Ciao, 2021!
What doesn't kill us makes us stronger!
Preface

People around the globe have been swiped by the COVID-19 Pandemic in the past year.

The challenges for residents of the Graduate House have been evident, ranging from daily living, social interactions, to other House related activities. I moved into GH right at the beginning of the Pandemic last year. Though with no experience as to what a “normal” life is like at GH, I feel the tension and anxiety that came together with the virus, especially in the first few months when we all had little knowledge of the Corona Virus, let alone how to deal with it.

However, I am amazed by how much and how well residents have thrived, grown and adapted. Recognizing life has to go on, and we have to learn to embrace life under the Pandemic as a “New Normal”, the theme of this Issue was thus decided.

From the sharing from the residents and event organizers on how they cope with the challenges and limitations under the Pandemic, their resilience and use of creativity were well demonstrated. This has precisely illustrated the saying: "When there is a will, There is a way". I truly appreciate their hard work and perseverance in re-establishing a new way of life and activities in the House.

In this connection, I wish to highlight the importance of self-care. As RPG students, it is common to regard study as the top priority and hard to remember to be good to oneself. Given the distress and restraints brought by the Pandemic in addition to the already stressful academic work, self-care and maintaining work-life balance becomes extremely imperative.

Hope the experiences of the residents shared in the Issue would be inspiring to and thus motivate you to pursue activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of good holistic health. Wish you a peaceful and fruitful life under the "New Normal"!

Kurtee Chu

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For every resident in the Graduate House, we all have our unique memories with our dear Master, Dr. Wei-Ning Lee. For the 2020 cohort joining our family during the pandemic, some may have only met her online, or just came across her Christmas greeting card in our student lounge. However, such kind of encounter and acquaintance is already wonderful and precious, let alone the numerous unforgettable experiences with her in person that some other residents had. As we all know, Dr. Lee has completed her mastership in the Graduate House by the end of 2020. Let us take this opportunity to wish Dr. Lee health and prosperity in the years ahead!

Now, let’s read the warm letter from our dear Master.

Dear Residents,

Living together with all of you in the Graduate House has been joyful and will absolutely be unforgettable. I enjoyed every Wednesday dinner with residents and every single GH activity I had attended, which wowed and inspired me from every aspect, particularly talented minds and kind hearts.

The most fulfilling part during my mastership is to grow with you and to witness how residents helped one another amid unprecedented challenges and uncertainties in HK in the eventful 2019 and 2020. Without your support, GH would not be as safe and peaceful, and the GH community would not be as strongly bonded as now. Thank YOU for your contribution to GH along the way.

I will complete my current term of mastership on Dec 31, 2020. Due to personal considerations, I did not renew another term of mastership in the Graduate House. It was a hard decision, and I am sorry for such a short notice. The Resident Fellow, Dr. Kurtee Chu, will be the interim Master, and I am sure that GH will remain a strong or become an even stronger family under her & future leadership.

To final year RPg students, wish you best of luck on your theses. You have gone through the most unfriendly period in the most critical phase of your RPg study. Stay persistent and tough. To junior RPg students, you are not alone. Plan your research work ahead. Continue your hard and quality work. To year 1 RPg students, you made it to study in HKU between the third and the fourth waves of the pandemic. Keep your passion for academic research, and stay positive and curious about the fast evolving world.

No matter which year you are, GH is a safe place where you can seek social support.

I will stay in GH until the last day of the year and still be around in HKU. I am sure that we will bump into each other from time to time on campus.

Taking this opportunity, I wish you a happy Winter Solstice, a Merry Christmas, and a fruitful and healthy New Year.

Wei-Ning
21, Dec, 2020
As a resident in the Graduate House, you may never be unfamiliar with our pigeonhole. However, have you thought about who is the one that collects the letters for us and distributes them to everyone day after day?

Thomas, our clerical staff, handles a great amount of paperwork to maintain the daily operation in the Graduate House. “People may feel shocked looking at my desk full of documents piling up into a mountain”, Thomas said. One of his major duty is in relation to the finance work, including the reimbursement procedure of the Graduate House activities, material procurement and so on. He also collects the information forms from every new resident here, the letters of our residents, as well as the documents from the university or any other units. “I work with the documents more than with people!”

Time flies. Thomas has been working in our House since 2001, and he is going to retire by the end of June this year. Recalling the time when he first came here, he said that it took about more than six months for him to get started, after which the cooperation with colleagues was getting more and more smoothly. Even though there was a manual illustrating the procedures and regulations about his work, he regarded the practice as always the most essential element to pick up momentum in the job. “Practice makes perfect.” There are so many things that are worth learning from our staffs in the Graduate House, and I can feel his strong commitment to this job. I do believe that this must be the key to his doing so well in these 20 years. In the end, may I take this opportunity to thank Thomas for his hard work and contribution to our House and wish Thomas all the best!

Mr. SIU Ping Chiu is our senior attendant in the Graduate House. Usually, we all call him Chiu Gor in Cantonese, with our admiration and appreciation for his hard work and kindness.

Chiu Gor has been working in the Graduate House since 1998, the same time as the establishment of the Graduate House. 23 years past, and he will complete his work in the Graduate House soon and retire by the end of June this year.

Chiu Gor has made a long list to summarise the job descriptions for this position. It will never be too exaggerated to say that he has been taken care of almost everything in our House, such as regular maintenance, warehouse management, material procurement, office affairs, etc. “My tasks are really trivial, and the only goal is to make it a comfortable place for the residents and also make everything goes smoothly.”

For our residents here, we are used to submitting the online defect report form when needed, and it is Chiu Gor that always takes good care of these issues. Once receiving the residents’ defect report form, he will contact the maintenance staff from an external unit and make an appointment with them after obtaining approval from the Graduate House manager. During the maintenance, he will be there together with the maintenance staff, monitoring the whole process and ensuring things are repaired. “Graduate House can be considered as an old build now, so there must be some normal wear and tear. However, the damages reported are usually caused by our residents’ improper use or failure to comply with our regulations, which is sometimes disappointing.”

Getting to know what our amazing staffs have done the hard work for our House, we do need to treasure everything here. When seeing the note left on the desk in our room noticing the maintenance done; when seeing the tips and rules in the student lounge and common room, please do not ignore them but spend some time reading every word carefully with our appreciation, and keep it in mind!

We are really grateful to Chiu Gor for his significant contributions to the Graduate House for more than 20 years. Taking this opportunity, we wish you the very best in your coming retired life!

Practice makes perfect
— Thomas’s work in GH

Thank you! Our dear Chiu Gor

March, 2021
Seven years in GH — Jun’s story

The most important part of my job is to GUARANTEE everyone being safe in our House

Jun found it a great job in our House because the working hours are quite suitable for her, and the tasks are easy to handle even though they may be a little bit scrappy sometimes. She appreciates jobs with clear rules and without complicated interpersonal relationships. "Just get my works done, even though they are quite ordinary." We all know that it's extraordinary when doing every ordinary thing well, and every ordinary day is precious enough to be remembered, isn't it?

Jun is from Chongqing and has been in Hong Kong for more than 20 years. It's quite interesting that she described Chongqing as a place that is not livable because the weather is extremely hot in summer and super cold in winter. Chongqing is now much more beautiful than 20 years ago, but she can only witness these changes through the media as she has been spending most of the time in Hong Kong for work. "Sometimes, I feel like I don't get to know my hometown." Despite her saying this, I have a very strong feeling that she has a sense of belonging to Chongqing, and she looked particularly relaxed and comfortable when she speaks Chongqing dialect. This may be what home is all about, a place that we may not think it all good but feel safe there.

Home is so warm. We are so lucky that we have our home here in Hong Kong, our lovely Graduate House. Jun enjoys her life in Hong Kong and working with the residents in the Graduate House. "I feel more energetic when talking with you guys because you all have creative ideas." In fact, I learned a lot and thought a lot after talking with Jun. In our Graduate House family, we really need to be grateful to every staff here who silently contributes to this big house and should not take everything for granted. Let's get closer and make it warmer!

Jun has been one of the watchmen is our House for seven years, and she is on duty from 7 am to 3 pm, six days per week. For most of us in most of the days, she may be the first person we meet every morning. I am super grateful to her because it is always her good morning greetings that brighten my every new day.

Take a closer look at the reception desk — there is a card reader, a thermometer, many folders with various documents inside, a telephone, and a computer. These are all closely related to Jun’s work. Jun pays attention to every student tapping the student card and taking their temperature when entering our House, being responsible for the safety of the Graduate House and the residents by carefully monitoring the people in and out and the CCTV. Besides, Jun is so lovely that she has been trying her best to remember every resident's name and which room he/she lives in. Once I saw her holding the phone with her ear and shoulder, and at the same time flipping through the documents carefully, and I was deeply touched by her taking everything seriously.
Celebrate Christmas Online

How does it feel to have a ‘party’ under the pandemic? For some residents living in GH, they actually have some feelings eager to share with us. All of them have experienced a wonderful and unforgettable online Christmas party in which they successfully played significant roles. They are Isha (one of the event organizers), LIU Yaping (one of the helpers), DENG Weipeng, DOU Zhiyang (both of them are the performers) and Sharon (the leader of Fitness Group whose show won the final award). Let’s listen to their sharing!

Q1: How was the working team recruited?

Isha: Hello everyone, I am Isha, one of the event organizers. It was challenging for our RC to design and organize the Christmas party given the COVID-19 restrictions. We had to do everything online, but we stepped up to the challenge. We sent out notice for recruitment for various positions, including designers, coordinators, technicians, and MCs. Fortunately, we received an overwhelming response from our residents. It was quite difficult to select the team from the incredible pool of applications. We selected residents who had prior experiences in these roles and who displayed great enthusiasm.

Yaping: Hello everyone, I am LIU Yaping, a first year PhD student from the Faculty of Education. I am also one of the helpers of Christmas party. I initially sent my CV to RC in order to become a designer of party because I am experienced and willing to design the poster. The competition is stiff and another competitor is more skilled than me. However, I have done well in some workshops when I was assigned with the purchasing work before, and I finally got the chance to be a member of this team because of my related experience.

Q2: How was the performance shown in the event finally chosen?

Sharon: I am Sharon, the leader of Fitness interest group. Once we received the information from RC to call for performers, we began to think what kind of performance we can prepare. LI Yuman, a member of Fitness Group, proposed that we can dance, which get agreed by most of the group members. Then we chose the background music, the dance movement and began to recruit the dancers.

Q3: Did you meet some unexpected situation? (like surprise, accident, interesting or moving moment?)

Zhiyang: My name is DOU Zhiyang, you can call me Frank. We really hope to bring a wonderful show to our Graduate House residents, since there’re not many opportunities for everyone to gather together. And I like playing the guitar very much. Actually, the feeling of everyone in the band working together to play music is exciting. For us, what matters is not the result, but this wonderful process. When we are old, looking back on the past, these are the best memories.

Weipeng: I am DENG Weipeng, one of the performers. We cooperated with us. We are so grateful to feedback to the residents, and they kindly proposed that we can dance, which get agreed by most of the group members. Then we chose the background music, the dance movement and began to recruit the dancers.

Weipeng: I am DENG Weipeng, one of the performers. We cooperated with us. We are so grateful to feedback to the residents, and they kindly proposed that we can dance, which get agreed by most of the group members. Then we chose the background music, the dance movement and began to recruit the dancers.

Isha: Yes, if we had a nickel for every time we faced a challenge, especially regarding the technology, we would be rich. It was exceptionally challenging for the team to hold the event online, keep a superior video quality and make it interactive at the same time. We had several rounds of deliberations before deciding to have a YouTube streaming. It took a lot of effort, time, creativity, and a lot of technical support to execute the event.
Q4: Did you find it problematic during the preparation due to the pandemic? How did you solve the problem finally?

Isha: Due to the pandemic, we were advised to provide food that is easy to give away, like packed food items. As the Residents’ Committee, we realized it would be rather a dull affair if our residents are without sumptuous food on Christmas. We rose to the occasion and came up with a plan that allowed us to provide our residents a diverse range of options for dinner while ensuring social distancing is followed.

Yaping: It was a tough task for us to purchase the proper food for residents with a limited budget while we need to consider the gathering restriction as well. There were three questions. The first one is to plan the food choices for the vegetarians. The salad we decided first was not hearty enough. Isha told us a restaurant where she loved to eat, and this restaurant could offer the vegan food containing rice and dessert, which is also cheap and delicious. Therefore, our first problem got solved perfectly. The second one is to offer foods for other residents. We hoped everyone can eat the steaming hot dinner while enjoying the party, and that is why we chose self-heating hot pot. Office was worried about the safety issue, also some extra trouble like the false triggering of fire alarm and relevant charge to the residents. Therefore, we had to remind the residents to complete the hot pot heating process inside the Student Lounge where there are only less sensitive heat detectors instead of sensitive smoke detectors in residents’ own rooms. Additionally, residents must close the door of the Student Lounge, turn on ventilation fan and kitchen hood, wait until all the steam and smoke have been emitted, then take the ‘hot’ hot pot back to their own rooms to enjoy the food. We also made a video in case some residents have no idea about how to complete the heating process. The third question is how to distribute the packed food to residents. In order to maintain the appropriate distance, we divided the residents having registered for food into several groups to ensure that the total number of people in Pt, including our helpers, was less than four. That afternoon we spent hours in distributing the food, tired but satisfied with the satisfactory completion of our mission!

Q5: What is your feeling about organizing/ participating in the event?

Isha: I believe the experience of organizing the Christmas Party online was like solving a challenging puzzle. There were times it was frustrating and seemed hopeless, but the process made us more resilient as we anticipated certain challenges and were well-prepared to deal with them efficiently. It was a fulfilling experience as the event turned out to be a success and our residents had a gala time.

Sharon: We have the same feeling with Weipeng’s complaint against the place and gathering ban. The limited place for us to rehearse and the impossibility to gathering together disturbed us a lot. Luckily, Peichao, our helper, good at video shooting, overcame the technological problems and provided the wonderful video. What’s more, we had an excellent editor who made our several videos joined into a harmonious whole!

Weipeng: At first the play is more emotional, having higher requirements to act. But wearing the masks makes it hard to display facial expressions. We had to change the script and added a narrator to help to tell the story. Secondly, we didn’t have large enough place for rehearsal. Because of the gathering restriction, we had to rehearse in different groups. As you can see in our final video, we finished our video mostly in the room of Fong Shu Chuen Amenities Centre. We couldn’t find a similar place to rehearse until we successfully booked the room.

Weipeng played ‘V’ in the play The Invisible Companion

Sharon: I was excited when residents chose our performance, the interesting aerobics, as their favorite show. If there were no pandemic, the whole group should go out to dine together. I hope we can find a chance soon afterwards to make up for the regret.

Zhiyang: I am very happy! It gives me the feeling of a big family gathering together, even though it is on the cloud. Every resident in GH is so versatile! Thanks to those who gave us this super Christmas! Thanks, GH!

Weipeng: I feel happy too. I can’t believe that I can be a member of a play until I joined this team. We all have the interests to play together and have fun in Christmas party and also, we have the determination to tell the story well. I have made some good friends through this experience, they are all friendly, interesting and talented!

We believe that most of us were excited that we can enjoy such a wonderful Christmas Party. It seems that RC and the teams had successfully found the way to deal with the potential unexpected change due to the social gathering ban and conduct the normal regular activity, preserving GH’s tradition. It also proved that the residents in GH are still creative, enthusiastic and positive. Therefore, we are eager to share these persons’ voices. The feeling of being a part of the event, the experience to cope with the pandemic, and the detail of the preparation, all of them will contribute to the inspiration of the ‘new normal’.
Get Everybody Moving

Would COVID-19 stop us from exercising? CHENG Yangyang, one of the residents in Graduate House, will answer “no”. She is the leader of Squash Group this year, and she has tried her best to organize regular exercise activities for the group members and all the residents living in GH.

Some people have little knowledge about the squash sport. One of Yangyang’s tasks is to promote squash and attract more residents. To her surprise, many female residents choose to try squash, and most of them finally fell in love with it and became experienced in this game.

Yangyang needs to book courts in Flora Ho Sports Centre for regular activities. She has always succeeded in booking all four courts in order to let more members enjoy the game. "Centre for Sports and Exercise had advised that users should not gather together in groups of more than four persons and it is recommended, as far as possible, to maintain an appropriate social distance (1.5m or more) from one another," said Yangyang, "This requirement is very easy to obey when we play squash. Each room has only two participants, sometimes three for rotation. They will keep moving to avoid bumping into each other, making sure that they stay the right distance all the time."

Yangyang sometimes tries to seek help from other sports groups’ leaders, for example, XIA Chang, the leader of Badminton Group, for experience of organizing colorful activities. There are more members in Badminton Group, and Chang has to organize more kinds of activities to reciprocate members’ passion. Although the gathering restriction didn’t bother Yangyang a lot, it was an unmitigated disaster for badminton players. The maximum number of each court is four, meaning that the number of quotas in each activity is limited. Chang encouraged residents to book additional courts aiming quota increase and it really worked. Every Friday noon, the group members concentrate on the messages from the online group, waiting to participate in the game ‘Name Chain’ to sign up for the quotas. Many group members are so eager to play badminton with friends together, but some of them have to wait for the next week’s regular activity because they failed to sign up. The speed of signing up is so fast that ‘badminton speed’ has become a meme to describe some unbelievable popularity in GH.

Last semester, Chang and Yangyang cooperated in holding an online workshop due to the social gathering policy and the unavailability of courts in the booking system during the new wave of COVID-19. WAN Chen, who is a member of Badminton Group, shared some tips, like choosing the racket, knowing the design of courts and understanding the rules, for beginners to play badminton. PANG Hongliang, a member of Squash Group, gave a basic introduction about squash, trying to attract more people to take part in the group activities. The members of the two groups also showed their interests in each other group in the Q&A session. It seems that there are some similarities between these two kinds of sports.

Chang thought it necessary to provide some opportunities for members to learn some professional skills. He believed that the best way to learn is to practice in the courts. Before the workshops, he initiated the teaching sessions to help the beginners to practice some basic skills, like high serve, high clear and cut. Some experienced players assisted him with the teaching. Chang re-organized the regular activities as soon as possible when he knew the re-opening of the sports facilities. He has a lot of new ideas to share his experience with others and teach them.

Chang isn’t the only one who has combined teaching with practicing while exercising. LI Mingxing, the leader of Dancing Group, is also a teacher who teaches the participants some basic dance movements during the regular group activities. Before the COVID-19, there was no limit on the activity and the members in Dancing Group can take part in the activity casually. During September and October, the pandemic started to slow down and got contained, Mingxing booked some courts for teaching and dancing although he had to limit the number of attendances. He tried to book two rooms in the beginning. He would finish his teaching in Room One, then he would move to Room Two to teach and the participants in Room One can practice on their own. It turned out that the effects were not good enough, not only the teacher became exhausted but also the participants could not
get corrected in time. The practicing situation became worse due to the spread of virus and the temporary closure of all facilities. Mingxing can only organize activities online. He chose some dance as examples to share his experience and some useful tips on how to learn dance from the original choreography video, and many participants took part in this online teaching.

From Mingxing’s perspective, keeping moving is a beneficial way to keep an active lifestyle to fight against COVID-19. In addition, as the leader of interest group, he is obliged to get everybody moving. Comfortingly, there are many residents in GH continuing exercising. They can practice in their own room after they have finished one day’s research or study. The Fitness Group also encourages residents to go out for a jog and keep fit. Group members will share the screenshot including their route, exercising time and the distance for recording. Sharon, the leader of Fitness Group, will remind them every Monday evening that wearing a mask all the time is mandatory to protect themselves. Sharon notices that residents are willing to run outdoor, because running is the simplest exercise to do without any equipment and training, which means it is the easiest way for residents to get relaxed under the pandemic.

All of these exercising groups expect more residents to take part in their activities, no matter where you’re from and no matter whether you are skilled. The feeling of exercising with friends, the experience got from teaching and practicing and the happiness gained via exercise will be the vitamin of the better live in HKU! It is time to keep moving, keep healthy, and keep happy!

If you pass YAN Weifu’s room, you can find a ‘Fu’ character and an Ox-shape paper cutting on his door, both of which are his ‘masterpieces’ created in the activity held by Calligraphy & Painting Group on Feb 10 night. Calligraphy & Painting Group offered materials in P1 Common room for residents to write ‘Fu’ character, write Chinese spring scrolls or have a paper-cut to decorate their rooms, celebrating the coming of Chinese New Year. YU Yuming is the leader of Calligraphy & Painting Group, and she didn’t expect the enthusiasm from residents until she set a vote for choosing the available time slots in order to keep a healthy and enjoying environment for participants and obey the official gathering restriction. Weifu was so excited that he could write a ‘Fu’ character by himself. Although he could not go back to his hometown during the Spring Festival, he felt at home because of the related activities held in GH.

Calligraphy & Painting Group had successfully held several workshops to innovate residents their skills of calligraphy and painting last semester. Before the COVID-19, they used to gather in P1 and practiced together. Some new members learn to use a Chinese brush by imitating the experienced members. Yuming will also share her experience with them and give some tips. However, they can’t continue gathering in P1 because of the continuous spread of COVID-19. Yuming tried some new ways to resume the regular activities. She finally decided to distribute the materials to group members, and residents can practice on their own in their room after regular Zoom session. The closure of classroom made Chenhao could only teach members Cantonese via Zoom online. “There are more participants to take part in our regular activities every week,” said Chenhao, “but it didn’t have the sense of teaching and learning. We have no chance to practice speaking and correct the errors online effectively. It depends on the equipment levels, participants’ willingness, the network situation and so on. In a word, the effect is not as good as before.”
Chenhao and Yuming shared the same feeling of teaching. There are fewer chances to practice together due to the COVID-19. The influence of interaction between the group members is not activated enough. Yuming invited her friends outside GH and HKU to give talks to group members, sharing their experience in calligraphy and painting. It effectively drew group members to take part in the interaction. The speakers, also experienced teachers, could help to solve some problems from residents and guide them a way to practice. Also, they provided various types of arts, improving the participants’ abilities in appreciating art. For example, Hanhua, a young painter skilled at creative paintings and calligraphy, was invited to share her experience on her works. She creatively combined the cartoon style and the ancient Chinese painting; thus, her paintings are novelty to the audiences. Her sharing was so inspired that some residents also started to try the new style in their own painting.

Chenhao figured out a way to increase the interactivity within the group as well as to evaluate members’ learning outcomes. He, with the group members, decided to sing a Cantonese song on the Christmas party. They chose Lonely Christmas and began to practice it. The performers were divided into several groups, and were taught by Chenhao one by one in order to provide the best performance on the show. It seemed that they really presented a wonderful performance that night. To Chenhao’s surprise, group members became closer thanks to the rehearsal. All of them hoped to make the show perfect. XIA Xingyu, one of the performers, used his drone to shoot the video, which actually excited the group members a lot. Chenhao was satisfied with the performance. “Though we really enjoyed in making this video and practicing Cantonese, it can be more interesting if there is no gathering restriction and pandemic. We had to shoot the video groups by groups, and it is possible that people in different subgroups will regard each other a total stranger despite they had performed together.” Chenhao regretfully added.

International residents had shown their passion with these two groups. In Cantonese group, there are an English session and Chinese session on each Thursday night. Residents can choose which session they wanted to join. In Calligraphy & Painting group, residents from different countries shared their feelings of painting and calligraphy and made progress together. Nur Syifaq Azlan, a resident from Malaysia, is enthusiastic to take part in all the group activities. She held a workshop to share her favorite comic to the group members before.

In a word, pandemic has greatly changed our normal life, but it doesn’t mean that everything is ruined. Why not keep learning new skills and practicing them with friends? “Learning by doing” is still a useful slogan to lead us to construct a new normal in the future.

We Have a lot of New Games

This year is full of challenge for Card Game Group, but it brings them some fresh experiences and wonderful feelings.

The Card Game Group had both online activities and face-to-face activities last semester, and all of these activities led residents to enjoy their life in Graduate House.

Werewolf and Avalon are two popular games for the regular group activities every year, and both of them become the online games this year. Group members can take part in the online games every Friday evening. Some apps provide the platform for players to enjoy these games online, and also, there is a website for residents to play Avalon online. At the beginning, LIU Jiamei, the leader of Card Game Group, was worried that group members might find it boring to play online due to the lack of excitement, tension and the feeling of realism which play essential roles in the face-to-face games. Nevertheless, participants get used to play these classical games via Internet, and Jiamei can finally feel relieved to organize the regular online activities.

YUAN Ye, one of the members of Card Game Group, didn’t ‘surrender’ to the restriction of public gathering. The majority of group will take part in the online activities, meaning that he might be able to organize some face-to-face activities engaging limited participants for residents who are also interested in playing games face-to-face. According to their interest to different card games, they can choose whatever card games they like to get relaxed from their busy research works and have fun in different subgroups. Last semester, they had played some new games, like Rocco and Scythe, while Ye introduced that board games nowadays can be roughly categorized into three types: strategy games, party games and role-playing games. All three kinds of games have their own audiences in GH. However, party games, which used to be the most popular, are not suitable under current gathering restrictions, since these games always involve too many participants. In those role-playing games, participants will explore a fictional universe created by the game designers by taking a specific role, reading his or her stories and starting adventures on tabletop. Experiencing the entire wonderful world is time-consuming, and it involves a lot of reading work. For example, there is almost one million words in game Tainted Grail: The Fall of Avalon. It seems strategy games are more convenient and relaxing. This explains why strategy games are becoming popular recently. Furthermore, Ye is a great fan of strategy games. He is always willing to shares his new collections with others, offering different choices for residents in GH to play face-to-face.
Jiamei was satisfied with the passion from residents in GH. Different from the previous years, in this year, more international residents are enjoying themselves in playing card games. She commented on the participation: "This year, our group became more international and we have participants from different countries and regions. We have developed some English version card games to facilitate more and more residents to join us and have fun." Ye provides some English-version or text-free card games from his collection, helping residents overcome language obstacles. LO Young is one of the most active international residents last semester, and he had impressed the other participants with his excellent and skilled performance.

Jiamei still has some trouble in organizing the group activities. She has wished that she could find a viable alternative to restart the Werewolf competition. The experience gained from the senior residents will be not useful if the competition has to be held online, and unpredictable technical problems may occur. Ye thought it is not a good idea to organize the competitions of strategy games. "Learning and playing a new strategy game well is quite challenging for beginners. Experienced players are usually in a position of advantage compared with others. Werewolf, which is a game of both luck and cooperation, can be more attractive for residents." Therefore, how to revive this regular big event, is still a question for both of them.

The pandemic has changed a lot. Besides of the change from face-to-face to online and the maximum number of attendances, the place for the face-to-face subgroups is also the question waiting to be solved. The P1 Common room had been quite strict in limiting the number of residents to four after the new wave of COVID-19, and sometimes there were over four residents wanting to take part in the face-to-face games. Ye had to book a common room in Fong Shu Chuen Amenities Centre for another group to enjoy the games.

Jiamei felt sorry that most of the group members failed to know each other. They only know the names, voice and nicknames in the online application. Maybe they met each other in the lifts or on the road, but they will not realize that they were in the same team once in the games. "Residents playing the face-to-face games are fewer than those playing the online Werewolf or Avalon," said Jiamei, "though they met each other in the common room and played games together, they might forget the looks because all of them were wearing the masks all the time during the activities. It seems that it is quite hard for us to match the names, voice, looks and characters in the COVID-19 background." They hope that the crisis will disappear, and more card games can be introduced to more residents, which would help them to enjoy some entertainment in the busy research life, find their best partner in the competition and live a happy life in GH!
Life is all about ...... FOOD!

Dragon Boat Festival
2020.06.24
Tai Po

Season for Crab
2020.09.24
Our lovely pantry

Mid-autumn Festival
2020.10.01
GH Home

My First Morning Tea
2020.11.07
Victoria Harbor Restr.

Crazy Barbecue
2020.11.29
Tai Mei Tuk

Having a picnic with our GH family!

Spicy Spicy!

Enjoy the sunshine and beautiful view

Super delicious crab

Home-made moon cake

Spicy Spicy!
The wonderful life of the GH “netizen”

Let’s take a look at how Graduate House residents spend their day!

7:30 AM
Zheng Yunping
Morning guys!! 😊

March, 2021

Hu Chen
@ZHANG Yunping Where R U?
I am climbing mountain with my friends now

March, 2021

Zheng Yunping
Such a sunny day! Don’t waste your time on your bed. Enjoy the sunshine!

March, 2021

Zheng Yunping
You got up so early!

March, 2021

3:00 PM
Liu Xiquan
Easy, my lady! It is besides the mountain square. Just go straight.

March, 2021

Hu Chen
Ths! Such a magnificent navigator. Why are u guys so energetic on weekend morning?

March, 2021

Hu Chen
It is cool now.

March, 2021

Hu Chen
@HU Chen Bro I have already got you!

March, 2021

Hu Chen
Where R U?

March, 2021

Hu Chen

10:00 AM
Liu Xiquan
Help! I might get lost. Is there anyone who know where it is?...

March, 2021

Sheng Mei
Did all of you go hiking today?

March, 2021

Liu Xiquan
Nah. I am joining a reading group and we are sharing our inspiration.

March, 2021

Sheng Mei
12:00 AM
How can you know my place by reading such limited information?

March, 2021

Liu Xiquan
I am eventually taking care of my little plants!!

March, 2021

Liu Xiquan

6:00 PM
Liu Xiquan
15:00 PM
Du Nan
Wow! Amazing!

March, 2021

Zheng Yunping
The night sky is also amazing! Are you guys back to GH now?

March, 2021

Du Nan
On my way!

March, 2021

Du Nan
@LI Yingqi Yingqi kept silent after the noon. What happened?

March, 2021

Du Nan
I am participating in an activity of cooking group! Mooncake time!

March, 2021

Hu Chen
Ingenious!

March, 2021

Hu Chen
20:00 PM
Guess what I have seen!

March, 2021

Liu Xiquan
A wild boar!! 😃😃😃
Maybe it is attracted by the delicious mooncake as well!

March, 2021

Liu Xiquan
Come back as soon as possible!! or else no mooncake left!

March, 2021

Sheng Mei
Great! Noted with thanks for your two recommendations.

March, 2021

Sheng Mei

19:00 PM
Liu Xiquan

Sheng Mei
Definitely me. 😊

March, 2021

Du Nan
Lady first! 😁😁😁

March, 2021

Du Nan
Now, the race starts!

March, 2021
How did you cope with COVID-19?

Q: How did you cope with COVID-19?

Z: We cannot get together with friends, try delicious canteen and explore exciting places, as well as celebrate the festivals. My plan to the Disney Land and the Ocean Park fell through.

W: I can’t often go back to the mainland to see my family and boyfriend!

X: I feel like the epidemic has disrupted the rhythm of life. I was often interrupted by my neighbours’ noise when I was taking online classes, reading, and even sleeping. That was the most significant impact on me during the epidemic.

Q: What impacts and changes have you felt in the life of GH during this year of the epidemic?

X: I think GH is very responsive and effective in dealing with the changes. And all the residents follow the latest regulations well, such as the restriction on gathering, wearing masks, etc. For me, my study plan was somehow disrupted, bringing pressure and anxiety to my mind. The build-up of stress took a toll on me physically and mentally.

W: The interest groups’ activities are greatly affected, and most of them are online or even cancelled.

Q: As for the impact of the epidemic on life and study, do you have any suggestions for GH students from your own experience?

Z: I hope everyone can participate in the GH activities as much as possible, which can help you relax and gain more interaction with our residents under this unusual situation.

W: Learn to be alone and explore your interests. Communicate more with family and friends and release your emotions in time.

Notes:

Q for Question
X for Xie Zhengli
Z for Zhang Yunping
W for Wu Xiaochuan
Rock the Tuesday

After LIU Yingqi, one of RA, gave his Tuesday talk in GH, LIU Zelin decided to self-nominate himself. Yingqi shared his research experience, explaining a method inspired from ancient pagodas by using resettable sliding joints in precast segment bridge columns to improve the seismic capacity, which enriched Zelin’s knowledge of construction and mechanism. Residents from different faculties shared their ideas about the talk. They asked their questions about the technique, all of which got good feedback from Yingqi. “I think it is the feeling of sharing that pushes me to nominate myself as the next speaker of the upcoming talks”, said Zelin.

Both of them are the speakers of The Tuesday with GH (also known as Tuesday Talk), a Graduate House’s regular activity initiated by Master Lee. She aims at providing a research sharing platform for residents who want to get prepared for their probation or academic meetings. The Tuesday Talk can be regarded as an approach to enhance intra-house communication additionally. Speakers and audiences might hope to find some unique, interdisciplinary inspiration during the sharing. Residents of GH have different backgrounds, and it is well believed that the academic communications can break the border of different subjects. It seems that this activity is not affected a lot by COVID-19 as the meetings can be held online and the communication can continue.

Zelin was worried that it would have some impact if he talked about his EEE major as the theories used in his research are mostly abstract and complicated. Yingqi used a lot of images to visualize his sharing, ensuring that audiences can keep pace with the talk, while finding a way to make the electronic theories easy to understand. Zelin is quite a hard task for Zelin. Finally, he chose to say something about game design theory rather than his research specialty. He was one of the members of a game design team, and he is also an experienced gamer. “Almost everyone plays games but seldom explores the world of game design. Players are easy to get caught by games as some designing strategies are used to ‘trap’ us. The theory of game design, with which others are unfamiliar, is exactly what I am fascinated about and experienced in.” He helped to divide game players into four subgroups to illustrate their features (for example, the players labelled as ‘explorer’ will spend most of their time in finding some non-proclaimed stories and details by the official, include some bugs) and showed how a well-designed game works to meet the requirements from players with different preferences.

It proved that the Tuesday Talk benefited Zelin a lot. “Different from the peer in the same lab, residents in Graduate House can tell something from various backgrounds. It feels like twisting a kaleidoscope when receiving other residents’ opinions,” said Zelin after he had successfully conducted his Tuesday Talk, “I was shocked several times, and wondered why I hadn’t realized that there were such wonderful views about my interest before.” The types of games residents in GH play are diversified, and the experience of being ‘trapped’ by game design theories varies from person to person. Even Master Lee has her own ideas about the game design, despite she is not really interested in playing electronic games. Zelin was satisfied about his presentation: “I have to acknowledge that the talk was far beyond my expectation.”
PANG Hongliang was the third resident giving his speech in The Tuesday with GH last semester. While being asked why he wanted to take part in this activity, he playfully gave a lot of ‘reasons’ for his participating: the certificate for speakers, the gifts from Master, getting inspired by Zelin’s talk (especially his charming oral English) and so on. However, as a student new to HKU, Hongliang has realized that the first step of his research is to practice his spoken English during the academic meetings and speeches. Having been trained from the university to demonstrate something related to his research, like the research topic, research methods and the evaluation system to ensure the accuracy of the outcome, with the language he gets used to, he believes that academic multilingualism plays an essential role in becoming a member of international academic community. “There is no doubt that there will be more and more occasions to use English during our research period, so why not seize every chance to practice it?”

Hongliang’s talk stressed on wireless power transfer. After the explanation on some general methods to achieve this epoch-making technique, he elaborated on some researches’ hot spots and promising research topics, like dual side charging control and impedance matching. His talk aroused interests of the participants. While some residents had their own opinions of the safety issue, some residents were eager to gain more knowledge about the maximum efficiency control and related research outputs.

Gita, another resident who gave an excellent talk in Tuesday Talk, found another way to decide her topic. Same as Zelin, she also had no idea about whether her research topic is easy enough to understand. Therefore, Tuesday Talk is also a challenge to simplify her research background and present her research details with accessible language. Additionally, she hoped to design her topic as interesting as possible in order to appeal to more participants. Considering the purpose of giving a comprehensible and attractive presentation as well as practicing her ability on giving academic presentation about her research interest, Gita finally chose to say something about the modelling of neurodegenerative disease. She explained: “The failure of several drugs during drug development suggests that animal models cannot completely mimic the complications of human bodies and human disease complexities. To fill the gap between human and animal research, precise human cell models are needed.”

Gita started her talk from presenting the phases of clinical trial as well as the failures and reasons, then compared the animal models and the human cell model, and she also pointed out that the most challenging parts of modelling are finding reliable cell sources and suitable cell culture platforms. In the end of the talk, strategies for improvement of existing systems were introduced. Her research topic is a matter of some urgency in some extent, which made Gita’s talk attractive for the residents.

Gita was satisfied that at the end of her talk, she received several exciting questions which are useful for her further research. She thought this was good practice for her future presentations. Hongliang regarded this talk as a chance to make friends. As a freshman of GH, he hoped to spend less time settling himself down in a new community. Friends who come from the same faculty, study in the same field or have the same interests will enrich Hongliang’s life. It turns out that Tuesday Talk actually helped him to meet some confidants: “An audience asked a question hitting the pain point of the related research, and at that time I realized that he can become one of my good friends.”
Rome wasn’t built in a day

After graduating from Fudan University as an undergraduate student, Li Jian didn’t study abroad as expected but worked as a research assistant for two years, which in fact was really a blessing in disguise. Listen! He is now sharing his inspiring story to us!

Q1: What is your research area?
Li: I used to focus on the purification of human protein but now my research is about using cryo-electron microscopy to analyze the three-dimensional structure and functional mechanism of multiple proteins involved in the process of chromosome replication, which will hopefully provide further guidance for the treatment of future genetic diseases and cancer.

Q2: How much time do you spend on work?
Li: I spend 90% of my working time doing experiment in the laboratory. To extract a protein, sometimes I need to work all night, and sometimes I work from 7 am to 12 am. But of course, this is not my everyday schedule and it’s actually flexible. I can arrange my time by myself and decide whether I need to go to the laboratory on every particular day.

Q3: How do you feel these hardships in your academic life?
Li: I do understand that scientific research is very challenging, but I have built up my toughness since I was a RA. Once I conducted an experiment in Hong Kong University of Science from 5 am to 12 am, without any food and even a drop of water. I think the hardships will be minimized as I know what I am aiming for.

Q4: Did you encounter any challenges in your project published in Nature?
Li: There seems to be no difficulty for me, and it seems that all of my previous experience as a RA and my persistence paid off. The strong ability in doing experiment on human cells drove me to this success. However, I have made a mistake that I directly used the electron microscope without doing the verification after the protein purification just for saving time, resulting in tens of thousands of funds wasted. "Do it step by step, and don't be too aggressive"!

Q5: How do you handle the relationship with your supervisor?
Li: I think it’s very important. I try to actively and timely report your weekly, monthly or new data, communicating with my supervisor in time instead of hiding away, to show my commitment and motivation. For the experimental tasks assigned by supervisor, I will definitely complete it actively. Supervisor will be more willing to put resources on us if he/she evidenced our efforts. In addition, a good relationship with other members in the laboratory is also important because we can make great progress with well collaboration and share experiences and lessons with each other.
Study on COVID-19

Since COVID-19 has changed our lives a lot, someone still conduct their researches related to COVID-19. The disadvantages caused by COVID-19 becomes their research materials.

JA Wei, a first year PhD resident in GH, is studying on COVID-19, as he is a member of a team starting to study SARS-CoV transmission from 2003. Their team focuses on studying the transmission dynamics of the respiratory diseases (i.e., influenza, SARS-CoV, norovirus and so on). Without the knowledge of transmission route, people cannot determine the prevention measurements. For example, the U.S. CDC (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) does not recognize the role of airborne route in the pandemic transmission, thus giving the mitigation measures insufficient in protecting the public. The team which Wei belonging to aims to provide enough evidence and offer protection measurements. Wei mainly does some theoretical study and data mining to find some evidences he needed in the research. For example, they found that COVID-19 has a high attack rate in crowded places, requiring high inhalation volume, but rarely occurs outdoor. Some judgements will be given according to these phenomena and the related theoretical knowledge, and fluid dynamics and indoor air theory will be applied into the judgements. Besides, they also use tracer gas to measure leakage of U trap in the building drainage system and use gas sensor and control theory to build an early warning system.

HUANG Xiner studies on COVID-19 as well. As a student majoring in emerging infectious disease, she regards her research as a significant work. She is greatly motivated by the inner power to spare no effort on her study considering the spread of the COVID-19. COVID-19 is not her only topic actually, and most of her researches are basic researches. Based on her previous experiences, she is well trained to be sensitive and experienced to analyze the virus’ entry process to a cell. The enzyme used by the virus to enter the cell, the transmissibility of the virus and the reduced pathogenicity are all included in her research. By researching the virus characterization, some therapeutical methods can be found, benefiting the further medicine production. The related paper has been published in the Nature Communications on Jan 8, identifying heparan sulfate in human lung epithelial cells as an important attachment factor for SARS-CoV-2 infection and indicating that heparin, a common anticoagulant, was found to associate with decreased mortality in severe cases. Though the paper was showing more details and evidence, the public might care more about the cure for COVID-19, which meanwhile proves the importance of Xiner’s research.

The research is not so risky as audience’s extravagant imagination. Xiner is reminded to equip personal protection and conduct the operation in accordance with the standard operating procedures when she has to enter the P3 laboratory every time by herself. Wei explained that besides utilizing N95 masks, when they have to do some experiments in the infector’s house, the Health Department will remove all infected persons and disinfect the experiment sites to protect the researchers’ health. Taking care of themselves has become one of their necessary skills.

Though it is not really risky in the lab, it is not easy for Xiner to overcome the fear when she was required to go to the lab from GH every day while she noticed the surge of the number of confirmed cases. At that time, most of labs need to close in order to protect the researchers. However, for Xiner and her peers in the group who are studying on COVID-19, it is the time to continue and accelerate their research instead of stopping it. They have to encourage each other, trying their best to find something useful for the fight. Soon they came to another problem. The factories in the whole world are influenced by the pandemic, some of them were shut down and others had to slowed their speed of production, that making the medical consumables become in short supply. They had to find some viable alternatives to continue the research.

The mental issue bothers both Wei and Xiner. Wei hopes he can go back home to see his parents once the pandemic is contained totally, getting totally relaxed from the research. Xiner also felt tired because she failed to go home due to the pandemic. The stress of research always makes her exhausted. Both of them find their own ways to get rid of stress. Wei, a member of Fitness Group, keeps running outdoor once a week to keep physical health and mental health as well. Xiner is the leader of Music Group in which members will have an online karaoke on Tuesday evening, and Xiner totally enjoys the activities. The friends they have made in GH help them to relief their emotion, offer the companion and listen to their pouring out their troubles.

It is really hard for us to tell when we can finally win the fight against the COVID-19, and it is also unlikely that we can get back to the familiar life, but it is obvious that some researchers are working so hard to help us find the new normal life after the damage caused by the pandemic. We sincerely hope they can finally succeed in their remarkable research.
Suggestions from Dr. Diana Lee: Be prepared, Be practical, Be happy

Dr. Diana Lee, Graduate House Academic Fellow from the Faculty of Education, accepted our interview on Feb 18, 2021 via Zoom. Ruiyan Gao, our journalist, also a student from the Faculty of Education, interviewed her. In the past few years, Dr. Dianna Lee and residents from the Faculty of Education have been gathering over lunch. It was great for her to see residents reporting their research progress or sharing their life. While answering our questions, she offered some suggestions for residents living in GH considering the uncertainties in future, resulting from the huge change of the world in recent years.

Be Prepared
Ruiyan Gao (hereinafter called G): Hello, Dr Diana Lee. Thank you so much for accepting this interview. Last year we had a gathering through Zoom and I am really happy to learn a lot from you. I just wonder do you have any suggestions related to studies for our residents?

Dr Dianna (hereinafter called D): Yes. Firstly, from my perspective, we need to be prepared. In the sense that, during the journey of your studies, you will experience a lot of different things, like your coursework, your research, or even different extracurricular activities that you conduct in addition to your research and to your coursework. You might be very busy making friends, getting settled down in the whole life, living in the Graduate House and getting to know people, especially if you’re from overseas. All of these will broaden your experiences, but at the same time, you need to remind yourselves to be prepared always. Whatever you’re taking up, you have to make sure that they are related to your future career path in some ways.

It is common that after finishing collecting your data, writing up your dissertation, and graduating, you may find that, suddenly, you don’t exactly know what you exactly want to do when you’re supposed to look for a job or decide how to move forward with your career with a PhD degree. It will be desperate to realize that all your previous experiences or the courses that you’ve done or the research that you’ve conducted may not promise you a job. That is why I want to tell you to be prepared. And this is my suggestion to residents, not only to those from the Faculty of Education but also from other faculties.

G: Thank you. So, you’re saying even though for first year students, we should have a somewhat clearer career path in our mind?

D: Yes. Either you have a fairly clear career path, or you can try out different things to find your path. For example, if you are not sure whether you want to be a researcher or want to teach in the future, you can try both. While finishing your own research task, you can take courses that are related to teaching, or you can try to be a teaching assistant in your second year to have different experiences in research and in teaching. In addition to your PhD studies, these experiences can be added to your CV after your graduation, indicating that you have been working actively on your research, while helping your supervisor to teach as a TA. As you know, if you have spent four or five years studying in HKU, and all you did is finishing your coursework and dissertation, there is nothing special. You need to differentiate yourselves, and make your CV more outstanding with the colorful experiences or expertise that you have gained from your research and other aspects of your life.

For those who want to become a researcher, it is possible that your employers may not hire you just because you’ve done some researches, unless your research is exactly what this field requires, or it is interesting enough to inspire some new research topics, or if it successfully fills some gaps in our recent researches. If you are interested in doing research, you need to make sure that whatever you are doing is somehow paving the way for your future.

There are many people graduating at the same time with you, and they all have a PhD degree just like you, and the job market is very hard to navigate, especially during these days, so you really have to have an end in mind when you start your PhD programme.

Be Practical
G: You have said that researches matching the hot spots will be a plus in our CV, so should the components of our research be practical?

D: I am not saying that something that is not practical is not good, but, considering the situation, especially the job market for students studying in education, I have to say that it is better for your research to be as practical as possible.

Education is some kind of social science. It is not Physics, astronomy nor any other abstract science subject. We are required to work for our society, for the community. If your research question is about a common concern or a common issue, you can easily translate it into something practical, solving problems or giving advice to some people who are stakeholders in the education community. You can also notice that we are not only required to make research useful but also benefit the community, and that is, as I said before, to be practical.

You just mentioned hot spots, or hot topic, and this is what I always bring up to students. It is one of the requirements of students of social science to keep thinking of something that is highly related to the society or something that is new and in need, for example, online learning. Children learning through digital devices is something pressing right now with the COVID-19 situation around the whole world. Definitely, our education-related research has been influenced a lot by COVID-19. All the school have been closed and a lot of classes have to be conducted online. Considering this situation, online learning, especially children’s online education, becomes a hot topic. How can parents make good use or careful use of digital devices to help children? How to make sure that parents can help children to learn at home? All of these questions need researches.

Be Prepared
D: Yes, it is one of my research areas. My PhD research was to investigate the bilingual and triliterate language development of kindergarten children in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, we have been implementing our bilingual and triliterate language policy since 1997. It was quite new at that time, and this language policy concerned every single kindergarten-age child in HK. During the studies, I also help my research supervisor in developing a child assessment measure to find out how children in HK develop their cognitive ability, language ability, self-help skills,
etc. This assessment tool has been fairly widely used nowadays to measure children’s development. So, in that sense, I would suggest that you need to think of something that you can work with your research professor together and see what are the gaps that you can fill. It is not just based on your own interests, but something that the community needs, the world needs.

**Be Happy**

G: Thanks for your sharing. I saw your project before, and it is very meaningful and valuable. I wish I can conduct some studies in early childhood too. But I am worried about my research due to COVID-19.

D: Yes. Honestly speaking, you might face some challenges. If your research work is related to classroom practices related to children’s learning, the way that you collect data has been significantly influenced. Of course, you can say that we still have the online class, but you need to understand that there are many underprivileged children and families who cannot afford to have a stable Wi-Fi or who may not have the digital devices required. There are also some children with special needs, for example, some children cannot focus for a long time. These children need training that cannot be done online. Hence, in terms of data collection, analysis, even the research questions would have to be redefined based on the influences by COVID-19. And also, the schedules of our research work have to be suspended or postponed.

G: This is unfortunate news for us.

D: Don’t be disappointed. Some traditional tools and assessment might face challenges, but some new issues are calling for your attention. If you look at UK or Canada, there are still lockdowns and, in that way, digital learning is one of the key ways for teaching and learning. So much research funding has now been redirected towards this direction and to see how we can enhance the teaching and learning experiences through online learning. It is worth doing because we can see that this will be a worldwide trend.

I don’t want to give you too much pressure actually. You can try your best be prepared and be practical, and it is also important for you to be happy. Just as I have mentioned before, you can make friends, get to know people and so on. You will have your own social time to get relaxed, have fun, and active networking is also an essential part for your future.

Graduate House is very special, not everybody who applied to the Graduate House can live in the Graduate House as a resident. You should always treasure this opportunity to make friends with other residents coming from different faculties, having different nationalities and majoring in different disciplines in the Graduate House. It is a very unique chance for you to know someone and form a network. Later on, in life, if you need to find a connection or try to find some information, you can always reach out to these friends.

I hope all of you can finally enjoy your life in HKU because not many people can spare four or five years of their life doing a full time PhD. Enjoy the relationship in Graduate house, and make good use of your time!
Amidst the imposing forest of towering skyscrapers. They interconnecting street blocks, buffer the bustling road and one emerges into an open-air the shuffling of foot traffic, market submerged in colorful Surrounded on all sides by fragrant blooms and evergreens. rainbow colored buildings, one It is breath-taking. It is also feels at the center of an intimate surreal to stumble upon a embrace or at the cusp of being garden within the unforgiving privy to its secrets. concrete jungle.

In the 1940s, Hong Kong struggled to accommodate a steady wave of refugees landing on its shores. Consequently, thousands ended up in makeshift shelters along vast but densely populated shantytowns. In the 1950s, a devastating fire tore and displaced thousands forcing the government to develop a group of residential buildings now known as estates. Estates were previously associated with crime but now have attracted tourists even the Kpop boyband Seventeen. Choi Hung is one of the oldest public housing estates in the city. It is a set of 11 rainbow colored tightly knit low-rise buildings. The estate was painted in different colors in order to “lift the spirits” of its residents. Choi Hung after all translates to the word rainbow. With clean lines, symmetrical streets. Groups of elderly Building alcoves are repurposed to perform synchronized into to waving vibrant tai chi while kids on scooters blue flowers hang. Walls are zip along the central courtyard plastered with towering vertical with abandon. Teenage boys gardens while humble bonsai banter and shoot hoops on trees populate the foot of the other half of the court as columns. elderly men silently deal cards on a makeshift table. At that Amidst this is the incessant moment, Choi Hung ceased to chatter. Sellers were peddling be merely a tourist destination their ornamental plants. Buyers were haggling for discounts. revealed itself as a community. Tourists were shooting photos. This is Hong Kong at its most People were laughing. Passersby were admiring. Young men were hunting for the perfect color - I got hating bruises of that shade that would rival the pastel colors of Choi Hung or that shade that would rival the pastel colors of Choi Hung or - neither one was inspiration nor determination. They were Gai Daan Jan or eggette, and the vibrant hues of the Flower Market.

Along the trail, I did encounter a lot of greenery - trees with lush cumulus verdant tops, lush activity and beautiful chaos. This is Hong Kong at its most authentic and frenetic. And it is vibrant.

Wow, Hong Kong! Re-Discovering HK like an old friend

The last destination of my three-day six stop CEDARS WOW tour was literally over the top. It was the hike up to the Peak - the highest point on Hong Kong Island located near HKU. While I am not a fan of hiking, the excitement of my ascent. student host was too palpable to deny. The rhythmic crunch of gravel under my shoes during the 2500-meter ascent reminded me of POW death marches. And there were times it felt like it. The best treks are those where one fully applies to it. Due to the uneven terrain, my knee and bum got intimately acquainted with the ground. Name any color - I got hating bruises of that shade that would rival the pastel colors of Choi Hung or the vibrant hues of the Flower Market.

Alas it didn’t happen. Two things sustained my sojourn - neither one was inspiration nor determination. They were Gai Daan Jan or eggette, and the vibrant hues of the Flower Market.

Upon reaching the apex, one becomes immediately enveloped in a spectacular 360-degree view of the city. Streetlights pulse like arteries of the city feeding into skyscrapers that thrum with lights. In contrast, there are the gentle rolling hills of the New Territories and the still silver water of Victoria harbor under the pale moonlight. The night sky is vast. The entire University of Hong Kong miniaturized underneath it. It is at this moment one realizes that all the bruises and difficulties of the climb have been worth it all along. This is Hong Kong - a mixture of the modern and the traditional, nature and urbanization, the local and the foreign.

Along the trail, I did encounter a lot of greenery - trees with lush cumulus verdant tops, lush activity and beautiful chaos. This is Hong Kong at its most authentic and frenetic. And it is vibrant.

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There would also be the “balls”. The other is lung so special stuffing inside each egg. Alas it didn’t happen. Two things sustained my sojourn - neither one was inspiration nor determination. They were Gai Daan Jan or eggette, and the vibrant hues of the Flower Market.

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Did you get lost in HKU when you arrived there for the first time? I think some of friends might have the same experience with me. I came to HKU on Dec 28th 2020, and fortunately got the help from a senior student whose hometown is the same as mine. She directed the way to the Department of Chemistry (Faculty of Science), helped me with the procedure of registration, and shared some living tips for my settling down at GH. At that time, I believed that I was a lucky girl and my life in HKU would go on without a hitch as the beginning was so perfect. It seemed that the pandemic didn’t affect me a lot.

However, my confidence got ruined the next day. “It’s near to your hall,” one of my friends studying around Kadoorie invited me to hang out but I have to wait for her in Kadoorie as she had an appointment with her supervisor in the morning, “If you successfully find the MTR, you will know how to find me. I will leave for you as soon as possible. You can take your time. See you soon!” Before I look around campus, I had known that it was a great convenience to have the MTR so near to GH. Though I arrived at GH by taxi and didn’t see the MTR last day, I still believed in myself on finding the way. I didn’t get used to seeking the help from the map because I enjoy the feeling of random walk and finding my destination finally with surprise. As the Chinese saying goes, “After endless mountains and rivers that leave doubt whether there is a path out, suddenly one encounters the shade of a willow, bright flowers and a lovely village”, the destination will show up at the end.

However, things go contrary to my wishes. I didn’t come in sight of the MTR “suddenly”, nor as my friend. I felt tired, hungry and terrible, almost soaked through my clothes sweating resulted of the midday sun. I could hear the passerby speaking Cantonese, but I still failed to pluck up the courage to explain what I was suffering and ask the correct way to them. It will be a total dilemma if we couldn’t understand each other’s language.

Additionally, everyone was wearing the having better life in HKU. The campus consists of several infrastructures, and distance because of the COVID-19. I didn’t the road networks, especially the upstairs know whether it is polite to stop someone. and downstairs road combination, are also “Will they get annoyed? Will they think I am complex. It will be a nice trip to go around weird?” It was at that time that I realized I had gotten lost in HKU and had no idea what I could do next!

I sent a picture to mark my position to my friend, wishing she could squeeze in some time to notice my message and give me some guidance. Maybe she would come to find me and lead the way. Unfortunately, she concentrated all her attention on the discussion. I was embarrassed, wondering whether I should get back to GH or continue to wait until my friend’s telepathy works well.

I was told that the university has provided tools and websites for freshmen to settle down in the new surroundings. For example, the Centre of Development and Resources for students (CEDARS) has a website specifically targeted students who are nonlocal, giving the essential living tips and don’t be indifferent when others ask for help. The pandemic can only control the physical distance, but the psychological distance might be shorter as people are prone to help each other in such hard time. Don’t be shy to seek help, and don’t be indifferent when others ask for help.

What I learned from the unforgettable experience is that all of us should raise awareness of reading maps aiming at enjoying our new life in HKU!
When accepting my admission offer into HKU and an opportunity to reside in GH, only one excitement came to my mind – meeting people from around the world. And indeed GH is full of surprises. My very first circle of friends really opened my eyes on many unexpected perspectives that all can be either good or bad. It made me realized human relationship is not as simple as ‘1, 2, 3…’ or ‘A, B, C,…’. Thus, because of those little experiences it drove me to exert changes to myself and unfortunately, the changes little by little loosened the superficial bond. Throughout those days, it was a challenging phase for me in my time at GH.

Therefore, despite the diversity and differences among us, we are all should be appreciating such good opportunities to get to know each other. Meeting those nice people along the way in GH, started to warm my heart and responded to my initial thought. We talked not because of our names, we talk and be friends because we choose to respect and genuinely wanted to learn about each other. Honestly, although I admitted that it is encouraged to use a language that everybody can understand and if somehow it was not being fully supported, I think there are many better ways we can compromise and still being respectful with each other. And it will all begin with a little kindness, acceptance, and tolerance that we are willing to initiate that goes beyond our differences.

Continued to stay and even believed that I would be able to come up with something that allowed everyone to participate easily with the acting roles. I received lots of encouraging words from my team, some of them interestingly discussed with me that we could change it into an easier and more relaxed one. After days and days working together as a team, even though we have different cultural and language backgrounds, we had finally transformed the story into an enjoyable play and brought the pleasant and memorable moments for our residents. Through this process, we are able to build a warm connection among us. What’s more, when participated in some interest groups, the leaders and other members would also like to introduce the topic and their discussion to me again in English, if sometimes the activities have to be in Chinese. I can feel the enthusiasm and warmth here along with the days passing by.

Despite everything that had happened, I was grateful that my initial thoughts of losing them meant losing all the friendship was appallingly wrong. Life continues, people come and go. In order to prepare a play for the Christmas Party, I wrote a drama script, but some actors who would like to join this play thought it was too hard, and some actors could not fully understand the storyline. Even one of them have quitted because she felt she was not suitable for the roles in the story. Despite supposedly being frustrated, I was not, not even a smidge. In fact, I felt deeply touched by everyone that continued to stay and even believed that I would be able to come up with something that allowed everyone to participate easily with the acting roles.