Max Otto

PHD STUDENT · UNIVERSITY OF MANNHEIM, GESS

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I study human morality, cooperation, and cultural evolution. My theoretical work uses (evolutionary) game theory, combining analytical models with agent-based simulations. Empirically, I adopt a design-oriented and methodologically pluralist approach, integrating multiple data sources and research strategies. Recently, my work has also engaged with methodological questions in computational text analysis.

Education

University of Mannheim *Mannheim*
PHD SOCIOLOGY *Sep 2022 - present*
- Thesis (prelim. title): "Culture and evolution in cooperation problems"

Leipzig University *Leipzig*
M.A. SOCIOLOGY *Oct 2019 - Aug 2022*
- Elective emphasis: (Micro-)economics and statistics
- Thesis: "Cultural determinants of intergenerational mobility" (Grade: 1.0; in German)

Leipzig University *Leipzig*
(PURE) MATHEMATICS *Oct 2018 - Aug 2019*
- Extracurricular studies (Linear Algebra I,II; Analysis I, II)

Leipzig University *Leipzig*
B.A. SOCIOLOGY *Oct 2015 - Aug 2018*
- Elective emphasis: Cultural studies
- Thesis: "Transitions of England's labor exchange institutions during late feudalism" (Grade: 1.0; in German)

Professional Experience

2023-	**Graduate Teaching Assistance**, Chair of Sociological Methodology, University of Mannheim
2022-2023	**Reserach stipend**, Graduate School of Economic and Social Sciences Mannheim
2019-2021	**Graduate Teaching Assistance**, Chair of Sociological Theory, University Leipzig
2018-2019	**Graduate Research Assistant**, Chair of Sociological Theory, University Leipzig

Publications

PUBLISHED

Otto, M. 2026. The cultural foundations of cooperation enforcement. Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 244, 107494. `https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2026.107494`

IN PREP

Otto, M. Evolutionary Dynamics of Moral Beliefs.

Otto, M. Extracting moral sentiments from historical text corpora.

Awards, Fellowships, & Grants

2023 **PhD research stipend**, Graduate School of Economic and Social Sciences, Mannheim

2022 **PhD research stipend**, Graduate School of Economic and Social Sciences, Mannheim

2014 **DPG Abitur Award**, German Physical Society

Presentations

CONTRIBUTED PRESENTATIONS

Otto, M. 2024. Evolutionary dynamics of moral beliefs. Venice International University, Italy.

Otto, M. 2024.Cultures of reciprocity, revenge, and reputation. The role of beliefs and preferences in the enforcement of cooperation. International Network of Analytical Sociology, Leipzig University, Germany.

Otto, M., 2023.Culture and the Mechanisms of Cooperation: The Interplay of Group Identity and Retaliatory Honor in Social and Economic Exchange. Analytical Sociology: Theory and Empirical Applications, Venice International University, Italy.

Teaching Experience

Research design *Mannheim*
TUTORIAL – GRADUATE LEVEL *2025-26*
- Inference techniques: (Survey-)Experiments, Matching, DiD, IV, RDD
- Application over exemplary data in R

Multivariate data analysis *Mannheim*
EXERCISE – UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL *2023-26*
- Linear Regression, Logistic/Probit Regression, Theory Testing
- Application over exemplary data in Stata

Data analysis *Mannheim*
EXERCISE – UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL *2024-26*
- Descriptive Statistics, Probability Theory, Hypothesis Testing
- Application over exemplary data in Stata

Sociological Theory *Leipzig*
TUTORIAL – UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL *2020-21*
- Review of main theoretical programs in sociology with an emphasis on contemporary schools of thought.
- Introduction to formal modeling, rational-choice and game-theoretic frameworks in sociology

Introduction to Scientific Research *Leipzig*
TUTORIAL – UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL *2019-20*
- Introduction to fundamental concepts of sociological theory and the construction of hypotheses.
- Introduction to essential tools for scientific work (literature research tools, bibliography management etc.).

Skills

Empirical	**Econometrics, Causal Inference (IV, DiD, RDD), Text-as-Data (NLP),**
Programming	**R**, Advanced
	Python, Stata, Proficient
	Matlab, Intermediate
Computing	**HPC Clusters (Slurm), Bash/Unix Shell, Git**, Intermediate
Research	**LaTeX, RMarkdown, Reproducible Workflow**, Advanced
Languages	**German**, native
	English, C1/C2 — Toefl 115/120