

CS147 | Assignment 2

POVs + Experience Prototypes

Introduction

The team consists of Ian K., Nik B., Uzair I, and Stephanie T.

Problem Domain

Our problem domain is bringing local communities together simply and safely. Our initial needfinding indicated more and more of people's interests and activities are realized online; however, certain activities, particularly those that have a physical aspect, still require an offline interaction. As people continue to form and engage in friendships and local communities online, there is an interesting tension between (1) having the majority of social connections occur online and (2) the conflicting desire to partake in offline activities with these people.

Preliminary POVs

We met Franklin, a junior undergraduate at Stanford who likes playing basketball, football, and clarinet. We were amazed to realize that it's very hard to find someone with similar interest in the community outside the university. It would be game-changing to have a way to get to know people in the local community with the similar interests with smaller foreigner gap.

Additional Needfinding

To further explore what forms foreigner gaps between acquaintances and strangers, we conducted three additional interviews. We asked more specific questions about how people found communities outside of an existing network (e.g. university) and if applicable, stories about meeting online strangers in person.

We talked with Norases, a software engineer at Robinhood who is an avid squash and scrabble player. Norases explained how he formed a squash department at Robinhood and how it is easier to find people at his company with similar interest because they work similar schedules. However, outside of the company, it is more difficult. Outside of work, Norases is also part of a San Francisco based Scrabble club. He found this club from talking with other attendants at the Scrabble competition event at Berkeley.

We met Jorvik, a pizza delivery guy who plays a lot of video games, both with in-person friends and online friends. We discussed how he meets his friends, and he described how many of his friends are random people he met online by being put on the same teams and in the same

player groups when he plays video games. Jorvik noted that he plays 5 - 6 hours per day with these online friends, during which they use voice chat to talk about anything and everything. He has no qualms about meeting his online friends in-person, because he spends so much time getting to know them by talking. To Jorvik, meeting online friends in-person is just like meeting up with real friends, the only difference being that this time there is a face attached to a familiar voice.

Lastly, we got to know James, an undergraduate at Rice University who spends his free time playing ultimate frisbee and Super Smash Bros. James expressed a disinterest in meeting up with strangers to play Super Smash Bros., citing too much effort for too little reward. To James, video games are something that is most enjoyable when playing with other people in the same room, similar to his reasoning for why he enjoy watching football. In contrast, James gave a different, more enthusiastic reaction to the idea of meeting up with strangers to play ultimate frisbee. In fact, this is something he already does and reports much enjoyment from meeting and playing against new people every week. As for James's other online interactions, he uses the internet in such a fashion somewhat sparingly: 30 minutes per day, and only to directly interact with people he knows well in real life. For James, online interaction with people is a last resort to be pursued only when interaction with others in real life is either unfeasible or it passes a certain threshold of inconvenience.

Revised POVs + HMWs

POV 1:

We met Martina, a biostatistics researcher who recently returned to her hometown in Michigan. We were amazed to realize that her preferences of activities require little-to-no offline interaction with others. It would be game-changing to enable mostly online people to comfortably interact with others in the offline world.

How might we...

- Make introvert people be more comfortable to interact with others?
- **Apply online resources and communities to encourage offline interactions?**
- Change the societal expectation that humans must socialize?
- Normalize asociality?
- Normalize the online-only world?
- Let people accept that socializing can be uncomfortable?
- Encourage uncomfortable human interaction within reason?
- Reduce the chance someone is bored during a human interaction offline?
- Add some offline interaction in typically online activities?
- Encourage people to participate in offline activities?

POV 2:

We met Norases, a software engineer at Robinhood, who is an avid squash and scrabble player. We were amazed to realize that it's not very difficult to form a group of people with the same interest within a company he works at, but it's very difficult to form a group outside the company. It would be a game-changing to have a way of bringing people with the same interest together while accelerating the ice-breaking and trust-development process.

How might we...

- Introduce people to existing clubs, and make it easier to discover existing social networks?
- Engage the local community to reduce the foreigner gap for people with the same interest?
- **Make sure that the meeting is safe?**
- Foster safe, easily-accessible communities around shared interests and activities?
- Help address scheduling conflicts?
- Maintain connection between people with the same interest, beyond the initial meeting?
- Allow people to not feel obligated to be part of the community?
- Fully realize an activity through social means?
- Simulate the intimacy that you could find in the physical relationships, across long distances (for example, in online communities)?
- Create a network for people who are new to a shared environment (such as a city or a college) and are interested in exploring or learning more, together?
- Make people feel more comfortable in the new environment?
- Connect people with > 1 mutual interest?
- Quantify what keeps people attached to certain communities, given that one shared interest is often not enough to predict a rapport

POV 3:

We met Jorvik, a pizza delivery guy who plays a lot of video games with in-person friends as well as online friends. We were amazed to realize that he had no qualms about meeting people he only knew from the internet, particularly those whom he had talked to for weeks without knowing what they looked like. It would be game-changing to encourage safe local offline communities from trustworthy online relationships.

- Establish trust in an online relationship?
- Leverage data to analyze the factors that affect trust while meeting in a digital space
- Create safe local communities keeping in mind the limitations of online trust?
- **Ensure that people feel (and are) safe meeting strangers?**
- Have online relationships without a need for local communities?
- Ensure these online relationships are formed first with others actually in the local community?

- Virtualize some form of pseudo-‘local’ community with online people who are physically separated?
- Form a local community with the risk that comes with online relationships?
- Form a online relationship given the stigma surrounding it?

Solutions*

1. Ensure the activity has some trusted mediator.
2. Provide a platform to tag along with a mutual friend (i.e. not a personal friend)
3. A buddy-up system that finds a friend within 1 hop of you to go to some activity together

* See Appendix notes for solution brainstorming notes.

Experience Prototypes

Is the presence of a trusted mediator more likely to encourage a social outing with an acquaintance?

Process

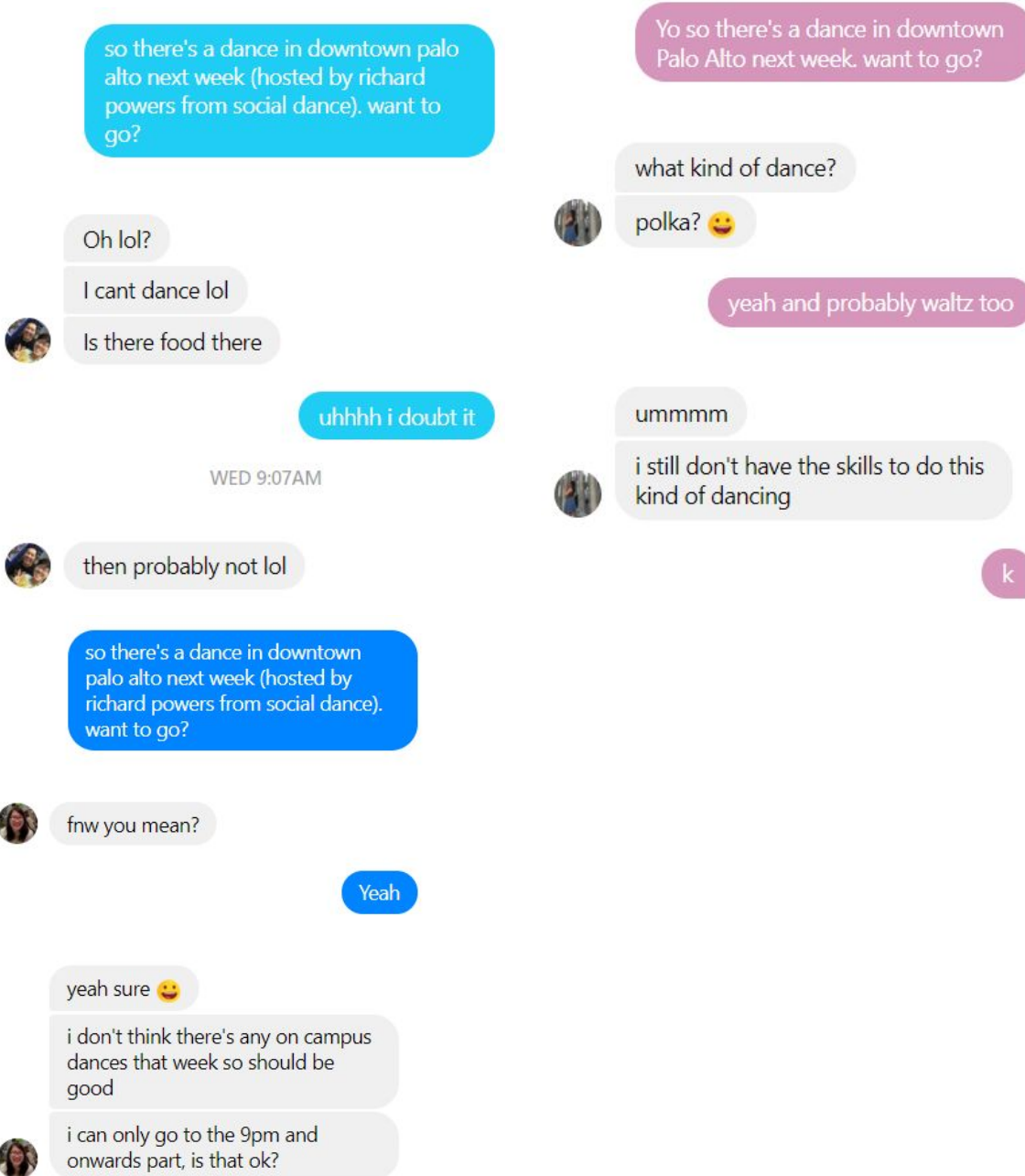
We asked acquaintances and random people around Stanford to attend a local social dance. Our control group was just asked and our test group was asked while dropping Richard Power’s name. We asked in person as well as via text and Messenger. If a person asked follow up questions, we answered on the spot, including date and location details, until we got a clear yes or no answer. After, we debriefed people about our project.

Control Script

There's a dance in downtown Palo Alto next week. Some of the local dance community will be there. Would you be interested in going?

Test Script

There's a dance in downtown Palo Alto next week. It's hosted by Richard Powers, who's teaches social dance at Stanford. Some of the local dance community will be there. Would you be interested in going?



Results

Control: 2 no, 1 no response

Test: 2 yes, 1 maybe, 2 no

Some of the reasoning for responses we got include:

- "It's on a Saturday night. I'd rather play video games then."
- "I'd go if a close friend had asked, but not any acquaintance."
- "There's no food."
- "If it's one of Richard Power's classes, it should be interesting"

User responses suggest that a known mediator (like Richard Powers for social dance) has somewhat of an effect on whether a person said yes; it did require the user to actually know of the mediator. However, many other factors like scheduling, activity interests, and other incentives were prevalent. It appears free food and alcohol is a common incentive to go if someone is not interested in the activity itself.

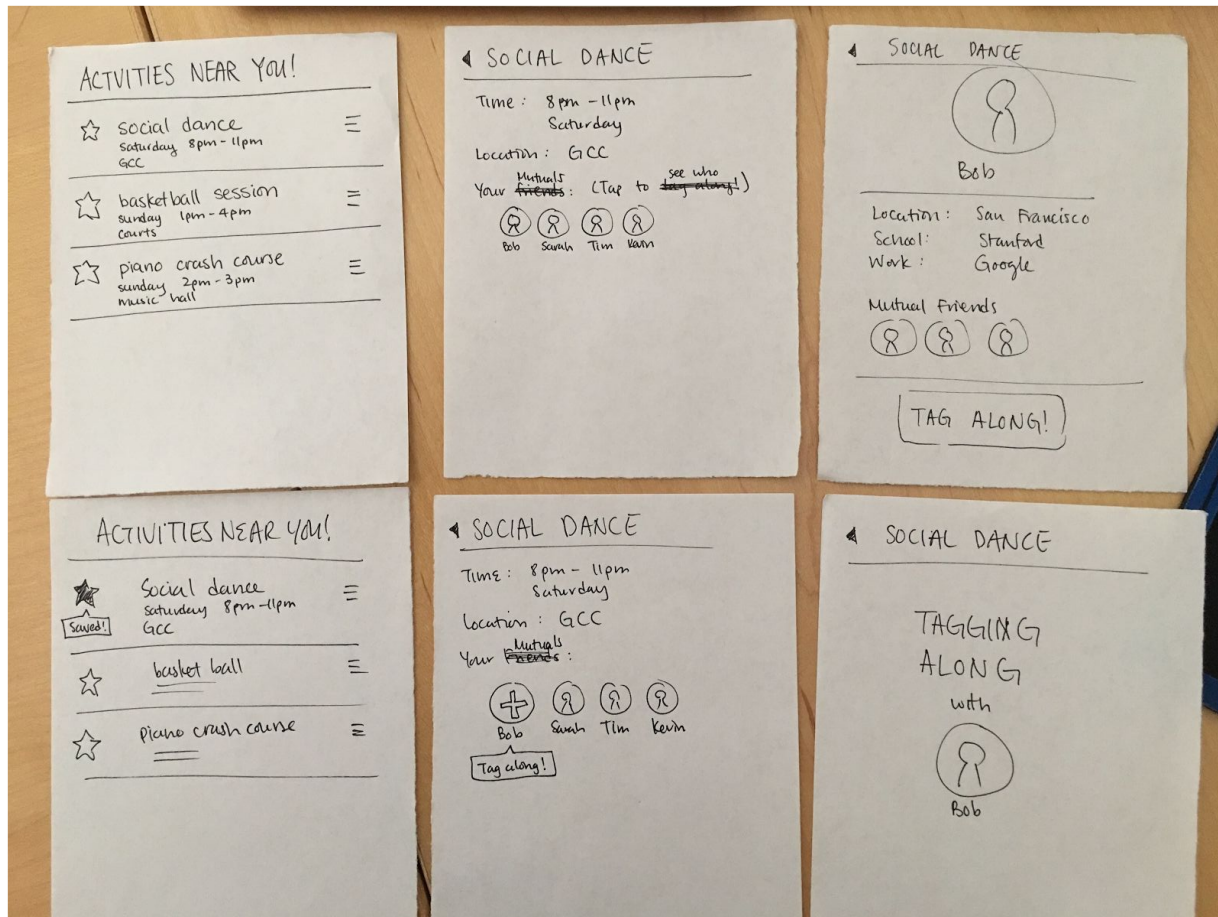
Would people more willing to tag along with an acquaintance if they knew a mutual friend well?

Process

We gave users a paper prototype that represented an interactive application. This application shows nearby activities and shows mutual friends that are going to each activity. We were interested in if having mutual friends was enough to get a person to go somewhere with an acquaintance.

Paper Prototype

- Screen 1: Lists nearby activities and allow user to pick one of interest.
- Screen 2: Lists details for the chosen activity. It also lists “mutuals” (people one hop out of the user’s network) who are also attending the event. There is a button for each mutual to view their profile (Screen 3) and a button to tag along directly (Screen 4). There is a button to go back (Screen 1)
- Screen 3: Profile details of the acquaintance, including location, school, work, and mutual friends. “Mutual friends” are direct friends of the user. There is a button to tag along (Screen 4) and a button to go back (Screen 2)
- Screen 4: Successfully registered for event!



Results

The user was interested in going to some events; however, she had several questions about the mutuals. The user wanted to separate mutual friends from actual friends when tagging along on Screen 2. Being able to see a mutual friend's profile details (location, school, work) seemed to catch user attention

- "Oh this person is at Google? Maybe I'll see him around then"
- "But I don't really know him or who our mutual friends are, so that's kinda sketchy. Let's go back"

In the end, our assumption that going somewhere with an acquaintance with whom one had a mutual friend is not enough of a connection, but having similar connections like workplace does somewhat lessen the foreigner gap.

Would people be convinced to do activities with a personal request?

Process

We first sent a personal request to someone we are really close to do some certain activity that they are equally inclined to say yes and no. For example, 'do you want to play basketball tonight?'. Then, we see their response and attempt to get implicit reasons. We repeat the same

process for acquaintances and observe their responses. Next, we ask people both in group message and facebook group which consist of people who are regularly doing some activities and those who are not regularly doing some other activities. Then, we observe their responses.

Note that because we want this test to be as natural as possible, for the group message and facebook group, we ask a question in the already existing group.

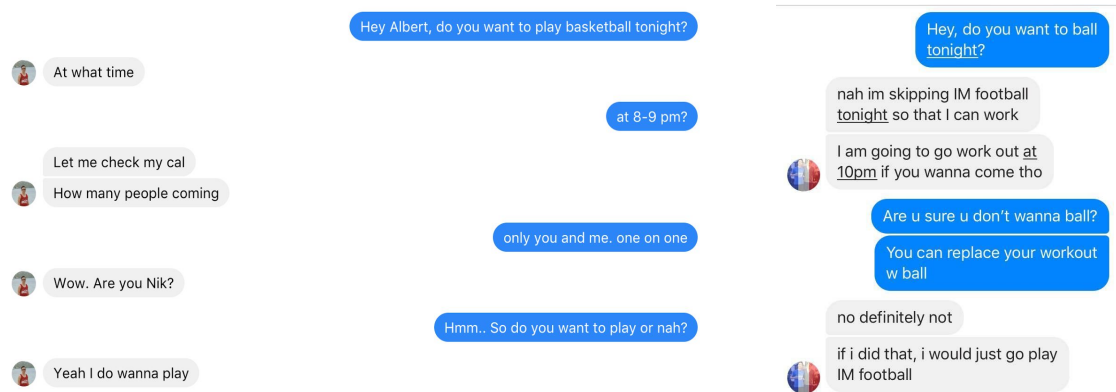


Figure: Response Examples from asking close friends

Results

Our close friends are willing to do the activity through a personal request under the condition that they don't have a conflicted schedule. However, the personal request to acquaintances might not be responded as being regarded as not important request or spam. For the group message, it appears that people who already did the activity regularly are less likely to respond and those who rarely join in are likely to not respond at all. The test shows the inclination that people prefer to respond the message in case of personal request from close friends and more likely to say yes if they don't have conflict schedule.

Key Takeaways

We found that making a personal request with close friends was the most successful in finding people to partake in some activity. The main issue with prototypes #1 and #2 is that there is still a large lack of trust between acquaintances, even with knowledge of certain connections like mutual friends or similar work/school backgrounds. It may be interesting to test out using a personal request to initiate an activity between acquaintances, rather than just indicating the presence of a mutual friend.

Appendix

- [All of our interview notes and brainstorming notes](#)

