Assignment 2: POVs and Experience Prototypes

Introduction

Team: 10:30, Digital Democracy

| Cheenar B. | Travis G. | Guhan V. | Max W. |

Problem Domain

Our first interviews were intentionally broad, capturing diverse points of view. These conversations led us to believe that a strong and engaged community can drive change as effectively as political efforts. Our new question became, "how and why do people contribute to and engage with their community?"

Initial point of view

Vietnam War Veteran

- **WE MET** Lionel, a 75-year-old Vietnam war veteran.
- **WE WERE AMAZED TO REALIZE** that that though Lionel has a deep mistrust of government, he firmly believes in the power of community. Lionel's story, in particular, got us thinking about democracy *outside* the strictly political space.
- **IT WOULD BE GAME-CHANGING IF** Lionel could view the government as part of the community that is lifting him up.

Sample how-might-we statements for Lionel

- HMW help Lionel develop more trust in the government?
- HMW help government empathize with Lionel?
- HMW help Lionel feel more fulfilled?
- HMW help Lionel help other people that have "fallen down?"

Additional Needfinding

We interviewed two additional people, focusing on community engagement and being sure to capture more socioeconomically diverse perspectives.

Interview #1: Nurse assistant in low-income neighborhood
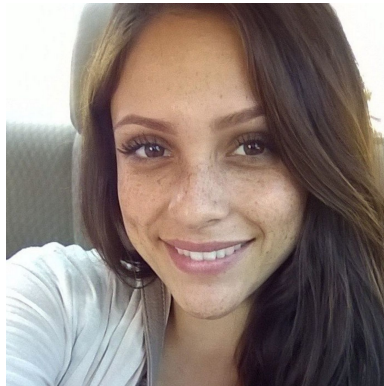
Aubrey is a 22-year-old certified nurse assistant with community-college education. Her neighborhood is dangerous, and she mostly keeps to herself and a few close friends. Few people in her community share her ambitions and values. She empathizes for the disadvantaged people she helps at work, but it's harder for her to be interested in difference at a larger scale. But, because of her focus on her family's future, she wants to get more involved through her child's school in the future.

Interview #2: Educated student originally from low-income family

Jonathan is a 22-year-old PhD student at Stanford who did his undergraduate studies at Brown. He is originally from Fort Worth from a low-income Mexican immigrant family. He identifies with the Mexican, queer, academic communities. He has gotten involved with these communities

mostly through his academic affiliations of his avenues for community engagement are through academia.

Jonathan feels a little siloed in academia, feels that losing touch with his roots inhibits him from helping out more. Jonathan said he reads a lot about politics and current events on Facebook, NYT, Reddit, etc. He talks about these issues on Facebook, and in person over the dinner table with family and friends. Jonathan wants to tap into the same groups he had at Brown here at Stanford. He lives in Redwood City, an area with a big Hispanic population he thinks he might get involved with.

Revised Points of View with How-Might-We's

The three new archetypes:

POV #1: Young professional in ed-tech

- **WE MET** Nhien, who is a 23-year-old Stanford grad working at IXL Learning. She lives with a roommate in the peninsula. Although she works in ed tech, she feels that she isn't involved/doesn't make impact in democracy.
- **WE WERE AMAZED TO REALIZE** that she feels disengaged from democracy despite her work in education.
- **IT WOULD BE GAME-CHANGING IF** Nhien could see how much of an impact she really has.

Sample HMWs

- HMW help Nhien feel more empowered about the positive change she makes in the world?
- HMW show Nhien other ways to contribute to her community?
- HMW show Nhien how much positive impact she's *already* making?
- HMW make Nhien reconsider her claim of apathy to realize that she does care?
- HMW make political and civic discussions more relevant to Nhien and her friends?

POV #2: Seasoned government employee

- **WE MET** Rachel, a government employee who has worked at the city, state, and federal level for around 10 years.
- **WE WERE AMAZED TO REALIZE** that Rachel feels extremely misunderstood and underappreciated by her constituents, and that she wishes her constituents took the time to engage and empathize with her.
- **IT WOULD BE GAME-CHANGING IF** Rachel felt valued by those on the "outside" of government.

Sample HMWs

- HMW help Rachel feel more valued as a member of society?

- HMW help constituents understand the work Rachel does?
- HMW bring citizens and government employees together through civic work?

POV #3: Nurse's assistant from a fragmented neighborhood

- **WE MET** Aubrey, a certified nurse's assistant who lives in a low-income neighborhood with her parents, brother and young child. She lives in neighborhood with high crime rates, making her feel disconnected from and distrustful of her neighbors.
- **WE WERE AMAZED TO REALIZE** that Aubrey doesn't really feel connected to communities beyond the people she lives with and works with.
- **IT WOULD BE GAME-CHANGING IF** We could connect Aubrey to people around her that share her aspirations and values.

Sample HMWs

- HMW get her connected with similar people?
- HMW help her get perspective outside her immediate surroundings?
- HMW make civic engagement a family activity?
- HMW help her feel closer to her family?

Selected HMW Statements

1. HMW help someone discover other ways of contributing to the community that she might be passionate about? (POV #1)
2. HMW bring citizens and government employees together through civic work? (POV #2)
3. HMW make civic engagement a family activity? (POV #3)

Experience Prototypes

We entered the experience prototype phase with many assumptions, and we chose three of them that we found central to our discussions of community. These assumptions were: that people would be more likely to contribute if they received immediate, positive feedback for doing so; that people would be more inclined to contribute if they were presented with relevant information about opportunities to do so; and that people would react positively to others in their community if they contributed to a common goal.

1. Will immediate, positive feedback get more people to contribute?
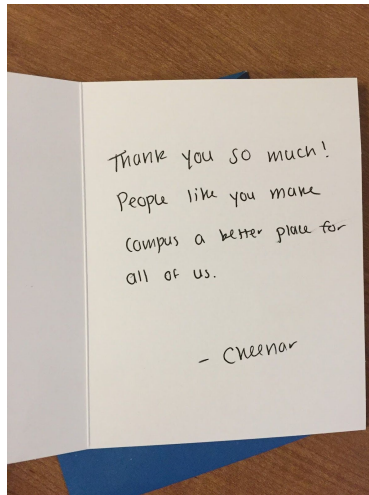
The thank-you note

In this scenario, we explain that the Stanford campus is overrun with visitors, and as a result there is too much litter. We conspicuously place some litter nearby. One of our team members asks the participant to help by picking up any litter they might see, while a second member of our team sits nearby. When the participant picks up the litter, our nearby teammate comes over, thanks the participant verbally for helping the community, and delivers a handwritten thank-you note.

We studied three participants for this prototype. They all indicated that they appreciated the note. We heard that it was "unexpected" and "immediate," and the fact that it was handwritten and hand-delivered made it feel more personal. All three participants felt better after receiving the note, and felt inclined to help again.
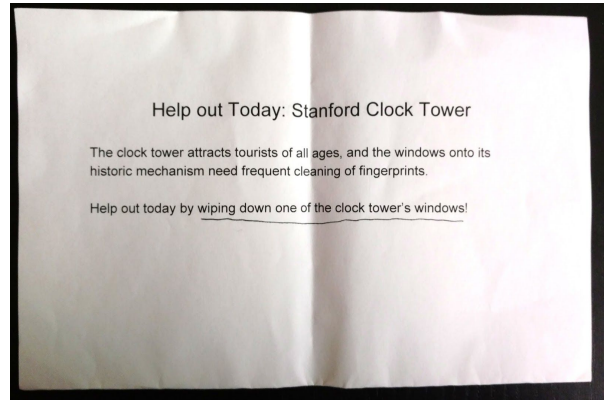
Because the task of picking up litter is so brief, it was difficult to understand how people felt while they performed the task, or how they might feel if the task took significantly more effort. We heard a concern that thank-you notes might get tiresome after the first few.

This study validated our assumption that positive feedback makes people more likely to want to help again. We also observed something new: people didn't notice the conspicuous litter until we asked them to look for it, even though they said they generally pick up litter anyway.

2. Will people be more willing to help if presented with local opportunities?

Presenting the info cards to a participant   An example card

This role-playing scenario involves taking a walk near the Stanford clock tower. One team member walks with the participant, and presents "info cards," analogous to phone notifications, when the participant approaches the tower. These info cards are simple print-outs on paper, with hand-drawn "buttons" the participant can touch.

The first card simply alerts the participant that he is near the clock tower. A "Learn More" button leads to some curated historical facts about the tower. From this info card, a "How Can I Help?" button leads to a suggested community contribution: cleaning fingerprints from one of the windows of the tower. Another of our team members is already at work cleaning the window, and offers a paper towel.

We studied three participants for this prototype. The first felt more connected to the history of the clock tower after receiving the information, and was more inclined to help clean it. However, the other two participants did not feel inclined to help. One, who was not a student, thought the information was interesting but did not want to perform the task. Another, a student, said the cards reminded him of Internet pop-ups and did not want even to learn more about the tower.

Our assumption that presenting relevant opportunities would encourage contribution was perhaps too strong. It is not safe to assume that everyone will want to participate. Further, location-based "notifications" run the risk of annoying users who equate them to pop-up ads.

3. Do people like collaborating with strangers if it solves a shared problem?

Two participants collaborating on a sign
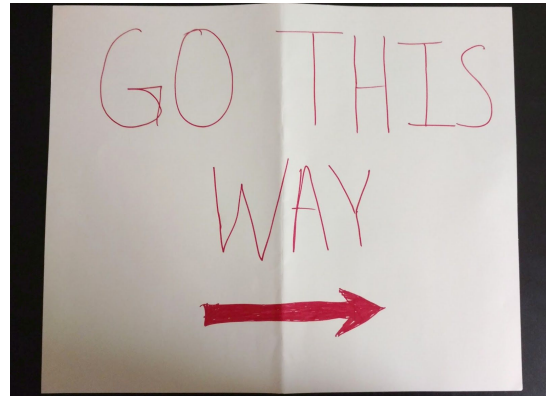
The finished sign

In this scenario, we explain to the participants that cyclists keep riding the wrong way through the "circle of death," and the community would benefit from a sign to indicate the correct direction of traffic. We provide markers and paper to the participants, and allow them to decide what to make. We selected two members of the Stanford community for this study, to ensure they shared a community interest.

The participants introduced themselves to each other and planned the task with each other before they started. We observed a brief, organic brainstorming session, during which they asked clarifying questions about the task: "Can we make up a monetary fine?", and "Can it include bad language?" The participants were friendly with each other and produced a simple but effective sign.

Though they talked throughout the process, one of the participants did the work on the sign while the other watched and made suggestions. Perhaps making the sign was not a large enough task to require two concurrent participants.

This study confirmed our assumption that collaboration can be a positive way to solve community problems, with a new caveat. One participant explained that he was more willing to collaborate because Stanford is a safe community, and that he would be more cautious about working with a stranger elsewhere.

Conclusion

Our second experience prototype, in which we presented people with relevant information about ways to help the community, was the most informative because of its controversial results. The convenient suggestion of an easy task made one participant more inclined to help, while the

other two had mixed feelings. The results substantiated that understanding people's motivations for engaging with their community is difficult.