

EVAN GURKIN

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PERSONAL STATEMENT

I use comparative approaches to understand the evolution of cooperation, communication, and social behavior in primates. My research experience spans experimental studies with captive chimpanzees, field and observational research on wild chimpanzees, baboons, and Japanese macaques, and analysis of other various model species. I am particularly interested in bridging primate behavioral ecology with human behavioral ecology to understand the evolutionary origins of human sociality, cooperation, and cultural transmission.

EDUCATION



University of Cambridge

2026–Present

Doctor of Philosophy: Biological Anthropology | Darwin College

Supervisor: Dr. Sylvain Lemoine

Cambridge, United Kingdom



University College London

2024–2025

Master of Science: Human Evolution and Behaviour | *Distinction*

London, United Kingdom



University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

2018–2022

Bachelor of Science: Double Major in Biology and Psychology, Minor in Chemistry

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Study Abroad: McGill University, Montréal, Canada (2019)



European Graduate School

2024–Present

Master of Arts: Philosophy, Art, and Critical Thought

Saas-Fee, Switzerland

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Visiting Researcher, Kyoto University

January–April 2026

PI: Dr. Shinya Yamamoto, Dr. Yu Kaigaishi

Project: Inhibitory Control in Japanese Macaques, Koshima Island, Japan

- Conducted field experiments on inhibitory control in free-ranging Japanese macaques using the cylinder task, as part of a multi-site replication
- Tested and analyzed 27 subjects across sex and dominance rank categories
- Manuscript in preparation

Field Research Assistant, Kyoto University

January–April 2026

PI: Dr. Ayumi Ogawa, Dr. Shinya Yamamoto (Wildlife Research Center)

Project: Drone-Based Observation of Feral Horse Groups, Cape Toi, Japan

- Conducted drone-based aerial observation of free-ranging horse groups at Cape Toi, Miyazaki, Japan
- Recorded group composition and spatial structure from aerial survey footage

Collaborator, University of Cambridge

January 2026–Present

Evolutionary Psychiatry Research Group (Collaborators: George Gillett, Dr. Nikhil Chaudhary)

Project: Psychiatrists' Experiences of Evolutionary Frameworks in Clinical Practice

- Developed the thematic coding framework and coded semi-structured interview transcripts with practising psychiatrists
- Co-authored manuscript submitted to BJPsych Open

Research Assistant, University College London

January 2025–August 2026

PI: Dr. Alecia Carter, Elisa Fernandez Fueyo

Project: Multi-Modal Communication in Chacma Baboons

- Analyzing multi-modal communication strategies (vocal, gestural, and facial) in chacma baboons using BORIS behavioral coding software
- Manuscript in preparation

Independent Project: Trust and Social Bonding Through Grooming Location in Chacma Baboons

- Investigating whether grooming location (vulnerable vs. non-vulnerable body regions) signals trust and strengthens social bonds
- Manuscript submitted to Biology Letters

Field Research Assistant, University College London

July-August 2025

PI: Dr. Alex Piel

Project: Environmental Influences on Chimpanzee Nest Construction in Issa Valley, Tanzania

- Conducted independent field research on wild, habituated chimpanzees examining how environmental factors influence nest-building behavior and site selection
- Collected ecological data and analyzed spatial patterns of nest site selection and created GIS visualizations using ArcGIS to map relationships between nesting behavior and habitat features

Research Assistant, University College London

March 2025–Present

PI: Dr. Lasana Harris

Project: Social Cognition in Beluga Whales

- Experimental work with captive population of Beluga whales at Oceanogràfic de València
- Pilot study beginning in November 2025

Research Assistant, University College London

2024–2025

PI: Dr. Alicia Melis

Project: Communication and Cooperation in Chimpanzees

- Coded and analyzed video data of chimpanzee cooperative experiments examining reciprocal altruism and partner choice
- Acknowledged for reliability coding in Melis, A. et al. (2026). Chimpanzees follow human pointing when attention is engaged. *iScience*.

Research Assistant, University College London

2025

PI: Dr. Ashleigh Wiseman

Project: 3D Morphometric Analysis of Neanderthal Trackway at Le Rozel, France

- Processed and analyzed 3D scans of Neanderthal footprints using CloudCompare and MeshLab
- Manuscript in preparation

Research Assistant, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

2021–2023

PI: Dr. David Pfennig, Pfennig Lab of Evolutionary and Ecological Biology

- Investigated phenotypic plasticity's role in evolutionary processes
- Studied interspecific competition effect on phenotypic plasticity (*Asplanchna girodi* and *A. brightwellii*)

Research Assistant, McGill University

2019

PI: Dr. David Green, Green Lab

Project: Environmental Impact of the Fowler's Toad

- Identified and recorded zooplankton species
- Analyzed impact of Fowler's toad tadpoles on zooplankton biodiversity

PUBLICATIONS & MANUSCRIPTS

Manuscripts Under Review:

- Gillett, G., Gurkin, E., Chaudhary, N., et al. Psychiatrists' experiences of evolutionary frameworks in clinical practice: a qualitative study. *BJPsych Open* (submitted).
- Gurkin, E., Fernandez Fueyo, E., Carter, A. Trust and social bonding through grooming location in chacma baboons. *Biology Letters* (submitted)

Manuscripts in Preparation:

- Fernandez Fueyo, E., Carter, A., Gurkin, E. Multi-modal communication strategies in chacma baboons.
- Gurkin, E., Kaigaishi, Y., Yamamoto, S. Inhibitory control in Japanese macaques: sex and rank effects on cylinder task performance.

PRESENTATIONS

- Evolutionary frameworks in psychiatry: findings from a qualitative study of clinicians. Lab meeting, University of Cambridge (Evolution, Mental Health and Behaviour Lab). May 2026.

AWARDS & HONORS

- **Dean's List:** University College London 2025, awarded to top 5% of graduating MSc students

MEMBERSHIPS

- **Primate Society of Great Britain (PSGB),** 2026–Present

FIELD & TECHNICAL SKILLS

Field Methods: Primatological field research with wild and captive populations, behavioral observation protocols, ecological sampling, drone-based aerial observation and survey, research diving

Data Collection & Management: Video recording and documentation, ethogram development, systematic behavioral sampling, field notes and database management

Quantitative & Qualitative Analysis: R programming, statistical modeling, network analysis, behavioral coding and analysis, qualitative thematic analysis, semi-structured interview coding

Specialized Software & Tools: R (statistical analysis), BORIS (behavioral coding), ArcGIS (spatial analysis and visualization), CloudCompare and MeshLab (3D morphometrics), Adobe Illustrator/Photoshop, Excel, Final Cut Pro

Communication & Dissemination: Scientific writing, grant writing, manuscript preparation, data visualization, conversational Spanish

PREVIOUS PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Senior Medical Management Coordinator, Physician Alliance for Mental Health 2022–2024

- Coordinated psychiatric care on Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACTT)
- Administer injections, draw and analyse labs, and assist with administrative needs.
- Wrote and submitted grant proposals for mental health practice initiatives

Founder & Creative Director, Lokedawg Clothing Company 2022–Present

- Founded sustainability-focused surf apparel brand; managed all aspects from product design to marketing

Head Surf Instructor, Tony Silvagni Surf School

2016–Present

- Organize and instruct surf lessons, performance management, provide feedback and analysis, and provide lessons for advanced surfers
- Develop therapy surf lessons for ACTT patients with severe mental illness

CERTIFICATIONS

Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) – National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians

BLS (American Heart Association), CPR/First Aid (American Red Cross)

PADI Open Water Diver