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Luddy Hall, Rm. 1106

Marrying Humanities with the Empirical to Learn from and Design for Subcultures

Abstract: One of the notable characteristics of HCI and CSCW is the egalitarian perspective towards a plurality of methodological and epistemological approaches. Lately, an increasing number of HCI scholars are drawing on the humanities in their work. In this talk, I discuss my ongoing efforts to learn from and design for subcultures. Subcultures often lie on the fringes of society while reinforcing and communicating their distinctive traditions in a sensor-rich and socially-networked world. My approach integrates social sciences such as ethnography and computational social science with humanistic approaches such as existential philosophy and reader reception theory. Building on past work, I will lay out several key challenges that make the “blending” of the social sciences and humanities seemingly intractable. In the context of various subcultures, I show how having these methods speak to each other by adopting the other’s epistemological baggage may actually open the door to effective methods that significantly move the field of HCI forward. I conclude with a discussion of how others might draw on the humanities in their own work, with a goal of inspiring others to develop their own approaches incorporating the humanities with social sciences.

Biography: Norman Makoto Su is an Assistant Professor in the School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering at Indiana University Bloomington. His research interests lie in human–computer interaction (HCI) and computer–supported cooperative work (CSCW). He directs the Authentic User Experience (AUX) lab which integrates empirical and humanistic methods to characterizes the relationship of technology with subcultures and designs systems to support their notion of authenticity. He received his Ph.D. in Information and Computer Science from the University of California, Irvine. He was a postdoctoral research fellow in the School of Information and Library Studies at University College Dublin, Ireland. He has a B.A. in Computer Science from University of California, Berkeley. He has done internships at IBM, The Aerospace Corporation, and PARC. He is a recipient of the NSF CAREER award to conduct research with rural subcultures. His research has been published in top venues such as CHI, DIS, CSCW, ECSCW, HRI, and ICWSM.

