

Joshua W. Z. Hew

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Education

University College London

MSc Cognitive and Decision Sciences

Sept 2025 – Aug 2026

- **Representative courses:** Computational Modelling of Cognition, Applied Deep Learning, Designing and Analysing fMRI experiments

University of Edinburgh

MA (Hons) Philosophy and Psychology (First Class Honours)

Sept 2021 – May 2025

- **Dissertation:** “Learned helplessness in dynamic causal environments: The impact of controllability and reward prevalence” (85%). Supervisor: **Neil Bramley**

Publications

Hew, J., Tarighat, A., Corley, M., & Horne, Z. (2024). Examining structural and semantic predictors of announced sarcasm on r/AskReddit. In *Proceedings of the 46th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*.

In preparation:

Hew, J., & Bramley, N. R. Learned Helplessness and Causal Inference and Learned Helplessness.

Hew, J., Rottman, J., & Horne, Z. The language of doubt impacts consensus judgements.

Presentations & Talks

Learned helplessness in dynamic causal environments: The impact of controllability and reward prevalence

- Talk presented at Bramley Computational Cognitive Science Lab (March 2025).
- Talk presented at British Psychological Society Undergraduate Conference, University of Abertay (March 2025).

The language of doubt impacts consensus judgements

- Talk presented at Cognition, Computation and Development Lab, University of Edinburgh (October 2024).

Examining structural and semantic predictors of announced sarcasm on r/AskReddit

- Poster presented at Social Data Science Poster Session, University of Edinburgh (June 2024).
- Poster presented at Cognitive Science Conference, Rotterdam (July 2024).
- Talk presented at Brain, Cognition and Development Seminar, University of Edinburgh (Nov 2024).

Grants, Honors, & Awards

Carnegie Trust Summer Vacation Scholarship (£3800)
University of Edinburgh Our Minds Scholarship (£1600)

Summer 2024
Summer 2024

Research Experience

Cognition, Computation and Development Lab (PI: Zachary Horne)
Research Assistant

University of Edinburgh
Jan 2024 - Apr 2025

- Administered 2 online experiments exploring how people judge the presence of consensus and persist in their beliefs despite widespread disagreement. Discovered that information framed to imply doubt reduces the influence of prior beliefs, guiding subsequent studies on behavioural responses to consensus information.
- Applied Huggingface language models to quantify the uniqueness of comments on r/Showerthoughts; we use this to measure the likelihood that random search within internet communities generates sufficient evidence that spurs belief change.
- Conducted an experiment to probe participant intuitions about belief distributions and overlapping evidence,

inspired by the pigeonhole principle and birthday problems.

Independent Psycholinguistics Project (Supervisor: Martin Corley) **University of Edinburgh**
Research Assistant *Sep 2024 - Apr 2025*

- Created and pretested a set of 32 stimuli, analysing the stimuli using ordinal regression models.
- Designed and deployed an online self-paced reading study in PCIbex to investigate sarcasm processing when reading direct or indirect speech.

User-centric Privacy and Security Research Team (PI: Jingjie Li) **University of Edinburgh**
Research Intern *Mar - Aug 2024*

- Collaborated with project members to develop a theory-informed taxonomy of unsafe content.
- Used this taxonomy to code 80 sections of script from a role-playing game.

Holly-Martin Psycholinguistics Lab (Supervisor: Greta Gandolfi) **University of Edinburgh**
Research Assistant *Autumn 2023*

- Annotated the linguistic features for transcriptions of conversations between humans and social robots.
- Coded an R script to check for annotator spelling mistakes and calculate inter-annotator agreement.

Teaching Experience

Big Data and Psychological Science **University of Edinburgh**
Teaching Assistant *Autumn 2024*

- Assisted Students with Coding Exercises in R.
- Developed a reference guidebook using R Markdown containing coding tutorials and course tips.

Other Relevant Experience

Undergraduate Psychology Association (UPA) **United Kingdom**
Journal Web Manager *Oct 2025 - Present*

- Supported the establishment of the association's journal, with a focus on web design.

Edinburgh Nightline **Edinburgh, UK**
Coordinator, Research and Policy Coordinator *Apr 2023 - Apr 2025*

- Managed committee and various projects, communicated with stakeholder institutions and trustees.
- Reviewed industry best practices to make improvements and facilitate research-informed focus groups.
- Visualised and interpreted call data and content to improve service quality and demonstrate impact.
- Former shift-taking listening volunteer, learned active listening and non-directionality techniques.

Psychology Magazine **University of Edinburgh**
Head writer, Writer *Spring 2023, 2024*

- Wrote 2 research articles aimed at the general public:
 - Can Money Buy Happiness? (2023)
 - The Good, the Bad, and the Obsession: Understanding Stan Culture in the Digital Era. (2024)
- As head writer, offered peer support and organised writing workshops.

Additional Information

Journal reviewing: Cognition (1)

Programming: R, Python, HTML, CSS, Javascript

Misc.: Qualtrics, Connect, Latex Overleaf, PCIbex, Adobe Premiere Pro, FlipaClip (animation).

Languages: English (native), Chinese (fluent), Malay (proficient)

Personal Projects: YouTube channel with 6 videos with 3000+ views, aim to create educational and scientific animated videos in the future. *Lepak Time* podcast ran with friends during COVID consisting 21 episodes.

Other Interests: Piano (diploma), Violin (grade 8), Bildungsroman literature, cycling, and bouldering.