MIKA ASABA

Seattle, WA ◇ email: mika.asaba [at] teachinglabstudio.com

APPLIED RESEARCH & DESIGN LEADERSHIP

Teaching Lab Studio Fellowship (2025 – Present)

Lead *Tangle & Thrive*, an applied research and development initiative designing and testing AI-enabled motivational supports to improve middle school students' engagement with digital math learning platforms. Collaborate with students, teachers, instructional coaches, families, designers, and engineers to rapidly prototype software-based interventions and evaluate usability, engagement, and accessibility for diverse learners in real classroom settings.

Human-Centered Design & Systems Research

Translate research from developmental psychology and learning science into classroom-ready tools and experiences. Examine how technology and instructional routines shape students' engagement with digital learning tools and sustained, minds-on learning. Lead weekly co-design sessions with adolescents, teachers, and school staff.

Leadership & Collaboration

Lead a small interdisciplinary team of researchers and designers and mentor junior researchers in applied research and collaborative design. Coordinate with engineering partners to support development, implementation, and testing. Build partnerships with public charter school networks, after-school programs, and informal learning organizations. Regularly synthesize and communicate research and tool updates to funders and internal stakeholders.

Methods

Mixed-methods research including behavioral experiments, diary studies, surveys, interviews, classroom observation, rapid prototyping, and iterative evaluation. Conduct statistical analysis and data visualization to inform design decisions and iteration, including contributions to other Teaching Lab Studio research projects.

EMPLOYMENT

Fellow Teaching Lab Studio	2025 - Present
Postdoctoral Research Associate Yale University Advisors: Julia Leonard, Julián Jara-Ettinger	2021 - 2025

EDUCATION

Ph.D, Psychology Stanford University Advisor: Hyowon Gweon	2016 - 2021
B.A., Neuroscience Wellesley College	2010 - 2014

AWARDS & GRANTS

Teaching Lab Studio Fellowship ($1,000,000)	2025–Present
NSF SBE Postdoctoral Fellowship ($138,000)	2022 - 2024
Character Lab Research Network ($40,000)	2021-2022
NSF Graduate Research Fellowship ($138,000)	2017-2020

PUBLICATIONS

* indicates equal contribution

UNDER REVISION

Asaba, M., Zhang, M., & Leonard, J.A. (under revision, *Communications Psychology*). U.S. children expect and approve of teachers' gender stereotypes about academic interest

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

Asaba, M., Stegall, J., Hembacher, E., Frank, M.C., & Gweon, H. (2025). Young children infer the informativeness of praise. *Developmental Psychology*.

Asaba, M.*, Wu, Y.*, Carrillo, B., & Gweon, H. (2025). When Success Is Surprising: Children's Ability to Use Surprise to Infer Competence. *Open Mind*, 9, 825-843.

Asaba, M.*, Davis, I.*, Leonard, J. & Jara-Ettinger, J. (2025). Detecting social biases using mental state inference. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 129(4), 649-667.

Asaba, M., Santos, M., Jara-Ettinger, J., & Leonard, J. (2025). Adolescents are most motivated by encouragement from someone who knows their abilities and the domain. *Developmental Psychology*, 61(9), 1793-1807.

Shachnai, R., **Asaba, M.**, Hu, L., Leonard, J. (2025). Pointing out learning opportunities reduces over-parenting. *Child Development,* 96(2), 679-690.

Asaba, M. & Gweon, H. (2022). Young children infer and manage what others think about them. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(32), e2105642119.

Asaba, M.*, Li, X.*, Yow, W. Q., & Gweon, H. (2022). Children selectively demonstrate their competence to a puppet when others depict it as an agent. *Cognitive Development.*, 62, 101186.

Asaba, M., Chuey, A., & Gweon, H. (2021). Beyond knowledge vs. belief: The contents of mental-state representations and their underlying computations (*Commentary on Philips et al. Knowledge before Belief). *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 44, e141.

Chuey, A., **Asaba, M.**, Bridgers, S., Carrillo, B., Dietz, G., Garcia, T., Leonard, J., Liu, S., Merrick, M., Radwan, S., Stegall, J. Velez, N., Woo, B., Wu, Y., Zhao, X., Frank, M., Gweon, H. (2021). Moderated online data-collection for developmental research: methods and replications. Frontiers in psychology, 4968.

Asaba, M.*, Ong, D.*, & Gweon, H. (2019). Children integrate physical and social information to reason about the emotional consequences of others' expectations. *Developmental Psychology*, 55(8), 1680-1693.

Gweon, H., **Asaba, M.** (2018). Order matters: Children's evaluation of under-informative teachers depends on context. *Child Development*, 89(3), e278-e292.

Koster-Hale, J., Richardson, H., Velez-Alicea, N., **Asaba, M.**, Young, L., Saxe, R. (2017). Mentalizing regions represent distributed, continuous, and abstract dimensions of others' beliefs. *Neuroimage*, 161, 9-18.

REFEREED CONFERENCE PROCEEDING PAPERS

Asaba, M., Zhang, M., & Leonard, J.A. (2024). Children expect adults to hold gender stereotypes, even when they are not accurate. *Proceedings of the 46th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society.*

Carrillo, B., **Asaba, M.**, Lozano, L., Okine, L., Leonard, J. (2024). Young children reason about adults' achievement goals for them. *Proceedings of the 46th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science*

Society.

Asaba, M.[*], Davis, I.[*], Leonard, J. & Jara-Ettinger, J. (2023). Detecting social biases using mental state inference. *Proceedings of the 45th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society.*

Asaba, M., Santos, M., Jara-Ettinger, J., & Leonard, J. (2022). Adolescents are most motivated by encouragement from someone who knows their abilities and the domain. *Proceedings of the 44th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society.*

Wu[*], Y., Tessler[*], M. H., **Asaba, M.**, Zhu, P., Gweon, H., Frank, M. C. (2021). Integrating emotional expressions with utterances in pragmatic inference. *Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society.*

Ong, D., **Asaba, M.**, Lim, H. Y., Chen, P., Gweon, H. (2021). "If only Santa had one more presentâĂİ: Exploring the development of near-miss counterfactual reasoning. *Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Asaba, M.[*], Wu, Y.[*], Carrillo, B., & Gweon, H. (2020). You're surprised at her success? Inferring competence from emotional responses to performance outcomes. *Proceedings of the 42nd Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Asaba, M.[*], Li, X.[*], Yow, W. Q., & Gweon, H. (2019). A friend or a toy? Four-year-olds strategically demonstrate their competence to a puppet but only when others treat it as an agent. *Proceedings of the 41st Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Asaba, M. & Gweon, H. (2018). Look, I can do it! Young children forego opportunities to teach others to demonstrate their own competence. *Proceedings of the 40th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Asaba, M., Hembacher, E., Qiu, H., Anderson, B., Frank, M., & Gweon, H. (2018). Young children use statistical evidence to infer the informativeness of praise. *Proceedings of the 40th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Bennett-Pierre, G., **Asaba, M.**, & Gweon, H. (2018). Preschoolers consider expected task difficulty to decide what to do and whom to help. *Proceedings of the 40th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*. *Proceedings of the 40th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Yoon, E., MacDonald, K., **Asaba, M.**, Gweon, H., & Frank, M. (2018). Balancing informational and social goals in active learning. *Proceedings of the 40th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Gweon, H., **Asaba, M.**, & Bennett-Pierre, G. (2017). Reverse-engineering the process: Adults and preschoolers' ability to infer the difficulty of novel tasks. *Proceedings of the 39th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Asaba, M. & Gweon, H. (2016). Who Should I Tell? Young Children Correct and Maintain Others' Beliefs about the Self. *Proceedings of the 38th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Ong, D., **Asaba, M.** & Gweon, H. (2016). Young children and adults integrate others' past expectations and current outcomes to reason about other's emotions. *Proceedings of the 38th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Gweon, H. & **Asaba, M.** (2015). Knowing what he could have shown: The role of alternatives in children's evaluation of under-informative teachers. *Proceedings of the 37th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

BOOK CHAPTERS

Asaba, M. & Gweon, H. (2020). Learning about others to learn about the self: Early reasoning about the informativeness of others' praise. In E. Brummelman (Ed.), Current Issues in Social Psychology:

Psychology of Praise. Routledge.

INVITED TALKS

Developmental Brown Bag, University of Wisconson-Madiscon University	2024
Developmental Brown Bag, Brown University	2023
Social Cognition and Learning Lab, UC San Diego	2022
Early Childhood Cognition Lab, MIT	2021
Morality Lab, Boston College	2021
Computational Social Cognition Lab, Yale	2020
Social Origins Lab, UC Berkeley	2019
Comparative Cognition Lab, Yale	2019

CONFERENCE TALKS

Asaba, M., Zhang, M., & Leonard, J.A. (2024). Children expect adults to hold gender stereotypes, even when they are not accurate. Poster at *46th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Asaba, M.*, Davis, I.*, Leonard, J. & Jara-Ettinger, J. (2023). Detecting social biases using mental state inference. Poster at *45th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Asaba, M., Santos, M., Jara-Ettinger, J., & Leonard, J. (2022). Adolescents are most motivated by encouragement from someone who knows their abilities and the domain. Talk at *44th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Asaba, M., Wu, Y., Carrillo, B., & Gweon, H. (2022). Children infer competence from others' emotional reactions to performance. Talk at *Society for Personality and Social Psychology*. *Origins of the Social Mind Preconference

Asaba, M., & Gweon, H. (2021). Young children revise and maintain others' beliefs about the self. Talk at *Society for Philosophy and Psychology conference*.

Asaba, M., & Gweon, H. (2021). Young children revise and maintain what others think of them. Talk at *Society for Personality and Social Psychology*. *Origins of the Social Mind Preconference

Asaba, M., & Gweon, H. (2021). Young children's ability to rationally revise and maintain others' beliefs about the self. Talk at *Society for Research in Child Development conference*.

Asaba, M., Wu. Y, Carrillo, B., & Gweon, H. (2021). Children infer competence from others' emotional reactions to performance. Talk at *Society for Research in Child Development conference*.

Asaba, M. & Gweon, H. (2020). Young children revise and maintain others' beliefs about the self. Talk at *Budapest CEU Conference in Cognitive Development*. *Organized Symposium: Towards a more diverse science of Theory of Mind: Measurements, mechanisms, and functions

Asaba, M. & Gweon, H. (2019). Children can use statistical information to infer the informativeness of others' praise. Talk at *Cognitive Development Society Conference*.

Asaba, M., Li, X., Yow, Q., & Gweon, H. (2019). A friend, or a toy? Four year-olds strategically demonstrate their competence even to a puppet. Talk at *41st Annual Cognitive Science Conference*.

Asaba, M. & Gweon, H. (2019). Look, I can do it! Young children use others' prior observations to communicate about the self. Talk at *Society for Research in Child Development conference*. *Organized Symposium: Managing Others' Beliefs About the Self: Bridging Reputation Management and Theory of Mind

Asaba, M. & Gweon, H. (2018). Look, I can do it! Young children forego opportunities to teach others to demonstrate their own competence. *Talk at the 40th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Asaba, M., Hembacher, E., Qiu, H., Anderson, B., Frank, M., & Gweon, H. (2018). Young children use statistical evidence to infer the informativeness of praise. Talk at *40th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

ACADEMIC RESEARCH SUPERVISION

POST-BAC RESEARCH ASSISTANTS
Brandon Carrillo (Stanford, 2019-2021); Jessa Stegall (Stanford, 2019-2021)

SENIOR THESIS STUDENTS
Zahra Yarali (Yale, 2023-2024); Emily Li (Yale, 2021); Denise Lopez-Sosa (Stanford, 2020-2021); Auguste Seong (Stanford, 2019-2021); Molly Irvin (Stanford, 2018-2020);

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
Lauren Okine (Yale, 2022 - 2023); Elaine Cheng (Yale, 2022 - 2023); Matthew Merritt (Yale, 2021 - 2022); Mackenzie Fidelak (Stanford, 2021-2022); Kate Littlejohn (Stanford, 2019 - 2021); Stephanie Chang (Stanford, 2019-2021); Colin Norick (Stanford, 2018-2021); Sofia Schlozman (Stanford, 2019); Kevin Ji (Stanford, 2018-2019); Julia Gillette (Stanford, 2018); Grace Wang (Stanford, 2017-2018); Fernanda Kramer (Stanford, 2016-2017); Brett Anderson (Stanford, 2016-2017); Andrew McCabe (Stanford, 2015); Ronald Anderson (Stanford, 2015)

TEACHING

PRIMARY INSTRUCTOR
Developmental Psychology (Stanford PSYCH113S)	Summer 2019
General Psychology (Stanford PSYCH105S)	Summer 2018

TEACHING ASSISTANT
Social Cognition and Learning in Early Childhood (Stanford PSYCH175)	Winter 2020
Cognitive Development (Stanford PSYCH141)	Fall 2019
Developmental Psychology (Stanford PSYCH60)	Fall 2018
Introduction to Psychology (Stanford PSYCH1)	Fall 2017, Winter 2018

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE

AD-HOC REVIEWS
Child Development, Cognition, Cognitive Development, Developmental Psychology, Emotion, Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, Open Mind, Scientific Reports

CONFERENCE REVIEWS
Cognitive Science Society, Society for Research in Child Development

DEI & OUTREACH
Yale Psychology Diversity Committee	2022-2023
CogSci Mentoring program (mentor)	2022
Application Statement Feedback program (editor)	2021
Stanford Psychology Diversity Committee	2018-2019
Stanford Psychology Paths to PhD program (co-organizer)	2017-2018