

AI and the Self: Exploring Identity, Agency, and Relational Personhood.

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Keywords

Personhood, Identity, Artificial Intelligence, Agency, Methodologies, Design Practices.

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1 Main goal of the meet-up

HCI research has a strong background of engaging with identity, values, and lived experience [1, 11], and has started to explore the role of technology in contexts such as stroke, bereavement, and dementia [7, 10, 13, 15, 17, 21]. By personhood, we mean the recognition of individuals as whole people with histories, relationships, and capacities for growth, rather than being defined solely by their health, impairments, or vulnerabilities [9, 14]. However, questions of how AI mediates and supports what it means to be a person, remain under-researched. This meet-up will position personhood as a central concern for the future of HCI research. Therefore, we invite CHI attendees to explore how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be designed and used for supporting personhood.

This meet-up will focus on methodological and ethical challenges of how HCI researchers can responsibly adopt and study AI systems in ways that sustain dignity, autonomy, and personhood. In particular, discussions will address methods that examine how AI may reconfigure personhood, as well as the risks associated with deficit-based framings that position people primarily in terms of problems to be solved. These framings can have negative consequences, such as undermining agency, narrowing opportunities for expression, reinforcing harmful stereotypes, and producing designs that not only fail to support people but may increase the current inequalities and exploitation [2, 4, 18].

The meet-up is designed as a collective agenda-building activity. Participants will critically reflect on the potentials (and failings) of AI in relation to personhood. We will consider personhood from two perspectives:

- **Personhood within ourselves:** our own sense of self, continuity and autonomy, and role in our communities.
- **Personhood in relation to others:** How people can act as guardians of someone else's personhood, representing facets of them to others even if they are no longer able to do this for themselves.

This framing of personhood is a common angle, where emphasis is given to the relationship of people around someone who is perceived to be experiencing challenges in their ability to represent their own personhood, for example, in contexts such as dementia. We would like to expand this framing to include the ability of every person, even when living with health challenges, to contribute to the personhood and wellbeing of others.

We aim to explore whether and how AI can support human agency in recognising and affirming the personhood of those around them. This may have significance in contexts such as ageing, bereavement, dementia, or mental health. By positioning the discussion in HCI methodologies, ethics, and design practices, **AI and the Self** will invite attendees to identify shared challenges and opportunities, while shaping an agenda that places personhood at the centre of Human-AI interaction.

2 Overview of activities

AI and the Self is designed as a discussion-driven session that looks at personhood and identity in relation to AI. The session will use the aforementioned personhood perspectives, which will allow attendees to discuss personhood from both an inward and outward perspective, as well as identifying key challenges and insights for future research in this community. We've intentionally designed this meet-up to be inclusive to those new to "personhood" as a philosophical concept, while ensuring that we stimulate engaging discussion and discovery for the experts within our community.

The session will begin with a welcome and framing introduction, where organisers will outline definitions and facets of personhood, the goals of the meet-up, and highlight the importance of moving beyond deficit-based models of health or ability. To support meaningful roundtable discussions, we will create a set of cards detailing facets of personhood in relation to the sense of self, autonomy, being a guardian of someone else's personhood, and role in relationships with others and the community. Attendees will be invited to read and handle these cards as we introduce the concepts and then throughout the meet-up.

2.1 Stage One (30 mins)

Following the framing introduction, we will facilitate small-group roundtable discussions. We will provide groups with scenario cards to facilitate critical discussion on personhood and the ethical, methodological, and design implications of AI. Groups will annotate their scenarios (15 minutes) through writing or drawing to capture their discussions and ideas. We will adopt a world café style format, inviting participants to exchange ideas with other groups (including

reformation of small groups) to stimulate new ideas and networking (15 minutes). This structure will encourage attendees to share perspectives across disciplinary and cultural boundaries while collectively reflecting on methodological, ethical, and design implications.

2.2 Stage Two (30 mins)

Building on the discussions, facilitators will then guide an agenda-building exercise. Scenario responses from *Stage One* will be shared by each group. As this happens, attendees will capture key insights on sticky-notes as each group shares. Organisers will cluster the sticky-notes into themes on a wall/Miro board projection. Together, participants will prioritise prominent challenges and insights, moving towards a co-produced list of agenda items for future research and practice focused on AI for personhood in HCI.

The session will conclude with a collective agenda and a reflection on next steps (10mins), including opportunities for collaboration through workshops, publications and other gatherings.

This structure ensures that attendees engage with personhood both as a self-experienced and as a relational concept and consider possibilities for AI therein. It balances small-group dialogue with whole-room collaboration, providing attendees with both conceptual clarity and a sense of shared agenda-building.

3 Organisers

As a team, our expertise spans a broad spectrum of HCI sub-disciplines (Design, Health, AI, Psychology, Informatics, Accessibility and Computer Science) and methodologies that relate strongly to personhood and AI in a range of human contexts. Our research has explored and advocated for personhood in relation to selfhood, agency and relational connections between people and their wider environments and communities. Much of this research has focused on complex social and health contexts such as visual impairment, bereavement, dementia, social isolation, death and mental health and included object, system and community outcomes. We have experience of running discursive group events such as leading Workshops, SIGs, government panels and conferences and a history of using creative and reflective methods to enable groups to explore complex ideas.

4 Community of Interest

AI and the Self will be of interest to a wide range of researchers and attendees in the CHI community who engage with issues of health, identity, and Human-AI interaction. The organisers will intentionally place the discussion across multiple contexts where personhood and identity are central concerns, including bereavement, stroke, dementia, and mental health. While these domains are often approached through a clinical or deficit model lens, the session will take a different direction by asking how AI can support and sustain personhood rather than reduce individuals to their needs or limitations.

HCI has already established research across these areas. Work on bereavement has examined how technologies shape practices of remembrance, grieving, and digital legacies [6, 17]. Researchers on stroke have focused on rehabilitation, accessibility, and the role of interactive technologies in supporting communication and

everyday activities [12, 20]. The dementia research community has explored design to support memory and social connection [3, 10]. Finally, mental health has been an active area within HCI, with studies on self-tracking, online peer support, and technologies for wellbeing [5, 8, 16, 19]. By involving multiple research domains, it will bring attendees together to share overlapping interests of identity, personhood, and autonomy within AI.

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Supplementary Material

5 Primary Contact

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6 Assumed attendee background:

AI and the Self attendees will primarily come from the HCI communities, with research expertise from interaction design, speculative design, participatory design, AI, and ethics. While attendees may have prior research experience in identity, lived experience, or value-sensitive approaches, no specialist knowledge of personhood is required. We also anticipate interest from those working in applied domains such as dementia, bereavement, stroke, or mental health, where personhood is often affected.

7 The approach you will use for organising and presenting the meet-up.

The meet-up will be structured as a facilitated discussion session. Organisers will open with a short framing presentation introducing the concept of personhood as understood in HCI, drawing on existing literature on identity, values, and lived experiences. Attendees will then be invited to engage in small-group discussion around two lenses; personhood within ourselves, and personhood in relation to others. Organisers will circulate to support groups and capture key discussion points. These points will then be clustered into themes and used as the basis for a collective synthesis. The organisers will ensure the session will be inclusive and provides time for both individual reflection and collaborative discussions.

8 An informal schedule of discussion topics.

- **0 – 10 Minutes** – Introduction to personhood, identity, and AI in HCI.
- **10-20 Minutes** – Ice breaker activity within small-groups for attendees to introduce themselves and their research interests.
- **20 – 50 Minutes Table discussions** – Attendees engage in a facilitated small-group discussion, prompted by key challenges in the research area. These will explore both personhood within ourselves and in relation to others, while asking how AI can support these and potential challenges and contexts.
- **50 – 80 Minutes Collective Agenda Building** – Building on the discussion, facilitators will guide attendees in identifying shared challenges, opportunities, and priorities. Contributions are then clustered into themes and places on the board.
- **80 – 90 Closing and Next Steps** – Organisers summarise the emerging agenda and highlight possibilities for future collaborations (e.g. workshops, collaborations).

9 Plan to attract a reasonable number of attendees.

For the conference programme and in the lead-up to the conference, we would ensure that invitations to attend **AI and the Self** are circulated within the community and would give assurances that all delegates would be welcome to attend. While advertising to existing

connections, the organisers will also advertise the meet-up through the CHI conference channels. We intend to discuss and promote the meet-up at our upcoming SIG, *'Participatory AI: Identifying Research Gaps and Building Community Infrastructure for Citizen-Centred AI'*¹ at CHIItaly 2025; and Workshop on *'Participate-AI: Exploring the Participatory Turn in Citizen-Centred AI'*² at ACM IUI 2026. Organisers will also promote the session via academic networks and social media (e.g. LinkedIn and BlueSky). By framing the topic at the intersection of AI, ethics, and lived experience, we expect to attract researchers from multiple sub-communities, ensuring an interdisciplinary discussion.

10 Requirements for the venue

AI and the Self requires a room with a large display or projector, tables configured for small-group discussion, plus wall space or whiteboards to allow the clustering of insights. The organising team will provide their own sticky notes, pens, and large flipchart paper.

¹<https://sites.google.com/view/participatory-ai/>

²<https://sites.google.com/view/participate-ai/>