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 address the emotional texture of everyday life.

Education

University of British Columbia — *Vancouver, BC*
Ph.D. in Computer Science — Sep 2022 - Present
- Committee: Robert Xiao *(Advisor)*, Dongwook Yoon, Regan Mandryk
- Expected Graduation: Aug 2027
- Funded by NSERC Canada Graduate Research Scholarship (CGRS D)

University of British Columbia — *Vancouver, BC*
M.Sc. in Computer Science — 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 — *Toronto, ON*
B.A.Sc. in Engineering Science — Sep 2015 - May 2020

Academic Appointments

Graduate Research Assistant - *University of British Columbia* — *Vancouver, BC*
Sep 2022 - Present
- Conducting human–computer interaction research under the supervision of Prof. *Robert Xiao* for both my M.Sc. and Ph.D.

Research Assistant - *University of Toronto* — *Toronto, ON*
May 2019 - May 2020
- Research thesis under the guidance of Professor *Timothy Chan*.
- Project Description: Analyzing Curling Performance Using a Dynamic Programming Approach.

Research Assistant - *University of Toronto* — *Toronto, ON*
May 2017 - Aug 2017
- NSERC-sponsored summer research funded by Professor *Kyros Kutalakos*.
- Project Description: Calculating 3D Object Depth Using Structured Light Imaging.

Research Assistant - *University of Toronto* Toronto, ON
• Summer research project under the supervision of Professor *Roman Genov*. May 2016 - Aug 2016
• Project Description: Developing a Novel Biomedical Wearable for Performance Analysis through Unsupervised Machine Learning.

Peer-Reviewed Publications

Note: In HCI, conference proceedings (e.g. CHI, UIST, CSCW, etc.) are the primary means to publish research. Conference papers undergo rigorous peer review, typically with 2-3 external reviewers and 2 associate chair reviewers. Conferences are highly competitive, and acceptance rates fall around 25%.
Authors with equal contributions are denoted by an asterisk (*).

[12] **Dissolving a Digital Relationship: A Critical Examination of Digital Severance Behaviours in Close Relationships**
Michael Yin*, Angela Chiang*, Robert Xiao
(to appear) Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction (CSCW 2026)

[11] **TravelTales: Reflecting on Meaningful Travel through Digital Scrapbooking and Journalling**
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

[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

[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

[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
🏆***Best Paper Honourable Mention*** Award [top 5% 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
Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction (CSCW 2024)
DOI: 10.1145/3686933

[6] **VirtualNexus: Enhancing 360° Video AR/VR Collaboration with Environment Cutout and Virtual Replicas**
Xincheng Huang*, **Michael Yin*,** 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

[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

[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

[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

[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
🏆***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

Works In-Submission

[5] **"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

[4] **The UnReality Camera: Instant Snapshots with Generative AI**
Michael Yin, Angela Chiang, Robert Xiao

[3] **Reflective Motion and a Physical Canvas: Exploring Embodied Journaling in Virtual Reality**
Michael Yin, Nadine Wagener, Robert Xiao

[2] **Navigating Oversharing: Designing Systems for Boundary Awareness and Self-Reflection During Digital Communication**
Michael Yin*, Chenxinran Shen*, Angela Chiang, Robert Xiao

[1] **The Words That Can't Be Shared: Exploring the Design of Unsent Messages**
Michael Yin, Robert Xiao

Extended Abstracts and Other Research Works

[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

[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
Abstract accepted and presented at CORS 2021

[1] **Calculating 3D Object Depth Using Structured Light Imaging**
Michael Yin, Kyros Kutulakos
Summer research presented at the Undergraduate Summer Research Conference 2017

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant *Vancouver, BC*
University of British Columbia Sep 2020 - Dec 2021
- CPSC304 - Introduction to Relational Databases **(3 terms)**
- CPSC344 - Introduction to Human-Computer Interaction **(1 term)**

Guest Speaker *Vancouver, BC*
University of British Columbia
- CPSC344 - Introduction to Human-Computer Interaction **(3 times)**

Additional training: UBC CS Teaching Development Program; Instructional Skills Workshop.

Mentorship

Across UofT and UBC, I have supervised five students (all undergrads). Three of them have worked with me on research projects, all of which have resulted in co-authored papers. I have previously been a **REX**

(**R**esearch **EX**perience 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

Organizing Committee	• Virtualization Chair for CHI PLAY 25, Video Chair for CHI PLAY 26
Associate Chair	• Associate Chair for CHI PLAY 24 WiP, CHI 25 WiP, CSCW 25 Full Papers, CHI PLAY 25 WiP
Meet-Up Organizer	• Organized the Human-CAT (Connection, Animals, Technology) Interaction Meet-Up for CHI 26
Student Volunteer	• Student Volunteer at DIS 22, CHI 23, CHI 24
Reviewer	• Conducted 50+ peer reviews across leading conferences and journals. • Received **11** Special Recognitions or Highly Useful Reviews.
Graduate Recruiting Group Leader	• Wrote initial reviews for all graduate school applicants in HCI for two recruiting seasons

Industry Experience

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

Awards

NSERC CGRS D — 2023 - 2026
• $40,000/year, for 3 years.

UBC Computer Science Four-Year Fellowship 4YF 2022 - 2026
• $18,200/year plus tuition, for the first 4 years of PhD studies.

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

Programming Languages: Python, JavaScript, C#, C, HTML, CSS, SQL
Other Skills: Qualitative and Ethnographic Research, Prototyping and Design, Game Development