

SVEN HEUSER

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EDUCATION

2015 - 2022	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

Professor Armin Falk

University of Bonn and briq
armin.falk@briq-institute.org

Professor Simon Jäger

MIT, Department of Economics
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Professor David Huffman

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

Professor Florian Zimmermann

University of Bonn and briq
florian.zimmermann@briq-institute.org

RESEARCH AND TEACHING FIELDS

Applied Microeconomics, Behavioral Economics, Political Economy

WORKING PAPERS

The Effects of Face-To-Face Conversations on Polarization: Evidence from a Quasi-Experiment (with Lasse Stötzer)

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

Moral Luck: Existence, Mechanisms, and Prevalence

(with Armin Falk and David Huffman)

In many types of decisions, 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 punishment and rewards are conditioned on such random outcomes, this violates a property of optimal incentives. It has been posited since ancient times that humans do assign punishments and rewards based on factors outside of actors' control, a tendency called "moral luck." This paper provides new evidence on the prevalence and robustness of moral luck, and on a key open question of whether moral luck is a preference or a bias. The results are from controlled experiments that can cleanly identify moral luck, but also involve real, consequential moral choices that are a matter of life and death for a third party (a mouse). We find moral luck in punishment, and show that this is at least partly due to a bias. Our findings support a causal chain in which random outcomes lead to biased judgments and incentivized beliefs about the nature of the actor, even though they contain zero information, and this in turn causes punishments to vary with outcomes. We also show that the bias is strong enough to remain in the face of an intervention that encourages deliberation. 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 also find evidence that actors exhibit internalized moral luck in how they evaluate themselves based on outcomes.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Self-Serving Attributions in Belief Formation

(with Lasse Stötzer)

Strengthening Worker Voice: A Field Experiment

(with Armin Falk, Simon Jäger and Frederik Schwerter)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Summer 2021 Lecturer, Economic Research Seminar (undergraduate)

RESEARCH POSITIONS

2017 -	Research Associate, 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

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

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

2022	Research Seminar, University Carlos III of Madrid Research Seminar, Norwegian School of Economics (NHH)
2021	Early-Career Behavioral Economics Conference (ECBE) Applied Microeconomics Workshop, University of Bonn and briq
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