2025 Australian Social Policy HDR Conference

Paper Abstracts

12 - 13 February 2025

Contents

Jolie Baasch, ANU

Title: Is my path the same as yours? Academic trajectories of children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and the effect of early intervention therapy

Abstract:

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is defined as a multi-factorial, heterogeneous developmental disability which is characterised not only by persistent impairments in reciprocal social communication and social interactions, but is also manifested by restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, pp. 50-59).

Australia's NDIS is unique in being the world's only dedicated national scheme (Ramcharan, 2016). Prior to commencement, the Productivity Commission forecast costs at scheme maturity of $13.6 billion p.a. (Productivity Commission, 2017). However, seven years after full roll-out, costs have increased to more than $35 billion p.a. with the scheme not yet reaching maturity (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2023). A significant contributor to this growth has been the number of young children entering the scheme with a diagnosis of ASD and accessing early intervention programs. Currently there is tension as the scheme's limited duration has not provided sufficient time to determine whether the financial investments in early intervention have reduced the volume of services that participants required later in life. Research published by the Autism CRC on behalf of the NDIA highlights this gap as "The near complete absence of evidence regarding the effects of intervention practices on quality-of-life outcomes highlights an urgent research priority" (Whitehouse et al., 2021, p. 15).

Recent Improvements in data collection, management and integration have opened opportunities for researchers to link data from health, education and social services to track children's experiences after participating early intervention therapy.

This research specifically seeks to understand if there is a relationship between participating in early intervention therapy and improved schooling outcomes for children diagnosed with ASD.

Bio:

Jolie Baasch is a Data Scientist with almost 25 years' experience in commercial and government organisations. Jolie commenced a part-time PhD through the ANU Centre for Social Policy Research (POLIS) as she seeks to explore the translation of her analytical skills into the research world.

In producing her research, Jolie draws upon her diverse professional experience in quantitative analysis and her lived experience as a parent of a child with ASD. She is driven to produce robust and impactful research that can be readily accessed and applied to support improved policy decisioning.

Elvira Bianchi, RMIT University

Title: Language services in schools: from policy to practice.

Abstract:

Research on parental involvement in the educational field shows the beneficial effects of successful communication on children's school success (see e.g., Booth & Dunn, 2013; Epstein, 2018; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Olmstead, 2013; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2007; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). However, despite the continuous efforts of Australian society to improve the integration of migrants, very little is known about parent-teacher communication with non-English-speaking families in Australia. Australia's Translation and Interpreting profession has also leaped forwards in recent years, with its importance in the public sector becoming increasingly

obvious, and its industry being often regarded as one of the most advanced worldwide. Nevertheless, research in community translation and interpreting has mainly focused on healthcare and legal settings, not the educational setting. The question arises therefore naturally: does the translation and interpreting profession have a part to play in the Victorian education setting?

This research explores strategies used in the communication between schools and non-English speaking families in the context of public education. A type of communication that, as part of a public service, is regulated by state and national policies which aim to ensure inclusive and equitable access to educational services for all students. The presentation will therefore begin by outlining the policies guiding such communication, focusing on the State of Victoria. Drawing from preliminary findings of the analysis of interviews with education professionals, the presentation will then explore how these policies translate into practice within schools. The focus will be on discrepancies between policies and their implementation and on the role that translators and interpreters play in this setting. Key discussion points include limited resources, role boundaries for different professional figures active in the setting, the reliance on ad-hoc solutions, and varying levels of awareness among staff about the importance of effective communication with non-English-speaking families.

Bio:

Elvira Bianchi was born in Switzerland in 1994, where she also lived and studied until graduating from her bachelor's degree of Applied Languages at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) in 2018. In 2020 she began her master's degree of Translation and Interpreting at RMIT in Melbourne, where she stayed upon completion of the degree, as a PhD candidate. Elvira is a practicing Interpreter and Translator in both Switzerland and Australia. She is also a committee member of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Insitute of Interpreters and Translators.

Adelaide Bragias, ANU

Title: 'You have caused all of this, it's all your fault': An argument for the application of grievance-fuelled violence to the prevention of male-perpetrated intimate partner homicide.

Abstract:

In this presentation, Ms Bragias provides an overview of a forthcoming publication[1] investigating the similarities between perpetrators of grievance-fuelled violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), and intimate partner homicide (IPH). In doing so, the research presents a theoretical argument for the potentiality for the application of a grievance-fuelled violence framework in IPH prevention.

Male–perpetrated IPH is one of the most common forms of homicide globally. While this rate has declined significantly over the past 30 years, there is little evidence to suggest that this decline is attributable to the awareness campaigns, early education and criminal justice reforms which Australia has implemented under the auspices of state, territory and federal level policy frameworks. The result of this research provides impetus to consider the potential of prevention models developed to address other forms of violence.

The presentation provides a review of the two fields of research, structured around the key similarities between these groups of offenders: motivation, histories of IPV and misogynistic attitudes towards women, psychopathology, and 'leakage'. Ultimately, the research proposes that perhaps these offenders are not as dissimilar as both practice and research suggest and recommends further consultation with practitioners to identify the implications on policy, and violence prevention.

Bio:

Adelaide Bragias' research sits at the intersection of grievance-fuelled violence, and domestic homicide. She is a PhD Candidate and Research Officer at POLIS: The Centre for Social Policy Research, and has published in leading journals in criminology and policing. Adelaide graduated with a Bachelor of Criminology (Honours I), and her thesis focused on intra-familial homicides. She received the Toni Makkai Prize for Excellence in Criminology in 2021.

Previously, Adelaide worked in the Australian Public Service, where she supported the management of a team to receive, assess and respond to reports of serious abuse within the Australian Defence Force.

Connie Byrne, UNSW

Title: The Cynic – Health Policy, Financialisation, and Social Reproduction in Australia

Abstract:

"What is a cynic?"

"A man who knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing."

> *- Oscar Wilde (1893) – "Lady Windermere's Fan"*

What are the real impacts of Australian healthcare policy on service delivery and social reproduction outcomes in the neoliberal era?

This paper utilises research around financialisation and social reproduction, as well as contemporary Australian scholarship, to analyse the last half-century of healthcare policy, and its impacts on outcomes for staff, patients, and other stakeholders. This paper is particularly related to the area of health, mental health, and disability research – however, as it relates to my forthcoming doctoral thesis, the implications of this study will also impact studies of social inequality, housing, gender inequality, families, and human service delivery.

Reviving an analytical method known as 'regressive-progressive analysis' – pioneered by Jean Paul Sartre, Henri Lefebvre, and Bertell Ollman – I review a selection of papers within and beyond social policy research, to gain an appreciation for the historical forces shaping the healthcare sector through financialisation and neoliberalism.

Employing theoretically informed analytical methods, this paper then interprets that review data and generates tentative insights for future research projects – in particular, this study is guided by renewed attention on social reproduction theory, and the insights of key scholars such as Brett Christophers, Perry Mehrling, Diane Elson, and Frederick Harry Pitts.

I ultimately argue that the emphasis placed on insurance and private enterprise in national and state healthcare policy has a tendency towards an inverse relationship with the quality and comprehensiveness of care to patients – a tendency which is not perfectly measurable, but qualitatively significant.

I suggest that the current healthcare paradigm is that of a cynic – one who truly knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing.

Bio:

Connie (Connor) Byrne (they/them) is a PhD Candidate at the University of New South Wales within the School of Social Sciences. They graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Political, Economic, and Social Sciences, achieving Honours in the First Class specialising in Political Economy. In addition to their academic career, Connie works as a corporate conference producer specialising in occupational safety, corporate services, and

government administration. Connie's research interests include heterodox political economy, social theory, transport logistics, socialist feminism, and metascience. They have two lovely partners, and a cat named Anise.

Jane Chen, University of Melbourne

Title: "A learning journey": Embedding intersectionality in policymaking across the Victorian public service

Abstract: Intersectionality is gaining appeal in public policy research and practice: in and beyond Australia, governments and other policymaking institutions are increasingly being urged to consider the simultaneous, compounding dynamics of social inequalities. In Victoria, this call appears to have been taken up by the state government, with references to intersectionality now apparent in the Gender Equality Act (2020) and various whole-of-government equality strategies. This paper outlines preliminary findings from an ethnography of the Victorian public service (VPS), which seeks to understand how this promise of intersectionality is being operationalised in practice. Based on six months of participant observation at Victoria's Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), and interviews with leaders and stakeholders across the VPS, it explores the "institutional life of intersectionality" (Nash 2015; 2019, 11): when, how and why it is becoming embedded into public policymaking practices. It presents intersectionality as a concept that is understood by public servants in highly variable ways. It draws on staff perspectives on their own attempts to use intersectionality — broadly guided by principles of lived experience, co-design and accessibility, yet ultimately applied in imperfect, "gender-plus" or additive ways. Moreover, it reflects on DFFH's current efforts to promote intersectionality as a framework, by "messaging" and "selling" its benefits to a diverse range of policy actors — across all government departments and Ministerial portfolios. This paper thus captures DFFH's approach to intersectional practice as, in the words of staff, a "learning journey": with a current focus on building a collective understanding of intersectionality's tenets, and developing staff capability to apply intersectionality tools. The insights of the project will contribute to intersectionality's conceptual development, and provide learnings for practitioners seeking to improve approaches to public policymaking.

Bio:

Jane Chen (she/her) is the daughter of Hokkien-Chinese immigrants, born and raised as a settler on unceded Wurundjeri lands. She is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne's School of Social and Political Sciences, where she is exploring how intersectionality is understood, deployed, embedded into process and otherwise applied by public policymakers in so-called Australia. Professionally, she is a public servant, with expertise in gender equality policy, anti-racism and multicultural affairs, and strategic planning. She is also a writer, occasional public speaker and non-executive director, with previous advocacy roles across the youth and multicultural sectors.

Elie El-Khoury Antonios, Western Sydney University

Title: Accommodating students with physical disabilities on placement in the human services

Abstract:

Human service practitioners seek to make a positive difference to the individuals and communities they support. To gain the skills and experience for this role, university students enrolled in human services degrees undertake placement. For students with physical disabilities however, barriers and challenges hinder their access to support on placement.

This Constructivist Grounded Theory study explores the accommodation of students with physical disabilities on placement and the impact of placement on their professional identity and career development in the human services field.

This presentation covers the key research findings, particularly strategies proposed to improve the accommodation of students with physical disabilities on placement.

Using an online questionnaire, the study identifies negative attitudes about students with physical disabilities and restrictive and inflexible course and placement policies and practices, as barriers to accessing support on placement.   Additionally, a document analysis and policy analysis highlight the legislative constraints of unjustifiable hardship and inherent course requirements towards implementing reasonable adjustments on placement.

Equally, the study finds that placement enables students with physical disabilities to increase their practice confidence, demonstrate their advocacy skills and determination to succeed, enhancing their development as practitioners.

On the basis of these findings, the study recommends placement accommodation strategies around access to on-site placement support for students with physical disabilities, providing disability knowledge and awareness training to placement agency staff, increases collaboration between universities and placement agencies, and establishing universal principles on professional practitioner requirements. Furthermore, the study proposes flexibility in inherent course and placement requirements to accommodate the diverse needs and skills of students with physical disabilities. These recommendations are significant towards improving disability inclusion in higher education placements, and enabling students with physical disabilities to contribute meaningfully to the human services.

Bio

Elie El-Khoury Antonios is a policy practitioner with five years of employment experience in disability and telecommunications policy. Elie holds a BSW and MRes from Western Sydney University, and is a current doctoral student in the School of Social Sciences at Western Sydney University. Elie's research interests include physical disability and placement in higher education, and disability inclusion in the workplace. Elie was a co-author of: Learning about social work research through field placements as a stepping stone to a career in academia Elie was born with Cerebral Palsy, and enjoys socialising with friends and family and watching sport.

Mohammad Faisal, University of Queensland

Title: Algorithmic Curation and User Agency in Digitised Public Services: The Usability Gap of Workforce Australia's Job Search Engine for CALD Jobseekers

Abstract:

This research examines the usability of Workforce Australia Online's (WAO) job search engine from the perspective of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) jobseekers in Australia. Launched in July 2022, WAO signifies a substantial shift towards a "digital-first" approach to the delivery of public employment services in Australia. This shift raises concerns about whether this approach effectively serves the needs of all users, particularly those from marginalised groups. Central to WAO is an algorithm-led job search engine designed to streamline the job searching process for jobseekers on income support. This study focuses on the experiences of CALD jobseekers as they navigate WAO's job search functionality, investigating whether the algorithm-led system effectively supports their needs. This study uses a qualitative approach, drawing on semi-structured interviews and observations with CALD

jobseekers to explore their experiences with the WAO job search engine. The research finds a significant gap between the intended benefits of the digital service delivery tool, such as enhanced efficiency and accessibility, and the actual experiences of CALD jobseekers. This research contributes to the understanding of digital inclusion and accessibility in digitalised public services. Addressing the limitations identified in this study is crucial for WAO to fulfil its anticipated promise of equitable and efficient service delivery for all job seekers, regardless of their background.

Bio:

Mohammad Faisal is a policy analyst turned doctoral candidate at the University of Queensland, focusing on bridging the gap between digital innovation and the empowerment of marginalised communities. His research centres on enhancing employment outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) jobseekers through improved digital governance, particularly within Workforce Australia's digital user interface. With a decade of experience in Bangladesh's public sector and a passion for social justice, he examines the potential of advanced digital technologies to revolutionize public service delivery. His academic endeavours are grounded in a mission to leverage technology for societal betterment, seeking industrial collaborations that resonate with his research interests in UX, HCI, Algorithmic governance, and digital transformation strategies.

Shannon Harvey, UNSW

Title: Disruptive Bodies: Troubling the Gender Binary in Family Violence Services

Abstract:

My doctoral research aims to explore the boundaries of "gender-based violence" as a conceptual frame by describing the diversity of non-binary people's experiences of gender and how they perceive gender in relation to their own experiences of domestic and family violence (DFV).

Evidence on LGBTQIA+ people's experiences of DFV has grown substantially over the past decade, but research has disproportionately focused on prevalence, abuse characteristics and help-seeking behaviours, with comparatively little focus on formal service provision. Where available, studies often group all LGBTQIA+ people together, without exploring how differences in gender and sexuality might impact service experiences and support needs.

Further, outside of LGBTQIA+ specialist services, Australian DFV services are almost exclusively segregated by binary gender, making them particularly inaccessible to trans and gender diverse people. This means that the evidence gaps in academic research are compounded by service providers having had little opportunity to develop practice-based evidence in responding to trans and gender diverse people, exacerbating the "gap of trust" between queer people and service providers.

This paper will describe my study's application of Critical Participatory Action Research, conceptualised as a "methodology of resistance" which aims to bridge the trust gap between queer people and service providers. Drawing on data collection to date, I will critically reflect on the potential of participatory methods to create spaces for dialogue and action between DFV professionals and people of non-binary genders, and query the role that research might play in building a more equitable service system.

Bio:

Shannon Harvey (they/them) is a part-time PhD candidate at UNSW Sydney and Director, Impact Data & Evaluation at The Benevolent Society. Having built their research career in the

community sector over the past 20 years, Shannon's doctoral research has created a new opportunity for them to tackle a topic that they have been unable to fully explore in their day job. They are also appreciating the opportunity to more fully explore the opportunities and challenges of participatory research methods.

Samara James, Southern Cross University

Title: Reversing the Gaze: An Autoethnographic Critique of Benevolent Saviorism in Transracial-Transnational Adoption in Australia

Abstract:

The 'rescue-saviour' narratives about transracial-transnational adoption are treated in this piece as both as a provocation and as manufactured myths. Myths that have hidden the ways transracialtransnational adoption - the forced migration of non-white children from the so-called 'thirdworld' to white adoptive parents in Western countries - executes racism through patriarchalcolonial-capitalist structures that commodify 'third-world' mothers as 'incapable, unworthy or hopeless', their children as 'pitiful orphans' in need of rescuing, and adoptive white-Western parents and countries as 'benevolent saviours'. I have titled this piece, 'reversing the gaze', drawing from my own process of subverting and surviving the dominant white-paternal gaze that seeks to possess the bodies of unwed Korean mothers and their children. The reflections presented here are both personal and political – and attempted through a reflexive lens. Using an autoethnographical approach, this presentation will interrogate adoption from a critical decolonial feminist perspective, unpacking the experiences of the researcher (a Korean adoptee) to explore how racism and patriarchy shapes and obscures one's self-understanding of adoption, and how it appropriates and colonises one's identity as an 'honorary white', and what is gained and lost in this process. These experiences are compared and critiqued against broader adoption literature and woven together with narrative and creative productions from South Korean adoptees – to center the voices of adopted/displaced children who remain unheard both within Korea's paternal nationalism and under the white-colonial regime of so-called Australia; a way to contribute towards a decolonial feminist politics of knowledge production in adoption research.

Bio:

Samara is an adopted Korean-Australian, currently living on Gadigal Land (Sydney). She is an early-career researcher and PhD student at the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University, funded under the ARC's highly prestigious Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) scheme. Samara holds a Masters in International Development from RMIT University. She is an active community member of Korean Adoptees in Australia (KAIAN) and InterCountry Adoptee Voices (ICAV). Her research interests concern migration and child and women's rights.

Sophia Kalashnikova, ANU

Title: National Identity and Citizenship Tests: Balancing Diversity and Unity in Western Democracies

Abstract:

National identity politics can be understood as a political strategy aimed at shaping the image of a nation at different points in time. In multicultural societies, national identity is often linked to diversity and promoted as a core cultural value. This raises two key issues in democracies: the

impact of ethnic diversity on national identity and the relationship between economic interests and national identity (Johnston et al. 2010). In such contexts, shared democratic values and beliefs become important and are affirmed through discursive practices translating into political action (Laclau 1994; Melucci 1996). Identity politics seeks not only to gain public recognition of a group's distinctive characteristics but also to institutionalize this recognition through public policy and legislation. This approach allows for the protection of different cultural identities within formal political and legal frameworks.

Citizenship laws, naturalization processes and integration programs are central to analyzing formal state boundaries (Orgad 2015). Citizenship tests show how Western democracies seek to unite citizens based on shared knowledge and values despite cultural diversity. These tests emphasize commonalities rather than differences, focusing on key ideas underpinning national identity. From a liberal perspective, citizenship tests should assess linguistic competence, civic norms, and knowledge of democratic history and political institutions rather than dominant culture (Levey 2014).

The research question is how democracies create barriers to the integration of new citizens into the existing community and how these barriers differ in countries that prioritize diversity in their national identity strategy. The study employs qualitative content analysis of citizenship test texts in Western democracies to explore the relationship between themes such as values and norms, state issues, history and culture, emotions, and the 'us versus them' narrative.

Bio:

My name is Sofia Kalashnikova, and I am a PhD candidate at the ANU, School of Politics and International Relations. The scope of my research interests is related to national identity in the context of political representation. I hold a master's degree in political science from St. Petersburg State University, graduating with distinction. I have published several peer-reviewed articles on political identity and youth policy and have presented my work at multiple international conferences.

Jodie Kidd, UNSW Social Policy Research Centre

Title: Practice as a remedy for history: trauma informed practice in NSW child protection policy directed at Aboriginal families

Abstract:

This paper offers a critical history of how intergenerational trauma emerged as a problem of practice in NSW child protection policy directed at Aboriginal families. I describe how intergenerational trauma came to be understood as a phenomena that child protection practitioners must take into account in the ways that they work with Aboriginal families.

In taking a historical view, the paper highlights two primary ways of thinking that have made intergenerational trauma possible as a problem of practice. First is the idea that child protection work must take account of Aboriginal peoples as a unique group – a way of thinking that emerged as the Department struggled to engage Aboriginal families in the early years of assuming responsibility for Aboriginal welfare in the 1970s. Second is the idea that practice improvement is a means to remedy the harms of welfare generally, and welfare's harms to Aboriginal people specifically. This way of thinking emerged over the 1970s and 1980s as practitioners and policymakers grappled with evidence and activism testifying to the harms of both mainstream and Aboriginal welfare institutions.

This paper is one thread of a broader history examined in my PhD. Overall, my research asks; How did intergenerational trauma emerge as a policy problem in NSW child protection policy?

And; what can its emergence tell us about the ways Aboriginal families are governed within the contemporary NSW child protection system? In asking these questions, I have sought to provide new conceptual material with which these ways of governing - most tangibly represented through policy - can be reworked for more just outcomes for Aboriginal families.

Bio:

Jodie is a PhD student at UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre. Her PhD is a critical history of the problem of intergenerational trauma in NSW child protection policy directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Prior to her PhD, Jodie spent over 10 years working in government and non-government youth and family services – in practice, management, and policy roles. She holds a Bachelor of Psychology, a Bachelor of Arts (Media and Communications), and a Master of Social Development.

Kinley, ANU

Title: Exploring the role of social protection in addressing old-age poverty and vulnerability in Bhutan

Abstract:

With rapidly changing social, demographic, and economic structures, informal social protection is becoming a less reliable source of support for older people worldwide, especially in developing countries. The decline of traditional social support systems for the elderly, particularly customary family-based support and filial piety, poses challenges in ensuring the well-being of the growing number of older citizens globally.

The existing contributory pension scheme in Bhutan covers only around 9 percent of the population and is limited to a few occupational groups such as public servants and military personnel. This leaves a significant portion of the population without formal pension coverage. According to Labour Market Information statistics for 2023, more than 65 percent of Bhutan's workforce is employed in informal sectors, such as agriculture. Given that these informal workers are not covered by the existing pension scheme, they are at a higher risk of experiencing old-age poverty and vulnerability in their later years.

To gain a more nuanced understanding of the situation of elderly people in Bhutan, fieldwork was conducted in three different locations in the country from March to June 2024. In total, 80 elderly individuals (aged 65 and above) participated in face-to-face surveys and semi-structured interviews to address one of my research questions: what are the key determinants of old-age poverty and vulnerability in Bhutan? For this conference, I will present some preliminary findings from my fieldwork.

Bio:

Kinley is a PhD candidate at POLIS: The Centre for Social Policy Research at the Australian National University. He earned his Master of Public Policy from the same university in 2010.

Kinley has over sixteen years of experience in coordinating and monitoring development plans, programs, and projects at both central and local levels in Bhutan. His ongoing research examines the role of social protection in addressing old-age poverty and vulnerability in Bhutan.

Gabrielle Lawrence, ANU

Title: Why is lived experience absent in welfare and unemployment policy making: a critical policy examination

Abstract:

Nothing about us without us has become a powerful mantra for calls for more participatory approaches to government, with groups historically excluded from decisions affecting their lives advocating for greater influence in policy making processes. In Australia, the involvement of people with lived experience has been gaining traction in certain areas of social policy, including mental health and disability, where structural engagement mechanisms have been established. The same cannot be said for welfare and unemployment policy making in Australia. The 2022 Robodebt Royal Commission and the 2023 Parliamentary Inquiry into Workforce Australia Employment Services both highlighted the absence of lived experience in policy design, and called on the Government to ensure there is user voice in policy design.

This research undertakes a critically-informed analysis of welfare and unemployment policy making in Australia to explore:

1.   Why is lived experience largely absent in welfare and unemployment policy making in Australia?

2.   What insights can lived experience perspectives bring to improve welfare and unemployment policy design in Australia?

3.   How can policy makers better engage with lived experience to inform welfare and unemployment policy making in Australia?

This paper will provide an overview of the methodological approach to answering these questions, and reflect on the value of combining research methods for analysing policy systems. The conference presentation first outlines the process for undertaking critical analysis of welfare and unemployment policy arrangements utilising Carol Bacchi's *What's the problem represented to be?* method and provides an overview of initial findings about the assumptions embedded in Australia's welfare and unemployment policies that establish cultural barriers to valuing lived experience in policy making processes.

 The presentation then outlines the proposed approach for conducting interviews with different actors in the policy system – policy advisers, decision makers, advocacy organisations and welfare recipients – as a complementary method of inquiry. The presentation aims to seek feedback on methodological considerations for this stage of the research, and to spark conversation about the opportunities and challenges in conducting research for policy impact.

Bio:

Gabrielle is a second year PhD candidate at the Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University, under the supervision of Professor Janine O'Flynn. Prior to commencing her PhD, she spent 15 years in the Australian Public Service in various policy advisory roles. Her research stems from a curiosity about how governments can better design and deliver policies and programs that respectfully engage with lived experience; policies that can truly respond to the voices and needs of the public they serve.

Tara Lees, Monash University

Title: Neoliberalism and domestic abuse: Using a Marxist framework to inform Australian social policy and practice.

Abstract:

Neoliberal ideas privileging individual freedom and limited government intervention continue to inform social policy formulation in Australia. Welfare state programs have, for the past forty years, shifted from advancing the social rights of vulnerable groups and individuals to forms of conditional welfare, arguably exacerbating disadvantage. However, there has been little reflection on how neoliberalism has impacted interpretations of domestic abuse (DA) and subsequent policy and practice responses. This presentation will argue that neoliberal policy is inextricably linked not only to women's subjugation, but more specifically to DA. The primary research question for this study is: What can be learned about preventing and responding to DA in neoliberalised contexts such as Australia, by bringing a Marxist lens to this problem?

Referencing the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032, this presentation will describe how this example of public policy is incomplete as there is little consideration of the implications of the neoliberal orthodoxy and its broader impacts. As a result, despite a commitment by government to eliminate the DA problem in one generation, it is argued that this will be unlikely, as the fundamental causes have not been interrogated. The second part of the presentation will describe how a Marxist lens can be used to critique neoliberalism and its relationship to women's subjugation and how it can, therefore, be useful as a framework to inform both policy formulation and social programs.

Bio:

Tara Lees is a current PhD candidate in the Social Work Department at Monash University, exploring neoliberalism, Marxism and domestic abuse. She brings to this topic many years of social work experience, working across various practice fields including family violence, health and child protection. Tara has had a long-term interest in how neoliberal hegemony has broadly impacted society and human service practice, and what 'grand narratives', such as Marxism, can offer as a frameworks and tools for understanding how social problems occur and how we can respond.

Muhammad Bello Mahmud, University of Wollongong

Title: Racism and racial battle fatigue: Exploring the experience of black African migrants in Australia

Abstract:

This paper will present the preliminary result from phase one of my research on racism and racial battle fatigue experience Black African migrants in Australia. Utilizing a critical race theory lens and a multimethod qualitative approach, this study will unfold in two phases. The phase one captures Stories from Black African migrants who have encountered racism and racial battle fatigue across various contexts. The storytelling sessions has shed light on their experiences and coping mechanisms. The subsequent phase is focused on collaboration with service providers from African migrant community institutions. The aim is to discuss insights from the phase 1 stories and co-create strategies using Indaba talking circle to overcome the highlighted challenges. Four fundamental questions guide this research:(1) What are the experiences of Black African migrants in Australia with racism? (2) In what ways is racial battle fatigue described by Black African migrants in Australia? (3) What are the strategies employed by Black African migrants when faced with experiences of racism and racial battle fatigue? (4)

How can racism against Black African migrants in Australia be addressed by policy and practice? The importance of this study lies in its novel contribution to a relatively under-explored area. It not only bridges the knowledge gap by highlighting the distinct challenges faced by Black African migrants, differentiating them from Indigenous Australians and other migrant cohorts, but also has profound implications for social policy. By revealing the emotions and viewpoints of African migrants, this study paves the way for evidence-based policies that bolster their mental health and overall well-being. Ultimately, this research envisions an inclusive Australian society in which Black African migrants can flourish and realize their maximum potential.

Bio:

Muhammad Mahmud is a PhD Candidate at the University of Wollongong, is a social work researcher focused on critical race theory, Ubuntu theory, intersectionality, and decolonizing methodologies. His research aims to enhance inclusivity within the Afro-diasporic experience, exploring migration, diaspora, racism, and racial battle fatigue. With advocacy experience in Australia's social work sector, he has supported at-risk youth as a case manager with Barnardo's and DHHS Tasmania, specializing in child advocacy, report writing and case management. Muhammad also holds a master's in social work and a graduate certificate in business administration, reflecting his commitment to professional growth.

Jackline Maina, University of Wollongong

Title: Femicide laws: a Kenyan perspective

Abstract:

Femicide, the gender-based killing of women and girls, remains a pressing global issue.

While many countries have enacted laws to address gender-based violence, the specific criminalisation of femicide is less common. The symbolic and practical power of law in addressing such violence is undeniable. However, the effectiveness of legal interventions, particularly in contexts of impunity, is subject to debate. This paper questions a) the extent to which existing laws in Kenya adequately address femicide, and b) whether specific femicide laws can effectively deter such crimes and ensure justice for victims. These are pertinent questions given the rise in number of femicides in Kenya and current activist efforts which advocate for dedicated femicide laws . While policy and legislative measures can provide a framework for accountability, they may not be sufficient to address the root causes of gender-based violence. Accordingly, it is crucial to consider the broader socio-cultural context in which femicide occurs.

This presentation explores the potential and limitations of femicide laws in the Kenyan context. It delves into the complexities of enforcing such laws, considering factors like societal norms, cultural practices, and institutional capacity. Additionally, the paper considers the role of community-based interventions in preventing femicide and promoting women's safety.

Bio:

Jackline is a PhD candidate at the University of Wollongong, land of the Dharawal People. Her doctoral research is focused on media discourses on femicide in Kenya. Her Honors research project focused on service provider perspectives on access to Australia's domestic violence provisions for migrant women on temporary partner visas.

Her research interests include gender-based violence, decolonial methodologies, migration, diasporic identities and anti-racism. With a professional background in social work and a

passion for advocacy, she has gained experience in the disability, child protection and out of home care sector. In her personal time, she enjoys reading non-academic stuff, yoga and watching Korean dramas.

Dewi Kartika Megasari, UNSW

Title: The field Implementation of social safety nets at the village level: The bottlenecks and the consequences on the beneficiary targeting.

Abstract:

This paper reports the findings of qualitative research in two villages with a total of 34 participants in Central Java Province, Indonesia, on the administration and utilisation of social safety nets from two perspectives: villagers (beneficiary and non-beneficiary households) and key informants (village administrators and other parties related to the process of beneficiary selection). Despite the formal/ideal process of proposing potential beneficiary households, the study found that the process of selecting potential beneficiaries may deviate from the ideal one. It is also found that beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries have contradictory perceptions of targeting social safety nets.

The study aims to address two main research questions:

a. How are social safety net programs administered at the village level?

b. What are the consequences of the administration implementation regarding beneficiary targeting, benefit utilisation, impacts on non-beneficiaries and the local economy, and expectations for the implementation of social safety nets?

The presentation will focus on two areas: (a) the design of the qualitative fieldwork (the contrast characteristics of the two selected villages and the different types of participants) and (b) some initial findings of the study covering different types of social safety nets administered at the villages, the beneficiary selection process (formal/ideal vs field implementation), and participants' perceptions on beneficiary targeting.

This study contributes to this field of research by providing empirical evidence of the administration of social safety net programs at the village level, the perceptions of beneficiary and non-beneficiary households of the programs, and the impacts of the programs on non-beneficiaries and the local economy. As the field implementation of social safety net programs may differ from their pre-determined designs, understanding the field implementation of the programs is essential to identify bottlenecks in the programs' implementation, causing the mistargeting issue: exclusion and inclusion errors.

Bio:

I'm Dewi, an Indonesian PhD student at the UNSW. 2025 will be the final year of my PhD as I started it in January 2022. In Indonesia, I have been working as a civil servant at BPS-Statistics Indonesia (similar to ABS in Australia) since 2007. I will continue working at the same agency once I complete my PhD.

One of my PhD thesis aims to explore the administration of social safety nets at the village level, the utilisation of the transfers, and the impacts on non-beneficiaries and the local economy.

Nina Nichols, ANU

Title: What works? Understanding First Nations workforce participation in Cape York

Abstract:

Research question: What factors impact a community-controlled organisation's capacity to recruit and retain a remote First Nations workforce in Cape York?

Focus of the presentation: My presentation will focus on the research design. Below is a summary of what I will present.

My research is designed to explore and understand a situation I observed during my 10 years of working with Apunipima Cape York Health Council (Apunipima), an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) for Cape York. That is, despite community-based First Nations staff being highly valued by the organisation, Apunipima struggled to recruit and retain a community-based First Nations workforce. Why?

First, I use a case study approach to explain organisation and government factors that influence this predicament. I build the case study from data I collected via semi-structured interviews with ex-staff, an analysis of reports, articles and documents and learnings I gained while working for the organisation.

Second, I apply an ethnographic approach to understand the values and meanings of work among First Nations people living in a remote community in Cape York. Insights gained from this approach will be used to explore potential tensions between local cultural practices and maintaining paid employment and examine intersections between local workforce participation and employer recruitment and retention expectations.

Significance of research findings: The findings from this research will contribute new knowledge to our understanding of ways to improve remote First Nations workforce participation and to strengthen the community-controlled sector, a Closing the Gap priority reform.

Acknowledgements: This HDR research project would not be possible without the acceptance, support and encouragement of Kuku-Yalanji speaking peoples from Wujal Wujal, Cape York.

Bio:

Nina Nichols is a PhD scholar at the Centre for Indigenous Policy Research (CIPR) at The Australian National University (ANU). Her placed-based qualitative research focuses on ways to improve First Nations workforce participation in Cape York. Nina has extensive experience working with community-controlled organisations through her role as Program Advisor Health Promotion at Apunipima Cape York Health Council. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology (Hons), a Master's in Development Studies, and a Graduate Certificate in Health Science. Nina lives and works on Gimuy Walubara Yidinji country in Cairns, Far North Queensland.

Edwin Chris Odhiambo, University of New England

Title: Decolonising Political Governance: Locating Participation through Sociolinguistic Justice

Abstract: The perennial political upheavals following every general election in Africa, particularly in Kenya, expose entangled flaws in the present governance framework. The uncritical strict adherence to the colonially inherited governance model and the instrumentalisation of English as the exclusive language of state mediation are central to these upheavals. The net effect is the legitimisation of exclusion and marginalisation of specific groups of people and their language practices, which limits them from having equal access to

social justice goods such as resource distribution, economic opportunities, political participation and power. This paper adopts ethnographic approaches and decolonising methodology to investigate the nature and extent to which social inequalities manifest through a colonially inherited political governance system and the widespread use of English as Kenya's official language. It also seeks to unsettle the hegemonic governance architecture deeply ingrained in colonial language ideologies and practices and to suggest pathways for an inclusive and equitable system. Preliminary findings indicate that the current governance system is skewed in the sense that it primarily favours the political class's needs while remaining subservient to those of the ordinary people. The study also reveals that the existing ideological epistemologies undergirding governance practices contribute to the (re)production of social injustice normativity by expecting languageminoritised groups to shape their linguistic practices after a 'one-size-fits-all' paradigm, despite Kenya's diverse and multilingual polity. The premise is that by questioning the colonial and imperial logic of political governance and its attendant monolingual ideologies, it will create a space for inclusivity. The study concludes that by focusing on people's linguistic repertoires, it promises to open pathways for a political governance system that upholds social justice and encourages peaceful coexistence and mutual cohesion.

Bio:

Chris Odhiambo is a Language and Society doctoral candidate in the School of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences at the University of New England, Australia. His passion lies at the intersection of language and politics, with a focus on the intricate dynamics of multilingualism, language planning and policy, and the agency of language-minoritised communities within governance. Chris is particularly dedicated to the pursuit of social justice issues and to exploring the epistemologies of the Global South.

Thila Raja, University of Melbourne

Title: Dance in prisons: A systematic review and narrative synthesis

Abstract:

Background: The world has seen an unprecedented increase in prisoners in the last few decades with over 11 million people being incarcerated. Arts based programs in prisons have offered opportunities for rehabilitation, education, vocation and recreation. Despite the evidence around arts-based projects in prisons , imprisoned populations worldwide suffer from a void of arts-based offers due to decreased support and funding cuts. Dance movement therapy (DMT)is the psychotherapeutic use of movement and uses a combination of verbal, somatic and creative arts therapies. Although the use of creative arts in forensics is growing, there is a lack of synthesis of literature around dance and DMT in prisons, and their contribution to the health needs of incarcerated people.

Methods: We embarked on a rigorous systematic review to understand the application of dance and DMT in prisons and the state of research. We charted data regarding therapeutic outcomes, populations, intervention dosage and outcome measurement tools according to the Dunphy Outcomes Framework. We conducted a narrative synthesis with a critical appraisal and risk of bias assessment due to heterogenous results.

Results: Seven studies were included, with the majority of studies being conducted on male participants. Outcomes were synthesized using the Dunphy Outcomes Framework (DOF), which is underpinned by a holistic approach to well-being with therapeutic domains in physical, cultural, cognitive emotional, social and integrative categories. Outcomes indicated dance and DMT in prisons have a wide range effect on emotional, social, physical, cultural, and integration

domains. The quality of studies remained low with no randomized controlled trials in DMT in prisons.

Discussion: The results of this first systematic review are promising and show a wide range of effects of dance and DMT in individuals in forensic institutions. The limited number of studies indicates the need for further research in dance, health and social justice.

Bio:

Thila is an experienced speech pathologist and dance movement therapist based in Perth, Australia. She is currently pursuing her doctoral studies in dance movement therapy (DMT) with University of Melbourne focusing on the impact of trauma informed prosocial DMT on self-efficacy and mood states on women in prison. In addition to her doctoral project, Thila lectures in the Master of Creative Arts Therapies program at the University of Melbourne. Thila also holds a managerial position at a brain injury rehabilitation setting, as part of her speech pathologist role. Thila's interests include health, mental health and disability in incarcerated females.

Maathu Ranjan, ANU

Title: Balancing Individualised Choice and Sustainability in Disability Support Systems: an Australian Perspective

Abstract:

Disability rates have grown significantly in recent times. This can be particularly observed in Australia, where a national survey reported a growth in disability rates of almost 30% over the last four years, compared with 8% in the three years prior to that. Minimal changes in biological markers and epidemiology associated with disability over the same period suggests that this unprecedented growth could reflect a fundamental shift in Australians' perception of disability.

This coincides with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), the largest social policy reform in Australia over the last two decades. The NDIS is one of the first international schemes designed to promote choice and control for individuals with disability. It was also designed to work within the ecosystem of government support which recognised disability as a natural part of human diversity and enabled people with disability to exercise their rights to the same extent as others.

Despite spending more per capita on disability support than most OECD countries, researchers find that the Australian disability system remains entrenched in the medical model of disability. Findings from the 2023 Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and the 2023 Independent Review of the NDIS highlight that much of the progress towards a social model of disability which integrates the needs of people with disability into mainstream systems, has yet to be achieved.

This paper examines Australia's disability policy landscape using national survey and administrative data to evaluate progress in moving from a medical to a social model of disability. We also assess the effect of various policy mechanisms in balancing the systems trade-off between promoting individuals' choice and control and maintaining fiscal sustainability.

Bio:

Maathu Ranjan is a Sir Roland Wilson Scholar from the National Disability Insurance Agency enrolled in a PhD in Policy and Governance at the Crawford School of Public Policy. Her research interests are shaped by her diverse work experience as an actuary across disability, health and general insurance sectors. Maathu's research interests include analysing the effectiveness of

government disability support systems on outcomes for those with autism as well as younger onset disability relating to neurodevelopmental conditions.

Pedro Riquelme, ANU

<u>Title:</u> Expectations and Transition from School to University by Young Students with Disability in Australia

Abstract:

This project aims to study the influence of disability and the student role identity on the educational trajectory, expectations, and outcomes of a cohort of young Australian high school students. This study employs a mixed-methods approach to explore how both disability and the student identity role interact, shaping student's expectations and trajectories compared to those students with no apparent disability.

The research combines quantitative analysis of existing data on different measures of observed educational variables with qualitative data of high school students through responses to open-ended questions from the student questionnaire of the GENERATION study. We aim to project both disability and student identity's impact on educational trajectories and expectations of students with disability.

The presentation will focus on the future expectations of Australian students. In wave 2 of the GENERATION survey, students were asked "Imagine you are now 25 years old. Write about the life you are leading, your interests, study, your home life and your work at the age of 25". Based on this data, questions regarding the views that students with disability have about their future, as well as what are the most relevant roles that they envision for themselves, will be explored. By examining these views, this research aims to provide valuable insights into how future expectations, identity roles, and disability intersect in shaping students' perspectives and trajectories in Australia.

The study's significance lies in its novel approach that incorporates identity theory to understanding the interaction between disability and student identity on expectations of students with disability. As Australia faces growing concerns about the gap between different groups of students, our research can uncover innovative ideas for educational policies targeted to students with disability by giving voice and representation to this group. Such approach can facilitate their integration in decision-making processes for an inclusive education, while also stimulating further research in areas such as disability, youth, identity and education studies.

Bio:

Pedro is a PhD student at POLIS: The Centre for Social Policy Research at the Australian National University. His academic background is in sociology, with a focus on youth studies and identity construction within urban youth cultures. His work employs identity theory and symbolic interactionism frameworks to analyse social phenomena. As a master's student, his thesis explored acquired physical impairments and identity changes during youth. Currently, he is examining the interaction between student identity and disability status and how the latter impacts students' expectations for further education. Pedro is using data from the GENERATION Study, a longitudinal study of Year 10 high school students in Australia.

Hannah Robertson, ANU

Title: Dating-app-facilitated abuse response in Australia: Insights from policy makers and stakeholders

Abstract:

Despite efforts to address dating app facilitated abuse, recent research indicates that it is experienced by ¾ of Australian dating-app users (Wolbers et al., 2022). As a result, the Australian Government has urged the dating-app industry to self-regulate through the development of a voluntary code of safety. This paper charts the process of this code development through interviews with internal dating platform policy makers, frontline service providers, policing organisations and Governments. The ways in which users are safeguarded by the apps and broader criminal-justice mechanisms are discussed, as well as the code alignment with existing efforts to address more general harm perpetrated via media, and sexual and gender-based violence. Implications related to both process and outcomes are then examined, with emphasis on key learnings for future policy development in similar areas.

Bio:

Hannah Robertson is a PhD candidate at the ANU Centre for Social Policy Research (POLIS). Through her doctoral research, she strives to create a safer digital dating landscape, by advancing our understanding of how best to prevent and respond to dating-app-facilitated abuse. Hannah is also an active member of the National Women's Safety Alliance, through which she became appointed (in 2023) as the Australian civil society delegate for the 67th annual UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York exploring 'Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls'.

Lauren Ryan, University of Melbourne

Title: Remote-First Work and Work-Family Integration: Consequences for Mothers' Employment, Financial Wellbeing and Caregiving.

Abstract:

With the recent rise of remote-first work, many working mothers are exploring new ways to balance their competing work and family demands through greater workplace flexibility and autonomy. Grounded in Clark's (2000) work family border theory and Chung's (2022) gendered flexibility paradox, this study addresses gaps in understanding how organisationally standardised remote work affects maternal workforce participation, financial wellbeing, and caregiving duties. Using a qualitative research design, the study posits the following questions: how do weak work-family borders influence remote-first mothers' (1) levels of workforce participation; (2) absorption of additional caregiving tasks; and (3) financial and personal wellbeing? Interviews with 26 mothers working across 23 organisations reveal that the flexibility and permeability of remote-first work enable mothers to pursue full-time, financially rewarding careers while increasing their caregiving involvement. Unique to this study, the universal standardisation of remote work inherent in the remote-first model is shown to mitigate concerns about gendered workplace stigmatisation associated using remote work as a tool for work-family integration. However, this is not without complexity. Though mothers reported benefits such as better work-family balance, enhanced connections with their children, and improved access to full-time employment, the study also highlights the risks of reinforcing gendered caregiving norms. Weak work family borders were shown facilitate adherence to internalised mothering ideals, which reduced experiences of maternal guilt on the one hand, but also resulted in the absorption of additional caregiving tasks into mothers' already expanded

roles, creating tensions across physical, temporal and psychological work family boundaries. These findings have implications for public, social and corporate policy approaches to the successful integration of work and family.

Bio:

Lauren Ryan is a final year PhD Candidate at the University of Melbourne with expertise in gender and development, women's economic insecurity, caregiving, unpaid labour, and the gendered implications of the future of work. She is also a gender and social performance consultant working with transnational corporate clients to improve diversity, equity and inclusion standards, policies and outcomes. Outside of work and study, Lauren is a mother of three, Co-Founder and CEO of The Global Women's Project and a Founding Board Director of the Koorie Academy.

Lanie Stockman, RMIT University

Title: Making sense of welfare quarantining in Australia, 2007-2023

Abstract:

In 2007, a welfare quarantining policy was introduced and has since endured as a feature of Australia's social security system. Under welfare quarantining, a small proportion of people who receive government support payments have between 50 and 90 per cent of their income paid into a mandated account, so that the money cannot be spent on prohibited items including alcohol. Prominent scholarly accounts have explained welfare quarantining as a product of neoliberalism and ongoing colonialism. While these overarching explanations offer partial accounts, they do not illuminate some of the policy's oddities such as it being implemented in seemingly random locations. As such my research asks: how do we make sense of the introduction, evolution, and endurance of welfare quarantining from 2007 until 2023? I explore this question by asking sub-questions including: how can the ongoing political commitment to welfare quarantining be explained? How has welfare quarantining been implemented in a variety of sites across Australia? What best explains any variations in the implementation of welfare quarantining? To address these questions, I undertook a critical policy ethnography of welfare quarantining, collecting and analysing data from policy artefacts and interviews with 27 policy actors to develop field studies in Cape York, the Northern Territory, Shepparton, Western Australia and Hinkler. In this paper I outline some of the findings of my field studies, revealing that while there are some commonalities across the five fields, there are also local conditions and actors that shape policymaking processes. Sometimes policymaking is a top-down process. At other times, processes are driven by local actors attempting to secure their ideological, political or business interests. The significance of my research is that it offers an alternative to conventional, overarching structuralist accounts of welfare quarantining policymaking that obscure these context-specific dynamics.

Bio

Lanie is a PhD student and lecturer in public policy at RMIT University. Lanie is interested in public policy research because of its potential to critique and offer alternative responses to contemporary social problems such as poverty, homelessness and ecological, settler and gendered violence. Lanie has previously worked in research, policy and evaluation in the non-profit sector.

Isabella Wilson, University of Sydney

Title: Early Childhood Education and Care Policies in Australia and the Gendered Dimensions of Care

Abstract:

Since the introduction of the Child Care Act 1972, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) has experienced an overwhelming number of reiterations with regards to Commonwealth policy in Australia. In recent decades, policies have consistently stated the same three policy goals to increase the affordability, accessibility and quality of ECEC services. Despite this, there is a consensus that policies have not been successful. While the whole of society suffers when ECEC policies are inadequate, there is a strong case to be made that women have a unique experience of ECEC policy failure. With care work being traditionally performed by women, when ECEC policies fail, gendered patterns of care are at risk of being reaffirmed, and existing patriarchal inequalities reinforced. This research will undertake a feminist informed analysis of ECEC, focusing on how policies in Australia have consistently been framed through a gendered discourse of care and how this framing impacts the lived experiences of women with ECEC obligations. Hence, the following research questions: Primary question: 1. How have the political discourses surrounding ECEC policies in Australia been constructed over time to reinforce gendered dimensions of care? Secondary questions: 2. How have these discourses perpetuated existing patriarchal inequalities? 3. How do these inequalities manifest in the lived experiences of women with ECEC obligations? 2 The paper presented will address the conceptual and design approach to the research, hoping to spark conversation and gain valuable feedback to take into the data collection stage of this project. This research aims to capitalise on the current policy attention given to ECEC to sustain the debate and ensure underlying ideological framings of previous policies are reflected upon, which is a necessary step in changing the narrative surrounding care and work to promote gender equality in subsequent policy developments.

Bio:

Isabella is a PhD student at University of Sydney's School of Social and Political Sciences. Isabella's research is interdisciplinary, influenced by Government & International Relations, and Sociology. Her research interests include a range of policy issues from a social justice lens. Her previous honours thesis analysed two Commonwealth policies that targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and her current doctoral research examines the shortcomings of Early Childhood Education and Care policies for gender equality. Isabella is also a Research Associate at the James Martin Institute for Public Policy, a government and university joint-venture that aims to transform public policy.