

# **Post-Conference: Evolutionary Psychology in the Low Countries**

**European Behaviour and Evolution Association  
(EHBEA) 2013**

University of Amsterdam, Thursday 28 of March 2013

## **Program**



## Program

09:00-09:30	Coffee & tea
09:30-09:35	Welcome by Annemie Ploeger, University of Amsterdam
09:35-10:00	Annemie Ploeger, University of Amsterdam <i>Autistic and schizotypal traits: do they overlap and why? A view from evolutionary developmental biology</i>
10:00-10:30	Willem Frankenhuis, Radboud University Nijmegen <i>Does Early-Life Exposure to Stress Shape, or Impair, Cognition?</i>
10:30-11:00	Athanasios Chasiotis, Tilburg University <i>Self-deception, parenting motivation, and well-being: Results from the Dutch LISS panel</i>
11:00-11:30	Coffee & tea break
11:30-12:00	Karlijn Massar, Maastricht University <i>Jealousy: Unconscious processes</i>
12:00-12:30	Gert Stulp, University of Groningen <i>Sex, Stature and Status – Natural selection on height in contemporary human populations</i>
12:30-14:00	Lunch break
14:00-14:30	Andreas De Block, KU Leuven <i>Why psychiatrists shouldn't care about evolutionary psychiatry.</i>
14:30-15:00	Stefaan Blancke, Ghent University <i>Evolved intuitions, cultural preferences</i>
15:00-15:30	Charlotte de Backer, University of Antwerp <i>You can't have your cake and share it. The co-evolution of commensality and prosociality.</i>
15:30-16:00	Coffee & tea break
16:00-16:30	Josh Tybur, VU University Amsterdam <i>Disgust: Evolved Function and Structure</i>
16.30-17:00	Mark van Vugt, VU University Amsterdam <i>Naturally Selected: The Evolutionary Psychology of Leadership, Status and Power</i>
17:00-17:10	Closing by Leander van der Meij, VU University Amsterdam

## Practical information

Admission is free. There are many locations near to the conference where you can have an excellent lunch (see list with recommendations below). After the meeting there is an opportunity to have dinner in the city center of Amsterdam (lunch and dinner costs are at own expense). The post-conference will be on the Roeterseiland of the University of Amsterdam in the city center of Amsterdam, Building JK, room B.25 (on the ground floor). See link for the location:

<http://www.uva.nl/over-de-uva/de-uva-in-amsterdam/locaties/locaties/locaties/content/folder/rec-jk.html>

We are looking forward to the post conference!

On behalf of the Organising Committee,

*Leander van der Meij*

*Annemie Ploeger*

## Recommendations for lunch:

CREA Café

Nieuwe Achtergracht 170 (around the corner of the meeting location)

<http://www.crea.uva.nl/cafe.php>

Café De Roeter

Roetersstraat 192

<http://www.goodfoodgroup.nl/roeter.html>

Lunchroom T

Roetersstraat 4 hs

<http://www.t-etenendrinken.nl>

Café Koosje

Plantage Middenlaan 37

<http://koosjeamsterdam.nl>

Burgermeester

Plantage Kerklaan 37

<http://www.burgermeester.eu>

De Pizzabakkers

Plantage Kerklaan 2

[http://www.depizzabakkers.nl/DePizzabakkers/contact\\_plantage.html](http://www.depizzabakkers.nl/DePizzabakkers/contact_plantage.html)

## Abstracts and contact information

**Time slot**      **09:35-10:00**

Author            Annemie Ploeger  
 University        University of Amsterdam  
 Email              A.Ploeger@uva.nl

Title                *Autistic and schizotypal traits: do they overlap and why? A view from evolutionary developmental biology*

Abstract            Autism and schizophrenia are disorders with different diagnoses and developmental trajectories. This suggests that these disorders have a separate etiology. However, recent research suggests that they are genetically related. In addition, it has been found that symptoms of autism and schizophrenia show a remarkable overlap. In my presentation I will focus on the correlation between autistic and schizotypal traits in the normal population. In several samples we found a positive correlation of about .5. I will explain this finding from an evolutionary developmental point of view.

**Time slot**      **10:00-10:30**

Authors            Willem E. Frankenhuis & Carolina de Weerth  
 University        Radboud University Nijmegen  
 Emails              WFrankenhuis@gmail.com, C.deWeerth@psych.ru.nl

Title                *Does Early-Life Exposure to Stress Shape, or Impair, Cognition?*

Abstract            A predominant view in psychology is that early psychosocial adversity (e.g., abuse) impairs cognition, as children from stressful backgrounds (e.g., violent households) score lower on standard tests of intelligence, language, memory, inhibition, and other abilities. However, recent studies indicate that these individuals may exhibit improved detection, learning, and memory of stimuli that are ecologically relevant to them (e.g., dangers), compared with safely nurtured peers. These findings contradict the view that cognition of stressed individuals is generally impaired, and rather suggest that individuals developmentally specialize their minds to local environmental conditions. Here, we discuss recent research supporting this hypothesis. In addition, we present novel studies (being developed) that examine whether stressed children show not only improved detection, but also improved memory and reasoning, on tasks involving stimuli that are ecologically relevant to them.

**Time slot**      **10:30-11:00**

Author            Athanasios Chasiotis  
 University        Tilburg University  
 Email              A.Chasiotis@TilburgUniversity.edu

Title                *Self-deception, parenting motivation, and well-being: Results from the Dutch LISS panel*

Abstract            Self-deception is a defense mechanism that suppresses negative and maintains positive aspects of the self. This mechanism might be particularly important within the realm of parenting effort. We tested this evolutionary hypothesis with data from the immigrant panel sample (N = 1406) of the dutch LISS panel (<http://www.lissdata.nl/lissdata>) by using explicit, implicit and self-report instruments

to measure self-deception (SDE, Paulhus, 1998), parental motivation (OMT, Kuhl & Scheffer, 2001) and subjective well-being (SWLS, Diener et al., 1985). Regression models and path analyses show interactional effects of gender on the mediational role of self-deception on the relation between parenthood and well-being. Furthermore, the relation of self-deceptive mechanisms and implicit parenting motivation is explored for the first time. Results are discussed within the framework of evolutionary developmental psychology.

**Time slot** 11:30-12:00

Author Karlijn Massar  
 University Maastricht University  
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Title *Jealousy: Unconscious processes*

Abstract An evolutionary perspective on human (social) behaviour assumes that the human mind has evolved to be responsive to contextual stimuli that are relevant to fundamental motives such as survival or reproduction. In the current presentation, I argue that the presence of a rival is one such contextual stimulus. I hypothesise that given the fact that the pair bond is essential to human reproductive success, rival evaluation over the course of human evolution has evolved into an automatic process, and that subliminal exposure to a rival should suffice to evoke jealousy. I will describe three studies using subliminal priming that confirm this hypothesis, and which show that sex-specific jealousy was evoked by rival characteristics to which participants were exposed outside their conscious awareness – whether these were in the form of words, photographs, or line drawings.

**Time slot** 12:00-12:30

Author Gert Stulp  
 University University of Groningen  
 Email G.Stulp@rug.nl

Title *Sex, Stature and Status – Natural selection on height in contemporary human populations*

Abstract As an upright walking mammal, height is perhaps our most conspicuous feature. Height is a highly variable trait, both within and between populations, has a high heritability, and influences the manner in which people behave and are treated in society. It is therefore possible that natural selection acts on this variation in height and, in this thesis, I investigated whether this was the case. I first examined sexual selection on height, demonstrating that taller individuals have higher social status and increased dominance, that there are height preferences for potential mating partners, that these preferences influence choice in a speed-dating context, and that height preference and choice influence actual pair formation. Having established a role for height in intra- and inter-sexual selection, I considered other ways in which height contributes to biological fitness, and how this differs between the sexes. I demonstrated that shorter women and women with partners much taller than themselves are at greater risk for a Caesarean section, and therefore face greater mortality risks. I furthermore showed that shorter women have more children than taller women, despite higher child mortality, whereas average height men have more children than both shorter and taller men. Due to these differential selection pressures, shorter families achieve higher reproductive success through the female

line, whereas average height families achieve greater reproductive success through the male line. In summary, there is natural selection on height in contemporary human populations.

**Time slot** 14:00-14:30

Author Andreas De Block  
University KU Leuven  
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**Title** *Why psychiatrists shouldn't care about evolutionary psychiatry.*  
**Abstract** Most philosophical critiques of evolutionary psychiatry focus on the explanations that evolutionary psychiatrists have produced to account for the spread and/or persistence of particular mental disorders (Adriaens 2007; Faucher & Blanchette 2011). My critique is more fundamental. I argue that even if the proposed evolutionary explanations for depression, autism, and schizophrenia would be supported by all the available evidence, the value of evolutionary psychiatry for the rest of psychiatry would still be very limited. If true, my argument subverts the claims made by both evolutionary psychiatrists (Nesse 2008, Nesse & Jackson 2006) and philosophical proponents of evolutionary accounts of mental disorders (Murphy & Stich 2000) . In their view, evolutionary psychiatry should be the foundation for psychiatric theory and practice. By scrutinizing and rebutting four arguments of Nesse and three arguments of Murphy and Stich in favour of their view, I will show that the assumed added value for psychiatry is either not an added value at all, or that the added value cannot be brought about by evolutionary psychiatry.

*References:*

- Adriaens, P. (2007). 'Evolutionary psychiatry and the schizophrenia paradox: a critique'. *Biology & Philosophy* 22: 513-528
- Faucher, L. & Blanchette, I. (2011). Fearing new dangers: Phobias and the complexity of human emotions. In P. Adriaens & A. De Block (eds.). *Maladapting Minds: Philosophy, Psychiatry and Evolutionary Theory*. Oxford University Press, pp. 34-64.
- Murphy, D. & Stich, S. (2000). Darwin in the Madhouse: Evolutionary Psychology and the Classification of Mental Disorders. In P. Carruthers & A. Chamberlain (eds.), *Evolution and the Human Mind: Modularity, Language and Meta-Cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 62-92.
- Nesse, R. . (2008). Evolution in medical education: The most basic science is missing. *Lancet*, 372, 21-27.
- Nesse, R. & Jackson, E. (2006). Evolution: Psychiatric nosology's missing biological foundation. *Clinical Neuropsychiatry* 3: 121-131.

**Time slot** 14:30-15:00

Author Stefaan Blancke  
University Ghent University  
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**Title** *Evolved intuitions, cultural preferences*  
**Abstract** Evolved intuitions, cultural preferences  
In the Moral Brain, the research group at Ghent University, we study how the evolved mind shapes and constraints human behavior and cultural phenomena. Originally, the focus lay primarily on morality, but in recent years the scope has expanded to include other domains such as art, religion, science and pseudoscience. Personally, I look at how evolved intuitions shape cultural preferences. More specifically, I apply the theoretical framework set by Sperber's epidemiology of representations, dual mind

theory and conceptual change, to several issues, including the cultural evolution of pseudoscience, the role of disgust in cultural evolution (for example, the opposition to GMOs), and the influence of folk biology in the history of biology and science education. In this talk, I will briefly sketch the research conducted within our group and then elucidate some of my own research.

**Time slot** 15:00-15:30

Author Charlotte De Backer  
University University of Antwerp  
Email Charlotte.DeBacker@ua.ac.be

Title *You can't have your cake and share it. The co-evolution of commensality and prosociality.*

Abstract It has been suggested that throughout human history, commensality has been a means to celebrate the benefits of the indispensable cooperation in the acquisition of food, while simultaneously operating as a moral socialization system for novices. Might it be that commensality was not a by-product of the food acquisition process, but evolved as an adaptive solution to problems related to the need of a moral system? In a first cross-sectional survey study we investigated if frequencies of childhood family style meals may be a good predictor of adult measures of prosocial behavior. Family style meals offer conditions that have been proven successful in the socialization of prosocial behavior: conviviality, but also clear rules among those who have to share the food. Using a cross-sectional survey among students in Belgium (n = 487) and Taiwan (n = 275), data was collected about childhood eating habits and current acts of prosocial behavior. In Belgium family style meals are restricted to home cooked meals, whereas in Taiwan eating out of the home also takes the form of family style meals that offer arenas for moral socialization. As forecasted, home cooked meals are a good predictor in Belgium, but not in Taiwan. And, overall, levels of prosocial behavior are higher in the Taiwanese sample. In two follow-up experiments we are testing the causality of this relation. The experiments are designed to test if children and adults behave more prosocial following a shared food experience, compared to a shared 'taste' experience or mealtime conversation. These studies are in progress, yet will also be briefly outlined.

**Time slot** 16:00-16:30

Author Josh Tybur  
University VU University Amsterdam  
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Title *Disgust: Evolved Function and Structure*

Abstract Research concerning disgust has expanded in recent years, and contemporary disgust researchers generally agree that an evolutionary perspective is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the development and function of this emotion. However, evolutionary approaches to disgust have typically not employed the computational, modular perspective endorsed by Cosmides and Tooby (2008) in generating theories of disgust. Here, I discuss how this perspective can promote novel hypotheses concerning the function and structure of disgust. Specifically, I detail potential differences in the inputs and outputs that should characterize functionally specialized disgust domains such as pathogen disgust, sexual disgust, and moral disgust.

<b>Time slot</b>	<b>16.30-17:00</b>
Authors	Mark van Vugt, Nancy Blaker, Allen Grabo & Brian Spisak
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Title	<i>Naturally Selected: The Evolutionary Psychology of Leadership, Status and Power</i>
Abstract	Leadership is arguably one of the most important themes in human social and organizational affairs. Yet despite the wealth of findings, many questions remain regarding the origins, evolution, biology, development, and social psychology of leadership. Here I will analyze leadership from an evolutionary perspective, review the findings (including from our own program), and discuss both the theoretical and practical implications. An evolutionary perspective offers novel insights into some major barriers to leadership effectiveness in groups. Obstacles include large discrepancies between modern and ancestral environments, the existence of innate cognitive biases in leader decision-making, and the presence of evolved psychological mechanisms designed to dominate and exploit other human beings. Yet, individuals in groups also possess evolved mechanisms to overcome these mismatches, avoid selective cognitive biases, and avoid the tendency to dominate and be dominated. Understanding the evolved psychological mechanisms underlying leadership and followership behaviors -- in terms of evolved functions, neurological and social psychological processes -- offers the best possible hope for producing an overall improvement in leadership selection and effectiveness within modern organizations.