

<b>Institution:</b> University of Exeter		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 29 Classics		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Informing new approaches to wellbeing through ancient philosophy		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2006-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
1. Gabriele Galluzzo 2. Christopher Gill 3. David Leith	1. Senior Lecturer 2. Professor 3. Senior Lecturer	1. 2013- 2. 1989-Dec 2013 3. 2013-
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> Oct 2013-Dec 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>  <p>Research by Galluzzo, Gill and Leith has informed new holistic approaches to happiness and wellbeing through engagement with ideas from ancient philosophy. Credited with launching the Stoic renaissance in contemporary society, the team have worked with members of the public interested in life-guidance as well as with psychotherapists and therapeutic practitioners. Transformative impacts have been delivered through the international network <b>Modern Stoicism</b> and a <b>Shared Learning Project</b> in collaboration with U3A Exeter. They included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increasing wellbeing</b> for thousands of people globally, through initiatives including the annual Stoic Week and Stoicon events, as well as online resources and co-produced research.</li> <li>• <b>Inspiring research to develop wellbeing scales, protocols and tools.</b></li> <li>• <b>Influencing professional practice</b> by promoting a more holistic and comprehensive approach to wellbeing and opening up new pathways for counselling and psychotherapy.</li> <li>• <b>Engaging the Public</b> in Stoicism.</li> </ul>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>  <p>Research from the unit (Gill, Galluzzo and Leith) has been characterised by two complementary approaches to ancient philosophy: 1) the analysis of the foundational elements of ancient thought, (2) and the dialogue between ancient philosophical ideas and contemporary philosophy, with a view to their application to contemporary life. It has explored several disciplinary areas, with particular reference to ethics, metaphysics and the interface between science and philosophy.</p> <p>The ethical strand of the research was initiated by Gill (in post until Dec 2013, subsequently Emeritus Professor) and played a crucial role in the birth of the Modern Stoicism project. Modern Stoicism is an international network of academics, psychotherapists and philosophical counsellors who collaborate in presenting ancient philosophical ideas, especially Stoic ones, to a broad public audience, offering reflective life-guidance directed at promoting happiness and wellbeing. Exeter researchers have been at the centre of the project from the beginning, with a leading role in the management of its activities, preparing the materials used and advising on the assessment methods. The project derives initially from an AHRC-funded workshop in Sept 2012 and a public engagement project (funded by an AHRC 'Follow-on' award of £30K in Sept-Dec 2013). Both activities were based on Gill's 2013 monograph on Marcus Aurelius [3.5]. More broadly, they drew on Gill's research in Hellenistic and Roman thought on psychology and ethics [3.4], and the interface with ancient medicine, especially Galen [3.5], which were supported in 2003-7 and 2012 by a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship and AHRC funding, respectively. A key relevant feature of this research is that it analyses the philosophical basis for the ethical guidance (including the 'therapy of emotions') offered by ancient philosophers and Galen, and correlates this guidance with modern life-guidance and psychotherapy.</p>		

Since his appointment (2013), Galluzzo has added to research in ancient philosophy within the unit a distinctly theoretical component as well as a methodology to bridge the gap between ancient and modern ideas. He has worked on core concepts of Aristotle's metaphysics – such as substance, essence, matter and form – and has pursued an interdisciplinary research agenda on the interface between history of ancient philosophy and contemporary metaphysics. The volume on universals in ancient philosophy that Galluzzo co-edited in 2013 [3.1] and his paper on the Aristotelian understanding of numbers [3.2] are particularly representative of his agenda. Fundamental to this agenda has been the engagement with contemporary debates in ontology and metaphysics, and with the way ancient philosophical thought has been transformed and adapted by contemporary philosophers.

This methodological approach underpins Galluzzo's use of ancient philosophical ideas, especially Aristotelian and Stoic ones, as a basis for modern self-guidance and ethical debate in adult education forums, including the Shared Learning Project with the Exeter chapter of the U3A. This project was designed and conducted together with Sanja Djerassimovic (impact researcher at Exeter) – and with Leith participating as one of the researchers – and explored fundamental principles of ancient philosophy comparing them to modern ideas on happiness. The project built on three workshops run by Galluzzo for U3A Exeter ('Aristotle on happiness' in 2015, 'The theory of everything? On the role of philosophy in the ancient world' in 2017, largely based on [3.1] and [3.2], and 'Ancient recipes for happiness' in 2019). Since 2013, Galluzzo has also been one of the leading figures in the Modern Stoicism network. His contribution to the activities of Modern Stoicism has been supported by a £10K grant from the US-based Recanati-Kaplan foundation.

Leith (appointed in 2013) has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the connection between ancient medicine and ancient philosophy. He has worked on Greek and Roman theoretical approaches to medicine, particularly those that challenge the Hippocratic-Galenic tradition that is better known today. His research emphasises the variety of ways in which different philosophical theories were used to shape and inform ancient approaches to health and wellbeing [3.6]. Leith has been involved in the management of the Modern Stoicism project and has acted as a researcher in the Shared Learning Project with the U3A Exeter.

### 3. References to the research

- 3.1. G. Galluzzo, R. Chiaradonna (eds.) *Universals in Ancient Philosophy* (Pisa 2013). Can be supplied on request.
- 3.2. G. Galluzzo, 'Substantiae sunt sicut numeri. Aristotle on the structure of numbers'. In Sialaros M (ed.), *Revolutions and Continuity in Greek Mathematics*, (Berlin 2018), 295-317. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110565959-011> Submitted to REF2021
- 3.3. Gill, C., *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought* (Oxford 2006). DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198152682.001.0001 Submitted to RAE2008
- 3.4. Gill, C., *Naturalistic Psychology in Galen and Stoicism* (Oxford 2010). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009840X12000558> Submitted to REF2014
- 3.5. Gill, C. *Marcus Aurelius Meditations Books 1-6, translated with introduction and commentary* (Oxford 2013). Submitted to REF2014
- 3.6. D. Leith, 'Herophilus and Erasistratus on the *hēgemonikon*', in B. Inwood & J. Warren (eds.), *Body and Soul in Hellenistic Philosophy. Proceedings of the 2016 Symposium Hellenisticum* (Cambridge 2020). DOI: 10.1017/9781108641487.003 Submitted to REF2021

### 4. Details of the impact

Research by Galluzzo, Gill and Leith has informed new holistic approaches to happiness and wellbeing through engagement with ideas from ancient philosophy. Through the international

network **Modern Stoicism** and a **Shared Learning Project** in collaboration with U3A Exeter transformative impacts have been evidenced.

Tim LeBon and Donal Robertson – two accredited psychotherapists who have been involved from the start in the initiatives of the Modern Stoicism network – emphasise in their impact statement that **“the impact of the Exeter-based academics has been positive and transformative”** and indeed **“phenomenal”**, and identify three areas of impact [5.1]: increasing wellbeing for members of the public taking part in international activities and online courses; inspiring medical research to develop wellbeing scales and protocols; and opening up new pathways for holistic wellbeing counselling and psychotherapy for therapeutic practitioners.

### **Increasing wellbeing for thousands of people globally, through initiatives, online resources and co-produced research**

#### a) The Modern Stoicism Project

Since October 2013, the Modern Stoicism Project has operated through three main channels: an annual introductory online course (Stoic Week) supplemented by focused four-week courses (Stoic Mindfulness and Resilience Training); an edited blog, Modern Stoicism, carrying short articles on Stoic ideas and life-guidance; and an annual public event (Stoicon), on Stoic philosophy and its practical applications. The huge appetite among the public for the ancient philosophy-based approach to wellbeing is demonstrated by the **large number of people who follow the activity of the network**: the website has 40,800 subscribers (and 30,000 viewers monthly), the Facebook Stoicism Group has to date nearly 84,000 followers, and the Twitter page over 24,000 [5.2].

The project expanded steadily and significantly throughout 2013-2020, with the number of people taking the annual online course **growing from around 2,000 in the first year to more than 8,000 in 2018**. Participants span all age groups, genders and continents [5.3]. The four-week course, devised by Donald Robertson with £4,000 funding from the AG Leventis Foundation (enabled by the unit), **regularly attracts more than 1,000 participants** [5.3; 5.4]. Two volumes of articles from the blog have been published in 2014 and 2016 by Patrick Ussher, a former Exeter graduate student. The annual Stoicon event has been held in London (2013-15, 2018), New York (2016), Toronto (2017) and Athens (2019) and participants regularly number more than 300. Galluzzo and Gill have run workshops (on social media; external goods; happiness; environmental responsibility) with small groups at each of the annual events, with written versions published in the blog. One significant spin-off of the network activities has been the creation, in 2017, of a non-profit limited company, based in Exeter (directed by Galluzzo and Gill, and by Leith as well until 2019). The company enables the network to gain financial support, mainly through private donations, and so fund both the activities and the underlying medical research.

The effectiveness of these initiatives and courses in increasing people's wellbeing has been assessed over the years by LeBon and Robertson through direct engagement with participants and online surveys. All findings consistently show that **engagement with Stoicism has generated considerable improvements in life-satisfaction** – of about 14% as an average on the one-week course, and 27% on the four-week course [5.3; 5.4]. Free-form responses confirm the transformative effect that online courses in particular had on participants. One response describes the four-week course as **“a life-changing experience”**; another observes that it **“empowered people to take charge of their own lives, their own selves”** [5.4].

#### b) The U3A Shared Learning Project – ‘Happiness across the ages’

The three workshops run by Galluzzo between 2015 and 2019 for the U3A Exeter were attended by an average of 45 participants, with feedback emphasising their **transformative effects on the audiences’ ideas and attitudes**. Participants observed that the workshops **“would improve standards of personal contentment from the point of view of being more**

reasonable in my approach to everyday matters”, that they “led to reflection of current difficult situation and challenged my instinctive response to this”, and “helped [me] to understand the relevance of ancient philosophy to my present way of life” [5.5].

The success of these interactive workshops led to the creation of an intergenerational project (‘Happiness across the ages’), modelled on the U3A Shared Learning Projects. Galluzzo, Djerasic and Leith worked with a group of six U3A members and eight Exeter students to provide them with tools to reflect on, and explore within their communities, experiences of happiness, supporting lifelong learning and wellbeing. Participants conducted independent research in ancient philosophy (guided by Galluzzo) and received training (led by Djerasic) in conducting qualitative social research projects. Data was generated through 18 original cross-generational interviews, based on research questions and the interview protocol jointly developed by the whole team. The project continued with great success despite the Covid-19 crisis, thanks to participants’ enthusiasm and commitment, concluding with a research report jointly produced by students and U3A members [5.6]. Findings were also published in October 2020 in an article on the ‘Sources Online’ section of the U3A webpage [5.7].

A questionnaire-based evaluation of the project’s benefits [5.8] **indicated the intellectual, social and interpersonal benefits of meaningful engagement, across two generations, with ancient philosophical thought.** Both U3A members and students emphasised the transformative effects in terms of skill acquisition, with one U3A member describing the project as an “eye-opener in terms of skills and perspectives on happiness”, and one student observing: “This project has allowed me to gain a wider perspective, not just on happiness, but on life itself.” [5.8] For U3A members, the project provided **an opportunity for stimulation, creativity and beneficial social interaction.** For the students, the project offered **a chance to grow personally and gain new perspectives** on life: “Ageing is a taboo subject, so I really never got a chance to speak about it. However, this project ... has given me the rare opportunity to speak to people of different generations, to understand their viewpoints and their perspectives. After listening to theirs, I feel like I have a better sense of what happiness is.” [5.8]

### Inspiring research to develop wellbeing scales, protocols and tools

A notable feature of the Modern Stoicism Project is the scale and complexity of the assessment of the value of the activities in promoting wellbeing through self-reporting questionnaires. Questionnaires have been analysed by LeBon and Robertson, and the findings of the analysis have been published in the reports on the annual week-long course (by LeBon [5.3]), and on the four-week course (by Robertson [5.4]). In this context, **a new, clinically relevant protocol** has been designed and trialled [5.3]. The Stoic Attitudes and Behaviours Scale (SABS) is intended to track the specific effects of Stoic guidance in promoting wellbeing. The scale measures wellbeing and self-satisfaction **through a series of parameters inspired by Stoic ethics**, including flourishing, taking control of one’s life, developing positive emotions and reducing negative ones.

‘Happiness across the Ages’ produced a toolkit [5.9] for conducting intergenerational projects. This was aimed both at third-age-facing organisations looking to develop shared educational projects with and for their members and communities, and at academics trying to develop meaningful experiences for their students at the intersection of teaching and research. The toolkit has been endorsed by national U3A and will be hosted on their website [5.7]. In November 2020, one member of the team presented the toolkit to over 100 members of U3A, obtaining “positive, excited, fascinated” feedback [5.7]. The National Shared Learning Project Ambassador for U3A has described the project as **“a national example of excellence by the U3A”** [5.7]. The toolkit has been further disseminated and has already been endorsed by Generations Working Together, a Scottish charitable organisation, which expressed the intention of including it in their learning resources [5.7].

### **Influencing professional practice by promoting a more holistic and comprehensive approach to wellbeing and opening up new pathways for counselling and psychotherapy**

In his impact statement [5.1], LeBon cites the increasing number of practitioners who are incorporating Stoic ideas into CBT and therapy as a result of participation in the Modern Stoicism's activities and of attendance at his specialist sessions on Stoicism and therapeutic applications. Moreover, he mentions the creation of a professional Stoic-informed CBT supervision group. Finally, Robertson comments on the boom of publications on Stoicism and life-guidance ("a whole genre of self-help that barely existed before") for which **the Modern Stoicism project has been a catalyst [5.1]**.

### **Engaging the Public in Stoicism**

The Modern Stoicism project has attracted extensive media coverage and public interest, both nationally and internationally [5.10], Gill featuring in an episode of BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme and Galluzzo interviewed for an article in the *New York Times* [5.10]. In his 2019 book *The Stoic Atlas*, Chuck Chakrapani, the director of the popular website The Stoic Gym and editor of the magazine *The Stoic*, reconstructs the history of modern Stoicism and locates in the research activities of the Exeter team **the beginning of the Stoic renaissance in contemporary society [5.10]**.

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- 5.1. Impact Statements from T. LeBon (30/06/2020) and D. Robertson (02/07/2020) on the research conducted on the efficacy of Stoicism in promoting wellbeing.
- 5.2. Modern Stoicism Facebook and Twitter Groups Data (screenshots).
- 5.3. Stoic Week Reports 2015-2018 by Tim LeBon.
- 5.4. D. Robertson's report on the Stoic Mindfulness and Resilience Training (SMRT) 2014.
- 5.5. Feedback Questionnaire from the 2019 Workshop with U3A Exeter.
- 5.6. U3A Shared Learning Project 'Happiness across the ages' - Final Report.
- 5.7. Endorsements File (Feedback from presentation of Toolkit to U3A members [November-December 2020]; U3A commitment to host toolkit and report online [17/12/202]; Generations Working Together endorsement [December 2020], and U3A Sources Online article [19/10/2020]).
- 5.8. Interim report from the U3A Shared Learning Project. July 2020. Internal to Exeter.
- 5.9. U3A Shared Learning Project – Toolkit.
- 5.10. Media Coverage and Public Interest file (Modern Stoicism website: <https://modernstoicism.com/>; New York Times Article [06/12/2016]; Chuck Chakrapani's *The Stoic Atlas*).