MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
Center for Gender in Global Context

FRIDAY, April 13
1:30-3:00PM
201 INTERNATIONAL CENTER
SPECIAL LOCATION

Rabindra Ratan
Department of Media & Information

Avatars for Empowerment: The real potential of virtual selves

Did you know that avatars offer a secret weapon that can be used to help reduce real world social inequities? This talk addresses this questions, examining recent theory and research on the psychological experience and effects of avatar use. Building on a broad definition of avatars as mediated self-representations, I will explain how avatar attributes influence users (e.g., the Proteus effect). I will discuss my experimental research on the psychological factors that moderate such avatar effects, as well as my research that applies these principles to meaningful outcomes, emphasizing the potential for avatars to counteract the harmful effects of stereotypes and empower all users in education contexts, especially STEM fields. Finally, I will describe my most recent theoretical directions with this work, building from Social Cognitive Theory to offer a framework for future research on how to maximize the empowering effects of avatars.

Rabindra (Robby) Ratan is Assistant Professor and AT&T Scholar at MSU's Department of Media & Information, and is also affiliated with MSU's Department of Psychology as well as MSU's College of Education's program in Educational Psychology and Educational Technology. His research focuses on psychological experiences of media use, with an emphasis on interactive environments (e.g., virtual worlds, videogames, the road) that include mediated self-representations (e.g., avatars, cars).

This event is free and open to the public.