

Sterling Williams-Ceci

PhD Candidate, Department of Information Science, Cornell University

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<https://sterlcwc.github.io/>

EDUCATION

PhD Candidate, Department of Information Science, Cornell University (August 2021 – June 2027, expected)

Professor Michael Macy and Professor Mor Naaman (Co-Chairs)

Professor Gordon Pennycook (minor member)

Professor Lior Zalmanson (ad hoc minor member)

Graduate Minor: Psychology

B.A. in Robert S. Harrison College Scholar & B.A. in Psychology, Cornell University (May 2021)

Summa Cum Laude

Merrill Presidential Research Scholar (top 1% of graduating class)

Honors Thesis: “Impacts of Online Behavioral Data on Impression Formation Toward Young Adults”

Minors: Information Science; Communication

RESEARCH INTERESTS

My research examines how interactions with emerging technologies transform the social psychological processes that shape human cognition and behavior. Building on decades of social psychological research between humans, I investigate what changes when *technology* becomes a social interaction partner. My research has a particular focus on the harmful cognitive impacts of Generative AI, such as how biased AI-generated suggestions can subtly influence sociopolitical attitudes and how humanlike forms of AI can reinforce beliefs in harmful gender stereotypes.

RESEARCH POSITIONS

PhD Student in Social Technologies Lab, August 2021 – present: Cornell Tech, New York, NY.

Director: Professor Mor Naaman. <https://s.tech.cornell.edu/>

PhD Student in Social Dynamics Lab, August 2021 – present: Department of Information Science, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. Director: Professor Michael W. Macy.

<https://sdl.as.cornell.edu>

Undergraduate Research Assistant, September 2017 – May 2021: Department of Information Science, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. Director: Professor Michael W. Macy.

<https://sdl.as.cornell.edu>

Contributed to a study measuring gender bias in language used to describe tenure-track job applicants by advisors in letters of recommendation across two fields ([linked here](#))

Undergraduate Research Assistant, January 2020 – September 2020, Department of Science & Technology Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. Director: Professor Malte Ziewitz.

<https://dueprocess.sts.cornell.edu>.

Contributed to an interview study: “Scoring Struggles: Everyday Experiences of Web Search Engines” ([linked here](#))

FELLOWSHIPS

Digital Life Initiative Doctoral Fellowship, Cornell Tech, Fall 2025–Spring 2026 (\$5,000)

JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS (ACCEPTED & IN PROGRESS)

Dash, S., Xu, Y., Cai, L., **Williams-Ceci, S.**, Liao, W., & Spiro, E. (2026). AI Overviews Reduce Search Result Engagement & May Influence Attitude Polarization. *Revise & Resubmit at Science Advances*. https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/u2pbg_v1

Williams-Ceci, S., Minkowitz, R. H., Zalmanson, L., Macy, M. W., & Naaman, M. Humanlike AI May Strengthen Women’s Belief in Sexist Stereotypes. Under submission.

https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/ejsg_v5

****Presented at APS 2026, SPSP 2026, and APS 2025**

Williams-Ceci, S., Jakesch, M., Bhat, A., Kadoma, K., Zalmanson, L., & Naaman, M. (2026). Biased AI Writing Assistants Shift Users’ Attitudes on Societal Issues. *Science Advances*, 12(11). <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.adw5578>

****Altmetric score: 584 (99th percentile of similar-age outputs; 97th percentile of similar-age outputs from Science Advances)**

****Selected Examples from Press Coverage:**

- Science (<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aeh0792>)
- Nature (<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-026-00781-9>)
- Scientific American (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/ai-autocomplete-doesnt-just-change-how-you-write-it-changes-how-you-think/>)

- **Los Angeles Times**
(<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2026-03-14/lopez-column-artificial-intelligence>)
- **Yahoo News**
(<https://ca.news.yahoo.com/love-autocomplete-texts-research-says-124316511.html>)
- **The Asahi Shimbun**
(<https://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASV62213CV62UTFL00SM.html?ptoken=01KTAYW7V49QDDGWXZ4GVVEHMC>)
- **Inside Higher Ed**
(<https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2026/06/10/taxonomy-harm-ai-a-ge-opinion>)
- **Slate Blogs**
(<https://slate.com/technology/2026/04/ai-writing-detectors-scandal-shy-girl.html?via=rss>)
- **ScienceNews**
(<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/ai-autocomplete-social-issues-views>)
- **AAAS EurekAlert!** (<https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/1119239>)
- **PsyPost**
(<https://www.psypost.org/ai-autocomplete-suggestions-covertly-change-how-users-think-about-important-topics/>)
- **Cornell Chronicle**
(<https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2026/03/ai-assistants-can-sway-writers-attitudes-even-when-theyre-watching-bias>)

****Cited by EdPsy as a motivation for its new policy prohibiting the use of AI:**
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/dr-dan-o-hare-ep_edpsychs-educationalpsychology-sicomm-share-7455682993622511616-kK9X/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAACSDf8kBLGkWVg8Th2vfKkPVsluZcg_8WJA

Williams-Ceci, S. & Williams, W. M. (2026). Bring Wisdom into AI Education (Before it's Too Late). *Roeper Review*, 48(1), 27–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02783193.2025.2593014>

Williams-Ceci, S. (2025). What I wish I knew when I switched fields for my PhD. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 9, 1069. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-025-02214-5>

****This is a World View piece in which I discuss the challenges I encountered when switching fields for my PhD and offer advice for the next generation of students**

Williams-Ceci, S., Macy, M. W., & Naaman, M. (2024). Misinformation Does Not Reduce Trust in Accurate Search Results, but Warning Banners may Backfire. *Scientific Reports*, 14(10977). <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-024-61645-8>

****Cited by NATO's Science & Technology Trends Report 2024-2025 ([linked here](#))**

Bernstein, R.H., Macy, M.W., Williams, W.M., Cameron, C.J., **Williams-Ceci, S.C.**, & Ceci, S.J. (2022). Assessing gender bias in particle physics and social science recommendations for academic jobs. *Social Sciences*, 11(2), 74. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11020074>

Williams-Ceci, S., Grose, G.E., Pinch, A.C., Kizilcec, R.F., & Lewis, N.A., Jr. (2021). Combating Sharenting: Interventions to Alter Parents' Attitudes Toward Posting About Their Children Online. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 125. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106939>

****Authored as an undergraduate**

Ceci, S.J., **Williams-Ceci, S.**, & Williams, W.M. (2016). How to actualize potential: A bio-ecological approach to talent development. *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*, 1377(1), 10-12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.13057>

CONFERENCE PAPERS

Sabri, N., Bhattacharya, A., **Williams-Ceci, S.** Bailey, D. V., & Bellini, R. (2026). Selling the Dream: Threat Modeling Intimate Insiders in Micro-businesses. *USENIX Security* '26.

Silver, B. M., **Williams-Ceci, S.**, & Naaman, M. (2025). AI is Perceived as Less Trustworthy and Less Effective when Using Emotional Arguments to Moderate Misinformation. In *Proceedings of the Extended Abstracts of the CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '25)*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706599.3720008>

Wang, L., Wang, R., **Williams-Ceci, S.**, Menda, S., Zhang, A. X. (2023). "Is Reporting Worth the Sacrifice of Revealing What I've Sent?": Privacy Considerations When Reporting on End-to-End Encrypted Platforms. *Nineteenth Symposium on Usable Privacy and Security (SOUPS 2023)*, 491–508. <https://www.usenix.org/conference/soups2023/presentation/wang>

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Anthropomorphic AI Chatbots Increase Belief in a Sexist Stereotype Among Conservative Women.” *APS 2026 Annual Convention*, Association for Psychological Science, Barcelona, Spain, May 28-30, 2026. [Poster]

****Waitlisted as a single-presenter talk; presented as a poster**

“Anthropomorphic AI Exacerbates Politically Conservative Women’s Belief in a Sexist Stereotype” Single presenter podium talk, *Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP)*, 2026

****Acceptance rate: 12% from ~600 submissions (declined due to concurrent symposium presentation)**

“Biased AI Writing Assistants Shift Users’ Attitudes on Societal Issues.” Single presenter talk as part of a symposium entitled “Persuaded by the Prompt: How AI Shapes Attitudes and Beliefs,” *Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP)*, 2026

“Biased AI Writing Assistants Shift Users’ Attitudes on Societal Issues” *AI+*, *International Advisory Board for Graduate Studies*, Hong Kong, China, June 26, 2025.

****Chosen by the Cornell Graduate School as one of two student presenters.**

“Stereo-Typing: LLM Chatbots’ Appearance of Typing Increases Women’s Belief in a False Stereotype” *APS 2025 Annual Convention*, Association for Psychological Science, Washington, D.C., May 24, 2025. [Poster]

“Impact of Generative AI on Opinion Formation” *INFORMS Annual Meeting*, Seattle, WA., October 20, 2024.

“AI is Perceived as Less Trustworthy and Less Effective when Using Emotional Arguments to Moderate Misinformation” *CHI ’25*, Yokohama, Japan.

“Evaluations of intelligence in physics reveal three times more “brilliance” words used to describe women than men.” *International Society for Intelligence Research (ISIR ’24)*, Zürich, Switzerland, August 1, 2024.

Williams-Ceci, S.C., Grose, G.E., Pinch, A., Kizilcec, R.F. & Lewis, Jr., N.A. Combating Sharenting: Interventions to alter parents' attitudes toward posting about their children online. *Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting*, Virtual., April 8, 2021.

****Awarded as Strategic Poster for exemplifying Interdisciplinary Research in Child Development**

NON-CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“AI’s Roles in Attitude Shift and Persuasive Influence.” Invited colloquium, *University of Pennsylvania*, September 16, 2026

“Is AI Secretly Changing the Way You Think?” *MindMatters: CogSci Talks* [podcast]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHRNLInwRfk>

“Biased AI Writing Assistants Shift Users’ Attitudes on Societal Issues.” *CUNY Honors Connect Program at Cornell Tech*, June 17, 2026.

“Biased AI Writing Assistants Shift Users’ Attitudes on Societal Issues.” *Center for Conflict & Cooperation, NYU*, April 10, 2026.

“AI Helps Us Write – But At What Cost?” Presented at the following events:

3-Minute Thesis Competition, March 20, 2024 (Link: https://vod.video.cornell.edu/media/Sterling+Williams-Ceci/1_o7lsjeb2/339333952)

Selected as a finalist for Cornell's 3-Minute Thesis competition, in which participants are limited to three minutes and one static slide to describe their thesis work to a live audience. I was awarded Second Place by a panel of judges and recognized by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Ivy+ Deans Conference, May 3, 2024

Cornell Board of Trustees Meeting, May 23, 2024

Innovation Meets Impact, Cornell Tech, December 10, 2024

"The Cognitive Impacts of Generative AI" *University of Central Florida*, November 14, 2024.

Presentation at Google's New York Office: "The Impact of Rank, Misinformation, and Warning Banners on Trust in Search Results: A Covid-19 Case Study."

Guest Lecture, INFO 4450: Computer-Mediated Communication. "Computer-Mediated Communication in Families."

Guest Lecture, INFO 4800: Behavioral Science Interventions. "Translating Ideas Into Experiments."

College Scholar Honors Thesis Presentation to the Public, 8 May 2021.

Presented the methods and findings of 2 randomized controlled experiments I conducted on impression formation toward young adults based on their online behavioral data. Communicated complex methods and results to an audience of about 100 people from multiple fields and without backgrounds in social science.

Cornell Human Development Youth Engagement Program, 26 June 2019:

Spoke to approximately 100 low income and underserved high school youth as part of New York State's 4-H program. Discussed how I became interested in my research questions and how I found a career path that would allow me to explore them.

College Scholar Research Presentations, 10 May 2019:

Presented to a group of 30 Cornell University students, faculty, and staff how I planned to study various impacts of the Big Data Age on young adults; gave examples of experimental studies I planned to conduct. My presentation was covered by the Cornell Arts and Sciences Communications website (<https://tinyurl.com/y4ag7aqf>) and the Cornell Chronicle (<https://tinyurl.com/y5ry2pcg>).

HONORS AND AWARDS

Outstanding TA Award, Cornell Tech, Spring 2025

2nd Place Winner (\$1,000), 3-Minute Thesis Competition, Cornell University, Spring 2024

Nominated for Outstanding TA Award, Cornell University, Spring 2022

Merrill Presidential Scholar, Cornell University, May 2021

Selected as one of the top 37 graduating seniors in recognition of “outstanding scholastic achievement, strong leadership ability, and demonstrated potential for contributing to society.”

Top 1% Strategic Poster Designation for Interdisciplinary Research, SRCD Biennial Meeting, April 2021

My first-authored behavioral intervention experiment on Sharenting (see **Publications**) was designated as one of the top 50 studies out of a few thousand exemplifying interdisciplinary research in child development. Awarded by the Society for Research in Child Development, a leading international organization devoted to developmental psychology research.

Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society inductee, Cornell Chapter, April 2021

Selected Spring 2021 for having a GPA in the top 7% for the senior class.

Selected for Golden Key Honor Society, Cornell University, May 2021

Robert S. Harrison College Scholar, Cornell University, December 2018 – May 2021

National Scholastic Writing Awards (Northeast Region-at-Large; > 300,000 works submitted annually):

Gold Key Award for Creative Writing & National Finalist, 2016

Silver Key Award for Creative Writing, February 2017

New York State Academic Excellence Scholarship, New York State Board of Education, May 2017 (\$2000.00)

TEACHING

[Upcoming] Graduate TA for INFO 5310: Psychological and Social Aspects of Technology, Fall 2026.

Co-Lead Instructor for “Interacting with AI: Understanding the Relationship Between AI and Humans,” an [inaugural Cornell Tech summer course offered to high school students](#), July 13–30, 2026.

***Promotional Video:**

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/cornell-tech_summer-innovation-intensives-at-cornell-tech-activity-7445901852711280640-_HKl?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAACSDf8kBLGkWVg8Th2vfKkPVsIuZcg_8WJA

This was a three-week intensive course I designed independently and co-taught to 14 high school students for three weeks. Topics covered AI’s impacts on humans across three levels: individual, interpersonal, and societal. Below are means of responses to the formal course evaluation (all statements asked on scales of 1-5, no SDs provided):

“The content was interesting to me:” mean = 4.64/5

“The pace was right for me:” mean = 4.07/5

“The level of difficulty was right for me:” mean = 4.36/5

“The instructors explained things clearly:” mean = 4.79/5

“The hands-on activities helped me learn:” mean = 5.00/5

“I learned things that I couldn’t have easily learned on my own:” mean = 3.71/5

Graduate TA for INFO 5330: Technology, Media, and Democracy, Spring 2025.

Graduate TA for INFO 5310: Psychological and Social Aspects of Technology, Fall 2024.

***Received the campus-wide Outstanding TA Award in June 2025**

Workshop on how to conduct online survey experiments for Prof. Michael Macy’s Social Dynamics Lab, Spring 2024.

Graduate TA for INFO 5310: Psychological and Social Aspects of Technology, Fall 2023.

Graduate TA for INFO 5310: Psychological and Social Aspects of Technology, Fall 2022.

Graduate TA for INFO 4450: Computer-Mediated Communication, Spring 2022.

Graduate TA for INFO 4100: Learning Analytics, Fall 2021.

Undergraduate TA for INFO 1260: Choices and Consequences in Computing (co-taught by Professor Karen Levy and Professor Jon Kleinberg). Spring 2021.

Undergraduate TA for SOC 2580: Six Pretty Good Books (co-taught by Professor Michael W. Macy and Professor Stephen J. Ceci). Spring 2021.

LEADERSHIP, MENTORSHIP, & SERVICE

Stephen H. Weiss Faculty Teaching Awards committee, Cornell University, Spring 2022–present

I was nominated by Cornell’s Dean of Faculty to serve on the committee that decides which faculty receive university-wide [Stephen H. Weiss teaching awards](#). As one of the only students on the committee, I read nomination dossiers for faculty nominees and discuss my evaluations with a panel of professors and the Dean of Faculty. I have been reappointed in this role every year since 2022. Serving on this committee has taught me what excellent teaching looks like and what to strive for in my own teaching.

Mentored MS Students ($N = 5$) and one undergraduate student for Independent Study, (Spring 2022 – Spring 2026).

Research Mentor for Ossining Science Research Program (Spring 2023 – Spring 2024)

Student Interviewer, Cornell Information Science’s PhD Admissions Committee, 2022-2024

Interviewed prospective students who made the finalist list for Cornell’s Information Science PhD program; contributed my evaluations to the faculty committee’s decisions

Lab Manager, Social Dynamics Laboratory, Spring 2022 (Spring 2023)

Coordinated the presentation schedule, managed the member listserv, and led the lab meetings for Professor Macy’s Social Dynamics Lab.

Student Lead, Social Dynamics Laboratory (Fall 2017 – Fall 2018)

Led other students working on the Letters of Recommendation project with Professor Macy and coauthors. Assigned tasks to students, held meetings, taught students individually, did the majority of coding, and presented on this project to the entire lab.

GRANTS

The Contribution Project (2019) - \$400.00

REVIEWING

Science Advances

Nature Communications

Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication

Brain & Behavior
Technology, Mind, and Behavior
Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace
Information, Communication and Society
Children & Society
Proceedings of the ACM Conference on Human-Computer Interaction

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Inferential Frequentist Statistics (multilevel modeling, hypothesis testing)

R (data science, inferential statistics and modeling approaches, data visualization)

Python (elementary scripting, data tidying, & basic data science)

Javascript, ReactJS (elementary app development)

- Built a GPT-powered chatbot with access to OpenAI's API; allows for customizable prompting and visual design to use in real-time human-AI experiments

GitHub, CSS, HTML (elementary Web design and layout skills)