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Academic output can be found here:

https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=2q2XL7UAAAAJ&view_op=list_works&sortby=pub_date

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Personal details

I am a tenured Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work and Social Administration at the University of Hong Kong. I was trained as a clinical psychologist in Australia and have been involved in research and clinical practices focused on suicide prevention, mental health promotion, education, interventions, and positive youth development since moving back to Hong Kong in 2003. My time in Australia inspired me with its multicultural and socially inclusive environment, and I hope to use my role as a university teacher, academic, and clinical psychologist to help make Hong Kong an even more socially inclusive society. My aim is to promote social inclusion through pragmatic research, with a focus on specific populations that require more attention and care in our society. In this document, I will share my vision for a socially inclusive Hong Kong and my roles in researching and promoting social inclusive initiatives for marginalized groups in Hong Kong, through research, professional sharing, knowledge exchange with media and the public, and education for young and mature students.

Currently, I am the Programme Director of the Master of Social Science (Counselling) and the immediate-past Programme Director of the Bachelor of Social Science (Counselling). I hope my research and clinical experiences can inspire counselling trainees and passionate undergraduates to become scientific mental health practitioners under our training at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). As a Fellow of the Hong Kong Psychological Society and the Hong Kong Professional Counselling Association, I aim to share my experiences and aspirations with younger professionals. I have served as a consultant and committee member for several government bodies (e.g., Education Bureau, Hong Kong Police College, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority), non-government organizations (e.g., Consumer Councils, Hong Kong Council of Social Services, Joyful Mental Health, Mind HK, the Samaritans and Zubin Foundation), and within HKU (i.e., Equal Opportunity Unit, Discontinuation Committee), and I hope my views can be shared with like-minded people who recognize the importance of having a socially inclusive society. I am also a Delegate of the Hong Kong Representative of the International Union of the Psychological Society, Asian Pacific Psychology Alliance, and was the Country Representative of Hong Kong for the International

Association of Suicide Prevention, allowing me to exchange our local research and psychological wisdom with international collaborators.

I am honored that my research and knowledge exchange work have been recognized, and I am the recipient of the 2012 and 2020 Faculty of Social Science's Research Output and Knowledge Exchange Awards, respectively. I have received over HKD200 million in funding as principal or co-investigator, published over 130 peer-reviewed articles, supervised tens of research postgraduate and taught postgraduate students' dissertations, and have an h-index of 35 with over 4500 citations. Below is a synopsis of my work in several research and practice areas, where I have contributed to the generation of knowledge, development of individuals, and making an impact on the broader community.

Hence, my main research and clinical practice theme aims at promoting social inclusion with a pragmatic research orientation. In this document, I will share my vision of a socially inclusive Hong Kong, the specific populations that require more attention and care in our society, and my roles in researching and promoting more social inclusive initiatives for those marginalized groups in Hong Kong through research, professional sharing, knowledge exchange with media and the public, and education for young and mature students with respectful research teams and no-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Suicide prevention

I joined the Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention in 2003, one of the very few suicide research and prevention centers in the region. At the time, the breadth and depth of suicide research was limited, but it allowed us to conduct and implement many new suicide prevention research studies and programs. With my clinical psychology background, I was heavily involved in the first case-controlled psychological autopsy (PA) study of adults who completed suicide to identify risk and protective factors for suicide in Hong Kong. One novel finding we discovered was that employment and finance issues were closely related to suicides in Hong Kong. Since then, I have been interested in the impact of gambling behavior and suicide, and my related academic output has become one of the most cited on this topic. Because of the PA study, I was able to use my clinical interviewing skills while talking to people bereaved by suicide, which inspired me to write a book about suicide bereavement that was probably the first one in the region in the early 2000s. Our experience in conducting the PA study also allowed us to develop, implement, and evaluate the first structured, empirical-driven program for people newly bereaved by suicide in collaboration with the Department of Health's Forensic Pathology Unit.

I also developed an interest in studying hotspots for suicide and using limited access to suicide means to prevent those suicides [18-20]. With my team, I conducted several innovative studies that looked at suicides on iconic bridges and islands in the 2000s. I evaluated the first bottom-up community suicide prevention program on Cheung Chau Island in Hong Kong, and the idea was then further developed into larger-scale prevention programs that were implemented in two districts, Eastern and North, each with over 500,000 people.

While all this work is fascinating, groundbreaking, and impactful at the familial and community levels, my passion for having direct interactions with people at very high risk for suicide led me to work closely with the Police Negotiation Cadre (PNC), which helps extremely high-risk people threatened with suicide on a weekly basis. With the support of the General Research Fund, I worked with the PNC to explore the reasons and pathways to suicide and how suicide crisis interventions work to stop people from killing themselves at very dangerous moments. This study was the first of its kind in the world to link the local police, academics, a world-renowned suicide prevention psychiatrist in Switzerland, and a former crisis prevention expert from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Being able to observe and talk to people who threatened suicide on rooftops or self-barricaded at homes was a life-changing experience for me and my collaborators,

as we saw how research findings and clinical practices can be applied in the community at the most life-threatening moments. Because of these experiences in suicide research and prevention, I became a consultant for the PNC, the Samaritans, and was a Country Representative of the International Association for Suicide Prevention. I will continue to work with the PNC, the Samaritans, and the research team to identify emerging factors for suicidal behavior in the 21st century and to evaluate innovative programs to prevent all preventable and tragic suicidal behaviors, especially among young people.

Child and adolescent well-being and positive youth development

Of all the age groups I have engaged with in my suicide prevention work, the age group that concerns me the most is the younger age group, especially since becoming a father in 2009. I have spoken to parents of those who have completed or attempted suicide or those with mental illnesses, and I feel their pain through all my senses. With my team, we developed an award-winning youth depression prevention website and school-based cognitive-behavioral program in the mid-2000s, which was awarded as an Outstanding Research Output by the Faculty in 2012. Since then, I have been involved in several youth-related studies that examine their drug use behavior, internet and gaming behavior, and have promoted positive youth development programs through peer-support, education, sports, arts, and music with many NGOs, such as Youth Outreach Heartline and Save the Children, and government organizations, such as the Education Bureau and Consumer Council, for general and marginalized young people.

Moreover, there is an increasing number of children suffering from various forms of special education needs, especially autism, and many of their parents are in distress. I was fortunate to receive a large amount of funding (around HKD 47 million) from the HK Jockey Club Charities Trust to work with over 600 primary and secondary schools, over 10 NGOs, and the World Health Organization (WHO) to start piloting its Caregivers Skills Training (CST) program together with 20 other countries. The CST program was just announced as an evidence-based parenting skills training program endorsed by the WHO in May 2022. Our work with children with autism is highly recognized by the Government and Education Bureau, and it has become a regular practice with about HKD 100 million per year funded by the bureau [6-8] to support children with autism in schools in Hong Kong. Our faculty awarded us the Outstanding Knowledge Exchange Award in 2020 for our work on this topic. I will continue to work with NGOs and the WHO to sustain the CST program on a larger scale to serve more children who can also benefit from this parenting program.

Engagement of young people with prolonged social withdrawal behaviour (aka Hikikomori)

Among the many youth problematic behaviors that I and my collaborators have explored, prolonged social withdrawal behavior in youth (known as Hikikomori, a Japanese term that became well-known in 2010) resembles a form of passive self-harm behavior to me. Hikikomori is a term used to describe people who have severe, prolonged social withdrawal behavior for at least six months and was first discovered in Japan in the mid-1990s. However, this behavior has increasingly drawn the attention of researchers and clinicians all over the world. I see hikikomori as a passive form of suicidal behavior, as people use withdrawal behavior to avoid social interactions with others as a coping mechanism to deal with their difficulties. However, being socially isolated for too long and spending most of their time at home can significantly interfere with their normal routine, occupational or academic functioning, social activities, or relationships, and eventually, their life skills and health will deteriorate. Moreover, their caregivers who care for them financially and emotionally on a round-the-clock daily basis suffer from a lot of stress, and some become ashamed of their children and suicidal as well.

In 2010, my former PhD student (now a Research Assistant Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong) and I started investigating the prolonged social withdrawal behavior situation in Hong Kong. We

took a non-psychiatric perspective to study this behavior, and hence, our studies cover a wide range of research methodologies to look at the causes of such behavior from a bio-psycho-social-developmental-sociological perspective. Our work has been widely recognized by other researchers in other countries, leading us to many academic presentation invitations at international conferences in Japan, Singapore, Switzerland, and we expanded our work to Shanghai and Taiwan [1, 2]. Our systematic review paper remains one of the most cited articles (over 170 times) in this research field [3]. We also co-created and evaluated one of the very first social service programs with an NGO using therapy animals to engage and service young people with such behavior [4]. More information can be found here: <https://www.ke.hku.hk/story/partnership/hidden-youth>. This innovative service is highly appreciated by the local community and social service professionals in Japan, Singapore, and other countries. Although many efforts have been developed to identify, engage, and help young people with prolonged social withdrawal behavior to re-engage back into society, the care and understanding of their caregivers are lacking not just in Hong Kong but in many countries. I will continue to work with local NGOs and international partners to initiate more innovative work for both young people and their caregivers.

Human-animal interactions and animal-assisted education and intervention

In 2009, my 17-year-old dog passed away when my son was just six months old. It was a memorable year for me when life and death issues were happening concurrently. While grieving for my fur child, I realized how little we knew about such kinds of bereavement, human-animal interactions, and the potential benefits of animal involvement in education and clinical settings in Hong Kong and among non-Western societies. With seed funding provided by the university, I conducted the first bereavement study on the death of companion animals with three social workers trained in pet bereavement counseling. We interviewed over 30 people who had lost their companion animals and found that although the grief was painful, it also led to post-traumatic growth for many of the interviewed owners. I was then fortunate to be commissioned by the Junior Chamber International Hong Kong to conduct the first study examining the bio-psycho-social impacts of pet ownership in Hong Kong with my former PhD student, who is a mental health social worker and retired last year. We also explored how involving dogs in social services could help elderly people with dementia, and our work was awarded the Best Poster Prevention in the Hong Kong Primary Care Conference in 2017.

Moreover, because of our experience and reputation of involving trained dogs to help hikikomori since 2010, we were gratefully funded by the Keswick Foundation with about HKD 4.5 million to develop and evaluate one of the very few animal-assisted humane and social-emotional learning programs in the world, implemented in 12 primary schools, with excellent recognition by the young children, their teachers, principals, parents, and the media. Our team has been recognized as pioneers in Hong Kong, leading human-animal interaction research and practices, and we provide consultation about animal welfare to schools and NGOs interested in animal-assisted interventions. During the school closure period in COVID-19 around the world, we developed an online version of the school program, which was highly recognized by other professionals in this field, and we were awarded the Best Presentation in the One Welfare World Conference 2021. Our team is still young, but we will continue to work on this research theme and many more topics, such as professional attitudes towards animal-assisted interventions, the impact of animal adoption and abandonment, which are important but yet to be studied in Hong Kong, a unique living environment compared to other mega-cities.

Ethnic minority population

Although Hong Kong is recognized as a multicultural society, the fact remains that most of its residents are Chinese-speaking citizens. Besides foreign domestic workers, many non-Chinese individuals, including

those who may have been born in Hong Kong with limited Chinese language skills, still face a lot of structural and social stigmatization and discrimination. As a researcher who wishes to promote social inclusion and as a person with firsthand experience as an ethnic minority (EM), enhancing the understanding and acceptance of people with South Asian ethnicity and collaborating with service providers who help South Asians in Hong Kong seems like a legitimate research and practice interest.

With the support of the HK Jockey Club Charities Trust, a multidisciplinary team including academics from the departments of public administration, sociology, psychology, and social work and social administration received over HKD 10 million to study youth development among ethnic minority youth from 2016-2018. Together with my former PhD student, who is now an Assistant Professor at Lingnan University, we published articles about the mental health and youth development of EM young people in Hong Kong. We were funded by the Public Policy Research Fund to examine the impact of the 2019 social movement on EM young people in Hong Kong, and we also received funding from the Equal Opportunity Commission to examine the needs and challenges of Nepali elderly who have been residing in Hong Kong since WW-II. With an increasing trend in the number of ethnic minority populations in Hong Kong, we will have to face more challenging issues about cultural and ethnic exclusion and racial inequitable arguments in the nearest future. I am grateful to be able to collaborate with different research teams funded by two Research Impact Funds to further our understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on our EM population in Hong Kong. In terms of teaching, our teaching team will continue to develop and evaluate culturally sensitive training for our students at the University and practicing professionals in Hong Kong.

Mental health promotion and intervention

As a clinical psychologist, I hope that psychological science can benefit as many people as possible not only to prevent the development of mental illnesses but also to help people have a flourishing and compassionate life. In addition to the school-based depression and animal-assisted humane education programs mentioned earlier, I have worked as a Co-Investigator on numerous research and implementation programs aimed at fostering the mental health of young people (e.g., Level-mind), women with postpartum depression, preventing elderly depression, enhancing caregiving skills of people with dementia (e.g., JoyAge, REACH-II), and centenarians. These programs were funded by the Jockey Club Charities Trust, Charles Kao Foundation, and University Grant Council, with a total amount of over HKD 200 million and a territory-wide impact. In these projects, I generally provide clinical psychology and suicide crisis consultations and training support in the development and implementation of those programs. Hong Kong is an advanced city; however, many people are still reluctant to seek counseling or psychological help for their life issues and may end up developing much more severe psychological problems or self-destructive behavior. With these large-scale studies, I hope more people can be initially engaged and receive the help they need from these projects.

Education within and beyond HKU

I began teaching undergraduates in 2005 as a Teaching Consultant. Since becoming a professorial staff member in the Department in 2010, I have been able to initiate numerous innovative teaching activities at the course, programme, and university levels with the support of the Common Core Course (CCC) office, the Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (CETL), and the Technology-Enriched Learning Initiative (TELI). Leveraging my clinical psychology background, I incorporate technology and connections with NGOs to provide students with experiential learning opportunities that go beyond the cognitive level and enhance their life experiences.

At the course level, I have worked closely with CETL and TELI to create trailers and teaching videos that engage students on mental health and communication issues. I teach the CCC course CCHU9022 and one

of its main learning activities involves groups of 5-6 students partnering with an NGO to develop a mental health-related programme during reading weeks. This allows students to apply and reflect on the material in their everyday lives, inspiring many of them to do more for the vulnerable in our society. With the great support of CETL and TELI, our course is well-received by over 120 UG students and we have even developed a secondary school-level course with taster online lectures.

I also developed and teach the SOWK1012 course, which attracts at least 250 UG students per year. The course focuses on improving the communication and counselling skills of IT-savvy young people who may not be effective communicators. It has been recognized and badged as one of the Communicative Intensive Courses at HKU, and my teaching rationale has been presented at several CETL-organized events to share my insights on teaching communication at the course level.

In 2012, I became the programme director for the Bachelor of Social Sciences (BSS, Counselling) major programme, which I completely revamped to include more experiential learning activities. I introduced SOWK1012 as a pre-requisite core course for students who wish to minor or major in counselling and developed a course at the 2nd and 3rd year levels that allows students to interact with master-level counselling trainees as both students and clients. This gives UG students the lived experience of being a client, helping them in their future pursuit of counselling at the post-graduate level. I also introduced a Capstone Project course at the 4th year level where students must partner with an NGO on a semester-long project aimed at promoting mental health for the service users of the NGOs. At the end of the course, students and NGOs are invited to share their projects with the wider university learning community. As a result of these efforts, the number of students claiming counselling as a minor or major has increased from a two-digit number in 2012 to over 330 in 2022.

I have been the Deputy Director of the MSS (Counselling) programme since 2010, and in 2022 I was appointed as its director. My vision is to train a strong cohort of counselors with both undergraduate and postgraduate training, and to provide high-standard counseling services to the wider community while advocating for counseling as a recognized profession in Hong Kong. To achieve this, I work with the teaching team and the Counselling Unit to provide as many experiential learning experiences as possible, including a role-playing activity where UG and PG students work together and simulate counseling sessions.

When it comes to supervising research training for UG, TPG, and RPG students, my primary consideration is to ensure they work on topics that matter to them. My philosophy on supervising RPG students involves mentoring passionate individuals who are willing to undergo the lengthy and challenging training process required to make a positive impact on society. I believe that the research postgraduate degree is a comprehensive training program that requires lifelong effort to master as a change-maker. Therefore, during their training, I support RPGs unconditionally to develop themselves as researchers, scholars, dream achievers, and life-changers, ensuring their passions do not become extinct before they take their first steps on the journey.

I prepare my supervised students to become curious, compassionate, collaborative, and competent social scientists, rather than mere "research and teaching technicians". I encourage them to collaborate with their peers, supervisors, and other researchers both within and outside their disciplines. I emphasize the importance of effective communication and caring for the people they serve, and I encourage them to engage in meaningful knowledge exchange activities, enabling them to share their research knowledge and wisdom with anyone at all levels of society.

My pedagogy for mentoring RPG students is influenced by my training in clinical psychology and two main teaching philosophies: Constructivism and Humanism. I use instructional strategies and create a tailored learning environment for each student, starting from the first encounter when I am approached for

supervision opportunities. Once accepted, I encourage them to write a commentary piece about their research interests for local newspapers, creating a mutual understanding of their passions. I also encourage them to take elective courses that matter to their passions and meet with me at least bi-weekly in an open-door policy.

I assess them periodically based on the progress of their proposal writings and set up group meetings with all my supervised and graduated students so they can share ideas, learn, and get support from each other. I liaise with other researchers and frontline professionals in non-governmental organizations to inspire them with the important work of NGOs and get them planning to work as a member of any transdisciplinary teams in the future. I partner with them during the data collection process to ensure their safety and that data is collected in an ethical manner. I also invite students to be involved in my courses either as sit-ins, sharing, or marking to get an early start as an educator.

In summary, as their supervisors, I see my role as that of a facilitator rather than an expert. I provide guidance and support while encouraging students to explore innovative ideas and take risks in their research. I cherish the opportunities to walk with research students who share my passion for learning and discovery, and I believe that all academics have an obligation to foster the next generation of scholars and practitioners equipped to make meaningful contributions to our world.

Undergraduate education

I also supervise undergraduate students who have received scholarships to conduct research projects aligned with their own research interests. Currently, I am supervising two IUG students funded by the Laidlaw Scholar Programme and the Undergraduate Research Fellowship Programme, who are studying youth and elderly issues in mainland China and Macao SAR. Additionally, I have supervised several post-doctoral fellows who are now Research Assistant Professors, Assistant Professors, and Associate Professors in other local universities.

At the university level, I am a member of the Discontinuation Committee because many students who go through the process suffer significant psychological pain and stress. As a clinical psychologist, I hope to provide psychological consultation and support to these students. Furthermore, my work on social inclusion and equity issues has led to my appointment as an Equal Opportunity Advisor in the university since 2005.

Professional development for making an impact locally and internationally

I strongly believe that any research work should contribute to the development and advancement of all members of society. Therefore, as a Fellow and Scientific Secretary of the Hong Kong Psychological Society and Hong Kong Professional Counselling Association, I volunteer to organize academic conferences, workshops, and webinars with conference committee members to enhance the research culture with frontline colleagues and the public through both professional associations. As a Fellow, I also mentor student members of the HKPS and provide consultations when necessary. Additionally, as Programme Director of a Taught Postgraduate programme, I supervise students who wish to upgrade their research knowledge and skills by doing their dissertations.

In my role as an Honorary Research Fellow of the Police College and Consultant of the Police Negotiation Cadre for government organizations, I share my experiences in suicide and crisis research with younger police officers. I also work closely with the Education Bureau to promote student mental health and suicide prevention. Moreover, I provide consultation to the Curriculum Development Council about a two-year course for secondary school students called Health Management and Social Care. Recently, I was appointed

as a co-opted Member of the Working Group of the Consumer Council on revamping Consumer Education for Youth.

As an Honorary Consultant for Youth Outreach, Honorary Psychological Consultant for the Samaritans, and Advisor for both MindHK and the Zubin Foundation among NGOs, I contribute my research experiences on mental health and ethnic minorities. Besides collaborating with local and international research teams, I review manuscripts for top-tier psychiatric journals, such as the British Journal of Psychiatry and Psychiatric Research. I was recently invited as a Life-long Associate Editor for the Frontiers of Psychiatry.

Knowledge exchange for raising the awareness of the marginalized groups and promote social inclusion

I see societal engagement and knowledge exchange with the wider community as an extremely important role as an academic. Therefore, I make myself available for media interviews to share the international, local, and my own research findings on suicide prevention, mental health, positive youth development, social withdrawal, and human-animal interactions and animal welfare. I always invite people with personal experiences or those who have participated in my research as part of the media interviews so that more people can be inspired to become advocates. These concerted efforts can help advise policymakers at local, national, or international levels and provide information through the press and on social media.

One of the knowledge exchange examples I wish to share is the JC A-Connect project, which aims to raise awareness of caring for caregivers and children with autism. We invited children with autism and their families, along with elderly residents and local community members, to co-create art pieces in Kam Tin Mural Village where I live. This activity showcases the talents of students with ASD in drawing and painting, and promotes a better understanding of autism in the community.

Personal statement

In psychotherapy, the term "Use of Self" refers specifically to the ways in which the therapist draws upon their own feelings, experiences, or personality to enhance the therapeutic process. For all the research and service programs that I have been involved in, I practice the Use of Self as well. To me, without this sense of practicing as a psychologist and a researcher, there will not be much power in the writings and words that I use to share my vision of the importance of social inclusion in our society. I feel privileged, proud, and grateful to have walked with so many like-minded people along the way.

As a pragmatic researcher and a psychologist with a stubborn sense of using myself in every step of the process, I enjoy having the freedom to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures of research and practice that best meet societal needs and purposes to create a socially inclusive society. I am particularly indebted to the friends and clients who have attempted or completed suicide, my almost centenarian grandmother with severe dementia, my passed-away and happily living fur children, my son, and wife for inspiring me throughout my personal and professional development journey.