Hi Everyone,

Welcome to the third research newsletter for this academic session. You will see that a great deal has been happening in relation to research projects, conferences, international visits and activities. Several items in this edition underline just how important and inextricable the link is between our research and our teaching. You will see that on pages 2 and 3 I outline our School of Social Sciences 5 year Research Plan the cornerstone of which is putting research firmly “at the heart of what we do”. This key message is encapsulated within this edition of the newsletter and showcased in a range of innovative and exciting ways. Thanks to Matt for pulling it all together and to all who have contributed.
On the 29th of April I presented the School of Social Sciences research plan to a panel chaired by Yvonne Barnett Pro Vice Chancellor for Research. In attendance were the Associate Deans for Research in each of the three colleges, Professor Martyn Bennett and colleagues from the Graduate School and Kathie Moore as Dean of Social Sciences. I was joined by Professor Matt Henn as The School's Postgraduate Research (PGR) Tutor. The plans are designed to set the research strategy for the School for the next 5 years from 2014-2019 and each School’s plan now has to be ‘signed’ off within the University by the Pro VC for Research.

Our Approach

For those football followers amongst us I outlined our overall approach as being akin to that of some of the most successful football teams. We want to grow and support our own talented ‘early career’ researchers whilst adding to our talent pool by using opportunities in “the transfer windows” to recruit new staff who are research active and can contribute to our success. Also like good football teams it’s not just down to the ‘manager’ to pick the players and lead the team (or in this case the School’s Research Director), achieving our plan will depend on the support from Divisional Research Coordinators, UoA Coordinators and our PGR tutors.

Key Messages

The key messages of our school plan reflects and links to the divisions’ research plans and we shall hold a half -day meeting of the School Research committee in July to make sure the plans align in terms of implementation.

Our vision is for the School of Social Sciences to be recognised nationally and internationally for our theoretically informed and applied research. We see research being at the ‘heart of what we do’ and by this we mean that in all the areas of activity in which we engage, teaching design and delivery, publications, grant capture and leadership/culture of our academic disciplines, we should seek to impact on our own and others’ practice to promote our work locally, nationally and internationally.

We have set ourselves 4 KPIs to achieve over the next 5 years which are to:

- Increase our research income by 5% year on year
- Increase the total number of staff producing 3* and 4* publications from 20% to 40% with an increase of 15% of staff publishing generally
- Ensure the continuation of UoAs in Psychology, Social work and Social policy with a return for Politics and IS also for REF 2020. We will make a continued contribution to the unit of assessment for education if appropriate.
- Increase our number of PGR students by a third
In 2013-14 our research income has increased by 353% which is a huge achievement. What is unlikely is that we can sustain this level of increase year on year so we have looked to our research expenditure over the last 3 years to give us a more realistic baseline for forecasting our 5% increase for 2014-15.

We have evidence that what has contributed to our success is our peer review of grant applications and our use of REF funds to support small scale projects that have grown into successful larger bids. We received a thumbs up from the panel in terms of both these initiatives.

In Psychology we have 93% of staff who are producing outputs of 2* or above. In other areas of the School we are less productive and so we need to make sure that staff are writing papers for peer reviewed journals. We will be setting up and supporting research groups and clusters in all areas of the School to support staff with their writing endeavours. In Psychology the focus of the division’s research strategy will be on supporting staff to publish in higher ranked journals.

In the REF 2014 we returned staff to three UOAs. Out target going forward is to continue to do this but also to ensure that by REF 2020 we have a return for Politics and International Relations. This is again reflected in the divisional level strategy.

Finally we have said that we will increase the number of postgraduate research students (PGRs) in the School by a third. In part this large increase reflects the number of PGR students joining us with the realignment of International Relations within the School at the start of 2012-13; however that tells only part of the story, as the growth here represents a genuine increase in numbers of new international PGR students joining the School. We have evidence that shows our PGR students complete on time and we will continue to capitalise on studentship opportunities at School and divisional level to grow our numbers as we go forward. We will also look for opportunities to increase our expertise within our supervisory teams particularly where offer cross-disciplinary expertise to a student’s PhD studies.

Our school plan was received exceptionally positively by Professor Barnett and the panel as clearly evidenced based and able to harness what is being referred to about as ‘research power’ within the University. As part of the plan I also presented an outline of what resources we would need to our goals which included an ambitious menu of funds for equipment, resources for research administrative support, PhD studentships and resources to support increasing research leadership within the School in ways that can be flexible and respond to divisional needs. Our requests were received favourably.

Key to our success will be our ability to continue to mentor colleagues at all stages of their research careers. We need to continue to peer review grant applications and to use our research groups and clusters to strengthen this process. We have support of the panel and the Dean of the School to approach timetabling flexibly and implement Research Intensive Periods to support staff to produce research outputs. We will tackle the challenge of implementing these initiatives at our half-day meeting in July. We also need to continue to use our research funds to support our activities including impact related events, attending conferences to give papers, small scale projects and open access publishing. As soon as we learn of the funds we have available to us for 2014-15 we will be reconvening the Research Funding Panel to receive your applications.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my research coordinator colleagues in the divisions and UoAs and to our PGR Tutors for helping me to ensure our plan was so well received. It has been a real team effort and I am proud that as a School we are seen to be well on the way to achieving our long term plan with confidence from the senior managers within the University.
Population ageing, economic circumstances, and human behaviour are placing social welfare systems under great strain. In England extensive reform of the social work profession is taking place. Training curricula are being redesigned in the context of new standards of competence for social workers – the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). Students must be equipped on qualifying to address an extensive range of human problems, presenting major challenges to educators. Critical theory suggests an approach to tackle one such challenge – selecting the essential content required for areas of particular practice. Teaching on social work with older people is used to illustrate this.

Habermas’ theory of cognitive interests highlights the different professional roles served by the social work knowledge base - instrumental, interpretive, and emancipatory. Howe’s application of sociological theory distinguished four social work roles corresponding to these. It is suggested that curriculum design decisions must enable practitioners to operate in each. When preparing students to work with older people, educators therefore need to include interpretive and emancipatory perspectives, and not construct social work purely as an instrumental response to problems older people present. This approach provides one useful rationale for curriculum design decisions, which is applicable to other areas of practice, and to contexts outside England.

It argues (from Critical Theory) that the role of higher education in social work serves a range of purposes, and uses work with older people to exemplify this.

Chris Ring: Published in Social Work Education April 8, 2014. DOI: 10.1080/02615479.2014.902435
At the 2013 Learning and teaching conference here at NTU I co-delivered a paper on ‘career narrativisation’ within the same panel as Graham Ferris – Reader in Law. A few months after the conference we met to discuss how our input shared important characteristics and how Graham found the concept of career very useful for his teaching of ethics on the Law degree – also providing a means of aiding student professional identity. As a result of such discovery Graham and I worked together on a paper exploring how career can be utilised within the Law curriculum which was delivered at the Annual Association of Law Teachers conference in Leeds.

The paper delivered provided great insight into aspects of identity, professional identity, the formation and influence of groups upon career enactment in a Law context – as indicated by it winning the Stan Marsh award for the best paper at the conference. It was very pleasing to see how an audience which initially appears outside of the arena of ‘career’ – yet not outside of our college – appreciate its trans-disciplinary nature and its ability to cross boundaries of the academic citadel. From a personal point of view an important learning for an ‘early researcher’ is how the initial serendipitous nature of career enactment can help to forge links across disciplines as well as highlight how we have similar pedagogic concerns.
In a new and unique venture, Nottingham Trent University and Nottinghamshire County Council have entered into a KTP – Knowledge Transfer Partnership, to research and innovate services for children and young people in the county. Utilising the knowledge and multidisciplinary research expertise at the University, this partnership offers a range of opportunities for both research and practice.

The 30 month project will review the approaches taken to working with children once an assessment of need has taken place. The project will also review the parenting programmes on offer, and the evidence basis for these.

Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) is a local authority, providing a range of services to 786,000 people across the county and around 180,000 children and young people. Young People’s Services, Early Help and Children’s Social Care services are part of the Council’s ‘Children, Families and Cultural Services’ department.

The project will employ a range of research methods, including involving children, young people and those associated in their care in Participatory Action Research (PAR). Doing so gives children and young people a voice and a chance to be included in the improvement and innovation of their services. This project will not only improve service delivery within the Council, but will provide the basis for a variety of academic papers, showcases and conference representations.
Overall the project aims to use the expertise of the partners, rigorous and methodical research, and the experiences and views of children and young people to develop an innovative model of service delivery for the Council. This innovative model will improve outcomes and better meet the needs of children and young people in Nottinghamshire.

Catherine Goodall has been appointed as the KTP Associate for this project, based in the Social Work and Professional Practice Division at NTU and hosted by the Council. Catherine has the proven practical, research and project management skills to make this Partnership successful.

For more information on KTP, Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham Trent University, see the following sites: www.ktponline.org.uk; www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk; www.ntu.ac.uk For more information contact Catherine Goodall, KTP Design and Implementation Analyst: Catherine.goodall@ntu.ac.uk
An International Erasmus Exchange

University of Murcia

Jane Challinor

It’s been almost three years in the planning - but finally I made it. Why did I want to do this? Well - firstly as a student of the language, it was a goal to aim for: to feel sufficiently fluent to be comfortable working (largely) in Spanish and to be able to get by on my own in a strange city. After 10 years of studying, I finally felt ready for the challenge!

Secondly, I have been following various Spanish and Spanish-speaking "profes" (lecturers) on Twitter for a number of years and have an impression that there is a lot of great practice here in Spain that I felt it would be good to see first hand.

Thirdly, I was very careful in my choice of university. I had a specific interest in technology enhanced learning and the University of Murcia is fortunate in having renowned innovation leaders in Mari Paz Prendes and Linda Casteñada. I formed a connection with Linda some years ago when I attended a conference in Barcelona. She later sent me a book she and Maria Paz had written about the University of Murcia’s transition to becoming a connected campus.

Although Linda works in the Faculty of Education teaching primary teachers about using technology in the classroom (rather than with social science students, as I do), I thought this an ideal place to come and observe the similarities and the differences in teaching and learning and to observe some innovative good practice. As part of the visit, I delivered a workshop (in English) for Linda’s bilingual student teachers (on the subject of “curation” using Pinterest). At least now I can add international teaching to my CV! I also attended other classes held in Spanish and spoke with students and teachers about their practice.
I met with the Innovation Unit who support the teaching staff to become creative with technology including managing the University’s MOOCs. Each year this unit puts out a call for bids to propose new projects. Up to 80 projects are being supported at any one time. I was also introduced to ATICA - the ITC support team who manage the LMS. The virtual learning environment at Murcia runs on an open source platform (Sakai) developed in collaboration with US and UK universities, which has all the usual functions but is by definition “free”. One thing that stood out for me was the clear and simple links between the VLE and the university’s system for recording student grades. The team also demonstrated a collaborative platform (also open source) for staff (Apereo) which is open to any academic to store documents, create discussions etc. which functions as a shared space to develop research. See https://sakaiproject.org/ for details.

So - now I’m home, the bags are unpacked and I have filled in my official report for the Erasmus scheme. What has been the value of the exchange and what do I think will change as a result of it? Immersion in a new environment, a different culture and with the opportunity to speak and listen daily in the language I am studying has been invaluable. This is a tiring process but the rapid development of fluency and vocabulary is amazing.

In terms of learning about the different education system, I saw at first hand the impact of University wide elections for the appointment of senior managers. These happen every four years and can be highly political and divisive. Students as well as staff vote in the Rector (Vice Chancellor), Vice Rectors (Pro VCs) and senior departmental managers. Now, there’s a thought!

During the week I found a couple of hours to wander off on my own and make first contact with Murcia’s Social Work Department which has the potential to bring direct benefit to our SWAPP Division. Finally I hope on a personal level to continue having contact with Linda and her team in order to collaborate on projects - and with luck I’ll be going back!

(A more detailed account can be found at http://thevirtualleader.blogspot.co.uk/ - I blogged everyday whilst I was away much to the amusement of staff and students at the University of Murcia)
As a lecturer in Social Policy I often like to promote different ways of learning this potentially dynamic subject. This lead me to seek the co-operation of a range of staff within social science disciplines in the making of a drama to help students learn. Staff within the division of social work but also sociology collaborated in the making of a film about adult safeguarding. As module leader for the level two health and social care module ‘safeguarding in practice’ I aimed to make the subject more accessible and so dreamed up a mini-drama about mental health and mental health law. I sought to achieve this when working on a number of different scenes in which my character ‘Colin’, introduced to these same students during my level one module in social policy, interacted with others to help students learn what can be complex policy and practice issues. I wrote the script and acted the part of ‘Colin’ a middle aged man experiencing mental health issues.

There were various scenes, ranging from a domestic argument to an episode in a hospital and a series of ‘talking heads’ whereby the actors talked of the story and the issues from their perspective. The first scene involved Tim Harrison, lecturer in health and social care, playing ‘Dave’ a one- time friend and house mate who turned enemy when he effectively made Colin homeless, after a fight. Colin, long term unemployed and homeless subsequently turned up in hospital where he was to encounter staff nurse ‘Deborah’, played by social work lecturer Deborah Bardouille in the Accident and Emergency. Colin then encountered a social worker, played by Social Work lecturer Mick Wilkinson, a housing officer (played by another social work lecturer, Simon Howard) and a duty psychiatrist, played by lecturer Ann Liggett. Other parts were played by Jill Beresford who played Colin’s ‘long suffering’ partner ‘Patricia’ and Miatta Sharka, a level two student on the degree, who acted out the role of a trainee Social Worker. Sociologist Phil Wane filmed the action in a studio in the Waverley Building and edited it in the School of Social Sciences Media Suite.

(Chris briefs the team)
Collaborate Approach

(The team learn their parts)

The film and the story showed the tensions that can exist and the problems that can ensue when vulnerable people encounter laws that seek to ‘safeguard’ them from harm but also take away their rights. It captured the complexities and ambiguities in both policy and practice and showed how practitioners can face difficult dilemmas. My colleagues and I received positive feedback from students who went on to watch the video scenes in seminars.

Students commented that the role play enhanced their learning as they could literally ‘see’ the different points of view played out before them. It has helped them to evaluate what can be complex law such as the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the Mental Health Act 2007. I personally enjoyed working with colleagues who were all very enthusiastic about the project and played their parts in the drama with skill and attention to detail, drawing upon their own knowledge and experience (with staff having their own experience of working in health and social care). I found the experience enjoyable as it allowed me to ‘show’ the issues involved rather than just ‘tell’. I am hopeful that there will be other such collaborations to come, both with staff and students.

(Rehearsals)
Dr Mike Sutton has a forthcoming eBook based on his research into science fraud titled *Nullius in Verba: The Hi-High Tech Detection of Charles Darwin’s and Alfred Wallace’s Great Science Fraud*. Mike discusses how he has proven (1) that contrary to current ‘knowledge beliefs’ we can now be 100 per cent certain there is only one ‘independent’ discoverer of the theory of *natural selection* and that is Patrick Matthew and (2) that it is beyond reasonable doubt that Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace committed the World’s greatest science fraud by plagiarising the discovery of natural selection from Matthew’s prior publication of it, then lied by claiming no prior-knowledge of it. Mike’s unique “bombshell” discovery was made possible only because new technology allows us to search 30 million documents online. With hi-tech research methods, developed by Mike, he was able to see what all the experts have missed these past 154 years. Mike was invited (all expenses paid) to give a presentation on some of the findings from his book at the International Science Festival in Edinburgh on April 10, 2014. The Edinburgh festival event was reported in the Scottish Daily Mail.

Patrick Matthews published his work in 1831.
Did Darwin copy ideas for Origin of Species?

By Bill Caven, Scottish Daily Mail

For centuries he has been credited with laying the foundations surrounding the theory of evolution. Almost single-handedly Charles Darwin transformed the way people thought about the natural world and how it has evolved over time. But there has long been a suspicion that the English-born naturalist and geologist established his theory on the strength of earlier work carried out by a Scottish scientist. Critics now suspect Darwin only wrote his Origin of Species after reading the work of Patrick Matthew, written nearly three decades earlier. The explosive new claims of alleged plagiarism more than 150 years ago were revealed last night by a top criminologist during the Festival of Science in Edinburgh. Dr Mike Sutton, of Nottingham Trent University, insisted that, without the contribution of the Scot, Darwin may never have written his theory. He said: ‘Until now, Matthew has been credited with having discovered the theory prior to Darwin but no one has been able to prove within reasonable doubt that Darwin read – or was otherwise influenced by – his prior-published discovery of 1831.’ But thanks to the latest hi-tech research methods, the criminologist has unearthed newly discovered literature that proves seven naturalists – three of whom were well known to Darwin – cited Matthew’s book years before 1859, when the Origin of Species was published. Dr Sutton admitted the mystery may never be solved. But he added: ‘This unique and brand new discovery is one of many newsworthy bombshells now blasting to smithereens current mythical Darwinist accounts of the origin.

Charles Darwin published his work in 1859

This is a link to an article (this site is publishing his e-Book) that provides some advance notice of his findings: http://www.bestthinking.com/articles/science/biology_and_nature/genetics_and_molecular_biology/internet-dating-with-darwin-new-discovery-that-darwin-and-wallace-were-influenced-by-matthew-s-prior-discovery
Mindfulness is a 2,500-year-old Buddhist meditation practice that we have previously defined as “the process of engaging a full, direct, and active awareness of experienced phenomena that is spiritual in aspect and that is maintained from one moment to the next”. A recent nationally representative survey by the UK’s Mental Health Foundation found that over 80% of British adults believe their health can be improved by becoming more mindful of the present moment – a view shared by over 70% of UK general practitioners. Secularised mindfulness-based interventions were first introduced into healthcare settings in the 1970s, and scientific interest has significantly increased since that time. Indeed, last year alone, over 600 scientific papers concerning mindfulness were published. This compares with a figure of only 50 scientific mindfulness papers published ten years prior to this (i.e., in 2003) and makes mindfulness one of the fastest growing areas of psychological research.

In recent years, mindfulness has been shown to be an effective treatment for a broad range of medical illnesses including (for example) mood disorders, schizophrenia, chronic pain, cancer, and human immunodeficiency virus (via the buffering of CD4+ lymphocyte declines). In fact, particular forms of mindfulness practice are now advocated by both the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the American Psychiatric Association for the treatment of specific forms of depression. There is also preliminary evidence to suggest that mindfulness can enhance metacognition and executive functioning.

Given the growing interest into mindfulness from both the general public and various healthcare stakeholders, here we provide seven practical tips for practising and teaching mindfulness effectively:

1. Make use of meditative anchors: The majority of group mindfulness programs begin by instructing participants how to use a meditative anchor. The most commonly taught meditative anchor is that of observing the breath. Full awareness of the in-breath and out-breath helps participants to ‘tie their mind’ to the present moment and to regulate thought rumination. For people with concentration deficits, instructing them to count their breath (i.e., from one to ten and then back to one) is normally helpful. Similarly, participants generally find it easier if they are guided using simple and gently spoken phrases such as “breathing in, I am fully aware of my in-breath” and “breathing out, I am fully aware of my out-breath”. Other examples are “breathing in, I am here; breathing out, I am now” and “breathing in, there is nowhere I need to be; breathing out, I am already home”.

2. Demonstrate how to breathe correctly: When using breath awareness as a meditative anchor, it is very important to avoid forcing the breath. In other words, the breath should be allowed to follow its natural course and to calm and deepen of its own accord. Forced breathing runs contrary to the general principle of meditation which is that tranquillity and wisdom are naturally present in the mind and will arise of their own accord when the correct conditions come about. One of these ‘correct conditions’ is simply observing and nourishing the mind through mindful awareness. A metaphor that might be used to help explain this principle is that of a garden fish pond – every time the garden pond is stirred or interfered with, the water becomes muddy and unsettled. However, if a person sits quietly next to the pond and simply observes it, the water becomes perfectly still and clear again.

3. Adopt a suitable meditative posture: Although the focus of mindfulness practice should be directed towards its maintenance during everyday activities, formal daily seated-meditation sessions are an essential aspect of mindfulness training. However, rather than sitting in meditation for hours on end and making
the practice into an endurance exercise, shorter sessions of between ten and twenty minutes are far more effective at the beginning stages. As part of seated meditation practice, a good physical posture helps to facilitate the cultivation of a good mental posture. The most important aspect of the meditation posture is stability and this can be achieved whether sitting up-right on a chair or on a meditation cushion. In our research work with an eight-week secular mindfulness intervention that we developed called Meditation Awareness Training (MAT), the analogy used to explain the most appropriate posture for meditation is that of a mountain; a mountain has a definite presence, it is upright and stable yet at the same time it is without tension and does not have to strain to maintain its posture — it is relaxed, content, and deeply-rooted in the earth.

4. Use mindfulness reminders: ‘Mindfulness reminders’ are a strategy for maintaining mindful awareness during everyday activities. An example of a mindfulness reminder is an hour chime (e.g., from a wrist-watch or desktop computer), that, upon sounding, can be used as a trigger by participants to gently return their awareness to the present moment and to the natural flow of their in-breath and out-breath. Some people prefer a less sensory reminder such as a simple acronym. For example, in the aforementioned MAT program, participants are taught to use a three-step SOS technique to facilitate recovery of meditative concentration by ‘sending out an SOS’ at the point when intrusive thoughts arise (Box 1).

5. Teach mindfulness from an experiential standpoint: In our teaching and research of mindfulness and meditation, something that we have continuously observed is that people are sensitive to the extent to which the teacher is able to impart an embodied authentic experience of mindfulness. Put simply, if the person teaching mindfulness is on some kind of spiritual trip, or their mindfulness experience is limited to information they have derived from reading a handful of books or attending a few mindfulness retreats, then participants tend to notice this and become less receptive. Conversely, a teacher that is ‘well-soaked’ in meditation is able to teach from a more experiential standpoint. They naturally exert a reassuring presence that helps individuals to relax and connect with their own capacity for cultivating meditative and spiritual awareness.

6. Focus on the integration of mindfulness into everyday life: Although it is unquestionably beneficial for people to meet with the mindfulness teacher regularly, emphasis should be placed on empowering participants to introduce mindfulness into all aspects of their lives. Many people find a CD of short guided meditations to be invaluable in this respect. Maintaining a regular practice of mindfulness does not have to encroach into busy work schedules. In fact, rather than ‘taking time out’, mindfulness practice really begins when a person gets up from their meditation cushion (or chair) and continues with work and daily tasks. So the practice of mindfulness is less about finding the time to practice, and more about simply remembering to engage a mindful attention-set during whatever activity one happens to be engaged in. For example, as you read this article, are you fully aware of your breathing? Can you feel your lungs as they rise and fall with each breath in and out? Can you feel the weight of your body on the chair you are sitting on? Do you know how you are sitting →
– is your posture that of somebody who is awake and fully participating in the world or are slumped right back in your chair? Are you fully present as you read this or is your mind already jumping to whatever you will be doing next? In short, are you fully aware of each precious moment of your life as it passes you by?

7. **Employ psycho-educational techniques:** As with most non-pharmacological interventions, a degree of psycho-education regarding the mechanisms of action and projected hurdles is generally regarded as a means of augmenting therapeutic alliance. Mindfulness-based interventions are no exception to this, and participants generally welcome advance notice of the difficulties they are likely to encounter as their mindfulness training progresses. One such difficulty, particularly in the beginning stages, is the feeling by participants that their mind is becoming even more discursive than before. However, rather than an actual reduction in levels of mindfulness, research demonstrates that such feelings generally result from a greater awareness by participants of the “wild” nature of their cognitive and emotional processes that had hitherto remained unnoticed. Particularly within the context of mindfulness-based approaches, psycho-education should be regarded as a two-way process. In other words, in working with the participant to discuss and explore different dimensions of their mindfulness practice, a co-produced form of understanding or wisdom often emerges. This is something that both the participant and teacher can benefit from and is consistent with pedagogic techniques used as part of traditional Buddhist practice.

Developing competency in mindfulness requires patience, regular practice, and guidance from a teacher with a firmly-embedded and experiential knowledge of mindfulness. However, with these essential ingredients in place, we believe that the above practical suggestions will help people cultivate an authentic understanding of mindfulness practice.

**Further Reading**


**Acknowledgements**

A number of the themes in this article have been adapted or expanded from papers and guidance previously published by the authors (please see the further reading list) as well as from content that previously appeared on the first and second authors’ meditation blog (www.edoshonin.com).
Research on Men’s Health

‘It is safe to use if you are healthy’: A discursive analysis of men’s online accounts of ephedrine use.

Dr Matthew Hall, Prof Sarah Grogan & Prof Brendan Gough

The historical use of ephedrine in sport is well-known (Magkos & Kavouras, 2004; National Institutes of Health: Office of Dietary Supplements, 2008). Less well-known is men’s use of ephedrine as a slimming aid. Arguably fuelled by the ‘war on obesity’ and the drive to muscularity (Grogan, 2008; 2010) the Internet has become awash with advertisements and information presenting ephedrine as safe. Frequently used in combination with caffeine and aspirin – the ‘ECA Stack’ – ephedrine users report enhanced exercise performance, body fat loss and appetite suppression. Yet the use of this psychoactive substance can have acute health implications, including adverse side-effects such as tachycardia, arrhythmias, cardiovascular disease, pulmonary oedema (see e.g. The European Centre for Drugs and Drug Addictions (EMCDDA; 2013). Given the tension between health risk and ephedrine-induced weight loss we wondered how men justified their use of ephedrine. Our recently completed project examined reader discussions from the online version of a popular men’s magazine using discourse analysis (Potter, 1996). We focused on how (il)legitimate users of this psychoactive substance minimise health-defeating side effects whilst also working up their own success stories. In particular we showed how a ‘community of practice’ was worked up based on reciprocated knowledge and experience (Ba, 2001; Greer, 2012).

‘I can’t be the only one?’: A discourse analysis of men’s online breast cancer.

Dr Matthew Hall, Prof Brendan Gough, Prof Kate Hunt & Dr Sarah Seymour-Smith

Breast cancer is still predominantly perceived as a ‘women only’ illness (Fentiman et al., 2006). Since male breast cancer is still poorly understood we wondered how men discussed their illness. Our project examined wo/men discussions from a popular online cancer support forum using discourse analysis (Potter, 1996). Although male breast cancer is still relatively rare in men (1:1000), risk increases significantly by occupation (regular contact with high temperatures and emissions) (Palli et al., 2005) and lifestyle choices. Indeed, obesity is one of the most common causes of hyperoestrogenisation in men (Fentiman et al., 2006) and excessive alcohol consumption increases men’s risk by 16% (Guenel et al., 2004). Whilst it is too early to draw conclusions on the future impact of social trends (Ruddy and Winer, 2013) what is certain is that men report experiencing isolation and male specific concerns e.g. hair loss and impaired sexual performance. What we also found was that men claimed healthcare practitioners misunderstand their needs because their experience has been predominantly with women. Indeed, the majority of healthcare staff were reported to be women. We also found that men distinguished their experiences of breast cancer from women’s and when men did emotion talk this was often frowned upon.
Politics and International Relations have held two very successful research conferences in recent months, led by two of our new research clusters.

Relocation, Continuity and Transformation in Middle East-Asia Relations

The Nottingham Conference Centre at the Nottingham Trent University - Thursday 10th April

Dr Imad El-Anis

The Division of Politics and International Relations’ Middle East and North Africa (MENA) research cluster held its first annual conference at the end of last term. This one day interdisciplinary conference explored the implications of change and transformation in the MENA and the region’s relationship with major state and non-state actors in Asia. This neglected set of relationships was explored through a range of methodologically and theoretically diverse research projects in the fields of Politics, International Relations, Political Economy, Business and Law. The conference brought together participants conducting research on the MENA that included postgraduate and early career researchers as well as more experienced colleagues, from a range of universities and the public and private sectors actors in the UK and abroad. Delegates presenting included scholars from NTU, the University of Keele, the University of Nottingham, Georgetown University in Washington, DC, Metropolitan University Prague; Freie Universitat in Berlin and the National Defence University in Islamabad. The conference provided scholars with an opportunity to share their research with colleagues, as well as with representatives from I.B. Tauris and Wiley Blackwells. Please see the MENA research cluster webpages at the following link for more information about our work:

http://www.ntu.ac.uk/apps/research/groups/22/home.aspx/group/156381/overview/middle_east_and_north_africa
Eco-logics: Ethics, Politics, Art Conference

Nottingham Contemporary - Tuesday 6th May.

Dr Kevin Love

The term ‘eco-logics’ attempts to convey the necessity for new forms of address that evade, disrupt or reconfigure the traditional geometries of thought commonly applied to the Human-Nature dyad. The Eco-logics Conference was organised and hosted by the Ethics, Ecology, Identity research cluster in the Division of Politics and International Relations, in association with the Centre for Critical Theory at Nottingham University and the Nottingham Contemporary. In order to facilitate a detailed and lengthy discussion of emergent themes, the programme purposefully departed from the standard conference design, adopting instead a workshop/roundtable format. The event successfully drew together academics and artists from a range of disciplinary backgrounds and practices, all of whom were engaged with questions concerning our relation to ‘nature’ and the nature of relationality. Two key note speakers (Prof Arto Haapala from the University of Helsinki and Dr Tom Tyler from Oxford Brookes University) provided stimulating and provocative addresses that acted as a starting point for roundtable discussions. Principle themes that emerged concerned the politico-economic, ethical and aesthetic forms of relation that presently exist, their impact and consequence, and the possibility of envisioning new modes of engagement which adequately reflect our developing understanding of the natural world. The format worked incredibly well, prompting one of our key notes to remark that it was the most productive academic event he had ever attended. The event concluded with a discussion of future possible outputs, these will take the form of a research network and the development of an edited collection.
The Division has also negotiated a third conference to be hosted by the new Insecurity Political Violence and Change (IPVC) research cluster (September 15th-16th 2014), “Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism and (Neo)Liberalism: Vernacular Perspectives”. Funding has already been confirmed by the British International Studies Association (BISA) as well as the NTU School of Social Sciences. The conference organiser is Dr Chris Baker-Beall, and NTU had to compete with Warwick University for the rights to host the event which has one confirmed keynote speaker from New Zealand, with two others pending.

Research dissemination

Dr Kevin Love has been awarded a Visiting Professorship as part of the prestigious European MA Aesthesis programme (http://www.aisthesis-master.de/media aisthsis_flyer_e.pdf). For the next five months he will be teaching courses at LMU Munich, KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt and the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in Munich, as well as participating in research activities and speaking at an International Symposium.
Professor Matt Henn has completed a chapter with Nick Foard for an edited collection published by the Political Studies Association, “Beyond the Youth Citizenship Commission: Young People and Politics”. The chapter presents key findings from their ESRC research project, and considers the arguments for and against the idea of introducing compulsory voting for young people. This high profile PSA publication includes a collection of impact position papers that are currently being targeted at government and shadow ministers, policy-makers and citizenship groups, and is designed to inform policy and practice with respect to young people’s apparent disengagement from democratic politics and institutions in Britain. The full volume is available on-line at http://www.psa.ac.uk/psa/news/psa-launches-beyond-youth-citizenship-commission-volume

Matt Henn and Nick Foard have also completed a commissioned article that they were invited to write for The Conversation (“Make the vote meaningful for young people – not compulsory”) which was published on April 25th 2014 at https://theconversation.com/make-the-vote-meaningful-for-young-people-not-compulsory-25939. Matt has also been invited to write a short article for the Local Government Association’s fortnightly membership magazine - this is a high-impact publication which is distributed free to around 18,400 councillors and council chief executives in England and Wales.

Matt Henn led on a media campaign organised by the Economic and Social Research Council to publicise research that he and Nick Foard have been conducting into young people’s political participation. The research was reported in various national and international broadcast and print media, as well as other specialist, professional and practitioner publications (including “Children and Young People Now”, “The Municipal Journal”, “The Big Issue”) and web-sites and e-bulletin (eg., the British Youth Council Facebook page and fortnightly e-bulletin which is sent to 15,500 individual members and citizenship groups and agencies).

Matt Henn was invited to present an opening paper at the Community Engagement and the Individual Electoral Registration (IER) Experience conference organised by the Local Area Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA). Matt presented key findings from an ESRC research project that he and Nick Foard have been leading, and considered how young people might be encouraged to vote at the 2015 General Election. This impact event (April 16th 2014) took place in Manchester, and Matt presented to an audience of professionals working on election-related matters (details at http://laria.org.uk/?p=2250).

Matt Henn was invited to the Universitat Autonoma Barcelona and contributed to a workshop on the May European assembly elections, and also led a series of classes in research methods for masters and doctoral students (May 12th and 13th 2014).
Professor Azrini Wahidin is Chairing and Judging the Undergraduate Awards for the category of Social Sciences. The panel consists of international academics and two colleagues from NTU, Dr Jason Pandya Wood and Dr James Hunter who have also joined the board. The Undergraduate Awards is the world’s only pan-discipline academic awards programme that identifies leading creative thinkers at undergraduate level. For further details go to http://www.undergraduateawards.com/.

As a member of the Cost Action Group Offender Supervision in Europe Azrini represented the UK in Malta and is also currently involved in research on the experiences of probation supervision.

Azrini delivered a paper at the recent British Sociological Association Conference drawing on her forthcoming book: Ex-combatants, gender and the peace process in Northern Ireland. Her paper was titled: Troubling Women? Voices of Former Female Volunteers in the IRA and their Experiences of the Violence of Incarceration.

Azrini was a member of the plenary session and delivered a paper at the Penal Law, Abolitionism and Anarchism Conference held in Nottingham. The paper was titled ‘A Libertarian Criminology or are criminologists Zoo Keepers of Deviancy?’ James Hunter and Azrini have also completed their report for the Crime, Drug Partnership on the intersections of crime, gender and ethnicity.

In response to the recent publication of the Ellison Review about the police handling of the Stephen Lawrence case Professor Simon Holdaway was interviewed on BBC 5Live, LBC, Radio 4 and BBC Television news. The Guardian and The Mail Online also reported his views about the review.

On 5th March Simon acted as rapporteur at the N8 Group of Universities, Police Research Network Workshop about Public Engagement in Policing. The workshop involved academics, police officers and police and crime commissioners from the N8 area.

On 19th February Simon gave the keynote paper at The University of Derby, School of Law day conference on ‘Diversity and Justice’.
Professor Robert Dingwall is actively looking for contributions to a special issue of *Contemporary Social Science* that he is editing on the future of high-speed rail. If you would like to make a contribution you can access details here: http://explore.tandfonline.com/cfp/pgas/contemporary-social-science-special-issue-hs2

Dr Eva Zysk was also asked to present a 2 hour training session on the April 23rd for NHS mental health therapists and trainees on morphing fears (a type of OCD).

Dr Nadja Heym completed her PhD at the University of Nottingham in 2009 looking at individual differences in antisocial and psychopathic tendencies. From 2008-2010, she worked as Research Coordinator at the Brain & Body Centre (UoN) for the IMAGEN project - a FP6 funded European research project investigating brain function, psychopathology and risk taking behaviour in over 2000 adolescents across eight European testing sites. From 2010 she held a teaching position in Individual Differences, Social and Developmental Psychology at the University of Nottingham and since April 2014 she has been a Lecturer in Psychology at Nottingham Trent University.

Nadja is a member of the International Society for the Study of Individual Differences (ISSID), the European Association of Personality Psychology (EAPP), the British Psychological Society (BPS, designation MBPsS) and the BPS Division of Forensic Psychology, as well as a founding member of the British Society for the Psychology of Individual Differences (BSPID).

Her research interests include: individual differences in maladaptive and antisocial and psychopathic tendencies in the general population across the life-span. In this context, she also studies social attribution processes, decision making, mental health and well-being.
Spring Bank Holiday - 26 May
Examinations (4 week block) - 12 May – 06 June
End of academic year - 06 June
Clear weeks to Graduation week - 6 weeks
Graduation - 21 to 25 July
University year ends - 31 July
August Bank Holiday - 25 August
Examinations - 26 August – 05 September
Welcome Week - 22 September
Term 1 Starts 10 Weeks (UG & PG) - 29 September

Next Issue: November 2014

If you wish to contribute to the next issue of the newsletter, then please contact Dr Matthew Hall:
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