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Executive Summary

During this user research, participants were asked questions regarding their experiences when connecting with AAPI members. Participants shared heartfelt moments of meeting someone who can relate to themselves and the importance of feeling understood. Participants were also asked about their habits regarding building connections and friendships. Participants believe in-person engagement is the easiest way to build a friendship, and while virtual connection is challenging and requires more work, they are not against virtual engagement too.

When participants are connecting with another person of AAPI identity, they express that connections happen when there's a space to meet and freely discuss. Participants were either at school or at work when they meet new people, and these interactions lead to conversation and connection. Building a friendship involves conversation, and participants expressed that feeling understood leads to a continuing conversation. Participants said that, when connecting with another person of AAPI identity, they were able to connect about food, Asian culture and habits, home, and language. Participants discussed that food, language, and culture were major components of building a connection with someone of AAPI identity. They felt more understood when an AAPI member was able to discuss their food, language, and culture with them rather than a person of another race. I think one of the key goals of the Mix & Match app will be to elicit feelings of being understood with respect to AAPI identity, because it creates a sense of community and validation.

Conversations with a person who does not identify as AAPI require some hobby or interest to be established to build a connection. Participants said that making friends requires there to be at least one shared interest so the conversation has a direction. Participants have typically sought connection when in a new environment, because they are more likely to engage with others and try to build a connection. The environment needs to provide opportunities for engagement. If one person is across the room, it'll be hard to build a connection. People need to be able to talk about what they would like. So in an organized activity, participants would have to stay on task rather than freely conversing. I also believe that the consistent frequency of seeing another person through school or work promotes friendship building, because there isn't a pressure to determine if you want to be friends after one interaction. This leads me to believe it is less likely to build connections through a quick interaction like a coffee shop or shopping mall. In other situations like coffee shops or shopping malls, someone would need to determine if they wanted to continue the connection by exchanging contact information, scheduling a time to meet, and then expending extra energy to meet up. Both school and work locations are already established and routine. Is there a way to provide a space that users can visit and build connections naturally?

With respect to virtual connection, this gets much trickier. Participants will engage in texting to keep up with friends, but participants both emphasized that in-person interaction made

virtual connections easier, because they already had experience engaging with the person. Participants expressed that they believe virtual connections can only go so far, and at some point an in-person meet up would be desired if the connection were to continue to grow. Participants said that in-person is the fastest and easiest way to build a connection and friendship.

Outside of texting, video games were mentioned by both participants as a medium for connection. Participants both mentioned that activities and shared goals facilitate connection, and that video games lead to connections and friendships. Even though these connections may not be with AAPI members, this is an example of a virtual connection that people take the time and energy to engage in. The game may provide an environment that facilitates engagement, but how much does it facilitate conversation? This depends on the game. If the game has a shared goal, users will focus on teamwork to achieve the goal. Depending on the difficulty of the shared goal, users may engage in side conversation that builds connection or they may limit conversation to strategizing how to achieve the goal. Users expend time and energy to convey the state and situation of the game too.

Participants expressed that games were played either for individual or for group interest. Some play for themselves and then engage with others virtually when they need assistance. Some play for their friends and will play a game they are not as interested in so they can have fun with their friends. There seems to be a threshold for why people are willing to engage in virtually when playing a game. Some have a personal interest and some are influenced by the interest of others. I think factoring a game into the app could be a great way to get people engaged and may facilitate conversation.

When asking the participants what information they would like to know before virtually connecting with someone, they expressed that interests/hobbies are a requirement. Interests and hobbies will inform the user if there is something that could spark a conversation which may lead to a connection. Both participants conveyed that the intent in conversations with a virtual match is to gauge how engaged the other person is and if there is good chemistry between the two people. If this is lacking, the conversation will not be continued. Participants expressed what lacking engagement means by describing it as short responses and boring responses. This lack of engagement signaled to the participants that the other person was not interested and there was no spark.

Both participants continued to expand upon what information they would like to be provided in a virtual profile. More information seems to be nice but not required. The more information that is provided, then the more personable the person seems. This leads me to believe that a cookie cutter profile may not be interesting enough to warrant a desire to connect and build a friendship. Instead, finding a method to convey a reason for connecting would lead to more desires to connect. Participants mentioned a few different factors that could be nice to know that would better inform them about a person which include geographical region and pictures (not specifically selfies). The geographical region could spark a conversation about what it's like to live in said region. The pictures could spark a conversation about the details of the picture and what's happening at the time.

When building a connection with a member of the AAPI community, a successful connection is a friendship where both members feel heard and understood. The members are able to freely discuss, laugh, and enjoy their food, language, and culture without being questioned or feeling misunderstood. Participants aren't actively searching for members of the AAPI community to connect with. Participants currently meet other AAPI members through school or work. Potentially providing more opportunities and spaces for AAPI members to engage could lead to more connections. To differentiate from facebook groups and meetups.com, providing more structure to one-to-one interactions rather than big groups could be more effective for building a friendship.

Personas

1. Misako Sato

a. Key attributes

- i. AAPI Identity: Japanese American
- ii. Age: 18
- iii. Generation: 1st Generation (first person in their family to immigrate to America)

b. Description

Misako Sato immigrated to America when she turned 18. Her parents wanted to send her to an American school, so she could have a better chance at life. Misako comes from a small village in Japan called Tsumago. It is rich in history and nature. While growing up, Misako loved the outdoors and helped out in her family's garden since before she could remember. In America, college has been especially challenging, because the culture was vastly different. She feels isolated from her family, and she can't visit them very often. She is excelling in college, but she has had a hard time making friends, because she is overwhelmed by the changes of moving to a new country.

2. Matthew Zhang

a. Key attributes

- i. AAPI Identity: Chinese Indonesian American
- ii. Age: 27
- iii. Generation: 1.5 Generation (immigrated with their parents to American while growing up)

b. Description

Matthew Zhang immigrated to America with his parents when he turned 10. He used to attend school in China, and the schooling was very rigorous. Upon switching to an American school, Matthew's grade improved. Matthew's family continued to speak Mandarin at home, and Matthew's parents packed his lunch with foods made from home. When Matthew would go to school, the other kids would ask him what he was having for lunch. In middle school, Matthew found a few other asian friends that didn't ask him what he was eating for lunch but rather

commented about how yummy the food must be. Matthew became friends with Johnny and Andrew, and the three became close friends who talked about anything and everything. Talking about food led the three to be foodies, and they started trying new restaurants together when they grew up. They shared the familial pressure to succeed and get straight A's. After college, they moved away from each other, but they have a group chat to share the new foods they're trying and the new stresses of their jobs.

3. Julie Li

a. Key attributes

- i. AAPI Identity: Chinese American
- ii. Age: 18
- iii. Generation: 2nd Generation (born in America to parents who immigrated to America)

b. Description

Julie grew up speaking Mandarin at home and English at school. Kids would ask her what her "real name" was. Julie's family called her Jieyu, but Julie always felt uncomfortable telling other kids that. Julie went to an after school program and met another girl named Mei, and they braided each other's hair. They talked about the pretty dresses they were going to wear for Chinese New Year, and they always included the color red in their drawings. They grew up to be best friends, and they met some more friends named Lilly and Oona, two sisters who moved into the school district. The four built a community among themselves and always remembered to celebrate their holidays with delicious food and crafts.

4. Isabella (Bella) Richard

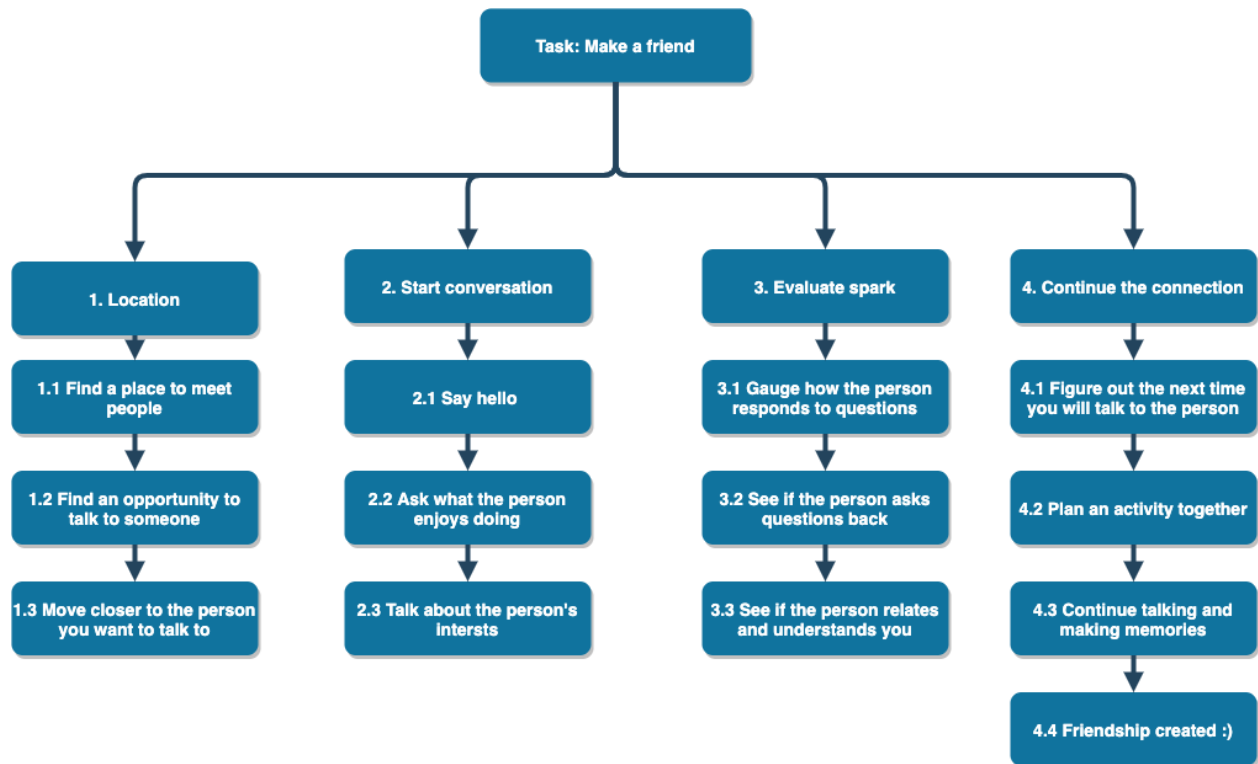
a. Key attributes

- i. AAPI identity: Chinese American
- ii. Age: 21
- iii. Generation: 1st Generation, adopted into American family

b. Description

Bella was adopted from China when she was one and brought to America by Abby and James Richard. Bella grew up with American traditions of celebrating Thanksgiving and Christmas. Although Bella doesn't like turkey, she enjoys stuffing and pumpkin pie. She grew up using Snapchat and shopping at Forever 21. Bella's friends were all white. Her friends would comment on her beautiful skin and that she didn't need makeup. Teachers would tell her she's naturally gifted at math which is why she excelled. Bella moved across the country for college, and she started getting involved with AAPI clubs. She learned about Asian cultures and foods and she's excited to learn more.

Task Models



Interview Script & Questions

Introduction

Hi. Thank you for helping me with this user research.

I'm working on a project to connect AAPI members, because I think it can be challenging to find someone who identifies as an AAPI member.

I personally identify as Asian, and I believe meeting other Asians would help me feel valued.

I'm interested in asking you a few questions about your experiences and what you would like. It'll take approximately 30 minutes.

I'm going to listen and jot down some notes. The information you provide will be used anonymously.

Do you have any questions?

Questions

- First, could you tell me how you identify as an AAPI member?
 -
- Could you tell me about a time when you met someone who identified as (insert same AAPI identity as subject said)? What did it feel like to connect with someone of the same AAPI identity compared to another racial identity? (Note: understand people's need to connect with someone like themselves)
 -
- How do you connect with people virtually? (Why do you use these methods?)
 -
- Could you describe a virtual relationship you have and how it developed?
 -
- Okay. I'm going to describe a couple scenarios to you, and I want to hear how you engage in them. (Note: See if there is a difference between a virtual stranger versus a matching identity virtual stranger)
 - Scenario 1: You're using an app to connect with people. How do you find someone to connect with? What do you talk about when you find someone?
 -
 - Scenario 2: You're using an app to connect with people, except this app connects people based on AAPI identities. Describe what you talk about when you find someone?
 -
- In both scenarios, you connected with someone virtually. How do you determine if you want to continue the conversation or end it after a single conversation? (Note: purpose is to understand comfort/trust with virtual versus in-person interactions)
 -
- In a virtual profile, there's information provided to you about the person. What information do you want to see before you decide to connect with the person?
 -
- What concerns do you have about virtually connecting with someone? How can these concerns be mitigated?
 -

Conclusion

Okay, great. Thank you so much for your help!

Interview Notes

- Template for Notes
 - First, could you tell me how you identify as an AAPI member?

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- Could you tell me about a time when you met someone who identified as (insert same AAPI identity as subject said)? What did it feel like to connect with someone of the same AAPI identity compared to another racial identity? (Note: understand people's need to connect with someone like themselves)
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- In a virtual profile, there's information provided to you about the person. What information do you want to see before you decide to connect with the person?
-
- What concerns do you have about virtually connecting with someone? How can these concerns be mitigated?
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● Person

- First, could you tell me how you identify as an AAPI member?
 - Vietnamese American
- Could you tell me about a time when you met someone who identified as (insert same AAPI identity as subject said)? What did it feel like to connect with someone of the same AAPI identity compared to another racial identity?
 - Food, grades pressure, why I can't do things, my parents values. No questions or push to be different
 - Feel understood and they relate
 - Support for presentations on mochi and fortune cookies but not tofu. But her friends supported her

- Were called FAB :((four Asian b****es) but her friends were so close. The girl was mean to them but they had a sense of community which built a shield. against criticism
- In a crowded room, she would choose to sit near girls and minorities
- How do you connect with people virtually?
 - it's so hard
 - Texting
 - Don't zoom
 - Instagram or discord
 - Not super effective. Conversation is slow. Lots of small talk
- Could you describe a virtual relationship you have and how it developed?
 - Don't know many people virtually
 - For in person, even seeing a few times before, makes virtual easier
 - In person → easier to expedite process of friendship and makes zoom easier
 - Over text. Don't get to learn that much.
- Okay. I'm going to describe a couple scenarios to you, and I want to hear how you engage in them. (Note: See if there is a difference between a virtual stranger versus a matching identity virtual stranger)
 - Scenario 1: You're using an app to connect with people. How do you find someone to connect with? What do you talk about when you find someone?
 - Looking for one thing in common no matter how little
 - Topic doesn't matter as long as we're both interested. If they're interested interested and I'm not, how can I continue the conversation because I'm not well informed
 - Remember one of my friends talking about ice cream flavors
 - As long as both people care about it
 - Scenario 2: You're using an app to connect with people, except this app connects people based on AAPI identities. Describe what you talk about when you find someone?
 - Food. Easiest one
 - Languages we speak. Different dialects of Vietnamese so changes what culture and foods they eat
 - Most of the friends I've met don't know the language as well. So not as invested in the culture. Maybe as kids not as involved so harder to connect. So that's why food makes sense and is "pretty safe" to talk about. Because their parents probably eat it
- In both scenarios, you connected with someone virtually. How do you determine if you want to continue the conversation or end it after a single conversation?
 - gauging how they interact in conversation
 - Are the answers short. Think they're not interested
 - If they respond and continue the conversation

- In a virtual profile, there's information provided to you about the person. What information do you want to see before you decide to connect with the person?
 - interests so it can inform topic of conversation
 - Demographic: age and sex, region
 - Region informs. California is the Asian hub. Asian heritage isn't lacking there.
 - People here, hard to find restaurants and their cultural foods
 - Even if Asian hub, we don't have China Town.
 - In China Town, more opportunities to enjoy their culture and heritages
 - Can reach out to people that live in an area they want to be in and can ask what's around
- What concerns do you have about virtually connecting with someone? How can these concerns be mitigated?
 - keeping conversation is really difficult
 - Continuous conversation is really important
 - In person, you can look around and get inspiration for topic. But texting is hard
 - Actually sticking with it

● Person

- First, could you tell me how you identify as an AAPI member?
 - Chinese Indonesian American
 - Generation 1.5. Born in a foreign land then moved here. Grew up part in foreign land and grew up here
 - Gen 1. Grew up in country
 - Gen 2. Parents were there but you grew up in next country
- Could you tell me about a time when you met someone who identified as (insert same AAPI identity as subject said)? What did it feel like to connect with someone of the same AAPI identity compared to another racial identity? (Note: understand people's need to connect with someone like themselves)
 - Grew up with a bunch of Chinese Indonesian back in Indonesia but not Chinese Indonesian American
 - After moving to states, wasn't in contact until about 10th grade. Went to pot luck of Indonesians so met Chinese Indonesian American
 - Next encounter would be when he started class in senior year of fall in 2017. Met someone on eboard who was also Chinese Indonesian American. Moved here for college. That was cool
 - Then he met Andrew who was second gen. Also Chinese Indonesian American
 - Feels like I can actually talk about home. Talk about food that you grew up with. Talk about language orientated jokes, funny grammar in Indonesian. Talk about homeland and family. Talking about family is a lot easier with someone of same culture. Can talk Indonesian or English. It's awesome
- How do you connect with people virtually? (Why do you use these methods?)
 - Usually over text

- When things get more connected, then facetime, then meet in person if we really feel a connection
- Text is less committed way initially. Not committed to befriend immediately. Even if chinese indonesian, not automatically friend. Gauge personality. Over time, if using the AAPI platform, want to be able to see them
 - Gives more of a personal touch to meet in person. Not like talking to a bot. Just texting over time feels like the connection can only grow so much. But seeing them in person, gives more personal touch
- Could you describe a virtual relationship you have and how it developed?
 - *needed clarification on only virtual
 - Befriended all of them in person first
 - Been acquaintances with them first in person. Then strengthened the relationship online
 - No experience meeting someone only virtually
 - The only time that happened was when he was playing ruinscape. He was doing missions with someone. Don't even know their real names. You go around and you yell that you need help with a quest and ask for a partner. Or you're in a game together and say gg and ask if they want to do something together in ruinscape. And then you ask them where they're from. Met someone from Toronto
 - Add them to your friends list
 - You can see when they log on. And you can do more quests with them. Easier to find a partner
- Okay. I'm going to describe a couple scenarios to you, and I want to hear how you engage in them. (Note: See if there is a difference between a virtual stranger versus a matching identity virtual stranger)
 - Scenario 1: You're using an app to connect with people. How do you find someone to connect with? What do you talk about when you find someone?
 - Pictures would usually be the best
 - Looking at friendships and how they've developed, the spark has been when they post something interesting. Like food or cultural attire or celebration that you don't see very often. You see that, comment on that, match with them. Talk about how cool it is and see where the conversation goes
 - Scenario 2: You're using an app to connect with people, except this app connects people based on AAPI identities. Describe what you talk about when you find someone?
 - *I spoke too quickly and had to repeat myself
 - Hey you're indonesian too

- If it's just AAPI, I feel like it needs to be something more. Can't be they're just AAPI too
 - If they're into hotpot or boba or korean barbeque or karaoke
 - Food is a go to for AAPI friends or parents or childhood stories
- In both scenarios, you connected with someone virtually. How do you determine if you want to continue the conversation or end it after a single conversation? (Note: purpose is to understand comfort/trust with virtual versus in-person interactions)
 - It's pretty obvious based on how they respond
 - If they reply with some boring reply like "lol"
 - Are you asking how I determine if there's a spark? I don't think it's something I can put a pin on
 - If we're just not clicking, I don't think the relationship will go any further
- In a virtual profile, there's information provided to you about the person. What information do you want to see before you decide to connect with the person?
 - Interests, hobbies
 - Picture would be nice
 - After that, the more they share, the more personable they are
 - But interests and hobbies and picture are the most basic. Too little than that seems like they don't care
 - But not required for religion or political party, but it's interesting to know where they stand on those things
- What concerns do you have about virtually connecting with someone? How can these concerns be mitigated?
 - That they're either a catfish or they're a bot or they're trying to scam me
 - That's really it
 - Not really afraid of anything
 - Maybe if they're a serial killer. That's concerning
 - Mitigated: Identity check maybe, like Lyft IDs their drivers or something. And then you can do, idk, background check. Have a way to report someone if they're being creepy
 - He would do a background check to use social media. He says if it gives people a sense of comfort. He uses a fake name for facebook for games so they don't spam him
 - If feels like if he's serious about the app, he's willing to do a background check. But then he feels like it might be exclusive tinder. But then it has to be how willing i am to meet AAPI people.
 - Why would i go through the hoops of proving identity if I'm not invested
 - There's a tinder for rich people. It feels like that