

NEWSLETTER

3 Issue July 2007

WORDS FROM THE ACTING HEAD

Dear Friends, Alumni, Students and Colleagues,

With the release of the 3rd issue of the newsletter, we are glad to inform you that by adopting the Outcomes Based Teaching & Learning (OBTL) framework in our teaching, the Department is further committed to foster a dynamic learning environment that provides applied, professional-based education to social science students, and nurtures ideal graduates. Through SS, students can concentrate in Applied Sociology, Counselling, Criminology, Psychology, and Social Work. They will also learn from staff members who have the respective education, research expertise, and international reputation in each of the specialized areas to prepare them to become leaders in these fields. Cheers and God bless.

Alex Kwan, Acting Head

Departmental Highlights

SS Co-organizes the HKPS Annual Conference



Understanding the common quest for a harmonious and violence-free society, the SS Department has partnered with the Hong Kong Psychological Society in organizing the society's annual conference on 2 June 2007 on the theme "Violence and Harmony: Psychology for Social Integration." The conference keynote speakers have addressed the importance of mental health awareness among police officers, who fight crimes and keep the peace in our society. In addition, eminent members of the Keynote Panel Plenary shared their hands-on experiences in assessing, understanding, and managing domestic violence and sexual offence cases at hand. The conference was enthusiastically received by the participants.

Maintaining Subjective Health Through Social Comparison in Old Age

Subjective health refers to a person's perception of his or her health in a global sense, and is usually measured by asking people to rate their overall health as either excellent, good, or poor. It is a very important indicator of health because it predicts subsequent death over and above the effects of objective health indicators such as cardiovascular diseases and other physical problems. This research project is aimed



at understanding the psychological mechanisms used by older persons to protect their sense of physical well-being despite predictable health deteriorations. One of such mechanisms that we studied is social comparison. Essentially we believe that by seeing one's health as better than peers of the same age, one can maintain a good subjective health despite declines over time. Moreover, because older persons are more vulnerable to health threats, we hypothesized that older persons benefit more from making social comparisons than do younger persons.

To examine these hypotheses, we conducted two studies. In Study 1 ratings on physical attributes for oneself and "someone of the same age" were obtained from 592 Hong Kong Chinese aged 20-92. As expected, perceiving one's physical self as better than others was associated with better subjective health. This was true even after measures of physical health were controlled for. In other words, for people who were similarly healthy physically, those who made more favorable social comparisons perceived themselves to be healthier. Moreover, the gain in subjective health as a result of social comparison was larger in older than in younger people.



Study 2 was designed to show the effect of social comparison over time. A longitudinal design is important because it allows us to examine the extent to which social comparison protects a person's subjective health as his or her physical health deteriorates over time. One hundred and ninety-nine persons aged 60-92 were interviewed twice over a 12-month interval, using the same measures as in Study 1. As expected, physical deterioration was associated with a poorer subjective health over time. This lowered subjective health in turn triggered social comparisons in order to compensate for the drop in subjective health. Subjective health was then improved as a result of seeing that one's health deteriorated less quickly than the health of others of the same age.

Together, the two studies show that although deterioration in physical health impairs one's subjective image of health, one can

Sheung-Tak Cheng received his PhD in clinical/ community psychology from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He has published widely in issues related to successful aging and the environmental conditions that support it. He is currently the Principal Investigator of a large-scale study examining the social network and health of older persons in Hong Kong. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, and an expert consultant to the United Nations Programme on Ageing.

SS Boosts the Development of Art

The Youth Study Net (YSNet) of the SS Department has participated actively in giving support to talented young artists. Together with such hearty co-organizing partners as the RTHK, the Hong Kong Playground Association, and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, YSNet hosted a prize ceremony at City's Wei Hing Theater to award prizes to outstanding young artists aged between 10 and 21. Guests of honor of the ceremony included Mrs Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor (Permanent Secretary of the HK S.A.R. Home Affairs Bureau); Dr Peter KK Wong (BBS); Mr Victor Hui (SBS, MBE); and Prof Lo TW (Professor of Social Work of the SS Department).



Smart Student Project – Adventure Based Training Camp

Fifteen Foundation-Year students had participated in a two-day Adventure Based Training Camp in the past February organized by the TDG project entitled "Learning through Self-Discipline and Personal Growth, Facilitated by Coaching" and sponsored by 18 teachers of the SS Department, including Profs Alex Kwan and S. H. Ng, Drs



make use of social comparison to repair such damage to subjective health. Whether a person perceives his or her health as superior or inferior to others depends on the target persons selected for comparison. Hence social comparison is a motivated behavior: Older persons are more motivated than younger persons to use social comparison to protect their subjective health from physical threats. This finding is an important contribution to the literature and enhances our understanding of the processes of successful ageing.

This series of study was supported in part by the Research Grants Council through the Competitive Earmarked Research Grant to Dr Cheng, and will be published in the *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*. Collaborators on the project are Dr Helene Fung at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Dr Alfred Chan at Lingnan University.

Dr Sheung-Tak Cheng

Principle investigator of the project

SS Family

This picture of teaching staff was taken during our staff retreat on 15 May 2007.



Julian Lai, Raymond Chan, Christopher Cheng, Annis Fung, T. Y. Lee, K. K. Leung, L. C. Leung, and David Lok, Mr Stephen Ma, Mr H. W. Mak, Drs Raymond Ngan, Vincent Tse, Bryan Wong, Xiaodong Yue, and Lena Zhong, and Mr C. M. Lau. The camp aimed to enhance participating students' personal growth and development through "experiential learning" and leadership training. Students had indicated enhanced self-confidence in carrying out and motivating others toward teamwork in the future.



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SS SERVING THE COMMUNITY

School Bullying: Treatment for Young Bullies and Victims by Ecological Approach

Dr Annis Fung Lai Chu, the Principal Investigator of a one-year project entitled Children and Adolescence at Risk Education (CARE), has received a grant of \$1,122,300 from the Quality Education Fund (QEF) of the HK S.A.R. Education and Manpower Bureau. The project aims at serving 10 schools between September 2006 and August 2007. Theory-driven and evidence-based, the study evaluates the construction and implementation of an ecological model which can help to develop home-school support teams in providing early identification and remedial support to junior secondary school students with aggressive behaviors and to the victims of school bullying. The project has also established strong collaboration with and received support from the Hong Kong Christian Service.

Objectives of the project include

- developing indigenous models with effective strategies in dealing with aggression, bullying, and victimization of violence;
- enhancing parents' understanding and communication skills in handling aggression and victimization of violence in children;
- building up clinical counseling and group skills among teachers and social workers in working with youths with aggressive and bullying behaviors, and with those with victimized and socially withdrawn behaviors;
- promoting multi-systemic collaboration and to strengthen partnership among schools' stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, and social workers), NGOs, and the university;
- cultivating zero-violence school culture in secondary schools;
- rebuilding a positive learning environment in Hong Kong.



had been successfully completed by the end of June. A ceremony in commemoration of the 10 participating schools was held at CityU's Wei Hing Theater on 8 July 2007.

Based on the alarming social needs, the effectiveness of the treatment outcome evaluation, and the well-received comments from reviewers, the project has been identified as outstanding. The project was invited to be presented at the QEF conference on 24 July 2007. A follow-up proposal to extend CARE for one or two years was submitted to allow more schools to participate in the project. An open recruitment orientation for the 2007-08 project phase was held at Lecture Theater 4 (LT-4) at CityU on 30 June 2007 from 2:30 to 5:30 pm.

A press release reception will be set up on 19 August, 2007. A professional training workshop on how to use the indigenous packages, manuals, and CD-ROMs will be held for social workers, teachers, and other helping professionals at Lecture Theater 3 (LT-3) at CityU on 25 August, 2007 from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. **This whole-day professional training workshop and the set of packages with manuals and CD-Rom are all Free Of Charge for representatives from schools and social**



Among 73 secondary schools initially registered for the project in August 2006, only 10 schools eventually had participated in the research process. Therapeutic groups administering cognitive-behavioral therapy to bullies and victims, and professional consultations and educational programs for teachers, parents, and school social workers

SS RESEARCH

Positive Development Programme for Hong Kong Youths

Research findings have shown that there are only a few systematic adolescent prevention and positive youth development programmes in Hong Kong. Even though such programmes exist, they usually dealt with isolated problems and issues in adolescent development and were short-term. Moreover, systematic and long-term evaluation of these existing programmes is lacking.

Dr Lee Tak-yan has begun working closely with a team of renowned academics in education and welfare from four universities in Hong Kong to design, implement, and evaluate a large-scale prevention programme for junior secondary school students. Based on 15 positive essential youth-development constructs, this programme is evidence-based, multi-year, and holistic, with a built-in longitudinal evaluative study on its effectiveness. This research team, with The Chinese University of Hong Kong as leading institution (and with Prof Daniel Shek as the Principal Investigator), is responsible for developing the programme contents, providing training for involved social workers and teachers, and evaluating the programme outcomes.

The programme's multi-year youth-enhancement scheme is known as "P.A.T.H.S. to Adulthood: A Jockey Club Youth Enhancement Scheme." It is implemented in collaboration with the HKSAR Education and Manpower Bureau and the HKSAR Social Welfare Department. P.A.T.H.S. stands for Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social programmes. The project was experimentally implemented in the 2005-06 academic year under the auspices of The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, which had donated HK\$400 million dollars to support the whole project. The scheme's chief task is to design, implement, and evaluate curricula for Secondary 1 to Secondary 3 students. Secondary school teachers and social workers had received 3-day training before delivering the curricula.

The project aimed to promote holistic development in young people by providing them with recognition and opportunities to develop competence and skills, interpersonal relationships with others, and healthy beliefs and clear values. A full implementation of the project is effective in this 2006-07 academic year. Its goal is to further extend the scheme to including a fuller range of secondary schools as participating units.

Up to now, 307 secondary schools in Hong Kong, including 24 schools in the control group and 12 special schools, have participated in the scheme. In 2007-08, another 30 schools may join in. The research team is now actively developing the English version of the curriculum.

agencies. You are cordially invited to this professional training workshop.

Dr Annis Fung

In a series of surveys conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme, over 85% of the students and 97% of the teachers and social workers regarded the scheme as "useful and beneficial." The same cohort of students will participate in follow-up evaluations every year; the seventh follow-up assessments will be expected to be conducted in 2010-2011.

Dr Lee was one of the Co-Investigators during the first two years of the project in 2005 and 2006 and is currently the project's Co-Principal Investigator. He has joined the two sub-research teams on Curriculum Development and Evaluation. For more information on the project's curriculum, training, and evaluation, please visit the project's Research Team website: <http://www.paths.hk>.

Dr T. Y. Lee

In the past two years, Dr Lee had designed and test-run 40 curriculum units for Secondary 1 to Secondary 3 students. He had also designed Conceptual Maps for 14 constructs in Chinese for Secondary 1 and Secondary 2 curricula. For more information on curriculum design, please visit this web site:

<http://www7.cityu.edu.hk/sspltr/ty/>

He had also assisted in the large-scale evaluation project and the publication of the evaluation results, and had jointly edited this book:

石丹理、李德仁 編著 (2007)。

共創成長路—賽馬會青少年培育計劃概念架構及課程設計手冊(二)

青少年正面發展構念。

香港：商務印書局。共266頁。



SS TEACHING

SS Internship at a Glance



To enrich students' out-of-classroom learning experiences through practice and real life settings, this year our Department has begun to offer a credit-bearing summer internship course for students majoring in Applied Sociology, Criminology, and Psychology.

Under the supervision of Drs Dennis Wong, Ho Wing-chung, and Vincent Tse, the internship course has been designed to provide students with opportunities to

integrate social-science knowledge into understanding practical issues in specific local and international contexts. The first batch of 13 student interns has arrived in Taiwan on 4 June 2007. As leader, I accompanied the students during the first week to meet with agency representatives, visited the hostel where they stayed, and traveled with them to several renowned historical sites in Taipei, such as the National Palace Museum, the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, and the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (also known as the National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall). To help them better understand Taiwanese cultures, I led them to an investigation of the Formosan aboriginal culture and inspired them to understand the cultural differences between mainstream Taiwanese and the indigenous peoples. In the process, students were able to appreciate the concept of cultural relativism, that is, the need to respect other people's cultures and problem solving skills. This kind of sensitivity to cultural relativism is helpful to students not only for navigating through Taiwan for the remaining of their internship but also for navigating their workplace in the future.

With the help of Prof Jou Sus-yan, Director of the Graduate School of Criminology at the National Taipei University, and Dr Wang Chia-huang, Head of the Department of Sociology at Yuen Ze University, we have established partnerships with four agencies in Taipei and Taoyuen. For five weeks, our student interns worked in those agencies. With the guidance of

their on-site supervisors, they acquired valuable work experience outside Hong Kong and applied their knowledge, theories, and concepts learned from their study programs to their job responsibilities in the real world.

The second batch of student interns took off to Taiwan on 2 July 2007. Another two batches of students were heading to Singapore in June, with Drs Ho Wing-chung and Dennis Wong as leaders. Please stay tuned for my future reporting on these exciting internship activities!

**Written By Mr Simon Fung
Internship Coordinator**

