

Ensar Acem

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I am a passionate Ph.D. student specializing in the evolutionary and contextual underpinnings of social behavior. Throughout my academic journey, I have taken part in a variety of interdisciplinary projects with leading advisors. These experiences have allowed me to acquire a wide range of research skills, including proficiency in open science. Moreover, I am an experienced remote researcher. For potential collaboration, please [explore my website](#).

Interests: Reasoning, cooperation, morality, political psychology, cognitive science of religion.

EDUCATION:

2023 – 2027	Ph.D., Psychological Sciences , Kadir Has University (Moral Intuitions Lab)
2020 – 2023	M.A., Psychological Sciences , Kadir Has University <i>GPA: 3.87 /4.00</i>
2015 – 2019	B.A., Psychology , Ankara University <i>GPA: 3.80 /4.00, The Top Student, Highest Honor Degree</i>

HONORS, GRANTS, & SCHOLARSHIPS:

2023 – 2027	Full Tuition Waiver (Ph.D.), Kadir Has University
2023 – 2027	Research Assistant Scholarship, TUBITAK 1001
2022 – 2024	Research Assistant Scholarship, Templeton Religion Trust Long-Term Research Grant
2021 – 2022	Research Assistant Scholarship, TUBITAK 3501
2020 – 2023	Full Tuition Waiver (M.A.), Kadir Has University
2018 – 2019	ERASMUS+ Internship Grant (two times)
2018 – 2019	Very High Achievement Award, Ankara University (two times)
2016 – 2019	State Scholarship, Republic of Turkey
2015 – 2019	Dean's High Honor, Ankara University (all semesters)
2015	SABANCI Achievement Grant (Renounced)

CURRENT RESEARCH:

2022 – Present



Funded by Templeton Religion Trust (funding ID: TRT0424)

Principal Investigators: Assoc. Prof. Onurcan Yilmaz, and Dr. Ozan Isler

Title: Religion as Universal Moral Compass: Does Religious Belief Promote Behavioral Consistency Across Moral Domains?

Projects:

- 1) Consistency of moral beliefs and behaviors
- 2) Religious group bias in anonymous interactions
- 3) Intention-behavior gap in moral dilemmas
- 4) How do analytic thinking and IQ relate to political ideology and religious belief?
- 5) The test of the dual-process model vs. the counter-normative model of religiosity
- 6) The predictive powers of Moral Foundations Questionnaire-2 in moral behavior
- 7) The effects of supraliminal religious primes on prosociality

Responsibilities:

- Ethics applications, preregistrations, Qualtrics designs, longitudinal data collection over Prolific ($N = 1200$ in pretest and 600 in posttests), measuring moral/social behavior using eight economic games, creating visual stimuli, developing supraliminal religious and secular authority primes and manipulation checks ($N = 5000+$ American and Turkish participants), data analysis and reporting, writing manuscripts, and delivering oral presentations at international conferences
- Developing the theory of Religion as Universal Moral Compass
- Testing the Supernatural Punishment and Supernatural Monitoring Hypotheses

2021 – Present



Funded by European Research Council, Advanced Grant (ERC-AdG; 101020453)

Advisors: Assoc. Prof. Onurcan Yilmaz, Dr. Ozan Isler, Prof. Simon Gaechter

Project: Contextual and cognitive underpinnings of political polarization in the domain of cooperation

- This project is a follow-up to my master's thesis. I am leading all the phases.
- Specifically, designing experiment in Qualtrics, data collection over Prolific for two experiments ($N = 2850$ for each; an equal number of Democrats and Republicans in Experiment 1 and a minimal group paradigm in Experiment 2), using cutting-edge cognitive style manipulations, writing a registered report to *Nature Human Behavior*.
- Testing the Contextualized Reciprocity Model, which compromises the Social Heuristics Hypothesis and the Self-control Account of one-shot cooperation.

2020 – Present



Department of Psychology, Kadir Has University

Principal Investigators: Assoc. Prof. Onurcan Yilmaz, Dr. Ozan Isler

Projects:

- 1) A high-powered experimental test of the Reflective Religious Doubt Hypothesis
- 2) The effects of cognitive styles on moral foundations: A cross-cultural examination
- 3) The determinants of moral courage: The development of the Moral Courage Game
- 4) Do meta-ethical beliefs predict moral behaviors?
- 5) The predictive ability of cognitive reflection on cooperation in different religious groups
- 6) The moderating role of resource scarcity on the effects of cognitive styles on cooperation

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:

Summer – Fall 2019



Environmental Health Group, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, University of London (Funded by ERASMUS+)

Principal Investigators: Prof. Robert Aunger, Prof. Val Curtis

Project: Evolved Human Motives: A questionnaire validation study

- Ethics application, questionnaire design
- Weekly meetings with the Evolutionary Demography Group (Prof. Rebecca Sear)

2018 – 2019



Experimental Psychology Laboratory, Ankara University (Research Assistant)

Advisor: Prof. Hakan Cetinkaya

Project 1: Temporal SNARC: The effect of time on spatial mental representation

Project 2: Interaction between number and shape size in spatial response time

Project 3: Confounding effect of color in implicit measurements of SNARC

- Designing visual stimuli, creating 7 different experiments in SuperLab 4.0, recruiting participants in laboratory ($N = 500+$), cleaning and analyzing reaction time data in Excel & SPSS, preparing 3 posters, manuscript preparation, weekly lab meetings. Paper: doi.org/10.1002/ijop.13045

Summer 2018



Social Neuroscience Lab, Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London (UCL) (Funded by ERASMUS+)

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sarah White

Project: Spontaneous mentalizing (Theory of Mind) in autism: An eye-tracking study

- Filming video stimuli, running eye-tracking experiments using Tobii Eye Tracker, extracting several types of eye-tracking data from Tobii Studio, data cleaning and analysis in Excel & SPSS, weekly lab meetings. Paper: doi.org/10.1098/rsos.231889

Summer 2017



Eye Tracking Lab, Department of Linguistics, Ankara University (Internship)

Principal Investigators: Prof. Ozgur Aydin, Prof. Iclal Ergenc

Project: The effect of the position of the lexical bundle on working memory

- Creating verbal and audio stimuli, recruiting child participants, running an eye-tracking experiment by using SMI Eye Tracker and Eye View 4.7, data cleaning and analysis in Excel & R.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

- 2022 – 2024 **Department of Psychology, Kadir Has University (Teaching Assistant)**
Class: Thinking Mathematically (undergrad-level – Spring 2024)
Class: Introduction to Statistics (undergrad-level – Fall 2022)

OTHER EXPERIENCE:

- 2021 – Present **Moral Intuitions Lab**
- Ten grant applications & project writing (including ERC Starting Grant and TRT)
 - Academic proofreading – Team leader
 - Academic peer reviewing
- 2020 – 2023 **Social Media**
- Social media management (multiple X/Twitter accounts with 50k+ organic followers)

PUBLICATIONS IN PROGRESS:

1. Şeker, F., **Acem, E.**, Bayrak, F., Yılmaz, O., Dogruyol, B., Isler, O., & Bahçekapili, H. G. (in review). Cognitive Reflection and Religious Belief: A Test of Two Models.
2. Günaydın, G., **Acem, E.**, Yılmaz, O., & Isler, O. (in review). Sosyal Psikolojide Niyet-Davranış Ölçümlerinin Tarihi, Sorunları ve Güncel Yöntemleri.
3. Şeker, F., **Acem, E.**, Vurgun., R., Dogruyol, B., Isler, O., Bahçekapili, H. G., & Yılmaz, O. (in review). Divine Verification: Introducing a CAPTCHA-based Religious Priming Technique.
4. **Acem, E.**, Yılmaz, O., Isler, O., & Gaechter, S. (in a registered report submission). Contextual and cognitive underpinnings of political polarization in the domain of cooperation.
5. **Acem, E.**, Yılmaz, O., & Isler, O. (in a registered report submission). Reflective disbelief or reflective doubt: How do cognitive styles affect the belief in God or gods?.
6. **Acem, E.**, Isler, O., Yılmaz, O., & Maule, J. (in a registered report submission). Fearing God or society? On the validity and effects of religious primes on prosociality.
7. **Acem, E.**, Alper, S., Isler, O., & Yılmaz, O. (in submission). Cross-cultural stability of the association between cognitive reflection and political ideology.

PUBLICATIONS:

1. Dogruyol, B., Velioglu, İ., Bayrak, F., **Acem, E.**, Isler, O., & Yılmaz, O. (2024). Validation of the moral foundations questionnaire-2 in the Turkish context: Exploring its relationship with moral behavior. *Current Psychology*. doi.org/10.1007/s12144-024-06097-z
2. Wu, R., Lim, J. T., Ahmed, Z., Berger, R., **Acem, E.**, Chowdhury, I., & White, S. J. (2024). Do autistic adults spontaneously reason about belief? A detailed exploration of alternative explanations. *Royal Society Open Science*, 11(7), 231889. doi.org/10.1098/rsos.231889
3. **Acem, E.**, & Yılmaz, O. (2023). Heroism as Moral Intuition. In *Encyclopedia of Heroism Studies*. Springer, Cham. doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17125-3_340-1
4. **Acem, E.** (2023). *Does cognitive reflection predict cooperation behavior after a seven-month period?* [Master of Art Thesis]. Kadir Has University. Thesis number and link: [818096](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17125-3_340-1)
5. Cetinkaya, H., **Acem, E.**, & Sakin, M. (2023). Temporal-SNARC: Time may be of a special way of spatial mental representation. *International Journal of Psychology*, 58(S1), 754–755. doi.org/10.1002/ijop.13045

POSTER PRESENTATIONS:

1. **Acem E.**, Sakin M., & Cetinkaya H. (2018). *The confounding effect of color in the implicit measures of SNARC Effect*. 1st Annual Cognitive-Experimental Psychology Conference, Ankara University, Turkey.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

1. **Acem E.**, Yilmaz O., Isler O., & Dogruyol B. (2023). *Does Cognitive Reflection Predict the Moral Behavior of Cooperation?*. II. National Symposium on Morality Studies in Social Psychology, Istanbul University, Turkey.
2. **Şeker F.**, **Acem E.**, Bayrak F., Yilmaz O., Dogruyol B., Isler O., & Bahçekapılı H. G. (2023). *The Relationship between Cognitive Reflection and Religiosity: A Test of Two Models*. II. National Symposium on Morality Studies in Social Psychology, Istanbul University, Turkey.
3. **Acem E.**, Yilmaz O., Dogruyol B., & Isler O. (2023). *Heroism as Moral Intuition and Its Relation to Social Behavior*. Everyday Heroism Conference 2023, Tauranga Moana, New Zealand. ([Abstract](#))
4. **Cetinkaya, H.**, **Acem, E.**, & Sakin, M. (2021). *Temporal-SNARC: Time may be of a special way of spatial mental representation*. ICP 2020+: The 32nd International Congress of Psychology, Prague, Czech Republic. ([Abstract](#))
5. **Acem E.** (2018). *Theory of Mind and implicit mentalizing in autism*. 1st Annual Cognitive-Experimental Psychology Conference, Ankara University, Turkey.
6. **Acem E.** (2018). *Sociobiology of incest taboo*. 7th Annual Sociology Conference, Ankara University, Turkey.

INVITED TALKS:

- 2022 *Graduate Education and Internship Abroad*. Mersin University Psychology Students Society.
2018 *Improve Your Career Abroad: How and Why Erasmus+ Internship?* Ankara Uni. Psychology Students Society.

CERTIFICATES:

- 2023 Improving Your Statistical Questions, Eindhoven University of Technology (Prof. Daniel Lakens)
2021 Introduction to R, DataCamp
2021 Introduction to Statistics in Spreadsheets, DataCamp
2020 The Data Scientist's Toolbox, Johns Hopkins University
2020 Understanding Medical Research, Yale University
2019 Improving Your Statistical Inferences, Eindhoven University of Technology (Prof. Daniel Lakens)
2019 Introduction to Python, Ankara University Neuroscience Society
2015 Advanced Computer Skills, Ministry of Education, Turkey

TECHNICAL SKILLS:

- **Eye-tracking:** Tobii Eye Tracker, Tobii Studio, SMI Eye Tracker, BeGaze.
- **Experimental design:** SuperLab, Qualtrics.
- **Online data collection:** Prolific, Qualtrics, Survey Monkey, Google Forms.
- **Statistical analysis:** GPower, SPSS, JASP, Jamovi, R (intermediate), Mplus (beginner).
- **Programming:** Python (beginner).
- **Reference management:** Zotero.
- **Social media management:** Twitter, TweetDeck.
- **Image editing – stimuli design:** PowerPoint, Pixlr X, Adobe Photoshop (intermediate).
- **Web design:** Wordpress, Google Sites, Blogger, Wix.
- **Other computer skills:** MS Office, MS Teams, Google Suite, Zoom, Slack, Teamviewer, etc.
- **Languages:** Turkish, English.

REMOTE COOPERATION:

- Consultancy (academic and professional)
- Online data collection (US/UK/Turkey)
- Lab studies/interviews (Turkey)
- Survey & experimental design (Qualtrics, etc.)
- Stimuli design (visual, audio)
- Data analysis & report
- Academic writing
- Grant writing & applications
- Proofreading & editing
- IRB procedures
- Project/Lab manager
- Social media manager

AFFILIATIONS:

- The Center for the Science of Moral Understanding, University of North Carolina ([Affiliate](#))
- The Moral Intuitions Lab at Kadir Has University ([Lab Manager & Research Assistant](#))

NON-PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS:

- Chess, cinema, poetry, blogging, biking, fitness.
- Philosophy of science, philosophy of religion, philosophy of space and time, philosophy of state and society, political economy, sociology of law.

PERSONAL VALUES:

- Kindness, open-mindedness, intellectual humility, creativity & novelty, cooperation.

REFERENCES:

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Prior to contacting my references, please reach out to me. This will allow me to ensure their availability and provide any necessary context. For more information and collaboration opportunities, [visit my website](#).

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