DIGIZINE PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

MIND OPEN

INSIGHTS IN PSYCHOLOGY

Number 3 - Spring 2009

OUT OF THE IVORY TOWER

INTERVIEWS WITH

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CONOR DOLAN – ANALYZING INTELLIGENCE
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EDITORIAL

Real people

Psychologists like putting psychology students to work. I was immediately on to this, as soon as I had begun my studies at the University of Amsterdam in 1985. All psychology students were – and still are – obliged to spend a total of forty hours as a test subject: fifteen during the so-called 'test week' and twenty-five on behalf of staff research. This compulsory test attendance – invented in 1974 by Jan Elshout, now an emeritus professor of psychonomics – is a smart way for researchers to arrive at a sufficient number of test subjects.

I remember my first experiences as a test subject vividly. A friend had participated in a test about the effects of alcohol on physical performance. He had gotten four glasses of vodka to drink, and was then asked to ride a home trainer for half an hour. I signed up as fast as I could, ironically ending up in the control group, with nothing but water to drink.

Not much later, I was assigned the task of writing down what I had dreamt, every night for a week. Since I had trouble remembering my dreams, I consulted the girl living next door to me. She was a medical student, who had a parrot called Charley. Charley often made his appearance in her dreams – as well as in mine.

I wasn't very much committed to the test week, either. I thought it was rather tiring, having to fill in all sorts of questionnaires and tests for three long hours, during five consecutive Wednesday afternoons, just shortly after I had gotten out of bed. By the end, I probably spent most of the time doodling.

I admit: it was juvenile behavior. Just like that adolescent habit I have of riding my bicycle at night without lights. (For me, this goes together with living in Amsterdam just like Freud goes together with psychoanalysis.) After reading the interview with Ronald Dahl in this issue of MindOpen, I suspect my clinging to juvenile habits might have something to do with certain 'tipping points'. Maybe I should go to the reopened Ambulatorium of the Clinical Psychology department and have myself checked out. Anyhow, I realize that psychological research was – and is – better off without test subjects like me. Therefore, I repeat: mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.

On a more fundamental note, a large part of psychological research is based on the participation of psychology students (probably too large a part). This makes it more difficult for researchers to make statements about the world outside the lab, or, in other words: about the real world. That's why I am very enthusiastic about the external subject pool that is about to be created. I encourage you to read the column of Michelle Spaan, the coordinator of this initiative, and to sign up as a test subject, especially if you aren't a psychology student. Psychology is in desperate need of real people.

Vittorio Busato, editor
www.vittoriobusato.nl

PS Should you decide to compensate for my behavior as a subject, do come and tell me if you see me at the bar. I'll gladly offer you a vodka – or a glass of water, if that's what you prefer.

The adolescent tipping point

by Ger Post

A couple of years ago, after a speech, Ronald E. Dahl raised the issue of the 'tipping point' with a few researchers of the Developmental Psychology department of the UvA. Dahl argued that the so-called tipping point-model, a term that was originally coined in sociology, and states that a small addition can produce a big change, would apply to the topic of adolescence. Although his co-debaters reckoned that this thought would need thorough research, Dahl's ideas appealed to them. The professor from Pittsburgh was invited to come to the University of Amsterdam, and during six weeks Dahl gave seminars and started some new approaches to research his model.

How would you describe your model?

'In short, it is based on a tipping point in early to middle adolescence. FMRI studies and psychophysiological research reveal that during early adolescence, emotional reactivity rises, along with the intensity of emotions. This increase causes a challenge for cognitive control and self-regulation, creating a period of instability in which social influences may cause the reaching of the tipping point and, consequently, may cause the balance to tip. This creates wonderful opportunities for adolescents to develop a healthy passion for long term goals, such as a particular academic status or sporting achievement. On the other hand, the balance could also tip towards negative spirals such as alcohol or drug abuse.'

Which parts of your research did you start up in Amsterdam?

'With researchers from the Developmental Psychology department, we are discussing and planning three lines of investigation which test different features of the model. For instance, together with Reinout Wiers, who did a lot of research on alcohol abuse, I want to examine to what extent brain circuitry involving the cerebellum may be important for aspects of emotional "balance" in ways that may be analogous to motoric balance. Adolescent drinking may impair the calibration of emotions in ways that are similar to the impact of alcohol on calibrating fine-grained motor function. This could result in an altered tipping point in regulating behavior more broadly, and contribute to a negative spiral of problematic behavior.

Is it true that nowadays, people go through adolescence and its problems at a younger age than they used to?

'The biological, hormonal processes that trigger the onset of puberty are taking place at relatively earlier ages than they occurred, say, a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago. Nowadays, a younger brain has to deal with more intense emotional processes. Add to this the social challenges of modern society, and in terms of cognitive control and self-regulation, the system could be shakier than it used to be.'

When does puberty end?

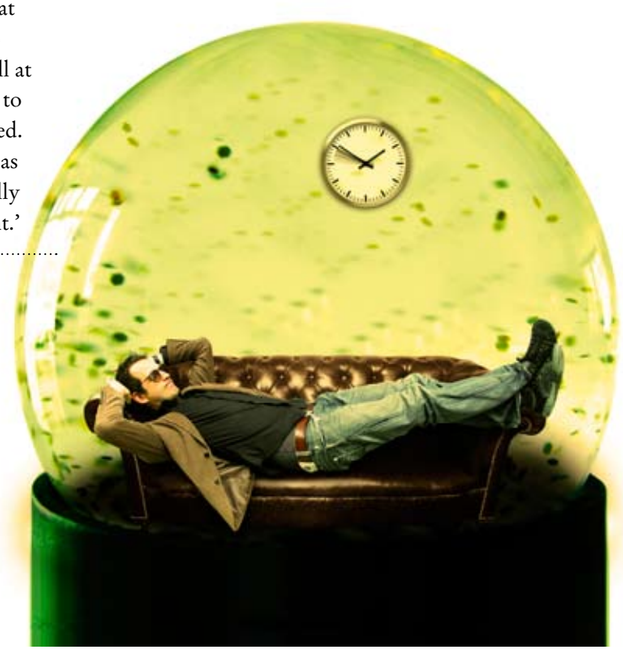
'The only functional way to describe the end of adolescence is in social terms. People receive an adult status when they are responsible for their own behavior. It's somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, adolescents need to be given more freedom to develop self-control. On the other hand, they lack that control. So they take risks, behave impulsively and try things out. Puberty is a dangerous time, with a death rate raise of 200 to 300 percent compared to childhood. And many people develop serious problems during this interval, like an alcohol addiction or a unipolar depression.'

As an expert on adolescents, you are regularly asked to give advice. So please, do tell us: how should parents and policymakers treat adolescents?

'The principle behind the gradual driver's license appears to work out. In the United States, you are allowed to drive when you reach the age of 16, which results in a lot of accidents. Simply raising the minimal age or improving their driving abilities doesn't work, because 18-year-olds tend to be just as crazy as 16-year-olds, and youngsters with improved driving abilities will take more risks. What does save lives is the gradual license, allowing adolescents only to drive a car with a parent at first. Later, they can drive the car on their own, and eventually they are allowed to drive with friends. This license does what good parents do: it gives the adolescent freedom to develop self-control – but not too much freedom all at once, causing them to be a danger to themselves or to others – and this development is carefully monitored. It is hard to copy this license to related issues such as alcohol, sex and drugs, but this principle of gradually increasing responsibility seems to work out all right.'

http://pmbcii.psy.cmu.edu/dahl/

'Nowadays, a younger brain has to deal with more intense emotional processes'



Analyzing intelligence

by Vittorio Busato

Is there a general factor of intelligence? The British psychologist Charles Spearman (1863-1945), a pioneer in the field of factor analysis, said there was. He called this factor *g*, for general intelligence. Spearman's first publication about *g* appeared as early as 1904, in the *American Journal of Psychology*.

To this day, the validity of *g* remains heavily debated in international specialist publications. Conor Dolan, associate professor of the Psychological Methods research group, is also involved in this discussion. Together with his colleagues, he's working on a steady oeuvre of methodologically well-founded publications in prominent journals. The articles mostly center on group differences in intelligence test scores, or IQ scores.

How would you explain the meaning of intelligence to a layman?

'I would certainly not describe it as *g*. I'm inclined to give a more natural description: a person's capacity to solve problems or to adapt successfully to their environment. From a differential psychological point of view, though, I can't help going into details. Psychometrical methods for measuring intelligence can be very informative about differences between individuals and groups, but it is impossible to infer from them any judgment about a person's individual intelligence.'

What inspired your interest in intelligence?

'It is primarily methodologically inspired. I used to do research on behavioral genetics, analyzing covariance structure models and working on confirmative factor analysis, principal component analysis or PCA. A lot of research into intelligence is aimed at understanding subtest scores of IQ tests such as the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale. In these studies, researchers tend to make a lot of use of PCA, and this is how I was drawn into the intelligence debate almost automatically. Soon, I was faced with researchers who claim that within g, there are differences between groups such as men and women or whites and blacks. Of course, it's allowed to make such claims, but you need to sustain them with structural models and the appropriate methodological analyses. However, their argumentation is quite disappointing.'

Could you give an example?

'Gender-based differences, for instance. My colleagues and I have tried to analyze the subtest scores of men and women as precisely as possible. There is supposed to be a difference in what is sometimes called "perceptual organization", as well as in verbal intelligence – but we have found none of these differences. In jargon, perceptual organization and verbal intelligence are called first-order factors. With indicators such as IQ subtests, we are able to analyze their variance. However, *g* is also thought to be involved in gender-based differences. I'm not saying that it isn't, but I am saying that it is impossible to make that claim in a methodologically well-founded way. There is no indicator for *g*.'

What can you say about the heredity of intelligence?

'A very recent meta-analysis states that intelligence is fifty percent hereditary. Yet, the community of intelligence researchers claims that intelligence is 70 to 80 percent hereditary. I wouldn't make any of such claims. The question should be: what is the heredity of individual differences in intelligence scores? That's a modification I'd like to make. After all, it is useless to talk about analyzing the heredity of intelligence per se.'

How exact or seemingly exact can an IQ score be?

'By definition, an IQ score is a random indication. If you, for whatever reason, are having a bad day, you'll have a lower intelligence score than you would on a better day. Supposing that this test is done in an honest and correct way, there are always standard measuring errors involved. From a psychometrical point of view, I could still estimate quite accurately within which interval your IQ score would fall. From a psychological point of view, it's a different thing. I cannot make any claims about the difference between a person with an IQ of 124 and someone with an IQ of 132. But you will find that a child with an IQ of 80 is cognitively very different from a child with an IQ of 120. Without doubt, the latter will do much better in school, but both children might very well be equally happy.'

What do you think of the more ecological approaches to intelligence, such as Robert Sternberg's successful intelligence, Daniel Goleman's emotional intelligence and Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences?

'I like the idea of them, but unfortunately, there aren't any sets of data about those types of intelligence for me to analyze methodologically.'

http://users.fmg.uva.nl/cdolan/

'There is no indicator for g'

Mediating between the social and the organizational

by Jorn Hövels

Gerben van Kleef (1977), associate professor of social psychology, received the prestigious Jos Jaspars Early Career Award at the conference of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology in June last year. The award is given to young psychologists who have made a great contribution to their field of research. Van Kleef, who began his scientific career as a PhD student of work and organizational psychology, was rewarded for his numerous publications on emotions and power in social contexts.

Primarily, Van Kleef himself regards the award as an acknowledgement for his way of linking organizational psychological issues with social psychological issues. 'The jury consists of social psychologists from various European universities. However, my research is anything but prototypical for their field. I'm beginning to realize that my work is actually taken seriously by other social psychologists. Evidently, I am not the outsider I thought I was. And that feels great, because I do consider myself a true social psychologist.'

Why is that?

'I'm much more interested to understand how people influence one another, than to find out how organizations should be organized in order to function optimally. I see the latter question as the derivative of the former. Organizations, after all, tend to function well when the people involved react to each other in a favorable way.'

Nevertheless, you find yourself on the interface of both fields of study.

'Social psychology mostly focuses on perception, emotion, cognition and intention. It has a more fundamental and process-related approach than work and organizational psychology, which is concentrated on behavior and hard results: does a team perform better or worse after an intervention? I'm combining the processes-related focus of social psychology with the behavioral questions that work and organizational psychology asks.'

Could you give an example?

'I've examined the way managers can improve the performance of their employees, and how the emotion of anger could be involved in this. It turns out that the effect of their getting angry at staff members depends on the individual team members. If they are quick to process social information, they will probably improve their performance when their manager gets angry. That's because these people will analyze the anger and interpret it as an incentive to try harder. Then again, employees with less of a tendency to process social information, will decide that their boss is simply being unfriendly. In that case, their performance is bound to deteriorate.'

An angry manager – that sounds rather incompetent.

'I define effective emotion regulation as applying emotions in a useful, appropriate way for a particular situation. This means that anger, in some circumstances, can actually be an effective management instrument. When people feel they have power over others – and of course, this is usually the case with managers – they often do make the mistake of not showing enough empathy to their subordinates. This is a common complaint of PhD students as well. There are physiological processes involved in this oversight. My research shows that the nervus vagus of people who feel powerful, works harder. This nerve keeps their heartbeat in check. In effect, powerful people tend to recognize other people's emotions, but react to them in a rather insensitive or numb way. It's a survival mechanism, because powerful people usually have a busy schedule and a lot of matters asking for their attention. This makes them less motivated to get to the bottom of personal problems.'

How would you describe the relevance of your research?

'Most research into the effects of emotions has been done on an intrapersonal level – if we see a lion, we become afraid and run for our lives – but not on an interpersonal or social level, in other words, on the way our emotions influence other people's behavior. This interpersonal level of analysis is the focus of my work. I believe that emotions help coordinate social interaction. I hope my research will ultimately contribute to our understanding of why we have emotions in the first place.'

How on earth did you manage to write 35 articles and chapters, half of which as first author, between 2002 and 2008?

'On a daily basis, I'm fortunate enough to be able to do the things I am most interested in. That gives me a great incentive to work hard.'

http://home.medewerker.uva.nl/g.a.vankleef/

'Powerful people's insensitivity is based on a survival mechanism'

Beyond psychology

by Vittorio Busato

Jeroen Raaijmakers (1952), professor of experimental psychology and director of the Cognitive Science Center Amsterdam (CSCA), has seen considerable changes in psychology since the beginning of his academic career. 'Psychology is moving closer and closer to biology,' he says.

In short, classical cognitive psychology used to be aimed at abstract representations of mental processes, without taking the neural substrate into account. Actually, that substrate or "hardware" wasn't even supposed to matter. It was all about the "software" of cognitive processes. Raaijmakers says this created a lack of understanding. 'I am not surprised that psychology, partly thanks to advanced brain imaging technology, is changing into cognitive neuroscience.'

Raaijmakers doesn't think this development will create a schism in academic psychology: 'For fields such as work and organizational psychology and social psychology, I see many areas of common interest. The relation between emotions and behavior, for example, decision-making processes, or neuroeconomics. It would be great to know more about the underlying neural processes.'

Raaijmakers, who is well-known for his research on memory, has recently become director of a new university-wide research program on brain and cognition. This is an interdisciplinary cooperation between psychologists, (neuro)biologists, economists, philosophers, (psycho)linguists, and educational researchers at the University of Amsterdam. Its objective is to gain insights into the mechanisms that make cognitive functions and processes possible.

Raaijmakers: 'The cortex and hippocampus, for instance, are parts of our brain that are essential for our memory. We'd like to know how processes at the cellular level interact to determine how and which information is stored when a memory trace is formed. The challenge that we are facing is to make the connections between those different levels.'

The CSCA aims to become one of Europe's top research institutes in cognitive science. What makes you so ambitious?

'The University of Amsterdam has always held a strong position in the field of cognitive science, although not always very visibly, because the research was spread out over various departments. Researchers as well as the university board, the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences now realize that by working together, we can break new ground. This will have to translate into excellent scientific output. Anyway, I'd say that one measure of the success of our ambition would be if internationally acclaimed researchers will be happy to come and work with us, for a shorter or longer period of time. The CSCA needs to become a kind of magnet for talent.'

How do you manage such wide-ranging research?

'I am not the only person doing that, all departments involved are managing it together. The idea is to bring together PhD and postdoctoral students who are interested in crossing the usual disciplinary borders. Working together intensively causes cross-fertilization and triggers new, unexpected ideas. I'd like to organize frequent meetings between researchers to make sure they talk to each other often, and I want to keep nourishing enthusiasm about how stimulating and enjoyable research can be.'

What are your own research objectives?

'I will stay focused on developing formal models to give us a truly deep insight into phenomena such as explicit and implicit memory. I want to know which characteristics of those models are responsible for their ability to predict specific phenomena. As for the research within the new programme, I would be interested in exploring how models developed within psychology relate to the more abstract cognitive models developed within logic and philosophy. I am also interested in knowing more about what exactly goes wrong in the hippocampus of amnesia patients, on a neurobiological and neuropsychological level.'

Psychology is a social science, not an exact science. Can psychologists still serve as pioneers in interdisciplinary research? Or will they always be dependent on the advancement of technology, such as brain scan techniques?

'You're talking about physics now, and biology depends just as much on physics as psychology does. I don't see why psychology should be less exact than biology. In fact, psychologists are pioneers in applying brain imaging techniques to study cognitive processes. That's why many leading cognitive neuroscientists are psychologists. They know how to analyze behavior, and how to design tasks and experiments to investigate component processes. For instance, psychologists are very skillful at controlling factors such as arousal or motivation when they examine learning behavior.'

Do you think that a stronger focus on interdisciplinarity could obscure psychology as an independent academic field?

'No, I don't. As the director of CSCA, I'm supposed to be an avid promoter of interdisciplinarity. But personally, I find it more important to advance knowledge and the understanding of the relations between cognition and biological processes, than to advance interdisciplinarity as a goal per se. In other words, the fact that we are crossing traditional borders between sciences is of much less significance than the research itself.'

http://home.medewerker.uva.nl/j.g.w.raaijmakers/
http://www.csca.nl/

'Many leading cognitive neuroscientists are psychologists'

The importance of shared values

by Jorn Hövels

Annelies van Vianen, professor of organizational psychology, became head of the Work and Organizational Psychology research group in January last year. Van Vianen has extended the scope of its research, which now encompasses the relation between employees and their working environment, challenges, creativity and (narcissistic) leadership. Also, the municipality of Amsterdam has commissioned the research group to examine the effectiveness of reintegration programs.

'A few years ago, we've agreed to broaden our horizons', explains Van Vianen. 'I'm committed to that. Before, our research mostly focused on work satisfaction, well-being and personnel selection. These are also important themes, but we already know quite a lot about them.'

Besides field research, experimental research is becoming more and more common, says Van Vianen. 'We're trying to become less dependent on the kind cooperation of respondents who provide us with self-reports. You can never be sure how accurately those self-reports reflect reality, anyway. In the laboratory, we are able to take a closer look at the details. Once these are worked out, a researcher can always decide to field-test them within a particular organization.'

Does being chair of the research group fit your personal career goals?

'As most of my colleagues, I wasn't really eager to fulfill this position, because doing research is what I am most interested in. However, since it's just the two of us – me and my predecessor, Carsten de Dreu – I've always known that I'd have to take over the job from him one day. Besides, in view of my research, it is actually quite interesting to be in a manager's shoes for some time. Unfortunately, I have little time left to do my own research. And that's a shame, because doing a successful research project would only add to my authority.'

Which research study are you involved in at the moment?

'I collaborate with researchers from Taiwan. We're examining whether the resemblance between staff members and their superiors affects the loyalty between them. In this part of the world, we don't have a term for sharing a background with someone, but in China and Taiwan, people call that *guanxi*. If you share *guanxi* with your boss, you'll have a much better chance of getting hired and of continuing to receive their support.'

Is 'guanxi' completely irrelevant in the Netherlands?

'In fact, I think we tend to underestimate the influence of sharing the same background here. Research has shown that in the Netherlands, sharing certain values does influence the selection and association with employees significantly. Very often, professional competence isn't a decisive factor.'

Which of those values are the most important?

'The way a person feels about justice, autonomy, helping others. These are essential aspects of our identity. They affect the goals we set for ourselves and serve as a guideline for the way we lead our lives. A good match is to the employer's as well as to the employee's advantage. If employees don't sense a connection, they will feel like they can't be themselves. That stings. In their work, employees want to be able to express their personality in some way – if they can't do that, they'll leave.'

How do you keep your research group together?

'We don't have a top-down management structure, so the researchers, who are professionals after all, are allowed a lot of space to determine their course. Certainly, their work has to fit the program. But the most important part of my job is hiring the right people.'

What is it like to be part of the female minority of professors?

'When I was younger, I used to worry a lot about the glass ceiling. That's why I founded the De Beauvoir Foundation, in order to encourage the participation of women in academic science. In my work as a professor, however, I don't notice any difference. Of course, I still think that more women should be promoted. Their number is increasing, but there are still obstacles to be removed. From the age of 28 until 40, men experience a career sprint, while most women begin to work less, because of having children. It's impossible for them to make up their arrears, especially in the Dutch academic system, in which there are fewer vacancies for professors than in the United States, for example, and in which your number of publications is still the key to obtaining a promotion.'

http://home.medewerker.uva.nl/a.e.m.vanvianen/

'If employees feel they can't be themselves, they will quit their job'

An outpatient research clinic

by Dagmar van der Neut

Clinical Psychology is expanding its research facilities. Thanks to the Psychology department, which is providing the necessary funds, the Ambulatorium on Roetersstraat can soon be reopened. There, certified psychologists will be giving treatments as well as collect data about the effects of interventions.

'The aim is to help clients overcome their problems and do research at the same time,' explains Arnold van Emmerik, who is coordinating the project. 'What's more, we'll bridge the gap between fundamental experimental psychology and clinical practice. As a small outpatient research clinic, the Ambulatorium will be somewhere in between a psychology lab and a mental health clinic.'

Van Emmerik is very enthusiastic about the investment. 'Like every clinical research group, we need to do client-based research. We used to do this at regular Dutch mental health clinics, or GGZ's. Unfortunately, since their production pressure has gone up, there is less and less room for scientific research, which costs a lot of time but doesn't bring in money. That's why we want to invest in the Ambulatorium, which will enable us to conduct clinical research without being dependent on other institutions too much.'

What do you intend to examine?

'Starting in September, we're going to do research into complex posttraumatic stress disorder or PTSD. People who have been traumatized extensively during their childhood, often experience many problems later in life which are very difficult to cure. Much debate is going on about whether they would benefit from a standard PTSD treatment or not. We've invited Marylene Cloitre, an American psychotherapist who has developed a special protocol for the treatment of this disorder. She's going to train our therapists as well as some from the Mentrum clinic, and then we're going to see whether her method improves existing treatments for these patients.'

Does this mean that the Ambulatorium will be a training center too?

'Yes, it does. The idea is to implement successful methods of treatment in other mental health clinics as well. If we train external therapists from the beginning and involve them in the research, this will probably be easier to accomplish.'

What other research plans do you have?

'One of the first things is comparing the effects of cognitive behavioral therapy to those of virtual reality exposure in clients with a panic disorder. Paul Emmelkamp, one of our professors, and PhD student Katharina Meyerbröker are responsible for this research. Also, for patients with self-mutilating or suicidal tendencies, we're going to compare individual cognitive behavioral therapy to mindfulness-based group therapy. The latter involves meditative techniques to teach people to react to their own thoughts and feelings in a friendlier, more observing way, without trying to alter them or regard them as irrational or dysfunctional, as they would in regular cognitive behavioral therapy.'

You are going to try out experimental treatments. Could you harm clients as a result?

'Our goal is to be innovative, so there will always be a new element in the methods of treatment we use. Then again, they will be based on cognitive behavioral therapy, a treatment that has already proven to be effective. As a rule, we'll focus on improving existing methods of treatment, not on doing any strange or wild experiments. Clients will be informed about what to expect and about the possible pros and cons. Actually, I think we'll be able to offer better treatments than most other institutions do, because we will suffer less from production pressure. We'll be able to do extensive diagnostic tests, carry out measurements and take much more time for clients. For example, the PTSD sessions will be one hour and a half each. Other clinics offer sessions of 45 minutes at the most.'

'We are bridging the gap between theory and practice'

Are you saying that regular mental health care has a lot of room for improvement?

'We know that cognitive behavioral therapy is effective, but it can still be perfected in many ways. Twenty to fifty percent of anxiety patients do not experience sufficient effects. Therefore, we can't pretend we have found the perfect treatment. We know what is currently the best kind of treatment available, but we cannot predict which patients will benefit the most from it. For that reason, we should explore diagnostics in new ways – which is another spearhead of the Ambulatorium. On the basis of personality traits and other individual difference characteristics, we might be able to predict whether or not a person will benefit from cognitive behavioral therapy.'

The Ambulatorium, in other words, is a necessity?

'Our research group here at the University of Amsterdam is the largest in the Netherlands. We have a good international reputation as well. If we want to continue to do innovative research and publish high-profile articles, the Ambulatorium is an absolute necessity. Ultimately, its impact will benefit the department as well as the university as a whole.'

For more information, go to www.acther.nl or write an e-mail to A.A.P.vanEmmerik@uva.nl

Suggestions? Please send an e-mail to: mindopen@uva.nl

PHD'S

MARCH 10 JACOB JOLIJ
Seeing and acting: The role of conscious and unconscious visual representations in visually guided behaviour

MARCH 10 MICHAEL VLIEK
Group-based social comparison processes: An intragroup level of analysis

APRIL 23 DAPHNE WIERSEMA
Taking it personally: Self-esteem and the protection of self-related attitudes

JUNE 18 JASPER WIJNEN
The role of selective inhibition in adaptive oculomotor control

SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS

JUNE 3-5 DOORWERTH
8th Dutch Endo-Neuro-Psycho Meeting
http://www.enpmeeting.org/2009

JUNE 21-25 VIENNA
11th World Congress of Psycho-Oncology
http://www.ipos-society.org/ipos2009/index.asp

JUNE 26 AMSTERDAM
CSCA Symposium 'Neural Basis of Consciousness'
http://www.csca.nl

SEPTEMBER 2-5 EDINBURGH
First meeting of the Federation of the European Societies of Neuropsychology (ESN)
http://www.fesn.eu/home

AUGUST 1-4 AMSTERDAM
MathPsych 2009
http://www.mathpsych.socsci.uva.nl/

NEWS

Carsten de Dreu, professor of Work and Organizational Psychology, has been appointed fellow of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP).

In February, three research assistants have been selected in the yearly 'Open OZI round' to assist at the following research:

Prof dr Ben Schmand and Prof dr Richard Ridderinkhof - Afname van cognitieve functies bij patiënten met de ziekte van Parkinson (Cognitive impairment in patients with Parkinson's disease);

Dr Conor Dolan - Een diffusie modelverklaring voor de relatie tussen algemene intelligentie en reactiesnelheid in eenvoudige cognitieve taken (An explanatory diffusion model for the relation between general intelligence and speed of response during simple cognitive tasks);

Dr Hilde Geurts - Het trainen van executieve functies in kinderen met autisme (The training of executive functioning in children with autism).

On the 15th of May, the Betto Deelman Award will be presented by the Dutch Foundation of Neuropsychology at the University of Amsterdam.

Next year, the Federation of the European Societies of Neuropsychology (ESN) will host Amsterdam: Neuroscience Capital of the World 2010. More information will soon be posted on http://www.fesn.eu/home.

GRANTS

REINOUT WIERS
Vici Grant
Automatisch verslaafd? Nieuwe perspectieven en behandelingen (Automatically addicted? New perspectives and treatments)

BIRTE FORSTMANN
Research assistant grant of the Division for the Earth and Life Sciences of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO)
The anatomical and neurochemical foundations of decision-making under time pressure

FRENK VAN HARREVELD
Achmea Research assistant grant for research on risk perception

FRENK VAN HARREVELD, JOOP VAN DER PLIGT AND MARK ROTTEVEEL
Open Competition Grant of the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO)
Ambivalence and choice conflict: Regulatory processes in attitudes and decision-making

COLUMN

Be a subject!

by Michelle Spaan

Why do we love testing ourselves so much? And why do we always want to compare our performance to that of others?

In any case, there are many who take advantage of this mechanism. Just go into a bookstore and you'll see that almost every magazine features a test of some kind. Also, television shows which revolve around a test have proven to be a lasting success. The Dutch IQ Test is probably the most popular. Its contestants are divided up into groups such as celebrities, construction workers, housewives, blondes and students. The most entertaining part is the announcement of the scores. Which province has scored the highest average IQ? Who turn out to be more intelligent: the students, or perhaps the construction workers? And which celebrity is going to be the laughingstock this time?

There used to be a TV quiz called Vijf tegen Vijf, or: Five against Five. Two teams of five people had to answer simple questions. Beforehand, these questions had been put to a hundred others. If the contestants were able to name one of the five answers most frequently given, they would score points. I would be watching at home, saying 'Told you so!' whenever I had guessed right. I wonder if everyone else was doing the same thing. Maybe not, but I am sure we enjoy finding out how "normal" we are.

And because people like doing tests, I just know that the new test subject pool of the University of Amsterdam is going to be a great success. Researchers of the Psychology department usually work with student subjects, because they are obliged to participate in several tests as a part of their course curriculum. Unfortunately, this poses some limitations to the scope of the research. After all, a more diverse subject pool, with people from all different sections of society, would make the test results more complete.

That's why we are inviting everyone to sign up for our subject pool. It doesn't matter how old you are, what kind of schooling you've had, or what your medical history is. Every single person is welcome. And the more we know about your background, the easier it will be for us to match you to the right test.

Of course, test subjects do not have to offer their services for free. They can choose between unpaid research (mostly online questionnaires) and paid research, either online or in the university's laboratory. Depending on the duration and the type of research, subjects will be recompensed. Often, they will be able to choose between money, a gift certificate, or a donation to a charity.

At the moment, we're working hard on the development of this subject pool. A pilot will soon be launched, and we should be ready for everyone to sign up in September. We'll put advertisements in newspapers, and distribute flyers in order to make it public. You can already visit www.test.uva.nl and let us tempt you to join in.

Remember: practice makes perfect. So by participating in the psychological research of the University of Amsterdam, you will not only help advance psychological knowledge, but you can also be confident you'll get better and better at all those magazine tests and television quizzes.

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