



# Psychology Department

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO  
**COLORADO SPRINGS**

## Diversity Committee E-Blast

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## **Diversifying Psychological Science**

Psychological science has historically focused on the experiences of Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) countries. Read the first two parts of this three-part series from the Association for Psychological Science (APS) to learn about issues, implications, and directions forward for greater diversity in psychological research.

**Part 1:** [The Problem with US Dominance in Psychological Science](#)

**Part 2:** [Colonialism and the Challenges of Psychological Science in the Developing World](#)

## **Challenging Your Assumptions about Aging**

Ageist assumptions about older adults are prevalent and can have negative effects on social and physical functioning (Allan et al., 2014; Chrisler et al., 2016). However, older adults live fulfilling lives and stereotypes about older adults are often reductive, if not outright wrong.

- Older adults often report just as or even more fulfilling social relationships (Charleston & Cartensen, 2010)
- Older adults tend to report lower mental health symptoms, including trauma symptoms (Palgi et al., 2015) and depression (Fiske et al., 2009)
- Older adults do more community service and volunteer work than younger adults (Morrow-Howell, 2010)
- Older adults tend to report greater sympathy and empathy in response to learning about difficult situations (Richter & Kunzmann, 2011)

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## **Upcoming Event**

### **National Multicultural Virtual Conference & Summit (January 5-7th)**

Conference topics include theories, research, and advocacy in multicultural psychology. Registration starts at \$50. Click [here](#) to learn more and register.

## **Equitable Grading: Reconsidering the Standard of "Learning"**

Read this Los Angeles Times [article](#) on educators who are reconceptualizing what "learning" is to be more equitable in their grading. Homework, deadlines, and singular attempts at assignments can be barriers for students with diverse needs, particularly those with unique learning styles or ongoing life stressors. This article highlights several approaches - including giving grace periods for deadlines, considering the role of implicit bias in grading, and valuing quality over quantity of work completed - that instructors can consider implementing in their own courses.



## **Student Spotlight: Stacy Yun, MA**



Stacy's personal and background history of being an immigrant inspired her to get curious and interested in DEI work. This has been a passion of hers since undergraduate studies when she moved to the United States in 2012. Stacy's research interests include dementia-related anxiety, caregiving, aging and mental health disparities, and minority aging, particularly with Asian Americans. In addition to investigating aging related topics, Stacy is particularly interested in how sociocultural factors impact aging and end-of-life processes looking at intersectionality of aging and cultural factors. Her interest in health disparities research really started and blossomed in her last years of undergraduate studies where she

examined the differences in Alzheimer's disease knowledge between younger and older adults in the United States and Korea. Since then, Stacy has continued to develop this work in graduate school and has worked hard to connect and build relationships with other researchers in the field who also conduct research in aging and mental health disparities. Her long list of accomplishments in EDI includes serving as student representative for multiple organizations (Society of Clinical Geropsychology's Mentoring Committee, Council of Professional Geropsychology Training Programs, research committee in Psychologists in Long Term Care, program support committee at UCCS Psychology Department, Colorado Springs Community Ethics Advisory Committee) to voice EDI concerns. She has also been awarded the 2021 Society of Clinical Geropsychology Todd "TJ" McCallum Student Gerodiversity Award, and the 2020 R13 Gerontological Society of America Diversity Mentoring and Career Development Technical Assistance Workshop Fellowship.

In terms of her clinical work, Stacy has been working as a clinical practicum student providing behavioral health services in a variety of clinical settings, gaining a deeper understanding of the unique challenges that older adults face and how different systems work to address these issues. Moreover, in addition to individual psychotherapy work, Stacy has co-facilitated multiple caregiver groups providing psychoeducation on coping skills to reduce their caregiver burden and creating a safe environment where they can connect and build meaningful relationships and provided neuropsychological assessment (both in English and Korean) services addressing various referral questions.

Being bilingual in Korean and English and a 1.5 generation Korean American, Stacy became more interested throughout graduate training in serving those who may have trouble accessing mental and behavioral health services due to cultural differences and lack of bilingual providers. She has administered neuropsychological assessments to native Korean speaking older adults at the UCCS Aging Center who would otherwise not be able to receive testing services and found the experience to be rewarding. This is an area of clinical expertise and supervision that she hopes to get more training in the future, and is looking to expand her networking to include other Asian American behavioral health providers.

Stacy is currently teaching the undergraduate Psychology of Aging class and has structured the class so that students can participate in active discussions about ageism, intersectionality and biopsychosocial models related to aging process, and DEI. She is co-mentoring an undergraduate thesis student with Dr. Sara Qualls to help the student develop a project looking at implications of gender and living situation on adult-child caregivers' caregiver burden. This year Stacy will be focusing on her dissertation project that examines the applicability of the updated sociocultural stress and coping model of caregiving for older spousal caregivers in South Korea, and is in the process of applying for clinical internships. Through internship, she hopes to broaden interest and experience in working with underserved populations clinically and participate in different professional workshops and groups to discuss important EDI issues related to the field of geropsychology (i.e., access barriers for students/clinicians/clients of color, difficult EDI challenges with mentoring, etc.).

You can learn more about Stacy's work by emailing her, or by visiting her [linkedin](#) or her [researchgate](#) profile.

# Editorial: Rehumanizing People

with

Disabilities

By: Julie Hurd & Mimi Morison

Whereas positive representations of people with disabilities (PWDs) in media may enhance advertisement effectiveness (Shelton & Waddell, 2021), the trend of framing stories of PWDs as sources of inspiration may have unintended negative effects on the very individuals being represented (Shelton, 2017). In a study examining perspectives of wheelchair soccer players, spectators and parents of players felt labeling the athletes as “inspirational” to be appropriate, whereas the athletes themselves did not (Cottingham, Pate, & Gerity, 2015). Similar studies of Paralympic wheelchair basketball players find that many athletes resent or do not appreciate being labeled as an inspiration (Hardin & Hardin, 2004; Hargreaves & Hardin, 2009).

Why would portraying PWDs as exceptional or sources of inspiration be harmful or perceived negatively by PWDs? Tropes of PWDs overcoming their limitations or perceived inadequacies may inadvertently paint a picture of the “ideal” person with a disability, inducing shame and frustration when one is unable to meet that standard (Pulrang, 2021; Young, 2012). Further, these inaccurate portrayals may relegate PWDs who are unable to overcome their disability as ineffectual. Stella Young (2012) coined the term inspiration porn to describe this trope, specifically defining it as,

“...an image of a person with a disability, often a kid, doing something completely ordinary - like playing, or talking, or running, or drawing a picture, or hitting a tennis ball - carrying a caption like “your excuse is invalid” or “before you quit, try”.”

Inspiration porn promotes the idea that staying positive or having a healthy mindset can “fix” the challenges experienced by PWDs (Pulrang, 2021). Indeed, inspiration porn “puts a lot of pressure on disabled people to be cheerful, accepting and ready to ‘make the most of their condition’” (Momene, 2015). Propagating the stereotype that PWDs are an inspiration and pushing toxic positivity invalidates tangible and concrete challenges PWDs experience, invalidates negative emotions that are rightfully felt, and perpetuates an ableist mindset by only focusing on PWDs “overcoming” their disability. PWDs experience barriers and challenges that cannot be fixed by a positive mindset. Some examples include needing assistance with activities of daily living, lack of financial resources, lack of accessible education and training, and lack of accessible occupations (Dew et al., 2019; Zwicker et al., 2017). PWDs experience discrimination, abuse, and resource deprivation that require advocacy, allyship, and systemic changes (Pulrang, 2021; Zwicker et al., 2017). These efforts are belittled if others believe that PWDs can be “fixed” with positivity. Having a positive attitude might get you signed up for the race, but it will not get you across the finish line.

PWDs may be viewed negatively if they express negative emotions (Pulrang, 2021; Young, 2012). Because of this, PWDs may downplay their experiences or be silenced for the comfort of others who are not living with a disability (Pulrang, 2021; Taub et al., 2004). Importantly, PWDs may experience shame or blame when they do have a bad day or when they do feel something negative if others are constantly toting the notion that they would be “fine” if they stayed positive (Pulrang, 2021).

Indeed, presenting PWDs as “objects of inspiration” rather than real people – innate imperfections and limitations included – may lead to unrealistic expectations from non-disabled people (Young, 2014). In Young’s 2014 TEDx talk, I’m not your inspiration, thank you very much, she effectively drives the point home in saying, “No amount of standing in the middle of a bookshop and radiating a positive attitude is going to turn all those books into braille.” Andrew Pulrang (2021), a person living with a disability working in the nonprofit sector of disability services and advocacy, suggests four ways for someone to be an ally for PWDs regarding inspiration porn and toxic positivity:

1. Be wary of any approach to disability that amounts to little more than a slogan or simplistic meme.

2. Remember that a disabled person's "negativity" is often a rational response to real problems.
3. Be aware that telling a disabled person they should "look on the bright side," "stay positive," or even just "smile more" may actually be more debilitating than encouraging.
4. Don't take ideas like "the power of positive thinking" too literally, especially when so many of the barriers disabled people face can only be removed with wood, concrete, and persistent advocacy."

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