HCI and Sensitive Life Experiences

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ABSTRACT

HCI research has identified a number of life events and life transitions which see individuals in a vulnerable state, such as gender transition, domestic abuse, romantic relationship dissolution, bereavement, and even genocide. Although these life events differ across the human lifespan, considering them as a group of 'sensitive life experiences', and exploring the similarities and differences in how we approach those experiences as researchers could be invaluable in generating a better understanding of them. In this workshop, we aim to identify current opportunities for, and barriers to, the design of social computing systems that support people during sensitive life events and transitions. Participants will take part in activities centred around exploring the similarities and differences between their own and others' research methods and results, drawing on their own experiences in discussions around carrying out research in these sensitive contexts.

Author Keywords

Ethics; humanistic HCI; life events; sensitive contexts.

DESCRIPTION

Life experiences that place individuals in a vulnerable state are an emergent theme in HCI. Research attention is turning towards challenging and deeply personal experiences such as gender transition [5], domestic abuse [3], romantic relationship dissolution [7], bereavement [2], and even genocide [4]. Such research has prompted community focus on how to conduct such challenging research, both methodologically and ethically (e.g. Waycott, CHI 2016). To better understand these experiences in the context of HCI research and design, we wish to explore them as a

collective whilst acknowledging the uniqueness of each context of enquiry. What can we learn about our approach to one sensitive context from our approach to another?

This one-day workshop will identify current opportunities for, as well as barriers to, the design of social computing systems that support people during sensitive life events and transitions ("experiences"). Participants will take part in activities aimed at exploring similarities and differences with respect to research methods and results. They will also draw on their personal experiences and perspectives to respond to discourse on how to *do* research in sensitive contexts, building expertise within the research community. Ultimately, the workshop will further the development of the emergent international community of researchers who focus on sensitive life events and transitions, offering a platform for knowledge exchange, methodological maturation and innovation, and further collaboration.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

We invite submissions including but not limited to the following: A specific case study, project, or critical evaluation of current technology in the context of life experience(s); a cross-cultural study in the context of technology use around a life experience(s); an auto-ethnography of (a) one's experience of conducting research in the context of a sensitive life experience or (b) one's experience of interactive with technology in the context of a sensitive life experience. These should be reflective pieces from which one can concretely say what they learned. Submissions should focus on one (or several) life events or transitions, or an otherwise sensitive context.

Schedule

Coffee breaks will be from 11:15-11:30 and 16:00-16:30, and the group lunch will take place between 12:30-14:00.

Pre-Workshop

Each of the submissions will be made available to participants through the workshop site; participants that do not want their paper to be shared publicly will have the option of having their work emailed instead. We ask that all accepted participants read each of the position papers before the workshop, as this will facilitate meaningful

discussion during the workshop activities. Similarly, we ask that all accepted participants read the following key papers:

- Jeffrey Bardzell and Shaowen Darzell. 2016. Humanistic HCI. *Interactions, March – April 2016, pp 20 – 29.*
- Wendy Moncur. 2013. The emotional wellbeing of researchers: considerations for practice. *Proc. CHI 2013.*

Icebreaker: Speed Dating (09:40-10:55)
The workshop participants will be tasked with taking part in a "speed dating" activity, to get to know one another quickly. This will involve participants being given one minute with every other participant, during which time they will share who they are, as well as a brief description of their research area. While the social aspect of this is important, the icebreaker will also be the basis for the first Group Work section of the workshop.

Foreground Similarities/Differences (10:55-11:15)
Following the icebreaker activity, each participant will be asked to write on post-it notes what they believe are the most salient events of each life experience, in the context of digital technologies. For example, in the case of a relationship break up, an individual changing their relationship status on Facebook may be considered a significant step. Facilitators and workshop participants will then employ axial coding in real time, using the post-it notes, to determine similarities and differences between the different life events. We will then group these into potential themes such as privacy, wellbeing, and digital content ownership, which will be used to divide up the participants into break out groups as part of the next activity.

Group Work: discuss themes and identify barriers/design opportunities (11:30-12:30, 14:00-14:30)
The workshop participants will be asked to arrange themselves into breakout groups of 4-6 people, where each group will consist of participants from a mix of research fields interested in different types of life experiences. Participants will be tasked with discussing the themes identified in the previous activity across each of the different experiences that they study. In particular, each group will: critique digital technologies' current uses and limitations; identify barriers that individuals currently face across each of the experiences under discussion; distil opportunities for design from these limitations and barriers.

Summarise Group Discussions (14:30-15:00)
The breakout groups will be recalled and asked to report on what they have discussed to the other groups. After all groups have had the opportunity to speak, the organisers will facilitate a discussion with the group as a whole; all participants, regardless of their groups, will have the opportunity to suggest themes or questions they would like to focus on. Notes will be stored in the form of a Google Doc, which will form the basis for sustaining the discussion

and creating a community beyond the workshop session. As a group, the organisers and participants will conclude the activity by summarizing the main points of the discussion.

360 Degree Reflection (15:00-16:00)
The final activity for the workshop session will entail a critical reflection on the current discourse around the conduct of HCI research, with a specific focus on working on life experiences in sensitive contexts. Participants will be familiar with key literature surrounding this issue, as we mentioned in the pre-workshop section of this submission, but the organisers will briefly summarise each paper at the beginning of the activity. Workshop participants will be asked to consider a number of issues, including:

- How our own personal motivations for conducting this type of research affect not only the outcomes, but also the process of conducting that research;
- The effect that conducting research has on the researcher (on a personal level, in terms of data interpretation etc.);
- The perceived effects of one's perspectives and subject position on the research they carry out.

Other relevant issues raised by workshop participants will also be discussed. As with the previous activity, the organisers and workshop participants' notes will be stored in the form of a Google Doc.

Closing Remarks (16:30-17:30)
It is important to the organisers that workshop participants are involved (as much as they want to be) in identifying routes for the dissemination of their work in the session. So, to finish off the workshop, we will discuss as a group the ways by which we hope to disseminate our work beyond NordiCHI 2016. Potential options include writing a special issue, working towards a panel at NordiCHI 2017, or creating an online collective blog about the outcomes of our workshop. To sustain this community of researchers, we will identify which medium will be best for maintaining context (e.g., mailing list, Facebook group) for discussion and continued collaboration at this point.

ORGANISER BIOGRAPHIES
Mr Daniel Herron (dherron@dundee.ac.uk) is a joint PhD student at the University of Dundee, and at the University of Technology Sydney. His research interests lie in designing technology that can positively impact life experiences. His doctoral research explores what happens when a romantic relationship comes to an end in a digital context [7], with a focus on how individuals interact with digital possessions from a past relationship

Ms Nazanin Andalibi (naz@drexel.edu) is a PhD candidate at Drexel University. She studies self-disclosure and social support practices in socially stigmatized contexts or negative life events such as sexual abuse [1]. She also has reflected on her experience as a researcher in sensitive

contexts and argues that it is important for the HCI community to consider researchers' occupational vulnerability in discussions, trainings, practices, and policies around research ethics.

Mr Oliver Haimson (ohaimson@uci.edu) is a PhD candidate in the Informatics Department at UC Irvine. His research focuses on how people represent changing and faceted identities on social media during life transitions. In particular, he studies transgender peoples' experiences with self-presentation and disclosure as they change gender on social network site [5,6]. Through his research, he hopes to impact technological inclusion of marginalised users.

Dr Wendy Moncur, FRSA (wmoncur@dundee.ac.uk) is a Reader in Socio-Digital Interaction at the University of Dundee. She is also a Visiting Scholar at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia, and an Associate of the Centre for Death and Society. Her research focuses on being human in a Digital Age. She has examined the design and use of technology in becoming a parent, relationship breakdown, retiral and end of life. She also examines methodological issues around the conduct of research in sensitive contexts, and opportunities for research to illuminate policy.

Professor Dr Elise van den Hoven MTD (Elise.Vandenhoven@uts.edu.au) is a Professor of Human Computer Interaction in the Faculty of Engineering and IT at University of Technology Sydney, and a part-time Associate Professor in the Dept. of Industrial Design, Eindhoven University of Technology, with honorary appointments at DJCAD and ARCCCD. Her research interests include human-computer interaction, design, and psychology, including people-centred design, designing interactive systems, physical interaction, and supporting human remembering.

DRAFT CALL-FOR-PARTICIPANTS

This workshop will bring together researchers and practitioners to share experiences of working with vulnerable people in sensitive contexts involving digital technologies, such as gender transition, sexual abuse, and romantic relationship dissolution. The aim of the workshop is to identify opportunities for, as well as barriers to, design of social computing systems that support people during sensitive life events and transitions. Workshop participants will explore themes across life experiences and consider similarities and differences. They will also draw on their own personal experiences and perspectives to respond to recent discourse on how to *do* research in sensitive contexts, building expertise within the research community.

We invite interested researchers and practitioners to submit a 2-4-page position paper in the SIGCHI Extended Abstracts Format, focusing on sensitive contexts, including but not limited to: An auto-ethnography of one's experiences conducting research in sensitive contexts, or interacting with technology after a vulnerable life event. This should be a reflective piece from which one can say what they learned; a specific case study, project, or critical evaluation of current technology in sensitive life events; a cross-cultural study in the context of sensitive life events and technology use. Please do not hesitate to contact the workshop organisers if you are unsure about the eligibility of your work.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

The workshop organisers have avenues for recruitment across a variety of disciplines and institutions. As this workshop is an international collaboration, the organisers have access to numerous institutions and mailing lists across the UK, Europe, USA, and Australia/New Zealand. Similarly, the organisers will use their contacts across multiple disciples and research areas to publicise recruitment for the workshop.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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