

University Asian students confront stereotypes

Students struggle to bridge differences

By Frale de Guzman
Emerald Reporter

In spite of the University's diverse ethnic population, stereotypes regarding Asian and Asian-American students are still prominent.

Many Asians are stereotyped as "nerds who always get good grades and raise the class curve," said Bo Kim, a member of the Asian/Pacific American Student Union. Additional stereotypes include media portrayal of Asian males as karate experts and Asian women as exotic and submissive beings. However, Kim said, none of these stereotypes are true.

According to Kim, many Asians have different values, which sometimes clash with the accepted norm of behavior. These differences may result in the stereotyping of a group. But, Kim added, because of these differences among various cultures, students should not cast Asians into a single mold.

This cultural diversity is manifest in the makeup of foreign students from countries such as Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. Because many of these students are trying to adapt to a culture that is different from their own, they often are regarded as different, said Rudy Tjeng, president of the Indonesian Student Association who entered the University in Fall 1985.

Because of the differences in cultures, adjustment to the American lifestyle sometimes is difficult. Most people tend to assume foreign students are well-versed in the idiosyncrasies of the American culture, even if they aren't, he said. For Tjeng,

that was the "most troubling aspect of all."

The strain of adapting to a new culture and way of life places a large burden on many of the different Asian groups at the University. To help them overcome culture shock, Asian students often will "hang around people from their own countries," Tjeng said.

Often these students find it "difficult to get along with the Americans," Tjeng said. However, the fault lies with both parties' inability to effectively cross the cultural barriers.

According to Tjeng, much of this division stems from a lack of understanding. University students often are unaware of the time and budget constraints many Asian students face.

"For me, studying here is just not studying. I have to rush with the time and graduate as soon as possible," Tjeng said. As a result, "you will find me studying all the time."

kind of playful and as a result, they (the two cultures) just don't mix," he said. "It's like water and oil. They (Asian students) try to (establish friendships) but it's difficult, and it needs some kind of catalyst to get things started."

However, Tjeng acknowledges Asians also have their own stereotypes of Americans. "When Indonesians see Europeans or Westerners...they say, 'Oh all Westerners are the same,' and it's easy to put ourselves in their shoes," Tjeng said.

However, according to Ruben Zamora, president of the Philippine Student Association, some University students do not mind being culturally ignorant.

"These students like to live in their own safe world," Zamora said. This ethnocentric attitude is predominant in students who are "forced to learn more about other cultures," Zamora said.

After all, "they're living comfortably, have no problems and

when University students make disparaging remarks about Asian students' unwillingness to associate with other students outside their cultural group.

This tendency to bond together takes place because it's "more comfortable that way," Zamora said. "We (Asians) all share the same culture and values and have a common bond that brings us together," Zamora noted. However, the only difference between the Asian groups and other University groups is that "because there are so many of us, we stand out," he added.

This lack of interaction between Asian and American students is sad, said Fiona Chan, a Chinese student who first came to the University in 1985.

Although many Asian groups come to the United States to "get an education," she believes Asians should "get an all around education, not only an academic one."

Through more interaction on the part of both groups, Chan believes the cultural gap that currently exists could be bridged. "There is a lack of real exposure between the two countries," Chan said. Outside the classroom atmosphere, little interaction takes place between the two cultural groups.

"The students only see each other in class and then they leave," Chan said. "There's no prolonged contact on either side. There's no opportunity for the students to get to know each other," she added. "And unless you join (outside) activities, there is little integration between the two cultures, and that is sad."

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— Fiona Chan

This pressing need to graduate places Asian students in a bind. Because some of the students have devoted huge amounts of time to the pursuit of academic achievement, they find it hard to "mix with the Americans," Tjeng said.

In contrast to the more reserved nature exhibited by many Asians, "the Americans are

no hassles. Why should anything different happen?" he added. In addition, many of these students have been exposed to Asian stereotypes from birth, and, as a result, it sometimes is "understandable" when students fail to let go of these learned images, Zamora said.

But, he added, it is frustrating

Police beat

The following is a list of campus-area crimes occurring between Nov. 6 and Nov. 18:

- The Eugene Police Department cited and released a woman for harassment after she shouted racial slurs at a black female student on Nov. 5. The incident took place at 5:35 p.m. while the victim was walking across a parking lot.

- A man exposed himself to a woman bicyclist on Nov. 6, at approximately 10:15 a.m. in the East 15th Avenue and Ferry Street area.

- Kitchen utensils valued at \$573 were reported stolen from Gerlinger Hall on Nov. 9. The theft occurred between Nov. 7 and Nov. 8.

- Items valued at approximately \$2,200 were stolen from 1416 Villard St. on Nov. 9 between 1 and 3 p.m.

- A sexual abuse incident took place on the second floor of the

University Main Library on Nov. 9 at 8:20 p.m. A man grabbed a female student from behind while she was looking for a book. The suspect then fled the scene. Police are looking for a suspect described as a white male in his early twenties, 5-foot-11, 160 pounds with sandy, blonde hair who is believed involved in other incidents of a similar nature.

- The "coffee money," amounting to \$100, for the Department of Education was stolen from Room 124 Education between Nov. 12 and Nov. 13. There was no sign of entry, and there are no suspects.

- A passenger vehicle ran into the rear of a LTD bus stopped in traffic on East 13th and Kincaid Street on Nov. 13 at 9:25 p.m. The driver of the car left the vehicle in the middle of the street and walked away before police arrived. The driver con-

tacted the EPD the next day and was cited for hit and run.

- Thieves stole a \$357 mountain bike from the back of a Chevrolet van parked on East 18th Avenue and University Street between Nov. 13 and Nov. 14.

- A \$350 VCR was stolen from a room in Caswell dormitory on Nov. 15. The EPD currently is investigating.

- A hit and run incident took place on East 13th Avenue and University Street on Nov. 16 at 3:20 p.m. A man was maneuvering a moped out of a parking area when he knocked over another moped. He left the scene, but a witness copied down the license plate number. The incident is under investigation by Campus Security and the EPD.

Campus Security reported 16 stolen bicycles since Nov. 6, two have been recovered.

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