
Workshop Proposal: Designing for Everyday Care in Communities

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Abstract

Recent HCI scholarship has begun to incorporate the concept of care as an alternative design lens, moving beyond health care or social care to consider care as a fundamental relational quality of life. This one-day workshop brings together researchers to find a shared understanding of the ways in which interpersonal care and interdependence could be supported through technology design in community contexts. The goal is to raise issues and increase sensitivity towards care, with the ultimate aim of impacting design practices—including how one might design community interactions with and for care. Participants will learn together how such a focus could impact their own research, while mapping and articulating how research and design in HCI-related fields can and does integrate care into sociotechnical systems more broadly.

Author Keywords

Design; Care; Community; Methods; Ethics.

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

Background and Motivation

Theories, lenses, and methods for incorporating care into human computer interaction (HCI) design contexts

are an ongoing issue of concern in HCI research. While HCI literature and research in the domain of *healthcare* is abundant, less understood is the interpersonal or social care that people might engage with on an everyday basis in technologically-mediated ways. When care in the context of technology design is discussed, it is often treated as separated from everyday life: it has a tendency to become oriented to specific settings and contexts (such as the residential care home [9], or the hospital ward [8]); to place an emphasis on technology to support personal practices of care (as in self-care and self-management technologies [10]); or to lead to the medicalization of populations defined as in need of care [17] or the formalization of care relationships [12]. All of these orientations lead to the divorce of care from its everyday role in our lives.

The above bodies of work have contributed significantly to our knowledge of how to design for care settings, impacting quality of life positively and improving health outcomes. However, recent work both within and outside of HCI has started to highlight the important role that personal and interpersonal care plays more generally in our everyday lives. Puig de la Bellacasa argues that we are always already intertwined in relations of care [11] and can derive joy from helping others as an outgrowth of our common humanity. Tronto [16] posits that a vital step toward creating a more caring citizenship rests on the need to recognize that *all* humans are interdependent beings who experience vulnerability and require care in some fashion. HCI scholars have built on these arguments to discuss the responsibility designers have to those with/for whom they design [7]; demonstrate the need for understanding the caring relationships that take place between researchers and participants [14]; and

explicate the caring relationships that can take place in technology-centered communities [15].

Furthermore, in the context of care there are increasingly blurred boundaries regarding where the formal and informal meet. In many European nations, reducing state budgets have promoted the need for interpersonal care that is scaffolded by networks of volunteers, neighbors, and people donating their time for other community members [13]. In Greece, the financial crisis has led to the formation of solidarity movements, self-organized by citizens, around basic needs for clothing, food, education, health, and care [18]. In the UK, where many care services are provided by not-for-profits and charities, what is seen and experienced as care can be broad, multi-faceted, and ill-defined [3]. In these contexts, technologies have a place for potentially scaffolding new forms of interpersonal care relationships between people in communities, or indeed capturing and representing forms of care that might normally go unnoticed [5].

We have begun to use the phrase “everyday care” to refer to these types of interdependent forms of care that always already take place in interpersonal contexts. These types of care can be designed for explicitly, such as in providing affordances for mundane-yet-intimate interactions (as in [6]). But in community and social contexts, they are often implicit, such as when leisure activities are organized for members of a social isolation support group without drawing attention to the socializing purpose of the activities. Developing pathways for supporting these everyday care interactions goes beyond traditional notions of “caring” in design, which usually emerge alongside discussions of empathy, to highlighting the

underdetermined nature of design practice and the recognition of social complexity that accompanies the design and use of technologies. Why is this important? If the pathways of giving and receiving care are designed thoughtlessly or with little knowledge of what care practices are being supported, we, as designers, risk perpetuating unequal power relations, or producing a one-dimensional flattening of the social relations that make us human. Any full accounting for interaction or experience design within community contexts must acknowledge—and ideally actively support—the ways in which care is implicated in everyday interactions.

Workshop Themes and Goals

This workshop will bring together researchers and practitioners from across HCI and related fields of participatory design, community informatics, and digital health care. In bringing these communities together, we hope to facilitate an interdisciplinary discussion and analysis of what is encapsulated by “everyday care.” We will also discuss what responsibilities exist to facilitate these kinds of interactions and relationships in community contexts. These discussions will cover issues pertaining to the design of interactive systems, methods of engagement, and the extent to which these responsibilities extend to interaction designers, user experience designers, and HCI researchers alike.

Participants will submit position papers in response to the at least one of the following workshop themes:

- 1)** Technologies to support interpersonal caring relationships: such as designs that promote positive interactions in specific contexts, or that support the coordination and self-organization of carers.
- 2)** Methods for exploring issues of care: such as frameworks for understanding the types of care that

can take place between friend groups (e.g., [2]), or design probes for reflecting on experiences of care.

3) Tensions in designing between care that is everyday versus care that is more formalized: such as acknowledging the stresses of performing as a carer in a health context and addressing the interpersonal needs of care recipients.

4) Educating and training designers to be conscious of care: for example, in engineering education focusing on responsibility rather than the capability for care-giving or care-receiving [1], and design education, focusing on values inscribed in designed artifacts [4].

5) Reflections on the responsibility of designers and researchers to care in their practice: such as in participatory design and related intervention work [7], and reflections on researcher-participant care relationships [14].

6) Critiques and provocations of care and its role in specific contexts: including, for example, how care can be entangled in power relations, how it can conflict with self-care, and examples of where “not caring” is necessary.

The goal of posing these themes will be to engender a cross-disciplinary community of researchers and practitioners with a joint interest in designing technologies and enquiring with design methods and techniques into future everyday caring practices within communities, including but not limited to: informal collectives, community organizations, online groups, non-profits, and self-organized groups.

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