

'We may be reaching a tipping point'

In a move towards aligning efforts to improve the robustness and openness of research and tackle questionable research practices and reproducibility, 10 universities have joined the UK Reproducibility Network. Formed of grassroots networks of researchers and stakeholders including publishers, funders and learned societies, including the British Psychological Society, the network hopes to shift incentives in academia to reward open research practices.

The 10 institutions, Aberdeen, Bristol, Edinburgh, Keele, Newcastle, Oxford Brookes, the Royal Veterinary College, Sheffield, Surrey, and UCL, will form a group of instructional leads within the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN) and will each create a senior academic role who will focus on improving research. These are the first institutions to formally join the network, co-founded in early 2019 by Professor Marcus Munafò, with more universities keen to become part of the network.

Munafò, Chair of the UK Reproducibility Network steering group and Professor of Biological Psychology (University of Bristol), said the UKRN's stakeholders were elements of the wider research system that had a role to play in improving research quality but that the final piece of the jigsaw was the institutions themselves. 'The institutions are important because in many ways they embody much of the research culture that many of these issues of reproducibility relate to for example in promotion and hiring criteria, the extent to which they incentivise certain types of research and publishing in certain types of journal.

'I think that's why getting the institutions on board is important because they will be responsive to the changes that the funders introduce, they also need to listen to the voices of the grassroots researchers in terms of what their needs are and they also need to think about how they create more positive incentives to work in ways that improve the quality of the work that we do.'

The institutions which have joined the UKRN will act as a link between its grassroots network of researchers

and stakeholders, allowing efforts to improve the incentive structure in academia and certain research practices to be aligned and coordinated. 'In academia and research our most important asset is our people and those people tend to move across institutions, particularly early in their careers. If certain things are done in a consistent way across those institutions it makes their interoperability far greater. 150 years ago trains from one company couldn't work on the tracks from another company; standardising the gauge of tracks allowed a far greater degree of efficiency because trains could move across different tracks. We're thinking about the same thing here in terms of training in basic transferable skills, having a common standard across those institutions, delivering a common set of training modules across those institutions so that, rather than having this competitive mode of working we have at the moment, we also bring in a degree of collaboration.'

Munafò has been involved with communicating a need for better quality, more replicable, research as well as misaligned incentive structures in academia for around 15 years. He said it is only in the last four years he has felt a sense that we may be reaching a tipping point. 'These conversations are much more mainstream now, the funders, the publishers, the researchers themselves are much more engaged with these issues and now we're starting to see the institutions coming on board. There's a real momentum building that I think is really positive. There's a really healthy feeling of self-reflection in the air, and we're starting to think more positively about what we can do to improve things, how we can collect the evidence to determine whether or not things have improved, how we can evaluate the way in which we work. We're past the point of saying things aren't great and we're in a much more positive phase of thinking about solutions and working together.'

Possibly one of the most important shifts that the open science movement has brought with it is a greater emphasis on meta-research, or research on research, as a discipline. Munafò pointed to the Research on Research Institute recently launched at the University of Sheffield, and the University of Bristol has announced it will create a centre and appoint chair in research quality. 'You're starting to see this coalescing of activity around the other side of the coin which is the empirical evaluation of some of these changes.' ER

The British Psychological Society and UKRN will be offering two full-cost bursaries for the Society's 2020 conference in Leeds for postgraduates or early career researchers who would like to present a paper on open science – one of the conference themes.

See tinyurl.com/wc7tnql for our interview with Munafò on his work with the UKRN



Jon Sutton

The UK Reproducibility Network was co-founded in early 2019 by Professor Marcus Munafò

Working with parliamentarians

A PhD student who is exploring the effects of children's play will be embarking on a secondment with the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology thanks to a BPS award. Alison Lacey (University of Sussex) will take time out of her research to brief parliamentarians on a psychological topic.

The joint BPS and Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology (POST) award is made annually and has seen doctoral psychology students write briefing papers on topics as diverse as migrants and housing, policing domestic abuse and palliative care. Lacey said she had always been interested in politics and current affairs and an opportunity to work in Westminster was too good to miss. 'I am really looking forward to meeting and interviewing key stakeholders about my topic area. PhD work can sometimes feel rather niche so this secondment will enable me to widen my research knowledge and skills, and to work in



Alison Lacey

a completely new way. What do I hope to gain? Something surprising that I haven't thought of in advance. Those are the best kind of experiences.'

Lacey, whose PhD explores children's social play and its influence on social and emotional skills, will start her time at POST in April with her topic yet to be decided. 'I've been advised to allow some time to get lost in the Houses of Parliament during the first week which is something I am keen to take literally. I have been in touch with a previous POST fellow who has warned me about the post-POST blues. So, I am determined to enjoy every challenging moment while it lasts.' *ER*

The joint BPS/POST award is made annually and will re-open for applications in June 2020. Info via tinyurl.com/ybqkm8xs See also 'Introducing the psychological government programme', p.55.

Doctoral research award

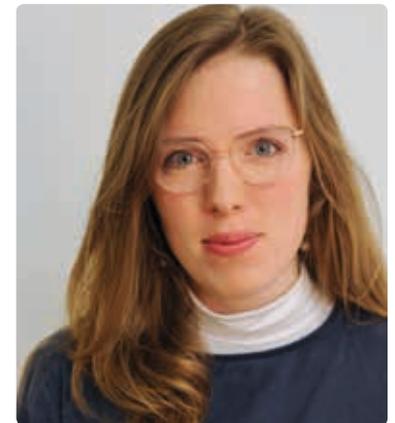
A social-media and screen time researcher who has informed policy debates in the area, and advocate for open science, has won the 2019 BPS Award for Outstanding Doctoral Research. Dr Amy Orben, now a Research Fellow at the University of Cambridge, completed her doctorate at the University of Oxford, supervised by Professor Robin Dunbar and Professor Dorothy Bishop.

Orben's doctoral research, which has resulted in three published papers so far, has used innovative methodologies and statistical techniques to dig deeper into the question of whether screen time and social media use impact on adolescent wellbeing and life satisfaction, finding little evidence of strong negative effects. She has also pointed to, and addressed, issues with many of the methodologies used in the field – including the use of self-report measures, and the ways in which analysis of large data sets may lead to researchers to identify apparently significant results but which have low effect sizes or are taken out of context.

Orben has also engaged with policymakers on debates around screen time guidelines for children including presenting at the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee and the UN, her work also helped to inform the UK Chief Medical Officer's report on screen time guidelines. Orben is an advocate

for more robust, transparent science, and co-founded ReproducibiliTea – an international open science journal club.

Orben said she was honoured to receive the award, and that she strongly believed that even 10 years ago her doctoral work would have been difficult to publish, due to its lack of positive results and a clear story. 'While the adoption of reproducible and open research approaches is still seen as a risk to graduate students as they navigate a harsh and competitive working environment, these approaches are becoming increasingly sought after by editors, reviewers and hiring committees. Adopting these practices did not only allow me to produce good research without the constant worry of having to find significant results, but also enabled me to meet amazing advisors, mentors, collaborators and friends who were integral to both my academic and personal development.' *ER*



Dr Amy Orben

Dr Orben features in a forthcoming episode of our Research Digest podcast, on screen time.



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promoting excellence in psychology

Call for Nominations

President 2021-22

The President is the visible figurehead of the Society and Chair of the Board of Trustees.

We are seeking nominations of Members of the Society to stand for election to the role of President in the Presidential year 2021-22.

The successful candidate will be President-Elect in 2020-21 and Vice-President in 2022-23.

Descriptions of the role and responsibilities, together with requirements and time commitments, are available on request. Please contact Viola Sander, Executive Assistant (email: viola.sander@bps.org.uk).

Procedure

The Board of Trustees has the responsibility to ensure that there is at least one candidate for this position.

Those wishing to propose candidates are invited to contact the Honorary General Secretary,

Dr Carole Allan (e-mail: carole.allan@bps.org.uk) for guidance.

Nominations will go live in early January and close on 17 February – visit <https://www.mi-nomination.com/bps>. These will take place electronically and will be operated by our selected partner, Mi-Voice, which is part of Democracy Technology. Any member information used by Mi-Voice is being handled in accordance with the Society's strict data security protocols. For those members who have opted out of being contacted by email, a form will be posted to their registered address on request. Please request via viola.sander@bps.org.uk

If more than one candidate is nominated, the election will be decided by a ballot of the Membership and the result announced at the AGM which is expected to take place at the British Psychological Society Conference 2020.

Beyond inequality

Psychologists for Social Change released a manifesto with the aim to encourage a psychologically healthy society which creates less distress in the run-up to last year's election and beyond. Aimed at psychologists, and anyone with a passion for good mental health and wellbeing, the manifesto points to ways that society can move past the inequality and effects of austerity and toward a society that 'causes less emotional harm to its citizens'.

Founded in 2014 Psychologists for Social Change (PSC) has a number of local groups across the UK which aim to apply psychology to policy and political action. In creating this manifesto PSC drew on other manifestos by the National Survivor and User Network and Kindred Minds and structured their recommendations around the five qualities of a psychologically healthy society – agency, safety, connection, meaning and trust – described in the PSC briefing paper The Psychological Effects of Austerity.

Regarding agency PSC suggested coproduction in developing policy

and bringing community psychology into the mainstream. Under its safety heading PSC suggested addressing insecurity in the benefits system and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

To help address connection, among other recommendations, PSC suggested addressing loneliness and introducing a universal basic income allowing people to spend less time working. To promote meaning it suggests promoting meaningful and good quality work and to promote trust it suggested addressing the 'multiple disadvantages to good mental health' faced by people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. [ER](#)

To read the full manifesto and recommendations please see: psychchange.org/psc-manifesto-2019.html

If you would be interested in starting a Psychologists for Social Change group in your area please see: psychchange.org/start-a-new-group.html

'From poverty to flourishing' – Society 2020 theme round-up

Shelter recently released a shocking report which found that a child becomes homeless every eight minutes in Britain – equivalent to 183 per day. The homelessness charity pointed out that in some London boroughs one in 12 children is homeless or living in emergency accommodation – including hostels and B&Bs.

Half of homeless people may have a traumatic brain injury according to a systematic review of evidence from the US, UK, Canada, Australia, Japan and South Korea. In *Lancet Public Health* the researchers point out that brain injuries are associated consistently with poorer mental and physical health, higher rates of suicidality and suicide risk, memory problems and increased use of health services and involvement with the criminal justice system.

Analysis from the Manchester Self-Harm Project, using data from emergency departments in the city, found greater rates of self-harm in areas which were socially fragmented, ethnically white British and socioeconomically deprived. The research group tweeted 'Although the city of Manchester is one of the most deprived local authority areas in England, small areas' socioeconomic characteristics still account for a large proportion of variability in self-harm incidence'.



Pain at Christmas

Ella Rhodes reports from the British Neuroscience Association's Christmas symposium, held at Bush House in London. The theme, pain, will stay with the association through 2020, bringing together findings from molecular and cellular neuroscience as well as psychology.

<https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/pain-christmas>



'For the first time it has become possible to reach some consensus on the nature of dyscalculia'

We hear from Rachel Simpson, chair of a working group on dyscalculia which has published new guidance with input from psychologists.

<https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/first-time-it-has-become-possible-reach-some-consensus-nature-dyscalculia>

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‘Be curious, be brave’

Ella Rhodes reports from the British Psychological Society’s second ‘Careers in Psychology’ event, held at the University College London Institute of Education.



Opening the day, President of the Society David Murphy highlighted the fast-changing nature of psychology as well as three psychologists, Artie Konrad, Brooke Rogers and Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, who have had fascinating career paths working in unusual areas. Konrad now works for Facebook on its ‘memories’ feature, which reminds users of past posts and photos; Rogers, among other things, is Chair of the Cabinet Office National Security Risk Assessment Advisory Group; and after being homeless as a teenager and joining the fire service at 16, Cohen-Hatton has studied psychology alongside her work and won the APA Early Career Award.

Fraser Smith, founder of the YouTube channel and blog GetPsyched and counselling psychologist in training, also told the audience they should be aware of the changing place of psychology in the world when developing their career paths. He pointed out psychology’s future role in using and researching technological advances including AI, virtual reality, therapeutic apps and even robots.

Smith started GetPsyched in 2017 and creates videos and writes blogs each week on mental health, psychology and therapeutic principles for the general public and psychology students. He has also created online courses including a free course on developing self esteem. Smith said he faced plenty of naysayers when setting up GetPsyched. He suggested that people be brave and think outside the box when considering their own careers in psychology.

Forensic Psychologist and Associate Professor Dr Karen Slade (Nottingham Trent University) started working in prisons 25 years ago. Slade grew up in Romford and, after being a ‘very average’ student at school, reluctantly went to university to study maths before switching to psychology.

Thanks to general disillusionment with education Slade decided to take a year out of university to complete a placement year at HMP Whitemoor – a high security prison in Cambridgeshire which had recently opened. She described her first day, being let through door after door, gate after gate, before emerging onto the wing and being hit by a wall of noise – music, shouting, and – after the

men spotted Slade and her female companion – scores of wolf whistles.

Slade’s first four months at Whitemoor were more than a little eventful. On that first day six category A prisoners escaped; during her second month there was a major riot on D wing; and in her fourth month a member of staff was taken hostage, an incident that went on for three days. Her placement year had fired Slade up and she realised forensic psychology was the career for her, and so she returned to university for her final year.

Slade said clients in the forensic world often struggle to engage with services, but she said it was fascinating working with people in prison and that the men often had quite a story to tell. Being a forensic psychologist requires a great deal of confidence in dealing with threat and the high pressure environment, she said. Prisons are not, however, like they are shown on TV – each one has its own community and culture, which forensic psychologists become part of.

Slade said she is often asked about gaining experience prior to forensic psychology training. She said there are many voluntary and paid roles out there including work with the Prison Independent Monitoring Board and the Shannon Trust. She pointed out that psychology is not the only useful experience to have – after university Slade ran bars in boats and pubs. Dealing with the conflict in those places helped her learn how to deescalate situations quickly, and there were many skills people gain through work and other experiences which can be useful in working with offenders.

After going through the civil service fast track scheme and working in the Additives and Novel Foods Division C, overseeing genetically modified foods, Slade started her forensic master’s degree and stage two training while working in HMP Wellingborough. This work involved carrying out risk assessments for lifers, individual and group interventions, research and consultancy on reducing self-harm, and supporting staff after incidents. Slade later returned to HMP Whitemoor as Head of Psychology.

She said that forensic psychology asks you not to judge and to be neutral and deal with someone in a



Dr Karen Slade

compassionate and empathic way. She said one offender she had worked with had never engaged with anyone for 34 years but had been watching Slade in her interactions with other men and personally requested to work with her specifically.

When she began work at HMP Brixton the prison had an incredibly high rate of suicide and self-harm, issues Slade realised deserved more consideration in prison settings. She led a team of staff in the prison to help redesign the prison environment with psychological principles in mind, with no funding, and helped to reduce the suicide rate to zero for the four years she was there – there had been eight suicides in the four years prior to that.

During her time at Brixton Slade undertook a research doctorate, and discovered a love of research which can be applied to practice. Eight years ago she moved to Nottingham Trent University, allowing her to teach, research and practice. Since then Slade has worked with a number of groups on suicide and self-harm reduction including the police, government ministries, Network Rail and the Samaritans.

Dr Annie Scudds (University of Chester) grew up in Bellefeuille near Montreal in Canada, and during her psychology BSc volunteered with brain injured patients, worked with women who had AIDS and as a nursery assistant. Scudds had always wanted to travel and completed the final year of her degree in France, an experience she found challenging but beneficial in terms of the skills she gained.

After returning to Montreal she completed a master's in cognitive psychology and worked as a research assistant learning about programming, project management, participant recruitment and data collection. Thanks to 'a bit of luck' the professor she worked with as a research assistant was moving to work at the University of Glasgow, and offered Scudds an scholarship to study her PhD on object cognition there. She gained her first academic posts in Glasgow as a postdoc, then lecturer. Then came a fork in the road, deciding between academia and working in a more applied research setting. At this point a former colleague who worked with Unilever suggested that Scudds may enjoy consumer science.

During her time at the company Scudds was asked some interesting questions in relation to product development and design; for example, she was once asked to design an experiment exploring people's perceptions of creases in fabric. She also worked on logos, brand names, helped to introduce new products and even carried out research into the perception of stains – very important for clothes detergent adverts.

After a few years working in industry Scudds decided to do a further master's degree in occupational psychology, and became an occupational support coach for a government initiative called Pathways to Work. She later moved back into academia as a senior lecturer at the University of Chester where she leads several modules, works in the university's marketing committee, leads the experimental psychology group and is a careers and employability tutor.

Scudds suggested that students think about psychology as they would when exploring options in a supermarket, and be open to new opportunities to discover what they like and dislike in the field. 'Be curious, be brave.'



Dr Annie Scudds

from the chief executive



This is the first edition of *The Psychologist* which you'll have received in 2020, and I hope that all of our members enjoyed the festive period and New Year's celebrations.

We're excited about the year that lies ahead, and to continue on our journey to becoming the true home for psychology in the UK.

It's the work of our fantastic volunteers and the input of you, our members, which is going to get us there, and we need your help over the next few weeks.

We're working with a company called The Social Kinetic on an ambitious member journey project which will tell us about the routes you take to becoming psychologists, and the times along the way where we could've offered you more.

Some of you will be contributing to the project through one of the many interviews or focus groups which we've arranged, but all BPS members are invited to give us your honest thoughts on what we do well, what we can do better, and where we need to get to.

You can do this by visiting bps.org.uk/memberjourney – please don't hold back!

Ultimately the project will paint us a picture of what the future of BPS membership needs to look like, produced in collaboration with you.

We all want the profile of psychology to keep growing, and for us to stay relevant in an ever-changing world. Tailoring our membership offer to the realities of modern psychologists is central to that.

I'll keep you updated on the progress of the project, and report back on what you tell us over the coming weeks and months.

You can also get in touch with me directly if you want to discuss any aspects of BPS membership, and what we should be doing better or offering to our members. I'm always keen to hear from members, and I would encourage as many of you as possible to get involved in this project.

Sarb Bajwa is Chief Executive of the British Psychological Society.

Contact him at Sarb.Bajwa@bps.org.uk