



Forthcoming in [PNAS](#), an innovative study entitled "Interaction of natural survival instincts and internalized social norms exploring the Titanic and Lusitania disasters" by [Bruno S. Frey](#), [David A. Savage](#) and [Benno Torgler](#) (and already available [here](#) alas with subscription; earlier version freely available [here](#))

Abstract: "...This study explores the interaction of natural survival instincts and internalized social norms using data on the sinking of the Titanic and the Lusitania. We show that time pressure appears to be crucial when explaining behavior under extreme conditions of life and death. Even though the two vessels and the composition of their passengers were quite similar, the behavior of the individuals on board was dramatically different. On the Lusitania, selfish behavior dominated (which corresponds to the classical homo economicus); on the Titanic, social norms and social status (class) dominated, which contradicts standard economics. This difference could be attributed to the fact that the Lusitania sank in 18 min, creating a situation in which the short-run flight impulse dominated behavior. On the slowly sinking Titanic (2 h, 40 min), there was time for socially determined behavioral patterns to reemerge. Maritime disasters are traditionally not analyzed in a comparative manner with advanced statistical (econometric) techniques using individual data of the passengers and crew. Knowing human behavior under extreme conditions provides insight into how widely human behavior can vary, depending on differing external conditions."