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Gendered or Neutral? Considering the Language of HCI: A lack of diversity in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields has been a challenge in terms of recruitment, engagement, opportunity and equality spanning decades. It is not well understood how new technologies created by the human-computer interaction (HCI) community affect aspects such as empowerment, diversity, identity and equity in minority groups.

Feminist theory suggests that the abstract, gender-neutral language used to talk about people in HCI would elicit imagery perceived to be male. Research suggests that the "people" words in HCI publications (user, participant, person, designer, researcher) all have a tendency to be perceived as male among a male audience, but females have a more balanced perception of "designer", "person", and "participant".

Greater awareness and sensitivity are needed regarding potential bias implied by these terms, that are not representative of the diverse community within and outside of HCI.

Interesting fact: The study collected drawings (about 150 per "people" word) plus surveys about the drawing and drawer to determine how people perceived the words vs. who they were.

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