



Ethnic Minorities, Housewives and Weak Ties: A Sociological Imagination of Translate for Her

Gigi Lo



I still remember, in the class of “Democracy and Society”, Professor Chan Kin Man taught us civil society was one of the pillars of democracy, and that a community cannot exist without homemakers. When working people leave their homes to go to work, who is the one building relationships in the neighbourhood, disseminating information, helping others in the community, not to mention, taking care of the old and the young and handling all the chores at home. They are homemakers.

I got a chance to know an ethnic minority (EM) women in Hong Kong — Pakistanis, Indians, Nepalese etc. after completing my bachelor of Sociology at CUHK. They were warm, kind and well-known for their hospitality. They always invited me into their home and served me delicious food and milk tea. However, they

can’t read numbers in Chinese characters, ingredients on food packaging, children’s school notices and more. Although I saw the language barriers they faced, I did not see only a group of victims, but the undiscovered assets in civil society.

The women whom I got to know, have a close family and female networks. If I can tap into their female network, I get access to the communities. If I empowered these women, I revitalise the communities. What do they need? They have strong ties, but these ties cannot help them overcome the cultural and language barriers they face, nor can they change the unequal situation in Hong Kong. In this case, it is much like asking what kind of social tie does one need to find a job? Granovetter’s answer is weak ties.

Translate for her, an NGO using WhatsApp to translate for EM ladies, is a great example of such a weak tie. A group of friends and I, including some who are sociology students, lined up Chinese-speaking volunteers and EM ladies to build a mutual support network with WhatsApp. Ladies can send their Chinese language material and ask for translation in the group. It’s not just a one-off translation service, but a day-to-day exchange of assistance. And it becomes a platform of trust that facilitates assistance and multicultural understandings. It’s also a network of empowered women through disseminating community information, reliable news and social resources. If civil society is a pillar of democracy, we are contributing to it.

For more information about the initiative, see:

www.translateforher.org; www.facebook.com/them.org.hk

PUBLICATIONS

Kim Jinho, Yuying Tong, and **Skylar Biyang Sun**. 2021. “The Effects of Peer Parental Education on Student Achievement in Urban China: The Disparities Between Migrants and Locals.” *American Educational Research Journal*. [\[Read the article\]](#)

Dealing with Rejections and a Few Tips

Francisco Olivos



Being rejected is nothing to be ashamed of. Only with the crude numbers, it is more likely that our papers will be rejected than accepted, and acceptations will be exceptions (and even lucky draws) for those who aspire to journals that publish a handful of papers a year over hundreds of submissions. I have been personally rejected in all the review stages (desk rejection, first-round, and second-round) by high tier and low tier journals, and I would like to share some of my reflections.

First, finishing a paper is already a milestone. Materializing our ideas and months of effort is something to celebrate. The only bad papers are those unfinished projects that sleep forever somewhere on your computer.

Second, desk rejections do not say anything about the quality of your work. This is an assessment of the suitability of the paper for the outlet. With a

few exceptions, editors do not read the article in detail. Rather they see whether your research question is of interest to the journal's audience. However, there is a growing trend (e.g., Sociological Science) towards a deeper quality assessment, and the rejection anticipates the likely outcome of the peer review. In any case, this process takes a few weeks, and you can easily resubmit it to a more suitable journal. A quick tip: always write a short cover letter justifying the suitability of the article.

Third, no matter the outcome, receiving the feedback of 2 or 3 experts in the field is a great contribution to improving our work, even more in small and diverse departments, where there are not many colleagues who are working directly in the same field. It is an external opinion to be always grateful of. Those months of waiting will be paid-off, even if we are rejected, if the comments and the suggestions are of high quality. A personal tip: Have more than one paper under review so that you can assume the cost of the time.

Fourth, although editors and reviewers decide our fate, they are not gods. They can also make mistakes, and the rejection could be a misjudgement. However, we should always assume that the "original mistake" was ours because we were not clear enough to prevent misunderstandings throughout the paper. Quick tips: avoid jargons, be explicit about your contributions in the introduction, and ask for feedbacks from non-seniors and colleagues in other subfields before submission.

Fifth, the idea that the scientific system is free from non-meritocratic factors is a utopia. Sometimes, your paper is rejected because (according to reviews) you are using Chinese data, or you do not provide convincing reasons to make your case theoretically relevant for a non-Chinese audience... even if you wrote several paragraphs about it. Or thinking in the double-blind process, reviewers do not know your name, institutional membership, or country, but editors do, and they make the final decision. Therefore, graduate students from peripheric institutions might encounter symbolic disadvantages in obtaining the R&R. A quick tip: grab a beer, blame the system, and do not reproduce it.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

✓ Call for papers

- Special issue of Sociology of Health & Illness "New Dialogues Between Medical Sociology and Disability Studies". Deadline for abstracts: July 5, 2021. [\[see the ad\]](#)
- Special issue of the American Journal of Cultural Sociology "The Cultural Sociology of Sport". Deadline for abstracts: June 1, 2021. [\[see the ad\]](#)

✓ Job ads:

- Associate/Assistant Professor in Sociology, University of Macau, Deadline: May 8, 2021. [\[see the ad\]](#)