

# Alex Hon Ki Wong, PhD

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## RESEARCH POSITIONS

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- Assistant Professor, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands** 2022 Feb – Present  
Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences – Clinical Psychology
- Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Würzburg, Germany** 2018 May – 2022 Jan  
Research group “Cognitive Control in the Context of Stress and Health”  
Project : *The generalisation and extinction of costly avoidance*  
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Andre Pittig
- Visiting Fellow, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium** 2017 Sept – 2017 Dec  
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Tom Beckers

## EDUCATION

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- Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology), University of New South Wales** 2015 Mar – 2019 Feb  
Highest grade recommended by all external thesis examiners  
Thesis: *The effect of trait anxiety on the generalisation of fear acquisition and extinction*  
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Peter Lovibond
- Bachelor of Science (Honours)/Commerce, University of New South Wales** 2010 Mar - 2014 Dec  
Majors: Psychology (Honours) and Marketing  
First class Honours in Psychology  
Honours Thesis: *Associative- and Propositional-based generalisation in human fear conditioning*  
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Peter Lovibond

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

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My research interests remain in the application of associative learning to anxiety-related psychopathology in humans. I am particularly interested in the generalisation of fear and avoidance to novel objects or situations, the extinction of pathological fear and avoidance, and how predisposing risk factors contribute to the acquisition of pathological fear. I am also keen in developing new research methods and measurements to more precisely address the research questions of interest.

## SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

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- Postdoc Plus Grant (€12,500)** 2021 - 2022  
Seed grant awarded for innovative research ideas  
Funded by the Graduate School of Life Science, University of Würzburg

**UNSW Exchange Program Award (\$3000)**

2017

Travelling award for visiting Prof. Dr. Tom Beckers at KU Leuven

Funded by the School of Psychology, University of New South Wales

**Australian Postgraduate Award (\$26000 annually)**

2015 - 2018

Scholarship awarded for postgraduate research training

Funded by the Australian Federal Government

**PUBLICATIONS**

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Pittig, A., & **Wong, A. H. K.** (2022). Reducing the return of avoidance and fear by directly targeting avoidance: Comparing incentive-based and instructed extinction of avoidance to passive fear extinction. *Journal of Experimental Psychopathology*, 13(4). doi:[10.1177/20438087221136424](https://doi.org/10.1177/20438087221136424)

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Pittig, A. (2022). Threat belief determines the degree of costly safety behavior: Assessing rule-based generalization of safety behavior with a dimensional measure of avoidance. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 156, 104158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2022.104158>

**Wong, A. H. K.**, Wirth, F. M., & Pittig, A. (2022). Avoidance of learnt fear: Models, potential mechanisms, and future directions. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 151, 104056. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2022.104056>

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Pittig, A. (2022). Avoiding a feared stimulus: Modelling costly avoidance of learnt fear in a sensory preconditioning paradigm. *Biological Psychology*, 168, 108429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsycho.2021.108429>

Pittig, A., Glück, V. M., Boschet, B. M., **Wong, A. H. K.**, & Engelke, P. (2021). Increased anxiety of public situations during the COVID-19 pandemic: Evidence from a community and a patient sample. *Clinical Psychology in Europe*, 3(2), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.32872/cpe.4221>

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Pittig, A. (2021). A dimensional measure of safety behavior: A non-dichotomous assessment of costly avoidance in human fear conditioning. *Psychological Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00426-021-01490-w>

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Beckers, T. (2021). Trait anxiety is associated with reduced typicality asymmetry in fear generalization. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 138, 103802. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2021.103802>

Pittig, A., & **Wong, A. H. K.** (2021). Incentive-based, instructed, and social observational extinction of avoidance: Fear-opposite actions and their influence on fear extinction. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 137, 103797. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2020.103797>

**Wong, A. H. K.**, Glück, V. M., Boschet, J. M., & Engelke, P. (2020). Generalization of extinction with a generalization stimulus is determined by learnt threat beliefs. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 125, 103755. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2020.103755>

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Pittig, A. (2020). Costly avoidance triggered by categorical fear generalization. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 129, 103606. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2020.103606>

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Lovibond, P. F. (2020). Breakfast or bakery? The role of categorical ambiguity in over-generalization of learned fear in trait anxiety. *Emotion*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000739>

Pittig, A., **Wong, A. H. K.**, Glück, V. M., & Boschet, J. M. (2020). Avoidance and its bi-directional relationship with conditioned fear: Mechanisms, moderators, and clinical implications. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 126, 103550. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2020.103550>

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Lovibond, P. F. (2020). Generalization of extinction of a generalization stimulus in fear learning. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 125, 103535. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2019.103535>

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Lovibond, P. F. (2018). Excessive generalisation of conditioned fear in trait anxious individuals under ambiguity. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 107, 53-63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2018.05.012>

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Lovibond, P. F. (2017). Rule-based generalisation in single-cue and differential fear conditioning in humans. *Biological Psychology* 129, 111-120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsycho.2017.08.056>

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#### MANUSCRIPTS SUBMITTED/IN PREPARATION

**Wong, A. H. K.**, Lee, J. C., Engelke, P., & Pittig, A. (under review). Reduction of costly safety behaviors after extinction with a generalization stimulus is determined by learnt threat beliefs.

Glück, V. M., Hilger, K., Engelke, P., **Wong, A. H. K.**, Boschet, J. M., & Pittig, A. (under review). A network perspective on real-life threat situations: Complex relations between situation-specific anxiety, trait anxiety, perceived threat, positive outcomes, approach motivation and approach and avoidance responses.

**Wong, A. H. K.**, van Dis, E. A. M., Pittig, A., Hagenaars, M. A., & Engelhard, I. M. (in prep.). The extent of safety behaviors engagement to a safety stimulus predicts maladaptive threat beliefs.

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Pittig, A. (in prep.). First order extinction reduces costly avoidance of learnt fear.

**Wong, A. H. K.,** Boschet, J. M., & Pittig, A. (in prep.). Examining the role of a feared stimulus in the process of avoidant decision: a temporal dynamic approach.

## **TEACHING & MENTORING**

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### **Erasmus University Rotterdam:**

#### **Lecturer – Anxiety and Stress (Bachelor)**

2022 – present

Taught the etiology, maintenance, and treatments for a variety of anxiety-related disorders. Introduction of experimental psychopathology and its clinical translation.

#### **Supervisor - Research theses and internship supervision**

2022 – present

Supervised the processes of data collection, data analyses, and thesis writing. All research topics focused on anxiety-related experimental psychopathology, including the generalisation and extinction of learnt fear and fear-related costly avoidance. (Number of master students: 7; Number of research interns: 1)

### **University of Würzburg:**

#### **Instructor – Seminar of Clinical Psychology (Masters)**

2018 - 2022

Taught and discussed how various associative learning models contribute to the understanding of the etiology and maintenance of a variety of clinical disorders, including anxiety-related disorders, schizophrenia, and substance use disorders. The seminar focused on experimental psychopathology and its clinical translation.

#### **Instructor – Translational Neuroscience (Masters)**

2019 - 2022

Taught and discussed the neuroscience approaches to the understanding of psychopathology in both animals and humans, with a specific focus on anxiety-related experimental psychopathology.

#### **Instructor – Seminar of Clinical Psychology (Bachelor)**

2018 - 2022

Taught and discussed the various models of fear learning, and the contribution of these models to understand the acquisition, maintenance, generalisation, and reduction of maladaptive fear in anxiety-related disorders. The seminar focused on anxiety-related experimental psychopathology and its clinical implications.

#### **Supervisor - Research theses and internship supervision**

2018 - 2022

Supervised the processes of data collection, data analyses, and thesis writing. All research topics focused on anxiety-related experimental psychopathology, including the generalisation and extinction of learnt fear and fear-related costly

avoidance. (Number of master students: 8; Number of bachelor students: 1;  
Number of research interns: 8)

### **University of New South Wales:**

#### **Tutor – Introduction to Psychology tutorials** 2016 – 2017

Delivered first year psychology content to undergraduates. Responsible for marking students' assignments, mid-session exams and presentations.

#### **Tutor – Research Methods tutorials** 2016 - 2017

Taught the concept and the usage of statistical analyses. Responsible for marking students' assignments and mid-session exams.

#### **Peer mentor – Undergraduate peer mentoring program** 2017

Peer mentored six Honours students, shared knowledge and experience in research, and helped evaluating their research career options.

### **PHD SUPERVISION**

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Paula Engelke 2019 – present  
University of Würzburg  
Co-supervised with Prof. Dr. Andre Pittig

### **CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS**

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#### **Talks**

**Wong, A. H. K., & Pittig, A.** (June, 2022). *The reduction of avoidance of learnt fear via first-order conditioned stimulus extinction*. Presentation at the Reading Emotions Symposium, Reading, United Kingdom.

**Wong, A. H. K., & Pittig, A.** (May, 2022). *Learnt threat beliefs determine the reduction in generalized costly safety behavior*. Presentation at the 13<sup>th</sup> European Meeting of Human Fear Conditioning (Online).

**Wong, A. H. K., & Pittig, A.** (May, 2019). *Costly avoidance triggered by categorical fear generalization*. Presentation at the 11<sup>th</sup> European Meeting of Human Fear Conditioning, Würzburg. Germany.

**Wong, A. H. K., & Lovibond, P. F.** (July, 2017). *Extinction with generalisation stimulus in high and low anxious individuals*. Presentation at the Australian Learning Group 2017 mid-year meeting, Sydney, Australia.

**Wong, A. H. K., & Lovibond, P. F.** (April, 2017). *Individual differences in fear generalisation on a categorical level*. Presentation at the 44<sup>th</sup> Experimental Psychology Conference, Newcastle, Australia.

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Lovibond, P. F. (December, 2016). *The role of reasoning in fear generalisation in high and low anxious individuals*. Presentation at the Australian Learning Group Christmas Workshop, Sydney, Australia.

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Lovibond, P. F. (November, 2016). *The role of reasoning in fear generalisation in high and low anxious individuals*. Presentation at the Sydney Postgraduate Psychology Conference, Sydney, Australia.

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Lovibond, P. F. (July, 2016). *Associative- and Propositional-based generalisation in human fear conditioning*. Presentation at the 4<sup>th</sup> International meeting of the Australian Learning Group jointed with International Society for Comparative Psychology, Sydney, Australia

Lovibond P. F., Chan C. K. Y., Chen, J. T. H., & **Wong, A. H. K.** (June, 2016). *Uncertainty and ambiguity in anxiety*. Presentation at the 8<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Behavioural and Cognitive Therapies, Melbourne, Australia

### **Posters**

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Pittig, A. (May, 2021). *Avoidance of learnt fear: Examining costly CS-avoidance in a sensory preconditioning paradigm*. Poster presentation at the 12<sup>th</sup> European Meeting of Human Fear Conditioning, Bochum, Germany (Online).

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Pittig, A. (May, 2021). *Avoidance of learnt fear:: Examining costly CS-avoidance in a sensory preconditioning paradigm*. Poster presentation at the 38<sup>th</sup> Symposium of the Division of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy of the DGPs, Mannheim, Germany (Online).

**Wong, A. H. K.**, & Lovibond, P. F. (September, 2017). *The effect of trait anxiety on categorical fear generalisation*. Poster presentation at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Summer School of Emotional Learning and Memory in Health and Psychopathology, Leuven, Belgium.

### **INVITED TALKS**

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- Graduate School of Life Science, University of Würzburg, 26/09/2022
- Expert meeting of Learning in Emotionally vulnerable people, 27-28/5/2022, West University of Timisoara
- Erasmus University Rotterdam, 24/2/2022
- University of New South Wales, 29/8/2019
- Maastricht University, 01/12/2017
- Ghent University, 18/11/2017

### **PROGRAMMING AND ANALYTIC SKILLS**

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- Experiment presentation with **MatLab**, **Neurobs Presentation** and **OpenSesame**
- Physiological data collection and analysis with **BrainVision Analyzer**, **LabChart** and **PSPHA**.

- Statistical analyses with **R, SPSS, JASP and PSY**.

## RESEARCH SKILLS AND PARADIGMS

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- Pavlovian fear conditioning, instrumental conditioning
- Physiological measures: Skin conductance responses (SCR), fear potentiated startle (EMG)

## ACADEMIC SERVICE

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Ad hoc reviewer for:

Behaviour Research and Therapy | Biological Psychology | Clinical Psychological Science | Cognition & Emotion | Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience | Frontiers in Neuroscience | International Journal of Psychophysiology | Journal of Anxiety Disorders | Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry | Journal of Experimental Psychology: General | Journal of Pain | Neurobiology of Learning and Memory | Neuropsychologia | Nutritional Neuroscience | Psychological Reports | Psychological Science | Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology | Scandinavian Journal of Pain | Scientific Reports

Doctoral committee member for:

Eveliina A. A. Glogan (Maastricht University)

15/12/2021

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

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|---|----------------|
| • Senior member, Experimental Psychopathology             | 2022-present   |
| • Member, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Psychologie           | 2020- present  |
| • Member, <i>American Psychological Association (APA)</i> | 2016 - present |
| • Member, <i>Australian Learning Group (ALG)</i>          | 2015 -present  |

## MEDIA FOR OPEN SCIENCE AND DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH

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Open Science Framework:

<https://osf.io/vakq8/>



ResearchGate:

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alex-Hon-Ki-Wong>



Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/PsycAlexWong>



Google Scholar:

<https://scholar.google.de/citations?user=hGM68v4AAAAJ&hl=en>

