



PRODUCTIVITY

Assignment 1

OUR TEAM



Gil S.



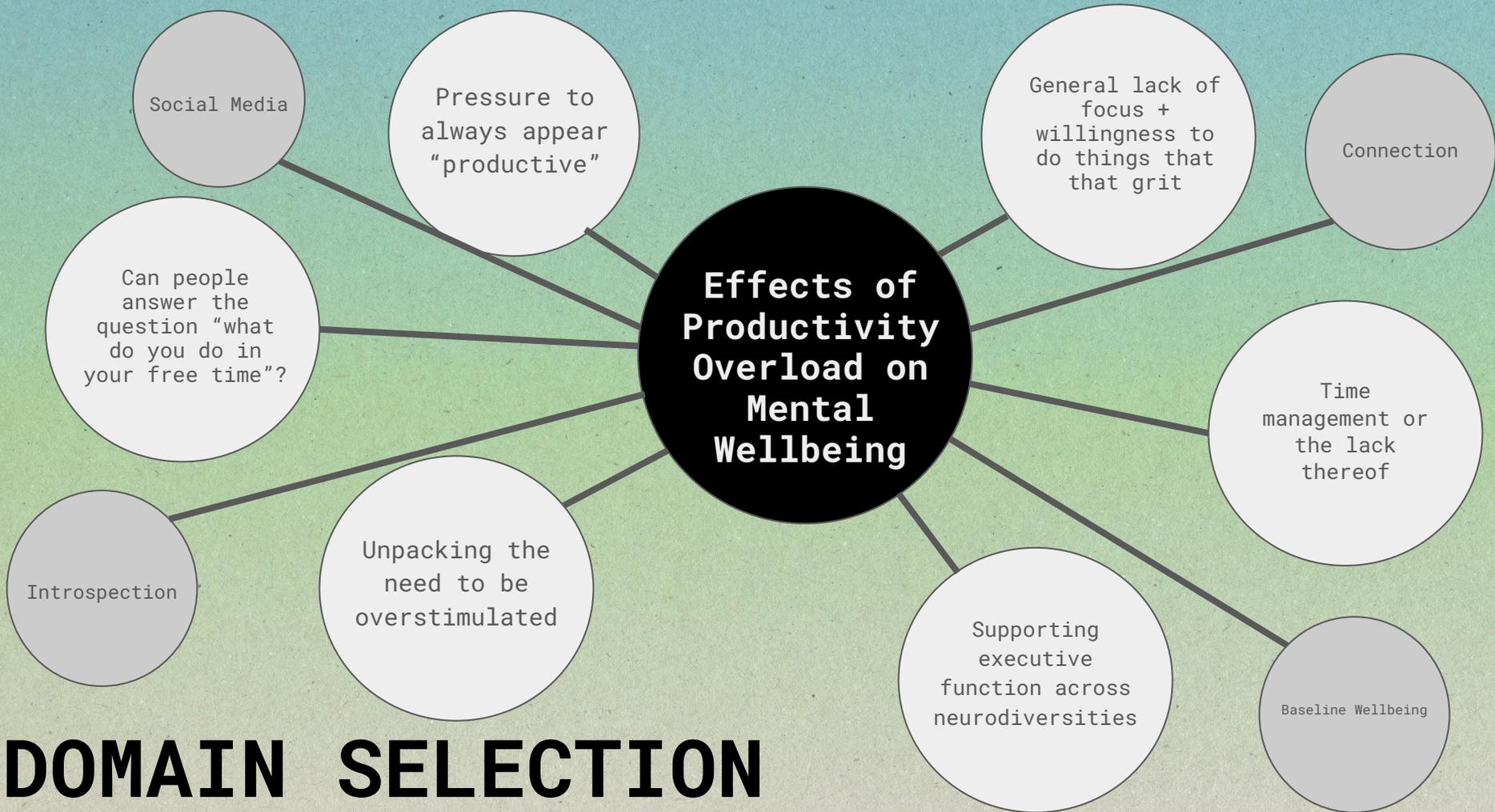
Bennie N.



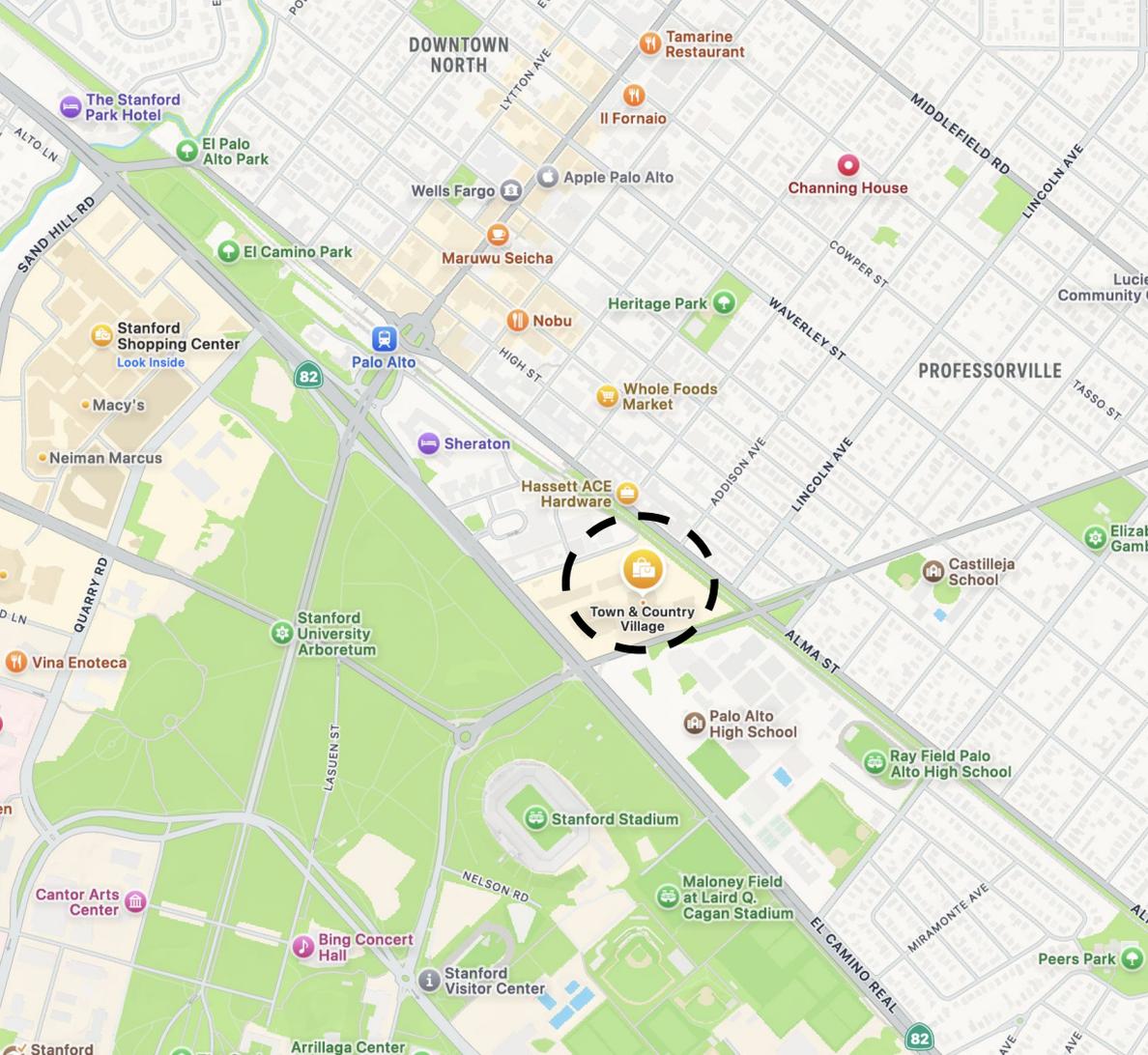
Gabriella U.



Ameshia B.



DOMAIN SELECTION



FINDING PARTICIPANTS

We went to **Town & Country** on two separate sessions (1 on **Sunday** and 1 on **Wednesday**). Appropriate location because:

- Next to Palo Alto High School, Stanford, and Tech Giants Headquarter (**Concentrated Ecosystem**)
- Community surrounded by tech resources, but still a **variety of access gaps**
- Urban-Suburban Blend

Sought out **any individual** who appeared to be taking a break/had time to talk, not just for our sake, but for the sake of evaluating that break against their context of productivity. **Productivity is not specific to one kind of person.**

WHO WE SPOKE TO



JC, 17

*Palo Alto HS Senior
Student-Athlete*



Darcy, 59

*Mother of
Neurodivergent
Children*



Gabby, 20

Stanford Sophomore



Omar, mid-50s

Cancer Researcher



Barry, 19

CSU Monterey Sophomore



Seth, 15

*Palo Alto HS Sophomore
Student-Athlete*



Jamie, 43

*Retired Colombian
Military, DoorDash*

Primary Tasks:

- High school homework & athletics
- College schoolwork
- Family & Home Care
- Research
- 16 hour-a-day delivery work

Primary Languages:

- English
- Spanish

Education Levels:

- Pre High school Diploma to doctoral graduate

Various Interview Methods

- **Video Recorded Interviews In English** (2 w/ Gabriella as interviewer & Amesha as notetaker)
- **Video Recorded Interview in Spanish** (1 Gil as interviewer and Bennie as notetaker)
- **Audio Recorded Interviews in English** (1 Bennie as interviewer and Gil as notetaker)
- **Computer Written Interviews in English** (2 w/ Gabriella as interviewer & Amesha as notetaker)
- **Handwritten Interviews in English** (2 Bennie as interviewer and Gil as notetaker)

Geographies of Origin:

- Bay Area
- Historical Palestine
- Colombia
- Michigan
- Ecuador/Lebanon

We looked for a variety of interviewees across race, age, profession, and gender.

Neurotypes (Not discussed in all interviews):

- ADHD
- Neurotypical

No compensation was offered, but we promised to be brief (25-30 min)

Variety of **socioeconomic class** deduced from primary tasks and location

*Describe the most
productive/
unproductive
person you know*

*Walk me through
your day*

WE ASKED THEM:

*What tools or
strategies do you
use to stay on
track?*

*Tell me about a
time when you
felt unproductive*

*What does "being
productive" mean
to you?*

General:

- Can you tell me a little about yourself?
- What does a typical day look like for you?
- How do you usually spend your free time?
- When do you feel most energized or motivated? Least?
- Are there any habits or routines you consider important in your life?

Productivity Specific:

- When you think about productivity, what comes to mind?
- Describe the most productive/unproductive person.
- What does productivity mean to you?
- When do you struggle to "be productive"?
- Pressure to be productive
 - How do you feel if you're not "productive"?
 - Can you describe a moment where you felt unproductive?
 - How do you define being unproductive vs. wasting time?
- Overstimulation / multitasking
 - What are things you usually do when trying to complete tasks?
 - Do you usually
 - What kind of work do you find yourself doing regularly? What does completing this work look like for you?
- Prioritization
 - Describe how you prioritize tasks?
- Executive function / tools
 - Do you use any tools (apps, journals, planners, habit trackers) to help you complete/keep track of tasks? How do they help or not help?
 - Have you ever tried to change your habits or routines? What worked and what didn't?
 - In which environments do you get the most done?
- Emotional layer
 - What emotions come up when you fall behind or don't meet your own expectations?}

INTERVIEW RESULTS



- Synthesizing the data
- Creating findings from observations
- Analyzing findings to create insights
- Using insights to create needs

IDENTIFYING EXTREMES

Scale: How reliant users are on organizational tools/systems for productivity



JC



Barry



Darcy



Jamie



Gabby



Seth



Omar

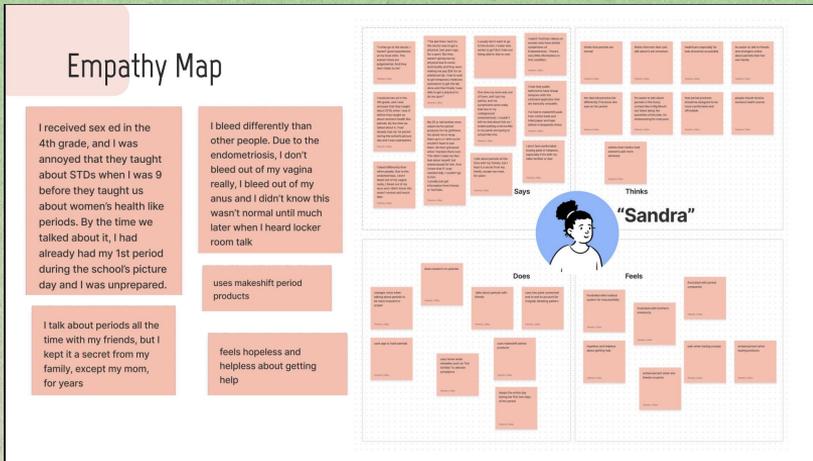
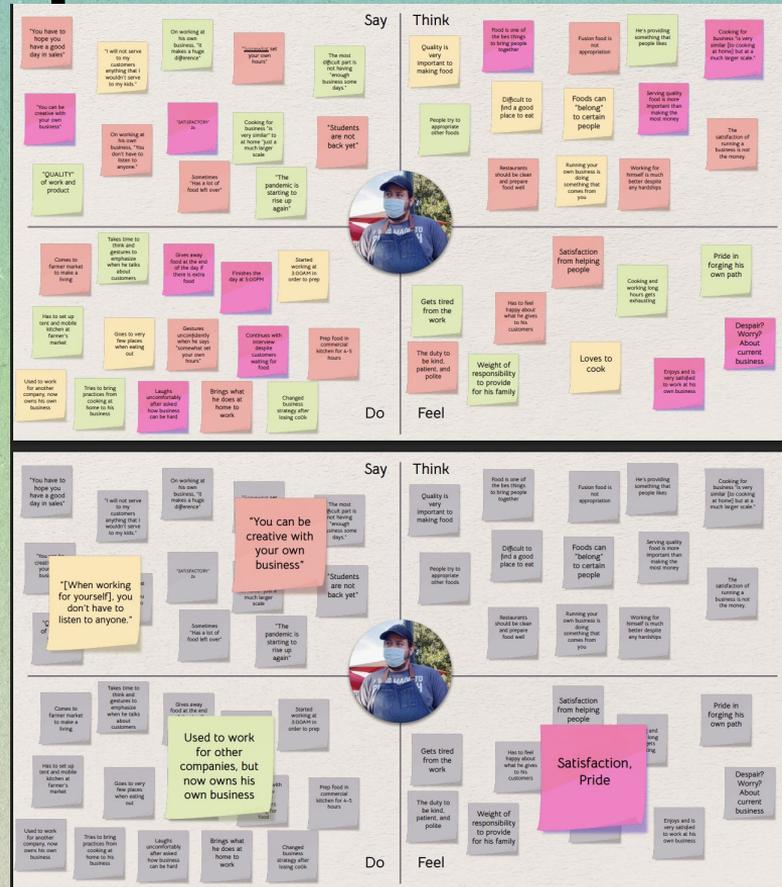
HIGH: Extreme reliance on tools routine, and other forms of predetermined structure

AVERAGE: Utilizes tools/systems, but tends to rely on intuition/feel

LOW: relies on habit/discipline over structure

EMPATHY MAP (template slide)

Map + standout notes





"You are not always going to be working, so things like playing video games is not unproductive because that's something that brings you joy."

JC

17, Senior @ Palo Alto HS, Student Athlete

EMPATHY MAP

"If you're not gonna be efficient, then [your time] should be time that you do things that bring you joy and happiness."

Gil Silva

sighs and kind of winces when he talks about how he spends his free time on tiktok

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

"[My dad] has failed 1000 times why should I fail too?"

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

Productivity is about maximizing time that betters you. (emphasis on work but including time for joy)

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

Casey

SAY

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

"If you're not gonna be efficient, then [your time] should be time that you do things that bring you joy and happiness."
Gil Silva

"When you have a goal and you can see the end of that goal...it makes it possible...otherwise you don't know what you're running for"
amemhahajana

"You are not always going to be working so things like playing video games is not unproductive because that's something that brings you joy"
amemhahajana

"Stressing out for 20 minutes is unproductive because you're not relaxing or working"
Gil Silva

"I got half off on my Lit presentation because I didn't include a summary which was just in the instructions and I couldn't read it"
amemhahajana

"I don't use my phone an hour before bed and an hour after I wake up. I get 8 hours of sleep and those 8 hours help me have better practices" (practice started by the father)
amemhahajana

"I talked to it [AI] about AP Lit and I have it to the side of me and I ask it simple questions in live response instead of having to look it up"
amemhahajana

being unproductive is "having meaningless time"
Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

"If I were to sit down and play video games I wouldn't consider that unproductive...because I'm kind of in my own world and it's something I enjoy to do"
Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

"I never want to be behind in those classes. I always do half or three-quarters when it's assigned so when I come back I can finish it quickly"
amemhahajana

"[My dad] has failed 1000 times why should I fail too?"
Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

"kitchen"
Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

DO

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

sighs and kind of winces when he talks about how he spends his free time on tiktok
Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

sighs when he talks about his least motivated day
Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

when he talks about taking "responsibilities" that he says make it harder for him to see a lot of novel games.
Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

pushes out when talking about stopping using his phone to focus
Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

Chuckles when thinking about his unproductive friend that always says "it's all going to work out" but doesn't take actionable steps.
amemhahajana

physically gestures to the side when talking about AI Assistant
Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

Physically gestures to the side when talking about breaking up tasks.
amemhahajana

Says a lot of "um" and "uh" when asked about prioritizing tasks outside of his academics.
amemhahajana

Smiles sheepishly when talking about how he uses AI to help him refocus his thoughts and says "it's kind of weird, but I just talk to it."
amemhahajana

Immediately grabs phone and puts in airport after the interview concludes.
amemhahajana

THINK

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

Productivity is about maximizing time that betters you, emphasis on work but including time for joy
Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

Being around others that have achieved goals that you are interested in pursuing makes them feel more attainable.
amemhahajana

Learning from others, like your parents, and accepting their guidance allows you to avoid failures that they have already undergone.
amemhahajana

Believes in incremental progress: breaking big goals into smaller tasks.
Gil Silva

Scheduling free time to hang out with friends or skipping things like sports practices is also important because those are things that bring joy.
amemhahajana

Building momentum for tasks by starting when its assigned allows you to feel less stressed and makes the task more approachable.
amemhahajana

It is easier to focus when you are listening to an audiobook or podcast because it is easy to zone out in silence.
amemhahajana

Working in spaces with people nearby but not people next to you helps with productivity.
amemhahajana

Being friends with people who have similar ambitions allows you to stay motivated and accountable.
amemhahajana

Tools like AI assistants help you feel more organized but also can't do deeper work just surface level help.
amemhahajana

less conscious of prioritization of tasks outside of main "work" (his academics)
Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali



FEEL

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

Frustration/ annoyance with self when he falls short of expectations (e.g., AP Lit presentation).
Gil Silva

Admiration for friends with consistent discipline.
Gil Silva

Motivated mid-week when momentum builds, but physically drained on Saturdays after a long week.
amemhahajana

Calm and centered when he meditates or stretches.
amemhahajana

Connected to peers through shared accountability, but also competitive in Pablo Alto's intense environment.
amemhahajana

Encouraged and inspired when he sees friends succeed, making his own goals (like pursuing law) feel possible.
amemhahajana

Reverent when thinking about his dad and how he passes his wisdom down.
amemhahajana

Amused when thinking about his unproductive friend that always says "it's all going to work out" but doesn't take actionable steps.
amemhahajana

Reminiscent when talking about his middle school years when he would work at his dad's office and could focus on tasks without background noise.
amemhahajana

Feels guilty when mentioning that he skips sports practices sometimes to make time for his friends.
amemhahajana

“In American culture, [output] is a big deal, and I don’t like how it affects my boys. Love yourself for who you are without pressure of production.”



Darci

*59, Mother of three neurodivergent sons,
Burlingame, Michigan*

SAY

Cabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonalu

let me reframe it for you

"I did this for fun (working at evening) to add structure to the day"

"You're born as an infant and you are just loved for just being, not for producing"

"Does all productivity add value? You're lying to yourself if you think it does"

"In American culture it's a big deal and I don't like how it affects my boys. Love yourself for who you are without pressure of production."

"You're not born knowing this... how to organize and outline and multistep process."

"I should do the laundry but I'm just going to sit down and read a book."

"To help focus them is very hard. Encourage them that they can do it."

"Trying to focus on myself so I can be there for others"

"Fake it till I make it."

"Negative selftalk shows up more when im not taking care of myself"

"I should be doing this should be doing that when looking around my house"

"Change your mindset from I have to do this to I get to do this"

"u need to learn how to advocate for urself"



THINK

Cabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonalu

Productivity is important, but culture places too much pressure on that come out.

Knowing when to support yourself instead of always pushing is most sustainable.

Supporting her sons with ADD or autism requires patience and transparency.

Other people may appear "better" at productivity, but everyone has their own journey.

You should honor deadlines, but rest and honesty are just as important.

Lists help free up mental space and reduce overwhelm.

Productivity should not define self-worth, though it's hard to remember that.

The skills of organization and prioritization are learned.

Only now at the age of 59 is positive self-talk coming more naturally. Start early.

Understand what you NEED to do vs. what you feel you "should" do.

DO

Cabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonalu

When asked to interview, she said "Yes, but can I finish my salad first and come to you guys?"

Looked at both of us when reminding us how important it is to practice positive self talk.

Starts her day with exercise and movement.

Works at Evereve, volunteers on the board of a disability advocacy group, and at a climate change group.

Reads and gardens in free time.

Stays off of social media and the news.

Writes down tasks to declutter mind because it makes it feel like less when you can see it.

Chooses to rest even when there are tasks to complete sometimes.

Goes hiking and spends time outdoors with her "awesome" husband

Leaves to pick up son from school

consols her son when he is struggling managing tasks due to his ADD

contemplates stated acknowledgement of her value outside of her productivity and loyalty of productivity around her has continued anxiety around not being able to keep up with her daily tasks

FEEL

Cabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonalu

Most energized after doing exercise.

Least energy when reading the news or when on social media.

Regretful when thinking about how hard she was on herself not knowing she most likely also should have been diagnosed with ADD.

Overwhelmed when seeing so much on her to-do list and just freezes.

Scared and hates how her sons have to grow up in a very distracted world with the pressure of production.

Guilty when choosing to not work.

Grateful for her husband's shared enjoyment for the outdoors.

Sadness and fear when mentioning the recent Michigan church shootings in her hometown.

Proud and happy to see her son with autism attending Fresno State and enjoying himself.

Amused when sharing that her son with autism is "happy go lucky"

Passionate when encouraging us to practice self talk and make time for ourselves.

EMPATHY MAP

"You're born as an infant and you are just loved for just being, not for producing"

ameshabanjara

"Change your mindset from I have to do this to I get to do this"

ameshabanjara

Only now at the age of 59 is positive self-talk coming more naturally. Start early.

ameshabanjara

paused a lot when reflecting on consoling her son when he is struggling managing tasks, anxieties, due to his ADD (weight in her voice)

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonalu

“In American culture, I find that everything is much faster. Everything is so fast-paced.”



Gabby

*20, Stanford sophomore, Lebanon,
Ecuador*

EMPATHY MAP

“Oftentimes, productivity is hyper-focused on just work and trying to cram as much as possible in a very short amount of time.”

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Moving more slowly means enjoying time with friends, money, food, etc.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

“Productivity is being able to balance multiple sections of yourself.”

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Francesca

SAY

Catalina Michèle Anaya Uguzoal

"To be productive, I have to be very specific, instead of saying 'study for Econ, I'll write read pp. 15-22 for Econ.'"

01 She

"In Ecuador and Lebanon, there is more importance on enjoying your life."

02 She

"Google Calendar is my best friend; without it, I would be lost."

03 She

"During the weekdays, I'm adamant about getting 8.5-10 hours of sleep; I'll thank myself the next day."

04 She

"We tend to be very individualized in how we feel good, so I try to do something for someone every day."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"Before, I used to write everything down in a big list, but that got overwhelming. Now, I pick out the main 3 things that I need to do that day."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"For me, going to the gym is really important, being able to move and get my mind off work."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"When I'm working, I love having bodies around me but no one to talk to, it really pushes me to concentrate."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"Nine hours of scattered work isn't the same as two hours of focused effort."

01 She

"I struggle a lot with anxiety, so being able to see ahead and know what the day will look like helps me prepare myself mentally and makes me excited for the day."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"I'm very adamant that after dinner there's no more work, unless there's reviewing or stuff like that."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"I put a lot of pressure on myself, having parents who immigrated to the US."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"During summer breaks, or during prolonged periods of time where there's less structure, I kind of struggle a lot more."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"I'm very prone to distraction; my phone goes in my backpack, not just facedown on the table."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"If you're not able to balance things that outside of academics, that's inherently unproductive."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"Productivity is being able to balance multiple sections of yourself."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"In American culture, I find that everything is much faster. Everything is so fast-paced"

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"Oftentimes, productivity is hyper-focused on just work and trying to cram as much as possible in a very short amount of time."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

THINK

Catalina Michèle Anaya Uguzoal

Structure + stability + helps manage anxiety and creates excitement.

01 She

Sees productivity as a balance + aware of burnout, influenced by her mom's insistence on balancing work with activities.

02 She

More is not always better.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Productivity is holistic.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

You're generally supposed to feel excited for the day ahead; that excitement comes from balance.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Family has a large influence on your productivity habits.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Moving more slowly means enjoying time with friends, money, food, etc.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Extreme productivity is trying to move as quickly as possible without taking time to enjoy your life.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

It's not worth doing something you're not excited by.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

It's harder for her to work with other people.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Keeping track of large and small tasks in the same space is important.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

It's surprising that it seems like most people in the US only speak English.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa



DO

Catalina Michèle Anaya Uguzoal

Puts phone in backpack to eliminate distraction.

01 She

Drinks coffee, multiple cups a day.

02 She

Works alone but in public spaces + wants presence of others without interaction.

03 She

Eats protein bars

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Gets eyebrows done.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Carries a water bottle with large water capacity.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Closes her laptop during breaks.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Dresses comfortably when working.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Sleeps less on the weekends.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Prioritizes socialization, sleep, and exercise as much as work.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

FEEL

Catalina Michèle Anaya Uguzoal

Anxious when unstructured (e.g., summers with too much free time)

01 She

Connected: values social ties deeply despite a packed schedule

02 She

Calm + excited when her day is scheduled and predictable

03 She

Burnout when she pigeonholes herself for finals.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Supported by her parents' reminder that there is no pressure and that she should always just do her best.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Rushed by the general American culture of speed: fast food, immediate checks in restaurants, etc.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Healthy when productivity is the intersection of academic, social, and physical health.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Adamant about the boundaries she's set to maintain the structure and balance in her life.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Surprised to see that theft in the US genuinely occurs.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Excited to speak about her routine and habits.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

*“Humans are inherently
collectivist;
individualism goes
against our nature.”*



Omar

*Mid-50s, Drug Discovery Scientist,
Manager, Historic Palestine*

SAY

"Productivity is setting goals and delivering on them"

"There is something in the material world of just writing on paper... flipping through pages, smelling the book makes learning better and more effective"

"Break down the huge task into smaller, manageable steps"

"I wanted to learn about a specific historical era, so I am"

"When I do use technology, I use OneNote"

"Humans are more than biology and chemistry, philosophy and tradition still matter"

"Education today doesn't teach people how to think, it just prepares them for jobs"

"I recommend pursuing a doctoral degree to explore methods of thinking"

"My friends and I are learning a different dialect of Arabic."

"Interests are part of human nature"

"Students and bright minds often chase money instead of curiosity"

"The function of education is to learn how to think."

"Humans are inherently collectivist; individualism goes against our nature."

THINK

Productivity = goal-setting + consistent delivery (applies equally to life and career)

Old-school methods (paper, books) create deeper understanding than digital shortcuts

Learning is best done when as many senses possible are used

What we generally deem as productivity is actually distraction

Sees capitalism driving productivity: work for profit over meaning

Productivity can be counterproductive if it makes people conform instead of think freely.

Curiosity and exploration are as important as efficiency

Collective thinking and community matter more than individual success

Important questions to ask are those surrounding "objective good".

American productivity is uniformity, producing sameness.

Management is about understanding your people, who they are not just what they do.

DO

Leans back in his chair and looks up when he finds a topic intriguing (traditional philosophy)

Points towards car/high school when he says he has to pick up his son

Very still when he told us that we couldn't record him (no head shake, hand wave, etc)

Refused to be recorded (audio or video), insisted on physical note-taking

Nods at the end of his answers

Became more expressive in his body (arms, legs, etc.) and face as time passed

Uses Google Calendar/OneNote minimally, keeps tech in a supportive but not central role.

Became animated when critiquing technology/AI

Extended the interview longer than he planned once he got engaged

Gestured broadly when discussing capitalism and philosophy

Uses structured frameworks for self-learning

Applies strategy across personal/professional life

FEEL

Skeptical of over-reliance on digital tools/AI

Concerned about society's growing individualism and fragmentation

Extreme discomfort from the idea of being recorded by strangers

Interested in speaking to us further whenever possible

Frustration with modern culture's obsession with speed and output.

Respect for tradition and older ways of learning

Pride in his team's capabilities

Fulfillment in guiding others' thinking

Guarded but respectful, skeptical and cautious yet hopeful and receptive.

Scared about curiosity's diminishing role as part of human nature



EMPATHY MAP

"There is something in the material world of just writing on paper... flipping through pages, smelling the book makes learning better and more effective"

Gil Silva

"Students and bright minds often chase money instead of curiosity"

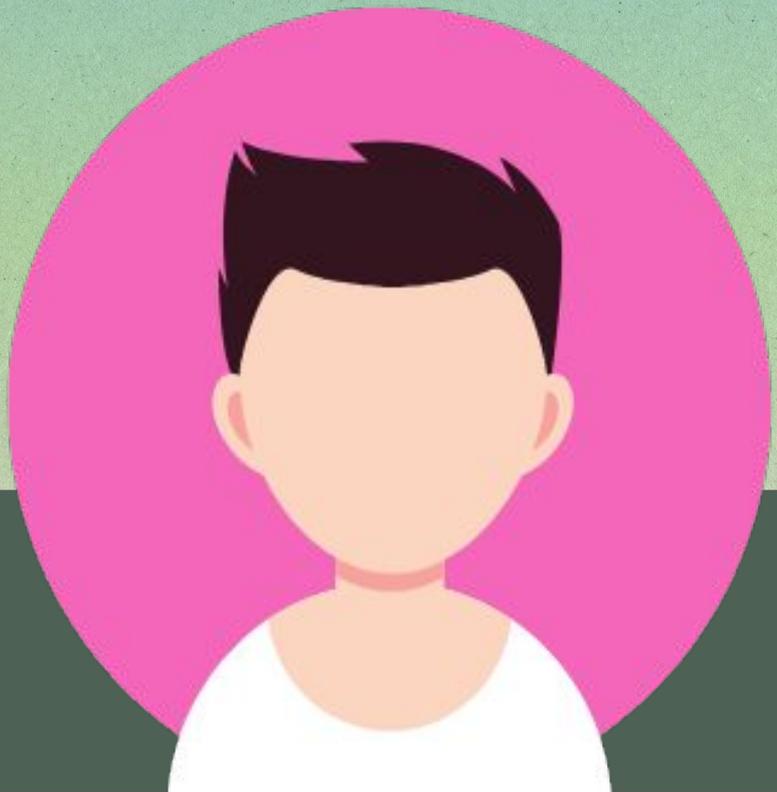
Gil Silva

What we generally deem as productivity is actually distraction

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Frustration with modern culture's obsession with speed and output.

Gil Silva



“I should be doing something but I’m just on my phone. I’m just taking a nap and I missed my assignment again.”

Barry

*19, Sophomore @ Cal State University
Monterey Bay*

EMPATHY MAP

"This was my freshman year... I failed a class because I was so behind I didn't feel like going."

ameshabanjara

conflicted, cynical when saying he admires his sister's discipline but also mentions how she will probably burn out

ameshabanjara

sheepishly looks at us when admitting that all he does is go to school, go to the gym, and nap

ameshabanjara

superiority over his roommates due to their tendency to multitask/ "not focus".

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

Harrison

SAY

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

"Staying focused, sitting down and doing what I got to do."

ameshabanjara

"This was my freshman year... I failed a class because I was so behind I didn't feel like going."

ameshabanjara

"I should be doing something but I'm just on my phone. I'm just taking a nap and I missed my assignment again."

ameshabanjara

"Otherwise I feel like a bum" (about going to the gym three times a week).

ameshabanjara

"Getting what needs to be done done."

ameshabanjara

"As long as you find the correct sources to back it up, it's a good opener to what you're trying to do." (research on chatgpt)

ameshabanjara

"If I'm gonna focus I'm gonna bring people that are gonna study with me or do their own thing silently."

ameshabanjara

"My sister is the most productive person... she is just so motivated"

ameshabanjara

"I spend sunday planning out my week as much as I can"

ameshabanjara

"If it's a long deadline and it's hard to do, I would have to prioritize getting the easy things done first to start making progress that are closer to the deadline while having some progress into the [far away goal]"

ameshabanjara

DO

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

goes to the gym at least three times a week (non-negotiable habit)

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

laughs when talking about his unproductive roommates

ameshabanjara

sits up straighter when talking about his military club

ameshabanjara

leans back in awe when speaking about his sister whose productivity he admires

ameshabanjara

uses Sundays to plan his weekly schedule even if he doesn't end up sticking to it

ameshabanjara

uses ChatGPT for almost everything including time management and research

ameshabanjara

very passionately says "oh yes" and sits up when asked if he has tried to change habits in the past

ameshabanjara

shrugs when saying that his sister will probably burn out

ameshabanjara

sheepishly looks at us when admitting that all he does is go to school, go to the gym, and nap

ameshabanjara

goes running in the mornings

ameshabanjara

manages schedules and holds people accountable for his pre-military club

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

THINK

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

His sister is the model of productivity; focused, disciplined, no distractions, but risks burnout.

ameshabanjara

Noise or music is necessary for him to stay concentrated; distraction is distracting.

ameshabanjara

Responsible people are role models worth following.

ameshabanjara

Prioritizing fun over work is unproductive.

ameshabanjara

Planning ahead with tools like Google Calendar helps, even if plans don't always work out.

ameshabanjara

Productivity requires discipline, but environment and people around him strongly shape outcomes.

ameshabanjara

Fixing his sleep schedule has a big impact on how much he gets done.

ameshabanjara

Productivity is tied to self-control because limiting his phone and social media is necessary to focus.

ameshabanjara

The military club he's in is good for seeing accountability.

ameshabanjara

Shifting his sleep schedule from staying up all night to being awake during the work helped him a lot.

ameshabanjara

FEEL

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

regretful when remembering how he would skip freshman year classes and then watch lecture but not pay attention

ameshabanjara

lazy and "bummy" when he would sleep at 7 am and wake up at 7 pm

ameshabanjara

inspired by his sister's ability to focus on one task without distraction

ameshabanjara

motivated when working around other responsible or driven people

ameshabanjara

relieved that he fixed his sleep schedule habits

ameshabanjara

energized with bursts of energy at night

ameshabanjara

conflicted when saying he admires his sister's discipline but also mentions how she will probably burn out

ameshabanjara

important and purposeful when describing how he reports to military higher ups and he holds people accountable

ameshabanjara

defensive about AI use

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali

superiority over his roommates due to their tendency to multitask/ "not focus";

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonali



*“It feels good to
be lazy, I’m gonna
be honest.”*



Seth

*15, Sophomore @ Palo Alto HS,
Student-Athlete*

SAY

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

"Oh productivity? It's a bad example right now"

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

productivity is "getting things done"

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

"It feels good to be lazy, (It's gonna be honest"

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

"If one person's working hard it inspires others... it inspires me to try more too."

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

"Phone is a major distraction"

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

wasting time is "when you're supposed to be doing something but you're not doing it."

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

20-10 method: working for 20 minutes, taking 10 minute break, then working another 20. He will be more work "comfortable and durable"

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

Google Calendar to visualize his schedule. To make sure of what you need every day. Make planning easier"

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

"I usually keep track of my tasks in my head."

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

"I was being lazy and my mom came and she was right. She was in the background helping me."

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

THINK

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

intimidated by two Stanford students (power dynamic from age)

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

productivity is linked to busyness

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

consistency is the most important habit

ameshabanjar

rest and family time matter, but doing what has to be done for school/sports feels better in the long term

ameshabanjar

consistency is the most important habit

ameshabanjar

seeing good role models or being a good role model affects everyone on the team

ameshabanjar

his routine is good right and working for him

ameshabanjar

his mom checking in on him is good for accountability

ameshabanjar

If a friend asks to hang out but it will jeopardize the finishing of your assignment, don't go

ameshabanjar

working in a library makes you more productive

ameshabanjar

thinks less about prioritization of tasks outside of school

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

does not really think about life outside of school and sports

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

DO

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

fidgets

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

when we arrived he moved his phone to under the table

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

spends most of his work time in his room but says he should work in a library

ameshabanjar

takes phone away when working on something

ameshabanjar

works for 30 min then takes a 10 min break then works again to be able to work longer

ameshabanjar

admires brother's phone's ability to turn off access for him when he needs to work

ameshabanjar

recharges by lying in bed and doing whatever he wants

ameshabanjar

frames productivity for both sports and school lenses

ameshabanjar

looked around when talking about the efficacy of his method

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

manages most of his tasks in his head.

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

he was sitting alone outside of a restaurant eating mike and ikes in the middle of school day playing video games on his phone

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

FEEL

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

guilty about his productivity and phone usage

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

most motivated when riding the high of finishing an assignment

ameshabanjar

disappointed when letting down a lot of people by not being productive

ameshabanjar

motivated to do better when he sees his teammates doing better

ameshabanjar

stressed when he falls behind especially because he doesn't get anxious usually

ameshabanjar

conflicted when given the choice between family events and necessary school assignments

ameshabanjar

comfortable working when he takes frequent breaks

ameshabanjar

ashamed when admitting that his phone is really distracting to him

ameshabanjar

uncomfortable talking about the shortcomings of his productivity

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

academics > sports > everything else?

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal



EMPATHY MAP

"I usually keep track of my tasks in my head."

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

he was sitting alone outside of a restaurant eating mike and ikes in the middle of school day playing video games on his phone

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

rest and family time matter, but doing what has to be done for school/sports feels better in the long term

ameshabanjar

uncomfortable talking about the shortcomings of his productivity

Gabriella Michele Amaka Ugwonal

“I work 15 or 16 hours daily. You only come home to rest from the day’s effort.”



Jamie

43, DoorDash Delivery, Ex-Colombian military

EMPATHY MAP

“Wasting time is when you do nothing. But sometimes you make an effort and still don’t get results. That isn’t productive either, but it’s not the same as wasting time.”

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

The U.S. economy is both an opportunity (higher income) and a burden (high costs, taxes, rent)

Gil Silva

“We immigrants don’t have quality time now, all the time is for work”

Gil Silva

“This system absorbs you... you forget your personal life, gym, and family”

Gil Silva

Jairo

SAY

Colombia Michelle Amalia Ugarruel

"Productivity is making money. In this moment, that's what it means for me"

Gil Silva

"This job is discipline. If you want more income, you have to discipline (leave up early) and stay on top of the app"

Gil Silva

"We immigrants don't have quality time now, all the time is for work"

Gil Silva

"I project myself each week, \$1,500, or I set a daily quota of \$200"

Gil Silva

"This effort now will be reflected later, when I can share more with my family"

Gil Silva

"This system absorbs you, you forget your personal life, gym, and family"

Gil Silva

"In this country, the economic system makes you focus on daily income"

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"You end up forgetting personal life... going to the gym, and spending time with family... because the economy absorbs you. You need income to survive here."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"Here, one dollar can't buy much. That's why we immigrants come here, for a better economic future. The economy here is good, but it absorbs."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"I always entrust myself to God. I pray for protection and guidance."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"With apps, you're your own boss. You don't depend on anyone. If you want more income, you need discipline."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"You have to pay taxes, obligations, rent, and food, which are all super expensive. Still, some money remains to share with family and build long-term security."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"Wasting time is when you do nothing. But sometimes you make an effort and still don't get results. That isn't productive either, but it's not the same as wasting time."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"And if apps don't provide enough, I would look for another job—construction or something else—to maintain stability."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"If you go out to work hard, right, necessarily, everything is going to go wrong for you."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"Discipline makes you succeed in work, personal life, finances, and social life."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"I work 15 to 16 hours a day. You only come here to rest from the day's effort."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

"So, besides saving money, I'm also providing a service to people who need fast internet while they work. That benefits them and me."

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

THINK

Colombia Michelle Amalia Ugarruel

Productivity = income generation + survival + future investment

Gil Silva

Discipline and consistency are the keys to success

Gil Silva

The U.S. economy is both an opportunity (higher income) and a burden (high costs, taxes, rent)

Gil Silva

Being unproductive isn't just idleness, it's also effort without results, which means you must adapt

Gil Silva

Working legally and transparently (paying taxes, complying with rules) is essential to avoid risks

Gil Silva

Hard work now = stability, family support, and better opportunities later

Gil Silva

Adaptability is essential: if apps don't bring orders, switch to construction or other jobs

Gil Silva

Customers' ratings = not just income, but dignity and respect

Gil Silva

Daily prayer and entrusting himself to God are essential before starting work for guidance and resilience.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

As an immigrant, one mistake could jeopardize everything; you have to move carefully.

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa



DO

Colombia Michelle Amalia Ugarruel

Tried to be helpful and advisory, often giving tips as if teaching newcomers

Gil Silva

Frequently checked his phone for delivery app notifications while talking

Gil Silva

Smiled occasionally, but mostly kept a serious, professional demeanor

Gil Silva

Balanced between answering questions directly and going off into reflective commentary (e.g., comparisons between Colombia and the U.S.).

Gil Silva

Seemed eager to explain and make sure the we understood his point of view

Gil Silva

Tracks and shares his delivery ratings proudly (4.99/5).

Gil Silva

Compared U.S. and Colombian economies multiple times

Gil Silva

Stressed discipline repeatedly ("this job is discipline")

Gil Silva

Works extremely long days (15-16 hours)

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Sets daily/weekly financial quotas

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Puts his faith in God before starting work

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Uses ratings as a performance metric

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

FEEL

Colombia Michelle Amalia Ugarruel

Pride in discipline, hard work, and supporting family

Gil Silva

Frustration and exhaustion from long days and little personal life

Gil Silva

Resigned to accepting present enjoyment for future benefits

Gil Silva

Motivated by family responsibility and remittances

Gil Silva

Grounded by spirituality (daily prayer)

Gil Silva

Encouraged by friendship with other delivery workers and positive customer ratings

Gil Silva

Frustrated at how expensive U.S. life is compared to Colombia

Gil Silva

Hopeful that current effort will "pay off" with family happiness later

Gil Silva

Anxiety about legality

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Sense of dignity from being his own boss

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Respect for competition

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

Wary of wasted effort without results

Bennie Amonua Nkwantabisa

TENSIONS

Joy vs Guilt

**Structure as Freedom
vs
Structure as Pressure**

**Productivity as Survival
vs
Self-expression**

EXAMPLES

JC views games as productive joy, Darci feels guilty when not producing

Gabby uses routine to reduce anxiety, Jamie uses quotas that trap him into 16-hour days

Jamie needs it for money, Omar ties it to philosophy, Gabby to stability, JC to balance

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

1. There are shared charges of emotionality when describing the role productivity plays in their lives.

- Anxiety, shame, pride, dignity, guilt; there was *no neutrality*.

2. Structure and ritual are not just used to manage time + tasks; they also regulate mood + identity.

- Calendars, lists, quotas, prayer, exercise routines all fulfilled a deeper purpose of providing regulation.

3. Interviewees felt that productivity is supported by ambient accountability.

- From body doubling to healthy competition to caregiving, productivity thrives as a result of being around others/social presence.

4. Interests are seen as a necessity to some and a luxury to others.

- Some felt that exploring interests and hobbies was an integral part of being human, while others felt it was time only some can afford.

5. Each person's perception of "wasted time" is the negative image of how they perceive productivity overall.

- What counted as 'wasting time' perfectly mirrored each person's values: for students it was weakness, for workers survival risk, for caregivers misunderstood rest, and for thinkers loss of depth.



INSIGHTS + NEEDS

FINDING

Each person's perception of "wasted time" is the negative image of how they perceive productivity overall.

INSIGHT

People's deepest fears about wasted time reveal what they hold sacred; wasting time is powerful because it directly threatens identity.

NEED

People need ways to reframe and protect their time so it feels aligned with their values instead of threatening their sense of identity.

INSIGHTS + NEEDS

FINDING

People don't just use structure and ritual are not just used to manage time + tasks; they also utilize them to regulate mood + identity.

INSIGHT

Structural tools provide psychological safety. They give people a sense of control in uncertain environments, turning productivity into a stabilizer for both mood and identity.

NEED

People need rituals and systems that adapt to their emotional state, not just their task list.

INSIGHTS + NEEDS

Productivity is supported by ambient accountability and is best under the influence of of varying levels of *presence*.

FINDING

INSIGHT

Being around others transforms productivity from an individual struggle into a social contract. Presence, whether through body doubling or shared labor, externalizes discipline and validates effort.

NEED

People need accessible forms of social presence that make accountability feel natural, supportive, and motivating without judgment.

SUMMARY / NEXT STEPS

- We spoke with **7 people** – high schoolers, a Stanford student, a scientist, a gig worker, a mom, and more – to understand **what productivity really means in their lives.**
- **Productivity is strongly tied to identity.** It is shaped by **emotions** (anxiety, guilt, pride), **values** (family, meaning, joy), and **culture** (American individualism vs. collectivism traditions).

Next Steps:

Turn these needs into POV statements, HMW questions, and prototypes for A2!

THANK YOU!



Appendix

We could put consent forms, anonymized screen grabs of recordings, things li