

Registration form (basic details)

1a. Details of applicant

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- Doctorate (date): 17 September 2004
-Use of extension clause (see Notes): no

1b. Title of research proposal

Learning to care: explaining the effect of education on prosocial behavior

1c. Summary of research proposal

Why do people contribute resources to the benefit of others, when there is no clear chance of being repayed? And why are such contributions more often made by people with a higher level of education? This project studies donations to charitable causes, volunteering, blood donation and postmortem organ donation as forms of prosocial behavior that are not easily explained by expectations of reciprocity or other self-interested motives. I propose a theory integrating insights from various disciplines, decomposing decisions about prosocial behavior in three stages: (1) being asked for a contribution by others; (2) being able to contribute; (3) being motivated to contribute. A higher level of education increases a positive outcome in all stages: a higher level of education increases the likelihood of being asked, decreases the net costs of a contribution, and increases contributions in three different ways: by providing a longer time perspective, socializing postmaterialistic value orientations, and by increasing beliefs in the efficacy of contributions. The project will use data from three prospective panel surveys to disentangle causes and effects of prosocial behavior with longitudinal analyses.

Keywords: prosocial behavior, education, panel data, social networks, philanthropy

1d. NWO Council area

MaGW

1e. Host institution (if applicable)

Utrecht University

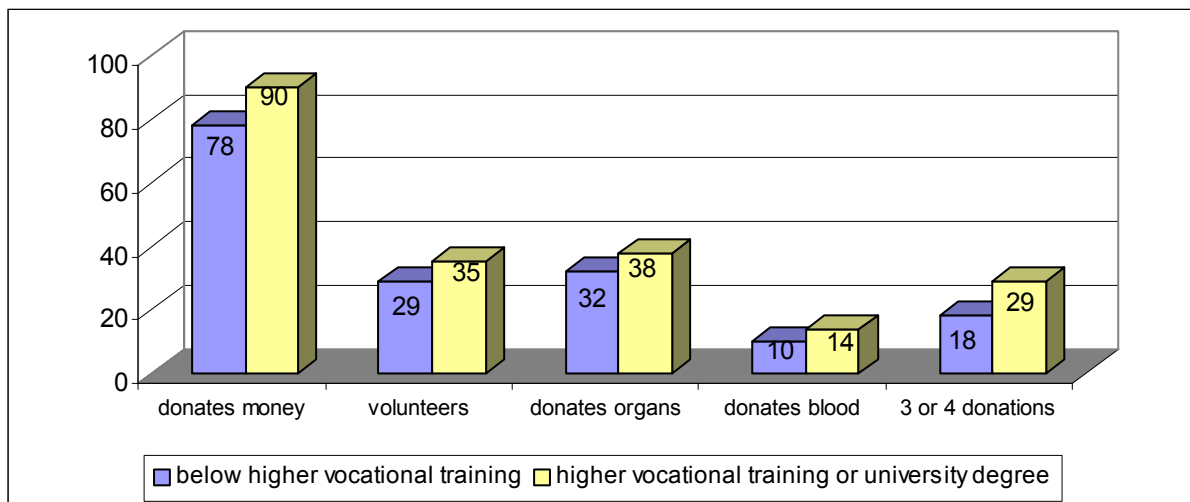
Research proposal

2. Description of the proposed research

2a. Research topic

More than 80% of the Dutch donate money to charitable causes [5,50]. About 30% do unpaid volunteer work [5,25,50]. Significant minorities are post mortem organ donor [46] and donate blood [5]. Giving to charity, blood donation, organ donation and volunteering require a personal sacrifice, and benefit society at large. This project aims at understanding why people engage in such prosocial behavior – and why especially higher educated persons do so. Prosocial behavior strongly increases with the level of education [5, 14, 32, 34, 41, 46]. Informal support is not studied because it can be explained by self-interested expectations of reciprocity [31, 35]. Survey data show that donations are more often made by persons with at least higher vocational training than by persons with lower levels of education (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Prosocial behavior (in %) by level of education (own computation based on [23], n=1587).



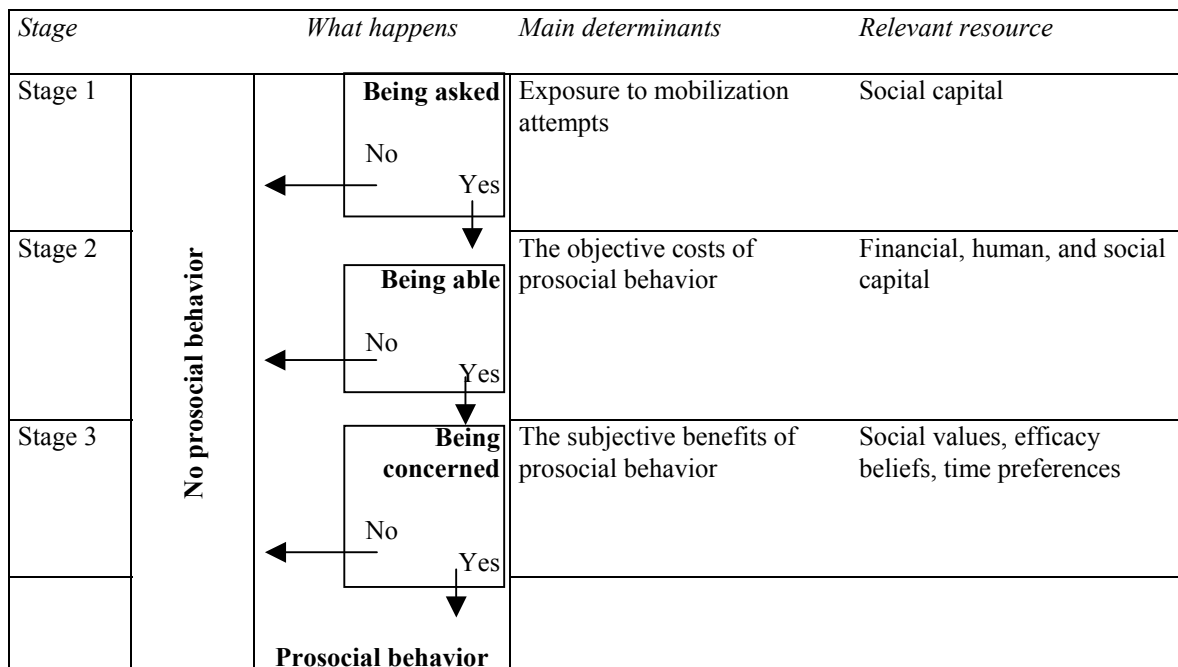
Why does education promote prosocial behavior? What is it in education that makes people more likely to contribute? In my dissertation [5] I showed that relationships of prosocial behavior with altruistic values, and identification with the needs of others through perspective taking and empathy are rather weak and do not explain educational differences. Neither are educational differences due to differences in cognitive ability [33]. Previous research in various disciplines has empirically identified a large number of other mechanisms that underlie prosocial behavior: people with larger networks [12, 16, 55], more resources [15, 58], more social trust [45, 48], greater abilities to delay gratification [50], and more postmaterialistic value orientations [10, 36] display more prosocial behavior. In contrast to previous research, this project studies these mechanisms together and investigates to what extent they explain educational differences in prosocial behavior.

2b. Approach

Theoretical model

I propose a theory integrating insights from sociology, psychology, and political science. Prosocial behavior is a decision in three separate stages as displayed in the three stage-model in figure 1. In each stage, a negative outcome means that prosocial behavior does not emerge, and with a positive outcome one enters the next stage. Prosocial behavior will only occur when positive outcomes occur in all stages (cf. [42, 54]). A higher level of education increases the likelihood of a positive outcome in each of the three stages, but the reason why differs per stage.

Figure 1. The three stage model of prosocial behavior



The importance of being asked and the role of resources

In stage 1, the relevant decision is not taken by the focal actor herself, but by other actors, such as nonprofit organizations that are seeking support. Resource mobilization theory from political science assumes that nonprofit organizations rationally ‘prospect for participants’, using existing networks of volunteers to recruit citizens who are accessible, willing and resourceful [16, 38, 39, 40]. The higher educated are more valuable for nonprofit organizations because they possess more human and social capital [22, 43] and are more accessible because of their more extensive networks. However, while recruitment risk increases with education, it seems to explain only a small part of the educational differences in charitable giving [8, 11].

In stage 2, the actor herself considers the costs of prosocial behavior, given the available stock of relevant resources. Education increases human, financial, and social capital, lowering the costs of participation [33, 57, 58]. The higher educated have a better health, possess more organizational skills, earn higher incomes, and have access to other wealthy and prestigious people. However, after controlling differences in resources, educational differences in prosocial behavior still persist [6, 8, 14]. People may be asked to contribute, and they may be able to do so, but if they just don’t care, they won’t.

Subjective evaluations: the cognitive filter

Therefore, this project focuses mainly on the subjective perception of the benefits of a contribution (stage 3). Not so much the objective costs of a contribution matter, but the subjective evaluations of the benefits, shaped by the cognitive filter through which the world is viewed [28]. Education molds and refines this filter in three ways:

(1) *Education makes people care about social problems* – Education teaches students to think and care about equality, human rights, freedom of speech, the environment and other ‘postmaterialistic’ issues [37]. The higher educated are more interested in global social problems and problems at a large social distance [54]. The higher educated can afford being concerned about such problems [36, 49] and are more likely to consider the benefits of a contribution for distant groups or abstract ideals [13]. Higher contributions of time and money to organizations advocating these issues by the higher educated can be explained partly by postmaterialistic values [10].

- (2) *Increasing efficacy beliefs* - Education increases beliefs in the efficacy of own and other's actions, including voluntary associations. People may be aware of social problems, care about them, but still feel that they cannot be solved. The higher educated have more confidence in their own abilities [48, 20], a higher self-esteem [30], and more trust in fellow citizens [24] and in charitable causes [2,14]. Higher levels of self-efficacy, self-esteem and trust among the higher educated may explain their higher level of prosocial behavior [2, 6, 21, 48].
- (3) *Expanding the time horizon* - Education trains people's awareness of the consequences of their own and other people's behavior and also learns people to care about them. Education not only widens the world view, but also expands the time horizon [29]. Decisions about contributions typically involve some trade-off between short and long-term outcomes - often in conjunction with conflicts between self-interest and collective interests. When deciding to contribute, persons with a longer time horizon will de-emphasize the costs in the short run and focus more strongly on future benefits. The ability to delay gratification increases prosocial behavior [51].

Disentangling causes and effects with prospective panel surveys

In sum, the higher educated are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior because they

- (1) Are more likely to be asked;
- (2) Have more resources at their disposal, lowering costs for prosocial behavior when faced with a request;
- (3) Are more concerned about the problems for which a contribution is needed, are more likely to believe that their contribution makes a difference in solving the problem, and are more convinced of the long-term benefits of contributions.

To test these hypotheses properly, longitudinal data are required. Relationships between prosocial behavior and resources, social values, and personality are reciprocal. Involvement in voluntary associations is both a consequence and a cause of self-efficacy [59], health [17], and requests for contributions [8, 44, 45]. In the near future, two prospective panel surveys among random samples of the Dutch population will become available to disentangle causes from effects of prosocial behavior: the *Survey of the Social Networks of the Dutch* (SSND [54]; Wave 1: 2000, n=1007; Wave 2: to be held in 2005) and the *Giving in the Netherlands Panel Survey* (GINPS, [50]; Wave 1 and 2 in 2002 (n=1707) and 2004 (n=1316); Wave 3 planned for 2006). Because the numbers of blood donors in the GINPS and SSND are too small for multivariate statistical analyses, data on blood donors from the *Blood Donation Panel Study* (BDPS) will be used to increase statistical power. The BDPS is a prospective study among 50,000 blood donors conducted by Sanquin (the official blood collection organization) containing a self-report questionnaire based on the GINPS. The applicant actively participates in the SSND and the GINPS project teams and advises Sanquin in the design of the BDPS. All three datasets have unique advantages. The SSND contains measures of trust and social networks and will be used to study recruitment processes and effects of social capital and trust on prosocial behavior. The GINPS will be used to investigate effects of resources, social values, trust and time preferences. The GINPS will also be used for field experiments with altruistic behavior [6, 8]. The experiments will test the effects of appealing to future benefits, postmaterialistic values and efficacy beliefs in requests for contributions to charitable causes. It is expected that increasing the salience of these motives increases contributions, especially by the higher educated.

Societal relevance

The charity sector in the Netherlands is a €3.5 billion industry [50]. Volunteer efforts for voluntary associations represent over 400,000 fte jobs, or 7.5% of total paid employment [18]. Evaluating the economic value of volunteer work at the minimum wage level, its annual value is €7681 billion. Relative to GNP, the nonprofit sector in the Netherlands is the largest in the world [47]. Giving and volunteering are of great social significance, not just because of their magnitude, but also because of their beneficial effects for society, making it more democratic [45], improving health [59] and happiness [56]. The mechanisms studied in this project can be used by national policy makers as well as by nonprofit managers and fundraisers to increase prosocial behavior. For instance, a recent experiment ([7], refining [27]) shows that charitable contributions can be increased by framing the costs of a contribution differently.

2c. Innovation

This project is innovative in the theory it proposes as well as the research design and the methods used. The three stage model integrates insights from theories in political science, sociology and social and personality psychology. These disciplines focus on different mechanisms affecting the participation decision, largely ignoring insights from other disciplines [9]. Considering the role of multiple actors is also an innovative step. Previous research usually views prosocial behavior as the outcome of one single decision, by one single actor, at one single point in time. In reality, citizens decide about giving and volunteering on multiple occasions, usually after mobilization attempts by voluntary associations. Therefore I consider prosocial behavior as a decision in multiple stages, taken and affected by organizations seeking support, by prospective individual contributors, and people in their social network. The research design is innovative because previous research has mainly used cross-sectional data that inhibit disentangling causes and effects [1, 11]. Finally, the combination of experimental and survey methods is also a promising initiative (cf. [26]).

2d. Plan of work

The project will be conducted at ICS/Sociology, Utrecht University (ICS/UU), in close connection with the Department of Philanthropy, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam organizing the GINPS [50]. At ICS/UU, I collaborate with Prof. Henk Flap and Dr. Beate Völker [12], organizing the SSND [55]. At ICS/KUN, I collaborate with Prof. Nan Dirk de Graaf [10] using data from the Family Survey of the Dutch Population (FSDP) [23]. International collaboration is described below (4g). Papers will be presented at international conferences and published in international journals in different disciplines.

2004	Paper: 'A resource explanation of the effect of education on prosocial behavior' (FSDP, with De Graaf) Design of experiments (GINPS) Paper: 'The social structure of trust: the role of education' (SSND1, with Völker & Flap) Paper: 'Causes and consequences of trust' (GINPS1+2, with Schuyt & P. Dekker, SCP) Design of questionnaire for SSND2 Design of questionnaire for BDPS
2005	Preparation of fieldwork for GINPS3 Conducting experiments in GINPS Paper: 'Consideration of future consequences and charitable contributions' (GINPS1+2) Data collection of SSND2 Data collection of BDPS
2006	Paper: 'Making a difference: education, self-efficacy, and prosocial behavior' (GINPS1+2) Paper: 'Perceptions of benefits of prosocial behavior' (GINPS1+2, experiments) Paper: 'Explaining the effect of education on blood donation: the role of networks and psychological motives' (GINPS2+BDPS) Data collection of GINPS3
2007	Paper: 'Social networks and voluntary associations: a longitudinal study' (SSND1+2, with Völker & Flap)
2008	Concluding paper: 'Cognitions, values, or social influence? Explaining the effect of education on prosocial behavior' (GINPS1+2+3; SSND1+2)

While the project mainly focuses on causes of prosocial behavior, the data also permit a study of the effects of prosocial behavior on health, labor market success, and subjective well-being. Time permitting, these topics will be studied in later stages of the project.

2e. Literature references

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Cost estimates

3a. Budget

	2004 (Sept.- Dec.)	2005	2006	2007	2008 (Jan.- Sept.) ^a	TOTAL
Staff costs: (k€)						
Applicant	13.005	40.549	41.905	43.261	33.473	172.193
Support staff						
Non staff costs: (k€)						
Data collection		^b 1.900	^c 12000			13.900
Travel and subsistence		1.000	1.050	1.100	1.150	4.300
Onvoorzien (5%)						9.520
TOTAL	13.005	43.449	54.955	44.361	34.623	199.913

^a Staff costs estimates are based on a 0.8fte contract, starting in scale 11.0, with 3% added to cover for unexpected increases.

^b Costs of contribution to data collection for second wave of SSND.

^c Costs of contribution to data collection for third wave of GINPS and experiments.

3b. Have you requested any additional grants for this project either from NWO or from any other institution?

no

Curriculum vitae

4a. Personal details

Title(s), initial(s), first name, surname: Drs. René H.F.P. Bekkers
Male/female: Male
Date and place of birth: 18 July 1974, 's-Hertogenbosch
Nationality: Dutch
Native country parents: Dutch

4b. Master's ('Doctoraal')

University/College of Higher Education: Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen
Date: 10 July 1997
Main subject: Sociology of Religion

4c. Doctorate

University/College of Higher Education: Utrecht University
Date: 17 September 2004
Supervisor ('Promotor'): Prof. Dr. H.B.G. Ganzeboom, Prof. Dr. N.D. de Graaf
Title of thesis: Giving and Volunteering in the Netherlands: Psychological and Sociological Perspectives

4d. Work experience since graduating

September 1997 – March 2003: PhD-student, Utrecht University (0.8fte, fixed-term)
January 2000 – January 2001: Researcher, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (0.2 fte, fixed-term)
March 2003 – present: Junior docent, Utrecht University (0.8fte, fixed-term)

4e. Man-years of research

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4f. Brief summary of research over last five years

(max. 250 words)

In my dissertation [5], I investigated the relation of formal prosocial behavior with social conditions and personality characteristics. Because in many cases (e.g., blood donation, organ donation, charitable giving) there is no prospect of future interaction with the recipient(s), and there hardly seem to be any social incentives for contributions, internalised prosocial values or prosocial personality characteristics could be the reason why there is still prosocial behavior in the absence of material or social incentives. However, even for anonymous prosocial behaviors, social conditions such as religious involvement, the level of education and the level of urbanization turned out to be more important (explaining on average two thirds of the variance) than personality characteristics. In addition, personality characteristics were not more strongly related to less costly and less observable examples of prosocial behavior. Next to my dissertation, I investigated the effect of religion on giving and volunteering [3], concluding that religious people give and volunteer more because they are more strongly embedded in a social network that encourages contributions, increasing the number of requests for contributions and the social pressure to contribute if asked to do so. In addition, I was involved in the design of the Giving in the Netherlands Panel Survey, conducted by the Department of Philanthropy of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

4g. International activities

Papers presented at international conferences

- BEKKERS, R. (2004). 'The Prevalence and Price Sensitivity of Altruism'. Paper presented at the 3d Symposium on Economics and Psychology, Tilburg University, September 1, 2004.
- BEKKERS, R. & WEESIE, J. (2003). 'The Luxury of Prosocial Values.' Paper presented at the 5th Biannual Conference of Environmental Psychology, Technical University Eindhoven, September 2, 2003.
- BEKKERS, R., Völker, B., Van der Gaag, M. & Flap, H. (2003). 'Social networks and associations.' Paper presented at ASA Annual Meeting, Atlanta, August 18.
- BEKKERS, R. (2003). 'Giving in the Netherlands Panel Survey.' Presentation at professional workshop 'Datasets in Philanthropy' at the ASA Annual Meeting, Atlanta, August 18.
- BEKKERS, R. (2003). 'Religion, philanthropy and volunteering.' Paper presented at '100 Years of Psychology of Religion', Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, May 27.
- BEKKERS, R. (2002). 'Trust, Accreditation, and Philanthropy in the Netherlands.' Paper presented at the 31st ARNOVA Annual Conference, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, November 15.
- BEKKERS, R. (2002). 'Giving Time and/or Money: Trade-Off of Spill-Over?' Paper presented at the 31st ARNOVA Annual Conference, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, November 16.
- BEKKERS, R. (2001). 'Participation in voluntary associations: Resources, Personality, or Both?' Paper presented at the 5th Conference of the European Sociological Association, Helsinki, August 31.

Invited Lecture

- BEKKERS, R. (2003). 'The power of social and psychological incentives for giving.' Presentation at Department of Economics, Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis, August 22. Invited by Dr. Mark O. Wilhelm.

Invited Workshop

- SCHNEIDER, W.H., PILIAVIN, J.A., HEALY, K. (and others). 'An International Comparative Study of Blood and Organ Donation'. Workshop at Center for Bioethics, Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis, November 18, 2004. Invited by Prof. W.H. Schneider.

International collaboration

I am involved in international collaborative research projects with:

- Prof. W.H. Schneider (Department of Medical and Molecular Genetics & Center for Bioethics, Indiana University): 'An International Comparative Study of Blood and Organ Donation'.
- Prof. Dietlind Stolle (Department of Political Science, McGill University, Montreal) and Dr. Marc Hooghe (Department of Sociology, Leuven), 'Socialization and social capital'.
- Dr. Mark Wilhelm (Department of Economics, Indiana University, Indianapolis), 'Empathy, religion and altruistic behavior in the United States and the Netherlands'. Dr. Mark Wilhelm and Prof. Richard Steinberg (also at the Department of Economics of Indiana University) are conducting a panel study of giving and volunteering in the US [19].
- Prof. Woods H. Bowman (Department of Economics, DePaul University, Chicago), 'Volunteering and

trust: A longitudinal analysis'.

- Dr. Stephanie L. Brown (Institute of Social Research, Michigan), 'Health benefits of volunteering'.

4h. Other academic activities

Peer review activities:

2004. Reviewer for *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly* and *Journal for Official Statistics*.

2003. Reviewer for *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*.

2002. Reviewer for *Tijdschrift voor Sociologie*.

I chaired sessions at the following conferences:

- NSV/VVS Marktdag Sociologie, Nijmegen, May 22, 2002, session 'Buurten, steden en gemeenschappen I'
- ASA Annual Meeting, Atlanta, August 18, 2002, session 'Networks and organizations'.

List of publications

5. Publications:

-International (refereed) journals

[S] BEKKERS, R. (2004, forthcoming). 'Participation in Voluntary Associations: Relations with Resources, Personality, and Political Values'. *Political Psychology*, 26.

[S] BEKKERS, R. (2003). "Trust, Accreditation, and Philanthropy in the Netherlands". *Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 32, 596-615.

-National (refereed) journals

[S] BEKKERS, R. (2005, forthcoming). "'Nee heb je, ja kun je krijgen': de effectiviteit van fondsenwervings- en rekruteringsstrategieën van maatschappelijke organisaties". *Mens & Maatschappij*, 80.

BEKKERS, R., HOOGHE, M. & STOLLE, D. (2005, forthcoming). "Jeugdparticipatie en sociaal kapitaal in Vlaanderen en Nederland". *Mens & Maatschappij*, 80.

[S] BEKKERS, R. & DE GRAAF, N.D. (2002). 'Verschuivende achtergronden van verenigingsparticipatie.' *Mens & Maatschappij*, 77, 338-360.

BEKKERS, R. (2002). "Giften van gereformeerden aan maatschappelijke doelen in Nederland". *Sociologische Gids*, 49, 386-408.

BEKKERS, R. (2000). 'Religieuze betrokkenheid en vrijwilligerswerk: een kwestie van psychologische dispositie of sociale organisatie?' *Sociologische Gids*, 47, 268-292.

-Books, or contributions to books

[S] BEKKERS, R., VÖLKER, B., FLAP, H.D. & M. VAN DER GAAG (2005, forthcoming). "Social Networks of Participants in Voluntary Associations". In: Lin, N. & B. Erickson (Eds.). *Social Capital: Advances in Research*. Aldine de Gruyter.

[S] BEKKERS, R. (2004, forthcoming). *Giving and Volunteering in the Netherlands: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives*. Amsterdam: Thesis Publishers (Dissertation Utrecht University).

BEKKERS, R. (2003). "De ontwikkeling van sociale waardenoriëntaties". Pp. 15-23 in: Van Dijk, E., Kluwer,

E. & D. Wigboldus (Eds.). *Jaarboek Sociale Psychologie 2002*. Delft: Eburon.

BEKKERS, R. (2003). 'De bijdragen der kerckelijken.' In: Schuyt, Th.N.M. (Red.). *Geven in Nederland 2003: Giften, Legaten, Sponsoring en Vrijwilligerswerk*. Houten/Mechelen: Bohn Stafleu Van Loghum, pp. 141-172.

[S] GOUWENBERG, B., WIEPKING, P., SCHUYT, T.N.M., BEKKERS, R. & SMIT, J.H. (2003). "Geven door huishoudens en geven door individuen". in: Schuyt, T.N.M. (Ed.). *Geven in Nederland 2001: Giften, Legaten, Sponsoring en Vrijwilligerswerk*. Houten/Dieghem: Bohn Stafleu Van Loghum.

BEKKERS, R. (2002). "Secularisering en veranderende motieven voor vrijwilligerswerk". Pp. 14-29 in: Buijs, G.J. & T. J. Van der Ploeg (Eds.). *Pro Deo: geïnspireerd blijven in vrijwilligerswerk*. Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum.

BEKKERS, R. (2001). En en of of of? De relatie tussen het geven van geld en tijd. In Schuyt, Th.N.M. (Ed.). *Geven in Nederland 2001*. Houten/Dieghem: Bohn Stafleu van Loghum.

-Other

In preparation

[S] BEKKERS, R. (2003). 'Anonymous Gifts: Personal Decisions, Social Backgrounds'. *Social Psychology Quarterly* (revise and resubmit).

BEKKERS, R. & SCHUYT, T.N.M. (2004). 'And Who is Your Neighbor? Explaining the Effect of Religion on Charitable Giving and Volunteering.' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (revise and resubmit).

VAN LANGE, P.A.M., VAN VUGT, M., BEKKERS, R. & T.N.M. SCHUYT (2003). "From Experimental Games to Prosocial Behavior: Ecological Support for Social Value Orientation." (submitted).

BEKKERS, R. (2004). 'Intergenerational Transmission of Volunteerism.' *Acta Sociologica* (submitted).

[S] BEKKERS, R. (2004). 'All-or-Nothing Dictator Games: A Field Experiment.' *American Economic Review* (submitted).

BEKKERS, R. (2004). 'Stability, Reliability and Validity of Social Value Orientations.' *Experimental Economics* (submitted).

MOLLENHORST, G., BEKKERS, R. & VÖLKER, B. (2004). 'De koude stad en het gezellige platteland?' *Mens & Maatschappij* (submitted).

[S] BEKKERS, R. (2004). 'The Prevalence and Price Sensitivity of Altruism'. Paper prepared for the 3d Symposium on Economics and Psychology, Tilburg University.

BEKKERS, R. & WIEPKING, P. (2004). 'To Give or Not to Give... That's the Question'. Paper prepared for the 32nd Conference of the Association for Research on Nonprofit and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA), Los Angeles, November 2004.

BEKKERS, R. & WEESIE, J. (2004). 'The Luxury of Prosocial Values.'

WILHELM, M., KAMIMURA, K. & BEKKERS, R. (2004). 'Religion, Empathy and Prosocial Behavior.'

[S] BEKKERS, R. & DE GRAAF, N.D. (2004). 'Opleiding en prosociaal gedrag: wil de ware hulpbron opstaan?'

Book Reviews

- BEKKERS, R. (2002). Review of Anheier & List (eds.), Cross-Border Philanthropy: An Exploratory Study of International Giving in the United Kingdom, United States, Germany, and Japan. *Voluntas*, 13(2): 198-199.
- BEKKERS, R. (2001). Review of Hooghe (2000, Red.): Sociaal kapitaal en democratie. *Sociologische Gids*, 48 (1): 106-109.
- BEKKERS, R. (2000). Review of Dekker (1999, Red.): Vrijwilligerswerk vergeleken. *Sociologische Gids*, 47 (2): 146-147.
- BEKKERS, R. (1999). Review of Passy (1998): L'action altruiste. *European Sociological Review*, 15 (4): 456-461.

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