

# Michael Yin

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I am a **human-computer interaction** (HCI) researcher who designs and explores interactive systems that support people in recognizing, expressing, and making sense of their *feelings*. My research combines system building, empirical inquiry, and theory from both computing and the social sciences to understand and support the emotional texture of everyday life.

## Education

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### University of British Columbia

Ph.D. in Computer Science

*Vancouver, BC*

Sep 2022 - Present

- Committee: Robert Xiao (*Advisor*), Dongwook Yoon, Regan Mandryk
- Expected Graduation: Aug 2027
- Funded by NSERC Canada Graduate Research Scholarship - Doctoral (CGRS D)

### University of British Columbia

M.Sc. in Computer Science

*Vancouver, BC*

Sep 2020 - Sep 2022

- Committee: Robert Xiao (*Advisor*), Dongwook Yoon, Alan Kingstone
- Thesis: *How Subtle Design in Video Games Impacts Player Experience: Qualitative Studies of Two Design Features*

### University of Toronto

B.A.Sc. in Engineering Science

*Toronto, ON*

Sep 2015 - May 2020

## Academic Appointments

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### Graduate Research Assistant - University of British Columbia

*Vancouver, BC*

- Conducting human-computer interaction research under the supervision of Prof. *Robert Xiao* for both my M.Sc. and Ph.D.

Sep 2022 - Present

### Research Assistant - University of Toronto

*Toronto, ON*

- Research thesis under the guidance of Professor *Timothy Chan*.
- Project Description: Analyzing Curling Performance Using a Dynamic Programming Approach.

May 2019 - May 2020

### Research Assistant - University of Toronto

*Toronto, ON*

- NSERC-sponsored summer research funded by Professor *Kyros Kutalagos*.
- Project Description: 3D Object Depth Using Structured Light Imaging.

May 2017 - Aug 2017

### Research Assistant - University of Toronto

*Toronto, ON*

- Summer research project under the supervision of Professor *Roman Genov*.
- Project Description: Developing a Novel Biomedical Wearable for Performance Analysis through Unsupervised Machine Learning.


May 2016 - Aug 2016

## Peer-Reviewed Publications

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Note: In HCI, rigorously peer-reviewed conference proceedings (e.g. CHI, UIST, CSCW, etc.) are the primary means to publish research. Acceptance rates of these venues are provided when publicly available.

Authors with equal contributions are denoted by an asterisk (\*).

- [14] **The Words That Can't Be Shared: Exploring the Design of Unsent Messages**  
[Michael Yin](#), Robert Xiao  
*Proceedings of the 2026 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2026)*  
[Acceptance rate: 25.3%] DOI: [10.1145/3772318.3790639](https://doi.org/10.1145/3772318.3790639) (to appear)
  
- [13] **Reflective Motion and a Physical Canvas: Exploring Embodied Journaling in Virtual Reality**  
[Michael Yin](#), Robert Xiao, Nadine Wagener  
*Proceedings of the 2026 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2026)*  
[Acceptance rate: 25.3%] DOI: [10.1145/3772318.3790486](https://doi.org/10.1145/3772318.3790486) (to appear)
  
- [12] **Dissolving a Digital Relationship: A Critical Examination of Digital Severance Behaviours in Close Relationships**  
[Michael Yin\\*](#), Angela Chiang\*, Robert Xiao  
*Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction (CSCW 2026)*  
DOI: [10.1145/3788050](https://doi.org/10.1145/3788050) (to appear)
  
- [11] **TravelTales: Reflecting on Meaningful Travel through Digital Scrapbooking and Journaling**  
[Michael Yin](#), Robert Xiao  
*Proceedings of the ACM on Interactive, Mobile, Wearable and Ubiquitous Technologies (IMWUT 2025)*  
[Acceptance rate: 27.0%] DOI: [10.1145/3749512](https://doi.org/10.1145/3749512)
  
- [10] **VIBES: Evaluating Real-Time Spatial Interaction Events on the Video Player for Livestreaming Applications**  
[Michael Yin](#), Robert Xiao  
*Proceedings of the ACM International Conference on Interactive Media Experiences (IMX 2025)*  
[Acceptance rate: 40.0%] DOI: [10.1145/3706370.3727867](https://doi.org/10.1145/3706370.3727867)
  
- [9] **Entertainers Between Real and Virtual - Investigating Viewer Interaction, Engagement, and Relationships with Avatarized Virtual Livestreamers**  
[Michael Yin](#), Chenxinran Shen, Robert Xiao  
*Proceedings of the ACM International Conference on Interactive Media Experiences (IMX 2025)*  
[Acceptance rate: 40.0%] DOI: [10.1145/3706370.3727866](https://doi.org/10.1145/3706370.3727866)
  
- [8] **TravelGalleria: Supporting Remembrance and Reflection of Travel Experiences through Digital Storytelling in Virtual Reality**  
[Michael Yin](#), Robert Xiao  
*Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2025)*  
[Acceptance rate: 24.9%] DOI: [10.1145/3706598.3713398](https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3713398)  
 **Best Paper Honourable Mention** Award [top 5.0% of submissions]
  
- [7] **How We See Changes How We Feel: Investigating the Effect of Visual Point-of-View on Decision-Making in VR Environments**  
[Michael Yin](#), Robert Xiao

- [6] **VirtualNexus: Enhancing 360° Video AR/VR Collaboration with Environment Cutout and Virtual Replicas**  
[Michael Yin](#)\*, Xincheng Huang\*, Kaseya Xia, Robert Xiao  
*Proceedings of the ACM Symposium on User Interface Software and Technology (UIST 2024)*  
[Acceptance rate: 24.0%] DOI: [10.1145/3654777.3676377](https://doi.org/10.1145/3654777.3676377)
- [5] **Press A or Wave: User Expectations for NPC Interactions and Nonverbal Behaviour in Virtual Reality**  
[Michael Yin](#), Robert Xiao  
*Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction (CHI PLAY 2024)*  
[Acceptance rate: 23.5%] DOI: [10.1145/3677098](https://doi.org/10.1145/3677098)
- [4] **Lies, Deceit, and Hallucinations: Player Perception and Expectations Regarding Trust and Deception in Games**  
[Michael Yin](#), Emi Wang, Felix Ng, Robert Xiao  
*Proceedings of the 2024 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2024)*  
[Acceptance rate: 26.4%] DOI: [10.1145/3613904.3642253](https://doi.org/10.1145/3613904.3642253)
- [3] **Drifting Off in Paradise: Why People Sleep in Virtual Reality**  
[Michael Yin](#), Robert Xiao  
*Proceedings of the 2023 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2023)*  
[Acceptance rate: 28.4%] DOI: [10.1145/3544548.3580947](https://doi.org/10.1145/3544548.3580947)
- [2] **How Should I Respond to “Good Morning?”: Understanding Choice in Narrative-Rich Games**  
[Michael Yin](#), Robert Xiao  
*Proceedings of the 2022 ACM Designing Interactive Systems Conference (DIS 2022)*  
[Acceptance rate: 23.0%] DOI: [10.1145/3532106.3533459](https://doi.org/10.1145/3532106.3533459)  
 **[Best Paper Honourable Mention](#)** Award [top 4.3% of submissions]
- [1] **The Reward for Luck: Understanding the Effect of Random Reward Mechanisms in Video Games on Player Experience**  
[Michael Yin](#), Robert Xiao  
*Proceedings of the 2022 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2022)*  
[Acceptance rate: 24.7%] DOI: [10.1145/3491102.3517642](https://doi.org/10.1145/3491102.3517642)

## Works In-Submission and In-Preparation

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- [3] **"I Don't Have Faith in The Developers to Use My Feedback": Understanding Player Values and Expectancy for Reporting Systems in Video Games**  
[Michael Yin](#), Chenxinran Shen, Robert Xiao
- [2] **Exploring Instant Photography using Generative AI: A Design Probe with the *UnReality Camera***  
[Michael Yin](#), Angela Chiang, Robert Xiao

- [1] **Navigating Oversharing: Designing Systems for Boundary Awareness and Self-Reflection During Digital Communication**

[Michael Yin](#)<sup>\*</sup>, Chenxinran Shen<sup>\*</sup>, Angela Chiang, Robert Xiao

## Extended Abstracts and Other Research Works

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- [4] **Understanding and Supporting Interactions with Virtual Agents**

[Michael Yin](#)

*Extended Abstracts of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2025)*

[Accepted to the Doctoral Consortium] DOI: [10.1145/3706599.3721090](https://doi.org/10.1145/3706599.3721090)

- [3] **How Subtle Design in Video Games Impacts Player Experience: Qualitative Studies of Two Design Features**

[Michael Yin](#)

M.Sc. Thesis

- [2] **Points Gained in Curling: Modelling Curling as a Markov Reward Process**

[Michael Yin](#), Timothy Chan

Presented Talk at the *Canadian Operational Research Society Annual Meeting 2021*

- [1] **Calculating 3D Object Depth Using Structured Light Imaging**

[Michael Yin](#), Kyros Kutulakos

Presented Talk at the *Undergraduate Summer Research Conference 2017*

## Teaching Experience

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### Teaching Assistant

*University of British Columbia*

*Vancouver, BC*

Sep 2020 - Dec 2021

- CPSC304 - Introduction to Relational Databases (**3 terms**)
- CPSC344 - Introduction to Human-Computer Interaction (**1 term**)

### Guest Speaker

*University of British Columbia*

*Vancouver, BC*

- CPSC344 - Introduction to Human-Computer Interaction (**3 times**)

**Additional training:** UBC CS Teaching Development Program; [Instructional Skills Workshop](#).

## Mentorship

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Across UofT and UBC, I have supervised five students (all undergrads). Three of them have worked with me on research projects, which have resulted in co-authored papers. I have previously been a **REX (Research EXperience Program)** mentor, as part of UBC's undergraduate research program. I have also mentored at various hackathons at UBC, including three times at **cmd-f** (Western Canada's largest hackathon that supports underrepresented genders in tech) and once at **HackCamp** (Canada's largest hackathon for beginners).

## Academic Service

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- Organizing Committee** • Virtualization Chair for CHI PLAY 25
- Associate Chair** • Associate Chair for CHI PLAY 24 WiP, CHI 25 LBW, CSCW 25 Full Papers, CHI PLAY 25 WiP, DIS 26 Full Papers, CHI PLAY 26 Full Papers
- Meet-Up Organizer** • Organizer for the *Human-CAT (Connection, Animals, Technology) Interaction Meet-Up* at CHI 26
- Student Volunteer** • Student Volunteer at DIS 22, CHI 23, CHI 24
- Reviewer** • Conducted 65+ peer reviews across leading conferences and journals, such as CHI, UIST, CSCW, IHCS, and more.  
• **11** reviews marked for “Special Recognition”
- Graduate Recruiting Group Leader** • Wrote initial reviews for all graduate school applicants in HCI for two recruiting seasons

## Industry Experience

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- Software Engineering Intern - Shopify (International R&D Team)** [Toronto, ON](#)  
May 2019 - Aug 2019
- Processed and modelled data for Shopify’s shipping calculator.
  - Developed a data pipeline to support Shopify partners in integrating independent applications.
  - Built UI widgets to improve merchant experience and collect behavioural data.
- Software Engineering Intern - Stanza (Data Team)** [San Francisco, CA](#)  
May 2018 - Apr 2019
- Implemented a backend API platform to centralize ad revenue payments and show revenue statistics for business decision-making.
  - Developed automated jobs to query for and display engagement data.
  - Created an event collection and transformation pipeline using AWS and Airflow.

## Awards, Grants, and Scholarships

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### Awards

- NSERC Canada Graduate Research Scholarship - Doctoral (CGRS D)** 2023 - 2026
- \$40,000/year, for 3 years.
- UBC Computer Science Four-Year Fellowship 4YF** 2022 - 2026
- \$18,200/year, for the first 4 years of PhD studies.
- President's Academic Excellence Initiative PhD Award** 2022 - 2026
- Faculty of Science PhD Tuition Award** 2022 - 2026

**University of Toronto Dean's List** (8 times)

2015 - 2020

## Grants

**NSERC Computer Science Undergraduate Student Research Award** (\$6,000) 2017

• Proposal: Calculating 3D Object Depth Using Structured Light Imaging

## Other Scholarships

**UBC Critical Play Fellow** (\$500) 2025

**The Crocker Foundation Bursary** (\$2,600) 2016

**Mario and Dorothy Pesando Scholarship** (\$2,567) 2016

**University of Toronto Scholar** (\$6,000) 2015

## Relevant Skills

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**Programming Languages:** Python, JavaScript, C#, C, HTML, CSS, SQL

**Other Skills:** Qualitative and Ethnographic Research, Prototyping and Design, Game Development