



*“A real role model provides more than inspiration; their very existence is confirmation of possibilities one may have every reason to doubt, saying, yes, **someone like me can do this.**”*

Sonia Sotomayor



MFA Design for Social Innovation Thesis
School of Visual Arts, NYC
May 2020

The Designers



Alisha Mahen

Alisha is a teacher turned designer researcher from India, where she taught in underserved communities for six years. She owes her identity as a designer to the kids she taught. They were the ones who pushed her everyday to think more about how to make every voice matter in the classroom. Her motivation for empowering voices through design brought me to DSI.

And after two years of self discovery at DSI, she sees herself as a community-centered designer working with populations facing inequity and social injustice, to reimagine their possibilities.

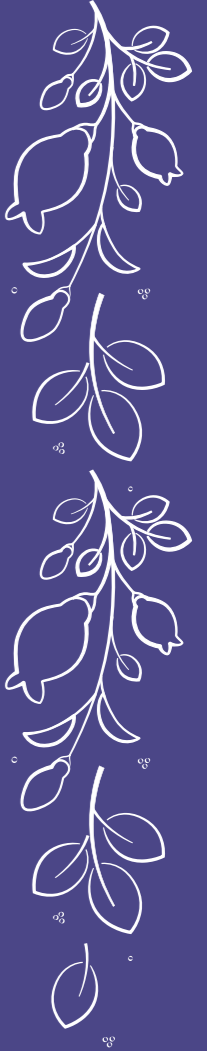


Elana Wolpert

Elana is a design researcher, design strategist and a writer. At her core, she's a curious listener and a lover of stories.

Before DSI, she spent three years teaching English in Istanbul and working with Syrian refugees. They showed such resilience and positivity in the face of systemic inequities, which deeply inspired her to focus on social impact work and led her to DSI.

Today, her design work focuses on community engagement that is both values-driven and power-building.



*“There is a craft
and a power in
listening.”*

Glenn Gould



PREFACE

Learning to Listen

True role models are hard to find. When we began this project, we never knew that we would meet inspiring women who show such wisdom and strength that it would drive our entire social design process.

We began this process hoping to confirm the hypothesis that using co-creation methods in social impact design is fundamentally about listening to marginalized voices. We hypothesized that when you listen deeply to those who face social issues, you have to be bold enough to shift the “expert” label to those who have lived experiences. Only then can you make a real impact.

This was our strategy when beginning this thesis. We employed a design process that required us to consistently turn back to the community for guidance. We conducted immersive ethnographic research to get to know the community in their full identities. We hoped that with the right tools, the community would have the ability to come up with innovative answers to their own problems. Co-creation was our most core design value. That manifested through using a community based participatory research design approach. We involved the community in every major decision, we did everything we could to make sure that the community’s voices came before our own.

Throughout this process, the women of the Yemeni community astounded us with their bravery, creativity, and sheer smarts.

So much so that we realized their wisdom could not sit in our documents of research. We had to broadcast their stories to the greater community of immigrant women in NYC. These women needed space to tell their stories, they needed representation, they needed to be heard.

In the end it was more than our strategy that was about uplifting voices but it became the resulting product as well. We co-created a series of storybooks that frame Yemeni immigrant women as role models and give them the platform to tell their life stories of pursuing a career and all of the challenges that came with it in a bold, authentic, and inspiring way.

We want to say thank you to the women of the Yemeni community in New York City who showed us that sometimes the most impactful thing you can do is ...

just listen.



Our Values

Authenticity is highly valued yet rarely examined. We began our year by examining what it really means to be authentic. Not only because authenticity is an honorable trait-but because authenticity allows for an improved co-design process.

Authentic people stay true to themselves and put the people around them at ease which allows for more genuine and open conversation. Co-design is fundamentally about bringing everyone's voices to the table. As designers, we have to be leaders in authenticity to allow for open conversation and radical collaboration.

So, it became fundamental to our design process that our values are not just a list of beautiful words, but that they are lived everyday. To do this, we coupled every value with a strategy so that we could find practical ways to bring our values to life and therefore, ensure our own authenticity.

VALUE 1

High-empathy approach.

STRATEGY 1

We prioritized the lived experiences of our target user and designing an intervention that fits into their culture.

VALUE 2

Diversity builds quality.

STRATEGY 2

We used community-based participatory research design methodology and democratized decision making.

VALUE 3

Transparency between client and designers.

STRATEGY 3

We had a consistent cadence of meeting with the client to deliver insights, check biases, and review next steps.

VALUE 4

Purpose-driven interventions that make positive impact.

STRATEGY 4

We made sure all of measurement points are based on the positive impact the intervention has on the user's life.

VALUE 5

Long-term sustainability is prioritized over flashy innovation.

STRATEGY 5

We made decisions and iterations based on the goal of long-term sustainability to ensure the product can continue running without us.

As designers, we have to be leaders in authenticity to allow for open conversation and *radical collaboration.*



We are all role models.



Our Process

DISCOVER

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

- Context Setting
- Framing the Brief
- Cultivating Relationships

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- Synthesis
- Persona
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One: Discover

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

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- Context: Yemeni Immigrant Women in NYC
- Framing the Brief
- Cultivating Relationships

RESEARCH ROUND ONE

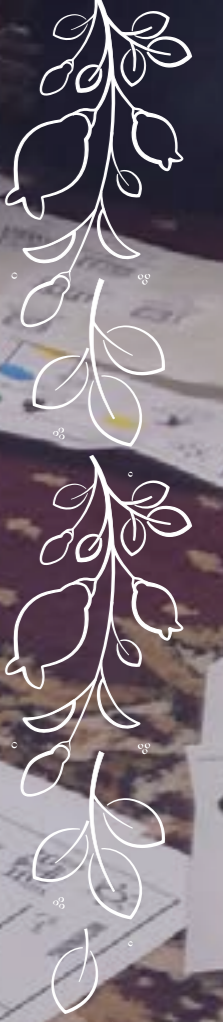
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- Discovering the Steps
- Synthesis
- Personas
- The Staircase
- Scoping with Stakeholders

RESEARCH ROUND TWO

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- Understanding How Women Plan
- Design Elements



Understanding Yemeni Immigrant Women in NYC

The Yemeni community has been quietly living in NYC for years, but these days, they're shaking things up.

As Muslim immigrants, they've seen their fair share of American islamophobia and discrimination, so they've learned to keep to themselves. You'd almost never know that the the earliest recorded history of Yemenis coming to America was way back in 1890.

However, since the Yemeni civil war started in 2015, Yemenis worldwide have been changed forever. The war has caused not only emotional strain but serious financial strain. After the Muslim Ban was enacted in 2017, Yemenis took yet another blow, they were then prevented from reuniting with their families in Yemen. The frustration was overwhelming.

Yemenis couldn't be quiet anymore. They went to the streets to fight for their rights, to the office to create programs that helped the disadvantaged, and to the court room to argue for justice.

Curiously, then one thing began to change that no one could've predicted: the attitude around women working. Traditionally, Yemeni women are not expected to work and in more conservative parts of the culture they stop their education after high school. The war in Yemen brought serious financial strain and with that came a cultural shift. Women now need to work to support their families. Often Yemeni families in New York City would actually be supporting three families: their local one, the mother's family in Yemen and the father's family in Yemen. When it costs \$100 to get a bag of rice and there's a nationwide famine, the whole family has to pitch in.

Now, Yemeni immigrant women are facing the difficult challenge that so many immigrants face; learning adapt without assimilating. They want to get jobs while still maintaining their cultural values. They want to work while still raising their kids, to make money while still having time to cook their favorite Yemeni dishes each night for the family.

Yemeni women are creating new paths and leading their culture into uncharted territory. Despite serious strife and struggle they are pushing onward, redefining what it means to be a Yemeni woman.

**Yemeni immigrant
women are facing
the challenge that
so many immigrants
face; *learning to
adapt without
assimilating.***





Framing the Brief

*What are Arab immigrant women's most pressing issues?
What are their current systems of support?*

Letting the Community Define the Problem

In working with any marginalized group, we learned that it's crucial to never assume you know what their problem is. Our process started from the people, not the problem. With Elana's background in working with Arabs and Alisha's passion for education, we knew our strength would lie in a topic that overlapped the two topics.

We began our journey by teaching volunteer English classes and citizenship test prep at the Arab American Family Support Center in Brooklyn. Our first learning there was that the overwhelming majority of Arab immigrants seeking help are Yemeni immigrants. Second, their biggest issue today is poverty. We interviewed an AAFSC who stated this explicitly, saying,

"The women who come here are all dealing with financial issues, it's getting worse as the war in Yemen gets worse. There's very little they feel they can do about it now."

This helped us create our first "How Might We" question:

How might we help Arab immigrant women improve their social and economic mobility?

With that focus in mind, we began to research all community leaders, from NGOs to local mosques. We got an interview with Imam Khalid Latif from the Islamic Center of New York University. Imam Latif is a powerful force in the world of social good work in NYC. He connected us with Dr. Debbie Almontaser, the founder of the Yemeni American Merchants Association (YAMA) and various other Yemeni leaders who supported our research.

Learning from Subject Matter Experts

While we were on the road to making a formal partnership with YAMA, we decided to do some subject matter research.

We interviewed:

- 1. Kerry Brode / Founder of Emma's Torch**, a restaurant and social enterprise that empowers refugees through culinary education and job readiness training.
- 2. Nikki Cicerani / President and CEO of Upwardly Global**, a non-profit organization that helps immigrants & refugees succeed in professional careers in the USA, while connecting employers with diverse talent.
- 3. Naseem Kapdi / Training Manager at Hot Bread Kitchen**, a nonprofit social enterprise that creates economic opportunity through careers in food through their culinary training and incubator.

From speaking to them, we began to form our initial learnings. **We began to understand that many employment preparation services for this community involve incubators because before women can enter the workforce, they need time to adjust to the new lifestyle.** There are several personal considerations they have to make before they can commit full-time. This set the tone for our next research, where we defined what those personal considerations are.



Cultivating Relationships

*How might we build trust with a vulnerable community?
How might we describe the power of social impact design to a grassroots NGO?*

Proposing a Partnership

Once we heard about YAMA's amazing work, we were eager to work with them. YAMA is a non-profit that seeks to educate and elevate Yemeni-American merchants and their families through education, civil rights advocacy, business and social service support. Dr. Debbie Almontaser is a co-founder and a Yemeni role model in her own right, she was the first in her family to receive a doctorates degree. She is a deep believer in the power of education regardless the gender.

Our goal was to make a partnership with YAMA so we could have a consistent community to co-design with for the next year. Since this community is especially vulnerable, we knew that YAMA would need to really trust our work to be willing to make a partnership. **We were clear and transparent about what we needed and what we could give back.**

We customized our research plan into a project proposal so they had an idea of the work we ha done thus far, and what direction we were looking to go in. We then created an extensive timeline on the basis of our partnership, showing what the year is going to look like for our project. We drafted a contract between SVA and YAMA which would ensure no misuse of pictures and research for YAMA's comfortability.

We were honored and excited when we made our partnership official in July.

Proxy Population

YAMA gave us access to two research groups: one class of Yemeni women in the Bronx and one class in Brooklyn that we would teach. Both English classes are taught in Mosques, since it's the place women feel most safe in.

When the class opened in October, we expected a full class of Yemeni women. However, the students were from a range of Arab countries: Egypt, Palestine, and Algeria. We we had done our research up to that point with a specification in Yemeni's experiences, so we were hesitant to widen our scope to include all Arab women.

To honor the diversity of Muslim and Arab women's experiences, we had to do a round of research to determine if they would be a fitting proxy population. **We interviewed all the women in the new class and found a few core similarities: they were all Muslim, mothers, immigrants, Arabs, English learners, and most importantly, the majority of them were seeking employment.** We determined that our mixed Arab community in Brooklyn would be an appropriate proxy population for the Yemeni community in the Bronx. We committed to keeping all stakeholder and community leader representatives to be solely from the Yemeni community.

Target User Population

Yemeni English Students
Bronx
Provided Round 1 Research

Proxy Population

Mixed Arab English Students
Brooklyn
Testing Group for Prototypes



Discovering the Steps

*What are their current barriers to social and economic mobility?
What does a day in the life look like for a Yemeni immigrant woman?
What are their priorities?*

From the interviews we had with the community experts and the secondary research we did during the summer, we drafted a research plan for the year. We came up with five research objectives that would guide the first round of research. These objectives are highlighted in the box below. We broke the objectives down into questions we needed to find answers to in order to achieve them.

We identified four categories of stakeholders from the community who could help us find answers to those questions: community activists, YAMA administrators, teachers, and students coming to YAMA's ESL classes. Working with our point of contact in YAMA, we created a list of people from the community who fell into the aforementioned categories who would be willing to participate in our research through the year.

We were aware that language was going to be a barrier, and the topics we were going to touch upon were deeply personal. Hence, in order to find answers to our research questions, we created different storytelling tools and prioritization tools (highlighted in the next few pages) which would help remove the barrier of language and help in having those conversations.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

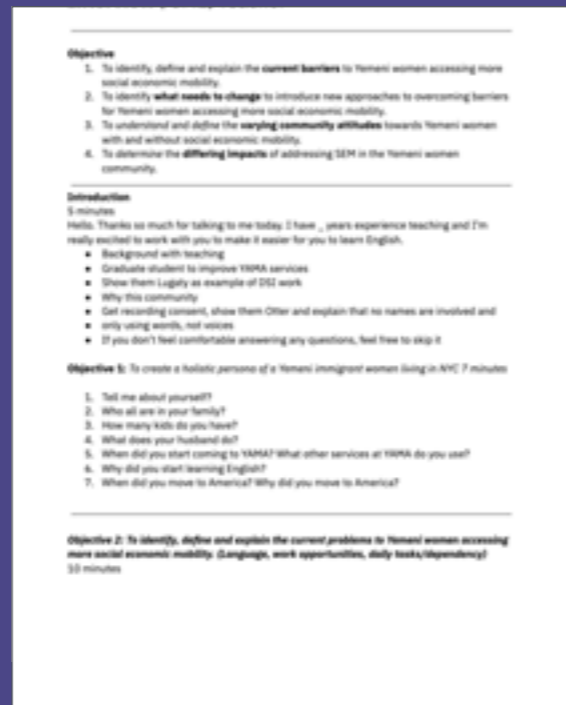
1. To identify, define and explain the **current problems** to Yemeni women accessing more social economic mobility.
2. To identify **what needs to change to introduce new approaches** to overcoming barriers for Yemeni women accessing more social economic mobility.
3. To understand and define the **varying community attitudes towards** Yemeni women with and without social economic mobility.
4. To identify the **strengths and weaknesses** of current approaches, both for community-led programs and organizations that help access people improve social and economic mobility.
5. To determine the **differing impacts of addressing** SEM in the Yemeni women community.
6. To determine if social or economic needs are more **desirable, feasible, and viable** for design interventions.



Interview Guides

Before conducting interviews, we always created extensive interview guides that would help us guide conversations towards the pre-determined research objectives we wanted to learn about. Our interview guides were heavily scripted, but shared the following features: they helped us know what to ask about, the sequence of questions, how to pose them in a culturally sensitive manner, and how to pose follow-up questions.

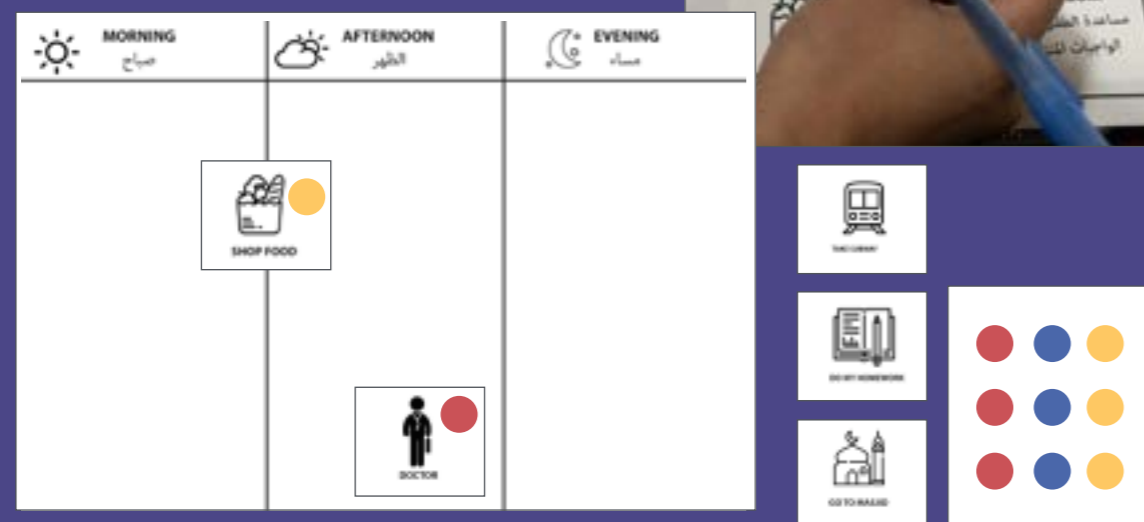
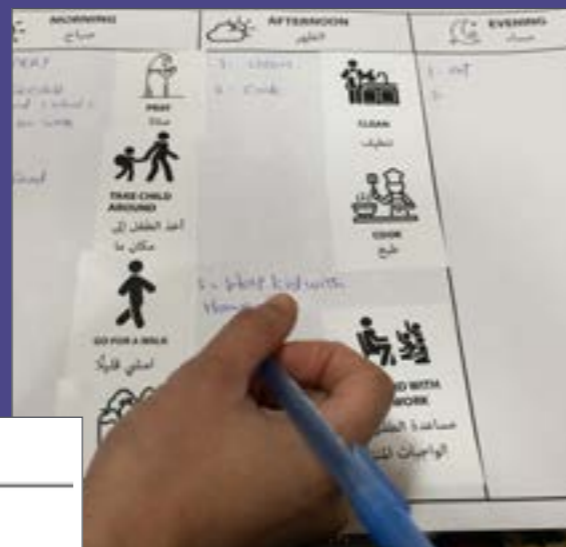
We personalized all our interview guides according to the stakeholders we were talking to. We tried our best to ensure that our interviews didn't trigger any discomfort for the interviewees; we tried to create a safe space by giving them an option to not answer if they didn't feel comfortable.



Mapping the Day Out

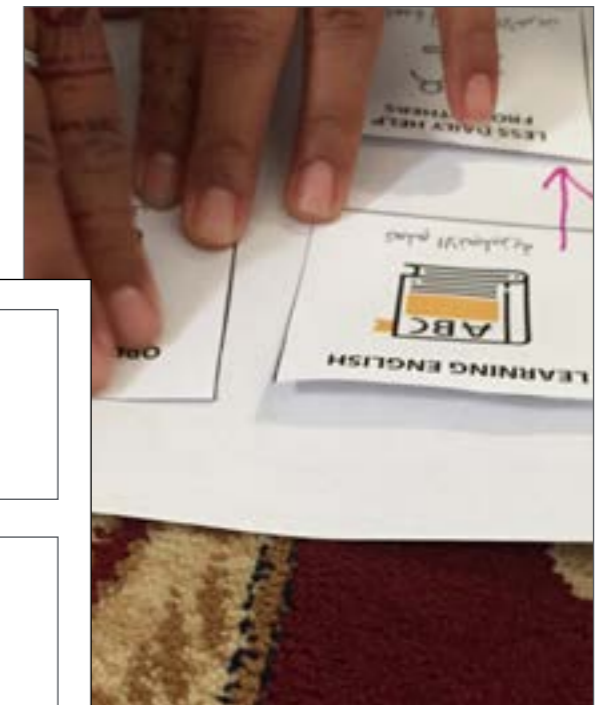
Mapping the day out was a co-creation tool we created to help the women who were ESL learners to be able to tell us more about what their day looks like, and to understand the points of English usage and dependency on others. This was for us to get a deeper understanding of their day-to-day challenges.

After constructing their day, we used their maps as tools to speak about possible activities they would like to do more, activities they were dependent on others for, etc.



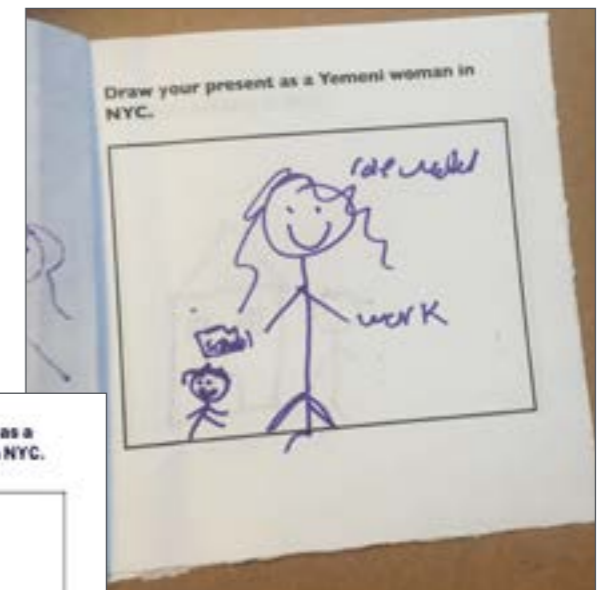
Prioritizing Activity

Based on the four main challenges that we had identified through our conversations with community experts, this activity was geared more towards getting an idea of how the women prioritized those challenges differently.



Create your Photo Album

We used a storytelling tool called "Create Your Own Photo Album" with the Yemeni women who were already working. We had an objective to understand factors that made it possible for them to reach their goals. The tool required women to draw pictures of their journeys to find work, their present, and their perceived futures. We used different objects like glue, scissors, etc. to aid the women in talking about the challenges they faced and things that helped them in their journeys.



Synthesis

How do we summarize while making sure we are uplifting the community's voices?

Coding

To make sure that we prioritized everyone's voices while synthesizing all the information, we decided on a specific coding technique. We developed an initial list of deductive codes based on our research questions, literature reviews, initial research, and our previous experience. We defined each code clearly. Following this, we read each interview and coded all relevant quotes accordingly.



Clustering and Mapping

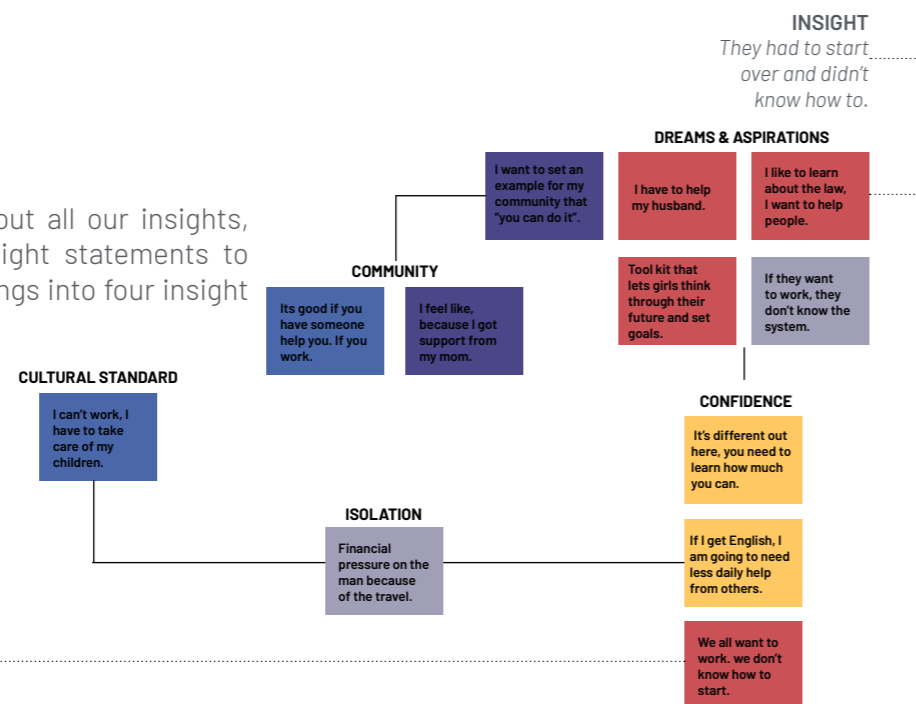
Our coding helped us prioritize quotes, while also enabling us to do a first round of clustering. We printed every quote along with its code, and clustered them into different groups. We then mixed and matched different quotes from distinct codes to generate a list of tiny insights.

Subsequently, we mapped all these tiny insights to observe connections between them.



Generating insights

After we were able to map out all our insights, we came up with a few insight statements to synthesize our research findings into four insight statements.

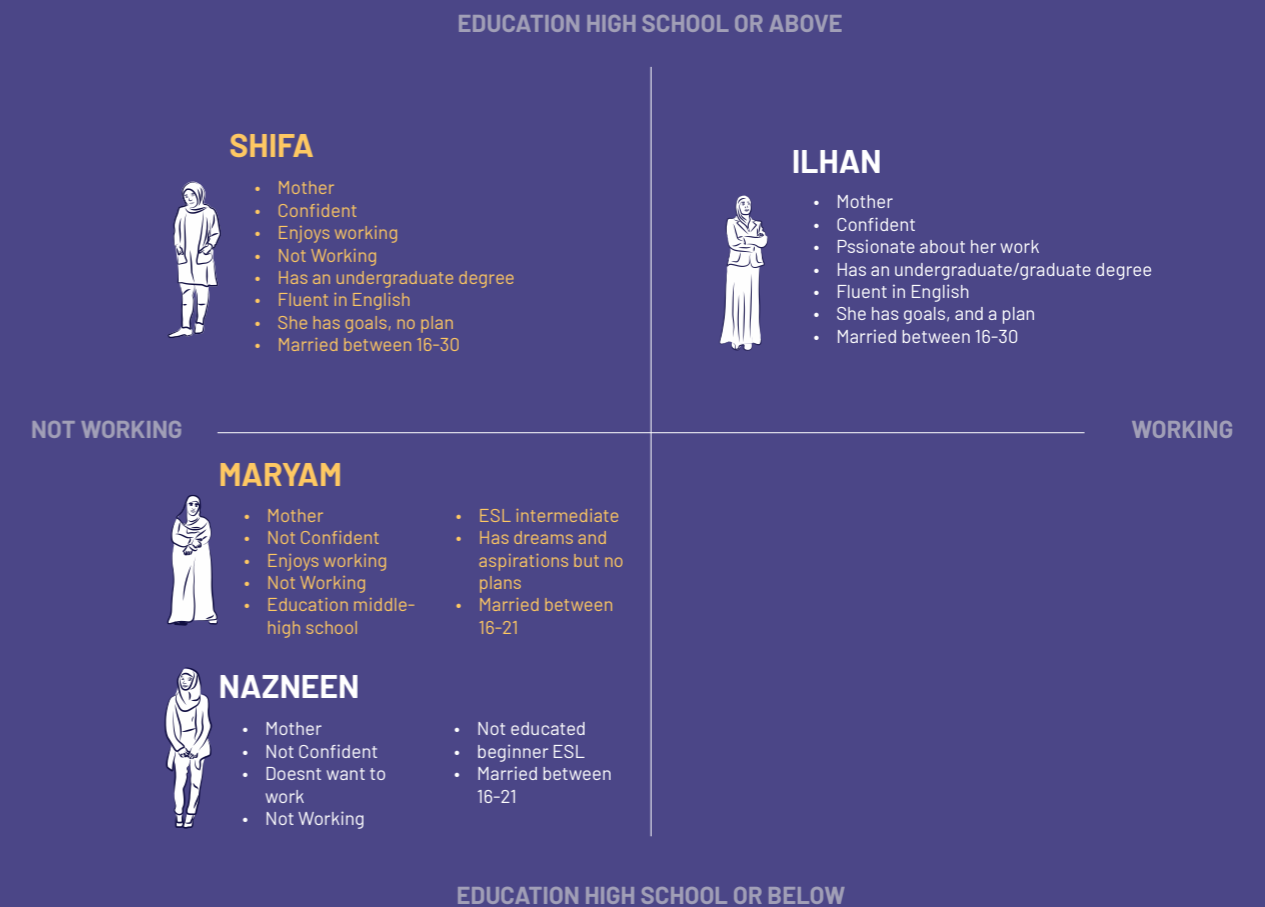


INSIGHT: English gives them, agency, independence, and the power to decide their own journeys in NYC.

Persona

How do we capture the diversity of the Yememi immigrant community?

In order to develop a deep understanding of the entire Yemeni community ecosystem, we created a range of personas based on our learnings. We identified our target audience within those various personas. The image below describes all the different personas in the community that we came up with. Among these personas, we decided to focus on Shifa and Maryam, because they represented our target group most closely.



Our Target Users

Maryam, (age 23) is a mother, who is at an Intermediate level in English. While she dreams of and aspires to work, she doesn't have a clear plan to achieve the same. One of the primary reasons she wants to work is the economic aftermath of the war in Yemen on families. Maryam wants to share the financial burden of providing for their immediate and extended families that her husband carries now. Additionally, her desire to work also stems from her will to be financially independent.

Shifa, (age 35) is also a mother. She is at an advanced level in English and also has an undergraduate degree. The war in Yemen also affected her, but her motivation to work is more for self-fulfillment purposes. She wants to continue the career journey that she had started on back in Yemen.



Entering the workforce is hard. Doing it for the first time as a mother and an immigrant is even harder. Our first insights scaffolded the **steps these women need to consider before they begin working.**

INSIGHTS: Steps to Getting A Job

INSIGHT 1: GET FAMILY SUPPORT

Their family's and community's mindsets about work can be a **tool of support, or a barrier to success** for Shifa and Maryam.

INSIGHT 2: DECIDE A CHILDCARE

Shifa and Maryam face a lack of **culturally appropriate childcare services in NYC** for their children.

INSIGHT 3: LEARN ENGLISH

English provides Shifa and Maryam with the agency, independence, and **the power to decide their own journeys in NYC.**

INSIGHT 4: PLAN FOR A CAREER

Though Shifa and Maryam have varying educational and professional experiences, when they came here, **both of them had to start over and didn't know how to.**



Scoping with Stakeholders

How do we leverage democratized decision making to scope our focus?

The Staircase framework gave us many opportunity areas to further explore; each step was a possible problem that we could research and work on. We decided to present this research to one of the community leaders - Dr. Debbie - so that we could together decide which stage would be the most pressing problem to solve. Our decision was informed by a three step process.

Challenger Framework

For every step, we did the 5 why's in two directions:

- **WHY:** "Why might Shifa/Maryam want to...?"
- **WHY NOT:** "Why can't Shifa/Maryam...?"

We asked her for specific responses, each of which we converted into a new "How Might We" statement. At the end of this stage, we had around 20 "How Might We" statements.



Prioritization Matrix

On the basis of priority and feasibility we asked her to then cluster all the how might we statements into a 2X2 matrix: high to low priority + high to low feasibility. This helped us get the highest priority and most feasible how might we statements.



Voting

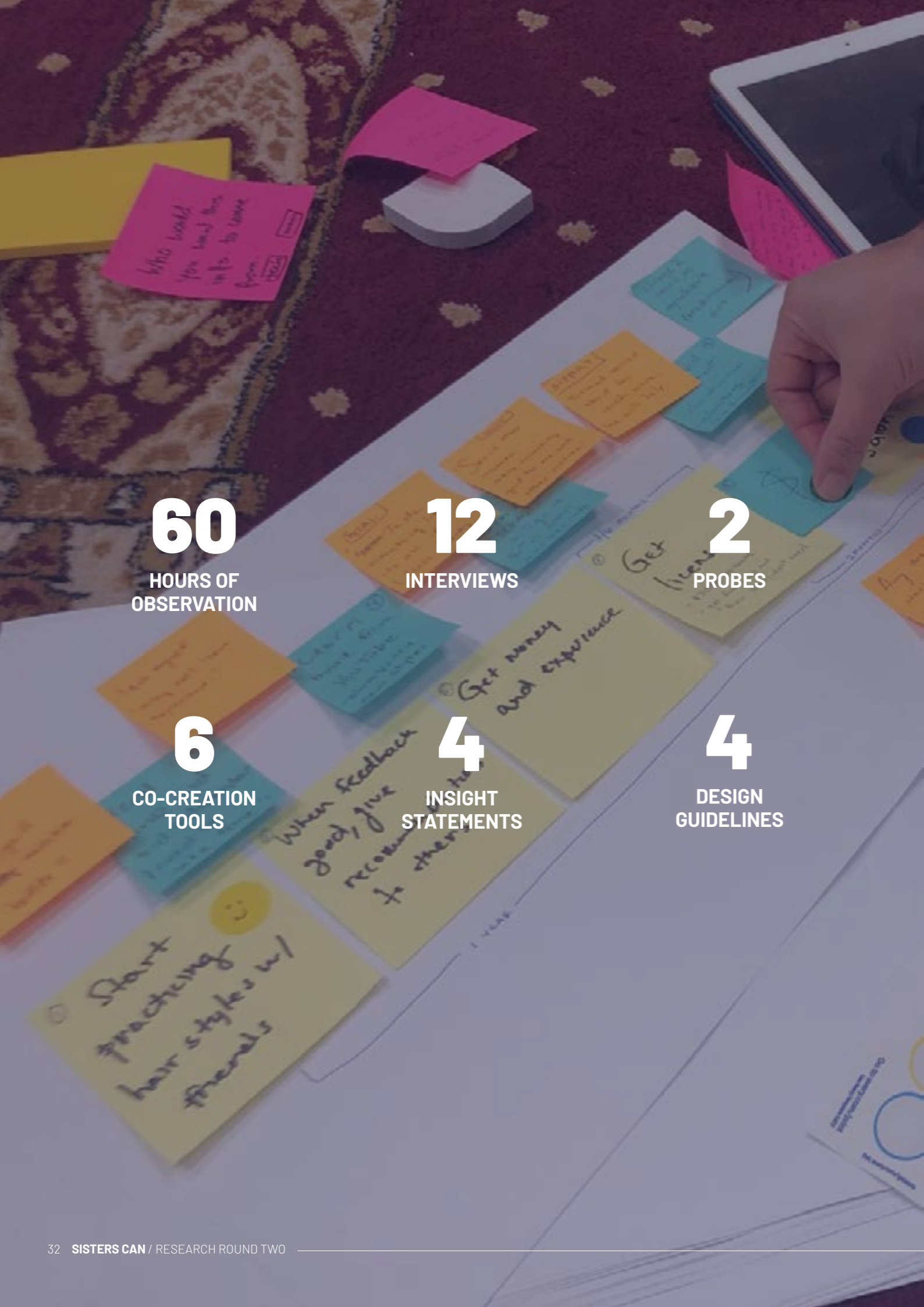
We asked her to then cluster all the "How Might We" statements into a 2x2 matrix defined by High to Low Priority, and High to Low Feasibility. This helped us identify the "How Might We" statements with the highest priority as well as feasibility.



HOW MIGHT WE

create a tool for Shifa and Maryam to have the agency to plan and decide their education and career paths in New York City?





60
HOURS OF
OBSERVATION

12
INTERVIEWS

2
PROBES

6
CO-CREATION
TOOLS

4
INSIGHT
STATEMENTS

4
DESIGN
GUIDELINES

Understanding How Women Plan

*What are their styles of planning?
How are they currently planning their careers?
What mediums are they most comfortable using?*

Now that we had decided the problem we wanted to further explore. We wanted to spend the next second round of research to

- Know the women better.
- Understand their motivations (negative or positive) for action or inaction towards careers.
- Understand whether they knew what they needed to do in order to achieve the goals of their choice.
- Understand how the women planned.

We decided to get information on the above using interviews, co-creation tools and design sprint methodologies, and speaking to 3 main stakeholders (the Bay Ridge population, the Bronx population and SMEs). Below, we explain the various probes and co-creation tools we used to obtain information.

Which communication medium do they trust?

Since we predicted that some sort of an information exchange would be an important element of the intervention, we wanted to understand which media of information the women used for different information. We provided the women situations and asked them to prioritize the media they would prefer in those situations for trustworthy information.



Our Learnings

This activity enabled more conversations around trust and communication. We also learned that the women heavily depended on their masjids (mosques), community Facebook groups and local state-owned numbers for information. What was additionally interesting was that the women trusted information coming from other women the most, irrespective of whether they were from their own community or not.

There is a new recipe you haven't heard about. What would you prefer hearing about it from?

- INSTAGRAM
- WOMAN AT THE MOSQUE
- FACEBOOK

There are ESL classes starting near your house. What would you prefer hearing about it from?

- MOSQUE
- NEWSPAPER
- BODEGA

There are job opportunities available. What would you prefer hearing about it from?

- MESSAGE ON THE PHONE
- ONLINE WEBSITE



Describing Their Perfect Teacher

Being outsiders to the community, we wanted to get a deeper understanding of what built the women's trust. While we imagined that there would be some sort of an information exchange that would happen through a technological application or a human medium, we needed to understand what would be characteristics of trustworthy mediums from the women. So we asked them to make a perfect teacher for us and describe their characteristics.

Learnings

We learnt that women wanted a medium that was flexible, gave them the ability to ask questions, and was able to create a space to listen to them.

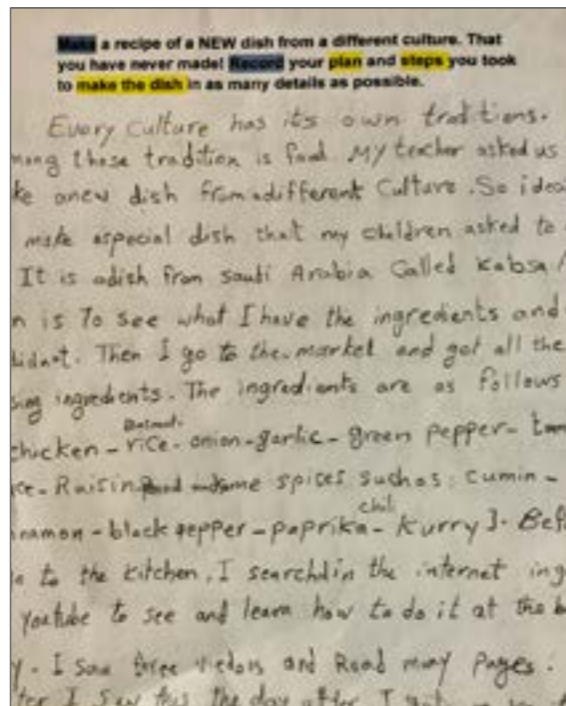


Using Cooking and Storytelling to Understand Planning

We wanted to understand how the women planned currently, so we asked the women to cook a dish they had never made before and then write down their planning process for the same. This activity gave us a peak into how the women currently planned their daily activities. We were able to discuss with the women what planning and goal setting looked like in their lives.

Learnings

We learnt that women loved to discuss things with their families, and breaking things into smaller steps.



Understanding How They View Themselves

This was an activity that we did to understand the women better in terms of their interests, their dreams, and hobbies.

Learnings

The biggest learning from this activity was that women had role models - people they looked up to. This led to an insightful conversation about who they saw as role models and what unique features they related with for each.

Draw yourself.

The way you see yourself!	The way others see you	What you dream yourself to be

Who am I?

Let's play 20 questions

1. In my free time, I like to _____
2. With my best friend, I like to _____
3. I learn most when _____
4. I don't learn _____
5. What do you find challenging at school? _____
6. What do you find easy? _____
7. I learn most when _____
8. I learn least when _____
9. What career interests you? _____
10. What superhero would you like to be? _____
11. What would your special powers be? _____
12. What's your role model/hero? _____
13. People like me because? _____
14. I can help others by _____
15. On weekends I like to _____

Mapping Perceived Steps to Get a Job

In order to take a deeper look at what they needed help with, we asked each woman what their perceived steps to getting a job were. We asked them to tell us their goal and break it down into steps they needed to take in order to achieve it.

We also asked them to identify which parts of the journey they were scared of and who they would refer to for overcoming those challenging steps.

Additionally, we asked them to draw an assistant that they would like to help them through their journeys.



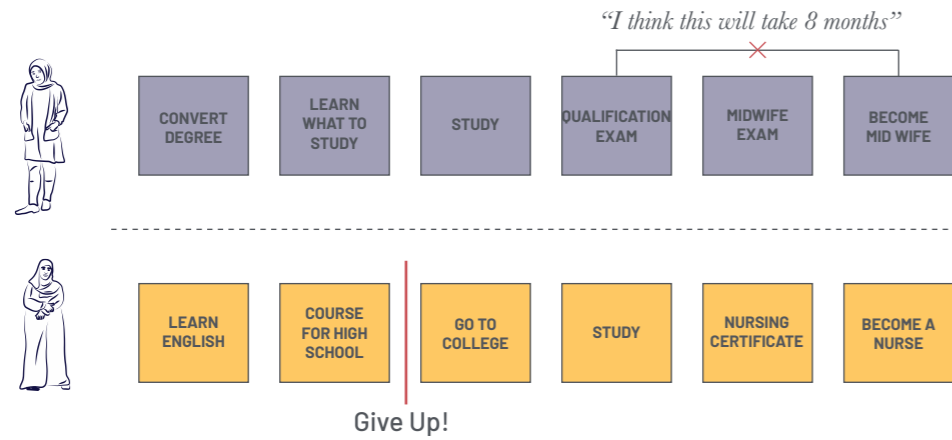

(LEARNINGS FROM THIS ON THE NEXT PAGE)



Learnings from Examining Their Perceived Steps to Getting a Job

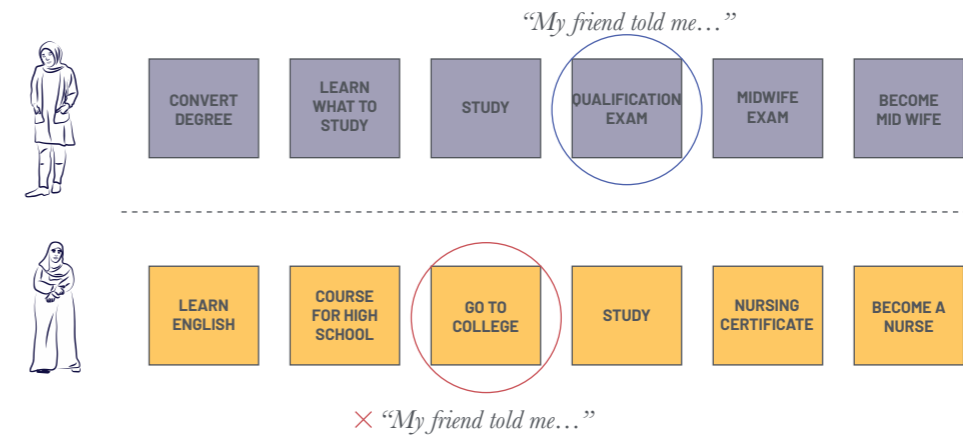
Shifa needs information while Maryam needs inspiration.

Shifa has worked before so she has an understanding of the process of getting a job. However she is misinformed about certain crucial details. At the same time, Maryam has a fear of the unknown. She is concerned about balancing her role as a mother with her career, and hence has a tendency to give up. The process of finding a job in NYC is complex and intimidating for both of them in very different ways.



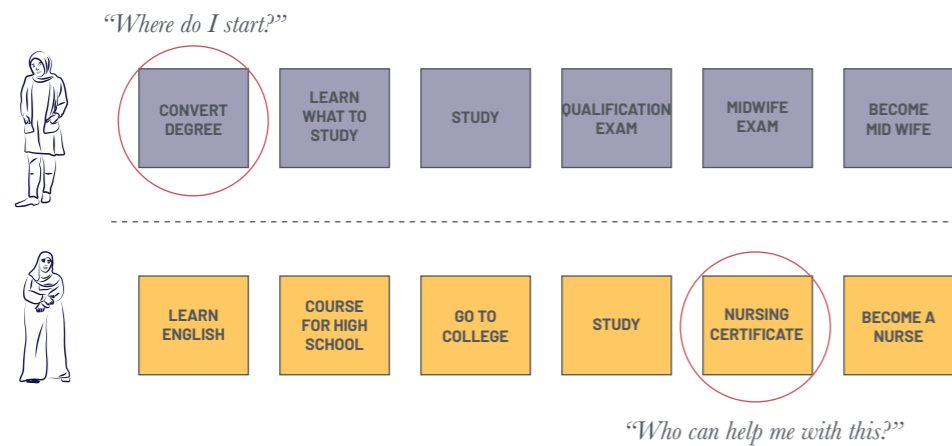
Shifa and Maryam rely on their community for information, but sometimes this means the spread of incorrect information.

There is an existing system of women encouraging other women. Since Shifa and Maryam's primary sources of information are their friends within siloed social circles, they are sometimes vulnerable to believing and spreading incorrect information. So, the third insight was that the tool required to leverage this community-trust system by using role models to deliver new, authentic, and diversified information to the women.



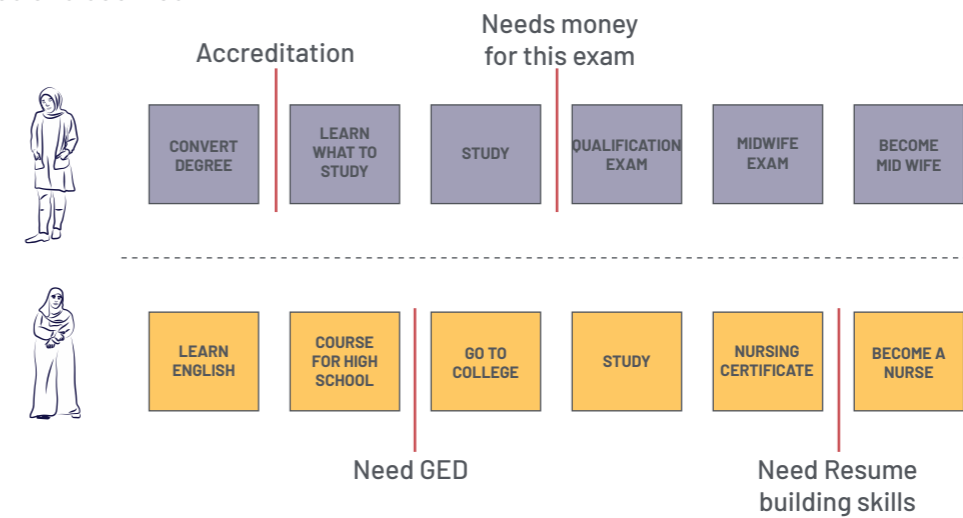
Shifa and Maryam have different motivations and abilities to commit to their career journeys.

Shifa and Maryam have different concerns such as raising their children, visa requirements, financial situations, and support systems. They need to have all the possible information about job requirements in order to pick their perfect unique path. Thus, the second insight was that because of their varying motivations and abilities of commit, they needed to be able to control their own learning journey.



Shifa and Maryam don't understand the complex bureaucratic process of getting a job in NYC.

We also learned that the women don't understand the complexity, document requirements, visa status, and financial documentation that are required by a heavily bureaucratic employment system in New York. They don't use the resources available to help them in such regards because of a lack of awareness. The lack of transparency around what's required to get a job leaves them feeling intimidated and daunted.



Our intervention must cater to the diverse needs in the community. They're all at different places in their journey, but we need to **design an experience where they can learn together.**

Design Elements

How do we create practical research-backed guidelines for the intervention?

INSIGHT 1

Shifa needs **information** while Maryam needs **inspiration**.

DESIGN ELEMENT 1

They need **inspiration and information**.

INSIGHT 2

Shifa and Maryam have different **motivations and abilities** to commit to their career journeys.

DESIGN ELEMENT 2

They need to be **drivers of their own path**.

INSIGHT 3

Shifa and Maryam rely on their community for information, but sometimes this means **that incorrect information spreads**.

DESIGN ELEMENT 3

They need role models with **diverse experiences**.

INSIGHT 4

Shifa and Maryam don't understand the complex **bureaucratic process** of getting a job in NYC.

DESIGN ELEMENT

They need a **transparent process that isn't oversimplified**.



Two: Design



CONCEPTING

40

- Ideating
- Concepting

PROTOTYPING

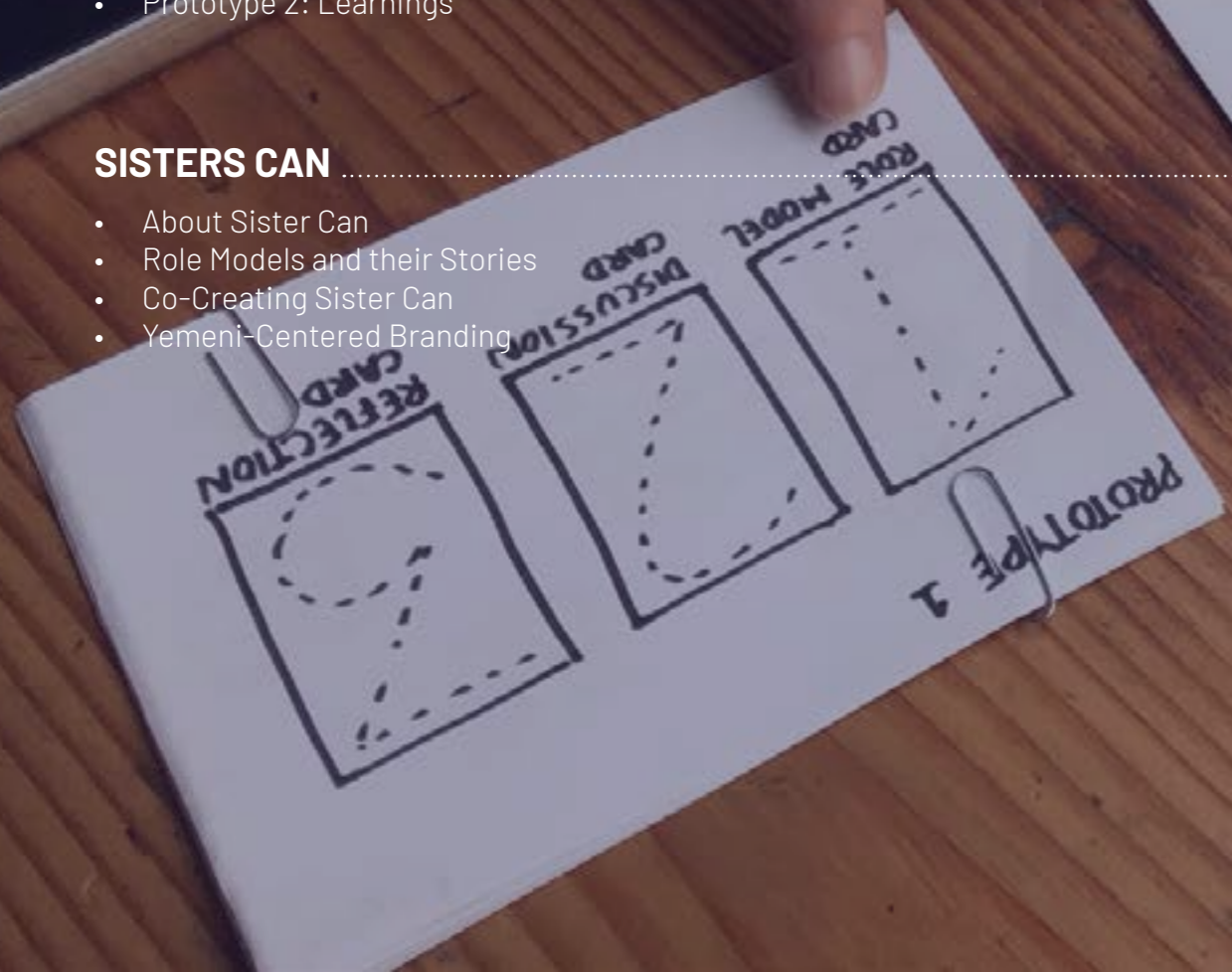
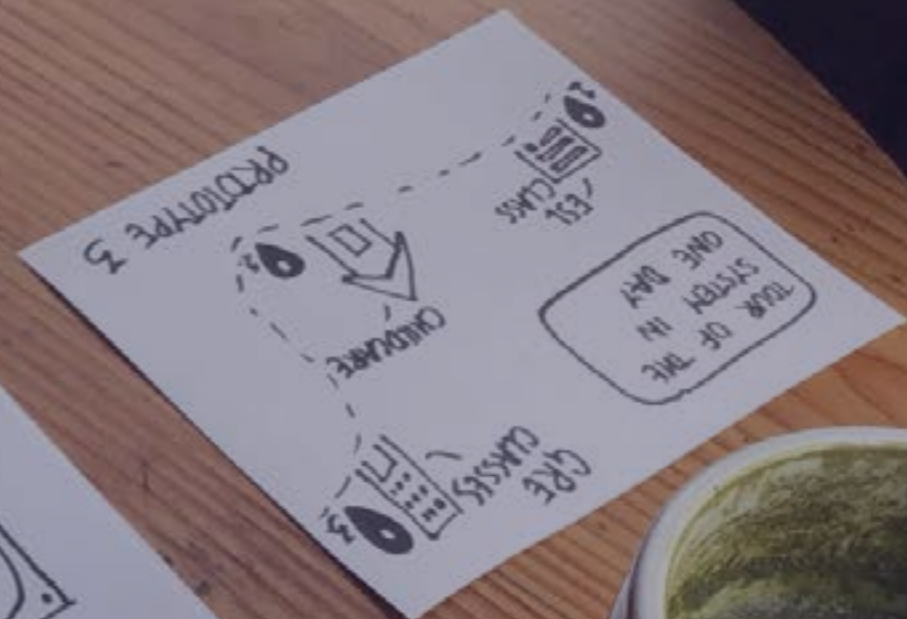
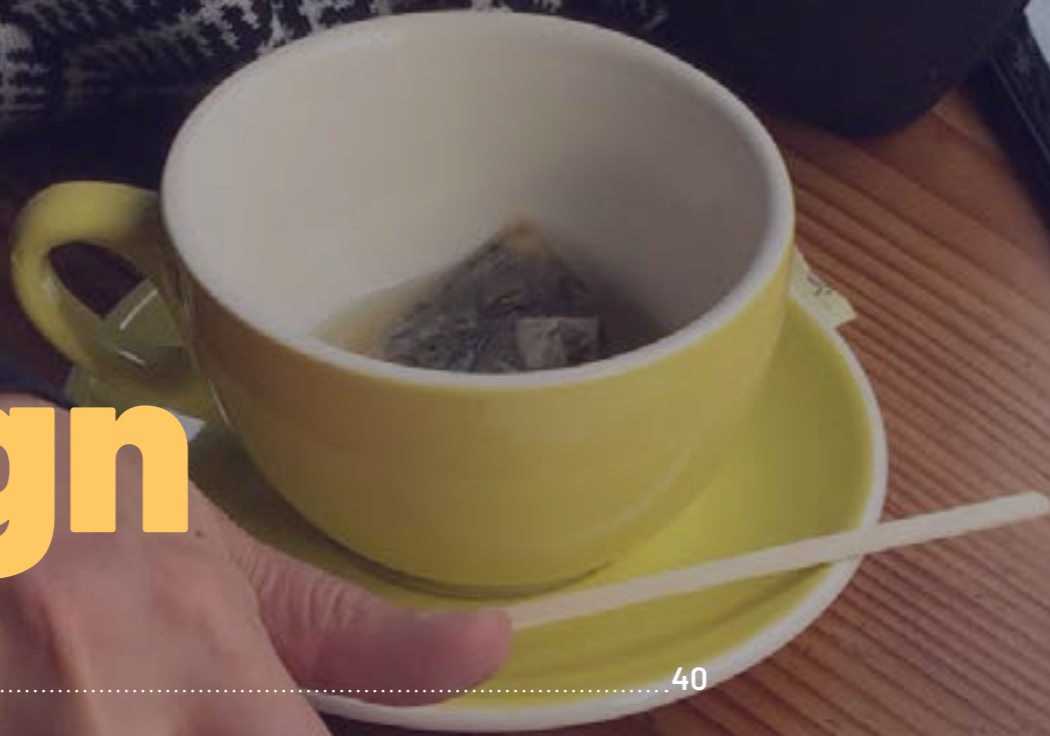
44

- Prototype 1: Linda's Journey
- Prototype 1: Learnings
- Prototype 2: Amiras's Journey
- Prototype 2: Learnings

SISTERS CAN

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- About Sister Can
- Role Models and their Stories
- Co-Creating Sister Can
- Yemeni-Centered Branding



Ideating

How do we involve the community in ideating solutions?
How do we give them tools for unrestricted and creative brainstorming?

We began doing participatory co-creation and envisioning possible intervention ideas. We held 8 mini design sprints with the Yemeni women in two locations in New York City - Bay Ridge and Bronx. We also conducted individual design sprints with community experts. Each design sprint comprised of four steps:

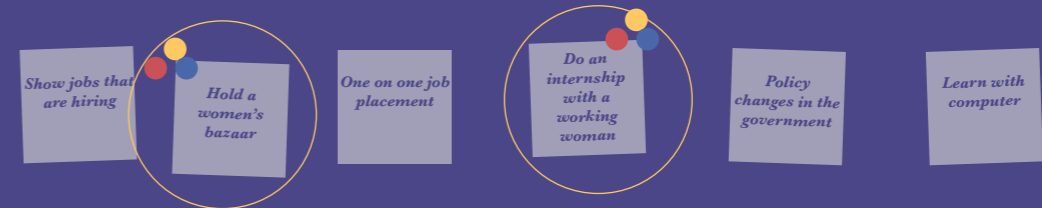
- **Warm Up:** We did a few warm-up exercises with the women to get their creative juices running.
- **Rapid Brainstorming:** We explained our research to the women, and asked them to list as many potential solution ideas to the problem as they could. We prioritized quantity over quality.
- **Crazy 6s:** We then asked the women to pick their favorite idea and think about six different ways of what that idea might look like - the most obvious way, a fun way, a difficult way, a creative way, and the most Yemeni way.
- **Storyboarding:** We asked the women to storyboard their favorite idea.

At the end of these design sprints, we obtained a total of 60 ideas. We sorted and clustered these ideas further into fewer concepts. Keeping our design elements in consideration and focusing on sustainability, we chose three concepts that we could start prototyping with.

NO HUMAN



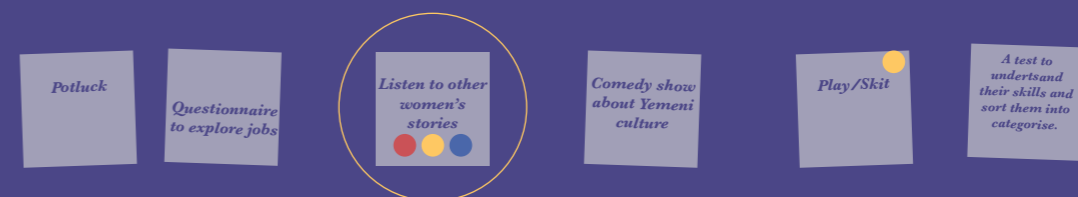
DIFFICULT



OBVIOUS



CREATIVE



FUN



YEMENI



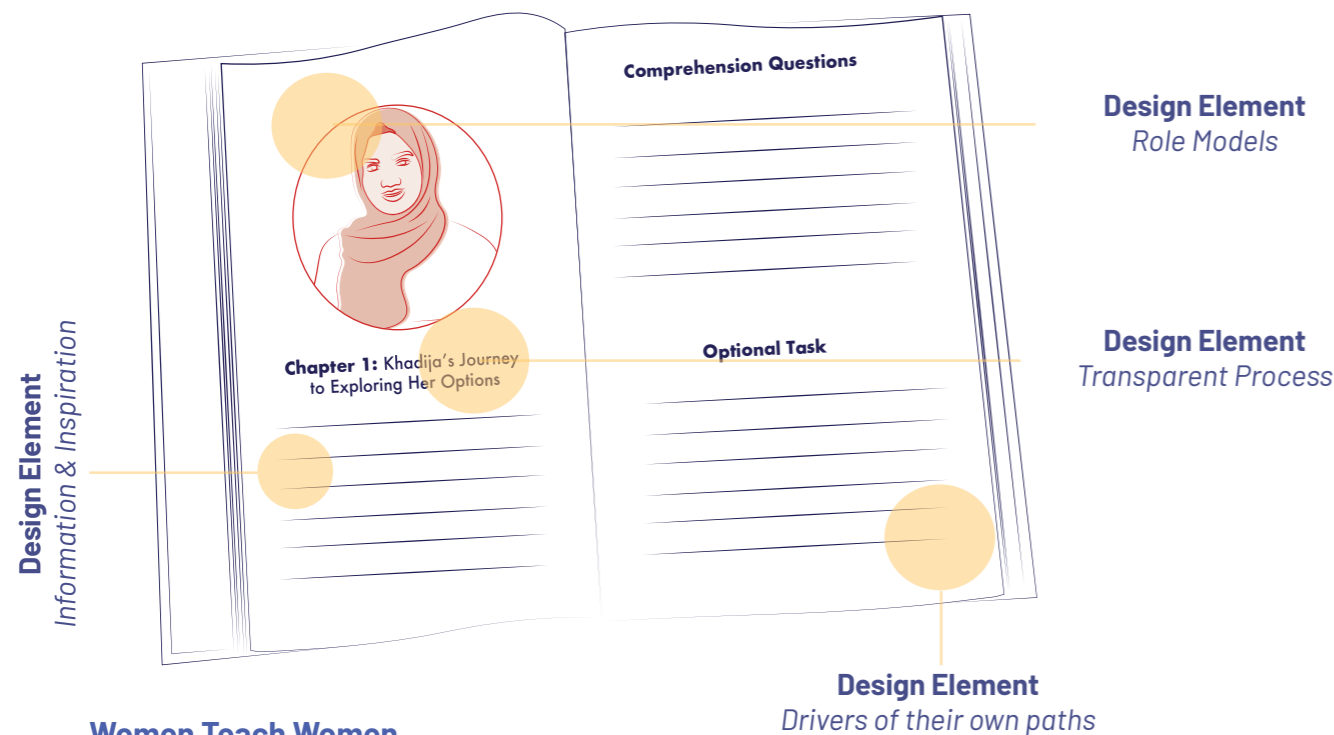
*These were just half the ideas we collected.



Concepting

What are all the different ways we can capture our design elements?

Our advisors as well as the YAMA stakeholders wanted us to create something that would inspire the women to take concrete steps such as signing up for GED classes, with regards to their paths. So we began to explore what could possibly inspire the women to take actions. We needed the prototypes to provide inspiration and information and allows women to control their own learning journey. They needed role models with diverse experiences, and a transparent process that didn't oversimplify a particular career journey.



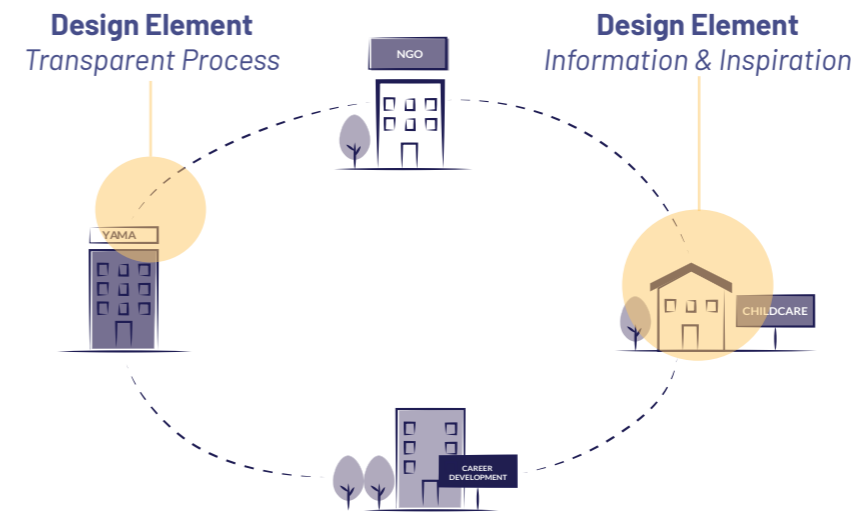
Women Teach Women

HYPOTHESIS: When women would get to learn within their classrooms from other women in the form of stories, it would help create crucial conversations in the community which would further help spread correct information on what it's like to get a job.

The Inspiration Exchange is an English learning book that showcases stories of Arab women's career journeys. Rooted in authenticity, the stories will show the challenges women faced and how they overcame them. It will be used in the YAMA's English classrooms, facilitated by English teachers, who are always welcome to more learning resources. Each chapter will have a story, some reflection questions, and an optional task that would help the women apply their knowledge to their own career journeys. Each class would also create space for the women to share ideas with each other on different challenges.

“Each idea is better than the last, but I love the story book idea.”

Dr Debbie, Co-Founder of YAMA



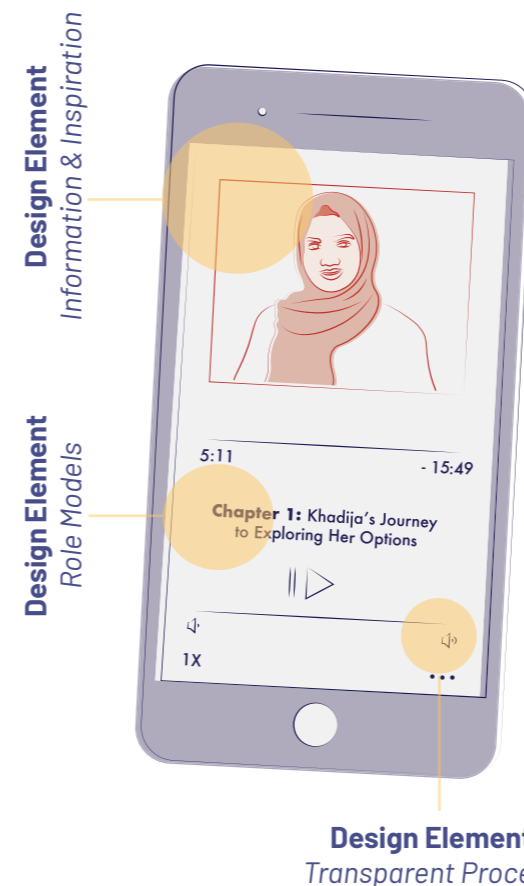
“The 2 concepts are a sequence of each other, they are building on each other, only once the women have inspiration they need to know who to go to.”

YAMA Director of Education

Tour of the System

HYPOTHESIS: If we show the women where they need to go to fulfill their dreams, it would help them get started in planning their steps to achieve them.

To get a job, women need to understand the whole system of finding employment, including logistics such as the location of services. We thought we could design a Field Trip Series which would allow the women to go on a trip as a group to various service locations around the city that they could use for specific career paths. There could be different field trips depending on different career goals like a doctor, a hairdresser, etc. that the women chose.



Inspiration Exchange

HYPOTHESIS: When women get to listen to other women's journeys, it helps them learn what it really takes to get a job, which in turn helps them plan their paths better.

We found that many of the women loved listening to various audio recordings and watching YouTube videos to learn new information. So our idea is to use a podcast channel to showcase the Arab women's career stories.

The process is simple. They download the podcast app, listen to the stories, and find links to different services in the description. It would also have guests from different NGOs who provide culturally relevant career services, so as to create a bridge between the women and the services.

We learnt early on that this idea might not be the most feasible because it would require us to educate the women more about the process. We realized that for our prototype to be sustainable, it must live within YAMA.



“She got a job in NYC by herself? MashAllah! That’s amazing. I’m also looking for a job.”

Brooklyn English Student

PROTOTYPE 1: Linda’s Journey

How do the women react to a role model story and brainstorming challenges?

Description

When we began with testing the role model stories, we started with a story of a role model who did not belong to the women’s community. In this prototype, we didn’t concentrate on any particular stage; we just wanted to see how women responded to role model stories.

The women read a story about a role model’s career and the challenges she faced. Then, we had another story as a challenge story for which the women would brainstorm solutions together to a particular challenge a character in that story faced. The women would then be asked to reflect on a similar challenge and how they would react to it themselves. Lastly, the women were asked to do an optional task as homework, for we wanted to see how many women would actually complete the assigned task.

Role Model Story

Brainstorming Challenge

Optional Homework

Feedback Form: How It Works

We wanted to measure the information acquisition through the comprehension questions, brainstorming activities, and reflection questions, evaluate the inspiration through measuring the response rate on the optional task.

We also had a feedback form which had different questions on their overall experiences - questions which would tell us what was going well and what could be better.



PROTOTYPE 1: Learnings

Insight 1

0% of the women considered reflecting as their favorite part of the experience, and only 22% of women were able to reflect. They did not get immediately used to self reflecting in this style, though they were open to it. The reflection piece should be designed to be comfortable, so that the women can be eased into exploring ways to help them reflect outside of writing.

Next Step

Define what ways would allow the women to self-reflect comfortably and creatively enough to gain deeper understandings and new ways of thinking.

Insight 2

44% of the woman wanted to know who helped the role model. They were drawn in by the story, the struggle and the challenges. They really wanted to know more about the role model's life, as well as the logistics and details of her success (for example, where did the role model get the money to start her business).

Next Step

Add more logistics and details (who helped her, where she went to get resources and support systems) of how the RMs found their success.

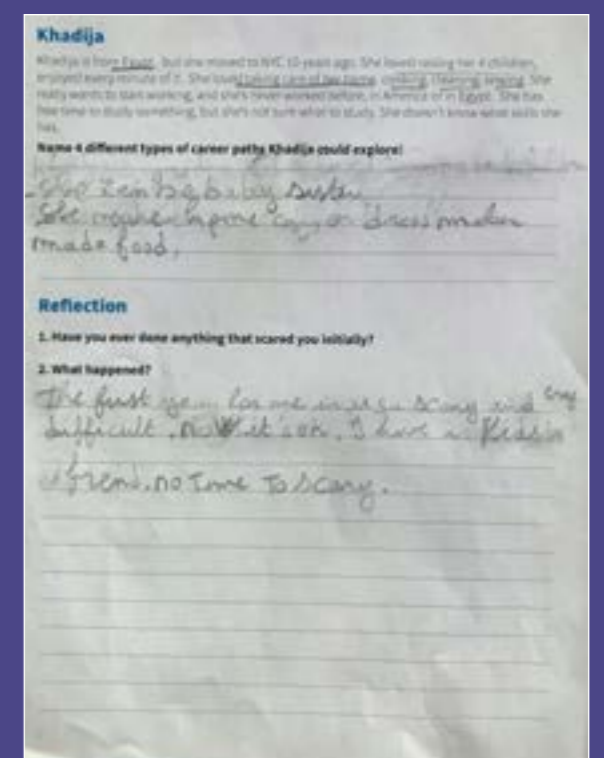
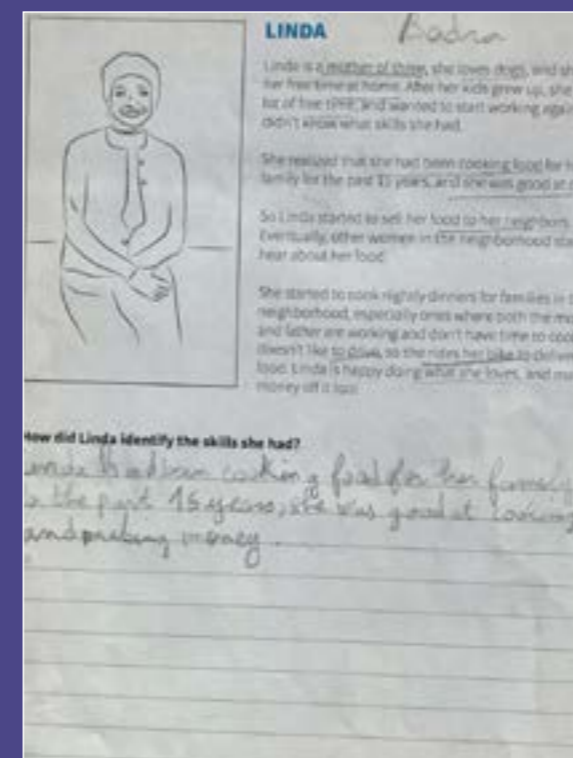
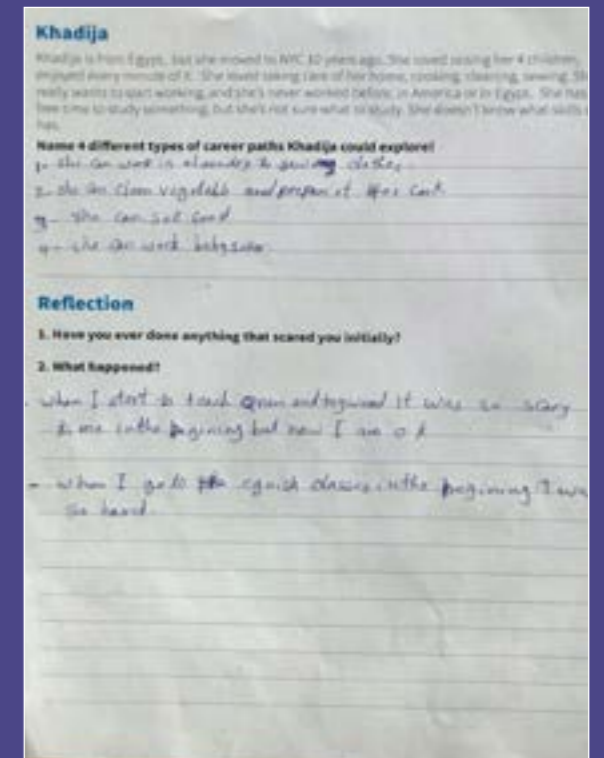
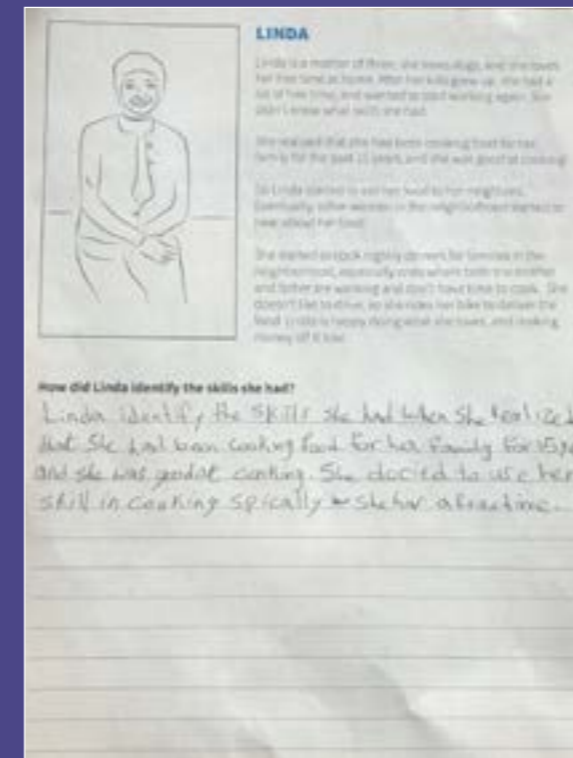
Insight 3

50% of the advanced students selected brainstorming with their sisters as their favorite part of the activity! The Women Teach Women mechanism worked to motivate, encourage, and inspire the women. They enjoyed working in pairs, and learning and discussing about fellow women's successes. This element of team work and communal success can be amplified throughout.

Next Step

Incorporate as many as possible ways to have them work in teams or be inspired by fellow women.

Student Work



PROTOTYPE 2: Learnings

Insight 1

80% of the women were able to complete their assigned optional homework task. This highlighted for us that the women were willing to take accountability of their own journeys. Many of their answers mentioned discussing things with family or children. Communal decisions and actions were important to them.

Next Step

Ensure that there are enough prompts to get the women to bring in their families into their planning journey.

Insight 2

75% of the women said that sharing with their sisters helped them reflect better. They did not get immediately used to self reflecting in this style, though they were open to it. The reflection piece should be designed to be comfortable, so as to ease the women into exploring ways to help them reflect outside of writing. Intense exercises like self-reflection were easier for the women to do in speaking activities rather than the writing activities, because writing was inhibiting her emotions.

Next Step

Provide spaces for reflection. This can be through writing, group discussion, class presentation activities.

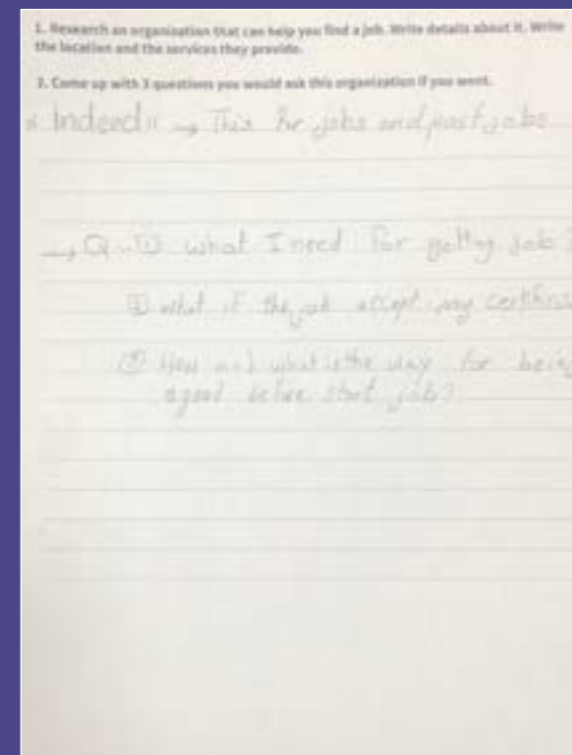
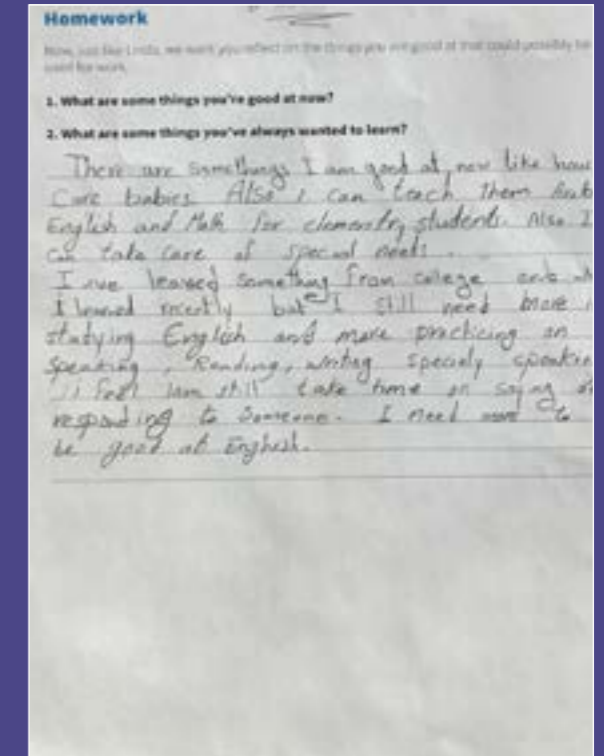
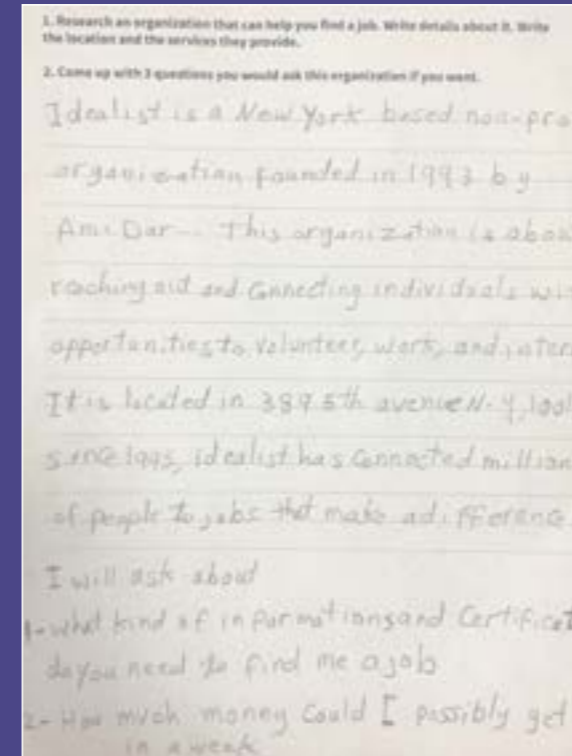
Insight 3

75% of the women rated reading as their favorite part of the activity! The mechanism of “women teach women” is working beautifully. The women get excited when they see other women succeeding. We are on the right track with respect to calling out the details, both in themes and steps of each path. But we also learnt that talking about the service provider and challenge in the same story was too much information at once for the women.

Next Step

In one class we should focus on only one story. For every challenge theme we are concentrating on, we need to ensure that we are doing two role model stories - one focusing on how a role model is able to tackle the challenge without an institution’s help and another that shows the same with an institution’s help.

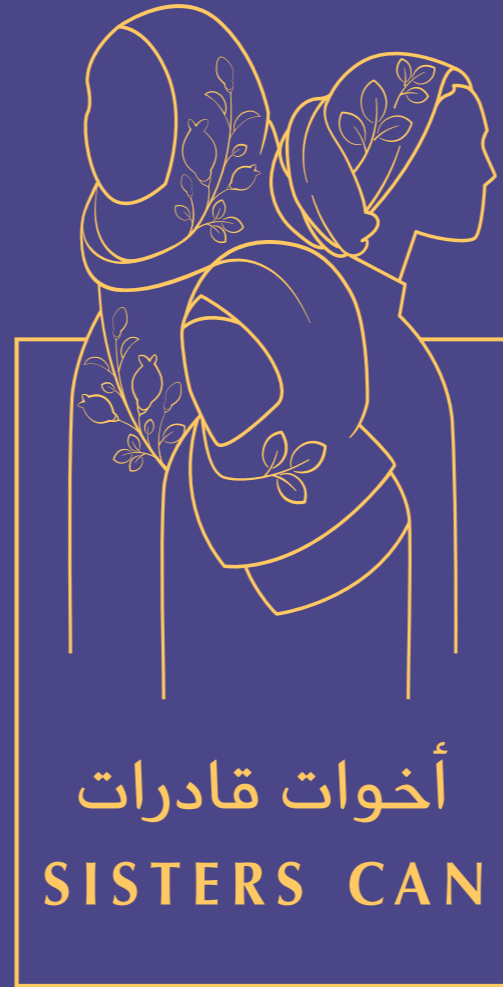
Student Responses to the Optional Homework



“I’m really good at taking care of children, I’d love to work in a preschool like Amira.”

Brooklyn English Student, age 28





*Sisters Can is a co-created English curriculum that gives Yemeni immigrant students information on their career paths with the **power of inspirational role-model storytelling.***



أخوات قادات
SISTERS CAN

We are all role models.

Let's learn about skill building together.

What does it take to follow your dreams?

How Huda opened the first hijabi friendly hair salon in NYC



Imagine a successful business owner working 12 hours a day, with one of the most well-known businesses in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. That business owner is Huda Dursi, a Yemeni-American high school graduate mother of three. Huda is an inspiring woman who worked hard to achieve her dreams of owning her own Muslim-friendly beauty salon.

Huda was born in Brooklyn, and wanted to work her whole life. She got married at 18, and started saving money for her first business from her wedding dowry. She was always creative, but she didn't always know what she was good at. She tried many different things, and failed! She had a t-shirt company, a soap brand, and even sold Islamic wall decorations online. Even though those businesses didn't succeed, they helped her learn a lot about how to be a businesswoman. She really loved makeup, and wanted to go to cosmetology school to learn to be a make-up artist.

"I used to tell myself I wanted to do hair and makeup professionally. He thought it was just a hobby or something for fun. I knew I was serious about it so I kept asking him if I could go to cosmetology school. He didn't let me go. I wanted it so bad that I didn't care what anybody told me. I knew I could do it. For some reason I never gave up. When my brother got married, I was so excited to keep practicing makeup on his wife! I practiced anytime I could. I found pictures of makeup online and did the same style on myself or my sister-in-law."

When Huda was 16, her family moved to Yemen for a few years. When she came back to New York, she hadn't graduated high school. So, she decided to get her GED.

Huda had her first child at 20, and took a few years to raise her. Whenever she had time, she would practice. When her kids were in elementary school, she started working with a makeup Benefit Cosmetics then got another job with MAC Cosmetics. She saved all her money for her dream for her future salon. She began to get a lot of clients, especially Muslim hijabi women who wanted her to style them for their weddings. Then, Huda knew it was time to get her cosmetology license so she could open her salon. So, she went to cosmetology school. When she graduated after a few years, she was ready to open her business!

Sisters Can

How does it work?

Sisters Can is an English language curriculum and career guidance tool. In the curriculum, there are stories of inspiring Muslim immigrant women who have overcome challenges in their career journeys. The different lessons break down the job process journey into a series of relatable steps and then helps guide women through each step. There are discussion questions for class discussions and planning tools that help women set achievable goals for their own careers.

What's the goal?

The goal is to empower women with the information and inspiration they need to be able to decide their own career paths. Sisters Can inspires informed conversations on the path to employment and education and helps women set reachable goals. Rather than provide them with a specific career path or an incubator, we're giving them the tools to independently choose what's best for their lives.

What's the strategy behind it?

Information

Yemeni immigrant women face an information gap because of their siloed communities, lack of time, and language barriers. They need to know details about the bureaucratic job finding system in the US, like visa requirements and resume formats.

Sisters Can brings the information resources they need directly to them.

Context

There's so much available career guidance information on the internet that it becomes overwhelming and distant.

Sisters Can delivers career guidance in a way that is familiar to them, which is intra-community storytelling. These conversations take place in their English classes in a Mosque, which is a safe learning space.

Inspiration

These women are often the first women in their families to enter the workforce, especially the American workforce.

Sisters Can provides Muslim immigrant role models to show representations of the possible, to help them fight self-stereotyping, and to show that they can overcome the barriers they are facing.

Women Helping Women

These Yemeni women are very communal, they love to help each other out. They often give each other advice, but our research showed a trend of incorrect information spreading through the community.

Through both the role model stories and the class discussions, **Sisters Can creates space for women to learn together.** They are brainstorming strategies to challenges, trading info and tips, and giving each other advice.

What does it include?

Stories

What does it take to follow your dreams?



How Huda opened the first hijabi friendly hair salon in NYC

Imagine a successful business owner working 12 hours a day, with one of the most well known businesses in New York City. That business owner is Huda Zahra, a Yemeni-American high school graduate mother of three, who is an inspiring woman who worked hard to achieve her dream of ownership over Muslim-friendly beauty salon.

Huda was born in Brooklyn, and wanted to work for herself. She got married at 16, and then traveling around for her first business from her wedding dress. She was always creative, but she didn't always know what she was good at. She made jewelry, she made things, and baked. She had a vision, a unique idea, and soon she started to sell her creations online. Even though these businesses didn't succeed, they helped her learn a lot about how to be a business owner. She really loved makeup, and wanted to go to cosmetology school to learn to be a makeup artist.

I used to tell myself I wanted to be a hair and makeup professional, but I thought I was just a hobby or something for fun. I knew I was serious about it as I kept asking myself if I could go to cosmetology school. He didn't let me go, I wanted to be a hair and makeup professional, but I didn't want to go to school. For some reason I never gave up. My brother got married, I was to be a bride, I had to do my own makeup for my wedding. I found pictures of makeup online and did the same style as myself as my sister-in-law.

When Huda was 36, her family moved to Yemen for a few years. When she came back to New York, she hadn't graduated high school. So, she started to get her GED.

Huda had her first child at 20, and had a few years to raise her. Whenever she had time, she would practice. When her kids were in elementary school, she started working with a makeup artist. Cosmetology class got started with MAC Cosmetics. She saved all her money for her dream for her future salon. She began to get a lot of clients, especially Muslim ladies who wanted to do their hair for their weddings. Then, Huda knew it was time to get her cosmetology license so she could open her salon. So, she went to cosmetology school. When she graduated after a few years, she was ready to open her business.

Index of NYC Resources

NYC Resources

English Resources

- **Highway to English:** online English language learning class
- **TEDEd:** YouTube channel that has inspiring videos from expert speakers on education, business, science, tech and creativity. They are fun videos that can be used for English practice.

Childcare

- **Dyker Heights Day Care:** Day care owned by Manal and her business partner, Seham. They offer daycare for young children. Manal is happy to give advice to any woman who is interested in opening their own daycare service. You can call the daycare at 347 459 xxxx

Planning

- **Upwardly Global:** strives to help immigrants & refugees succeed in professional careers in the USA, while connecting employers with diverse talent. (212) 219-8828
- **Brooklyn Adult Education Learning Center,** they have classes for TASC tests, computer literacy, nursing assistant classes. All for free (718) 638-2635

Extra

- Check out Nuha's Yemeni-inspired artwork! <https://www.instagram.com/omawosalkhair/>
- **LeJemalik:** Huda's beauty salon for hijabi ladies! All women are welcome, they provide a private salon with no men allowed. Huda also does makeup, waxing, nail, color, henna, and more! <https://www.lejemalik.com/>

Lesson Plans

DATE: 11th April, 2020

GOAL: SWBAT analyze the role model's journey of gaining confidence and apply learnings to how they can gain more confidence themselves.

OBJECTIVE:
 SWBAT get familiar with the word 'confidence' by making personal connections
 SWBAT identify how the role model gained confidence in her English and how that led to her professional success.
 SWBAT list ways to improve her English by brainstorming with a partner
 SWBAT strategize how they can gain more confidence in themselves.

MATERIALS:

- [Story](#)

AGENDA:

TIME	DETAILS	GROUP
10 minutes	Vocabulary	Whole Class
5 minutes	Warm Up	Whole Class
20 minutes	Story	Whole Class
20 minutes	Discussion Questions	Pairs
10 minutes	Whole class Reflection	Whole Class

TIME	DETAILS
VOCABULARY 10 minutes	Today we will be reading a story about confidence, but before we start let's learn some new words.

Goal Setting Activities

Planning Your Future: Week 1

Assessing self and identifying areas of strength and aptitude.

1. When looking for a job, it's good to think about the skills you already have. There may be parts of your life where you've learned something useful without even realizing it. Think about your hobbies, duties, and interests.

Hobby Example: I like doing henna for my friends	Duty Example: I take care of my kids	Interest Example: I've never learned to sew but always wanted to
Hobby 1:	Duty 1:	Interest 1:
Hobby 2:	Duty 2:	Interest 2:
Hobby 3:	Duty 3:	Interest 3:

2. Now that you've listed many skills and interests, which of these sounds most exciting to you? Which would you be most interested in doing as a job? Pick 3 skills, then think about why you are interested in each. If it's not on the list above, you can still add it.

Skill 1:	Skill 2:	Skill 3:
I'm interested in this because...	I'm interested in this because...	I'm interested in this because...



We need to democratize what it means to be a role model. We need to start **seeing role models through the eye of the beholder.**

Role Models and their Stories

How did we choose the role models?

We developed a strategy to determine who would be most effectively inspiring to these women. From reading "The Motivational Theory of Role Modeling: How Role Models Influence Role Aspirant's Goals" by Thekla Morgenroth, Michelle K. Ryan and Kim Peters, we identified three core traits.

Role models need to be:

Attainable

"It's key that role models are representations of the possible. Role models do not need to be outstanding to be effective. Many "ordinary Joes" can be role models to someone."

Relatable

"Similar role models help changing self-stereotyping and the perception of barriers, especially with underrepresented or stigmatized groups. They face specific challenges, such as lacking a sense of belonging, experiencing stereotype threat, or facing discrimination."

Diverse

"We do not believe in a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to role modeling. Role aspirants all have different goals, belong to different groups, and find different attributes desirable and attainable. We need to provide a range of diverse people—we need to start seeing role models through the eye of the beholder."

How is the curriculum organized?

There are 8 stories that feature an Arab Muslim woman in NYC and her authentic journey to having a career. Using our staircase framework, these role models guide the students through relatable challenges.



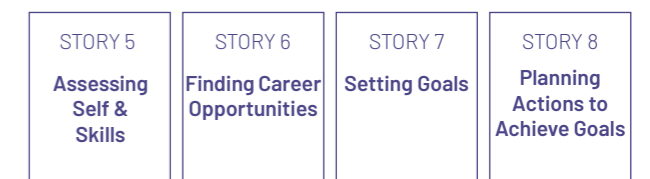
PART 1

Overcoming challenges to getting a job.



PART 2

Planning and setting goals for a career.



“I loved reading the story of how the role model, Khadija achieved her dreams. I dream of the same thing.”

English Student, Brooklyn

Khadija

Khadija is from Egypt, but she moved to NYC 10 years ago. She loved raising her 4 children, really wants to start working, and she's never worked before, in America or in Egypt. She has to start to study something, but she's not sure what to study. She doesn't know what skills she could explore!

Reflection

1. Have you ever done anything like this before?
2. What happened?

*Can get an Day care
Cooking is around it on her own
teacher assistant
my & work on line*

Co-Creating Sisters Can

Co-Creating for Equity, Ownership, and Sustainability

We believe that inclusivity builds quality, so we wanted to create a curriculum that represented not only our research but the perspectives of community members as well. This would allow for the community to feel more ownership of it, which would ensure the chances that the *Sisters Can* curriculum is used for years to come.

What Was Co-Created

- The role models we used
- The discussion questions for each chapter
- The institutions listed

Who We Co-Created With

- YAMA Director of Education
- YAMA Teachers
- Yemeni woman, entrepreneur and community leader
- Yemeni Teacher who works for NYC Department of Education

Key Learnings from YAMA Director of Education

- It's important to use this space to talk about daily discrimination the women might face in the workplace and work together to come up with solutions
- In the childcare step, the mom also needs to consider how she is currently preparing her child to be adjusted to a new routine
- Women should really consider what type of working environment they want. If they want to be an employee or an owner, if they want to work with men, how many hours they're comfortable with working, etc

Key Learnings from YAMA Teachers

- Women can do a role play each week where they act out like they are facing the same challenge the role model faced in the story. This way, they're practicing presenting to the class and internalizing the learnings.
- It's useful to have vocab words defined in Arabic as well as English

Key Learnings from Yemeni Entrepreneur

- She gave us lists of amazing contacts of women that could be our role models and also helped us link up with the Yemeni artist we hired
- All of the things they're learning, such as English or education in general should be framed from how it benefits her family life. When families see how education helps her help the family, they encourage it.

Key Learnings from Yemeni Teacher

- Provided list of culturally sensitive childcare agencies
- Helped us adjust the discussion questions to make them both thought provoking and culturally appropriate

Facilitating a Co-Creation Session

To ensure that we created space for every part of the curriculum to be co-created, we used the power of Post-Its! We created a grid of the curriculum including the **chapter topics, discussion questions, and the institution needed.**



Yemeni-Centered Branding

Community-Empowered Branding

Our visual goal was that *Sisters Can* looks like it really came from the Yemeni community, and we also wanted to support Arab designers. We hired Arab designers to do the branding and artwork.

Amwaj Alzahrani

Sisters Can Role: Logo Designer
Social Designer and Graphic Designer
Saudi Arabian

Ala'a Al Zubiriy

Sisters Can Role: Portrait Designer
Artist
Yemeni

The Name

The name is a combination inspirational and culture. In Arabic, it's common to call your female friends "sisters" in Arabic, and we wanted to mirror this camaraderie. We also wanted to leave it somewhat open, we didn't define any specific dream or goal in the name because the program is about facilitating women to live the lives that they want.

The Logo

Our designer Amwaj, did a beautiful job creating a logo that is simultaneously feminine and strong.

The logo shows women breaking through a box, symbolizing the challenges they are surpassing. They are at different heights which indicates the different place they are in their journeys. They also have diverse hijab styles to show the diversity of the Yemeni community.



Yemeni Color Scheme

We created a color scheme that was inspired by the beautifully intricate traditional clothing of Yemen and the warm yellow buildings in the cities.



Portraits of Role Models to Accompany Stories



Huda Quhshi
Owner of Le'Jemalik
Beauty Salon



Ashia
Investment Banker



Dr. Debbie Almontaser
Co-Founder of YAMA



Yasmeen
Software Engineer



Menal and Seham
Daycare Owners



Nuha
Craft Artist



Sahar
Painter



Eman
Aspiring Professional
Baker



Three:

Deliver



PROXY INTERVENTION 68

- Social Design and Social Distancing
- Proxy Implementation
- Outcomes
- Theory of Change

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE 78

- Values and Scaling

CLOSING THOUGHTS 80

- Thanks



The pandemic showed us how inequitable our society is. We need to **master the practice of virtual gathering to create social impact.**

Social Design and Social Distancing

*How do we make this work still relevant and impactful?
How do we continue to collaborate and co-create?*

And after all of the work we had done, then came the pandemic.

With the strangeness of The Great Pause, we shifted our strategies and re-aligned our goals. Our intervention was to be held in English classrooms in the Bronx and Bay Ridge, and those classes were completely moved to online.

We are now entering the world of virtual gathering. How do we design for it?

Social Impact Design is More Needed than Ever

The pandemic shifted provided a lot of clarity on how inequitable our culture is, and shown the need for programs that help marginalized groups. Specifically in this pandemic era gathering, accessing information, and entering the workforce have all become much more difficult for everyone and especially for already marginalized groups like Yemeni immigrant women. The *Sisters Can* program helps with all of those challenges even as a virtual course.

Furthermore, now more than ever the community needs to build their social capital, and the women need strategic plans for how they will enter a struggling job market. Even while the pandemic is increasing in isolation and prohibiting information exchange, *Sisters Can* creates a space for women to learn from each other, set informed goals, and work together.

Learnings from the Social Distancing Era

1. Communities can adjust to new circumstances, never assume that they can't.

When the pandemic first hit, we were sure that there was no way that our Yemeni community would be interested in online courses, and we completely gave up. We were both excited and embarrassed at our own judgements when we learned three weeks later that the women had continued their classes online- even with high attendance!

2. Online experiences are similar to in-person ones, but they're not the same. Design for that difference.

As the world scrambled to move online, we noticed that it's crucial to make sure you're designing a new experience, rather than trying to copy what the old one would have been. We adjusted our plans to encourage more discussion and less presentation, and moved personal reflection time in the homework activities.

3. Adjust your expectations, don't lower them.

We were so excited (and a bit surprised) to see that women in our proxy intervention showed up to our online class excited and motivated to learn. We adjusted our measurements of success so they made sense for an online environment, and brainstormed how we could leverage the situation.



Proxy Intervention

*How do we adjust our measurement goals for an online course?
How do we ensure that women are still able to work together and learn from each other?*

Facing Our Biases in the Move to Online Learning

The Yemeni community is a less tech-savvy group and we didn't know their comfortabilities or limitations. We initially (wrongly) assumed that they wouldn't be able to attend online classes at all, but as the whole world adjusted, so did our community. They showed up in impressive numbers to the online English classes. They were excited, driven, and present in class. It was really special to see such a bonding moment in a time of separation, and a huge learning for us on our own biases.

The Process of Adjusting for an Online Intervention

Pre-Pandemic Goal

Women develop an **entire plan** for how they will achieve their career goals.

Post-Pandemic Goal

Women should develop a **series of small goals** that can help them towards their career goal.

Step 1: Adjust measurement goals

- The very first thing we did was adjust our expectations and measurements of success. We made sure they were achievable for the circumstance, and still required the women to learn,

Step 2: Adjust Interactive Elements

- Our initial lesson plans included a whole section on presenting to the class because this helped the women with public speaking skills. In an online course where students often have shorten attention spans, this didn't work as well. Furthermore, people were really craving social interaction. So, we encouraged more free group discussion on the stories.

Step 3: Co-design a lesson with YAMA teachers

- Our YAMA teachers were doing a beautiful job at teaching online. We ran them through an entire lesson plan including the presentation deck.
- This helped us get feedback and also gave the teacher a chance to get clarity on the lessons


Online Measurement Documentation

Time	Data Points	Data collection	Things you heard/insights/etc
PRE CLASS	How many women showed up?	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women immediately remembered "last week we talked about Ashwaq from Baghdad"
DURING CLASS WARM UP	How many women attempted to answer the question "When have you shown perseverance?"	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "When I came here I lookd for English schools and it was so hard. But now alhamdulillah I found and it is easy."
	How many women were able to correctly answer the question "When have you shown perseverance in learning English?"	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have to learn the language for your kids, schools, hospitals. It takes time from your families. It requires a lot of practice.
READING	What were the words that women did not understand while reading the story?	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture Communal Strives Create Insulted specifically Immigrant <p>Questions Sara asked students to summarize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was Minnesota different from Virginia? How did Ilhan persevere? Why was it hard for Ilhan? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They answered: because she was strange to them and different. What does hope mean?
	Any thought/changes about the story that you felt should have been added?		•
	How much time did it take to do the reading?	20 minutes	
COMPREHENSION	Were the women able to say at least 2 of the following:	•	
FEEDBACK	What were the women's responses to:	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep going until you achieve your dream.

Class in Action

What were the **challenges** that Menal faced once she decided she wanted to open a childcare service? Name 2.

- How did Menal show **resilience** in overcoming these challenges?





Outcomes

Students

The following outcomes are tied to the outcomes we previously mentioned in our theory of change.

The women we worked with have daily commitments that often restrict their learning times. Some of them are not the most proficient with technology for online learning. Above all, all the women were mothers, and thus had lives to attend to outside these classes. Yet, over the 3 weeks of our online intervention, **we had almost 25 women participate!**

The willingness of the women to assume the responsibility for their own journeys was highlighted when **67% of the women successfully completed their homework task**. This also made it clear that the women concretely recognized a hard skill that would initiate their career journeys

62% of the women were able to set and articulate clear goals for themselves, which demonstrates their sense of possibility and hope for their career journeys.

An additional outcome we hoped for was for the women to exchange ideas with each other about working within the community. When we provided the women with a situation related to having a difficult conversation with their husbands, we were awestruck by the quality of the dialogue that took place. We witnessed passionate agreements, disagreements and elaborate conversations about topics that are often not spoken about much by the women.

“This woman is a from a country that has war just like mine. From this story I learned that when you need something, you should work more to get it.”

English Student, age 33, Bronx

“I’ll try to depend on myself all the time so I can be more confident with help. I have to keep working until I achieve my aim.”

English Student, age 40, Brooklyn

“I learned to keep working hard for my dream. She accomplished her dream even after kids and marriage. I have to conquer my fear and not depend on others all the time.”

English Student, age 32, Brooklyn

Teachers

The teachers were remarkable enthusiastic to teach the curriculum.

They took accountability for the curriculum by personalizing it for their classroom needs so as to push the women’s thinking.

The teachers were eager to extend the intervention. They assured us that they were comfortable using the curriculum by themselves, and would implement it other upcoming classes too.

YAMA

Throughout our project, YAMA has been excited at how accurate and representative they feel our research is. Since they learned our research of how many Yemeni women want to work, they’ve increased their career guidance programming. They held a workshop with a career guidance NGO and are hoping to open their own career guidance department and GED classes.

Sisters Can provides a great bridge between their English program and their future career guidance department.

Sisters Can is now a core part of YAMA’s ESL curriculum, and they are using our thesis video as a tool to recruit more women to the course!

“I like these stories because they are so realistic. The students are not used to reading this stuff. These stories hit home. If you have more stories on Muslim women it can give the students courage.”

YAMA English Teacher, Bronx

“I love this idea, this is exactly what the women need. You have addressed alot of questions that women have.”

YAMA English Teacher, Bronx

“Sisters Can will be implemented in English classes next year, inshAllah. Its going to be a very rewarding program and we are grateful to have sister Alisha and Elana. We want to applaud everyone because this project shows the power of a community working together and understanding each other.”

Director of Education, YAMA



Student's Goal Setting Responses

I want to Learn English and speak with it very well because I want to have a good job. I will achieve my goal by next year to achieve this goal, I will try to practice more by attend English class, Also practicing by watching news, Also watching movies. I will work on it two or three times week. I will know I have achieved the goal, when I feel very Confident to talk to anyone. Also when I have a good job.

Skill Building: ^{date: 29/4,} class 3
I want to learn English because so I could help my t and help my self out will achieve my goal by I will achieve my goal by one to achieve this goal, I will to act my goal will study English, I study one day in a week month (circle one). I will know I achieve achieved the goal when I can help my kids with their homework.

Skill 1:
I like to study.
I'm interested in this because, I love the education.
Skill 2:
I have to care my family.
because, this is important to me.

I want to be a translator because I can help myself and my children outside the home.
I will achieve my goal by May 2022 to achieve this goal. I will ask my friend and my family to teach me once time day. I will know I have achieved the goal when I can learn English.

Read
I want to learn how to read and write in English because I want to help myself and my children in school and home.
I will achieve my goal by September 2020.
To achieve this goal, I will let my children to teach me. I will work one hour a day to learn.
I will know I have achieved the goal when go pick up my children and I understand what the teacher is saying about my child.



Theory of Change

Overall Goal

Improve the ability of Yemeni immigrant women to plan their career journeys and to be agents of information in their communities.

Sisters Can achieves this goal by...

Providing relatable role models so that...

- Sisters can fight self-stereotyping and see representations of the possible
- Sisters can learn strategies for overcoming similar challenges

Providing information on the career process so that...

- Sisters can make informed decisions on what their goals should be
- Sisters can manage and maintain their paths independently
- Sisters can give information to a friend or relative who needs it, being an agent of information

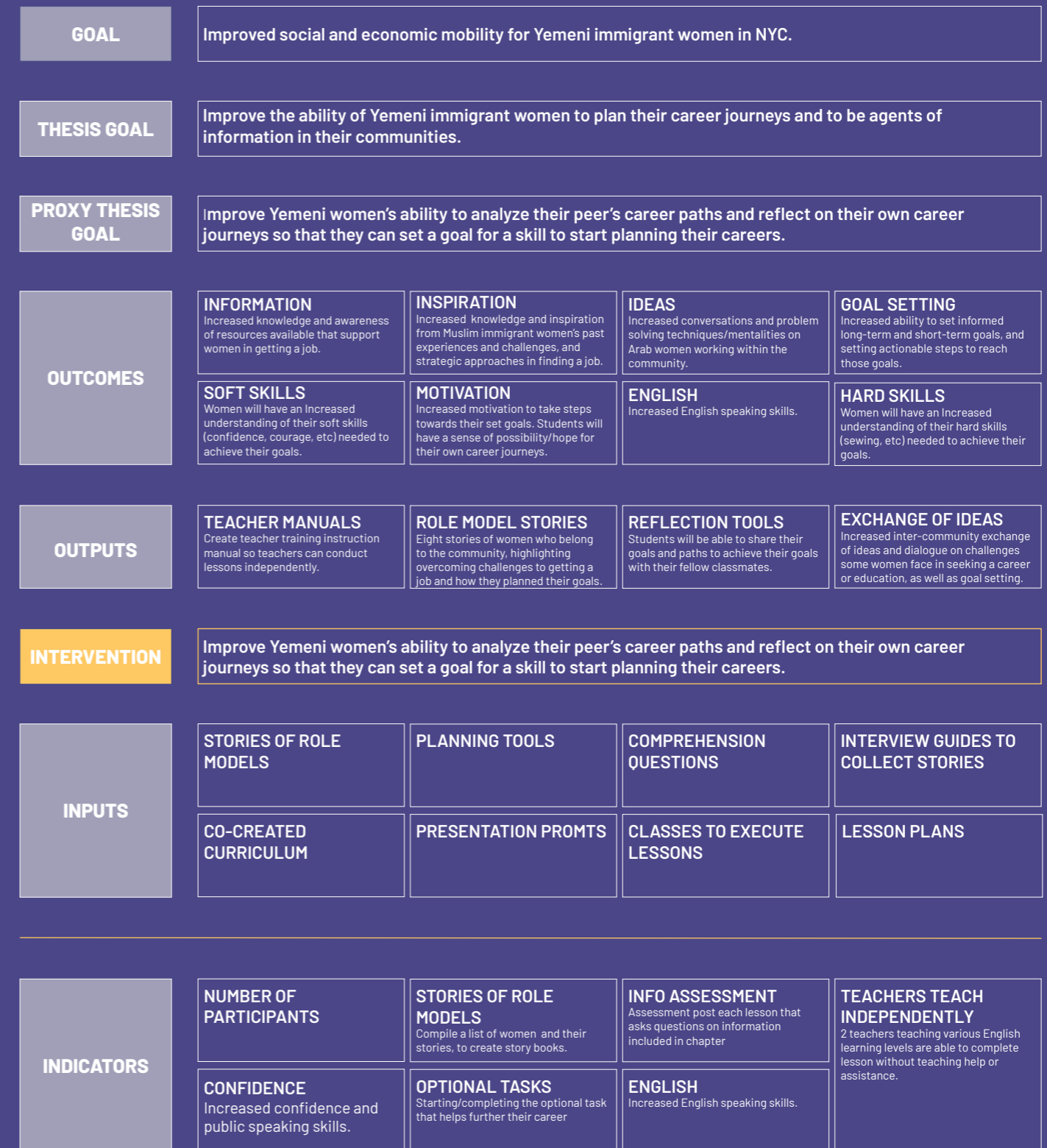
Creating a safe space for conversation on the value of a woman's career and education so that...

- Sisters can think about what their dreams and wants are, separate from other responsibilities
- Sisters can trade ideas, strategies, and bounce ideas off of each other
- Sisters can increase their social capital by learning about the goals of resources of their fellow sisters

Providing a goal setting and planning activities so that...

- Sisters can take the time to determine what goals are most fitting for their current lifestyles
- Sisters can create a career plan to stay on track and create self-accountability
- Sisters can develop their independence and self-efficacy in managing their path

Sisters Can exists so that...Yemeni immigrant women have everything they need so that they can take their career paths into their own hands.



The art of scaling is about growing while *maintaining your core values.*

Scaling with Values

Sisters Can is now part of YAMA's Core English Curriculum

We created this product with a goal of long-term sustainability, so we are honored that *Sisters Can* is now part of YAMA's core English teaching curriculum. They are using our thesis video as a recruitment tool to bring in more students.

Exploring the Possibility of Using *Sisters Can* in Other Communities

We are interested at the idea of other NYC Arab/Muslim centered NGOs or English institutions to feature these stories. Elana has worked with Arab refugees in Istanbul and Greece and would love to implement this project abroad.

While thinking about scaling, we want to stay true to the project's core mechanics of intra-community storytelling and information exchange.

In scaling, we would we want to honor the diversity of experiences within the Arab and Muslim immigrant women, and co-create a new set of stories with a few things in mind.

1. What the barriers to social and economic mobility are
2. What type of information they would need in their specific situations
3. Identifying role models who are attainable, relatable, and diverse

We definitely don't believe that one size fits all. So, to scale with intent, we would want to keep the core aspect of this project which is that it is tailored to the needs of Yemeni immigrant women in NYC.

As we were reflecting on this project, we remembered some advice that a mentor once told us.

"True innovation is born from specificity."

IDEO.org Designer

In the end, project is strong because it uses those tools in a Yemeni-specific context, everything was co-created with the community.

For now it belongs to the NYC Yemeni community and it was an honor for us to tell their story.



Thanks

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YAMA, Dr. Debbie, and the Yemeni Community

Thank you to YAMA for working so hard to help the Yemeni community, for being flexible as we embarked on this design process, and for creating so many inspiring spaces for women's empowerment.

Thank you to Dr. Debbie who is the ultimate role model- and our role model too!

Thank you to the Yemeni women of NYC who were so generous with their time, contacts, and creative ideas

Abeer

Thank you for being a super woman! This project would not be possible without Abeer who connected us with every person, every institution, and guided us in every big decision. Your hard work does not go unappreciated.

Mari

Thank you for listening to our frustrations, being generous with your expertise on design, guiding us in the difficult moments, and for being a friend as well as an advisor.

Aditi, Abhinav, Danielle S, & Sena

Thank you for the proofreads, the design edits, the word adjustments, the late nights, and for being a shoulder to lean on.

Amwaj & Ala'a

Thank you for listening to our vision and our mission and transforming it into a visual language that represents the community.

Our Families

Thanks for supporting us and our own personal educational journeys. Thanks for helping us in the hard moments and reminding us of our core goals.





MFA Design for Social Innovation Thesis
School of Visual Arts, NYC
May 2020