

Nicolas Restrepo Ochoa

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Education

Duke University, Ph.D. Sociology 2022

Dissertation: *Three papers on beliefs: on their measurement, their transmission, and its implications for large-scale change*

Duke University, M.A. Sociology 2021

University of Cambridge, M.Phil. Sociology 2016

Durham University, B.A. Sociology 2015

Research Interests

Attitudinal change | Cultural change | Computational Social Science | Agent-based modeling | Morality | Cultural evolution | Social learning | Social Networks |

Skills

R: Proficient | Qualtrics: Proficient | Agent-based modeling: Proficient | Python: Intermediate | Network analysis: Proficient | Stan: Proficient | Git: Proficient | Bash: Intermediate

Publications

PUBLISHED

- 1) Andrés Castro Araújo and **Nicolás Restrepo Ochoa**. "How to Make a Functionalist Argument". *Sociological Science*. [Link](#)
- 2) **Nicolás Restrepo Ochoa** and Turgut Keskintürk. "Measuring Movement in Cultural Landscapes". *Poetics*. [Link](#)
- 3) Amelia Meier, **Nicolás Restrepo Ochoa**, et al. "Network indicators of anthropogenic removals in animal societies". *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*. [Link](#)
- 4) Maria Cristina Ramos Flor and **Nicolás Restrepo Ochoa**. "Identity Networks as a New Frontier: Conceptualizing, Mapping, and Analyzing Identity Structures and Their Impact on Well-Being". *Social Psychology Quarterly*. [Link](#). Winner of the outstanding recent contribution award by the american sociological association's social psychology section.
- 5) **Nicolás Restrepo Ochoa** and Stephen Vaisey. "Opinions on Hard-to-Discuss Topics Change More via Cohort Replacement". *Evolutionary Human Sciences*. [Link](#)
- 6) **Nicolás Restrepo Ochoa**. "The role of template matching in the attribution of immorality". *Poetics*. [Link](#).
- 7) Ketika Garg, Cecilia Padilla Iglesias, **Nicolás Restrepo Ochoa**, VB Knight. "Hunter-Gatherer Foraging Networks Promote Information Transmission". *RSOS*. [Link](#).

CONDITIONALLY ACCEPTED

- 1) **Nicolás Restrepo Ochoa** and Cristina Moya. "The Emergence of a New Pilgrimage as an Assurance Game" (Co-author). *RSOS*. [Link](#).

UNDER REVIEW

- 1) Jake Womick, Daniela Goya-Tocchetto, **Nicolás Restrepo Ochoa**, et al. "Moral disagreement across politics is explained by different assumptions about who is most vulnerable to harm". *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.
- 2) Kevin Kiley and **Nicolás Restrepo Ochoa**. "Life-course Trajectories of Sociopolitical Attitude Change across Cohorts and Topics". *American Journal of Sociology*.

IN PROGRESS

- 1) **Nicolás Restrepo Ochoa** and Thomas Wolff. "Cultural transmission and the global and local dynamics of social influence". [Link](#).
- 2) **Nicolás Restrepo Ochoa**. "The shape formative windows and the pace of cultural change". [Link](#)

PRESENTED

- 1) "Explaining the Emergence of a New Ritual". MTS Speaker Series 2025, UC Merced.
- 2) "Theoretical Puzzles around the Emergence of a New Pilgrimage" - Cultural Evolution Society Conference, Durham, UK, 2024.
- 3) "Theoretical Puzzles around the Emergence of a New Pilgrimage" - UC Davis Anthropology Department Speaker Series, Winter 2023.
- 4) "Stubborn Agents: when does learning not pay off?" - Cultural Evolution Society Conference, Aarhus, Denmark, 2022.
- 5) "Varying formative windows and the pace of cultural change" - Formal Models of Culture panel at the ASA conference 2022.
- 6) "Bringing ecological rationality into models of cultural transmission" – Mind and Materiality panel at the ASA conference 2020.

Research Experience

POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCHER

2022-PRESENT

UC Davis, Anthropology Department

Designed longitudinal survey studying the beliefs and habits of people in the region where a pilgrimage recently started. The survey encompasses different data, from field experiments to cognitive tasks, and follows participants across three years.

Trained and managed a large team of interviewers responsible for multi-year data collection.

Develop a new theoretical approach for understanding the emergence of a collective ritual, understanding it as an assurance game.

Derived predictions from that theoretical model, and from the literature on the diffusion of innovations, and tested them against the empirical data, providing one of the first empirical studies of how a new collective ritual spreads.

DOCTORAL RESEARCHER

2018-2022

Duke University, Sociology Department

Developed a new computational approach to test the idea that template matching underpins moral judgement, resulting in individual and coauthored projects.

Combined classic paradigms of social influence with work on social learning in a novel agent-based simulation that shows how different learning biases give rise to varying patterns of diffusion.

Collaborated with a large, multi-disciplinary team building simulations to examine how the removal of members via poaching affects the dynamics of social transmission across three different species.

Built a theoretical model that shows that current theories of belief change at the individual level imply that ageing populations should change at a slower pace, thus making a novel connection between cultural change at the personal and aggregate level.

RESEARCHER

2017-2018

Colombian Agency for Reincorporation

Used spatial and demographic data to explore why certain ex-combatants were less likely to continue to participate in the state's reincorporation programs.

Worked with a large team of quantitative and qualitative researchers to identify the groups that were most at risk of not participating in the state's programs, with an aim towards developing policies to mitigate such risk.

GRADUATE RESEARCHER

2015-2016

University of Cambridge, Sociology Department

Conducted in-depth, biographical interviews with Colombian human-rights activists to understand how they built their identities around political commitments.

Used grounded theory and content analysis to show how respondents used narrative frameworks to portray their political commitments as both an awakening, an inevitability, and the orienting principle of their biographies.

Teaching Experience

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

2024

Designed and taught a one-day introduction to social network analysis given in UC Davis's DataLab.

DOING REPRODUCIBLE RESEARCH WITH R

2024

Designed and taught a 3-day course for graduate students about tools for effective, reproducible research in R

INTRODUCTION TO R COURSE AT THE UNIVERSIDAD DEL ALTIPLANO

2023

Designed and taught a 2-day course geared to a mostly Spanish-speaking audience

SYLLABUS DESIGN FOR AN INTRODUCTION TO DATA SCIENCE COURSE

2022

Helped design a syllabus for an introduction to data science course and to write a set of complementary exercises using engaging data sets.

TA FOR THE SOCIAL STATISTICS SEQUENCE	2021-2022
Preparation of coding workshops for a 2-semester course focused on Bayesian statistics and causal identification.	

Mentoring

HONORS THESIS ADVISING AT THE UNIVERSIDAD DEL ALTIPLANO	2023
Accompanying students, who are writing their thesis based on the novel panel dataset we collected, with all aspects of research.	

ASSISTANT TO THE DEPARTMENT'S STATISTICIAN AT UC DAVIS	2023-PRESENT
Advising graduate students in all stages of the research process, from outlining the questions to finding the right statistical tools to answer them.	

PROJECT MANAGER - DATA+	2021
Led a team of undergraduates with limited coding experience to build a dashboard of Durham Public Schools, currently being used by local organizations.	

Funding and Awards

Summer Research Fellowship (\$5,500), Graduate School, <i>Duke University</i>	2022
Summer Research Fellowship (\$5,500), Graduate School, <i>Duke University</i>	2020
Summer Research Fellowship (\$5,500), Graduate School, <i>Duke University</i>	2019
Fuller's Prize for best departmental average in Sociology, <i>Durham University</i>	2015
Vice-Chancellor's Scholarship for Academic Excellence, <i>Durham University</i>	2014

Languages

Spanish: native | English: fluent | German: C1

Departmental Service

WORLDVIEW LAB MANAGER (DUKE)	2021-2023
Coordinated speaker series, and organized the academic year's schedule to build a productive and engaging research group.	

ANTI-RACISM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE (DUKE)	2021-2023
Acted as a bridge between students and faculty to work on fostering an environment where all students felt they could reach their full potential.	

GRADUATE STUDENT FORUM CO-CHAIR (DUKE)	2020-2021
Managed the budget allocated for graduate student events throughout the year.	

STAFF APPRECIATION COORDINATOR (DUKE)	2019-2020
Collected cash gifts biannually to give to the staff in our department and building more broadly.	

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE (DUKE)

2018-2019

Actively communicated with the Sociology graduate students to then represent them in voting about choices this broader student body was making.

Professional Memberships

American Sociological Association

Cultural Evolution Society