

# Connecting the Family with Awareness Systems

NATALIA ROMERO<sup>1</sup>, PANOS MARKOPOULOS<sup>1</sup>, JOY VAN BAREN<sup>2</sup>, BORIS DE RUYTER<sup>3</sup>,  
WIJNAND IJSSELSTEIJN<sup>1</sup> AND BABAK FARSHCHIAN<sup>4</sup>

*<sup>1</sup>Eindhoven University of Technology, The Netherlands, {n.a.romero, p.markopoulos, w.a.ijsselsteijn@tue.nl}; <sup>2</sup>Elsevier, The Netherlands, j.baren@elsevier.com; <sup>3</sup>Philips Research, The Netherlands, boris.de.ruyter@philips.com; <sup>4</sup>Telenor, Norway, babak.farshchian@telenor.com*

Awareness systems have attracted significant research interest for their potential to support interpersonal relationships. Investigations of awareness systems for the domestic environment have suggested that such systems can help individuals stay in touch with dear friends or family and provide affective benefits to their users. Our research provides empirical evidence to refine and substantiate such suggestions. We report our experience with designing and evaluating the ASTRA awareness system, for connecting households and mobile family members. We introduce the concept of connectedness and its measurement through the Affective Benefits and Costs of communication questionnaire (ABC-Q). We inform results that testify the benefits of sharing experiences at the moment they happen without interrupting potential receivers. Finally, we document the role that lightweight, picture-based communication can play in the range of communication media available.