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Title: Asian American RSO's on the University of Illinois Campus: Organization Interaction and Reasons for Joining

About the Authors:

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Abstract: This paper looks at Asian American Registered Student Organizations (RSO) on the University of Illinois campus. We wished to understand the particular inter-group dynamic of Asian American RSO's and to understand whether groups were really united under the umbrella term APAC (Asian Pacific American Coalition). If so, what sort of implications, in regards to community and solidarity, were assumed through this involvement. Additionally, we wished to find the reasons individuals joined a specific organization over another within the spectrum of Asian American organizations on campus.

Question: What aspects of a particular Registered Student Organizations (RSO's) are appealing to Asian American youth? Are decisions to join based primarily upon an individual's ethnic identity or cultural heritage? How do the organizations interact among themselves? Do they mingle quite frequently or are they separated by the characteristics that differentiate them from each other?

Plan: Our research plan included surveys, observation, and interviews. We wanted to use all three methods in order to get a well-rounded idea of the interaction between and within groups. We also wanted to observe the social interaction of the individuals in order to decipher if this might be a reason for joining a particular organization. We all attended the Asian Pacific American Coalition (APAC) meeting. This meeting consists of representatives from each of the affiliated organization. This is a general meeting to discuss and inform other organizations of upcoming events and to discuss any other matters of importance within the Asian American

community. The APAC meetings are generally held every other week at the Asian American Cultural Center (AACC). At this particular meeting, there was a speaker to address the officers of the organizations. Her lecture revolved around Asian versus American leadership styles and how they interact. Normally, the meetings are surrounded solely on events coming up for the organizations, as well as a place to discuss potential inter-org events or collaborations.

We chose to target organizations with different member sizes, ethnic focus, and Asian American Greek organizations. We felt that this would give us better insight to what characteristics define each organization and why this might attract someone to join. In addition, it was necessary for us to see the interactions of every group instead of focusing on only one organization's meeting. Our group interviewed members and/or officers from Taiwanese American Students Club (TASC), Asian American Association (AAA), Taiwanese Intercultural Association (TIA), and Vietnamese Student Association (VSA).

Data (observations):

Kimberly: For my observation, I decided to go to the APAC Coalition meeting on Thursday, October 22 at the Asian American Cultural Center. I decided to map out the room in which we were sitting, as well as provide description. The room was set up a little bit differently than this drawing, but my skills at computer drawing are limited. The main take-away from the picture is that I was sitting in the second to last row, on the right hand side. I did not have the ability to see the members behind me, but only in front of me and to the right. I also had full view of the speaker and the happenings going on to the left side of the room where the copy machine was. Everyone was set up facing the screen with the Power Point presentation and where the speaker was.

The room was extremely loud before the speaker began. I assumed that everyone knew each other outside of the meeting because of the level of friendly chatter. I also assumed the people at the meeting to be members of Asian American organizations on campus. While I doubted them to be general members, I believe they were officers. People were speaking in groups of 3-4. Two males didn't appear to be talking to anyone. They were sitting by themselves and not conversing with the other people in the room. One male was on his laptop and seemed to be distracted by it. Everyone quieted down quickly when the speaker began.

When the speaker first began, there were two girls by the copy machine (making copies for the speaker I later found out). The noise from the machine distracted me from the speaker. The majority of the students in the room were female. Everyone paid direct attention to the speaker for the first 15 minutes. Later on into the presentation there were a few whispers from the back as well as some phones going off which was distracting.

The speaker made some great points about leadership as an Asian American. She argued that culture changes leadership. She also spoke about the dialectics of Asian American and the characteristics that were associated with their Asian "side" and their American "side." She demonstrated that it was difficult to differentiate between which characteristics belong to which

side. The room paid attentive attention to the speaker. Two females in front of me began drawing comics about 30-35 minutes into the presentation. People seemed to get slightly restless after almost an hour passes.

After the speaker, there was a time for the different organizations to promote their activities and to encourage others to join them in their endeavors. Several fliers were handed out with more information. There were many activities to be announced and other members asked lots of questions about them (I assumed that they were interested in participating). They asked questions like when, where, what time. It seemed as though the activities would gain more participation because of the other organization joining them in their efforts. I think that stood out most. Each organization informed other members about their activities and in turn, the other members are willing to participate. I attribute this willingness to their relationships outside of their organizations. Perhaps, these friendships developed because of the organizations. Either way, I believe that support stemmed from their close personal ties to members of other organizations.

Janice: I attended the Asian Pacific American Coalition (APAC) meeting on Thursday, October 22, 2009 for my observation. This meeting is held every other week at the Asian American Cultural Center (AACC). Members from each of the affiliated Asian American Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) are typically in attendance. This particular meeting included a speaker, who talked about Asian vs. American leadership styles.

I was upstairs in the Activities Room of the AACC before the meeting started. As part of the APAC Board, I had to help set up the room. Kim was also there early and offered to help move furniture, as did a couple other people, but in general, people stood around chatting. The chairs were set up theater-style with an aisle in the middle, separating the seating into two sections. The room got louder as more and more people came in. Most people walked in with other members from their respective organizations. Only a couple organizations had single individuals at the meeting. There were four rows of seats and couches at the front of the room in close proximity to the speaker.

Once the seats were arranged, everyone started to sit down. APAC board members sat towards the front. Mainly people seemed to prefer sitting in the back row. Almost everyone sat with members of their own organizations aside from two sets of couples who sat together. As part of the APAC board, I found myself sitting in the front and also waving the girls from my sorority as well as my APAC co-chair towards me subconsciously. I did not even realize that I had done this until I looked back down at the notes I was taking for this observation. I noticed that the Asian American Greeks sat on the left side of the room, while members of the smaller organizations sat in the back left and a large RSO's member sat in the front left, on the couches. There were three non-Greeks amongst the Greeks. Kim sat close to me and a male student sat next to his girlfriend in the back corner on the end of the row. The third student was the only member of her RSO present at the meeting. She did not really talk to the other girls sitting next to her at first, but exchanged a couple of words with them once she was introduced.

Once the meeting started, everyone focused on the speaker. She held their attention for a little bit, but soon people started zoning out. One guy in the front row and one in the back center were

falling asleep. The people sitting next to them would nudge them occasionally to wake them up. The speaker often asked for audience response, but wasn't given much. At the end the APAC co-directors regained control of the floor, the board gave updates, and the floor was open to RSOs to announce upcoming events. Almost all organizations had something to announce and a couple handed out flyers. Everyone seemed to pay more attention to this part; it was either because the meeting was almost over, or waiting for a turn to speak. After this portion, people got back into clusters and chatted some more. There was some mixing between the Greeks, but that was the extent of the inter-group interactions. A few people lingered in the room, waiting for their friends, but mostly people left right away.

Tiffany: For my observation, I went to the APAC Coalition meeting with Janice and Kimberly. It was held on Thursday, October 22nd in the upstairs conference room at the Asian American Cultural Center. I thought this meeting was ideal to observe the interactions between organizations because each APAC org is supposed to send at least one representative to the meetings. The layout of the room had individual seats line in diagonal rows that faced the speaker. There were two couches in the front as well. The speaker was in the middle with her PowerPoint behind her. This week there was a speaker who spoke about Hybrid Leadership: Asian-American.

Before the speaker began her lecture many of the attendees were talking amongst themselves. Since I have been to APAC meetings before I recognized individuals of different organizations. Basically, the officers of the organizations were talking amongst themselves and not really with other organizations. There was some inter organization communication but not that much. I noticed that the majority of the organizations had about three to four individuals attend. However, there were some individuals who came alone. The groups basically clustered into their own areas. There was not that much inter-group seating arrangement. Also, the APAC board mainly sat in the front of the room on the couches. I was sitting in the back row so I could have a view of everything going on in the room.

Once the speaker began her lecture, the attendees paid attention to her and there was no interaction between the individuals. Everyone seemed to pay attention for the first part of her lecture, but seemed to be bored afterwards. I noticed people whispering, writing notes, and texting on their cell phone. Once in a while the speaker asked the audience questions but there was minimal response. The audience did not seem too engaged with her lecture. The speaker addressed leadership among Asian Americans. She differentiated between the "Asian" leadership style and the "American" leadership style. She made abstract metaphors to describe these differences. The main point of her lecture was to describe the hybrid culture and hybrid leadership. I noticed a lot of people getting restless and looking at the clock.

After the speaker, there was time for the present organizations to promote their upcoming events. Several organizations passed out flyers to the audience. The individuals there seemed to be more engaged during the portion of the meeting because they asked for specifics such as the time and length of the event. The organization's representatives would then relay the information back to their respective organizations.

Overall, I noticed a lack of mingling among the organizations. Most individuals seem to mingle with the individuals from their same organization or they mingled with people they were friends with. The organizations definitely seemed to support one another's organizations or at least relay the information back to their members. I thought the meeting went very smoothly and efficiently and it gave the attendees a time to learn about other organization's events.

Data (interviews):

Kimberly: For my interview, I decided that I should speak with both an officer of an organization, as well as a member. I decided to contact two different organizations so that I could compare and contrast them. I contacted an officer of the Asian American Association on campus and a member of the Taiwanese American Students Club. The questions varied slightly depending on the interviewee.

My questions for the President were based upon how the group promoted its interests and fulfilled its mission statement. I wanted to know the reasons he decided to become a member and why he believed that this organization was the right one for a student on campus. I wanted to know what activities each club participated in and what they did to remain in contact or correspondence with the other Asian American organizations on campus.

He spoke about APAC, saying, "...we hold many social events together. But on top of that we do philanthropy work, cultural workshops, and sporting events. These groups include Asian interest fraternities and sororities, Philippine Student Association, Taiwanese American Student Coalition, Vietnamese Student Association, etc." He wanted to emphasize the fact that these organizations are bound by their social ties, but that they are also bound by the types of interests and the ways in which they choose to contribute to the community. He went on to mention that, "Every one of these organizations offer something different than the other but we all stand for a common cause. We differ in our own group culture and dynamic. Whichever one fits with the student, the student should choose. Also, since we are a pan-Asian group, I believe that our group can relate to a more variety of students." In summary, he allowed me to understand that AAA, as well as other Asian American organizations on campus are meant to provide a place of solidarity and security in order to meet each other. He also spoke about the ways in which the Asian American organizations on campus are meant to provide a name. As he said, "On a campus so big, it is easy to get lost in all the noise. It is just simply, power by numbers. The more people we have for our cause, the louder our voice becomes." It seems as though the organizations are a voice for Asian Americans and it allows them the kind of empowerment necessary to feel as though they belong. It is a great way to meet people that are similar and different and to find a belonging. It also serves to voice a purpose and to make the community aware of Asian Americans and their history and heritage as both Asian and American.

The second interview was with a member of TASC. She expressed an interest in the group because of its ability to teach her about her Taiwanese culture and identity. She was interested in the social aspect as well as a sense of community or solidarity, which was also mentioned by the other interviewee. She mentioned that, "I think these activities provide a sense of community for Asian Americans on campus because it gives them an opportunity to bond over food or

something that they can all relate to. I think these activities do promote awareness of Asian American heritage, but only in the sense of foods just because the majority of these events revolve around food such as the bubble tea, iron chef, and hot pot event.” She wishes to emphasize the relation of food [a non political method] of identity and community. It is easier to bond over something that one can relate to. Food provides a common denominator to get to know another. Overall, her points reflected the desire to identify with her Taiwanese identity, but the social aspect was important as well. It was a way for her to find people on campus to relate to.

I think this is important to both organizations. They wish to provide a place for cultural awareness, social identification, and a sense of community on campus. Organizations work well together because they share a common goal of cultural awareness, identity relations, and the solidarity that each group is able to provide for Asian American students on campus. Each organization has a common goal of sharing their heritage with both the community and campus as a whole and with Asian Americans on campus that might not have explored aspects of their culture or other Asian Americans on campus. Not only is it a way to relate to one and other and relate themselves back to society, it is also a way to create a social medium and solidarity on campus.

Janice: On the morning of November 4, I walked into the Asian American Association (AAA) office to meet my interviewee. He is an officer of this student organization and identifies himself solely as a “AAA person”. The AAA office is a familiar environment for both of us and there was a comfortable, yet professional atmosphere. The interview started with basic questions about AAA. The interviewee joined the organization his freshman year, participating in a couple events and was hooked. He came from a predominantly white high school where he had very few Asian or Asian American friends. When he came to college, he decided to “try something new”. He has only ever been an active member of AAA and admits that he never really looked into other Asian American organizations on campus. When asked what made AAA different from other organizations on campus, he said, “[we] focus on a wider demographic, because we are not Filipino or Taiwanese or Chinese Americans, we are Asian Americans... That’s why I joined”. Aside from this organization’s pan-ethnic focus, all the Asian American student organizations seem to be rather similar. I asked for the goal of AAA and he was able to recite most of the mission statement, but not wanting this generic response, I asked what he thought the goal should be. He paused to think for a second but smoothly answered, “to provide a strong, active and supportive community for its members, at its heart, that’s what should be about”. In his opinion, AAA would be considered one of the large member-based organizations, along with Philippine Student Association (PSA) and Taiwanese American Student Club (TASC). Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) and Chinese Undergraduate Student Association (CUSA) are considered small organizations because of their “limited membership, small officer board, [and] lowered scale of programming”. By his immediate response when asked about “big” and “small” orgs, it seems that categorizing organizations is a normal concept. He said that AAA interacts with other organizations on a pretty regular basis, but not so much with small orgs since they are harder to get in contact with. “Our interactions with small orgs are limited due to self-segregation on their part... they never make efforts to interact with us”. VSA and CUSA have become better known in the past couple years, but other organizations such as Singapore Student

Association and Malaysian Student Association seem to have disappeared. When it comes to Asian American Greeks, he says they “hit middle ground between big and small orgs” and keep “pretty constant contact”. But he feels that there aren’t very many co-sponsored events with the Asian American Greeks. He took more time to think of his responses, as if he had not thought about AAA’s interaction/relationship with Greeks as much as with small orgs. Wrapping up the interview, he explained that organizations should be judged on the following: ability to provide for its members, attendance at their events, quality of programming, and cohesion of leaders. Though there is some separation between big, small, and Greek Asian American organizations, the interviewee shows that it is not due to any explicit problems between the organizations. Perhaps it’s about stepping out of their comfort zone and like he did freshman year, “trying something new”.

Tiffany: I interviewed three officers from three different organizations in the Asian Pacific American community. One officer was from Asian American Association (AAA), another was from Taiwanese American Students Club (TASC), and the last one was from Taiwanese Intercultural Association (TIA). I decided to interview these organizations because they vary in size as well as their reputation. I found that the officers from TASC and TIA joined their respective organizations for similar reasons. Both felt more culturally connected to their organizations because of the focus on Taiwanese culture. They felt more comfortable with the people in these organizations and felt that they could relate better. For example, the officer from TIA said, “I joined TIA because for me TIA represents a small unique niche of Taiwanese population that I feel is most similar to me. Most of them are neither Taiwanese American nor native Taiwanese. Many students in this niche are somewhere in between the two cultural identities.” This shows how this individual felt connected to this specific group. Moreover, both the TIA and TASC officer seemed to have more cultural motivations than the AAA officer for joining. The TASC officer said he wanted to learn more about his Taiwanese identity and culture. On the other hand, the AAA officer said, “I wanted to get to know people. I wasn’t looking too much into cultural stuff. I just wanted to be close to people who I felt I could relate to.” Through these interviews there is definitely a different focus between these organizations. AAA, TIA, and TASC are all social cultural organizations that host many events for their members. However, TIA and TASC seem to have a stronger emphasis on the cultural aspect in comparison to AAA. AAA seems to be more focused on social events. I think this could play a major role in what organizations individuals choose to join because they would choose the organization that caters toward what they are looking for. Also, it is clear that the individuals who chose to join a Taiwanese focused organization were generally Taiwanese in background and felt more connected to that specific organization.

Another finding I found interesting was that all three officers felt that the organization they belong to was in fact exclusive. Although they feel their organization tried to be inclusive and include all individuals it does in fact end up being mostly a specific type of people. The officer from TASC says, “I believe that the name of the club is exclusive in itself. It targets mostly Taiwanese-American individuals, with the exception of some people.” His response differs somewhat to the officer from AAA. He states that AAA ends up being exclusive in the sense that majority of the members are Asian. However, AAA differs from other organizations because it incorporates many Asian ethnicities. There is not one dominant one within the club. The

exclusivity of the club most likely plays a large role in how prospective members choose which organization to join.

I also interviewed the individuals about their views on the interactions between the organization they belong with and the other organizations within the APA community. Through their answers it is clear that collaborations between organizations are often for the sake of co-hosting and for social purposes. The officer from AAA had a negative comment regarding collaborating with other organizations. He said, "A lot of the events are just co-sponsors which don't require much collaboration. This is just kind of sad because it's almost like we are selling ourselves out now." It seems as if he feels that these collaborations are meaningless because there is no real interaction between the two organizations. The officer from TIA stated, "These collaborations are purely for social reasons, so more people from different organizations come out to the event." His reasoning seems to be for more of an organizational motive in the sense that more individuals would attend their event. Overall, individuals from different organizations seem to have respect for the other APA organizations on campus, but there really is little interaction between the organizations. The only interaction is when groups co-host events with other organizations in order to split the money and publicity work or to attract more individuals to their event. I find it unfortunate that there is a feeling of disconnect between organizations within the APA community.

Analysis: Asian American organizations on campus wish to provide a place for cultural awareness, social identification, and a sense of community on campus. Organizations share a common goal of cultural awareness, identity relations, and the solidarity for Asian American students on campus. Each organization has a common goal of sharing their heritage with both the community and campus as a whole and with Asian Americans on campus that might not have explored aspects of their own culture or other Asian American cultures on campus. Not only is there potential to relate to one and other and relate themselves back to society, it is also a way to create a social medium and solidarity on campus.

However, while many of the interviewees noted that their organizations are not exclusive; in the end this does seem to be the case because specific types of individuals join their organizations for specific reasons, which usually corresponds to their ethnic identity. There is not that much collaboration among organizations. Clubs only seem to interact with one another when they co-sponsor events together. The purpose of these co-sponsorships appears to be to attain larger attendance rates as well as to split the costs for the event (such as publicity). Other than that, there does not seem to be that much interaction. There are certain collaborations that are more common. For example, the individual interviewed from TIA said that TIA and TASC collaborate on many events together because they have similar goals. Overall, organizations seem to interact mostly amongst their own members.

Our findings agree with and relate to the, "College and Notions of Asian American: Second-Generation Chinese and Korean Americans Negotiate Race and Identity" by Nazli Kibria. Our findings support this article because many students seem to be joining these organizations to find a group of individuals that they feel comfortable with and can identify with which tends to relate to ethnic identity. At the same time, many of these individuals want to learn more about their

identity that they might not have had an interest in high school. The article also talks about the comfort of Asian American friendships. This is very prevalent in our findings because individuals join these organizations because they feel comfortable. The interviewee from TIA specifically said he chose to join TIA because he felt he could identify with the other individuals in terms of how they grew up.

As we discussed in regards to the Espirtu article, “Coming Together: The Asian American Movement,” the establishment of a name on campus allows the potential for Asian Americans to have a voice, as well as to be able to construct a pan-Asian American identity (Espirtu, 33). They wish to gain both a better understanding of their cultural identity and ancestry, but also to form social networks and people that are able to relate to their particular experiences (Espirtu, 37). However, as noted in our findings, many of the members of these organizations tend to gravitate toward others that are like them.

Our findings tend to contradict some aspects of Espirtu’s article in that students do not form a pan-ethnic solidarity despite the umbrella term of Asian American. Though labeled as Asian American, individuals tend to gravitate toward people with similar backgrounds, but some are looking for a pan-ethnic niche. The Asian American Association (AAA) interviewee joined because it seemed more open. And although, the organization does put on cultural programming, it has not always just focused on certain Asian cultures. Where as, the Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) does an annual Pho night; AAA will have Asian Roll Night, which includes sushi, spring rolls, etc.

But whether one joins an ethnic specific or pan-ethnic group, the members remain loyal to their chosen organization. There are often collaborative events, but certain organizations tend to collaborate more often. In addition to TIA/TASC collaboration based on similar culture, membership numbers also seem to play a factor. It is easier for the Philippine Student Association (PSA) and AAA to collaborate because both are large organizations that can bring in the same number of people to a program. They are able to put the same amount of members to plan and run the event because of similar sized officer boards.

Another factor in collaboration is Greek versus non-Greek organizations. Asian American Greek organizations tend to spend more time with each other more than with non-Greeks. This may be due to a sense of pride in their letters and the intimidation factor that keep non-Greeks from approaching them. But in the end, Asian awareness is one of the pillars in these Asian American Greek organizations so there is still a tie to the Asian American community. When alpha Kappa Delta Phi (aKDPH) hosted their annual Breast Cancer Date Auction, members from all different Asian American organizations came to support and a few were even up for auction. However, despite everyone coming together, there was still much segregation between organizations. Most everyone sat with their own organization; there was hardly any mixing.

The other article that pertains to our findings is by Omi and Winant, entitled, “Racial Formation.” The function of Asian American organizations is to counteract certain racial projects that are occurring in day-to-day activities (Omi and Winant, 59). By finding a voice that is larger than the individual, Asian Americans are able to have more of an influence on campus. They are

not lost in the crowd of faces, but instead they are able to promote their identities and selves in a positive manner. This positive promotion has the ability to counteract certain “common sense” notions of what is stereotypically considered inherent to the race and ethnicity of Asian Americans (Omi and Winant, 60).

Research Narrative:

Asian American RSO's on the University of Illinois Campus: Organization Interaction and Reasons for Joining:

Our EUI research project sought to understand the organization of Asian American students on campus. Our research question was an attempt to find out how established student organizations on campus interact between them and what reasons Asian American students had for joining a particular organization. We wanted to understand the qualities or characteristics that ultimately attract individuals to certain organizations. What aspects of a particular Registered Student Organizations (RSO's) are appealing to Asian American youth? Are decisions to join based primarily upon an individual's ethnic identity or cultural heritage? How do the organizations interact among themselves? Do they mingle quite frequently or are they separated by the characteristics that differentiate them from each other?

Our research plan included observation, and interviews. We wanted to use all three methods in order to get a well-rounded idea of the interaction between and within groups. We also wanted to observe the social interaction of the individuals in order to decipher if this might be a reason for joining a particular organization. We all attended the Asian Pacific American Coalition (APAC) meeting. This meeting consists of representatives from each affiliated organization. This is a general meeting to discuss and inform other organizations of upcoming events and to discuss any other matters of importance within the Asian American community.

The APAC meetings are generally held every other week at the Asian American Cultural Center. At this particular meeting, there was a speaker to address the officers of the organizations. Her lecture revolved around Asian versus American leadership styles and how they interact. Normally, the meetings are surrounded solely on events coming up for the organizations, as well as a place to discuss potential inter-org events or collaborations.

We chose to target organizations with different member sizes, and ethnic focus. We felt that this would give us better insight to what characteristics define each organization and why this might attract someone to join. In addition, it was necessary for us to see the interactions of every group instead of focusing on only one organization's meeting. Our group interviewed members and/or officers from Taiwanese American Students Club (TASC), Asian American Association (AAA), Taiwanese Intercultural Association (TIA), and Vietnamese Student Association (VSA).

Our main findings at the APAC meeting showed that most representatives were situated in smaller groups of 2-4. The smaller groups consisted mostly of people within the same organization. The representatives sat with other members of their own organization or friends. This leads us to believe that there is a sort of disconnect between organizations within the Asian American community on campus. Most members attend this sort of meeting in order to support another member or officer of their organization or to help inform other organizations of their

upcoming events. Another reason for attending is to find out more about what kind of events are going on for other organizations. At this particular meeting, except for the announcements of other events, the interactions between any two organizations were limited.

The first EUI project we examined was called “An Investigation into how Korean American Freshmen Chose CFC and What They Gain from their Church.” This research relates to our finding because the author focuses on the reasons why freshman choose to join a particular church. In our case, we chose to focus our research on why students choose certain APAC organizations. The reasons freshman chose to join a particular church included a way to make friends and to find guidance. Others wish to find out more about and to grow within their religious and spiritual identities.

In our research, we found that many members wish to make friends or learn about their cultural or ethnic heritage and identities as well. In addition, many students in Asian American organizations wish to find guidance through the Big Sib/Little Sib program or the Family program. The Big Sib/Little Sib program assigns an older member to a new member of the organization. The older member acts as a “big sib” to help acquaint the “little sib” to college and provide him or her with guidance. Similarly, the family program provides members with a smaller and more closely-knit group within the larger organization. The smaller group allows for an individual to be a part of the larger philosophy of the organization [cultural awareness, social identification, and sense of community], while at the same time facilitating a more personal and intimate relationship to another member.

Many Asian American students choose a particular organization because of its openness to a pan-ethnic identity. One officer of AAA pointed out that, “since we are a pan-Asian group, I believe that our group can relate to a variety of students.” Another officer for AAA elaborated on this by stating, “[we] focus on a wider demographic, because we are not Filipino, or Taiwanese or Chinese Americans, we are Asian Americans... That’s why I joined.” According to this officer, AAA tends to interact with other larger organizations like TASC, but not smaller ones such as VSA. The size of the organization seems to influence the type and extent of inter-organization mingling.

Our findings agree with and relate to the, “College and Notions of Asian American: Second-Generation Chinese and Korean Americans Negotiate Race and Identity” by Nazli Kibria. Our findings support this article because many students seem to be joining these organizations to find a group of individuals that they feel comfortable with and can identify with which tends to relate to ethnic identity. One respondent for TASC said, “I wanted to learn more about my Taiwanese identity because I wasn’t very informed or didn’t very much about it before coming to college.” Many of these individuals want to learn more about their identity because they might not have had an interest in high school.

The article also talks about the comfort of Asian American friendships. This is very prevalent in our findings because individuals join these organizations because they feel comfortable and as though other members can relate to them and their experiences. The interviewee from TIA specifically said he chose to join TIA because he felt he could identify with the other individuals in terms of how they grew up. He said, “I joined TIA because for me TIA represents a small unique niche of Taiwanese population that is most similar to me. Most of them are neither Taiwanese American nor native Taiwanese. Many students in this niche are somewhere in between the two cultural identities.” This quote supports the notion that individuals tend to gravitate towards groups they feel most comfortable with. In this individual’s

case, he felt most comfortable with TIA because he could personally identify with the members of that organization.

As we discussed in regards to the Espirtu article, “Coming Together: The Asian American Movement,” the establishment of a name on campus allows the potential for Asian Americans to have a voice, as well as to be able to construct a pan-Asian American identity (Espirtu, 33). They wish to gain both a better understanding of their cultural identity and ancestry, but also to form social networks and people that are able to relate to their particular experiences (Espirtu, 37).

Our findings relate to some aspects of Espirtu’s article in that students form a pan-ethnic solidarity under the umbrella term of Asian American. The Asian American Association (AAA) interviewee joined because it seemed more open. And although, the organization does put on cultural programming, it has not always just focused on certain Asian cultures. Where as, the Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) does an annual Pho night, AAA will have Asian Roll Night, which includes sushi, spring rolls, etc. This provides a wider spectrum for participation.

The second EUI project that we wished to look did not allow us to look at the entire paper. However, the abstract gave us an idea of where to take our research further. It was entitled, “Asian American RSO’s on Campus.” This research would have been beneficial to look at if we wanted to further our quest to find why students join a particular organization. The paper looked at different immigrant generations to see whether different organizations catered to immigrants with different statuses. If we were to continue our research regarding RSO’s on campus, this would be a great direction for our paper to take. Perhaps, the cultural reasons that many students join RSO’s for would be relevant or irrelevant based upon the number of years an individual was in the U.S. Or perhaps, the individual would join the group to make friends and feel a sense of community much like we have found students on campus desire. This would be a very interesting direction for our research to take.

Some Asian American organizations on campus wish to provide a place for cultural awareness, social identification, and a sense of community on campus. Organizations share a common goal of cultural awareness, identity relations, and the solidarity for Asian American students on campus. Each organization has a common goal of sharing their heritage and identities with both the community and campus as a whole, as well as with Asian Americans on campus that might not have explored particular aspects of their own culture [or other Asian American cultures on campus].

Not only is there potential to relate to one and other and relate themselves back to society, it is also a way to create a social medium and solidarity on campus. As one officer for AAA put it, “On a campus so big, it is easy to get lost in the all the noise. It is just simply power by numbers. The more people we have for our cause, the louder the voice becomes.” It seems as though the organizations are a voice for Asian Americans and it allows them the kind of empowerment [at the everyday level] necessary to feel they belong. It is a great way to meet people that are similar and different.

Many Asian Americans choose a particular organization because they wish to learn more about their specific ethnic background. Because of this, some of these organizations [like TIA or TASC] tend to be oriented according to these identities, while other groups that are more socially oriented are all-inclusive. In addition, we found that the organizations spend minimal time interacting between each other unless it is a specially designated event where efforts have been combined to save money for publicity, etc. However, even co-sponsorship has limited interaction

because [as one AAA officer concluded] planning requires very little collaboration or interaction. An officer from AAA stated that “AAA does host many events with other organizations, but a lot of the events are just co-sponsors which do not require much collaboration. Oftentimes, we just split the cost for publicity or the materials needed for the event” This quote demonstrates that when there is interaction between organizations, it tends to serve a more business like function, such as supporting the event financially rather than wanting to have members actual get to know each other at a personal level. Thus, the personal interaction between group members is limited by the larger goal of hosting a successful event.

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Recommendations:

Our main thoughts on the issue of RSO's on campus is that there is definite potential for Asian Americans to have a larger voice on campus. While many of the organizations have specific event nights that other members might attend, we found that interaction between members of any two organizations is limited. Perhaps, the University should do more to encourage all student organizations to interact more closely with one another. The University can help RSOs with events, especially culturally focused events, in terms of funding, advertisement, etc. There is already Asiantation (Asian American RSO Quad Day) in the fall, but maybe something like Activity Day in the spring to help promote the AA organizations to boost membership.

Also, many individuals choose a particular organization based upon their own desires and needs. Our respondents pointed out that some choose a group like AAA because of the social benefits and guidance, while others chose a group like TASC because they wished to learn more about their cultural/ethnic heritage. It is wonderful to have a variety of organizations offering slightly different options so that a diverse array of needs can be met.