

Department of Sociology and Social Policy

SEMINAR

**Reconciling Solidarity with Diversity:
Is Assimilation the Answer?**

(in English)

Speaker: Dr. Choi Wai-kit
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University of Hong Kong

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Venue: Room SO-322, Dorothy Y. L. Wong Building,
Lingnan University

Abstract

Is social solidarity compatible with cultural diversity? If not, can they be reconciled? In a recent research, Robert Putnam shows that growth in ethnic diversity in the U.S. is associated with decline in social solidarity. For Putnam, this suggests the need of building an overarching identity among the citizenry while showing respect for difference. Since immigration is one of the causes of diversity, expansion in public programs that help immigrants acculturate is proposed as a mean to establish the common bond. Immigrants in the U.S. certainly assimilate or acculturate but I will first draw on the sociological literatures on segmented assimilation and show that there are multiple paths as well as destinations of assimilation, hence being American through assimilation does not guarantee the generation of a common identity. Lastly I will propose an alternative strategy of reconciliation. Rather than examining ways to build commonality, I will suggest the need to first explain how inter-ethnic distrust or disrespect is constructed in historically specific social contexts.

Biography

Dr. Wai Kit Choi is currently a Fulbright Scholar visiting the Faculty of Social Sciences at University of Hong Kong. His home institution is California State University, Los Angeles, where he is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology. He received his Ph.D. from University of California, Irvine, M.A. from University of Chicago and B.A. from University of Wisconsin, Madison. In addition to edited volumes, his writings appear in journals such as Science & Society, Postcolonial Studies and Contemporary Sociology. He also has an article forthcoming in Journal of Historical Sociology.