Protecting and Perfecting the Muslim Family: Marriage and Parenthood Programmes in Malaysia and Singapore

In Malaysia and Singapore the marriage education movement among Muslims is a recent phenomenon which saw its beginnings from the 1980s onwards. Shades of moral crisis involving the family, and changing demographic contexts, underpins the ideological and pragmatic basis for marriage education. In our study of these courses in Malaysia and Singapore it was found that this movement of pre-marital education is a means of managing marital and parental crises facing Muslims in the two countries. These include incidences of underage and early marriages, high divorce rates and ‘religiously improper’ marital and sexual relations between the sexes. Underpinning all of these concerns is an agenda of fashioning Muslim sexuality, marriage and parenting as one that could fit in with modernity but yet dissimilar from ‘Others’, and hence forming a distinct basis of identity of the modern Muslim family, community and state. A reframing of gender relations is one area that has also been a main feature of these courses and one that may be at odds with demographic changes involving rising participation of Muslim females in education and the labour force.

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Suriani Suratman, a social anthropologist, is Senior Lecturer at the National University of Singapore, Department of Malay Studies. Her teaching covers areas on Malay culture and society, Malay ethnicity and identity and Malay families and households. Her research focuses on Malay ethnic identity and the (re)production of portrayals of Malays and gender relations and inequalities in Malay families and households. Her publications include a book chapter, “Tudung Girls: Unveiling Muslim Women’s Identity in Singapore” (2011), a journal article “Gender Relations in Singapore Malay Dual-Income Households: (Un)Changing Views and Practices” (2011) and “Problematic Singapore Malays: Sustaining a Portrayal” (2010).

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Date: 6 April 2018 | Time: 12.00nn - 1.30pm
Venue: Ventus Evans Room, VT-02-01C

All are welcome! Refreshments will be served. Registration is required.
Register at: https://tinyurl.com/yaxl8jz