

Name of collection

An introduction to the fascinating work and career options open to people with a social psychology qualification

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I first got interested in social psychology when I did my undergraduate degree many years ago now, but I was always really interested in the parts of psychology that were to do with group processes. So when I first started out as an MSC student, I was really interested in detecting deception, and whether or not we're able to tell when someone's lying to us or being truthful to us. And I was really interested in the way that both police suspects and interviewers used story as a way of communicating in police suspect interviews.

My actual area of study was around women in politics. And I was looking at how women become involved in politics, how they're successful in politics, and how they're not successful in politics, and how kind of we decide who belongs, who doesn't belong, who gets included in something, and who gets excluded from something. So that obviously has a lot to do with social psychology and that interface between the person and the world at larger society.

I'm interested in kind of how disabled people reclaim language to bring about ideas and processes that kind of improve inclusion and equality for disabled people.

So I then went to university to study social psychology with social sciences. And that set me on a path of activism that has stayed with me for the rest of my life. So I now do work in and around equalities, specifically gender inequality as a major focus.

Sometimes I work within a university setting. I do research work for universities. And other times I do all kinds of other work that is connected with the project for equality.

Another big project that I've been involved in that has social psychology at its core is the work that I did recently as part of a team at the University of the West of England. We developed an eight-hour training program commissioned by Public Health England to do something to tackle the culture that supports sexual assault, sexual abuse and violence and harassment in a university settings among students and staff.

So I actually train police officers, detectives, how to interview police suspects in serious cases. And that might be serial sexual offenses, murder, or terrorism. And what we're doing there is where training officers how to use quite complicated social, psychological models in practice in an applied setting.

I've applied more learning to more kind of community settings and the environment that's about kind of improving the inclusion and equality of disabled people.

I've worked with different kinds of organizations to help support the work that they're doing. I also, a few years ago, did a project with a police and probation consortium, who asked me and my colleagues if we could help them out, finding out why a program they were running was successful. So they had all this lovely quantitative data telling them that this program they had implemented was reducing recidivism.

As we know, most crime is committed by a small percentage of people. And the idea behind the program was if they could help the small percentage of people, they could reduce an awful lot of crime. What they wanted us is to find out the meaning. What was going on there? Why were they finding this so successful?

So we went in and we use two kinds of methodology that I was using in my research, which is key methodology and also interviews. And we talked to everybody, all of the stakeholders, some prisoners, some offenders, police probation, the heads of the police, managers, nurses, prison officers. And it was really, really interesting to find out the kind of information that people-- the kind of everyday normal things that you can do to make the quality of other people's lives better.

So a lot of my work has been at root to do with addressing the question, what are the best tools that we can use to help people to shift their sometimes very deeply rooted problematic attitudes that they may have been carrying around with them for a lifetime in order to make a change to society and a change to our social norms?

There are lots of things about kind of studying psychology that are really important to lots of aspects of work, particularly within sort of community and organizing and campaigning organizations. Social psychology brings a lot of critical perspectives that is really enabling. And it can help organize in such a way that kind of keeps things fresh and pushes forward sort of ideas that will bring about change.

I think it tells us a lot about how the world works, how we understand each other, how we make sense of each other.

The other thing to mention about social psychology is that it's quite useful just generally in the workplace. It's useful in terms of teamwork, understanding group processes. And so it has lots of applications, even in job settings where you're maybe not directly working with social psychological content.

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