

Bad Idea that won't go away

John Carroll – Well, I'll just do these quick, I mean this is kind of singing to the choir I guess, um, one is the idea that you can hire a human factors expert and expect that person to tell you what to do to insure usability when you don't know who your users are or what the task is. Another is the abiding hope in HCI that with just a little more work we will develop rules, wizards, user interface management systems, customization tools or software architectures that will guarantee the creation of user interfaces and applications that are usable. And the last is heavy weight change intolerance, intolerant design methods which give the designer the illusion of control and guarantee mediocrity in outcomes

Christopher Nemeth – thank you, Chris?

Christopher Wickens – Oh don't get me started. Those of you that know me know that I'm going to say that point o five level of statistical significance and no hypothesis significance testing in HST. It's got its value certainly in basic research but I think it is really, really biasing a lot of the research that's been done in human factors where there's a view that point o five level is somehow, some absolute level if its less than point o five there's no difference, if it's greater than point o five there's a difference. For reasons I've written about in a paper of common sense statistics I think that is a very bad approach to trying to advance causes of safety in, which is what our discipline is all about. To often using that approach will reject an innovation that actually would improve safety because the results were not statistically significant. And it also feeds into this general thing I don't like and that's people that treat things as black and white, significant or not, point o five is a somewhat arbitrary point along a continuum of degree of confidence that there is a difference and it also tends people to neglect the size of the difference, not in terms of variance accounted for, but in terms of how many seconds faster or how many percent correct or saved, or changed by that particular effect.

Gary Klein – So this isn't a bad idea that won't go away, it's a good idea that's turned sour and kind of ugly and it's the idea of decision biases. The original research was very important for changing the mindset about rationality and showing how people don't follow rational approaches and for being able to demonstrate systematic errors, which create for us an opportunity to think about how do our minds work because of the systematic errors that are occurring, that gives us some insights. What's happened though is we moved from systematic errors, of course any mechanism has its limitations and that's not an issue, it turned from that into irrationality and so now you see lots of publicity, lots of books about everyday irrationality or predictably irrational where it's sort of has morphed into something different from noticing limitations of a mechanism to none of us can be trusted to think clearly and so we should find some other means of making decisions and getting things done. And I find that a little discon, more than a little disconcerting

Nancy Cooke – The bad idea that won't go away that technology and automation will solve all of our problems, no matter what they are and an example is hurricane Katrina, I heard over and over again that the problem was we didn't have enough satellite radios and I come to find out that we did. They were in boxes and they didn't have batteries in them and the real problem was people didn't know who to talk to or what to say to them, so I just find that to be irritating after a while

Christopher Nemeth – other thoughts on the bad idea that won't go away, yes sir.

Audience Member 1 – still runs around (inaud) that the brain is like a digital computer

Christopher Nemeth – the idea that the brain is like a digital computer won't go away

Audience Member 1 – or basically a syntax engine

Christopher Nemeth – it's a syntactic engine

Audience Member 1 – yea

Christopher Nemeth – thank you, other comments on bad ideas that won't go away, yes sir

Audience Member 2 – Designing systems that are designed without human factors up front, thinking that you can train the problems to go away once you field the system, you can essentially train the individual to overcome the problems of that system design

Christopher Nemeth – creating systems with out any allowance for human performance and then attempting to train the people so that they're able to operate within the system or as part of it *expos facto*. Fair enough.