

CAO, Yuan (Sally)

Department of Social Work & Social Administration
University of Hong Kong

Academic qualifications and professional accreditations:

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| 2018 | PhD in Psychology, University of Queensland (funded by UQ International Postgraduate Research Scholarship & UQ Centennial Scholarship) |
| 2018 | Master of Clinical Psychology, University of Queensland (Part time study) |
| 2018-present | Registered Psychologist with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) |
| 2012 | Master of Neuroscience, Queensland Brain Institute, University of Queensland |
| 2011 | Bachelor of Social Sciences in Psychology (first class honours), City University of Hong Kong |

Present position:

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| Aug 2023 onwards | Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work and Social Administration, The University of Hong Kong (HKU) |
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Previous positions:

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| Jun 2021-Jul 2023 | Research Assistant Professor, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) |
| Feb 2020-May 21 | Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Rehabilitation Sciences, PolyU |
| 2019 | Registered Psychologist at Boronia Park Medical Centre, Australia. Key responsibility: to deliver psychotherapy to clients of all ages as a practising psychologist. Clients included children, couples and older adults |
| 2017- 2019 | Research Officer at Relationship Australia Queensland (NGO). Key responsibilities: to manage an intervention study on reducing social isolation and mental health symptoms among older adults, and to perform data analysis and paper writing on projects on counselling services |

Publications

Journal papers (in English peer-reviewed journals)

1. **Cao, Y.**, Kwan, G. S. Y., Siu, J. Y.-m., Schmidt, N. B., & Shum, D. H. K.* (In Press). The role of intolerance of uncertainty in explaining mental health symptoms among adults in Hong Kong. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychires.2025.09.073>
2. **Cao, Y.**, So, W. W. Y., Wang, Y., Hu, D.-d., Xie, Y., Gu, J., Chan, R. C. K., & Shum, D. H. K.* (2025). Adaptation of the virtual assessment of mentalizing ability and evaluation of its utility and psychometric properties in Chinese individuals on the schizophrenia spectrum. *Schizophrenia*, 11, 43. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41537-025-00594-1>
3. Yu, M. H. M., **Cao, Y.***, Fung, S. S. Y., Kwan, G. S. Y., Tse, Z. C. K., & Shum, D. H. K. (2025). Aging and intolerance of uncertainty on anxiety and related mental health concerns: A scoping review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 110, 102975. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2025.102975>
4. Chan, R. C. F., Chen, M., Chan, J. L. M., Shum, D. H. K., & **Cao, Y.*** (2025). Long-term Effect of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Managing Subclinical Depression: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Depression and Anxiety*

5. Zhang, J., Ho, W. S., Chen, M., & **Cao, Y.*** (2025). Risk and protective factors for bereavement adaptation: a protocol for a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ open*, 15(8), e104351. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2025-104351>
6. **Cao, Y.***, Shi, Y., Low, D. C. W., Shek, D. T. L., Shum, D. H. K., Tanksale, R., & Dingle, G. (2025). Using music to promote Hong Kong young people's emotion regulation and reduce their mood symptoms and loneliness: Protocol for a pilot randomized controlled trial. *JMIR research protocols*, 14, e67764. <https://doi.org/10.2196/67764>
7. Wang, S., Andrews, G., Pendergast, D., Neumann, D. L., Liang, X., **Cao, Y.**, Li, D., & Shum, D. H. K.* (2025). Age-Related Changes in Theory of Mind in Middle Childhood: A Cross-Cultural Comparison Between Australian and Chinese Children. *Developmental Neuropsychology*, 1–18. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/87565641.2025.2560482>
8. Chan, R. C., Zhou, J. H., **Cao, Y.**, Lo, K., Ng, P. H., Shum, D. H., & Wong, A. Y.* (2025). Nonpharmacological Multimodal Interventions for Cognitive Functions in Older Adults with Mild Cognitive Impairment: Scoping Review. *JMIR aging*, 8, e70291. <https://doi.org/10.2196/70291>
9. Leung, A. H. T., Chan, C. C. S., Kwong, C. M. Y., Leung, C. H. Y., **Cao, Y.**, Yu, M. H. N.*, Chan, R., & Shum, D. (2025). The effect of time delay on young adults' prospective memory. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17470218251335308>
10. **Cao, Y.**, Kwan, G. S. Y., Tse, Z. C. K., Chow, K. K. S., Kwan, D. K. S., Lam, W. W. Y., & Shum, D. H. K.* (2024). Managing uncertainty and loneliness: Protective and risk factors impacting on older people's mental health in Hong Kong. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 68, 234-255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01634372.2024.2423678>
11. Tse, Z.C.K., **Cao, Y.**, Chau, B. K. H., Yeung, M.K., Leung, C., & Shum, D.H.K.* (2024). Does playing mahjong benefit older individuals? A scoping review. *The Journal of Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease*. <https://doi.org/10.14283/jpad.2024.102>
12. Xu, R. H.*, **Cao, Y.**, Dong, D., Wong, E. L-y., & Chan, S. K-w. (2024). Development and validation of a mental eHealth literacy scale. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 16, 100518. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2024.100518>
13. Li, D., **Cao, Y.**, Hui, B., Shum, D. * (2024). Are older adults more prosocial than younger adults? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Gerontologist*, 64, gnae082, <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnae082>
14. Xu, R. H.*, Tian, L., Zhu, L., **Cao, Y.**, Chan, S. K., Dong, D., Cheung, W. A., & Wong, E. L. (2024). Age Differences in Electronic Mental Health Literacy: Qualitative Study. *Journal of medical Internet research*, 26, e59131. <https://doi.org/10.2196/59131>
15. Tian, L., Wong, E. L., Dong, D., Cheung, A. W., Chan, S. K., **Cao, Y.**, Mok, P. K. H., Zhou, L., & Xu, R. H.* (2024). Improving mental health literacy using web- or app-based interventions: A scoping review. *Digital health*, 10, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20552076241243133>
16. Stevens, E., Lohan, A., Petch, J.,* Lee, J., Bickerdike, A., & **Cao, Y.** (2023) "We were actually able to sit down and talk": Australian parents and practitioners navigating dynamics of power and emotion in Family Dispute Resolution. *Journal of Family Studies*, 29, 1967-1985. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2022.2151499>
17. **Cao, Y.**, Siu, J. Y-m, Choi, K-S., Ho, N. C-l., Wong, K. C., & Shum, D.* (2023). Using knowledge of, attitude toward, and daily preventive practices for COVID-19 to predict

- the level of post-traumatic stress and vaccine acceptance among adults in Hong Kong. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, doi: [10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1103903](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1103903)
18. He, J., Lin, J., Sun, W., Cheung, T., **Cao, Y.**, Fu, E., Chan, S. H. W., & Tsang, H. W. H.* (2023). The effects of psychosocial and behavioral interventions on depressive and anxiety symptoms during the COVID-19 pandemic: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Scientific Reports*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-45839-0>
 19. Siu, J. Y-m, **Cao, Y.**, & Shum, D.* (2023). Stigma and health inequality experienced by ethnic minorities during the COVID-19 pandemic in a Chinese community: an implication to health policymakers. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 11, doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1184209
 20. **Cao, Y.**, Siu, J. Y-m, Shek, D. T. L., & Shum, D. H. K.* (2022). COVID-19 one year on: Identification of at-risk groups for psychological trauma and poor health-protective behaviour using a telephone survey. *BMC Psychiatry*, 22, 252. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-022-03904-4>
 21. Tse, Z.C.K., **Cao, Y.**, Ogilvie, J.M., Chao, B. K. H., Ng, D. H., & Shum, D. H. K.* (2022). Prospective memory training in older adults: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Neuropsychology Review*, 33, 347-372. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11065-022-09536-5>
 22. Siu, J. Y-m*, **Cao, Y.**, Shum, D. H. K. (2022). Perceptions of and hesitancy toward COVID-19 vaccination in older Chinese adults in 25 Hong Kong: A qualitative study. *BMC Geriatrics*, 22, 288. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-022-03000-y>
 23. Leung, C., Wong, K. C., So, W. W. Y., Tse, Z. C. K., Li, D., **Cao, Y.***, Shum, D. H. K. (2022). The application of technology to improve cognition in older adults: A review and suggestions for future directions. *PsyCh Journal*, 11, 583-599 <https://doi.org/10.1002/pchj.565> (invited paper)
 24. Lohan, A., **Cao, Y.**, Petch, J.*, Murray, J., & Howe, E. (2021). Does relationship counselling for one work? An effectiveness study of routine relationship counselling services where only one individual attends. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 42, 320-335. <https://doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1458>
 25. Canty, A. L., **Cao, Y.**, Neumann, D., & Shum, D. H. K.* (2021). The functional significance of cognitive empathy and theory of mind in early and chronic schizophrenia. *Psychiatry Research*, 299, 113852. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2021.113852>
 26. **Cao, Y.**, Yusri, N. M., Powell, T., & Cunningham, R.* (2019). Neural and behavioral markers of observed pain of older adults. *Neuropsychologia*, 131, 84-90. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2019.04.012>
 27. Zhao, Q.*, Neumann, D. L.*, **Cao, Y.**, Baron-Cohen, S., Yan, C., Chan, R. C. K., & Shum, D. H. K.* (2019). Culture-sex interaction and the self-report empathy in Australians and Mainland Chinese. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 396. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00396>
 28. Waters, A. M.*, **Cao, Y.**, Kershaw, R., Kerbler, G. M., Shum, D. H. K., Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J., Craske, M. G., Bradley, B. P., Mogg, K., Pine, D. S., & Cunningham, R. (2018). Changes in neural activation underlying attention processing of emotional stimuli following treatment with positive search training in anxious children. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 55, 22-30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2018.02.004>
 29. Zhao, Q., Neumann, D. L.*, Cao, X., Baron-Cohen, S., Sun, X., **Cao, Y.**, Yan, C., Wang, Y., Shao, L., & Shum, D. H. K. (2018). Validation of the empathy quotient in Mainland China. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 100, 333-342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891.2017.1324458>

30. **Cao, Y.***, Dingle, G., Chan, G. C. K., & Cunnington, R. (2017). Low mood leads to increased empathic distress at seeing others' pain. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 2024. [10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02024](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02024)
31. **Cao, Y.**, Contreras-Huerta, L. S., McFadyen, J. J., & Cunnington, R.* (2015). Racial bias in neural response to others' pain is reduced with other-race contact. *Cortex*, 70, 68-78. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cortex.2015.02.010>
32. Yan, C., **Cao, Y.**, Zhang, Y., Song, L., Cheung, E. F. C., & Chan, R. C. K.* (2012). Trait and state positive emotional experience in schizophrenia: A meta-analysis. *PLOS ONE*, 7, e40672. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0040672>
33. Yan, C., Liu, W., **Cao, Y.**, & Chan, R. C. K.* (2011). Self-reported pleasure experience and motivation in individuals with schizotypal personality disorders proneness. *East Asian Arch Psychiatry*, 21, 115-122. <https://www.easap.asia/index.php/component/k2/item/179-v21n3-p115-122>
34. Zong, J., Cao, X., **Cao, Y.**, Shi, Y., Wang, Y., Yan, C., Abela, J. R. Z., Gan, Y., Gong, Q., & Chan, R. C. K.* (2010). Coping flexibility in college students with depressive symptoms. *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 8, 66. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1477-7525-8-66>

(*Corresponding author)

Journal papers in local peer-reviewed journals

Wang, M., Zhang, L., Fu, X., Wang, Y., Jiang, Y., **Cao, Y.**, Wang, Y., & Chan, R. C. K. (2025). Investigating the differential effects of audio-visual information and emotional valence on empathic accuracy. *Journal of Psychological Science*, 48, 567-576. <https://jps.ecnu.edu.cn/CN/10.16719/j.cnki.1671-6981.20250306> (in Chinese).

Book chapter

Bentley, S., Haslam, C., Cruwys, T., **Cao, Y.**, Milic, J. (2022). Groups 4 Health in Later Life. In: Asmundson, G.J.G. (Ed.), *Comprehensive Clinical Psychology*, 2nd edition, vol. 7. Elsevier, pp. 402–414. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-818697-8.00037-6>. ISBN: 9780128186978

Research grants

External grants as Principal Investigator

- Principal Investigator for the project funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, titled “Bridging developmental gaps for deprived bereaved children and youth”
- Principal Investigator for the Investigator-initiated Project under the Health and Medical Research Fund/HMRF, the Health Bureau, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, titled “Using music to promote young people’s emotion regulation and reduce their depressive and anxious symptoms and loneliness: A pilot randomised controlled trial”
- Project Coordinator for Beijing-Hong Kong University Alliance (UGC-Education Bureau) funded “Symposium on Social Cognitive Abilities in Healthy, Sub-clinical and Patients”

Selected external grants as co-investigator

- Co-Investigator on General Research Fund (GRF) on “Effects of aging on theory of mind: A study using age- and context- appropriate assessment tool for adulthood”
- Co-Investigator on the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC)/Research Grants Council (RGC) joint-fund on “Virtual-reality Assessment of Social Cognition

Impairment and its Related Neural Mechanism in Schizophrenia Patients and At-risk Individuals”

- Co-Investigator on the HMRF – Commissioned Research on the COVID-19 on "Psychological trauma and unsafe behaviour during the COVID-19 epidemic: A mixed-design study of people's emotion, knowledge, attitude and behaviour"

Selected conference presentations delivered

- **Cao, Y.*** (2024, Nov 14). The effect of age on one's ability to tolerance uncertainty: meta-analysis & scoping review, Hobart, Australia.
- **Cao, Y.*** (2023, Aug 28). Social relationships and mental health [Invited talk]. Symposium on the interface between reward processing and memory, Hong Kong.
- **Cao, Y.***, So W.W.Y., Wang Y., Hu, D.D., Chan, R.C.K., Shum, D.H.K., (2023, Jun 13-15). The relationship between theory of mind and schizotypy in Chinese individuals: Preliminary findings based on a culturally appropriate assessment tool [Clinical conditions]. Australasian Social and Affective Neuroscience Society, Adelaide, Australia. <http://www.as4san.com/members-only-2023-conference>
- **Cao, Y. ***, Siu, J. Y., & Shum, H. K. D. (2021). *Psychological trauma and unsafe behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Paper presented at 14th European Public Health Conference 2021: Public Health Futures in a Changing World, Dublin, Ireland.
- Shum, H. K. D. *, Siu, J. Y., & **Cao, Y.** (2021). *Psychological trauma and unsafe behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic: a mixed-method study of people's emotion, knowledge, attitude and behavior*. Poster presented at Health Research Symposium 2021, Hong Kong, China.
- **Cao, Y.** & Model, M. (2019). *It is all about relationships. A holistic case management approach to elder abuse prevention*. Paper presentation at the Family & Relationship Services Australia National Conference 2019, Hunter Valley, NSW, Australia.
- **Cao, Y.** (2016). *Effect of induced sadness on neural responses to other's pain*. Poster presentation at the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Organization of Human Brain Mapping (OHBM, 2016) in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Cao, Y.** (2015). *Low mood leads to increased empathic distress for others' pain*. Paper presentation at the Australasian Social Neuroscience Society Conference in Brisbane.
- **Cao, Y.** (2011). *Chinese Characteristics in Responding to Psychological Measures*. Poster session presented at the Hong Kong Psychological Society Annual Conference 2011, Hong Kong.

Workshop/webinar

Invited speaker to “Emerging methods in assessing social cognition” Webinar organised by International Neuropsychological Society in April, 2025. Talk title “Theory of mind in the schizophrenia spectrum”.

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/OAAvX_l9SKuAouj0wpENjA#/registration

Teaching experiences

Teaching Innovation Grant Award

Teaching Development Grant on “Innovation to improve undergraduate students' engagement and expertise in research – a collaboration with colleagues from HKU, NGOs and University of Wollongong”. Curriculum re-design based on experiential learning, co-design and internationalisation.

Course coordinator and lecturer at HKU

- SOWK6303 Human behavior and social environment I
- SOWK6003 Social Work Research Methods
- SOWK2015 Research on Social Work Practice
- SOWK2143 Social Research Method
- SOWK1004 Human behavior and social environment I

Research supervision

At HKU

- Primary supervisor for PhD project on aging & ageism, 2024-
- Primary supervisor for PhD project on schizophrenia, 2024-
- Primary supervisor for PhD project on aging & caregivers, 2023-
- Co-supervisor for MPhil project on stigma in bereavement, 2023-

External supervisor at other universities

- Primary supervisor of BScOT final year project on “Music and emotion regulation”, 2022. Won the Best Capstone Prize for 2022.
- Co-supervisor for PhD student on aging and theory-of-mind, 2024-
- Co-supervisor for PhD student on “The behavioral and neural mechanisms underlying prosociality in older adults”, 2022-
- Co-supervisor for Master of Occupational Therapy final year project on “Understanding music therapy for older adults with dementia in Hong Kong”, 2022-2023.

Other research experiences

Awards

- Rising Star Award of the Association for Psychological Science (APS), 2024
<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/members/awards-and-honors/aps-rising-stars>
- Cao, Y. (2010). *The scholar-practitioner collaborations in the field of cognitive neuropsychology*. Outstanding Academic Papers by Students. CityU Institutional Repository, Run Run Shaw Library, City University of Hong Kong.
<http://dspace.cityu.edu.hk/handle/2031/6054>

Editorial board membership

- Editorial Board Member of *Innovation in Aging*
- Associate Editor for *Journal of Community Psychology*

Service in grant applications

- Member of the Assessment Panel of the Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care (“I & T Fund”) of the Social Welfare Department
<https://www.swd.gov.hk/en/aboutus/advisory/itfund/>
- Member of the Assessment Panel of the Enterprise Support Scheme (ESS) of the Innovation and Technology Commission <https://www.itf.gov.hk/en/funding-programmes/supporting-research/ess/enterprise-support-scheme-ess-assessment-panel/index.html>

Other service to community

- Ad Hoc reviewer since 2023 for journals including: Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences, BMC Geriatrics, British Journal of Social Work, Social Science & Medicine, Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work & Development, Cerebral Cortex, Global Mental Health (Cambridge Prisms), PsyCh Journal, Stress and Health, International Journal of Clinical & Health Psychology
- Mentor for junior psychologists through the APS Mentorship Scheme

Service to the university

- Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) & MSocSc (Counselling) Program Committee Member
- Student scholarship interview panel for the HSBC Hong Kong Scholarship, 2024