

Spring 2020

Social Cognition & Interaction (SCI) Lab  
Prof. Adam Pearson  
<https://research.pomona.edu/sci/>

**Student Representatives:**

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**Descriptions of Lab research (generally, 3-5 sentences):** The SCI Lab explores how inequality and group memberships shape how we think about, interact with, and relate to others and the world around us, with a particular focus on understanding how these factors shape public engagement with the issue of climate change, within the US and globally.

Two main questions guide much of our research: (1) How do group processes impact how we perceive and respond to local and global sustainability challenges like climate change? and (2) how can a deeper understanding of these processes promote informed and equitable decision making? To explore these questions, we use a variety of methods, including lab and field experiments, and probability-based survey experiments.

Our research mantra is: (1) do good science; (2) have fun doing good science

**Current Project(s):**

- **Climate Change and Public Engagement:** As each new round of climate negotiations illustrates, how people perceive and engage with the issue of climate change is powerfully shaped by how others – including ingroups and outgroups – respond to the issue. Research in our lab is currently exploring how social identities, political polarization, and inequality influence how different groups perceive and respond to environmental problems, like climate change, and organizations working to address them. Additional studies with collaborators at Claremont Graduate University are exploring environmental attitudes among Latinx youth and adults and cultural factors, such as familism, that may influence how these groups respond to climate change and its impacts.
- **Understanding and Addressing Disparities in Environmental Organizations:** Race and income in the US predict exposure to a wide range of environmental hazards; yet, despite these inequities, racial and ethnic minorities remain underrepresented in national environmental organizations and decision-making bodies. With collaborators at Cornell and the Environmental Defense Fund, we are currently exploring social psychological factors that may contribute to these disparities, such as racial, ethnic, and class stereotypes about environmentalists that may fuel misperceptions of who is concerned about the environment and lead environmental organizations to overlook minority and low-income groups in their advocacy and outreach.
- **Environmental Construal:** What counts as an “environmental” issue? Additional studies in our lab have documented differences in how minority and low-income populations conceptualize environmental issues relative to other segments of the public. Minority and lower-income groups experience a disproportionate share of environmental risk, exacerbated by social conditions that heighten vulnerability to environmental harms. This suggests that disadvantaged groups may conceptualize environmental issues more broadly than members of advantaged groups to include underlying social conditions, such as poverty, racism, limited access to health care and transportation, and poor

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sanitation, that can make people vulnerable. Current studies are exploring the nature of these perceptions and their implications for broadening public engagement around sustainability issues.

### **RA Responsibilities & Expectations:**

#### Responsibilities

- Research assistants work on a primary project, typically in collaboration with other students in the lab. RAs are expected to also contribute, as needed, to other lab projects
- Meet weekly for lab meetings to discuss articles, design studies, and coordinate administrative tasks/issues
- Help with a wide range of tasks, depending on your skills and the needs of the lab, such as programming surveys, conducting literature reviews, assisting with IRB applications, data entry and analysis, administrative tasks, and recruiting participants
- Commit a minimum of 4 hours to the lab each week, in addition to lab meetings

#### Expectations

- Communicate clearly and often with Professor Pearson and fellow lab members
- Keep track of your work, both in terms of hours and accomplishments
- Develop good research practices, including careful documentation of lab activities and materials, and effective collaboration (conscientiousness, persistence, attention to detail, and effective collaboration are the keys to doing good science)
- Work toward the creation of a concrete product, such as a fully programmed and pilot-tested survey, completed data collection for a study, or a conference poster, depending on your level of experience
- To ensure that students are able to sufficiently contribute to the lab, and develop necessary skills to do so, involvement in no more than one research lab at a given time and a 2-semester commitment is preferred
- Once accepted to the lab, students are encouraged to sign up for a half credit course, PSYC 199, Research Assistantship, to receive credit for lab participation. Previous research experience is not required, however completion of PSYC 154 Social Psychology with Lab, PSYC 180C Climate Change and Human Behavior, Psychological Statistics, and/or Research Methods, is encouraged

### **How to get involved in this lab:**

See the lab website for current projects and recently published papers and email Professor Pearson ([adam.pearson@pomona.edu](mailto:adam.pearson@pomona.edu)) with a brief description of your background, including any relevant courses taken or prior research experience, and a short description of research interests that relate to current SCI Lab projects. Resumes are also welcome, but not required.