

PhD Theses defended in 2016

January

On January 14, 2016 **Thijs Bouman** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Threat by association: How distant events can affect local intergroup relations" at University of Groningen.

Promotors

Prof.dr. Sabine Otten (University of Groningen)

Co-promotor

Dr. Martijn van Zomeren (University of Groningen)

Summary

In today's globalized world, local societies host an increasing amount of cultural groups. Although this diversification clearly has its merits, cultural minorities also frequently face intolerance by host-society members. Whereas most explanations for this intolerance focus on perceived actions of the local cultural minorities themselves, this dissertation focusses on whether perceived threats from other—more distant—outgroups can also induce local intolerance through "carry-over effects".

This potential influence of distant events on local intergroup relations is particularly relevant in the current global village, in which the media frequently confront individuals with international events that could induce feelings of intergroup threat (e.g., Arab uprisings, Greek economic crisis). Indeed, the findings of this dissertation suggest that messages conveying (potential) threats from distant outgroups (e.g., Islamic State, Greeks) can cause negative feelings toward local cultural minorities (e.g., Turkish-, Moroccan-, and Indonesian-Dutch citizens). Both symbolic threats to one's cultural worldview or values (Chapter 2), and realistic threats to one's possessions or power (Chapter 3), can carry over and negatively affect feelings toward local outgroups. More specifically, carry-over effects mainly occur toward those local outgroups that observers associate with the distant outgroup perceived as threatening. This association can resemble a superordinate outgroup category (Chapter 4), in which both the distant outgroup and local outgroups are included. For instance, native Dutch citizens could (implicitly) categorize the Egyptian rebels and Turkish-Dutch citizens within the same superordinate outgroup "Muslims", which could explain carry-over effects. Interestingly, in contrast to the support found for carry-over effects of distant threats, no such carry-over effects emerged for positive information about a distant situation (Chapter 5), which could suggest a positive-negative asymmetry.

By focusing on distant intergroup threats and how they can carry over into local intolerance we added a new dimension to the analysis of local intolerance. When distant and local outgroups are associated with each other in the mind of the observer, negative distant events can indeed negatively influence local intergroup relationships.

On January 20, 2016 **Anna van 't Veer** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Effortless morality — cognitive and affective processes in deception and its detection" at Tilburg University.

Promotor

Prof.dr. Ilja van Beest (Tilburg University)

Co-promotor

Dr. Mariëlle Stel (Tilburg University)

Summary

This dissertation presents an experimental social psychological investigation of both deception and its detection with an emphasis on the role of automatic, ‘effortless’ processes. The described work is connected to recent debates in moral psychology about the intuitive nature of prosocial and moral behavior, as well as to findings from the evolutionary, developmental, neuroscientific, and response time literatures. Building on the premises that successfully navigating the social world requires intuitive moral decisions and evaluations of the moral character of others, and that these judgments and decisions are often made under circumstances that are not well equipped for moral deliberation, three aspects of deception were investigated.

First, cognitive effort involved in deceiving others was examined. Previous research that speaks to the question whether being honest or dishonest is an automatic tendency has resulted in mixed findings, possibly due to a focus on time as an indication of deliberation. Therefore, in this dissertation cognitive load, rather than time, was manipulated. Findings suggest that when enough cognitive capacity is available and people can serve their self-interest by being dishonest, they will often do so. Yet without this cognitive capacity, people are honest regardless of the fact that self-interest could have been served. This dissertation thereby provides direct evidence for the prediction that being dishonest takes more cognitive effort than being honest.

Secondly, the work in this dissertation tests theoretical notions about people’s ability to effortlessly form a correct impression of the trustworthiness of another person in the realm of deception detection. Theories from different research areas suggest that people have an automatic ability to determine whether another person’s intentions are good. This kind of skill would allow people to successfully choose cooperation partners and form coalitions with others who reciprocate when help is needed. However, well-established findings from the deception detection literature reveal that direct veracity judgments are often biased and wrong. A possible reason for this could be that when people make a judgment of whether someone else is lying, they deliberate too much. Therefore, in this dissertation people’s affective responses towards (dis)honest others were examined. The (pre-registered) research in this dissertation reveals that whereas people are not able to distinguish between liars and truth-tellers when they are asked to judge veracity directly, their affective (i.e., liking, trustworthiness) judgments favor a truth-teller over a liar. This is the case when participants were presented with relatively longer stories told by targets who were lying or being honest about their personal life, when presented with a brief answer by a target about a transgression committed earlier, and when liars and truth-tellers were well rehearsed and therefore came

across with more ease of expression. Being on guard seemed to facilitate these effortless veracity judgments—both a certain amount of vigilance (i.e., stress) and being forewarned of the possibility of deception can bring out relevant intuitions.

Finally, this dissertation examined the previously unexplored physiological responses in the observer of (dis)honesty. The above-mentioned intuitions about another person's (dis)honesty may stem from early unconscious processes that can be reflected in a physiological reaction that marks the (un)friendly intent of others. Two different physiological responses within the observer of (dis)honesty were investigated. The first, finger skin temperature, reflects trust and unfolds slowly over time. The second, pupillary response, reflects mental processing and is a more fine-grained time sensitive measure. Results reveal that people's physiology was differentially affected by the (dis)honesty of others. When people observed liars their skin temperature consistently dropped, whereas when they observed truth-tellers this depended on whether they were forewarned about the possibility of deception. Additionally, when people observed a dishonest compared to an honest target, this evoked a greater pupillary response, even though the face area of honest and dishonest targets was monitored similarly. Together the findings in this dissertation demonstrate the benefit of looking at deception through a lens that emphasizes the cognitive effort that is exerted by both the deceiver and the deceived.

February

On February 18, 2016 **Sabine Ströfer** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Deceptive Intent: Physiological reactions in different interpersonal contexts" at University of Twente.

Promotor

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

Co-promotors

Dr. Matthijs Noordzij (University of Twente)

Dr. Elze Ufkes (University of Twente)

Summary

This dissertation advanced the deception field by examining the psychological processes associated with deceptive intent. The main focus forms the intention to deceive and more specifically, whether cues to deception already can be measured during truth telling with the mere intention to lie. In order to test this prediction, we examined truth telling with the intention to lie on a crucial aspect later on and compared this with 'sincere' truth telling and lying across four empirical studies.

In order to deliver a theoretical as well as practical contribution to the deception field, these studies ranged from controlled to more realistic experiments and varied in interpersonal context as well as stakes for the deceiver. Cues to deception were measured in form of electrodermal activity (EDA), a direct indicator for sympathetic nervous system activity and most frequently used physiological measure in the lie detection context.

Across all studies, constant lying evoked higher EDA than constant truth telling. But deceptive accounts, which consists of truth telling with the intention to lie, did not necessarily induce an increase in EDA. Rather, elevated EDA levels during the mere intention to deceive seem to depend highly on the degree of interpersonal contact. Particularly, we could not measure the intention to deceive in situations involving direct face-to-face interaction.

However, in situations where the deceiver did not have access to the interviewer's reactions we did found elevated EDA levels during deceptive intentions. These results may be explained from an impression-management perspective. We propose that deceptive intentions may especially increase cognitive and emotional load when deceivers are deprived from social feedback of the interviewer. In order to measure the intention to deceive, it thus may be beneficial to withhold deceivers from target's (non)verbal reactions.

On February 29, 2016 **Caspar van Lissa** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Exercising Empathy: The Role of Adolescents' Developing Empathy in Conflicts with Parents" at Utrecht University.

Promotor

Prof.dr. W. Meeus

Co-promotor

Dr. S.T. Hawk

Summary

The goal of this dissertation was to provide insight into the role of adolescents' empathy development in adolescent-parent conflict. Two empathy dimensions become increasingly developed in adolescence: emotional empathic concern for others, and the cognitive ability to engage in perspective taking. The first issue we examined is how empathy develops in adolescence. Our results showed that perspective taking is more susceptible to development in adolescence than empathic concern. Moreover, adolescents' empathic concern predicted their development of perspective taking, and mothers' perspective taking predicted their daughters' perspective taking development. We also studied differences between adolescents in trajectories of empathy development. We identified groups of high-, average-, and low-empathy adolescents. The differences between these groups became further amplified from early- to mid-adolescence. This highlights the importance of recognizing low empathy at a young age, and supporting its development. We also studied associations between empathy and conflict frequency and behavior. We found that the aforementioned low-empathy adolescents and their parents reported significantly more frequent conflict than other adolescents. Furthermore, both naturally developing and experimentally induced empathy were associated adolescents' conflict behavior. Across two studies, cognitive empathy was more strongly associated with a pattern of constructive conflict resolution behavior than affective empathy. Finally, we investigated whether high empathy was associated with greater conflict sensitivity. We found that high-empathy adolescents were more sensitive to the detection of conflict with parents, and experienced greater conflict-related emotion dysregulation. On the one hand, higher empathy is thus associated with more constructive conflict resolution behavior, but on the other hand, it is also associated with a vulnerability for conflict-related emotion dysregulation. Parents and clinicians should consider this potential tradeoff.

March

On March 22, 2016 **Tim Theeboom** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Workplace coaching: Processes and effects" at University of Amsterdam.

June

On June 14, 2016 **Marlon Mooijman** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "On the determinants and consequences of punishment goals: The role of power, distrust, and rule compliance" at Leiden University.

Promotors

Prof.dr. Eric van Dijk (Leiden University)

Prof.dr. Naomi Ellemers (Utrecht University)

Co-promotor

dr. Wilco W. van Dijk (Leiden University)

Summary

This dissertation focuses on the determinants and consequences of leaders' punishment goals. I investigate how and why leaders rely on certain punishment goals, and how and why leaders' reliance on such punishment goals affects punishment effectiveness. Specifically, in this dissertation I demonstrate that—with increasing power over others—leaders rely more on punishment goals that are actually suboptimal in promoting rule compliance. I demonstrate that power fosters a distrustful mindset towards people, which increases reliance on deterrence—but not just deserts as a punishment goal. Using deterrence—as opposed to just deserts—as a justification for punishments, in turn, decreases people's willingness to comply with rules because they feel distrusted by the leader. Finally, leaders' reliance on suboptimal punishment goals can be explained by their motivation to maintain power over others. Although power may thus increase leaders' reliance on punishments to deter rule-breaking behavior, paradoxically, this may at times decrease the effectiveness of the punishment.

September

On September 28, 2016 **Niels van Doesum** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Social mindfulness" at VU University Amsterdam.

Promotor

Prof.dr. Paul van Lange (VU University Amsterdam)

Co-promotors

Dr. Jan-Willem van Prooijen (VU University Amsterdam)

Dr. Joshua Tybur (VU University Amsterdam)

Summary

This dissertation introduces the construct of social mindfulness, a new way of looking at how people can be mindful of others in spontaneous and proactive ways. One of its main goals is to show how the new construct provides information over and above extant approaches to prosocial behavior. The combined chapters thus provide evidence that social mindfulness has its own natural place among traditional and previously established ways of examining human cooperation and prosociality.

Taking a broad interdependence theoretical approach, social mindfulness is conceptualized in terms of other-regarding choices that involve both skill and will to act mindfully towards another person's control over outcomes. Three important aspects define social mindfulness and distinguish it from other measures of prosociality: (1) social mindfulness involves a 'social mind' that recognizes the needs and wishes of others in the present moment, (2) socially mindful behavior does not necessarily require big sacrifices, and (3) perceived social mindfulness is more about the interpersonal process than the material result of the situation – intention over outcome.

A grand total of 15 studies establish social mindfulness as a useful new construct that provides a fresh look at many aspects of human prosociality and cooperation. Chapter 1 offers a general theoretical introduction, after which Chapter 2 presents the construct in more detail and validates its main operationalization in the SoMi paradigm: Being other-oriented leads to greater social mindfulness, acting socially unmindful makes a target less likeable, targets with untrustworthy faces elicit lower social mindfulness, and social mindfulness proves to be correlated with various prosocial (personality) traits and orientations. Two behavioral field studies in Chapter 3 illustrate how the actual presence of others triggers socially mindful behavior. Next, Chapter 4 argues that the SoMi paradigm can also be used to measure social hostility, and Chapter 5 reveals the important role of target social class to explain prosocial behavior; specifically, higher social class targets elicited lower social mindfulness. Chapter 6 puts these findings into perspective and outlines possible pathways for future work on social mindfulness.

On September 29, 2016 **Leonie Venhoeven** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "A look on the bright side of an environmentally-friendly life: Whether and why acting environmentally-friendly can contribute to well-being" at University of Groningen.

Promotor

Prof.dr. Linda Steg (University of Groningen)

Co-promotor

Dr. Jan Willem Bolderdijk (University of Groningen)

Summary

As U.S. president Barack Obama stated in his speech at the 2014 Climate Summit, “We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation that can do something about it” (original quote by Governor Jay Inslee). In order to effectively “do something” about climate change, it is crucial that individuals change their behavior to reduce their environmental impact. However, acting environmentally-friendly is often equated with sacrificing personal well-being, since this type of behavior can involve some degree of effort and discomfort. In this dissertation I argue this view is too pessimistic. It overlooks that environmentally-friendly behavior can also be perceived as meaningful behavior and thus contribute to personal well-being as well.

As my studies show, environmentally-friendly behavior is both explicitly and implicitly associated with positive emotions (Chapter 3). The meaning associated with environmentally-friendly behavior explains why acting this way can feel good: people feel better about behavior that is more meaningful (Chapter 3), and feel good about environmentally-friendly behavior because it is seen as meaningful (Chapter 4). As we reason, meaningful behavior may elicit positive emotions because such behavior can signal something positive about who you are. In Chapter 5, finally, I found that acting environmentally-friendly can indeed boost one’s self-image – especially when voluntarily engaged in – and thereby make people feel good about engaging in this type of behavior.

Although engagement in environmentally-friendly behavior may sometimes be costly, uncomfortable and frustrating, the current dissertation shows there is also a brighter side of this type of behavior. Since environmentally-friendly behavior can be seen as meaningful behavior, engagement may reflect positively on who you are – particularly when you act out of your own volition. Thereby, environmentally-friendly behavior can contribute to well-being as well.

October

On October 14, 2016 **Florien Cramwinckel** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "The social dynamics of morality" at Utrecht University.

Promotor

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

Co-promotor

Prof.dr. Eric van dijk (Leiden University)

Summary

In this dissertation, I try to answer fundamental questions about how morality functions in various settings. In particular, I use a wide range of content domains, measures, methods and manipulations to examine how people react to the morally motivated behavior of others. In exploring this issue, I focus on reactions towards others who take a moral stance as well as on reactions towards oneself. The starting point for the research described in this dissertation is the observation that people sometimes react negatively when others show moral behavior. For example, in one experiment, participants tasted meat during the study. Hereafter, they were confronted with the reaction of someone who refused to taste this meat out of moral or non-moral reasons. I demonstrated that people who ate meat felt threatened by moral vegetarians. Furthermore, people evaluated themselves more negatively after exposure to moral vegetarians. Moreover, I showed that these effects were attenuated when people could protect their self-concepts, for instance, by cleansing their hands. The behaviors I focus on are not moral or immoral behaviors per se. Instead, what I show is that labelling or perceiving them as moral—regardless of their exact content—has a strong influence on people's self-concepts, their evaluations of others, and their actual behaviors. This leads to the conclusion that morality plays an important role in regulating people's attitudes and behaviors in the social world.

November

On November 1, 2016 **Junhui Wu** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Understanding Human Cooperation: The Psychology of Gossip, Reputation, and Life History" at VU University Amsterdam.

Promotor

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

Co-promotor

Dr. Daniel Balliet (VU University Amsterdam)

Summary

This dissertation contributes to extant literature on effective solutions to cooperation problems. It focuses on two important factors: (a) gossip and reputation, (b) life history strategy that reflects variations in resource allocation decisions toward fitness-relevant activities.

Chapters 1 and 2 provide a general introduction and a systematic review of extant theories and research on the role of reputation in social interactions. Chapters 3 and 4 investigate when gossip (i.e., reputation transmission) can promote generosity and cooperation and the psychological mechanisms (i.e., reputational concern and expected indirect benefits) underlying this phenomenon. I focus on two situational features: (a) perceived "shadow of the future" with potential gossip recipients, and (b) others' social connections and gossip potential in one's social network. Indeed, people are more generous toward someone who (a) can gossip to their future partner or (b) is more socially connected and can gossip to more people. Moreover, the gossip-based generosity effect is mainly driven by one's reputational concern, rather than expected benefits from future partners. This implies that people may not rationally calculate potential benefits from a specific interaction or base their decision on these benefits. Chapter 5 reveals that gossip is relatively more effective and efficient than punishment to promote and maintain cooperation when gossip involves no cost and punishment is moderately costly. Chapter 6 provides some initial evidence on whether life history (LH) strategy relates to cooperation. Overall, there is no support for the prediction that a slower LH strategy relates to more cooperation or that childhood environments interact with current resource scarcity to predict cooperation. However, people following slower LH strategies show stronger concern for reputation, prosocial orientation, and trust in others. Chapter 7 summarizes the key findings, and outlines the broader implications and avenues for future research.

To conclude, this dissertation advances our understanding of human cooperation by providing converging evidence on the effects of gossip, reputation, and life history parameters. It stresses the importance of reputation monitoring and spreading in groups and social networks to promote trust and cooperation in society at large.

On November 4, 2016 **Elise C. Seip** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Desire for vengeance. An emotion-based approach to revenge." at University of Amsterdam.

Promotor

Prof. dr. Agneta H. Fischer (Universiteit of Amsterdam)

Co-promotors

Dr. M. Rotteveel (University of Amsterdam)

Prof. dr. W. W. van Dijk (Leiden University)

Summary

When someone has suffered at the hands of someone else, he or she might develop a tendency to take revenge, that is; “an attempt, at some cost or risk to oneself, to impose suffering upon those who have made us suffer” (Elster, 1990, p. 155). Traditionally, most research on vengeance has focused on the act of revenge and not so much on the emotional state of desire for vengeance. In this dissertation, I have described a set of studies that further enhances our understanding of desire for vengeance and its relation with actual revenge. I have focused on three questions. First, what is desire for vengeance? Second, when and under which circumstances does desire for vengeance lead to revenge? And third, why are people motivated to take revenge? The results presented in this dissertation provided important new insights in desire for vengeance and revenge. First, the experiential content of desire for vengeance was revealed. Second, it was shown that revenge is more likely when salient others of the victim approve revenge, or when the victim experiences strong feelings of anger as part of his or her desire for vengeance. And third, it was shown that in severe situations individuals experience more satisfaction from personally getting back at the offender than from observing vengeance by a third party. Whereas in moderate severe situations individuals experience equal amounts of satisfaction after personal revenge and vengeance by a third party. Altogether, this dissertation increases our understanding of desire for vengeance and its relation with actual revenge.

On November 24, 2016 **Angela Ruepert** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Working on the environment" at Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.

Promotor

Linda Steg (RuG) & Kees Keizer (RuG)

Summary

Environmental problems can be reduced if people would engage more often in behaviour that harms the environment as little as possible or even benefits it. For this purpose, it is important to understand which factors influence and promote pro-environmental behaviour. Until now, most studies focused on factors influencing household pro-environmental behaviour. Yet, within a lifetime people spend a major part of their time at work. Encouraging pro-environmental behaviour at the workplace can result in a significant reduction in environmental problems. In this dissertation I propose and tested a conceptual framework to understand, predict and promote various pro-environmental behaviours at work.

Pro-environmental behaviour (at home or at work) generally implies a conflict between immediate gratification or financial gains and long-term benefits for the environment. I argue that people are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviour when they are focused on benefiting the environment rather than on the convenience and financial costs related to pro-environmental behaviours. I propose that the extent to which people are focused on benefiting the environment and thus the likelihood of pro-environmental behaviour depends on two general factors: the values people endorse (in particular the extent to which they endorse biospheric values), and contextual factors that make people focus on benefiting the environment.

My results show that people are indeed more likely to act pro-environmental at work when they strongly endorse biospheric values. Biospheric values encourage pro-environmental behaviour at work via a similar process as in the private sphere: they strengthen environmental self-identity and personal norms to act pro-environmentally at work, which encourages pro-environmental actions. Yet, contextual factors can inhibit people to act upon their personal norms and engage in pro-environmental behaviour at work: in some situations, it may be rather costly to act pro-environmental, reducing the likelihood that people act upon their biospheric values. My research shows that contextual factors may not only inhibit or enable pro-environmental behaviour at work directly, but also indirectly by affecting the extent to which employees are focused on benefiting the environment. I found that strong biospheric values and contextual factors that make people focus on the environment can even encourage pro-environmental actions after prolonged working on a strenuous task. Interestingly, such contextual factors especially affected those with relatively weak biospheric values. In the right context, people with relative weak biospheric values will act as pro-environmentally as those with relative strong biospheric values.

December

On December 15, 2016 **Debby E. Purba** successfully defended the PhD thesis entitled "Antecedents of turnover, organizational citizenship behavior, and workplace deviance: Empirical evidence from Indonesia." at Erasmus University.

Promotors

Prof. dr. H.T. van der Molen

Prof. dr. M. Ph. Born

Co-promotor

Dr. J.K. Oostrom

Summary

The dissertation examined antecedents of employee turnover and work performance (i.e., Organizational Citizenship Behavior [OCB] and Workplace Deviance [WD]) in a non-Western country where published research on employee behaviors is still scarce. To achieve this goal, four separate empirical studies were conducted, drawing from theories representing non-Western cultures, such as social identity theory and covenantal relationship theory. Data were gathered from different organizations, namely employees of a cement factory and a restaurant industry, nurses from hospitals, and teachers from higher education institutions. The four studies attempted to answer the following research questions: (1) How do employees' personality traits affect their OCB, (2) In what way do organizational and non-organizational factors affect employees' turnover intentions, and (3) To what extent does job embeddedness affect the relationship between individual work orientations and employee behaviors (i.e., OCB and WD). The results showed that job embeddedness could act as an explanatory variable in the relationships between individual difference characteristics (such as work orientations), organizational and non-organizational factors, and employees' behaviors (i.e., turnover, OCB, and WD). Moreover, it was demonstrated that different foci of job embeddedness, namely on-the-job, off-the-job, and family embeddedness, have different consequences for employees' behaviors. Off-the-job and family embeddedness negatively affected turnover intentions indirectly through on-the-job embeddedness, while on-the-job embeddedness consistently and negatively influenced turnover intentions across studies.