Now I don’t know how many of you have used Tinder, but even if you haven’t, you probably know it’s not exactly a realm of romance.

One night when my levels of self-loathing and desire to make bad decisions were at an all-time high, I decided to try Tinder for the first time. Within 24 hours, two different men had found me on Facebook and attempted to connect with me, saying they saw my profile and wanted to chat (even though that is *not* how the rules work!). I had never heard of this happening to anyone else, and needless to say, I was a little unsettled. I deleted my account immediately, and like all bad decisions, tried to forget it ever happened.

*(Artistic recreation because I deleted the actual messages out of disturbance, not realizing they might be helpful should I present at an ethics symposium years later)*

Just within the Lehigh Valley (a 10? mile radius) I’ve heard multiple stories of friends being picked up by Uber drivers who drove recklessly or even seemed intoxicated themselves (mention guy who offered his vape pen?). From South Jersey where I grew up to the Lehigh Valley where I live now, I know far too many women who literally ran out of their Ubers as soon as possible because their drivers attempted to take them to an unknown location after prolonging the drive and making sexual comments. Just a few weeks ago I visited a friend in Florida for spring break, and my biggest concern was the 30 minute Uber ride from the airport to her apartment. A rental car would have been too expensive, and a taxi wouldn’t have been as readily available at the time my flight landed. Weeks in advance, I prepared by asking multiple friends to track my Uber ride and researching TSA-approved self defense tools I could pack along with my swimsuit and travel-sized sunblock.

I chose this topic because, ever since I was little, when people would ask me what I want to do when I grow up, I would say: I want to help others, and I want to change the world. Once I was past a certain age, especially in college, this answer elicited laughter and a sort of cynical sympathy. People told me to abandon that dream because it was unrealistic, and I would ultimately become disillusioned. Luckily, I met mentors and advisors along the way who told me to never give up on that dream, that I should hold onto how much I care, because there is power in caring. Eventually I declared a major in computer science after seeing the near limitless possibilities of programming as the perfect means for achieving my goal. Human computer interaction seemed like the perfect focus for me.

I want to preface this presentation by stating that I will be delving into some potentially distressing topics such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic abuse, and racism. I don’t want to blindside anyone at any point in this discussion.

The field of human computer interaction is incredibly broad, but is most often viewed through the lens of user experience. However, the “human” in human computer interaction doesn’t just refer to the user – human encompasses all those impacted by the technologies on the computer side. Interaction doesn’t just refer to the experience of the technology, but the affects it has, whether negative or positive. Thus, an ethical question arises: are the developers of the technologies responsible for any harm individuals might face because of their creations?