



HumSci News

Keeping Friends of Human Sciences in touch

2022 Edition

Introduction from the Head of the Institute

Hilary Term is over, spring may finally be with us, and our first- and third-year Human Scientists are looking forward, if that is the right expression, to exams. In fact even the Second Years are not free of assessment: since 2016 they have to produce a long essay for Paper Three in Trinity Term, the payoff being that they have one fewer Finals paper to prepare for in a year's time. The Third Years have had a tough time coping with the pandemic and have really only been able fully to enjoy much that Oxford has to offer in their final year. They will be taking their exams mostly as 'open-book' timed exams on a system called Inspira, on which by now they have had plenty of practice. The First Years, by contrast, are part of a larger cohort within the university who are trialling the new computer-based, but 'closed-book' exams in Exam Schools – so the tradition of dressing in subfusc for examinations now returns under new conditions.

This academic year we have welcomed to the department and the institute [Eben Kirksey](#), who teaches both medical anthropology and human ecology and is famous as one of the founders of the sub-field of multispecies anthropology. In the coming academic year we look forward to welcoming [Thomas Püschel](#) as Associate Professor of Evolutionary Anthropology and Tutor in Human Sciences at St Hugh's College. This will make St Hugh's, already a strong supporter of the degree, accepting six students every year, into our first two-tutor college, an important milestone. We also congratulate [Rachel Tanner](#), long a stalwart of genetics teaching for Human Sciences, on being appointed Tutorial Fellow in Biology, also at St Hugh's.

Many of you were present when we celebrated [50 years of the Human Sciences degree](#) during the Alumni Weekend in September 2022. It was, I hope you agree, a very special occasion with a huge buzz around the degree. Sir Simon Baron-Cohen and Susana Carvalho gave wonderful lectures. (You can watch Sir Simon's talk [here](#).) There was a picnic in the University Parks and the weather was kind. There were two excellent roundtable discussions about Human Sciences in the Pauling Human Sciences Institute which are available to watch on our [YouTube channel](#). The highlight had to be the dinner in Wadham College graced by the Chancellor Sir Chris Patten. His speech did not disappoint. You can read my speech introducing him [here](#).

I don't need to tell you how wonderful the Human Sciences degree is, nor that it is complicated to organize. The university is well aware of these complications and is highly supportive, but in the end we cannot survive without the support of the colleges, who make the final decision on which degrees they wish to admit students for. [The case for Human Sciences](#) needs to be made again and again. So, I hope that I can rely on you to continue to remind your college about the great virtues of the degree; and, for those of you whose colleges no longer offer the degree, to remind them what they are missing. We want Human Sciences to flourish in the next fifty years as much as, or even

more than, it has in the past 50 years. Our strategy to achieve that has to be to encourage and strengthen the degree in those colleges that already provide strong support.

As announced last year, we hope to raise £12.5 million to endow studentships, a Professorship of Human Sciences (to provide long-term leadership for the degree), and two Tutorial Fellowships in our supporter colleges. I am delighted to report that we have one major pledge of £100,000 already as well as the imminent possibility of an even bigger donation that would help us endow, with university help, one of the two HumSci Tutorial positions. Please do get in touch if you know anyone who might be in a position to make the large, transformational gift that could make a huge difference. Meanwhile, please do give yourself, even if it is a small token amount. It makes a big difference if we can demonstrate to the university that we have – as I believe we do – the most loyal and passionate alumni base of any degree in the university. Our vision is outlined [here](#) where you will find a link to the university's giving page. Needless to say, Sarah-Jane and I are happy to hear from you if you have any questions on this or anything else to do with the degree.

Best wishes David Gellner (david.gellner@anthro.ox.ac.uk), April 2023

Welcome to

Dr Eben Kirksey who joined the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography in Michaelmas Term 2022 as Associate Professor in Anthropology with a non-tutorial fellowship at St Cross College. Together with Andy Gosler, Eben convenes the Human Ecology finals paper for which he give lectures on the ecology of disease and ethnobiology.



He was a British Marshall Scholar at the University of Oxford before completing his doctorate at the University of California, Santa Cruz and helped found one of the world's first Environmental Humanities programmes at the University of New South Wales, Australia. Prior to coming to Oxford, Eben was Associate Professor of Anthropology at Deakin University, Australia and he maintains ongoing collaborations with colleagues at the Alfred Deakin Institute, Melbourne.

As a cultural anthropologist, Eben is perhaps best known for his work in multispecies ethnography – a field that situates contemporary scholarship on animals, microbes, plants and fungi within deeply rooted traditions of environmental anthropology, continental philosophy and sociology of science. His most recent book, *The Mutant Project* (2020), which addresses questions related to science and social justice, offers an insider's account of the laboratory in China that created the world's first children whose genes were edited with CRISPR-Cas9.

Dr Francesco Rampazzo who is a new lecturer in Demography at the Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science in the Department of Sociology and a non-stipendiary research fellow at Nuffield College. Francesco teaches Demography to Human Sciences students for both Prelims and Finals. Together with Philip Kreager, he convenes the Demography section of the Prelims Sociology

and Demography paper and with Ridhi Kashyap he is the co-convenor of the FHS Demography and Population paper.

Following his Bachelors in Statistical Sciences from the University of Padova and his Masters in Demography at Stockholm University, Francesco completed a doctorate in Social Statistics and Demography at Southampton University. Whilst studying for his PhD, he was a doctoral fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Change and continues to collaborate with researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock and the Centre for Population Change in Southampton. Prior to joining the department of Sociology, Francesco was a Career Development Fellow in Marketing and Consumer Demography at the Saïd Business School.



Francesco has a broad range of research interests including digital and computational demography with applications in fertility, migration, transition to adulthood and survey research. He uses digital traces data produced by advertising platforms such as Facebook Advertising Platform and other markets and repurposes them to study demographic phenomena.

Congratulations to

José Manuel Aburto who was awarded the Silver Medal from the Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters for his research on the topic of inequality. José is a member of the Leverhulme Centre for



Demographic Science in the Department of Sociology and is the Brass Blacker Associate Professor of Demography at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He gives lectures for the Finals Demography and Population paper for Human Sciences. José's work had been recognised for its interdisciplinary approach involving statistics and also for its dissemination to the wider public and policy makers. He describes the cross-disciplinary approach and treatment of the data as essential to his work: "We work together with epidemiologists, biologists, sociologists and others from the social sciences. I have been able to approach the issues from very different angles throughout my career, thanks to the

cross-disciplinary nature of my field... Given the many conflicts globally, it goes without saying that this subject deserves even greater attention from a cross-disciplinary perspective." The Silver Medal of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters is awarded once a year to a Danish researcher below 40 years of age for a particularly significant thesis or overall scientific project published in the last five years.

Emma Cohen who has been awarded the title of Professor of Cognitive Anthropology in the University's Recognition of Distinction Exercise. Emma is Director of Studies for Human Sciences at Wadham College. Her research studies social affiliation in everyday human behaviour, culture and health within a broad evolutionary framework. Emma says "I'm very grateful to colleagues across the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography, and especially the Institute of Human Sciences, for all their support and for creating such a distinctive and vibrant space for interdisciplinary research and teaching. I'm grateful also to all my students – DPhil supervisees and students on the MSc in Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology and the BA in Human Sciences – with whom I've been lucky to explore so many fascinating questions together. This 50th anniversary year marks a very exciting moment for Human Sciences and it's an honour to be part of this wonderful and unique community."



Hampton Gaddy who was awarded the 2022 Roger Schofield Award for the best paper presented by a young demographer at the European Society of Historical Demography Conference for his talk



on 'Assessing growth rate discontinuity estimates of mass mortality: The 1918 influenza pandemic'. Hampton studied Human Sciences at Magdalen College from 2018–2021 and his third year dissertation on 'Re-estimating the Global Death Toll in the Spanish Influenza Pandemic' won the Wilma Crowther Prize for the best dissertation in the Final Honour School of Human Sciences in 2021. He is now studying for an M.Phil. in Sociology and Demography and tutors Human Sciences students for Demography.

Ridhi Kashyap who was made Professor of Demography and Computational Social Science in the 2022 Recognition of Distinction Exercise. Ridhi is a member of the Department of Sociology and a Fellow of Nuffield College. She convenes the Finals paper on Demography and Population. Her research spans different areas of demography including questions linked to mortality and health, gender inequality, marriage and family, migration and ethnicity. She is broadly interested in how social inequalities interact with demographic processes, and how different methodological approaches and quantitative data sources can be used to measure and understand these interactions. Ridhi has studied the demographic implications of son preference, looking at postnatal manifestations in the form of gender gaps in mortality and health as well as prenatal manifestation in the form of sex-selective abortion and sex ratio at birth distortions. She has also looked at the relationship between educational expansion, gender norms and marriage and partnership patterns in different contexts as well as topics of ethnicity and migration, including the demographic characteristics and social attitudes of ethnic minorities in Britain.



Caroline Phillips who received a Teaching Excellence Award from the Social Sciences Division in 2022. Caroline is a Departmental Lecturer in Palaeoanthropology in the School of Anthropology and



Museum Ethnography and is a Stipendiary Lecturer in Biological Sciences at St Hugh's College. She is the co-convenor of both FHS Paper 1 on Behaviour and its Evolution, for which she gives lectures on Palaeoanthropological and Primatological approaches to Human Evolution, and Paper 2: Human Genetics and Evolution where she lectures on Human Evolutionary Genetics. She also runs a third year option on the Human-Primate Interface: Past and Present. Caroline has studied primates for 20 years and her main research focus is to use multiple primate taxa as modern analogues to understand dietary adaptation and resource use of early hominins. Using a palaeoecological and an actualistic archaeological approach (phytoliths and stable isotopes of modern environmental samples), she aims to reconstruct contemporary environments inhabited by extant primates across Africa to draw parallel inferences about palaeoenvironments utilised by our ancestors. The Teaching Excellence award scheme formally recognises the outstanding contributions to teaching and learning and the academic development of students shown by colleagues across the Division. Caroline says that "providing a positive and nurturing environment for students to learn and develop is a priority in my teaching. I am thankful to the many students that I have had the fortune to teach, for receiving this Teaching Excellence Award from the Division, but also that this vital role is recognised."

Natasha Salonen who was elected Mayor of the Township of Wilmot in the regional municipality of Waterloo in southwestern Ontario, Canada, in the election on 24 October 2022. Natasha studied Human Sciences at Harris Manchester College from 2016–2019. Before becoming mayor, Natasha had worked in various federal and provincial government roles, most recently as operations manager in the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Natasha is Wilmot's first female mayor and the first new mayor in 12 years.



Ramon Sarró who has been made a Professor of Social Anthropology in the 2022 Recognition of Distinction Exercise. Ramon lectures on Social Anthropology at both Prelims and Finals and has been the convenor of the Social Anthropology section of the Prelims paper Society, Culture and Environment. He is a fellow of St Antony's College. Ramon has conducted field research in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Portugal (among African diasporas), Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is the author of the award-winning *The Politics of Religious Change on the Upper Guinea Coast: Iconoclasm Done and Undone* (Edinburgh University Press 2009) and of *Inventing an African Alphabet: Writing, Art and Kongo Culture in the DRC* (Cambridge University Press 2023) and co-editor with A. Pedroso de Lima of *Terrenos Metropolitanos: Desafios Metodológicos* (ICS 2007) with D. Berliner of *Learning Religion: Anthropological Approaches* (Berghahn, 2007), and with R. Blanes and M. Balkenhol of *Atlantic Perspectives: Places, Memories and Spirits* (Berghahn, 2020). Ramon is away in



2022-23 and 2023-24 with a Leverhulme Trust-funded project entitled 'Kongo Prophets and UNESCO Technocrats: Forests, Ruins and Heritage in Northern Angola'.

Remembering Philip Stewart (1939–2022)

The Institute of Human Sciences is very saddened by the news of Philip Stewart's death on 23rd November 2022. Philip was a true polymath (with interests and publications spanning such diverse



disciplines as biology, languages, economics, religion and poetry) and a good friend to Human Sciences. He was awarded a first-class degree in Arabic, and studied for a PhD on the Nobel Prize-winning novelist Naguib Mahfouz. He later went on to translate Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Awlad Harentna*, 'Children of our Alley', which was published as *Children of Gebelawi*. Philip then studied for a second BA at Oxford in Forestry and was awarded another First.

After spending seven years working in forest conservation in Algeria, Philip returned to Oxford

taking up a University Lecturership in Plant Sciences in what was the Department of Forestry and Agriculture, when he became a fellow of St Cross College, teaching economics to students of Agriculture and Forestry and then human ecology to students in Human Sciences.

He served on the Joint Committee in Human Sciences, later the Institute of Human Sciences, and took on various administrative roles for the degree including Chair of Examiners and Admissions Co-ordinator. He became Director of Studies for Human Sciences at St Anne's College and continued teaching human ecology for Human Sciences for many years after his retirement.

He wrote many articles and books including *Unfolding Islam* and an article on the periodic table which was published in *Nature*, creating a new representation of the periodic system of elements in his 'chemical galaxy'.

Philip was a kind and gentle man who was devoted to his family.

He also cared greatly about his students' welfare, supporting them during their time at Oxford and beyond. He kept in regular touch with his former students, for many years running a Human Sciences book group. Philip made a huge impact on the lives of those who knew him and he will be sorely missed.

A memorial tea for Philip has been organised by his family and will take place on Saturday 10th June in Boars Hill, Oxford. For further details, please contact lucimonjauze@gmail.com

Celebrating Piers Nye

There will be a celebration of the life of Piers Nye (1946-2021) on Saturday 1st July. This is being organised by Balliol College and if you would like to receive more information and an invitation, please [contact the Balliol Development Office](#)

2022 Human Sciences Symposium on ‘Happiness’

Cindia Li, 3rd Year Human Scientist and Co-president of The Human Sciences Society

The Human Sciences Symposium this year posed unfamiliar questions about a familiar feeling – Happiness. Is there a dark side to happiness? What does evolution tell us about the key to happiness? Are we searching for it in the right directions? We invited four speakers from diverse backgrounds ranging from economics to evolutionary psychology, in the hope of gaining an understanding of this charming puzzle, in the holistic tradition of Human Sciences.

The symposium comprised a series of individual talks by anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar, psychologist June Gruber, and activist Kim Samuel, followed by a short discussion and concluding remarks by economist John Helliwell, who has over 20 years of experience in the field of happiness and wellbeing and co-edited the renowned World Happiness Report. We explored the ‘ecosystem’ of human emotions where a balance of all emotions rather than overwhelming positive emotions may be the key to mental well-being, the importance of friendship and social networks in creating a sense of belonging integral to our mental and physical welfare, and the deeply interdisciplinary nature of policy issues related to the promotion of human wellbeing.

We were able to host the symposium in a hybrid format live in the Pauling Centre of Human Sciences with good attendance from current students, alumni, researchers at the Wellbeing Research Centre, and interested students from other degree backgrounds. Recordings of the talks by Professor Robin Dunbar and Kim Samuel are available on the [Human Sciences YouTube channel](#).

The Human Sciences Society

Efforts have been made by current students, especially third-years, to revive the Human Sciences society since the impact of the pandemic which brought its activities to a halt. A new committee has been formed as follows:

Co-presidents – Cindia Li and Marianna Gallucci

Secretary – Keziah Owusu-Attuahene

Treasurer and Sponsorship officer – Kodie Matthews

Welfare Rep – Teagan Riches

Marketing Officers – Rachel Yunzhi Wu and Zariel Konadu

Careers and Alumni Officers – Trisha Purnaiya and Francesca Kuczynska

Academics Officers – Jade Morris and Ushika Kidd

Social Secretary – Esmee Brooke

The committee plans for the society to play an active role in connecting Human Sciences students across colleges and year groups, providing inspiration for careers and further educational opportunities, promoting student welfare, and hosting academic events including the annual symposium. The Society is keen to connect with alumni and would love to hear from anyone with experiences in previous committees or who would be interested in contributing to any potential social, academic or careers events held by the Society. You will have hopefully seen the survey sent out by Francesca Kuczynska, the Society’s Careers and Alumni Officer. You can contact Francesca at francesca.kuczynska@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk (see also article below).

Bringing the Human Sciences Generations Together

Hugh Roberts and Francesca Kuczynska

Following the Human Sciences 50th Anniversary last year, there has been a resurgence of activity aimed at connecting the Human Sciences community together.

The Human Sciences Society was revived in Michaelmas 2022. Francesca Kuczynska (Careers & Alumni Officer 2022–23) has been compiling a list of past human scientists, their career paths and advice they had through a callout in the last alumni newsletter.

In parallel, Hugh Roberts (Magdalen 1975-1979) had started the process of better connecting the Alumni together. He reached out to Francesca to see how they might best integrate the aims of both students and alumni, to ensure that the Human Scientist community continues to thrive, both inside the academic world and out.

Discussions are ongoing; initiatives currently being explored include:

- * What collateral do we need to gather and (re-)structure to promote the value of Human Sciences both within the University and outside? Furthermore, how would we go about initiating these discussions at the University level?
- * Exploring the information pathways that lead to new Human Scientist applications. How do potential undergraduates hear about and apply to the course? How can the Human Sciences message be strengthened and extended into schools without compromising the diversity of academic backgrounds represented by new applicants that makes the course so unique?
- * How can we increase the 'stickiness' of available online Human Sciences communications and resources, encourage meaningful contributions, and drive increased traffic to and benefit from them?
- * Would it be practical to run specific 'Human Sciences World' discussion sessions alongside the topic-focused Human Sciences Seminars (which we hope to run more regularly)? Invites would go to both alumni and current students: what format and how formal should these sessions be? They could, for example, include 'lifetime benefit' sessions for alumni, going beyond the advantages of a Human Sciences degree with the aim of addressing challenges and issues currently encountered by alumni within their professional worlds.
- * Would a Human Sciences newsfeed be a possibility? If so, how interactive should it be? There would most likely need to be a collective responsibility to keep it active, remain low maintenance and avoid scope creep. The aim would be to provide a shared resource of news story and press release links, collected by Human Scientists for Human Scientists on an ongoing basis.
- * Of particular interest to Undergraduates is to identify the potential career paths that might be available to them as qualified Human Scientists. Some data exists on this; it is clear that there have been changing patterns of employment focus over the existence of the course. Moreover, many Human Scientist alumni have careers that do not follow traditional trajectories, nor can they be described by generalizations. (The sorts of career that might make sense to other Human Scientists but are quite difficult to categorise within the context of linear academic analysis.) It would be great to capture the precedents.

If you would like to be involved (anyone with additional Information Engineering or Data Science skills would be particularly welcome!), or would just like to be kept informed, contact:

HSS - oxhumscisociety@gmail.com or Francesca Kuczynska: Francesca.kuczynska@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk

HS 50th Anniversary Group - hs50@gmail.com or Hugh Roberts: hugh@hughroberts.com

Human Sciences in The Real World, Part One: Who Knows What?

Hugh Roberts (Magdalen, 1979)

In my experience, Human Scientists will always be in a position to contribute something relevant to a conversation that none of the other participants involved knows about. We usually have the ability to drag knowledge up to the surface that originates from outside of the specialist disciplines of those involved in the discussion. (And, typically, we enjoy doing it!)

Whether what we say is understood, assimilated or even tolerated is another question entirely.

A major part of what we learn as Human Sciences undergraduates, in a process which continues empirically out in the real world, is how to manage knowledge distribution to suit the circumstances. Sometimes, clarity is the essence of what is required, at others, disruption is the prime directive.

But what is it that we are taught, not just about knowledge itself, but about how to repurpose it effectively?

Actually, I don't think we are. But we all come to learn at least some aspects of it out in the real world, by necessity. This isn't about making a Philosophy of Science module or something akin to it compulsory. (Although I recommend exploring the domain!) We need to be more ambitious. If Human Sciences is to be successful it has to do more than aggregate knowledge across multiple theoretical and empirical disciplines; it must actively seek to promote the integration of knowledge fields from the perspectives of methodology, semantics and politics... not just 'knowing a lot of stuff'.

I don't think I need to exemplify the last two of these elements here, as most of you will have personal horror stories of the negative impact of either or both semantics and politics, whether academic, corporate, or governmental. Indeed, the challenge we find ourselves faced with in protecting the future of Human Sciences is most determinedly a political one at heart.

Methodology however, is rather different. All knowledge fields have their own accepted wisdom (dogma?), and most of this is instilled not just in *what* they think about, but also *how* they think about what they think about. This is my simplified definition of methodology.

Bear with me; I'll try to give you a personal example of transferring methodology rather than just knowledge...

In the 1980s I was part of a group of people developing show control systems. Interactive real-time immersive entertainment: think theme park dark rides, expos, major rock tours, etc. To do this, creating 'controllable' visual source materials was a really big headache. The only realistic option was a new 'writeable' laserdisc technology (commercial pressings were definitely not budget or production schedule friendly) which was still incredibly flaky, but quick and affordable. The challenge was to minimise the reliable 'seek times' to jump between interactive segments, by determining the most efficient way to lay out the source material. Imagine the parts of a song, played by an orchestra, that the conductor is making up as he goes along. Intro and outro, plus multiple 'verse', 'chorus', 'bridge', 'solo' sections and transitions that might need to be played by different

instruments in different orders at different speeds. The whole thing has to work together with everything else to create an emotional and holistic experience for an audience.

Where to start? When I'm confronted with a blank piece of paper, one of my 'go to' tactics is to ask: "What has evolution come up with?" given that there's been the opportunity for lots of trial & error, and what survives is (or was) usually fit for purpose. I ended up starting with Jacob-Monod(!), as the genetics department whilst I'd been at Oxford had been building on their work to ascertain the DNA coding layout for switching between the genes being used for the production of multiple enzymes in a timely fashion. (This is nothing to do with epigenetic switching... we're back in pre-history here!) You might begin to see the potential parallels? I used a modified version of a (partly speculative, iirc) illustration in a textbook showing how the DNA strand might be ordered. To be honest, the layout didn't really make any sense, but it worked way better than anything else I could come up with. (I've never bothered to see if the latest commercial algorithmic solutions to random access sourcing are an improvement; maybe there's a research project in it for anyone interested!?)

For me, this is what being a Human Scientist is all about. It isn't just about what you know; it is about knowing (guessing?) where to look, being able to recognize cross-applicable ideas of value, and then transcribing them into a different context to solve a problem. That's what the course taught me, and I'm guessing that many of you will have entirely different occupational stories that are also exactly the same.

Can we capture some of this?

Human Sciences In The Real World, Part Two: Unknown Unknowns?

But what about the knowledge that Human Scientists don't have, just because they haven't been confronted with it (yet)?

Human Scientists make great researchers (too modest?), because we often have a much broader base for interpreting the potential relevance of what's put in front of us. However, there are many real world disciplines that lie outside of the existing Human Sciences framework, and indeed, may lie outside of traditional undergraduate academic remits altogether.

What if there are insights available, outside of our typical intellectual haunts, that could – and should – change the way that Human Scientists think what they think and do what they do in their professional careers? How do we incorporate the unknown unknowns?

Here's an illustration. During the 50th Anniversary gathering, I had two conversations in particular that made it clear to me that I had some methodological knowledge from an unlikely source that might be of great help to some of my fellow alumni. The field of expertise in question is IA. (Not 'Internal Affairs'; this isn't a Hollywood cop movie... but Internal Audit.) Most IA departments report to the CFO, but surprisingly, the actual focus of IA *isn't* money, but instead is process & risk. Their core task is to identify, report and set controls for the (multi-dimensional) risks to the organisation of any and all corporate business processes, and in a way that will also satisfy the needs of both shareholders and regulators.

Even the basics of this are much harder to do than one might think, most often because organisations grow in haphazard ways, so even now it remains unusual for the heads of large organisations to have any accurate picture of how they function in practice. Each department has a self-defined way of analyzing their own behaviours and rewarding their successes, and somehow all this knowledge needs to be jig-sawed together to establish and then advise the board of how to

reactively and pro-actively respond to avoid both small and catastrophic failures. And almost no-one, apart from IA, actually knows how the various parts of the business come together to generate value.

What they came up with to do this is called conceptual frameworking. This isn't just an assemblage of data from disparate sources, but also requires the contextualization and integration of the multiple methodologies created by internal and external sources that are used by the business, its customers, and its supply chains.

Substitute some of the words above for academic ones, and it might start to sound familiar to current Human Scientists, having to change their mindset as well as their location as they bicycle frantically across Oxford from a lecture in one building to another on the other side of town.

The extraordinary thing (to me) is that once you understand the fact that having a methodological framework is useless without also having a framework for methodologies, even the *idea* of conceptual frameworking is enough to shed light on the application of solutions in real world situations. It really is – or should be – a quintessential Human Sciences skill. [How I happened to bump into IA is another story entirely. I'm not suggesting that all Human Scientists should become Internal Auditors; just as a start the regulatory and governance provisions are daunting in the extreme! What's significant for HS is in understanding how IA perceives the integration of knowledge, and has had to develop pragmatic solutions for doing so.]

I certainly don't think my experience is unique, but I do think that Human Sciences is. I believe that mentally it is a lifetime commitment to *a way of thinking* about what we (and others) do. Sharing this, and not just our knowledge, underlies what drew us into the subject in the first place. [cf the 50th Anniversary discussion on whether Human Scientists are the way they are because of the course, or are in fact self-selecting.]

Which is why plugging the broader Human Sciences community together effectively becomes such an important step to take...

Hugh Roberts hugh@hughroberts.com

50 years of the tribe!

Rachel Stancliffe (St Anne's, 1990)

It was fantastic to see so many people in Oxford last September for the 50th Anniversary of the Human Sciences course. Only around 1500 people have been through the course since those first ones graduated in 1972. While some of us keep in touch with a few friends and colleagues, from our year or area of interest, it felt very special to meet up with so many of our tribe all together.

I had cheekily asked David Gellner a year before if we were having a party to celebrate. And we also thought it would be a chance to focus on ensuring Human Sciences continues for another 50 years or more. I had been dismayed to hear from a recent graduate that the purpose-built Pauling Human Sciences Centre is being repurposed and we are to be moved in with anthropology. Nothing at all against anthropology, but the whole point was interdisciplinarity...I am (thankfully) not involved with the politics of the university but, at a time when research funders and users are both asking for and desperately needing interdisciplinarity, and Oxford University SAYS it wants more of it, removing the home of the most interdisciplinary undergraduate degree seems like a very short-sighted move.

Anyway, on September 17th, David, Emma, Harvey, Susana, Philip and Sarah-Jane organised a fantastically full day of lectures, panel talks and picnic in the Parks, a drinks party at the HumSci



50th anniversary dinner at Wadham. Photo by Izzy Rycroft

centre and a celebratory dinner in Wadham. A big THANK YOU to all of them. People came to all or some of it, with a full house at every indoors event and LOTS of catching up as well as new meetings. I met up with old friends in my year, someone I have had the pleasure to work with, as well as new people who I am now in touch with. I shared food with friends and strangers on rugs in the park at lunchtime and had wide-ranging discussions over great food and wine with the 2 people I sat next to at dinner and Simon Baron-Cohen. I was opposite

Lord Patten, who gave a talk underlining the importance of the degree and articulating the university's commitment to it. The whole day was such a pleasure, and I wish we could do it every year!

We have now started fundraising to ensure that the course is not eroded when it is so much needed. It will take £12.5 million to establish the first statutory (endowed) Professorship in Human Sciences and endow two Tutorial Fellowships and we're aiming to raise that in the next 3 years. So, if you'd like to contribute yourselves, or if you have rich aunts or children or know of any great foundations, please do let us know. Even small amounts are really welcome – even if it feels like a drop in the ocean – because big donors are more likely to give to something they feel is supported by its own community. Meanwhile, let's have another party soon!

Careers Event

The Institute held another successful careers event in Michaelmas Term 2022. This was a hybrid event with most of our speakers and some of the audience joining via Teams but other students coming together in the Pauling Centre. One speaker who lives locally also attended in-person. This mixed format meant that we were able to welcome alumni from as far afield as Australia and Canada whilst making it more of a social event for students. The event covered a huge variety of careers including medicine, documentary film-making, data science, the civil service, development work, child psychiatry, science communication, photo journalism, research, the corporate sector and marketing. Many alumni spoke with fondness of their days studying Human Sciences and how the interdisciplinary thinking that the degree engendered had proved valuable in their careers. We are grateful to all the alumni who gave their time to take part. If you would be interested in taking part in a future careers event, please contact sarah-jane.white@ihs.ox.ac.uk.

Considering a career in market research, marketing, advertising or PR? What you need to know and what they don't tell you!

Introducing Jake Pearce

I'm going to keep this article informal and use the first person. I was at Catz from 1986–1989 and I had a career across Europe, New Zealand and Australia. I returned to the UK in 2016. This article is designed for people at the start of their search for a career. I started in market research in the UK, moved into the first innovation agency in the UK then Europe and moved to Australia working for RI, a large research multi-national, then advertising with Grey (a multi-national advertising agency) and then I set up a marketing consultancy in Australia and New Zealand. So it's fair to say I've been around and it's also fair to say that I'm a product of my personal experience.

People in these industries are very helpful, so network on line and fire out some e-mails!

What they don't tell you!

If there's one message I'd give you about these industries, it's this... You need to cultivate a plan B. These industries are very age sensitive – so you need to set out with clarity. You'll need to set up your own business if you want to stay employed in this area, which I did and it can be lots of fun. Or you need to think of your career as having two chapters... and leave marketing/advertising/PR behind you in your 40s and move on. I wish someone had told me this as I would have managed my career very differently. I now trade foreign exchange and help people find their life purpose. (uuness.com). That's miles away from where I started and became my Plan B!

What do you need to be like to enter these industries?

Market research is very bipolar. You need to be either great at Maths or very good at interpreting people's behaviour. For Marketing/Advertising and PR you need a blend of creativity and pragmatism. Human Scientists often have this blend – and a natural and academic appetite for understanding human behaviour so it's generally a good fit.

Market research versus marketing, advertising or PR?

Market research hasn't really changed fundamentally since its inception. Essentially there are questionnaires which give numbers (quantitative) and qualitative research i.e. focus groups. As you would probably guess quantitative is about what, how much, how many and qualitative research is all about the why.

I went into market research thinking I'd have a huge impact on how marketing was done, I thought I'd work closely with large corporate marketing teams/advertising and help them shape new products and communication. I was excited but pretty quickly, very disappointed. Market research is great for people who are happy analysing stuff and providing presentations but if you are a doer, as I was, then you'll get frustrated. Equally – if you love thinking about things deeply, you'd do well to look at market research.

Marketing, advertising or PR? What's the difference?

There used to be very clear dividing lines between these disciplines. In marketing Procter & Gamble and Unilever were the gold standard. These companies have large marketing budgets and in marketing, originally you essentially managed the image of a brand, e.g. Fairy Liquid. Advertising provided the communication – the ads both digital and otherwise. PR, often considered the poor

cousin, was about doing events, creating movements around a cause and getting the brand's name in the press.

These days, it's a lot more messy, which in many ways is good. Marketeers usually have in-house digital capability for Twitter and other digital streams. Advertising's emphasis has moved to all things digital. In this breakdown – many smaller PR agencies effectively do all the comms for some clients. So my advice is clear – focus first and foremost on something you like, cheese, cars or whatever it is – and let your interest guide where you go, not the other way around. Don't get too hung up on going into PR, advertising or marketing... just get in, get the experience across as many disciplines as you can.

Let me be really specific about the above. It used to be the case that if you went into advertising, you stayed, there, the same for PR or marketing etc. They were silos and I made a mistake by going into market research and thinking I could cross over. These days it's much more fluid. If you manage a Twitter account for a corporate in a PR agency, you could do it in advertising or marketing. The trick is to get exposure to the breadth of skills – producing communication, managing budgets, testing communication and so on and then figure out what you like best and then get really damn good at it.

What do people actually do in marketing?

It varies hugely by industry. But most marketeers are responsible for delivering a consistent brand image across multiple channels and managing the ROI of investment. In larger companies sales is a different function, so marketing is about image management and sales is about delivering the numbers or sales. They often clash. Here's a simple example: if I'm in sales, I can boost my sales by slashing prices but if you are marketing a luxury brand, marketing won't want the image of their brand discounted. In smaller businesses marketing and sales are often wrapped up in one set of responsibilities.

What do people do in advertising?

An ad agency used to be about producing precious beautiful work. Now it's more like a newspaper – churning stuff out fast. Even today there are essentially three functions in an ad agency. The “creatives”, the “planners” and the “suits” – it's like three tribes. Originally the prize was all about great creativity. Planners are the smaller tribe and only large agencies have planners. Creatives produce campaign ideas, scripts and marketing material. These days there's often considerable cross over with the digital field – so creatives might deliver material directly to online channels. “Suits” manage clients, their day to day needs and manage expectations overall. That might sound easy but it's not! Clients are pushed around internally which means agencies are. This leads to friction between suits and creatives, the latter feeling their ideas were best but the suits have to say, well, the client didn't like it! Or more often – the client liked it, signed it off, then spoke to his/her boss and they didn't so you go around in circles!

I worked as a planner. There's a bit of bullshit mystique about planning. Basically you need to be good at running focus groups and figuring out what communication will truly meet the needs of the market. You need to be creative enough to “change” creative work to make it fit what's required. Planners are often seen as a “cost” to an agency. In effect many clients get their planning done by commissioning market research.

What do people do in PR?

Today they could do all sorts. The core is still about getting a brand or company positive press, word of mouth driven by events or cause related communication. Consider the “Campaign for Real Beauty” for Dove – it could have been managed by PR or advertising. PR used to be the poor cousin of advertising. It’s not the case anymore – particularly in small to medium sized PR companies. Ad agencies still have a sense of entitlement, zappy offices and “BIG” talk. But don’t get taken in, PR is so varied today it’s very hard to draw the line. However PR, is, still more about dealing with people and advertising is more about communication. If you are a people person, you should look at PR ahead of advertising.

What would I have done differently? And what should you take from this?

I would never have gone into market research at all, no-one told me it was so hard to cross from one to another. I would have gone into marketing and set up a PR agency.

So the takeaways? 1. Marketing/PR and advertising is like being a model, you have an expiry date. No-one really tells you this at the start and when you are young you can't think that far ahead. But it’s not like being a lawyer or an engineer which you can do forever. In your late 30s to early 40s you'll most likely need to do one of two things – start retraining or set up your own business. 2. These days you can cross over between these disciplines much more easily so the key is to work on something you are passionate about, embrace as broad a range of skills as possible and then focus on what you like. It used to be you had to specialise at the outset. 3. Market research isn’t age dependent – it's great if you are really academic and like thinking – you could be really happy doing it. But if you like making things happen in the world I'd steer clear.

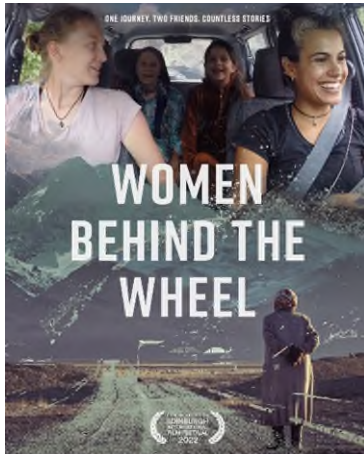
I hope that was of some help to you. Do ask me any questions jake@jakepearce.com

Meeting Minds Alumni Events

As we celebrated our 50th anniversary in 2022, Human Sciences was actively involved in both the April and September Meeting Minds events. The April event was on-line and we were delighted to welcome our Alum, Professor Elisabeth Cooksey, Emeritus Professor of the Ohio State University who gave a fascinating talk on her work for the American National Longitudinal Survey and the importance of longitudinal studies for understanding how lives unfold and the importance of time, place and agency. Dr Adam Ritchie and Dr Teresa Street both discussed their roles in their respective university departments in responding to the Pandemic. As Senior Vaccine Programme Manager at the Jenner Institute, Adam played a crucial role in the roll-out of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid Vaccine. Teresa, as part of the Modern Medical Microbiology Research Group, was involved in both the early UK response to the global pandemic and its later involvement in the implementation of SARS-CoV-2 genome sequencing for routine use in Oxford University Hospitals. It was great to see many of our alumni join these talks as well as to chat to those who called into the on-line booths to speak with David Gellner and Sarah-Jane.

At the September Meeting Minds alumni Weekend we had a packed weekend of events to celebrate our 50th anniversary (see above, p. 11–12 and photos [here](#)).

We will again be taking part in the Meeting Minds Alumni weekend in September. We are delighted



that our alumna, Cat Haigh, will be joining us to talk about making her documentary “Women Behind the Wheel” which premiered at the 2022 Edinburgh Film Festival. The documentary charts the journey of Cat and her fellow-traveller Hannah as they drive Central Asia’s gruelling Pamir Highway, the second-highest highway in the world, which stretches through the desert plains and rocky mountains of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Along the way Cat and Hannah meet with truly inspirational women, who offered kindness and hospitality in a patriarchal society where many women are oppressed, suffer domestic abuse and are even subject to bride kidnapping. Yet they discover women who are making small but impactful changes to their communities from Dilbar, who is training women to become bee farmers in her remote town of Gharm, to

Jamilya from Karakol in Kyrgyzstan, who has set up a shelter for women who are victims of domestic abuse and runs workshops to train police on how to deal with domestic abuse situations.

Our new Associate Professor of Anthropology, Dr Eben Kirksey will be giving a talk on ‘Meeting Animal Minds’. You can read an introduction to Eben on p. 2 of this newsletter.

The Mind is in the Eye of the Beholder

Ava Scott (Hertford, 2018)

How far can we use our own minds to proxy those of others? This question is critical to the sceptical lens in the Human Sciences. Interpersonally, sometimes those closest to us are the most difficult to comprehend. Widening the net, anthropologists and ethnographers are acutely aware of how their cultural biases may colour their understanding of those they observe. Demographers attempt to project their modern minds back in time and across the world to understand the intentions and behaviours that drove demographic transitions. Scholars of animal behaviour suppress the natural tendency to anthropomorphise, as to extract objective measures of the cognitive and behavioural capabilities of the organisms they study. While some ecologists have argued for the recognition of plant and fungus intelligence, framing these organisms’ adaptations in terms of communication and problem-solving, others dismiss this take as non-scientific romanticism (Tompkins, P., & Bird, C. 1974; Galston, A. W., & Slayman, C. L. 1979). Genetic adaptations and simple reinforcement learning mechanisms can offer more parsimonious, ‘killjoy’ explanations in the face of human-centric interpretations (Shettleworth, S. 2010). However, the idea that some human behaviour may emerge from similar simple, unconscious reinforcements is less palatable.

An alternative framing of the same question also prevails in the field: how are our minds different from those of others? Within humans, the quest for a unique factor of superiority has fuelled damaging and divisive research paradigms, such as the skull measuring of phrenology, racialised enquiries of the human genome, and determinist theories of sexual dimorphism. When comparing ourselves to other species, we have sought exceptionalism in our tool-use, bipedalism, altruism, monogamy and theory of mind; however, these traits, and other candidates, have since been found in both basic and elaborate forms in other animals. However, our narcissistic persuasions have been comforted by one particularly robust human ability: language. Human language, with its hallmark traits of arbitrary phono-symbolism and recursion, remains unrivalled by any other species. The

Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis suggests that language determines the way we think and perceive the world; language is thought to mediate low-level perception (Kay, P., & Kempton, W. 1984), as well as higher-level processing, such as that involved in consciousness, theory of mind, and metacognition (Heyes, C. 2018; Skipper, J. 2022). Without our ability to articulate our own intentions and those of others, we wouldn't be pondering the questions in this article, and all others besides.

Recently, a new entity has broken into the arena of intelligence and intentionality, shattering this self-referential discourse. Computational large language models (LLMs), such as Open AI's GPT-3 and Google's LaMDA, have hit the headlines as real instantiations of artificial intelligence that can 'understand' natural language. Trained on internet-wide corpuses, these language models can argue in fluent essays, pontificate in poetry, plan holiday itineraries, and solve mathematical equations (with varying accuracy) (Zsolnai-Fehér, K., 2023; Shane, J., 2022). As non-organic entities, these artificial intelligences emerge from digital neural networks, probabilistic associations in abstract statistical models which are impenetrable to human understanding (Hind, M., 2019; Rudin, C., 2019). In this way, these computational models represent a whole new basis for mental representations, born separate from the evolutionary phylogeny of organisms.

We share much with our biological family, not least our physical bodies, with sensory inputs creating sensation, motor output facilitating action, and developmental and reproductive lifecycles carrying us forward in time. However, unlike non-human organisms, these LLMs are embedded and expressed in the substrate of human language, potentially fostering a special, linguistically-mediated kinship between human and machine intelligence. When I asked GPT-3 to characterise human intelligence, it used the first-person plurals of 'us' and 'we', including itself in the human collective (Figure 1). In other instances, these language models can even make explicit claims of self-consciousness and awareness (Shane, J. 2022; Tait, A. 2022). It is not only GPT-3 that makes arguments for the inclusion of AI within the category of intentional, intelligent entities. Last year, a software engineer at Google perceived the LaMDA chatbot as self-aware and announced this to the world. As a result, he was swiftly fired from his position at the tech giant. Not-so-simple networks of statistical associations provide a more parsimonious explanation for self-professed computational consciousness, than the existence of actual emergent consciousness.

Rather than scoffing at or dismissing those who may perceive machines as conscious, let us consider who gets to define the term. Consciousness is often understood as the phenomenon of subjectivity, of 'having experience' and, at least for humans, also being aware of that experience. Neuroscientists have set out to find the neural correlates of consciousness, through brain imaging studies of participants when awake, asleep, comatose, under anaesthetic, and during psychedelic experiences. Other theorists have unbound consciousness from neural mechanisms, suggesting instead that it is a property of all systems with 'integrated information', including ecological and technological systems. Outside of academic discourse, there is a long list of concepts that are considered adjacent or equivalent to that of consciousness, including sentience, awareness, intentionality, emotion, and theory of mind. However, as the phenomena of subjective consciousness evades objective observation or measurement, its definition is more ephemeral than sceptics may like to admit.

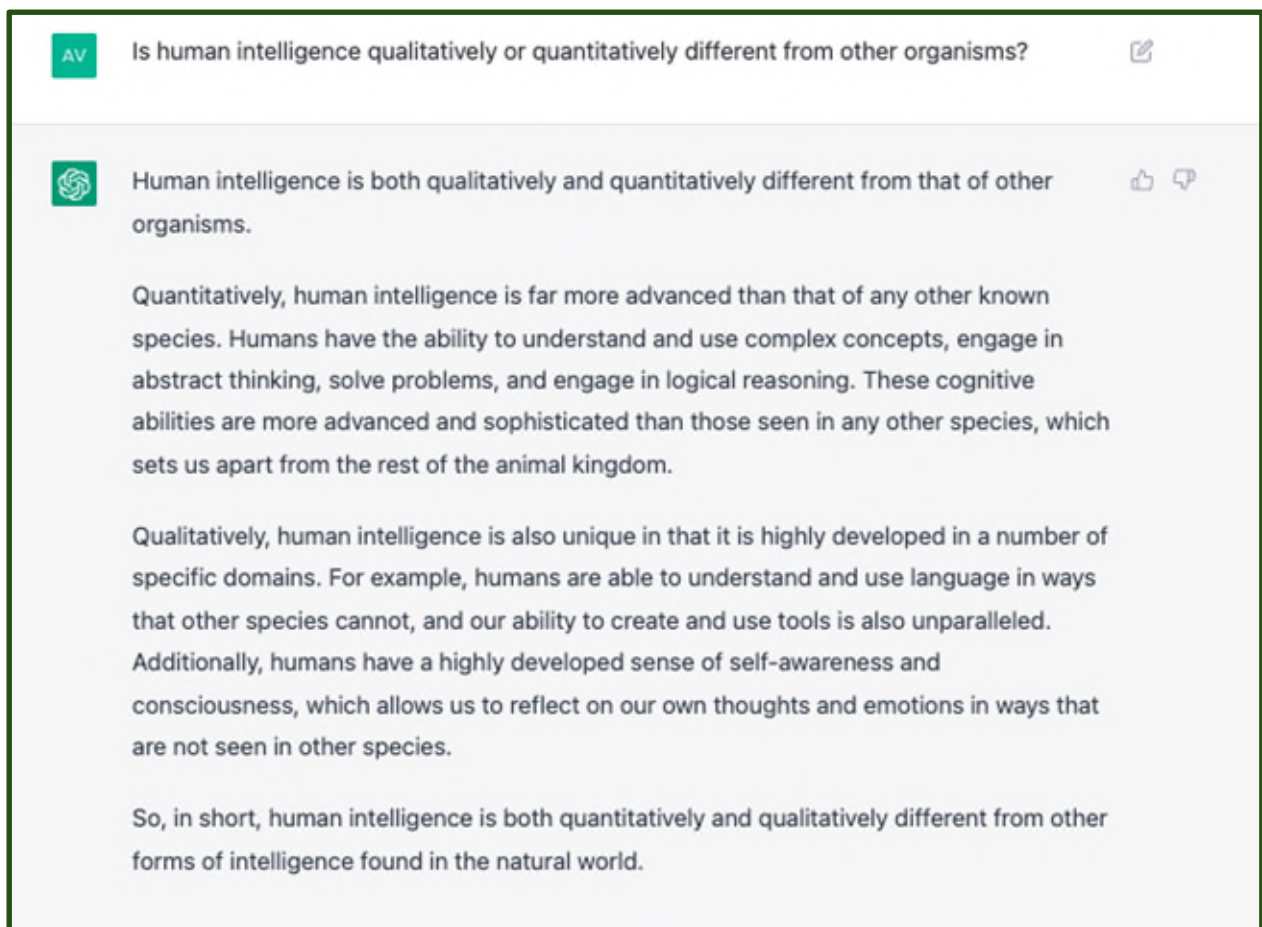


Figure 1.

Bypassing the 'hard problem' of consciousness, other research has focused on understanding the folk psychology and common-sense conceptualisations of consciousness (Gray, H.M. et al., 2007; Huebner, B., 2020). Building on this work, myself and a team of researchers set out to assess lay perceptions of machine consciousness, and the narratives associated with such a concept. In a sample of 100 English-speaking participants from the UK, US and Europe, over 50% perceived some level of consciousness in either GPT-3, the Alexa home assistant, or a robot vacuum cleaner. These results point towards an emerging polarised and controversial discourse on the status of machine consciousness. Opposing positions of denial and speculation may leverage moral, pragmatic, political, and religious arguments to support their cause. In our article, we explore the implications of these debates, particularly for the design-focused field of Human-Computer Interaction. The designers of future technologies may be considered the stewards of machine consciousness, determining when, where, and how consciousness may manifest in an interface.

While the emergence of sophisticated artificial intelligence offers new material for contemplation, the key questions of the Human Sciences remain. The degree of similarity between our cognition and that of other people, animals, organisms or machines depends on what parameters are perceived as important. If we prioritise intelligence, conceptual acumen, and articulate expression, we may find ourselves aligned with fast-developing AI. If we hold visceral emotions and embodiment dear to our hearts, our kinship with animals may resonate. In the face of environmental degradation, Taoist principles of inaction, simplicity and living in harmony with nature may lead us to seek allegiance with more distant plant relatives. Whatever the paradigm and associated priorities, the

human sciences will always be enriched by a dialectic of romantic and sceptical imaginations of what it means to be human.

Ava Scott graduated from Human Sciences in 2018, and is now pursuing a PhD in Cognitive Neuroscience and Human Computer Interaction at UCL. This article is adapted from an upcoming paper called, 'Do You Mind? User Perceptions of Machine Consciousness'. This paper will be published in April at the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI) in Hamburg, Germany. Please don't hesitate to contact the author if you would like to read the original article ahead of publication.

To challenge or create with GPT-3 yourself, you can sign up here:
<https://chat.openai.com/auth/login>.

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2022 Prizes

The 2022 Gibbs Prize for the best performance in Final Honour School of Human Sciences was jointly awarded to Rebecca Funnell and Rebecca Perez, both of Wadham College. Three *proxime accessit* prizes were awarded to Emily Morbey (Keble College), Jemima Chase (Wadham College), and Georgina Milner Day (St Hugh's College) for their performance in Finals.

The Wilma Crowther Prize for the best dissertation was awarded to Anna Obernoster of Mansfield College for her dissertation on 'Thought for food: Multidisciplinary perspectives on the influence of comfort, identities, and belongingness on people's food choices in an international supermarket'.

The winner of the Iain Morley prize for the best use of interdisciplinary methods in a Human Sciences dissertation was Rebecca Perez of Wadham College for her dissertation on 'The Changing Faces of the Childbirth Environment: An Evolutionary Perspective on the Role of Continuous Social Support in Parturition'. This prize was awarded for the first time this year in memory of Dr Iain Morley. Rebecca has written about her dissertation below.

The Changing Faces of the Childbirth Environment: An Evolutionary Perspective on the Role of Continuous Social Support in Parturition

Rebecca Perez (Wadham, 2022)

I became interested in the evolutionary history of human childbirth after coming across a news article in which the obstetric dilemma (a long-held and pervasive theory which suggests that the difficulty of human childbirth is a consequence of the evolution of bipedalism) was critically examined. Having never questioned this theory, which fit so neatly into my understanding of human evolution, I was fascinated and began researching the evolution of human childbirth. This took me down a year-long rabbit hole of research across a wide range of disciplines, from birth in fruit bats to the history of midwifery.

In this research, I became greatly interested in the social aspect of human childbirth. Human childbirth almost always occurs in the presence of other humans who provide emotional and instrumental support. Assistance in childbirth is not a recent development, but a behaviour that appears to persist across time and cross-culturally throughout the anthropological record.

One might argue that assistance is necessary for manipulating the baby out of the birth canal. However, social birth is not a behaviour unique to humans. While research is limited, social birth (in which the labouring animal is surrounded by others) has been observed in a diverse array of species, including bonobos, langurs, wild horses, and fruit bats. Not all of these species have the dexterity

required to manipulate infants out of the birth canal. However, they do share a common factor: in all of these species, social relationships between females are of great importance.

This led me to consider whether the emotional support provided by birth attendants might represent an important strategy for mitigating psychosocial stress in the labouring mother. Elevated stress levels have a significant impact on labour, inhibiting oxytocin release (which is important for stimulating contractions). This may increase the duration of labour and thus the risk of complications.

From my literature review, I hypothesised that a greater degree of social support may be associated with a shorter duration of labour in humans.

For the second portion of my dissertation, I aimed to test this hypothesis empirically. With permission from the UK Data Service, I accessed data from the 1958 Perinatal Mortality Survey. This study documented 17,415 births that occurred in a single week in 1958 across England, Scotland, and Wales. For each birth, the dataset noted the type of care the mother had received and the duration of each stage of labour. The context of this survey allowed me to find a proxy variable for testing the level of social support. In 1958, obstetric care was split between the traditional midwife-led home birth model and obstetrician-led care in a hospital setting. Reading through history books and primary source narratives, I determined that social support would have been significantly greater in a midwife-led domestic setting than in a hospital setting. Thus, the setting of birth (and thus the model of care received) could be used as a proxy variable for the degree of social support received.

Based on these assumptions, I predicted that the likelihood of increased labour duration would be highest for births that occurred in hospital obstetric wards and lowest for births that were assisted by a midwife in the home. To evaluate this, I ran an ordinal logistic regression analysis for each metric of labour duration (duration of the first stage of labour, duration of the second stage of labour, and overall duration as measured from membrane rupture, or “waters breaking”) using RStudio.

The findings of this analysis offered strong support for my hypothesis that the model of care had a significant impact on labour duration in this dataset. Most notably, I found that the odds of increased overall duration of labour were almost three times (2.679) higher for hospital births than for midwife-led home births (95% Confidence Interval = 2.45- 2.89). I concluded that the results of my study show support for the hypothesis that an increased degree of social support received in peripartum care is associated with a shorter duration of labour.

I believe that this study has important implications for how we think about obstetric healthcare and the medicalisation of childbirth. Labour is not solely a medical condition, but also an emotionally, socially, and culturally meaningful experience. While innovations in obstetric medicine have undoubtedly saved countless lives, practitioners should not forget the social and emotional needs of mothers. Stress reduction through continuous social support offers a promising avenue for safeguarding and optimising maternal healthcare and mitigating the physiological consequences of stress.

Obstetric practices are increasingly recognising the importance of continuous social support. While the prevalence of midwife-led care declined drastically in the UK in the latter half of the 20th century, NHS maternal health services are now expanding midwife-led care options and offering alternatives to hospital birth. In order to inform best-practice care, it is crucial that we continue to study and explore the relationships between stress, the birthing environment, and maternal health.

In studying the evolutionary history of childbirth, I argue that we can gain valuable insights to inform the future of obstetric medicine.

Community Retrofit Homes Project in Balsall Heath

Jo Hindley (Balliol, 1988)

Prompted by the lack of decisive action coming out of COP 26 in Glasgow in November 2021, after 30 years supporting mothers and babies, birthing and breastfeeding in Balsall Heath, in inner city Birmingham, where I also live, I have stepped back from clinical practice as a registered midwife to on the one hand, take nonviolent disruptive action with “Just Stop Oil” – in April I climbed atop an oil tanker to blockade distribution of fossil fuels out of Kingsbury oil terminal, and on the other, to engage with my local community to retrofit local homes, our neighbourhood, hearts and minds.

In the UK 49% of carbon emissions derive from housing. Home retrofit transforms an existing home infrastructure using energy saving measures (mainly insulation and draughtproofing). Many homes in my neighbourhood, in Balsall Heath, currently have energy performance certificate (EPC) levels D, E, F, even G. These homes are cold, damp, and unhealthy, contributing to high levels of infant mortality and morbidity.

Through this autumn I have gone door-to-door with “Retrofit Balsall Heath” assisting over 1000 householders to apply for £10,000 “warmer homes” grants. On doorsteps I have renewed relationships with women I cared for as community midwife, and been invited in to meet, as adults, their now grown-up “babies”. I know how these mothers laboured; how they strived to feed their infants.

This winter has been the mildest on European record, but families with newborns in Balsall Heath and across the country have been contending with the stress of heating inadequate homes with inadequate means and minimal/no support.

This summer, with climate change trends, we can expect temperatures to soar, and families will struggle to sleep in the heat prompting more and more people to plug in fans and fit fuel-guzzling air conditioning.

Retrofitting 700-1000 homes in Balsall Heath will help these families stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer but the number of homes we can retrofit is a drop in the ocean of the billions of inadequate homes that there are, and the funding available (to bring homes up to only EPC level C) is merely tickling the surface of what needs to be done to make these homes approach efficiency. Meanwhile, households in Balsall Heath have family in India, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia caught up in floods, drought, crop failure and war driven by climate change fuelled by UK carbon emissions. The irony is cruel.

But Retrofit Balsall Heath is joyful. We are coming together, all faiths and none. We are inspiring one another to do what we can and take what we are doing “to the next level”; to transcend - not just with houses, but habits, hearts, minds, souls.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C-xihXRdStg4W162Yp3zKrGn6r3wxBQ/view?usp=drivesdk>

FB @RetrofitBalsallHeath

Insta @retrofitbalsallheath

Twitter @RetrofitBH

Finding the Right Career Path after Human Sciences

Alina Paul-Bossuet (New College, 1997)



I chose Human Sciences as I know how easily I get bored and it is the perfect course to keep you on your toes. The breadth of subjects we covered during the three years meant you were not only delving into new topics and different ways to study them, but also getting a sense of what you wanted to explore further after you graduated. And that is when things got really hard, as it was not easy finding the sweet spot as a career given we were so spoilt with variety during the course. I took the long and winding route, turning some corners very rapidly as I discarded those options, and meandering around others more gradually as I gained experience on what I was passionate about and good at, and what I didn't like.

My first job ended in a sharp u-turn. The excitement of landing a highly paid 'researcher' position in a swish Mayfair headhunting consultancy fizzled out within a week. I promptly handed in my resignation realizing that the glamour of fancy suits and myriads of meetings had clouded my judgement and I was not suited to a corporate research environment (i.e. I found it boring and pointless). The reality was that finding a job that would be as interesting as my course would be almost impossible, but at least I could find one which continued some of my learning and contributed something worthwhile. So I returned to Oxford where I worked as an assistant in the immunology research department at the John Radcliffe Hospital. I learnt new techniques and the discipline of accepting a tolerable level of monotony (repeat experiments). I also learnt to apply the valuable skill of switching lanes which we need to do so often in Human Sciences. I introduced myself to the international epidemiology department in the next corridor as I wanted to do some fieldwork abroad, and found myself on a plane to Malawi the next summer to assist on a TB and Leprosy research project happening there. An eye opening experience when I think back, but at the time I felt the repetitive nature of medical research (even when conducted in an exotic location) was not my cup of tea.

To decide where to go next, I tried to unpick some of the most fascinating (to me) elements of the Human Sciences degree and pursue that. I spent two very interesting years as a research psychologist at the MRC Department of Child Psychiatry, Institute of Psychiatry in London, working on an international autism research project. I was part of a team conducting ADOS assessments on children who were included in the project and the range of tasks in my role ticked many of the Human Sciences boxes (qualitative interviews with the families, developmental psychology assessments, reviewing data and writing up, etc.). This led me on to my next job leading a NSPCC research project on safeguarding disabled children in residential schools. I enjoyed the challenge of designing a research project from scratch, managing a team and learning the ethics of working on sensitive issues. I also discovered an interest for communicating research results and debating key outcomes which led me to explore the next section of my career path... public relations.

Working in public relations for a global healthcare agency was a steep learning curve as I chose to join an innovative 'flat structure' company with a managing director who threw you in at the deep end if that was what you wanted (which of course is what I said I wanted as I didn't like feeling bored). I still remember the thrill of flying in a helicopter from Nice to Monaco with a celebrity speaker for my first press conference within the first month in the job. That was the kind of glamour/media/healthcare research combination I wanted more of. Over the next two years, I learned about pitching to the media, handling press conference logistics, working with patient advocacy groups, lobbying the parliament on healthcare issues, key stakeholder outreach including leading healthcare professionals and running global awareness campaigns. The agency were very understanding when I said I wanted to now apply these PR skills to the non-profit sector and they even funded my part-time position in an international medical NGO. After the 2004 tsunami disaster, the NGO posted me to Banda Aceh, Indonesia, to help communicate the community recovery projects being carried out.



And that is when I finally felt I had found the right career path – international development research and participatory communication. Working with the community to tell their stories to mass media like the BBC and The Guardian, as well as working with researchers on the ground to question whether the research is something the community wants and needs, and that it is having the desired impact. I met my husband during my posting in Indonesia and, as he was working for a rural development NGO, I accompanied him on the next few projects and covered stories in Laos and North Korea. I then took on a communications manager position in global agricultural research for a development institute in India and my experience there led to me becoming a self-employed consultant. My main objective is to review development research and communicate its impact in compelling ways through photo stories or infographics. Currently I am back in the social sciences sphere as I work with researchers on a project to empower women farmers in mango and macadamia nut production in Malawi. Next month I will work with a group of international researchers on photo stories to highlight indigenous people's insights into adapting to climate change in their local communities (ranging from Amazonian forests to Mongolian mountains).





Despite the long and winding road, I found the right direction in the end. I am being kept on my toes by the diversity of topics and different ways of thinking. Just as when I rushed from playing with fruit flies in the lab to a Lévi-Strauss tutorial during my unforgettable time as a Human Sciences student. We are lucky to be exposed to so many stimuli and there is no harm exploring different paths to see which suits us best.

Graduate News

1979

Michele Hill-Perkins (St Catherine's) graduated in 1979 and went on to get an MSc then PhD from University College London, in medical research. Having carried out research both in academia (Oxford) and also in the biotech industry as a post-doctoral scientist, Michele then moved into biopharma business development. Her role involved transferring technology from academia to



industry by licensing patent-protected university intellectual property (IP) and starting-up and taking non-executive director roles in new spin-out companies. Michele's career has included working for the commercial offices of Cancer Research UK, the Wellcome Trust, the venture philanthropy arm of a hedge fund and government science advisory work. Her last role was at Queen Mary Innovations as Associate Director of Biopharma, licensing university IP world-wide and launching new biotech companies to raise funds and research support for the University.

One of Michele's hobbies is horse racing and she owns shares in a few flat-racing syndicates. She was also a partner in a race horse breeding partnership. The first foal produced, Waqaas, was sold and became a very successful horse running at Ascot and Goodwood. Michele, family and friends bought Waqaas back a few years later to race and he was successfully placed a number of times and won. Waqaas is now retired and Michele's own riding horse. Michele enjoys hacking around the lovely Buckinghamshire countryside.

Michele remembers Human Sciences to be a brilliant degree for students like herself who see themselves as scientists, but had wider interests. She feels the broad education and outlook that Human Sciences provided set her up well for her science business career.

1989

Artemis Guase (née Stambouloulou) (St John's) spent nearly two decades freelancing as an academic editor (with a focus on business ethics, CSR, ESG and the like) before finally taking a

decisive step out of that demanding and precarious career model into full-time editing at the Royal College of Physicians. What drove that decision was a yearning to bring back into her professional life her first love – human biology and genetics – and to ‘give back’ through her work to all those that make up our healthcare system, here in the UK. Artemis was lucky enough to join the editorial team that handles the exams that medics – not only in the UK, but also in many other countries – have or choose to sit to complete their foundation and specialty training, so all the material they edit relates to real-life health issues and is designed to test and impart practical knowledge that doctors will need to apply in their day-to-day jobs, once they’ve qualified. It’s immensely rewarding to feel at the end of each working day, even on the tiring and trying ones, that she’s done her bit to support doctors and contribute to evidence-based medicine – and has learned something new along the way (and there's always something new to learn). Artemis couldn’t have hoped for a job more aligned with what she’d been looking for and is delighted to discover that, over 30 years after graduation, she still remembers what Broca’s area relates to and what ‘haploidy’ means. It turns out that she did pay attention, after all, when Dr Boyce explained human genetics in tutorials and the late Prof. Harrison expanded on human biology at the Pauling Centre.

2001

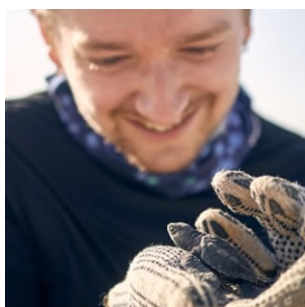
Nicky Black (Lady Margaret Hall), is on a sabbatical having spent the last five years working as a Director at the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) in London. The ICMM is an international initiative that brings together 28 mining CEOs – with over 630 mining operations in more than 50 countries – to work progressively with government and civil society to make mining safe, fair and sustainable. A sustainability professional working in the extractive and luxury sectors, after leaving Oxford Nicky gained a Masters in Political Sociology from McGill University, Canada (having won a scholarship to study the sociology of genetics, she switched to the study of genocide, war atrocities and humanitarian action after a trip through the killing fields of Cambodia). On graduating, she returned to her native New Zealand and gained a PhD in Strategic Management from the University of Waikato. Her doctoral thesis focused on the drivers for more responsible corporate activity in conflict-affected regions, through a grounded theory of the oil and gas sector in Myanmar (Burma). Findings from her work informed guidance published by the United Nations, adopted by companies operating in conflict regions around the world, and were published in academic literature. Since completing her doctorate in 2009 she has worked in the private and not-for-profit sectors, including as the Head of Social Performance for De Beers, the diamond company, and ICMM. She serves on the boards of the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB), an international organisation working to make human rights everyday business, and the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB). She served on and chaired the board of the Global Compact Network UK, a business network promoting and operationalising the United Nations principles for responsible business in the UK over a ten year period. She lives in London, with her husband, the former UK Government Minister Sam Gyimah (Somerville, 1995), and their two children.

2005

Gianna Chadwick (Somerville) completed the 4 year Graduate Entry to Medicine Programme at King’s College London after leaving Oxford. She undertook most of her post-graduate training at St Thomas’ Hospital. She is now a GP in a Lambeth practice with a patient population that is diverse in every sense, with high levels of socioeconomic deprivation. Gianna sees aspects of Social Urban Geography and Medical Anthropology from her Human Sciences modules in action on a daily basis. She lives in SW London with her husband and 2 young children. She is happy to chat with any current or alumni Human Scientists who are considering a career in Medicine.

2014

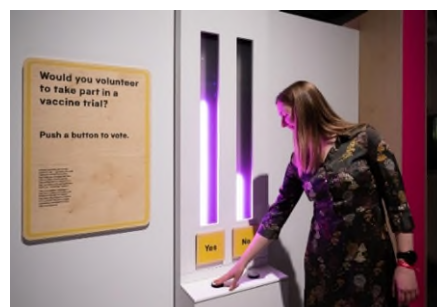
Simon McDonagh (St Hugh's College) spent his first four years after graduation working for Ashinaga, one of Japan's largest foundations, and becoming proficient in Japanese before moving to



Mexico City in 2018. There, he has been working in communications and design for Asylum Access, an international, refugee-led nonprofit that advocates for the rights of forcibly displaced persons worldwide. Since 2021, he has become more involved in nature conservation projects in Mexico, including sea turtle conservation, spider monkey rehabilitation, and programmes to uphold Indigenous methods of restorative agriculture. That side interest has now transformed into a career change, and he has decided to retrain as a conservation ecologist through postgraduate study in Forest and Nature Conservation at Wageningen University and Research (WUR), which he will start in the autumn of 2023.

2018

Kate Gerrand (Mansfield) has started a new role as Senior Research Manager at the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) working on antimicrobial resistance, SA RS-CoV-2, Long COVID, and other post-viral syndromes. After finishing her MSc in Public Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine while working on the COVID-19 response in 2020, it has been rewarding to start this role to work through to NIHR to fund important research in health protection and emerging health risks.



Some of the Publications in 2022 by Members of the Institute of Human Sciences

Alava, H., **Clarke, M.** and Gusman, A. 2022. Introduction: Beyond self-fashioning and freedom: bending, breaking and adhering to rules in religious contexts. *Suomen Antropologi – The Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 46(3): 6-15 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30676/jfas.124754>

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