

## **Het vormen van meningen: een experiment**

### **Purpose of the research and summary of the experimental design**

**Károly Takács and Andreas Flache**

Thank you very much for participating in the experimental part of the testdays and for giving approval for using your data for scientific research. We assure you that your answers are handled completely anonymously and confidentially.

#### *Purpose of the research*

You participated in an experiment that had the aim to test the presence of certain fundamental mechanisms in opinion formation. The experiment allowed communication only in a controlled form: you could select pre-defined messages to be sent to your pair. Our aim was to systematically disentangle which mechanisms are at work in opinion formation in this controlled environment. We were interested in whether differences in opinions affect attraction ratings and if large difference in opinions might result in negative influence.

#### *Summary of the experimental procedure*

At the start of the experiment, before any matching occurred, individual opinions and the importance were recorded for 31 issues. These issues were selected in a pilot from a longer list. The pilots have shown that opinions distribute “nicely” on these issues, which is important for the background assumptions of our hypotheses.

Consequently, participants were matched with other subjects, who in fact were from earlier sessions. This was due to technical reasons. (By using a different software, we will be able to achieve in the following experiments that every participant is matched with another participant in the same session.) Pairs were randomly assigned to different conditions. In each condition, 7 or 8 issues were selected in a pre-specified order.

#### *Results and following experiments*

These experiments were the first in a series of opinion formation experiments. Opinions were not flexible enough on all issues that were present in the testdays experiment. From the 31 issues, 20 will be selected for a following experiment, in which more advanced hypotheses will be tested about the interrelated dynamics of opinions and attraction ratings in dyadic pairs with controlled communication. Participants of the following experiment will be rewarded by money. If you are interested to participate or have further questions about the research, please write an e-mail to [k.takacs@rug.nl](mailto:k.takacs@rug.nl).