
SIGCHI Research Ethics Town Hall

Cosmin Munteanu (moderator)
University of Toronto Mississauga
Mississauga, ON, Canada
cosmin.munteanu@utoronto.ca

Amy Bruckman
Georgia Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA, USA
asb@cc.gatech.edu

Michael Muller
IBM Research AI
Cambridge, MA, USA
michael_muller@us.ibm.com

Christopher Frauenberger
Technische Universität Wien
Vienna, Austria
christopher.frauenberger@tuwien.ac.at

Casey Fiesler
University of Colorado Boulder
Boulder, CO, USA
casey.fiesler@colorado.edu

Robert E. Kraut
Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA, USA
robert.kraut@cmu.edu

Katie Shilton
University of Maryland
College Park, MD, USA
kshilton@umd.edu

Jenny Waycott
University of Melbourne
Melbourne, Australia
jwaycott@unimelb.edu.au

ABSTRACT

An ongoing challenge within the diverse HCI and social computing research communities is understanding research ethics in the face of evolving technology and methods. Building upon successful town hall meetings at CHI 2018, GROUP 2018 and CSCW 2018, this panel will be structured to facilitate audience discussion and to collect input about current challenges and processes. It will be led by members of the ACM SIGCHI Research Ethics Committee. We will pose open questions and invite audience discussion of practices centered on recent “hot topic” issues. For this year’s town hall, the primary focus will be on paths to balancing the often-competing regulatory frameworks under which we operate (some of which having recently undergone significant revisions) with our community’s efforts to reveal ethical challenges posed by new interactive technologies and new contexts of use. We will engage the audience in

Permission to make digital or hard copies of part or all of this work for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that copies are not made or distributed for profit or commercial advantage and that copies bear this notice and the full citation on the first page. Copyrights for third-party components of this work must be honored. For all other uses, contact the owner/author(s).

CHI'19 Extended Abstracts, May 4-9, 2019, Glasgow, Scotland, UK

© 2019 Copyright is held by the author/owner(s).

ACM ISBN 978-1-4503-5971-9/19/05. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1145/3290607.3311742>

discussions on whether there is a non-colonial role for ethics education within the broad HCI community, how that may capture the cultural and disciplinary differences that are woven into CHI's fabric, and how research ethical issues should be handled in SIGCHI paper submission and review process.

INTRODUCTION

An ongoing challenge within the HCI and social computing research communities is understanding research ethics in the face of evolving technology and methods and diversity of standards across institutions, government agencies and national cultures. HCI as a field is at the forefront of both pushing the envelope of (designing) new technologies and engaging in the scientific study of the impact of such technologies with respect to broad social, demographic, cultural, political, and ethical considerations. Novel and challenging open questions for research ethics in recent years have generated discussion within our community, prompted by changes in governance of data management, privacy, and research practices in multiple continents. We draw in related ethics workshops (e.g., CSCW 2017, GROUP 2016, CHI 2017), as well as a growing body of literature and empirical work in this space –all demonstrating the urgency and complexity of the challenges we face as a community in handling and engaging with case studies that raise significant ethical considerations.

The SIGCHI research ethics committee has been tasked with helping our community move towards creating and disseminating norms and with providing feedback on contentious cases that arise during the SIGCHI submission and review processes. One important step towards accomplishing this is to facilitate open conversations about ethical challenges in our work among diverse research communities. To this end, members of the committee have hosted research ethics town halls at SIGCHI conferences, including CHI [7],[11], CSCW [6],[9], GROUP [4] and IDC [10], with the goal of engaging as many SIGCHI community members as possible.

CHALLENGES AND OPEN QUESTIONS

Previous town halls, as well as workshop discussions, have surfaced a number of persistent ethical challenges for HCI researchers. A non-exhaustive list of topics with open questions includes research at the intersection of art and technology, in which the boundary between research participants and audience is blurry [3]; exploratory and novel research methods that raise unexpected ethical questions [11]; research on public data [8]; conducting research in industry settings [12]; and research involving vulnerable populations [2]. More recently, Vitak et al. have shown that internet researchers do not have consistent practices, particularly around issues such as what constitutes public data and best methods for consent and anonymization [18]. These issues also come to bear in the challenges of conducting research in industry settings [12], as evidenced by concerns over what the recent Cambridge Analytica controversy might mean for research practices and access [15].

It is also important to consider the potentially different values and ethics positions from different contexts [1],[5]. The cultural, institutional, and regulatory differences that exist across the global HCI community are also critical issues that we must wrestle as norms evolve.

REGULATIONS AND PRACTICES

Recent regulatory changes have considerably impacted how HCI researchers conduct their work. Notably, the newly implemented European Union (EU) General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) governs the processing, use, or holding of personal data of individuals in the EU [13]. Though regulations around fair, transparent data use may

already be in line with best practices for research, there may be provisions and definitions that have implications for researchers both within and outside the EU. Additionally, a revised Common Rule issued by the US Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies to govern Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and research involving human subjects became effective in 19 2018 and will likely exacerbate existing issues of inconsistency across IRBs [14]. In addition to challenges posed by changes to current regulatory frameworks, many members of our HCI community either operate under long-established policies that may afford different interpretation on how to conduct HCI research in an ethical manner (e.g. the Canadian Tri-Council Statement [16], while other members are located within setting where ethical concerns are more strongly placed within an individual researcher's own practice. This raises the issue of whether the broader HCI community should engage in collaborative, grassroots-driven efforts to reconcile potentially competing policies that may impact different members of our community? We also note that many countries, countries, and organizations do not have formally-defined IRBs. To broaden the international coverage of our committee's work, we need to develop a better understanding of the diverse ethics governance practices around the world.

SERVICES TO REVIEW PROCESSES

In 2017, the ethics committee began offering its services to SIGCHI program committees, in providing informed opinions when ethical issues are raised in the paper review process. These services were amply solicited in 2018, with numerous requests for reviewing of ethical concerns made (and honoured) during the CHI 2018 review process. It is thus timely to engage the community in eliciting feedback on this process, assessing whether it has been useful, and how the SIGCHI Ethics Committee may improve and further democratize the process.

TOWN HALL FORMAT AND SPECIFIC TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

This panel session will be in a town hall format, which will maximize time for questions, comments, and discussion by attendees. We will give a brief (five to ten minutes) introduction, including an overview of topics that have been raised at previous town halls, the current summary of a survey of the current state of the different regulatory frameworks under which many of the HCI community member operate, and an explanation of current SIGCHI Ethics Committee processes during paper review. Following that, we will open the floor for discussion around the central topics for this year's ethics town hall:

1. What steps can we as a community take to facilitate conversations about ethics?
2. How can we, as a community, contribute to deepening our understanding and improving our practice in the face of a rapidly-changing technology landscape?
3. What are some possible paths toward balancing the frameworks (policy, regulatory, cultural, or simply personal) under which SIGCHI community member operate with the need to ensure our research (and publications) are held in high regard with respect to the ethical conduct of research with human participants? For example, is community-driven education and knowledge dissemination such a possible path? And finally,
4. Is there a role within the SIGCHI community for policies, procedures, or structures that reflect a shared understanding of ethical positions, without imposing a top-down, view that overrides the diversity of practices that set our community aside from others? That is, can we avoid imposing a narrow procedural

view (by the Ethics Committee, by other organizations, or even through grassroots movements) that disregards local practices, while of course maintaining the integrity of the scientific and broader ethical perspective?

The town hall will be attended by a subset of the membership of the SIGCHI Ethics Committee and moderated by committee member Cosmin Munteanu. The panel presenters represent a diverse international membership (three continents, four countries). They also represent a wide range of expertise related to ethics policies, such as: teaching ethics and policy courses, conducting training seminars, serving as ethics reviewers, serving as members (and chairs) of university and industry ethics boards, conducting (and publishing) scientific research on topics related to ethics. In particular, the panelists will represent perspectives from:

- Academia, under four different types of policies that are of applicability to many members of the CHI community:
 - The Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct of Research with Human Participants: Cosmin Munteanu
 - The European Union General Data Protection Regulation: Christopher Frauenberger, Michael Muller, and its impact to research outside Europe: Robert Kraut
 - The United States' Common Rule: Casey Fiesler, Amy Bruckman, Robert Kraut, Katie Shilton
 - The Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research: Jenny Waycott
- Industry: Michael Muller, Cosmin Munteanu (in previous industry research role)

As with past panel presentations, a guest panelist (not member of the SIGCHI Ethics Committee) will be invited to present their perspective on the topics discussed. For this year we aim to invite a representative of the CHI membership from Asian countries. We hope this will help inform and nuance our discussions specifically related to the role of the SIGCHI Ethics Committee in balancing existing policy frameworks under which numerous members operate, with the wide range of perspectives and approaches that may exist throughout the world – without a top-down imposition of a narrow procedural view, while maintaining scientific and ethical integrity.

PEOPLE

Cosmin Munteanu is an Assistant Professor at the Institute for Communication, Culture, Information, and Technology (University of Toronto Mississauga), and Co-Director of the Technologies for Ageing Gracefully lab (TAGlab). Cosmin's multidisciplinary work includes mobile interaction through speech and language, mixed reality systems, digitally inclusive learning support for marginalized users, assistive technologies for older adults, ethics in human-computer interaction, and usable privacy and cyber-safety.

Casey Fiesler is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Information Science at University of Colorado Boulder. Her research largely falls into the area of social computing, with an emphasis on law, ethics, and social norms. She is currently part of a multi-institution National Science Foundation supported project devoted to empirical studies of the ethics of research involving big, pervasive data.

Amy Bruckman is Professor and Associate Chair of the School of Interactive Computing at Georgia Tech, where she does research on social computing. She is chair of the ACM SIGCHI Research Ethics Committee.

Robert E. Kraut is a Professor of Human-Computer Interaction at the Human-Computer Interaction Institute at Carnegie Mellon University. He has conducted empirical research on online communities, the social impact of the internet, and related topics. He chaired the American Psychological Association's talk force on the Internet and psychological subjects' research and has served on CMU's IRB for over 15 years.

Michael Muller works as a Research Staff Member at IBM Research, USA, where he collaborates on research and prototypes for new AI concepts and data science support environments; previous work included collaborative systems that support human work. He was recently approved as Diversity co-chair on the GROUP conference steering committee.

Katie Shilton is an associate professor in the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her research explores ethics and policy for the design of information collections, systems and technologies. She is the PI of the PERVADE project, a multi-campus collaboration focused on big data research ethics.

Christopher Frauenberger is Senior Researcher at the Human-Computer Interaction Group, Institute for Visual Computing and Human Centered Technology, TU Wien (Vienna University of Technology). His research focuses on designing technology with and for marginalised user groups, such as those with disabilities. He is committed to participatory design approaches and builds on theories and methods from diverse fields such as the action research, disability studies, philosophy of science, research ethics amongst others.

Jenny Waycott is a Senior Lecturer and ARC Future Fellow at the Melbourne School of Engineering, University of Melbourne, Australia. Her current work focuses on the design and use of new technologies to support older adults who are socially isolated. She is the principal organizer of the CHI Workshop Series on "Ethical Encounters in HCI".

REFERENCES

- [1] Tamara Alsheikh, Jennifer A. Rode, and Sian E. Lindley. 2011. (Whose) value-sensitive design: A study of long-distance relationships in the Arabic cultural context. In Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing (CSCW), 75–84.
- [2] Alissa N. Antle. 2017. The ethics of doing research with vulnerable populations. *interactions* 24, 6: 74–77.
- [3] Steve Benford, Chris Greenhalgh, Bob Anderson, Rachel Jacobs, Mike Golembewski, Marina Jirotko, Bernd Carsten Stahl, Job Temmermans, Gabriella Giannachi, Matt Adams, Ju Row Farr, Nick Tandavanitj, and Kirsty Jennings. 2015. The Ethical Implications of HCI's Turn to the Cultural. *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction* 24, 1: 24–37.
- [4] Pernille Bjorn, Casey Fiesler, Michael Muller, Jessica A. Pater, and Pamela Wisniewski. 2018. Research Ethics Town Hall Meeting. In Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Supporting Group Work (GROUP)2.
- [5] Alan Borning and Michael Muller. 2012. Next steps for value sensitive design. Proceedings of the 2012 ACM annual conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems - CHI '12: 1125–1134. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2207676.2208560>
- [6] Amy S. Bruckman, Casey Fiesler, Jeff Hancock, and Cosmin Munteanu. 2017. CSCW Research Ethics Town Hall: Working Towards Community Norms. In Companion of the ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing (CSCW Companion).
- [7] Casey Fiesler, Jeff Hancock, Amy Bruckman, Michael Muller, Cosmin Munteanu, Jenny Waycott, and Melissa Densmore. 2017. Research ethics for HCI: A SIGCHI town hall meeting. In Proceedings of the CHI Conference Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI EA).

- [8] Casey Fiesler and Nicholas Proferes. 2018. “Participant” Perceptions of Twitter Research Ethics. *Social Media + Society* 4, 1.
- [9] Casey Fiesler, Amy Bruckman, Robert E. Kraut, Michael Muller, Cosmin Munteanu, and Katie Shilton (2018). Research ethics and regulation: An open forum. *CSCW 2018 Companion*, 125-128.
- [10] Christopher Frauenberger, Alissa N. Antle, Monica Landoni, Janet C. Read, and Jerry Alan Fails. Ethics in interaction design and children: A panel and community dialogue. In *Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Interaction Design and Children (IDC)*.
- [11] Christopher Frauenberger, Amy S. Bruckman, Cosmin Munteanu, Melissa Densmore, and Jenny Waycott. 2017. Research Ethics in HCI: A Town Hall Meeting. *Proceedings of the CHI Conference Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI EA)*.
- [12] Christopher Frauenberger, Marjo Rauhala, and Geraldine Fitzpatrick. 2016. In-Action Ethics. *Interacting with Computers* 29, 2: 220–236.
- [13] Samuel Greengard (2018). Weighing the impact of GDPR. *CACM* 61(11), 16-18.
- [14] James Grimmelmann. 2015. The Law and Ethics of Experiments on Social Media Users. *University of Colorado Technology Law Journal* 13: 219–272.
- [15] Jacob Metcalf and Casey Fiesler. 2018. One way Facebook can stop the next Cambridge Analytica. *Slate*. Retrieved from <https://slate.com/technology/2018/03/cambridge-analytica-demonstrates-that-facebook-needs-to-give-researchers-more-access.html>
- [16] Stephanie Sadownik, Cosmin Munteanu, Zhenhua Xu. 2016. Ethical dilemmas during field studies of emerging and disruptive technologies – is our current state of knowledge adequate? A knowledge Synthesis Report for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).
- [17] Jessica Vitak, Nicholas Proferes, Katie Shilton, and Zahra Ashktorab. 2017. Ethics Regulation in Social Computing Research: Examining the Role of Institutional Review Boards. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* 12, 5: 372–382. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1556264617725200>
- [18] Jessica Vitak, Katie Shilton, and Z. Ashktorab. 2016. Beyond the Belmont Principles: Ethical Challenges, Practices, and Beliefs in the Online Data Research Community. In *Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing (CSCW)*, 941–953.