

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

University of British Columbia

Ph.D. in Computer Science

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

Vancouver, BC

Sep 2022 - Present

University of British Columbia

M.Sc. in Computer Science

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

Vancouver, BC

Sep 2020 - Sep 2022

University of Toronto

B.A.Sc. in Engineering Science

Toronto, ON

Sep 2015 - May 2020

Academic Appointments

Graduate Research Assistant - University of British Columbia

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

Vancouver, BC

Sep 2022 - Present

Research Assistant - University of Toronto

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

Toronto, ON

May 2019 - May 2020

Research Assistant - University of Toronto

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

Toronto, ON

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

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: (to appear)
- [13] **Reflective Motion and a Physical Canvas: Exploring Embodied Journaling in Virtual Reality**
[Michael Yin](#), Nadine Wagener, Robert Xiao
Proceedings of the 2026 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI 2026)
[Acceptance rate: 25.3%] DOI: (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 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](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
Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction (CSCW 2024)
DOI: [10.1145/3686933](https://doi.org/10.1145/3686933)

- [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

- [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
Paper Submitted to an ACM Conference

- [2] **Re-Envisioning Instant Photography using Generative AI: A Probing Study Using the *UnReality* Camera**
[Michael Yin](#), Angela Chiang, Robert Xiao
Paper Submitted to an ACM Conference

- [1] **Navigating Oversharing: Designing Systems for Boundary Awareness and Self-Reflection During Digital Communication**
[Michael Yin*](#), Chenxinran Shen*, Angela Chiang, Robert Xiao
Paper in Preparation for an ACM Conference

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](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

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

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** (Research **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

Associate Chair • Associate Chair for CHI PLAY 24 WiP, CHI 25 LBW, CSCW 25 Full Papers, CHI PLAY 25 WiP, DIS 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 50+ peer reviews across leading conferences and journals, such as CHI, UIST, CSCW, IJHCS, and more.
• **13** reviews marked for "Special Recognition" or "Highly Useful".

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

- 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.

May 2019 - Aug 2019

Software Engineering Intern - Stanza (Data Team)

San Francisco, CA

- Implemented a backend API platform to centralize ad revenue payments and show revenue statistics for business decision-making

May 2018 - Apr 2019

- 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