



AYUDAS RAMÓN Y CAJAL CONVOCATORIA 2016

Turno de acceso general

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Título:

Understanding the temporal determinants of choice and happiness

Resumen de la Memoria:

Unlike other animals, human beings spend a lot of time thinking about what is not going on around them, re-experiencing events that happened to them in the past and pre-experiencing events that might happen to them in the future. I am primarily interested in understanding how this ability shapes people's decisions and happiness in the present. Specifically, I investigate (1) how people's memories of outstanding past experiences can impair the way they enjoy their current experiences, and (2) how people's biased projections of the future can impair the decisions they make regarding their happiness. In other words, how can your choice and enjoyment of today's activities be profoundly affected by what you did yesterday and the plans you have for tomorrow?

The ability to travel through time to relive the past and envision the future is inarguably one of the greatest cognitive achievements of the human mind, but my research suggests that this achievement comes with several emotional costs that people should be aware of.

1. My work on the way people remember the past explores novel determinants of what makes us satisfied with our experiences—from chocolates to vacations—and offers insight into understanding happiness over time. It suggests that, although many people pursue the best things in life in the belief that it will make them happy, these peak experiences will, ironically, often reduce their happiness in the long run.

2. Similarly, my work on the way people imagine the future highlights the unforeseen role of personal change on individuals' future emotional lives—oversights that can lead to poor decisions with regard to future happiness. In particular, I show that people have a fundamental misconception about their future selves. Time is a powerful force that transforms people's preferences, reshapes their values, and alters their personalities, and people seem to generally underestimate the magnitude of these changes. In studies of more than 17,000 people ranging in age from 18 to 68 (Quoidbach, Gilbert, & Wilson, 2013, *Science*), I found evidence to indicate that people accurately remember how much their personalities, values, and preferences have changed in the past decade, but severely underestimate how much they will change in the next decade. Adolescents, their parents, and their grandparents all seem to think of the present as a watershed moment in which they have finally become the people they will forever be—and all of them are wrong. This research shows that this "End of History Illusion" leads to misguided financial and personal decisions.

Recently, in order to better understand the underlying determinants of everyday choices and happiness, I created a novel smartphone application, which allows to monitor people's emotion and decisions in real time as they go about their daily lives. More than 50,000 people throughout Europe already use this application, providing literally millions of observations monthly and a tremendous opportunity to understand the drivers of everyday decisions and well-being at a scale never seen before.

Ultimately, I am interested in using my research to help design optimal positive emotional experiences, to improve people's satisfaction in the long run, and help individuals making better decisions regarding their future happiness.

Resumen del Currículum Vitae:

I am currently a Visiting Professor in the Department of Economics and Business at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. I completed my Ph.D. in Psychology conjointly at the University of Liege and the University of British Columbia in 2010 under the direction of Prof. Michel Hansenne and Prof. Elizabeth Dunn, respectively. Before joining UPF, I worked three years as Postdoctoral Fellow at Harvard University under the direction of Prof. Daniel Gilbert in the Psychology Department.

My research explores the temporal determinants of choice and happiness. I have published a total of 27 articles on the topic in well-known peer-reviewed journals. These include two first-author publications in *Psychological Science* (the leading journal in psychology; Impact Factor [IF] = 4.94), one first author publication in *Psychological Bulletin* (IF = 14.46), one co-first author publication in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS; IF = 9.42), and one first-author publication in *Science* (one of the most prestigious scientific journals in world; IF = 31.03). This research is frequently covered in popular media outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *Financial Times*, the *BBC*, the *Daily Mail*, *Scientific American*, and *CNN*.

I am a member of several scientific societies and I was recently appointed a member of the Program Committee for the meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, a major event in the field attracting thousands of scholars annually. I have also been an invited seminar speaker in many outstanding research institutions, including Harvard, Harvard Business School, Northeastern University,



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Carnegie Mellon University, INSEAD, HEC-Paris, and University of Warwick, among many others.

I am an Associated Editor for *Psychologica Belgica* and I regularly serve as a reviewer for 24 different journals (including the top journals in Psychology like *Psychological Science* and *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*). I have also organized or co-organized several professional events, including the Decision-Science Seminar Series at Harvard University.

I have been the recipients of multiple grants and awards for a total of over 700,000 euros. This includes an Excellence Awards from the Wallonie-Bruxelles International organization, a grant from the Belgian American Education Foundation (a very competitive grant based at Yale University and promoting Belgian researchers working in the U.S.), and a postdoctoral grant from the Belgian National Found for Scientific Research in which I ranked 1st out of almost a hundred applicants. In Spain, I was awarded a Beatriu de Pinos grant, a Juan de la Cierva grant, and 2 grants as a Principal Investigator from the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (MINECO), Subprograma Estatal de Generación de Conocimiento (# PSI2016-75353-P and #PSI2013-41909-P; for a total of. 194,810 euros).

In addition my research activities, I have published 3 popular science books on emotions and happiness ☑ translated in 6 languages ☑ and hosted my own TV series about the Science of Happiness on the French television channel France 2.



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Título:

Análisis Aplicado del Comportamiento Clínico

Resumen de la Memoria:

I am interested in the use of the psychological principles of learning in the development of evidence-based interventions for individuals with complex disabilities. My main lines of research can be summarized as follows.

Evidence-Based Interventions and Outcome Research in Individuals with Autism and other Severe Disabilities.

I have conducted a series of studies evaluating novel approaches to the assessment and treatment of problem behaviours in individuals with autism and other severe disabilities. I have also conducted epidemiological and meta-analytical studies in this area. For example, in a recently completed study my students and I evaluated a novel strategy to reduce bruxism in individuals with intellectual disability by using EMG technology and the presentation of specific types of social stimuli. In another example in Querim et al. (2013) we developed an abbreviated method to select evidence-based interventions for problem behaviour in individuals with autism and intellectual disability. This strategy resulted in 80% time savings during the assessment phase and is already in use among clinicians in the field. I also have an interest in evidence aggregation and evidence-based practice guides. For example, in Virues-Ortega (2010) and Virues-Ortega et al. (2013) we summarized the evidence of various psychosocial interventions for autism spectrum disorder and produced some clinical recommendations. These meta-analyses have been downloaded thousands of times from the publisher's website and have been cited by health decision-makers and government organizations.

Knowledge Translation Targeting Individuals with Autism and Severe Developmental Disabilities.

As suggested above, I am interested in the transfer of experimental research into applications. For example, I am currently involved in a research project funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to promote the uptake of evidence-based interventions by special education teachers. As part of this project in Virues-Ortega et al. (2014) we developed an evidence-based clinical decision-making guide synthesizing the evidence from hundreds of studies into a clinician- and teacher-friendly decision-making tool.

Expanding Psychological Methods for Research and Practice.

I have made contributions in the areas of experimental design in clinical settings, analysis of behavioural factors in population-based studies, and outcome research and meta-analysis of behaviour-analytic interventions. I have recently published methodological articles on experimental design at Behavior and Philosophy, Behavior Therapy, and International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology. In this connection, I consider important to incorporate technological solutions that would allow a more far-reaching use of psychological principles of learning in applied settings. For example, I am currently collaborating with a mathematician in the development of an algorithm that will interpret complex time-series data produced by clients in real clinical settings. In yet another example, one of my students has recently completed a purposely-developed movement tracking system integrated with a psychological intervention designed to minimize movement among children with autism undergoing magnetic resonance imaging scans.

Resumen del Currículum Vitae:

I am currently senior lecturer level 7 and programme director of the Postgraduate Programme in Applied Behaviour Analysis at the School of Psychology of The University of Auckland. My current position involves a high level of responsibility both in research, teaching, and academic administration. The Behavior Analysis Certification Board ranked our Postgraduate Programme in Applied Behaviour Analysis first worldwide in 2015 by certification exams pass rate from a global pool of nearly 300 university programmes. In addition, the School of Psychology of the University of Auckland was ranked 29th worldwide in the 2016 QS ranking exercise and received 5+ QS stars. I am also member of the board of directors of the Behavior Analyst Certification Board, leading certifying body for behaviour analysts, and associate editor of the Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, the flagship journal of my field. Before my tenure in Auckland, I have been assistant professor and area coordinator at the University of Manitoba in Canada (2010-2014), post-doctoral researcher at the Instituto de Salud Carlos III in Spain (2004-2010), and clinical psychology resident in Spain and the US (Spain Health Ministry competitive residence program) (2001-2004). I have completed pre- and post-doctoral scholarships at the University of Hawaii and the University of Florida under the supervision of Dr. Stephen N. Haynes and Dr. Brian A. Iwata, both renowned scholars in the field of behavioural assessment. My research focuses on the neural, emotional, and behavioural factors of problem behaviour, particularly among individuals with autism spectrum



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disorders and severe disabilities. I also have an interest in outcome research and novel methodological developments in the field of evidence-based behavioural interventions for individuals with intellectual and developmental disability. My work has been supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Manitoba Institutes of Health Research, The Oakley Mental Health Research Foundation, The British Academy and other reputed international agencies totalling over 500,000 USD in funding as principal investigator and co-investigator. I have authored nearly a hundred specialized publications of which 65 are peer-reviewed journal articles. I have been an active contributor to the development of my field through my academic work, an also as part of a number of professional organizations. For example, I am a member of the board of directors of the Behavior Analyst Certification Board Inc.; a certifying agency serving over 20,000 professionals worldwide, I am a member of the accreditation panel of the Colegio Oficial de Psicólogos (Spain), and a member of the editorial board of seven international journals in my area of study.



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Título:

Language and brain: on bilingualism, word-class distinction, and aphasia

Resumen de la Memoria:

My research career began when, during my time as a clinical neuropsychologist at a general hospital near Barcelona, I sought the advice of Prof. Costa to study single cases of aphasia. As a result, I acquired deep expertise on the study of language from a cognitive neuropsychology approach. I performed this research activity in parallel with my PhD thesis about the collateral effects of bilingualism (2006-2010, University of Barcelona). My pre-doctoral phase was highly productive and of high scientific significance. Also, I benefited from three pre-doctoral stays abroad with two of the most influential researchers worldwide in the study of brain and cognition: (a) two stays of 3 months each at University of Birmingham (UK) with Prof. Glyn W. Humphreys and (b) a 6-month stay at the Cognitive Neuropsychology Laboratory (CNLab) at Harvard University with Prof. Alfonso Caramazza.

After I completed my PhD, I began a 3-year post-doctoral phase abroad with Prof. Caramazza. First, I spent one year gaining experience in neuroimaging techniques at the Center for Brain/Mind Sciences (CIMEC; University of Trento, Italy). During that time I was awarded one of the most prestigious postdoctoral fellowships—Marie Curie (IOF)—with which I moved to the CNLab (Harvard University) for two years. Then, I expanded my knowledge on lexical-conceptual representations from a neuroimaging approach.

During these pre- and post-doctoral phases I contributed significantly to issues such as:

- (a) The impact of bilingualism on executive control. My work on whether and how speaking two languages benefits domain-general executive control is now taken as a reference work in this research field.
- (b) Category-specific semantic deficits. I showed that particular types of concept (i.e. animals, as opposed to tools) are more resistant to the damage associated to Alzheimer's disease.
- (c) Category-specific grammatical deficits. I studied single cases to show that the two languages of a bilingual obey the same governing principles of grammatical organization.
- (d) Verb preference in the brain. I used neuroimaging techniques to demonstrate that verb preference in some brain regions is driven by a word's predicative function.

After the completion of my post-doctoral period abroad, I conducted a 3-year post-doctoral phase back in Barcelona thanks to the "return year" of the Marie Curie-IOF and the subsequent 2-year fellowship (Formación Posdoctoral, MINECO). The research activities of this phase, which are still underway, include:

- (1) Leading neuroimaging projects about (i) the study of bilingualism as a contributor to cognitive reserve in dementia, and (ii) the neural correlates of accented-speech processing.
- (2) Leading various neuropsychological studies, such as the one investigating the role of the supplementary motor area in action-language understanding.

Finally, I moved to the Basque Center for Cognition, Brain and Language (BCBL; Donostia-San Sebastián) with THE GOAL OF LAUNCHING A NEW RESEARCH GROUP ON APHASIA. This venture project will represent a beautiful convergence of my expertise on cognitive science, clinical neuropsychology and neuroimaging. The ultimate goal of this project is to establish myself as an experienced researcher at the forefront of a thrilling enterprise: BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGY AS A BASIC SCIENCE AND APPLIED NEUROPSYCHOLOGY.

Resumen del Currículum Vitae:

SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION

-Total citations to date: 1013, h-index: 12 [Source: ResearcherID, Thomson Reuters, last updated Dec 01, 2016; total items in publication list: 28 (27 peer-reviewed journal publications and 1 peer-reviewed book chapter); total items with citation metrics: 23

-[Highly Cited Article Award (2007-2011)] from the journal Cognition: Costa, Hernández & Sebastián-Gallés (2008).

-[Highly Cited Article Award (2014-2016)] from the Journal of Memory and Language: Hernández, Martín, Barceló, & Costa (2013).

-Regarding the quality of the 27 peer-reviewed journal publications:

- 10/27 publications as a first author;
- 20/27 publications in quartile score 1 (Q1);
- 17/27 publications with a maximum of 5 authors.

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITY

I have presented my work in 31 international conferences, being first author in many of them. Also, I have a number of publications in collaboration with international authors with relevant recognition. In addition, I have been investigating at very prestigious foreign centers: A total of six months at the University of Birmingham (UK), more than one year at CIMeC (Trento, Italy), and a total of two years and a half



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at Harvard University (US). It is also worth noting that I have been mentored by two of the most internationally influential researchers: Prof. Glyn W. Humphreys and Prof. Alfonso Caramazza.

REFEREEING ACTIVITY AND OTHER EVIDENCE OF RECOGNIZED EXPERTISE

- Ad-hoc reviewer for 9 international peer-reviewed journals with high impact factor.
- Expert grant reviewer for the Agencia Nacional de Evaluación y Prospectiva (ANEP; Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness): 7 projects reviewed between 2012 and 2014.
- Expert grant reviewer for Small Grants Research Program organized by the scientific journal Language Learning.
- Regularly invited to teach courses in different MA degrees on topics related to language disorders.
- I will take part in the doctoral membership committees of two PhD thesis defenses that will take place in the upcoming months (March and June 2017).

MENTORING

- Due to the nature of the positions I have held, my mentoring activities have often been extra-official and, thus, do not appear on my record: I extra-officially trained 2 PhD students, 1 research assistant, and 1 visiting student.
- Official mentoring:
 - Co-advisor of an undergraduate student. Course: Psychology 985, Spring Term 2013, Harvard University.
 - Co-advisor in 2 ongoing MA theses

CAPACITY TO OBTAIN FUNDING

- Awarded with different competitive fellowships under Regional, National, and European programs.
 - 2014. FWO Post-doctoral fellowship. Government of Flanders. Declined in favor of the ["Formación Posdoctoral-MINECO"](#).
 - 2014. Fellowship for Transnational Academic Careers. European Commission. Declined in favor of the ["Formación Posdoctoral-MINECO"](#).
 - 2013. ["Formación Posdoctoral-MINECO"](#). Government of Spain.
 - 2010. Marie Curie (Modality:International Outgoing Fellowship; IOF). European Commission.
 - 2008. Short Research Visit Programme-AGAUR. Government of Catalonia.
 - 2006. PhD fellowship UB FI-G. Government of Catalonia.
- Participation in 6 research projects financed in competitive calls [" "](#) because of the short duration of post-doctoral contracts, I have not been able to apply for regular grants as PI, with the exception of the Marie Curie-IOF fellowship (["223,669.60"](#); reference: 271671).