Luisa Helena Santiago Wolf

PhD Candidate

University of Cologne – Cluster of Excellence: ECONtribute Markets & Public Policy
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Research Fields

Labor Economics · Education Economics · Applied Microeconomics · Equality of Opportunity

References

Prof. Anna Bindler, PhD
Crime, Labor, and Inequality Department
DIW Berlin and University of Potsdam
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Prof. Dr. Pia Pinger
Department of Economics
University of Cologne
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Prof. Dr. Erik Hornung
Department of Economics
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Education

University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany
PhD Economics — 2022–Present

Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden
Visiting Researcher — 04.2025–06.2025
Host: Peter Fredriksson

Vienna University of Business and Economics (WU), Vienna, Austria
Master of Science in Economics (Science track) — 2018–2021
Master Thesis: "Selectivity and Effectiveness of Worker Training Among Age Cohorts: An International Analysis"

Nova School of Business and Economics, Lisbon, Portugal
Study Abroad — 2019

University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration — 2014–2018
Minor in Econmics
Dean's Award – Awarded to the top 10% of students

Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, Viña del Mar, Chile
Study Abroad — 2016

Job Market Paper

The trickle-down effects of higher education affirmative action in Brazil

The debate on higher education affirmative action concentrates much on the immediate beneficiaries and their prospects, disregarding that future beneficiaries should also react to the chance to pursue higher education. Effects might thus trickle-down to children who are still at school, which is a decisive stage for their future. I address this and study a higher education affirmative action law in Brazil that substantially increases public school students' chance of university admission by reserving 50% of vacancies in each major at flagship federal universities. I conceptualize students' expected effort reaction in a theoretical framework and empirically test its theoretical implications. Using administrative data from the São Paulo State School Performance Assessment System test and its rich background questionnaire, I apply a difference-in-discontinuity design and study how the affirmative action policy affects students' effort, performance and aspirations. Results are in line with the theoretical predictions. I find that effort, performance and aspirations increase, raising students' attainment at school. Students who did not study, start exerting effort, leading to increases in the middle and upper part of the effort distribution. The increased effort is reflected in improved Portuguese performance. Portuguese scores increase by 2% of a standard deviation. Math performance is only raised among girls and students with high socioeconomic status. Although academic effort is raised to a similar extent across students from different backgrounds, differential effects on performance suggest that some students might need additional support to translate the increase in academic motivation and effort into improved performance.

Work in Progress

AI or human? Applicants' decisions in discrimination settings
(with Paula Scholz and David Stommel)

While there is agreement on the great potential for efficiencies and savings that the use of artificial intelligence (AI) can bring to recruitment, there is also an ongoing debate about acceptance of hiring algorithms. The existing literature on the perception of hiring algorithms is ambiguous, especially for settings that incorporate the risk of discrimination. In the paper, we study whether anticipated discrimination influences applicants' preferences for a hiring algorithm. We conduct an online experiment in which applicants choose whether a human manager or an AI system decides about their hiring. The experiment exogenously introduces either taste-based or statistical discrimination. We show that both the presence and type of discrimination causally influence applicants' preference for an AI or human recruiter. Applicants exposed to negative taste-based discrimination perceive AI as less biased and prefer algorithmic evaluation, while those expecting in-group favoritism (i.e. positive taste-based discrimination) 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. These patterns are not driven by general AI aversion. Belief elicitation shows that references to fairness, trust, and competence are most relevant to applicants and context-dependent. Our study highlights that acceptance of AI in hiring is also dependent on the type of anticipated discrimination, with implications for the design and communication of hiring processes.

Surfeel: Teaching Children to Verbalize Emotion
(with Barbara Boelmann, Miguel Morin, and Anna Person)

We provide the first economic evidence on emotional verbalization – children's capacity to name what they feel – as a target of school-based skill formation. In a cluster-randomized trial covering 527 kindergarten and primary-school children in 37 Portuguese classes, a low-cost program delivered by children's own teachers raised the accuracy with which children identify emotions and shifted their vocabulary from generic terms towards specific emotional labels. Treated children were more likely to divide an endowment equally with an unfamiliar child, reported higher well-being at school, and were rated by teachers as forming a better classroom environment. Effects on well-being and pro-sociality were largest among kindergarten children.

A missed opportunity? Labor demand and workforce diversity
(with Anna Bindler, Barbara Boelmann, and Lena Janys)

How do labor demand shocks affect workforce diversity in the absence of targeted diversity policies? A conceptual framework illustrates the potential trade-off between the demographic and quality composition of a workforce when there is a positive labor demand shock. Exploiting the German reunification as a natural experiment, we analyze the academic labor market where nearly all social sciences professors in East Germany were replaced while STEM faculty remained largely unchanged. Using administrative data and a regional difference-in-difference design, we find increased dispersion in the institutional quality of hires, indicating that the new hires came from less select departments. At the same time, female representation did not increase despite qualified women in the pipeline. Instead, East German hiring patterns converged to those in West Germany in terms of gender composition. In simulations, we investigate implied losses: Under conservative assumptions, we show that, considering the pipeline of qualified applicants, the marginal female hire's quality is approximately half a standard deviation higher than the marginal male hire's quality.

Affiliations

DIW, Guest Researcher	2024–Present
Center for Social and Economic Behavior (C-SEB), Junior Researcher	2022–Present
Cluster of Excellence ECONtribute: Markets & Public Policy, Junior Researcher	2022–Present

Conferences & Seminars

2026: EALE Conference (Barcelona), HELM Conference (IAB, Nürnberg), DIW Cluster Seminar (Berlin), Applied Lunch Seminar (Cologne)
2025: ESPE Conference (Naples), Uppsala Brown Bag Seminar (Uppsala)
2024: GfeW Annual meeting (Cologne), ESPE Conference (Rotterdam)

Grants

2025: C-SEB, 3000 EUR – Funding for a research visit at Uppsala University
2023: C-SEB Junior Start-Up Grant, 4000 EUR – Project funding for early career researchers
2022–2026: ECONtribute, 3800 EUR – Funding for various projects

Teaching

Fall 2025–Present: Introductory Economics, for BSc in Health Economics, Political and Social Sciences
Spring 2025+2026: Contract Theory, for Master Economics
Spring 2024+2025: Data Analysis and Econometrics, for BSc Management, Economics, Social Sciences
Fall 2025: Theory of the firm, for BSc Economics
Spring 2024: Seminar in Economics, for BSc Economics
Fall 2024: Seminar on Topics in Management: Peer Effects at Work, for Master Corporate Development
Spring 2023: Econometrics for Behavioral Economists, for Research Master Economics
Fall 2022: Seminar on Population Health and Health Inequalities, for Master Health Economics
Fall 2021–Present: Supervision of Master (2x) and Bachelor Theses (3x)

Professional Service & Activities

2026: Science Slam, Speaker
2025–2026: Internal Applied Lunch Seminar, Co-Organizer

Language & Programming Skills

German (native), English (fluent), French (fluent), Spanish (fluent), Portuguese (bilingual), Italian (basic)
Proficient in: Stata, R, Python