



## SEMINAR

### **Doing Gender in Online Dating: A Comparison of Cyber Profiles Created by Local and Expatriate Men and Women Based in Singapore**

Date: Friday, 15 January 2010

Time: 3.00 pm — 4.30 pm

Venue: Seminar Room III, ISEAS

#### About the Speaker

**Dr Nilanjan Raghunath**  
Visiting Fellow  
Department of Sociology  
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Dr Nilanjan Raghunath is Visiting Fellow at the Department of Sociology at NUS. Her research on South Asia looks at social mobility and social networking influenced by employment in multinational firms, the new IT caste in India and their careers and marriages. She also researches on cyber dating and marriage portals. She completed her PhD in Sociology at NUS, a Masters in Anthropology and Sociology at the Roehampton Institute in London, and an MBA at the United States International University. Prior to joining NUS, Dr Raghunath was consultant for developing market research tools for SME businesses in India and Kenya.

#### About the Seminar

Online dating has become a global phenomenon. Its proliferation is a result of the boom in e-commerce, a curiosity or need of willing individuals to socialise across cultural and national boundaries, and the advent of dating websites that provide users with sophisticated search engines tailored to such purposes. Current research on dating sites includes various topics such as market segmentation, reasons for seeking partners through the internet, and prospects of online relationships. However, little theoretical emphasis has been placed on gender variations in social capital and social networking by men and women who are local, as compared to those who are expatriates in a country. There is a need to understand why and how people use the internet as a dating resource to meet people in non-native settings and vice versa, in search of compatible non-natives or their own, and how online networking



technologies and communities are reshaping gender identities and expectations in this context. I will in particular apply and expand on network theory by Ronald Burt and Joel Podolny to understand how people present their profiles and their partner expectations.

The current empirical findings are largely based on dating sites catering to niche markets such as mail order brides, assisted marriages and also those catering to religious and ethnic similarities. This research proposes studying profiles by locals and expatriates based in Singapore that have been registered with expats.com and Shaadi.com.

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of cultural or ethnic variations or heterogamy on the expectation from the opposite gender. Also considered will be the filter criteria posted by men and women in a foreign culture or when profiling for locals versus foreigners. This research is based on the study of 100 male and female profiles between 23 to 33 years of age. It examines their partner expectations and what they hope to find in a match, the main proposition being as follows: men tend to profile themselves on a premise of open-ended polyamory, targeting “exotic” foreigners, whereas women tend to profile themselves on a premise of conservative monogamy, with less expressed preference for either a local or foreign partner.

*You are cordially invited to this seminar.*