Organizing for More Just and Inclusive Futures: A Community Discussion

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Abstract

This Special Interest Group brings together researchers and practitioners to examine the critical questions, innovative methods and emerging possibilities that arise from an orientation toward disability justice within CSCW research particularly and HCI research more broadly. We will focus on how digital technologies influence the ways disabled people organize and advocate for their rights, and how disabled people influence and configure technologies as well. By attending to the intersections of technology, disability justice, and social movements, we aim to explore how HCI and CSCW research can support the organizing efforts of disabled communities. This SIG emphasizes the ways in which disabled people and communities have been organizing and are continuing to organize in response to various forms of oppression. The SIG will provide a platform for scholars and activists to engage in conversations around technologies, disability justice, and social movements. By centering disability justice as a framework, we hope to foster a deeper understanding of how HCI and CSCW research can support and amplify the efforts of disabled communities. Participants will share their insights, collaborate on research ideas, and contribute to a collective vision of a more inclusive and justice-oriented HCI and CSCW. Through these discussions, we aim to generate actionable strategies for future research and practice in supporting organizing efforts.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → **Accessibility**; **Collaborative and social computing**.

Keywords

Disability Justice, Social Movements, Organizing, Technologies, Access

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1 Introduction

What might more just and inclusive futures look like locally - and globally - when we center disabled peoples' voices? How can we work toward building these futures? Critical scholarship on disability within HCI and CSCW has argued for the need to center disabled peoples' lived experiences and perspectives in studies of their interactions with technology [2, 19, 31]. Simultaneously, scholarship from disability studies [12, 28] and HCI/CSCW offers several anti-oppressive lenses [8, 21, 26] and frameworks through which to understand and work with the experiences of disabled people and communities, such as disability justice [14, 18, 22, 27].

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Disability justice as a framework centers intersectionality in disability advocacy, attending to the ways that various histories of oppression such as ableism, anti-Blackness, colonialism, Islamophobia, and patriarchy are intertwined [15]. The disability justice movement emerged across North America in 2005, led by disabled people of color and queer disabled people in response to some of the limits of the disability rights movement at the time. Among the key tenets of disability justice that are relevant to HCI and CSCW research are those of intersectionality, anti-capitalism and interdependence [3]. This Special Interest Group explores the question: how can the principles of disability justice inform (a) the ways that organizing and advocacy are understood and studied and (b) the role that technologies play in social movements?

Thus far, HCI and CSCW scholarship on disability and technology has focused on the range of access barriers that disabled people face when using various technologies [1, 4, 7, 10, 11, 13, 20]. Other strands of inquiry have attended to disabled peoples' perceptions of and responses to these barriers, especially as they show up in relation to everyday social interactions [5, 16, 22, 25]. This SIG draws on the critical lenses forwarded by disability justice in order to attend to disability rights movements and other intersectional social movements. In addition to an interest in global and local social movements, this SIG will attend to the wide range of everyday forms of advocacy undertaken by disabled people and communities.

Through this SIG, we will bring together researchers working on the use of technologies in social movements and practitioners interested in advocacy. The SIG will foreground a disability justice framework as we attend to the ways that digital technologies shape organizing and advocacy around disability and its intersections with other forms of identity. Our goal through this SIG is to build a community that draws on and contributes to a growing body of critical scholarship within HCI and CSCW that prioritizes centering the needs and lived experiences of disabled individuals. [1, 7, 9, 18, 19, 24, 26, 27, 29–31].

2 Organizing for Just and Inclusive Futures: Topics and Motivation

Through this SIG, we will focus on five key themes related to disability justice, technology and social movements that have been identified within HCI and CSCW scholarship: (1) technology as a medium for disability organizing (2) organizing to fight technology-related harms (3) organizing and advocacy as work practices (4) what disability justice can teach us about organizing and other forms of collaboration and (5) conference venues as sites for organizing and solidarity. Conversations before, during and after the SIG will contribute to one or more of these provisional, intersecting themes:

2.1 Technology as a medium for disability organizing

How does technology intersect with and re-shape questions of visibility with/in/around disability organizing? Historically, disability advocacy groups have relied on direct action measures that center visibility through vivid imagery to enforce social change. Some examples of this are ADA-related protests where wheelchair users crawled up stairs, MTA protests where they impeded buses from moving ahead). Additionally, some groups within the larger umbrella of disabilities have been on the periphery of advocacy efforts (for instance, people with intellectual disabilities), because of the reliance on normative ways of communication within organizing. This theme attends to the ways that various technologies mediate questions of visibility in social movements. For example:

- How can we use technology to enhance visibility of disability groups?
- How does technology offer opportunities for more inclusive organizing?
- How can scholarship on disability and social movements broaden inclusivity in studying organizing practices within HCI, CSCW, and related disciplines?

2.2 Organizing to fight technology-related harms

Global social movements have thus far have been effective at building cross-political, cross-group coalitions for advocacy efforts. Centering a disability justice framework, this theme attends to efforts to organize by people and communities experiencing harms from the use of various technologies [6, 17]. For example:

- What are the different forms of coalition building in the day of AI (with/without technology mediation), which discriminate against people with disabilities?
- How are disabled people and communities already responding to technology-mediated harms and entrenched forms of oppression?
- What resources should we be equipping communities with in order to enable coalitions and move towards social movements?

2.3 Organizing and advocacy as work practices

Social movements are most often understood in the context of episodic and highly organized and coordinated efforts. At a different scale, disability justice advocacy is often largely done by individuals, groups and organizing structures in their respective settings, often in response to everyday forms of oppression. This theme attends to the diversity of forms that organizing can take, focusing particularly on the many scales across which organizing occurs.

- What kind of activism and organizing happens at a more everyday micro level?
- Why is it important for CSCW to understand these everyday efforts? How can we do so?

2.4 What disability justice can teach us about organizing and other forms of collaboration

Building on the numerous ways that calls to disability justice are taken up across social movements, and moving between the global and the local, when and how do the principles of disability justice inform intersecting causes? This theme attends to the application of principles of disability justice to the praxis of research within and beyond HCI. For example:

- What principles and practices might we be able to draw on from disability justice to think about organizing and other forms of collaboration?
- How can - and how do - disability justice principles come to inform the design of technologies that are key to social movements?

2.5 Conference venues as sites for organizing

Conferences have increasingly grown to respond to ongoing sociopolitical causes (such as the call to reconsider participation in CHI 2024 in Hawai'i), serving as sites where attendees themselves come together to organize around global and local forms of harm and oppression [23]. This theme attends to the possibilities for conference venues to serve as sites for organizing, paying attention to the histories, as well as the current and future trajectories of organizing at HCI and CSCW conferences. For example:

- What role can a space such as CSCW play as a site for organizing?
- What can we advocate for with/in/as an interdisciplinary space for academics, practitioners, people with disabilities, allies?

3 SIG Activities and Goals

Through this Special Interest Group, we will focus on developing a global research agenda toward research on more just and inclusive futures, as well as pathways forward for researchers interested in centering disability justice in their study and support of social movements. The first goal of the SIG, therefore, is to foreground the intersections between social movements and the use of technology from a disability justice framework. To do so, the SIG will draw upon participants' experiences with social movements through a pre-SIG conversation.

The second goal of the SIG is to serve as a starting point for conversations among researchers, activists and other practitioners who will be at the conference, and to further these conversations into the development of a global research agenda. We will do so by exploring research priorities that participants define at the intersections of the SIG's key themes.

The final goal of the SIG is to create a toolkit of practices and theories from disability justice (such as collective access and interdependence) that can inform HCI and CSCW research and future collaborations among participants in the SIG.

4 SIG Outcomes

We anticipate that the SIG will have the following outcomes:

- Facilitating conversations toward strengthening existing networks and building new networks of researchers and organizers interested in disability, technology and social movements
- A research agenda for future work at the intersections of the SIG's key themes
- A toolkit of practices and theories from disability justice (such as collective access and interdependence) that can inform CSCW research

5 Community Building Through the SIG

We anticipate that this SIG will be of interest to researchers, practitioners and activists who are motivated by the desire to build more just and inclusive futures. In particular, conference attendees interested in disability justice, technology and social movements will be the primary community that this SIG seeks to engage with and contribute to. The SIG will be of interest to those outlined in this community because its identified themes speak directly to the connections between work in these three areas. The SIG will be an opportunity for those working in these areas to initiate and continue conversations with each other, with the aim of building out a global research agenda and facilitating future collaborations in these areas. All activities are designed with the goal of examining the critical questions, innovative methods, and emerging possibilities that arise from an orientation toward disability justice within HCI broadly, and CSCW research more specifically.

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