This workshop explores the recent development of local and indigenous psychological practices in China. These include a dynamic blend of traditional Chinese thought, local approaches to healing, socialist legacies, and Western influences. It is now understood that Chinese psychological practices borrow from tradition as a means of acculturating “Western” psychology in service of both individual and sociopolitical ends. At the same time, practices revise and tweak Western psychology to make it more compatible with Chinese population. Our primary interest is in an ethnographic analysis of this dynamic exchange and the resulting unique configurations of care.

The theoretical backdrop for the workshop is "indigenous psychology," or IP, an intellectual movement that "resist[s] the hegemony of Western psychology in representation of the human mind, and in investigation of local mentality" (Sundararajan 2016). IP consists of two major components: “adapting theory and method from the West and drawing on traditional resources from the local culture (including literature, history, and philosophy) for hypothesis testing and theory construction” (Sundararajan 2016). This workshop addresses both dimensions of IP by examining how Chinese psychologists seek parallels and cross-pollination between Western psychology and Chinese cultural traditions, including Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM).

The workshop also centres local coping mechanisms for distress. Such mechanisms spring from interactions with the lived environment, producing a local ecology of psychological care. We ask: what kinds of psychological care and wellbeing result in healthful and meaningful livelihoods for people? One important goal of this workshop is to assess the impact on this ecology of China's first Mental Health Law, in place since 2013. As this law emphasizes and legitimizes psychiatric hospital care based on Western biomedicine, its impact on local practices cannot be ignored.

Politically, the workshop takes as a starting point the idea that psychological practices and therapies accepted within the Chinese population offer a window for understanding current forms of governance. In recent decades the Chinese government has cultivated a new kind of ideal subject: not the individualistic self who is assisted by Western psychology, and not the traditional citizen who does not embrace entrepreneurship. Rather, this subject enacts an ensemble self that connects both: neoliberal but collective, family-oriented, and resilient in the face of difficulties caused by economic restructuring since the 1990s. We explore when and how current indigenous psychological practices assist in producing, or resisting, this ideal subject.
Highlighting the hybrid nature of contemporary Chinese culture, papers in the workshop refuse essentialist analysis of any given intellectual tradition. Instead, they carefully tease out how different potentials of Chinese cultural tradition are mobilized for contemporary purposes, and how they go through specific curation and trajectories to shape therapeutic practices. To address this complexity authors employ a variety of theoretical insights to inform their analyses.

Topics include the invention of TCM Psychology; the integration of TCM into indigenizing psychoanalysis for developing “suboptimal mental health”; emerging Confucian developmental and educational psychology in Chinese child-rearing practices; the adoption of the philosophy of the neo-Confucian scholar Wang Yangming in psychological counseling and moral teachings offered to Chinese government officials; the hybridization of Western psychotherapy with Buddhism, Daoism, and Chinese divination; indigenous theories of (psychological) wellbeing and their understanding of “modernity” in two transnational minority ethnic communities of Lisu and Akha; cross-generational perspectives on mental health treatment through mixed methods, highlighting conflicts between people's lived experience and their social roles/cultural niches; the subjective experience of “localization”—how cultural materials (including calligraphy, poetry couplets, and paintings) converge as a question of how a person transduces materials into meaning; the cultural and professional critiques of a new "illness"—"empty heart disease" and post-partum depression; the effects of compulsory labor on recovery from heroin addiction; and finally, the history of indigenization of Western psychotherapy since Mao’s era and the psychosomatic model of healthcare in Mao’s China.

Nov. 23, 2019 Saturday

8:30—9:00am Pastries and Coffee

9:00—9:40am Keynote Speech: Dr. Louise Sundararajan: Indigenous Psychology and its Implications for Cultural Analysis

Panel 1 Psychology and Traditional Chinese Medicine
9:40—10:00am Yanhua Zhang (Clemson University)
10:00—10:20am Zhang Liao (Harvard Medical School)
10:20—10:40am Linying Hu (Simon Fraser University)
10:40—10:55am Discussion: Katherine Mason (Brown University)
10:55—11:10am Q&A

Lunch at Harbor Center (11:10—1:00pm)

Panel 2 Psychology, Confucianism, and Daoism
1:00—1:20pm Zeng Yukun (University of Chicago)
1:20—1:40pm Mieke Matthyssen (Ghent University)
1:40—2:00pm Han Buxin (Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences)
2:00—2:15pm Discussion: Louise Sundararajan
2:15—2:30 pm Q&A
2:30—3:00 pm Coffee break

Panel 3 Folk Healing and Local Ecology of Psychological Care
3:00—3:20 pm Teresa Kuan (Chinese University of Hong Kong)
3:20—3:40 pm Barclay Bram Shoemaker (Oxford University)
3:40—4:00 pm Li Geng (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences)
4:00—4:15 pm Discussion: Li Zhang (University of California, Davis)
4:15—4:30 pm Q&A

Panel 4 Drug Addiction, Psychosomatic Conditions, and Socialist Legacy
4:30—4:50 pm Nick Bartlett (Barnard College, Columbia University)
4:50—5:10 pm Wang Dongmei (Nanjing University)
5:10—5:30 pm Zhipeng Gao (Simon Fraser University)
5:30—5:45 pm Discussion: Sandra Hyde (McGill University)
5:45—6:00 pm Q&A

Dinner at 6:30 pm

Nov. 24, 2019 Sunday

8:30-9:00 pastries and coffee

Panel 5 The Politics of the Heart
9:00—9:20 am Huang Hsuan-Ying (Chinese University of Hong Kong)
9:20—9:40 am Miranda Wu (University of California San Diego)
9:40—10:00 am Jie Yang (Simon Fraser University)
10:00—10:15 am Discussion: Mieke Matthyssen (Ghent University)
10:15—10:30 am Q&A

10:30—10:50 am coffee break

Panel 6 Wellbeing, Modernization, and Minority Ethnic Groups
10:50—11:10 am Lau Ting Hui (Cornell University)
11:10—11:30 am Deborah Tooker (Le Moyne College)
11:30—11:45 pm Discussion: John O’Neil (Simon Fraser University)
11:45—12:00 pm Q&A

12:00—12:40 pm Keynote Speech: Laurence Kirmayer (McGill University)

12:40 Lunch
Invention of TCM Psychology: Navigating Cultural and Institutional Ambiguities of Mental Health in Contemporary China
Yanhua Zhang
Clemson University

The past three decades have witnessed drastic social and economic transformations, increased needs for mental healthcare services, and the rise of Western psychotherapy and psychiatric medicine in China. In accordance, TCM (traditional Chinese medicine) professionals have been active in crafting a mental health sector within their profession to establish the cultural and professional authority and compete for social and economic resources in treating mental illnesses alongside the dominant Western psychiatry and clinical psychology. Coming into the new century, TCM seemed to experience its share of “psycho-boom” with many research and publications devoted to TCM psychology and growing TCM clinical practices specialized in treating mental distress, mind/emotion-related disorders, and psychosomatic illnesses drawing on both TCM sources and Western psychotherapeutic modalities. However, China’s first mental health law effective in 2013 specifies only a register psychiatrist can diagnose and treat mental disorders and fails to include TCM under its legal provisions regarding diagnosis and treatment of mental illness, which further complicates the contexts in which TCM professionals develop psycho-knowledge and work with patients suffering emotion/mind related disorders. Drawing on ethnographic observations and video and audio lectures from a TCM continuing education program, this paper examines how, in aligning itself with the science of psychology and negotiating its institutional role in the official mental health care system, the newly emerged TCM psychology not only transforms TCM theories and practice, but more importantly, with its hybrid practice, participates in making a new type of moral person that vacillates between the relational, role-bearing, and embodied member of a community and an individualized, self-motivated, well-adjusted psychological subject.

The development of Psychoanalysis in comparison to Traditional Chinese Medicine
Liao Zhang
Harvard Medical School

Over the last 30 years, China has undergone a dramatic shift from a largely agrarian society to an industrial powerhouse. Under great social change, China has faced serious mental health problems. Addressing the challenge, the Chinese government has utilized a variety of treatment modalities, including Western psychotherapy and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). With the government’s support, TCM practitioners adopted psychoanalysis in their practices to treat mental illnesses. Through a comparative historical and ethnographic analysis, this paper analyzes TCM’s use of psychoanalysis and seeks to understand the Chinese government’s strategies in promoting TCM and guiding the incorporation of Western ideas into TCM. Looking specifically at how TCM professionals have indigenized psychoanalytic concepts and applied them in their clinical works, this paper draws comparisons between the practices of TCM and psychoanalysis. The integration of TCM with Western psychotherapy has given rise to an interdisciplinary study—“suboptimal mental health”. As an alternative discourse, “suboptimal mental health” represents Chinese professionals’ efforts to become independent from Western intellectual and professional orientations in mental health. I argue that TCM’s ability to incorporate psychoanalysis relies largely on the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) consistent support. The CCP’s determination to promote TCM is part of the nation’s agenda to strengthen Chinese
nationalism.

**Canonical Reading and Confucian Radical Hope**

*Yukun Zeng*  
*University of Chicago*

Aligned with anthropological literature on the “psycho-boom” in contemporary China (Kleinman 2010, Zhang 2014, Huang 2015), this paper pays special attention on the emergent Confucian developmental and educational psychology in Chinese child-raising practices (cf. Kuan 2015) through the lens of an educational movement called dujing. Referring ‘to read’ (du) ‘canons’ (jing), dujing is a movement in which students read Confucian texts aloud, repetitively, intensively, and without exegesis. Established in Taiwan in 1994, dujing has been popular in mainland China since the 2000s. Millions of people have committed to dujing, sending their children to private dujing institutes and often ceasing the compulsory public schooling. The kernel of dujing theory is that children are superb at memorizing before 13 years old and then the capacity of understanding starts to grow, therefore children should spend the golden age on absorbing canonical moral wisdom and expects to actualize it in the long-term future. Dujing theory hybridizes western developmental psychology, indigenous educational psychology in ancient China, and global canonical traditions. This paper analyzes how, given the political economy and moral landscape in contemporary China, dujing’s developmental and educational psychology could articulate Chinese parents’ educational concerns and how dujing movement socialize families to a “Confucian” mode of radical hope (Lear 2006) or ‘fate’ (ming). Drawing on theoretical toolkits of value, language ideology and language socialization, this paper joins the effort to operationalize contemporary PRC Confucianism in people’s everyday affect, practice, and ethics instead of reducing it to a cultural essence or top-down ideological engineering (Yang 2017).

**Interrogating the effects of compulsory labor on recovery from heroin addiction in the People’s Republic of China**

*Nick Bartlett*  
*Barnard College, Columbia University*

Since heroin use first received national attention as a serious social problem in the early 1990s, the Chinese state has sent hundreds of thousands of people testing positive for the opioid to labor in state detention centers each year. Intensive policing of this population has meant that most people with long-term histories of heroin use have spent extensive time laboring in these “isolated compulsory detoxification centers” (geli qiangzhi jiedusuo). This paper draws on fieldwork amongst former and active heroin users to explore the effects of this socialist mode of treatment on the prospects of recovery from long-term addiction. Specifically, I look at this system’s uneasy co-existence with the country’s other favored treatment, a national state-run methadone maintenance substitution program, explore common existential struggles of former detainees when leaving the centers, and discuss grassroots activism that has attempted to address harmful consequences of this public security-run system.
“Overcome Illness with Revolutionary Spirit!”: The Psychosomatic Model of Healthcare in Maoist China

Zhipeng Gao
Simon Fraser University

In healthcare, it is a commonplace practice to tap into the patient’s subjective qualities, such as confidence and optimism, to enhance treatment outcome. In Maoist China, such approach became a defining feature of healthcare and keenly promoted by copious medical professionals, patients, and celebrities. In this article, I examine this psychosomatic model of healthcare as an assemblage of several ideological, scientific, and medical sources. Mao Zedong’s dialectical materialism ostensibly attempted to reconcile the contradiction between idealism and mechanistic materialism, but eventually favored the former amid China’s progressive ethos. The Maoist psychosomatic thinking enlisted traditional Chinese medicine as well as Pavlov’s neurology for their common recognition of the mind-body dynamics. Above all, the psychosomatic model was geared toward a commitment to socialism, which served as not only a sublime source of inspiration for inducing self-recovery, but also a call for a revolutionary personhood to be cultivated through healing. Curiously, while the popular speedy synthetic therapy embodied the psychosomatic model in its call for passionate self-exertion and discipline, two co-existent approaches – Qigong and Pavlov’s sleep therapy – required the patient to achieve restfulness and quietude. In a way similar to Arthur Kleinman’s analysis of somatization, these two approaches created a temporary opening for patients to escape from unrelenting state demands.

Colonial Afflictions: Strength Loss and Indigenous Theories of Well-Being on China’s Ethnic Borderlands

Lau Ting Hui
Cornell University

The Lisu are a transnational ethnic community living across the borders of Burma, China, Thailand, and India. In the Nu River Valley of China’s Southwest Yunnan Province, the Lisu form the majority. Heavy-handed development and rapid social change in the valley have resulted in enormous cultural and community damage as dramatically reflected in rising alcoholism, suicide, violence, and spiritual afflictions. Drawing on two years of fieldwork with Lisu subsistence farmers, this paper focuses on Lisu experiences of chronic “strength loss” (sei ba la) and “pain” (na) and intense “cravings” (kue) for strength-replenishing foods such as alcohol and meat. Many Lisu attribute their strength loss, pain, and cravings to compulsory sterilization under the one-child policy (1979-2015). For some, indigenized Christianity has become an important cultural and spiritual resource. Through Christian prayers, Lisu combine the transnational power of Christianity with indigenous healing practices to overcome their colonial afflictions. Others, however, adamantly refuse any form of recovery, insisting, instead, on living with the constant reminder of their colonized condition. Situating their loss and pain in relation to processes of hegemonic governance and capitalist patriarchy, Lisu indigenous theories of sickness and well-being problematize both Western and Chinese therapeutic ideologies. In their afflictions and modes of healing, Lisu articulate their desire for dignity and a new politics of becoming. Engaging with Lisu categories and terms of analysis, this paper seeks to conceptualize indigenous psychology from the periphery of China, in communities that complexly resist and co-opt Chinese and Western therapeutic regimes.
The “indigenization” of psychological interiority and the indexing of “modernity” among a minority group in the Sino--sphere
Deborah E. Tooker, Le Moyne College, Syracuse, New York

The Akha are a minority group (ar. 700,000 pop.) in the Southwest China borderlands (Yunnan province), Thailand, Burma, Laos, and North Vietnam. They originated in China and have kept and renewed connections to the Chinese homeland even if they are now living in a different country. This paper focuses on younger Akha who maintain ancestral traditions and have not converted to Christianity or Buddhism. These individuals come from a community in Thailand that has undergone rapid social change from a 1980s subsistence economy to a present day supra-local market economy that entails both a local entrepreneurial movement to cash crops with the construction of Akha-owned factories (especially coffee) as well as wage labor (local, national, and international).

Such economic transitions (along with political and cultural transitions) are usually considered markers of “modernity”. Foucault has argued that, at least in the west, confessional techniques and rituals connected to the definition of the ‘real’ arose as part of the emergence of “modernity” and new subject formation. These techniques spread beyond religion—to areas like mental health institutions and the ‘psy’ ences, the justice/prison environment, and child welfare. Others have also pointed to the realm of social media (ex. Fletcher 2010 on blogs as confessional). There are both negative sides (surveillance/control) and positive sides (appeal of ‘modernity’ and ‘finding one’s true self’/liberation) to this, now, global circulating discourse.

In the case of Akha social media usage, especially Facebook, I find that a discourse of psychological interiority appears as an index of “modernity” (as in saying that now you can “use your own thinking”, “follow your own desire”). However, this discourse is not actualized in the western sense and does not enter the confessional mode (for example, there is a stigma attached to expressing one’s feelings online (losing ‘face’) or doing things outside of a group context). Side by side with this is also an indexing of tradition and an actualization of traditional forms and values (such as a collective, family orientation and emphasis on harmony with others). Thus, a western-style psychological interiority is not only indigenized but also appropriated for strategic purposes as a kind of symbolic capital to make “modernity” claims. This process is also part of a longstanding cultural resistance to individualization.
Managing Officials’ Heart Distress in China: Interpretive Labor and Wang Yangming’s Moral Psychology

Jie Yang
Simon Fraser University

There has been an increasing rate of depression and suicides among Chinese government officials in the context of China’s anticorruption campaigns especially since 2013. To manage this “existential crisis,” the government, instead of reforming problematic bureaucracy that generates distress and corruption, has offered moral teaching and psychological counseling. Such counseling adopts mixed methods drawing on techniques and precepts from existential psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and the philosophy of neo-Confucian scholar Wang Yangming. This paper examines these hybridized therapies offered by counselors and moral psychologists in Beijing. My analysis focuses on how counselors integrate in their counseling Wang’s teaching on the heart as the Way and the unity of knowing and acting. While Wang’s emphasis on the heart as the ground for knowledge production and moral agency reinforces the inward turn for happiness and fulfillment advocated by Western psychotherapy, Wang’s teaching on action as the way of obtaining knowledge and knowledge automatically leading to action goes beyond inner management of the heart. This unity of knowing and acting cultivates moral agents who live life by actualizing their liangzhi “conscience.” It also echoes the government’s condemnation of networks for insider information, which allegedly contributes to both corruption and distress among officials. I argue that Wang’s philosophy helps shift in governing from a focus on the interpersonal to the existential, which encourages officials to find existential meaning not merely from work but through a more holistic approach to life. Psychologization here includes both a turn to the heart and correcting distress with “holism.”

The Disparities and Similarities of Chinese Divination and Psychological Counselling

Li Geng
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Diviners are widely known for borrowing the established legitimacy of psychological counselling, which is growing fast in China. In this paper, based on ethnographic work on divination in Shandong province, I first describe how divination adopts the discourses and practices of counselling. I then contend that the reason why diviners can engage with counselling lies with the ill-formed institutionalization of both occupations. Finally, I examine the disparities and similarities of divination and psychological counselling from both my observations and the views of the clients of divination. I argue that divinatory knowledge is flexible and elastic but it can also be so sophisticated and subtle that it is worshipped as an advanced philosophy. In contrast, counselling requires that customers receive enough education to understand it. Diviners commonly nurture an aura of omnipotence, while the process of counsellors gaining the trust of their clients is usually slower. Counselling requires a much higher level of client participation. It is a form of highly conscious self-management where the counsellor’s diagnosis aims at the self. By contrast, diviners remove agency and responsibility from the client and find the reasons for their predicament in fate. Thus, it is the client’s fate that is diagnosed rather than her or him. In other words, divination guides people to escape from the contemporary neo-liberal mode of selfhood.
Curating the Self in a World of Multiplicity: China's Psycho-Boom from a First Person Perspective

Teresa Kuan
Chinese University of Hong Kong

The anthropologist Hsuan-ying Huang describes China’s psycho-boom as “a world of multiplicity.” In this world of jianghu (“rivers and lakes”) – a 2,000 year-old trope invoking the world of hermits, vagabonds, and secret societies – the line between professional and lay enthusiast is not clear (2017). Concerns and interests animating intensive study and training sometimes have much to do with a quasi-religious search for meaning of life. This presentation draws from fieldwork in an institute for family therapy, specifically, interviews with fellow trainees who, I eventually discovered, juggle multiple other interests and loyalties. I will discuss the trajectories of two middle-aged women, for whom the road to working as counselors as a second career began with what one might call a “conversion.” As one counselor put it, psychology “saved” her life (jiuming); it relieved her sense of guilt for a family crisis that started with her husband’s extra-marital affair. For another, it began with hearing the news of an old cadre dying from lung cancer; he suddenly ate some solid food after a visit from a therapist-psychiatrist, who merely chatted with him at his bedside. I examine these conversion stories as a way to understand how the multiplicity of the psycho-boom takes form in highly personal projects to transform one’s relation to life. I experiment with thinking of “localization” in first person terms, i.e. first person virtue ethics (Mattingly 2014), by taking the question of how cultural materials converge as a question of how a person transduces materials into meaning.

Mental health promotion through everyday Chinese cultural practices

Buxin Han, PhD & Professor of Psychology
CAS Key Lab of Mental Health, Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences

There has been an increasing rate of mental disorders among Chinese people (Huang et al, 2019). Scholars have examined the cultural differences in the occurrences and mechanism of mental disorder (Li, et al, 2016), with respect to the belief in a just world (Wu et al, 2013), religious belief (Dueck & Han, 2012), and even color perception (Zhang & Han, 2014). These studies indicated that there might be different approaches in coping with mental health problems in China. Given modern psychology has been introduced and developed in China for more than 100 years (Jing & Fu, 1997), Chinese people are not WEIRD (e.g., Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic; Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010a, 2010b). As a matter of fact, mental health promotion mechanisms and skills have been developed and applied on a daily basis for thousands of years in China, through practices like calligraphy (Kao et al, 2016), painting, seal cutting, taijiquan (Wei, et al, 2015). These skills were also embedded in rituals, e.g., couplets used for different places (main gates of historical architecture, scenic sports, conference halls, studying rooms, etc.) and different occasions (e.g., Spring Festival, wedding ceremony, funeral, etc.) in order to cultivate and refine emotion through psychological processes such as priming, mind flow, and flourishing (Sundararajan, 2015; Seligman, 2016). To demonstrate such culturally specific psychological processes, in this talk, I will use grief as an example, focusing on the ways in which people continue the emotional bond with deceased significant others (Bannano et al, 2012). I will introduce the tradition of special contents and changing color of couplets for families in bereavement in the first three years after the death.
Why the Heart is Empty: A New Diagnosis and Its Social and Professional Critique
Hsuan-Ying Huang
Chinese University of Hong Kong

This paper examines “empty heart disease” (kongxin bing), a new diagnosis coined by Dr. Xu Kaiwen, a renowned psychiatrist/psychotherapist at Peking University. First proposed in November 2016 at a popular talk, this “illness of the age” (shidai bing), which presented with a cluster of symptoms—including depression, loneliness, and meaningfulness—that had allegedly become common among students at elite institutions like Peking University, stirred up a lively debate on social media and beyond. Taking the discussion on “empty self” and narcissism in American psychology and social sciences (for example, Cushman 1990; Lasch 1979) as a reference point, I trace the trajectory of Dr. Xu’s formulation. Emphasis is placed on how he turns from a social critique on China’s education system to a professional critique on the near-complete acceptance of Western psychiatry and psychotherapy by his colleagues. I situate this move in the psy-disciplines’ long-term pursuit for indigenization—the creation of treatment modalities that suit the Chinese—as well as the intensification of this ideal in the Xi Jinping era.

Zhuangzi’s ‘fasting of the heart-mind’ (xinzhai): insights on Daoist healing power in psychotherapeutic practice.
Mieke Matthyssen
Ghent University

As a consequence of the deteriorating mental health situation in China, and the global indigenization movement starting around the 1980s, indigenous Chinese psychotherapies are increasingly popular. This is not only visible in the mushrooming philosophical and psychological academic publications on the psychological value of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, but also in therapeutic practices. In doing so, Chinese indigenous psychology not only bases itself on the rich traditional reflexive discourses on the psyche and on how to be(come) human (zuoren), but also seek parallels between these traditions and Western psychology. Newly emerged psychotherapies often hybridize the traditional precepts with Western knowledge and healing practices. This paper will address a - still very marginal - psychotherapy rooted in Zhuangzi’s spiritual process of ‘fasting of the heart-mind’ (xinzhai), sometimes also practiced as a combined xinzhai-wuhua-Active Imagination (Jung)-Embodied Imagination (Bosnak) therapy. Based on academic discussions on the subject and analysis of case studies by Chinese practitioners, this paper will reflect on how xinzhai is presented not only as a powerful individual healing path through ‘the transformation of things’ (wuhua), but also as informative for the therapeutic relationship. The paper concludes with a few critical reflections on the psychologization of Daoism as a new type of appealing intervention against the background of a far-reaching pragmatic governmental approach to ancient wisdom.
Solving my problems or fixing my life? “Body-Heart” narratives through lived experience from a cross-generational perspective in contemporary Chinese society

Hua Miranda Wu
University of California, San Diego

Mental health in contemporary China is becoming a growing industry, gaining both official, commercial as well as the general public’s attention. With growing concerns about people’s well-being, how do people from different age groups experience the transition in the production of knowledge in the “psy” sciences? Is this blooming industry help to optimize people’s well-being and enrich the access for people deal with mental illness? Or does it “medicalize” problems with a social or historical origin and targeting on the individual instead? Channeling it down to a cross-generational perspective on the understanding and intervention of mental health problems, I intend to discuss how individuals contemplate about their struggles as they going through psychologically challenging periods. How people with various access to knowledge and treatment about mental health and how does that influence their decision-making process when it comes to recognize and dealing with mental health problems. This provides a good opportunity not only to discuss the illness experience those people went through and also reveals how they deal with the body-psyche relationship, their interaction with the cultural system, and how they contextualize their illness experience in their life course. Their exploration of the changes brought by the body and “heart” (a more appropriate translation than Mind in the Chinese context) reveals more than treatment of disease and alleviation of symptoms, but rather heightened conflict between the individual’s idiosyncratic interpretation of lived experience and the social roles provided by their cultural niche.

How Wechat Is Helping to Rise Psychotherapeutic Consciousness in China

Barclay Bram Shoemaker
Oxford University

Seeking mental health treatment in China is extremely stigmatised. China is in the midst of what the CCP itself has acknowledged is a mental health crisis—estimates suggest that by 2025, 36.9m years of healthy life will be lost to mental illness in China (which is a 10% increase on today). According to the Lancet ‘The World Mental Health Surveys reported that in people with a serious mental disorder and not seeking care in the past 12 months 87% of Chinese did not perceive a need for care; the mean corresponding proportion in all other countries was 48%’ (Patel, Xiao et. al: 6). Even in the infrequent occasions when people do seek mental health treatment in China, they often find it extremely hard to find care; there are thought to be at least 180 million potential seekers of mental health treatment; 4.3 million of them in desperate need. Yet there are only some 20,000 qualified specialists throughout the country to meet the demand. Into this breach a number of public wechat accounts 微信公众号 have emerged which are seeking both to educate followers about what mental health is and also, in the case of the largest such group, Know Yourself, which has over 4mn active users, to connect patients with therapists in over 400 cities across China. In doing so these accounts do much to de-stigmatise mental illness and have been instrumental in creating a small but growing coterie of middle-upper income ‘worried well’ who are now seeking out-patient care for mental health related concerns (i.e. non-severe in the sense of needing in-patient psychiatric intervention). These accounts are also creating spaces for the development of a psycho-therapeutically informed bio-citizenry in China.
Mohan’s “Shame”?: A Field Study of a Chinese Counseling Psychologist  
Wang Dongmei  
Nanjing University
Based on my field study in a city along the Yangtze River from 2016 to 2019, this paper describes the research, practice and teaching/training of a Chinese counseling psychologist, Mohan--one of the first researchers and practitioners of psychotherapy in Mainland China since 1978--in order to examine the indigenization process of Chinese counseling psychology. As At the age of 60, due to his thoughts on death, Mohan was amazed at the spiritual realm of Wang Yangming. Then when he read the complete works of Wang Yangming, he was "extremely ashamed." Because of his early experiences, Mohan was educated to throw away Chinese classics and Chinese cultural tradition. Since the reform and opening up in 1978, the re-introduction of Western science and his scientific training has made him completely follow the model and theories of Western psychology. Then he has begun to recognize the value of Chinese culture and psychotherapy in solving his own personal issues and his teaching and practice of psychotherapy. What makes this leader of Chinese psychotherapy feel ashamed? This paper will analyze the individual life course of the Mohan and the development of psychotherapy in Mainland China over the past 40 years. Through the relationship between Mohan’s personal life and professional practice, this paper examines the tensions between the indigenous wisdom and his professionalism with scientific Western psychology. Further, I will demonstrate how Mohan produced the knowledge and techniques of Chinese psychotherapy in his research, teaching and training. Then I will discuss the structural defects and consequences of the development of Chinese psychotherapy.

Zuoyuezi: Politics of Caring and Postpartum Depression in Contemporary China  
Linying Hu  
Simon Fraser University
Zuoyuezi (坐月子 “sitting the month”) is an indigenous psychosomatic caring and healing postpartum practice for new mothers based on Traditional Chinese Medicine. This paper demonstrates that Zuoyuezi creates a unique temporal relational space for new mothers, which not only disciplines their bodies but also shapes the family politics and ethics. Diverging from some previous studies arguing that Zuoyuezi can dramatically alleviate or prevent new mothers’ postpartum distress by offering sufficient care and family supports, this paper illustrates how traditional grandmother-baby-mother triad formed during Zuoyuezi intertwines with increasingly dominating Western attachment theory, which potentially contributes to new mothers’ postpartum depression.