

EDUCATION

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

Ph.D. Psychology, Expected 2031

Research Interests: Moral Disagreement, Prosocial Design, AI-Human Interaction, Intergroup Bias & Polarization, Social Identity, Mindfulness

New York University, New York, NY

B.S. Applied Psychology, 2023

GPA: 3.91, **Honors Thesis:** “A Mixed-Methods Longitudinal Investigation of Black Families’ Gender Socialization Transmission”

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Associate II, Psychology Department, Azusa Pacific University 2/2025 - 9/2026

- Lead Coordinator for Project TREE, a federally funded SAMHSA grant (\$2,725,000) addressing substance use through technology-based (mHealth) and 1:1 early interventions for at-risk youth
- Directly supervises graduate interns and undergraduate research assistants
- Creates training curriculum for L.A. Department of Mental Health (DMH), Substance Abuse Prevention & Control (SAPC), and LAUSD
- Provides continuing education for mental health providers
- Collaborates with the project team on implementing data analysis and protocols for data-related tasks (e.g. conducting basic descriptive statistics, T-tests, ANOVA, Chi-Square, Non-parametric analyses, correlation, transforming data, recoding, checking for missing data)
- Plans community workshops and trainings for adults, adolescents, and mental health providers

Research Assistant, Center for Conflict and Cooperation, NYU 9/2021 - 7/2024

- Drafted and published work in moral hypocrisy and intergroup bias
- Designed experimental paradigms in Qualtrics, Matlab, Python, and R
- Proofread and wrote manuscripts, literature reviews, and grant requests
- Coordinated Institutional Review Board submissions
- Managed and scheduled data collection for over 2000 participants

Research Assistant, Learning Race Lab, NYU 9/2019 - 5/2023

- Prepared presentation and conference materials
- Coded 400+ qualitative parent-child interviews for Racial Socialization in NVivo and Dedoose
- Collaborated with research team to develop codebook for qualitative interviews

PUBLICATIONS & CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Robertson, C. E., **Akles, M.**, & Van Bavel, J. J. (2024). Preregistered Replication and Extension of "Moral Hypocrisy: Social Groups and the Flexibility of Virtue". *Psychological Science*, 35(7), 798–813. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09567976241246552>

Cox, B., Hughes, D. L., Das, S., Brown, J., **Akles, M.**, Blood, T., Keryc, C., Martinez, A. M., & Way, N. (2022). White families' communications about and around race: Conversations between white adolescents and their mothers. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 32(3), 896–918. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12774>

“Killed with Kindness: Does "Glazing" Elicit Comparable Emotional Distress to Direct Hate Despite Lower Perceived Severity?” (**Akles**, 2026, Presentation at APS 2026)

“Digital Pathways to Prevention: Integrating Mobile Tools to Support Youth and Family Behavioral Health ” (Castaneda & **Akles**, Presentation for (STAR) UCLA Department of Behavioral Health, 1/21/2026)

“Exploring Recovery Processes Among Youth in Recovery from Substance Use Disorders who participated in a Technology-based Recovery Support Project” (**Akles**, Castaneda, & Ang, 2025, Presentation at INEBRIA).

“Enhancing Youth Behavioral Health Services through Academic-Community Collaboration: A Focus on SBIRT Integration using a Mental Health Trainee Practicum Model” (Okolo, **Akles**, & Durant, 2025, Presentation at INEBRIA).

“Demonstration of an Integrated SBIRT Model for Early Intervention, Emotional Wellbeing, and Family Support” (Saunders, Huynh, & **Akles**, 2025, Presentation at INEBRIA).

“Loving Their Sons and Raising Their Daughters: A Mixed-Methods Longitudinal Investigation of Black Families’ Gender Socialization Transmission” (**Akles**, 2023, Honors Thesis Presentation at NYU Applied Psychology Conference)

IN-PROGRESS RESEARCH

“Prosocial Nudging in Online Chats: Evaluating Real-Time AI Rewrites and Friction-Only Pauses in Gaming Environments.” Preregistered research study, currently in data collection. Open Science Framework (OSF). Targeted for HCI publication.

“Group identity and issue relevance: The interactive effects of social identity on agreement, interpersonal evaluation, and perceived moral alignment” [Unpublished manuscript]. Department of Psychology, University of Southern California.

AWARDS, HONORS & CERTIFICATIONS

Emerging Scholar Mind & Life Summer Research Institute, June 2026

Prosocial Design Network + Roblox Research Award “AI-Mediated Prosocial Chat Nudging”

\$9,540, January 2026

Azusa Pacific University Graduate Travel Award \$400, March 2026

New York University, Dean’s List, August 2020 - May 2023

Applied Psychology Honors, August 2019 - 2023

Humane Studies Fellowship from the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS) \$5,000, October 2023

Cross-Cutting Initiative on Inequality Award for Research Interviewing Award, May 2023

Peer Support Specialist Certification, September 2025

- Provided 1,500+ hours of non-clinical counseling for justice-involved and substance-involved individuals.

NYU Steinhardt Merit Scholarship, \$36, 960, August 2019-2023

Covina Women’s Club Scholarship, \$5,000, May 2019

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant PSYC 100 University of Southern California 8/2026 - present

- Teach two independent weekly lab sections covering experimental methodology and core psychological concepts.
- Evaluate lab reports, assignments, and exams, providing constructive feedback on scientific writing.
- Proctor department-wide examinations for large undergraduate cohorts while maintaining academic integrity.
- Hold weekly office hours to clarify course material, assist with lab work, and support student learning.

ACTIVE MEMBERSHIPS

Association for Psychological Science - Graduate Student Proposal Review Board

Prosocial Design Network

International Network on Brief Interventions for Alcohol & Other Drugs

Psi Chi, The International Honor Society in Psychology

SKILLS

Computer: R, MATLAB, SPSS, SAS, Python, Javascript, Qualtrics, Dedoose, NVivo, Stata, SPARS, GitHub, Google/Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel) , Canva, Photoshop

Interpersonal: Project coordination, Scheduling, Reliable with deadlines, Adaptable.

REFERENCES

Claire Robertson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Psychology and Neural Science, Colby College
clrobert@colby.edu

Jay Van Bavel, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Psychology and Neural Science, New York University
jay.vanbavel@nyu.edu

Rachel Castaneda, Ph.D.

Professor, Department of Psychology, Azusa Pacific University
Research Psychologist, UCLA Integrated Substance Use and Addiction Programs (ISAP)
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