Intersectional HCI: Engaging Identity through Gender, Race, and Class
Ari Schlesinger, W. Keith Edwards, Rebecca E. Grinter

Reviewed by: Rishabh Devgon

Critical Review:

Ari Schlesinger et al. [1] have approached 'identity' and representation of the user, one of the most essential issues of the third wave of HCI. The paper investigated the identity of a user through survey research. The authors reflect on three aspects of identity: gender, race and class and find their relationship with HCI research. The paper elaborates on what Intersectionality constitutes and adapts Leslie McCall's three approaches to intersectional research to HCI. These approaches include anticategrol complexity, intercategorical complexity and intracategorical complexity. The research further explores the concept of self disclosure and transparency in research and provides a plethora of recommendations to make research at CHI more intersectional in nature. This work is not novel as stated by the authors because they have made use of a corpus of existing work.

What I really liked about this work was how aware it was about social equity. The study echoed the need for more research geared towards historically suppressed and underrepresented groups like women and the LGBTQIA+ community. This is extremely important because there still exists a power difference due to identity as a consequence of systemic and systemic oppression and prejudice. These are disproportionately stacked up against minorities. Especially in tech, we observe that there is a gross under representation of people from underprivileged communities. A reflection of that can be seen by the number of women in technology as compared to men.

The methodology of the paper was a typical survey style research model with the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the accumulated corpus. The corpus was collected by performing a keyword search on the ACM Digital Library of CHI papers from 1982-2016 and then filtering out the results. The set of keywords included items describing identity through gender, ethnicity, race and class. This method was justified given that the primary goal of the paper was to engage identity through intersectional HCI. However, the research was not replicable because it lacked the various parameters for search filters and a table of the keyword set. The paper has explicitly mentioned their inclusion, exclusion criteria and have provided their positionality and self disclosure. However, the authors have not revealed their gender or their nationality which reveals double standards from the author's recommendations. The authors have revealed their shortcomings in the limitations section of the paper which is always appreciated.

The paper was situated in the USA and thus it was not generalisable to the Global South. The authors did not reflect on various aspects of identity within the USA, let alone other countries. These aspects include language, deformity, handicap, age, political inclination, marital status, education and criminal history among others. Thus, I think that the research is not intersectional

enough. In addition, the paper is vague at certain places with no clear definition of the chosen demographic and contextual data. The study does not deliberate on the difference between sex and gender which seems to pretty important in the paper's context. The paper also fails to acknowledge intersex people. The authors do not recognize the fact that several trans women just simply identify as women and thus a discussion about them when discoursing about gender is counter intuitive. The paper has also talked about non binaries in a separate paragraph as compared to men and women and thus reinforced a negative stereotype.

The paper does touch upon the importance of disclosure of why a particular demographic needs to be studied in intersectional research. However, the reason that it proposes for the same seems misdirected: "This gives the impression that gender matters for women and women alone, which warrants reflection". An alternative justification for the same is establishing the incentive to study men due to the power that they have over women in patriarchal structures and their importance in causing a shift. This is because changing paradigms is a collaborative effort and can not be achieved independently. The paper is also guilty of over dramatization with it's claim of just 140 articles out of 14000, when the ground reality is that the exclusion criteria rejected several posters, workshops and students' work and thus the number must be much lesser than 14000. In fact the paper has specified in it' own limitations that there was no way of gauging implicit representation of intersectionality.

I think that the work could have been further strengthened by providing references of all the analysed articles in the survey corpus. This would have provided reproducibility and legitimacy to the research. A further exploration could also be made on contextual reporting in CHI literature especially in papers originating from the US. In my opinion the efforts of the authors would have been better directed had they chosen to analyse more recent papers in greater detail. This would have provided a better landscape about current practices and also have lended to better analysis and recommendations for the future. The recommendations of the paper focus on the importance of disclosure of identity but do not talk about how that affects the research and analysis. It also offers surface level recommendations that do not really address the more systematic discriminatory practices in CHI.

To conclude, the paper offers a platform to extend the research to other parts of the world as well and adapt to their intersectional requirements. It also offers the opportunity to further investigate the individual facets of intersectionality in more detail. Overall, the paper offered important recommendations for the entire CHI community and reinvigorates the spotlight on intersectionality.

References:
1. Ari Schlesinger, W. Keith Edwards, and Rebecca E. Grinter. 2017. Intersectional HCI: Engaging Identity through Gender, Race, and Class. In *Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (CHI '17), 5412–5427. https://doi.org/10.1145/3025453.3025766