

In conversation with

Chia Po Cheng

THE QUINTESSENCE SERIES:
INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTERNATIONAL WORK BY SCPS

Po (he/him) is a doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology at University of Massachusetts in Boston from Taiwan. Prior to his doctoral study, Po graduated from the dual master's counseling program at University of Pennsylvania and worked as a licensed professional counselor in Philadelphia. His research interests include LGBTQ+ studies and the intersection of mental health and social policy. He believes that stories shape our understanding of ourselves, our relationships, and even our society, so he is dedicated to bringing underrepresented stories to public awareness.



Motivation

Po shares that as an international student, he is inspired to have a contribution to his country through his research and describes international scholars as "windows to the voices" of their home countries. Po is currently examining the impact of policy (i.e., Marriage Equality act) on mental health for LGBTQ+ individuals in Taiwan. He narrates that his undergraduate research experience examining cross-cultural aging differences and classes in anthropology during his masters broadened his research lens. The way in which we ask questions and how we intentionally create space for the stories to be shared, Po describes, is the essence of international work.

Impact

Po shares that a sizable LGBTQ+ literature in Taiwan is qualitative in nature, emphasizing the salient roles of language in storytelling and in understanding different cultures. He reflects that the most impactful part of his work is to bring the local knowledge to international platforms. Po is excited and hopeful that by examining the impact on policy on mental health, his dissertation research can simultaneously honor the grassroots-level Taiwanese efforts and also pave way for greater academic visibility of Taiwanese LGBTQ+ issues.

Barriers

Po describes two main barriers to international work:

1. **Accessibility to literature:** English speakers are typically unable to access the wealth of literature in other languages, limiting the knowledge base in international research. Po shares that since he is bilingual, he is able to access literature in Chinese as well as English.
2. **Colonial frameworks:** Po shares that one must be critical of the frameworks being used in any study. He narrates engaging in regular reflection about the methodology and cultural frameworks he uses in his research.

Advice for students

- Don't be afraid to ask your advisor about conducting international research based on your own country of origin despite being at a U.S. institute.
- Your advisor may not understand literature in your language, which may increase your personal accountability and responsibility.
- Be mindful of your emotions (positive and negative) regarding the issues you feel passionate about and how emotions influence the ways in which we frame things.