

Sociology of Mental Health Study Group AGM 5th September 2012

The meeting was run by co-convenors Lydia Lewis and Angela Cotton and attended by five other Study Group members. It began with a description of the Study Group, outlining its aims, purpose, ethos, history, and membership (which currently numbers 245) and with a review of recent activities. These were noted to have included a day conference on connecting mental health and domestic violence research and practice agendas, led by Angela Cotton, which took place last year. This year, Lydia Lewis helped organise a day conference on “Public and patient involvement in health care: Implications of the ‘Big Society’” which was intended to include a session specifically on mental health (although the speaker unfortunately had to withdraw). Meeting attendees were also given the opportunity to join the Group through providing their contact details and areas of interest for the members web site list, if they were not existing members.

Comments and questions from attendees were then invited. One suggestion was received: that the Study Group could encourage more international research collaboration for example to conduct comparative research. Using the network for international data sharing and comparison was highlighted as a particularly useful potential function of the Group. LL agreed to alert members to this idea via a Group circulation and to the potential use of the members list (which contains details of people’s locations and interests) to facilitate such collaboration. More internationally focused events were also discussed, although the cost constraints to these were noted. It was also noted that the Study Group sessions at the BSA annual conferences do provide opportunities for international networking among members.

The meeting then moved to a presentation of a research briefing by Lydia Lewis entitled, “*You become a person again*”: *mental health and community learning* (available at: <http://www.wea.org.uk/resources/research>). The research, conducted in partnership with the Workers’ Educational Association, employed the capabilities approach along with theories of recognition and of capitals in order to explain the multi-level processes through which adult learning provision in community settings can promote resilience and mental well-being for adults whose lives have been impacted by adverse experiences. The presentation generated lively discussion around the themes of educational models for targeted mental health provision within and outside the mental health ‘system’, the curriculum choices available within this provision, and the ways in which targeted ACL can help to challenge and address domestic violence through providing support and opportunities for breaking silences on this socially taboo issue.

For further information about the Sociology of Mental Health Study Group, please see our web site: www.britsoc.co.uk/MedSoc/MedSocMentalHealth.aspx.