

ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER - ISSUE #6



HEAD OF DEPARTMENT'S FOREWORD

As you are reading this, it's January 2022. We are probably all asking the same question in different ways: where did 2021 go? It was a curious year. Time went fast and slow at the same time. With reduced travel and reduced opportunity for outings, celebrations and other milestones, we are all finding it hard to remember what happened when. Many of us have experienced loss. Our heart goes out to the members of our community who did; it's important that we acknowledge life's more challenging moments. This weekend, my husband and I divided up across two funerals. Both friends are missed hugely, each had a particular quality to make friends wherever they went, with all walks of life. Each occasion was also a celebration of life, friendship and connection. This is what one of our friends chose to be remembered by: "It's not where you run, it's who you run with (Born feral, New Model Army).

Notions of community and belonging also weave as a thread through our department's activities. Dr Libby Drury has a [new paper](#) out with Professor Ulrike Fassbender on the important topic of intergenerational contact at work. More in the next edition! Our two professional doctoral programmes had

their induction on 7 January. We are glad to have such critical thinkers as part of our community. There are so many challenges in the world of work now, and whatever we do, we have to look at best evidence. Two of our PhD students, Christine Shukis-Brown and Shafag Garayeva successfully defended their doctoral theses – congratulations to both! Shafag has already commenced her first academic post, working with her second supervisor who moved to the University of East Anglia, but remains part of our DNA.

Finally, we are so glad to witness the success of our undergraduate students, many of whom have undertaken successful career changes following graduation or signed up for future postgraduate study – all our best wishes for the future!

Professor Almuth McDowall
Head of Department

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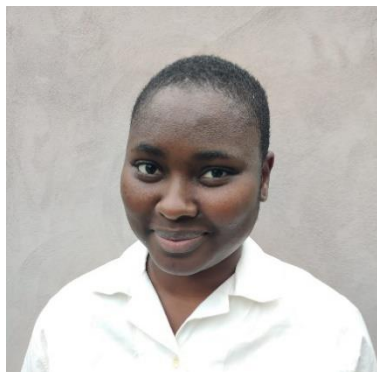
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AUTUMN GRADUATION: CELEBRATING STUDENT SUCCESS

Birkbeck's autumn graduation celebrated the hard work and academic achievements of our Class of 2021. In a virtual ceremony on 3 November, graduating students were addressed and congratulated by Professor David Latchman CBE, Vice-Chancellor; Baroness Joan Bakewell, President; Professor Joanna Bourke, College Orator, alongside academic staff and family and friends. Students who had performed exceptionally well in their studies were presented with awards by Head of Department Professor Almuth McDowall at the BEI Prizegiving Ceremony, where they also received congratulations from Executive Dean Professor Geoff Walters and their invited guests. We would like to congratulate our Class of 2021 on the resilience they have shown through the year and on their fantastic achievements.

Organizational Psychology Awards for our BSc Business Psychology:

- **Best Module Result:** Christopher Griffiths
- **Best Project:** Michele Ruggieri
- **Best Overall Student:** Sabina Enukwesi



Sabina Enukwesi received the award for Best Overall BSc Business Psychology Student.

LIVELY DEBATE LAUNCHES PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE IN EVIDENCE-BASED HRM

In November, we celebrated the launch of our new Professional Doctorate in Evidence-Based Human Resource Management with a webinar that invited leading professionals in the field to reflect on the state of evidence-based practice in the UK today.

Chaired by Professor Julie Gore, Programme Director, the webinar invited thought-provoking reflections from David D'Souza, Membership Director of the CIPD and Professor Claire Gubbins, Professor in Organisational Behaviour and HRM at DCU Business School, Dublin City University. Questions from Visiting Professor Rob Briner and Professor Almuth McDowall, and the 125+ attendees resulted in a lively discussion.

Evidence-based HR is a purposeful approach to decision-making that equips HR leaders to navigate their uncertain environment. It involves adopting a decision-making process that critically evaluates multiple sources of data, experience and expert opinions to ensure the decision's most successful outcome. The event offered an opportunity to reflect on where we are now with evidence-based practice in HRM, asking how far we have come and how practitioners can embed evidence-based practice in their work. We hope to continue this conversation.

[Catch up on the discussion on YouTube.](#)

CONSULTANCY STUDENTS COLLABORATE WITH CHANGE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

A new collaboration between the Department of Organizational Psychology and the [Change Management Institute](#) will see students supporting practitioners to tackle the key challenges facing the change management profession.

Students on the [MSc Management Consultancy and Organisational Change](#) will work with practitioners to identify and investigate 'thorny' topics that arise during periods of change. We would like to thank Associate Lecturer Alistair Cumming for working with the CMI to put together this exciting initiative for our students.

[Read more about the project.](#)

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

ARE COVID-19 CONSPIRACIES A THREAT TO PUBLIC HEALTH?

Research by Dr Lilith Whiley and colleagues from the University of Essex explores conspiracy theorists' responses to public health recommendations.

As COVID-19 spread in early 2020 and uncertainty around the origins and transmission of the virus grew, conspiracy theories filled in the gaps. Social media was rife with claims that COVID-19 was an artificially created bioweapon; a plot by pharmaceutical companies to profit from

vaccines; even being spread across the 5G network. At the height of the pandemic's first wave, conspiracy-related content received greater engagement than content from sources such as the World Health Organisation and national health services. What are the implications of this for public health?

Together with colleagues from the University of Essex [Department of Psychology](#), I sought to understand whether this 'infodemic' of conspiracy theory content posed a threat to public health initiatives such as mask wearing, social distancing and take-up of the COVID-19 vaccination.



Did conspiracy theorists follow public health initiatives in the COVID-19 pandemic?

Prior research suggests that conspiracy beliefs could prevent people from complying with public health guidance during a pandemic. Previous studies also suggest that there is a negative relationship between conspiratorial beliefs and support for government COVID-19 health guidelines. We carried out [three complementary studies](#) to further understanding on the relationship between conspiracy beliefs and health protective behaviours during the COVID-19

pandemic. In a series of surveys conducted at the height of the UK's first wave, we examined to what extent participants agreed with COVID-19 conspiracy theories and how this compared to their mindset, trust in government, social characteristics and health protective behaviours.

Key findings were:

- Trust and analytical thinking correlated negatively with conspiracy beliefs.
- Being part of an ethnic minority, more educated, a frontline worker or having a conservative ideology correlated positively to conspiracy beliefs.
- Conspiracy theory believers reported following health guidelines, such as hand washing and social distancing, as much as others, but were less likely to agree to get tested or vaccinated against the virus and more likely to share misinformation online.

The fact that conspiracy theorists comply with public health guidelines around COVID-19 but are unwilling to be tested or vaccinated for the virus, appears contradictory. What is interesting, however, is that all the behaviours that conspiracy believers performed as much or more than other people provide autonomy and control, for example hand washing or wearing a mask. Getting tested or vaccinated, on the other hand, requires trust in others. Our results confirmed that conspiracy theory believers were reluctant to undertake actions in which they had lower levels of personal control, viewing these actions as more risky and less beneficial.

What are the implications of these findings when tackling the COVID-19 pandemic?

While conspiracy believers are frequently presented as risk takers who refuse to follow official health recommendations, our findings show that this is not the case. Conspiracy believers endorse as much, or even more, the protective behaviours that give them a sense of personal control. However, hesitancy around getting tested and vaccinated against COVID-19 due to a lack of trust is a cause for concern. The increased prevalence of conspiracy theories in frontline workers and individuals from ethnic minorities may explain the greater hesitancy to be vaccinated against COVID-19 observed in both of those groups.

We have identified the following recommendations to support uptake of public health initiatives:

- Design communications around testing and vaccination for COVID-19 to be inclusive for conspiracy believers, clearly communicating the risks and benefits.
- Ensure these health messages are delivered by trusted sources.
- Promote autonomy-supportive health advice, for example when inviting healthcare professionals for a flu vaccine.
- Ensure transparency from pharmaceutical companies in their data sharing to increase trust.
- Include prompts for analytical thinking in COVID-19 communications to prevent the spread of false information.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- **Professor Alexandra Beauregard** chaired the Work and Family Researchers Network virtual plenary 'Conversations about Covid-19 & Work-Family Around the Globe' on September 17, 2021. [Session recordings and chat logs are available online.](#)
- **Dr Rachel Lewis** had two invited presentations at Rail Wellbeing Live entitled 'Managing conflict, bullying and harassment at work' and 'What if your job was good for you?'. Rachel was also on an invited panel discussion on 'The future of wellbeing at work' at the ISMA Stress Summit and on an invited hosted round table on 'The future of duty of care' at the FEM EMEA conference.
- **Mark Stringer** is running a session on organisational power and politics to 80 MBA students at Imperial College London.
- **Dr Kevin Teoh** presented 'Embracing an Organisational Perspective to Wellbeing: It's not only about yoga and resilience' at a CIPD London Online Meeting, 28 October 2021.
- **Dr Lilith Whiley** and Sarah Stutterheim from Maastricht University will be leading a specialised network in Gender, Work and Organization on gender and health at work.
- **Dr Jo Yarker** and **Dr Rachel Lewis** have written a number of guides on mental health and returning to work for organisations: 'A review of qualitative research that informs on implementation issues for workplace mental health interventions' for the World Health Organization; the [Returning to the workplace after the COVID-19 lockdown – toolkit](#), for SOM Contributions; [Managing a return to](#)

[work following long term sickness absence: Guide for People Professionals](#) for the CIPD in Partnership with BUPA; and [Transitioning out of lockdown and the impact on your work](#), for Mental Health at Work. Rachel and Jo also gave an invited workshop at the Leadership in Healthcare conference called 'A manager's toolkit for managing stress and mental health in the workplace'.

- **Dr Jo Yarker** gave a number of invited presentations: 'Exploring the reality of inclusive return to work' at the Work Wellness Institute, October 2021; 'Transition out of lockdown' to the Road Safety Markings Association; 'Preparing for a successful return to the workplace' at IBEC Keep Well Summit; and 'Developing WHO Guidelines for Mental Health at Work' at GDG. Jo was also on an invited hosted round table at the Mad World Summit, on an invited panel discussion at the World Mental Health Day event on 'When mental health and inclusivity collide' and a symposium member at EA-OHP symposium on 'Mental health and wellbeing at work in times of crisis.'

AWARDS, HONOURS AND APPOINTMENTS

- **Dr Rashpal Dhensa-Kahlon** was awarded £10,000 funding from the Wellcome Trust Institutional Strategic Support Fund to undertake a latent class trajectory analysis, using the Longitudinal UK Household Data, to explore the impact of COVID-19 on health and well-being.
- **Dr Lilith Whiley** joined the Editorial Board of Gender, Work and Organization.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

DR LUKAS WALLRICH



Lukas joined the Department as Lecturer in Organizational Psychology in July. He shares what he's looking forward to for the year ahead.

What's your #BBKStory?

I first got to know Birkbeck when I did my Master's right next door at the Institute of Education. I then applied to the Psychology Department for my PhD, and although I ended up going elsewhere to access funding, I really enjoyed getting to know the people and the process at Birkbeck.

After working for several years in management consultancy looking into organisational culture, I began to look for ways to combine academic research with having a real-world impact - organizational psychology felt like a way to bring those

two parts of my interest together. When a role came up in Birkbeck's Department of Organizational Psychology, which has a reputation as one of the most exciting organizational psychology departments around, I applied and was very grateful for the opportunity to join.

What are you currently working on?

I'm teaching a module on consultancy and professional practice, combining practical skills development with academic evaluation of the consultancy process. Having experienced first-hand the power of consultancy, but also some of the pitfalls, it will be interesting to look at it from the other side and to help students prepare for their careers.

I'm also doing some teaching around diversity management, which is what I want to focus my research on as well. I'll be looking at how to harness the benefits of diversity in the workforce and joining in the activities of the department's [Diversity Research Group](#). In addition, I am very excited about the Open Science movement and planning to bring some of these ideas into the Department.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Pre-COVID I did a lot of travelling; that's always been very important to me and I look forward to that becoming possible again. In lockdown, I've enjoyed doing more practical things, like DIY and building furniture, which provides a nice balance to academia!

SAVE THE DATE: QUALITATIVE METHODS IN ACTION DAY

Alumni and friends of the department are warmly invited to attend our fifth [Qualitative 'Methods in Action' Day](#), which will take place on **Thursday 12 May 2022** and will run from 10am-4.30pm. The event is organised by the [Qualitative Research Methods Group](#).

The day will feature a mix of presentations and panel discussions by academic staff and PhD students from the department. The theme will be 'inclusive research', examining what this means and entails from different perspectives and within a variety of occupational and organizational contexts. If you are interested in attending, please [register online](#).

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles

- Abdellatif, A., Aldossari, M., Boncori, I., Callahan, J., **Chatrakul Na Ayudhya, U.**, Chaudhry, S., Kivinen, N., Liu, S., Utoft, E., Vershinina, N., Yarrow, E., and Pullen, A. (2021). Breaking the mold: Working through our differences to vocalize the sound of change. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 28(5), 1956-1979.
- **Beauregard, T. A.**, and Adisa, T. A. (2021). [Enactors or reactors? Work-life border management for women in law in Nigeria](#). *Community, Work & Family*.
- Cotton, E., **Beauregard, T. A.**, and Keles, J. Y. (2021). [Gender equalities: What lies ahead](#). *Work, Employment and Society*, 35(4), 615-620.
- De Camargo, C. and **Whiley, L. A.** (2021) 'There's always got to be a villain': the

police as 'dirty' key workers and the effects on occupational prestige. *Policing and Society: An International Journal of Research and Policy* ISSN 1043-9463.

- **Dhensa-Kahlon, R. K.** and Woods, S. A. (2021). Humor styles as markers of personality facets: An examination of the personality structural foundation of humor. Forthcoming in *Personality and Individual Differences*.
- Donaldson-Feilder, E., **Lewis, R.**, **Yarker, J.**, and **Whiley, L.** (Accepted Nov 21). Interpersonal mindfulness in Leadership Development: A Delphi Study. *Journal of Management Education*.
- González-Cabrera, J., Basterra-González, A., Montiel, I., Calvete, E., **Pontes, H. M.**, and Machimbarrena, J. M. (2021). [Loot boxes in Spanish adolescents and young adults: Relationship with internet gaming disorder and online gambling disorder](#). *Computers in Human Behavior*, 107012.
- Juanchich, M., Sirota, M., Jolles, D. and **Whiley, L. A.** (2021) Are COVID-19 conspiracies a threat to public health? Psychological characteristics and health protective behaviours of believers. *European Journal of Social Psychology* ISSN 1099-0992.
- Macur, M., and **Pontes, H. M.** (2021). [Internet Gaming Disorder in adolescence: investigating profiles and associated risk factors](#). *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 1547.
- **Matei, R.**, and Ginsborg, J. (2021). Health education for musicians in the UK: a qualitative evaluation. *Health Promotion International*.
- Mikus, K. and **Teoh, K.R.H.** (2021). [Future-oriented Coping, Psychological Capital, Future-oriented Coping, and the](#)

[Wellbeing of Secondary School Teachers in Germany](#). Education Psychology.

- Montag, C., Schivinski, B., and **Pontes, H. M.** (2021). [Is the proposed distinction of Gaming Disorder into a predominantly online vs. offline form meaningful? Empirical evidence from a large German speaking gamer sample](#). Addictive Behaviors Reports, 100391.
- **Pontes, H. M.**, and Macur, M. (2021). Problematic internet use profiles and psychosocial risk among adolescents. PLOS ONE, 16(9), e0257329.
- Poon, L. Y. J., Tsang, H. W. H., Chan, T. Y. J., Man, S. W. T., Ng, L. Y., Wong, Y. L. E., Lin, C. Y., Chien, C. W., Griffiths, M. D., **Pontes, H. M.**, and Pakpour, A. H. (2021). [Psychometric Properties of the Internet Gaming Disorder Scale–Short-Form \(IGDS9-SF\): Systematic Review](#). Journal of Medical Internet Research, 23(10), e26821.
- Rozgonjuk, D., Schivinski, B., **Pontes, H. M.**, and Montag, C. (2021). [Problematic Online Behaviors Among Gamers: the Links Between Problematic Gaming, Gambling, Shopping, Pornography Use, and Social Networking](#). International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction.
- Riley, R., Buszewicz, M., Kokab, F., **Teoh, K.R.H.**, Gopfert, A., Taylor, A.K., van Hove, M., Martin, J., Appleby, L., and Chew-Graham, C.A. (2021). [The sources of work-related psychological distress experienced by England-wide foundation and junior doctors: a qualitative study](#). BMJ Open, 11, 6: e043521 (Impact Factor: 2.369).
- Riley, R., Kokab, F., Buszewicz, M., Gopfert, A., van Hove, M., Taylor, A.K., **Teoh, K.R.H.**, Martin, J., and Chew-Graham, C.A. (2021). [Protective factors and sources of support in the workplace as experienced by UK foundation and](#)

[junior doctors: a qualitative study](#). BMJ Open, 11, 6: e045588.

Books, Chapters and Reports

- Basile, K.A. and **Beauregard, T. A.**, (2021) [Boundary management: getting the work-home balance right](#). In: Russell, E. and Grant, C. (eds.) *Agile Working and Well-Being in the Digital Age*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 35-46. ISBN 9783030602826.
- Reich, T. C. and **Dhensa-Kahlon, R. K.** (2021). Workplace Mistreatment: A Review of the Literature and Agenda for Future Research. Forthcoming in Brough, P., Daniels, K., Gardiner, E. (Eds). Handbook Series in Occupational Health Sciences. Handbook on Management and Employment Practices.

Conference Output

- Adamson, M., **Beauregard, T. A.**, and Lewis, S. (2021, August). Managing family and flexible work during Covid-19: The changing sense of entitlement? Paper presented at the Work, Employment and Society Conference (virtual), 25-27 August 2021.
- **Teoh, K.** (2021). Policy Responses to Atypical Work in Europe. In G. Fisher (Chair), International Perspectives on Work, Stress, and Health. Work, Stress and Health Conference, Virtual Conference, 4 November 2021.
- **Lilith Whiley** hosted the London hub of the [International Society of Critical Health Psychology conference](#) at the end of August 2021.

The Department of Organizational Psychology is part of Birkbeck's School of Business, Economics and Informatics.
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