

BSA Sociology of Mental Health Study Day
February 6th 2010

ALCOHOL AND MENTAL HEALTH

The Study Group met this time at the BSA's own conference room, at Imperial Wharf, which now has its own Overground station, immediately opposite. (The address is, appropriately, 2, Station Court!) Twenty people registered for the day, which ran from 10.30 a.m. till 5 p.m., with a break for lunch and networking.

The morning provided four presentations, each offering a different perspective on the sociology of alcohol use. David Cook, of the University of Surrey, started the day with a picture of traditional, 12 Step approaches, in 'Recovering from Alcohol and Mental Health Problems in the 12-step Fellowships: a Social Movement Perspective'. He was followed by Jeff Fernandez, Alcohol and Drug Lead Nurse for NHS Islington. Jeff was able to talk about new practices in treatment, such as the use of the social learning approach, and its appropriateness for a more sophisticated understanding of issues of alcohol and gender.

The focus then moved to a more psychological dimension, as Lyndsey Moon, of City University, London, spoke about 'Tensions when social and personal narratives clash'. She considered how we may want to re-tell the story of our relationship to alcohol and how this has been part of the aim of the Women's group, GLADA, based at City Hall, London. Finally, Patsy Staddon, of the University of Plymouth, presented ' "In recovery" or "recovered"; a sociological consideration of the medical model of "alcoholism" ', in which she challenged the traditional understanding of alcohol use, showing how it served the interests of some social groups at the expense of others.

During the lunch break, flip charts were available for attendees to write down issues they would like to discuss during the afternoon. Based on this, a lively afternoon debate ensued which focused on social and medical models of mental health and service responses to alcohol use. The discussion covered issues such as ways of knowing, emotion and gender; the relationship between identity and knowledge; and barriers to the implementation of a social perspectives approach in services.

A follow-up workshop at the BSA Medical Sociology Group conference in September is planned.

The day was organized by Patsy Staddon with support from Anthea Martin and Lydia Lewis. They would like to thank all attendees for their participation and the BSA staff for their help towards organizing the event.