

DOMNA BANAKOU

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Education

PhD in Clinical Psychology and Psychobiology

University of Barcelona 2014 – 2017

Funded by the FI-DGR 2014 Grant for universities and research centres for the recruitment of new research personnel.

MSc in Computer Graphics, Vision and Imaging

University College London 2009 - 2010

BSc in Computer Science

Ionian University 2004 – 2009

Research

New York University Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates)

Principal Investigator (*August 2022 – present*)

- Tamkeen NYU Abu Dhabi – Faculty Research Funding (76 71220 ADHPG VP211)

GetLab, Cyprus University of Technology (Limassol, Cyprus)

Senior Research Associate (*Sept 2020 – present*)

CYENS Centre of Excellence (Nicosia, Cyprus)

Research Fellow (*Sept 2020 – Sept 2022*)

- VR for Well-Being Research Group. Principal Investigator: Dr. Despina Michael-Grigoriou.

Event-Lab, University of Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain)

Postdoc (*May 2017 – July 2022*)

- Project: Moments in Time in Immersive Virtual Environments (MoTIVE), ERC Advanced Grant (<https://doi.org/10.3030/742989>). Principal Investigator, Prof. Mel Slater.

Research Assistant (*Jan 2011 – Apr 2017*)

- Project: Beinstein – Becoming Einstein: The Influence of Virtual Embodiment on Intelligence (PSI2014-56301-R Ministerio de Economía, Industria y Competitividad of Spain). Principal Investigator, Prof. Mel Slater.
- Project: VERE – Virtual Embodiment and Robotic Re-Embodiment (<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/257695>). Principal Investigator, Prof. Mel Slater.

University College London (London, UK)

Research Assistant (May 2010 – Sept 2010)

- Project: The exploitation of immersive virtual reality for the study of moral judgements by Leverhulme Trust (<https://www.leverhulme.ac.uk/research-project-grants-2009>). Principal Investigators, Dr. Sylvia Xueni Pan, Prof. Mel Slater.

Teaching

New York University Abu Dhabi (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates)

Visiting Assistant Professor of Practice

- [*IM-UH 1011 Communications Lab*](#), Major Interactive Media (Fall 2022, Spring 2023, Fall 2023, Spring 2024, Fall 2024, Spring 2025).
- [*IM-UH 2320 Games and Play*](#), Major Interactive Media (Fall 2022, Spring 2023, Spring 2024, Spring 2025).
- [*IM-UH 2516 Virtual Reality Research and Applications*](#) (Fall 2023, Fall 2024).
- *IM-UH 4001 Capstone Project*, Major Interactive Media (Spring 2023, Fall 2023, Spring 2024, Fall 2024, Spring 2025).
- *CS-UH 4001 Capstone Project in Computer Science 1*, Major Computer Science (Fall 2023, Spring 2024, Fall 2024).

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Barcelona, Spain)

Assistant Professor - MSc in Video Game Design and Programming

- *M7.458 Videogame programming in Unity3D* (Spring 2021, Spring 2022).

Past Teaching

- Guest Lecturer, Virtual Reality in Psychology, Executive MSc Behavioural Science, The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK (June 2021).
- Seminar Lecturer, Experimental research in virtual reality – theory and technology, MSc in Brain and Cognition, Department of Information and Communication Technologies, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain (Fall 2020).
- Summer School Lecturer, Experimental research in virtual reality – theory, ethics, technology, The Active Self autumn school, Herrsching, Germany (Oct 2019).

- Seminar Lecturer, Experimental research in virtual reality – theory and technology, MSc Interactive Physiology, Faculty of Biology, University of Barcelona (*Fall 2014, 2015*).

Publications (selected)

Sun W., Banakou D., Świdrak J., Valori I., Slater M., Fairhurst M.T.(2024). Multisensory experiences of affective touch in virtual reality enhance engagement, body ownership, pleasantness, and arousal modulation. *Virtual Reality* 28, 162 (4.4, Q1).

Hadjipanayi C., Banakou D., Michael-Grigoriou D.(2024). Virtual reality exergames for enhancing engagement in stroke rehabilitation: A narrative review. *Heliyon*, 10:18, e37581 (3.4, Q1)

Banakou D., Johnston T., Beacco A., Senel G., Slater M. (2024). Desensitizing Anxiety Through Imperceptible Change: Feasibility Study on a Paradigm for Single-Session Exposure Therapy for Fear of Public Speaking. *JMIR Form Res* 2024;8:e52212 (2.0, Q2)

Pavlidou A., Gorisse G., Banakou D., Walther S. (2023). Using virtual reality to assess gesture performance deficits in schizophrenia patients. *Front. Psychiatry* 14:1191601. (4.52, Q1)

Hadjipanayi C., Banakou D., Michael-Grigoriou D. (2023). Art as therapy in virtual reality: A scoping review. *Front. Virtual Real.* 4:1065863. doi: 10.3389/frvir.2023.1065863. (3.86, Q2)

Slater, M., Cabrera, C., Senel, G. Banakou D., Beacco A., Oliva R., Gallego J. (2023). The sentiment of a virtual rock concert. *Virtual Reality* 27, 651–675 (2023). (4.2, Q1)

Banakou D., Slater M. (2023). A comparison of two methods for moving through a virtual environment: walking in place and interactive redirected walking. *Frontiers in Virtual Reality Sec. Virtual Reality and Human Behaviour* 4:1294539. (3.86, Q2)

Slater M., Banakou D., Beacco A., Gallego J., Macia-Varela, R Oliva M. (2022). A Separate Reality: An Update on Place Illusion and Plausibility in Virtual Reality. *Frontiers in Virtual Reality* 3:914392. (3.86, Q2)

Slater M., Banakou D. (2021). The Golden Rule as a Paradigm for Fostering Prosocial Behavior with Virtual Reality. *Current Directions in Psychological Science: November*. (3.03, Q1)

Banakou D., Beacco A., Neyret S., Blasco-Oliver M., Seinfeld S., Slater M. (2020). Virtual body ownership and its consequences for implicit racial bias are dependent on social context. *R. Soc. Open Sci.* 7:201848. (3.66, Q1)

Banakou, D., Kishore S., Slater M. (2018). Virtually Being Einstein Results in an Improvement in Cognitive Task Performance and a Decrease in Age Bias. *Front. Psychol.* 9(917). (3.8, Q1)

Hamilton-Giachritsis, C., Banakou, D., Quiroga, M.G., Giachritsis C., Slater, M. (2018). Reducing risk and improving maternal perspective-taking and empathy using virtual embodiment. *Sci. Rep.* 8(1). (4.6, Q1)

Banakou, D., & Slater, M. (2017). Embodiment in a virtual body that speaks produces agency over the speaking but does not necessarily influence subsequent real speaking. *Sci. Rep.* 7(1). (4.6, Q1)

Banakou D., Parasuram D. H., & Slater M. (2016). Virtual Embodiment of White People in a Black Virtual Body Leads to a Sustained Reduction in their Implicit Racial Bias. *Front. Hum. Neurosci.* 10 (601). (2.9, Q2)

Banakou, D., & Slater, M. (2014). Body ownership causes illusory self-attribution of speaking and influences subsequent real speaking. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. (PNAS)* 111, 17678–17683. (11.1, Q1)

Banakou, D., Groten, R. & Slater M. (2013). Illusory ownership of a virtual child body causes overestimation of object sizes and implicit attitude changes. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. (PNAS)* 1 (6), 12846–12851. (11.1, Q1)

Conferences and Invited Talks (selected)

“Embodied interactions in VR for Promoting Social Inclusion”, HAPCOR Summer School. TU Dresden, Germany, 4-5 September 2024 (*invited speaker*).

“How Artificial Character Embodiment shapes user behaviour in multi-modal interactions”, 25th International Conference on Multimodal Interaction. Paris, France, 13 October 2023 (*keynote speaker*).

“Enhancing Prosocial Behavior in VR”, Würtual Reality XR-Meeting, Würzburg, Germany, 11 April 2023 (*keynote speaker*).

“Embodiment for a Kinder Society”, The Czech Transformative Tech Community, Deloitte, RedButton Edu and pAloneers., Czech Republic (Online), 16 June 2022 (*keynote speaker*).

“VR in Healthcare and Rehabilitation”, Universitäre Psychiatrische Dienste Bern, Bern, Switzerland, 5 June 2022 (*invited speaker*).

“How to Overcome the Body”, VACZINE ART Symposium, Düsseldorf (Online), Germany, 4 July 2021 (*keynote speaker*).

“Challenging Tech’s Path Forward - Avatars for Virtual Reality”, SXSW PanelPicker 2021 (*panel speaker*).

“Being Somebody Else: The Future of Narrative Storytelling”, FilmInteractive 2019, Łódź, Poland, October 2019 (*invited speaker*).

Awards and Grants (selected)

- Faculty Advancement Grant, UAE, 2024.
- Tamkeen 2024 Faculty Research Grant, UAE, 2024.
- Tamkeen 2023 Faculty Research Grant, UAE, 2023.
- Tamkeen 2022 Faculty Research Grant, UAE, 2022.
- FENS-IBRO/PERC grant, Berlin, 2018.
- SIGGRAPH European Contest, IST Austria, 2016.
- “Best Young Researcher” Award – University of Barcelona, 2015.
- FI-DGR Grant for universities and research centres for the recruitment of new research personnel, 2014.

Media References (selected)

- Japan Broadcasting Corporation NHK , “Frontiers – The World is Made of Illusions”, Oct 31, 2024, by Joe Odagiri and Yu Aoi.
- Popular Mechanics, “What is the Proteus Effect”, Oct 16, 2023, by Sarah Wells.
- Epsilon Magazine, “Effect Proteus – Le Pouvoir des Avatars”, Oct 9, 2023, by Muriel Valin.
- Observer, “Mind Over Body” Mar 2020, by Alexandra Michel.
- ERT, “Virtual reality and the sense of embodiment” Nov 2019, by Eve Tsirigotaki.
- The Psychologist, “Shuttering the Self” Aug 2019, by Ella Rhodes.
- BBC, “Virtual lives: Could VR change how we think of others?” Oct 11, 2018, by BBC Click.
- Advocate, “A Study Showed Better Results on Cognitive Tasks for People Who Embody Albert Einstein in VR”, Jul 13, 2018, by Brad Bennett.
- Bias Film, 2018, directed/produced by Robin Hauser.
- The New Yorker, “Are we already living in virtual reality?” Apr 2, 2018, by Joshua Rothman.
- The New Yorker, “This is your avatar speaking” Feb 20, 2015, by Nicola Twilley.
- BBC, “Can virtual reality be used to tackle racism?” Nov 28, 2013, by Melissa Hogenboom.

Academic Activities & Memberships (selected)

- EAI ArtsIT 2024 General Chair, Abu Dhabi, UAE, November 2024.
- EAI ArtsIT 2024 Local Chair, Abu Dhabi, UAE, November 2024.
- EuroXR 2024 Application Program Chair, Athens, Greece, November 2024.

- ISEA 2022 International Program Committed/Art Jury, Barcelona, Spain, June 2022.
- IEEE VR 2022 Conference Track International Program Committee, Christchurch, New Zealand.
- ICAT-EGVE International Demo Chair Committee, 2018, Limassol, Cyprus.
- SIGGRAPH Volunteer, 2016, Anaheim, USA.
- Brain Awareness Week (BAW) campaign volunteer, University of Barcelona, 2016, Barcelona, Spain.
- IEEE Melecon International Program Committee, 2016, Limassol, Cyprus.
- 1st IR3C PhD Symposium Organizing Committee, 2015, Barcelona, Spain.
- 2nd VERE PhD Symposium Chair Committee, 2014, Barcelona, Spain.
- Guest Associate Editor, Frontiers in Psychology: Personality and Social Psychology.
- Guest Associate Editor, Frontiers in Virtual Environments.
- Guest Associate Editor, Frontiers in Neuropsychology.
- Editor, Frontiers in Psychology: Consciousness Research.
- Editor, Frontiers in Virtual Reality: Virtual Reality and Human Behaviour.
- Editor, Frontiers Research Topics.
- Editor, PLOS ONE.
- EuroXR Association Member.
- SigmaXi Honor Association Full Member (by nomination only).