

Institut für Organisation und Personal

Abteilung Organisation



Aktuelle Masterarbeitsthemen 1. Termin (23.04.2024)

You can apply for the following topics between **25.04.2024 (noon)** and **02.05.2024 (noon)**. Applications sent before will not be considered.

Please send applications to: michele.kaeser@unibe.ch. Your application must include the following:

- **Personal Information:** name, student number
- **Priority List:** Provide a list of at least five priorities.
- **Transcript of records:** of your bachelor's degree and a current version of your master's program

Topics will be assigned based on the first-come-first-served principle and the fulfillment of prerequisites.

N°	Topic	Supervisor	Earliest / Latest Kick-Off
1	The role of social proximity in pro-environmental decision making	Dr. Andrea Essl	Aug. 8 th – Oct. 31 st
2	Explicit and implicit preferences in the context of pro-environmental or pro-social behavior	Dr. Andrea Essl	Aug. 8 th – Oct. 31 st
3	Purpose Matters: The Impact of perceived purpose on employee performance	Danièle Hafner	July 1 st – Sep. 20 th
4	Evaluating the Efficacy of AI-Generated vs. Human-Generated Calls to Donate	Danièle Hafner	July 1 st – Sep. 20 th
5	The impact of New Work attributes on organizational attractiveness	Danièle Hafner	July 1 st – Sep. 20 th
6	Being good role models: Exploring the effects of responsibility concerns on pro-social behavior	Hana Dadic	Sep. 9 th – Sep. 30 th
7	Do we care what Artificial Intelligence thinks of us? Social image concerns in the digital age	Hana Dadic	Sep. 9 th – Sep. 30 th
8	Implicit preferences in pro-environmental behavior	Hana Dadic	Sep. 9 th – Sep. 30 th
9	The power of choice: Exploring the impact of autonomy on employee performance	Michèle Kaeser	July 1 st – Sep. 30 th
10	Praxismasterarbeit (LEAD) Lehrende und ihre Entscheidungsumgebungen: Nutzung von Support- und Fortbildungsangeboten	Michèle Kaeser	July 1 st – Sep. 30 th
11	Praxismasterarbeit (LEAD) Lehrende und ihre Entscheidungsumgebungen: Digitale Tools	Michèle Kaeser	July 1 st – Sep. 30 th

A short description is available for each topic (see below).

Topic 1: The role of social proximity in pro-environmental decision making

Description: In recent decades, there has been a growing body of literature dedicated to understanding how social norms and peer influence shape individual behaviors, particularly in the domains of pro-social and pro-environmental behaviors. Researchers such as Fatas et al. (2018) have recently provided compelling evidence for preference conformism among peers, a phenomenon also known as behavioral contagion. Behavioral contagion, characterized by the propensity for individuals to mirror the actions and attitudes of their peers, may play a pivotal role in shaping environmental behaviors. Building upon this foundation, this Master's thesis aims to examine the drivers and barriers of behavioral contagion concerning pro-environmental behavior, with a particular emphasis on the influence of social proximity within peer groups. By investigating how individuals' relationships with their peers affect their likelihood of adopting environmentally friendly behaviors, this study seeks to contribute to our understanding of the mechanisms underlying behavioral contagion in the context of pro-environmental behavior.

Goal: Detailed discussion of the theory and supplementary literature; design and conduction of a behavioral economic experiment, data analysis (including, descriptive analysis, hypothesis testing, and regression analysis), discussion of the experimental results and practical implications

Literature:

Fatas, E., Hargreaves Heap, S. P., & Rojo Arjona, D. (2018). Preference conformism: An experiment. *European Economic Review*, 105, 71-82.

Dimant, E. (2019). Contagion of pro- and anti-social behavior among peers and the role of social proximity. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 73, 66-88.

Topic 2: Explicit and implicit preferences in the context of pro-environmental or pro-social behavior

Description: While many individuals express explicit support for pro-environmental and/or pro-social behavior, their actions in daily life often reveal a significant gap between their attitudes and behaviors. This phenomenon, known as the attitude-behavior gap, poses a critical challenge in understanding and promoting sustainable decision-making. The aim of this Master's thesis is to investigate the circumstances under which individuals hold explicit preferences for pro-environmental/pro-social decisions, yet demonstrate implicit preferences for non-pro-environmental/non-pro-social choices. To achieve this, the thesis will utilize an innovative methodology proposed by Cunningham and de Quidt (2023) for experimentally analyzing implicit and explicit preferences from choice data. The methodology posits that individuals tend to adhere to their explicit preferences when faced with choices that vary in one attribute. However, when additional attributes are introduced, diluting their reasoning, individuals may resort to implicit preferences. Through this process of dilution, individuals can justify their choices differently, allowing them to align with their implicit preferences. By applying this methodology, the thesis aims to shed light on the mechanisms underlying the attitude-behavior gap in pro-environmental/pro-social decision-making.

Goal: Detailed discussion of the theory and supplementary literature; design and conduction of a behavioral economic experiment, data analysis (including, descriptive analysis, hypothesis testing, and regression analysis), discussion of the experimental results and practical implications

Literature:

Cunningham, T., & de Quidt, J. (2022). Implicit Preferences. CEPR Discussion Paper No. DP17343, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4144661>

Barron, K., Dittmann, R., Gehrig, S., Schweighofer-Kodritsch, S. (2022). Explicit and Implicit Belief-Based Gender Discrimination: A Hiring Experiment, CESifo Working Paper, No. 9731, Center for Economic Studies and ifo Institute (CESifo), Munich

Topic 3: Purpose Matters: The impact of perceived purpose on employee performance

Description: In the era of New Work, the striving for meaning in work is becoming increasingly important as employees seek more than just financial compensation from their employment. The concept of meaningful work refers to how individuals perceive their roles and tasks as meaningful and as contributing to a larger societal goal. Previous research, including experimental studies, has examined various dimensions of meaningful work and its impact on organizational outcomes such as performance and job satisfaction. This master's thesis aims to explore the impact of perceived meaningfulness at work on organizational outcomes such as performance and satisfaction through a novel or expanded research question. The master thesis will be carried out through an experiment in which the meaningfulness of tasks is manipulated to observe its influence on, for example, employee performance and satisfaction levels.

Goal: Detailed discussion of the literature. Design of an experiment. Conduction, analysis (descriptive statistics and statistical tests), and evaluation of the experiment.

Literature:

Cassar, L., & Meier, S. (2018). Nonmonetary incentives and the implications of work as a source of meaning. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 32(3), 215-238.

Ariely, D., Kamenica, E., & Prelec, D. (2008). Man's search for meaning: The case of Legos. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 67(3-4), 671-677.

Lysova, E. I., Allan, B. A., Dik, B. J., Duffy, R. D., & Steger, M. F. (2019). Fostering meaningful work in organizations: A multi-level review and integration. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 110, 374-389.

Topic 4: Evaluating the Efficacy of AI-Generated vs. Human-Generated Calls to Donate

Description: In the changing advertising landscape, synthetic content created by artificial intelligence (AI) will drastically change the implementation of marketing strategies. Recent research suggests that the source of communication - whether generated by AI or humans -

has a significant impact on consumer responses, including their willingness to donate to charity. This master's thesis examines the comparative effectiveness of AI-generated and human-generated donation calls. The aim is to understand how these different sources influence donation behavior, focusing on the amounts donated and the psychological mechanisms behind these potential differences. This research is particularly relevant as more and more organizations incorporate AI into their communication strategies, so it is crucial to understand the impact of such integration on donation behavior.

Goal: Detailed discussion of the literature. Design of an experiment. Conduction, analysis (descriptive statistics and statistical tests), and evaluation of the experiment.

Literature:

Arango, L., Singaraju, S. P., & Niininen, O. (2023). Consumer responses to AI-generated charitable giving ads. *Journal of Advertising*, 52(4), 486-503.

Cohn, A., Gesche, T., & Maréchal, M. A. (2022). Honesty in the digital age. *Management Science*, 68(2), 827-845.

Chugunova, M., & Sele, D. (2020). We and it: An interdisciplinary review of the experimental evidence on human-machine interaction. *Center for law & economics working paper series*, 12.

Topic 5: The Impact of New Work Attributes on Organizational Attractiveness

Description: At an era of skills shortages, recruiting suitable talent has become a major challenge for companies. In order to increase their attractiveness for potential employees, companies are increasingly focusing on the concept of New Work, which emphasizes for example autonomy, meaningfulness and self-realization. Although this approach is attracting high interest in practice, there has been little experimental research on how these efforts affect the company's attractiveness to job seekers. A previous study by Schmitz et al. (2021) has shown that new-work attributes in job advertisements significantly increase Millennials' perceptions of organizational attractiveness, which is reflected in increased overall attractiveness, intention to seek employment, and organizational prestige. Building on this foundation, this master's thesis aims to further investigate the impact of New Work attributes through an extended research question.

Goal: Detailed discussion of the literature. Design of an experiment. Conduction, analysis (descriptive statistics and statistical tests), and evaluation of the experiment.

Literature:

Schmitz, A., Wüst, K., & Fritz, L. (2021). Influence of New Work Attributes in Job Advertisements on Perceived Organizational Attractiveness. *Management Revue*, 32(4), 318-342.

Dassler, A., Khapova, S. N., Lysova, E. I., & Korotov, K. (2022). Employer attractiveness from an employee perspective: A systematic literature review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 858217.

Topic 6: Being good role models: Exploring the effects of responsibility concerns on pro-social behavior

Description: People tend to behave differently when they are being observed compared to when they act in private due to social image concerns. For example, Bašić and Quercia (2022) show that participants in an experiment lie less when they are being observed by another participant of the same experiment. But do people also care about how their actions might influence the future actions of the observer? As an example, consider how many people decide not to cross a street at a red light when children are present. Does this role model consideration also apply to other settings? The goal of this master's thesis is to understand through a behavioral experiment whether and how the effect of potentially influencing the actions of others affects pro-social behavior.

Goal: Literature overview of social image theory and role model concerns, designing and conducting a behavioral experiment, data analysis and result interpretation

Literature:

Bašić, Z., & Quercia, S. (2022). The influence of self and social image concerns on lying. *Games and Economic Behavior*, 133, 162-169.

Sherif, R., & Simon, S. A. (2023). *Trading-Off Efficient and Visible Pro-Environmental Actions* (Working paper No. 2023-27). Max Planck Institute for Tax Law and Public Finance.

Topic 7: Do we care what Artificial Intelligence thinks of us? Social image concerns in the digital age

Description: Research has shown that people act differently when they are being observed by other humans due to social image concerns, i.e., caring how others view them (Bašić & Quercia, 2022). However, in recent years human interactions have shifted to digital environments and now even include direct communication with AI. This raises the question of how these social image concerns are evolving in these modern environments. For example, do we care about the version of ourselves we portray to AI such as ChatGPT? The goal of this master's thesis is to explore through a behavioral experiment whether social image concerns are present in human-AI interaction.

Goal: Literature overview of social image theory and AI-human interactions, designing and conducting a behavioral experiment, data analysis and result interpretation

Literature:

Cohn, A., Gesche, T., & Maréchal, M. A. (2022). Honesty in the digital age. *Management Science*, 68(2), 827-845.

Bašić, Z., & Quercia, S. (2022). The influence of self and social image concerns on lying. *Games and Economic Behavior*, 133, 162-169.

Topic 8: Implicit preferences in pro-environmental behavior

Description: Many individuals state to support the environment (explicit preference) but make non-environmentally friendly decisions in certain situations (implicit preference). This is known as the attitude-behavior gap, which can be observed, for example, for the purchase of organic products. A novel methodology by Cunningham and de Quidt (2023) aims at revealing implicit preferences from choice data. They suggest that individuals act according to their explicit preferences when a choice set varies only in one attribute. However, when the attribute to which the implicit preference applies is mixed with additional attributes, the original reasoning is diluted, and individuals act according to their implicit preference. The goal of this master's thesis is to apply the novel methodology of Cunningham and de Quidt (2023) in a laboratory or online experiment in the context of pro-environmental behavior.

Goal: Literature overview of (implicit) preference theory, designing and conducting a behavioral experiment, data analysis and result interpretation

Literature:

Cunningham, T., & de Quidt, J. (2022). *Implicit Preferences* (No. 17343). CEPR Discussion Papers.

Barron, K., Ditlmann, R., Gehrig, S., & Schweighofer-Kodritsch, S. (2022). *Explicit and implicit belief-based gender discrimination: A hiring experiment* (No. 9731). CESifo Working Paper

Topic 9: The power of choice: Exploring the impact of autonomy on employee performance

Description: Based on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which recognizes the innate need for autonomy, organizations are increasingly granting employees autonomy over various facets, including working conditions, hours, tasks, and compensation. Research suggests that autonomy in compensation can increase employee productivity and creativity. For example, Mellizo et al. (2014) showed that when employees were able to collectively vote on the compensation system, their effort was higher than when they did not have this opportunity. Charness et al. (2012) showed that employees were more productive when they could set their own wages, and Brück et al. (2021) showed that self-determined wages also increased employees' creativity. There are still some aspects of autonomy and pay that have not been explored. The goal of this thesis is to investigate through a behavioral experiment one aspect of autonomy and pay.

Goal: Detailed discussion of the theory and supplementary literature; design and conduction of a behavioral economic experiment, data analysis (including, descriptive analysis, hypothesis testing, and regression analysis), discussion of the experimental results and practical implications

Literature:

Brück, C., Knauer, T., Meier, H., & Schwering, A. (2021). Self-set salaries and creativity. *Journal of Business Economics*, 91(1), 91–121. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11573-020-00985-z>

Mellizo, P., Carpenter, J., & Matthews, P. H. (2014). Workplace democracy in the lab. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 45(4), 313–328. <https://doi.org/10.1111/irj.12054>

Topic 10: Praxismasterarbeit (LEAD)

Lehrende und ihre Entscheidungsumgebungen: Nutzung von Support- und Fortbildungsangeboten

Beschreibung: Der Lehrkörper an Hochschulen sieht sich mit zahlreichen Herausforderungen konfrontiert. Um diesen zu begegnen ist gewisses Spektrum an Lehrkompetenzen nötig. Unterstützung erhalten Dozierende an der Universität Bern durch das breitgefächerte Angebot der Supportstellen des Vizerektorats Lehre. Von vielen Lehrenden wird dies jedoch kaum genutzt. Es stellt sich die Frage, wie der Lehrkörper auf das breite Angebot aufmerksam und dazu angeregt wird, dieses zu nutzen. Welche Faktoren behindern und welche fördern die Entscheidung für oder gegen die Nutzung der vorhandenen Support- und Fortbildungsangebote, um die individuellen Lehrkompetenzen weiterzuentwickeln, innovative Lehrkonzepte zu realisieren und dadurch den Studierenden der Universität Bern zeitgemässe Bedingungen für den Lernerfolg zu bieten?

Ziele:

- Ermittlung möglicher Faktoren, die die Nutzung vorhandener Support- und Fortbildungsangebote an der Universität Bern durch Lehrende fördern oder hindern, basierend auf bestehender Literatur und unter Verwendung empirischer Methoden (Befragungen)
- Erarbeiten einer Liste möglicher Elemente zur Gestaltung und Skizzierung einer entsprechenden «Choice Architecture», wobei auf verhaltensökonomische Grundlagen zurückgegriffen wird, um Empfehlungen für mögliche Interventionen zur Förderung der Nutzung der Angebote durch Lehrende vorzuschlagen

Literatur:

Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. Yale University Press.

Hanno, E. C. (2023). Nudging Early Educators' Knowledge, Beliefs, and Practices: An Embedded Randomized Controlled Trial of Text Message Supports. *Early Education and Development*, 34(2), 530–550. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2022.2053476>

Postareff, L., Lindblom-Ylänne, S., & Nevgi, A. (2007). The effect of pedagogical training on teaching in higher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(5), 557–571. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.11.013>

Informationen zum Praxispartner

Für zusätzliche Informationen zum Praxispartner kontaktieren Sie michele.kaeser@unibe.ch

Topic 11: Praxismasterarbeit (LEAD)

Lehrende und ihre Entscheidungsumgebungen: Digitale Tools

Beschreibung: Digitale Medien sind eine Realität an Hochschulen. Auch die Universität Bern stellt den Lehrenden zahlreiche Tools kostenlos zur Verfügung. Vieles davon wird sinnvoll eingesetzt zur Unterstützung der Prozesse in lernförderlichen Umgebungen. Dennoch liegt noch viel Potential brach und es fragt sich, wie der Lehrkörper auf die Möglichkeiten aufmerksam und dazu angeregt wird, diese gemäss den Ergebnissen aus der Lehr-Lernforschung und den hochschuldidaktischen Erkenntnissen zweckmässig einzusetzen. Welche Faktoren behindern und welche fördern die Entscheide für oder gegen die Nutzung digitaler Bordmittel in der Lehre, um damit den Studierenden der Universität Bern zeitgemässe Bedingungen für den Lernerfolg zu bieten?

Ziele:

- Analyse vorhandener Möglichkeiten an der Universität Bern
- Ermittlung möglicher Faktoren, die deren Einsatz in der Lehre fördern oder hindern, basierend auf bestehender Literatur und unter Verwendung empirischer Methoden (Befragungen)
- Erarbeiten einer Liste möglicher Elemente zur Gestaltung und Skizzierung einer entsprechenden «Choice Architecture», wobei auf verhaltensökonomische Grundlagen zurückgegriffen wird, um Empfehlungen für mögliche Interventionen zur Förderung der Nutzung digitaler Tools in der Lehre vorzuschlagen

Literatur:

Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. Yale University Press.

Weijers, R. J., de Koning, B. B., Scholten, E., Wong, L. Y. J., & Paas, F. (2024). "Feel free to ask": Nudging to promote asking questions in the online classroom. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 60, 100931. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2023.100931>

Banerjee, S., Jambrina-Canseco, B., Brundu-Gonzalez, B., Gordon, C., & Carr, J. (2023). Nudge or not, university teachers have mixed feelings about online teaching. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01691-1>

Informationen zum Praxispartner

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