

**Meeting at the Crossroads**

**A Perspective Analysis on the Relationship between Sisters**

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## Driving Concepts for Analysis

For this analysis, I will be investigating how sibling relationships play a role in how adolescents develop their identity through political and psychological resistance. The three concepts I will be using to drive my analysis of my interview include the theory of Meeting at the Crossroads by Brown & Gilligan, Erikson's Theory of Identity Development and Way's theory of the Crisis of Connection.

Brown & Gilligan emphasize how the "Meeting at the Crossroads" between women and girls allow girls the opportunity to express their feelings, needs, and opinions about the difficulties they face with others who have been through similar challenges. Hopefully, building these authentic relationships will allow girls the opportunity to better navigate a male-dominated society. While this concept can be applied to non-familial relationships and within class we have witnessed instances of the concept within Mother-Daughter relationships, there has not been an example of sister relationships and how they may manifest different responses of resistance and accommodation. Specifically, because sibling relationships can fluctuate in relationship closeness (siblings could have been separated or twins could have grown up together), it would be interesting to see how this dynamic changes the expression of Meeting at the Crossroads.

In Erikson's Theory of Identity Development, Erikson's main argument is that an individual's sense of identity is actively built on how a person observes and judges themselves in comparison to how others perceive/judge them. Erikson's claim is based on understanding how an individual's identity is developed over the course of their lifetime. How a person navigates periods of inner and environmental conflict dictates the strength of their identity. Tied to this concept is the theory of the Crisis of Connection. As Way concludes her findings in *Deep Secrets: Boys' Friendships and the Crisis of Connection* the Crisis of Connection is the

reinforcement of gender stereotypes/ideologies that boys do not have the same emotional needs and desires as girls and accommodation to these pressures of society inhibits the creation of genuine vulnerable relationships. This theory can also be applied to adolescent girls who accommodate ideologies of not having independent thoughts and opinions, which echoes Brown & Gilligan's concepts of Self-Silencing and Meeting at the Crossroads. Way's findings underscore the universal capability of seeking intimacy and how it shapes adolescent identity development and whether or not these adolescents develop "false identities" in order to maintain relationships. We see this recurring dilemma or dynamic within adolescent identity development through Erikson's perspective of adolescent identity development as Erikson claims: "an attempt to engage in intimate fellowship and competition or in sexual intimacy fully reveals the latent weakness of identity". Meaning, the act of establishing, maintaining and seeking relationships can actively "weaken" a person's "true identity" and that these people may find themselves adopting false identities in order to acquire or maintain the relationship.

### **Interview Focus**

For this analysis, I interviewed an adolescent Asian American girl of 21 years of age. The participant has a sister who is 4 years older than her. Questions during the interview were focused on the participant's perspective of her relationship with her sister and how their relationship dynamic impacted the participant's actions. The goal of this analysis was to use the three concepts (Meeting at the Crossroads, Erikson's Theory of Identity Development, Crisis of Connection) to provide context for how sibling relationships may cause specific instances of resistance and subsequently cause adolescents to identify themselves differently according to Erikson's Theory of Identity Development. The Crisis of Connection will be used as an overarching theme to discover within adolescents and their desire to form bonds with their

siblings specifically. Using the theory of Meeting at the Crossroads in the analysis of sibling closeness will garner insight on why adolescent identity is largely formed by their desire to form close relationships. The principle query is centered on how the strength of sibling relationships are able to change how adolescents navigate cultural ideologies. An additional inquiry is centered on how external comparison between siblings, perhaps instigated by cultural ideologies, influence the Crisis of Connection between siblings.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

From this interview, a few key findings emerge. First, sibling bonding through navigation of cultural ideologies has a positive impact on creating non-familial relationships and improving other familial relationships. Second, younger siblings who are able to witness and experience acts of resistance by their older siblings feel more empowered and comfortable to resist as well regardless of individual differences. Third, the closeness of sibling relationships is largely dependent on the gap of age between the two siblings. In fact, a specific age gap has a significantly larger impact on the sibling relationship due to the fact that American ideologies insist that societal stages of life occur every 4 years (e.g.: High School and University). Overall, this interview highlighted the positive identity development through establishing a Meeting at the Crossroads and navigating the Crisis of Connection through building a strong sibling bond.

### **Key Findings & Constructs**

To begin, a reoccurring notion during the interview highlighted how sibling age impacted not only facets of their identity, but also the nature of their familial relationships. The participant highlighted how her older sister typically had more responsibility and initiative to look after their family and maintain familial relationships. In turn, after witnessing this, the participant felt as if she needed to “take some responsibility as well... because I realize it's a lot

for her to do on her own”. To add to this, the participant noted that witnessing her sister “take the initiative, to make sure the family stays together and the family does fun things” has motivated the participant to continue communicating and initiate interaction with her friends and boyfriend. Communication, as the participant describes, was impacted the most from improving the relationship with her sister. Even with more sensitive topics regarding mental health which is often stigmatized in East Asian cultures, and often results in internalizing mental issues, the participant notes that:

“Because she's always been very open about her mental health, and talking about it, and just encouraging me to kind of find words for my feelings and showing her any, like sharing her mental health journey and her struggles. So I think because she's so open about it, and she's always encouraging me and asked me how I feel and everything like that. It's made me more comfortable to seek out help one on one, and I know that she's there, because she's taught me that.”

This is a clear example of Meeting at the Crossroads and highlights how witnessing resistance to cultural ideologies is a gateway to build more authentic relationships that prevents the perpetuity of harmful ideologies and toxic behavior. Because the participant’s sister openly resists and encourages the participant to resist the internalization of mental stress, the participant is able to build her own healthy relationships. She says:

“she taught me how to communicate with others and raise issues. And kind of be able to communicate my needs. And I think that's shown through a lot in my relationship with my boyfriend, being able to communicate how I feel and what I want or need. I think I learned a lot of that through my sister.”

It is clear that the participant dynamically changes her outlook, perspective and behavior after witnessing her sister's acts of resistance. This falls in accordance with subverting the Crisis of Connection as the participant is able to balance and improve her relationship with others by voicing her own thoughts and feelings. From her reasoning, this is made possible by having an authentic relationship with her sister. In this way, the participant is also subverting this recurring dilemma within adolescent identity development through Erikson's perspective of adolescent identity development. Erikson claims that, "an attempt to engage in intimate fellowship and competition or in sexual intimacy fully reveals the latent weakness of identity" (Erikson, 1962). Meaning, the act of establishing, maintaining and seeking relationships can actively "weaken" a person's "true identity" and that these people may find themselves adopting false identities in order to acquire or maintain the relationship. However, the participant again is able to form and maintain better relationships through communicating her own thoughts and feelings and resisting the cultural ideology that adolescent girls should internalize their thoughts.

What is interesting about the participant's perspective on actively making an effort to maintain and improve her relationships is the impact of age and as the participant frames it: "maturity". The participant points out specifically that "I think age impacts, mature maturity, and perspective and life...because my sister has four extra years of knowledge and understanding, and just four extra years of experiencing things that I haven't experienced". This perspective is interesting because it vaguely accommodates to cultural ideologies and sets up the dynamic between the sibling relationship to be non-accommodating. The fact that the participant values age as a signifying factor of maturity actively accommodates to East Asian cultural ideologies. We can find the same form of accommodation in *Only Hope: Coming of Age under China's One Child Policy* by Vanessa L. Fong where Chinese youths are expected to follow the Confucius

teachings of respecting your elders because they are wiser and have more life experience. Furthermore, the specific mention of four years depicts the influence of American cultural ideologies. The participant says:

“I've never lived with my sister, like permanently, like our parents were separated, growing up. So like, we only got super close recently, like in like, the recent years. So I would say her actions in those like, elementary, middle, even till High School, like when she was in high school didn't impact me that much because we weren't living together and we weren't that close. And I think our upbringings were pretty different. So we just had very different trajectories academically. So it was hard to kind of say whether or not she influenced what I did in high school, or even middle school or elementary school...And then like, the last five years, is when I would say we've become like actually like sisters.”

This example models how the American educational system systematically assigns “stages of life” that separate the interaction between the participant and her sister. The participant notes that it was not until recently that she formed such a close relationship with her sister and that a large part of becoming closer was because they shared a similar career trajectory. This is interesting primarily because the circumstance of separating students in the educational system has impacted the opportunity to build their sibling relationship.

On the other hand, once the participant and her sister shared the same academic and career trajectory, they found it much easier to communicate and share their thoughts and feelings with one another – thus improving their relationship. The participant specifically notes that:

“Both going into Psych is that I guess it's very, like, a non traditional path, non traditional path that's desired, I guess, by first generation, families. Because there are obviously more lucrative career paths we could have taken or more secure paths that we could have

taken. And I think that's a struggle that we both kind of struggled slash guilt that we both kind of struggled with. But because we're both in the same group, we were able to share that with each other.”

From this example, it is clear that there is an active resistance to cultural ideologies occurring within the two sisters. Their shared experience of being first-generation students has impacted the way they both respond to the expectations that first generation students, like Chinese youths during the One-Child Policy, “should provide for their elders as their elders have provided for the child” following Confucius filial piety (Confucianism). Both the participant and her sister actively navigate and resist this expectation in the pursuit of their similar career trajectories by sharing their experiences with one another. Furthermore, contrary to the expectation that the participant would feel pressured to succeed as well as her older sister, the participant said:

“we have joked about kind of me copying her or us like ending up like, we're just gonna end up doing the exact same things, we joke about them. But I think I've never felt kind of insecure or scared. If anything is made me feel more secure that having someone that's gone through a similar path of like choosing psychology. Even though we're going down different paths now it's so like, the path that she is going down and will always be also extremely exciting and interesting to me. So I think I like that we're both in similar but different fields. And I feel like that means I can learn a lot from her. And if she wants, she can learn a lot from me. I think, even though we're in similar fields, and makes us really see it more as definitely like, a pro with a bonus.”

From this example, both sisters engage in Meeting at the Crossroads and aid each other in the navigation of cultural ideologies and feelings of inadequacy. The participant notes that since she shares a similar identity to her sister, being an Asian American woman in a STEM field, it is



common for both her and her sister to have instances of Imposter Syndrome. These feelings of Imposter Syndrome are again tied to actively resisting against cultural ideologies and the expectation to succeed as first generation students. The participant specifically said:

“I think can be easy for both of us to kind of get in our own heads and think, are we really qualified to do what we're going to do, especially since we grew up, not surrounded by people that are in roles that we now want to try to get into. I think feeling maybe inadequate or feeling like we have so much to compete against, does make us internalize that difficulty that I guess we kind of face within ourselves, of just not having the same amount of resources growing up, which I guess ties back into the first generation identity. It's a little hard to escape. But I think all of that does tie into any imposter syndrome or insecurities that we face going into our career path. But I think where we are now both me and my sister were a little less scared of that.”

The first-generation identity is strongly rooted in the participant's identity because it is the most prominent identity that both she and her sister faced challenges with. The fact that both sisters want to achieve the “first-generation” dream while pursuing their own interests is an example of actively navigating through cultural ideologies. The burden of this navigation was alleviated by their ability to communicate with one another and share their experiences and struggles – helping one another throughout the process. This is a clear example of subverting the Crisis of Connection through the action of Meeting at the Crossroads. In fact, this also falls back to Erikson's theory of Identity Development due to the fact that both the participant dynamically builds and develops her identity from her first hand experience of witnessing the shared struggles of both herself and her sister.

After the completion of the interview and reflection of connecting the participant's experience, there are other sibling dynamics that I would like to observe or have questions on. One particular detail that I have noted after this interview, is how the participant occasionally refers to her sister as a "friend", which begs the question: what separates someone from being a friend rather than being a sister? The participant uses the term "friend" and "sister" interchangeably to describe the nature of the relationship she has with her sister. Looking back, I would have liked to have asked why she did this. Perhaps it can be rooted in the fact that her relationship with her sister is still very recent (within 5 years) and that the participant feels as if their bond is not yet close enough to be deemed "sisterly". The participant noted specifically that,

"But I definitely want where we're at right now to be maintained. But of course I definitely want there to be growth as well...I think we can both grow and be more mature as people and then maybe one day also like talking about things from my childhood that we didn't talk about a lot. But I think that needs like a new, an extra level of maturity. That is something we've both reached yet, because we didn't grow up together...so I think there's a lot of unspoken issues that we've dealt with separately that we're not ready to talk about yet. But I think going forward one, just keeping the really closeness we have now. But then I think with age, we'll also just talk even more deeply about topics that we've kind of hovered over for now."

Interpreting this example, the participant's "definition" of sister and of a sibling relationship is rooted in something beyond just biological relation – it is rooted in how two people are able to share a multitude of experiences with one another. Therefore, while the participant does feel closer to her sister now compared to before, there is still an aspect of distance in the participant's

perception of their relationship. Again, the participant highlights how “maturity” is needed to overcome this distance, however the true question lies in the fact of whether or not maturity is dependent on age or willingness to communicate for the participant and her sister.

### **Future Inquiry**

All in all, this analysis was insightful in understanding how close sibling relationships are catalysts to subverting the Crisis of Connection and participating in the Meeting at the Crossroads, which allows adolescent girls to maintain healthy relationships to others and to adolescents themselves. Of course, this is only one analysis of a particular sibling relationship. Future inquiries should be made to observe other sibling dynamics. For example, how would subverting the Crisis of Connection manifest differently if the sibling relation was between a brother and a sister? What if the siblings were more distant? How would the dynamic change if the siblings did not share biological relations? There are a multitude of varying sibling dynamics that have yet to be explored.

In hindsight, I felt as if I should have taken the extra time to interview the perspective of the participant’s older sister to form a more comprehensive analysis of the sibling dynamic. Perhaps the participant’s older sister felt differently on certain topics and it would be interesting to observe how being the *older* sibling and not having an older role model impacted the sister’s relationship with the participant. At the moment, I can only speculate the perspective based on the participant’s experience.

Otherwise, this interview has pushed the concept of Crisis of Connection, Meeting at the Crossroads and Erikson’s Theory of Identity Development into a territory that observes how an individual’s interaction with their microsystem (siblings) is reflective of how they interact with the exosystem. The dynamic interaction between the layers of the system and navigation through

cultural ideologies is what causes identity development and is integral in understanding how adolescents develop holistically. From my analysis it is clear that this interaction and navigation not only occurs between the spheres of influence, but it also occurs within each sphere.

Therefore, analysis of adolescent relationships is an integral part of observing the growth of adolescents throughout their lifetime.

**Transcript****Jaimie Chin 0:00**

First, I appreciate you taking the time to participate in this interview with me, because I know I'm very busy. But before we get started, please be advised that all these questions are entirely voluntary. And it's totally fine that you want to skip some questions. If you want any part of the interview transcript to be removed, please let me know. And I will be so at your request. So like anything you say, during the interview, where you're like, oh, wait, I probably shouldn't have said that. Just let me know. And I'll take it out later. Okay. Okay, before we get started, any other questions you might have for me? Is this anonymous? Yes, this is anonymous. So first, I want to start with some personal questions regarding you and your siblings. So first, what is your position within your family dynamic?

**Jenny Li 1:09**

As in a younger sibling? Yes. I'm in a family of four right now and it's I'm the youngest, and then my oldest sister. And then my dad and my grandpa.

**Jaimie Chin 1:26**

Okay, great. So can you tell me more about the relationship? Within your family? Is it like, generally good or generally bad? Do you talk to one another? Do you not talk to one another?

**Jenny Li 1:38**

It's generally generally good. I'd say we're pretty close. There are some topics that we don't talk about that I think there's kind of more generational. But within like me and my sister we're close, and we talk about pretty much anything, but then it's harder with like the adults.

**Jaimie Chin 2:01**

Okay, can you give me a list of things that you would talk to your sister about? Like, you wouldn't talk to your other family members as?

**Jenny Li 2:13**

Well, I think with my sister out, talk about kind of anything. So that could be like, school, or work or white career or just like the day to day like what's happening in my day, maybe I had a fight with my boyfriend or with a friend. So just like day to day activities, I could, I feel like I could easily talk to her about that down to more serious issues. Or even like mental health, or things as you're comfortable talking to my sister about, about when it comes to topics with my dad or my grandpa, I think it's definitely more on the surface level of like, the generally how schools doing generally my career plans, but my sister definitely gets some more specifics.

**Jaimie Chin 3:00**

So I believe you emphasized the topic of mental health before, why do you feel more comfortable talking to your sister about mental health compared to your other family members?

**Jenny Li 3:10**

I think she, I would definitely give my sister the credit for making the space, more comfortable for us. Because she's always been very open about her mental health, and talking about it, and just encouraging me to kind of find words for my feelings and showing her any, like sharing her mental health journey and her struggles. So I think because she's so open about it, and she's always encouraging me and asked me how I feel and everything like that. It's made me more comfortable to seek out help one on one, and I know that she's there, because she's taught me that.

**Jaimie Chin 3:57**

So on that topic of having an open relationship with your sister, do you think that the relationship with your sister, makes you strive to be a better person in like, your life in general, whether it be social, academic, athletic, musically, because I think as you mentioned before, you're very open with speaking to your sister about these things. So does your relationship impact your outlook on life in that way?

**Jenny Li 4:26**

I definitely think in a lot of different ways it has impacted the way I view of life and my relationship with others. I don't know if you want me to go into like any specific parts, or type of relationships, but just in general, it has helped me with things like communication and wanting to like, have like, friendship or any relationship is a two way street. So things like that has definitely affected how I do go about my relationships with anyone

**Jaimie Chin 5:02**

Can you give me an example?

**Jenny Li 5:03**

I think the idea of communication was really big for me, because she taught me how to communicate with others and raise issues. And kind of be able to communicate my needs. And I think that's shown through a lot in my relationship with my boyfriend, being able to communicate how I feel and what I want or need. I think I learned a lot of that through my sister.

**Jaimie Chin 5:38**

Is there anything that you learned from your sister to not do? Whether it be communication or something else?

**Jenny Li 5:47**

Yeah. I think because we're so close, that we see like, the good and the bad of each other, I've seen some of the things that she does do maybe when interacting with her friends or her significant other that has made me think maybe I shouldn't choose that.

**Jaimie Chin 6:12**

If you feel comfortable, do you want to give me like a specific example of what you chose not to do?

**Jenny Li 6:17**



Yeah. Okay. I think she has the tendency to be afraid of abandonment, which I think is a very common thing to be afraid of. I think everyone's a little scared of that. But I think the way she reacts to that feeling, especially like verbally can be harmful, sometimes whether she's talking to a friend or her boyfriend and when she does feel threatened by those kinds of feelings, or like insecure in any way, she kind of takes it out on the other person or maybe making like accusations or jumping to conclusions based off like what she's thinking. And it's not necessarily true. And that person doesn't really have any, like evidence of feeling like they might leave her or thinking certain things about her. But she kind of projects her own fears onto other people and kind of puts words in their mouth. And I feel like it's something that you should figure out first. She taught me that maybe I'll think about that first before immediately, instead of assuming what someone's thinking.

**Jaimie Chin 7:33**

Okay, I see that's interesting. So, because you have been mentioning communication a lot, do you think that your sister has had like, a large impact on other aspects of your life other than communication?

**Jenny Li 7:48**

Yes, and then also, I mean, there's been a lot of like, big and little things, but I think on the topic of like family relationships, recently, she's really helped me understand the importance of those kinds of familial relationships. Because I think as like, everyone grows up, it's easy to drift apart. But I think my sister has always been that person in the family that kind of forces everyone to be together in a good way where she wants us to have family dinners, and she wants us to, like

interact. And I think it's easy for family to take advantage of that. Because you think, oh, they'll always be around. But I think my sister is one of those people that really like takes the initiative, to make sure that fam the family stays together and the family does fun things. And I appreciate that of just for reminding me that just because we're all like Families always around doesn't mean you still don't put in the effort to I guess, spend time together.

**Jaimie Chin 9:02**

So how does your like sister's, like action of like, having family dinners and encouraging more familial bonds affects? Like how you go about building the bond as well? How does her influence impact you to do different things?

**Jenny Li 9:20**

It encourages me to also like, take some responsibility as well as opposed to I think when I was younger, my sister because she's older she would always take the initiative but encourages me to do that every now and then to whether it's a I'm currently away at college, but maybe every time I go home, I say I asked like my family as well. Some of my extended family can we go out to eat? Or nowadays that I'm older I'll help her plan some events, because I realize it's a lot for her to do on her own. So, or even like with friends it makes me think Maybe I should try and initiate to hang out. Because just because I talked to them often, maybe I should try to put take that extra step to do something on top of that.

**Jaimie Chin 10:15**

Um, do you think because, I know that you mentioned that because your sister is older, a lot of the initial responsibility fell on her. And then as a younger sibling, you felt like you wanted to help your sister with that responsibility. So do you think that the order in which you and your sister were born like affect them amount of influence she had on you? So if your sister was younger, how do you think your relationship would be similar or different?

**Jenny Li 10:47**

I think that's almost unimaginable for me. Because I think a lot of our dynamic was built around that age gap. The age gap, especially right now, because I think we're both pretty young that the age gap feels more prominent, I think up until the time like, siblings are in their 30s and 40s. The age gap just changes. Like we're, both of us always were in life, like, I feel like we were always four years apart, which meant we were never in the same school. Never. By the time I was in college, she was working already, I think so much of our interaction, or our relationship is built on that age gap. So that if she was younger, it'd be really difficult to try to imagine what that feels like I still we still be close and friends. But I think the nature of our relationship would definitely be different.

**Jaimie Chin 11:50**

So I, what I found interesting was you mentioned how, like, being four years or four years apart, and like, specifically four years apart, has impacted. Like, because I know that you mentioned like stages of life, like, at least in the American system, like every four years, like a different move. Like when you're in middle school, your sister's in high school, and you're in high school, you're sipping coffee and whatnot. So how, though, since your sister was older, and she's already

gone through these, like stages, how do you think her response or her actions in those settings impacted how you respond in those settings? Like how your sister was in high school and how she reacted to her surroundings? How did it affect how did it affect your response to your high school environment?

**Jenny Li 12:52**

For example, I think we also want to disclaimer that we didn't go up together. So I think my answer to this would be pretty different than maybe two siblings that like grew up together for the last 20 years, because I didn't, I've never lived with my sister, like permanently, like our parents were separated, growing up. So like, we only got super close recently, like in like, the recent years. So I would say her actions in those like, elementary, middle, even till High School, like when she was in high school didn't impact me that much because we weren't living together and we weren't that close. And I think our upbringings were pretty different. So we just had very different trajectories academically. So it was hard to kind of say whether or not she influenced what I did in high school, or even middle school or elementary school.

**Jaimie Chin 13:56**

Oh, that's a very interesting dynamic. So as you mentioned, like only recently that you've gotten really close with your sister

**Jenny Li 14:06**

I would say recently as in maybe the last 10 years, with I know that's like half of my life, but, close close, definitely the last five, but last, like 10 years, like the last eight to 10 years is when

we kind of started to interact for the first time. And then like, the last five years, is when I would say we've become like actually like sisters.

**Jaimie Chin 14:39**

How does that change your relationship from like, let's say, not very close to friends to sisters, how do you think that impacted her influence on you?

**Jenny Li 14:50**

I think was that influenced A lot because it just made me appreciate her so much more. Knowing that If she hadn't, because she's older, I think that's why she was the one that took that initiative of knowing that families, like don't take it don't like take family for granted. Let's mend that relationship. While we're still young. I think those were a lot of her thoughts because she was old enough to realize that. So now that I'm at the time, I didn't understand or appreciate that, but now that I'm older as well, I realized that if she didn't do that, she didn't like have these really, I guess, admirable thoughts and actions, which influenced how I act now. I realized we still might not be friends today, if she didn't do that. So it's really taught me, I guess, one might not take anyone for granted and kind of taught me the steps of like how to, like, build and maintain, like any kind of relationships.

**Jaimie Chin 16:19**

I noticed that you're mentioning a lot about like, how your sister's thoughts or her views on having very close family relationships were very important to you, and how that has impacted your life. I want to specifically touch on maybe difficulties that you think both you and your

sisters faced and how each of you either overcame them, or like how her reaction impacted your own action towards like, a problem that you find that you both face.

**Jenny Li 16:57**

So difficulties as in like life events, or just like anything, including life events?

**Jaimie Chin 17:05**

It doesn't have to be specifically life events and stuff that do you notice, like any common issues that both of you face?

**Jenny Li 17:12**

I'm sure there are some but I think I can think of I can share more like specifically things we went through, like our parents' divorce and things like that, that would be like a shared difficulty. But if I'm thinking of just like things that we struggle with, it's hard because our personalities are pretty different. I guess, I guess it depends, either like family events I could share or I guess our career path, or something that I guess would be a shared difficulty, kind of like upbringing? I'm not sure like, what you what, which one, I should say.

**Jaimie Chin 18:15**

You can say all of them, any of them, whichever one you feel comfortable

**Jenny Li 18:23**

Well, I would say the most shared one, I think, because I think that impacted us the most was definitely our parents divorce. And I feel like kind of starting from there was I was too young to like, understand it. But my sister was definitely the one that was at least like a little bit older enough to experience it and remember it. I think that was definitely a shared difficulty that we experienced. But because she was older, like every difficulty that we did experience together as a family, because she was older, she has to kind of take the brunt of all of that, while I was like almost too young to even fully remember understand. And I think that well it is a pretty recurrent theme of like, my sister has to deal with it because she's older and she understands what's happening

**Jaimie Chin 19:26**

So like now that you're older and now that you could have recognized that, How would you reflect on your own actions either during that time or after that time?

**Jenny Li 19:42**

I think well during the time, I was extremely young, like when my parents divorced, I was less than one. And then we kind of got split up with like her with my mom and me with my dad. But think it's hard to reflect on my actions because I was a kid, I think I kind of just did what everyone told me to do. And she did as well. So there was so young. But now that I am older, I guess what I learned, as I'm reflecting is to like it already happened. There's nothing I can do, but kind of going forward, doing the best I can to, I guess, cherish the relationship that I have now.

**Jaimie Chin 20:44**

You mentioned previously about, perhaps a common difficulty you face during like your career path. Can you talk more about that as well?

**Jenny Li 20:54**

Yeah. Well, I don't know if this is a coincidence. But we both ended up in psychology. And I think, going into psych, we both had the struggle of we know, we're interested in psychology and the human mind and kind of just understanding because there has been a lot of mental health, I guess, mental health struggles in my family in general. So I think maybe that influenced both of us to pursue this path. And just like pure interest, but we both have kind of struggled where to go from there, like we have the psych degree or were pursuing the psych degree, what to do with it. But I think that's definitely a shared struggle, and also having the shared identity of being like first generation college students, or her being like the very first generation, and I'm kind of like, I guess, 1.5 generations because my sister went to college. So I think having that that's definitely a shared struggle. And it just kind of led us different places, we both went into psychology. But I think my sister's definitely leaning more towards the traditional psychology path. And then I strayed a little bit from that. But I think we definitely felt the struggles of like, figuring out what we want it to do while honoring, like, our family and kind of picking a path that would be like safe, and like secure financially for the family, while also doing something that like genuinely interested us.

**Jaimie Chin 22:36**

So that's an interesting response. Because I was wondering if, like the two of you, because you mentioned how your sister decided to go on a more traditional path. While, you kind of strayed



from the traditional psychology path, Why do you think this happened? Or why do you think this occurred?

**Jenny Li 23:05**

Um, well, I can't really speak from my sister, I can only assume. But I do wonder if it's because I would say my sister definitely experienced more of the mental health struggle aspects of my family, whether just being old enough to, like talk to my parents about it being more open. And I think she definitely went through more as when she was younger as well. Because she did live with my mom. And my mom struggled with pretty severe mental health issues as well. So I think because she was probably more exposed to kind of that environment maybe kind of empowered her more to explore that path. And then for me, I think I'm really interested in that path as well. But I ended up straying away a little bit more from it, because I'm also wondering, I'm wondering if I'd be able to handle that much amount of kind of emotional burden going into the traditional psychology passed. And I think I also been to toward something that was more financially secure, which I'm going to something that's pre-health.

**Jaimie Chin 24:29**

I also want to ask whether or not because it's since you're both in psychology, do you ever face like feelings of doubt or inferiority or like comparison that has impacted you? What is the first thing that pops into your mind when I mentioned that?

**Jenny Li 25:11**

Well, I was thinking initially I thought because we have felt that way jokingly almost, because we ended up getting the same career path. I mean it's the same major and we almost ended up down the same career path, we have joked about kind of me copying her or us like ending up like, we're just gonna end up doing the exact same things, we joke about them. But I think I've never felt kind of insecure or scared. If anything is made me feel more secure that having someone that's gone through a similar path of like choosing psychology. Even though we're going down different paths now it's so like, the path that she is going down and will always be also extremely exciting and interesting to me. So I think I like that we're both in similar but different fields. And I feel like that means I can learn a lot from her. And if she wants, she can learn a lot from me. I think, even though we're in similar fields, and makes us really see it more as definitely like, a pro with a bonus.

Okay, one more thing to add. Yeah. Is that, I think so that's more like was in me and my sister, but then like, in terms of like, difficulties they face like, both going into Psych is that I guess it's very, like, a non traditional path, non traditional path that's desired, I guess, by first generation, families. Because there are obviously more lucrative career paths we could have taken or more secure paths that we could have taken. And I think that's a struggle that we both kind of struggled slash guilt that we both kind of struggled with. But because we're both in the same group, we were able to share that with each other.

**Jaimie Chin 27:10**

Okay, yes, that's really nice to hear that you're able to sort of share the burden of being resistant to like, traditional form of ideas. Right. So I think you specifically mentioned that your career

path has something to do with it. Because, like you mentioned, I believe, just culturally as like, being first generation and also being Asian, that's probably finding a more lucrative career path is probably better. But like you said, by not choosing that route, you're able to share the troubles that come with that correct?

**Jenny Li 27:52**

Yeah.

**Jaimie Chin 27:56**

Do you think there are other examples of this that are not related to your career path, for example, it doesn't just have to be tied to your first generation identity, but also just your identity, or maybe women in STEM because psychology is a STEM field, or anything of that matter.

**Jenny Li 28:22**

Recently, we both felt a little bit of imposter syndrome, I think is pretty common. With all the parts of identity, whether that's being a woman in STEM, being a woman being Asian American, being a minority. And taking a non traditional path, I think can be easy for both of us to kind of get in our own heads and think, are we really qualified to do what we're going to do, especially since we grew up, not surrounded by people that are in roles that we now want to try to get into. I think feeling maybe inadequate or feeling like we have so much to compete against, does make us internalize that difficulty that I guess we kind of face within ourselves, of just not having the same amount of resources growing up, which I guess ties back into the first generation identity. It's a little hard to escape. But I think all of that does tie into any like imposter syndrome or

insecurities that we face going into our career path. But I think where we are now both me and my sister were a little less scared of that. Because for me, I'm at the end of my undergraduate career now, so I feel like I face a lot of those like insecurities earlier on, but I'm sure I'll face it again right before I go into my career, but I think right now I'm in a pretty good place. Whereas my sister is about to begin graduate school after a few gap years. I think she's kind of going through that a little bit of that right now.

**Jaimie Chin 30:16**

Yeah, I'm interested to why do you think the first generation identity is so hard to escape? Or why it's so difficult compared to your other identities?

**Jenny Li 30:34**

Yeah, I would say it's hard to escape is 100% true, but also more of a joke. And think it's hard to escape because it's going to permanently, permanently be a part of my identity. And it's not something that I'm ashamed of, or anything. I think more so going throughout the four years of college has made me become very proud of that, that me and my sister do identify as first generation. I forgot the question.

**Jaimie Chin 31:16**

I'm just wondering why that's, like, so prominent compared to your other identities?

**Jenny Li 31:22**

Oh. I think especially because I'm in college right now, and navigating such big changes in my life in my life, especially my sister as well. But it does make us like when we do reflect together, as we're both kind of ending different chapters of our lives at the moment, coincidentally, like, around the same time, is that we didn't have a lot of guidance. Throughout this process, especially my sister, because when I was going through, I have my sister or my sister was going through it, she didn't have anyone, at least directly in the family, to guide her through that process. So I think one that makes us very proud of ourselves to be able to, like navigate a system where we didn't have a lot of resources to begin with. And we don't have a lot of networks or connections to get into the fields, we want to it's just not a lot of our families in those fields. So I think, throughout college, and we realized that, yes, like, we were both pretty disadvantaged compared to like, maybe perhaps, the path that other students came from. So I think it'll always be a pretty big part of our identities, because it kind of reminds us where we came from, and also like how much we've accomplished, in spite of not having that level of support that other students might have.

**Jaimie Chin 32:57**

Like you mentioned, you appreciate your sister because she kind of guided you through that process, because she is older when the two of you didn't have a lot of resources to begin with. I'm curious to see if you think that you have impacted your sister in some way.

**Jenny Li 33:19**

I think I have. One because she has told me so it's a little hard to like, kind of take away that knowledge of like, mess with their head. I think that's something else like I like about my sister,

she communicates that those things as well as like, it's a mutual relationship, although I'm not there to give her like advice from like an older person's perspective, I think I am able to communicate her with her especially these days like as a friend because she's taught me how to communicate it's ended up helping her because I'm there for her when she does need anyone a sister or a friend. And I think because when we've had shared experiences that makes it easy to talk about certain things, but I think also, I guess my personality, and just even the field I went through because I am psychology, I understand I guess certain aspects of human mind. Just I'm definitely a source of support for her whenever she needs that and I do make that known for her and she knows that I'm there for her. So I think in terms of just like being someone supportive and having someone to validate her emotions and just like rant to and I think just because I person I personalities are different Um, we do learn from each other in that aspect of I give up to give a specific example, when we argue or have conflicts, she's more the type to kind of talk about it right away, despite like any hurtful words as for me I'm more of the type to dwell on it for a while, and then say something after I've thought it through or not saying it at all, but I think we meet in the middle. So that's like, one way, I guess I've impacted her more specifically.

### **Jaimie Chin 35:32**

And I'm wondering, out of curiosity, if one of you, or both of you were, like, different. And by different I mean, like, because I'm aware that both of you share, like, you're both girls, you're both heterosexual. So you can bond on or talk about these things more comfortably? How do you think that would change? If, let's say, one of you were like, not a girl, or one of you was not heterosexual? How do you think that would change the dynamic? Or would it changed the dynamic for that matter?

**Jenny Li 36:10**

I actually don't think it would have I think, whether with things like Elissa, for example, if you provided me with this helpful to understand the question, whether it's like gender or sexual identity, those don't really impact it. But I think our nature of our relationship is more built on our shared experiences, and love for each other. So I think if... I'm actually not sure, because but I think at the end, the relationship wouldn't change, unless you're changing something like our age. Because overall, are, we're pretty different in terms of our upbringing and their identity and our personalities. But I think if any of that changed, I think we still be close right now. As long as like, you know, life events, don't change, and no, like, birth order changes.

**Jaimie Chin 37:14**

Why do you think age plays such a big importance in your relationship?

**Jenny Li 37:18**

I think age impacts, mature maturity, and perspective and life. Because I mentioned this before, but because my sister has four extra years of knowledge and understanding, and just four extra years of experiencing things that I haven't experienced, although in the grand scheme of like, life four years isn't a lot. But I think in the age that we are at now, we're both in our 20s, that's four years of growth is a lot. So I think because we have such different perspective, that age gap is like, exaggerated because of just how much can change in those four years, or how much more one can experience in four years. I think that plays a big part, and just also her personality, maybe it's not 100% age, but also maybe the personalities that my sister has had where she's not

afraid to be blunt, she's more straightforward. So as a result, she was able to kind of mend a relationship because she wanted to, and she was able to do that in a straightforward way instead of kind of maybe beating around the bush. But I think definitely her age is important because of what I said. But also, now I'm thinking of like other factors like her personality.

**Jaimie Chin 38:48**

Tell me more about what you would like for the future of your relationship with your sister to be

**Jenny Li 39:28**

I would definitely love for it to say not exactly where it's at. But I think the level of trust and comfortability I have we have returned and I really want that to be maintained. Not that I need it to be better but definitely not worse. But I definitely want where we're at right now to be maintained. But of course I definitely want there to be growth as well. Maybe growth and both of us I think we can both grow and be more mature as people but and then maybe one day also like talking about things from my childhood that we didn't talk about a lot. But I think that needs like a new, an extra level of maturity. That is something we've both reached yet, because we didn't grow up together. So I think there's a lot of unspoken issues that we've dealt with separately that we're not ready to talk about yet. But I think going forward one, just keeping the really closeness we have now. But then I think with age, we'll also just talk even more deeply about topics that we've kind of hovered over for now.

**Jaimie Chin 40:37**



That's wonderful to hear. And I hope that you and your sister, because I've met your sister before. I hope you guys continue to have such a wonderful, wonderful relationship. And I wish you guys nothing but the best. All right. Thank you so much, Jenny for your time. And again, if there's anything that you would like to redact or remove from the transcript, please let me know. And I'll send you the transcript ahead of time so you can just read it over and if you would like. Okay, thank you.

**Jenny Li 41:08**

Of course. Thank you

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