

# PhD Theses defended in 2003

## January

On January 8, 2003 **Marlene Roefs** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Public participation and perceived (in)justice in South Africa, 1995-2000" at VU University Amsterdam.

### **Promotor**

Prof.dr. P.G. Klandermans

### **Co-promotor**

Dr. J.L. Olivier

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## Summary

This is a thesis about black and white South Africans – in Dalton’s (1988) words, as citizens, voters, protesters, unionists, party members, community activists, and political spectators who are the driving force of the precious democracy in their country. Irrespective of whether participation takes the form of conventional politics, contentious politics or involvement in civil society, public participation is crucial for consolidating the young democracy. Citizen participation bears a complex relation with (in)justice. In this thesis Roefs has tried to describe and disentangle some dynamics that are commonly associated with political and civil participation by focusing on black and white South Africans during the first years of inclusive democracy in their Republic. Some promising developments were observed in this relatively short time. In particular, the tendency to move away from racial self-descriptions and racial comparisons to more personal and optimistic characterizations alludes to a collective change of mind. Secondly, people are generally not unwilling to participate and regard both conventional and moderately contentious ways of participation as viable means to engage in politics. Voting intentions were high and involvement in CSOs has only slightly declined. The 1999 elections were preceded with increased hope and satisfaction with living conditions. It remains to be seen, however, whether this optimism was a short-lived state associated with elections and new political leadership. Overall, citizen participation is not only an expression of discontent and concern, but also expresses a belief in betterment and optimism.

Despite these positive observations, it is noticeable that dissatisfaction seems to increasingly affect perceptions of the government. Racial disparities are vast and remain important in explaining variation in participation and feelings of injustice, while class differences are gaining relevance in self-perceptions and social comparison processes. Given the growing divide between the poor and the rich, the promise of “a better life for all” and “batho pele” principles in governance become more difficult to hang on to. At the same time, this divide is not different from many other countries in the world, whether established or emerging democracies. What might be unique to contemporary South Africa, however, is that, as the findings suggest, the majority of the people trust the political leaders, national identity is growing and that participation in radical protest has not become much of an option – so far.

# March

On March 11, 2003 **Rick van Baaren** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Mimicry: A Social Perspective" at University of Nijmegen.

**Promotor**

Prof.dr. A.F.M. van Knippenberg

**Co-promotor**

Dr. K. Kawakami

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## Summary

The experiments conducted in this dissertation shed new light on mimicry. Mimicry turns out to be a non-specific, non-strategic phenomenon, which is moderated by closeness to others and cognitive style. In addition, the consequences of mimicry are general and broad. Not only the mimicker, but also other people profit from the beneficial consequences of mimicry. This suggests that mimicry does not just create "something special" between two people, but mimicry changes the way one perceives and behaves toward the environment. Objects are integrated in their contexts and other people are treated more pro-socially. Then, the fact that, in most cases, the mimicker is the one who benefits has a logistic cause rather than an emotional one. This dissertation adds to the existing knowledge on mimicry and introduces new theoretical insights. Now even more, mimicry has been shown to be a potent mechanism that causes people to help each other, which is of fundamental importance for the social animals that we are.

On March 27, 2003 **Femke Bennenbroek** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Social comparison and coping with radiation therapy: The significance of different

dimensions of comparison" at University of Groningen.

### **Promotors**

Prof.dr. A.P. Buunk

Prof.dr. R. Sanderman

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### **Summary**

This thesis focuses on how social comparison information (i.e., information about how fellow patients are doing, feeling and coping) can be used by cancer patients to adapt to and cope with cancer and the treatment with radiation therapy.

Which alternative is best when providing social comparison information to cancer patients? It seems to be very beneficial to include procedural information in patient education materials. Procedural information increases subjective understanding of the treatment, as well as feelings of self-efficacy. Patients know better what to expect and can better prepare for the impending treatments. Procedural information as provided on the procedural tape not always demonstrated the most beneficial effects, but it never demonstrated adverse effects either. Nonetheless, it seems that providing patients information about fellow patients who are coping well is the most beneficial.

**May**

On May 20, 2003 **Rob Holland** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "On the structure and consequences of attitude strength" at University of Nijmegen.

### **Promotors**

Prof.dr. A.F.M. van Knippenberg

Prof.dr. B. Verplanken

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### **Summary**

Probably the most important question in attitude research concerns the relationship between attitudes and behavior. Spurred by the often disappointingly weak impact of attitudes on behavior, researchers began to focus on attitude strength. Attitude strength is defined in terms of attitudinal consequences. Strong attitudes are stable over time and have a great impact on behavior, while weak attitudes are less enduring and have no or only minor causal influence on behavior. However, classifying attitudes as 'strong' or 'weak' on the basis of their consequences (e.g. behavioral outcomes) does not make clear why one attitude is more consequential than another. The present research program aimed to clarify the nature of attitude strength by examining the structural attitudinal features, mental processes, psychological experiences and the consequences associated with two important dimensions of attitude strength. First, centrality, i.e. the strength of the link between an attitude and core values and the self-concept (importance, centrality). Second, commitment, i.e. the degree in which a person is able to retrieve a clear and decided evaluation (certainty, accessibility). In several experiments, the structural attitudinal features related to centrality and commitment were investigated. First, it was found that central attitudes became more accessible after (subliminally) priming the self-concept, while peripheral attitudes were unaffected by self-priming. Secondly, commitment was found to be increased after participants had repeatedly expressed their global evaluation, suggesting that enhanced attitude accessibility signals the confidence with which we hold our attitudes. Thirdly, the two dimensions of attitude strength were linked to behavioral outcomes. In line with the prediction it was found that centrality, and not commitment, predicted the occurrence of value- or self-expressive behaviors (donating money to charity). Also, and further corroborating the relation between attitude centrality and the self-concept, it was found that implicit self-esteem was enhanced after successfully expressing a central attitude through behavior. Finally, other experiments showed that commitment was associated with the moderation of strength on self-perception effects. Participants were less likely to infer their attitudes from behavior, when they could easily retrieve an attitude, suggesting that commitment is a pivotal moderating variable with regard to contextual influences on attitudes. To sum up, the research in this dissertation suggests that the two most important dimensions of attitude strength, commitment and centrality, are related to different structural features and mental processes, have unique consequences, and may reflect distinct attitude functions.

On May 27, 2003 **Dianne van Hemert** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Patterns of cross-cultural differences in psychology: A meta-analytic approach" at Tilburg University.

**Promotors**

Prof.dr. Y.H. Poortinga

Prof.dr. A.J.R. van de Vijver

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**Summary**

This thesis makes attempts at integrating findings from fifty years of culture-comparative studies in order to lay a foundation for a more comprehensive understanding of the patterning of cross-cultural similarities and differences. This is pursued through meta-analyses of single and multiple instruments. Explanations of reported cross-cultural differences in terms of statistical, methodological (bias) and substantive factors on sample, study, and country levels were examined.

On May 27, 2003 **Michaéla Schippers** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Reflexivity in teams" at VU University Amsterdam.

## **Promotors**

Prof.dr. P.L. Koopman

Prof.dr. D.N. den Hartog

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## **Summary**

This dissertation deals with the little examined, yet important issue of reflexivity in teams. Reflexivity was defined as the extent to which group members overtly reflect upon, and communicate about the group's objectives, strategies and processes, and adapt them to current or anticipated circumstances. Since reflexivity is a "young" concept, an important aim of this dissertation was to position the concept within the existing literature. Another aim of this dissertation was to develop a questionnaire on reflexivity and to explore the relationship between reflexivity and related variables such as leadership, shared vision, trust, error management, and feedback-seeking behavior, and to assess the mediating effect of reflexivity as a process variable. The development of this questionnaire is described in two studies, namely, a sample of sixty teams from a variety of organizations and a sample of school management teams. In both samples, we focused on the reflection component. Two factors of reflection were found. These were named evaluation/learning and discussing processes. In the sample of school management teams, we examined the extent to which team composition with respect to need for cognition and group attachment, affected team process (trust and reflexivity) and in turn team outcomes (team performance and student performance). Finally, in both samples, we examined the extent to which team composition affected team process (reflexivity) and in turn team outcomes (satisfaction, commitment, and performance). Overall, we found evaluation/learning to mediate the relationship between inspirational leadership and diversity on the one hand, and team performance on the other hand. The results of an intervention study with the concept of reflexivity is also described. The results of this study suggest that reflexivity can be enhanced by means of a relatively modest intervention. Practitioners might consider such an intervention when working with teams in organizations. The results suggest that especially evaluation/learning might be important in enhancing team effectiveness.

**June**

On June 5, 2003 **Heleen van Mierlo** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Self-managing teamwork and psychological well-being" at Eindhoven University of Technology.

**Promotors**

Prof.dr. C.G. Rutte

Prof.dr. M.A.J. Kompier

Prof.dr. J.A.C.M. Doorewaard

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## Summary

In this thesis, we present a model of the relationship between task design in self-managing teams and the psychological well-being of team members. Our model maintains the task characteristics approach that is so typical for studies about self-managing teamwork and well-being. However, it challenges earlier work in this research field by stating that the design of team tasks will not directly affect the individual psychological well-being of team members. In our opinion, self-managing teamwork will affect individual well-being indirectly through an effect on the individual tasks of team members. Moreover, the extent to which self-managing teamwork affects the individual tasks may vary between different team members, depending on specific features of the individuals and their environment. Together, these two propositions constitute the core of this thesis and will be the common thread through all subsequent chapters.

Results confirm the two central hypothesis of this dissertation study: Team task design relates to psychological well-being indirectly through the individual tasks of team members, and team task design does not affect the individual tasks of all team members to the same extent. These results provide a reassurance for the proponents of self-managing teamwork. A High level of team autonomy indeed seems to have a positive impact on individual task design and thereby on individual psychological well-being. Our results also suggest that if one is interested in the psychological well-being of employees, in addition to increasing team-level autonomy – for example by implementing self-managing teams – one may want to promote team member perceptions of self-efficacy, provide a supportive direct work environment, and make special effort to avoid the combination of low autonomy and low social support.

On June 6, 2003 **Judit Arends-Tóth** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Psychological Acculturation of Turkish Migrants in the Netherlands: Issues in Theory and Assessment" at Tilburg University.

**Promotor**

Prof.dr. A.J.R. van de Vijver

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**Summary**

The current thesis explores theoretical and methodological issues in the study of acculturation, a generic name for changes in cultural orientation. The central topic of this project, the psychological acculturation of Turkish-Dutch in the Netherlands, was investigated in a series of studies carried out among first- and second-generation Turkish-Dutch adults and youngsters. This group was chosen because it forms one of the largest migrant groups in the Netherlands and because Turkish-Dutch are often seen by native Dutch as the prototypical migrant group.

The four studies clearly show that acculturation involves complex processes and numerous factors. No single measure of method can reveal the complexity of acculturation in a comprehensive manner. The findings from these studies raise a number of questions regarding the conceptualization and assessment of acculturation.

Although the nature of this thesis has been mostly theoretical and methodological, some practical issues can be addressed. Multiculturalism, in which cultural groups value and actively support the coexistence of mutual cultural differences, is not (yet) a reality in the Netherlands.

The need for culturally appropriate assessment and interventions is increasingly apparent as societies become more culturally diverse.

The four studies in this thesis have answered some questions and raised others, and it is clear that there are many unresolved issues still to be tackled. The construct of acculturation should gain prominence in multicultural societies as it focuses on cultural variability within societies. Research aimed at increasing conceptual clarity and providing methodological improvements should continue. Future research should focus on the question of how we can account for acculturation in assessment. In addition, more research is needed on the qualitative changes in acculturation over generations and on the characteristics of environmental demands on the acculturation process.

**September**



On September 16, 2003 **Ruben Taris** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Person-Environment fit. A longitudinal study of the interaction between employee characteristics and work environmental characteristics" at VU University Amsterdam.

**Promotor**

Prof.dr. P.J.D. Drenth

**Co-promotor**

Dr J.A. Feij

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**Summary**

A fast growing number of studies have demonstrated that affective work outcomes, such as job satisfaction and commitment to the organization are determined to a certain extent by the interaction or fit between an employee's personal characteristics and features of his or her job, work team or the organization as a whole (i.e., P-E Fit; Kristof, 1996). In the studies presented in this thesis, the effects of various types of P-E fit on work outcomes such as job satisfaction, intention to leave and general health are investigated. Results showed that (a) the type of P-E fit together with (b) the domain under investigation (e.g., social work relations) in relation to (c) the type of work outcome (e.g., turnover intentions) are important aspects to consider when performing P-E fit research. It was demonstrated that each of these aspects (a, b and c) affects the shape and the magnitude of the relationship between P-E fit and work outcome. Results showed that with regard to some work aspects not only a good or optimal fit leads to positive work outcomes, but also a surplus of these work supplies. For example, employees became even more satisfied with their jobs when the amount of intrinsic work supplies, such as job variety and autonomy, increased beyond the point of a perfect P-E fit. With respect to extrinsic work aspects, results showed that offering too much (i.e., beyond the point of an optimal fit) of these extrinsic work aspects (salary or promotion opportunities), has a negative impact on employees.

Overall, it can be concluded that P-E fit measures presented in this thesis turned out to be relevant indices to depict the process of work socialization (i.e., the process in which young people are transformed into capable participants in the work process; Feij, 1998). Theoretical and practical implications of the results of the studies presented in this thesis and directions for future research are discussed.

**October**

On October 14, 2003 **Camiel Beukeboom** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "How mood turns on language" at VU University Amsterdam.

**Promotor**

Prof.dr. G.R. Semin

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**Summary**

Does a person's mood influence the type of words he chooses to communicate something? Several lines of research have shown that positive and negative mood states are associated with different styles of cognitive processing. Processing in a positive mood seems to be influenced by abstract, general knowledge like stereotypes, heuristics and scripts, whereas negative mood states seem to be connected with more analytic processing, and a more specific cognitive focus.

In a number of experiments, employing different methods, it was investigated whether the presumed differences in cognitive processing between people in positive and negative moods exert an influence on language use. In one study participants re-described a number of behavior-descriptions in their own words following a mood induction. In other studies participants freely described an autobiographical event after a mood induction. The results of these studies demonstrate that people in a positive mood are more likely to use abstract language, thereby interpreting and generalizing the communicated information. By contrast, people in a negative mood are more likely to use concrete language, thereby sticking to the specific facts. Moreover, it was demonstrated that the mood-induced differences in linguistic abstraction exert an influence on the inferences that recipients draw. The findings are important because they demonstrate how intra-personal cognitive processes can become reflected in language use. In this way mood can exert an influence in interpersonal interactions. Mood may be a factor that subtly influences the development of interpersonal conversations.

**November**

On November 17, 2003 **Joost Miedema** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Fairness and the Self" at Leiden University.

**Promotors**

prof.dr. K. van den Bos  
prof.dr. P.A.M. van Lange

**Co-promotor**

dr. R. Vermunt

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**Summary**

As fairness and justice are among the most important cultural norms and values, several scientific fields have paid attention to this topic. The current thesis takes a social psychological perspective, and aims to provide an answer to the question why fairness is so important to people. (cf. Tyler, 1990, 1997). The central idea behind the work is that fairness is so important, because it provides a means to protect, enhance, or maintain the self. Results from a series of nine experiments show that people react more strongly toward a fair or unfair event (such as receiving, or not receiving, an opportunity to voice one's opinion, or receiving the same pay for the same work or not) when they feel threatened (e.g., by briefly considering negative self-related thoughts) as well as when they feel affirmed (by, for instance, briefly considering positive self-related thoughts). Even when the self has been activated outside of the participants' awareness (by means of subliminal primes), people show stronger reactions toward an unfair or fair event. These results indicate that a response toward a perceived level of fairness, depends on the level of self-involvement in the situation. The centrality of fairness to the self has been subject of speculation (see, e.g., Cropanzano & Ambrose, 2001; Skitka, 2003; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler & Lind, 1992), but empirical data were provided for the first time in this thesis.