

ELANOR F. WILLIAMS

CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL DATA

CURRENT POSITION

Postdoctoral Fellow
University of Florida, Marketing Department

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EDUCATION

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

PhD Social Psychology 2008

Dissertation: "The dynamic self: The use of ideals and intentions in understanding self and others"

Graduate advisor: Thomas Gilovich

YALE UNIVERSITY

BA Psychology 2001

Distinction in the Major

Thesis: "The accuracy of lay theories about gender differences in the fundamental attribution error"

Undergraduate advisor: Geoffrey L. Cohen

RESEARCH INTERESTS

I am interested in how people make judgments and decisions in consumer contexts. An example of how those interests are reflected in my research is my focus on the question of why people fail to learn from mistakes. Consumers have knowledge of their own past failures as well as those of others, and yet they too rarely use that information to help them make better future decisions. My research on this and other topics has encompassed work on differences in judgments of self and others, how our intentions for and beliefs about the future can influence our decisions and judgments in the present, and the ways subjective experience can differ from objective reality.

PUBLICATIONS AND MANUSCRIPTS

ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS

Williams, Elanor F., Thomas Gilovich, and David Dunning (forthcoming), "Being All That You Can Be: How Potential Performances Influence Assessments of Self and Others," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.

We suggest that people expect that they should or will perform even better than their best performances, with practice, effort, or better circumstances, and these potential performances are the closest match to their intended output; therefore, potential can be seen as a useful marker of what one can do. Six studies demonstrate that people incorporate potential into assessments of their own traits and abilities to a greater extent than they do so for others.

Alba, Joseph, and Elanor F. Williams (forthcoming), "Hedonic Consumption: A Review of What People Enjoy Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," invited paper for *Journal of Consumer Psychology*.

In this paper we review 30 years of research on hedonic consumption. Inspired by Hirschman and Holbrook (1982), we examine the ways in which subsequent research has helped us understand how consumers think about and choose products and activities that they will enjoy, and propose fruitful ways in which the next 30 years of research can continue to shed light on this important and influential topic.

Williams, Elanor F., and Thomas Gilovich (2008), "Conceptions of the Self and Others Across Time," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34 (8), 1037-46.

People are full of plans, goals, hopes, and fears—future-oriented thoughts that constitute a significant part of the self-concept. But are representations of others similarly future-oriented? In five studies, we show that the future is more a part of the self than it is of other people. This leads people to see themselves as less knowable than others, to rely more on their own strivings to make assessments than to rely on the strivings of others, and even to perceive themselves as further from their ideal selves.

Williams, Elanor F., and Thomas Gilovich (2008), "Do People Really Believe They Are Above Average?" *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 44 (July), 1121-8.

Participants made a series of bets to test their belief in the accuracy of their self-enhancing trait ratings. They were indifferent between betting on themselves or on a matched-probability random drawing, and it took only a slight change in the drawing's probability for them to switch their bet, indicating that people truly believe their self-enhancing self-assessments.

Williams, Elanor F. (2007), "Naïve Cynicism," in *Encyclopedia of Social Psychology*, ed. Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen Vohs, San Diego, CA: Sage Publications, 601-2.

Williams, Elanor F. (2007), "Three-Dimensional Model of Attribution," in *Encyclopedia of Social Psychology*, ed. Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen Vohs, San Diego, CA: Sage Publications, 992-3.

MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVISION

Williams, Elanor F., and David Dunning. "From Formulae to Faith: A "Consistency Heuristic" in Assessments of Self-Performance." Invited revision for *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

In three experiments, we suggest that approaching a problem in a systematic, rule-based way induces people to have confidence in their resultant responses, regardless of whether their approach leads them to the right conclusion. Our work suggests one reason why miscalibrated confidence judgments are so common: people rely on how they make a decision as a guide to its quality, rather than what the decision was or their true ability to make it.

MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW

Williams, Elanor F., and Robyn A. LeBoeuf. "Starting Your Diet Tomorrow: Consumers Believe They Will Have More Control Over the Future Than They Did Over the Past." Under review at *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Across eight studies, we show that, all things being equal, people believe they will have more control over the future than they would have the past. Our research suggests that one reason why people believe that they will be able to have greater self-control and make wiser decisions in the future than they have in the past is that they think they will have more control over the outcome of future situations than they had over similar past ones. This perceived increased control is due not to optimism or stronger emotional responses on the part of the future, but instead a feeling that it is more important to control the future than it was to control the past.

Williams, Elanor F., and Mary Steffel. "Double Standards in the Use of Enhancing Products by Self and Others." Under review at *Journal of Consumer Research*.

People are less accepting of products and services that enhance rather than enable potential but as yet unattained traits. In addition, people believe that potential is a part of who they are but is not a part of others, which suggests that these types of products that appear to enable the self will likely be seen as enhancing others. We find this to be the case, and that this leads people to believe it is less morally acceptable for other people to consume such products than it is for themselves to do so.

LeBoeuf, Robyn A., Elanor F. Williams, and Lyle A. Brenner. "Forceful Phantom Firsts: Framing Experiences as "Firsts" Amplifies Their Influence on Judgment." Under review at *Journal of Marketing Research*.

First experiences with products and people are highly influential. We believe, however, that consumers overextend this valid rule, leading superficially or irrelevantly "first" items to also have greater influence than "later" ones. In five studies, we show that people draw stronger conclusions from experiences that seem to be or are associated with firsts, believing them to be more likely to occur, continue, or reoccur than equivalent later experiences.

Steffel, Mary, and Elanor F. Williams. "Delegating Decisions: Recruiting Others to Make Difficult Choices." Under review at *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Across a variety of situations, our work suggests that people are more likely to choose to let someone else choose when the decision is difficult than when it is easy. Our findings suggest that delegating difficult choices is rooted in the desire to avoid responsibility for making the

wrong choice, as participants who delegated rather than choose themselves felt less responsible for choice outcomes, and delegation increased under circumstances of high accountability and the possibility of transferring responsibility to another person.

Williams, Elanor F., and Thomas Gilovich. "Stacking the Deck: The Relative Impact of Peak and Typical Performances in Judging the Self and Others." Under review at *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.

We present four studies suggesting that people believe the best examples of where they might stand on a variety of traits represents their typical standing on those traits, but that others are represented by more average examples. In addition, the extent to which people "take the best" in their self-assessments predicts their susceptibility to the above-average effect.

WORKING PAPERS

Williams, Elanor F., David A. Pizarro, Dan Ariely, and James D. Weinberg. "The Valjean Effect: Visceral States and Cheating." Targeted for *Psychological Science*.

Visceral states like thirst, hunger, and fatigue can alter motivations, predictions, and even memories. We propose that these "hot" states can also change our standards for moral behavior. In three studies, we demonstrate that people will lie to win a prize that would relieve their current visceral state. Importantly, this effect was specific to a prize that could alleviate participants' current need state. We believe this demonstrates that people may alter their moral standards in order to satisfy a visceral state.

WORKS IN PROGRESS (DATA COLLECTED)

❖ Product satisfaction based on secondhand impressions (with Nira Munichor). *We are interested in two aspects of word-of-mouth communication. One is how the message of a word-of-mouth communicator may change as it is filtered through sender and receiver; we believe that the message is sharpened and leveled as it is transmitted, leaving receivers with more extreme impressions than senders intend. The second is how product experience is changed by knowing someone else's previous impression of the product. We suspect that secondhand information may improve product experience, as it makes key product aspects more fluent and easily perceived.*

❖ Sunk savings (with Robyn LeBoeuf). *The sunk cost phenomenon is well-established. We believe that there is a corresponding "sunk savings" phenomenon, wherein people will continue to save objects, even perishable ones, simply because they have saved them to that point. We are investigating whether this is because people infer that they have saved the object because it is special, rather than the object being special because they have saved it; whether the object accrues value ("interest") as it is saved; or whether something else lies behind this paradoxical behavior.*

❖ Empathy gaps with past selves and their effect on self-change efforts (with David Dunning). *Many self-change efforts require us to overcome visceral sensations, like hunger or pain. We believe that, because people who are not in a visceral state have difficulty imagining being in one, many self-change efforts will fail because people will overestimate their ability to overcome their visceral sensations or fail to plan properly to avoid them.*

❖ Collections and the self: Belongings can serve self-protective functions (with JoAndrea Hoegg and Richard Lutz). *Past work has suggested that people develop and maintain collections of items to serve a self-protective function, but this idea has never been tested empirically. We are examining whether a person's collections, or possessions more generally, will function as other self-affirmations do, reducing defensiveness and other negative reactions in the face of threat.*

❖ Consumers' perceptions of free will (with Joe Alba). *Consumers seem to have a firm belief in their ability to exert willpower and volition. We are examining the depth of this belief, whether consumers are as convinced that others share this power, and what it means for marketers' perceived culpability for unwanted or damaging consumer behaviors.*

❖ Pursuing goals for the sake of goal pursuit: Activating multiple goals increases general goal pursuit (with Chris Janiszewski). *The goal system does what it can to make sure goals are attained, by increasing the urge to complete them as time passes. We believe that the goal system doesn't discriminate between goals perfectly, and that the more goals one has active, the harder one will work to complete any one particular goal.*

❖ Visceral states, empathy, and altruistic aid. *Visceral states are hard to understand when you are not in them. This suggests that people currently experiencing a visceral state may be more empathetic to others undergoing the same experience. However, these states are also quite self-centered and unpleasant; I am examining whether a visceral state will make someone more or less likely to help other people, and whether the effect is specific to others sharing one's current visceral state.*

❖ I would do that if I were you: Advising others to act when you would not (with John R. Chambers, James A. Shepperd and Jenny Howell). *It is very easy to advise someone else to take a leap forward; it's another thing to do it yourself. We believe that people are more likely to advise others to act than they themselves would be likely to do, and that part of what underlies this asymmetry is the empathy gaps people experience when trying to understand another person's thoughts and emotions.*

PRESENTATIONS

CHAired SYMPOSIA

Williams, Elanor F., Karlene Hanks, Joanne Kane, & Eugene Caruso (2007, January), "Judgment in the Context of Time: How Thinking About the Future Differs from Thinking About the Past." Symposium presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Memphis, TN.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Steffel, Mary, and Elanor F. Williams (2011, August), "Delegating Decisions: Using Others To Make Difficult Decisions." Poster to be presented at the Subjective Probability, Utility, and Decision Making Conference, London, United Kingdom.

Williams, Elanor F. and Mary L. Steffel (2011, January), "The Ethics of Enhancement Are in the Eye of the Beholder: Double Standards in the Use of Enhancing Treatments by Self

and Other.” Poster presented at the Judgment and Decision Making Preconference, Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, San Antonio, TX.

Dunning, David, Elanor F. Williams, and Justin Kruger (2011, January), “The Hobgoblin of Consistency: Rational Errors Underlie Misguided Confidence Among the Incompetent.” Paper presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, San Antonio, TX.

Williams, Elanor F., and David Dunning (2009, November), “From Formulas to Faith: Consistency Leads to Confidence.” Paper presented at the Society for Judgment and Decision Making Conference, Boston, MA.

Williams, Elanor F., David Pizarro, and Dan Ariely (2009, February), “Visceral States Influence Moral Decision Making.” Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Tampa, FL.

Williams, Elanor F., and David Dunning (2008, November), “Leading Ourselves into Temptation: Memory for Visceral Sensations and Self-Change Efforts.” Paper presented at Society for Judgment and Decision Making Conference, Chicago, IL.

Williams, Elanor F., and Thomas Gilovich (2008, May), “Using Thoughts of the Future in Assessments of Self and Others.” Paper presented at the Midwestern Psychological Association Conference, Chicago, IL.

Williams, Elanor F., and Thomas Gilovich (2008, February), “Priming Honesty Reduces Self-Enhancement.” Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Albuquerque, NM.

Williams, Elanor F., and Thomas Gilovich (2007, November), “The Influence of the Future on Judgments of Self and Others.” Paper presented at the Society for Judgment and Decision Making Conference, Long Beach, CA.

Williams, Elanor F., and Thomas Gilovich (2007, May), “Potential Influences Assessments of Self But Not Others.” Paper presented at the Midwestern Psychological Association Conference, Chicago, IL.

Williams, Elanor F., and Thomas Gilovich (2007, January), “The Me Yet to Be: How Future Selves Influence Perceptions of Self and Other.” Paper presented (as symposium chair) at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Memphis, TN.

Williams, Elanor F., and Thomas Gilovich (2006, May), “Best Performances as Representative Performances for the Self.” Poster presented at the Association for Psychological Science Conference, New York, NY.

Williams, Elanor F., and Thomas Gilovich (2006, May), “Best Performances as Representative Performances for the Self.” Paper presented at the Midwestern Psychological Association Conference, Chicago, IL.

Williams, Elanor F., and Thomas Gilovich (2006, January), “Testing True Belief in Self-Enhancing Trait Ratings.” Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Palm Springs, CA.

Williams, Elanor F., and David Dunning (2005, May), "From Formulas to Faith: Consistent Theories Lead to Confidence." Paper presented at the Midwestern Psychological Association Conference, Chicago, IL.

Williams, Elanor F., and Thomas Gilovich (2005, January), "Erring on the Side of Awesome: Self-Enhancement as Generous Placement Within a Range of Values." Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, New Orleans, LA.

INVITED TALKS AND GUEST LECTURES

Cornell University, Department of Human Development (2006, October).

Cornell University, Introduction to Social Psychology guest lecture (2007, June).

University of Florida, Department of Psychology (2008, October).

University of California, San Diego, Rady School of Business (2009, October).

FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

Cornell University Sage Fellowship, 2003-2004, 2007-2008

Conference Travel Grant, Cornell University, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008

Cornell Departmental Research Grant, 2007-2008

Association for Consumer Research Transformative Consumer Research Grant, 2008

Julian Simone Fund Grant, Marketing Department, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2010

University of Florida Graduate Student Council Research Grant, 2010

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Ad hoc reviewer for *Journal of Marketing*; *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*; *Social Psychology*; *Cognition*; and *Social Cognition*

Competitive paper and special sessions reviewer, *Society for Consumer Psychology*

Competitive paper and special sessions reviewer, *Association for Consumer Research*

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Association for Consumer Research

Society for Consumer Psychology

Society for Judgment and Decision Making

Association for Psychological Science

Society for Personality and Social Psychology

TEACHING

MARKETING COURSE EXPERIENCE

Consumer Behavior

Spring 2010, Fall 2011, Spring 2012. A lecture course designed to give students an introduction to theory and research that reveal what choices and decisions consumers tend to make and why and how they make them. I am responsible for

designing and teaching this course, which is typically taken by undergraduate Marketing majors at the University of Florida. (Overall instructor rating: 4.72 out of 5; college mean: 4.22)

Marketing Research

Spring 2011. A lecture course covering all aspects of marketing research, from simple observation to experimental design. I was responsible for designing and teaching this course taken by MBA and other business masters students at the University of Florida. (Overall instructor rating: 4.51 out of 5; college mean: 4.11)

Ethics and Public Policy for Marketers and Consumers

Fall 2010. A lecture course focused on recent trends in transformative consumer research, geared toward students interested in improving people's lives through marketing. I was responsible for designing and teaching this course, an elective taken by MBA and other business Masters' students at the University of Florida. (Overall instructor rating: 4.91 out of 5; college mean: 4.19)

OTHER COURSES DESIGNED AND TAUGHT

Introduction to Social Psychology

Summer 2008.

Introduction to Cognitive Science, Writing in the Majors: *Effective reading and writing in the social sciences*

Fall 2006.

Introduction to Psychology: Personality and Social Behavior special topics seminar

Summer 2005, 2006, 2007.

Introductory Psychology Seminar: *The self: Who we are, how we know, and what that means*

Fall 2004.

PERSONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Writing in the Majors Graduate Teaching Seminar, Fall 2006

Postdoctoral Bridge to Business Program for AACSB AQ Certification, completed

July 2011

TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

Introduction to Psychology (with Jim Maas), Fall 2004

Developmental Psychology (with Michael Goldstein), Spring 2005

Psychology and the Law (with David Dunning), Fall 2005

Introduction to Social Psychology (with Tom Gilovich & Dennis Regan), Spring 2006

Introduction to Cognitive Science (with Michael Spivey), Fall 2006

Research Methods in Psychology (with David Dunning), Spring 2007

Introduction to Psychology: Personality & Social Behavior (with Daryl Bem), Summer 2005

Introduction to Psychology: Personality & Social Behavior (with Tom Gilovich), Summer 2006, 2007

ADVISING EXPERIENCE

Senior Thesis Adviser:

Ana Figueras, University of Florida, (2010-2011). Thesis: "Disclaiming Defaults: Knowledge About Choice Architecture And Its Effects On Decision-Making"

Supervisor for Independent Study:

Samantha Mann, Diana Diesendruck, Ana Figueras, Danielle King, Mercedes Castro, and Peter Chami

PRIMARY REFERENCES

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