways for designing better datasets through, for example: (1) design jams and/or interviews with affected marginalized groups; (2) engaging data workers to understand their perspectives on data design; or (3) engaging with critical theories (e.g., queer theory, feminist studies) to conceptualize new methods of dataset design.

2. Identifying perspectives on AI of different public stakeholder groups

The design of AI systems ultimately affects the people such systems are deployed on. From schools to entertainment apps to airports, AI systems are being deployed everywhere. In this project, we might focus more broadly on the general public (e.g., through comments on news articles) or we might focus more narrowly on specific groups (e.g., through interviews with domain experts like TSA or with identity groups like LGBTQ people). Ideally, we would focus on a specific domain of AI, like facial recognition or chatbots. The goal of the project would be to identify concerns and desires that technologists should consider and design for.

3. Understanding the technical needs and practices of stigmatized communities

Technical systems - from AI to social media platforms - are often critiqued for serving a generalized "user" while ignoring communities historically at the margins. As a result, many groups feel underrepresented and misunderstood, and often adopt practices for mitigating harms and building communities. This project would focus on exploring the technical needs and practices of a stigmatized community. Though a broad topic, I am particularly interested in the experiences of transgender individuals, sex workers, and individuals struggling with addiction.

4. Misc. identity projects

If the team was interested in exploring identity (e.g., gender, race) representations in other technical domains, I would also be excited.



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REALITY LAB RESEARCH ADVISORS

Earl W. Huff, Jr., Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

School of Information, University of Texas at Austin

About Me

I am an Assistant Professor of Social Justice Informatics in the School of Information at UT Austin. I co-direct the Research on Equity, Access, and inclusion in Technology and society Lab (REALITY Lab). I earned my Ph.D. in Human Centered Computing from Clemson University and my M.S. and B.S. in Computer Science from Rowan University. My research interests focus on improving the equity and inclusion of technology for underserved populations such as marginalized racial and ethnic groups, older adults, and persons with disabilities, by using human-centered approaches and methods. Specifically, I leverage methods in participatory and interaction design to include the voices of all end users and stakeholders in the design and development of new and existing technologies to improve their usability and accessibility. My current research examines the accessibility educational technology for higher education and online learning for learners with disabilities. A secondary focus looks at broadening participation in user experience (UX) design, with an emphasis on accessible user experiences. I develop learning materials and approaches to introduce topics of inclusive design and accessible computing in K-16 to increase the awareness of and interest in career opportunities in UX.



Research Interests

- UX/UI design
- Social Justice informatics
- Accessibility, assistive technology, and accessible technology
- Racial equity in STEM education
- Human-centered design of equity and inclusive technology
- E-learning and e-learning technologies



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Angela D. R. Smith, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

School of Information, University of Texas at Austin

About Me

I am an Assistant Professor at the School of Information at the University of Texas at Austin. I received my doctoral degree from Northwestern University in Technology & Social Behavior, a joint degree in Communications and Computer Science. My research is in the field of Human-Computer Interaction, Computer-Supported Cooperative Work, and Information Sciences. My current research explores how critical and intersectional theoretical lenses can inform an assets-based participatory design of technologies to support historically marginalized groups, such as individuals of color and individuals experiencing houselessness, in pursuing sustainable, emancipatory transformations and socially responsible technology experiences. Through qualitative, participatory design methods, I seek to co-construct knowledge, conscientization, and design interventions with my populations.



Research Interests

- Cultural computing
- Racial justice & equity
- Social justice informatics
- Critical Race Theory & Black Feminist Thought ideologies

Potential Projects

The REALITY Lab conducts research in the broad area of social justice informatics. Projects will fall into one or more of our four research thrusts: accessibility, community-engaged research, cultural computing, and user experience. Potential research may fall into one (or a combination) of the following areas: video games, education, and A.I. ethics.

1. **AI & Ethics:** Qualitative study probing AI ethics among traditionally excluded individuals – e.g., Black, Indigenous, People of Color. We are flexible to the types of individuals included as part of the study as long as you can demonstrate how they are underrepresented.

Potential questions of interest:

- How might AI negatively impact traditionally excluded individuals?
- In what ways can we design AI to be more inclusive and equitable?
- How might we derive solutions to design more inclusive and equitable AI?



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- What does ethical AI look like?

2. **Critical Consciousness & Housing Insecurity:** Qualitative study exploring how we can use critical consciousness as a lens to destigmatize and de-otherize individuals experiencing housing insecurity through a transformation game. Typically used in education, critical consciousness is a theory that reviews our sociopolitical understandings of the world to understand and act against oppressive forces. There is flexibility in the design of the research activities – interviews, walkthrough, diary, etc.

Potential questions of interest:

- In what ways does a homeless simulation game help individuals think about housing insecurity?
- What aspects of critical consciousness are most salient in shifting perspectives about this population?
- To what extent can individuals learn about housing insecurity from simulating homelessness?
- What educational value can be imprinted in simulation games to reduce stigma?



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CO-ADVISORS

Oliver Haimson, PhD

Assistant Professor, University of Michigan School of Information
Affiliate Faculty, Digital Studies Institute
Senior Fellow, Center for Applied Transgender Studies
i3 2011 Alum

About Me

I conduct social computing research focused on envisioning and designing trans technologies, social media content moderation and marginalized populations, and changing identities on social media during life transitions. Much of my research has focused on transgender identities and experiences online and with social technologies. My research goal is to impact technological inclusion of marginalized users. I am a recipient of a National Science Foundation CAREER award and several Best Paper and Honorable Mention awards at CHI and CSCW.



I earned my Ph.D. in Information and Computer Science in 2018 from the Informatics Department at University of California, Irvine's Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences. I received my M.S. in Information and Computer Science from UCI Informatics, and my B.S. in Economics at Carnegie Mellon University, when I participated in the first cohort of the iSchool Inclusion Institute (i3). Prior to becoming an academic, I founded and managed independent bookstores for a number of years. I also toured and recorded as guitarist, vocalist, and songwriter in several rock bands. I am a big fan of most animals, including cats and dogs.

Research Interests

- Social Computing
- Human Computer Interaction (HCI)
- Trans Technologies
- Content Moderation
- Trans and LGBTQ+ Health
- Identity Transitions
- Social Media



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Kayla M. Booth, PhD

Assistant Professor, School of Information
PI & Director, The iSchool Inclusion Institute (i3)
University of Texas at Austin

About Me

I'm an Assistant Professor of Instruction in the School of Information at The University of Texas at Austin. When it comes to research at a high level, I'm guided by the question, "What role can research play in collective liberation?" Although this will continue to evolve over time, right now the answer I'm most drawn to is, "Elevating intersectional counter-narratives to deficit models by centering marginalized users' actual voices around actual behaviors, perceptions, and priorities."



My work focuses on the co-design and evaluation of community-led **health** and **education interventions** to support and empower marginalized youth populations. These interventions take a myriad of formats, including curriculum design, community programming, app and software development, training and policy evaluation, etc.

Research Interests

- Social Media
- Health Information
- Youth Information Behavior
- Equity & Justice
- Health Informatics, Social Informatics, UX Design
- Community-Based Participatory Design

Potential Projects

1. **Intersectionality, Health, & Information Quality:** We'll take an intersectional approach to exploring how users evaluate the quality and/or trustworthiness of health information on social media. How do [user populations] evaluate the quality of [health subcategory] information on [social media platform]?

Example Research Questions:

- How do LGBTQ+ college students evaluate the quality of mental health information on TikTok?
- How do college students from marginalized populations evaluate the quality of fitness content on video-based platforms?



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2. **Participatory design of technology with marginalized groups:** In what ways can technological innovation help to address challenges that [marginalized group] faces? How can [type of technology] innovate to be more inclusive of [marginalized group]? What recommendations can we learn from [marginalized group]'s current and future experiences with technology to guide this process?

Example Research Question:

- How can [augmented reality](#) be more [trans](#)-inclusive?

3. **Universities Must Do Better:** We mentioned this in our presentation, but a third option would be a project asking, *"How can different stakeholders within universities (professors, administrators, academic advisors, organizations, offices, Residence Life, etc.) more meaningfully support students from marginalized populations during national human rights violations? How do students experience meaningful support, as opposed to performative measures?"*

We can take an intersectional approach to focusing on a specific event or movement, or take a broader approach across movements or events, depending on the group's interests.



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Joe Sanchez, PhD

Associate Professor
Graduate School of Library and Information Science
Queens College, City University of New York

About Me

I'm an Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies at Queens College (CUNY). I received my doctoral degree from the iSchool at the University of Texas at Austin. I study groups of people as they engage with information in social situations to learn about their everyday information practices and their information worlds. My work informs education policy, telecommunications regulation, and the entertainment industry. My current research explores the information worlds of Mexican-American teens, BIPOC Teens who read Manga, and Latinidad representation in pop culture. Through deep qualitative study I seek to amplify the voices of underrepresented communities. My methods are a combination of interviews, focus groups, participatory action research, ethnography, participatory design, and historical analysis.



Research Interest:

- Information & Subculture
- Teaching and Learning
- Social Justice
- Multimedia Production

Potential Projects:

1. **The Pedagogy of Web Video:** Online learning has become mainstream since the lockdowns of Covid-19 but students report that most online videos created by professional educators are boring and terribly produced. Yet, instructional videos on TikTok and YouTube are amongst the most consistently watched content for leisure. Whether it's makeup tutorials, guitar lessons, nail art, or home improvement, how are these creators able to make engaging instructional content and what can traditional educators learn from them? What can content creators in TikTok or YouTube teach us about learning online? This project may include watching and classifying tiktok videos, interviewing content creators, interviewing people who watch videos, conducting focus groups, and designing/creating/testing instructional content.

Potential Questions:

- What are the techniques (pedagogy) content creators use in TikTok to create effective instructional videos. Can we build a Taxonomy (classification of techniques)?



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- How do users describe the elements of effective instructional videos created for TikTok or YouTube?
- Can we design effective web video for college or high school instructors using the techniques of TikTok creators?

2. BIPOC Teens and Manga/Anime: Manga represents 76.1% of all comic and graphic novels sales in the United States where manga sales increased 171% from 2020 to 2021. Manga narratives often represent the lived personal experiences of teens and allows them to identify possible solutions for overcoming obstacles and becoming self-empowered. Through manga, teens can learn social-emotional competencies, how to understand and reflect on their lives and the lives of others. Developmental research indicates that effective mastery of social-emotional competencies is associated with greater well-being and better school performance whereas the failure to achieve competence in these areas can lead to a variety of personal, social, and academic difficulties. We will use interviews, focus groups, or surveys to collect information.

Potential Questions

- a. Is manga/anime supporting and/or reinforcing social-emotional development with BIPOC teens?
- b. What are the visual/textual characteristics of manga, Japanese visual storytelling, that are motivating BIPOC teens to read or watch anime?
- c. In what ways are public libraries supporting BIPOC readers of manga?

3. Propose a Subculture with an interesting information problem.