

Summer 2020

“Queer Allyship in APIDA Communities”

Research Study Report

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Overview

Inception

“Queer Allyship in APIDA Communities” was conceived as part of the Asian American Organizing Project’s (AAOP) Summer 2020 Gender Justice Research Cohort. The project was created and implemented by cohort members Haruka Yukioka, Selena Vue, and Siena Iwasaki Milbauer. It was supervised by AAOP staff members Serena Hodges and Vang Xor Xiong.

“Queer Allyship in APIDA Communities” was created as a participatory action research (PAR) project. This means that engagement with community and valuing the voices of community members was a key component of the research process. It also means that turning the results of the research into potential actionable steps was a consistent goal throughout the project. For suggested action steps based on the study’s results, please see the “Future Uses” section of this report.

Project Goals

The main goals for “Queer Allyship in APIDA Communities” were:

- Identify what queer-identifying APIDAs need from their APIDA allies
- Identify what APIDA allies need to become better allies
- Survey and interview at least 20-25 people
- Quantitative portion specifically: Determine general satisfaction of queer APIDAs and APIDA allies with current state of allyship and allyship resource availability in APIDA communities
- Qualitative portion specifically: Provide significant body of qualitative information regarding queer APIDAs’ and APIDA allies’ experiences (notable because of general lack of information on these topics)
- With future actionable steps in mind:
 - Help determine what resources AAOP could create for APIDA allies and queer APIDAs
 - Help guide further research

In the opinion of the researchers, these goals were met through the completion of the project

Study Structure and Execution: Recruitment and Participant Requirements

Recruitment of participants for “Queer Allyship in APIDA Communities” began in late June 2020 and lasted through the middle of July. Recruitment occurred through social media publicization and personal outreach.

Interested participants were asked to complete a [screening survey](#). This was to ensure that participants met the participation requirements for the study. Those requirements were:

- Identify as APIDA (Asian, Pacific Islander, Desi American)
- Identify as LGBTQ+ or as an ally to the LGBTQ+ community
- Be between the ages of 16-24

Interested participants who passed the screening survey by fulfilling these requirements were followed up with by email. They were asked to complete a consent form, a quantitative survey, and to sign-up for an interview slot.

Study Structure and Execution: [Consent Form](#)

The consent form obtained the participant's explicit consent to participation in the study, to have their interview recorded, and to potential future contact from AAOP. Participants who did not wish to have their interview recorded were still able to participate. Participants who did not wish to be contacted in the future by AAOP were still able to participate.

The consent form informed participants that they could cease participation in the study at any time, or elect to skip any questions that they did not wish to complete.

The consent form was completed via google forms.

Study Structure and Execution: Quantitative Survey

The quantitative survey was completed via google forms.

The quantitative survey asked several basic demographic questions, as well as three questions about participants' opinions on the state of allyship and allyship resources in APIDA communities. Questions differed for [queer](#) and [ally](#) participants. The questions were:

For both queer and ally participants:

- What is your name?
- What are your pronouns?
- What is your age?
- Where do you currently live?
- Within the APIDA community, what is your specific ethnic identity/identities?

For queer participants:

- Within the LGBTQIA+ community, what is your specific identity/identities?
- How much do you agree with the statement "As a queer-identifying APIDA, I feel supported by my APIDA community"?
- How much do you agree with the statement "As a queer-identifying APIDA, I am satisfied with the way allyship is practiced within my APIDA community"?

- How much do you agree with the statement "As a queer-identifying APIDA, I am satisfied with the resources available in my APIDA community to educate and inform APIDA allies so they can become strong allies"?

For ally participants:

- How much do you agree with the statement "As an APIDA ally to the LGBTQIA+ community, I feel like my APIDA community supports the fact that I am an ally"?
- How much do you agree with the statement "As an APIDA ally to the LGBTQIA+ community, I am satisfied with how I and other APIDA allies are practicing allyship"?
- How much do you agree with the statement "I am satisfied with the resources available in my APIDA community to educate and inform myself and other APIDA allies to the LGBTQIA+ community so we can be strong allies."?

Study Structure and Execution: Qualitative Interview

The qualitative interviews began in mid-July and lasted through the end of the month. They were conducted via Zoom. Participants were asked to sign-up for a 1-hour slot, but most interviews lasted an average of between 20 and 40 minutes. The interview began with the interviewer (either Haruka Yukioka, Selena Vue, or Siena Iwasaki Milbauer) verbally reviewing the consent form with the participant.

Questions were asked in a set order (as listed below, unless otherwise noted) and unique follow-up questions were asked when appropriate. Questions differed for queer and ally participants. The questions were:

Intro questions for both queer and ally participants:

- Tell me about yourself!
- How do you feel about the state of allyship in the APIDA community?
 - Do you think that allyship is supported in the APIDA community? In what ways yes? In what ways no?

For queer participants:

- How does your APIDA identity interact with your queer identity?
- What do you think the qualities of good allyship are?
- Thinking of APIDA allies you know, what are some examples of the ways you have seen APIDA allies practicing allyship?
 - How do you feel about the ways they practice allyship?
- What do you feel are specific barriers that Asian Americans/APIDAs face when becoming allies?
- What do you need from your APIDA allies? What actions would you like them to take?
- What are some notable experiences or interactions you have had with APIDA allies?

- How did those experiences make you feel?
- What resources would you like to be available to your APIDA allies?
 - What physical resources would you like?
 - What emotional/mental resources would you like?
 - Are there resources that are already available that are important to you?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

For ally participants:

- Why do you personally identify as an ally?
- What do you think the qualities of good allyship are?
- How does your APIDA identity interact with your allyship?
- What do you feel are specific barriers that Asian Americans/APIDAs face when becoming allies?
- Thinking of yourself and other APIDA allies, what are some examples of the ways you practice allyship?
 - How do you feel about the ways you practice allyship?
- What do you think queer APIDAs need from APIDA allies, like yourself?
- What are some notable experiences or interactions you have had as an APIDA ally?
 - How did those experiences make you feel?
- What resources would you like to be available to assist in your allyship?
 - What physical resources would you like?
 - What emotional/mental resources would you like?
 - Are there resources that are already available that are important to you?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Study Structure and Execution: Analysis

Following the completion of all quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the data accumulated was analyzed and prepared for presentation.

For the quantitative data, the answers to the quantitative survey were first organized in a spreadsheet. Then, the most relevant quantitative data was translated into graph form. To read a summary of the findings from the quantitative survey, and to see the graphs displaying that data, please see the “Quantitative Findings: Summary and Key Takeaways”, “Quantitative Findings: Ally Graphs”, and “Quantitative Findings: Queer Participant Graphs” sub-sections.

For the qualitative data, the qualitative interviews were first transcribed. Then, the transcriptions went through a process known as “coding”. In this process, key themes and repeated patterns were discerned. Then, using a data analysis software ([dedoose.com](https://www.dedoose.com)), relevant passages and quotes were highlighted and tagged to specific “codes”, representing those themes and patterns. This gathered all the passages and quotes relevant to a certain topic together, enabling ease of analysis.

Following this coding process, the qualitative data discerned was prepared to be presented 1) through this report and 2) through a series of infographics, meant to be distributable via social media. To read a summary of the findings from the qualitative interviews, and to see the infographics produced, please see the “Qualitative Findings: Summary and Key Takeaways”, “Qualitative Findings: Breakdown of Key Topics”, and “Qualitative Findings: Infographics” subsections.

Study Structure and Execution: Incentives

Each participant that completed all parts of the study (consent form, quantitative survey, qualitative interview) was eligible to be entered into a raffle. Three winners were drawn from that raffle, and those three winners got one \$50 gift card each. In order to ensure fairness and impartiality in this raffle, each eligible participant was assigned a random number, and the random number generator at www.random.org was used to choose the winners. The winners were informed via email, and the gift cards mailed to them at their preferred mailing addresses.

Findings

Participant Demographics

20 participants completed all aspects of the study. Of those 20 participants, 13 were queer, and 7 were allies. Other notable demographic statistics on the study participants are:

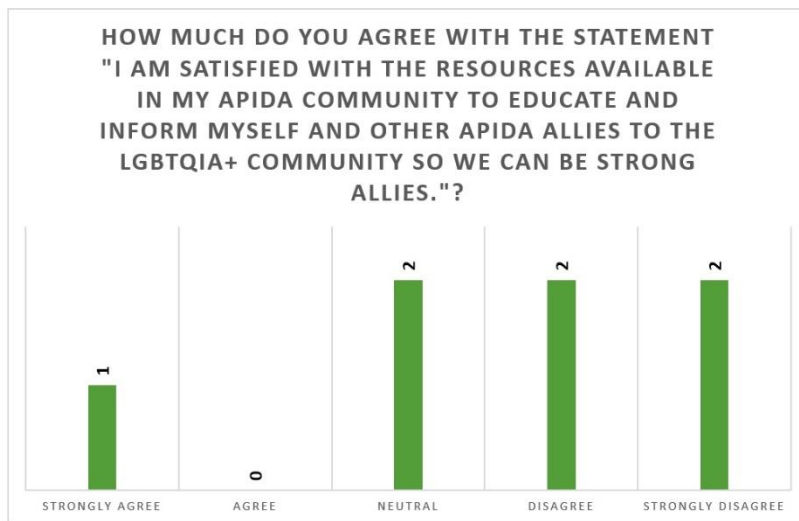
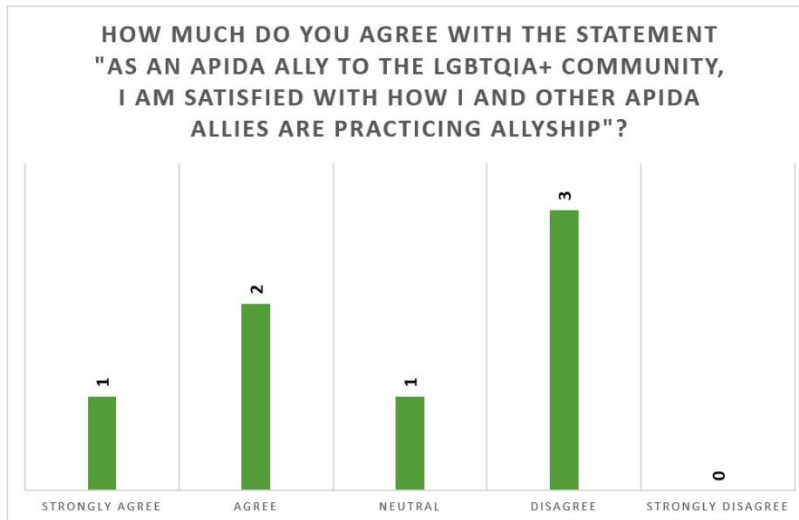
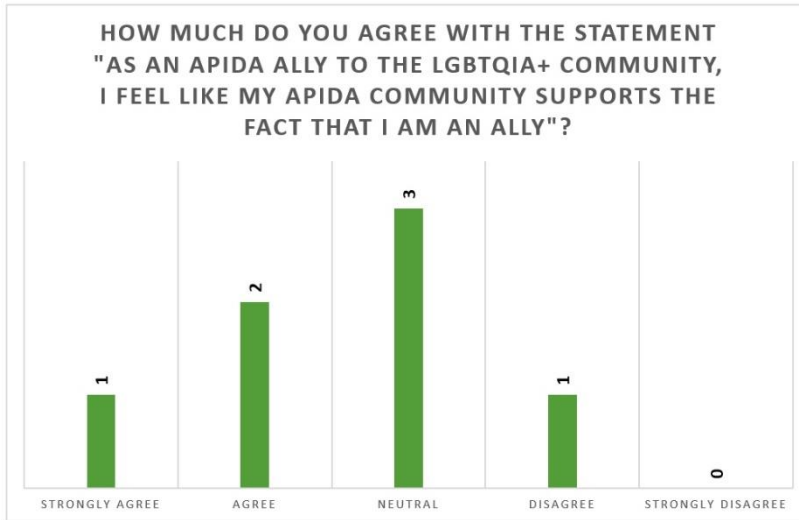
- The age range of participants was 15-24. The average age for participants was 20.
 - *Note: One participant was aged 15. While this technically placed them outside of the required age range for participants, they were turning 16 within a few weeks of their scheduled qualitative interview, so an exception was made.*
- The majority of participants currently lived in the Twin Cities metro area (15 out of 20 participants).
- The participants came from a diverse variety of APIDA communities, including Hmong American (7 participants), Desi American (5 participants), Chinese American (3 participants), Vietnamese American (2 participants), and Filipino American (2 participants). 4 participants identified as bi-racial or multi-racial.
- Queer participants identified with a wide variety of specific LGBTQ+ identities, including Bisexual (4 participants), Lesbian (3 participants), Questioning (2 participants), Non-binary (1 participant), and Pansexual (1 participant).

Quantitative Findings: Summary and Key Takeaways

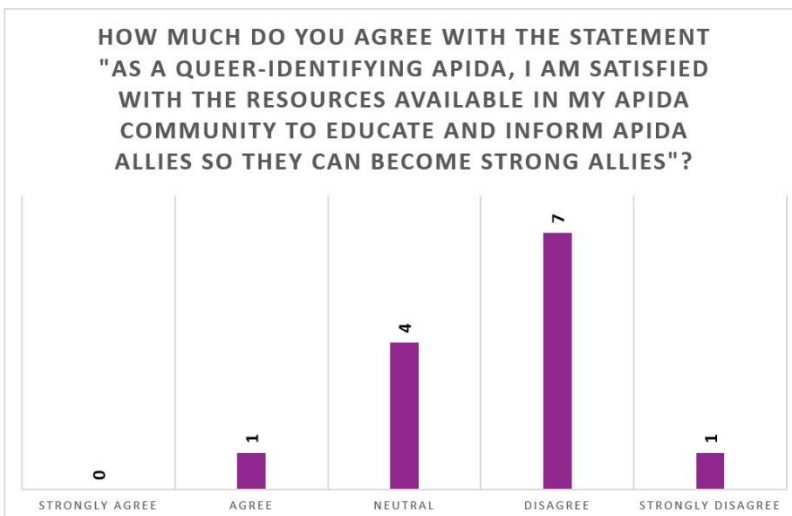
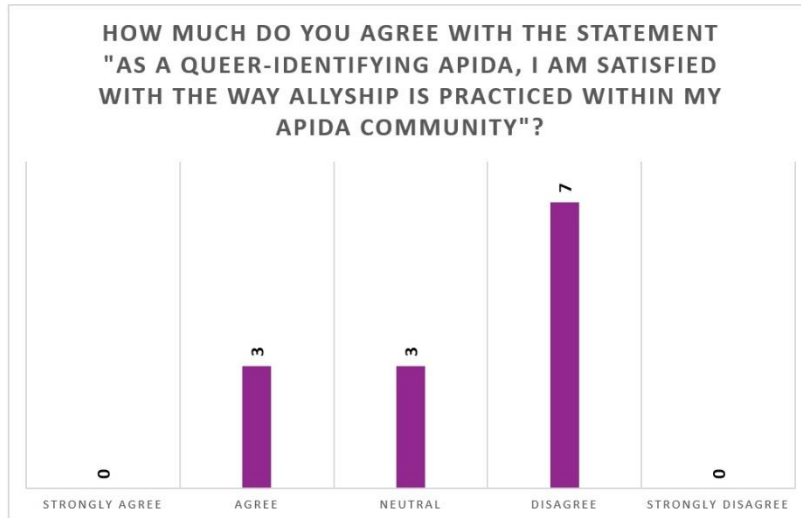
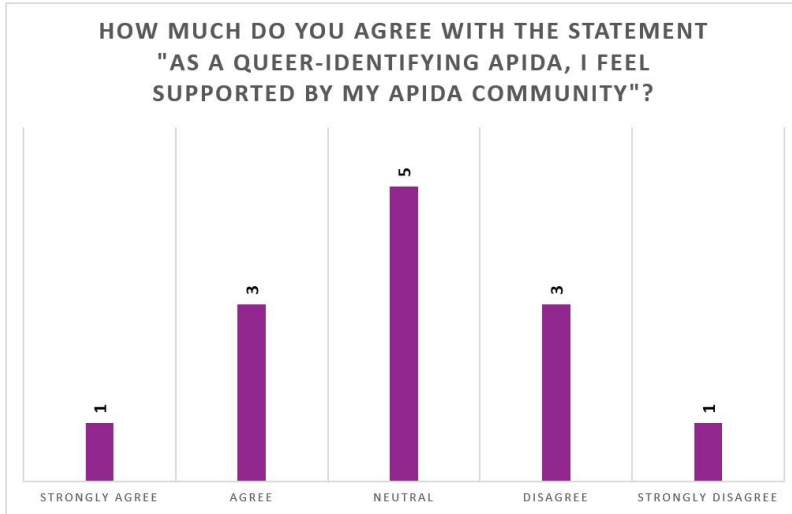
The quantitative findings for “Queer Allyship in APIDA Communities” were culled from the answers to the quantitative survey administered to study participants. Key takeaways are:

- Both ally and queer participants had mixed answers to the question of whether they felt their APIDA communities supported them as allies and queer-identifying people, respectively. Ally participants leaned slightly towards feeling supported, while queer participants were evenly split in feeling supported or not.
- Ally participants were mixed in their satisfaction with how APIDA allies are currently practicing allyship.
- Queer participants were largely unsatisfied with how APIDA allies are currently practicing allyship.
- Both allies and queer participants were largely unsatisfied with the resources available to educate and aid APIDA allies in their allyship towards the LGBTQ+ community.
- Overall, ally participants demonstrated slightly more satisfaction with the general state of allyship in APIDA communities, as compared to queer participants. However, neither ally nor queer participants appeared to be fully satisfied with the state of allyship in APIDA communities.

Quantitative Findings: Ally Participant Graphs



Quantitative Findings: Queer Participant Graphs



Qualitative Findings: Summary and Key Takeaways

The qualitative findings for “Queer Allyship in APIDA Communities” were culled from the answers to the qualitative interview each study participant completed. Key takeaways are:

- Among both ally participants and queer participants, there was widespread dissatisfaction with the current state of allyship in APIDA communities.
 - Many participants did note that there had been improvements in LGBTQ+ acceptance, particularly among younger APIDA folks.
- Ally participants most frequently cited a general distaste for discrimination and having LGBTQ+ loved ones (friends or family) as the motivations for their allyship.
- Queer participants frequently noted a disconnect or even conflict between their APIDA and queer identities, and many expressed feeling isolated because of their intersectional identities.
- When it came to barriers specific to APIDA allyship, the most frequently mentioned were elders, cultural values/traditions/standards, and the need to “save face”.
- Both ally and queer participants often addressed the differences between “good” and “bad” allyship.
 - Frequently cited qualities of good allyship were taking the initiative to educate themselves and others, a willingness to intervene in appropriate situations, listening, and simply being supportive.
 - Frequently cited qualities of bad allyship were relying solely on queer folks for education and information, and behaving performatively.
- The most desired resources for improving APIDA allyship were educational resources, resources on language and vocabulary, and resources specifically for communicating with APIDA families.
 - When it came to the format of these resources, slightly more participants advocated for online/digital resources, but others passionately argued for the value of in-person resources.

Qualitative Findings: Breakdown of Key Topics

Dissatisfaction with state of allyship in APIDA communities

- Almost all participants (≥16) expressed dissatisfaction with the state of allyship in APIDA communities, some even questioning whether it existed.
 - *“...for now I feel like there’s really no allyship and I don’t know how that would look like if there is one.”*
 - *“I think it [allyship in APIDA communities] needs strengthening because I haven’t seen any.”*
 - *“I don’t see a lot of people who are in the Asian community who would identify themselves as being allies or actively want to work on it, or who are open to it.”*

- Even participants who had a more positive view of the state of allyship in APIDA communities felt like there was room for improvement.
 - *“There is a strong presence of good allies, but it’s not strong enough.”*
 - *“I think it [allyship in APIDA communities] feels very like preliminary to me right now. I know that there are like queer Asian folks in the community, etc., like doing really great work and like straight allies too. But like, I don’t know, I don’t really know a ton of people in my circles that are like really active or like even comfortable talking about it”*
- Some participants (≥6) did note that there have been improvements in the state of allyship in APIDA communities, especially among the younger generation.
 - *“I think there’s like a lot of opportunity, like people are open and perhaps ready for taking, like, more steps on allyship. Especially like among younger folks.”*
 - *“...when it comes to people around my age, I think it’s definitely starting to get better.”*
 - *“I think our generation is pretty good at it...”*

Interactions between APIDA and ally/queer identities

- Almost all (≥12) queer participants spoke about the complications of juggling intersectional identities, specifically their APIDA/racial/ethnic and queer identities, and consequent feelings of inner conflict and isolation.
 - *“...it’s been really difficult navigating both my Asian-ness and my queerness. Cause I feel like more often than not, they don’t go hand in hand. There’s a lot of conflict.”*
 - *“...all the people on TV who I see who are gay are white, and you know, that was like typical representation that I had. And that all the people I knew in my community were straight. So, it really, it was extremely, to have those two identities overlap was really an extremely isolating experience.”*
 - *“I think it’s mostly that when I’m in a space that’s like maybe supposed to be for queer students or whatever, it’s oftentimes very white-dominated, so I might not feel safe as like an APIDA, Asian American individual. But when I’m in an APIDA space, I might not feel like I belong there as a queer individual. So it’s kinda like, where is that, there must be somewhere where that gap is bridged.....that’s how I feel about the connection of my identity as an Asian American and as a queer individual...where is my community, do I even have a community, that kind of feeling.”*
- Ally participants noted a general distaste for discrimination (≥4) and having queer-identifying loved ones (≥5) as the most common motivators for their allyship.
 - *“For lack of a better word, I just thought it [being an ally] was common sense....I just think that love is love and I just don’t think, I think that’s really natural and I*

think that [if] people want to be with each other, then they should be and I think that discrimination and the oppression is completely wrong within the history.”

- *“I think growing up and having seen friends who were part of the [queer] community helped me become an ally.”*
- Some participants (≥3) also noted that being part of the APIDA community could make APIDA allies uniquely suited to being effective allies to queer-identifying APIDAs.
 - *“I would say because I’m Asian, I know, of more like, boundaries or limitations or challenges that people in the LGBTQ community can face. Or what stigmas they might go against, or just problems like, that might come because I identify as an APIDA and I know that the [APIDA] community is still not super open to things like that [queerness], so I think I’m more aware and knowledgeable of ideas or things that might come about that is serves as a problem to others.”*

Barriers to APIDA allyship

- The most mentioned (≥12) barrier specific to APIDA allyship was difficulties approaching, standing up to, and/or educating elders in the community.
 - *“The whole age in the Asian community thing can make it really hard to say to an elder like ‘Hey, those are not my pronouns, that doesn’t make me comfortable’”*
 - *“I think the biggest thing I’ve seen is a willingness to call out some people, but not others. And I think this digs deep into respect for elders and respect for parental figures or grandparents or family members.*
 - *“There’s a lot of fear and ignorance around queer identities that a lot of our elders hold. I think that young people might be hesitant to be an ally because of that.”*
- The 2nd most mentioned (≥11) barrier was cultural values/traditions/standards.
 - *“I think it’s difficult for a lot of immigrant families, especially from Asia, to really like understand something like this [queerness] and become open about talking about sexuality and queer support, and in general just the LGBTQ community. Just because a lot of our parents and past generations grew up with very conservative beliefs.”*
 - *“I think specific barriers we face as allies are coming out of our shells and breaking the stereotype of ‘being quiet and to ourselves’ growing up I personally was always told to ‘hold my tongue’”*
- The 3rd most mentioned barrier (≥9) was the need to “save face”.
 - *“I think that our like, culture itself has, is rooted like, so many things are integrated into it where it's like, you really need to save face...”*
 - *“I had a family member who came out as being gay and I remember my mom and my sister-in-law about it and my mom was just like ‘do you know how to delete conversations, like text conversations because I don’t want anyone finding out’ and it just gave me a really weird feeling in my stomach. It’s nothing to be*

ashamed of, but they made it seem as if he did something so bad that nobody could know.”

- Also repeatedly mentioned were toxic masculinity/the historic de-masculinization of Asian American men (≥3), difficulty grasping LGBTQ+ concepts (≥4), the idea of “queerness by association” (≥6), fear of ostracization from an APIDA community as a consequence of allyship and/or queerness (≥6), and the fear of making mistakes and offending the LGBTQ+ community while attempting acts of allyship (≥4).
 - *“But when it comes to gender and self, I don't think that that's as, gender allyship is not really prevalent in the [APIDA] communities. I think a lot of that can stem from traditional gender roles and norms, and a lot of toxic masculinity and patriarchy within the Asian or APIDA community.”*
 - *“Another barrier would be, let's see, just like difficulty with grasping everything. Because, you know, LGBTQ isn't one thing, there are a bunch of different ideas within it, and so really becoming an ally at first might be hard, because there are just so many new things to learn. And that might get people more frustrated and, like they might find that they want to give up or not really show as much importance on the issue.”*
 - *“Aligning yourself with anyone openly and visibly queer can possibly endanger the person who is trying to be an ally. Again, I'm thinking about my brother, and how it's so easy for our parents and grandparents to jump to conclusions and assume that someone is queer or gay just because they support the community. I've seen him go through that before.*
 - *“I think ostracization from community, is a big one [barrier], just because of how ingrained homophobia [is]...”*
 - *“...it's just that I don't want to offend anybody. So I try not to say too much because you know, like, sometimes I get scared like, what if like, you know, like someone from the queer community calls me out for saying the wrong thing or something. So I tend to be kind of cautious whenever I'm talking about like, issues related to the queer community only because I myself don't really 100% know everything that's happening in the queer community, so I tend to be kinda scared sometimes...”*

Good allyship

- The (≥15) most mentioned quality of good allyship was educating themselves and others.
 - *“And I think education is really important, and I think that allies could do a better job in trying to educate their older generation”*
 - *“Like educating yourself can be a huge form of allyship that people don't really recognize because it's kind of more quiet, you know, because you're just doing your own research and learning on your own and figuring out what you can do.”*

- *“I also think having someone who's able to work to understand, like, terminology, and statistics, and really just like work to actively educate themselves. And really, as long as they are telling me that they're trying to learn, and like, allowing me to help them learn, I think that's just the best way that you can be an ally, is just really advocating for learning as much as you can. Because that's where the biggest step, that's where the biggest change occurs.”*
- The 2nd most mentioned (≥14) quality of good allyship was a willingness to intervene in appropriate situations.
 - *“Continuing to step up when it is obvious that people are experiencing discomfort. Especially cis people with the privilege of navigating spaces without damaging their mental health. Stepping up and protecting us [queer folks].”*
 - *“And then I think another thing that is huge as well is not just advocating for them [queer folks], like in their face and agreeing with them, but also behind closed doors. And not accepting certain characteristics of other people who are anti-LGBTQ community, cause I feel like it's very backwards when you say you're an ally or want to be an ally but then you accept other people who do certain things.”*
 - *“I have a friend who, someone made like a kind of homophobic comment and he just stepped in and he was just like "hey, you know what? Come over here, I wanna talk to you. You can't say that" and I could kind of hear them talking but he made sure it was like, private and I kinda just felt this wave of relief coming over me. Cause it wasn't directed at me, but it was still kinda like, oh my god should I say something, is he gonna call me out, like just basically fight or flight reaction of like, what's gonna happen. And then he just stepped in! And just said "hey, you know, we're just gonna talk about this over here" and the wave of relief was just like, oh thank god someone else is stepping in here like, the burden's off of me.”*
- Tied (≥10) for the 2nd most mentioned quality of good allyship was listening.
 - *“...really just listening cause I feel like you know, you can do your research but if you don't really listen to like, the needs and the wants of what a lot of people who are struggling with specific issues, I don't think you'll fully understand the complexity of what is going on.”*
 - *“I think just people who are willing to listen to me, I think, is really important. People who like, really internalize that, instead of brushing it off. Cause I know sometimes when navigating in the APIDA community, like, I feel like, I can't share my attraction to men, or I can't talk about my queer identity at all. So I think something that I really value is that I can like, not just discuss it with someone, but I can like, to see them be really present in that, and to also see them willing to learn from my, like, sexuality, or from my gender expression.”*
- Tied (≥10) for the 2nd most mentioned quality of good allyship was supporting.

- *“But like, in general, allyship I guess, I think being like, a shoulder to lean on, is that the saying? Just like supporting a friend in private, or outwardly...”*
- *“I think for my allies, I would personally like to have them reach out to me more often. I feel like emotional support, at least being a very extroverted person, it's very obvious when I need emotional support, because you can see it on my face, you can see it in my actions. And my friends have done a really good job of reaching out to me when I need it without me having to go and approach them, and I think that has encouraged me to embrace myself and accept myself a lot more.”*
- Also repeatedly mentioned were asking questions/being willing to learn (≥9), embracing uncomfortability (≥4), explicit welcoming and celebration (≥5), inclusion (≥3), knowledge of positionality (≥4), being open-minded (≥3), reaching out privately (≥6), taking action (≥5), being willing to take risks (≥4) and being willing to admit faults (≥3).
 - *“Realizing that it's OK to mess up. And you are going to mess up an understanding that if you do, you need to take responsibility. There has to be accountability and then always learning and changing.”*
 - *“...people who are willing to like actually, like put themselves in like, uncomfortable conversations and try to grow and undo implicit biases.”*
 - *“I think there's kind of this level of like tolerance, acceptance and then celebration. And I think that allyship in general, tends to fall in the tolerance, acceptance range. And I would really love it to fall into the celebration range as well. And like, have people not only being like, oh, OK, you're queer, OK, we'll just kind of put up with it or like, you know, I'll be like, oh, that's, that's cool, and then move on. To like, really celebrating, you know, like everyone in this community.”*
 - *“...I think for allies, a challenge I have for them is like make sure they are being intentional and inclusive to queer folks...”*
 - *“...like admitting there's sometimes like, certain people have privileges. Just acknowledging that you have privilege...”*
 - *“I think good qualities that an ally should have is being open minded.”*
 - *“You don't even need to do, I mean it's great if you can do it, like outwardly, to like public people, but like, man if my mom could just tell me like 'I'm proud of you being gay', that would mean the whole frickin world. That's all I need, you know what I mean?”*
 - *“I think that, like, one thing that I would appreciate from allies is to, like, start paying attention to issues that don't feel like like, pay attention to issues that are like gender and sex related. So like pronouns, for example. Like that's something that I feel like people are definitely like coming around to, but like people don't really like, I think a lot of people just do it and don't know why, or like don't understand the purpose, or like the way that misgendering can be really, really violent. And so, like stuff like that, or like single use bathrooms. And just like*

maybe even like bigger policy issues, like just like paying to those and like, caring about those and advocating those, advocating for policies.”

- *“Because like, in a sense, I may not feel safe speaking up, I may not feel safe to share my experience. So I think that's where I'm asking allies to like, put themselves at risk of like judgement, put themselves at risk of being shunned by the Asian community or the APIDA community, you know.”*
- *“I think a big one is just like being willing to communicate? So if they're like, oh, I don't know XYZ, like asking or especially being able to take criticism or like, correction, which is something I feel like a lot of allies struggle with, which makes them pretty bad allies, because like if they really want to help you, then they want-like they don't know necessarily how to help you. So I feel like the reasonable answer to that question is, "oh, let me ask or like if they tell me I'm doing it wrong, I will listen to them, because that is their lived experience. They probably know better than me." And yeah, I feel like that's what a good ally does. And if they don't do that, that's bad ally behavior.”*

Bad allyship

- Tied (≥9) for the most mentioned quality of bad allyship was relying solely on queer folks for education and information.
 - *“... not forcing your queer friends to do the burden of educating yourself-educating you, because that's-that's a big burden.”*
 - *“I'm in general super wary about having queer people perform emotional labor, letting non-queer allies pick their brains.”*
 - *“Because I don't think all the educating should come from the queer community either. And so, like, just like, you know, like a, like teaching people how to do the mental check of like, oh, how is this question going to land for the other person? You know, how is this question being perceived? And teaching people to be like, you know, is it essential to know whether, you know, my friend's trans boyfriend has a certain genitalia? You know, like, do I need to ask that question to support the relationship? And if the answer is no, then don't ask the question.”*
- Tied (≥9) for the most mentioned quality of bad allyship was behaving performatively.
 - *“A lot of the problems that I find with performative allyship are saying that they're such a great ally. But they're not doing that legwork, not doing that background research...”*
 - *“But, I guess in general I see like a lot of student groups posting things for pride month, or being like we also support our queer brothers and sisters. But sometimes, some of those people, I know they don't actually give a shit but they are like posting it because they know it will look good, I guess.”*
- Also repeatedly mentioned were being uncomfortable around queer folks (≥3), not taking action (≥5), and demonstrating passive acceptance (≥5).

- *“...but the thing I experience the most is alienation. Just ending a relationship with me because they don’t know how to approach me, I’ve had that happen. Discontinuing asking me to go out with them.”*
- *“I post on social media and then I do nothing more. And I just felt like I'm not doing anything like proactive, I'm not doing anything to actually help the problem. Or not even help, just learn about the problems. And so, I realized like, okay, I should probably educate myself and actually practice what I'm preaching on my social media.”*
- *“But I also think that sense of allyship is very limited to all, just like, like you're queer and not really doing anything more so to do that. And just acceptance.”*

Resources

- The most mentioned (≥8) desired resource to improve APIDA allyship was educational resources.
 - *“Definitely lists of like, like educational like, websites, books, videos.”*
 - *“...just having a source that I could go to, like, searching up certain things or what not.”*
 - *“Yeah, so I think right now, issues regarding the LGBTQ community are kinda like, spread out, or you don't really hear about it as much. So I think definitely like, educational resources...”*
- The 2nd most mentioned (≥7) desired resource to improve APIDA allyship was language/vocab resources.
 - *“I think definitely like, kinda what I talked about like, the language, there's like a lot of language I do not understand. And like, I think sometimes, like especially when I was first starting my social justice journey or whatever, I was really like, taken aback by some of the words, the terminology and whatnot, and because I'm so like, kind of cautious about like, terminology that I know it like, draws me away so I don't use specific terminology cause I know it might draw other people away. So I think like, maybe just having like, explaining some terminologies and like, why you might feel the need to like, use certain terminology versus other terminology.”*
 - *“I don't know if you've seen, like, the Letters for Black Lives website, but like, that letter was translated into a bunch of languages. And like, I know that the words for a lot of terms don't exist, like, literally don't exist in some languages. So like that would be challenging, but especially for talking to like older folks or relatives, that might be helpful for people or, or even just like providing it.”*
 - *“I was not aware of pronouns until I started [program redacted]. That was something I didn't think about... I am cisgender and heterosexual so I don’t have to think about how I’m being addressed. Learning about pronouns is something that everyone needs to know.”*

- The 3rd most mentioned (≥6) desired resource to improve APIDA allyship was resources for communicating with family.
 - *“...resources on like, or different tactics on like, how to talk to a family member on certain issues.”*
 - *“...resources on how would you talk to your family about like not saying certain things. Or being homophobic or transphobic to other people, et cetera.”*
 - *“I think resources for families would be super, super helpful. Where there's support for queer children who are coming out, who are coming to terms with their identity, who are working through that and, you know, in term support and resources for their family members to understand and support them in the best way that they can. That's really, keeping in mind the kind of cultural backgrounds and ramifications, you know, that coming out in the APIDA community, or certain subsets of it, might have. A lot, there are of course resources for families of queer children, it's just that I see that a lot of them focus on white families, and don't necessarily have the cultural training or background to deal with families who might be coming from a different place, for children who might be coming from a different place. You know, again I think something like that probably would have made a world of difference for me growing up, and that's something that I would love to see happen, definitely just more resources for families, more resources that will help support queer APIDA children.”*
- Also repeatedly mentioned were resources addressing intersectionality (≥5), ally-specific spaces (≥3), resources to help connect with others with shared identities (≥5), resources for children (≥3), mental health resources (≥4), and workshops focused on improving allyship (≥4).
 - *“And so having resources that are really, really culturally sensitive to individual identities and can be tailored to each community within this kind of wider umbrella of Asian-American, I think would be really helpful.”*
 - *“...there could be more space for allies, just allies, to come together and be like, you know, this is something I asked and I've been wondering about. And maybe other allies would be able to help them say, like, well, I don't think that's an appropriate question to ask the queer community. But like, you know, we can sort of talk about it and talk about like, you know, why do you feel like you need to know that? You know, I think that's another thing that people don't want to unpack is like, you know, psych, well, what's the deeper meaning behind the question? So, I think workshops for just allies and spaces for just allies to come together and talk about, you know, whatever they want to talk about and process and ask questions.”*
 - *“...a group of people who share kinda the same perspective as you, that you can talk to and really open up about things, and then also learn how to be a better ally from them. I think learning how to be a better ally comes from talking to*

people within the community before talking to people who, like, have just been exposed to the community, because I think like, hearing from direct experiences are the best way to learn.”

- *“I think one of the biggest things that I would like, I think would be super valuable, is if we start at a younger age. Whether that's like the education system...”*
- *“...also resources for mental health with that, are big things to have. Because I think mental health is also a big issue within this community that's not talked about, and very stigmatized in the Asian American community. So I think pushing to have those resources available are really important.”*
- *“As a university student, I would like to just see more programs initiated by Asian student groups, specifically about like queer identities, how to be an ally.”*
- Participants had varying opinions about the preferred format for resources, with slightly more (≥ 7) advocating for online/digital, but others (≥ 3) for in-person.
 - *“I think having a lot of knowledge on social media is the most helpful, because that's where people most instinctually go for information, and for updates.”*
 - *“And, so I think like having in-person work being done, where allies can actually sit down with someone face to face, rather than just skimming over something on the internet, you know, that may or may not fully sink into your brain. I think having in-person conversations with other people is incredibly impactful. And yeah, unfortunately that's not possible right now [due to covid], but hopefully in the future, something like that can be. I definitely think that these resources should and need to be in-person.”*

Other Notable Findings:

- It was clear that the Black Lives Matter movement was on people’s minds during their interviews, as many participants (≥ 13) brought up experiences, resources, or concepts of allyship related to the movement.
 - *“Especially with the protests and stuff going. Police targeting queer folks and [unintelligible from recording] having a worst time off if they've been arrested. So just that putting yourself in and physically being a body instead of the other person being arrested is what I've seen [as an example of allyship].”*
- Some participants (≥ 3) noted the impact of colonialism/imperialism on APIDA communities, and how it may have contributed to anti-queerness in those communities.
 - *“And I think when it comes to older parts of the community, that's just a whole different thing to tackle. Because you are really undoing, just generations of ingrained homophobia, of ingrained colonialism, that has completely warped the way that we treat queerness in our culture.”*


Qualitative Findings: Infographics

How do I become a better queer ally?




1
listen to queer and trans people

We are the experts on our own lives, struggles, and identities. You can learn so much just by listening to what LGBTQ+ people share. Understand your positionality as an ally and center the voices of queer and trans people. Don't speak over folks or co-opt the conversation—just listen, validate, and ask how you can support them (and then take action!)




2
be supportive

Being queer and trans in this world is hard, and your support can make a big difference. Every person is different so make sure to ask what kinds of support work for them. Start by listening to people when they talk to you about their experiences. **Maintain confidentiality – outing people can be a huge safety issue.** Be willing to advocate for them if they ask you to do so. Check in every so often to make sure that your actions feel supportive and helpful for them.




3
educate yourself

Do not automatically expect LGBTQ+ people to teach you -- we're not encyclopedias! Becoming familiar with different definitions is a great starting point, as well as learning what you should and shouldn't say. Doing this research yourself shows queer and trans folks around you that you are willing to take the load off of marginalized people. It's okay to ask a LGBTQ+ person a question, but try researching or asking other allies first. Make sure to ask permission, and don't become upset or angry if they say no.




4
educate others

Once you have listened to queer and trans people, started doing your own research, and feel fairly confident in your knowledge, start educating others. **Many cisgender and heterosexual folks are more willing to listen to allies than LGBTQ+ people, so you have an important role to play!** Use your social media to spread informative posts and advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. Try to answer questions that other allies might have. If you hear someone use a slur or make an ignorant or hurtful comment, let them know. And on that note...




5
intervene in the moment

When LGBTQ+ folks hear a homophobic/transphobic comment, it causes many of us to feel distress, fear, and sadness. **It's crucial for allies to step in and intervene,** because odds are that it is safer for an ally to speak up than a queer or trans person. Otherwise, your silence in that moment signifies that you are complicit in our oppression, and LGBTQ+ people will not be able to count on you. Speak up even if you don't think there are queer or trans people present -- it shows people around you that you will not tolerate oppressive behavior.




6
take responsibility when you mess up

None of us are perfect, and we will all make mistakes no matter how hard we try. **When someone calls you out, set any defensiveness or shame aside, and truly listen to what they are saying.** Don't overly apologize or spiral into self-hate: this forces LGBTQ+ people to set their pain aside to comfort you. For many people, taking the time and energy to call someone out is a labor of love, and so is apologizing and taking accountability for the harm you've perpetuated. You'll become a better ally for it.




7
normalize using pronouns

Pronouns are important for everyone, regardless of whether you are cisgender/cis (identify with the gender you were assigned at birth) or transgender/trans (do not identify with the gender you were assigned at birth). Make a habit of introducing yourself with your pronouns and asking others what their pronouns are. Add your pronouns to your social media or email signature. These acts set an example for the people around you and show queer and trans people that you are an ally in all areas of your life.




8
show up

A big part of allyship is showing up and taking action. **We all have different abilities and commitments, so show up in a way that works for you!** If you can go to protests and events, do so. Donate to LGBTQ+ advocacy organizations and contribute to personal fundraisers for queer and trans people. Pay attention to policies and legislation that impacts the community, and contact lawmakers. Avoid patronizing businesses that have harmful practices, like Hobby Lobby and Chick-fil-A. Make sure you practice what you preach!




9
commit to long-term allyship

Allyship is a journey. Undoing societal homophobia and transphobia is a lifelong journey, and we owe it to each other to continue learning and growing. Continue to challenge your own assumptions and biases, and engage those around you in conversations about LGBTQ+ acceptance and advocacy. Keep following LGBTQ+ leaders and content creators. LGBTQ+ people will continue to fight for our rights and acceptance, and **we are counting on you to be there with us.**



Is your queer allyship good enough?


Is your queer allyship good enough?



Is your allyship performative?

Definition: allyship that centers yourself rather than marginalized communities. Often, there are potential social or financial rewards that the "ally" can receive for their support.

- Do you share all of your allyship actions on your social media?
- Do you center your identity as an ally or your feelings when speaking about LGBTQ+ topics?
- Do you regularly interact with LGBTQ+ people in non-activist/allyship settings?



What you can do about it

Why it hurts: performative allies only support the LGBTQ+ community when it benefits them, and fail to do the difficult work that is necessary to enact real change. This false allyship only hurts us and our fight for justice.


- Show up for queer and trans people even when you will not receive any direct benefits or rewards.
- Listen to LGBTQ+ people and don't talk over us. We're the experts on our own lives, and can tell our stories.
- Examine your intentions before posting. Why is it important for other to see? Who is being centered?



Do you rely on queer folks to teach you?

Being an ally to a community that you're not familiar with can mean doing research and asking questions. How are you gathering the information you need to be a strong ally?

- When you have a question about LGBTQ+ issues, do you primarily rely on queer folks to provide an answer?
- Do you only talk about LGBTQ+ issues when you're around queer people?
- If you do need to ask a queer person a question about LGBTQ+ issues, do you offer compensation?



What you can do about it

Why it hurts: queer and trans people should not be treated like dictionaries. Having these conversations often means vulnerability and emotional labor, and doing so constantly is exhausting and adds another layer of difficulty.


- Do your own research. Allies take the burden off of LGBTQ+ people, and constant education is a burden.
- Before asking your question, run through this checklist:
 - Have you exhausted all other options before asking?
 - How might the person you're asking feel?
 - If this is a question about someone's body, do you absolutely need to know the answer?
 - What compensation can you offer this person for their labor?



Is your allyship limited to tolerance?

Tolerance: a permissive mindset, "I allow/put up with this"
Acceptance: an inclusive mindset, "I approve of this"
Celebration: a welcoming mindset, "I honor this"
Allyship is a journey through these stages.

- Do you only use someone's correct pronouns when you're in front of them?
- Do you become uncomfortable when someone brings up LGBTQ+ topics or acceptance?
- Would you be upset or distressed if someone close to you came out as queer or trans?



What you can do about it

Why it hurts: LGBTQ+ people deserve to have their identities accepted and celebrated, rather than simply tolerated. It is really difficult to cope with the feeling that your identity is a burden that others must put up with.

- Start by following LGBTQ+ content creators and listening to them. Active engagement can lead to acceptance.
- Understand that sexuality and gender, much like race, are important and integral parts of people's lives.
- When you feel uncomfortable around LGBTQ+ topics, acknowledge that. Ask yourself why you feel this way.



Do you fetishize queer people?

Definition: the act of reducing marginalized people to a single aspect of their identity. While it's often sexual, fetishization can affect all types of interpersonal relationships.

- Have you ever wanted to have a "gay best friend"?
- Do you see LGBTQ+ people as their sexuality or gender first, and their personhood second?
- Do you want queer friends just so you can go to gay bars or pride?



What you can do about it

Why it hurts: While it's hard to have your identity minimized, it's also hard when our identity is all we are. When our sexuality or gender is obsessed over, you're not interacting with us as people — just as objects of your fixation.

- Examine your stereotypes of queer and trans people. Where do they come from? How are they reinforced?
- Seek out media created by LGBTQ+ people to diversify your view and information sources.
- Engage with LGBTQ+ content creators and identify all the qualities they have beyond queerness or transness.



Resources for queer APIDA allyship

Resources for queer APIDA allyship

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READ

books

Marriage of a Thousand Lies
by S.J. Sindu, fiction

Quarantine
by Rahul Mehta, short stories

This Way to Sugar
by Hieu Minh Nguyen, poetry

Seasonal Velocities
by Ryka Aoki, compilation

Soft Science
by Franny Choi, poetry

Small Beauty
by jia qing wilson-yang, fiction

When Fox is a Thousand
by Larissa Lai, fiction

Women Loving: Stories and a Play
by Jhoanna Lynn B. Cruz, compilation

She of the Mountains
by Vivek Shraya, fiction

Queer Asia: Decolonising and Reimagining Sexuality and Gender
edited by J. Daniel Luther and Jennifer Ung Loh, nonfiction

The Very Inside: An Anthology of Writings by Asian & Pacific Islander Lesbians
edited by Sharon Lim-Hing, anthology

On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous
by Ocean Vuong, fiction

ASIAN AMERICAN ORGANIZING PROJECT

READ

articles

For Asian Americans, coming out in 2019 can still present unique challenges
z.umn.edu/AsianComingOut

LGBTQ Asian Americans Brace for a 'Double Whammy' as Hate Crimes Rise
z.umn.edu/DoubleWhammy

The Midwest as a 'Hmong Queer San Francisco'
z.umn.edu/MidwestHmongQueer

"It gets better," but for Asian Americans, coming out can also get complicated
z.umn.edu/ItGetsBetterAPIDA

The transcendent bissu
z.umn.edu/TranscendentBissu

New analysis shows startling levels of discrimination...
z.umn.edu/TransAPIDAs

ASIAN AMERICAN ORGANIZING PROJECT

LISTEN

podcasts

This QPOC Life - Johnathan Gibbs, Carlos Rios, Zach Ares and Jo Lee
Ep 23 "Navigating Life as a Queer Asian"
Ep 24 "Colorism in the Queer Asian Community"

Nancy - Kathy Tu and Tobin Low
"Hello, Hello"
"We Can't Be Erased"

Queer Asian Podcast Club
"Creating Asian American Culture ft. Author Nishta J. Mehra"
"DIS-ORIENTING with The Queer Arabs"

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WATCH

videos

Our Families: LGBT Asian and Pacific Islander Stories
z.umn.edu/OurFamilies

Asian Parents & Their LGBT Children: On Unconditional Love
z.umn.edu/UnconditionalLove

Exploring The Roots Of Chicago's Queer South Asian Community
z.umn.edu/QueerSouthAsian

The challenge of coming out gay to Asian parents
z.umn.edu/ComingOutChallenge

Family Is Still Family Series
z.umn.edu/FamilyIsStillFamily

I'm Gay | Eugene Lee Yang
z.umn.edu/EugeneLeeYang

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FOLLOW

activists

ALOK | @alokvmenon
Indian American writer, performance artist, and media personality

Eugene Lee Yang | @eugeneleeyang
Korean American producer, filmmaker, YouTuber, and actor

Chella Man | @chellaman
multiracial Chinese American YouTuber, actor, and activist

Schuyler Bailar | @pinkmantaray
multiracial Korean American athlete and activist

Manpreet Singh Virk | @singhisqueer
Punjabi American artist, poet, rapper, and activist

Helen Zia | @helenziareal
Chinese American author, poet, and activist

The Peach Project | @thepeachproject
provides educational resource posts on APIDA identity

The Gaysian Diaries | gaysiandiaries.com
narrative project

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Future Uses

Possible Uses for Findings:

- Share graphs of quantitative data via social media; encourage partners to publicize and share them as well.
- Share infographics of qualitative data via social media; encourage partners to publicize and share them as well.
- Share report with partner organizations, especially organizations that are working on APIDA issues and LGBTQ+ issues. Invite them to keep an open dialogue with AAOP and to potentially participate in future work around empowering queer-identifying APIDAs and strengthening allyship in APIDA communities.

Possible Future Research:

- Conduct poll of a broad swath of APIDA population, asking them if they identify as an ally to the LGBTQ+ community. Would provide quantitative data to backup or disprove this study's participant's assertion that the state of allyship in APIDA communities is poor, and in need of improvement.
- Conduct poll of APIDA allies, asking them what their motivations for being an ally are. Would provide quantitative data to backup or disprove this study's participant's assertion that the most common motivators are a general distaste for discrimination and queer loved ones. Would also provide a road map for potentially motivating new APIDA community members to become allies.
- Conduct research on the specific differences between young APIDAs' and elder APIDAs' attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community. Would provide valuable information that would enable organizations and individuals to better address the apparent generational gap in allyship quality in APIDA communities.
- Conduct qualitative research on people's experiences of being shunned and/or ostracized from APIDA communities due to being queer and/or being an ally. Would provide important information of one of the most extreme but apparently all-too-common consequences of being a queer-identifying APIDA or an APIDA ally. Could be conducted as a de-identified research project, or as a public narrative project.
- Conduct qualitative research on how cultural values and standards in APIDA communities impede activism and progressive social values. Could focus specifically on LGBTQ+ activism, or a broader swath of causes. Could involve a specific research population (e.g. APIDA activists, young APIDAs) or a broader population. Would provide important information on the struggles that, according to this study, APIDAs may face in their communities when trying to advocate for progressive causes.

Possible Action Steps:

- Conduct further research (potential projects indicated above, in the “Possible Future Research” sub-section)
- Develop resources in accordance with this study’s results. These could include, but are not limited to:
 - A list of educational resources catered to APIDA allies (books, films, websites, etc.)
 - The infographic “Resources for queer APIDA allyship” serves this purpose, but could be expanded on
 - A concise list of important LGBTQ+ terms, with definitions
 - Translations of LGBTQ+ terms
 - This could manifest in a project/platform where native speakers of various languages are invited to contribute translations, with AAOP serving as a receiver, organizer, and distributor of those translations.
 - A starter guide to pronouns (correct usage, how to introduce yourself with your pronouns, how to respond appropriately, apologize, and correct if you make a mistake on someone else’s pronouns)
 - A conversation guide for discussing LGBTQ+ identities and topics with APIDA families
 - Specific topics could include how to call family members out on anti-LGBTQ+ language and behavior, how to come out to your APIDA family, etc.
 - Physical and/or digital ally-specific spaces for them to converse, bond, learn from one another
 - A guide intended for children, introducing them to basic LGBTQ+ terms and teaching them how to be supportive to the community
 - Workshops on improving allyship (to be held digitally for now due to COVID, but hopefully can transition to in-person offerings in the future)

Conclusion

Conclusion:

Conducted during the summer of 2020, “Queer Allyship in APIDA Communities” was a research study that sought to investigate the state of allyship in APIDA communities and identify what resources would be most helpful to improve allyship in APIDA communities. Through quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the project yielded informative data on those topics. The findings from “Queer Allyship in APIDA Communities” are important and interesting in their own right, but will also serve as a compelling springboard for further research and actionable steps.

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