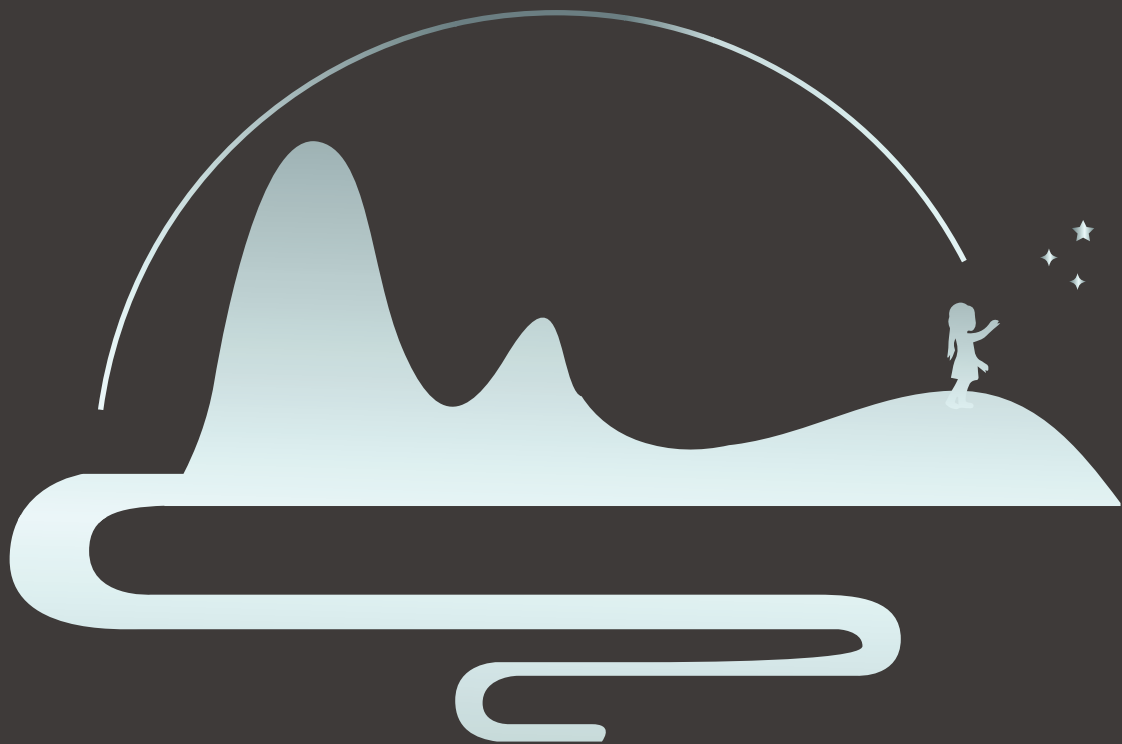


School of Visual Arts



No one is an island
没有人是一座孤岛

Design for social innovation
Zhengze Jia
Advisor: Mari Nakano



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PREFACE

01

Something about me

My work and commitment to the mental health issues of AAPI immigrant youth draws from personal experiences.

I'm a child of a typical traditional Chinese family. I lived with my parents and grandparents when I was a child in Wuhan, China. My grandparents were teachers back in the 1950S, and they experienced the Anti-Japanese war, Cultural revolution, and Chinese civil war. My parents are doctors with nearly 30 years' experience.

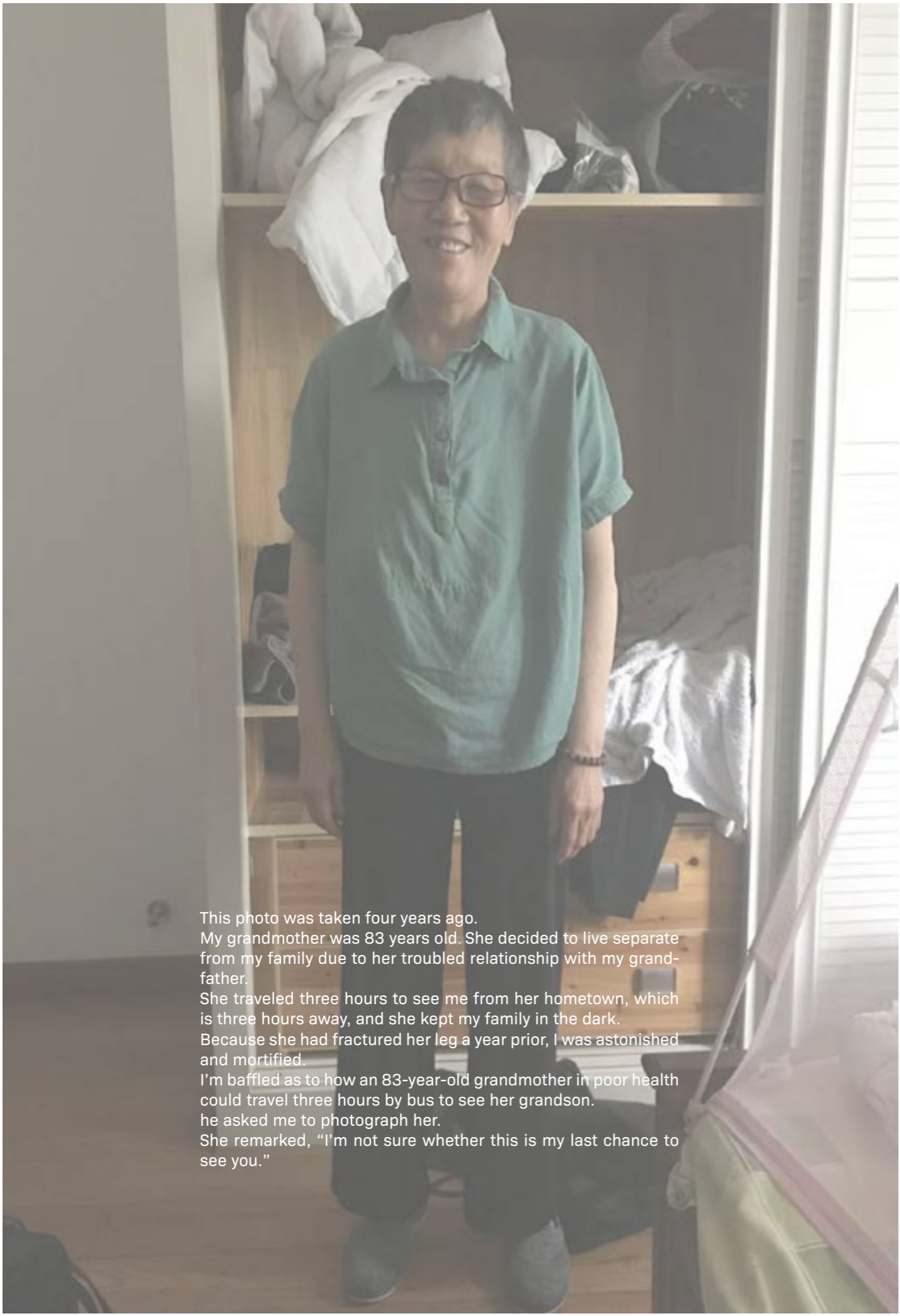
I'm the only child in my family and lived with my grandparents until I was five, then moved to Wuhan from their hometown to live with my parents. My family is the epitome of thousands of families in China. My parents worked very hard and sacrificed for the family to provide a better living for my generation.

I came to the U.S. seven years ago to study abroad. I went to Boston and then transferred to the University of Iowa to study Journalism and Art, which were critical to my career development and also further grounded me in the importance of understanding personal experiences and trauma responses.

I haven't talked to my mom for almost six years, and I barely contacted my family once since I came to the U.S. It is unhealthy; we have not had a deep or real conversation about our circumstances, and there has never been a deep and real conversation between generations.

Last year, I finally decided to see a therapist. I have experienced depression and anxiety on and off since middle school but silently struggled and tried to normalize it for many years. I thought those emotions were just from myself being hypocritical. For many years I felt empty and lonely where I was in a never-ending battle with my thoughts, and I believed there was no way out. I would continue to push forward, suppressing what I was feeling because that was what I had been accustomed to doing since I was young.

Because I've been there. I hope this work could help someone from the AAPI(Asian American and Pacific Islander) families to connect with someone and find a community of their own.



This photo was taken four years ago. My grandmother was 83 years old. She decided to live separate from my family due to her troubled relationship with my grandfather. She traveled three hours to see me from her hometown, which is three hours away, and she kept my family in the dark. Because she had fractured her leg a year prior, I was astonished and mortified. I'm baffled as to how an 83-year-old grandmother in poor health could travel three hours by bus to see her grandson. He asked me to photograph her. She remarked, "I'm not sure whether this is my last chance to see you."

My dynamics of this project

The core of my project has focused specifically on the second generation of AAPI immigrant families in the US.

As a young Asian student from China who spent seven years in the U.S. I feel very connected with the children of AAPI immigrants, especially in the years with increasing numbers of hate crimes against Asian communities.

In this project, I started with elderly care and service for AAPI immigrants in the U.S. and safety problems connected with Anti-AAPI Hate. The reason that I chose this topic is that I know the caregivers' services and the market was in disarray in China; people are unable to find reliable sources and services for their elderly parents. I also spent a long time finding a caregiver for my grandmother, who lives with and has been bed-ridden all the time due to health problems. My family found a couple of caregivers for her, but she told me she was not satisfied with their services. Thus, I designed an app in 2019 which aimed to help older people to access better services for senior age wellness.

I had a hard time connecting with local elderly organizations in NYC. However, I realized that what my grandmother truly wanted was not physical needs but mental support from the family. She has not been satisfied with the caregivers and elderly centers because she wants to live with my grandfather and my father.

I have been asking myself why each of my family members has to live separately? Why is everyone in the family not happy? Why is it so hard for them to talk to each other? What factors lead to this relationship?

Then I pivoted my research to intergenerational trauma within the AAPI immigrant families. In my research, I found that intergenerational trauma is just a part of the factors that cause the disconnection between the children of AAPI immigrants and their immigrant parents. All of these insights led me to the mental health and wellness problem in the AAPI immigrant community.

CONTEXT

02

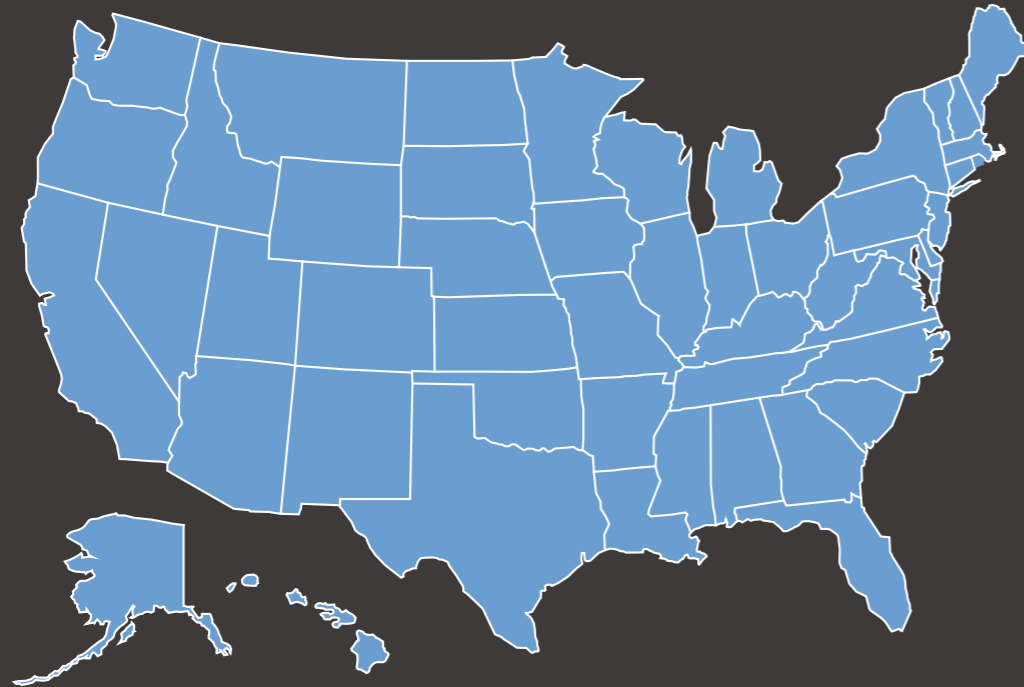
Introduction

The second generation of AAPI Americans have long been an underserved and understudied group with regard to mental health and the research surrounding it. This research reached out 12 people of second-generation of Chinese American immigrant families, 2 people of second-generation of Vietnamese immigrant families, one people of second-generation of Malaysia immigrant family, and one people from Korean American immigrant family. I reckon that this work may not be able to reflect the whole AAPI diaspora; Ideally, I want this work to reflect some perspectives of AAPI community. In this research, I also seeks to reveal hidden feelings, and address the mental health wellness of this population. AAPI Americans tend to underuse mental health services compared to the general population, with only 28% of AAPI Americans with a probable diagnosis seeking mental health treatment compared to 54% of the general population¹. The second generation—children of the AAPI first-generation immigrants face many barriers when it comes to accessing adequate care, including language, lack of knowledge about resources, stereotypes as a “model minority”, therefore, leaving them to be unable to understand their feelings, and amidst cultural stigmas around mental health.

The mental challenges they face are unique, complex, and relevant with cultural context. The barriers and stereotypes of Asian tradition also prevented the second generation of Asian immigrants from talking about feelings and mental conditions; the labels of mental health such as “crazy” “fragile” and “weak” . On the other hand, when the parents find that their children have a mental illness, they blame their children’s character and feel ashamed for their poor parenting. Even though they would like to help, they do not know what to do because of the lack of awareness and mental resources in the community.

¹ Le Meyer, Zane, Cho, & Takeuchi, 2009

DATA BACKGROUND



6.1%

of the U.S. population identifies as Asian American or Pacific Islander.

15%

of them reported having a mental illness in the past year.

Serious mental illness rose from

2.9%-5.6%

in AAPI people age 18-25 between 2008-2018

Major depressive episodes increased from

10%-13.6%

in AAPI people age 12-17 between 2015-2018

And

8.9%-10.1%

in young adults age 18-25 between 2015-2018

That is over

2.900.000.000

people from AAPI community

INFLUENCING FACTORS

03

● Asian cultural values

● Family Pressure

● Social stereotypes

Photo from Adobe stock



The sculpture of Confucius in NYC Chinatown. Confucianism is an ancient Chinese belief system which has great influences on the value system of East Asia, it focuses on the importance of personal ethics and morality.

ASIAN CULTURAL VALUES

Culture shapes the expression and recognition of mental health problems. The influence of the teachings and philosophies of Confucian, collectivist tradition discourages open displays of emotions in order to maintain social and familial harmony or to avoid exposure of personal weakness.

● Stigmas & Taboos

Talking about mental health is a taboo in many Asian cultures. Speaking out about mental illness can be seen as a sign of weakness and a source of shame for the family.

● Value of independence

The children of AAPI immigrants has been told to be self-independent to prove their capacities. Whereas elderly AAPI immigrants emphasize independence as a means to maintain their self-esteem and to avoid becoming burdens to their children. Most elderly AAPI immigrants prefer to have their children move in with them rather than moving in with their children.

● Confucianism

Confucianism is an ancient Chinese philosophical tradition. This idealism highlighted the ideal that personal value should depend on someone's ability to take care of their family and community. Thus, this idea leads to the idea that mental health problems could be the result of a lack of self-discipline and a weakness of character



Photo from Adobe stock

FAMILY PRESSURE

Many cultural traditions within AAPI communities emphasize “collectivist” values, where personal identity is defined by the interconnectedness and relationships with other community members. The needs and interests of the community often take priority over the needs and wants of each person.

● Eating bitterness

It’s a phrase and concept commonly imparted among the AAPI families passed between parents and children. Eating bitter also has a deeper meaning that success requires sacrifice. If you want to achieve something good it requires an investment of time and effort, and so you have to do what is necessary to earn it. This also indicates the ability to endure and overcome all kinds of trials and is regarded as a fundamental part of the Chinese character. Also, Asian culture accepts suffering as a natural part of life.

“Eating bitterness is a blessing, my mom says that all the time.” Stephine

● Saving Face

Saving faces refer to the ability to preserve the public appearance of the patient and family for the sake of community property—is extremely important to most Asian racial groups. Saving faces also refers to protecting the family’s reputation in Asian families.

“My parents hid the fact tht I was in therapy from their circle of friends and community.” Haru

● Family sacrifice & Expectations

Children of immigrants grew up hearing stories of their parents' homeland, of danger and conflict they escaped, and the sacrifices they made to immigrate to their country of residence without any resources. The children have been told that their family sacrificed so much for them in order to provide them a better and stable life. Thus, immigrant parents have high expectations of their children's success. However, these expectations place a significant amount of responsibility and pressure on their children, and many of these children end up feeling guilty for not living up to expectations

"I still remember once, Mom kicked me out of the house when I was a sixth grade student because I got a C on a school exam." Aaron

"I imagine how hard it must be for them to imagine freedom, when they had to choose to sacrifice too much for their own happiness for mine." Jenny

● Hierarchy & Patriarchy

Traditional Asian families place great value on the family as a unit. Each individual has a clearly defined role and position in the family hierarchy, which is determined by age, gender, and social class. Each person is expected to function within that role, submitting to the larger needs of the family.

● Gender stereotype

In traditional Asian American families, major decision-making is the purview of the father, followed by the oldest son who receives preferential treatment on the assumption that he will accept greater responsibility in the care of the family.

The mother's job is to nurture and care for her husband and children. Female children have a lower status than male children within the family. In some cultures, such as the Chinese, the wife is expected to become part of her husband's family.





Photo from Adobe stock

SOCIAL STEREOTYPES

The racism, foreigner stereotype, and the myth of model minority tends to affect second-generation AAPI immigrants more than first-generation immigrants.

● Model minority

The myth of the model minority is based in stereotypes. It perpetuates a narrative in which Asian American children are “whiz kids” or musical geniuses¹. This myth also indicates that some ethnic minorities are examples by others, this myth applies to many Asian immigrant communities. It has historically led to ethnic segregation, and promoting this stereotype will impact the well-being of mental health of Asian immigrants.

I found out that this concept is the root cause of stress. The children in the Asian immigrant community have been told that they are destined to succeed, they are expected to change the fate of the family, and failure comes as a devastating hit to their mental health.

● Foreigner stereotype

Foreigner stereotype is a form of systemic racism used against Asian Americans. They have historically been stereotyped as foreigners in the United States no matter their duration of time living here or whether they were American-born. This stereotype occurs when someone is assumed to be born in other countries or doesn't speak English. Some questions like where are you from? Where are you really from? This increases feelings of isolation and loneliness by being presumed as an outsider based on your race.

“I think the problem is people don't even realize this is the problem” Jen-Ling

¹ What is Model Minority Myth? Sarah-Soonling Blackburn Mar 21, 2019

● Racism

Racism is not a new thing to the AAPI community. The online reporting center Stop AAPI Hate documented nearly 3,800 cases of anti-Asian hate between March of last year and February of last year. The pandemic and rising violence toward the Asian American community are leaving many afraid for their families and their own personal safety.

● Identity Loss

Some of my participants came to the U.S with their parents at an early age. Most of them had a hard time and struggled with the tension between American and Non-American identities. They were forced to adapt a new culture that changes how individuals act and feel, and impact on their cultural identity. The feeling of “stuck in the middle” is what I hear the most.

“It is really hard to find someone who matches up with my background to talk with. I feel like I’m stuck in the middle. I’m too Americanized for my parents, but also too Asianize for my friends.” Jen-Ling





Photo from Adobe stock

RESULTS OF INFLUENCING FACTORS

With all of the stigmas, taboos and influences from the perspective of culture, family and society, the pressure will cause the problem of lack of awareness and no access of sharing. On top of that, the suppressed feelings will finally lead to the mental health issues of children of AAPI immigrants.

● Lack of awareness

Underlying all these factors is the stigmas and taboos against mental health. The children of AAPI families fear being thought of as weak or “crazy” for having psychological disorder. They tend to normalize and internalize the pressures, and believe that they have to endure those feelings to protect their family and their “faces”.

● No access of sharing

The most urgent challenge of children from AAPI families is that they may have no access of sharing their feelings. They don't know who are the right person to talk with, and why do they need to talk about that.

Based on the data of MHA(Mental Health America), AAPI's adults are the racial group least likely to seek mental health services which is 3 times less likely than white people

DIAGRAM OF PROCESS



This diagram was produced based on an interview I had with the AAPI community. The most common and visible social stereotypes in the lives of children from AAPI immigrant households are model minority, outsider stereotype, and racism. Then I moved on to the family; majority of my participants believe they are under pressure from their parents, but they are unable to distinguish between familial pressure and mental health difficulties. A deeper cause for this is the Asian cultural context's beliefs, which emphasised the importance of individuality and collectivism.

All three views contributed to the issue of AAPI immigrant children's lack of awareness and access. With all of the stigmas and pressures, the feelings will manifest themselves in mental health difficulties such as depression, self-isolation, family alienation, and even suicide. I developed this diagram by summarizing all of my participants' conversations. This chart was accepted by all of them, and it assisted some of them in identifying the source of their stress.

INTERVENTION DOMAIN



After I constructed this diagram and outlined all of my target audiences' pain points, I concentrated on the issues of lack of knowledge and lack of access to sharing.

As a social designer, my goal is to interrupt this cycle by connecting the second generation of AAPI immigrants with someone who shares their experiences so they can talk about their feelings.

Clarification: My approach is not helping people with their mental health issues such as depression, self-isolation, and suicide. I clearly reckon that I have no background in psychology, and I'm not qualified to do that.

PROJECT

04

THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT...

10

Second-generation of AAPI immigrants interviews

2

Senior of AAPI immigrants interviews

9

Personal stories collected

22

hours conversation

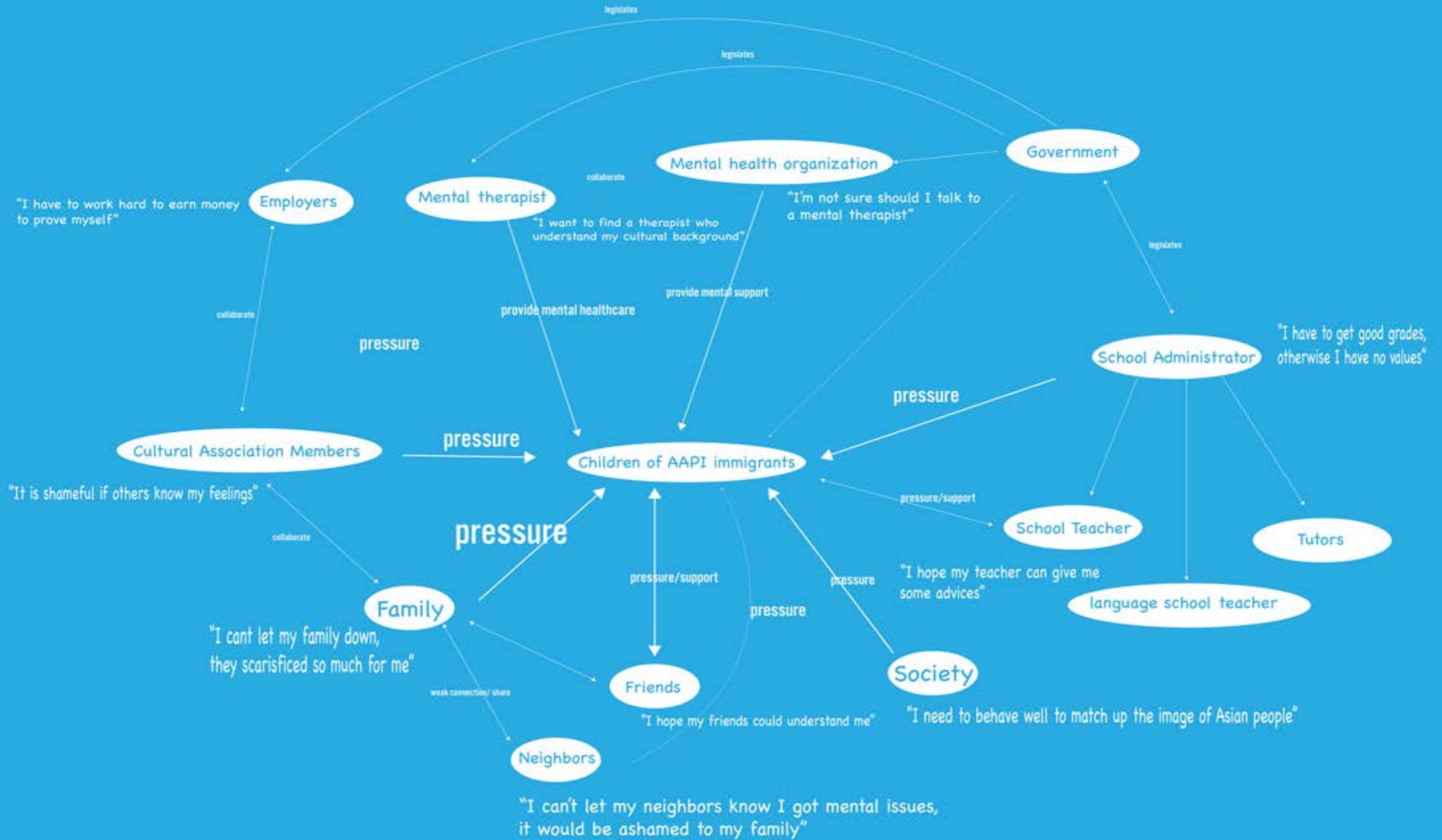
3

Second-generation of AAPI Immigrants partners

3

Prototypes

ECOSYSTEM MAP



HOW DID I GET HERE...

I began researching geriatric care and the safety of the AAPI community in September 2021.

In NYC, contacting with the local group or a senior was difficult.

I spent nearly the whole semester reaching out to the organization and making connections. I contacted a number of organizations, including:

Protect Chinatown

Heart of dinner

Nan Shan senior centre

Greater Chinatown Community Association

Asian Association for Equality

However, I didn't get any responses from them. Then I went to Chinatown, trying to start a conversation with some seniors. Still, there weren't many seniors out there because of the Covid. Then I had to attend some events held by some small organizations even though what they are doing has no connection with Asian seniors.

Later I reached out to an organization called the Keepsake House. I built a connection with the co-founder, and I interviewed them. I was too happy to see the fact that what they were doing did not match what I wanted to do. I acted like a drowning man trying to catch at a straw. Their organization is more centered around independent musicians. But at that time, I was lost in the process; I could not really tell what the problem I cared about the most. I didn't want to let this go because I needed to get back on track with the timeline, and I was frightened of what would happen if they were the only ones that responded.

I also done a lot of research on independent musicians, but when I went to work on it, it was really painful and upsetting because a voice in my head kept telling me that this wasn't right, that this wasn't what I wanted to do. This sensation was driving me insane, and I was quite worried about it.

I ultimately decided at the conclusion of last semester that I couldn't hold on any longer, and I started all over again.

Later, to distract myself from the anxiousness, I spent some time rapping out my ideas.

Consider the following questions:

Who am I?

What's my identity?

What have I been through in the last 25 years?

Who is the group of people that I feel connected with?

What are the problems that I genuinely care about?

After gate three, I realized the time I had spent reaching out to the community and those feeling of struggling. Anxiety and depression were not wasted. At the end of this last semester, I decided to do inter-generational trauma as my thesis.

Later, I asked my friends to help me connect with second-generation AAPI immigrants and started to look for people on the social media platform. After talking with some of the second generations of AAPI immigrant families, I found out we have many things in common, even though I'm not from an immigrant family. At that time, I looked back on my journey, and I couldn't help thinking:

Why is it so difficult to make friends with members of the AAPI community?

Why aren't individuals interested in discussing themselves?

Why does everyone in the AAPI community make me feel like I'm living on a remote island in the middle of the ocean?

I perceived a sense of lonely and silence; there are so many underlying feelings in the community.

This is how I get here. I want to tell the second generation of AAPI immigrants who live under the pressure that you are not alone...

**NO ONE IS AN ISLAND
EVERYONE IS HERE...**

INTERVIEW METHOD

05

Description

As my research developed, I began conducting interviews with the children of Asian immigrant families in order to learn about the factors that hinder them from discussing personal feelings and lead to emotional alienation and isolation. I spoke with ten Asian immigrant families' children. They are medical students, professors, doctors, public activists, and middle school teachers, among other jobs. I want to learn more about the elements that lead to separation and mental stress.

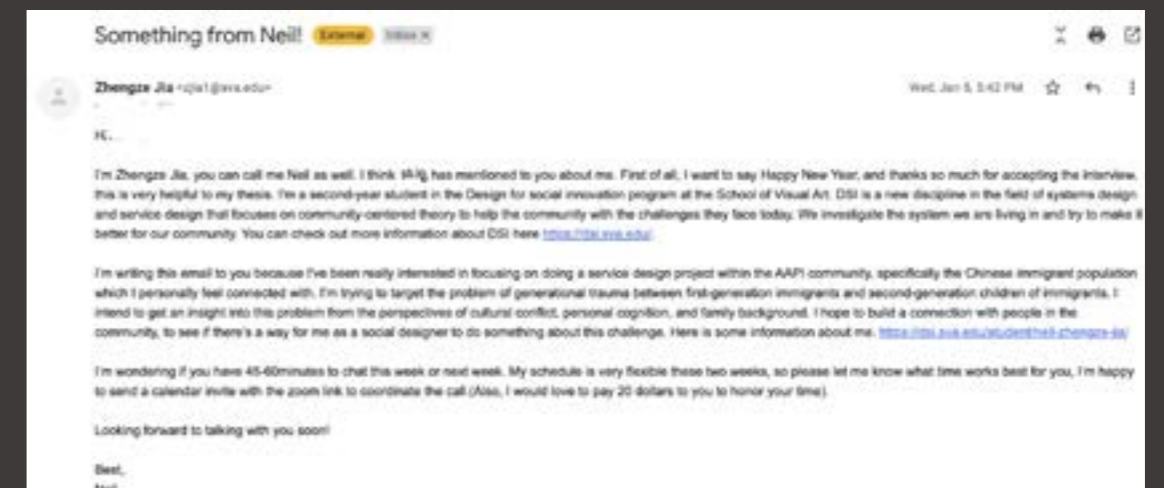
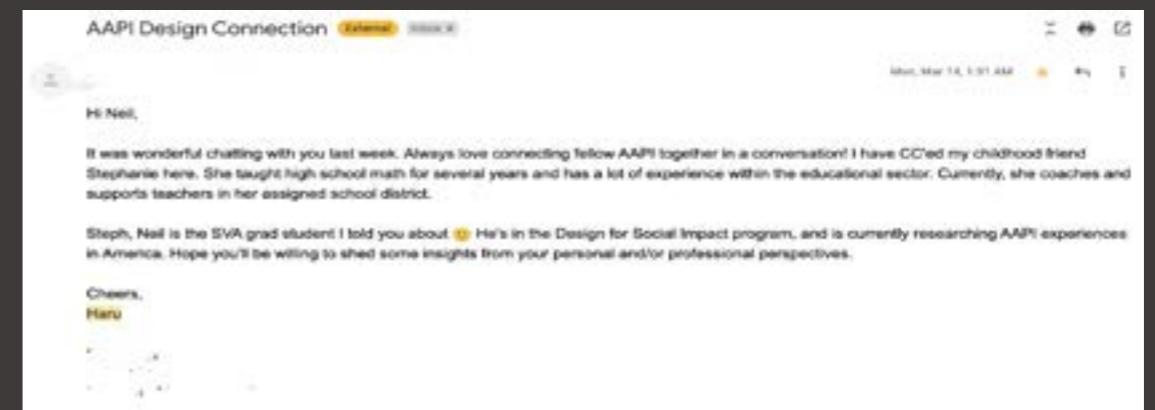
What problems do they have to deal with?

What are their strategies for dealing with past issues?

What are some intervention points for unmet needs?

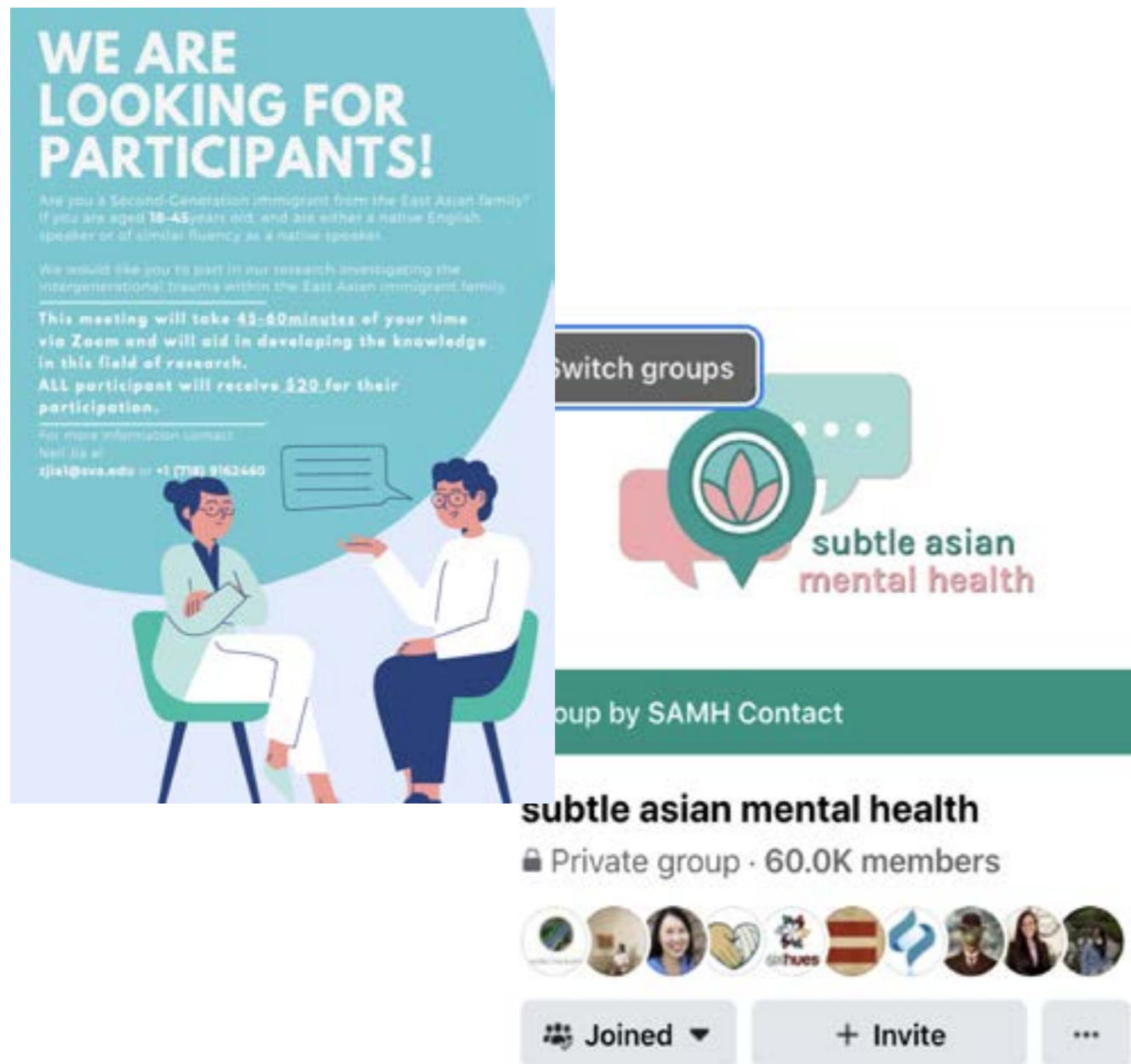
● Introduced by friends

Some reaching out emails



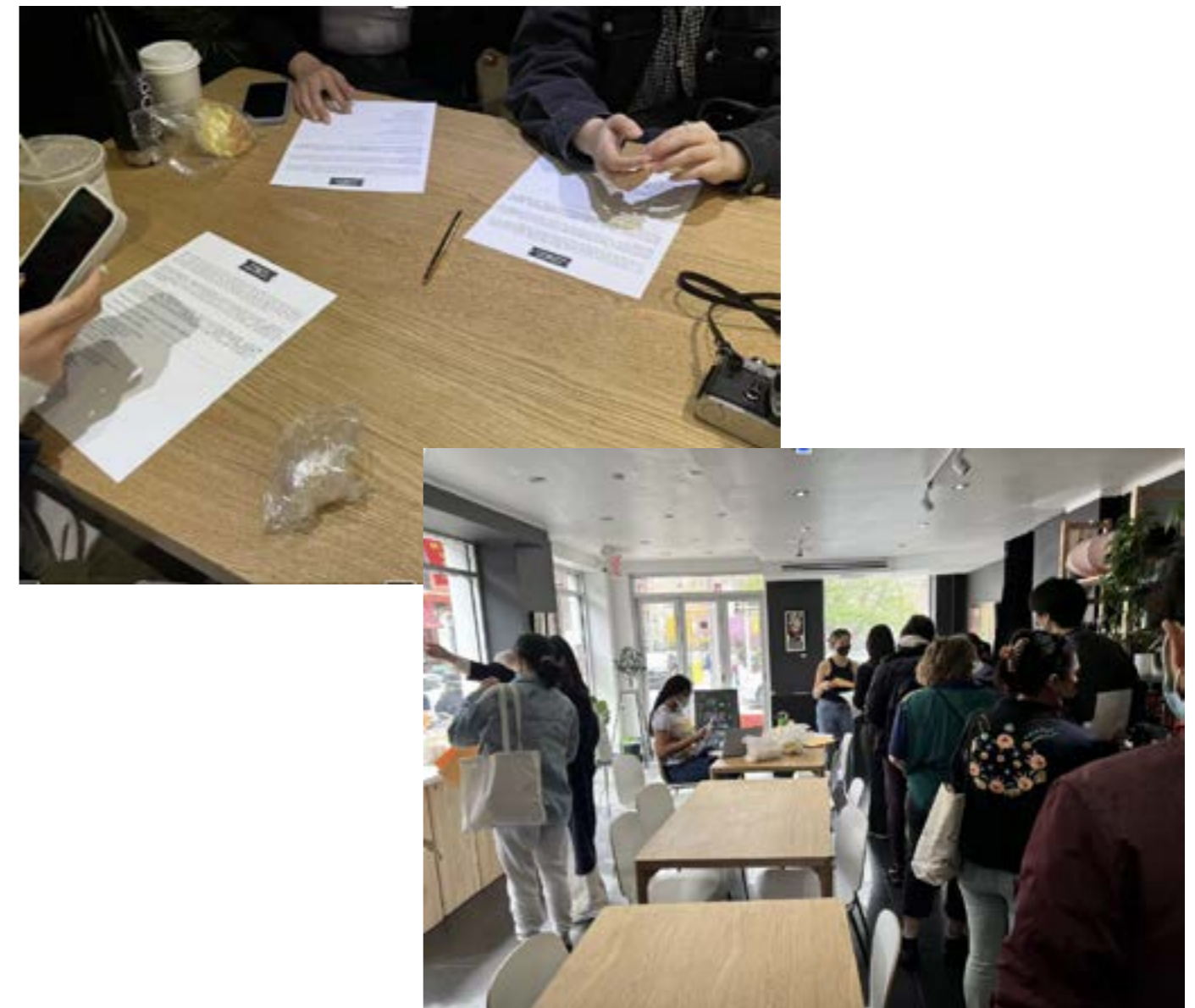
● Looking for participants on social media

I made a poster searching for participants and shared it with individuals in my mental health group on Instagram. I also sent it to a few of my friends, requesting their assistance in spreading the word. In this method, I was able to contact three members of my target audience. Even if my friends continue to introduce them all, this poster offered a brief introduction and more information to the community members.



● Volunteer in Asian community organization

I participated to some Asian organizations in order to reach out more people. I went to a orgnaiztion called Welcome to Chinatown, and help them to do the research and survey about the local restaurant in Chinatown. I have to say this is a good way to know people of the community, and build partnership with them, but volunteer is not working for the organization.



SOME OF MY INTERVIEWS...



Jen-Ling/ Medical student



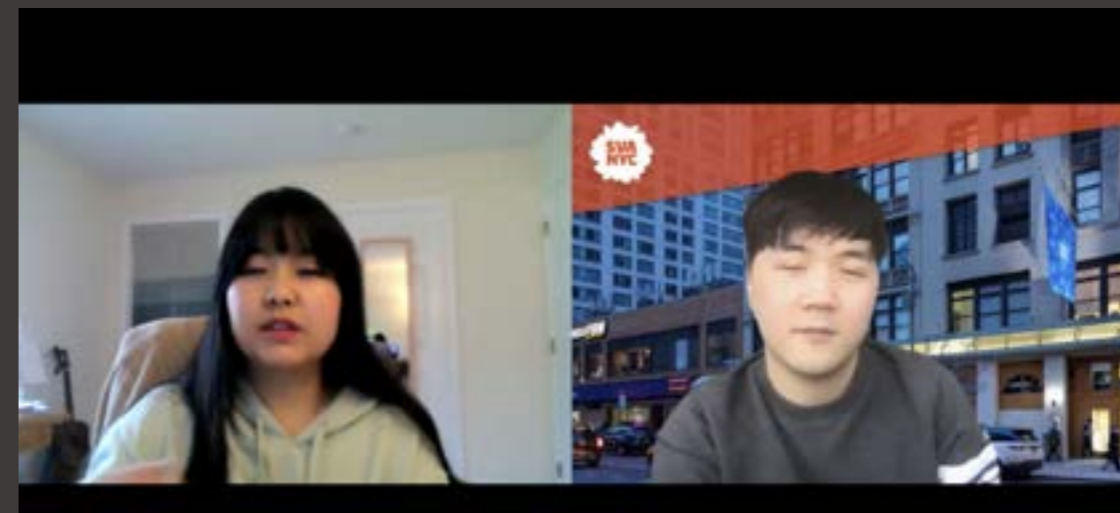
Aaron/ Graduate student at UC Berkeley



Jon/ Freelance worker



Rachel/ Artist

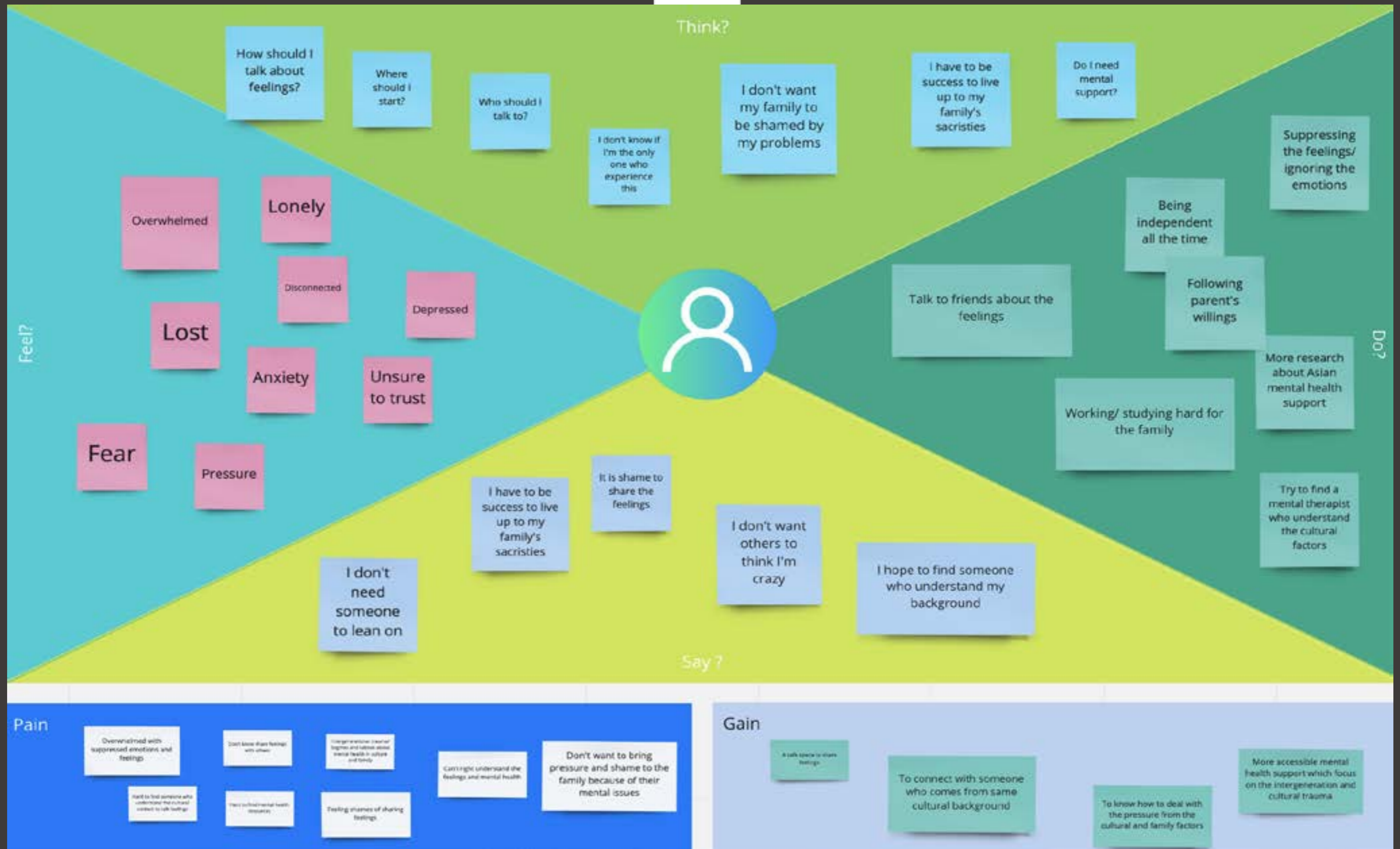


Haru/ Professor at University



Stephaine/ Educator in middle school

EMPATHY MAP



After each interview, I compiled a summary of what I heard and felt during the session. In addition, I considered what my target audience sees and experiences in their daily lives. I attempted to put myself in their shoes and comprehend their concerns.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide⁴³

Introduction⁴⁴

Hi, XXX. Thanks so much for coming today. (How are you doing today? etc.) Before we started, let me just quickly introduce myself and this interview. I'm Neil, and I'm from Wuhan China. Now I'm a second-year thesis student at the School of Visual Arts, and I'm majoring in Design for social innovation. We investigate the system and social issues that we are living and try to make it better for our community. As a thesis student, I focus on the relationship between parents and their children among older Chinese immigrants, the reason why I want to do this because as an average 25 years old international student, I came to the US six years ago. I'm personally feel deeply connected with the Chinese American community, and this is the problem that I have been experiencing these years with my parents, even though they are not the immigrants. ⁴⁵

So, I want you to know that this is a safe space for you and me to have a conversation. I will send you an informed consent to you after the interview, just make sure no one would know the content of our conversation today. ⁴⁶

The most important thing about this interview is that please feel free to interrupt me if you don't want to answer the question I ask, or just say I don't want to talk about this. Please let me know if the question makes you feel uncomfortable. ⁴⁷

No matter what you say, your answer would be extremely helpful to my research. This interview will take 35-45 mins. ⁴⁸

Also, I want to ask your permission to take pictures and recording our conversation, and it is only for study use. Let me know if you have any questions. Thank you!⁴⁹

Warm-up question⁵⁰

Q1: Please introduce yourself a little bit. Where were you born and raised?⁵¹

Q2: Where are your parents from? ⁵²

Q3: What was your favorite food growing up?⁵³

Have you ever visited the China, or the place your parents grew up? If not, if you wanted to travel there, where would you go and why?⁵⁴

⁵⁵

⁵⁶

Interview questions⁵⁷

⁵⁸

culture and Identity⁵⁹

⁶⁰

Q1: When you hear the term "Second Immigrant Generation", what words or images emerge?⁶¹

Q2: What was it like for you growing up in a Chinese immigrant family? ⁶²

Q3: In what ways do your parents or your culture shape your identity? And how do you identify yourself? ⁶³

Q4: What kind of traditions or celebrations do you maintain for the ancestors?

How has it changed in America? (Cultural differences) ⁶⁴

Family and Kinship⁶⁵

Q1: What do you remember most about your parents and grandparents when you were a child?⁶⁶

Q2: What were your parents' rules or advices about ⁶⁷ relationship?⁶⁸

Q3: How do they measure the meaning of success? /

success about your life?⁶⁹

Q4: Did your parents ever talk about their experiences

immigrants? What was said, or not said? (Pause) What

found out? What is your reaction now?⁷⁰

Q5: Have you ever feel the pressure or responsibility ⁷¹ parents?⁷²

Q6: Do you think your parents have influences on your personality? Is it good or bad to you? ⁷³

Closing Questions⁷⁴

Q1: if you have a child, what kind of person you wish they could be? Why?⁷⁵

Q2: Are there something you want your children to learn from your parents,

what's not? ⁷⁶

LEARNINGS

1. Children of AAPI immigrants have been told to be independent and successful since they were a child. Most of them are living under pressure and started to question where those feelings come from.

2. It is hard for them to connect with someone who understands the Asian cultural context to share their feelings.

3. Always keep humble in the conversation, do not feel like you already know this. Even though most of them have shared experiences, different people have different stories.

4. Do not go deep. Keep an eye on the emotions of your participants; give them space and enough time if they become emotional.

5. Do not always stick to the interview guide. Those questions may not help you to get what people truly want.

6. Self-care. Some of the conversations are very emotional, and I feel very compassion and resonate with them. Sometimes, I had to lie down on the bed to get rid of those emotions.

7. Enjoy the process, and enjoy the process of building the connection.

8. People will be defensive about the questions related to family, and it is ok to ask them some warm-up questions.

9. I would rather not see the conversation as an interview but as a conversation with your friends. If you want to hear their stories, share your stories first.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Second generation of AAPI immigrants who have early awareness of the pressure they face

Photo from Adobe stock

PAINT POINTS

- People don't always recognize their pressure and negative feelings.
- Stigmas and taboos against mental health make it challenging for them to seek additional help.
- It is hard for them to find someone who matches and understands their background.
- Don't know who to talk with, and-what to talk about?



PROBLEM REFRAMED

How might we create a safe and trusted space for children of AAPI immigrant families to share their lived experience, to reduce the feelings of isolation, and to increase the sense of belonging?

Photo from Adobe stock

PROJECT GOALS

- To connect second generation of AAPI immigrants who have shared experiences to one another
- To provide a safe space for the second generation of AAPI immigrants to share feelings

PROTOTYPE 1

06

I finally decided to see a therapist to talk about intergenerational trauma in the last year. I have experienced depression and anxiety on and off since middle school, but silently struggled and try to normalized it for many years. I thought those emotions was myself being hypocritical. Many years, I was in a never-ending battle with my thoughts and I believed there was no way out. I would continue to push forward, suppressing what I was feeling because that was what I was accustomed to doing since I was young.

I cannot remember when is the last time talking with my mom, with my dad, with my grandfather and my grandmother. I cannot remember the last time I had a conversation with my family. I even cannot remember how many years it's been since they were separated. I guess that's the way how we get along with each other. However, I can still remember the impact of this relationship in my life, and it has become part of me.

It's weird that I feel nothing when I write down these words.
We are who we are because they were who they were
But I miss something I've never had,
I miss someone I had to let go.
How to love someone? how to connect with something?
I'm disabled.

11:17 2/22/2022 Jersey City

STORY BOARD

Description

Sharing personal experiences is the first step toward forming bonds with people. People who are lonely are hesitant to make the first step. The thought of storytelling inspired me. I believe that sharing stories has a positive influence on people's thoughts. We can cope better with adversity and meet the challenges we confront if we have a reasonable level of positive feeling and optimism. I encouraged my participants, who were second-generation Asian immigrants, to share their handwritten and anonymous stories with me, as well as read the stories of others to express their thoughts. I want to establish a safe space for the children of AAPI immigrants to express their silent sentiments and connect emotionally with one another without being pushed or feeling pressured by trauma exposure.

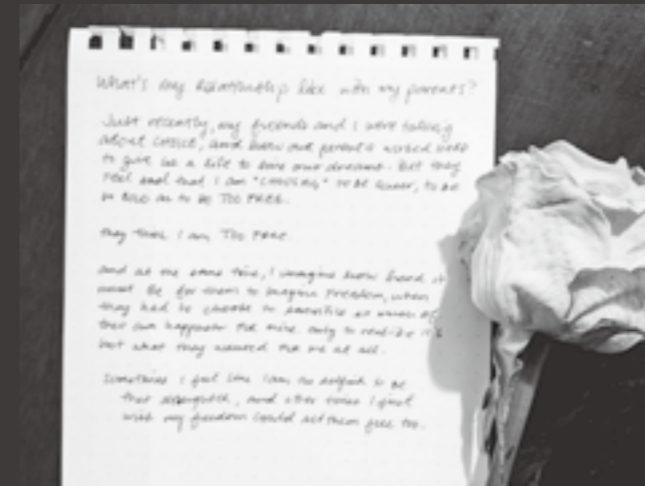
Goals

1. To provide a safe space for second-generation AAPI immigrants to share their stories with someone who has shared experience.
2. To increase the connection among the community of second-generation immigrants.

What I want to test

1. Do people feel less lonely by reading others' stories?
2. How do people feel about sharing stories in this way?
3. Do people feel connected with others at some points?

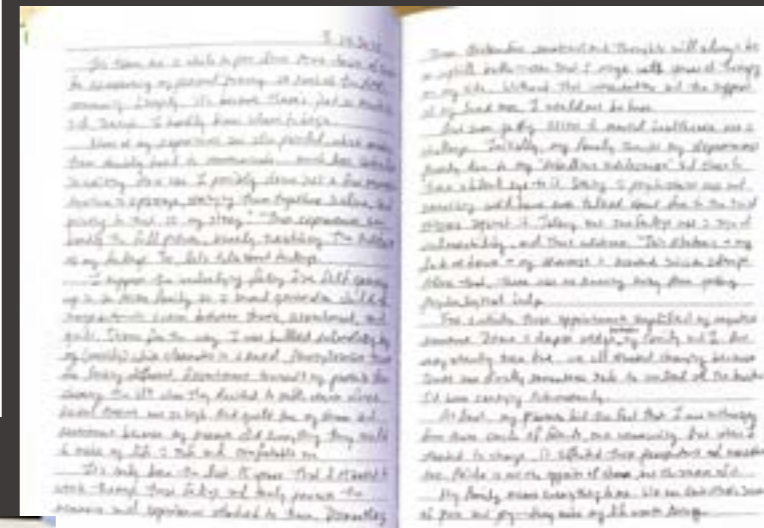
STORIES FROM COMMUNITY



What's my relationship like with my parents?
Just recently my friends and I were talking about college, and how our parents wanted us to go to a life to save our dreams. But they told me that I am "crazy" and "too smart" to go to college. I am the first.
My Mom, I am the first.
And as we come this, I imagine how hard it must be for them to imagine freedom, when they had to choose to sacrifice at what they thought was the only way to realize it. But what they wanted for me at all.
Sometimes I get like them to help to be their strength, and then come light with my freedom could not mean free to.

I was always taught that sadness is weakness. If we are sad, we are vulnerable, we are ungrateful, and we are selfish. How could you dare to be sad after all that has been sacrificed for you? It would be dishonorable to your family and to your ancestors if you could not repay them with joy- even if that joy is just on the surface.
But how could you not be sad after feeling the weight of pressure to be joyful all the time? How can you ever repay all the sacrifice and support your family, your ancestors and your community have given to you? And how on earth are you supposed to give even more to those who come after you?
I had to always hide my sadness for these reasons. If I showed it, I was shamed and my feelings were dismissed. But after years of suppression, the sadness you have hidden for so long, manifests itself into a mental illness that you can no longer hide from. This brings a whole new level of shame because it feels like failure. You were not strong enough to squash your sadness and now it has overcome you.
It took me a long time to unlearn this kind of thinking. The process is still ongoing. Maybe a part of me will always feel ashamed for daring to be sad but now the other part of me knows that this sadness is intergenerational. It is inevitable and it is natural. We are sad but we can also be grateful, we can be capable and we can be enough.

As a society influenced by traditional patriarchy and Confucianism, procreation and the traditional one-man, one-woman family are major components of society, and as an LGBTQ community, they often face pressure from public opinion and traditional ideas. My third-tier city tends to be under more pressure. Growing up, my parents wanted me to get married and have children soon, and every holiday I faced questions from various relatives. My identity and the pressure I was under made it impossible for me to communicate honestly with my parents. I was always living a double life. I pretended I had a girlfriend and made up a lot of lies every day. But I really wanted to tell them who I really was, because the stress was preventing me from living the life I wanted, and it was making me emotional all the time. And now I'm trying to find a solution, hoping one day I can tell my parents who I really am so I can live my full life.



FEEDBACK

I have collected nine anonymous stories from the community. Each of the stories is different and vulnerable. After, I created a storyboard to ask people to look at others' stories and tell me how they felt about them by filling out a survey.

“I really liked the metaphors people used to talk about their grief, like salty/sweet. I also like hearing people's stories and what is going on for them behind the scenes. I can't help but try to guess who some of these people are, which changes my experience a little bit, but I am enjoying the anonymity in general! It would be cool to see this in an even bigger community!! (Can't wait)”

“ I related to the story about choice and feeling like as a daughter, we are too selfish when we choose to do something that does not align with our parent's expectations. It feels like a constant battle in our minds.”

“how to love someone? how to connect to connect with something? I'm disabled.” I'm facing the same problem with this person. Is it a problem needs to be solved/ fixed? Or, I should just let it go?”

“I feel kind of less lonely when seeing others facing common issues.”

LEARNINGS

1. People feel resonated with the story that shares common experiences with them.
2. A safe and trusting environment is the foundation for people to share their feelings.
3. Reading others' stories that resonated with them could reduce the sense of loneliness in some ways.
4. It is important to acknowledge people how their stories will be used.
5. The format of the writing piece could be more flexible.
6. There should be a more straightforward question or prompt for people to respond to.
7. It could be more helpful for people to connect with others if we categorized them into different topics and prompts.

SLAND

HOME

OUR STORIES

COMMUNITIES

RESOURCES

SHARE YOUR STORIES

MY STORY

PROTOTYPE 2



No one is an island
没有人是一座孤岛

Read More

07

STORYTELLING WEBSITE

Description

The last prototype proved that storytelling can reduce the sense of loneliness and build a connection with each other. Also, the anonymous story provided a sense of safety for the participant to share their personal feelings. Thus, I was thinking of putting those stories on a website to let more people have access to the stories and connect people on a larger scale. Also, this website includes some other functions like finding a therapist and communities for the people who had a hard time finding the community.



HOME

Goals

1. To connect people on a larger scale.
2. To engage more people to share their stories.
3. To provide more access to people to find the community.

What I want to test

1. How do people feel about sharing their stories online?
2. Does more people want to share?
3. What are the potential barriers and challenges of online storytelling?



STORIES



COMMUNITIES



STORIES



THERAPIST



MY STORY

FEEDBACK

I spent a week on the website design. Before I'm going to create a real website, I showed these mockups to my community and asked for their feedback. However, that feedback was not what I expected. I would say this prototype failed, but this is where I learned the most.

“Thank you but I don't feel comfortable since it is so personal”

“Thanks for asking that question! I think it's a sensitive topic”

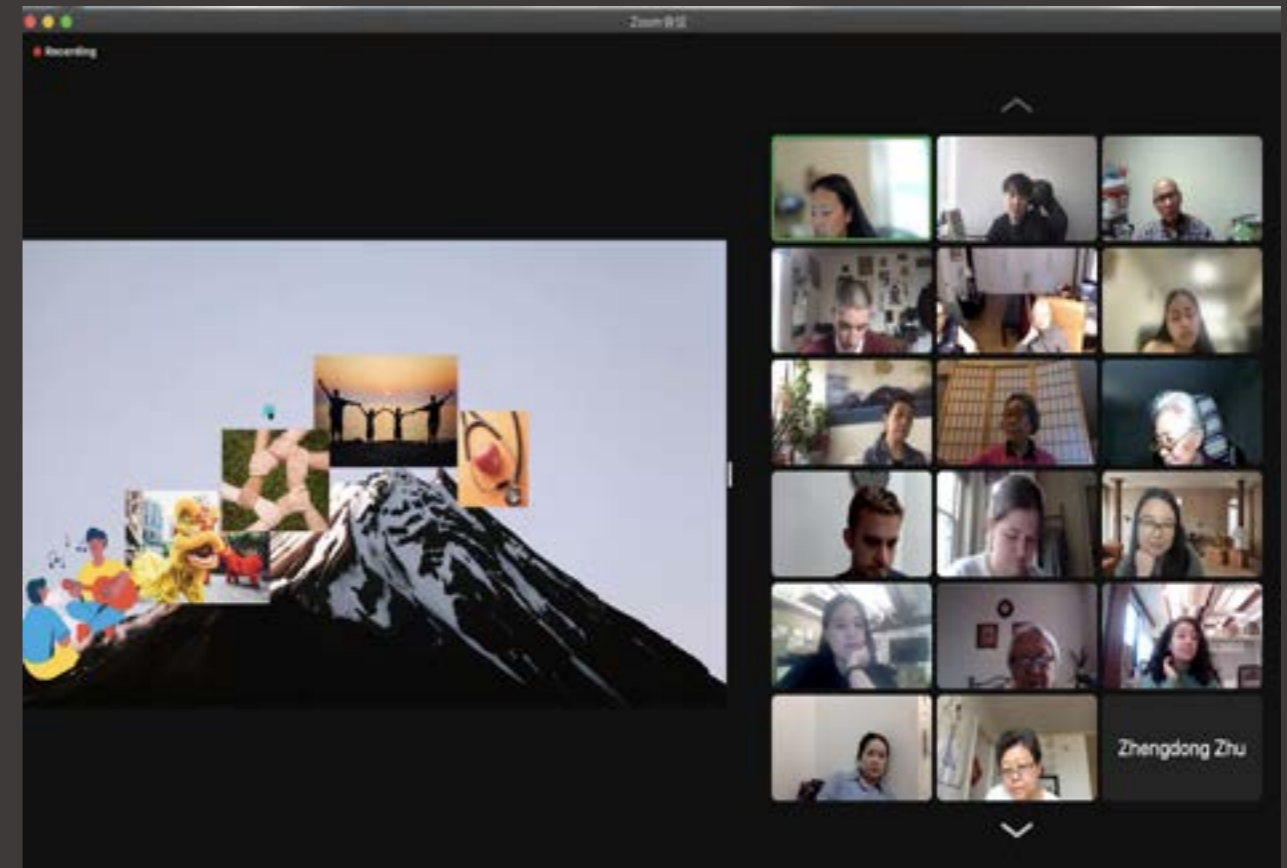
“Sorry I don't want it to be publicized “

LEARNINGS

1. People are more likely to share with others who have shared experiences in a smaller group.
2. People would like to share within a small group, but it is different to share it on a larger scale
3. Although the stories are anonymous, the feelings are still personal.
4. Transparency. We should make sure when people share their feelings, they should know Who, When, and How their stories will be shared.
5. Before creating the intervention, the designer should keep asking for feedback from the community.
6. Trust and transparency could be the interaction principle of this space.

WORKSHOP 1

08



Description

I had a chance to join a workshop with eight seniors from the AAPI community. Even though they are not my target audience, their thoughts and experiences are still critical for me to understand the second-generation AAPI immigrants and the immigrant community.

Co-creation with AAPI seniors

This workshop aims to know the experiences and pain points of AAPI seniors in daily living and seek opportunities to connect with the senior community. This workshop invited eight seniors from the AAPI community. Students sent them a design package that they had designed before the workshop. They asked them to follow the instructions to create an artboard that reflects their values and journey and helps people to understand their situation.

Goals

1. To understand what are the challenges that AAPI seniors face with
2. To understand their needs and pain points in their daily living.
3. To seek opportunities to connect with the senior community.

LEARNINGS

1. The last generation of AAPI immigrants sacrificed their lives for their families.
2. People are afraid of the Covid-19; they are the most vulnerable group of people in the pandemic.
3. They are highly independent. Most of them moved out of their children's houses to live in the senior apartment because they did not want to be a burden to their children.
4. Lack of entertainment in daily living during the Covid.
5. Sense of loneliness and isolation.
6. As a social designer, we have to consider the accessibility of different groups of people

WORKSHOP 2

09



Description

I created this workshop with different AAPI designers and the people from the community. After my second prototype failed, I realized that I should hear more voices from the community to understand what people thought. Also, It is more critical for me to co-create with the community rather than create something for them by me.

Goals

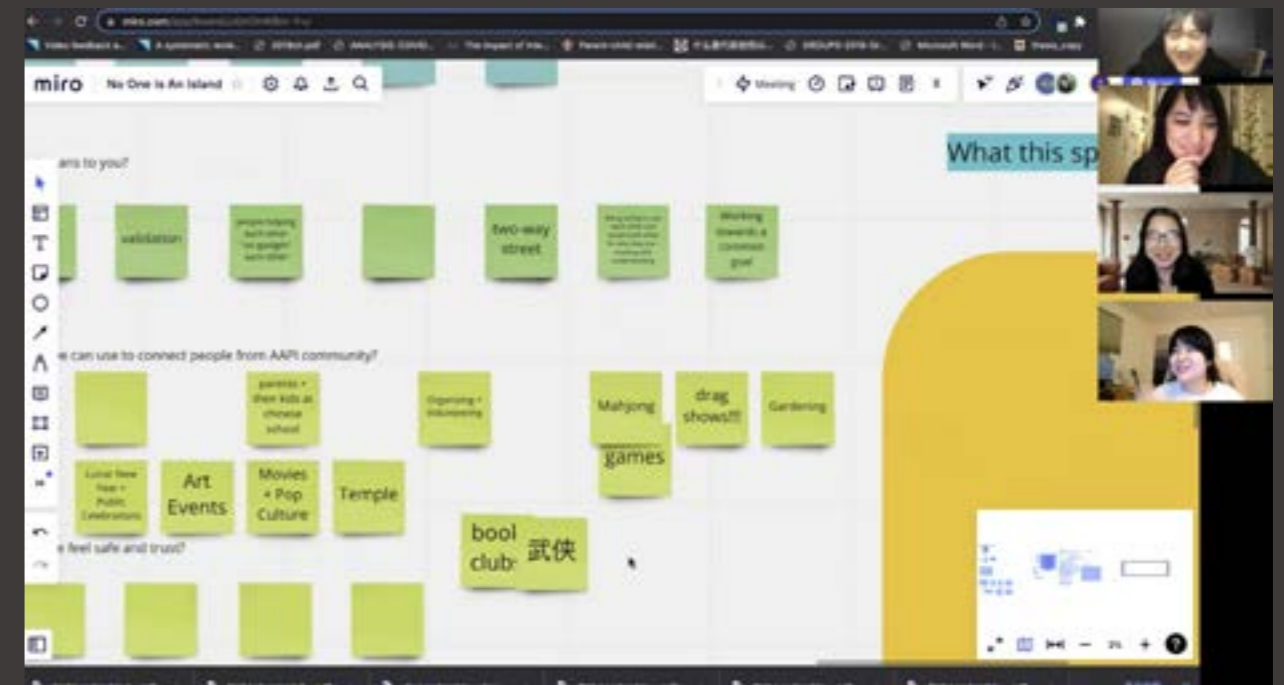
1. To think through ways with people from the AAPI community to support this space. Digital or Analog?
2. To understand what communication and interaction method that people wants
3. To understand what are some ways to connect the children of AAPI immigrants

Activities

In the workshop process, I realized that this form of group discussion with people who have shared backgrounds is also a pathway to connecting the people of the AAPI community. At first, I created some icebreaker activities for my participants to know each other better.



At the stage of the activity of 'awareness', I found that people started to share their stories and experience with each other. All of us felt significantly resonated and connected with others in the meeting.



Activities

I created some questions and activities for this workshop. These activities are mainly around the questions such as:

What:

- what are the topics that you want to share with people?
- what does connection mean to you?
- what are the things that we can use to connect the children of AAPI immigrants?

Who:

Who would you like to share?

How?

How can we make people feel safe and trust?

And two main questions

WHAT ARE THE INTERACTION PRINCIPLES OF THIS SPACE?

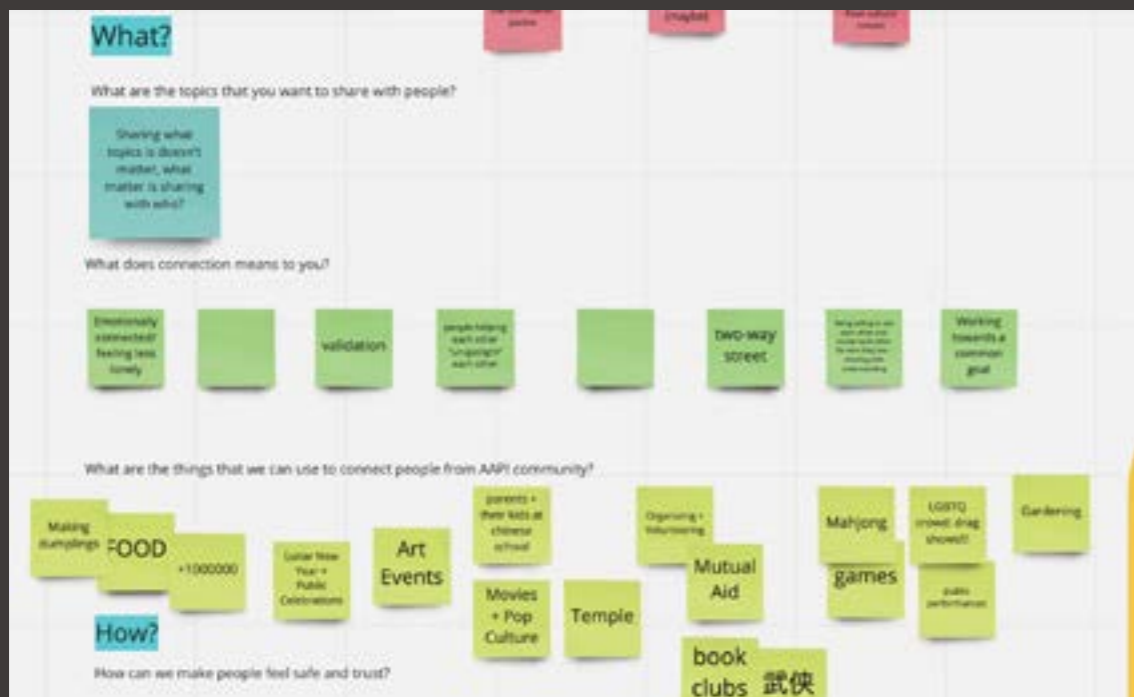
WHAT THIS SPACE LOOKS LIKE?



Why? & Who?



How?



What?



What this space looks like?

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Trust

Leadership

Shared
experience

Safe/ Privacy

Small
group/Hyper
local

After the workshop, we developed the five interaction principles of this space for the second generation of AAPI immigrants.

1. Shared experience. Shared experience is the key to connecting the people of the AAPI community. It makes it more likely for people to speak up about their feelings with others.

2. Trust. Trust this space, trust other people in the community, and trust that they are not alone

Small group/ Hyperlocal. People in the small group are more likely to share their feelings. Also, the mechanism of the small group provides the opportunity for everyone to talk.

Safe/ Privacy. When people share their feelings, they should know Who, When, and How their stories will be shared.

Leadership. When the conversation involves some deep and traumatic topic, someone in the group needs to have a higher awareness of the group than others. It could be helpful to lead the conversation positively.

FEEDBACK

I realized this workshop is also a pathway to connecting the people in the community. We had a very good conversation, and everyone had the chance to share their experiences with other people in the group. Thus, I asked people to give me some feedback about their feelings after the workshop.

“I loved meeting Jenny and getting know you and June better. I felt a lot of kinship hearing your stories and insights. I’m privileged to have had a lot of guidance and support over the years to learn how to own my past and heal. But all the same, it was kind of scary disclosing my experiences to people I don’t have a long history with. Still, I’d rather share than not share. Stories connect us all and bring people together in solidarity. Knowing that makes my personal growing pains and joys I’ve lived worth sharing.”

“I think it helped me think about how big of a social issue mental health was, and people came up with some interesting interventions. I think there could have definitely been some thoughtful activities that came out of it!”

“The workshop is well prepared and packed with intriguing personal stories from participants. It offers the unique opportunity to explore the Asian American experience, as well as diverse cultural contexts within the Asian heritage, leading us to ponder: where is the safe place to make our voices heard? “

LEARNINGS

1. Sharing what topics don’t matter; what matter is sharing with WHO?
2. We don’t have to create something new for the target audience to share their feelings, but we can use the space that already exists.
3. People are more easily to be connected by someone they know.
4. DO NO HARM. If people don’t want to talk about personal feelings and stories, take a step back.
5. Leadership in the conversation is important.

PROTOTYPE 3

10



SOCIAL NETWORK APP

Description

This app was designed based on the interaction principle. This is an audio-based social media app that allows people everywhere to talk, tell stories, find their communities, deepen friendships, and meet with people who share shared experiences.

The user can jump in and out of different channels on different topics. However, you can only join the private group by invitation.

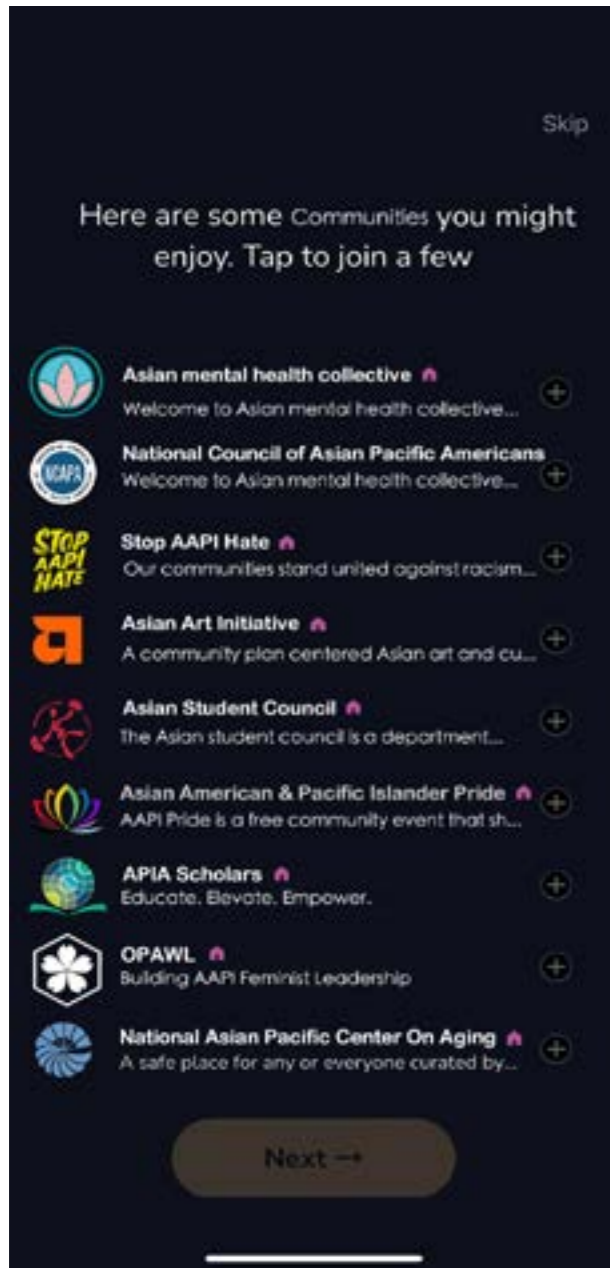
This app includes a function that encourages and leads the user to do some activities together in the real world.

Goals

1. To provide a safe space for second-generation AAPI immigrants to share their stories with someone who has shared experience.
2. To deepen the connection among the community of second-generation immigrants.
3. To provide a sense of safety to people about their privacy.
4. To build different small communities for people to share everything.
5. To connect online interaction with in-person activity, to provide an opportunity for people to know each other in the real world.



NO ONE IS AN ISLAND



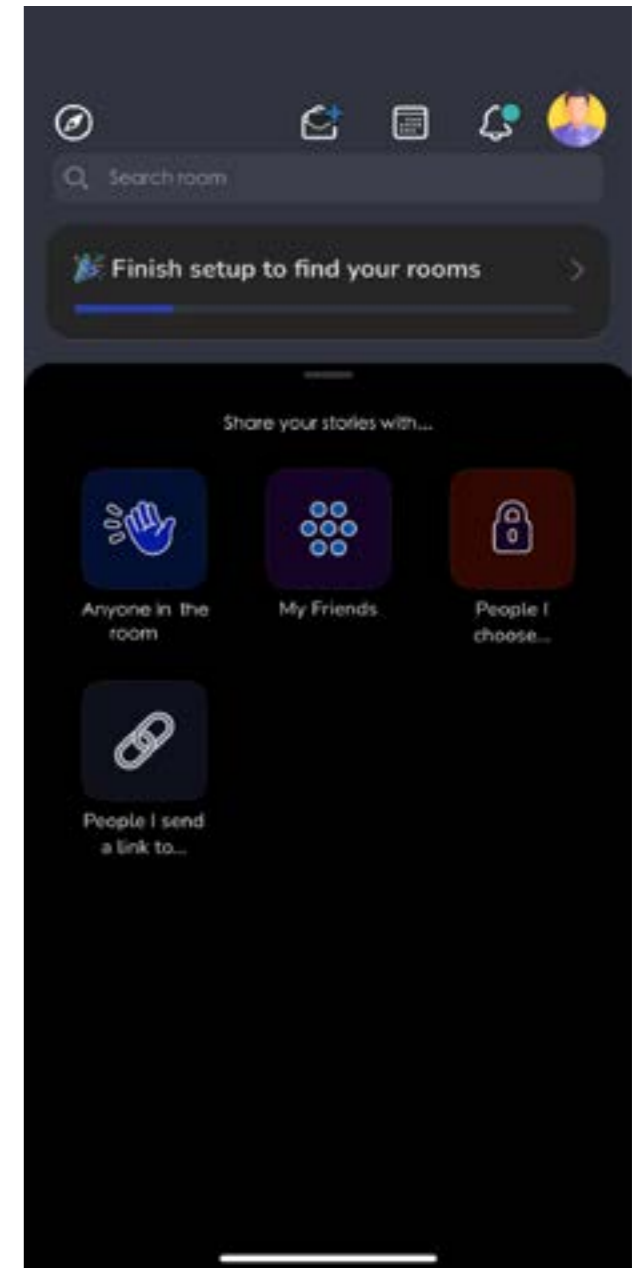
COMMUNITIES



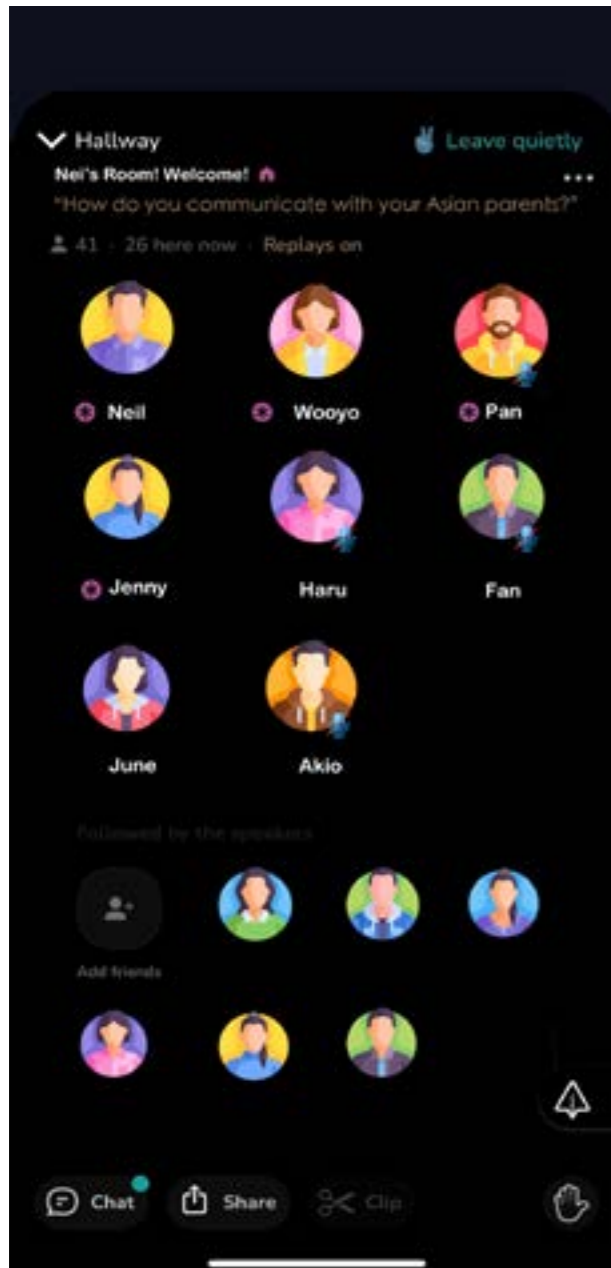
FRIENDS



INTERESTED TOPICS



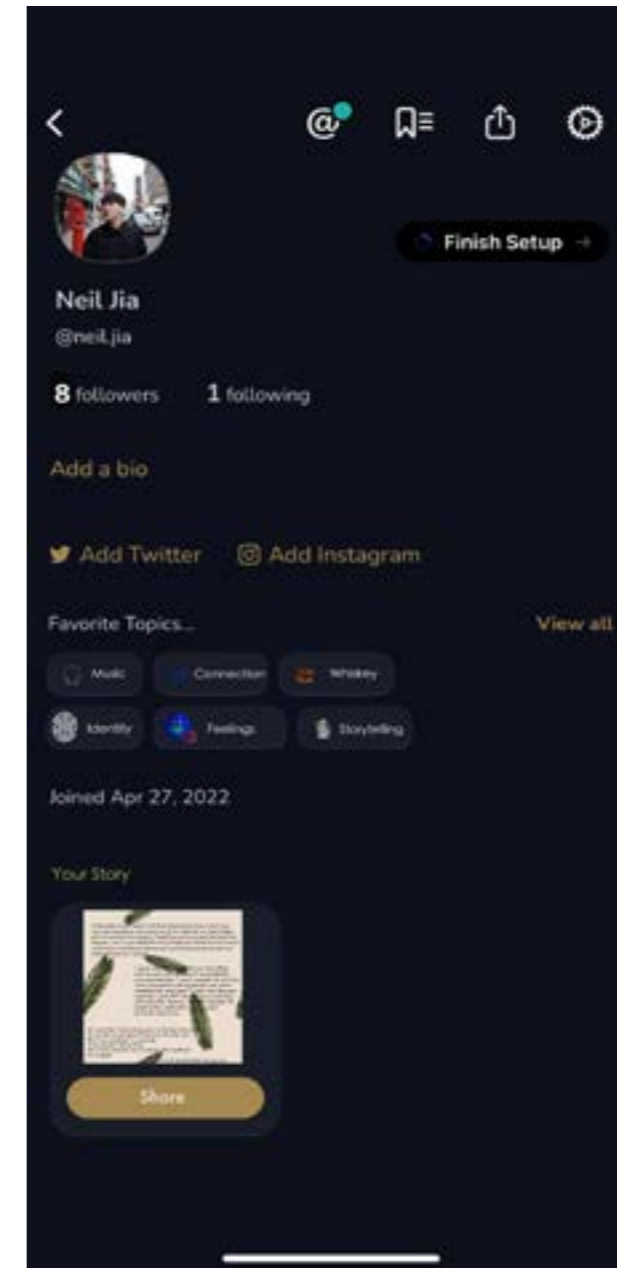
SHARE YOUR STORIES



ROOM



ROOM CHAT



ME/ STORY BOARD



MUSIC EVENT



FOOD MAKING




STORY SHOW



COFFEE MEETING

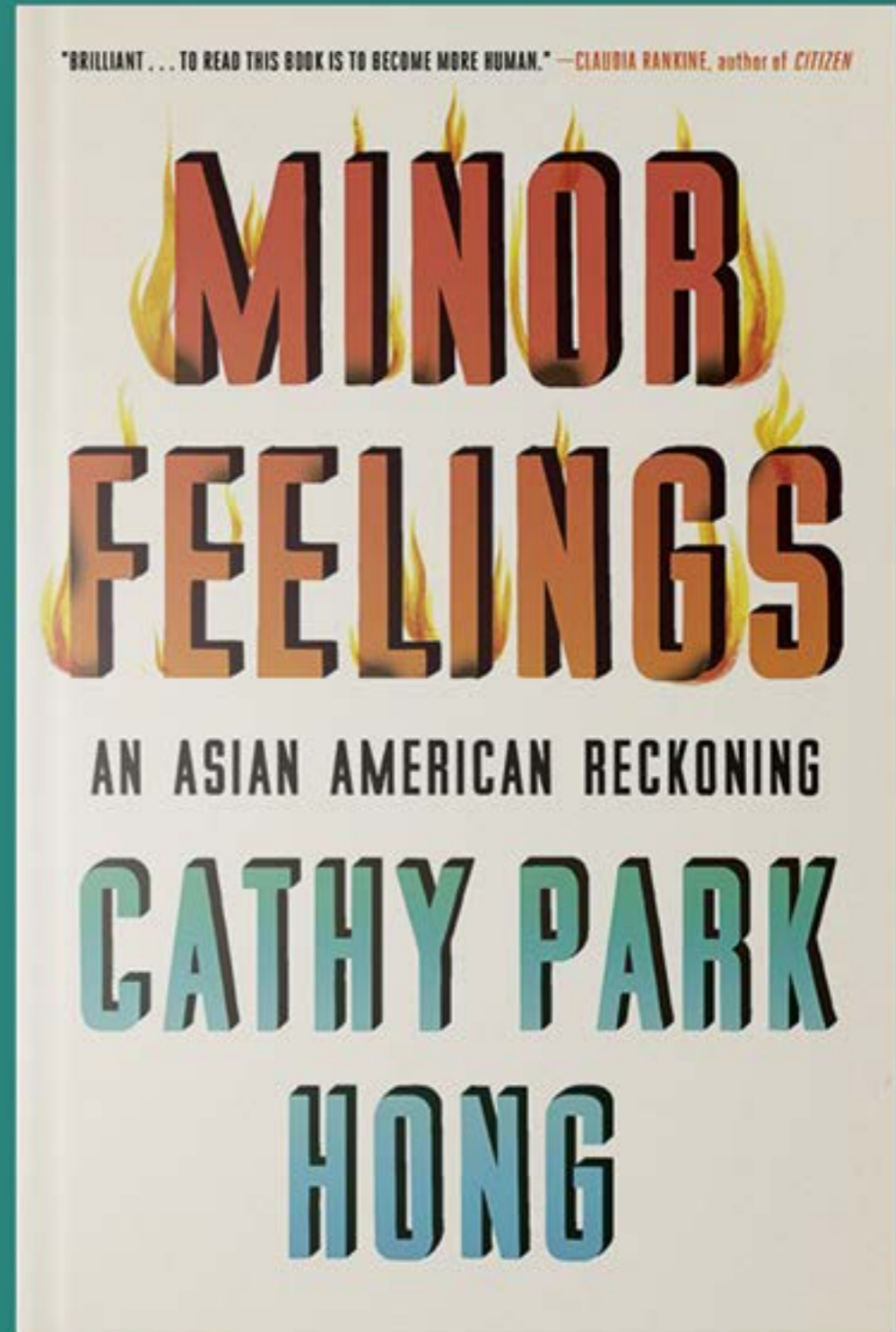


ENTERTAINMENT



“But where does the silence that neglects her end, and where does the silence that respects her begin? The problem with silence is that it can’t speak up and say why it’s silent. And so silence collects, becomes amplified, takes on a life outside our intentions, in that silence can get misread as indifference, or avoidance, or even shame, and eventually this silence passes over into forgetting.”

*—Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning**



LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

11

I WILL...

Testing the app with my community and gathering their feedback.

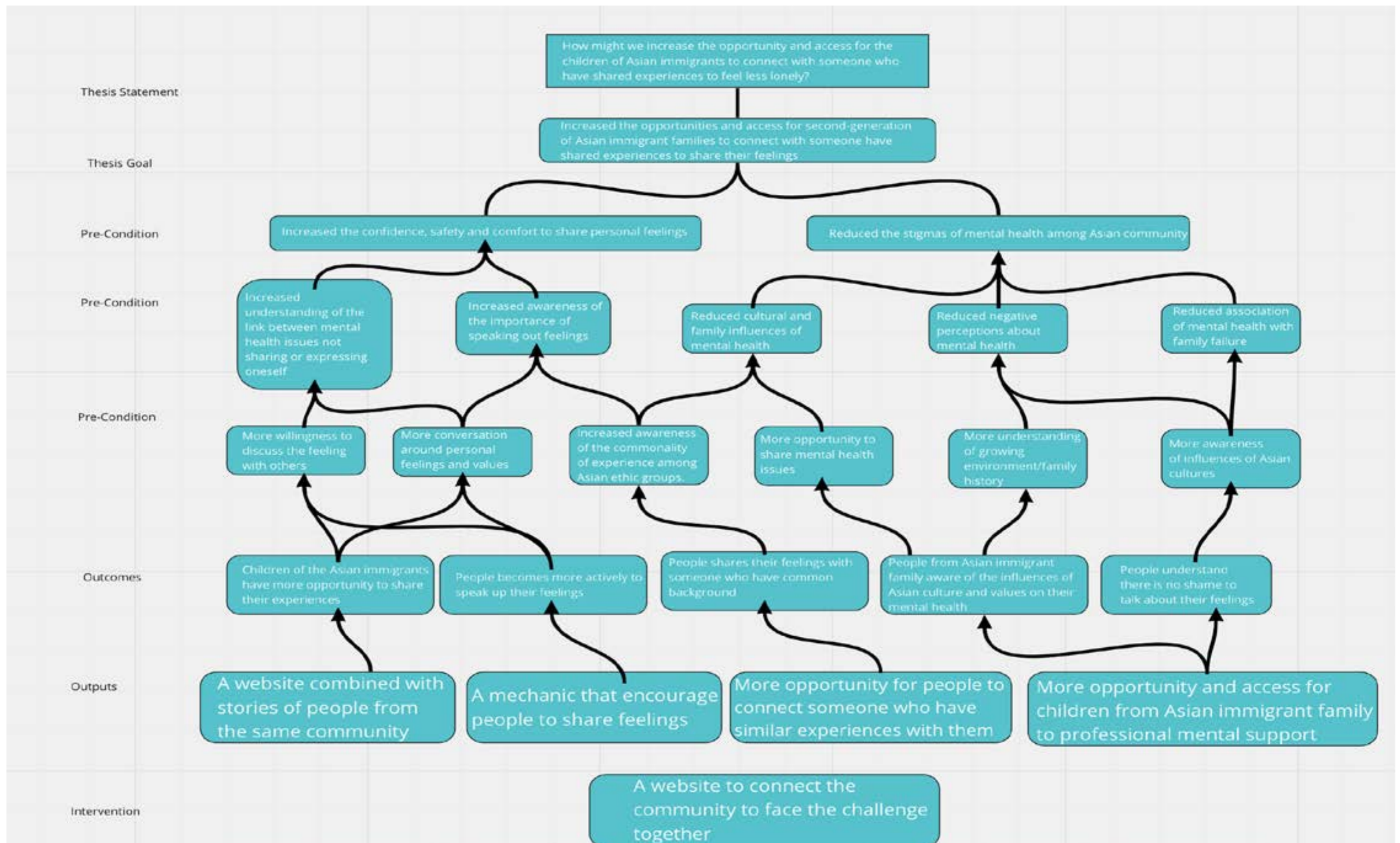
Organizing the activities with the AAPI community, such as making the dumpling, music events, and playing Mah-jong.

Attending the workshop with the first-generation AAPI community this month. They are not my target audience for this work, but they still need more attention and care.

Iterating the project. There is no best one, but always a better one.

Talking with more people from the AAPI community, each of the interviews that I have done brought me many different insights into the AAPI community.

Keep thinking and growing!



THEORY OF CHANGE

The goal of TOC is to increase and access the opportunities for second-generation AAPI immigrant families to share their feelings in terms of mental wellness. In order to achieve this goal, we have to look back at the history of Asian mental health. The stigmas that are against mental health are the most challenging factors that prevent people from looking for mental support. Also, people in the Asian community do not use to talk about their feelings.

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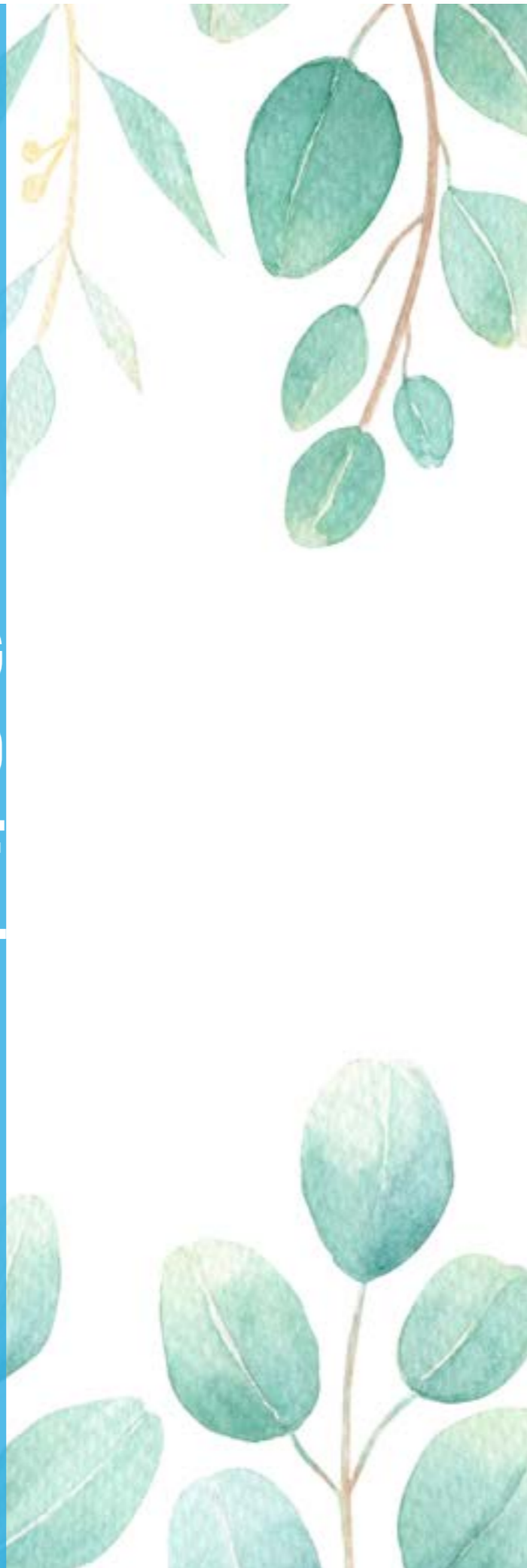
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SOMETHING TO MYSELF

12



"I couldn't help to think of myself two years ago when I'm writing this as the end of my DSI journey..."

Back to August 2020. I just ended three months quarantine in my room at Wuhan. During the three months, I broke up with my girlfriend for three years. I was living with my father and grandfather, whom I hadn't talked to for two years, reading the bad news every day in my room and looking at the number of affected and death growing up every second. I heard the people who live upstairs shouting out and breaking down. My mom was at the frontline against the Covid. Even though we hadn't talked with each other for almost seven years, I felt very complicated when I heard about this. I've never experienced something like Covid at that time in the past 23 years. One day, I told my family that I felt nervous about it, and my grandfather said that this was nothing compared with what he had been through. I knew he was trying to comfort me, but he didn't know-how. As an 89 years old senior who had experienced the Anti-Japanese war, Cultural revolution, Chinese civil war, and the Great Famine...he barely talked about those things. I only know there was an old wooden box in my family that he brought with him when he fled from his hometown. He is the only survivor in his family.

I cannot even remember when is the last time I cried, but I felt tears streaming down my face when I wrote about my grandmother that she said
"Ú;(my nickname), take a photo for me; I'm not sure If this is my last time to see you."

I guess this is the bonds of the family; like Haru said in her story, "we are each other's source of pain and joy."

At this moment, I can see the three months in Wuhan changed me into a person with more compassion and humility. Still, it also instilled more depression and desperation in me.

The last semester, I was in a very frustrating time. I'm glad that I chose this topic as my thesis, even though after all the time I spent pivoting, it is like somewhere in my fate. Doing this project is also a journey that I unstructured myself. I'm lucky to know many people who face the same challenge as I do and people who guide me through their journey.

I guess this is why I came to the DSI... it also feels like somewhere in my fate.

So! keep growing! Grow better because of hurt!

SPECIAL THANKS

13

Thanks to my advisor Mari for giving me all the patience during the time when I lost the direction. Thanks for guiding me through the most challenging part of my project. It is more than just this project. Sometimes, when I talk with you, I feel there are also many underlying feelings inside of you, but you set an example for me on how to move forward with those feelings. Sorry for the headache that I gave you. It was not easy for me and also for you. In China, there is an old saying that "a teacher for a day is a father for a life.."ひらがなありがとうせんせ!

Thanks to my chair Miya for always being supportive and encouraging me! Thanks for staying at 11 pm with me before, and sorry for the headache that I gave you and Mari...I really appreciate your openness and patience with each student. I still remember the first time that I talked with you in the interview. That was the first interview ever in my life. Thanks for accepting me to the DSI. More than just the project, I think you, as the chair and teacher, set me an example of what kind of person I want to be in the future.

Thanks to Haru for trusting and sharing all the stories and journeys with me! I lay down on the bed for hours after our first conversation, and after that, I pivoted my work. You show me the possibility of living with the bad things and traumas in life, and how you walk out from that is very inspiring. I'm glad that Miya introduced June to me, and then June connected you with me! I won't forget that!

Thanks to Jenny, Mickey, Zahra, and Mighty7 for connecting me with the community and giving me all the support!

Thanks to June, Jenny, and Haru for joining my workshop and giving me all the advice and support!

Thanks to all my participants for contributing to my work! I couldn't have done this without you all.

Thanks, DSI!

And thanks for all the struggle, anxiety, and uncertainty that I had in my practice to make me grow better!

At last, thanks, Neil, for doing this; this is just a start. Keep moving!