



UNIVERSITY *of*  
WORCESTER

# POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

22-23 June 2026

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PROGRAMME



# WELCOME WILLKOMMEN

Welcome to the University of Worcester Postgraduate Research Conference 2026. Our desire is for the conference to **IGNITE** your research creativity, enable you to **CONNECT** with the PGR community, and **ENGAGE** in meaningful research discussions.

This conference brings together our University of Worcester PhD, Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA), and MRes researchers for our annual two day event. A special willkommen (welcome) to all our students joining us from Fachhochschule des Mittelstands in Germany and PGRs joining us from other UK Universities.

The PGR conference is a truly multidisciplinary event and a celebration of the excellent and innovative research of our PGR community. Over the next two days we will hear from students at all stages of their research degree, in the form of 5 minute lightning presentations (Ignite sessions) and oral presentations. The abstracts for all sessions can be found at the end of this booklet.

We are grateful to our keynote speaker: Professor Nicoleta Cinpoes, University of Worcester, and our PGR panelists, Beas Banerjee, Heather Chapman, and Krista Easton.

If you need any assistance, the conference team will be more than happy to help.

We hope you enjoy the next two days and leave feeling inspired and energised as you continue on your research journey.

*Dr Charlotte Taylor, Nichola Armstrong, Irene Conti, and Prof. Lynn Nichol*  
**PGR Conference Committee 2026**



**UNIVERSITY of  
WORCESTER**



Staatlich anerkannte, private  
**Fachhochschule des  
Mittelstands (FHM)**

# PROGRAMME Monday 22 June 2026

9.00-9.15	<b>Registration and Refreshments</b>	Joel Richards Conference Suite, University of Worcester Arena
9.15-9.30	<b>Opening Remarks and Welcome Address</b> <i>Conference Team</i>	
9.30-9.45	<b>Co-creating the Researcher Skills World</b> <i>Jade Millar, Tom Mandall and Beth Gomm</i>	
9.45-10.45	<b>Panel Session: Getting the most out of your conference experience</b> <i>Beas Banerjee, Heather Chapman, and Krista Easton</i>	

## Session Transition Time (15 minutes)

	Joel Richards Conference Suite	EGA 1007, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Building
11.00-12.30	<p><b>Presentation Stream 1</b> <i>Chair: Dr Shirley Evans</i></p> <p>Misunderstandings and mismatched perspectives in the role and purpose of community-based support initiatives for people living with dementia <i>Thomas Morton</i></p> <p>“Walking the Talk”: Embedding Trauma-informed Principles into Research Exploring Trauma-informed Dementia Care <i>Mary-Joy Allbutt</i></p> <p>‘Metabolic–Psychological Interactions Across the Menopausal Transition: Early Observations from an Integrated Physiological and Psychosocial Study’ <i>Bradán Houghton</i></p>	<p><b>Presentation Stream 2</b> <i>Chair: Dr Lucy Hope</i></p> <p>Relationship Patterns in Later Life: Why They Matter <i>Jennifer Edgecombe</i></p> <p>Sustaining participation beyond dementia: an ethnography of a community group in Italy <i>Livia Wright</i></p> <p>Interrogating Normative Assumptions In Research On Adult Child-Parent Co-residence <i>Irene Conti</i></p>

12.30-13.15	<b>Lunch Break</b>	Joel Richards Conference Suite
13.15-14.15	<p><b>Workshop:</b> "When the going gets tough..." Navigating the thrownness of doctoral study to flourish in your studies and beyond.</p> <p><i>Sarah Weaver, Dr Gilda Davis and Dr Emma Innes</i></p>	

**Session Transition Time (10 minutes)**

	Joel Richards Conference Suite	EGA 1007	EGA 1008
14.25-15.25	<p><b>Presentation Stream 4</b>  <b>Chair: Dr Charlotte Taylor</b>            'Teaching the Body to Shine: Ballroom Support for Young People's Eating Distress (Surveillance be Gone)'  <i>CC Clifford</i></p> <p>'Internalised Weight Stigma and the Lived Experiences of Women with PCOS: A Qualitative Study'  <i>Utpreksha Gaude</i></p>	<p><b>Presentation Stream 5</b>  <b>Chair: Dr Claire McLoone-Richards</b>            'Supporting neurodivergent response police officers: A case study of police organisations in England and Wales'  <i>Alexander Wood</i></p> <p>'Police use of force; Analysing police and civilians interactions in Ghana '  <i>Peter Twumhene</i></p>	<p><b>Presentation Stream 6</b>  <b>Chair: Dr Sean Bracken</b>            'Using Polytextual Thematic Analysis in children's research'  <i>Francesca Musgrave</i></p> <p>'An exploration of teachers' knowledge, confidence and readiness for teaching foundational digital accessibility awareness in schools'  <i>Helen Wilson</i></p> <p>'Negotiating Ethics in the Field'  <i>Ibironke Adubiaro-Ajayi</i></p>

**Session Transition Time (10 minutes)**

	Joel Richards Conference Suite	EGA 1007	EGA 1008
<b>15.35-16.15</b>	<p><b>Ignite Stream 1</b> <i>Chair: Dr Muhibul Haq</i> Improving the Management of Large-Scale Infrastructure Projects through Network-Based Stakeholder Management <i>Peter Trapp</i></p> <p>The Myth of Meritocracy in Recruitment and Selection? An exploration of the candidate perspective in the US Real Estate Industry <i>Christin Hall</i></p> <p>From Chatbot Experience to E-Loyalty: Examining the Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction in Indian E-Commerce <i>Sufaila Neeliyatt Verkkal</i></p> <p>Understanding Organizational Processes and Influences on Corporate Incubator Structures in a Family Business <i>Elisabeth Grashoff</i></p>	<p><b>Ignite Stream 2</b> <i>Chair: Dr Rachael Paige</i> Doing, Bee-ing, Becoming: An exploration of the occupation of hobby beekeeping <i>Annabel Heaslop</i></p> <p>Oral Microbiome Status in Metabolic Syndrome using Oral Health Indicators: Integrating Evidence, Dietary Influences and Targeted Interventions <i>Manal Chouchane</i></p> <p>Effectiveness of heat mitigation protocols in perimenopausal females <i>Emma Lawrence</i></p> <p>Data analysis methods for interpretive phenomenology: Do the use of crafted stories and vignettes aid interpretive understanding? <i>Sarah Weaver</i></p> <p>Hearing from the Hidden: Exploring the views and experiences of learning disabled people, subject to probation supervision in England and Wales <i>Kay Wall</i></p>	<p><b>Ignite Stream 3</b> <i>Chair: Dr Carla Solvason</i> Employee-Driven Innovation in German Family-Owned Companies: A Cross-Sectional Survey on How User-Built AI Agents Enable Product and Process Innovation <i>Janine Flottmann</i></p> <p>Retrogistics and Circularity principles: A case study of a major UK retailer <i>Anthony Nwosu</i></p> <p>When Financial Logics Clash: Designing a Delphi Study of Portfolio Governance in Automotive Transformation <i>Ram Kumar Raja</i> <i>Mahendra Varman</i></p> <p>ESG Integration and Institutional Pressure as Drivers of Buyer-Supplier Collaboration towards Green Procurement: A Cross-National Study of Procurement Professionals <i>Deep Khanal</i></p> <p>Section 136 - Mental Health Act (1983): An effective response to mental health crisis or an overused and ineffective power to support those experiencing emotional distress? <i>David Palfreyman</i></p>

**Session Transition Time (10 minutes)**

<b>16.25-16.30</b>	<b>Plenary</b>	Joel Richards Conference Suite
<b>18.00</b>	<b>Dinner</b>	<b>Zizzi</b> , 106 High St, Worcester WR1 2HW

# PROGRAMME Tuesday 23 June 2026

9.00-9.30	<b>Registration and Refreshments</b>	Joel Richards Conference Suite
9.30-10.30	<b>Welcome Address</b> <i>Conference Team</i>  <b>Keynote Address:</b> "The Unbearable Lightness of Being ... A Researcher" <i>Prof. Nicoleta Cinpoes</i>	

## Session Transition Time (10 minutes)

	Joel Richards Conference Suite	EGA 1007	EGA 1008
10.40-12.10	<b>Presentation Stream 1</b> <b>Chair: Dr Rhys Pritchard</b> Historical and Personal Barriers to Physical Activity Autonomy: An Intersectional Analysis of Recently Divorced Mothers in Post-socialist China <i>Rona Chunhong Zhou</i>  Nutritional Advice and the Transition to Wheelchair Use: A Sequential Mixed-Methods Study <i>Heather Chapman</i>  Artificial Intelligence Technology and Green Consumption Behavior: Evidence from Restaurant Customers in Ghana <i>Edward Martey</i>	<b>Presentation Stream 2</b> <b>Chair: Dr Bere Mahoney</b> Autistic traits among adults with bipolar disorder <i>Krista Easton</i>  Tracing Identities of Muslim 'Liberated Africans' in the Crown Colony of Sierra Leone during the Nineteenth Century <i>Malina Yallanki</i>	<b>Presentation Stream 3</b> <b>Chair: Dr Fleur Visser</b> The effect of ecological intensification on soil fungal populations in UK vineyards <i>Joseph Leaper</i>  Assessing the Impacts of Climate Change on Women Farmers' Adaptation and Livelihoods in Nigeria <i>Sarah Jatau</i>  Spray-Induced Gene Silencing (SIGS) for Downy Mildew Control: Targeting Cross-Kingdom RNA Exchange Between Pea and <i>Peronospora viciae f. sp. pisi</i> <i>Gizem Unal</i>

12.10-12.50	<b>Lunch Break</b>	Joel Richards Conference Suite
12.50-13.50	<b>Workshop:</b> Keeping the 'Ph' in Your PhD: Why Dismissing Philosophy Makes Feedback Hurt More Than It Should <i>Irene Conti, Dr Bere Mahoney and Dr Cate Rose</i>	

**Session Transition Time (10 minutes)**

	Joel Richards Conference Suite	EGA 1007
<b>14.00-15.00</b>	<p><b>Ignite Stream 1</b> <i>Chair: Dr Helen Ford</i> How do forced-immigrant Afghan entrepreneurs in the UK deploy resources and an entrepreneurial orientation to exploit entrepreneurial opportunities for survival and growth? <i>Mahboobullah Khaliqyar</i> Exploring Social Entrepreneurship in Morocco: Challenges and Opportunities in Green Marketing <i>Kawtar Rikaoui</i> Addressing Gender Inequities in Primary Education: Barriers to Girls' Enrolment and Retention in Rural Sokoto State, Nigeria <i>Adebimpe Seriki</i> Beyond Attachment: A Mixed Method Study of Applying Knowledge of Infant Mental Health to Social Work <i>Rose Rumsey</i> Inclusion in practice? Exploring the policy-practice gap in healthcare education <i>Nathan Caswell-Price</i></p>	<p><b>Ignite Stream 2</b> <i>Chair: Dr Julie Cooke</i> Autism, Domestic Abuse, and Intersectionality: Exploring Autistic Women's Experiences <i>Zoe Ellis</i>  Interdisciplinarity and early-stage research in Gothic reproductive medicine and health humanities in post-millennial women's writing <i>Lottie Goodger</i>  The Oracle of Place: Making the Invisible Visible <i>Rebecca Burns</i></p>

**Session Transition Time (10 minutes)**

<b>15.10 - 15.30</b>	<b>Closing Plenary and Next Steps</b>	Joel Richards Conference Suite
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# KEYNOTE SPEAKER



## **PROF. NICOLETA CINPOES**

Professor of Shakespeare Studies,  
Institute of Arts and Humanities,  
University of Worcester

### *“The Unbearable Lightness of Being ... A Researcher”*

Cued by Milan Kundera’s novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), my talk unpacks the concepts of ‘weight’ and ‘lightness’ in relation to doctoral research. Interrogating their evaluation as positive and/or negative, I suggest that doctoral research is precisely in the business of shifting this assessment paradigm. While the two terms are ordinarily viewed as polar opposites, I suggest that they are interchangeable; as a result, research emerges as a cyclical rather than a linear journey.

To put it simply: how do you give an answer when you don’t even know what question to ask, and the language in which to articulate it has not yet been invented? In doing so, I am thinking – with the aid of maritime terms – about the compass a researcher constructs to navigate uncharted waters and manage strange encounters as much as about charting the course of research itself. I am interested in how such concepts intertwine during the developmental ‘twin journey’ of the ‘doctoral research’ and the ‘doctoral researcher’ (Dely Lazarte Elliot 2022: 1659). Ultimately, I am proposing that, in the case of PhD research, as well as any research for that matter, the integration of process and product applies to both the research and the researcher.

# ABSTRACTS PANEL & WORKSHOPS

## GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE



*Beas Banerjee*



*Heather Chapman*



*Krista Easton*

Want to get the most out of your PGR conference experience?

Join us for our panel session on Monday 22 June and find out more. We'll be joined by three of our current doctoral students, Beas Banerjee, *School of Science and the Environment*, Heather Chapman, *School of Health and Wellbeing*, and Krista Easton, *School of Health and Wellbeing*, who will reflect on their experiences of attending and presenting at both internal and external conferences. They'll also share how attending conference events has shaped their research as well as anything they wish they had done differently. We'll wrap up the panel session by sharing some top tips for getting the most out of this year's PGR Conference.

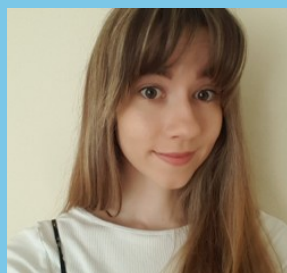
## CO-CREATING THE RESEARCHER SKILLS WORLD



*Jade Millar*



*Tom Mandall*



*Beth Gomm*

Throughout the conference, the Research Librarian and Academic Liaison Librarians invite delegates to co-create a researcher's skills map, plotting where they are in the research skills world. If researchers find themselves in uncharted territory, on an open access oasis, or are all at sea with systematic reviews, the Librarians will be on-hand to set the coordinates for the Library support best-suited to help.

## WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH... NAVIGATING THE THROWNNESS OF DOCTORAL STUDY TO FLOURISH IN YOUR STUDIES AND BEYOND



*Sarah Weaver*



*Dr Gilda Davis & Dr Emma Innes*

This workshop aims to discuss health and wellbeing during the doctoral journey and as an Early Career researcher. Concepts of health, wellbeing, and resilience are personal and often experienced by individuals in multi-dimensional and subjective ways. Despite this, feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, ill-health and overwhelm may feel like common companions on our research journeys. Numerous studies highlight that doctoral candidates have higher reported rates of stress and mental health disorders than the background population. This peer-led workshop seeks to share stories from researchers about common challenges and experiences during their doctoral studies, and the actions that they took to overcome or manage them. Reference to the underpinning literature and recent evidence will be made. As part of the workshop, we will co-create an e-resource that encompasses a variety of multimedia activities and support networks, Apps or advice for researchers and students.

By sharing and normalising conversations about the uncertainty and feelings that may occur in the world of academia and research, individuals may benefit from mutual support from their peers. Promoting health and wellbeing, and signposting tools and resources, may help researchers overcome common stressors as they navigate their doctoral/ECR journey.

## KEEPING THE 'PH' IN YOUR PHD: WHY DISMISSING PHILOSOPHY MAKES FEEDBACK HURT MORE THAN IT SHOULD



*Irene Conti*



*Dr Bere Mahoney*



*Dr Cate Rose*

Feedback, critique and uncertainty are central characteristics of the PhD journey, but doctoral researchers often perceive these elements as intellectually challenging or even as criticism of their personal competence. This workshop introduces the idea that thinking like a philosopher is a tool for reframing how ones engage with feedback, critique and uncertainty because it provides a strategy for reinterpreting these central PhD characteristics as essential for their intellectual growth, and not as threats to their personal competence. This reframing tool uses the four pillars of philosophy- intellectual humility; foundational concepts; tolerance of uncertainty; and, reflection and distance, all foundations of the kind of thinking developed through doctoral study. The workshop explores how doctoral researchers can use this reframing tool to develop a constructive and reflective approach to feedback, critique and uncertainty, a capacity that is essential to all student doctoral journeys as apprentice researchers and beyond. Participants will also be encouraged to bring along an example from their own experience (for instance, a piece of feedback or a feedback experience that stayed with them) to support reflective discussion and practical engagement during the workshop.

# ABSTRACTS IGNITE

## **THE ORACLE OF PLACE: MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE**

*Rebecca Burns*

Familiar places are often the hardest to see. Sociologist John Urry argued that cultures train us in what to notice, directing our attention towards the scenic and spectacular, while everyday landscapes can often go unnoticed, receding into background. My PhD project, *The Oracle of Place*, asks whether the oracle card format can function as a counter-gaze: a way of redirecting attention toward the overlooked and ordinary places within the communities we live in.

This practice-based study investigates how the specific properties of the oracle card format, which include randomness, interpretive openness, and ritual practice, can mediate community connection to familiar local places. Based in Kington, Herefordshire, the research draws on therapeutic landscapes theory and creative health practice, extending both to account for the material-symbolic formats through which people are brought into relationship with place.

Early exploratory observations in another Herefordshire market town revealed that most people bring a documentary mode of perception to familiar images, asking what is this? and expecting a clear answer, rather than the slower, more open way of looking that the oracle format invites, suggesting the central argument of this research: that the oracle card format may retrain perception, making the invisible visible.

## **INCLUSION IN PRACTICE? EXPLORING THE POLICY-PRACTICE GAP IN HEALTHCARE EDUCATION**

*Nathan Caswell-Price*

United Kingdom (UK) Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are increasingly expected to demonstrate inclusive learning and teaching through equitable student outcomes. However, within professionally regulated healthcare programmes, translating inclusive frameworks into everyday learning, teaching, and assessment remains a complex challenge. Consequently, educators must balance inclusive pedagogical principles with professional regulatory competencies and educational expectations.

This doctoral study explores how healthcare lecturers interpret and operationalise inclusive frameworks, specifically Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiation, within a UK Paramedic Science programme. It also examines learners' lived experiences of inclusive education using an action-research-informed Lesson Study design. Educators will collaboratively plan, teach, observe, and refine inclusive educational strategies across iterative cycles within a single academic year. Student voice will be captured through narrated drawings and semi-structured interviews, enabling the examination of inclusion as both a pedagogical and a relational process.

This IGNITE presentation will share the study's emerging conceptual foundations and invite feedback on the proposed methodological design. The study will consider how Lesson Study may bridge the gap between inclusive policy and practice-based enactment in high-stakes education within healthcare programmes.

## **ORAL MICROBIOME STATUS IN METABOLIC SYNDROME USING ORAL HEALTH INDICATORS: INTEGRATING EVIDENCE, DIETARY INFLUENCES AND TARGETED INTERVENTIONS**

*Manal Chouchane*

Metabolic syndrome (MetS) is defined as a cluster of conditions such as obesity and high blood pressure, which occur in conjunction with each other leading to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes (T2D). The oral cavity is the entryway to the human body, and the oral microbiome (OM) comprises the second largest portion of the human microbiome. Emerging evidence suggests that the OM may influence taste perception, subsequently affecting dietary behaviour and contributing to obesity and MetS (Schamarek et al., 2023). The 'diet-oral microbiome-systemic inflammation' axis was recently identified, portraying a direct link between OM and dietary habits.

Furthermore, associations between OM composition and the risk of T2D were proposed, however, a lack of direct empirical studies was acknowledged, and further research was recommended. This research aims to investigate the association between MetS and OM using oral health indicators and determine the modulation effects of green tea and probiotics on microbiome-inflammation link. The aim will be answered through a multi-study approach. A systematic review synthesising the current evidence linking OM dysbiosis to inflammatory pathways specific to MetS, followed by an observational study comparing oral health indicators of OM and dietary habits between individuals with and without MetS. Finally, an intervention study will evaluate the effect of green tea chewable and a probiotic mouthwash on OM composition and buccal lipid profiles as indicators of inflammation. Together these studies will aim to inform strategies and interventions to support health through OM targeted therapies.

## **AUTISM, DOMESTIC ABUSE, AND INTERSECTIONALITY: EXPLORING AUTISTIC WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES**

*Zoe Ellis*

Autistic women's experiences of domestic abuse remain significantly under-researched, despite evidence suggesting they face increased vulnerability to abuse alongside barriers to recognising, disclosing, and accessing support. Existing frameworks often fail to account for the intersecting influences of gender, disability, and power, limiting understanding of how abuse is experienced and responded to.

This project adopts an intersectional framework, informed by the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, alongside feminist disability perspectives, to examine how gendered and ableist systems shape autistic women's experiences of domestic abuse. By integrating feminist, disability, and neurodiversity perspectives, the research aims to address gaps in current understanding and contribute to more inclusive approaches to policy, support, and research.

My presentation focuses on the conceptual development of the study at the pre-data collection stage, alongside the feminist methodological metaphor of "patchwork quilting" to represent the bringing together of individual lived experiences into a collective understanding. It will also reflect on the role of researcher positionality in shaping the study's methodological approach.

Feedback will be invited on the application of intersectionality within sensitive qualitative research, and on the ethical and methodological implications of feminist disability approaches.

## **EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN INNOVATION IN GERMAN FAMILY-OWNED COMPANIES: A CROSS-SECTIONAL SURVEY ON HOW USER-BUILT AI AGENTS ENABLE PRODUCT AND PROCESS INNOVATION**

*Janine Flottmann*

Family-owned businesses are a cornerstone of the German economy, yet little is known about the extent to which employees' use and design of AI agents contribute to innovation in these companies. This study examines how user-developed AI agents influence employee satisfaction, innovation-related behavior, and organizational productivity, and how these factors collectively drive product and process innovations. It fills a gap in existing research, which has largely focused on strategic and management-related factors, by viewing employees as active users and developers of AI-supported innovations in German family businesses.

The study is designed as a quantitative cross-sectional online survey targeting employees in German family-owned companies who currently use, have used, or intend to use AI agents at work.

The purpose of the presentation is to introduce the research context, explain the conceptual model and hypotheses, and gain early feedback on the study design, measurement approach, and overall research direction before data collection begins.

## **INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND EARLY-STAGE RESEARCH IN "GOTHIC REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE AND HEALTH HUMANITIES IN POST-MILLENNIAL WOMEN'S WRITING"**

*Lottie Goodger*

The Gothic has long been used to reimagine collective anxieties through aesthetics of excess, decay, monstrosity and haunting. Medicine has often been at the centre of this purging of shared fear, with reproductive medicine - particularly its risks, taboos and contested social and legal status - recognised as a persistent driver of Gothic sensibilities in popular fiction. A critical tradition of 'medical gothic', beginning with Romantic and Victorian medical developments and bodily proscriptions, has long been recognised, but reproductive medicine, particularly beyond fictions of the 18th and 19th centuries, has been persistently marginalised.

This presentation will outline the early stages of a PhD research project which aims to identify how women writers are using the medical gothic tradition to explore reproductive medicine in the 21st century and how this relates to current thinking in health humanities and feminist reproductive advocacy. The primary focus of this presentation will be the two overall aims of the investigation as outlined, and a discussion of the relevant interdisciplinarity.

## **UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES AND INFLUENCES ON CORPORATE INCUBATOR STRUCTURES IN A FAMILY BUSINESS**

*Elizabeth Grashoff*

Family businesses frequently pursue entrepreneurial activities through internal corporate venturing (ICV), often through corporate incubators, to support long-term competitiveness, innovation, and growth.

Although this approach aligns with family firms' preferences for maintaining control and preserving family legacy, ICV in family businesses remains underexplored, despite the high failure rates of corporate venturing initiatives, particularly in incubator structures. In particular, little is known about how family-specific characteristics, organizational processes, and business resources shape the design, implementation, and success of ICV activities. Therefore, this study examines the organizational influences, processes, and outcomes related to ICV in family businesses. Drawing on the dynamic capabilities perspective, it explores how organizational actors structure, coordinate, and reconfigure resources within corporate incubators to support internal venturing activities over time. A qualitative case study approach is adopted to capture the complexity of these processes within a German family business. Data are collected through semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and secondary organizational documents. The study contributes to the limited research on internal corporate venturing in family businesses and provides practical insights into how corporate incubators can be managed more effectively in the long term. The presentation outlines the study's aims, research gaps, and research design, as the project is currently at the stage of ethical approval.

## **"THE MYTH OF MERITOCRACY IN RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION?" AN EXPLORATION OF THE CANDIDATE PERSPECTIVE IN THE US REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY.**

*Christin Hall*

My study examines how candidates perceive meritocracy within the recruitment processes of the US real estate development industry. To date, I have completed the literature review and methodology chapters, addressed the ethical implications relating to researcher positionality, and obtained ethics approval for primary data collection.

The project adopts a qualitative research approach using semi-structured interviews within a narrative inquiry framework. This methodology aims to capture rich, subjective accounts from a diverse range of participants in order to generate nuanced and in-depth data for interpretation.

I am currently in my second year of research and focused on finalising primary data collection while beginning the thematic analysis of the findings. The pilot study, including thematic analysis and critical reflection, has already been completed.

## **DOING, BEE-ING, BECOMING: AN EXPLORATION OF THE OCCUPATION OF HOBBY BEEKEEPING**

*Annabel Heaslop*

Healthcare within the UK is facing many challenges, with waiting lists for hospitals at record levels (Powell, Baker & Foster, 2024). A focus on prevention and community-based care has been identified by both the NHS (Our mandate to reform the NHS, 2025) and the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT, 2025), with the RCOT (2024b) also highlighting the importance of sustainable practice and occupational therapist's role in addressing the climate emergency. In line with the RCOT's focus on having occupation as a key focus (RCOT, 2024a), as a hobby beekeeper, the researcher investigated the literature surrounding the occupation of hobby beekeeping to explore the potential of this occupation. A knowledge gap was identified, with no studies identified investigating the activity of beekeeping holistically from an occupational science or occupational therapy perspective. As such, the research will aim to explore this knowledge gap by using a qualitative approach to investigate the experience of hobby beekeepers within the UK and explore the potential of this occupation, drawing on nature connectedness theory and the discipline of occupational science. In doing so, the research will seek to understand how hobby beekeeping can present opportunities for occupational therapy.

## **HOW DO FORCED-IMMIGRANT AFGHAN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE UK DEPLOY RESOURCES AND AN ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION TO EXPLOIT ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR SURVIVAL AND GROWTH?**

*Mahboobullah Khaliqyar*

This research will answer the research question "How do forced-immigrant Afghan entrepreneurs in the UK deploy resources and an entrepreneurial orientation to exploit entrepreneurial opportunities for survival and growth?" and aims to explore how Afghan-origin migrants in the UK deploy their limited resources and entrepreneurial orientation to exploit opportunities for survival and growth. The research will use the Resource-based View theory (RBV) and Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) as sensitizing concepts. The two theories will guide the interpretation of the empirical and serve as dialogue partners that provide conceptual direction.

The research adopts an interpretivist, abductive, mono-method qualitative research design, using semi-structured interviews to capture the lived experiences and strategic behaviors of Afghan-origin entrepreneurs. The study will bring together the above two theories to understand entrepreneurship in the context of forced migration. Therefore, this presentation will briefly introduce the research problem, the theoretical framework, methodological approach, and research contribution.

## **ESG INTEGRATION AND INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURE AS DRIVERS OF BUYER - SUPPLIER COLLABORATION TOWARDS GREEN PROCUREMENT: A CROSS-NATIONAL STUDY OF PROCUREMENT PROFESSIONALS**

*Deep Khanal*

Green procurement is gaining strategic importance, yet existing literature emphasises the Environmental dimension of ESG whilst largely overlooking Social and Governance dimensions within buyer-supplier relationships. Furthermore, cross-national quantitative studies capturing individual procurement practitioners' perspectives remain limited, with no published study including Nepal as a contrasting developing economy.

This study aims to examine the influence of ESG integration and institutional pressure on buyer-supplier collaboration towards green procurement across developing (Nepal), emerging (India, China), and developed (Singapore, UK) economies.

The study pursues four objectives: to examine the influence of each ESG dimension Environmental, Social, and Governance on buyer-supplier green collaboration, and to assess the role of institutional pressure across the targeted countries.

The research question is: To what extent does ESG integration and institutional pressure influence buyer-supplier collaboration towards green procurement among procurement professionals across these five countries?

Four hypotheses propose that each ESG dimension and institutional pressure positively and significantly influence green procurement collaboration.

A quantitative Likert-based survey of 120–150 procurement professionals will be analysed using SPSS. This presentation seeks early feedback on the research design prior to data collection.

## **EFFECTIVENESS OF HEAT MITIGATION PROTOCOLS IN PERIMENOPAUSAL FEMALES**

*Emma Lawrence*

Climate change is increasing the UK's heat exposure, with measurable impacts on workforce productivity. For example, a +1°C temperature anomaly has been associated with a ~9.5% reduction in worker

effort. Despite this, current heat mitigation guidance is based on male physiology, with limited consideration of female-specific responses. This gap is particularly problematic for individuals experiencing the menopausal transition. As hormonal fluctuations increase, heat sensitivity rises, inducing symptoms such as hot flushes. The effectiveness of heat mitigation strategies in this demographic remains unclear, with implications for health, wellbeing, and workplace performance.

This work addresses the gap through an applied programme of research. First, it develops a methodological framework to improve classification and inclusion of menopausal populations in heat research, enhancing rigour and reproducibility. Second, it investigates the adaptive responses to passive hot-water-immersion heat-acclimation; a scalable, accessible protocol aiding the translation of laboratory-based approaches into a home-based model. Third, it investigates pragmatic cooling solutions, such as electric fans, considering real-world relevance and usability, with potential to influence policy.

This presentation will outline progress to date, including, a manuscript in preparation and ongoing data collection. It will also highlight challenges of conducting research in an underrepresented, occupationally relevant population.

## **FROM CHATBOT EXPERIENCE TO E-LOYALTY: EXAMINING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN INDIAN E-COMMERCE**

*Sufaila Neeliyatt Verkkal*

Indian e-commerce industry is increasingly investing on AI chatbots to enhance customer service, yet limited studies explain how these technologies can create a sustainable relationship in this context. The purpose of this research is to investigate complex relationships between customer experience, satisfaction, and loyalty in the context of AI chatbot experience in the Indian e-commerce industry. This research aims to examine how AI chatbot experience influences customer loyalty in the Indian e-commerce platforms with a focus on testing satisfaction as a mediator.

Theoretically the study will be grounded on S-O-R framework, to holistically capture how the external stimuli, chatbot experience dimensions such as Ease of Use, Information Quality, and Anthropomorphism trigger cognitive and emotional state, satisfaction (Organism) which will lead to the behavioural response, loyalty. This framework will clearly explain how external technological features influence internal evaluations and subsequently consumer behaviour.

As this research is currently at the design stage and prior to data collection, the purpose of this Ignite presentation is to share the proposed conceptual framework and research methodology, and to seek early feedback on the model, variable selection, and planned survey approach.

## **RETROLOGISTICS AND CIRCULARITY PRINCIPLES: A CASE STUDY OF A MAJOR UK RETAILER**

*Anthony Nwosu*

Retrologistics also known as reverse logistics is a business tool that deals with recovery of value, this process seems incomplete without a continuous preservation mechanism. Circular economy principles entrenched in elimination, circulation and regeneration aim to preserve value for as long as possible. The UK retail sector has made conscious efforts to remodel the future of consumer goods, but much remains on the integration of reverse logistics and circular economy overtime. This study aims to understand the circular economy interpretation of a major UK retailer, focusing on supplier collaboration, waste resource strategies, consumer perspectives, and third-party metrics.

A case study design provides a vivid picture of the complex processes of CE and RL linkages. An exploratory sequential analysis will be applied to this research, moving from qualitative to quantitative data. The qualitative study explores a major UK retailer's circular economy and reverse logistics processes, then a quantitative study is used to test these findings in customers and supply chain managers settings. The participants include suppliers, sustainability managers, retail customers and external supply chain managers.

The research argues that there is a gap in the long-term nexus between retail circular economy and reverse logistics, and it uses a mixed-methods case study approach to achieve this.

## **SECTION 136 - MENTAL HEALTH ACT (1983): AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS OR AN OVERUSED AND INEFFECTIVE POWER TO SUPPORT THOSE EXPERIENCING EMOTIONAL DISTRESS?**

*David Palfreyman*

This study considers the application of police powers under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983. The empirical process will include an audit of clinical records to understand more about the people that become subject to this power and the circumstances behind this. Semi structured qualitative interviews will be carried out with Approved Mental Health Professionals, police officers and psychiatrists to explore the effectiveness of the statutory process and the extent to which positive clinical outcomes are achieved.

The thesis draws on a theoretical underpinning of a social model of mental health, and the study design will be located in an ontological and epistemological paradigm drawing on a relativist tradition that recognises the validity of interpreting meaning through the research process. Empirical data will use a social constructionism approach which seeks to generate understanding and meaning from a range of groups involved in the s136 process.

## **WHEN FINANCIAL LOGICS CLASH: DESIGNING A DELPHI STUDY OF PORTFOLIO GOVERNANCE IN AUTOMOTIVE TRANSFORMATION**

*Ram Kumar Raja Mahendra Varman*

Digital and software-driven transformation is forcing automotive manufacturers to manage portfolios that combine capital-intensive hardware investments, software-intensive platforms and long-horizon regulatory compliance obligations. Finance-operations leaders must allocate capital and manage risk across these coexisting, and often conflicting, "financial logics". This doctoral project investigates how portfolio-level governance works in this context, focusing on a German automotive organisation undergoing business model transformation.

The Ignite presentation introduces a developing Delphi study design aimed at eliciting and refining finance-operations leaders' implicit decision rules. The study has three objectives: (1) to trace how portfolio governance structures and decision logics have evolved over time during transformation; (2) to explore how leaders currently make portfolio-level capital allocation and resource-commitment

decisions under deterministic hardware, probabilistic software and regulatory compliance logics; and (3) to identify which governance mechanisms and metrics they regard as workable in practice, and under which organisational and regulatory conditions.

By sharing this work-in-progress design rather than results, the session seeks interdisciplinary feedback on the conceptual framing of "incommensurable financial logics" and on the practicalities of conducting Delphi research in a politically sensitive setting. The aim is to refine a rigorous yet feasible approach to studying portfolio governance under complex transformation pressures.

## **EXPLORING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MOROCCO: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN GREEN MARKETING**

*Kawtar Rikaoui*

This research explores the challenges and opportunities faced by social entrepreneurs in Morocco in adopting green marketing strategies to promote sustainability-oriented businesses. As Morocco continues to pursue sustainable development goals and environmental initiatives, social entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as an important approach for addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. Despite this potential, the adoption of green marketing practices in Morocco remains limited due to factors such as low consumer awareness, financial constraints, weak policy implementation, and cultural barriers towards sustainable consumption.

The study adopts a qualitative research approach, Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with social entrepreneurs and industry experts, alongside consumer surveys designed to examine awareness, perceptions, and behaviors towards environmentally friendly products and services. The research aims to identify the major barriers affecting green marketing adoption while also exploring opportunities linked to growing sustainability trends, government initiatives, and international support for environmentally responsible businesses.

This Ignite presentation will focus on the development of research design, methodological choices, and emerging themes identified through literature review. The presentation aims to receive early academic feedback on the proposed methodology, sampling strategy, and the anticipated contribution of the study to sustainability and social entrepreneurship research and practice in Morocco.

## **BEYOND ATTACHMENT: A MIXED METHOD STUDY OF APPLYING KNOWLEDGE OF INFANT MENTAL HEALTH TO SOCIAL WORK**

*Rose Rumsey*

I am a third year PhD student in the School of Allied Health. I am undertaking a study in Infant Mental Health and social work practice. I have submitted my ethics application so am now preparing for the next stage of my project, collecting data.

The aim of the project is to consider whether there is benefit to social workers having ore knowledge of infant mental health and whether this can improve upon practice and relationship building within child and family social work. This will be undertaken by considering child development through a Biopsychosocial model.

I will be presenting my planned quantitative data collection through surveys and seeking participants through social media and qualitative data collection of focus groups and how I plan to gain views of participants through a guided discussion. I will be giving an overview of how I plan to manage the group dynamics and achieve gaining insight from the participants. I will also be seeking feedback as to how best to achieve my goals from those I am presenting to.

## **ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUITIES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: BARRIERS TO GIRLS' ENROLMENT AND RETENTION IN RURAL SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA**

*Adebimpe Seriki*

This thesis explores the persistent inequalities in Nigeria's education system. Although primary education is officially free and compulsory under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, millions of Nigerian children remain out of school. Despite government efforts to improve basic education, significant differences in enrolment and completion rates persists between the northern and southern states, as well as between male and female students.

This study aims to examine the social, cultural, economic, and institutional barriers that hinder the enrolment and retention of girls in primary schools in rural Sokoto State, Nigeria, with the goal of identifying policy recommendations and practical strategies to promote gender equity in access to primary education. Most importantly, this research will provide an opportunity to hear the voices of Nigerian

children and their families themselves regarding their experiences of access to education, alongside the views of educators, community leaders and policymakers.

The aim of this presentation is to share my research with other researchers, build confidence, and improve my communication skills.

## **IMPROVING THE MANAGEMENT OF LARGE-SCALE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS THROUGH NETWORK-BASED STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT**

*Peter Trapp*

Large-scale infrastructure projects, such as ports, airports, and transportation or energy infrastructure, are frequently characterized by delays, cost overruns, and stakeholder conflicts. These projects are distinguished by their long timeframes, high investment volumes, and the involvement of public and private actors. Traditional approaches to stakeholder management focus primarily on individual stakeholders and their interests, while relationships, interactions, and network structures remain insufficiently addressed in practice. A network-based perspective, therefore, views stakeholders not as isolated actors, but as integral parts of dynamic webs of relationships shaped by interdependencies, power structures, and cooperative ties. The concept of network structures shifts the focus away from the notion of controllable one-to-one relationships toward interconnected, interacting network systems. Against this backdrop, this research project investigates the extent to which the management of large-scale infrastructure projects can be optimized by integrating a network-based component into the stakeholder management process.

This presentation explores the potential of a network-based perspective for stakeholder management in large-scale infrastructure projects. Its objective is to solicit feedback on whether such an approach can deepen our understanding of conflicts, delays, and coordination challenges, contributing to the further development of stakeholder management methodologies.

## **HEARING FROM THE HIDDEN: EXPLORING THE VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING DISABLED PEOPLE, SUBJECT TO PROBATION SUPERVISION IN ENGLAND AND WALES'**

*Kay Wall*

The literature identifies a significant point in relation to the treatment of adults with learning disability in the criminal justice system; captured in the government commissioned report led by Lord Bradley in 2009 (DoH 2009). Whilst the review predominantly focussed on mental health provision, there was mention of adults with learning disability. Contemporary research however describes adults with a learning disability as a "hidden population" within the criminal justice system, whose voices are rarely heard.

Contemporary debate stresses the importance of lived experience advising all aspects of criminal justice services, and this has led to the rise of HM Prison and Probation Services Insight Group. However, contemporary comment suggests that little has changed in the last decade despite the rhetoric: continued calls for the same recommendations to be implemented within the prison and probation services remain.

My research seeks to include co-production principles to hear the voice of this marginalised group in relation to current probation supervision experiences. It will also provide an opportunity for learning disabled people to contribute to the dialogue regarding effective service delivery.

This Ignite presentation aims to share a brief context for the current research and key findings from the initial literature review. Moreover, I will present the methodology and intended methods for the research.

## **DATA ANALYSIS METHODS FOR INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGY: DO THE USE OF CRAFTED STORIES AND VIGNETTES AID INTERPRETIVE UNDERSTANDING?**

*Sarah Weaver*

This lightening talk will compare different data analysis methods congruent with an interpretive phenomenological approach, highlighting the value and use of crafted stories as an aid to un hiding the everydayness of participants' lived experience.

Data analysis in hermeneutic and interpretive phenomenologies is a slow and iterative process where the researcher dwells in the narrative data. This ignite session briefly reflects on the different approaches to data analysis favoured by hermeneutic researchers, such as Diekelmann et al.; Braun and Clarke and van Manen. The researcher proposes that the use crafted stories, as narrative devices, may aid the "bubbling up" of meaning and understanding of the lived experience of participants. Discussion and feedback from peers, researchers and senior colleagues is invited, to aid awareness and debate of ontological methodology.

# ABSTRACTS PRESENTATIONS

## **NEGOTIATING ETHICS IN THE FIELD**

*Ibironke Adubiaro-Ajayi*

This presentation reflects on my data collection journey during PhD fieldwork with private primary school proprietors in Lagos, Nigeria. Trained within United Kingdom research protocols, I entered the field with expectations shaped by formal ethical procedures and methodological planning. However, the realities of conducting research in practice revealed a more negotiated process requiring flexibility, cultural sensitivity, and continuous reflexivity (Berger, 2015; Pillow, 2003).

The study originally adopted a sequential multi-methods approach using questionnaires followed by semi-structured interviews. During data collection, I encountered several unexpected challenges and learning experiences, including difficulties gaining access to participants through digital means, concerns around trust and audio-recording, expectations regarding compensation, and cautious or selective responses linked to school reputation and accountability. Similar fieldwork challenges within Nigerian and African contexts have been highlighted by Afolabi (2021); Onyeze-Joe (2022). I also had to navigate my positionality as both an insider and researcher within the Nigerian educational context.

Rather than viewing these experiences solely as methodological obstacles, this reflection examines how they shaped my understanding of participant engagement, qualitative research, and fieldwork realities in cross-context settings. The presentation highlights the importance of adaptability, relationship-building, research-in-context, and reflexive practice during data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It further argues that ethical practice in cross-national research is relational and context-dependent, requiring flexibility, reflexivity, and cultural competence (Oyinloye, 2021).

By sharing these reflections, the presentation contributes to discussions on doctoral fieldwork realities and context-sensitive approaches to research ethics in international research.

## **“WALKING THE TALK”: EMBEDDING TRAUMA-INFORMED PRINCIPLES INTO RESEARCH EXPLORING TRAUMA-INFORMED DEMENTIA CARE**

*Mary-Joy Albutt*

The bi-directional relationship between trauma and dementia is well documented, with studies suggesting that people living with unresolved Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are up to twice as likely to develop a neurocognitive disorder (NCD), whilst NCDs themselves constitute a risk factor for late-onset PTSD.

Whilst devolved nations have developed guidelines for trauma-informed practice and care, no such guidelines exist in England. Additionally, evidence remains scarce on how trauma-informed care (TIC) principles should be embedded within dementia care home settings.

Furthermore, whilst existing literature focuses on trauma-informed care as a practice model, fewer studies consider how trauma-informed principles should guide research methodology when investigating vulnerable populations.

This presentation examines my PhD's methodological innovation: applying TIC principles not only as a research topic but as an ethical framework shaping the research process itself. Through critical reflexive practice in my study's 3rd year it became evident that methodological congruence required redesign of the research question, aims, objectives and methodology, to align with the principles under investigation.

I will discuss the conceptual and practical challenges of conducting research about trauma-informed care in a trauma-informed way, inviting critical discussion about research ethics, power dynamics, and the epistemic responsibility to align research methods with the values we study.

## **NUTRITIONAL ADVICE AND THE TRANSITION TO WHEELCHAIR USE: A SEQUENTIAL MIXED-METHODS STUDY**

*Heather Chapman*

Wheelchair users represent a heterogeneous population with diverse impairments, activity levels, and health trajectories. Nutritional guidance for this group is often extrapolated from ambulatory populations, with existing literature largely focused on individuals with spinal cord injury or limb amputation following an acute transition to wheelchair use (ATW). However, many individuals experience a chronic transition to wheelchair use (CTW) as mobility progressively declines, a distinction rarely addressed in nutrition research or clinical practice.

This sequential mixed-methods doctoral study explores the availability, accessibility, and relevance of nutritional advice for adult wheelchair users. Phase 1 recruited nine semi-structured interviews, which were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, with human-led coding supported by AI-assisted comparison to enhance analytic reflexivity. Five themes were constructed: nutrition positioned as “out of scope” in wheelchair transition care; self-directed dietary adaptation; identity recalibration and dietary control; health complications as turning points; and structural or policy disconnects.

Phase 2: a quantitative anonymous online survey aiming to recruit 300 participants, analysed using SPSS. Preliminary Phase 2 survey findings appear to reinforce these insights, indicating many wheelchair users receive little or no nutritional guidance following transition to wheelchair use. These findings highlight the need for integrated nutritional guidance within wheelchair transition care pathways.

## **TEACHING THE BODY TO SHINE: BALLROOM SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S EATING DISTRESS (SURVEILLANCE BE GONE)**

*CC Clifford*

My paper examines how contemporary Ballroom culture aids young people in traversing and re-imagining experiences of eating distress. Anchoring theories of performativity and embodiment, my study understands Ballroom as a generative social world where bodily norms are simultaneously rehearsed, called forth, and transfigured through practice. Edifying on Judith Butler's account of performativity, Jose Esteban Munoz's notions of queer futurity and utopian performatives, and Marlon M. Bailey's ethnography of house/ball communities, I argue that Ballroom cultivates distinctive forms of recognition, mentorship, and collective care. In conversation with Charlotte Cooper's critique of individualising models of “eating disorders,” the project situates care as a cultural labour: a shared aesthetic practice enacted through categories, craft, and kinship.

Methodologically, the research combines participant observation, semi-structured interviews with young Ballroom participants, and reflective auto-ethnography. Fieldwork is multi-suited, centring the UK scene with a planned period of observation in New York, enabling attention to both local specificity and transnational lineages. Analytically, the paper traces three mechanisms through which support emerges: (1) performative affirmation- the adjudicated, call-and-response choreography of value that names, hails, and holds bodies; (2) kinship and pedagogy- House structures that transmit technique, history, and care: and (3) aesthetic labour- training, costuming, and walking categories that re-orient attention from surveillance of the body to its capacities for precision, presence, and pleasure.

Rather than treating eating distress solely as an individual pathology, the study foregrounds how collective witnessing and shared practice can open pathways toward agency and belonging. By centring youth voices and thick, situated description, the paper contributes an account of Ballroom as community infrastructure for care- one that reframes what support can look like when it is performed, judged, and celebrated together.

## INTERROGATING NORMATIVE ASSUMPTIONS IN RESEARCH ON ADULT CHILD-PARENT CORESIDENCE

*Irene Conti*

Coresidence between adult children and their parents is becoming increasingly common worldwide. Existing research has primarily focused on the socio-economic determinants of this living arrangement, often overlooking the subjective and psychological experiences of individuals involved. Moreover, scholarship on this topic frequently appears to be shaped by normative assumptions surrounding life-course trajectories. This presentation discusses findings from a Critical Interpretive Synthesis (CIS) conducted to critically examine the academic literature on adult child-parent coresidence and interrogate the assumptions underpinning current research in the field. Particular attention is given to the implicit normative assumptions informing research questions and interpretations. In addition to presenting the synthesis findings, the presentation reflects on the methodological and epistemological implications of conducting critical interpretive research as part of a doctoral study. Broader issues related to epistemic vigilance, reflexivity, and research integrity within academic research are also considered.

## AUTISTIC TRAITS AMONG ADULTS WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER

*Krista Easton*

**Aims** Autism is underrecognised in adults with bipolar disorder (BD), yet its presence can shape the clinical course of the BD illness. This work examined the rate and clinical correlates of autism, both as a diagnosis and as traits, in a large sample of adults with BD in the UK.

**Methods** The rates of autism diagnosis and autistic traits, measured by the Autism-Spectrum Quotient Short version (AQ-Short), were determined among 4088 adults with a DSM-IV diagnosis of bipolar I disorder (BDI) or bipolar II disorder (BDII) from the UK Bipolar Disorder Research Network. The association of autistic traits, by AQ-Short subscales, with lifetime clinical variables of BDI and BDII was further examined.

**Findings** More than a third of adults with BD had clinically significant levels of autistic traits and two out of five of those with BDII. Autistic traits were associated with a more severe BD illness course, including suicidal behaviour, and psychiatric co-occurrences.

**Conclusions** Autistic traits in BD are common but are currently unrecognised. These findings have direct clinical and personal implications. Routine screening for autistic traits should be considered in adults with BD, particularly those with BDII, although symptom overlap with autism warrants caution.

## RELATIONSHIP PATTERNS IN LATER LIFE: WHY THEY MATTER

*Jennifer Edgecombe*

Later life relationships are becoming increasingly diverse due to demographic and social change. Rising divorce rates, increased life expectancy and growing numbers of older adults entering remarriages, cohabiting and living apart together (LAT) relationships have altered the structure of intimacy and partnership in later life. At the same time, population ageing and pressures on health and social care systems have increased reliance on unpaid partner caregiving. Despite these changes, dementia caregiving research and policy continue to assume long-term marriage as the dominant relationship context in older age.

This presentation explores the demographic and relational trends that informed a mixed-methods study of motivations for partner dementia caregiving among adults aged 55 and over. An online survey was completed by 207 participants across a range of relationship forms, including first marriages, remarriages, cohabitation, and LAT relationships.

Particular attention is given to the significance of relationship timing, relationship length, and changing family structures in shaping assumptions about future care. Findings suggest that later-life relationships are not a single category, but consist of distinct relationship forms with differing expectations surrounding obligation, reciprocity, and caregiving responsibility. These demographic shifts have important implications for future dementia care provision and assumptions surrounding care availability.

## **INTERNALISED WEIGHT STIGMA AND THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN WITH PCOS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

*Utpreksha Gaude*

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is a common chronic condition affecting approximately 1 in 8 women worldwide. Despite its name, PCOS is a complex metabolic and hormonal disorder with wide-ranging physical and psychological repercussions. Symptoms such as weight fluctuations, fertility concerns, fatigue, hair loss and facial hair can contribute to body image distress and reduced self-esteem.

These experiences are further shaped by broader structural influences, including limited awareness within healthcare settings and sociocultural expectations of femininity. Drawing on a feminist lens within a critical realist framework, this study examines the lived experiences of women with PCOS, with a particular focus on internalised weight stigma. The aim is to uncover the influence of internalised weight stigma on behaviour, relationships and management of the condition.

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with 21 participants, primarily recruited through Verity (Online PCOS community based in the UK). Preliminary thematic analysis suggests recurring patterns of internalised stigma, perceived lack of medical support, and significant behavioural adaptations in response to weight-related concerns. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated resilience and agency in managing their condition.

Further analysis is ongoing to deepen understanding of the interplay between social structures, health experiences, and self-perception in women with PCOS. The initial themes uncovered so far include internalisation of weight stigma, limited awareness, resilience among the participants and an ongoing frustration surrounding the consequences of the disorder. Building on these insights, a future quantitative phase is planned to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges women with PCOS face.

## **METABOLIC–PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERACTIONS ACROSS THE MENOPAUSAL TRANSITION: EARLY OBSERVATIONS FROM AN INTEGRATED PHYSIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL STUDY**

*Bradán Houghton*

The menopausal transition is associated with significant metabolic and psychological changes, yet the mechanistic links between these processes remain poorly characterised. Emerging evidence suggests that declining estradiol may influence metabolic regulation while simultaneously altering hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis activity, potentially contributing to increased stress and psychological symptom burden. This study investigates the interactions among glucose regulation mechanisms, capillary blood fatty acid composition, salivary cortisol secretion, and psychological well-being across menopausal stages.

Participants were recruited into premenopausal, perimenopausal, and postmenopausal groups. Each participant completed an Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT) with capillary glucose measurements to assess glycaemic response and metabolic regulation. Psychological symptom burden and menopause-related quality of life were evaluated using validated instruments, including the DASS-21 and MENQOL questionnaires. In addition, capillary blood fatty acid profiles were analysed using gas chromatography and salivary cortisol by high-pressure liquid chromatography to explore potential neuro-metabolic pathways associated with symptom presentation.

Preliminary findings indicate stage-specific differences in glycaemic response patterns alongside variation in reported psychological symptom domains. Early analyses suggest that alterations in metabolic regulation during the menopausal transition may coincide with increased psychological symptom burden, supporting emerging hypotheses regarding metabolic–neuroendocrine interactions. These findings highlight the importance of considering metabolic physiology alongside psychological outcomes when studying menopausal health. Understanding these interactions may inform future multidisciplinary approaches to menopause management, integrating metabolic monitoring with psychosocial support strategies.

## **ASSESSING THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON WOMEN FARMERS' ADAPTATION AND LIVELIHOODS IN NIGERIA**

*Sarah Jatau*

Agriculture serves as a crucial source of livelihood for women farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. However, the impacts of climate change have increasingly jeopardised the livelihoods of smallholder women farmers, posing threats to food security, income stability, and overall rural well-being. As such, climate change adaptation is vital for enhancing the resilience of women farmers.

This research investigates the factors influencing climate change adaptation among women farmers in Nigeria, emphasising grassroots perspectives and lived experiences to transcend top-down interpretations of adaptation. It aims to capture how women farmers perceive, navigate and respond to climate-related challenges in their daily lives.

Utilising the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, this research employs a qualitative, participatory approach to explore women farmers' adaptation strategies. The findings indicate that adaptation is influenced by unequal access to livelihood assets, gendered responsibilities, institutional support, and broader socio-economic conditions. The research suggests that sustainable climate change adaptation must be grounded in women farmers' lived realities and address the structural barriers that constrain their livelihoods and resilience.

## **THE EFFECT OF ECOLOGICAL INTENSIFICATION ON SOIL FUNGAL POPULATIONS IN UK VINEYARDS**

*Joseph Leaper*

Wildflower strips have been widely introduced in perennial crop systems as a form of ecological intensification, both to promote above ground biodiversity and support ecological pest control, but these interventions are often studied in isolation. Consequently, there is a lack of integrated research assessing the combined impacts of wildflower interventions on both above ground and below ground biodiversity.

In spring 2024, wildflower alleyways were established at four sites across three commercial vineyards in Sussex and Surrey. At each site, two plots of sixteen 75 m alleyways were selected, one sown with a mix of native perennial wildflowers, and one left under conventional vineyard management. Soil fungal communities were assessed using amplicon sequencing of soil DNA targeting the fungal ITS2 region.

Initial results indicate an increased diversity and potential shift in fungal community composition in wildflower alleyways compared to those under conventional management.

## **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGY AND GREEN CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR: EVIDENCE FROM RESTAURANT CUSTOMERS IN GHANA**

*Edward Markwei Martey*

The study aims to examine AI technology and green consumption behavior in Ghana and develop a framework that combines Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Norm Activation Model. The rapid global economic growth and population explosion have exacerbated environmental degradation and natural resource depletion, underscoring the need for green consumption behavior to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and resource consumption. The study adopted a quantitative research approach and collected data from 797 customers in Restaurants in Ghana. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was adopted to identify the best-fitting model for the data collected. Partial least square – Structural Model Equation was adopted for data analyses. The findings highlight crucial factors influencing AI-driven green behavior, including attitude, social norms, perceived behavioral control, personal norms, ascription of responsibility, and awareness. Firstly, Governments and policymakers should leverage virtual and real-life platforms to promote low-carbon living, encouraging public participation in green initiatives. Secondly, Businesses must adopt green strategies to enhance their social reputation and sustainable development. Thirdly, managers can utilize AI technology to guide customers toward eco-friendly consumption. Finally, restaurants should partner with influential role models to raise environmental awareness and promote sustainable behaviors. This is among the first empirical research to integrate TPB and NAM to create a framework and offer theoretical inspiration to explore green consumption behavior and incorporated AI technology practices. The result of the study offers practical management implications to promote green consumption.

## **MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND MISMATCHED PERSPECTIVES IN THE ROLE AND PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORT INITIATIVES FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA**

*Thomas Morton*

The number of people living with dementia is growing, and with it the need for more widespread and consistent community support. Community-based initiatives (CBIs), such as regularly meeting groups and communal activities, aim to help provide this, however long-term sustainability is a challenge for such initiatives. One reason for this may be that the form CBIs take, and their delivery, varies significantly and what they do can be poorly understood and poorly supported by other organisations in dementia health and care pathways.

As part of a PhD by prior published work, findings from a realist review and realist evaluation investigating the sustainability of dementia support CBIs were synthesized using a societal psychology lens, to uncover new insights regarding the role and purpose of CBIs. The goals of social inclusion, improved social citizenship and better social health for people with dementia were identified as commonly key to the purpose of CBIs; however, misalignment with the psychological dimensions and perceptions of stakeholder organisations was also identified, potentially impacting on CBI success and sustainability. Conclusions were drawn regarding how communication, collaboration and evidence-gathering can better align organisations within dementia pathways, to create systems more supportive of social health for people living with dementia.

## **USING POLYTEXTUAL THEMATIC ANALYSIS IN CHILDREN'S RESEARCH**

*Francesca Musgrave*

Children's geographic play research has historically centred around urban experiences, leaving rural children's play underexplored. This research addresses that gap by investigating where boys and girls in rural settings play, how they use those spaces, and the independent mobility afforded to them. Data was generated through group interviews and a participatory map-making drawing exercise with children. To analyse both the verbal and pictorial data produced, I employed Polytextual Thematic Analysis (PTA), which is an adapted form of thematic analysis that enables verbal and pictorial data to be thematically analysed simultaneously. Despite its relevance for multi-method research, PTA remains underused and few published studies detail its practical implementation.

This presentation offers a step-by-step account of how PTA is applied in practice, illustrated with real examples from my data. I outline how drawings and interview transcripts are coded in parallel, how visual and verbal codes are brought together, and where the analytical challenges and opportunities arise. In doing so, I aim to provide a transparent, accessible guide to PTA that is useful both for child-centred research and for researchers in other fields.

## **POLICE USE OF FORCE; ANALYSING POLICE AND CIVILIANS INTERACTIONS IN GHANA**

*Peter Twumhene*

The use of force by police in interactions with citizens remains a significant concern in contemporary policing, as it profoundly affects public trust, perceptions of legitimacy, and the overall relationship between law enforcement and the community. In Ghana, issues related to excessive or unjustified use of force have gained prominence, particularly during routine encounters between police officers and citizens. Despite the prevalence of these interactions, which often result in injuries or fatalities, there is a notable deficiency of empirical research that explores the complexities surrounding situations leading to the use of force. This study aims to enhance our understanding of the factors influencing police use of force, how these encounters are perceived and interpreted by both police officers and citizens, and the policy measures that might be implemented to address this critical issue in Ghana. Adopting a qualitative research approach, the study investigated the lived experiences of commercial drivers and police officers in situations that culminate in the use of force. A total of 30 participants were recruited, comprising 20 commercial drivers and 10 police officers from both lower and senior ranks. Participants were engaged through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews to gather data. A thematic analysis of the collected data revealed several significant themes: power dynamics, corruption, poor communication skills, lack of accountability, and inadequate training in de-escalation strategies. By examining both systemic and behavioural factors influencing police use of force, this research offers valuable insights for policymakers and the Ghana Police Service to reduce instances of force and enhance the relationship between law enforcement and citizens in Ghana.

## **SPRAY-INDUCED GENE SILENCING (SIGS) FOR DOWNY MILDEW CONTROL: TARGETING CROSS-KINGDOM RNA EXCHANGE BETWEEN PEA AND *PERONOSPORA VICIAE F. SP. PISI***

*Gizem Unal*

Downy mildew (*Peronospora viciae f. sp. pisi*, Pvp) causes substantial yield losses in pea (*Pisum sativum*), requiring sustainable control alternatives to conventional fungicides. We investigated spray-induced gene silencing (SIGS) using double-stranded RNA (dsRNA) to target essential Pvp genes and optimize pathogen control strategies. Small RNA sequencing revealed bidirectional cross-kingdom RNA exchange between pea and Pvp, identifying natural gene silencing targets for enhanced dsRNA design. We identified three Pvp genes targeted by pea-derived small RNAs and two pea genes regulated by Pvp-derived small RNAs, providing five candidate targets for dsRNA-based biocontrol. Functional validation using both short synthesized dsRNAs (SS-dsRNAs) and longer in vitro produced dsRNAs demonstrated that targeting these cross-kingdom exchange genes achieved significant suppression of Pvp infection in pea plants.

Additional Pvp genes involved in RNAi machinery and essential metabolic pathways were identified and validated as effective SIGS targets. Our results establish SIGS as a viable, environmentally sustainable approach for downy mildew management and provide a framework for improving dsRNA-based plant disease control through systematic identification of cross-kingdom RNA interactions.

## **AN EXPLORATION OF TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE, CONFIDENCE AND READINESS FOR TEACHING FOUNDATIONAL DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY AWARENESS IN SCHOOLS**

*Helen Wilson*

In a 'digital by default' society, individuals are not only consumers but also routine producers of digital information. However, much of this content is not created in ways that are accessible to all users, particularly people with disabilities or those relying on assistive technologies. With around 20% of the population said to have some form of disability, this makes such digital exclusion a significant issue.

Many of the significant barriers experienced by those with disabilities could be addressed through the application of basic digital accessibility principles, however, practical knowledge about these principles is limited. One potential strategy for addressing this challenge at scale is the integration of digital accessibility awareness education within the school curriculum. However, digital accessibility is widely absent from the educational curriculum in general, and existing literature suggests that teachers lack confidence, training, and resources to be able to teach the topic or to create accessible learning materials themselves.

This paper reports findings from a UK-wide questionnaire investigating the prior knowledge, experiences, and confidence of teachers working in upper Key Stage 2 with respect to teaching digital accessibility in schools. The Upper Key Stage 2 context was specifically identified through the literature review as a developmentally appropriate stage to introduce digital accessibility awareness to pupils in schools, as it aligns with existing digital education topics such as online safety, data protection, and PSHE lessons related to empathy and consideration of others' needs.

It's primary role as a questionnaire is to specifically inform and prepare for a more in-depth qualitative study into digital accessibility awareness lesson planning and pilots at upper Key Stage 2. The findings also offer further research opportunities for teacher education regarding inclusive practices and skills for inclusive practices and curriculum development should digital accessibility be incorporated into the national curriculum and beyond.

## **SUPPORTING NEURODIVERGENT RESPONSE POLICE OFFICERS: A CASE STUDY OF POLICE ORGANISATIONS IN ENGLAND AND WALES**

*Alexander Wood*

This research aims to explore how different police organisations support neurodivergent response police officers across England and Wales. The objective of this research is to identify and understand how police organisations support neurodivergent response officers and how neurodivergent response officers perceive the support available. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines a survey and case study research strategy to identify suitable cases. 23 semi-structured interviews were carried out representing 13 police organisations. The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis which found five themes: (1) recognition, (2) organisational insight (3) challenges, (4) work alignment (5) support. This research contributes to evidence-based policing and has several implications for police organisations on how they approach the issue. This research also has implications for future research into policing and neurodivergence.

## **SUSTAINING PARTICIPATION BEYOND DEMENTIA: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF A COMMUNITY GROUP IN ITALY**

*Livia Wright*

Dementia-inclusive initiatives aim to enable people with dementia to remain engaged in their social worlds. While international research highlights the value of sustaining everyday roles and activities, little qualitative work has examined how this is achieved in Italy. This study addresses this gap by exploring how participation is supported within a community group.

The study draws on ethnography conducted as part of a doctoral project. Methods included participant observation in a community group embedded in an integrated care network, interviews with professionals, and home interviews with people with dementia and family members. The research followed an iterative, reflexive design within a social constructionist epistemology. Leibing and Katz's concept of alienation-based care informed the analysis.

Initially established as a service for people with dementia and their families, the group gradually became a mixed community group organised around ordinariness and everyday activities. Participation was sustained through relational, material, organisational, and cultural prosthetics that enabled involvement without positioning dementia as the central organising category.

The findings are discussed in dialogue with the Meeting Centre UK model, reflecting on how community-building initiatives can shape the experience of living with dementia and concurrently challenge dominant sociocultural narratives

## **TRACING IDENTITIES OF MUSLIM 'LIBERATED AFRICANS' IN THE CROWN COLONY OF SIERRA LEONE DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

*Malina Yallanki*

Established on the Upper Guinea Coast of West Africa, the Crown Colony of Sierra Leone was situated in a region characterised by a long-standing tradition of Islamic practice and networks. However, historiographical debate on the colony has largely emphasised British and Christian influences in shaping its development, with the result that its Islamic presence has received comparatively less attention. This research aims to explore the colony from a different perspective by focusing on the identities and experiences of Muslim communities who arrived through both voluntary and forced migration.

Between 1808 and 1885, over 103,000 enslaved individuals were forcibly relocated to the colony by Royal Navy patrols and became known as 'Liberated Africans', some of whom were Muslim. The Registers of Liberated Africans, held at the Sierra Leone Public Archives, provide an important source for examining the proportion and significance of Muslim 'Liberated Africans.' By recording the biographical details of formerly enslaved Africans, these registers make it possible to identify Muslim names and trace their experiences in the colony. The process of identifying Muslim names presents methodological complexities that this study engages with. Through this analysis, this research aims to provide insight into the enslavement of Muslims in Islamic West Africa and contribute to a more balanced understanding of the complex interactions that shaped the Crown Colony.

## **HISTORICAL AND PERSONAL BARRIERS TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AUTONOMY: AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF RECENTLY DIVORCED MOTHERS IN POST-SOCIALIST CHINA**

*Rona Chunhong Zhou*

Globally, recently divorced mothers (RDMs) face psychological, social, financial, and physical health challenges during early post-divorce transition. In China, this transition is shaped by unique sociocultural and political conditions. While existing studies emphasize RDMs' identity work and psychosocial recovery, few tackle barriers to PA. Despite PA's well-established benefits, research in China has yet to explore the intersection of gender, divorce, single motherhood, post-divorce transition, and PA.

This study examines how the intersection of RDMs' social identities generates historical and personal barriers to PA, aiming to inform transition-related well-being support. Using intersectionality and post-socialist feminism, I analysed twenty-eight semi-structured interviews.

Historical barriers include the prioritisation of productivity over health, reproduction of "double burden" (paid work and unpaid care labour) ideals, and gendered labour imbalance. Personal barriers involve time and financial constraints, fatigue, reduced self-worth, emotional strain, and prioritisation of psychological recovery over PA. RDMs' PA autonomy is conditioned by the double burden resulting from Maoist labour-oriented women's liberation and neoliberal narratives of self-responsibility.

This study reveals layered PA barriers among RDMs in post-socialist China. It calls for subsidized childcare and PA programmes, professional psychological support, and a cultural shift from moral judgement to empathy.