

Not Enough:

Voices of Second-Generation Asian American Immigrants

An Exhibit hosted by the Samuel E. Kelly Ethnic Cultural Center

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— Exhibit Introduction —

Title: Not Enough: Voices of Second-Generation Asian American Immigrants

Concept:

A Thesis Project for the University of Washington Museology Graduate Program in the form of a physical exhibit focusing on the stories and life experiences of Asian American Second-Generation Immigrants, created in collaboration with the local University of Washington student community.

Host Site: Samuel E. Kelly Ethnic Cultural Center

Run Time: May 20th - June 4th, 2024

Curator Bio:

Not Enough: Voices of Asian American Second-Generation Immigrants is Erika Krause's Graduate Thesis Project. Erika is a Korean American Second-Generation Immigrant studying Museology (Museum Studies) here at the University of Washington. Erika has been involved in the local Asian American community for many years. It was this intimate connection to the community that drove her to choose this topic for her thesis. Erika understands firsthand the challenges of straddling multiple identities & the importance of cultural representation. She hopes to use this exhibit as a platform to amplify the voices of this community & educate others on the unique experiences of this community.

Exhibit Theme & Narrative

Exhibit Theme:

The overarching theme of the exhibit focuses on the feeling of not being American enough or Asian enough. This narrative is told through first-hand accounts from local community members within the University of Washington student body. These community members have shared a story or concept that has made them feel “not enough”, and provided an object to represent that experience. These stories have been split into four general themes that naturally emerged through conversations with community members. These themes are Food, Family, Language, and Appearance.

Curatorial Statement:

Being stuck in-between, teetering back and forth, being pulled in two different directions, these feelings are a part of everyday life for Asian American second-generation immigrants. Constantly being treated as an outsider, it is common for this community to feel that they are not enough - not American enough, not Asian enough.

Second-generation immigrants are individuals born and raised in a country different from one or both of their parents. *Not Enough: Voices of Second-Generation Asian American Immigrants* attempts to tell the stories of this community through firsthand accounts, encapsulating the ever-present struggles of navigating two cultures and the profound sense of belonging that emerges through their intersectionality.

This exhibit was developed in collaboration with twelve local Asian American second-generation immigrants who generously provided the objects & stories featured in this exhibit. Within these stories, four central themes—food, language, family, and appearance—serve as conduits through which the complexities of identity are explored.

At its core, *Not Enough* is a celebration of resilience and diversity - a testament to the richness that emerges at the intersection of cultures. This exhibition seeks to elevate the voices of second-generation immigrants, allowing for connection and recognition. While the struggle for belonging is real, so too is the agency with which we carve out our own spaces and cultivate our own cultures.

Themes & Theme Texts

Food

Food is a universal language that connects and comforts individuals across cultural boundaries. For second-generation immigrants, who often feel isolated from their culture, food serves as a conduit for embracing and preserving cultural identity. However, food is not always a connecting force. Many have dealt with bullying and racism due to cultural food, often resulting in self-consciousness or resentment. Despite facing such obstacles, many embrace their cultural food as they get older. From learning to cook traditional dishes to sharing meals with family, second-generation immigrants often use food to strengthen ties, reinforce cultural pride, and share their culture with others.

Language

It is a common misconception that English is always a second language for Asian Americans, despite the range of fluency within this community. Whether fluent in many or only English, language comes with its own challenges. For some, translating for family can be a burden. Others struggle to talk with family or connect with their culture due to a language barrier. Regardless of the challenge, the othering that language brings to this community is universal. Not knowing a language makes it clear that you are an outsider. While speaking many languages requires code-switching - having to shift from one language to another based on the social setting. This makes belonging a conscious task, rather than a natural feeling. Ultimately, language can connect or alienate many second-generation immigrants.

Family

For many Asian second-generation immigrants, family can be a difficult and emotional topic. Language and geographic barriers often make people feel detached from their family and culture. This lack of a family support system can amplify feelings of isolation and cultural disconnect. For some, the presence of an immigrant parent(s) also introduces challenges. The cultural differences between generations can lead to misunderstandings and damaged relationships. However, these bonds often heal with time, as people forge lasting relationships with those who share lived experiences. Whether these bonds are with blood relatives or found family, they represent the importance of connection.

Appearance

Appearance is the most obvious intersection of cultures for Asian second-generation immigrants. Being visually between two cultures, individuals encounter misconceptions and stereotypes from both sides. Many generalize a person's appearance, assuming a singular Asian identity or experience. Others might question one's cultural authenticity if their appearance differs too much from the visual stereotype of "Asian". The lack of representation worsens these challenges. It limits the visibility of diverse Asian identities and appearances. However, in recent years these issues have become less common, with an increase in diverse representation and recognition. Asian second-generation immigrants are reclaiming pride over their appearance with their intersectionality of cultural identity.

Visual Theme

Fonts:

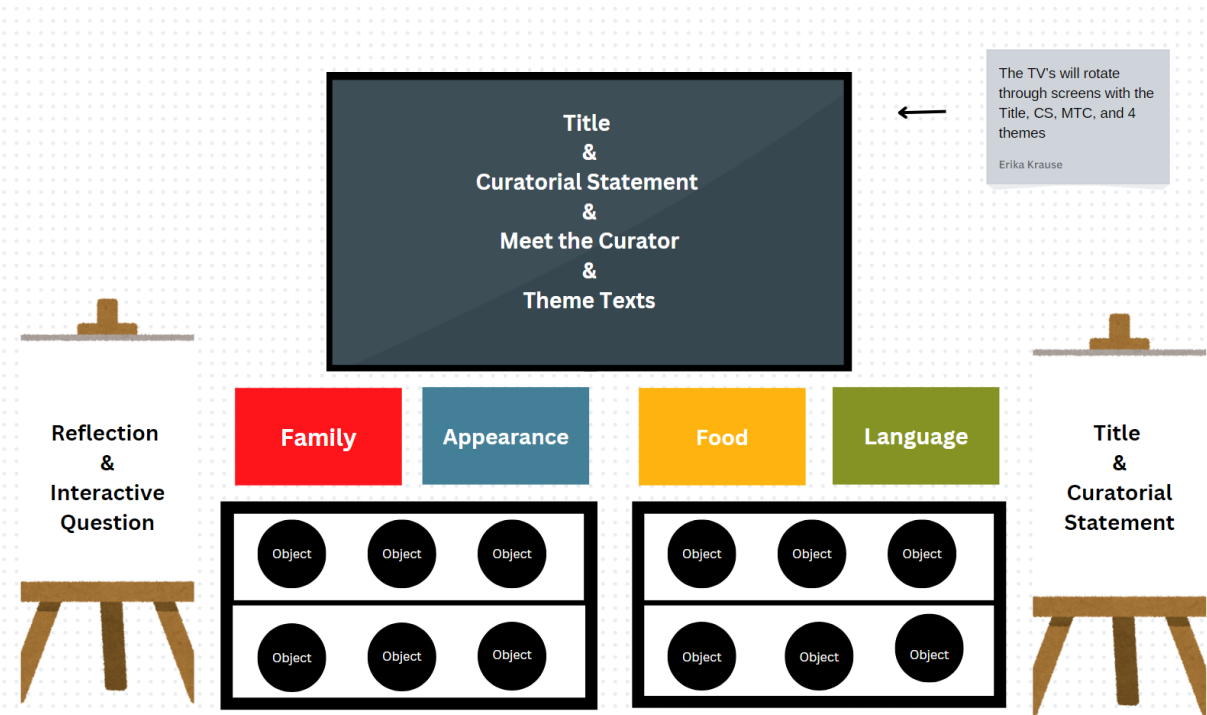
- *Merienda* = Main headings
- Krub = General text
- **Dokdo** and *Gaegu* = Food theme headings and text
- *Yomogi* = Language theme texts
- **Gochi Hand** = Family theme texts
- *Courgette* = Appearance theme texts

Colors:

- **Food = Orange (Hex Code: #ffb30f)**
- **Language = Green (Hex Code: #849324)**
- **Family = Red (Hex Code: #fd151b)**
- **Appearance = Blue (Hex Code: #437f97)**

Exhibit Layout

- TV screens rotate every few minutes between the title, curatorial statement, curator bio, and four theme texts
- Easels on each side of the display cases
 - Right side: title & curatorial statement
 - Left side: reflection question & interactive
- Two glass display cases for the objects, divided by the four themes



Interactive Element

The easel on the left side of the display cases will have a reflection question & a QR code linking to a Google form that visitors can use to submit their answers. Answers will be pulled from the Google form and displayed on the board periodically to allow for moderating. At installation, quotes from community members will be displayed to start the interactive with answers.

Reflection Question: "How has your own experience with navigating multiple cultures (whether ethically or otherwise) influenced your understanding of identity and belonging?"

Google Form: <https://forms.gle/AWPWXq1TXyowAyt57>



Object List

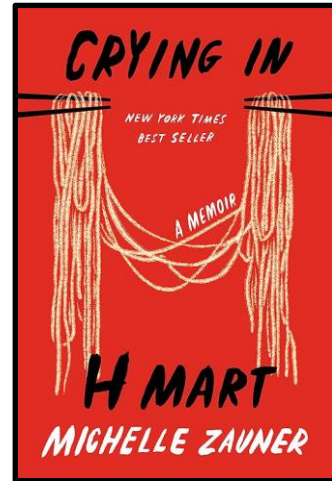
Object 1:

***Crying in Hmart* by Michelle Zauner**

Book, 2022

Community Member: Sam Kim

Theme: Family



Object 2:

Lorry Plush

Plush Toy of Lotte World Mascot

Community Member: Anonymous

Theme: Family



Object 3:

Pet Rocks

From the film *Everything Everywhere All At Once*, 2022

Community Member: Anonymous

Theme: Family



Object 4:

Training Chopsticks

Place Setting with Training Chopsticks

Community Member: Wen Zhang

Theme: Food



Object 5:

Food & Snacks

Asian & American Snacks

Community Member: Madelyn Yeh

Theme: Food



Object 6:

Park's Family Food Menu

Mock Menu with Food Names Used by the Park Family

Community Member: Heather Park

Theme: Food



Object 7:

Duolingo Trophy

Proof of Completion of Chinese Module, 2024

Community Member: Steven Wang

Theme: Language



Object 8:

Quotes

Quotes from the FamilyMart Podcast, 2024

Community Member: Aviel L.

Theme: Language

"Not Phillipino enough
for the Philipinos, not
American enough for
the Americans"

"You sit on this center
line and have to
bounce back and
forth to figure out who
you are more of" **

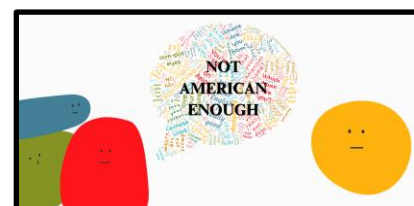
Object 9:

The Things We Hear

Art Piece, 2024

Community Member: Anonymous

Theme: Language



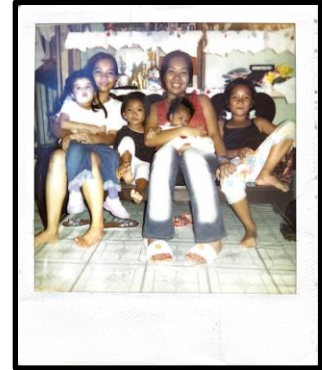
Object 10:

Polaroid Photos

Photos of Criscia and her Family in the Philippines, 2003

Community Member: Criscia Rinaldi

Theme: Appearance



Object 11:

Kokeshi Doll

Japanese Wooden Doll, 1994

Community Member: Jasmine

Theme: Appearance



Object 12:

Various Makeup & Skincare Products

Asian & Western Beauty Products

Community Member: Wendy

Theme: Appearance



Object Labels

Each object has two labels, one for the object itself and one that explains the story behind the object.

Object 1:

Crying in Hmart, 2021

Property of Sam K.

Book

Crying in Hmart is an autobiography, written by Michelle Zauner, about her experiences growing up as a Korean second-generation immigrant in rural Oregon. The focus of the book is on her rocky relationship with her mother due to their cultural differences, and how that relationship changed as Michelle grew up and her mother eventually passed away from cancer.

The Story Behind *Crying in Hmart*

Sam K.

Growing up Korean American in rural Washington, Sam had a difficult relationship with her mother. Zauner's story hit close to home for Sam as she connected with it heavily over the similarities both shared. It can often be shameful or difficult to talk to others about a bad relationship with a parent, especially one who is an immigrant. "I know she gave up everything to come to the US to give me the best life she could, so how horrible am I to argue with her constantly", Sam voices the

inner thoughts of many second-generation immigrants in similar situations. Seeing someone else experience the same difficulties and arguments she had with her mother, relieved some of that guilt and helped her feel less alone.

Object 2:

Lorry Plush, 2006

Property of Anonymous

Lotte World Plush Toy

Lorry is a Tanuki, a raccoon-like animal, who is one of the main mascots of Korea's Lotte World Amusement Park. She, with her counterpart Lotte, represents the childlike fun and wonder that Lotte World brings its guests. Her significance is comparable to that of Minnie Mouse in America.

The Story Behind Lorry

Anonymous Community Member

This community member received this Lorry Plush from their Grandma when they were a child. Having lived across the world from her, they only visited their Grandma a handful of times before she passed. Additionally, communication between the two was difficult, due to the language barrier. The only memory they can recall of their Grandmother is receiving this plush. She handed it to them and said, in broken English, "This for you, my 꽃돼지 (term of endearment meaning

chubby piggy), it is my love”. As an adult, they treasure this plush and mourn the loss of a typical Grandparent-Grandchild relationship.

Object 3:

Pet Rocks, 2022

Property of Anonymous

Rocks with Googly Eyes

These “pet rocks” are based on a scene from the Oscar-winning film *Everything Everywhere All At Once (EEAAO)*. The movie tells the story of an immigrant mother-daughter relationship through a sci-fi plot that involves jumping between alternate universes. These two rocks represent the mother and daughter in one of the many universes they visit.

The Story Behind *Pet Rocks, 2022*

Anonymous Community Member

This movie was incredibly impactful to how this community member viewed their relationship with their mother. Many similar stories about an immigrant mother-daughter relationship come from the second-generation daughter’s perspective. However, *EEAAO* tells the story of the mother, of her life experiences and struggles. Seeing what their mother went through helped them understand their difficult relationship with their mother a bit better. Watching this film with their mother was an emotional bonding experience that allowed for them to connect through

similar experiences that they previously were unaware of. The community member chose to represent this particular scene from the film because it boils the complicated relationship between these two characters down to two simple rocks and shows that at their core, they are more similar than they realize.

Object 4:

Training Chopsticks, 2017

Property of Wen Z.

Place settings & Utensils

Here, we have a place setting where regular chopsticks have been replaced with training chopsticks. Training chopsticks are attached at the top and have a thumb ring in order to make them easier to use. These are often used by young children when they are first learning to eat.

The Story Behind the *Training Chopsticks*

Wen Z.

While Wen grew up eating Chinese food, having an American father meant that they did not use chopsticks. Her mother would always set the dinner table with forks and eat with her cooking chopsticks. Due to this, her inability to use chopsticks was never an issue. That is until she went to college and found herself having to ask for a fork for herself at Chinese restaurants. The looks from the waiter staff and her Asian friends were enough for her to feel embarrassed about lacking

a skill so ingrained within her culture. At the age of 20, Wen decided it was time to learn and bought herself these training chopsticks. Learning this skill has led to a closer connection with her culture and her mother, who now sets the dinner table with forks and chopsticks.

Object 5:

Various Snacks, 2024

Property of Madelyn Y.

Asian & American Snacks

These snacks were Madelyn's childhood favorite snacks. The Asian snacks were staples in her household and made regular appearances in her school lunch. The American snacks were the forbidden snacks that she begged for in the grocery store, only to be met with "Too sweet" and "Bad for you" from her parents.

The Story Behind Snacks

Madelyn Y.

What you bring to lunch in elementary school is potentially the most important event of the day. For Madelyn, it was the part she dreaded most. Every day she would try to hide her "smelly" and "gross" snacks from the eyes of her peers. Her friends would exchange snacks between them as Madelyn looked on with longing. For much of her life, she envied them and their "normal" lunch snacks. That is until a boba shop opened up in her hometown and suddenly, her friends discovered

their love of Asian flavors. Madelyn started sharing her Asian snacks and began gaining a sense of pride in her cultural foods. Suddenly she had the most sought-after snacks at school. She had to ask herself, “Was a Fruit Roll-up a worthy trade for a Hi-Chew”?

Object 6:

Park’s Family Food Menu, 2024

Property of Heather Park

Mock Menu of her Family’s Foods

Despite being a multicultural household, English was the main language spoken in Heather’s home. Due to this, most of the Korean foods they ate were not referred to by their actual Korean name, but rather by their own made-up names. The mock menu here shows some of these foods with both their actual Korean name and the name Heather and her family use.

The Story Behind the *Park’s Family Food Menu*

Heather Park

These made-up names were the only names Heather knew for these foods. However, after coming to college, she quickly realized that not knowing their actual names meant that no one else knew what she was talking about. It made her feel alienated, even in a group of fellow Korean Americans. While embarrassed by her lack of knowledge, Heather began to learn the real names of these foods and

can now talk about “Bungeo-ppang” without having to explain “a fishy cake that isn’t fish cake, but a fish-shaped cake, you know?”. Despite this, whenever she’s home she’ll ask for a “fishy cake” or “American Ramen” because it represents the sense of belonging she and her family created for themselves.

Object 7:

Duolingo Trophy, 2024

Property of Steven W.

Virtual Trophy for Completion of Chinese Course

On the language-learning app, Duolingo, you receive an in-app trophy once you have fully completed all the lessons available for a given language. This trophy represents Steven’s theoretical fluency in Chinese.

The Story Behind the *Duolingo Trophy*

Steven W.

Despite having two fully Chinese parents, Steven W. never learned Chinese growing up. Like many immigrant parents, they did not teach Steven Chinese because they wanted him to grow up speaking English without an accent. As an adult, Steven resented their choice, wishing he was bilingual. After a lifetime of being unable to speak to family and having to say “No, I do not speak Chinese” for the hundredth time, he decided to learn his ancestral language. He downloaded Duolingo and after doing lessons every day for two years, he got his Duolingo trophy! While he

was not quite fluent he could speak to his family, which was his original goal. Did he still get weird looks for his rough pronunciations and American accent? Ironically, yes but he was closer to his parents and family than ever before.

Object 8:

Quotes, 2024

Sent in by Aviel L.

From FamilyMart Podcast on TikTok

These quotes are from the FamilyMart Podcast titled “Not Filipino enough for the Filipinos” which is run by three Filipino American friends. This particular podcast was about visiting the motherland (the Philippines) and feeling like an outcast. They touch on the fact that not knowing the mother tongue, or not knowing it well enough, makes it obvious that they are a foreigner in the Philippines.

Story Behind Quotes

Aviel L.

As per the title of this exhibit, it is fairly common for community members to feel like they “are not Asian enough”. Aviel personally related with the three hosts on the FamilyMart podcast, having had his own experience being treated as a foreigner while visiting family in the Philippines. He chose these quotes to reflect the frustration of constantly feeling like an outsider. “You can learn the language, but you can not be fluent enough, or you can be extremely Westernized, but your

last name is ‘too hard to pronounce’”. When you are treated as a foreigner in both the US and the homeland, where are you supposed to feel at home?

Object 9:

The Things We Hear, 2024

Anonymous

Digital Art Piece

The theme of language doesn't only represent multilingual struggles, it also applies to English and how language is used. *The Things We Hear* is an art piece by an anonymous community member in an attempt to showcase the constant reminders that we are simultaneously both “Too Asian” and “Not Asian Enough”. The two word clouds are made up of phrases and words, compiled by all community members, that are commonly heard by Asian second-generation immigrants. The word list for both word clouds can be seen on either side of the piece.

Object 10:

Polaroid Pictures, 2003

Property of Criscia R.

Photos of Her Family & Her

Polaroid photos of Criscia and her family when she visited the Philippines as a baby. In many of them, she is with her mother, Normi.

The Story Behind *Polaroid Pictures*

Criscia R.

Having only visited the Philippines a few times, Criscia mostly remembers how she stood out as foreign to both locals and her family. These photos in particular show how obviously she physically stood out, due to her paleness, in comparison to her family. “When I visit the Philippines I am almost like an object to take pictures with because I’m so pale and tall and don’t speak the language”. However, even beyond appearance, Criscia battled with being perceived as an outsider in both America and the Philippines. As she got older, she found that this feeling is something her mother also experiences and that it allowed them to bond in a unique way. Realizing that her mother didn’t fit in a cultural box and that this intersectionality is what made her mother who she is, freed Criscia of the need to fit into a box herself.

Object 11:

Kokeshi Doll, 1994

Property of Jasmine

Wooden Japanese Doll

Kokeshi dolls are a traditional Japanese-style doll that typically has no distinctive legs or arms. They are carved out of wood, with their facial features and clothing details painted on. These dolls are used to bring luck and protection to children.

The Story Behind the *Kokeshi Doll*

Jasmine

Like many Japanese children, Jasmine was given a Kokeshi doll when she was young. While these dolls are generally for children, they are rather fragile in comparison to other dolls. Jasmine would often play dolls with her friends and she was never able to find one that looked like her. After a while, she was tired of trying to sharpie her facial features on Barbies, and she grabbed her Kokeshi doll off the shelf. After a few hours of rough play, one of the attached sleeves of the doll broke off. Broken still, Jasmine cherishes this doll as an adult because it reminds her of how far Asian representation has come in her lifetime.

Object 12:

Various Makeup & Skincare Products, 2024

Property of Wendy

Asian and Western Beauty Products

This bag of products is used in Wendy's daily skincare and makeup routine. There is a mix of Western and Asian products that cater to the different needs of her skin type and facial features and to the cultural beauty standards of both countries.

The Story Behind *Makeup & Skincare Products*

Wendy

Like many other teenagers, Wendy learned how to do her makeup through YouTube tutorials. However, she struggled to replicate Western makeup styles on her Asian facial features. Fake lashes never stayed on her shorter lashes and her mascara would smudge onto her eyelids. It wasn't until she was well in college that she learned there were Asian makeup products suited to her features. She was excited to try these new products but quickly learned that she did not fit into Asian beauty standards. She wasn't pale enough to easily find a foundation shade and her cheeks weren't round enough for Asian-style blush. Despite this setback, Wendy mixed and matched Western and Asian products and styles to create her own personalized makeup routine.

Exhibit Photos

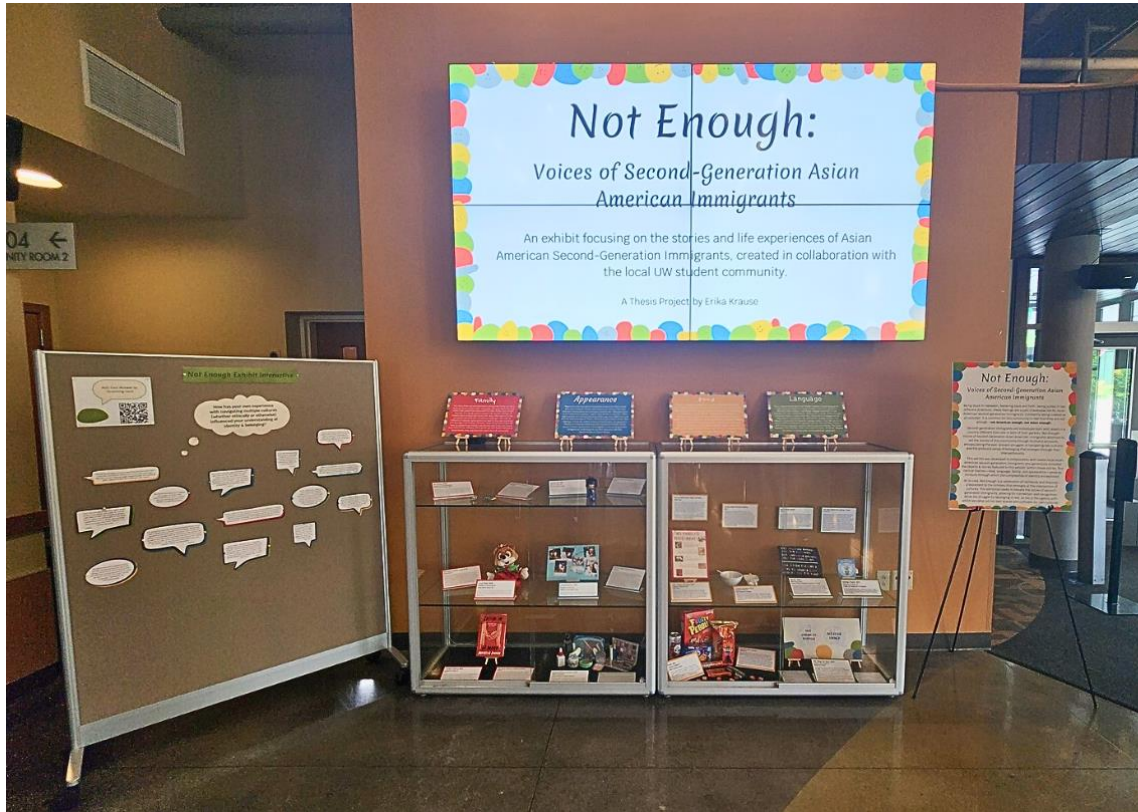


Fig. 1 Front View of Exhibit

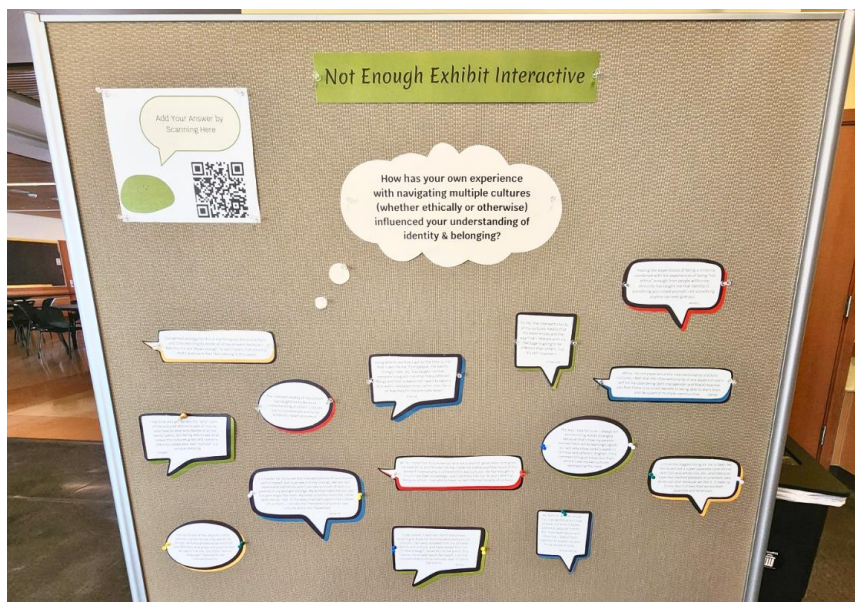


Fig. 2 Interactive Element

Acknowledgments

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