Needfinding

Yinlin Zhao, Derrick Chen, Lisa Ing

Yinlin Zhao



Derrick Chen



Lisa Ing



Domain Selection:

How do people form and maintain connections?

- Offline experience, online facilitation
- Broadly relatable, yet individually unique

Guiding questions

1) How do you stay connected with your friends and family?
2) Tell me about your social life.
3) How frequently do you get in touch with friends, family, acquaintances?
4) Tell me about a time when you caught up with someone you haven't seen in a while.
5) Tell me about your memorable hangout.
6) How has your social life changed since high school, college, life?
7) How do you maintain your friendships?
8) What do you find fulfilling about your relationships?



John Doe

27-year-old paramedic



Offlina Exper

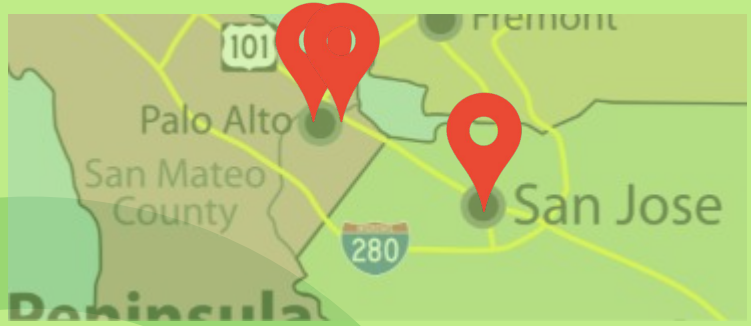
Mom looking for a job



Zhang Wei

Retired harbor pilot

Participant Selection



- Age Range: 27-60+
- Countries of Origin: United States, Germany, China

Methodology:

- Approached potential participants in public settings
- Local voice recording app
- Transcribed with Otter.AI and TinRec
- FigJam for Empathy Maps
- Google Docs for notetaking
- Compensation: Stickers!

John Doe

Night Shift Paramedic — Extreme User



“And so I go back to Chicago, and then I'm like, ‘Hey, are you free?’ And they're like, ‘I didn't even know you were in Chicago’, and so you know, it for the most part works, but sometimes it doesn't, and you know it creates a little bit of frustration on both parties because it's like, damn, I ain't seen your ass in a while, you know?”

John Doe

Night Shift Paramedic — Extreme User



Surprises and Contradictions:

- John Doe groups his friends into concrete Type A / Type B categories and mainly schedules to hangout with his Type A friends and spontaneously hangouts with his Type B friends, despite being Type B himself and doing most of the scheduling.

Offlina Exper

Mom Looking for a Job



“People here are transient. They come here for 3-5 years and then move on. I don’t know if there is an interest to form long relationships.”

Offlina Exper

Mom Looking for a Job



Surprises and Contradictions:

- Most of Offlina's social interactions are now based around activities that her kids participate in, but the activities she most enjoys doing are things her kids are not enthusiastic about.

Zhang Wei

Retired Harbor Pilot



“They had been colleagues for over a decade, so our relationships were never as close as theirs.”

Zhang Wei

Retired Harbor Pilot

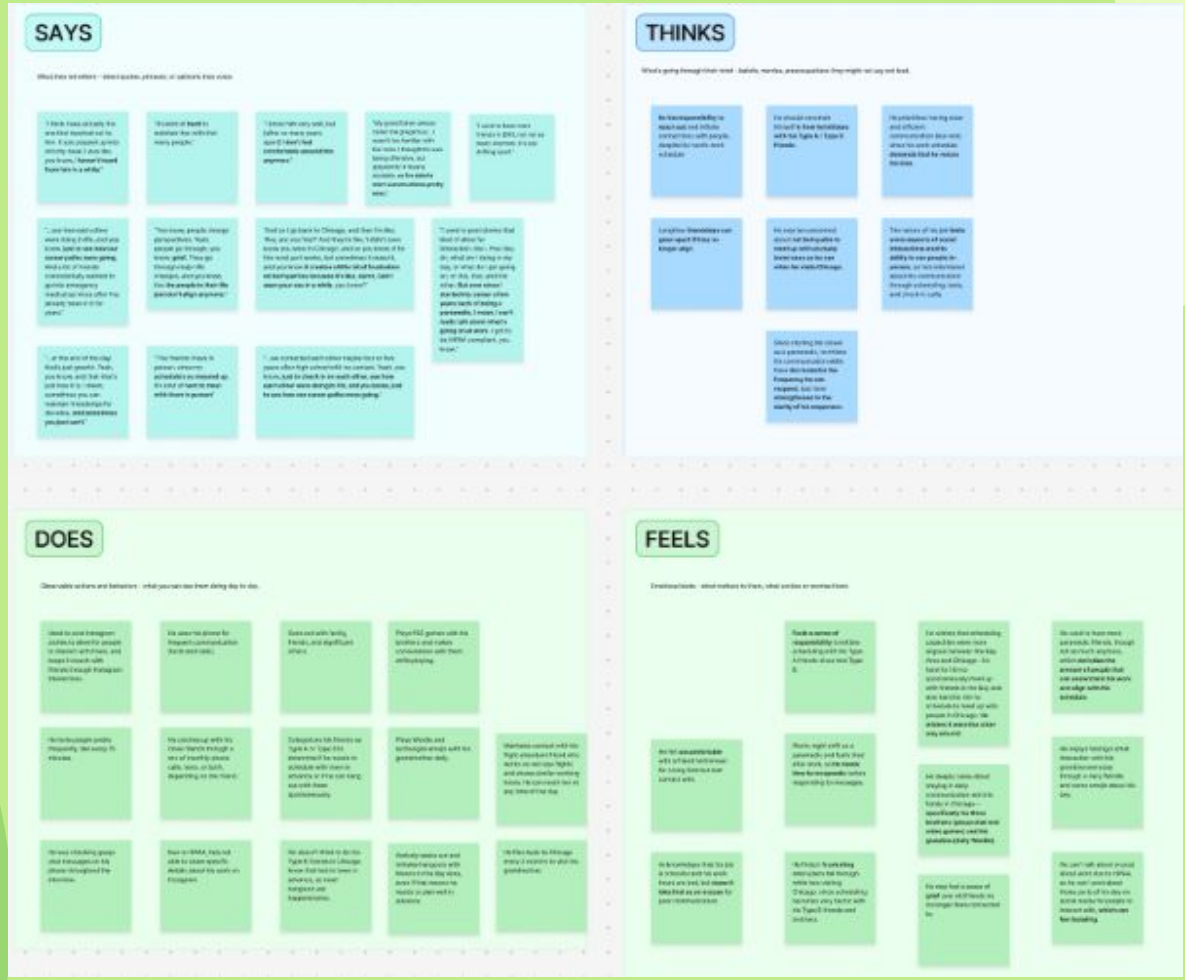


Surprises and Contradictions:

- Zhang Wei's does not maintain frequent or close contact with with his old friends and family. However, now that his son has done the same by moving to Silicon Valley, he video-calls his son every 2 weeks and talks for hours on the phone with him, despite the time zone difference.

Insights and Needs

John Doe



John Doe

He used to have more paramedic friends, though not as much anymore, which **dwindles the amount of people that can understand his work and align with his schedule.**

He may be concerned about **not being able to meet up with as many loved ones as he can when he visits Chicago.**

He prioritizes having clear and efficient communication (like text) since his work schedule **demands that he values his time.**

Maintains contact with his flight attendant friend who works on red-eye flights and shares similar working hours. He can reach her at any time of the day.

Insight: John's unconventional work schedule leads him to feel responsible for planning activities when he does become available.
Need: People want social planning to have less friction while preserving the spontaneity of hangouts.

Feels a sense of responsibility to initiate scheduling with his Type A friends since he's Type B.

Works night shift as a paramedic and feels tired after work, so **he needs time to recuperate** before responding to messages.

"The friends I have in person, since my **schedule's so messed up**, it's kind of **hard to meet with them in person**"

"I know him very well, but [after so many years apart] **I don't feel comfortable around him anymore**."

He was checking group chat messages on his phone throughout the interview.

Offlina Exper



Offlina Exper

Being from Germany and connecting with my heritage is a really important value that I have

Parents are very involved with each other as a community to support their children

Insight: Offlina experiences misalignment between the activities she enjoys and what allows her to spend time with people.
Need: Parents want to pursue their own interests while still fulfilling their parental responsibilities.

Calling her friends monthly and her sister twice a week

There's less whining, my kids are not so much into hiking. I have to always to have find an incentive.

Splitting time with each child so each child gets more personable with each parent

"If you have kids, [meeting new people] is mostly through school."

I'm so far away from childhood friends that I make from my studies. You can really see who keeps in touch with you and keeps it going because its a lot of work.

Accidentally stumbled upon a music concert

Annoyed with the pessimism that German parents have

Saddened by the fact that her social life is not much

Its hard to create deeper connections in America

Zhang Wei



Zhang Wei

There's no reason to reach out to people purposelessly. Relationships are reinforced through shared experience and need

He is melancholy about having grown distanced from many of his old friends and family

Travel to California to visit their son

Sent letters to his wife from the Suez canal

Communication with family is vastly easier now. Maritime satellite systems cover globally for safety and daily vessel tracking, but private calls cost $5-6/min so companies rarely offered it. Later companies granted 10-20 free minutes monthly. Calling cards in US ports were cheap—$5 for 180 minutes. Since calling cards expired in 30 days before our next port visit, we'd use all 180 minutes calling home until running out of topics—it was inconvenient back then.

Insight: Zhang Wei feels active efforts to make and maintain friendships is too disruptive to be worth the effort.
Need: People want connection-forming to be serendipitous and low-risk.

Social connections should be made from face to face interaction

No active attempt to make friends—just among regular colleagues, getting closer to those you click with and keeping distance from those you don't. No deliberate effort. Beyond colleagues, friendly relations formed gradually, plus high school and university classmates. Occasionally childhood friends grown up together, neighborhood peers. ...As for specific principles for developing friends, it's hard to generalize without knowing what angle you mean. Sincerity comes first for us, right? With colleagues, with everyone—friendliness, sincerity, friendliness, perception.

Friendships and deeper relationships should come naturally

He felt worried about the psychological wellbeing of his son and the stress his wife was experiencing

He is worried about overburdening people with his communication since they have their own lives

Learned English to communicate with other sailors

Reflection and Summary

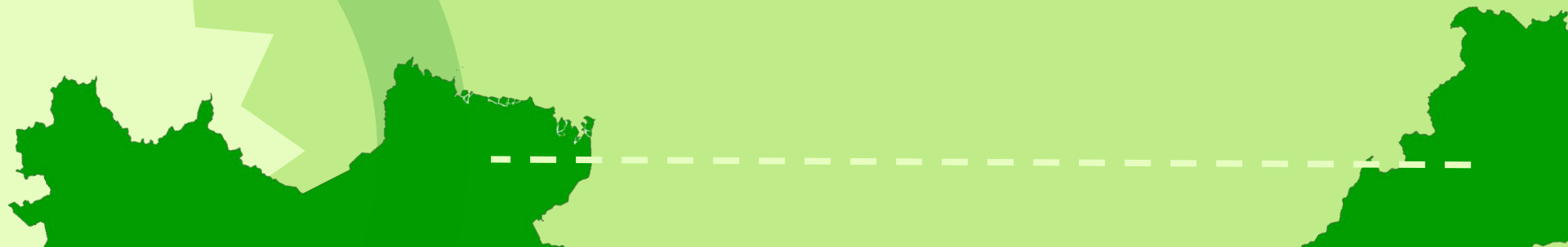
- It can be awkward to run out of questions or forget a good question.
  - Notetaking on pen and paper could help in the future.
  - Typing during the interview feels rude and alienating
- Starting the interview felt intimidating, but it quickly settles into a conversational pace.
- Interviewee stories are emergent
- Many people do not respond ideally to each question
  - Formulate follow-up questions that are encouraging without railroading
  - Find the value in tangents

Summary

Asynchronicity and distance increases the friction involved in forming social bonds

The fear of making trouble for someone often outweighs the desire to connect

Social lives often warp directly around a person's daily occupation and rhythms



What's Next?

- Narrow down our intended user base
- Develop a persona for our intended general user
- Finding additional interview subjects within our narrowed scope