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Welcome to the 6th edition of INSIGHT

This latest edition contains a mixture of good news, interviews, events and features and provides an insight into the activities taking place within the IHC.

On page 4, we have details about our forthcoming events; on page 10, 14 and 23, we have details of past events and we have some interesting IHC member profiles from Paul Artes and Nick Pratt.

Please remember to send any good news stories to us via IHC@plymouth.ac.uk so that we can accurately capture all our activity in forthcoming publications.

With best wishes,
The IHC Team.
We have had a number of exciting conferences and seminars since January with more coming up over the spring and summer terms and we are always adding to the list of events that we have planned. Please check the IHC webpage for details of how to book your place and to find out about our forthcoming events.

**Rehabilitation Research Group Lecture Series co-hosted by IHC**

Lower extremity sensory impairment post
Speaker: Terry Gorst, Plymouth University/North Devon Healthcare Trust
20 January 2016

**IHC CMI AutoBiography Cluster Group Meeting**

‘Whoever Holds the Scissors/Relaxer Holds the Power: an auto/biographical reflection of my experience of Black hairdressers’
Speaker: Louise Owusu-Kwarteng, University of Greenwich
28 January 2016

**Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy Research Cluster Seminar Series co-hosted by IHC**

Reflections on Occupational Science
Speaker: Professor Matthew Molineux, Griffith University, Australia
9 February 2016

**Sociological Association (BSA) South West Regional Medical Sociology Group/Centre for Health and Social Care Innovation (CHeSCI) Conference 2016**

Medical Sociology and Impact
Speakers: Cath Quinn, Plymouth University; Lauren M Sardi, Quinnipiac University, Hamden, CT USA; Hannah Farrimond, University of Exeter; Joyce Halliday, Plymouth University; Kass Gibson, University of St Mark and St John
15 February 2016

**School of Health Professions Lecture Series co-hosted by IHC**

Organised curiosity and reflective practitioners - the keys to a research rich environment
Speaker: Professor Pip Logan, University of Nottingham
17 February 2016

**Rehabilitation Research Group Lecture Series co-hosted by IHC**

Do insoles affect balance in people with diabetes?
Speaker: Dr Joanne Paton, Plymouth University
24 February 2016

**Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy Research Cluster Seminar Series co-hosted by IHC**

The Distinct Contributions to Practice of Four Levels of Occupational Science Research
Speaker: Dr Doris Pierce, Eastern Kentucky University
8 March 2016
School of Health Professions Lecture Series co-hosted by IHC
Death, birth and a few other significant concerns: Some auto/biographical imaginings
Speaker: Professor Gayle Letherby, Plymouth University
16 March 2016

Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy Research Cluster Seminar Series co-hosted by IHC
Use of virtual words in occupational therapy
Speaker: Rashid Kashani, Plymouth University
10 May 2016

School of Health Professions Lecture Series co-hosted by IHC
The value of systematic reviews for health and social care
Speaker: Dr Katrina Bannigan, Plymouth University
11 May 2016

IHC Seminar
Breastfeeding – A window into mothering itself
Speaker: Lucy Parker, Plymouth University
17 May 2016

Rehabilitation Research Group Lecture Series co-hosted by IHC
WEB-PaMS; web based physiotherapy for people affected by Multiple Sclerosis; reflections on the first year of this feasibility study
Speaker: Rachel Dennett, Plymouth University
25 May 2016

IHC CCCS/Learning Outside Formal Education Research Cluster Seminar
Beyond words
27 May 2016

VOYAGE Ageing Research Conference 2016
10 June 2016

IHC/Voice, Inclusion and Participation Research Cluster Seminar
The posthuman child: decolonising childhood discourses
Speaker: Karin Murris, University of Cape Town (UCT)
15 June 2016

IHC/Plymouth Institute of Education Postgraduate Research Student Conference
18 June 2016

Rehabilitation Research Group Lecture Series co-hosted by IHC
Title TBC
Speaker: Emma Cowley, Plymouth University
13 July 2016

If you do not already receive our fortnightly events email and would like to be added to the distribution list please email us at ihc@plymouth.ac.uk
’The Presentation of Research and Everyday Life’

What is your current position and how did you get there?

I currently have an Emeritus Professorship in Sociology at the University of Manchester. I first arrived at the university in 1962, employed as a Research Associate on a study of a local factory and apart from a couple of short breaks I have remained at Manchester, becoming a Professor in 1997 and retiring in 2000. Not very exciting, I am afraid!

What are your connections with Plymouth?

Over the years I have given papers on various subjects and more recently, shared interests in auto/biographical approaches to social enquiry. This has led to my being invited to reflect on the participant observation study that took me to the University of Manchester in the first place. I have also acted as an External Examiner on Julie Parsons’ (Plymouth University) doctoral thesis dealing with gender, class and food, now published by Palgrave.
What are your key research interests and activities?

For several years, my main interests have focused on family studies. While I have been involved in some empirical studies (on the organisation Relate and on the processes of leaving home) my main focus has been more theoretical, looking at the way in which we conceptualise and understand family life. I have argued that we need to move away from thinking of ‘family’ as a noun (especially in thinking about the family) to thinking of family processes. In particular, I have elaborated the ideas associated with ‘family practices’ and in thinking about the ways in which people, individually and collaboratively, do family. More generally, I have been pleased at the way in which studies of family, intimacy and personal life have become a major stream within British sociology. This is reflected in the development of the journal, Families, Relationships and Societies which is now in its fourth year. I have also been highly flattered to have a centre, dealing with these topics in the context of everyday life, named after me at the University of Manchester.

In addition I have two main other interests. From the late 1980s I have been interested in men and masculinities where I have looked at some of the issues raised when men turn to studying themselves as gendered beings and also at some questions to do with fatherhood. Running alongside my other interests have been an interest in auto/biographical studies. I was one of the founding members of the British Sociological Association’s Auto/Biography Study Group and have attended most of its annual conferences. To me, there seems to be a natural affinity between the approaches developed by colleagues involved in this study group and my other interests. Everyday lives are gendered lives and many of the stories that people tell are family stories. The auto/biographical approach seems to be one of the best ways of capturing the fluid processes of everyday family, and gendered, lives.

In 2009, I published a book on the topic of acquaintanceship. This was something of a new departure although there are some continuities with my other interests. ‘Acquaintances’ are those individuals who occupy the fluid spaces between ‘strangers’ and ‘intimates’ and include workmates, neighbours as well as people you nod at in the street or the pub. I feel that these relationships have significance in their own right and play an important part in the way in which we construct our everyday social worlds.

Theoretically, I am now retired although I find myself using my sociological skills, such as they are, in all kinds of unexpected ways. As a volunteer for a local small museum I have found myself taking part in developing ways of evaluating particular exhibitions as well as providing a sociological dimension to topics such as Food, Leisure and even the English Civil Wars.
Successful funding for Commensality Project – Dr Julie Parsons

Just after lunch at 2:00pm on Friday May 1st 2015 I received an e-mail from the treasurer at the Foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness (SHI). In March I had applied for one of the two Mildred Blaxter postdoctoral fellowships the SHI award each year (with deadlines in March and October). This award is named for Professor Mildred Blaxter, a previous editor of the journal Sociology of Health and Illness, in recognition of her contribution to the discipline. Mildred Blaxter (1925-2010) is perhaps best known for her book *Health* (2010), as well as her work on inequalities, as Sally Macintyre (2010) writes in an “Appreciation of Mildred Blaxter”:

> With the repeated re-emergence of concerns about social inequalities in health in the UK, Mildred subsequently continued to contribute a more nuanced understanding of concepts of inequality and disadvantage (Blaxter, 1987, 1993, 2000, 2010).

The application process had been rigorous, as is usual with these competitions. Alongside the university requirements for R&I, I had to submit my recently completed PhD (March 2014), any outputs from this (Parsons 2014, Parsons 2015a), two statements from non Plymouth University referees familiar with my work, one of whom had to be an external examiner from my PhD, a reference from someone willing to act as a mentor (Professor Gayle Letherby) and of course a proposal that had to be related to the PhD. To cut a long story short the tenor of that Friday (before a May Bank Holiday weekend) e-mail was as follows...

We have now reviewed all of the applications for the Spring 2015 round of the Mildred Blaxter Fellowship and I am pleased to say that our reviewers have agreed to fund your proposal. Congratulations on that decision.

The SHI Mildred Blaxter postdoctoral fellowship was awarded for 12 months from the end of September 2015. The small-scale exploratory study is entitled “Commensality (eating together) as a tool for health, well-being, social inclusion and community resilience, at a rural land-based prisoner resettlement project”.

In my application I argued that this complemented my completed doctoral study, subsequent monograph (Parsons,
and other outputs that highlight the power of everyday foodways in reinforcing social and cultural divisions. I added that I had been involved with a local rural prisoner resettlement project ‘LandWorks’ since its inception, with guidance from Associate Professor Joyce Halliday who supervised master’s students’ early evaluations of this social enterprise. I interviewed the first ‘trainees’ at LandWorks in June 2013 and one of the MSc Social Research student’s did some early scoping of the project for her research placement option.

LandWorks is a rural land-based scheme that offers support and training to recently released prisoners and men released on temporary license (ROTL), referred to as ‘trainees’. At the heart of the project is the eating and sharing of a lunchtime meal with a range of visitors. Lunch is mostly a locally grown vegetarian meal and can be considered an act of ‘table fellowship’ (Coveney 2006), developed specifically to encourage social inclusion, to build links between trainees and the wider community and for trainees to develop social skills and tastes in food they might not otherwise have experienced. As noted in Parson’s (2015b) work early food experiences are significant in shaping identity and commensality fosters a sense of social inclusion and solidarity (Fischler 2011, Grignon 2001). Sharing everyday foodways has the capacity to create and re-create social bonds and values (Sutton 2001).

Indeed, the significance of commensality for reinstating cultural norms and values has been well documented (Bourdieu 1984). Arguably we eat nothing in isolation, but as part of a culture, so that we feed not only our appetites but also our social values and desire to belong (Fiddes 1991). This connection works both ways in terms of fostering inclusion and acceptability amongst trainees and the wider community. Further commensality has long been associated with maintaining social solidarity and as a method for influencing attitudes whether it is change towards healthy eating or a feeling of acceptance, it is worthy of further investigation. Findings from this small-scale exploratory study will help in fostering interdisciplinary and collaborative working with others in the areas of food and Public Health, especially those interested in food as a tool for social inclusion for marginalised groups.

References
Parsons, J. M. (2015b), Gender, Class & Food; families, health and bodies, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan
Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy Research cluster seminar series

“Occupational science is the study of humans as occupational beings. People have an innate desire to occupy themselves and occupations that are sustained over a period of time hold meaning to individuals which are personal and idiosyncratic. Occupation is not viewed in the lay sense of the term as a job of work, but as the things we choose to do in our daily lives that have meaning to us. We also know that what people do has an influence on their health and wellbeing, and the occupational science/occupational therapy research group aims to explore this link. Occupational science (OS) is informed by many disciplines interested in what people do, for example, occupational therapists (OT), human geographers, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, and educators. A better understanding of why and how people choose and sustain their engagement in their daily occupations will inform and influence health promotion of individuals, communities and populations. It will also guide occupational therapists in the use of occupations therapeutically.

The occupational science/occupational therapy research cluster in the School of Health Professions decided to promote OS/OT research and develop knowledge in this area, alongside development of PhD students and staff research. One of the ways to take this forward was by setting up an annual programme of seminars at PAHC to include presentation and discussion from leading figures in the field.

The first programme in the OS/OT monthly seminar series was in 2012-2013. The lectures in this series were mainly from our own staff and PhD students but also included a session from international authority on occupational science and editor of the Journal of Occupational Science, Honorary Professor Clare Hocking. Her presentation was titled “The Evolution and Progress of Occupational Science as a Discipline”. In subsequent years, exciting programmes of seminars have been offered and have been well received by staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students and practitioners. The seminars included many leading international authorities on occupational science and occupational therapy, who joined us by Skype or Webinar.

This seminar series is now well established and we are pleased to be hosting the 2015-2016 programme at the Peninsula Allied Health Centre (PAHC).

On 21st October Miranda Cunningham, Lecturer in Occupational Therapy, presented her MSc dissertation titled “Exploring the Lived Experience from an Occupational Perspective.” Miranda used a phenomenological approach to explore how five men who were residing in a homeless hostel experienced engaging in their daily occupations. Much of the literature on homelessness focuses on the causes of homelessness rather than the lived experience, and this presentation gave some moving examples of the participants’ experience of daily life on the streets and within the hostel. This study has made a contribution to developing the concept of ‘survival occupations’ and highlighted the occupational injustices experienced by homeless people.
On November 10th Dr Mick Collins joined us remotely and gave a fascinating talk on “Sustainability and Occupational Science” to a packed audience. This was followed by a seminar on December 8th from Tore Bonsaksen who joined us on an Erasmus exchange from Norway. He talked to us about the progress and development of the Model of Human Occupation.

**The spring lectures in the series were:**

**February 9th:** Professor Matthew Molineux, Head of the Discipline of Occupational Therapy at Griffith University, Australia “Reflections on Developments in Occupational Science”.

**8th March:** Professor Doris Pierce, Endowed Chair in Occupational Therapy in Eastern Kentucky “The Distinct Contributions to Practice of the Four Levels of Occupational Science Research”.

**10th May:** Rashid Kashani, Occupational Therapist “Use of Virtual Worlds in Occupational Therapy”

Contact tanja.krizaj@plymouth.ac.uk or anne.roberts@plymouth.ac.uk for more information on any of the information given.
I was appointed as Professor for Eye and Vision Sciences and Academic Lead in Optometry at the School of Health Professions at Plymouth University in November, 2014.

After finishing my clinical training (Optometry pre-registration year) at the Royal Eye Hospital in Manchester, in 1997, I decided to stay on at the University of Manchester for a PhD. Working with Prof David Henson’s team we developed new ways to map the visual field. Visual field tests, often referred to as perimetry, play an important role in clinical vision care – some eye conditions can lead to “blind spots” in the visual field that develop so insidiously that they do not become obvious to patients until the final stages of the disease. Next to visual acuity (measured with the well-known letter charts), visual field tests are probably the most often performed vision tests – but strangely they have not received the attention they deserve. Perimetry is still often perceived as a “black art” by clinicians, and visual field tests are seen as difficult-to-do by many patients. Making these tests more informative and efficient, and less challenging to perform, still occupies me to this day.

My next move was to Nova Scotia in Canada where I joined Balwantray Chauhan’s group at the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at Dalhousie University for a 2-year post-doctoral fellowship in glaucoma. Under the leadership of Raymond LeBlanc this group had developed a truly outstanding clinical research facility that was fully integrated in the Halifax Eye Care Centre, the largest eye department in atlantic Canada. This had made it possible to recruit a large cohort of committed patients with glaucoma who would regularly attend research sessions alongside their clinical care appointments.

The longitudinal datasets from these investigations, collected over more than two decades, were second to none in the world. My postdoc focused on relating changes in the visual field to those observed at the optic nerve head, the beautiful structure at the back of the eye where fibres from retinal ganglion cells collectively leave the eye to form the optic nerve. Prof Chauhan and his colleagues had been pioneering a new technology, confocal scanning laser tomography, to capture the 3-dimensional surface topography of the optic nerve head with hitherto unprecedented precision. At the time it was thought that these objective measurements might largely replace visual field examinations for the monitoring of glaucoma, but surprisingly our work
demonstrated that changes at the optic nerve head occur “out of sync” with changes in visual function. The practical consequence of this is that retinal imaging technologies must be used in conjunction with visual function tests such as perimetry (rather than in isolation) – a fundamental change in how glaucoma is managed.

The work in Halifax opened up a completely new world to me – that of ocular imaging technologies – which during the last decade has completely changed clinical practice in ophthalmology. Technologies such as Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) are now found in every hospital eye unit and also in more high-street optometrists’ practices, and they provide images of the retina that were beyond our wildest dreams when I trained as an optometrist 20 years ago. And what we have seen so far is likely only the beginning of a much larger train of development.

Is it likely that vision test will, in future, be completely replaced by imaging technologies? Can smart cameras replace letter charts, visual field tests, and reports of what patients are actually seeing? Not likely, but clearly the role of vision and imaging tests is changing. Imaging technologies are becoming ubiquitous in primary eye care, and it is clear that this must have far-reaching implications on how optometrists are educated and trained. Optometrists in the UK have been the main providers of primary eye care for a long time, and they have an important role as gatekeepers to increasingly capable (and expensive!) secondary services provided by their medical colleagues in primary and secondary care. Unless we equip our students with the intellectual tools to keep up with the speed of change in diagnostic armamentarium, scope of practice, and organisation of healthcare, they will be left behind – unable to grasp the opportunities brought about by technological advances. And this is really what makes me want to get up in the morning.

At the same time, we need to work to make psychophysical (vision) tests better for patients and for clinicians. During the past twenty years much progress has been made by applying modern mathematical and statistical techniques to make vision tests faster and more efficient. Yet, there is much room left for improvement: surprisingly, some patients turn out to respond to vision stimuli quite differently from what our “models” lead us to expect. For example, they may be much more reluctant to “guess”, or become uncomfortable when pressed to make decisions under uncertainty. Also, most of today’s vision tests work much better in people with “normal” compared to those with damaged vision. Ironically it normally is in the latter group where the results are most important for deciding on medications or surgery.

We have recently attracted 100K of studentship funding from “Fight for Sight” to design a new visual field test for patients with moderate and advanced glaucoma. This will help our group to establish the foundations for a new approach to measure peripheral vision, and to find out how this test can help to predict patients who are at risk from falling.

This kind of work exemplifies the area where I believe our “Eye and Vision Research” group (one of the research clusters within the Centre for Health and Social Care Innovation) in Plymouth can make a real difference – in the translation of laboratory research into clinical tools that are useful in the consulting rooms. We are exceptionally lucky to have many keen and talented clinical colleagues in the regional eye units and in community practices in our area. Now our challenge is to harness this wonderful resource to build a powerful regional eye research network that will make a difference in years to come.
A conference on the theme ‘Methodology and Methods: innovation, challenges & opportunities’ took place on the 3rd December 2015. This highly successful annual conference now in its 10th year attracted a diverse audience of 85 delegates from across different disciplinary areas included allied health professions, clinical medicine, health and social services, arts, education and early childhood studies.

The Conference Keynote was delivered by Professor. Kalwant Bhopal, School of Education and Social Justice, University of Southampton.

Researching the ‘Other’: Towards an intersectional informed reflexivity

Prof. Bhopal explored the concept and practice of intersectionality-informed reflexivity as central to the research process. Using the authors’ experiences of conducting research with marginalized communities—minority ethnic women from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds in the UK; and Gypsy/Traveller women in the UK – this presentation explores intersectionality as a framework for understanding and analyzing the relationships between researchers and participants and the possibilities of “humanizing research” (Paris & Winn, 2014). Through this framework, the presentation seeks to examine questions about the challenges and possibilities of educational research processes that centre intersectionality.

Seventeen presentations were given across three streams of Creative, Visual and Auto/Biographical Approaches, Research in Healthcare Settings, and the Theoretical and Methodological Challenges in Research. A wide range of research approaches were explored. These included the exploration of realist approaches to multi-disciplinary based research, facet methodology, visual
methods, creative partnership working, critical interpretive synthesis in systematic reviews, qualitative interviewing hard to research populations, application of ‘inside-out’ method for a patient centred approach to evaluating care delivery, using lean methodology to improve health care systems and decision making, a rhizomatic approach to patient and public research involvement and the development of organisational change tool.

The conference facilitated some lively debates, and provided an opportunity for inter-disciplinary networking and discussion.

Copies of the conference abstracts and presenter biographies can be requested by emailing ihc@plymouth.ac.uk

**Twitter quotes for the #MI2015**

“Fascinating talk from Kalwant Bhopal on ‘intersectional informed reflexivity’”

“Interesting presentation on application of Lean Methodology in A&E setting”

“Cath Gristy Stories from the School Bus. Such an interesting presentation using Deluzian assemblage approach”

“#Creativity in our blood and we need it to flow form the earliest days”

“Marie Lavelle speaking about Parenting in hindsight, encouraging auto/biographical reflection”

**CMI Conference 2015 Presentations**

A range of topics were covered at the conference including:

‘Parenting in Hindsight’: Researching temporality

Stories from the School Bus

Exploring unwarranted variations in clinical healthcare practice: Implications for de-implementation

Creative Partnerships: working together to evaluate creatively

Patient and public involvement in research: A rhizomatic approach

Creating and Measuring Organisational Change for Person Centred Coordinated Care: the development of the organisational change tool (OCT)

Messiness and Facets: researching the bigger picture

Qualitative Interviewing for Difficult to Research Populations

The ‘Lean’ Approach of Value Stream Mapping in Emergency Care

Developing a collaborative care model for people with severe mental illness: programme theory development

‘Real world interpretation’ of patient case studies: a clinical panel’s contribution to studying decision making in emergency medical admissions

To Elicit, Explore and Elaborate: Using Visual Methods in Community-Based Evaluation Research on Young Black Male Achievement

Evaluating a complex intervention for offenders with common mental health problems: a novel methodological approach to outcome measure selection

Reflection of theory building in two multi-disciplinary ‘realist’ research projects
Coastal Academies: changing school cultures in disadvantaged coastal regions in England

Dr Tanya Ovenden-Hope and Dr Rowena Passy have been conducting longitudinal research into leadership in coastal academies for a number of years. The research began with Marine Academy Plymouth’s (MAP) conversion from a National Challenge school to academy status and the University’s involvement as MAP’s joint sponsor with Cornwall College and Plymouth City Council. We felt that this was an unmissable opportunity for Plymouth University researchers to follow the changes that would ensue within MAP, and set up a project whereby we visit the school each year to talk to senior leaders, teachers and a sample of students who entered MAP’s Year 7 in 2010 about their experiences and views. Publicly-available data provide the context for each year’s research visit.

We quickly recognised that there was something different about the challenges that this coastal academy faced, and wondered if this might be applicable to schools in other seaside locations. The next stage of the research was to apply for IHC funding to extend the research to include two further coastal academies that operated in isolated areas of high socio-economic deprivation. The findings from this study were picked up by the *Guardian* and drew attention to the challenges for student outcomes in disadvantaged coastal regions. The research demonstrated strong similarities between project schools in terms of leadership and student attainment, and inspired a further project extension to include six coastal academies, this time funded by Plymouth University and the Academies Enterprise Trust. The report from this round of research (Ovenden-Hope and Passy, 2015) demonstrated the common challenges faced by these coastal academies.
of educational isolation, the absence of local school improvement measures such as the London or City Challenges, low student attainment, issues with staff recruitment and retention, and failing local primaries.

Subsequently, Ofsted recognised that student performance in secondary schools in England was below benchmark in many coastal regions. At this time, we were working with the Future Leaders Trust (FLT), who had read our report and recognised the potential impact of our findings for other coastal schools facing similar challenges. Together we identified six schools who were working with the FLT who utilised the recommendations of our findings to write a case study on their own experiences relating to school improvement in coastal regions. The FLT issued a collaborative report (2015) which corroborated our findings, identifying four challenges for coastal schools and four recommendations for improvement. This report, along with our own and that of the Centre for Entrepreneurs (2015), which cited our work for seaside town education regeneration, arrived in the media in a timely fashion; the theme was picked up by the government in Nicky Morgan’s first speech on school improvement in which she acknowledged that coastal towns ‘struggle to recruit and retain good teachers’ and pledged to create a National Teaching Service. The research was also widely used in media articles nationally and internationally, including an article in the Guardian Teacher Network that used our recommendations for school improvement guidance. Tanya was also interviewed by the BBC for a magazine feature on ‘How do you rescue a seaside town?’. Since then Tanya has been asked for expert comment by the Education Media Centre on the latest Ofsted annual report, and we have both been invited to participate in government groups for professional teaching including the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Teaching Profession, chaired by MP Ian Mearns, and a new panel for Teaching Standards, called by Lord Jim Knight.

We are delighted that our longitudinal research into the impact of socio-economic deprivation in coastal regions for student attainment has been recognised nationally, and that its findings are having an impact on future policy and process.

References


Future Leaders Trust (2015) Combatting Isolation: why coastal schools are failing and how headteachers are turning them around, online link at http://www.future-leaders.org.uk/insights-blog/combatting-isolation-coastal-schools/


Dr Rowena Passey
GOOD NEWS

NIHR awards grants to Plymouth students

Two local clinicians have been awarded prestigious PhD fellowships from the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), thanks to successful applications submitted alongside Institute of Health and Community (IHC) academics from the Faculty of Health and Human Sciences.

Angie Logan, from Peninsula Community Health, Cornwall, has been awarded £267,066 to carry out research into whether stroke sufferers’ use of a standing frame to practise basic functional movements has a positive effect on their function. The aim of the study is to help stroke sufferers “get up and get moving” – a priority that a number of patients conveyed during discussions – and assess whether other medical complications can be lessened as a result. Her mentoring team, who were fundamental in putting the funding bid together, consists of Professor Jon Marsden, Chair in Rehabilitation; Dr Jenny Freeman, Associate Professor in Physiotherapy, both from the School of Health Professions; Professor Bridie Kent, Head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery and Dr Jillian Pooler, Lecturer in Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry.

Meanwhile, Richard Collings, from Torbay and Southern Devon Health and Care NHS Trust, has been awarded £270,033 to conduct a pilot study to test a new instant insole solution for people with diabetes that cuts waiting times and helps prevent foot ulceration and amputation. The study uses proven real time in-shoe pressure measurement technology to help design, produce, fit and then evaluate the performance of insoles for patients with diabetes within a single visit. His mentoring team who, again, were key in submitting the bid were Dr Jo Paton, NIHR Clinical Research Lecturer and Podiatrist; Professor Jon Marsden, Chair in Rehabilitation and Dr Jenny Freeman; all from the School of Health Professions and Professor Jos Latour,
Professor in Clinical Nursing.

Angie’s study aims to assess whether it is possible for people with severe stroke to use a standing frame to practise functional movements such as standing, and moving between sitting and standing. In addition, the research will find out if it is possible and practical to use a functional standing frame programme in the sub-acute hospital setting.

To help with the feasibility study, 50 people with a severe stroke will be recruited from four different Stroke Rehabilitation Units in Cornwall and Devon.

Participants will be randomly allocated to take part in one of two 45-minute programmes: either 30 minutes of a ‘functional standing programme’ followed by 15 minutes of usual physiotherapy, or the whole 45 minutes of usual physiotherapy management only.

The person assessing each participant will not be aware of which treatment participants are receiving, therefore the study will be assessor-blinded to minimise bias. Angie will assess the feasibility of undertaking these outcome measures and obtain an estimate of the size of any change with the intervention, which will inform the development of a future main study.

Currently, physiotherapy for people with severe stroke concentrates on practising tasks such as transfers in and out of a chair, which are important for independence and achieving discharge home. Standing up early after a stroke may help strengthen muscles, reduce orthostatic hypotension – a sudden drop in blood pressure when a patient moves from lying to standing – and minimise or prevent muscles becoming stiff and weaker.

Richard’s pilot study will compare the clinical effectiveness of the new instant insole with standard NHS insole provision to see which intervention is best at reducing pressure under the feet and preventing ulceration development.

The novel, low-cost, individualised and instant insole protocol for people with diabetes and neuropathy at risk of re-ulceration was iteratively developed by Dr Joanne Paton and Richard Collings. The protocol combined foot biomechanics with real time in-shoe pressure analysis to make the best of commercially available materials. The protocol was informed by Dr Paton’s previous research, a review of the literature and engagement with clinical experts and patients. Standard NHS practice often means that patients, at high risk of foot ulceration, wait months for bespoke footwear and insoles to be made, often without an acceptable alternative. When finally issued, the offloading performance of insoles is very varied and difficult to predict. The resulting health outcomes are currently assessed using a high-risk ‘wait and see if the foot condition deteriorates’ approach.

The full study is entitled Reducing Foot Plantar Pressure (ReFPres) in people with diabetes using an instant insole solution: a mixed methods pilot study. By identifying high pressure points at risk of developing ulceration at an earlier stage, providing a offloading insole instantly, and evaluating how well they work before they are issued, the new intervention aims to remove the previous delays between insole ordering and issue, optimise the insoles pressure reducing effect and remove the current clinical ‘guess work’ used to assess how well an insole work to reduce pressure.

The pilot study is taking place as a precursor to a larger trial to determine if the new technology testing method and the new way of working is sufficiently helpful in preventing ulcers developing. Richard and the team will be enlisting the help of podiatrists with experience of diabetes and neuropathy working within the NHS across three selected areas of Torbay and Southern Devon, Exeter and the Solent to run the randomised controlled trials.

Two groups of 38 people will be compared, all of whom have diabetes and sensory neuropathy (nerve damage) that have been categorised as moderate risk of developing a foot ulcer. One group will be randomly allocated special insoles made using this new scientific method and the other will be given plain cushioned insoles. Richard will then be able to test the feasibility of many aspects of the trial design and gather data about the ability of each insole to reduce under foot pressures and ulceration in order to inform a further larger clinical trial.
I’m not really one for looking back on life and identifying ‘turning points’, but 31 years ago as a sixth former taking three sciences at A-level and applying to study engineering at university, I applied for a scholarship from the Engineering Council. I got an interview and duly travelled down to London, where I was grilled on my desire to be an engineer by two rather staid gentlemen in suits. My recollection is that things didn’t go well, though the detail of most of it escapes me now. I do though remember the final question (read, ‘nail in the coffin’) which was being asked whether I was ‘a things person or a people person’. I can also recall my anger at being asked about what I then considered – and still do – to be a dim-witted dichotomy. My response was that I didn’t see them as mutually exclusive, though I knew this to be the wrong answer and sure enough I went on to study engineering at Oxford without the scholarship. Thanks goodness for 1980s grants, housing benefit and a common expectation amongst students regarding cycling everywhere.

I left Oxford as the only person in the cohort of 170 to go into primary teaching, though it’s worth noting that none of my close contemporaries went into engineering and are now all bankers and chief executive of big companies, rather belying the idea that universities train one for a particular job. Ten years later I found myself working for the University of Plymouth and have been here ever since, undertaking a number of different roles in the Faculty, then School, now Institute of Education. As a long-time employee one other thing has persisted too; the belief that it was still a stupid question. Indeed, whilst the anger has left me so that I now look back quite proudly at having stuck to my guns, the interest in it has been, if not deliberately then at least implicitly, at the heart of much of my work ever since. This work focuses on learning, of course, but a recognition that learning takes place in a social world that it filled with people and things, all of which form the context for life. Thankfully, my gut instinct as a teenager has matured into a more systematic understanding of these relationships through my work. I now know, for example, that the relationship between people and ‘things’ (both conceptual and physical) is at the heart of the work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Working in communist Russia, he theorised development as being rooted in the tripartite relationship between
subjects, working together on objects of activity and using artefacts (things) to mediate understanding. Just as people need activity and objects, with their specific social meaning and implicit goals, to form a context for understanding, so engineers need a social context within which to make their work meaningful. We over-engineer bridges because human life is precious to us; and we design HS2 because it’s politically expedient, though being built almost entirely of steel one wonders why we are getting rid of our steel industry at the same time. Anyway, you can’t sensibly engineer ‘things’ in the world without understanding people; and you can’t understand the development of people in society without appreciating the social role that ‘things’ play in their drive to make new sense of life.

My particular interest nowadays is in the social relationships which underpin classroom activity. Ten years ago my PhD examined the inherent tensions that exist for teachers in trying to manage classroom discussion at a time when ‘whole class interaction’ was just becoming fashionable. Essentially, how to make learning head in the right direction whilst still allowing learners the space to explore ideas and to make understanding their own. It also tackled this from the perspective of pupils and I still remember an interview with one 7 year old girl who, being a bright spark, had worked out that it paid to keep her hand down from time to time when the teacher asked questions. ‘Well’ she explained, ‘since he always expects me to answer, when I really want to say something I don’t put my hand up and then he asks me why and I get to answer’. Pure genius!

In my most recent study I’ve been asking primary teachers what they do in their assessment work; not the mechanics of how they carry it out, but the reasons for doing what they do. School assessment (and that at universities) is rife with tensions. Teachers have generally come into the profession because they like children and want to help them develop as young people; yet increasingly their jobs depend upon getting good (nay, ‘outstanding’) outcomes from these pupils. As one teacher put it to me: 

obviously I want my children to do well anyway, but then there is that extra thing of I want you to do well not just for yourselves, and for me to enjoy the fact that you’ve done well, but actually, you know, I need you to do well so I can kind of live in my house.

Thus, teachers learning the art – or is it now the science – of assessment are not pulling in a single direction. Indeed, for many it feels like they are being tugged in all directions by policy and practices which address competing demands of performativity. Similarly, pupils themselves are increasingly under pressure to achieve, not just for themselves but in order not to let their teachers down. ‘He’ll be disappointed in me’, as my daughter said to me the other day with reference to her teacher and the possibility of not ‘meeting her target grade’ on an impending maths test. Ten years ago I wonder if he’d have been disappointed ‘for’ her?

With my colleagues Peter Kelly and Ulrike Hohmann, we have also been examining the nature of expert teaching in different national contexts – particularly in Denmark and Germany. Stepping outside the UK is liberating in the way it opens up a view of one’s own system and makes one realise just how local it is. Denmark has traditionally had an education system centred on a more democratic view of schooling; in strong contrast to the marketised, accountability-driven UK context centred on social mobility
through individual achievement. We have been interested in the ways in which this manifests itself at the level of classrooms – what teachers are required to do in such systems; what makes them good at it, or not; and how this changes relationships with pupils and with learning itself.

Understanding education from this social, political perspective, but trying to understand the effects at school level, not just at the macro-level, has also underpinned the other major element of my work; the development and leadership of the Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD). This programme tries to encourage part-time doctoral students to use similar social perspectives on their own working lives to make sense of what is happening to them. It’s a wonderful experience, working with experienced professionals in the education world and helping them reconceptualise what they do – and of course getting so much back in terms of fresh understanding and exciting ideas for ourselves. It is also an opportunity to do, at postgraduate level, one of the things we do best at Plymouth which is to provide educational opportunities for people who might not have expected them. It’s a chance to remind myself that the greatest pleasure in education is not helping the privileged to get outcomes which they already expect, but to help those who might not have expected it and, in some small way, to make a difference to their lives; to help them see the world differently and, in so doing, to see it differently oneself. We do this brilliantly at Plymouth and should shout about it more.

Conversely, I see a great danger as education becomes a commodity to sell. Add the misnomer that teaching leads directly to learning, mix in a layer of accountability – you will only get promotion if you sell it well enough and get acceptable outcomes – stir in some responsibility – if the grades aren’t good enough it must be your fault – and suddenly it becomes hard to tell who it’s for. When my son’s teacher tells me at a parents’ evening that ‘we need him to get his reading up to level 4a’, I wonder who the ‘we’ is. My son, permanently welded to his iPad, doesn’t care a hoot. And you won’t be surprised to know it doesn’t bother me either because actually he can read really well when it’s not in school. Which leaves my son acting as commodity for the benefit of just one person.

This brings me back to my interest in people and things. As you start to confuse the two, turning educational processes into objects, funny things start to happen. Whilst we often hear that students are consumers, in a weird sort of way they also become the commodity for us to use in pursuing our own professional ends.

All of which means that I think I was right: it was a truly stupid question.
The CMI Auto/Biography Research Cluster Conference took place on 30th September 2015 and comprised four speakers; David Morgan, Carole Sutton, Gayle Letherby and John Scott.

**David Morgan**, who is now retired after teaching for 37 years at the University of Manchester gave a paper entitled ‘The presentation of research and everyday life’. He discussed that ethical issues do not end with the completion of a research project. They continue with the publication and presentation of results and with the afterlives of these presentations. He revisited his experiences following the presentation of a study of a factory to a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

**Carole Sutton, CMI Director** and Associate Professor (Senior Lecturer) in Quantitative Methods in the School of Government, Plymouth University gave a paper entitled ‘Nuzzle, nuzzle, woof, woof... ‘Maggie is here’: accidental kinship, animal companions and visual images’. She explored the relationship between humans and animal companions in the context of her transition from a non-pet world to an accidental pet owner drawing upon visual images.

**Gayle Letherby**, Honorary Professor in the School of Health Professions, Plymouth University, a freelance academic and a Civil Celebrant gave the following paper: ‘Writing Lives; Mine and Others: warnings, responses, choices and challenges’. In the paper, she outlined some of her experiences of writing auto/biographically and auto/biographically; including reference to her own experience in academic writings predominantly about others and writings predominantly about herself.

**John Scott**, now retired from 41 years of full-time university work, gave a paper entitled ‘Writing the Times of My Life’. He looked at the purpose behind a personal autobiography and the attempt to make this more than a mere chronology or ‘memory dump’. He focused on questions of memory and time perspectives, looking at how reflective activity necessarily leads to a reconstruction of the past that have an uncertain relationship to the ‘truth’.

All the papers were extremely thought provoking and prompted a significant amount of discussion. We were able to make links across papers and all participants spoke about their own experiences of working auto/biographically.

If you would like any further information about the presentations made at the conference please contact ihc@plymouth.ac.uk
Partnership initiative uses technology to enhance children’s understanding of the natural world

Academics Linda la Velle and Jan Georgeson, Centre of Culture, Community and Society at Plymouth University, are leading a project to develop software which will give young people an enhanced understanding of the natural world.

PhenoloGIT is a three-year project which will design, build and test an educational platform which teachers and students can use to share information about the physical environment and the living world. This will then be used to create teaching plans, as well as a mobile app and spatial data infrastructure so that young people can use real-world data to learn about seasonal changes in the nature all around them.

The project is centred around phenology, the study of periodic plant and animal life cycle events, and how these are influenced by seasonal and inter-annual variations in climate and habitat factors.

It is being led by the Plymouth Institute of Education in conjunction with the Galicia Supercomputing Centre, Spain (CESGA); the O Cruce school in Galicia, Spain; the Centre of Information Technologies in Education (CITE) in Vilnius, Lithuania; and VIA University College in Horsens, Denmark.

Professor Linda la Velle, Professor of Biology in Education and Associate Director (Research) at the Plymouth Institute of Education said: “This is a hugely exciting...
project that has the potential to change the way nature is taught and learned in both primary and secondary schools. We believe it will raise interest in biology as a subject and enhance young people’s understanding of big issues in science, such as biodiversity and climate change. It also embraces elements of citizen science and encourages students to use the 21st Century 4Cs skills: collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and communication.”

Many national and international organisations are already generating large volumes of phenological information in high quality geographical databases, but much of this data is unusable or unknown for most teachers.

PhenoloGIT will build a platform that allows European teachers and students to use everyday mobile devices and open source technologies in an easy but flexible way to collect and upload high quality data.

Initially, the project will be piloted in four schools in each of the four host countries – UK, Spain, Lithuania and Denmark, with the aim of expanding its reach in the future.

Maria Malmierca, e-Learning Department Manager at CESGA, said: “This project will be trialled with students aged seven to 14, but they will be helping to build a Europe-wide database of information. It will enable them to see what is happening in their neighbourhood and relate it to developments in other parts of the continent. It will also provide valuable information for researchers, who will benefit from data collected to recognised standards and from a variety of new and existing sources.”

PhenoloGIT is being funded with a £258,930 grant from the European Union’s Erasmus+ programme, which aims to boost skills and employability, as well as modernising education, training and youth work.
ON MY BOOKSHELF

William Harvey (1628)
The circulation of the blood and other writings.

Translated by KJ Franklin., 1963.
London: Dent.

Ruth Endacott

My copy of this small but seminal text was rescued from a hospital library rubbish bin a couple of decades ago (!). William Harvey made the momentous discovery that the flow of blood around the body must be continuous, that it must flow in one direction only and that the transformation of venous blood into arterial blood takes place in the lungs. He came to this conclusion through many years of ‘argument and ocular demonstration’ [1] – debate and experiment, much like science of today.

Harvey’s message eventually got through because he wrote in depth with clear explanations of his experiments and findings. Harvey stated that he believed that the heart was a pump and that it worked by muscular force. Harvey wrote about what he had seen during his experiments, such as the contraction of the walls of the heart cavities at the moment when they emptied of blood (systole) and the dilation of the cavities when filled (diastole). He also documented his findings when he observed a vein swell below a ligature.

Although described as ‘a pioneer who had no footsteps to follow’ [2], Harvey did in fact build on the work of his tutor (Fabrizio) who was the first person to clearly describe the valves that exist in the veins. However, what seems like an obvious concept to us today – that the heart pumps blood around the body in one direction - was revolutionary at the time. His defiance of the medical “common knowledge” (that the liver was the centre of the circulation of blood) laid the groundwork for all modern investigations of the circulatory system, and was probably the most important discovery of 17th-century medicine.
What Harvey’s work demonstrates is the need for tenacity, dogged determination and a very elegant turn of phrase, appropriate to the audience. Never described as a sycophant, he opens his detailed description of the circulation with a letter to the King stating:

The heart of animals is the foundation of their life, the sovereign of everything within them...from which all power proceeds. The King, in like manner, is the foundation of his kingdom, the sun of the world around him, the heart of the republic, the foundation whence all power, all grace doth flow. ... Accept, therefore, I most humbly pray your most serene majesty, with your accustomed goodwill and graciousness, this new account of the heart [1. p3].

In his letter to the Royal College of Physicians, which also prefaces the work, he reminds them that ‘it lies within all men to err and to be deluded and many discoveries have been made through the chance learning of one person from another’ a sentiment echoed in much of the patient safety and quality of care reports produced in the past couple of decades. But a reminder of his fear of impending rejection is highlighted in the final sentence ‘Farewell, Excellent Doctors, and look with favour upon your anatomist’.

This particular translation of Harvey’s work contains not only his major theses and his rebuttal of the criticism of many of his medical colleagues, but also an account of the dissection of the corpse of a man reputed to be aged 152. His record of what we would describe as a post mortem has echoes of many of the public health warnings of today: ‘he had always hitherto existed on one kind of diet and that the simplest; after he had gradually taken to a generous rich and varied diet, and stronger drink, he ruined the functions of almost all his natural parts.’

Harvey’s personal fame was such that he became royal physician to Charles 1, no doubt a smart move for one with controversial ideas that needed to be appreciated by persons of great influence. However, the influence on his day to day practice (and hence income) was said to have suffered and people called him ‘mad’ [3, p232]. The influence of Harvey’s work on modern science is summarised by the social historian Roy Porter as convincing ‘later investigators that medical science had to be put on a new footing’ [3, p211]. Indeed his lasting legacy to medicine was his belief in experiments to test out theories, as evidenced by the eventual acceptance of his major discovery. As a literary work, Harvey’s writing is eloquent and he has something of Shakespeare’s turn of phrase. All in, a great read!

References
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