

Plenary

Wednesday 11 September 2019 at 17:00 – 18:00

Exhibition Centre, Main Lecture Theatre, Room PX001

Doctor Amy Chandler

Authentic bodies in (mental) health

In this plenary presentation I draw on my own research on self-injury, as well as the work of other scholars working on 'mental' health and the body, to craft a story about the role of authenticity and medicine in understanding 'mental' health. I will suggest that a range of embodied practices which are tied to 'mental' health (self-injury, eating disorders, psychotropic drug use) enrol, rely upon and enact particular cultural understandings of *bodies*. Medicine – both medical practice and research - can be seen as crucial in shaping these. Authenticity emerges as a key theme in how medical knowledge and 'lay' accounts regarding these practices are constructed. This talk will elaborate some of the claims I make in *Self-Injury, Medicine and Society*, exploring the extent to which these interpretations hold for other practices. In doing so I will simultaneously make the case for the vital, yet vulnerable, importance of qualitative research on 'mental' health in order to inform sociological theory, medical practice, and as part of an ethical commitment to the experiences and expertise of those of us who may be marginalised by our 'mental' health.

Amy Chandler's research addresses sociological perspectives on health and health-related practices, with a focus on bodies and embodiment. Her first (and so far only) monograph *Self-injury, Medicine and Society: Authentic Bodies* (2016) won the 2017 Philip Abrams Memorial Prize, and the 2018 Foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness book prize. She has authored numerous articles and chapters on self-harm, self-injury, suicide, drug-use, parenting and mental health.

Amy did all of her degrees at the University of Edinburgh – an MA (Hons) in sociology, an MSc by Research in sociology, and a PhD in sociology (2010). She was a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships, and a Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Lincoln. She is currently Lecturer and Chancellor's Fellow in the School of Health in Social Science, University of Edinburgh. Amy has received research funding from the British Academy, Wellcome Trust, Economic and Social Research Council, and the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland.

