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Member Spotlight: Cindy H. Liu

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Faculty Page

During the 2023 Biennial Meeting, Dr. Liu received the **Outstanding Contributions to Research on Asian/Asian American Award** presented by the SRCD Asian Caucus. This award recognizes a scholar who has made outstanding and unique contributions to research on Asia/Asian American families and children.

Why did you decide to choose Developmental Science as a course of study or career?

From an early age, I was fascinated by people - why they did what they did, and why they held whatever opinions they had. As a kid, I would give out surveys to visitors who came to the house - an early effort to quantify data. Having a sister that was 10 years younger, I got to witness firsthand how kids developed and

get an early peek at the developmental “stages” that I would learn later in college. I started off as pre-med and an engineering major at the University of Minnesota but quickly realized that being an engineer was not for me. I took my first psychology course, during which the professor for child development, Andrew Collins, showed a bunch of videos of infants. This was when I realized that one could have a career watching videos and analyzing children and families! I immediately changed my major to developmental psychology.

Do you have a mentor or mentors who have been instrumental in your career and, if so, who and how?

There are so many people that have inspired me, but these are just a few of the senior mentors I’ve had across different disciplines. My postdoctoral mentor, Ed Tronick, modeled for me what it looks like to stay curious and to innovate in research. My postdoctoral director Martha Shenton demonstrated to me the importance of being thorough, direct, but also loyal and thoughtful towards others. My late mentor Larry Seidman, an early psychosis researcher, held a high standard for ethics and taught me discipline and timeliness, and was a wonderful example of fairness and compromise in his collaborative work. My former department chair Terrie Inder, a neonatologist, was unafraid to roll up her sleeves, and modeled savvy leadership that emanated generosity and humanity. All of them readily withheld judgment while providing the scaffolding that I needed for my personal and professional growth.

What advice would you give to a Graduate student beginning their Ph.D. studies in Developmental Science or related?

I’m going to go with providing some practical advice that I wish I had gotten. Grad school isn’t the end all, be all. While it may have been your goal to get into graduate school, your next immediate goal is to prepare for getting a job after graduation. Know what it takes to get there! Explore, learn, and engage with different ideas or activities but keep in mind that you’ll need to prepare for getting a job and if it’s in academia, you’ll want some record of teaching and publications. Get advice from grad students or recent grads who are on the job market to learn more. And of course, make sure you and your mentor are on the same page about what is involved.

What is your favorite social media platform (if you have one) and why?

I’m highly visual and therefore like to browse Instagram. I love photos and videos and checking out all the latest trends in food, fashion, and travel (although I’m not necessarily prone to indulging in them myself). I suppose it’s consistent with my curiosity about people and culture. A lot of what comes up for me pertains to

Asian experiences including Asian food (like cute bento boxes or innovative ramen restaurants in Japan). I curate funny and interesting posts involving animals or recipes, and I watch them with my kids.

What are some of your hobbies?

I actually watch a good deal of television and gravitate towards anything that has to do with action or espionage. People are also often surprised to hear that I enjoy watching sports, particularly football, having grown up in the Twin Cities (go Vikings!) and having lived in New England for 15 years (go Patriots!). In the spring, summer, and fall, I hang out on the sidelines throughout the week, watching my kids play baseball and soccer.

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