

**Schedule of the conference "Counseling the procrastinator in academic settings"  
University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands  
July 5-6, 2001**

**Location:** Course-room Academic Assistance Centre, Tower department, University Main Building, Broerstraat 5, Groningen

**Thursday July 5, 2001**

09:00 - 09:30	Coffee
09:30 - 09:45	Opening remarks (Harry Schouwenburg)
09:45 - 10:30	<p>Joe Ferrari, DePaul University, Chicago, USA: <b>Academic procrastination: A review of who, when, and why students (and faculty) engage in task delays</b></p> <p><b>Abstract:</b> It should be no surprise that many students report they engage in <u>academic procrastination</u>: the purposive delay in the start and/or completion of educationally-related tasks. In fact, it has been estimated that as many as 70% of U.S. college students report frequent academic procrastination. Educational administrators and research psychologists have examined the antecedents and consequences of academic procrastination among students and faculty for several decades. In this presentation, a review of the published literature on "who procrastinates" (the demographic and personality characteristics of persons who frequently delays tasks), "when they procrastinate" (the situations that elicit task delays), and "why they procrastinate" (the motives and purposes for frequent task delays) will be discussed. Taken together, this overview of the field of academic procrastination provides a framework about the student and faculty member who engages in task delays. It is an attempt to create a context in which to assess preventive and intervention strategies for assisting persons who engage in frequent academic procrastination. Effective treatment programs to reduce academic procrastination rates may be developed given an understanding of the profile for task delays.</p>
10:30 - 11:15	<p>Tanja van Essen, University of Groningen, The Netherlands: <b>A student course on self-management for academic procrastinators</b></p> <p><b>Abstract:</b> This study reports on a new type of intervention for academic procrastinators, a course on self-management. This is a seven-week course of 2-hour sessions for university students who have chosen to arm themselves against their tendency to procrastinate. The intervention includes the following components: Study planning: students will gain insight into their time spending, will make a weekly work plan, and will learn to plan in terms of SMART goals. Cognitive level: students will learn to apply RET techniques to their own study behaviour. Behavioural level: students will learn to search for ways to get themselves to working and to keeping themselves at work, and to reinforce and punish themselves. In addition, during the course we will provide information about backgrounds and causes of academic procrastination. Effects will be measured on a weekly basis using the APSI. At the time of the conference, two such intervention programmes will have been conducted. Both approach and results will be discussed at the conference.</p>
11:15 - 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 - 12:15	<p>Audur Gunnarsdottir, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland: <b>A cognitive behavioral group programme for students with severe procrastination problems</b></p> <p><b>Abstract:</b> It can be argued that the problem of procrastination lies both in the cognitive structure and in the way students approach their study in long term study habits. Counselling programs that aim firstly on study habits do not seem to be sufficient for students with severe procrastination problems. Procrastination in some university students or adults seems to persist in spite of study-behavioral treatment. Therefore, when assisting clients with these problems, we must implement methods which tangle the cognitive structure of procrastination. From both the work of others (i.e. on self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-worth, and cognitive-behavioral models) and our own experience with university students we have been developing a cognitive behavioral group programme for students with severe procrastination problems. The first aim of the project is to develop a cognitive and behavioral treatment model which explains both the procrastination problem and what maintains the problem, and which will help to give guidance for treatment strategies. Secondly, to build a group programme based on the model, while applying both cognitive and behavioral treatment techniques. Outlines of the experimental model and a group treatment plan for university students with procrastination problems will be introduced.</p>

12:15 - 13:00	<p>Jean O'Callaghan, University of Surrey, Roehampton, England:  <b>A comparison of cognitive behavioural and narrative approaches to working with academic procrastination. An exploratory study</b></p> <p><b>Abstract:</b>  This paper presents findings from an exploratory intervention study conducted at a UK university learning support centre. The focus is on students' self-reported procrastination of academic writing tasks for coursework assignments.  Thirty volunteer students were randomly allocated to either a Cognitive Behavioural or a Narrative eight-session programme delivered weekly, one-to-one with follow-up monitoring for a further 4 months.  Findings highlight the common and distinct outcomes of the two approaches. Discussion of these findings will consider some of the implications of using 'talking cures' as appropriate ways of working with academic procrastination.</p>
13:00 - 14:00	<p>Lunch in the English Room at the University Main Building  (courtesy of Academic Assistance Centre, University of Groningen)</p>
14:00 - 14:45	<p>Sary Van den Heuvel, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands:  <b>Experiences with the course 'Self-management and studying'</b></p> <p><b>Abstract:</b>  As counsellors of students with study problems, we noticed their need for help in tackling their procrastination habits. Based on a literature study on procrastination causes and treatment, which we conducted to gain an insight into the problem, we have developed a course entitled 'Self-management and studying'.  The techniques used were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ deepening the student's self-understanding, using a.o. self-monitoring, self-assessment tests and exchanging experiences</li> <li>▪ theory on procrastination (lectures, literature, internet)</li> <li>▪ self-management techniques (goal setting, planning/time management, RET, stimulus control techniques, study skills techniques)</li> <li>▪ relaxation, concentration and visualisation techniques</li> </ul> <p>The course consists of an introduction for orientation and selection purposes, six meetings and a follow-up after two months. A first course was organised in October 2000 with thirteen participants. With the nine students who completed the course, it has had a positive effect. All of them reported being more aware of their behaviour and more able to control their own lives. The average APSI score (N=9) on procrastination dropped from seven to five. Some of them reported more enjoyment in their studies, increased self-confidence and that they worried less than before. At the follow-up meeting two months later, this positive effect was still noticeable.  A second course has recently started. In July, we will be able to report our experiences with four courses.</p>
14:45 - 15:30	<p>Clarry Lay, York University, Toronto, Canada:  <b>Getting well by being in the right place most of the time: Lesson number one for the trait procrastinator (and nine more)</b></p> <p><b>Abstract:</b>  The fortunes of people are often attributed to being in the right place at the right time. What we may overlook, however, is that most fortunate people are most often to be found in the right places. There are lessons here for the trait and academic procrastinator. For a variety of reasons, procrastinators faced with high priority tasks and deadlines would rather do something else, or at least, just end up doing something else. Being in the right place reduces the number of possible other things. But this is only the beginning. Being in the right place can prime the ought self and reduce ideal self-actual self discrepancies, promote positive self-identity, provide positive feedback, narrow focus, and prompt intentions. Procrastinators who want to change must be taught how to get to the right place most of the time. Difficulties here and possible solutions will be considered. In addition, I will briefly outline nine other points that I emphasize in more than a decade of counseling university students seeking to avoid procrastination.</p>
15:30 - 15:45	<p>Coffee break</p>
15:45 - 17:00	<p>Discussion session (chair: Harry Schouwenburg):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What interventions work best in dealing with academic procrastination?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do cognitive techniques have surplus value over a purely behavioural approach?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are the implications for theoretical notions about procrastination?</i></li> </ul>

**Friday July 6, 2001**

09:00 - 09:30	Coffee
09:30 - 09:45	Opening remarks (Clarry Lay)
09:45 - 10:30	<p>Tim Pychyl, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada:  <b>Exploring the effects of academic procrastination intervention through Personal Projects Analysis and measures of subjective well-being</b></p> <p>Abstract:            In this study, measures of procrastination and subjective well-being were used to explore the effectiveness of a six-week, campus-based academic procrastination treatment program. Fifty undergraduate students participated in the study that compared a self-selected treatment group (n=15) to a comparison group that received Personal Projects Analysis (PPA) but not treatment (n=17) and a comparison group that received neither PPA nor treatment (n=18).            The results from the Procrastination Assessment Scale-Students (PASS; Solomon &amp; Rothblum, 1984) and the Academic Procrastination State Inventory (APSI; Schouwenburg, 1994) demonstrate that at the end of treatment, procrastination scores decreased significantly for the treatment group relative to the comparison groups. Similarly, within-subjects analyses revealed that the mean appraisal for the PPA dimension procrastination was significantly lower for the treatment group.            Separate analyses of the PPA project factors revealed no significant differences between groups, however within-subjects analyses of the treatment group indicated that appraisals of project structure, community and efficacy increased significantly by the end of the six-week program. Surprisingly, no significant differences were found between groups on affect or life-satisfaction measures by the end of the program. The implications of these results are discussed in terms of Personal Projects Analysis as an outcome measure for future research related to academic procrastination.</p>
10:30 - 11:15	<p>Sian Williams, University of Sussex, Brighton, England:  <b>Applying the theory of planned behaviour to the planning fallacy</b></p> <p>Abstract:  <b>Objective:</b> To show that the dominant theory of the planning fallacy being a cause of forward thinking leading to optimistic predictions is inadequate in fully explaining the phenomenon. Applying the theory of planned behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1985), and the concept of implementation intentions (Gollwitzer, 1990) is more informative.  <b>Design:</b> TPB variables measured by self-report. Error between predicted completion date and actual completion date of an academic project as the outcome variable.  <b>Method:</b> psychology students completed questionnaires in two waves. Three weeks before the deadline of a lab report participants completed measures of TPB variables and made a best guess estimate for when they would complete their next lab report by. They were further required to record the thoughts that went through their head when making that estimate. Participants were split into two groups, one (experimental) instructed to form implementation intentions with regard to their plan, the other (control) given no such instruction. Three weeks later (after deadline) participants reported the actual time and date of completion.  <b>Conclusions:</b> By applying the TPB and comparing the predictions and actual behaviour of people forming implementation intentions with people not forming such intentions, the present paper will argue that an individual's original prediction can be met through increasing intention to act and by forming plans to implement that intention.</p>
11:15 - 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 - 12:15	<p>Bruce Tuckman, Ohio State University, Columbus, USA:  <b>The design of a web-based intervention to help college students overcome procrastination</b></p> <p>Abstract:            A new web-based distance program called DON'T DELAY is being designed, using webCT as a development tool, to accomplish the following: (1) give students pointers, advice, reminders, and encouragement on a continuing basis to get started on important tasks; (2) enable students to assess and monitor their own weekly time-wasting behavior, and publicly set goals to reduce it; (3) provide a computerized planning and monitoring format for weekly tasks; (4) provide a vehicle for students to communicate about their procrastination problems and solutions with others of like mind. The conceptual and technical nature of the intervention will be described, including the concepts of (a) the <i>delay quotient</i> as a behavioral indicator of procrastination, (b) the planning process and form as a technique for limiting procrastination, (c) public goal setting as a mechanism to provoke behavioral change, (d) group support as a means of maintaining behavioral change, and (e) ease of accessibility, user-friendliness, and enjoyability to facilitate participation. Preliminary efforts at evaluation of the intervention and its results will also be reported.</p>

12:15 - 13:00	<p>Rob Topman, University of Leiden, The Netherlands:  <b>Digital coaching of procrastinators</b>  <b>Abstract:</b>  Information &amp; communication technology (ICT) offers new opportunities in counseling university students.  The website of the University of Leiden provides information, questionnaires, checklists and training in study skills. Particularly relevant for procrastinators are: the Smart questionnaire, checklists on studying and preparing for tests, information on time-planning and a growing collection of well known excuses.  <i>Digital Coaching.</i>  As Digital Coaches we intend to offer students help and support in realizing their potential as students, offering tools and methods and advising students how to use them. We do not criticize or investigate the students, nor do we explore their inner motives or deeper psychological conflicts. As many procrastinators are oversensitive to criticism and guidance and seek a sense of freedom in their relationship, we assume that coaching is a better offer to them than formal psychological treatment.  <i>Procedure.</i>  Students can enter the program either directly via the web or via an appointment with one of the student psychologists, after which they fill in some questionnaires. Also, an interview with the student is held.  In the weeks to follow we communicate via e-mail. We require students to fill in web time- and planning forms several times per week, enabling us to monitor them. We offer advice, encouragement, immediate feedback and make follow-up arrangements regarding planning.  The program consists of general components and more specific features, enabling us to offer tailor-made advice.  The program is evaluated in a second face-to-face interview. Preliminary results and data will be presented, as well as some case material.</p>
13:00 - 14:00	<p>Lunch in the English Room at the University Main Building  (courtesy of Academic Assistance Centre, University of Groningen)</p>
14:00 - 14:45	<p>Siegfried Dewitte, Catholic University, Louvain, Belgium:  <b>The struggle between the present and the future in procrastinators and the punctual: Strong temptations in the present, or weak incentives in the future?</b>  <b>Abstract:</b>  Academic procrastinators seem to be weaker in keeping to their intended studying than more punctual students are. Why is this? Is it because of the tempting nature of short-term alternative activities, or is it because of a weaker perceived connection between present weekly effort and future final grade?  To answer these questions, we weekly monitored in a sample of students study behaviors as well as the reasons for failing to follow up on their plans, and the perceived influence on their final grade of studying during the week.  We further explored whether individual differences in the universal discounting phenomenon (the gradual increase of study efforts toward the end of the semester) may be explained by failure to ward off temptations, by failure to be aware of the influence of present behavior on future outcome (the grade), or by both.  To assess individual differences, trait procrastination, impulsivity, and the Big Five factors of personality were measured. Finally, relationships between these trait variables and the three evolving behaviors and cognitions (studying, warding off temptations, perceiving influence of presently studying) will be reported.</p>
14:45 - 15:30	<p>Wendelien Van Eerde, Technical University, Eindhoven, The Netherlands:  <b>How dysfunctional is procrastination? A meta-analytical integration of the research</b>  <b>Abstract:</b>  This meta-analysis integrates the correlations of 78 studies examining the relation between procrastination and 20 variables. A model is presented, in which these variables were categorized into 4 classes: 1) general antecedents, such as age, gender, and cognitive ability; 2) psychological antecedents, such as the Big Five factors of personality, self-esteem, and self-efficacy; 3) psychological outcomes, such as state anxiety and depression; and 4) performance outcomes, such as missing a deadline and study grades.  The most important antecedents of procrastination were low conscientiousness and low self-efficacy. Anxiety and depression were outcomes of a moderate magnitude. Performance outcomes were negatively related. Many of the effect size categories were heterogeneous, indicating that moderators may play a role. However, the majority of studies did not account for situational determinants. The limitations of previous research are discussed and a different approach is recommended to assess the dysfunctional aspects of procrastination.</p>
15:30 - 15:45	<p>Coffee break</p>

15:45 - 17:00	Discussion session (chair: Clarry Lay): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>How should we counsel the academic procrastinator?</i></li><li>• <i>What have we learned about the phenomenon?</i></li><li>• <i>What next?</i></li></ul>
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