Biographical Data and Platform Statements

2024 Candidates

BOARD MEMBER (3 POSITIONS)

Rashmi Gangamma, PhD (She/Her/Hers)

My educational foundations in Psychiatric Social Work in India, and my subsequent education, research, teaching, practice, and leadership in MFT in the United States inform my social justice lens in family systems therapy. I believe that we, as family systems therapists, have a unique responsibility to promote relational healing and authentic dialogue, especially in contexts of systemic oppressions, disruptions, intergenerational trauma, and profound grief. This belief has been a guidepost in my work with individuals and families with experiences of complex traumas of forced displacement and systemic, identity-based oppression.

Collaboration, relationship building, and an openness to diverse, multiple perspectives define my work as a scholar, faculty member, and a program director. For instance, during my tenure at Syracuse University, I led a team of graduate students and partners in academia and community agencies to establish co-located family therapy services for resettled refugees, strengthen curriculum to increase therapist competencies, and conducted interdisciplinary research with implications for shifting refugee resettlement policies.

In my current role as a program director of a newly accredited CFT program at the University of Colorado, Denver, I work similarly, collaborating with faculty and university administrators to better support our students, increasing our program's recognition, and advocating for resources in these challenging times in higher education.

Recent advances through the tireless work of Family Team and AAMFT leadership have led to increased access and recognition at national levels. I am optimistic about our future directions and will work hard towards further fulfilling our strategic vision to enhance our profession's reputation, parity, and ensure rigorous education and training. As your board member I will also work to amplify diverse, minoritized voices in guiding the future trajectory of our profession.

(I) PRESENT PROFESSIONAL POSITION

- Program Director, Couple and Family Therapy program, University of Colorado, Denver. 2022 – Present.
- Associate Professor, Couple and Family Therapy program, University of Colorado, Denver. 2022 – Present.

(II) MOST RELEVANT PAST PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS (WITHIN THE LAST 7 YEARS)

- Graduate Director, PhD program in Marriage and Family Therapy, Department of Marriage and Family Therapy, Syracuse University. 2021- 2022.
- Associate Professor, Department of Marriage and Family Therapy, Syracuse University. 2018-2022.
- Assistant Profession, Department of Marriage and Family Therapy, Syracuse University. 2012-2018.

(III) AAMFT MEMBERSHIP: PAST AND PRESENT PARTICIPATION IN AAMFT, INCLUDING TOPICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC INTEREST NETWORKS

American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), 2005- Present.

- Member, Margins to Center, Cultural Connections among C/MFTs. 2020- Present.
- Member, Queer and Trans Advocacy network, 2020 – Present.
- Member, Intervention Research in Systemic Family Therapy, 2020 – Present.
- Member, Rocky Mountain Interest network, 2022- Present.

Mentor, Minority Fellowship Program, American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, 2019.

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(IV) PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (Activities should be directly linked to the position and should demonstrate the skills needed for the position. Please refer to the list of competencies and skills for the position)

Past and present activities, projects, or publications (limit 3) that are evidence of leadership skills, experience integrating information, working towards consensus, and decision-making skills.

I have presented at various national and international conferences, conducted workshops for non-profits, K-12 teachers, as well as mental health professionals on topics of contextual therapy theory and refugee mental health. Most of these presentations have involved graduate students I mentored.

Examples of professional presentations:

- Gangamma, R. Invited keynote. Restoring and enhancing fair connections at the margins: A contextual view of the LGBTQ+ migrant experiences. International Conference on Contextual Therapy. Long Beach, California. May 2023.

- Gangamma, R., Su, Z., Le, A-K., & Lucena, C. A scoping review of factors promoting mental health in LGBTQ migrants. National Council on Family Relations (NCFR), Annual conference, Minneapolis, MN, November 2022.

- Gangamma, R., & Tor, S. Experiences of trauma in resettled refugee families, HopePrint staff retreat, January 2019.

Examples of Publications:

- Gangamma, R., Walia, B., Minkoff-Zern, L. A., & Tor, S. (2024). Role of Gardening in Mental Health, Food Security, and Economic Well-Being in Resettled Refugees: A Mixed Methods Study. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, *12*(1), 3-18. https://doi.org/10.1177/23315024231216112

- Gangamma, R., & Tor, S (2022). Need for collaboration between psychotherapists and spoken language interpreters in work with resettled refugees: Lessons from a training program. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling and Psychology.* *Doi:* doi.org/10.33043/JSACP.14.2.25-34

- Gangamma, R. (2018). A phenomenological study of family experiences of resettled Iraqi refugees. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 44(2),* 323-335. https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.12251.

Examples of other professional activities:

- Site Visitor, Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE), 2021 -Present.

- Co-Chair of scientific program for the International Conference on Contextual Therapy, Budapest, Hungary, 2021. 2019- 2021.

- Member, Accreditation Reviewer Program, Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education. 2018-2020.

- Secretary/Treasurer, Family Therapy section of National Council on Family Relations (NCFR). 2014-2016.

- Member, National Council on Family Relations (NCFR). 2004 – 2023

- Member, American Academy of Family Therapy (AFTA), 2023 – Present.

- Mentor for Early Career professionals, American Family Therapy Academy, 2023-2024.

- Editorial board member, Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 2016 -2024.

(V) COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION: Past and present activities demonstrating knowledge of and commitment to social justice and systemic science.

In addition to my scholarship and clinical practice with minoritized populations, my commitment to social justice is demonstrated through my involvement in various service activities. For nearly ten years, I provided free family therapy services at Syracuse University's Couple and Family Therapy Center, working with clients mostly from low-income backgrounds.

BOARD MEMBER (3 POSITIONS)

Following are other examples:

Member, LGBTQ+ Faculty Council, University of Colorado, Denver, 2023 – Present.

- I represent the Denver campus on this Faculty Council working closely with campus- wide university administrators to develop and implement inclusive policies for faculty and staff.

Member, Research to policy collaboration, Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center, Pennsylvania State University, 2019-2020.

- The Research to Policy collaboration is a platform connecting researchers with policy makers via meetings and policy briefs. As part of their initial cohorts, I advocated for policies promoting mental health in immigrant and refugee families.

Board member, Refugee and Immigrant Self- Empowerment (RISE), Syracuse, NY. 2018-19.

- RISE is a non-profit community agency serving the needs of low-income, resettled refugee families. As a board member, I was involved in building support for staff to ensure retention, fund-raising, and developing psychoeducational activities to promote mental health.

(VI) RELEVANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION – Optional (up to five sentences)

You may choose to identify and/or describe parts of your background which may include the following: work setting (e.g., private practice, academia, agency, community health, government), home location (e.g., rural, urban, suburban), region (e.g., US state, international), any other relevant demographic information (e.g., age, ethnicity/race, gender, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual affiliation, ability, immigration status, languages spoken.

My commitment to advancing social justice in mental health is driven by my own intersectional identities of being a queer-identified immigrant of color in the United States as well as my privileges earned through formal education, employment, and ability to access and understand most sources of knowledge in our field.