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EDUCATION

NHH Norwegian School of Economics, Bergen, Norway.
Ph.D. Economics, *expected* Spring 2026.

Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago, Chicago, USA.
Research Stay hosted by Ariel Kalil, 09/2023 – 03/2024.

University of Mannheim, Mannheim, Germany.
M.Sc. Economics, 2017 – 2019.

University of Mannheim, Mannheim, Germany.
B.Sc. Economics, 2013 – 2016.

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Economics of Education, Behavioral Economics

AFFILIATIONS

FAIR – Centre for Experimental Research on Fairness, Inequality and Rationality, Norwegian
NHH School of Economics, Bergen, Norway.
BIP Lab – Behavioral Insights and Parenting Lab, University of Chicago, Chicago, USA.

REFERENCES

Alexander W. Cappelen
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WORKING PAPERS

“Parental Belief Updating About Children’s Abilities: Experimental Evidence from Norway” Job
Market Paper.

Parents’ beliefs influence how they invest in their children—but when confronted with information about their children, do they revise these beliefs rationally, or are they subject to bias? To address this question, I conduct a large-scale lab-in-the-field experiment in Norwegian elementary schools, in which parents receive noisy but unbiased signals about their child’s relative performance or behavior in one of two domains. I experimentally manipulate the ego-relevance of the signals by either highlighting that they are (i) indicative of the child’s future life outcomes or (ii) indicative of the intergenerational transmission of skills between children and parents. I evaluate the effects relative to a baseline condition without additional information. Parents’ prior beliefs are overconfident in their child’s abilities and compared to a rational Bayesian benchmark, they update conservatively in both domains in response to the signals. However, differences emerge between the domains. While belief updating in mathematics is symmetric and unaffected by the information condition, in prosociality, parents exhibit asymmetric updating by overweighting positive signals when these carry direct or indirect ego-relevance. Behavioral responses suggest motivated cognition; for example, parents downplay negative signals in the prosocial domain. The findings highlight how psychological motives affect belief formation when updating about someone else’s performance in a context relevant for human capital formation.

“Does Parental Feedback Shape Children’s (Over)Confidence?” with Kai Barron, Michela Carlana, and Oda Sund.

This paper studies how parents shape the ego-relevant information children receive about themselves and how it influences the beliefs and behavior of children. Using a field experiment with 7th-grade Norwegian students and their parents, we show that parents provide their children with feedback that is systematically more favorable than parents’ private beliefs. Children incorporate this positively biased feedback into their self-assessments without affecting their actual performance. The gap between parents’ private beliefs and communicated feedback is larger when feedback precedes task completion, suggesting motivational intent. The study contributes to the understanding of how social transmission of self-relevant information, rather than just individual cognitive biases, shapes overconfidence.

“Parents’ Perceptions of Children’s Economic Prospects Affect Parental Investments” with Mesmin Destin, Ivan A. Hernandez, Ariel Kalil, Rebecca M. Ryan, and David Silverman.

Individuals are sensitive to cues about economic conditions in ways that affect their beliefs and behavior. This paper experimentally tests how parents’ perceptions of children’s mobility prospects affect parental investments of time and money in child skill development. An experiment involving approximately 1,000 parents of children aged 5-17 aimed to shift parents’ beliefs regarding the possibility of future upward (downward) economic mobility in the U.S. society. We find that parents are responsive to signals about their children’s future economic mobility prospects. Using a novel measure of time investment, parents who are prompted to consider favorable prospects for their children increase their time investments to enhance their children’s skills and report being more willing to pay for resources to achieve this aim. These parents also strengthen their beliefs about the returns on parental investments, highlighting a plausible mechanism. Effects on beliefs and behavior are consistent across parents of varying income and educational levels.

PUBLICATIONS

“Economic Mobility and Parents’ Opportunity Hoarding” with Mesmin Destin, Ivan A. Hernandez, Ariel Kalil, Rebecca M. Ryan, David Silverman, September 2024.
Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 21 (37) e2407230121.

WORK IN PROGRESS

“Parental Beliefs About the Returns to Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills and Investments in Children” with Derek Rury.

GRANTS AND FUNDING

Professor Wilhelm Keilhaus Memorial Fund (NOK 28,000)
Funding received for attending academic conferences in 2025

Norges Bank’s Fund for Economic Research (NOK 25,000)
Funding received for attending academic conferences in 2025

Professor Wilhelm Keilhaus Memorial Fund (NOK 15,000)
Funding received for “Parental Belief Updating About Children’s Abilities”

Diligentia Foundation for Empirical Research (EUR 39,000)
Funding received for “Does Parental Feedback Shape Children’s (Over)Confidence?”

Research Council of Norway - Research Stay Abroad Funding (NOK 250,000)
Funding received for research stay at the University of Chicago

Centre of Ethics and Economics (CEE) Grant (NOK 30,000)
Funding received for “Parental Belief Updating About Children’s Abilities”

Professor Wilhelm Keilhaus Memorial Fund (NOK 65,000)
Funding to support Lab-in-the-Field Data Collection

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

2025 (past and upcoming): FAIR – MPI Bonn Workshop; 17th Nordic Conference in Behavioral and Experimental Economics; Advances with Field Experiments Conference; Narratives, Memory and Beliefs Workshop WZB-LMU; Experiments in Economics and Business Workshop; Berlin – Bergen Workshop; International Symposium in Experimental Economics (iSEE) NYU Abu Dhabi

2024: NBER Economics of Mobility Workshop; FAIR – MPI Bonn Workshop; Nordic PhD Workshop in the Economics of Education

2023: Rohit and Harvanit Kumar Conference on Early Childhood Development; Advances with Field Experiments Conference; 6th Experiments on Social Inequality Workshop

2022: HCEO – briq Summer School on Socioeconomic Inequality

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Undergraduate (Bachelor) Level:

SAM17 – Economics and Psychology, Norwegian School of Economics, Autumn 2024.

Graduate (Master) Level:

FIE421 – Long-Term Macroeconomic Analysis, Norwegian School of Economics, Spring 2021.

FIE403 – Business Cycle Analysis, Norwegian School of Economics, Autumn 2021 – Autumn 2022.

STR421 – Competitive Strategy, Norwegian School of Economics, Spring 2023.

ECN421 – Behavioral Economics, Norwegian School of Economics, Spring 2025.

RELEVANT RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

University Lecturer (50% Position), Norwegian School of Economics, Norway, 2024 – 2025.

Full-time Research Assistant (Predoc) for Teodora Boneva, University of Oxford, United Kingdom, 2019 – 2020.

Research Assistant for Sebastian Findeisen, University of Mannheim, Germany, 2018 – 2019.

Research Assistant at the Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW), Mannheim, Germany, 2016 – 2017.

Research assistant for Prof. Dr. Eckhard Janeba, University of Mannheim, Germany, 2014 – 2016.

OTHER

Software: Stata, R, Python, oTree, Qualtrics.

Language: German (native), English (fluent), French (basic), Latin.

Citizenship: German.

Last updated: August, 2025.