

# Yanjun Shi



## Biography

I am a graduate student in M.Ed., Counselling Psychology, at the University of Lethbridge. I am interested in patterns of human behaviour and intrigued by the capacity of the human mind. I started to read books on classic psychoanalysis when I was a teenager in China, fascinated by the theories of psychology and psychotherapy. I came to the University of Lethbridge for my undergraduate studies in psychology seven years ago. I also enjoy learning different languages and am curious about the process of language acquisition.

After completing my undergraduate thesis on gender-differentiated speech development in Mandarin speakers, I made inroads into addiction and neuroscience. Writing a literature review on behavioural addiction in an independent study and volunteering at a neuroscience lab that studied neuropathways of decision-making brought me closer to my passion in addiction and mental health research. Over a year after my undergraduate studies, thanks to a fateful coincidence, I met my current supervisor and mentor in Counselling Psychology. I started working with her on immigrant intergenerational relationships and couples counselling for addiction. This led to my decision to pursue graduate studies in Counselling Psychology. My counselling training has helped me to be more deeply connected with myself and others. My interest in counselling is mainly in couples and family, extending to immigrants and culture. My career aspirations as a prospective researcher and counselling practitioner include helping to bridge the gap of communication between researchers, health providers, and patients, and promoting knowledge exchange between Canada and China in mental healthcare.

## Project Summary

### *Patient Engagement in Gauging the Relational Gap in Addiction Treatment*

A large body of research shows that involving couples and families in treating addiction, yields positive results. However, conjoint couple therapy is under-implemented in addiction services. This project engages former patients as research advisors to explore patients' need for couple-involved



addiction intervention and patient experience of different addiction programs within the Alberta Health Services (AHS). Participants will be recruited from an ongoing study that compares the outcomes of Congruence Couple Therapy (CCT) with Treatment as Usual (TAU) in two AHS sites for couples with alcohol and gambling disordered partners. Upon treatment completion, a survey will be distributed to both partners individually to learn about their motivations and expectations when they signed up for the couple treatment study in addition to their past experiences of seeking couple counselling. In-depth interviews will be conducted with each partner among CCT and TAU couples to elucidate the couple's treatment experiences. The patient advisors are couples and partners who have gone through AHS addiction services and couple counselling while coping with addiction. They will give input on designing the survey and the interview protocol as well as feedback on the findings. The patient engagement will help balance the researcher's biases and honour the patients' perspectives. The results of this mixed methods study will shed light on the approaches and elements of what patients find effective and beneficial in their addiction and couple relationship recovery. Patients' voices on addiction treatment will inform meaningful research and programs most responsive to patients' needs.