

Sociology of Mental Health Study Group
Convenors: Lydia Lewis, Bath Spa University and Patsy Staddon, Plymouth University
Annual Report 2009-10

This year we have continued collaborative activities with service user/survivor organisations in mental health which have added further diversity to our events and membership base. Our events have attracted broad audiences which have included mental health practitioners and providers as well as students, academics and members of third sector organisations. We have also continued the good practice of publishing reports of events on the study group web site, and have continued to use the BSA annual conferences as opportunities to publicise the group.

Events

We concluded our seminar series, '*Researching in Mental Health: Sociological and Service User/Survivor Perspectives*' co-hosted with the Survivor Researcher Network in June 2009. The series took place at the British Library with five events taking place between January and June. Funding was gratefully received from the Sociology for Health and Illness Foundation and was used to cover the costs of refreshments at meetings and expenses for organisers, presenters and un/low waged delegate attendance. We were also extremely grateful for support from the British Library in hosting the event free of charge and in providing drinks for an after-party at the closing event, as well as to the BSA for administrative help. A report of the event is available on the study group web site and the organisers are currently looking into publishing opportunities for papers presented in the series.

February Study Day: Alcohol and mental health

This event took place at Imperial Wharf and featured four presentations on the sociology of alcohol use. David Cook, of the University of Surrey, considered the 12 Step programme as a social movement: 'Recovering from Alcohol and Mental Health Problems in the 12-step Fellowships: a Social Movement Perspective'. Jeff Fernandez, Alcohol and Drug Lead Nurse for NHS Islington, spoke of new practices in alcohol treatment as providing new ways of understanding issues of alcohol and gender. Lyndsey Moon, of City University, London, described 'Tensions when social and personal narratives clash', considering re-telling the story of our relationship to alcohol. Patsy Staddon, of the University of Plymouth, challenged traditional ways of seeing alcohol 'misuse' in '“In recovery” or “recovered”'; a sociological consideration of the medical model of "alcoholism" '

Papers were followed by lunch, networking, and an afternoon of discussion, focusing on social and medical models of mental health and service responses to alcohol use. There was also interest from some participants in the idea of following up the study day in the BSA online Forum.

Membership:

This currently stands at around 200, and we continue to expand a broad-based and international membership.

Lydia Lewis and Patsy Staddon, Co-convenors, 2009-10

Study group web site: www.britsoc.co.uk/medsoc/MedSocMentalHealth.htm