



Spirituality—Exploring Drug Users' Desistance through the Lens of Positive Criminology

Presenter : Yichun (Kay) Yu

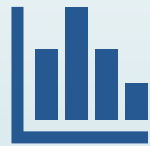
Doctoral student at the Department of Crim Prevention and Corrections, Central Police University

Authors : Yichun Yu, Yifen Lu, Chuen-Jim Sheu, Lanying Huang, Wen-Yen Hsieh

Outline



*Introduction and
Research
Background*



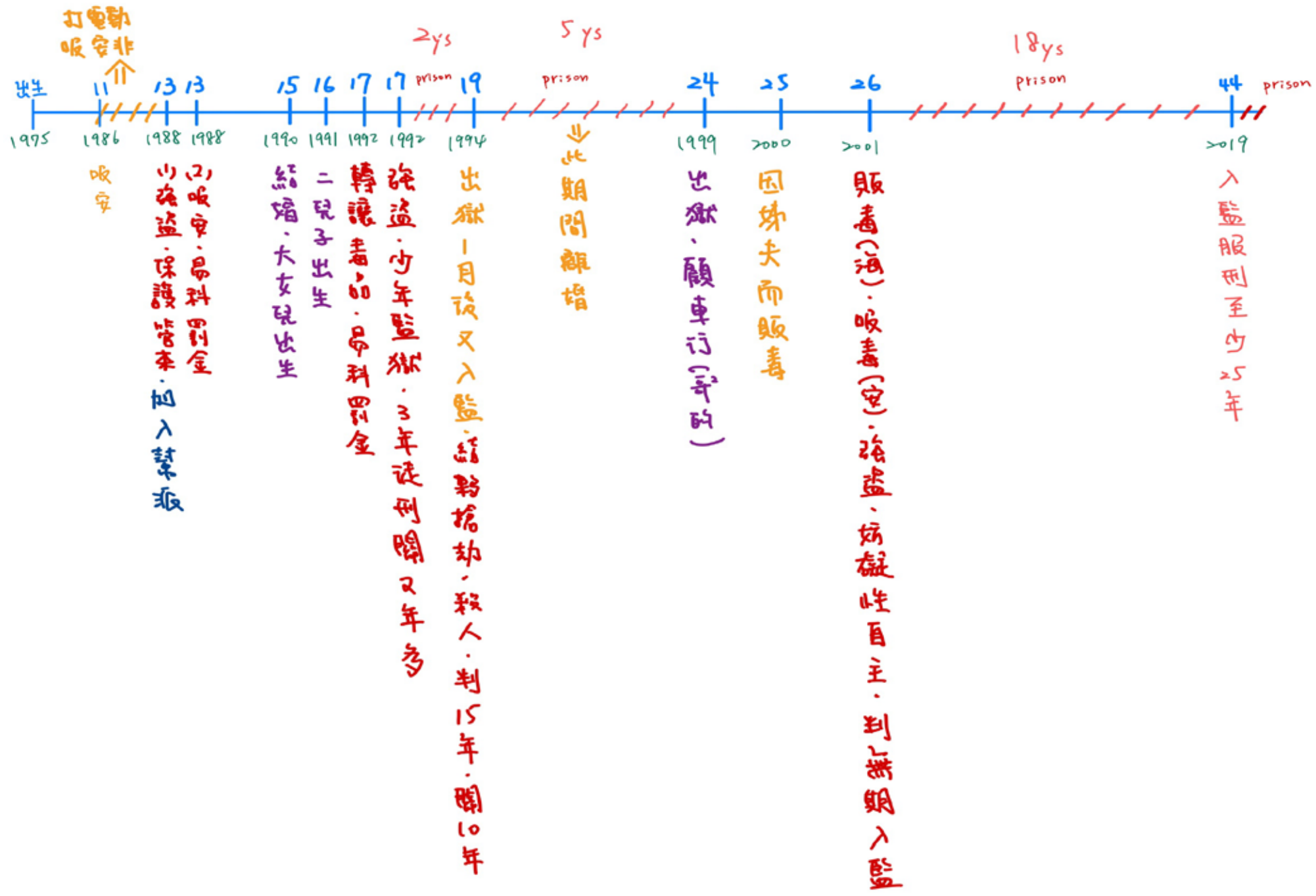
Research Data



*Research
Findings*



Conclusion





Introduction and Research Background

- Ø Psychological and physical dependence on drugs complicates the cessation process (Laub & Sampson, 2003; Schroeder et al., 2007).
- Ø Drug use is strongly associated with other criminal behaviors (e.g., theft, violent crime, drug trafficking) (Colman & Laenen, 2012; White, 2014).
- Ø **Three Key Features of Positive Criminology** e Ronel, 2015:21-22 f
 1. Emphasis on positivity and proactivity
 2. Emphasis on desistance from crime
 3. Emphasis on integration
- Ø **Three conditions for Initiating behavioral Change** e Ronel, 2015:14-19 f
 1. Love
 2. acceptance is healing
 3. justice as caring

Research project



Funding: National Science and Technology Council (MOST 110-2410-H-130-054)



Cheun-Jim Sheu
Professor



Wen-Yen Hsieh
Associate Professor



Lanying Huang
Associate Professor



Yifen (Monica) Lu
Assistant Professor



Yichun (Kay) Yu
Assistant Researcher

Sample Criteria :

- Individuals over 30 years old.
- History of drug use starting before age 18.
- Experience with at least one form of drug-related treatment (e.g., compulsory rehabilitation, deferred prosecution with rehabilitation, prosecution, and conviction).
- Drug-free for a minimum of three years.



	Gender	Age	Education	Imprisonment
Case 1	Female	50	Master*	2y8m
Case 2	Female	46	Bachelor*	14y
Case 3	Female	50	High school graduate	5y6m
Case 4	Male	56	Master*	8y
Case 5	Male	36	College dropout	11y6m
Case 6	Male	47	High school graduate	6y
Case 7	Male	44	Junior high school dropout	10y
Case 8	Male	42	College dropout	fine
Case 9	Female	40	High school graduate	fine
Case 10	Male	30	Bachelor*	3y10m
Case 11	Male	48	Junior high school graduate	16y8m

Samples' characteristics



Findings:

A. Motivation and Intentions for “Change”

1. Cognitive Shifts:

- Realization of past wrongdoings and harm caused to others.
- Awareness of time passing and a desire to change.
- Positive thoughts (mindfulness) as a source of persistence.
- Family interventions and emotional connections.



Findings:

A. Motivation and Intentions for “Change”

1. Cognitive Shifts:

*“It was because I took a religion class in prison. At first, I just joined to kill time. Then, during one session about **abortion**, I suddenly felt awakened and started crying. I began to feel remorse... **When you feel regret and realize you’ve done wrong, that’s the beginning of change.** I thought, ‘Why did I abort so many children? How could I be so irresponsible? How could I arrogantly think I wasn’t hurting anyone?’ At that moment, I started crying, wondering why I had made those choices and why I had been so irresponsible. I even believed, ‘As long as I like it, why shouldn’t I do it?’ How could I have been so self-centered to think I wasn’t hurting others? I thought I was only harming my own body—what did it have to do with anyone else? How could I have such a mindset back then?”*

(Case 1 i Female i 50 years old)



Findings:

A. Motivation and Intentions for “Change”

2. Family Influences:

- Family interventions and emotional connections.

*“My turning point was when I went to the Operation dawn. After I returned, my sister said to me: ‘You’ve been using illegal drugs since you were young, and every time you get out of prison, it doesn’t take long before you start using again with your friends. Do you know how old you are now? Do you know you have a daughter? **Are you really going to make your daughter tell people that her mom is a drug addict?**’*

My sister also said: ‘If you don’t go [to seek help], and if you use drugs again, no one in this family will help you anymore. ’

(Case 3 i Female i 50 years old)



Findings:

B. Strength of Persistence

1. Support Systems:

- Family, environment, personal resolve.

"One thing I'm really proud of is not just the fact that I've changed, but that I stuck with my university studies for six years and graduated. That's what sets me apart from others—I kept going and didn't give up. And in March this year, I achieved something even greater than finishing university: It took me 7 years to pay off my credit card debt. I finally cleared it all, and I stayed determined throughout."

(Case 4 i Male i 56 years old)



Findings:

B. Strength of Persistence

1. Support Systems:

"I couldn't think of anyone at the time, but then I thought of my aunt. She wrote me a letter saying, 'My child, you've been gone more than 10 years, not a single day has passed without me praying for you. Even though you are in prison, I thank God that I finally have news of you. Don't worry now...' She wrote more words to encourage me.

*She came to visit me, sent me some money, and gave me a Bible. **She said, 'Auntie can't help you, but Jesus can. You need to read the Bible carefully. Only He can help you.'***

*Not long after that, I was arrested in June, and my birthday was in July. On my birthday, I received a cake and a bag of lychees—my aunt had sent them to me. I was so moved. She wasn't my mom or dad, and yet, even after I made her so heartbroken while staying at her house all those years ago, she still remembered my birthday. **What kind of love makes someone still care and love me this much?**" (Case 6 i Male i 47 years old)*



Findings:

B. Strength of Persistence

2. Building Self-confidence:

Q: Do you feel accomplishment?

A: I do feel accomplishment. To be honest, serving here compared to working outside is very different—longer hours, less pay, and you often have to put aside your own time and things because of the needs of the sisters or brothers. But sometimes I think, when you have a conversation that helps bring someone back on the right path, no matter how many hours it takes, when they are finally willing to change, that's the greatest sense of accomplishment. (Case 3 i Female i 50 years old)

"I personally feel that my journey of quitting drugs has been quite successful. I've started learning to face things, keep my promises, and tell the truth—because in the past, I was always lying." (Case 4 i Female i 56 years old)



Findings:

B. Strength of Persistence

3. Fear of Losing Stability:

- Fear of losing the peaceful life achieved after quitting drugs.

A: Yes, I'm much happier now. The longer I stay on this path, the harder it is for me to go back. For example, if I were only two years out of prison and still working on getting my high school equivalency, when I see alcohol or drugs and I might be tempted to use them. But now, as a junior in college, if I see drugs, I'd think, "No way! If I take this, I'm done—I won't be able to keep studying."

Q: All your efforts over the past four years would be wasted?

A: Exactly. The further I go, the stronger I feel. If I become a social worker someday and see drugs, I think I'll have even more resistance because I've come so far. (Case 5 i Male i 36 years old)



Findings:

C. Spiritual Reconnection

- **Role of Faith & Personal Reflections on Faith**

*"Yes, faith provides a steadying force. Faith also guides me on the right path. **It teaches us that God is always present.** In the past, we were afraid of the police or of being caught by family when doing something bad. But faith tells us that God is everywhere. Even when no one else is watching, God knows. So, I don't do bad things even when I'm alone. That's the stabilizing power of faith." (Case 6 i Male i 47 years old)*



Findings:

C. Spiritual Reconnection

- Role of Faith

"I just feel that everything in the world is constantly changing. When things change, how will you deal with it? Do you have the strength to face it? I think that's really important. That's why I continue to hold on tightly to God. Even after leaving the community, I keep preparing myself so that in the future, I can continue helping other sisters who want to quit drugs. In a way, it's also about taking care of myself." (Case 9, Female i 40 years old)

"I feel that through faith, I've realized how weak and fragile people can be. It's so easy to slip back into your old life if you're not careful. Faith has helped me completely let go of my past life. I think it's because of my time serving here and seeing so many role models in faith—their transformations and their unwavering trust in God, no matter what challenges they face. Even in the toughest times, their faith in God helps them get through. It makes me feel like this is what I've always been looking for, something I've been chasing—a way to find the answers I needed." (Case 3 i Female i 50 years old)



Summary

- ˆ Motivation for “Change”
 - ˆ Cognitive Shifts
 - ˆ Family Influences
- ˆ Strength of Persistence
 - ˆ Support Systems
 - ˆ Building Self-confidence
 - ˆ Fear of Losing Stability
- ˆ Spiritual Reconnection
 - ˆ Role of Faith & Personal Reflections on Faith



Textual Analysis

✓ Successful drug desistance is attributed to various factors:

ü 49% **Internal** Factors:

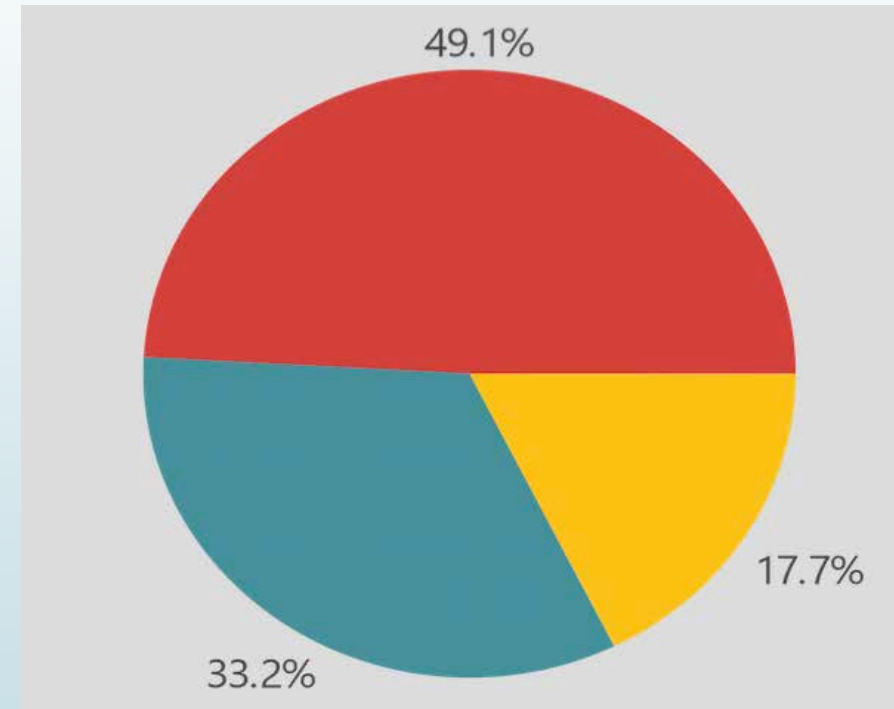
○ Self-motivation, confidence, personal development, persistence, satisfaction, and commitment.

ü 33% **External** Factors:

○ Age, long-term imprisonment, military service, sentence determined, accompany, religion, role model, and opportunity.

ü 18% **Family** Factors:

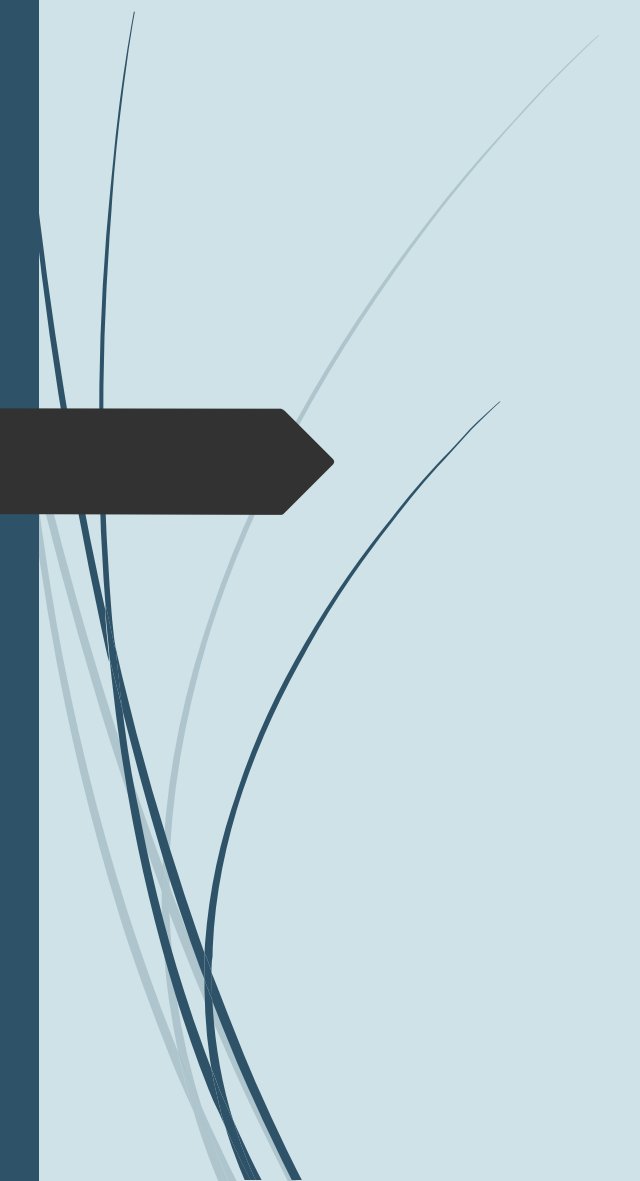
○ Family bonding, monitor, and support.





References

- Colman, C. & Van Laenen, F. (2012). “Recovery came first”: Desistance versus recovery in the criminal careers of drug-using offenders. *The Scientific World Journal*, doi:10.1100/2012/657671.
- Galanter, M. (2007). Spirituality and recovery in 12-step programs: An empirical model. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 33(3), 265-272. doi: 10.1016/j.jsat.2007.04.016
- Laub, J. H. & Sampson, R. J. (2003). *Shared beginnings, divergent lives: Delinquent boys to age 70*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ronel, N., & Segev, D. (2015). *Positive criminology*. New York: Routledge.
- Schroeder, R. D., Giordano, P. C., & Cernkovich, S. A. (2007). Drug use and desistance processes. *Criminology*, 45(1), 191-222.
- White, H. R. (2014). Substance use and crime. In K. J. Sher (Ed.), *Psychology and substance abuse* (pp.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chuen-Jim Sheu(2022). *Humanistic Criminology—Control theory and Restorative Justice*. San Min Book Co.

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide consists of several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey, and a solid black arrow pointing to the right.

Thank You for
Listening!