

Ben Sterling

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Education

Yale University

B.S. in Cognitive Science

Sept 2021 – May 2025

- Minor in Statistics & Data Science

Publications

Rajadesingan, A., **Sterling, B.** (*under review*). Geographic Biases Against Global South Users as a Collective Phenomenon on Reddit.

Berke, M., **Sterling, B.**, Tenenbaum, A., & Jara-Ettinger, J. (*under review*). Quantitative Reconstruction of Other People's Cognitive Processes as Bayesian Inverse Reasoning.

Berke*, M., **Sterling*, B.**, Chandra, K., & Jara-Ettinger, J. (2025). People Use Theory of Mind to Craft Lies Exploiting Audience Desires. *Proceedings of the 47th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* ([link](#)) [↗](#)

Berke, M., **Sterling, B.**, Tenenbaum, A., & Jara-Ettinger, J. (2024). No signatures of first-person simulation in Theory of Mind judgments about thinking. *Proceedings of the 46th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* ([link](#)) [↗](#)

Berke, M., Tenenbaum, A., **Sterling, B.**, & Jara-Ettinger, J. (2024). Thinking about thinking as rational computation. *Proceedings of the 45th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* ([link](#)) [↗](#)

Talks and Presentations

Berke*, M., **Sterling*, B.** (presenter), Chandra, K., & Jara-Ettinger, J. (2025). People Use Theory of Mind to Craft Lies Exploiting Audience Desires. Talk presented at the 51st annual meeting of the Society for Philosophy and Psychology. Talk also presented at the 47th Annual Conference for the Cognitive Science Society

Sterling, B., Berke, M. (2022). Metacognition and Object Perception. Presentation at Yale Undergraduate Research Symposium

Research Experience

Center for Media Engagement, UT Austin

Advised by Ashwin Rajadesingan

June 2025 – Present

- Studying how personal narratives and narrative style draw politically disinclined users into discussion, training transformer classifiers and running large-scale Reddit analyses.
- Auditing systemic information and participation gaps across platforms, running behavioral experiments and building product metrics to diagnose barriers and inform the design of deliberative spaces.
- Developing scalable measures of partisan identity vs. ideology over 100M+ comments to forecast polarization dynamics.

Computational Social Cognition Lab, Yale

Advised by Julian Jara-Ettinger

June 2022 – June 2025

- Led an end-to-end thesis on audience-sensitive deception: proposed and formalized Bayesian ToM model, designed stimuli, ran online behavioral experiment, analyzed results, and presented findings.
- Implemented studies inferring mental effort in Rush Hour puzzle: designed Qualtrics tasks, proposed managed participant recruitment, conducted data analysis, and created visualizations.
- Evaluated hierarchical probabilistic monitor for neural object detectors, executed and validated computer vision models on Yale HPC, supporting joint inference over 3D scenes.

Comparative Cognition Lab, Yale

Advised by Amanda Royka

March 2023 – June 2023

- Ran on-site video capture and gaze-coding for rhesus macaque ToM field experiments at Cayo Santiago

Awards and Honors

Mellon Research Fellowship	<i>Spring 2025</i>
Yale College End-of-term Award	<i>Spring 2023 - Spring 2025</i>
Lewis P. Curtis Fellowship	<i>Summer 2023</i>
Yale First-Year Summer Research Fellowship in the Sciences and Engineering	<i>Summer 2022</i>
National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) Academic Year	<i>Fall 2021</i>

Professional Experience

Bureau of Arms Control, U.S. Department of State	<i>May 2024 – August 2024</i>
<i>Science Policy Intern</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Wrote 5 policy briefs distilling AI-ethics and chemical-security research for Deputy Assistant Secretary ◦ Coordinated two interagency conferences for 12 nation delegates 	

Service

Mt. Zion Criminal Justice - Penpal & Mentor	<i>2025</i>
UT Austin Staff Council - Volunteer	<i>2025</i>
Yale Bulldog Days Visiting Students - Cognitive Science Representative	<i>2024-2025</i>
Yale Cognitive Science Mentorship Program - Mentor	<i>2023-2025</i>
Yale Computer Science Digital Ethics Center - Volunteer	<i>2024</i>
Dixwell Community House (Q House) - Volunteer	<i>2023-2024</i>