



# Annual Review

**The School of Psychology & Counselling  
Open Psychology Research Centre (OPRC)**

**Report Period: 2023–2024**

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# Stay in touch!



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# Introduction

## Foreword from the Director of Research

I am delighted to be writing my second introduction showcasing our vibrant research in the [School of Psychology & Counselling](#), supported by the [Open Psychology Research Centre](#). The academic year 2023–2024 provided us with the opportunity to reflect on the significant and sustainable upward trajectory on our research and knowledge exchange in the School. During this year, the School has been successfully running eleven research projects supported by funders such as Leverhulme, Research England, Economic and Social Research Council, Australian Research Council, European Commission and the National Institute for Health Research.

We are proud that our School of Psychology & Counselling has an established reputation and a long tradition of discipline-defining empirical, methodological, and theoretical innovation. We seek to understand, transform, and enrich the lives of individuals and communities through our commitment to social justice. We work across disciplines and beyond traditional academic boundaries. Our research in social, cultural, applied cognitive psychology and the psychology of health and well-being, is distinctive for being theoretically

informed but also rooted in everyday life; multi-perspectival and methodologically open; participatory and engaged with multiple publics.

The School is supported by the Open Psychology Research Centre, a bottom-up and inclusive space which promotes psychological research across three broad areas: social and cultural psychology, the psychology of health and wellbeing and forensic and cognition related research. What ties these broad areas together is a desire to undertake research that addresses key societal issues. We were delighted



**The Open Psychology Research Centre's (OPRC) purpose is to seed, enhance, grow and showcase research in the School of Psychology and Counselling, consistent with OU values and mission.**



to welcome Catriona Havard as a new Centre Co-Director along with Peter Hegarty.

We hope you enjoy this Annual Review which features research activity undertaken across the School of Psychology & Counselling, as well as the work support by Open Psychology Research Centre.



**Professor Sarah Crafter**

Director of Research, School of Psychology and Counselling

## Foreword from OPRC Co-Directors

The Open Psychology Research Centre (OPRC) at the School of Psychology & Counselling has continued to foster and grow its research, collaboration and engagement activities during the 2023–2024 period. This year, the Centre maintained its focus on its three core research strands: Culture and Social Psychology (CuSP), Psychology of Health and Wellbeing (PHeW), and Forensic Cognition Research Group (FCRG). Each strand hosted numerous seminars, workshops, and collaborative events, enriching academic discourse, and supporting staff and student engagement in impactful research.

In addition to its research strands, the OPRC funded several impactful projects, including the evaluation of arts programs within healthcare settings, research on postpartum anxiety interventions, and studies on digital identity and safety, more details are later in this document.

The Centre's achievements in the past year underscore its role as a leader in innovative psychological research, committed to social justice and knowledge exchange. These efforts culminated in a productive advisory board meeting, reflecting on the Centre's growth and impact. Through its activities, OPRC continues to drive interdisciplinary research and meaningful change in psychological practice and public policy.

Professor Peter Hegarty stood down as Co-Director in 2024 after three years in the role. Peter set up a number of fantastic initiatives for OPRC, including setting up the Advisory Board with the previous Co-Director Professor Paul Stenner, establishing the Collaboration Laboratory (Collab) and launching a Tuesday evening lecture series, that was incredibly successful and well received. Professor Catriona Havard continues in her role as OPRC Co-director and is joined by Professor Gini Harrison. Both Co-Directors are looking to the year ahead and supporting research within the School and increasing the global presence of OPRC and the research of the School.

## **OPRC Co-Directors**

### **Professor Catriona Havard & Professor Peter Hegarty**



# Activities by our three Research Strands

## Culture and Social Psychology (CuSP)



***Led by Dr Sandra Obradovic and Professor Paul Stenner***

[The Culture and Social Psychology Strand \(CuSP\)](#) strand studies real-world issues in changing societies, and works in and across different areas of cultural, social, political, and psychosocial psychology, and across disciplines. In 2023–2024, CuSP included 31 academic faculty, 9 PhDs and Post Doctoral Research Associates.

CuSP continued to thrive this year delivering a diverse program of both online seminars and face-to-face events. These meetings fostered a space for productive discourse, collaboration, innovation and support. This program included invited international and world-leading speakers sharing their research, CuSP members discussing prospective papers and grant bids, and PhD-focused sessions designed to constructively support their work. Topics chosen this year were selected in light of their real-world significance, and ‘crisis’ was a key focus. Particularly noteworthy sessions included discussions of process ontology theory with Australia-based researchers; the psychology of politically unstable societies featuring several speakers from across Europe; psychology’s role in the environmental crisis, with contributors from multiple UK universities; and psychological opportunities and challenges associated with the North and Global South divide, with discussants from the US and South Africa. CuSP also held two highly successful in-person events which included both national and international expert speakers, covering topics such as

everyday extremism and a political psychology of crisis. These events were well attended, and generated valuable discussions and insights into these critical topics.

The CuSP sessions also provided a nurturing environment for OU academic staff and PhD students to present early-stage work, receive constructive feedback, and refine their research, leading to a plethora of peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations – many of which can be seen in the publications section of this report. Significant publications include contributions to a major volume on postmodern psychotherapy and papers in *Theory and Psychology*.

Furthermore, dedicated and themed sessions gave members the opportunity to expand their methodological repertoire (for example, through exposure to cutting-edge theory and methods presented by external speakers, and a participatory action research workshop). In addition, formal and informal discussions at CuSP events have opened multiple possibilities for future collaborations and networking (particularly for student members), as seen in new co-authored papers and a Q methodology workshop.

The structure of CuSP and the innovative and practical nature of the strand's events has heightened the profile of members' research; and networking with other relevant groups of researchers has fostered discussions of engagement and real-world impact. In addition, the contribution of many CuSP members to the school's new level 3 social psychology module represents a striking demonstration of research / teaching synergy, further raising both the profile and impact of the strand's work. It is therefore not surprising that CuSP is becoming ever more recognised as one of the most significant groupings of critical, cultural, historical, and theoretical psychologists.

# Psychology of Health and Wellbeing (PHeW)



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

## **Research Development**

[Psychology of Health and Wellbeing \(PHeW\)](#) held a number of meetings in 2023–2024 where colleagues presented both completed projects and works in progress, encouraging collaboration and networking. These gatherings also facilitated discussions on journal article support, funding bids, and the expansion of research networks. In addition, several thematic meetings and external speaker events have helped to forge external partnerships. These include the launch of a co-edited book by [Zoe Boden-Stuart](#), and a special issue for the Journal of Psychosocial Studies.

The stand has also actively fostered a supportive environment for our PhD student members, who have played a critical role in our meetings this year, both presenting their research and actively participating in discussions.

## **Publication Quality and Quantity**

One of PHeW's key priorities was to support and enhance publication quality, especially at meetings where "works in progress" were presented and discussed. With the REF cycle underway, the sessions provided REF-specific support, including a popular session on systematic reviews, a critical area for REF. Additionally, the Critical Mental Health Research Group served as a reading group, where draft articles were discussed and refined, further supporting publication outputs of members.

### **Increasing Research Visibility**

The research visibility of PHeW has grown this year, as evidenced by the high attendance rates at both internal and external events, on- and offline. Events involving external speakers were particularly popular, attracting a diverse audience of 30+ attendees. For example, our “Wellbeing in Contexts: From Pregnancy to Policing” event which explored specific health and wellbeing challenges and opportunities across various contexts drew many attendees from outside both the strand and the School.

### **Research Impact and External Engagement**

Many of our members entered their research into the Open Societal Challenges (OSC) program this year. The OSC aims to address global societal issues by fostering open, collaborative innovation and research across disciplines, involving diverse stakeholders to create impactful, sustainable solutions to real-world problems. Examples of this work include initiatives like David Kaposi's "Breaking Cycles of Violence," which he presented at the Centre for Policing Research and Learning, with plans for future collaborations; and a project exploring "The Health and Wellbeing of Emergency Responders and their Families" which includes Professors Gini Harrison and Graham Pike as part of the research team.

### **Synergy with OU Teaching Programs**

Although not a key focus of the strand's activities, some synergy with OU teaching programs emerged this year. In particular, members of the Critical Mental Health Group have been asked to contribute to forensic mental health curriculum, which we hope to see in the future.

## Forensic Cognition Research Group (FCRG)



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

[The Forensic Cognition Research Group \(FCRG\)](#) has conducted multiple research events and collaborations to advance academic research, foster community, and enhance visibility within the field. Key activities this year included regular online research seminars with internal and external speakers, including PhD students and early-career researchers. These sessions provide a platform for feedback, skill development, and research promotion. This year, the FCRG also expanded its presentations by regional academic members, enriching its internal research community.

Two significant face-to-face events were held, with the first in London focusing on psychology, computing, and law, and the second—a one-day conference in Edinburgh—focusing on face processing, featuring speakers from various career stages. The Edinburgh event attracted over 20 attendees, including academics from six other universities, and concluded with a presentation by Centre Advisory Board member [Professor Vicki Bruce](#).

The FCRG has broadened its interdisciplinary impact through collaborations with entities such as the Centre for Policing Research and Learning (CPRL) and the Harm and Evidence Research Collaborative (HERC). Group members have also published research on topics such as terrorism studies and face recognition and secured significant external funding. Notably, they received an ESRC grant to investigate forensic science trust issues in marginalized communities and funding for projects on driver distraction and the role of ethnicity in courtrooms.

The FCRG has contributed to OpenLearn by creating new courses and updating existing ones on [forensic psychology](#) and [open science](#). In addition, it uses its social media presence to share research, events, and opportunities, and members have engaged with the public through podcasts, talks, and video resources.

### **Research Impact and Culture Development**

In terms of developing research activity and increasing output, FCRG's research meetings provide valuable feedback and a collaborative space, enhancing members' work and supporting peer-reviewed outputs. Moreover, by fostering collaborations, these events have indirectly contributed to a higher volume and quality of publications, and partnerships with law enforcement and external organizations in fields like road safety have amplified the reach and impact of FCRG's research. This impact can also be seen through the Open Societal Challenges (OSC) projects submitted by FCRG members, including research that seeks to [explore police proportionality and use of force](#), investigate the issue of [ethnicity in courtroom decisions](#) and create [screening tools for children who cannot recognise faces](#).

Inviting external speakers and attending international conferences has increased FCRG's external visibility, establishing collaborations and raising its profile. Synergies with teaching have been enabled through group members contributions to The OU's teaching by way of course development and resource creation, enhancing the educational value of their research. Regular events encourage external funding bids, enabling feedback on early-stage ideas. Mentors within FCRG further support members' grant applications.

Moving forward, FCRG will pursue initiatives to strengthen team building, facilitate constructive feedback on grant ideas, and support BBC/OU co-productions.

# OPRC Supported Projects

OPRC supported several projects in the School from 2023 to 2024, below are some reported highlights.

**Laura McGrath**

## **Arts for Health Milton Keynes: Evaluation of the Permanent Art Collection and the Temporary Exhibitions Programme.**



Milton Keynes University Hospital has the largest private art collection in Milton Keynes, comprising around 450 works including paintings, sculpture, prints, textiles, and glass works. The collection was established when the hospital was built in 1984; since 2004, MKUH have employed the charity 'Arts for Health Milton Keynes' to curate the collection on their behalf. This project set out to evaluate how the collection is perceived and understood by users of the hospital and establish a framework for understanding the impact of the collection on health and wellbeing. Funding from the OPRC paid for a research assistant to collect data and assist with data analysis and report writing. This included key informant interviews with staff and volunteers who work closely with the collection, and a survey of people using the hospital (staff, patients, visitors, carers, and others) collected both online and on site. Results from the evaluation were presented to the hospital charity board in July and written up as a report. A theory of change for the collection was developed to help inform future practice and articulate the mechanisms through which the art collection enhances health and wellbeing in the hospital environment.

**Sinead Eccles**

## **Take Five to Age Well**

The main objective of Take Five to Age Well Pledge (Take5) is to support individuals to live longer and healthier lives by

offering them the framework of 'Five Pillars for Ageing Well.' Through this framework, individuals joined communities and made a pledge or pledges that empowered them to boost their physical and mental health and well-being. The project is cross faculty, with academics from the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and languages (WELs) and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the external partner Age UK.



The Faculty of WELs funded the initial stages of setting up the project and data collection, OPRC provided funding for two consultants to work on the data analysis of a survey and final editing of the mid-term report. Due to the funding from OPRC that facilitated the project report, the project team will be given the approval to run the pledge again in September 2025. The findings are also being written up for publication.



**Tanya Frances**

## **Equitable access to eating disorder treatment in the UK. Practitioners' perspectives on weight stigma and weight-based criteria for intervention**

Specialist eating disorder Services (SEDS) are facing high demand with limited funding, and there are serious gaps in service provision, sometimes leading to fatal consequences. Weight-based referral and treatment criteria are well-known issues ED patients experience and activists in the UK use anecdotal evidence to campaign for change. Weight stigma in healthcare settings can cause harm, including increased likelihood of eating disorder symptomology and reduced likelihood of seeking treatment. However, there is little research that explores the role of weight stigma and weight-based barriers to SEDS based on the experiences of clinicians at present.

The aims of this project were to explore practitioner perspectives on whether weight stigma, and weight criteria influence accessibility of eating disorder (ED) treatment. The OPRC funded a consultant to assist in running four focus groups with eating disorder specialist practitioners to gather their views and experiences about weight stigma and weight-based criteria for eating disorder treatment. Data analysis is ongoing, and the findings will be written up for publication. During the planning stages, the researchers found a distinct lack of literature on this particular topic, a scoping study was undertaken, and has been written up to be submitted to Health Psychology Review. The findings and publications (both the scoping study and focus group data) will assist in generating refined research questions for an ESRC bid.

Gini Harrison

## **Perinatal Wellbeing Support (PAWS); A preliminary study investigating the acceptability of an eHealth program to support mild-to-moderate levels of anxiety in a perinatal cohort**



The period surrounding childbirth is one of profound change and can often lead to significant anxiety in the year following birth. However, most women experiencing postpartum anxiety (PPA) go unrecognised and untreated.

Technology-based 'eHealth' interventions offer a valuable and scalable source of support for women experiencing PPA. However, their acceptability within a UK perinatal context is unclear. OPRC funds paid for a research assistant to help carry out a small piece of work into the potential acceptability of an existing Australian eHealth program ("MUMentum") in a UK context.

We asked a small number of perinatal women and perinatal support workers to use the program and then attend one of three focus groups. Across these focus groups, we identified: (1) the suitability of the language, characters and examples used in the program; (2) the appropriateness of the content for a UK audience; (3) updates that might need to be made to the program for it to be acceptable in the UK. Findings will be used to inform the update of the NIHR grant application.

**Louise Newbigging**

## **Real or not Real: First impressions of AI-generated faces**

In recent years, there has been an advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) particularly from 2022 onwards. The 'Real or not Real: First impressions of AI-generated faces' project aim was to evaluate faces produced using image generation AI. This is an important area given that AI faces appear hard to detect.



The OPRC funded a consultant to conduct an audit of 4 AI-generation platforms (Copilot, Adobe Firefly, Daz, and Stable Diffusion), creating 36 face stimuli in each platform. An experiment was created and data collection on Collab is underway.

The other element of the project was to employ a bespoke Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) element to create novel AI-generated faces and this aspect is still ongoing.

**Rose Capdevila, Peter Hegarty**

## **Psychology's Feminist Voices**

The Open Psychology Research Centre was very pleased to offer some support to the development of a website dedicated to telling the stories of feminist psychologists who were instrumental in bringing



about changes in psychology and enriching psychology with feminism. You can find this rich history of UK Feminist Psychology in this online exhibit on the [Psychology's Feminist Voices](#) website.

The project is directed by a research team known as Psychology's Feminist Voices (PFV) and led by Alexandra Rutherford. Project collaborators in The Open University include Professors [Rose Capdevila](#) and [Peter Hegarty](#). OPRC was able to contribute to the development of the online exhibit looking at UK Feminist legacies and futures which was developed by Rose Capdevila, Katherine Hubbard and Lois Donnelly.

If you would like to see more from the exhibit, you can find that here: <https://feministvoices.com/exhibits> and click on 'Lasting legacies, Feminist Futures: UK Feminist Psych.

# Collaboration Laboratory (CoLLab)

The CoLLab is now in its second year and played an increasingly important role over the year, fostering synergies between teaching and research. For example, embedding CoLLab into a number of undergraduate and postgraduate modules has led to the creation of a large participant pool, comprising over 5,000 participants. This has encouraged the development of over 40 research projects (some funded by OPRC) and given students the opportunity to take part in cutting edge research. CoLLab also hosted a series of Tuesday evening talks that were delivered by academics in the school, proving a vehicle to directly disseminate their research to psychology students. The talks have been so successful and well received that we are exploring how to build on them in the future.

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, and are more inclusive of queer communities and of people with disabilities. We cannot wait to see how the CoLLab, shapes the future of psychology participant pools.

# Knowledge Exchange and Impact in the School of Psychology & Counselling

A number of OPRC members carried out impressively impactful research and Knowledge Exchange (KE) activities in 2023/24. Some of these activities have been outlined above, within the summaries of the activities undertaken by each of the research strands. In this section, we outline some of the highlights in more depth.

## Impact and KE Showcase: Driving Change

Professor Gemma Briggs' research on the cognitive and behavioural effects of handsfree phone use, led to two key Knowledge Exchange grants focusing on advanced road safety initiatives.

The first, funded by the Department for Transport, developed and tested a proof-of-concept mixed-reality road safety educational tool, as well as creating a straightforward, jargon-free toolkit that others can use to design similar interventions.

The second project, funded by The Road Safety Trust and endorsed by the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC), examined police interactions with

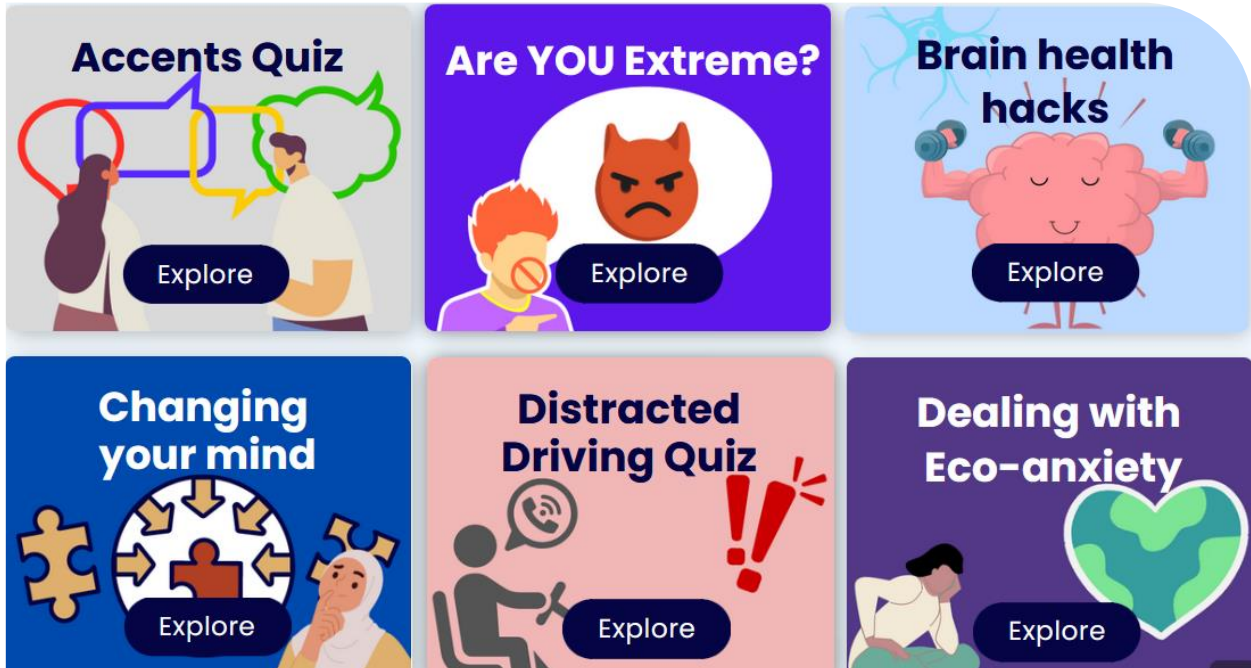


mobile phone offenders and provided guidance for best practice. This project, titled “We Need to Talk About Handsfree,” aimed to ensure handsfree use is no longer recommended to drivers as a safer alternative to illegal phone use. The project has drawn considerable interest from road safety professionals, leading to collaborations with local authorities to co-design and co-produce evidence-based resources, including folded cards, infographics, and FAQ materials, which can be given to mobile phone using drivers. These have been shared with all UK police forces and widely adopted by road safety teams and the Port of Dover police for driver education.

Professor Briggs presented these findings at three practitioner conferences and discussed them with the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety. She also provided insights on BBC radio, in podcasts, on the Road Safety GB website, and in an explainer video for The Road Safety Trust.

Further extending her impact, Professor Briggs filmed two masterclasses on the dangers of phone use while driving for road safety professionals and provided CPD training to motor-legal experts and driving instructors. She contributed as an expert in a Brake and AXA insurance roundtable, which lobbied the government to consider European vehicle safety measures. Additionally, she served as a critical reader for the updated DVSA guide on driving and contributed to a press release for the Department for Transport’s Think! campaign.

## BBC One's Morning Live



Morning Live is the UK's most watched live daytime magazine programme with an average of 1.2 million viewers each day. The programme consists of live studio discussions and also pre-recorded films on topical subjects. The OU co-produced six films and each covered topics proposed by academics from the School of Psychology & Counselling which were shown during several programmes. The topics of the films included: *Eco Wins* with [Dr Trudi Macagnino](#), *Distracted Driving* with [Professor Gemma Briggs](#), *Changing Your Mind* with [Dr Jim Turner](#), *Brain Health Hacks* with [Dr Sinead Eccles](#), *Everyday Extremism* with [Professor Kesi Mahendran](#) and *Courtroom Accents* with [Professor Lara Frumkin](#). The films are still available on [OU Connect](#) and [iPlayer](#) and Blogs by the six academics are available on the School's [Blog page](#).





# Externally Funded projects in the School of Psychology & Counselling

## Anti-Catholicism in the UK since 1945: An Interdisciplinary Study of Prejudice

### Team members:

- John Wolffe (PI-Religious Studies),
- John Dixon (Co-I-Psychology),
- Jovan Byford (Co-I-Psychology),
- Erin Geraghty (PDRA-History),
- Sumedh Rao (PDRA-Psychology)

**Funding body:** Leverhulme Trust

### The Last Acceptable Prejudice? Is it OK to Hate Catholicism?

The project offers the first systematic interdisciplinary examination of anti-Catholicism in the diverse cultural and historical contexts of the post-war United Kingdom.

'The last acceptable prejudice' is the subtitle of a study by Philip Jenkins of anti-Catholicism in the present-day United States which raises significant questions for the UK. Jenkins argues that anti-Catholic prejudice remains widespread in America and is 'acceptable' because it is closely associated with otherwise liberal and progressive causes such as contraception, the rights of women and LGBTQIA+ people. Moreover, sexual abuse by Catholic priests is perceived as symptomatic of overall institutional failure and corruption. When Pope



Photo: Credit to [www.CGPGrey.com](http://www.CGPGrey.com)

Benedict XVI made a state visit to Britain in September 2010, a 'Protest the Pope' rally in central London highlighted similar concerns.

While these issues appear highly contemporary, anti-Catholicism in Britain has a long history, dating back to the Reformation. Our project focuses on the much more recent past but still covers a long period of enormous change, beginning with the immediate post-Second World War period, when the religious transformations of the 1960s including the Second Vatican Council still lay in the future. We will also be taking a 'four nations' approach, contrasting the normally more muted anti-Catholicism of England and Wales, with the more overt sectarianism notably evident in the 'Old Firm' rivalry of Celtic and Rangers in Scotland, and in the ongoing divisions between 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' communities in Northern Ireland.

The project will be a collaboration between two historians, Professor John Wolffe and Dr Erin Geraghty, and a team of psychologists, including Professor Jovan Byford, Professor John Dixon and Dr Sumedh Rao. In bringing together historical and psychological approaches to the study of prejudice, we shall seek to develop deeper understanding of anti-Catholicism through exploring a variety of questions. How has the balance between 'traditional' Protestant anti-Catholicism and more contemporary secular anti-Catholicism shifted over the last eighty years? In what ways can people brought up as Catholics become anti-Catholic? How might we clarify the boundary between legitimate criticism of Catholicism on theological or moral grounds, and prejudiced attitudes? What overt and more subtle forms does prejudice take? How do these differences help us to understand the diverse political and religious characteristics of different parts of the UK?

Our wider ambition is through the case study of anti-Catholicism to show how history, religious studies and psychology can complement each other in developing methodologies that enable us better to understand other forms of prejudice.

## CPWO – Centre for Protecting Women Online

### Team members:

- Rose Capdevila
- Lisa Lazard
- Nelli Stavropoulou



**Funding body:** Research England

The [Centre for Protecting Women Online](#) is a Research England funded project which aims to address the issue of women and girls' online safety. It brings together academics in law, software design, artificial intelligence, policing, and psychology with colleagues in the private sector and policy making. It will be a vehicle for understanding and addressing challenges posed to women's online safety through a novel, interdisciplinary and ambitious research agenda. It combines cross-sectoral, collaborative outputs to reduce online harms suffered by women and girls; minimise anti-social behaviours online whilst promoting pro-social behaviours and help build tech/software that helps ensure accountability, credibility and to facilitate justice.

The Centre is led by Olga Jurasz, Professor of Law. The work of the Centre will be delivered through a management and five interwoven Work Streams: Law and Policy, The Future of Responsible Tech, Ethical and Responsible Tech/AI, Policing and Human Behaviour.

Co-leading the Human Behaviour stream are Professors [Rose Capdevila](#) and [Lisa Lazard](#). Rose and Lisa have been conducting research into gender in digital spaces and violence against women and girls (VWAG) for over a decade.



Rose and Lisa are currently also working on the European funded project Gender Equitable Interactions Online (GEiO) with colleagues in Germany, Iceland and Spain. Also, working in the Human Behaviour stream of the CPWO is PDRA [Nelli Stavropoulou](#), a participatory arts-based researcher and a creative facilitator who will be familiar to colleagues in the School from previous projects. The team will soon

be joined by a fully funded PhD student and an EDIA (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility) Intern. In the next few years, the stream will recruit a lecturer in Psychology with specialism in this area. Current and future projects include: audiencing and witnessing online, technologically facilitated violence as well as the role of men and masculinities in preventing VAWG.

# Recognising the resilience of Urban-Poor Malaysian Indian Women in the EXCAPE-URMI Research Collective

## Team members:

[Geetha Reddy](#)

**Funding body:** The British Academy



EXCAPE URMI is a transdisciplinary research project that explores the legacies of colonialism which established racial, political, gender, and class hierarchies of control by favouring some groups and marginalising others in Malaysia. Many Indians who arrived as indentured labourers during British colonisation continue to experience poverty and lag behind all other ethnic groups in terms of social mobility despite various attempts at ameliorating their social conditions through government and international aid programmes. Malaysian Indian women are disproportionately affected relative to other racialised groups in the country (Malaysian Indian Blueprint, 2017; Saigaran & Thambiah, 2023). Generations of urban-poor Malaysian Indian women have faced a multitude of challenges, including higher unemployment, lower labour force participation, greater responsibility for unpaid care work, limited educational attainment, and rising crime rates. Extensive research has documented the



contemporary challenges experienced by Malaysian Indians in overcoming poverty. However, its connection to the historical foundations is yet to be explored in depth.

The project addresses this disconnection by applying a social psychological theorising of precarity (Coultas et al, 2023; Reddy & Amer,

2022) and a decolonial approach to the study of social issues (Readsura Decolonial Editorial Collective, 2022). Applying OXFAM’s gender research rubric (OXFAM Policy & Practice, 2019), the project is gender-transformative as it not only considers and analyses gender (as it pertains to men, women, and other gender diverse groups) for short-term progress, but also informs long-term changes to structural causes of inequalities such as gender power relations, norms, and inadequate public policy planning.

EXCAPE URMI highlights the intellectual leadership of Global South academics who will co-strategize responsive pathways to reduce the impact of gender inequality. The team draws from its diverse disciplinary expertise, fieldwork experience, creative communication, and sensitivity to cultural nuances to work with 50 B40 (Bottom 40% of income earners in the country) Malaysian Indian women in the EXCAPE URMI Research collective. The collective intends to build community resilience and identify traces of the legacies of colonialism—referred to as coloniality—in their everyday lives.

The acronym EXCAPE-URMI is a play of words in service of the transformative action we intend to facilitate through the project. Urmi is a common Indian name for women. Ur(u)mi is also a percussion instrument used in Tamil folk music, typically played by men. The research collective works towards challenging traditional hierarchies and power dynamics to advance greater equity, justice, transparency, and accountability as part of this research process.

**Project Title:** Exploring Coloniality and Precarity Engagements amongst Urban-Poor Resilient Malaysian Indian Women (EXCAPE-URMI)

**Co- Investigator:** Dr Nithiya Guna Saigaran, Universiti Malaya

**Project Manager:** Enbah Nilah Sugurmar

**Post-Doctoral research fellow:** Dr Keshia D’silva

**Fieldwork assistant and social media manager:** Leia Ariin Gomez





trust forensic science evidence that is collected. However, the public identified forensic science evidence that is valid (e.g., fingerprints) and that which has been debunked (e.g., bitemarks). A survey on words that are used to describe forensic science evidence will examine if there are barriers for members of the public in understanding what is happening in investigations and court cases due to linguistics.

At the beginning of the project, the team held a launch event where stakeholders, including police officers, forensic scientists, lawyers and CJS charity organisers were able to discuss what they thought the crucial issues were around trusting forensic science. They were also asked about ways to inform the public about what can, and cannot, be trusted with respect to forensic science evidence. Interviews have been conducted with stakeholders to further delve into some of those issues.

Findings from the interviews reveal that stakeholders feel that forensic science is trusted but they and their colleagues are struggling to keep up with the pace of forensic science research. Stakeholders believe that forensic science laboratories are trusted more than the police, leading to a series of other questions about trust in the CJS outside the scope of this project. Stakeholders were less certain about trust and distrust of forensic science by marginalised members of the public but felt that most came into the CJS as a victim or defendant.

Participatory interactive sessions will be run with members of the public to ensure that their voices are heard. The data will then be triangulated and a prototype to reduce distrust will be produced. Plans for this are in the early stage with an output expected by late spring 2025.

## NEW ABC: Networking across Educational Worlds: Across boundaries for community-building

### Team members:

- [Sarah Crafter](#) (The Open University)
- [Nelli Stavropoulou](#) (The Open University/Oxford Brookes University)
- [Guida de Abreu](#) (Oxford Brookes University)

**Funding body:** European Commission Horizon 2020

The NEW ABC project, led by Professor Rachele Antonini at the University of Bologna, used Innovative participatory action research and co-creation approaches to improve the inclusion and wellbeing of migrant and refugee children and young people in education. It has drawn together 13 partners across 9 European countries to develop 9 pilot action interventions.

The UK team engaged in their own pilot actions which involved working with a local school to develop a 'Young Translators Club' where they worked with young people who translate and interpret for peers, family and community to improve their social and emotional wellbeing. Building the skills and capacities of the young people, the academic team co-created with our young translators to build a website, podcasts, art-work and an advice leaflet. For this work, the UK team won the 2024 a **Research Excellence Award for Outstanding Open Research**. You can find out more about the wider project all the different pilot action interventions here: <https://newabc.eu/>



NEW-ABC has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement (G.A NO 101004640). The views and opinions expressed in this presentation are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

# The 2024 Sebastian Bartoş Dissertation Prize

From the first presentation of the D811 module, Cassie Riggs, was awarded the 2024 Sebastian Bartoş Dissertation prize. This prize honours the contribution of Dr Bartoş to the development of the Psychology MSc (Conversion), which was ongoing at the time of his unexpected death in early 2022. Sebastian's commitment to research excellence is honoured by awarding this prize to the best psychology dissertation completed in D811: Critically Exploring Psychology 2.

The title of Cassie's dissertation was, *'Agency, identity and dominant discourses: a critical discursive psychology study of how lay people navigate the climate change values-actions gap'*. Using focus groups, the research took a critically discursive approach to understand how people navigate conflicting and competing motives in relation to climate change. Following Cassie's excellent outcome with the MSc Conversion, she is now exploring options for Doctorate study.

# International Advisory Board Meeting

On May 15th and 16th, the OPRC hosted the third visit by members of its international advisory board. On this occasion, The Open University was visited by Professors Michelle Fine (City University of New York, USA), Brandon Hambler (University of Ulster, UK), and Thomas Teo (York University, Canada).



As in previous years, advisory board members attended a number of school meetings and joined OPRC colleagues for dinner, creating ample opportunity for their critical constructive feedback on the research direction of the School. This year, they joined the School Research Committee meeting, and received briefings on developments in the past year in the Collaboration Lab and on the School's Athena SWAN bid. They joined OPRC members in workshops on PhD culture and research impact and a keynote address by Professor Miranda Horvath from the University of Suffolk.

The advisory group applauded the growth and development of the OPRC's systems and the shift in the leadership of the School's research committee from the OPRC co-directors to the director of research. As in previous years, they were impressed by the distinctiveness of the strands themes and the engagement of staff and PhD students in impactful work oriented towards social justice, and the Collab schemes to engage students through research lectures and as research participants.

# OPRC Media

## OPRC Social Media Activity



**Visit the School blog page:**  
<https://oupsychology.wordpress.com/>



**Visit the OPRC webpage:**  
<https://www5.open.ac.uk/centres/psychology/>

**181,754**  
BLOG VIEWS

**17,116**  
Web Views



**View School of Psychology & Counselling X (formerly Twitter) page:**

[https://twitter.com/OU\\_Psychology](https://twitter.com/OU_Psychology)



**For more information or queries, email the Centre:**  
FASS-Psych-Co-ResearchCentre-Enq@open.ac.uk



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# OPRC Core Team



**Professor Catriona  
Havard**  
OPRC Co-Director



**Professor Peter Hegarty**  
OPRC Co-Director



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



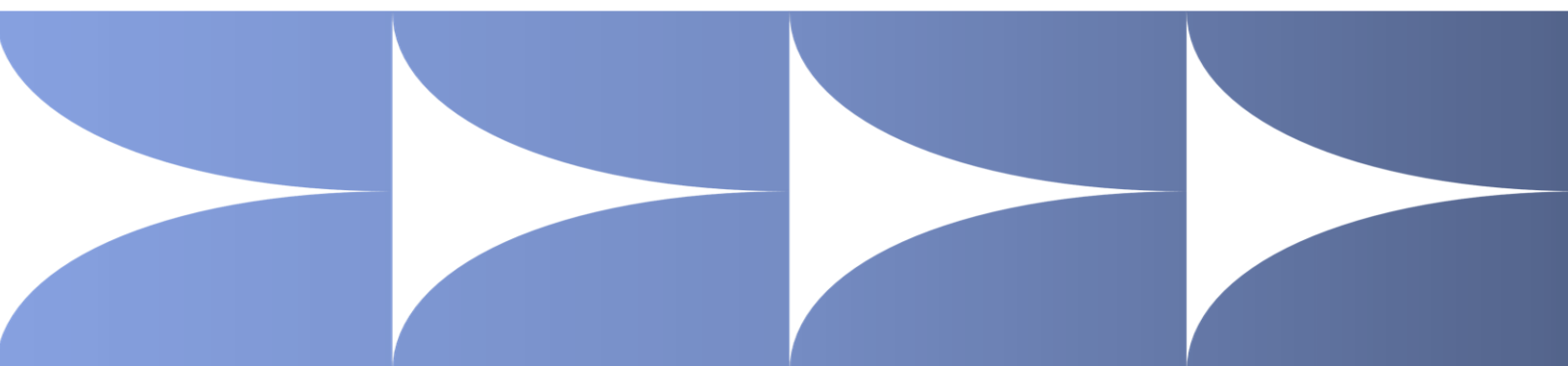
**Sue Cocklin**  
OPRC Assistant  
(Research)










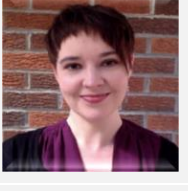






**Dr Hannah Hale**  
Post-Doctoral Research  
Associate (PDRA)



**OPEN PSYCHOLOGY  
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# School Research Committee

	<p><b>Professor Sarah Crafter</b> Director of Research (Dec. 2023–present)</p>		<p><b>Dr Jean McAvoy</b> Head of School Psychology &amp; Counselling /SMT Representative</p>
	<p><b>Dr Ailsa Strathie</b> Postgraduate Convener (Co-PGC)</p>		<p><b>Dr Sandra Obradović</b> Postgraduate Convener (Co-PGC)</p>
	<p><b>Professor Paul Stenner</b> CuSP Strand Co-Lead</p>		<p><b>Dr Sandra Obradović</b> CuSP Strand Co-Lead</p>
	<p><b>Dr Lara Frumkin</b> FCRG Strand Co-Lead</p>		<p><b>Dr Ailsa Strathie</b> FCRG Strand Co-Lead</p>
	<p><b>Professor Darren Langdrige</b> PHeW Strand Co-Lead</p>		<p><b>Dr David Kaposi</b> PHeW Strand Co-Lead</p>
	<p><b>Professor Darren Langdrige</b> REF Lead</p>		<p><b>Professor John Dixon</b> Impact Lead</p>
	<p><b>Dr Anthony English</b> Postdoctoral / Early Career Research representative</p>		<p><b>Magi Young</b> Doctoral student representative</p>

# Centre Advisory Board (CAB)

	<p><b>Professor Vicki Bruce</b> Professor Emerita of Psychology - Newcastle University</p>		<p><b>Professor Michelle Fine</b> A Distinguished Professor of Critical Psychology, Women's Studies, American Studies and Urban Education - City University of New York</p>
	<p><b>Professor Brandon Hamber</b> John Hume &amp; Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace - Ulster University</p>		<p><b>Dr Celestin Okoroji</b> LSE Fellow - London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)</p>
	<p><b>Professor Esther D. Rothblum</b> Professor Emerita of Women's Studies - San Diego State University Visiting Distinguished Scholar - UCLA School of Law-Williams Institute</p>		<p><b>Professor Helen Spandler</b> Professor of Mental Health Studies - University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), School of Social Work, Care and Community Editor - <i>Asylum</i>, the radical mental health magazine.</p>
	<p><b>Professor Thomas Teo</b> Professor of Psychology in the Historical, Theoretical, and Critical Studies of Psychology Program - York University, Toronto (Canada)</p>	 <p>OPEN PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE</p>	



# Publications

## Articles

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