

# MELISA AKAN

## Curriculum Vitae

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Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences  
University of Massachusetts Amherst  
[makan@umass.edu](mailto:makan@umass.edu)

### EDUCATION

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*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL*

Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology 2021

Thesis: Haven't I seen you before? The complex effects  
of prior familiarity on face recognition

Advisor: Aaron S. Benjamin

M.S. in Cognitive Psychology 2018

Thesis: The effect of lineup size on eyewitness identification accuracy

Advisor: Aaron S. Benjamin

*Boğaziçi (Bosphorus) University, Istanbul*

M.A. in Cognitive Psychology 2011

Thesis: The organization of autobiographical and public events across  
different social identities

Advisor: Ali Tekcan

B.A. in Psychology (High Honors) 2008

### GRANTS AND AWARDS

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NSF SBE Postdoctoral Research Fellowship 2022-2024  
\$138,000 USD

Dissertation Completion Fellowship 2020 – 2021  
\$20,000 USD

Psychonomic Society Graduate Travel Award 2018  
\$1,000 USD

Graduate Teaching Certificate 2022

List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent Fall 2016, Fall 2018

### RESEARCH INTERESTS

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Human memory in the laboratory and in educational and legal settings, the role of race on face perception and recognition, retrieval practice effects, decision-making processes at retrieval, eyewitness memory, recognition memory, face recognition, intentional forgetting, autobiographical memory, collective memory

## PUBLICATIONS

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- Akan, M.**, & Yüvrük, E., Starns, J. J. (under review). Memory error speed predicts subsequent accuracy for recognition misses but not false alarms.
- Akan, M.** & Benjamin, A. S. (under review). Haven't I seen you before? The complex effects of prior familiarity on face recognition.
- Akan, M.**, Robinson, M. M., Mickes, L., Wixted, J. T., & Benjamin, A. S. (2020). The effect of lineup size on eyewitness identification. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xap0000340>
- Mungan, E., **Akan M.**, & Bilge, T.M. (2019). Tracking familiarity, recognition, and liking increases with repeated exposures to nontonal music: Revisiting MEE-revisited. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 54, 63-75. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2019.02.002>
- Akan, M.**, Stanley, S., & Benjamin, A. S. (2018). Testing enhances memory for context. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 103, 19-27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jml.2018.07.003>
- Akan, M.**, & Sahakyan, L. (2018). Repeated failures to obtain selective directed forgetting in lab and online samples and variations in stimuli. *Memory*, 26(3), 294-305. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658211.2017.1327600>
- Rathbone, C. J., Salgado, S., **Akan, M.**, Havelka, J., & Bernstein, D. (2016). Imagining the future: A cross-cultural perspective on possible selves. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 42, 113-124. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2016.03.008>
- Moulin, C. J. A., Souchay, C., Buchanan, S., Bradley, R., Karadöller, D. Z., & **Akan, M.** (2014). Déjà vu in older adults. In B. L. Schwartz, & A. S. Brown (Eds.), *Tip-of-the-tongue states and related phenomena* (pp.281-304), New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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- Akan, M.**, Starns, J. J., & Cohen, A. L. (2022, November). *How does matching a feature across lineup members affect the decision process?* Poster presented at the 2022 annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society, Boston, MA.
- Akan, M.** & Benjamin, A. S. (2018, November). *The effect of prior familiarity and conceptual knowledge on face recognition accuracy*. Poster presented at the 2018 annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society, New Orleans, LA.
- Akan, M.** & Sahakyan, L. (2016, May). *Selective directed forgetting remains a puzzle*. Poster presented at the 2016 international meeting of the Psychonomic Society, Granada, Spain.
- Akan, M.**, Bilge, T. M., & Mungan, E. (2014, November). Effect of repetition on affect and recognition judgments in tonal and nontonal tunes. Poster presented at the 2014 annual meeting of Psychonomic Society, Long Beach, CA.

**Akan, M., & Boduroğlu, A.** (2009, April). *Görsel Bilgiyi Bütünsel İşlemenin Çalışma Belleği Kapasitesine Etkisi (Effects of holistic processing on visual working memory capacity)*. Poster presented at the 16th National Psychology Congress, Mersin, Turkey.

## INVITED TALKS

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**Akan, M.** (2021, November). *Prior familiarity can either impair or enhance face recognition memory*. Cognitive Brown Bag, Psychological and Brain Sciences, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

**Akan, M.** (2021, March). *Haven't I seen you before? Effects of prior familiarity on face recognition memory*. Cognitive Talk Series, Department of Psychology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

**Akan, M.** (2019, March). *The effect of prior familiarity and conceptual knowledge on face recognition accuracy*. Cognitive Talk Series, Department of Psychology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

**Akan M.** (2018, March). *Does lineup size affect eyewitness identifications?* Cognitive Talk Series, Department of Psychology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

**Akan, M.** (2016, September). *Is it possible to selectively forget unwanted information?* Cognitive Talk Series, Department of Psychology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL*

**(Online) Learning and Memory (4 semesters)** 2019 – 2021

*Instructor* (Summer 2020, Winter 2020-2021)

*Course Developer* (Fall 2019, Spring 2020)

Developed the syllabus, lecture slides, audio recordings of voice-over lectures, course activities, and exam questions for the online section of the Learning and Memory course housed in Moodle.

**Cognitive Psychology** 2019

*Teaching Assistant* (Spring 2019)

Instructor: Kara Federmeier

**Learning and Memory** 2017

*Instructor* (Summer 2017)

**Learning and Memory (2 semesters)** 2017

*Teaching Assistant*

Instructors: Gary Dell (Spring 2017), Aaron Benjamin (Fall 2017)

**Introduction to Psychology (3 semesters)**  
*Instructor* (Fall 2016, Spring 2018, Fall 2018)  
Coordinator: Lisa Travis

2016 – 2018

## **EMPLOYMENT**

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Postdoctoral Fellow  
*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Sept 2021 – Present

User Experience Research Intern  
*State Farm*

May – Aug 2020

Completed a project on the testing of direct mail marketing messages and prepared reports on user interviews.

Research Assistant, Advisor: Aaron Benjamin  
*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

2016 – 2021

Carried out multiple independent research projects examining various aspects of human memory and their application in educational and legal settings. Research topics include the effect of self-testing on memory, factors that affect eyewitness memory, and the effect of prior familiarity on face recognition.

Research Assistant, Advisor: Lili Sahakyan  
*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

2015 – 2016

Carried out multiple independent research projects on selective directed forgetting and the effect of distinctiveness on memory.

Research Assistant, Advisor: Esra Mungan  
*Boğaziçi (Bosphorus) University, Istanbul*

2014 – 2015

Conducted a study examining the relationship between familiarity, affective judgments, and recognition memory for tonal and nontonal music.

Project Coordinator  
*Hrant Dink Foundation, Istanbul*

2012 – 2014

As the coordinator of the Media Watch on Hate Speech Project, organized workshops, and conferences with international scholars on media discourse and discrimination and coordinated the publication of media watch reports.

Research Assistant, Advisor: Ali Tekcan  
*Boğaziçi (Bosphorus) University, Istanbul*

2008 – 2011

Conducted research on collective memories of Turkish citizens and the organization of memory for personal and public events in different social groups.

Research Assistant, Advisor: Chris Moulin  
*University of Leeds, Leeds, U.K.*

Apr – Jul 2010

Worked on multiple research projects on déjà vu in older adults, memory errors in patients with Alzheimer's, and the effect of self-referential processing on memory.

Research Assistant, Advisors: Aslı Özyürek and Aylin Küntay  
*Koç University, Istanbul*

Mar – Sept 2008

Collected data for research projects examining the effect of language on nonverbal event representations, and language comprehension in 3-year-old infants.

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

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Ad hoc reviewer

2019 - Present

*Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*

*Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*

*Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications*

*Perspectives on Psychological Science*

*Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*

*Memory*

*Applied Cognitive Psychology*

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

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Data analysis and visualization: R, MATLAB, Microsoft Office Applications

Programming: MATLAB, E-prime, FlashActionScript3, JavaScript, HTML, CSS

## REFERENCES

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### **Professor Aaron S. Benjamin**

Department of Psychology

University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign

603 East Daniel Street

Champaign, IL 61820

[asbenjam@illinois.edu](mailto:asbenjam@illinois.edu)

### **Associate Professor Jeffrey Starns**

Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences

University of Massachusetts Amherst

434 Tobin Hall, 135 Hicks Way

Amherst, MA 01003

[jstarns@umass.edu](mailto:jstarns@umass.edu)

### **Professor Kara Federmeier**

Department of Psychology, Department of Kinesiology,

Program in Neuroscience, and the Beckman Institute

for Advanced Science and Technology

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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Champaign, IL 61820

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