



AARHUS  
UNIVERSITY  
BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



---

# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

OPENING CONFERENCE

TRYGFONDEN'S CENTRE FOR CHILD RESEARCH

AARHUS, 29-31 AUGUST 2013

---



TRYGFONDENS  
BØRNEFORSKNINGSCENTER





“ In Denmark, we give high priority to social spending on children and youth. Yet, the results often fall below our aspirations and and can, in many areas, best be described as mediocre. **We need to be better at evaluating our own effectiveness and through that, produce smarter and happier children.**”



- Merete Konnerup, TrygFonden

# CONTENT

About us	7
About the conference	8
Conference programme	9
Speakers	12
Conference dinner	17
Why study causal effects?	19
Our studies	21
Practical information	27
Thank you	37

---



“ There is a real need for a more systematic approach to designing interventions for children and youth today. Without hard evidence about what works and what doesn't, we deny ourselves the opportunity to learn from our mistakes and our successes.

The new **TrygFonden's Centre for Child Research** will help **fill the gap** by working closely with partners in policy and practice, we will equip them with solid evidence to sharpen their efforts in uplifting vulnerable children and youth.”

- Michael Rosholm, Director, TrygFonden's Centre for Child Research

## ABOUT US

**TrygFonden's Centre for Child Research** is a newly established interdisciplinary research centre at Aarhus University, Business and Social Sciences that seeks to strengthen the effectiveness of social policies targeting children and youth in Denmark.

**The centre is funded by a generous grant from TrygFonden to pioneer new, scientific impact evaluations and to work with policymakers to integrate evidence into policies that improve the wellbeing of children and youth.**

The centre is directed by Michael Rosholm, Professor of Economics at Aarhus University, and is intended to become a focal point for an expanding network of researchers in child language and literacy, criminology, economics, pedagogy, political science, psychology and sociology.

**You can read more about us at [childresearch.au.dk](http://childresearch.au.dk)**

---

# ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

## FROM SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE TO EFFECTIVE POLICY AND IMPROVED WELLBEING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

All children and young adults should have the opportunity to grow up to their full potentials and to live happy and healthy lives. But some don't. Despite a comprehensive social protection system and no lack of neither goodwill, nor public use of resources, family background remains a strong predictor for life outcomes. To be more successful in filling the gaps, we need a more systematic approach to learning about what works and to designing policies based on hard evidence.

**This 3-day conference marks the opening of TrygFonden's Centre for Child Research by bringing together researchers, international experts, policymakers and practitioners to kick-start a dialogue around a Danish agenda for scientifically backed policy.**

# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

## Day 1: Thursday, the 29th of August 2013

- 9.00 - 9.30 Registration - tea, coffee and morning rolls
- 9.30 - 9.45 Welcome Remarks by by Svend Hylleberg, Dean, School of Business and Social Sciences, Aarhus University
- 9.45 - 10.00 Official Opening of Centre by Jørgen Huno Rasmussen, Chairman, TrygFonden
- 10.00 - 12.45 **Impact Evaluations in Practice**
- The French Experiment Fund**  
Martin Hirsch, Head of French Civic Service Agency  
Bruno Crepon, J-PAL Europe
  - Early Childhood intervention in Ireland**  
Orla Doyle, University College Dublin  
Noel Kelly, Northside Partnership, Dublin
  - Pre-School Literacy Programme in Aarhus**  
Simon Calmar Andersen, Aarhus University  
Rasmus Bak-Møller, Aarhus Kommune
- 12:45 - 13:30 Lunch
- 13.30 - 15.00 **Growing up in Denmark**  
Michael Rosholm, Aarhus University with comments from:  
Jesper Brask Fischer, Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Integration  
Jacob Hess, Ministry of Education
- 15:00 - 15:30 Tea/coffee
- 15.30 - 17.00 **Panel Discussion: Building a Knowledge Culture in Denmark**  
Merete Konnerup, TrygFonden  
Michael Rosholm, Aarhus University  
Members of TrygFondens Forum for Applied Research
- 17:00 - Reception
-

## Day 2: Friday, the 30th of August 2013

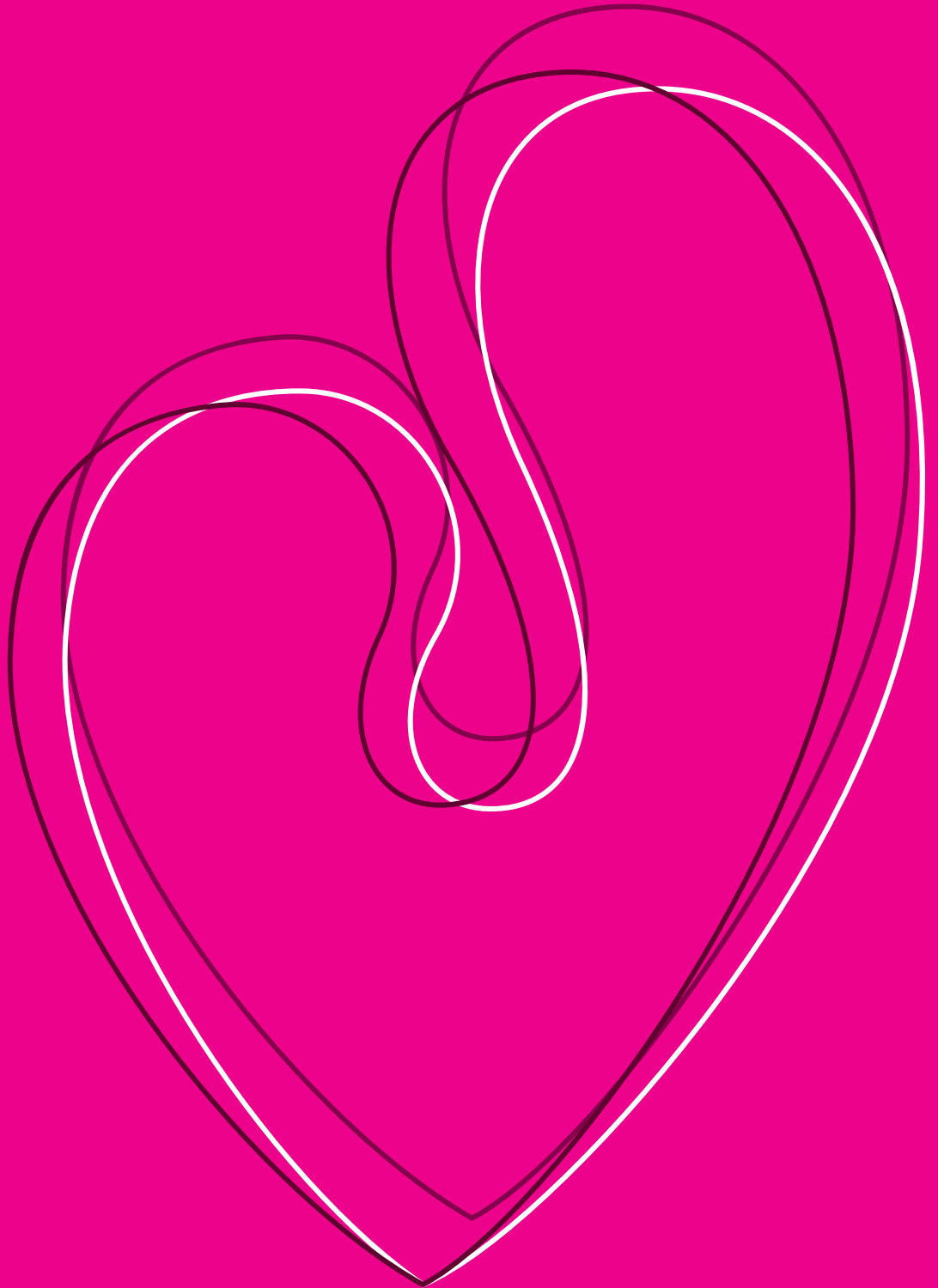
8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome by Michael Rosholm, Prof. of Economics, Aarhus University
9:15 – 10:30	Keynote Speech, by James Heckman, Prof. of Economics, University of Chicago "The Economics of Human Development".
10:30 – 11:00	Tea/coffee
11:00 – 12:30	<p><b>Early Childhood Interventions</b></p> <p>Orla Doyle, UCD, "Evaluating the early effectiveness of the Preparing for Life programme: Experimental evidence from a childhood intervention" (30 min)</p> <p>Tarjei Havnes, Oslo University, "Bright and Early? Childcare for toddlers and early cognitive skills" (30 min)</p> <p>Marianne Simonsen, AU: Discussant (15 min)</p>
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 14:15	Keynote Speech by Meredith Rowe, University of Maryland, "The importance of the home environment for children's early literacy and numeracy development".
14.15 – 15:00	<p><b>Language and Literacy Development in At-Risk Children</b></p> <p>Dorthe Bleses, University of Southern Denmark: "Language and literacy development in children from low-SES families and language minority homes: A Danish perspective" (15 minutes)</p> <p>Simon Calmar Andersen, Aarhus University: "Helping Parents Helping Their Children. An Overview of Some Danish Randomized Controlled Trials". (15 minutes)</p>
15:00 – 15:30	Tea/coffee
15:30 – 17:30	<p><b>Value for Money: Cost Benefit and Cost Effectiveness</b></p> <p>Lynn Karoly, RAND, "Benefit-Cost Analysis for Interventions Serving Children and Youth: Lessons from the United States" (60 min)</p> <p>Clive Belfield, Columbia University, "Cost-effectiveness Analysis and Child Well-Being: Policy Lessons from the US" (45 min)</p> <p>Discussion and a Danish perspective, Jacob Arendt, KORA (15 min)</p>
19:00 –	Conference dinner



## Day 3: Saturday, 31st of August 2013

- 8:30 – 10:30      **Bringing Approaches from Economics and Psychology into the Field**  
Sally Sadoff, University of California San Diego,  
"The Behavioralist Goes to School: Field  
Experiments in Education" (45 min)  
Rachel White, University of Pennsylvania, Department of  
Psychology: "Psychological distancing, self-control and  
emotional well-being in children and adolescents" (45 min)  
Silvia Angerer, University of Innsbruck, Department of  
Economics: "Cooperation and Punishment in Children"(20 min)
- 10:30 – 11:00      Tea/coffee
- 11:00 – 12:00      Keynote Speech, by Russell Rumberger, UC Santa Barbara  
"The Challenge of Universal High School Completion"
- 12:00 – 13:00      Lunch
- 13:00 – 14:30      **School Absenteeism**  
Michael Crowley, Yale University, "Understanding the Cycle of  
School Refusal: Moving Toward Basic Research" (30 min)  
Merike Darmody, Trinity College Dublin, "Causes and Conse-  
quences of School Absenteeism in Ireland" (30 min)  
Mikael Thastum, Aarhus University, "Treatment of Children with  
Severe School Refusal Behavior: Seven Case Studies (15 min)
- 14:30 – 14:45      Concluding Remarks by Michael Rosholm
- 14.45 – 15:15      Tea/coffee
-

# SPEAKERS





**Bruno Crepon,**  
J-PAL Europe, CREST and Associate  
Professor at ENSAE and École  
Polytechnique



**Jacob Hess,**  
Ministry of Education



**Clive Belfield,**  
Associate Professor,  
Columbia University,



**James J. Heckman,**  
Professor, University of Chicago  
Nobel Memorial Prize winner in  
Economics



**Dorthe Bleses,**  
Professor,  
University of Southern Denmark



**Jesper Brask Fischer,**  
Ministry of Social Affairs, Children  
and Integration



**Helena Skyt Nielsen**  
Professor,  
Department of Economics and  
Business, Aarhus University



**Jørgen Huno Rasmussen,**  
Chairman, TrygFonden



**Jacob Arendt Nielsen,**  
Director of research,  
KORA



**Kamilla Trille Gumedde,**  
Executive Director  
TrygFonden's Centre for Child  
Research, Aarhus University

---



**Lynn Karoly,**  
Senior Economist at the  
RAND Corporation.



**Merike Darmody,**  
Research officer,  
Trinity College Dublin



**Marianne Simonsen,**  
Professor,  
Department of Economics and  
Business Aarhus University



**Michael Crowley,**  
Associate Director, Developmental  
Electrophysiology Lab  
Yale University



**Martin Hirsch,**  
Head of French Civic  
Service Agency



**Michael Rosholm,**  
Professor,  
Department of Economics and  
Business Aarhus University



**Meredith Rowe,**  
Assistant Professor,  
University of Maryland



**Mikael Thastum,**  
Professor, Aarhus University



**Merete Konnerup,**  
Head of programmes promoting  
well-being, TrygFonden



**Noel Kelly,**  
Northside Partnership,  
Manager: Preparing for Life  
Programme



**Orla Doyle,**  
Associate professor,  
University College Dublin



**Silvia Angerer,**  
Research Assistant,  
University of Innsbruck



**Rachel E. White,**  
Post.doc,  
University of Pennsylvania



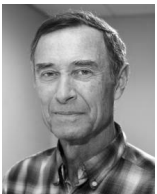
**Simon Calmar Andersen,**  
Associate Professor,  
Department of Political Science  
and Government, Aarhus University



**Rasmus Bak-Møller,**  
Head of Educational Department  
of Children and Youth



**Svend Hylleberg**  
Dean, School of Business and  
Social Sciences, Aarhus University



**Russell Rumberger,**  
Professor, UC Santa Barbara



**Tarjei Havnes,**  
Associate professor,  
Oslo University,



**Sally Sadoff,**  
Assistant Professor,  
University of California San Diego



# DINNER INFORMATION

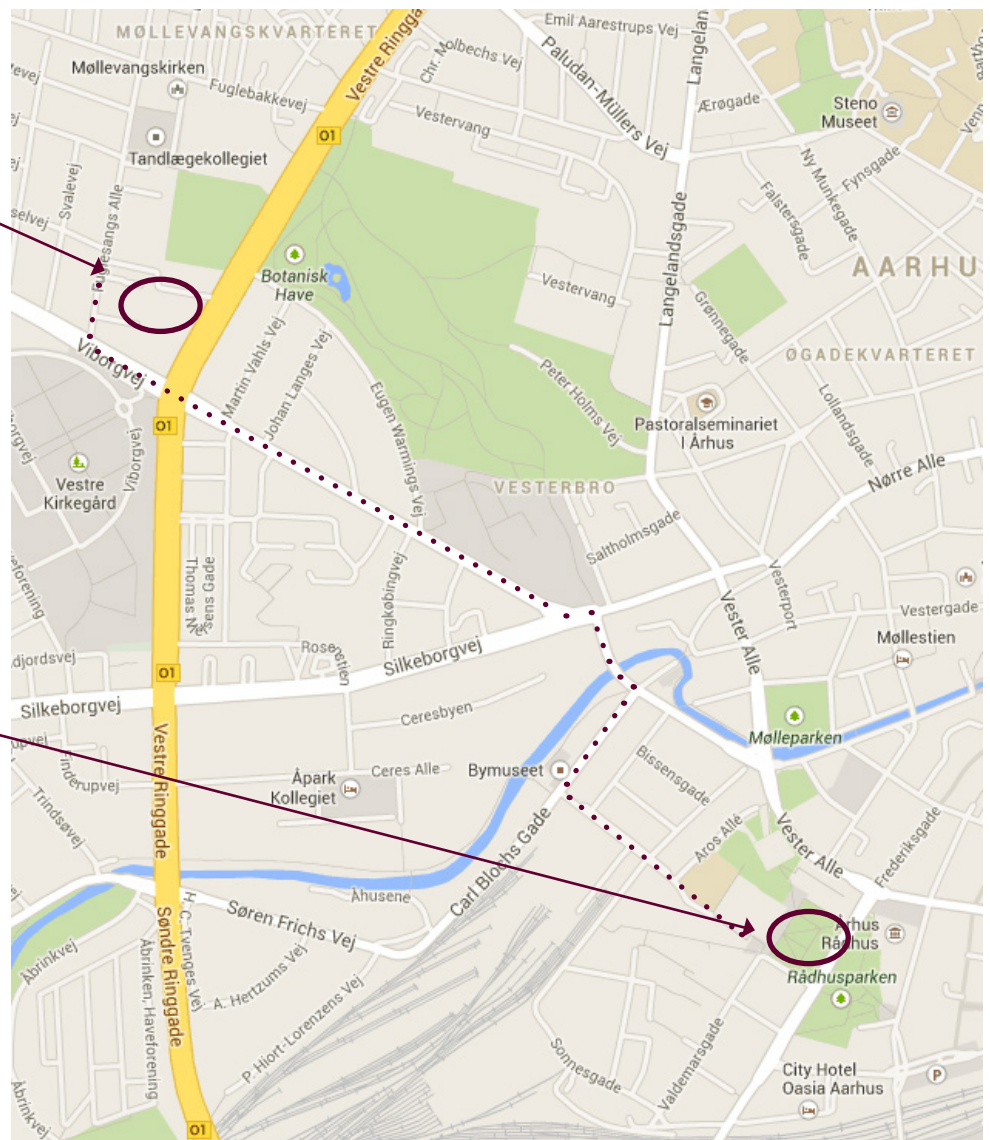
**Where:** Johanneberg, Musikhuset Aarhus, Thomas Jensens Allé  
 (walking distance approx. 25 min.)

**When:** Friday 30th August, 2013  
 19:15 / 7:15 pm

**Dress code:** smart casual

**Conference venue**

**Conference Dinner**



## LEARN MORE

Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, J-PAL. Using Randomisation in Development Economics: A Toolkit.

<http://www.povertyactionlab.org/methodology>

Paul Gertler, Impact Evaluations in Practice.

<http://www.povertyactionlab.org/methodology>





# WHY STUDY CAUSAL EFFECTS?

**Children who do well at school, often have different background characteristics than those who don't.**

On average, they attend better schools, are healthier, have more educated and more supportive parents, amongst other factors. If their school success is attributed entirely to the performance of their schools, it is not very informative for policy purposes. Other factors contribute too.

To circumvent this problem, it is common in social sciences to use statistical methods to “control” for these differences. But it is difficult to control for things that you cannot observe and measure, such as the motivation of the child, the amount of help received at home etc.

Causal effect studies take advantage of – or create – variation in the implementation of a new social policy to compare outcomes, over time, for those who received the program to those who didn't, holding all other factors constant.

**New advances in research methods have strengthened our ability to integrate such variation into the implementation of real-life policies, enabling us to better learn from policy changes and providing scientific knowledge about what works and what doesn't.**



## OUR STUDIES

Strengthening school readiness through a nursery school based intervention to strengthen language development and numeracy. **Lead researcher: Dorte Bleses, University of Southern Denmark**

Evaluation of a parental training programme, The Incredible Years, for first-time parents. **Lead researcher: Marianne Simonsen, Economics, Aarhus University**

Providing suitcases with children's books and educational information for parents of preschool children has been shown to reduce the need for special education. This study tests the effectiveness of a follow-up intervention when the children enter primary schools. **Lead researcher: Simon Calmar Andersen, Political Sciences, Aarhus University.**

Develop and test a behavioural intervention to strengthen self-control and reduce vocational school drop-out rates. **Lead researcher: Helena Skyt Nielsen, Economics, Aarhus University**

A descriptive study of the underlying risk factors associated with school absenteeism for grade 0 to grade 9 learners, with an experimental follow-up study to test means of reducing school absenteeism. **Lead researcher: Mikael Tastum, Psychology, Aarhus University**

Evaluating the effects of providing spare-time jobs to socially disadvantaged youth. **Lead researcher: Anna Piil Damm, Economics, Aarhus University**

Testing improvements in case management quality from a social worker caseload reduction. **Lead researcher: Peter Jensen, Economics, Aarhus University.**

Evaluating the effects of providing young job seekers with a mentor. **Lead researcher: Michael Svarer, Economics, Aarhus University**





# COST BENEFIT STUDIES

**To design good policy, it is not enough to know whether a programme is achieving its objectives. We also need to know if it is good value for the money. Causal effect studies - that reliably attribute effects to a programme - are particularly good candidates for also testing relative costs and benefits.**

At TrygFonden's Centre for Child Research, all evaluated programmes will be subjected to cost benefit analyses to estimate their relative cost effectiveness. Over time, this will enable us to compare effects across programmes and across time dimensions, answering questions about how to best use the available resources to achieve the largest gains for Danish children and youth.

**This could include questions such as:**

“ Do we get more young adults into the labor market by investing in grade 9 career counseling programmes, job centre-based counseling or reducing absenteeism in primary schools?”





# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## Wireless network:

To log onto Aarhus University's wireless network, you need to connect to AUWLAN, open your browser and enter your username and password (at the back of your name tag)

## Lunch:

Lunch is served in the S-building 2610

## Bus information:

To get from Fuglesangs Allé to the city center, you can take most of the yellow city busses at Viborgvej/Ringgaden. See more information at the information board at the conference

## Taxi:

To order a taxi you can call (+45) 89 48 48 48

## Good to know:

In case of emergency, please call 112

In the event of acute illness or injury, Emergency Doctor Service (+45) 70 11 3131























**We would like to thank TrygFonden for  
its generous support to the centre.**









TRYGFONDENS  
BØRNEFORSKNINGSCENTER

Aarhus University  
School of Business and Social Sciences  
Trygfonden's Centre for Child research

Fuglesangs Allé 4  
8210 Aarhus V

 (+45) 8716 5428  
 [mvandersen@econ.au.dk](mailto:mvandersen@econ.au.dk)  
 [www.childresearch.au.dk](http://www.childresearch.au.dk)