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## **Limitations of Global Norms on Global Conservation: Using Provincial Norms to Motivate Pro-Environmental Behavior**

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Two field experiments examined the effectiveness of signs requesting hotel guests' participation in an environmental conservation program. Appeals employing descriptive norms (e.g., "the majority of guests reuse their towels") proved superior to a widely used traditional appeal that focused solely on environmental protection. Moreover, normative appeals were most effective when describing group behavior that occurred in the setting that most closely matched consumers' immediate situational circumstances (e.g., "the majority of guests in this room reuse their towels"), which we refer to as provincial norms. Additional experiments conceptually replicate this finding and help elucidate mechanisms driving the effect of provincial norms.

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## SYMPOSIUM SUMMARY

# Going Green and Seeing Green: Social Routes to Conservation and Monetary Roadblocks to Consideration

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### SYMPOSIA OVERVIEW

In consumer contexts, purchase decisions that benefit the individual (e.g., buying a sports car) can often impose costs on others (e.g., damaging pollution of the environment). In this session, four papers explore the factors that facilitate or inhibit consumers' motivation to consider others in their beliefs and behaviors—including behaviors that have a direct impact on the welfare of society as a whole. The first two papers offer novel strategies for promoting environmentally friendly ("green") consumption, and the final two papers pinpoint a pervasive roadblock to such prosocial behavior. By providing both theoretical and practical contributions, this symposium raises new questions about the effects of status, social norms, and money on consumer behavior specifically and social interaction more generally.

In the first paper, Griskevicius, Tybur, and Van den Bergh investigate the role of status-attainment goals in consumption. Drawing on evolutionary theories of altruism and status, this research shows that activating status motives can actually increase the tendency of people to choose green products over superior non-green products. Goldstein, Griskevicius, and Cialdini examine the role that certain reference groups play in motivating hotel guests to conserve environmental resources, showing how such consumers give greater consideration to the normative behaviors of reference groups whose immediate surroundings most closely match their own.

In contrast to such prosocial behavior, the remaining two papers examine how a factor inherent to consumption activities—money—can serve as a barrier to the consideration of others' needs and perspectives. Because money can remind people how they can achieve their own goals without the input or influence of others, it can reduce their dependency on others and their desire for social connectedness. Mead and Baumeister show that individuals who are primed with money are less driven by self-presentation concerns and are less well liked by an interaction partner. Unlike priming status goals, priming money seems to reduce the motivation to make a good impression on others in the service of forging interpersonal bonds. Caruso, Mead, and Vohs examine the underlying mechanism for the asocial effects of money. This research finds that the mere presence of money leads people to behave in a more self-centered (egocentric) manner, which makes them less likely to take the perspective of others and less likely to help a stranger (unless they were financially dependent on that stranger). As such, money may hinder people's ability to understand social norms, anticipate others' reactions to their behavior, or be sensitive to the needs of other people—all of which may prevent them from pursuing behaviors that benefit not only the welfare of others but of society as a whole.

Taken together, the papers in this symposium offer some specific strategies for promoting prosocial behavior and some important barriers that can prevent it. Considering that the bulk of the consumer literature has tended to focus on the factors that incline consumers toward self-focused consumption rather than other-oriented consumption and conservation (Mick 2006), we think that this symposium will be part of the movement to address this imbalance. We feel that a deeper understanding of the goals that are active in various consumer contexts can further our efforts to

increase the motivation and execution of actions that embrace, rather than eschew, the concerns of others.

This symposium should be of interest to researchers in the areas of persuasion, motivation, social influence, prosocial behavior, decision-making, and consumer cognition. Because the papers in this symposium utilize multiple and diverse methodologies, it should also appeal to those who value the combination of field and laboratory experiments. The speakers will integrate the presentations by highlighting their contribution to the consumer behavior literature and their implications for marketing research and practice. Each speaker has agreed to serve if the proposal is accepted, and all papers have data from several experiments and are in advanced stages of completion.

### EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

#### “Conspicuous Conservation: Promoting Green Consumption through Status Competition”

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How can we motivate consumers to go green? Traditional approaches suggest providing people with information (about the plight of the environment) or with incentives (to switch to green products). Although both techniques can certainly spur conservation, such approaches largely ignore the social nature of—and the social motivation behind—conservation.

Consider what a person communicates about himself by going green. By purchasing a hybrid car rather than a gas-guzzler, for example, a person can signal to others that he is a relatively altruistic, rather than a selfish, individual. That is, instead of purchasing an environmentally wasteful product that will benefit only him, he chose a product that will benefit others by helping the environment, even though choosing the green product often means foregoing the luxury of having a more powerful engine and ample trunk space.

Engaging in prosocial behaviors such as green consumption can earn people a prosocial reputation (Semmann, Krambeck, and Milinski 2005). Individuals with such reputations are seen as more trustworthy (Barclay 2004) and more desirable as friends, allies, and leaders (Cottrell, Neuberg, and Li 2007). Considering that prosocial individuals are highly valued, prosocial actions are directly associated with status. Indeed, self-sacrifice for the benefit of the group has been shown to increase a person's status in the group (Hardy and Van Vugt 2006).

An altruistic reputation can be so valuable that individuals across modern and traditional societies (and even across species) are known to compete for status by trying to be seen as more altruistic—an evolutionary theory called *competitive altruism* (Van Vugt et al. 2007). Given the relationship between prosocial behavior and status, the theory of competitive altruism suggests that people should engage in prosocial actions particularly when they are motivated to compete for status. Thus, because green products enable a person to signal that he is cooperative and prosocial, activating a motive for status should lead people to prefer green over non-green products.

The current research examined how activating a status motive influenced product choice. Consider one choice facing a person in a bustling car show room: Should he buy the relatively luxurious, higher-performance, but energy-wasteful car, or the less luxurious, lower-performance, but energy-efficient Hybrid car. If he is motivated to gain status at the time of the decision, a traditional perspective suggests that he should choose the more luxurious option (e.g., Godoy et al. 2007). After all, this car has better performance, comfort, and indulgence. But the theory of competitive altruism suggests that status should lead him to choose the green product because there is an important public cost to choosing the more luxurious non-Hybrid car: Such a choice may signal to others that the owner is selfish and doesn't care about the welfare of others.

The first experiment examined how status motives influenced product choices between three types of green products (e.g., Toyota Camry HYBRID) and a more luxurious non-green counterpart product (e.g., Toyota Camry XL V-6). Findings showed that although the more luxurious products were generally more preferred (in the control condition), activating status motives significantly increased people's tendency to choose the green product.

According to competitive altruism theory, a key factor in how status motives should influence product choices is whether the act of purchasing can publicly signal the buyer's prosocial or selfish nature. The second experiment thus examined how status motives influenced choices when purchases were made in public versus in private (e.g., shopping alone at home on the Internet). Consistent with traditional perspectives, when shopping in private, status motives led people to prefer the more luxurious products. However, in line with competitive altruism, when shopping in public, status motives led people to choose the green (rather than luxurious) products. The third experiment examined how the relative price of the green vs. non-green products influenced their desirability. Results showed that status motives led green products to be particularly desirable when such products cost more than their non-green counterparts.

In summary, although status has been traditionally associated with luxury and "status goods," this research shows that activating status motives can lead people to forego such products. Instead, consistent with the theory of competitive altruism, status motives can lead people to choose non-luxurious and poorer-performing green products because such products can signal a prosocial rather than the selfish nature of the person. This research has both theoretical contributions and practical implications for consumer behavior.

**"Limitations of Global Norms on Global Conservation:  
Using Provincial Norms to Motivate Pro-Environmental  
Behavior"**

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Recently, many consumer researchers have noted that very little research has been conducted on the factors that influence consumers' prosocial behaviors, and even less on pro-environmental behaviors (Menon and Menon 1997; Mick 2006; Robin and Reidenbach 1987; see also Bendapudi, Singh, and Bendapudi 1996). We sought to better understand such actions in several domains, including the domain of hotel towel reuse. With the adoption of environmental programs by hotels, more and more travelers are finding themselves urged via signs to reuse their towels to help conserve environmental resources by saving energy and reducing the amount of detergent-related pollutants released into

the environment. Guests are almost invariably informed that reusing one's towels will conserve natural resources and help save the environment from further depletion, disruption, and corruption. Notable in its complete absence from these surveyed persuasive appeals was one based on a potentially powerful motivator of prosocial behavior: descriptive social norms.

When consumers learn that seven out of ten people choose one brand of automobile over another or that teeth-whitening toothpaste has become more popular than its less functional counterpart, they are getting information about descriptive social norms, which refer to how most people behave in a given situation. Descriptive norms motivate both private and public action by informing individuals of what is likely to be effective or adaptive behavior in that situation (Cialdini, Kallgren, and Reno 1991).

The complete absence of a descriptive normative approach to hotel conservation programs is especially remarkable considering that studies conducted by the largest manufacturer of hotel towel reuse signs indicate that approximately 75% of guests who have the opportunity to participate in such programs do reuse their towels at least once during their stay. From a practical perspective, then, one purpose of this research was to investigate whether utilizing an appeal that conveys the descriptive norm for participation in such programs would be more effective at encouraging towel reuse than the current industry standard appeal. We tested this hypothesis in Experiment 1 by creating our own towel reuse cards and recording the extent to which each of the two appeals spurred guests to participate in a hotel's conservation program. Consistent with predictions, we found that the sign employing the descriptive norm approach produced significantly greater towel reuse than one employing the standard environmental approach.

A second purpose of the present investigation was to examine how hotel guests' conformity to a descriptive norm varies as a function of the type of reference group tied to that norm. In Experiment 2, we examined whether the norm of hotel guests' immediate surroundings, which we refer to as the *provincial norm*, motivates conformity to the norm to a greater extent than the norm of guests' less immediate surroundings, which we refer to as the *global norm*. Specifically, we investigated whether guests who learn the descriptive norm for their particular room (provincial norm) are more likely to participate in the program than guests who learn the same descriptive norm for the whole hotel (global norm), even though the provincial norm in this context is rationally no better an indicator of correct or proper behavior than the global norm. Consistent with predictions, the sign employing the provincial norm led to the greatest amount of towel reuse, even though individuals considered this group to be comparatively much less meaningful to their personal identities than to other reference groups used for other descriptive normative appeals in Experiment 2.

The more powerful influence of provincial norms was conceptually replicated in Experiment 3. In that experiment, participants went to a large on-campus computer center, where they learned the (pro-environmental) norms for either the entire computer center (global norm) or simply for the people who had previously sat at their particular computer (provincial norm). Consistent with the field data, those who learned the provincial norm were more likely to engage in pro-environmental behavior than were those who learned the global norm. Several other experiments in the computer center setting help reveal potential mechanisms for the effect. Theoretical and pragmatic implications of this work are discussed.

**“Money Reduces Self-Presentation and Interpersonal Likability in Novel Social Situations”**

*Nicole L. Mead, Florida State University, USA*

*Roy F. Baumeister, Florida State University, USA*

Because humans have a fundamental need to belong, they often try to put their best face forward when meeting new people in an attempt to be perceived as likable (Baumeister 1998). In fact, self-presentation is vital for success in life. Many desirable outcomes, such as making friends, success in one’s occupation, and maintaining healthy relationships, are influenced by the ability to manage one’s impression according to situational demands (e.g., Schlenker 1980).

However, people are not always successful at getting their desired impression across to others. Because self-presentation is a conscious and effortful process, people are not always willing or capable of exerting the resources that self-presentation requires (Vohs, Baumeister, and Ciarocco 2005). The current research examined how money influences self-presentation and interpersonal likability. It was expected that, because money reduces people’s desire for social connectedness (Vohs, Mead, and Goode 2006), nonconscious reminders of money would reduce self-presentation strategies and interpersonal likability.

Experiment 1 tested the hypothesis that reminders of money would reduce concern with creating a desirable impression on a new interaction partner. After completing filler questionnaires in front of a money or a fish screensaver, participants were told they would engage in a 5 min conversation with another participant. The experimenter explained that, because it can be difficult for people to have a conversation with a stranger, both participants would record an introductory video that would be viewed by the partner before the interaction. Self-presentation was measured by having a group of independent raters code how hard participants were trying to create a good impression in their video. Consistent with our hypotheses, results indicated that money-primed participants tried less hard than neutral-primed participants to create a good impression on their partner.

In Experiment 2, we tested the hypothesis that money would reduce interpersonal likability by having two previously unacquainted participants engage in a semi-structured conversation for 5 min. In each pair, one participant was assigned to be the target of the interaction (the person who rated for interpersonal likability) and the other the rater. Participants, naïve to experimental condition, were put in separate rooms and completed a jumbled phrase task. Half of the targets descrambled phrases containing money-related words whereas the other half of targets descrambled sentences containing only neutral words. Raters always performed the neutral version of the descramble task. After a 5 min interaction, raters were asked to indicate how likable, competent, and friendly the target was during the interaction. Both the target and the rater were asked to indicate how much they cared about the impression they made on their partner during the interaction. Results indicated that, compared to participants who descrambled neutral-phrases, participants who unscrambled money phrases were rated as less likable. Moreover, money-primed participants were seen as less friendly during the interaction, which mediated the effect of the money-prime on reduced likability. Money-primed participants also cared less than about the impression they made on their partner than neutral-primed participants. Additional analyses indicated that results were not attributable to mood or differences in perceived competency.

Results of two experiments suggest that money reduces the likelihood that people will self-present to a new acquaintance. Although this could have positive implications for the self, such as

ability to stand up for one’s rights, it may have negative implications for others, such as reduced prosocial behavior.

**“There’s No “You” in Money: Thinking of Money Increases Egocentrism”**

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*Nicole L. Mead, Florida State University, USA*

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The psychological effects of money long have been suspected, and now are beginning to be revealed in experimental research. Particularly in consumer contexts, money is a potent incentive because it enables consumers to obtain the goods and services necessary to achieve their personal needs (Lea and Webley 2006). Because money tends to engender a self-sufficient state of heightened personal goal pursuit and reduced dependency on others (Vohs, Mead, and Goode 2008), reminders of money may harm interpersonal sensitivity by increasing attention to the self and away from others.

Theoretically, money’s ability to reduce social sensitivity can be understood as resulting from the exchanged-based rules that govern the use of money in consumer contexts—rules that are diametrically opposed to the forces that promote communal behaviors (Fiske 1991). Empirically, participants reminded of money tend to offer less help to others, request less help from others, and put more physical distance between themselves and others relative to those not reminded of money (Vohs, Mead, and Goode 2006). In the current research, we explored whether money has the effect on basic human cognition of increasing egocentrism—the fundamental tendency to interpret the world in terms of the self.

Because money heightens personal goal pursuit (Vohs et al. 2006), and because active goals direct cognitive resources (Bargh et al. 2001), reminders of money may focus the mind on the self. Given finite cognitive resources, increased focus on the self means reduced focus on other aspects of social life, including other people. In addition, egocentric correction is a costly controlled process that is less likely to be activated when people are insufficiently motivated (Epley et al. 2004). Because money stimulates self-sufficient behavior, it may well reduce attempts to understand others’ perspectives. In four studies, we tested the hypothesis that reminders of money may reduce people’s willingness to correct their own egocentric perspective.

In Study 1, we asked participants to draw a symbol on their foreheads (Hass 1984). We manipulated the salience of money by having some participants draw a dollar sign (\$) and others draw the letter *S*. A greater percentage of participants drew the symbol egocentrically (as though the writer would read it herself) when drawing the symbol \$ than when drawing the symbol *S*, suggesting that they were less likely to spontaneously adopt another’s visual perspective.

In Study 2, we activated the concept of money for some participants but not others before they read some social information (facts about another student) and some nonsocial information (a list of nonsense words). On a subsequent surprise memory test, those reminded of money made more errors when recalling information about the other student but not the nonsense words, suggesting that money’s effects on information processing may be specific to social information.

To test whether money reduces the tendency to adjust one’s egocentric beliefs, Study 3 asked participants to rate both how much they personally, and how much other people, agree with various statements about abortion (Ross, Greene, and House 1977). Participants who were subtly reminded of money through a faint back-

ground image on the computer showed greater egocentric projection of their own beliefs and their predictions of another's beliefs.

Finally, Study 4 tested whether a financial incentive for accuracy would overcome the effects of money primes on egocentric behavior. Because a financial incentive provides direct benefits to the self and may allow consumers to fulfill their own goals and needs more effectively, we predicted that money-primed participants would be more inclined to work for a financial incentive than a social one. In a maze task that required participants to give directions to help a blindfolded participant navigate a series of paths, the financial incentive (but not the social one) reduced the number of egocentric errors made by participants primed with money.

Money has become an integral part of consumer societies, as people desire to accumulate the goods, services, and (presumed) happiness that it affords. When a consumer has enough resources to be self-sufficient and meet her own goals, she has little need to interact, trade, or negotiate with other consumers or sellers in a marketplace. Furthermore, moving beyond one's egocentric perspective may be a necessary step in promoting prosocial behavior, such as empathizing with those in need or donating to charitable causes (e.g., Batson 1994). We feel that a deeper understanding of the effects of money on human cognition and behavior in general—and on the egocentric tendencies it appears to engender in particular—should help both consumers and marketers develop strategies that enable the perspective taking necessary to facilitate efficient exchanges and promote choices that benefit both the individual decision makers and the societies to which they belong.

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