

## Spotlight on Ng Kong Man Joey

### Best Doctoral Student Paper: “Insignificance of Well-being in a Chinese Context: An Anthropological Examination”

(Award Sponsored by *Organization*)

I'm a part-time PhD candidate at the University of Nottingham. As a Chinese, I'm living in my home city – Hong Kong. I'm working as a full-time Lecturer in The Open University of Hong Kong. The paper that was recognised as The Best Doctoral Student Critical Paper, is drawn from my PhD thesis, in which it examines the topic of well-being. Well-being is a contemporary term used around the globe to represent human concern in lives. Tracing back to 15 years ago, I got the first touch of this term when I was studying in Australia. I enrolled in a *Work-life Balance* course in the Master of Human Resource Management. The course required me to examine my own sense of well-being. This learning experience planted my interest in this topic.

Although I'm quite determined to study well-being in my PhD thesis, I have never thought that I would take a critical perspective. In the first year of my doctoral study, I felt a bit lost in how I was going to approach this topic. I had explored a number of methodologies, but still I could not land in a field that I felt passionate and challenging. Until I read the works of Xu (2000), Sparkes (2007), Ailon (2008) and Learmonth (2009) - they have inspired me towards the direction of Critical Management Studies (CMS). I realized the 'beauty' of CMS – constantly reflecting on the established mainstream management knowledge and practices and questioning

what has been taken-for-granted.

Since then, I have strived to demystify the notion from the critical lens. I started by examining the assumptions behind the concept of well-being and questioning if such a Western concept could be applied in a Chinese context. My thesis consists of an archaeological and anthropological examination. The first part of the analysis draws from Foucault's (1979) *Archaeology of Knowledge* to examine the discursive (trans)formation of well-being. The second part of the analysis is an ethnography which focuses on a Chinese perspective regarding their everydayness of life. I believe that as a researcher, I have the obligations of critiquing existing management assumptions and lifting up the voice of the marginalized. That is how and why I finally chose CMS as the 'home' for my research.

Although being a CMS researcher is exciting and meaningful, I also feel disconnected with other academics at work. It is quite difficult to find a CMS community in the business schools of Hong Kong. However, my enthusiasm sustains due to the continuous support of my PhD supervisors, Dr Qi Xu, Dr Craig Shepherd and Dr Lorna Treanor. Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to them. I feel thankful for their patience, encouragement, immense knowledge and insightful comments. They consistently allowed my own interests and



Ng Kong Man Joey, Best Doctoral Student Paper-Presented by Dr. Ajnesh Prasad and Professor Stephen Cummings

aspiration to flourish, but at the same time steered me in a right direction to make sure that my thesis is of appropriate standard and quality. My thesis would not have been possible without their passionate guidance, participation and enlightenment. I am gratefully indebted to them for their invaluable inputs and care. Thanks God for sending them – the angels to my PhD life. Their presence definitely gives me a strong sense of *xing fu* (living well).

The award gives me a huge motivation to pursue my career in the CMS field. Special thanks are due to Professor Mark Learmonth, Professor Stephen Cummings, Dr Michelle Greenwood, Dr Ajnesh Prasad, Dr Eda Ulus and my reviewers for their constructive feedback. They offered me encouragement and insights in polishing my paper, as well as ex-

tending my future research. I plan to extend my research to other contemporary management notions and practices such as sustainability, leadership, flexibility, and work-life balance.

The experience of attending the annual meeting of the Academy of Management (CMS Division) was fascinating. I was able to participate in the Professional Development Workshops, symposiums, CMS Plenary and presentations. Most importantly, I enjoyed engaging in a lot of intellectually stimulating discussions and interesting conversations with the likeminded scholars and researchers. Thanks to the executive committee of the CMS Division – your warm welcome and rapport remind me that I'm not alone. I'm delighted to be part of the group and would be very willing to contribute to the CMS community as much as I have received. Let's keep in touch! I look forward to meeting all of you again in the near future.

## References

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### **Best Doctoral Student Paper, Abstract, by Ng Kong Man Joey:**

Well-being is made as a global concept which is generally significant to everyone. Nevertheless, this paper challenges the presumed universality of well-being. Given the assumption that underlies the notion is individualism, well-being is conceivably less applicable to a Chinese who regards family as part of self. Although a Chinese expression, *xing fu* 幸福 is often considered as an equivalent to well-being (Davis, 2005; Lu, 2001; 2010), the two concepts are culturally distinctive (Ng, 2017). This paper aims to explore the relevancy of well-being and *xing fu* in a Chinese context. A research question is formulated: *How do members of family businesses in Hong Kong draw upon the discourses of well-being and xing fu in their daily lives?* To answer this question, an anthropological examination is carried out. The findings indicate that rather than spontaneously expressing well-being, the research subject showed a more salient concern on *xing fu*. In the discussion, *xing fu* is further contextualized and its differences with well-being are examined. In general, the paper contributes to knowledge by bringing in an indigenous perspective into the discursive space.