Alberto Acerbi

Gaskell Building 206
Brunel University London
Uxbridge, UB8 3PH
United Kingdom

email: alberto.acerbi@brunel.ac.uk
web: acerbialberto.com
twitter: @acerbialberto
phone: +44 (0)1895 265925

Current position

Centre for Culture and Evolution, Department of Psychology, Brunel University London   2019 - current
Lecturer

Areas of specialization

Cognitive anthropology, cultural evolution, individual based modelling, computational social science, digital media

Education

PhD, Anthropology, University of Siena (Italy)   November 2007
MA, Philosophy (*cum laude*), University of Siena (Italy)   October 2002

Previous positions

School of Innovation Science, Eindhoven University of Technology   2015 - 2019
Researcher

Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, Bristol University (UK)   2013 - 2014
Newton Research Fellow

Centre for the study of cultural evolution   2008 - 2012
Stockholm University (Sweden) & University of Bologna (Italy)
Post-doctoral researcher

Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig (Germany)   2007 - 2008
Post-doctoral researcher

Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies, CNR, Rome (Italy)   2004 - 2007
Research assistant

Publications

BOOKS:
1. **Acerbi A** (2020), *Cultural Evolution in the Digital Age*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

PREPRINTS:
1. **Acerbi A**, Snyder WD, Tennie C (2020), Ape cultures do not require behavior copying, available at: https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.03.25.008177v1

2. **Acerbi A**, Charbonneau M, Miton H, Scott-Phillips T (2019), Cultural stability without copying or selection, available at: https://osf.io/vjcq3/

JOURNALS:
1. **Acerbi A**[*], Kerhoas D[*], Webber A, McCabe G, Mittermeier R, Schwitzer C (2020), The impact of the "World's 25 Most Endangered Primates" list on scientific publications and media. *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 54, 125794 ([*]equal contribution)

2. Brand CO, **Acerbi A**, Mesoudi A (2019), Cultural evolution of emotional expression in 50 years of song lyrics, *Evolutionary Human Sciences*, 1, e11

3. Morin O, Sobchuk O, **Acerbi A** (2019), Why people die in novels: Testing the Ordeal Simulation Hypothesis, *Palgrave Communications*, 5, 2

4. **Acerbi A** (2019), Cognitive attraction and online misinformation, *Palgrave Communications*, 5, 15

5. Morgan TJH, **Acerbi A**, van Leeuwen EJC (2019), Copy-the-majority of instances or individuals? Two approaches to the majority and their consequences for conformist decision-making, *PLoS ONE*, 14(1), e0210748

6. **Acerbi A**, Tehrani J (2018), Did Einstein really say that? Testing content versus context in the cultural selection of quotations, *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 18 (3-4), 293-311

7. Ruck D, Bentley RA, **Acerbi A**, Garnett P, Hruschka DJ (2017), Role of Neutral evolution in word turnover during centuries of English word popularity, *Advances in Complex Systems*, 20 (6-7), 1750012

8. **Acerbi A**, Kendal J, Tehrani J (2017), Cultural complexity and demography: the case of folktales, *Evolution and Human Behaviour*, 38 (4), 474-480

9. Morin O[*], **Acerbi A**[*] (2017), Birth of the cool. A two-centuries decline in emotional expression in Anglophone fiction, *Cognition and Emotion*, 31 (8), 1663-1675 ([*]equal contribution)

10. **Acerbi A** (2016), A cultural evolution approach to digital media, *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 10, 636

11. **Acerbi A**[*], van Leeuwen EJC[*], Haun DBM, Tennie C (2016), Conformity cannot be identified based on population-level signatures, *Scientific Reports*, 6, 36068 ([*]equal contribution)

12. van Leeuwen EJC, **Acerbi A**, Kendal RL, Tennie C, Haun DBM (2016), A re-appreciation of "conformity", *Animal Behaviour*, 122, e5-e10

13. **Acerbi A**, Tennie C, Mesoudi A (2016), Social learning solves the problem of narrow-peaked search landscapes: experimental evidence in humans, *Royal Society Open Science*, 3(9): 160215

14. **Acerbi A**, Tennie C (2016), The effect of redundancy on cultural transmission and cultural stabilization, *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, 130(1): 62-70

15. Pugliese F, **Acerbi A**, Marocco D (2015), Emergence of Leadership in a Group of Autonomous Robots, *PLoS ONE*, 10(9): e0137234

16. **Acerbi A**, Mesoudi A (2015), If we are all cultural Darwinians what's the fuss about? Clarifying recent disagreements in the field of cultural evolution, *Biology & Philosophy*, 30(4): 481-503

17. Ghirlanda S, **Acerbi A**, Herzog H (2014), Dog movie stars and dog breed popularity: A case study in media influence on choice, *PLoS ONE*, 9(9): e106565

18. **Acerbi A**, Bentley RA (2014), Biases in cultural transmission shape the turnover of popular traits, *Evolution and Human Behaviour*, 35(3): 228-236

19. Bentley RA, **Acerbi A**, Ormerod P, Lampos V (2014), Books Average Previous Decade of Economic Misery, *PLoS ONE*, 9(1): e83147

20. Ghirlanda S, **Acerbi A**, Herzog H, Serpell JA (2013), Fashion vs. Function in Cultural Evolution: The case of Dog Breed Popularity, *PLoS ONE*, 8(9): e74770

21. **Acerbi A**, Lampos V, Garnett P, Bentley RA (2013), The expression of emotions in 20th century books, *PLoS ONE*, 8(3): e59030

22. **Acerbi A**, Ghirlanda S, Enquist M (2012), Old and Young Individuals' Role in Cultural Change, *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulations*, 15(4): 1

23. **Acerbi A**, Ghirlanda S, Enquist M (2012), The logic of fashion cycles, *PLoS ONE*, 7(3): e32541

24. **Acerbi A**, Jacquet P, Tennie C (2012), Behavioral constraints and the evolution of faithful social learning, *Current Zoology*, 58(2): 307-318

25. **Acerbi A**, Tennie C, Nunn CL (2011), Modeling imitation and emulation in constrained search spaces, *Learning & Behavior*, 39(2): 104-114

26. **Acerbi A**, Nunn CL (2011), Predation and the phasing of sleep: an evolutionary individual-based model, *Animal Behaviour*, 81(4): 801-811

27. **Acerbi A**, Enquist M, Ghirlanda S (2009), Cultural evolution and individual development of openness and conservatism, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA*, 106(45): 18931-18935

28. **Acerbi A**, McNamara P, Nunn CL (2008), To Sleep or not to Sleep: The Ecology of Sleep in Artificial Organisms, *BMC Ecology*, 8(10): 1-12

29. **Acerbi A**, Parisi D (2006), Cultural Transmission Between and Within Generations, *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulations*, 9(1): 1

BOOK CHAPTERS / CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS:

1. **Acerbi A**, Ghirlanda S, Enquist M (2014), Regulatory traits: cultural influences on cultural evolution, in: *Evolution, Complexity, and Artificial Life* (Cagnoni S *et al.*, Eds.), Berlin, Springer: 135-147

2. **Acerbi A**, Lampos V, Bentley RA (2013), Robustness of emotions extraction from 20th century English books, in: *IEEE BigData 2013 Proceedings*: 1-8

3. **Acerbi A**, Ghirlanda S, Enquist M (2012), Regulatory Traits in Cultural Evolution, in: *Proceedings of the Italian Workshop on Artificial Life and Evolutionary Computation* (Cagnoni S *et al.*, Eds.), University of Parma: 1-9

4. Pugliese S, **Acerbi A**, Miglino O, Marocco D (2012), Emergence of Leadership in a Group of Autonomous Robots, in: *Proceedings of the Post-Graduate Conference on Robotics and Development of Cognition*: 36-39

5. **Acerbi A**, Marocco D (2009), Orienting learning by exploiting sociality: an evolutionary robotics simulation, in: *IJCNN 2009 Conference Proceedings*, Piscataway, NJ, IEEE Press: 20-27

6. Marocco D, **Acerbi A** (2007), Adaptation and Social Facilitation in a Population of Autonomous Robots, in: *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Epigenetic Robotics* (Berthouze L *et al.*, Eds.), Lund, Lund University Cognitive Science Series: 85-91

7. Cecconi F, Zappacosta S, Marocco D, **Acerbi A** (2007), Social and individual learning in a microeconomic framework, in: *Proceedings of the Econophysics Colloquium and Beyond*, Univeristy of Ancona

8. **Acerbi A**, Marocco D, Nolfi S (2007), Social Facilitation on the Development of Foraging Behaviors in a Population of Autonomous Robots, in: *Advances in Artificial Life. Proceedings of ECAL 2007* (Almeida e Costa F *et al.*, Eds.), Berlin, Springer: 625-634

9. **Acerbi A**, Parisi D (2007), The Evolution of Pain, in: *Advances in Artificial Life. Proceedings of ECAL 2007* (Almeida e Costa F *et al.*, Eds.), Berlin, Springer: 816-824

10. **Acerbi A**, Nolfi S (2007), Social Learning and Cultural Evolution in Embodied and Situated Agents, in: *Proceedings of the First IEEE Symposium on Artificial Life* (Abbass HA *et al.*, Eds.), Piscataway, NJ, IEEE Press: 333-340

OTHERS:

1. **Acerbi A**, Brand C (2020), Why are pop songs getting sadder than they used to be?, *aeon*

2. **Acerbi A**[*], van Leeuwen EJC[*], Haun DBM, Tennie C (2018), Sigmoidal acquisition curves do not necessarily indicate conformity. Reply to Smaldino et al. (2018)", *Scientific Reports*, 8, 14016 ([*]equal contribution)

3. **Acerbi A**, Sacco PL (2018), Folk-economic beliefs as "evidential fiction": Putting the economic public discourse back on track (Commentary on Boyer & Petersen), *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 41, e159

4. **Acerbi A** (2017), Review of Tim Lewens, Cultural Evolution: Conceptual Challenges, *Philosophy of Science*, 84(1)

5. **Acerbi A** (2013), The History of Our Emotions in Millions of Books, *Huffington Post (USA Edition)*

6. Ghirlanda S, **Acerbi A**, Enquist M, Nakamaru M (2010), The Sometimes Evitable Route to Conservatism and Persuasiveness. A Replay to Xue and Costopoulus, *Current Anthropology*, 51(2): 271-272

7. **Acerbi A**, Marocco D, Vogt P (2008), *Social Learning in Embodied Agents*, special double issue of *Connection Science*, 20(2-3)

Recent conference presentations, invited talks and workshops

- *Digital age: the long view*, Seminar Series, Oxford Internet Institute, Oxford University, UK, February 25, 2020 (invited)

- *The culture that wasn't?*, Centre for the study of cultural evolution, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden, December 16, 2019 (invited)

- *Cognitive attraction and online misinformation*, Centre for Culture and Evolution, Brunel University, London, UK, May 22, 2019 (invited)

- *Cognitive attraction and online misinformation*, CBEN Cultural Evolution, University of Antwerp, Belgium, November 22, 2018

- *Cognitive attraction and online misinformation*, Jheronimus Academy of Data Science, Den Bosch, The Netherlands, November 20, 2018 (invited)

- *Birth of the cool. Cultural dynamics of emotion words in fiction and song lyrics*, Late Summer School in Digital Humanities, Moscow, Russia, October 9, 2017 (invited)

- *Cultural Evolution in the Digital Age*, Themed session at the Inaugural Cultural Evolution Society Conference, Jena, Germany, September 13, 2017 (organiser of the session)

- *Three predictions for cultural attraction theory*, Cultural Evolution by Cultural Attraction: Empirical Issues - Satellite Workshop of EHBEA 2017, Paris, France, April 5, 2017 (invited)

Teaching

- Brunel University London, guest lecturer - Evolutionary perspective on culture, Special topics in culture and evolution, Cross-cultural and evolutionary research methods, Individual differences, Introduction to Bioinformatics - 2020

- Ecole Normale Supérieure, guest lecturer - Introduction to Cognitive Social Sciences - 2018

- Eindhoven University of Technology, coordinator and lecturer - Evolutionary Foundations of Innovation Science - 2017 and 2018

- University of West England, guest lecturer - Research Skills - 2014, 2015 and 2018

- Eindhoven University of Technology, teaching supervisor - Introduction to Modelling - 2016 and 2017

- University of Bristol, seminar series (8 seminars) - Anthropology and Well-being - 2015

- University of Bristol, guest lecturer - Contemporary Theory in Anthropology, Advanced Writing in Archaeology and Anthropology, Anthropological Methods - 2014 and 2015

- University of Bristol, teaching assistant - Contemporary Theory in Anthropology - 2013

- Stockholm University, guest lecturer - Human ethology - 2011 and 2012

Supervision

- I am currently supervising one BSc project and one MSc project and co-supervising one MSc project at Brunel University London

- I co-supervised two MRes project at the University of Bristol

Academic service

- Deputy Division Tutor, Brunel University London - 2020 - current

- PhD panel member (thesis committee secretary), Simon Carrignon: Content-Dependent Biases in Social Learning Strategies: a multiscale approach, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona - 2019

Reviewer

- **Books:** Berghahn Books, Cambridge University Press, MIT Press.

- **Grant Applications:** EHBEA 2014 Student Research Grant Competition, Swedish Research Council (Individual Grant Application), Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation (Wallenberg Academy Fellows)

- **Journals:** Acta Biotheoretica, Animal Behaviour, Advances in Complex Systems, Behaviour & Information Technology, Behavior Research Methods, Biology & Philosophy, Biology Letters, Cognitive Science, Cognitive Systems Research, Cognition, Connection Science, Current Zoology, Evolution and Human Behavior, Evolutionary Anthropology, Evolutionary Human Sciences, Evolution Medicine and Public Health, IEEE Autonomous Mental Development, Interaction Studies, Journal of Evolutionary Psychology, Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulations, Journal of Cognition and Culture, Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, Journal of General Philosophy of Science, Journal of Theoretical Biology, Learning & Behavior, Mathematical Anthropology and Cultural Theory, Nature Human Behaviour, Palgrave Communications, PLoS ONE, Proceedings of the Royal Society B, Royal Society Interface, SAGE Open, Scientific Reports, Synthese, The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science, Trends in Ecology and Evolution.

- **Conferences:** Applications in Cultural Evolution: Arts, Languages, Technologies 2018, ISBE 2016, ECSI 2014, ECAL 2013, EPOS V, WIVACE 2012, WIVACE 2008, SAB 2008, WIVACE 2007, ECAL 2007, EEG 2007, SAB 2006, WIVA III