ARE THEATRICAL VIGNETTES A Viable Medium To Support Asian American Families Affected By COVID-19? CHATogether In Secondary Boarding Schools

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Background: Yale Compassionate Home, Action Together (CHATogether) is a group focused on using theater to address emotional wellness in Asian American children and parents on stigmatized issues. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, CHATogether helped Asian American boarding school students converse openly and safely with their families about mental health and emotional well-being.

Objectives: We aim to promote mentalization, empathy, and effective communications in Asian American boarding school students and families during pandemic transitions.

Methods: CHATogether members 1) enact the role of a parent or teen in a live skit where there are differences in perspectives 2) a moderator steps in to reflect and offer guidance towards improved communication, and 3) the skit continues using the skills just learned. Our event depicted a quarantined Asian American family that highlights an argument between a high school junior and his parents about phone usage. After acting and audience discussion, a preliminary survey study was conducted.

Results: 17 out of 18 participants gave a rating of 7 out of 10 or above in helpfulness when addressing emotional wellness. 15 out of 18 participants felt like the relatability was above a 7 out of 10. As first-time attendees, 38.9% of them either agreed or strongly agreed that the event changed their perspective of their own teen-parent relationship. 72.3% of participants suggested that their parents or children should participate in this in the future, while 88.9% of participants suggested that more boarding school students and faculty will benefit from this program.

Discussion: Preliminary results suggest that a theatrical vignette may be a great medium to support Asian American families during the pandemic. This is a relatable and interesting way for participants to explore controversial issues and family relationships. Future goals include expanding to more boarding schools and assessing longer-term outcomes.

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Learning Objectives
At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:
1. Attendees will be able to learn this methodology to appreciate culturally-adapted communication in Asian American families.
2. Attendees will be able to raise awareness of the mental health issues among minority students in boarding schools.

References
Boal A. Theatre Communications Group; 1985.
Rohd M. Heinemann Drama; 1998.
https://youtu.be/EqMXc2UJXe0