

Association for Information Systems

AIS Electronic Library (AISeL)

ICIS 2021 TREOs

TREO Papers

12-12-2021

Emancipatory Design Science: A Method of Designing IT for Social Good

Amber Grace Young

University of Arkansas, ayoung@walton.uark.edu

Yaping Zhu

University of Arkansas, yzhu@walton.uark.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://aisel.aisnet.org/treos_icis2021

Recommended Citation

Young, Amber Grace and Zhu, Yaping, "Emancipatory Design Science: A Method of Designing IT for Social Good" (2021). *ICIS 2021 TREOs*. 61.

https://aisel.aisnet.org/treos_icis2021/61

This material is brought to you by the TREO Papers at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in ICIS 2021 TREOs by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.

TREO

Technology, Research, Education, Opinion

Emancipatory Design Science

A Method of Designing IT for Social Good

Young, Amber G. (ayoung@walton.uark.edu); Zhu, Yaping (yzhu@watlon.uark.edu)

Design science research (DSR) involves developing theory-based design principles and/or IT artifacts to solve problems while contributing to knowledge about how an IT *should* be designed to accomplish a focal outcome. DSR in IS draws on kernel theories, primarily from the reference disciplines of engineering, management, and psychology. Though design is never value free, theories rooted in values such as ethical and critical theories have rarely been used as kernel theories in the DSR literature. Recently, Kane et al. (2021) demonstrated how critical kernel theory can be used as the basis of a subtype of DSR that they refer to as emancipatory design science. While Kane et al. (2021) laid out an emancipatory design theory for a machine learning application, explaining applications and guidelines for applying emancipatory DSR approaches fell outside the scope of their research. This research clarifies what is meant by emancipatory DSR. Emancipatory DSR is a subtype of DSR that:

1. is built on a critical or ethical kernel theory, and
2. involves developing theory-based design principles and/or IT artifacts to solve problems of human constraint, oppression, marginalization, or hegemony, by promoting freedom, emancipation, inclusion, or social good.

Value sensitive design (VSD) is a three-component iterative methodology that includes conceptual, empirical, and technical investigations, aiming to capture human values in design (Friedman et al. 2013). Emancipatory DSR goes a step further to provide theory-driven and value-laden design principles that promote freedom to act, express, belong, and think (Young et al. 2021). Emancipatory DSR outcomes include but are not limited to social justice, dignity, humanization, inclusion, voice-giving, fairness, peace, transparency, democratization, community enhancement, creativity, and mental and physical health and safety. Emancipatory DSR provides a new way of thinking about design to promote social good for users and society.

Keywords: design science research, design theory, emancipation, critical theory, ethical theory, freedom, social good, emancipatory design theory

References

- Friedman, B., Kahn, P. H., Borning, A., & Hultdtgren, A. (2013). Value sensitive design and information systems. In *Early Engagement and New Technologies: Opening up the Laboratory* (pp. 55-95). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Kane, G. C., Young, A. G., Majchrzak, A., & Ransbotham, S. (2021). Avoiding an oppressive future of machine learning: A design theory for emancipatory assistants. *MIS Quarterly*, 45(1), 371-396.
- Young, A., Zhu, Y., & Venkatesh, V. (2021, January). Emancipation research in information systems: Integrating agency, dialogue, inclusion, and rationality research. In *Proceedings of the 54th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (p. 6359).