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Resonating emotions: an embodied perspective on alterations in facial emotion processing in autism and social anxiety

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Curriculum vitae

Julia Folz was born in Ulm (Germany) on December 23, 1993. Already during her time as student at the Robert-Bosch-Gymnasium in Langenau, she developed a strong interest in understanding the drivers of human behaviour. After her graduation in 2012, she therefore started a Bachelor's degree in Psychology at Heidelberg University. During her time as a Bachelor student, Julia got engaged in research as a student assistant in various departments of the Psychological Institute, including Social Psychology, Developmental and Biological Psychology, and a research group on self-regulation. She also explored research possibilities outside of academia, by joining the SINUS Markt- und Sozialforschung GmbH for a six-months internship. Her inspiring research internship stays at the Affective Brain lab at University College London and the Biological Psychology Department at the University of Tübingen eventually convinced her to continue her journey in academia. These internship experiences additionally fostered Julia's interest in studying physiological processes in the context of emotion. As a result, she decided to investigate the neurophysiological emotional response to aesthetic stimuli in her Bachelor thesis under supervision of Prof. dr. Hagemann, which she completed in 2016. In order to extend her knowledge and skills concerning experimental research, Julia joined a Master's degree in Neuro-cognitive Psychology at LMU Munich, for which she received a scholarship by the Max Weber Program, in the same year. Throughout her Master studies, Julia continued to work as a student assistant in the EEG & Behavior Lab at LMU. Her fascination with the description of dynamics in social interactions eventually led her to join the Research Group "Social Neuroscience" at the Max-Planck-Institute of Psychiatry for her Master thesis in 2018. Under the supervision of Prof. dr. med. Leonhard Schilbach and dr. Dimitris Bolis, Julia investigated the role of alignment between real-time interacting individuals in decision-making on multiple levels, namely subjective experience, gaze and neural activity. In 2019, Julia joined the Comparative Psychology and Affective Neuroscience (CoPAN) lab at Leiden University to obtain a PhD in Cognitive Psychology under supervision of Prof. dr. Mariska Kret and dr. Milica Nikolić. Building up on her interests and experiences, her PhD project focused on physiological processes in the non-verbal communication of emotions. As potential mechanism of social interaction difficulties, she particularly zoomed in on alterations associated with autism and social anxiety in the embodiment of others' emotions and in its linkage to emotion perception. Julia's project involved a collaboration with Prof. dr. med. Katja Kölkebeck at the LVR hospital in Essen. There, PhD student Kristina Nikić conducted experiments with clinical samples,

i.e., individuals on the autism spectrum and individuals with social anxiety, which were planned and overseen by Julia. A Leiden University Fund (LUF) travel grant enabled Julia to establish another collaboration by joining Prof dr. Winkielman's Social Cognition lab at UCSD (San Diego) for a summer research stay in 2022. During her time abroad, she could apply her interest in embodied emotions to a new field, namely politics. In the scope of her PhD research, Julia engaged in various teaching activities. In addition to the supervision of Bachelor and Master thesis projects as well as internships, Julia gave lectures in courses, workgroups and in workshops on topics such as experimental methods, social cognition in psychopathology and emotion research. Following her passion to discuss research with peers, Julia not only attended various conferences and summer schools but also resumed organizing events, which she already engaged in during her Bachelor and Master studies (e.g., the Heidelberger symposium in 2014 and various TedxTUM events). Together with her PhD colleague Chris Riddell, Julia organized a symposium on (embodied) emotions and social connectedness across disciplines at the conference of the European Society for Cognitive Psychology in 2023. Moreover, Chris and Julia applied for funding to organize a mini-conference on positive and negative consequences of interpersonal alignment, the "Co-Align 2023", which was awarded a LUF conference grant. Next to sharing her findings with other scientists, Julia wrote several popular science blogs for the Leiden Psychology Blog to make her PhD research accessible to the general public. In 2024, Julia started a position as Postdoc in the Developmental Psychopathology group at the University of Amsterdam. Here, she is studying how mothers attune to their infants to help them regulate their emotions, and how this relates to the infants' ability to regulate themselves.



List of publications

Published

Folz, J., Nikolić, M., & Kret, M. E. (2024). Individual differences in interoception and autistic traits share altered facial emotion perception, but not recognition per se. *Scientific Reports*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-70299-5>

Folz, J., Akdağ, R., Nikolić, M., van Steenbergen, H., & Kret, M. E. (2023). Facial mimicry and metacognitive judgments in emotion recognition are distinctly modulated by social anxiety and autistic traits. *Scientific Reports*, 13(1), 9730. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-35773-6>

Folz, J., Roth, T. S., Nikolić, M., & Kret, M. E. (2023). Who gets caught by the emotion? Attentional biases toward emotional facial expressions and their link to social anxiety and autistic traits. *Current Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04484-6>

Folz, J., Fiacchino, D., Nikolić, M., Van Steenbergen, H., & Kret, M. E. (2022). Reading Your Emotions in My Physiology? Reliable Emotion Interpretations in Absence of a Robust Physiological Resonance. *Affective Science*, 3, 480–497. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42761-021-00083-5/Published>

Gallup, A. C., Kret, M. E., Eldakar, O. T., **Folz, J.**, & Massen, J. J. M. (2021). People that score high on psychopathic traits are less likely to yawn contagiously. *Scientific Reports*, 11(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-03159-1>

Submitted for publication

Bolis, D., Koike, T., Lahnakoski, J., **Folz, J.**, Lombardo, M., Sadato, N., & Schilbach, L. (2024). Attuned minds: Spontaneous gaze coordination induces shared decision-making and enhances individual confidence. *Manuscript submitted to Nature Communications*.

Folz, J., Nikić, K., Nikolić, M., Janowicz, V., Koelkebeck, K.* & Kret, M. E.* (2024). The Role of the Body in Altered Facial Emotion Perception in Autism and Social Anxiety. *Manuscript submitted to Behaviour Research and Therapy*

In preparation

Akdağ, R.*, **Folz, J.***, & Nikolić, M. Social Functioning in Anxiety Disorders. (book chapter)

Folz, J., Diana, F., Sjak-Shie, E., Nikolić, M., & Kret, M. E. Missing the tune (to trust)? Modulations in Physiological Alignment and Trust Formation by Social Anxiety and Autistic Traits.

Folz, J., Lin, C., Nikolić, M., Kret, M. E., & Winkielman, P. "Feel" that you can trust politicians? The role of bodily responses and their sensation in trust judgments.

Folz, J., Nikolić, M., & Kret, M. E. Validation of the Dutch translation of the Interoceptive Accuracy Scale (IAS) and the Interoceptive Attention Scale (IATS)

Nikić, K., **Folz, J.**, van Dijk, A., Suslow, T., Koelkebeck, K.*, & Kret, M. E.* Integration of Affective States on Facial Emotion Perception in Autism.