

## Letters from the Editors

### Carrie Ruggieri & Danny Yeung

#### Lessons from Parts 1 & 2 of the International/Cultural Issue

By Carrie Ruggieri, LMHC  
Editor-in-Chief

Dear Readers,

Let us thank our authors -Yuko Hanakawa, Jeanne Paik, Evon Chiu, Tamar (Tammy) Avichail, and Kev Kokoska for the beautifully written, deeply insightful, and genuinely enjoyable scholarly articles. Each invite us into the experience of a culture - indeed, the writer's culture. This is both a gift and an honor. Our writers, here, and in Part 1 of this Issue (published September 2025), share personal stories and sentiments - a testament to the safety we create for each other as a community.

From Evon Chiu we learn of the identity challenges for 3<sup>rd</sup> culture kids - and the dynamic activity of identity, which, as Evon describes it, is more a verb than a noun. Tamar Avichail explores the sensitive task of discerning resistance to emotional expression and receptive capacity from cultural norms of expression. She, and Yuko demonstrate the sensitive and nuance task of honoring the culture while still facilitating an authentic emotional experience. Jeanne Paik writes poignant, and at times, playful exploration of the power of collective healing for collective trauma. Through Kev Kokoska's work within the prison system, we grasp the anguished human need to communicate across imposed silence. And from Yuko Hanakawa—whose work served as the catalyst for everything I explore below—we encounter a perspective that upended my understanding of a multicultural world. Though her aim was to present applications of cultural neuroscience, I came away with a living-systems view of culture—one I had long sensed but could not yet name.

Each author, across Parts 1 and 2, advances Diana Fosha's (2021) call to continue developing AEDP toward a truly multicultural model. As often happens when earnest explorers engage in an uncharted task - beginning with curiosity, passion, and lived experience - results emerge through a recursive process: casting wide, drawing in, and casting wide again. As a result, our intrepid authors, as a whole, have returned - breaking new ground. They have introduced new language

and extended the relational and cultural reach of AEDP - going beyond Fosha's original call. So much so, that I now feel our title, *The International/Cultural Issue*, misses the mark.

That title anticipates a collection of articles that inform cultural sensitivity and model adaptation cross cultural contexts. What we have instead offers something more dynamic and less categorical than what the term multi-cultural implies. The image alive for me right now is of a solar system reimagined as a polycentric cosmos, in which the center of gravity is variable rather than fixed: *a living systems view*. With the help of ChatGPT, I settled on, *Orbits in Dialogue: Global Voices Shaping AEDP as a Living System*. Each word carries essential meaning. Together, they convey that cultures are not more-or-less distant outpost interacting with the pull of a central orbit, but are mutually reflecting and radiating influences within a dynamic whole.

While a multicultural orientation invites us to attend to difference, a living-system perspective invites us to recognize that difference is already inherent in the whole. As applied to AEDP, this living-systems perspective is more aligned with our experience of cultures as unique, though also mutually informative and mutually influential. Enhancing this perspective are re-orienting terms introduced to AEDP by Yuko Hanakawa - such as, **ecological interconnection** and **cultural congruency** - concepts with wide-ranging applications, from dyadic interaction to identity development.

Yuko also reports findings from cultural neuroscience demonstrating that culture shapes neuro-circuits, in ways analogous to how attachment environment shapes the neuro-circuits of attachment. From this vantage point, we could consider attachment orientation itself as a culture within a culture. This opens the possibility of applying the culturally sensitive guidelines offered by Evon Chiu, and Tamar Avichail articles, not only to a client's location within their broader cultural context, but also to the needs of the local therapeutic dyad - for example, attachment style differences between client and therapist.

What I ultimately argue is not a rejection of multicultural frameworks, but an expansion—toward a living-systems view that more fully accounts for culture as dynamic, embodied, and relationally enacted.

I am reminded of a passage by Feynman quoted in Fosha (2005), offered in a spirit of inspiration - a splendid, poetic expression of the living-systems, polycentric perspective.

Which end is nearer to God, if I may use religious metaphor, beauty and hope, or the fundamental laws? I think that the right way of course, is to say that what we have to look at is the whole structural interconnection of the thing; and that all the sciences, and not just the sciences but all the

efforts of intellectual kinds, are an endeavor to see the connections of the hierarchies, to connect beauty to history, to connect man's history to man's psychology, man's psychology to the working of the brain, the brain to the neural impulse, the neural impulse to the chemistry, and so forth, up and down, both ways. And today we cannot, and it is no use believing that we can, draw carefully a line all the way from one end of this thing to the other, because we have only just begun to see that there is this relative hierarchy. And I do not think either end is nearer to God (Feynman, quoted in Edelman, 1992, quoted in Fosha, 2005).

In closing, I am delighted to announce that Danny Yeung has generously agreed to undo my aloneness and remain on as Senior Editor beyond his work on this current volume. I am truly grateful for his easy support, vast knowledge, and insightful feedback - contributions that are both integral to the quality and care we bring to stewarding the excellent contributions from our authors.

\* Fosha, D. (2021). Future Directions. In D. Fosha (Ed.), *Undoing aloneness & the transformation of suffering into flourishing: AEDP 2.0* (pp. 107–131). American Psychological Association.

\*\* Fosha, D. (2005). *Emotion, true self, true other, core state: Toward a clinical theory of affective change process*. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 92(4), 513–552.

## The Magic Continues – Part 2

By Danny Yeung, MD

Senior Editor

Building on the communal receptiveness of our previous International/Cultural issue, Transformance is proud to showcase another five erudite international/cultural contributions from Yuko Hanakawa, Evon Chiu, Tamar (Tammy) Avichail, Jeanne Paik, and Kev Kokoska.

Compelling in her contention, **Yuko Hanakawa** in *Wired for Harmony: Cultural Neuroscience and AEDP with Asian Clients* persuasively argues that collectivist culture shapes neural connectivity in ways that predispose the Asian clients towards interdependence and social harmony. Yuko's citations of fMRI studies, cultural neuroscience and cross-cultural research are supportive of her main thesis. Her thesis - how cultures value and therefore shape the expression of affect - has profound significance for clinical understanding and intervention within AEDP's four-state transformational process.

Building on this theoretical foundation, Yuko translates her cultural informed AEDP into clinical practice by offering interventional guidelines that unpack the "rationale" and provide concrete suggestions for what to say in session. Beyond Yuko's conceptual and practical contributions, a deep reading of her session transcripts is profoundly moving, stirring feelings of awe and reverence, and once again illustrating the magic of full presence – that simply being with an author's (Yuko's) words, can evoke core state.

With a stroke of genius, **Evon Chiu**, in her article *Culturally Attuned AEDP for Attachment Integration: Four Internal Working Models of a Taiwanese Adopted Migrant Boy*, created what she called "children with stolen emotions" to describe the traumatic impact of historical, political and cultural factors contributing to young children being sent overseas away from their parents and motherland. Noting that Evon's argument is potentially generalizable from the particular case of Taiwan to similar cases elsewhere around the globe.

Evon's prose is articulate and elegant employing powerful poetic imagery that engages our right brain. Drawing on the distinction between vertical and horizontal healing interventions, Evon insightfully makes the implicit explicit by identifying a parallel dynamic of vertical and horizontal trauma. She reminds us that in collectivist societies, connection could be experienced as a threat and intrusion; as such, State 2 work may at times require self-with-self vertical work before the self-with-other horizontal work. Rather than the therapist joining, Evon proposes that the radical act is for the therapist to wait and hold the space for the client to become. Ultimately, Evon offers a compelling formulation of culturally attuned AEDP.

Is client's rejection of our affiliative affect rooted in culture? Restrictive receptive affective capacity? Or personal trauma? These are the overarching and insightful questions posed by **Tamar (Tammy) Avichail** in *Therapeutic Delight or Cultural Discomfort? Enhancing Receptive Affective Capacity Across Cultures*. Informed by Multicultural Orientation framework, Tamar asserts AEDP therapists must proactively translate our model, making the implicit cultural gaps within the local therapeutic dyad explicit in order to bridge structural and linguistic gaps.

Illustrated with informative schematic diagrams, Tamar devised a valuable differential diagnostic guide to discerning resistance to affirmation, appreciation and inter-subjective delight in cross-cultural therapeutic dyad. Following which, Tamar prescribed six therapeutic interventions for assessing and adapting in a multicultural therapeutic triad. Finally, Tamar reminds us to keep actively optimizing our interventions to meet the challenges of the multicultural orientation framework and to do justice to these vital considerations.

Excited by **Jeanne Paik's** exploration into the phenomenology of collective transformance in *KPop Demon Hunters: An Allegory of Collective Transformance and Healing*, I find myself exclaiming with inner cheer for AEDP's going beyond the frame of the individual psychotherapy out into healing collective wounds for the Korean culture at large. Informed by Cultural Attachment Theory, Jeanne argued for a persuasive and hopeful case how Korean society, traumatized repeatedly historically, could experience collective transformation for the better.

Riding the wave of global popularity and reaching myth like proportion, Jeanne contends that KPop Demon Hunters (KPDH) is a powerful illustration of how Korean themes and storytelling have universal resonance and reaches the collective in a profound way. Jeanne's analysis further reveals an implicit made explicit alignment between AEDP work and Korean social emotions: *jeong, han, musim* and *heung* and their correlation with AEDP's four states phenomenology. And to top it off, Jeanne's vision of KPDH as a collective portrayal is compelling with its protagonists navigating AEDP's four state transformational process, culminating in cultural repair and collective healing moment.

Beginning with a moving self-disclosure, **Kev Kokoska**, in *From Story to Symbol: Established Imagery in Constrained Therapeutic Settings*, draws us in with potent immediacy through poignant images into the world of the incarcerated persons. In a lifeworld where explicit language and discursive storytelling exposes the speaker to mortal danger, Kev makes a strong and creative case for the use of images and "symbolic disclosure" in healing transformation for the imprisoned. Most importantly, Kev contends imaginal processing is therapeutic in high surveillance environments. And if I may be allowed some degree of editorial license, this

technique of imaginal processing is deeply meaningful to worldwide communities under tyrannical rule.

Stylistically poetic throughout his article, Kev's right brain mediated writing is impactful to our soulful selves. Kev's axiom “[W]hat is visible is not the whole of what is alive” beautifully highlights the particularity of individual personhood in the universality of our shared sense of humanity. Kev further underscores the important distinction between imaginal tendencies that are generative versus preservative. In the next *Transformance Journal* issue on the uses of imagination in AEDP, Kev will unpack these imaginal tendencies in full clinical detail.