

# SVEN HEUSER

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University of Bonn  
Institute for Applied Microeconomics  
Adenauerallee 24–42, 53113 Bonn, Germany

sven.heuser@uni-bonn.de  
www.svenheuser.com  
+49 177 2720026

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## EDUCATION

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2015 - 2022 (expected)	Ph.D. in Economics, University of Bonn
2013 - 2015	M.Sc. in Economics, University of Mannheim
2009 - 2012	B.Sc. in Economics, University of Bonn

## REFERENCES

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### **Professor Armin Falk**

briq – Behavior and Inequality Research Institute  
armin.falk@briq-institute.org

### **Professor Simon Jäger**

MIT, Department of Economics  
sjaeger@mit.edu

### **Professor David Huffman**

University of Pittsburgh, Dep. of Economics  
huffmand@pitt.edu

### **Professor Florian Zimmermann**

briq – Behavior and Inequality Research Institute  
florian.zimmermann@briq-institute.org

## RESEARCH AND TEACHING FIELDS

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Applied Microeconomics, Behavioral Economics, Political Economy

## JOB MARKET PAPER

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### **The Effects of Face-To-Face Conversations on Polarization: Evidence from a Quasi-Experiment** (with Lasse Stötzer) [\[link\]](#)

Do conversations between like-minded individuals exacerbate political polarization whereas conversations between contrary-minded individuals reduce it? We examine this question by exploiting a quasi-experiment in Germany, in which strangers were paired based on their political views for unobserved in-person meetings. We find that meeting a person with a similar political opinion leads to more extreme political views. In contrast, talking to a contrary-minded person reduces negative attitudes towards those with opposing political opinions and improves the perception of social cohesion. However, it does not lead to an adaption of the political views. Together, the results suggest that political in-person conversations among like-minded individuals may increase polarization of views and thus widen the gap between ideological groups while conversations with contrary-minded individuals can reduce affective, but not ideological polarization.

## WORKING PAPERS

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### **Moral Luck: Existence, Mechanisms, and Prevalence**

(with Armin Falk and David Huffman)

In many circumstances, individuals can influence the probabilities of good or bad outcomes by their actions, but there is still a role for chance in determining final outcomes. If rewards and punishments depend partly on outcomes and not just actions, this violates a principle of optimal incentives, and implies distortions of behavior in legal, economic, political, and social contexts. Philosophers, legal scholars, psychologists, and social scientists have long debated the existence and nature of such a tendency, sometimes denoted “moral luck”. A challenge to assessing the existence and strength of moral luck is having a setting with real, consequential moral decisions, but also sufficient control to causally identify underlying mechanisms. This paper provides evidence from experiments with these features, and finds evidence of moral luck in how actors are punished by spectators. A key mechanism is a bias of judgements and beliefs about the character of the actor, based on random outcomes, even though such outcomes contain zero information. This can be partially mitigated by providing additional information about the actor. It is not eliminated by nudging individuals towards deliberative decision making. A proximate underlying mechanism appears to be emotional response to outcomes. The bias is prevalent, but not universal, it is unrelated to most demographics, and is present regardless of high or low cognitive ability or education. We discuss theoretical and policy implications.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

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### **Self-Serving Attributions in Belief Formation**

(with Lasse Stötzer)

People tend to have biased beliefs about themselves and the world they live in. This project investigates self-serving attributions as a mechanism: Do individuals attribute feedback in a “self-serving way” resulting in a distortion of beliefs about external factors that are not related to self-image? We design a controlled lab experiment to test this dynamic. Individuals receive ambiguous exogenously varied feedback that can be caused by either their own ability or the fact that they are (positively or negatively) discriminated. We test whether positive feedback is disproportionally attributed to oneself instead of being positively discriminated. Likewise, we examine whether negative feedback results in too positive beliefs about oneself and exaggerated beliefs about being negatively discriminated. Data collection was paused due to COVID-19.

### **Strengthening Worker Voice: A Field Experiment**

(with Armin Falk, Simon Jäger and Frederik Schwerter)

This project studies the effect of strengthening worker voice of blue-collar workers on mental health, motivation and productivity. In collaboration with a large German company we will conduct a field experiment that exogenously varies the strength of workers voice. After successful pilots, the roll out of the main study has been delayed. Due to COVID-19 the company was unable to implement the treatments in times of contact restrictions.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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Summer 2021    Lecturer, Economic Research Seminar (undergraduate)

## RESEARCH POSITIONS

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2017 -	Research Assistant, briq
2014 - 2015	Research Assistant, Chair of Experimental Economics, University of Mannheim
2010 - 2012	Research Assistant, Institute for Applied Microeconomics, University of Bonn

## FELLOWSHIPS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

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2021 -	Associated Member, Cluster of Excellence ECONtribute: Markets & Public Policy
2019 -	Research Fellow, Collaborative Research Center Transregio 224
2016 -	briq Student Fellow
2016 - 2019	briq Scholarship
2015 - 2016	Dissertation Scholarship of the Bonn Graduate School of Economics

## RESEARCH GRANTS

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2021	Research Grant from Cluster of Excellence ECONtribute: Markets & Public Policy: Funding for “Outcome Matters: Evidence on Moral Luck” (€32,000)
2020	Research Grant from Collaborative Research Center Transregio 224: Funding for “Self-Serving Attributions in Belief Formation” (€4,400)
2019	Research Grant from Collaborative Research Center Transregio 224: Funding for “Self-Serving Attributions in Belief Formation” (€5,700)

## SEMINAR AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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2021	Early-Career Behavioral Economics Conference (ECBE)
2020	European Economic Association - Annual Meeting Verein für Socialpolitik - Annual Meeting Research Seminar, Department for Political Sciences & Sociology, University of Bonn
2018	Applied Microeconomics Workshop, University of Bonn and briq
2017	Applied Micro Brown Bag Presentation, University of Bonn