

# Society for Psychological Anthropology

## NEWSLETTER

### Winter 2022



Edited by: Breanne Casper, Sugandh Gupta, and Ellen Kozelka

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**cover photo:** The cover image shows a still from a running train captured on New Delhi Railway Station platform at India. Indian railways is one of the longest rail network in India.

**photo by:** Sugandh Gupta, a Ph.D. Candidate medical anthropology at University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill. Her research interests include studying mental health systems and everyday care in areas of distress, socio-political conflict, and violence. Her dissertation work examines the social and clinical impacts of long-term militarization and political conflict on injecting drug users (IDUs), health professionals, and government officials in Jammu City, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), India. Specifically she documents how inadequate resources and lack of access to state-sponsored substance use recovery programs for IDUs in an environment of conflict have broader ramifications for public health, social inclusion, employment, public policy, decriminalization of users, human rights protection, and violence prevention.

# From the SPA President

## Ecologies of Mind: Psychological Anthropology in the Time of Pandemic and Beyond

Dear SPA Members, Friends and Colleagues,

Warmest greetings from a crisp autumnal Montreal. It is a pleasure and a privilege to serve as incoming president of SPA. The SPA has been a welcoming community for me since 1985, providing a friendly, collegial, and intellectually stimulating space for interdisciplinary conversations and collaborations with kindred spirits. This is my first contribution to this newsletter and I wanted speak briefly about both the challenges and exciting possibilities for the SPA that lie ahead.

We are living in difficult times—a perennial truism that has taken on unique inflections. We have been forced by the pandemic to live online, through virtual communities we participate in from our wired cottages and caves. The acceleration of the digital networking of humanity brought on by public health efforts to mitigate the pandemic would be transformative enough, but this is occurring in the midst of other powerful social shifts that will endure long past the pandemic: a widespread awakening to the persistent and pervasive injustices of racism, structural violence and inequity; the toxic effects of social media engineered to capture and commodify attention; the deliberate fueling of political polarization and extremism which threaten civil society and democratic institutions; and the rise of authoritarianism and a global oligarchy. All of this is unfolding in the face of the gathering storm of planetary climate change, environmental catastrophes, and massive forced migration.

These converging forces are changing the meanings of culture and community, bringing new urgency

and seriousness to questions that have occupied psychological anthropology from its inception. As a hybrid discipline—situated at the intersection of social and psychological theory—psychological anthropology has been centrally concerned with agency, subjectivity, developmental trajectories, and the politics of experience. To the extent the mind is constituted by our transactions with others, changes in the social world lead to changes in the psyche, with new configurations of self and personhood. We need to explore these new ecologies of mind.

The great diversity of approaches in psychological anthropology provide unique perspectives and methodological strategies for exploring these issues, including the many forms of ethnographic inquiry; the use of visual and other media to explore sensory worlds; literary approaches to understanding storied selves; in-depth case studies that reveal the conventions and contradictions of self-construction; and structured approaches to systematic comparison.

I come to this discussion from an academic engagement with cultural psychiatry. There many intersections of cultural psychiatry and psychological anthropology and there is a long history of collaboration between clinical psychiatry in psychological anthropology—from the exchanges between Edward Sapir and Harry Stack Sullivan, through the work of Bateson and Don Jackson at the Mental Research Institute, to current efforts to inform clinical practice and global mental health with more sophisticated notions of the social meaning and communicative functions of explanatory models, idioms of distress, and ecological views of the person. My predecessor at McGill, Raymond Prince, was on the editorial board of *Ethos* for many years and guest edited an issue on *Shamans and Endorphins* that explored the links between the

emerging neurobiology of endogenous pain control and ritual practices. We are at a pivotal moment in efforts to rethink the interplay of mind, brain and culture in ways that can inform the applications of neurobiology and psychology to every domain of life.

My own interests have converged on efforts to advance an ecosocial approach to psychiatry. This includes a focus on metaphor and embodiment as paths to understanding illness experience and its transformations through healing, ritual and social practice. This began not just with clinical interests but with an engagement with the systems thinking of Gregory Bateson, which was grounded in his ethnographic fieldwork, understanding of biology, and exposure to the philosophy of Russell and Whitehead's *Principia*. Bateson's thinking took shape during the emergence of cybernetics in the 1940s, through the Macy conferences and later interdisciplinary exchanges. This has received new impetus in current systems biology which recognizes the deeply embedded nature of all experience. Most recently, 4E cognitive science has built bridges between concerns originally articulated by phenomenologically oriented philosophers and psychologists and leads toward a more thoroughgoing ecological view of the mind.

This ecosocial view encourages us to see the big picture—and the *longue durée*. This vision spurs my conviction that the community of the SPA can help us all move through this time of challenges and change together, with grace and creativity, to deepen the scholarship in the field, rethink conventional wisdom, and make meaningful contributions to understanding human experience in all its possibility and potential.

I have begun to have conversations with our colleagues about the next steps for the SPA and invite each of you to contribute your ideas for new directions as well as paths of continuity and renewal. Among the many ideas on the table, we hope to create new opportunities for mentorship through workshops and informal discussions that can encourage dialogue between scholars at different stages of their careers: honoring our elders but also taking direction from the emerging generation of scholars engaged with our most immediate

challenges and with a steady gaze on the horizon.

We also hope to foster avenues for interdisciplinary exchange – perhaps holding joint meeting with other organizations, notably the Society for the Study of Psychiatry and Culture, to which many SPA members belong and with which we share a common interest in mental health problems and processes of psychological adaptation, growth, and transformation.

I look forward to working with all of you to strengthen the SPA as a community that embraces diversity, explores the richness of human experience, and contributes to the vital questions of our time.

In friendship and with the hope of meeting in person soon,

Laurence Kirmayer

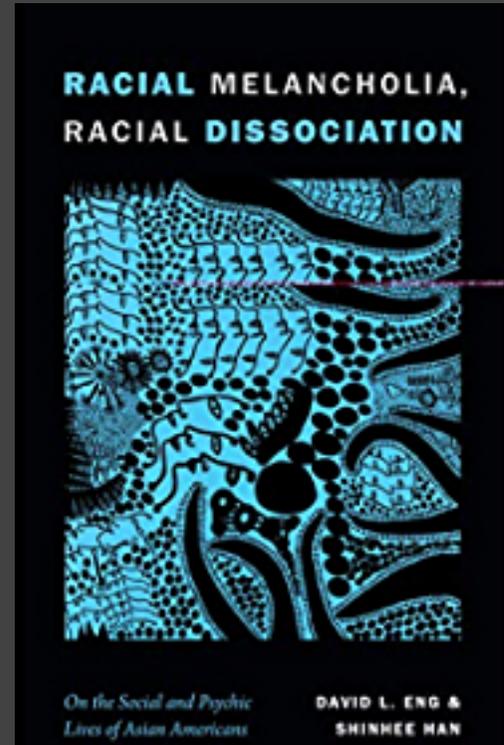
SPA President

## Author's Intro with David Eng and Shinhee Han

*This column provides a platform for authors to summarize the significance of their upcoming and/or recently published books in Psychological Anthropology in a short, approachable venue. It provides readers the chance to learn about the significance of the latest research, straight from the source! If you would like to be featured in this column, please contact the Newsletter Editors at [spa.an.submissions@gmail.com](mailto:spa.an.submissions@gmail.com). If you are interested, please send us your contribution at [spa.an.submissions@gmail.com](mailto:spa.an.submissions@gmail.com)*

*Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation: On the Social and Psychic Lives of Asian Americans* (Duke University Press, 2019) represents an ongoing collaboration that has lasted for two decades. The book is the result of a comprehensive reframing and rewriting of our analyses about the social and psychic lives of Asian American adolescents and young adults we encountered in the classroom and clinic across two generations, from Generation X to Generation Y. Over time, we have witnessed firsthand the shifting demographics and remarkable psychic transformations of our students and patients, accompanied by an ever-growing politics of colorblindness in U.S. society and the rise of Asia under neoliberalism and globalization.

We—a second-generation Chinese American male professor in the humanities and a 1.5-generation Korean American female psychotherapist—originally met at Columbia University, where we worked in the mid-1990s in the Department of English and Comparative Literature and in Counseling and Psychological Services, respectively. A spate of suicides by Asian American students brought us together in collective sorrow. This grief was exacerbated by a feeling on the part of our students and patients that there was—and continues to be—little acknowledgment or understanding of the social violence and psychic pain afflicting Asian American communities. This fact is as true on the part of administrators, faculty, and students as it is, most poignantly, on the part of ourselves. We began writing together as a way of working through the trauma of these student suicides but, ultimately, we wrote the book because we feel an ethical responsibility to bear witness and to address the psychic pain and suffering of the students and patients we have taught and worked with for over two decades.



Combining critical race theory with several strands of psychoanalytic thought, the book presents two distinct psychic mechanisms by which racialized immigrants process problems of discrimination, assimilation, exclusion, loss, and grief: “racial melancholia” and “racial dissociation.” We use the term racial melancholia to refer to histories of racial loss that are condensed into a forfeited object whose significance must be deciphered and unraveled for its social meanings. Racial dissociation, in contrast, refers to histories of racial loss that are dispersed across a wide social terrain, histories whose social origins and implications remain insistently diffuse and obscure.

We developed our theory of racial melancholia in the late-1990s in relation to Generation X (those born between 1960 and 1980). As we encountered a new cohort of students and born

between 1980 and 2000)—we came to realize and patients—millennials from Generation Y (those born between 1980 and 2000)—we came to realize the historical and demographic specificity of our understanding of racial melancholia. Our novel theory of racial dissociation represents our attempt to understand, describe, and navigate the changing social and psychic landscape of race, racism, and race relations in the United States.

There is very little scholarship on psychoanalysis and race; there is even less on psychoanalysis and Asian Americans. *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation* attempts to redress that real absence. It is the first monograph that brings the classroom and the clinic together, focusing specifically on case histories of Asian Americans adolescents and young adults. These studies of first- and second-generation Asian Americans deal with a range of difficulties, from depression, suicide, panic attacks, and the politics of coming out to issues of the model minority stereotype, transnational adoption, parachute children, and colorblind discourses in the face of intensifying racial and nationalist violence in the U.S. and Asia. Throughout, we link psychoanalysis to larger structural and historical phenomena, illuminating how the study of psychic processes of individuals can inform broader investigations of race, sexuality, and immigration while creating a more sustained conversation about the social lives of Asian Americans and Asians immigrants in the diaspora.

## About the Authors

**David L. Eng** is Richard L. Fisher Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is also Professor of Asian American Studies, Comparative Literature & Literary Theory, and Gender, Sexuality & Women's Studies. Eng is the recipient of research fellowships from the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, and the Mellon Foundation, among others. In 2016, Eng was elected an honorary member of the Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research (IPTAR) in New York City. He is the author of three monographs, the co-editor of five collections, and is currently completing "Reparations and the Human," which investigates the relationship between political and psychic genealogies of reparation in Cold War Asia.

**Shinhee Han**, PhD is a practicing psychotherapist at the Newschool University's Counseling Service and in private practice. She is an adjunct professor at the Center for Study of Ethnicity and Race, Columbia University, offering courses on Asian Americans, Race, and Psychoanalysis.

She is also a founding member of the Asian Women Giving Circle in NYC, a philanthropic organization that funds Asian women artists creating social activism and change. Previously, she worked at the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, Barnard College and Columbia University.

# Mentoring Matters with Daniel Lende

*The SPA is deeply committed to mentoring students and young professionals. This column features the voices of exemplary mentor-scholars in Psychological Anthropology. They share tips and strategies as well as offer guidance that they learned as they went through the process of graduate school, including conducting research, writing up, applying for jobs, etc. If you would like to be featured or nominate someone to be featured here, please contact the Newsletter Editors. at [spa.an.submissions@gmail.com](mailto:spa.an.submissions@gmail.com)*

The digital forms an increasing part of our research, teaching, and service, and anthropology has responded to these changes. The American Anthropological Association offers its own [Open Anthropology Research Repository](#). Cultural Anthropology has moved to an [open access format for its journal](#), with accompanying materials on a [companion website](#). Anthropologists are disseminating their approaches via formats like YouTube, such as Saiba Varma and colleagues making a webinar for [patchwork ethnography](#). Our own SPA conference [“Interrogating Inequalities”](#) was entirely online last spring, and materials like this bibliography on [Translating Psychological Anthropology Beyond the Academy](#) are available via our website.

These transformations offer the opportunity to bring anticolonial and antiracist initiatives into digital domains. Given how many of the same power structures, biases, and exclusions operate online, it is imperative that we build better practices and spaces. SPA President Rebecca Lester issued exactly this call for psychological anthropology as a whole in her [Presidential Address on “Crucial Accountability” in Spring 2021](#): “It is well beyond time that we respond collectively with significant and substantive change.”

Digital approaches can amplify voices, often against more closed domains. In the blogpost [“Feeling like ‘Colored Me’ and the Inequities in the Intellectual Formation of Anthropologists,”](#) Louis Philippe Römer shows how specific experiences – such as attending the AAA conference – can “shed light on the ways that enduring asymmetries still manifest in academic preparation and graduate education, but also to illuminate pathways toward greater equity and reciprocity in relationships within academia and beyond.”

Digital platforms such as the [Visualizing Justice Project](#) can help build a “transdisciplinary approach that brings insights from law, anthropology, history and art, together

with practices of film-making and visualisation.” Similarly, the [Black Cemetery Network](#) connects academics, advocates, and local communities to tell the stories of black cemeteries using research, multimedia, and poetry and art, all aimed at “Building inclusive futures, together.”

Transformative practices can change how we use digital media as part of our scholarship. Too often, we use the digital to continue to privilege academic outcomes conceived in the print era, such as monographs or articles. The digital is not bound to those formats. For example, going digital can make more of the process of research public. Digital also offers an array of formats to convey ideas, data, and research outcomes, as well as to generate community connections and impacts. The [Pandemic Journaling Project](#) offers exactly that sort of approach to documenting life during COVID.

Our cellphones and other media technologies offer new ways to do research. If we only get linguistic data – transcripts of interviews, field notes on participant observation – then we can only convey understanding through linguistics. Today we can easily photograph and take video, we can create audio recordings (and so can our informants), we can more easily capture art and the experience of place and the sense of being there through these multiple mediums, and then combine them into one, such as [Tajen Interactive](#) with Balinese cockfighting.

To do that, we need to generate multimedia materials while doing the work of research. Then, an array of outcomes becomes possible, as Anne Pfister showed with her collaborative research with deaf children and their families in Mexico City that combined traditional ethnography with photovoice. The photos were featured in a public exhibition in Mexico and also became a multimedia academic outcome published in *Medicine Anthropology Theory* as [Proyecto Fotovoz: The everyday lives of young people attending Instituto Pedagógico para Problemas de Lenguaje in Mexico City](#).

Online engagement – consistent and in public – can also help generate new initiatives. For my colleague Greg Downey and myself, neuroanthropology started first as a blog. Our initial conversations online quickly grew into substantive engagement with each other, with research, and with a much broader audience. Interacting with an array of scholars made neuroanthropology more interdisciplinary, even as the blog led to a conference, a book, a journal volume, and most recently, the open-access article *Elements of Neuroanthropology*. All by starting to share our work in public and engaging with others.

Both academic institutions and the discipline of anthropology have to increase our presence in these digital domains. If we are not there, we are not part of the conversation. We will have ceded the ground to more powerful actors. However, the same skills that we develop in academia can help us cut through the obfuscation that often happens online. Our ability to listen and build rapport offers possibilities to change discourse. We can also extend what we do in the classroom. When we teach, we are not sharing only our research and we are not concerned with only our ideas. We are thinking about and making an effort to convey materials to others in ways that are accessible to them and that foster learning and change. These efforts are much needed online.

### **About the Author**

**Daniel Lende** is associate professor of anthropology at the University of South Florida, and co-founder of the blog [Neuroanthropology.net](http://Neuroanthropology.net). He has taken part in numerous online initiatives, including the Notre Dame Hub, Medical Anthropology Wiki, Neuroanthropology PLOS, Neuroanthropology Facebook, and Anthropology in the Everyday Instagram. Much like research projects, not all initiatives last. Lende is busy planning his next one.

# SPA/RLF Lemelson Foundation Fellow

Ziqi Xie, Boston University

## **Kinship, Morality, and Population Policy: Making families with More than One Child in Contemporary China**

On January 1, 2016, China replaced its 36-year-long One-Child Policy with a universal Two-Child Policy. Whereas the policy advocates reproduction of “high quality” children and targets women aged 22 to 35 years old, nationwide reproductive centers have been crowded with women born between the 1970s and 1980s desiring to birth a second child through assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs). This generational cohort of women sees a second child as important enough to give up their career, spend life-savings, and risk bodily well-being. While performing seeming conformity, they are also reappropriating the policy for their own goals, like son preference. The interstices between population policy and local moral worlds provide an ideal context to investigate the links between kinship, gender, morality and ethics, and governmentality. My project explores family-making with more than one child by middle-aged women and their kin in contemporary China. I examine how and why a ‘demographic question’ gets rephrased and remade into a ‘moral question’ in relation to family values and gendered ideologies. To understand how kinship is being remade, remoralized, and gendered in these families’ childbearing and childrearing practices, I conducted fieldwork in Guangzhou, China.

During the summer of 2019, I conducted six-weeks of field research in one of China’s leading fertility clinics and reproductive research centers. I conducted in-depth interviews with 21 women who were above 35 years old, diagnosed with secondary infertility, and trying to get pregnant with a second child through ARTs. During the pandemic in 2020, thanks to SPA/Robert Lemelson Foundation Fellowship, I conducted follow-up interviews

with the interlocutors in the hospitals via WeChat or phone. I still had the hospital’s permission to conduct my research, but I could not go there due to Boston University’s ban on in-person research along with my one-month compulsory quarantine at a hotel when I was back in China in May 2020.

From June to July in 2020, I conducted in-depth interviews with four families in Guangzhou who successfully had their second children through ART. I went out with them, in the park, in the shopping mall, in the cafe, and in the early childhood education center. I conducted both face-to-face interviews and online interviews many times. I was also invited to join many new active chat groups and online forums concerning second children (including WeChat, QQ, and Douban). I did virtual participant observation on their discussions and conversations to see their fragmented while quotidian moral worlds. I also visited Guangzhou Library and Provincial Archives of Guangdong and collected data regarding the local policies and revised policies and regulations on both China’s Two-Child Policies and ARTs. My closer observation of these women and their kin’s quotidian life helped me to understand how they think through their circumstances, feel through their conception, and reconcile their unavailing concessions and ‘sacrifices.’ This summer work further drew me to locate family-making in an entangled medical, political and social context and extend my anthropological inquiries into kinship, morality and ethics, and gender.

The major empirical and epistemological changes underway in the interstices between population policy and local moral worlds reveal the perplexing state of scholarship of kinship and neoliberalism. First, the family as a unit has been overlooked by the overarching concepts of individualization and governmentality in studying Chinese governance and social transformations. Second, the intersubjective and intergenerational experience and practice of kinship tend to be

has been simplified and decontextualized by the debates of the naturalization of category through ARTs in today's new kinship studies. Research efforts on the relationships between governmentality and subjectivation who adopt a Foucauldian framework have been focused heavily on "self-governance." This framework of "self-governance," which emphasizes that subjectivities necessarily align with a given form of governmentality, however, is not adequate to explain the situation in China. It fails to explain the gaps between population science and local moral worlds and cannot elucidate the viability, durability, and malleability of familial values undergirding the state's co-construction of family and state where neoliberalism and socialism meet in the face of China's (alleged) rising individualism. Most of these women are diagnosed with secondary infertility due to their age, long-term compulsive placement of IUDs, or previous cesarean sections (the rate of cesarean sections in China reached a high of 46 percent in 2010), as a result of the One-Child Policy. Rather than resigning themselves to the position of victimhood, why do they commit to producing an "ideal family"? How has population policy been imagined and practiced by these families as the last opportunity to remedy their regrets and thus create a "better family"?

The fieldwork in 2020 funded by SPA/RLF fellowship has driven me to extend beyond the clinics and take a family-centered approach to study the vacuum between the state's population science, local moral reasonings, and practices. My theoretical ambition in my dissertation is to extend the current theorization of neoliberalism that brings kinship, morality, and gender into the discussion of governmentality. I seek refine contemporary kinship studies in relation to morality and ethics, politics, and demographic dynamics; illuminate the viability, durability, and malleability of familial values undergirding a state's co-construction of family and state in the face of the rise of individualization; and bring a fresh perspective in viewing morality and ethics alongside governmentality.

## About the Author

Ziqi Xie is a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Anthropology, Boston University. Ziqi's dissertation research will be an ethnographic study of the family-making with more than one child by middle-aged women and their kin in the context of China's dramatic population shift from One-Child Policy to the universal Two-Child and Third-Child Policy. Her research interests include kinship studies, STS studies, morality and ethics, population and policy, gender and body, and neoliberalism.

# SPA/RLF Lemelson Foundation Fellow

Youjung Kim, Johns Hopkins University

## COVID-19 Government Measures and Everyday Life of People on Jeju Island, South Korea

Many of those who endured the violence of Jeju *Sasam* (also called Jeju 4.3)<sup>1</sup> are now in their 70s and 80s, residing in single-person households in South Korea, because their families have been dispersed throughout Osaka and the mainland in pursuit of economic opportunities. South Korea's enforced social distancing and strict surveillance in response to the spread of COVID-19 have restricted the movement of the elderly and raised concerns about infection in their neighborhoods. The isolation imposed by social distancing measures severely impacted the elderly's ability to carry out everyday tasks because they are dependent on state-provided support that includes help from social workers. How do these bureaucratic regulations create new sources of tension among those who underwent the violence of *Sasam* as they navigate government agencies? How do the existing ties of kinship and neighborliness help make the elderly's everyday lives livable under social distancing measures?

To pursue these thoughts—and with the generous support of the SPA/Robert Lemelson Foundation Fellowship—I conducted biweekly first-round interviews among ten households between June and August 2020 using a survey developed through the collaborative project of scholars in which Dr. Veena Das and Dr. Clara Han act as principal investigators. The survey form consisted of three modules about financial precarity and the differential distributions of pandemic-related emergency funds released by the government, mental illness experiences especially how earlier events are stitched into current stories of COVID-19, and the circulation of information and concerns with stigma. I initially aimed to identify possible interviewees in their 70s and above because of their direct association with Jeju *Sasam*. Because many of them live alone, I also decided to seek out respondents in their 20s and 30s to compare how they navigate government services under the pandemic<sup>2</sup>. With in-person field research restricted, my interviews were conducted virtually with the help of my research assistants on

the island, who recorded all conversations with the permission of the household members. I also interviewed the assistants twice per month to glean additional information about the interview data.

In my initial analysis I have observed variations among households affected by government measures. For instance, when Jeju Special Self-Governing Province first implemented their COVID-19 subsidy in May 2020 which provided up to 500,000 Won (500 USD) per household<sup>3</sup>, not all participants in my study benefited. Yeongmi, who barely earns a living as a part-time childcare worker, did not qualify for the emergency funds because she is registered as the head of the two-person household with her daughter, a government officer<sup>4</sup>. Even though Yeongmi lives alone in practice, households containing public officials were excluded from the emergency subsidy. On the other hand, Sunhee, who lives on the government's monthly public pension for the elderly, received the support funds (200,000 Won [200 USD] for a single-person household) and went to a five-day traditional market near her village to purchase items needed for an upcoming ancestral rite. Sunhee did not apply for the funds herself because she cannot read or use a computer. She first learned about the subsidy from neighbors whom she shared a hairdresser with, and the village community center's staff who were responsible for the emergency funds called her into their office to receive the subsidy. She mentioned how the support funds helped her financially: "If not, how do we [indicating herself and those living in poverty] have money?"

Even though both Yeongmi and Sunhee meet the income eligibility criteria for the government's COVID-19 support fund (earning the predetermined standard median income or less), they have had differential access to it because the application is structured to target a distinct population: one that fits the composition of a household whose precarity the government acknowledges (those without income from public institutions) and who possess language and computer literacy (or live in a network of people with these proficiencies).

Without the subsidy, Yeongmi lived day to day with the support of her daughter, who helped with grocery shopping and cooking meals. Although there were many days when they could not see each other in person, Yeongmi's daughter left the food and grocery items at her mother Yeongmi's door and kept in touch with her daily via phone and Kakaotalk (the Korean version of WhatsApp). Sunhee, who received news about the emergency funds from her neighbors because she could not read, also lived with the help of her children. Her eldest son residing in Jeju City gave her a ride to the hospital for a routine check-up (because of concerns about riding a bus during the pandemic), and her other son paid for her monthly utility bills. Close ties with their family and neighbors helped Yeongmi and Sunhee get by despite the social distancing measures implemented due to the pandemic.

While Sunhee expressed her approval of the COVID-19 subsidy, Yeongmi pointed out the imbalance of such temporary government support. Although Yeongmi was not eligible for the first subsidy in May, she was able to receive the second one that was distributed the following September. This time, all residents—regardless of their citizenship and income level—were eligible for 100,000 Won (100 USD). While Yeongmi used her relief funds to purchase daily necessities, she cautioned that the support fund is temporary and worried, “What if it comes out as taxes later? What if it becomes harder for our children?” Her concern is that the government may charge higher taxes as a form of repayment, and the next generation will have to carry this increased financial burden.

Further, when Yeongmi raised her concerns about the imbalance embedded in the government subsidy, she also talked about problems with the government's restitution for the violence of Jeju *Sasam*. “My father hid [in the mountains] because of accusations from the next-door [neighbors], but those bad people are getting [repayment]. I find these things disgusting.” She mentioned feeling upset when she realized that those who accused her father of being among the armed resistance group were registered as official victims of *Sasam*. However, she indicated that hardship comes in life despite any efforts to improve one's circumstances. “There are always ‘events of the times’ in human life, and there are always difficulties, so we have

to live while adapting to them.” Yeongmi expressed the limits of government support as difficulties in life that individuals have no choice but to accept. Her statement shows the embedment of tensions created by the bureaucratic discrepancy in her life.

The narratives I gathered during this period have established the fundamental groundwork for my dissertation, which explores how catastrophic events are sedimented into the everyday life of Jeju islanders. Based on my research findings and existing relationships with my interlocutors, this future research will examine how the government's subsidies and compensations exacerbate Jeju islanders' precarity in their daily lives. The SPA/Robert Lemelson Foundation Fellowship has offered invaluable support to initiate my research under the challenging circumstances of COVID-19. It provided an opportunity for me to adapt to a new research method where in-person fieldwork was no longer possible. By looking at how critical events reverberate in ordinary life, my research is committed to tracing the shadow of catastrophe as it is cast upon the present.

### End Notes

1. During the period between 1947 and 1954, close to 30,000 Jeju islanders were massacred by government forces as they were denounced as communist associates against the U.S military regime and the establishment of the South-only government. This violence perpetrated by the state covered the longest duration in contemporary history of South Korea.
2. This piece does not include the analysis of the data from the 20s and 30s due to the word limit.
3. All households with a standard median income of 100% or less and resident registration (as of April 14, 2020) in Jeju Special Self-Governing Province were eligible for the COVID-19 support funds, except those who earned income from public institutions. Depending on the number of household members, the amount differed (e.g. single-person household: 200,000 Won; two-person household: 300,000 Won; three-person household: 400,000 Won; and households with four people or more: 500,000 Won).
4. This paper employs pseudonyms.

### About the Author

Youjoung (Yuna) Kim is a PhD Student in the Department of Anthropology and Fellow at the Program of Women, Gender and Sexuality at Johns Hopkins University. Her research explores how bureaucratic mechanisms that legitimize government support exacerbate precarity in the daily life of people in South Korea. Her research has been supported by the SPA/RLF Fellowship, the Andrew Mellon Language Fund, and the programs in Women, Gender and Sexuality and East Asian studies at Johns Hopkins.

# SPA/RLF Lemelson Foundation Fellow

Breanne Casper, University of South Florida

## Interrogating Local Neurologies of Substance Use Triggers

This research project focuses on understanding substance use triggers in real world, everyday contexts. Substance use triggers can be anything from paraphernalia (an alcohol bottle, needle, pill bottle, etc.) to places of past use, or emotional states. For those experiencing addiction, triggers are said to be one of the biggest barriers to stopping use. However, little research on triggers has taken place outside of psychology labs, where people live and encounter triggers. This preliminary dissertation research project sought a more holistic understanding of how individuals' interactions with their natural environments shape their substance use and treatment experiences. This project posed two questions: first, how do individuals define and understand triggers in everyday life? And second, how do individuals in "recovery" navigate their environments (social, physical, and institutional) in relationship to the triggers?

Preliminary research took place in August of 2020 in Tampa Bay, Florida. As the conditions of the pandemic demanded, research took place mostly virtually via phone calls and Zoom interviews. I conducted ten semi-structured interviews with individuals who were in local addiction treatment programs such as Narcotics Anonymous (NA) or out-patient therapy programs. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with four addiction professionals and analyzed primary source materials (pamphlets and teaching materials) used in local addiction treatment centers. Finally, I conducted one instance of participant observation with the director of a local substance use prevention program. Through these research experiences, several key findings emerged.

### Triggers as Relational

Semi-structured interviews revealed the relational nature of triggers. Triggers, for participants, were

often tied up in many different dimensions of drug experiences. Often it was not only objects that were triggering, but the symbolic nature of these objects. One participant exemplified this best in her discussion of her most major trigger: her bathroom. While the bathroom was the location she most often took drugs, the bathroom also represented the only space in her home that she could find relief, amidst the stress of the pandemic, facilitating online schooling for her two young children, and balancing overtime at work. The trigger, without further ethnographic investigation, seems simply tied to a past location of use, however that trigger is fully entangled with the stresses and current state of the world. Semi-structured interview data validated previous research on triggers which concluded that triggers are entangled (Dennis 2016). More specifically, this moment highlighted how significantly entangled triggers are in mediating relationships between institutions, culture, social relationships, and environment.

### Brain-Body Discourse

Participants also spoke frequently of the psychological and physiological dimensions of triggering experiences. They often discussed their bodies in relation to their triggers, specifically noting physiological and psychological distress when triggered. Some of these responses included racing thoughts, increased heart rate, sweating, and specific tastes in their mouth. Participants also discussed their brains as being "broken" or "wired wrong". This discourse was bolstered by materials given out by addiction treatment professionals with one handout showing images of a "clean" and "healthy" brain, opposite the "diseased" brain images of people who use drugs. Physiological connections to triggers are well known and theorized in the lab (Witteman et al. 2015). However, research has not connected these types of reactions to an entanglement's framework for addiction. The brain-body discourse that surfaced

in this preliminary research project highlighted the necessity of connecting brain-drug-world entanglements.

### **Harm Reduction Approach to Triggers**

While harm reduction techniques have been largely successful in helping to keep people safe and lead toward recovery (Ritter and Cameron 2006), approaches toward triggers employ an abstinence-based framework. Through interviews with addiction professionals, I learned that the general therapeutic directive is to “identify triggers and avoid them.” Most tellingly, many participants expressed how difficult it is to avoid triggers, specifically as they are tied to the places they live, relationships they have, and important memories. For one participant the unavoidable dilation of her blood vessels in a hot shower, reminding her of her experience as an intravenous drug user proved a potent trigger. Simple guidance to avoid her triggers is inadequate at best. This should prompt an assessment of harm-reduction based solutions for substance use triggers which focus on upstream care and strategies for triggering moments.

Preliminary research also facilitated the theoretical development of this project. Triggers often represent relationships between individuals and their environments (physical, social, and emotional). At the same time, triggers, both as an experience and discourse, complicate an individual’s relationships to their bodies. This has prompted further exploration into the concept of local neurologies (Lende and Downey 2020) to connect the entangled and embodied experiences of triggers. Local neurologies is a concept that seeks to explain how local environments shape our body’s most plastic organs, the brain and nervous system. Scholars have yet to account for the everyday-ness of moments that triggers can occur in. Most research on triggers comes from labs. Most discussion about triggers happens in treatment. But triggers are lived outside of both of those places. It is my hope that this deeper ethnographic research will get at those everyday moments.

I am grateful to the Robert Lemelson Foundation and Society for Psychological Anthropology for the support and opportunity to conduct this preliminary research. Without the generosity of the organization

preliminary research for this project would not have been possible particularly in these precarious, pandemic times. I am deeply appreciative of their support of this project.

### **Citations:**

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### **About the Author**

Breanne Casper is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of South Florida. She earned her B.S. in Anthropology and Cognitive Science from Michigan State University in 2017 and her M.A. in Biocultural Applied Anthropology at USF in 2019. Breanne’s thesis research focused on informal systems of substance use recovery among college students. Breanne has also worked on research projects focused on higher education, prescription stimulant use, and discourses of mental health recovery. Breanne is an incoming editor for the SPA Newsletter and serves as the chair of the Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco Study Group of the Society for Medical Anthropology.

# SPA/RLF Lemelson Foundation Fellow

David Boze, University of Chicago

## Education, Identity, and Islam in the American Midwest

Over the summer of 2021, with the generous support from the SPA/Robert Lemelson Fund (SPA/RLF) fellowship, I spent 8 weeks visiting Muslim communities in a state located in the United States Midwest. While much ethnographic work has focused on Muslim populations in large metropolitan areas, smaller Midwestern cities across the United States have growing Muslim communities, both as a result of refugee resettlement programs and migration away from urban areas. I investigated how American Muslims are conceptualizing their religious and national identities, and how these ideas of identity are influencing Muslim education institutions. Through this research, I hoped to better understand how Muslims in America are navigating issues of identity, particularly in predominantly conservative, Christian areas of the United States.

The SPA/RLF Fellowship was invaluable in enabling me to perform preliminary work which has laid the foundation for upcoming dissertation research. The pandemic required that I quickly shift sites to a project that I felt was promising but for which I lacked contacts and important details about activities happening on the ground. These visits provided background knowledge that will be crucial to the development of my future project. The most valuable aspect of this work was that it allowed me to cultivate relationships with community members, pointing my future research in exciting new directions.

I spent my summer learning about the Islamic education services available in these areas and the ways Islamic institutions are being used to cultivate Muslim identities among younger generations. As part of my pre-dissertation work, I visited 5 Midwestern cities ranging in size from 8,000 to 250,000 residents, all with growing numbers of Muslim residents. Within these sites, I attended a total of 8 mosques and had the opportunity to meet and converse with religious leaders and congregation members. Given that a high number of Muslims in several of these

cities were refugees, I also spoke with members of the region's primary refugee resettlement agency and two organizations which support migrants and refugees in the area to better understand the populations they serve and their relationship with Muslim communities across the state. By speaking with religious leaders, congregation members, and educators, I learned more about the discourses and practices that mosques and Islamic schools are engaging in to cultivate religious and national subjects.

My visits in the region revealed incredible diversity within these Muslim communities. Within these spaces, recently arrived refugees engaged with 3rd generation immigrants, indigenous African American Muslims, and recent converts. Immigrant populations had arrived from various countries including Yemen, Sudan, Chad, Lebanon, Morocco, India, Pakistan, and Myanmar. While the populations were primarily Sunni, a Shi'a mosque was among the sites I visited as well. The mosques which members of these populations attend are all multi-purpose institutions, offering not only a place to worship and perform prayers, but also acting as hubs of community activities for celebrating religious holidays, offering educational services, and engaging in interfaith dialogues. These congregations varied greatly in size, from some having several dozen to others reporting between 200-300 regular attendees. However, due to fears of COVID-19, most congregations were experiencing low attendance, and many had only recently transitioned back to in-person services when I began my fieldwork. Some of these institutions had ethnically heterogeneous congregations and strove to bring together Muslims of various backgrounds, while others had more homogenous congregations with religious and educational services catering to members of specific ethnic groups.

Despite the differences in these communities, the provision of Islamic educational opportunities for children, youth, and adults proved to be a common concern at all of my field sites. I found all community centers offering a variety of services including Islamic daycare, preschool, afterschool programs,

weekend classes, summer school programs, youth activities, and Qur'anic study circles. In addition to education offered directly at mosques, two accredited private Muslim schools offering elementary education are also operating in the area, as well as a madrasa which provides classical Islamic education by focusing on the memorization, recitation, and interpretation of the Qur'an.

Rather than finding a simple dichotomy juxtaposing "American values" in opposition to "Muslim values", my preliminary research suggests much more complex negotiations of identity occurring with adults, children, and youth and points to the important role played by local Muslim institutions in this process of negotiation. The Muslim people I spoke with did not describe these tensions as irresolvable differences separating them from their identity as American citizens. In fact, civic duty and community engagement were described as ways of realizing both a Muslim and American self. At Friday sermons, stories of the prophet's migration to the city of Medina and his serving of the community were used as a template for how Muslims should engage in their communities. Some mosques explicitly state that they seek to cultivate American Muslim identities. Yet while Americanness is asserted, the openness to which institutions assert a Muslim affiliation varied.

Americanness and Islam were consistently portrayed as compatible and even complimentary; however boundary-making practices within these institutions highlighted concerns about tensions between Muslim identity and participation in what was perceived as a broader mainstream secular culture in the United States. Certain more well-established institutions were decorated with Arabic calligraphy and had Islam in the name of the organization, while others were discrete and had names that in no way hinted at the religious nature of the institution. Thus, some communities engage in practices which downplay religious identity. Further, much focus was placed on attempting to ensure that children and youth learn to make sense of their differences with classmates, including why they fast, wear a hijab, and pray. These concerns marked areas by which Muslims sought to maintain distinction from non-Muslims in America through work with children and youth as well as to encourage sociality between their Muslim peers.

This points to the creative ways in which Muslim leaders are discussing and practicing ideas of identity and citizenship within the context of conservative Christian America. These processes are complex and fraught as they involve both the maintenance of religious difference with the larger community, engagement as American citizens, and the strategic downplaying of religious identity. This work looks to speak more generally to the ways religious difference is experienced and navigated by religious minorities in the United States, and particularly within the American Midwest, as the region experiences increased migration and demographic change. In my future fieldwork, I plan to further explore the tensions of navigating both distinction from and appeals to Americanness through Muslim identity by examining the strategies and practices by which American Muslims engage in practices of identity formation. I will investigate the ways in which institutions conceptualize Muslim and American identities as well as how they are taken up, preserved, and changed by younger generations.

### **About the Author**

David Boze is a graduate student in the Department of Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago studying cultural and psychological anthropology. David's dissertation will explore how Muslim communities in the Midwest navigate notions of citizenship and identity and the role that institutions such as schools and community centers play in the development of the self.

# SPA Prizes, Awards, and Fellowship Recipients 2020 & 2021

## Stirling Prize

Winner - Sarah Willen: *Fighting for Dignity: Migrant Lives at Israel's Margins.*

Honorable Mention: Elizabeth Fein: *Living on the Spectrum: Autism and Youth in Community.*

## Boyer Prize

Winner: David Eng and Shinhee Han: *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation: On the Social and Psychic Lives of Asian Americans*

## Condon Prize

Winner: Parsa Bastani. *"Feeling at Home in the Clinic: Therapeutics and Dwelling in an Addiction Rehabilitation Center in Tehran, Iran."*

Honorable Mention: Nikita Simpson *"Ghar ki Tension: Distress and Domesticity in Contemporary North India."*

## SPA Lifetime Achievement Award

2021 - Carol Worthman

2020 - Mary Jo-DelVecchio Good

## SPA/RLF Student Fellows 2020

Youjyoung (Yuna) Kim. *COVID-19 Government Measures and Everyday Life of People on Jeju Island, South Korea*

Shuting Li. *Is Technology a Challenge or Solution to Elder Care in China?*

Breanne Casper. *Interrogating Local Neurologies of Substance Use Triggers*

Talia Katz. *When Embodied Healing Moves Online: Constituting Psychodramatic Clinical Discourse as an Object of Anthropological Inquiry Under Pandemic Conditions*

Ziqi Xie. *Kinship, Morality, and Population Policy: Making families with More than One Child in Contemporary China*

David Boze. *Education, Identity, and Islam in the American Midwest*

# ETHOS

Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology

## **2020 Condon Prize for Best Student Essay in Psychological Anthropology**

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Parsa Bastani

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### **Research Reports**

### **Becoming Role Models: Pedagogies of Soft Skills and Affordances of Person-Making in Contemporary China**

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**Image:** An everyday scene at the Psychiatric Disease Hospital, Jammu City, Jammu and Kashmir, India. Families gather outside the psychiatrist's room seeking care for their loved ones. The family members actively engage in treatment consultations. It is the family members who first bring the patient to the psychiatrist, they engage in consultation on behalf of the patient and also take part in deciding both, the appropriate treatment and the continuation of treatment. If family members do not perceive a marked improvement in the patient then they may stop the treatment. Image by Sugandh Gupta.

anthropology  
NEWS

Your co-editors for the SPA column in the AAA Anthropology-News (Sugandh Gupta, Ellen Kozelka, and Breanne Casper) would like to hear from you! Do you have pictures from the field or any accolades, publications, or news you would like to share with SPA members? Throughout the year, SPA-AN features research by our members. If you have an idea for a piece or for a series, be in touch ([spa.an.submissions@gmail.com](mailto:spa.an.submissions@gmail.com))!