“SoSc Life: RPG Newsletter” is now published on a regular basis in the end of each semester (January and July). The Newsletter provides a platform for RPG students to share their research achievement and learning experience and to improve the communications with faculty members and Division administrators. It is also a part of our efforts to strengthen the graduate training program in social science and to build up a sense of belongings. The newsletter is of the PGs, by the PGs, and for the PGs.

The Division of Social Science currently enrolls 15 PhD students and 26 MPhil students. We offer one of the best training programs in the region for students who are interested in social science research. Many of our PhD graduates are now holding academic positions at Academia Sinica (Taiwan), Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Peking University, Fudan University, Renmin University, Sun Yat-Sen University, the National University of Singapore, LaTrobe University (Australia). Many of our MPhil students have been able to continue their PhD study in top research universities like Harvard, Stanford, Yale, Cornell, UCLA, University of Toronto, and among others.

I have been serving on the PG committee and watching the growth of our graduate student training program since I came to UST in 2003. As a PG committee member, I once had a chance to read students’ files, interview and recruit them, get to know almost everybody as the instructor of the two required courses (SOSC509 and SOSC534). As a junior faculty then, I could easily mix with them, many of whom I still maintain contact with now. They told me that learning in a dynamic environment and living on a beautiful campus have become their memorable life experience.

As graduate students, you may come and go, and HKUST is only one stop of your long career journey. As an institution without much tradition, what you have achieved and experienced here, to be recorded in the Newsletter, will soon become a part of our assets and history to benefit to those who follow your steps and assist our RPG program in reaching the next level of excellence.
A. Achievement and Progress (2010-2011)

Publications in 2011


Alumni News (2011)

Huang, Xiambi and Mark Western. 2011. "Social Networks and Occupational Attainment in Australia," Sociology 45(2): 269-286. (Xiambi HUANG, School of Social Sciences, LaTrobe University, Australia, PhD 2005).


Conference Presentations


Huang, Xiambi and Mark Western. 2011. "Social Networks and Occupational Attainment in Australia," Sociology 45(2): 269-286. (Xiambi HUANG, School of Social Sciences, LaTrobe University, Australia, PhD 2005).


B. Oversea Exchange Experiences

My Experience at the University of Michigan

by Hua YE

Thanks to the HKUST Overseas Research Awards, I am currently spending about 5 months as a visiting research student at the Population Studies Center (PSC) at the University of Michigan. Thanks also to Prof. Yu Xie, who is my sponsor at the University of Michigan, I have access to research facilities here, including office space, computing facilities, the library and internet resources.

I have been attending two courses at the University of Michigan: Quantitative Methods I by Yu Xie at the Department of Sociology, and Labor Economics I by Mel Stephens and John Bound at the Department of Economics. I am also a regular member of the Quantitative Sociology Workshop, and have participated in various seminars, e.g., the QMP Methodology Seminar, the PSC Seminar, the PSID/CDS Seminar, the PSC/SRC Seminar, and the CCS Noon Lecture Series (interested parties may search the internet for information on these seminars). I have presented some of my current research in classes and group meetings, and have received helpful comments and suggestions from the audience. In addition to my dissertation research and cooperative projects with Prof. Xiaogang Wu, I am also working on two new research projects with Yu Xie.

The most important experience here is exposure to more diverse research topics. Our division has a strong research unit on studies of Chinese societies. I have benefited greatly from discussions with fellow students and the faculty, and I am often impressed by their deep understanding of Chinese societies. In contrast, I have learned much more here about different perspectives and approaches.

The PSC is one of five centers at the Institute of Social Research (ISR); the other four are the Survey Research Center (SRC), the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), the Research Center for Group Dynamics, and the Center for Political Studies. ISR is a large research community of inter-disciplinary researchers, including sociologists, economists, demographers, public health researchers, statisticians, and psychologists. Some of the faculty members know a great deal about data collection (Panel Study of Income Dynamics and its Child Development Supplement, and Health and Retirement Study are collected by SRC and ISR); many of them are methodologically sophisticated and, most importantly, they emphasize research designs and often offer intuitive suggestions to students/faculty here who encounter methodological difficulties. It is an enjoyable experience to attend their seminars. Even when I am not the person to whom suggestions are offered, insightful thoughts sparkle during scholarly exchanges.

I have also learned more about research on other countries, especially on US society, and have been thinking about the possibility of similar research projects on China. Exposure to studies of other societies enables me to look beyond Greater China when thinking about existing research findings. China is not that unique once we embrace a comparative perspective; what is happening in China may have happened in earlier days in other countries, or is happening now in other countries. Even if China has its own uniqueness, we need to situate our findings in a comparative context where we can dialogue with scholars working on other countries. To accomplish this, we need to know more about what others have done in different settings, and this will be one of the imperatives for my future studies.

I appreciate having been offered the opportunity to be here, and I look forward to sharing my thoughts with fellow students in our division.

YE, HUA

PhD candidate

University of Michigan, 24 August, 2011 to 5 January, 2012

Tip: Our division supports one PhD student each year to undertake exchange to an overseas research institute / university for one semester after passing PhD qualifying exam.
From June 13 to 24, 2011, I was honored to be nominated by our division to participate in the **Consortium on Qualitative Research Methods (CQRM)** co-hosted by the Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University.

The CQRM is known as the best workshop on qualitative and multi-method research in the USA, and even the world. It seeks to enable students to create and critique methodologically sophisticated qualitative research designs. It explores the techniques, uses, strengths, and limitations of these methods, while emphasizing their relationships with alternative approaches. Topics include research design, concept formation, methods of structured and focused comparisons of cases, typological theory, case selection, process tracing, comparative historical analysis, congruence testing, path dependency, interpretivism, counterfactual analysis, interview and field research (including archival) techniques, necessary and sufficient conditions, fuzzy set methods, natural experiment and philosophy of science issues relevant to qualitative research.

The workshop was organized into three types of institute sessions: (1) unified (whole institute) classes; (2) research design discussion groups; and (3) elective modules for different research methods. The research design discussion groups were held for two hours on most mornings at the institute. Every attendee was assigned to one discussion group (which was formed based on similar research topics) to present his/her research proposal and receive constructive feedback on their own research designs from discussion group members and the instructor of that group (who was a guest professor of the institute).

Although the workshop was very intensive, I benefited from it greatly. First, I discovered and learned recently developed cutting-edge qualitative research methods; second, I received some valuable suggestions and comments on my research proposal for my PhD dissertation; third, I met many brilliant professors and students from top universities, and communicating with them gave me many inspiring and intuitive ideas; and fourth, I connected with some professors and students who share similar research interests with me, and this kind of academic community is helpful for my future study.

**SHENG, ZHIMING**

PhD Candidate

Syracuse University, June 13-24, 2011

Tip: Our division supports one research student each year to attend this two-week workshop at Syracuse University, USA.
Life at UCLA

by Gloria HE

Thanks to this newly established graduate exchange program and the sponsorship of Prof. Cameron Campbell and Prof. Rob Mare, I was fortunate to be an exchange student at UCLA for half a year.

In contrast to HKUST, UCLA uses a quarter rather than a semester system, which is far more fast-paced and challenging. Half a year is one semester in Hong Kong, but is two quarters there, which means that the workload is almost doubled.

For these two quarters, I joined the California Center for Population Research (CCPR), and participated in various seminars. I also enrolled for and attended several courses (i.e., introductory of demography, neighborhood effect, and statistical methods), in which I finished two working papers, one of which was presented at the North American Chinese Sociologist Association (NACSA) in August in Las Vegas.

This exchange experience has had a great impact on me, academically as well as emotionally. If you were to ask me: “What’s the most important thing you learned from it?” I would say “People really have got a lot of potential.”

This half a year in LA has already become part of my most important memories. We outgrow things and memories usually fade. Yet the really important experiences stay in our hearts and we never forget.

C. Other Research Opportunities

A. Conference Funding increased

Goods News to PhD students and Postdocs to attend conferences:

The Senate Research Committee has approved the new RTG policy. The new policy is effective now and will apply to the December around of application 2011.

1. PhD students are eligible to receive support at most three times during their program of study. The restriction that prevents students from applying more than once every two years has been removed.

2. For postdocs, transportation expenses, conference registration fees and/or per diem up to a maximum amount of $8,000 are supported. More research opportunities can be found in http://webhost1.ust.hk/~webocga/resopp/web/hk/php/local.php

B. Call for Application: PhD Exchange

Existing PhD student, after the qualifying exam, can apply for Oversea Research Award to spend one semester in a US university to undertake research projects related to their dissertation. The deadline is Feb 29. For more information, contact PG coordinator, Professor Xiaogang WU.

C. Future Conferences

1. The next Annual Meeting of American Economic Association is scheduled for January 4-6, 2013 in San Diego, CA, USA.

2. The Annual Meeting of American Sociological Association is scheduled in August 17-20, 2012 in Denver, CO, USA.

3. The Annual Meeting of American Political Science Association is scheduled in August 30-September 2, 2012 in New Orleans, LA, USA.

4. The 70th Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference is scheduled in April 12-15, 2012 in Chicago, IL, USA.

5. The Annual Meeting of Population Association of America is scheduled in May 3-5 in San Francisco, CA, USA.

6. The Annual Meeting of Association for Asian Studies is scheduled in March 15–18, 2012 in Toronto, Canada.

7. The Spring meeting of the Research Committee on Social Stratification and Mobility (RC28) of the International Sociological Association (ISA) will be held at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China, from May 10-13, 2012. The theme of the conference is: Economic Transformation and Social Stratification in Comparative Perspectives. The conference is cosponsored by the Center for Applied Social and Economic Research, HKUST and Department of Sociology, CUHK. For more information, visit http://rc28.ust.hk.
D. Students
Graduates and New RPGs

1. PhD graduates this year (5):
   Shuo CHEN, Bing LI, Nan LI, Chicheng MA, Zhuoni ZHANG

2. MPhil graduates this year (11)
   Among the 11 MPhil students who graduated in the summer of 2011, six took jobs either in Hong Kong or mainland China, four enrolled in our division’s PhD program (Ting CHEN, Jia YU, Jing ZENG, Titi ZHOU), and one enrolled in a PhD program in the USA (Qian WANG). Jia YU received the Hong Kong PhD fellowship.

3. New MPhil Students (10)
   There are 10 MPhil students enrolled in our division in this semester.

PRESENT RPG STUDENT NUMBER

15
PhD students

26
MPhil students
E. Student Life

by Qin JIANG (TA Coordinator of SOSC)

The department activity this fall semester was a pizza gathering following the open day on September 25. On September 24 and 25, about 15 RPG students offered their help at the division’s counter.

The original plan was to organize a BBQ gathering for all the RPGs in our division. Unfortunately, the heavy rain forced us to change the plan. Thanks to our division’s financial support, and with the help of Ting CHEN and others, we finally organized a Pizza gathering in our PG office. There were 26 participants in total, including eight new MPhil, seven year-two MPhil, six PhD students, and three Alumni. Our Acting Head, Prof. Yik, also attended the gathering. The senior and new RPGs got to know each other and everybody had a good time that night.

Forthcoming TA Activities in the Spring Semester

A. Field trip to New Territories in April

Supported by SAO’s Graduate Student Life Fund, we plan to lead a field trip to the Hong Kong Wetland Park and also the New Choi Yuen Village in the New Territories in April, 2012. Wetland Park is a perfect site to appreciate the beauty of Hong Kong nature, especially in Spring, and the New Choi Yuen village is famous for its resistance to the Express Railway in Hong Kong over the past two years. Visiting this village can enrich our knowledge about Hong Kong Society.

B. Fishing trip in June

The MSSS (Mainland Student and Scholar Society) will organize a fishing trip near HKUST in June.