

Career Preparation for SS Students: Alumni Sharing Sessions and Experiential Workshops

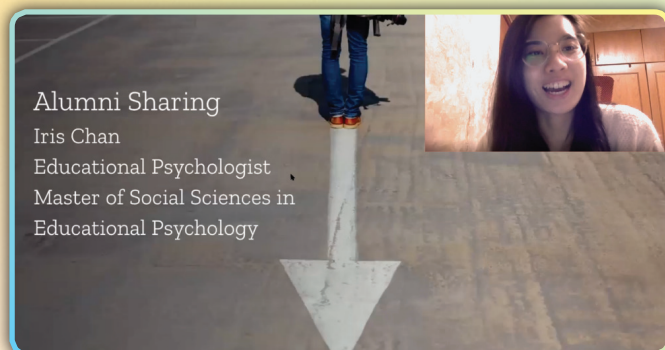
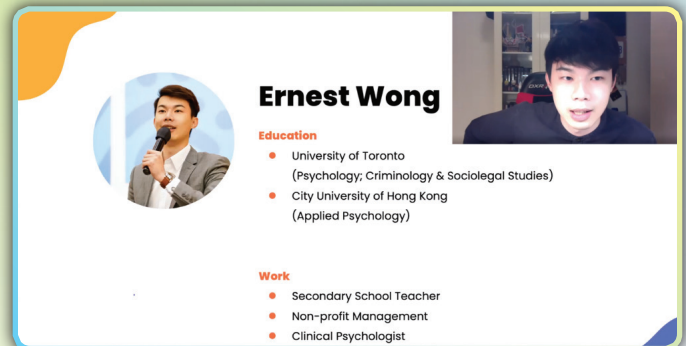
The Department always concerns about students' career planning and preparation. Several activities were conducted near the end of 2020 to early 2021 to enhance students' self-understanding and help them explore possible career paths. The workshops also equipped students with important skills for the job market. It is an honour to have our alumni to volunteer in these activities and contribute to the Department. It was also a great opportunity for us to connect with our alumni again.

Psychology Alumni Sharing Series - Development Aspects in Hong Kong and the UK

Two alumni sharing sessions had been organized by Psychology student mentors for psychology students on 4th and 5th December, 2020. The psychology mentors designed the sharing sessions based on the preferences of their fellow classmates. They have invited five alumni to share and connect with our students. For the first session, Mr. Raphael

Lo, Mr. Ernest Wong and Miss Iris Chan shared about their working experiences and pathways in becoming a Behavioural Therapist, Clinical Psychologist and Educational Psychologist in Hong Kong. For the second session, Miss Michelle Mok and Mr. Titian Tam shared about how to become and what it is like to be a Clinical Psychologist in the United Kingdom.

Students might not have a clear direction after they graduate from the general psychology degree. The sharing sessions allowed students to explore diverse career paths both locally and internationally upon graduation.



Alumni Sharing: Further Studies and Career Development in Canada

Another alumni sharing session for SS students was held on 21st December, 2020. Our guest speakers included Mr. Jacky Liu, who obtained his Master Degree in Social Work from the University of Calgary, and Miss Vivian Leung, who is a PhD candidate in Social Work at the University of Toronto. They shared their personal experiences and struggle in leaving Hong Kong and pursuing further studies and career in a foreign country. The guest speakers also talked about the differences between studying social work or being a social worker in Hong Kong and in Canada.



◀ Project X invited Mr. Jacky Liu and Miss Vivian Leung to share their experiences in Canada to SS students on Zoom.

Experiential Project on Professional Approaches to Contemporary Interventions

This is a project funded by the Career and Leadership Fund, aiming to offer students opportunities to explore contemporary intervention approaches in social services and human-related industry before graduation. The project contains different components, including Zentangle, Expressive Arts, Drama Therapy, Groupwork in diverse social media and video-editing skills.

The first workshop held on 9th April, 2021 was about Zentangle. The Zentangle method is an easy-to-learn art method to create beautiful images with structured patterns, aiming to promote participants' creativity, increase their confidence and boost their sense of well-being. The Instructor, Miss Jacqueline Leung, who is our alumna and a Certificated Zentangle® Teacher, led our students through a 3-hour mindfulness journey with Zentangle. Jacqueline also shared with students about her further career development and tips on how to prepare for graduation.



▲ Miss Jacqueline Leung (bottom left with green face mask) and students with their Zentangle drawings.



◀ Zentangle drawings by students.

▼ Students appreciating each other's Zentangle drawings in group.



A Phoenix Rising from the Ashes: A conversation with Dr. Tsang Yuk Ha Eileen about *Tongqi* (同妻) in China



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Dr. Tsang completed her PhD studies at the Department of Sociology, University of Birmingham. Her research focuses on cultural and political sociology of China; gender and sexualities; consumption and popular culture; gender, crime, and deviance.

1. Your research article, *A “Phoenix” Rising from the Ashes: China’s Tongqi, Resistance, and New Life*, was recently published by the *British Journal of Sociology*. What is *Tongqi*?

Tongqi is a group of women who have unwittingly married gay men seeking to hide their sexual attraction to other men. In China, gay men rarely confess their sexual orientation. Instead, they tricked naïve women into this “marriage fraud” to fulfill the filial obligation. The amount of China’s *Tongqi* is large. It is estimated that there are 14 million *Tongqi* in China, taking up around 3.5% of married women.

2. What motivated you to investigate *Tongqi*?

I realized that life for *Tongqi* was tough and the phenomenon was hard to ignore. *Tongqi* suffer from physical and mental distress. They report high rates of intimate partner violence, including verbal and sexual abuse. Also, they are highly exposed to sexually transmitted diseases and more susceptible to HIV infection.

3. How did you meet these women?

First, I contacted “money boys” (hereafter MBs) that I knew from previous research, who are all homosexuals but might have wives. I requested to meet with their wives. I successfully interviewed 49 *Tongqi* via this method. In the second year, 10 more *Tongqi* were interviewed based on the recommendation of 12 non-governmental organizations. Totally I contacted and interviewed 59 *Tongqi*.

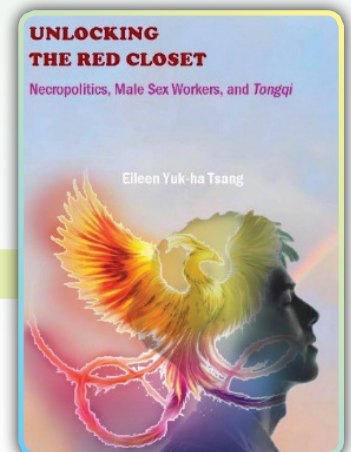
4. What did you find after you had conversations with them?

Out of 59 *Tongqi*, twelve were educated and 47 were low-educated. They made different choices after discovering their husbands’ identity. Of the 12 with education, nine filed both in-court and out-of-court divorces. However, China’s divorce law favors men. Three women filing in-court divorces ended up losing the custody of their children. For those who chose out-of-court divorces, the divorces caused great damage to their life. The majority of low-educated *Tongqi* decided to stay in marriages after their discovery. Many low-educated *Tongqi* lived in the rural area of China. They felt that they did not have the means to leave their sham marriage.

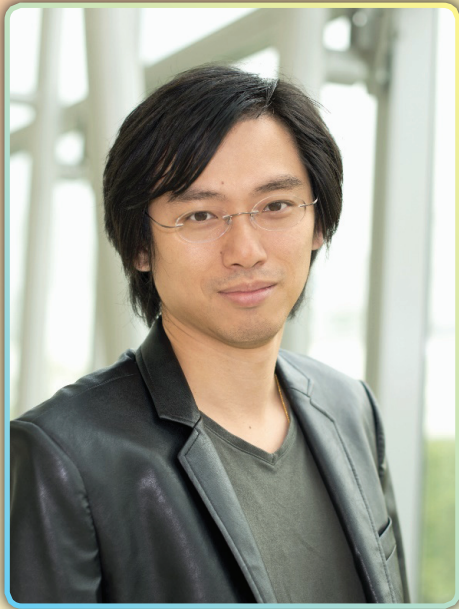
I found that even though their marriage was a fraud, these women did not simply wait for death. They took action in at least three ways. One way is to file for divorce, thereby regaining their self-respect. For those infected with AIDS, a second way is to get treatment to stay physically healthy. With physical health they can raise their children and chart a new life course if they wish. A third way is to seek help and support from NGOs, as well as online groups of those with similar experiences. Some famous NGOs include China Wives of Gay Men Mutual Aid Studio (同妻互援工作室) and Xiao Delan (小德蘭 Little Teresa), which provide professional and legal advice to help *Tongqi* cope with the situation.

5. I heard that you will also have a new book about this research. Can you tell us more about it?

Yes, my new book “Unlocking the Red Closet: Necropolitics, Male Sex Workers, and *Tongqi*” published by *Cornell University Press* is coming out in 2022. The book systematically discusses my findings on male sex workers and *Tongqi*, as well as the extended theory of “social death of necropolitics”.



Studying the Brain through Brain Imaging



Dr. Chun-Yu TSE is a new member of the SS department. He joined the department in Sept 2020. Dr. Tse received his PhD in Psychology from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. His research focuses on the brain mechanism in change detection and the application of the mismatch brain signal associated with change detection to investigate psychological phenomena in social, developmental, educational, and clinical areas. He applied various brain imaging and stimulation methods, like electroencephalography (EEG), optical brain imaging, Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), and Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) in his research.

What is your research about?

My research is about how the human brain detects changes in the environment. Imagine that when you are sitting in a coffee shop reading a book or working on the computer while some soft music is played at the background. Although you fully attend to your book or computer work, you can still detect changes in the environment. For example, a fire alarm is sounded, a baby starts crying, or a spoon is dropped on the floor. Brain scientist find that a specific brain signal is automatically elicited when such changes take place in the environment. The brain is sensitive to small changes, but only call for your attention when it detects salient changes. This automatic change detection process takes place outside our awareness, as if there is another person or "mind" monitoring the environment for us.

The system can also detect complicated changes, like rhythm or semantics, and play a role in higher level cognition, like language processing. In some clinical conditions, like Autism, their sensitivities to certain changes are different, the brain signal elicited by these changes can be used as a biomarker for the conditions.

What are the differences between the behavioral and brain approaches in social sciences?

I always get asked why we need to study the human mind through brain imaging, could the same information be obtained by measuring behavioral responses or through self-reports. The human mind is typically understood through studying behaviors. However, the same behavior can be produced by different mechanisms. Just like, there are many paths (cognitive/brain mechanism) that can connect between the mind and the behavior. Brain imaging allows us to observe the path generating the behavior directly. Brain imaging is a kind of modern mind-reading approach that helps us to reveal unique information about the human mind.

Brain science sounds very sophisticated. Is it difficult to learn? If I don't have any background in the science subjects, would it still be possible to work in this area?

This research field, also known as cognitive neuroscience, is an interdisciplinary area that integrates knowledge and expertise from different disciplines, like psychology, neuroscience, computer science, social sciences, and psychiatry. It means that there can be a lot to learn, but it also means that you can position yourself in this field based on your background and expertise. There are students who don't have any background in the science subjects studied their master or PhD degree in this area. You can also collaborate with cognitive neuroscientists if you want to get yourself started in this area.



A Salute to Our Heroes

"Heroism ... is a way of being. And it is a special way of viewing ourselves. To be a hero requires taking effective action at crucial junctures in our lives, to make an active attempt to address injustice or create positive change in the world. To be a hero requires great moral courage. And each of us has an inner hero waiting to be expressed."
Eger, Edith (2017). **The Choice. Even in hell hope can flower.** Ebury Publishing.

In the last two Newsletters, we talked about issues under the "exceptional and challenging academic year" (#29, 2019) and "the challenges we are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic" (#30, 2020). Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic is still lingering when I was writing this message. This chronic stressful situation has taken a toll on our physical and mental well-being. Despite this, I have witnessed strengths among many people around us. Instead of dwelling on the difficulties we have encountered, I would like to pay tribute to these heroes in this message.

First and foremost, I applaud our students who have shown extraordinary heroism in facing the challenges of academic requirements during the past year. Students have participated in real-time online lectures with dynamic interactions via Chat, Poll, and Breakout Rooms. Students of our

professional programs have adapted quickly to mixed-mode learning involving small face-to-face group practical skills training sessions and mass online lectures. Students have completed their capstone research projects using online data collection methods under social distancing. I am sure our students will apply these newly acquired coping skills in other aspects of their life in the future.

Teachers and administrative staff in the department have also worked hard to maintain excellence in teaching, research, and student development under the current challenging situations. The department has completed all courses in the real-time online interactive mode in Semesters A and B of 2020/21. We continue to attract good DSE students and outstanding Ph.D. students from the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme. Two of our students have been selected into the Joint Bachelor's Degree Program between the City University of Hong Kong and Columbia University. Our Project-X team has been working to provide development workshops on Mentor Training, Volunteering, Planning a Study Tour, Career Development, and Alumni Sharing. Overseas exchange and internship programs have been stopped because of COVID-19. However, we have continued to arrange local internships for



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our students. I bow to the dedication of my colleagues. They are the real heroes in my heart.

Last but not least, I have witnessed the enthusiastic support from our departmental advisors, alumni, external partners, and colleagues of other departments during the past months. Their heroism in creating positive changes under challenging situations offers me hope in life.

It's a blessing to serve you in my role as Head of Department. Let's hold hands and walk together towards a better future.