

The International/Cultural Issue

Letters From the Editors

Carrie Ruggieri & Danny Yeung

Coming Home Around the World

By Carrie Ruggieri

I am delighted to present Danny Yeung as co-editor of this International/Cultural Issue. He envisioned and advanced this project, and his thoughtful and encouraging engagement with each contributing author has infused this volume with the vitality and rigor evident in every article.

Danny's editor's letter conveys the inspiring – core state inducing - impact of the articles and reflects the heart of each contribution. I, too, was amazed and deeply, pleasurable immersed, as these depictions of AEDP led me on a summer pilgrimage across Brazil, Sweden, Korea, China, and Israel. While I am very proud to present this erudite yet personal Journal Issue, I am a bit sad to be concluding my journey with it - though I am equally excited to imagine the pleasure with which it will be received by our community. Meanwhile, Danny and I will be turning our attention to Part II of the International/Cultural Issue - to be released in December 2025!

While the articles in this volume honor the authors' respective cultures, they also demonstrate how AEDP enriches therapeutic practice across diverse contexts. In turn, culture and context challenge and expand AEDP, highlighting the flexibility and robustness of its theoretical foundation. This volume testifies to the capacity of AEDP to retain its healing impact while adapting gracefully to different cultural settings.

In these pages, we encounter considerations of language, faith, historical-political forces, and cultural conventions with both transgenerational and contemporary impact. The question remains: how can we embrace the collective whole without losing the essence of each unique world.

Several authors offer illuminating perspectives. Danny Yeung and Sabrina Wei suggest the way to hold such vastness, and diversity is through cultivating the Eastern philosophical mind-set. Regina Pontes and Maria Cândida Sobral Soares evoke Humberto Maturana's bio-systemic vision, which embraces the interconnection of biology and culture.

Across these contributions several overarching considerations stand out that may apply when working with any population whose values or social expectations differ from our own. Among them are the need to distinguish cultural convention around emotional expression from defensive exclusion of emotion, and the question of whether – or to what extent - the therapist adapts the client to AEDP or adapts AEDP to the client.

For example, regarding the latter, Anna Christina Sundgren describes the need to at once soften the impact of AEDP's explicit and intimate language, while also desensitizing patient's reactivity to a more explicitly intimate interpersonal experience. By contrast, Leah Subar illustrates the circumstances when spiritual and cultural norms must be accommodated even when they may seem incompatible with our expectations of how emotion processing unfolds. Jacquie Ye-Perman expands our understanding of the role of identity in processing trauma through her identification of developmental-differentiation challenges specific for client's suffering transgenerational trauma. Finally, So-Yeon Kim and Danny Yeung explore, in a Korean context, what may be the unifying themes underlying all successful first AEDP sessions.

I close in wonder at what so many in our community have so vividly expressed - that spontaneous recognition, often in nearly the same words, that AEDP is not simply a method but a lived, felt sense of "coming home." And this leads me to marvel, once again, at Diana Fosha's singular vision - untethered by time or place - that continues to inspire and inform the practice of psychotherapy around the globe, and back again.

Next, I warmly introduce the co-editor of the International/Cultural Issues, Danny Yeung, M.D., He is an AEDP Senior Faculty member and Chair of International Development. A beloved member of our community, Danny has contributed to AEDP theory and practice through his numerous presentations, articles and book chapters. He has brought AEDP to China and Chinese-speaking communities through trainings and translations of AEDP texts into Chinese. His letter follows below.

Magic Beyond Words

By Danny Yeung

Can AEDP writings put the readers into core state?

Yes, it can!

How? What are the inner states of the readers' mind that will be conducive to such a magical phenomenology?

Privileged with the honor of assisting Carrie Ruggeri for this global issue, I find my implicit reading habits comes into explicit play. First, reading at the level of the lips, a quick scan of the paper to catch an overall sense of what our colleagues are writing about. Second, reading at the level of the mind, a word-for-word intellectual engagement with the arguments of our colleagues. Third, reading at the level of the mind-in-heart, a moment-to-moment tracking of the feeling tone as it shows up in each word, phrase or dialogue in the theoretical discussion and analytical transcripts. Fourth, reading at the level of the heart, a deep hearkening to the core of our colleagues-as-authors, colleagues-as-therapists and the affective depth of their clients and cultural world. Fifth, reading at the level of maximal embodiment, allowing myself to enter into the "whole new world" our colleagues-clients have invited us to experience.

Regina and Maria Candida's article, *AEDP fits like a glove: AEDP and Brazilian culture*, joyfully declares the deep resonance between our model of healing and their native world. Drawing on Maturana and Varela's *autopoiesis* - the groundbreaking concept describing the innate process of continual self-creation of all living entities – this resonance finds expression in AEDP's phenomenology of *transformance*. Going beyond the individual psychotherapeutic frame, Regina and Maria Candida brilliantly draw parallels between the four-state transformational process and its seamless integration with aspects of Brazilian culture, especially in Rio de Janeiro.

I am grateful for the opportunity to feel into the vibrancy of the Brazilian world, mediated through the presence of Regina and Maria Candida, building affectionate relationships, exemplifying creativity, and above all, exuding joy - the quintessential and crowning marker of flourishing and emotional fulfillment.

In contrast to Regina and Maria Candida's article, *AEDP fits like a glove: AEDP in Brazilian culture*, Anna Christina Sundgren's *AEDP in a Swedish context*, describes the uneasy fit of certain traditional Swedish values – notably the *Law of Jante* and its first commandment: "You

are not to think that you are anything special.” This law reflects a collective core value within Scandinavian communities, one that stands in stark contrast to the ideals espoused in the American Dream. I have an “aha moment” when Anna Christina formulates cultural differences as “State one stuff” and in the process dives down into the fundamental and universal human core of emotional experiences and non-verbal poetic expressions. Anna Christina’s courageous, authentic and humble self-disclosure of her struggle to receive positive feedback from her client is an awe-inspiring corrective to Jante’s Law. In doing so, she offers a beacon of hope and light for her fellow Swedish AEDP colleagues to “learn and work” with this “most difficult method.” Going forth, AEDP as a way of being, may just be a powerful transformative agent, contributing to the emergence of a new cultural narrative for the Swedish community.

From her client Wei’s distressing experience of “turning into Iron Man” to the emerging sense of “I can give you a bigger space” for the self, this unfolding process signifies Jacquie Huan Ye-Perman’s moving work presented in her article, *Transformation of Transgenerational Trauma: A Cross-Cultural Case Study*. Jacquie’s concise and precise portrait of the sociopolitical evolution of mainland China from the late 1930s to the present is a sheer stroke of genius, capturing how successive autocratic political movements gradually imprisoned and oppressed the Chinese mind.

Applying the healing power of AEDP to transgenerational trauma rooted in the extreme oppressive conditions, Jacquie is masterful in her cultural sensitivity. Through gentle attunement, she provides safety and time needed for the client to express experience and express anger towards an elder - necessary to reclaim her psychic territory and restore her sense of personal power. Imaginatively entering into the transformative intersubjective world of Wei and Jacquie, I bear witness to the dramatic and freeing power of AEDP with a deep yearning for more liberation of the oppressed for a life of ease, joy and happiness.

Leah Suber’s work *On Sacred Ground: An AEDP Case Study with a Torah-Observant Jew*, from the get-go, evoked in me an inner posture of deep bow and the feeling of reverence. Worthy of citing word for word, Leah’s insight, “Each Hebrew word—especially those of prayer and Torah—are vessels of Divine vitality, imbued with the power to affect spiritual realms...every utterance a person makes has the potential to stir cosmic systems and align earthly action with Divine purpose,” are so powerful that the *davah* (Hebrew for “word”) are forever seared in my heart and soul.

Without any hint of spiritual bypass, Leah’s healing work with Raizy, her culturally Torah-observant Jewish client, dives courageously into the intense pain of traumatic and heartbreakng loss. For Raizy, processing anger towards parents is no mere challenge of the scriptural injunction to honor her parents, it is an ultimate confrontation with a holy lineage. As a result,

watching moment-to-moment how Leah's work with Raizy to optimally resolve this issue is both breathtaking and awe-inspiring. Engaging in Leah's therapeutic dialogue with Raizy, I could feel the compassion and pathos of the prophet Jeremiah emanating from each word. I am deeply grateful to Leah for being unapologetically explicit in giving an authentic - and arguably prophetic - voice in our AEDP oeuvre of works.

In *From Symptom to Transformational Energy: Integrating Daoist Yin-Yang Perspective into AEDP's Practice*, Sabrina Wei invites us to view AEDP phenomenology through a Daoist yin-yang philosophical lens. Rooted in ancient Chinese culture, this Daoist dialectical and dynamic interplay of opposites sees the potentiality of expansion within contraction, vulnerability in flourishing and the co-arising of dread and hope. Integrating the yin-yang dialectic and AEDP's phenomenology of transformation, Sabrina emphatically contends: The goal is not to move clients unidirectionally from State One to State Four, but to facilitate their interaction until a generative rhythm of contraction and expansion, vulnerability and vitality, emerges. Here, integrating the downward movement of the States with the flow of the yin-yang cycle, Sabrina makes visible and explicit the in-session experiential therapeutic spiral - or helical dynamic - that is often invisible and implicit in AEDP work.

Furthermore, Sabrina demonstrates her theoretical brilliance by synthesizing Daoist yin-yang wisdom with Mitchell's observation of "hope and dread" in the therapeutic encounter, McGilchrist's concept of the "coincidence of opposites," and the figure-ground principle from the Gestalt tradition. Going beyond the application of AEDP to various populations, Sabrina's contribution is both creative and original, inviting us to expand and enrich the philosophical underpinnings of our work.

Why is AEDP making such a valuable contribution to the mental health needs in Korea? So-Yeon Kim and I (Danny Yeung) offer the reasons through a systematic qualitative analysis in *First session experiences for Koreans in AEDP*. So-Yeon and I lament the high prevalence of mental health suffering among South Koreans, as measured by the low level of life satisfaction, high level of depressive and anxiety symptoms, and deaths by suicide. With the South Korean government's aim to financially subsidize up to eight sessions of one-on-one counseling, AEDP is in a key and timely position to provide a powerful path of healing from the get-go to alleviate South Korea's mental health crises.

As the first Korean certified AEDP therapist, So Yeon demonstrates her erudition and experience in hermeneutic phenomenological research methods. Privileged as one of So Yeon's supervisor, I watched in amazement the profoundly healing AEDP work she did with Sunhee, beautifully reported in this paper. Furthermore, the three major themes identified in this research: encounter, recollection, and transformation, are meticulously unpacked. So Yeon and I are joyful that we

could contribute to the research validating AEDP's stance that healing can - and should - begin from the first encounter between client and therapist. Ultimately, together with other Korean colleagues, So Yeon and I are enormously hopeful that AEDP will contribute to writing a new mental health narrative for the future of South Koreans.

In *After Freud Meets Zhuangzi: Stance and Dance of the Self-in-Transformation with the Other-in-Contemplative Presence*, Danny Yeung, Diana Fosha, Jacquie H. Ye-Perman and Xu Yong propose that contemplative presence can enrich the existing AEDP formulations of therapeutic presence and dyadic mindfulness. Contemplative presence extends beyond a purely psychological approach by incorporating the spiritual or transpersonal. This allows therapists to more effectively engage with clients who have deep spiritual practices, preventing a defensive avoidance of such experiences. This practice is not a passive state but is intentionally cultivated to deepen the therapeutic connection. Furthermore, contemplative presence emphasizes radical loving acceptance, which goes beyond simple mindfulness. This involves the AEDP therapist receptively entering the client's inner world, and willingness to be moved by - and even potentially changed by - the client's spiritual experiences, thereby creating a profound connection.

Finally, the notion of contemplative presence connects the Chinese cultural ideal of cultivation, where one is "inwardly a sage and outwardly a king." This means that the practice of contemplative presence should extend beyond the therapy session, becoming an ongoing, sagely way of being for the therapist. This inner cultivation then naturally informs the therapist's outward professional work, aligning with the principal that AEDP is a way of being, not merely a set of techniques.

In resonance with Carrie's closing reflections on the mystery and wonder of AEDP's felt sense of "home" in the hearts of a world-wide community, I would like to close with Diana Fosha's words:

The spirit of AEDP is something that is greater than the sum of all of the parts. It is a felt sense, the way AEDP lives in the therapist's heart and mind and body and soul – something that informs their being with the patient in a way that is more fundamental than the application of specific interventions to the clinical situation... [the spirit of AEDP] informs them in a lived way by the practitioner.... [the spirit of AEDP] extends AEDP beyond "doing" to "being."

~ Diana Fosha Forward to *The Instinct to Heal: Practice Awakening the Power of Transformation* (Yeung, 2023).