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Emotions in the social world: recognition, expression, and alignment across the lifespan

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Acknowledgement

Any person who has undertaken a nearly five-year PhD knows what a unique and transformative experience it is. It is a labor of love, sustained not only by perseverance but also by the unwavering support of a wide network of friends, colleagues, and family. While it is impossible to thank every individual who contributed along the way, I am deeply grateful to all who have been part of this chapter.

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colleagues and mentors at the Cognitive Psychology Unit and the lab support staff at SOLO at Leiden University, who facilitated countless meaningful discussions and ensured I always felt part of the academic community.

The nature of my research meant that I travelled and collaborated frequently to complete various projects, and I am incredibly grateful to those who hosted and supported me along the way. A special thanks to Akihiro Tanaka, who graciously welcomed me at Tokyo Woman's Christian University during the data collection for my cross-cultural study. To Sam Wass, and his team at the BabyDevLab, thank you for the lively and stimulating discussions which gave me confidence in a key statistical approach fundamental to one of the chapters. To Elise Dusseldorp at the Methodology and Statistics Department at Leiden University—your dedication and expertise were instrumental in our meta-analysis. I also extend my gratitude to my collaborators at the University of Amsterdam, Stephanie Mizrahi and Bram van Bockstaele, for their invaluable contributions to our study at NEMO Science Museum.

Beyond academia, having a life outside of research was essential to my well-being and success. To my dearest friends who kept me grounded and sane over the years—Udo, for supporting me through the difficult times, especially during the start of this project during COVID. Timo, for being both an academic mentor and a close friend. Sander, for shifting my perspective on life in ways you may never fully realize. Yuval, for your talented artistic skills and help with the cover. Harm, Pieter, Dine, Iraj, Sylvie, Pascal, Juliette, Julia, Bono, Thomas, Glauco, Sam, Iva, Mat, David, Irene, Leonardo, Ilias, Nick, Pete, Yannick, and Tom—thank you for the countless coffees, beers, clubs, afters, and celebrations that provided much-needed distractions from deadlines and projects.

Finally, to my family and partners—your unwavering support and love have carried me through moments of both joy and existential crisis. To my parents, Carole and Tony Riddell, none of this would have been possible without you. Your steadfast belief in me made it possible to move my life to the Netherlands, and for that, I am forever grateful. To my sister and now brother-in-law, Ash and Vinnie Atkinson, thank you for reminding me to take life a little less seriously and for always welcoming me home in Australia. And to my partners, David Smeulders and Luis Benitez—I cannot imagine this journey without you both. Your love,

encouragement, and presence through the highs and lows have allowed me to grow not just as a scientist, but as a person. I am stronger, wiser, and a better version of myself because of you.

With deep appreciation,

Christopher Riddell

Curriculum Vitea

Christopher Riddell was born in 1993 in Melbourne (Australia) and graduated from his high school studies Whitefriars College in 2011. He completed a Bachelor of Science (with Honors), majoring in Psychology, at the University of Melbourne. During this time, he developed a passion for understanding human social behavior. He eventually completed his thesis on the use of cognitive enhancement drugs and how these were related to academic success among Australian university students. After this time, he moved to Amsterdam, the Netherlands to pursue a Research Master in Brain and Cognitive Sciences, where he graduated *cum laude*.

In his research master project, under the supervision of Dr. Timo Stein, he investigated the face inversion effect under interocular suppression. Here, he developed a fascination in faces and the types of information that faces have the potential to communicate. Following this project, Chris completed his literature thesis on continuous flash suppression, and its potential use as a tool to examine unconscious processing in the brain. This project piqued his interest in the automatic and unconscious way individuals appear to mimic each other's facial expressions, body language, and physiological responses during social interactions. In April 2019, he saw an advertisement for a PhD position at the CoPAN lab under the supervision of Mariska Kret.

After an initial application, two rounds of interviewing and a lengthy assignment, Christopher joined the CoPAN lab in 2019. In the beginning, he worked as a research assistant, coordinating the operations of the Psychology Lab on Wheel. In May of 2020, he began as a PhD student under the supervision of both Prof.dr. Mariska Kret and Dr. Milica Nikolić. Further homing in on the interests he developed in his prior education, Christopher's PhD project explored how emotions are recognized and expressed across humans of different ages and cultures, as well as in nonhuman animals. He combined observational, experimental, and meta-analytic methods to study emotional responses at different levels—facial expressions, physiology, and self-reports.

Throughout his PhD, Christopher was actively involved in teaching and supervision. He led work groups, delivered lectures on socio-cognitive neuroscience, experimental methods, and emotions, and supervised numerous Bachelor's and Master's thesis projects. His research also involved international collaborations, including a project at Tokyo Woman's Christian University with

Akihiro Tanaka and Hisako Yamamoto, supported by the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences' Van der Gaag grant. Additionally, he co-organized the Co-Align Conference on the positive and negative effects of interpersonal alignment, funded by a LUF Conference Organization Grant, alongside colleague Julia Folz.

Christopher also developed a strong passion for science communication during his PhD. In 2023, he was named one of the Dutch Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences' "Faces of Science," a prestigious title awarded to young researchers dedicated to making science accessible to the public. In this role, he published multiple blogs on his research findings, gave public interviews on Dutch and Belgian radio stations, and appeared in a podcast about the function of laughter on NEMO Kennislink. Finally, academic service played a pivotal role in his trajectory. Christopher spent two years as the PhD representative for the Cognitive Psychology Unit, served on the Institute PhD council, and since 2024, as an Early Career Research Section Member for the International Society for Research on Emotion (ISRE).

In 2025, Christopher began a new position as a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Developmental Psychopathology group at the University of Amsterdam. In this role, he investigates key social-familial factors shaping adaptive and non-adaptive shyness in childhood.

List of Publications

Riddell, C., Jensen, C., & Carter, O. (2018). Cognitive enhancement and coping in an Australian university student sample. *Journal of Cognitive Enhancement*, 2(1), 63-69. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41465-017-0046-z>

Riddell, C., Kret, M. E., Zijlstra, T., Nikolic, M. (2023). Fearful apes, happy apes – is fearfulness associated with uniquely human cooperation? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 8(46). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X22001911>.

Riddell, C., Nikolić, M., Dusseldorp, E., & Kret, M. E. (2024). Age-related changes in emotion recognition across childhood: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 150(9), 1094–1117. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000442>

Riddell, C., Nikolic, M., & Kret, M. (2025). Putting the social in emotions: the effect of audience presence on pride and embarrassment across ontogeny. *Developmental Science*, 28(4), e70024. <https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.70024>

Riddell, C.*, Zijlstra, T.*, Nikolic, M., Kret, M.E. (invited contribution, in preparation). Play Face Mimicry Across Species: Comparative Insights from Human Infants, Adults, and Orangutans

*denotes shared first authorship

Riddell, C., Nikolic, M., van Bockstaele, B., Kret, M. E. (in preparation). Working in sync: Children and adults' cooperation and interpersonal liking in face-to-face interactions.

Riddell, C., Roth, T., Yamamoto, H., Tanaka, A., Kret, M., Nikolic, M. (in preparation). Cross-cultural emotions reconsidered: the recognition and production of emotions across age in Japan and the Netherlands.