



WeWahMusic: Sociologists for Change

Javier Pang



I obtained my undergraduate degree in the Department of Sociology at CUHK. I still remember how I was inspired by the lectures offered by Prof CHAN Kin Man. CD (Dr. SZE Tak On) was the research assistant of Prof Chan and he loved inviting “soci-mate” to form a tea group for chit-chat on social issues. One day, he invited other SOCI students and me to form a “tea group” with Prof Chan. In the tea group, we shared our lives on the campus, the books we were reading, and even our personal trouble (as “sociology students”, absolutely we would end up using the sociological perspective to debunk these “trouble”). Prof Chan loves using his story and experience to encourage us. He always suggested that we should make use of our time during undergraduate study, jump out of our comfort zone, and think about what we could do

by using our knowledge, social position, time, prestige, resources in order to make the world better.

In 2011, the HK government launched the Scheme \$6000. My friends and I thought that we should not just use this money for our own interests. Instead, as students studying sociology, we thought there must be something meaningful that we could spend the money on. Being introduced by CD, I met some new friends from other sectors (I.T., science, marketing, social work, pharmacy, etc.), and we planned to launch a free piano learning scheme for the underprivileged students in Hong Kong after several discussions.



Inequality is a vital issue in Hong Kong, and the life quality of the underprivileged students was largely ignored at that moment. Learning cultural activities was barely impossible for these students. However, under the distorted, weird, absurd education system, cultural capital is essentially important for academic career development. Piano is one of the most common, but expensive musical instruments in Hong Kong.

We used our social network to connect the resources in the community to provide a totally free 1-on-1 piano lecture to the students for up to four years. Our community collaborator, such as churches, community centers, NGOs, secondary schools, private music centers and, the most important, the volunteer piano teacher, they all support our scheme after listening to our presentation and observing the real change of the families and students in our annual concert. They provided their place for learning, collected second-hand books for the students, donated money and helped to recruit volunteers. The success of our scheme is totally based on the robust civil society. We have invested nearly ten years in building up our organization and consolidating the protocol. Until now, nearly 300 students graduated from our program and we can see how their lives are changed after learning music. Every year, we are happy to hear that our students successfully enter their ideal secondary school and university. We believe that volunteer teaching not only nourishes their cultural capital but also accompany their growth. We hope that one day they will become the seed of change for our future generations.

CONFERENCES

Lai, Yingtong and Eric Fong. Does context matter? Exploring the effects of weekend gathering on psychological well-being of live-in migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong. Paper to be presented at the Population Association of America 2021 Annual Meeting (May 5-8, 2021).

PUBLICATIONS

Chen, Dan and Yuying Tong. 2021. “Marriage for the sake of parents? Adult children's marriage formation and parental psychological distress in China.” *Journal of Marriage and Family*. [\[Read the article\]](#)

Four Tips to Present Your Research to Non-academic Research Participants ... and Why it Matters

Anita Venanzi

1. Know your audience and let them know you, in the sense of gaining access, managing mutual roles and legitimacy, negotiating a respectful common language, and transparently shared interests. I am just a beginner in talking to non-institutional, non-commercial, and quite diverse transnational and grassroots audience. They tend to be or be close to the very people I interviewed or who allowed me to conduct participant observation, so a large part of this work came with the perks of letting each other be seen. None of this is possible, of course, without knowing oneself first through a careful privilege/deprive check and positioning in relation to those who we are problematically encouraged to call "subjects."

2. Weighted expectations management. The feedback we'll receive and the journey towards receiving it greatly benefits our human and academic performance. Plus, there is a debt to be paid - for no research would have happened without consent and participation. We can offer to pay by presenting our observations in a way that assists self-reflection, fulfills or expands interests, responds to certain needs – or all of the above. This means asking first, genuinely and, most importantly, vulnerably.

3. Interactive and inclusive. Showing that an academic can give up the upper hand is, first of all, a matter of reparative justice, but it also comes with perks. For example, the usual 15 minutes we get at conferences may spread to 2 hours of time: not to try the thrill of a keynote speaker but to make it interactive and inclusive. This means sitting in a circle on the floor, getting acquainted with intercultural competence, non-formal education methods, non-violent communication. Moreover, it requires to go slow, to stop, and ask continuously, "Does it make sense to you? Do you see yourself in this? Is it clear enough? Is it useful? And then deal with – and treasure – all the "Nos", right on the spot.

4. Free ego work. Does this sound terrifying? It is indeed very far from the self-congratulatory and self-serving academic mode we are encouraged to embrace. However, this is not about prestige. Because when it is, it turns out to be very useless. When we buy into the ego-trip of prestige, we tend to give and receive comments that are polished by constructive or destructive undisclosed interests. Letting go of this ego-blasting hyperstructure can be surprisingly refreshing and liberating. Most of all, it can direct us in producing mindful knowledge that matters to those who are – and are kept – outside of academia, which are still the majority of people.



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

✓ Grants and awards

- **Francisco Olivos** and **Dan Chen** were awarded the grant for student-led projects of the Hong Kong Sociological Association.

✓ Job ads:

- Assistant Professor / Associate Professor / Professor in Social Development, East China Normal University, Shanghai, China. **Deadline: May 9, 2021.** [\[see the ad\]](#)

✓ Call for applications:

- Eurasia-Pacific Uninet Ernst Mach Grant for PhD Students and Post-Docs for 2021-22. **Deadline: March 15, 2021.** [\[see the ad\]](#)