

## Supporting Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander Graduate Students: Tips for Graduate Educators and Students

As a result of the current rise in racism and violence targeting Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander (AAAPI) communities in the United States, many young people and adults are experiencing fear, confusion, stress, and trauma. Like K–12 school communities, universities and colleges should serve as welcoming and affirming places for all students, faculty, and other staff. Unfortunately, many AAPI students, including those in school psychology graduate programs, have expressed uncertainty and anxiety about their safety and well-being in the current context. It is important that graduate program faculty, university administrators, and graduate students work together to ensure that all members of the AAPI community—especially graduate students—feel safe and supported. The following tips and related resources can help graduate educators and students gain the tools necessary for critical self-reflection, education, affirmation, and advocacy to create change.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR GRADUATE EDUCATORS

Graduate educators have primary responsibility for ensuring the safety and well-being of their students. This includes creating learning environments that reinforce respect and inclusion, mitigate harmful speech or behaviors, provide needed supports, and facilitate improved understanding of and self-reflection regarding historical and systemic racism and the lived experiences of AAPI individuals in this country.

#### Creating Safe Supportive Environments

- Create safe and supportive learning environments and an inclusive program climate to ensure that students from the AAPI community feel safe in your class/program (physically, mentally, and emotionally).
  - Initiate discussions related to current events surrounding or harming the AAPI community in our country, and acknowledge the impact this has on AAPI students.
  - Check in on AAPI students when the community is facing prejudice or harm (e.g., after the Atlanta shooting on March 16, 2021).
  - Work to create a “call-in” culture where educators are made aware of their own microaggressions against the AAPI community, which can be destructive to students’ identity and sense of belonging, and given the opportunity to repair the relationship and learn from the experience.
  - Ensure that AAPIs’ sharing and participation is safe and respected. Their voices, goals, and interests as well as their values must be recognized and supported in the classroom and in research.
  - Celebrate AAPI cultures and prepare students to approach service delivery from a culturally responsive and strength-based perspective.

- Value the expertise and lived experiences of AAPI community members, scholars, and practitioners by inviting those who identify as part of the AAPI community to speak to the class and work to build community through facilitating courageous conversations between AAPI students and allies.
- Support the development and execution of statewide or nationwide affinity groups for AAPI graduate students to connect (e.g., AAPA, AMENA-Psy, AAAS), potentially through state or national school psychology associations.
- Acknowledge the differences often reflected in intergenerational perspectives (e.g., students and families go through vastly different experiences depending on when they immigrated or came to the United States), acculturation, and family composition (e.g., extended families or international adoptees).
- Support Asian international students emotionally and assist them with the struggles with policies and requirements related to their status in class registration and practicum/internship applications (see Yang et al., 2020).
- If you feel safe to do so, confront anti-AAPI racism on your campus, at your training program/institution, and [in the public](#) (e.g., Hollaback! Bystander Intervention).
- Report anti-AAPI racism, harassment, and attacks when you feel safe and comfortable.

### Improving Knowledge, Self-Reflection, and Curricula

- Recognize that anti-AAPI racism is a part of U.S. history. The everyday racism and violence against people of Asian descent, especially Asian immigrants, have been going on for more than a century. Graduate programs must highlight how contemporary issues related to anti-AAPI racism and violence are deeply rooted in American rhetoric. For example, Asian Americans have long been considered a threat to Whites-only immigration policy and referred to as the “yellow peril”—unclean and unfit for American citizenship (Tsien, 2020).
- Recognize that Asian American history is U.S. history. Calls to increase ethnic studies in pre-K–12 schools should also apply to graduation education. Graduate programs must provide discussion on the achievements of AAPI leaders in the field and communities in addition to situating historical anti-AAPI violence within contemporary examples of anti-AAPI rhetoric, violence, and policies. In considering ways to diversify school psychology, it is important for prospective students to see themselves represented within our field.
  - Empower AAPI students by celebrating the community’s accomplishments in American culture and history (e.g., leaders and scholars in the fields of school psychology and education; companies started by Asian Americans; AAPIs’ participation in social activism and important changes in policies that advance social justice).
  - Highlight the contributions of AAPIs during the fight against COVID-19 and keeping the country running in essential work sectors. Include AAPI history, text, and research throughout graduate training coursework.
- Understand the diversity within the AAPI community. The AAPI community is not a monolith, and cultures can be vastly different within the community.
- Educate yourself and your students about the [model minority myth \(MMM\)](#) so you can begin to take actions to dismantle it.
  - The model minority myth perpetuates a narrative in which AAPI children are stereotyped as whiz kids or geniuses. The myth characterizes AAPI children as a polite, law-abiding group who have achieved a higher level of success compared to other minoritized groups through a combination of

innate talent and hard work. This myth can also lead to feelings of invisibility and result in AAAP I students being underserved by available academic and wellness resources.

- The MMM is harmful because it systematically erases the differences among individuals, ignores the diversity of AAAP I cultures, perpetuates the “forever foreigner” myth, and obstructs progress towards social justice.
  - Educate yourself and students about historical and ongoing issues that are happening in various AAAP I ethnic groups (e.g., [mass deportation of Southeast Asians](#), the [school to prison to deportation pipeline](#)).
  - Adopt data disaggregation as an equitable practice in data reporting to dismantle the MMM (see Teranishi et al., 2015).
- Intentionally unlearn oppressive concepts in school psychology research and practice that bolster White supremacy ideologies.
  - Intentionally learn about and make space for discussion on how to [decolonize](#) current training approaches in graduate school psychology programs.
  - Intentionally include in class discussions and assignments concepts that highlight theories that advance social justice and antiracism, including but not limited to Asian critical (AsianCrit) theory ([Iftikar & Museus, 2019](#)) and intersectionality ([Crenshaw, 1989](#)).

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

For students who identify as AAAP I:

- Recognize that your experience and your emotions are valid and important.
- Take needed time to heal.
- Connect with AAAP I affinity groups to celebrate the achievements of AAAP I in this country (e.g., AAPA, AMENA-Psy, AAAS).
- Continue to learn and unlearn about our own internalized racism against AAAP I communities and other communities of color.
- Confront White supremacy through self-reflection and at the institutional level with different microintervention strategies (e.g., [Sue et al., 2019](#)) when you feel safe and supported.
- Continue to engage in antiracist work in solidarity with all AAAP I ethnic groups, other communities of color, and other multiple marginalized communities.
- Report anti-AAAP I racism, harassment, and attacks when you feel safe and comfortable.

For students who do not identify as AAAP I:

- Check in with your AAAP I colleagues/classmates to ensure they feel supported.
- Learn about AAAP I history including both the communities’ contributions to this country and the historical and ongoing anti-AAAP I violence.
- Confront anti-AAAP I racism on your campus, at your training program/institution, and [in the public](#) (i.e., Hollaback! Bystander intervention), when you feel safe.
- Learn and unlearn your own implicit biases against AAAP I.

- Participate/join social and psychological associations and organizations for AAPIs at the local, regional, and national level, such as the [Asian American Psychological Association](#) (AAPA) or [Asian Americans Advancing Justice](#) (AAJC).
- Report anti-AAPI racism, harassment, and attacks when you feel safe and comfortable.

## RESOURCES AND ADDITIONAL READING

- Countering Coronavirus Stigma and Racism: Tips for Teachers and Other Educators, <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/countering-coronavirus-stigma-and-racism-tips-for-teachers-and-other-educators>
- NASP Condemns Violence Against AAPI Communities, Urges Schools to Reinforce Students' Safety, Well-Being, <https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/media-room/press-releases/nasp-condemns-violence-against-aapi-communities-urges-schools-to-reinforce-students-safety-well-being>
- School Psychology Unified Call for Deeper Understanding, Solidarity, and Action to Eradicate Anti-AAPI Racism and Violence, [https://tsp.wildapricot.org/resources/Documents/Final%20Unified%20Statement 4 30 21.pdf](https://tsp.wildapricot.org/resources/Documents/Final%20Unified%20Statement%204%2030%2021.pdf)
- What Is the Model Minority Myth, <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/what-is-the-model-minority-myth>
- 11 Moments From Asian American History That You Should Know, <https://time.com/5956943/aapi-history-milestones/>
- School Psychology Unified Antiracism Statement and Call to Action, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2372966X.2020.1809941>
- [How to Support AAPI Youth and Families Facing Discrimination](#), <https://division45.org/public-service-announcements-for-aapi-families-facing-covid-19-discrimination/>
- Asian American Psychological Association, <https://aapaonline.org/>
- Asian American Advancing Justice, <https://www.advancingjustice-aaajc.org/>
- Stop AAPI Hate, <https://stopaapihate.org/>
- *PBS Asian Americans*, a five-part docuseries about different aspects of the Asian American experience, <https://www.pbs.org/show/asian-americans/>

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