

# SGSSS Student Induction 2024

## Students and Abstracts

Securities: Justice, Economies and Conflict

### **Zhoulihua Zhang**

University of Strathclyde

#### **Missing but not Forgotten: Modelling New Developments in the Global Economy Using Data with Missing Values**

My project plans to develop a Bayesian-VAR method to complete estimating missing data and modelling in one-step.

### **Matthew Heneghan**

University of Glasgow

#### **Remittance Regimes: Rethinking the Political Economy of Long-Term Dependency on Labour Migration in Central Asia**

Around 80% of annual migration from Central Asia is in the direction of Russia, which today hosts an estimated 14 million labour migrants – making Eurasia one of the world's most migration-intensive regions. The remittances which migrants send home are not only a major source of household income, but contribute up to 40% of GDP in homelands and neutralise demands for governments to provide social welfare. The economic and political integrity of these flows has, however, become increasingly unstable due to regional and global shocks such as Russia's war in Ukraine, turbulent energy prices and the COVID-19 pandemic. Migrant-sending states in Eurasia have sought to mitigate risks to remittances through increasing institutional engagement with migratory processes within and beyond state borders, and bringing migration to the forefront of public discourse.

This project is interested in how long-term remittance dependency has influenced patterns of political and institutional behaviour. Focusing on Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, it employs document and strategic discourse analysis alongside elite interviews to situate the phenomena of sustained labour migration and remittances within broader state narratives. Through comparative analysis of these states, it critically assesses the extent to which a differentiated state-political regime type has emerged as a result of decades of structural dependency on remittance flows. Where existing research has overwhelmingly focused on migration politics in Global North contexts, this

project contributes to growing interest in how labour migration affects sending-state politics within emerging regions.

### **Sama Younes**

University of Edinburgh

#### **Mapping Palestine: Decolonial Spatial Practices and Imaginations of an Otherwise**

From the United Nations Partition Plan (1947) to present-day digital maps, Palestine has been mapped and re-envisioned countless times, with borders set and continuously reset to define colonial occupation. From physical transformations to systemic efforts of renaming and remarking space, this colonial process alienates Palestinians from their land through an imposed extra-territoriality (the absent) and extra-temporality (the dead, the futureless). In thinking concretely about the material role of colonial cartography as a technology of spatio-temporal erasure, my project asks how, and to what ends might we understand the role of (re)mapping as connected to Palestinian spatial and temporal claims and visions of freer futures? Put differently, what do Palestinian (re)mapping practices offer to visions of decolonisation?

Against this backdrop, my research explores Palestinian (re)mapping practices in and beyond Palestine, examining how Palestinians mediate, reconfigure, reclaim, and reimagine space and place in ways that transcend the ~~tenets~~ of normative cartography, and highlighting Indigenous knowledges and relations to land as a counter epistemic register (Peluso, 1995) that embraces Indigenous presence in contrast to epistemic and material (i.e. land-based) claims to settler permanence. To this end, my project approaches imagination as a critical site of action to investigate how Palestinian (re)mapping practices negotiate political realities, living histories, and imagined futures — and what tensions between the imaginative and the material might tell us about the conditions of Palestinian colonial and decolonial life beyond dominant discourses on humanitarian rights and state boundaries.

### **Benson Njongoro**

University of Glasgow

#### **Coloniality of Punishment: A critical exploration of colonial impacts on penalty with justice experienced people and those in communities in Kenya**

As Black et al. (2021: 610) argue, “For scholars of crime and punishment, greater commitment than ever is necessary to engage with perspectives that critique the colonial past and use this awareness to recognise global inequalities in the present.” Recent research by Pfungst and Kimari (2021) on settler colonialism

affirms that Kenya has normalized a colonial mode of punishment in post-colonial era. Foucault's seminal work on the prison derives from an analysis of practice in Europe, while studies of colonial punishment have focused either on the single institution of the prison or more recently isolated forms of punishment, such as capital punishment. As a result, these works have not considered the diverse and complex nature of colonial punitive regimens in the Global South and missed the opportunity to explore the logic of domination and contradiction at work in penal practices. This research aims to break new ground in the study of colonial punishment, by adopting a more holistic approach and considering a broader range of features of colonial punishment in one former colonised site, Kenya, exploring both how 'coloniality' continues to shape penal-legal practices and how a postcolonial future might be imagined.

To achieve this, my thesis seeks to answer the following questions:

- (i) How did 'coloniality' shape penal-legal practices in Kenya?
- (ii) What are key features of colonial punishment in Kenya? What is the relationship between coloniality and criminal (in)justice in Kenya?
- (iii) How do people inside and outside the criminal justice system think about punishment, its use and the prison's future?

### **Ursula Shepherd**

University of Glasgow

### **Justice Through Online Spaces: Exploring Online Self-Representations of Sexual Violence Victim-Survivors**

This research will look at how victim-survivors of sexual violence represent themselves on social media, and whether it contributes to feelings of justice. The research is built upon sociological and criminological research concerned with justice and self-representation of marginalised identities online. For this study, justice takes the shape of state justice and informal justice, as researchers have established that many victim-survivors seek justice in non-judicial forms such as participation, validation, vindication, and offender accountability-taking responsibility. Due to a gap in state justice, where rape reports seldom result in conviction in the UK, victim-survivors frequently receive little to no support from authorities, and find themselves suffering secondary victimisation inflicted by the police and court system themselves, thus turning to online communities for support. This is the phenomenon with which I am interested and will be addressed by investigating how online victim-survivors conceptualise justice and whether online self-representations contribute to a sense of justice. This will help to expand current understandings, as self-representation is frequently overlooked in discussions about justice and online spaces. I plan to use

participatory research methods that will allow participants to take and select photographs that assist in conveying their experiences and narratives. This method will help to foster a trauma-informed approach that emphasises lived experience and participant empowerment. Through this, the research will be able to demonstrate how to create helpful and empowered online networks for victim-survivors, whether through internet, nonprofit, or state organisations.

## Social Inequalities

### **Raghad Hilal**

University of Glasgow

#### **Place under Threat: Mapping the Lived Experience of Young Palestinians**

Through examining the lived experience of young Palestinians, this project explores how everyday threats shape lived experiences of place. By focusing on Israel's mechanisms of control, it will uncover the multiple layers of people's sense of place. This project aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how spatial threats impact the emotional connections, geographical perceptions, and memories of young Palestinians about place in Palestine and Israel. It does so by drawing on the researcher's unique position as a Palestinian and building upon their existing track record of investigating Palestinians' place experiences in the West Bank. From this situated vantage point, the study contributes to broader theoretical debates on the formation of a sense of place by posing the following three research questions:

1. How do young Palestinians identify and form an emotional connection with places in a context of threat and spatial fragmentation?
2. How do young Palestinians navigate and negotiate their spatial activities in a fragmented geography?
3. What are the differences between the collective memory of Palestinians living in Palestine and Israel?

### **David Rozental-Devis**

University of Edinburgh

#### **The Non-binary Self: Subjectivity, Aesthetics and the Tattooed Body**

In 2022, the Sheffield Tattoo Festival interviewed a non-binary tattooer, Ems, who expressed that "there is a real visceral and tactile gender affirmation in taking control of your body and adapting it – especially with the waiting list for gender affirming surgeries being so long" (2022). When considering the cultural, spiritual, and personal significance permanent body markings have had to people across time and space, what significance could tattoos have to non-binary people? What can non-binary cultures of tattooing tell us about the relationship trans people might have with their bodies in ways that, rather than limit this relationship to the medical, expands understanding to encompass the aesthetic. Thinking through what the relationship between tattoos and non-binary gender could entail – what tattoos mean to their non-binary acquirers – led me to develop the following research questions:

1. How does embodiment, specifically in the form of tattoos, figure in the constitution and expression of non-binary subjectivities?
2. How is non-binary subjectivity negotiated through aesthetic choices?
3. Are there non-binary tattoo aesthetics and, if so, what are they?

To address these research questions, I will conduct narrative interviews with tattooed non-binary people, beginning with a 'tattoo tour' and followed by a series of questions developed in the moment, designed to get the participant to expand on elements of their 'tattoo tour'. Once a tattoo has been etched onto skin, it makes its way through the world with a life of its own, imbricated with not just the meanings given to it by the wearer, but with the beholder's own applied meanings. With its aesthetic reception, the tattoo – as a piece of art regardless of its embodied nature – can be understood as having its own subjectivity. Considering tattoos in this regard, as forms of knowledge in their own right, and as containing social and cultural significance, I will photograph tattoos and analyse them as (body) artworks, drawing on the methods of reception aesthetics and visual narrative analysis. Interview data will be analysed in conjunction with visual data, combining interpretative phenomenological analysis with narrative analysis.

### **Louis MacPherson**

Strathclyde University

#### **Housing injustice and children's outcomes: how does growing up in rented accommodation affect children's health, wellbeing and cognitive development?**

Recently, housing has been a key public debate with unaffordability of homeownership and inadequacy of social housing sadly making headlines. Further, housing has received growing scholarly attention as an important context shaping individuals' life-course transitions and their (physical, social and financial) wellbeing. The research has focused predominantly on adults, with research on housing in childhood being underdeveloped. We need to advance knowledge on housing trajectories experienced by children; and the mechanisms through which housing impacts their lives.

Previous studies focused on housing tenure and found that growing up in owned rather than rented accommodation has a positive effect on children's outcomes. The existence of a "housing tenure effect" can be questioned, as the relationship might be driven by the socio-economic resources of households in rented accommodation, or by other features associated with housing tenure – such as housing quality, neighbourhood characteristics or residential stability.

While most previous studies were US based, this project will expand the evidence base on Europe. The focus is on Scotland, which shares similar housing market and policy context with the rest of the UK. A key advantage of using Scottish data, however, is the possibility to observe recent cohorts, whose childhood unfolded during the peak of the housing boom and the subsequent housing recession, through to the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis.

The project will address the following themes and associated research questions:

The changing housing trajectories during childhood:

1. Which housing tenure trajectories do children experience? And have they changed over time?
2. Which socio-demographic characteristics are associated with specific housing trajectories (e.g., living continuously in private renting)?

The relationship between housing trajectories and children's outcomes:

1. What is the relationship between housing trajectories and children's health, socio-emotional wellbeing and cognitive development?
2. To what extent is the relationship between growing up renting and children's outcomes explained by:
  - a. Children's socio-economic background?
  - b. The characteristics of children's housing and of the neighbourhood of residence?
  - c. Other demographic processes associated with living in the rental sector (e.g., residential or family instability)?

## **Susan Slater**

University of Glasgow

### **How can Innovation Districts deliver inclusive growth in post-industrial urban communities? A comparative international study assessing the challenges and opportunities of implementation in the UK, Europe and North America.**

Finding effective ways to achieve economic growth is a challenge for policymakers across the world; persistently high levels of inequality mean that this must now meet a wider set of objectives, to deliver social as well as economic benefits. This puts additional pressure on long-standing policy levers such as innovation, which has tended to be an elite endeavour, benefiting those individuals and businesses with the capabilities to exploit opportunities. In the

new context of inclusive growth, innovation needs to give greater consideration to who participates and who benefits.

This research will explore a specific approach to innovation - Innovation Districts – and assess their potential to deliver inclusive growth. These are place-based interventions which proponents claim can stimulate city economies in an inclusive way by creating employment and business opportunities for local residents; however, some commentators believe that they lead to gentrification, increasing house prices and providing jobs for external workers. Thus, there is a striking evidence gap between claims made in favour of Innovation Districts and what we know about how inclusive growth considerations are built in to policy interventions. The topic therefore brings the debates around inclusive economic growth via innovation into a specific urban context, one which commands significant financial investment.

The research will investigate how Innovation Districts are responding to inclusive growth concerns and what mechanisms they are pursuing to progress inclusive growth objectives. Taking a longitudinal approach, the research can explore the choices made by policymakers in relation to inclusive growth over a 5-year period.

### **Eleanor (El) Beaton**

University of Edinburgh

**Homonationalist pressures: A critical examination of the priorities and self-identification processes of trans migrants from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region navigating European asylum and migration practices and discourses.**

My PhD research intends to explore the experiences of trans migrants from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, who have settled in Europe, through ethnographic methods and narrative interviewing. At present, I am particularly concerned with issues of family, community, violence, performance, and presentation. Notably, this work endeavours to contribute findings which would develop existing asylum and immigration systems and processes for trans migrants from the MENA region.

### **Ambrose McMonagle**

University of Glasgow

**Containment, Cure, and Crip Futurity: Understanding Ableism as Normative Violence**



Combining an archival case study of Lennox Castle with Crip Theory, this project explores how ableism, rehabilitative narratives and normality politics create a system unwilling to imagine, let alone build, disability futures. It will examine ways that disability policy can develop towards a wider liberation from the politics of normality.

### **Hannah Glover**

University of Edinburgh

#### **Where to next? Post-school transitions and career decisions among young people in Scotland – insights from the Growing Up in Scotland study**

This project aims to untangle the drivers of career ambitions and post-school destinations among young people in Scotland. It uses quantitative methods to analyse the Growing Up in Scotland study, a longitudinal cohort study of young people born in Scotland in 2004/05, as they navigate childhood, youth, and now steps into adulthood.

### **Hanna Walfridsson**

University of Edinburgh

#### **Feminist Foreign Policies at the Face of an Emergency – Examining the (Lack of) Gender-Mainstreaming in Climate Policies of Gender Equality Forerunners**

In 2014, Sweden launched the first feminist foreign policy (FFP), integrating gender perspectives and women's rights in international engagements. While numerous states have vouched to do the same, the climate emergency poses significant challenges for FFPs to achieve their goals. Environmental degradation and global warming exacerbate societal issues, widen disparities, and increase the risk of food insecurity, resource scarcity and displacements. Impact which disproportionately affects marginalised communities, including women. Yet, within FFPs, climate change arguably remains underexplored. This project aims to examine how FFP states understand the challenges of climate change and gender inequality, and how they develop gender-responsive policies to tackle the climate crisis. Importantly, what lessons can we learn from this to inform the shaping of FFPs in the future? Designed as a case study, it scrutinises the intersection of gender and climate considerations in policies of five FFP states: Sweden, Canada, Spain, Mexico, and Scotland. Policy documents concerning gender equality and climate change, as well as interviews with foreign policy experts, will be analysed using Bacchi's WPR approach. This project could thereby produce vital knowledge of how climate change and feminism are understood in current frameworks and by people who work with them. These understandings ultimately shape whether policies find adequate solutions to a

climate crisis that threatens all life and ecosystems. Possible contributions thus extend far beyond women's rights and gender justice, suggesting lessons for inclusive solution to the greatest challenge of our time.

### **Haoyu Tian**

University of Glasgow

#### **Transport justice and sustainability implications of requirements and benefits in job advertisements**

This proposed research will investigate transport-related requirements and benefits in UK job advertisements, and explore their implications in social equity and sustainability. Employing advanced methodologies, including Natural Language Processing and spatial analysis, the study plans to identify transportation-related features from Adzuna job advertisements and further address the complex relationships between transport-related factors, job characteristics, and socio-economic features. Findings are expected to enhance the current understanding of the relationship between transportation justice and the labor market, providing policymakers with evidence-based information to develop more equitable and sustainable transportation systems and labor markets.

### **Yasmine Zeid**

University of Dundee

#### **An analysis of Power and Complexity Within Community Development Through the Lens of Hot Chocolate Trust: How Community Workers Work with the Expertise of Communities in Striving to Impact on Social Inequalities**

I will be using a Participatory Action Research approach to explore the project goals, where the young people at HCT will act as my co-researchers.

### **Annika Chambers**

University of Edinburgh

#### **A longitudinal study of changes in tobacco and alcohol retail availability and maternal health behaviours and birth outcomes**

The project will explore the quantitative relationship between tobacco and alcohol retailing environments in Scotland and how they relate to the consumption of alcohol and tobacco products during pregnancy.

### **Caroline Crawford**

University of Strathclyde

#### **Addressing Systemic and Clustered Injustice in the Realisation of the Right to Independent Living in Scotland**

My research is a part of a much greater and more comprehensive project being carried out with the aim of incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into Scottish domestic law. With a specific focus on the right to independent living, my research will look to utilise the principles of the convention to support the development of a comprehensive remedy system that ensures accountability and justice when rights are not upheld. To achieve this, I will be engaging directly with front line complaint handlers and a lived experience advisory group, while also employing critical discourse theory to analyse the underlying power dynamics and narratives used to promote injustices.

### **Michelle Gwynn**

University of Glasgow

#### **Transformation and Conflict, Wapping 1968 to 1997**

My project will explore the uneven urban experience of everyday social, structural, and cultural change during late twentieth century London. The project will center this investigation within Wapping, the former Port of London and residential site encompassing just under half a square mile adjacent to the City of London. Wapping has been simultaneously subject to, and actor within, some of the most formative social and economic processes of the past century. These processes include the transformative impact of multiple national and localised phases of deindustrialisation and urban regeneration, and the dramatic demographic shifts related to substantial migration. In addition, Wapping was the site of major political and industrial unrest as experienced during the Wapping Print Dispute of 1986. Existing on the borderlands of often separate historiographies regarding deindustrialisation, gentrification, protest, race and neoliberalism, Wapping offers the unique opportunity to bridge and explore connections within the story of modern Britain. Using archival research and oral history, the project will investigate Wapping through the everyday as experienced by its shifting composition of residents, from the closure of the docks in 1968, the heavy impact of the 1986 Wapping Print Dispute upon everyday life - and through iterations of redevelopment and mass gentrification. Research will explore the changing ways Wapping residents belonged, experienced, contributed, resisted, and adapted to the structural and cultural transformation of the area and in doing so, examine how the experience of Wapping contributes or contests contemporary British narratives around community, class, politics and difference.

### **Alzbeta Manova**

University of Aberdeen

#### **More real than reality: using deep learning networks to resolve how people make sense of other people's behaviour**

Social interactions rely on the ability to “see” the meaning in others’ behaviour: our friend’s excitement when opening a present, their disgust when brushing away a spider, or simply that they “want” the thing they’re currently reaching for. And while such attributions of meaning underpin all social interactions – from long term decisions about how we relate emotionally to others to moment-to-moment decisions about how we respond to their behaviour – little is known about the underlying mechanisms. This project leverages recent advances in AI/deep learning to test novel theoretical frameworks that promise to uncover the mechanisms behind these attributions. Accordingly, social inferences do not emerge from a simple reading of others’ behaviour, but reflect active attempts to project meaning onto it, to test whether what we think about others reflects what they actually

do. Our approach rests on the observation that strikingly similar projection mechanisms underpin recent advances in AI/deep learning for artificial 2D/3D image generation (e.g., diffusion models, domain adaption) that achieve performance good-enough to fool human observers in mistaking artificial for real images (e.g., “deep fake” videos). This serendipitous alignment of mechanisms makes it possible for the first time to implement the theoretically proposed mechanisms in deep-learning architectures, to test: (1) whether these mechanisms indeed reflect human-like performance and biases, (2) whether these models can, like human observers, combine information about the seen behaviour with outside contextual information, and, (3) whether their output is good enough to fool human observers into mistaking artificial action videos with real ones. This project will provide new insights into people’s remarkably social perception skills, and allow novel tests of the underlying mechanisms through machine-learning models. Moreover, it will provide the AI/deep-learning community and UK industry with new ways to “humanize” current architectures and ensure that models align with human expectations and biases.

### **Clara Seyfried**

University of Dundee

#### **Coherence and causality in discourse processing: Psycholinguistic and corpus-based approaches**

Even though it forms the basis for the vast majority of human communication, language comprehension remains poorly understood. This project therefore aims to investigate the mechanisms underlying discourse coherence, i.e., what allows humans to establish connections between different units of language to form a coherent understanding of language input as a whole. One such connection appears to be causality, i.e., an effect one event has onto the existence of another, as expressed in discourse connectives such as "because" or "therefore". In three strands of research, I will investigate the relationship between causality and discourse coherence through a variety of approaches. In Strand 1, I will use eye-tracking measures to test the effects causal connectives have on how well sentences are processed and remembered depending on how well their connection can be explained through causality (Study 1), as well as whether the cause or the effect of causal connections is mentioned first (Study 2). In Strand 2, I will test whether the processing and memory of causal coherence is impaired in older (65-85 y/o) as compared to younger adults (18-35 y/o) and whether this is associated with specific cognitive abilities (Study 3), in particular when cognitive load is high (Study 4). Finally, in Strand 3 I will use computational methods to analyse how frequently causality is marked in spoken and written discourse (Study 5), as well as factors determining coherence (Study 6) in two linguistic corpora. Together, this will provide evidence of how well causality can help model human language comprehension.

### **Carlene McAvoy**

Glasgow Caledonian University

#### **Rhetoric or reality: an exploration of healthcare needs and access following the experience of rape and/or sexual assault in Scotland**

Prevalence studies from the UK indicate that around one in ten women report experiencing rape (Macdowall et al., 2013). The physical and psychological effects of rape and/or sexual assault are well documented and include a myriad of health outcomes – physically and psychologically.

Healthcare can play a central role in the recovery of survivors through the appropriate provision of services and support. Aggregate numbers on disclosure to healthcare range from 6% to 27% (Lanthier, Du Mont and Mason, 2018) and in Scotland only 17.9% of survivors may have disclosed to healthcare professionals (Scottish Government, 2023).

Such numbers, however, do not reveal insights into the experiences of disclosure. Additionally, we do not know how women who are marginalised, e.g. economically or through their race/ethnicity or indeed those at the intersections

of systems of oppression, can seek support. It is therefore crucial to address these gaps by speaking to women about their experience of sexual violence, and disclosure.

The aim of the research is therefore to explore the experiences of survivors of rape and/or sexual assault in relation to help-seeking and disclosure to healthcare. Using qualitative episodic interviews, the research will highlight and promote the survivors voice and experience through the research.

### **Maksim Novokreshchenov**

Edinburgh Napier University

#### **Modelling in Practice: Institutional Ethnography of Infectious Disease Modelling**

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the growth of epidemiological modelling's influence on social life and policy. Although there are studies that have documented how epidemiological modelling has accumulated its political capital and that have demonstrated the repercussions of the policies driven by the models, still little is known about how the models are produced in practice. The project I am proposing aims to fill in this gap with an ethnographic study of the practices of infectious disease modelling and the differences between these practices in different organizations. By conducting qualitative interviews with the modellers, engaging in participant observation in two prominent laboratories in the UK or abroad, and critically examining the models themselves, I hope to demonstrate the ethical repercussions of current modelling practices and outline the potential ways to improve them.

### **Stephanie Love**

University of Glasgow

#### **Women's experience of online dating: examining men's intrusions in online dating contexts**

Men's intrusive and abusive behaviour toward women in online dating apps has gained much popular attention (e.g. 'Tinder Nightmares') with several high profile cases resulting in criminal charges. Illustrating that abusive behaviour is an everyday experience and therefore an important area for research attention. Yet, scholarly interest in women's lived experiences (i.e. first-hand accounts) of men's intrusive behaviour remains low. Moreover, no known studies to date examine experiences outside of one particular app despite a proliferation of apps (e.g. Tinder, Bumble, Hinge).

Empirical findings suggest a need to investigate the similarities and differences across and within apps in relation to app affordances, user behaviour and culture. Primarily as differences across and within technological and sociocultural scaffolding may contribute to a normalising and legitimising of intrusive behaviour in some apps more than others.

By utilising Gavey's (2018) 'cultural scaffolding of rape' as a conceptual framework the project examines how intrusions can be understood as a reflection of gendered sexuality that is skewed in ways that can accommodate intrusive and abusive behaviour as unremarkable or even normal. The concept of 'intrusions' is applied to capture the diverse spectrum of men's uninvited abusive practices toward women.

Findings will have timely and significant implications for policy and practice due to the recent Online Safety Act (2023) and the Australian governments roundtable on dating app safety. Research will speak directly to policy developments and their subsequent revision and operationalisation with findings used to engage with tech companies, internet safety organisations and sexual violence organisations.

### **Misbah Mukhtar**

University of Edinburgh

#### **Exploring the intersection of feminism, populism and surveillance capitalism: a case study of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI)**

My research is focused on gender, populism, and surveillance capitalism in the context of elections in Pakistan, specifically, the role that social media communications targeting women voters (and the changing business models of the major platforms) are playing in the PTI's digital strategy. I am drawing on postcolonial feminist theory, critical research on populist political movements, and feminist Science and Technology Studies scholarship coupled with my on ground field-work.

### **Chanju Mwanza**

University of Glasgow

#### **Podcasting and pedagogy for the planet: Examining the nexus of art, entertainment, and education related to sustainability and climate change.**

This project explores how specialised academic knowledge related to climate change and sustainable development is advanced, or not, through podcasts as pedagogy in both higher education as well as non-formal spaces through public pedagogy. The climate emergency is one of the most significant crises of our

time: and against a backdrop of global efforts to address the climate crisis, it is essential to understand how people receive, process, learn and share information about sustainability and climate change.

**Thomas Alexander**

University of Aberdeen

**Listening ahead: Do people form specific expectations about individual speakers?**

To communicate successfully, people need to be able to resolve the incredible speed of hearing around 200 spoken syllables per minute. Research suggests that the brain deals with this through prediction. Rather than merely resolving words as they come in, people listen ahead: they form specific expectations about the next word they will hear so that these words can be processed efficiently, and additional processing is only needed if these predictions are incorrect. So far, however, research has mostly assumed that these expectations are general, based simply on statistics of which words, concepts, or structures are most likely. This project tests, for the first time, whether people form expectations in a speaker-specific way, in other words, whether people adapt their predictions to the idiosyncratic words and concepts one person is likely to use, but not another. It relies on established methods to measure prediction errors in language using electrical brain activity and tests whether these brain responses differ when words are generally unexpected but expected for this particular speaker and whether predictions are adjusted if the listener knows that a speaker is unreliable and makes many speech errors. Moreover, it will test how processing changes when interacting with persons with known language difficulties, for whom expectations are unreliable.

This research will help us understand better what makes humans excellent language users. It will inform educational settings and help us to better frame information to aid learning, and also inform how we can go about communicating with individuals with language disorders.



## Environment, Migration and Demographic Change

### **Charlie Third**

University of Edinburgh

#### **Just and Sustainable Transitions: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding Behaviour Change In The Cairngorms National Park**

The project focuses on Cairngorms 2030, the Park Authority's new interdisciplinary programme for people, nature and place. It encourages positive behaviour change among individuals, communities and key stakeholder groups and in diverse contexts including transport, climate change, landscape management, healthcare, finance and business and tourism.

#### Methods and Data

The project will use critical theories of human agency and behaviour change, sustainability transitions literature, and an interdisciplinary methodological approach to support the implementation of Cairngorms 2030, and to analyse its dynamics and impacts. Working collaboratively with the Park Authority, the student will combine primary data collection techniques such as ethnography, observing Cairngorms 2030 programme staff practices and activities and analysis of secondary data collected from participants and activities. The latter includes demographic and equalities data and from qualitative and quantitative indicators developed through the Park Authority's work with the University of the Highlands and Islands. This project will provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities, successes and challenges of the programme and its impact on regional sustainability in a Scottish context.

#### Expected research outcomes

The project will generate new forms of knowledge and practices that help to achieve more sustainable societies and a just transition in Scotland and beyond. Learning will support more nuanced theoretical and conceptual approaches to sustainability transitions as well as practical insights to be used by the Park Authority. International impact can also arise by considering how learning can be used to support other Parks and regional designations beyond Scotland, thus supporting global sustainability transitions.

### **Rhiannon Hawkins**

University of Glasgow

#### **'Rain rain go away ... come back another day': Understanding Scotland's changing relationships between climate change and mental health**

This project will bring together human geography and environmental science to understand how climate change, flood/drought risk and mental health are experienced and responded to in Scotland's communities.

Combining a complementary suite of methods including policy analyses, desk-based environmental data analysis, spatial (GIS) analyses, social survey, in-depth interviews and community engagement, this PhD will comprise an interdisciplinary encounter with human worlds and physical processes. By focussing on areas of flood/drought risk in Scotland, new data relating to understandings of the relationship between human mental health and local climatic conditions/risk will be sensitively collated and disseminated, providing an holistic understanding of community response and resilience to climate change in Scotland. This project will expand on recent work that has only just begun to acknowledge and address the relationship between climate change and mental health, offering an exciting opportunity to push forward the boundaries of knowledge in this area by adopting an explicitly interdisciplinary approach.

Innovative and distinctive features of the approach will be a community engagement strategy organised via 'river walk events' and community mapping of previously flooded/drought-prone high-risk areas – held for and with local publics – which will combine social and environmental approaches to sharing flood risk knowledge accrued and recruitment of publics to the study. This is intended to advance an innovative mobile interdisciplinary method of data collection/knowledge dissemination. The project will also examine the role that 'cultural memory' of past events can play in increasing community awareness/knowledge of local environments, thus increasing future resilience via co-creation of a culturally-appropriate community resource. The research team will recruit representatives of key national consultative, risk assessment and policy-making bodies to a project advisory board, ensuring that planned research outcomes will be relevant and targeted appropriately as part of the national effort to address and mitigate climate change.

### **Terry Hill**

University of Glasgow

### **Labour Party Ideology and the Hegemony of Economic Growth: Green Capitalism and Climate Catastrophe**

This project will analyse the climate discourse and policy offerings of the Labour Party from 1997 to the present, seeking to reveal the parties political ideology and associated direction on climate crisis. Scientists warn planetary catastrophe

is upon us and a growing body of scholars argue the proposed growth-based solutions of neoliberal political parties such as Labour are not only ineffective for tackling climate collapse, but are also the driving the collapse. By conducting a critical discourse analysis on the Labour Parties policy and rhetoric around climate change I will examine if they are constrained by Labour's historical and current ideology.

**Jamie McDiarmid**

University of Stirling

**The International Refugee Regime in Crisis? A Comparative Study of the EU's response to the Ukraine Refugee Crisis (2022) and the Syrian Refugee Crisis (2015)**

This research explores and analyse the EU's approaches to refugee crises, by studying and comparing the cases of the Syrian and Ukrainian refugee crises in 2015 and 2022. By weaving together interdisciplinary approaches and frameworks from international relations, sociology, and law, the study aims to explore factors that could potentially be influencing EU asylum and migration policy and responses to such crises. Factors such as race, religion, ethnicity, and culture may play a role, among others. Additionally, an examination of the rise of far-right nationalism and shifts in domestic concerns within member states will be conducted. This analysis aims to ascertain whether these factors have indeed exerted an influence on the decision-making processes of the European Union. The project critically analyses how contemporary crises challenge traditional norms in the international refugee regime and their impact on those seeking refuge.

This work has four primary objectives: to compare and analyse how the UN Refugee Convention is interpreted and implemented by the EU and its member states; to examine the role of factors like race, religion, gender, ethnicity, and culture in EU refugee policies; to incorporate sociological insights to understand EU and civil society responses; to evaluate the Refugee Convention's efficacy in addressing contemporary refugee challenges.

This research is crucial because of the lack of comparative studies including Ukraine as a case study in existing literature. Its innovation lies in integrating theoretical perspectives from sociology, particularly institutional discrimination, into international relations, enriching our understanding of how social identities shape relationships between actors.

**Paria Moazemi Goodarzi**

University of Glasgow

**Negotiating Identity in the Iranian Diaspora: Exploring Representations of Exile through Community Education and Socially Engaged Art**

The Iranian Exodus 1997-present represents a multi-faceted migration phenomenon involving individuals from diverse socio-political backgrounds seeking for better social and political conditions extended for over five decades. The experiences of Iranian refugees have remained largely unexplored within academic discourse, often overshadowed by the traumatic history and negative media portrayal of Iran as a hub of terror and religious radicalism. The intersectional nature of Iranian migration, the intricate interplay of cultural and political aspects, together with the connections between the Iranian migration experience and similar phenomena in Afghanistan, Syria, and global discussions on citizenship, has been little studied.

The complexities surrounding migration necessitate innovative and sustainable approaches to comprehend and address the dynamics of community integration and education in the context of forced migratory flows. Iran's geographical location, positioned in close proximity to conflict zones and unstable regions, has rendered it a significant destination for refugees over the years. Addressing issues of discrimination and race remains an ongoing challenge and has been increasingly brought to international attention due to Iran's political position. This interdisciplinary project, with a focus on literature and art in community education, aims to analyse representations of the Iranian exile. It will uncover transnational ties within the diaspora and address broader issues surrounding citizenship, refugee representation, and the legacies of global progress and the promotion of democracy. It aspires to foster innovative perspectives and methodologies while contributing to the global dialogue on migration, displacement, and complex interplay of cultural and political factors in the experiences of refugees."

**Jamie Haughton**

University of Glasgow

**Legal Form and Subjectivity in the Anthropocene: A Re-Evaluation of the Carbon Market Project**

The destruction wrought by climate change has now inaugurated a new geological epoch – The Anthropocene –wherein human activity has become the primary driver of planetary change. The scale of the crisis is such that the law is necessarily called upon to shape our responses.

The dominant legal response of recent years has been the creation of markets for greenhouse gas emissions. Here, emissions are transformed into tradeable legal rights which market processes can optimally distribute amongst agents. Incentive generating markets of this type have been central to Scotland's climate strategy. However, despite their promise, markets of this type are yet to lead to meaningful reductions in emissions.

The purpose of this project is to explain this disjuncture – it will do this by developing a novel theoretical perspective that situates the failure of these projects not in economics but rather in the foundational legal concepts [subjectivity, rights, exclusionary ownership] on which they're built.

It will first employ socio-ecology to develop an account of the underlying social causes of the crisis; it will then apply those findings to a doctrinal study of Scotland's carbon market schemes and identify the legal forms through which those causes operate; finally, it will use legal theory to explore whether those legal forms are necessarily connected to poor climate outcomes or whether those outcomes are contingent on social externalities. In doing so, it will question the law's path-dependency on market-based approaches and reflexively open new legal pathways for responding to the crisis.

## Governance and Institutions

### **Mojca Cerar**

University of Aberdeen

#### **Can audit and feedback be applied to target healthcare professionals recruitment and retention behaviour in RCTs? A mixed methods exploration**

More than 7 million participants have been required to participate in clinical trials registered thus far in 2022 alone. In the UK, the National Institute for Health Research Health Technology Assessment (NIHR HTA) programme spent £100 million on trials during 2019-2020. In addition to being expensive, clinical trials often fail to deliver due to problems with trial conduct, process which involves behaviours. Trial conduct is not currently conceptualised through this behavioural lens, yet, behaviours are at the heart of clinical trial delivery and the social science discipline of behavioural science can provide critical insights for the clinical trials community- improving health by improving research. Recruitment and/or retention continue to be the biggest challenge for successful trial delivery. For example, only 56% of UK NIHR HTA funded trials recruited their sample size, and some suffered loss to follow up of up to 77%. In efforts to improve recruitment and retention trials share data on these activities with staff at recruiting sites. This typically involves comparisons with other sites, such as the best recruiting and retaining sites, with the aim of changing the behaviour of clinical staff. This information is often fed back as newsletters or reports. This assessment of recruitment and retention activity compared to a 'standard' reported back to sites can be considered as audit and feedback (A&F) a widely used, evidence based, component of healthcare quality improvement. The existing target driven strategies to improve trial recruitment and retention are not currently conceptualised as A&F behaviour change strategies and as such the potential for effectiveness of this evidence based behavioural approach has not been maximised. In addition several studies have highlighted that the process of staff recruitment to trials is influenced by complex social phenomena requiring in depth understanding in order to unpack. This project aims to address this gap.

### **Andrea Scalera**

University of Glasgow

#### **Informal Migration and the Escalation of Securitization in Italy: Resistance to Counter-Measures and the Longitudinal Implications for Policy Actors**

Italy is home to more than 5 million immigrants (ISTAT, 2023) and is the primary entry point into Europe for migrants taking the central Mediterranean route. Securitization has guided domestic migration policymaking since the early

1990s. (Paoli, 2023). This can be broadly understood as a social constructivist process that defines how a threat is constructed and packaged through mutual understanding among securitizing actors (policymakers) and audiences (Buzan, et al., 1998). The Italian state has demonstrated, throughout the past thirty years, an ‘escalation of securitization’—referred to in emerging literature as the ‘Securitization Climax’ (Lupovici, 2016). In other words, despite the civil resistance and the efforts of cross-party and non-governmental actors (such as the Catholic Church, migrant associations and other third-sector organisations), there has been consolidated political interest in the securitized pathways to policymaking (Rossi, 2019). Italy distinguishes itself as the prototypical case study for the analysis of securitization in that: irregular migration is a relatively recent phenomenon; it is a merging point between the ‘Global South’ and ‘Global North’; and party politics have been negligible in steering the outcomes of securitization (Zincone, 2006).

Though the ‘escalation of securitization’ has increasingly impacted migration policymaking (and adjacent policy areas such as welfare policies) since the 1990s, it has been poorly explored in temporal perspective. Through process-tracing the intensification of the securitization agenda in Italy, this project aims to shed light on how and why securitization has become the dominant policymaking paradigm (Balzacq, 2011). To facilitate this understanding, the project delineates this into three distinct phases: 1) 1990—2008 (the collapse of the First Republic to the Global Financial Crisis); 2) 2008—2015 (the emergence of the ‘migrant crisis’); 3) 2015—Present. Moreover, this research aims to explain why de-securitization efforts have been complicated by the gradual entrenchment of securitization ideas.

### **Li Min Ong**

University of Strathclyde

#### **Time, Public Perceptions of Procedural Fairness, and Legal Theory**

My PhD project would examine:

- Why issues of time might matter for citizens’ perceptions of procedural fairness when engaging with public services (empirical component); and
- How public perceptions about procedural fairness could matter for law (theoretical component).

I am also interested in how digital transformation in the public sector affects the questions above.

### **Julie Maria Ejby Pedersen**

University of Edinburgh

### **Mark of the Moral: Modelling the Moralisation of Behaviour as an Interaction of Group- and Individual-Level Processes**

This project aims to improve our understanding of how people come to moralise behaviours that previously had no moral status; that is, how we come to see eating meat or wearing a mask as moral issues. What initiates such moralisation processes, and how does it spread through society? To date, moral psychology research has focused on how people make moral decisions, and the consequences of moralisation, (e.g., riots or altruistic behaviour). However, we know little about how behaviours initially become seen as moral, how social context affects this, and the additional consequences of combining factors affecting groups and individuals.

I will develop and test a theory of moralisation that combines these social and individual-level factors. First, I will conduct a systematic examination of existing research to inform this theory and clarify unanswered questions. Secondly, I will develop a computational model that includes social- and individual-level factors contributing to moralisation, which will make exact predictions about the processes of moralisation. I will subsequently test some of these predictions in an online experiment on individual and social motivations to moralise.

My project will bridge individual- and group-focused approaches to studying morality, offering novel insights into the psychological processes of moralisation. This work will inform theories, helping to understand how and why moral status is assigned (and why not). Furthermore, this work may inform policymakers on how to curb moral polarisation and conflict, and how and when to anticipate sudden emergences of moral feelings (e.g., towards mask-wearing to ensure the safety of others).

### **Jacqueline Imrie**

University of Stirling

### **Libraries and Class Identity in Scotland, 1800-1842: The Significance of Libraries in an Industrialising Society**

This research project will uncover the significance of libraries in establishing and/or disrupting senses of class identity in an increasingly industrialised society. It analyses the socio-economic conditions that determined how libraries were managed and accessed in Scotland between 1800 and 1842.

Technological changes including developments in the printing industry (most notably the invention of the steam-driven printing press) and improvements to



transport networks made literature more readily available to the masses in this period. Such developments had implications for how libraries were managed, in terms of book stock, regulations, and fees (most libraries had membership costs until the Public Libraries Act was passed in 1850). Consequently, the ways in which members of society could access libraries and the texts within them were influenced by the specific management strategies of each library.

Library borrowing records, cataloguing which books were borrowed, when they were borrowed, and by whom, often contain details about the borrower such as address or occupation. With this information, we can trace the individual in contemporary sources – e.g. in census records (these exist for 1801 and 1841), voters' rolls, church records, wills and inventories, and taxation records. By tracing borrowers from multiple libraries, I will create a dataset of individual library users around Scotland to analyse patterns of library use on the basis of social class (using the HISCLASS (Van Leeuwen and Maas, 2011) occupation (using the HISCO (Van Leeuwen, Maas, and Miles, 2002), gender, and location to establish patterns and trends relating to social class identity.

### **João Paulo Magalhães**

University of Edinburgh

#### **Impact of the EU redistribution governance on social outcomes**

The EU governance framework basic goal is to frame a supranational redistribution capacity according to rules and mechanisms defined jointly, but continuously shaped by political decisions to tackle inequalities. This framework appears nevertheless to be misaligned with citizens' social needs, although the political decisions are arguably driven by the underlying technocratic approach. So, the main hypothesis is that despite the apparent increasing redistribution capacity facilitated through the European Semester at both European and national levels, these efforts will likely continue to fall short in effectively addressing social inequalities. This is due to the decision-making processes that fail to consider or align with the distribution of social risks across different populations and regions, influenced by varying political dynamics and legitimacy challenges inherent in European social market economies.

Based on these premises, the principal research question is: how to redistribute resources according to EU citizens' needs; and reduce inequalities? The research strategy intends to focus on how the political decision-making factors influence the EU redistribution rules and mechanisms of three policy tools - European governance review, Next Generation EU, and Cohesion Policy Framework - and then impact the social and economic cohesion. The research follows a

theoretical framework formed by the power resources theory to explain and quantify the distribution of power that influence social outcomes, coupled with an institutionalism lens to qualitatively explain the decision-making process of each policy tool.

## **Calum Paterson**

University of Edinburgh

### **Understanding the Multi-Level Voter - Evidence from the Scottish Election Study**

This project will examine the multi-level reality of voters, using Scotland and data from the Scottish Election Study as a case study. Even though the UK is a multi-level state, it is often not treated as such by those studying British political behaviour. Northern Ireland is typically studied separately, while the entirety of Great Britain is regularly treated as an undifferentiated mass. Researchers sometimes add statistical controls for Scotland and Wales to absorb country-level variation in responses, but this cannot compensate for acute differences in the predictors of vote choice observed in Scotland and Wales at both devolved and UK-level elections.

Methodologically, this project will conduct a statistical analysis of publicly-deposited datasets of the Scottish Election Study, led since 2011 by the two supervisors. This will include techniques such as multivariate regression, factor analysis and latent class analysis. It will also involve the innovative merging of SES datasets over time, including the creation of panel datasets tracking respondents over successive waves.

In so doing the project will make the following contributions:

- Better understanding of political variation within the UK, by examining whether and how explanations of UK-level voting behaviour in UK General Elections and the 2016 Brexit referendum also apply to voters in Scotland.
- Connecting Scotland to comparative studies of multi-level voting. While much of the UK psephological literature focuses on American theories of voting, the study of multi-level voting, particularly in settings where there are multiple nations within the state (Canada, Spain, Belgium), is less often cited. This dissertation will locate Scotland within a wider comparative framework.
- Identifying and resolving challenges relating to the understanding of multi-level voting in the UK, including the relationship between data

infrastructure, methodological nationalism, and studies of voting behaviour.

### **Sarah Weiler**

University of Strathclyde

#### **Evidence use and argument construction in foreign policy discussions**

How are different types of evidence used by experts when they provide foreign policy advice? How are they perceived, interpreted, and acted upon by decision-makers in the foreign policymaking space? These are the core questions I propose to investigate as a doctoral student at Strathclyde University. Through a combination of interviews and document analysis I will identify, reconstruct, and scrutinize the arguments and epistemic warrants employed in policy recommendations, seeking to enhance our understanding of how experts as well as policymakers reason about the validity of different types of evidence. I hold that the insights derived from the proposed research project would constitute a valuable contribution to ongoing discussions around evidence-based policymaking and the role of expert advice in addressing pressing challenges in today's world – by advancing our empirical understanding of the policymaking process (the is) but also, and importantly, by provoking reflection on epistemic questions around how policies should be formulated, discussed, and decided upon.

### **Sophie Cathcart**

University of Stirling

#### **The realisation of child agency: to what extent do curriculum policy and practice in Scottish schools foster the agency of young people as active participants in the world?**

In response to current social, environmental and economic challenges, developing the agency of children and young people through schooling is today often seen as a priority of educational policy at both national and international levels. That is, with reference to the current understanding of agency in literature, children should be developed as individuals who act and exist in the world with intentionality and base their actions on their own choices.

As a modern learner-centred curriculum, the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence is an example of a curriculum with such an aim. With hopes of encouraging children as individuals who take responsibility for their own learning and determine their own paths, the Curriculum for Excellence requires that all classroom activity should be underpinned by the principle of “Personalisation and Choice”. Whilst this is a positive ideal, though, from issues such as poor

definitions of agency in policy leading to ambiguity in translating the concept to practice to frictions in the prevailing structures and cultures of schooling which confuses the rationale behind promoting agency development, there are several barriers to the actualisation of this in practice. Vivally, however, there is currently little research into the effects of this conflict between what is instructed in policy and what is actually practised in classrooms on the children themselves in schools in Scotland. Thus, this piece hopes to contribute to this field.

## Health, Wellbeing and Communities

### **Lynne Scott**

Glasgow Caledonian University

#### **Where is the 'Community' in Community Wealth Building?**

In collaboration with Development Trusts Association Scotland, this PhD will explore the implementation of The Scottish Government's commitment to a national Community Wealth Building (CWB) strategy. Ethnographic research will be undertaken to explore how local governments are working with community groups, identifying key factors that inhibit or facilitate CWB efforts, and how these dynamics differ across local authority areas in Scotland. Additionally, the research will reveal to what extent local people perceive that their participation and ownership of local resources has been enhanced (or not) as a result of CWB efforts, and evaluate how these perceptions align with - or diverge from - the rhetoric of both local and central government.

### **Ewelina Dytrych**

University of Stirling

#### **Development and mixed methods evaluation of an evidence-based, gamified mobile app for social anxiety management in young adults**

Social anxiety is a prevalent and debilitating condition affecting a significant portion of young adults, causing intense fear and discomfort in social situations. This can lead to low self-esteem, loneliness, depression, and difficulties in school or work, hindering their potential and quality of life.

Unfortunately, many young adults with social anxiety do not receive adequate help due to long waitlists, excessive treatment costs, stigma, or their preference to manage their social anxiety on their own. To address these challenges, I propose developing a mobile app that provides much-needed support.

This solution leverages the popularity of smartphones and games among young adults, making it accessible and tailored to their preferences. The app will incorporate evidence-based therapies (cognitive behavioural, emotion-focused, metacognitive), behaviour change techniques and gamification to maximise its effectiveness and engagement.

Over three years, my research will have three components:

1: I will review existing social anxiety apps using established frameworks to identify their strengths, weaknesses, effectiveness, and qualities crucial for informing the development of my app.

2: I will collaborate with ten young adults with social anxiety, five healthcare professionals, and five tech experts to gather further insights into app development. Then I will design an app prototype using FlutterFlow, a no-code mobile app development platform.

3: Sixty young adults with social anxiety will test the app, to revise it further. I will gather insights into user experiences and the app's impact on social anxiety levels, well-being, mood, and daily activities.

### **Lisa Paul**

University of Glasgow

#### **Personal assistance for disabled people, changing labour markets and social care reform**

In 2022, the Scottish Parliament legislated for a major new National Care Service, to be launched in 2026. This collaborative PhD is designed to offer fresh conceptual and empirical insights to inform Scottish choices and academic debates about the future role for personal assistants (PA) in this new era of social care reform. PAs are support workers who can be employed individually by disabled people via direct payments as an alternative to using other services. Although personalisation has dominated social care reform over the past 20 years, very little is known about the insecure and multiply disadvantaged personal assistance workforce in Scotland. The research will examine the impact of PA roles in Scotland's changing social care system – both in relation to the needs of the PA workforce and the needs and preferences of disabled people as employers and service users. The PhD will be co-supervised by the PA Programme Board, which is an innovative cross-sector grouping of government, third sector and disabled people's organisations based in the Scottish Government. The Board has co-produced a work plan and identified the need for robust new data on the roles and experiences of PAs in Scotland as a priority for their work. The doctoral research will offer new academic knowledge and critical policy analysis of the reconfiguration of social care and the emergence of an increasingly diverse and disparate workforce. This proposal has been developed collaboratively with the PA Programme Board to directly address a core research gap and the candidate will work with the PA Programme Board to produce new empirical work and critical understandings.

### **Aliya Nur Zahira**

University of Stirling

#### **Community-based participatory research to explore socio-cultural influences on breastfeeding continuation in multiethnic mothers living in Scotland: A photovoice study**

It is well established that breastfeeding is the healthiest form of infant feeding both for babies and mothers. The benefits increase with the duration of breastfeeding, with a minimum of 6 months exclusive breastfeeding recommended by the WHO. However, breastfeeding continuation rates are notably low in the UK, with significant variation across different ethnicities. Asian and Black mothers have the highest rates of continuation, whereas White mothers have the lowest rate for decades. Studies found sociocultural factors, specifically, those within family and community spheres have more salient impact on breastfeeding continuation than professional support.

This research aims to explore how socio-cultural factors influence breastfeeding continuation in Asian, Black, and White mothers living in Scotland. A mixed-method approach guided by the Socio-Ecological Model, Health Action Process Approach, and Cultural Dimension will be employed in this study. Phase 1 aims to investigate the perspectives of breastfeeding continuation to the mothers, their family, and public members using quantitative questionnaires. Phase 2 aims to explore how socio-cultural factors influence breastfeeding continuation involving mothers and their families. This will employ a participatory approach using photovoice followed by an interview. Phase 3 aims to identify psychosociocultural factors that can be targeted in culturally-sensitive interventions to promote breastfeeding continuation through a traveling exhibition.

No research has attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural influences and mechanisms involved in breastfeeding continuation among different ethnicities in the UK. It can help researchers and policy makers formulate socio-culturally-sensitive interventions, thus increasing breastfeeding normalisation and rates in the country.

### **Catherine Cairns Leyman**

University of Stirling

### **Understanding Self-Management and Support for Young People with Chronic Musculoskeletal Pain**

The scale of chronic musculoskeletal pain among is increasing, leading to complex challenges in healthcare delivery. This qualitative research project aims to investigate and elicit the self-management strategies employed by young people and their primary caregivers to address their chronic musculoskeletal pain.

Utilising qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with young people (aged 13-18) experiencing chronic musculoskeletal pain and their

primary caregivers. The study will explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies related to self-management of pain. Data will be analysed using the Constructivist Grounded Theory approach.

Findings from this study will contribute to understanding the lived experiences of young people and their caregivers in managing chronic musculoskeletal pain. Themes related to self-management strategies, barriers, and facilitators will be identified.

This research aims to inform tailored interventions and support mechanisms for young people with chronic musculoskeletal pain, ultimately enhancing their quality of life and reducing the burden on healthcare systems. The project emphasises a patient-centric approach, empowering individuals to take an active role in their healthcare journey.

### **Huilin Fang**

University of Aberdeen

#### **Self-Relevance Supporting Multisensory Integration in the Ageing Mind**

As the global population ages, increases in sensory impairments such as hearing and vision loss is shifting healthcare priorities and demographics. Research indicates that sensory impairments in older adults are linked to depression, lower quality of life, and cognitive decline. Some recent work suggests that making sensory information more personally relevant (self-relevance) might improve how that it is processed by people across the lifespan. This evidence leads to two critical questions: Can self-relevance enhance multisensory function as people age, and what mechanisms drive this improvement?

To answer these questions, this project will combine machine learning, behavioural experiments, neuroscience methods, and virtual reality (VR) techniques. I will first use machine learning to investigate the relationship between self-relevance and sensory processing in the elderly using a large cohort dataset. Next, I will use electroencephalography (EEG) and transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) to establish the causal role of self-relevance in multisensory perception. Finally, VR techniques will be used to assess whether training that increases the self-relevance of sensory stimuli in multisensory environments could serve as an effective intervention to enhance sensory functions as we age. This comprehensive approach aims to provide valuable insights into how self-relevance can be leveraged to improve sensory function in older adults, potentially informing new interventions to enhance cognitive and sensory health in ageing.



## **Luka White**

University of Edinburgh

### **A mixed methods exploration into body-related gender euphoria and eating disorders in trans and/or nonbinary autistic adults**

This PhD will conduct a series of three studies to explore gender euphoria and disordered eating in adults who are autistic and also transgender and/or nonbinary (TNB). This PhD seeks to answer the following research questions: 1) What is the experience of disordered eating like for TNB autistic adults? 2) What is a valid and acceptable self-assessment tool for gender dysphoria/euphoria in autistic and non-autistic TNB adults? 3) Does gender dysphoria/euphoria have a role in predicting eating disorder-related outcomes in TNB autistic adults?

Both TNB and autistic adults are under-represented in the academic community. Transgender and autistic adults voice that those within those communities should lead research into the needs and strengths of these communities. As a TNB autistic adult myself, I will strive to make the most of this opportunity and to use the knowledge and skills learned to give back to my communities. I will ensure that my PhD research is designed and led by myself and other TNB autistic community experts, including those with eating disorder experience. I will use any voice or platform provided for me through the PhD to support members of my community and advocate for their (our) needs and human rights.

## **Chloe Rebecca Ezou**

University of Stirling

### **Understanding the health and wellbeing of people involved with community justice in Scotland**

In recent years there has been a huge expansion in the use of community justice (CJ) sanctions, both in Scotland and internationally. Compared to prison sentences, CJ sanctions are intended to provide better health and social outcomes for those who offend. However, unlike the prison population where health needs are well known, very little is known about the health needs of those involved with CJ – partly due to the challenges in accessing suitable data about the CJ-involved population. This project will address this issue by using advanced statistical analysis to leverage data on people who have been involved with CJ from pooled sweeps of the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) to describe the health needs of CJ-involved people in Scotland.

The pooled SCJS provides a rare opportunity to understand small populations in Scotland and their attitudes towards and involvement with the justice system. However, analysing this complex dataset raises challenges in how best to make inferences that are up-to-date when combining data that spans back to the late 2000s. This project will identify the most suitable analytical techniques for this task by drawing on advances in the multilevel, Bayesian modelling and causal inference literatures to provide the most robust estimates possible of health needs in the CJ-involved population.

## **Kyleigh Melville**

University of Edinburgh

### **Neurodivergent students' experiences with multi-sensory environments in school: A participatory action research approach**

Schools are one of the most important places for children and young people to participate in targeted support for their challenges and needs. One way in which educators support neurodivergent students (e.g. with a diagnosis such as autism or ADHD) in schools is through the use of multi-sensory environments (MSEs). MSEs were originally intended to provide a space for students with learning disabilities to enjoy stimulation and support their emotional regulation. However, their efficacy is largely unknown and existing literature is mainly observational, often anecdotal and inconsistent. Several concerns on school-based MSEs have been reported such as staff not knowing when or how to use them with students and little evaluation of activities that take place within the MSE. Despite the sparse and inconsistent research, MSEs have been widely adopted in schools across the UK. Further research is needed to explore how use of MSEs can support wellbeing, learning and engagement in neurodivergent students. Students themselves are rarely included in research into MSEs, as most of the current literature recruited staff, carers or other stakeholders. Students have the right to express their opinions on decisions that impact them therefore, there is a need for school-based research which actively involves students. This project would culminate in the creation of a resource which will contain advice co-designed with students on how schools can use MSEs to better support the wellbeing, learning and engagement of neurodivergent students. Using a participatory action research (PAR) approach, the proposed research aims to answer the following three questions across four studies:

Q1: How do schools currently use multi-sensory environments to support neurodivergent students? (Study 1)

Q2: What are school staff and neurodivergent students' experiences with/using multi-sensory

environments? (Study 2A and Study 2B)

Q3: Using co-designed methods, can a resource be created to inform the design and use of MSEs to better support neurodivergent students' learning, wellbeing and engagement? (Study 3)

### **Edward Pomeroy**

University of St Andrews

#### **Care in Times of Crises: an intersectional approach to socio-economic inequalities in giving and receiving informal care during the COVID-19 and cost-of-living crises**

Informal care refers to unpaid help given to someone who needs support for a range of reasons, such as disability or old age. It may include help with daily activities, such as cooking and medical tasks, alongside financial and emotional support, and can occur in absence of, or alongside, formal care services, which includes care provided by trained doctors and nurses. Informal caregivers play a vital role in delivering health and social care to those in need. During times of difficulty, such as economic hardship, the demand for informal care increases as formal care services become less accessible.

Using secondary quantitative data, this project will investigate the patterns, drivers, and economic wellbeing implications of informal care exchanges in the UK (both giving and receiving care), and how these change under periods of crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the emerging cost-of-living crisis. The project will investigate the individual characteristics (e.g., gender and ethnicity) associated with these changes as well as how they intersect (e.g., ethnic minority female), to produce differing impacts on the economic wellbeing of care providers and receivers. This research will contribute academically by exploring how various characteristics of diversity combine to intensify inequalities for those who provide and receive informal care. This research is significant for society, as it will provide up-to-date evidence of inequalities within informal care, emphasising which individuals are most disadvantaged. This information can aid policy making to ensure these groups are recognised, valued, and supported to empower their role within informal care.

### **Bria Trosclair**

University of Glasgow

#### **Investigating Lifelong Learning via Community-led Heritage Expressions: A Participatory Action Research Approach with Roma Communities in Govanhill, Glasgow**

My research critically examines the impact of community-led heritage and outreach programming to determine how heritage production relates to community education, development, and social action. I use Participatory Action Research to co-design a community-led collection framework with Roma community members and Romano Lav, a Roma advocacy organisation in Govanhill, as an innovative approach to knowledge co-creation and cultural representation of Roma communities in Glasgow. Community-led education programmes designed and led by Roma participants will constitute creative action steps for communicating Roma heritage. Broader research will examine how participatory responses support community-led practice within community development work, the role cultural heritage organisations play in this, and how embedding marginalised stories within wider heritage narratives in Glasgow promotes cultural heritage's activist potential.

### **Elizabeth Mackenzie**

University of Strathclyde

#### **Targeting Depression and Excessive Daytime Sleepiness in Patients with Autoimmune Hashimoto's Thyroiditis Through the Use of Novel Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to Improve Patient Quality of Life**

5% of the population suffer from hypothyroidism, the most common cause of which is Autoimmune Hashimoto's Thyroiditis. It is characterised by an enlarged thyroid, and physical symptoms such as unexplained weight gain, hair loss, and cold sensitivity, and by co-occurring symptoms of depression and excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS). Although medication can be used to treat the physical symptoms of the disease, the psychological symptoms, and difficulties, such as depression and sleepiness, often remain, impacting the patient's wellbeing and quality of life. A treatment to combat these symptoms that can be delivered alongside medication is desperately needed. The project aims to develop and test such an intervention. The treatment will be adapted from other Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) protocols that have been used to treat EDS and poor mental health in other populations. CBT is a type of talking therapy that teaches the patient different thinking strategies to change negative thoughts and behaviours. The PhD will begin by adapting this CBT protocol to be better suited to the Hashimoto's population. This will then be shared with experts in the field who will be given rounds of questionnaires to fill out to evaluate and refine the protocol in order to develop a final version (study1). The intervention will then be tested in a pilot study (study2a) to determine if it is practical and can be applied in a real-world setting. Completers of the trial will then be interviewed (study2b) in order to determine whether any further developments of the intervention are necessary.

**Xavier Chan**

University of Strathclyde

**Increasing access to digital sleep interventions through public libraries**

The transition towards digital sleep interventions such as digital cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia naturally changes who can access such treatments. For example, older adults may not have internet access at home or have limited capabilities to engage with the treatment. The aim of this project is to investigate the feasibility and barriers and facilitators in the way of developing a service embedded within public libraries to increase access to digital sleep treatments.