

*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>*

## **NIBS Spring Conference 2015**

The second annual NIBS Spring Conference will take place this year from 21 to 23 April at the University of Nottingham.

The theme of the conference this year is Behavioural Science & Policy. We are pleased to present our four keynote speakers:

- **Colin Camerer**  
Robert Kirby Professor of Behavioural Economics at California Institute of Technology
- **Nick Chater**  
Professor of Behavioural Science at University of Warwick (Business School)
- **Paul Slovic**  
Professor of Psychology at University of Oregon
- **Catherine Eckel**  
Sara & John Lindsey Professor at Texas A&M University

The call for papers closed on 16 January. Registration is set to open at the end of February.

Details of how to register and up-to-date information about our programme will be available on our [NIBS 2015 conference website](#).

## **Publications**

Do student evaluations of university reflect inaccurate beliefs or actual experience? A relative rank model, by **Gordon D. A. Brown**, Alex M. Wood, Ruth S. Ogden and John Maltby. (2015). *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 28(1): 14-26.

The UK National Student Survey (NSS) plays a key role in ranking university degree courses in many league tables. In addition, there is a strong steer in the higher education sector both to measure the quality of instruction, as well as students' satisfaction with their university programmes, in particular now that student fees have seen substantial increases in recent years.

Using questions from the NSS, the authors examined whether and how students' expressed satisfaction with issues such as feedback promptness and instructor enthusiasm depends on the context of comparison.

A key finding of the study is that satisfaction ratings and quality of provision are different quantities. Students' responses are influenced strongly by their beliefs about how their experience ranked among the distribution of student's experiences at other universities, even when those beliefs about the experience at other universities are inaccurate.

The authors assert quality and satisfaction should be assessed separately, with objective measures (such as actual times to feedback), rather than subjective ratings (such as satisfaction with feedback promptness), being used to measure quality wherever practicable.

### Payday Lending

Changes to payday lending regulations made a big impact in the media at the end of 2014.

NIBS Co-Investigator **John Gathergood** testified at the Treasury Select Committee on the policy. His testimony was covered in The Independent and other national media outlets. John has also authored opinion pieces in FT Advisor; a think piece with ResPublica entitled 'Climbing the Credit Ladder: short-term loans as a path to long-term credit' (covered in the FT and Guardian); and given interviews with BBC Radio 4, Radio 5 Live and Sky News in relation to the FCA policy.

In the FT Adviser, John said, "Fundamental change must occur in how lenders treat customers who cannot repay their debts. The payday lending market can only move forward with a radical re-thinking of its offering to consumers."

### Studying coordination problems

When individuals, groups, or even nations desire to act together to achieve something that none can achieve alone, they must often negotiate between multiple ways of accomplishing this. Typically, this will require some form of shared knowledge of the situation, a degree of assurance between parties, or some complex reasoning about what others are likely to do. This is the essence of a formal 'coordination problem.'

In December 2014, a group of economists and psychologists from within the Network met for a day-long workshop on coordination.

To find out more about this, and other similar events organised by the Network, visit the [NIBS Blog](#).

### Mind, Society and Behavior

The newly launched [World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society and Behavior](#) published by The World Bank argues that development policies based on new insights into how people actually think and make decisions will help governments and civil society more readily tackle such challenges as increasing productivity, breaking the cycle of poverty from one generation to the next, and acting on climate change.

The report holds new insights on how people make decisions; it provides a framework to help development practitioners and governments apply these insights to development policy. Drawing on background papers and notes prepared by researchers including **Abigail Barr**, Associate Professor and Reader in Economics, and NIBS Co-Investigator. Abigail worked with Pieter Serneels, Andrew Zeitlin and Frederic Mugisha on community participation in Ugandan public primary school accountability.

The full [World Development Report 2015](#) is available online (PDF).

### PhD Student Workshop: Lab in the field

The University of East Anglia has partnered with the Choice Lab at the Norwegian School of Economics to present the third annual PhD student workshop on Experimental Development Economics: Lab in the Field. The event will take place on 25 April 2015 in London.

The program includes a keynote speech by The Choice Lab researcher Bertil Tungodden about risk taking, choice and social preferences. In addition to Tungodden, Arjan Verschoor, University of East Anglia and Morten Lau, Durham University will also give keynotes.

More details on the programme and registration can be found at [this link](#).