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# Systemic Sensitivity

On Systemic Oppression in Socio-Technical  
Systems

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## Academic dissertation

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**Abstract**

As technology becomes an integral part of everyday life for many, it also becomes a tool to facilitate harm and injustice towards communities who face marginalization.

To understand and address challenges of systemic oppression, the field of human–computer interaction (HCI) has moved towards framing larger questions of injustice and systemic issues. Through the growing area of social justice in HCI, researchers are collectively working to frame more just futures for communities that have experienced marginalization.

However, the influence of systemic oppression on socio-technical systems can create hard-to-predict outcomes that ultimately lead to reproducing harmful practices towards marginalized communities. Through the included papers in this dissertation, on a range of topics from cultural heritage for Sámi communities, ageism reproduced through technology implementation, socio-political awareness to mitigate technology-facilitated sex trafficking, supporting women with experience of sexual violence to paths of justice, building a cohesive and fluid understanding of social justice in HCI, and critiquing interpersonal safety technologies, I present and discuss how the influence of systemic oppression creates hard-to-predict outcomes in the socio-technical systems we create. I show how these outcomes can lead to reproducing harmful practices towards marginalized communities and why it is important to actively work against this. To address the outcomes and harmful practices that I refer to as the “harm-reproduction loop,” I propose a theoretical lens called systemic sensitivity.

Systemic sensitivity is a lens to support researchers in understanding the loop, addressing hard-to-predict outcomes and mitigating harmful practices. In doing so, we can more actively work against systemic oppression and work towards socio-political change and long-term contributions towards marginalized communities.

This dissertation is a compilation dissertation, which means it is based on six papers in total.

These papers are the foundation of the work produced, and all have been conducted within social justice in HCI.

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