

<p>Institution: University of Northampton</p> <hr/> <p>Unit of Assessment: 4- Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience</p> <hr/> <p>a. Context</p> <p>The School of Social Sciences has declared that "Research is central to the mission of the School ... We aim to push the boundaries of knowledge in our specialist areas, <i>but also to apply this research to real world situations</i>. We have an outward looking research agenda which engages with key themes in today's society and links to the needs and interests of a range of public and private bodies". Research in the Psychology Division embodies this aspiration by organising activity around four research clusters that engage with key stakeholders in the areas of mental health, psychotherapy & counselling, and education to identify research goals that reflect real needs at local, national and international level. The intended beneficiaries are practitioners and service users across the range of the sector including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, psychotherapists and counsellors, complementary therapists, and research active psychologists. The significant impact of this work has been recognised nationally and internationally, as evidenced by significant funding from the European Commission under the Daphne III Funding Programme, the Academy of Finland, The Bial Foundation, Portugal, the NHS, and the National Centre for Research Methods. This work has focused particularly on the experiences of practitioners and end-users in a manner that has theoretical value while having clear applications in practice. Some of this work is relatively newly established and involves ECRs who have been appointed as part of the Division's research strategy to concentrate expertise in the four designated subject areas. As a consequence some impact effects are expected to increase in number and extent over the next REF period.</p> <hr/> <p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Our strategy in the period 2008-13 has been to build research around four research groups that capitalise on expertise in the Psychology Division, but to tailor that activity so that it addresses psychological needs as identified through local, national and international networks and thus ensure that research outcomes are designed to have real-world impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Centre for the Study of Anomalous Psychological Processes (CSAPP) explores so-called 'peak', 'anomalous' or 'exceptional' experiences to critically test claims that these are indicative at best of faulty thinking and perception and at worst of pathology. Research in CSAPP has traditionally been 'pure', but has developed an applied orientation by focusing on the impact upon wellbeing (both positive and negative) of anomalous beliefs and experiences. Collaborations with practitioners' professional bodies such as the Spiritualists' National Union, the Confederation of Healing Organisations (CHO) and a national mental health charity (to remain anonymous) has enabled us to develop projects through dialogue with service providers that allow insights into the qualitative and quantitative impacts of anomalous experiences and beliefs that would be of benefit to therapists and clients, and also to develop interventions using spiritual practices (such as yoga and meditation) that can be applied more generally. • The Social and Cultural Research in Psychology (SCRIP) Group explores socially situated and inclusive shared realities, and particularly focuses on situations in which conventional understandings may be problematic, such as in relation to mental health, family life, disability, gendered violence, class and bullying. Research activity has focused on the application of qualitative methods to explore people's experiences so as to inform policy and practice. For example, Callaghan's Daphne III project, <i>Understanding Action and Resistance</i>, is concerned to represent children and young people's experiences of domestic violence, and Maunder has investigated the challenges faced by students experiencing the transition into Higher Education. SCRIP research underpins a professional practice MSc in Child and Adolescent Mental Health and is the focus of one of our case studies. • The Mental Health & Counselling (MHaC) Group focuses on issues relevant to mental health and various psychotherapy and counselling practices. The group includes academics with specialist interests in these topics and professionals working in mental health and counselling contexts. Research has focused on maximising efficacy by developing integrated approaches (such as combining therapy with active exercise) and on developing a richer understanding of
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practitioners' and clients' experiences of counselling and psychotherapy. One case study exemplifies this approach, consisting of an evaluation of psychological approaches to obesity and exercise.

- The newly-established Cognitive & Experimental Research Team (CERT) is concerned with testing the application of cognitive models of learning, for example through the development of argument mapping approaches, and improving statistical literacy among psychologists and this work underpins professional training workshops for psychologists run by CERT for the ESRC's National Centre for Research Methods.

Engagement with beneficiaries

A number of externally funded projects include provision for research to be presented to practitioners and to the public. For example, Callaghan's Daphne project has involved high-profile launch events in each of the participating countries that have been attended by representatives of governmental and nongovernmental agencies with an interest in this issue. Further events are scheduled for dissemination of findings. Similarly projects funded by the Bial Foundation have been showcased at special biannual events in Porto that are organised by the funding body. Other dissemination events have been organised in collaboration with professional bodies or practitioner groups. For example, research on the pathologisation of mediumistic experience was presented at a special event organised by the Spiritualist National Union, which attracted over 150 practising mediums from around the UK and abroad. The very positive response to this event has led to a follow-up week-long residential course that has been designed in consultation with Roe and will take place at Stansted Hall in February 2014. Similarly, results from a funded project on the efficacy of noncontact healing were presented at an event specially organised for the purpose by the CHO, an umbrella body that represents the interests of healers working in the UK. As a consequence, a further event involving the press is planned for November 2013.

In order to increase direct impact upon practice, professional conferences have been hosted by the University of Northampton. SCRIP have collaborated with the Centre for Children and Youth to organise a three-day conference on children and young people's mental health (3-5 July 2013), and the Daphne project includes practitioner workshops to be held in each participating country. CSAPP have collaborated with the Society for Psychical Research to organise a three-day conference (7-9 Sept. 2012) that presented research on anomalous experience. CERT ran two workshop events for research psychologists (13 & 20 Nov 2013) on using an array of effect size analyses and confidence interval estimates as alternatives to null hypothesis significance testing that is sponsored by the ESRC's National Centre for Research Methods and have been developed in consultation with them to address identified needs.

Researchers have engaged more directly with users and beneficiaries by developing professional practice MSc programmes in Counselling Young People & Children, Integrative Counselling, and Child & Adolescent Mental Health. These programmes have been developed in consultation with professional bodies such as the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy, and the Northampton Parent Intervention Partnership (NORPIP). A Counselling Service has been offered by the MHaC Group using funding won from the Enterprise Club, Big Bonanza initiative that incorporates service evaluation by end users.

Research has featured in national and international media, including the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, and television programmes such as *Anglia News*, the *Richard and Judy Show*, and the documentary *Decoded: Dan Brown's Lost Symbol*, thus increasing reach of findings beyond the academic community.

Evidence of impact is gathered in the form of testimonials and feedback from practitioners and service users, e.g. in follow-up to workshops and other dissemination events, and increasingly as a planned outcome as part of the dissemination of findings from evaluations and interventions.

c. Strategy and plans

The concept of impact is embedded within the school's Research and Enterprise strategy and is reflected in the applied orientation of the four clusters based in Psychology, which focus on improving wellbeing particularly by evaluating service provision and intervention strategies, and encouraging changes to practice that will be evaluated as part of the research programme. This strategy builds on the strong links that groups have developed with local, national and international professional practice networks (see §a for examples) to encourage collaboration when designing

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research projects so as to ensure fitness for purpose, and to ensure that realised benefits are assessed and disseminated. Research projects and grant applications are reviewed by group leaders to ensure they have real world consequences and incorporate the means to gauge impact. Ongoing projects that reflect this embedded strategy will generate lines of impact in the next research cycle, and include:

- CSAPP manages funded projects that are run in conjunction with a national mental health charity (to remain anonymous) on how therapists and counsellors respond to clients' accounts of their anomalous experiences that includes a feedback/workshop element for therapists (Roxburgh & Evenden), and negotiation with the CHO culminated in an evaluation of claimed benefits of distant healing practices (Roe & Roxburgh) that includes guidelines for good practice
- SCRIP's longstanding involvement with CAMHS underpins current research on children and young people's experience and understandings of domestic violence using interviews and photo-voice diaries (Callaghan). Impact will be maximised through practitioner workshops and events for clients that incorporate opportunities for feedback and follow-up.
- MHaC is involved in a number of projects that explore the process and outcome of therapies, including an international project that explores interactions between therapist and clients during couple therapy (Fellin).
- CERT has been developing a programme of research that applies principles of cognitive psychology to improve learning of both foreign languages (Fritz) and research methods and statistics (Fritz, Smith & Morris). The latter has already led to a position article published in *The Psychologist* and workshop events for professionals that will provide opportunities to gauge impact upon practice.

d. Relationship to case studies

The selected case studies reflect the strategy outlined above to evaluate professional practice by focusing on the experience of practitioners and service users. Callaghan's case study involves the application of SCRIP's expertise in CAMH and with qualitative approaches to inform national debates around training for mental health staff. This has impacted upon the training of professionals in the UK and abroad in child and adolescent mental health. The second impact case is an influential report commissioned by the BPS to examine physical activity and exercise behaviour for the obese, and offers a cross-disciplinary psychological perspective on ways in which to help individuals who may be struggling with weight problems, culminating in professional practice guidelines. The report remains the BPS's position statement with respect to psychological interventions.