

TIMM BEHLER

Curriculum Vitae as of September 2023

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EDUCATION

- 2019– Ph.D. in Economics, Department of Economics, University of Gothenburg
Supervisors: Prof. Dawei Fang & Prof. Olof Johansson-Stenman
[Expected date of graduation: May '24]
- 2016–2019 M.Sc. in (Competition) Economics, Düsseldorf Institute for Competition Economics (DICE), Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf
Supervisor: Prof. Paul Heidhues
- 2018 Exchange Semester, Meiji University Tokyo
- 2013–2016 B.Sc. in Economics, Department of Economics, University of Hamburg

PREVIOUS POSITIONS

- 2017–2019 Research Assistant, DICE, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Primary: Behavioral economics, Organizational economics, IO
Secondary: Applied micro theory more generally

TEACHING INTERESTS

- Microeconomics, Behavioral economics, IO, Organizational economics, Game theory

WORKING PAPERS

- Salience-Based Stereotyping [Job Market Paper]
Meritocracy in Hierarchical Organizations (with Patrik Reichert)

WORK IN PROGRESS

- A New Model of Status in Contests (with Patrik Reichert)
Fragile Men (with Patrik Reichert)
Testing the Discouraging Effect of Competition in Contests (with Jens Ewald)
Suspicious Consumers in Deceptive Markets
Affirmative Action and Female Talent

GRANTS AND AWARDS

- 2023 University of Gothenburg Donation Board scholarship
- 2022 Social Science scholarship from the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (SEK 147.000 for “*Testing the Discouraging Effect of Competition in Contests*”)
- 2022 Adelberg Foundation Hospitality Grant
- 2019 Award for best master thesis at DICE

SEMINARS, CONFERENCES, AND SUMMER SCHOOLS

- 2023 RGS Conference (U Bochum); Econ Research Seminar (U Oslo); Behavioral and Experimental Economics Workshop (U Gothenburg); Behavioral Econ Brownbag (U Gothenburg); Nordic Conference on Behavioral and Experimental Economics (U Lund)

2022	Behavioral and Experimental Economics Workshop (U Gothenburg); Econ PhD Seminar (U Gothenburg)
2021	Max Planck Summer School for the Political Economy of Conflict and Redistribution (Max Planck Society, Berlin); Econ PhD Seminar (U Gothenburg)
2019	Econ PhD Seminar (U Gothenburg)

SERVICE

2020–2021	President of the Economics Graduate Student Association, Department of Economics, University of Gothenburg
2020–2021	Member of the Board, Graduate Student Association, School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg
2019–2020	Ph.D. Representative at the Department Board, Department of Economics, University of Gothenburg

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2021–	Tutorials for the course “Methods for Economic Analysis” (Economics B.Sc., twice per year)
2021–	Tutorials for the course “Mathematics” (Economics M.Sc. & Finance M.Sc, once a year)
2021	Teaching Course, University of Gothenburg

SKILLS

L^AT_EX, R, Stata

LANGUAGES

German (native), English (fluent), Swedish (basics)

REFERENCES

Prof. Dawei Fang (supervisor) Department of Economics University of Gothenburg Vasagatan 1, Box 640 SE-405 30 Gothenburg dawei.fang@economics.gu.se	Prof. Olof Johansson-Stenman (supervisor) Department of Economics University of Gothenburg Vasagatan 1, Box 640 SE-405 30 Gothenburg olof.johansson@economics.gu.se	Prof. Martin Dufwenberg Department of Economics University of Arizona, Tucson 1130 East Helen Street, P.O. Box 210108 Tucson, Arizona 85721-0108 martind1@arizona.edu
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RESEARCH DESCRIPTION AND DISSERTATION SUMMARY

I am an applied microeconomic theorist, also running experiments to test both my own and other researchers’ theoretical predictions. My current research can be separated in two strands: discrimination and organizational economics. I approach these two strands from both a classical and a behavioral perspective, borrowing ideas from sociology and psychology to incorporate into economic models and derive novel insights.

The two strands of my research are connected in that I am mostly interested in how some characteristics—e.g., talent—of individuals are perceived by others. To better understand discrimination, this is relevant because much of it is based on the (incorrect) belief that a certain group is inherently worse at performing a specific task than another group. In the organizational economics literature, the question is relevant, for example, for a manager who wants to allocate employees with certain characteristics to certain positions, while only having imprecise knowledge of these characteristics. For example, in line with some meritocratic ideal, a manager may want the most talented employees to occupy the highest ranks of the organization. In some ongoing projects, I also work on the intersection of these two themes.

Salience-Based Stereotyping. In the first chapter of my dissertation, I propose a model in which an agent from a socially dominant group learns about the average productivity of a socially dominated group. Productivity is determined by a random intrinsic productivity parameter and education. The agent updates his beliefs overweighing the importance of education based on how salient it appears to him among a given group. The model can account for several stylized facts: i) The agent will hold persistently negative beliefs about the dominated group; ii) he will be subject to in-group bias, exhibiting overly positive beliefs about his own group; and iii) adding a new dominated group can improve the agent’s view of the old dominated group. Additionally, it predicts that iv) stereotyping is particularly extreme if the agent learns mostly from "tokens," and that v) affirmative action aimed at one of two dominated groups can help that group but hurt the other. Lastly, the model provides a novel connection between taste-based, accurate statistical, and inaccurate statistical discrimination, leading to a feedback loop between discrimination in education and inaccurate beliefs about the dominated group.

Meritocracy in Hierarchical Organizations. The second chapter of my dissertation is joint work with Patrik Reichert. We investigate the extent to which competitive promotion mechanisms can achieve meritocratic selection of agents. Opposed to the common view, we show that when incorporating promotion-contests into hierarchical organizations, they may not help the most talented players to reach the top of the organization. If the organization's middle tier can influence the career advancement of players below them, they may block the promotion of talented players out of fear that it could negatively affect their own career prospects. Uncompetitive seniority-based promotion schemes can alleviate this problem. Pessimistically, however, we also identify a novel tradeoff between the selection of talent onto the middle and top tiers of the hierarchy. Whether this tradeoff occurs in equilibrium depends crucially on how noisy the information transmission between the low and middle tiers is.

Fragile Men. The (tentative) third chapter of my dissertation is ongoing work with Patrik Reichert. We design an incentive compatible experiment to explore a novel mechanism that may prevent women from rising to the top of organizations. We hypothesize that men, motivated by social image concerns, value winning (and losing) against women less than winning (and losing) against comparable men due to signaling considerations. We first develop a simple theoretical model where we account for social image concerns and endogenize the probability of success in a contest theory framework. We then develop a 2x2 experimental design where we vary (1) the observability of contest outcomes to external players and (2) the probability of losses. We expect men to avoid competing against women when the outcome of the contest is observable to other experimental subjects. Furthermore, we expect this effect to be stronger when the likelihood of losses increase.

Other Ongoing Projects (Selected). Beyond the projects described above, there are other less developed projects which I briefly want to mention. In one project, I am looking at the effect of affirmative action in contests on the expected abilities of winners. For example, when there is a quota for some positions, prescribing that a certain share must be filled by women, there is often the fear that this implies that a given woman was only selected due to the quota rather than talent. Indeed, this mechanical effect exists. However, there is also a more nuanced counter effect and, hence, whether the fear is warranted is unclear. Suppose that we live in a world in which discrimination against women indeed exists. In a contest framework, this discrimination demotivates women. Typically, in contests, participants of differing abilities are motivated and demotivated asymmetrically, such that discrimination demotivates talented individuals more than less talented individuals—i.e., the more the principal demotivates the participants, the closer will be the equilibrium effort submissions from talented and less talented individuals. This also decreases the probability that, conditional on winning, an individual is talented. Affirmative action can counter the demotivating effect of discrimination, which, in contrary, leads to an increase in the spread between equilibrium effort submissions by talented and less talented individuals. This increases the expected ability of the winner. Which of these opposing effects dominates is non-obvious.

In another project, I investigate deceptive markets in which consumers are partially naive. In a deceptive market firms may charge two prices, an observable price that the consumers anticipate and a hidden price that naive consumers do not anticipate paying when they make their purchase decisions. Previously, researchers have made the argument that this cannot have consumers in competitive markets: If firms make strictly positive profits with hidden prices, then they will just compete these profits away by setting the observable prices below marginal costs. I challenge this view by assuming that consumers are suspicious rather than fully naive. They believe with some probability that firms may be deceptive in the sense that they charge hidden prices. This incentivizes firms to not charge observable prices below marginal costs, because that would reveal them to be deceptive. Perversely, it is precisely consumers' suspicion that makes them worse off.