

# Natalia Vélez

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## Education & Professional Experience

- 2020– Harvard University  
NIH F99/K00 Postdoctoral Fellow  
Advisors: Samuel J. Gershman, Fiery Cushman
- 2014–2020 Stanford University  
Ph.D., Psychology  
Advisor: Hyowon Gweon
- 2010–2014 Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
B.S., Brain & Cognitive Sciences  
Hans-Lukas Teuber Award for Outstanding Academics

## Fellowships, honors & awards

- 2019–2024 NIH Blueprint D-SPAN Award (F99/K00; Role: PI)  
“Computational and neural underpinnings of decision-making in social contexts”  
\$369,300 total direct costs approved
- 2015–2018 Stanford CNI Innovation Grant  
\$12,500 in seed funding for neuroimaging studies
- 2018 Stanford Centennial Teaching Award
- 2017 Psych One Zimbardo Teaching Prize
- 2017 Cognitive Computational Neuroscience Travel Award
- 2015 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship
- 2014 Stanford EDGE (Enhancing Diversity in Graduate Education) Fellowship
- 2013 MIT-Amgen Scholar (PI: Rebecca Saxe)

## Publications

### PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

1. **Vélez, N.** & Gweon, H. (in press). Learning from other minds: An optimistic critique of reinforcement learning models of social learning. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*. [[preprint](#)]
2. **Vélez, N.**, Bridgers, S., & Gweon, H. (2019). The rare preference effect: Statistical information influences affiliation judgments. *Cognition*. [[paper](#)] [[repository](#)]
3. **Vélez, N.** & Gweon, H. (2018). Integrating incomplete information with imperfect advice. *Topics in Cognitive Science*. [[paper](#)] [[repository](#)]

4. Koster-Hale, J.\*, Richardson, H.\*, **Vélez-Alicea, N.**, Asaba, M., Young, L., & Saxe, R. (2017). Mentalizing regions represent continuous, abstract dimensions of others' beliefs. *Neuroimage*. [paper]

5. Open Science Collaboration. (2015). Estimating the reproducibility of psychological science. *Science*.

#### REFEREED CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

1. **Vélez, N.** & Gweon, H. (2020). Preschoolers use minimal statistical information to infer the preferences and group membership of new individuals. *Proceedings of the 42nd Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*. [preprint]

2. **Vélez, N.**, & Gweon, H. (2019). Neural mechanisms underlying the computation of socially inferred rewards. *Cognitive Computational Neuroscience*.

3. **Vélez, N.**, Wu, Y., & Gweon, H. (2018). Consistent but not diagnostic: Preschooler's intuitions about shared preferences within social groups. *Proceedings of the 40th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*.

4. **Vélez, N.**, & Gweon, H. (2017). Integrating incomplete information with imperfect advice. *Cognitive Computational Neuroscience*.

5. **Vélez, N.**, Bridgers, S., & Gweon, H. (2016). Not all overlaps are equal: Social affiliation and rare overlaps of preferences. *Proceedings of the 38th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*.

6. **Vélez, N.\***, Leong, Y. C.\*, Pan, C., Zaki, J., & Gweon, H. (2016). Learning and making novel predictions about others' preferences. *Proceedings of the 38th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*.

#### Selected Presentations

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|--------|--|
| 4/2021 | Guest lecturer: <i>Social learning and cultural transmission of knowledge</i><br>HumBio 4B: Behavior, Health, and Development, Stanford University |
| 4/2021 | Discussant: <i>Perspectives on play</i> , SRCD Biennial Meeting  |
| 3/2021 | Talk: <i>Cognitive and collective foundations of collaboration</i><br>PBS Early Career Colloquium, Johns Hopkins University                        |
| 2/2021 | Talk: <i>Cognitive and collective foundations of collaboration</i><br>Cognitive Proseminar Speaker Series, UW-Madison                              |
| 2/2021 | Talk: <i>Cognitive and collective foundations of collaboration</i><br>Social Brain Brownbag, Dartmouth University                                  |

- 2/2021 Talk: *Cognitive and collective foundations of collaboration*  
Social Cognitive Seminar Series, Brown University
- 7/2020 Talk: *Multigenerational innovation and division of labor in online communities*  
Workshop Co-organizer: “Cognition, Collectives, and Human Culture,” Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society
- 7/2020 Talk: *Preschoolers use minimal statistical information to infer individuals’ preferences and group membership*  
Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society
- 10/2019 Talk: *Preschoolers use minimal statistical information to infer individuals’ preferences and group membership*  
Symposium Chair: “How children’s understanding of social relationship guides their learning about others,” Cognitive Development Society
- 9/2017 Poster: *Integrating incomplete information with imperfect advice*  
Conference on Cognitive Computational Neuroscience (*CCN Travel Award*)
- 11/2016 Talk: *Town hall meeting on diversity & inclusion: Student climate survey*  
Department of Psychology Colloquium, Stanford University

## Teaching

### STUDENTS MENTORED

9/2020–	Alicia Chen	1/2019–	Denise López Sosa*
6/2020–8/2020	Grace Deng	9/2019–3/2020	Seran Kwon
1/2018–6/2020	Xi Jia Zhou*	6/2018–8/2018	Isabel Won
6/2018–8/2018	Natalie Hampton	6/2018–8/2018	Anutra Guru
1/2018–7/2018	Timothy Young	1/2015–6/2018	Chelsey Pan*
5/2017–5/2018	Sajjad Torabian	9/2017–5/2018	Yuerui Wu
9/2017–12/2017	Kyle Lutnick	1/2017–9/2017	Valentina Ruiz-Jiménez
6/2017–9/2017	Maya Jones	6/2017–9/2017	Michelle Wang
6/2017–9/2017	Sumer Vaid		

\* Honors Thesis and capstone students

### TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

- 2018 PSYCH 175: Early learning and social cognition
- 2016–2017 PSYCH 1: Introduction to psychology
- 2016 PSYCH 187: Research design, implementation & comm. in cognitive development
- 2016 PSYCH 50: Introduction to cognitive neuroscience

## Service

### OUTREACH

- 2016–2019 R Bootcamp  
Taught an intensive introduction to R to groups of 15–20 undergraduate researchers  
Sessions: October 2016, June 2017, June 2019, July 2019  
Course materials: [github.com/nataliavelez/RWorkshop](https://github.com/nataliavelez/RWorkshop)
- 2014–2016 Stanford Splash
- 2013 MIT Education Studies Program  
Designed and taught courses for high school students on “Sensation & Perception” (9 hours) and “Introduction to Neuroscience” (50 hours)

### DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

- 2017–2018 Paths to PhD Workshop, *Writing the personal statement*
- Organized and led workshops for 25-30 local students from underrepresented groups interested in pursuing a PhD in psychology
  - Matched each attendee to a current PhD student who provided one-on-one feedback on their personal statement
- 2015–2017 Stanford EDGE (Enhancing Diversity in Graduate Education) Mentor
- 2016–2017 Stanford Psychology Diversity Committee, inaugural member
- Chaired a department-wide colloquium on diversity and inclusion, presented student climate survey results
  - Served as graduate student representative on the Faculty Development Initiative search committee
  - Contributed to the new “Diversity” page on the Stanford Psychology website