Finding Our Joy: Queer Perspectives on HCI Research

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ABSTRACT

How do we make space for joy in Queer HCI? This work draws on our authors' experiences as Queer researchers and allies, navigating a field that is ostensibly receptive to our work, yet provides a narrow framework for acceptable research. We relate personal accounts of contending with identity, practice, and publication; we discuss what joy means to us, and the gap we see in Queer HCI where joy should exist. We believe that Queer HCI and research can itself be subversive, and assert that it needs to be in order for our research community to flourish. Our work emerges from a need for Queer joy in our research practice, and we approach Queerness as a multifaceted experience that by nature resists the categorisation that we often see in HCI. Finally, we present reflective guidelines for future work, that will allow us achieve inclusive, intentional, and joyful research.

1 INTRODUCTION

Queer HCI has experienced assimilation into broader HCI research in recent decades [63], where previously discussions of Queerness in computing ranged from unusual to outlandish to scandalous. This work corroborates the experiences of Queer researchers and allies, at different stages of our academic careers, as we explore the disparity between our lived Queer experiences and the ways that Queerness is allowed to exist in the HCI landscape. Our Queerness is rich, expansive, and messy, and it deeply intersects with our other identities, including race, neurodivergence, and gender. Critically, Queerness is joyful and celebrative, and we push towards a future in HCI that appreciates Queer joy.

Throughout this work, we consider the question: What is the difference between HCI for Queer people, and Queer HCI? We believe there is a rift between practice and lived experience. We explore the idea that what is widely considered "Queer HCI" works backwards to integrate Queer experiences into existing technology and research; as opposed to the potential of truly Queer HCI, which approaches Queerness as a foundation to the work. We discuss Queer joy in tech and non-tech contexts, with the mindset that each can inform the other.

This paper draws on authors' conversations and autoethnographic case studies, following participation in *The REJOICE Workshop: Joyful Identity Expression & Exploration as an Act of Resistance and a Digital Good*, which took place at BCS HCI 2024 [14]. Queerness is not monolithic: our experiences converge and diverge, and at times we disagree with each other. Our Queerness is inextricable from our practice, and this work explores the contentious issues of

positionality, publishing, and what a joyful future could look like in Queer HCI.

Our work culminates in guidelines for incorporating Queer joy into HCI. We challenge the typical format of a prescriptive design ruleset by proposing reflection that draws on the experiences we discuss in this paper.

2 BACKGROUND

The discussion of gender and sexuality has been contentious within HCI. Early Gender-related HCI work focused on exclusively women secretaries using word processors, as men did not use typewriters [11, 38]. Barkhuus and Rode [5], at a time when talking about Queerness in HCI was still too "taboo" even for Rode who identifies as Queer to publish on, were considered provocative with their alt.CHI paper calling out the majority of their sample of CHI papers from the prior 24 years for not having enough women. They hoped that if we let women into the discussion, Queerness would follow, but the implicit bias here was that gender did not impact how we interacted with computers, after all we all were just "Model Human Processors" [10] - we did not have bodies, which means no discussion of gender or joy, just brains, processing, and a giant finger to press buttons.

Slowly, things shifted in the field, and we started moving outside the office. While Malone presented the first heuristics about enjoyability in 1984 [38], and Carroll and Thomas called for a scientific study of fun [11]. By 2002, Monk et al. [44] were asking why *"fun and enjoyment are qualities only rarely called for in the context of software products and computers."*. They queried why *"Fun and enjoyment are HCI' s Unbeloved Child"* and called for a workshop that ultimately led to the publication of their book laying out design processes for fun, enjoyment, aesthetics and "the experience of use" [7].

It was hard to have Queer joy in HCI if both gender and fun were out of scope, but by the mid 2000s, things were changing. Fiore and Donath [20]'s work on online personals makes mention of gender but does not focus on Queer dating sites. In 2006, four then graduate students, Johanna Brewer, Joseph 'Jofish' Kaye, Amanda Williams, and Susan Wyche held a radical workshop on "Sexual interactions: why we should talk about sex in HCI" [9]. At the time the workshop was considered scandalous, such that numerous people refused to review it, and this was typified by reviews such as *"I' d feel a whole lot better if some of them had track records of research in the area, or signed statements from their psychotherapists attesting to their motives in promoting the workshop."* The workshop was critical of HCI' s tendency to "desexualize technology" despite widespread evidence of its use for intimacy. One apocryphal example they gave [9] is in Norman ' s foundational text *The Psychology (Design) of Everyday Things* - he compares the computer to the home motor from the 1918 Sears Roebuck catalog, but entirely ignores the prominently placed "portable vibrator" in an ad titled "Aides that Every Woman Appreciates" [46]. This workshop did not explicitly frame itself in terms of straight or Queer sex, but is notable for one of the first mentions in the HCI canon of "sexual minorities" and a reference to Koch and Schockman [33]'s discussion on LGBT+ community in the Internet (technology) world. Increasingly, we

see work on Queer HCI. They critiqued the HCI community for ignoring sexuality, implicitly inviting the study of Queer joy.

By the early 2010s, thanks to the scholarship of Wagner [66], Robertson [55], and Bratteteig [8], and later Rode [56] and Bardzell [4], gender was starting to become acceptable to discuss in mainstream HCI. Since Light [37] in her seminal paper formally introduces Queer theory as a critical means "to look at resistance to computer formalisation of identity through queering." Suddenly, discussing both joy and Queerness were possible within the HCI community. Recent scholarships [57] engage with intersectionality - a systematic approach towards understanding "overlapping matrixes of oppression" such as race, class, disability, and gender [16] to promote equity and inclusivity in technology design by aligning unique and under-represented user values. Still we see a noticeable gap bringing together the discussion of Queer theory, intersectional experiences, and the literature on joy, fun and pleasure. This is critical as the scholarship of Queer identity is still marginalized, and as we will argue problematically framed in HCI.

3 QUEER JOY

3.1 As Our Authors Define It

Ekat & Kay: Joyful Queer research is reciprocal and relational. It emanates from caring relational bonds. It manifests as humility, wholesomeness, weirdness, acceptance and solidarity. In research, this form of Queer joy is found in the shared creation of Queer research counter-norms. As a given, we use our positions of power (limited such as they be) to act as agents of the interests of our participants. As a given, we foreground experiential knowledge, understanding of its importance. As a given, research and education is a process of liberation and of re-thinking social structures.

Molly: Queer Joy is about community, creativity, and subversion. My joy can be internal: I enjoy playing with my gender presentation, looking in the mirror and thinking, "There I am". And it can be external: I' ve found so much joy through local Queer community theatre and performance, which has put local amateur drag acts into the spotlight. It's refreshing to experience as someone who grew up only seeing drag through the lens of RuPaul ' s Drag Race and polished acts in the gay village in the city where I grew up. Queer joy is radical, weird, and it's essential. I struggled with my identity in my teens without a Queer friend group, and frequently wondered how people found Queer community - I was eventually able to make these connections through social media and engaging with fanfiction. My research focuses on exploring social media with the goal of understanding and legitimising its role in the lives of Queer people.

Elisa: If I consider the concept of Queerness as a direct subversion of societal norms, I can testify, through my personal experience in male-dominated work, social, and cultural environments, that one can still encounter restrictive gender norms that attempt to classify individuals using normative rules. The challenges arising from this context are numerous and can be addressed in various ways with a Queer joy perspective. In my experience, a primary goal is to support diversity within the local academic community by creating safe spaces and fostering dialogue through an intersectional lens. This could involve organizing department events that create protected spaces, supporting Queer students by offering
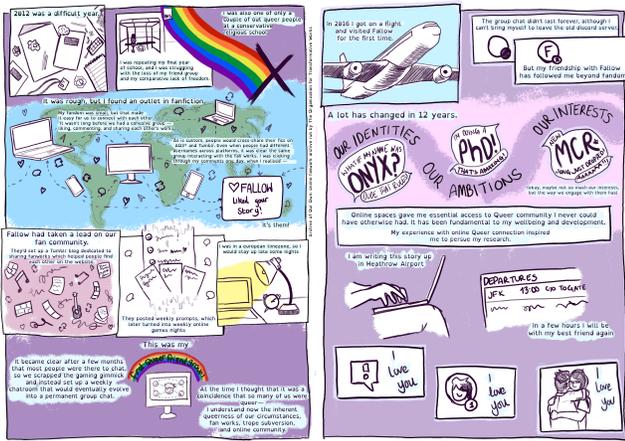
Figure 1: A teenage Molly discovers Queer joy through online community. *Image description can also be accessed in the supplementary materials*

them opportunities to speak and express themselves, and fostering an inclusive environment where gender is no longer a point of division. Instead, we are seen as individuals with unique stories and needs, each worthy of being shared and heard. At the same time, it has been essential to incorporate Queerness into a broader conversation about challenging academic and societal systems grounded in normative rules. For instance, this can be achieved by organizing events that encourage all department members to participate in discussions focused on diversity, equality, and inclusion. To me, Queer joy is about challenging and disrupting the gender-based normative rules and stereotypes that confine both adults and children, preventing us from being who we truly are and who we aspire to be.

Francesca: Queer joy is found in the constant act of creating and shaping spaces and narratives that don ' t just include us but are made by us, for us, in all their messy, vibrant, layered forms. Personally, I found Queer Joy by gathering Queer people together, forming an association where everybody could feel free to share their Queer opinions in a safe environment. As a researcher, I see in Queer joy the freedom to question and play with the boundaries of knowledge itself. This form of joy allows us to deconstruct the frames of traditional research and reassemble them with empathy, imagination, and wonder, celebrating the non-linear, the absurd, and the experimental. Queer joy to me means then embracing the beauty of fluidity, curiosity, and the freedom to accept every definition of self and love. It celebrates the discovery and rediscovery of identity, as a liberating force that turns inquiry into a playground for authenticity.

Sarah: As a faculty member in Computer Science, I ' m acutely aware that our discipline, our institutions, and our academic cultures are highly normative and there is often very little space for joy. In this context, it would be very easy to frame my definition of Queer joy as a combative list of what it is not, but that seems rather antithetical. I wouldn ' t identify as Queer, and so my definition of Queer joy is derived from my recent experiences researching the topic with a group of researchers and academics who identify as

Queer or as allies. For me, joyful Queer research is one of contrasts —not just to the aforementioned traditional academic climate, but to itself —it ' s kindness and compassion (to ones self as well as others) alongside resilience and a willingness to be combative when that ' s what ' s needed. It ' s celebrative and may even be frivolous but it ' s not just frivolous. Queer joy is sited in a recent and not-so-recent history of personal and collective marginalisation and normative confines, and yet simultaneously envisions a world of possibility.

Yifan: Queer joy is a deeply intimate and personal experience and it also radiates, influencing those around us. For me, queer joy emerges from profound, heartfelt pleasure driven by passions that resonate deeply. In research, this joy encourages me to embrace the unfamiliar - for instance, when I explore "Vogue" dancing as part of my Soma Design training - and to have a good time. Queer joy intertwines bravery, curiosity, and vulnerability, supporting me to engage with lived experiences and self-reflection to carry out "good research" and design "meaningful things". It becomes a practice of liberation and physical delight, transcending personal boundaries to enhance collective well-being.

Jennifer: I grew up in the American South in a heteronormative Catholic family. I was sufficiently sheltered growing up that despite being Queer myself, I did not know Queer identities beyond being a gay man were possible until university. While throughout my life I struggled with the rigid Southern gender roles, especially around dress and deportment, only in my 40s did I become aware that non-binary Cis identities were possible. Thus, while I have been authentically myself in my gender construction, perhaps due to my age, I never felt welcome to identify as Queer, until recently. This sense of rejection by the Queer community frames my impressions of Queer joy. For me Queer joy, is finally a sense of inclusion that being neurodivergent, gender fluid and non-binary are not only just okay, but that I have a label and the sense of belonging that comes with it, and it is no longer just me against the world. Queer joy to me is pride and inclusion. And I am so grateful to be welcomed into a community that produces so much joy through artistic creation, especially musical theatre and fashion which are dear to my heart.

3.2 So, What Is Queer Joy?

Across our definitions, we draw on personal experience and collectively refuse to distill joy to a single digestible concept. **Queer joy is fluid and contextual**. Given these disparate framings, we see Queer joy manifest through themes of **Expression, Creativity, Subversion, Reactive, and Solidarity**. These themes are present throughout this paper, and are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive for Queer joy manifestation.

4 INCLUSIVITY STRUGGLES OF QUEER RESEARCH

4.1 Supporting "Me-research" in HCI

"Being a scientist is, at the most fundamental level, about being able to study what's exciting to you." – Jeremy Yoder, a gay men studying Queer individuals in science [30].

Figure 2: Themes of Queer joy in this paper. *Image description can also be accessed in the supplementary materials.*

"Me-research" focuses on one's lived experience [18]. In HCI, numerous research engage with this discourse, leveraging self-reflection and personal narratives to support design practice and research exploration (e.g. [17, 19, 45, 52, 59]). Similarly, Yifan's academic inquiry embodies this type of research trajectory:

> "I moved Western Europe from [Country Reacted] after high school. [Dating App Name Reacted] and Twitter helped me a lot to explore my queer identity and sexuality and found relationships and communities...I later learned that my behaviours - changing how I look, how I talk in different queer socials are actually an result of 'social learning of gender' from these online interactions. I got lost and confused about what they [online media] expected me to be as a Chinese queer in order to be accepted."

This conversation occurred when Yifan explained why their interest in designing to support identity exploration and well-being among Queer Youth of Colour (QYOC) is important - it is rooted in a "lived and felt" experience. Everyday technology-mediated interactions has shaped Queer identity and exposed them to the deep-seated contradictions in digital environments that promotes diversity, yet often upholds Western values and norms. Conducting this work is not only an academic practice but also serves as a personal quest to reconcile "identity crisis" caused by tensions between the intersectional experiences of Queerness and race at that age.

However, carrying out this work is extremely challenging for three reasons. First, while scholars in cognate fields actively call for the urgent need for providing safer digital spaces for Queer teenagers (e.g. [6, 22, 25, 41, 65]), the HCI community appears less engaged with this issue. To date, only one study [36] mentioned involving Queer adolescents to co-design an AI healthcare system, yet it failed to explore intersectionality —a critical aspect of equity and inclusivity. The lack of prior research complicates the task of building a robust theoretical foundation and arguing for a further investigation. Second, as this project uses personal stories for design exploration, societal pressures and ethical concerns pose further

challenges. The pervasive myth that "Does technology make my children gay?" [51, 53] makes it difficult to involve parents and teenagers in relevant research activities. This difficulty is magnified when trying to reach Queer youth from cultures where Queer topics are forbidden, illegal, punishable even with death. While including diverse community members is crucial to counteract structural inequalities in Queer research and fight against a practice of necropolitics of Queer erasure [39], the feasibility of directly involving parents and children is an open methodological question given the ethical and social-cultural value tensions. Finally, a practical issue is obtaining research funding. To date, Yifan's research funding proposal was rejected by two LGBTQ+ research charities - "interesting and important topic" but "too niche" and "lacks wider impact". Kearney et al. [32] argue how minority scientists are subject to various forms of discrimination, such as not getting credit for their research or biases in peer reviews for grants and publications. Most critically, they write, *"Research shows that women and racial minorities in STEM often wish to pursue scientific questions that differ from those of the socially dominant community of scientists."* Thus, the lack of funding is a form of structural discrimination presenting further barriers for Queer research. For junior research students and scholars like Yifan, pursuing a topic that is taboo or unfundable can be discouraging, especially if they are not allowed to seek feedback from individuals with "lived Queerness". This situation can turn research passion into "Queer shame". However, Queer joy has the potential to transform personal stories into continuous motivation by engaging with true passion; it can help navigate difficult experiences, echoing the sentiment "莫忘初心" ("Do not forget why you started").

4.2 Navigating Publication Barriers

Despite the value of exploring mischief and play as means to explore Queer joy, we sometimes find ourselves struggling to navigate publication. New research is expected to have a strong foundation in literature, which can be an obstacle for the novel and niche fields that our authors work within. We confront evolving understanding of and attitudes towards Queerness, wherein getting our work in front of a receptive reviewer creates an additional barrier.

Stumpf et al. [61]'s "Gender-Inclusive HCI Research and Design: A Conceptual Review" extends for 69 pages, yet addressing trans and non-binary identities is left to a call for future work to "transcend conventional thinking about gender as binary and fixed... (to) lead to a richer understanding of users and how to better design for everyone". In short, non-cis identities were an afterthought, reflecting the marginalized nature of Queer identities in HCI.

An author whose research context centres non-binary people has contended with the treatment of non-binary identities exclusively as a subcategory of transgender. Non-binary people are underrepresented in the research, with the first major-venue publication on non-binary people being in 2018 [63], and our experiences are obfuscated in broader discussions of Trans HCI that focus on binary trans identities [60]. Feedback included: *"I am not convinced that these two categories - nonbinary and trans - need to be so fully separated as they are in this paper."* Such feedback dismisses the idea that non-binary identities can be distinct at all, even as non-binary

academics attempt to study the challenges they face in technology-mediated environments.

Two authors received pushback on a recent HCI publication for allowing children to select their gender as "boy, girl or prefer not to say". One reviewer fed back: *"personal opinion is that it is rude to ask sexually undeveloped persons for their gender...I fully support individual's right to define themselves and live according to their choices, but when we speak about functions of the body that are a result of hundreds of thousands of evolution, we should go by the definitions that apply to mammalian bodies...asking children for their preferred gender is polite to the current social trends, but could be confusing to children."* Even taken in good faith, the review perpetuates the age-old trope that Queerness and Transness are adult topics: that there is something shameful about them, and that broaching the topic with children is unethical and inappropriate. This starkly contrasts evidence that trans children who are supported in their gender identity have better mental health outcomes [47] relative to those that are not supported [54].

Our experiences underscore a significant gap in research and publication practices. A more nuanced understanding and acceptance of Queer scholarship is necessary, particularly studies focusing on specific subsets of the Queer community [63]. This aligns with ongoing discussions in HCI about inclusivity and the acknowledgment of diverse identities. By engaging with "Queer joy" as future publication practice, the field can advocate for a more inclusive research approach that acknowledges and celebrates the unique perspectives and experiences of all Queer individuals, thereby enriching HCI both academically and ethically.

5 MISCHIEF AND PLAY

Queer joy encompasses freedom to express oneself. This often involves reshaping or resisting normative structures that fail to account for diverse identities and expressions. When technology is structured on binary categories, rigid labels, or standardized interaction flows, it fails to account for Queerness, and Queer users find themselves navigating these spaces in ways that subvert, bypass, or misuse intended functions to make technology work for them [68].

5.1 The "Human" in Human-Computer Interaction

The purpose of HCI is to allow personhood into design - to create technology that honours the unique individuality of each user. Queer expression challenges designers to move beyond rigid standards and embrace the full spectrum of human identity. In Queer HCI, personhood is not only expressed through the freedom to personalize or adapt digital interactions but also through the acceptance of non-linear, evolving identities.

By integrating mischievous research, HCI can better support users who resist categorisation, ensuring that digital spaces are as diverse and adaptable as the people using them. In many ways, mischievous research embodies the fluidity of Queer identities by allowing interactions that are unbound by rigid expectations. This method supports the idea that identity is not a fixed attribute but something that can evolve and change based on context, mood, and experience.

When Queer users are free to "play" with the technology - to engage with it on their own terms - they can bring parts of themselves into digital spaces that standardized design would otherwise exclude. This level of freedom and agency is crucial for creating HCI that truly respects the complexity of human identity.

5.2 Mischief as Research

Mischievous research is inherently flexible, user-defined, and celebratory of non-normative practices to HCI. It transforms technology from a set of fixed, functional tools into a collaborative space for self-expression, creativity, and joyful defiance, aligning with Queer users' desire for freedom and authenticity in their interactions.

When allowing subversion and playfulness in interaction with technology, we enable Queer users to navigate limitations in creative ways. Play, as an approach, challenges normative structures and invites non-linear, emergent forms of engagement, fostering spaces for dialogue and innovation that reflect users' diverse experiences [68]. Where traditional HCI often limits users to roles or categories, mischievous research allows researchers and Queer users to be creative and disruptive. This subversive, Queer approach adapts and transforms technology, making room for HCI that values personal and complex identity narratives rather than conformity. Mischievous behaviour can even expose systemic biases within technology systems and interfaces, showcasing how assumptions about user behaviour fail to capture marginalized experiences [12].

In typical HCI frameworks, users are funnelled into predefined pathways that reflect normative assumptions about identity, behaviour, and interaction. Playfully navigating or subverting these constraints creates room for non-normative interactions. Through playful, and sometimes defiant engagement, Queer users reveal alternative ways of interacting with technology that can go unnoticed in more structured research approaches. Play-based research, for instance, allows participants to actively reshape their interactions with tools and systems, highlighting areas where systems must evolve to support genuine user needs [68]. The mischievous responder could be encouraged rather than filtered out in Queer research, as it exists as a subversion and rejection of data collection [12].

By adopting and embracing mischievous methodologies, we allow divergent interactions that challenge standard usability metrics and interface logic. This kind of research can uncover valuable insights into how technology can be more inclusive and adaptable by allowing users to define their own modes of interaction[68].

Incorporating mischievous research practices encourages a shift from designing for compliance and conformity to designing for expression and individuality. It transforms the role of the user from a passive participant to an active co-creator of their technological experience, ensuring that HCI evolves to meet the needs of a richly diverse user base.

6 RELATIONAL HCI

Despite these obstacles, our team has had success researching Queer HCI. For instance, Ekat's PhD thesis on intimacy and neurodivergence unexpectedly became an extensive healing journey. As a Queer, neurodivergent person, the bullshit heteronormative and

ableist norms society had instilled in them led, at times, to (self-)violation and neglect of their own needs, boundaries and desires. But no more! Ekat now approaches their research topic from a Queer and Crip standpoint to create a caring, non-judgemental environment for participants. In so doing, they continuously and inadvertently reflect on their own relationship with intimacy and what makes them feel good. Their positionality subverts the myth of the objective and impartial researcher, and self-understanding interweaves with the knowledge they gain and the people they meet on this journey of liberation through research and caring for fellow Queer and Crip folks.

The relationship is reciprocal: not only do we as researchers create safe spaces for our participants to share Queer experiences, but our participants create safe spaces for us to ask Queer questions. We share our expert knowledge and resources, and receive knowledge and resources from participants from outside our academic bubbles. In this, the relationality of joyful Queer research is manifest: a space for joy must be created by all parties present. Power relations imbalances between design researcher and participant [15], are complicated by inequalities of social identity, which can render a research space hostile for researchers. The interview situation itself *"is a relational process in which both the researcher and the researched are open to affecting and to being affected"* [3, p. 68], within which normative concepts such as hierarchies are deeply culturally situated and are not necessarily, as HCI 'canon' would have it, oppressive, but rather a question of respect, support, and ultimately, caring [1].

6.1 Case Study 1: Rethinking Relational Roles
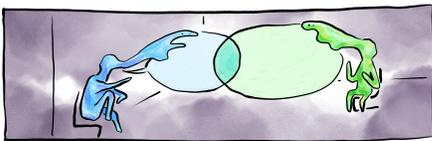
Figure 3: Sharing is daring: our researcher reaches out. *Image description can also be accessed in the supplementary materials*

When Ekat conducted interviews with trans people about their experiences with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), they realized how shared positionalities foster a sense of mutuality and consequently, joy. To tell their stories, research participants used the language they shared with Ekat through Queer identities: conveying (shared) emotions, frustrations, and struggles relating to their experiences with the medical system [48, 49]. In one interview, a participant humorously drew on categories like 'cis male gyno' or 'this behavior is typically Russian' [48]. While reflecting the participant's own experiences (e.g. as a trans person going through the cisnormative medical system, as a person from Ukraine), these categories simultaneously evoked collective realities. Ekat in their position as a non-binary person born in Russia related to the stories, frustrations and quips of their participant. *"Although [Ekat's] own story was not present in the interview, [their] nodding, nervous laughter, the way [they] shook [their] head, or the tone of [their] voice*

acted as means of transmitting [their] affects to the participants who just shared theirs. They all signalized that [they] understood and that [they] too shared emotions and experiences like these" [48, p. 58]. These collective relational epistemologies [69] were a means of making sense of the trans PCOS-body [49]. Queer relational joy enriches research, and the intersection of lived realities is a key part in making sense of Queer lived experiences that in many ways refuse to be categorized.

Queer identities not only trouble traditional researcher-participant roles, but may break hierarchies and existing power relations within institutions. As Queer people we all make marginalizing experiences, or we make joyful experiences that stand out of oppressive heteronormative systems. Sharing these experiences, venting to each other and scheming counter strategies fosters intimacy across hierarchies be it within workplace hierarchies or between researcher and participant. When you relate and you want things to get better eventually, you also care for each other.

6.2 Case Study 2: The Symbiont
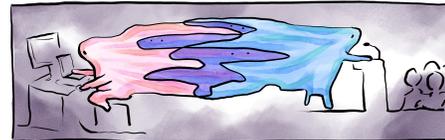
Figure 4: The Symbiont: our researchers unite. *Image description can also be accessed in the supplementary materials*

Queer-Crip joy necessitates the rethinking of social structures. After many (sometimes tearful) rants and mutual consolations, Ekat and Kay decided to enter a workplace symbiosis, where they share their emotional work lives, support each other, and step in and up for each other as researchers and in an academic context. Although a 'Work Spouse' is defined as *"special, platonic friendship with a work colleague characterized by a close emotional bond, high levels of disclosure and support, and mutual trust, honesty, loyalty, and respect"* [40, p. 502], the idea is inexorably linked to the idea of heterosexual marriage, often displaying semi-romantic connotations (ibid) as well as unevenly distributed care work and power imbalance [21, 64]. Implicitly, the idea of a 'Work Spouse' assumes this kind of emotional and occupational arrangement can only exist between cis-hetero men and women. Our researcher symbiosis troubles this not only through gender and labour distribution, but through its extent, based on our shared, if different, neurodivergent experiences. Being open about our symbiosis, we represent one another at meetings if necessary, co-write paragraphs, sometimes single sentences when our brains are foggy, mirroring the hypervisibility of Queer and Crip relationships outside of the workplace. Long-term Queer rethinking of workplace sociality could lead to the reaching of *"high levels of disclosure and support, and mutual trust, honesty, loyalty, and respect"* [40, p. 502] as attributes of workplace sociality that do not require these sometimes clandestine arrangements.

Mutual aid tends to be erased in academic circles where care is either used as a theoretical concept, dropped as a buzzword, or

worse, seen as something done for disabled people by non-disabled people. This is in spite of the fact that caring and interdependence have always been practised by disabled people, and are key to our survival [50]. Academic framings obscure the enormous work disabled people are doing everyday care for themselves. Likewise, disabled and Queer mutual aid practices are historically interlinked [29, 50]. Mutual aid and solidarity in the face of capitalism are practised by marginalized people to combat systemic oppression together [58]. Both Queer and Crip lived realities generate new forms of living and thriving together, visible in spaces where Queer and Crip visions of joy overlap [31].

7 POSITIONALITY

In the beginning of our paper we refused to distill Queer joy to a single digestible concept: this is because our definitions were so different and we wanted to preserve this polyvocality. Thus an author's positionality is critical to understanding Queer joy, yet we recognize the tensions in our field regarding privilege and who and under what circumstances can discuss positionality. It is at times difficult to extract the concept of *positionality* from the oft-expected *position statement*, wherein an authors disclose their relation to their work and sometimes details about their identity. A Queer author's identity can be difficult to communicate to those outside their community, and we here discuss perspectives on positionality as it relates to our pursuit of Queer joy in academia, for better and for worse. We recognise positionality statements are controversial in our field [35] with concerns being raised that they are used to gate-keep who is allowed to write about a topic; and that only people in a position of privilege can explicitly claim a minority identity, as it might be too unsafe to out oneself as LGBTQIA+ in large portions of the Global South. Finally, there are legitimate concerns about "reflexivity theater" where choices to share background information is purely perfomative [35].

7.1 The Purpose of Positionality

Positionality provides valuable context: a researcher's positionality inevitably interacts with their practice. Positionality is less about a specific identity and more about how researchers relate to the research they are conducting [35], and what political values and stances their research lens is guided by. It helps readers to contextualise and parse the cultural context of work, understand which socio- and technopolitics guide it, and choose their own stance on it. This is especially important to reflect on when researching marginalized groups, given the continuous epistemic violence and exploitation [70] that these groups are exposed to by hegemonic research paradigms. Considering the value of experiences rooted in one ' s positionality [26, 27] research on marginalised groups is in most cases better when done by people sharing these identities.

7.2 The Pragmatic Approach

Position statements have become part of standard practice for publication, particularly in Western HCI research. From utilitarian point of view, since this is considered a highly recommended component for equitable research, researchers can be inclined to follow what is considered the standard for publishing and dissemination [35]. There is a risk that position statements become mechanical

exercises in meeting the expectations of reviewers. When positionality becomes functionally synonymous with "position statement", rather than a process of reflection of the interaction between the author ' s identity and their research, its political purpose is obfuscated and it loses its meaning. If the authors cannot sufficiently prove that they are the appropriate entity to conduct the research, will their work's validity be challenged? Would a position statement be necessary if the author's perspective and relation are discussed within the work?

7.3 Vulnerable Disclosure

Position statements carry an irretractable weight. In such a public forum as a research community, willingness to disclose vulnerable details about one's identity becomes a point of contention. It is a privilege not everyone can afford in academia. There is impact to consider in a professional context, where even the matter of choosing a name to publish under can be a weighty decision for Queer researchers considering a future that includes gender transition.

Vulnerability also enables us to create safe and positive experiences for research participants, as Ekat explores in Section 6. There is a social function to vulnerability: our authors connected with each other through a willingness to discuss personal and intimate experiences of joy. Joy is, in and of itself, a vulnerable experience, and is integral to Queer research for an equitable future. In this way positionality and reflexivity can be useful tools in performing Queer joy, but given the risks associated with performative Queerness in some environments this needs to be the choice of the authors and not something enforced by academic structures.

8 GUIDELINES

We corroborate our work with the following guidelines, that move us towards a Queer HCI future that makes space for Queer research methods and relationality.

(1) **Being Queer is a Joyful Experience.**
(2) **Queer Joy is Just Existing.** Reimagine Queerness as unremarkable this is someone ' s normal, mundane, everyday life. Unremarkable does not mean ignoring Queer oppression or joy, but rather working towards justice by treating Queerness as a regular case rather than a special case. By thinking of Queer participants, Queer experiences, and Queer joy as banal [2], we can imagine what a more equitable world could look like.
(3) **Queerness is Intersectional.** Queerness exists in the context of race, gender, age, class, religion, disability, caste, and colonialist backgrounds. There is a need for research that addresses Queer identities in all their nuance and specificity. Queer research should be inclusive of the Global South, of children and teenagers, and it must be conducted carefully and intentionally with mind to lived experiences, rather than bioessentialism.

It is the fallacy born of privilege to believe there is technology or research that exists decontextualized from society, and therefore, from politics [67]. Research projects can be enriched by engaging with community activism. Queer research should support Queer liberation and thriving, rather than contribute to oppression and demise.

(4) **Queerness is Fluid and Playful.** Design and research for change, fluidity, and mischief, rather than discouraging these behaviours. We should be cognisant of stereotypes, as well as our own culturally contextualised assumptions and values relating to identity prescriptions, and design and research beyond the assignment of absolute categories to people. While remaining critical of structural inequality and considering intersectional identities in research, static and rigid definitions must be complicated to make room for transitional and fluid identities.

(5) **Relationality and Reciprocity with Participants.** Participants are not just "data". Queer and otherwise marginalized people participating in our research not only grant us their time but also their intimate life experiences, many of which can be distressing to talk about. These stories are precious and need to be handled with active care which goes beyond basic research ethics [34]. As researchers, we need to ask ourselves, what can we offer in return? This starts with the way we represent our participants' stories: member-checking is always advised to make sure we are not undermining participants' voices for our research goal. Study design should be reflexive of the power relations at play, and ideally, be continuously adapted towards participants' needs [42, 43]. Consider compensating participants adequately, hire them to participate in data analysis (e.g. as done by [24]), or shape your research project collaboratively (e.g., as done in participatory action research [28] [62]), and if they wish let them take credit for their participation by name [13, 23].

(6) **Engage Thoroughly with Positionality.** Positionality should not be treated as a checkbox, but rather as important contextualising matter. We should consider what our positionality is doing for our participants and the communities we want to uplift. When acting as authors, reviewers or readers, we should be conscious of the role of position *statements*, and consider whether they are uplifting the work.

9 CONCLUSION

Queer joy is an integral element of Queer experiences, and we present our stories as a counter-narrative to the historic trend of Queer research that centres negativity. We push back against framings of Queer life as undesirable, or shameful. Instead, Queer HCI fundamentally incorporates joy, subversion and solidarity; and embraces non-normative users rather than pushing back against us. At the same time we push back against Queer experiences as exceptional and instead frame them as ordinary. We additionally want to see expressions of Queer joy manifest through research and publication practice, and to this aim we offer guidelines for Queer HCI research. We present them in the hopes of promoting a peer review process that is receptive to Queer experiences: such as through a better appreciation of positionality, as well as the nuance of Queer identity and relationality. Our contribution is removing the deficit framing of Queer HCI where Queerness is a problem to the be tackled to something should be celebrated, as such a Queer joy is critical to ensuring emancipatory and normalizing experiences for all users regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

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