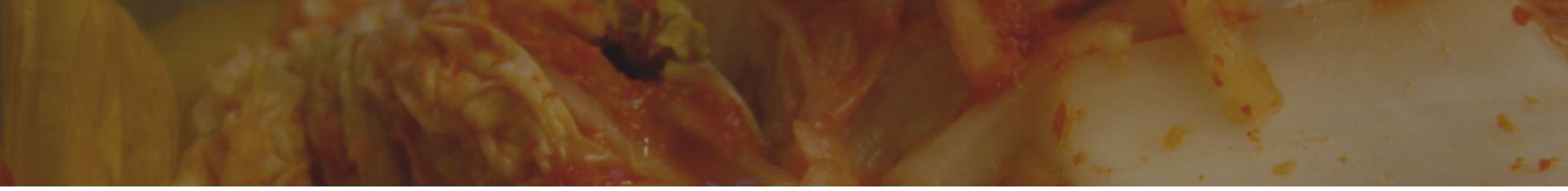


# More Than Kimchi and Cash

DESIGNING FOR CULTURAL IDENTITY

Kipum Michael Lee  
Masters Thesis Project  
2007-2008

Advisor: Shelley Evenson  
Masters in Interaction Design  
Carnegie Mellon University



# More Than Kimchi and Cash

DESIGNING FOR CULTURAL IDENTITY

Kipum Michael Lee

A Studio Project Submitted in Candidacy for the  
Degree of Master of Design in Interaction Design

The School of Design  
Carnegie Mellon University

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Kipum Lee

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Shelley Evenson

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

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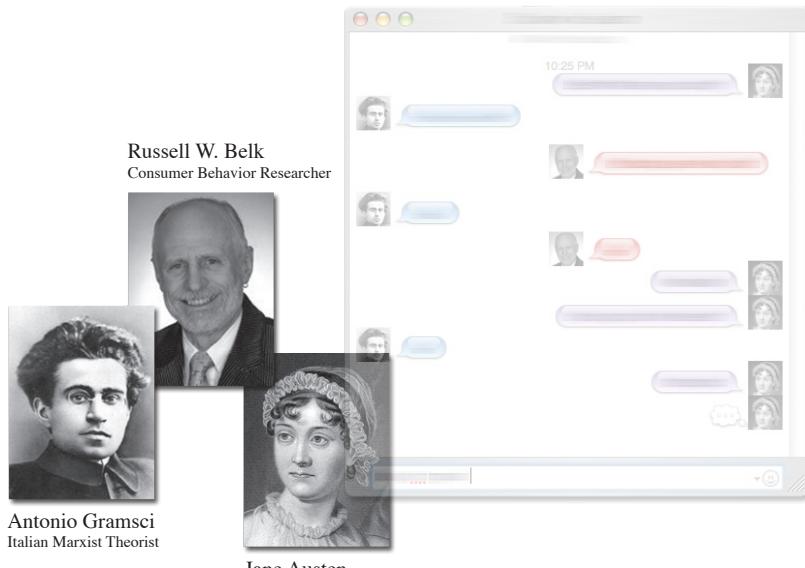


# Introduction

## Project Overview

Certain products have the power to shape cultural identity. Korean Americans in the United States are one group among many who are still developing their own culture. Since culture is a complex mesh made up of various institutions, I have focused on one informal institution - the family. Among Korean American families, there is a disconnect between first generation parents and their children. Notably, as children leave for college, communication further dwindles. This service explores interaction opportunities to enhance relations between Korean American parents and their children. I believe there is also an opportunity for this product to be a platform for future products involving other cultural identities.

# My Inquiry



Thesis Essay: "A Drama on Designing Products for Cultural Identity"

## Is There Something Worth Pursuing Here?

This project was motivated by one simple question: Can one deliberately design for a culture and shape it? I was provoked by my thesis essay which explored this theme of designing for cultural identity. In the essay, I strive to discuss a theory behind the theme of culture and identity in the form of a dialogue among three notable thinkers. In this project, I wanted to explore the theme in practice.

There are products that destroy cultures. For example, in an effort to better the world, designers have created hybrid cars. However, many of the visually impaired complain of the destructive power of these vehicles because they cannot hear the electrically powered engines as they cross the street. Another example, of course, come from the Nazis who created highly sophisticated products used to destroy numerous cultures.

If certain products are destructive, can certain other products be used to enhance cultures?

# My Hypothesis



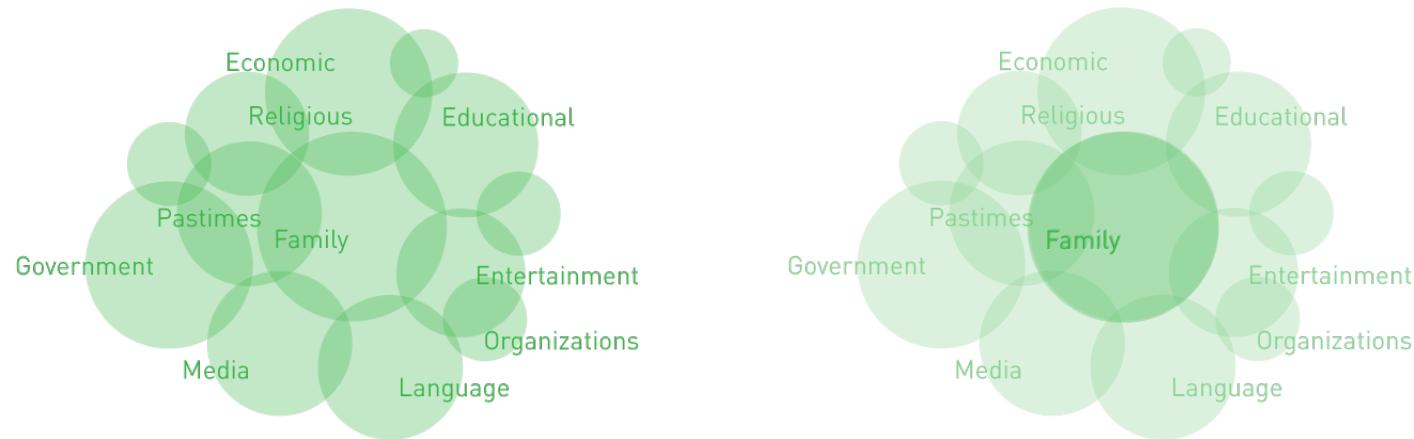
## Yes, Products Can Shape Cultures

My hypothesis is that the right products centered around the right activities can help people participate in a culture.

Oprah is a powerful example of a product that shapes culture. In addition to having her own store and product line, she continues to influence Americans as well as the world through her actions and charisma. Another example is the Terrible Towel of the Pittsburgh Steelers that encourages the participation of fans at home and abroad. The towel uniquely shapes a certain culture as royalties from the towel's sales are used to help the disabled of the Allegheny Valley School in Pennsylvania. There is also PlayPumps International and its innovative water system used to bring clean water to communities in Africa and change the way many Africans live.

These products that enable groups of people to participate undeniably shape culture.

# What is Culture?



## Culture as a System of Institutions

Although there are numerous interpretations of what culture is, for my project, I worked with the interpretation that culture is made up of various institutions. This view comes from Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist theorist whose work has been very influential for those who study culture.

According to Gramsci, culture is made up of various institutions and by influencing the ideology of institutions one at a time, a certain idea can eventually dominate and permeate throughout a society.

Out of the many institutions, I focused on the family institution for my project.



## Scope

*"There are approximately 3.5 million Asian American young people under the age of 18. They represent a highly influential and media-savvy demographic with billion dollars of spending power. Yet it's surprising that more brands aren't actively reaching out to these kids. It's a demographic just ready and waiting to be served."*

Quirk's Marketing Research Review | June 2007

*"They spend between \$100-200 billion a year, more than the GDP of a majority of the world's nations, have the largest family income of any ethnic group in America, including whites, and love top brands. Of course, we're talking about Asians. What's surprising, though, is how little effort mainstream advertisers have traditionally put into reaching them."*

MediaLifeMagazine.com | December 1999

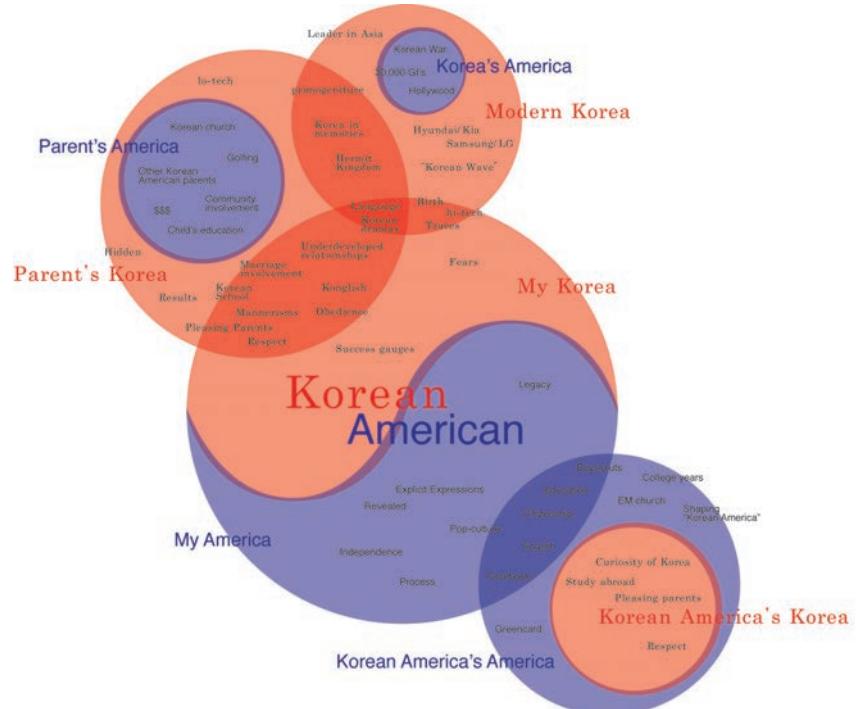
### Korean Americans

I chose to focus on Korean Americans in the United States because they are a fairly recent immigrant group. Many of them came to the United States during the late 1970's and early 1980's and are still developing as a culture.

There is a certain myth of Asian Americans (including Korean Americans) as a "Model Minority" group which views these individuals as hard working, intelligent, ambitious, and analytical. Yet, this notion is being challenged as many 1.5 and 2nd generation Korean Americans have deviated from this mold and are starting to pursue other professions and activities previously unassociated with them. Many also have tremendous buying power yet do not have products that really meet their needs as a rising and evolving culture.

My project desires to address this group and the communication needs they have between parents and the younger generation.

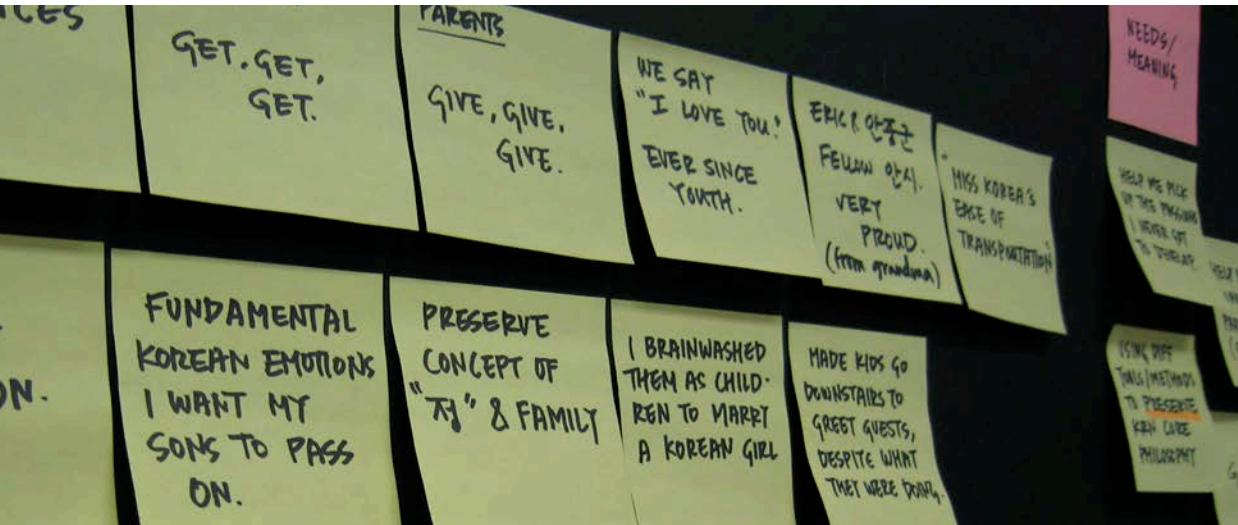
## Scope | Territory Map



## Exploring the Boundaries

A territory map was made to identify themes related to Korean Americans and several participants contributed to the map.

# Process | Research Overview



## What I Did

To understand the relationship between Korean American children and their parents, fourteen in-person interviews were conducted with children ages 14-26 and six parents in their 40-50's were interviewed. In the last session with children and parents, it was a participatory design session and was used as a generative process to refine towards the final product.

I also attended events and engaged in activities in which Korean Americans participate. These activities range from going to church to cooking at home.

Secondary research included an online survey inquiring about gifts given to parents, which had twenty-two respondents included non-Korean Americans, validations through Facebook, and a literature review.

# Process | Findings

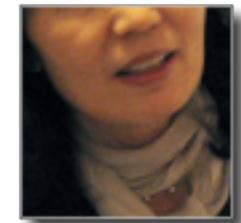


## Process | What I've Learned



Child

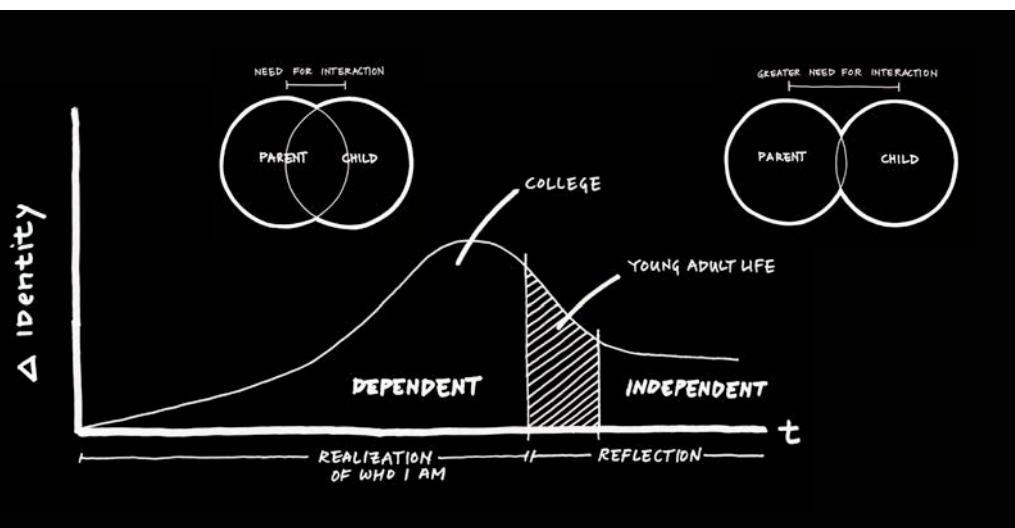
*"I feel like my parents don't know anything about me when it comes to interests, activities, and personality. I would love for them to know more about what I think about politics, business ... I feel like I've changed so much since college, but they haven't had a glimpse into my world."*



Parent

*"I want to interact with my kids more than just sending them food and money."*

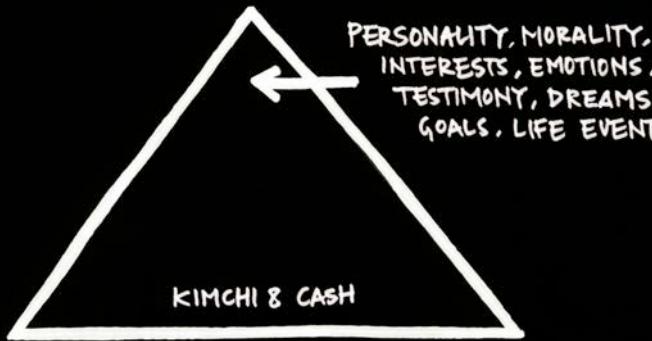
# Process | What I've Learned



## Analysis

As children go off to college, they undergo a transformation as they learn more about themselves and grow physically and emotionally. During this time of self discovery, they develop new types of needs.

## Process | What I've Learned

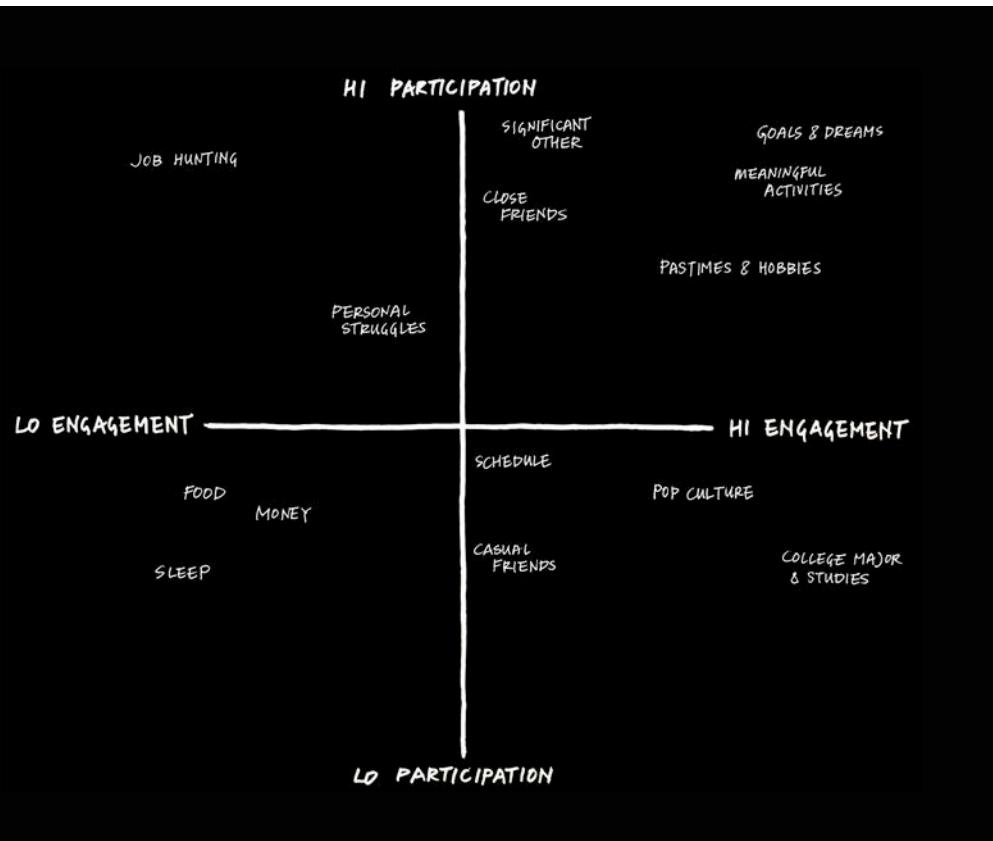


### Interpretation

Like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there are needs that meet the basic requirements and there are psychological and emotional needs. There is a rich opportunity to meet these needs after college when many Korean Americans are in a period of reflection.

From these needs, prominent themes were developed.

# Process | What I've Learned



## Themes

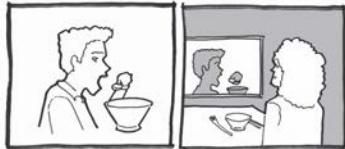
There is a slight difference in nuance between the words “participation” and “engagement.” I took participation to mean the level of actions needed to address the depicted theme. For example, Korean American parents are eager to participate in finding suitable significant others for their children. They go so far as to meet with other Korean American parents in formal matchmaking sessions in some communities.

Engagement for me means the level of interest and concern. For example, in Korean American culture, many parents were interested in their child’s college major but did little in terms of asking questions and really wanting to know more about the nature of their profession or studies. They supported their kids with tuition money but not in terms of identifying with the subject matter of their studies.

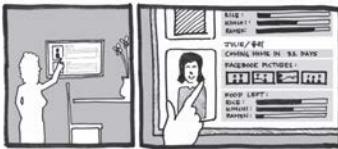
To verify these themes, concepts were produced and presented to people.

# Process | Initial Concept Development

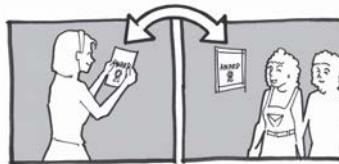
01. Umma Watches Sam Eat



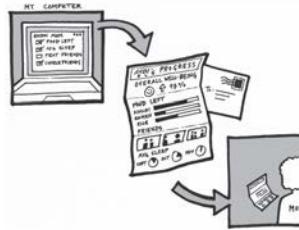
02. How Much Can Umma See?



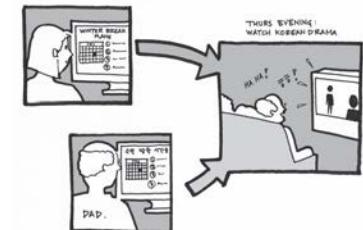
03. Let Umma Show Off



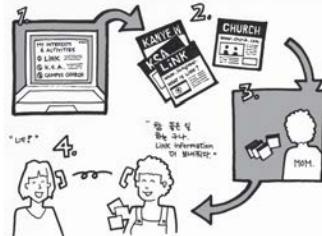
04. Giving a Progress Report



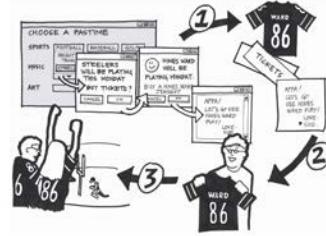
05. Scheduling for Break



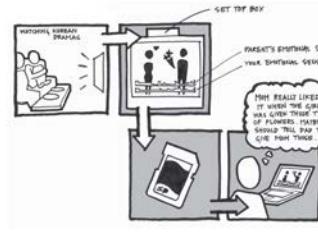
06. Showing My Interests



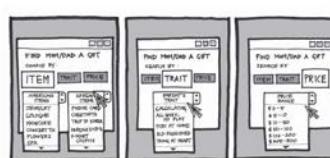
07. American Pastimes



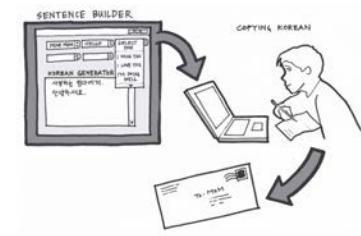
08. Learning from Dramas



09. Choosing a Gift



10. Expressing in Korean



## Preliminary Concept Generation

Ten concepts were generated from the research and presented to eleven interviewees.

# Process | Initial Concept Development



Profile edit Friends ▾ Inbox (1) ▾ home account privacy logout

Search Applications Photos Groups Events Marketplace + more

### My Photos – Concept Validation

Comments 61 – 80 of 96 | Back to Album | See All My Photo Comments First Prev 1 2 3 4 5 Next

**Eric Ahn (Johns Hopkins) wrote at 11:10am on November 19th, 2007**

YES, nice. I think this hit it on the head.

It's so HARD to tell my parents what I'm interested in. And though parents know better than kids, there is this language gap that restricts my ability to DESCRIBE my interests to my parents, rather than having them just observe what I like. I want to be able to TELL them why I like it.

It's like what I said in the previous picture, about watching movies with my parents. My parents are pretty hip for most Korean parents, but we have very different interests. My mom falls asleep during movies, even like Blackhawk Down.... ^\_~;

**Edward Ahn (Baltimore, MD) wrote at 8:13pm on November 24th, 2007**

I think that this is a great idea... really really necessary. It's still very difficult for me to share my dreams/goals/life events with my parents. part of the difficulty is that there's no good medium through which to share, and the other part of it is that I grew up not really sharing much, so that would be tough to change.

I think that the blurb cards shown in the pictures would be an interesting way to do it. It could hold only general information to keep the parents abreast of what's on their kids' minds, or it could have a personalized section for a personal note/testimony. There's a couple of problems with this of course: sharing of such important events through any method other than in-person or phone seems a bit impersonal. also, if the parents receive like 20 notifications a week, that would conceivably desensitize them to thinking that anything is important.

**Uram Joshua Lee (SAIC) wrote at 10:25pm on November 18th, 2007**

This is great. My friend Paul's mom just got into football and is always calling him up asking questions. She's also a huge baseball fan. They're one in a million with having similar interests. Perhaps something like this that comes with cool student discounts like studentuniverse.com could work. Also a website it's on that has other news on Korean American celebrities.

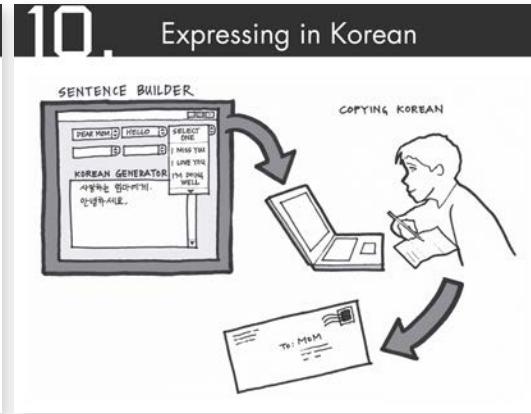
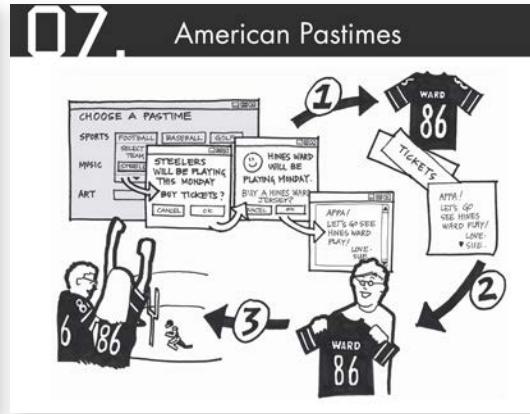
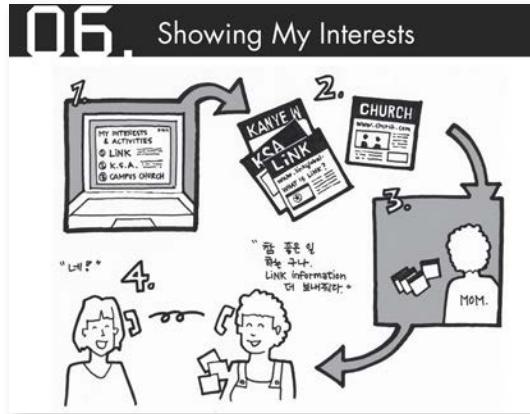
## Facebook

Concepts were also posted on Facebook along with scenarios and validated by Korean Americans when it was convenient for them to stop by and make comments.

Facebook is a social networking site used by many Korean Americans so it was very easy to find participants. Although there are some things one can only get from in-person interviews and sessions, using this tool to have busy participants contribute was helpful for the next phase of the process.

In total, 106 comments were made on the ten concepts.

# Process | Initial Design Implications



Provide an easy way to share interest with parents.

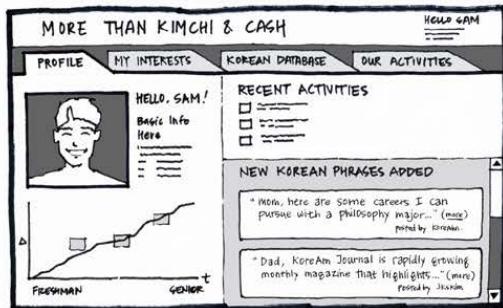
Provide opportunities to participate together in American pastimes.

Facilitate sharing in Korean.

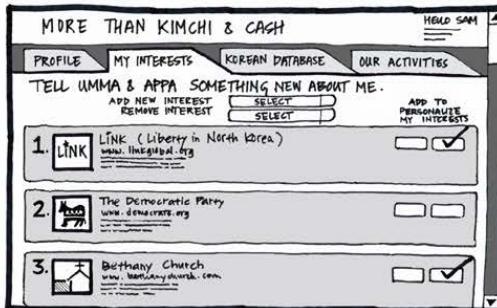
## Moving Towards a Product

Three concepts were met with more enthusiasm than the others and three major design implications were used to move towards an initial product and scenario.

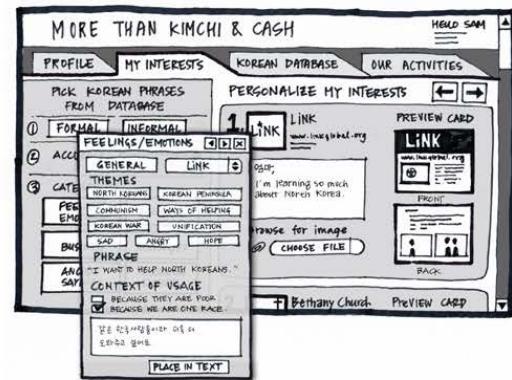
# Process | Initial Product and Scenario



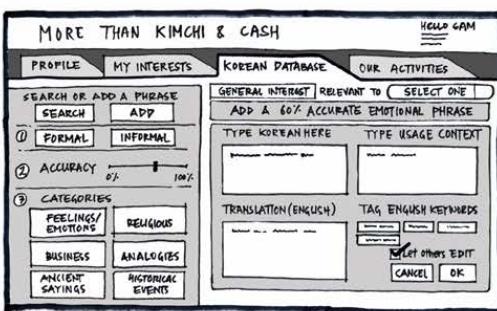
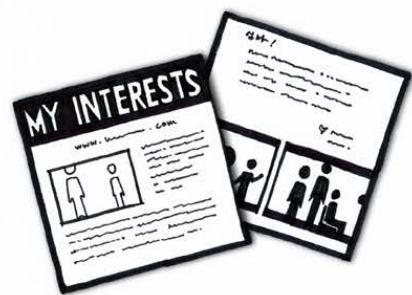
Sam was a member of LiNK at his university but never had a chance to tell his parents about it. He logs onto the service. It shows his basic info, his change throughout college, his recent activities using the service, and some new Korean phrases added by the user community.



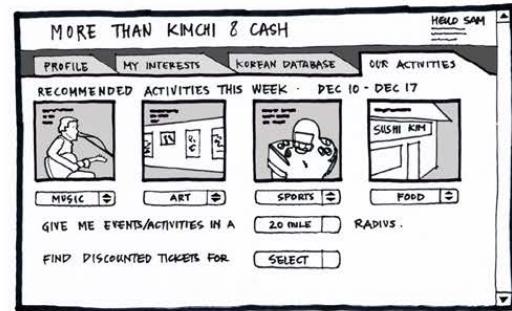
He moves on to his interests page and checks off some interests to update his parents.



He uses the Korean database to find a phrase that best fits his feelings and personalizes his message. He also adds images of his friends and him during a recent LiNK event to show his active involvement.

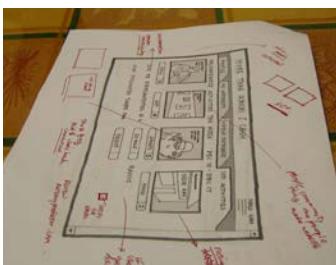


A few days later, his mother calls to say she got his card and expresses her concern for North Korea. She agrees that something must be done and asks Sam to send her more information about LiNK. Then, as a good mother, she tells him how he could have expressed some of the English on the message card in Korean. After the call, Sam logs onto the service and adds a new phrase his mother just taught him so that others can access the expression and even edit his rough Korean.



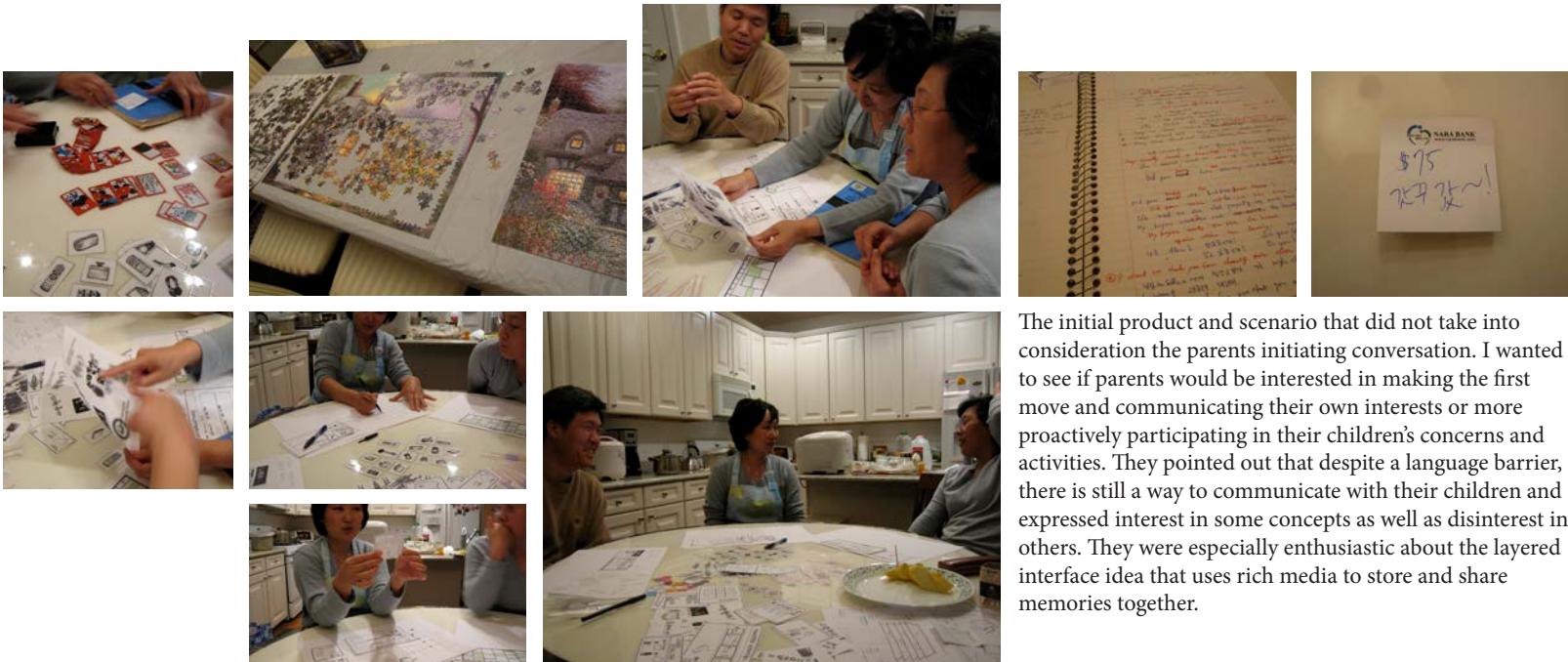
While he's still using the service, he checks to see if anything interesting is happening during that weekend. Maybe he'll go to a Steelers game and have some kalbi with his family at Sushi Kim. If they're not interested, he could certainly ask his friends and also get a group discount.

## Process | Back to the Users



The initial product concept and scenario were brought back to users and the general consensus was that the product was interesting yet might demand too much time from their schedules. They suggested something lighter that they might be able to do with less time engagement. They also said it might be good to think of another way to deliver the service other than from a web channel.

## Process | Back to Users



The initial product and scenario that did not take into consideration the parents initiating conversation. I wanted to see if parents would be interested in making the first move and communicating their own interests or more proactively participating in their children's concerns and activities. They pointed out that despite a language barrier, there is still a way to communicate with their children and expressed interest in some concepts as well as disinterest in others. They were especially enthusiastic about the layered interface idea that uses rich media to store and share memories together.

# Process | Participatory Design



## Tools for Communication

Here are some of the tools used to get users to speak during the participatory design sessions (see pages 20 and 21). I wanted to know what types of information users would want when communicating with their child or parent.

# Process | Forms of Korean Interaction



# Process | Forms of Korean Interaction



## The Floor

The floor has always had a special place in Korean culture. It is interesting that even though many 2nd generation Korean Americans do not speak Korean, the forms of Korean interaction are part of their daily routine. One example is taking off one's shoes when entering the house.

In Korea and also in Korean American communities, one can see the adoption of certain spatial designs to support these forms of interaction with the floor. For example, even in Korean restaurants in the United States, one usually has the option of sitting in chairs or going into the special rooms where one can sit on the floor with a mat.

A strong consideration for this interaction was eventually taken when coming up with the final product and scenario for my project.

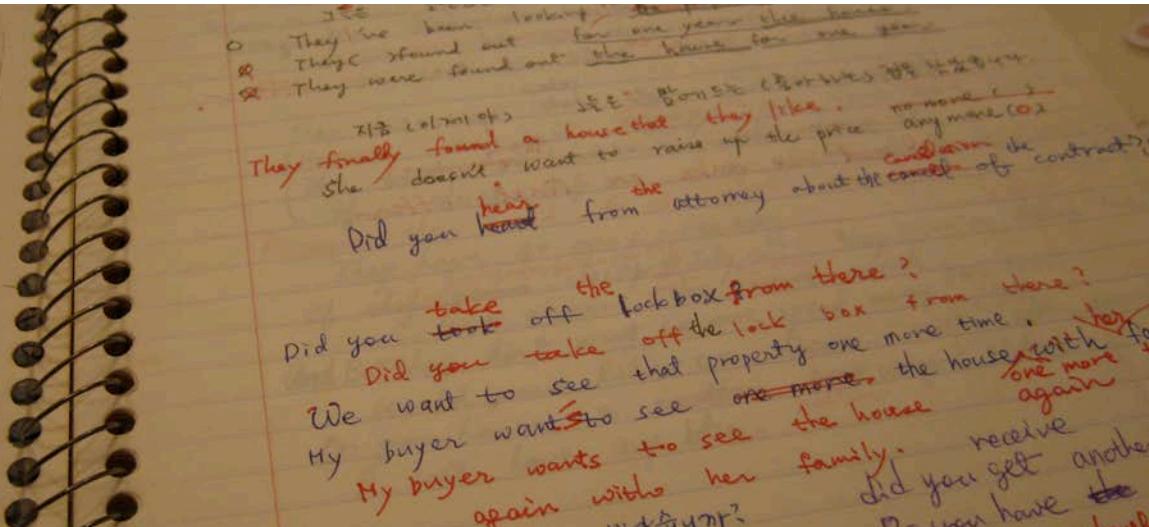
# Final Design Implications



## 1. Simple Asynchronous Communication

The final product addresses the need for simple communication. In one Korean American family, everyone had a different schedule and had no time to come together for even a meal. So, they ended up setting up several puzzle sets on their dining table and whoever had time to stop by would participate in this activity. As members passed by, they would be able to see traces of other family members.

# Final Design Implications



## 2. Preservation of Language Through the Exchange of Simple Sentences

One of the consistent themes throughout the whole process has been preservation of the mother tongue and various other forms of Korean culture. Parents expressed a need to learn English but were more excited to learn if they could ask questions directly to their kids. They felt that they had something to learn from their kids and their kids could benefit from the communication by learning Korean. For example, one mother, who is a real estate agent, has many questions about how to say certain phrases to address her clients. She keeps a notebook and writes down what she wants to express in Korean. Later on, she asks her son how to say the relevant phrase in English and he would help her and learn some Korean in the translation process.

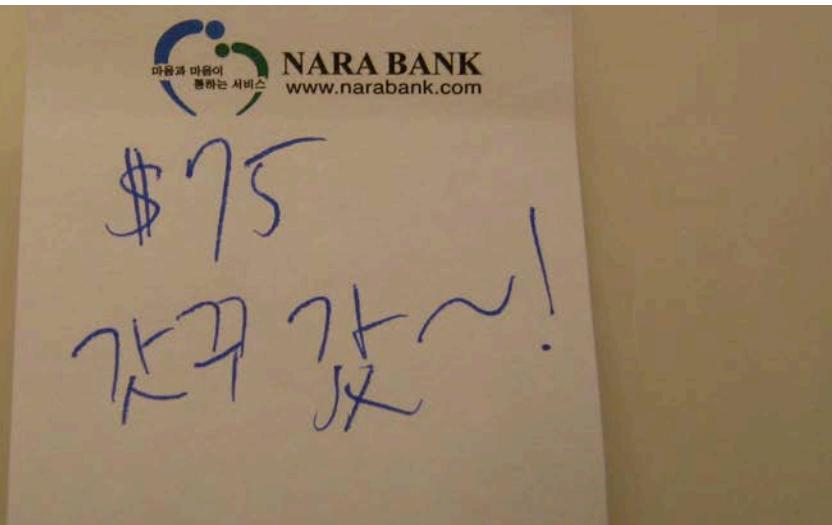
# Final Design Implications



## 3. Get a Gist of What Child is Doing

All of the parents interviewed expressed a desire to know their child's rough schedule. This is because many of them do not know what their child is doing when they want to give them a call. They fear disrupting their child's work and said they do not want to call their child while he/she is at work or at school. By knowing where they are, it would give them some assurance as well as knowing when to call to say hello.

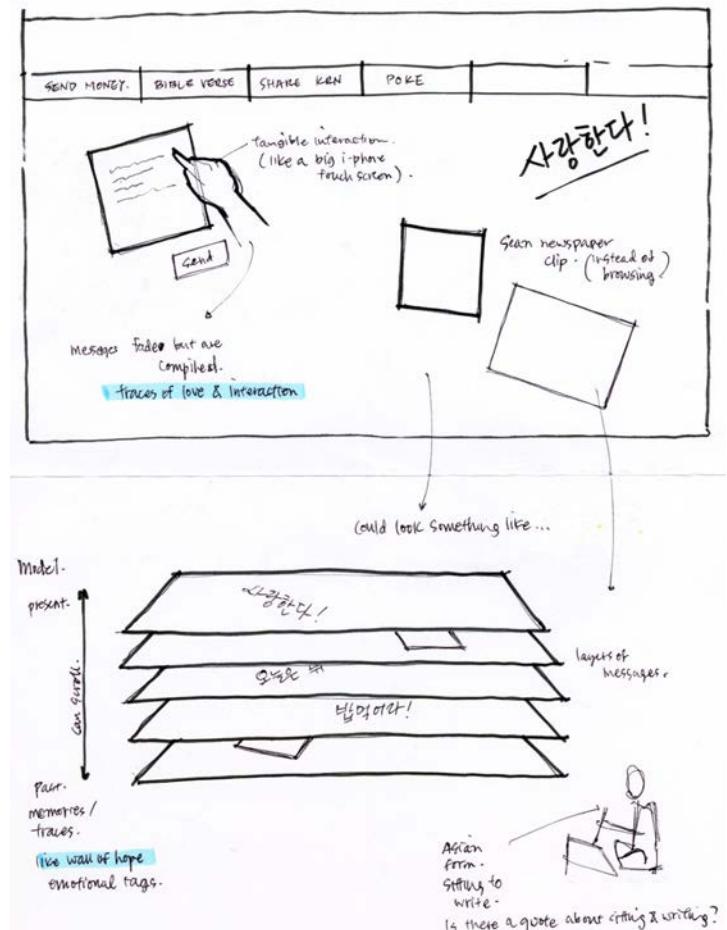
## Final Design Implications



### 4. Expression and Creation of Memories

If the first design implication calls for simple communication, this one goes all the way back to the need to share interests, desires, goals, and dreams. Many children have a difficult time communicating their feelings and thoughts to their parents, and this implication was crucial in coming up with the final product and scenario where parents and children share rich media to communicate deeper desires. The image on the left is a note left by a son to his mother that reads, "I took \$75!" During the interview I had with the mother, she expressed how this simple note gave her much comfort as she said that he did not always tell her such things. By sharing something like this, she feels a sense of trust and transparency that is necessary for a healthy relationship.

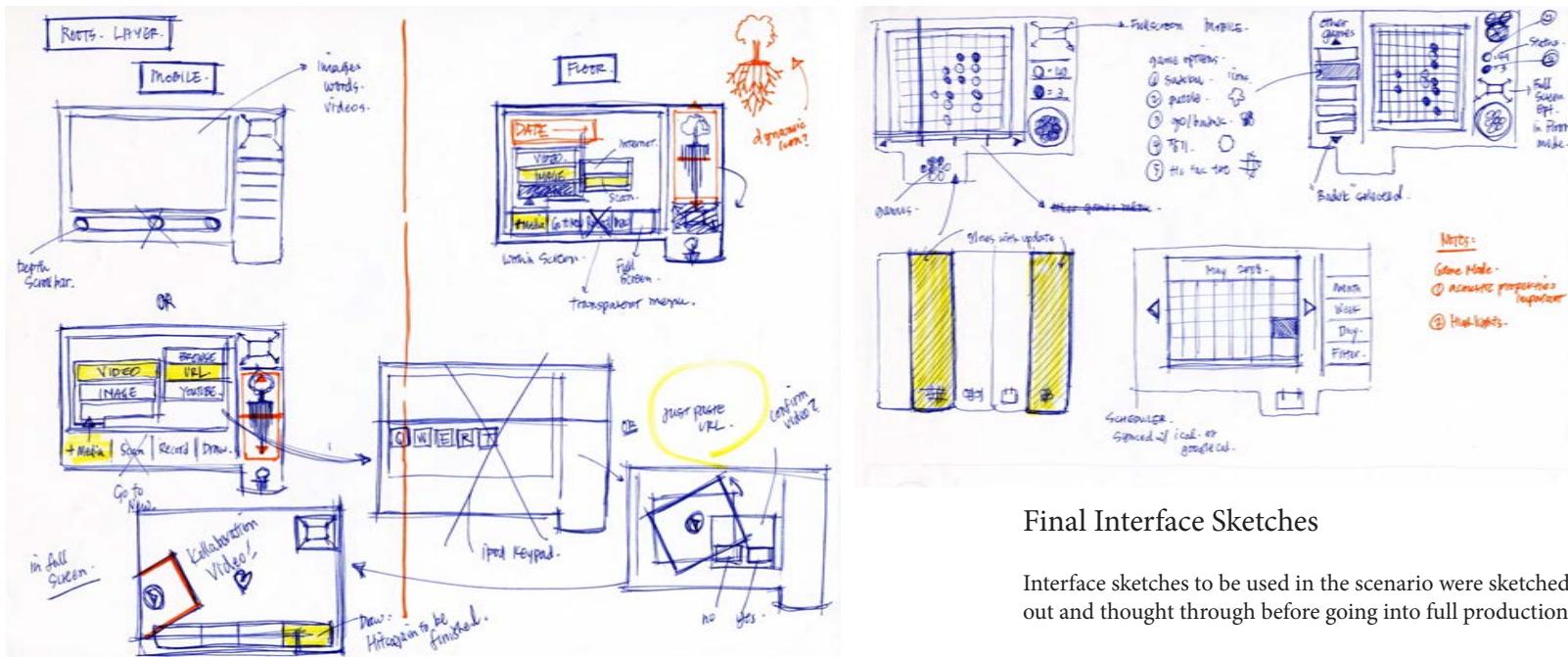
# Final Product and Scenario



## Final Concept Sketches

Sketches were made of the possible product along with how it would function. Pictured on this slide is the memory sharing component where family members would be able to select rich media and share them with each other. As the memories compile, one gets a trace of other events that have happened in the past as they stack up in a layered form with the passage of time.

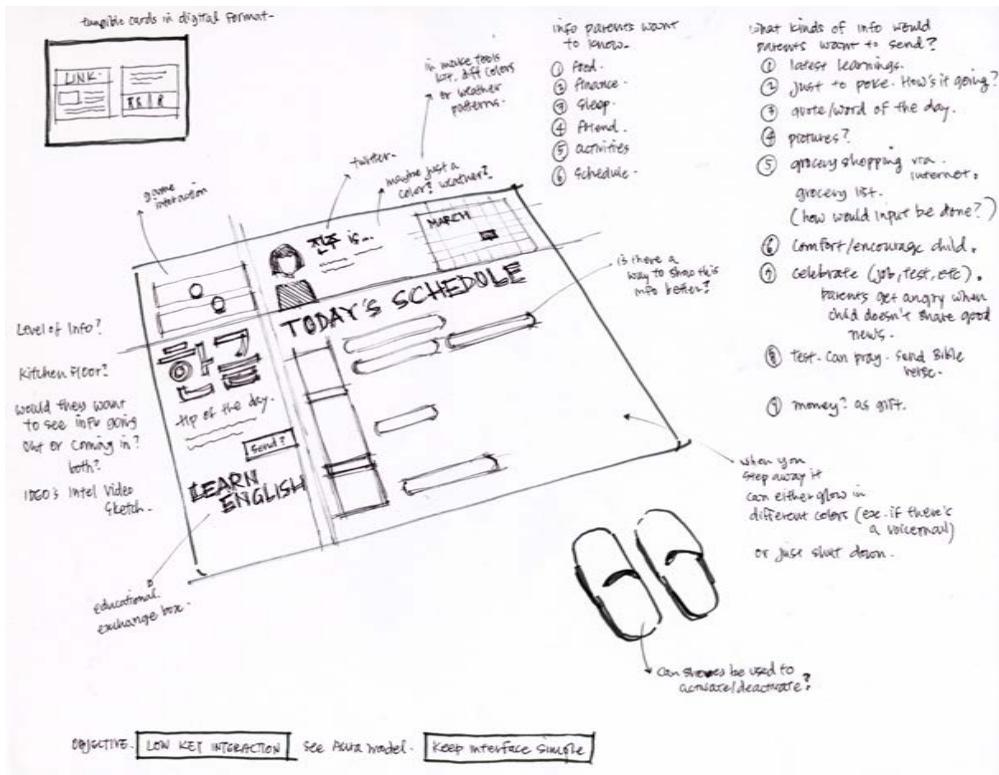
# Final Product and Scenario



## Final Interface Sketches

Interface sketches to be used in the scenario were sketched out and thought through before going into full production.

# Final Product and Scenario



## Final Interface Sketches

This was a quick sketch of what the final interface might look like for parents who would access the service through the floor.

# Final Product and Scenario



Josh is getting ready for a Korean American event called "Kollaboration."



Josh is singing and practicing when he gets a call from Mom.



Mom asks him what he's doing and he explains he's practicing for Kollaboration. Mom is curious and wants to know more about it.



Mom is curious about Kollaboration and wants to hear more about it

Josh promises to send Mom more information about Kollaboration.



When he has some free time, Josh uses the service to send Mom some information.



He chooses the green bar which gives him access to sharing rich media.



He then inputs the URL for a video containing information about Kollaboration.

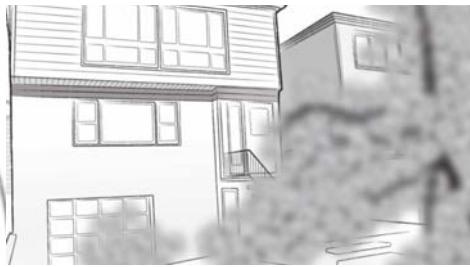


After placing the video in a desired location using gestural interaction, he writes a memo to Mom telling her what the video content is.

# Final Product and Scenario



Josh also takes a moment to make his next move in a game of "go" after seeing his mother has made a move since he last played.



Meanwhile, Mom is cooking in her kitchen.



She gets an update from the service, notifying her that Josh has just updated her with new information as well as made his move in their continuing game of "go".



Mom is able to see that he has posted a video through the glowing image on the interface.



She uses her foot since she is cooking, to play the new video.



A Korean anchor presents information about Kollaboration through the video link.



Mom gets an understanding of what Kollaboration is and also gets information from the video of when Josh's performance will be.



She is able to select a date to store a memo. Josh will not be able to see this message until the day of her selection.

# Final Product and Scenario



Using the service, she stores an encouraging memo for Josh to receive on the day of his Kollaboration performance.



Mom makes her next move in their virtual game.



On the day of his parents' anniversary, Josh gets a reminder and calls to wish them a happy anniversary.



Mom is excited that he actually remembered.



Later in the day, Mom and Dad go through an album and Mom wants to send Josh a picture of her and Dad when they first got married.



Mom uses the service to scan the picture, adding it to a new layer in the media content.



On the day of the performance, Josh gets the memo Mom sent him two weeks earlier.



At first, he sees that something is hidden in a layer from a previous moment in time. He knows that Mom must have sent him this memo a while back.

# Final Product and Scenario



He scrolls towards the new memo but can see traces of other media that have been shared along the way.



He sees the memo Mom sent two weeks ago.



Josh is encouraged and happy that Mom is interested in something that is very important to him.



Mom also gets a reminder through the schedule component of the service that today is Josh's performance.



After the performance, Josh calls mom to tell her that he won.



Mom is excited and Josh says he will send her the clip of his winning performance.



A few days later, Mom gets a new video of Josh introducing his performance as well as the actual performance. She calls Dad over.



They watch Josh as he introduces his performance video.

# Final Product and Scenario



By this time, Dad is hovering over Mom's shoulder as they anticipate the performance.



They watch Josh perform.



Mom and Dad give Josh a call to say he did a great job and that they are proud of them.



Josh is happy that his parents now know of something that he cares deeply about and because his parents are proud of him.

# Significance



## Back to the Users?

After finishing the project, I posted the scenario sketch on Facebook to get feedback from Korean Americans. It has been encouraging to see the product resonating with individuals. I hope to develop this product further as I get more feedback from children as well as parents.

# Significance

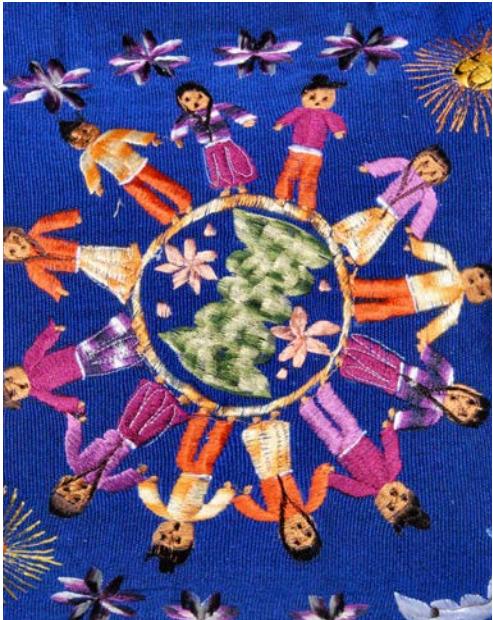


## It's About Service

My goal for the project was to provide a service for Korean American parents and their children. Although it would be foolish to argue that service is exclusive to Korean and Korean Americans, serving the needs of others with the utmost respect has always been a key aspect of Korean culture. As shown in the image on the left, this advertisement by Korean Airlines shows a form of service that is understood by Koreans all over the world.

I believe my product/service is an effort to provide Korean Americans the tools necessary for them to make choices regarding their activities and behaviors as they develop in America and in the world. Good products are ones that do not dictate certain actions but ones that provide users with freedom and enable them to live their lives with self-motivated purpose.

# Significance



## Further Exploration

I would like to explore other activities in which Korean Americans participate. For example, in the scenario, I centered a product around an activity called Kollaboration. Although there are not too many Korean American activities out there at this time, there are still a handful worth exploring, such as Korean American churches.

I would also like to explore other institutions since culture is made up of many institutions. I've focused on just one - the family. What would be the nature of a product that has a different scope?

Ultimately, my vision for this project was not just to make something for Korean Americans. I would like to explore how this product/service can be applied to other user groups as well as other families other than Korean Americans.

# Appendix



Josh is able to see the orange bar glowing which means that Mom has made her move in a game and it is now his turn.



The green bar lights up as he presses the bar.



Josh is brought to this page. The tree with roots can be used to scroll through the layers of rich media that have been collected over time.



Josh uses the “+ media” function to send Mom a clip of video.



Once the video is attached, he presses the full screen button that is activated when the screen is tapped.



Once in full screen mode, he presses the “draw” button which allows him to write or draw something.

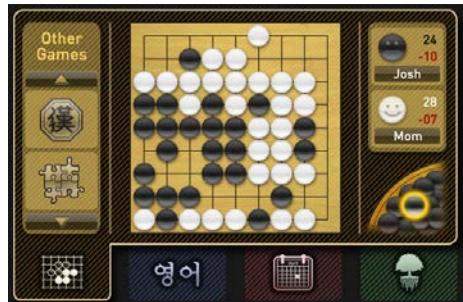


After he has posted, he clicks the orange bar/icon to get to the game section.



Once in the game section he sees the last move Mom made, which is shown by a red blinking glow over the white game piece.

# Appendix



To make his next move, Josh clicks the black game piece on the bottom right corner and then selects the location on the board where he would like to place his piece.



Mom gets to see the updated video as it glows on the top layer with a greenish pulse.



She clicks the full screen mode to get to the new video.



She clicks the “to New” button with her foot and it opens the video clip.



To select a date to store a message, she clicks the top left date and a calendar opens up.



After selecting a date, the date on the top left corner of the screen turns red.



Mom draws a message.



Mom sees Josh's last position and clicks her game piece before placing the piece on the board. Her interface is slightly different because it can hold more information.

# Appendix



Mom wants to send Josh a scan of the picture that she and Dad found in their wedding album. After selecting “image” and then “scan,” she places the picture on the interface.



Josh sees a hidden layer on the day of his performance. He sees the message glowing in a green pulse.



He scrolls with the scrollbar to get to the message but sees other media that have been shared since then.



The date on the upper left corner also goes backward in time as each shared medium passes by with its associated date of placement.



Josh sees the message Mom sent two weeks earlier.



Mom also gets a reminder on the day of Josh's performance through the calendar component.



After the performance, Mom and Dad watch Josh explaining what the accompanying video is about.



Mom and Dad watch Josh's performance.