Men are big spenders in the luxury consumer market. Prior research showed that single men may purchase conspicuous items to attract a mate or show off to the opposite sex. But...what about married men? If men only purchase conspicuous luxury items to attract a mate, will they stop doing this once they have committed to a mate? Perhaps these purchases will change with men’s experience in, and satisfaction with, the relationship. They may be more motivated to display to new potential mates through such purchases when things are not going well.

As a fourth-year PhD candidate at the Department of Psychology, Tingting Liu conducted a series of studies supported by the EHAP research award to answer this overlooked research question. She developed a paradigm whereby men would first be primed to either think about what they did or did not like about their current relationship. After priming them to feel one of two ways about their relationship, they next performed an online shopping task that Tingting created, that consisted of more than forty products, to measure married men’s interest in purchasing conspicuous luxury items or more traditional items, either for themselves or their partner. With the help from EHAP research award, she was able to design and run pilot studies and formal experiments for her dissertation thesis, testing more than a hundred participants this summer.