
Solidarity Across Borders: Navigating Intersections Towards Equity and Inclusion

Michaelanne Dye

Georgia Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA, USA
mdye@gatech.edu

Neha Kumar

Georgia Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA, USA
neha.kumar@gatech.edu

Ari Schlesinger

Georgia Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA, USA
a.schlesinger@gatech.edu

Marisol Wong-Villacres

Georgia Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA, USA
lvillacr@gatech.edu
Escuela Sup. Politec. del Litoral
Guayaquil, Ecuador
lvillacr@espol.edu.ec

Morgan G. Ames

University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, CA, USA
minecraft@morganya.org

Rajesh Veeraraghavan

Georgetown University
Washington, D.C., USA
rajesh.veera@georgetown.edu

Jacki O'Neill

Microsoft Research
Bangalore, India
jacki.oneill@microsoft.com

Joyojeet Pal

Microsoft Research
Bangalore, India
joyojeet@gmail.com

Mary L. Gray

Microsoft Research
Cambridge, MA
mlg@microsoft.com

Abstract

There is a growing community within CSCW that examines issues of equity and inclusion in internet and social media use. With researchers focused on global development, social justice, accessibility, and more, we contend that there are issues of equity and inclusion impacting the research subjects located on the “margins” of digital existence, the research that examines these issues, and the researchers engaged in this research. The goal of our workshop is to brainstorm and discuss how we might *demarginalize* those researched, this research, and these researchers within CSCW scholarship. For this, we build on the concepts of *intersectionality* and *solidarity* from feminist scholarship, aiming to recognize the differences and *similarities* across disparate contexts, and to uncover synergistic research trajectories and objectives. Our workshop will be led by academic and industry researchers pursuing CSCW, Social Computing, and Information and Communication Technologies and Development (ICTD) research focused on intersectionality, equity, and inclusion. We invite a broad range of participants from research and practice interested in learning about or deepening their understanding of these topics. Our workshop will foster solidarity across diverse subsections of the CSCW community and beyond.

Author Keywords

Marginality; Intersectionality; Solidarity; ICTD

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Miscellaneous

INTRODUCTION

Internet and social media use among white, middle-class users in the Global North is researched extensively across the fields of CSCW, Social Computing, and ICTD. Nevertheless, a growing amount of CSCW research situates itself in diverse contexts across the U.S. and the rest of the world (*e.g.*, [2, 4, 15, 25]), fostering conversations on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Recent panels and workshops on social justice [11], intersectional futures [12], empowerment [1], designing with underserved populations [8], and learning from marginalized users [30] attest to the expanding and diversifying interest in these areas.

The research subjects at the focus of these papers, panels, and workshops form the majority of technology users across the world (often referred to as the next billion users, the next *four* billion users, etc.), are recognized as “marginalized.” Many of our citations are concerned with bringing this status under the scrutiny of CSCW research and including these users in a growing body of knowledge. Within this growing body of research, we are particularly influenced by the work on intersectionality in HCI [24, 29]. By rendering visible how different forms of power operate and interact—via gender, race, caste, class, sexuality, geography, etc.—an intersectional lens helps interrogate the overlapping margins of these power structures and explore how we might begin to center these groups [5, 14, 19, 26].

To articulate issues of equity and inclusion more fully, we also need to work on demarginalizing the research that studies these issues, and the researchers engaged in this work. Thus, we turn our attention to research that examines intersectionality, equity, and inclusion. Growing Mohanty’s

notion of *feminist solidarity*, we strive to carve out a space in CSCW for future scholarship focused on equity and inclusion that acknowledges how the intersecting, marginalized realities studied across the fields of CSCW, Social Computing, and ICTD are indeed different, *but also* similar, complicated, and interwoven. We aim to identify commonalities among research focused on equity and inclusion across these fields in terms of motivations, goals, challenges, and workarounds. Engaging solidarity can help us to move forward, not as fragments but as parts of a larger whole.

Our goal is to make the CSCW community more mindful of intersectionality, equity, and inclusion within (and beyond) its ranks. We acknowledge that we are all affiliated with elite institutions of privilege. Nevertheless, we are motivated to help our institutions and communities be more equitable.

Our workshop aims to *foster solidarity across borders and intersections*. We plan to bring together like-minded individuals across CSCW to collectively brainstorm and discuss how we might better identify and expand our solidarity at the intersections. In discussing solidarity, Mohanty asks us “*to see the complexities, singularities, and interconnections between communities of women such that power, privilege, agency, and dissent can be made visible and engaged with*” [19]. We wish to expand Mohanty’s vision by creating solidarity not only across communities of women, but across communities of marginalized groups in CSCW, including the research that focuses on these groups, and the members of the CSCW community who conduct this research. One way to approach this *solidarity* is to turn to concepts that represent intersecting axes of difference such as labor, power, sex, race, bodies, and machines, which can help us discover how experiences of oppression, exploitation, struggle and resistance are connected across these margins.

BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

A growing body of research across CSCW and in related fields focuses on people “at the margins.” While this kind of work is the mainstay of ICTD [6], CSCW has also investigated questions around equity and inclusion, such as internet access in underserved communities across Cuba and Bangladesh [10, 3], the role of care in materially constrained environments [16], how class and ethnicity intersect with equitable technology use in the U.S. [2], and more. In HCI, researchers have engaged with the invisibility of technology users in the Global South [4], engagements between HCI and postcolonial perspectives [15], and the intersection of infrastructural constraints, gender equality, marginality, and social justice (*e.g.*, [7, 9, 11, 13, 17, 23]).

Although they take place in different locations and were conducted by researchers from different disciplines, the above works share a common axis in their focus on populations from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Through the frameworks of intersectionality and solidarity, we are committed to identifying intersections of marginalization and the similarities they have across these contexts. This approach to solidarity focuses on bringing together different contexts—not to erase the particularities of individual sites but to identify common patterns of marginalization. For example, works on internet access in Cuba [10] and Bangladesh [3] demonstrate how those with lower social capital may be excluded from online participation across contexts.

To start exploring how we can better foster such solidarity, this workshop aims to bring together three types of participants: researchers focused on intersectionality, equity, and inclusion; researchers working on core CSCW topics that see similarities between their work and more “marginalized” research; and researchers outside of the usual CSCW conference attendees. We intend to draw most of our at-

tendees from this first group of researchers motivated by promoting equity and inclusion through an intersectional lens, albeit in different contexts, with different approaches, and from different disciplines.

The second group of participants includes researchers who stand at the core of CSCW and engage with topics that potentially share concepts with the ideas and axes of power we’ve explored in this proposal, like [20, 28, 21]. Our goal is to better understand how we might speak with these participants—as an audience for our research—more effectively and develop solidarity across research areas.

Finally, it is critical to include the many researchers outside of the usual CSCW conference attendees who pursue research on groups at the margins (*e.g.* [22, 27]). There is a great deal they would bring to, and find, at CSCW. We intend to recruit a critical mass from this group as well.

We are not the first to pursue such an agenda of equity and inclusion. In a workshop at CSCW 2012, a group convened to consider how to develop practices of reciprocity with marginalized groups [30]. More recently, a workshop at CSCW 2017 focused on design methods for underserved communities [7]. Through our workshop, we intend to build on these efforts to create bridges within and across sub-communities of CSCW, as well as invite participation from those new to the field but conducting highly relevant research. Our goal is to start the discussion on how we can *demarginalize the “margins”* by recognizing intersections that exist, and engaging solidarity to navigate towards equity and inclusion.

We believe that building coalitions and solidarities across borders and intersections will also enable the CSCW community to be more inclusive and inviting towards research(ers) to engage *with* and *at* CSCW.

ORGANIZERS

Our team consists of scholars working in and across the fields of CSCW, Social Computing, and ICTD. Even though Michaelanne, Ari, Marisol, and Neha are all at Georgia Tech, they communicate across research groups that focus on social computing, global development, science and technology studies, and the learning sciences. Mary, Joyojeet, and Jacki are researchers at Microsoft Research, spanning geographies. Rajesh is actively involved in the ICTD realm but less so in CSCW, while Morgan is the reverse. Though we operate in different circles, there is much we see in common with each other's work, and would like to come together—in solidarity—to explore how the field of CSCW and its people might be the better for it.

Michaelanne Dye is a Ph.D. candidate in Human-Centered Computing at Georgia Tech and a Ph.D. Fellow at Microsoft Research. Her research lies at the intersection of social computing, ICTD, and anthropology. She studies how social processes involved in navigating political and economic duress are mediated by social computing technologies.

Neha Kumar is an Assistant Professor at Georgia Tech, where she conducts research at the intersection of human-centered computing and global development. She is committed to fostering a globally inclusive and intersectionally diverse discipline of computing. She also edits the *Human-Centered Computing Across Borders* blog.

Ari Schlesinger is a Ph.D. student in Human-Centered Computing at Georgia Tech. She researches how we can build equity into software, hardware, and the design process. Her work uncovers strategies for addressing complicated tech problems by connecting people, systems, and infrastructure in novel ways.

Marisol Wong-Villacres is a Ph.D. student in Human-Centered Computing at Georgia Tech. Her research interests lie at the intersection of culture, learning sciences, and social computing, with a specific focus on using an assets-based approach to designing technology for vulnerable communities.

Morgan G. Ames is a postdoctoral scholar with the School of Information and the interim associate director of research for the Center for Science, Technology, Medicine and Society at the University of California, Berkeley. Her book *The Charisma Machine: The Life, Death, and Legacy of One Laptop per Child* is due out in 2019 from MIT Press. Morgan's next project explores discourses around childhood, education, and 'development' in Silicon Valley.

Rajesh Veeraraghavan is an Assistant Professor at the Science Technology and International Affairs (STIA) Program at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He is interested in understanding the role of information and technology towards making systems of governance more participatory.

Joyojeet Pal is a Senior Researcher in the Technology for Emerging Markets area at Microsoft Research, India. He maintains a faculty position at the School of Information at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. His current work focuses on the use of technology by politicians in the Global South.

Jacki O'Neill is a Senior Researcher in the Technology for Emerging Markets area at Microsoft Research, India. Specializing in HCI, she conducts ethnographic studies to inform the design of innovative new technologies that take into account the social features of work, capitalize on people's skills and knowledge, and contribute to socioeconomic development.

Activity	Time	Details
Opening Remarks Session I	9am-9:15am 9:15am-10:45am	<i>Defining</i> Solidarity
Break Session II	10:45am-11am 11am-12:30pm	<i>Locating</i> Solidarity
Lunch Session III	12:30pm-2pm 2pm-3:30pm	<i>Fostering</i> Solidarity
Break Session IV	3:30pm-4pm 4pm-5.30pm	<i>Practicing</i> Solidarity

Table 1: Agenda

Mary L. Gray is a Senior Researcher at Microsoft Research and a Fellow at Harvard University's Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society. She maintains a faculty position in the School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering with affiliations in Anthropology, Gender Studies and the Media School, at Indiana University. Mary studies how technology access, material conditions, and everyday uses of technologies play out in people's lives.

AGENDA

Our single-day workshop will be organized in four sessions, each of which will have participants brainstorm and reflect on the potential role of solidarity within and across their research areas. We aim to include up to 40 participants. Among these, we would like up to 25 participants who conduct research at CSCW with participants "at the margins," up to 10 who are CSCW researchers fairly new to this nature of work, and another 5 who are CSCW first-timers but have engaged deeply with questions of marginality, intersectionality, and social justice. We plan to keep this community in contact and growing beyond the workshop.

Defining Solidarity: In this session, after opening remarks and introductions, participants will aim for a shared understanding on what a focus on solidarity could entail for their work, identifying what they have in common with others in the room. This will take place as a "speed-dating" exercise, where participants will identify similarities and differences between their work and that of each person they have a conversation with in the allotted time. At the end of this session, participants will engage in a group discussion to share their findings and reflect on how a focus on mutuality and co-implication could strengthen their research.

Locating Solidarity: Participants will identify the different areas in which they might (or might not) be in solidarity with each other. This could include contexts of research (such as underserved healthcare settings), methodologies used (such as co-design), theories used (such as ethics of care), and more. After forming groups based on their contexts of research, participants will explore solidarity through an affinity diagramming activity [18]. Each group will then share and explain its diagrams to the others.

Fostering Solidarity: In this session, we will discuss the areas participants identified as *lacking in* solidarity, understand why these gaps exist, and discuss how we might foster solidarity in them via small group brainstorming sessions. We will supply the participants with specific examples (listing them on our workshop website), so that they can draw inspiration from them and/or from their own work.

Practicing Solidarity: In our last session, we will turn to how we might *practice solidarity*. Our focus here will be on ways of extending the ideas discussed to the "real world," through teaching in classrooms, creating reading groups, planning additional workshops, and more. Towards the end, participants will make 5-minute presentations of their groups' ideas and discuss, as a room, the ideas presented.

We will develop a report to summarize outcomes from each session and recommendations for ways that our discussions may be extended and incorporated within wider CSCW scholarship. We will make this report available on our website and distribute it via social media channels to the wider CSCW community. We will also write up a summary of the workshop results for the *Interactions* magazine.

WEBSITE

Our website is <http://cscwsolidarity.wordpress.com>. It includes an overview of our workshop, our goals, and desired outcomes. It also includes a call for participation, where we provide examples of the kind of position papers we are seeking, and the research interests of our target participants. This website will later feature the position papers we review and accept. Once the workshop is completed, we will post a summary on this site and make it an ongoing resource for the community.

LOGISTICS

Recruiting and Selecting Participants:

We seek participants who engage in research and practice with marginalized communities, particularly those who pursue research on feminism, intersectionality, social justice, and global development (in the Global North or South). We will promote our call for participation via traditional channels (*e.g.*, Facebook groups, Twitter, mailing lists, etc.). Potential workshop participants will be invited to submit a two-page abstract that articulates their positionality, describes their research area, and comments on how they find themselves in solidarity (or not) with the sub-areas of research mentioned in our proposal. We will offer examples from our own work and research backgrounds in our call for participation, to concretely express what we would like the submissions to include. Finally, once these papers have been accepted, participants will be expected to read through the accepted

papers prior to attending the workshop. This will be vital to working together on the sessions during the event.

Equipment and Supplies Needed

For brainstorming and affinity diagramming sessions, we will use large 3M pads, dry-erase boards/markers, Post-It notes, and Sharpies. Ideally, we would like a room with tables that can be arranged suitably for group work.

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