



Department of Sociology

Seminar

by

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Coercive Morality? Network-based Exchanges of Favors in Hospitals in China

Date : 19 October 2017 (Thursday)
Time: 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm
Venue: Rm. 1045, 10/F., Academic and Administration Bldg,
15 Baptist University Road, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon
Language: English

Abstract

Drawing on ethnographic data, my talk presents how patients seek preferential treatment from hospitals through *guanxi* (social relationships) and explains why the practice displays a certain pattern. As seekers (patients seeking preferential treatment) are many and providers (physicians) are limited, seekers usually have to go through a number of intermediaries who help to connect them to the providers. Long chains of connections made up of strong ties are commonly observed. Laypersons and hospital personnel act as intermediaries delivering favors to the seekers in these chains without gaining any monetary or material rewards. These practices are characterized as a form of generalized exchanges in which seekers rely on the help of strangers. I argue that this particular pattern of network-based exchanges is constituted by a form of coercive morality that defines and reproduces Chinese *guanxi*. While the concept of coercive morality is inductively derived from the findings, it manifests how altruism, obligation, and rational calculation coexist and simultaneously constitute human action.

***** ALL ARE WELCOME *****

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