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<http://ap3.fas.nus.edu.sg/fass/psytmw/>

What does your research focus on?

I am interested in a wide range of topics, but my research centers on appraisal theories of emotion. I am also interested in the cognitive processes associated with different emotions.

What drew you to this line of research? Why is it exciting to you?

I first got into appraisal research in 1999 as a masters student in the National University of Singapore. Most appraisal studies up to that point were aimed at showing which emotion is associated with which appraisal. This is important, but I realized that more could be done. For instance, how do several appraisals combine to create an emotion? Can the effect of an appraisal on an emotion be described by a precise mathematical function? How can appraisals be better measured and manipulated? How do implicit appraisals affect emotions? What are implicit appraisals anyway? Are there systematic relationships between chronic appraisal styles and physical health, the amount of money a person has, his birth order in his family, etc? Is there a genetic basis for chronic appraisal styles? The list goes on...

Who were/are your mentors or psychological influences?

Phoebe Ellsworth, my PhD advisor, has been a rich source of advice and support. George Bishop, my masters adviser, encouraged me to explore topics outside of his area of research, which helped me to develop an open and inquisitive mind. Other scholars I have learned much from and am grateful for

include Chang Weining, Barbara Fredrickson, Ira Roseman, Klaus Scherer, Norbert Schwarz, Ramadhar Singh, and Craig Smith. I am inspired by several historical figures for their audacity and ingenuity, and they range from David Hume to the Beatles. And by my students, who often give me new research ideas and see things in ways that researchers, too *entrenched* in their ways of thinking, fail to see.

To what do you attribute your success in the science?

Perseverance, humility, an open mind, innovation, discipline, collaboration, courage, and some luck.

What's your future research agenda?

I hope to develop appraisal research further (see Question 2). Also, I am interested in examining the cognitive and behavioral consequences of specific positive emotions.

Any advice for even younger psychological scientist? What would you tell someone just now entering graduate school or getting their PhD?

Develop the qualities listed above (and pray for luck). It is important to work in areas that your advisors have expertise in, but you should also carve out an area of research that you can call your own. Try to do what everyone else is not doing, but not so much that no one takes you seriously. Science is an adventure where you often start out not knowing what to do and whether it will work. It is often a risky enterprise and a gamble. Publication is as heartbreaking as it is gratifying — sometimes even more so. I have had many more rejections than acceptances. Don't be discouraged, you must keep trying.

What publication are you most proud of or feel has been most important to your career?

Tong, E. M. W., & Yang, Z. Y. (2011). Moral hypocrisy: Of proud and grateful people. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 2, 159-165.

This paper is about the effect of pride and gratitude on moral hypocrisy, co-written with an undergraduate student, Jerry Yang. The paper reports a study that examined an intriguing moral phenomenon in which people would openly declare the intention to do what is right but would instead do what is wrong in the service of self interests as long as they thought they could get away with it. More importantly, the study showed that gratitude reduces this tendency towards moral hypocrisy whereas pride encourages it. The idea came to me suddenly and was uninvited. I knew keenly the idea would work. The data was collected within four months, the paper was written within two months, and the publication process (from first submission to acceptance) took about six months. The paper does not answer all questions, but the speed with which the research, writing, and publication took place was exhilarating, the findings are compelling, the design was simple, and no budget was needed. I wish my other research projects could be this enjoyable!