

Dr Bryony Payne

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I am an early career, postdoctoral research associate with multidisciplinary training spanning the social sciences. My research uses methods from behavioural psychology to examine how people understand other people's thoughts, feelings, and intentions. My most recent work aims to find ways of facilitating understanding between people with different life experiences, such as different political affiliations or developmental trajectories (trauma vs no trauma). You can see more about my research here: <http://www.understanding-others.com/> and here: <https://bryonypayne.wixsite.com/research>

Education

2018 – 2022 **PhD** in Psychology, University College London (Supervisor: Prof Carolyn McGettigan)
Thesis title: *Representing the self: Investigating the roles of ownership, choice, and agency in the processing of self-associated voices.*

Viva examiners: Professor Matthew Longo & Professor Ana Pinheiro.
Passed with no corrections, March 31st 2022.

2016 – 2018 **MSci** in Neuroscience, Language, & Communication, University College London

2015 – 2016 **MA** in Endangered Languages and Cultures, SOAS, University of London

2011 – 2014 **BA (Hons)** in Linguistics, University of Brighton (First Class)

Academic Positions

2025 – 2028 **Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Birkbeck School of Business and Law, University of London**

My current research, "Overcoming Societal Tensions in Europe: Can Age Diverse Friendships be the Solution?", examines whether – and how – having intergenerational friendships may reduce wider societal tensions through improved attitudes toward other outgroups.

2024 – 2025 **Postdoctoral Research Assistant, Institute of Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience, King's College London**

I worked on a King's Together Grant funded project (PI: Dr Caroline Catmur), in which I assessed ways of improving understanding between people with different life experiences (i.e., facilitating understanding between people with no trauma and people with a history of adverse childhood experiences). I was responsible for designing, implementing, managing and disseminating this body of research, including all administrative tasks such as preparing high-risk ethic applications, organising team meetings etc.

2022 – 2024 **Postdoctoral Research Associate, King's College London/University of Oxford**

I worked on a John Templeton funded project exploring '*The Role of Cultural Evolution in Human Understanding*' (awarded to PIs: Prof Geoffrey Bird, University of Oxford and Dr Caroline Catmur, King's College London). I designed complex experimental tasks to examine people's ability and propensity to accurately mentalise about others' thoughts and feelings. Further, I assessed ways of restoring this capacity when it breaks down (i.e., in the instance of considering the minds of out-group members).

Publications

Payne, B., Bird, G., & Catmur, C. (2025). Anti-social learning: The impact of language on mentalizing. *British Journal of Psychology*, 00, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjop.70001>

Rosi, V., **Payne, B.**, & McGettigan, C. (2025). Effects of self-similarity and self-generation on the perceptual prioritization of voices. *Journal of experimental psychology. Human perception and performance*, 10.1037/xhp0001325. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xhp0001325>.

Payne, B., Bird, G. & Catmur, C. Poorer representation of minds underpins less accurate mental state inference for out-groups. *Sci Rep* **14**, 19432 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-67311-3>

Payne, B., & Catmur, C. (2024). Embodiment in the enfacement illusion is mediated by self–other overlap. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 379(20230146). <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2023.0146>

Payne, B., Addlesee, A., Rieser, V., & McGettigan, C. (2024). Self-ownership, not self-production, modulates bias and agency over a synthesised voice. *Cognition*, 248, 105804. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2024.105804>

Payne, B., Lavan, N., Knight, S., & McGettigan, C. (2021). Perceptual prioritization of self-associated voices. *British Journal of Psychology*, 112(3), 585-610. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjop.12479>

Under review

Payne, B.*, Bird, G., & Catmur, C. Feedback on mental state inferences improves accuracy and awareness. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*. Pre-print available at: https://osf.io/d8xuw/?view_only=70fb9619dd70428e9d2ad94b060f77ed

Published in the media

Payne, B.* (2024, September 26). Bridging the gap: Why we misunderstand people who differ from ourselves. *Inspire the Mind*. <https://www.inspirethemind.org/post/bridging-the-gap-why-we-misunderstand-people-who-differ-from-ourselves>

Payne, B.*, & Kazamia, E. (2024, September 11). We're Bad at Understanding Our Political Opponents. *Nautilus Magazine: Psychology*. Retrieved from <https://nautil.us/were-bad-at-understanding-our-political-opponents-856730/>

Payne, B.*, & Catmur, C. (2024, August 28). People think they are much better at understanding others than they actually are: New research. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/people-think-they-are-much-better-at-understanding-others-than-they-actually-are-new-research-236273>

My research has also been reported via Mirage News, Foreign Affairs New Zealand, Inkl, The Telegraph, MSN, Tolerance.ca, Eurekalert, Ground News, Phys.Org, Yahoo News, Sciety, Real Clear Science, Naked Science, Earth.com, Scivillage, Spotlight Magazine, Reddit Science, SciencePost and Soylent News.

Conference proceedings

Sultan, A., Mixter, A., **Payne, B.**, & Catmur, C. (2025) *Machines modelling minds: GenAI models show sensitivity to targets' personality when inferring their mental states*. Talk presented at Exploring Interdisciplinary Frontiers: Cognitive Science, Computational Modeling, and Artificial Intelligence, University of Cambridge, UK, May 9–10, 2025.

Payne, B., Bird, G. & Catmur, C. (2024). Understanding in-group and out-group minds: How to better understand politically dissimilar others. Talk presented at European Society for Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience 2024, University of Ghent, May 24th 2024.

Rosi, V., **Payne, B.**, and McGettigan, C. (2024) Effect of familiarity on the perceptual prioritisation of self-associated voices. Poster presented at Experimental Psychology Society meeting, University College London, April 10th 2024. <https://eps.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Victor-Rosi.pdf>

Payne, B., Bird, G. & Catmur, C. (2024). Understanding in-group and out-group minds: Feedback on mental state inferences improves accuracy and awareness. Talk presented at Experimental Psychology Society meeting, University College London, January 4th 2024.

Mixter, A., **Payne, B.**, Bird, G., and Catmur, C. (2024). Prior experience of others' minds underpins the ability to infer mental states. Talk presented at Experimental Psychology Society meeting, University College London, January 3rd 2024.

Payne, B., Bird, G. & Catmur, C. (2023). Poorer representation of minds underpins less accurate mental state inference for out-groups. Talk presented at the International Social Cognition Workshop, UC Louvain, Belgium, 1st September 2023.

Payne, B., Bird, G. & Catmur, C. (2023). Understanding in-group and out-group minds: Feedback on mental state inferences improves accuracy and awareness. Poster presented at the International Social Cognition Workshop, UC Louvain, Belgium, 1st September 2023.

Catmur, C., **Payne, B.** & Bird, G. (2023). Similar thoughts, similar minds: Are people less prone to consider the minds of dissimilar others? Talk presented at International Convention of Psychological Science, Brussels, 9th March 2023.

Payne, B., Bird, G. & Catmur, C. (2023). Are people less prone to consider the minds of out-group members? A new mental state inference task. Talk presented at Experimental Psychology Society meeting, University College London, January 4th 2023.

Payne, B., Bird, G. & Catmur, C. (2022). Predicting the beliefs and opinions of others: Are people less prone to consider the minds of out-group members? Poster presented at Experimental Psychology Society meeting, University of Stirling, July 13th-15th 2022. Viewable at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Neilq_abrWI.

Payne, B., Addlesee, A., & McGettigan, C. (2022). Incorporating a new auditory identity into the self-concept. Poster presented at the 1st Interdisciplinary Conference on Voice Identity: Perception, Production and Computational Approaches, University of Zurich, July 4th-6th, 2022.

Payne, B. (2021). Testing social interaction in isolation: An online challenge. Talk presented at BeOnline Conference. Hosted online. June 30th, 2021. <https://beonlineconference.com/testing-social-interaction-in-isolation-an-online-challenge/>

Payne, B., Lavan, N., Knight, S., & McGettigan, C. (2021). Perceptual prioritisation of self-associated voices. Talk presented at the European Society for Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, Budapest, Hungary, June 23rd, 2021.

Payne, B. (2020). Prioritisation of self-associated voices. Talk presented at the SSF (Speech, Hearing and Phonetic Science) event. University College London, November 26th, 2020.

Payne, B., Lavan, N., Knight, S., & McGettigan, C. (2020). Self-reference effects in the perception of voices. Poster presented at the Experimental Psychology Society meeting, University College London, January 3rd-5th, 2020. Awarded Presidents Commendation Prize: <https://eps.ac.uk/presidents-commendation-for-student-posters-winners/>

Awards and Prizes

2025	Open Research Awards, 2024 (£50) Awarded by King's College London in recognition of my significant contribution to supporting and practicing of open research.
2024	Early Career Research Award (£2500) Awarded by the Institute of Psychology, Psychiatry, and Neuroscience, King's College London to fund a pilot body of research on representing other's minds.
2024	King's Education Award, 2024 Nominated by students at King's College London as a member of staff who has made a real difference to their experience.
2024	Super Supervisor, 2024 Recognised as a 'super supervisor', an award given by students at King's College London based on the supervision they received during their final year research projects.
2023	Best Poster Prize, F.N.R.S., Psyceduc, (€100) Awarded by scientific committee of the "From Self-Knowledge to knowing others" workshop.
2020	Best Poster Prize, Experimental Psychology Society, (£50) President's Commendation for Student Poster
2014	BA Project Prize, University of Brighton. Awarded for highest dissertation grade of the year.

Teaching

2023 – 2024	The Development of Social Cognition (invited lecture), University College London
2019 – 2021	Neuroscience of Language and Speech MSc (Neurolinguistics module), University College London.
2020 – 2021	How to Conduct Online Experiments , University College London
2019 – 2020	Research Methods (including experimental design and advanced statistics) , University College London.

Supervision

Supervisor on MSc Organisational Psychology Research Projects, Birkbeck, University of London

2024 – 2025 Sejal Padhiar, Sabina Khatun, Maria Golebiewska, Drew Goddard, Harriet Thomas, Jocelyne Keller-Yates, Sydonnie Hyman-Wellington, Vasanthi Prathapan

Supervised research from data collection to dissemination on:

- *Does having intergenerational friendships affect people's attitudes towards other out-group members? Dyadic Analysis with 258 participants.*

Supervisor on BSc Psychology/Neuroscience Final Year Research Projects, King's College London

2023 – 2024 Chidinma Anumba, Erin Harris, Zarrin Tasnim, Oluwasemilore Ramotalahi Sofola

Supervised research from design to dissemination on:

- *Anti-social learning: Does language in the media affect the way we represent out-groups?* Behavioural experiment with 120 participants.

2023 – 2024 Chloe Lau, Mehar Arora

Supervised research from design to dissemination on:

- *Does awareness of the heterogeneity within an opposing group improve our understanding of opposing-group members?* Behavioural experiment with 88 participants.

2023 – 2024 Saimah Khan, Julia Gill

- *Do we mentally represent similar others with greater granularity than dissimilar others?* Behavioural experiment with 64 participants.

Training

- 2024 **1-to-1 Media training by Inside Edge**
A team of former BBC journalists delivering highly bespoke media training in a 1-to-1 session.
- 2024 **Computational Modelling - Training**
In-house (KCL) training on computational modelling and its implementation in R.
- 2024 **Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) training**
Training at King's College London, with a focus on its application in psychological research.
- 2023 **Writing for the Public Workshop (Written Media and Books)**
Completed a course on writing for public audiences, covering techniques for effectively communicating research through media and books.
- 2023 **Pitching for Funding Workshop**
Engaged in a training session on how to pitch research ideas persuasively to potential funders, honing presentation and communication skills.
- 2023 **Successful Grant Applications Training (for Research Staff)**
Participated in a workshop focused on developing effective grant applications, emphasizing strategies for securing research funding.
- 2022 **Software**
Statistical analysis in R, SPSS, JASP; training in MATLAB and SPM imaging software, online experiments via Gorilla, Prolific, sound processing incl. Audacity, Praat, ELAN, FLEEx, Toolbox.
- 2019 **Certified MRI user at BUCNI**, University College London
- 2019 **Simulating Data in R**, University College London
- 2019 **Python & MATLAB Programming**, University College London
- 2019 **Neuroanatomy**: A comprehensive 3-day course in structural and functional neuroanatomy (Kings College London) for students of medicine, psychology & neuroscience.
- 2018 **Advanced skills in R**, Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health (ICH)

Further outreach and engagement

- 2020 **Interview with the Experimental Psychology Society (2020):**
<https://eps.ac.uk/eps-poster-prize-interview-bryony-payne/>
- 2019 **Researcher spotlight interview with Gorilla Behavioural Experiment Builder (2019):**
<https://gorilla.sc/spotlights/bryony-payne>
- 2019 **Royal Institution – ExpeRience**
Delivered a public workshop on auditory science (UCL).

Reviewing and Academic Service

2024	Committee panel member for IoPPN Early Career Research Award
2019	Peer reviewed papers for the Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, British Journal of Psychology, Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, Cortex, Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, Language and Speech.