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Physical transitions and digital transitions

Some life transitions, such as starting a new job or moving to a different city or country, involve physical movement or routines with new physical settings [25–27]. In other life transitions, such as realizing one's LGBTQ identity, people may remain in many of the same physical settings as before, but will start to frequent new digital spaces [18]. Many life transitions involve both physical and digital movement. When studying people's use of social technologies during life transitions and designing technologies to support these changes, researchers must pay attention to these differences and the different needs that arise with each.

Technology non-use during life transitions

Some people may withdraw from social technology use during life transitions. Scholars exploring technology non-use have described how the lack of adoption of technology, as well as the withdrawal from using technology, can be related to a range of socio-cultural logics, rather than traditionally explored factors such as finances and infrastructure [3,37]. A limited body of research has examined why transitioning populations sometimes withdraw from social technology use. Semaan and colleagues [38] found that, in the context of veteran transitions, some veterans discontinued use of social media when they observed other veterans violating the pro-social cultural logics they drew upon while in the military. Lingel and colleagues [27] found that transnational migrants can experience fatigue from social media and disconnect from their old networks, such as on Facebook. Additionally, LGBTQ people coming out of the closet might practice non-use in online spaces where they perceive participating as a risk to their privacy and safety [13]. Prior work has also demonstrated numerous motivating factors behind non-use, demonstrating that non-use in itself can be a task deeply entangled with life transitions [3]. We will discuss implications for designing for and researching technology non-use during life transitions.

Liminality framework

Several social computing researchers have discussed and theorized how van Gennepe's [14] liminality framework (see Figure 1) applies to life transitions and social technologies. For example, Haimson [18] built from van Gennepe's liminality framework to develop the concept of *social transition machinery*, which describes the ways that, for people facing life transitions, multiple social media sites and networks often remain separate, yet work together to facilitate life transitions. This work argued that van Gennepe's description of the transition stage as being neutral or identity-less is not accurate in digital contexts, when instead people often portray multiple identities on different social media sites [18]. Semaan et al. [39] applied van Gennepe's liminality framework in the context of veterans re-integrating into civilian society, and found that veterans were drawing on a range of ICTs, such as social and mobile media, to engage in identity repair work stemming from conflicting rules and norms between the military and civil society, as they processed their changing identities across the phases outlined in Van Gennepe's [14] framework. The authors built from this framework by developing the concept of *identity awareness*, whereby the authors argued that across the stages of transition, by drawing on an assemblage of social and mobile media, people undergoing transitions are able to develop an understanding of new rules and norms in the spaces they are transitioning into [39]. In this workshop, we will discuss further ways to build from van Gennepe's framework [14] (as well as Turner's [42] and Bridges' [6] work which further expanded on it) to understand and design for social technology use during life transitions.

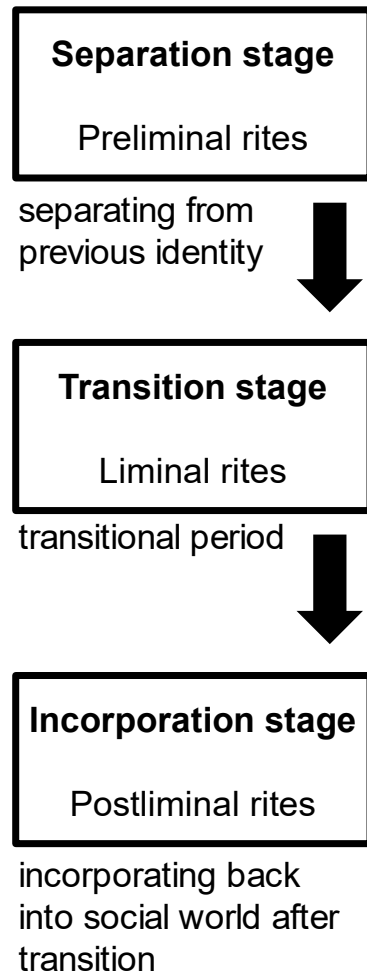


Figure 1: Van Gennep's liminality framework.

Theoretical frames to draw from

We will discuss further theoretical frames that social computing researchers can draw from. These include Higgins' self-discrepancy theory [24], Markus and Nurius' possible selves [28], Gergen's saturated self [15] and other social constructionist theories [4,16], and Goffman's dramaturgical theory [17], to name a few. We will also spend time exploring the potential application of other theories, such as those from Science and Technology Studies (STS), Feminist Science and Technology Studies (FSTS), and more. We aim to hear from workshop participants and learn from their expertise on different theories, and collaboratively generate connections between theories and how they can be applied to life transitions research.

Methodological considerations

In this workshop, we will address methodological considerations unique to life transitions research. For instance, which types of methods work well for studying particular types of life transitions? What are each method's limitations in this context? Many life transitions can be traumatic for people, and many are related to stigmatized or vulnerable identities. Thus, researchers must take care when interacting with and designing technology with/for these populations. Additionally, researchers may feel personally vulnerable if they have also experienced the types of life changes they are studying. We will discuss ways of handling these situations, as highlighted in past work [1,32].

Workshop Activities

This workshop will include four activities: brainstorming, discussion, agenda setting, and presentations. After participant introductions and short talks, the first half of the workshop will be dedicated to collaborative brainstorming. In the second half, we will hear a keynote presentation by a topically-relevant speaker. Then, we will discuss workshop themes and brainstorming results, and then set an agenda for future research and design in the area.

Workshop Goals

This workshop's goals include the following:

1. Facilitate networking, connections, and collective identity for social computing researchers who study life transitions and social technologies.
2. Discuss and make connections between the eight workshop themes described above.
3. Set an agenda for future social computing research and design for life transitions/social technologies.
4. Potentially derive a new concise term that can be used to describe this research area.
5. Provide groundwork for a collaborative research publication based on insights gained at workshop.

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