

## Spotlight on Social Sciences 2012 – Conference report

'Spotlight on the Social Sciences' is a conference organised and run by and for postgraduate researchers from all subjects within the social and economic sciences. It took place on Friday the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, 2012. In total, 52 attended the conference with delegates and presenters from Cardiff University, University West of England, and Cardiff Met. Professor Ken Wann, Deputy Dean of the University Graduate College, welcomed everyone to the conference which was followed by an interesting keynote on '*Studying violence and self-harm in forensic and clinical settings*' by Professor Robert Snowdon from the School of Psychology. Overall, the conference proved a great success with excellent talks from 18 PhD students and 15 poster presentations from different disciplines which facilitated lively discussions throughout the day. The conference provided an ideal environment for students to disseminate their work outside of their subject area, and to receive feedback from different perspectives. All presentations and posters were marked by judges, and prizes for best posters and best talks were awarded.

### Prize winners

#### Talks

Corinne Funnell	£100.00
Harry Bowles	£75.00
Jessica Baillie	£50.00

#### Posters

Susannah McWilliam	£50.00
Dacia Leslie	£25.00

### **Panel 1: Education and Policy**

Panel 1 consisted of presentations from Mengle Zhang (SOCSI), Sara Knight (SOCSI) and Olivia Pearson (SOCSI).

The panel began with a highly engaging talk by Mengle who spoke about graduates' early career trajectories, their perceptions of work, employment and under/unemployment. His talk explored graduates' employment trajectories in the context of 'massification' of higher education and recent debates surrounding graduate employment/unemployment.

Sara's research looks at the implementation of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification in colleges and schools in Wales. Her research looks at how policy is understood and implemented in schools and colleges. She presented a comprehensive account of the structure of the Welsh Baccalaureate and how schools and post-16 students interpret it, value and use it, giving insights into some of her early research findings.

Finally, Olivia gave a highly stimulating talk on time-banking and young people. She introduced the concept of 'time-banking', giving concrete examples to support her description. This paper considers the growth of 'time-banking' in the UK and why time-banking is being used by young people.

## **Panel 2: Health Psychology**

Panel 2 consisted of presentations from Gareth Thomas (SOCSI), Ben Windsor-Shellard (PSYCH) and Rebecca Craig (PSYCH).

Gareth gave a fascinating account of his research thus far. Following a brief introduction to his ethnographic study and research approach, Gareth explored the use of the ultrasound scan to detect potential foetal abnormality during a pregnancy, identifying how the ultrasound encounter triggers significant yet often complex issues. This was compared with the issues provoked by the 4D 'bonding' scan, an ultrasound openly advertised as having no benefit. Capturing the essence of both scans by explicating ideas of 'biotourism', consumerism, reassurance, enjoyment, and encounters as family events, the presentation concluded with Gareth sketching out his methodological plans for the coming six months.

Ben followed this up with an excellent talk named "The link between sexual orientation and health: Attitudes and Ambivalence." In this presentation, Ben spoke about the effects of sexual orientation attitude ambivalence. He focussed particularly on giving a clear account of the research tools employed to collect this data.

This panel finished with an engaging presentation from Rebecca suggesting a correlational link between participants' current attachment functioning and traits associated with psychopathic personality disorder, among a non-clinical sample. Distinct relationships were found between each subscale of the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (current attachment) and the Triarchic Psychopathy Measure. The potential treatment implications of these findings were discussed in light of the limitations of the current cross-sectional design.

## **Panel 3: Religion and Criminal Justice**

Panel 3 consisted of presentations from Abdul-Azim Ahmed (Bangor University), Corinne Funnell (SOCSI), and Rachel Cahill-O'Callaghan (CARBS).

Abdul-Azim illustrated, with historical photographs, the lives of Muslims in Wales, in particular the life experiences of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Muslims. Throughout the presentation Abdul-Azim made reference to historical events in Cardiff, including the Welsh Muslim communities in Loudon Square and Tiger Bay, making the talk relevant to those living in Cardiff.

The second talk in the panel was presented by Corinne on the subject of racist hate crimes using an ethnographic methodology. The social, policy and practical implications of researching this subject were made clear throughout the research, and Corinne used anecdotal evidence from her data collection to make the presentation interesting. The paper sought to understand how victims and their caseworkers understood their experiences of racist hate crime, and the challenges of reporting such crimes to the authorities.

The final talk of this panel was given by Rachel on the subject of the influence of personal values on legal judgements. This accessible and engaging presentation discussed how the research analyses

Supreme Court cases, drawing on empirical and theoretical work of psychologists to identify code and analyse personal values in legal opinions.

#### **Panel 4: Family and Gender**

Panel 4 consisted of Sarah Witcombe-Hayes (SOSCI), Alegra Hummel (MEDIC) and Verity Clarke (Bristol School of Policy).

The presentations in panel 4 were started by Sarah who, whilst basing her research around the family, chose to give an informative and entertaining account of her experiences as a PhD student. Entitled "Research as rollercoaster," she addressed many of the issues that PhD students will go through and gave some excellent advice with examples which drew on her own experiences.

This was followed by Alegra who gave an interesting account entitled "the relationship between family, puberty and substance use in girls." In this presentation, Alegra expertly broke down the results of her findings thus far and began to allude to possible analytical theories.

Finally, panel 4 was drawn to a close by Verity who gave a presentation entitled, "The adoption of mixed ethnicity children". Drawing on contemporary studies, Verity gave a concise breakdown of the literature thus far and her hopes for the research ahead of her.

#### **Panel 5: Research Methods**

Panel 5 consisted of presentations from Harry Bowles (and his colleagues from Cardiff Met), Esther Muddiman (SOCSE) and Hannah O'Mahoney (SOCSE).

The first presentation was collaborative work of six postgraduate researchers from Cardiff Met. The group presented philosophical, methodological, and ethical dilemmas that qualitative researchers face. The presentation showed the communications between research students faced by the challenges of qualitative research.

Esther talked about her research in student experiences of education and understandings of success. She also reflected on her experience during data collection in Singapore and Britain. Considering methodological and practical issues Esther offered various insights of conducting cross-cultural study.

Finally, Hannah presented the methodological issues of the uses of interviews in her research conducted in a turtle conservation organisation in the Western Peloponnesus region of Greece. The presentation compared the advantages and challenges of the interview experience in two stages of the research, participant observation and in-depth interview.

#### **Panel 6: Health and Wellbeing**

Panel 6 consisted of presentations from Ilona Johnson (DENTL), Jessica Baillie (SONMS) and Katie Webb (PSYCH) whose research focuses on health and well being in both hospital and community care. The diverse and fascinating presentations demonstrated that research has a vital role to play in the provision of appropriate healthcare to both individuals and communities. This panel also

highlighted the importance of both qualitative and quantitative research methods and context in the drive for effective policy measures for healthcare.

Ilona presented an overview of her qualitative and mixed methods study into how nurses' emotional experiences influence patients' oral care. Ilona explained how her study can help to develop understanding of emotions that motivate care and also outlined future steps to apply this multidisciplinary research to training and health promotion to enhance care and improve patient health.

Jessica showed how she has used qualitative methods to study how families live with peritoneal dialysis and demonstrated that the results revealed in-depth understanding of how individuals and relatives live with PD. Jessica also explained how these findings can help to demonstrate the usefulness of ethnography to examine the impact of home medical treatments.

Katie presented her PhD research which looks at the management of common mental health in primary care, which evidence suggests is challenging. Katie explained how she uses a range of studies and different methodologies to investigate the underlying causes of these challenges in the hope of providing solutions and further directions.