

ALEXA MOLINARO

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OBJECTIVE

Inquisitive undergraduate student and researcher interested in leveraging neuroimaging and computational modeling to study the neurobiology of depression and guide treatment development.

EDUCATION

B.S.; Psychological and Brain Sciences - GPA: 3.99/4.0

Sep 2021 - Jun 2025

University of California, Santa Barbara

- Minors: Spanish, Professional Writing - Science Communication Track

Pontifical Catholic University of Chile

- Fall 2023 - UC Education Abroad Program

PUBLICATION CONTRIBUTIONS

Peña, M., Vásquez-Venegas, . . ., Guevara, P. (2024). A brief tablet-based intervention benefits linguistic and communicative abilities in toddlers and preschoolers. *npj Science of Learning*, 9(1), 38. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41539-024-00249-3>

- After the article was returned for resubmission, I completed a comprehensive revision that resulted in the article's publication. My contributions are recognized in the Acknowledgements.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Molinaro, A. (May 2025). Individual Differences in Neural Basis of Justice Intuition. Poster to be presented at URCA Poster Colloquium at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

MANUSCRIPTS IN PROGRESS

Molinaro, A., Yu, H. (in preparation). Individual Differences in Neural Basis of Justice Intuition.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, Yu Emotional Science Lab - PI: Dr. Hongbo Yu

May 2023 - Present

- Manage data collection for multiple experiments, including behavioral and fMRI studies; total of 60+ participants.
- Data cleaning and analysis for behavioral and fMRI studies (Python, R, MATLAB, Excel, fMRIPrep).
- Provide pointed feedback for ongoing projects and conference presentations.
- Conduct independent research Honors Thesis to be completed by May 2025.

Research Assistant, Cognitive Neurosciences Lab - PI: Dr. Marcela Peña

Sept 2023 - Jan 2024

- Managed EEG data collection for 15+ infants and studied EEG data analysis techniques.
- Made multiple stimuli adjustments during project development phase for future study.

Research Assistant, Experimental Neuroscience Lab - PI: Dr. Ed Kronmüller **Sept 2023 - Dec 2023**

- Managed eye-tracking data collection for 20+ participants.
- Cleaned and coded behavioral data.
- Adjusted stimuli during pilot testing for future study.

HONORS THESIS

"Individual Differences in Neural Basis of Justice Intuition"

Mar 2024 - Present

UCSB Faculty Advisor: Dr. Hongbo Yu

- Pilot fMRI study examining moral judgement tasks, focusing on how individual character traits (e.g. propensity for shame) predict individual differences in judgements and brain activation.
- Collected fMRI neuroimaging data for 22 participants, cleaned data using fMRIPrep and Python, conducted Inter-Subject Representational Similarity Analysis (IS-RSA) and Single-Trial Multivariate RSA in MATLAB and R.
- Senior Honors Thesis to be completed by May 2025 with peer-review article submission scheduled for shortly thereafter.

EXTRACURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT

Involvement Officer, Psi Chi Chapter at UCSB

May 2024 - Present

- Develop events that intuitively meet member interests; including Research Assistant networking opportunities between undergraduate students and laboratories on campus as well as skills workshops, graduate school application workshops, and alumni events.
- Monitor other Psi Chi chapter accomplishments to inform and improve UCSB chapter events.

Founder and President, Spanish Club at UCSB

Jan 2023 - Present

- Founded club on campus and grew membership to 200+ members in under three years.
- Organize weekly events that offer an immersive Spanish-speaking environment for students to practice the language and engage in cultural activities related to Spanish-speaking countries.
- Collaborate with other campus organizations for events (e.g. UCSB Salsa Club, Italian Club).
- Oversee, lead, and support a six-member officer board.

Writer, Daily Nexus at UCSB

May 2024 - Present

- Write articles for "Science and Tech" column of UCSB student-run magazine.
- Develop article ideas through conducting interviews with psychology faculty and completing literature review of psychology studies.

Member, Society of Undergraduate Psychologists at UCSB

Jan 2024 - Present

- Attend and participate in weekly meetings, including research journal discussions, skill workshops, and faculty presentations.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Host and Mentor, UCSB Rise Initiative

Aug 2022 - Present

- Host collaborative study space for Disabled Students Program 4+ times per quarter with 40+ students per session.
- Assist with coordination and execution of DSP campus events; includes tabling, event set-up, event take-down, and event planning.
- Improve DSP programming through program development meetings with faculty.

Panelist, "Thriving Together: Networking Strategies for UCSB Students and Alumni"

April 2024

- Panelist for undergraduate event with 40+ attendees; presented strategies for navigating professional networking from a student perspective.

Panelist, "Study Skills Workshop"

April 2024

- Panelist for undergraduate event with 30+ attendees; presented study skills derived from UCSB's Campus Learning Assistance Services (CLAS) from a student perspective.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (URCA) Grant, \$750 awarded by UCSB 2024
Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society
Psi Chi, The International Honor Society in Psychology

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **Languages:** English, Spanish.
- **Certifications:** Python, R.
- **Skills:** fMRI, EEG, Eye Tracking, MATLAB, Research Design, Data Analysis.
- **Interests:** Meditation, Yoga, Salsa Dancing, Music, Hiking, Traveling, Reading, Tai Chi.