Empowering Filipino American Young Adults Through Culturally Relevant Leadership Experiences

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Abstract

The purpose of my study was to explore the leadership development of Filipino American young adults. As an advisor for Lakas Mentorship Program in the Inland Empire, I explored the following question among program staff and mentors: How could I use culturally relevant curriculum to foster personal and professional development for young Filipino American leaders? I evaluated the impact of four cycles centered on leadership training and improving program practices to understand how to deepen engagement and facilitate positive transformation. I found that the following contributed to meaningful engagement: intentional leadership opportunities, institutionalized program structure, and peer mentorship and community among participants.

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Introduction

Throughout my undergraduate experience, I came into contact with a multitude of Filipino student groups at various universities. These organizations gave Filipino/Filipino American students the opportunity to find community among those who identify with similar values and experiences. Upon graduation, it seemed more difficult to find such spaces. To solve this problem while uplifting our community, a group of post-graduates founded Lakas Mentorship Program (LMP) in 2012. "Lakas" means "strength" in Tagalog. LMP envisions empowered youth and thriving communities with a mission to "foster positive transformation and explore the experiences of the Philippine diaspora. We achieve this through culturally relevant curriculum, critical engagement, and advocacy" ("Lakas Mentorship Program," 2018). I use my personal values of growth, community empowerment, and passion to guide my leadership practice with Lakas Mentorship Program.

Filipino American young adults who are members of underrepresented or under-resourced communities may take up leadership roles to initiate change and serve as role models to each other. This motivation may arise due to lack of Filipino/Filipino American representation in mainstream education and prominent industry roles. As such, the possibilities are endless for developing and exercising leadership practices, which brings along structural uncertainty and difficulty determining the most effective training and engagement methods. These opportunities and concerns are ever-present in LMP as the program grows and becomes more widely known in the local community.

The primary concern of my research was to maximize the potential for this space to be a training ground for leadership development. I also wanted to foster a space in which staff

members and mentors gained valuable experiences that would contribute to their goals outside of

LMP. As someone who studies and works in higher education, I had a student engagement and

development lens upon which to base staff training and leadership development. My leadership

goal for the past seven years has remained constant: for staff members and mentors to gain

something that enriched their life outside of their time with LMP while they fulfilled their duties

to the best of their abilities. Staff members and mentors typically join LMP to give back to the

community by donating their time and knowledge. Within my research, I sought to streamline

the training process and institutionalize program practices. I approached personal and

professional development through a cultural lens; one that took into consideration each person's

lived experiences and values, rather than prescribing generic models and qualities of good

leadership. The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership development of Filipino

American young adults and how this process fit into their own passions and goals. This research

took place among the staff members, advisors, and college mentors who are part of LMP.

     With this goal in mind, I explored the following research question: How could I use

culturally relevant curriculum to foster leadership development for staff and mentors in Lakas

Mentorship Program? Gloria Ladson-Billings defines "culturally relevant teaching" as "an area

of theory/practice that attempts to integrate students' cultural backgrounds into the classroom

with the goal of promoting academic achievement" (Jupp 2004).

Background

     Two broad themes emerged from the literature as I explored the deeper context of LMP's

functions: mentorship and culturally relevant curriculum. Empowering Filipino American young

adults through participation in a mentorship program involves taking up leadership roles.

Additionally, LMP provides opportunities for participants to experience culturally relevant

curriculum, as mainstream classrooms do not typically provide this.

Mentorship

Very limited literature exists regarding the topic of mentorship and leadership among

Filipino American youth. A recurring theme in mentorship studies is the increased capacity for

creativity and problem-solving as a result of involvement in mentorship spaces (Gotian, 2016, p.

2-5). A common assumption is that those who are successful naturally have the ability to lead

and mentor, but Gotian asserted that mentorship is a skill that requires training. There is a strong

emphasis within mentorship practices to understand what already exists in a group—both within

each participant and in the nature of a group itself (Davis, 2016, p. 6). Another theme is the

importance of mentorship relationships in career advancement, leadership development, and

empowerment, especially from those who identified with others in terms of culture or race

(Green & King, 2001, p. 2-3). Green and King offered that three types of support are necessary

for a transformative mentorship relationship: emotional, informational, and structural. Their

process fostered engagement and connection to one's institution while becoming more

empowered through a cultural lens.

The relationship and impact of race-based matching on mentoring relationships is also

significant. Rhodes, Reddy, Grossman, & Lee (2002) share that "proponents of same-race

matching firmly believe that one's racial and ethnic background plays a critical role in

establishing effective mentor-mentee relationships" (p. 2115). They also believe that "deep

levels of trust, sharing, and cooperation will never be realized unless there is a common bond of

race or ethnicity" (Rhodes et al., 2002, p. 2115-2116). While this view is somewhat limited, it

does provide a basis for LMP's mentorship pairings and practices, as most high school and

college participants are Filipino or Filipino American. Matching mentees with mentors who are

the same race or ethnicity also conveys to youth that adults from their community can "serve as

positive role models" (Rhodes et al., 2002, p. 2117).

The value of mentors with similar backgrounds as mentees cannot be understated. Haber-Curran, Everman, & Martinez (2017) emphasized the positive effects that mentors with similar backgrounds as their mentees experienced: better organizational skills, communication skills, and career development. Mentors shared that they experienced affirmation in their career paths, as well as increased cultural competency skills that enhanced their preparation for said career paths. These tangible takeaways exhibited that serving others through mentorship can also be a way of improving oneself.

Culturally Relevant Curriculum

The literature also suggested the value of culturally relevant curriculum, which takes into consideration narratives and histories that are often ignored in mainstream education. Engaging students in this way shows empathy, compassion, and validation of their experiences. Because there is a lack of culturally relevant curriculum in American classrooms, students may feel "othered" and must deal with the effects of negative stereotypes, racism, and oppression in addition to typical challenges in exercising leadership (Nadal, 2008, p. 155). Jupp (2004) attempted to bring culturally relevant curriculum into his own classroom by making three "reflexive turns" in his approach: synthesis, dialogue, and caring. By using these three pillars to develop and facilitate the curriculum, the students were more likely to engage with the material and "bring their lives" into the classroom. This notion was further solidified by Museus and Maramba (2010, p. 235) with the concept of "cultural integrity," in which students benefitted from culturally relevant institutional programs and practices that affirmed their cultural identities and increased their chances of success in institutions where they were minoritized or othered.

Gaps in the Literature

I would still like to learn about how Filipino Americans compensate for a lack of culturally relevant role models and what harmful values must be unlearned as a result of not

seeing other Filipinos or Filipino Americans in positions of leadership and power. The lack of

Filipino representation in many industries in conjunction with the absence of culturally relevant

curriculum and mentorship may speak to a more deeply seated issue. There is a gap in the

literature specifically about the struggles and inability of Filipino Americans to take up positions

of power. Affirmations of Filipino American leadership and effective mentorship are also

missing, which further highlights how Filipino American stories are overlooked or deemed to

have no value.

Theoretical Foundations

In thinking about the history, nature, and goals of Lakas Mentorship Program, I sought

theoretical frameworks to help me make sense of each participant's journey and development. I

utilized Integral Leadership and Adaptive Leadership lenses to examine leadership practices and

make recommendations for the program moving forward. To give structure and better understand

the strengths of the program and staff members, I used Tara Yosso's Cultural Wealth Model.

Lastly, I applied Kevin Nadal's Pilipino American Identity Development Model to explore topics

of ethnic identity and development amongst participants. These theories armed me with language

and a frame of reference as I analyzed themes and observations that emerged during my action

research.

Integral Leadership and Adaptive Leadership

I explored leadership issues within LMP through the lens of Integral Leadership theory,

which provided a breakdown for categorizing aspects of change and development within

participants and the organization as a whole. Integral Leadership, which was first introduced by

Ken Wilber gives weight to both the inner, subjective aspects of change, as well as outer,

objective aspects of change (Klein, p. 2). The model, called AQAL—All Quadrants, All

Levels—depicts four quadrants (Appendix A): Upper Left or Quadrant 1 (individual/subjective),

Upper Right or Quadrant 2 (individual/objective), Lower Left or Quadrant 3

(organizational/subjective), and Lower Right or Quadrant 4 (organizational/objective). The

quadrants allowed me to delineate and articulate areas of strength and challenge in our leadership

development journey. I also used the model to identify various solutions and leadership strategies

that were present for participants and the organization.

As a community-based educational organization, LMP faces complex leadership issues,

but also has the latitude to operate and implement changes as we wish. Heifetz and Linsky

(2004) share that "leadership in education means mobilizing schools, families, and communities

to deal with some difficult issues—issues that people often prefer to sweep under the rug" (p.

33). They categorize such issues as *technical* or *adaptive*; "technical challenges" have a readily

available solution with straightforward implementation in which the authority does majority of

the work, while "adaptive challenges" can be defined as challenges in which the people with the

problem bear the primary locus of responsibility for learning their way towards a viable solution

(Heifetz, 2004, p. 35). To solve adaptive challenges, "we must change people's values, beliefs,

habits, ways of working or ways of life… and developing this competence will probably

require… adopting new norms of supervision, experimentation, or collaboration" (Heifetz, 2004,

p. 35).

Cultural Wealth Model

Tara Yosso's Cultural Wealth Model utilizes a Critical Race Theory lens to view how

communities of color "nurture cultural wealth" (2005, p. 77). This model delineates cultural

wealth into six categories: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance

(Appendix B). This model complements Appreciative Inquiry, as it outlines "how students of

color access and experience college from a strengths-based perspective" (Locks, p. 1). The

Cultural Wealth Model lies in direct contrast to the approaches to education found in mainstream

schooling, which view students of color functioning from deficit thinking where "students enter

school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and parents neither value nor

support their child's education" (Yosso, 2005, p. 75). While types of capital can be placed in

multiple categories, this model is useful for understanding the lived experiences of LMP

participants in the Appreciative Inquiry process.

Pilipino American Identity Development Model

Kevin L. Nadal (2004) formulated the Pilipino American Identity Development Model

(PAID) "because of a distinct history and culture that differentiates [F/Pilipino Americans] from

other Asian groups… F/Pilipino Americans may experience different ethnic identity

development than other Asian Americans" (p. 45). This model is non-linear and non-sequential,

contains six stages, and was intended to be a tool for therapeutic treatment and understanding

acculturation levels (Appendix C) (Nadal, 2004, p. 45 and p. 52). The stages are as follows:

Ethnic Awareness, Assimilation to the Dominant Culture, Awakening to Social Political

Consciousness, Panethnic Asian American Consciousness, Ethnocentric Consciousness, and

Incorporation.

The aforementioned theories provided a foundation for the themes and insights that

emerged during the Appreciative Inquiry process. Additionally, the frameworks were useful in

making loose predictions and planning the next steps for LMP to achieve its desired goals.

<div align="center">**Context**</div>

LMP was founded in 2012 to empower Filipino American youth in the Inland Empire

region of California. In this middle-class suburban region, the counselor to student ratio is about

450:1 and approximately 8% of students identify as Filipino or Filipino American (California

Department of Education, 2011). However, there are very few Filipino educators within Inland

Empire school districts.

LMP pairs high school students with college mentors and together, mentorship pairs attend monthly Pillar Sessions centered on the following topics: Self-Awareness, College Preparation, Leadership, Filipino American Studies, and Positionality. The program functions completely from small donations and is led by staff members and advisors who volunteer their time to serve the community. The staff and advisors consist of young professionals and graduate students from a variety of backgrounds (Appendix D).

I have been involved with Lakas Mentorship Program for the past seven years. This group was based in my hometown and until that point, I found no other local Filipino organizations specifically for young adults. In an effort to serve the Filipino American community in a place I knew and loved, I applied to a position on staff a few months after completing my undergraduate degree. As someone who was deeply immersed in extra-curricular activities and leadership development in college, I wanted to continue this type of work as I embarked on my post-graduate journey.

My History with Lakas Mentorship Program

During my first two years with LMP, I served as Leadership Pillar Coordinator and then Curriculum Director. In the following three years, I served as Co-Executive Director. During that time, I also fulfilled the duties of Self-Awareness Pillar Coordinator, Director of Mentors, Staff Development Director, and Administrative Coordinator. This volunteer opportunity helped me discover my passion for empowering Filipino American youth and led me to pursue a career in higher education and student affairs. I did not have a single Filipino or Filipino American teacher during my own K-12 education and my only Filipino professor in college taught Filipino language. This lack of representation pushed me to realize the value in providing Filipino American youth and young adults with role models and lessons not typically found inside the classroom.

My Current Role and Plan for the 2019 Cohort

I currently serve as the Chair of Staff Development and Community Relations on LMP's Board of Advisors. My primary responsibility is to advise the Executive Director on both day-to-day operations and staff development. The Board of Advisors meets monthly and I meet with the Executive Director and Curriculum Director in my advisor capacity on an as-needed basis. For the past few months, this has been about once a month, along with bi-weekly email exchanges or phone calls. Our working relationship is defined by the support and collaboration we offer each other, which is strengthened by the friendships we have developed over time. The typical challenges we face are lack of time commitment, as all staff members are working professionals and/or full-time students. As an advisor who previously served as the Executive Director, it is challenging for me to delineate when I should advise versus what tasks I should take up to support the current staff.

For the 2019 cohort and my research study, I planned to collaborate with the other advisors and Executive Directors to assess the training needs and goals of staff and mentors. I also worked closely with the Executive Director as he explored his own leadership practice and navigated how best to run the program. From there, I developed and facilitated leadership trainings in attempts to improve the program delivery itself, as well as the personal and professional growth that staff and mentors experienced while being part of the program.

Methodology I

In many spaces, educational and otherwise, a problem-based approach is common. Too often, I try to identify problems and then devise solutions—some that are viable, some that may be lofty in nature. In thinking of Action Research and improving my own practice, I wanted to turn my typical approach on its head. While exploring Action Research methodologies, I soon realized that turning something on its head meant that my original approach was still centered as

the point of reference. I learned about Appreciative Inquiry, which is based on combining

techniques of Action Research and facilitating improvement and development within an

organization. Appreciative Inquiry uses a positive, appreciative, and participatory method in

which researchers can discover untapped potential, opportunities, and solutions to problems

(PDH Education, 2014). This method utilizes a strengths-based approach, rather than a problem-

based approach, as the starting point for analyzing the conditions and the potential of the group.

Central Concepts and the 4-D Cycle

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) hinges on the concepts of Affirmative Topic Choice and a

positive core, in which groups must deliberately and consciously make decisions to shape a

better future and effect positive change (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, p. 277). This practice

consists of the 4-D Cycle: Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny (Appendix E). These cycles can

be applied to both large and small-scale operations, which "liberates the power of inquiry, builds

relationships, and unleashes learning" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, p. 280). This approach

also relies on the commitment of several stakeholders and requires that participants get in touch

with personal motivations and relatively intimate details.

An Appreciative Inquiry Approach to Questioning

AI's approach facilitated exactly the type of culture, tone, and approach that I hoped to

foster in LMP as a whole, based on the needs I had assessed. The organization has always been

grounded in lived experiences and storytelling, which permeates AI. In assessing my own

practice and the needs of the program's staff and mentors, I realized that asking the right

questions was vital to uncovering what lies at the heart of LMP's best practices. With seven

years of experience under my belt, it was easy for me to infuse certain assumptions or ask

leading questions when I evaluated practices and staff and mentor engagement. PDH Education

(2014) postulates that "an AI model of asking questions can produce organizational

improvements that effect positive changes starting from major stakeholders' stories and

experiences… AI questions are framed in such a manner so as to discover personal stories,

experiences, and successes; there are no 'right' answers. Best practices can be celebrated by

using key questions framed around the positives." AI opened the door for me to explore my

practice in LMP and explore LMP's practices from a place of discovery and positivity, allowing

for the best and most nurturing practices to emerge. Furthermore, Cooperrider & Whitney (1999)

note that the stories shared are not simply stories or problem-solving, but rather a searching of

best practices, discovering opportunities, and identifying the elements of an organization's

positive core. This approach provided me with structure that was open to let emerge what would,

rather than directing, consciously or unconsciously, toward a limited set of outcomes.

Limitations of Appreciative Inquiry

On first review, it seems like Appreciative Inquiry casts aside problems and problem-

solving in favor of fluffy, abstract, positive cultural change. Turning from the problems at hand

to what strengths are present may ignore technical issues that need immediate solutions.

Balancing immediate operational issues with methods of Appreciative Inquiry proved to be an

overwhelming task. At times, I felt myself, other advisors, and staff members getting frustrated

at the commitment to positivity and the unchartered waters of asking the right questions. In a

program that turns over about half its staff and participants year to year, we felt an urgency to

make structural changes that would have immediate effects. Throughout the research process, we

had to remain grounded in long-term sustainable change while addressing pressing issues.

As we conducted typical program operations, completed professional development

activities, and evaluated our practices, it became increasingly difficult to ignore the weaknesses

of the organization throughout the 4-D Cycle. While I focused on strengths and an appreciative

approach to questioning, I still documented the weaknesses, critiques, and negative feedback that

emerged. I intended to utilize the strengths and positive aspects of LMP to address the gaps and

needs, rather than simply ignoring them.

Needs Assessment

As I transitioned into the role of an advisor, rather than a staff member, I grappled with

the most effective way to take up my role without taking over the duties of others. In the larger

scope, there is a need to identify and highlight positive role models and leaders in the Filipino

American community. There is also a need to understand what effective mentorship looks like

for Filipino American young adults and find ways to empower community members to see the

value in sharing their stories.

Prior Conversations and Reflections

Many of the issues and concerns I noted thus far came about through organic

conversations with LMP staff members and advisors. One of LMP's strengths is the friendships

formed by opting to volunteer our time to this community work. As such, we have had honest

conversations with each other about program operations, our feelings about program issues, and

everything in between. I made extensive notes about my thoughts when checking in formally and

informally with staff members. I saw that structured staff development was noticeably absent and

wondered if this contributed to the staff's struggles with engagement. During our conversations,

we determined that we would like to shape a culture of lifelong learning and personal

development within LMP.

This Group is What We Make of It

The needs and priorities can change on an annual, monthly, and even daily basis,

depending on who is most engaged with the program and what experiences they bring with them.

While the group is unique in its existence, participants generally bring their insight, leadership

style, and ways of doing things from university Filipino organizations. Each year, we have

followed the same models and checklists of events to ensure the program continues cohort after

cohort. The sense of familiarity brings comfort, but also breeds a culture of completing the bare

minimum. While there have been some changes over time, very few instances could be classified

as a structural or foundational shift. As the program grows in size (staff members, mentors, and

mentees), I believe there is so much untapped potential, as well as methods of efficiency and

deeper learning that we have not yet uncovered.

The 4-D Cycle and Pre-Cycles

I used each phase in the 4-D Cycle as a cycle itself. Within each cycle, there were 4 sub-

cycles that also mirrored the Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny model. I conducted a total of

four cycles in addition to pre-cycles. Each cycle included a period of discovery and exploration,

an engaging dialogue or activity, and a form of data gathering. At the conclusion of each cycle, I

offered a tangible product or practice in efforts to build infrastructure or promote sustainability

of the program. Participants consisted of LMP's Board of Advisors, staff members, and mentors.

Each cycle informed my process for the next and I was committed to adapting the plan to adjust

for new insights. I analyzed data for trends and insights regarding how participant and program

strengths could best be utilized. I sought to solidify LMP's connection to its "positive core"—the

strengths of the organization (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, p. 34).

Timeline

I conducted pre-cycles throughout June, July, and August. This is the typical recruitment

window for new staff members, as well as the preliminary planning period for the Executive

Director, Curriculum Director, and Board of Advisors. Each cohort lasts from September

through the following June. Due to pre-occupation with program operations and other

commitments, cycles occurred over the following timeline: Cycle 1 – September 2018, Cycle 2 –

October 2018, Cycle 3 – December 2018, and Cycle 4 – April 2019.

Pre-cycles

The first step in Appreciative Inquiry requires an organization to select an affirmative top choice, or "life-affirming factors," that will be used to create a learning agenda (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 33). At the beginning of my project, I conducted two types of pre-cycles to select the affirmative top choice and also explore the positive core. I planned the 4-D Cycle using the observations and reflections from the pre-cycles in an attempt to access the positive core.

One type of pre-cycle consisted of conversations with four participants who were current directors and advisors (Appendix F). I was curious about what issues were at the forefront of their minds, as well as observations about previous cohorts. Our conversations revealed a deep sense of community and friendship among staff and advisors. It also became clear that as staff members, it was natural to experience disengagement with the program after specific staff duties were complete. Another recurring topic was the lack of structure and accountability among staff members. Because this is a volunteer organization, it is not typically a priority when other obligations arise. Summer planning meetings also served as a pre-cycle. These meetings provided a space to observe, reflect, and ultimately shape the priorities and trajectory of the planned cycles.

General experiences in LMP. In discussing why these four participants initially joined LMP, a theme emerged surrounding a desire to both find community and nurture existing friendships. Most staff members were recent college graduates when they joined, in search of another Filipino/Filipino American group to join in similar vein to their college cultural organizations. Education was also a prevailing aspect of participants' decisions to join. Not all participants currently work in the field of education. However, the more grassroots style of educating the community and learning about Filipino/Filipino American experiences attracted staff members to the program.

Social and Navigational Capital. Within Yosso's Cultural Wealth model, these
participants responses can be classified as social and navigational wealth. In the social aspect,
respondents found a community of their peers and gained access to LMP, which could be
considered a social institution in this instance. By finding community in LMP, they gained
access to a group that could facilitate personal and professional success, in addition to serving as
a support system. The navigational capital acquired by joining a cultural-based leadership and
mentorship organization can help participants become more cognizant of what is going on in
their own workplaces and institutions. Participants can also use their learning in LMP to
understand and navigate unsupportive or hostile climates in those workplaces and institutions.

Time invested in LMP. Low time investment at the beginning of one's involvement was
also a common theme. It was clear that LMP was not a priority in the early stages of their
involvement. LMP was consistently put on the backburner if other commitments arose.
However, participants shared that whenever they did attend staff meetings and other events, it
was always worth their time. They viewed their experiences in a positive light, even though their
program interactions were few and far between during their early days. This sense of support,
community, and engagement brought them back year after year and was also a catalyst in
deepening their involvement. The social and navigational capital acquired through involvement
in LMP created a cycle of continued engagement for participants.

Changes observed in LMP over time. The most noted change throughout participants'
involvement was the growth of the program. As the number of staff members, mentors, and
mentees increased, it appeared that "pride and ownership in the organization grew." Because of
higher participant numbers, we experienced more recognition in the local Filipino American
community and our work spread through word of mouth. Additionally, in recent years, staff
members and mentors returned to the program for a second and third term. Our staff turnover

rate has decreased in the last two years. For participants who returned, they built on their

investment from previous years, increased their confidence, and streamlined the nature of their

positions.

The other notable change was the addition of the Positionality Pillar Session to the

original four pillar sessions. The primary goal of this pillar session is "to build an understanding

of how one is seen in and interacts with the world around them" ("Lakas Mentorship Program,"

2018). Students typically engage with complex topics such as racism, oppression, diversity,

microaggressions, and much more. Interviewees expressed that this pillar session lifted the

consciousness of the program and became a pinnacle of our work with students. It is our

perception that high school and college students have responded well to this pillar. They

continue to meet the challenge of discussing identities, racism, oppression, inequity, and a bevy

of other complex topics through the lens of their Filipino/Filipino American experience.

Facilitating ethnic identity development. Participants' reflections about the Positionality

Pillar demonstrated that the program curriculum can be a tool in facilitating ethnic identity

development. Nadal's Pilipino American Identity Development Model discusses the stages in

terms of attitudes and beliefs towards self, other F/Pilipino Americans, other minority groups,

and white/dominant groups. From participants responses about the Positionality Pillar in this pre-

cycle, I came under the impression that LMP's curriculum, which we intend to be culturally

relevant, changes students' attitudes toward the self and the groups noted in the model.

Additionally, the work we undertake in planning this pillar and the learning that occurs

contribute to staff and students' resistance capital with in the Community Wealth Model.

Students are poised to take a stance on social justice issues and engage with their community to

solve challenging problems regarding such issues. The views of the Positionality Pillar session

affirmed my beliefs about the power and uniqueness of LMP's curriculum in facilitating ethnic

identity development.

Summer Planning Meetings. The first summer planning meeting I had with the 2018-

2019 Executive Director, Aaron Gallardo, was also a debrief meeting of the 2017-2018 cohort.

This occurred in early June 2018. Planning for the upcoming cohort usually begins as the current

cohort is wrapping up, typically around June of each year. During this meeting, we discussed

staff dynamics and needs, the End of the Year Celebration, director elections, and staff

recruitment for the 2018-2019 cohort. We continually revisited the lack of staff structure and

accountability as part the nature of LMP.

At the second summer planning meeting, I met with Aaron and the Curriculum Director,

Dustin Domingo. This meeting took place in August of 2018. We continued to use observations

and reflections from the previous cohort to inform our plans for the 2018-2019 cohort. Dustin

had just concluded his first year as a staff member and his insights were new and refreshing. He

was about the begin the final year of his doctoral program in Educational Leadership as well.

The academic and experiential background he brought to LMP and the Curriculum Director

position helped strengthen the foundation for changes that we wished to implement. Together,

we outlined the outcomes and agenda for the annual staff retreat, where the goal was to onboard

new staff members. At that retreat, Dustin introduced a Stages of Team Development model that

was meant to inform staff development over the course of the cohort (Appendix G). During this

summer planning meeting, we compiled the observations, reflections, and feedback gathered

from the previous cohort and used this information to build the initial training priorities for the

staff retreat and the first portion of cohort.

Applying the AQAL model. The summer planning meetings gave me a sense of what

quadrants we typically focused on in our work and program operations. I have always believed

that LMP was a unique space in which the subjective, inner quadrants (Quadrants 1 and 3)

remained at the forefront of our work, which is not typical of other organizations and institutions.

While this seemed true during our debriefing and planning, it also became clear that we have

accepted the negative aspects of our culture for far too long—namely the lack of commitment,

accountability, and structure. I also began to understand how writing off the nature of LMP led to

our shortcomings in the outer, objective quadrants (Quadrants 2 and 4). We outlined hefty plans

for changing systems, policies, and practices, while trying to simply accept "the way things are"

in terms of the loose structure and commitment from staff members.

Life-Affirming Factors

As a result of these pre-cycles, I determined that the life-affirming factors of Lakas

Mentorship Program were the deep sense of community, lifelong learning, and commitment to

culturally relevant curriculum and leadership experiences. I chose lifelong learning as the

affirmative top choice to guide my Appreciative Inquiry process. In our efforts to center and

infuse lifelong learning in our work, the community aspect and culturally relevant curriculum

naturally followed.

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Cycle 1: Discover – Strengths and Intentions

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In the Discover phase, the goal is to grasp the inner workings of the organization and its

people. Before attempting to make organizational changes, it is necessary to "identify and

appreciate the best of what is" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 43). My goal was to flesh out the

strengths of the program operations and staff members. I also wanted to learn about staff

members' motivations and expectations for joining LMP.

Sub-cycle 1a: Discover

I reviewed quantitative and qualitative evaluations from past cohorts to get a sense of

what LMP has consistently done well over the years. Most evaluations consisted of post-pillar

session surveys completed by staff and mentors. Participants noted what aspects of each pillar

session they enjoyed or found valuable, as well as what aspects they would remove or change.

Since our inception, we have expressed a desire to utilize consistent and robust methods of

evaluation. However, this never came to fruition and we settled for an overly simple method of

collecting event feedback at the end of each monthly pillar session.

From the pillar session evaluations, it seemed that LMP consistently provides students

and staff with engaging experiences, community, and a nurturing space. Students appreciated the

interactive activities, especially around complex topics of identity, race, culture, and planning for

life after high school or college. They expressed that the information presented throughout the

pillar sessions was valuable to them. Students also felt seen and heard—they were empowered to

share their experiences and were provided with a safe space to explore their identities. They

enjoyed meeting new people and participating in engaging dialogue. And last, but not least, they

appreciated the free food provided at each pillar session.

I also reviewed informal self-evaluations and program evaluations completed by staff

members. While my primary objective was to learn from the data available, my main takeaway

from this part of the process was that we have been doing ourselves and the program and

disservice by not implementing formal staff evaluations and consistent methods of gathering

staff perspectives, experiences, and insights. Aside from the staff duties and responsibilities

listed in the program handbook, there were very few reporting procedures that demonstrated how

exactly staff members carried out their work.

From what was available at the end of the 2017-2018 cohort, I gathered that staff

members valued being in community with the mentors and mentees and feeling like their work

made a positive impact. They also appreciated the opportunity to practice leadership in a safe

space. The diversity of staff member experiences meant a variety of tangible tools, activities,

trainings, and lesson plans to implement throughout the year. Staff members were also adept at

utilizing their networks to support the program and each other in both personal and professional

endeavors. The adaptability of program operations was also viewed as a strength—for example,

the mid-year transition to virtual meetings to review logistical matters allowed for more

engaging activities during in-person staff meetings. Overall, the greatest strength was the sense

of community and the support system that staff members fostered with each other.

The existing documentation and evaluations from previous cohorts helped me get a sense

of LMP's strengths and a frame of reference for new data that I gathered. Before reviewing these

evaluations, I was under the assumption that I would find valuable information relating to AQAL

Quadrants 1 and 3, which focus on aspects of personal engagement, values, and culture. The

tight-knit nature of staff seemed closely related to members' personal investment in the program,

demonstrating LMP's strengths in Quadrants 1 and 3. What emerged was the need to refine

categories in Quadrants 2 and 4, such as skills, behaviors, and systems.

Sub-cycle 1b: Dream

I utilized this sub-cycle for data gathering in which I recorded what brought each

participant to LMP, what they wanted to gain from their participation, and types of meaningful

mentorship experiences they have had (if any). The Dream stage draws on an organization's

history—LMP's history and trajectory is largely determined by the history of its members. To

initiate a process of reflection, I led an activity called "Five Why's," during the September staff

retreat. This activity challenged staff members and advisors to understand the core reasons for

joining LMP. The original question posed was as follows: "Why did you join Lakas this year?"

For each response, participants then asked, "Why?" and repeated the inquiry five times.

In the initial round of answers, majority of the 10 participants expressed that they joined

LMP to make a difference or give back to the community. Below are selected responses from the

first round: Participant A said, "I joined Lakas staff because I wanted to give back to the Fil Am community while exploring my career goals." Participant B shared, "I joined Lakas staff to learn more behind the scenes work, network, and be more proactive in the group." Participant C said, "To contribute to my community in a new way that was meaningful to me."

As participants dove deeper into what this meant, themes of self-awareness and growth emerged, coupled with a search for belonging, celebrating Filipino culture, and wanting to empower others. Many of participants tied their motivations back to their parents' immigration journey and struggles. In the final round of answers, some participants arrived at a big picture reason, while others shared highly individualized reasons for joining. Participant D shared that they wanted "to be involved, to ultimately work on myself, and help others work on themselves." Participant E wrote, "I always felt ashamed of who I was because I never thought I was enough," while Participant F wanted "to make sure people of color are in a position to be empowered and give back." Lastly, Participant G said, "There are many issues that affect different people and we need the whole community to work." This activity exemplified the Dream stage by exploring what motivations were most present for participants and provide space to voice those stories.

One-on-one interviews. After the retreat, I conducted 13 interviews with staff members and advisors to further understand motivations and expectations for their participation in LMP. These responses further contributed to the Dream stage by demonstrating their hopes and impressions of what was possible in the organization. Interviewees reflected on big picture inspiration, wishes, and instances when they felt most excited about their involvement with the program. This sub-cycle set the tone early in the research process for grasping when the organization has been most alive and effective, and I used those moments as a baseline for our efforts at facilitating positive change.

Motivations and expectations for joining. Throughout the interview responses, I noticed

that participants' primary motivators for joining the program was to connect with others. "I

joined Lakas to meet new friends, create connections, and be in a safe space with my fellow

Filipino Americans," one staff member told me. Participants also shared that they were involved

in their college Filipino organizations and searched for similar ways to stay engaged with the

Filipino/Filipino American community after graduation. Another staff member said, "I wanted to

continue my service to the Filipino American community, especially after enjoying my

experience during undergrad." This type of motivation speaks directly to the social capital

available in LMP.

About half of the interviewees had previous or current experience working with students

and wanted to apply this experience specifically to the Filipino American community. Some

expressed that they wanted to provide opportunities to students that they wished they had, while

others wanted to provide opportunities that were meaningful in their own development. One staff

member shared, "I joined Lakas in 2017 after being a mentor at my undergrad Fil Am org's

student-initiated recruitment weekend… I wanted to facilitate that kind of experience for Fil Am

high schoolers in my own neighborhood." Essentially, staff members wanted to "stay involved

and serve others." Majority of participants also cited professional development as a reason for

joining. Just as they wanted to work with students, they also viewed themselves as students of

the program in which they could learn from their peers and learn material they did not get in

college. The idea of facilitating both others' and their own learning demonstrates a willingness to

expand the community wealth of others and participate in peer mentorship with each other.

When staff members felt most alive. Staff members experienced excitement when they

saw the fruits of their labor. They felt energized after each pillar session, especially after

receiving positive feedback from students. They expounded upon the opportunity to practice

leadership and facilitate different activities: "being the one to practice leadership and see a

change and learning in others [was] affirming, fulfilling, and exciting." One participant

commented that this gave them confidence in their ability to foster a safe space. Another

participant said they felt most alive when they "saw students connect the dots between lesson

plans and their own lives." A staff member shared the following moment when they felt most

alive:

> It was the week leading up to my pillar session where I had so much support from the
>
> entire staff and especially the [Board of Advisors], who took the time to help align my
>
> ideas and boost my confidence. Everyone contributed positive energy and it was the
>
> greatest feeling.

Participants showed a strong presence in Quadrant 1 with their levels of "personal meaning and

engagement," which is often the hardest, but most necessary to increase while attempting

organizational change (Klein, p.2). The zest for practicing leadership gave me confidence in

facilitating change based on the categories delineated in the AQAL model.

Seeing mentors and mentees connecting with each other and engaging in activities during

pillar sessions and other program events was especially fulfilling. Participants also felt most alive

when they connected with students on a deeper level, "listening to their goals, aspirations,

accomplishments, and plans to grow." They loved learning together and building relationships.

They felt most excited to be in a community in which staff members and students formed a tight-

knit support system. One returning staff member shared the following sentiments:

> I have the opportunity to actually speak with the students, high school or college, and
>
> learn more about their perspectives. It's always exciting to witness someone hear a
>
> question or a comment and then have a quizzical look on their face. I love when folks

say, 'Huh, that's interesting,' or 'I've never thought about that before.' Those are the

moments that make me glad I'm in Lakas.

An advisor shared the specific moment when she felt most alive in LMP:

The specific memory I have is when [this high school student] started crying at the

Positionality Pillar in 2016. And she realized it was the first time she's been vocal about

her experiences with discrimination and racism as a Fil Am. I say that it makes me feel

most alive because I think it highlighted that no matter what age or position you're at in

the program, you can make those connections as long as you're in the safe space the

program provides. It was a really enlightening moment to see her release that… and how

that increased her own engagement in the program. We had more folks coming forward

because they were seeing their own peers commit to the program.

These themes speak to Stage 5 (Ethnocentric Realization) within the Pilipino American

Identity Development model. In this stage, attitudes towards other Filipino Americans are

positive and empowering—"The F/Pilipino wants to be recognized and understood along with

his or her community" (Nadal, 2004, p. 57). Additionally, participants demonstrated aspirational

wealth regarding the hopes of dreams of others in LMP. Despite inequities and struggles,

participants supported each other in their endeavors and want to see each other succeed in their

endeavors.

   Personal wishes and goals. This section of the interviews demonstrated staff members

desires for growth and self-improvement. Some wishes focused on self-love, such as maintaining

a healthy body and mind, practicing kindness toward themselves, and being more intentional

about time commitments. Participants also wanted to take on more leadership opportunities,

refine their leadership skills, and also pursue more educational degrees.

How staff members stay inspired. The most common source of inspiration and affirmation for participants was the community they felt within LMP. A major theme was the feeling that fellow staff members were invested in their own personal and professional lives. It seemed common for staff members to reach out and check in with each other regarding matters outside of their LMP duties. They were also inspired by interactions with staff members and students during pillar sessions and other program events. A few interviewees loved the opportunity to mentor others, even though that was not explicitly a part of their job description. Hearing that they have helped others in their journeys was especially affirming to them. Regarding their sources of inspiration within LMP, Participant H shared, "I stay inspired through the community of Lakas staff members. Many of them have become more than just colleagues," while Participant I said, "I am thankful for [specific staff members] because they have been great sources of affirmation and inspiration. I feel comfortable talking to most of staff and I don't feel guilty reaching out to them for comfort."

Aside from the connections they experienced within the program, participants also felt inspired seeing other staff members pursue their passions. Some external sources of inspiration were taking time for self-care and also finding inspiration within their respective faiths or religions. As interviewees expressed different sources of inspiration and affirmation, they also shared that they appreciated the acceptance they felt within LMP, even when they had different interests or ways of doing things from others. All in all, the support system within LMP was a major factor in feeling inspired and affirmed.

The Five Why's activity and interviews contributed to this Dream sub-cycle by drawing on participants' personal histories and exploring "what might be… and envisioning results" in terms of expectations of their experience in LMP. Pairing these insights with the strengths

discovered in the previous sub-cycle provided a foundation on which we could map the solutions

we wanted to attain in the upcoming Design and Destiny sub-cycles.

Sub-cycle 1c: Design

As the Chair of Staff and Community Relations, one of my primary tasks is identifying

professional development opportunities and facilitating activities to connect staff members'

involvement to their outside lives. The Five Why's activity and interview responses revealed the

diversity of experiences and goals that staff members brought to LMP. In designing this training,

I witnessed the complexity of our efforts to offer staff members some benefit to being on staff

outside of fulfilling their desire to give back to the community. It seemed so easy to let go of

such a priority and simply enable staff members to fulfill their stated duties to the best of the

abilities. But I could argue that the community and unexpected professional development that

kept staff members engaged was vital to empowering staff members to complete their duties

well. I decided that for any professional development to be valuable, I had to design a leadership

or professional development training that was broadly applicable across a variety of industries

and stages of life.

I chose to lead a workshop entitled, "Power-mapping and Authority" during which

participants identified stakeholders, relationships, and strategies that were key in pursuing a big-

picture professional goals (Appendix I). Participants of this workshop consisted of staff members

and college mentors during a monthly mentor meeting. They were encouraged to view

stakeholders, relationships, and power in proximity to their professional goal and understand

which relationships should be cultivated to advance them towards these professional goals.

Rather than viewing professional goals with an individualistic mindset that can be reached by

pulling themselves up by their bootstraps, participants formulated their power maps to begin

viewing relationships more collectively and strategically. This workshop specifically contributed

to the growth of skills in AQAL Quadrant 2 (individual objective skills and behaviors), while

also raising awareness about the dynamics in Quadrant 4 (objective collective systems and

structures). My goal for this activity was to make an explicit connection to LMP's investment in

staff and mentors outside of the program space. Power-mapping is a valuable skill for LMP staff

to utilize in fulfilling program operations, but is also transferable to participants' experiences

outside of the program.

     Reframing the mindset. During the debrief and reflection portion after this activity,

students and staff members expressed how they had not previously thought about achieving their

goals with this perspective. The activity pushed students to recognize the different types of

cultural wealth in their lives and understand how to utilize these in achieving their goals.

Mentors and staff members shared a variety of professional goals such as culture writer, student

affairs professional, and clinical mental health professional. They appreciated that we spent time

on a professional development activity that was directly related to their goals, even though the

goals vastly differed. We were pressed for time during the activity and many participants shared

that they wanted to dedicate more time learning about authority and power mapping. The

excitement in their learning and realizations felt palpable and demonstrated the value of

intentionality in making space for these types of activities. The positive feedback I received from

this activity affirmed the need for structured professional development for staff members and

mentors.

Sub-cycle 1d: Destiny

     Until this year, the thread of big picture leadership and professional development only

explicitly ran through a couple of staff positions. For most positions, this mode of infusing

leadership and professional development into one's duties existed as subtext beneath staff duties

and LMP events. It usually was not until an activity intentionally challenged staff and mentors to

think about their roles outside of the space that they were pushed to make that connection.

Engaging in a manner that served one's professional development outside of LMP was viewed as

more of a bonus after we did the work of organizing a robust program for the high school

mentees. The destiny that emerged from this first Discover cycle was a need to reframe staff and

mentor engagement, involvement, and duties. We made it a priority to surface the underlying

tone of lifelong learning and professional development that has been present over the years.

Together with the Executive Director and Curriculum Director, we looked at our operations,

leadership opportunities, and professional development programming with a lens that took into

consideration moving individuals toward their goals and LMP towards our goals simultaneously.

Cycle 2: Dream – Professional Development Possibilities

Following the priority of reframing leadership and professional development set forth in

the previous cycle, I chose to explicitly focus on streamlining opportunities for this type of

development throughout the year. I recognized that it was necessary to reconcile operational

needs with individual needs of staff and mentors. While I felt the weight of this complex task, I

remained rooted in appreciating the strengths we had already achieved thus far. The Dream

portion of the 4-D Cycle is "grounded in the organization's history," while keeping in mind the

voices and hopes of participants (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 44). I explored what was present

and necessary for participants in their leadership and professional journeys while being mindful

of the impact of cultural values on our trajectories and metrics for success.

Sub-cycle 2a: Discover

In this reflective phase, I organized a dialogue with the Executive Director (Aaron

Gallardo), Curriculum Director (Dustin Domingo), and Staff Development Coordinator (Kent

Paris). We discussed staff development needs and desired outcomes. Throughout this

conversation, we continually returned to the idea of lifelong learning and arming staff and

mentors with skills that were applicable in their personal and professional lives. Kent expressed a desire to "build tomorrow's educators" and assist the curriculum team in effectively delivering their lesson plans. Aaron shared tangible skills that he wanted to help staff improve, such as time management, communication skills, and financial planning. The range of leadership and professional development outcomes became wider and wider.

Our conversations felt like we were working from two ends simultaneously—on one hand, the directors needed staff to be equipped with certain skills to carry out their duties successfully; on the other, we had to find out from staff directly what type of training they would most benefit from. One thing we agreed on was the lack of time and commitment to professional development. Professional and leadership training was typically the first on the chopping block when meeting agendas had to be shortened. There was also a bit of tension about whose role it was to lead staff development efforts. We each had a stake in it, but were not clear on who would make executive decisions due to power dynamics and perceived authority. Our collaborative nature proved to be a hindrance in this moment, further exacerbated by our existing friendships and what seemed like a desire to endlessly support each other without contradicting one another. This conversation was a prime example of "how things really work around here" in culture portion of AQAL Quadrant 3 (Klein, p.3). We spent a significant amount of time making professional development plans that fell under Quadrant 2 and 4, but the rules in Quadrant 3 may have been setting us up to fail.

Sub-cycle 2b: Dream

At the staff meeting following the retreat, we sought to understand what concerns staff had about program knowledge, operations, and participation for the upcoming year. Aaron and I facilitated a brainstorming session for staff members to voice their concerns and apprehensions. There were no limits to the subject matter or scope of these concerns—the prompt was simply as

follows: "What concerns do you have for the upcoming year?" This meeting took place in

October 2018, during the busiest time of recruitment season, in which the primary focus is

gathering high school and college students to take part in the program. At this time, curriculum

and logistical planning was already underway for the cohort that was scheduled to begin in

December 2018.

Sixteen staff members separated into four groups during the brainstorming session and

were given a piece of poster paper to list their concerns and apprehensions. All groups then

rotated to view the products of each group's brainstorming session. During each rotation, staff

members offered suggestions and training ideas for tackling the stated concerns. During this sub-

cycle, I wanted to center the voices of staff members and expand the potential of what was

possible during future leadership trainings and professional development activities.

Engagement, Operations, and Development. Participants were primarily concerned

with staff and student engagement. For both of these groups, they were worried about low

attendance and retention. On the staff member side, participants were apprehensive about

burnout, the geographic distance of events, being unfamiliar with program operations, and lack

of participation during events. On the student side, participants were concerned about students

not understanding or grasping the value of the curriculum, lack of communication, and

unsupportive families. In terms of operations, participants were worried about inability to reserve

venues, lack of funding, and low recruitment numbers. Lastly, they were concerned about

mentorship practices and training mentors to handle conflicts, "imperfect" mentor/mentee

pairings, and building mentors' confidence in their abilities.

Adaptability and Accountability. The suggestions offered in response to the

aforementioned concerns exemplified how the participants "imagined what could be" and

explored what was possible from the group based on LMP's strengths (Cooperrider et al., 2008,

p. 45). While that specific activity surfaced weakness of the organization, it also provided an

opportunity to demonstrate how LMP strengths could be leveraged to improve upon such

weaknesses. In reviewing the suggestions for addressing the concerns listed, themes of

adaptability, making space for vulnerability, and commitment emerged. Participants stressed a

reliance "on program evaluations to adapt curriculum," which further demonstrated the need to

implement consistent, relevant evaluations. They shared that staff members should delegate tasks

and "support each other in responsibilities." Suggestions also pointed to a safe learning

environment in which "it is okay to be vulnerable, honest, and ask questions." The importance of

building relationships appeared frequently, especially outside of mentorship pairings and with

community partners. Participants stressed the importance of utilizing people and resources

already available to us. Finally, the suggestions stressed commitment to program dates, roles,

and responsibilities.

       Reflections on Concerns and Suggestions. The most visible set of concerns related to

AQAL Quadrants 2 and 4. As I reviewed the themes from concerns and suggestions shared by

staff members, I noticed that not every concerned had a solution or idea for how to address it.

Some suggestions did not seem feasible or realistic, such as "giving 110% all the time,"

especially when a major concern was burnout. It seemed as if some solutions could only apply to

certain types of personalities or leadership styles. Many of the concerns were adaptive problems

that could not simply be addressed by technical solutions. From my perspective, it would take a

lot of maturity and self-awareness to properly address the concerns listed and facilitate

transformative change. Many of the concerns listed have been present since the inception of the

program and in previous years, we simply accepted the issues as part of the nature of the

program. But after completing this activity, I began to wonder what we could feasibly do in a

year to shift the culture and expectations in the long-run and address these persistent concerns.

Sub-cycle 2c: Design

In this Design sub-cycle, I utilized two written questionnaires that explored more of the

big picture experiences staff members brought with them into LMP. I wanted to use a tangible

tool to track these experiences, as the Design cycle calls for creation of an organization's social

architecture. While there is very little structured Filipino American culturally relevant curriculum

to apply to a program like LMP, our rich and diverse experiences provide a strong foundation

upon which to base our curriculum and program priorities. As such, I administered these

questionnaires as a structured means of collecting and validating those experiences. It was at this

point in the process that the need for more formal infrastructure in our training and staff

engagement became apparent.

Participant demographics and educational experiences. The first questionnaire

collected demographic and educational information, as well as mentoring relationships and areas

that staff members wanted to improve in their personal and professional lives (Appendix J).

Among the 29 questionnaire respondents, 13 were ages 18-22, 13 were ages 23-27, and three

were ages 28-32. Sixteen respondents identified as women, 12 identified as men, and one

identified as non-binary. 13 unique undergraduate institutions were identified with seven

respondents currently completing or holding an graduate degree. For undergraduate degrees, 15

participants were STEM majors, four in the social sciences, four in humanities, five in

professional or liberal studies, and one in visual/performing arts. 24 out of 29 respondents shared

that they had mentoring opportunities available in their workplaces and of those 24, 21

respondents currently take advantage of those mentoring opportunities.

Role models and representation. The second questionnaire focused on experiences with

role models and Filipino/Filipino American representation in education and workplace settings

(Appendix K). As a mentorship program, I wanted staff to reflect upon their lived experiences

and bring those into the curriculum and programming. For the 16 questionnaire respondents, 11

had Filipino or Filipino-American teachers in K-12 school or in college. 12 respondents had

other significant Filipino or Filipino American adults in their life. Four out of the 16 respondents

did not have any type of mentor inside or outside of their workplace/school. All other

respondents had at least one formal or informal mentor in their workplace or school.

Participants shared the following types of roles models, which can contribute to all six

types of Cultural Wealth: professors, supervisors and other senior positions in their workplaces,

family members, and those with similar educational and professional paths. Some participants

also shared role models who they looked up to for their passions, accomplishments, and the way

they lived their lives, regardless of if they shared the same professional goals. Participants

wanted to embody the traits and values of their roles models and looked to them for assistance

with decision-making, encouragement, and support. A common theme was connecting with role

models on a personal level, challenging each other to becomes their best selves, and encouraging

each other to pursue self-reflection.

The data gathered through this questionnaire demonstrated the diversity of experiences

and perspectives present among staff members and mentors. I viewed this as the primary strength

of LMP upon which we could build culturally relevant curriculum. Staff and students can utilize

each other's lived experiences as a foundation for their learning and achieving their goals.

Sub-cycle 2d: Destiny

After reviewing and reflecting upon insights from the dialogue, concerns brainstorming,

and questionnaires, I wanted to provide an intervention that would sustain the life force of

leadership and professional development for staff members and eventually mentors. What

emerged as the Destiny of this cycle was the idea of creating a professional development

curriculum formulated in tandem with the pillar session curriculum. By institutionalizing a

professional development syllabus, we could provide staff members with a tangible outline of the

program's investment in their leadership and professional growth.

By creating this syllabus in parallel with the student syllabus, it would be easier to

integrate culturally relevant curriculum and grapple with the monthly themes as a whole program

more deeply. As I completed the Dream cycle, I held on to the notion of institutionalizing

infrastructure and uncovered the need to plan and execute farther in advance than we ever have.

By having such tools (questionnaires, syllabi, etc.) at the ready, we could increase our capacity

for more meaningful engagement and a larger operations workload. While a professional

development syllabus could be considered a technical solution, creating and implementing the

curriculum would likely prove to be an adaptive challenge. The struggle then proved to be

carving out time and space to create such tools that could be implement year after year with only

minor adjustments. The Destiny of Cycle 2 served as a prime example of a leadership challenge

that spanned all four AQAL quadrants.

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Cycle 3: Design – Tools and Infrastructure

</div>

In the third phase of the 4-D Cycle of Appreciative Inquiry, the goal is to "embody the

organizational dream in ongoing activities" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 45). After solidifying the

idea for a professional development syllabus, the cohort was well underway, and operations had

to continue as planned. As was typical of previous years, most staff members became pre-

occupied with student recruitment and their specific positions duties, in addition to their

commitments outside of LMP. I pivoted my energy in this cycle to supporting and empowering

staff members in their duties as the busy season got underway. With the desire to create and

implement tools still at the forefront of my mind, I wanted to support staff members as they built

sustainable infrastructure.

At this point, I began grappling with my role as an advisor—rather than taking on the tasks of actually creating these tools, I reflected on my own practice and focused on offering what I could while staff members took up the work of building infrastructure. I wrote the following in my personal journal after a staff meeting:

> There is value in hearing what every staff member is doing inside and outside of their roles. We had lofty goals over the summer and at retreat. But once the year starts, we fall into the same routine because we get short on time, have outside lives, and a long to-do list. My role is observing.

It became difficult for me to outline exactly what I planned do this in this cycle because I wanted the staff members to pursue projects in line with their strengths. The type of support I offered depended largely on staff members sharing their strengths, interests, and desires before I stepped in to advise. In the vein of adaptive leadership, I let what was meant to happen emerge while observing the big picture from balcony perspective and then returned to the dance floor to make interventions.

Sub-cycle 3a: Discover

In this sub-cycle, I prioritized transparency about my research process. I had informal conversations with several staff members about my preliminary findings, trends I noticed, and suggestions for improvement. I used this sub-cycle to get a feel for which staff members were interested in ideas shared by others and where we might be able to combine our strengths to create productive and necessary infrastructure. In the Discover and Dream cycles, a recurring strength was the collaborative nature among staff, along with the deep connections and investment in each other's' goals and endeavors. It was apparent that a vast amount of Cultural Wealth was present across all six categories. As a program, we were adept at leveraging existing resources and maintaining a safe learning environment in which we could be honest, vulnerable,

and innovative. Lastly, I wanted to draw from the diversity in educational backgrounds, career

fields, and interests present among staff members. Heifetz and Linsky (2004) shared that

"problems that require [adaptive] leadership are those that they experts cannot solve… The

solutions lie not in technical answers, but rather in the people themselves" (p. 35). Rather than

creating additional burdens to stated staff duties, I wanted to foster an environment in which staff

members willingly initiated projects that would further build our infrastructure.

Sub-cycle 3b: Dream

I was asked to attend a virtual meeting regarding revamping the program and pillar

evaluation process. As mentioned, we typically conducted simple paper evaluations to gather

feedback at the end of each pillar session. Since 2014, we have also administered a pre- and post-

assessment to mentors and mentees in an attempt to gauge student learning. This evaluation

process was inconsistent and did not offer much to help us improve program practices.

Many strengths that emerged were related to the work that some staff members were

doing in their graduate school programs. Namely, our Administrative Coordinator, Abby

Saavedra, who is enrolled in master's program in Clinical Psychology, as well as Dustin, who

was completing an Ed.D in Educational Leadership. They expressed a strong desire and

willingness to create and implement robust evaluations. During our meeting, we determined

program outcomes for the upcoming cohort and then delved into the details of what program and

pillar evaluations should entail. It became clear that much of the social, navigational, and

resistance capital of Community Wealth present in LMP consisted of the unique educational

experiences that participants brought with them.

After further discussion, Dustin shared the idea of creating a workbook that mentors and

mentees would utilize throughout the cohort (Appendix L). This workbook would contain all the

necessary materials for each pillar session, as well as the evaluations. Activities in the workbook

would also parallel the program outcomes we decided upon. I wrote the following reflection after

this meeting:

> I kept wanting to solve things by inserting myself and creating more work. I acknowledge
>
> that the culture is changing and there is more accountability. We are raising expectations
>
> for staff. Always go back to outcomes. What are we really trying to achieve by doing
>
> this?

Sub-cycle 3c: Design

As many of us were in graduate school, we wanted to utilize both theoretical frameworks

and best research practices in formulating program outcomes and evaluations. Dustin adapted the

Social Change Model from the Higher Education Institute at UCLA (Appendix M) into a Lakas

Leadership Development Model that outlined how we intended for mentors and mentees to

engage with the program curriculum over the course of the cohort (Appendix N). He used this as

the starting point of the workbook, which created transparency and a through line of educational

opportunities that we hoped the mentors and mentees would take advantage of. I assisted Dustin

with the logistical and financial requirement to produce this product. I also supported Dustin and

the curriculum team with workshop design and reviewing the corresponding contents for the

workbook.

In terms of the evaluation, Abby took it upon herself to create the first iterations and then

send them to the informal evaluation committee for feedback and adjustments. Throughout the

process, we offered our thoughts on theoretical frameworks, language, outcomes, and other

things she should consider in the evaluation process. As Dustin and Abby designed these

tangible tools, I took ownership of my role in facilitating, empowering, and supporting staff

members in capitalizing on their strengths for program gain.

Sub-cycle 3d: Destiny

In Cycle 3, I more deeply felt the tension of balancing growth and development in all four AQAL quadrants. This sub-cycle made clear how much more initiative and investment was necessary from each staff member for us to create institutionalized change. We "delivered on new images of the future" by raising our standards and expectations. As a result of this cycle, we now had formal evaluation tools, leadership and engagement frameworks, and student workbooks. By creating these tangible tools and an implementation schedule, we increased expectations about accountability among staff members. We appreciated staff members' strengths and passions, and they rose up to meet higher expectations. The Destiny of the third cycle was the high impact creation of sustainable tools we had been seeking for years.

Cycle 4: Destiny – Sustainability and Institutionalization

Cooperrider et al. explains that Destiny is meant to nurture a collective sense of purpose and movement for the group (2008, p. 46). I wanted the Destiny cycle to shift the focus back to the bigger picture. The cycle was intended to bring the experience back full circle, as participants reconciled their own histories, the impact of culturally relevant curriculum, and the trajectory of LMP. In the first three cycles, we dove into our practices and formulated tools and approaches to improve the organization. We refined our leadership practices while rooted in our Filipino American experiences and shaped the program into a space unlike what we found in typical academic or professional settings. The challenge was then to institutionalize these practices and devise a feasible plan for sustaining the program, its curriculum, and this style of leadership training.

Sub-cycle 4a: Discover

In this sub-cycle of Discovery, I challenged participants to return to their personal histories and desires. I conducted two focus groups with a total of five participants as a means of gathering data (Appendix O). Focus group participants consisted of both staff members and

advisors spanning a range of years involved, as well as positions and perspectives. During these

dialogues, participants discussed how their ethnic identities affected their educational and

professional experiences. They then compared their leadership experiences in LMP to their

leadership experiences in other settings. Lastly, they were asked to share the master narratives of

their lives and the stories they think should be passed on from generation to generation.

Academic and educational expectations. Participants shared tidbits of their parents'

immigration stories and a general sentiment of coming to America for a better life. Stories of

struggle and making parents' sacrifices worthwhile were common. Linguistic, familial, and

aspirational capital emerged throughout the retellings of immigration stories. These stories also

framed the Ethnic Awareness and Assimilation to Dominant Culture stages within the Pilipino

American Identity Model. One participant stated the following:

> I felt like there was a much more personal motivation and need [for ethnic studies]
>
> because I was invisible in history. There are a lot of issues surrounding minorities and the
>
> treatment of minorities. I felt like it was super important to arm myself with that kind of
>
> knowledge and be able to better navigate the world.

Another participant shared the following:

> The work ethic I saw from my parents and how they came from the Philippines with not a
>
> lot of money, but were able to build a fairly decent life. I think that really affected how I
>
> saw school. I also think that my parents put a lot of emphasis on school, studying, and
>
> doing a good job. Working hard and striving for excellence.

The concept of intentionality surfaced when participants shared that they pursued

coursework in ethnic studies as a means of exploring their ethnic identity and perspective. In

these parts of the dialogue, participants exhibited different stages in the Pilipino American

Identity Development Model, namely Stages 3-5: Awakening to Social Political Consciousness,

Panethnic Asian American Consciousness, and Ethnocentric Consciousness. Ethnic studies

coursework seemed to be a catalyst for identity development and moving from one stage or

another within the model.

Privilege and intentionality in personal and professional development. The idea of

intentionality also carried through to professional development. As participants raised their

consciousness around ethnic identity, they actively sought professional development that took

into account their ethnic identity—or at the very least, did not completely ignore or erase their

ethnic identities in the workplace. For these participants, LMP served as the premier place to

experience tailored professional development that took ethnic identity and lived experiences into

consideration. Participants wanted to understand how their ethnic identity affected their decision-

making and vice versa, possibly in conjunction with moving toward Stage 6: Incorporation

within their identity development.

Participants also remarked on having to consider one's privileges or lack thereof while

navigating professional settings and advancing in their career trajectories. They lamented about

having to spend time reconciling diverging definitions of success or dedicating more efforts to

personal development than their white and/or more privileged counterparts. One participant

wondered how much farther along in his career he could be or if he could have more easily

switched careers if he did not feel pulled to spend time continually learning what it means to be

Filipino American. However, these multiple concepts of success demonstrated a heightened

awareness of ethnic identity can contribute to one's aspirational and navigational wealth within

the Community Wealth model, thus reframing such struggles as strengths. Additionally,

participants felt a duty to increase representation in their respective industries, especially as we

mentor and teach younger generations. Because participants invested time in unpacking how

their ethnic identities affected their career paths, they were better equipped to access various

forms of capital and mentor younger community members who may face the same struggles.

     The pressure of being Filipino and American. In LMP, we spend a considerable amount

of time exploring our culture, owning our stories, and learning to be proud of where we come

from. Within the AI process, the need to stay committed to the program and participants'

strengths remains at the forefront. Yet this sometimes does a disservice to our operations by

ignoring the effects of negative experience in shaping effective operations and practices. It seems

like participants believed that we formulated many of our practices and processes in response to

negative experiences we have had as a result of our ethnic identity development.

     Participants shared that their prioritized unlearning harmful cultural values and dealing

with cultural shame as they navigated their professional and personal development journeys. One

staff member said, "I didn't want to be associated with other Filipinos. I didn't want to be a

stereotype. I wanted to be different… I had to unlearn a lot of that in college." Participants noted

that exploring one's ethnic identity in and after college was a time of growth, but also required

them to recognize and let go of harmful values and ideals they had internalized during childhood.

For example, participants discussed the cultural shame they felt about the color of their skin or

their country of origin and how these characteristics made them feel less than. These feelings can

be defined as Stage 2: Assimilation to Dominant Culture within the PAID framework in which

attitudes and beliefs towards oneself (including physical characteristics, behaviors, values, and

traditions) are negative and self-deprecating (Nadal, 2004, p.54).

     As participants discussed such negative experiences, the diversity in their upbringing and

perspectives became apparent. Some participants did not want to be associated with Filipinos

during their K-12 years, while others actively sought or formed Filipino student groups. The

desire to find community with others demonstrates aspects of State 5: Ethnocentric Realization.

The differences in responses and experiences doubles down on the non-linear, environment-based nature of the model. Additionally, some participants actively went against their parents' wishes in pursuing certain careers (such as music and ethnic studies), while others already felt a strong inclination towards the careers their parents wanted them to pursue. Although the topics became more solemn, it was clear that the one of the strengths of LMP is the diversity of experiences each staff member and advisor brings as we shape operations, curriculum, and strategies as well at the critical perspective we employ when reflections on such experiences.

During these focus groups, I viscerally felt the limitations of Appreciative Inquiry and the dominant focus on strengths in improving one's practice. I had to resist the tendency to minimize negative, painful, or traumatic experiences in trying to favor strengths and positive attributes. I wondered if there was an appreciative approach to questioning in which we could hold multiple, complex truths and draw strength from such experiences.

Sub-cycle 4b: Dream

A key component of action research is validation. In this Dream sub-cycle, I sought to escape the silo of LMP and the mental models that might have limited my AI process. I paused to wonder if we were continuing the same style of leadership that frequently led us to flying by the seats of our pants. By seeking validation and consulting with critical friends, I wanted to solidify a practice of evaluating our actions through which we could reflect and adjust as necessary. Employing such a mechanism in each cycle and sub-cycle would have been ideal. But even against our best efforts of action, reflection, and adjustment, we easily fell back into old habits as the year and workload ramped up.

I utilized various social validation measures to test for validity: my critical friends group, sharing my findings with participants, and gathering participant perspectives (McNiff, 2016, p. 220). Combining insight from those in the Filipino American community (participants) with

those outside of the community (critical friends) helped me compile comprehensive critical

feedback to consider. The nature of Appreciative Inquiry is "cooperative and co-evolutionary,"

which is why I was committed to involving these stakeholders in my validity (Cooperrider &

Whitney, 1999, p. 276). LMP has had very little on which to base our approach to mentorship

and leadership, as there few organizations that do similar work. As such, my methods for

ensuring validity lay in the hands of stakeholders and those directly affected by this process.

Sub-cycle 4c: Design

In this Design sub-cycle, I administered another survey as a means of gathering data

about what participants value most about LMP and their wishes for the program moving forward

(Appendix P). Participants reflected on what they deeply connected with in their program

experience and also shared their hopes for the future. 13 participants completed this survey. I

compared the observations and desires I have had for LMP over the last seven years with those

of other staff members who have been in the program a shorter amount of time and may have

had a different experience. I intended for these responses to serve as a foundation for the Destiny

of this appreciative inquiry process.

Why we value LMP. I value LMP for nurturing space it provides in a variety of areas:

personal and professional growth, relationships and support systems, culturally relevant learning,

and validating my lived experiences. In the PAID model, environment and social systems are key

in determining the ability to move between different stages of development. I did wonder how

staff perceived the intrinsic value of the program and its value in their own lives. Their responses

were similar to my own, which then made me wonder about the cyclical nature of shaping the

dynamics, curriculum, and environment of the program—do we shape the program in these ways

because these are our own values; or does the program espouse these values so well that they

become the priorities in our own lives?

Safe, nurturing space. Many participants shared that LMP fosters a safe space in which students and staff can explore their identities and practice leadership. A culture of lifelong learning permeates this space. Students and staff mentor one another while learning from each other's lived experiences. In the vein of lifelong learning, participants appreciated the opportunity to learn about themselves by learning about culture and history. They also valued that the program empowers staff and students by providing the tools to succeed, in addition to opportunities for storytelling and a place that validates our experiences. The program serves as a vehicle to move toward the stages Ethnocentric Realization or Incorporation in one's ethnic identity development. Overall, participants expressed that LMP is a place where they feel seen and heard, which is not always the case in other personal, academic, and professional settings.

Community and connections. Participants valued the connections they made with students and staff members and the diversity of perspectives of the group. On a personal level, a phrase that was continually repeated was that staff members were "down for each other," which demonstrated a deep sense of kinship. Many participants shared that LMP provided a space and experience similar to their college cultural organizations. Additionally, participants appreciated the expansion of their professional networks due to their involvement with LMP.

Wishes for the program.

When I served in various staff positions, my perspective was more focused on the minutia of the duties I had to fulfill. Now that I am an advisor, I am tasked with considering the bigger picture and taking steps to ensure staff is equipped to carry out program operations. Participants shared wishes that aligned with a desire to strengthen the program and ensure it has the means to continue for years to come.

Increased Engagement. A common concern was low attendance numbers for both students and staff. Because staff members are not financially compensated, we must take

ownership over our own curriculum and learning and make the program worth our time. We

must also take it upon ourselves to form relationships with people whom we then want to show

up for and support. I also assume that many of the students who elect to spend their time in a free

mentorship program are also involved in other extra-curricular activities, internships, or jobs.

Similar to staff member engagement, students prioritized other commitments over attending

LMP events. This happens often, as monthly LMP events occur on weekends.

At this point, curriculum and relationships are the primary motivators for attendance.

Creating these engaging conditions is time-consuming and mentally draining for staff members.

With our current resources, I realized this wish is a double-edged sword. It seems like we must

ask for more engagement to increase engagement. When I arrive at solutions such as this one, I

remind myself to turn back to social validation groups or look outside for innovative ideas. It

feels like we have been trapped in this wish for the past seven years and each time, we come up

with the same solution: sustainable funding.

Improved Operations and Infrastructure. Participants wished for sustainable sources of

funding and had a variety of ideas about how to spend this funding so as to address the

program's growth and successfully fulfill our mission. Some suggested having students pay a

registration fee to create "buy-in" for the program, while others suggested grant funding.

Generally, participants wished that staff members would be paid for their work and even turn

director positions into full-time roles.

Aside from issues that could be solved with an increased revenue stream, staff members

and advisors also wanted to solidify reliable operations and practices. Some shared a desire to

plan the events calendar farther in advance or increase the length of terms that directors serve.

Institutional Partnerships. Participants wished for more formal status or institutional

partnerships. This is something I felt strongly about for years as a staff member as well. As an

advisor, establishing these partnerships and/or seeking non-profit organization status falls under

my duties. Having served in this role for almost two years now, I grasped how difficult it is to

come to a consensus on how to proceed as a program, let alone executing the necessary actions

to complete whatever decision at which we arrive. Overall, participants want some sort of

official integration into high schools or universities.

Sub-cycle 4d: Destiny

The Destiny of this final cycle remains to be realized. The challenge for advisors and

staff members is how to deliver on these wishes for institutionalization and sustainability. The

recommendations to improve leadership training and program operations will be presented to the

Board of Advisors and Executive Director at the final meeting of the current cohort in May. This

is an exciting opportunity to share the findings of the appreciative inquiry process. However, this

will also occur simultaneously with year-end planning for this cohort and program planning for

next year. Additionally, the current advisors are still unsure about who will be returning next

year, as each of our two-year terms expires in July. Ideally, there will be advisors and staff

members available and capable of carrying out this destiny while continuing the regular program

operations of staff and student recruitment during the summer months. I am left to wonder how

we can solidify this commitment and ensure accountability for following through on the wishes

that so many of us expressed.

<div align="center">

Outcomes and Findings

</div>

After conducting the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle, I gained a variety of insights

regarding the strengths, leadership challenges, and the impact of culturally relevant leadership

experiences within LMP.

Tangible Tools and Processes

Throughout the cycles, I helped facilitate the creation and implementation of tools and processes that will provide the type of structure that many staff members sought. Moving forward, we plan to integrate the program evaluations, pillar session evaluations, and student activity workbook into the operations for each cohort. These tools will serve as a foundation and reference point to assess the outcomes of our work and provide much-need uniformity.

Strengths of Lakas Mentorship Program

A number of broad strengths emerged throughout several of the cycles: community, growth, and leadership experiences. A recurring sentiment that emerged throughout each cycle was the level of support and sense of community that participants experience in LMP. Participants constantly push themselves and each other to grow in their personal, professional, and leadership practices and LMP is a tool that helps facilitate such growth. LMP is also unique in the number and depth of leadership experiences it provides to students, staff members, and advisors that they may not have available to them in school, workplaces, or other institutions.

Moving through the Pilipino American Identity Development model. It became apparent that all of our work in the program, whether that was through the actual curriculum or through managing program operations, could play a role in helping participants move through different stages of the Pilipino American Identity Development model. This framework emphasizes the impact of environment and community for generating opportunities to change one's belief and attitudes as a Filipino American person. LMP provides a type of environment that challenges students, staff, and advisors to take on this identity work, critically examine ourselves, and experience growth.

Utilizing the AQAL Model to Appreciate and Improve

Throughout the 4-D cycles, I identified strengths and areas we were currently focused on in each of the four AQAL quadrants. Areas of challenge and improvement also emerged in each of the four quadrants, demonstrating the necessity for a comprehensive approach to both technical and adaptive challenges. It is important to infuse culturally relevant leadership and curriculum and grasp the value of lived experiences when devising solutions across all four quadrants. The lens provided through the AQAL model enabled me to categorize and parse through individual and collective leadership issues that LMP has experienced for years.

Limitations

I am proud of the work, reflection, and analysis I carried out for LMP through the AI and action research process. However, I recognize that there were several program limitations that may have skewed my findings or made my original proposal difficult to implement.

Time and Capacity Limitations

Throughout the Appreciative Inquiry process, my main limitation was the time commitment required to carry out each cycle. Fortunately, the model was relatively easy to incorporate into existing program operations. Because LMP is something I volunteer my time to, I was unable to dedicate as much time as I would have liked to this action research. This reflects the same issues with commitment and prioritization that is common among staff members.

I was mindful of not creating extra tasks for staff members and advisors who have a variety of personal, professional, and academic commitments. I had also hoped to collaborate much more than I did throughout the process with staff members and advisors. While this helped me recognize strengths within processes that were already occurring, I had to stretch agendas thin and take time away from other valuable or necessary pieces of event agendas.

Positionality

My role and stated duties as an advisor also limited me. When I administered data

collection tools or facilitated activities directly related to this action research, I had to reconcile

my advisor duties with the somewhat self-serving nature of using the organization for my action

research. I became increasingly aware of staff perceptions of my research, especially because I

was not as present as I would have liked to be to build more rapport with individual staff

members and mentors. My positionality as an advisor with seven years of LMP experience may

also have had an effect on mentor, staff, and advisor responses as they participated in each cycle.

Some participants view me as a role model and I also hold both formal and informal authority

within the organization. Participants may have felt pressured to respond a certain way because of

our dynamics with each other or because of the aims of my action research.

<div align="center">

Recommendations

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The Appreciative Inquiry process, 4-D Cycle, and theoretical frameworks provided a

foundation for understanding both what is and what could be. Dedicating the time, energy, and

resources to completing this process enabled me to outline specific, tangible recommendations,

which we have neglected for the past seven years of existence.

Recommendations for the 2019-2020 Lakas Mentorship Program

In the big picture of improving program operations and engagement, advisors and staff

members should utilize an organizational management and change lens. While there are

improvements to make in the subjective Quadrants 1 (personal meaning and engagement) and 3

(culture and shared values), we do pride ourselves on the strengths in these quadrants. LMP

would benefit from structure and an outlined action plan to address issues in the objective

Quadrants 2 (skills and behaviors) and 4 (systems and structure). By utilizing an organizational

management and change lens, we could make improvements to our leadership practices in all

four quadrants simultaneously.

Planning for upcoming cohorts earlier would allow ample time to address emergencies or

other unforeseen circumstances. Because tangible tools were created this year, we can save

transition time and also provide continuity in planning upcoming cohorts. Operations would also

improve by implementing staff reports that contain month-to-month duties, outcomes of these

efforts, and other pertinent details and reflections. This would aid the transition and onboarding

process from year to year as staff turns over. These reports would also allow directors and

advisors to gather data to reorganize duties and positions, if necessary. Additionally, creating a

program evaluation that parallel the student evaluations would be helpful for gathering data and

insights consistently. Another high impact change would be to extend the term for the Executive

Director and Curriculum Director from one year to two years. This would further solidify year-

to-year continuity and would have an impact on the retention and development of other staff

members.

Throughout this process, I experienced the benefit of applying theoretical frameworks to

understand and make predictions about our work. I recommend integrating the Pilipino

American Identity Model into curriculum and professional development planning, as well as in

shaping the larger outcomes and vision of the program. My final recommendation for the

program is to follow through with creating a professional development syllabus for staff

members and mentors that parallels the program curriculum.

Recommendations for Further Action Research

With regard to Filipino American leadership and mentorship, I recommend further action

research on how immigration stories and intergenerational gaps affect values and practices.

Throughout the cycles, these topics were continually mentioned, and it would be interesting to

understand how one's family values differ from their own and how those differences affect

personal growth and professional development. Action research centered on leadership

development and storytelling practices may also shed light on the leadership and mentorship

experiences of Filipino Americans.

Recommendations for My Own Personal Learning

To improve my own practice, I should refine my skills and gain more experience in

program assessment and evaluations. Data gathering and analysis are a key part of almost any

role in higher education. I currently work in a community college setting where change happens

quickly and tangible data is required to make sound decisions. I would also benefit from more

experience with applying for grants and methods of sustainable fundraising. Lastly, I would

benefit from exploring other forms of culturally relevant curriculum, especially those that can be

utilized outside of traditional classroom spaces and in other higher education settings.

Significance to Higher Education

Institutionalized spaces and student membership turnover within higher education can

limit the work of cultural organizations on college campuses. LMP is a space over which

participants have almost total control—the possibilities and impact of our work know no bounds.

As a student affairs practitioner, it is difficult for me to find such opportunities as I fulfill my

stated job duties on a college campus. Improving my practice in LMP provides me with insights

that I can bring back to my institution, as we try to innovate and serve students in the ways that

they need.

LMP is an organization that seeks to fill a gap of what high school and college students

are missing on their campuses. Experiences, opportunities, empathy, and more—participants

stand to benefit from development they like do not experience at school and work. The impact of

culturally relevant curriculum, mentorship, and leadership development will likely transfer to

students who have the same gaps in their college experience. I can bring these best practices with

me to my work in student affairs and higher education.

Personal Reflection

This appreciative inquiry and action research project challenged me to consistently reflect

about my values, goals, professional practice, and so much more. While it was certainly a

considerable time commitment and exhausting project, it was worthwhile to apply research

practices and theoretical foundations to work that I have been doing for the past seven years.

Taking Ownership

For most of my time with LMP, I held a prominent leadership role on staff through which

I was responsible for shaping most of the executive decisions regarding program operations.

Now that I am an advisor, I have had to examine my leadership style and adjust my practices in a

new way that supports staff, mentors, and other advisors. Through this process, I took ownership

of my advisor role, learned to take a step back and see what needs emerged, rather than creating

new tasks. I also practice communicating and giving feedback differently, as my words were no

longer viewed as decisions, but suggestions instead. When I first switched to this new role, I

used to feel more defensive when I was not consulted about every decision or direction for

program operations—I thought that staff members should value my insight with my many years

of experience. In doing my action research and applying concepts of integral leadership theory

and supporting others in the Pilipino American Identity Development Model, I reframed my

mindset surrounding the value of my own experience and offering it for others to utilize.

Applying Theory to Practice

When I first got involved in LMP, we were flying by the seats of our pants and constantly

putting out fires. After all, it was something we did in our free time—whatever we accomplished

was already a big deal it itself. As the program has grown over the years, we never quite shed

this scrappy, grassroots nature. Now that we are widely known throughout the Filipino American community in Southern California, it is time to shape up our operations and make headway on our big picture goals. Getting the opportunity to apply leadership and ethnic identity development theories to the work we do in LMP has been instrumental in helping me see exactly what is next for the program and what steps must be taken to move forward.

Often times, I cannot be as experimental and innovative with my practices in my professional settings. Utilizing LMP as a testing grounds has given me transferable skills and ideas that I utilize in the workplace. In job interviews and other professional conversations, I frequently refer to the work I have done with LMP in this process and my offerings are met with inquiry and enthusiasm for how I can use what I achieved in this program to advance other initiatives and departments.

Balancing Development

LMP has been my prime place for both personal and professional development. When I first came to USD, I told many people that the higher education leadership program was essentially a two year-long LMP workshop. Putting these experiences togethers helped me uncover layers for leadership development within myself and pushed me to be courageous and confident in those endeavors. Now that I can delineate exactly where my strengths and struggles lie, I am better able to understand how I make decisions, apply my values, and create plans to move forward.

Gratitude

All in all, I am immensely grateful to have completed my action research with Lakas Mentorship Program. I have invested so much of myself and my time in this program and it was deeply transformational to have engaged with my work in this new way. I feel excited for what the future holds for my own learning, my professional life, and LMP.

Conclusion

I feel like I barely scratched the surface with the work we could do internally to improve program operations and leadership development. Additionally, we began the recognize the necessary steps to institutionalizing the program and entrenching ourselves more deeply into the community. In the coming months and years, it is clear that we need to continue being courageous no matter what path we choose to pursue.

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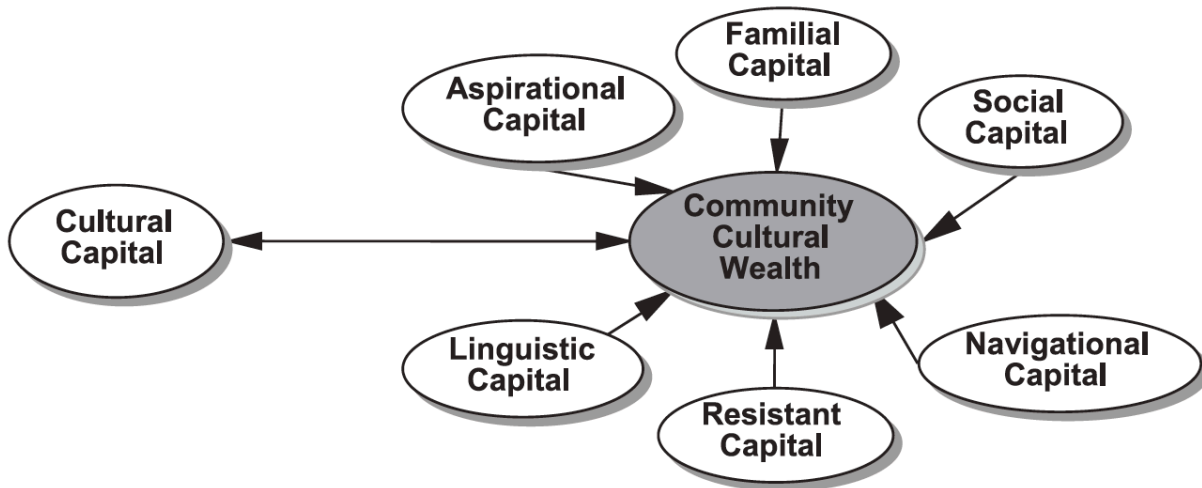
Appendix A

AQAL Model – All Quadrants, All Levels

	Subjective	*Objective*
Individual	QUADRANT 1 *Personal Meaning & Engagement*	QUADRANT 2 *Skills & Behaviors*
Collective	QUADRANT 3 *Culture & Shared Values*	QUADRANT 4 *Systems & Structure*

(Klein, p. 2)

Appendix B

Community Cultural Wealth Model

A model of community cultural wealth. Adapted from: Oliver & Shapiro, 1995

(Yosso, 2005, p. 80)

Appendix C

Pilipino American Identity Development Model
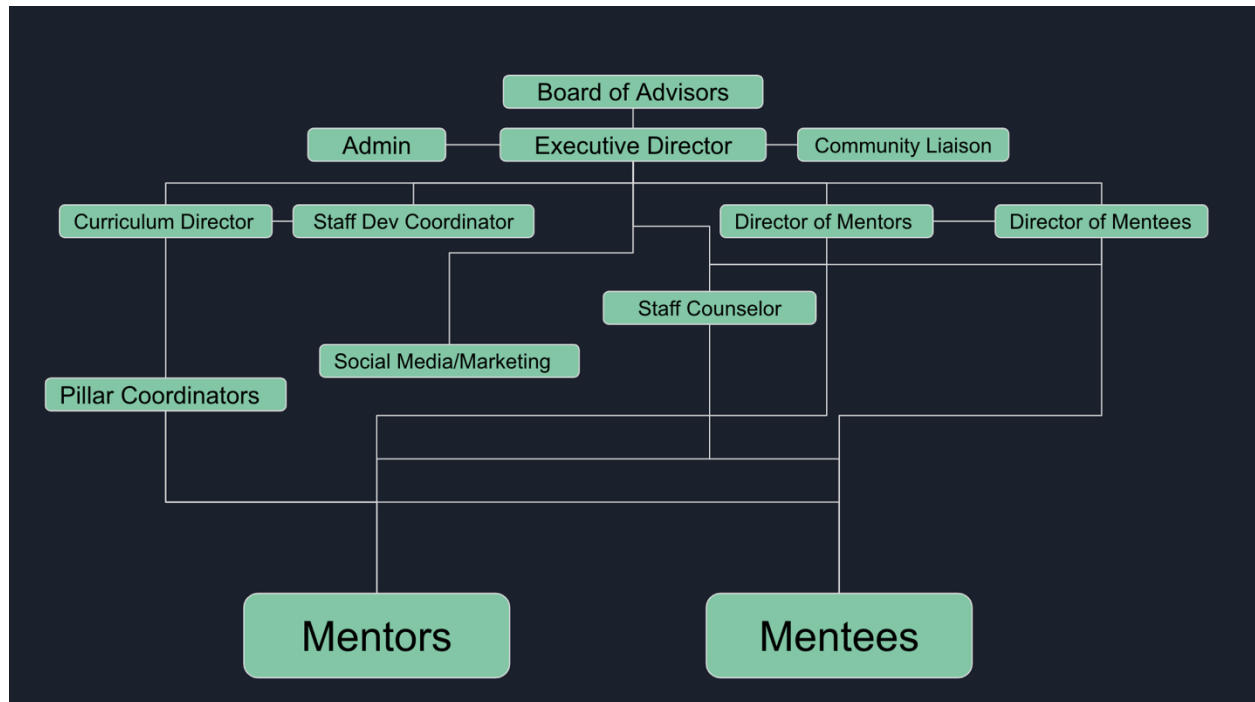
Pilipino American Identity Development Model

Stage of F/Pilipino American Identity	Attitudes Toward				
	Self	Other F/Pilipino Americans	Asian Americans	Other Minorities	White/ Dominant Group
1. Ethnic awareness	P/Neutral	P/Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	P/Neutral
2. Assimilation to dominant culture	N/SD	N/GD	N/D	N/D	P/GA
3. Awakening to social political consciousness	P/SE	P/GE	P/GA	P/A	N/D
4. Panethnic Asian American consciousness	P	P/A	P/GA	P/A	N/D
5. Ethnocentric consciousness	P/SE	P/GE	Neutral/GD	P/GE	N
6. Incorporation	SA	P/GA	A	P/A	Sel A

Note. P = Positive; N = Negative; SD = Self-Depreciating; SE = Self-Empowering; SA = Self-Appreciating; GD = Group-Depreciating; GE = Group-Empowering; A = Accepting; GA = Group-Appreciating; D = Discriminatory; Sel A = Selective Appreciation.
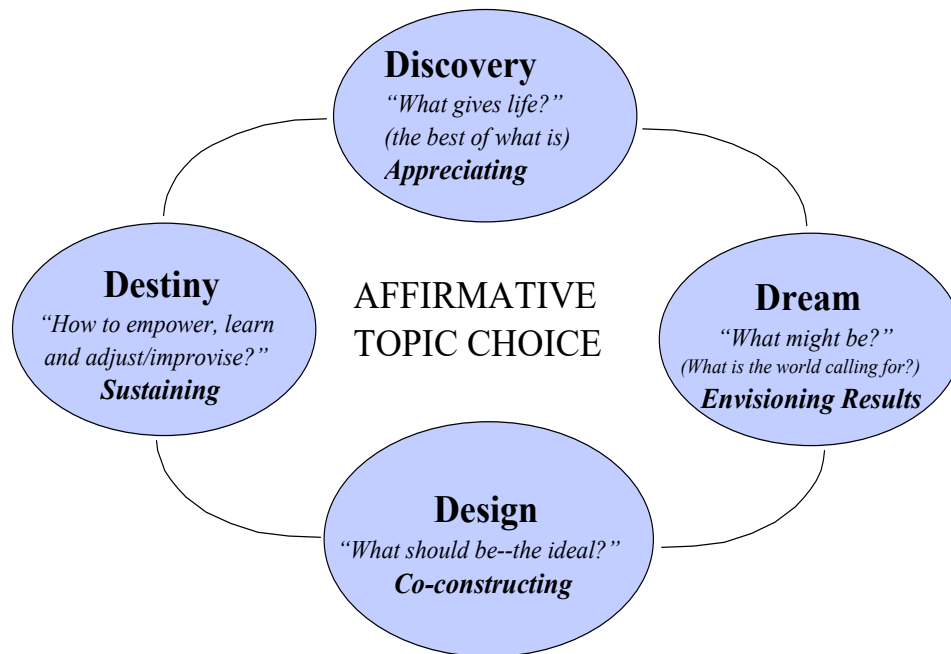
(Nadal, 2004, p. 53)

Appendix D

Lakas Mentorship Program Organizational Chart

("Lakas Mentorship Program," 2018)

Appendix E

Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle

Discovery
"What gives life?"
(the best of what is)
Appreciating

Destiny
*"How to empower, learn
and adjust/improvise?"*
Sustaining

AFFIRMATIVE
TOPIC CHOICE

Dream
"What might be?"
(What is the world calling for?)
Envisioning Results

Design
"What should be--the ideal?"
Co-constructing

(Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, p. 279)
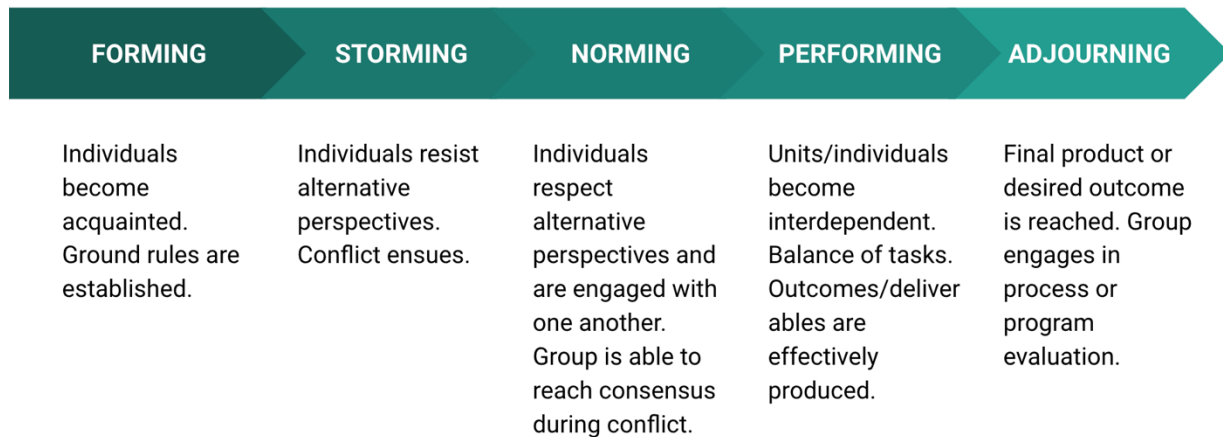
Appendix F

Pre-cycle Conversation Questions

- Tell me about your experience in Lakas.
    - How it this cohort going?
    - What is going well?
    - What are some areas of improvement?
- How have you seen Lakas change during the time that you've been involved?
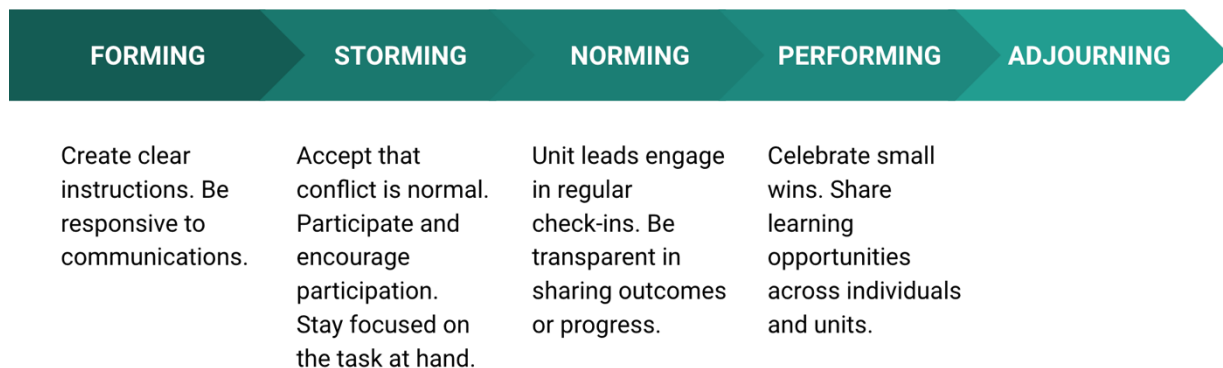
Appendix G

Stages of Team Development

CHARACTERISTICS

FORMING	STORMING	NORMING	PERFORMING	ADJOURNING
Individuals become acquainted. Ground rules are established.	Individuals resist alternative perspectives. Conflict ensues.	Individuals respect alternative perspectives and are engaged with one another. Group is able to reach consensus during conflict.	Units/individuals become interdependent. Balance of tasks. Outcomes/deliverables are effectively produced.	Final product or desired outcome is reached. Group engages in process or program evaluation.

STRATEGIES TO ADVANCE THROUGH STAGES

FORMING	STORMING	NORMING	PERFORMING	ADJOURNING
Create clear instructions. Be responsive to communications.	Accept that conflict is normal. Participate and encourage participation. Stay focused on the task at hand.	Unit leads engage in regular check-ins. Be transparent in sharing outcomes or progress.	Celebrate small wins. Share learning opportunities across individuals and units.	

(Dustin Domingo, 2018)

Appendix H

Interview Protocol

Introduction: "This interview is part of my Action Research project entitled, "Empowering
Filipino-American Young Adults Through Culturally Relevant Leadership Experiences."
Ultimately, I want to streamline the leadership training process within Lakas Mentorship
Program and facilitate meaningful learning opportunities for you as you fulfill your duties. I also
want to explore staff member engagement and the impact of acting as role models to each other.

Throughout the interview, I will be asking you to discuss your experience in Lakas. Your
responses will remain confidential. I will not report your names, information, or responses to
anyone, including staff, advisors, participants, colleagues, or supervisors. Names of participants
will not be included in the final report about this survey. Do you have any questions?"

- What were your motivations and expectations for joining Lakas?
- Considering your entire time with LMP, can you recall a time when you felt most alive,
  most involved, or most excited about your involvement?
- Without being humble, what do you value the most about yourself?
- How do you stay professionally affirmed, renewed, enthusiastic, and inspired?
- Describe three concrete wishes for yourself.

Appendix I

Power Mapping Activity

1. Identify your goal or target
2. Identify all stakeholders
3. Research your stakeholders
   a. formal authority
   b. informal authority
4. Plot stakeholders on the map
   a. connect relationships
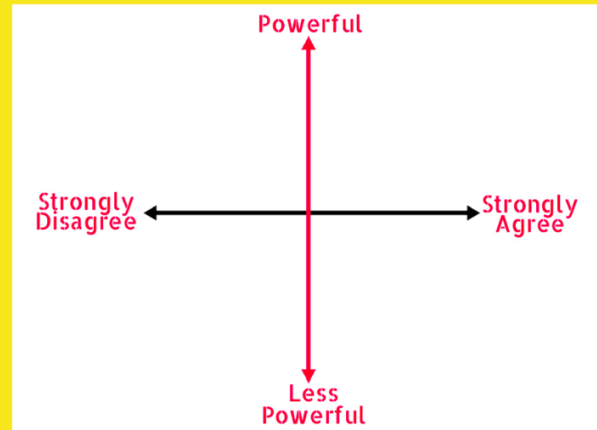
Appendix J

Demographic and Educational Information Questionnaire

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnic Identity
- Job Title, Occupational Field
- College Attended
  - Major(s)
  - Minor(s)
- Graduate School Attended
  - Degree, Program
- What Filipino organizations have you been involved with (past or present)?
  - Briefly explain the purpose of each organization.
- Do you have formal or informal mentoring opportunities available to you in your workplace or school? Yes or No
- Do you take advantage of this opportunities? Yes or No
  - Why or why not?
- In what areas do you want to improve in your personal life?
- In what areas do you want to improve in your professional life?

Appendix K

Representation Questionnaire

- Did you have any Filipino/Filipino American teachers growing up? Yes or No
    - Please list the grade level and subjects taught
- Describe what type of interactions you had with each educator.
- Do you have any mentors?
    - Yes, a formal mentor in my workplace
    - Yes, an informal mentor in my workplace
    - Yes, a formal mentor outside of my workplace
    - Yes, an informal mentor outside of my workplace
    - No, I do not have a mentor
- Yes or No:
    - I have a role model who is significantly older than me.
    - I have a role model who is about the same age as me.
    - I have a role model I can relate to on a cultural level.
- Briefly describe your role model(s) and their impact on you.

Appendix L

Lakas Activity Workbook Table of Contents

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(Dustin Domingo, 2018)
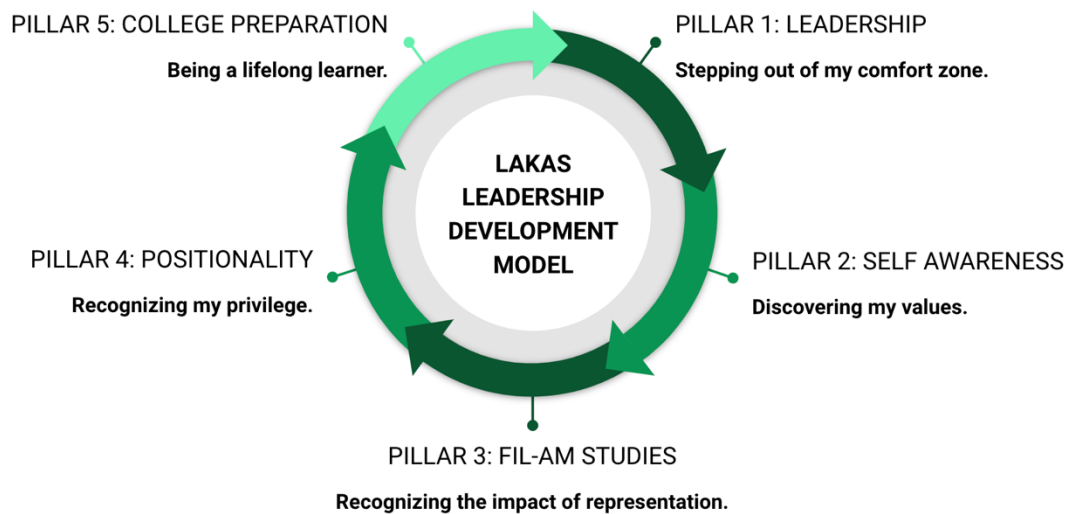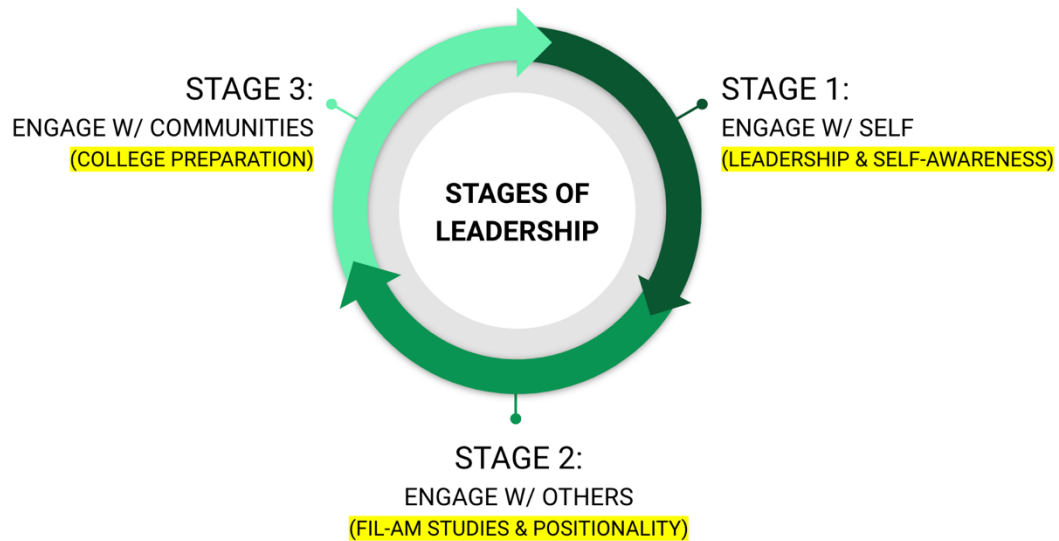
Appendix M

Social Change Model

(Adapted from Higher Education Research Institute,
A Social Change Model of Leadership Development Guidebook, Version III, 1996, p. 21)

Appendix N

Lakas Leadership Development Model

(Dustin Domingo, 2018)

Appendix O

Description: Focus groups will last 1 hour. Participants will sit in a circle. A recording device will be placed in the center of the group. The primary investigator will recount the purpose of the research and offer a copy of the consent form to review, if desired. The primary investigator will also notify participants that they may excuse themselves if they feel uncomfortable or no longer want to participate in the group.

Focus Group Script

The purpose of my research project is the understand how to use culturally relevant curriculum to foster personal and professional development for Filipino-American young adults. The purpose of this focus group is to reflect on and explore your leadership journey and how your ethnic identity fits into this narrative.

To allow our conversation to flow more freely, I'd like to set some ground rules.

1. I would like to ask that one person speaks at a time, so we can give our undivided attention.
2. You do not have to answer every question, but I'd like to hear from each of you as the discussion progresses.
3. This is a confidential discussion. I will not report your names or who said what to your classmates, colleagues, or supervisors. Names of participants will not be included in the final report about this meeting.
4. I want all of you to feel free to comment on each other's offerings without fear that your comments will be repeated later and taken out of context.
5. There are no "wrong answers," but different opinions. Say what is true for you, even if you're the only one who feels that way. Don't let the group sway you. But if you do change your mind, feel free to share that.
6. Please feel free to excuse yourself at any point, should you feel the need to.
7. Are there any questions?

Focus Group Questions

- How has your ethnic identity affected your educational experiences?
- How has your ethnic identity affected your personal or professional development?
- How does your leadership experience in Lakas compare to other leadership experiences you've had?
    - If you have had no other leadership experiences, how has Lakas shaped your capacity for leadership?
- What is the master narrative in your life?
- What stories do we collectively want to pass on from generation to generation?

Appendix P

Program Wishes and Values Questionnaire

- What is it about LMP that you value most?
- How have you seen LMP change in the time you have been involved?
- Describe three concrete wishes for LMP or for yourself.