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Author(s):
Günther, Isabel; Grosse, Melanie; Klasen, Stephan

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Isabel Günther
Melanie Grosse
Stephan Klasen

GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT GÖTTINGEN

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Paper, Person or Place?

Isabel Günther, ETH Zürich**
Melanie Grosse, University of Goettingen
Stephan Klasen, University of Goettingen

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Abstract:

We analyze the drivers of presence (size of audience) and participation (number of questions asked) in parallel sessions at a large economics conference, using the annual meeting of the German Economics Association in 2012 as a case study. We find that the location of the presentation is at least as important for the number of academics attending a talk as the combined effect of the person presenting and the paper presented. Being a presenter in a late morning session on the second day of a conference, close to the place where coffee is served, significantly increases the size of the audience. Single-authored papers with long titles as well as those by junior researchers attract significantly fewer attendees. When it comes to asking questions, location becomes less important, but smaller rooms lead to more questions being asked (by women). Younger researchers as well as very senior researchers attract more questions and comments. There are also interesting and sizable gender effects. Women attend research sessions more diligently than men (at any point in time only half of the registered male economists compared to nearly two-thirds of female economists are attending a session), but seem to ask fewer questions than men. Men are less likely to attend presentations on health, education, welfare, and development economics than women. Our findings suggest that strategic scheduling of sessions could ensure better participation at conferences. Moreover, different behaviors of men and women at conferences might contribute to the lack of women in senior scientist positions.

JEL codes: A11, B54.
Key Words: Economists, Conference, Preferences, Gender Differences.

**Corresponding Author: Isabel Günther, ETH Zürich, Center for Development and Cooperation (NADEL).
Email: isabel.guenther@nadel.ethz.ch

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1. Introduction

"Happy is the one who speaks to attentive listeners" - Sirach 25:9

Publishing in journals and presenting at academic conferences are the key mechanisms for dissemination of research results for academics in all stages of their careers. This is true for economists as well as for researchers in the natural sciences or humanities. In addition, conferences play a central role for learning about other researchers' ongoing work, and provide an opportunity to network with researchers working on similar topics. Lastly, they play a very important role for the career development of young researchers for whom conference presentations can yield at least three benefits. First, just getting accepted at a well-known and highly selective conference already constitutes recognition of the quality and relevance of one's research, thereby constituting a signal of potentially considerable value in a market where asymmetric information problems are pervasive. Second, for young researchers conferences are one of the most important (and sometimes only) opportunities to present their research to a wider audience outside their own institution, and to receive feedback from specialists.[1] Third, a conference presentation can also be one of the most promising ways to get known to potential employers for post-doctoral or professorial positions. Since such appointments are generally made by senior professors, presenting in front of them can be one of the best ways to secure an academic job. Moreover, asking questions in sessions where others present can be a way to demonstrate research interest and research skills which might increase one's standing in the profession.

Of course, all of these positive effects of presenting at conferences, and especially for young researchers, only become effective if one has a sufficiently large and attentive audience. In a world where most general economics conferences now have dozens of parallel sessions, it is far from clear that there will be many attendees in one's session. Nor is it given that anyone actually asks a question or comments on the research. While it is well known among economists that many parallel sessions at large general conferences attract very few listeners, and frequently there is no discussion at all after the presentation of a paper, to our knowledge

[1] In contrast, more established researchers have many more ways to disseminate their research, including invited seminars, invited workshops, keynote speeches, organized sessions at conferences, newspapers, blogs, etc.

there exists no prior study that empirically investigates the drivers of attendance and discussion at conferences.

Knowing about the drivers of presence and participation at a conference is, however, of great importance for both the presenters who want to disseminate their results and get feed-back as well as for the conference organizers who have to think about how to schedule sessions in order to ensure that academic exchange is maximized. Most conference organizers do not mix topics of papers within one session and they make sure that no sessions with the same topic are organized parallel to each other to enable like-minded researchers to exchange ideas. However, at least to our knowledge, little attention is paid to other factors that might limit discussion during parallel sessions.

The question is also of interest to behavioral and gender economics through the investigation of whether there are clear gender differences in behavior at such conferences, with important repercussions for the standing and career progression of women. Given the importance of conferences for young researchers' careers and the determination of universities to increase the share of female senior academics, such gender differentials in attending and commenting can shed light on how conferences may affect these efforts.

Gender differences in science continue to be substantial. A comprehensive study by Ceci et al. (2014) summarizes the literature and adds own evidence on the still "(non)-level playing field" of science for men and women in several fields. Female full professors are still underrepresented, even though the share of female Ph.D. students is increasing and the share of graduate students is already above 50% (Ferber and Brün 2011, Ceci et al. 2014, The Economist 2013). Furthermore, females are also underrepresented in publications and citations, and they are less successful in getting positions, funding, tenure, and promotion (e.g. Mailiniak et al. 2013 and McLaughlin et al., 2013 for the field of international relations, Ferber and Brün 2011 for economics, Symonds et al. 2006 for life sciences, and Ceci et al 2014 for several fields)[2].

[2] Ceci et al. 2014 disaggregate findings for many disciplines and fields. For economics they find a publication gap for assistant and full professors, but not for associate professors. They also find a promotion, salary, and tenure gap in economics.

Recent findings suggest that one important factor affecting these gaps is "promotion and self-promotion". All papers on gender gaps in citations find that people tend to cite papers of authors of the same gender more, and that papers authored by women are systematically cited less. Furthermore, women tend to self-cite less because they do not seem to "like" such type of self-promotion.[3] Lastly, women seem to have smaller networks and fewer co-authors, potentially leading to fewer publications, adding to the fact that, in general, women tend to submit fewer papers (Ceci et al. 2014).

When it comes to preferences of female scientists, Rhoten and Pfirman (2007) highlight that women are more likely to use techniques of other fields or disciplines, are more interested in group work, and tend to look at questions at the edges of their discipline (in niche fields) or with connection to different fields where competition and exposure is less severe. In addition, women, on average, are considered to be more "people-oriented" (whereas men are more "thing"-oriented) and are more likely than men to drop out from math-intense fields (Ceci et al. 2014). While these studies provide a rich background to our analysis, to our knowledge, there is no literature to date that has investigated how the behaviors of men and women at conferences are a manifestation of these gender gaps (and might help to maintain them).

The two studies that come closest to our investigation are papers by Hauffler and Rincke (2009) and Borghans et al. (2010). Applying a choice experiment, Borghans et al. (2010) investigate conference preferences among European labor economists. They find that the keynote speaker and the location are the two most important drivers of conference attendance. Hauffler and Rinke (2009) also analyze which submitted papers between 2005 and 2008 have passed the competitive selection procedure of the annual congress of the German Economic Association to be accepted for presentation. They find that acceptance is mainly driven by the previous publication record of the author and whether the author already is a full professor. Both factors could be highly correlated with the quality of the paper or might act as a signaling effect for the selection committee.

Our paper differs from both these studies by focusing on the behavior of participants *at* a conference, i.e. after the general attendance decision has been made by the author and the

[3] Similarily, Ceci et al. 2014 point out that expectations and stereotypes change behavior, e.g. males overestimate their (math) ability and females underestimate it (given that the expectation is that females are bad at math). Even the ordering of test sections can play a role, e.g. if the gender of the respondent has to be marked before or after the test questions are answered.

selection committee. In particular, we look at the researchers' participation in and discussion during research sessions.

The aim of this paper is therefore to empirically analyze which factors attract attentive academics at sessions at a general conference. We analyze both the general *presence* as well as the *participation* (by asking questions) of researchers in parallel sessions. Using the annual meeting of the German Economics Association (called 'Verein für Socialpolitik') in Göttingen in September 2012 as a case study of a large general economics conference with many parallel sessions, we particularly investigate the role of

- the *paper* (topic, length of title, number of authors, publication status),
- the *person* (seniority, position, research success (or visibility) of a scientist in terms of high-level publications or the department he or she comes from, gender of the presenter), and
- the *place* (time of day, day of the conference, location, and size of the room).

We study the entire sample as well as male and female researchers separately to identify gender differences.

We find that place has the largest impact on number of researchers attending a talk. The highest numbers of attendees are observed on the second day (out of three) of the conference, in sessions in the late morning, in the most convenient locations. Moreover, papers with long titles as well as those by junior researchers attract significantly fewer attendees. The research quality (or visibility) of the person presenting in terms of high-level publications or a highly renown department s/he comes from does not seem to attract more listeners. There are interesting and sizable gender effects with regard to topic choice. Moreover, sessions by female presenters are frequented more, but mainly because more women attend sessions in general, and sessions with female presenters in particular.

When it comes to active participation, more questions are asked to younger less known researchers, to presentations taking place in smaller rooms, and to the second presenter within a session of three. Women ask fewer questions, but a large share of women in the audience (controlled for the number of women in the audience) and smaller rooms increase the likelihood of a woman to ask a question.

Our findings suggest that scheduling sessions should be taken seriously – apart from avoiding parallel sessions with similar topics – to ensure better participation at conferences. The gender differences merit particular attention as they might relate more generally to gender differences of career progress for males and females in the academic profession.

2. Conference Set-Up and Data Collection

The VfS (Verein für Socialpolitik) is – after the European Economic Association – the largest association of European economists with more than 3,000 members (for comparison the American Economic Association has more than 20,000 members). Most members are from Germany, Austria, and German-speaking Switzerland. The VfS organizes one large conference per year. Recently, presentations and discussions are increasingly being held in English; hence, some European non-German speaking economists attend the conference. However, the share of German-speaking economists is still very high at more than 90 percent.

The VfS annual conference of 2012 took place in Göttingen from 9-12 September (Sunday to Wednesday). Located in the middle of Germany, Göttingen has excellent train connections, i.e. all major German cities (including Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, and Munich) are very easily and quickly reached. Göttingen itself is a town very much dominated by the university: out of the roughly 120,000 inhabitants, 25,000 are students, and the central campus is located very close to the city center and the train station. Even though it is a pleasant place, there are very few noteworthy sights that would attract many tourists. Thus, it would be fair to assume that the economists who attended the conference were very likely to actually be at the conference (i.e. they would not spend their time visiting a museum or going to the theatre). On the other hand, because of the excellent train connections, there is the possibility to just come for a short period and then get away quickly. The VfS annual conference always invites paper presentations from all fields of economics, but also has a core topic each year for which key note speakers are invited. The focus of the 2012 conference was on "Challenges and opportunities for labor markets in the 21st century" (Neue Wege und Herausforderungen für den Arbeitsmarkt des 21. Jahrhunderts).

436 researchers were accepted and registered for presentations and 637 participants registered in total (including press and panel presenters). The weather was nice and warm until Tuesday afternoon with a sudden change to extreme rainfall on Tuesday evening (but after the last parallel sessions), and it was dry again on Wednesday.

After a welcome reception on Sunday, the scientific program started on Monday morning with the first block of parallel sessions (Block A) and ended on Wednesday in the early afternoon with a plenary discussion. Overall, the scientific program took place on 3 days during which parallel sessions and plenary meetings alternated. In total, 7 blocks (A – G) with time slots of 90 minutes each were scheduled with 20 or 21 parallel research sessions in each block (e.g. A1-A20). In each research session 3 papers were presented (only one session had 4 papers). In total, 426 papers were scheduled to be presented in 142 sessions. Out of these 426 presentations, 27 presenters (6.3%) did not show up to give a presentation. During 3 out of the 7 blocks of parallel sessions so-called "panels" with expert discussions on specific issues took place. These "panels" were organized by research institutions and added another parallel option (the 21st or 22nd) to choose from. See Appendix A2 for an outline of the time table.

The conference was located in two buildings of the university campus: First, in a "central lecture building" (ZHG) with larger rooms which are normally used for large lectures and, second, in a "seminar room building" (VG) with smaller rooms where smaller lectures and tutorials take place. Walking from one building to the other takes about 3 minutes (open air). See Appendix A1 for a map of the conference set-up. The lecture rooms in ZHG do not have any windows but can host 85-230 people sitting in rows, whereas the VG rooms can host 25-48 people sitting at tables in a u-shape and offer daylight. In ZHG, all plenary sessions, the three panels, and 10 parallel research sessions took place. In VG, the other 11 parallel research sessions took place. The ZHG was also the location for coffee breaks and for a book show of approximately 20 research institutions and publishing houses.

According to the scientific committee of the conference two rules applied when assigning 3 research papers to certain research sessions (1-20) and blocks (A-G).[4] First papers with a topical fit were grouped into sessions. Then sessions were assigned to blocks avoiding that the same topic would appear twice within one block, e.g. in parallel sessions. Apart from those

[4] Interview with Armin Schmutzler, 11. October 2013, University of Zurich, chair of the scientific committee.

two rules sessions were (practically) randomly assigned to the various blocks (A-G) and to a session number (1-20). Next, according to the local organizer (Melanie Grosse, co-author of this paper) the sessions were mechanically assigned to the time slots and rooms, only following the rule that the same session number would always be in the same room (e.g. A1, B1, …, G1 all took place in room ZHG.001).

The data set used for the analysis has been compiled from three different sources. First, the conference booklet provided the following information: presentation title, presentation ordering, building and room where the presentation took place, presentation day and time, presenter's name, gender, and affiliation, and number of co-authors. The conference booklet did not contain the abstracts nor was there a book of abstracts or a homepage of abstracts. The papers could be downloaded from the conference homepage, which, however, only included 100 papers (less than one quarter of the total). Moreover, the download process was very time consuming. Thus, we assume that further information about the content of the presentations (besides the titles) was hardly available to the potential audience.

Second, primary data collection took place during the conference with a small survey filled out by research assistants who participated in each session. They recorded whether the presentation took place as planned, and collected information on the number of participants (men and women) as well as the number of questions asked (by men and women). Participants did not know whether a presentation listed in the program was cancelled due to no-show of the presenter before the session took place which, as stated above, affected 27 presenters (6.21%).

Third, information on presenters was retrieved from various websites. The information retrieved from websites included the "Handelsblatt Ranking", a German economics newspaper which ranks "German" economists (defined as researchers working at German-speaking universities in Germany, Austria, and the German-speaking part of Switzerland) according to their publication record. We used the three individual categories for the year 2011: (i) best economists with regard to their lifetime achievement ("Lebenswerk"), (ii) best economists in the last 4 years, and (iii) best economists below age 40. Furthermore, we included if the presenter was affiliated to one of the top 10 economic faculties according to the Handelsblatt Ranking in 2011 (Handelsblatt, 2011). In addition the RePEc (Research Papers in Economics) homepage was consulted to obtain the number of peer reviewed

publications for each presenter as well as whether the paper presented at the conference was already listed at RePEc (http://repec.org). Last, the personal web-site of each presenter was consulted for his/her academic position (ongoing Ph.D., completed Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Full Professor)[5] and her/his (JEL code) sub-discipline.

3. Results

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics on aggregate presence and participation. A total of 637 persons registered, of which 75% were men. Most of the registered persons were also presenters (407), and there the gender-split is also around 3:1. If everyone diligently attended all sessions, one should expect 20-30 persons per session (given 20 sessions) depending on whether we consider all registered persons (that also includes media and politics) or only the researchers that also presented a paper. In reality, the average attendance is much lower, at 11 persons per presentation (not counting the presenter).

Table 1: Aggregate Presence and Participation

		Total	Men	Women
Total Registered Economists	a1	637	486	151
Total Economists with Presentations	a2	407	308	99
Theoretical Number per Talk 1*	b1=(a1-20)/20	30.85	23.55	7.3
Theoretical Number per Talk 2*	b2=(a2-20)/20	19.35	14.65	4.7
Actual Presence of Economists	c	11.19	8.16	3.02
Actual Participation of Economists**	d	3.99	3.16	0.82
% of persons present	e=c/b2	0.5782	0.5569	0.6425
% of persons participating	f=d/c	0.3565	0.3872	0.2715

Notes: *20 presenters and 20 parallel sessions; ** participation=number of questions asked

There is a clear gender difference in attendance with women having a 10 percentage point higher attendance rate than men (64 in comparison to 55 percent). When it comes to "active" participation, the average presentation attracts 4 comments or questions, and here the gender differentials are reversed, with men having a 10 percentage point higher participating rate than women. Of the women listening to a presentation only 27 percent ask a question, whereas of the men listening to a presentation 38 percent ask a question. Two reasons might be behind this finding: either women do not ask questions because they do not like to self-promote and to "show off" (as assumed in The Economist, 2013) or because they fear the

[5] Note that the title Associate Professors does not exist in German speaking countries.

exposure (Rhoten and Pfirman 2007), especially in a male-dominated audience. Note that, on average, in each session 8 men, but only 3 women were present. This gender effect might, however, partly be explained by an age effect: whereas 37% of registered male presenters are (assistant) professors, only 24% of registered female conference participants are (assistant) professors (see Table 3). Unfortunately, we can only distinguish the number of participants and questions asked per session by gender, but not by (academic) age.

As shown in Table 2, within a session there is considerable fluctuation in presence and participation. Session hopping (or late arrival and early departure) is rather common but fluctuations *within* sessions are much smaller than differences in presence *between* sessions. However, note that within session variation might be underestimated as we only observe the net change in number of people listening to different talks within a session, i.e. if 2 people leave and 2 people arrive before the second talk, we would not measure any variation. In contrast, the number of questions asked varies almost as much within sessions as between sessions.

Table 2: Between and Within Variation of Presence and Participation

	Total	Men	Women
StD between sessions: Presence	7.066	5.023	2.712
StD within sessions: Presence	1.505	1.202	0.559
Within/between StD	0.2129	0.2392	0.2061
StD between sessions: Participation (Questions)	2.064	1.760	0.959
StD within sessions: Participation (Questions)	1.570	1.399	0.880
Within/between StD	0.7606	0.7948	0.9176

Note: StD refers to standard deviation.

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics of the variables included in the empirical analysis. During 40% of the sessions there was an organized panel discussion occurring at the same time (usually with well-known senior economists, thus potentially diverting audience away from the parallel contributed sessions). Half the sessions took place in the main building (where the coffee breaks also took place and where an exhibition of academic publishers and research institutes was organized), the other half in a second building about 200 m away (walking distance around 3 minutes). On average room capacity was very large (with a mean of 95 seats) suggesting that most sessions looked rather empty given the average number of 11 listeners (see Table 1).

Regarding presenter characteristics, about one quarter are female, and have an average of 6 listed refereed publications in RePEc. However, note that 58% of presenters have 0 refereed publications on RePEc, most of them presumably Ph.D. students and young researchers. More than 30% of presenters come from the top 10 economics departments according to the Handelsblatt Ranking (in total researchers come from 103 different universities). Ph.D. students represent 43% of the presenters. With respect to academic backgrounds, 20% of presenters have a research focus on labor and population economics, which is not surprising given the main topic of the conference which was on labor markets. Most other participants come from macroeconomics, international economics or public economics: in total 30% of presenters. The remaining 50% of the presenters are distributed among the remaining 12 fields of economics (see Table 3).

Regarding the papers, most papers are co-authored and more than one third of the papers were already available on RePEc. About half of the papers come from three JEL codes: methods (including econometrics and experimental methods), micro (where again experimental papers also play a role) and labor economics. The other papers are distributed across the other fields. History of thought, law and economics, and economic history are greatly underrepresented; but these fields are also not widely represented among economics researchers at universities in Germany.

Men and women are evenly distributed across time slots and rooms. However, male researchers attending the annual meeting of the German Economic Association are on average more senior than female researchers. They more often have a tenured professorship, have more peer-reviewed publications on RePEc, and are more often listed in the Handelsblatt rankings. The topics men and women chose to present are largely the same. The JEL codes of the papers are not statistically different at the 5%-level, except Agricultural and Resource Economics which is more often the (first) JEL code of papers authored and presented by men.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean Total	Mean Men	Mean Women
Observations	407	308	99
	Place		
Parallel Panel	43.13	43.83	40.40
Main Building (ZHG)	48.78	47.08	53.54
Second Building (VG)	51.22	52.92	46.46
08.30-10.00 am	42.89	43.18	42.42
10.30-12.00 am	28.92	28.57	30.30
15.30-17.00 pm	28.19	28.25	27.27
10. September	22.70	26.95	30.30
11. September	42.89	43.18	41.41
12. September	29.41	29.87	28.28
Room Size	94.79	92.59	101.62
	Presenter		
Presenter is a women	24.26		
Presenter's refereed publications in RePEc	6.43	10.02*	3.52*
Presenter is listed in Handelsblatt ranking**	9.80	12.01*	3.03*
Presenter from Top 10 Uni in Handelsblatt ranking****	34.15	35.06	31.31
ongoing Ph.D.	42.89	39.29*	57.58*
Ph.D. completed	21.57	22.08	17.17
Ass. Prof.	11.03	10.39	13.13
Prof	23.28	26.95*	11.11*
Others (A/B/K/N)***	1.72	2.27	0.00
C: Methods	8.35	7.79	10.10
D: Microeconomics	4.42	2.92*	9.09*
E: Macroeconomics	11.06	12.01	8.08
F: International economics	10.07	10.71	8.08
G: Financial economics	9.58	9.42	10.10
H: Public economics	12.29	13.64	8.08
I: Health, education, welfare	5.16	5.19	5.08
J: Labour and demography	19.90	17.86*	26.26*
L: Industrial organization	8.35	8.44	8.08
O: Development economics	3.44	3.25	4.04
Q: Agricultural and resource economics	3.93	4.22	3.03
R: Urban and regional economics	1.72	2.27	0.00
	Paper		
Single authored paper	25.24	25.00	26.26
Paper listed in RePEc	36.27	36.36	35.35
Others (A/B/K/N)***	3.19	3.57	2.02
C: Methods	15.23	14.94	16.16
D: Microeconomics	15.97	16.88	13.13
E: Macroeconomics	9.34	9.74	8.08
F: International economics	10.32	10.71	9.09
G: Financial economics	6.88	5.84	10.10
H: Public economics	9.34	9.42	9.09
I: Health, education, welfare	4.67	4.22	6.06
J: Labour and demography	13.02	12.01	16.16
L: Industrial organization	4.42	4.87	3.03
O: Development economics	2.70	2.27	4.04
Q: Agricultural and resource economics	2.46	3.25*	0.00*
R: Urban and regional economics	2.46	2.27	3.03

Notes: *significant difference between male and female researchers at 5% level; ** listed in either (i) best economists' lifetime achievement ("Lebenswerk"), (ii) best economists in the last 4 years, and (iii) best economists below age 40; *** JEL codes A/B/K/N: General Economics (A), History of Economic Thought (B), Law and Economics (K), Economic History (N); ****a total of 103 universities were present.

Our estimation strategy is as follows: we first estimate the drivers of the "attractiveness" of the talk (Table 4), and second the "attentiveness" of the audience (Table 5). Thus, we first estimate the effect of various variables on the number of people listening to the presentations (i.e. the size of the audience). When we look at the attractiveness of talks, three main groups of explanatory variables emerge: 1) "Is the *place* or timing comfortable to reach?", 2) "Is the *person* presenting (academically) attractive?", and 3) "Does the *paper* sound interesting?"

Our regressions are clustered at the session level because it is not clear if persons focus on one specific talk within one session or if they target one session in general. We observe that people do not move that much within sessions (Table 2): the within-session variance of presence is much smaller than between-session variance. If the overall attractiveness of a session plays a big role in the presence decision, then the person's or paper's effect on presence is underestimated. We cannot directly test for the impact of previous attendance (within one session) for following presentations, given that the number of participants of the previous presentation is also influenced by the following presenters, leading to a "reflection problem" (Manski, 1993).

A summary of our results suggests that unknown males writing single-authored papers with long titles on unpopular subjects presented in early morning sessions and remote rooms have a very low chance to attract listeners.

In particular we find that place is at least as important as the combined effect of the (perceived) quality of the paper and presenter. The adjusted R-squares are similar for both specifications (compare columns 1-3, Table 4 with columns 4-6, Table 4). In particular, the sessions that are located in the VG attract much fewer people than the ones in ZHG, and the early morning sessions are also very unpopular. At first sight, there also seems to be a problem of late arrival to sessions, so that the first (and to a smaller extent the second talk) of each session has a smaller audience. However, this effect disappears once we control for person and paper (Table 4, columns 7-9). Hence, the last presentation seems to be a more (research) "attractive" person and paper (see discussion below). This is likely, considering that at most conferences the last presentation is given by the session chair, who is often set to be a more experienced researcher. For the case of this conference 16 percent of the first or second presenters (within a session) were full professors whereas 37 percent of the third

presenters were full professors. In only 29 out of a total of 142 sessions was the third presenter more junior than the second presenter (ongoing Ph.D. < Ph.D. < Ass.Prof < Prof). In only 10 out the 142 organized sessions was a full professor participating in the session but not the last presenter.

Tenured presenters, holding the title "Prof." (information that the audience cannot see from the program but might know nevertheless), seem to attract more people, and female presenters tend to attract more people. The quality of a researcher's work, proxied by the number of papers already published and the Handelsblatt ranking does not seem to play a role (neither university ranking nor individual rankings). In terms of the paper being presented, we see that long titles decrease attractiveness. For example, in comparinga short title such as "Rewarding Idleness" (18 characters) with the long title "Do people have a preference for increasing or decreasing pain? An experimental comparison of psychological and economic measures in health related decision making" (162 characters), or "The Interest Rate Trap" (22 characters) with "How can banks effectively stabilize their retail customers' saving behavior? The impact of contractual rewards on saving persistence and cash flow volatility" (157 characters), we seem to observe a kind of boredom effect (more notable for men). In fact, having 140 additional characters decreases the size of the audience by 2.8 persons.[6] Writing a single-authored paper also significantly decreases the chances of attracting a large audience. In the sample, 25% of papers are single authored and 75% of papers are co-authored. Probably we observe two effects: either more co-authors means that one of the co-authors is also (well) known (and that name attracts a larger audience), or that the co-author also attends the session. The average effect (+1.9) is too large to be explained solely by attending co-authors. Only for 30% of co-authored papers one (or more) of the co-authors is also present at the conference (and presents another paper).

In terms of topic, the single most attractive JEL code is "J", for "Labour and Demography, which might also be driven by the overall topic of the keynote presentations ("Kerntagung") which was on "labour markets". We have also checked for the impact of number of researchers presenting a paper within the same JEL code as the presenter (instead of JEL code dummies). However, this variable does not have any influence (results are available from the authors on request). This means that higher presence within certain JEL topics is not driven

[6] We also tested whether titles that are formulated as questions attract more or fewer listeners, but no impact was found. Results are available from the authors on request.

by more people presenting a paper of that JEL code at the conference. Last, we also estimated the effect of the number of researchers (present at the conference) from the same field as the presenter. This variable has a statistically significant but small impact: one additional researcher from the same field as the presenter increases the audience by 0.05 persons. In comparison to smaller groups (such as development economics with 14 participants), largely represented fields of economics (for example macroeconomics with 41 participants) hence only attract 1.3 ([41-14-1]*0.05) more listeners. Results are available from the authors upon request.

When we separate the results by gender we find that women attend other women's talks. Furthermore, women seem to like plenary (anonymous?) sessions more than men, maybe because of being less exposed. Men seem to predominantly attend sessions on Tuesdays and are less interested in health, education, welfare and development topics than women. This result is in line with Rhoten and Pfirman (2007): these topics are often more applied and interdisciplinary than "traditional" fields of economics. Men are also more attracted by tenured presenters than are women. This could be explained by self-promotion patterns of men, who may be seeking to network with potential employers or co-authors.

Table 4: Attracting Academics – Drivers of Presence

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Dependent Variable	Number of people present	Number of males present	Number of females present	Number of people present	Number of males present	Number of females present	Number of people present	Number of males present	Number of females present
	Place								
Parallel Panel	-2.639	-0.409	-1.574*				-2.594	-0.481	-1.652*
ZHG	Reference								
VG	-2.755**	-1.122	-1.78***				-1.793*	-0.608	-1.20***
Monday	Reference								
Tuesday	3.013**	2.484**	0.601				2.787**	2.242**	0.535
Wednesday	-0.0779	-0.983	0.460				-0.545	-1.375	0.296
8.30-10.00	Reference								
10.30-12.00	3.833*	1.741	1.771**				3.841**	1.646	1.938**
15.30-17.00	2.761	0.246	1.642				2.016	-0.295	1.599
1st Presenter	Reference								
2nd Presenter	0.426*	0.292	0.136				-0.198	-0.106	-0.0455
3rd Presenter	0.621**	0.415*	0.174*				0.00773	-0.0551	0.0265
	Person/Presenter								
Female presenter				1.987**	0.875	1.000**	1.855**	0.826	0.91***
Publications in Repec				0.0638*	0.0348	0.0222*	0.0580	0.0301	0.0194
Handelsblatt ranked				-1.508	-1.152	-0.0948	-0.591	-0.554	0.220
Top 10 Uni				-0.288	-0.155	-0.107	-0.638	-0.459	-0.202
Ongoing Ph.D.	Reference								
Ph.D.				-0.129	-0.0168	-0.145	0.251	0.123	0.0599
Ass. Prof.				0.620	0.328	0.148	0.302	0.161	-0.00247
Prof.				1.829	1.420	0.0840	2.194*	1.735*	0.208
	Paper								
Title length (letters)				-0.0207*	-0.017**	-0.0057	-0.0148	-0.0145*	-0.00335
Single authored paper				-1.856**	-1.529**	-0.524*	-1.623**	-1.426**	-0.388
Paper listed in Repec				0.864	0.330	0.196	0.583	0.173	0.0959
C: Methods	Reference								
D: Microeconomics				-1.729	-1.142	-0.315	-0.756	-0.624	0.152
E: Macroeconomics				2.126	2.272	-0.651	3.312	2.685	0.102
F: International Econ.				0.850	1.075	0.117	1.265	1.453	0.190
G: Financial Econ.				-2.470	-1.096	-0.858	0.00370	0.292	0.272
H: Public Economics				-2.030	-0.924	-0.476	-1.337	-0.498	-0.151
I: Health, Edu,Welfare				-2.398*	-2.407**	-0.247	-0.793	-1.547*	0.523
J: Labour /Demography				4.679**	2.390	2.354**	4.681**	2.661*	2.107**
L: Industrial Orga.				-0.378	-0.0789	0.226	-0.522	-0.0205	0.0598
O: Dev. Economics				-2.877*	-3.23***	-0.796	-2.060	-2.869**	-0.353
Q: Agri & Resources				0.688	1.207	-0.645	2.754	2.218	0.427
R: Urban & Regional				-1.303	-1.608	0.344	-1.315	-1.278	0.0219
Others (A/B/K/N)				6.341	4.366**	2.744	6.218	4.293*	2.716
Constant	10.3***	7.36***	3.15***	11.4***	8.80***	2.94***	9.78***	7.83***	2.48***
Observations	404	404	404	399	399	399	399	399	399
Adj. R-squared	0.1172	0.1001	0.1506	0.187	0.1181	0.1336	0.2371	0.2112	0.2218

Notes: ***statistical significant at 10% level; **statistical significant at 5% level; * statistical significant at 1% level. Standard errors are clustered at the session level.

After having estimated the drivers of the "attractiveness" of the talk (passive presence), we turn to the "attentiveness" of the audience (active participation). In Table 5 we estimate the effect of various correlates on the number of questions asked by the audience, controlled for the number of people present. We again look at the same three main groups of explanatory variables: 1) "Is the *place* or timing comfortable to ask questions?", 2) "Is the *person* presenting doing a good job?", or 3) "Is the *paper* stimulating?

The overall results suggest that Ph.D. students or full professors presenting in a small seminar room (with daylight) allocated to the second presentation in a session get asked the most questions.

Interestingly, presence and participation are not very strongly related: the size of the audience has only a small impact on the number of questions asked. A presenter would need 10 more participants to get asked one additional question (noting that the average number of people present in each session is only 11).

In contrast to our results for the drivers of presence, we find that location and time is not important for the number of questions asked. The effects of early morning sessions, parallel panels, or specific days as found for presence disappear for participation. Hence, once the audience is attracted to a certain talk the number of questions is independent of the timing of a presentation. However, the second presenter in each session gets asked more questions than the other presenters. Given that we control for the number of researchers present at each talk, this result cannot be explained by late arrival and early leaving within sessions. The explanation might hence be that the audience needs to "warm up" and get in touch with the group, so that for the first presenter the "mood" is not yet favorable. For the last presenter, the problem might be that the session time is over[7], limiting the available time for questions. Moreover, even though the sessions that are located in the VG attract much fewer people than the ones in ZHG, once the audience is there, the tendency to ask questions increases. This seems to be due to a nicer seminar atmosphere of the VG rooms. If we control for seat numbers per room (instead of building type), we find that 1 more seat leads to 0.005 fewer questions asked (see Table 5), or 100 more seats lead to 0.5 fewer questions. Given an average of 4 questions per session, a large room reduces the number of questions by about 10%.

Ph.D. students and full professors attract more questions. An attentive audience has two reasons to ask questions. Either the presentation was perceived as "good", so this stimulates a nice discussion (thus interested questions are asked). Or the presentation was "less convincing", so the audience gives rather critical comments to the presenter (thus critical questions are asked). One might expect Ph.D. students to give less experienced presentations.

[7] However, the last presenter is the session chair, so s/he theoretically would have full control over the time allocation.

In addition, a Ph.D. student might receive more questions because it might seem easier to ask questions to a less experienced researcher than to a more senior economist. Or it may be the case that senior researchers feel more obliged to give comments to Ph.D. students, who might benefit from comments much more than senior researchers.

In terms of the paper, the negative effects of long titles as well as the effect of single-authored papers as observed for presence vanishes for participation; neither has the JEL code "J", for "Labour and Demography", a strong (positive) effect on participation.

When we separate the results by gender we find that there is no difference in the number of questions female and male presenters are asked (Table 5, columns 4-9). Also the drivers of active participation (i.e. asking questions) do not largely differ between men and women (Table 5, columns 2-3, 5-6, 8-9) – apart from the fact that women ask fewer questions in general (Table 1). This finding is in contrast to our results for presence with women selecting research sessions differently from men. In a separate specification (Table 5, columns 1-3) we further tested the impact of the share of women (controlled for the absolute number of men and women present during a talk) and the effect of the session chair being a woman. The sex of the session chair does not have any impact on the number of questions asked (in total, by men and women). However, the share of women has a (positive) effect on the number of questions posed by female researchers – independent of the absolute number of women in the room which directly influences the number of questions asked.[8]

[8] This is in line with Ceci et al. 2014 who point out that girls might shy away from competition with boys when the stereotype would expect them to perform worse, e.g. girls perform better in (math) competitions when more girls are around compared to situations when more boys are around.

Table 5: Attentive Academics – Drivers of Participation (controlled for Presence)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Dependent Variable	# questions asked	# questions by men	# questions by women	# questions asked	# questions by men	# questions by women	# questions asked	# questions by men	# questions by women
# people present	0.07***						0.082**		
# men present		0.0969*	-0.0173					0.115**	-0.015
# women present		-0.0634	0.118**					-0.069	0.111**
	Place								
Parallel Panel	0.356	0.867	-0.340				0.892	1.064	-0.234
ZHG	Reference								
VG	0.764**	0.79***	0.0949				0.705*	0.607*	0.0806
Monday	Reference								
Tuesday	0.0635	0.175	-0.209				-0.118	0.126	-0.264
Wednesday	-0.214	0.0273	-0.221				-0.437	0.0511	-0.426
8.30-10.00	Reference								
10.30-12.00	-0.291	-0.832	0.284				-0.761	-0.965**	0.247
15.30-17.00	-0.0265	-0.679	0.494				-0.634	-0.936	0.4
1st Presenter	Reference								
2nd Presenter	0.62***	0.469**	0.164				0.611**	0.433*	0.17
3rd Presenter	0.387	0.235	0.170				0.483	0.289	0.193
Chair is a women	-0.0370	0.0235	-0.0380				-0.0236	0.09	-0.0761
Share of women	0.00534	-0.0115	0.0174**				0.00694	-0.00806	0.0180**
Room Size a)	-0.005**	-0.003**	-0.002**						
	Person/Presenter								
Female presenter				-0.114	-0.155	-0.0598	-0.0519	0.0229	-0.0646
Publications in Repec				0.00950	0.0136	-0.0049	-0.0105	0.0000	-0.009*
Handelsblatt ranked				-0.917*	-0.664*	-0.267	-0.656	-0.442	-0.211
Top 10 Uni				0.327	0.236	0.0970	0.402	0.343	0.0649
Ongoing Ph.D.	Reference								
Ph.D. completed				-0.746*	-0.403	-0.330*	-0.796**	-0.489*	-0.306*
Ass. Prof.				-0.677*	-0.215	-0.476*	-0.611	-0.143	-0.457**
Prof.				-0.565	-0.492	-0.121	-0.321	-0.368	0.0481
	Paper								
Title length (letters)				0.003	0.003	0.001	0.00339	0.00259	0.00124
Single authored paper				0.111	0.297	-0.0890	0.0622	0.208	-0.122
Paper listed in Repec				0.303	0.471*	-0.170	0.283	0.480*	-0.168
C: Methods	Reference								
D: Microeconomics				-0.0828	-0.152	0.0998	-0.232	-0.299	0.0434
E: Macroeconomics				1.193*	0.969*	0.270	0.594	0.331	0.283
F: International Econ.				-0.145	-0.180	-0.0273	-0.133	-0.246	0.0652
G: Financial Econ.				0.626	0.465	0.230	0.0612	-0.207	0.212
H: Public Economics				1.038	0.600	0.456*	0.897	0.436	0.411*
I: Health, Edu,Welfare				1.438*	1.043	0.489*	1.075	0.814	0.303
J: Labour /Demography				0.0316	-0.309	0.0662	0.143	0.0241	0.131
L: Industrial Orga.				1.675*	0.892	0.723	1.788**	0.995*	0.751
O: Dev. Economics				0.526	0.311	0.444	0.329	0.113	0.343
Q: Agri & Resources				-0.256	-0.328	0.0981	-0.586	-0.851	0.244
R: Urban & Regional				-0.827	-1.06**	0.240	-0.57	-0.606	0.0442
Others (A/B/K/N)				0.997	0.328	0.253	0.993*	0.38	0.58
Constant	2.40***	1.75***	0.302	2.656***	1.873***	0.306	2.086***	1.745**	0.181
Observations	404	404	404	399	399	399	396	396	396
Adj. R-squared	0.076	0.102	0.119	0.132	0.121	0.169	0.163	0.175	0.228

Notes: *statistical significant at 10% level; **statistical significant at 5% level; *** statistical significant at 1% level. Standard errors are clustered at the session level. a) room size is a separate specification where instead of the building the room size is included in the regression: coefficients of other variables do not change significantly.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to empirically analyze which factors attract attentive academics to research sessions at a general economics conference. We analyze both the general *presence* as well as the *participation* (by asking questions) of researchers in parallel sessions. Using the annual meeting of the German Economics Association (called 'Verein für Socialpolitik') in Göttingen in September 2012 as a case study of a large general economics conference with many parallel sessions, we particularly investigate the role of paper, person and place.

We find that on average only half of participants attend a research session at any point in time. Furthermore, place and time has the largest impact on number of researchers listening to a talk. The highest numbers of attendees are observed on the second day (out of three) of the conference, in sessions in the late morning, in the most convenient locations. Single-authored papers with long titles as well as those by junior researchers attract significantly fewer attendees. A Ph.D. student presenting a single-authored paper on Monday morning, away from the location where the coffee is served can expect about 6 participants. A tenured professor presenting a co-authored paper on Tuesday before lunch in the central building can expect about 20 participants. There are also interesting and sizable gender effects. Sessions by female presenters are frequented more, but mainly because in general women attend sessions more regularly, and they attend sessions with female presenters in particular. Women have a stronger preference for panel sessions and are interested in different topics than men. Men are more likely to attend talks by senior tenured economists, which is not the case for women. However, note that we cannot fully distinguish gender from age effects.

When it comes to asking questions, Ph.D. students and tenured professors in small seminar rooms attract the most questions. Women ask fewer questions, but a large share of women present increases the likelihood of a woman to ask a question. In general the drivers of active participation (i.e. asking questions) are substantially different from the determinants of mere presence. For attendance the location (including place and time) is highly important, for participation, the status of the presenter (and the room size) is most important.

Our findings suggest that scheduling sessions should be taken more seriously – apart from avoiding parallel sessions with similar topics – to ensure better participation at conferences. For example, one might want to schedule more parallel sessions at convenient times (and

fewer at the margins), and try to have all sessions in smaller seminar rooms within one building to maximize academic exchange.

The gender differences merit particular attention as they might relate more generally to gender differences of career progress for males and females in the academic profession. For example, if women are less likely to attend talks by senior scientists and ask fewer questions, and if this is an important way to impress more senior colleagues, pre-assigning discussants in a gender-balanced way might be one way to address this problem.

Promoting the role of senior women at such conferences might also help. Looking at all past VfS conferences reveals that only one senior woman (in 2013) was honored with the "Thünen-Vorlesung", the "Gossen-Preis", or the "Stolper-Preis, all awarded by the VfS (comprising a share of 2% (1 out of 52 awardees)). This might give the impression of an "old boys network" (McLaughlin et al., 2013).[9] The "Selten-Preis" for young researchers (a best paper award) suggests lower gaps among younger researchers, where female awardees reach a share of 25% (3 out of 12 until 2013).

[9] The importance of role models is also pointed out by Ceci et al. 2014: Female students show better performance and higher engagement if they have female instructor in the university.

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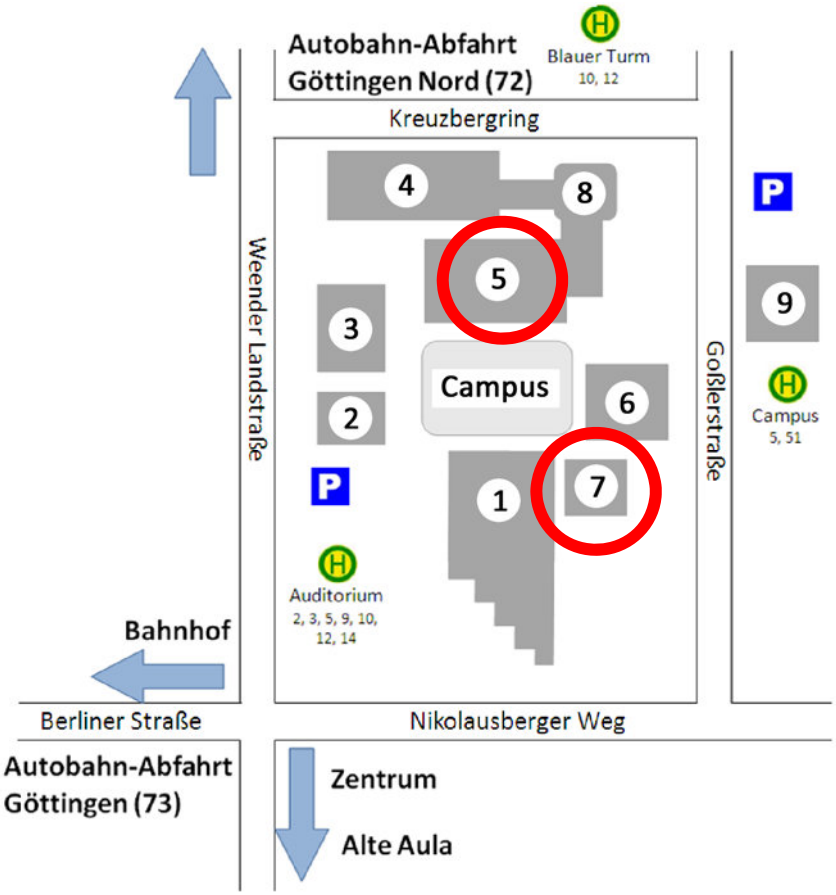
6. Appendix

A1 Conference: Geographic Set-Up



1 Bibliothek (SUB)
2 Theologicum
3 Oeconomicum (Oec)
4 Zentralmensa
5 Zentrales Hörsaalgebäude (ZHG)
6 Juridicum
7 Verfügungsgebäude (VG)
8 Mehrzweckgebäude (MZG)
9 Mensa am Turm

A2 Conference Time Plan (Selection)

	Alte Aula	ZHG 011	ZHG 101	ZHG 001	ZHG 002	ZHG 003
MONTAG						
08.30 – 10.00				A 1 Local Labor Markets & Migration	A 2 Trade Agreements	A 3 Treatment Effects
10.30 – 10.50	Begrüßung					
10.50 – 12.05	Plenum: R. Freeman					
14.00 – 15.15		Plenum: Alan Manning				
15.30 – 17.00			Panel 1 Euro-Krise, zweite Runde	B 1 Measurement of Poverty & Malnutrition	B 2 Tax Competition	B 3 Migration I
17.30 – 19.30		Gossen-Preis, Thünenlecture				
DIENSTAG						
08.30 – 10.00				C 1 International Trade I	C 2 Labor Market Institutions, Labor Demand	C 3 Trade & Labor Markets
10.30 – 12.00				D 1 Gender Diff., Children, Labor Markets	D 2 Trade & Environment	D 3 Migration II
13.15 – 14.30		Plenum: Pierre Cahuc				
14.30 – 15.15		Plenum: F.-J. Weise				
15.35 – 17.05			Panel 2 Tablets, Breitband, Web 2.0	E 1 International Trade II	E 2 Households	E 3 Innovation & Network Industries
17.15 – 18.30		Plenum: Jennifer Hunt				
18.35 – 19.15		Mitgliedervers				
MITTWOCH						
08.45 – 10.15				F 1 Public Finance	F 2 Transfers	F 3 Multinationals & FDI