



Department of Psychology
The University of Hong Kong

香港大學心理學系

Departmental Seminar

Crowded Minds: The Psychological Impact of Social Crowding

12:30 p.m. – 13:30p.m. | June 17, 2024 (Monday)

Rm 813, 8/F, The Jockey Club Tower | Centennial Campus | The University of Hong Kong



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Abstract

As industrialization and urbanization process, more and more people are moving to cities and towns which makes it a daily experience to feel crowded. Many problems caused by social crowding may be rooted in the impacts of crowding on basic psychological processes and social interactions. Better knowledge regarding the impact of feeling crowded not only deepens our understanding on mental health and social issues associated with urbanization but also guides future planning for sustained healthy living and fostering of harmonious societies. Through ten studies, we investigated the impact of social crowding. Specifically, in the first six studies (N = 1,041), we investigated the impact of social crowding on individuals' propensity to dehumanize others and its implications for aggression. In Study 1, we form a corpus of more than 80,000 posts (N = 71,093 users) on social media and used natural language processing to test the association between social crowding and mind perception as expressed in a real-world setting. In Study 2, we conducted an experimental study to provide causal evidence for the effect of social crowding on dehumanization. In Studies 3 and 4, we further examined whether social avoidance accounts for the effect of social crowding on dehumanization. Study 5 provided additional causal evidence for a mediation model, revealing that the impact of social crowding on dehumanization is attenuated when individuals' tendencies for social avoidance are suppressed. Finally, in Study 6, we found that social crowding fuels aggression, with dehumanization serving as an explanatory factor. Overall, these results illuminate the impact of social crowding on interpersonal perception and interaction, deepening our understanding of urbanization and guiding future planning for sustained healthy living. In the last four studies (N = 866), we tested whether social crowding would enhance individuals' competitive orientation through sense of lacking control. In Study 7, we found that social crowding manipulation increases competitive orientation by an implicit measure of word stem completion task. In Study 8, we replicated the effect by showing that participants perceived the same conversation as more competitive when they exposed to a crowded background noise. In Study 9, we conducted a correlational research and validated the positive relationship between social crowding and competitive orientation on a trait level; we also found the mediating role of sense of lacking control. In Study 10, we further examined the mediating effect of sense of lacking control through an experimental design. Taken together, these results illuminate the impact of social crowding on interpersonal perception and interaction, deepening our understanding of urbanization and guiding future planning for sustained healthy living.

About the Speaker

Xinyu Pan is a final-year PhD student under the supervision of Prof. Zhansheng Chen at HKU. Her primary research focuses on the intersection of social cognition and social interaction, with a specific emphasis on examining how contextual factors influence social cognition. Xinyu will soon be a post-doctoral researcher, where she will continue her scholarly pursuits.

Zoom Meeting (For participants who couldn't attend the Seminar in person)

<https://hku.zoom.us/j/6985555998?pwd=V05yTGJWNTIzazd2OFZ0Q3FReHVkdz09>

Meeting ID: 698 555 5998 | Password: Psyc

~All are Welcome~

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