

NEWSLETTER

Patience, Connection, Adjustment: Conducting Fieldwork during the Pandemic

YAO Wei

Image from iStock



Last year was really hard for everyone. For postgraduate students who need to conduct fieldwork for graduation theses, it could not be more difficult during the pandemic. Adopting a qualitative research method, my thesis research aims to understand psychoactive drug abuse among rural-to-urban young migrants in China. Before and during my fieldwork in mainland China, obstacles flooded.

Originally, I planned to do a pilot study before the proposal oral defence. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to do so because of the unstable epidemic in both Hong Kong and the Mainland. I chose to further revise my thesis proposal and design research instruments. In October, I finally returned to the Mainland to conduct my fieldwork. I relied on official institutions or social work agencies to gain access to drug abusers. Because of the pandemic, there was no way for outsiders to enter the compulsory isolated treatment centers as they are controlled by the government. Hence, my only hope was social work agencies specializing in drug rehabilitation. However, the possible risks brought by my presence were also a concern to these agencies. It took me more than one month to build trust with a social work agency. I presented my research plan to the director without any reservation and waited patiently for his permit. Meanwhile, I actively contacted various resources and made backup plans in case this channel did not work out. Fortunately, I received a lot of help from that agency.

Nonetheless, another problem was that local agencies provide services only for drug abusers with local hukou. Migrants are not their targets. This is a common situation in every city of Mainland China. But I did not surrender to these barriers. I have established rapport with social workers during my stay in the agency, and this got me to know that although very few, migrant drug abusers do come to that agency and seek help. Thus, I finally had the chance to conduct my pilot study. Furthermore, the good news was that this agency would carry out a project aiming to provide service for migrants in Guangdong province after the Chinese New Year. I feel that difficulties are always accompanied by hope. During my fieldwork, I frequently encountered anxiety and depression. I chose to talk to my supervisor and friends and accepted the fact that my fieldwork will be extended for a long time. My last word is that: don't give up, actively contact every social tie you think may help, and adjust your research schedule and your mindset as well!

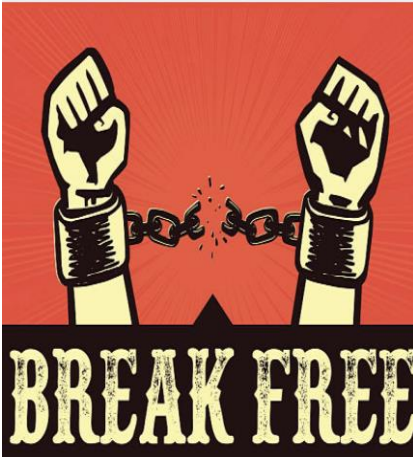
PUBLICATIONS

Olivos, Francisco. 2021. "Motivation, Legitimation, or Both? Reciprocal Effects of Parental Meritocratic Beliefs and Children's Educational Performance in China." *Social Psychology Quarterly*. [\[Read the article\]](#)

Stigma Management Strategies among Ex-prisoners in Hong Kong

Jacky SIU Cheuk Lap

Image from iStock



Reintegrating into the society, which promotes the return and rejoining the society after prison, is one of the prominent goals, or even the final purpose of rehabilitating incarcerated offenders. The reintegration process of ex-prisoners, however, is not an easy task to achieve. One of the greatest obstacles of reintegration shared by ex-prisoners in Hong Kong will notably be the problem of public discrimination and “self-stigma”. Despite all ex-prisoners sharing the same stigmatized identity as an “ex-con,” various reintegration outcomes were observed among the former inmates by adopting various coping strategies. Accordingly, I have conducted a pioneer study for my undergraduate thesis in examining the experience of stigmatization and the stigma management strategies adopted by ex-prisoners in Hong Kong after discharge.

With respect to the outbreak of COVID-19 in January 2020, and to prevent contracting the virus through face to face interviews, content analysis was used to supplement the data from the in-depth interviews. This was done to enrich the sources of data gathered. Three major findings were worthwhile to mention from this study. Not surprisingly, ex-convicts in Hong Kong suffered from both perceived public discrimination and self-stigmatization after discharge, particularly during the reentry of the labor market after discharge. Besides, the former inmates usually conceal their criminal history unless they could develop a “replacement self”, which is the cognitive formation of self-identity that is matched by behavior at odds with previous criminal conduct to challenge the stigmatized identity. A typical example will be the criminal record disclosure after their good performance in the workplace has been recognized by their colleagues. It could help them to challenge the stigmatized status and re-establish an identity of a law-abiding citizen. Finally, social support and religious belief might offset the trauma derived from the challenges of reintegration. Simultaneously, they facilitate the process of prisoner reentry and lead to a success of desistance. Despite the methodological limitations, this study particularly highlighted the significance of social support, religious beliefs, and stable employment for the reintegration of ex-prisoners in designing re-entry-focused policies

ANNOUNCEMENTS

✓ Call for papers

- Special Issue "Migrant Health and Quality of Life" in Sustainability. Deadline for abstracts: June 20, 2021. [\[see the ad\]](#)
- 2021 American Society of Criminology Meeting. Deadline for abstracts: March 26, 2021. [\[see the ad\]](#)
- Inverse Generative Social Science Workshop 2021. Deadline for abstracts: March 1, 2021 [\[see the ad\]](#)

✓ Job ads:

- Lecturer II in Global and China Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University. Deadline: March 13, 2021. [\[see the ad\]](#)