

West Midlands Medical Sociology Group 2005

Co-convenors: Wendy Martin (University of Warwick) and Stephen Handsley (The Open University)

In 2005 the focus of the West Midlands Medical Sociology Group has been to promote the profile of postgraduate research as well as provide a forum to facilitate collaborative links for people with an interest in medical sociology. In particular, the meetings have provided an arena to share ideas and information, offer mutual support and promote interest in medical sociology within the West Midlands.

The West Midlands Medical Sociology Group first held two meetings at the University of Warwick that provided an opportunity for members to present and discuss their current research that had originated from their postgraduate studies. In February, Dr Tina Miller (Oxford Brookes University) presented her research that informed the recent publication of her book entitled *'Making Sense of Motherhood: A Narrative Approach'*. Tina highlighted the significance of narrative as a method to understand early motherhood, and showed how the moral and 'risky' context in which pregnancy and motherhood takes place shaped the subjective experiences that her participants felt able to voice at different times during their journey from pregnancy into early motherhood. In May, Stephen Handsley (The Open University) presented his research *'Caregiving, Mental Health and Ethnicity: an Irish dimension'*. Stephen pointed to the important, and at times neglected, role of caregivers for people with mental illness in Irish communities living in the UK. Both these presentations were well attended and were followed by lively and interesting discussions.

The West Midlands Medical Sociology Group also organised a postgraduate forum focussing on social aspects of health, illness and medicine that took place in May at the University of Warwick. The aim of the postgraduate forum was to provide a supportive, informal and constructive venue for research students to share ideas, to discuss work in progress and explore different research approaches. The forum stimulated a great deal of interest and following a process of peer review of abstracts, 13 research students gave PowerPoint presentations about their research. The range of topics included HIV/AIDs, ethnicity, embodiment, diabetes, research with children, complementary/alternative medicine and the role of health professionals. There were presentations from postgraduates at all stages of their studies, some developing their research design, some in the process of fieldwork and analysis, and one postgraduate was even waiting for his viva the following week! We were delighted to welcome Dr Simon Williams (University of Warwick) who gave the keynote address on his current research *'Vulnerable bodies? Sleep, health and emotions'*. Throughout the day there were lively and supportive discussions and it was agreed that the postgraduate forum not only led to important collaborative links between research students but provided an important stepping stone for emergent researchers in medical sociology who wish to disseminate their research at inter/national conferences.

For further information about the West Midlands Medical Sociology Group and details of future events please contact the co-convenor Wendy Martin: W.P.Martin@warwick.ac.uk and/or visit the BSA Medical Sociology Group website: <http://www.britsoc.co.uk/>

Organisers: Wendy Martin, Stephen Handsley and Alan Bradley (West Midlands Medical Sociology Group) and Dr Alan Dolan (Forum for Health, Medicine and Society, Institute of Health, University of Warwick)