

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>

Events News

On 5 September, UEA hosted an event to mark Bob Sugden's 70th birthday, by celebrating his diverse and path-breaking theoretical and empirical contributions to economics, philosophy and game theory. This very special event was attended by many of Bob's former students and co-authors including several NIBS researchers. NIBS Co-Investigators Andrea Isoni, Graham Loomes and Chris Starmer were among those who presented at the conference.

Pictured here are a few of the attendees



From 18 to 20 September, we held our annual NIBS Workshop. This year the University of Warwick hosted the event. As usual the aim was for NIBS colleagues and close collaborators to share their research, and spend time discussing possible new collaborations. Plans are already underway for next year's event which UEA will be hosting.

Welcome to our New PhDs

Lara Suraci (Nottingham) and Laura Wei (Warwick) commence their PhDs this month. Both students align with NIBS through scholarships financed by institutional commitment to our project. We were delighted they were both able to join us at our September Workshop, as it was a great opportunity to meet with NIBS colleagues.

Congratulations to NIBS at WBS

Pictured here are members of the NIBS team at Warwick Business School with their Outstanding Interdisciplinary Research (at Warwick) Award. This was presented at the WBS end-of-year party on 11 July 2019. Congratulations to the team at WBS.



Voter Registration - update

In our last newsletter we told you about some research by Felix Koelle, Tom Lane, Daniele Nosenzo and Chris Starmer which was published in *Behavioural Public Policy* in June. This study examines the issue of student voter registration, and it tested the effects of nudges 'in the field'.

Our partner (Oxford City Council) has received positive feedback on the project and it's understood there are plans for The Cabinet Office to include our NIBS poster presentation in a case study. You can [view the research paper online here](#).

New Paper in Management Science

[Reexamining How Utility and Weighting Functions Get Their Shapes: A Quasi-Adversarial Collaboration Providing a New Interpretation](#) by Despoina Alempaki, Emina Canic, Timothy L. Mullett, William J. Skylark, Chris Starmer, Neil Stewart & Fabio Tufano was published online 1 August 2019.

In 2015, a paper by Stewart, Reimers and Harris (SRH) was published in Management Science. It demonstrated that shapes of utility and probability weighting functions could be manipulated by adjusting the distributions of outcomes and probabilities on offer, as predicted by the theory of decision by sampling. They call this the 'SRH effect' which, at face value, profoundly challenges standard interpretations of preference theoretic models in which such functions are supposed to reflect stable properties of individual risk preferences.

Motivated by this challenge the authors undertook an extensive replication exercise, based on a series of experiments conducted as a quasi-adversarial collaboration across different labs, and involving researchers from both economics and psychology.

Although the effect was clearly replicated, it also arose in designs set up to control for the decision by sampling explanation. In addition, analysis using a model-free comparison approach found no evidence of patterns akin to the SRH effect. On the basis of simulation exercises, they demonstrate that the SRH effect may be a consequence of mis-specification biases arising in parameter recovery exercises that fit imperfectly specified choice models to experimental data. Overall, the analysis casts the SRH effect in an entirely new light.

New Paper in Nature Human Behaviour

[People Prefer Coordinated Punishment in Cooperative Interactions](#) by Lucas Molleman, Felix Koelle, Chris Starmer and Simon Gaechter

was recently published in Nature Human Behaviour. This collaboration with the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin (one of our international partners) acknowledges support from both NIBS 1 & 2.

Human groups can often maintain high levels of cooperation despite the threat of exploitation by individuals who reap the benefits of cooperation without contributing to its costs. Prominent theoretical models suggest that cooperation is particularly likely to thrive if people join forces to curb free riding and punish their non-contributing peers in a coordinated fashion. However, it is unclear whether and, if so, how people actually condition their punishment of peers on punishment behaviour by others.

This paper provides direct evidence that many people prefer coordinated punishment. With two largescale decision-making experiments (total n = 4,320), the authors create minimal and controlled conditions to examine preferences for conditional punishment and cleanly identify how the punishment decisions of individuals are impacted by the punishment behaviour by others. They find that the most frequent preference is to punish a peer only if another (third) individual does so as well. Coordinated punishment is particularly common among participants who shy away from initiating punishment. With an additional experiment they further show that preferences for conditional punishment are unrelated to well-studied preferences for conditional cooperation.

These results highlight the importance of conditional preferences in both positive and negative reciprocity, and they provide strong empirical support for theories that explain cooperation based on coordinated punishment.

[A full text version of the paper can be viewed via this share edit link.](#)