

The background of the cover features two koi fish swimming in a teal-colored tank. The fish are painted in shades of brown and white, with detailed scales and long, flowing fins. Two white lotus flowers are visible, one in the upper left and one in the lower right, partially overlapping the fish. The overall style is artistic and painterly.

*Summer 2022*

# ***THE ASIAN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST***

*The Official Newsletter of the Asian  
American Psychological Association*

VALERIE YEO

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## FELLOW MEMBERS,

I hope the start of the summer season is finding you as well as can be expected. It has been healing to see all of you come together as a community in a variety of ways, and I am thankful for this organization now more than ever.

In light of so much tragedy, I have had to continuously turn myself toward a path of acceptance of the things I cannot control and to keep myself from getting stuck. The difficult emotion finds us easily in moments such as these, and while necessary to acknowledge and process these feelings, I hope to remind you all of the importance of striking a balance.

For many reasons, it can feel impossible to allow ourselves to connect with positive emotions when we are weighed down by the heaviness of grief, fear, or sadness. I have at times felt a pang of guilt in allowing myself to turn away from the news or avoid conversation on the latest political upheavals. Yet, when intentionally directing myself in these moments toward the things that I find meaningful, I am reminded of the potential for healing and renewal in feelings such as joy, calm, and peace.

I encourage all of you as we move toward the second half of 2022 to find your moments of happiness or gratitude, no matter how small, and hold onto them in a purposeful way. While this may seem like an obvious strategy for us as mental health professionals, I know there are many in our field, myself included, who have placed our own needs last in order to attend to those of the people and things outside of us. It is clear that the need for our work is not going away, so let us not forget how much more important that makes it to strengthen the practice of prioritizing ourselves.

I'll leave you all with just a few of the things that have brought me joy in the past few months:

- ▶ Being surrounded by books at my local library.
- ▶ The colors in the sky at sunset.
- ▶ Longer days and warmer nights.
- ▶ Braiding my niece's hair.
- ▶ Finishing a tough workout.
- ▶ Fireflies!
- ▶ The sounds and movement of a dreaming dog (I can always tell when Ziggy is dreaming about running through a wide open field and it never fails to warm my heart).

As always, feel free to reach out to me directly with any thoughts/suggestions/ideas or just to say hello.

In gratitude,

**Anjali**



Lauren Yang



Uyen Sophie Nguyen

## The Asian American Psychologist

### A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

We first want to express our many thanks and gratitude to our AAPA community for your positive feedback on the Spring 2022 issue of the Asian American Psychologist, the first of our term together with our very talented and dedicated team members. Your feedback was not only so encouraging for us all to hear but also energized us to produce this Summer 2022 issue. As we strive to share the news of our organization, we hope to continue opening up space for dialogue and amplifying the diverse voices of our members. As such, we were very excited by the enthusiastic responses from our AAPA community in contributing to this Summer 2022 issue. We had the pleasure of welcoming multiple guest writers, who kindly shared their keen perspectives on identity and social justice, in addition to thoughtful reflections on their own personal experiences.

Previously, **resilience** and **connection with others** were themes that our team felt emulated the Spring 2022 issue. What emerged for our team in characterizing the themes of this issue were **joy** and **pride**. Much was to be celebrated over these past few months with AANHPI Heritage Month, Mental Health Awareness Month, and LGBTQ+ Pride Month. In her coverage on AANHPI Heritage Month, our reporter **Nicole R. Benquechea** compiled highlights from the weekly themed email threads on our listserv in celebration of different aspects of our cultures. Also, guest writer **Caitlyn Suen** shared moving vignettes as part of her discussion on an often invisible part of the Asian LGBTQIA+ community in her article, "Let's Talk About Asian Asexuality." Moreover, planning for the 2022 Annual Convention has been underway, and our reporter **Dr. Sue H. Kim** had the chance to hear from Convention Chair **Dr. Calvin M. Sims** and the Sessions Committee on what members can look forward to.

We also recognize that much tragedy still casts a dark shadow on us all with the recent shootings in Buffalo, NY; Laguna Woods, CA; and Uvalde, TX that targeted the marginalized, innocent, and vulnerable in our communities. Not only did it pain our (already broken) hearts even further to hear about these acts of hate and violence, but it also starkly reminded us of how much work still needs to be done in targeting systemic issues while remaining in solidarity together. In recognition of such trying times, **Dr. Valerie Yeo** showcased the delicate balance between surviving and being present in her artwork titled, "Transformation and Abundance." We were very honored to feature it as this

issue's cover art for which Dr. Yeo shared her inspiration and the meaning of this stunning piece to her.

In addition, our guest writers provided practical considerations and recommendations as their contributions to this issue. **Dr. Grace A. Chen** and **B. Andi Lee** spoke well to the challenges experienced by AAPI students in navigating the internship application season (among other processes), recommending effective ways in which students and professionals alike can support AAPI students with a liberation approach. Meanwhile, **Wendy Chu**, **Magdalena Moskal**, and **Eleanor Wu** raised important points on providing culturally sensitive mental health treatment for Asian American girls from critical feminist perspectives. We were struck by the gems in these articles, and we strongly encourage members to learn from their insights as well.

With so much to glean from this issue in particular, we remain very grateful to be able to learn from our AAPA community. Moreover, we will continue to reflect and implement ways in which we can be even better scholars, practitioners, and advocates in our own roles. We are also incredibly honored to have been able to share the written and visual works of our fellow members with the rest of the community. We look forward to producing the next issue with our talented team, so stay tuned for Fall 2022! Please feel free to share your comments or suggestions with us at [newsletter@aapaonline.org](mailto:newsletter@aapaonline.org). Wishing you all a fun and relaxing remainder of summer, and take good care of yourselves.

# Finance Officers' Report

AAPA's Co-Finance Officers (FOs) Cat Bitney, Amanda Breen, and Michelle Madore are happy to report that AAPA's bank accounts are in good condition. Our total combined balance from ETrade, Chase and PayPal is \$410,458.44 as of June 7, 2022. Subtracting fiscal agent accounts and AAPA Division balances, AAPA's main account has \$329,220.47 in working capital.

The FOs are also pleased to share the following updates with the AAPA membership:

**Chase Bank Ownership** We are in the process of transferring ownership of the Chase bank account from Nellie Tran and Jan Estrellado to Cat Bitney. FO Amanda Breen is also in the process of gaining online access to the account.

**Chase Bank Debit Card** Cat currently has a debit card and Amanda will get one soon, but we will not be issuing debit cards to each division (as we had once talked about doing). If there are expenses that division representatives or others need paid with the debit card, please contact us at [finance@aapaonline.org](mailto:finance@aapaonline.org).

**ETrade Account** In order to simplify our finances, the FO team is planning to close the ETrade account. This will be a process, and we will update the membership as we get closer to doing so.

**Tech Services** The FO team is also working on taking stock of and streamlining AAPA's subscriptions to various tech services (e.g., Canva, Zoom, etc.)

**2021 Taxes** We have been granted an extension until November. Cat is working closely with our accountant to submit AAPA's 2021 taxes.

**2022 Budget** The FO team is working closely with AAPA President Anjuli Amin to finalize the 2022 budget and will seek approval from the EC in the coming weeks.

**Reimbursement and Payments** Please continue to use this link for reimbursement/payment requests:

<https://forms.gle/FY3TB5FDG4MZ8fz1A>

# Hello AAPA Members!

## Updates from the Membership Team

Thank you for being an AAPA member. As your membership team, we are excited to announce that our AAPA membership student volunteers, Oscar Lau and Carla Cortez, have started sending out monthly membership updates. Look out for these updates which include spotlights on different AAPA members.

Currently, AAPA has a total membership count of **1,349** members. Student members continue to comprise the majority of our membership. See the table below for a breakdown of our membership by membership category.

As an AAPA member, you can edit your membership details by logging into your account on [aapaonline.org](http://aapaonline.org). If you cannot remember your password, there is an option to reset it. By logging in online, you can join our wonderful AAPA divisions and update your email address for the listservs.

Your AAPA membership lasts for a year from the date that you signed up and will be automatically renewed after the year is complete. Please email us if you would like to opt out of having your membership automatically renewed.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding AAPA membership or the new website changes, please do not hesitate to contact our membership team at [membership@aapaonline.org](mailto:membership@aapaonline.org).

Thank you for your continuing support of AAPA! We are thankful for this community.

## Best wishes,

AAPA Membership Team (Oscar, Carla, Amanda, and Kavita)

### MEMBERS

Student	786
Professional	554
Retiree/Emeritus	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,349</b>

# COVER ARTIST FEATURE

**Valerie Yeo, Psy.D.**  
**Transformation and Abundance (2022)**  
**Digital Painting**

Over the course of the pandemic, I have felt very drawn to the element of water, and a lot of my artwork has reflected this. Water has the capacity to heal and soothe, as well as the capacity for power, and I wanted to create a piece of art that embodied this juxtaposition. The two carp also symbolize the "both/and" perspective. As Asian Americans, we have the power and capability to be so much more than just one thing.

**What inspired you to create this piece?**

Times are trying right now, and we are also exhausted of hearing about and experiencing such trying times. We get much projected onto us as Asian American psychologists, both by culture and community, and also by ourselves. I wanted to create a piece of art that symbolizes hope and a sense of abundance, while also evoking a sense of calm, and reminding us of the permission to exist just as we are in this moment.



**About the Artist**

Dr. Valerie Yeo (she/her) is a licensed psychologist in Portland, OR, where she has a private practice. She received her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Denver. Her role as a psychologist includes providing individual therapy and immigration-based assessments, as well as teaching, supervising, and mentoring future mental health professionals. Her specialties are Asian American mental health, and racial and religious trauma. She believes strongly in honoring our full selves—emotional, somatic, mental, spiritual, and social, within our present and historical contexts.

## Early Career Award Announcement

# AAPA Member Recognized for Innovative Approach to Psychology

by Dr. Veronica Lac

We are pleased to share that Dr. Veronica Lac, Founder and Executive Director of The HERD Institute, has been honored by the APA Division 32, Society for Humanistic Psychology. Dr. Lac is the recipient of the 2022 Carmi Harari Early Career Award, which recognizes an individual within 10 years of receiving their Ph.D. for contributions towards innovation, application, and social action that impact human potential. Dr. Lac is also the first woman of color to receive this prestigious award.

Dr. Lac gained her Ph.D. at Saybrook University, specializing in Existential-Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology. Her academic background, combined with her passion for horses, led her to create The HERD Institute, which offers training and certifications in the art of Equine-Facilitated Psychotherapy & Learning.

In addition, her transnational identity and experiences provide a solid foundation in understanding how to work within a cultural competency framework, and she has centered her teachings through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The HERD Institute features unique programs for training mental health professionals to work in partnership with horses to assist in the healing and growth for a diverse client population and has recently launched a series of Inclusive HERD workshops that provide mental health practitioners continued education to increase cultural competency.



Outside of her work at the Institute, Dr. Lac is the author of two best-selling books on equine-facilitated work and has contributed to multiple peer-reviewed journals as a reviewer, author, and editor. Currently, she serves on the Editorial Board of University Professors Press.

As a practitioner, Dr. Lac has created canine- and equine-assisted therapy programs for IOP, outpatient, and residential programs. Moreover, in her role as a certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor, Dr. Lac is a strong advocate of neurodiversity affirming treatment, prioritizing personhood over behavioral adjustment, and highlighting human potential over pathology. Throughout the pandemic, Dr. Lac has challenged the status quo within the Humanistic Psychology field and the equine industry with her anti-racist and diversity, equity, and inclusion virtual summits, pushing for changes at all levels of the organizations she works with to ensure that the invisible becomes visible.





Commenting on her achievements, Dr. Lac says, “I am honored to receive this Award and grateful for the mentorship and encouragement of my elders in supporting me to reach for my dreams. The little girl in me, who day-dreamed of running through green pastures with horses as she looked out of the window of a high-rise apartment, wakes up each morning delighted and full of glee that she gets to do that in real life, every day. But she’s not done daydreaming. I want to spread the work of The HERD to those who are unfamiliar with animal assisted work, into communities that do not have access to green pastures, and to practitioners who think that this is beyond their realm, despite an intuitive calling to horses and/or other animals. I recognize the deeply rooted whitewashing of equestrian history and want to remind my Asian community that we have the blood of our ancestors coursing through our veins, blood of those who lived with and relied on horses for centuries for their well-being, safety, and existence, and it is in the returning to those human-animal relationships that generations of trauma can be explored and healed.”

Find out more about Dr. Veronica Lac and The HERD Institute at [www.herdinstitute.com](http://www.herdinstitute.com).

# Gracie Square Hospital's Asian Psychiatry Program

RECEIVES  
\$169,000 GRANT FOR  
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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By Nadine A. Chang, Ph.D.  
Clinical Psychologist  
Chair, Asian Psychiatry  
Program Committee

It is now well-documented that hate crimes against Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities skyrocketed over the past two years, and research has linked this surge to increases in stress, anxiety, depression and difficulties in numerous other areas of well-being for individuals in these communities.

In spite of increasing mental health needs, there remain numerous barriers to mental health care, which result in AAPI communities having the lowest rates of mental health care service utilization of any racial or ethnic group. Barriers include limited knowledge and/or acceptance of mental health and illnesses, availability of culturally-appropriate resources, and awareness of and access to culturally-appropriate services.

Gracie Square Hospital (GSH), a non-profit psychiatric hospital affiliated with the New York-Presbyterian Health System, offers several specially designed inpatient programs that provide behavioral health care to meet the language and cultural needs of the diverse communities of the New York Metropolitan area. In the early 1990s, GSH established the Asian Psychiatry Program, which provides culturally-informed treatments, incorporating cultural factors and their influence on an individual's experiences and views of mental health and illness.



Gracie Square Hospital, A Team of Behavioral Healthcare Professionals

Its mission is to not only recognize the growing needs of marginalized AAPI communities, but also continue striving to break down barriers to accessible mental health care and education. In addition to being in demand for its inpatient services, the GSH Asian Psychiatry Program has been increasingly in demand as a source of expertise in serving AAPI communities in and around New York City. Our clinical staff has offered multilingual educational programs and other resources throughout the New York-Presbyterian Hospital System, as well as with partnered community organizations.

Last fall, GSH's Asian Psychiatry Program was awarded \$169,000 to continue these efforts, funding a new position of Community Outreach Coordinator. This member of our team will fortify mental health resources in AAPI communities by creating a pathway through which our well-established inpatient Asian Psychiatry Program will continue to partner with the New York-Presbyterian enterprise and external community organizations, using our expertise to serve the mental health needs of AAPI communities. One arm of this position entails identifying the mental health needs of AAPI communities on an ongoing basis and bridging these gaps with education and prevention opportunities. The other arm will focus on:

1. creating clearer access points for mental health services for AAPI communities
2. increasing understanding while decreasing stigma around seeking mental health care
3. offering accessible and culturally-appropriate preventive mental health strategies that can be shared with family and friends, such as ones for coping with distress and building personal resilience
4. contributing to the overall safety and well-being of these underserved New York City communities.



Art For Hospitals





# What do you want to eat?

Master's Capstone Project by  
Sharlene Justo, M.S.

# តើ អ្នកចង់ញ៉ាំអ្វី

(CHNG NHOAM AVEI)

MY MASTER'S CAPSTONE PROJECT IS A COOKBOOK TITLED, "WHAT DO YOU WANT TO EAT?" (CHNG NHOAM AVEI IN KHMER). IT IS AN OPEN BOOK TO THE COOKING PROCESS OF WHO I AM. IT CONTAINS RECIPES FROM HOME AND REFLECTIONS OF MY HOMECOMING TO MY IDENTITY AS A KHMER FILIPINA WOMXN.

MY ROLE AS A NURTURING PROVIDER WAS PREDETERMINED FOR ME WHEN I WAS FAAB (FEMALE ASSIGNED AT BIRTH); IN THE HOME, WOMXN'S MAGIC OF FOOD SERVES IN THE ORDER OF: THE MAN OF THE HOUSEHOLD, EVERYONE ELSE AT THE TABLE, AND THEMSELVES LAST. I UTILIZE A MULTICULTURAL FEMINIST THEORETICAL LENS TO UNDERSTAND THE MULTI-DIMENSIONS OF WHO I AM BY LOOKING AT MY ROLE AS A HELPER THAT WAS LEARNED BY WOMXN FIGURES WHO RAISED ME, CULTURAL INFLUENCES, AND COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES.

"WHAT DO YOU WANT TO EAT?" IS A QUESTION MY FAMILY ASKS ME WHEN I COME HOME TO VISIT. THEY EXTEND THEMSELVES TO MAKE ALL MY FAVORITES - THE EFFORT AND SACRIFICE ARE AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE AND CARE. I FOUND MYSELF CENTERING PEOPLE IN THIS MANNER: I GAVE TO OTHERS BEFORE I GAVE TO MYSELF. THIS ENGAGEMENT OF SELF-SACRIFICE AND SELF-ABANDONMENT LEFT ME DEPLETED AND STARVING FOR LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE THAT I COULD RECEIVE SIMPLY FOR BEING ME - AND NOT THE BELIEF THAT I WAS WORTHY OF ONE'S TIME/ENERGY IF I HAD SOMETHING TO OFFER/GIVE. "WHAT DO YOU WANT TO EAT?" IS A QUESTION I MUST ASK MYSELF; I REASSESS WHAT IS ON MY PLATE AND NO LONGER STUFF MYSELF WITH OVERCOMMITMENTS. I USED TO LIVE BY THE QUOTE, "I CAN'T COMPLAIN ABOUT HAVING TOO MUCH ON MY PLATE IF MY GOAL WAS TO EAT." LIKE MY ANCESTORS, I STUFFED MYSELF AS A RESPONSE TO SURVIVAL. A SCARCITY MINDSET THAT I MUST "TAKE WHAT I CAN GET" AND DARE NOT "WASTE FOOD." I KEPT EATING EVEN IF I AM FULL BECAUSE I DIDN'T BELIEVE I WILL BE ABLE TO EAT AGAIN. SURVIVAL IS NECESSARY AFTER IMMIGRATION INTO A CAPITALIST COUNTRY THAT WILL LEAVE OUR PEOPLE TO STARVE.



WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH OR LIVE IN THE BEST NEIGHBORHOODS, BUT OUR MEALS WOULD TELL OTHERWISE. FOOD IS A LOVE LANGUAGE AND OUR SOURCE OF CONNECTION. IT WAS A WAY TO ACKNOWLEDGE AN INDIVIDUAL'S WANTS AND NEEDS. IT WAS HOW WE CELEBRATED ONE ANOTHER. IT WAS A WAY OF HONORING AND REMEMBERING OUR LOVED ONES WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US. IT WAS A PEACE OFFERING. IT WAS HOW WE INVITED OUTSIDERS TO OUR HOME. IT WAS WHAT BROUGHT US TOGETHER AT THE END OF THE DAY. IT IS WHAT KEEPS OUR CULTURAL LEGACY AND FAMILIAL STORIES ALIVE. FOOD IS HEALING THROUGH ITS BIOLOGICAL AND COMMUNITY NOURISHMENT. FOOD IN ALL OF ITS WAYS IS OUR EMBRACE OF THE HEALING OF COLLECTIVISM.

WHILE FOOD IS DEEPLY EMBEDDED INTO SOUTHEAST ASIAN CULTURE, IT IS A SACRED AND VULNERABLE PRACTICE FOR ME TO INVITE FOLX INTO MY HOME AND SHARE MY CULTURAL DISHES.

RECIPES INCLUDING KREOUNG, KUY TEAV, BALATONG, ETC. ARE AN EMPOWERMENT TO THE ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE AND INTERGENERATIONAL HEALING I HOLD AND WILL CARRY ON. THIS COOKBOOK IS VISIBILITY TO THE KHMUNITY AND ILOCANOS. FOR TOO LONG, MY IDENTITIES WERE NOT SEEN AS A WHOLE, AND I FELT THAT I WAS NOT ENOUGH OF EITHER IDENTITY GROUP. "CHNG NHOAM AVEI" IS THE VISIBILITY THAT I LONGED FOR AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, VISIBILITY TO THE MULTIDIMENSIONS OF WHO I AM. I AM A WOMXN, KHMER WOMXN, FILIPINA WOMXN, DAUGHTER, GRANDDAUGHTER, MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR, CHEF, STUDENT, CAREGIVER, CREATIVE, AND MORE. I AM SPICY, SALTY/UMAMI, SWEET, SOUR, SOFT/TENDER, THICK/DENSE, AND WILL KEEP YOU COMING BACK FOR MORE. THESE ARE THE FLAVORS (BACKGROUNDS) AND SPICES THAT I WILL BRING TO THE MENTAL HEALTH AND COUNSELING WORLD THAT IS FULL OF BLAND EUROCENTRIC WESTERN HEALING MODALITIES.



## Sharlene Justo SHE/HER/HERS

SHARLENE IS A RECENT GRADUATE FROM SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY'S COMMUNITY-BASED BLOCK (CBB) PROGRAM FOR M.S. IN MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY COUNSELING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION. HER UPBRINGING IN STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA AND KHMER-FILIPINA IDENTITY SHAPED HER PURPOSE-DRIVEN COMMITMENT TO BE A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL. SHARLENE PLANS TO PURSUE HER LPCC AND CONTINUE TO HEAL WITH THE AANHPI COMMUNITY. SHE HOPES TO WORK DIRECTLY WITH THE CAMBODIAN DIASPORA AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN COMMUNITIES. SHE THANKS HER CAPSTONE FACULTY ADVISOR AND IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT OF AAPA, DR. NELLIE TRAN, FOR GUIDING HER COOKBOOK PROJECT AND HELPING HER RISE INTO HER PHOENIX MOMENT.

# Updates on the 2022 AAPA Annual Convention

by Dr. Sue H. Kim

Take a minute to think back to the last AAPA annual convention you attended. Who did you connect with? Which presentation still sticks with you? What changed in your life, as a result of your attendance there?

For those of you who have attended AAPA annual conventions over the years, you might have so many memories that they blur together. But I'm guessing that at least one convention led you to a connection with a special person. Someone who made a significant difference in your thinking, your career, or your life. That's how fulfilling and magical these conventions are.

Planning an event of this size is a huge undertaking. Yet this year's Chair, Dr. Calvin Sims, is excited to share some tidbits about the upcoming convention, which is scheduled for September 30-October 2, 2022. Like last year's convention, this will be virtual, so you can attend easily from the comfort of your home or office. Wearing sweatpants or yoga pants, who will know?

Recognizing that coordinating the many moving parts of a hybrid convention requires efforts from a dedicated team, Dr. Sims started off by expressing his "gratitude to a large team of amazing convention committee co-chairs, who I feel absolutely privileged to be working with and learning from." He further described the committee co-chairs, many of whom are graduate students, as "very hard-working, committed, so creative, and so generous with their time... and time is priceless." During this process of "kickstarting new visions and traditions for the next 50 years in AAPA," Dr. Sims is excited to be coordinating with these lovely people.

In sharing his reflections on the planning process thus far, Dr. Sims kindly took the time to answer our questions:

## What are your hopes/vision for the convention?

Hopes and vision for this 2022 Annual Convention center on three aims:

1. Inclusivity and Solidarity
2. Learning from the Past to Create a Stronger Vision
3. Looking Inward for Healing within AAPA Family, Divisions, and Members.



Calvin Sims, Ph.D.

*We want the  
convention to be  
really dynamic  
for attendees*



Toward these aims, we are focusing on the following tangible actions:

- ▶ Collaboration with other Ethnic Minority Associations, including the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi), the National Latinx Psychological Association (NLPA), the American Arab Middle Eastern and North African Psychological Association (AMENA-Psy), the Society for Indian Psychologists (SIP), among other associations of mental health-focused disciplines and more.
- ▶ Using experiences and lessons learned from the past to create bold new visions and opportunities for dynamic change for the next 50 years of AAPA.
- ▶ Intentionally bolstering cohesiveness between AAPA's divisions and AAPA overall by promoting interdivisional collaborations in our Call for Session Proposals.

### **Will there be anything different/new this year that you are implementing?**

We are doing a memorial for elders who have transitioned. This year, our inaugural one will be dedicated to Dr. Jean Lau Chin, serving as the beginning tradition of remembering our elders in upcoming conventions.

### **Will there be anything traditional that you are hoping to keep?**

AAPA is steeped in tradition, and we will be upholding most of that, with an eye toward adding more. For instance, our closing ceremony should have culturally based musical guests and artistic creative performances that center on a strengths-based narrative that embraces our Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Desi (ANHPID) identities. We want the convention to be really dynamic for attendees.

---

If you have been thinking about reconnecting with faraway AAPA colleagues, or presenting your latest research project, or finding a new mentor... you will want to plan on attending the 2022 annual convention. The virtual format makes it so convenient and affordable to "get there!" It is time to create more memories with your friends at AAPA!



# Secrets Revealed by the AAPA Convention Sessions Committee

by Dr. Sue H. Kim

What do Pooja, Shangyun, Shannon, Stephanie, and Mike have in common? They are the brains and muscle behind the sessions to be offered at the upcoming virtual AAPA Annual Convention. Personally, when perusing the options in a typical convention schedule, I am rarely reminded of the people who devoted hundreds of hours to planning the convention theme, soliciting session proposals, reviewing them, selecting what will be offered, and scheduling everything so it fits and flows smoothly. Now that the committee co-chairs have revealed what goes on behind the curtain, I am in awe - and I promise I will look at the convention schedule with more respect and gratitude going forward.

Pooja Mamidanna and Shangyun Zhou are this year's co-chairs of the Sessions Committee. The Co-Chair Elects are Dr. Shannon Dodani and Stephanie Chin, learning furiously as they help. They are assisted by Mike Guinasso, a dedicated volunteer committee member.

Pooja and Shangyun kindly took the time to share some updates on their work thus far, which have been excerpted below:

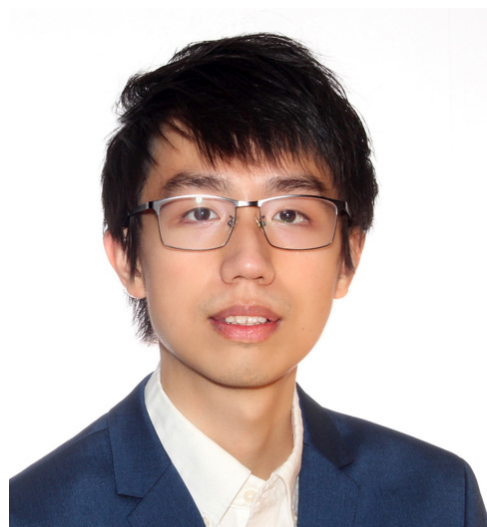
## What do you want our readers to know about sessions for the AAPA convention this year?

We are one of the biggest teams in the history of [AAPA] convention planning. Having future co-chairs currently on the committee, we created an orientation process that is meant to be passed down to the future generations of sessions co-chairs. This system will help future co-chairs to be well situated on the team and be proactive in delivering a better experience each year for attendees.

As this year marks the 50th anniversary of AAPA convention planning, we are thinking of ways to make this experience special... [like] encouraging cross-divisional collaboration... which has not happened before.



*Pooja Mamidanna, MA, MSC, LMFT*  
Co-Chair



*Shangyun Zhou, M.A.*  
Co-Chair

## What is new and unique that is being offered in this year's convention?

AAPA involvement for the committee has included Pooja in leadership roles and conference planning since 2016, Shangyun with the Division on Students and conference planning, Shannon and Stephanie as active members in AAPA for the past two years, and Mike recently being introduced to AAPA by Pooja. In these roles, they received feedback on the lack of inclusivity in submission proposals that focus on other underrepresented and minoritized communities in the Asian Diaspora and the intersectionality of our own diverse AAPI identities. Incorporating from previous post-conference evaluations and discussions during division business hours, this year's sessions committee collaborated with Dieu Truong, who was an active leader in the convention planning process, to find ways to address this concern.

## On the call for proposals and encouraging collaboration

Therefore, this year's call for proposals emphasized collaboration. Examples include cross-collaboration from divisions (to increase division cohesion), the division leadership EC's submitting a proposal together, and division leadership collaborating with their division members for the submission of proposals.

In the spirit of promoting collaboration across AAPA divisions, Pooja and Chandni Shah (AAPA Council of Division Representatives Chair) are brainstorming with Convention Chair Dr. Calvin Sims and Dieu Truong on a possible town hall meeting for division leadership to have a "meet and greet" for division leaders to network and share the work that they are engaging in, along with ideas about how we can increase cross-collaboration between divisions with their programming, events, and the conference at large.

## On interdisciplinary scholarship and honoring multidisciplinary perspectives

In considering a submission of a proposal for a session or poster, you may notice how the sessions committee is intently focused on interdisciplinary scholarship, multicultural perspectives, cross-cultural psychology, child and family-focused experiences, and other works that further social justice movements.

To honor wisdom and knowledge emerging from multidisciplinary perspectives, the sessions committee is inviting submissions from not just psychologists but also other professionals, including behavioral analysts, special education specialists, speech/language pathologists, social workers, marriage and family therapists, child life specialists, art therapists, spiritual/holistic medicinal practitioners, among others. If you are a researcher, community leader, activist, mental health provider, and/or educator working with communities that are ethnically minoritized and marginalized in multiple ways, the committee encourages you to submit a proposal on your work.



*Dr. Shannon Dodani, Psy.D.*  
Co-Chair Elect



*Stephanie Chin, MS.Ed.*  
Co-Chair Elect



*Mike Guinasso, M.A.*  
Volunteer

## On emphasizing Asian, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, and Desi (APINH) youth mental health in submissions

Finally, to emphasize the “nurturing [of] our communities,” especially in the younger generations, the sessions committee is very interested in submissions that focus on the mental well-being of APINH children and their immediate systems (i.e. family and school). For example, experiences are welcomed in any of the following for a program proposal: a) disproportionality in the identification of neurodevelopmental diagnosis within APINH child populations in different settings; b) disparities in accessing pediatric mental health services and educational support; c) intersectionality of APINH identities and neurodiversity in children, youth, families, and adults; or d) supporting the traumatic effect of inpatient hospitalization for children and the family system.

## On being more culturally sensitive when giving feedback to people submitting proposals for sessions

Shannon suggested changing the description of submissions from “difficult dialogues” to “courageous conversations.” She explained that the term “difficult” has a negative connotation that in turn can be discouraging to those wanting to engage in such conversations. By reframing this description, the committee hopes to change the attitude that dialogue of this nature can only be engaged in from a painful and uncomfortable space. While these conversations do take both courage and vulnerability, they do not have to be onerous or burdensome.

The committee further stated that a new and improved review of the framework has been created to ensure a more equitable inclusion of submissions and a safer experience that does not inadvertently retraumatize those who submit proposals with internalized oppressive feedback. It takes bravery to submit a program and share your scholarship and ideas with others, and we do not want the review process to perpetuate white supremacy ideologies against our own AAPA family.

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*"As this year marks the 50th anniversary of AAPA convention planning, we are thinking of ways to make this experience special... [like] encouraging cross-divisional collaboration..."*

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And now, it's up to us. As AAPA members, we can get creative about ways to collaborate, create, and submit proposals, sharing the wonderful work we have been doing in our professional spheres. With the efforts of our sessions committee members in mind, there is hope for numerous program submissions towards having a successful convention. As you were reading this article, you may have noticed a spark of an idea. Let's nurture our “sparks” and share them with the caring community that is AAPA!



## NOBODY TOLD ME YOU SHOULD HAVE A MENTOR

Interview of Dr. Gayle Iwamasa for AAPA's Division on Women Digital Herstory Project

by Dr. Sue H. Kim

Watching Dr. Michi Fu interview Dr. Gayle Iwamasa via Zoom on May 20th, I felt like I was eavesdropping on a pair of close friends who were lounging on a beige couch with colorful pillows in an Airbnb, catching up and talking about old times. At one point, there was a delightful discussion of the cute sandals that Gayle was wearing and how she had glitter eye makeup on.

Division on Women Co-Chair Dr. Sherry Wang kicked off the event by reading an extensive list of Gayle's numerous professional awards and accomplishments, which only represented a fraction of all the impressive things she has done. In fact, earlier in the week, Gayle had been appointed as the leader of the Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee to address the high rate of suicides in the U.S. military, which was established by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III last March.

It was so fun to see the hilarious and caring human being behind the incredible CV. Here are some of her words of wisdom:

*"I owe my career to Dr. Richard M. Suinn."* Gayle started off by recalling how as an Assistant Professor, she had really wanted to present at the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy (AABT), now known as the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT), on the topic of the lack of cultural diversity. She boldly cold-called Dr. Suinn (who was a prominent name in behavior therapy circles at the time) after finding his number in the AABT membership phone directory, and he kindly agreed to serve as discussant on the panel that she was assembling. Following that, Gayle said she also was gradually "adopted" by other mentors who took her under their wing, such as Dr. Christine Iijima Hall, Dr. Jeff Mio, and Dr. Gordon Nagayama Hall. "Mentoring is so important for any career," she said, commenting on what she has learned, as no one had told her about the importance of having mentors and "being able to learn from people who are wise and experienced."

*"You've gotta be realistic about the impact you're going to have."* Even though we as psychologists have "tons of research... [that] could improve the world," it isn't that simple. Gayle laughed as she said, "Now, I'm wiser... [I've learned that] your dissertation isn't going to change the world." In fact, she pointed out how "psychology has been used to oppress people... [and instead] let's use it for the greater good." Along those lines, Gayle encouraged all of us to find ways to communicate more to the public about psychology, which is "everywhere, in everything in your life."

“When you walk into a room or meeting, you have stimulus value.” Gayle said, “Nobody told me [that] people make attributions and assumptions about you as the only Asian American woman at the meeting.” For example, in her work as a National Director at the Veterans Affairs, she might walk into a meeting and notice that she is the only person of color or the only Asian American. She gave further examples of how she has learned to respond in those situations, such as by saying, “I’m happy to share my opinions, but I don’t represent all people of color.” She regards it as a “teachable moment” for White-identified people in those settings who might not have heard that before.

“It’s always good to collaborate.” Having worked in academia, which she described as an environment that can be “toxic for women, worse for women of color,” Gayle encouraged us to join networks of women in psychology who can “be your professional sisters.” She pointed out sexist assumptions that others have made about her in the past, questioning why she was at a conference when she possibly had kids at home. Being creative about collaborative partners is important because “sometimes it’s not who you think to collaborate with.”

“Nobody told me [that] people make attributions and assumptions about you as the only Asian American woman at the meeting.”

“Have difficult conversations.” Gayle further shared that she sees how people nowadays seem “scared” to talk, digging in their heels or avoiding talking to those with different views. She believes that we need to “talk and understand why someone would think that way,” if it is different from how we think. Otherwise, we will engage in confirmation bias “that the media [nowadays] caters to.”

When Michi asked Gayle what career she would have chosen if she had not become a psychologist, Gayle confessed that she loves being a psychologist so much that it was hard for her to consider other options. She could have been a hairstylist, as she has enjoyed perfecting her hair dye techniques during the pandemic. Possibly, an animal trainer job to her could be fun, using psychological concepts to shape behavior; she noted that even a single-celled organism can engage in learning!

The world is so fortunate that Dr. Gayle Iwamasa was able to pursue her dream career as a psychologist, as numerous lives have been positively affected by her mentoring, teaching, research, and administrative talents. My guess is that if we surveyed the AAPA membership to see who has been encouraged and supported by Gayle, there would be a lot of responses. And if anyone out there needs a tip on where to get some blinged-out sandals or inexpensive sparkle makeup, she’s happy to provide mentorship for you in those areas as well.

Drs. Michi Fu and Dr. Gayle Iwamasa



# Critical Feminist Perspectives of Culturally Sensitive Mental Health Treatment for Asian American Girls: Practical Considerations and Recommendations

By Wendy Chu, Magdalena Moskal, and Eleanor Wu



Asian American youth-aged girls face significant mental health disparities. For example, Asian American girls ages 5 to 9 had the highest rates of suicide from 1984 to 2014 compared to any other race (CDC, 2016). Asian American immigrant girls are over 40% more likely to experience school victimization than white males (Koo et al., 2012). More recently, anti-Asian hate crimes have been reported primarily by women, and events such as the March 16th Atlanta shooting of six Asian women have traumatized many Asian American girls. Historically and currently, Asian American girls experience systemic racism and other forms of oppression that define their experiences and mental health outcomes (Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018).

A critical feminist lens can aid in understanding Asian American girls' experiences and conceptualizing culturally sensitive mental health treatment. Specifically, analyzing how Asian American girls are oppressed within complex sociocultural/political systems and focusing on practices that elevate individual and collective healing/liberation can support therapists in meeting Asian American girls' mental health needs (Cheng et al., 2021; Qin, 2004; Shih et al., 2019). To this end, we as three Asian American female doctoral students in psychology draw from three treatment approaches to offer several recommendations that may enhance the cultural sensitivity of mental health care for Asian American girls.

## Narrative Therapy

Narrative therapy asserts that individuals are influenced by the stories they tell themselves, which are often a product of messages they receive from the surrounding systems and dominant culture (Wallis et al., 2011).

Narrative therapists center individuals' insights while encouraging them to understand how oppressive systems have shaped their stories and empowering them to "re-author" alternative stories that embody their values. By inviting Asian American girls to explore the effect of the "dominant story" on one's narrative, they may elucidate how stereotypes such as the model minority myth have shaped their story as a tool for oppression. For example, Asian American girls may come to recognize how the societal expectation to be "gentle" and "submissive" acts as a tool to silence their opinions and perspectives. When "re-authoring" their story, Asian American girls can reflect and integrate their values into their story, building a stronger sense of self that draws on the richness and strengths of their experiences. Some narrative practice recommendations include:

1. Use Socratic questioning to promote reflection of the "dominant story" and how it plays out in perceived and experienced societal norms, values, and expectations.
2. Use creative modalities for "re-authoring" one's story (e.g., poetry, songwriting, prayer, dance) to elucidate new insights and perspectives.

## Mindfulness-Based Interventions

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) and mindfulness, the intentional and non-judgmental self-regulation of attention or awareness of the present moment, have been well-documented for their positive effects on health and wellbeing (Bishop et al., 2004; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). MBIs recognize cultural perspectives and strategies that align with Asian philosophies and values, which can increase the sensitivity and appeal of treatment for Asian Americans (Hall et al., 2011; Sun et al., 2021). Functionally, acknowledging these perspectives and values in therapy serves as an act of resistance against white colonialism or dominant Western ideology. MBIs also enhance cognitive and emotional

nonreactivity and self-compassion, which strengthen Asian American girls' capacity to recognize and respond to oppressive forces of racism, misogyny, and more (Gu et al., 2015). MBI practices can promote healthy responses to adversity and foster positive relationships with oneself and others. Some recommendations include:

1. Acknowledge and explore how Asian and other cultural values resonate to consider values-oriented therapy processes or practices.
2. Teach mindfulness skills, such as cognitive/emotional reactivity and self-compassion, using youth-friendly activities (e.g., worksheets, hands-on activities, videos).

### Radical Healing Framework

Radical healing is a new psychological framework that provides therapists a means to move beyond traditional therapy practices to better support race-based healing in marginalized communities (French et al., 2020). Rooted in liberation psychology, ethnopolitical psychology, Black psychology, and intersectionality, radical healing emphasizes five components posited to improve individual and community wellbeing: critical consciousness, radical hope, strength and resistance, cultural authenticity and self-knowledge, and collectivism (French et al., 2020). Integrating components of radical healing into treatment may be beneficial for Asian American girls. For example, racial-ethnic socialization interventions, a means of increasing critical consciousness, have been found to enhance family communication about race-related topics (Stein et al., 2021). Also, encouraging Asian American girls to cultivate social support and a sense of community, such as through collectives like the Asian American Feminist Collective (<https://www.asianamfeminism.org/>), can provide avenues to gain knowledge, build strength, and create positive impacts. Some practice recommendations include:

1. Engage in critical consciousness-raising conversations about experiences of oppression and highlight collective strength/resistance in the therapeutic space.
2. Encourage collectivist actions, such as expanding support networks or becoming involved in political activism, as a form of community-based healing.

### Conclusions

With the burgeoning mental health needs of Asian American girls in the current sociopolitical climate and the lack of tested treatments for Asian American girls, culturally sensitive mental health practices must be identified. To contribute to these efforts, we identified three treatment approaches and frameworks discussed in the empirical literature that align with a critical feminist perspective: narrative therapy, mindfulness-based interventions, and radical healing framework. In reviewing these approaches, we offered concrete practice recommendations to assist therapists in providing culturally sensitive mental health services to Asian American girls. We hope that future scholars can empirically test these and other treatment practices in this population to advance the field of psychology and promote the mental health and wellbeing of Asian American girls.





# ASIAN AMERICAN NATIVE HAWAIIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH



## RECOMMENDATIONS & FAVORITES

By **Nicole R. Benquechea**

Why Do We Celebrate AANHPI Heritage Month?

Happy AANHPI Month to all! The newsletter team was happy that our AAPA members are finding time and space to keep themselves grounded and connected with people and things they love and value. Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month is dedicated to celebrating the intersecting identities of AANHPI and neurodiversity. Notably, the 2020 census found that 24 million people in the U.S. identify as Asian alone or in combination.

The month of May is unique because it is the month that celebrates not only our collective identity of AANHPI heritage but also Mental Health Awareness and Global Accessibility Awareness Day (May 19, 2022). This rich heritage has shaped the history of the United States while having their lives dramatically influenced by moments in its history. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian Americans have faced a storm of violent incidents, the latest in a series of discriminatory and unjust actions that have occurred against them for centuries in the U.S. AAPA professional and student members, who are featured below, worked toward strengthening community unity, equality, and even joy attained through food, visual arts, and the written word.



For the month of May, [Nellie Tran, Ph.D.](#), an associate professor at San Diego State University's Community Based Block Program, started this fantastic conversation piece for AAPA members to engage in a fun topic. Some of us highlighted and celebrated different aspects of our culture and historical heritage that make us proud and bring us joy. For one week, the AAPA highlighted "food" to start a conversation on the listserv about all things food-related and how it relates to members' cultural and historical heritage. This topic helped individuals share delicious recipes and especially hear about others' connections to the beloved foods of their cultures.

*What always makes you smile when you eat it? Do you have a recipe you can share? How about favorite restaurants for our favorite Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander American cuisines? Recipes, chefs, books, and anything food and eating-related that brings the members joy and pride, and reminds them of their heritage.*

Today, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing racial group in the United States. AANHPI Heritage Month celebrates the unique journey of all immigrants and citizens in the United States and their unique life experiences, traditions, and cultures. In one conversation, [Pooja Mamidanna, MA, MSC, LMFT](#), explained how food has brought comfort and brings people together in creating memories: "As a therapist, something I also educate my clients on is the importance of nourishing your mind, body, and soul with good food as we are what we eat, and being cognizant of what we are eating can also help with our physical and mental well being." By sharing recipes and YouTube videos for certain chefs and dishes, many on the AAPA listserv could feel a sense of belonging by sharing their experiences with delicious food.

In the second week of May, the listserv celebrated different aspects of culture and historical heritage that make us proud and bring us joy in "visual arts." [Alicia Ibaraki](#), a member of the Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Planning Committee, posed several fun questions to grow the conversation in joy and happiness:



*Do you have a favorite movie or TV show that highlights an Asian American or Pacific Islander story? Are there pieces of art that make you happy (can you share a picture of them)? Are there AAPI actors and actresses whose work we should check out? Summer's coming up soon- for the folks lucky enough to get a summer break, what should we binge-watch?*

**Grace A. Chen, Ph.D.**, a psychologist, coach, and consultant in California, happily shared the thought-provoking movie *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. In the 2022 comedy-drama film, Michelle Yeoh stars as Evelyn, a Chinese immigrant to the United States who owns a laundromat with her husband Waymond (Ke Hu Quan) and her daughter Joy (Stephanie Hsu). The film's story depicts when an IRS auditor (Jamie-Lee Curtis) threatens a massive audit of their business. That is when Evelyn discovers an ability to jump between multiple universes. While it is a family drama about the immigrant experience, it also involves martial arts action and plenty of laughs along the way. Everyone on the listserv seemed to have a fun time sharing funny and relatable scenes from the movie, which also had its poignant moments.

In the third week of May, some conversations sparked a shoutout to inspiring leaders who have made valuable contributions to the next generation. **Lauren Yang, M.A.**, a doctoral graduand of Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, explained that the week was meant to highlight the written word:

*We would love to start a conversation on the listserv about written media that brings you joy. Do you have a favorite book, a poem (or even a journal article) about the AANHPI experience you love? Are there any great kids or young adult books for the next generation? How about authors, poets, scholars, or other creators of the written word that you would recommend?*

Another great way to instill an appreciation for different cultures is to share stories from historically underrepresented communities.

One example came from **Rose Dhaliwal, M.S.**, a doctoral candidate at the University of La Verne and chair-elect of the AAPA Division on South Asian Americans, who gave a shoutout to *Stories for South Asian Supergirls*. This book, written by Raj Kaur Khaira, highlights the achievements of South Asian women. This was just one of many book recommendations from listserv members.

“Something I wish I had as a young girl and am glad is out there now for future generations to feel empowered and inspired by.”

**Darcy S. F. Ing, Psy.D.**, a staff member of Samaritan Counseling Center Hawaii, commented and kindly shared a link to [AMightyGirl.com](https://www.strongminded.com), which is a resource for young girls of all races and cultures and their families. As you celebrate Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month with your family, friends, and community, you can grow to value different cultures, and see how our country benefits from people with various backgrounds. Stay tuned for future editions of the AAPA newsletter as we celebrate the legacy, sacrifice, and achievements of AANHPIs as they share their proud heritage and culture.

# STAYING ROOTED AMIDST THE WHIRLWIND OF APPLICATION SEASON:

## Recommendations for AAPI Students and Professionals

WRITTEN BY  
B. ANDI LEE, M.S.  
GRACE A. CHEN, PH.D.

As a new academic year looms on the horizon, the doctoral internship application process is on the forefront of many people's minds. It got us thinking about the particular challenges that AAPIs face in many selection processes, so we wanted to share thoughts about how students and professionals (faculty, supervisors, training directors) can navigate and advocate for change around these challenges.

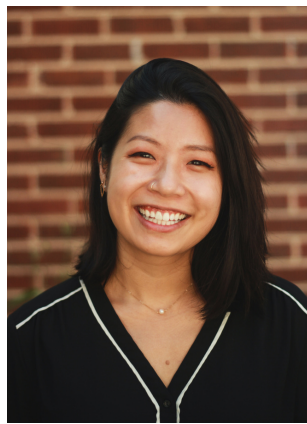
### OVERVIEW

"Asian Americans have been taught for most of our lives that swallowing our suffering and pushing through is the cost of earning our right to belong." - Jenny Tzu-Mei Wang, Ph.D. (Instagram: @asiansformentalhealth)

Many Asian cultures value humility and discourage speaking highly of oneself. Additionally, U.S. dominant culture reinforces gendered expectations of women being humble and modest. At times, the culture of psychology more broadly seems to judge the idea of "self-promotion."

And yet, the structures of academia and internship programs foster (or demand) competition and focus on quantitatively-based milestones for achievement (e.g. number of clinical hours, number of publications). Thus, we recognize that the internship application process (among other selection processes) can feel quite stressful to AAPI students, especially when they hold multiple marginalized identities.

We wanted to address the challenges of navigating selection processes through the lens of liberation. We see liberation as being able to collectively exist as we are, recognizing that we deserve love, respect, and freedom from White supremacy, capitalism, and the intersections of these oppressions.



B. ANDI LEE, M.S.



GRACE A. CHEN, PH.D.

Liberation is the freedom to exist in a society where we have collective self-determination and can live out our full humanity.

### CHALLENGES

We identified three challenges that arise when AAPIs are engaged in a selection process:

- Difficulty identifying one's strengths because of messages or values around "humility"
- Difficulty articulating one's lived knowledge and expertise in diversity because there is no structural support or mentoring around it
- Immense psychological energy spent on internal processing - making sense of one's experiences and figuring out how to navigate the system (e.g., self-editing).

Unfortunately, as the field of psychology has continued to be individually-focused when it comes to multicultural competencies (with some exceptions), there remains no structure that supports meaning making for trainees of color. While there is no easy solution to address these challenges, we suggest a few starting points in taking a liberation approach through which we all can be our full selves and engage in our community connections, whether as a student or professional of color.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### FOR STUDENTS - CARE FOR YOURSELF AND ONE ANOTHER

- Set boundaries for your time and wellness (e.g., taking nights and weekends off during this months-long application process) because you deserve rest and restoration.

- Foster community within academia by connecting with student and professional organizations, such as AAPA Division on Students, Div. 45 Student Committee, your local graduate student union, or starting your own group! How else might you foster spaces for collective care where you are now or virtually? Having shared academic experiences with peers can be affirming and illuminating.
- Provide specific feedback in evaluations and recommendations letters. For example, clinical supervisors could provide detailed comments in evaluations for trainee review by using case examples in which the trainee demonstrated particular competencies. This can further help trainees not only recognize but also better articulate their strengths and growth areas.

- Maintain relationships with others outside of academia, such as mentors, therapists, or chosen family. They can recognize strengths that you might downplay in an academic setting.
- Ask for specific examples and feedback in evaluations and recommendation letters from supervisors and advisors. It can be helpful to get their perspectives on what are considered “valued strengths” by those in power within this system.

### FOR PROFESSIONALS - CONTINUE TO CHANGE THE CULTURE AND STRUCTURE OF PSYCHOLOGY

- Reflect on how you may perpetuate competition and individualism to the detriment of AAPI and other marginalized students, and consider how you may want to shift your approach to supporting students with such identities.
- Foster a culture of support and care in your training program, supervision group, or research lab. For example, model and encourage students to share their work and support one another, rather than talk in terms of numbers or other metrics that can incite competition. Host regular group check-ins with students who are working on their internship applications. Even further, pause the plan for the day and invite in our shared humanity by acknowledging world events (e.g., shooting in Taiwanese church) and emphasizing the need for solidarity in dismantling anti-Black racism (e.g., the Buffalo shooting).
- Lift others up by nominating students for awards and recognitions, initiating collaborations with colleagues, or acknowledging the efforts of our community members. For example, use list-servs and social media to highlight AAPI contributors, whether they are students or colleagues. Even sending a quick email or message that congratulates others' wins is an easy way of expressing the sentiment “I see you, you matter!”

The internship application process can feel isolating and overwhelming at times. However, especially in the face of uncertainty around acceptance and rejection, we want to remind our community of how we can show up and care for each other.

Furthermore, we believe it is our ethical duty to engage in collective care praxis. Namely, we need to show up for each other and support our collective healing, while taking time to engage in rest and restoration for ourselves too.

What might this look like for our AAPA community? This could include sharing intergenerational knowledge (both within and outside of an academia context); sharing our physical, emotional, and spiritual resources with each other throughout the year; and engaging in community efforts to support our agency and self-determination on the path towards liberation.

### CLOSING THOUGHTS

*From Dr. Grace:* I want to emphasize that we all have something to contribute and hopefully are doing something meaningful – and that right there is enough. I encourage all of us to be whole human beings.

*From Andi:* In the spirit of liberation, I would like to remind us that even as we students apply competitively for placements among other things, we do not need to achieve much of anything, so that we may be deserving of our rights to humanity, respect, love, worth, and freedom. We are enough as we are.

Additional resources (including internship application tips!) for psychology doctoral students are available at Dr. Grace's website, [Psych Grad Corner](#).

anyway, I had

## DIARIES OF AN INTERNATIONAL PHD STUDENT

By *Samantha Walsh*



Growing up, I lived in a country where I was part of the majority. I did not have a lot of interactions with people from other countries and I did not realize how much my race and ethnicity would play into my identity until I got to the U.S. Suddenly, at 25, this realization was brought to the forefront and I was forced to reckon with questions: What did it mean to me to be Filipino? What did it mean to be Asian? How about being an international student? Since I arrived, I realized that much of what I do, what I say, the norms I have internalized, and how I relate to other people are products of my upbringing within the Filipino culture. And while I now have permanent residency, I still consider myself an international student—I did not have the experiences that most American graduate students had before entering grad school and I am still getting used to the culture that I have found myself in.

“You speak English really well!”

I still get this a lot, and five years later, I still do not know how to respond to this question. Honestly, when I first arrived in Boston, hearing this statement felt very flattering. At that time, it sounded like a compliment. But, as I learned more from my classes and in conversations with others, I realized it was really more of a veiled insult to my fellow international students and in general to non-White foreign individuals. So why did it *feel* like a compliment?

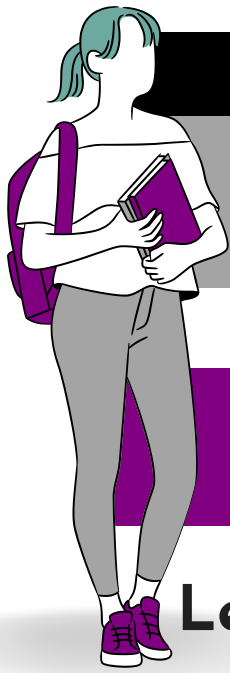
In one of my qualitative methods classes, I conducted an informal research study on colonial mentality and how it manifested in the different aspects of Filipino people’s lives. One of my questions focused on language. After a lot of reflection, introspection, and conversations with my Filipino friends, I realized that I felt flattered whenever someone complimented my English because it spoke to this deep-seated desire to be as close to whiteness as possible. I am never going to *look* White (I am *morena* or darker skinned) but if I could *sound* White, then that was one step closer to this ‘goal’... this *ideal*. During the years of colonization that we endured under Spain and the United States, Filipinos were told that *our* culture was less. They instilled in us this deep shame for things that were *ours*. This manifests in our preference for western music, movies, media, and the most *visible*—beauty ideals. Even as we start to appreciate our culture, our skin color, and our products more, we still have this unconscious bias towards those that bring someone closer to the western ideals.

Not everyone may think like this—after all, Filipinos are not a monolith. A lot of my thoughts and analysis of colonial mentality is based on my experiences both from the Philippines and in the U.S. My identities come together to produce a perspective that might be different from others. As a researcher, I am cognizant of my unique positionality. My experiences are those of an individual who grew up in the motherland, but my training is decidedly western. How, then, do I reconcile this and do the research? This is something that I am continually struggling with as an international student as I prepare to do my dissertation. I feel like I am stuck in the middle, and because I was born and raised in the Philippines, I do not know enough about the Filipino American experience to do research on it, but I also think I would be doing a disservice to Filipinos in the homeland to do research with a local population using western methodologies because I think I would not be able to capture their experience fully. As I write my proposal and move forward with my research, I need to continually check myself to ensure that I am not perpetuating any harm towards my community.

This brings me to another struggle that I face as an international student: while I know there are a ton of Filipinos in the field of psychology, I still find it difficult to make connections. Part of this is due to the fact that I did not grow up in the United States. Finding connections as a person of color is already hard, and this is even harder when you are an international student. In a sense, I am like a first-generation student; the first in my family to study abroad and pursue a career in academia. I did not know the lay of the land and had to figure out a lot of things on my own and up until recently, the process of meeting other Filipino academics who had similar interests as me was a mystery. I have more knowledge now, and a few people I met by chance have led me to other like-minded individuals. Mentorship and support are an important part of a researcher's journey, and networking with as many people as possible is critical.

Being an international student is not for the faint of heart. There is always the fear and possibility of losing your legal status. For most, they are away from their primary support system, thousands of miles away. There are many more challenges that we face when we pursue education in the U.S. (e.g., funding and grants, visa restrictions, etc.), and I have listed a few in this article. Despite these difficulties, we continue to persevere because we recognize that we were given the opportunity and the privilege to study in great schools and learn from amazing people. Each international student will face their own set of obstacles, and the experience can sometimes be hard to explain to others who are not going through the same thing. To my fellow international students, my best advice is to find your people. They do not have to be international students—build your village and journey on. And if you ever feel like you do not belong, remember that you are where you are meant to be. And if all else fails, karaoke fixes everything.





# The Asian American Psychologist

LGBTQIA+

## Let's Talk About Asian Asexuality

By Caitlyn Suen

As a Malaysian from a Muslim-majority nation, we tend to be reserved when discussing LGBTQIA+ topics in public. However, given our proximity to Thailand, which is a bit more open to discussing such topics, we are somewhat acquainted with the LGBTQIA+ community. The younger generation is more willing to share their perspectives on LGBTQIA+, identify themselves, and express their preferences.

Among the LGBTQIA+ community, asexuality is less well-known in Asian culture, even though it is a substantial community today. According to a study by the Williams Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, more than 1% of minorities in the United States identify as asexual, with 91% of them being in the age group of 18-27. In addition to the term "asexual," those in the asexual community may use the term "ace" to describe themselves. To learn more about the asexual community, I spoke with three different members from the asexual community regarding their experiences being asexual or ace.

*"I'm happy in love, but I never want to have sex."*

**Pam (They/Them/Theirs), 46 years old, Malaysian, identifies themselves as asexual, in a relationship for 10 years.**

Pam is my aunt, and they have been in a relationship with their partner for almost ten years. They each live in their own houses, but next to each other. They've known each other since they were in university. At the time, my aunt was seeing someone who identified as male, but they soon realized that they were not interested in that person in a sexual way, so they ended that relationship.

My aunt stated that explaining their asexuality to others, especially someone you date, is very difficult. They'll presume that you're not sexually attracted to them because you don't love them enough. Some of them think that you might change along the way, and some of them may even believe that you're mentally ill. My aunt was hurt when they heard these

comments regarding their asexuality from previous partners because they really loved them. Because of my aunt's asexuality, they have thought that they didn't deserve to be loved and that they aren't capable of loving. Only when my aunt began seeing their current partner did they start to believe that they were entitled to be loved and that finally, not only is their love being recognized and accepted, but their identity is also being respected.

My aunt is fortunate to have someone who understands, loves, and respects them. In fact, many aces still face difficulties in finding a mate who fully comprehends them. Many of them fear that they will be alone for the rest of their lives.

### ***"I'm hesitant to reveal my true identity to my parents."***

**Chloe (She/Her/Hers), 28 years old, Chinese, identifies herself as aromantic and asexual, single.**

Many LBGTQIA+ studies have revealed that some asexuals may also be aromantic, which means that they do not experience either sexual or romantic attraction. However, some of them can be asexual but not aromantic, or aromantic but not asexual.

Chloe identifies herself as both asexual and aromantic. When she discovered that the majority of her acquaintances were in relationships or liked someone while she did not, she was surprised, as she had no feelings for anybody and no desire to be in a relationship. Even just hearing about a friend's love life made her uncomfortable. Her friend suggested that she might not have yet seen a person that triggered her emotions. Chloe came to the firm conclusion that she is both asexual and aromantic when a high school classmate confessed his feelings for her, which took her aback because her friend misinterpreted their

closeness for romantic feelings between them. However, she viewed it more as akin to a sibling relationship or a close friendship.

Chloe is relieved to have found her identity, but she is apprehensive about what to tell her family, especially her parents. Previously, China's family planning program prohibited families from having more than one child. Now, China's program has changed, and families are allowed to have at least three children per household; therefore, having children and starting a family are extremely essential and important in Chinese culture. Due to that, it is difficult for Chloe to come clean with her parents about her asexuality status.

### ***"I am single, and I am happy."***

**Vince (She/Her/Hers), 21 years old, Vietnamese, identifies herself as asexual, single.**

Vince has previously been in several heteroromantic relationships. She stated that most of her previous relationships ended in heartbreak. She had no desire to have sexual contact with her ex-boyfriend; she would turn down sexual contact requests from her ex-boyfriend and tell him that she would only have sex with him when they are married, hence, most of her ex-boyfriends either cheated on her or broke up with her.

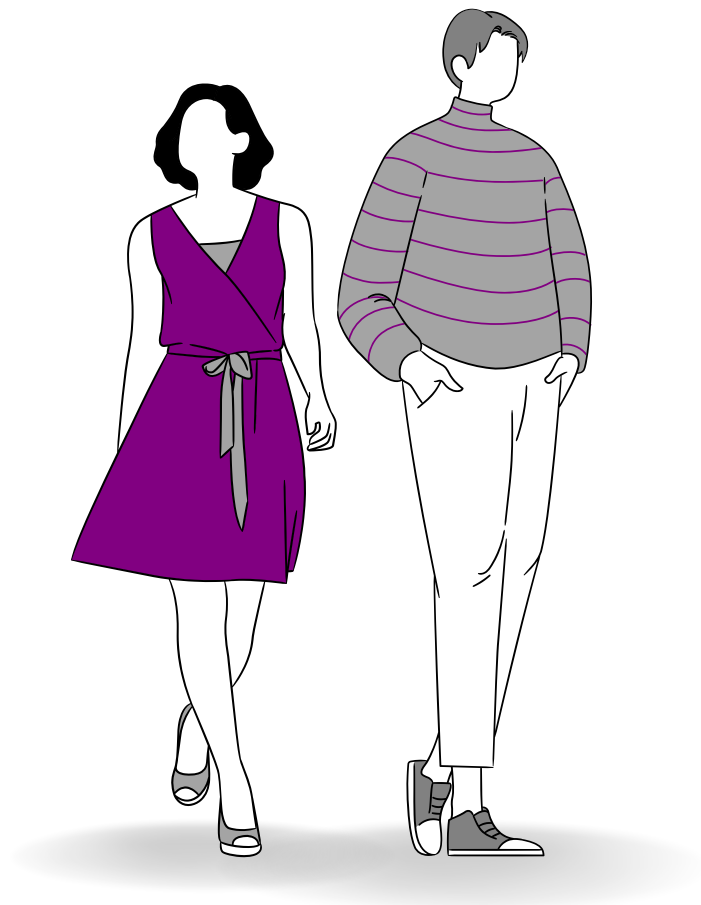
Refusal to engage in sexual activity may be motivated by a variety of reasons, including religious convictions or a fear of intimacy induced by a traumatic experience in the past. So, how did Vince comprehend her asexuality? I queried Vince; she then revealed that she had been intimate with her immediate past boyfriend, but that she didn't enjoy it and felt uncomfortable. Later, she confessed that she has felt emotions for several females, but she's unsure whether those sentiments would ever lead to her wanting to engage in sexual activity with any of them.



Today, Vince is seeing a therapist to discover more about herself.

In short, asexuals or aces have almost always been underappreciated by society. It's not because there isn't a large group of them; it may appear almost superficially to be no different from single people who are not engaging in sexual activity for various reasons. But, it is important to remember that simply because asexuals or aces may not experience sexual or romantic attraction, asexuals or aces still want and deserve to be loved and to be noticed and appreciated in society.

*If you would like to learn more about Asian asexuality, you may wish to read journalist Angela Chen's recent book, [Ace: What Asexuality Reveals About Desire, Society, and the Meaning of Sex](#), published by Beacon Press and available from multiple retailers.*



# Westernized Daughter Meets Filipino Parents: The Trials and Learnings of Moving Out

*By Annabelle Falloria*



One college summer, I sat down with a friend, and we started discussing my need to move out of my Filipino parents' household. He, a white male, could not grasp how *torn* I felt. He went on about independence and how toxic my parents were. Back then, I was in total agreement with him. I wanted nothing more than to leave my suffocating mother. I was raised with the notion that high school ending and college starting signified adulthood and autonomy. Now is a different story.

My father did not talk to me for a whole month when I moved out. I am the youngest daughter of two and I was the first to move out. He was not upset about me moving out - he was angry that I was hurting my mother by moving out. My mother has been my

guardian for all twenty-five years of my life; my father left when I was eight years old and came back into my life when I was thirteen. My wonderful, forever-loud and caring mother was a single mother of two girls in their formative development stages for five years with a nearly non-existent income.

The relationship I have with my mother has withstood the test of life and difficult circumstances. I do not think that eight-year-old me would call her 'caring,' nor do I think my fifteen-year-old self would call her 'wonderful.' However, over the years, I have been able to come to terms with who I am and the dueling cultures I have been raised in. I have learned to see my mother in a whole new light.

I am a second-generation Filipina. I was born in Canada but raised in America. At school and in my neighborhood, I was raised with white kids with white families. My friends went to Girl Scouts and Brownies and had play dates. I went home immediately after school, hung out with my family, and spent my weekends with Titas and Aunties and cousins I am not actually blood-related to. My home environment was filled with fast-paced Tagalog, adobo, pancit, and cousins. My whole childhood emphasized and was centered around my family; my parents instilled a sense

of being responsible for my family that my white friend could not comprehend. Leaving my family meant *leaving* my family.

My mother left her family in her early twenties to be an au pair in Hong Kong. She took this job so that she could provide financial support for her family. She left behind her parents and her eight siblings. She is the oldest in her family and bears more responsibility than I can currently imagine. My mother was not able to fly back home when her parents passed away. She is the only person in her family to be living outside Luzon – the main island of the Philippines. Thanks to technology, she is able to FaceTime with her siblings nearly every day, but still, my heart aches at the thought of my mother not being able to be with her own siblings, nieces, and nephews. This feeling is definitely a wide pivot from my previous understanding and emotions regarding my mother.

By the end of my doctoral program, I will be considered a doctor. However, not the doctor that my mother originally planned. When I decided to pursue my doctorate in psychology and not in medicine, I had to convince my mother that I was still going to have the title of doctor. In all honesty, I am not pursuing higher education for myself. I am doing it because I know it will make my mother proud, and I know that that reasoning is not something my friend would understand. To do something for your family – for your mother, it's not a Western ideal.

During the first two quarters of my graduate education, I learned about coloniality. A lot of colonization has been instilled in me. I learned that the years-long battle raging inside of me is heavily influenced by coloniality. This pressure for individuality and independence is a very Western and colonial imprint. My need to “move out” and “stand on my own” is a Eurocentric concept that is not easily found in collectivist communities. My parents were not raised to push their kids out of the nest and yet, being here in America, they are the odd ones out.

Learning about my internal coloniality has allowed me to recognize the ways in which my parents and I are different. Our upbringings are different. Our understanding of the world is different. However, it has also allowed me the opportunity to appreciate how my parents were raised and how they in turn raised me.

While I partly blame Filipino culture and its deviation from colonial norms for my trauma, I have so much joy and pride in my upbringing. I have loved being raised in Filipino culture. I love having so many Ates and Kuyas. Since growing up, I have missed my weekends with my non blood-related cousins. I miss the never-ending tables of Filipino food and the constant barrage of “Eat more!” and plates being shoved in front of me.

*“Learning about my internal coloniality has allowed me to recognize the ways in which my parents and I are different.”*

I have actually moved back in with my family, but things have changed as I have grown up and experienced the world on my own. Since moving back in, boundaries have been set with my mother and there's a mutual understanding that I am an independent adult. However, at the end of the day, I love coming home to a home filled with my mother's cooking and bellowing voice.

My story is not original; there are many people out in the world that have gone through similar experiences that I have. I think it is important to remember that the feelings I have had and the events I have lived through have been formative. The impacts are everlasting. They have also made me appreciate and understand my family, their expectations, and my culture a little bit more.

# fun stuff!

take a break.

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## MUSIC & MEDIA

Listen to [music](#) by Asian- and Pacific-diasporic artists based on recommendations from the AAPA community.

Have any media recommendations for the next newsletter? Submit them [here](#).

### key

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