

Singapore Families: Risk and Protective Factors

Local media artistes Gurmit Singh and Lin Ruping were among the fresh faces and latest appointments to the Families for Life Council under the Ministry of Social and Family Development, whose mission is to “build strong and resilient families... that make for stronger communities”. In the popular imagination, the family serves various positive functions for individuals and society. Within the intimate and private confines of the family, however, there is potential for conflict and tension.

The joint workshop organised by IPS Social Lab and the Social Science and Policy research cluster at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), National University of Singapore (NUS), aims to address some of the relational issues that impact the Singapore family. The event will be held on Friday, 29 January 2016 at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House. (Registration details are below)

Tan Ern Ser, Associate Professor at the NUS Department of Sociology, who heads the IPS Social Lab research unit and the FASS Social Science and Policy cluster, offers his views on what to expect from the workshop.

What are some of the highlights and specific issues that will be addressed?

This is the third in the IPS Social Lab-FASS Social Science and Policy cluster’s workshop series. The first dealt with social research and methodology, the second on the middle class, and the third will be on family relations and dynamics. We have previously invited survey professionals and academics. However, for this workshop, the speakers are, apart from Ms Charlotte Beck, Senior Director of the Family Development Group, MSF, entirely from VWOs (voluntary welfare organisations) or FSCs (family service centres). These are social service practitioners who have first-hand experience with the bright side and downside of family relations and dynamics. An interesting, emerging issue to be discussed is that relating to transnational marriages. The common thread running through the four topics presented are the risk factors arising from mismatch expectations and the possibility of developing or accessing protective factors that could enhance family resilience.

How will the workshop offer new ways of looking at old issues?

While the presentations are delivered by social service professionals, the fact that the workshop is held in an academic institution will facilitate an exchange of ideas among people with different orientations and concerns, be it theorising, policy formulation or social service delivery aimed at strengthening families in Singapore. Except for the theme relating to transnational marriages, the other topics are not entirely new. What is new is the spotlight on

the transformation of the family brought by the advent of the globalised network society. The transformation could be in terms of family values, communications, care-giving, decision-making and how these impact family resilience. The workshop will likely point to the societal factors that could produce tensions, and how policy and social service agencies could help families develop the protective antidotes against family conflict, even dissolution.

How relevant are the themes, in the evolving landscape of families and in the context of a globalised network society?

The themes are relevant insofar as they identify the challenges to the family in Singapore, and how the tensions generated by the social changes occurring in our globalised network society do not suggest a moral crisis, but a need to identify external pressures that impinge on family members, their priorities, and their relationship with one another.

What are the implications for policymaking?

If the family is an important social institution for raising the next generation of Singaporeans and for helping Singaporeans cope with the vicissitudes of everyday life and challenges, then understanding the risk and protective factors could contribute to policies aimed at enhancing family resilience.

How do these issues tie in with the work done by IPS Social Lab and FASS Social Science and Policy cluster?

One of the key research areas undertaken by IPS Social Lab is that of family resilience and the critical factors that can contribute to that. The Social Science and Policy cluster is broadly interested in how social science can contribute to the policymaking process. In short, both entities believe in translating social scientific understanding of social institutions into effective policies, which can enhance the social well-being of families and individuals.

SINGAPORE FAMILIES: RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Joint Workshop by Social Lab, Institute of Policy Studies and Social Science and Policy Research Cluster, NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Date: Friday, 29 January 2016
Time: 9.30am – 12.30pm
Venue: Auditorium, Shaw Foundation Alumni House
NUS Kent Ridge Campus, 11 Kent Ridge Drive
Singapore 119244

Registration

Registration is free. RSVP by Friday, 22 January 2016

NUS Staff & Students click [here](#) to register

All other RSVPs and enquires to be directed to fass_ssp@nus.edu.sg, with your full name and organisation.

Enquiries:

If you have any enquiries, please contact Ms Paveena Seah at tel: 6601 3220 or via email: paveena.seah@nus.edu.sg

If you have comments or feedback, please email ips.eneews@nus.edu.sg



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