My experience with the Teen Resource Center (TRC) has been a curious and welcoming one. It all started with my girlfriend informing me about this girls-only club called “Chick Chat”. As a gentleman, I escorted her to the program’s opening day with a couple of friends, and I had an open mind to see if there were more programs offered by this place called TRC. As I thought, there were. Stepping into that cramped room, not knowing that later on it would be viewed as a cozy place, I was given an overview of what TRC was. From that day, I frequently visit TRC, not only to participate in their programs such as Language Buddy Program and Teen Advisory Committee (TAC), but also just to chill. There are health educators available to inform you about common teen topics such as health, relationships, bullying, etc. This is a place where secrets can be kept safe. This is a place where you can go when you have a problem. This is a place where you are free to express yourselves.

The Teen Resource Center (TRC) is a pediatric program under the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center. Founded in 2003, TRC’s mission is to provide information and support to the Asian American youth population through health education, programs, activities, and referrals.
One of the most interesting aspects of the Language Buddy Program was that it helped both teens whose first language was Chinese and teens whose first language was English. It allowed participants to learn an unfamiliar language better. I had to practice my Chinese in the program and it pushed me to try harder to pronounce certain phrases in Chinese. That was another great thing about Language Buddy Program—it pushed the teens to get out of their comfort zone to learn about American or Chinese culture in a friendly environment. My peers never made fun of me for my Chinese pronunciation.

My first year as a TAC member was difficult because I didn’t know anyone. I barely made friends because I was the youngest member; however, I still enjoyed it and decided to join again the following year. When I joined TAC again, many things changed. Unlike the previous year, Larissa became a co-facilitator with Jennifer, our facilitator from the first year. This year, TAC was split into two groups, the Open Mic and the Newsletter subcommittees.

In my second year, I made many new friends. Maybe they were closer in my age, more outgoing, or I felt more comfortable with TAC this year. Whatever the case was, I had a lot of fun working with the new members. Although it was fun, I was still challenged that year, especially when it came to planning the Open Mic events. It required a lot of time and commitment, but I became closer friends with the members I worked with. We worked really well together and always had creative ideas for the events. I learned to enjoy myself that year. Our new year at TAC has just begun and I know that I will have just as much fun as I did.

I gained many life skills in this program, which included how to socialize with new people, how to write a resume, and most importantly, how to overcome language barriers. Because of that, I felt much closer and was able to joke with everyone in the program after a short period of time. The Language Buddy Program helped us develop people skills and learn about foreign things. Furthermore, the Language Buddy Program was more than just a program for helping those who didn’t know English or Chinese well—it helped me explore my Asian American identity.

The Language Buddy Program at the TRC was an incredible learning experience for me. This program helped teens connect despite language barriers. It was also a place where we learned about heritage, tradition and culture.

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The Teen Advisory Committee (TAC) serves as TRC’s core group of volunteers. They create TRC’s newsletters, plan open mic events, and evaluate TRC health materials and services.

We Grew through...
The Community Service Learning Program (CSLP) is a six month internship in which high school students gain professional skills while serving the Asian American community through non-profit community service and collaborative social research.

Intern Statement
In order to learn about the types of personal problems that Asian American students face, we conducted a survey to explore the types of support that Asian American students seek out when facing personal struggles. We then incorporated focus groups to determine potential sources of Asian American students’ personal problems.

From our initial research, we learned:
• Asian American students face microaggressions—negative, subtle, and often unintentional remarks based on categories including race, gender, and sexual orientation—which is an overlooked problem in high schools.
• Asian American students primarily turn to peers for support, instead of seeking guidance from trusted adults (parents, guidance counselors, administrators).
• Peers are major reinforcing of microaggressions because they are the ones students go to for guidance.

We hypothesized:
• Asian American students who face microaggressions do not call attention to the concern of microaggressions because they do not think that it is a “big deal”.
• Students are uncomfortable seeking personal support from trusted adults because they believe that adults, especially guidance counselors, are only concerned with their academic problems.

Microaggression: Negative, subtle, and often unintentional remarks based on categories including race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Chick Chat was a great program to be a part of because I got to meet new people. All the girls there were respectful and polite. It was nice knowing that no one there was going to judge one another. We could all be ourselves and we liked each other for who we were. I enjoyed having a new activity each week because we got to bond with each other and it was fun. We were able to utilize our creativity to decorate items such as mason jars and headbands. This TRC program helped me become more outgoing and sociable.

Chick Chat is an eight week program open to female youth. This program provides a series of DIY (Do it Yourself) hangouts that allow participants to have fun and develop friendships in a safe space.

CSLP Interns (Left to Right): Jefferson Bai, Kevin Ou, Nanxi You, Eslam Alnagar, Sharon Chan, Sunny Zhong, James Wang, Ryan Kong
CSLP Research Findings

Focus group participants and expert interviewees said:

• “Teachers should communicate with their students and try to find their problems. Teachers should encourage the students to be who they want to be.”
• “Being a Teenager is a time when they absorb a lot of things and try to set up their own identity.”
• “Yeah, MMM (Model Minority Myth) is based off stereotypes and comes from it. We are burdened with these stereotypes because we have to fill the obligation of being the model minority.”
• “The process is challenging. Teens who feel they can’t survive under school expectations either become withdrawn or rebellious in attempt to cope with the challenge.”
• “If I speak out, I am depicted as mean. If I am quiet, I appear more respected.”
• “I would feel the need to do drugs if my friends were doing it just to fit in.”

Analysis:

• Microaggressions that stem from stereotypes (such as the Model Minority Myth) create inaccurately portray the identities of Asian American students (in terms of social behaviors, sexual health, and party culture).
• Misconceptions of Asian American students develop because microaggressions and stereotypes are a rare conversation topic.
• Trusted adults and Asian American students perceive microaggressions to be harmless.
• Asian American high school students’ interests, hobbies, behaviors, and decisions are unconsciously influenced by microaggressions. For example, an Asian American student would feel reluctant to participate in certain school activities, such as student government or the arts, mainly because these activities don’t show the commonly perceived image of an Asian American student.
• Asian American students are pressured to meet the many, often culturally conflicting expectations of being an “Asian American student”.

Research Methods:

Total Surveyed:
(From TRC Handball Tournament)

• Male- 35
• Female- 16

Grade Level:
College Freshman: 3.8%
High School Senior: 30.8%
High School Junior: 42.3%
High School Sophomore: 15.4%
High School Freshman: 7.7%

Who do you go to the most when you have personal problems?

Friends 53.60%
Family 14.50%
High School Guidance Counselors 8.70%
Others 1.50%
No One 21.70%

To overcome microaggressions, we can:

• Be informed about the role of microaggressions in teenagers’ life.
• Leave comfort zones, and be more exposed to more experiences.
• Participate in programs or initiate campaigns to spread awareness about important teen issues such as the role of microaggressions in a teen’s life and provide support if needed.
• Approach and talk to adult figures you trust (family, school faculty, mentors, and mental health experts) when experiencing problems.
• Encourage peers and students to explore diverse cultures and allow better understanding of different ethnicities.
• Support services that provide Asian American students with education services and youth development opportunities.

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Monday - Friday 3PM - 7PM
Saturday - Sunday 2PM - 6PM