

RESEARCH GROUP FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP & POLICY SEMINAR

THE IDEAL PARENT, OR THE DESERVING CITIZEN?

Reflections on Chinese immigrant mothers' involvement in children's education in post-colonial Hong Kong

Presented by **Dr Beatrice Oi-Yeung Lam**, Department of Sociology, University of Hong Kong



Dr Beatrice Oi-Yeung Lam

ABSTRACT

The learning difficulties of children of Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong are well-documented. Programmes facilitating acculturation and injection of educational resources aside, parents of these children are held responsible for overseeing their children's learning progress and engineering their school achievement. Drawing upon the findings of qualitative interviews conducted with 24 Chinese immigrant mothers in 2009-2010, I will in this presentation reflect upon the problematic assumptions behind the expectations of parental involvement in relation to the schooling of children of Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong. Not only are such assumptions premised upon a hegemonic, masculinist construction of the 'deserving' parent as the Hong Kong citizen. Such assumptions are also de-contextualized: The onus is on the parents - in actuality immigrant mothers - to manage their children's studies when it is the fathers who are equipped with the cultural resources needed. In part, this is a product of the gendered context of cross-border migration from the 1990s onward. The emotional work this entails for immigrant mothers is glossed over in the neo-liberal construction of the ideal learner/parent/citizen, whereby parental input, coupled with individual enterprise and talent, are purported to 'produce' effective learning and economic competitiveness. Implications for education of children of immigrants, and parental involvement in general, are drawn.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Dr Beatrice Lam did her bachelor and M.Phil degree in sociology in The University of Hong Kong and completed her Ph.D. in sociology in The University of Manchester. She has participated in research and teaching development in the areas of gender and education as well as education policy and administration, and in promoting gender equity education. She has taught in The University of Hong Kong, The Open University of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Institute of Education and HKUSPACE in various areas in sociology.

Intrigued by the role of parenting and schooling in processes of social stratification, Beatrice embarked on her research journey by examining parenting practices and intergenerational transmission of educational and social dis/advantage in families in Hong Kong. She has since then developed an interest in studying stratification processes at and beyond the family-school interface, and more recently how class, gender, 'race'/ethnicity and migration factors in such processes in post-colonial Hong Kong and the United States.

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Free and open to the Public, no RSVP required. There will be no refreshments provided for this seminar