



# Department of Applied Social Studies Serves the Society

## UK RIOTS

Between 6 and 10 August 2011, several London boroughs and districts of cities and towns across England suffered widespread rioting, looting and arson. Following a peaceful march on 6 August 2011, in relation to the police response to the fatal shooting of Mark Duggan, a riot began in Tottenham, North London, an apparent incident between a young girl and police sparked clashes which escalated to wide-scale rioting. In the days that followed, rioting spread to several London boroughs and districts and eventually to some other areas of England.

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## UK Riots

(from the cover page)

As a result of the riots, a total of five fatalities were sustained across England, not to mention the countless numbers of homes, properties and businesses damaged. One of the most high-profile commercial casualties of the rioting was a family furniture store in Croydon that burned down after 144 years of continuous trading. More than 3,000 individuals were arrested for riot-related behaviour, some of those arrested were as young as nine years old. Many individuals were reported to the police by their parents, who had spotted their children in media footage. In the midst of the riots, British Prime Minister, David Cameron, spoke of fault lying in people being “allowed to feel that the world owes them something.” While young people retaliated with masked interviews in news reports, remonstrating their lack

Media news reports blamed the increasing number of young people with no skills, education, values or aspirations, the breakdown of the family unit, and the ever-increasing number of single parent families as all acting as contributors to the breakdown in respect among British youths which led to the riots. Although Britain's youth were not the only individuals involved in the rioting: individuals involved in the riots came from a range of ages, backgrounds, education and ethnicities. However, it is the



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youth that so captured both the media's and the public's attention so vividly. Why did so many young people in their droves feel compelled to get involved in the looting and rioting? Was it really simply down to blind opportunism? The media talked of the youths involved as 'feral children'. However, those arrested in riot-related incidents were not necessarily from deprived backgrounds. Some individuals arrested were from privileged, exemplary backgrounds. One individual arrested had worked as a volunteer, excelled at school and was supposed to be representing London 2012 Olympics as a representative and mascot for London. She was shopped to the Police by her parents after they saw images of their daughter on the news. What motivated these individuals? What triggered the action for so many people to get involved, destroying their local communities and societies?



A recent government-funded study examining the motivations of young people who took part in the August rioting has concluded that the rioters and looters were driven by a combination of excitement, opportunism and dissatisfaction with the police. The riots which swept across England offered young people 'a day like no other', a chance to get 'free stuff' and were likened to a 'rave', a report has found (Morrell, Scott, McNeish, & Webster, 2011). The study, thought to be the first to be based on what young people themselves have to say about the riots, found that for some, 'moments of madness' led to atypical behaviour. However, for many, the decision whether to get involved was based on whether they felt the benefits to themselves outweighed the risks. The opportunism of the moment seemed to play a significant role, tempting those individuals who would not normally behave in such deviant ways. The excitement of the events was reported to be strongly tied with the opportunity to get 'free stuff'.

A party attitude in association with the adrenaline rush was viewed as encouraging the involvement of young people (Morrell et al., 2011).

Much was made of the role of social media networks, such as Blackberry Messenger, Twitter, and Facebook, in their ability to spread news faster. Social media sites were reportedly being used by rioters to inform each other of where rioting and looting was taking place. Attitude towards authority also seemed to play a role as a trigger. Expressions of anger and resentment were found to be commonplace among many of the youth. As one young female rioter, whose identity was hidden by a mask of scarves and hooded tops, declared to a BBC news reporter, it shows "the rich and the police that we can do what we like."

Reference:

Morrell, G., Scott, S., McNeish, D., & Webster, S. (2011). The August riots in England: Understanding the involvement of young people. London: National Centre for Social Research. Last accessed online on 08 November 2011 from:

<http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/769712/the%20august%20riots%20in%20england%20web.pdf>



Credit: Getty Images



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## Clinical Psychology in Hong Kong

### Clinical Psychology: Its scope and nature

Below is a popular joke among clinical psychologists:

*If you want some private time and don't want to chit-chat with someone sitting next to you on a plane, you just need to tell them that you are a clinical psychologist and that person will remain silence during the whole trip.*

This is only a joke but to a certain extent, it reflects some of my personal experiences. Even today, some people still think that a clinical psychologist can read their mind by just observing them or talking to them. But can a clinical psychologist do that? And what is clinical psychology?

The Hong Kong Psychology Society, Division of Clinical Psychology gives the following description of clinical psychology in its website:

“The field of clinical psychology is a branch of applied psychology. It integrates theories, research and practice pertaining to understand, predict and manage the followings:

1. Intellectual, emotional, cognitive, biological, psychological, social and behavioral aspects of human development in varying cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds and ages.
2. Emotional, cognitive and behavioral adaptation and adjustment to personal development and environmental changes.
3. Maladjustment and emotional distress triggered by illnesses, accidents, trauma, social hazards and family complications.” (retrieved from <http://www.dcp.hkps.org.hk/faqs.php> on 30 November 2011)

An important implicit message in the above description is that clinical psychology is a science-based profession.

It uses scientific evidences to formulate valid and reliable methods for assessment, diagnosis and treatment. The scientist-practitioner model, also called the Boulder model, is a common training model in clinical psychology. According to this model, a psychologist is a scientist and a competent researcher, and s/he is also a practitioner who applies knowledge and techniques to solve clinical problems. Hence, clinical psychologists are not readers of the mind. They need to conduct systematic assessments and with lots of compliance from a person before they can understand his/her “psychological makeup”.

### Clinical Psychology Training

The minimum requirement to practice as a clinical psychologist in Hong Kong is a master degree in clinical psychology. As at today, the Hong Kong Psychological Society recognizes two local clinical psychology programmes so that graduates from these programmes are eligible to become registered clinical psychologists of the Society. These two programs are run by the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong respectively. These two programs have many commonalities. Some of them are described below:

**A**dmission Requirement. The minimum requirement for both programs is a bachelor's degree with honors in psychology from a tertiary institution in Hong Kong or its equivalent.

**C**urriculum and Study Mode. Both programs adopt a two-year full-time study mode. There are three major components in the curriculum, including academic study; clinical practicum training; and dissertation. Academic study consists of classroom courses on assessment, diagnosis and psychopathology, psychotherapy, health and community psychology, family/group therapy, neuropsychology, and professional ethics. For practicum training, students will be arranged to do clinical psychology work under the supervision of qualified clinical



psychologists in a variety of real work settings (e.g. hospitals, prisons).

**E**valuation and Core Competencies. Both programs share a common practicum evaluation form and a common list of core skills (e.g. relaxation training, intellectual assessments). Students must demonstrate their competencies to perform these core skills in front of a qualified clinical psychologist before they can be graduated. These procedures ensure the professional standard of practicing clinical psychologists to protect clients and the general public.

## Scope of Services

**H**ong Kong produces its first batch of locally trained clinical psychologists in 1970s. In the early years, most clinical psychologists in Hong Kong were employed by the government. Over the decades, the employment setting of clinical psychologists has expanded. Government departments including Social Welfare Department, Department of Health, Correctional Services Department, Hong Kong Police, and recently the Fire Services Department, are still a major employer of clinical psychologists. In addition to that, you can also find clinical psychologists in public hospitals run by the Hospital Authority (e.g. Castle Peak Hospital, Queen Mary Hospital); private hospitals (e.g. Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital); and non-government organizations (e.g. Hong Kong Christian Service, New Life Psychiatric and Rehabilitation Association). More and more clinical psychologists are now running their own private clinics as well.

**I**n terms of job nature, clinical psychologists work mainly with patients suffering mental disorders (e.g. depression, schizophrenia). However, the scope of clinical psychology has grown in the past decades and clinical psychologists now work with individuals, couples and families in both remedial and preventive services. Clinical

psychologists also provide their services indirectly through consultation activities, research, project development and evaluation, as well as community work (e.g. psychological support to victims of disaster). I am sure the scope of clinical psychology will continue to evolve and clinical psychologists in Hong Kong will involve in more and more challenging and meaningful work in future.

## Some Reflections

**O**ver the years, many people shared with me their anxiety about applying for clinical psychology programs in Hong Kong. The competition of getting into a clinical psychology program in Hong Kong is keen and stress is normal. However, to me, the real challenge begins only when one starts working as a clinical psychologist after his/her professional training. For learning psychology for self-understanding and enhancement is an enjoyable experience to most people. However, applying psychological principles to help people with emotional problems can be a very difficult and challenging task. On the other hand, your patients can your best teachers in life. Using myself as an example, I have encountered many excellent mentors and teachers in my academic pursue in psychology. However, my best teachers in life are my patients who had suffered from cancer, chronic illnesses, and other life adversities. Some even used their own life to teach me how to lead a more meaningful life.

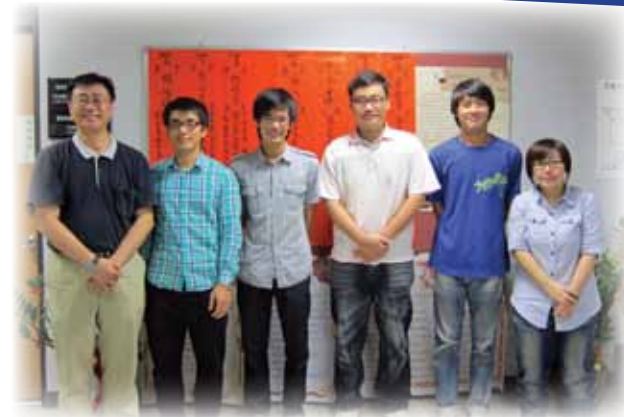
*Professor Samuel Ho*  
*Professor, SS*



## Taiwan Internship Experience : A Current Student's Perspective

During my internship, I was working as a research assistant in Yuan Ze University, Taiwan. My research team was working on a project studying the characteristics of cross-border marriages' children in Taiwan. This is a great experience for me to conduct a research in a place with different background. For instance, the working environment there was more relaxing. While having a meeting, Taiwanese will just list out the main concerns rather than tightly follow the agenda like the meeting in Hong Kong. These differences show the cultural differences between Western people and Chinese people.

Apart from being a research assistant, my on-site supervisor has arranged several organization visits. It is a valuable opportunity for me to communicate with the local social welfare organizations in person as I have learnt a lot from understanding the backgrounds of social welfare system and working process of social organizations in details. For instance, they have tried their best to provide professional and enjoyable activities for their members even they did not have enough supports. I have deeply felt their passion in doing their work. After the visits, my supervisor encouraged me to have a long-lasting and clear thought. When I got a useful one, my intension should be strong enough to achieve the goal even if the financial and human resource was not enough.



The most impressive experience of the internship was being a member of a social service team which provided community services to a village in TaiDong. This was my first time to get in touch with the aborigine of Taiwan. They were very hospitable. They always welcome other people from different places, share their culture and life experiences and they love to help each other. All these were valuable things that Hong Kong people seem losing. Besides, by working with Taiwan students, I have felt their passion on providing community services. They all have brought their talents in to full play. During the process, they have made a lot of amendments which they do not afraid of getting wrong. Moreover, our supervisor has given us many spaces to develop the community services. While working in a team, I have highly cooperated with other members. Even though I was not involved in some activities, I was always taking my initiative to give a hand to my team so as to make the event more effective and efficient.

It is a very memorable experience for me to live and work outside Hong Kong. It is proven that I am interested in discovering the culture of different places and I have made lots of new friends in Taiwan. Moreover, I have learnt to be more well-planned, flexible, passionate and contributive which helps me to prepare to be a profession for the coming future.

*Edmond Ho*

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## Local Internship Experience: A Graduate's Perspective

In last summer, I have had my internship in United Centre of Emotion Health and Positive Living (UCEP). UCEP is a mental illness centre, and my supervisor is a clinical psychologist. There is no doubt that studying mental illnesses and provide therapies are the major concern here. Apart from dealing with several kinds of disorder, UCEP also concern enhancing human well-being. As its NGO nature, UCEP is also a good start for those who decide to work in NGO in their future as well.

As UCEP is a mental illness centre, people could have better understanding about individual psychology. For instance, many mental patients would seek help here. Sometimes, supervisor and clients would invite you to join the therapeutic section, and you can clearly observe what is exactly going on. At that time, you can listen to patients' disclosure, understand their problems, and analyse causes and influences. Also, you can observe how to practice therapies. After that, your supervisor would discuss about the case and clarify your hypotheses, and elaborate the rationale of applying particular therapy. Also, the experience has satisfied my curiosity about mental disorders and therapies.

Additionally, you could participate into the activities of UCEP. Most of the participants are current clients. It provides a platform that you can communicate directly with mental patients. The direct interaction allows me to observe behavioural and thinking pattern of mental patients. Developing rapport with mental patients is the most important business. Frankly, this process is difficult, but I finally made friend with most of the guys.

The most special gain is the knowledge and skills of positive psychology. UCEP is the earliest organization promoting positive psychology in Hong Kong. Positive psychology is a hot topic recently. It has indicated the limitation of pervious psychology, which is over-concerning the negative side. Therefore, positive psychology allows people to live without disorder, and more than that, live with positive and happiness. As the resource of positive

psychology in college is relatively limited, UCEP is an ideal channel for us to learn this funny aspect.

The knowledge and experiences in UCEP are extremely useful and valuable to me. After observing the therapeutic sessions and sharing with supervisor, I am capable to handle college work about abnormal, clinical and counselling psychology at ease. Moreover, the experience would advance your future career in counselling or clinical psychology because you have better understanding about their nature. And, positive psychology is very useful and impressive because everyone could make a good use with it. For academic, I have studied in depth about the concept 'humour' for my FYP. The resource of positive psychology assisted me so much that I could have excellent performance. For personal growth and well-being, I strongly suggested that everyone should apply positive psychology theories, such as flow, mindfulness, gratitude, hope, into their life. I firmly believe that it the contribution of positive psychology will never let you down.

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