Wilson N. Merrell

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https://wnmerrell.github.io/personal-website/

Current Academic Appointments

Aarhus University (Denmark)
2024 – present
(*parental leave spring 2026)*

Postdoctoral Researcher
Centre for the Experimental-Philosophical Study of Discrimination (CEPDISC)
Department of Political Science

University of Oslo (Norway)
2024 – present

Guest Researcher
Department of Psychology
Social and Intergroup Relations Lab

Academic Training and Education

University of Michigan
M.S. (2020), *Ph.D. (2024), Social Psychology*
Graduate teacher certificate *(2024)*

University of Zurich
Summer Research Fellow (2023)

Max Planck Research School
LIFE Junior Fellow *(2021-2023)*

Macalester College
B.A., Psychology (honors) & Economics (2016)

Research Interests

I am a social psychologist with two primary research programs: one on *hierarchy*, *intergroup relations*, and *status*; and another on *infectious disease concealment* and the *psychology of infectious illness*

Publications (* joint first authorship)

1. **Merrell, W.**, Fan, L., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Thomsen, L. (*Conditionally accepted)*. The folk psychology of spatial resource patchiness and social hierarchy. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.
2. **Merrell, W.**, Fan, L., Gothreau, C., Laustsen, L. (*In press*). Democrats and Republicans hold similarly gendered mental images of ideal politicians. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*.
3. Vossoughi, N., **Merrell, W.**, Kteily, N., Ho, A. (2026). The Role of Egalitarian Ideology in System-Challenging Collective Action among Members of Dominant and Marginalized Racial Groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin.* https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672261427820**.**

4. **Merrell, W.***, Fan, L.*, Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Thomsen, L. (2025). Resource possession in the mind's eye: Ideological convergence and divergence in the perceptions of poor people. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin.* https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672251371787.
5. **Merrell, W.**, Ackerman, J. (2025). Flaunting Porsches or Paris? Comparing the social signaling value of experiential and material conspicuous consumption. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin.* https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672251331658. [Aarhus University Coverage]
6. Ackerman, J., Samore, T., Fessler, D., Kupfer, T., Choi, S., **Merrell, W.**, et al. (2025). I see sick people: Beliefs about sensory detection of infectious disease are largely consistent across cultures. *Brain Behavior and Immunity*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbi.2025.04.020.
7. **Merrell, W.**, Vossoughi, N., Kteily, N., Ho, A. (2024*)*. Looking White but feeling Asian: The role of perceived membership permeability and perceived discrimination in multiracial-monoracial alliances. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672241267332. [Kellogg Insights coverage]
8. **Merrell, W.**, Choi, S., Ackerman, J. (2024). When and why people conceal infectious disease. *Psychological Science*. https://doi.org/10.1177/09567976231221990. [APS Coverage] [Under the Cortex Podcast]
9. Ackerman, J., **Merrell, W.**, & Williams, L. (2024). Social cognition and consumer psychology. In D. Carlston, K. Johnson, & K. Hugenberg (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Social Cognition*, 2nd New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197763414.013.35.
10. Fessler, D.*, **Merrell, W**.*, Holbrook, C., Ackerman, J. (2023). Beware the foe who feels no pain: Relationships between relative formidability and pain sensitivity in U.S. online samples. *Evolution and Human Behavior*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2022.11.003. [Human Behavior and Evolution Society Blog]
11. Choi, S., **Merrell, W.**, Ackerman, J. (2023). Safety first, but for whom? Shifts in risk perception for self and others following COVID-19 vaccination. *Social and Personality Psychological Compass*. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12757.
12. Choi, S., **Merrell, W.**, Ackerman, J. (2022). Keep your distance: Different roles for knowledge and affect in predicting social distancing behavior. *Journal of Health Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1177/13591053211067100.
13. Ackerman, J., **Merrell, W**., Choi, S. (2020). What people believe about detecting infectious disease using the senses. *Current Research in Ecological and Social Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cresp.2020.100002.

Manuscripts under review

14. **Merrell, W.**, Fan, L., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Thomsen, L. (*In Principle Acceptance, Stage 1 Registered Report*). Height, hierarchy, and humanity: A registered replication and extension of Kunst et al. (2019). *Social Psychological & Personality Science*.
15. **Merrell, W.** (*Invited R&R, major revision*). Experiential vs. material conspicuous

consumption signal distinct forms of status. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*.

16. **Merrell, W.**, Fan, L., Hjorth, F., Dinesen, P., Sønderskov, K. (*Under review*). Perceived Threat in Local Contexts Amplifies Spatial Representations of Bad Areas. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*.

Selected manuscripts in preparation

(Drafts available upon request; $^{+}$ undergraduate student collaborators; ^ graduate student collaborators)

Merrell, W., Kruse, M., Laustsen, L. (*In preparation)*. Disentangling automatic and deliberative psychological processes in conjoint experiments.

Merrell, W., Ho, A. (*In preparation*). How do racially minoritized perceivers categorize dual-minority multiracial people? The case of Kamala Harris.

Chaar, R.$^{+}$, Pischel, K.$^{+}$, Giritlioglu, A., **Merrell, W.**, Fessler, D. (*In preparation*). Ripped or racialized? Folk myths of muscularity in American Black men.

Merrell, W., Sabree, K.^, Meyer, M.^, Ackerman, J. *(In preparation*). Disease Concealment is Ubiquitous but its Prevalence is Underestimated by Public Health Experts

Merrell, W., Zubaly, B.^, Ackerman, J., (*In preparation*). Fear of exclusion and exploitation as motivational drivers of infectious disease concealment.

Fan, L.*****, **Merrell, W.***, Donner, M., Ackerman, J., Tybur, J. (*In preparation*). From whom do we hide our sickness? Interpersonal value and the selective concealment of infectious illness

Honors & Awards

Otto Klineberg Intercultural and International Relations Award (2024), Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, awarded to "the best paper or article of the year on intercultural or international relations." *Looking White but Feeling Asian: The Role of Physical Permeability and Perceived Discrimination in Multiracial-Monoracial Alliances.*

Provost Teaching Innovation Prize (2021)**,** University of Michigan, annually recognizes the most innovative pedagogical projects across the University. *Inclusive Teaching in Research Methods Courses.*

Research grants and fellowships

Aarhus University Department of Political Science Small Grants Program (2026), 40,000 DKK (~$6,300)

Danish National Research Foundation (DNRF)

- 2026 Research Funding Call, 168,000 DKK (~$26,000)
- 2025 Research Funding Call, 161,000 DKK (~$25,000)
- 2024 Research Funding Call, 184,000 DKK (~$28,000)

BeSample Collaborative Grant (2025), $718

Sweetland Fellows Seminar, Junior Writing Fellow (2021)**,** University of Michigan, $11,000

Pillsbury Graduate Research Award (2021), University of Michigan, $1,000

Evolution and Human Adaptation Program Research Award (2020), University of Michigan, $1,000.

Rackham Graduate Student Research Grant (2023), University of Michigan, $3,000.

Rackham Professional Development Grant (2023), University of Michigan, $100.

Rackham Graduate Student Research Grant (2020), University of Michigan, $1,500.

Early Career Award, (2020), Network of Multiracial Scholars, $100.

Rackham Institute for Social Research Training Award (2020), University of Michigan, $2,600.

Rackham Conference Travel Award, University of Michigan, $900 each
- 2024, "Looking White but Feeling Asian: The Role of Physical Permeability and Perceived Discrimination in Multiracial-Monoracial Alliances"
- 2023, "Beware the Foe who Feels no Pain."
- 2022, "Infectious Disease Concealment."
- 2020, "Revisiting Conspicuous Consumption as a Costly Signal."
- 2019, "Conspicuous Consumption of Experiential Goods."

Chaired Conference Symposia

1. *Rethinking resources: How resource scarcity, patchiness, and unpredictability shape core psychological processes in distinct ways* (co-chair Dr. Julia Buzan). Annual Meeting of the Society of Experimental Social Psychology, Lisbon, PT (2025). Symposium speakers also included Dr. Oliver Sng and Dr. Carsten de Dreu.
2. *Banding together, pulling apart? Challenging racial hierarchy through intraminority coalitions* (co-chair Dr. Nadia Vossoughi). Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, San Diego, CA (2024). Symposium speakers also included Dr. Chyei Vinluan and Dr. Ashley Berkebile-Weinberg.
3. *Hiding who we are, what we know, and how we feel* (co-chair Dr. Josh Ackerman). Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology. Atlanta, GA (2023). Symposium speakers also included Dr. Michael Slepian, Dr. Elizabeth Page-Gould, and Dr. Stephanie Chaudoir.

Conference Presentations

1. **Merrell, W.,** Kruse, M., Laustsen, L. (November 2026). What psychological processes do conjoint experiments actually measure? Introducing a new attribute-norming tool for political scientists. Talk to be presented at the Danish Political Science Association, Nyborg, DK.
2. **Merrell, W.,** Meyer, M., Sabree, K., Gonzalez, R., Ackerman, J. (October 2026). Hiding Sickness and Staying Included: Infectious Illness Concealment Across 21 Countries. Talk to be presented at the Society for Experimental Social Psychology, Montreal, CA.
3. **Merrell, W.**, Fan, L., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Thomsen, L. (October 2025). Folk beliefs about ecological resource patchiness and intergroup hierarchy. Talk presented at the Society

for Experimental Social Psychology, Lisbon, PT.

4. **Merrell, W.**, Fan, L., Gothreau, C., Laustsen, L. (June 2025). Do Democrats and Republicans hold similar gendered mental representations of the ideal politician? Talk presented by Lasse Laustsen at the European Political Science Association, Madrid, ES.
5. **Merrell, W.**, Fan, L., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Thomsen, L. (June 2025). Folk beliefs about ecological resource patchiness and intergroup hierarchy. Talk presented at the Human Behavior and Evolution Society, Atlantic City, NJ.
6. **Merrell, W.**, Fan, L., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Thomsen, L. (February 2025). Mapping conflict: How spatial resource patchiness shapes perceptions of territoriality. Data blitz presented at the Conflict and Conflict Resolution pre-conference, Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Denver, CO.
7. **Merrell, W.**, Fan, L., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Thomsen, L. (February 2025). Patchy resource ecologies can evoke intergroup conflict. Data blitz presented at the Evolutionary Psychology pre-conference, Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Denver, CO.
8. **Merrell, W.**, Ho, A. (November 2024). How do racially minoritized perceived categorize dual-minority multiracial people? The case of Kamala Harris. Talk presented at the Danish Political Science Association, Odense, DK.
9. **Merrell, W.**, Fan, L., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., Thomsen, L. (September 2024). Resource possession in the mind's eye. Talk presented at the Conference on Discrimination, CEPDISC, Aarhus, DK.
10. **Merrell, W.**, Choi, S., Ackerman, J. (June 2024). When and why people conceal infectious disease. Talk presented at the Human Behavior and Evolution Society, Aarhus, DK.
11. **Merrell, W.**, Choi, S., Ackerman, J. (April 2024). When and why people conceal infectious disease. Talk presented at the European Human Behavior and Evolution Association, Montpellier, FR.
12. **Merrell, W.**, Vossoughi, N., Kteily, N., Ho, A. (February 2024*)*. Looking White but feeling Asian: The role of physical permeability and perceived discrimination in multiracial-monoracial alliances. Talk presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, San Diego, CA.
13. **Merrell, W.**, Choi, S., Ackerman, J. (February 2023). Infectious Disease Concealment. Talk presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology annual conference, Atlanta, GA.
14. **Merrell, W.,** Vossoughi, N., Seifert, C (February 2021). Incorporating Critical Pedagogy in Psychological Research Methods. Talk co-presented with Dr. Nadia Vossoughi at the Society for the Teaching of Psychology Pre-Conference at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, virtual.

Invited Talks

University of Richmond, Department of Psychology (November 2025)
École Normale Supérieure, Evolution and Social Cognition Team (October 2025)
Danish National Research Foundation (August 2025)

University of Oslo, Department of Psychology (April 2025)
University of Richmond, Department of Psychology (December 2024)
St. Olaf College, Department of Psychology (December 2024)
Haverford College, Department of Psychology (January 2024)
Gustavus Adolphus College, Department of Psychology (December 2023)
Beloit College, Department of Psychology (November 2023)
Lake Forest College, Department of Psychology (November 2023)

Teaching experience

Spring 2025	**Co-Instructor**, "Promoting Change through Social Psychology." Part of the Global Mobility, Inclusion, and Diversity in Society MA program at the University of Oslo. Co-taught with Dr. Thomas Schubert and Dr. Charles Samuelson. (no student evaluations)
Spring 2025	**Instructor of Record**, "The Social Psychology of Inequality: Groups, Hierarchies, and Discrimination." Upper-level BA Course at Aarhus University. (4.9/5.0)
Fall 2021	**Instructor of Record**, "Separating Fact from Fiction in Psychological Science;" self-created course developed for the Sweetland Fellows Seminar as a first-year writing seminar in the English department at the University of Michigan. (Syllabus) (5.0/5.0)
Winter 2021	**Graduate Student Instructor**, "Introduction to Psychology," University of Michigan. Responsible for test creation and grading assignments. (no student evaluations).
Winter 2020 and Fall 2020	**Graduate Student Instructor,** "Research Methods in Psychology," University of Michigan. Taught two lab sections per semester of 20 students each, designed lesson plans, oversaw semester-long individual research projects. In Winter 2020 developed modules on critical pedagogy to create a more inclusive research methods curriculum. (materials) (4.9/5.0)
Winter 2019 and Fall 2019	**Graduate Student Instructor, "**Introduction to Social Psychology," University of Michigan. Taught three discussion sections per semester of 25 students each, designed lesson plans, wrote exams with teaching team, and held office hours. (4.9/5.0)

Research Mentorship

Dissertation and thesis committees
External examiner, Rikke Haudrum Rasmussen, Doctoral Dissertation Pre-Defense, Department of Sociology, University of Copenhagen, 2026

Independent research supervision (papers/theses)
Co-supervisor (with Dr. Josh Ackerman), Ariella Kushner, University of Michigan Honors Thesis, *Disease concealment and welfare trade-off ratios*, 2021-2022

Supervisor, William Gonzalez, University of Michigan Directed Advanced Research, *Lay beliefs about scent and social class*, 2021

Supervisor, Ariella Kushner, University of Michigan Directed Advanced Research, *Social harm and infectious disease concealment*, 2020

Lab research supervision (presentations/posters)
Motivations underlying infectious disease concealment, Arin Hirsch, Caitlin Fagel, Winter 2023
Experiential conspicuous consumption, dominance, and prestige, Yat Sum Leung, Dylan Selkin, Victoria Treder, Fall 2022
Environmental harshness and pain sensitivity, Rachel Annex, William Gonzalez, Winter 2022
Children's perceptions of status signals, Lily Jankowiak, Ariella Kushner, Emmaleigh Krause, Fall 2020
Strategic disease concealment, Caitlin Hoyng, Ariella Kushner, Winter 2020
Speed of processing in online dating, Julia Salamango, Fall 2019
Humblebragging in the online and offline sphere, Haley Henry, Cara Jhang, Jian Sun, Winter 2019

Service to the field and public communication

Ad hoc reviewer: *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Evolution and Human Behavior*, *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin, Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, Journal of Personality, Social Cognition, British Journal of Psychology, Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, Personality & Individual Differences, Evolutionary Psychology*

Program committee: *Human Behavior and Evolution Society* (2024), *CEPDISC Annual Conference on Discrimination* (2025)

Public communication: *Motivational frictions* (Psychology Today blog)

Leadership, Departmental Service, & Campus Involvement

2021 - 2022	**Social Area Departmental Associate**, University of Michigan, attended faculty meetings to serve as one of two student representatives for our area.
2021	**Graduate Student Admissions Committee**, University of Michigan, one of four students chosen to read applications and decide on admissions for the next cohort of social area students.
2020	**Recruitment Weekend Organizer**, University of Michigan, one of two students chosen to plan and facilitate recruitment weekend activities for prospective students
2019 - 2020	**Diversity Representative,** Psychology Diversity Committee, University of Michigan

2019 - 2022 **Co-chair,** Asian Psychological Student Association, University of Michigan
2018 - 2019 **Treasurer**, Asian Psychological Student Association, University of Michigan

Professional Memberships

Society for Personality and Social Psychology
Society for Experimental Social Psychology
Human Behavior and Evolution Society
European Human Behavior and Evolution Society

Programming, Analytic, and Language Skills

Programming and statistics: R, Stata, SPSS, MPlus, excel, javascript, Qualtrics, SR Experiment Builder, SR Data Viewer
Methods and techniques: Reverse correlation, geospatial analysis, conjoint analysis
Language: B2 Danish (prøve i Dansk 3, May 2026, average score = 7)

References

Dr. Lotte Thomsen
Professor of Psychology, University of Oslo
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Dr. Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington
Associate Professor of Psychology, NYU Abu Dhabi
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Dr. Josh Ackerman
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Dr. Arnold Ho
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Dr. Nick Haas
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Director, Sweetland Center for Writing, Professor of English and Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, University of Michigan
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