

ZICKLIN CENTER FOR BUSINESS ETHICS RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES

SPEAKER: Jennifer Dunn, Ph.D., student in Operations and Information Management, The Wharton School and Maurice Schweitzer, Assistant Professor of Operations and Information Management, The Wharton School

TITLE: Invidious Comparisons and Insidious Behaviors: Envy and Social Undermining at Work

DATE: December 7, 2004 – Noon – 1:30 PM – Room 641 JMHH

If you plan to attend and would like a lunch, please email Gale Davis by December 3rd at agale@wharton.upenn.edu.

ABSTRACT:

Cooperation and competition co-exist in organizations. Managers expect employees to cooperate with each other, but frequently compare co-workers with each other to determine rewards such as bonuses and promotions. Even when employees do not directly compete with their colleagues, they are likely to engage in social comparisons with them (Festinger, 1954). Both competitions and relative comparisons can produce envy, which may harm subsequent cooperation. In this paper we describe the influence of competitive outcomes and relative comparisons on envy and social undermining. We find that unfavorable comparisons and outcomes (e.g., losing competitions) trigger envy, which increases social undermining towards the outperformer. We also find that people who are envied do not account for this relationship. Outperformers maintain high levels of trust in their outperformed colleagues.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES:

Jennifer Dunn is a Ph.D. student in Operations and Information Management at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research interests include the development of personal reputations at work, and the role of emotion in trust, negotiation and ethical decision making.

Maurice Schweitzer is an assistant professor of Operations and Information Management at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. He is interested in the negotiation process, and much of his work focuses on deception and trust. His work has appeared in journals such as the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, and *Management Science*. He serves on the editorial boards of *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* and the *International Journal of Conflict Management*.