

# Psychology DEI Committee

## Fall 2024 Newsletter



The DEI committee is pleased to bring you the first installment of a quarterly newsletter! We hope this will help our community stay informed about the ongoing work, and serve as another way that we build community together. We will be archiving copies of these newsletters on our [DEI Committee Website](#).

### Meet your 2024-25 DEI Committee Members!



*From Left to Right: Aiswarya Gangadhar, Julia Wanlin, Isabelle Gross, Heather Bullock, Michael Vallerga, Jeremy Yamashiro (Chair), Samantha Fong, Jexy An Nepangue, Grace Hwang, Katie Ritchey, Margarita Azmitia (not pictured)*

## DEI Spotlight



### Zak Keith

#### ***Tell us about yourself.***

I'm Zak, and my pronouns are they/them. I'm from a small rural town in Appalachia, Virginia with a population of about 270 people, where being a non-binary queer person was far from accepted. I pursued my undergraduate studies at Virginia Tech, earning degrees in psychology, sociology, and criminology, driven by a desire to understand individual and societal behaviors. I later worked at the University of Houston as a behavioral researcher, focusing on emotion communication through nonverbal touch between parents and children. Applying to grad school led me to UCSC, where I've been growing both as a scholar and an artist. Additionally, I'm a professional drag queen and have recently started a drag consulting and production business.

***Read more.....***

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## Fall Colloquium: CARE

For the Fall 2024 DEI colloquium, Meg Kan and Zack Tarro from the Center for Advocacy, Resources, & Empowerment (CARE) led a workshop for our community on bystander intervention in sexual harassment, boundary setting in the workplace, and supporting survivors of harm. As a community we came together to learn more about how we can better support each other in maintaining a respectful community based on mutual support and care. Thank you to everyone who was able to attend and participate, and those who submitted feedback about the event. The DEI committee is considering your responses as we plan for future quarters.

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## Inclusion-oriented Activity Funding

This Fall, small grants were awarded to....

### **Feminist Consciousness Raising Group for Men/Male-Adjacent Folks**

This group will be a way for members of our department to learn from each other about anti-sexism, feminism, and feminist theory, to examine how we may be achieving or falling short of the ideals we like to think of ourselves as living up to, and to learn how to change ourselves and our institutions for the better.

### **Psych Grads for Social Justice**

Hosted a teach-in in November titled "Queering Solidarity: Palestine & Queer BIPOC Liberation," focused on the connections between queer BIPOC liberation and Palestine liberation as well as how we as psychologists can apply a critical lens, like queer theory, to solidarity efforts with Palestine.

### **Amah Mutsun Relearning Program Speaker and Plant Exchange**

[Rick Flores](#) gave a talk on the [Amah Mutsun Relearning Program](#), covering the important work the program does in restoring and preserving the traditional ecological knowledge of the [Amah Mutsun Tribal Band](#). Afterwards, attendees participated in a plant exchange where we exchanged and repotted plants, or simply chatted and connected with others.

### **Interested in Applying?**

The call for small grant proposals is shared out at the beginning of each quarter. Accepted programs are given a small amount of funds to help support the event.

## Department Profile

### [Siwar Hasan Aslih](#)



Can you share a brief overview of your work?

### [Hanna Kim](#)



Can you share a brief overview of your work?

I study intergroup relations, collective action dynamics, and the political attitudes of disadvantaged groups. My current research focuses on understanding the implications of the war in Gaza, both within Palestine and in the United States. In Palestine, my research examines how experiences of oppression and violence under Israeli occupation impact Palestinians' emotional responses and their willingness to engage in acts of resistance. In the U.S., my research explores how the ongoing war in Gaza is shaping American attitudes toward the issue of Palestine. Recently, I have been investigating how the war has influenced voting decisions among Arab and Muslim Americans in the 2024 presidential election. I am also studying U.S. media coverage of the war, with a particular focus on the language used in reporting, and how this shapes public perceptions of responsibility for war crimes.

**What would you say most motivates you in your work? What are you most excited/passionate about?**

There is so much that can be said about motivation, and I don't feel that I can boil it down to a simple answer.

**What do you like to do in your spare time/when you're not at work?**

I enjoy hikes, books, jigsaw puzzles, and historical drama series.

**What is one thing about Santa Cruz that you are excited to explore or learn more about?**

I've heard that Santa Cruz is known for its ghost stories and I'm curious to learn more about these eerie tales and supernatural folklore. I'm also curious about the pirate legends tied to the area.

**What might someone be surprised to learn about you?**

I'm typically a risk-averse person and not adventurous, but 8 years ago, I

As a quantitative methodologist, I develop and evaluate statistical methods for use in psychology and social sciences research. Currently, I'm extending causal mediation analysis methods to assess how a set of educational programs influence child development through different pathways and how these effects may vary across subpopulations. Another project I'm excited about involves studying close relationships using dyadic data analysis methods, focusing on how different measurement models (e.g., multiple manifest variables, composite scores, or latent constructs) shape our understanding.

**What would you say most motivates you in your work? What are you most excited/passionate about?**

I'm most motivated when I see something both intriguing and impactful. In my research and teaching, that often means discovering the unintended consequences of seemingly objective methodological choices. People often think of statistics as purely numerical and objective, but it's fascinating to recognize how much these numbers can reflect hidden assumptions. Tailoring methods to best serve research questions is a challenge I truly enjoy.

**What do you like to do in your spare time/when you're not at work?**

I love immersing myself in stories and music. Whether it's revisiting an epic tale (with the shorter days, it's the perfect time for a Lord of the Rings marathon!) or listening to every possible recording of a musical piece, these distractions energize me and remind me to savor the blessings in life.

**What is one thing about Santa Cruz that you are excited to explore or learn more about?**

jumped off a 30-foot wall into the Mediterranean sea in the Old City of Akka (Acre).

I was thrilled to discover Santa Cruz's vibrant community of local artists when I arrived. I'm looking forward to exploring exhibitions, concerts, and other creative events around town.

**What might someone be surprised to learn about you?**

I'm a bit of a sports nerd! I've been following the Korean baseball league since college and have recently gotten into the NFL. While I can never seem to remember much about past games or seasons, I love observing individual players and teams, finding unexpected life lessons in random moments. If there are other sports enthusiasts out there, I'd love to connect!

Do you have ideas for something you'd like to share in our newsletter? Send an email to [psychdiversity@ucsc.edu](mailto:psychdiversity@ucsc.edu).

[Past editions of this newsletter are available on our DEI Website.](#)



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