Assignment #2

Angela, Katherine, Meredith, Rebecca

meet team 2 (KRAM)!



Angela Yang



Katherine Kricorian



Meredith Nam



Rebecca Alcala

A1 highlights

Claire

as a professional working in an art gallery, **watches for guests' physical signals** to **initiate interaction**.



Daisy

says she doesn't need to meet new people, but actually enjoys these interactions. holds back from starting interactions, fearing she will overstep boundaries or say the wrong thing.



people's **body language and interaction with physical elements of third spaces are a unique, non-verbal way to communicate** interest, confusion, etc., an observation relevant not just to workers in third spaces, but patrons, too.

people possess a natural desire to connect with others. limited self-confidence or the setup of physical spaces can get in the way, so **people like Daisy need ways to feel safe and confident reaching out to strangers without fear of overstepping.**

spontaneous experiences in third spaces &

a focus on third spaces built around **hobbies and interests** (w/ **physical objects**). how do people **signal and interpret openness** to connect in these environments?

we talked to...

Fiona & Frank



couple in their 20s from NYC who met at a dog park and aim to visit as many third spaces as possible.

#extreme-user

@cal-ave-farmers-market

George



a SWE in his 30s who visits Downtown Library weekly to read & relax.

#extreme-user

@downtown-library

key findings about fiona & frank

in the Bay Area, **miss randomly discovering new spots** and **feel disconnected from community**



"We have a feeling that **people try to stay in their own spaces**. They don't really want to talk or **even let the dogs meet up, as much as our time in New York**."

"**We're from New York**, so when we're in the city, **we're so used to just walking around**, picking a direction and … **finding some new things**."

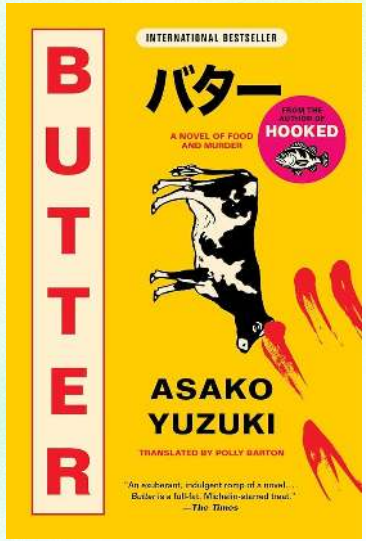
Even when I'm proactive with clear hobbies/interests, why is it hard to interact? How can we "break into" people's monotonous everyday lives w/ spontaneity?

key findings about george

welcomes spontaneous interactions only when they are **centered on the space** rather than personal topics, allowing **connection without disrupting his routine**.

"That's kind of the whole point [of libraries] for me. **I come to read, not to talk to people**."

reading this book b/c it's critically-acclaimed





(did not consent to pictures)

"I guess **I don't think of [my conversations at this library] as talking to people?** It's more like, the book is there and the person is just kind of there too. **They feel like part of the library.**"

key findings from 2nd round of interviews

- **we wrongfully assumed…**
  - proactive individuals face fewer barriers to spontaneous encounters, esp. when they are intentional about going to third spaces, but **they felt similarly to Daisy.**
- **we discovered…**
  - quieter people and spaces have **great potential** for random interactions. however, i**nteractions should be low effort** and **respect boundaries of people and spaces,** particularly regular routines in third spaces (reading, journaling, etc.).
- **we initially felt a bit overwhelmed…**
  - as everyone had such unique experiences, pain points, and emotions in third spaces—there was **no “common ground”** within our domain, especially across extreme users.
- **so, we adapted…**
  - we leaned into our users' unique tensions to craft **three distinct POVs** (Daisy, Fiona & Frank, and George) that honor different boundaries and social needs.

POV #1: Daisy

in studio 2, we thought of daisy like this...

We met... Daisy, an elderly ESL teacher with over 60 years of teaching experience viewing her granddaughter's work at the Palo Alto NODE art gallery.

We wonder if this means... this hesitation comes from personal perceptions or from the structure of the physical environment around her.



We were surprised to realize... Daisy immensely values spontaneous human connections despite being hesitant about/self-conscious about initiating interactions.

It would be game-changing to... lower Daisy's barrier of entry when it comes to feeling excited and safe to interact with strangers without feeling judged.

but, we revised it to this

We met… Daisy, an elderly ESL teacher with over 60 years of teaching experience viewing her granddaughter's work at the Palo Alto NODE art gallery.

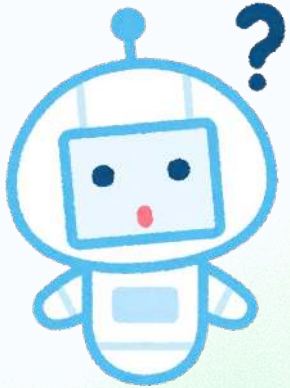


We were surprised to realize… she has "enough friends" and "doesn't want to overstep" strangers' boundaries, yet her most emotional, vivid memories were with strangers, particularly when she needed help.

We wonder if this means… she craves social interaction but only feels comfortable approaching strangers when a preexisting need gives her permission to connect.

It would be game-changing to… make reaching out to strangers feel like a shared, functional necessity rather than an uninvited overstepping of boundaries.

HMW...



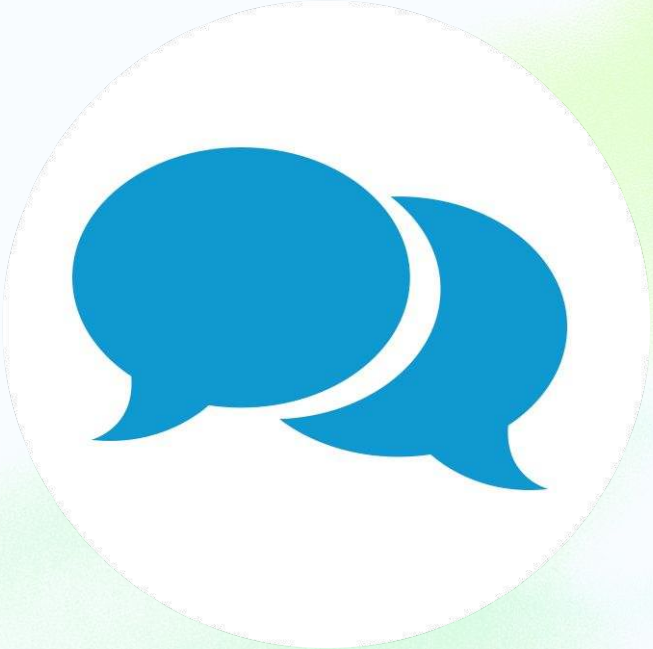
invite people to approach strangers in public spaces without fear of overstepping?

SOLUTION #1:

Description

an app where users can **set a preference** to whether they want to interact with someone new.

when two people nearby are open to spontaneous interaction, the app will **notify them** and **suggest conversation topics** based on their profiles.



Key Assumptions

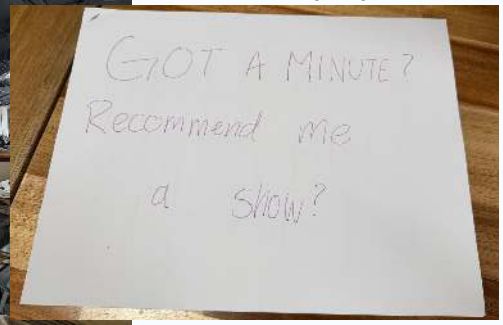
if directly offered the opportunity, **people will approach strangers** and **discuss low-effort topics** like shared hobbies and interests.

EXPERIENCE PROTOTYPE #1: “APPROACH ME”

CoHo testing environment



& prop



The Methodology

sit at CoHo with the sign *Got a minute? Give me a show recommendation* taped onto computer for 1.5 hours.

The Participants

Elderly Stanford Law grad in his 70s, open-source programmer in his 30s, Stanford student in his 10s/20s.

business card given by Stanford Law grad after 40-minute conversation



results & key learnings

What Worked

- wide age range (20s, 30s, 70s) shows that **people of all backgrounds are comfortable initiating conversation with a stranger**, not just someone of similar background
- most likely, **naturally confident *AND* potentially less-confident people felt comfortable approaching Rebecca**

What Didn't Work

- unsure if participants approached b/c they read the sign
  - only the Stanford student gave Rebecca a show recommendation (*Arcane*), so **possible participants might have approached even w/out the sign**

Key Learnings

- once people know you are open to conversation, they can become **excited to talk even without a shared interest**. many people simply wanted to chat and learn about others
- couldn't distinguish hesitant people like Daisy b/c their outward mannerisms/appearance doesn't say much, so we **have to trust that they will reciprocate efforts to interact**
- **assumption not completely validated** (would need larger sample pool and ask for personality)

POV #2: Fiona & Frank

fiona & frank's POV

We met… Fiona & Frank, an adventurous couple living in both NYC and SF who met at a dog park and regularly explore farmers markets, cafes, and other third spaces with their dogs.

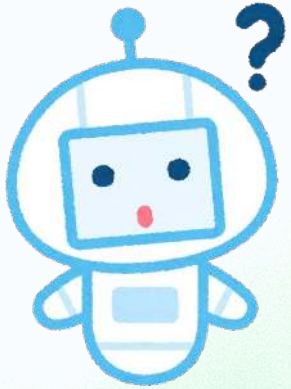
We wonder if this means… they feel a loss of social spontaneity in the Bay Area and rely on physical catalysts (like dogs) to bypass social hesitation and create community.



We were surprised to realize… the couple says Bay Area residents "stay in their own spaces" compared to NYC and don't "even let the dog[s] meet up," yet they continue bringing their dogs to third spaces.

It would be game-changing to… lower the effort and energy required for strangers to interact w/out common interests in third spaces without feeling awkward

HMW...



integrate low-pressure socialization into people's existing daily routines without making it feel like extra effort?

SOLUTION #2:

Description

based on user's availability, digital calendar application that automatically suggests **low-effort activities** in nearby third spaces and **groups users to go together**.

Key Assumptions

people **rely on, check,** and accurately **update** their calendars in their daily lives.



EXPERIENCE PROTOTYPE #2: "YOU'RE INVITED"

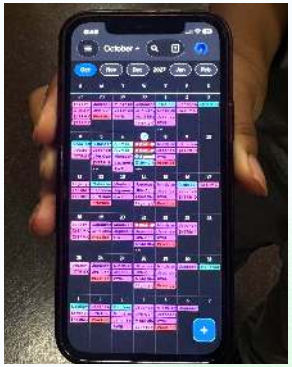
The Methodology

when we run into friends, **invite friends to a fake dorm baking event** w/ set date (Saturday at 7pm) and **see if their first action is checking their calendars**.

The Participants

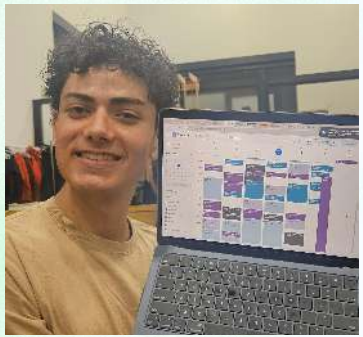
Helena and **Irene** (members of Katherine's dance team) and **Joey** and **Katrina** (Angela's friends we bumped into @ the Outdoor Center)

Helena and **Irene**









Katrina and **Joey**

results & key learnings

What Worked

- all participants **immediately checked their digital calendar** (Google Calendar, Outlook, Notion)
- calendars visibly filled w/ academic and personal events and color-coded, so **reliably updated**

What Didn't Work

- participants **hesitant to attend event** even if free
  - asked "what are we baking?" and "who else will be there?" before committing → true interest requires **shared hobbies/interests** and **knowing people there**
- **participants limited to students**, so **unsure if different user groups still rely on calendars**

Key Learnings

- **busy people are more likely to use calendars, but if they're so busy, they may want to just rest during their free time**. low-effort activity = sleeping?
- **someone is free and suggested a low-effort activity ≠ genuine interest and commitment to doing activity**.
- so, **assumption validated**, but implement "incentives" like shared interest or activity "buddies".

POV #3: George

george's POV

We met... George, a SWE in his 20s who visits Downtown Library weekly to read and relax.

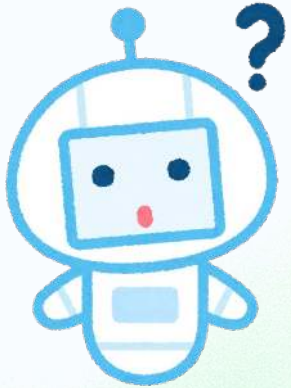
We wonder if this means... George wants to have spontaneous interactions where he learns something book-related but doesn't feel removed from his routine of reading and finding new books.



We were surprised to realize... he "[came] to read, not talk to people," yet recalled several warm interactions with strangers about books that felt "part of the library".

It would be game-changing to... enable brief, topic-focused interactions that feel like a natural extension of quiet third spaces without disrupting individuals' privacy and routines.

HMW...



signal openness to interact in more quiet, individualistic third spaces without disrupting the atmosphere?

SOLUTION #3:

Description

an **anonymous, location-based app allows users to “check in” to quiet, individualistic spaces** like libraries and cafes, opt in to space-related chats (books, coffee), and **get chat partner recommendations**.

offers a **low-effort way of saying "I'm here!"** without awkwardness or disrupting the space’s quiet atmosphere.



Key Assumptions

quiet or individualistic people and spaces prefer indirect, low-effort ways to signal openness (which location-based check-ins provide); partially already confirmed by George.

people are comfortable **temporarily sharing location data** in exchange for social opportunities.

EXPERIENCE PROTOTYPE #2: **"WYA?"**

The Methodology

ask people how they would check if people they knew were at a specific place, probing their **comfort with digital location sharing and presence tracking**.

The Participants

Joey, **Katrina**, and an older couple walking around Main Quad.



Joey & Katrina's shared locations





results & key learnings

What Worked

- **sharing and checking locations are integrated into college students' daily patterns** and treated as a game ("let me check my Sims")

What Didn't Work

- most older people & strangers said they'd just text people
  - did not have non-family members' locations and **questioned purpose of sharing location**
  - followed up by asking if they were fine sharing location within a fixed location or duration if it was an event, and they said that's OK

Key Learnings

- **older people & strangers only felt comfortable temporarily sharing location when a clear intent and trustworthy user was presented**
- because we all live on campus and already know people's daily routines w/out their location, **students view sharing locations as a social statement of trust in and closeness w/ friends, and may not consider safety risks**
- so, **assumption somewhat validated**—if there is a functional purpose to sharing location.

combining solutions #2 and #3...

integrated “serendipity” calendar



- users **input interests, hobbies, and curiosities and general location** into app
- form groups w/ friends or register as individual user
- anonymously **“tack” location-specific event recommendations** onto community calendar or **“collect” others’ recommendations** onto individual calendar
- based on user’s schedule/inputted info, **app sporadically suggests third-space activities**, directly in group and/or user’s calendar
- calendar **matches people @ event (based on location)** if there’s others using the calendar

combining solutions #2 and #3...

WHY this solution?



bridges gap between planning and spontaneity

- solution #2 alone (scheduled group matching) may feel **too rigid or demanding for busy/introverted users**
- solution #3 alone **may not work if no one else checks in at the right time/place**
- combining them lets **users plan ahead (tacking recommendations to their calendar) while still leaving room for serendipitous interactions** if strangers go to same event

areas of caution

Who do we serve/leave out?

- serves **young adults w/ established friend groups**, **people eager to explore** their surrounding third spaces, and **introverts** who want to make individual plans but still feel connected w/ like-minded individuals
- may leave out **elderly individuals** who aren't as tech-savvy or prefer making plans in person

Ethical implications

- affects **people's privacy** (location, info about themselves, interests, calendar); must use temporary location check-in, not tracking
- ensure people are matched to others with **diverse interests** (not just people who seem similar). prototype proved that even w/out shared interests, people have fulfilling conversations

any questions?

appendix

Daisy POV

HMW help people feel comfortable interacting with strangers they find interesting?

Angela Yang

HMW encourage many people to all explore the same shared space (to naturally bring about spontaneous interactions)?

Angela Yang

HMW lower the barrier of entry to discovering niche third spaces?

Angela Yang

HMW adapt third spaces for users with different accessibility needs?

Angela Yang

HMW adapt spaces to various cultural expectations that people have?

Angela Yang

HMW make people excited (not scared) to approach strangers?

Rebecca Alcala

HMW encourage conversations about controversial or sensitive topics while lessening fear of judgment?

Katherine Kricorian

HMW encourage spontaneous interactions with elder individuals, whether with other elders or young people?

Katherine Kricorian

HMW create third spaces where people can discuss differing/controversial opinions?

Rebecca Alcala

HMW Make 3rd spaces more accessible for the older population?

Rebecca Alcala

HMW change how people initially judge others before they interact with them?

Rebecca Alcala

HMW encourage interactions in third spaces based on physical objects?

Meredith Nam

HMW help people build confidence when approaching strangers?

Angela Yang

HMW notify people of others that require assistance in third spaces?

Angela Yang

HMW develop around the idea of serendipity without making design feel too planned

Angela Yang

HMW make serendipitous interactions easier and more common

Angela Yang

HMW make serendipitous interactions tailored to people's interests

Angela Yang

HMW completely remove the feeling of "being a burden" when approaching a stranger in public?

Meredith Nam

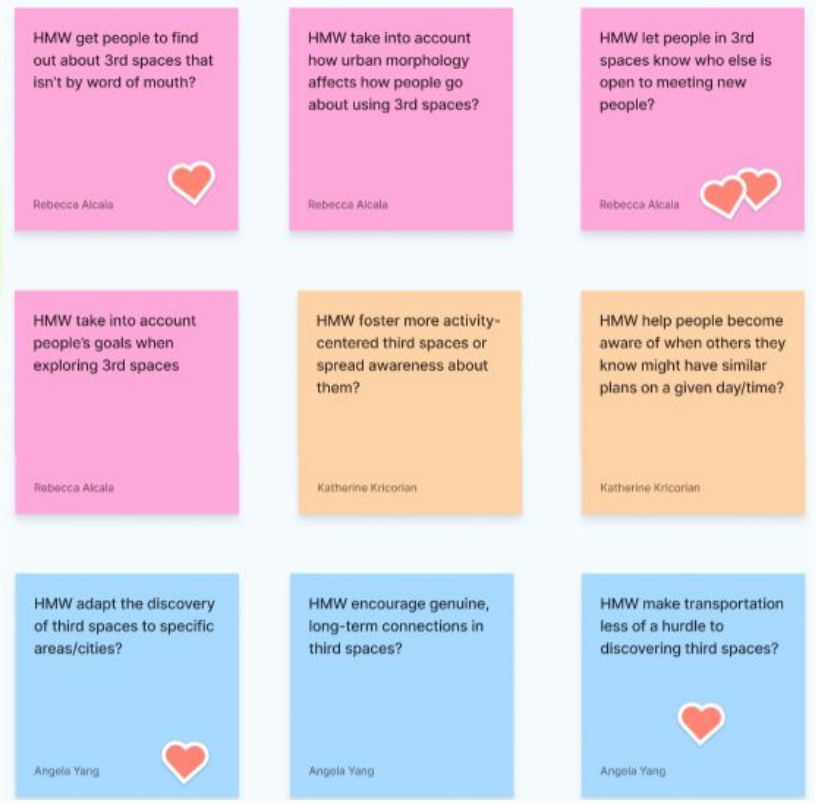
HMW use art exhibits or their descriptions as physical magnets that prompt thoughtful dialogue between viewers?

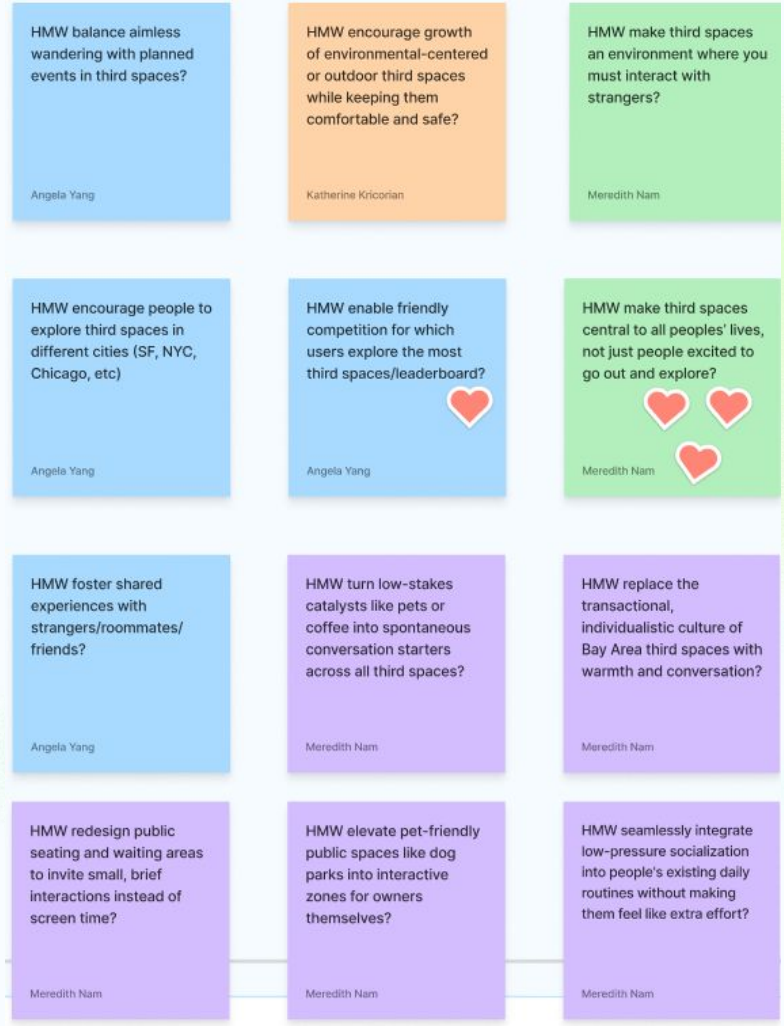
Meredith Nam

HMW give people explicit social permission to approach strangers in public spaces without fear of overstepping?

Meredith Nam

Fiona & Frank POV





George POV

HMW easier for George to be approached without interfering with his regular activities at the library?

Meredith Nam

HMW lighten the social burden on both people in a small interaction?

Meredith Nam

HMW make brief but helpful acts between strangers (like picking up fallen books) happen more often?

Meredith Nam

HMW foster spontaneous interactions based on a specific hobby or interest?

Angela Yang

HMW find a middle ground between quiet third spaces and conversation?

Meredith Nam

HMW foster the development of introvert-friendly third spaces that still allow for or even prioritize human connection?

Katherine Kricorian

HMW create connection without anyone having to talk?

Meredith Nam

HMW allow people to signal their level of comfort with being approached?

Angela Yang

HMW adjust the expectation of interactions based on the type of third space?

Angela Yang

HMW make 3rd spaces have designated areas based on how comfortable people are being approached?

Rebecca Alcala

HMW make reading a book in public feel like an invitation for conversation rather than a "do not disturb" sign?

Meredith Nam

HMW transform quiet library spaces into rich, non-verbal social environments?

Meredith Nam

HMW allow a person to tailor the kinds of spontaneous interactions they prefer?

Angela Yang

HMW help people find other people with similar interests in 3rd spaces?

Rebecca Alcala

HMW differentiate 3rd spaces based on how much people want to interact with others?

Rebecca Alcala

HMW give people explicit **social permission** to approach strangers in public spaces without **fear of overstepping**?



HMW integrate **low-pressure socialization** into people's existing daily routines without making it feel like **extra effort**?



HMW signal **openness** to interact in more quiet, **individualistic third spaces** without disrupting the atmosphere?



HMW signal **openness** to interact in more quiet, **individualistic third spaces** without disrupting the atmosphere?

