

Ethan O'Leary

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Education

Norwegian School of Economics (NHH), Bergen, Norway,
PhD Economics, Supervisor: Erik Ø. Sørensen (2022-2026)

Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB) & Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany
Research stay hosted by Prof. Dr. Dorothea Kübler & Prof. Sebastian Schweighofer-Kodritsch PhD (April-July 2025)

Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, Sweden
MSc Economics: GPA 4.47/5.0 (2019-2022)

University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, United Kingdom
BSc Economics: First Class with Honours (2015-2019)

References

Prof. Erik Øiolf Sørensen.
Norwegian School of Economics
erik.sorensen@nhh.no

Prof. Sebastian Schweighofer-Kodritsch.
Universität Leipzig
sebastian.schweighofer-kodritsch@uni-leipzig.de

Prof. Bertil Tungodden.
Norwegian School of Economics
bertil.tungodden@nhh.no

Placement Director: Kjell G. Salvanes, kjell.salvanes@nhh.no.

Teaching and Research Fields

Behavioural Economics, Microeconomic Theory, Applied Microeconomics.

Job Market Paper

(Mis)anticipated Discrimination

Awards: Best Paper Award at The Young Economists' Meeting 2026

I propose and test a novel mechanism through which discrimination persists: the misperception of statistical discrimination as taste-based discrimination. I first derive a theoretical model of self-confirming discrimination which arises in the job-application setting to demonstrate this mechanism. Correctly attributing the source of discrimination leads to multiple equilibria such that arriving at inequality represents a coordination error. However, misattributing discrimination to taste-based origins leads only to a discriminatory equilibrium and reduces the perceived return to deviating from discrimination-inducing application strategies. In a pre-registered laboratory experiment, I find that subjects who experience discrimination from an ambiguous origin overestimate the probability that this inequality is caused by taste-based discriminators. This misattribution directly leads to a higher probability that application strategies sustain statistical discrimination: a 1 percentage point increase in believed probability that discrimination is taste-based leads to a 0.35 (0.24) percentage point decrease (increase) in the probability that a subject in the discriminated (favoured) group applies to a job, perpetuating statistical discrimination. Moreover, misattribution leads to stronger perceptions of market unfairness and lower demand for affirmative action among the favoured group. This demonstrates that the misattribution of the source of discrimination can both directly and indirectly lead to sustained discrimination and inequality.

Working Papers

The Cultural Trust Gap: Evidence from England's North-South Divide *Working Paper Access (Under review)*

Trust—the belief in another individual or organization's intent to act in good faith—is a cornerstone of social prosperity. However, cultural norms significantly influence trust levels within and between groups, often leading to discriminatory behaviours that undermine cooperation. This paper investigates the impact of culture on trust using a novel experimental approach that isolates trust from confounding factors such as risk preferences and distributional concerns. The setting of the experiment is England – a culturally and economically divided nation. Focusing on self-identified Southerners and Northerners, I find evidence of a cultural trust gap. Specifically, while Southerners exhibit equal trust towards both groups, Northerners trust Southerners significantly less than their own group. By decomposing trust into its conditional and unconditional components, I show that this disparity is driven by unconditional trust: Northerners perceive Southerners as more selfish than their own culture.

Works in Progress

Anticipated Discrimination, Gender Stereotypes, and Competitive Choices in Job Applications: A Large-Scale Online Experiment

(with Roberto Caputo, Michael Hilweg-Waldeck & Anita Zednik)

We study whether workers anticipate gender discrimination by evaluators and how such anticipation distorts competitive choices in job applications. We conduct a large-scale, pre-registered online experiment in which approximately 9,000 workers choose between a non-competitive piece rate and a competitive payment scheme whose payout depends on being selected by an incentivised human evaluator. By randomly varying whether the evaluator can observe the worker's gender across a male-stereotyped and a female-stereotyped task, we isolate the causal effect of anticipated discrimination on labour supply. In the male-stereotyped task, gender revelation breaks the link between women's objective performance beliefs and their beliefs about being selected: conditional on the same win belief, women report significantly lower selection expectations when their gender is known. This distortion reduces female entry rates, with the strongest effects among above-average performers for whom competing would have been the correct decision. We complement the worker experiment with a manager pilot experiment that measures actual evaluator behaviour. Comparing worker expectations to evaluator decisions reveals a double mismatch: in the male-stereotyped task, managers show no discrimination against women, yet workers anticipate it; in the female-stereotyped task, female managers favour female workers, yet workers fail to anticipate this advantage. Our findings suggest that the welfare costs of gender gaps in job applications can arise from distorted beliefs rather than from discriminatory evaluator behaviour, pointing to information-based interventions as a promising policy lever.

The Fairness of Discrimination *(with Erik Ø. Sørensen & Sebastian Schweighofer-Kodritsch)*

Can We Trust the Trust Game: Identifying the Effect of Inequality on Trust *(with Roberto Caputo)*

Teaching

Undergraduate

Economics and Psychology (Autumn 2026 [Lecturer])

Microeconomics (Autumn 2020 & 2021 [TA])

Graduate

Behavioral Economics (Spring 2026 [Lecturer]: Autumn 2026, Autumn 2025, Spring 2024 & Autumn 2023 [TA])

Behavioral Business Strategy (Autumn 2024 [TA])

Introduction to the Global Economy (Autumn 2022 [Lecturer])

Grants

2026

German Association for Experimental Economics Research, 2 000 EUR *(with Roberto Caputo, Michael Hilweg-Waldeck & Anita Zednik)*

ZEW Research funds, 3 800 EUR *(with Roberto Caputo, Michael Hilweg-Waldeck & Anita Zednik)*

2025

Norwegian School of Economics Centre for Ethics Grant, 30 000 NOK (*with Roberto Caputo*)
Norwegian School of Economics Centre for Ethics Grant, 30 000 NOK
University of Mannheim Economics Department, 50 000 EUR (*with Roberto Caputo, Michael Hilweg-Waldeck & Anita Zednik*)
Professor Wilhelm Keilhaus Minnefond, 50 000 NOK
Norges Banks Fond til Økonomisk Forskning, 20 000 NOK

2024

Norwegian School of Economics Centre for Ethics Grant, 20 000 NOK

Conferences & Workshops

Upcoming

6th Discrimination and Diversity Workshop, Online; 2027 ASSA Meeting (Session from Association for the Society of Generosity), Washington DC

2026

Young Economists Meeting, Brno; 3rd Annual Workshop on Behavioural Economics, Sheffield; FUR Conference, Alicante, The Chicago School in Experimental Economics, Osaka; 2nd Berlin Micro Theory & Behavioural Economics Conference, Berlin; EEA 2026, Dublin

2025

Newcastle University Experimental Economics Meeting, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Max Planck / FAIR NHH Workshop, Bonn; Berlin Micro Theory and Behavioral Economics PhD Conference, Berlin; Society for Advancement of Behavioral Economics (SABE), Trento; Berlin-Bergen Behavioral Workshop, Berlin; Thurgau Experimental Economics Meeting, Kreuzlingen

2024

Copenhagen Network of Experimental Economics, Lund; FAIR Spring School, UC San Diego

Invited Talks

2025

University of Mannheim

Service

Referee: Journal of Political Economy Microeconomics

Other Experience

Quantify Research, Stockholm, Sweden

Research Analyst in Real World Evidence (Health economics) (*2022*)

Stockholm Institute for Transition Economics (SITE), Stockholm, Sweden

Research Assistant to Prof. Jesper Roine (*2021-2022*)

Skills

Software

Stata, R, Python, oTree, Javascript, HTML

Languages

English (native), French (C1), Swedish (B1), Spanish (A2)

Citizenship

United Kingdom

Ireland