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1. What first drew you to relationship science?

My interests in relationships started in my time serving the Army, where I started wondering how people in different life stages thought about and approached their relationships. However, I was only exposed to relationship science after spending a semester on an undergraduate student exchange at the University of California, Los Angeles, where I took a relationships class taught by Professor Thomas Bradbury and the rest is history!

2. What's a project you're especially proud of right now, and why?

Building on work looking at relationship receptivity theory, we are now trying to understand the differences between readiness and desire for committed romantic relationships. One stream I'm particularly excited about examines latent profiles of what makes people ready/desire relationships, as we know very little of the antecedents. In building up this area, we are also excited to translate some of this work to policy by also looking at marital and parental readiness as well. I think what is most exciting is the opportunity to bridge theory and contribute to demographic trends and policy conversations as well beyond academia.

3. What do you find most exciting or rewarding about studying relationships?

I think what is most exciting and rewarding is that the stakes feel real. Almost everyone has experienced love, loneliness, conflict, or loss and when research can speak meaningfully to those experiences, it matters beyond just beyond the publications. I have also thoroughly enjoyed coming back to Singapore to do my work. Beyond just providing a cultural perspective, I think Singapore is a great context for studying how pressures around marriage, singlehood and families are shaped by both psychological and cultural/policy concerns!

4. What's something about relationships that people often misunderstand—or that your work has changed your mind about?

I think we often think in terms of trade-offs (e.g., risk regulation), but increasingly, my own work highlights how/when we are able to balance both for the best possible outcomes. Stay tuned for more!

5. What are you working on next, or what question are you most excited to pursue?

I'm trying to understand ambivalence in singlehood, and how single people navigate both the tensions of relationships and singlehood and how they might reshape relational pathways. I am also very interested in singlehood discrimination and how/whether that affects well-being. Even though it seems like there is a focus on singlehood, ultimately I am excited to understand the future of intimacy in a rapidly changing world!

6. What advice would you give to students or early-career scholars interested in relationship science?

I feel what has really benefited me has been to read widely across the theoretical traditions, interdependence, attachment, evolutionary psychology because I believe I have started thinking more generatively when trying to marry concepts from different frameworks. Also, on the one hand, don't be afraid to let real-world phenomena (e.g., AI-companionship, aging, delayed marriage) shape theoretical innovation, but also do not be caught up in the zeitgeist and keep changing your focus to study whatever is popular in the current time. Next, build relationships, especially with people in IARR. I have benefited from the interactions and friendship with many exceptionally talented scholars, many of whom continue to inspire. The work is harder and slower in isolation and some of the most generative experiences in my own career have come from folks who pushed back on how I thought about things. Finally, learn to communicate our research to non-academic audiences early, not as an afterthought!

Also, happy to welcome anyone who wants to visit Singapore to talk about relationship science!