

Postdoctoral Fellow Position: PKU-UChicago Collaboration

The Learning Sciences Laboratory at the Graduate School of Education, Peking University (PKU) and [The Human Nature and Potentials Lab](#) at the University of Chicago seek a postdoctoral fellow with strong training in social psychology, developmental science, or cognitive science to join a new interdisciplinary initiative. This initiative is funded by a Cyrus Tang Foundation Grant awarded to Dr. Ran Wei at PKU and Dr. Fan Yang at the University of Chicago.

We aim to understand how individuals conceptualize and develop *a sense of purpose* in life. The fellow will work closely with the PKU and UChicago teams as part of an integrated initiative, depending on individual expertise and project needs. They will play a central role in designing and implementing a series of experiments and evidence-based research studies and intervention programs. The position is ideal for scholars who are eager to study existential questions related to purpose, meaning, and big questions in life, and who value working across institutions to translate theory into scalable interventions for diverse communities.

Responsibilities

- Participate in cross-site and cross-cultural collaboration and project coordination across teams, including opportunities for international travel and extended collaborative research stay in the United States for data collection, trainings, collaborative meetings, and conferences.
- Lead and coordinate study implementation, including recruitment, data collection, and data management across collaborating sites.
- Support design-based research cycles, including structured check-ins, feedback sessions with parents, students, and educators, and iterative refinement of intervention components.
- Collaborate closely with designers and engineers to optimize the usability, accessibility, and engagement of AI-powered and game-based interventions.
- Contribute to manuscript preparation, conference presentations, and knowledge dissemination materials for academic, school, and community audiences.

Required Qualifications

- PhD in social psychology, developmental psychology, learning sciences, cognitive science, or a related field
- Strong quantitative research training (e.g., multilevel modeling, experimental or quasi-experimental designs)
- Professional or native proficiency in Mandarin Chinese (for communication with families and partners, and for Chinese-language research contexts)
- Strong interests in and engagement with questions about purpose, meaning, psychological wellbeing, and related topics.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience with natural language processing (NLP) and/or machine learning, including building and evaluating models for text analysis or multimodal data.
- Experience and willingness to work with populations with diverse age and cultural backgrounds.

Appointment and Support

The appointment is expected to commence in August 2026. This is a 1-year appointment with a competitive 12-month salary and benefits package, in accordance with university policies. Pending satisfactory performance, the contract may be renewed annually for up to four years, contingent on continued funding support.

Principal Investigators

Dr. Ran Wei is an Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Education, Peking University, where she co-directs the Learning Sciences Lab. Her research program investigates how the home environment, particularly caregivers' communicative input, beliefs, and use of educational technologies, supports children's neurocognitive development. Currently, her work focuses on designing and evaluating effective, culturally resonant, and AI-powered interventions that empower parents from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to foster their children's learning and growth.

Dr. Fan Yang is a Research Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Chicago, where she directs the Human Nature and Potentials Lab. Her research examines existential cognition—how children and adults engage with life's "big questions," including what gives life meaning, who we are, and what is worth pursuing.

Application Materials

Please compile the following into a single PDF in this order:

1. Cover letter (1–2 pages)
2. CV
3. 1–3 representative publications or preprints
4. Contact info for reference letters

Submit to Dr. Ran Wei at ranwei@pku.edu.cn, and Dr. Fan Yang at fan.yang@uchicago.edu.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled.