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0521608449 - Social Comparison and Social Psychology: Understanding Cognition,
Intergroup Relations, and Culture

Edited by Serge Guimond

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Social Comparison and Social Psychology

Much of our knowledge about ourselves, and about the world in which we live, is based on a process of social comparison. Our tendency to appraise events, objects, people, and social groups by making comparisons has captured the interest of social psychologists for over half a century. This volume provides an up-to-date synthesis of the latest theoretical and empirical developments in social psychology through research on social comparison processes. With chapters by leading theorists and internationally renowned researchers, it provides invaluable information on the role of this process of comparison as it occurs within a single individual over time, between individuals, and between social groups. It also features an original international study testing the universality of the effects of social comparison on the self. This book will appeal to scholars and students alike and will serve as an important reference for the study of cognition, intergroup relations, and culture.

SERGE GUIMOND is Professor of Psychology at the Université Blaise Pascal in Clermont-Ferrand, France.

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Preface

The idea for this book derives from a research project developed by a group of social psychologists from the Social and Cognitive Psychology Laboratory (LAPSCO-CNRS) of the Université Blaise Pascal in Clermont-Ferrand, France. It is a great pleasure for me to acknowledge the material and financial support received for this project from our laboratory and its staff, and from the ACI-Cognitive Program of the French Government in the form of a research grant. Most of the people that have contributed to this volume were associated with this project from very early on. Indeed, one of the stated objectives of the project was to develop research on social comparison processes through international collaborations. To this end, a first meeting was held in July 2002 in San Sebastian, Spain involving American, British, Belgian, Dutch, and French social psychologists, and a second meeting was held in Clermont-Ferrand in January 2004, involving American, Dutch, French, German, and Swiss social psychologists. These meetings provided unique opportunities to discuss theoretical and research issues, and these discussions were important to develop many ideas covered in this book.

I would like to thank all the contributors to this volume who have agreed to participate in this project. Their dedication and goodwill helped to turn hard work into nice times. I am grateful to Sandra Duarte and Magali Villate for their precious help during various phases of this project, to Jean-Léon Beauvois, Jean-Pierre Deconchy, Nicole Dubois, Gérard Lemaine, Jean-Marc Monteil, and Donald Taylor for inspiring discussions, and to Sarah Caro, Elizabeth Davey, and Laura Hemming from Cambridge University Press for their enthusiasm, professionalism, and support. A special thanks is due to Kate Reynolds and John Turner for providing the opportunities to share some ideas related to the preparation of this book at a memorable meeting hosted by the Australian National University. Last but not least, I want to express my love to my family, Caroline, Antoine and Marité, who have contributed immensely to this volume by their comments and questions, and to my parents, Gilda and Camille, who are truly “incomparable.”

S. G., CLERMONT-FERRAND,
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