**User Experience and Artificial Intelligence Assignment8**

**Topic: Hedonic vs. Utilitarian Values; Warmth & Competence; Trust**

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**The Value of the Task: Why Hedonic AI Feels Less Trustworthy**

One question I keep coming back to is this: Why do we feel differently about AI depending on what it does?A system that helps us calculate taxes or optimize logistics might be seen as useful, even admirable—but an AI that recommends music, tells jokes, or offers emotional comfort can often feel… unsettling. Why?

It seems that when AI enters hedonic territory—tasks associated with pleasure, aesthetics, or emotional experience—people begin to question its appropriateness. I think this reaction stems from a deeply rooted association: pleasure is human, calculation is mechanical. So when machines start engaging in pleasure-oriented activities, they may appear to step into a space reserved for emotionally rich, uniquely human experiences. We hesitate. We doubt.

One study supports this intuition: people are less supportive of AI systems (and even the companies behind them) when those AIs are involved in high-hedonic tasks. Why? Because such involvement reduces the AI’s perceived humanlikeness, which in turn lowers its warmth—a key social trait. That reduction in warmth eventually undermines trust and support.

This insight resonates with my own experiences. When I see AI composing music or offering therapy, I often find myself more skeptical. Not necessarily because I believe it can’tdo those things, but because I’m not sure if it should. There’s something sacred, or at least intimate, about certain human experiences—and when AI enters that space, it triggers a kind of moral unease. It’s not just about performance quality; it’s about role boundaries.

**Warmth and Competence: The Two Axes of AI Acceptance**

If there's one psychological model I’ve found particularly useful in thinking about AI perception, it’s the Warmth–Competence framework. Originally developed to explain social stereotypes, it maps how we judge others along two key dimensions: Are they friendly?and Are they capable?And it turns out this framework applies surprisingly well to artificial agents.

From what I’ve observed—and what the research confirms—AI systems perceived as competentare more likely to be accepted, especially in utilitariancontexts like healthcare, finance, or job screening. When AI is good at what it does, people are willing to rely on it. However, competence alone doesn’t ensure comfort or loyalty. That’s where warmthcomes in.

Warmth isn’t about technical performance; it’s about intent, empathy, and trustworthiness. Even a highly capable AI may be viewed with suspicion if it seems cold, manipulative, or opaque. In human-AI teams (HATs), for example, both warmth and competence shape how humans engage with AI partners. A competent but cold AI might be tolerated, but a warm and competent one is embraced.

This balance is fragile, though. As mentioned earlier, hedonic tasks can undermine warmth by making the AI seem artificial or inauthentic. The irony is that the more human-like the function, the more human-like the expectations—and when those expectations aren’t met (e.g., AI making a joke that falls flat or offering empathy that feels scripted), trust erodes.

What I find interesting is that humans are quite flexible in how we assign warmth. We don’t need AI to literally feel emotions; we just need cues that signal understanding, transparency, or good intent. Voice tone, facial animations, even explanatory feedback can all increase perceived warmth—without requiring true consciousness.

**Trust is Built, Not Assumed**

Trust in AI isn’t automatic—it’s earned, contextually and over time. And different types of trust matter at different levels. From what I’ve gathered, cognitive trust(based on logic and transparency) and emotional trust(based on empathy and familiarity) play different roles depending on how visible, tangible, or personal the AI system is.

In one recent study on AI-based video interview interfaces, applicants actually showed more cognitive trust in AI-led interviews than in traditional human ones. That surprised me at first. But when I thought about it, it made sense: humans are biased, unpredictable, and can be inconsistent. In contrast, AI (when designed well) appears objective and rule-based—predictable, in a good way.

What makes the difference, though, is transparencyand tangibility. People trust what they can see and understand. When an AI explains how it evaluates resumes or what features it uses in scoring, cognitive trust goes up. When it presents a visible, understandable face—not just a blank algorithm—it becomes more approachable.

But here’s the catch: immediacy alone doesn’t build trust.Just because an AI responds quickly or is available 24/7 doesn’t mean it’s trustworthy. If it feels too eager or too intrusive, people pull back. Trust is less about speed, and more about relational depth and clarity of intention.

So the key question becomes: What kind of relationship do we want with AI?Not just in terms of function, but in terms of emotional tone. Should it be a silent assistant, a friendly peer, or something more autonomous and advisory? Each role comes with its own expectations—and its own pitfalls.

**Conclusion: Designing for the Right Kind of Trust**

When I think about the future of AI, I don’t just think about better algorithms or faster processing—I think about how it feels to live with these systems. Do they make us feel safe? Valued? Understood?

That’s why the interplay between hedonic vs. utilitarian values, warmth vs. competence, and trustis so important. These aren't just abstract psychological categories—they are the building blocks of how people decide whether to adopt, reject, or embrace AI in everyday life.

If we want AI to be accepted not just functionally but emotionally, we need to design for more than intelligence. We need to design for relational coherence. That means:

1. Assigning AI to tasks that match its perceived role,
2. Communicating its limits and logic clearly,
3. And signaling warmth in ways that don’t fake empathy but facilitate connection.

The more we try to make AI appear human, the more we risk falling into the uncanny valley of trust. But if we let AI be a different kind of partner—competent, clear, and contextually aware—we might find a new model of collaboration. Not imitation, but integration.Not human-like, but human-aligned.