Paula Scholz

she/her

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Research Profile

Organizational Economics, Gender Economics, Behavioral Economics
Methods: Field experiments in organizations, laboratory and online experiments

Education

04/2023 – present **PhD Candidate in Economics, University of Cologne**
Supervisors: Dirk Sliwka, Joseph Vecci

2020 – 2023 **M.Sc. in Economic Research, University of Cologne**
As part of the PhD Program of the Cologne Graduate School in Economics

2017 – 2020 **B.Sc. in Management and Economics, Ruhr-Universität Bochum**
Specialization: Industrial Organization and Economic Policy

Research Stays

12/2026 Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany (Host: Florian Englmaier)
11/2026 University of Gothenburg, Sweden (Host: Joseph Vecci)
09 – 11/2025 University of Gothenburg, Sweden (Host: Joseph Vecci)

Job Market Paper

It's Not About the Money – Or Is It? Leadership and the Gender Application Gap

Single-authored

A key supply-side factor contributing to gender gaps in pay and representation in leadership is a gender gap in applications for those positions. With salaries becoming increasingly observable at the application stage, understanding the role of different salary levels in application behavior is important. Using a laboratory experiment, I i) study the role of different salary levels on the gender application gap, ii) examine underlying mechanisms and iii) test a potential solution to mitigate any salary-induced gender application gap. I find a substantial gender gap in the willingness to apply only for highly paid positions: women are 12% less willing to pay than men to acquire these roles despite performing equally well as leaders. While risk attitudes and confidence do not drive the application gap, I find that the gender difference can be explained by men's general higher willingness to claim the lead, which is salary-dependent and gets activated for high salary positions. Additionally, the high salary position is associated with a shift in the perceived stereotype about leadership from female-typed to male-typed, especially among men. Randomly assigning prior leadership experience, a potential solution, does on average not reduce the gender application gap.

Papers Under Review

Gender Discrimination against Pre-PhD Students: A Field Experiment

with Philipp Dörrenberg, Christoph Feldhaus, and Sebastian Berger

Rejected and resubmitted, Journal of Human Resources

We conduct a field experiment on gender discrimination against pre-PhD students in academic economics and business administration. We invite the universe of postdocs and professors at German, Austrian, and Swiss universities to a survey on AI in teaching. Invitations are randomly sent by nine male and nine female Master's students. Each student also randomly varies whether their email mentions a PhD intention. Male researchers provide more answers to female students, while female researchers show no average gender difference. PhD intention increases male researchers' responses to male students. It reduces female researchers' responses to female students, driven mainly by tenured researchers.

Working Papers

Onboarding, Matching, and Employee Turnover – A Field Experiment

with Dirk Sliwka and Timo Vogelsang

We evaluate how a low-cost onboarding practice at the beginning of the employment affects turnover among newly hired frontline employees. In partnership with a large German retail chain, we ran a field experiment across more than 900 stores and 2371 new hires (August 2024 – July 2025). Treated stores implemented a structured welcome intervention: managers announced the newcomer in advance and hosted a brief social event with their colleagues on the first day, while control stores continued with business-as-usual onboarding. The intervention increases separations in the first month of employment by about 2 percentage points while cumulative separations over three and six months are largely unchanged, in line with the view that the intervention accelerates mutual learning about match quality. Both stayers and movers in the treatment group have higher working hours indicating that the treatment also fostered employee motivation.

AI or Human? Applicants' Decisions in Discrimination Settings

with Luisa Santiago Wolf and David Stommel

We study how anticipated discrimination shapes applicants' beliefs about and choices of evaluators. We conduct an online hiring experiment in which participants choose whether a human or an algorithm decides whether or not to hire them. The experiment exogenously introduces either taste-based or statistical discrimination. We show that both the presence and type of anticipated discrimination causally influence evaluator choice. Applicants expecting taste-based discrimination perceive AI as less biased and prefer algorithmic evaluation, while those expecting in-group favoritism prefer human decision makers. Under statistical discrimination, disadvantaged applicants prefer human decision makers, whereas advantaged applicants tend to favor AI, which they expect to rely more strongly on performance signals. Text analysis of participants' statements reveals that attitudes towards AI in hiring depends on the type of anticipated discrimination with implications for the design and communication of hiring processes.

Work in Progress

Building Better Managers for the Future of Work

with David J. Deming, Joseph Vecci, and Ben Weidmann

In this project, we plan to examine how AI changes team organization, managerial skill requirements, and the development of junior employees. We will run a field experiment and study teams of white-collar workers in India performing real workplace tasks over several weeks. Team composition and manager assignment will follow the repeated-randomization method, which identifies individual contributions to team output by randomly assigning workers to multiple teams and controlling for individual skill. This setting allows us to generate rapid evidence on AI changes and investigate organizational processes in a natural work environment while maintaining experimental control.

Further Publications

KI im Recruiting – Forschungsergebnisse der Uni Köln & Partner im Pilotprojekt werden
Queb blog post [Link]; with Luisa Santiago Wolf and David Stommel

Research Grants & Awards

2026	**Handelsbanken Research Foundations, Sweden** – "Identifying and Developing Effective Managers: Field Experimental Evidence from Professional Teams", with David Deming, Joseph Vecci, and Ben Weidmann, 1,000,000 SEK	90,000 €
2026	**C-SEB Female Travel Funds** – research stay at the University of Gothenburg	1,700 €
2025	**C-SEB Visitor Program** – research stay at the University of Gothenburg	3,000 €
2025	**ECONtribute Research Grant** – conference fee and travel costs	1,300 €
2023	**C-SEB Research Grant** – "AI or Human? Applicants' Decisions in Discrimination Settings", with Luisa Santiago Wolf and David Stommel	6,500 €
2023	**ECONtribute Research Grant** – "It's Not About the Money – Or Is It? Leadership and the Gender Application Gap"	5,000 €
2023	**ECONtribute Research Grant** – "AI or Human? Applicants' Decisions in Discrimination Settings", with Luisa Santiago Wolf and David Stommel	1,000 €
2022	**C-SEB Student Award** – award and participant fees for the master's thesis	1,500 €

Conferences & Seminars (* = accepted)

Invited	Organizational Economics Brownbag Seminar, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (2026)*; Synapse Lab Research Seminar, University of Stavanger (2026); Brownbag Seminar, Lund University (2025)
2026	Behavioral and Experimental Economics Seminar, University of Gothenburg*; ECONtribute Retreat, University of Bonn and Cologne; Annual Meeting of the Organizational Economics Committee, Cologne; Field Experiments in Economics and Business, TUM; Conference of the Society for Institutional & Organizational Economics (SIOE), INSEAD; Workshop on Leadership, Employee Well-Being, and Firm Performance, University of Salzburg; Colloquium on Personnel Economics, Erasmus School of Economics
2025	Nordic Conference in Behavioral and Experimental Economics, University of Stavanger; Behavioral and Experimental Economics Seminar, University of Gothenburg; EEA, Bordeaux School of Economics; M-BEES & M-BEPS, Maastricht University; ECONtribute YEP Workshop, University of Cologne
2024	Gender Gaps Conference in Warsaw, GRAPE; Behavioral Management Science Workshop, University of Cologne; C-SEB Workshop, University of Cologne
2023	Workshop on Gender in Adaptive Design, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology; YEP Junior Workshop in Gender and Labor Economics; ECONtribute Retreat, University of Bonn and Cologne; PhD Course on Subjective Beliefs, Attention and Economic Behavior, University of Copenhagen
2022	C-SEB Early Ideas Workshop, University of Cologne
Other	Queb Internal Seminar (2025); case Nerdnight (2024)

Teaching Experience (student evaluations: 1 = worst, 5 = best; averaged across years)

2026/27	Exercise class, *Strategic Human Resource Management* (M.Sc., English)
2022 – 2026/27	Seminar, *(Field) Experiments on Management Practices* (B.Sc. & M.Sc., English; evaluation 4.0/5)
2024 – 2026	*Business Projects in Human Resource Management & Organizational Behavior* (M.Sc., English)
2025	Exercise class, *Contract Theory* (M.Sc., German)
2024/25, 2025/26	Exercise class, *Industrial Organization* (B.Sc., German)
2024, 2026	*Seminar Economics (Introduction into Scientific Writing)* (B.Sc., German; evaluation 4.7/5)
2023/24	Seminar, *Field Studies and Experiments in Management and Organizational Behavior* (B.Sc., English)
2023, 2024	Exercise class, *Economics of Organization and Management* (M.Sc., English; evaluation 3.7/5)
2022	Exercise class, *Economics of Incentives in Organizations* (M.Sc., English; evaluation 4.0/5)

Employment & Affiliations

04/2023 – present	**Research Associate with Master's degree** Department Corporate Development, University of Cologne
02/2022 – 04/2023	**Research Associate with Bachelor's degree** Department Corporate Development, University of Cologne
10/2022 – 09/2025	**Young ECONtribute Program Fellow** Research Area: Organizational Design & Behavior, University of Cologne
01/2026 – present	**Associated Member of ECONtribute** Research Area: Design of Organizations and Markets, University of Cologne
12/2022 – present	**Member of the Center of Social and Economic Behavior (C-SEB)** University of Cologne

Professional Service

10/2023 – present	**Co-organizer, C-SEB Early Ideas Workshop, University of Cologne** with Louis Strang (until 2026) and Jasper Siol (2026 – present)
08/2025 – present	**PhD Representative in the Board of the Department Corporate Development** **Representative at three Hiring Committees**

References

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