

# Mind your steps @IDC

Exploring how individuals discover methods to communicate and make relationships

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## P3 Project Report

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### Under the guidance of

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# Declaration

I declare that this written document represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented, fabricated or falsified any idea/data/fact/ source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.



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Date: 25-05-2024

Place: IDC, IIT Bombay

## Approval Sheet

This Design Project III titled "Mind Your Steps @IDC: Exploring how individuals discover methods to communicate and make relationships" by Anisha Verma, Roll number 22M2269 is approved, in partial fulfillment of the Masters Degree in Design at the IDC School of Design, Indian Institute of Bombay.

Project Guide: Prof Mandar Rane



Internal Examiner: Prof Prasad Bokil



External Examiner:



Chairperson:

 27/5/24

# Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Professor Mandar Rane for giving me the freedom to pursue this project, having confidence in me and guiding and supporting me through the process. I am also grateful to Prof. Prasad Bokil, Prof. GV Sreekumar, Prof Mazhar and all the IDC Professors for their valuable feedback and suggestions during stage presentations.

I would also like to thank Yash H Bharani, for his constant support and feedback throughout the project journey. I would like to express my gratitude towards all the participants who took out time to speak to me in detail about their experiences! This project would not have been completed without their constant support.

I am also thankful to all my batchmates, for helping me throughout the project and constantly motivating me.



# Abstract

At the heart of this project is a detailed exploration of the communication styles, approaches, efforts, and challenges faced by the IDC community, particularly between professors and students. Through qualitative interviews and observations, this study uncovers the nuances and complexities of these interactions, highlighting the often invisible barriers that hinder effective communication.

The culmination of this research is an illustrated artifact, created using a blend of digital and traditional watercolors. These illustrations are designed to be both humorous and thought-provoking, depicting the various gestures and methods individuals adopt to improve communication. By employing satire, this project not only critiques the current communication practices but also aims to inspire self-reflection and encourage a more engaged and connected community at IDC.

This project underscores the opportunity to redefine IDC's culture. Embracing new communication styles can lead to greater engagement and stronger relationships, fostering a sense of belonging and support for all members of the IDC community. Through this creative exploration, the project aims to set new standards for communication and interaction, paving the way for a more vibrant and interconnected future at IDC.

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## Project Description

**Summary/ Overview:** Through this project, I aimed to understand the communication practices people generally follow to make relationships/ bonds with people who don't belong to their group. The groups referred to here can be different generations like Millennials and GenZ, office people such as employees and interns, college students and professors, and mothers and children.

This project was personally driven by observing the surroundings. Several cases were observed where there were gaps and conflicts in communication within these groups. After researching about these different groups, the audience of IDC i.e. Professors and students were chosen to understand about their communication style, approach, efforts and gaps.

In this project, I have attempted to explore the stories and scenarios students generally face during the course in IDC. I personally feel that there is a glass wall between Professors and students, because what a student conveys to his Professors is generally conveyed either in different tones or different meanings.

The final outcome of this project is an illustrated artefact that reflects the different gestures individuals adopt to make better communication between themselves. The medium that I have adopted is a blend of digital and traditional watercolours.

## Approach(s) / Method(s):

### Primary research -

1. Phase One- The first phase was to determine the audience that was struggling with communication. Being a student I couldn't empathise more with the students of IDC. Hence, concluded to understand the communication between Professors and Students.
2. Phase Two- Unstructured interviews with 16 individuals was conducted, and were asked to share their experiences and perceptions of communication between both the parties and their views about different topics such as personal engagement, Courses, different events and future interactions.

### Secondary research -

1. Research papers, articles and blogs on the student and teacher relationship. Also read about generation gap during the research.
2. Movies, series, books and podcasts which communication gap between different generations.
3. Previous projects done on similar themes by other students across the globe.

**Process-** The first phase was the most mystifying. Somehow problem was identified but the problem space was still undiscovered. It took me a lot of time to narrow down the subject and reach to a defined problem space. The main subject during that time was Communication. I was understanding the conflicts and disputed people have in communicating with other. Several reasons were also discovered such as generation gap, behaviour gap, technology gap, geographical gap, age gap. It was during this phase when I realised that generation gap and age gaps are two different terms.

After narrowing down the problem space to IDC people, I did qualitative interviews, I listened carefully to their stories, I observed their facial expressions, I tried to understand their feelings regarding the issues that they were having at that time. I then translated these stories into a series of satirical illustrations that when stitched together to form an overarching narrative that highlight the different approaches people take to make IDC a place where freedom is felt in every corner and in every project. With that the research also highlighted the issues that a student face which a Prof should address but ignores it. Overall, the process involved a combination of creative brainstorming, research, and careful observation to capture the complex and sometimes chaotic relationship between individuals and their Professors.

## **Findings and Conclusions-**

The project findings reveal the formal and informal interactions with each others. Students have different opinions about the environment that IDC offers.

Analyses of user behaviours of around 17 users across BDes, MDes and Dual Degree students demonstrate that MDes is the most disappointed group among all of them. Disappointed with the Eco-system, Course selection and the process of teaching. One of the insight observed during the interview is- IDC in today's time is shining. But after ten years, people would not be interested in joining any course for it because it is going far from what the world demands.

## **The Final Output-**

The humorous and thought-provoking illustrations in this project aim to depict key findings in a way that encourages self-reflection. This project highlights the series of events at IDC that enrich its culture and bring everyone together, including the various actions taken by professors during decision-making processes. It also critiques the decisions made by different bodies within IDC. Through satire, this project offers a creative and engaging exploration of these issues, potentially inspiring further conversations and actions for future batches.

# INTRODUCTION

The Project started with some observations around the groups understanding the frustrations of the other person not understanding it. With that Prof Mandar shared a PDF which helped really well to identify the problem.

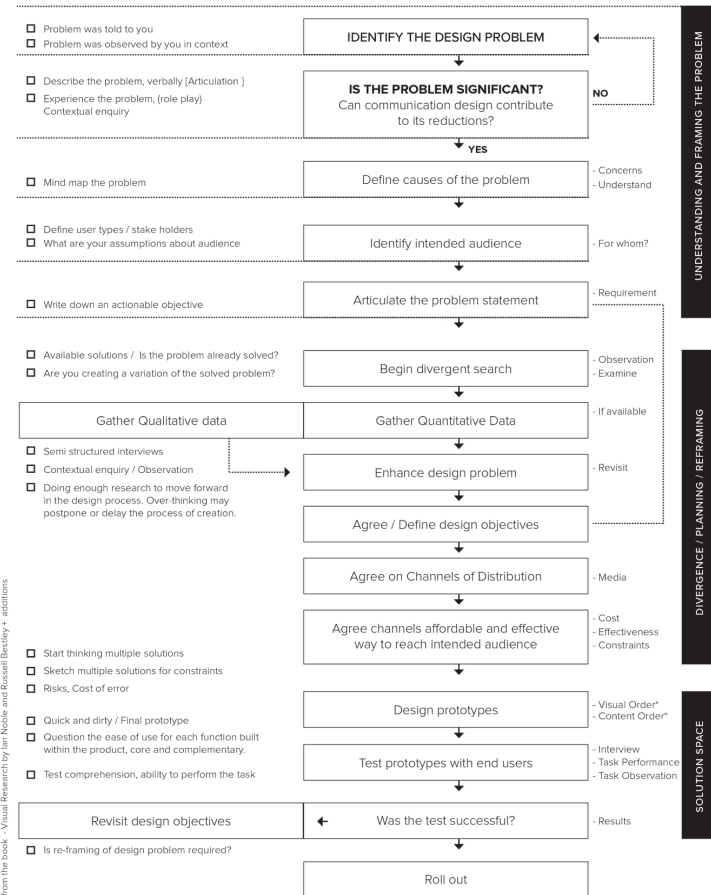
This PDF guided my way through the First phase of research. Inspired by my observations of my surroundings, I noticed many instances where communication gaps and conflicts arose within these groups. After conducting research on these different groups, I focused on the IDC community, specifically professors and students, to understand their communication styles, approaches, efforts, and the gaps they face.

## **Why focus on IDC specifically?**

Understanding the topic that I have chosen, the audience that I was working with was quite diverse and large. I had to narrow down to come to any conclusions. I personally felt that there are some conflicts between Professors and Students, the reason was the space. A space to convey their words to each other. Hence, this project. This project gives the students a space to say what they feel and what they want which they couldn't communicate because of this invisible formal wall. At the end, if a person is not personally here, what's the point of learning so many Design skills and coming to IDC?

**WHAT IS A PROBLEM?**

A problem as a situation in which one has a goal but does not know how to reach it (Duckner 1945)



Adapted from the book - Visual Research by Jan Noble and Russell Bentley + additions

# Secondary Research

*PAPERS/ NEWS/ JOURNAL ARTICLES*

## **Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins [1]**

"We believe 1996 is a meaningful cutoff between Millennials and Gen Z for a number of reasons, including key political, economic and social factors that define the Millennial generation's formative years.

This means that the differences within generations can be just as great as the differences across generations."

Given the varied socioeconomic backgrounds of both students and faculty at IDC, I sought to identify the factors responsible for the significant changes in their communication styles. Unsurprisingly, technology emerged as a pivotal element. Among the factors examined were the reliance on paper versus digital media, the influence of social media, the specific terminologies used, the diverse backgrounds of professors, and whether a student was pursuing a Bachelor's, Master's, Dual Degree, or Ph.D. program. Identifying these factors was only the beginning; comprehending their impact on communication required extensive time and research. Although the aforementioned study does not perfectly mirror the generational landscape in India, it provided valuable



insights and a sense of direction, highlighting which factors could be profoundly influential for our analysis.

### **Generation z: A study of its workplace communication behaviors and future preferences<sup>[2]</sup>**

“Gen Zs have less practice with face-to-face communication”

“According to the study, social media is the least used mode of communication from current manager to employee and it the least preferred mode of communication for Gen Zs with their future manager.”

“The study in this thesis indicates that they prefer face-to-face communication with their manager, but just because they prefer it does not mean they would start with it. Would they prefer to text them first? Would they follow up with a call and then move on to face-to-face communication, which is what they preferred from the beginning? Are the Gen Z’s going against their own preferences to meet the preferences of someone else like their manager?”

This research paper emphasised the work culture that is essential for a team to work effectively. It made me think, what if instead of having individual thinking, why can’t this pair become a team and provide better designs? What is stopping them from doing so?

### **Bridging the Gap: How the Generations Communicate<sup>[3]</sup>**

“Because the generations believe that they will be perceived negatively, their actions may not accurately represent how they really feel.”

“New generations are being born every day and we must begin to consciously consider how we will keep up with new methods of communicating that will also continue to be born.”

COVID-19 brought significant changes to IDC, reshaping many aspects of the institution. One profound insight that emerged during interviews was that now is an opportune moment to redefine IDC's culture. This period of transition presents a unique chance to embrace new communication styles, fostering greater engagement and strengthening relationships within the community.

Moreover, redefining our communication culture can help address the diverse needs of our community, from first-year students to seasoned faculty members. It can promote a sense of belonging and support, ensuring that everyone feels heard and valued.

### **Bridging the Disconnect Between Gen Z and Management<sup>[4]</sup>**

Only 32% of Gen Zers (roughly defined as born between 1997 and 2012) feel very equipped with the resources they need to thrive in the workplace, according to a Salesforce survey of

23,000 workers.

And it's important to find ways to work together. In his book "The First Time Manager: Leading Through Crisis," former NBCUniversal and Nickelodeon HR executive Paul Falcone noted that Gen Z and millennials make up 38% of the workforce and they generally value social responsibility, flexibility and empowerment. But there are three additional age groups laboring alongside them: the silent generation (born 1928-1945), baby boomers (born 1946-1964) and Gen X (1965-1980).

### VIDEOS/ SOCIAL MEDIA

Finding different, unique and effective ways to communicate with students is a task. So I started looking out for people who are uniquely sharing their perspectives.

#### Mother with Signs<sup>[5]</sup>

One of the way they drew my attention was this instagram account of a Mother giving advices to younger ones. Her content makes one empathise with her.



#### Jacqueline Malouf<sup>[6]</sup>

This video touched the core of communication gap between two different groups of generations. Finding the common ground of food brought these two generations together. Just like that in this project I made an attempt to find a common ground for Professors and students.



# Primary Research

The methodology for this project involved semi-structured interviews of students and Professors, who were asked to share their experiences and perceptions about Communication at IDC. The interviews were analysed to identify common themes and patterns, which were then used to create the satirical illustrations. An informal approach was taken throughout the project as the use of satire in the final outcome was intended to convey the emotions and experiences of the interviewees in a creative and engaging way.

## *QUALITATIVE DATA- USER INTERVIEWS (16 COMBINED INTERVIEWS)*

Out of 16 participants whose data was collected, 13 were students including BDes, MDes, Dual Degree and PhD students. 3 were Professors. I spent time with 16 participants, to understand in-depth their emotions and feelings about IDC. I then transcribed those interviews and identified themes and patterns from it. The themes that I identified are now different chapters in the Final Output.

Out of 16 interviews, 6 conversations were shortlisted for illustration and the final outcome for the publication.

### **Prompts/ Area for discussion- Students**

- How do you feel about the events like holi, diwali etc are celebrated in IDC? Do you think students genuinely like to participate in these events?  
Recently IDC hosted IPL, how were the participants recruited? Did it require more effort than needed?
- Tell me 3 BTs that Prof usually give you.
- Emails have been the earliest forms of communication in every professional space. And so in IDC.
- Considering this scenario of organising an event such as a talk with a guest, an email is usually floated. Yet a few students join it. What do you think about this communication? Is it apt? Can this be improved?
- IDC has a rich culture as compared to other departments. Is there any change that you would like to bring/ add to it?
- No doubt the environment here in IDC is friendly. Do you think we lack some professionalism? Altogether, we must balance making the IDC a casual living space and a professional working space.
- Do you think Professors understand the load of doing academic work with TA work.

### **Prompts/ Area for discussion- Professors**

- How do you feel about it when students arrive late in your class? Could there be a logical reason for this situation?
- Have you taken any measures to stop their late arrival behaviour? What were they?
- Have you experienced any change in the pattern of behaviour of students asking for leave earlier and now? How do students communicate with you regarding their leave? Do they take permission or simply tell or tell you after they have gone from IDC?
- Does it annoy you when a student's phone rings during a discussion or meeting? Have you asked them to silence their phone? What general behaviour/ feeling did you experience? Previous vs now
- Emails have been the earliest forms of communication in every professional space. And so in IDC.
- Considering this scenario of organising an event such as a talk with a guest, an email is usually floated. Yet a few students join it. What do you think about this communication? Is it apt? Can this be improved? What used to happen in earlier days?
- Prof and students communicate on multiple platforms such as WhatsApp, signal, slack, and email. Do you think the availability of many

platforms leads to a communication gap because everyone's preference is different?

AJ- Slack

Dalvi-Signal

Mandar-WhatsApp

Email-others

What reasons do students give when they can't follow up with your text?

- IDC has a rich culture as compared to other departments. Is there any change that you would like to bring/ add to it?  
No doubt the environment here in IDC is friendly. Do you think we lack some professionalism? Altogether, we must balance making the IDC a casual living space and a professional working space.
- What role does a pat on the back have in your teaching style? Do you usually praise children for their work? After interviewing students from different departments, it was observed that IxD students yet working so hard are not appreciated by their professors.
- How were you taught during your time? Pat on the back or ultimatum-style
- Have you observed any change in the behaviour patterns of your students for the past years?

- What is your perspective on TA? Do students work well for TA? Was the TA load students have now the same as a few years ago? Does TA work by students bring any value to you? Does their assistantship make your work effortless?
- In the orientation, it was conveyed to us that placement is the last thing we students should be worried about. Now the stats say in CD out of 16 students, 5 are placed. In IxD, 50%. There is a gap b/w what is taught in IDC and what the industry demands outside world. What is your view on this subject matter? This is a blurry area for me.
- In no way I am against what you teach.
- How should an ideal IDC department studio look like? As most people say, the Old building is where everyone's heart is. For example, we have beds in classrooms, and people usually sleep in studios. Earlier, people used to party in the corridor.
- How do you evolve your teaching style over the years?
- How do you feel about the events like holi, diwali etc are celebrated in IDC? Do you think students genuinely like to participate in these events?
- Recently, IDC hosted IPL; how were the participants recruited? Did it require more effort than needed?

## Analysis of qualitative data

- Multisensory events, not only talk shows. But some activities  
Methodology for talk show can be improved for better communication.  
Such as?

In talk show- One-way communication is strict way of communication

Two way- Keeps people engaged

- An open space for all the people to hangout, a collaborative space, with some books, games, PS etc
- I am scared of asking questions or putting my point in discussion because I believe they have much more knowledge than me and I will sound dumb if I ask this question.
- Social gathering in IDC between students and faculty
  - ◆ IDC Dinner
  - ◆ IPL- cricket
  - ◆ Book club
  - ◆ Teachers day
  - ◆ Informal gathering like ID
- IDC is a shallow place for collaboration
- Suggesting Board Game day

I believe if we can break the Ice and everyone can mix their interests, we can make a very nice mojito

Students respect more if a professor becomes open and liberal

- Faculties ko IPL me aana chahiye, aacha lagta. Hume koi issue nahi hai, balki hum to khush honge
- Profs don't empathise with our career choices. They don't understand that in the end we will be working for a company. We can't build our own living the time we leave IDC. We can't generate that worth.
- They don't empathise with our portfolio. This must be a two-way communication.
- Infographics of some casual and professional habits of IDC Faculty and students that keep them connected
- Lack of empathy by one prof. They won't understand my situation- they just stick to what they said 2 months back. Situations change sir!
- Listen to students
- Show some interest in our work and our ideas
- We should have freedom of expression
- We should spend some informal time together; comfort is imp. It will also increase our respect for you, that a Prof of all the things took some time out of his/her schedule and spend some time with us.

Not like ID party, going crazy with alcohol and all, but something engaging.

- Time restriction bcz they have family. Make these events during Formal times. More than happy to join.
  - IDC earlier traditions- People used to go to Professor's Home on Holi and Profs used to keep sweets for them. Profs used to get angry if the students didn't show up.
  - Efforts to be with each other has gone down.
  - We understand that the course is hectic, and we must do something about it.
  - Interaction decreased bcz number of students increased
  - The classroom should look like classroom, at least when Prof sees it
  - Call faculty at right time and right duration of time for informal sessions. Invite them at least one week before the event
  - Can start interacting with One faculty at a time. One faculty-One week
- Pandemic did a good thing- Good time to start a new culture and tradition

- Students should invite them earlier, they have their own schedule. It didn't happen earlier, earlier students used to be happy to invite us.
- Faculties are not available every time in their cabin, even in working hours. Difficult to make personal connections with everyone.
- Aalto University- 3 students and 3 faculty have breakfast and talk about life. (Hugging Point)

## Finalising the Direction

### Brainstorming Ideas

Even though the data collected was for a very small number of individuals, it gave a gist about the feelings and emotions of students towards IDC's culture, curriculum, placements and personal engagement with Professors. After collecting many stories, I brainstormed on depicting these final themes. Whether the final outcome will be digital or Non-digital?

### Initial Ideas-

1. Creating an interactive website or exhibition that showcases the identified themes
2. Developing a short film or animation that humorously and sarcastically depict the scenarios
3. Designing a game card activities for engagement
4. Developing a series of infographics or illustrations
5. Creating a digital campaign for Student-Professor interaction
6. Making a calendar that reminds them to take which approaches
7. Designing a print or digital publication that explores these communication styles of different individuals

Post brain-storming on all the above mentioned ideas, I decided to go ahead with a completely non-digital approach.



### **Who is the audience?**

I then decided to make a small booklet that can be given to the students of the upcoming batch during the Orientation Program in IDC. Hence, the booklet needed to be small such as A5 size.

### **What is inside the booklet?**

These are a collection of illustrations, narratives, and dialogues, offering the incoming batch a unique glimpse into the IDC experience through the eyes of those who have come before them. This includes formal and informal communication styles and conflicts in interaction between the group that the upcoming batch should be cautious about.

### **PUBLICATION TITLE**

Choosing a title for a project was a challenging task, and it's important to consider several factors before finalising one. In the case of this project, the title selection process involved brainstorming several ideas and evaluating them based on various criteria such as relevance, clarity, and memorability. The initial list of potential titles included options such as "Communication at IDC", "The unsaid words" and "The Future of IDC" After careful consideration, these titles were discarded because they either didn't accurately convey the scope of the project or didn't sound catchy enough to capture readers' attention.

Eventually, the title "Mind your steps @IDC" was chosen because it succinctly encapsulates the main theme of the project.

### **PROCESS**

The process involved a blend of both hand-drawn and digital illustrations. I hand-painted these illustrations with watercolors on A4 size sheet and gave finishing touches with digital mediums such as Procreate. There was a personal reason in choosing this medium because I feel the emotions that watercolors give is the same emotions that IDC require for enhanced engagement between individuals.

### **VISUAL STYLE**

The style lies somewhere between illustrations and paintings. The final illustrations are a blend of different stories. The illustrations are combined with light texts for the viewers to understand better. Few elements are also added that depict IDC and with suggestions on what can be done better in near future.





## Fonts:

I have used the following fonts in the illustrated publication:

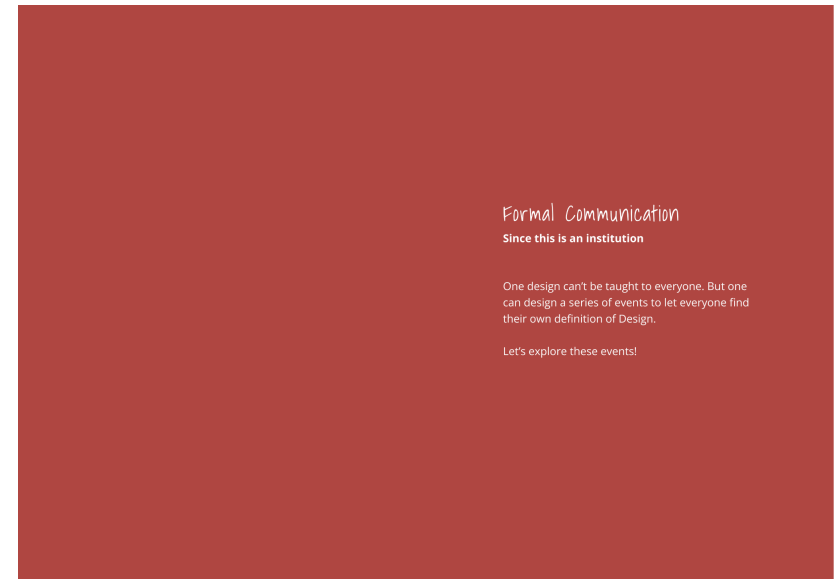
- **Shadows into Light** adds a unique hand-written and friendly character to the spreads while also maintaining readability and legibility. This font is used as headings on the introduction pages.
- **Open Sans**' clean and modern style allows for easy readability and comprehension of the information presented. This font is used for body copy

## CONTENT STRUCTURE

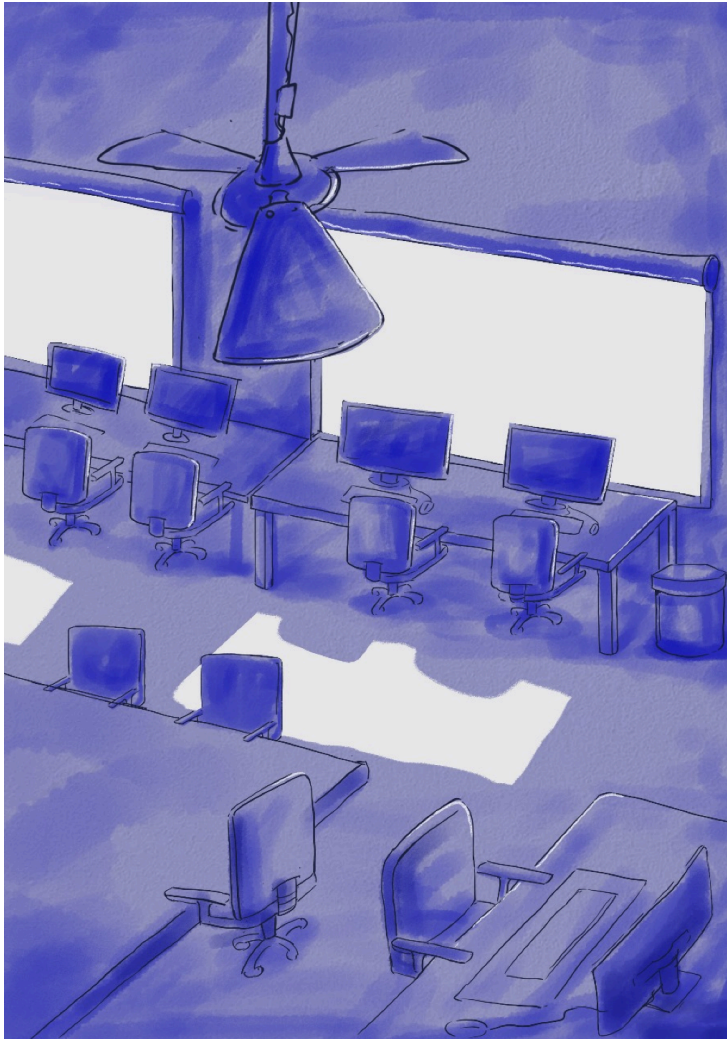
Divided into distinct sections, each component addresses a unique facet of Communication style. Each section draws inspiration from my extensive conversations with individuals throughout this project.

The section comprises of two integral parts:

- The Title Page, which features the emotions associated with that particular theme.
- The Final Illustration Spread, which showcases a complete visual representation of my interpretation of the entire conversation.

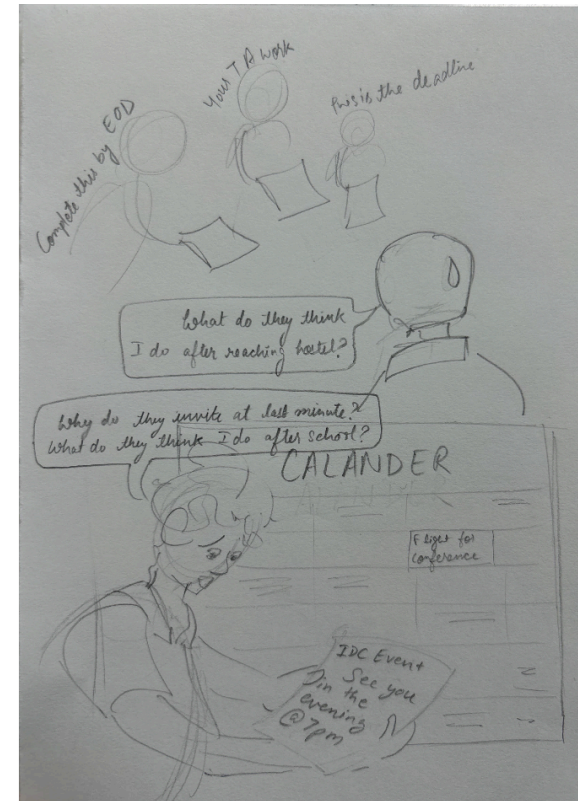
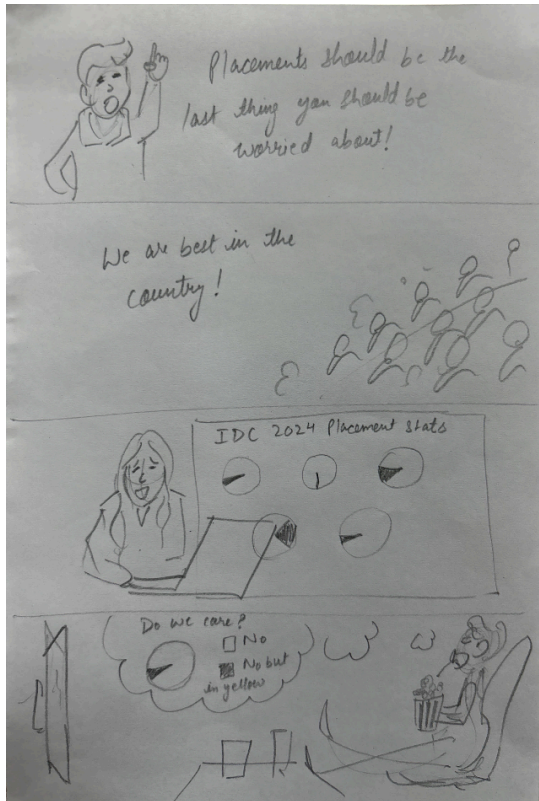


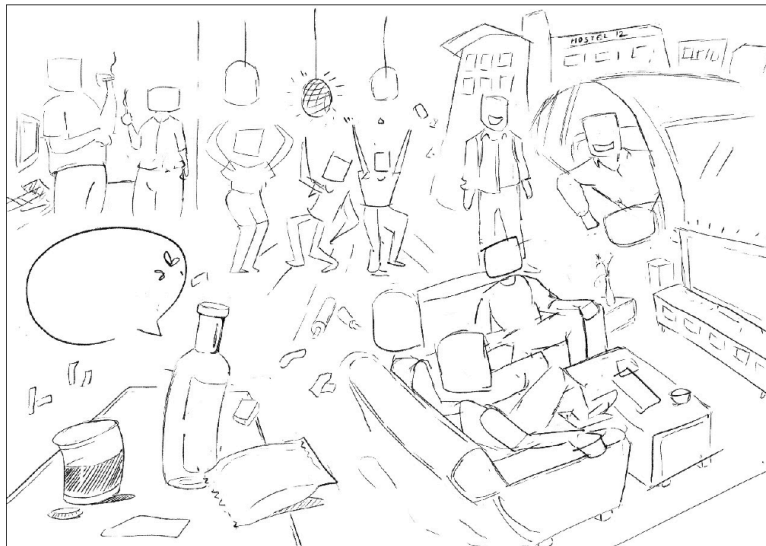
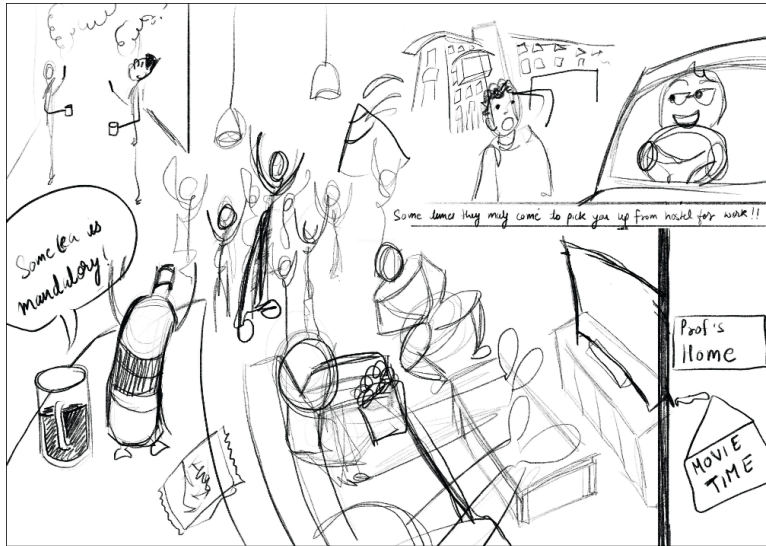
## ILLUSTRATION STYLE



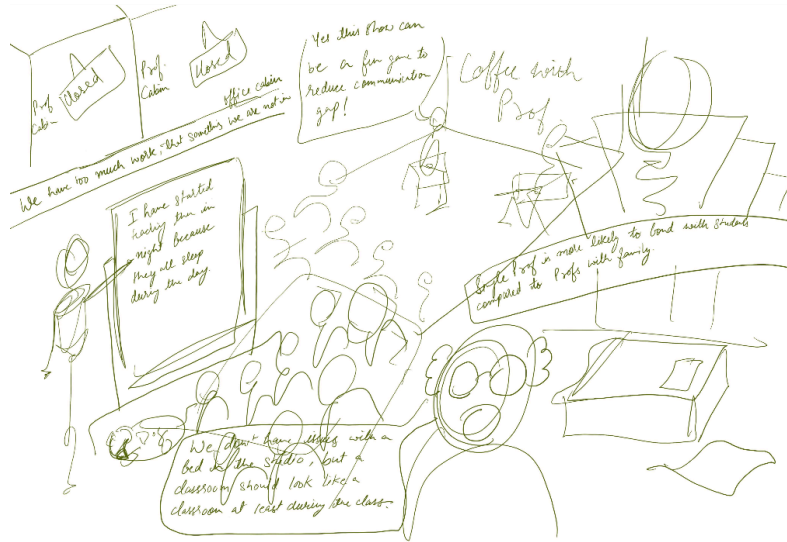
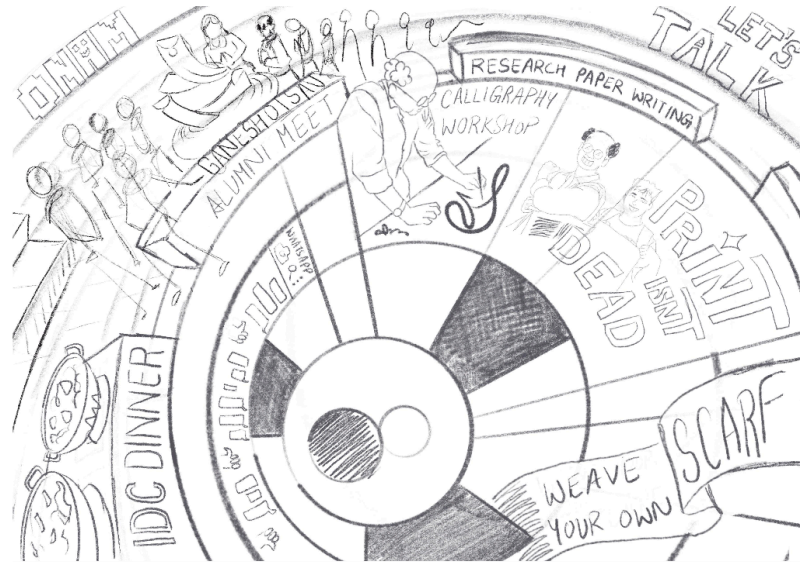
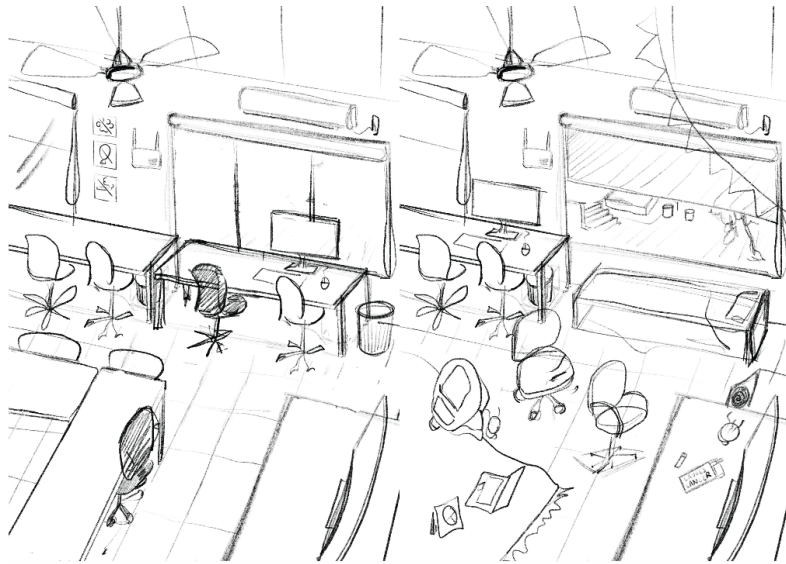


## Process Photos









## Conclusion

The qualitative interviews provided deeper insights into users' emotions, behaviours, and perceptions related to their behavior and approach in handling situations. The data revealed many patterns and themes around the subject.

One of the unique findings which seems very common is that the Professors who are Single i.e not married are willing to devote more time to students and hence, make good bond with them. While the married Professors generally prefer to go home early and couldn't devote their personal time to students which is understood. But somehow this is affecting the students performances. To me this came out as a powerful insight which if taken into action, students can go beyond the scope of what is possible today, Like I mentioned earlier, it is not about individuality, it is about making a great team.



# References

[1] Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins

By Michael Dimock

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>

[2] Generation z: A study of its workplace communication behaviors and future preferences

A Thesis by Jamie Bredbenner Bachelor of Arts, Wichita State University, 2012

<https://soar.wichita.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/917b5252-e192-4a88-acac-9f6ab3854ce9/content>

[3] Bridging the Gap: How the Generations Communicate

Hannah Downs Concordia University, Saint Paul

<https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=comjournal>

[4] Bridging the Disconnect Between Gen Z and Management

<https://nbcuacademy.com/gen-z-management-communication/>

[5] Mother with Signs

[https://www.instagram.com/motherwithsign?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_button\\_share\\_sheet&igsh=ZDNlZDc0MzlxNw==](https://www.instagram.com/motherwithsign?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet&igsh=ZDNlZDc0MzlxNw==)

[https://www.instagram.com/reel/C1zBmC1Pq-F/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA%3D%3D](https://www.instagram.com/reel/C1zBmC1Pq-F/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA%3D%3D)

Few references for designing the Booklet

Women statistics & Illustrations

<https://www.behance.net/gallery/197436815/Women-statistics-illustrations>

Limerick Book Illustration (Bengali Book)

[https://www.behance.net/gallery/195227431/Limerick-Book-Illustration-\(bengali-book\)](https://www.behance.net/gallery/195227431/Limerick-Book-Illustration-(bengali-book))