
The Relationships between Data, Power, and Justice in CSCW Research

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ABSTRACT

Many decisions about social, economic, and personal life are heavily data-driven. At the same time, data has become increasingly quantified, and available to people and institutions in positions of power, often with little introspection or reflection on its positive uses or harmful misuses. This panel will inspect CSCW's role in identifying constructive and appropriate uses of data and its responsibility for protecting against harms and inequalities perpetuated by misuse. The panel will present a series of debates about quantification of data, data surveillance, organizational data use, and policy making. An overarching theme throughout the set of debates is interrogating CSCW's role in extending critical scholarship on power and justice towards academic, policy, and industry impact.

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CSCW'19 Companion, November 9–13, 2019, Austin, TX, USA.

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ACM ISBN 978-1-4503-6871-1/19/10. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3311957.3358609>

Author Keywords

Data; Power; Health; Gender; Privacy; Surveillance; Justice; Equity

ACM Classification Keywords

Human-centered computing~Computer supported cooperative work

Motivation and Background

This panel aims to interrogate CSCW's relationship with and responsibility to issues around data, power, and justice. Building on CSCW's long-standing interest in the intersection between technological systems and power (e.g., [2,3,5]), this panel will cover topics including: the relationship between data, institutional power, advertising, and public policy from a global perspective; how data science approaches quantify human experiences; how data practices in the workplace relate to labor and power; and how theories of justice can help us to reimagine more equitable uses of data. This panel's focus on power and data complements a CSCW 2017 panel focused on power and design practices, as well as emerging scholarship arguing for principled data justice [1,6] and against data violence [4]. Additionally, these topics have historical presence in CSCW as areas of interest (e.g., workplace and collaboration, health). We will focus the discussion on topics that could be reasonably debated among the CSCW community. Instead of reinforcing particular shared viewpoints, our hope is to introduce dimensions where there might be opportunities for collaboration and change.

Panel Debates

This panel will debate a series of topics that build on the panelists' own research interests and expertise, as well as our own values and positions in academic and industry research. We focus on questions around "who" holds power in these relationships, such as corporations and US institutions; "what" can be done with this data; and "if" these approaches are just and equitable. The debates are grouped by themes and will be discussed in clusters to allow audience participation throughout the panel. The first cluster (Debates 1 and 2) is concerned with how data can be used; the second cluster (Debates 3 and 4) is concerned with policy and practice associated with data use; the final cluster (Debate 5) is centered on CSCW practice.

Debate 1: What are the limits of "datafication" of human experiences? What are the implications of a growing field of data science which quantifies nuanced and stigmatized experiences (e.g., health inequalities)? Are there experiences that should be excluded from this practice?

Debate 2: Are there productive or acceptable uses of data for surveillance? Can bodily or workplace surveillance be carried out in ways that resist people in power promoting injustices to people not in power? Is privacy as a privilege an inevitability?

Debate 3: Are there productive mechanisms by which organizations can be responsible and trustworthy guardians of data? Should CSCW play a more active role in proposing ways that data should be used by industry, governments, and nonprofits?

Debate 4: What are the risks and implications of largely U.S. or European-based institutional powers making policy decisions with global impact? What are the related implications of CSCW being a largely U.S.-based conference?

Debate 5: What can the CSCW community do to support goals around justice and equity for data? How should theories of justice, which demonstrate how identity-based privilege reinforces social inequities in the world, influence CSCW scholarship and practice?

Attendees

The panel should attract academic and industry researchers interested in critical and constructive debates about appropriate uses of data. In particular, we hope to draw participants who are interested in how data interacts with power and justice.

Panel Format

The panel will take the format of a debate. Each participant will briefly (3-5 minutes) formulate a specific tension in data use and discuss potential benefits and risks. Each cluster will be presented and then opened up for audience participation. The panel will encourage audience participant via a Twitter backchannel and use of the sli.do live polling system.

Panelists

Our panel brings together scholars from diverse stages and disciplinary perspectives and approaches. Panelists were chosen via an open call on Twitter in April, 2019. This biases the panel towards people who are active on Twitter and sufficiently confident to express interest, but allows for a relatively open, community-driven selection process.

Stevie Chancellor is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Northwestern University. Her research interest lies in using computational approaches, like machine learning and data science, to understand deviant mental health behaviors in online communities. Her work focuses on dangerous mental health behaviors, like suicidality, opioid addiction, and pro-eating disorder. Currently, she is thinking about how to develop rigorous, just, and compassionate approaches to applying data science techniques to understand vulnerable communities.

Shion Guha is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Computer Science at Marquette University. He directs the Computational Social Science Lab and his research centers around biases and inequities among various marginalized, vulnerable and underdeveloped populations especially in issues around public policy. Currently, he is working with intersectional populations in South Asia as well as foster care and criminal justice systems in Wisconsin.

Jofish Kaye is Principal Research Scientist at Mozilla in the Emerging Technologies team. His research explores the social, cultural, and technological effects of technology on people, and how people's decisions, needs, and behaviors can change and improve those technologies. He manages a small team focusing on open voice assistant tools and technologies and runs the Mozilla Research Grants program.

Jen King is the Director of Privacy at the Center for Internet and Society. An information scientist by training, Dr. King is a recognized expert and scholar in information privacy. She examines the public's understanding and expectations of online privacy and the policy implications of emerging technologies. Her research sits at the intersection of human-computer interaction, law, and the social sciences, focusing on social media, genetic privacy, mobile platforms, the Internet of Things (IoT), and digital surveillance.

Niloufar Salehi is an Assistant Professor in the School of Information at UC, Berkeley. Her research focuses on two main areas: social computing and digital labor. Her past work has explored how workers on Amazon Mechanical Turk can engage in collective action to better their work conditions and how digital tools can support collectives designing around issues that affect them. Currently she is working on how digital tools are used for workplace surveillance. Salehi will serve as Moderator of the panel.

Sarita Schoenebeck is an Associate Professor in the School of Information at the University of Michigan. Her work sits at the intersection of social media, social computing, and human-computer interaction. Her research focuses on issues related to equity and access in online environments in the domains of online harassment, gender and masculinity, justice, and self-regulation. She is currently exploring ways of translating theories of justice into approaches for supporting targets of online harassment.

Elizabeth Stowell is a PhD student in the Personal Health Informatics program at Northeastern University's Khoury College of Computer Science and Bouvé College of Health Sciences. Elizabeth's research focus centers the ways that social computing systems can address stigmatized public health issues, such as sexual violence, facing our society. In particular, Elizabeth uses human-centered computing techniques to investigate the dynamics of interpersonal and network-level phenomena on platforms such as Twitter to characterize their impact and to understand the mechanisms that either promote or erode health equity.

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