

Faculty of Design

2021

The Question of Intimacy

Mages, Michael Arnold and Neely, Stephen

Suggested citation:

Mages, Michael Arnold and Neely, Stephen (2021) The Question of Intimacy. In: Proceedings of Relating Systems Thinking and Design (RSD10) 2021 Symposium, 2-6 Nov 2021, Delft, The Netherlands. Available at <http://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/3879/>

Open Research is a publicly accessible, curated repository for the preservation and dissemination of scholarly and creative output of the OCAD University community. Material in Open Research is open access and made available via the consent of the author and/or rights holder on a non-exclusive basis.

The OCAD University Library is committed to accessibility as outlined in the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#) and the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#) and is working to improve accessibility of the Open Research Repository collection. If you require an accessible version of a repository item contact us at repository@ocadu.ca.

The Question of Intimacy

Michael Arnold Mages, PhD Northeastern University, Department of Art & Design, Boston, USA

Stephen Neely, PhD Carnegie Mellon University, School of Music, Pittsburgh, USA



Gianpiero Petriglieri

@gpetriglieri



Apr 3rd 2020, 4 tweets, 1 min read

Bookmark

Save as PDF

+ My Authors

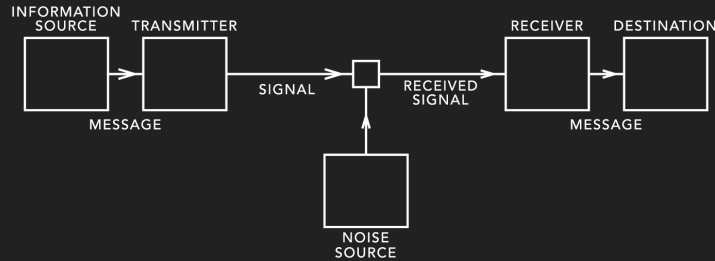
I spoke to an old therapist friend today, and finally understood why everyone's so exhausted after the video calls. It's the plausible deniability of each other's absence. Our minds tricked into the idea of being together when our bodies feel we're not. Dissonance is exhausting.

It's easier being in each other's presence, or in each other's absence, than in the constant presence of each other's absence.

Our bodies process so much context, so much information, in encounters, that meeting on video is being a weird kind of blindfolded. We sense too little and can't imagine enough. That single deprivation requires a lot of conscious effort.

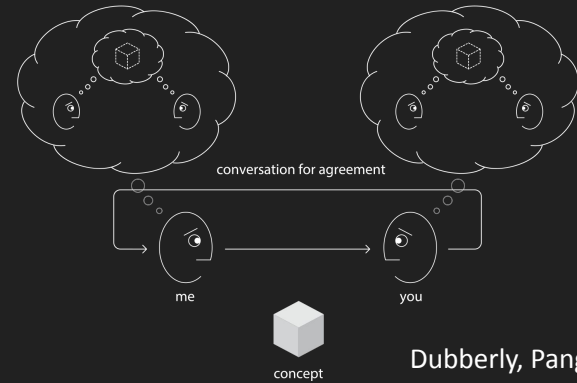
I am finding Zoom easier if I don't make eye contact. Then I can mimick a distant presence, which feels more real. If I want intimacy, and we're apart, I'll phone. And If I want to say thinking of you, I'll write.

Models of Communication

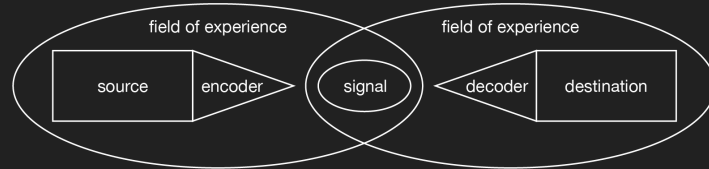


Shannon, Weaver (1948)

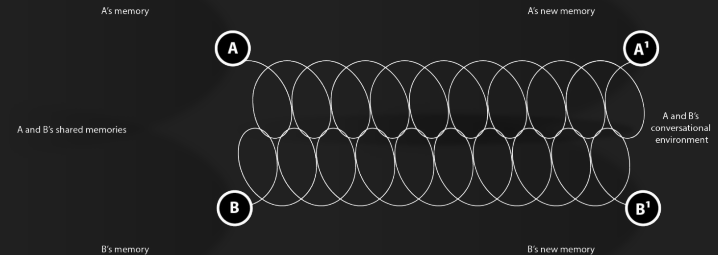
Models of Conversation



Dubberly, Pangaro (2009)



Schramm (1954)



Arnold-Mages (2018)



E.M. Folsley: The Machine Stops, promotional image from 2001 radio show dramatised by: Gregory Norminton



Courtesy Henry Burrows (CC BY-SA 2.0)

The implicitly embodied conversation



Photos by Ruby Wallau/Northeastern University

Opportunities for designed intimacy

Sight Mimetic actions such as joint or in-dialogue nodding (Cox 2001)

Eye contact as direct mutual gaze. (von Grunau & Anston 1995; Mason, Hood, & Macrae 2004; Nurmsoo, Einav, & Hood 2012)

Considerations of aperture. i.e., Perspective of a single eye or perspective from an immobile head that is out of one's own control. Varying visions of the “room” separate by placing individuals in different spaces, rather than shared spaces.

Smell Olfactory shifts signal motion in the living/experiencing/embodyed environment

Sound Mimetic phatic utterances i.e., “mmm”, “Uh huh”, “how are you?”, breathing, sighing, lip smack, etc.

Environmental/ambient sounds aid in the creation of the shared space

Innovations in spatially-informed audio recording techniques: binaural recording (Blau, Budnik, Fallahi, Steffens, Ewert, & van de Par 2021) triphonic spatial audio (such as the Syng Cell Apha (Levy 2021)) and others

Touch Touch immediately and unconsciously aids in coupling (Chatel-Goldman et al., 2014) i.e., handshaking

Shared soma-deep experience – the inwardly understood sensation of kinaesthesia such as shared motion of nodding, the shared crisis of climatic speech (Neely 2019)

Opportunities for designed intimacy...continued...

Cohesive vs Fractured Embodiment

Embodiment, and shared embodiment as enkinaesthesia, requires a cohesive palette (Neely 2019), i.e., subtle facial expressions, full bodily gestures, conscious and unconscious cues.

Entrainment

Unison experience vs. millisecond or technical glitch lags (Coan 2015)

Attention

Focused, immersed vs. multitasking vs. attention

Repleteness

In the communal space/experience there is a bottomless opportunity for risk and intimacy (Dreyfus 2000).

In communal space a participant may support or disrupt the collective experience in any number of ways.

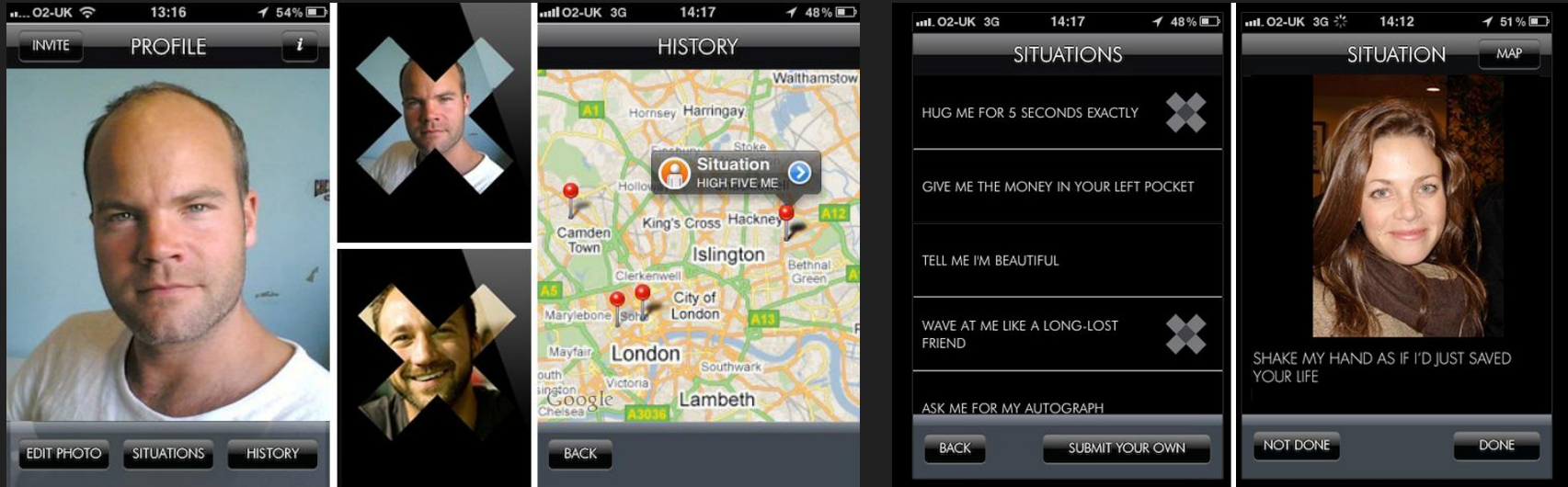
Experientially oriented project examples

Paul Sermon's Telematic Dreaming (1992)



Experientially oriented project examples

Benrik's Situationist iPhone app (2011)



conclusion

“[The] acceptance of the other person beside us in our daily living [...] is the biological foundation of social phenomena: [without this] there is no social process and, therefore, no humanness.”
—Humberto Maturana (1992, p. 246)