

# Laurenz Richard Kuno Günther

## Contact

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## Research and Teaching Fields

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Political Economics, Behavioral Economics, Experimental Economics

## References

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## Job Market Paper

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### **Political Representation Gaps in Europe**

Do parliaments in representative democracies represent the policy attitudes of their voters? I examine this question using both data on the policy attitudes of 2,074 parliamentarians and 31,461 citizens who are representative of 27 European countries and a novel estimation framework that I validate with referendum data. I find large and systematic "representation gaps." Parliaments are more culturally liberal than voters in nearly all countries. On economic issues, they tend to be more market-oriented than voters, but this result varies by country. These results are at odds with the standard assumption of vote-share maximizing politicians. I theoretically and empirically explain the existence of representation gaps through a perceived competence advantage of some politicians that enables them to implement their preferred policies. Representation gaps help explain distrust in democracy and the existence of populist parties, which fill representation gaps. These findings suggest that reversing the rise of populism and increasing trust in democratic institutions requires established parties to close representation gaps. Finally, it informs policymakers on how to reposition themselves to do so.

[Link to the paper](#)

## Working Papers

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### **Inherited Inequality and the Dilemma of Meritocracy** (with Timo Freyer)

In a meritocratic society, inequality is considered just if it reflects individual achievements, but people are not held accountable for factors they cannot influence. However, individuals are frequently not responsible for their outcomes themselves but differentially benefit from the efforts of others. As such *inherited inequality* may simultaneously be considered merited and not merited, it is unclear whether it should be accepted or rejected on meritocratic terms. We develop a theoretical framework and run a preregistered survey experiment with 543 subjects representative of the US population to investigate how people resolve this dilemma. In the experiment, impartial spectators redistribute payments between pairs of individuals. We vary whether inequality in the initial distribution is based on luck or effort and whether spectators redistribute between individuals who have worked on a task themselves to earn money (noninherited inequality) or between individuals who differentially benefit from the work of real-life friends (inherited inequality). Spectators equalize a much larger fraction of initial inequality if it is based on luck instead of effort. Yet, they do not differentiate much between situations in which they redistribute between individuals who have worked themselves and situations in which they redistribute between individuals who have differentially profited from their friends' work. The results suggest that most people find inequality fair if it is grounded in differential effort at some stage. Our observations may help to explain why many people oppose redistributive policies in the real world.

[Link to the paper](#)

## Work in Progress

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### **Would Europeans still Dislike Immigrants if they Knew them?**

Most Europeans demand immigration reductions. Should politicians follow this demand? The answer to this question depends on whether the anti-immigration attitudes of voters are due to negatively biased beliefs about immigrants, which have been documented by previous research. This paper proposes a new method of estimating the immigration attitudes that people with biased beliefs would hold if they were well-informed about the characteristics of immigrants. The method combines data on immigration attitudes, estimated from vignette studies with hypothetical immigrants, with administrative data on the characteristics of real immigrants. I employ this method using data from a large-scale vignette study in which 15,000 subjects, representative of the population of 15 European countries, decide on whether to accept or reject hypothetical asylum seekers with data on the characteristics of real asylum seekers. I find that most asylum seekers that came to Europe since 2015 would have been rejected by large majorities in all countries considered. This suggests that anti-asylum seeker attitudes are not solely driven by biased beliefs about asylum seekers' characteristics.

*Working paper coming soon*

### **Information Interventions Can Increase Anti-Immigration Attitudes**

It is well known that most Europeans favor reducing immigration to their countries. However, recent research finds that most Europeans also overestimate the number of immigrants in their countries. This has led many to argue that anti-immigration attitudes result from biased beliefs and that policymakers should not follow the demands of their voters. This paper shows that Europeans do not overestimate the number of all types of immigrants. I elicit the beliefs of a representative sample of over 2,100 Germans about the number of asylum seekers in Germany in 2020. Contrary to previous studies, I find

that Germans strongly underestimate the number of asylum seekers, particularly of those that are not granted asylum. Furthermore, I conduct an information intervention in which I inform random sub-samples of Germans about the actual number of asylum seekers with or without asylum. I find that, if anything, providing information increases anti-immigration attitudes. These results raise doubts that anti-immigration attitudes can be generally dismissed as biased beliefs.

*Working paper coming soon*

### **Can Dating Apps Increase the Birth Rate in Developed Economies?**

*In preparation*

## Education

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2019–2023 (expected)	Ph.D. in Economics, <b>Bonn Graduate School of Economics</b>
2019	Master of Science in Economics, <b>University of Bonn</b>
2017	Bachelor of Science in Economics, <b>University of Bonn</b>

## Teaching Experience

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2022–present	Teaching Assistant for "Introduction into Economics", <b>University of Bonn</b>
2021–2022	Supervision of Master Thesis, <b>University of Bonn</b>
2019–2021	Teaching Assistant for "Introduction into Economics", <b>University of Bonn</b>

## Awards, Scholarships and Grants

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2022	Selten Grant by the Cluster of Excellence ECONtribute (€10,000) Grant by the Institute for Applied Microeconomics at Bonn University (€3,000) Grant by the MacroFinance and MacroHistory Lab at Bonn University (€2,000)
2021	Selten Grant by the Cluster of Excellence ECONtribute (€8,000)
2020	Research grant by the BGSE and briq Institute (€4,000)
2019	Research grant by the BGSE (€2,000)
2019–2022	Scholarship from the briq Institute
2018–2022	Scholarship from the German Research Foundation ("Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft")
2017	Research grant by the Institute for Applied Microeconomics at Bonn University (€1,000)

## Presentations

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2023	Applied Economics Lunch Seminar (PSE Paris; scheduled)
2022	FAIR Online Workshop (NHH Bergen; scheduled) Research Network Seminar (DG ECFIN at the European Commission) Applied Micro Workshop (Bonn) PolSek Seminar (Uppsala) Verein für Socialpolitik annual conference (Basel) Econometric Society European Meeting (Bocconi) Young Economist Symposium (Yale) SNES Spring Conference 2022 (Mid Sweden University) 16th CEUS Workshop on European Economics (WHU) 15th RGS Doctoral Conference in Economics (University Duisburg-Essen)
2021	Applied Micro Coffee (Bonn) Applied Micro Workshop (Bonn)
2020	Bonn/Mannheim PhD Workshop (Mannheim)
2018	11th RGS Doctoral Conference in Economics (University Duisburg-Essen)
2017	Applied Micro Coffee (Bonn)

## Professional Service

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Refereeing	Economic Policy
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## Miscellaneous

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Nationality	German
Human Languages	German (native), English (fluent)
Computer Languages	R (fluent), Python (fluent), oTree (fluent), z-Tree (fluent)
Hobbies	Football, Writing novels, Blogging