

Social Psychology

The Social Psychology Postgraduate Programme at Auckland University is made up of three core courses:

The Social Psychology Postgraduate Programme consists of:

- PSYCH 716** **Social psychology and Interpersonal Processes**
- PSYCH 731** **Social psychology and Intergroup Processes**
- PSYCH 741** **Social Psychology and Collective Action**

These courses provide students with a detailed background in cutting edge research on how people think, feel, and behave within their interpersonal interactions, in larger groups, and in society in general. The three courses focus on a combination of theory and empirical research and methods used to understand interpersonal and intergroup processes.

The Social Psychology Programme provides students with the skills, training and knowledge to continue on to further postgraduate study in Social Psychology at the Masters or PhD level. If you plan to continue with a Masters or PhD it is strongly recommended that you also take PSYCH 744.

Also strongly recommended:

- PSYCH 744** **Experimental Design and Quantitative Methods for Psychology**

Other Related Courses:

- PSYCH 715 Psychology and Sustainability
- PSYCH 717 Community Psychology
- PSYCH 722 Human Learning and Development
- PSYCH 760 Workplace Assessment and Development
- PSYCH 761 Organisational Psychology
- PSYCH 743 Critical Qualitative Research
- PSYCH 755 Gender, Power and Sexuality

Social Psychology and Interpersonal Processes (PSYCH 716). This course is taught by Dr. Nickola Overall. The course is seminar-based and focuses on applying contemporary theory and research to understanding how the social environment shapes who we are and how we behave within interpersonal contexts. The course is organized around three progressing themes: (1) a foundational perspective illustrating the importance of social connections for people's health and wellbeing, (2) exploring how prior interpersonal experiences influence the way individuals' think, feel and behave, and (3) examining how people attempt to manage their relationships with others. Topics include, for example, the physiological and psychological consequences of social isolation vs. support, social emotions, social cognition and attribution, attachment processes, self-esteem and dependence regulation, stereotype threat, interpersonal communication and influence, self-regulation, impression management, and relationship maintenance.

Social Psychology and Intergroup Processes (PSYCH 731). This course is taught by Dr. Chris Sibley. The course is seminar-based and focuses on specific social psychological theories relating to intergroup relations, political ideology, and prejudice. The theories covered in this course all relate to trying to understand and model how people operate in social groups, and how it is that almost all human groups tend to be hierarchically structured in a way that leads to some people having more than others. Specific topics covered include research on the causes and expression of sexist and racist beliefs, and the personality and situational factors underlying prejudice and discrimination more generally. The course also has a specific New Zealand focus and integrates research and theory on the psychology of intergroup relations to understand group processes, ideology, and attitudes in New Zealand's unique socio-political context.

Social Psychology and Collective Action (PSYCH 741). This course is taught by Dr. Danny Osborne. The course is seminar-based and aims to explain why collective action and other forms of social protest occur so infrequently. In pursuing this goal, this course examines the (a) prevalence of social inequalities (broadly defined), (b) impediments to collective action, (c) psychological antecedents to social protest, and (d) types of responses people can pursue after experiencing an unfavourable outcome. Because collective action entails processes that unfold across multiple levels of analysis, this course takes an interdisciplinary approach and references the literatures in social psychology, sociology, and political science. Nevertheless, the course's central focus is on research in psychology (e.g., relative deprivation theory, tokenism, system justification theory, procedural justice, intergroup emotions, etc.).

Looking Ahead?

The following courses provide an important background if you are interested in studying social psychology at the postgraduate level:

- PSYCH 204 – Social Psychology**
- PSYCH 311 – Advanced Topics in Social Psychology**
- PSYCH 306 – Research Methods in Psychology**

Social Psychology Staff Research Interests and Supervision

Chris Sibley

My research interests are in the study of prejudice, social inequality, identity, wellbeing and intergroup relations. I have a wide range of honors projects on offer this year, including research projects on (a) the causes and expression of sexist and racist beliefs, (b) the effects of experiences of different types of discrimination on subjective wellbeing and psychological adjustment, (c) psychological health and psychological distress and anxiety in the New Zealand population, (d) sexism and gender differences in body image, (e) facebook use and social support, and (f) the personality and situational factors that predict prejudice and discrimination.

I run the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS). This is a representative longitudinal study that assesses change and stability in the personality, social attitudes, and values of roughly 6500 New Zealanders each year. I am open to supervising thesis research analysing the NZAVS data to answer questions relating to any of the broad areas of social psychology (e.g., prejudice, intergroup relations, personality, personal relationships), and topics relating to health, wellbeing and clinical psychology (mainly those concerned with modelling national trends in health and clinical outcomes). Check out the NZAVS website at if you want to know more about thesis opportunities from the study, or pop by and chat: <http://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/uoan/ZAVS>

Nickola Overall

My research interests focus on interpersonal communication and the impact of close relationships on the self, including emotion, wellbeing, self-regulation and self-esteem. I primarily use observational, diary and longitudinal methods to capture the predictors and outcomes of people's cognition and behaviour within daily interactions and live problem-solving discussions.

I work on a range of topics with my students. Recent student projects include: the links between attachment, stressful life events and depressed mood; the costs and benefits of relationship improvement strategies; the psychological benefits of fiction in coping with depressed mood and developing empathy; sexism, relationship preferences and conflict resolution; the effectiveness of influence strategies within organizational settings; how relationship events can undermine or boost security and wellbeing; and the impact of support on achieving personal goals.

Danny Osborne

My research is broadly situated within the areas of intergroup relations and political psychology. Specifically, I focus on two central topics that are aimed at increasing our understanding of how inequalities are produced (and reproduced) in society. The first topic examines the role belief systems have in legitimizing economic and social inequalities. The second topic assesses the impact that race-based stereotypes have on people's memory of others' facial features. Because errors in eyewitness identification are the leading cause of mistaken convictions, awareness of the implicit biases that affect how we remember others can help reduce the number of people who are wrongfully imprisoned.

Given the scope of my research, I am willing to supervise students who are interested in studying the causes (and consequences) of social inequalities. Specific projects include (a) attitudes toward those on benefits, (b) the impact discrete emotions have people's willingness to help those who are stigmatized, (c) factors that affect our memory of others' perceived stereotypicality (i.e., the degree to which a person "looks like" others from his or her social group), and (d) other projects dealing with stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination.

Further Information

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General Inquiries

General enquiries about postgraduate studies in Psychology, and enrolment should be directed to the Department's Postgraduate Advisor:

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Graduates of universities overseas and/or those without New Zealand citizenship or permanent resident status should also correspond with the International Students Office:

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