

# Pulling Together a Patchwork Reality: Supporting Memory Work of Family Memory Keepers

Jasmine Jones, Advisor: Mark Ackerman, University of Michigan

## Purpose

Exploratory pilot study to understand the practices and significance of keeping multi-generational memories

## Study Design

- ✧ In-depth Interviews
- ✧ Purposive sample (5 total)
- Multi-generational: Grandparents, parents, children
- Multi-cultural: Afro-American (2), Eastern European, Euro-American, East Asian
- 4 Female, 1 Male

## Contribution

- ✧ We discovered that the values and strategies people use to remember **memories that are not their own are fundamentally different** than those engaged in reminiscing on their own past experience
- ✧ Highlight key aspects of the experiences of family memory-keepers, in **finding, restoring, and sharing family memories.**
- ✧ Complement literature on: technology-mediated reminiscence, technology heirlooms, physical and digital mementos, cherishable objects

## Finding Stories

### Motivations

*...maybe they just recently they started feeling old or started feeling like they won't live forever and **they wanted to make sure that we have some connections***

### Hidden / Forgotten Stories

*Now the generation that went back to probably my father and my aunt and uncle, **they probably knew, but they wouldn't tell.** ... People were very hush mouthed. So they just didn't say.*

### Situated & Contextual

*You never just share [a story]. I think when we share things or **when we share family stories, it's prompted by something in the context**, and then the story goes kind of depending on her interest...*

## Restoring Stories

### Reconciling Different Perspectives

*It's all different viewpoints whether its written or oral. I don't know if there is any truth actually. ... Sometimes the record is wrong... You just kinda have to figure out which is the best record to use. **It's a judgment call.***

### Weighing recovery costs

*...Really all I've been able to get there is what was written down by the family just because of the language barrier. ... **figure out where you get the most bang for your buck for the time you have to put in it.***

### Privacy and emotional impact

*If I ask them, I think they would talk about it, but I didn't really ask them. **Sometimes its kinda sad to ask about it.** Because it's a long time ago. It makes you think, I'm old, right?*

## Sharing Stories

### Deciding what is Meaningful

*I think the stories that are the most valuable to keep are probably the ones that reflect the character of the person... So I think **when you can relate to a person...that's really what gives a story context and flavor**, and what makes it meaningful to be passed down.*

### The Creation of Mementos

*She never placed value on them, in fact, they were kind of annoying in various ways. And after my grandmother died, I think she started seeing them differently. ... **It became a sentimental connection** after my grandmother died.*

### Objects + Narratives

*Photographs, they do have a special look to them, that you can say because of the fashion, because of the black and white, you can say, "Oh this is very old." But with china, you really don't have that sense. **It's in a way timeless.** ...overall the time and place is just the story and how that's being created...*

## Future: Supporting Memory Work

- ✧ Tools for collaborative, multi-generational story gathering
- ✧ Enhancing memory objects to preserve & share stories

## Acknowledgements

*This work funded in part by NSF GRF, and supported by Social Worlds Research Group at University of Michigan School of Information.*