

Lara Maister

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Contact Details

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Profile & Research Interests

I am a post-doctoral researcher, interested in self-awareness, social cognition, and the perceptual and conceptual distinctions between self and other. My current research investigates the role of embodiment in social cognition, aiming to 'bridge the gap' between the minimal, perceptual senses of body ownership and interoception, and the mechanisms involved in complex social cognition. Another branch of my research has focused on cognition in autism. During my PhD, awarded from the University of Cambridge, I studied the mechanisms employed by children with autism to retrieve episodic and relational memories, and how cognitive information processing biases affect these mechanisms. I am keen to continue my career in psychological research, and am enjoying opportunities to apply my knowledge and research ability to new problems, and learning new methodological and analytical skills.

Current Research

20011-2013 **Post-doctoral Research Fellow, Royal Holloway University of London.**

Principal Investigator Prof. Manos Tsakiris, Lab of Action and Body, Royal Holloway University of London

Research Synopsis The current project aims to investigate the role of embodiment in social cognition. Changes in one's body representation and in the perception of one's internal physiological states can change the way the self perceives other people, and from this we can learn about the embodied basis of a range of implicit and explicit sociocognitive processes.

Responsibilities Recruitment and testing of participants from the student body of Royal Holloway, University of London.
Design of experimental paradigms, employing a variety of experimental, psychophysical, neurocognitive and social psychology methods.
The programming of computer-based paradigms, using a variety of coding languages.
Preparation of applications for ethical approval from various Ethics Committees.
Multivariate statistical analysis of large and complex data sets, and drawing relevant, reliable conclusions from the results of the analyses.
Disseminating the findings of my research, both at international conferences and to other UK research groups. Authoring research reports for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

Past Research

2007-2010 **PhD in Experimental Psychology, University of Cambridge.**

Thesis Title Investigating the Mechanisms Underlying the Episodic Memory Deficits in Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Supervisor Dr. Kate Plaisted-Grant, Laboratory for Research into Autism, University of Cambridge

Research Synopsis Working with children with high-functioning ASD, I investigated the way they use executive functions to process relational and contextual information, both in episodic memory retrieval and in online information processing. My research revealed that children with ASD atypically employ controlled, executive mechanisms to process and retrieve contextual information, perhaps reflecting an effortful suppression of a local information processing bias.

Responsibilities Recruitment of children and adolescents for participation in my research, both from clinical and control populations. Developed working relationships with teachers, parents, Special Educational Needs Coordinators and Local Education Authorities in areas across the UK.
Design of well-controlled experimental paradigms, and the development of innovative testing procedures to measure specific elements of memory, executive functions and cognitive processing biases. The programming of computer-based tests, and multivariate statistical analysis of complex data. Disseminating the findings of my research, both at international conferences and to other UK research groups. Authoring research reports for publication in peer-reviewed journals.
Teaching and supervising undergraduates, and advising new graduates in research methods

Publications & Presentations

Publications

- Maister, L., Slater, M., Sanchez-Vives, M. V., & Tsakiris, M. (2015). Changing bodies changes minds: owning another body affects social cognition. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 19(1) 6-12.
- Maister, L., Cardini, F., Zamariola, G., Serino, A., & Tsakiris, M. (2015). Your Place or Mine: Shared Sensory Experiences Elicit a Remapping of Peripersonal Space. *Neuropsychologia*, IN PRESS.
- Maister, L. & Tsakiris, M. (2014). My Face, My Heart: Cultural Differences in Integrated Bodily Self-Awareness. *Cognitive Neuroscience*, 5(1), 10-16.
- Farmer, H., Maister, L. and Tsakiris, M. (2014) Change my body, change my mind: the effects of illusory ownership of an outgroup hand on implicit attitudes toward that outgroup. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4(1016).
- Maister, L., Simons, J. S., & Plaisted-Grant, K. (2013). Executive functions are employed to process episodic and relational memories in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Neuropsychology*, 27(6), 615-627.
- Ainley, V., Maister, L., Brokfeld, J., Farmer, H., & Tsakiris, M. (2013). More of myself: Manipulating interoceptive awareness by heightened attention to bodily and narrative aspects of the self. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 22(4), 1231-1238.
- Maister, L., Sebanz, N., Knoblich, G., & Tsakiris, M. (2013). Experiencing ownership over a dark-skinned body reduces implicit racial bias. *Cognition*, 128(2), 170-178.
- Maister, L., Banissy, M., & Tsakiris, M. (2013). Mirror-Touch Synaesthesia Changes Representations of Self-Identity. *Neuropsychologia*, 51(5), 802-808.
- Maister, L., Tsiakkas, E., & Tsakiris, M. (2013). I Feel Your Fear: Shared Touch Between Faces Facilitates Recognition of Fearful Facial Expressions. *Emotion*, 13(1), 7-13.
- Maister, L., & Plaisted-Grant, K. (2011). Time perception and its relationship to memory in Autism Spectrum Conditions. *Developmental Science*, 14(6), 1311-1322.

Selected Conference Presentations

- Maister, L. & Tsakiris, M. (2013, June). *Investigating the multisensory basis of self-other distinction*. Oral Presentation at workshop session "Integrating Self and Other: Perception, Action, Metacognition", Budapest, Hungary.
- Maister, L., Banissy, M. & Tsakiris, M. (2013, January). *Mirror-Touch Synaesthesia Changes Representations of Self-Identity*. Poster session presented at a meeting of the Experimental Psychology Society, London, UK.
- Maister, L. & Tsakiris, M. (2012, July). *Culture-dependent modulations of interoceptive awareness during self-observation*. Poster session presented at the Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness 16, Brighton, UK.

Education

2004-2007

First Class BA (Hons) in Natural Sciences from the University of Cambridge

Specialising in Experimental Psychology.

Psychology Subjects

Comparative Psychology, Associative Learning, Developmental Psychology, Learning and Memory, Abnormal Psychology, Connectionism, Statistical Methods

Research Project

Episodic-like memory in the Californian Scrub Jay, supervised by Prof. Nicola Clayton

2002-2004

Shrewsbury Sixth Form College, Shrewsbury

A-level Subjects

Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics A-levels (all grade A)
Art and General Studies AS-levels (both grade A)

1997-2002

Mary Webb School, Shrewsbury

GCSE Subjects

Science Double Award, Mathematics, English Language, English Literature, French, Food Technology, Art and Design, Music (all grade A*)

Additional Skills

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| <i>Computing Proficiency</i> | All MS office applications. SPSS statistical analysis. Experimental design programming languages, including Presentation, MATLAB, E-Prime, DMDX, Visual Basic, PEBL. |
| <i>Training</i> | Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation, fMRI data analysis, University of Cambridge Graduate Training Courses on Presentation Skills, Scientific Writing, Supervising Undergraduates,. |
| <i>Other</i> | Full, clean UK driving licence |

Awards & Prizes

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| <i>2010</i> | Tenth Term Research Scholarship, St. John's College, University of Cambridge. International Society for Autism Research Student Award. |
| <i>2007-2010</i> | Friends of America Domestic Research Studentship, University of Cambridge. |
| <i>2007</i> | Scholarship for Academic Excellence, St. John's College, University of Cambridge. |
| <i>2006</i> | H.E. Durham Fund Award. |