

Disciplining “Other” Singles: Deconstructing the State’s Portrayal of an “Ideal” Single in Singapore

Johan SUEN
Xiang Ru Amy TAN
National University of Singapore

Introduction

Conventionally perceived as the “Other” in an environment intensely pressured by the State’s persuasion on marriage, procreation and family as the basic building block of society (Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports 2011), singles in Singapore have become targets of ostensibly helpful aid from the State through various resources courtesy of the Social Development Network (SDN)—an agency arm of the national government. Singles inadvertently receive a spectrum of both explicit and implicit messages crafted to assist them in attaining a befitting self that serves to seemingly increase the likelihood of them finding “love” and a life partner. A discursive reading of these State-endorsed social directives found in the DUET magazine—a publication of SDN intended for singles in Singapore—reveal that the State has unwittingly constructed a normative “ideal” single.

This paper, therefore, attempts to deconstruct the State’s portrayal of an “ideal” single in Singapore—how one should look, how one should behave, and how one should perceive love, dating and marriage etc.; more importantly, the authors argue that this process engenders a latent “Othering” of singles who deviate from the constructed normative “ideal” single and these social directives serve as the State’s attempt to discipline them into conformity. The authors theorize that such a normative construction of an “ideal” single not only ideologically subordinates those singles who fail to conform; it discursively and rhetorically averts structural inadequacies resulting in non- or delayed marriages by inferentially attributing the cause of the social problem to the personal failure of individual singles.

1. Rising singlehood as a national concern

A recent report on “Marriage and Parenthood Trends in Singapore” published by the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD) of the Prime Minister’s Office in June 2012 reiterates the familiar issue of rising singlehood in Singapore. Following the pattern of most developed countries, singlehood rates in Singapore have risen steadily over the years; between 2000 and 2011, the proportion of singles has increased across all age groups. In

particular, among citizens aged 30–34 years old, singlehood rates have increased from 33% to 44% for males, and from 22% to 31% for females (figures rounded up). In the same period, the median ages of citizens at first marriage have also risen—from 28.5 to 30.1 years for grooms and from 26.1 to 27.8 for brides.

The Singapore government agonizes over this disturbing trend because Singapore's population is aging rapidly due to declining fertility rates. The report highlights two main contributing factors to the general decline of Singapore total fertility rate (at 1.20 as of 2011, well below replacement level of 2.1)—(a) more people are staying single or getting married later, and (b) married couples are having their first child later and having fewer children (National Population and Talent Division 2012, 2).

The State widely acknowledges its resolve to address this trend by affirming that “encouraging marriage and parenthood is a priority for the Government”; the State, therefore, administers a range of measures to support “Singaporeans’ aspirations of getting married and having children” (National Population and Talent Division 2012, 5). Specifically, the Social Development Network (SDN) is slated to play a vital role in helping singles find their life partner; the network professes to reach about 100,000 singles each year, providing them with greater opportunities for social engagement and resource guides to dating.

2. Social Development Network (SDN)

SDN was established as part of the “Marriage and Parenthood Package” introduced to promote a “pro-family environment” in Singapore. Its vision is to “promote marriages and nurture a culture where singles view marriage as one of their top life goals”. More importantly, SDN endeavors to “be a credible, leading agency and one-stop resource centre on relationship skills, social interaction opportunities and information” (SDN website, 2012).

The network is in actuality the combination of two pre-existing agencies which had similar objectives albeit slightly differentiated—Social Development Unit (SDU) was formed in 1984 as a platform for graduate singles to meet. A year later, Social Development Services (SDS) was launched as a platform for non-graduate singles to meet. Although the primary purpose was to promote marriage in Singapore, the marked distinction of two separate agencies exemplifies the government's intent of principally encouraging marriage between those with similar qualification background. SDU and SDS were finally merged in 2009 “to reap economies of scale, enlarge the outreach, and provide more opportunities for singles to meet”—thus giving rise to present-day SDN.

Not only did the pool of singles enlarge with the merger, the paid membership applicable previously was also discontinued to make SDN even more inclusive for all resident singles.

The revamped SDN now claims to “forge an extensive network of singles, resources and partners in the private, people and public sectors to create an overall environment conducive for singles to meet and form meaningful relationships” (SDN website, 2012).

3. SDN’s resources & publications—DUET magazine

In line with SDN’s mission to be a one-stop resource center on “relationship skills, social interaction opportunities and information”, the DUET Magazine was launched. DUET packages itself as a lifestyle magazine that seeks to provide its readers with information ranging from lifestyle articles to dating and relationship issues, grooming tips, interesting dating venues, reviews on restaurants, books, etc. It is a state funded quarterly publication targeted at singles in Singapore. SDN registered members receive every issue of the magazine in their mail at no charge and the digital version of the magazine is also available on the SDN website (refer to appendix A for sample magazine covers). In this paper, the images and content presented in the DUET magazine are used to illustrate and analyze the State’s discourse on singles.

4. Portraying the ‘ideal’ single: The discursive construction of moral contract and tutelage

By the very acceptance of a specific behaviour as an ‘illness’ and the definition of illness as an undesirable state, the issue becomes not whether to deal with a particular problem, but *how* and *when*. Thus the debate over homosexuality, drugs or abortion becomes focused on the degree of sickness attached to the phenomenon in question or the extent of the health risk involved. And the more principled, more perplexing, or even moral issue of what *freedom an individual should have over his or her own body is shunted aside*. (Zola 1972, as cited in Cox and Mead 1975, 182; emphasis mine)

In his seminal work on the relationship between the state and families, Jacques Donzelot argued that the policing of the latter by the former involved a system of control by ‘contract’ and ‘tutelage’, in which families that abide by the accepted and valued norms enjoy autonomy while those who transgress the terms of the contract are subjected to a range of institutional disciplinary measures (Donzelot 1979). The application of Donzelot’s theoretical framework of contract and tutelage will allow us to perceive how the normative ideologies about gender roles, spousal selection, and family values, which are present in almost all of its publications and resources, serve to morally discipline singles and ultimately, facilitate the legitimization of state policies that both directly and indirectly penalize singles.

Taken at face value, SDN's publications do function as a comprehensive resource for singles and strongly complements the national objective of curbing rising singlehood. However, when assessed critically and at an ideological level, it becomes apparent that these attempts at solving a national problem are fraught with normative values. While we understand that this is not inherently problematic per se, we argue that the promotion of substantive *narratives* of specific norms themselves may inadvertently reinforce the ideological factors as well as overlook the structural issues contributing to the problem of singlehood.

Our first example concerns notions of gender roles. As part of its 'self-help' approach, SDN's publications, and DUET in particular, frequently portray women as "emotional creatures" and men as "hunters" (SDN 2011c, 25). The basic assumption is that such gender characteristics underpin almost all misunderstandings between men and women. Although, it may be useful to be knowledgeable about the gendered subtexts of interaction within a relationship, such assumptions also serve to emphasize the "natural" associations between the sexes and their respective gender roles; especially in terms of how different they are. It is common to find phrases such as "men and women are wired differently" and "men and women... communicate on different wavelengths" in DUET's featured articles, which are written by 'experts' who are usually directors of dating agencies, grooming companies or psychologists. We posit that this naturalization of traditional gendered roles functions to encourage the gendered expectations that men and women have of each other; thereby promoting the preclusion of behaviours and attitudes that stray from the traditional ideal. For instance, by stating that men show interest in women if they "look straight at a woman", and how women indicate interest by "being attentive and giggling", they ideologically stipulate the gender norms for "appropriate" courtship, which indirectly renders the diversity of any other forms of courtship interactions that depart from such gender norms as "unnatural".

The second ideological value implicitly perpetuated by the SDN is ethnic endogamy. This is most apparent when we examine a recurrent aspect of SDN's publications, which involves the glorification of "successful" couples who have either married or are in long-term relationships. In all of such examples published, both partners were of the same ethnicity (SDN 2012b, 28). While the articles do not explicitly mention ethnicity as a factor behind the couples' successful union, we find it is noteworthy to question the ideological implications behind the decision to select and highlight only endogamous couples; this despite the increasing social trend of intermarriage among different ethnic groups (Department of Statistics Singapore 2011). The issue of marriages between locals and foreigners also tends to be conveniently glossed over despite its growing occurrence. The main implication to be fleshed out here is that with the growing percentage of inter-ethnic divorces, the

perpetuation of such discourses that ignore the socio-structural trends would certainly not bring about any constructive changes.

Another related ideological value to include at this juncture is socio-economic homogamy, which had been explicitly indicated in the membership criteria at the start of the state's "social development" initiatives, but has since become increasingly implied throughout the years. This is particularly pronounced in the pages of DUET. A significant part of DUET's content provides "opportunities" and "suggestions" for activities that singles may participate in to meet their potential partners. Entry fees for these activities, however, are far from nominal and average at around \$50 Singapore dollars. These activities are complemented with articles stating the importance of keeping a relationship "unique, fun and entertaining" (SDN 2011b, 3), which ideologically emphasizes the need for consumption as one imperative factor behind maintaining a "healthy" life as a couple. We argue that such consumption is characteristic of "middle-class" socio-economic statuses as they include activities such as "Night Photography @ Marina Bay", which requires participants to bring their own DSLR camera (SDN 2012a); trips to overseas locations such as the "Jet Ski Safari" in Batam (SDN 2012b); and the "Ice Cream and Chocolate Tasting" sessions that cost SGD\$59. The main ideological premise constructed through such a sub-textual association between consumption and courtship is that unions should be between couples of the same, if not similar consumption patterns and capacity.

5. Legitimizing the moral contract: The medicalization of singlehood and the othering of 'deviant' singles

After having outlined the ideological values inherent in DUET and how they contribute towards the construction as well as perpetuation of a moral contract for Singaporean singles, this section will examine the discursive implications of the tendency to frame a significant portion of SDN's published content as "expert opinions", while also strategically including "research findings" from selected external and "distinguished" scientific sources in order to legitimize the aforementioned ideological values. As the most effective ideological forms of social control are those that are endorsed by "objective experts" and don the trappings of moral neutrality (Zola 1972, as cited in Cox and Mead 1975, 170), it is imperative that we extract the moral significance beneath the medico-scientific discourse of the SDN.

A striking example of how relationship issues and singlehood in general is framed in medico-scientific terms can be found in the "ask the expert" columns called "Ask Dr. Love", which constitute a staple component of DUET (see Appendix B). In these columns, it is interesting to note that the *credentials* of the resident experts providing the advice are always emphasized. Thus far, of the two individuals who have been "Dr Loves", one holds a PhD in Social Work while the other is the vice president and head of the research and

development department of a charity for Singaporean families. However, in most situations, the 'solutions' they suggest to the individuals who write in with their problems appear to resemble value-laden *opinions* that are couched in "pragmatic" and morally neutral "expert advice". In an exemplary instance, one female reader had a problem with a man who seemed to have lost in interest in her after having gone for a series of dates. The reader also mentioned that she had had sex with the man. The accompanying "expert advice" that was published reads as follows:

Dr Love: When sex comes easy in a relationship, it short-circuits the challenge and excitement of a pursuit, and interferes with the growth of trust and respect within the relationship. Besides, there are people out there who are simply looking for sex with no strings attached. It sounds selfish, but this guy may have gotten what he wants and may have no reason to pursue you further or be committed to you. *I encourage you to refrain from reciprocating his sexual advances because in doing so, you are condoning his actions and giving him permission to continue to treat you this way. If you're looking for meaningful relationships with the opposite gender and want to be pursued as a lady, it would be wise to guard your heart and not allow men to emotionally manipulate you into giving yourself away so easily. It would be good to set healthy physical boundaries and take things slowly when you first meet someone.* (Dr. Love 2012b, 36; emphasis mine)

The excerpt above is characteristic of the majority of solutions prescribed by "Dr. Love" to her readers; couching moralistic ideas in objective, rational and medical terms, through the use of phrases like "healthy physical boundaries" and "meaningful relationships with the opposite gender". Such a medico-moral approach facilitates the discursive process of individualization (Foucault 2000), which serves to depoliticize problems pertaining to singlehood by dissociating them from broader social issues, such as the impact of work and gender expectations. This is primarily achieved by attributing the major causal factors behind the rise of singlehood to the singles themselves; specifically in relation to them possessing certain attitudes that are deemed to be negative in the eyes of the state and influential moral entrepreneurs. The numerous "understanding-yourself" quizzes as well as relationship and dating "checklists" provide apt examples of how certain attitudes are profiled categorically as being submissive, dominant, arrogant and materialistic, which are then ranked according to how they positively or negatively affect relationships. Even the articles featuring individual makeovers strongly emphasize, in a celebratory manner, selected *attitudinal characteristics* that would increase their level of attractiveness beyond that of just physical appearance. Conventional gender-based notions are present here as well as the women are "revamped" to display "femininity", "elegance", "cuteness" and "sexiness",

while the men are remade to exude “confidence”, “edginess”, and “physical fitness.” This is apparent in the descriptions of the “made-over” individuals (see Appendix C), which tend to highlight the preferred physical activities and training regimes for the men and for the women, specific physical attributes (“curvy”, “slim”, “long-legs”) become the main focus. Thus the sub-textual message to be gleaned here has two main mutually-reinforcing premises; firstly, that the status of singlehood is a problematic one; secondly, that there must be something inherently wrong with either the individual’s appearance, behaviours, values or even performance of gender roles; and thirdly, that the individual is *personally* accountable and *responsible* in bringing about the required changes to resolve the problem.

Ideologically complementing the de-politicizing nature of the individualization discourse is the politicization and discursive framing of personal “risk” as social “danger”. Such a process imputes a morally negative value into the relatively neutral concept of risk, thereby transforming it “from a probabilistic calculus of chance to a politics of risk as *danger*” (Douglas 1992, 22-25, as cited in Nye 2003, 119). Applying this to our discussion, the discursive genealogy of the rise of singlehood perpetuated by SDN as representatives of the state can be traced to the individual singles themselves, who constitute both the root of the problem as well as the solution. In other words, if singles choose to remain single, they are not only risking their own futures, but also endangering that of the entire social body. In his expositions on “governmentality”, Foucault (1991, 100) states that the medicalization discourse served the aim of governance in strategically aligning the interests and welfare of each individual with that of the wider population. This therefore granted the authorities the right to abridge the civil rights of “dangerous” individuals “in the name of a higher collective principle and with a medical judgement” (Foucault 2000, 178-200; Pasquino 1991, 235-250, as cited in Nye 2003, 119). This aptly relates to the Singaporean context where the individualization discourse performs a key legitimating role for state policies that explicitly marginalize singles in an attempt to curb their rising numbers.

6. Policy approach: Encouraging marriage, discouraging singlehood

One of the salient unintended consequences of the government’s fervent attempt to encourage marriages is that singles are penalized for remaining status quo or delaying marriage plans. This is evident in two main policy areas that blatantly discount singles:

(1) Housing policies

An overwhelming 85% of Singaporeans live in government-built flats (Housing Development Board, HDB). These are heavily subsidized housing and supply is tightly controlled and highly competitive due to land limitations. Singlehood is evidently discouraged by the rules of eligibility for HDB flats purchase—singles must be over the age

of 35 to be eligible to purchase newly built flat government subsidized housing as a *co-owner* (either with a sibling or parents) only. In order to be the *sole owner* of the flat, the single can only purchase from the private markets or buy resale HDB flats (HDB 2012), often at inflated prices compared to those who are eligible for new flats. It is not an exaggeration to imply that singles are structurally displaced and discriminated when they see fellow citizens not too different from themselves save for their marital status given priority on the wait list for new HDB flats and additional cash subsidies.

(2) Enhanced marriage & parenthood package

The Marriage and Parenthood Package was initiated in 2001, then enhanced in 2004 and again in 2008, each time raising the cash bonuses for soon-to-be parents and even granting to-be-weds the additional top-up grants to the prevailing Central Provident Funds (CPF) housing grants (Family & Community Development @ eCitizen 2009). Singles are completely bypassed in these benefits as they are officially ineligible for these benefits.

The discrimination is so brazen that, ironically, single female Members of Parliament (MP) were compelled to speak up for their counterparts on this very issue in parliament in 2004. Ms Indranee Thurai Rajah, a nominated Member of Parliament who is single herself, is cognizant of the government sending out signals of its “strong pro-family stance” and cautioned that single women—a growing group in society now—would “feel a lot of pressure because they get the sense that somehow, it is not right for them to be single” (The Straits Times, Mar 10, 2004). Similarly, another MP Ms Irene Ng raised concerns about “going overboard with the pro-family campaign, as it could imply that ‘you are a failure if you do not have a spouse or a family’” (The Straits Times, Mar 10, 2004). Ms Ng further suggests that if Singapore becomes increasingly unwelcoming to singles, that, mobile as they are, it could potentially propel them to leave the city, resulting in an eventual brain-drain for the country.

More importantly, these single female MPs point out that long hours at work and work related stress (which may, in part, be due to the need to cover work for their married colleagues when they are away on maternity leave or childcare leave at times), diminishes the chances and vigor to socialize during their non-work hours/days. While such a structural inadequacy has been raised both in parliament and in the media before, the State continually disregard the predicament of singles, and repeatedly attributing the issue to the individual. This leads to one of the main conclusions that this paper draws vis-à-vis the basis for “Othering” singles who are not proactively pursuing marriage as a life goal because of their non-adoptive positioning towards established gender stereotypes, various norms about having the “right” mindset about “love”, “better” time management and/or failing to present oneself as desirable to the opposite sex.

7. The gap between polices and the socio-structural factors affecting the rise of singlehood—The political corollary of “social tripartism”

Thus far, our analysis has focused on the state discourse on singlehood and the relevant social policies while only hinting that significant gaps exist between them and the socio-structural realities of singles in Singapore. This section will therefore serve to elaborate on the latter in greater detail.

One of the main structural factors that serve to escalate the rise of Singlehood in Singapore is increased work demands and work stress resulting in lack of time and/energy for singles to date. One lucid indication is the number of hours Singaporeans spend on their job. It is no coincidence that a survey conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2008 showed that Singapore workers put in the longest hours at work. An international poll of 13 economies showed that Singapore alarmingly surpassed Japan and Taiwan—countries traditionally known to have a notoriously hardworking workforce. The ILO report affirms that Singaporeans worked an average of 45.9 hours a week in 2008 and 46.3 hours a week in 2007 (Li 2010). The study intentionally surveyed this period as it was at height of a global recession. In spite of the economy taking a downturn, Singaporeans still clocked more hours than the legally permitted 44 hours a week under the Employment Act.

The issue of increasing work demands and stress taking time away from singles is often swept under the carpet as the State discursively situates the responsibility for solving the national issue of Singlehood primarily within the “people sector”, which Tan (2001, 111) argues is a political device deployed “to avert a legitimating crisis” for the State by deflecting accountability for social issues away from itself as well as the private sector, who constitute the other two members of Singapore’s “social tripartite”. Tan’s insights on the political corollary of social tripartism in Singapore are crucial in understanding the lack of political will in implementing labour policies to effect changes in local work culture. This is due mainly to the ‘governmentality’ that perceives the public, private, and people sectors as discrete entities and having their own respective roles to play in the functioning of society. Thus, anything deemed to be “political” remains the sole prerogative of the government (public sector); while the economic and financial “duties” belong to the domain of private businesses, commerce, and financial sectors; and finally, depoliticized “social” issues, such as the rise of singlehood, are devolved to the people sector, which consists of voluntary, grassroots, as well as civic organizations. We posit that approaching social issues in such a ‘siloe’d’ and politically isolated manner will become problematic in the long-run since the three entities are so intrinsically intertwined in reality.

Nevertheless, however, some amount of credit should be given to the State for promoting “work-life harmony”, for instance, setting up the Work-Life Works! (WoW!) Fund worth S\$10 million which was introduced to carry out strategies that would “enhance the quality

of workplaces so that employees would be more engaged and productive" (MCYS 2007, 9). In the same breath, maternity leave is extended to 16 weeks for mothers who are employed. Unfortunately, these policies tend to be skewed towards work-life support for married individuals or parents, hinting that the state seems to advocate that work-life balance is only important for married people or parents. The various schemes and awareness campaigns are all targeted at married people or parent, but rarely at singles in spite of the fact that singles too need time to find a partner and time to date.

Conclusion

From our analysis thus far, we have expounded on the ideological processes in which the Singapore government discursively 'others' singles as a means towards securing legitimacy for its family-centric policies. Vital to this 'othering' process is the perpetuation of an 'idealized' single—an individual who has internalized the 'proper' normative values concerning conventional gender roles and expectations as well as ethnic and socio-economic homogeneity. Through the use of expert opinion and scientific endorsement, *individual* singles that deviate from the 'ideal' are effectively presumed to be deficient and are therefore in need of some form of correction. Ultimately, we contend that the state-perpetuated discourse and policies are highly divorced from the socio-structural realities faced by singles, particularly concerning issues and stresses in the domain of work. Thus, the failure of the Singapore state's "governmentality" to recognize and address the root causes not only serves to exacerbate the problem of rising singlehood, but also contributes towards the marginalization of a significant and growing proportion of Singapore's resident population.

References

Books and Journal Articles

- Department of Statistics Singapore. 2011. *Statistical Release 1: Demographic Characteristics, Education, Language and Religion*. Government of Singapore: Singapore.
- Donzelot, Jacques. 1979. *The Policing of Families*. Patheon Books: New York.
- Douglas, Mary. 1992. *Risk and Blame: Essay in Cultural Theory*. Routledge: London.
- Foucault, Michel. 1991. 'Governmentality' in G. Burchell, C. Gordon. & P. Miller (eds) *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.
- . 2000. 'About the Concept of the Dangerous Individual' in D. J. Faubion (ed) *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, Vol. 3*. The New Press: New York.
- Nye, Robert A. 2003. "The Evolution of the Concept of Medicalization in the Late Twentieth Century" *Journal of History of the Behavioural Sciences* 39(2): 115-129.
- Pasquino, Pasquale. 1991. 'Criminology: The Birth of a Special Knowledge' in G. Burchell, C. Gordon. & P. Miller (eds) *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. University of Chicago Press:

Chicago.

SDN. 2011a. *Duet*. February-April. Social Development Network: Singapore.

SDN. 2011b. *Duet*. May-July. Social Development Network: Singapore.

SDN. 2011c. *Duet*. August-October. Social Development Network: Singapore.

SDN. 2012a. *Duet*. January-March. Social Development Network: Singapore.

SDN. 2012b. *Duet*. July-September. Social Development Network: Singapore.

Tan, Kenneth Paul. 2001. "Civic Society and the New Economy in Patriarchal Singapore: Emasculating the Political, Feminizing the Public." *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. 15(2): 95-122.

Zola, I. K. 1972. 'Medicine as an Institution of Social Control' in C. Cox and A. Mead (eds) (1975) *A Sociology of Medical Practice*. Collier-Macmillan: London.

Newspaper Articles

Li, Dickson. 2010. "Singapore Workers put in Longest Hours: Survey". *The Straits Times*. Jan 11.

The Straits Times. 2004. "Is it Wrong to be Single?" *The Straits Times*. Mar 10.

Online sources

Family and Community Development @ eCitizen. "Marriage and Parenthood Package Overview".
<http://fcd.ecitizen.gov.sg/MarriageNParenthoodPackage.html> (accessed Jun 25, 2012).

Housing Development Board, Singapore. "Eligibility to Buy New HDB Flat".
http://www.hdb.gov.sg/fi/10/fi/10321_p.nsf/w/BuyingNewFlatEligibilitytobuynewHDBflat?OpenDocument#FamilyNucleus (accessed Jun 25, 2012).

Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports, Singapore. "Our Five Pillars: Strong and Stable Families".
<http://app1.mcys.gov.sg/AboutMCYS/OurFivePillars/StrongandStableFamilies.aspx> (accessed Feb 5, 2012).

Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports, Singapore. "Inaugural Study Confirms Positive Benefits of Work-Life Harmony to Individuals and Businesses".
<http://app1.mcys.gov.sg/portals/0/Summary/research/43-20071.pdf> (accessed Jun 25, 2012).

National Population and Talent Division, Singapore. "Marriage and Parenthood Trends in Singapore".
https://www.nptd.gov.sg/content/dam/nptd/Occasional%20Paper%20on%20MP%20Trends%20For%20Media%20Briefing%2028%20Jun%202012_w%20annex.pdf (accessed Jun 25, 2012).

Social Development Network, Singapore. "About SDN".
<http://app.sdn.sg/AboutSDN.aspx> (accessed Jun 25, 2012).

Appendix A

JANUARY • MARCH 2012

duet

5 relationship myths busted
EVEN FAIRYTALE ROMANCES NEED A BIT OF WORK

Paint the town red

ADD SOME COLOUR TO YOUR LIFE WITH NEW YEAR LOVE RESOLUTIONS!

Read *DUET* and win Capital vouchers ENJOY THE HOLIDAY AT 2-FOR-1. READ TO WIN \$60 IN VOUCHERS AND MORE!

NOVEMBER • DECEMBER 2011

duet

LOVE, SET, MATCH!
FIND OUT IF YOU ARE READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP

Ignite that Spark

EXPERT TIPS TO WORK THAT CHEMISTRY IN A BUDDING RELATIONSHIP

Read *DUET* and win Capital vouchers ENJOY 1-FOR-1. READ TO WIN FREE SPA TREATMENTS AND MORE!

AUGUST • OCTOBER 2011

duet

When words get in the way
WHY MEN AND WOMEN SOMETIMES DON'T UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER

Score that first date

EXPERT TIPS TO MAKE THAT A REALITY

Promotions
APPROXIMATE MINIMUM TICKETS 2 FOR \$42
10% OFF FOOD/DRINKS
15% OFF SPA/SAUNA/CLUB CARES

MAY - JUL 2011

duet

ROMANCE TAKES WORK
"I don't believe in love at first sight," says actor Zhang Zhen Huan

It's fun to be in love

Perk up your dates, experts tell you how

WIN 1. COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS TO THE NAUGHTY 80s CONCERT
2. COMPLIMENTARY NAUGHTY 80s CONCERT BOON (UP TO \$128 PP)
CHECK OUT THE EXCLUSIVE PROMOTION

BUZZ Tips for a lasting relationship | **CHAT** Singles talk about what they dream to do | **STYLE** Inspire you with the latest fashion

Appendix B

NEED SOME LOVE ADVICE? ***ask the expert**

MIXED SIGNALS

I've known this guy for over a year. We chat on the phone almost everyday and meet at least once a week. Recently, he has been rather distant, and says we have communication problems. I've expressed my feelings for him, but he avoids the topic. I want to cut off contact so I can get him out of my mind, but he continues to call and SMS me everyday. What should I do? If he doesn't want to have a romantic relationship with me, why does he maintain contact?

Dr Love: It's understandable that you are confused by the mixed signals he's sending. He wants to be in touch but refuses to commit to something more serious, and that's unfair to you. There's obviously a reason why he's unwilling to go forward. However, since you've communicated your feelings to him, the ball is in his court. He should let you know how he feels about you and whether he wants to take this relationship a step further. It's good that you want to cut off contact. He needs to know that he should let go and let you move on if he's not interested in pursuing this relationship.

SAD AND DISAPPOINTED

I've had a crush on a close friend for three years. Though we seldom meet, he confides in me whenever he's unhappy or has a critical decision to make. I rely on him for support too, and he never fails to lend a listening ear or to give constructive advice.

I used to believe that our friendship could develop further — until he told me that he is gay. I'm depressed. Although he has a boyfriend, I can't stop thinking of him. We still meet up. What should I do?

Dr Love: I can empathise with your disappointment and confusion. Feeling depressed is normal, but you need to work through your feelings and accept your friend for who he is. This doesn't mean that you can't be there for each other, but at the same time, you need to meet more people to increase your chances of finding a life partner.

IN LOVE WITH THE DOC

I've fallen in love with my regular physician. However, our conversations only revolve around my medical condition. He's single and I don't know if I should tell him how I feel. How do I move on from here?

Dr Love: It's important for you to be aware of the difference between infatuation and true love, and it sounds like you're infatuated with your doctor. Your conversations are focused only on your medical condition because this is a doctor-patient relationship, after all.

Although infatuation can be the first step towards a romantic relationship, there are consequences to consider if you want to take this relationship further. You must be aware of the risks you're taking, as the doctor probably has his own code of ethics concerning patients. If you make it known that you're interested in him romantically, you should expect some awkwardness or embarrassment if he rejects you. If that happens, you should perhaps change your doctor, take the experience in stride and move on. ☑

* Please send in your questions to SDN, 2 Orchard Link, #05-02, *SCAPE, S237978 or email sdn@meys.gov.sg (Subject: Ask Dr Love)

Ask dr love

DUET's resident relationship guru Dr Linda Haverkamp-Heng is here to hear you out and offer useful advice.



Appendix C

revamp
SMASHING NEW LOOKS



Sherene Lo
33, BANK ANALYST

Given the nature of her job, Sherene reports to work early and often stays late into the evening. But that doesn't mean that this bubbly lady doesn't have an active social life. Whether it is after work or during the weekend, Sherene makes it a point to meet her friends, even if it's just for a quick dinner. One of her favourite activities is going to K Box for karaoke sessions, where she likes belting out Mandopop hits by Taiwanese artists Yuki Hsu and Charlie Young.

HER MAKEOVER WISH
Working in a bank does not allow Sherene to be creative when it comes to work wear. When on the job, she wears a "uniform" of long-sleeved shirts and pants. However, this chatty lady is open to new ways to dress up, for work or when she's out with friends. "I think my style is quite boring," she admits. "So it'd be nice if I could see myself in a new set of clothes to get some ideas on how to accentuate my features."

HER NEW LOOK
Tucking in a loose blouse into an A-line skirt helps keep Sherene's new look smart but feminine at the same time. The blouse is given a playful twist with a detachable beaded collar. This outfit highlights her best assets — her long legs — which are paired with beige and orange heels to complement the coral tone of her blouse. To complete her look, Sherene's hair is swept back in a half-braid to elongate her neck.

Sassy Chic

Sherene Lo works the K-Pop cute look with a hint of sexiness.

Photo by Jui Shing. Hair: Ching Hui. Makeup: Miko. Styling: Xiang Ru Amy Tan. Sherene's beaded collar blouse and skirt are from Topshop. Her long legs are from Topshop. Her heels are from Topshop. Her bag is from Topshop.

revamp
SMASHING NEW LOOKS



Winston Han
28, ACCOUNTANT

Despite long hours at work, Winston finds time for a regular exercise routine — he jogs three times a week at MacRitchie Reservoir. The Taekwondo black belt holder says that he doesn't like to shop, and the only time he buys new clothes is just before Chinese New Year. He spends about \$500 a year on new clothes.

HIS MAKEOVER WISH
To try other fashion styles that makes him look presentable and approachable on first impression. "Most of the time, I prefer dark colours such as brown, green and blue," says the soft-spoken man who sticks to the typical tailored shirt-and-pants ensemble for the office. On weekends, he goes for casual wear such as polo T-shirts, bermudas or jeans.

HIS NEW LOOK
The stylist shows that it doesn't take much to dress up for that festive year-end date. Contrast is key to creating a sharp and refreshing look. The bright blue jacket worn over a black graphic print T-shirt complements Winston's fair complexion, and adds a pop of colour to the overall look.

Blue Dasher

DUET shows Winston Han a quick and fuss-free way to dress up for a party date.

Photo: Hong Ching. Styling: Bora Ching. Hair and Makeup: Ng Jui-min. Blouse by PCOA, Black T-Shirt and Jeans from Reebok.