



Disability Intimacy in HCI: Defining a Community-Driven Research Agenda

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Abstract

Intimacy is a complex, multifaceted subject of importance within disability rights movements. Disabled individuals are entitled to the same universal human rights (e.g., marriage, sexual and reproductive self-determination) as everyone else. Assistive measures that support equity in their personal lives remain central to these movements. However, the research community's relatively narrow focus of what "intimacy" is (i.e., primarily concerned with sex) combined with factors, such as context, cultural sensitivities, power dynamics and complex ethics, has resulted in its limited exploration in HCI Accessibility Research. Among the relatively small body of HCI literature, most works approach disabled intimacies through a primarily deficit-oriented and heteronormative lens. Notably, ASSETS has featured only two papers on this subject in the past 23 years [53]. Moreover, few studies in HCI explore the methodological and ethical considerations of researching disabled intimacies, and even fewer are disability-led and include queer perspectives [53]. In this half-day virtual workshop, we invite engineers, technology design and development researchers, industry practitioners, accessibility

advocates, as well as anyone with disabled and/or queer lived experiences to discuss potential avenues to expand research in Disability Intimacy within HCI. Our goal is to better define what this novel research field could look like, facilitate connections between individuals interested in exploring it, and contribute to its overall visibility and expansion.

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1 Introduction

Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) technology research, design, and development primarily address disability in terms of accessibility and assistive technologies [65]. These efforts have long-standing ties investigating how technology might address inequities faced by people with disabilities (i.e., limits or loss of personal agency, autonomy, and inclusion). By critically examining systems of oppression, challenging long-held assumptions about people with disabilities, and working with the disability communities, many accessibility researchers in HCI have promoted the disability community's priorities by centering research on their goals and values. As a result, a vast number of HCI accessibility publications have historically, either directly or indirectly, contributed to advancing universal human rights, as outlined by various international organizations. Most notably, this includes the United Nations (UN) through its *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* [50] and more specifically,

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within the context of ASSETS and digital accessibility research, the UN's *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)* [49].

However, one domain of universal human rights has been vastly underexplored—particularly when it involves disabled individuals: intimacy. This topic is interconnected with other fundamental rights and is woven into the fabric of the human experience. For example, intimacy is closely linked to human rights that define one's quality of life and overall well-being. These rights form the basis of entire research domains within the HCI community, including equity, privacy, access to and freedom of information, education, and personal expression, as well as freedom *from* discrimination, degradation, physical violence, and coercion. Other intimacy-related rights are inextricably tied to both intimacy and lived experience, such as the right to freely with full consent marry, the right to create a family (i.e., reproductive rights, including the ability to decide the number and spacing of children), the right to equality, safety, and respect if the marriage is dissolved, and finally, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual health. Furthermore, people with disabilities are often marginalized within the context of sexual intimacy and reproductive health research.

The UN's *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research (SRH)* and *Human Reproduction Special Programs (HRP)*, describe sexual health as a “state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being” that occurs across the entire human lifespan (i.e., from adolescence, the reproductive years, and as we age) [1, 75, 76]. As core component to the human experience, it also includes: “sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction ... [and is] experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles and relationships” [1, 75, 76]. While sexual health and sex education are crucial areas that require further attention in relation to disability [5, 57], they all too often present a limited view of disability intimacy.

However, intimacy is more than just simply sexual, romantic, and emotional entanglements. Intimacy is multifaceted. Facets of intimacy also include context and power dynamics. Much like disability, intimacy is shaped by a person's interaction with their broader environment. Under certain conditions, intimacy and sexuality are not only influenced by, but also subjected to, structural and systemic barriers imposed by various “biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors” [75], particularly for individuals with intersecting marginalized identities. Furthermore, the *need* for international organizations like the UN, Amnesty International, and World Health Organization (WHO) to explicitly recognize sexuality and the myriad aspects of intimacy as a human rights issue reflects the widespread, structural injustices experienced globally by people with disabilities in their daily, and sexual, lives.

Beyond this, the disregard for the diverse experiences, practices, and needs of disabled people related to different forms of intimacy overlooks a fundamental aspect of how disabled individuals interact with the world. However, this oversight also represents an unexplored opportunity for a conference centering accessibility. This workshop aims to address these intersecting issues through targeted goals that provide HCI researchers with alternative lenses and approaches—ones that critically examine and challenge exclusively

able-bodied, deficit-based, and heteronormative viewpoints when studying the intersections of accessibility, disability, and intimacy in all its forms (e.g., emotional well-being, support networks, meaningful relationships, platonic or otherwise, fear of intimacy, interpersonal trust, communication, conflict navigation, family planning and management, etc.) with mediating technologies. These goals contribute to affirmative, community-driven research by amplifying the visibility of this topic and collectively expanding the space for it within the field.

Such goals include:

- **Creating an inclusive space** by not only elevating the voices of researchers impacted by and relevant to their lives and/or research;
- **Creating a collaborative space** by facilitating personal and professional connections between attendees as well as future opportunities for collaboration between those interested in furthering this academic topic (i.e., intimacy) and its intersection with other topics (e.g., technology, disability, identity, etc.) ;
- **Collectively defining disability intimacy** by conducting knowledge sharing activities as well as creating and showcasing workshop artifacts that ultimately:
 - **Challenge existing narratives & power structures** by identifying potential challenges that can perpetuate inequality and marginalization;
 - **Support future investigators** by identifying and aligning community-driven theoretical lenses and approaches (e.g., intersectionality, crip and queer theory, disability justice) for HCI researchers, developers, designers, and practitioners interested in conducting digital intimacy research;
- **Exploring the role of technologies in disability intimacy** by critically attending to both the potentials and risks of different technologies, imagining future approaches to intimate tech, and identifying areas where technology may not be the solution;
- **Expand upon future avenues of HCI inquiry** to define what this novel research field could be by collectively developing a research agenda, “Disability Intimacy in HCI,” as a both a workshop outcome and living document.

2 Background, Related Work, and Workshop Motivation

HCI research that explores both disability and sexuality *together* remains scarce, and when it does appear, it often adopts a deficit-oriented perspective [53]. The few studies that do investigate this domain tend to have significant limitations. Scholars have long noted that the intimacy, sexuality, and pleasures of disabled people receive little attention in public discourse, accessibility-related policymaking, and academic research [2, 28, 39, 63, 64]. When these topics *are* addressed, they often reinforce harmful ableist narratives and dehumanizing stereotypes.

Calls for more and better research on disability and intimacy are not limited to HCI accessibility researchers; scholars outside the field have also emphasized the need for higher-quality, sexuality-focused studies [3, 18]. Yet many researchers and practitioners

continue to produce deficit-based work grounded in the medical model of disability [53]. This model treats disabled people's physical and cognitive traits as undesirable problems to be "fixed" [41, 48, 65–67, 71]. Even when well-intentioned, such approaches ignore systemic oppression and deny disabled people the agency and bodily autonomy to define and navigate their own experiences.

Deficit-driven research practices continue to perpetuate epistemic violence and ableism experienced by people with disabilities [65, 72, 77]. Rooted in eugenics, compulsory norms are upheld as unattainable ideals, standards against which all bodies are measured and expected to conform [7, 13, 15, 30, 31, 43–45]. These norms legitimize violence and dehumanization toward those who diverge from them, especially disabled, queer, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color [7, 30, 60].

Within this context, disabled intimacies are often framed as irrelevant or deviant, reinforcing beliefs that people with disabilities are non-sexual, or worse, that their sexualities further mark their bodies as in need of being "fixed". This framing aligns with the deficit-based medical model of disability and dominant understandings of intimacy and embodiment, rather than acknowledging the systemic and structural forces at play [28, 30, 39, 43, 59, 62]. Fortunately, researchers adopting asset-based approaches, particularly those grounded in the social model of disability, offer necessary counterpoints. Their work demonstrates that intimacy can be an act of defiance against systems and practices that constrain autonomy and self-determination.

A literature review by Patel & Osipova et al. [53] further highlights persistent patterns across existing research in this space. They found that much of the literature tends to:

- (1) Contextualize disability within a medical model where any issues related to sexuality are portrayed as caused by disability;
- (2) Present intimate technologies primarily as tools to solve specific problems, while disregarding the societal contexts in which they operate;
- (3) Prioritize mechanistic understandings of sexuality and center hetero-normative desires.

Additionally, a review by [52] found that from 2001 to 2024, *only two papers at ASSETS* addressed disability and sexuality using an asset-based lens: Conde's exploration of a serious game to support boundary and consent reflection for people with developmental disabilities [8], and Mooney et al.'s study on blind and partially sighted users' needs when accessing online sexual health clinics [47]. While these works are important, their scarcity underscores how narrowly intimacy has been addressed within the ASSETS community.

When core components of the human experience are dismissed by default, the research community becomes limited rather than expansive, deeming intimacy research irrelevant or taboo. With this workshop, we aim to offer the HCI community, including researchers, designers, developers, and practitioners—alternative approaches that are more expansive, inclusive, and attuned to the intersections of technology, disability, identity, and sexuality. Otherwise, we risk continuing to perpetuate harm against disabled bodies, autonomy, and personal fulfillment [32, 53, 69], choosing to ignore a rich and vital part of human life.

Intimacy is multifaceted and nuanced, yet existing research fails to capture its full depth and breadth across the human experience. When disability intimacy is narrowly framed, deficit-based research disregards the complexity of intersecting identities—such as race, gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, disability status, religion, and age—that shape the lives and relationships of disabled people [36]. Relatively few studies are self-determined, disability-led, and centered on crip sexualities, and ethical considerations in working with disabled participants remain underexplored [53]. By de-legitimizing intimacy as a valid research avenue, the burden of adapting tools and technologies to be safe, accessible, and aligned with disabled individuals' needs and pleasure preferences is once again placed on those most marginalized [27, 55]. This further excludes disabled communities by casting their identities, intimate connections, and lived experiences as deviations from dominant heteronormative narratives [32, 34, 51].

Fortunately, recent work in HCI disability intimacy research includes several notable exceptions. Crawford et al. contributes to this growing body of work with two studies centered on the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ disabled and neurodivergent individuals [10, 11]. These studies examine how assistive technology (AT) is used, avoided, and socially mediated in community spaces [11], and how romantic partners co-create communication strategies—foregrounding non-verbal methods and repurposed household tools as Do-It-Yourself Assistive Technology (DIY-AT) to support emotional intimacy [10]. Research grounded in *pleasure activism* [4] has also embraced a disability-led approach to exploring intimacy through multiple lenses. One such study examined the personal experiences of women, framing masturbation not only as a source of pleasure but also as a site of *joy* [26].

Intimacy becomes a powerful challenge to the status quo, particularly when personal autonomy is under threat. The disability community has long resisted normative, dehumanizing, and inaccurate portrayals of disabled people's intimate lives [37, 62, 74]. In parallel, HCI's queer and disabled research communities have offered rich critiques and alternative frameworks for rethinking both disability [66, 70, 71] and sexuality [33–35, 52], responding directly to the field's inadequate representation of these experiences.

As organizers of this workshop, we view intimacy research, in all its forms, facets, and intersectional dimensions, as a call to action. This workshop is a direct response to calls from queer and disabled communities within HCI for more research at the intersection of technologically mediated, accessible intimate human experiences—experiences that support disabled people's agency to connect with themselves and others. In an effort to challenge the status quo, this workshop draws on critical frameworks such as intersectionality [12, 19, 56], disability justice [66, 70], self-determination [16], crip [73], and queer [68] theory in HCI. It centers queer and disabled autonomy and explores the expansive potential of intimate connection, both platonically and through pleasure, with loved ones, partners, social circles, and oneself, all with the aim of building a digital accessibility intimacy research agenda that supports bodily autonomy, personal fulfillment, and fully actualized selves. Our motivation for this workshop is to carve out research time and space to critically examine, discuss, and challenge the prevalence of heteronormative, ableist, and oppressive norms and taboos around

sexuality and other facets of intimacy. We aim to explore how related technologies might either reinforce these norms or serve as tools for building a more affirmative and inclusive research agenda. That is, an agenda grounded in the voices of those who have been marginalized for too long.

2.1 Community-driven Theoretical Underpinnings: Embracing the Crip-Queer Potential of Disability Intimacy

As previously mentioned, both the disability community and queer and disability technology scholars have long advocated for greater inclusivity. Toward this end, our workshop’s approach to disability intimacy is grounded in crip theory and queer theory. These frameworks support attendees in exploring the largely underdeveloped terrain of disability intimacy research. Both offer rich, nuanced critiques of dominant compulsory norms, those that center able-bodied, cis-heterosexual perspectives, and expose how these norms function as mechanisms of oppression [7, 30, 31, 43–45].

Given the historical and political entanglements of disability with violence, dehumanization, and eugenics, scholars in crip studies have emphasized how disabled embodiments and intimacies are inherently queer [6, 29–31, 43, 44, 60]. In this context, we draw on Sedgwick’s framing of “queer” as “an open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically” [61, p. 8], and as a term “fraught with so many social and personal histories of exclusion, violence, defiance, excitement” [61, p. 9]. Like queering, “[c]ripping spins mainstream representations or practices to reveal able-bodied assumptions and exclusionary effects. Both queering and crippling expose the arbitrary delineation between normal and defective and the negative social ramifications of attempts to homogenize humanity, and both disarm what is painful with wicked humor, including camp.” [58, p. 37].

Building on the work of scholars who have integrated crip and queer theory into HCI [38, 65, 66, 68, 70, 71, 73], this workshop embraces crippling and queering as disruptive research practices [7, 31, 38] to challenge normative assumptions around disability intimacies. Following the lead of Hamraie and Fritsch’s “Crip Technoscience Manifesto,” we advocate for research and design approaches that are anti-assimilatory, anti-normative, and opposed to technosolutionism [22]. At the same time, these approaches “meander[...] into silliness, but [are] grounded in passionate critique” [65, p. 250].

As such, we recognize that disability intimacy is complex [37, 74] and any related technological development must be disability-led and grounded in disabled standpoints¹ With crip and queer theory as the foundation, this workshop seeks to build a shared understanding of the approaches necessary for researching intimacy in all its forms, as a human right, a source of joy, a challenge to the status quo, and a way of connecting with oneself, others, and community..

¹In contrast to a perspective, which can be held by an individual, a standpoint refers to a collectively developed and held perspective of an oppressed group and includes that group’s critiques, political stances, and matters of concern [9, 21, 23, 24].

3 Workshop Plans

Our proposed workshop aims to bring together technology designers, engineers, researchers, practitioners, and individuals with lived experience who work at—or are interested in—the intersections of disability, intimacy, and technology. Recognizing that this area remains underexplored, our primary goals are to collaboratively define what disability intimacy might encompass within HCI, propose a shared research agenda, and build a network of individuals committed to advancing this field. In planning the workshop, we draw on prior accessibility-focused workshops [40, 42, 54, 66, 70] following best practices for accessible engagement while remaining responsive to participants’ specific access needs and feedback from the ASSETS community.

3.1 Virtual Workshop Format

This workshop will be held virtually with synchronous and asynchronous activities taking place in the week leading up to the ASSETS’25 conference. Leveraging a virtual medium, we can engage more people and provide personalized accommodations. Participants are encouraged to take breaks and the activities are designed to work both synchronously and asynchronously, so participants can come and go according to their needs.

Synchronous activities will be held over Zoom² and Miro³, and asynchronous participation will also happen on Miro or Discord⁴ or any other medium of preference for a given participant. Hence, we will also host a Discord server to build community and share workshop materials. This server will include channels for general announcements, workshop materials, and optional topic-specific discussions. Participants will also be able to request new channels if needed, including via an anonymous form.

The workshop activities and corresponding schedule will also be shared on Discord and the workshop’s website ahead of time if needed for time management and to give participants the chance to prepare something if they wish to do so.

We aim to recruit a minimum of 10 attendees and a maximum of 30. At this time, all organizers plan to attend the workshop synchronously, taking on facilitator roles to better support attendees.

3.2 Pre-Workshop Activities (Synchronous + Asynchronous)

Upon acceptance into the workshop, participants will be invited to take part in a series of optional online pre-workshop activities. Most of these activities will be asynchronous, reducing the participation burden for those with conflicting schedules and timezones, and based on participants’ submissions to facilitate interest-driven discussions.

Discord Community: Accepted participants will be invited to join a private Discord server one month before the workshop. This space will serve as a hub for building community around the workshop topic and will remain active before, during, and after the event. Organizers will create thematic channels, such as *introductions*, *social* and *resource-sharing*, and encourage participants to engage within them. All workshop activities will be shared in

²<https://www.zoom.com>

³<https://miro.com>

⁴<https://discord.com>

advance on the server, allowing for asynchronous contributions and preparation for synchronous sessions.

Workshop Submissions: All accepted submissions will be posted to the Discord server at least two weeks prior to the workshop. Organizers will notify participants via email once the materials are available and encourage them to review each other’s work. This announcement will also be shared on Discord, where dedicated channels will be created for discussion and reflection on submissions.

Reflection Prompt: To support dialogue around the workshop theme, participants will be invited to respond to a reflection prompt and share their thoughts in a designated channel:

Joyful Artifacts: To prepare for the workshop, we invite participants to bring with them **at least one example of each** of the following:

- Joyful crip intimacies
- Joyful sex-related technologies or tools

Examples may be experienced, observed, imagined or otherwise, and will be exchanged briefly in low-key exchange; auxiliary materials, while welcome, are not required.

Online Crafting Sessions: Finally, participants will be invited to reflect on their understanding of disability intimacy through a crafting activity. Ahead of the workshop, each participant, or group of participants, will be asked to create an artifact that represents the intersection of disability, intimacy, and technology. These artifacts may take any form participants choose. The emphasis of this activity will be on the reflective process, rather than the final product. Organizers will provide a suggested list of crafting materials, focusing on easily accessible household items. To foster interaction in the lead-up to the workshop, organizers will host informal online crafting sessions (via Zoom or Discord) scheduled across multiple time zones.

3.3 Workshop Activities (Synchronous)

This half-day (4 hours) virtual workshop will include various activities. The specific format, activities and break times will be adjusted based on participants’ reported timezones and accessibility needs:

Introduction & Icebreakers: The workshop will begin with a short introduction to the topic, participants, and facilitators. Participants will then collectively engage in a game of Crip Pleasures A-Z [20]. Organizers will go through the alphabet from start to finish and participants will contribute with words or phenomena starting with that letter that relates to “Crip, disabled, chronically ill, neurodivergent, blind, D/deaf, Mad and / or learning disabled” experiences of joy, happiness, sexiness, sensuality, satisfaction, or pleasure [20]. Participants will be prompted to come up with their contributions to this activity ahead of the workshop, allowing more brainstorming time for those who may need it. (40 minutes)

Break: Break between activities. (15 minutes)

Collectively Define Disability Intimacy: Participants will engage in small-group discussions in breakout rooms to explore the question: *What is disability intimacy?* These conversations will focus on its various forms, nuances, and intersections—both with others and with the wider physical and digital world. To guide the discussion, participants will first be encouraged to brainstorm topics related to *disability*, followed by topics related to *intimacy*. Then,

each group will work toward identifying points of intersection, generating their own definitions of disability intimacy.

To support this process, each group will be provided with a Venn diagram template in Miro (or another medium based on participants’ accessibility needs), where they can write and organize post-its during their discussion. Organizers will give a time check halfway through the session to encourage groups to move on to the second prompt and conclude within the allotted time. (40 minutes)

Break: Break between activities. During this break, participants will be encouraged to individually explore the Miro board containing each group’s venn diagram and an additional diagram mapping the current state-of-the-art in Disability Intimacy in HCI[53]. Post-its will be available for participants to leave comments. (20 minutes)

Knowledge Sharing Session: The organizers will present a brief thematic analysis of the accepted submissions, highlighting areas of shared interest. Based on this, but with options to choose or elect new topics that may have emerged from the previous workshop activities, participants will be re-grouped into breakout rooms each with an assigned discussion topic related to the realities of conducting disability intimacy research and designing dedicated technologies (e.g. Ethics, Consent, Participant Care, Taboo, Risks, Community-centered Design, etc.). Each group will discuss their experiences, resources, and strategies surrounding the discussion topic. To facilitate discussions, we will collect anonymous participant questions about the selected topics prior to the workshop and distribute them as discussion prompts. Finally, each group will share the main insights of their discussion with the rest of the participants. (45 minutes)

Break: During this break between activities, participants who have not already done so (during the pre-workshop crafting sessions — see Section 3.2) will be encouraged to create an artifact for the Futuring Disability Intimacy Showcase (the following activity). (30 minutes)

Futuring Disability Intimacy Showcase: Participants will be invited to present the artifacts resulting from the pre-workshop crafting sessions (see Section 3.2) or the one held during the previous break to the group. Each presenter will be encouraged to briefly describe how their crafted artifact represents their thoughts, views, and desires in relation to disability intimacy. Throughout the showcase, participants will be encouraged to ask questions, make provocations, reflect on their creations, discuss them with others, and find intersections and diversions among their creations. This activity aims to encourage critical discussion on the role of technology in disability intimacy based on a creative and pluralistic futuring approach rather than promote a techno-solutionist narrative. (30 minutes)

Reflections & Wrap Up: Bringing together insights from all of the workshop activities, organizers will lead a collective discussion on lessons learned, opportunities, and challenges of Disability Intimacy research in HCI, and possibilities for collective and collaborative actions among workshop participants. Organizers will take notes during this discussion and utilize them to write a draft of a manifesto for Disability Intimacy in HCI. This draft will be shared and iterated upon with participants following the workshop. Finally, participants will be encouraged to continue discussions, networking, and resource sharing in the workshop Discord. (30 minutes)

4 Expected Outcomes

With this workshop, we aim to foster a liberatory ethos of joyful exploration around crip intimacies and advance this as a shared research agenda within the accessibility community. In doing so, we hope to cultivate a network of researchers through collaboration and knowledge exchange; our Discord server will remain active as a hub for communication and resource sharing. We also plan to organize follow-up workshops to support continued learning and collective growth. Potential outcomes include a publication in *Interactions* or the SIGACCESS Newsletter, and/or an experience report or short paper for ASSETS'26 to increase visibility and share our insights.

5 Diversity and Inclusion Considerations

In addition to bringing together participants with diverse lived experiences, identities, cultures, disciplinary backgrounds, and global perspectives, we are especially committed to centering individuals with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ communities, and those from historically marginalized groups. To support this commitment, the workshop is intentionally designed to be flexible, accessible, and inclusive of different participation styles and access needs.

Our virtual format will support multiple modes of engagement, including both synchronous and asynchronous participation. Recognizing that attendees may join from different time zones and bring varied energy levels or access needs, we will adopt a rolling structure that welcomes drop-in attendance and partial participation. We plan to use Discord, Zoom, and Miro based on their accessibility features [17, 46, 78], and organizers' familiarity with the platforms. We remain open to incorporating additional tools as needed to meet participants' accessibility requirements.

We also welcome participants who prefer to engage as listeners, with no expectation for verbal or written contributions unless they feel comfortable. To support connection before and during the workshop, we will set up a Discord server and share onboarding materials in advance. A moderated channel will remain open throughout the event for questions and real-time support. We will also create optional, topic-specific channels, including one for culturally sensitive discussions, where participants can share or reflect in a more private setting. New channels can be requested through a designated contact or an anonymous form, offering flexibility for participants to engage in ways that feel safe and comfortable.

To support participants joining at different times or stepping away, brief video overviews of activities and pinned FAQs will be shared on Discord. Additional accommodations, such as Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, or sensory supports, will be coordinated with the ASSETS organizing committee based on participants' access needs. We welcome assistance from the conference in covering any associated costs.

As required, all submissions must follow ASSETS accessibility guidelines for PDF and audio-visual content. Participants will be asked to ensure their materials are accessible, including the use of alt text, captions, structured headings, and other best practices outlined in the ACM accessibility guidance. Upon acceptance, they will also be invited to share any specific access requests so we can plan accordingly.

To help support open and respectful engagement throughout the workshop, we will develop a community agreement in advance. This agreement will outline behavior expectations around respectful dialogue, confidentiality, and active listening, and will emphasize that participants are encouraged to engage in ways that feel safe for them. It will also include guidance on how to raise concerns privately or anonymously if any issues arise during the workshop. All participants will be asked to review the agreement beforehand and will have the opportunity to suggest amendments if needed. Before the workshop begins, participants will be invited to affirm their agreement.

Our goal is to create an environment where participants feel supported, valued, and empowered to speak from their lived experiences.

6 Website

The workshop website will be the central hub for information about the workshop. Once finalized, the site (<https://www.experiencing-access.eu/disability-intimacy-workshop/>) will include the following elements:

- **Workshop information** including overview and goals, call for participation, and detailed workshop schedule;
- **Pre-workshop resources** including Discord server onboarding, accessibility guidelines, and a community agreement outlining shared behavior expectations;
- **Post-workshop resources** will be uploaded after the workshop, including a collaboratively authored "Disability Intimacy in HCI" manifesto, a gallery of photos and artifacts taken and created during the workshop, links to related outcomes and publications, and updates on the next steps.

The website will also offer different contact channels and options to get support from the organizers.

All sections of the website will follow web accessibility best practices (WCAG 2.1 AA), ensuring compatibility with screen readers, keyboard-only navigation, and sufficient color contrast.

7 Call for Participation

The Disability Intimacy in HCI Workshop connects researchers working on disability and intimacy in the context of technologies. Together, our aim is to develop a research agenda for disability intimacy in technology research, including potential challenges, theoretical approaches, and relevant questions moving forward. We invite submissions responding to either one, multiple or all of the following prompts:

- What makes you passionate about disability intimacy in the context of your research practice and beyond?
- What makes you angry about current discourse regarding disabled sexuality in academia and beyond?
- What would you like to see more of in the future; what are you particularly interested in or excited to explore in this context?

Submissions may be made in either of the following formats:

- One A4 page which can include text, drawing, images of artifacts, or any other content.
- One maximum 3-minute-long audio or video file.

Submissions may be made via the submission form on the workshop website and will be reviewed by the organizers for topical fit, with the aim to include a variety of approaches.

Submissions should be accessible PDFs or captioned video/audio. Please contact the organizers in advance if you require assistance generating an accessible PDF or captioning your submissions. Submissions should not be anonymous. Accepted submissions will be made available on the workshop's private Discord server, to which only the organizers and accepted participants will have access. At least one author of each accepted submission must attend the workshop in-person or online, and all participants must register for the workshop.

Contact Organizers: Email queries to Kirk Crawford: kirk4@umbc.edu

Workshop website: <https://www.experiencing-access.eu/disability-intimacy-workshop/>

8 Attendee Recruitment & Selection

We will gather **10–30 participants** whose research interests align with the goals and questions outlined in this proposal. Participants will be selected through the juried submission process described in our call for participation (see Section 7). Each submission will be reviewed by at least two organizers who will provide comments.

8.1 Recruitment

Building on our prior research [10, 11, 25, 42, 51–54, 65], the breadth of our disciplinary expertise, and our ongoing contributions to European projects [1, 14], we have cultivated a diverse network of researchers, practitioners, and community stakeholders with shared interest in disability intimacy within and beyond HCI. This workshop offers an opportunity to deepen those connections and grow this emerging community.

Organizers will promote the call through personal, professional, and institutional networks, leveraging existing relationships across our respective research communities. We will also circulate the call via established mailing lists and direct prospective participants to our website, which will serve as a centralized, regularly updated source of information.

9 Organizers

Ekat Osipova (they/them) is a Ph.D. researcher in the project ACESSTECH at the TU Wien Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) group. Guided by crip and queer studies, their research explores tech-mediated intimacies from a neurodivergent standpoint. Together with fellow neurodivergent folks, Ekat explores the neuro-queer potentialities of technologies that are pleasurable and create joy.

Jay Rodolitz (she/they) is a Computer Science Ph.D. student at Northeastern University. Their research centers accessibility and usable privacy, exploring the failures of modern regulation and how communities come together to create access and privacy norms that meet their needs.

Kirk Crawford (he/him) is a Ph.D. candidate in Human-Centered Computing at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). His research explores how disabled and neurodivergent LGBTQIA+ individuals and their partners navigate communication in their

relationships, with attention to emotional intimacy, the role of technology, and the practices partners develop to support connection and access. He is interested in how future technologies could be designed to reflect these practices and respond to the relationship needs and lived experiences of the partners.

Ana O. Henriques (she/they) is currently a PhD student with ITI/LARSyS, at the University of Lisbon. Ana has focused their research on the intersections of care ethics, feminist HCI, and community-based work while developing a process framework that integrates community-led and feminist for community-based projects.

Kay Kender (any pronouns) is a predoctoral researcher and part of the ACESSTECH project at the TU Wien HCI group. Their research centers on critical and speculative participatory design approaches to marginalized experiences with and connected to technologies.

Chorong Park (she/her) received her Ph.D. in Technology with a minor in Gerontology from Purdue University in May 2025. Her dissertation—now provisionally patented—focused on designing accessible augmented-reality and AI systems to enhance emotional well-being and autonomy for older adults and people with disabilities. Park's research weaves together ethical AI, inclusive robotics, and critical disability studies through participatory fieldwork with marginalized older populations. In August 2025, she will join the University of Houston as Assistant Professor of UX/UI Design, where she will continue creating customizable, accessible interfaces that bridge generational and ability divides.

Patricia Piedade (she/her) is a Ph.D. student affiliated with ITI/LARSyS and INESC-ID, at the University of Lisbon. Her research interests lie in accessibility and participatory methodologies, especially at the intersection of the two. Patricia's current work focuses on how to make public spaces enjoyable for neurodivergent individuals who, like herself, experience feelings of sensory overload and distress within such spaces.

Rachel Wood is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Maryland in College Park. After nearly a decade working in the tech industry as a Senior User Experience Designer, Rachel's research orients around co-developing accessible technology with individuals who have conditions that affect their cognition (e.g., Alzheimer's Disease & AD related-dementias, Down Syndrome, Acquired Brain Injury, etc.) and making research methods more inclusive. Her dissertation focuses on improving the accessibility of health data visualizations by co-designing with them individuals with Down Syndrome.

Katta Spiel is an Assistant Professor for 'Critical Access in Embodied Computing' at TU Wien. Their research marginalized perspectives on embodied computing through a lens of Critical Access. Their work informs design and engineering supporting the development of technologies that account for the diverse realities they operate in. In their interdisciplinary collaborations with disabled, neurodivergent and/or nonbinary peers, they conduct explorations of novel potentials for designs, methodologies and innovative technological artifacts.

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