PhD Theses defended in 2009

January

On January 20, 2009 **Krispijn Faddegon** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Regulatory Focus in Group Contexts" at Leiden University.

Promotor
Prof.dr. N. Ellemers, UL

Co-promotor
Dr. D.T. Scheepers, UL

Summary

This thesis examines the influence of different group situations on the regulatory focus of the individual group members and the impact of the regulatory focus of individual group members on the performance of the team. It was demonstrated that promotion and prevention strategies can "top-down" be adopted by group members via the identity of the group that models group members' behavior towards promotion or prevention consistent responses (Chapter 2). It was shown in chapter 3 that the regulatory focus strategies of the group members can also arise "bottom-up" from the interdependency structure of the group task. Disjunctive group tasks (team performance equals performance best group member) induced promotion focus consistent responses whereas conjunctive group tasks resulted in prevention consistent responses among group members. Finally, Chapter 3 demonstrated that the regulatory focus strategies of group members affects the performance of team (Chapter 4). The current thesis underlines the importance of taking the social context into account when examining individuals' regulatory focus. It also adds to the literature on group processes by showing that group situations can not only affect the amount of motivation of group members but also the direction of that motivation (promotion vs. prevention). Finally the thesis has many practical implications for teams or team managers that are interested in optimizing team performance.

On January 29, 2009 **Marijke Leliveld** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Ethics in Economic Decision-Making" at Leiden University.

Promotor
Prof. dr. E. van Dijk, UL

Co-promotor
Dr. I. van Beest, UL

Summary

This dissertation sheds more light on ethics in economic decision-making. Over the course of nine experiments, I studied (a) when people adhere to ethical standards like the do-no-harm principle or equal divison rule, and (b) how people respond to situations in which ethical standards are violated. I show that when people know that by furthering their self-interest they harm another person (either by taking from or by allocating a loss to the other person), people become reluctant to benefit themselves. This reluctancy is a genuine concern for fairness instead of a strategic concern. In addition, I show that when people observe a situation of distributive injustice, they are not only willing to give up money to punish persons causing this injustice but also to compensate persons suffering injustice. Empathic concern moderates the preference for punishment and compensation: low empathc people prefer punishment whereas high empathic people prefer compensation. Theoretical implications of these results are discussed in terms of altruism, empathy, and motives of self-interest and fairness.

On January 30, 2009 **Monique Pollmann** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Accuracy and Bias in Person Perception" at VU University Amsterdam.

Promotors
Prof.dr. G.R. Semin, UU

Co-promotor
Dr. C. Finkenauer, VU

Summary

The present dissertation investigates how people make predictions about other people's traits and feelings. In six experimental studies and one longitudinal study we investigate which strategies people use to predict others and whether the use of these strategies leads to biased and/or accurate predictions. We argue that bias and accuracy are two conceptually different constructs that both give valuable insights into the processes that guide person perception.

In the first series of studies we show that people's predictions about others are based on different strategies for different targets. People rely on projection when predicting similar others and rely on stereotype information when predicting dissimilar others. Furthermore, the extent to which people rely on projection to predict similar others depends on the order in which predictions are made, with self-other predictions leading to less projection than other-self predictions. These findings give valuable insights into the processes that underlie person perception.

In the second series of studies we show that people use the same strategy to predict others' emotional experiences that they use to predict their own emotional experiences. People tend to make biased predictions about their own future emotional experiences, and we show that people's predictions about others' future emotional experiences are similarly biased. People's predictions are nevertheless somewhat accurate because people are able to predict which emotions they will experience to what extent. Furthermore, we show that the predictions of two people predicting the same person correspond to each other. This interpersonal accuracy can be very functional because it promotes understanding between people.

In the third empirical chapter we investigate the consequences of accurate person perception at the interpersonal level. We show that people have fairly accurate knowledge about their partner's traits, preferences, and behaviors. Nevertheless, accurately knowing one's partner is not related to relationship well-being; those who have very accurate partner knowledge are not more satisfied than those who have less accurate partner knowledge. However, we found that the feeling of understanding one's partner and being understood by one's partner – independent of actual understanding – is related to relationship satisfaction. Together the seven studies presented in this dissertation show that people's perceptions of others are both biased and accurate. People often base their predictions about others on heuristics, which leads to biased perceptions. Because we all use the same heuristics, however, chances are high that we nevertheless understand each other.

February

On February 19, 2009 **Edwin Boezeman** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Managing the volunteer organization: Strategies to recruit, content, and retain volunteers" at Leiden University.

Promotor
Prof.dr. N. Ellemers, UL

Summary

Werkzaamheden van vrijwilligers zijn onmisbaar voor tal van organisaties. Toch is er weinig bekend over werving en motivatie van vrijwilligers. Inzichten die werkmotivatie verklaren uit instrumentele overwegingen (bv., salaris, carrièreperspectief) zijn niet van toepassing op vrijwilligers. Dit proefschrift (promotor: Professor doctor Naomi Ellemers) geschreven aan de afdeling Sociale en Organisatiepsychologie van de Universiteit Leiden door promovendus Edwin Boezeman laat zien dat trots en respect een belangrijke rol spelen in de motivatie van mensen om vrijwilligerswerk te gaan en blijven doen. Vrijwilligers die trots zijn op hun vrijwilligersorganisatie en die zich gewaardeerd voelen zijn meer betrokken bij hun vrijwilligerorganisatie. Zij zijn ook vaker van plan om als vrijwilliger te blijven werken. Niet-vrijwilligers zijn meer bereid zich in te zetten voor een vrijwilligersorganisatie wanneer zij trots en waardering verwachten te ervaren als vrijwilliger. Om vrijwilligers te werven en te behouden is het als vrijwilligersorganisatie daarom belangrijk te communiceren over het nut van het vrijwilligerswerk en de ondersteuning die men als vrijwilliger in het vrijwilligerswerk kan verwachten. Benadrukking van het succes van de vrijwilligersorganisatie kan averechts werken inzake vrijwilligerswerving, omdat dit de indruk wekt da

On February 27, 2009 **Lieven Brebels** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Mirror, mirror on the wall... Procedural fairness as an evaluative and regulatory looking-glass self" at Tilburg University.

Promotors
Prof.dr. D. de Cremer, EUR
Prof.dr. C. Sedikides, Southhampton

March

On March 10, 2009 **Michael Vliek** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Group-based social comparison processes: An intragroup level of analysis " at University of Amsterdam.

Promotor
Prof.dr. J. van der Pligt, UvA

Summary

It is proposed that although inter-personal comparison operates at the most micro level and inter-group comparison may operate at the most macro level, they both seem to neglect comparison at the intermediate level of analysis captured by intra-group comparison. The aim of the research reported in the dissertation was to give evidence of the importance of an intra-group level of analysis for the further understanding of social comparison processes. Chapter 1 introduces a theoretical approach through which interpersonal and intergroup comparison processes can be integrated using an intra-group level of analysis. Chapters 2-4 show how interpersonal comparisons are bounded by shared group membership. Chapter 2 develops the main paradigm used in chapter 3 and 4. This chapter provides evidence that highly distinct groups function as an explicit frame of reference against which interpersonal comparison within such groups acquire meaning. Chapter three uses this paradigm, and shows how individuals higher in self-esteem appear to create a consensus of poor performance in their highly distinctive in-group to protect themselves against the negative implications of an unflattering upward comparison with a relevant referent. Chapter 4 uses a similar paradigm in order to unravel the process thought to underlie individual's tendency to 'bask in the reflected glory' of a better performing referent. Here it is shown that basking occurs through a process by which individuals denote themselves as sharing the same group membership. This enabled individuals to bask in the reflected glory the referent brings to the group as a whole, for the purpose of deflecting the negative consequences of exposure to a better performing referent. Mediation analysis supported this by showing that this group level basking predicted more positive affect and higher self-esteem after exposure to the better performance of a fellow in-group member. Finally, chapter 5 shows that lower status group members use their shared group membership in a way that benefits their personal self-esteem by basking in reflected glory. High status group members however are not able to use this strategy to deflect the threat of an upward comparison. These results suggest that the characteristics of the shared group membership have important implications for the processes and outcomes of seemingly interpersonal comparisons. All chapters then, give evidence for the importance of shared group membership for understanding how individuals react to and interpret seemingly interpersonal comparisons within such contexts. Chapter 6 summarizes the main findings and develops some avenues for future research.

On March 19, 2009 **Judith Grob** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Dial E for Emotion: Context and Consequences of Emotion Regulation" at University of Groningen.

Promotors
Prof.dr. D.A. Stapel, UvT
Prof.dr. E.H. Gordijn, RuG
Prof.dr. S. Otten, RuG

Summary

Whistling loudly while walking through a dark alley or smiling politely when being given an awful gift: We all regulate our emotions. In this dissertation I investigate the context in which emotions are regulated and the consequences of different emotion regulation strategies.

First of all, my survey studies show that people consider it good to express one's emotions, with a preference for the expression of happiness and sadness over the expression of disgust. People mainly express their emotions when with people they feel close to and on whom they depend. They are more likely to show positive than negative emotions and the target of the emotion is important as well. Concerning emotion regulation strategies, behavioural strategies are preferred over cognitive strategies. Hiding an emotion is positively correlated with behavioural withdrawal; whereas losing an emotion is positively correlated with doing something of the opposite valence.

Secondly, my experimental work shows that different emotion regulation strategies have different effects. To investigate these effects, participants were shown disgust evoking material, after having been instructed to express, suppress or reappraise their emotions. After emotion expression, participants showed more subjective feelings of disgust, as well as a higher cognitive activation of disgust-related concepts. They did not show more disgust-related action tendencies though. After reappraisal the emotion lost intensity on all measured emotion components. Whereas after facial suppression of disgust, the participants did feel less subjective disgust, but the emotion simply showed itself via other emotion channels.

Finally, I further investigated the effects of the suppression of disgust. When facially suppressing disgust a rebound effect occurs, in that participants show more cognitive activation of disgust-related concepts (i.e. 'gross', 'dirty'). They also show more cognitive activation of negative disgust-unrelated concepts (i.e. 'hate', 'bad'). So even though the emotion is gone from the face, it is not truly gone. These rebound and leakage effects after emotion suppression can neither be accounted for by suppression in general, nor by emotional thought suppression. When the facial muscles responsible for the expression of disgust were blocked by having participants hold a pen between teeth and lips while watching the disgust-evoking material, the same pattern of results was shown as found in the case of the facial suppression of disgust.

In the remainder of the dissertation, the important role of the face in the expression of emotion, and further implications of my research are being discussed.

On March 26, 2009 **Katherine Stroebe** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Is this about me? Responding to subtle discrimination - beyond an individual versus group perspective" at Leiden University.

Promotor
Prof.dr. N. Ellemers, UL

Co-promotor
Dr. M. Barreto, UL

Summary

My dissertation focused on the processes underlying targets' responses to 'subtle' forms of discrimination. Whereas in the past the blatant expression of prejudice was not only common but also accepted within society, past decades have seen the social and legal sanctioning of these more overt forms of prejudice. In consequence discriminatory behavior has taken on more subtle forms that are less easily detected by targets of discrimination and can create considerable ambiguity concerning whether the (negative) personal treatment received is due to factors at an individual level, such as one's personal deservingness (i.e., lack of ability/interpersonal skills) or due to factors at the group level, such as one's membership of a devalued group and the prejudice of another.

It is this ambiguity concerning whether treatment is individually (i.e. personal ability) or group based (i.e. one's group membership such as being an ethnic minority, female) that has been the focus of my dissertation.

I studied two main questions: Firstly, to what extent are individuals who are focused on individual level aspects of a situation (i.e., lack of personal ability as a reason for personal failure) able to process information that provides evidence that personal treatment is due to their group membership (i.e., prejudice of another) rather than personal characteristics?

Secondly, what are the processes underlying targets' responses to discrimination? Attributing a situation to discrimination may have negative consequences for targets' psychological well-being as it means that part of the self (the group self) is devalued, as well as increasing the realization of the negative future implications of one's devalued group membership (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). It can also buffer the self from personal failure and be self-protective as it allows targets to attribute their personal outcomes to (the prejudice of) another, rather than blaming the self (Crocker & Major, 1989).

The present dissertation focused on the processes underlying and determining these differential responses. My research reveals that the extent to which targets experience discrimination to be pervasive (i.e., prejudice as widespread and likely to occur in the future) can explain when attributions to discrimination are self-protective versus harmful.

Discrimination that is experienced as rare can help buffer targets from personal failure (by offering a more external attribution for failure) without having very negative implications for the future whereas discrimination that is perceived as pervasive and recurrent is harmful for well-being.

Importantly, we also studied possible reasons why pervasive discrimination should be so harmful for well-being. Our research revealed that making attributions to discrimination is not only harmful because it has direct negative consequences for the self (i.e., limited access to important resources) but also because it threatens people's basic worldviews, in other words their view of the world as a fair and just place in which people get what they deserve.

Therefore our research stresses that in considering responses to discrimination it is important to focus on these responses not only as being motivated by a need to protect the self from failure or discrimination (i.e., ego-motivated) but also by the need to protect one's worldviews and see the world as just (i.e., system-motivated).

April

On April 12, 2009 **Daphne Wiersema** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Taking it personally: Self-esteem and the protection of self-related attitudes" at University of Amsterdam.

Promotor
Prof.dr. J. van der Pligt, UvA

Co-promotors
Dr. F. van Harreveld, UvA
Dr. M. Rotteveel, UvA

Summary

The research presented in this dissertation explores the ways in which individuals protect attitudes that are linked to the self-concept. These so–called value-expressive attitudes have been proven difficult to change, but not much is known about the strategies individuals employ to accomplish this. In this dissertation two global strategies of attitude-protection are being discerned. The aim of the passive-defensive strategy is to resist persuasion by avoiding confrontation with counter-attitudinal content, for instance by selective exposure or the use of distraction. The aim of the active-defensive strategy is to resist persuasion by refuting counter-attitudinal information. Furthermore, it is expected that low self-esteem individuals will adopt a passive-defensive strategy and those high in self-esteem an active-defensive strategy.
In the first empirical chapter the relationship between self-esteem and memory for attitude-relevant information is investigated. Three studies showed that low self-esteem individuals demonstrated relatively better memory for pro-attitudinal information as opposed to counter-attitudinal information while high self-esteem individuals demonstrated the opposite pattern. We hypothesize that these differences are the result of the different strategies of attitude-protection. In the second empirical chapter the use of distraction by low self-esteem individuals as a strategy to avoid dealing with counter-attitudinal information was explored. It was found for instance that low self-esteem individuals postponed reading a counter-attitudinal message and had better memory for distracting information that was presented simultaneously with counter-attitudinal information relative to high self-esteem individuals. In the last empirical chapter the two strategies of attitude-protection were related to attitude change. It was found that the assumed active-defensive strategy of high self-esteem individuals rendered their attitudes more resistant to persuasion relative to those of low self-esteem individuals. However, when the capacity to refute counter-attitudinal content was constrained, the attitudes of high self-esteem individuals changed more while those of low self-esteem individuals became more resistant to persuasion.
The results presented in this dissertation suggest that there are different ways to protect an attitude. By linking two global strategies of attitude-protection to self-esteem, new light could be shed on the mixed findings obtained in prior research on memory for attitude-relevant information and attitude change.

On April 16, 2009 **Menno Vos** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Identity patterns in diverse work groups: Improving social integration outcomes through relational identities" at University of Groningen.

Promotor
Prof.dr. K.I. van Oudenhoven-van der Zee, RuG

May

On May 14, 2009 **Karlijn Massar** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Unconscious rivals: The automatic evaluation of rivals in jealousy-evoking situations" at University of Groningen.

Promotor
Prof.dr. A.P. Buunk, RuG

Summary

Emotional states act as signals that specific kinds of agonistic or avoidant behaviors would be functional in the current situation. This is true for so-called 'basic' emotions like fear – causing the individual to flee – or anger – causing the individual to fight – but certainly for jealousy as well. In general, jealousy can be conceptualized as one part of a coordinated system of cognitive, affective, physiological and behavioral responses aimed at guarding one's mate from potential intrasexual competitors which, ultimately, is of importance to reproductive success (Maner & Shackelford, 2007; Buunk, Massar & Dijkstra, 2007; Buss, 1994; Daly, Wilson, & Weghorst, 1982). Throughout my thesis I have argued that the adaptive function of jealousy is the maintenance of the pair bond, since this not only increases the survival chances of individuals, but also of their offspring. Protecting your mate from interlopers is therefore crucial, and those individuals who were the most sensitive to threats to their relationship would have been reproductively more successful. Given this, in this dissertation I have detailed how in women, attractive rivals evoke more jealousy than unattractive rivals, and also more jealousy than socially dominant rivals. In men, the rival's social and physical dominance is crucial to evoke jealousy. Moreover, using several subliminal priming techniques, I have shown that rivals need not be evaluated consciously for jealousy and a number of other negative emotions to arise: their threat to one's relationship can be assessed literally in the blink of an eye. The present research adds to the literature on sex-specific evaluations of rivals by showing that jealousy is evoked not only through unconscious exposure to words (Massar, Buunk & Dechesne, 2008) or line drawings of body shapes (Massar & Buunk, 2008), but also by exposure to photographs of faces or photographs of models wearing costumes varying in status. Moreover, my findings not only showed that jealousy may be affected by subliminally induced characteristics that were projected on the rival, but also that individual differences affected the attention paid to these characteristics. The findings from this thesis show the flexibility of human behavior and the ability to respond adaptively to specific circumstances. Moreover, I conclude that jealousy is not the negative emotion it is often made out to be – some degree of jealousy might actually be very healthy (and adaptive) indeed.

On May 19, 2009 **Bart Terwel** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Origins and consequences of public trust: Towards an understanding of public acceptance of carbon dioxide capture and storage " at Leiden University.

Promotor
Prof.dr. N. Ellemers, UL

Co-promotors
Dr. F. Harinck, UL
Dr. D. Daamen, UL

Summary

Climate change is among the most important issues on the current political and scientific agenda. Implementation of recently developed carbon dioxide capture and storage (CCS) technology is currently considered as a relevant climate change mitigation strategy. This technology involves the capture of carbon dioxide in power plants or other major industrial organizations, the transport of the carbon dioxide to underground sites (e.g., depleted gas fields), and the subsequent injection and storage of the carbon dioxide in these sites. Public acceptance of CCS will be crucial for the realization of this technology as a strategy to mitigate climate change.

The central proposition in my thesis is that public acceptance of CCS will depend on people's trust in CCS stakeholders (environmental non-governmental organizations such as WWF, industrial organizations such as Shell, and government bodies) rather than on specific qualities of the technology. I show that trust can be based on indicators of organizational competence (i.e., expertise, experience), which I refer to as competence-based trust, and indicators of organizational integrity (i.e., honesty, openness, concern for public interests), which I refer to as integrity-based trust. Both these types of trust influence public acceptance, although it seems through a somewhat different route. I further show that people put more trust in environmental NGOs than in industrial organizations, and that these organizations instigate more trust by providing arguments that are congruent rather than incongruent with their perceived 'true' motives (e.g., an industrial organization is trusted more when it communicates an economic argument compared to when it communicates an environmental argument to support its position). Furthermore, I show that political decision makers instigate trust and receive support for decisions made by using fair procedures to arrive at their decisions (i.e., decision-making procedures that provide different interest groups with an opportunity to voice their opinions in the decision-making process, which I refer to as 'group voice'). People's knowledge level about the issue at hand moderates these voice effects in that people with a reasonable level of knowledge care more about public voice than people with little knowledge.

June

On June 10, 2009 **Emma ter Mors** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Dealing with information about complex issues: The role of source perceptions" at Leiden University.

Promotor
Prof.dr. N. Ellemers, UL

Co-promotors
Dr. W.H. Weenig, UL
Dr. D. Daamen, UL

Summary

This thesis focuses on how the way people deal with information about complex issues depends on their perceptions of sources that provide the relevant information. The complex issue under consideration throughout this thesis is that of carbon dioxide capture and storage (CCS). In short, CCS involves the capture of carbon dioxide in power plants, the transportation of the carbon dioxide to underground storage sites (e.g., depleted gas fields), and its subsequent storage in these sites.

Overall, the current thesis shows that in order for communication about complex issues to be effective, relevant information sources need to be trusted. When trust in information sources is lacking, people's information selection and their information evaluations are affected in a negative way, with detrimental consequences for the impressions of the issue people form. Additionally, the present work demonstrates the surplus value of having divergent sources provide information in collaboration, instead of separately.

The contribution of the present findings to the field of communication is threefold. First, this thesis complements and extends current findings in the literature as it focuses on informative communication, while previous work has mainly addressed persuasive communication. The second way in which the present research advances the existing literature is by its focus on information-related outcome variables such as perceived information quality and information selection, instead of persuasion-related variables. Third, the present findings add to the existing literature by comparing the effectiveness of individual sources with that of collaborating sources.

The present findings also contribute to research in the area of selective exposure. First, the present thesis sheds light on the relation between the information people select, their subsequent thoughts and the attitudes they form. Second, the studies in this thesis are the first to show that people's information selection can be source-guided, that is, guided by expectations about the source's viewpoint about the issue under consideration.

Finally, the present findings have important practical implications for designers of information campaigns about CCS. According to the present thesis the most promising communication strategy in the context of CCS would be to have different stakeholders (e.g., an oil company and an environmental nongovernmental organization) provide information about the technology in collaboration.

On June 17, 2009 **Marret Noordewier** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Consistency and the Unexpected" at University of Groningen.

Promotors
Prof.dr. D.A. Stapel, UvT
Prof.dr. M. Zeelenberg, UvT

Summary

A kind person, a smiling face, sunny weather, being successful: These are all positive events and most people feel good when they encounter them. The question in the present dissertation is, however, whether this is also true when these positive events happen unexpectedly. That is, in many, if not all, consistency theories, the idea that expectancy-inconsistent outcomes should elicit negative affect is one of the core features. The research in the present dissertation provides the first systematic empirical evidence for the notion that inconsistencies may sometimes (but not always) elicit negative affect.
Each chapter offers a different area in which people's need for consistency has an effect on feelings of the unexpected, ranging from person perception, taste, and visual stimuli to self-relevant performance expectancies, stereotypes, price expectancies, and self-esteem. It appears that people's initial response to the unexpected is negative affect, even when the outcome is positive (e.g., expected failure feels better than unexpected success). Only when people are willing and able to abandon the comfort of their expectancies can they accept reality as it is (e.g., success feels better than failure, regardless of expectancies). The dissertation specifies for which people, situations, and circumstances this is possible.

On June 19, 2009 **Martijn Veltkamp** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "On the Instigation of Implicit Motivation: How Deprivation and Positive Affect Cause Motivated Behavior" at Utrecht University.

July

On July 2, 2009 **Jacomijn Hofstra** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Attaching Cultures: The role of attachment styles in explaining majority members' acculturation attitudes" at University of Groningen.

Promotors
Prof.dr. J.P. van Oudenhoven, RuG
Prof.dr. K.I. van Oudenhoven-van der Zee, RuG

September

On September 9, 2009 **Jacqueline Tanghe** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Affect in Groups: Convergence, Conditions and Consequences" at VU University Amsterdam.

On September 10, 2009 **Suzanne Pietersma** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Persuasive Health Communication: A Self-Perspective" at University of Groningen.

Promotors
Prof.dr. T. Postmes, RuG
Prof.dr. A. Dijkstra, RuG

Summary

The use of health messages aimed at persuading people to alter unhealthy habits is very common in western societies. Messages about quitting smoking, eating healthily, and practicing safe sex, for instance, are advertised through many different media channels and thereby reaching virtually everyone. Health messages remind people of the risks they take by acting unhealthily. Although most people value their health, many of them still act unhealthily. This inconsistency generates an aversive psychological state called a self-threat. In order to restore their positive self-image, people seek to reduce this self-threat. The doctoral thesis of Suzanne Pietersma focuses on self-threats that are generated by persuasive health messages. She studied both the determinants of what generates a self-threat and the adaptive responses that are activated to reduce a self-threat.

The results of her studies show that maintaining a positive self-image is most important to people, even when this is at the expense of their own health!

On September 17, 2009 **Anne Marike Lokhorst** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Using Commitment to Improve Environmental Quality" at Leiden University.

Promotors
Prof.dr. E. van Dijk, UL
Prof.dr. G. de Snoo, CML/WU

Co-promotor
Dr. H. Staats, UL

Summary

The making of commitments is often used as an intervention aimed at increasing pro-environmental behavior. Research shows that when people commit to changing their environmental behaviors, they tend to adhere to their commitments. In this dissertation it is investigated whether commitment making is effective in improving agricultural nature conservation and with that, environmental quality of farm lands. Furthermore, a conceptual review of commitment making is offered, as well as an experimental investigation of the conditions under which people are willing to make such commitments. Results show that commitment making combined with tailored information is indeed effective in improving farmers' nature conservation. Several explanations of the effect of commitment making on behavior are offered. Also, it is shown that the willingness to invest in commitment making is contingent on the interplay of dispositional trust and situational expectations. Taken together, this dissertation aims to provide the reader with a perspective on the entire process of commitment making: under which conditions people engage in it, if it is successful in altering behavior, and how it is successful.

October

On October 16, 2009 **Jonathan van 't Riet** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Framing Health Communication Messages" at Maastricht University.

Promotor
Prof.dr. H. de Vries, UM

Co-promotors
Dr. R.A.C. Ruiter, UM

Summary

Health-promoting messages can be framed in terms of the gains associated with healthy behaviour, or the losses associated with unhealthy behaviour. Studies show inconsistent results with regard to which type of framing is more persuasive. The present thesis argues that researchers can foster our understanding of message framing in two ways. First, it is important to investigate the mechanisms that underlie message-framing effects. Therefore, three studies were conducted that investigated the hypothesis that positive and negative affect as a result of gain- and loss-framed messages can mediate the persuasiveness of gain- and loss-framed messages. The results showed that gain-framed information resulted in higher levels of positive affect and in higher levels of information acceptance and attitude, an effect that was mediated by positive affect. In addition, loss-framed information resulted in more negative affect than gain-framed information and negative affect increased participants' intention to engage in the healthy behaviour. These results suggest that affect may be of great importance in the persuasion process and may be particularly helpful to explain the underlying mechanisms of message framing effects. The findings also suggest that gain- and loss-framed messages offer distinct pathways to persuasion. Second, important insights can be gained by investigating the circumstances under which gain- or loss-frame information is more persuasive. Three studies were therefore conducted that tested the moderating influence of self-efficacy. The results suggest that loss-framed information is more persuasive for people with high self-efficacy to perform the recommended behaviour. No effect of framing was found for people with low self-efficacy.

On October 30, 2009 **Remco Wijn** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "A functional perspective on the justice judgment process and its consequences" at Utrecht University.

Promotor
Prof.dr. K. van den Bos, UU

Summary

A vast body of research points to the importance of justice to people. Justice exists between individuals and groups of individuals and is thus a social phenomenon. Communication constitutes an important part of the social construction of what is considered fair or unfair. It is for this reason that an examination of how and when people talk about justice, and what the consequences of such communications are, is so important. I suggest that justice can be employed by people (e.g., by adopting it in communications) to influence others or to attract others' attention. I also suggest that self-interest plays a pivotal role in the use of justice in communications because justice can be seen as an objective, higher-order norm that conflicts with self-interest. The studies in Chapter 2 show that people use justice assertions to persuade others, but only when all conditions are present that warrant successful employment of justice assertions (i.e., no apparent self-interest, and able to adjust behavior to a situation). Chapter 3 presents experimental research data that shows that adopting justice assertions in communications renders a message more persuasive when the communication source is not pursuing self-interested goals. Chapter 4 shows that because of the aversive and threatening characteristics, and the social meaningfulness of injustice, unjust information draws and holds attention stronger than just, positive and neutral information and information that is equally negative but less socially meaningful. Finally, Chapter 5 investigates fluctuations in the justice sensitivity personality trait. I show that both fair and unfair experiences, directed toward the self and others, elevate justice sensitivity. These effects may be temporary or evolve into desensitization over repeated exposures, or, potentially, may shed light on the process of how people acquire sensitivity to justice. These chapters thus show that justice assertions and information are functional and are used as such. The current studies aim to contribute to a better understanding of the justice judgment process. Investigating the functionality of justice judgments helps to obtain a complete representation of the manners in which people use and interpret justice judgments and justice-related experiences, and contribute to our understanding of the justice judgment process.

November

On November 13, 2009 **Niels van de Ven** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "The bright side of a deadly sin: The psychology of envy" at Tilburg University.

Promotors
Prof.dr. M. Zeelenberg, UvT
Prof.dr. R. Pieters, UvT

Summary

Envy is the painful emotion caused by the good fortune of others. This emotion is condemned by the major religions, and is for example one of the seven deadly sins in the Catholic tradition. This is not without reason, as earlier research confirmed that envy often leads to destructive behavior. However, the general motivational goal of envy is to level the difference with the superior other, and this can also be accomplished via a motivation to improve one's own position.

To test this idea, we first examined the experience of envy and found evidence for the existence of two types of envy, one being more destructive (malicious envy) and the other being more constructive (benign envy). In a series of studies investigating the consequences of experiencing envy, we indeed found that participants who were benignly envious increased their motivation to study more and actually performed better on an intelligence task. Although many people think that after an upward social comparison it is the feeling of admiration that inspires and activates a motivation to improve oneself, it actually turns out to be the negative feeling of benign envy that does. The current findings provide new insights into for example the effect role models have on people, on social influence in consumer behavior, and on how people can function in groups in which some people are better off than others.

Furthermore, in the final empirical chapter we reversed the lens and investigated how people respond when they are better than others, in a position in which they could be envied. We find that if people expect to be maliciously envied by others, they will behave more prosocially as a result, in an attempt to ward off the potentially destructive effects of malicious envy. Envy thus also serves a useful group function, being a social glue that helps foster cohesion when some people do better than others.

December

On December 23, 2009 **Anthon Klapwijk** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "The Power of Interpersonal Generosity" at VU University Amsterdam.

Promotor
Prof.dr. P.A.M. van Lange, VU University Amsterdam

Summary

How can one understand and promote cooperation and trust in everyday situations that incorporate a social dilemma (i.e., a conflict between self-interest and collective interest)? This question is not only relevant for scientists but also for policy makers, managers, school teachers, spouses, parents and many others. The past decades, there has been a strong consensus among scientists that reciprocity was the answer to this question. Direct reciprocity (through exchange) and indirect reciprocity (through reputation) could enhance the emergence of cooperation and trust among people. However, it appears that most prior work has overlooked some important features of social situations, most notably the presence of "noise"— the notion that people sometimes make errors in their actions or perceptions (e.g., accidentally saying the wrong thing) or can be prevented from acting according to their intentions by an external factor (e.g., a breakdown of the mobile network). It is plausible that noise exerts detrimental effects on cooperation and trust, may result in patterns of negative reciprocity (e.g., escalation of conflict) and possibly cause bad reputations.
In the present dissertation, the hypothesis is advanced that an effective way to deal with other people is to behave in a generous (rather than reciprocal) manner. Interpersonal generosity involves investing slightly more than one has received from the other (cf. Kollock, 1993). It is hypothesized that generosity is very effective in promoting cooperation and trust, particularly in social situations that are subject to "noise" and misunderstanding. Inspired by two complementary lines of research, five studies were designed to test the hypotheses. Together, these studies provided good evidence for the ideas regarding three beneficial functions of generosity: (1) the building of an atmosphere of trust,(2) a symbiosis of generosity with reciprocity, and (3) the elicitation of an 'other-regarding mind-set' in others. These functions apply not only to long-term relationships between "friends" (exchange-based cooperation) but also within communities of "near-strangers" (reputation-based cooperation).