

Wanderlust into (y)our past: Mediating Intimacy for Prosocial Co-existing with Your Loved One in Home Quarantine

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I present a web-based experience named Wanderlust into (y)our past, which aims to mediate a bond with a partner, family member, and loved ones. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, couples and families are learning how to co-exist healthily in quarantined life where they live together all the time in a confined space. Wanderlust into (y)our past takes them together to a virtual time travel to the places where they have been in the past and nudges them to share personal memories. Through these interpersonal dialogues of the past, this system encourages them to consider each other and take collaborative and prosocial actions towards the new normal in the post-pandemic. This paper describes backgrounds, approaches, ongoing functional prototype, and a future direction.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-Centered Computing**; • **Interaction Design**; • **Empirical studies in interaction design**;

KEYWORDS

Home Quarantine, COVID-19, Meditating Intimacy, Family Bond

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1 INTRODUCTION

As of April 2020, many cities around the world have declared stay-at-home orders due to the COVID-19 outbreak. While digital technologies and online alternatives allow people to continue many of the same activities as before the pandemic to some extent, new social issues are emerging regarding how to co-exist healthily with a partner or family members in a quarantined life where people live together every minute of every day in a confined space. World Health Organization has been warning a rise in domestic violence in many countries during quarantine [World Health Organization 2020], and experts have predicted an increase of divorce cases in the future [Bloomberg 2020]. As a long-term strategy to protect our mental wellbeing, multidisciplinary interventions that cultivate

altruistic values and prosocial behaviors are required [Holmes et al. 2020].

Under the circumstances, I present a web-based experience named Wanderlust into (y)our past, which takes couples and families to a virtual trip to the places where they have been in the past. During their time travel, it asks them questions to vitalize their interpersonal dialogues. In doing so, it encourages them to consider each other and take collaborative and prosocial actions, such as planning future travels after the pandemic. Using the Time Machine feature of the Google Street View API [Google 2020], I contextualized the experience of building a collective family body towards the future through wandering into the past.

2 RELATED RESEARCH AND APPROACH

2.1 Meditating Intimacy for Couples

While mediating intimacy for people that are living apart has been frequently studied in the HCI field [Vetere et al. 2005], [Brereton et al. 2015], my project investigates on the intimacy between couples and families coexisting in the same space. In this context, I employed the concept of deep interpersonal sharing [Branham et al. 2012], which has been studied as one of the potential approaches to mediate the intimacy of local partners.

2.2 Memory Sharing for Interaction

Storytelling and sharing digital mementos have been highlighted to vitalize social communication in local places [Kurosaki et al. 2014] and create a bond and connection of the family [Jones and Ackerman 2018]. In my project, I applied this concept in the couples' design space in quarantined life and used symbolic memories as a trigger of communication and mutual understandings.

3 SYSTEM DESIGN

3.1 Look & Feel

According to the approach above, I prototyped the web-based experience named Wanderlust into (y)our past, as shown in Figure 1. Considering the situation where couples are stuck at home in potentially stressful situations, I have designed a context where they go on a virtual time travel to the past five to ten years ago from a web browser together. The system leads users to the following four steps to dive into each other's inner world, and (re)emphasize each other. It is the experience of building a collective body towards the future while wandering in the past.

1. The system asks users preliminary questions about their relationship and where they have been in the past (Fig. 2(a)).
2. The system will tour places of the age designated by each couple. Since the past cannot change subjectively, the system

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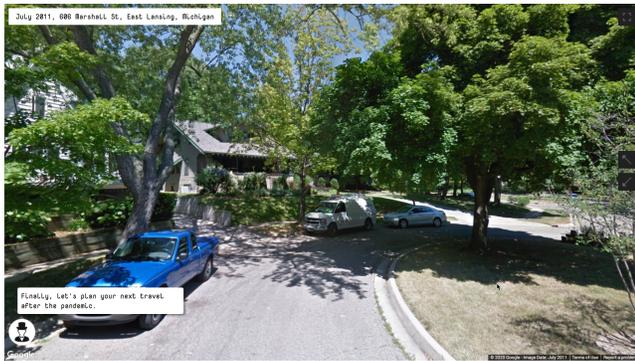


Figure 1: Screen of Wanderlust into (y)our past

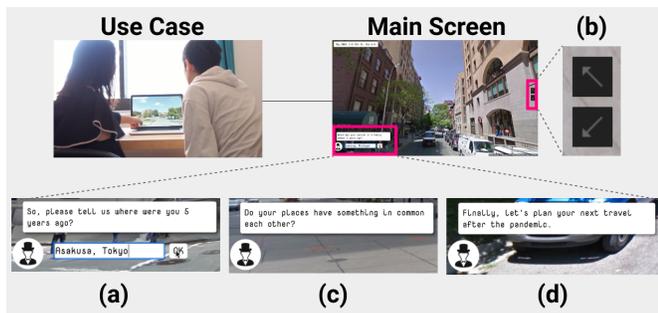


Figure 2: UI that guide users: (a) asking preliminary questions, (b) taking virtual wandering, (c) encouraging interpersonal dialogues, (d) nudging collaborative action

automatically changes scenes at the same speed as walking. The user can only change the angle of the view. (Fig. 2(b)).

3. During the wandering, the system asks them questions prompting interpersonal dialogues such as who was the best friend or what were each other's common things (Fig. 2(c)).
4. The system finally nudges users to take collaborative and prosocial actions towards the future, such as planning the next journey after the pandemic (Fig. 2(d)).

3.2 Implementation & Test

Considering the quarantined life, I built a functional prototype that is accessible from home without any special equipment. I developed for PC and mobile web browser and used the stable infrastructure, the Google Street View API to implement the time travel experience.

The system calls a Street View panorama with the year and place that is specified by the user, and tours the place automatically by following the navigation link of each panorama. Additionally, unlike the original way of using map data to provide information to users, I minimized information on the screen to allow users to immerse themselves in the wandering experience.

It is the ongoing project and has so far tested two American couples. After the experience, one couple decided to go to the beach, and the other started looking for their old photos together.

4 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

I presented the web-based experience named Wanderlust into (y)our past to mediate the couple's bond. Future work will focus on polishing the experience with empirical research. At the same time, I will distribute it on Github and enable people to enjoy this virtual trip to the nostalgic memories as healthy escapism from the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

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