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PII: S0014-2921(16)30219-7  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2016.11.007>  
Reference: EER2928

To appear in: *European Economic Review*

Received date: 16 May 2014

Accepted date: 28 November 2016

Cite this article as: Sandra Ludwig, Gerlinde Fellner-Röhling and Carmen Thoma, Do Women Have More Shame than Men? An Experiment on Self-Assessment and the Shame of Overestimating Oneself, *European Economic Review*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2016.11.007>

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## Do Women Have More Shame than Men? An Experiment on Self-Assessment and the Shame of Overestimating Oneself\*

Sandra Ludwig,<sup>†</sup> Gerlinde Fellner-Röhling<sup>‡</sup> and Carmen Thoma<sup>§</sup>

### Abstract

We analyze how subjects' self-assessment depends on whether its accuracy is observable to others. We find that women downgrade their self-assessment given observability, while men do not. This holds true when the self-assessment concerns a task with individual as well as competitive incentives. Women avoid the shame they may have if others observe that they overestimated themselves. Men, however, do not seem to be similarly shame averse. This gender difference may be due to different societal expectations: while we find that men are expected to be overconfident, women are not. The negative effect on women's self-assessment is eliminated when performance is only imperfectly observable. Shame aversion may explain recent findings that women shy away from competition, demanding jobs, and wage negotiations, as entering these situations demonstrates confidence in one's ability.

*Keywords:* Gender, Shame, Self-confidence, Overconfidence, Experiment

*JEL-Classification:* C91, D03, J16

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\*We would like to thank Bianca Bauer, Gary Charness, Guillaume Frechette, Uri Gneezy, Martin Kocher, Johannes Maier, Dalia Marin, Rosemarie Nagel, Petra Nieken, Ernesto Reuben, Klaus Schmidt, Marta Serra-Garcia, Sebastian Strasser, Matthias Sutter, Lise Vesterlund, Marie-Claire Villeval, Philipp Wichardt, participants of the Berlin Behavioral Economics Seminar, the CESS Experimental Economics seminar at NYU, the MELESSA seminar and the Micro Workshop at the University of Munich, the ESA meetings 2011 in Luxembourg and 2012 in New York, and the SFB/TR 15 conference 2011 in Tutzing for helpful comments and discussions. We are also grateful to two anonymous referees and an Associate Editor for their valuable suggestions. Financial support from LMUexcellent and SFB/TR 15 is gratefully acknowledged. For providing laboratory resources we kindly thank MELESSA of the University of Munich and the Vienna Center for Experimental Economics.

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