JESSICA STEPHENSON

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

I am a researcher and data scientist with a background in cognitive science and applied statistics, focused on how people reason, communicate, and interact with sociotechnical systems. My work explores questions at the intersection of moral psychology, philosophy, and technology — including how individuals interpret algorithmic decisions, form beliefs about fairness, and respond to abstract language in social contexts. I bring experience designing behavioral experiments, analyzing structured and unstructured data in R, and building tools that support accessible, community-engaged research.

EDUCATION

New York University, New York, NY
M.S. in Applied Statistics for Social Science Research Sept. 2023 - Dec. 2025
Concentration: Data Science for Social Impact GPA 3.9

Rutgers University Honors College, New Brunswick, NJ Sept. 2017 - May 2021
B.A. in Cognitive Science, Minor: Philosophy (Cum Laude) Major: 4.0, Overall: 3.7

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

West Interpersonal Perception Lab, New York University July 2023 - Present
Quantitative Research Associate | Dr. Tessa West
Leading data cleaning and preprocessing of uncoded text and behavioral data in R, applying regular expressions and tidyverse tools to prepare data for analysis. Coordinating projects focused on automating transcription workflows to improve efficiency. Developed and maintain a customized Salesforce database to centralize and streamline participant recruitment. Research explores how status, power, and group dynamics influence persuasion and relationships across real-world settings.

Conceptual Development and Social Cognition Lab, New York University July 2022 - Present
Research Associate | Dr. Marjorie Rhodes
Designing and conducting experiments to examine how children and adults use pragmatic cues to interpret generic language and form essentialist beliefs, while generating empirical data to inform a Bayesian model of this developmental pathway. Collecting data using video stimuli and Qualtrics surveys. Analyzing response data in R using mixed-effects models to examine developmental patterns. First author of a full publication with poster presentation at Cognitive Science 2025 conference.

Mind and Development Lab, Yale University May 2021 – June 2022
Research Assistant | Dr. Paul Bloom
Investigated how children and adults reason about morality, including how they assess moral standing across humans, animals, and robots. Designed and administered structured interviews with child participants. Managed study scheduling and logistics, conducted literature reviews, and assisted with manuscript preparation.

Dept. of Neuroscience and Cell Biology, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School Sept. 2018 – June 2022
Research Associate | Dr. Mladen-Roko Rasin
Conducted wet-lab cellular biology research on neuronal development, focusing on post-transcriptional regulation in the central nervous system. Generated and analyzed experimental data, maintained daily lab operations, and developed a searchable database of experimental reagents. Co-authored a peer-reviewed publication in *Nature Communications*.

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

July 2025 **Speaker knowledge modulates the effects of generic language on essentialist beliefs**
[Forthcoming at CogSci 2025]

June 2021 **Dehumanization of Prisoners as a Function of Punitive Attitudes** [*Poster*]

April 2021 **Eccentric Beliefs: Bayesianism, The Psychological Immune System, and Post-Racial Worldviews**
[*Senior Honors Thesis, Advised by Dr. Andrew Egan*] [🔗]

April 2020 **Translational derepression of Elavl4 isoforms at their alternative 5' UTRs determines neuronal development** [*co-authored publication, Nature Communications*] [🔗]

May 2019 **The Role of Ribosomal Protein L7 in Developing Neocortical Neurons** [*Poster*]

SKILLS

Technical Tools:

Programming: R (e.g., tidyverse, ggplot2), Python (e.g., pandas, seaborn), Java
Reproducible research: RMarkdown, Quarto, Overleaf, LaTeX
Database and Survey: REDCap, Qualtrics, Airtable, Salesforce
Research: Zotero, Google Scholar, other scholarly databases
Publishing: Git/GitHub, Microsoft Office Suite, Google Drive, Adobe Creative Cloud, Wordpress

Methods & Analysis:

Supervised learning & statistical modeling
Applied in coursework and research to model relationships between predictors and outcomes, as well as to build classification and prediction models using developmental, behavioral, educational, and policy datasets.

- Linear, logistic, multilevel, and Bayesian regression
- Regularized and tree-based methods
- Model tuning and validation

Unsupervised learning & measurement models
Applied in coursework on psychometrics and statistical learning to uncover latent traits, reduce dimensionality, and identify meaningful groupings in psychological and survey data.

- Item Response Theory
- K-means, k-prototypes, hierarchical, and model-based clustering, LCA
- Factor analysis, PCA

Causal inference
Applied in research with experimental data and in coursework to estimate causal effects and evaluate interventions using real-world and simulated datasets.

- Propensity score matching, regression discontinuity, difference-in-difference, instrumental variables, sensitivity analysis

Text analysis & NLP
Applied in independent projects, research, and coursework to analyze unstructured text data and uncover linguistic and thematic patterns.

- Web-scraping, tokenization, POS tagging, word embeddings, document-term matrix construction
- Sentiment analysis, topic modeling, thematic coding

Other Skills:

Data acquisition and preparation: Obtaining, cleaning, and preparing datasets from diverse sources—including original empirical studies, public repositories, and simulated data
Experimental Design: Stimuli design, survey and task design, pre-registration, pilot-testing, data collection
Research administration: Database development, public engagement, IRB preparation, scheduling appointments
Teaching: Curriculum development, inclusive pedagogy, mentorship

RELEVANT COURSEWORK

- Statistical Computing (in R)
- Causal Inference
- Frequentist Inference
- Bayesian Inference
- Practicum in Applied Statistic: Probability
- Intermediate Quantitative Methods
- Generalized Linear Models and Extensions
- Multi-Level Modeling
- Messy Data and Machine Learning
- Psychometric Measurement
- Ethics of Data Science
- Data for Social Impact
- Data Journalism
- Philosophy of Mind

AWARDS

2017-2021 **Rutgers James Dickson Carr Scholarship Recipient**
2018-2019 **Rutgers Aresty Undergraduate Research Fellowship**
2021 **Rutgers Paul Robeson Scholar**

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies Sept. 2024 - Present
Adjunct Lecturer, Statistics for Social Change
Designing and teaching an undergraduate course connecting statistical methods to social justice and public policy. Facilitating inclusive classroom discussions on bias, fairness, and the role of data in shaping social systems.

BabyChildTeen@NYU July 2022 - Present
Recruitment Coordinator
Managing multi-lab participant recruitment for the BabyChildTeen@NYU research group. Designing and maintaining public-facing communications and websites. Building partnerships with organizations and leading community workshops to increase engagement with developmental research. Maintaining a centralized participant database used by 8 labs, and project managing the development of a new system for recruitment tracking, participant outreach, and data management.

Rutgers University Digital Writing Center Sept. 2020 – May 2021
Tutor
Participated in a semester long internship studying various pedagogic theories and applied theoretical tutoring frameworks in one-on-one tutoring sessions with undergraduate students taking introductory language composition courses.

Rutgers Chapter of Nu Rho Psi National Honors Society Sept. 2019 – May 2021
Vice President
Organized community outreach and fundraising events to support brain health organizations. Planned an Undergraduate Research Symposium to expand opportunities for students to present their work and gain experience in academic research. Mentored underclassmen on topics related to academic success, navigating research opportunities, and building confidence in scholarly environments.

The Mental Note Journal Aug. 2019 – May 2020
Editor
Participated in a double blind, three-tier review process of original college-level research papers, theoretical works, and commentaries pertaining to the Cognitive Sciences.