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Less now or more later?

Essays on the measurement of time preferences in economic experiments

Lisette Swart

Time preferences influence how people compare outcomes realized at different points in time. Measuring such time preferences is however not straightforward. The four studies in this thesis increase our understanding of how such time preferences can be measured correctly. Two chapters are based on a lab-in-the-field experiment in Nigeria and two on a laboratory experiment in the Netherlands. This thesis shows that different methods to measure time preferences yield different results. A substantial share of this difference is related to changes in the lives of participants outside of the experiments. This thesis therefore stresses the importance of measuring such changes both in experiments with monetary rewards and in experiments with effort.

Lisette Swart (1988) holds a bachelor in Social Science from University College Utrecht and an MPhil in Economics from Tinbergen Institute. After graduating, she started her PhD research at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the Tinbergen Institute. As part of her PhD, she conducted field work in Nigeria, Tanzania and the Netherlands. Her research interests include applied microeconometrics, development economics and behavioral economics. Since June 2016, she has been employed as a researcher at the Education, Labor and Pensions department of the CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis.



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