



# OPRC Annual Review

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School of Psychology & Counselling / FASS



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## Stay in touch!



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[P&C School Blogs](#)



[P&C School Twitter](#)



[Email Research Centre](#)

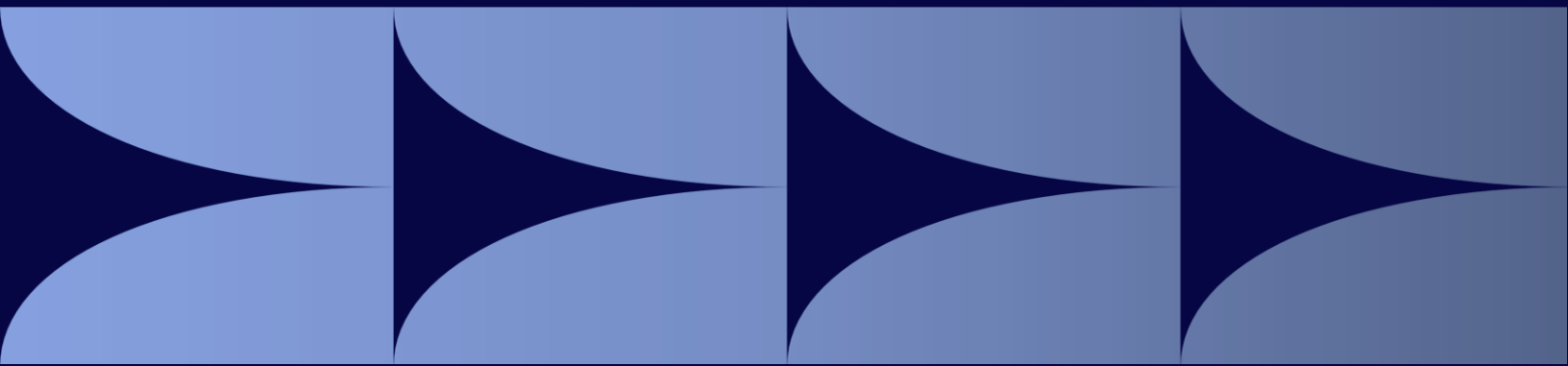
Contact Centre Co-Directors: [Catriona Havard](#); [Peter.Hegarty](#)



*Were we to evaluate people, not only according to their intelligence and their education, their occupation, and their power, but according to their kindness and their courage, their imagination and sensitivity, their sympathy and generosity, there could be no classes.*



**Michael Young**





# Introduction

## Forward from the Director of Research

**The academic year of 2022–2023 was a time of movement, change and new beginnings. The Open Psychology Research Centre (OPRC) entered its third year with a new confidence and supported by a vibrant research community. In this Annual Review, the team are proud to showcase the research-related successes and endeavours of the School of Psychology & Counselling here at the Open University.**

It is part of our mission to be 'Open' to exploring the complex issues facing a changing society. The research activity in our School and supported by OPRC, exemplifies this desire to understand the perspectives of others to make a positive difference to everyday lives. But as with many 'openings', there might also be 'endings'. It is with this in mind that we celebrate the significant work undertaken by Prof. Eleni Andreouli,

who came to the end of her term as Director of Research in the School of Psychology & Counselling in December 2022. Eleni played a fundamental role in establishing OPRC alongside the two Centre Directors, Profs. Paul Stenner and Peter Hegarty. Her legacy meant that a strong foundation was laid for the work of OPRC to move forward.

I would also like to thank the OPRC team for welcoming me into my new role as Director of Research in January 2023. It has been an exciting six months, working closely with the OPRC team and developing new ways to think about supporting research-related activity in our School. In this, participations in our three vibrant and active Research Strands is key. In this report you can read more about the work taking place in the Psychology of Health and Wellbeing (PHeW), Forensic Cognition Research Group (FCRG) and the Culture and Social Psychology group (CuSP).

Our research continues to thrive. We have four members of the School either leading or involved in EU

# OPEN PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE MISSION

## OPEN PSYCHOLOGY

...that crosses disciplinary boundaries



## RELEVANT TO REAL SOCIAL AND PERSON ISSUES

...that acknowledges the degree to which human psychology is shaped by history



## UNDERSTAND, TRANSFORM AND ENRICH LIVES

...of individuals and communities by means of engaged research collaborations which embrace many perspectives



## OPEN AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

...capable of opening fresh angles on complex issues faced by today's fast changing society



"I WANT THE WORLD TO RECOGNISE  
WITH ME THE OPEN DOOR OF EVERY  
CONSCIOUSNESS"  
FRANTZ FANON

Open Psychology  
Research Centre

Horizon 2020 funded projects. Examples include the [GEiO](#) project, which studies the role of gender in online work meetings across four nations (Germany, Iceland, Spain, and UK). A number of our School academic community are involved in [OppAttune](#): Countering Oppositional Political Extremism through Attuned Dialogue.

This study seeks to 'track', 'attune' and 'limit' the rise of extreme political narratives. Other ongoing and successfully funded projects are supported by the British Academy, UK Innovation, NIHR, ESRC, Wellcome and the British Psychological Society.

A key aspect of our research mission is working directly in public to solve issues through knowledge exchange projects. For example, Gemma Briggs successfully secured some Department for Transport funding to work closely with external partner (First Car), who create virtual reality driver education films.

I'm very proud to be able to introduce, in this Annual Review, a host of seed-funded research projects and endeavours, extensive publications and notable speeches and addresses delivered by members of the School of Psychology & Counselling.



**Professor Sarah Crafter**

Director of Research, School of Psychology  
and Counselling

## Forward from Professor Peter Hegarty

*When our critical friends on the Centre Advisory Board gathered in Milton Keynes in the Summer of 2023, they told us that they had noticed considerable growth and development at the OPRC in the previous academic year. Growth in our grant bidding and publications are documented later in this document. That activity has expanded the OPRC's remit to increasing support for those who hold external research grants within the School. In a climate where it was now safe to do so, our strand leads got us meeting each other as researchers face-to-face in 2022-23. At the same time, Dr Marta Prandelli and Dr Nihan Albayrak-Aydemir - the OPRC's first post-docs - developed new systems for engaging the unique OU student body at undergraduate and doctoral levels. We supported research days that drew our first cohort of MSc Psychology (Conversion) students into the research culture. The OPRC's Centre*

*Management Board was dissolved and merged to form the School Research Committee.*

*These developments benefited from the initial framing of the OPRC's goals by its founding Co-director, [Professor Paul Stenner](#). Paul stood down from his role as Co-Director in 2023 having spent much of the last year leading an ambitious external bid that represented the research of several OU colleagues within and beyond the School of Psychology & Counselling.*



*The OPRC is already benefiting from the fresh enthusiasm of its newest Co-Director, [Professor Catriona Havard](#) who brings a wealth of experience in research group management and a fresh perspective to OPRC.*

### **[Professor Peter Hegarty](#)**

Open Psychology Research Centre  
(OPRC) Co-Director



Introducing outputs from the Belfast Mobility Project led by Prof John Dixon (funded by ESRC), 'Stitches and Stories' workshop at the Ulster Museum, Belfast, & 'The Belfast Quilt' on display at the 'Common Threads' exhibition, Island Arts Centre, Lisburn, collaborating with Dr Heather Richardson and Bree Hocking



# Activities by our three Research Strands

Within OPRC we have three research strands who are supported by the School of Psychology & Counselling. The majority of our academic staff, research staff and doctoral students in the school belong to one of the strands and as detailed below, spent 2022-2023 engaging in a host of research-related activity.

## Culture and Social Psychology (CuSP)



***Led by Dr Sandra Obradovic and Professor John Dixon***

The Culture and Social Psychology (CuSP) research strand studies real-world issues in changing societies and work in and across different areas of cultural, social, political, and psychosocial psychology, and across disciplines. The key goals of CuSP in the past year focused on creating a space for innovative and productive dialogue about research through a combination of virtual seminars and in-person events. To achieve this, we focused on a blend of seminar types, including inviting external speakers to share their research, inviting members to discuss prospective grant applications and publications, as well as inviting PhD students to present their work and receive feedback on it. Noteworthy sessions include:

- A seminar on “Charting the role of social/political psychology in buttressing harm in Palestine, the Arab region, and the Global South” with invited speakers (Dr Rim Saab, Dr Mai Albzour and Dr Nader Hakim).
- A discussion with OU Emeritus Professor John Clarke titled “A distorted narrative of society? The omissions of sociology and cognate disciplines, and their implications for our research”
- A seminar on research in progress including work by newer CuSP members (Dr Parisa Dashtipour and Dr Geetha Reddy)

This research strand, which is the biggest one in the School of Psychology & Counselling, has a regular and healthy attendance each month, including between 15–30 members in each seminar. We are also very glad to welcome colleagues from outside of the School, who are part of the groups external mailing list, to our seminar series throughout the year.

### *In-person CuSP meetings*



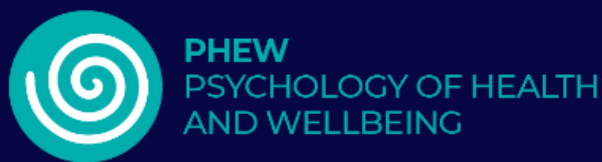
**Image:** CuSP co-lead Sandra Obradović given opening address at CuSP-LSE in-person event in May, 2023.

Two in-person events were held in the past year. The first event took place in November. The event “CuSP London: Beyond existing methodologies: innovations in technological and digital uses for research” included three talks by external speakers (Professor David Ellis, University of Bath; Alex Goddard, LSE and Dr Maxi Heitmayer, UAL). The second event took place in

partnership with the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science at the London School of Economics. The event, CuSP-LSE: Social psychology as world-making, included six speakers from both the LSE (Dr Cathy Nicholson and Professor Sandra Jovchelovitch) and OU (Dr Evangelos Ntontis, Dr Sharon Xuereb, Magi Young, Prof. Kesi Mahendran). Both events were well-received and well-attended, and enabled opportunities to discuss cutting-edge research and network with colleagues beyond the strand.

For anyone interested in joining the CuSP external mailing list, please contact Sandra Obradovic ([Sandra.obradovic@open.ac.uk](mailto:Sandra.obradovic@open.ac.uk)).

## Psychology of Health and Wellbeing (PHeW)



***Led by Dr David Kaposi and Professor Darren Langdridge***



The Psychology of Health and Wellbeing (PHeW) Strand accommodates three distinct yet interlinked themes around Counselling and psychotherapy, Critical approaches to mental health, and Wellbeing in contexts, concerned with health issues arising from different

working environments, communities, and life events.

PHeW had a particularly successful year. Taking full advantage of the flexibility offered by video conferencing, our programmes were very well attended, with around 15 participants in the room for all occasions. This grew to over 30 at our end-of-year face to face event held in London, partly no doubt due to the well-chosen menu featuring salmon and hummus – but partly due to the possibility of more spontaneity that off-line events afford. The group continues to attract external participants too, with our connections to the Mulberry Bush School and the Portman Clinic being of particular note. And we have now also amalgamated the Perinatal Research Network, which brings together an array of academics and practitioners, into the group.

The meetings offered a pleasing variety of formats and topics; some focused on work in progress while others allowed participants to share more developed ideas and projects; some had a more theoretical or historical emphasis while others were oriented to practitioners.

Highlights of the year included an event fully devoted to PhD candidates. In recent years, the community of doctoral students affiliated to PHeW has grown considerably, and it was a particularly nice experience to see projects at an early stage, with topics encompassing a variety of areas including self-harm, trauma and radicalisation, and post-mastectomy narratives. Events involving external academics and practitioners were also particularly enjoyed by members. This year, we had three meetings devoted to external speakers. A workshop led by Dr Brigid MacCarthy focused on experiences of whistleblowing, particularly the conflict between loyalty to an organisation and the wish (at first) or obligation (subsequently) to divulge some unpleasant truth involving that group. Another session was a seminar by Dr Stephen Blumenthal, a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst, focusing on psychological and

anthropological determinants of violence and the re-enactment violent experiences.

Our end of year face-to-face meeting, the first such meeting since the very start of PHeW, on the theme of “Change and Resistance in Mental Health” featured a mixture of external and internal speakers. Professor Mick Cooper, a counselling psychologist, spoke to the positive aspect of the theme, arguing for the constructive role of enhancing synergies or positive confluences in counselling settings and mental health beyond the clinic. Dr Anne Aiyegbusi, a mental health nurse, in turn, provided a view from the other end of the pole: challenges experienced in forensic mental health institutions and the necessity of a psychoanalytical framework to make sense of these.

A particularly pleasing development of the year has been the establishment of two sub-groups within PHeW, one focusing on Critical and Psychological Mental Health, and the other on Counselling and Psychotherapy Research. The groups have been meeting monthly, in addition to the monthly general PHeW meetings, providing a more intimate space for the discussion of somewhat more “inchoate” topics.

## **Forensic Cognition Research Group (FCRG)**



***Led by Dr Lara Frumkin and Dr Ailsa Strathie***

The main aim of the Forensic Cognition Research Group (FCRG) is to better understand the perceptions, processes, and systems of the criminal justice system, taking an approach that is both critical and solution-oriented to tackle real world issues. Current research broadly falls into three (overlapping)

categories: a) courtroom processes, b) policing and inquiry, and c) community and citizens.

This year, FCRG was focused on continuing its successful series of virtual seminars, reintroducing in-person events, and increasing opportunities for postgraduate research students to give presentations.

We held six online research seminars. At these events we invite one external speaker and one internal speaker to present completed work, or work in progress. This year we had presentations from external academics across three continents, expanding our research network, and giving group members exposure to research conducted outside the UK.

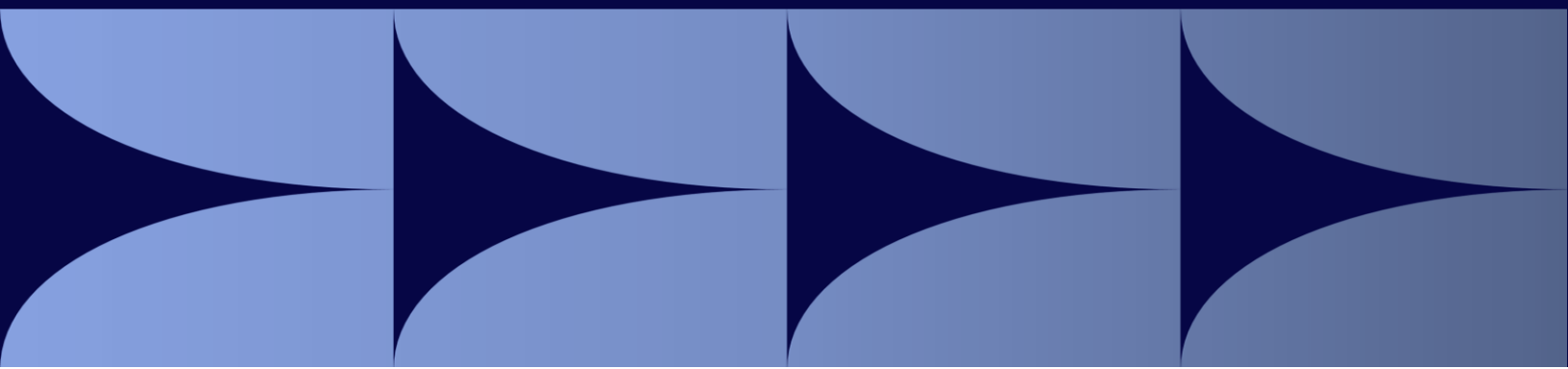
We held three face-to-face meetings and trialled different formats and locations. The first two were external-facing events and both included a hybrid option. At our first event we had talks from an external academic who studies cognition through the lens of magic, and a PGR who is conducting research on interpreter-assisted police interviews. The speakers shared an approach to studying psychological processes in applied contexts which is central to the research of FCRG members.



The second face-to-face event focused on PhD researchers, and four of them gave presentations to the group. PGRs had the opportunity to present their research in a supportive environment, hear about research by their peers, and to engage in informal academic discussions after the presentations.

The final face-to-face meeting was a journal club limited to internal group members, which took place at the MK campus.

The group has a Facebook page with 2500 followers which has been used to advertise research studies and events. We work closely with the Harm and Evidence Research Collaborative contributing to regular interdisciplinary research meetings with academics from criminology, social policy and law. We also have strong links with the Centre for Policing Research and Learning, allowing members to develop collaborative research projects and to present findings to policing partners, (e.g., road safety, policing, law). The group is also active in Knowledge Exchange. This year group members worked on several BBC programmes, gave presentations to police partners, and hosted the Driving Change research conference, attracting a large audience of academics and practitioners to the Milton Keynes campus.





Introducing outputs from the NEW ABC project, 'Empowering Young Translators' led by Prof Sarah Crafter (funded by EU Horizon2020). Art work by young people and re-imaged by artist Kremena Dimitrova. In collaboration with Prof Guida de Abreu, Dr. Nelli Stavropoulou.



# Teaching & Research Interface

Here, at The Open University we believe strongly that our undergraduate and postgraduate students should benefit from the research we do in the School and that our teaching influences our research. It was with this in mind, that we have been engaging in two key activities last year: the Collab and Journal Club.

## Collab and Journal Club

In the 2022/2023 academic year, the OPRC Post Doctoral Research Associates, we ([Nihan Albayrak-Aydemir](#) and [Marta Prandelli](#)) lead on two OPRC activities, aimed at fostering collaboration, and building the School's supportive research community : Collaboration Laboratory (Collab) and Journal Club.



## Collaboration Laboratory (Collab)

The Collab was piloted as a distinct space to allow researchers in the School and students on OU psychology modules to collaborate on scientific knowledge production. The Collab had a soft launch in November 2022 and a hard launch in March 2023. To date, 48 researchers and 535 student participants have joined the Collab and interacted around seven research studies. Those studies' methods were diverse and included interviews, focus groups, experiments, and surveys. Researchers have aimed to enhance the learning experience achieved through research participant by presenting detailed debriefing information and contact opportunities at the end of each study.

*Compared to typical participant pools consisting of undergraduates enrolled in introductory psychology courses, our participants in the Collab are older,*

have more diverse educational backgrounds, include more full-time or part-time workers, and are more inclusive of queer communities. In addition, whilst in traditional pools, students are required to complete a number of studies for course credit, and this can influence the quality of the data and overall educational experience of the students. Therefore, all Collab participation is voluntary. We cannot wait to see how the Collab, shapes the future of psychology participant pools.

## Journal Club



We started a Journal Club for PhD students and their supervisors. Our goal was to create a community of researchers in the School where PhD students can actively shape the direction of discussions. We held monthly online meetings around a predetermined topic and article, with one member leading

the discussion and by doing so, provided a platform for critical evaluation of recent articles in psychology literature. The readings and discussions allowed engagement with cutting-edge dilemmas in the field, such as open science and decolonisation movements. We actively supported the PhD community by experimenting with innovative engagement strategies and assessing the needs of PhD students, ultimately striving to create an inclusive and supportive research culture.

## MSc Psychology Conversion

In 2022–23, the OPRC supported two Research Showcases for the first cohort of students on The OU’s new MSc (Conversion) Psychology degree. Both hybrid events were hosted at The OU’s Milton Keynes campus by students on the first of two MSc modules; [\*D810: Critically Exploring Psychology 1\*](#). The focus of the Showcases followed the D810 curriculum.



The first addressed qualitative methods, by featuring the work-in-progress by four PhD students in the School; Ashleigh Bennett, Charlotte Gaskill, [\*Katherine Langford\*](#), and [\*Shannon O’ Rourke\*](#). The second showcased statistical techniques, via explanation of their somewhat surprising historical origins, and demonstration of their usage in the research of Associate Lecturer Dr [\*Myrto Esthathiou\*](#) and visitor [\*Dr Fabio Fasoli\*](#) (University of Surrey). Both events were warmly received by module team and students alike. In 2023–24 the OPRC will support three showcases which will engage both the second cohort of D810 students, and those who have successfully completed D810 and who are enrolled in [\*D811: Critically Exploring Psychology 2\*](#) (which includes the MSc dissertation requirement). A key aim for the coming year is to encourage wider School participation in these events, engage postgraduate taught students with researchers of different levels of experience in the School.

Introducing research outputs by Prof. Gemma Briggs, educating drivers on the dangers of mobile phone use (funded by the Department for Transport and the Road Safety Trust)

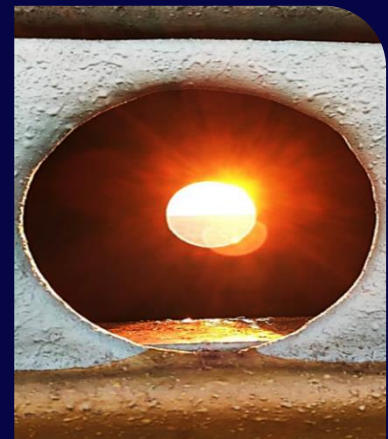


# OPRC Supported Projects

One of the key functions of OPRC is to support research-related activity in the School of Psychology & Counselling. This might include seed-funding for projects, training activity, support for publications or impact activity. Below we detail some notable highlights for 2022-2023. We were delighted to be able to support such an interesting range of research activity.

## Support for Doctoral Scholarships

OPRC supported the submission of a bid led by [Professor Paul Stenner](#) on a programme of research on sense-making in conditions of uncertainty and transition with a transdisciplinary focus involving co-supervision between OPRC members and colleagues from social science and arts and humanities disciplines in FASS, as well as STEM.



Activities during the bid development leading to submission included the following events:

- An event to identify and develop transdisciplinary research on 'sense-making in crisis', December 2022
- An event on 'Psychology in the arts, arts in Psychology', May 2023

A particular focus of these events was on art and psychology. Art and Psychology have been tightly intertwined since long before Freud used the story of Oedipus to decipher the unconsciousness mind. Professor Stenner brought together Psychology and Arts scholars from across The Open University to explore some productive connections informed by questions like: How does writing and reading fictional stories empower ordinary people living

through difficult circumstances? ([Dr Siobhan Campbell](#), [Prof. Sara Haslam](#)); How can reading stories lead us to empathise with those we might otherwise scorn? ([Prof. Zoe Walkington](#), [Prof. Graham Pike](#)); Why was music so important in the treatments offered in 19th Century asylums? ([Dr Rosemary Golding](#)); What are the ethics of using writing to voice silenced stories like those of Virginia Wolff's learning-disabled half-sister Laura? ([Dr Emma Claire Sweeney](#)); Why and how are people curating their bookshelves to manage the impressions they give whilst videoconferencing? ([Dr Shafquat Towheed](#)); What can artists learn from psychoanalysis and psychoanalysis from art? ([Dr Edward Hogan](#)); How are cognitive representations of intersex people influenced by classical literature? ([Prof. Peter Hegarty](#)); Why are so many scientists now using arts to engage the public with their research? ([Prof. Darren Langdridge](#)).

These events paved the way to a new theoretical framework for the research ideas informing a major funding application, the outcome of which we await with interest.

## Support for Research Activities

### Public Understandings of Food Citizenship

[Professor Eleni Andreouli](#) with colleagues from University of Surrey, University of Western Macedonia and University of Bath, in support of an ESRC/ Leverhulme Trust project.

The current food system is responsible for growing health inequalities, environmental degradation, and poor societal outcomes (EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet and Health, Willett et al.,



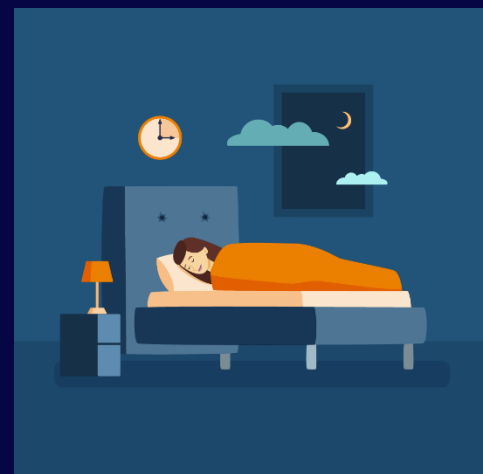
2019). In this context, new movements and alternative visions of a fairer and more sustainable food system are being advanced. The concept of food citizenship has emerged as one such vision and it is achieving greater traction both within academic circles and among food activists and grass roots movements. Within this paradigm, food is thought of as a fundamental right of all human beings, and food citizenship as both an entitlement and the food-related practice capable of achieving better food system outcomes, enabled, and given expression through the existing institutions (Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2015).

Against this background, the focus of the current research programme is understanding how food citizenship is manifest (explicitly or implicitly) in people's sense-making of their relationship with food, people's food-related practices and the opportunities these afford to achieve the desired food system change. The research will contribute social psychological evidence of food citizenship as everyday practice. It will seek to explore social representations of food citizenship from the lens of diverse groups and actors within the food system.

## **'Parenting at a Distance'**

Professors [Lindsay O'Dell](#), [Sarah Crafter](#) (The Open University) and Dr Amanda Holt (Roehampton University) were supported with their investigation into 'Parenting at a Distance'

Funding was sought for a workshop to bring together various actors involved in different forms of residential care for young people. The aim of the workshop was to gather



Credit: Shutterstock © inspiring.team



the views, experiences and expertise of parents and staff who either have a child living in residential care or work residential care themselves. In this project the team are looking to examine experiences of care, and being cared for, when children and young people live at a distance from their parents/caregiver in residential settings. The organisation of the workshop was support by one of the Post-Doctoral Research Associates within the School of Psychology & Counselling, Dr Nelli Stavropoulou. The workshop was attended by 12 experts who discussed some of the key challenges and issues relating to parenting at a distance, and the gaps that would benefit from deeper exploration in research. This workshop has laid the foundations for the development of a research grant.

## **Support for Research Publication Quality**

Support was associated with [Dr Sarah Laurence](#)'s outputs linked to an ESRC-funded New Investigator Grant, Recognition of the Ageing Face. Project 1: A study looking at how to improve recognition of child faces. Children's faces are particularly difficult to recognise as they have less textural information available, and most people have limited experience with them. Project 2: Humans can recognise familiar faces across highly variable images. It is possible to morph together several images of the same person to produce an average. Computer models of face recognition have been found to perform better at recognising averages than individual images of a person. There is, however, mixed evidence that humans perform better with averages than individual images. The study involves two experiments. The work will advance theory on how humans represent familiar faces by including an episodic memory component, so far neglected by the field.



Professor Catriona Havard's current study 'a background of bias' aims to extend previous research on biased police lineups and eyewitness identification. Research conducted by Havard et al. (2019; 2023) revealed that small variations in the background colour of police-like photo lineups could increase false identifications of innocent suspects. This research has been disseminated to academics and police practitioners; however, it used a cognitive face recognition experiment, rather than the more applied eyewitness identification task. The current study aims to replicate these findings by employing a more ecologically valid designed approach, that is more akin to real life eyewitness identification.



Dr Johanna Motzkau successfully secured funds from OPRC to present at the Psychology of Women and Equalities section conference (BPS) and related writing retreat in Iceland in May. This opportunity aimed to enhance her grant writing and bidding activities for an ESRC project and improve the quality of two publications. The project Johanna is developing relies on these two papers- "Dark Listening: An emancipatory method for researching cultures of listening", and "Listening with care". Listening matters because less powerful people are often either misheard or not heard. Johanna argues that this aspect of social inequality/ injustice can be understood and addressed in new and impactful ways through her concept of 'cultures of listening' (Motzkau & Lee 2022).

The project aims to further develop a participatory, art based, method called 'dark listening' that offers a novel way to explore how children and families experience their involvement with child protection workers (including social services and police), i.e.: the experience of being listened to, vis a vis the

listening practices/ experiences of practitioners and decision makers they encounter.



Dr Nihan Albayrak-Aydemir, together with Professor Peter Hegarty, successfully secured funds from the OPRC in support of their research project titled *“Participants in psychology: reporting and interpretation of samples in APA journals”*. The aim of this research was twofold: 1) Describing the ways in which psychologists report data collection procedures (e.g.: source of data and language used to collect data) and sample characteristics in their research (e.g.: nationality and gender), 2) Describing the ways in which psychologists interpret the findings of their research based on the characteristics of their sample (e.g.: limitations and future directions).

The funding was used to triple-code 1408 studies from 792 research articles, which led to the creation of an invaluable dataset. Nihan presented their findings at the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology European Regional Conference and the British Psychological Society Social Psychology Section Annual Conference, which were both well attended and well received. Nihan and Peter are now preparing a manuscript to submit to an internationally recognised high-impact journal that publishes influential papers in the field.

## Impacting on everyday lives



Professor Gemma Briggs, successfully organised a day conference in collaboration with external partners, providing a platform for academics, police practitioners, road safety professionals, and policy makers to collectively address the issue of driver distraction and advance road safety. During this event, Gemma presented findings from her grant, highlighting the need for training police officers on the dangers of hands-free phone use.

Securing grants from the Road Safety Trust and the Department for Transport, she conducted new research on driver distraction, aiming to generate fresh outputs and integrate impact and public engagement activities. This research has the potential to influence training at the College of Policing and inform protocols for police officers encountering drivers using phones. The support of partner police forces, including the National Police Chiefs Council and the Police Foundation, adds confidence to the potential short and long-term impact of these efforts.

# External Funding Successes During the Reporting Period

Receiving funding for research marks the beginning of the important process of gathering new knowledge that can have an impact on individuals, communities, and society. In this section we highlight some of the exciting ongoing research projects taking place in the School of Psychology & Counselling.

## **Professor John Dixon – British Academy funded grant on collective protest**

Led by Professor John Dixon (Open University), working in collaboration with Professor Shelley McKeown (University of Oxford) and Dr Sofia Stathi (University of Greenwich), this project consists of a mixed methods study of a now iconic event of collective protest in Bristol. This event culminated in the removal of the statue of Edward Colston, a figure associated with slavery and historic racism. The project is using a combination of survey data and walking interviews to explore themes such as the perceived legitimacy of different forms of collective action and the role of positive emotions in instigating and sustaining such action. Magi Young, a PhD student at The OU, is developing one strand of the project, focusing on the role of hope in collective protest.



## **Professors Zoe Walkington and Graham Pike – OU Policing consortium funded research on proportionality and use of force**

Proportionality, particularly as it relates to ethnicity and legitimacy, is very important for policing and the issue is high on every force agenda.

The goal of the current project is to explore interactions that involve use of force between West Midlands Police officers and citizens, by analysing body-worn camera footage. The research aims to determine whether the actions and behaviours of both officers and citizens differ depending on a range of factors, including ethnicity.



image credit by [John Gomez](#) via Shutterstock.



### **Professor Peter Hegarty – EC Commission Horizon 2020 funded work on Achieving Gender Diversity**

GVERSITY is a Marie Skłodowska Curie initial training network which supports 15 PhD fellows across 8 European countries to research the pathways that create unequal representation in the workplace, and effective interventions that engender greater equality and inclusion. The OU Co-Investigator is Professor Peter Hegarty. He supervises the PhD of The OU fellow – [Shannon O'Rourke](#), with co-supervisor [Professor Darren Langdridge](#). Shannon's PhD examines diverse leadership pathways among LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer) individuals in the UK and Italy. In the UK, her work has been supported by a non-academic secondment within the Consortium which supports the LGBTQ+ voluntary and charitable organizations across the UK. Professor Hegarty also supports the academic secondment of three other GVERSITY fellows to The OU; Serena Haines (Czech Academy of Science), Mary Ann Ciosk (University of Trieste), and Franziska Saxler (University of Berne). Their work with Professor Hegarty concerns men's aspirations for child-care professions, sexual

harassment of sexual minorities in the workplace, and basic stereotyping processes. Professor Hegarty also had overall responsibility for delivering the interdisciplinary training to the 15 GIVERSITY fellows in Summer 2021, and he remains responsible for their career development planning throughout the project which runs until 2024.



**[Dr Sarah Laurence](#) – Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded grant on Recognition of the Ageing Face**

We can recognise the faces of our friends and family across a huge range of conditions. However, despite decades of research, we still do not know how this is achieved. One clue – previously unstudied – arises from our perception of faces as they age. Dr Sarah Laurence was awarded an ESRC New Investigator grant to study the psychological mechanisms that allow us to recognise the same face across substantial changes in age. Findings revealed that we have developed mental representations of familiar faces that are sufficiently general to work across the huge range of their photos (Laurence et al., 2022). But that children younger than six have difficulty generalizing beyond their direct experience with a highly familiar face (Matthews et al., 2022). For people known over a more limited time, such as contestants from a reality TV show in the early 2000s, there are substantial individual differences in how well people recognise those contestants 20 years later (Sexton et al, in prep).

Changes over time are also a problem for unfamiliar face recognition. For example, our passports can be up to ten years old, and yet a viewer checking our identity must nevertheless make the match. Using computational and behavioural studies, the funded project has addressed



this problem, establishing the circumstances under which unfamiliar face recognition is prone to age changes (Sexton et al., accepted), and has assessed the abilities of practitioners working in forensic settings (forensic examiners) to match age-separated images (Sexton et al., under review).

Sarah presented this work at the European Conference on Visual Perception, Nijmegen, August 2022 (most of the conference networking for this project took place on boats!)



**[Dr Nihan Albayrak-Aydemir](#) – British Psychological Society (BPS) funded grant on the representations of Syrian, Afghan, and Ukrainian refugees in the media.**

This project investigates the dynamics of reporting in the media with a comparative approach, focusing on Syrian, Afghan, and Ukrainian refugees during specific emergency periods. It explores the nuances in reporting based on the refugees' origin and the relationship between the reporting country and the country generating refugees. The research spans different time frames, analysing the first three months of each refugee emergency to ensure a



comprehensive and fair comparison and we use a diverse selection of newspapers based on their circulation and political orientation. By employing critical discourse analysis, we aim to uncover how these distinct refugee groups are socially represented and positioned within the media discourse. We also aim to provide insights into the similarities and differences in media coverage across the physically distant United States and the physically proximate United Kingdom.



**Professors [Lisa Lazard](#) and [Rose Capdevila](#) – EU Commission Grant CHANSE, Horizon 2020 funded to examine gender and videoconferencing at work**



[The Gender Equitable Interactions Online](#) (GEiO) project studies the role of gender in online work meetings across four nations (Germany, Iceland, Spain and the UK). Research exploring how gender becomes relevant to videoconferencing at work remains in its infancy. Existing investigations suggest that, with the exponential rise in digitally mediated working patterns and new reliance on videoconferencing platforms, there is increasing opportunity for organisations to enhance their strategies for more inclusive online interactions. A key aim of this project is to build new transnational data on ways in which digital videoconferencing innovations can either encourage or inhibit gender equity in the workplace. The GEiO project is working with international corporations in each of the above partner countries to fulfil this aim. Three different and complementary methods will be used to explore gendered processes in these contexts. These include: (1) An analysis of video-recordings of online work meetings to make sense of conversational patterns; (2) a Q methodological study which will explore shared understandings of

digital working; and (3) an investigation of social perceptions of videoconference meetings using story completion methodology. By approaching the data both by study and by country, this methodological design will facilitate opportunities for cross-national sharing of what has worked well and any ideas for addressing any commonly identified barriers. The research findings will provide a firm basis for knowledge exchange with private sector organisations to develop evidence-based training on digital gender inclusivity.



### **Professor Kesi Mahendran– EC–Horizon Europe 2020 funded to track, attune and limit political extremism**

OppAttune is a three-year, €3.16 million Horizon–Europe/ Innovate UK funded project which involves the Open University and 16 other partners from the European Union and beyond. The aim of the project is to track, attune, and limit the spread of political extremism. Limiting political extremism involves developing an intervention using an *I*–Attune self-assessment and an innovative Attunement Model. [Professor Kesi Mahendran](#) is the lead scientific coordinator on the project and is joined from OPRC by [Professor Eleni Andreouli](#), [Dr Sandra Obradović](#), [Dr Evangelos Ntontis](#), and Dr Anthony English (post-doctoral research fellow). OPRC is involved in all eight work packages. The project grant also funds two PhD studentships into everyday extremism, led by international students Tetiana Shyriaeva from Ukraine and Evangelia Vergouli and Greece.



The consortium partners gathered in Athens at Panteion University on the 24th and 25th of April for an inception meeting. At this gathering, the partners planned the first year of the project by sharing insight on their respective work packages and engaging in constructive discussions on the project's next steps. On

25th September the project launched a major communication launch on its articulated objectives alongside the new webpage. More information on the project can be found at <https://oppattune.eu/> and @oppAttune on YouTube, Instagram, and X/Twitter.

# Keynote speeches at Conferences

Below are just a small number of examples of invited Keynote speeches, invited symposiums and awards by members of the School of Psychology & Counselling



Eleni Andreouli "*The micro-politics of everyday life: reflections on social psychology and citizenship*" – Keynote to British Psychological Society Social Psychology Section Annual Conference



Gina D Malta "*The mutuality of relational depth*" Winner of the Society for Psychotherapy Research UK Chapter Early Career Award



Lee Curley "*Unconscious and cognitive bias*" – Keynote to British Medical Association



John Dixon "*Navigating the divided city*" – Keynote to the Biannual Swiss Psychology Conference



David Jones "*Claiming experience? The ethics of critical and psychosocial research*". Symposium organised at the 9th Qualitative Research in Mental Health Conference

# International Advisory Board

The newly formed School Research Committee (SRC) had its first face-to-face meeting with the OPRC advisory board in July 2023. Six members of the advisory board attended:

- [Professor Vicki Bruce](#)
- [Professor Michelle Fine](#)
- [Professor Brandon Hamber](#)
- [Professor Hel Spandler](#)
- [Dr Celestin Okoroji](#)
- [Professor Thomas Teo.](#)

The SRC meeting was followed in the afternoon by an event 'Opening Psychology for Equity, Sustainability and Living Well' showcasing PhD student research and discussing the experiences of PhD students within the School. The second day's event was introduced by [Professor Kevin Shakesheff](#), showcasing grant-funded research within the School and research contributing to the bid for doctoral support led by [Professor Paul Stenner](#) described above. It ended with a discussion lead by [Professor Peter Hegarty](#) about the future direction of the OPRC.



# OPRC Media

## OPRC Social Media Activity



**18,248**

Visits to the Open  
Psychology Research  
Centre website



**295,516**  
views of the School Blog

[OU Psychology & Counselling Blog](#)

[Open Psychology Research Centre Website](#)

[X - OU\\_Psychology&Counselling](#)



**150.8k views on  
'X' formerly  
Twitter**

Introducing outputs from the Supporting Children's Mental Health through Familial Online Relationships (funded by eNurture/ESRC), led by Profs. Rose Capdevila & Lisa Lazard, collaborating with the Networking Families Research Group



# OPRC Core Team

**Professor Peter Hegarty** OPRC Co-Director

**Professor Paul Stenner** OPRC Co-Director

**Dr Ekaterina Kandelaki** OPRC Manager (Research)

**Sue Cocklin** OPRC Assistant (Research)

**Dr Nihan Albayrak-Aydemir** Post-Doctoral Research Associate (PDRA)

**Dr Marta Prandelli** Post-Doctoral Research Associate (PDRA)

# School Research Committee (SRC)

(Formerly Centre Management Board (CMB))

**Professor Eleni Andreouli** Director of Research (DoR) (2019–December 2023)

**Professor Sarah Crafter** Director of Research (DoR) (December 2023–present)

**Dr Simon Clarke** Postgraduate Convener (PGC)

**Professor John Dixon** CuSP Strand Co-Lead

**Dr Sandra Obradović** CuSP Strand Co-Lead

**Dr Lara Frumkin** FCRG Strand Co-Lead

**Dr Ailsa Strathie** FCRG Strand Co-Lead

**Dr David Kaposi** PHeW Strand Co-Lead

**Professor Darren Langdrige** PHeW Strand Co-Lead

**Dr Jean McAvoy** Head of School Psychology & Counselling



# Centre Advisory Board (CAB)

**Professor Vicki Bruce**: Professor Emerita of Psychology – Newcastle University

**Professor Michelle Fine**: A Distinguished Professor of Critical Psychology,  
Women's Studies, American Studies, Urban Education- (CUNY)

**Professor Brandon Hamber**: John Hume & Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace –  
Ulster University

**Dr Celestin Okoroji**: LSE Fellow – London School of Economics and Political  
Science (LSE)

**Professor Esther D. Rothblum**: Professor Emerita of Women's Studies – San  
Diego State University; Visiting Distinguished Scholar – Williams  
Institute

**Professor Helen Spandler**: Professor of Mental Health Studies – University of  
Central Lancashire (UCLan); Editor – Asylum, the radical mental  
health magazine

**Professor Thomas Teo**: Professor of Psychology in the Historical, Theoretical,  
and Critical Studies of Psychology Program – York University, Toronto

# Publications

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## Book Chapters

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