

NEWSLETTER

A Reflective Blog on Academic Life in the Publish-or-Perish Era

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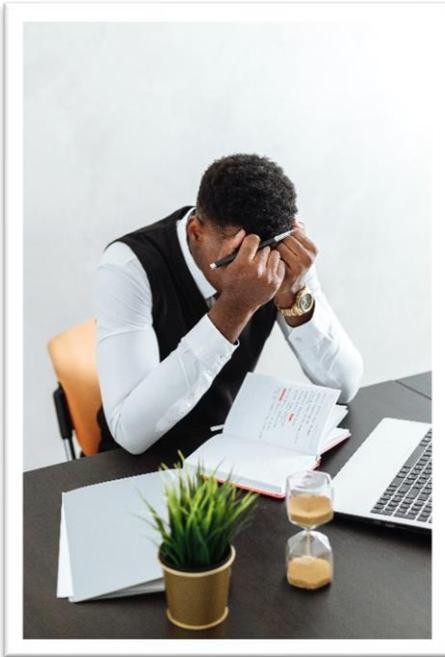


Photo by Thirdman from Pexels

I recently learned how working in academia is not as free as I often imagined it to be; it rather remains confined on an institutional level. A UK-based lecturer told me that in many universities there, teaching evaluation has been such a key competitive index that there is pressure for instructors to ‘improve’ it by minimizing course workload and depth. It seems to me that in Hong Kong and mainland China, though, it is the publish-or-perish principle that directs priorities to publication over teaching, which at times renders course evaluation totally irrelevant. Institutional competition on publication and personal interests in co-authorship can collude, promoting homogeneity of faculty expertise to an extent that reproduces the marginalization of certain research approaches and sacrifices students’ access to diverse courses and perspectives. (When discussing this idea with Roman Matvienko, I was reminded that the clear-cut division of teaching and research itself could partly be a result of institutional favour with ‘researchers’ than ‘teachers’.)

While we surely have to aim high with publication to secure a place in the competitive job market, this reflection is to invite discussion on the underlying issues and possible solutions. One thing for me is to be wary of placing publication on such a priority that the scope of knowledge we define as ‘irrelevant’ expands, whereas curiosity and openness towards the multiplicity of approaches to the social world shrink. And if we think of our relationships with colleagues, students, teachers, research subjects, and fields as risking colonization by an ‘academic economy’, there are multiple dimensions and values of human relations awaiting restoration. Can the sensitivity to power relations and institutional issues that we are trained on as sociologists also assign us responsibilities to address the problems we reproduce? Though it seems difficult to make a difference soon, speaking out against the compromised teaching quality and diversity remains the very first step that I am hoping much more academics could do.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Surviving Graduate School: Tips and Tricks from Final year Students. November 20, 2021, 2:00 PM. Rm 422. Sign up here: bit.ly/SurvGS

How to Get Your Work Published: Short Presentation + Q&A with CUHK Sociology Faculty. November 26, 2021, 2:30 PM. RM 422. Sign up here: bit.ly/SocPubWork

#HKinPictures: Filipino Domestic Workers on Sundays

Yvan Ysmael YONAHA



Photo by Yvan Ysmael Yonaha

Part of the research I'm doing now is asking how overseas migrant workers spend their days off. As you can see from the picture, domestic workers spend part of their day off still engaging in care work – this time for their families back in the Philippines. Buying and packing and buying they fill the streets of Hong Kong on Sundays. The practice of sending care packages has been so ubiquitous that we have a special term for it – *balikbayan* boxes – literally returning home boxes. The person may not be able to return home yet, but these goods will suffice for the moment. Camposano (2012:83)

argues that these boxes are a “performance of intimacy”.

While seemingly simple, this has implications on worker well-being in the long run. The recreation of labor is as important as looking at the workplace. Let's not forget to care for the carers. One of the best ways the Philippines can do this is to revamp its labor export policy to make it humane and beneficial for them.

Camposano, C. C. (2012). *Balikbayan Boxes and the Performance of Intimacy by Filipino Migrant Women in Hong Kong*. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 21(1), 83–103.

NL Team's Note: We intend to make #HKinPictures a regular feature in the Newsletter. We invite you to share your pictures with us with a caption and we'd be happy to feature it.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

✓ Call for papers and applications

- 13th Annual CUHK Anthropology Postgraduate Forum: Happiness and Wellbeing in Times of Crises. **Deadline for Abstract: November 12, 2021.** [[See the ad](#)]
- Sociologies of the Future and the Future of Sociology for *Sociology*. **Deadline for Full Paper: December 1, 2021.** [[See the ad](#)]
- The Social Construction of Adolescence in Contemporaneity in *Sociological Studies of Children and Youth* series. **Deadline for Proposals: November 15, 2021.** [[See the ad](#)]

✓ Job ads:

- Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, HKU. **Review of Application Ends: November 15, 2021.** [[See the ad](#)]
- Lecturer/Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore. **Deadline for Application: November 30, 2021.** [[See the ad](#)]
- Assistant Professor, Gender and Women's Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison. **Deadline for Application: November 28, 2021.** [[See the ad](#)]