

Institution: University of Strathclyde		
Unit of Assessment: D28 History		
Title of case study: Challenging perceptions and informing debate around controversial health issues		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2011 - 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Matthew Smith	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 5 January 2011 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 – December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Through engagement with health and education professionals, advocates and the public, Professor Smith's award-winning historical research has challenged perceptions and informed debate around three controversial health issues: food allergy, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and preventive approaches to mental health. Demonstrating the unique insights to be gained from rigorous historical analysis, the findings from Smith's extensive archival and oral history research have: influenced health policy and practice in the USA, Canada and UK; informed preventive mental health approaches in Scottish schools; and deepened public understanding through media engagement and cultural influence.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>While significant advances have been made in recent years to understand the nature and extent of physical and mental health conditions, professional practice amongst health practitioners and educators can be slow to attune and adapt. This is particularly true for more complex conditions, such as food allergy, which defy simple explanation and arouse controversy. Recognising the implications of this, particularly for children and young people, Professor Smith has undertaken detailed historical research into a number of controversial health topics to advance knowledge and challenge misconceptions.</p> <p>Adopting a mixed-methods approach, combining archival research and analysis of published documents with oral history interviewing, since 2011 Smith's research has explored food allergy, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and approaches to preventive mental health. This has entailed: research in 20 American and UK archives focussing on documents from 1900–2000; scrutiny of medical publications, newspapers and magazines, primarily from 1850–present; and analysis of 150 oral history interviews undertaken with patients, parents and practitioners, covering experiences from 1940 to the current day.</p> <p>Food Allergy: Smith investigated the marked increase in food allergy during the twentieth century to understand not only why this occurred but also why it became so controversial. By analysing archival and published medical sources dating between 1900 and 1980, he found that soon after the term 'allergy' was coined in 1906, divisions emerged between the understandings of food allergists – who saw food allergy as a widespread condition that caused much chronic illness – and orthodox allergists, who defined food allergy more narrowly and claimed it was far less common [R1]. The silos of comprehension that emerged prevented open-minded explorations into the root causes of food allergies. Smith's conclusion from these findings was that in order to explain why food allergies are increasing and becoming more severe (e.g. peanut allergy), it is imperative to develop a more holistic approach that includes insights from patients.</p> <p>ADHD: On the basis of his archival and oral history research, Smith contests the widespread idea that ADHD is a disorder that has been present in human populations throughout history and across the globe. Charting the emergence of ADHD as a diagnostic term in the United States from the</p>		

late 1950s, Smith reveals how socio-political factors drove this and shaped its depiction as a predominantly genetic behavioural disorder characterised by hyperactivity [R2, R3]. Key factors identified are the demographic impact of the baby-boom generation, the tightening of American education spurred by the Soviet launch of *Sputnik*, the advent of psychopharmacology and changes to psychiatric practice, and the introduction of food chemicals into children's diets. By highlighting the significance of local historical, cultural and political factors, this research makes the case for recognising and addressing the environmental influences on human behaviour, whether that be the structures of education or demands of the modern workplace, to promote inclusivity.

Preventive Mental Health: Between 1900 and 1980, preventive approaches to mental health, such as child guidance, mental hygiene and community mental healthcare, were central to both mental health policy and practice. Emerging in the United States, social psychiatry was the most influential approach adopted, but the outcomes were disappointing. Researching the reasons for this, Smith discovered that while social psychiatry triggered momentous changes in mental health policy, it failed to endure because governments were hesitant to implement the socioeconomic changes required [R4]. These findings support the argument that in order to tackle increasing rates of mental illness (with the World Health Organisation predicting that depression will be the most common disease worldwide by 2030), progressive social policies, such as universal basic income (UBI), must be introduced. Smith's subsequent collaborations with Kritsotaki (University of Crete) and Long (Glasgow Caledonian/Newcastle University) to produce edited collections on post-war psychiatry [R5] and mental illness [R6] placed this research in broader context to inform debate.

3. References to the research (Strathclyde affiliated authors in **bold**)

- R1 M. Smith** (2015) *Another Person's Poison: A History of Food Allergy* (New York: Columbia University Press) ISBN: 978-0-231-16485-6 [Submitted as REF2]
- R2 M. Smith** (2012) *Hyperactive: The Controversial History of ADHD* (London: Reaktion) ISBN: 978-1-780-23031-3 [Available from HEI]
- R3 M. Smith** (2017) Hyperactive Around the World: The History of ADHD in Global Perspective, *Social History of Medicine* 30(4): 767–787 <https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/hkw127> [REF2]
- R4 M. Smith** (2016) A fine balance: individualism, society and the prevention of mental illness in the United States, 1945-1968, *Palgrave Communications*, 2: 1-11 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2016.24> [This journal is now called *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*]
- R5 M. Smith**, D. Kritsotaki and V. Long (2016) 'Introduction' in **M. Smith**, D. Kritsotaki, V. Long (eds), *Deinstitutionalisation and After: Post-War Psychiatry in the Western World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave). ISBN 978-3-319-45360-6 [available at <https://bit.ly/37Vm6O6> or from HEI on request]
- R6 M. Smith**, D. Kritsotaki, V. Long and O. Walsh (2018) 'Introduction' in D. Kritsotaki, V. Long, **M. Smith** (eds), *Preventing Mental Illness: Past, Present and Future* (Basingstoke: Palgrave) ISBN: 978-3-319-98699-9 [available at <https://bit.ly/3uCHHEz> or from HEI on request]

Notes on the quality of research:

All outputs have been peer-reviewed prior to publication. **R1** received an honourable mention in the Association of American Publishers' Prose Awards (History of Science, Technology and Medicine); **R2** was named the Choice Outstanding Academic Title (2013) by American Library Association; **R3** is the most read article in *Social History of Medicine*; and Smith's broader body of research on the history of preventive mental health has been shortlisted for a 2020 AHRC/Wellcome Trust Medical Humanities Award (Best Research). This research has been supported by competitively-awarded funding totalling GBP450,000. Key funders include the Wellcome Trust (e.g. Smith, *Another Person's Poison: A History of Food Allergy, 2009–2012*: GBP121,000) and Arts and Humanities Research Council (Smith, *An Ounce of Prevention: A History of Social Psychiatry in the USA, 1939–present*, 01/20/2014–31/01/2017: GBP151,921).

4. Details of the impact

Through engagement with health and education professionals, advocates and the public, Professor Smith's research has informed debate and advanced understanding of food allergy, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and preventive approaches to mental health. Specifically, since August 2013 he has:

- Influenced health policy and practice in the USA, Canada and UK;
- Informed preventive mental health approaches in Scottish schools;
- Deepened public understanding through media engagement and cultural influence.

Influenced health policy and practice in the USA, Canada and UK

By sharing his research findings in a wide range of publications, Smith has engaged various stakeholders and informed the thinking of health professionals and policymakers. Gaining traction globally, articles published in the *Lancet*, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, *Clinical Psychology Forum*, *psychologytoday.com* (over 170,000 reads), *The Conversation* (over 140,000 reads) and other media outlets between 2015 and 2020 resulted in numerous speaking invitations and requests for information. This led Smith to deliver presentations to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDHMH); the mental health charity Mind; the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPSYCH); the University of Alberta Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry; the British Psychological Association; and the International Movement and Nutrition Society, among others.

Feedback from the approximately 1,000 health professionals who have engaged with Smith's research through this outreach activity indicates broadened practitioner understandings and influence on mental health policy. For instance, the (former) NYCDHMH Commissioner found Smith's *Lancet* article so 'valuable' when considering how their *Mental Health Roadmap For All* initiative could be 'situated in a broader historical context' that they shared it with 'NYC Deputy Mayor Rich Buery who also expressed how useful it was for framing and contextualizing our current work' [S1]. The Scottish Recovery Network's director said that Smith's work on Universal Basic Income (UBI) and mental health 'inspired us to begin to connect with potential partners to explore a "micro-pilot" of the approach' [S2]. Furthermore, a quarter of the psychiatrists who attended the RCPSYCH lecture on UBI and mental health in 2019 stated they would inquire more about their patients' financial situations, and/or would begin to vote for parties endorsing UBI [S3a].

Other illustrative examples include a child psychiatrist who found that Smith's ADHD research 'helped to provide a theoretical and factual basis for my approach and supported my pursuit of a critical evaluation of psychiatry in general', adding his opinion that Smith was 'a key figure in the international field of health history' [S4]. Likewise, a Canadian neurodiversity advocate realised that they could 'take the historical facts about the diagnosis [ADHD] and contextualize it within our culture', adding that *Another Person's Poison* [R1] 'helped to inform our approach to allergy advocacy...It was invaluable...in my outreach to caregivers...especially in helping me to communicate with them as I taught best practices' [S5].

Demonstrating the influence of Smith's research on key figures with the authority to effect change, following an event in 2019 the President of the International Society of Drug Bulletins suggested that 'all textbooks on medical diseases should start with a chapter on the history' to benefit clinicians' decisions [S3b]. Likewise, reading *Hyperactive* [R2] made Regensburg University's Director of the Institute of Psychology 'more critical of the way in which most researchers and clinicians understood [ADHD]', leading him to invite 'Prof Smith as a keynote [at an ADHD conference] in the hope that he would influence more researchers and clinicians to think more critically and carefully . . . discussion of his lecture showed that many participants realised how knowledge about the history of ADHD may influence our attitudes about diagnosis and therapy' [S6]. Closer to home, the Lead Associate Medical Director for Mental Health, said they were using Smith's book *Deinstitutionalisation and After* 'to establish a new mental health strategy for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde' [S7].

Informed preventive mental health approaches in Scottish schools

Recognising the importance of small tests of change to drive transformation on a larger scale, from 2015 (with a GBP15,000 grant from the Scottish Universities Insight Initiative), Smith worked with the head teacher of Pinkie St Peter's Primary, Musselburgh and the affiliated child psychiatrist on a preventive mental health strategy. Staff, parents and pupils designed sustainable, cost-effective interventions rooted in two ideas from Smith's research: firstly that ADHD was not the best conceptual framework to understand children's mental health problems [R2, R3]; and secondly, mental health referrals or mental illness could be reduced through proactive school-based interventions [R6]. Initiatives included using puppets to improve communication and attachment at nursery/P1–P2 level, and the 'Pinkie Pod' podcast for P6–P7s who struggled with confidence. The school's former head said that *'Matt's emphasis on prevention and changing the environment, not the child, remained central to our thinking'* [S8]. To NHS Glasgow's Lead Associate Medical Director for Mental Health, Smith's *'contribution to the Pinkie Resilience Project was an exemplary demonstration of the potential for academic insight to influence the lives of people in Scotland'* [S7].

Attesting to the wider significance of Pinkie Resilience Project, it has been highlighted as an example of good practice at local, regional and national levels. As well as gaining the attention of the Minister for Children and People, who visited the school in early 2016 to see how they *'are helping children develop their communication skills to support learning and build their confidence and resilience'* through the use of puppets [S9a], the project was mentioned in the East Lothian Partnership Children and Young People Services Plan 2017-20 to evidence the shift to prevention and early intervention. Noting that *'The Pinkie St Peters 'Resilience Project' is another example of community ownership of the need to build capacity and resilience from within the hearts of communities themselves'*, the plan outlines how *'the East Lothian Partnership has embedded responsibility for community resilience and capacity building into the work of the 6 Local Area Partnerships'* [S9b pp.102-3].

Building on the work initiated during the resilience project, the school has continued to develop its nurturing approach and share the insights with others, including through the South East Improvement Collaborative (SEIC). One of the six Scottish regional improvement collaboratives established in October 2017, SEIC facilitates discussion and learning amongst education professional across the City of Edinburgh, Midlothian, Fife, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders. A presentation on 'Health and Wellbeing at Pinkie: A Nurturing School' at the SEIC 'Scottish Attainment Challenge' event in March 2019, therefore contributed to regional discussions around improving learning and engagement [S9c]. The school's good practice has also been shared internationally through a partnership with Finnish schools launched by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) in June 2019; Pinkie St Peter's Primary was one of seven East Lothian schools linked to schools in Espoo, Finland to inform the city's implementation of a *'new curricula with an emphasis on the school as a learning community and sustainable, collaborative learning'* [S9d].

The benefits of the preventive mental approach advocated through the project have also been incorporated into briefings for policymakers, schools and children's services by the Scottish Universities Insight Institute around poverty, educational attainment and wellbeing [S9e].

Deepened public understanding through media engagement and cultural influence

As a BBC/AHRC New Generation Thinker, Smith informed public understanding of food allergy and mental health via frequent contributions to BBC Radio programmes, blogs and podcasts. His research featured on *The One Show*, China Global Television Network (CGTN), the BBC World Service, BBC Brazil, BBC Mundo, Channel Q (USA) and in *The Big Issue* (Japan), *Sunday National*, *La Opinión*, *Gazeta do Povo*, *Boston Globe*, *Sunday Mail*, *Independent*, *Mladina* (Slovenia) and *Utah Today*, amongst others. Smith was the focus of a story about UBI for a CGTN show broadcast on the network's 6 international channels (170+ countries) and shared with their 16 million Twitter and Instagram followers. The video attracted over 16,000 views on the CGTN Europe Facebook page. Smith's blog posts were read by approximately 350,000 people. In *The*

Conversation, his article on UBI and mental health was shared over 4,700 times on Facebook, while a food allergy post (over 52,000 reads) was reproduced by *The Independent*, *Irish Examiner*, *Times of Malta*, *Real Clear Science*, *Metro*, *New Zealand Herald*, *The I* and Channel News Asia. It also led to an interview on BBC 5 Live's Steven Nolan show and to a *The One Show* consultancy. Public lectures extended Smith's reach, with 16 talks delivered to over 2,700 people in North America and the UK as well as Australia, New Zealand and Japan, including the *New Scientist* Instant Expert Lecture on Mental Health; NHS Research Scotland; Food Allergy Bloggers Conference (FABlogCon); European Researchers' Explorathon; Mind; RSA Oceania; and a public lecture on UBI and mental health. FABlogCon's founder commented that Smith's work put food allergy 'in perspective. The evidence that food allergies aren't new will help many parents argue... that it isn't their fault' [S3c].

With over 3,200 Twitter followers, comprising medical professionals/researchers, teachers, mental health charities and advocacy workers, Smith has used the platform to share his research insights in order to challenge misconceptions and inform opinion. That he has been successful in doing so is apparent from the level of engagement with his posts. One follower declared she didn't 'have to identify with having ADHD anymore after learning the history of how hyperactivity became a "disorder" during the Cold War', while another recommended Smith's 'brilliant piece' in the *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* to those working in 'education and mental health'. Analysis over 10 months in 2019 revealed an average engagement rate of 1.22%, comparing favourably to a median of 0.048% across all industries [S3d].

Smith's monograph *Hyperactive* [R2] has also exerted influence by inspiring Will Sutcliffe's novel *Concentr8* (Bloomsbury, 2015), a critique of contemporary understandings of ADHD. Sutcliffe said *Hyperactive* 'was absolutely the central plank of the research for my novel. I was so impressed by... the superbly lucid way you explained... issues to a non-scientist like myself... it is an important book about a topic that ought to be taken far more seriously' [S10]. In addition, 10 extracts from *Hyperactive* were used as epigraphs in *Concentr8*, which was long-listed for the 2017 UK Literacy Association's book award. Sutcliffe again acknowledged Smith's ADHD research in an *Independent* article.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1** Factual statement from Science Advisor, Office of the Commissioner, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, dated 1 December 2015.
- S2** Factual statement from Director, Scottish Recovery Network, dated 25 October 2019.
- S3** Participant feedback from events and social media figures: **a.** Royal College of Psychiatrists event, 19 September 2019. **b.** President, International Society of Drug Bulletins, June 2019. **c.** Founder, FABlogCon, 5 January 2016 **d.** Social Media Impact Report, December 2019.
- S4** Factual statement from Child Psychiatrist, dated 23 August 2018.
- S5** Factual statement from Canadian neurodiversity advocate, dated 10 March 2019.
- S6** Factual statement from Director, Institute of Psychology, Regensburg University, dated 4 July 2019.
- S7** Factual statement from Lead Associate Medical Director for Mental Health, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, dated 3 February 2020.
- S8** Factual statement from former Head of Pinkie St Peter's Primary School, Musselburgh, dated 22 July 2020.
- S9** **a.** Scottish Government, [Quality Improvement throughout a child's journey: update from the Scottish Government](#), March 2016. **b.** [East Lothian Partnership, Children and Young People Services Plan 2017-20](#), March 2017. **c.** Pinkie St Peter's Primary School, [Presentation to SEIC 'Scottish Attainment Challenge' event](#), 5 March 2019. **d.** General Teaching Council for Scotland, ['Finish schools partnership to learn from Scotland'](#), 18 June 2018. **e.** Scottish Universities Insight Institute, [Poverty, educational attainment and wellbeing briefings](#), 2019.
- S10** Factual statement from William Sutcliffe, British novelist, dated 17 May 2015.