

ELEMENT EIGHT



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PERSONAL STATEMENT

I have recently completed an MSc in Cognitive Psychology, which has built upon my interest in therapeutic practices and marginalised groups. Alongside my studies, I have worked as a mental health volunteer for students and have completed mental health first aid training. My studies and volunteer work have inspired me to embark on a PhD examining impression formation and clients' engagement in counselling and therapeutic support. As someone interested in the impact of mental health on students and marginalised communities, my proposed research would inform counselling practice to improve service delivery and, in turn, client outcomes.

I have a strong academic background, achieving a First-Class honours degree as an undergraduate and a distinction at MSc level. My focus for both has been mental therapy and has produced research output. The dissertation for my undergraduate studies, 'The Anxious Student: Attention and Anxiety in the University' was presented at the Research Festival, University of Edinburgh. Based on my Master's thesis, I present a paper, entitled 'Therapeutic Encounters: How Clients from Marginalised Communities Experience the Therapeutic Encounter' at the British Psychological Society Annual Conference, Manchester. I also received the British Psychological Society Student Award for this submission.

Alongside my academic achievements, I have ensured that I have developed my skills as a researcher. I have developed a number of skills relating to data collection, with experience in eye-tracking data analysis with Tobii Pro Studio. I am also experienced in analysing EEG/ERP analysis using MATLAB, EEGLAB, and ERPLAB. I also have advanced proficiency in PsychoPy, E-Prime, and Presentation for experiment design. I also have strong statistical analysis skills, with experience in large-scale data management and longitudinal analysis. I have also used advanced statistical techniques, including multilevel modelling, SEM, and Bayesian analysis. To support my strong statistical analysis, I have used a range of different programmes, and have become proficient in Python and R. I also have a very high level of expertise with SPSS and jamovi.

My extensive experience with data collection and analysis not only comes from my undergraduate and postgraduate studies, but also from research assistant work I have undertaken. As an undergraduate, I secured a summer internship at the University of Manchester, where I worked in the memory laboratory (Mem Lab). I designed participant recruitment strategies for a series of testing sessions. I was able to recruit a sample size of 60 participants, aged 80+ years, to take part in the research. As a postgraduate, I worked as a research assistant in the Cognitive Laboratory (Cog Lab) at the University of Edinburgh. My role involved conducting EEG experiments as part of a large-scale study to investigate anxiety levels in 100 students. I also supported three undergraduate students to learn research methods and analysis skills.

As a prospective academic, I am aware of the need to not only develop research and analytic skills, but also to play an active role in a teaching environment. I have taken on the role of teaching assistant at the University of Edinburgh. I designed and led a series of four tutorial sessions for 30 first year undergraduate students. I also supervised laboratory practical sessions that were part of the undergraduate Year 1 research methods modules. I am actively involved in the student community, working as a mental health advisor, providing peer support for over 80 students.

I am a committed student who is an active BPS member with a real drive for research excellence and innovation. I have the tenacity and drive to be successful at a PhD, using my educational opportunities to take on extra work experience, to strengthen my knowledge and skills base. I have learned the challenging practical issues in conducting research. I have also ensured that I have a balanced approach, working alongside students and participants, so that I have the interpersonal skills to ensure a positive research environment for those involved in research projects. I have taken every opportunity to learn and to excel. I am aware of the challenges of a PhD and the independent drive, and resilience to constantly improve my research. I am keen to contribute to the academic community in terms of research output as well as practical recommendations for applied therapy settings.