

# “Crippling” Resilience in HCI: Proposing A New Approach to Disability Innovation

Crippling Resilience

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When we consider resilience, disabled people are often among the first to spring to mind, perhaps with reference to a social media post showing a wheelchair user lifting weights or a video of a d/Deaf child struggling to learn verbal speech. These snapshots of disabled life are often treated as lessons in resilience. After all, if “they” can do it, what’s “your” excuse? Resilience here is seen as a quality extraordinary individuals possess [6].

But this can fall into what Stella Young calls the trope of “inspiration porn,” where disabled people are objectified as inspirers of non-disabled people [10]. In HCI, disability is often similarly objectified as an intellectual exercise in extremes to test researchers’ limits and show their expertise [7]. This may manifest saviour-type approaches wherein researchers cite disability as their “inspiration” but design *for*, rather than *with*, disabled people – resulting in innovations that fail to address the very real needs of this community [5].

Rooted in “crip” resilience theory [3], notions of crip technoscience, a term for understanding and reimagining sociotechnical systems based on the experiences and expertise of disabled people [1,8], and our work at GDI Hub, we suggest the HCI community practice a different approach to disability innovation and resilience [2]. Instead of studying disability as an inherent deficit and resilience as a heroic overcoming, we advocate for finding the real, everyday resilience and embedded knowledge *within* disabled experiences and actively seeking out more fundamental crip methodologies that are usually overlooked, unrecognised, or discouraged.

Rather than continuing to “solve issues” from outside the community as an intellectual exercise, those in HCI can first seek and methodologically utilise existing knowledge and innovations from within disabled people’s communities. Marginalised people, including the disability community, are experts in resilience and problem-solving, and solutions are designed with this truth at the core. Doing so is critical for those committed to social justice and holistic well-being; as Sen argues, participation is important as both the means and the end of interventions [4,9]. How we do this and who does this, matters. Those working in HCI, health, and wellbeing have an opportunity to push against the injustice of exclusion by reflecting on how they could be “cripping” resilience in their work, research, and refuse to conform to systemic ableist attitudes.

We are not merely advocating for participatory design or co-design, but with such valuable approaches, we encourage researchers, designers, and healthcare professionals to go beyond that with inclusion throughout research methodologies from problem identification and data collection to analysis and design, and not limited only to developing solutions. To this end, we seek to discuss, develop and contribute guidance for HCI researchers to apply such principles to their work. After all, disabled people *are* resilient, because the community run up against ableist people and systems every day, multiple times a day – and keep going.

## REFERENCES

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