

The ESRC Network for Integrated Behavioural Science is a partnership among the Universities of Nottingham, Warwick, and East Anglia. Visit us online at <http://www.behavioural-science.ac.uk>

Network officially launches

The **ESRC Network for Integrated Behavioural Science (NIBS)** is a cross-disciplinary group of researchers who develop and test models of human behaviour and behavioural change, whilst drawing out implications for the formulation and evaluation of public policy.

The Network was established with almost £4m funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) to investigate what can be done to ensure key policy decisions better reflect real-world behaviour.

In the November 2013 [press release](#) announcing the launch, Professor **Chris Starmer**, Principal Investigator of NIBS, commented, "The award underlines the enormous potential significance of our work. We hope our research will eventually have a direct influence on government policy, shape financial regulation and assist in the design of products and services. By far the most important benefit that could ultimately emerge is that many of the high-level decisions that affect all our lives will at last be firmly rooted in reality."

NIBS collaborates with colleagues from [seven international centres of excellence](#) through an exchange programme for researchers, and the Advisory Group includes academic advisors and affiliate members invited to represent business, industry, media and government.

In its first year the Network awarded funding for 12 projects covering a range of themes including strategic thinking, measures of imprecision and similarity perceptions. Projects are led by one of 19 [Co-Investigators](#) from across three partner organisations.

Household Finance Workshop in May

The Network's first public workshop will focus on individual and household financial decision-making and behaviour in financial markets. It will take place in Nottingham from 6 to 8 May 2014.

Submissions are invited from all disciplinary backgrounds. The [call for papers](#) on the NIBS website has fuller details. The closing date for submissions is 23 February 2014. We encourage you to forward this call on to anyone who might have an interest in participating.

Spaces will be limited. NIBS will be reserving some spaces for participation from non-academic organisations, with funding available for expenses for non-academic representatives.

Those who would like to attend the workshop but do not wish to present a paper, should register their interest by e-mail to suzanne.robey@nottingham.ac.uk

Human Zoo on BBC Radio 4

NIBS Co-Investigators **Dr Abigail Barr, Nick Chater and Bob Sugden** talk about research on social norms and fairness on [Radio 4's The Human Zoo series 3 episode 3](#), broadcast on 28 January 2014.

More on Abigail's work can be found in the book, [Experimenting with Social Norms: Fairness and Punishment in a Cross-Cultural Perspective](#) edited by Jean Ensminger and Joseph Henrich which is currently available for preview.

Publications

Luigino Bruni and **Robert Sugden** published 'Reclaiming Virtue Ethics for Economics' in the [Journal of Economic Perspectives](#). Using the methods of virtue ethics and with reference to the writings of some major economists, it proposed an understanding of the purpose (telos) of markets as cooperation for mutual benefit, and identified traits that thereby counted as virtues for market participants; concluding that the market need not be seen as a virtue-free zone.

Christopher Boyce, Alex Wood, James Banks, Andrew Clark and **Gordon Brown** published 'Money, Well-Being, and Loss Aversion: Does an Income Loss Have a Greater Effect on Well-Being Than an Equivalent Income Gain' in [Psychological Science](#). Higher income is associated with greater well-being, but do income gains and losses affect well-being differently? Findings showed that loss aversion applies to experienced losses, challenging suggestions that loss aversion is only an affective-forecasting error. By failing to account for loss aversion, longitudinal studies of the relationship between income and well-being may have overestimated the positive effect of income on well-being. Moreover, societal well-being might best be served by small and stable income increases, even if such stability impairs long-term income growth.

Neil Stewart, Stian Reimers and Adam J L Harris published 'On the Origin of Utility, Weighting, and Discounting Functions: How They Get Their Shapes and How to Change Their Shapes' in [Management Science](#). (in press). They present a theoretical account of the origin of the shapes of utility, probability weighting, and temporal discounting functions. The data demonstrate that there is no stable mapping between attribute values and their subjective equivalents.

Visit the NIBS website for a [full list of research publications by Network investigators](#).

Behavioural Economics and Public Health

In a [recent working paper](#), Ryota Nakamura, Marc Suhrcke, and **Daniel John Zizzo** propose a "triple test" for evaluating the usefulness of behavioural economics models for public health policy. They outline three criteria:

1. Whether the model provides reasonably new insights;
2. Whether these have been properly applied to policy settings;
3. Whether they are corroborated by evidence.

Where a test is not passed, this may point to directions for needed further research. They consider the cases of social interactions models, self-control models and, in relation to health message framing, prospect theory; out of these, only a correctly applied prospect theory fully passes the tests at present.

Eamonn Ferguson and **Chris Starmer** published 'Incentives, expertise, and medical decisions: testing the robustness of natural frequency framing' in [Health Psychology](#). The study involved 325 participants and concluded that the Natural Frequency (NF) effect is robust to incentives supporting the use of NF frames in clinical settings.

Spotlight: Albert Weale

Albert Weale is Professor of Political Theory and Public Policy at University College London. Albert received a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2013 Queen's Birthday Honours List for his services to political science. NIBS is pleased to have Albert as a member of the Network's Advisory Group.

Albert published a brief intellectual autobiography devoted to his interest in health policy called '[Political Ideals and Personal Encounters](#)' in Adam Oliver (ed.), *Personal Histories in Health Research*.