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Race, Disability, and Technology: A Call to Action for Accessibility Researchers

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Examinations of intersectionality and identity dimensions in accessibility research have primarily considered disability separately from a person's race, ethnicity, and culture. Accessibility work often does not include considerations of race as a construct, or treats race as a shallow demographic variable, if race is mentioned at all, or tends to conflate its designation with other proxies. The lack of attention to race as a construct and its interaction with other factors in accessibility research presents an oversight in our field. By systematically eliminating whole areas of need and vital perspectives from the work we do, this omits critical areas and domains of research inquiry. Further, there has been little focus on the *intersection* of race and disability within accessibility research, and the relevance of their interplay. When research in race or disability does not mention the other, this work overlooks the potential to better understand the full nuance of marginalized, minoritized and "otherized" groups. To address this gap, our work highlights the value of considering how constructs of race and disability work alongside each other within accessibility research studies and the designs of socio-technical systems. We offer a framework for engaging the intersection of race and disability throughout the research process, and present a series of case studies that showcase the potential of integrating racial equity perspectives into accessibility research. Along with providing recommendations towards establishing this research direction and guiding principles for approaching this intersection, our new analysis reflects on tensions and considerations that arise while pursuing this work.

CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing → Accessibility**; • **Social and professional topics → Race and ethnicity**.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: Race, Disability, Accessibility, Intersectionality, Inclusion

1 INTRODUCTION

In her 1991 Stanford Law Review article, Kimberlé Crenshaw speaks of the importance of *intersectionality* as a analytic lens saying *"although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and anti-racist practices"* [35]. Since the coining of this term and emergence of its use among scholars in law and the humanities, we have seen researchers apply the theoretical framework of intersectionality to various

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areas of study to understand the many axes of social division that work together and influence people's lives and their relationship to power [29]. In the context of HCI, scholars have begun to explore how race and social class shape experiences with sociotechnical systems, noting that intersectionality has the potential to "bring about solidarity within the HCI community" [142]. While accessibility researchers are beginning to consider intersectionality as well (e.g., [34]), we are yet to deeply engage with the social construct of race and how it shapes disability.

While portrayed as minoritized, people of color make up a majority of the world's population. In the United States, only 55% of the population is expected to be non-Hispanic White by 2030. However, the bulk of research focuses on the experiences of those who are White [57, 131, 156], or well off and have access to higher education. As a result, implicitly, the bulk of accessibility research contributes to a limited understanding of the experiences of people with disabilities.

Notably, ableism and racism often collide in everyday life [123]. Scholars in areas of education and law have begun to advocate for an intersectional lens [59, 73]. For example, Harris [73] asserts that some of the more salient socio-political issues can no longer stand to look at racialization and disability as distinct. To even be diagnosed with some types of disability is a privilege of the White middle class [21]). Much of this work is guided by efforts that take place outside of the ivory tower, namely disability activists' call for more intersectional movements and emphasis on collective liberation [84]. They cite not only the erasure but the regression of progress that happens when neglecting one or other axes of identity. While scholars who take a critical look at technology research have examined how ableism and racism are manifested and proliferated through our sociotechnical systems (e.g., biased algorithms [32, 66, 120, 141]), these works occur largely in isolation from each other. It is crucial that we begin to engage with this intersection in accessibility research.

The potential for investigating the intersections experienced by racially minoritized groups that live with disabilities is vast, and calls attention to how we might make technology and our research practice more inclusive. It may additionally open up new domains of inquiry such as disaster response and safety (e.g., [37]) or systems of incarceration and institutionalization [132], housing and unemployment [44, 45, 95] – all of which where people with disabilities, and Black and Brown communities, are either over- or underrepresented.

A few accessibility papers have begun to emerge in this landscape to address this gap (e.g., [13, 89, 105, 169]). For example, Bennett *et al.* [13] explore the role of race in image descriptions through interviews with a variety of people with diverse identities. Their paper represents a valuable foray into what we believe is a rich and under-examined space for research in accessibility. Building upon the recent emergence of this area, we echo that a broader understanding and awareness of these constructs is foundational to meaningfully engage the intersection of race, disability, and technology. As noted by other scholars, engagement with intersectionality will require an understanding of the *politics* of identity rather than simply checking boxes [142] as well as a recognition of how dynamics of research "still often perpetuate the exploitation of marginalized folks" [25].

Catalysed by a lack of guidance on how to successfully conduct intersectional accessibility research and by a lack of conversations in our community about the importance of this work, we were motivated to explore the space of race, disability, and technology. In this work, we analyze three exemplary papers which lie at the intersection of race, disability and technology. Drawing from our analysis and other intersectional frameworks, we then highlight ways to engage with race and disability through each stage of the research process. In this expanded version of our conference paper [70], we go beyond a retrospective analysis of work in the field, and articulate tensions we might encounter in doing this work. Particularly, we discuss dominant narratives in race and accessibility research and highlight the need to honor diverse perspectives. We additionally showcase the role language plays in perpetuating (in)justice, and reflect on how other axes of marginalization are also racialized and impact perceptions of disability. Our new discussion features key challenges in engaging with the intersection of race and disability, and offers critical consideration to help guide researchers in advancing this area.

Positionality. We offer the analyses of the case studies in this paper as one of several possible interpretations which are influenced by our identity and positionality as scholars. We worked with the intention to form an author group that could draw from both personal and professional knowledge in doing this work – thus, our research team is composed of both scholars with and without disability, graduate students and senior academic faculty, and individuals who identify as White American, Black American, South Asian-American, and South Asian. All authors have extensive experience studying accessibility. As our collective positionality and experiences are limited to experiences in the United States, our discussion of what it means to engage race and disability in accessibility research throughout this paper is informed by the history and current state of racial dynamics within the United States.

2 BACKGROUND ON DISABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY & RACE

The past decade has seen increasing research on accessibility in technology-related venues such as CHI and ASSETS [106]. While promising, much of this research focuses on certain categories of disability over others (such as blind and low vision technology). Rarely does technology research explore the intersection of disability with other identities. For example, in preparation for a seminar on the intersection of disability and race, we conducted a search of the ACM digital library in the summer of 2020 (using words like "race", "disability" and "Black"). Our search turned up extremely few results, most of which were not relevant to the constructs of race and disability (such as about *black lists* and *race conditions* in the security sphere). In the rare case when a paper talks about both disability and race [105], they are often treated separately, simply providing information on what percentage of participants are in various categories without considering how those identities interact or how they impact lived experiences of participants (e.g., [72, 191]).

Informed by this, we focus this review on important adjacent domains where these constructs have been studied. First, we define what we mean by the terms 'disability' and 'race', and contextualize what it means to engage with these constructs in research. We next review some of the ways in which race and disability interact to amplify inequity and highlight key precedent work at this intersection. Finally, we identify technology-related work at the intersection of disability and race including those that have amplified disability or racial bias.

2.1 Defining Constructs of 'Disability' and 'Race'

Scholars have acknowledged that both race and disability are social constructs with no objective reality [101, 137]. For example, Roth *et al.* discuss how race is experienced as a number of conflicting dimensions such as racial identity, self-classification, observed race, reflected race, ancestry, and phenotype [153]. Ta-Nehisi Coates explains how there are no physiological measures that separates the races, instead they were adapted to explain social difference and inferiority [28]. In this sense, race is a construct that is a product of social context [28]. Similarly, Leonardo and Broderick discuss how 'Whiteness' *"reserves the right to exclude any person or group for the purposes of racial domination. 'White' is whatever Whites make it to be, using whatever ideological reasoning happens to be available at the time"* [101]. Racism, then, is the discrimination against an individual or a group based on the assumption of racial inferiority or superiority.

Similarly, scholars have positioned disability as one that is subjective with no one particular experience. In fact, in the Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA), disability is defined to include anyone who "has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities...or a person who is *perceived by others as having such an impairment*" (emphasis ours). While the lens of medicine has historically resulted in disability being characterized through individual diagnosis, there is increasing recognition of the role environments and attitudes play in creating an experience of disability [92, 130]. As noted by Susan Jones, the experiences of disability further vary across time, culture, and environments [90]. This is also reflected in the inconsistency of language used by people with disabilities to describe themselves and the concept of a disability identity [108, 147, 160].

2.2 The Intersection of RacexDisability

Race and disability are inextricably linked. Theorists have turned to history to recognize how ability has been racialized and race has been disabled [30], especially in the the context of eugenics and medical experimentation and immigration (e.g., [88, 125, 180]). For example, (supposed) disability was used to justify slavery and to deny immigration to unwanted groups [120, 125]: *"...discrimination against people of color, women, and other historically marginalized groups has often been justified by representing these groups as disabled.... Thus disability is entwined with, and serves to justify, practices of marginalization."* ([120], p. 11).

More generally, race, disability and poverty are deeply intertwined in the United States [61, 83], with disabled people, especially those of color, facing inequities in education, poverty status, employment, medical debt, food security, and more [61]. Similarly, entire books have been written about the interlocking factors that contribute to the over-representation of both people of color (particularly Black people) and people with disabilities in the North American carceral system, refugee and asylum systems, and systems that feed into these [26, 38].

Although the intersection of disability and race is understudied in the accessibility technology literature, it is very much a topic of inquiry in the broader disability literature [30, 38, 84, 192]. This body of literature touches on topics such as religion, fashion, innovation, science inclusion, communication access, climate and disaster response, mutual aid, interdependence, joy, class, ability, opportunity gaps, over and under representation, the school-to-prison pipeline and school reform, and race, disability and the law. This linkage between race and disability is further reflected in the "points of contact" between respective fields of critical race theory and disability studies: first, both argue that disability and race are social rather than biological; second, both argue for disability and race to be recognized as relational; third, both use stories and first-person accounts to foreground experiences of racism and ableism [51].

There is also an active and informative dialogue taking place outside of academia at the intersection of race and disability, including blogs and podcasts such as the 'Chicas Talk Disability YouTube Channel'[*] and the 'Black Disabled Men Talk' podcast[†]. Disability activists have also championed the #BlackDisabledLivesMatter[‡] and #DisabilityTooWhite [123] movements to acknowledge this intersection. Many of those driving this broader conversation have historically been actively excluded from academia in the past, but have provided a strong foundation for any discourse around the intersection of race and disability.

Out of these and other settings, the concept of 'Disability Justice' has arisen [18, 84]. Disability Justice, which was founded by a group of marginalized, disabled community activists and artists, is based on the observation that *"all bodies are caught in bindings of ability, race, class, gender, sexuality and citizenship ...[and that] only universal, collective access can lead to universal, collective liberation"* [84]. Rather than focusing on one issue, disability justice recognizes the power in complex identities, and situates power in an intersectional, anti-capitalist collective framework of caring, interdependence, solidarity and liberation. At the same time, it provides a critical lens for examining oppression [169].

2.3 Race and Disability in the Technology Space

The idea that technology can reproduce racism is discussed in works such as Hankerson *et al.* [65], which found that at the time only six articles in the ACM digital library mentioned the term "racism." The authors ask why racism is not reflected in our literature and highlight how technology can perpetuate racial bias, a premise that

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[*] https://www.youtube.com/@chicastalkdisabilityyoutub7482/about

[†] See https://blackdisabledmentalk.com/

[‡] See https://blacklivesmatter.com/disabled-black-lives-matter/

is further investigated in Ruha Benjamin's book 'Race After Technology' [11]. It does not require digging far beneath the surface to uncover a multitude of examples of such technologies. Multiple articles have taken up the important topic of how technology and race intersect (e.g., [71, 129]) as well as the inclusiveness of the field to scholars of color [49]; our methods (e.g., [24, 43, 103, 173]); and the potential for technology to directly address the implicit and explicit racism in app and algorithm design (e.g., [18]) and the impacts of racism (e.g., [172]).

Similarly, technology can reproduce ableism. Not only are many websites and apps simply not accessible to people who do not use traditional input configurations (e.g., [152, 182]), but many apps, data sets, and algorithms may all encode ableist biases [112]. Data-related biases can be made worse by the heterogeneity of the disability experience, making it hard to ensure that data about any one person can be collected at scale [141]. As with racism and technology, many examples exist of ableist biases impacting a multitude of domains. The risks associated with ableist technology go beyond exclusion to serious concerns such as involuntary disclosure of disability, surveillance of disabled people, as well as the technology's potential to exacerbate or cause disability [112]. Ableism is so prevalent, even within our own accessibility research community, that multiple papers have taken a critical perspective on how we as a community co-construct our domains of inquiry (e.g., [104]'s discourse analysis of institutional logics in discourses of housing and [194]'s analysis of epistemic violence in disability-related technology research).

Despite the parallels in these two domains of inquiry, few technology focused articles have considered the intersectional aspects of race, disability, and technology. While some works have explored the adoption of accessibility technology contextualized by race and culture (e.g., [82, 148, 179]), other aspects of the technology pipeline (such as design or implementation) remain relatively unexplored. Additionally, an examination of how accessibility technologies may enact racism (or vice versa) is largely missing from the literature. Reflective of early thinking in the space is Sum *et al's* [169] workshop on Disability Justice in HCI, which called for a reflection on how disability interacts with other systems of oppression and how this informs the technologies we design. It included 34 submissions touching on topics from Disability Justice in the Global South to body autonomy to smart cities to virtual and hybrid conferences as a form of intersectional equity, highlighting the breadth and depth of research that our community is inspired to do at this intersection.

3 CASE STUDIES

We conducted a seminar focused on the intersection of race, disability, and technology in 2020 (discussed in [70]). Our experiences compiling content for this seminar as well as teaching mindfully to a diverse group motivated us to form a larger group to explore intersectional accessibility work further. In this section, we present a series of case studies that exemplify engagement with both race *and* disability through the course of research. We chose to use case studies to showcase engagement within this intersection as this method has previously been used to construct compelling narratives, cultivate a critical lens for HCI research, and surface new research futures for the community [14, 69, 111, 188].

In choosing our case studies, we first conducted a search across the ACM Digital Library and Google Scholar using keywords such as *'Race'*, *'Disability'* and *'Intersectionality'* as well as keyword descriptors of research approaches (e.g., equity, inclusion, diverse). We scoped our search to research that examined experiences or interactions with technology. We read through articles to identify research questions outlined, frameworks used, and engagement with constructs of race and disability to choose our case studies. Our analysis examines the people, focus of the study, and methods applied while contemplating how each facet of the research process engages with constructs of race and disability and undertakes intersectional approaches. Sections 3.1 to 3.3 discuss the three case studies from our search in 2023 [70]. Section 3.4 highlights some of the newer works since our original paper was published in 2023.

3.1 Case Study 1: Negotiating Accessibility and (Mis)Representation in Image Descriptions

Bennett *et al.* [13] explore how individuals' appearances are described in image descriptions (i.e., textual descriptions of visual content) – particularly, they explore the tensions around describing appearance characteristics that may convey an individual's race, gender, and disability. They report on interviews with 25 screen reader users (mix of totally blind, those with visual memories, and other visual impairments) who also identify as "Black, Indigenous, People of Color, Non-binary, and/or Transgender". Through their analysis, they highlight participants' experiences with image descriptions: their preferences for self-description, their experiences of (mis)representation by others, and their interest in descriptions of others' appearances.

This work offers an excellent exploration of a topic at the nexus of race and disability. While image descriptions have received considerable attention in accessibility research (e.g., examining automated and human crowd-sourced pipelines for generating image descriptions etc.), image descriptions of *photographs* bring up unique considerations around representation of identity. Describing physical features of the person photographed can allude to their racial, gender, and disability identity – how might we do so while being mindful of consequences of misrepresentation? Automated approaches have the potential to make image descriptions more widely available, but would biases in AI models amplify the harms of misidentification and misrepresentation in this context? In exploring these questions, Bennett *et al's* work engages with race as a construct, challenging how race is conceptualized visually vs. nonvisually, and analyzing the historical validity associated with these different ways of sensemaking and the power dynamics at play.

In their approach, they work thoughtfully to highlight perspectives that are typically underrepresented in accessibility and HCI research. Not only do they recruit participants at nexus of minoritized identities, they go beyond just reporting demographics to actively comparing and contrasting specific perspectives that emerged from specific intersectional identities. For example, they discuss how different participants navigate self-descriptions of identity and what shaped their choices – some enjoyed how specific they could be with their choice of identity label and physical description verbally (e.g., Latina with caramel, brown skin) whereas others found language to be insufficient in summarizing their identities (e.g., their heritage or transitioning genders). In exploring experiences of descriptions by others, they asked participants to share experiences with misrepresentation and associated harms, and how this affected their choice to use image description technologies. They delve into tradeoffs between access afforded by image descriptions and microaggressions experienced by use of this technology, highlighting that populations that are more marginalized and minoritized typically take the burden of its harms.

While their primary goal was to explore how appearance and identity are negotiated in image descriptions, they also recognize that explicit expression of different identity facets might not always be appropriate and necessary in all interactions or all contexts. In these cases, the interplay of race and disability might not be of significance or priority. However, in contexts where significance is undetermined, erasure and misrepresentation could cause harm. Overall, their findings and analysis emphasize the need to critically assess tensions across these generally siloed categories of identity for accessibility research. This paper thus serves as an imperative case study for HCI research.

3.2 Case Study 2: Designing for Intersectional, Interdependent Accessibility in Content Creation

Gonzales [60] explores the process of creating accessible and bilingual digital content, examining interdependent and intersectional concerns that arise in the process of translation. The author reports on both her prior research with communities of translators as well as her experience of creating video montages of these translation sites. In reflecting on her experiences designing and publishing that work, she explores tensions in making research accessible to a variety of audiences.

This work again offers an intriguing case study on technical communication, demonstrating how language is entwined with both culture and disability. The data narratives in the paper examine this intersection through experiences of translators as well as audiences of translation. For example, the first data narrative focuses on creating bilingual captions and discusses tensions between translations and accessibility for audiences. Subtitles usually offer language translations for viewers from different languages, and captions offer transcriptions of both speech and non-speech audio for d/Deaf and hard of hearing audiences. As the author's work focused on sites of translation, the videos contain a mix of "Spanishes and Englishes and gestures". The act of adding captions and subtitles necessitates making assumptions about ability and linguistic background of the audience– the author discusses how they balanced the need for access with the goal of showcasing linguistic tensions that arise during translation work.

The second data narrative, on the other hand, focuses on translators' own experiences with language and disability and examines how their identities as immigrants and disabled people influenced their approach to translation. The process of translation is often multimodal, with translators often using any available mode to communicate (drawing figures, texting, using their bodies, singing, dancing). The embodied nature of this practice is deeply shaped by questions of access and ability, and cannot be separated from material conditions, histories, and experiences of translators. This work therefore highlights the need for an intersectional approach to content creation. Building on these data narratives, Gonzalzes outlines goals for future accessible content creation: including designing for language fluidity, developing culturally relevant policies for digital publishing, and recognizing labor of multilingual content creation.

Apart from their analysis, they also thoughtfully apply frameworks of interdependence and intersectionality to inform their research methods and process. For example, the choice to use video recordings in sites of translation allowed her to capture multimodal, embodied communication, but brought up new considerations regarding comfort and consent of participants, and the role of race, class, and gender in shaping power dynamics. The resulting discussion of centering collective access and goals shaped data collection and which video data was disseminated. This also informed how they incorporated translators' perspectives throughout the work – by working *with* translators and not just writing *about*, she reflected on reciprocity and giving back to the community whose time she was using. This led to collectively deciding with participants to not anonymize data, and thus allow them to trace their contributions in resulting publications. Overall, by combining insights from disability studies and translational studies, this work shows meaningful engagement with intersectional tenets through the course of research.

3.3 Case Study 3: Understanding Socio-cultural Accessibility Barriers for Refugees with Disabilities

Hamidi *et al.* [64] explore the amplified challenges surrounding access to disability and healthcare services that refugees with disabilities face in host countries. They report findings from semi-structured interviews with six experts who have experience serving marginalized refugees in the United States. Through their analysis of the use of digital technologies by refugees with disabilities, they highlight opportunities for technological and structural change, promoting culturally sensitive accessibility and healthcare resources.

This work examines a domain underexplored in accessibility research that is deeply shaped by race and culture. Through their interviews, they show how understandings of disability and access themselves are shaped by other identities held by these individuals. For example, there are cultural disconnects in social interpretations of disability held by refugees vs. by their host countries, which then impacts the types and levels of stigma they experience in provisioning access. Limited language support creates additional barriers in accessing resources for healthcare and accessibility.

The authors found that these highlighted cultural and language barriers between refugees and disability/health services directly contribute to misunderstandings, in turn, lending to mistrust and not having sufficient tools to address accessibility and healthcare concerns at this intersection. The authors argue that this dilemma, *"can be understood from an intersectional perspective that places the experiences of refugees with disabilities at the* *intersection of multiple overlapping categories of power relations, disability and immigration status. Viewed from this perspective, it becomes clear that the resources and training of experts serving only people with disabilities or refugees will not be adequate to address the needs of people who are both refugees and have disabilities.*" [64]. They go on to examine current technologies used by refugees with disabilities, and raise recommendations for future assistive technology solutions that address dual language and access needs, such as integrating language support into technologies, improving the cultural training of healthcare service providers, and training refugees on how to use technologies to identify resources.

Along with surfacing the importance of addressing intersectional needs that arise in this context, the authors are thoughtful in their approach to this research. While their exploration considers provisioning healthcare, they still opt to use of post-medical frameworks to honor the social conceptualizations of disability and emphasize the rights of people with disabilities. They also recognize overlapping power relations that impact the intersectional experiences of people with disabilities, and reflect on these frameworks to compose their methods and analysis. Additionally, they were mindful of their target population when recruiting. To reduce potential burdens that could emerge from the participation of current disabled refugees and their families, the authors capture the perspectives of experts who are experienced with serving refugees in the United States. These experts include people who came to the United States as refugees themselves, and highlight their lived experiences of navigating personal cultural and language barriers. The authors note limitations of this approach in gathering first-person perspectives, and surface future directions for incorporating such perspectives into their work. Overall, this can serve to guide future work to examine understudied accessibility topics through an intersectional perspective.

3.4 Recent Works Engaging with Race and Disability

Our three case studies, while notably distinct in their domains of inquiry and methodology, highlight the breadth of work that can be done when inspired to engage with the intersection of race and disability, from new perspectives on technology work (such as image annotation [13]) to domains entirely new to the field of accessibility (such as technology use among refugees [64]) as well as meta reflections on how we disseminate our research accessibly [60]. While prior work has highlighted the value of critique as one way to forge alternatives to normative research practices [188], we see equal value in highlighting the promise of this area through these exemplary case studies.

We are excited to note that increasing research in HCI is beginning to reflect on how the intersection of race and disability might materialize in their respective research spaces since the publication of our initial work [70]. The contexts explored here include exploring visual assistance technologies, real-time sensemaking and awareness of sound information, interacting with more accessible and public transportation platforms [3, 80, 102, 168], along with online digital contexts [124, 146]. They point out this intersectional lens can be valuable in eliciting the nuances that occur when physical, public, and environmental aspects are at play with other sociocultural factors and norms in these technology-driven experiences. Similarly, within the domain of health equity research and its convergence with AI, research has begun to include the call for examining disability as a core part of the additional marginalization discrimination that occurs when developing health technologies for women and BIPOC communities [135, 187].

The prevalence of digital lives and online identities through the latest wave of emerging technology has reproduced more instances of racism and ableism, and thus researchers in this space have started to explore the ideal experiences individuals at this unique intersection desire. This includes experiences around assistive technology use in queer disabled community center spaces and communication, menstrual pain technologies, and accessible transportation [33, 34, 134, 190]. Understanding how race and disability identity and representation also materialize within the crux of AI's infinite interpretations and exploring how it is negotiated for different contexts has become another crucial context. The proliferation of generative AI has brought scholars to study the problems and preferences across AI tools, LLM systems like resume screening, and depictions of multiple marginalization in text to image model outputs [4, 58, 109, 139]. Building upon a disability-centered perspective, these works have begun to think about other facets of identities, further recognizing and engaging with race as a core aspect of inclusion. They also highlight the complexity of online experiences that have been compounded with algorithmic-driven injustices through disability activism on social media or against disabled content creators [77, 154].

Expansion of VR accessibility research has additionally brought forth more unique discussion in the design space of how race and disability can be expressed– ideas around how both identities can be experienced in synchrony through choices of ability, appearance, aesthetics and others. There is some deliberation around self-presentation and disability representation through VR avatars and social VR environments. This has lent an interesting lens to help deconstruct what ideal intersectional experiences can be and how to build affordances across dimensions– through choices aorund disability disclosure, visible vs. invisible disabilities, along with more underexplored areas such as chronic pain, and gender identities [62, 105, 196, 197].

Many other critical pieces of work have called for the importance of the intersection as a method of identifying access frictions, assumptions, and other ethical boundaries in research [53]. Some scholars are reflecting what the future of disability justice research approaches mean for intersectional efforts as well [170]. Other scoping literature reviews and recent research agendas have articulated the importance of race and disability in their respective analysis across various disciplines such as captioning, sexuality and disability in technology, learning sciences and pedagogy, the new era of youth's assimilation with AI [114–116, 136].

We applaud those who have started to reflect on how the intersection of race and disability might materialize in their research, with many including these reflections into the motivations and limitations of their work. We believe the need to engage with this intersection will continue to grow as accessibility research moves into all of the spaces where people interact with technology. In all of these spaces, there are people marginalized by both race and/or disability. People who are at the intersection of both deserve our attention and will in turn lead us to new innovations and insights.

4 ENGAGING WITH THE INTERSECTION OF RACE & DISABILITY THROUGH RESEARCH

In this section, we draw on insights from above case studies to reflect on what it means to engage with race and disability through the course of research. In addition to these cases, we also draw draw on literature that highlights new methodological structure and goals that arise in working with race and disabilty [5, 91, 107, 188]/ as well as intersectional spaces [173, 185]. Frameworks such as *Intersectional HCI* [142, 159] and *Critical Race Theory in HCI* [129] have also provided a critical foundation for such an analysis, and we build upon such frameworks to explicitly incorporate race as a construct into the consideration of disability work in technology-related research.

Our discussions around what it means to engage with the intersection of race and disability in HCI have been shaped by reviewing this literature along with our own experiences as researchers. Our aim in outlining considerations for each stage of research is to support reflection on where ableism and racial bias might influence our work, from research questions to study design to analysis.

4.1 Stage 1: *Formalization*

In this stage of research, researchers define what is meant by race, disability, and their intersection. As we note in section 2.1, constructs of race and disability are defined by social consensus, so engaging with them well in research requires thoughtful formalization. For example, consider collecting data about race and disability from participants in a study: as these social constructs are a moving target [22, 101], people may interpret identity labels based on social positioning or other subjective factors (e.g. perceptions of skin tone, regional background). Research efforts are further complicated by the fact that identifying along each of the constructs of race or disability can have undesirable effects, meaning participants may be reluctant to disclose multiple marginalization. Additionally, researchers may attempt to use proxies for engaging in race and disability when collecting demographic information, such health status and services utilized, socioeconomic status, and locality [127]. Here use of healthcare services by an individual could be construed as determinant of access, but would paint an incomplete picture and disregard many social factors related to disability [130]. These complexities point to the need to thoughtfully consider how researchers would like to define each of these concepts and collect related data in their work.

One of the ways researchers could carefully engage with the constructs of race and disability is by drawing theories from adjacent fields, such as critical race theory [40], disability studies [39, 41, 92, 130], and intersectional frameworks and theories (e.g., DisCrit [30, 101, 144]). A body of research explores how these theories may inform HCI research specifically as well (e.g., [57, 111, 129]). In our case studies, we see that authors picked theories informed by the specific social and technical context of study. For example, Bennett *et al.* considers race as a "sociomaterial system for categorizing people" based on cultural, behavioral and physical traits because that is most relevant to how it translates to language and description. Similarly, Hamidi *et al.* draw on the human rights model of disability, as this allows them to engage with different cultural understandings of disability held by refugees. Gonzales brings together theories from translation studies and disability studies to showcase the diverse needs of different audiences.

We argue that this engagement with theory not only enriches analysis, but is necessary to ensure research does not "perpetuate disparities, inequalities, and stereotypes" [5]. We echo Andrews *et al.* , who emphasize research should begin with understanding the history and values of a community. Establishing this foundation is even more important when exploring contexts where people have been historically excluded from research about them – only then can we recognize tensions between "political/historical literature and participant experiences" [188] and adapt our research directions.

4.2 Stage 2: *Framing and Scoping*

This is the stage of research where we decide what research questions are worth answering. Engaging with disability in HCI has prominently looked at how we can use technology to make the world accessible for people with disabilities, or highlighting the exclusionary nature of existing technologies and corresponding failures to meet access needs of people with disabilities (e.g., [12, 78, 106, 111]). Engaging with race in HCI similarly explores the impact and adoption of technologies by different racial groups, experiences with certain systems, and how these technologies may perpetuate harm against those with marginalized racial identities (e.g., [5, 65, 68, 88, 129, 163]). Engaging with the intersection of race and disability may involve framing the research more broadly than either construct individually, and highlight new avenues for research.

As an example, an accessibility focused research project may focus on automated speech recognition and captioning technologies' potential to support d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals (e.g., [16, 94, 98, 117]). A similar project in this space that engages with racial identity may explore the use of speech recognition technologies (such as Alexa) by speakers with different dialects (e.g., [36, 71, 181, 184]). Engaging with the intersection of race and disability brings up new research questions – how well do current captioning systems capture different dialects? How well do speech recognition systems work for speakers of these dialects who also have deaf accents, stutters, or non-normative speech patterns? Disability and race each offer new dimensions to explore. How does the potential for surveillance through captioning tech impact adoption by those with multiple marginalized identities? How does internalized ableism shape how folks adapt/hack speech recognition technologies for use?

In this stage, it is also necessary to interrogate and reimagine the dynamics of knowledge production. While accessibility research has had a shift towards participatory research methods, research still continues to be a site of epistemic violence—for instance, when disabled knowledge is invited but not legitimized; when research goals misalign with disabled people's actual needs; when ableist epistemologies frame disabled perspectives as non-credible or unscientific; or when disabled contributions are scrutinized while ableist ways of knowing remain unquestioned [194]. To address this potential harm, Andrews *et al.* suggest designing the research process with community input, and collaboratively developing equitable research questions and data collection methods. Williams *et al.* emphasizes the need to ensure a project is oriented (or re-oriented) to "participants' desires without ulterior motive." [188]. With our case studies, we see the potential of formative research to articulate community desires (e.g., engaging with participants at the intersections, such as people of color who are screen reader users [13]), and thus inform the design of technology and future research in the field.

4.3 Stage 3: *Methods*

The next step in the research process is to identify the epistemological foundations of the project and select and execute methods. Research at the margins "often perpetuates the exploitation of marginalized folks" [25] and thus requires careful attention to mitigating harm in our methods. For example, research that engages with the construct of race may need to address insider/outsider dynamics, cultural relevance, and power structures [63, 119]. Similarly, research that engages with disabled communities must consider the accessibility of the research methods themselves: accessibility of recruitment materials to study design (e.g., incorporating breaks, adjusting to changing access needs, offering materials in multiple modalities, considering participant health concerns) [91, 107].

In addition to these practical considerations, reflecting on the epistemological foundations of intersectional research is crucial. Oftentimes, disability or even racialized identity "demarcate a type of knowing and lived experience that is systematically subverted" and marginalized away from what is considered "real" research [100, 194]. There is also a risk of invalidation in work that stems from people that might not carry institutional power [67, 100, 194].

In the above case studies, we see that choices made about participant engagement reflect a careful attention to topics like power, cost to stakeholders, credit, and so on. Bennett *et al.* chose to center experiences of screen reader users instead of image describers (which are prioritized in prior research) [13]. Hamidi *et al.* opted to work with experts who serve refugees instead of refugee families themselves so as to reduce potential burden of participation. Gonzales carefully reflected on rights and representation of digital content, and chose not to anonymize participants so that translators could trace their contributions to the research [60].

In another example, consider this sequence of studies (all by the same authors): First, a study of passively sensed behavior correlates of discrimination experiences among students might start by talking to a broad sample of students of different races and ethnicities, uncovering changes in psychological state, physical activity, phone use and sleep [160]. However, the representation of people with disabilities in the study was only 1%, and in later iterations of the same study despite attempts to recruit, this only went up to an average of 10% [193], about half of the true representation at universities [99]. A deeper look at the study methods must question the root cause of these challenges, which might be recruitment, retention due to inaccessible study design, or an unknown factor and adjust the methods accordingly. Alternatively, a new approach might revisit the same questions in an interview format, as [195] do. This may in turn require returning to questions of framing and scoping. For example, Zhang *et al.* [195] mention one example of the intersection of race and disability where a participant benefited from virtual office hours not only due to the ease with which they could zoom in on the whiteboard (they were low vision); but also because they felt unsafe walking to in-person office hours due to their race and gender. We present this as an example of a sequence of articles that variously touch on race and disability, but never fully engage with their intersection. Even just by touching on demographics, however, they aptly illustrate the importance of iterating on methods to engage with different populations.

We must continuously reflect on our methods to identify potential unintended consequences and negative impacts of our interventions and interactions. Whether those consequences represent unexpected accessibility needs, difficulties with recruiting or retaining participants, or deeper expressions of bias and ableism, ongoing attention to their possibility is essential to reacting to and addressing them, minimizing harm, and maximizing the power and positive impact of the time gifted by participants to the endeavor.

4.4 Stage 4: *Analysis and Writing*

The final stage of a project involves integration and synthesis of the work, to carry the intersectional research questions and analysis goals that guided the research through to writing and analysis as well. Recognizing how researchers' own identities and biases have shaped the research process is one key aspect of this work. This has increasingly shown up in HCI literature as explicit positionality statements regarding ability and racial identities of authors. For example, Bennett *et al.* go beyond standard positionality statements to actively expose personal perspectives where they are relevant and carefully discuss relationships between different identities participants hold; Hamidi *et al.* [64] trace overlapping power structures between refugees and healthcare providers.

At a deeper level, this may look like interrogating power dynamics and relations between researchers and participant communities or amongst the research team due to these identities. For example, in a co-design effort with a local Black community group, Tran O'Leary *et al.* [173] found, upon reflection, that the very methods being studied morphed during their analysis, where the researchers were "thinking in terms of lines of 'perfect' alignment for the concrete forms [while their collaborators] prioritized specific people's engagements over an idealized design process." While that study did not engage with disability, the importance of critical questioning of assumptions and definitions extends to intersectional work as well.

Even when research questions explored by a paper do not center the intersection of race and disability, there is still potential for these constructs to come up in data and findings. Through analysis and writing, researchers have a chance to reflect on biases and new dimensions of inquiry. This may involve noting instances of ableism and racism in collected data (e.g., participant interviews), as well as identifying historic and systemic factors/biases and root causes that may be impacting research questions and findings. In this vein, Boveda and Annama [23] offer a valuable framework for researchers to reflect on throughout the research process, across onto-epistemic, sociohistorical and sociocultural dimensions, calling for researchers to reflect deeply on "how they engage with and communicate knowledge about multiply marginalized people".

Last but not the least, writing and analysis also an opportunity to reflect on reciprocity to the community that offered their time for the research to take place. This can take many shapes and forms – Mack *et al.* [107] suggest member checking with research participants to ensure their perspectives have been represented accurately by sharing transcripts, presentation materials, final papers, and any artifacts associated with the project for approval and critique. Andrews *et al.* recommend supporting community investment in the results and disseminating research in a way that is accessible to participating communities. Gonzales' case study offers valuable insights on this stage of research, particularly making content accessible to different audiences from different linguistic backgrounds and a variety of dis/abilities. The decisions she reflected on are not unique to a single project and often embedded in most research publication and dissemination pipelines. By explicitly stating these choices, we can begin to interrogate how we may be reinforcing structures of oppression. If we want to *"purposely decenter standardized notions of language, culture, and ability simultaneously"* [60], we need to recognize the critical considerations involved in working with multiply marginalized communities, AND the labor of doing so well.

4.5 Summary

While we have endeavored to offer some concrete examples for each of the outlined stages, we do not mean to oversimplify the nuances related to deep and meaningful engagement with social constructs of race and disability.

This engagement looks different for each project. We emphasize that researchers need to be responsive to the wants and needs of multiple marginalized communities and what they say is right and important. Further, work in this space necessitates iteration based on learning, and constantly adapting with and to needs of the community.

5 LOOKING AHEAD: TENSIONS AT THE INTERSECTION

As we note in Section 3.4, we are heartened to see increasing attention to the intersection of race and disability in technology research since the publication of [70] in 2023. We the authors have also been engaged in projects that are heavily informed by lenses of race and disability. To do this work, we have drawn on theories from adjacent fields like disability studies and race and ethnicity studies, reflected on what we mean by race and disability and the history of these terms, explored trends in computing research related to these fields, and had discussions about the tensions we encounter in practice. In this section, we share some of these complexities in engaging with the intersection of race and disability, highlighting nuances brought up by historical and cultural implications that impact sociotechnical analysis in accessibility research moving forward.

5.1 Balancing Narratives of Joy and Grief

In The Danger of a Single Story, Chimamanda Adichie excellently articulates the risks we run into when we repeatedly share just one story about a community, a culture, a person: "show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become" [2]. Here, we discuss narratives that shape the work we do, showcasing the tentative balance between recounting harm and centering community joy. Balancing these dimensions is particularly complex given how racism and ableism shape each other, informing how researchers frame and scope their work.

To start, we trace how this has appeared across accessibility and race research. Since the publication of Mankoff *et al's* "Disability Studies as a Critical Source of Inquiry" in 2010 [110], there has been a paradigm shift in how accessibility research is conducted and framed. Specifically, the discussion of different models of disability has allowed accessibility researchers to recognize how the medical or deficit model permeates most of our work, situating impairment within the individual and thus impacting who we design technology for and what we design technology to do. More works have now started to note the structural and historical underpinnings of disability experiences (e.g., [12, 79]) and thus contemplate how we might do research to address these structural inequalities.

Parallel critiques have discussed how work with communities of color often takes a deficit or a damage-centered lens. For example, Tuck argues against such simplistic narratives that portray marginalized communities as broken, urging instead for desire-based frameworks that recognize hope, resilience, and complexity [175]. While focusing on trauma and systemic oppression is necessary, it risks reinforcing single stories that otherize marginalized groups and erases positive aspects of their lives. Erete *et al.* echo this, cautioning against framing structural inequalities as descriptive of or inherent to communities [48].

To counter/balance narratives of oppression, lenses of flourishing have been adopted by researchers. For example, To *et al.* emphasize the importance of centering positive aspects of humanity, such as joy, pleasure, rest, and cultural heritage [171]. We see this approach in works like Eglash *et al.* that argue for taking a race-positive approach to computing design [46]. This is also reflected in trends in accessibility research that move from addressing functional aspects to considering other realms of life like art, gaming, culture [113]. Some of these works (e.g., [79]) are also led by disabled scholars, using autoethnographic methods that expand the focus to other aspects of disabled life, including disabled joy, intimacy, care work.

These research trends reflect broader disability discourse. In activism, the emphasis of pride and joy counters the idea that disability is a tragedy or that disabled lives are not worth living – instead positioning "disability is an ingenious way to live" (from artist Neil Marcus). Disability pride [27, 118] reclaims disability as a desirable identity and offers notions of community. Adopting a lens of flourishing is made possible by the match/fit/proximity to the lived experiences and perspectives on disability of the communities or individuals in question. But we ask: can we apply a lens of flourishing in the absence of desirability?

Here we are thinking of how disability can emerge as a direct outcome of systemic and structural racism [74]. Along with lesser access to the social determinants of health, high magnitudes of incarceration, war, police brutality, and violence institutionally subjugate communities of color towards disablement as a form of White supremacy [174]. For example, disability can be found to be clustered in low-income neighborhoods where people of color are forced into contact with environmental hazards, toxicity, pollution, and lack of clean water [19, 87, 97, 126]. When reckoning with this disproportionate "proliferation of disability through social, material, and economic violence" [50] as experienced by communities of color, is it possible to construct disability as a positive identity? What if one does not identify as disabled at all? Considering the history of eugenics, "ableist notions of disability" have been used to justify continued oppression of entire communities regardless of their realities [9, 50]. Then and now, distancing oneself from disability is/was a necessary attempt to survive oppressive spaces [50]. What stories do we tell about disability in these contexts? How will this shape our work of access and liberation?

In doing intersectional accessibility work then, we are called to reflect on how exactly we preserve testaments of harm without portraying them as inherent to communities. We are also called to reflect on how we define the bounds of disability both as a lived experience and a political identity [121] because it has a direct impact on the work we do (what is access) and who we do it with (who are we designing with/for). Some scholars have already taken up these questions (e.g., the exclusion of pain and discomfort in social model of disability [130], or the exclusion of Mad, chronically ill, neurodivergent identities from umbrella of disability [47, 143, 183]). Perhaps uniquely applicable here is crip negativity as a methodology [162], which "dials in on who is left behind when being disabled becomes a respectable way of being in the world" and holds spacetime for "bad crip feeling felt cripply". We highlight the role multiple stories have played in these discourses and contend that this emphasis on multiple truths is important not only to account for experiences of different individuals but also those of the same individual across time, given how identities change over time and context.

A commitment to articulating multiple stories is necessary in these spaces. While no single project can address field-wide narratives, we urge researchers to be mindful of dominant narratives, reflect on how these shape their research questions, and commit to surfacing multiplicity of realities through their work. And then, as a community, we must create space for this narrative plurality within our conferences and conversations.

5.2 Honoring Diverse Narratives In Community-Led Research

As junior scholars in accessibility research, we often grapple with the tension between prevailing narratives within academic discourse and the complex realities of people's lived experiences. This dissonance is particularly pronounced when participants express ableist beliefs or when established "best practices" rooted in White-centered perspectives fail to align with the lived experiences of marginalized communities. Drawing upon the methods stage of our framework, we discuss the need to critically examine methodologies to ensure we honor diverse narratives and challenge the homogeneity often implicit in dominant academic paradigms.

Accessibility research must transcend the mere pursuit of academic contribution toward sustainably co-creating access and empowerment with participants. This demands addressing power imbalances between us and participants, which can shape how stories are told. As researchers, we must cultivate spaces that foster agency, empowering participants to share their stories authentically rather than narratives that conform to research expectations. Honoring the full diversity of disabled lives requires resisting the urge to fit narratives into dominant frameworks. Drawing from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and LatCrit, counterstories prioritize the lived experiences and knowledge of marginalized individuals, highlighting narratives that diverge from dominant discourse [164]. Bernal (2002) further emphasizes how to make these stories matter within existing systems. This is particularly relevant in accessibility research, where counterstories can challenge prevailing assumptions and bring to light the nuanced realities of disabled experiences that are "not often told" [164]. Too often, non-Eurocentric stories are dismissed for their "subjectivity", while dominant stories are often accepted as "truth" [17]. Our work must reflect that there is no singular "truth," but rather broaden the scope of understanding of the disabled experience. In honoring and preserving these stories, our work must embrace the full plurality and complexity of disabled experiences — grief, resilience and joy, and the fluctuation of these emotions — to co-create knowledge that reflects the holistic realities the disabled experience.

Creating a space that cultivates agency to share these stories requires community-led methodologies that empower disabled community members to lead and shape the research agenda, rather than simply being passive subjects. However, a primary tension lies in aligning current academic research processes, which are often competitive, fast-paced, and structurally rigid in nature, with the principles and temporal demands of community-led approaches. These frictions are well-documented [15, 75] outside of accessibility, however, unique considerations emerge when examined through the lens of accessibility, disability and their intersection with race. This is particularly pronounced in accessibility research, where adjusting workflows is often necessary because traditional ones are not always effective in accounting for accommodations [107]. This builds on the concept of Crip time, recognizing the non-linear, flexible, and individualized temporalities required to support disabled participants' *and disabled researchers'* access needs [107]—temporal disruptions from normative pacing that academic systems often fail to accommodate. Honoring Crip time in research challenges conventional academic norms and demands flexibility not only to slow down but also to accelerate when needed. Research methodologies must prioritize responsiveness and adaptability, accommodating the diverse and fluctuating rhythms of disabled participation. This is especially crucial at the intersection of race, disability, and accessibility, where nuanced inquiry and flexible, community-led methods are essential for accurate and ethical representation.

Disabled participants navigate intersecting marginalizations, which can create conflicting demands, necessitating research approaches that accommodate these complexities. For example, building rapport with participants—an early step in the methodology stage—may require more time and effort when working with multi-marginalized groups, particularly when researchers do not share similar backgrounds. Historical events, such as the Tuskegee syphilis study, have created deep-seated mistrust towards academic research among minorities [158]. Addressing this mistrust necessitates deliberate and sustained efforts to build trust, foster genuine collaboration, support participant agency, and enable authentic storytelling.

The deliberate, flexible pace that is intrinsic to community-led approaches in intersectional accessibility research contrasts with the pressures of academia, potentially deterring some researchers. Despite these frictions, researchers should work towards more adaptable community-led methodologies.

5.3 Paying Attention to Language

Language used to describe race and disability as well as the (perceptions of) language practices of individuals have always been spaces where ableism and racism take root. Particularly relevant to the writing and analysis section of our framework, here we discuss how language can be a tool for reifying injustice as well as fighting it.

Language shapes rhetoric and can, over time, be used to dehumanize or other-ize a group of people. Challenging ableist or racist language then, has been a way to challenge this implicit rhetoric and has been a space of activism. For example, this is seen in the d/DHH community's activism against the phrase hearing-impaired, and in the self-advocacy of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities against the so-called 'r-word' [1]. This activism in part highlights how language encodes notions of disability (such as not situating impairment within the individual) and in part makes visible the deadly consequences of dehumanizing language (such as incarceration, forced sterilization and physical and emotional abuse) [50]. Along with challenging ableist language, the disabled community has also reclaimed language with such connotations. Cripple, for example, has historically been used as a slur against visibly disabled individuals. Through the work of disabled artists and activists, crip is now used to represent a “flamboyant sense of collective identity characterized by both defiance against abled-norms [and] wicked humor.” [86]. There is a parallel history of the word to denote connection to a predominantly African American gang (the Crips), which has caused some parts of the disabled community to reject the reclamation of the word [161]. It is these multiple stories that again show how race and disability collide. Alongside activism, crip has also been adopted by disability studies scholars as a way to theorize about disability (e.g., the use of cripping as a verb, crip theory [118], claiming crip identities [155], and the reflecting on the future of crip [93]).

Tracing these genealogies of language used today is a powerful way to recognize history, acknowledge multiple lived realities, and honor/give credit to those who came before. However, language can be used as a tool of disempowerment and erasure too. Since language carries stories (which we have established are powerful) – sometimes people in power throw doubt on language-ability or language choices of individuals to otherize or dismiss their stories, so we need to be careful here. Below we elaborate.

Detecting ableism / racism through language. Language used by individuals or organizations regarding race and disability might not characterize their stance or beliefs about the same – people can be anti-ableist and anti-racist in approach and get language wrong. In Black Disability Politics [157] Schalk illustrates this nuance through the Black Panther Party’s (BPP) activism, which embodied anti-ableism through material and discursive support in the 504 sit-in and framing disability rights within Black liberation, despite use of terms like ‘inspiring’ that can carry ableist connotations. Importantly, the BPP’s use of ‘inspiring’ was not used to describe disabled individuals themselves, but rather the collective power of protest. This history adds nuance to our understanding of disability politics in Black activism, going beyond a shallow representation of Black disabled folks as simply distancing from disability. In both historical and contemporary events, we emphasize not using language as a sole barometer or check for (anti) racism or (anti) ableism. There is a need to read in context and generously.

Notions of Language-ability. In paying attention to language, we have to contend with not only language choices but also notions of language-ability. Certain dialects or varieties of English are stigmatized or characterized as incorrect [81]– a belief that is reified through many of our systems (educational, medical, and technological) and rooted in racist and ableist ideologies [76]. More insidiously, questioning someone’s quality and capacity for language has been used to call to question their competence, ability, and personhood [151] and then discredit their stories. We emphasize two points here: one, that everyone [and their stories] have “the right to be heard no matter how inelegantly stated” [31]. Second, there is a need to not only preserve stories but how the stories have been articulated, the linguistic diversity. Implicit norms surround and constrain our writing and reporting practices (e.g., as seen in story 2, where authors discuss how reviewers requests’ to edit participant quotations consisting of colloquial language, ascribe to White notions of proper and are complicit in editing away voices of color [128]). Only by preserving and fostering linguistic diversity can we begin to dismantle these norms.

How we engage with language goes well beyond the writing phase, impacting how we conduct research as well. Many participants have communication access needs that are met through the use of language technologies or access providers – these too can encode racist biases. Automatic speech recognition (which supports access technologies like captioning and dictation and voice activated tech) has been known to perform poorly with different dialects and accents in English [96]. Human access providers such as captioners, interpreters, and translators are not immune from these biases, and may struggle with unfamiliar accents or dialects (e.g., Black ASL). This has a significant impact on the accessibility of communication through the research process. A commitment to fostering linguistically accessible spaces can also be a good way to ground ourselves in real world experiences, and ensuring the specificity required by academia does not make our conceptualizations unapproachable to the communities we work with or are a part of.

Supporting Multilingualism. So far we have discussed this in the context of English, but part of our quest for justice is thinking beyond English and the legacies of colonialism. This is not only work of expansion to other languages but also one of deepening our understanding of the role language plays in shaping rhetoric of disability and race. 'Crip', for example, has been adopted by theorists/activists in Sweden and Germany [86]. But many recommendations around disability language don't necessarily translate. For example, how does one represent the distinction between deaf and hard of hearing and Deaf in other languages? More importantly, how do speakers of these languages who fall under the d/DHH umbrella identify themselves? In another example, are the differences between disability-first and language-first important in other languages? These questions pertain not only to academic writing but also to how we embody and enact disability politics in our day-to-day lives. Many of us have struggled to articulate our work or positionality in our native language to our families and communities – not because of a lack of fluency or a belief that these languages are less capable than English in capturing the nuance required by our science – but simply from the linguistic hegemony that permeates our research traditions. It is necessary we reflect on how our standards and practices with language may result in exclusion and erasure of the very perspectives that we hope to gather: this includes researchers from different language and geographical backgrounds, participants, reviewers, presenters, and beyond.

We contend that our reflections in this section extend beyond rhetoric and communication. Excluding diversity in language leads to a homogenization of experiences and perspectives as well. Moving towards pluriversality in our field and practices will require us to continuously reflect on notions of language correctness, language ability, and language supremacy.

5.4 Recognizing Other Axes of Marginalization

Much of what we have discussed focuses on how there is an over focus on White disabled bodies in accessibility research, and we show how engaging with the construct of race is crucial to addressing the lived realities of disabled people in the United States. Here we elaborate to say that recognizing how White supremacy operates as a system of oppression necessitates also looking at other axes such as ethnicity, migration status, religion, spirituality, and culture. These aspects not only intersect with racialized experiences of disability but can be fundamental aspects of building their conceptualization of what it means to be disabled [52].

In many HCI papers we often see race and ethnicity conflated together "race/ethnicity", "race and or ethnicity". However, they are conceptually distinct as outlined by Valdez and Golash-Boza [176]. Both produce different outcomes of social relationships and structure and therefore shouldn't be interchangeably used in research practice. While ethnicity is characterized through a group's self-determined notions of culture, history, and practices, race is a social construct that is imposed externally, commonly by those of the dominant group and dictating the hegemonic culture. Considering the two concepts as proxies of each other limits inquiry and understanding of these categories. Valdez and Golash-Boza further differentiate these archetypes by juxtaposing how engaging in ethnicity means studying relationships on inclusion, incorporation, or assimilation whereas studying race focuses on exclusion, inequality and systemic injustices. Drawing this distinction, we underline how access, technology, or design research with disabled populations across these groupings should be approached.

More specifically, the racial context in the United States is one where Europeans created the idea of race to justify the genocide of Native Americans and the enslavement of Africans [176]. These racial boundaries between White and non-White that were historically established and have been reproduced since are also a critical part of what constitutes as a disability and add to the social component of an "impairment" [122]. They have dictated the unfair distribution of privileges, social benefits, and legal rights which has compounded overtime into amplified disparities– that can be attributed to notions of disability but are not explicitly correlated.

There are increased risks for disabled people with other intersecting marginalized identities. For example, many Black people might not identify as disabled since associating themselves with another "ism" heightens their chances of additional harm and violence from societal institutions. Given the exponential levels of incarceration of Black people and increased police brutality [150], Black people with disabilities experience double the risk in comparison to their White disabled counterparts, instinctively refraining from identifying as disabled. Depending on the type of disability a person has, officers can misread their willingness to comply, which in many cases leads them to respond with inappropriate tactics or escalation and use of excessive force. Activists Wesley Hamilton and Imani Barbarbin reflect on their community's sentiments towards doing so: "From them I am told that I am already Black: "Why give them another reason to shut the door in your face" [7], deliberating how they must negotiate tensions between being both black and disabled.

The ethnic context in the United States is one of substantial successive waves of immigration over centuries [176]. Within these, some of these communities have assimilated into US-centric norms and culture, finding an amalgamation of their worlds while others have preserved their origin's practices and ways of understanding disability. These dynamics determine how cultural interpretations of disability emerged and how cultural understandings of disability have strongly shaped perceptions around concepts of disability and people with disabilities– an implication for those conducting research outside of their own familiarities and contexts.

There are cultures where the idea of "disability" doesn't exist or one can't really be "disabled". These viewpoints emerged from a European origin and Western contexts [186], rooting from medicalization of bodies post the first World War, followed by the emergence of the health insurance industry and marketplace for rehabilitation services. The translation of these perspectives also might not necessarily carry into culture where individual personhood and ability isn't prioritized in comparison to those with an affinity for family, group membership, and community values. The nature of these relationships and social positioning dictate how disability is understood and can be culturally-bound.

Within all the different pathways and journeys of immigration, such as whether someone is seeking asylum, a refugee or undocumented, there are a multitude of factors that pose additional barriers to inclusion for people with disabilities. They are not just static denominators for legal purposes but more so active perpetrators in disabled experiences. For example, disabled immigrants experiencing hardships under the (The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) or DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) face further discrimination across employment and attaining access needs, which deters support from immigration and legal services and magnifies their disability as incompetence. They have expressed hesitancy towards claiming disability as a core part of their identity as it perpetuates narratives around being a "bad" immigrant, underperforming and insufficient laborers, projecting they are undeserving of pathways to citizenship in the U.S [138]. These capitalistic and merit-based norms have created eugenic phenomena spurring into a "healthy migrant effect" that segregates against immigrants with disabilities.

The status of markers can even govern if someone is eligible to seek a professional diagnosis, get wellness support, accommodations, or find medical help. A disability diagnosis is often required for reviving educational and workplace accommodations, whose documentation process is shaped by several biases [149]. Receiving disability benefits requires citizenship status, excluding tax-paying immigrants as well [133].

Religion and spirituality can play a role in addressing and understanding disability and the type of support or services one seeks [167]. For example, various religions have different ways to interpret disability, ranging between its acceptance as a divine gift versus a punishment or as an effect of karma. These distinctions can be even further broken down by levels of least to most accepted across types of disability and its value accordingly within a culture. Practices of spirituality and faith can offer coping mechanisms and counteract negative connotations, but also be another metric of exclusion within many faith-based communities for reinforcing marginalization. For example, the National Women's Health Project in the U.S. approached wellness for Black Women by including impressions of spirituality given its role in many of their lives [157]. Additionally, holistic and cultural health practices like ayurveda and homeopathy don't necessarily medicalize disability, and offer an interesting approach to care and treatment without a framing of cure. While most writing and research in this intersection has focused on North American and English religions, more exploration is necessary to understand the nuances of disability brought forth by other denominations.

Conducting research in the U.S., whose population is immigrant, diverse, heterogeneous in nature prompts us to highlight how other dimensions of identity, whether implicitly or explicitly recognizable, are pivotal in building personal and social relationships to disability. Many such proxies for ethnicity and race, like the ones mentioned above, are often collected from folks or entirely dismissed. These unique intersections of racism and ableism should be paid attention to for deepening our understanding of disability.

6 CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS MOVING FORWARD

As we reexamine what it means to be disabled and its intersections with other aspects of marginalization tied to race, we recognize key areas that remain underexplored in our initial analysis. Here, we offer future-forward considerations to help guide researchers in advancing intersectional accessibility work.

6.1 Theorizing Beyond Academia

We acknowledge that our search for intersectional accessibility work was limited to the ACM Digital Library and Google Scholar, and constrained by specific keywords, as noted in section 3. Although our goal was to understand how intersectionality is made legible within accessibility in HCI venues, we recognized that meaningful intersectional scholarship exists outside of these bounds—including activist media and public scholarship that theorizes accessibility through lived experience and cultural critique [8, 56, 85], non-HCI academic work from library and information sciences [54, 55], and theoretical contributions in adjacent computing and pedagogy venues that advance Crip technoscience and disability justice [140, 189]. Here, we call for accessibility research to deepen its engagement with theories and scholarship—both within and beyond academic channels.

Formalization requires researchers to identify and engage with theories that span disciplines. These theories offer frameworks that decenter dominant norms and call attention to the structural and historical conditions shaping experience. Importantly, many transformative theoretical frameworks—such as Disability Justice [18]—emerge not solely from academic inquiry but from activist praxis and community leadership. Theory-making is thus not confined to the academy; it is a distributed process cultivated through protest, mutual aid, storytelling, and grassroots organizing. Through blogs, art, and media, disability and racial justice advocates have been utilizing these venues to highlight and bring awareness to their diverse lived experiences. However, these perspectives often remain unacknowledged in academic research due to the absence of formal credentials—further marginalizing these perspectives. Yet, these voices offer critical epistemic insights for understanding and situating intersectional work and should not be dismissed or deemed less legitimate simply because they fall outside peer-reviewed channels.

Recognizing these diverse modes of knowledge production expands the scope of formalization beyond peer-reviewed literature to include activist scholarship and collective knowledge practices. This shift reorients formalization as a process of community-rooted visioning—one that foregrounds the epistemic authority of those most impacted in defining the questions and domains that matter. Researchers must fully embrace the principles of citational justice—uplifting and valuing contributions from both academic and non-academic sources. This practice challenges hierarchical norms of knowledge production that privilege academic voices and calls for a fundamental shift in how knowledge is perceived and valued. Centering expertise rooted in lived experience—particularly from racially marginalized people with disabilities—requires moving beyond conventional academic frameworks to ensure these voice are not silenced. While we call for engagement with theories beyond the ivory tower of academia, in addition to those from within, we recognize this is no small commitment. Engaging with cross-disciplinary theories demands sustained commitment, requiring researchers to undertake the complex work of learning new theoretical traditions, critically rethinking—and in some cases unlearning—their own assumptions. While this may deter engagement, failing to do so risks reproducing exclusion and misinterpreting data, collapsing engagement into representational checklists.

Making this shift also invites us to re-imagine such peer-review structures, which not only shape knowledge production, but also play a consequential role in maintaining—or transforming—epistemic hierarchies. Part of this re-imagination, perhaps, includes expanding our understanding of who is recognized as a "peer" in the evaluation, stewardship, and legitimization of knowledge. While such shifts require sustained infrastructural and cultural commitment, they are a critical step toward epistemic justice.

6.2 Expanding Intersectional Inquiry to Other Axes and Global Contexts

In addition to the identity dimensions we discussed in 5.4, that are often conflated with race, further exploration is required towards other axes of identity—such as gender and sexuality—that compound and further marginalize people with disabilities [20, 50]. For example, familial and cultural criteria can impose gender norms that shape disabled experiences, influence what counts as a disability, and impact assistive technologies preferences [10]. Additionally, gender biases influence access to and reception of diagnoses (e.g., Rizvi *et al.* work on gender biases in ADHD diagnosis and how technology can support those who are underdiagnosed [149]). Similarly, disabled queer folks experience additional stigmatization, ostracization, and forms of cultural oppression given bodily differences and norms of social othering [6, 42]. Certain visible versus invisible disabilities precept certain positive or negative gender expectations that translate into ways of using technology. For example, Spiel challenges ableist assumptions of heteronormativity by examining the crossover of queer theory, trans studies, critical disability studies into design of disabled technologies [165].

Subsequently, expanding this work to global contexts remains critical as the scope of our work has been limited to U.S. contexts. The sociopolitical conditions of a country, such as its history, governance, economic structures, religion, and geography, deeply shape how identity dimensions are constructed and what forms of recognition, services, and benefits are available. These dynamics influence how disability is defined and institutionalized, as seen in the contrast between U.S. disability laws like the ADA and IDEA and the U.N.'s United Nations's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' regulations [178]. Virdi illustrates how the British colonization of India impacted hearing technologies [177]. Wong-Villacres et. al calls for expanding HCI perspective of race through discussing the experiences of the "mestizaje" across Latin America [145]. Building on these examples, research must attend to the local, historical, and cultural specificities that shape disability experiences across diverse sociopolitical and global contexts.

6.3 Reducing Methodological Defaults and Assumptions

Conceptualizations of disability—how it is understood, experienced, and identified with—are shaped by race and other intersecting axes of marginalization. These dimensions profoundly influence how individuals engage with technology. When disability is viewed as socially and culturally situated, it becomes clear that interactions with technology are not reducible to functional binaries. Rather, they are deeply contextual and situational—shaped by identity, socioemotional experiences, and environmental conditions.

Thus, as a field, we must take embodied, crip-informed approaches that center the nuanced experiences of disabled people. For example, Spiel *et al.* elaborate on how engaging in embodied exploration with minoritized disabled bodies can be instrumental for articulating and expressing critique of technology co-design [166]. This requires us to interrogate the normative assumptions built into our methods—such as the implicit centering of whiteness or able-bodiedness. Researchers should challenge standing defaults and definitions that overlook the nuances and complexities of those who exist and their stories at the intersection of racial identity and disability.

Importantly, this work requires making space for and preserving a full range of disabled testaments — both joy and grief — to debunk defaults and move beyond reductive narratives towards a more holistic understanding of disabled lives.

Yet, methodological change alone is insufficient. Deeper structural transformation within the research community itself is critical. How we lead research groups, engage in advocacy, teaching, and dissemination collectively shape whether engagement with race, disability, and intersectionality is normalized—and holds potential to dismantle structures of power and oppression. Representation alone is not enough; researchers must commit to redistributing power by centering leadership from those most impacted [18], and ensuring that those with lived experience guide the direction of the work [100].

7 CONCLUSION

We present a framework that outlines practical ways for meaningfully engaging with race, disability, and their intersection throughout the research process, and analyze three exemplary case studies that operate at this intersection. These considerations and retrospective analyses serve as a starting point for future research in intersectional accessibility work. Our extended version of this work delves into additional complexities while engaging with this intersection, highlighting tensions that arise while moving forward. We urge the accessibility community to historically and theoretically contextualize future research engagements at the intersection of race and disability and recognize these potential tensions in doing this work.

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