



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MSc (Eastern Washington University, 2008)
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**“The Implicit Link of Luxury and Self-Interest: The Influence of Luxury Objects
on Social Motivation and Cooperative Behaviour”**

Department of Psychology

Monday, September 28, 2015
10:30AM
David Turpin Building
Room A136

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Robert Gifford, Department of Psychology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Jutta Gutberlet, Department of Psychology, UVic (Member)
Dr. Andrea Piccinin, Department of Psychology, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Jeff Joireman, Department of Marketing, Washington State University

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Catherine Léger, Department of French, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Despite growing concerns for environmental crisis and the recent economic downturns, worldwide appetite for luxury goods has remained stable and has even grown dramatically in some countries. Luxury goods implicitly convey certain meanings and norms. What are psychological and behavioural consequences of exposure to luxuries? In this proposal, I argue that exposure to luxury goods increases cognitive accessibility of constructs relate to self-interest and subsequently affects social judgments and behaviour. I aim to establish a theoretical conjunction between (a) anthropology's study of material culture, which focuses on material evidence in attributing human cultures, and (b) psychology's priming technique, which examines the effects of activated cognitive representations on psychological responding. Accordingly, three studies were conducted to investigate the implicit link of luxury and self-interest. The results showed that exposure to luxury primes automatically activated mental associations relate to self-interest and subsequently increased one's propensity to allocate more resources to oneself relative to another person (study 1), caused some harvesters to defect in a multi-stage *N*-person commons dilemma (study 2), but did not necessarily induce unethical behaviour aimed to harm others (study 3). Research about the psychological effects of luxury goods are important because luxuries are implicitly embedded in institutional settings and organizational environments in which negotiations are typically conducted and resource allocation decisions are made.