

STRENGTHS Lab

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The Strengths Lab aims to examine how marginalized and trainee (psychotherapists in training) populations cope with adversity from a strength-based perspective. Our research aspires to shed light on how negative experiences can be harnessed as opportunities for growth and positive change. Our lab centers on the following two lines of research programs:

- (1) Our research projects aim to examine coping with adversity (e.g., acculturative stress, language discrimination, gendered racial microaggression, acculturative family distancing, intergenerational conflicts, impostor feelings) and mental health outcomes from a strength-based lens or positive psychology outlook among marginalized populations (e.g., BIPOC populations, international student populations, immigrant populations, older adult populations). We aim to advance literature by exploring the mechanisms underlying culturally relevant (e.g., yin-yang perspective, collective self-esteem) and positive psychology concepts (e.g., mattering, self-compassion, resilience) to examine the effects of coping strategies on mental health outcomes (e.g., depression, loneliness, posttraumatic growth, psychological well-being).
- (2) In addition, we are dedicated to examining the strength-based mechanism of coping resources in training and supervision (e.g., supervisory encouragement, supervisory working alliance, self-compassion) to alleviate the negative effect of trainees' experience of adversity (e.g., anxiety in clinical sessions, impostor feeling, concerns about counseling clients of color) on psychotherapy and training/supervision outcomes (e.g., self-efficacy in the clinical work).

Current Research Projects

- Coping with acculturative family distancing and mental health outcomes among Asian American young adults and older adults. Our research explores strength-based and culturally relevant resources as mediators and moderators of the coping process.
- Coping with trainees' anxiety and impostor feelings in clinical work, and counseling self-efficacy. Our research focuses on exploring strength-based resources within supervision as the mediator and moderator variables.
- Developing a strength-based and culturally inclusive framework for enhancing mental health outcomes among older adults, with the implications for training and supervision.
- A scoping review of trainees' beliefs about aging.
- Sense of mattering scale development: (a) trainees' sense of mattering in the clinical work scale; (b) supervisor's sense of mattering scale; (c) Asian American and immigrant older adults' sense of mattering scale.

Lab expectations:

- Attend and actively participate in weekly lab meetings
- Students are expected to be involved in 1-2 research projects collaboratively with Dr. Tsai and lab members. Students will (a) learn and develop competence in research design, literature review, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript writing, (b) present at least one 1st author poster or symposium at a national/international conference, and (c) have opportunities to collaborate on writing manuscripts for publications with Dr. Tsai and lab members.
- Have individual advising meetings with Dr. Tsai (at least 3 times per quarter) to discuss professional development (e.g., crafting a cover letter for practicum applications, practicum interview practice, and career development) and dissertation progress.

How to Apply?

Send the following materials to Dr. Tsai (ptsai@paloaltou.edu):

1. Current CV (Curriculum Vitae)
2. Unofficial transcripts
3. One or two-page cover letter detailing fit with Strengths Lab, in particular, discuss (a) why you became interested in exploring coping with adversity from strength-based perspectives among marginalized populations (e.g., BIPOC populations, international student populations, immigrant populations, older adult populations) and/or trainee population, (b) your past research experience, and (c) your career goals.

Openings:

3 new members will be invited to join the Strengths Lab each year. You may choose to start participating in the lab in the previous Spring or Summer quarter. Interested students are welcome to attend a lab meeting!

Notification: Students accepted into the Strengths Research Lab will be notified by email on the PAU uniform notification date.

Questions?

Please email Dr. Tsai at ptsai@paloaltou.edu

Selected Peer-Reviewed Journal Publications

- Liu, S., Wei, M., Ko, S., Du, Y., Wang, C., He, L., & **Tsai, P.-C.** (2024). Engagement with new possibilities, personal growth initiative, and optimism among East Asian international students. *Journal of Asia Pacific Counseling*, 14(2), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.18401/2024.14.2.1>
- Liu, S., Arterberry, B. J., Wei, M., Tittler, M. V., Wang, C., Klesel, B., & **Tsai, P.-C.** (2024). Exploration and cross-validation for the latent profiles of emotion regulation difficulties among college students. *Motivation and Emotion*, 48(4), 652–672. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-024-10077-y>
- Liao, K. Y.-H., Wei, M., **Tsai, P.-C.**, Kim, J., & Cheng, H.-L. (2023). Language discrimination, interpersonal shame, and depressive symptoms among international students with Chinese heritage: Collective self-esteem as a buffer. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 36(4), 774–795. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2023.2164845>
- **Tsai, P.-C.**, & Wei, M. (2018). Racial discrimination and experience of new possibilities among Chinese international students. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 46(3), 351–378. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000018761892>
- Liu, T., Wong, Y. J., & **Tsai, P.-C.** (2016). Conditional mediation models of intersecting identities among female Asian international students. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 44(3), 411–441. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000016637200>
- Wei, M., **Tsai, P.-C.**, Lannin, D. G., Du, Y., & Tucker, J. R. (2015). Mindfulness, psychological flexibility, and counseling self-efficacy: Hindering self-focused attention as a mediator. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 43(1), 39–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000014560173>
- Wong, Y. J., **Tsai, P.-C.**, Liu, T., Zhu, Q., & Wei, M. (2014). Male Asian international students' perceived racial discrimination, masculine identity, and subjective masculinity stress: A moderated mediation model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 61(4), 560–569. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000038>
- Vogel, D. L., Armstrong, P. I., **Tsai, P.-C.**, Wade, N. G., Hammer, J. H., Efstatthiou, G., et al. (2013). Cross-cultural validity of the self-stigma of seeking help (SSOSH) scale: Examination across six nations. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 60(2), 303–310. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032055>
- **Tsai, P.-C.**, & Wong, Y. J. (2012). Chinese and Taiwanese international college students' participation in social organizations: Implications for college counseling professionals. *Journal of College Counseling*, 15(2), 144–156. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1882.2012.00012.x>
- Wei, M., **Tsai, P.-C.**, Chao, R. C., Du, Y., & Lin, S.-P. (2012). Advisory working alliance, perceived English proficiency, and acculturative stress. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 59(3), 437–448. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028617>

- Wei, M., Chao, R. C.-L., **Tsai, P.-C.**, & Botello-Zamarron, R. (2012). The concerns about counseling racial minority clients scale. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 59(1), 107–119. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026239>

Selected Professional Presentations

*Denotes Graduate Student Collaboration

- Lee, B. #, Reyna, M. #, & **Tsai, P.-C.** (2026, January 28-30). Healing from historical trauma -intergenerational resilience among Asian and Latine communities. [Round table presentation]. National Multicultural Conference & Summit, Seattle, WA, United States.
- **Tsai, P.-C.**, Wei, M., Liu, S., Huo, H. #, Candalla, A. #, Zhang, S. #, & Yaggahahewage, P. # (2025, August 7-9). Development and validation of a self-soothing scale. [Poster presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Convention, Denver, CO, United States.
- **Tsai, P.-C.** (2025, August 7-9). Empowering older adults—A strengths-based and culturally inclusive framework for mental health. [Poster presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Convention, Denver, CO, United States.
- Huo, H. # & **Tsai, P.-C.** (2025, August 7-9). Acculturative stress and depression among Chinese Immigrants: The role of forbearance coping. [Poster presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Convention, Denver, CO, United States.
- Liu, S., Wolf, J. & **Tsai, P.-C.**, & Shao, J. (2025, August 7-9). Experiences of Non-native English-speaking faculty in the U.S. [Poster presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Convention, Denver, CO, United States.
- Liu, S., Ejadi, G., **Tsai, P.-C.**, & Favela S. (2024, June 8). Cultivating emotional resilience: A polyvagal approach to addressing emotion regulation challenges in college students. [Poster presentation]. Bay Area Affective Science Meeting. Berkeley, CA, United States.
- Gray, B. #, Leake, V., Pierce, T., **Tsai, P.-C.**, Barfield, S., & Riding-Malon, R. (2023, August 3-5). Where literacy and stigma meet: Barriers to mental health help-seeking for Appalachian women. [Poster presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Convention, Washington, DC, United States.
- James, C. #, Pierce, T., **Tsai, P.-C.**, & Steele, J. (2023, August 3-5). Effects of sexual attitudes and age-related stigma on sexual behaviors in older adults. [Poster presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Convention, Washington, DC, United States.
- Siebach, E. # & **Tsai, P.-C.** (2023, August 3-5). COVID-19 stressors, posttraumatic growth, and depression: The roles of rumination and distress disclosure. [Poster presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Convention, Washington, DC, United States.
- Thelen, C. #, & **Tsai, P.-C.** (2022, August 4-6). Impostor phenomenon and career outcomes among women in STEM: The role of encouragement and research self-efficacy.

[Poster presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Convention, Minneapolis, MN, United States.

- Cain, A.[#], James, C.[#], Love, A.[#], Chung, A.[#], Cohn, T. J., & **Tsai, P.-C.** (2022, August 4-6). Implementing telehealth in rural communities under HRSA GPE Grant- Lessons learned from trainees and program. [Poster presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Convention, Minneapolis, MN, United States.
- **Tsai, P.-C.**, Michon, P., Źabińska, A., Jackson, P., & Sirgy, M. J. (2021, August 23-27). Testing the effectiveness of a well-being intervention program in Poland. [Poster presentation]. International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies Conference.
*The first two authors contributed equally.
- **Tsai, P.-C.** (2021, August 12-14). Embedding project-based learning in teaching undergraduate psychology. In Burleson, Y.-A. (chair). Classroom examples in enhancing multicultural humility--Student and instructor's perspectives. [Symposium]. American Psychological Association Annual Conference.
- **Tsai, P.-C.**, Wong, Y. J., Wang, S.-Y., & Li, Y. (2021, August 12-14). Development and validation of a Supervisory Encouragement Scale. [Poster presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Conference.
- Thelen, C.[#] & **Tsai, P.-C.** (2021, August 12-14). Probable ways to navigate the “storming” stage of the group work. In Burleson, Y.-A. (chair). Facilitating effective group work in teaching applying stages of Yalom. [Symposium]. American Psychological Association Annual Conference.
- Baker, H.[#] & **Tsai, P.-C.** (2021, August 12-14). Gendered racial microaggression and East Asian American women's body esteem. [Poster presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Conference.
- Harris, K.[#] & **Tsai, P.-C.** (2021, August 12-14). Experiences of gendered racial microaggressions and well-being among Black women in graduate school. [Poster presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Conference.