

Report for the SHI Foundation

Researching in Mental Health: Sociological and Service User/Survivor Perspectives: A Joint seminar series between the Survivor Researcher Network and the British Sociological Association Medical Sociology Group Sociology of Mental Health Study Group

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The aim of this seminar series was to bridge the gap between academic sociologists of mental health and service user/survivor mental health researchers, providing opportunities for learning from one another. In this respect, it was ground breaking and was an extremely worthwhile and successful initiative, as evidenced by the feedback below. In fact the aim was more than met with each event attracting an average of around 40 attendees spread across different organizational backgrounds, including survivor/service user organizations, academia and mental health practice. In addition, the seminars provided for attendance from all over the UK, including Scotland, and internationally, with one presenter travelling from Germany and delegates attending from France and Ireland.

Five seminars took place in total (the February seminar was cancelled due to bad weather), with these running between January and June 2009. Seminars were hosted free of charge at the British Library in London on the first Monday of each month, from 6-8pm, and all were extremely well attended. The series began with a panel session to get debate going and then featured between two and three presentations at each, with a combination of survivor/service user and sociological presentations on each occasion (see programme below). This made for lively debate and stimulating discussion at each event. This continued informally on each occasion in order to maximize the benefits of the occasion, including networking opportunities, and opportunities to bridge divides between delegates working in different sectors and to encourage collaborative links. This aspect of the series was particularly successful, as the feedback below demonstrates.

In addition to oral presentations and discussion, the seminar series encompassed the display of work from two survivor organizations: The Survivor History Group and *Recovery*. This element of the series was well appreciated and added additional opportunities for dissemination and interest for delegates.

Outputs from the seminar series will include a longer report including reflections from the organizers and regular attendees on the initiative, which will be posted on the Study Group web site. Some of those involved are also keen to pursue publications of papers presented during the series. An on-line forum has been set up in response to demand from delegates and some of the organizers and others involved in the series are keen to run a second seminar series on the back of the success of this one and the many benefits it accrued for those involved. Acknowledging this success, the BSA has offered to support such future events which contribute towards its 'public sociology' agenda.

In the remainder of this report, we present the programme of the seminar series, followed by some of the summative feedback from delegates and breakdown of expenditure. We would like to thank the SHI Foundation for supporting the initiative, and also the British Library for their support in providing the venue and funding a wine reception on the closing evening. Thanks as well to the British Sociological Association for doing such an excellent job in providing administrative support and publicity materials.

Programme

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 12 th January 2009 | Panel session 'Mental health research by and with service-users/survivors: opportunities and barriers'. Chair: Professor Peter Beresford, Centre for Citizen Participation, Brunel University. Speakers: Professor George Szukler, Dr. Diana Rose, Patricia Chambers, Dr. Julie Ridley. |
| 2 nd March 2009 | <p>'What's in a name? Race, user involvement and 'hard to reach' communities', Jayasree Kalathil, Survivor Research.</p> <p>'Effective involvement in mental health services: the role of assertive outreach and the voluntary sector', Rosie Davies, Bristol Mind.</p> <p>'Politics of Recognition: what can a human rights perspective contribute to understanding users' experiences of involvement in mental health services? Lydia Lewis, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick.</p> |
| 6 th April 2009 | <p>'In-Sight–Bi-polar Self-Management', Heather Straughan, Centre for Mental Health Recovery, University of Hertfordshire</p> <p>'Not ending with the research report: Extending the outcomes into the researched reality', Jasna Russo, Sandra Hamilton, Berlin, Germany '</p> <p>Does who we are make a difference to the research that we do? Evaluating the impact of service user involvement in mental health research', Steve Gillard and Kati Turner, Division of Mental Health, St. George's, University of London.</p> |
| 11 th May 2009 | <p>'How Personality Became Treatable', Martyn Pickersgill, Institute for Science and Society, University of Nottingham.</p> <p>'Women, alcohol and mental health: achieving authenticity in a hostile environment', Patsy Staddon, University of Plymouth.</p> |
| 1st June 2009 | <p>'A symbolic interactionist approach to mental health outreach', Jim Roe and Hugh Middleton, University of Nottingham</p> <p>'Using personal experiences to understand other people's mental health recovery', S. Ajayi, J. Billsborough, T. Bowyer, P. Brown, A. Faulkner, A. Hicks, J. Larsen, P. Mailey, R. Sayers, R. Smith; <i>Rethink</i>.</p> <p>Discussion of the seminar series and ways forward.</p> |

Selected summative feedback received July 2009

| | True | False | Response Count |
|---|-------------|----------|----------------|
| I would recommend attending a BSA event to my colleagues | 96.9% (31) | 3.1% (1) | 32 |
| The event offered good networking opportunities | 100.0% (31) | 0.0% (0) | 31 |
| The content is useful to my work | 93.8% (30) | 0.0% (0) | 32 |
| I would like to attend more of these seminars should they be approved | 96.9% (31) | 3.1% (1) | 32 |

What did you enjoy most about these seminars?

The opportunity to listen to and discuss presentations of service-user and survivor research alongside more directly sociological mental health presentations - also equally the opportunity to get to know the BSA study group members and SRN community better after the seminars.

Opportunity to network; finding out about other people's work.

Fresh approaches & perspectives; quite different from the presentations I am mostly used to.

Hearing about innovative projects and ideas; networking.

Being able to listen to other user researchers' research topics/interests & the networking opportunities during these seminars.

The papers were short, but very good and there was plenty of time for open discussion which was very engaging.

It allowed user and professional researchers to learn from each other.

The friendly exchange of ideas - ideas about sociological relevance of user research (useful as I teach sociology).

Opportunity to hear and network with assorted people and disciplines and original thinkers.

The opportunity to be up to date on the research being conducted and the difficulties encountered. The convivial nature of the interaction, particularly in the later seminars.

Spirited mix of different kinds of perspectives, discourses and debates.

The opportunity to hear from people working on challenging the status quo with new and fresh ideas, and examples of their work.

Really, really, really interesting and informative. At the informal bit in the pub later I had some excellent in-depth discussion that were as enlightening as the seminars.

Stimulating mix of people. Perspectives that were challenging.

Further comments and suggestions for future events

It would be good to have more seminars of this nature as they seem to bridge the gap between S.U.s and MH workers. Debate on these important' issues could really move us forward.

I think it would be a good idea to continue pairing SRN researchers with BSA Study group researchers on themed seminars.

It's important that a sociological focus is retained, ... [to ensure] challenges to conventional thinking.

I thought the idea of further developing a relationship between user groups and the BSA is both timely and full of potential for future activities.

I would definitely be up for attending future seminars. Thanks for organising them!

Budget expenditure*

| Outline budget | |
|--|-----------------|
| Travel for planning meeting for 4 organising committee members at the British Library in London | £120.53 |
| Tea/coffee/biscuits for 5 meetings (based on £2.75 per serving - British Library rates; attendance of 40 delegates). | £551.43 |
| Travel of organisers to all 5 meetings and one cancelled meeting (accounting for convergence with MHF meetings for 3 of these) | £395.88 |
| Travel and subsistence for speakers travelling within England (£60 per head approx) | £290.05 |
| Travel and subsistence for speakers travelling from Scotland and Germany | £410.18 |
| Travel and subsistence for low/unwaged/student delegates at each meeting (2-3 per meeting) | £266.43 |
| TOTAL | £2034.50 |

* Please note this is under the originally budgeted amount, partly due to cancellation of one of the seminars