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Action Plan

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**Goal:* To learn more about the culture of Asian/Pacific Islanders and more about API student experiences in higher education.

**Objective #1:* Develop Awareness of the Asian/Pacific Islander Culture/Student Experience

- a. Reflect and write down my assumptions, biases, and stereotypes of API culture and API college students. Discuss with my best friend (Korean) and my girlfriend (half Filipino).
- b. Watch a movie that depicts, portrays, and/or examines API culture.
- c. Buy ingredients at a predominantly API grocery store and cook an API dessert.

**Objective #2:* Increase Knowledge of the Asian/Pacific Islander Culture/Student Experience

- a. Read articles that share about the experience of API college students.
- b. Meet with the leaders of API student clubs/organizations and interview them about their student experience.

**Objective #3:* Develop Skills to Work More Effectively with Asian/Pacific Islander Students

- a. Assess my current skill level of working with API students. Discuss with my best friend (Korean) and girlfriend (half Filipino).
- b. Create a program to meet at least one API identified need.

For “Part A” of my first objective I reflected and wrote down my assumptions, biases, and stereotypes of API culture and API college students. I then discussed them with my best friend who is Korean and my girlfriend who is half Filipino. The list of assumptions, biases, and stereotypes I came up with and shared were: Asian/Pacific Islander college students are model minorities, quiet/soft-spoken, get good grades, are business, math, technology, or science majors, know a lot about business, math, science, and technology, have strict parents, major in what their parents want them to major in, have a strong and fast paced work ethic, are perfectionists, and are independent and responsible.

I wanted to share my assumptions, biases, and stereotypes about Asian/Pacific Islanders with my two closest friends because I wanted their advice on how to overcome them. That was what I hoped to learn. I want to treat each API student I come across in my personal and professional career as an individual and not someone who is put inside a box. That was how I wanted to change and grow. I felt most comfortable sharing these controversial inner thoughts with my two closest friends because I knew they would not judge me for thinking in such a way and they would give me straight answers, their honest thoughts in response to my own.

When sharing these assumptions, biases, and stereotypes with my two closest friends I asked them each three questions. I asked: “Where do you think I got these assumptions, biases, and stereotypes from?” “How do you fit into or break the mold on these?” and “Who in your life have you seen fit or break the mold on these?”

To “Where do you think I got these assumptions, biases, and stereotypes from?” my girlfriend answered:

I think that your assumptions may have come from the media or from things that you may have heard people say. People you have met in combination with lack of vast experiences with people who break that mold could have reinforced those assumptions, biases and stereotypes. I think you could have gotten the idea that

Asians/Pacific Islanders are the model minority by observing how people treat APIs as often "safe" or trustworthy in comparison to how other minority groups are treated.

My best friend answered: Friends, media, and genes (by genes, I mean it's in the genes).

To "How do you fit into or break the mold on these?" my girlfriend answered:

I fit into this mold because I get good grades, I'm a perfectionist, I see myself as independent and responsible, I think I have a strong work ethic, I like to work in a face paced environment, and I excelled in math and science in school. However, I am by no means timid or soft-spoken, my parents are not strict, my parents supported my choice of major, and most of my success comes from my parents supporting my own drive, not from them pushing me to do well.

My best friend answered: I don't think I apply to almost any of them, except good grades, a strong and fast paced work ethic, being a perfectionist, and being independent and responsible.

To "Who in your life have you seen fit or break the mold on these?" my girlfriend answered:

My roommate in college was born in China and when it came time for her to choose between psychology and biology her father emphasized that biology would give her a better life, would help her make more money, and that it was superior to psychology. She ended up choosing biology. However, she was by no means a goodie-goodie and she was on academic probation at one point, so I can see how she both fits the mold but also breaks it. Growing up, some of my friends' parents who immigrated from the Philippines or Vietnam were very strict and sometimes my mother, who is first generation Filipino-American, would be an advocate for my friends and try to talk the parents into letting their children have a little more freedom. My best friend who is first generation Chinese/Laotian was our salutatorian in high school and went on to receive a BS in Business Science in college, so she would seem to fit the mold. However, her parents were not strict, she chose her own major, she's very bright but does only enough to get by, and is very comfortable speaking her mind.

My best friend answered: Every Asian I've gotten to know.

After this experience I felt relieved, as if I had gotten some hidden thing off of my chest.

I shared something personal with my close friends and they gave their honest opinion on the matter. I acknowledged to them: this is how I view your people, this is how I generalize the

race/ethnicity you belong to. From their responses, my friends seemed to forgive me in a way and recognize that I am growing in my multicultural awareness. My reaction to this experience was at first one of fear, but then one of trust, like I had deconstructed a barrier that was holding back my knowledge of the API culture and student experiences.

Step II for this particular part of objective one would be to move deeper, beyond sharing my assumptions, biases, and stereotypes into sharing why they are good or bad and what I should do to get rid of any or all of them. I actually did this in Part “A” of objective three in my action plan when I was assessing my skill level with these two close friends. I asked them, “Why should I keep or abandon part or all of this list?” and, “What steps should I take, if any, to get rid of any or all of this list?” But there will be more said on their answers later.

An implication for multiculturalism in student affairs that I took away from this activity would be for student affairs professionals to encourage their students to share with their close friends from other cultures their biases, stereotypes, and assumptions. I have known the friends I shared with for years, but I never shared with them what I just did. It took our friendships to a deeper understanding of where one another are coming from and where to go from there. Whether it is through programming, the curriculum, co-curricular action plans, or some way of implementing this idea, I would encourage students to express their stereotypes to their friends right away. That way they move forward in a clearer understanding of one another’s culture and student experience. That way they can be better friends.

For “Part B” of my first objective I watched a movie that depicted, portrayed, and/or examined API culture. The movie I chose was *The Joy Luck Club*. From watching the movie I hoped to learn more about API culture and transfer that knowledge into the API college student

experience. I hoped to change my preconceived notions of what API culture is like while growing in a deeper understanding. I also hoped to view the film with college students in mind.

The film portrayed a Chinese family, particularly the relationship between a mother and her daughter. In that relationship the mother was very proud of her daughter's achievements and was especially vocal about these achievements when other Chinese parents were around. The mother would speak in roundabout ways, instead of flat out saying her daughter was the best. Since the Chinese family was first-generation in the United States, they sought out respect, particularly for the women. They did not want to be looked down upon like they were back in China. In the film this led to the mother pushing her child to play the piano and chess in order to make a name for the family. The daughter felt a lot of pressure to make her mother proud. Chinese culture, as portrayed in the film, is one in which children should obey their parents and do what they want them to do. As a result, this led to the daughter saying to her mother that she could never live up to the child her mother wanted her to be. The daughter was tired of being paraded around in the atmosphere of competition, tired of being used to show off to other families. Going against her mother's wishes was seen as going against her mother and this led to drama throughout the film.

One feeling I had during and after the film was that maybe not all Chinese families are like this and maybe there are families like this who are not Chinese. While this may be true, one thing I did learn from the film was that this family was first-generation in the U.S. The family dynamics may be more of a factor than being Chinese, or maybe it is the combination of the two. In any case, I felt like I had a taste of what some API college students have been through in their life or still go through while attending college.

If I were planning Stage II of this action plan, I would watch more films with Chinese culture, as well as more films on first-generation API families. I would compare and contrast the films looking for similarities and differences. I would also watch the film with a group of API college students who could help filter what is fact in the film from what is dramatization.

One implication for multiculturalism in student affairs would be to collaborate the multi-ethnic programs office with the film studies department to create a program. This program would encourage all students to look at films that portray any race or ethnicity with a critical eye, letting students know that the film does not capture the whole, but rather a part. The program could also allow for students to share their insights, misconceptions, personal experiences, and other related thoughts. In a sense, the program could act as a venue for students to debunk their own stereotypes, assumptions, and biases.

For “Part C” of my first objective I bought ingredients at a predominantly API grocery store and cooked an API dessert. From this experience I hoped to learn another item to cook, a unique item to cook, and the challenges other races and ethnicities face inside “American” grocery stores. Something I wanted to change was my preconceived notion of what Asian/Pacific Islander food was like. Having eaten at Asian restaurants throughout my life, the only notion of an API dessert I had was fortune cookies. I also wanted to explore the Pacific Islander side of API food. My girlfriend and I purchased ingredients at *Seafood City*, a predominantly Filipino grocery store. We then cooked a Filipino dessert called Bitsu Bitsu lead by her aunt Patti’s knowledge.

While we were shopping at the grocery store I felt completely lost. I had no clue where to find anything and I felt intimidated to ask for help. I also felt like I did not belong at the grocery store and like everyone there was looking at me, judging, asking in his or her mind why I

was there. When my girlfriend and I got home to the kitchen, the nurturing of her aunt Patti helped me feel more at ease and at home. I did mess a few things up during the cooking process, but they were quickly forgiven. The end result was delicious. I had never tasted something like it before nor imagined myself cooking it in the first place. I stepped into new ground and wanted to learn more Filipino foods to make.

If I were preparing Stage II of this portion of the action plan I would challenge myself to prepare appetizers, the main course, and a dessert that were all Filipino. I would also enter *Seafood City* unaccompanied to feel the full effect of being alone in unknown territory. I would also “fly solo” in the kitchen, preparing and cooking everything without guidance. Doing all of this would allow for more immersion into the API culture, particularly Filipino culture and food.

One implication for student affairs professionals would be to have a program inside the dormitory similar to my cooking extravaganza. The program could occur during orientation week and be involved with teaching freshman about diversity. Students would pair up in teams to go out to a grocery store, buy ingredients, and come back to make an unfamiliar ethnic food in the dorm kitchen. This may need to take place at a smaller college and at one in the Los Angeles area. A small college would allow for more kitchen use and the LA area would allow for more diverse ingredients to be purchased.



Ingredients for Bitsu Bitsu:

- 16 oz box of Mochiko sweet rice mochi flour
- 13.5oz can of coconut milk
- 1tsp of baking soda
- 1 cup of sugar
- 1 ½ - 2 cups of shredded coconut
- water: for consistency

Glaze topping:

- 1 cup of brown sugar
- ¼ cup of miniature marshmallows

Instructions for Bitsu Bitsu:

1. In a medium sized bowl, combine the mochi flour, coconut milk, baking soda, sugar, and shredded coconut.
2. Using your hands, fold and thoroughly knead the ingredients until it reaches the consistency of cookie dough. Add water (in small amounts) as needed. The mixture should stick to your hands as you mix, but not to the sides of the bowl.
3. Pinch off a tablespoon sized piece of dough and roll it between your flattened palms until it is in the shape of a ball.
4. Thickly coat a skillet with vegetable oil.
5. Heat the oil in skillet on medium-high and place the dough balls into the oil.
6. Turn dough balls over when you see the bottoms turn golden brown.
7. Repeat step 6 until all sides of the ball are golden.
8. Place bitsu bitsu into a paper towel covered bowl as your retrieve them from the skillet.
9. In a small pan over low heat mix the brown sugar and marshmallows until they are melted down into a molasses mixture.
10. Remove the paper towel from the bowl containing bitsu bitsu and then pour the glaze over the bitsu bitsu evenly.
11. Toss bitsu bitsu in bowl until all are evenly covered.
12. Serve immediately. Bitsu Bitsu is best served hot!

For “Part A” of objective two I read articles that shared about the experience of API college students. From this activity I hoped to learn more about the API student college experience in order to meet their needs better. I also hoped to change my biases, assumptions, and stereotypes I listed earlier, particularly about API students being the model minority. I want to treat all API students as individuals and I want to give special attention to the fact that the API racial/ethnic category generalizes a large population of diverse people groups and cultures.

According to Kurotsuchi (2003), Asian/Pacific Islander students are the “invisible” population in U.S. higher education and are the “missing minority” in collegiate racial/ethnic discourse. Maramba (2008) states, “According to the 2000 census, the state of California has the largest Asian population in the United States at 4.3 million; of this number, Chinese represent 980,000 (23%) closely followed by Filipinas/os at 903,000 (21%).”

The API category is very diverse; there are over 50 ethnic groups encompassed by it. Collecting these races/ethnicities into one category can be very problematic as each sub-group is unique and deserves unique attention, study, and research. In studying the API student college experience, Lee (2006) reported that 31% of the API population in the U.S. in 2000 was born in the U.S., while 69% was foreign born. API families are also more likely than Whites to have incomes of \$75,000 or more, yet API families are also more likely than Whites to have incomes below \$25,000.

API students are going to college at a faster rate than any other racial/ethnic group. Allen, Antonio, Ceja, McDonough, & Teranishi (2004) researched the college choice process for API students and their families. Broken down by ethnicity, the researchers discovered that Chinese and Korean students are more likely to attend highly selective colleges than Filipino and Southeast Asian students. Also Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students are more likely to attend

private universities whereas Filipino and Southeast Asian students are more likely to attend four-year public colleges. The researchers concluded the more money an API family has, the higher the selectivity of the college entered and the less money an API family has, the lower selectivity of the college entered. Also, Filipino and Southeast Asian students wanted to live near home more than Chinese, Korean, and Japanese students. Chinese and Korean students took more SAT preparation courses. Southeast Asian and Filipino students were more influenced by financial concerns and chose a college based on tuition. Chinese and Korean students were more likely to apply to more than one college. And, Southeast Asian, Filipino, and Japanese students were more likely to apply to only one college.

The perception that all API students are high achievers is misleading. Yeh (2004) researched college persistence amongst API students and found that 40% of API students in higher education are attending two-year colleges and 82% of API students attend public institutions. High school drop out rates are at 46% for Filipino students, 50% for Southeast Asian students, and 60% for Samoan students. Also, including Asian foreign students into API data significantly alters results. In 1997, “Asian foreign students earned 18% of all U.S. doctoral degrees,” while, “Asian Pacific Americans earned only 3%.”

Gloria & Ho (2003), in a study of API students’ college experience and persistence, found that API students have higher entry, persistence, and completion rates than any other race/ethnicity. However, Filipino, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Island students have lower levels of completion than their fellow Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students.

In higher education, API students make up 6.4% of the student population, while API faculty makes up 5% of the faculty population. Lundberg & Schreiner (2004), in a study on faculty-student interaction, discovered that API students reported more negative relationships

with faculty than White students reported. Also, the quality of relationship with faculty was the strongest predictor for learning for API students, yet API students had lower levels of interaction with faculty.

On the college campus, minorities experience a lack of support and unwelcoming environment more often than Whites. Ancis, Mohr, & Sedlacek (2000) researched student perceptions of campus cultural climate by race. The researchers found that African Americans, Asians, and Latinos felt more pressure to conform to racial stereotypes than Whites. And African Americans and Asians felt more pressure than Latinos. Whites felt they were treated more fairly than Asians and African Americans. African Americans and Asians felt more than Whites that faculty perpetuated racism. The researchers also found that Whites see groups of minorities as segregation whereas minorities see them as support systems. In a study of perceptions of campus climate for underrepresented groups, Rankin & Reason (2005) found that 64% of API students perceived the campus accepting of difference, 25% were uncertain, and 11% perceived the campus as not accepting.

In Maramba's (2008) look at the Filipino student experience, the researcher noted students were concerned with the lack of Filipino representation on campus and the lack of Filipino coursework. Also, students reported a lack of student service concern and reported a sense that there was no larger community on campus. The students reported their safe zone as a place where they did not feel "tokenized" and "essentialized."

After reading these articles my main reaction to them was a desire for individual attention. Every article I read on API college students prefaced their writing by saying not much has been done to listen to the voice of Asian/Pacific Islander college students. The articles also

acknowledged that Asian and Pacific Islander are distinctly different. My feeling from the readings was an internal goal to give API students attention and treat them as an individual.

If I were preparing Stage II of this part of the action plan I would read the book *Working With Asian American College Students*. Reading that entire book would provide a deeper look into how to best serve API students. In my initial stage I read ten articles of about ten pages each that touched the surface of what API college students face; reading one one-hundred page book would dig deeper into the topic and allow me to expand my knowledge further.

Something all student affairs professionals need to keep doing is reading literature on their college students. They need to stay up to date on the literature and at times move beyond articles into reading long books. Through reading research and theory on college students we can know more about where they are at and how to help them. However, reading the literature is only part of what needs to happen. After reading, a professional needs to share about what they learned with students and colleagues and actually practice what they have learned. This is one implication for student affairs professionals.

For “Part B” of objective two I met with some leaders of API student clubs/organizations and interviewed them about their student experience. I hoped to learn more about what it is like to be an API student on a diverse college campus and a predominantly white college campus. I hoped to change my idea of what API students go through, growing in my knowledge.

I asked the three students a list of four questions. One student was from UCSD, one was from Cal Poly Pomona, and one was from Westmont College. The questions were: “Do you feel you are treated differently by students based on being Asian/Pacific Islander? By faculty? By staff and administration?” And, “Finish the following statement: "Being Asian/Pacific Islander, in order to 'fit in,' I often feel I need to change some of these personal characteristics..."

To the first question, being treated differently by students, the UCSD student answered, “No. Over half of UCSD students are Asian/Pacific Islanders so for the most part, it's easier to relate to one another.” The Cal Poly student answered, “No. Living and going to school in southern California, I feel that diversity is more welcomed.” The Westmont student answered, “Yes. I get a lot of looks and questions, like I am special or something.”

To the second question, being treated differently by faculty, the UCSD and Cal Poly students answered similarly. They said no because their schools were researched based and their faculty members come from a wide range of cultures. The Westmont student said no and that the professors in class were further along in accepting diversity than the students were.

All three students said that the staff and administration did not treat them differently for being API. For the last question about fitting in, the UCSD student answered, “I feel that sometimes more is expected from me. Growing up as an Asian American, there's always the question of ‘Am I Asian enough?’ or ‘Am I American enough?’” The Cal Poly student answered, “There is a mutual understanding between everyone to be who you are.” The Westmont student answered, “Sometimes to fit in I need to tone down my passion for diversity.”

After hearing these students answer my questions I understood more the differences between diverse and non-diverse colleges and how they affect students. My reaction to the student from Westmont was one of concern. Whereas the other two students seemed to have a support system of peers in place, the Westmont student seemed to lack the peers and the staff to help her through college.

If I were planning Stage II of this experience I would speak with more API students from the institutions I looked into to see if the API experience was similar for more students. I would

also expand the type of institutions I look into, spanning the spectrum of the percentages of API students in the student population.

One implication for student affairs concerning multiculturalism is the fact that numbers do matter for creating healthy student experiences. Colleges and universities need to understand that the student population mainly makes the culture occurring at an institution and admitting a predominantly White student population will not help ethnic minority students.

For “Part A” of objective three I assessed my current skill level of working with API students and discussed my thoughts with my best friend who is Korean and my girlfriend who is half Filipino. I wanted to learn from my friends what I was doing right and what I was doing wrong in my interactions with API college students. From their opinions and reflections I wanted to change my behavior and grow into a more understanding and genuine person.

When I assessed my skills with my two closest friends I asked them each two questions. First I shared with them my view of these two questions and my approach to interacting with API college students. Then I asked them the questions and encouraged their answers to rebuke me. I asked: “Why should I keep or abandon part or all of my list of biases, stereotypes, and assumptions?” and “What steps should I take, if any, to get rid of any or all of this list?”

To, “Why should I keep or abandon part or all of my list of biases, stereotypes, and assumptions?” my girlfriend answered:

I can give an example of a person who proves an assumption is true, but in the same breath show you how that same person also breaks that mold. I think that it's okay to loosely keep those assumptions if you recognize that they are not the whole story. It's important to realize that more often than not you will come across people who fit only a couple of those stereotypes but will not fit them all. Also, you should recognize that people who are not API can possess those qualities and people who are API can possess qualities outside of those you listed. It's okay to notice patterns among cultures, but do not make decisions based up these assumptions (such as hiring someone API over another race because he/she is likely to be a responsible and independent hard worker). Finally, learn more

about our collective culture and independent cultures so you know why some of those qualities are valued or why they are perceived to be valued.

My best friend answered: Abandon all of it, because if you don't, you won't meet someone on his or her terms. You'll always think you know someone before you even say hi.

To, "What steps should I take, if any, to get rid of any or all of this list?" my girlfriend answered:

I think the biggest step you can take is gaining knowledge through experience. When you do encounter someone who is API put your list aside, enjoy their company and try to get to know more about them and their culture. Later, you can reflect on your interaction and reevaluate your assumptions. For example, if you spent time with my family you would come to know that my grandparents instilled a strong work ethic in us because when they immigrated they came from a very poor country and had very little money when they got here. They worked very hard to give us a better life. You would also see that there are people in my family that are just downright lazy. So as you gain knowledge, reflect upon and reevaluate your perceptions, and be willing to challenge other people's impressions as well.

My best friend answered: Meet more Asians. Get to know them on their terms. Listen and accept before you process and understand. Come with as much of a blank slate as possible. It'll change over time, if you let it. Conscious decisions go a long way.

After speaking with my close friends about my skills in working with API college students, my first reaction was to avoid API students all together because I felt like I had no skills. My best friend encouraged me to get rid of all assumptions and the like while my girlfriend said some were fine to keep. At first I felt confused, but then I felt inspired. In my previous skill of working with API college students I was flawed. I would approach the students acting as if I already knew something about them. Now I am inspired and have been encouraged to try out a new skill of abandoning everything before meeting an API college student so that I can treat them as an individual. If they express some needs that can be associated with other API identified needs then I can problem solve from using established knowledge (such as ethnic

identity development). I will treat API students as individuals first, then look toward generalizations of the API student experience, whereas in the past I was doing it the opposite.

For Stage II of this experience I would test out this new skill again and again in order to evaluate whether it worked or not. I would also seek more opinions on how to approach API students, especially the opinions of student affairs personnel who have been on the job a while.

One implication for student affairs concerning multiculturalism that I learned from this objective is that practice makes perfect. My best friend and my girlfriend were a form of diversity training for me similar to that provided to faculty and staff at a college. Diversity training is one thing, but diversity action is another. I am curious about ways student affairs professionals can act on what they learn as soon as they learn something. Practice makes perfect. My skill level in working with API college students will not grow unless I act on what I learn.

For “Part B” of my third objective I created a program to meet at least one identified need I heard from the Asian/Pacific Islander population. From this experience I hoped to learn how to implement a program related to diversity, multiculturalism, race, and ethnicity. I also hoped to take action on what students were sharing with me in order to not let their words fall upon listening ears, yet lazy hands. I sought growth through this experience by throwing myself, a White male, to the wolves in a sense, by programming for a race/ethnicity that I am not part of.

The program I came up with was a flyer campaign to be posted around campus or in the Multi-Ethnic Programs office. The flyer said: “I am not Asian. I am me. There are over 50 ethnic groups encompassed by ‘Asian/Pacific Islander.’ Get to know me.”

My initial reaction to this program was surprise because I was taking action on a college campus. Much of my personality is one that sits back and observes, not necessarily takes action. While the program is still under review by the Multi-Ethnic Programs office, I am worried that it

is not sensitive, not relevant, or unnecessary. I feel like I really put myself out there. However, the need for being treated as an individual was a common theme throughout my research and discussions with API college students. I feel justified in the program I made and I feel proud of my work that I have done. The goal of my program is awareness and knowledge that hopefully leads to student action. I hope to bring awareness to all non-API students that calling someone “Asian” generalizes that person. I hope to bring knowledge by revealing that the “Asian” generalization is bad. Hopefully action will come about in which non-API students will reach out to API students and get to know them as individuals.

Stage II of this experience would be to have a follow-up program to the flyer campaign. The follow-up program would consist of faculty, staff, and student speakers that could explain their reasons of why calling someone “Asian” is not appropriate. Faculty could share on the history of the Asian/Pacific Islander cultures and how they did not all get along in the past and not all get along today. The generalization actually humiliates some people. Students and staff could share about their personal preferences in what they want to be called and how they want to be “labeled” by others.

One implication for student affairs with multiculturalism is that White people can act to promote diversity. Though White people may fear acting and non-White people may fear their actions will only perpetuate suppression and privilege; White people can have an impact.

**I am
not
Asian.**

I am me.

There are over 50 ethnic groups encompassed
by “Asian/Pacific Islander.”

Get to know me.

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