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Highlights from the 39th Society for Reproductive and Infant Psychology Conference, London 2019

Over two days in September, SRIP welcomed 96 delegates from nine countries to the society's 39th annual conference, at City, University of London. Delegates were treated to a range of inspiring talks, workshops and keynotes in an inclusive and supportive environment that was stimulating both for senior researchers and professionals, as well as for early career researchers and students.

SRIP's dedication to supporting early career researchers was demonstrated by its first early career researcher workshop, held the day before the conference began. This event was attended by 20 delegates and provided an opportunity to network with peers, and gain insight from more experienced researchers. The afternoon included a round of speed-dating style networking, reflection from senior research colleagues on 'what I wish I had known at the start of my career', and developing skills for oral presentations and Viva. Feedback from workshop delegates was positive and SRIP is keen for early career researcher events to continue.

The strength of SRIP's multi-disciplinary focus was drawn together in Professor Catherine Monk's SRIP Lecturer Award Keynote, 'Parenting Begins Before Birth: for Mothers and Children'. Integrating research from perinatal psychiatry, developmental psychobiology, and neuroscience, Professor Monk's work demonstrated the effects of maternal physical and emotional stress on pregnancy and the baby, and the benefits of early intervention to improve infant outcomes.

The SRIP 2019 conference saw Dr Louise Bryant step down from the SRIP committee after long and loyal involvement. Louise gave an informative and impassioned Keynote Lecture, 'Influencing Policy and Practice in Antenatal Screening: Making Impact with Psychological Research' detailing her academic and applied research activities over the last two decades. Including the translation of research about how women make decisions about antenatal screening into national guidance given to all pregnant women in England. The challenges and achievements gained through translating research into practice were further demonstrated by highly engaging talks from Dr Rachel Tyrrell-Smith and Dr Emma Lowrie about the use of Video Interaction Guidance and the Baby Steps intervention respectively, in Blackpool.

One of the key features of SRIP is the range of topics embraced by the society and this was evident at the 2019 conference (abstracts can be found online). Pregnancy topics included gestational diabetes, stress management, and reproductive challenges. Further presentations related to birth trauma and PTSD, exploring birth experiences relative to infant behaviour, trauma in healthcare professionals, and rapport between fathers and midwives. Postnatal themes included paths of support for the transition to parenthood, parenting interventions, and postpartum anxiety.

Debbie Garrod's oral presentation brought to life fathers' perspective of engaging with midwives during childbirth. Her research highlighted how fathers navigate the new landscape of birth based on their prior life experiences. Fathers often look to midwives to say out loud what they feel is happening at different stages of the birth process; to help fathers process what for them, is extraordinary. Another addition to the SRIP 2019 conference programme was a clinical skills workshop facilitated by Jan Smith, Emma Svanberg, Rebecca Moore and Jane Gibbons. The workshop looked at utilising the Make Birth Better model to support maternity services to reduce birth trauma.

Highlighting the need to shift the focus from birthing women, to first tackle the increasingly traumatised maternity system and healthcare professionals.

The flash poster presentations gave a wonderful opportunity to hear short research summaries on varied topic areas. Including best practice guidance for involving and supporting partners and families in specialist perinatal mental health services by Florence Bristow, and a proposed trauma-informed interpersonal skills toolkit for midwives, proposed by Jenny Patterson. It is amazing how much information can be communicated in three short minutes and one presentation slide, so much acquired in a total of 30-minutes of presentations. We will be particularly interested to follow Camille Deforge's work looking at the impact of sleep after traumatic childbirth on the development of PTSD. Likewise, the poster displays provided further occasions to learn more about the diverse areas of research SRIP encompasses such as women's decision making in induction of labour, and the use of conversation analytic methods to research antenatal screening conversations. Congratulations again to the prize winners, Leanne Jackson for her flash presentation about maternal guilt and shame associated with infant feeding, and Helen Driscoll for her poster on roleplaying motherhood with hyper-realistic reborn dolls.

As in previous years, the SRIP conference provided many opportunities to network with colleagues in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Particularly socialising at the delicious conference dinner held at the historic Holborn Bars. We look forward to SRIP's 40th annual conference to be held at Chester University, 15-16th September 2020 and hope that you will be able to join us there.