

Lea Heursen, MSc

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Research Interests

Behavioral Economics, Experimental Economics, Organizational Economics

Education

Ph.D. 10/2012-present	University of Zurich, Switzerland Department of Economics Committee: Prof. Ernst Fehr, Prof. Roberto Weber
MSc 09/2010-07/2011	London School of Economics and Political Science, UK Economics Specialization: Contracts and Organizations Thesis: "Modelling Social Preferences in Teams and Their Impact on Job Design" Grade: highest distinction of class (80/100)
MA 09/2009-08/2010	Ecole Polytechnique and Sciences Po Paris, France Economics and Public Policy
BA 08/2008 -08/2009	University of California, Berkeley, United States Economics, Political Economy
BA 09/2006-08/2008	Sciences Po Paris, France Cum laude (top 10% of class)
Secondary school 08/2003-06/2006	Schule Schloss Salem (Salem International College), Germany Merit scholarship, Abitur, International Baccalaureate: Diploma in Theatre Arts

References

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Current research projects

Does Relative Performance Information Lower Group Morale? (job market paper)

Numerous studies document that relative performance information can intrinsically motivate humans to exert more effort in order to perform better individually. However, many organizations rely not just on individual effort, but also on group morale—the willingness of group members to help *each other* perform better. This study asks whether relative performance information has a detrimental effect on group morale, by creating a sense of competition among members of a reference group that translates into a reduced willingness to help. To answer this question, I design a novel laboratory experiment that allows me to vary relative performance information without varying other extrinsic rewards and to precisely measure group morale. For this purpose, I introduce the Help Game, in which group members can invest in the performance of others in their reference group by sharing general knowledge with them at a small personal cost. I find that providing relative performance information causes a large increase in the perception that group members are in competition and also weakens social ties between group members. However, relative performance information does not systematically affect the willingness to help others in the group.

Are Women Less Effective Leaders than Men? (with Eva Ranehill and Roberto Weber)

We study whether the differential effectiveness of male and female leaders provides a basis for gaps in men and women's prevalence in leadership positions. While there are widespread perceptions that men are better leaders than women, little evidence supports this view. We confirm, using an implicit attitude test, that leadership is more strongly associated with men than women. We then study the actual effectiveness of male and female leaders at inducing a coordinated change among followers from inefficient equilibria to risky high-investment strategies that are only profitable when others also pursue them. We study a setting in which strategic complementarities in followers' actions mean that perceptions of leaders' effectiveness can be self-confirming. Our experiment employs a 2x2 design that compares women and men in leadership positions, measuring their effectiveness when followers either do or do not know their gender. We design a context with features designed to enhance the salience of gender differences in effective leadership. However, women and men are equally successful at improving their group's outcomes, independently of whether followers know the leaders' gender. Therefore, while we provide evidence of gender biases in perceptions of leadership quality, we do not find that these are related to actual leadership performance, even in a setting where beliefs are critical.

Angry Citizens and Political Extremism (with Lynn Conell-Price)

We study whether inducing anger toward the incumbent government causes citizens to support more extremist policies and political candidates. We define extremism in terms of distance from status-quo policies. We conducted an experimental study with 2000 U.S. voting eligible adults in the context of the 2016 U.S. Presidential campaign in the week before the election. We compare conditions in which anger at the government was activated with a thought-listing prompt, to conditions in which participants listed their thoughts on a neutral topic. A manipulation check confirms that the treatment induces anger in the predicted direction. We find that this minimal prompt activating existing anger at the government leads to an increase in expressed political extremism. Interventions designed to give participants the possibility to vent their anger, e.g. by communicating their attitudes about the government to U.S. congressional representatives, failed to attenuate the impact of anger on political extremism. This result suggests the possibility that transitory emotions—including those activated by political rhetoric or advertising targeting these reactions—may drive changes in policy positions.

Grants, Awards and Scholarships

09/2017-08/2018	ZGSE Dissertation Completion Fellowship
10/2016	ZGSE Director's Grant, CMU Small Grants Program (2000 USD with Lynn Conell-Price "Angry Citizens and Political Extremism")
09/2012-08/2016	Excellence Foundation Zurich Fellowship Four-year funding for PhD at ZGSE
01/2007-07/2011	Fellow of the German Academic Merit Foundation (Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes)
09/2010-07/2011	German Academic Merit Foundation, International Scholarship
08/2008-07/2009	UC Berkeley EAP Scholarship
08/2003-06/2006	Merit scholarship of Dornier Foundation for Schule Schloss Salem (full tuition and board)

Relevant Work Experience

08/2011-06/2012	European Central Bank, Directorate General Financial Stability Research position on banking regulation
04/2010-08/2010	Ecole Polytechnique Department of Economics, Research Fellow Project: "Coalition Formation and Institutional Design of International Alliances" Adviser: Prof. Francis Bloch Nomination for Ecole Polytechnique Research Prize
05/2009-08/2009	Permanent Mission of the Republic of Palau to the United Nations, New York Economic Adviser Advising on development strategies and design of development agencies 09/2009-11/2011 ad-hoc advice on economic policy
01/2009-08/2009	Research assistant to Prof. Ulrike Malmendier, PhD

Conferences, Seminars and Summer Schools

2017	ESA International Meeting (UC San Diego) Conference on Status and Social Image (WZB Berlin) University of Zurich Experimental and Behavioral Economics Internal Seminar
2016	Russel Sage Foundation Summer Institute in Behavioral Economics University of Zurich Experimental and Behavioral Economics Internal Seminar
2014	Cambridge-INET and HCEO Summer School in Social Economics (Poster) Zurich Workshop on Economics (Solothurn) Swiss Theory Day
2013	Zurich Workshop on Economics (Schaffhausen)
2012	EBA Research Workshop (EBA, London)

Teaching

Advanced Microeconomics I, Master's level, TA Fall 2014

Other academic activities

Organizer Behavioral & Experimental Economics Seminar, University of Zurich (Fall 2017, Spring 2018)

Supervision of BA and MA theses in Behavioral and Experimental Economics

Co-founder and member of ZGSE Development Committee (2015-2016)

Co-organizer Zurich Workshop on Economics 2014 (Solothurn)

Other relevant skills

Software	Stata, R, z-Tree, Mathematica
German	Native speaker
French	Proficient 2006-2008, 2009-2010, university studies in French in France
English	Proficient TOEFL 2011 :117/120 2008-2009, university studies in English in the U.S. 2010-2011, postgraduate studies in English in the UK