

Hong Kong Sanitation Workers and Their Strategies under Uncertainty

Wong Hoi Kei

During the pandemic, social conditions and people have also been affected to varying degrees. As a group of cleaners who are frontline workers, the difficulties and situations have also changed. In addition to understanding from a social perspective, this paper focuses on sanitation workers' understanding of the epidemic. It reflects on the current state of society through their actions and responses. Using an anthropological perspective, visit the working environment of two different types of outsourced cleaners to examine their epidemic measures and understand the changes in the community before and after the epidemic.

This research paper emphasizes the response of Hong Kong sanitation workers, a group that is easily overlooked in daily life when it becomes crucial during the epidemic—highlighting the marginalized group and their responses to disease. The thesis analyzes the changes of temporary space creation to cleaners from anthropology, discusses the use of space as a strategy to face social crises. The paper proposes three major research topics: the changes in their daily behavior, the relationship between workers and community groups, and workers' response to the epidemic. And through on-site participation and interview methods, we have a deeper understanding of the difficulties reflected by the epidemic and existing social problems.

COVID-19 is a new situation that the world never imagines; everything is changing without expected results. However, this paper tried to capture the ongoing issues among sanitation workers and allow us to reflect on the public health concept. The cultural construction of illness and inequality mentioned in chapters, the “we” and

“they” concept that workers had held, implying how sanitation workers put health responsibility on themselves and behaved differently in encountering the virus. Putting them in a risk group also arouses misunderstanding and inequality. For example, the individual responsibility aroused blaming the victim in society. Thus, maybe it is time for society to reconsider the health idea and certain groups in Hong Kong, realize some people are suffering from different backgrounds. As a whole to tell, it is a complex issue when sanitation workers are facing COVID-19.

The newly established social groups and "secret places" of the epidemic rethink the existing prejudices and institutional problems of cleaners. Furthermore, understand the optimistic attitude of workers towards the epidemic and use the anthropological idea to explain the attitudes and measures of specific groups in the big crisis. Besides, take sanitation workers as a newly COVID-19 anthropological research, this research redefines the way of treating virus under medical anthropology. From the research results, there are many possibilities in society that need people to discover how to live together with the virus.