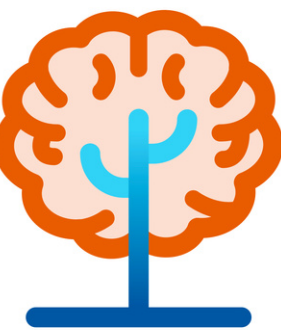


# The Strategic Leader as **Host**: Building **Connection** and **Collaboration** in Polarized Times

**Nitin Deckha, PhD**

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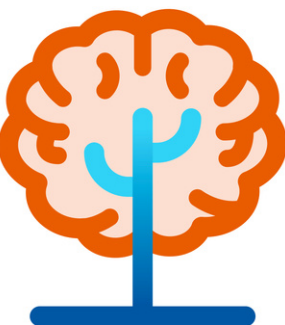
Accelerated technological  
disruption

Growing inequality and  
polarization

Impacts of  
climate change

Misinformation, distrust and  
cynicism

**What can a leader do  
to foster connection  
and collaboration?**



# We can strategically:

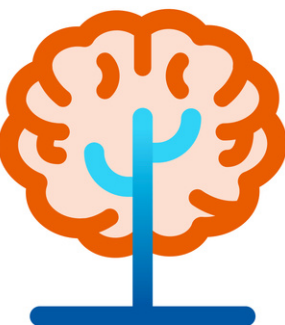
**Lean into  
cultural values  
of hosting and  
hospitality**



**Activate  
Host  
Leadership**



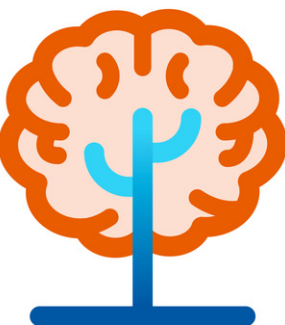
**Spark  
connection  
and  
exchange**



**We can activate our ability to be a host**

**We can draw from our interconnected experiences of being a host, a guest and a stranger**

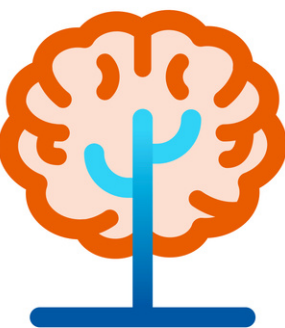
**Instead of **xenophobia** (fear of strangers), we might consider the ancient Greek word (**philoxenia**), which means “love of strangers, eagerness to show hospitality”**



# Leaning into Asian cultural values, hosting and hospitality traditions

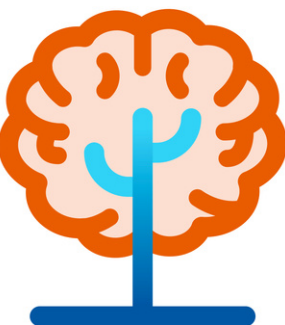
According to research on Asia's hospitality industry  
key Asian cultural values include:

- **collectivistic worldview**
- **care, concern and respect for others**
- **humility and service-mindedness**
- **attention to verbal and non-verbal cues**



# Explore hosting as a cultural form

- Anthropologist Adam Yuet Chau calls hosting:
- “ritual staging of host-guest interactions for particularly important sociopolitical and ritual occasions (e.g. funerals, weddings, the Olympic Games, etc.)”



# Examining cultural assumptions of hosting



According to Yuet Chau:

Underlying assumptions in Chinese rituals of hosting are:

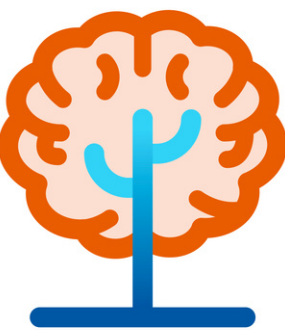
1. Guests are afforded honor and respect

2. However, hosts “are the most active, potent, and pre-eminent agents”

3. Act of hosting frames “entire host-guest interactional matrix”

4. One cannot be a legitimate guest if one cannot host in return: web of interrelationships

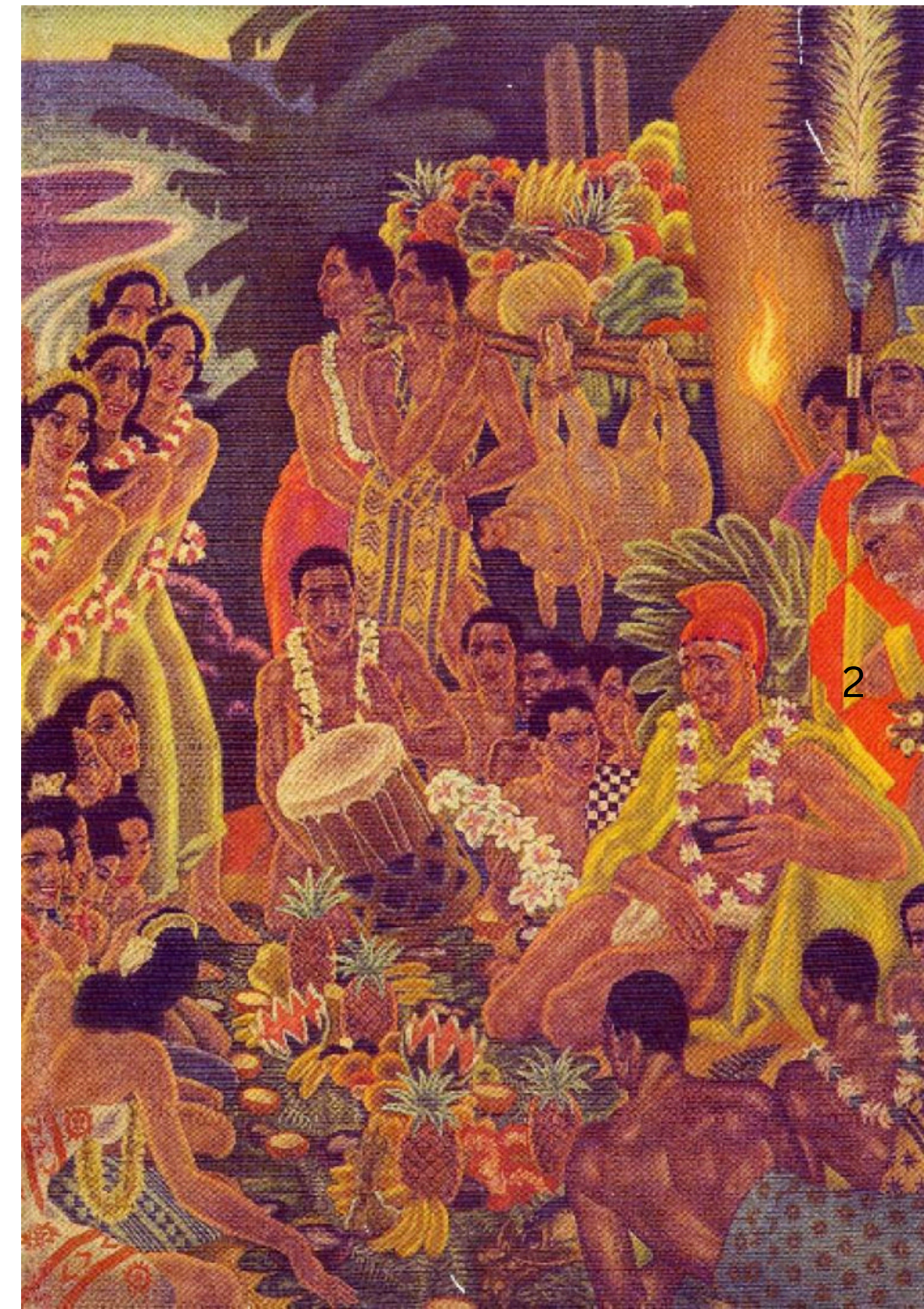
2



# Compare against Hawaiian ho'okipa (“to be hospitable”)

According to Randie Fong:  
Traditional Hawaiian cultural constructions of  
hospitality have 5 elements:

1. Heahea: Call of welcome (duty of host)
2. Mea'ai: Food and its sharing
3. Kuleana: Purpose of visitation by guests
4. Le'ale'a: Fun and entertainment
5. Makana: Gift giving



3

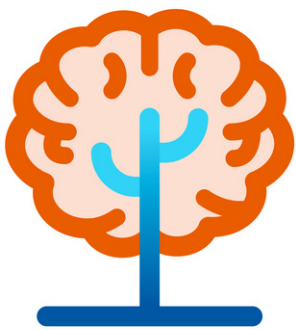


# Activity 1: Mentimeter

Share a cultural tradition that you grew up with or experienced that illustrates the host-guest relationship



<https://www.menti.com/alczffvokz89>



# Let's connect Asian cultural values to host leadership theory!



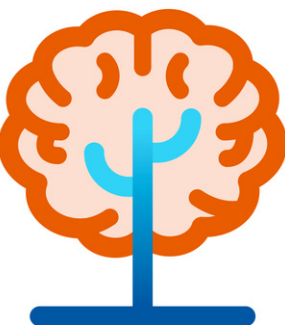
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# Distilling insights from Host Leadership theory (Mark McKergow and Helen Bailey)

**6 roles that you can perform as a host**

**The art and practice of:  
stepping forward + backward  
enabling interactions among different people + interests**



# Exploring the 6 roles



**1. Initiator:** step forward and make first move

**2. Inviter:** by inviting we can engage others

**3. Space creator:** create space (physically and psychologically) for interactions to happen



# Exploring the 6 roles, continued

## 4. Gatekeeper:

clarifying expectations  
and norms

**5. Connector:** linking people and ideas  
AND knowing when to get out of the  
way so magic happens!

**6. Co-participant:** initiate,  
provide and join-in



# Activity 2: Connecting Asian Cultural Values and Host Leadership

You and your colleagues receive an email from the CEO's office that funding for next year's ERG events are on pause. You've participated in these events in the past and recognize their benefits for people across your organization. What could you do?

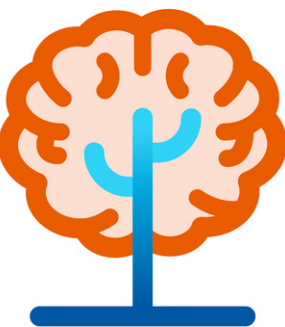
1. In your groups, enact a response that connects Asian cultural values and host leadership theory.
2. Incorporate playing the host and guests.

## Asian cultural values

- collectivistic worldview
- care, concern and respect for others
- humility and service-mindedness
- attention to verbal and non-verbal cues

## 6 Roles of Hosts:

Initiator, inviter, space maker, gatekeeper, connector & co-participator



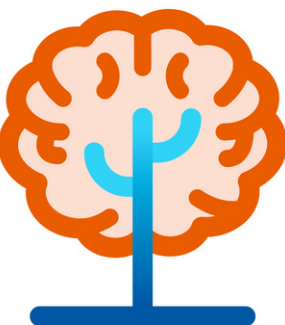
# Debrief

**What was your group's response to the scenario?**

**How did you perform the role of host and guest(s)?**

**How were you able to spark connection and exchange?**

7



# Key takeaway!

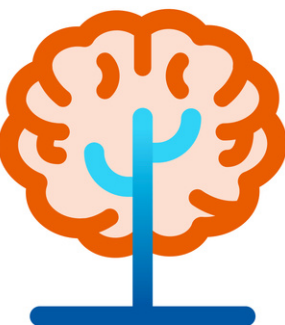
**Leverage our  
deeper  
cultural values  
of hosting and  
hospitality**



**Activate  
Host  
Leadership**



**Spark  
connection  
and  
exchange**





# 2025 Leadership Convention by NAAAP

Poll question

**How can a host also be a leader?**

My response

- Sets the agenda and leads the team
  - They already are
  - interaction and mentoring
  - Personally connect with their audience/group
  - Drive audience engagement
- and 5 more answers



# 2025 Leadership Convention by NAAAP

Poll question

**How does a great host make you feel?**

My response

A word cloud of responses to the poll question. The words are arranged in a curved path, with 'Included' being the largest and most prominent word. Other visible words include 'Wonderful', 'Welcome', 'comfortable', 'like you belong', 'Like home', 'Seen', and 'Heard'.

Included  
Wonderful Welcome  
like you belong  
comfortable  
Like home Seen  
Heard

Powered by Whova

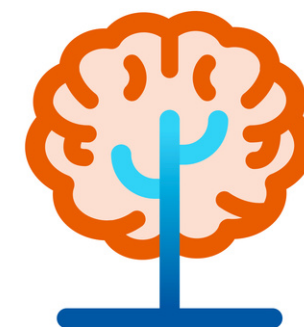


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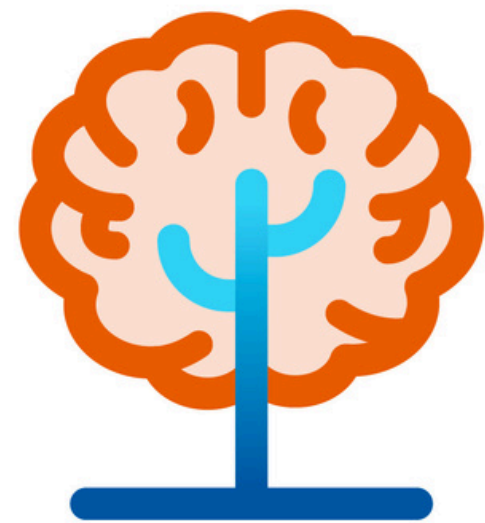
**Thank you!  
Questions or  
comments?**



<https://www.menticom/alczffvokz89>



# Nitin Deckha, PhD



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