

PhD Theses defended in 2011

January

On January 6, 2011 **Elze Ufkes** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Neighbor-to-neighbor conflicts in multicultural neighborhoods" at University of Groningen.

Promotors

Prof.dr. S. Otten (University of Groningen)

Prof.dr. K.I. van Oudenhoven - van der Zee (University of Groningen)

Prof.dr. E. Giebels (University of Twente)

Summary

Most people experience occasions in which they are hindered or annoyed by the actions or ordeals of one of their direct neighbors. These irritations include someone playing loud music late at night, a dog defecating on your lawn, or someone having a mess in his or her garden. Depending on how residents perceive, and subsequently react to social irritations, they can form the basis for highly escalated and enduring neighbor-to-neighbor conflicts. Especially in culturally diverse neighborhoods—where individuals from different cultural backgrounds live in close proximity yet relatively anonymously, to each other— residents generally may find it harder to handle such irritations. In his doctoral dissertation “Neighbor-to-neighbor conflicts in multicultural neighborhoods”, Elze Ufkes describes research the emergence of, prevention of, and intervention in neighbor-to-neighbor conflicts in culturally diverse neighborhoods.

More specifically, in the first part research is presented showing that negative stereotypes affect residents’ perceptions, negative emotions, and subsequent reactions in such a way that stereotypes are likely to deteriorate a conflict situation. Then, in the second part possible ways to either prevent or intervene in neighbor-to-neighbor conflicts are investigated. Specifically, the results show that overarching urban district identities, under certain conditions, can function as a shared identity for majority and minority members, and as such may decrease negative stereotypes in culturally diverse neighborhoods. Finally, results presented in the third part of the dissertation demonstrate that a well-known and popular intervention in neighborhood conflicts—that is, neighborhood mediation—can be effective in solving neighbor-to-neighbor conflicts, even when it does not result in an actual mediation session.

On January 13, 2011 **Jan Willem Bolderdijk** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Buying people: The persuasive power of money" at University of Groningen.

Promotors

Prof.dr. E.M. Steg (RuG)

Prof.dr. T. Postmes (RuG)

Summary

Money is believed to be a powerful and universal source of motivation, which suggests that money can be effectively employed to promote desired behavior. But is this really the case? Can financial rewards persuade people to drive more safely? Will people reduce their energy consumption after learning about the financial benefits of energy conservation? In other words, can we 'buy' people into changing their behavior? This is the central question of this dissertation. Studies conducted in field and lab settings demonstrated that money can be both productive and counterproductive for promoting desired behavior. Financial rewards, for example, were effective in reducing speed violations. Conversely, money appeared less suitable as a tool for environmental campaigning: stressing the financial gains (viz., save money) was less effective in promoting energy conservation behavior than stressing the environmental gains (viz., reduced CO₂-emissions). Furthermore, we found that the persuasive power of money depended on more than just reward size: people were more strongly motivated to reclaim a previously owned than a recently acquired one Euro coin. Practitioners often rely on financial incentives to promote desired behavior, but they may be unaware of money's psychological effects. This dissertation shows that the persuasive power of money ultimately depends on how money affects people's cognitions. When designing financial incentives, practitioners should therefore not only consider what money can do for people, but also what money does to people.

On January 19, 2011 **Yana Avramova** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "How the mind moods" at Tilburg University.

Promotors

Prof.dr. D.A. Stapel (Tilburg University)

Prof.dr. F.M.G. Pieters (Tilburg University)

On January 20, 2011 **Kim van Erp** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "When worlds collide: The role of justice, conflict and personality for expatriate couples' adjustment" at University of Groningen.

Promotors

Prof.dr. K.I. van Oudenhoven - van der Zee (University of Groningen)

Prof.dr. E. Giebels (University of Twente)

Co-promotor

Dr. M.A.J. van Duijn

Summary

This study explored the relational processes underlying expatriates' and expatriate spouses' highly associated adjustment during an international assignment. This is important because an international assignment is a transition phase that uproots prior arrangements between partners, and perceptions of imbalance are accentuated. This study – among over 100 expatriate couples - showed that partners influence each other's adjustment in several ways. First, perceptions of injustice evoked conflicts, and consequently hampered expatriate couple's adjustment. A lack of respect and acknowledgment (interpersonal injustice) experienced by the expatriate spouse influenced both partners' feelings of conflict. Additionally, both partners' distributive unfairness (perceiving one invests more in the relationship than receiving in return) also led to conflicts that ultimately hindered psychological adjustment. For expatriate spouses and as the assignment unfolded, the negative effect of affective conflict was reduced when such conflicts were avoided. Second, and more positively, being emotionally stable, open-minded and high in social initiative increased expatriates' and expatriate spouses' psychological, socio-cultural and professional adjustment. Even more interesting, these intercultural personality traits could be mutually exchanged: When one's own personality resources did not suffice, one's partner's resources partly buffered the deficiency and as such provided partners with extra coping resources.

In order to adequately advise and support international employees, companies should take into account not only the expatriate but also the expatriate spouse. Receiving better advice and being more aware of the uprooting process the move entails, enables expatriate couples to cope with the challenges more effectively, and may help partners to better support each other.

March

On March 8, 2011 **Sonja Schinkel** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Applicant reactions to selection events: Interactive effects of fairness, feedback and attributions" at University of Amsterdam.

Promotor

Prof. dr. A.E.M. van Vianen (University of Amsterdam)

Co-promotor

Dr. D. van Dierendonck (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

Summary

Due to a surge in job mobility, the impact of selection events over the last decades has increasingly been investigated from the applicant's perspective. Since applicant reactions (e.g., well-being, self- and organizational perceptions, test-taking attitude) may further influence all kinds of behaviors (e.g., career withdrawal, negative recommendations of the organization and ceasing to purchase products or services) studies into these reactions have amounted. Despite the growing body of applicant reactions literature, however, many issues remain unclear. The research presented in this dissertation was developed to improve our understanding of these issues. Specifically, the five studies reported here have examined possible moderators of the relationship between selection events and applicants' personal and organizational reactions: effects of fairness, feedback and attributional processing in the formation of applicant reactions were studied.

First, the results of these studies revealed that both fairness and feedback differentially affect personal and organizational reactions. Our results therefore suggest that the assumptions made by selection fairness theory (Gilliland, 1993) should be nuanced: Both procedural and distributive fairness generally do result in higher organizational attractiveness, but seem unrelated to well-being and self-evaluations. These findings constitute a first step toward a better understanding of the variable effects of fairness in selection situations.

Further, it was demonstrated that well-being, self-evaluations and test-taking attitudes of rejected individuals may be harmed by the provision of (specific) feedback about substandard performance, whereas organizational attractiveness are not. These findings have interesting implications for applicant reactions research, because they suggest that, especially in a rejection situation, feedback may not be as advantageous as is generally assumed.

Third, our results showed that attributional processing may be important in determining applicant reactions. Moreover, these findings suggest individual differences in the occurrence of a self-serving bias (Miller & Ross, 1975), where particularly individuals with a more optimistic attributional style keep their well-being and self-perceptions intact when simultaneously blaming some external factor for the cause of their negative experience (Ployhart & Ryan, 1997). In contrast, those with a less optimistic style do not, and experience more negative personal reactions when rejected.

To conclude, whilst it may be undesirable to take into account applicants' attributional tendencies, it is in the interest of organizations to pay attention to applicants' perceptions of the fairness of their selection procedures and outcomes. Finally, given that all applicants must somehow be informed of a selection decision, the challenge for researchers as well as practitioners is to design feedback in such a way that damage to applicant and organization is minimized.

On March 9, 2011 **Nina Regenber** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Sensible Moves" at VU University Amsterdam.

Promotor

Prof.dr. G.R. Semin, Utrecht University

Co-promotor

Dr. M. Hafner, Utrecht University

On March 18, 2011 **Suzanne Oosterwijk** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Moving the Mind: Embodied Emotion Concepts and their Consequences" at University of Amsterdam.

Promotor

Prof.dr. A.H. Fischer, UvA

Co-promotor

Dr. M. Rotteveel, UvA

Summary

Embodied cognition theories propose that simulations of sensory-motor experiences (e.g. smell, taste, vision), introspective states (feelings) and bodily reactions (e.g. muscle movements, physiological activity) form the foundation of conceptual representations. When these ideas are applied to the domain of conceptual emotion knowledge, the prediction follows that the same bodily mechanisms activated during emotional experiences also underlie emotion concepts. This dissertation examined the link between conceptual representations of emotion and bodily states.

As predicted, we found that spontaneous bodily reactions occur during conceptual emotion tasks. For example, we found changes in body posture when people generated words about disappointment. Furthermore, generating words about fear and processing fear sentences was accompanied by changes in the sympathetic nervous system. Embodied reactions are not static, however, but may differ depending on the kind of knowledge that is activated. We found, for instance, that both bodily reactions and subjective reactions were strengthened when people retrieved personal knowledge compared to general semantic knowledge. Hence, self-relevance may influence how embodied reactions are integrated into a 'full-blown' simulation. In addition, embodied reactions that accompany emotion knowledge activation may also have a direct influence on how people react to subsequently presented stimuli. We demonstrated that processing fear sentences can enhance bodily reactions towards fear-related stimuli and bursts of white noise. A mediation analysis indicated that this potentiation effect is best understood in terms of the embodied reactions that occur during the processing of fear sentences. Finally, this dissertation suggests that simulation of internal states may not only be important in understanding linguistic references to emotions, but may also play a role in understanding references to other mental states, such as or visceral states (hunger, thirst) or states that are classically seen as "cognitive" (thinking, remembering).

These results provide important insights into how people create meaning when they think or talk about emotional events or states. Moreover, these results suggests that our bodies serve as a Rosetta's Stones enabling us to understand the emotions transferred through abstract symbols written down in letters, books and chat windows.

On March 24, 2011 **Iiona McNeill** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Why We Choose, How We Choose, What We Choose: The Influence of Decision Initiation Motives on Decision Making" at University of Amsterdam.

Promotors

Prof.dr. C.K.W. de Dreu (University of Amsterdam)

Prof.dr. B.A. Nijstad (University of Groningen)

Co-promotors

Dr. M.J.J. Handgraaf (University of Amsterdam)

Summary

Even though both research on behavioral decision making and research on motivation have been extensive, relatively little research has focused on the influence that different types of motives at the start of a decision may have on subsequent decision making. The main goal of this dissertation was to fill this gap. Three lines of research were undertaken to examine whether and how different motivational types that people have when they start deciding influence the decision process (Chapter 2), the types of decisions they make (Chapter 3), and how they subjectively value the decision outcome (Chapter 4). More specific, in Chapter 2 I examined the influence of approach versus avoidance motives on the decision process. In Chapter 3 I examined the influence of shopping motives on time in store and unplanned purchasing. Finally, in Chapter 4 I examined the influence of having a learning versus outcome focus whilst deciding on valuation of the chosen outcome. The main theoretical conclusions of this dissertation were: Motivational types differently influence decision making, different types of motives interact in their influence on decision making, and the effects of motives depend on both situational aspects and individual differences. Even though this research has only scratched the surface of examining the different motivational types that people may have when they start deciding, it has already shown the broad potential influence of these types on decision making behavior. Based on the research presented in this dissertation we can already more accurately predict the way in which people make decisions, the outcomes that result from them, and valuation of the chosen option. Since decision making is vital to our well being through its facilitation of self-determination, it is not surprising that it has received a great deal of attention in the past. However, this dissertation shows that there are still avenues in need of further exploration. With this dissertation I hope to increase awareness that the influence of different types of initiation motives on decision making represents an interesting avenue to turn into.

May

On May 10, 2011 **Pieter Desmet** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "In Money we Trust? Trust Repair and the Psychology of Financial Compensations" at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

On May 13, 2011 **Joel Vuolevi** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Incomplete Information in Social Interactions" at VU University Amsterdam.

June

On June 1, 2011 **Petra Tenbult** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Understanding consumers' attitudes toward novel food technologies" at Maastricht University.

Summary

The main aim of the research presented in this thesis is to understand mechanisms underlying people's reactions towards modern food technologies. More insight into the mechanisms underlying the reactions of consumers towards these food technologies will help us understand how food products are perceived and evaluated. In this thesis we investigated which processing and evaluation strategies are used when people are confronted with familiar and non-familiar food products. In Chapter 2 we investigated whether specific types of food technologies differ in their perceived familiarity and in how positively they are evaluated. Moreover we investigated whether a relationship could be found between the familiarity of food technologies and attitude strength. In Chapter 3, we investigated in two studies whether novel and familiar food products are associated with different processing strategies (analytical versus automatic). In Chapter 4, we investigated whether different evaluation strategies (product-based versus process-based) are used when consumers evaluate food products that are manufactured with the use of novel and (relatively) familiar food technologies. Finally, in Chapter 5, we tried to replicate the finding that the evaluation of food products is product specific by showing that the acceptance and evaluation of food products depends on product features such as whether the product is genetically modified or not and whether they are processed food products or not.

In sum, the research presented in this dissertation provided more insight into the mechanisms underlying the reactions of consumers towards food products. Not only does this insight help to better understand how food products are perceived and evaluated, but by understanding how these evaluations are formed, one can better predict how consumer evaluations of food products will evolve and consequently the future success of those food innovations.

On June 15, 2011 **Lukas Koning** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "An instrumental approach to deception in bargaining" at Leiden University.

Promotor

Prof.dr. E. van Dijk (UL)

Co-promotors

Dr. I. van Beest (UL)

Dr. W. Steinel (UL)

Summary

Deception is often described as a form of unethical behavior, yet it is frequently used in bargaining. This raises the question why people use deception in bargaining. In this dissertation an instrumental approach to deception is presented to help answer this question. In an instrumental approach, the use of deception depends on both the goals bargainers pursue and the means they have available to attain their goals. An instrumental approach presupposes that bargainers select the means they consider most instrumental to their current goal. This dissertation demonstrates that pursuing different goals or having different means, indeed has an impact on the use of deception. Furthermore, it demonstrates that reactions to deceit also follow an instrumental pattern. Deceit was judged less harshly when it was employed by someone in a position of limited means. Finally, this dissertation shows that false expectations are an important reason why deception is often considered unethical.

July

On July 1, 2011 **Shaul Shalvi** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Ethical Decision Making: On Balancing Right and Wrong" at University of Amsterdam.

Promotor

Prof. Dr. C.K.W. de Dreu (University of Amsterdam)

Co-promotor

Dr. M.J.J. Handgraaf (Wageningen University)

Summary

When we think of ethical failures we often think of the big crocks like Barney Madoff. However, even most honest people lie sometimes. Having private information allows people to unethically benefit themselves on the expense of others. When people lose their luggage they may exaggerate an insurance claim and describe their old camera as brand new to get more money from the insurance company. Such seemingly small lies of otherwise honest people accumulate to millions of Euros paid annually by insurance companies. This dissertation sheds light about the amount of lying people conduct when they know that they will never be caught. People were asked to do tasks in which they could privately lie in order to gain money. Students rolled a die three times and were asked to report the outcome of the first roll. Since only they knew what they rolled, they could lie as much as they wanted. However, while the evidence for lying was clear, the amount of lying was modest. While the students understood that they should have reported the first roll outcome they were reporting the highest of the three rolls they saw. This was because lying by reporting a high value that was observed on one of the extra rolls felt less unethical than lying by using values that were not observed. The conclusion is that people lie exactly to the extent that they can justify the lie to themselves. Justifications allow people to lie for money while feeling honest.

On July 14, 2011 **Ashley Hoben** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "An Evolutionary Investigation of Consanguineous Marriages" at University of Groningen.

Promotor

Prof.dr. B.P. Buunk, RuG

September

On September 23, 2011 **Niek Hoogervorst** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "On the psychology of displaying ethical leadership: A behavioural ethics approach" at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Promotor

Prof.dr. D. de Cremer (EUR)

October

On October 6, 2011 **Barbara Nevicky** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Narcissistic Leaders: The Appearance of Success" at University of Amsterdam.

Promotor

Prof.dr. A.E.M. van Vianen (University of Amsterdam)

Co-promotor

Dr. A.H.B. de Hoogh (University of Amsterdam)

Summary

Many of the world's leaders have been said to possess narcissistic characteristics, for example Steve Jobs of Apple Computers or President Nicolas Sarkozy. At first glance, this does not seem surprising, as the narcissistic personality profile encompasses many prototypical leadership characteristics, such as confidence, perceived intelligence, extraversion, self-esteem and dominance. Implicit leadership theory states that we all have an implicit idea of what constitutes an effective leader (Lord et al., 1984; Offermann et al., 1994). But what if in addition to the above characteristics a person also lacks empathy, is exploitative and arrogant, and has sense of entitlement, as narcissists do? When and why would such a person be considered an effective leader? This is one of the questions I addressed in my dissertation. Furthermore, I investigated whether the perceptions of narcissists as leaders are actually aligned with reality, in terms of their impact on the performance of those they lead. The series of field and experimental studies presented in my dissertation show that narcissists indeed emerge as leaders in group settings, and that there are certain conditions under which they individually perform better (highly interactive settings), are especially preferred as leaders (during crises), and are perceived to exhibit innovative behavior (dynamic environments). This dissertation also taps into a potential 'dark' side of narcissistic leaders and shows that people tend to make incorrect judgments when it comes to narcissistic leaders' capabilities. Because narcissistic leaders are characteristically self-absorbed and egocentric they actually inhibit the exchange of relevant information which is essential to high quality decision making and thereby diminish group performance.

On October 24, 2011 **Annemarie Loseman** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Me, Myself, Fairness, and I: On the Self-Related Processes of Fairness Reactions" at Utrecht University.

Promotor

Prof.dr. Kees van den Bos (Utrecht University)

Co-promotor

Dr. J.R.C. Ham (Eindhoven University of Technology)

Summary

The current dissertation focuses on the psychology of justice as a self-related process. Six experiments within three justice domains are reported in which specific self-related aspects and their influence on fairness reactions are investigated.

The construction of one's self-image (i.e., the self-concept) is presumed to be involved in the experience of fair and unfair treatments by others. That is, how others approach a person, provides information about how they judge this person and in the end, how this person 'should' think about him- or herself (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934).

Chapter 2 demonstrates that this process mainly involves the individual aspects of the self-concept, meaning how people think about themselves as an individual, independent from others. In Study 2.1 this is demonstrated by the higher activation of the individual self than the social self in just and unjust situations. Study 2.2 adds to these findings by showing that fairness reactions are strongest when people were both being treated as individuals and their individual selves had been activated.

Chapter 3 shows that when people's self-image is being threatened, they pay more attention to fairness aspects in their environments, but do so in a self-centered way. This means that people do not only react more positive to a fair outcome (when they receive as much as another person), but also to being overpaid. These findings were gathered in a field experiment (Study 3.1) and a laboratory experiment (Study 3.2). When people have a higher need for positive self-views (e.g., because they are experiencing self-threats) they temporarily attach lower value to the unjust aspect of the overpayment and hence react more positively toward being overpaid.

Self-related processes are also involved in how people deal with their Belief in a Just World (BJW) in which all people get what they deserve. The importance of this belief has been demonstrated by the strong, irrational and defensive ways in which people react when this belief is being threatened. For example, people tend to blame innocent victims for their ill fate, probably to restore the idea of deservingness (Lerner & Simmons, 1966). Chapter 4 investigated the processes of coping with just world threats. It was presumed that just world threats may essentially be self-threatening, and may thus involve self-regulation. Study 4.1 investigated the self-regulation process of coping with just-world threats by focusing on the frustration of self-regulation by studying the role of ego-depletion, which indeed caused stronger blaming reactions. Study 4.2 focused on the facilitation of self-regulation by studying the role of self-affirmation, which indeed caused the attenuation of blaming reactions.

In summary, fairness reactions are driven by self-related processes. Not only the reactions of people to being treated in just or unjust ways involve the self, but also when they are being confronted with a strong injustice of another person.

December

On December 12, 2011 **Francesca Righetti** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Self-regulation in interpersonal interactions: Two regulatory selves at work" at VU University Amsterdam.

Promotor

Prof.dr. P.A.M. van Lange (VU University Amsterdam)

Co-promotor

Dr. C. Finkenauer (VU University Amsterdam)

Summary

My dissertation examined the interplay between self-regulation and interpersonal processes. In our work, we have investigated the impact of two components of self-regulation, regulatory focus and self-control, on various interpersonal dynamics that play a key role in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships, such as interpersonal goal support, trust, and daily sacrifices. We have also examined the influence of close relationships on aspects of self-regulation, such as motivation and goal achievement.

The first two empirical chapters examined the role of regulatory focus theory on interpersonal goal support. When people are pursuing goals, they are often surrounded by others who can help or impair their goal accomplishment. With their advice, support, and suggestions others can have a significant impact in the way people approach goals. When is interpersonal goal support beneficial for the individual's goal accomplishment and when is not? Who is open and receptive to be helped? Who are the best partners to approach for support while pursuing goals? Regulatory focus theory can contribute to answer these questions. The results of the two empirical chapters showed that promotion orientation is beneficial for interpersonal goal support.

The second part of the dissertation examined the role of self-control on trust and sacrifice. Research demonstrates that, in most situations, self-control helps people to behave in a prosocial way and refrain from following selfish impulses. Therefore, self-control is a meaningful characteristic to perceive in others in that it allows us to predict their behavior.

The third empirical chapter showed that people tend to trust others who are high in self-control. However, while in most situations, we can expect prosocial behavior from people who are high in self-control, the fourth chapter of this dissertation also showed that, in close relationships, when people need to decide whether to engage in small sacrifices for their partner, impulsivity (rather than self-control) favor pro-social behavior.