

Saumya Arora, Ph.D.

(she/they)

CURRENT POSITION

Pacific Lutheran University

September 2026 – Present

Assistant Professor of Psychology (Tenure-Track)

- Undergraduate courses taught:
 - Clinical Psychology 1: Mental Health and Psychological Disorders
 - Introduction to Psychology

EDUCATION

University of Tennessee (UTK), Knoxville, TN

Awarded August 2025

Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology (APA-Accredited)

Advisor: Kirsten A. Gonzalez, Ph.D.

Dissertation: Optimal Practices for Supporting QTBIPOC Clients in Therapy: A Therapeutic Dyad Study

GPA: 4.0

University of Tennessee (UTK), Knoxville, TN

Awarded May 2021

Master of Arts in Psychology

Advisor: Kirsten A. Gonzalez, Ph.D.

Thesis: “There Are Not a Lot of Providers Who Look Like Me”: Identity and Therapy for Sexual Minority Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color”

GPA: 4.0

University of Minnesota (UMN), Minneapolis, MN

Awarded December 2017

Bachelor of Science in Psychology, Minor in Sociology

Graduated with High Distinction

GPA: 3.95

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Qualitative methodologies; access to mental health services for queer and/or trans Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (QTBIPOC); QTBIPOC experiences in therapy; South Asian mental health; advocacy through research.

PUBLICATIONS

Arora, S., Dua, V., Kler, S., Jain, K., & Gonzalez, K. A. (2026). “Sexuality is a topic that should not be discussed”:

South Asian cultural experiences of sexual orientation. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*.

Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000915>

Arora, S., Gonzalez, K. A., & Yang, W. (2025). “I’m someone who makes sense to my therapist, without me needing

to contort myself”: a therapeutic dyad study with QTBIPOC clients and their therapists. *Journal of Counseling*

Psychology. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000822>

Kler, S., Sahu, A., Chwalisz, K., & **Arora, S.** (2025). The Intergenerational Trauma Experiences and Healing (ITEH)

model for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (LGBTQ+ BIPOC)

individuals. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000809>

Dua, V., Szymanski, D. M., Gonzalez, K. A., & **Arora, S.** (2024). If not us, then who? QTBIPOC graduate student

researchers’ experiences researching QTBIPOC communities. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. Advance

online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000621>

Goates, J. D., Harris, A., & **Arora, S.** (2024). 2024 Report: Student Affiliates of Seventeen (SAS). *The Counseling*

Psychologist, 52(8), 1406-1417. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00110000241291855>

Arora, S., & Goates J. D. (2023). 2023 report: Student Affiliates of Seventeen. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 51(8), 1171–

1180. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00110000231211511>

- Abreu, R. L., **Arora, S.**, Gonzalez, K. A., & Rivera, D. P. (2022). Resisting colonization in higher education and empowering LGBTQ+ students: Mobilizing toward liberation. In D. P. Rivera, R. L. Abreu, & K. A. Gonzalez (Eds.), *Affirming LGBTQ+ students in higher education* (pp. 203–210). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000281-013>
- Arora, S.**, Gonzalez, K. A., Abreu, R. L., & Gloster, C. (2022). “Therapy can be restorative, but can also be really harmful”: Therapy experiences of QTBIPOC clients. *Psychotherapy*, 59(4), 498–510. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000443>
- Gonzalez, K. A., **Arora, S.**, Abreu, R. L., & Rivera, D. P. (2022). Introduction: A call to action for affirming all LGBTQ+ students in higher education. In D. P. Rivera, R. L. Abreu, & K. A. Gonzalez (Eds.), *Affirming LGBTQ+ students in higher education* (pp. 3–14). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000281-001>
- Kler, S., **Arora, S.**, & Le, T. P. (2022). Validation of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) Among LGBTQ+ People of Color. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481756.2022.2109174>
- Singh, A.A. & **Arora, S.** (2022). South Asian American Sexuality and Supporting LGBTQIA+ Clients. In U. Dunlap, D. Srivastava, & N. Tewari (Eds.), *Counseling South Asian Americans: Psychological and Clinical Implications*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003081548-7>
- Abreu, R. L., Gonzalez, K. A., **Arora, S.**, Sostre, J. P., Lockett, G. M., & Mosley, D. V. (2021). “Coming together after tragedy reaffirms the strong sense of community and pride we have.” LGBTQ people find strength in community and cultural values during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 10(1), 140–149. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000516>
- Gonzalez, K. A., Abreu, R. L., **Arora, S.**, Lockett, G. M., & Sostre, J. (2021). “Previous resilience has taught me that I can survive anything.” LGBTQ resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 8(2), 133-144. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000501>

PEER-REVIEWED PRESENTATIONS

- Kler, S., **Arora, S.**, Gamio Cuervo, A., Torres, A.μ, & Anant, N.~ (2026, Sept 24-27). A COSMIN Scoping Review of Existing Measures of Intergenerational Trauma and Historical Trauma. [Poster Presentation]. California Psychological Association Annual Convention, Sacramento, CA, United States.
- Cook, K.D., **Arora, S.**, & Chang, Y.J. (2026). *Cultivating critical consciousness in abnormal psychology Courses: Preparing students as change agents*. Poster session accepted for the 2026 Annual National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology, Point Clear, AL, United States.
- Arora S.**, Kler, S., & Gonzalez, K.A. (2022). “In real life, fluidity is not accepted by the community”: South Asian cultural messages on gender and sexuality. Poster session accepted for the American Psychological Association 2022 Convention, Minneapolis, MN, United States.
- Arora S.**, & Gonzalez, K.A. (2021). “I’ve never experienced effective therapy before”: Identity and therapy for sexual minority Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color. Poster session accepted for the American Psychological Association 2021 Convention, San Diego, CA, United States.
- Lockett, G. M., Sostre, J.P., Mattevi, N. J., **Arora, S.**, Gonzalez, K. A., Abreu, R. L. (2021, August). *COVID-19 Impacts on and Protective Factors for LGBTQ Communities*. In A. Randall (Chair), LGBTQ Resilience and Covid-19 Pandemic. Symposium accepted for the American Psychological Association 2021 Convention, San Diego, CA
- Sostre, J., Lockett, G. M., DePecol, Z., **Arora, S.**, Gonzalez, K. A., Abreu, R. L. (2021). *LGBTQ+ community values and their impact on LGBTQ+ individuals’ reactions to covid-19*. Poster session accepted for the American Psychological Association 2021 Convention, San Diego, CA, United States.
- Gonzalez, K. A., **Arora, S.**, Koech, J. M., Pulice-Farrow, L., & Abreu, R. L. (2020, August). “I love it and hate it at the same time.” Gender differences in reactions to the #MeToo movement. Presented at the American Psychological Association Convention, Washington, D.C, United States.
- Pulice-Farrow, L., Koech, J. M., **Arora, S.**, Gonzalez, K. A., & Abreu, R. L. (2020, August). “I am not interested in sharing my story with strangers.” Factors contributing to the disclosure of a #MeToo story. Presented at the American Psychological Association Convention, Washington, D.C, United States.
- Arora, S.**, Gonzalez, K. A., & Abreu, R. L. (2020, April). “Believing oppressed people about their oppression.” Reflections about allies by LGBTQIA+ People of Color. Counseling Psychology Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, United States. (Conference canceled due to COVID-19).

Kler, S., Domínguez Jr., S., & **Arora, S.** (2020, April). Supporting QTBIPOC individuals in research, reaching, and practice. Counseling Psychology Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, United States. (Conference canceled due to COVID-19).

Gonzalez, K. A., & **Arora, S.** (2019, September). Unseen and underserved: An analysis of wellness support services for bisexual People of Color and Indigenous People on U.S. campuses. OUTstanding Conference, Knoxville, TN, United States.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

The ReSIsT (Research on Social Intersections at Tennessee) Lab, UTK

August 2019 – Present

Research Team Member

Principal Investigator: Kirsten A. Gonzalez, Ph.D.

- Project Title: QTBIPOC therapeutic dyad study
 - *Role:* Co-PI
 - *Tasks:* Design study, collect data via individual interviews, verify transcripts, analyze data, manuscript writing
- Project Title: QTBIPOC experiences in therapy
 - *Role:* Co-PI
 - *Tasks:* Designed study, collected data via individual interviews, verified transcripts, coordinated with research assistant, analyzed data, wrote manuscript
- Project Title: South Asian perspectives on gender and sexuality
 - *Role:* Co-PI
 - *Tasks:* Designed study, collected data via online survey, coordinated with internal and external collaborators, analyzed data, wrote manuscript
- Project Title: White supremacy in counseling psychology
 - *Role:* Research Assistant
 - *Tasks:* Analyzed data using grounded theory, assisted in manuscript writing

Gordon Couples Research Lab, UTK

November 2022 – April 2023

Research Assistant

Principal Investigators: Zahra Amer, M.A. & Kristina Gordon, Ph.D.

- Project Title: 2nd-generation South Asian immigrant perspectives on dating, marriage, and bicultural identities
 - *Role:* Research Assistant
 - *Tasks:* Assisted in data analysis using grounded theory

TEACHING INTERESTS

Clinical/counseling psychology (psychopathology, intervention, counseling skills); multicultural psychology and counseling; introduction to research methods; qualitative research methods; psychology of sexuality; psychology of gender; Asian American psychology.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Department of Psychology, UTK

January 2024 – May 2024

Pre-Practicum Coordinator; Graduate Teaching Assistant

Course: PSYC 568 - Pre-Practicum in Counseling Skills

- Conducted multiple intakes to identify clients for pre-practicum counseling psychology doctoral students
- Provided group supervision to six pre-practicum counseling psychology doctoral students, under the supervision of counseling psychology faculty member
- Facilitated role-plays to develop and strengthen trainee counseling skills
- Reviewed recorded sessions to evaluate student's therapeutic competencies

Department of Psychology, UTK

August 2023 – December 2023

Lab Instructor; Graduate Teaching Associate

Course: PSYC 294 - Research Methods in Psychology Laboratory

- Taught course material on psychology research methods for a total of 46 students (split across two sections)

- Developed and facilitated classroom activities, including demonstration of study procedures
- Graded student assignments and provided constructive feedback
- Provided one-on-one support and mentorship to students

Department of Psychology, UTK

March 2022 – May 2022

Intergroup Dialogue Facilitator

Course: PSYC 235 - Intergroup Dialogues

- Facilitated six-week dialogue with diverse group of undergraduate students to encourage their development of critical consciousness on race, class, and gender

Department of Psychology, UTK

January 2021 – May 2021

Lab Instructor; Graduate Teaching Associate

Course: PSYC 294 - Research Methods in Psychology Laboratory

- Taught course material on psychology research methods for a total of 40 students (split across two sections)
- Developed and facilitated classroom activities, including demonstration of study procedures
- Graded student assignments and provided constructive feedback

Department of Psychology, UTK

August 2020 – December 2020

Discussion Section Leader: Graduate Teaching Assistant

Course: PSYC 110 - General Psychology

- Taught and reviewed introductory psychology course material for a total of 45 students (split across two sections)
- Developed and facilitated engaging activities
- Graded student assignments and provided constructive feedback

Department of Psychology, UTK

January 2020 – May 2020

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Course: PSYC 440 - Introduction to Organizational Psychology

- Assisted primary instructor with student learning and course outcomes
- Served as point of contact for student concerns and queries
- Graded student assignments and exams
- Administered exams and course activities

Department of Psychology, UTK

August 2019 – December 2019

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Course: PSYC 110 - General Psychology

- Provided students with resources and materials relevant to the course
- Collaborated with primary instructor to design assessment tools
- Graded student assignments and exams
- Proctored exams

CLINICAL INTERESTS

BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ populations and related concerns, identity development, acculturation and assimilation, family-of-origin concerns, spirituality and existentialism, relationship issues, trauma, liberation.

SUPERVISED CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Student Counseling Services, Northeastern Illinois University

August 2025 – August 2026

Postdoctoral Fellow/Specialist

- Reviewed client information and conducted weekly intake interviews
- Provided weekly individual, couples, and group therapy to an ongoing caseload of 18 clients
 - Reviewed client progress using CCAPS on Titanium and adapt treatment plans

- Provided weekly individual and group supervision to doctoral student externs
- Performed administrative tasks and wrote progress notes

Counseling Center, University of Illinois-Chicago

August 2024 – August 2025

Doctoral Intern (APA-Accredited Predoctoral Internship)

- Reviewed client information and conducted intake interviews
- Provided weekly individual psychotherapy to an ongoing caseload of 11 to 13 clients
 - Reviewed client progress using CCAPS on Titanium and adapted treatment plans
- Co-facilitated weekly interpersonal process group
- Provided supervision to one advanced extern and participated in weekly supervision of supervision
- Participated in weekly multicultural seminar
 - Presented multicultural case conceptualization
 - Provided feedback to peers
- Collaborated with Gender and Sexuality Center
 - Co-facilitated queer and trans drop-in support space with counseling center senior staff member
 - Developed a mental health resource list for queer and trans students
- Performed administrative tasks and wrote progress notes

Counseling Services, Pellissippi State Community College

August 2023 – May 2024

Practicum Therapist

- Reviewed client information and conduct intake interviews
- Provided weekly individual psychotherapy to an ongoing caseload of 6 to 8 clients
- Engaged in weekly outreach with students, including in classroom settings and student community spaces
- Performed administrative tasks, wrote progress notes, and engaged in treatment planning

Student Counseling Center, UTK

July 2021 – June 2023

Graduate Assistant Therapist

- Conducted intake interviews and 3-4 brief assessment/triage appointments each week
- Provided bi-weekly individual psychotherapy to an ongoing caseload of 20 to 30 clients
- Delivered couples therapy to 7 couples using Emotion-Focused Couples Therapy and the Gottman Method
- Facilitated Students of Color support group
- Performed administrative tasks, wrote progress notes, and engaged in treatment planning
- Reviewed client progress using CCAPS on Titanium
- Provided feedback to colleagues via group supervision

Department of Psychology, UTK

January 2023 – May 2023

Peer Supervisor

- Provided supervision to one pre-practicum counseling psychology doctoral student by utilizing a humanistic-relationship model
- Wrote progress notes for each supervision session
- Presented supervision case conceptualization to determine areas for growth
- Provided feedback to colleagues via group supervision

Department of Psychology, UTK

April 2021

Group Facilitator (Single Outreach Event)

- Provided psychological and affirming support to Knoxville community members following a school shooting
- Delivered relevant resources to community members
- Received supervision and implemented feedback

Student Counseling Center, UTK

August 2020 – May 2021

Practicum Therapist

- Reviewed client information and conducted intake interviews
- Provided weekly individual psychotherapy to an ongoing caseload of 10 to 16 clients
- Facilitated workshops and case presentations
- Used CCAPS to assist in treatment planning
- Delivered feedback to colleagues via group supervision

Department of Psychology, UTK

February 2020 – May 2020

Pre-Practicum Therapist

- Provided individual counseling to one undergraduate volunteer client
- Presented case presentations of client conceptualizations
- Delivered and received clinical feedback
- Engaged in administrative tasks and wrote progress notes

SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Student Affiliates of Seventeen, American Psychological Association

August 2022 – August 2024

Executive Board Co-Chair/Tri-Chair

- Led and facilitated the process for UTK to serve as the next host institution of Students Affiliates of Division 17 (APA), and consequently assisted in transition to fully national model
- Assisted in revision of bylaws, budget plan, thematic pillars, and board composition
- Collaborated with Society of Counseling Psychology executive board to communicate needs, concerns, and updates
- Directed biweekly board meetings to receive and communicate updates
- Reviewed and supported activities of all pillars and committees
- Held processing space for fellow counseling psychology students

Phyllis Wheatley Center, YWCA Knoxville

August 2021 – May 2022

Social Justice Practicum Volunteer

- Developed and conducted a needs assessment to establish organizational needs and aspirations
- Analyzed results from needs assessment to design an intervention that addresses needs reflected by PWC
- Developed and facilitated structured lesson plans on wellness strategies to youth
- Reported progress and updates to site supervisors
- Implemented feedback from supervisors to enhance efficacy of developed intervention

Student Affiliates of Seventeen, American Psychological Association

August 2020 – August 2022

Justice & Equity Co-Chair

- Created social justice, advocacy, and equity-centering programming for Student Affiliates of Division 17 (APA)
- Designed and facilitated healing and wellness-oriented groups
- Collaborated with other board members to provide support and implement feedback
- Attended biweekly board meetings to communicate updates with executive board and other members

The Counseling Psychologist

October 2021 – December 2021

Mentorship Program Application Review Committee Member

- Reviewed applications to The Counseling Psychologist's Mentorship Program
- Communicated feedback on applicant strengths, areas of growth, and fit with the Mentorship Program's mission
- Collaborated with committee members to create ranking of applicants and determine consistency of the program

HONORS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Special Recognition of Leadership	2024
Society of Counseling Psychology (APA Division 17)	
Psychology Outstanding Graduate Research Award	2023
Department of Psychology; University of Tennessee, Knoxville	
Social Justice Scholarship	2021 - 2022
Trauma Therapy Certificate Program; Trauma Institute & Child Trauma Institute	
Graduate Fellowship	2019 - 2023
Department of Psychology; University of Tennessee, Knoxville	

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Division 17 - Society of Counseling Psychology, APA	August 2020 – Present
American Psychological Association	August 2019 – Present
Asian American Psychological Association	August 2020 – August 2026