

Rama Adithya Varanasi

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<https://merama.github.io/> 

Research Statement

My research lies in Human Computer Interaction (HCI), Computer Science, and Development Sociology, where I study how day to day technologies are used for self-empowerment by working communities in marginal settings. In particular, I am interested in examining how collaboration between human and machine agents impact agency and motivation of digital workers. I plan to use my findings to design ethical and intelligent socio-technological systems that focus on improving occupational wellbeing of working communities.

Research Areas

Human computer interaction • HCI4Development • human-machine collaboration (AI) • digital labor • future of work • wellbeing • learning science • emerging markets

Education

- 2017-cur. **Ph.D.**, Human Computer Interaction, *Cornell University*
Advisers: Dr. Nicola Dell & Dr. Aditya Vashishta
- 2015-17 **M.S.**, Information Science, *Pennsylvania State University*
Adviser: Dr. John Carroll
CGPA: 3.89
- 2009-13 **B.Tech.**, Information Technology, *SRM University*
CGPA: 3.96

Publications

PEER REVIEWED

- 2021 **Varanasi, R. A.**, Siddarth, D., & Seshadri, V, & Bali, K, & Vashishta, A. Feeling proud, feeling embarrassed: Experiences of low-income women with crowd work. *Proceedings of the 2022 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*.
- 2021 **Varanasi, R. A.**, Vashishta, A., & Pal, Joyojeet. Accost, Accede, or Amplify: Attitudes towards COVID-19 Misinformation on WhatsApp in India. *Proceedings of the 2022 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. **[Under review]**

- 2021 Jain, P.*, **Varanasi, R. A.***, & Dell, N. "Who is protecting us? No one!" Vulnerabilities Experienced by Low-Income Indian Merchants Using Digital Payments. *COMPASS*, 2021.
- 2021 **Varanasi, R. A.**, Vashistha, A., Kizilcec, R. F. & Dell, N. Investigating Technostress Among Teachers in Low-Income Indian Schools. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction: CSCW*, 2021.
- 2021 **Varanasi, R. A.**, Vashistha, A., & Dell, N. Tag a Teacher: A Qualitative Analysis of WhatsApp-Based Teacher Networks in Low-Income Indian Schools. *Proceedings of the 2021 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*
- 2020 **Varanasi R. A.**, Vashistha, A., Parikh, T., & Dell, N. Challenges and Issues Integrating Smartphones into Teacher Support Programs in India. *In Proceedings of the 2020 International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development*.
- 2019 **Varanasi, R. A.**, Kizilcec, R. F., & Dell, N. (2019). How Teachers in India Reconfigure their Work Practices around a Teacher-Oriented Technology Intervention. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction: Vol. 3, Issue CSCW, Article 220*. 2019.
- 2018 **Varanasi, R. A.**, Diccico, E., & Gambino, A. (2018). Facebook Reactions: Impact of Introducing New Features of SNS on Social Capital. *In International Conference on Human-Computer Interaction (pp. 444-451)*. Springer, Cham
- 2017 **Varanasi, R. A.**, Hanrahan, B. V., Wahid, S., & Carroll, J. M. (2017). TweetSight: Enhancing Financial Analysts' Social Media Use. *In Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Social Media & Society (p. 22)*. ACM.

WORKSHOPS

- 2019 **Varanasi, R. A.**, & Dell, N. Understanding Technology Reconfiguration Practices by Teachers at the Margins of Intersectionality. *In Proceedings of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*.
- 2018 **Varanasi, R. A.**, Parikh, T., & Nicola Dell. Solidarity in Education: Organizations' Use of Technology to Support Low-income Schools. *In Proceedings of the 2017 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing (CSCW '17)*. ACM.
- 2018 Lim, S., **Varanasi, R. A.**, & Parikh, T. (2018, February). GLIDE (Git-Learning IDE; Integrated Development Environment): In-class Collaboration in Web Engineering Curriculum for Youths. *In Proceedings of the 49th ACM Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education (pp. 1112-1112)*. ACM.
- 2017 **Varanasi, R. A.**, Yan S., & Borge M. (2017, January). Making Design Practices Visible to Young Learners. *Learning sciences conference 2018. Information Science & Technology, Pennsylvania State University*.

Talks

- 2021 Evolution of education research in HCI4D space. *Guest lecture at IS4940, Cornell University*.

- 2020 Challenges and Issues Integrating Smartphones into Teacher Support Programs in India. *ICTD'20*.
- 2019 How Teachers in India Reconfigure their Work Practices around Educational Technology Interventions. *CSCW'19*.
- 2018 Teaching cognitive apprenticeship design thinking through learning by failure. *Learning sciences conference 2018. Information Science & Technology, Pennsylvania State University*.
- 2016 Understanding the challenges with traditional design evaluation methodologies in after-school learning environments. *3rd International Rutger's iconference, '16*.

Grants, honors & awards

- 2021 Outstanding service award by *Cornell University*
- 2020 Dissertation grant by *QulRI Institute*
- 2018 Engaged Doctoral grant by *Cornell University*
- 2017 International research travel grant by *Einuadi Center for International Studies*.
- 2016 Student research grant by *Bloomberg Inc*.
- 2015 ACE award for outstanding performance and innovation by *Standard & Poor's*
- 2014 Changemaker of the year award for improving the education access to elementary schools by *Standard & Poor's*

Service

- 2020 PC, Late breaking work track, *CHI'21*.
- 2020 Co-president, *Information science department, Cornell University*.
- 2019 Co-chair, *IndiaHCI'19*.
- 2019 Co-organizer, *HCI across borders, CHI'19*.

Professional Experience

- July'20- Dec'20 Research Intern, *Microsoft Research, India*.
Investigated motivations for misinformation resharing practices in rural India. One of the first research studies to showcase the stark differences between the misinformation consumption and combatting practices between rural and urban areas.
- May'13- July'15 UX Designer, *Standard & Poor's, India*.
Improved the customer experience of 12 financial modules in the Platform - a flagship financial analytic tool. Avg. user sessions increased by 3.4 mins.
- Dec'12- Mar'13 UX Intern, *McGrawHill Financials, India*.
Improved workflows for Key Development and Business Intelligence segments. Improved turn around time of product data by 28%.

Teaching Experience

Jan'18- May'18	Project manager and coach for graduate level research projects <i>Cornell University</i>
Jan'16- Jul'16	Instructor at summer web designing and development workshop <i>Penn State University</i>
Jan'13- May'15	Teacher at Math & Science for low-income govt. school <i>Teach for India</i>

Skills

METHODOLOGIES

Ethnographic methods • user research • wireframes • rapid prototyping • personas • user stories • scenario based design • usability testing • A/B testing.

PROGRAMMING

HTML, CSS & JS • Bootstrap • D3.js • JQuery • Ruby on Rails • Python • R

TOOLS

Adobe Photoshop • Adobe Illustrator • Adobe InDesign • Inkscape • Axure RP • Adobe XD • Miramatrix eye tracker • SPSS.