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### A Critique on *Intersections*

Sabina Kou and Brandon Tran's podcast, *Intersections*, delves into the intersections of being Asian American and mixed, or Asian American and gay. This podcast was a calming listen in on the lives of two Asian American teenagers in California who have multiple and sometimes conflicting identities. Sabina and Brandon begin by introducing their identities to the audience-- with Sabina being a mixed Chinese/Singaporean/Malaysian Asian American, and Brandon being a Vietnamese American gay male. These intersections might seem common or not as complex as some, however Sabina and Brandon's stories dive deep into the personal realm of what it means to have intersecting identities.

The first half of the first episode focuses on Sabina's mixed identity and how she has struggled with it in America. Brandon raises good points in asking why Sabina has assimilated to American culture, and why she defaults to putting white people on a pedestal and automatically becoming their friend. This provided some insight on how it feels to be mixed race in America and the struggle of not only finding who you are within your identities, but also dealing with finding your place in America. The two did a thorough analysis of why Sabina might feel this way, which potentially dragged the topic on a little longer than it should have. Brandon seems to keep bringing the conversation back to why Sabina assimilates into white culture so much, which allows listeners to have a deeper understanding of Sabina, but could be taken as repetitive. Brandon and Sabina dig a little bit deeper into the difficulties of finding a balance in your communities as a mixed person, since you never get the full cultural experience of a certain

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community. This part of the episode was very well done, with Brandon asking good questions on what it feels like to be mixed and why it is hard for Sabina to fit into any group.

The second half of episode one touches on Brandon and his journey as a gay Asian American, especially how people acted immediately after he came out. It was interesting to note that Brandon did not know what being gay was until he was a pre-teen, but when he learned, he knew that's what he was. This provides a lot of commentary on what it means to be a gay Asian American with immigrant parents—being sheltered from the discussion of these identities is common for Asian Americans. Sabina's story of finding her identity was similar, as she mentions how she didn't know the feeling of not knowing her identity or being mixed until she experienced it first hand, and that she's never really talked to her parents about these things. Brandon's half of this episode was more anecdote and less analysis, which is a shortcoming of this section of the podcast. While his stories provided insight, the only analysis that was done was towards the end when they analyzed the hypersexualization of gay Asian males and how that relates to Asian women versus the emasculation of straight Asian men. This conversation could have been expanded upon a bit more in order to get a general understanding of what it means to have the intersection of being gay and Asian American, in order to get more analysis into this episode.

The second episode sheds light on Brandon and Sabina's parents experiences immigrating to the United States, and how these hardships shaped their morals. The first half of

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the episode focuses on the struggles that their parents faced in the Cultural Revolution and Vietnamese diaspora, and what their parents did in order to become self made. Brandon and Sabina then focus in on the 2008 recession, and how it greatly affected the financial status of both of their families-- going from being upper middle class to having nothing. This motivated Brandon and Sabina to get where they are today, and pursue careers that support them financially. It would have been interesting if Brandon and Sabina had analyzed why they are working so hard, and whether they actually want to do what they are currently doing. Additionally, it would have been insightful if they had tried to draw a parallel between their motivations to work versus their parents motivation to work, and which one is better (or more ethical) for one's well being. This section of the podcast was interesting to listen to, however, Brandon and Sabina could have made it more engaging or familial if they had their parents speak on the phone about their experiences, or had a recording of them telling their own stories. The re-telling of their parents stories made them seem to lack antiquity or genuinity due to the formulaic nature of their storytelling.

Brandon's commentary on having to be self sufficient, not only financially but emotionally, sheds a lot of light on the relationship between expressing emotion and being Asian American. It is a trend that Asian American families struggle to express emotions with each other, and there is a large stigma around mental health and finding help. While it was noticeable that this was a touchy topic for the both of them, a bit more analysis on this would have provided for a better conversation. This section of the podcast was very anecdotal, and a deeper insight on

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how and why this plays into Asian American culture might have been a good addition to the conversation.

Like any self-made podcast, the technicalities of this series could have been improved. At times, the sound quality would be different than the previous snippet and the volume of the speech would vary. Additionally, some parts of the podcast seemed stiff and unexciting, potentially due to “stagefright.” Brandon and Sabina did a good job of staying on topic, but some of their analysis was not as thorough as it could have been. This podcast seemed more like one which recites personal anecdotes, and not one that provides a deep analysis into the reasons behind their Asian American and intersectional experience. While they were asking each other good questions, I think their answers could have dove a bit deeper into theory and analysis apart from just anecdotes.

Overall, this podcast was a good listen which shed light on certain intersections of being Asian American. As Brandon and Sabina said, there are so many intersections out there and they have to be talked about in order to spread awareness. Oppression and silencing will continue if these intersections are not brought to light. Telling these personal stories allows people to understand what others go through and the micro (or macro) aggressions they face daily.