Rebecca Zhu

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Last Updated: November 2026

Employment

Postdoctoral Scholar – Stanford University 2023 – present
Principal Investigator: Michael C. Frank

Postdoctoral Scholar – University of California, Berkeley 2022 – 2023
Principal Investigator: Alison Gopnik

Lab Manager – Harvard University 2015 – 2017
Principal Investigator: Susan Carey

Education

Ph.D. in Psychology – University of California, Berkeley 2017 – 2022
Dissertation Committee: Alison Gopnik, Steven Piantadosi, John Campbell (philosophy)

Hon. B.Sc. in Psychology Research and English, Double Specialist – University of Toronto 2011 – 2015
With High Distinction

Research Funding

Stanford University, King Center Global Development Research Fund ($40,000 USD)	2026-2028
American Psychological Foundation, Lorraine D. Eyde Grant ($3,500 USD)	2023
Aga Khan Foundation & Jacobs Foundation, Schools2030 Program ($152,528 USD)	2022-2023
UC Berkeley, Institute of Cognitive and Brain Sciences Research Grant ($5,000 USD)	2022
UC Berkeley, Center for Effective Global Action Seed Funding ($4,400 USD)	2020
University of Toronto, Arts & Sciences Undergraduate Research Fund ($2,500 CAD)	2014

Fellowships & Awards

Stanford Impact Labs Postdoctoral Fellowship	2025-2026
SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship ($140,000 CAD)	2024-2026
NAEd/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship Semifinalist	2024, 2026
Diverse Intelligences Summer Institute Fellowship ($4,400 USD)	2023
Jean Piaget Society Dissertation Prize Finalist	2023
John L. Simpson ABD Graduate Research Fellowship in International Studies ($7,500 USD)	2021
Barbara and Arnold Silverman Graduate Fellowship ($3,000 USD)	2021
SURF SMART Mentoring Award ($5,000 USD)	2021
Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award	2021
Berkeley Psychology Department Graduate Student Instructor Excellence Award	2020
Society for Philosophy and Psychology Travel Award ($100 USD)	2019
UC Berkeley Psychology Department Travel Grant ($600 USD)	2019
NSERC Postgraduate Scholarship – Doctoral ($63,000 CAD)	2019-2022
NSERC Canada Graduate Scholarship – Doctoral ($105,000 CAD)	declined
UC Berkeley Graduate Division Conference Travel Grant ($1,500 USD)	2019
UC Berkeley Graduate Division Conference Travel Grant ($1,500 USD)	2018
UC Berkeley Fellowship ($56,000 USD)	2017-2019
McNab Scholarship in Psychology ($400 CAD)	2015
Trinity College Provost's Scholar ($200 CAD)	2015
David Derwyn Owen Prize ($400 CAD)	2015
George Gray Falle Graduating Scholarship ($300 CAD)	2015
Trinity College Travel Fund ($500 CAD)	2015

NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Award ($5,625 CAD)	2014
George Gray Falle Scholarship ($2,000 CAD)	2014
Trinity College Travel Fund ($500 CAD)	2013
John Pettigrew Scholarship ($400 CAD)	2013
Canada Post Scholarship ($6,000 CAD)	2013
University of Toronto Dean's List Scholar	2012-2015
University of Toronto President's Entrance Scholarship ($2,000 CAD)	2011

Peer-Reviewed Book Chapters

1. **Zhu, R.**, Goddu, M.K., & Gopnik, A. (2024). Providing explanations shifts preschoolers' metaphor preferences. In J. Knobe & S. Nichols (Eds.), *Oxford Studies in Experimental Philosophy Volume 5*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

18. **Zhu, R.,** Martinez-Krams, M., Arieda, J.O., Kilonzo, T.N., Fan, J.E., & Frank, M.C. (under review). Measuring U.S. and Kenyan children's vocabularies using object, photograph, cartoon, and line drawing stimuli.

17. Kachergis, G., O'Reilly, F., Braginsky, M., Xiao, X., Lightbody, A., Shannon, K.A., Watson, Z.D., Zhang, L., **Zhu, R.,** Abutto, A.B., Ma, W.A., Long, B., Murray, T., Yeatman, J.D., Sulik, M.J., Obradovic, J., Jenkins, N., Ansari, D, Perfetti, M.C., Mariño, J.P., Hornoff, L., Bohn, M., Haun, D., Ram, N., Domingue, B.W., Frank, M.C. (revise & resubmit). Creation and validation of the LEVANTE core tasks: Internationalized measures of learning and development for children ages 5-12 years. *Behavior Research Methods.*

16. **Zhu, R.,** Arieda, J.O., Kilonzo, T.N., Watson, Z.D., Sepuri, T., Long, B., Fan, J.E., & Frank, M.C. (in press). Developmental changes in children's production of line drawings in global contexts: Evidence from Kisumu, Kenya. *Developmental Science.*

15. **Zhu, R.**, Kilonzo, T.N., Engelmann, J., & Gopnik, A. (2026). Investigating the validity of picture-based assessments across cultures and contexts: Evidence from young children in Kenya and the U.S. *Developmental Psychology, 62,* 2633-2648. doi: 10.1037/dev0002050

14. **Zhu, R.,** Arieda, J.O., Kilonzo, T.N., Allums, S., Sparks, R.Z., & Frank, M.C. (2026). Global research requires global researchers: Opportunities and challenges for capacity-building. (Commentary on Bard et al., 2026). *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 49,* e283. doi: 10.1017/S0140525X2510410X

13. **Zhu, R.,** Kilonzo, T.N., Zhu, L.Z., Fan, J.E., & Frank, M.C. (2026). Cross-contextual variability in children's early understanding of visual media. *Topics in Cognitive Science, 18,* e70034. doi: 10.1111/tops.70034

12. Frank, M.C., Baumgartner, H., Braginsky, M., Kachergis, G., Lightbody, A., Sparks, R.Z., **Zhu, R.**, Carlson, S.M., Graham, S., Lipina, S.J., Newcombe, N.S., Odgers, C.L., Pianta, R.C., Siegler, R.S., Snowling, M., Yoshikawa, Cubillo, A., & Dodge, K.A. (2025). Learning Variability Network Exchange (LEVANTE): A global framework for measuring children's learning variability through collaborative data sharing. *Child Development, 96,* 1867-1884. doi: 10.1111/cdev.70011

11. **Zhu, R.** (2025). Preschoolers represent abstract relations predicated upon kind membership. *Open Mind, 9,* 70-88. doi: 10.1162/opmi_a_00179

10. **Zhu, R.**, Pitchik, H.O., Kilonzo, T.N., Engelmann, J., Fernald, L., & Gopnik, A. (2025). The development of picture comprehension across early environments: Evidence from urban and rural toddlers in Western Kenya. *Developmental Science, 28,* e13579. doi: 10.1111/desc.13579

9. **Zhu, R.**, Goddu, M.K., Zhu, L.Z., & Gopnik, A. (2024). Preschoolers' comprehension of functional metaphors. *Open Mind, 8,* 924-949. doi: 10.1162/opmi_a_00152

8. **Zhu, R.,** & Gopnik, A. (2024). Preschoolers and adults metonymically extend proper names to owned objects. *Child Development. 95,* 177-190. doi: 10.1111/cdev.13999

7. **Zhu, R.**, & Gopnik. A. (2023). Preschoolers and adults learn from novel metaphors. *Psychological Science, 34,* 696-704. doi: 10.1177/09567976231165267

6. **Zhu, R**. (2021). Preschoolers' acquisition of producer-product metonymy. *Cognitive Development, 59,* 101075. doi: 10.1016/j.cogdev.2021.101075

5. Luoto, J., Garcia Lopez, I., Aboud, F.E., Singla, D., **Zhu, R,** Otieno, R., & Alu, E. (2021). An implementation evaluation of a group-based parenting intervention to promote early child development in rural Kenya. *Frontiers in Public Health, 9,* 443. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2021.653106

4. Thai, S., Lockwood, P., **Zhu, R.**, Li, Y., & He, C.J. (2019). The family ties that protect: Expanded self-comparisons in parent-child relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 36,* 1041-1066. doi: 10.1177/0265407518754363

3. Tskhay, K.O., **Zhu, R.**, Zou, C., & Rule, N.O. (2018). Charisma in everyday life: Conceptualization and validation of the General Charisma Inventory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 114,* 131-152. doi: 10.1037/pspp0000159

2. Hochmann, J. R., Tuerk, A., Sanborn, S., **Zhu, R.**, Long, R., Dempster, M., & Carey, S. (2017). Children's representation of abstract relations in relational/array match-to-sample tasks. *Cognitive Psychology, 99,* 17-43. doi: 10.1016/j.cogpsych.2017.11.001

1. Tskhay, K.O., **Zhu, R**., & Rule, N.O. (2017). Perceptions of charisma from thin slices of behavior predict leadership prototypicality judgments. *The Leadership Quarterly, 28,* 555-562. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2017.03.003

Peer-Reviewed Conference Proceedings

5. Du, H., Sepuri, T., Maheshwari, U., **Zhu, R.**, Arieda, J.O., & Long, B. (2026). Structure and diversity in children's line drawings of object categories across four international contexts. *Proceedings of the 9th Annual Conference of Computational Cognitive Neuroscience.*

4. **Zhu, R.,** Kilonzo, T.N., Arieda, J.O., Verma, A., Fan, J.E., & Frank, M.C. (2025). Investigating children's performance on object- and picture-based vocabulary assessments in global contexts: Evidence from Kisumu, Kenya. In D. Barner, N. Bramley, A. Ruggeri, & C. Walker (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 47th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* (pp. 3126-3132). Cognitive Science Society.

3. **Zhu, R.**, & Gopnik. A. (2022). Preschoolers and adults make inferences from novel metaphors. In J. Culbertson, A. Perfors, H. Rabagliati, & V. Ramenzoni (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 44th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* (pp. 373-379). Cognitive Science Society.

2. **Zhu, R.**, Goddu, M.K., & Gopnik, A. (2021). Providing explanations shifts preschoolers' metaphor preferences. In T. Fitch, C. Lamm, H. Leder, & K. Teßmar-Raible (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* (pp.1977-1983). Cognitive Science Society.

1. **Zhu, R.**, Goddu, M.K., & Gopnik, A. (2020). 4- and 5-year-olds' comprehension of functional metaphors. In S. Denison., M. Mack, Y. Xu, & B.C. Armstrong (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 42nd Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* (pp. 1968-1974). Cognitive Science Society.

Conference Talks

8. **Zhu, R.**, Kilonzo, T.N., Arieda, J.O., Martinez-Krams, M., Fan, J.E., & Frank, M.C. (2026). Investigating children's performance on object- and picture-based vocabulary assessments in global contexts: Evidence from Kisumu, Kenya and the San Francisco Bay Area, U.S.A. *25th International Congress of Infant Studies*. Panama City, Panama.

7. **Zhu, R.**, Kilonzo, T.N., Engelmann, J., & Gopnik, A. (2024). The development of picture comprehension across early environments: Evidence from urban and rural toddlers in Western Kenya. *Biennial Meeting of the Cognitive Development Society*. Pasadena, CA.

6. **Zhu, R.**, Kilonzo, T.N., Engelmann, J., & Gopnik, A. (2024). Investigating the validity of assessments involving pictures across global contexts: Evidence from preschoolers in Mombasa, Kenya and Berkeley, USA. *Cognitive Development Society Preconference*. Pasadena, CA.

5. **Zhu, R.**, Pitchik, H., Kilonzo, T.N., Engelmann, J., Fernald, L., & Gopnik, A. (2023). Are assessments involving picture stimuli valid in global contexts? Evidence from preschoolers in Mombasa, Kenya. *Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development.* Salt Lake City, UT.

4. **Zhu, R.,** & Gopnik, A. (2022). Preschoolers and adults make inferences from novel metaphors. *44th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society.* Toronto, Canada.

3. Luoto, J., Otieno, R., Garcia Lopez, I., Alu, E., **Zhu, R,** & Aboud, F.E. (2021). Implementation research on an effective parenting program in Kisumu, Kenya: Comparing group and home delivery. *Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development.* Virtual conference.

2. **Zhu, R.**, Goddu, M.K., & Gopnik, A. (2019). Preschoolers' metaphor comprehension in causal contexts. *11th Annual Dubrovnik Conference on Cognitive Science*. Dubrovnik, Croatia.

1. Tskhay, K., **Zhu, R.**, Zou, C., & Rule, N. (2015). Measuring and understanding "everyday" charisma. *16th Annual Convention of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology*. Long Beach, CA.

Conference Posters

18. Du, H., Sepuri, T., Maheshwari, U., **Zhu, R.**, Arieda, J.O., & Long, B. (2026). Structure and diversity in chidlren's line drawings of object categories across four international contexts. *9th Annual Conference of Computational Cognitive Neuroscience.* New York City, New York.

17. **Zhu, R.,** Arieda, J.O., Kilonzo, T.N., Watson, Z., Sepuri, T., Long, B., Fan, J.E., & Frank, M.C. (2026). Developmental changes in children's production of line drawings in a drawing-sparse environment: Evidence from Kisumu, Kenya. *48th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society.* Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

16. **Zhu, R.,** Arieda, J.O., Kilonzo, T.N., Watson, Z., Sepuri, T., Long, B., Fan, J.E., & Frank, M.C. (2026). Developmental changes in children's production of line drawings in a drawing-sparse environment: Evidence from Kisumu, Kenya. *Biennial Meeting of the Cognitive Development Society*. Montreal, Canada.

15. Martinez-Krams, M., **Zhu, R.,** Fan, J.E., & Frank, M.C. (2026). Are objects easier than pictures for vocabulary assessments with 3- to 5-year-old children? *Biennial Meeting of the Cognitive Development Society*. Montreal, Canada.

14. **Zhu, R.,** Kilonzo, T.N., Arieda, J.O., Verma, A., Fan, J.E., & Frank, M.C. (2025). Investigating children's performance on object- and picture-based vocabulary assessments in global contexts: Evidence from Kisumu, Kenya. *47th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society.* San Francisco, CA.

13. **Zhu, R.,** Kilonzo, T.N., Arieda, J.O., Verma, A., Fan, J.E., & Frank, M.C. (2025). Investigating the relation between children's picture experience and their performance on object- and picture-based vocabulary assessments in global contexts: Evidence from Kisumu, Kenya. *Long-Form Recordings Interdisciplinary Summit: Innovations and Insights in Language Development.* Paris, France.

12. **Zhu, R.,** Kilonzo, T.N., Arieda, J.O., Fan, J.E., & Frank, M.C. (2025). Investigating the validity of picture-based assessments in global contexts: Evidence from children in Kisumu, Kenya. *Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development.* Minneapolis, MN.

11. **Zhu, R.,** Goddu, M.K., & Gopnik, A. (2021). Providing explanations shifts preschoolers' metaphor preferences. *43rd Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society.* Virtual Conference.

10. **Zhu, R.,** Goddu, M.K., & Gopnik, A. (2021). Can preschoolers shift their metaphor preferences? *46th Annual Meeting of the Society of Philosophy and Psychology*. Virtual conference.

9. **Zhu, R.**, Pitchik, H., Fernald, L., & Gopnik, A. (2020). When and how do toddlers in rural Western Kenya understand the referential nature of pictures? *42nd Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society.* Virtual conference.

8. **Zhu, R.**, Goddu, M.K., Gopnik, A. (2020). 4- and 5-year-olds' comprehension of functional metaphors. *42nd Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society.* Virtual conference.

7. **Zhu, R.**, Goddu, M.K., & Gopnik, A. (2019). Preschoolers' metaphor comprehension in causal contexts. *45th Annual Meeting of the Society for Philosophy and Psychology*. San Diego, CA.

6. **Zhu, R.**, & Srinivasan, M. (2018). Children's acquisition of regular metonymy: Exploring the producer-product relation. *10th Annual Dubrovnik Conference on Cognitive Science*. Dubrovnik, Croatia.

5. **Zhu, R.**, Hochmann, J.R., Dempster, M., Sanborn, S., & Carey, S. (2017). Preschoolers' acquisition of the words 'same' and 'different'. *Biennial Meeting of the Cognitive Development Society*. Portland, OR.

4. **Zhu, R.,** & Carey, S. (2017). Noun labels facilitate success on relational match-to-sample with same and different kinds. *7th Annual Central European University Conference on Cognitive Development.* Budapest, Hungary.

3. Thai, S., Lockwood, P., **Zhu, R.,** He, C.J., & Li, Y. (2017). Expanded-self comparisons in parent-child relationships. *18th Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology*. San Antonio, TX.

2. **Zhu, R.**, Hochmann, J.R., Sanborn, S., & Carey, S. (2016). Representations of entropy and the relations same and different early in human development. *38th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*. Philadelphia, PA.

1. Thai, S., Lockwood, P., **Zhu, R.,** & He, C. (2016). The ups and downs of comparing your child: Parents' expanded-self comparisons. *International Association for Relationship Research Conference*. Toronto, ON.

Invited Talks

Developmental Colloquium, University of California, Santa Cruz	2026
Lab for the Developing Mind (PI: Moira Dillon), New York University	2025
Psychology Colloquium, University of Waikato	2025
Developmental Colloquium, University of California, San Diego	2025
Language and Cognition Seminar, Harvard University	2024
Marginalia Science Community Symposium, Boston College	2024
Early Childhood Cognition Lab (PI: Laura Schulz), Massachusetts Institute of Technology	2024
Settings for Early Education and Development Lab (PI: Dana McCoy), Harvard University	2024
Computational Cognitive Development Lab (PI: Elizabeth Bonawitz), Harvard University	2024
Psychology Colloquium, University of Edinburgh	2024
Cluster on Language Research, University of California, Davis	2024
Psychology Colloquium Flash Talk, Stanford University	2023
Diverse Intelligences Summit, University of St Andrews	2023
Lab for Developmental Studies (PI: Jesse Snedeker), Harvard University	2023
Mind and Body Lab (PI: Spike Lee), University of Toronto	2023
Cognitive Development and Social Cognition Lab (PI: Marjorie Rhodes), New York University	2022
Cognition and Learning Center (PI: Jinjing Jenny Wang), Rutgers University	2021
Computational Social Cognition Lab (PI: Julian Jara-Ettinger), Yale University	2021
Wollheim Philosophy Group, University of California, Berkeley	2021
AnalogyList Online Seminar	2020
Cognitive Tools Lab (PI: Judith Fan), University of California, San Diego	2020
Cognition and Language Lab (PI: Steven Piantadosi), University of California, Berkeley	2019
Developmental Neuroimaging Lab (PI: Ghislaine Dehaene), NeuroSpin Paris	2018
Social Learning Lab (PI: Hyowon Gweon), Stanford University	2018

Cross-Cultural Research Experience

Bogota, Colombia - with the Universidad de los Andes (1 trip, 1 week total)	2024
Mombasa, Kenya - with the Schools2030 Program (1 trip, 1 month total)	2022
Kisumu, Kenya - with the Safe Water and AIDS Project / COHESU (4 trips, 5 months total)	2019 - present

Teaching Experience

As Graduate Student Instructor:

Sense and Sensibility and Science (Instructors: Alison Gopnik, John Campbell, Saul Perlmutter)	Spring 2021
Developmental Psychology (Instructor: Jan Engelmann)	Fall 2020
Methods in Cognitive Development (Instructor: Celeste Kidd)	Spring 2020

As Guest Lecturer:

"Linguistic Development", Developmental Psychology (Instructor: Jan Engelmann)	Fall 2020-2023

For complete course evaluations, please see https://osf.io/h3bwt/

Mentorship Experience

Mentor, Cognitive Science Society 2025 – present
Mentor, Cognitive Development Society 2025 – present
Postdoctoral Mentor, Stanford Psychology Paths to PhD 2024 – present
Graduate Mentor, UC Berkeley Getting into Graduate School Program 2020 – 2023
Peer Mentor, UC Berkeley Graduate Assembly of Students in Psychology 2019 – 2022

Honors Thesis Students:
Lillian Mack (2026 - present) – Current thesis student
Maya Martinez-Krams (2024 - 2026) – MA Student at Stanford University, Department of History
-Major Grant Awardee ($8,000 USD), Conference Grant Awardee ($1,500 USD)

Select Undergraduate Research Assistants:
Eliana Shaham (2026 - present) – Current research assistant
Gabriella Ignacio (2026 - present) – Current research assistant
Dena Kumsa (2025-2026) – Currently applying to medical school
Lily Zihui Zhu (2021-2024) - PhD Student at Harvard University, Department of Psychology
Mina Chang (2022-2023) - Lab Manager at Emory University, Department of Psychology
Sasha Zitter (2022-2023) – MD Student at New York Medical College
Audrey Kaufman (2021-2022) – MA/EdS Student at Chapman University, Department of Education
Zoe Carwin (2020-2022) - Program Assistant, Instituto Familiar de la Raza, Inc
-SURF Research Fellow ($5,000 USD)
Anna Cialfi (2020-2022) - MEd Student at California State University - Long Beach, Department of Education
Sophie McMullen (2020) - Clinical Research Coordinator at UCSF, Department of Psychiatry
Pamee Sapasap (2020) - MEd Student at the University of Washington, Department of Education
Zhimeng Li (2019-2020) - PhD Student at Yale University, Department of Psychology

Professional Development

Long-Form Recordings From A to Z Summer School, PSL University/Ecole Normale Supérieure 2025
Diverse Intelligences Summer Institute, University of St Andrews 2023

Professional Services

Ad-Hoc Journal Reviewing: *Acta Psychologica, BMC Psychology, Child Development, Cognitive Processing, Frontiers in Developmental Psychology, Frontiers in Psychology, Frontiers in Public Health, Language Development Research*, *Memory and Cognition, Metaphor and Symbol, Journal of Child Language, Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, Journal of Neurolinguistics, Journal of Pragmatics, Nature Communications, New Ideas in Psychology, Open Mind, Psychological Methods, Psychological Science, Scientific Reports, Topics in Cognitive Science, Vision Research*

Ad-Hoc Conference Reviewing: *Cognitive Science Society, International Congress of Infant Studies, Society for Philosophy and Psychology, Society for Research in Child Development*

Ad-Hoc Grant Reviewing: *American Psychological Foundation, Stanford King Center for Global Development*

Ad-Hoc Book Proposal Reviewing: *Cambridge University Press*

Public Outreach – Invited Talks

University of California, Berkeley - Early Childhood Education Program 2022
Schools2030 Program - Learning Session 2022

Public Outreach – Blog Posts

“Are assessments involving pictures valid in global contexts? Evidence from Mombasa, Kenya” 2022
“How do environmental factors affect picture comprehension in early childhood?” 2021