



BU MATCH FUNDED STUDENTSHIPS 2024

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT TITLE

Understanding threat, risk, and harm in the policing of suspects of sex offences

PROJECT SUMMARY

Within policing there is a drive to understand who the 'riskiest' or 'most harmful' suspects are, to prioritise limited policing resources and to ensure police are maximising their opportunities to safeguard victims and the wider public. While there is a strong appetite in policing currently to use concepts like, threat, risk, and harm to drive forward operational actions, these concepts are often poorly understood and articulated, used inconsistently, and used to describe different psychological concepts in different circumstances without recognition of these differences. Further, their application in tools, assessments, and judgements often do not often have a strong evidence base which underpin them. The purpose of the PhD, therefore, is to explore the psychology of concepts threat, risk, and harm, and to understand how they are used within policing.

There is scope for the appointed student to select specific aspects of the topic that are of most interest to them. They may cover research questions like:

- What are the underpinning psychological mechanisms of concepts like threat, risk, and harm, and how are they operationalised within a policing context? Are these operationalisations fit for purpose and reflective of the underpinning psychological concepts?
- How are these concepts currently measured, and can the evidence base which is largely reliant on convicted populations be attributed to non-convicted perpetrators? What are the differences are between these populations?
- What are the current ways in which these concepts are used within policing, e.g. the development of policing risk assessment structured tools? Are these concepts being used on a case-by-case basis or through the use of 'big data' to make large scale decisions about suspects (e.g. ranking suspect 'harm' through an algorithmic tool)? Have these tools been appropriately applied and evaluated, and considered within existing ethical and legal frameworks relevant to policing?

Crucially, the PhD should consider how the realities of policing enable, or prohibit, officers from conducting assessments of suspect threat, risk, and harm equitably, ensuring that these principles are used fairly and do not reinforce bias e.g. may be seen in the general collection of police data, or create misinformation leading to inappropriate policing decision making.

The student who undertakes this PhD must be eligible for UK policing security clearance.

ACADEMIC IMPACT

While concepts like risk and risk assessment are not new, within forensic psychology and criminology they are most often used within the context of psychologists conducting risk assessments within prison settings. The application of risk in policing, particularly on a large scale as opposed to on a case-by-case basis, is something which has received little attention in the academic literature. The links between the operational uses of threat, risk, and harm are rarely linked back to the theoretical literature to determine what is actually meant by these terms and what they should represent in policing. The successful student would have the opportunity to make a truly novel contribution to both the psychological, criminological, and social policy / policing literature in the field.

SOCIETAL IMPACT

This is an applied topic which brings together theoretical concepts from psychology and criminology and understands how they are applied in policing. There is, therefore, a clear pathway to non-academic impact as the PhD will explore how these concepts are currently used to good (or poor) effect within policing, providing clear recommendations as to a)

where the evidence base supporting law enforcement practice requires bolstering, and b) where current or projected policing practices should be continued or paused, subject to further scrutiny.

PGR DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

As this is an applied area of research, there will be opportunities for the student to make professional connections with both academics and practitioners in the field. There will also be the opportunity to:

- Present their findings to academics at both UK and international conferences
- Present their findings to practitioners

We also strongly encourage our PhD students to take advantage of the opportunities BU provides PG students, such as attending PG conferences and networking opportunities and completing relevant courses. We endeavour to provide our PhD students with the tools to develop professionally during their PhD and are open to discussions around their career progression and how we can support this.

SUPERVISORY TEAM

First Supervisor

Dr Kari Davies

Additional Supervisors

Professor Miranda Horvath (University of Suffolk); Dr Mark Manning

Recent publications by supervisors relevant to this project

The following are a selection of publications from Davies, Horvath, and Manning over the last three years:

Brown, J. M., Figueiredo, M. S., **Horvath, M. A. H.** (2022). Taking stock; a review of the state of forensic psychology as revealed through an analysis of journal articles 2015-20. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Research and Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24732850.2022.2088326>

Brown, J. M. & **Horvath, M. A. H.** (Eds.) (2021). *The Cambridge Handbook of Forensic Psychology, 2nd Edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crivatu, I., **Horvath, M. A. H.** & Massey, K. (2021). The Impacts of Working with Victims of Sexual Violence: A Rapid Evidence Assessment. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse, 24(1)*, 56-71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380211016024>

Dalton, C. T., Barrett, S., **Horvath, M. A. H.**, & **Davies, K.** (2022). A systematic literature review of specialist policing of rape and serious sexual offences. *International Criminology*.

Daly, E., Smith, O., Bows, H., Brown, J. M., Chalmers, J., Cowan, S., **Horvath, M. A. H.**, Leverick, F., Lovett, J., Munro, V. & Willmott, D. (2022). Myths about Myths? A Commentary on Thomas (2020) and the Question of Jury Rape Myth Acceptance. *Journal of Gender Based Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1332/239868021X16371459419254>

Davies, K. & **Horvath, M. A. H.** (2022). Guest editors' introduction: Project Bluestone: Improving the police response to rape and serious sexual offending in the United Kingdom. *International Criminology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43576-022-00066-x>

Davies, K., Imre, H., & Woodhams, J. (2021). The utility of the Violent Crime Linkage Analysis System (ViCLAS) for linking stranger sex offences. *Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice*. doi: 10.1108/JCRPP-02-2020-0019

Davies, K., Spence, R., Cummings, E., Cross, M., & **Horvath, M. A. H.** (2022). Understanding sexual violence and factors related to police outcomes. *Frontiers in Psychology*. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.977318

Gekoski, A., **Davies, K.**, & Allen, K. (Accepted for publication). Barriers and challenges to police and Crown Prosecution joint working on rape and serious sexual offence cases: A police perspective. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*.

Gekoski, A., Massey, K., Allen, K., Ferreira, J., Dalton, C. T., **Horvath, M. A. H.**, & **Davies, K.** (2023). 'A lot of the time it's dealing with victims who don't want to know, it's all made up, or they've got mental health': Rape myths in a large English police force. *International Review of Victimology*, 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02697580221142891>

Horvath, M. A. H. & Brown, J. (Eds). (2022). *Rape: Challenging Contemporary Thinking, 10 years on*. Routledge.

Horvath, M. A. H., Rose, H., Dalton, T., Massey, K., Crivatu, I. & Matthews, K. (2021). *Independent sexual violence advisers (ISVAs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland: a study of impacts, effects, coping mechanisms and effective support systems for people working as ISVAs and ISVA Managers*. Project Report. Middlesex University & Canterbury Christ Church University, London. <https://figshare.com/s/a49ec5cc8cd7c45b3dca>

Ji, Z., Rockowitz, S., Flowe, H., Stevens, L., Kanja, W., & **Davies, K.** (2022). Reflections on increasing the value of data on sexual violence incidents against children to better prevent and respond to offending in Kenya. *Societies*, 12, 89-98. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc12030089>

Norman, J., Fox, A., Harding, R., Majid, A., Williams, E., **Davies, K.**, & **Horvath, M. A. H.** (2022). Critical reflection: The importance of case reviews and reflective practice in rape and serious sexual offences investigations. *International Criminology*.

Rockowitz, S., Wagner, K., Cooper, R., Stevens, L., **Davies, K.**, Woodhams, J., Kanja, W., & Flowe, H. (2023). A systematic review of criminal justice initiatives to strengthen the criminal investigation and prosecution of sexual violence in East Africa. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*.

Spence, R., **Horvath, M. A. H.**, Dalton, C. T., & **Davies, K.** (2022). *Impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on reporting of rape, serious sexual offences, and domestic abuse in one English police force*. Special Issue of the *Journal of Gender Based Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1332/239868021X16425806897258>

Woodhams, J. & **Davies, K.**, Galambos, S., & Webb, M. (2021). A descriptive analysis of the temporal and geographical proximities seen within UK series of sex offenses. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 36, 706-715. 10.1007/s11896-021-09473-8

INFORMAL ENQUIRIES

Please contact the lead supervisor on the following email for informal enquiries: Kari Davies (kadavies@bournemouth.ac.uk).

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The BU PhD and MRes Studentships are open to UK, EU and International students.

Candidates for a PhD Studentship should demonstrate outstanding qualities and be motivated to complete a PhD in 4 years and must demonstrate:

- outstanding academic potential as measured normally by either a 1st class honours degree (or equivalent Grade Point Average (GPA) or a Master's degree with distinction or equivalent
- an IELTS (Academic) score of 6.5 minimum (with a minimum 6.0 in each component, or equivalent) for candidates for whom English is not their first language and this must be evidenced at point of application.

Candidates for an MRes Studentship should demonstrate outstanding qualities and be motivated to complete a MRes in 18 months and must demonstrate:

- outstanding academic potential as measured normally by an upper second class honours degree (or equivalent Grade Point Average (GPA)
- an IELTS (Academic) score of 6.5 minimum (with a minimum 6.0 in each component, or equivalent) for candidates for whom English is not their first language and this must be evidenced at point of application.

HOW TO APPLY

Please complete the online application form by **the deadline on the project webpage**.

Further information on the application process can be found at: www.bournemouth.ac.uk/studentships