

# NISHA GUPTA

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA

## CONTACT

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University of West Georgia  
109 Front Campus Drive  
Melson Hall  
Carrollton, GA 30118

## PORTFOLIO

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[www.nishagupta.org](http://www.nishagupta.org)  
[www.phenomenologicalart.com](http://www.phenomenologicalart.com)

## EDUCATION

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### Ph.D.

in APA-accredited Clinical Psychology program  
Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA  
Department of Psychology  
Degree awarded: 2018

### Dissertation:

"Illuminating the Trauma of the Closet among Sexual Minorities: A Cinematic-Phenomenological Study of Existential Rights"

[www.illuminatethecloset.com](http://www.illuminatethecloset.com)

### M.A.

in Counseling for Mental Health and Wellness  
New York University, New York, NY  
Department of Applied Psychology  
Degree awarded: 2012

### B.S.

in Psychology and Communications, Cum Laude  
New York University, New York, NY  
Steinhardt School of Education  
Degree awarded: 2006

## BIOGRAPHY

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I am a **liberation psychologist** and **arts-based phenomenological researcher** who disseminates research findings about people's lived experiences of oppression and empowerment through artistic formats for the purposes of social advocacy and sociocultural healing. My work as a researcher, artist, and educator seeks to disrupt cultures of silence, evoke empathy and compassion, initiate dialogue, and build solidarity across difference. My arts-based phenomenological research projects include: "**illuminate**" a phenomenological short film about the lived experience of being in the LGBTQ closet; and "**DESI EROS**," a series of surrealist folk art paintings about the lived experience of reclaiming erotic power among women from the South Asian Diaspora. At UWG, I launched the "**Phenomenological Art Collective**," a research and creative arts lab through which I teach students to disseminate phenomenological research to the public through the expressive arts. I was also trained clinically as a psychotherapist for eight years, with a focus on trauma therapy and liberation psychotherapy with queer people of color.

## SPECIAL RECOGNITION & AWARDS

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Distinguished Dissertation Award, American Psychological Association (APA) Division 5 of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods, 2020

Distinguished Dissertation Award in the Humanities, Duquesne University, 2019

Top three finalist for International Institute for Qualitative Methodology's PhD Dissertation Award, 2019

Award winner of "best special effects," "best soundtrack," and "most artistic" for "illuminate" short film, Colorado International Activism Film Festival, 2018

Dissertation Fellowship Award (\$15,000), Duquesne University McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts, 2018

University-Wide Graduate Teaching Award, Duquesne University McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts, 2017

Psychology Department Teaching Award, Duquesne University McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts, 2017

Graduate Assistantship Award, Duquesne University McAnulty Graduate School of Liberal Arts, 2012-2017

## TEACHING

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**Assistant Professor of Psychology, Tenure-Track**  
**Department of Psychology, Anthropology, and Sociology**  
**University of West Georgia**  
**Carrollton, GA**  
**2018—present**

### Graduate courses taught

Liberation Psychology  
Mind-Body Studies  
Psychology and Filmmaking  
Explorations into Creativity  
Research Workshop 2

Reader, Britney Gedler (Ph.D. dissertation in progress).  
"Coming in: A poetic inquiry."

Reader, Peder Schillemat (M.A. exit interview, 2020).  
"Framework for liberation teaching in a first-year course."

Reader, Brian Patrick Harris (M.A. exit interview, 2020).  
"Untitled."

Advisor, Deedra Climer Bass (M.A. independent study, 2020).  
"Maternal bereavement: An autoethnography."

Advisor, Larissa McPherson (B.S. honors thesis, 2020).  
"Processing trauma: Art therapy and expression of the inner world."

Advisor, Rose Dessaint. (Ph.D. independent study, 2019).  
"Liberation psychology and healthcare policy: What is the meaning of life and death from those in hospice care?"

Advisor, Holly Gibson (M.A. independent study, 2019).  
"Bittersweet memory: A phenomenological virtual reality simulation of Alzheimer's & dementia."

Advisor, Isabel Tweedle and Lori Jordan Fountain (Ph.D. independent study, 2019). "Merleau-Ponty and phenomenological filmmaking."

Advisor, Olivia Basant (B.S. independent study, 2019). "What is the lived experience of gender dysphoria among youth?"

### Undergraduate courses taught

Liberation Psychology  
Culture and Psychology  
Social Psychology  
Theories of Psychology  
Psychology as a Human Science  
Explorations into Creativity

### Student work supervised

Chair, Marta Stefanyshyn: (Ph.D. dissertation in progress).  
"Embodying signature character strengths and realizing potential in social situations: An arts-based phenomenological research study"

Chair, Alison Hall (M.A. thesis in progress): "The lived experience of #metoo stories: A poetic-phenomenological study"

Chair, David Wise (M.A. thesis in progress): "Queer people's lived experiences of leaving religion and finding spirituality"

Chair, Holly Gibson (M.A. thesis, 2020): "Exploring the meaningful aspects of BDSM sexuality through existential-humanistic theory."

Chair, Theo Holt (Ph.D. dissertation, 2019). "Black undergraduate students' experiences of thriving at a predominantly White institution: A photovoice study"

Chair, Toyosi Pius (M.A. thesis, 2019) "1st and 2nd generation immigrants' experiences of assimilation to American culture: A phenomenological research study"

Reader, Lisa Watts (Ph.D. dissertation in progress).  
"Incorporating a mental health approach in parent-child sexual health education: An exploration of parental perspectives before and after a psychosexual health education intervention."

**Doctoral Student Course Instructor**  
**Department of Psychology**  
**Duquesne University**  
**Pittsburgh, PA**  
**2013—2016**

### Undergraduate courses taught

Introduction to Psychology  
Social Psychology  
Psychology of Cultural Diversity and Social Justice

## RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

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### Current research projects

“DESI EROS: An arts-based phenomenological study of reclaiming erotic power among women from the South Asian diaspora,” digital publication available on [www.desieros.com](http://www.desieros.com)

“Film as Sociocultural Therapy:” Co-editor of special issue of *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, currently in progress with anticipated publication in 2021

### Publications in peer-reviewed journals

Gupta, N. (2020). Teaching phenomenological research as a method of therapeutic art-making: A Covid-19 case study. *Qualitative Methods in Psychology Bulletin*.

Gupta, N. (2020). Illuminating the trauma of the LGBTQ closet: A cinematic-phenomenological study and film about existential rights. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*.

Gupta, N. (2020). Singing away the social distancing blues: Art therapy in a time of coronavirus. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, Special issue on Covid-19*.

Gupta, N., Simms, E., and Dougherty, A. (2019). Eyes on the street: Photovoice, liberation psychotherapy, and the emotional landscapes of urban children. *Emotion, Space and Society*.

Gupta, N. (2019). The phenomenological film collective: Introducing a cinematic-phenomenological research method for social advocacy filmmaking. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*.

Gupta, N. (2018). Harnessing phenomenological research to facilitate conscientização about oppressive lived experience. *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology; Special issue: Radical Humanism, Critical Consciousness, and Social Change*.

Gupta, N. (2018) Stories of faith, stories of humanity: Fusing phenomenological research with digital storytelling to facilitate interfaith empathy. *Special Issue of Qualitative Research in Psychology: Creative Representations of Qualitative Research*.

Gupta, N. (2017). Exploring the schizoid defense of the closet through the existential-phenomenology of R.D. Laing. *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. 5(2), 170-189.

Gupta, N. (2015). The cinematic chiasm: Evoking societal empathy through the phenomenological language of film. *Janus Head: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature, Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology, and the Arts*, 14(2), 35-48.

### Book chapters

Gupta, N. (submitted). Finding God in the bedroom: The sacred goodness of sexual pleasure. *Eros and Psyche: Humanistic and Existential Approaches to Sex and Sexuality*. University Professors Press.

### Non peer-reviewed publications

Gupta, N. (2020). Covid-19 art therapy: Transforming trauma into beauty. *Covid Action Network*.

Gupta, N. (2016). Phenomenological research meets social advocacy filmmaking. *The GPPA Report: The Official Newsletter of the Greater Pittsburgh Psychological Association*.

### Art exhibitions and publications

BIPOC & DESI Queer Art Exchange 2.0. (February 2021). Title of Painting Series: "DESI EROS".

LACPA's Virtual Art Exhibition: Mirrors of the Mind: The Psychotherapist as Artist in a Time of Coronavirus. (November 2020.) Title of Painting: "She."

Black Iris Gallery (November 2019). Group exhibition on Eco Martyr Portraits: Faces of the Slain, curated by Richard Bargdill, Ph.D. Richmond, VA. Title of painting: "Archad Ayao."

Muses & Vices Magazine (October 2019). Special edition issue on Erotic Joy. Title of painting; "The Moment of Surrender."

Colorado International Film Festival (July 2018). Film screening and award winner of best special effects, most artistic, and best soundtrack in the documentary genre. Title of short film: "Illuminate."

### Research labs

Phenomenological Art Collective, University of West Georgia (2018 — present): Launched arts-based phenomenological research lab to teach and mentor UWG psychology students to disseminate phenomenological research to the mainstream public through the expressive arts such as film, dance, visual arts, poetry and music: [www.phenomenologicalart.com](http://www.phenomenologicalart.com)

Placelab Research Group, Duquesne University (2015 — 2017): Senior doctoral research assistant in a qualitative research lab engaged in participatory action research with local communities in Pittsburgh. Duties included: developing and facilitating research projects, collecting and analyzing data, authoring papers for publication, consulting with peer researchers and community leaders, and mentoring undergraduate students in lab.

## PRESENTATIONS AND MEDIA APPEARANCES

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### Conference presentations

Gupta, N. (2021, April). "DESI EROS: A decolonizing study of South Asian women's experiences of reclaiming of erotic power through surrealist folk art." Society for Psychological Anthropology Virtual Conference.

Gupta, N. and Fountain, L.J. (2021, March). "Phenomenological Art as a Vehicle for Women's Liberation," The Association of Women in Psychology Virtual Conference.

Gupta, N. (2020, May). "Therapeutic filmmaking: Theory and Practice." Narrative Matters 2020 Conference. Atlanta, GA. Conference cancelled due to coronavirus.

Gupta, N., Fountain, L.J., Tweedie, I. (2020, June). "Introducing the Phenomenological Film Collective: Three Film Screenings." International Human Science Research Conference. Pace University: New York, NY. Conference cancelled due to coronavirus.

Gupta, N. and Visse, M. (2020, June). "Aesthetic Phenomenological Research: Theories and Methods." International Human Science Research Conference. Pace University: New York, NY. Conference cancelled due to coronavirus.

Gupta, N. (2019, March). "Illuminating the LGBTQ Closet through Phenomenological Filmmaking: A Cinematic-Phenomenological Research Study and Film Screening." APA Division 32 Society for Humanistic Psychology Conference. Oregon State University: Corvallis, OR.

Bargdill R., Crouch, C., and Gupta, N. (2019, March). "Phenomenology as Creative Practice and Play: A Workshop" APA Division 32 Society for Humanistic Psychology Conference. Oregon State University: Corvallis, OR.

Gupta, N. (2018, June) "Eyes on the Street: Using Photovoice as a Tool for Emotional Empowerment and Community Trauma Healing among Youth." International Human Science Research Conference: Spartanburg, SC.

Jenkins, J., Gruner, D., and Gupta, N. (2018, May). "Research as Sociopolitical Intervention." Society for Qualitative Inquiry in Psychology (SQIP) Conference, Pittsburgh, PA.

Gupta, N. (2017, August). "The Intergenerational Trauma of the Gay Closet: Healing Familial Bonds of Shame." APA Convention, Washington D.C.

Gupta, N. (2017, April). "Building Intimate Dialogue within the Multicultural College Classroom: Guideposts from Liberation Psychology." APA Division 32 Society for Humanistic Psychology Conference: Point Park University, Pittsburgh, PA.

Gupta, N. (2016, October). "Nightmares of the Closet Across the Generations: A Psychoanalysis of Intergenerational LGBTQ Trauma." Association for Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society Conference, Rutgers, NJ.

Gupta, N. (2014, October). "Exploring the 'Social Pathology' of Closeted Gay Individuals through the Existential-Phenomenology of R.D. Laing." The Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences Conference: New Orleans, LA.

Gupta, N. (2013, August). "Stories of Faith, Stories of Humanity: Disseminating Phenomenological Research through Digital Storytelling to Facilitate Interfaith Empathy." International Human Science Research Conference: Aalborg, Denmark.

### Invited speaker

Gupta, N. and Simms, E. (2021, March). "Eyes on the Street: Photovoice as liberation psychotherapy." Invited speaker for virtual presentation at the Center for Community-Engaged Teaching and Research, Duquesne University. Pittsburgh, PA.

Gupta, N. (2018, December). "Disseminating human science research to the mainstream public for hope of liberation: An invitation." Invited Keynote Speaker for the 12th Annual Undergraduate Qualitative Research Symposium, Point Park University: Pittsburgh, PA.

### Media interviews and appearances

The Roadside "Creating Commune" Conversations. (2021): "Interview with Dr. Nisha Gupta" Interview about liberation psychology approaches to community-building through public art.

Community Building Art Works "United Against Silence" podcast. (2021): "Episode 2: Nisha Gupta" Interview about depth and phenomenological approaches to the creative process.

The Brown Taboo Project podcast (2021): "Episode 2: Decolonizing and Reclaiming the Erotic with Dr. Nisha Gupta."

UWG News (2020): "UWG Takes Over 'The Academic Minute': Psychology Professor Discusses Empowerment from Sexual Oppression"

The Academic Minute podcast and WAMC radio segment (2020): "Art and Social Advocacy"

Martha Stewart Magazine (2020): "How to cope with loneliness during times of social distancing."

We Are Moving Stories (2018): "illuminate: a cinematic poem about being in the closet. Interview with Director Nisha Gupta."

Art with Impact (2018): "AWI Exclusive Interview with Nisha Gupta, filmmaker behind the short 'illuminate'."

## UNIVERSITY SERVICE

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### **Psychology Program Service University of West Georgia**

M.A. Committee member, 2020-present

Diversity and Inclusion in Curriculum Design organizer, 2020

Ph.D. Committee member, 2018-2020

Psychology Department website re-design supervisor, 2019

Faculty search committee member, 2018

Departmental mission and vision contributor, 2018

### **University Service University of West Georgia**

Diversity Committee, 2021-present

Faculty Senator, 2020-2021

Institutional Planning Committee member, 2020-present

Becoming UWG Strategic Planning stakeholder, 2020

Center for Diversity and Inclusion Anti-Racism Webinar Series co-facilitator, 2020

### **University Service Duquesne University**

Center for Teaching Excellence mentor, 2016

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

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### **Society for Qualitative Inquiry in Psychology (SQIP):**

Communications Chair and Executive Committee member, 2020-present

### **APA Division 5 Qualitative and Qualitative Methods:**

member, 2020-present

### **APA Division 32 Humanistic Psychology:**

member, 2020-present

**Journal of Humanistic Psychology:** member of Editorial Board, 2020-present

## INVITED PEER-REVIEWER

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*Journal of Humanistic Psychology*

*Qualitative Inquiry*

*Lesbian and Gay Mental Health*

*Frontiers in Psychology*

## PROFESSIONAL CONSULTATION

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**Queer South Asian Womxn's Network:** therapy workshop facilitator for queer South Asian community, 2021

**Women in eDiscovery:** invited panelist for dialogue about prioritizing mental health during the pandemic for women who are working professionals, 2021

**South Asian Sexual and Mental Health Alliance:** art therapy workshop facilitator for South Asian community, 2021

**Community Building Art Works:** art therapy workshop facilitator for veterans and healthcare providers, 2021

**Ad Council and COVID Collaborative:** consumer research and campaign strategy consultant for nationwide Covid-19 Vaccine Education campaign, 2020:  
[www.covidcollaborative.us](http://www.covidcollaborative.us) and [getvaccineanswers.org](http://getvaccineanswers.org)

**Natwest Group:** Invited speaker for corporate mental health and wellness event, 2020

**Lyftd:** invited panelist for dialogue about navigating relational trauma in intimate relationships, 2020

**Re:Imagine ATL:** trauma consultant for youth therapeutic filmmaking non-profit organization, 2018

**Psychology Confluence Alliance:** invited panelist about intersectional feminism in Pittsburgh, 2016

**Vox Populi:** co-editor and website developer of literary e-zine, 2016

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

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**University of West Georgia's COVID-19 Hopes and Challenges collection:** invited consultant for Covid-19 photovoice project for the UWG community, 2021

## PSYCHOTHERAPY TRAINING

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**American University Counseling Center  
Doctoral Clinical Intern  
Washington D.C.  
2017–2018**

Completed APA-accredited clinical internship program with 2000 pre-doctoral internship hours. Provided individual psychotherapy to undergraduate and graduate students with diverse, intersecting, cultural identities. Integrated psychodynamic, relational-cultural, mindfulness, and liberation psychology approaches to therapeutic work. Conducted outreach projects, i.e. a self-care kit for student activists; a needs assessment for gay, bi, and questioning men of color students; and Woman of Color Empowerment and Healing Circle for women of color students. Conducted crisis interventions and intake assessments. Supervised doctoral practicum students in psychodynamic therapy. Co-facilitated process-oriented group therapy. Attended didactic seminars and conducted case presentations. Collaborated with campus partners.

**Persad Center  
Clinical Practicum Trainee  
Pittsburgh, PA  
2015-2016**

Provided individual psychotherapy to members of the LGBTQ and HIV/AIDS communities. Attended didactic seminars to acquire cultural competence working with sexual and gender minorities. Co-led an LGBTQ support group regarding authenticity, vulnerability, and shame. Helped brainstorm ways to adapt CBT trauma-focused therapy for the LGBTQ population. Conducted crisis interventions, treatment planning, and intake assessments. Referred clients to physicians for hormone treatment and psychiatric consultation.

**Children's Art and Talk (CHAAT) Group Counseling Program (Sponsored by Duquesne University Psychology Clinic and The Center that CARES) Student Psychotherapist  
Pittsburgh, PA  
2015**

Co-facilitated a six-week art therapy program for pre-adolescent African-American kids residing in a low-income neighborhood of Pittsburgh, in collaboration with local artists of color. Art projects incorporated African and African-American heritage via drum-making, mask-making, and quilt-making. Used collaborative art-making to facilitate community pride, positive relationships, and emotional vulnerability between kids.

**Duquesne Psychology Clinic  
Graduate Student Clinician  
Pittsburgh, PA  
2012–2016**

Provided individual and couples psychotherapy to diverse, adult residents of Pittsburgh. Presenting problems included: grief, PTSD, panic attacks, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, identity issues, sexual issues, family/relationship distress, sociocultural/community trauma, and academic concerns. Conducted diagnostic and personality assessments and consulted with on-site psychiatrist.

**Baruch College Counseling Center  
Psychotherapy Extern  
New York, NY  
2011–2012**

Provided individual psychotherapy to undergraduate and graduate college students. Integrated cross-cultural approaches with psychodynamic psychotherapy regularly with first-generation immigrant and international students at one of the most predominantly international universities in the United States. Delivered case presentations and participated in individual and group supervision. Consulted with a team of psychiatrists, academic and career advisors, and supervisors with diverse theoretical orientations.

**Women & Children's Art Therapy Circle: Seva Mandir Shortstay Home (as part of NYU's Art Therapy Graduate Program and the Foundation for Sustainable Development) Art Therapy Intern  
Udaipur, India  
2011**

Co-facilitated daily, art therapy group sessions for women and children of a local Indian village who had endured domestic violence. Developed multicultural sensitivity working within a Rajasthani and Hindu context.

## ADVERTISING AND MEDIA WORK

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**The Village Productions**  
**Researcher and Strategy Consultant**  
**New York, NY (remote)**  
**2020**

Helped develop strategies for the 2021 Ad Council's COVID-19 Vaccine Education nationwide public health campaign, an initiative in collaboration with the CDC, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and multiple other scientific and medical institutions. Duties included reviewing research about vaccinate hesitation and developing multimedia strategies to create cultural dialogue and education about vaccination. Campaign can be viewed at [www.covidcollaborative.us](http://www.covidcollaborative.us) and [getvaccineanswers.org](http://getvaccineanswers.org)

**Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising**  
**Strategic Storyteller/Planner**  
**New York, NY**  
**2007–2010**

**Youth Connection Consumer Insights:** Conducted ethnographic research among youth demographic (ages 5-18) to develop consumer insights. Produced digital media content to creatively express insights to youth brand marketing clients (General Mills, JCPenney). Collaborated with creative directors to design advertising campaign strategies and executions.

**Circle of Respect Anti-Bullying Campaign:** Helped develop advertising strategy for a national, multimedia anti-bullying intervention launched by the National Crime Prevention Council to diminish bullying behaviors among children and adolescence.

**Together Counts Healthy Living Campaign:** Helped develop advertising strategy for a national anti-obesity intervention to promote healthier lifestyle habits among parents and children. Campaign was pitched to Michelle Obama to be considered for her “Let’s Move” initiative.

**BBDO Worldwide**  
**Assistant Account Executive**  
**New York, NY**  
**2006-2007**

Worked in account management on the global Oral-B business, and conducted research to inform strategic planning innovation for Sony and Fedex-Kinkos.