NIBS
Network for Integrated Behavioural Science

June 2017

*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 2017

The programme for the Behavioural Science and Public Policy workshop held from 3-5 May at University of Warwick is [available online](). This event featured a series of roundtable discussions among ESRC NIBS and Leverhulme 'Value' Programme researchers and members of the policy and regulatory community, on the use of behavioural insights in shaping policy.

September Meeting Dates Announced

The next annual NIBS workshop for NIBS-funded researchers and close collaborators will take place 6 to 8 September 2017 at the Derby Conference Centre, Derby.

This will be the last opportunity for those in receipt of NIBS funding to update the Network on their research progress before the end of the current grant on 30 September 2017, but see news of NIBS 2.0 below too!

Connecting with our Partners

In September 2017 The Center for Behavioral Decision Research (one of our international partners) will be hosting a conference at which NIBS and Leverhulme 'Value' Programme colleagues will be participating. The focus of the conference (which will take place at Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh) will be tailored to meet the needs and research interests of our group. Professor George Loewenstein, Co-director of the Center for Behavioral Decision Research at CMU, and the Director of Behavioral Economics at the Center for Health Incentives at the Leonard Davis Institute of the University of Pennsylvania, has attended past NIBS events and the group is looking forward to this excellent opportunity to network on the other side of the Atlantic.

Next Destinations

The current grant from the Economic and Social Research Council supporting the Network is set to end on 30 September 2017. We would like to wish all the best to some of our PhDs and post-docs as they move on to the next stage of their careers:

- **Tom Lane** (Nottingham PhD) – has taken up a teaching position at the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China.
- **Emily Wyman** (Nottingham Post Doc) – has secured funding to undertake 2 projects with CeDEx, but is currently on maternity leave.
- **Dennie van Dolder** (Nottingham Post Doc) – has accepted a position at the University of Amsterdam.
- **Tim Mullett** (Warwick Post Doc) – has secured a position as an ESRC Research Fellow in the Warwick Business School.
- **Francesco Fallucchi** (UEA Post Doc) – will join the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research as a tenure-track Researcher in the Personnel and Behavioural Economics group.

We have submitted an application to the ESRC for a follow-on project (nicknamed "NIBS 2.0") which would build upon our work to date and develop a particular focus on the science of consumer behaviour. We are pleased to inform you that our proposal has been assessed and recommended for funding, although we were awaiting more details when this newsletter went to press.

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Policing the Way

Neil Stewart (NIBS Co-Investigator and Professor of Behavioural Science at Warwick) has been working with "big data" from police systems and using insights from behavioural science to address central questions in policing, including:

- Do officers and staff learn from complaints and conduct cases?
- Do good managers reduce days lost to sickness in their staff?
- Why is there disproportionality in stop and search?

Early results from this research have featured:

- Blue light collaboration at the Met Police Commissioner's 100 event at The Shard.
- Discussant on the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime at the Policing and Crime in a Global City Conference, City Hall, London.
- Speaker on "Stop and search" at West Midlands Police International Study Tour, Birmingham.
- Speaker on "Learning from Police Complaints and Conduct" at the NIBS September workshop 2016 (University of Warwick).

Cognitive biases and unfounded beliefs

The desire for evidence-based policy is motivated in part by the realisation that conventional wisdom can be wrong. Claims that "everybody knows" are true, sometimes turn out not to be.

Understanding how conventional wisdom can go awry falls squarely within the NIBS mission. In a recent blog post, **Theodore Turocy** (NIBS Co-Investigator and outfielder for Norwich Iceni in the British Baseball League) offers a brief case study from the world of sport.

In baseball, teams take turns at bat over nine innings. It is just about universally believed that being the team to bat last confers a strategic advantage. Yet, neither empirical data nor theoretical analysis corroborate the belief. The post outlines how several cognitive biases, studied in NIBS research in other settings, can help us understand why such beliefs form and can persistent, even in the absence of underpinning evidence.

Featured publication

Growth and Inequality in Public Good Provision by **Simon Gächter**, Friederike Mengel, Elias Tsakas, Alexander Vostroknutov, is forthcoming in the *Journal of Public Economics* (available online March 2017).

Other things equal, we mostly view growth as good, and inequality as undesirable. Whether the two are inextricably linked is a topic of significant public debate.

This paper studies a small laboratory economy, in which participants' wealth can grow (or shrink) over time depending on the outcomes of previous rounds of interaction. Successful growth requires that individuals contribute their wealth towards a public good, at the cost of a short-run private benefit to themselves.

In the experiments, amounts contributed are increasing over time. The growth of wealth across groups is substantial. The richest groups at the end of the experiment earn more than ten times what the poorest groups earn.

Introducing the possibility of punishment does not increase wealth, and in some cases even decreases it. When players can punish others, inequality in early periods tends to inhibit growth. The wealthy tend to invest more in the public good, increasing the wealth of all. Punishment of the wealthy in early periods prevents them from accumulating the wealth to invest in subsequent periods.