Title of Special Issue
Feminist Human Computer Interaction: Working at the Intersection of Feminist Theory and Digital Innovation

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Outline of theme of special Issue
Human-Computer Interaction is the study of how humans interact with computers and other digital technologies. In recent years, practice-based HCI research has begun to move into real-world settings and justice-oriented spaces. At the same time, there has also been a growing interest in HCI theories, including a growing number of interpretations of feminist theories, methodologies, methods, or tools. Existing work relates to, for example, the development of activist campaigns for more inclusive and welcoming conference venues, the formalisation of a Feminist-HCI community, and the increase of publications that recognise their links to feminist theories. While some scholars are working to bring feminist theory, thought, methods, and values into the field of HCI, this kind of research is often still either marginalised or sensationalised.

This Special Issue brings forward alternative approaches to feminist thought, theory, and HCI. It will build on existing work in HCI and associated disciplines, such as Design or Science and Technology Studies (STS) to further explore the potential of feminist theories in the mutable landscape of digital innovation. We will unpick some of the theoretical nuances of feminist thought as it is understood and made manifest through the design, development, and evaluation of digital technologies. This Special Issue will build on contemporary debates, while also opening up spaces of inclusion to address the dialogic opportunities and challenges of designing technologies fairly to bring about social change.

Our Special Issue is made up of three particular themes: (1) contemporary understandings of feminist HCI theories in political debates, (2) the building of feminist speculative futures, and (3) the development of actionable theory to build more nuanced theories and applications of feminist HCI. Overall, this Issue of Feminist Theory will be the first to explore in detail the relationship between feminist theory and digital technologies through the lens of HCI research. It will also be the first, to put into conversation the potentials of bringing together the practically oriented disciplines of HCI, Design, and STS with theoretical understandings of feminisms.

Justification for theme of Special Issue
Feminist HCI works to carefully engage critical perspectives to tacit value systems within HCI's dominant research and design paradigms on humans' interaction with technology. As Bardzell et al. describe, it is not the problem domain of gender and computing but rather the "connection to feminist thought" that makes a methodology and practice feminist. The cultivation of feminist research within the multidisciplinary discipline of HCI, has been a slow, yet delicate and determined one (Bardzell et al. 2012). Through the striving of researchers seeking to challenge the dominant gender invisibility of technical design and deployment, the field is gradually working towards addressing greater inclusivity in research in both practice and theoretical framing. Informed by feminist standpoint theory (Bardzell et al., 2010),

intersectionality (Fox et al. 2017; Schlesinger et al. 2017), care ethics (Toombs et al. 2015), ecofeminism (Kannabiran, 2015) and feminist disability theory (Moeller, 2013), the mainstream feminist-HCI narrative has been shaped through careful debate, support and production. The blend of traditional feminist thought that has been evolving for the past hundreds of years, and the novelty of the emergence of HCI poses a unique struggle towards what mode of feminism may become dominant within design frameworks. Given the pervasive and ubiquitous nature of communicative technologies, how we design, understand and evaluate these practices could be argued as one of the most important forefronts in the contemporary feminist debate.

Technology, as a concept within existing works within Feminist Theory, has been conceptualised in two ways. Firstly, as a firmly fixed, permanent and unmovable entity, where the effects on matters such as virtual body image (Fantone, 2003), criminal justice for sexual violence (Dodge, 2017) and reproduction (O'Riodran, 2009) on feminist identities are studied. Alternatively, technology is framed as an abstract, fictional and futuristic concept through the studying of Donna Harraway (Currier, 2003), Joan Tronto (Stoate, 2012) and Judith Butler (Hellstrand, 2016). When we position technology in this way, it can illuminate the spaces where feminist theory is essential to address, contribute and fight against. Yet when the design, implementation and the use of technologies are excluded from the picture, we are left without the tools and methods to alter our interaction with technology. Through this special issue, we aim to address the lack of research that exists within Feminist Theory of designers, theorists and software engineers producing digital tools in the contemporary context. By incorporating content that represents the heart of emerging feminist technologies, we aspire to demonstrate the best of these efforts.

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Brief statement about origin of proposal

The four co-editors have been heavily involved in building a community of feminist HCI scholars. In the summer of 2016, they were part of a larger group who established fempower.tech, a feminist tech collective in HCI, to be able to better organise members of the community. As part of their work, fempower.tech engage in critical debate around issues of feminism in HCI while simultaneously putting into practice this work through the development of a prefigurative politic at large HCI conferences.

Fempower.tech were approached by one of the journal editors, asking whether they would like to propose a special issue around the unique intersection of feminist theory and HCI. The four co-editors came together to further develop this initial idea, which later turned into this proposal.

Explanation of how papers are solicited

Papers were solicited through an open call that was shared with our professional networks and through social media. Since we are all members of fempower.tech, a feminist tech collective aimed at raising feminist issues in HCI, we initially shared our call on the network's website (https://fempower.tech). After this, we also shared the call on this page through the fempower.tech (as well as our personal) twitter accounts and a Feminist HCI slack channel that was created roughly 6 months ago. We also sent e-mails with the call to people we know through our grassroots organising who we thought may be interested in submitting an abstract or would be able to share the call in their networks. We also shared the call in feminist mailing lists and a Facebook group, as well as mailing lists in HCI. As such, our call reached audiences in academia and industry internationally.

We received 31 abstracts to our open call related to varied aspects of Feminist HCI. Some related to feminist HCI theory, while others related to the application of feminist theory in relation to the design of digital technologies, the evaluation of digital tools, or the ways in which diverse groups and communities use digital technologies. Abstracts came from individuals based in Asia, Australia, South America, North America, and Europe who were in their final years of undergraduate degrees, as well as Master's students, PhD candidates, precarious postdoctoral labourers, as well as established academic staff.

One of the editors received all the abstracts and anonymised these. At least two co-editors read each anonymised abstract, writing comments as we were doing so. We then discussed each abstract as a group of 4 and narrowed down the abstracts based on their contribution to theory in relation to feminist HCI. Once we had a tentative list of abstracts, we looked at the author bios and forefronted the work of early career researchers or those writing slightly outside their traditional discipline or research space when papers were in related areas of research.

Abstract for all proposed articles

As mentioned earlier, the Special Issue will be made up of three related but separate sections. Each of these sections will put points of view in dialogue, to produce not only interesting and novel articles, but also shorter collaborative pieces that put these articles into conversation to build theoretical, geographic, and speculative bridges (we have called these pieces 'Dialogue of contemporary politics' and 'Dialogue of speculative futures').
Here, we provide an overview of the different papers before providing abstracts for each of the papers.

[abstracts have been removed for this version of the proposal]