Women's Health, Wellbeing, & Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Research in the fields of Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) and Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) is increasingly examining topics surrounding women's *health*. Many of these works convey that women's health cannot be isolated from various social and affective aspects of health, strongly suggesting a more holistic engagement with women's *wellbeing* instead. Extending beyond wellbeing, we find that much prior work is committed to promoting women's *empowerment* along various dimensions, such as being more in control of their bodies, having the freedom to express themselves online, being able to secure access to computing education, among other goals. In this panel, we bring together the voices of members of the CSCW community who actively care about women's health, wellbeing, *and* empowerment in the worlds of research, design, and practice.

KEYWORDS

Women; Health; Wellbeing; Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen a growing interest in women's health and wellbeing across the human-computer interaction (HCI) and computer-supported cooperative work (CSCW) communities (*e.g.,* [1, 2, 4]). Researchers have examined the challenges around designing technologies that could positively impact women's health, such as technologies that support women in their maternal, sexual, and/or reproductive health needs, among others (*e.g.,* [3, 5, 8, 11, 15, 19, 20]). Prior work has also investigated ecological factors that influence women's access to health, recommending that greater attention be afforded to social and affective aspects of health in addition (e.g., [12]). In this panel, we will discuss why a broader look at women's interests and wellbeing is needed, going beyond physical health conditions alone [17]. A broader definition of women is also needed to include trans and cis women in conceptions of health and wellbeing [7]. We will stress how greater depth might allow us to engage with work across domains more effectively; this may require further engagement at the levels of theory, design, and practice.

Bringing together panelists with a wide range of expertise on various topics around women's interests, we will begin by discussing women's wellbeing and empowerment as preferred focuses in comparison to women's health. Touching upon Bardzell's principles of feminist HCI and Nussbaum's

exposition of central capabilities [6, 13] we will reflect on what an approach to wellbeing might afford, that a focus on health alone may not. We will also discuss what empowerment looks like and the importance of stepping out of western settings to culturally distinct and intersectionally diverse ecologies, where users must also be able to influence the design of these technologies, adopt them, engage with them on their terms, and/or maintain such engagements [14].

We will summarize literature that emphasizes the importance of going *beyond the individual* [9, 18], and discuss how prior work has involved (or not) others such as care providers, partners, parents, children, and the broader sisterhood conversations that are important to have, given the nascent stages this research is in and the missed opportunities to be addressed. Laying out the value that a multi-stakeholder view can bring, we will elaborate also on the conflicting agencies and freedoms that surface when we turn our attention to designing for the less empowered. How might women's wellbeing be targeted such that diverse stakeholder groups, no matter their agendas, are part of the conversation?

We will examine how different motivations but aligned goals might be channeled to target social change. In particular, we will reflect on the contributions of researchers and practitioners in the domain of women's health and wellbeing, and where the challenges and opportunities lie in their coming together. We will also take an in-depth look at intersectional aspects of group identity, including how race, gender identity, and sexuality complicate such objectives [10, 16]. The role of extrinsic environments is crucial in this regard; different cultures and geographies surface different challenges.

The goals of our panel are thus to advance current conversations on women's health through a consolidation of lessons derived from a set of women-centered projects led by the panelists that highlight the importance of going beyond (1) the focus on physical health alone, (2) the individual to take a multi-stakeholder perspective, (3) gender as the only axis of differentiation to consider other intersections, and (4) research, design, or practice in isolation to a more integrated view.

BIOS

Neha Kumar is an assistant professor at Georgia Tech, and conducts research at the intersection of human-centered computing and global development. She has been working on topics around women's health since 2014, with a particular focus on the social and affective aspects of health. Much of this work takes place in India, and investigates the role of community health workers in circumventing various societal barriers towards facilitating the delivery of healthcare in underserved communities.

Daniel A. Epstein is an assistant professor at the University of California, Irvine, where he studies how personal tracking technologies can better acknowledge and account for everyday realities. He has worked in women's health since 2016, understanding people's experiences with apps designed to support them in tracking menstruation and fertility. Recommendations from his work on designing inclusive, useful menstrual tracking technology have been integrated into popular commercial apps.

Catherine D'Ignazio is a scholar, artist/designer, and hacker mama who focuses on feminist technology, data literacy, and civic engagement. She has run women's health hackathons, designed global news recommendation systems, and created talking and tweeting water quality sculptures. Her forthcoming book from MIT Press, Data Feminism, with Lauren Klein, charts a course for more ethical and empowering data science practices. As of Jan 2020, D'Ignazio will be an assistant professor in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT, directing the Data + Feminism Lab.

Amanda Lazar is an assistant professor in the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her research lies at the intersection of Human-Computer Interaction and Health Informatics. Much of her work addresses how technologies designed for health and wellbeing position and support individuals as they age.

Andrea Parker is an assistant professor in the Khoury College of Computer Sciences and the Bouvé College of Health Sciences at Northeastern University. Her research spans the domains of HCI and public health, as she examines how social computing systems can reduce barriers to wellness for vulnerable, marginalized populations. A part of this work looks at how technology can promote healthy eating and relationship wellbeing for women in romantic partnerships.

Muge Haseki is a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Technology, Innovation, and Competition at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research lies at the intersection of ICT access and use and global development.

Anupriya Tuli is a Ph.D. student in Human-Centred Design at IIIT-Delhi, India. Her work lies at the intersection of human-centred computing and healthcare for development. She engages with feminist perspectives for designing technologies for women's advocacy and works extensively with practitioners and NGOs working on menstrual health.

STRUCTURE OF PANEL

The panel will begin with brief introductions from the panelists, who will explain how their research interests connect with women's health and/or broader related themes. They will then take 5-7 minutes each to make a brief presentation, leaving the audience with potential directions and motivations for future work. We will then invite questions from the audience for the remaining 45 minutes.

Neha will be moderator, after offering a brief introduction on the themes of health, wellbeing, and empowerment, situating these within the feminist frameworks offered by Bardzell and Nussbaum. She will propose a more integrative approach for future CSCW research to consider.

Daniel will go next, describing the role that personal tracking takes in facilitating women's wellbeing, focusing on challenges to make the technology inclusive and useful. He will also discuss guidelines for taking an etic perspective on the topic.

Catherine will describe how feminist theory and activist practices can be used to create more inclusive and participatory design processes for innovating around women's health. In particular, she will talk about equity-focused hackathons on breastfeeding and menstruation.

Amanda will discuss aging and women's health, the intersection of ageism and sexism in older women's wellbeing, and the tensions that emerge between medical institutions and women's lived experiences.

Andrea will discuss the importance of designing for women in intersectional contexts. She will also elaborate on public health definitions of "health" and "wellbeing".

Muge will share some examples around the world on how to design for women in intersectional contexts.

Anupriya will describe the role of intermediaries like practitioners and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in advancing the discourse around taboo topics such as menstruation. She will discuss the role that culture and context play in shaping access to healthcare services.

CONCLUSION

Our panel has four objectives. First, we intend to highlight that women's health is inextricably tied to aspects of women's wellbeing and empowerment, and vice versa. Second, we will emphasize the importance of taking multi-stakeholder perspectives, even—and especially—when there are conflicting stakes. Third, we will highlight that thinking about women is not enough; we must make an effort to recognize the intersections we are working with, whether it is the intersection of gender with age, race, class, geography, or any other differentiator. Finally, we will offer perspectives across research, design, and practice, also arguing that we must strive for an alliance across these areas if our larger goal is indeed women's empowerment.

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