

CATAPULT DESIGN WORKSHOP SERIES

WORKSHOP

EXPLORING VALUES: WHAT MATTERS AND WHY?

Values are the ideals, norms, moral perceptions and objects that dictate the boundaries of individual and group behavior. Whether it's understanding what sort of interactions between men and women are appropriate, discovering what young people in a culture strive to be as adults, or identifying the "must have" ingredient in a kitchen cabinet, learning to appreciate values is essential to understanding how people of a certain group contextualize their experiences and shape their worldview. As researchers, values give shape to the questions and observations we make, and can provide valuable insight toward uncovering the "why" behind the "what." As product and service designers, understanding values helps us form more accurate theories about how people's behavior and preferences might shape the success or failure of a project. This workshop will assist participants in understanding the importance of identifying values as part of the research and design processes, as well as provide a set of basic techniques for helping uncover information about what people hold most dear.



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The majority of our world's population lacks access to life's basic needs. We develop and implement human-centered products to help them thrive.

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EXPLORING VALUES: WHAT MATTERS AND WHY?

What are “values”?

- *Cultural values* include the ideas, beliefs, attitudes or principles that hold significance in a society. They impact the way people behave and influence what choices individuals and groups make.
- *Personal values* are the standards, beliefs or qualities that you consider worth upholding or pursuing.
- Examples of values:
 - Community
 - Material comfort
 - Wealth
 - Competition
 - Individualism
 - Health
 - Freedom
 - Religiosity or spirituality
 - Natural resources
 - Education ...What else?

How do values influence culture?

- Values are the basis of and driving force behind culture
- Dictate social and economic priorities [e.g. people want to be wealthy; people want to have big families]
- Determine moral authority [e.g. religious and political figures]
- Dictate behavior [e.g. gender roles, class structure]
- Can be formalized into law [e.g. sexuality]

Why is it important to uncover values?

As a researcher: How can values influence anthropological research and cultural understanding?

- Creates context for understanding why people behave and make decisions as they do
- Informs the “why” behind the “what”

As a designer: How do personal and cultural values influence product or service design?

- Helps you understand current behavior and trends
- Helps you understand if desired changes in behavior run counter to cultural values
- Assists you in understanding what motivates certain individuals or groups

What methodologies do you use to uncover values?

- Observation of particular groups
 - Look at important physical, social or emotional

elements, interactions

- Open-ended interview questions focused on what is important to individuals or groups and why
- Participant-guided tours of relevant spaces and activities
- Activities surrounding value exploration
 - *Values Cards* [see Workshop Activity]: Cards with simple line drawings of images relevant to a certain topic (e.g. water, jobs). The cards, a basis for discussion, are placed in front of interview subjects and questions about the card material are posed. Asking “why” as a follow-up question is critical. [IDEO Values Cards]
 - *Scenario Testing*: Show users a series of cards depicting possible future scenarios and invite them to share their reactions [IDEO Methods Cards]
 - *Behavioral Archaeology*: Look for the evidence of people’s activities inherent in the placement, wear patterns, and organization of places and things [IDEO Methods Cards]

Tips to keep in mind when uncovering values

When interviewing:

- Start with basic questions or an easy activity
 - e.g. “Walk me through your day” or “Could we look through your family photo album?”
- The interviewee is your guide; follow their lead. They will gravitate toward what’s important
- Let the interviewee provide the inflection. What do they get animated about?
- Be comfortable with silence
- Listen for repetition. Subject matter or traits that are frequently mentioned are significant in some way
- Explore various levels of values:
 - Individual
 - Community/group
 - Cultural
- Collect stories; they are goldmines of information. As a researcher, collecting stories is your primary job
- Stimulate discussion across stakeholder groups
- Adopt vocabulary of locals - they’ll describe values in their own terms and you need to be able to relate [e.g. what you refer to as a “car,” they might call a “truck”]
- Use information you collect in a sacred way

When designing:

- Take note of aspirations. Aspirations are similar to values in that persons hold them dear. As designers, aspirations offer insight into human behavior and desire
- Understand the ways in which people do/do not use

- products, and the values that surround the usage
- Where possible, design with established behavior patterns in mind
- Explore ways in which you can respect and reinforce values mentioned by community members when designing

Main takeaway: Understanding values is central to understanding a particular cultural context. In uncovering values, you learn the “why” behind the “what” and have insight into why people behave the way they do. Ultimately, you are made aware of others’ priorities and ways of structuring the world.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Challenges of interpretation (If values are not made clear, how do you drive at this concept?)

Fluidity of values (While certain values are pervasive, others are different among groups, often even within a society. Additionally, some values are static or pervasive, while others are fluid and changing)

Reporting problem (There can be a difference between what people say their values are and how they act)

Fundamentals of Anthropology: Ethnocentrism vs. Cultural Relativism, in relation to cultural values and norms

Design opportunities (Exploring the ways in which understanding values could make for better products)

Discussion activity: Connecting Values with Design. Think of products where a core value led to their creation. Then, think of products whose use is constantly impacted by values, for better/for worse.

RESOURCES:

IDEO Values Cards framework
 IDEO Methods Cards
 Jump Associates
 Images: www.flickr.com

ACTIVITY: EXPLORING PERSONAL VALUES

This activity explores how we structure our lives, and how our values influence our decisions.

In front of you there are 18 image cards*, depicting a variety of “values.”** Place the cards face up in front of you, in no particular order, and examine them briefly. When prompted, answer the questions by choosing the most relevant cards. There is no correct answer; interpret the cards/images as you see fit (literally or figuratively), and choose what best answers the question for you. Discussion will follow card choices.

* Image cards aim to represent the following values: animals/livestock, transportation, exercise/athletics, prayer/spirituality, health/well-being, money, house/shelter, entertainment/technology, nature/environment, education, relationships/friendships, family, travel, map/location, conversations/community, food, design/art. The blank card is optional; if there is a value that a participant wishes to use and there is no such card, they can draw their own.

** Note: These photos were chosen for this particular workshop scenario. Choose your own photos accordingly, and depending on your research angle. For example, if you are interested in learning more about water usage, choose relevant photos: bodies of water, cups, clean vs. dirty water, money.

Activity Questions:

1. Without prompt, what three images are you immediately drawn to? Why?
2. What “value” is most important to you? Why?
3. When thinking about your ideal job, what image comes to mind? Why?
4. What do you like to spend your money on? Why?
5. How do you fill your freetime? Why?
6. What couldn’t you live without? Why?

NOTES:

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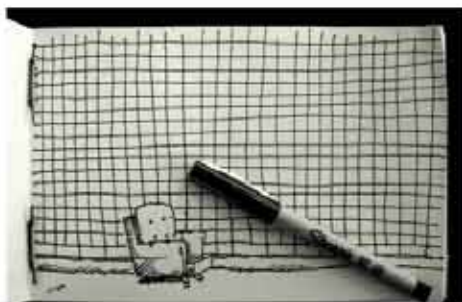
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