ABSTRACT:
I will present our latest research on countersignaling which is a strategy to challenge or thwart a dominant high status group through symbols which are in stark contrast (e.g., architecture with ornaments and 'dis-functional' elements) to the symbols endorsed by the high status group (e.g., 'form-follows-function'). Our concept of countersignaling is rooted in cultural-evolutionary theories of counter-dominance and provides a psychological mechanism to explain the adoption of symbolic patterns in collective action and social movements. It is furthermore argued that these symbolic patterns are manifested in fashion and art-styles which hence provide a window into the underlying dynamics of social organization (e.g. an elite’s social influence is represented in the number of people who adopt the elite’s stylistic elements). We tested this mechanism in a series of experimental studies and also applied it to a large dataset of musical genres and styles. Our results provide an answer to an almost hundred year old debate between seemingly conflicting theories to explain the dynamics of fashion cycles.

Contacts
Staff di Dipartimento - Psicologia e Scienze Cognitive
tel. 0464 808608 – 8610 - DipartimentoPSC@unitn.it