Virtual Companions and Friends
Christine Talbot
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
talbot1@uncc.edu

Motivation

- Number of people living alone has increased
- People with pets have better health and mood because they provide a “focus of attention that's outside of someone's self”
- I propose that a virtual companion who is
  - an empathetic listener to vent the stresses of your day to
  - someone to come home to
  - someone who could help get you in a better mood

Pets have been shown to:
- Reduce stress by reducing cortisol levels
- Improve well-being by increasing serotonin levels
- Help reduce blood pressure
- Provide long-term protection for the heart
- Help you feel better about the way you spend your time
- Help depression
- Help keep you engaged socially

References

Approach

- **Motivation System**
  - **Sensors**
  - **Culturally-enabled FAdMA architecture**
- **Cultural Dimensions**
  - **Symbol Translation**
- **Rituals**
  - **Appraisal**
  - **Cultural**
  - **Dimensions**
- **Memory**
- **Emotional State**
- **Intention Structure**
- **Symbol Translation**
- **Planner**
- **Effectors**
  - **Action Tendencies**
- **Tendencies**
- **Appraisal**
- **Motivation System**

Related Work

There are many “companions” and at-home monitoring out there, such as:
- Alerts for medical emergencies such as missed / incorrect medication dose, accidents in the home, etc. [2]
- Digi Electronic Virtual Pets, where you feed and care for the pet to keep it alive
- HAL, which focuses on the textual interaction and learns as you go [6]
- Chat rooms to get some sort of human interaction, such as AIM, Yahoo, etc.
- Organizational virtual humans that help you organize your computer and allow you to do your mail like those at Guile3D [5]
- Milo, who recognizes friends and takes messages for people [9]
- Milo who is a game by Microsoft that simulates a young boy
- Yuruppy, another version of a digital pet for children
- A V A R I, a virtual receptionist [7]

Sources:

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to: Dr. Dale-Marie Wilson, Raghavi Sakpal, Future Computing Lab at UNCC, LA Morabito