

DEI Statement

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I am a proud gay man who grew up in a conservative society in India. Being from a sexual minority myself, questioning my non-conformity in a rigid societal structure has been an integral part of my growing up, and has led me to become sharply observant and critical of the society in which I exist. I am well versed with the concepts of systemic discrimination, social dynamics and intersectionality, and thus it is a motif that is reflected in my research interest and personal goals. I am committed to making a difference in academia and in the greater society through my work.

Firstly, I would like to talk about my work to help the queer community. I am an ardent believer in challenging the status quo, and have dived headfirst into pressing social issues. I have regularly championed the causes of LGBTQ students in my college, both at IIT Kharagpur and at Northeastern, and was one of the student petitioners in the Supreme Court of India case against the Union of India to decriminalize homosexuality, which resulted in the landmark judgment in our favor in September 2018¹. As a PhD student, I have been involved with organizations such as oSTEM² and QueerInAI³, and have organized socials and workshops that invite the research community into focusing on technological harms to queer people, at reputable conferences such as SIGIR⁴ and FAccT⁵. These interactions have led me to make meaningful connections and have future collaborations with other queer researchers who also deeply care about this issue.

Secondly, I would like to touch upon the broader themes of diversity, equity and inclusion through my work. My research expertise in algorithmic fairness stems from a sense of social justice and correcting past socioeconomic harms. Even though I would largely classify myself as a Machine Learning researcher, I have been very cognizant about ensuring that whatever I do has real world applications, and this is how I settled on my thesis topic of investigating the real-world implementation challenges of fair machine learning. I try not to stop at just publishing a new paper, but also try to follow up with stakeholders who might benefit from my findings – for instance when I published my adversarial attack to make fair ranking models unfair, I reached out to people at Google and Bing Search teams to inform them that this paper is out there and to investigate whether they can make their systems resilient to such an attack, to ensure that minority groups are fairly represented on image search.

Thirdly, a diverse student and faculty body is extremely important for academia – it leads to a rich exchange of different ideas and helps robust growth. I have noted Northeastern's efforts in diversifying the student and faculty population and have been inspired by it - during my time as a PhD student the racial and gender diversity of our college significantly improved, and it has made our lab culture come alive in tangible ways. I am also a proud ally of the Underrepresented Genders Group at our college and plan to commit to similar efforts as a faculty member going forward.

Finally, in the same vein, I am a fervent supporter of different kinds of teaching styles and classroom culture (as further detailed in my teaching statement). I believe that meeting people where they are, and encouraging them to think critically about the society in they belong, is a pathway to broadening participation in Responsible ML research, and this aligns solidly with my other lifelong commitments.

¹<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/iitians-who-fought-against-section-377-celebrate-empowering-judgement-1913804>

²<https://www.ostem.org/>

³<https://www.queerintai.com/>

⁴<https://sites.google.com/view/queer-in-ai/sigir-2021>

⁵<https://facctconference.org/2022/acceptedcraft.html#colab>