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Studio Theme: Sharing

Problem Domain: How do we share our time and experiences with strangers?

Assignment 2: POVs and Experience Prototypes

We began this week with the following POV:

We met Samir, who moved to the Bay Area 4 years ago to work at Facebook. We were amazed to realize his level of apathy when it came to making new connections, especially with the opposite gender. It would be game-changing to make meeting new people an exciting and non-stressful experience.

Additional Needfinding:

Based on feedback from studio last week, we focused our needfinding this week on locals rather than people who were new to the Bay Area. We also focused more on extremes, asking our interviewees about extremely positive and extremely negative experiences meeting new people.

First, we interviewed Alif, a 30-year-old working for Disney in Palo Alto. He described himself as a “proximity person” because he only stays in touch with people he interacts with regularly. When one of his closest colleagues left Disney, Alif told him, “After you leave, I’m not going to talk to you.” This somewhat extreme example confirmed our earlier hypothesis that frequent interaction is key to forming close relationships.

We also learned that Alif believes common values are the most important factor when forming relationships. He prefers to get to know people gradually, which gives him the opportunity to gauge whether they share his values. His most negative experience was with one of his college dormmates who, according to Alif, made rash decisions and didn’t respect the people around him. This added a new dimension to our insights about how people form relationships: in addition to shared interests, common values are a key part of forming a connection.

Next, we interviewed Jesse, a recent Stanford grad living in Palo Alto and working in San Jose. He chose to live 40 minutes away from work to stay close to his network of friends at Stanford because he doesn’t know where to find “non-contrived” environments to meet new people. He prefers meeting people through activities: when he was in

Beijing, for example, he used meetup.com to find a group of ex-pats to go rock climbing with. From these examples, we realized that people often want to form new connections, but they don't want to feel like they're going out of their way (into non-organic environments) to meet new people.

POVs & HMWs:

After synthesizing our interviews, we developed the following POVs with sample HMW statements:

1. We met Alif, a 30-year old Stanford grad working for Disney in Palo Alto. We were amazed to realize that he thinks shared values are by far the most important aspect in forming relationships. It would be game-changing to introduce Alif to people based on values that they have in common.

How might we...

- a. let Alif specify which values were most important to him so that others would be aware?
 - b. make people more comfortable discussing their personal values with someone they just met?
 - c. learn about people's values without asking them outright?
2. We met Jesse, a recent Stanford grad who lives in Palo Alto and works in San Jose. We were amazed to realize that he enjoys meeting new people, but doesn't want feel like he's *doing something in order to* meet new people. It would be game-changing to give Jesse opportunities to meet people that felt organic rather than contrived.

How might we...

- a. get Jesse into more places where he can meet people organically?
 - b. make "meeting people" part of Jesse's everyday routine?
 - c. provide incentives to overcome the negatives of "contrived" meetups?
3. We met Shayla, a recent UCSD grad who started working at Google 3 months ago. We were amazed to realize that a strong common interest or activity is most important when she's meeting new people. It would be game-changing to help Shayla meet people based on the activities they have in common, especially activities that she wouldn't generally do with someone the first time they met.

How might we...

- a. help people realize what they have in common at an early stage of their relationship?
- b. introduce people who are in similar situation (ex. new to an area) and share an interest or hobby?
- c. convince strangers to do an activity they both enjoy together?

Ultimately, we selected the following 3 HMWs:

1. How might we help people find an activity/belief/interest they have in common with someone they want to get to know better? (POV #3)
2. How might we help people meet for reasons other than “just to meet”? (POV #2)
3. How might we help people who are new to an area meet people in their new location who like doing the same things they like doing? (POV #3)

Prototype #1:

First, we prototyped a solution to help users identify common interests with someone they want to get to know better. Our solution would allow the user to anonymously invite that person to do an activity with them. Some assumptions behind this idea are:

1. Anonymity makes people more willing to reach out to people they don't know well
2. Suggesting activities that the other person enjoys makes it more likely that the two parties will form a connection

We asked Arzina, a 25-year-old Bay Area native, to test our prototype. We began by setting the context: she had been working at her current company for several months. There was one coworker in particular - Jesse - who she wanted to get to know better. Next, we handed her the prototype: a stack of index cards that simulated different screens of a mobile app. Arzina found Jesse through our app and invited Jesse to go hiking. After we simulated a short hike, Arzina received a notification asking her if she wanted to hang out with Jesse again.

During the experience, Arzina got particularly excited when she saw Jesse's list of interests and found one - hiking - that she liked as well. Afterwards, she told us, “I love that you're doing something that is meaningful for you”. This confirmed our second assumption: engaging in a shared interest makes it easier to form a new connection. However, our assumption regarding anonymity turned out to be incorrect. Arzina said that she associates anonymous invitations with blind dates; she wouldn't want to send an anonymous invitation to an acquaintance because she thinks it would be misinterpreted.

This showed us that identifying common interests among people is an interesting idea, but we need something other than anonymous messages to help people communicate.

Prototype #2:

Our second experience prototype tested a solution that brings strangers together to try an activity that neither of them has done before. We were interested in how people bond over tackling unfamiliar tasks and whether that's a natural catalyst for friendship.

Some of the assumptions are:

1. Potential users are comfortable being in unfamiliar situations (including failure) with strangers
2. Activities feel collaborative rather than competitive, since the former is more likely to lead to friendship

We tested this prototype with Dr. V, a professor of engineering at Stanford (identity obscured at his request, hence no pictures of the prototype test). The scene: Dr.V has always wanted to learn how to ride a unicycle (true story) but none of his current friends want to learn with him.

Since index cards worked well for the previous experience prototype, we used the same format. Once Dr. V. chose an activity and found another user through the app, we physically went out and found someone in the vicinity - Alberto - to unicycle with him (i.e. attempt to ride their bikes with no hands).

Overall, Dr. V and Alberto seemed to genuinely enjoy themselves and claimed they would consider unicycling together again. This confirmed our second assumption: strangers can bond in a supportive atmosphere. However, Dr. V was initially hesitant to reach out to a stranger when he was already nervous about learning to unicycle, which strained our first assumption. Dr. V said that it would depend on the type of activity, and that he might be more comfortable with strangers if the activity was lower risk.

Prototype #3:

The final experience prototype was a solution that focused on organically setting up a new relationship through a common adventure. Going into this prototype, our assumptions were:

1. People feel more comfortable meeting others in the context of an activity
2. Users are comfortable not knowing much about who they are going to do an activity with

We tested this prototype with Katie Torigoe, a Stanford senior. The scene: Katie had recently moved to a Star City, we were sitting in her new apartment (i.e. an empty

room), and she was looking for a weekend activity. We made a prop mobile app task flow, using several sketches, for Katie to interact with.

At the outset, Katie expressed slight discomfort at being lonely in a new area. When she began interacting with our app, she was excited about the fun activities she could choose. However, her discomfort grew when it came to selecting a person to do it with. She commented that choosing between people based on their photos, names, and bios “felt like a dating app”. After inviting one person, she immediately tried to invite more to the same activity, saying that she would definitely feel uncomfortable in a one-on-one scenario. While this test confirmed our first assumption, our second assumption was certainly broken - at the end of the experience, Katie was more worried about the people she was going to meet than excited for the adventure.

Conclusion - Most Successful Prototype:

Based on these results, our second experience prototype - a solution for bringing strangers together to learn a new skill - was the most successful. Dr. V said that he enjoyed trying a new activity with a stranger because they were on an equal playing field; there was no power imbalance between one person being the “teacher” and the other being a “student”. He also commented that it felt very organic because they were solving challenges together. With the other prototypes, however, our users seemed uncomfortable. Arzina found it awkward to send/receive anonymous invitations. Katie was unsure whether she was using a solution to meet friends or meet dates, and wished that she could find out more about potential activity partners before agreeing to meet with them. We think that with some modifications, we will move forward with our second prototype.

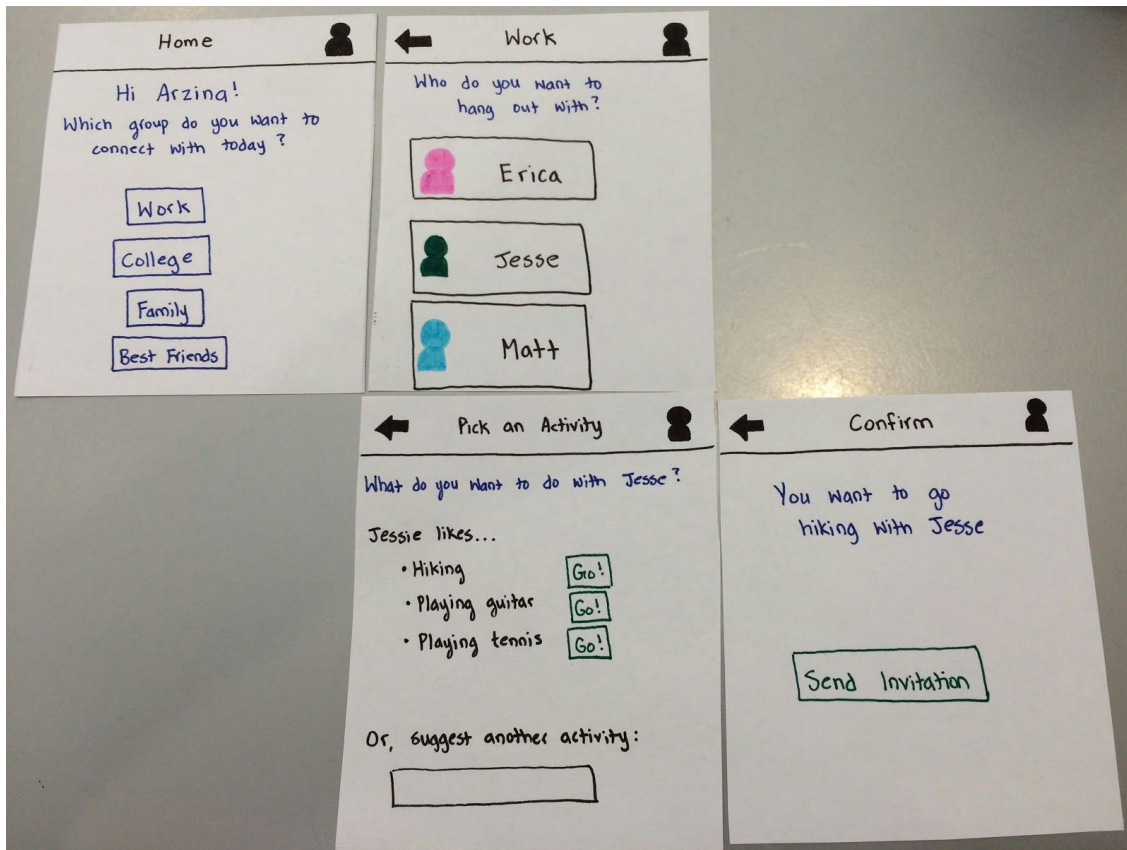
Appendix: Pictures

Interview with Alif:



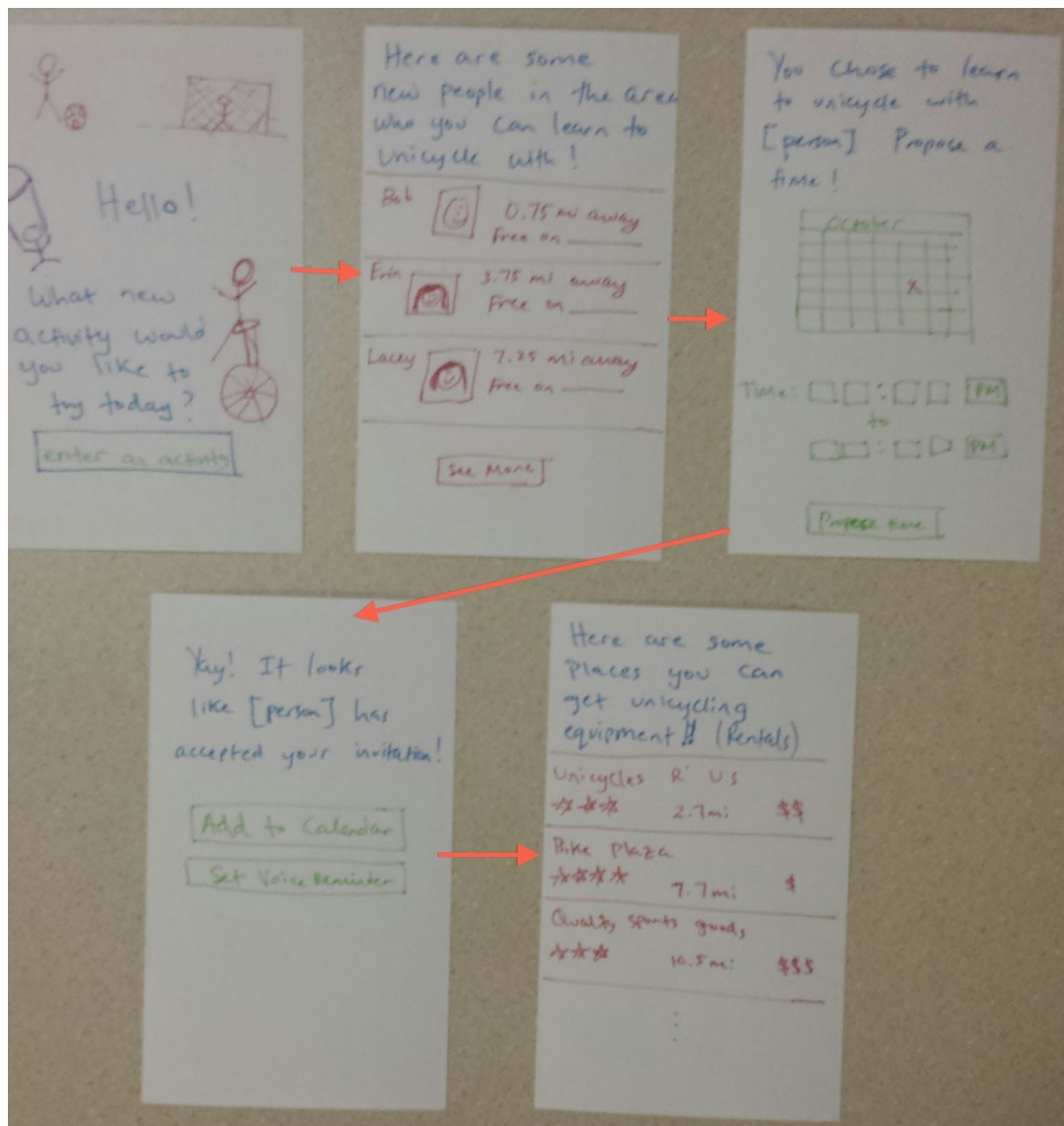
During the interview, we asked Alif to contact someone he wanted to get in touch with, and observed his behaviour. We took this picture while he was looking for a coworker's phone number to send her a text.

Experience Prototype 1: Solution to help people identify common interests with someone they want to get to know better

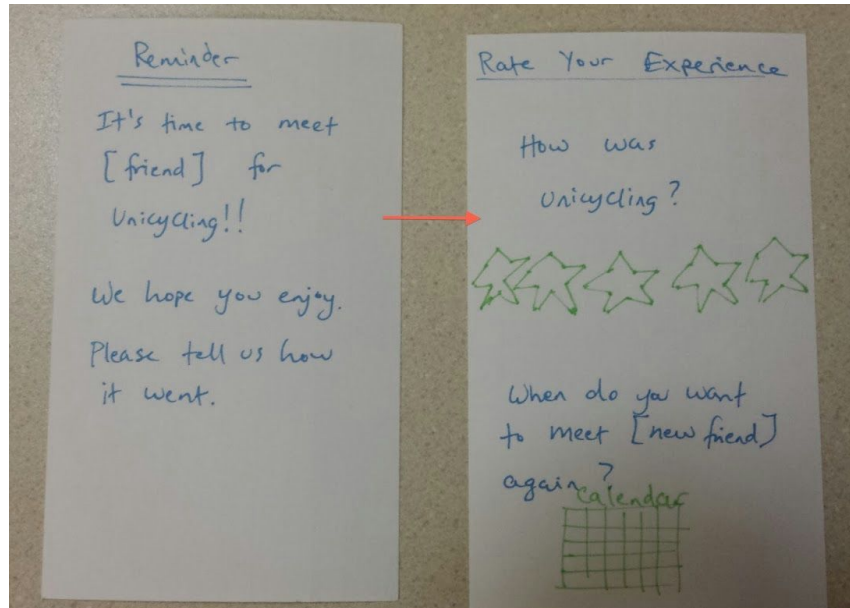


Sketches simulating the workflow that allows users to find people they want to connect with, view their favourite activities, and send invitations.

Experience prototype 2: Solution that brings strangers together to try an activity that neither of them has done before.



Workflow to choose an activity and find someone to do it with

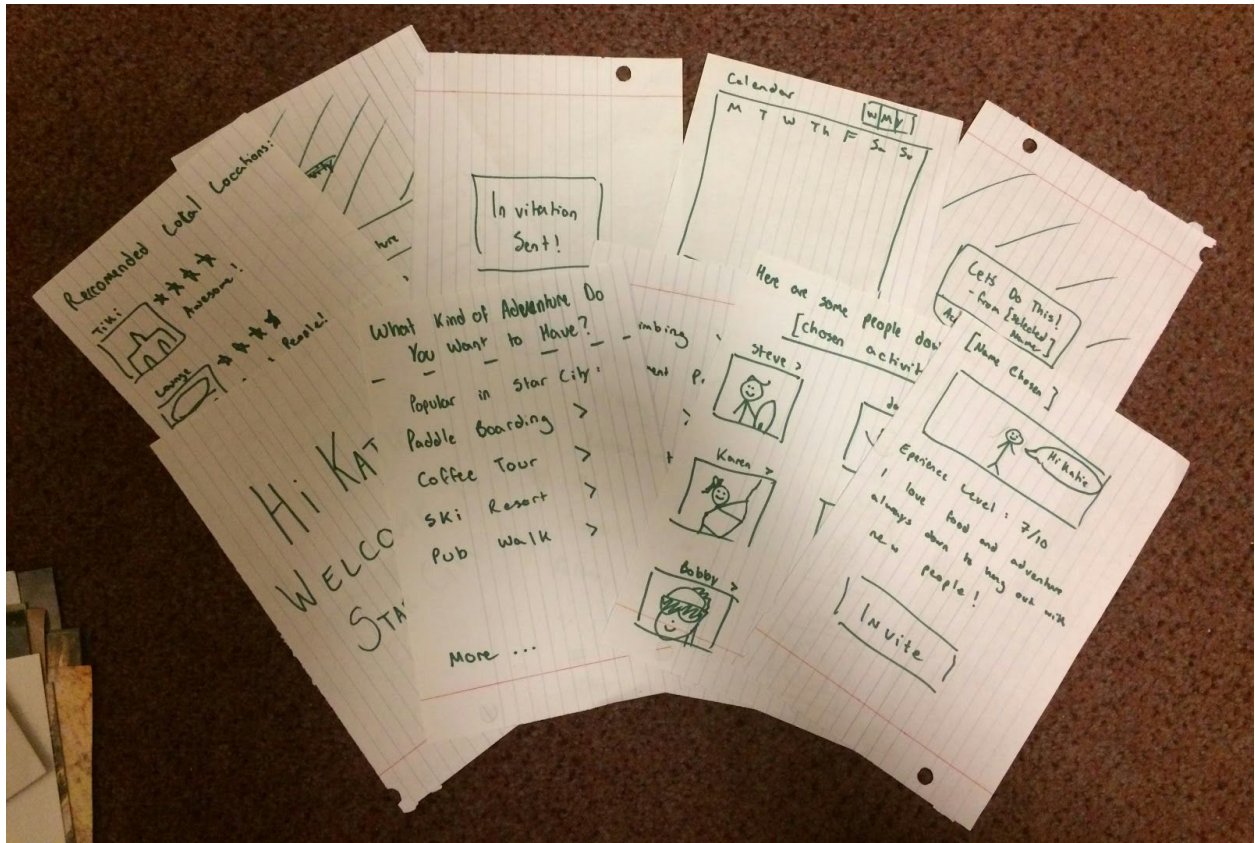


The left view is shown on the day of the activity. The right view is after the activity

Experience Prototype 3: Solution that focuses on organically setting up a new relationship through a common adventure



Setting the scene: Katie just moved into a new apartment in a new city



Screens of the app that we used to test this experience