

David C. Smerdon

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School of Economics
The University of Queensland
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CURRENT POSITION

2017 - present **Lecturer**, University of Queensland.

RESEARCH

Primary Fields: Behavioral Economics, Development
Secondary Fields: Experimental Economics, Microeconomics, Applied Microeconometrics.

EDUCATION

2016 - 2017 **Marie Curie PODER research fellow**, Bocconi University, Center for Economic Policy Research.
2013 - 2017 **PhD in Economics**, University of Amsterdam and Tinbergen Institute.
Thesis: *“Everybody’s doing it: Essays on trust, social norms and integration.”*
Supervisors: Prof. Theo Offerman (UvA), Prof. Uri Gneezy (UC San Diego)
2011 - 2013 **MPhil in Economics (cum laude)**, Tinbergen Institute.
2002 - 2006 **Bachelor of Science / Bachelor of Commerce**, University of Melbourne.
Majors: Discrete Mathematics; Statistics; Psychology.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2008 - 2011 **Policy analyst**, Australian Department of Treasury, Canberra. Groups: Macroeconomics, Financial Markets.
2011 **Teacher, The Light and Leadership Initiative**, Peru, (pro bono). Classes taught: mathematics, physical education, chess, English

REFEREEING

Games and Economic Behavior; Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization

TEACHING

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|---------------------------|---|
| <i>Microeconomics</i> | 2013-16, University of Amsterdam, Microeconomics I, Tutor Highest teacher evaluations in English streams, 2013-16 |
| <i>Mathematics</i> | 2013, Tinbergen Institute, Mathematics I, Teaching Assistant |
| <i>Thesis supervision</i> | 2013-2016, University of Amsterdam, undergraduate (8) and postgraduate (1) |

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS (SELECTION)

2016 **Marie Curie Fellowship: Early Stage Researcher**, PODER, Centre for Economic Policy Research. Node leader: Prof. Eliana La Ferrara (Bocconi University). Project: “Informal institutions and networks in development”
2014 - 2016 **Behavioral economics priority area** (€35,000), University of Amsterdam. Grants for experiments.

- 2011 - 2013 **General Sir John Monash Scholarship** (AUD \$150,000), John Monash Foundation. Australia's top postgraduate award.
- 2011 - 2012 **Tinbergen Institute Scholarship** (Full tuition plus €25,000).
- 2009 **Chess Grandmaster**, International Chess Federation.
- 2002 - 2007 **National scholarship** (Full tuition plus AU \$50,000), University of Melbourne.
- 2005 **Young Victorian of the Year Award Winner** (AU \$10,000), Rotary Foundation.
- 2001 **Young Australian of the Year Nominee** National Australia Day Council, Australian Government.

CONFERENCES AND INVITED SEMINARS (SELECTION)

- 2017 Tilburg University, University of Vienna, BREAD/CEPR/PODER Development Economics Conference, (LSE), University of Queensland.
- 2016 Spanish Economic Association Symposium (SAEe), University of Antwerp, BREAD/CEPR/PODER Development Economics Conference (Bocconi), University of Nottingham, University of Amsterdam, University of Oxford.
- 2015 Vrije Universiteit, University of Norwich, Rady School of Management (UCSD), University of Amsterdam.
- 2014 NYU, University of Nottingham, Tinbergen Institute.

REFERENCES

ACADEMIC

Prof. Theo Offerman
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Rady School of Management
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Prof. Eliana La Ferrara
Bocconi University
Department of Economics
Via Sarfatti 25
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POLICY

Prof. Arthur Schram
University of Amsterdam /
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Villa La Fonte
VF055 Florence
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Marian Kljakovic
Senior Manager, International Strategy
Australian Securities & Investments Commission
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Australia
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OTHER SKILLS

Programming Mathematica, Stata, Matlab, Excel, HTML, PHP, EViews, L^AT_EX

Writing *Smerdon's Scandinavian* (2015). Published by: Everyman Chess, London

Speaking English (native); German, Dutch (intermediate)

Chess **International Chess Grandmaster**, seven-time Australian Olympiad representative

WORKING PAPERS

Albrecht, S. and Smerdon, D. “When refugees work: The social capital effects of resettlement on host communities.”

We examine the effect of refugee resettlement on social capital through a case study of a rural town in Australia. The resettlement was exogenous with respect to social indicators of the township and filled an unmet labor demand in the host community, thus allowing us to isolate social capital effects. We combine trust data from a lab-in-the-field experiment with repeated cross sectional survey data from both treatment and demographically and economically similar control towns. Contrary to current social theory of ethnic diversity and migration, we find no evidence of negative social capital effects on the host community. Residents in the treated town were less susceptible to ethnocentric trust, and showed significantly more favorable attitudes towards refugee resettlement in Australia in general, with these effects being particularly strong among females. Based on our results, we describe conditions for which shifts toward rural resettlement policies can minimize social welfare costs for host countries.

Smerdon, D., T. Offerman and U. Gneezy, “Everybody’s doing it: On the emergence of bad social norms,” Tinbergen Institute Discussion Papers, vol. 16, no. 23, 2015.

Social norms permeate society across a wide range of issues and are important to understanding how societies function. In this paper we concentrate on ‘bad’ social norms - those that are inefficient or even damaging to a group. This paper explains how bad social norms evolve and persist; our theory proposes a testable model of bad norms based on anecdotal evidence from real-world examples. We then experimentally test the model and find empirical support to its main predictions. Central to the model is the role of a person’s *social identity*, the scale of their social payoffs, in encouraging compliance to a norm. The strength of this identity is found to have a positive effect on bad norm persistence. Additionally, while the size of the social group does not have a long run effect, smaller groups are more likely to break a bad norm in the short term. Furthermore, the results suggest that both anonymous communication and increasing information about others’ payoffs are promising intervention policies to counter bad norms.

Blauw, S. and D. Smerdon, “Trust and Inequality: Just bad luck?” 2016.

A large body of empirical research has found a negative correlation between trust and income inequality, but little is known about how this relationship works. We investigate whether the income distribution mechanism in a society matters. In a lab experiment, subjects are placed into either a high- or low-income class, with the class assignment predetermined by one of three allocation mechanisms: greed, merit or luck. We also vary the degree of overall inequality. Income inequality negatively impacts trust only when income classes are randomly determined. When the income distribution mechanism is based on either merit or greed, the relationship between trust and inequality disappears. Our findings are robust against selection effects, social preferences and alternate measures of trust. We also report supporting evidence from cross-country data from the World Values Survey.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Gulesci, S., E. La Ferrara and D. Smerdon, “Norms-based interventions in the field: RCT evidence from female circumcision and child marriage practices in Somalia.”

Smerdon, D. “It matters if you’re black or white: Aspiration and confidence biases in chess players.”