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The Representations of Youth in Liberal Studies Student Works in Hong Kong

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Abstract: The study explored whether the deficit approach to understanding youth, which has been widely critiqued in contemporary youth studies, could still be a dominant paradigm in the student works of an emerging curriculum emphasizing multiple-perspective thinking. The study analyzed the student works in the Enquiry Study Award Scheme organized by Hong Kong Education City (HKEdCity), which was a region-wide competition awarding Liberal Studies (LS) student projects. The findings indicated that although there were diverse theoretical labels presented by the student works, a deficit approach to understanding youth was still a dominant paradigm. This also implied that negative representations of youth were not merely enforced by authoritative institutional discourses, but were partly supported and endorsed by the students themselves.

Keywords: Representations of Youth, Liberal Studies, Critical Thinking, Schools

The Deficit Approach to Understanding Youth in Schools

DISCUSSIONS IN YOUTH studies generally point out that a deficit approach to understanding youth is dominant in education settings. It is common to see some generalized negative impressions concerning the younger generation; for example, research studies suggest that university students now are more narcissistic than the previous generations (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2008; Twenge, Konrath, Bushman, Foster, & Campbell, 2008). In Hong Kong, there is a ganghai discourse (Huang, 2009; Qu, 2010), saying that the children and adolescents in the region share common character attributes, such as being unresponsive, irresponsible, apparently mature and intellectually naïve.

In the beginning of the 20th century, psychologist G. Stanley Hall coined the phrase "storm and stress", using it to describe adolescence. This period, according to Hall, is characterized by a teenager's conflict with parents, mood disruptions, and engagement in risky behaviors; it is a psychological turmoil midway between childhood and adulthood (Arnett, 1999; Hall, 1904). Based on this premise, adolescence means non-adult, essentially characterized as "deficient" or "incomplete". Since that "discovery" of adolescence, a deficit approach has increasingly become the major frame of reference for helping professionals' perception of youth. Research studies show that biased representations of youth are commonly embedded in teaching materials, textbooks and classroom practices (Heshusius-Gilsdorf & Gilsdorf, 1975; Jabal & Riviere, 2007; Savage, 2008; Schee & Baez, 2009), and negative perceptions about young people are usually held by helping professionals and teaching professionals (Buchanan, et al., 1990; Finn, 2001; Hines & Paulson, 2006; Seginer & Somech, 2000; Shek & Chan, 2011).

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Theoretical discussions suggest that these negative impressions are indeed preconceptions, and that they are structurally sustained, because they help conceal the problematic economic and social conditions in which the young people are situated (Besley, 2003; Burman, 1994; Finn, 2001; Griffin, 2001; Lesko, 1996; Wyn & White, 1997). Griffin (1993) sees that through reference to a deficit approach to understanding youth, the introduction of educational, clinical and corrective interventions can be "justified in the absence of any evidence of actual deviance or deficiency on the part of young people" (p. 201). Besley (2003) also notes that institutional programs classify adolescents as normal or abnormal according to sets of norms which are "based largely on psychological notions of identity that suggest an individual must work on constructing an adult self in adolescence order to become self-governing" (p. 165). Youth services and youth research, based on a deficit approach to understanding youth development, tend to focus more on "what young people lack" than "what young people have". Although different approaches to understanding youth are not mutually exclusive, an overwhelming emphasis on personal faults may obscure the reality and risk neglecting any structural factors that help foster positive development.

Emerging Curriculums and Multiple-perspective Thinking

There are various curriculums emerging around the world, aiming to nurture students' critical thinking or multiple-perspective thinking, which can shed new light on the dominance of the deficit approach to understanding youth. For example, the Theory of Knowledge course (TOK) in International Baccalaureate (IB)'s Diploma Program (IBO, 2005) prompts students to be aware of themselves as thinkers, encouraging them to become more acquainted with the complexity of knowledge, reflect critically on diverse ways of knowing, and on areas of knowledge. The 'Knowledge and Inquiry' (KI) curriculum in Singapore aims to strengthen students' critical thinking skills (Singapore_MOE, 2004, 2005, 2009). The goal of Citizenship Education in the UK (Great_Britain_DfEE_QCA, 1999, 2003) is to enable students to become informed citizens, equipping them with proper enquiry skills and thinking skills (Great_Britain_DfEE_QCA, 1999). The Liberal Studies (LS) curriculum in Hong Kong addresses contemporary social issues using multiple-perspective thinking (Hong_Kong_EDB, 2007).

Although these emerging curriculums are not specialized youth studies programs, they do cover a wide range of socio-cultural issues in which youth-related issues are commonly addressed. Because multiple-perspective thinking is a core aim of these curriculums, they have potentially opened up possibilities for alternative representations of youth inside education settings. However, if institutional regulations from schools will inevitably support a deficit approach to understanding youth, does this mean that these emerging curriculums simply repeat the same old deficit-based representation? This case study explored whether the deficit approach to understanding of youth, which has been widely critiqued in contemporary youth studies, could still be a dominant paradigm in the student works of an emerging curriculum in Hong Kong which emphasized multiple-perspective thinking.

A Case Study on the Liberal Studies Student Works in Hong Kong

The LS curriculum in Hong Kong, started in 2009, is an inquiry-based curriculum intending to nurture students' multiple-perspective thinking. The core curriculum explicitly notes that

the curriculum aims to "enable students to develop multiple perspectives on perennial and contemporary issues in different contexts" (Hong_Kong_EDB, 2007, p. 5). The assessment indicators clearly note that the students should "discern views, attitudes and values stated or implied in any given factual information" (Hong_Kong_EDB, 2007, p. 124). The marking rubrics state that a top grade candidate will "evaluate various viewpoints and synthesize their own opinions and suggestions on the basis of logical arguments and sufficient examples" (Hong_Kong_HKEAA, 2009). In short, LS requires students to develop multiple-perspective thinking and make quality judgments. The LS curriculum covers six modules, namely Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships, Hong Kong Today, Modern China, Globalization, Public Health, and Energy Technology and the Environment. The curriculum materials and student works related to the theme of Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships usefully presents the approaches to understanding youth which are embedded in the curriculum. The official website of the curriculum presents diverse approaches to understanding youth (http://ls.edb.hkedcity.net/). For example, there is a general biological/medical approach to understanding youth, seeing that teenager's biological changes somehow stimulate troubling emotions and behaviors (e.g. mood disruptions, sexual behaviors):

> This definition of adolescence often emphases the changes brought about by sexual maturity. The emergence of secondary sexual characteristics is commonly used to mark the advent of adolescence. The theory assumes that all adolescents experience a similar and linear developmental stage and all encounter similar obstacles. (Extracted from the passage on "Adolescence" on the EDB Website)

There also is a general psychological approach to understanding youth, which sees that social factors are always interacting with intrinsic psychological attributes owned by individuals:

> Through observation and experiments, developmental psychologists deduce the average developmental speed in each aspect, set standards and specify behavior and/or body characteristics for each stage of development to distinguish between 'normal' and 'abnormal' development... Therefore, developmental psychologists tend to view physiological development as a relatively fixed and predetermined sequence, while cultural and social factors are just seen as the factors that may interfere the "normal" development track from outside. (Extracted from the passage on "Growth and Development" on the EDB Website)

There is also a social constructivist approach to understanding youth, emphasizing the constituting role of social contexts:

> Social constructivism does not deny that human character traits are to a certain extent inherited but it also believes that cultural and societal factors are the major forces that shape individuals. Genetic inheritance merely defines a flexible boundary but it does not determine the essence of the character traits. Moreover, even if a specific character trait has been inherited, how the individual and others perceive it, give meaning to it and act according to it are the products of the social culture of a specific time and place. Therefore, social constructivists are more concerned about the prevalent ideas about "growth and development" in society, as well as the social systems that produce, repro-

duce and spread these ideas. (Extracted from the passage on "Growth and Development" on the EDB Website)

These various approaches to understanding youth development presented by the official website of the curriculum do not comprehensively cover all possible approaches to understanding youth, but they do imply that the curriculum presents a tone which is different from the deficit approach to understanding youth.

The LS curriculum requires students to conduct an Independent Enquiry Study (IES). Students are encouraged to choose inquiry topic that they are interested in and are allowed to use different media forms to present their findings (including written report, creative writing or multi-media production) (Hong_Kong_EDB, 2007, pp. 117-118). Independent Enquiry Study (IES) comprises 20% of a student's assessment in Liberal Studies. With the emerging importance of IES under the new assessment scheme, both teachers and students are asking for clear guidelines for assessing and doing a "good" IES. This student-led emphasis in Liberal Studies makes it a very suitable dataset for showing the approaches to understanding youth from the students' point of view.

The Enquiry Study Award Scheme organized by Hong Kong Education City (HKEdCity) has shown the trend of Liberal Studies student works. HKEdCity is an IT-in-education company which is wholly owned by the Government of Hong Kong SAR. The Award was founded in 2008 and was jointly organized by Hong Kong Education City, The Hong Kong Institute of Education and Hong Kong Liberal Studies Teachers' Association. All the entries of the Scheme were unpublished school-based LS student works, or modified versions of existing school-based LS student works. From 2008-2010, the Award had grown from 20 entries in 2008 to 180 entries in 2010. There were altogether 81 student works awarded over the years; nine were directly concerned with young people's engagement with socio-cultural issues, such as slimming culture, sexual attitudes, health, earring culture, Internet activities, civic participation, media effects, pop songs and identity dilemma (see Table 1).

All of the Award Scheme entries were assessed and commented upon by academics and experienced Liberal Studies teachers. Moreover, the Award Scheme followed the assessment criteria suggested by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. The awarded student works presented students' perceptions of youth issues under particular institutional conditions; by analyzing these student works concerning youth issues, the study identified the representations of youth in the institutional context of Liberal Studies – an emerging curriculum that emphases multiple-perspective thinking. Specific questions investigated included: How do students perceive what young people need or how they ought to behave? What do the findings tell us about the validity of the claim that a deficit representation of youth is structurally sustained by the education and clinical regimes?

Methods

The contents of the selected student works were analyzed using a general content analysis approach. First, potential *meaningful units* in the texts were identified. Statements explaining or defining "what young people need" or "why young people have particular needs" were identified, forming the meaningful units of the analysis. A meaningful unit could be a statement or a group of statements. Details or examples illustrating the same argument were

not double-counted. Moreover, ambiguous sentences were not counted. The process was highly selective, aiming to exclude ambivalent data as much as possible.

Second, the meaningful units were coded and classified using a spreadsheet, serving to chart the *approaches to understanding youth* and the v*alue judgments reflected*. There were three possible categories associated with the value judgment reflected: i) positive (meaningful units reflecting a positive perception of youth, including statements showing directional indicators such as "good", "high caliber", or statements implying a positive sense based on a general value judgment in the Hong Kong context); ii) negative (meaningful units reflecting a negative perception of youth, including statements showing directional indicators such as "bad", "low caliber", "lacking" or statements implying a negative sense based on a general value judgment in the Hong Kong context); and iii) neutral (meaningful units that did not indicate an orientation or indicated an ambivalent orientation). There were at least four possible categories associated with the approaches to understanding youth, including: i) a general biological approach (meaningful units implying a presumption that biological factors (e.g. puberty) would stimulate emotional and behavioral changes); ii) a general psychological tone (meaningful units implying a presumption of intrinsic psychological qualities affected by external social conditions); iii) a general sociological tone (meaningful units implying the author(s) were aware of the power, institutional, cultural or gender factors behind definitions of youth issues and moral standards; and iv) others (meaningful units that could not be classified as any of the above categories). Prominent common themes were further identified (for example, the theme "media effect" in our analysis was derived from this set).

Third, to minimize the influence of potential biases of the researchers, an inter-rater reliability check was performed. After the first rater coded the meaningful units, a second rater coded the meaningful units again without reference to the coding done by the first rater. The respective results were compared.

Finally, after completion of the coding and inter-rater tests, the attributes associated with those meaningful units were compared and contrasted, and special features identified.

Results

There were altogether nine student works selected from the Enquiry Study Award Scheme which addressed a range of youth issues including slimming culture, sexual attitudes, health, earring culture, Internet activities, civic participation, media consumption, pop songs and identity dilemma (see Table 1). A total number of 71 meaningful units were derived from these student works. Inter-rater reliability was 89% for the coding of the value judgments and 90% for the coding of the approaches to understanding youth. Major observations were as follows:

Observation 1: The LS Student Works did Present Diverse Youth Issues and Diverse Approaches to Understanding Youth

The LS student works addressed a wide range of youth issues (see Table 1). Moreover, they presented diverse approaches to understanding youth. Among all the meaningful units derived (N=71), 6% showed a biological approach to understanding youth, 25% reflected a sociological approach and 28% exhibited a psychological approach (see Table 2). It is worth noting that the well-established psychological approach was only slightly more popular than the

sociological approach. Additionally, the findings showed that there was an emerging approach to understanding youth issues that was not noted by the Curriculum website. Among the meaningful units, 38% indicated an approach to understanding youth issues that appealed to "media effects".

Observation 2: There was a Dominant Deficit Orientation behind the Various Approaches to Understanding Youth Presented by the LS Student Works

Although the findings present diverse approaches to understanding youth, there was a dominant deficit orientation behind these diverse approaches. On a closer scrutiny, it was found that statements such as "what young people lack" and "why they fail" largely outnumbered those noting "what young people possess", "what is meant", or "why some young people succeed".

Among all the meaningful units derived from the student works (N=71), 70% were negative, 24% were neutral, only 6% were positive. That is, among the student works, there were much more meaningful units reflecting a negative perception of youth than those reflecting a positive perception of youth or neutral explanations of youth phenomena. In other words, although the LS student works did address a diverse range of youth issues, the details of their contents were largely presented with a deficit orientation.

In general, the value judgments associated with a psychological approach or a media effects approach tended to be negative, and the value judgments associated with a sociological approach were more balanced (see Table 4). Among the meaningful units reflecting a psychological approach (N=20), 85% of them indicated a negative view of youth. Some typical examples of these negative views of youth included:

> ES02006: *Young people cannot judge correctly*. The survey shows that 40% of the respondents thought that exaggerated and inaccurate reports did affect their point of views.
> ES02009: *Young people at this age enter puberty but are yet to have a mature mind.* They are more easily influenced by peers, mass media and other external factors and behave irrationally since their analytical ability is still developing.
> ES03009: One of the respondents told us that wearing so many earrings would make her look extraordinarily cool and special. She explained that people in the streets never wear as many earrings as she does. *What a mental addiction!*
> ES03021: In this project, I find that many youths blindly believe whatever popular songs tell them. Some even took action to follow those ideas without thinking twice. In fact, many lyrics were very unrealistic and misleading. *It shows that youth today are lack in social awareness and critical thinking.*

Among the meaningful units reflecting a media effects approach (N=27), 81% indicated a negative view of youth. Most of these "media effects" were assertions without well-articulated reasoning or theoretical bases, but they generally noted that young people lacked certain competences and therefore they were affected by undesirable influence from the media, for example:

ES03010: It can be concluded that Internet has a big impact on junior form students in our school. 20% to 35% of these students do not sleep or eat regularly or focus on study attentively, *because of their addictive Internet activitie s*.

ES02018: Facing the shock of the Internet, youths learn knowledge of sex merely from obscure reports in newspapers and magazines. *With incomplete or limited knowledge, however, they tend to have an open attitude toward sex*. Some even reported having sexual indulgence.

By contrast, among the meaningful units reflecting a sociological approach to understanding youth (N=18), 39% indicated a negative view of youth, 44% indicated a neutral view of youth and 17% indicated a positive view of youth. However, most were from the same piece of student work and these positive statements were very uncommon among the entire set of student works (see Table 5). Some of the positive statements addressing the potentials of young people included:

ES03020: Bearing a number of important responsibilities, Post-80s were inevitably under great pressure. On the other hand, the sense of responsibility encouraged them to proactively contribute to society and to be brave in expressing personal opinions and appeals.

ES03020: To fight for jobs, they started to reflect and think upon the current social problems. They developed a brave heart to fight for social justice and equality. Voting became an important channel for participating in political and social affairs or expressing their own voices.

Discussion

This study explored whether the deficit approach to understanding youth could still be dominant through investigating the awarded student works of an emerging curriculum in Hong Kong which emphasized multiple-perspective thinking. The findings indicated that although there were diverse theoretical labels presented by the student works, a deficit approach to understanding youth was still a dominant paradigm.

There are certainly possibilities of going beyond a deficit approach to understanding youth in schools. Both the official website of the LS curriculum and the LS student works presented a range of youth issues and diverse approaches to understanding youth (see Observation 1). Although many of the student works tended to maintain a traditional developmental psychological approach (in which youth development is depicted as a process having a relatively predetermined sequence and external factors are seen as alien elements affecting "normal" development), the most popular way of understanding youth issues was in appeal to media effects. Most of these media effect arguments were beyond a typical "storm and stress" logic.

However, under closer scrutiny, the findings showed that most of the student works still presented a deficit orientation (see Observation 2). In many cases, young people were characterized in terms of what they lacked or in how they failed to meet particular standards. For example, young people explained their habit of wearing rings as a kind of "psychological addiction" (ES03009) and that their "immature minds" (ES02009) are easily influenced. In other words, student works focusing on "what young people lack" largely outnumbered those focusing on "what young people possess", "what is meant?", or "what has been done within

limitations?" It is worth noting that the overwhelming emphasis on individual faults may obscure the reality and risk neglecting factors that help foster positive development. Apparently diverse theoretical labels actually tend to aim at the same goal: finding faults and problems in adolescents. For the students, "critical" nearly meant "criticizing", and multiple perspectives tended to mean a multiplicity of reasons supporting particular criticisms. In other words, the deficit tone was a kind of meta-approach behind their various approaches. This orientation might be partly shaped by a broader institutional context, including, for example, the ways in which examination questions are structured. It is common to see that the LS exercises and examination often involve quasi-dichotomous questions like "To what extent you agree with or disagree with this position?" That is, the mode of questioning has already framed a social phenomenon in terms of an issue or dispute, hinting to students to think about whether they agree or disagree with particular assertions. This kind of dispute-based argumentation may be useful in training up debaters and politicians, but this may also limit the possibility and abundance of social inquiry. This mode of thinking may be part of a broader trend in the Hong Kong society, and therefore it is worthwhile to more thoroughly understand the social conditions sustaining a deficit approach to understanding youth.

It is worth noting that the psychological approach to understanding youth, which has usually been regarded as the basis of the deficit approach, was only one of the factors sustaining the deficit orientation in the student works we studied, and in fact this psychological approach did not necessarily imply negative preconceptions of youth. In most of the student works, the problems meant "problematic youth" instead of "youth" facing some "problems". The different theory labels, such as social construction, psychology, biology, and media effects, were rather instrumental, serving to provide sound reasons supporting the observations of youth problems.

Students are important social agents in strengthening or weakening institutional discourses. The students involved in the study were exempted from adopting a particular stance, according to LS assessment guide; on the contrary, they were explicitly encouraged to be critical. It is interesting to note that despite this freedom to present multiple-perspective thinking, they monotonously tended to present a deficit approach to understanding youth. As shown by the findings, most of the meaningful units from the official LS website in fact reflected a neutral view of youth that explains youth issues in objective ways, with multiple or even conflicting discourses at the institutional level. For example, the assessment criteria emphasized multiple-perspective thinking which was not in line with a clinical discourse. Furthermore, the official website covered a range of perspectives, including a rather radical sociological approach to understanding youth. Cultural studies critics see that the educational, clinical, and correctional discourses all help rehabilitate the problematic youth through the eradication of their assumed deficiency, illness or delinquency (Besley, 2003; Finn, 2001; Griffin, 2001; Lesko, 1996). The findings showed that the clinical and correctional discourses were not merely enforced by the curriculum documents. Putting aside whether the students really meant what they stated in the project reports or merely intended to express a politically correct position, it seems that the deficit approach to understanding youth was partly supported and endorsed by the student themselves.

We therefore argue that although the institutional discourse of the LS curriculum partly shapes the official public discourse in the education sector, it does not really reflect students' learning experiences at an operational level. Theoretically, critics note that Foucault's ideas miss the notion of identity and identification to explain why the power of institutional dis-

courses works in the first place, suggesting power as an intrinsic feature of discourse itself and presenting a kind of discourse-determinism (Varela, 1999; Wenger, 1998). Drawing on this argument, we argue that discourses can be detached from specific enterprises and they can be reinterpreted and adapted in various practices. Discourses are more like a fluid cluster of ideas surrounding social actors than a hierarchy of ideas defining their positions. While cultural studies critics generally point out that a deficit representation of youth is structurally sustained by treatment regimes, many critics perpetuate the idea of discourse-determinism, overlooking the ways in which alternative discourses are repressed or developed. In this study, we see the two sides of the coin: students have a chance to evaluate and present alternative perspectives, but they also have the capacity to uncritically endorse the deficit approach to understanding youth.

This study has several limitations. First, the number of student projects studied definitely could not represent all the LS student projects in Hong Kong. It should be qualified here that the study does not aim to prove a general trend but only examines particular cases for any possibilities of alternative discourses. Second, the coding of the contents of the student works did rely on the researchers' subjective judgments but this influence was minimized through the adoption of an inter-rater reliability test. Third, this Hong Kong-based study does not represent all emerging social studies curriculums emphasizing multiple-perspective thinking.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study helps reveal possibilities and difficulties of developing alternative approaches to understanding youth in schools, contributing to the discussion of youth representation in a broader context. Further research may be required; for example, it would be worthwhile to investigate in what ways teachers or students assume positions assigned to them and in what ways they further develop the meanings of those positions. Moreover, it would be useful to explore representations of youth in other educational initiatives across different socio-cultural contexts.

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Table 1: The Titles of the Selected Student Works

Case code	Project title
ES02006	報章的報導手法對青少年成長的影響 A study of media reporting styles and its influence on the growth of youth
ES02009	從纖體文化看青少年對美的價值觀 A study of slimming culture and its influence on youth's value on beauty
ES02018	兩代的性觀念 A study of sexual attitudes from two generations
ES03007	香港學校環境對中學生的健康影響 Hong Kong school environments and its influence on students' health
ES03009	環環相扣 Interlocking: Earrings make me special
ES03010	互聯網活動對本校學生健康的影響 The influence of Internet activities on students' health
ES03020	探討香港八十後青年參與政治、社會事務的程度高與社會的關係 A study on Hong Kong Post-80s' participation in political and social affairs and their relation to society.
ES03021	現今流行曲與青少年愛情價值觀的關係 A study of youth's love values through popular songs
ES03040	誰偷走了我的身份 Who stole my identity?
(for further details, see http://edblog.hkedcity.net/ies)	

Table 2: Approaches to Understanding Youth Reflected by the Meaningful Units from the Student Works

Approaches Reflected Source	Biological	Psychological	Sociological	Media Effects	Other	Total
Student works (N=71)	6%	28%	25%	38%	3%	100%

Table 3: Value Judgments Reflected by the Meaningful Units from the Student Works

Value Judgments Reflected Sources	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total
Student works (N=71)	70%	24%	6%	100%

Table 4: Approaches to Understanding Youth and Value Judgments Reflected in the Meaningful Units from the Student Works

Value judgments Reflected Approaches Reflected	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total
Biological (N=4)	50%	50%	0%	100%
Psychological (N=20)	85%	15%	0%	100%
Media effects (N=27)	81%	15%	4%	100%
Sociological (N=18)	39%	44%	17%	100%
Others (N=2)	100%	0%	0%	100%

Table 5: Selected Student Works and the Value Judgments Reflected

	Views on Youth			
Case Code	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total
ES02006 (N=10)	78%	11%	11%	100%
ES02009 (N=20)	95%	5%	0%	100%
ES02018 (N=10)	82%	18%	0%	100%
ES03007 (N=2)	50%	50%	0%	100%
ES03009 (N=2)	100%	0%	0%	100%
ES03010 (N=6)	67%	33%	0%	100%
ES03020 (N=4)	0%	25%	75%	100%
ES03021 (N=6)	50%	50%	0%	100%
ES03040 (N=11)	45%	55%	0%	100%

About the Authors

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Chitat Chan received his PhD from the Institute of Education, University of London, researching in youth media practice. Chitat had worked as a school social worker, a school teacher and a manager in an IT-in-education company. He enables young people to explore personal and sociocultural issues through a variety of narrative forms, such as storytelling, dramas, photographs, videos and new media production. Chitat currently works as an Instructor in the Department of Applied Social Sciences of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

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The Humanities Community

This knowledge community is brought together by a shared commitment to the humanities and a concern for their future. The community interacts through an innovative, annual face-to-face conference, as well as year-round virtual relationships in a weblog, peer reviewed journal and book imprint – exploring the affordances of the new digital media. Members of this knowledge community include academics, educators and research students.

Conference

Members of the Humanities Community meet at the International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities, held annually in different locations around the world.

Over the past eight years, the Humanities Conference has established a reputation as a focal point for new ideas and new practices in humanities research and teaching. The conference was held at the University of California, Los Angeles, USA in 2010; in Beijing, China in 2009; the Fatih University, Istanbul, Turkey in 2008; American University of Paris in 2007; University of Carthage, Tunis, Tunisia in 2006; University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK in 2005; Monash University Centre, Prato, Italy in 2004; and the University of the Aegean, Rhodes, Greece in 2003. In 2011, the conference will be held at the Universidad de Granada, Granada, Spain.

Online presentations can be viewed on YouTube.

Publishing

The Humanities Community enables members to publish through three media. First, by participating in the Humanities Conference, community members can enter a world of journal publication unlike the traditional academic publishing forums – a result of the responsive, non-hierarchical and constructive nature of the peer review process. *The International Journal of the Humanities* provides a framework for double-blind peer review, enabling authors to publish into an academic journal of the highest standard.

The second publication medium is through a book series The Humanities, publishing cutting edge books in print and electronic formats. Publication proposals and manuscript submissions are welcome.

The third major publishing medium is our news blog, constantly publishing short news updates from the Humanities community, as well as major developments in the humanities. You can also join this conversation at Facebook and Twitter or subscribe to our email Newsletter.

Common Ground Publishing Journals

AGING Aging and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal Website: http://AgingAndSociety.com/journal/	**ARTS** The International Journal of the Arts in Society. Website: www.Arts-Journal.com
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CONSTRUCTED ENVIRONMENT The International Journal of the Constructed Environment Website: www.ConstructedEnvironment.com/journal	**DESIGN** Design Principles and Practices: An International Journal Website: www.Design-Journal.com
DIVERSITY The International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations Website: www.Diversity-Journal.com	**FOOD** Food Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal Website: http://Food-Studies.com/journal/
GLOBAL STUDIES The Global Studies Journal Website: www.GlobalStudiesJournal.com	**HEALTH** The International Journal of Health, Wellness and Society Website: www.HealthandSociety.com/journal
HUMANITIES The International Journal of the Humanities Website: www.Humanities-Journal.com	**IMAGE** The International Journal of the Image Website: www.OntheImage.com/journal
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