

CMC outline — 26 Sept 2006

- **Email overload**
 - **Ducheneaut, N., and V. Bellotti. Email as habitat: An exploration of embedded personal information management.**
 - Getting more into CSCW (Computer-Supported Cooperative Work) research
 - Social component, but also task-oriented
 - Qualitative in terms of interviewing users about their email management strategies, mixed with quantitative in terms of analyzing folder structures, reporting correlations
 - 28 interviews — 10 at Xerox PARC, 12 at "MediaWorld", 6 at "LeadDesign"
 - Documents — artifacts tied to communications
 - Different communication patterns for managers
 - Documenting activity
 - Organizing meetings
 - **Whittaker & Sidner. (1996). Email overload: exploring personal information management of email.**
 - Interviews with 20 participants, employees of Lotus
 - Analysis of email of 18 participants — cross-sectional data collection, not longitudinal
 - Significant differences between "frequent filers" and "infrequent or non-filers"
 - Suggestion that frequent filers have fewer "failed folders" (contain only a few items)
- **Major points**
 - Atheoretical — mostly an empirical look at a practical problem
 - One model for a CHI (Computer-Human Interaction) paper: "problem" (in the practical sense), observation or experiment, possible design solutions
 - Appropriating a communication tool for collaboration and information management, since those activities occur socially, in the locus of communication
 - Filtering and filing are difficult for users to manage
 - Work better if users organize folders based on easy-to-filter criteria, like sender rather than project
 - These are cognitively demanding tasks and require anticipation of future needs
 - This would be a much better application for tagging, because the problem here is the one-to-one relationship between messages and folders. Conceptually, users will probably want to label messages on a number of different dimensions.
 - If a message is from your boss concerning Alpha Project and asking you to file a report by next Thursday, do you file it in "boss," "alpha project," or "to do"?
 - Little use of search found in D&B — some found in W&S.
 - But is this because search is so slow vs. sorting? What if we have instant, as-you-type retrieval?
 - Functionality IS usability
 - Email is the home of both informational and conversational missives.
 - How should the interfaces for these differ?
 - Major suggestion: threading of conversations. Interesting that many mail clients now implement this.
 - Representing threads is a common problem among persistent media that track replies — email, newsgroups
 - Graphical approaches — Venolia on email, Fiore & Smith on newsgroups
 - Email as a habitat
 - Hard to separate communication from the objects of communication — documents, to-dos.
 - Quotes from Whittaker & Sidner perhaps best illustrate "email as a habitat"

CMC outline — 26 Sept 2006

- **Online dating**
 - **Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs. Managing Impressions Online: Self-Presentation Processes in the Online Dating Environment.**
 - GREAT piece
 - Methodologically rigorous
 - Strongly theoretically motivated
 - Large dating site, "Connect.com"
 - Semi-structured interviews of 34 users
 - Half male, half female
 - 3/4 urban (LA), 1/4 more rural (near Modesto)
 - From 25-70, most in 30s and 40s
 - Online dating experience 1 month to 5 years
 - "Reflective" of Connect.com's population, but *not* a random sample
 - Coding: labels for statements, thought units, etc.
 - Iterative refinement of coding scheme
 - Lots of work!
 - Taking "ground level" behaviors and thought processes and building categories and conceptual structures out of them
 - Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
 - Reciprocal relationship between these technologies and larger culture
 - "Shape and are shaped by social practices"
 - "As Shah and Kesan point out, 'Defaults have a legitimating effect, because they carry information about what most people are expected to do.' "
 - Howard (2004): *capacities* and *constraints*
 - But also: *circumvention* — how do users maximize capacities and minimize constraints through strategic exploitation of system features?
 - Available search parameters
 - Fudging age to avoid natural cut-off points
 - How do searchable features influence perception?
 - What happens when you start checking all those boxes and setting all those parameters? Overspecification.
 - You can't do this in f2f interaction, e.g., at a party
 - Do users *really know* what they want?
 - Self-presentation and perception
 - Tension between truth and self-enhancement
 - Strategic self-presentation — self-enhancement
 - Common misrepresentations: age, marital status, appearance
 - Dan Ariely — "Lie enough to get to coffee, but not so much that you don't get to sex."
 - Economy of exaggeration — Baseline level of exaggeration that users must meet just to measure up with other exaggerators?
 - What if it leads to disappointment when they meet offline?
 - Authenticity
 - More honesty because of "passing stranger" effect or sense of anonymity?

CMC outline — 26 Sept 2006

- cf. Hancock et al. in Week 10 — "The impact of communication technologies on lying behavior."
- Anticipated face-to-face interactions — cf. prisoner's dilemma
- Ideal selves — describing who you *want to be*
 - Tension with actual self
 - Personality matching in couples — Klohnen & Mendelsohn 1998
 - Assortative mating on *actual-ideal self congruence* (kind of like self-esteem)
 - Perceptions of partners no more accurate than chance (!) BUT perceptions of partners were more similar to *own ideal self* than chance would predict
 - What about people who don't really care to take the relationship offline? Perhaps swings the balance toward self-enhancement or outright dishonesty (play?)
 - Social Information Processing — "cognitive misers" — forming impressions based on limited available cues (Walther, Wallace)
- Findings
 - **Attending to subtle, minute cues — both in presentation and perception**
 - "Recursive" relationship between the cues you focus on in others and the cues you attend to in yourself
 - Sexual language
 - Woman who avoids it entirely
 - Man who uses it deliberately
 - Photos — what does your pose mean? (seated == overweight?)
 - What are some of the things that users give off in online dating?
 - **Some of these are perceived to be given off by others, but then carefully tended to by self**
 - Language/grammar mistakes — lack of education, lack of interest?
 - Time of writing — night owl? What if it's Saturday night?
 - Length of email — desperation?
 - Last login
 - "Foggy mirror" — "the gap between self-perceptions and the assessments made by others." — what if people aren't lying, but rather are telling the truth as they see it or would like it to be? It's an untruth only by some standards.
 - Credibility: What are the assessment signals? (from Donath 1999)
 - Demonstrating, not describing, characteristics
 - Photos. In a way... but how do you know the photo is unmodified, of the right person, relatively recent, etc.?
- **Fiore & Donath. Homophily in online dating.**
 - Homophily is common in the literature on attraction
 - Political views, morals, some kinds of personality traits, interests, even level of attractiveness (assortative mating — "7s" seek other "7s")
 - Background on data set ("the Site")
 - Generally rural and secondary urban areas
 - Almost all heterosexual
 - Consider pairs of communicating users (dyads)
 - Female initiation almost 25% more likely to get a response than male initiation (25.1 vs. 20.6 percent response rates)

CMC outline — 26 Sept 2006

- Some characteristics more "bounding" than others — that is, users are more likely to seek someone like themselves on that dimension.
 - e.g., smokers might want to find other smokers more so than people with blue eyes want to find other people with blue eyes.
- Method
 - How many people would we expect to have the same educational level? Same preferences for having a child?
 - Suppose we randomly draw one man and one woman from the set of users. We have to consider that men and women might be differently distributed on these characteristics.
 - Example: physical build.
 - Compare actual percent of dyads who are the same on a given characteristic with the expected percent same on that characteristic.
- Findings
 - Values for ALL characteristics were the same in dyads more often than chance would predict
 - But some are much more likely
- Methodological notes
 - HUGE sample size ... makes statistical tests almost unnecessary.
 - Problem with this? You have to see large effects or have some a priori theory about why you might see an effect in order to accept it. Otherwise you are attaching meaning to small variations that, although statistically significant, are semantically opaque
 - Other issues?
 - Lack of nuance. What exactly are these users considering when they make their decisions?
 - Outcome information. How many of these dyads meet face-to-face? What do the successful f2f dyads have in common? Is it substantially different from these online dyads?