

**- Module thématique de l'école doctorale -**

**“Theory Building Versus Theory Testing. From Fighting to Improve Existing Theories to the Development of a New Theory”**

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This seminary has two main goals. The first aim is to provide insights about theory formation in social psychology by developing a practical methodology for constructing explanatory theories, from (1) identifying a relevant phenomena that becomes the target of explanation; to (2) formulating a prototheory –a set of theoretical principles that explain these phenomena-; (3) developing a formal model including explanatory principles; (4) checking the adequacy of the formal theory; and (5) assessing the overall worth of the theory testing whether the phenomena is reproduced systematically. The second goal is to encourage participants to follow a research strategy, independently of the theoretical approach, that should be useful for framing any research challenge.

To that end, the seminary begins with the examination of classical theories already existing, apparently well-established- that included a series of limitations or questions to be solved- e.g. the common ingroup identity model, intergroup contact, self-verification – to the emergence of a fully new theory, identity fusion –a visceral feeling of oneness that predicts extreme pro-group behaviors. The different steps for the establishment and generalization of the theory will be revised as its causes, consequences, as well as underlying mechanism.

**Monday 4 December 2023**  
(room GEO-2152 - Lausanne)

- Theory Building vs. Theory Testing. Relevance for Science vs. relevance for Society. Or... the beginning of 25 years of struggle.
- Improving the Common Ingroup Identity Model: The “Dark” side of recategorization.
- Improving the Intergroup Contact Theory: Extended, Vicarious and Depersonalized Contact.
- The link between Personality and Social Psychology: From Self-verification to Verification of Ingroup Identity. And the emergence of a NEW THEORY: Identity Fusion

**References:**

- Borsboom, D., van der Maas, H. L. J., Dalege, J., Kievit, R. A., & Haig, B. D. (2021). Theory Construction Methodology: A Practical Framework for Building Theories in Psychology. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 16(4), 756-766. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620969647>
- Gómez, Á., Dovidio, J. F., Cuadrado, I., Huici, C. & Gaertner, S. L. (2008). The other side of We: When outgroup members express common identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34, 1613-1626. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208323600>
- Gómez, Á., Seyle, C. D., Huici, C. & Swann, W. B. Jr. (2009). Can self-verification strivings fully transcend the self-other barrier? Seeking verification of ingroup identities. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97, 1021-1044. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016358>



**UNIVERSITÉ  
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**Ecole doctorale**  
Psychologie sociale



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Faculté des sciences sociales  
et politiques (SSP)

Gómez, Á., Tropp, L., Vázquez, A., Voci, A. & Hewstone, M. (2018). Depersonalized extended contact and injunctive norms about cross-group friendship impact intergroup orientation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 76, 356-370. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.02.010>.

**Tuesday 5 December 2023**

(room GEO-2152 - Lausanne)

- Identity Fusion Theory: Origin, consequences, first set of moderators and mediators, and establishment of the Theory.
- Generalization of the theory to the 5 Continents and to different domains
- The multi-disciplinary expansion of the theory over the world, Part I
- The multi-disciplinary expansion of the theory over the world, Part II

**References:**

- Swann, W. B. Jr., Buhrmester, M. D., Gómez, A., Jetten, J., Bastian, B., Vázquez, A., Ariyanto, A., Besta, T., Christ, O., Cui, L., Finchilescu, G., González, R., Goto, N., Hornsey, M., Susianto, H., Sharma, S., & Zhang, A. (2014). What makes a group worth dying for? Identity fusion fosters perception of familial ties, promoting self-sacrifice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 106(6), 912-926. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036089>
- Swann, W. B. Jr., Jetten, J., Gómez, Á., Whitehouse, H. & Bastian, B. (2012). When group membership gets personal: A theory of identity fusion. *Psychological Review*, 119(3), 441-456. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028589>
- Whitehouse, H., Jong, J., Buhrmester, M., Gómez, Á., Bastian, B., Kavanagh, K., Newson, M., Matthews, M., Lanman, J. A., McKay, R. & Gavrillets., S. (2017). The evolution of extreme cooperation via shared dysphoric experiences. *Scientific Reports*, 7, 44292. <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep44292>

**Wednesday 6 December 2023**

(room 5-030 – Pont d'Arve - Geneva)

- From the lab to the field... The advantages of a multi-disciplinary, multi-method, multi-theory approach to social sciences.
- The Prison's Project: What is social psychology useful for?

**References:**

- Gómez, A., Atran, S., Chinchilla, J., Vázquez, A., López-Rodríguez, L., Paredes, B., Martínez, M., Blanco, L., Alba, B., Bautista, H., Fernández, S., Pozuelo-Rubio, F., González-Álvarez, J.L., Chiclana, S., Valladares-Narganes, H., Alonso, M., Ruíz-Alvarado, A., López-Novo, J.L., & Davis, R. (2022). Willingness to sacrifice among convicted Islamist terrorists versus violent gang members and other criminals. *Scientific Reports*, 12(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-06590-0>
- Gómez, A., López-Rodríguez, L., Sheikh, H., Ginges, J., Wilson, L., Waziri, H., Vázquez, A., Davis, R., & Atran, S. (2017). The devoted actor's will to fight and the spiritual dimension of human conflict. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 1, 673-679. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-017-0193-3>

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**Thursday 7 December 2023**

(room A100 – Sciences II 10:15-14:00 – **room 4020 Uni Mail 14:00-16:00** – Geneva )

**Morning :**

**Plenary talk.** Title: *Why is it so difficult to investigate radicalization that leads to violence?*

Why are there people who are willing to die and kill for a group, a value, or a leader? Researchers have attempted to respond to such a question, particularly after the attack on the Twin Towers in New York the 11S. However, few have developed theoretical models, less have applied such models to real empirical context and extremely scarce ones have had the direct fieldwork experience with individuals under risk of radicalization, violent radicals (e.g. terrorists), or former terrorists. This is motivated by a series of theoretical, methodological, and empirical limitations that impede obtaining conclusive findings. The aim of this conference is to offer a sample of the results from a research team that has made the effort to solve these limitations. It will be presented: (1) the nature and development of a theory to predict extreme behavior on behalf of a group, a value, or a leader; (2) the main findings in the laboratory that built the theory; (3) a novel methodology to deep into its underlying mechanism making fieldwork; (4) empirical results obtained with individuals under risk of radicalization, fighters in Syria and Iraq, internally displaced individuals in the war between Syria and ISIS, former members of radicals Islamist groups and Tamil Tigers, terrorists from ISIS and Al Qaeda and street gangs and organized-crime bands in prisons and, finally, (5) it will be introduced a transcultural model including 31 studies and illustrating the pathways for the will evil or good, including more than 12.000 participants from 9 countries, people in longstanding conflicts, refugees, imprisoned jihadists and gangs, US military, studies in Ukraine before and during the war, and rolling studies with a European ally of Ukraine. It will be paid particular attention to the application for Governmental Institutions, as penitentiary Institutions, and in the development of strategies to prevent radicalization leading to violence and to foster disengagement.

**Afternoon :**

- **Workshop.** Discussion with students.