

Topic suggestions for thesis supervision winter semester 2025/26

Martin Brandt

- **Is There a Relevation Effect in Preference Judgments?**
Explore whether the Relevation Effect, previously shown mainly in episodic recognition, can be found in non-episodic contexts like preference judgments—potentially with implications for advertising.
- **Binding in Visual Short-Term Memory: Reliability of Individual Measures**
Investigate how reliably people bind visual features like shape and color in memory, and develop a reliable measure for it based on a student sample.
- **Output Interference in Episodic Memory**
Test whether recalling earlier items in a recognition test affects memory for later items. A new experimental idea is to be piloted on a larger sample.

Daria Ford

My research focuses on answering the question about processes underlying memory for truth and falsity. It is inspired by the fact that in today's world, we are constantly exposed to misinformation, especially online. We face huge challenges—war, pandemics, natural disasters—and the way information is remembered on these relevant topics significantly impacts our decisions, such as vaccination choices and political stances.

Research Topics:

- How Does Negation Impact Memory for Truth and Falsity?
- Forgetting of False and True Information
- Are Truth and Falsity Two Complete Opposite Dimensions?

Please note that the main language of communication with the supervisor will be English, but experiments can be conducted in German. You can write your thesis in English or German.

Beatrice Kuhlmann

- **Motives Behind Senior Citizen University Participation**
Based on an already completed survey of senior students at the University of Mannheim, this thesis will involve coding and analyzing the motives that drive individuals to pursue university studies later in life. It will also examine how these motives are influenced by demographic factors such as age, gender, and educational background. Additionally, comparisons to a previous survey and any changes observed over time—especially those occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic—will be of particular interest.
- **Implicit Stereotypes About IT & Aging**
Implicit stereotypes about aging are often measured in a general, overarching way (e.g., old = bad, young = good). Kornadt et al. (2016; <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0361073X.2016.1132899>) demonstrated that implicit stereotypes about aging differ depending on the domain—such as health and fitness versus family and relationships. These domain-specific IATs (Implicit Association

Tests) will be extended to include a newly developed IAT that captures implicit stereotypes about aging in the context of IT competence (e.g., use of smartphones, computers, tablets). The aim is to assess the strength of implicit stereotypes in this domain using the new IAT.

Désirée Schöning

- **Metamemory for Source Monitoring**

How well can people predict whether they'll remember the source of information?

Carolin Streitberger

It has been shown that a word can be correctly recalled in a cued recall test even though it was not previously recognized in a recognition test (Riefer & Batchelder, 1995). This phenomenon is surprising because cued recall relies more heavily on retrieval processes than recognition.

The *retrieval independence assumption* states that this phenomenon occurs because cued recall and recognition are independent of each other. This means that the probability of retrieval in cued recall is assumed to be independent of whether the word was previously correctly recognized or mistakenly missed. However, this assumption is considered unrealistic, and when it is violated, storage and retrieval parameters in the corresponding MPT (multinomial processing tree) model are significantly overestimated.

This project is supervised jointly by Beatrice Kuhlmann and possibly Edgar Erdfelder. We are looking for a master's student with an interest in methods (e.g., simulation studies, MPT modeling, or R).

Nikoletta Symeonidou

- **The Context Reinstatement Effect and Emotional Contexts:** A well-established finding in memory research is the so-called *context reinstatement effect*: we are better able to retrieve information from memory when the context during retrieval matches the context during learning (Smith & Vela, 2001). Put simply: memory benefits when the original learning context is reinstated at the time of retrieval. However, very few studies have investigated whether this effect is influenced by the emotional significance of the context. This raises the question of whether emotional contexts enhance or diminish the context reinstatement effect. Is memory still equally supported by context reinstatement when the context is emotionally charged?
- **Mood and Source Memory - The Role of Stereotypes:** Some studies suggest that people in a positive mood (as compared to a negative one) rely more on stereotypes and holistic (top-down) thinking processes. However, this effect has not yet been studied in the context of *source memory*—that is, memory for the origin of information. When we don't clearly remember the actual source of information, we often rely on stereotypes to make source attributions (e.g., "That cake recipe must be from my grandma—she always likes to bake."). Whether our mood influences such stereotype-based source judgments has barely, if at all, been explored.