

In Memory of Professor Chan Wing Tai

By Professor Dennis S. W. Wong

It is with the deepest sorrow that we announce that Professor Chan Wing Tai, the former Head of the Social and Behavioural Sciences Department (SS), passed away on the evening of 22 April 2022, aged 77.

Wing Tai, as he was commonly known, joined City University (formerly called City Polytechnic of Hong Kong) as a Principal Lecturer in 1988. He assumed the role of Associate Head at SS for three years from 1990 to 1993, and served as Head of SS for five years from 1993 to 1998. Although he served at other tertiary academic institutes starting in 1999, Wing Tai continued to serve as an honorary teaching fellow and research consultant at the Quality Evaluation Centre of SS until 2010.

Wing Tai graduated from the Department of Sociology of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in the 1960s. He was awarded a Master of Arts in Sociology from the University of Pittsburgh, in the United States, in the early 1970s. He was a distinguished academic in the field sociology and a well-known research scholar in the field of social services. Right before he joined SS in 1998, he used to be Assistant Director of Hong Kong Council of Social Services, a prestigious voluntary organization which acts as the leader for coordinating social services among NGOs in Hong Kong. With such a well-respected reputation, Wing Tai led SS to overcome the challenges of the various academic accreditation processes and eventually gained full academic accreditation for running a Bachelors in Social Work Programme at the then



City Polytechnic in the mid-1990s. This was a remarkable achievement for SS and the whole institution, when there were only a few Bachelor's degree programmes offered at that time. With such a city-wide and prestigious degree programme offered at SS, the Department grew rapidly in those years. Other academic programmes, including Bachelor's programmes in the field of sociology and post-graduate studies, were subsequently developed under the leadership of Wing Tai.

During his entire academic career, Wing Tai was committed to supporting teaching and inspiring young intellectuals at SS, as well as in numerous renowned higher education institutions, including the University of Pittsburgh, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Shue Yan University and the Hong Kong College of Technology. His mentoring and expert knowledge influenced the generations of students who are now pivotal across diverse disciplines. In addition to teaching and research, he was appointed board member to various organizations and statutory committees in the Hong Kong government. He devoted his efforts to the development of programme evaluation, organizational management and quality assurance, and he was awarded the JP and the MH by the government in recognition of his contributions to society. His passing is a tremendous loss to our community. His wisdom, humility and perseverance will be dearly missed. He will always be fondly remembered as a dedicated and well-respected teacher.

Department's Connection with Alumni and Students: Psychology Alumni Sharing Sessions and the Launch of Departmental Student Chapter

The Department treasures its relationship and connection with alumni and current students. To prepare students for better career planning, several Psychology alumni have been invited to volunteer at our alumni sharing sessions in February 2022. The student-mentor group, Departmental Student Chapter, was launched in March 2022 to promote a closer relationship between the Department and its students.

Psychology Alumni Sharing Series 1.0 & 2.0

Psychology student mentors organized two alumni sharing sessions for psychology students on 13 and 19 February 2022. The psychology mentors designed the sharing sessions based on their classmates' preferences on areas of interest. For the first session, Ms Vincy Yip and Mr Franco Fok shared their working experiences and pathways in becoming an educational psychologist and I/O psychologist, respectively. For the second session, Mr Raphael Lo shared his learning experience studying to become a clinical psychologist. Mr Jerome Kwok shared about his work as a counselling psychologist.



Department of Social and Behavioural Sciences
CityU 香港城市大學
CityU Hong Kong

PROJECT X

PSYCHOLOGY ALUMNI SHARING 1.0

Time to know more about two Psychology-related professionals!

DATE: 13/02/2022
TIME: 3PM-5PM
VENUE: **Changed to Online Format!**

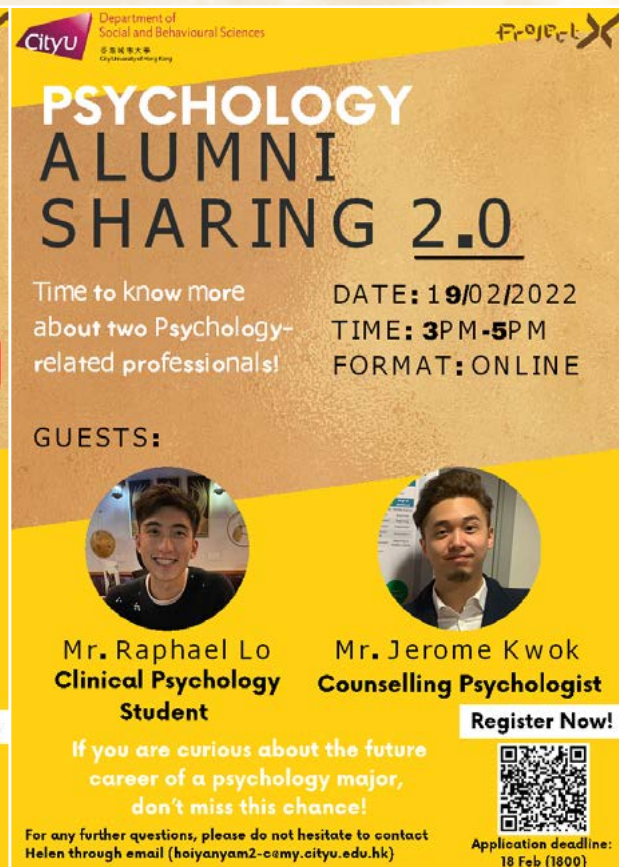
GUESTS: MISS VINCY YIP Educational Psychologist
Mr. Franco Fok I/O Psychologist

QUOTA: 30
(Year 3, 4 students will have priority)

Register Now!

If you are curious about the future career of a psychology major, don't miss this chance!

For any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Helen through email (hoiyanam2-c@my.cityu.edu.hk)



Department of Social and Behavioural Sciences
CityU 香港城市大學
CityU Hong Kong

PROJECT X

PSYCHOLOGY ALUMNI SHARING 2.0

Time to know more about two Psychology-related professionals!

DATE: 19/02/2022
TIME: 3PM-5PM
FORMAT: ONLINE


GUESTS: Mr. Raphael Lo Clinical Psychology Student
Mr. Jerome Kwok Counselling Psychologist

Register Now!

If you are curious about the future career of a psychology major, don't miss this chance!

For any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Helen through email (hoiyanam2-c@my.cityu.edu.hk)

Application deadline: 18 Feb (1800)



Posters for the two psychology alumni sharing session held in February 2022

Departmental Student Chapter 2022–23

The Departmental Student Chapter is a student group that aims to strengthen students' sense of belonging to the Department by organizing various mentoring and out-of-classroom learning activities for their classmates. Other than serving as student mentors, members of the Departmental Student Chapter will also serve as student representatives of our department when attending various University-wide events.

Students from different majors have been recruited to serve in the 2022–23 academic year. The Orientation Day for the Departmental Student Chapter was successfully held on 28 March 2022 via Zoom. Department Head Professor Samuel Ho, Associate Head Dr Cherry Tam and Project X convener Dr Anna Hui gave welcome speeches to our mentors-to-be. The mentors-to-be will go through training on mentorship and organizing activities to prepare them to become competent student mentors and representatives of the Department.

Recruitment poster for the Departmental Student Chapter



Professor Samuel Ho, Dr Cherry Tam and Dr Anna Hui greeting the mentors-to-be on Orientation Day



Mentors-to-be completing an ice-breaker during Orientation Day

An HK Tech 300 Seed Fund Project by Our PhD student

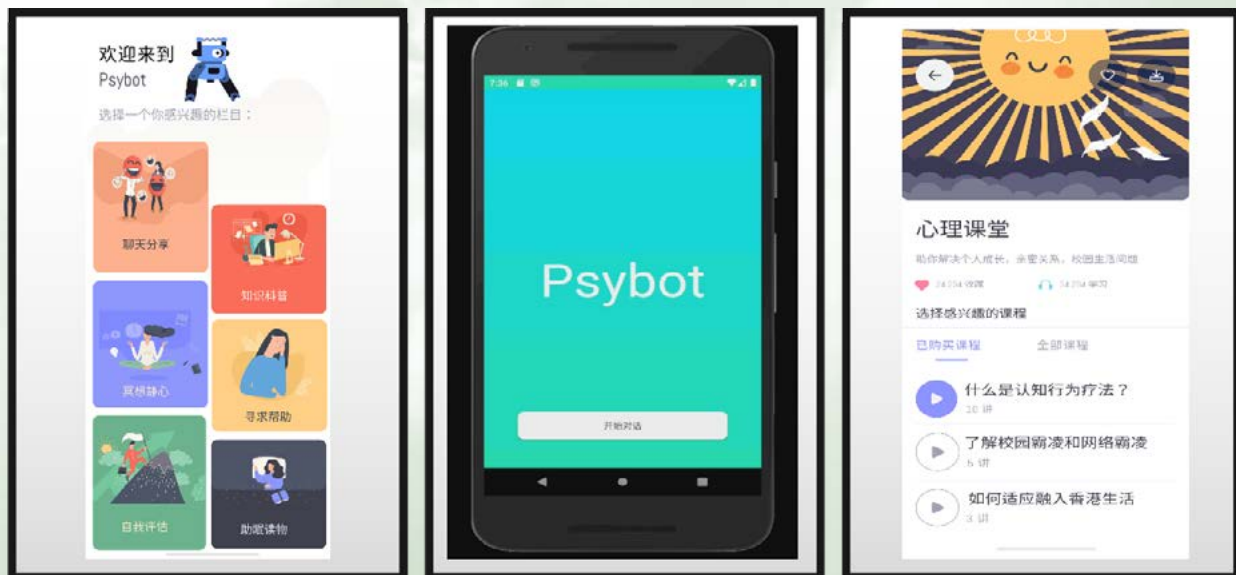
Mobile Chatbot Application to Meet Psychological Needs of People in Greater China in the Context of the COVID-19 Epidemic

By **Du Hao**

(a recipient of HK Tech 300 Seed Fund)

When I first came to CityU six months ago, I was amazed at the variety of clubs and related activities. However, I found very few activities and clubs related to psychology. Although the Student Development Service (SDS) offers free psychological counselling to students in need, such services require face-to-face appointments, and there is currently no way to book online. A friend of mine from Mainland China studying architecture told me that she had been experiencing emotional distress for some time. She recognized that she needed psychological help but could not make an appointment online, and she did not feel comfortable going to SDS face-to-face to make an appointment. This conversation gave me the initial idea to build an online counselling appointment application.

CityU had been heavily promoting the HK TECH300 project; this is an unparalleled project and a great help for students with innovative ideas. In the last class of Semester A, Professor Samuel Ho also encouraged us to apply and shared the experience of another successful team from our college. Once again, I was inspired. At this point, I also realized that an online counselling appointment service was not well-suited to the innovative requirements. Through some searching and reading, I found that digital mental health psychology-oriented chatbots have been very hot around the world for a few years and fit well with my plans, as well as being achievable in the future. After more than a month of communication and formation, we finally set up our Psybot (Psychology-Chatbot) team; our team consisted of five students from various fields such as psychology, machine learning, information system and data analysis. We each divided the work and initially planned to combine cognitive behaviour theory (CBT) from psychology with the natural language processing (NLP) technology of artificial intelligence (AI) to complete a prototype chatbot program. We have achieved a stage of success so far.



The picture on the left is the main feature page we designed, the middle shows the chatbot feature we have successfully piloted and a psychology classroom service we plan to include is shown on the right.

Based on the educational background of our team members, we are currently developing the version in Simplified Chinese. We will also consider adding Traditional Chinese and English versions in the future. During our preliminary background research, we found that, according to China's National Health Planning Commission, in 2017, 90 million people with depression in China alone. There are, however, only 30,000 psychiatrists in China, which is a very disparate ratio. Also, according to the Lancet, as of 2019, about 16.6% of China's population, more than 180 million people, will need psychological help at least once in their lifetime. As we all know, this figure is likely to be even more exaggerated in the years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has aided the growth of the digital mental health field, with several related companies receiving funding in the United States, South Korea and mainland China; according to our limited knowledge, there are only a small number of companies in this field in Hong Kong, which is another reason why our team chose this area.



Image source: Wang, Y., & Li, A. (2021, April 27). Global Mental Health Digital Therapy Value Trends Report 2016-2020. DOC88. <https://www.doc88.com/p-03447124199474.html>

To summarize our project, Psybot is a psychology-oriented chatbot application. It currently combines the CBT technology of psychology and the NLP technology from AI. In addition to this functionality, there are plans to include other psychology sections, such as meditation classes, psychological questionnaires, psychological comics and psychological articles, among other content. Psybot hopes to provide users with professional psychological services through conversations that change and challenge irrational, troubling beliefs, thus alleviating the difficulties they are facing. With the appearance of COVID-19 pandemic in particular, traditional face-to-face counselling is limited, and people are experiencing more psychological problems. We want our online psychological software to meet their psychological needs: it should be like a 24/7 psychological takeaway service.



Du Hao (second from left) and his teammates, Wang Tianteng (first on left), Wang Yahui (middle), Li Xuhong (second from right) and Li Jiansheng (first on right)

As a recipient of the HK TECH300 Fund, our team members are happy to turn our ideas and research directions into a product that will help our friends and all Chinese people in need. However, we are currently at a very preliminary stage. We have received a lot of encouragement and help from our professors and friends, and we are confident that we can slowly overcome the challenges that remain. Our next step will be to continue to writing our dialogue database to improve our program, then set up a trial run and test our chatbot; we hope to present the completed chatbot in the App market by this time next year.

Meet Our New Faculty

Dr CHAN Siu Ming

Dr Siu Ming CHAN worked as a frontline social worker in community settings for eight years before embarking on his academic journey. He served the underprivileged, including homeless people, low-income families living in cubicles and subdivided flats, poor children and the elderly through direct service, group work and community work. He also conducted policy research and surveys related to vulnerable groups facing poverty, housing problems and other community issues. Dr Chan completed his PhD at the Department of Social Work, in the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research focuses on housing, poverty, social welfare, social work, mental health and inequality.



How did you start your social work career?

During my social work practicum, I started to visit grassroots and low-income families in different areas of Hong Kong. I saw some singletons living in a cage home with bedbugs, families with children living in cubicles of less than 40 square feet, people cooking in their toilets and the homeless living on the street for years. I constantly asked, why do the residents suffer? Why is this situation happening in Hong Kong? What can we do to improve the well-being of the poor? After graduation, I started working as a social worker in the community setting and walked with the underprivileged groups.



Why did you start teaching social work in academic institutions?

I never thought that I would teach in an academic institution. I would like to thank my social work teachers for inviting me to start teaching part time at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong College of Technology in 2014. Learning and teaching are intricately linked, and both teachers and students benefit when we learn from each other. Student improvement encourages me to continue teaching. I believe that good teaching not only helps students self-actualize, it gives them necessary skills and cultivates in them a desire to promote the well-being of disadvantaged groups in the community, which is also a mission of social work.

What is your research about?

My principal areas of research interest include poverty, housing, health, social welfare and social work. My vision is to enhance the well-being of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. My PhD thesis lays a foundation for studying the relationship between housing and poverty, emphasizing the impact of housing on the condition of poverty. I proposed various housing poverty measurements, including the ratio and residual approaches, to highlight the critical role of housing in poverty studies. Moreover, the concept of multidimensional poverty, including deprivation, social exclusion and subjective poverty, has been employed to study the poverty situation in Hong Kong. It helps to broaden our understanding of poverty and to capture the suffering of disadvantaged groups.

I heard that you had a new baby girl recently: what has your experience been?

Busy and tired, but also marvellous and joyful. I begin to understand the difficulties and the life pressure of being a caregiver. I sincerely appreciate all the caregivers who handle the numerous obstacles in caregiving. The parenting experience inspires me to rethink the meanings of family needs and child education, the roles of social workers and social policies related to caregivers. These may become my new research areas.

Dr LU Shiyu, Tracy

Studying Healthy Ageing Process for Our Ageing Society

Dr LU Shiyu (Tracy) joined the SS Department in September 2021. Dr Lu received her PhD in Social Welfare from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She has research aspirations to promote healthy ageing among older adults. Specifically, Dr Lu's studies examine the relationships between neighbourhood environment and health among older adults and explore the associations between their volunteer behaviours and health.



Why is healthy ageing important in your research agenda?

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared 2020–2030 the Decade of Healthy Ageing, aiming to transform the public health framework for the ageing population globally. Healthy ageing is not necessarily about being disease-free: Many older adults can manage certain health conditions. Healthy ageing is about the continuing process of creating a supportive environment and opportunities that enable people to be and do what they have reason to value. This new conceptualization calls for examination of the current service planning, urban design and health and social care systems in our society.

How do your studies contribute to Healthy Ageing?

My studies focus on two streams to better understand the healthy ageing process. One is to examine how the living environment influences older adults' behaviours and health, while the other is to explore how to promote volunteering among older adults, making them more socially active.

1 Examining the role of the supportive neighbourhood environment for the older population

Where we live shapes our behaviours, lifestyles and health. Older adults are particularly affected by their immediate environment due to their tendency to spend more time in their neighbourhoods than younger people, as well as their declining age-related capacities. Findings from my previous studies suggest that a supportive neighbourhood environment (e.g. urban greenness, the availability of neighbourhood community facilities) are associated with active social lifestyles and better functional ability, which further leads to better mental health among older adults. In addition, one of my ongoing studies attempts to explore the relationships between an age-friendly environment and social capital and how these two key factors jointly contribute to subjective well-being among older adults.

2 Promoting volunteering using Time Bank

Participation in volunteering is key to achieving healthy ageing for older adults and building community social capital for the society. My ongoing research project investigates the effects of Time Bank on volunteering behaviors and the well-being of older people. Time Bank is a system to encourage reciprocal service exchange. Volunteers receive time credits if they participate in voluntary work (e.g. 1 hour = 1 time credit). My research group collaborated with the team from Department of Computer Science at HKU to set up a time bank platform in the HINCare mobile App for seniors to seek volunteering opportunities, record their volunteering hours and redeem rewards. Rewards are mainly provided from local social enterprises and designed to allow volunteers to exchange services/products for themselves, service receipts and family members and neighbors, to maximize their altruism and positive effects on the community. Data collection is still ongoing and findings are expected to be available in 2023.



Dr Lu (on the left) and a senior volunteer from Dr Lu's Time Bank research project (Photo credit: CGoodjob)

How to thrive in a challenging period?

The Department has experienced a challenging period during the Omicron pandemic. In terms of teaching, we have changed from hybrid to a full online mode in the middle of the semester. Internship and exchange opportunities require extra effort to materialize. Regarding research, our social sciences research laboratory has gone through many closing–reopening cycles due to infectious disease control measures. Most of the research meetings and conferences are conducted virtually. The work of our general administration staff is not easy at all. They need to fulfil the demanding tasks of supporting the Department's teaching, research and student development activities under a flexible and sometimes unpredictable working mode.

The above changes may take a toll on our mental health. About one in two people may exhibit severe to moderate anxiety symptoms during the Omicron pandemic [1]. Mental health issues and factors related to good mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic are important research topics for social and behavioural scientists. As expected, many faculty members in the Department have made significant contributions to this topic through their research outputs. Between February 2020 and May 2022, our faculty members have published 33 research papers investigating the mental health of different populations and factors related to their adjustment during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have put these papers on our department website: https://ssweb.cityu.edu.hk/covid-19/covid_pub.html. We invite you to read them and share your views with us.

On top of the scientific findings, it would be helpful to mention here some handy tips for maintaining mental health during difficulties. In her book *How to Feel Good in Difficult Times* [2], Lindenfiel offers easy-to-understand strategies to help us regain control and move on in five life domains: home, relationships, finances, physical health and mental well-being. Other valuable tips based on the literature and our research on other populations include:

- *Practice goal-oriented thinking.* Maintain a future outlook by setting concrete goals. Re-goal downward when the situation worsens and re-goal upward when the situation gets better.
- *Learn from good models.* List people handling the situation well and write what they have done to help themselves thrive.
- *Savour your good experiences.* Do what you intrinsically like (and is not harmful to you) regularly, even if you need to make some modifications due to infectious disease measures such as social distancing. Share your good feelings with others, and take a mental photograph to prolong the savouring.

The above strategies may help maintain your mental health – and they may also help you to experience positive gains during difficult times as well. Talking about positive gains, I am happy to report the following very positive news about the Department at the closing of my message.

- Our congratulations on the well-deserved recognition of Professor Sylvia Kwok, who becomes a full professor of the Department on 1 July 2022.
- Dr Annis Fung and Dr Nancy Yu have obtained the CLASS Excellence in Knowledge Transfer Award and Certificate of Merit.
- Ms TANG Hoi Ching Dorothy has obtained HKD 100,000 from the Fang Brothers Whole Person Development Scholarship. Dorothy is our BSSPSY major student.
- Two of our current PhD students and three Social Work graduates were awarded the HK Tech 300 Seed Fund: Hu Hao (PhD student), Zhang Qiaochu (PhD student), Tsoi Wing Kin (BSSSW graduate), Chan Wai Kuen (BSSSW graduate) and Fan Yuet Ying (BSSSW graduate).
- Two social work students have obtained recognition from professional bodies: Ms LI Fong, Fion obtained the Outstanding Social Worker Award 2021–22 (BASW & MSSC



Prof. HO Samuel M.Y.

Head

Department of Social and Behavioural Sciences

Programmes) and Mr LEUNG Siu Kei, Michael was selected as the Outstanding New Social Worker Award 2021–22 (BSSCRIM Programme).

- The Department has secured a Shared Equipment Budget of 1.08M from the Provost Office. Faculty members should use the budget to purchase research equipment to support collaborative research endeavours.

Again, failure and frustration are not the only outcomes in times of difficulty. I hope that we will all continue to thrive in the post-COVID-19 era.

References

1. Magramo, K., *Hong Kong's mental health crisis: nearly half of residents suffer 'moderate to severe' signs of anxiety amid coronavirus fifth wave, survey shows, in the South China Morning Post.* 2022, SCMP: Hong Kong.
2. Lindenfiel, G., *How to Feel Good in Difficult Times.* 2020, CPI Group (UK) Ltd: Croyden.