

More than Kimchi & Cash

DESIGNING FOR CULTURAL IDENTITY

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. Within this group, there is a disconnect that occurs between first generation parents and their children. As children leave for college, communication further dwindles. This service explores interaction opportunities to enhance relations between Korean American parents and their children. There is also an opportunity for this product to be a platform for future products involving other cultural identities.



To understand the relationship between Korean American children and their parents, thirteen in-person interviews were conducted with Korean Americans and their parents. Their ages range from 14 to 26, and the four parents in the interviews are first generation parents in their late forties and early fifties.

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 to parents. The twenty-two respondents included non-Korean Americans as well.

"Even if my child was born in America, I wanted her first food to be Korean."

"I will be the one to teach my grandchildren about Korean things."

"I feel like I've changed so much since college, but they haven't had a glimpse into my world."

"I brainwashed them when they were children to marry a Korean girl."

"I guess you gravitate to people who look like you or have similar values."

"For me, it's more shocking if someone is a Korean American and doesn't go to church."

"When my kids write letters to me in Korean, it shows they care - even if everything's misspelled."

"My sons only know the first line of the Korean national anthem, but they remember the melody."

"I want to know more about my kids than just what they eat and if they need more money."

"For the SAT's, I checked the other box, I guess I'm Asian but don't know where Pacific Island is."

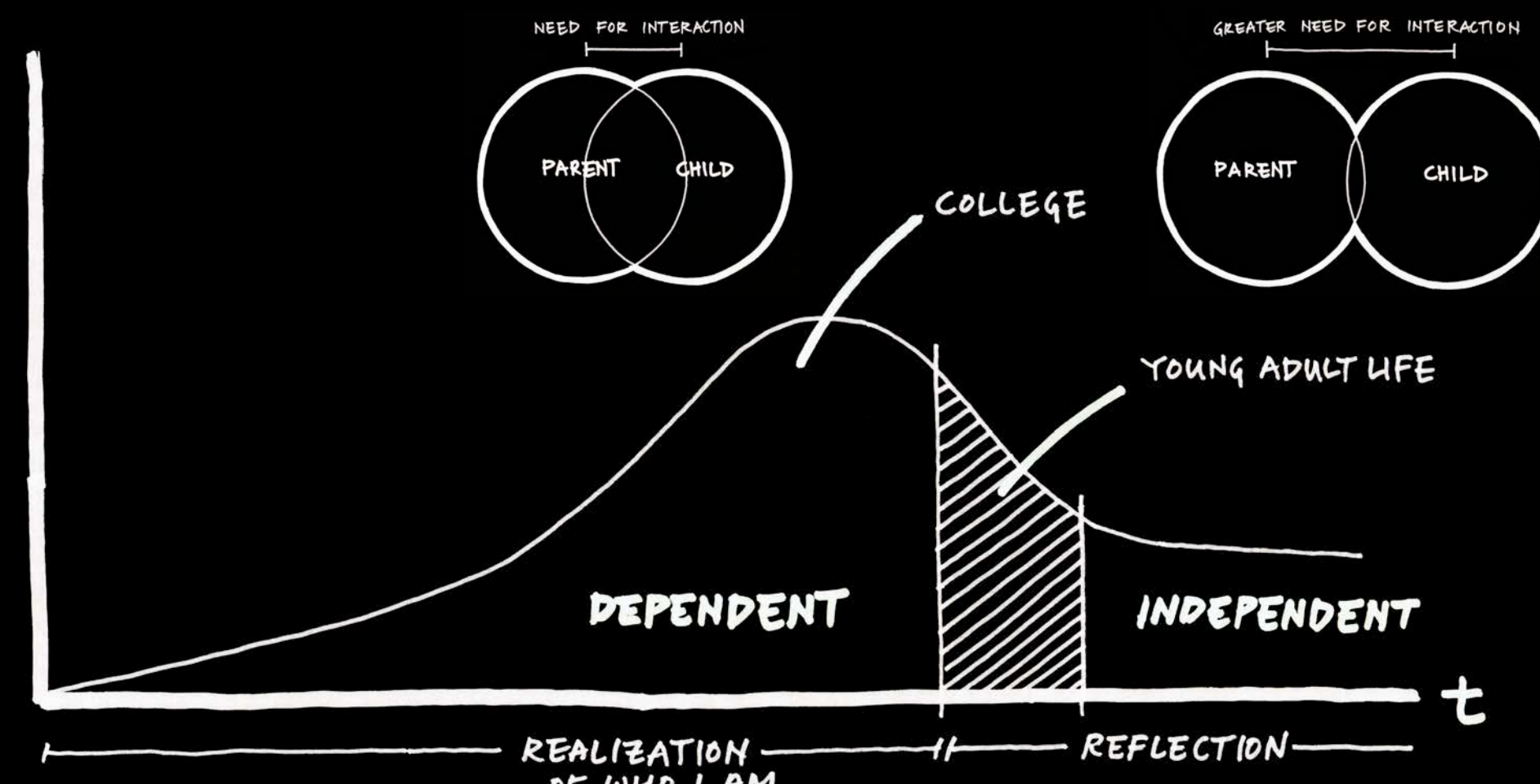
Research

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.

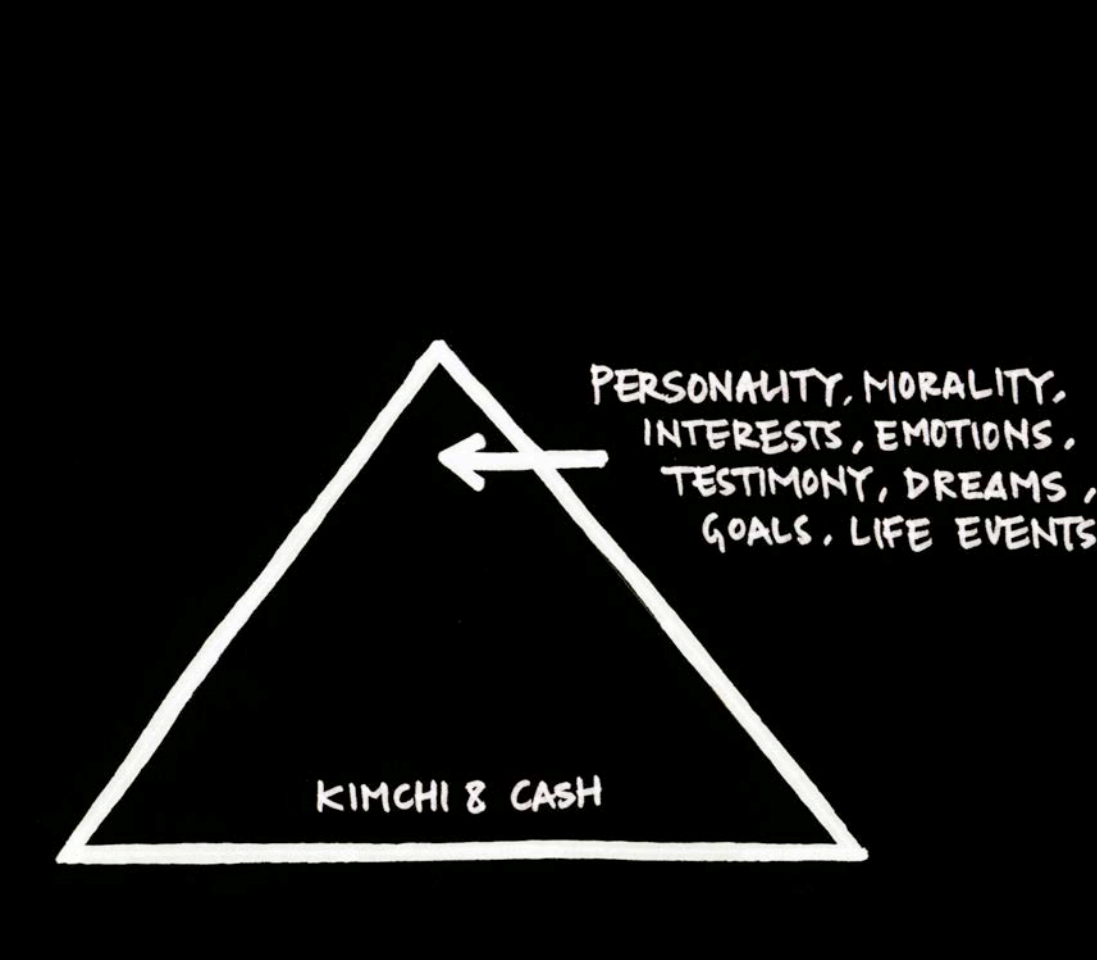
Interpretation
Like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, there are needs that meet the basic requirements and there are psychological and emotional needs. There is a rich opportunity to meet these needs after college when many Korean Americans are in a period of reflection.

From these needs, prominent themes were developed. To verify these themes, concepts were produced and presented to people.

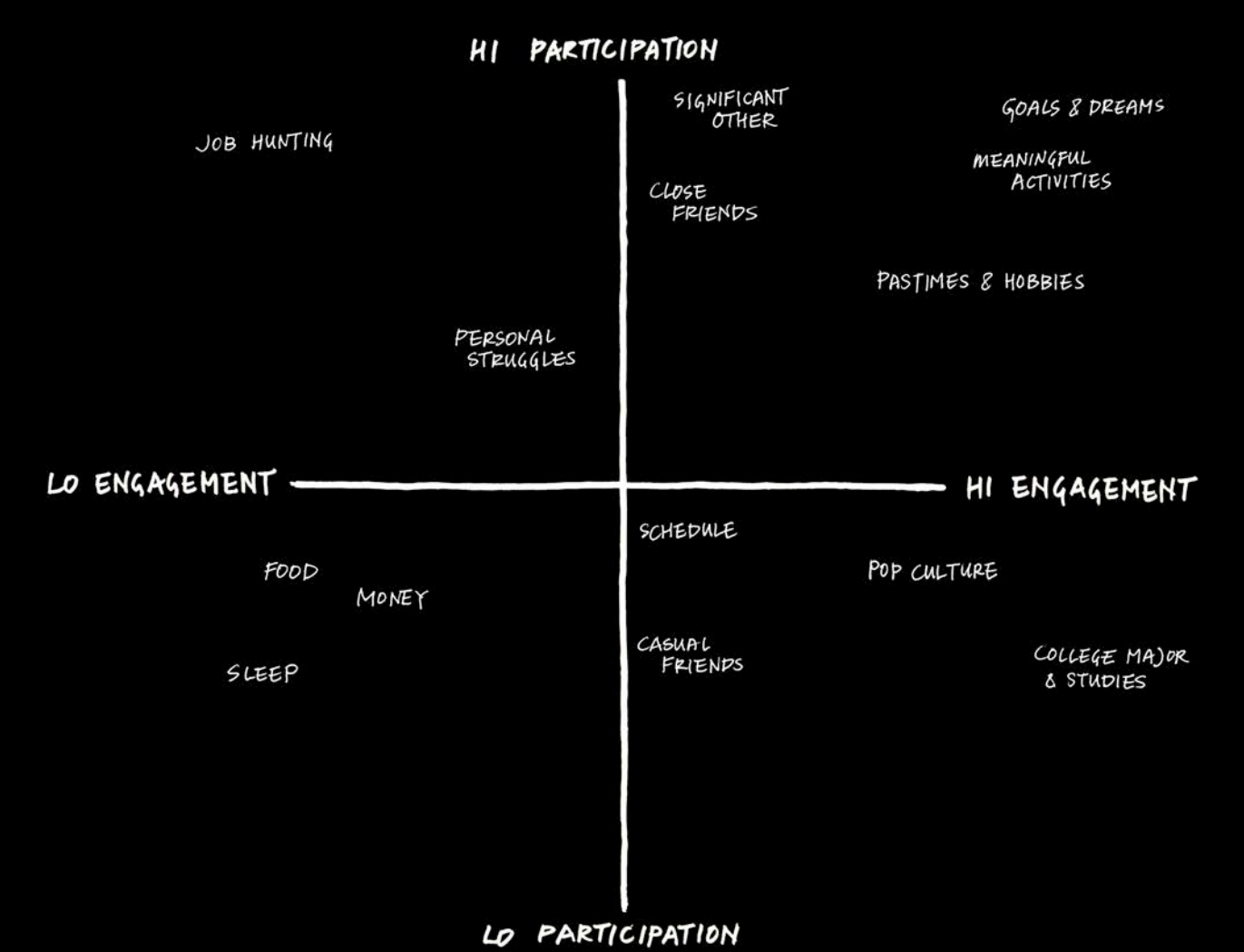
Identity Transformation



Psychological & Emotional Needs



Themes



What I've Learned

Ten concepts were generated from the research and tested with eleven interviewees. Three of the concepts were received with enthusiasm.

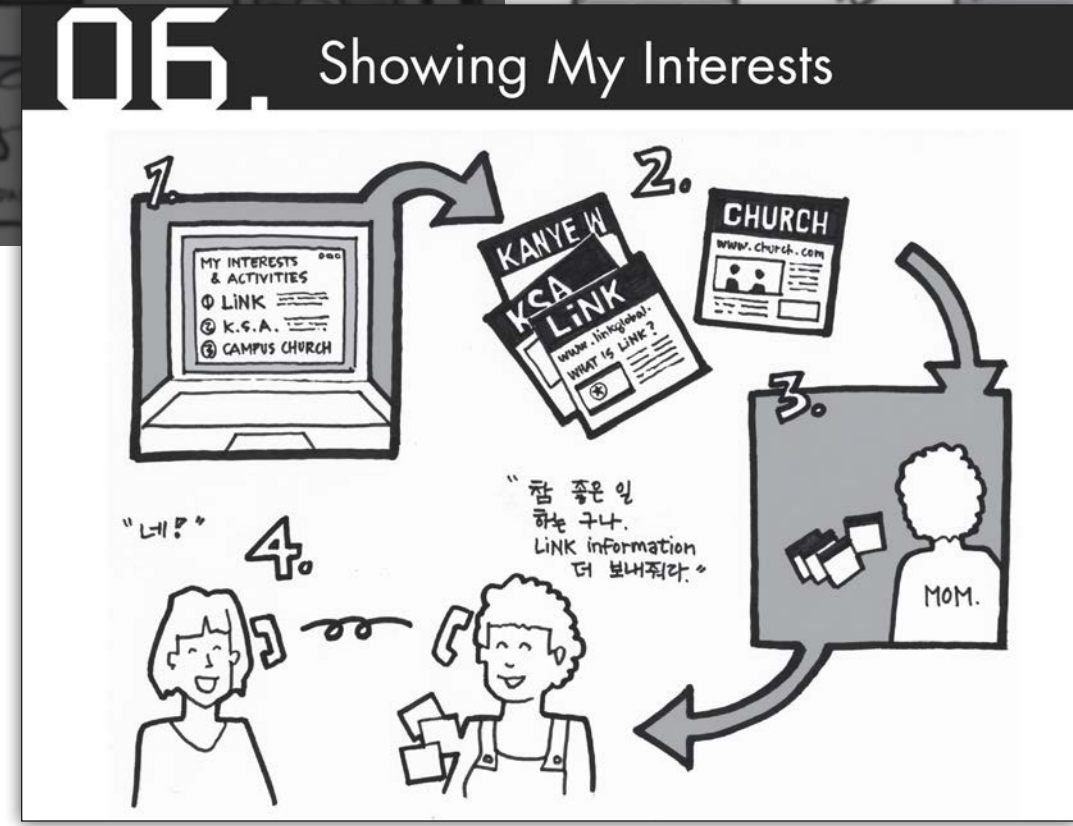
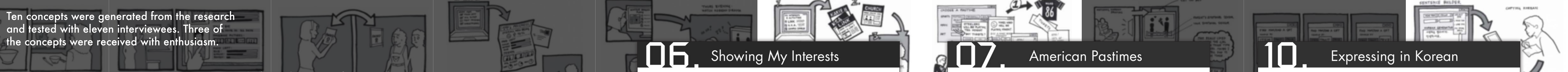
Concept Validation

With Concept 06, respondents expressed a desire to tell parents their interests and also stated the concept would be more desirable if the information were delivered in Korean.

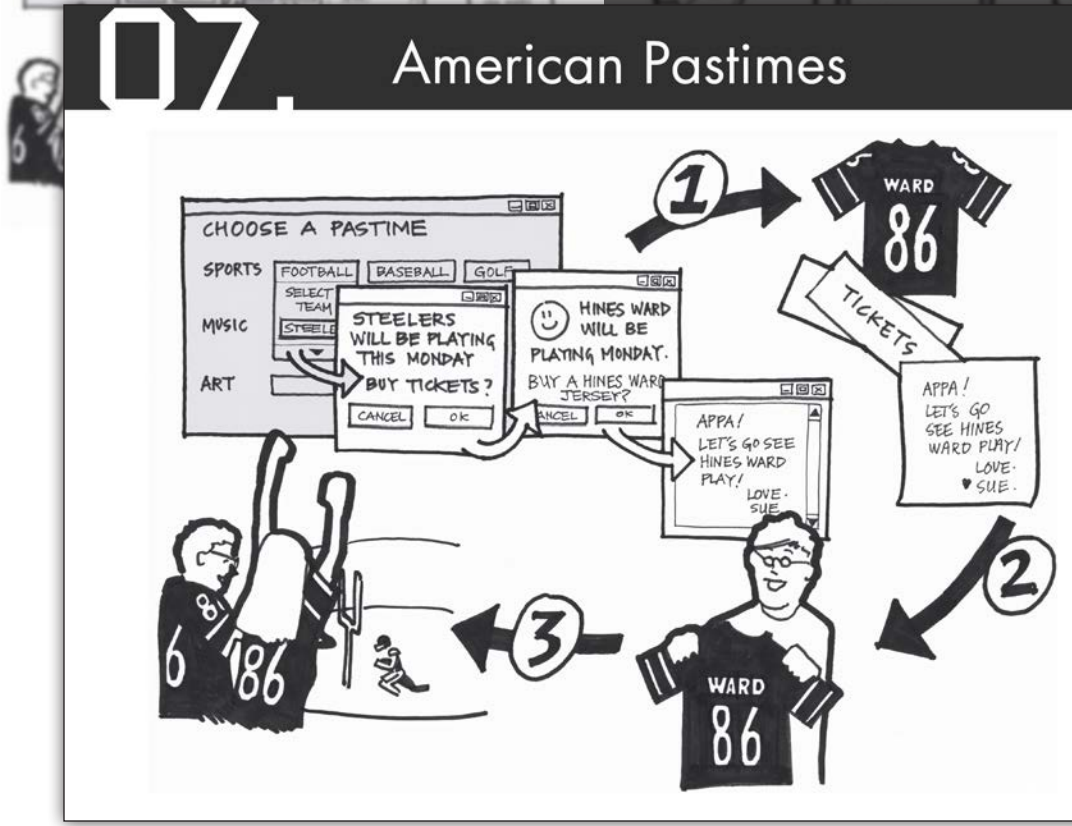
Concept 07 is about using the service to participate in an American pastime. Responses were positive, stating a desire for suggestions based on previously participated activities as well as discounts for such events.

Concept 10 is about personalization and expression through Korean. Although some stated that having a friend to translate would be the best option, having a database of common phrases would be helpful. Accuracy was not a big issue and many disliked the idea of a sentence generator.

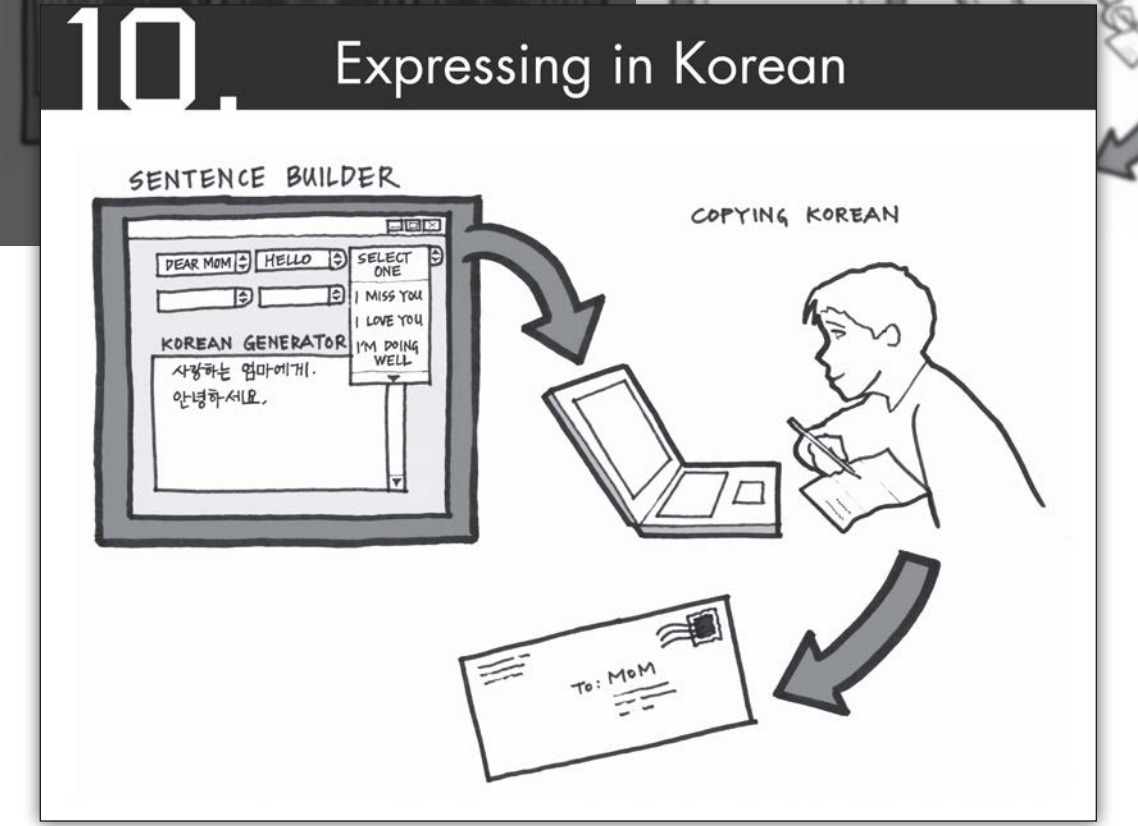
Design Implications



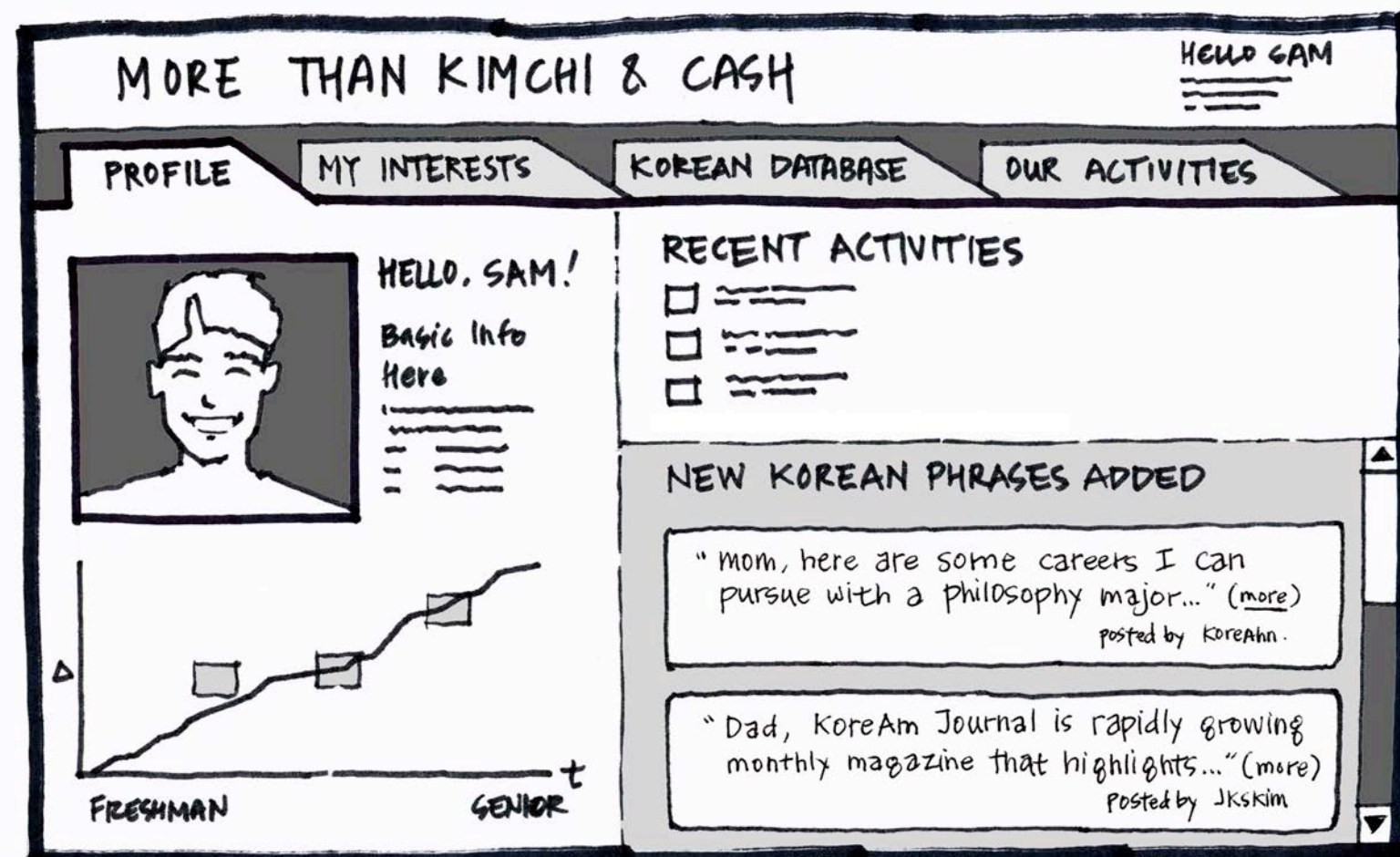
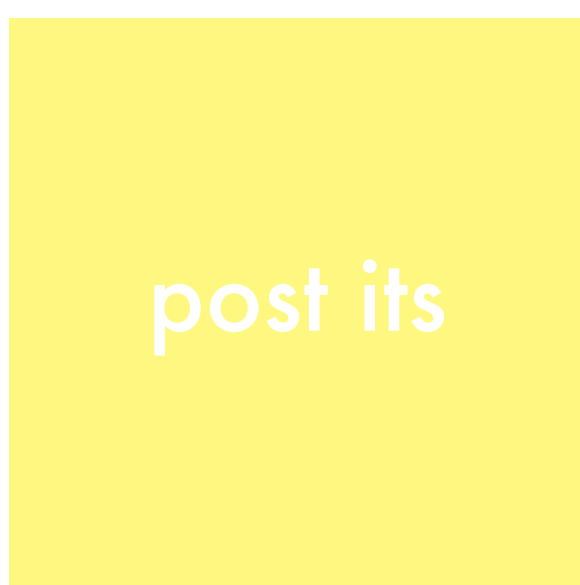
Provide an easy way to share interests with parents.



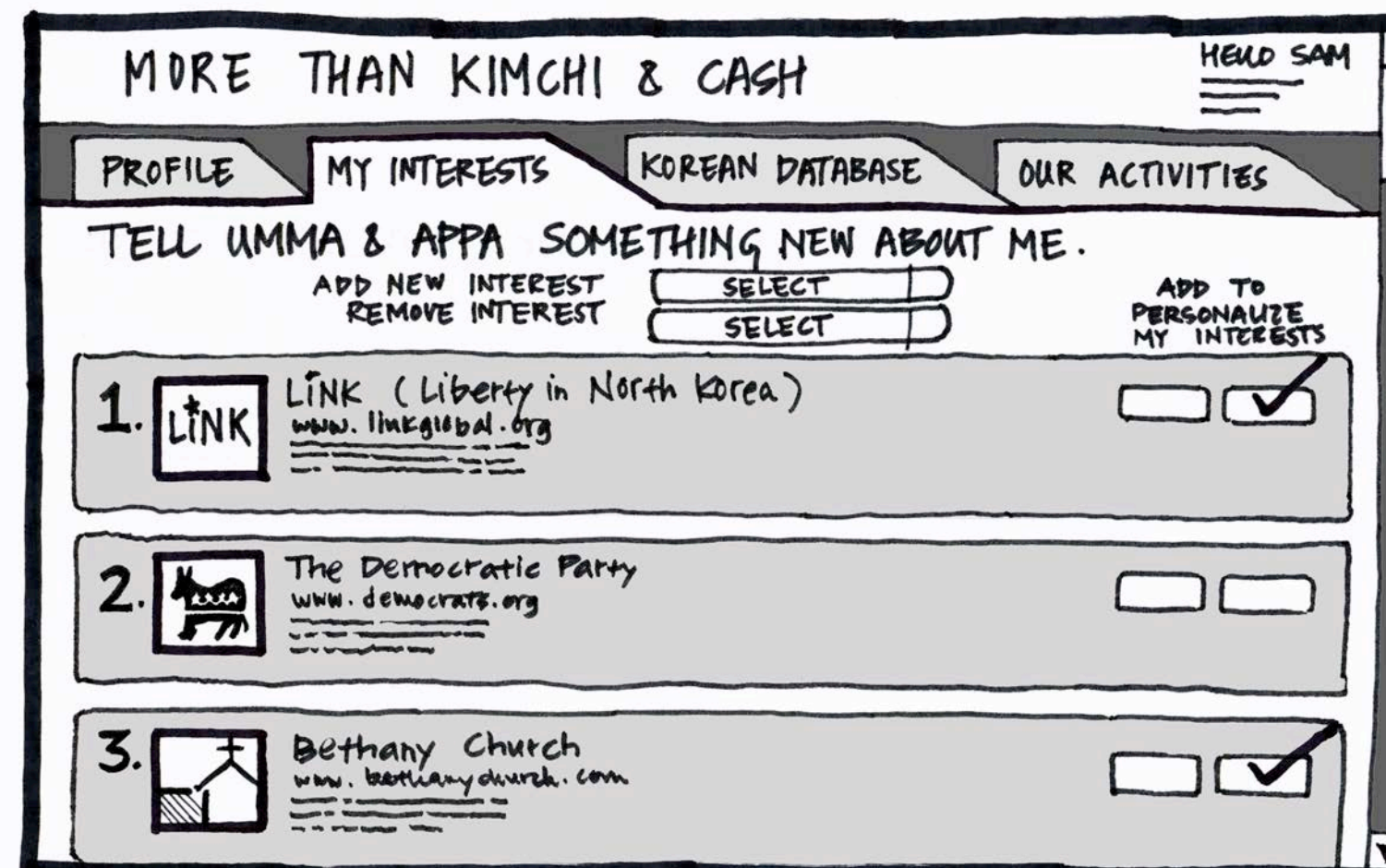
Provide opportunities to participate together in American pastimes.



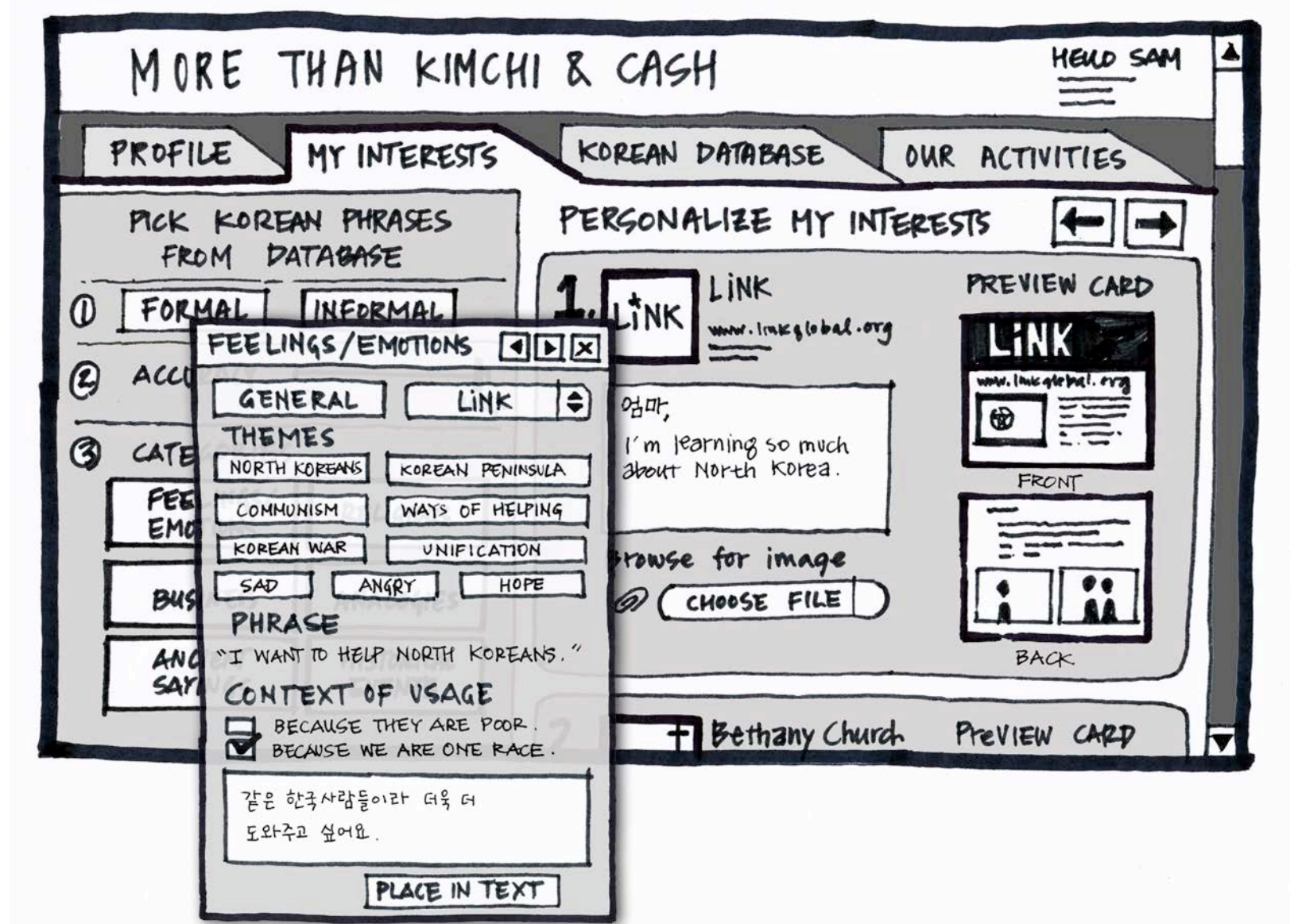
Facilitate sharing in Korean.



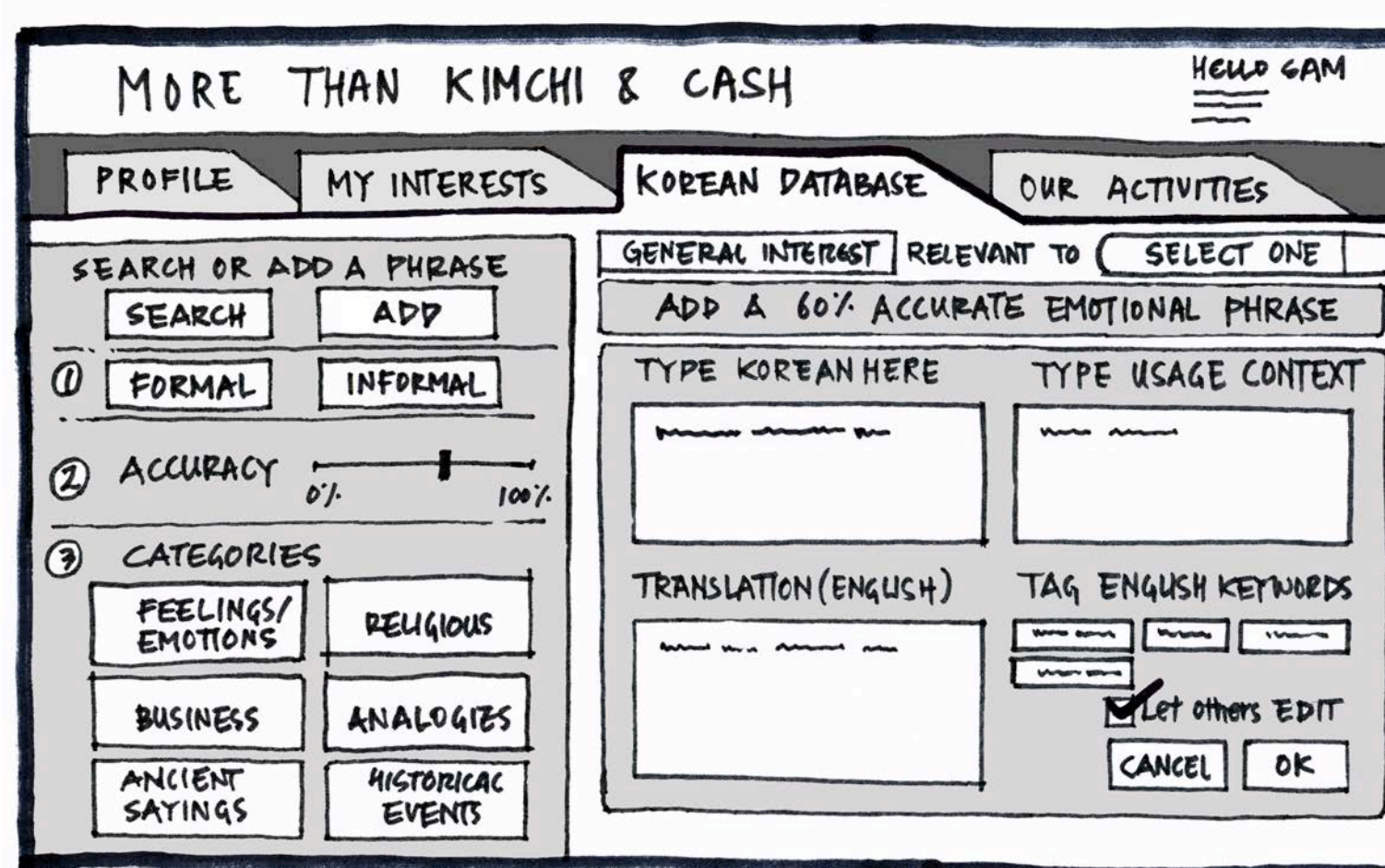
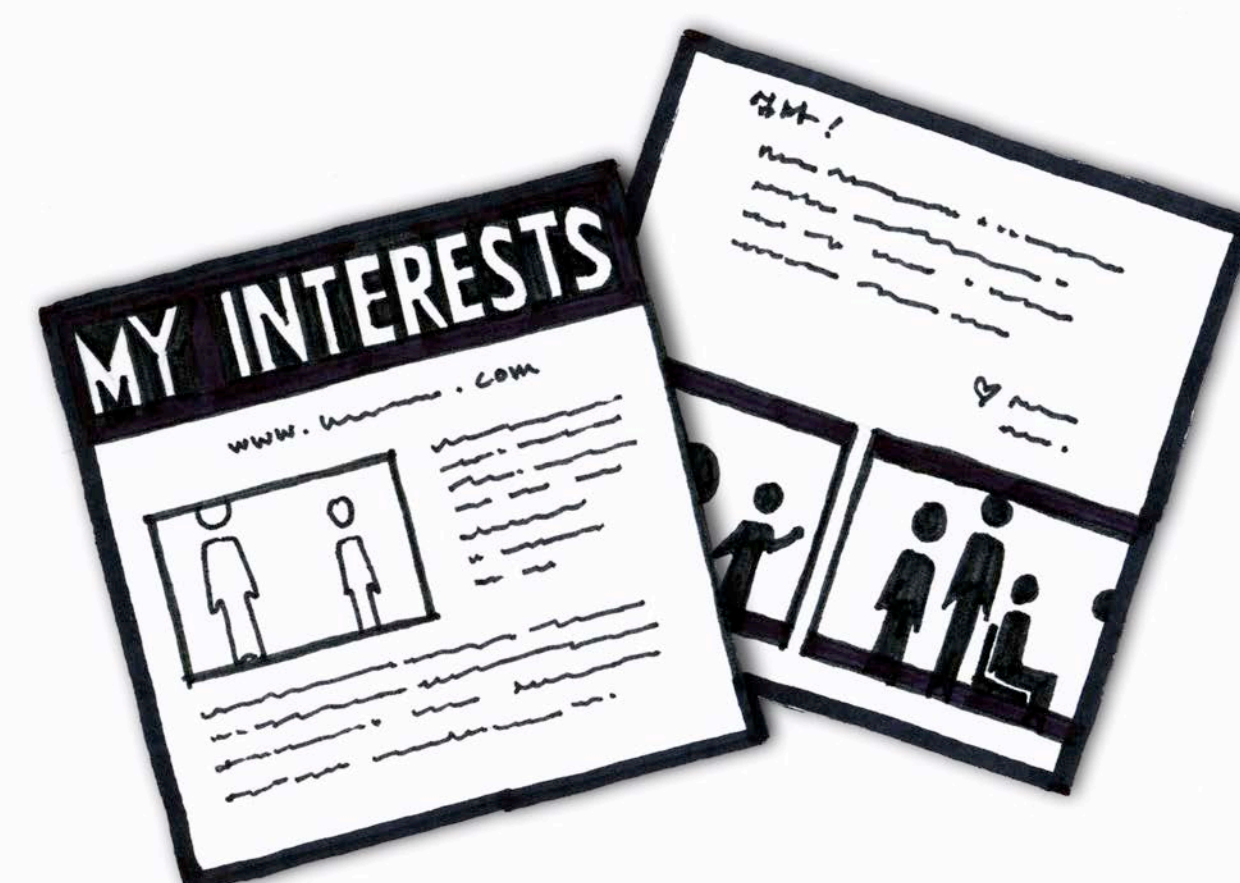
Sam was a member of LINK at his university but never had a chance to tell his parents about it. He logs onto the service. It shows his basic info, his change throughout college, his recent activities using the service, and some new Korean phrases added by the user community.



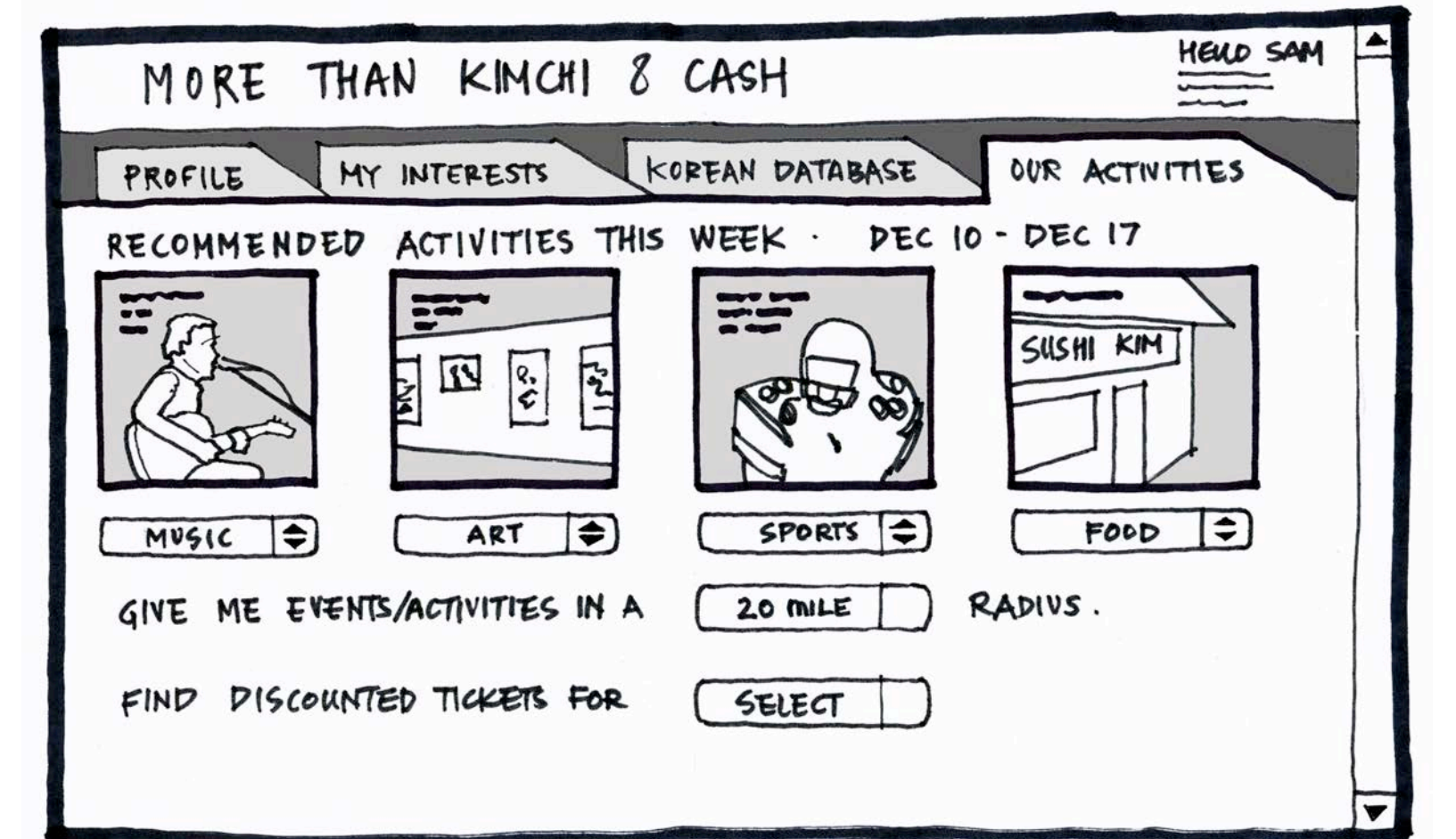
He moves on to his interests page and checks off some interests to update his parents.



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 Steeler's 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.

Product & Scenario