Assignment 2: POVs and Experience Prototypes

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Problem domain

Storage and packing needs: In our initial needfinding, we found interesting tensions in how people choose which possessions they keep, and how they categorize and manage those belongings. In particular, we wanted to explore problems people encountered with storage, including long-term storage, packing/storage for moving, and packing for extended trips.

Preliminary POV

We met Edith and Professor Snipp. We were amazed to realize both of them permanently keep things in storage but also forget what's there and end up buying new things. It would be game changing to give people a better awareness of how they organize their space and possessions.

Additional Needfinding Results

We investigated our initial POV by conducting five additional interviews.

Among those five were people who moved recently (Chelsea), people who pack often (Cary), and extreme users who move their entire lives every 3-4 months (Bianca).

We talked to Chelsea, who recently moved from Berkeley to Redwood City and chose to leave her bed and many of her clothes behind. She described her systems for keeping sentimental things (collect to leave at her parents' home; "I'm assembling a museum of myself"), practical things (keep nearby), digital memories (backup on hard drives by season), and everything else (get rid of).
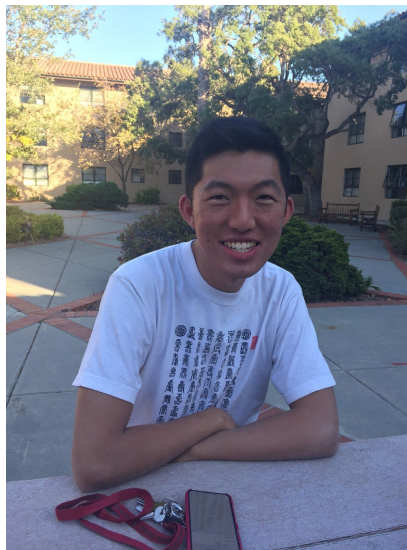
We talked to Cary, a semi-professional Youtuber at Stanford who travels often for conventions and competitions. He talked about his frequent travelling and notably touched on how he keeps many objectively useless and seemingly unsentimental objects in his household, for fear he would get more attached to the objects in the future.

We talked to Bianca, a student who moves every three months to a new country. Bianca talked about the difficulty in considering what to bring and what to leave with each move. She desires elements in the home that are personal, but is also challenged by limited space and the guilt it creates in new purchases.

Revised POVs and HMWs

POV 1:

We met Chelsea, a journalist/book critic living in a tiny room. We were amazed to realize each time she visits her parents, she brings a big box of sentimental things she wants to keep but doesn't need and leaves them with her parents. It would be game changing if she could keep the meaningfulness without the hassle.

Sample HMWs 1:

- HMW make leaving something a bonding experience?
- HMW leverage her friends to help her keep sentimental things?
- HMW give her infinite space to store things?
- HMW separate sentimentality from physical objects and make it mobile/digital?
- HMW help her find usefulness for her sentimental items and reuse them in new ways?
- HMW make her home like a museum?

POV 2:

We met Bianca, a student at Minerva who moves every three months. We were amazed her luggage stored out-of-season clothes, which she lacked the space to fully unpack, and she disposes functional items to make room for sentimental items when packing. It would be game changing for her to feel freedom in a constrained space.

Sample HMWs:

- HMW make a space feel like home without additional purchases?
- HMW make her sentimental objects functional?
- HMW make reusing items exciting?
- HMW help her remember what is in her luggage?
- HMW remove her belief that she needs more clothes?
- HMW help her get rid of luggage altogether?

POV 3:

We met Cary, a semi-professional Youtuber. We were amazed he keeps random objects that he doesn't necessarily feel an emotional connection with at the moment, for fear of developing feelings in the future. This leads to clutter. It would be game changing to help him reconcile his emotions in a way that doesn't take up as much physical space.

Sample HMWs:

- HMW make seemingly useless objects a greater part of his life?
- HMW give away/destroy sentimental objects to create a new experience?
- HMW turn his experiences into a video game instead of objects?
- HMW make his objects take up less space?
- HMW help him know the future?
- HMW give him confidence in his existing feelings?

Final HMWs and Solutions

Final HMWs:

We used heat map voting to select final HMWs. During our selection, we found one HMW had surfaced independently from all three POVs:

1. HMW make seemingly useless sentimental objects a more relevant part of their life?

Additionally, we were drawn to these HMWs from POV 2 (Bianca) and POV 3 (Cary) respectively:
2. HMW help them remember what is in their luggage and/or storage?
3. HMW convert sentimental objects into new experiences that don't take up their physical space?

Solutions:

We did another round of brainstorming/heat map voting to choose our best three solutions, which happened to correspond to each HMW:
1. Motivate people to pass on sentimental objects and/or home decorations to others, making shared experiences in the process.
2. Provide people with a "home outside of home" virtual backpack/luggage system to help them remember what to pack.
3. Connect people to others who
   (a) also want to destroy/pass on sentimental objects in a meaningful way, or
   (b) can suggest practical uses for their sentimental objects.

Experience Prototypes

Prototype 1:

We wanted to test the assumptions that (a) people are willing to give up sentimental possessions if they know the receiver genuinely wants the gift, and (b) shared experiences act as an incentive to give.

Our prototype required two of our members to act as the "app" and the "receiver," and an index card to represent the object the user would give away:
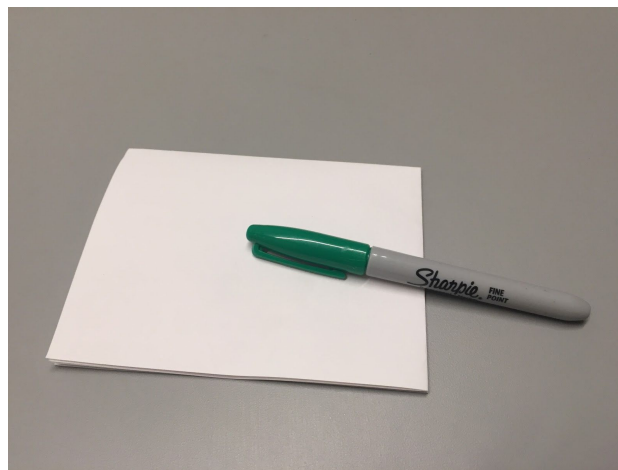
We tested our prototype with Justin, a Stanford student. First, the "app" asked Justin to think of a sentimental possession he was willing to part with and depict it on the card (an old bracelet). Then, the "app" brought out the "receiver," who, in conversation, enthusiastically told Justin why she was excited to put that object in her home (she would incorporate the bracelet into her meaningful theater project). Finally, Justin gave the index card to the "receiver."

Justin immediately said "yes" when asked if he had any sentimental objects. After the experience, he said that he felt good giving his bracelet to someone who would value it, and that he would agree to do the same thing with the actual bracelet. When asked to clarify, he mentioned he would be less willing to give the bracelet away if the other party did not value it.

Our assumptions were valid; people were more willing to part with unused sentimental objects if they would be meaningfully treated.

Prototype 2:

We wanted to test the assumption that people value visualizing their items and plan beforehand when deciding what to pack.

We made the prototype by drawing three boxes on a sheet of paper. The largest box was an image representation of a suitcase; the medium was a written list of the items in the case; the smallest was a bar estimating how much the suitcase was filled.
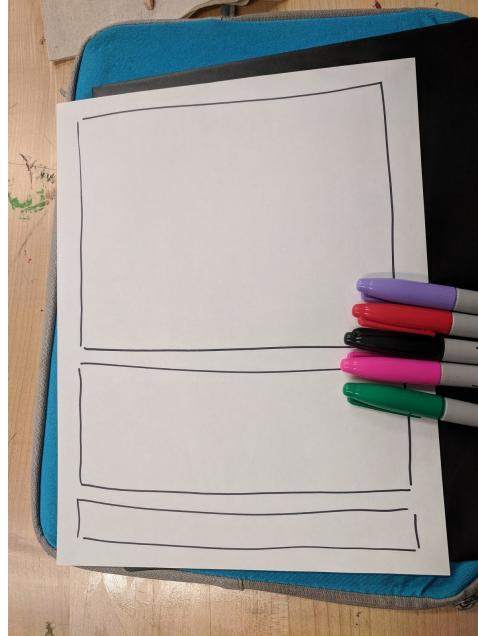
We tested our prototype on Mark, an elderly Stanford visitor [did not want to be photographed]. Since he came to visit his sister, we asked him to write what he packed on this trip, one object at a time. Then, we asked him to draw how the object would fit inside his suitcase. Finally, we asked him to fill up the percentage bar with an estimate of how much space the object would take in the suitcase.
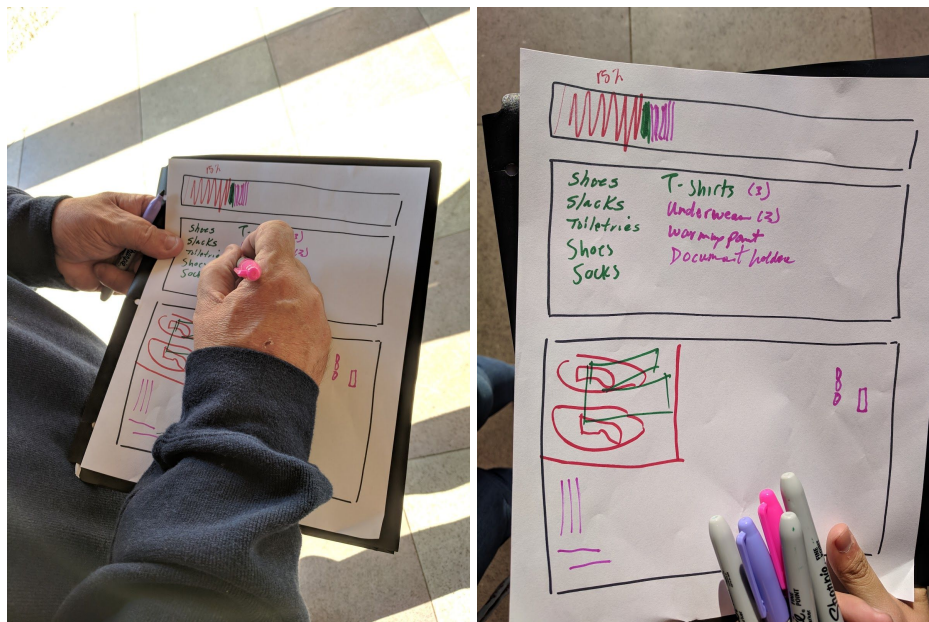

During testing, Mark offered suggestions like putting socks inside shoes when packing to save space. He also commented on the lack of 3D visualization on the suitcase and brought up split compartments. He said he usually buys items when he gets to his destinations instead of bringing them.

When asked if the exercise was helpful, he said it was okay. Then, he talked about himself, mentioning how he could improve because he "always packed at the last moment." He said that if it were a long trip, he would be more organized.

The assumption was somewhat valid; his mentioning of self-improvement implied that visualization may be useful for last minute packing. It seems that people who have few items to pack and short trips may not need such a virtual suitcase, so one of the new assumptions that emerged is need for packing visualizations being primarily from long-term travelers.

Prototype 3:
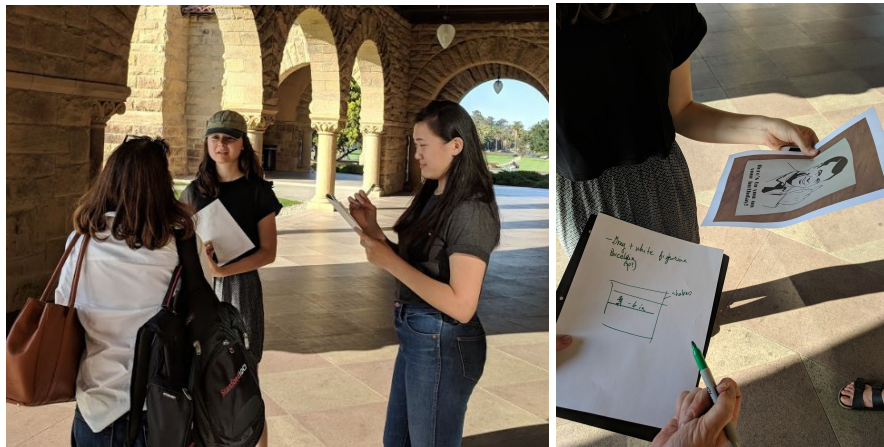
For this prototype, we tested the assumption that others' opinions are effective in finding inspiration in sentimental but otherwise useless objects.

Priss, our interviewee, was asked to write on an index card an object of sentimental significance but functional insignificance. The interviewer then presented a personal object and asked asked the interviewee to provide suggestions to creatively dispose of or functionally transform the object.

We presented Priss a birthday card and the interviewer expressed its personal significance. Priss generated the following ideas:

Creatively dispose
- Ceremony with friends where you light the item on fire, allowing for "personal absorption and release into the atmosphere"
- Paper mache box
- Shred and send back to friends

Functionally transform
- Take advantage of the image's meaning to decorate a folder and make it easily recognisable

Priss's object of choice was a figurine at her mother's house which reminded her of her mother's design skill. She would be upset if it went missing, but would be okay selling it for something else that had equal value/meaning.

Priss was enthusiastic during idea-generation, but we were surprised by her admission that she would not adopt similar suggestions if they were presented for her own personal object. She would

rather "earmark" the money for a more sentimental purpose. She readily came up with ideas for creative disposals, but struggled with functionality transformations. We learned that the act of generating ideas for others is exciting, but depending on the object, there may be more friction in executing more risk-averse, creative ideas.

Key Takeaways

Our most successful prototype was prototype 3 with Priss, who demonstrated that when interviewees excitedly generate ideas for others, they prioritize novelty and a collective experience which sometimes runs counter to recognising the personal significance of the object to the individual. Priss revealed this when we asked her how she would feel about transforming or creatively destroying her own sentimental object. This was especially valuable in comparison to prototype 1, where Justin voiced great willingness to give away his bracelet when presented with a justification from the receiver. Clearing items with less sentimental value benefits from shared and creative experiences, while more sentimental objects benefit from personal connection to, and reassurance from, the receiver.