Mental health and reflexivity:

The role of personal experiences of mental ill-health in medical sociological research

7 June 2016, University of Edinburgh

This one-day symposium will explore the role of personal experiences of mental ill-health in knowledge production in academia (with a particular focus on sociology). Researchers enrol personal experiences in different ways, from sharing experiences with study participants to articulating experiences of mental health in academic publications. This may be the sole focus of the writing (e.g., auto-ethnography); or it might ground larger ethnographic projects (e.g. Orr, 2008). Standpoint epistemology in mental health research and mad studies has offered further ways of thinking through and with subjective experiences understood by one’s self or others as pathological (Rose, 2003; LeFrancois, Menzies, and Reaume, 2013).

This symposium will explore in more depth what it means to draw upon one’s own experiences of mental ill-health in sociological knowledge production.

Papers are invited from researchers working in a range of disciplines including, but not limited to, (medical) sociology, science and technology studies, and medical humanities. Abstracts of up to 400 words are invited. The following are indicative questions, but all abstracts addressing the symposium topic will be considered:

How do biographical elements shape the production, and conception of, sociological knowledge? What, if anything, is special about experiences of mental ill-health, compared to other aspects of biography and selfhood? How, if at all, do personal experiences of mental ill-health enable critical reflection on the conceptualisation of mental health and illness in contemporary medical sociology - as well as in society writ large?

Abstracts should be sent to tineke.broer@ed.ac.uk by March 6th, 2016. Please include your full name, affiliation, postal address, email address, title of your presentation, and a short bio or CV. Limited travel bursaries are available for postgraduate students; indicate in your email if you would like to apply. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by March 18th, 2016.

Organising committee: Tineke Broer (University of Edinburgh), Amy Chandler (University of Lincoln) and Martyn Pickersgill (University of Edinburgh). This symposium is generously supported by funding from the Foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness.