HumSci News

Keeping Friends of Human Sciences in touch

December 2017

Welcome from the Head of the Institute

Welcome to our Human Sciences annual Newsletter and warmest wishes for a Happy New Year in 2018. This is the first of a returning three-year stint for me as Head of the Institute and, as an alumna who is still teaching on the degree, I am delighted to be able to continue to support it by being at its helm.

The year 2017 brought many good things both for Human Sciences at Oxford and for various members of our teaching team and our alumni. In the Newsletter you will see details of a number of awards and plaudits won by various tutors and students alike.

In addition, 2017 brought two new members of the teaching team. Dr Ridhi Kashyap joined us in September (details below) and took on responsibility for the Demography teaching that for many years was run by Professor David Coleman. Dr Teresa Street also joined us as part of the Genetics and Evolution team. These appointments built on the earlier creation of three posts in Anthropology during 2013 and continue the consolidation of Human Sciences at Oxford.

There was also a welcome boost to student numbers in 2017. We are delighted to announce that St Benet's Hall voted to admit two students to read Human Sciences starting in 2018. Dr Pieter Francois will be their Director of Studies and was successful in finding two students in our December Admissions round to become St Benet's first cohort in October 2018. In addition, Mansfield now takes four students a year, an increase in its previous offers. Therefore, all in all, Human Sciences is continuing to flourish!

Sadly, we said goodbye to Professor Geoffrey Harrison in 2017. His contribution to Human Sciences over many decades has been immeasurable and a significant portion of this Newsletter is devoted to his memory.

I hope you will enjoy reading the rest of the news contained in this year's Newsletter.

Amanda Palmer, Head of Institute

Welcome to

Ridhi Kashyap

Ridhi Kashyap was appointed Associate Professor in Social Demography with a Non-Tutorial Fellowship at Nuffield College from 1 September 2017. She is the convenor of the Demography and Population Finals paper.

Ridhi completed her doctorate in the department of Sociology here at Oxford. During her doctorate she was jointly affiliated with the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Germany. Ridhi's research examines how gender and other social inequalities interact with demographic processes. Her research interests span a number of substantive areas in demography and sociology, including gender, fertility and marriage, health and mortality, and ethnicity and migration. In addition to her substantive interests, she is interested in methodological innovations, in particular how computational and digital approaches, such as agent-based modelling, microsimulation and digital 'big' data, can be used to enhance the demographer's toolkit.

Ridhi's dissertation research examined the fertility and mortality implications of son preference, and the macro-level sex ratio imbalances in populations that these dynamics give rise to. In related work, she is studying sex-differentials in infant and child mortality in a global perspective.

In work on marriage and family, she is working on developing demographic measures to characterize marriage regimes. In particular, she is interested in how female educational expansion combined with demographic change in age and sex structures is likely to influence marriage and family patterns in Asia.

In the strand of her research on ethnicity, religiosity and migration, Ridhi has studied the demographic characteristics, social norms and attitudes of ethnic minorities in Britain. She has also studied the demographic determinants and generational variations in religiosity and social attitudes among Muslim communities in Britain, and compared religiosity among different ethnic groups.

In recent projects, she is examining the potential of digital trace 'big data' from the web for monitoring development indicators related to gender inequality as well as demographic indicators.

Teresa Street

Teresa Street was appointed part-time Departmental Lecturer in Genetics from 1 September 2017, and will be the convenor of the Genetics section of the Prelims paper on Genetics and Evolution. Teresa is also a Research Scientist with Modernising Medical Microbiology, a research group within the Nuffield Department of Medicine.

Having obtained both her BSc in Biochemistry (1998) and her PhD (2002) from the University of Bath her interests have always been centred on high-throughput laboratory techniques and sequencing. She has worked on gene expression profiling and re-sequencing projects using microarray technology, and her PhD project, at the Centre for Extremophile Research, involved developing high-throughput assays to measure genetically engineered enzyme activity.

The Modernising Medical Microbiology research group aims to transform how infections are analysed and treated, to ultimately improve patient care. Teresa's current research interests lie in the ability to utilise molecular techniques to improve the diagnosis of bacterial and viral infections. Using cutting-edge whole genome sequencing techniques, she is working on projects that aim to identify pathogenic bacteria and viruses directly from clinical samples, without the need for an initial culture step. Her current research uses a metagenomic sequencing approach to identify pathogenic organisms causing orthopaedic device-related infections.

Congratulations to:

Professor Jonathan Gershuny, FBA, who was appointed CBE for services to social sciences and sociology in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2017. Jonathan is Professor of Economic Sociology, Co-Director of the Centre for Time Use Research in the Department of Sociology and Senior Research Fellow of Nuffield College. His research which focuses on how people spend their time, aims to provide new answers to pressing questions about the evolution of the balance between work and leisure and between paid and unpaid work, the implications of such changes for health and well-being, and how they vary by country, age, gender and possession of material resources. Jonathan has in the past given Sociology lectures for Human Sciences and was, at one time, convenor of the Sociology section of the Sociology and Demography Prelims paper.

Professor Kate Hunt who was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Kate is a Human Sciences alumna and Professor of Gender and Health at Glasgow University and Associate Director of MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit at the University of Glasgow until February 2018. She is taking up a new post as Professor of Behavioural Sciences and Health at Stirling University from February 2018. Her research focuses on understanding and improving human health and wellbeing, with a particular interest in the social determinants of health behaviours and health inequalities, and culturally sensitised behaviour change interventions. Kate has been a great supporter of the Human Sciences degree and has previously contributed to the teaching of the Health and Disease option.

Dr Zuzanna Olszewska who won the 2017 MES Book Award from the American Anthropological Association. The Middle East Section of the American Anthropological Association awarded Dr Olszewska the prize for her recent book *The Pearl of Dari: Poetry and Personhood Among Young Afghans in Iran* (Indiana University Press). Zuzanna specialises in the ethnography of Iran and Afghanistan with a focus on Afghan refugees in Iran, the Persian-speaking Afghan diaspora, and the anthropology of literature and cultural production. Zuzanna is a fellow of St John's College and co-ordinates the lecture series on Key Themes in Social Anthropology for the Honour School paper Anthropological Analysis and Interpretation.

Dr Premila Webster who was appointed MBE for services to public health in the 2017 New Year's Honours list. Premila is Director of Public Health and Education and Training in the Nuffield Department of Population Health at the University of Oxford. She has previously taught on the Health and Disease option.

Remembering Geoffrey Harrison (1927–2017)

Geoffrey Harrison has been such an influential figure in Biological Anthropology and in Human Sciences that much has been published on his academic rise and his personal accomplishments.

David Coleman gave a beautiful and touching eulogy at Geoffrey Harrison's funeral service. His grandson also spoke touchingly of his relationship with his grandfather. We can all hope to have such relationships that are remembered by those that we leave. What follows is a personal reflection from a former student of a man who was first her mentor and tutor and who later became her friend:-

Geoffrey Harrison was one of the most generous, warm and funny men I have had the pleasure to meet. His wise words, his anecdotes and his kindnesses will remain with me always and his belief in my academic potential provided me with opportunities to learn and explore subjects through teaching and research. He was part of the 'old school' – he was polite, considerate, charming and good humoured. We talked about his being an Ent (as in Lord of the Rings – the large, old tree-like beings that have seen all of life and that might be called upon again to protect us should necessity call). He loved Human Sciences and Human Sciences loved him in turn.

Let me share a funny story that reflects on Geoff's kindness and inclusivity:-

After my first degree in Human Sciences I was fortunate to have Geoff as my supervisor for my graduate studies. My daughter, Esther, was born three weeks before Finals so she was very young when I approached the then Department of Biological Anthropology with a baby in a pram for my Masters. The other students were from Imperial and UCL and they ignored me at the tall steps into the building. (They were NOT Human Scientists.) In they went leaving me outside to consider my practical options to navigate the steps. Moments later there was a roar of a voice "Have you left Mrs Freud outside with Esther?" I heard Geoffrey bellow. "Outside!!" he commanded. Six young men rushed out of the building. "You take the pram" he said to one of them and, softly, he suggested I take Esther. "Never, never leave Naomi, her baby or the pram outside. They are as much a part of this group as each of you". He kept a play pen in his office for Esther and my weekly tutorial essay reading would be to Geoff and to Esther who he would play with on his knee whilst I read.

Earlier this year I found a copy of a letter I had written in 2007 to celebrate Geoffrey's birthday. I sent it straight to Elizabeth and Geoff. It made them smile. I read it to one of my present finalists who thought I should share it.

From the teachings of Professor Geoffrey Harrison

1) If 1200 words and forty-five minutes are insufficient for an essay, you do not know the answer.
2) Never make notes. Understand and you will remember.
3) Blood pressure need not increase with age.
4) Cooking with seawater raises blood pressure.
5) A little stress is necessary for life. Without stress you are dead.
6) The advent of the bicycle changed mating patterns in rural Oxfordshire, demonstrating the importance of access. It appears that to be found by the average male in his quest for a mate it may be better to be on an easy bike route than to have a pretty face.
7) When discussion fails, consider action – especially if you are at the wheel of a large truck, the barricade is flimsy and delay is not an option for the blood samples on board.
8) The two choices for a parent are to sleep in the same room as the baby or in a room as far away as possible!

Naomi Freud, St Catherine's College, 1988 and Director of Studies for Human Sciences at St Catherine's College

The Geoffrey Harrison Lecture

November 2017 saw the launch of the Oxford Bio Anth Initiative's annual #HumanAdapt meeting at the Natural History Museum. Over two days more than 250 people attended events open to the general public, with the ambition to explain, debate and learn about contemporary issues in Biological Anthropology organised in collaboration with the Parkes Foundation and the Society for the Study of Human Biology.

#HumanAdapt also saw the first annual Geoffrey Harrison Memorial Lecture, awarded by the Parkes Foundation. The lecture is to be awarded annually in Geoffrey Harrison's honour to persons who have made a substantial and sustained contribution to the study of human biology and especially biosocial sciences. Geoffrey Harrison (who died in September 2017) was one of the most important figures in 20th century Human Biology. He was a key member of the pioneering group of scientists who developed the new Human Biology from the old Physical Anthropology along with Joe Weiner, Derek Roberts, Jim Tanner, Arthur Mourant, Nigel Barnicot and Kenneth Oakley. The expertise and diversity of this group of visionary scientists allowed them to shape the development of human biology over the next 50 years as a discipline in which biology, behaviour and social context worked together to define the human species. Geoffrey Harrison was for many years Professor and Head of the Department of Biological Anthropology at the University of Oxford and instrumental in the early development of the Human Sciences Degree.

The inaugural lecture was given by Professor Melissa Parker, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (who was Geoff's own nomination and is a Human Sciences alumna), on the subject of 'Ebola: A Biosocial Journey'. Attended by nearly 100 people and followed by a wine reception in the museum, the lecture was a tour de force on the importance of anthropology to human biology – a theme that Geoff would have wholeheartedly approved of!

Simon Underdown, Senior Lecturer in Biological Anthropology at Oxford Brookes University and one of the co-organisers of #HumanAdapt

The Anthropological Demography of Health

International Workshop held at the Pauling Centre for Human Sciences 29-31 March, 2017

Human Sciences hosted this meeting, jointly with Centre Population et Développement of the University of Paris-Descartes, bringing together a multi-disciplinary group of twenty-five specialists in local health, population, epidemiology, and culture. Over the four plus decades that the Human Sciences course has been in existence, collaboration between anthropologists, demographers, and health scientists has greatly expanded beyond demographers' initial obsession with fertility, and, as human scientists know, prominent amongst the subjects of this research are ageing, AIDS and other epidemic diseases, genetic disorders, infertility, malaria, mental health, new reproductive technologies, nutrition, and reproductive and child health. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a synthesis of these developments, as most studies remain local and the field has not achieved sufficient critical influence. The main themes in the three-day meeting focused on how to develop awareness of the history of health interventions as a counter to Western and local elite biases; how detailed case studies highlight glaring issues of health governance; the tendency of quantitative indices used in tracking and evaluating vital trends to reify and thus misrepresent demographic, social, and health variation; and the use of combined anthropological, historical, demographic, and epidemiological approaches to correct these problems. Participants drawn from around the world included a number of graduates of the Human Sciences course (Kaveri Qureshi née

Harriss, Alison Shaw, Elisabeth Schröder-Butterfill) and several who have taught here over the years (Romola Davenport, Simon Gregson, Stanley Ulijaszek, Philip Kreager). The projected book of the workshop follows two previous meetings also generated from Human Sciences (*Population in the Human Sciences,* OUP 2015; and *Fertility, Conjuncture, Difference: Anthropological Approaches to the Heterogeneity of Modern Fertility Declines,* Berghahn 2017). More details can be found at www.frsg.org

Philip Kreager, Director of the Fertility and Reproduction Research Group

Oxford Human Sciences Society - 2017 Review

2017 has been another great year for the Human Sciences Society, and so firstly, I'd like to say a huge thank you to the committee, to all those that have spoken and helped out at our events and to all the students past and present that have attended them.

As usual we started the year's activities in February with the Symposium, this year entitled 'Speaking Truth to Power', a theme that became more and more relevant the more 2017 went on. As per usual, our topics for discussion ranged across the whole Human Sciences spectrum. Adam Ritchie began with a talk on the importance of intellectual honesty in the context of genetic modification and biological warfare. He was followed by Patrick Shea, a member of the first ever Human Sciences cohort, who spoke about his experiences in policy making and gave his thoughts about how a Trump presidency would be handled. Melissa Parker, another HumSci alum, then spoke about how the desire for 'scientific data' in inappropriate situations or carried out with inappropriate motives is often damaging, speaking with reference to her work in drug administration in East Africa. Asad Rehman, from Friends of the Earth, then closed the day with a rousing speech about the need to be aware of how progressive activism in the global North mediates only a certain truth to power. Each talk sparked lively questioning, engaging Human Scientists young and old. Overall the day was really pleasing to be a part of, and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at 2018's event on the 24th February.

The beginning of Trinity Term saw the election of a new committee. Luke Stalley was elected Vice-President; Kate Gerrand, Treasurer; Ray Williams, Secretary; Freya Dixon-van Dijk, Social-Secretary, and myself President. It has been an utter delight to work with all of them for the last two terms, they have all made my life very easy, and we've all enjoyed ourselves along the way.

Trinity Term was a pleasingly fruitful start to our tenure. We began by organising a screening of HumSci alum Adam Curtis' excellent 2016 film, 'Hypernormalisation'. We all came away with a pleasant kind of 'mind-blown' headache. Anyone who has watched it will understand, I'm sure!

Towards the end of term, we attempted to hold a BBQ, but alas the British weather had other ideas. Nevertheless, we had an enjoyable Pimm's fuelled time in the Mansfield JCR, playing pool and calming freshers ahead of their Prelims. Following a slight re-vamp of our social media pages, we also launched a new LinkedIn group that has quickly filled up with HumScis of all ages and professions. We really hope that this will continue to grow into a bustling and mutually beneficial community!

Michaelmas was another great term for the society. After introducing ourselves to the incoming freshers, and with their imaginations captured, Freya managed to organise perhaps the most well attended HumSci Soc event of all time. She somehow herded over forty-five 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years into a cramped Temple Lounge for perhaps the most enjoyable crew date I have ever attended. Michaelmas also saw the launch of our now notorious "Make Sciences Human Again" hats, along with the usual array of colourful T-shirts and sweatshirts. It is safe to say Human Sciences students have never been this well dressed. We closed the term with our 2nd Annual Careers Soirée, bringing alumni from across four decades of Human Sciences to talk to the students about their careers. A repeating theme was that Human Scientists never really know what they want to do, but end up doing the most fantastic array of things, from writing children's books to conserving the lives of Asian elephants. I would like to thank Benjamin Rinck, Vicky Clayton, Tim Myatt, Belinda Stewart-Cox, Annie Coleridge, Bill Fryer, and Isabel Thomas for all giving such interesting talks, I know all the students who came really appreciated them.

Looking back, I am really proud of all that we have achieved this year, and I look forward to seeing you all in 2018.

Maurice Lange, Human Sciences Society President, 2017–2018.

Human Sciences Symposium 2018 – 'The Future'

This year, the Human Sciences Symposium, 'Thinking Forward: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Human Futures', will take place across the afternoon of Saturday 24th February at Magdalen Auditorium, Oxford. This year's Symposium will be an exploration of how humans produce, predict, and plan for different futures, and we are pleased to welcome speakers from various disciplines to present their ideas and research around what and how our future looks like. The schedule includes:

Professor Iwan Morus from the University of Aberystwyth, who'll be talking about the social history of our Western futures (https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/history/staff-profiles/listing/profile/irm)

Doctor Anders Sandberg from the Future of Humanity Institute, University of Oxford, who'll be talking about the capability of technologies to shape long-term futures (https://www.fhi.ox.ac.uk/team/anders-sandberg/)

Professor Emeritus Ulf Hannerz from the University of Stockholm, who'll be talking about his most recent book 'Writing Future Worlds': an anthropologically thick description of global future scenarios (http://www.socant.su.se/english/research/our-researchers/ulf-hannerz)

Professor Nicky Clayton from the University of Cambridge, who'll be talking about the cognition underlying future thinking in humans and other animals, and offering an evolutionary perspective on these aspects of cognition (https://www.psychol.cam.ac.uk/people/nicola-clayton), she'll be joined by Mr Clive Wilkins (https://www.psychol.cam.ac.uk/people/clive-wilkins), an artist, dancer and magician amongst other things who will be collaborating with Nicky to incorporate the arts into what will be the symposium's finale!

Please join us for the afternoon for what is sure to be an exciting opportunity to learn more about 'the future' and how this wide theme is explored across a variety of disciplines.

Luke Stalley, third year Human Scientist and Vice-President of the Human Sciences Society

What is really going to save healthcare in this country?

The apparent demise of the NHS is everywhere you look nowadays. What needs to change to save "our NHS" is a question that remains unanswered, despite the best efforts of the government, NHS Trusts, CCGs, and all of the consulting firms that they employ. Increasing waiting times, up to 40% of beds blocked with patients who are medically fit to leave, and organisations running on huge recurring deficits, are just a few of the issues being faced by the NHS.

Despite this, the NHS is an institution that we can, and should, be immensely proud of. It is equitable, efficacious, and actually pretty efficient. It remains one of the most advanced and high-performing public organisations in the world. Having studied public health, and then worked in one of the consulting firms trying to "save the NHS", what needs to change has long been on my mind.

As Human Scientists, we know about the challenges that developed countries face due to population ageing and non-communicable disease. In the UK, we grow and live in environments which are stacked against us in terms of staying healthy. What this is doing to the NHS, in the simplest of terms, is increasing the demand. This is happening at a time when the supply is, at best, staying the same, and at worst shrinking.

The scale of the unpalatable truth is now coming to light – that 1 in 4 deaths are from preventable causes!

This is staggering. Extrapolate that (a bit) and it means we could probably cut demand on the NHS by a quarter by just taking care of ourselves a bit more.

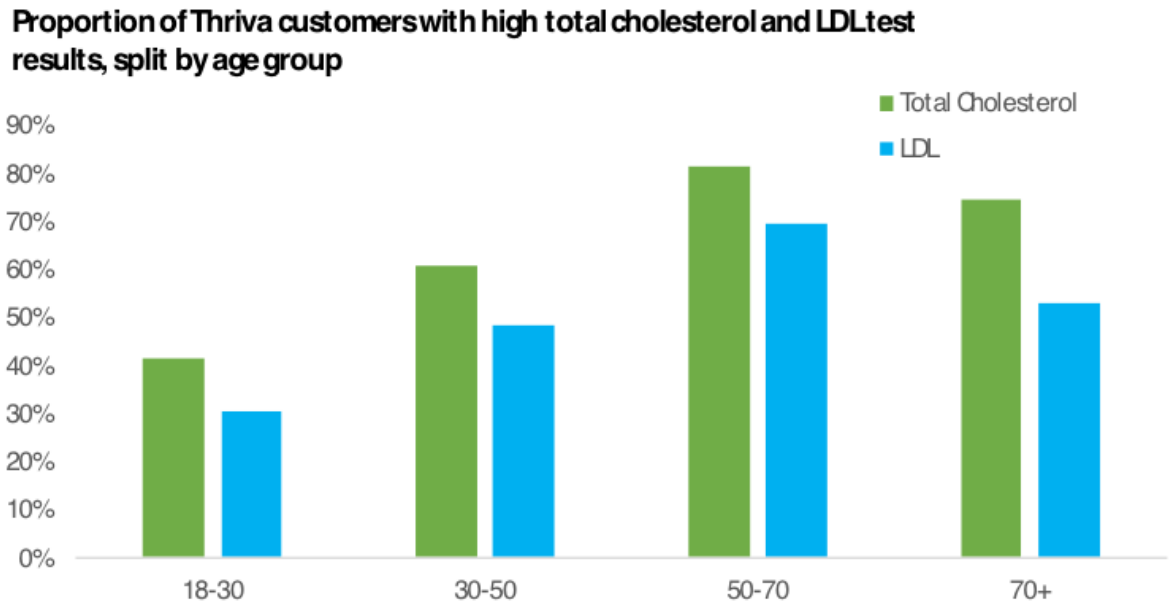
Why should we though? Many of us will be paying taxes, or at least plan to in future, which go towards the services we need, when we need them. The problem is, we will break the NHS, and some of the people in it, if we don't start taking preventing disease more seriously. Then it won't be there when we need it.

The interesting thing about preventative health is that it is, and certainly will be for the foreseeable future, about personal health choices that we all make every day. The problem is that it is really difficult to know what is good for us and what, in fact, is not.

Increasingly, people are turning to data to answer the question of what works. Up until very recently, we have lived with little personal health data in our lives, but it is difficult to make the case for prevention without it. Healthy choices are tough enough to make, but even harder when you don't know if they are working.

Data will be crucial to changing the way we think about health, from sick care to prevention and the evidence to date suggests that it will be private companies that give us access to this data. Fitbit, Sleepio, Natural Cycles, and Thriva (where I currently work) are just a few of the many health-tech companies that are providing people with their health data and thus enabling them to make more informed health choices.

Our data at Thriva suggests there is still a way to go if we are going to take control of our health at the population level and reduce the demand on the NHS. Over 80% of the people aged 50-70 who took a blood test with Thriva had high total cholesterol, and 69% had high LDL cholesterol.



Source: https://thriva.co/
n=7166 (total Cholesterol); n=6907 (LDL cholesterol)

However, our data shows that LDL and total cholesterol fall between our customer's first Thriva blood test, and second one three months later. This is true across all age groups. This illustrates the speed at which lifestyle changes can have an impact on disease risk factors, such as cholesterol, and is both personally empowering and nationally promising.

Even if it wanted to, the NHS cannot simply shift its spend into preventative healthcare. It will not be the organisation to transform the way we think about our health at a population level, because it is too good at caring for the sick. It will be up to us, supported with our own data, to take steps to prevent disease. Which can go a long way to saving the NHS.

Annie Coleridge, St John's, 2013

Meeting Minds Alumni Weekend 2017

As part of the Meeting Minds Oxford Alumni Weekend in 2017, the Institute of Human Sciences hosted a very interesting talk by Dr Tristam Wyatt on 'Sexing up human pheromones: How a scientific myth was started'. An audience of around 30 alumni (both Human Scientists and those from other disciplines) enjoyed the talk which was followed by discussion and drinks. Dr Tristram Wyatt is a Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Zoology and an Emeritus Fellow of Kellogg College. He is the author of *Pheromones and Animal Behaviour* which won the Best Postgraduate Textbook Award of the Royal Society of Biology 2014 and *Animal Behaviour: A Very Short Introduction* (2017).

2017 Prizes

The Bob Hiorns Prize

This year's Bob Hiorns Prize was awarded to Catherine Haigh (Keble College) for the best performance in the Final Honour School of Human Sciences.

The Wilma Crowther Prizes

Catherine Haigh was also one of three winners of this year's Wilma Crowther Prize for her dissertation: "Home away from home? Implication of forced migration on fertility rates of Syrian refugees in Germany". The other winners were Louis Jamart (Mansfield College) for his dissertation on "'*Tharwat*': Food deprivation as a catalyst for social unrest in the 'Arab Spring'" and Aqsa Tahir (St Hugh's College) for her dissertation on "Exploring the social and cultural determinants of late-stage presentation of breast cancer."

We asked this year's prize-winners to tell us about their dissertations.

Catherine Haigh Writes:

Although it sounds corny, as soon as I came across the Human Sciences degree I was no longer interested in any other degree course. Throughout school I had always wanted to pursue both the sciences and the humanities, and was at pains to choose between them, yet the Human Sciences degree would enable me to pursue both disciplines. However, this did limit my choice of Universities to just UCL and Oxford who offer the degree (my UCAS form looked very sparse!), but was a gamble I was willing to take.

Two aspects of the course stand out to me as particularly fundamental to my experience studying Human Sciences, as I reflect on the past three years. First, was the holistic nature of the degree: although highly diverse and varied in terms of the modules we study, all the various elements we studied (anthropology, sociology, genetics, evolution, demography, ecology, physiology – to name a few) truly came together in the final year to form one broad picture of humankind. Finals exam questions were angled in ways that not only enabled, but encouraged us to make links between all the modules we had studied, and it was surprisingly satisfying to pull together seemingly disparate elements of the course – who would have known that bipedalism, female crime rates, and genomics could all be linked!

The second aspect was the opportunity afforded to me through the Human Sciences dissertation, which requires students to write on a topic of their choice that draws on more than one discipline. From the outset, I knew that I wanted to carry out my own research and was keen to marry this with my interest in the current plight of Syrian refugees and in demography. Eventually a title was born: *Home away from Home*? *Implications of forced migration on fertility rates of Syrian refugees in Germany*, and I put forward a proposal to carry out my own interviews with refugees in Berlin. Having navigated the rather detailed CUREC forms, the University granted permission for my trip and my applications to Keble College for funding were successful. I wanted to understand whether the move to Germany was likely to impact on the ordinarily high fertility rates of Syrian refugees and the subsequent implications it might have on German society in the future. In December 2016 I travelled to Berlin for 3 weeks, during which time I spent many hours talking to Syrian men and

women, visiting their homes in apartments and tower-blocks, drinking tea in 'refugee cafes', entertaining Syrian children, participating on refugee sight-seeing trips and volunteering at shelters across the city. This style of research allowed me to address their personal experiences of fertility and family in a much more fine-tuned way than would have been possible with a larger social survey or questionnaire. My findings, too long to detail now (indeed cutting down the dissertation to the word limit was a struggle!), were rewarding and often unexpected, uncovering the symbolic importance of childbearing for not only Syrian people, but for those who are forced to flee from their homes.

Since completing the degree, many people have asked me whether I would have picked a different subject, were I to go back and do it all again. To me this question seems absurd, I simply cannot imagine myself having studied anything else. I am immensely grateful to have had the opportunity to study at Oxford, and have tried to embrace more than just the work, but sports, socialising, new friends, and college life along the way.

In the following extract from her dissertation, which Catherine has given us permission to reproduce here, she describes her research process.

My analysis of the fertility intentions, ideals and practices of Syrian refugees is based on fieldwork carried out in Berlin, Germany, in December 2016 where I lived and volunteered for three weeks.

I met Syrian refugees through a variety of channels. I was introduced to a few initial contacts: one Syrian businessman through a family friend who owns a company in Berlin; and some refugees, through an academic who had previously carried out some interviews with a small group of Syrians. Via these contacts, I was then introduced to brothers, sisters, parents and cousins, neighbours in shelters, and friends of friends. Gradually I managed to enter a network of some twenty, loosely connected, families living in different areas of the city. I was also able to build a good rapport with a number of women and families specifically through my volunteering efforts which were focused and intensive in the first half of my trip.

Overall, this method of locating families produced something like an intentional snowball sample: it was systematic in the sense that I made an effort to connect with families from different social strata and situations, and through personal endeavours to expand my network; but ultimately random with regard to the specific women and families I ended up meeting. I was conscious of the need to talk with refugees, women in particular, from different socio-economic backgrounds: from those with many personal resources, living in their own apartments; to those in adequately equipped shelters planning on moving their families out; to those who had been living in Berlin's most basic shelters for over a year, often displaced or separated from other family members.

It is worth mentioning that the refugee shelters in Berlin cannot all be grouped in the same way. While some that I visited (in Brebacher Weg & Groß- Berlinerdamm) provided a good level of accommodation – individual rooms and toilet facilities, privacy, large canteens and multiple play rooms; others (in Tempelhof Airport & Moritzplatz) were merely large empty spaces filled with bunk beds, clusters of which were separated by hanging sheets or flimsy curtains to create 'separate rooms', toilets were shared and kitchen facilities temporary. Unsurprisingly refugees greatly varied in their satisfaction with their current situation.

In terms of the fieldwork itself, I started with a general set of interview questions which initially asked about the general background of the interviewee. This established an initial comfort with my questioning style, and I found put refugees at ease. I then asked a series of further questions based around the four fertility theories. From this structured starting point, conversations often meandered towards topics which my subjects were particularly keen to tell me about: women expressed central concerns, complaints, anecdotes – far more so than men did. Some interviews

were individual, some in family or marital units, others were with groups of friends. Some discussions were brief, others lasted hours. Conversations were in both Arabic and English, but never in German due to both interviewer's and interviewees' inability to speak the language. A young female translator (Yara), who was of Syrian/Palestinian origin but had lived in Berlin her whole life, accompanied me on visits to refugees who could not speak conversational English. This significantly slowed down the pace of questioning but was vital in enabling me to uncover the perspectives of refugees I otherwise would not have been able to communicate with. The translation process initially worked one question at a time: me asking a question, Yara translating it to the subject, me listening to the subject's answer (while attempting to read their facial expressions), Yara translating the answer back to me. However, once Yara was more comfortable with my subject matter, she would often ask her own questions in direct response to the subject's answer, and then translate to me a summary of her own probing endeavours. This allowed her to sustain a smoother flow of conversation and pursue particular nuances she spotted, those which are often lost during the translation process.

I scribbled extensive field notes as soon as possible after every visit, describing in detail the places, people and happenings I had observed, the outlines of each conversation – often reconstructing specific quotes I had kept to mind and double checking with Yara for clarification. On some occasions I felt comfortable to take notes during a visit, but in general I avoided this because it introduced a sense of formality and undermined the free-flowing spontaneity of the discussion. For the same reason I did not record any of my conversations. Gallagher expresses a similar approach towards the conversations she had with Syrian women in Damascus over a number of years, suggesting that recording or note-taking during conversations would have 'significantly altered the dynamics of an informal visit'[1]. Gallagher also draws attention to the importance of confidentiality. Like her, the refugees I interviewed were trusting me with sensitive information and would have been rightly hesitant to talk had I produced a video-recorder. To maintain confidentiality I did not ask the women for their surnames either. To summarise my fieldwork process, in a similar way to Gallagher, I drew on 'observation and reconstructed conversations, rather than on direct quotations from transcribed recorded interviews'. I also built up an extensive amount of field notes based on occasional meetings and observations from my volunteering endeavours.

In terms of consent, interviewees provided their verbal consent to participate in the study: I read out a short introductory text prior to questioning and the interviewee verbally agreed to participate. I did not need to document participant consent as only those consenting were interviewed. Written consent was not obtained to ensure anonymity of participants. I also systematically emphasised that their participation in my fieldwork was not related *in any way* to government institutions, but an academic project which would not affect their asylum application or status in Germany.

Prior to and during my trip I seriously considered the complexities and risks involved with interviewing refugees. According to the UNHCR (2013), 'in research involving interviewing refugees it must be borne in mind that ethical considerations are relevant. Not only may experiences of trauma and insecurity have characterised an individual refugee's flight and journey, but such experiences often continue into the settlement context and may influence the individual's ability and desire to integrate. The experiences may also affect refugees' willingness and ability to participate in research'. I did find the latter to be the case, some groups of refugees politely declined my invitations to have coffee and a chat saying they did not want to speak, others told me they had already talked to multiple researchers or journalists. Aside from that, I experienced little resistance to my project, most Syrians were happy to talk, and even the most emotional remained composed and in-control at all times. I took particular effort to treat all the individuals I encountered as

[1] Gallagher, S.K (2012). *Making Do in Damascus: Navigating a Generation of Change in Family and Work.* Syracuse: N.Y., p. 19.

humans, as real people, rather than 'research objects'; I showed an interest in their lives, I listened to their stories, ate their food, laughed with them and danced to their musical performances – mixtures of 'Arabic rap' and traditional Syrian songs which were sung with gusto.

Catherine Haigh

Tharwat': Food deprivation as a catalyst for social unrest in the 'Arab Spring

On December 17th 2010 a video was posted online of a young man covered in flames burning alive. The posting contravened Tunisia's censorship laws. Despite this, the video quickly became viral across social media, accompanied by the Twitter hashtag '*#bouazizi*' in reference to the young street vendor who committed the act of self-immolation. By January 2011, a smiling portrait of Bouazizi had become the face of what would be known throughout the Middle East and North Africa as the '*Tharwat*' (Revolutions). Although no evidence exists of Bouazizi attempting to voice a political stance, he is considered by many as the individual whose act sparked an international revolution far beyond the borders of his neglected municipality – the 'Arab Spring'.

However, macro-level political analysis of the *Tharwat* has failed to explain why conflict has persisted throughout the MENA region despite the political restructuring of 2011. To answer this question, I returned to the micro-level symptoms of the revolutions. Taking as a starting point Mohamed Bouazizi's struggle to 'feed his family' under Ben Ali's repressive rule, and his tragic self-immolation, in my dissertation I set out to establish the pathways through which food deprivation may have acted as a catalyst for social unrest throughout the 'Arab World'.

My initial review of existing literature established an association between food insecurity and conflict during the *Tharwat*. This review revealed several gaps in our current understanding of the relationship between food and unrest. Namely, current literature failed to explain why the global food crisis in 2011 resulted in conflict in certain MENA nations, but not all. Conditions in Iraq, for instance, remained surprisingly stable. I determined that to properly understand the complex pathways between food deprivation and unrest, a pluridisciplinary 'Human Sciences' approach would be necessary.

Accordingly, I drew upon biological and social data to better understand the 'conditions of possibility' that may have contributed to food deprivation triggering the *Tharwat*. Links were established between ecology, animal behaviour, physiology and human evolution to explain how food deprivation – conceptually an individual experience – could evolve into a social revolution. Armed with these fresh insights regarding the biological pathways through which food deprivation can trigger aggression, but conscious nevertheless that there were yet other factors that needed to be taken into consideration, I then embarked upon a two-tiered analysis.

Firstly, I analysed quantitative data from the World Bank to construct a model which integrates the 'socio-demographic' burden present in the MENA region alongside these biological conditions.

Secondly, I embarked upon a qualitative analysis to evaluate this model. Through content analysis of social media and a previously unpublished interview with a human rights professional who lived and worked in the region during the relevant period, I compared my findings against the experience of individuals who had first-hand involvement in the *Tharwat*. This new data validated my own conclusions regarding the complex pathways between food deprivation and social unrest in the *Tharwat*.

The implications of these findings are broad. Firstly, by documenting the complex array of factors that have constituted the 'conditions of possibility' for uprisings in the past, we are better able to understand and explain why conflict and violent protests persist in countries such as Yemen, Egypt, and Tunisia despite newly established 'democracies'. Secondly, they can be used in a predictive manner, to identify 'hot spots' for social unrest and inform policies that would contribute to global security i.e. where the cluster of conditions discussed are present, States should anticipate social unrest and ideally address the underlying causes.

Louis Jamart

Exploring the social and cultural determinants of late-stage presentation of breast cancer

The incidence of breast cancer is increasing in both developed and developing countries, making it one of the most frequently diagnosed cancers in the world. In the developing countries, breast cancer survival rates are significantly lower and one of the key reasons for this is the late-stage presentation of disease, which is commonly dictated by sociocultural barriers to health-seeking behaviour. As Human Scientists we know that health related behaviour is a multi-factorial concept dependent on the dynamic interaction between people, their environments, and behaviours.

I wanted to explore how these sociocultural barriers manifest themselves in terms of access to healthcare and the presentation and diagnosis of breast cancer. I focused on Pakistan because it is a developing country which has the highest breast cancer incidence rates in Asia. I carried out both a literature review and some field work of my own. I travelled to Pakistan during the summer before my Final year and, after obtaining CUREC approval, I interviewed breast cancer patients in two hospitals in Karachi, and Multan. From speaking to patients, I found that women's misconceptions about breast cancer can lead them to believe that the only treatment available is the removal of the breast: which can lead to stigmatization, and rejection from family. Subsequently, they choose not to make use of the healthcare services, instead looking to alternative healthcare providers, such as spiritual healers. I used the Health Belief Model to understand how perceived ideas about disease can influence health-seeking behaviours.

From my findings, there are the three intervention pathways which can simultaneously raise breast cancer awareness and tackle the underlying issues leading to late-stage presentation in developing countries like Pakistan. Firstly, health education at the community level is necessary to raise awareness and empower women to engage in health-promoting behaviours. Secondly, the use of Lady Health Workers is needed to promote breast awareness and practice of breast self-examination within communities. Finally, effective and culturally-sensitive media campaigns can challenge breast cancer stigma, operating on a national level. Combined, these interventions can tackle the health inequality seen in developing countries, and empower communities to support women with breast cancer, leading to a reduction in late-stage presentation, and improved breast cancer outcomes.

Aqsa Tahir

Gibbs Prizes

This year's main Gibbs Prize was awarded to

Cecilia Høgfeldt (The Queen's College)

and book prizes were awarded to

Elie Danziger (St Hugh's College)
Will Bennett (St Catherine's College)
Khazna Chami (Mansfield College)
Annabel Rice (Keble College)

Many congratulations to all our prize-winners and to everyone who passed Prelims and Finals this year.

Book Review: Behave: The Biology of Humans at their best and worst

I had really high hopes for my Human Sciences degree. I didn't hear about it until I was at the Oxford interview for another subject — a Hum Sci first year started explaining to me the fantastic array of subjects she studies, I was absolutely blown away and decided right there and then that it was for me. I very much enjoyed my three years studying humans and got a huge amount out of each of the subjects. Anthropology in particular had a way of throwing my world upside down every week, and I loved the way Demography looked at the macro patterns of the most intimate decision you can make. For Finals I managed to integrate some of the perspectives but still felt like I was changing hats between exams forgetting the critiques of science as a way of knowing when going into Human Genetics, and the attempt to separate off the observer and the observed when going back into Anthropology. Which is why I was very excited when a friend recommended "Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst" by Robert Sapolsky.

Sapolsky starts with a behaviour (touching someone's arm) and tracks back in time from milliseconds beforehand through days to months beforehand back to the individual's childhood. As you can gleen from the title, he puts all of the influences of behaviour into one coherent biological framework. It's a tour de force of nerve impulses, sensory inputs, hormones, synaptic plasticity, brain development and genetics with an exploration of how the factors we don't often think of in a biological way – cultural and social setting – affect (some of) these factors. For example, the influence of culture extends to sensory information processing — Westerners are better at remembering the person in the middle of a complex scene whilst East Asians are better at remembering the scene and the context. In the Epilogue, Sapolsky writes that a summary of the book could be "it's complicated" but makes an effort throughout the book to be more specific than that in what modulates what.

And one of the strongest points he pushes home is that it's all about the context. In popular culture, testosterone is associated with manliness and aggression but studies show little correlation — what it does depends on is the context and the hormone seems to simply amplify pre-existing patterns as it increases the rate of action potentials if neurons are stimulated by something else. For example, giving people testosterone before playing the Ultimatum Game made them make more generous offers — "winning" to the extent that you can do so in the Ultimatum Game is about getting a good reputation (especially when played in multiple rounds). And so it's the interactions that matter — a somewhat obvious point when you put the development of our biological systems in the context of evolution and having to respond to the physical and social environment, but easy to forget when we're studying in silos.

From talking about behaviour in general, he moves on to moral decision-making on the way to talking about free will, personal responsibility, and reforms of the criminal justice system. The basic argument is that we are continuously discovering more and more factors which affect behaviour, which leaves less and less room for free will, which leaves less and less room for personal

responsibility for our behaviour and a criminal justice system which punishes individuals. He discusses the need for a justice system as a place to rehabilitate, and also, where necessary, to keep the public safe, but rejects the idea of it being for the sake of punishment, because what is the point of punishing people for things they have very little responsibility for?

You don't need to be interested in justice system reform to enjoy this exploration of what makes up behaviour, and I sincerely recommend it as a good read (with a lot of appendices if you want to dig into the details!)

Vicky Clayton, New College, 2015

Graduate News

1991

Jacci Bulman (née Garside, St John's) has recently enjoyed co-editing an anthology of poetry in support of human rights, entitled 'Write to be Counted'. The collection includes poets from all over the world and covers many aspects of upholding human rights and dignity. All profits go to PEN, a charity which supports writers in difficult circumstances worldwide. The anthology is now available on Amazon.

1999

James Curley (Somerville) completed a PhD in Zoology at Cambridge University, and then did post-docs at Cambridge and Columbia University, New York, in Behavioural Neuroscience. He was then an Assistant Professor at Columbia in Psychology for five years. James is now an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin. He researches how and why animals establish social networks particularly dominance hierarchies. Most of the rest of his time is spent doing fun things with his daughter and wife in Austin. Throughout his academic career James worked on understanding animal and human behaviour at all levels of analysis – from genetic and molecular, through neural circuits to population and evolutionary levels. Human Sciences was the perfect course for him and he often thinks about how it shaped his life and thinking.

2007

James Hadfield (Lady Margaret Hall) married **Carol Bhaskar** (Somerville), in February, who also studied Human Sciences. James and Carol met in the Pauling Centre in 2004 and have been together since university. Seeing as they met as HumScis they thought it only appropriate to theme their wedding on things they had learned on the course and even had a quiz for the guests to match the table names with the definitions. A number of other Human Scientists were guests at their wedding. Many congratulations to James and Carol.

Joanna Romanowicz (Hertford) really loved the course and her time at the University and can't believe it's been 10 years since graduation! After completing her final year Joanna decided to carry on with her studies, this time at UCL, where she did a degree in Environment, Science and Society, which explored the relationship of our society and the environment. Since then, Joanna has been

lucky enough to work in the sustainability sector (with her HumSci hat on!), focusing on behaviour change interventions and raising awareness around environmental issues. For the past seven years, Joanna has been working in the Department for Sustainability at NUS, working on a range of national environmental projects with students and academics across Europe. She currently manages a European-wide behavior-change project that addresses fuel poverty, environmental awareness, and behaviour change, across 8 different counties. The project is funded by the European Commission and has given Joanna the opportunity to travel across Europe, presenting its impact at a variety of conferences, and meeting inspirational individuals striving to make a difference. Funnily, her professional path recently crossed with another Human Scientist from her year – **Rebecca Baron** (Magdalen, 2007) – who now works for Ben & Jerry's as UK Campaigns Manager (in their social mission team). Ben & Jerry's have been a fantastic supporter of the behavior-change projects, and Joanna says it's really nice to work together with Rebecca again (they used to be tute partners in Medical Anthropology).

2013

Laura Hancox (New College) has, since graduating, completed an MSc in Psychological Studies and has worked as an Assistant Clinical Psychologist for the NHS. Shas been offered a place on the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology course at the University of Nottingham which she took up in September. Laura was working between the NHS and Oxford University in the Department of Psychiatry here and moved to Nottingham in August.

2016

Kaddy Halliday (Harris Manchester) has completed an M.Sc. in Medical Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh, which she graduated from in November. The course followed on well from Human Sciences, which Kaddy found complemented and informed much of how and what she studied. She did however miss the breadth and richness of Human Sciences, to which she doubts anything else could adequately compare! The highlight of the M.Sc. must have been its dissertation, for which Kaddy spent 3 weeks at a specialist hospital for obstetric fistula in Ethiopia (Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia). Her project explored the social life of illness as it played out in the hospital, with special reference to material culture. She remains in Edinburgh, now studying for a Ph.D. in Population Health and Epidemiology. This time her project looks at health inequalities with specific focus upon the relationship between birthweight and rurality in Scotland. Outside of academia, Scotland lends itself to brilliant (although now increasingly bone-shakingly chilly) weekends walking/running the hills and coastlines with obligatory whisky stops along the way. But when the hills are too much of an effort, the city is brimming with a vibrant and eclectic culture, which is never boring.

Beth Thorne (New College) is Chief of Staff at New York-based non-profit organisation, Project Rousseau. Their mission is to empower youth in communities with the greatest need to reach their full potential and pursue higher education. Students come from homes with an average income of less than $10,000 and also face other forms of extreme hardship such as homelessness, hunger, or violence. Project Rousseau takes a holistic approach to students' educational problems through four pillars of programming: comprehensive one-to-one mentoring, academics, community service, and broadening horizons, which encompasses everything from museum trips, to work experience at the European Parliament, and exchange trips to Japan!

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If you don't currently receive our newsletter by e-mail and would like to do so and be added to the Human Sciences e-mail list to receive updates on Human Sciences events, please contact sarah-jane.white@ihs.ox.ac.uk

With the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) we need to ensure that we have up-to-date permissions to e-mail you. If you have not done so recently, please can I ask you to e-mail sarah-jane.white@ihs.ox.ac.uk to confirm that you would like to remain on the Human Sciences e-mail list and are happy to be contacted with newsletters, details of events, and other information which we think would be of interest to you as a friend of Human Sciences.

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Human Sciences Society Facebook Group

The Human Sciences Society has a group on Facebook which can be found at https://www.facebook.com/groups/93254436688/

Human Sciences Linked-In Group

As mentioned in the Maurice's review of the Human Sciences Society, we now have a LinkedIn Group for Human Scientists. You can join this at https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8607787