

Current Position

Postdoctoral Researcher

September 2023 - Present

Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin

EU Horizon Project: Social Media for Democracy (SoMe4Dem), Cognition in Online Environments group at the Center of Adaptive Rationality (ARC). September 2025: early promotion to *Researcher*.

Research Interests

- Transformations of political order — democratic regression, transformation of party systems, rise of populist and radical-right parties, political polarization, trust
- Public discourse in online environments and political opinion formation
- Political information consumption in complex media ecosystems and individual-level interventions to boost online (news) media literacy
- Selection effects and measurement issues in digital behavioral data
- Data access, systemic risk assessment and platform regulation under the EU Digital Services Act

Education

PhD Political Science

2020-2023

Hertie School Berlin

Title: Public Discourse in Online Environments: Contributions to description, measurement and communication behavior change in political online ecosystems. Supervised by Simon Munzert, Ralph Hertwig and Andrew Guess. Evaluated by Fabrizio Gilardi and Yannis Theocharis. Graded with summa cum laude.

MSc. Social Data Science

2019-2020

University of Oxford

Interdisciplinary and international graduate program, hosted by the Oxford Internet Institute, at the intersection of social and computational science, with a practical focus on data analysis and programming with Python, online research and political science. Thesis: Should we talk to climate skeptics? Graduated with distinction.

MSc. Psychology

2016-2019

University of Kassel

First major in Social and Environmental Psychology, second major in Clinical Psychology. Master thesis: Social Drivers of Individual Air Travel. Final grade 1.0. Research assistant to Andreas Ernst, Center for Environmental Systems Research, Kassel.

BSc. Psychology

2013-2016

University of Kassel

Bachelor thesis in environmental psychology: Outdoor sport and Environmental behavior. Final grade 1.1. Research assistant to Isabel Lindner, Department of Psychology, Kassel.

Publications

1. Younger-Khan, S., Weidmann, N. B., & Oswald, L. (2024). Consistent effects of science and scientist characteristics on public trust across political regimes. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03909-2>
2. Oswald, L. (2024). More than news! Mapping the deliberative potential of a political online ecosystem with digital trace data. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03115-0>
3. Oswald, L. (2023). Public Discourse in Online Environments. Contributions to description, measurement and communication behavior change in political online ecosystems. *Dissertation*, Hertie School. DOI: 10.48462/opus4-5066
4. Lorenz-Spreen, P., Oswald, L., Lewandowsky, S., & Hertwig, R. (2022). A systematic review of worldwide causal and correlational evidence on digital media and democracy. *Nature Human Behaviour*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-022-01460-1>
5. Oswald, L., & Bright, J. (2022). How Do Climate Change Skeptics Engage with Opposing Views Online? Evidence from a Major Climate Change Skeptic Forum on Reddit. *Environmental Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2022.2071314>
6. Klaus, G., Oswald, L., Ernst, A., & Merk, C. (2021). Effects of opinion statements on laypeople's acceptance of a climate engineering technology. Comparing the source credibility of researchers, politicians and a citizens' jury. *Journal of Science Communication*, 20(1), A03.
7. Oswald, L., & Ernst, A. (2020). Flying in the Face of Climate Change: Quantitative psychological approach examining the social drivers of individual air travel. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(1), 68-86.
8. Klaus, G., Ernst, A., & Oswald, L. (2020). Psychological factors influencing laypersons' acceptance of climate engineering, climate change mitigation and business as usual scenarios. *Technology in Society*, 60, 101222.

Working papers

1. Oswald, L., Schulz, W. & Lorenz-Spreen, P. (2025). A Collective Field Experiment Disentangling Participation in Online Political Discussions. *Revise & resubmit at Science Advances*. https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/p2jaq_v1
2. Oswald, L., Schulz, W. & Stier, S. (2025). How the iceberg of online participation shapes our understanding of political attitudes and behavior. *Under review at Nature Human Behavior*.
3. Bak-Coleman, J. B., Lewandowsky, S., Lorenz-Spreen, P., Narayanan, A., Orben, A., & Oswald, L. (2025). Moving towards informative and actionable social media research. *Under review at Science Advances*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2505.09254>

4. Oswald, L., Kozyreva, A., Nickl, P. L., Herzog, S., & Hertwig, R. (2025). Lateral reading and online search interventions to boost competent news browsing in Germany. EU deliverable draft version.
5. Oswald, L. & Munzert, M. (2025). Then and Now: Increasing Exposure to Untrustworthy News Media. *In prep.*
6. Oswald, L., Zöller, N., Zhao, X., Gollwitzer, A., Wulff, D. (2025). Automating the Analysis of Online Political Discussion Quality using Large Language Models. *In prep.*
7. Offer, K., Oglanova, O., Oswald, L. & Hertwig, R. (2025). Prevalence and predictors of medical information avoidance: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Accepted in Annals of Behavioral Medicine*
8. Oswald, L. (2024). Effects of Preemptive Empathy Interventions on Reply Toxicity among Highly Active Social Media Users. <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/evdxy/>
9. Oswald, L., Munzert, S., Barberá, P., Guess, A., and Yang, J. (2023). Beyond the tip of the iceberg? Exploring Characteristics of the Online Public with Digital Trace Data. <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/yfmzh/>
10. Oswald, L. (2022). Automating the Analysis of Online Deliberation? A comparison of manual and computational measures applied to climate change discussions. SocArXiv. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/qmzwx>

Teaching

Introduction to R Workshop

Spring 2022

Hertie School, Berlin (MSc Public Policy and MSc International Affairs)

- Day 1 - Base R Basics: Data types and structures, RStudio interface, operators, data frames, error handling, missing data, and best practices.
- Day 2 - Tidyverse: Tidy data principles, dplyr for data manipulation, tidyr for data cleaning, ggplot2 for visualization, and basics of functions and iteration.

Introduction to Data Science

Fall 2021

Hertie School, Berlin (MSc Data Science for Public Policy)

Teaching Assistant to Prof. Simon Munzert. Development of R tutorials. Topics included:

- Base R, GitHub for version control, Tidyverse, functions and iteration, databases, web scraping, modeling, visualization, Shell basics, debugging, Shiny for interactive applications.

Statistical Modeling & Causal Inference

Spring 2021, Spring 2022

Hertie School, Berlin (Master in Public Policy)

Teaching Assistant to Prof. Simon Munzert. Weekly R tutorials for interdisciplinary and international student groups. Collaborated on creating assignments to assess learning. Topics included:

- Causality, DAGs, potential outcomes framework, regression, matching, instrumental variables, regression discontinuity, difference-in-differences, panel data, fixed effects, moderation, and mediation.

Quantitative Methods II

Spring 2015, Spring 2016

University of Kassel, Germany (BSc Psychology)

Teaching Assistant to Dr. Isabel Lindner. Tutorials in German focused on deriving estimates conceptually and applying them in R. Topics included:

- Analyses of variance, repeated measures, (semi)partial correlation, multiple regression, analyses of covariance, and non-parametric tests.

Quantitative Methods I

Fall 2015

University of Kassel, Germany (BSc Psychology)

Teaching Assistant to Dr. Isabel Lindner. Tutorials in German focused on deriving estimates conceptually and applying them in R. Topics included:

- Scales and variables, measurement theory, descriptive statistics, logic of statistical tests, t-tests, correlation, and regression.

Guest Lectures & Short Workshops

Various Institutions

- **Public discourse in online environments** (Spring 2025): Workshop at the Summer Institute on Bounded Rationality, Berlin.
- **Beyond experiments: Addressing causal questions outside the laboratory.** (Spring 2025): Workshop at the ARC Research Retreat.
- **Boosting Online Decision Making: Lateral Reading and Online Search** (Fall 2024): Guest Lecture at the Hertie School, Berlin.
- **Reference Management with Zotero and Overleaf** (Spring 2024): Workshop at ARC, MPIB Berlin.
- **Decision Making in Online Environments** (Spring 2024): Guest Lecture at HU Berlin, MSc Mind and Brain.
- **Selective Engagement in Online Public Discourse** (Fall 2023): Guest Lecture at University College Dublin, Connected Politics Lab.

Talks & Communication

Conference Presentations

- MediaPsych, Duisburg - conference presentation: Boosting online news media literacy with lateral reading and online search 2025
- IC2S2, Norrköping, Sweden - conference presentation: Participation in online political discussions: A collective field experiment on Reddit 2025
- IC2S2, Philadelphia, USA - conference presentation: Dynamics of digital discourse: A collective field experiment on Reddit 2024
- EPSA, Köln - conference presentation: Digital literacy in Germany: testing interventions with survey experiments and web tracking data 2024
- Digital Democracy Workshop, Zurich - conference presentation, Exploring the online public (sphere) with digital trace data 2022

- EPSA, Prague - conference presentation, Who Engages Where on the Online Public Square? Evidence from Digital Trace Data 2022
- ICP+ - conference presentation, How do climate change skeptics engage with opposing views? Mechanisms of social identity and cognitive dissonance in an online forum 2021
- MPA - conference presentation, How do climate change skeptics engage with opposing views? Invited talk within the 'internet explorer' symposium 2021

Invited talks

- Embassy of Belgium in Berlin - invited talk: Digital Media, Disinformation and Democracy 2024
- German Foreign Office, Berlin - invited talk, young diplomats program: Digital Media and Democracy 2024
- Abgeordnetenhaus, Berlin - invited talk, Die Zukunft der Parlamentarischen Demokratie im Angesicht digitaler Medien 2024

Science Communication

- School materials:** Geomax 31 - Demokratie und soziale Medien 2025
- Science Podcast:** Unraveling Behavior: Digital Media and Democracy 2024
- Press writing:** The Conversation - Is the global decline in democracy linked to social media? We combed through the evidence to find out 2022

Academic Community Engagement

Recruitment and coordination of research assistants and interns at the Center for Adaptive Rationality, MPIB Berlin 2024-present

Research Consulting at the Data Science Lab, Hertie School 2020-2021

Representation and committee work

- Elected PhD Representative & IT committee Hertie School 2022-2023
- Elected Student Representative, Graduate Center for Environmental Studies and Teaching (GradZ), University of Kassel 2018-2019
- Elected Student Representative, Directorate, Department of Psychology, University of Kassel 2017-2018

Seminar organization and event management

- Workshop on detecting and combating disinformation, misinformation and hate speech for media professionals and communication practitioners in Berlin, funded by the EU Horizon Grants SoMe4Dem and PRODEMINFO 2025
- SmP seminar organization: Network Analysis for Sustainable Development. 4-day seminar with international speakers and 85 participants in Berlin, funded by Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes 2020
- SmP seminar organization: Artificial Intelligence and Society. 3-day seminar in Munich, funded by Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes 2019
- SmP seminar organization: Sustainability Scenario Modeling. 3-day seminar in Vienna, funded by Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes 2018

Reviewing Journal Articles

Journal of Politics, Political Behavior, Electoral Studies, Politics and Governance, Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media, International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction, PNAS Nexus, Royal Society Open Science, Psychological Science in the Public Interest, Journal of Science Communication

Awards and Scholarships

Doctoral Scholarship 2021-2023

German Academic National Foundation (Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes)

Supporting doctoral students from different disciplinary and personal backgrounds that are "united in their particular scientific ability, in their curiosity that extends beyond their own discipline and life world, and in their pronounced sense of social responsibility."

Best poster award 2022

Political Methodology Europe

For the poster: "Measuring Deliberative Potential in the Online Public Sphere – A Latent Class Segmentation Analysis." presented at PolMeth Europe 2022, annual award.

Highly commended thesis 2020

Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford

Honoring MSc thesis (Should we talk to climate skeptics?), annual award.

Carl-Friedrich Graumann Award 2018

German Psychological Society (DGPs), Section Environmental Psychology

Honoring BSc thesis (Outdoor Sport and Environmental behavior) as best newcomer scientist work in the field of environmental psychology, biannual award.

Scholarship 2016-2020

German Academic National Foundation (Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes)

Supporting "the university education of young people who, on account of their exceptional academic or artistic talents and their personalities, can be expected to make an outstanding contribution to society as a whole."

Third Party Funding

Max Planck Society

Awarded, starting October 2025

Internal call: Schubladenprojekte.

Applied for 500k (incl. 4 years Postdoc) for project on populist support - grant proposal submitted as PI with Anastasia Kozyreva, Philipp Lorenz-Spreen and Ralph Hertwig.

BMBF

Under review

Call: Vertrauen in Demokratie und Staat: Digitale Desinformation erkennen und abwehren im Rahmen des Forschungsrahmenprogramms der Bundesregierung zur IT-Sicherheit Digital. Sicher. Souverän.

Applied for 1 mio (incl. 3 years Postdoc, 2 x 3 years PhD) - grant proposal submitted as PI with Sebastian Stier (GESIS/Mannheim) and Philipp Lorenz-Spreen (TU Dresden)

Contact

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