

Technology and the Family Life Cycle: Play, Pressure and Purpose

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on some work conducted by myself and a number of researchers at Microsoft Research, Cambridge. It involves the use of a technology invented by Microsoft called, 'Sensecam'. SenseCam is a so-called 'life logging' technology, designed to support the recovery of memories at critical junctures in the life experience. The technology was, that is, envisaged as an aid to issues that would be familiar to any cognitive scientist, and largely surrounding problems of memory 'retrieval'. Drawing on two separate studies, we will suggest that the use of Sensecam cannot be explained through such a lens. We will demonstrate

how use of the technology can be both creative and unpredictable. Equally, however, we are slowly learning that the degree to which this might be true depends on particular positions in family life that people find themselves in and on the affordances of the technology itself. Thus, where 'playfulness' usefully describes some orientations to the technology, issues of pressure and purpose describe others.

REFERENCES