

Doctoral School Research Award Report

Arguably, one of the most valuable tools for social psychology is community; the coming together of researchers and activists to inspire and support one another. This is particularly true for members of the LGBTQ+ community, like myself, whose project is focused on exploring the psychological mechanisms that contribute towards transprejudice. I was therefore fortunate as a final year PhD student in the Department of Psychology that the Doctoral School Research Award afforded me the opportunity to attend a conference in Scotland held by the Sexuality and Social Work group. This Special Interest group does incredibly important work by raising awareness on various social issues that impact members within the LGBTQ+ community. This group has made a significant contribution toward the betterment of social work practice. Moreover, the Sexuality and Social work group provides a space in which those in academia and professional practice can come together and exchange ideas. Not only does this provide an excellent opportunity for networking, but it also creates the potential for collaborative work, both nationally and internationally. Needless to say, I was thrilled to present a poster of my research at this conference.



Welcome remarks from Sexuality & Social Work co-chairs (Pictured left to right: Alfonso Pezzella, Melissa Bird)

The poster I presented was based on three studies I conducted as part of my PhD project, showing that gender identity consciousness (i.e., emphasising distinctions between transgender and cisgender people) indirectly predicts higher levels of transprejudice. This is especially the case for cis individuals for whom gender identity is an important part of their self-esteem, or who perceive the existence of trans people as presenting some form of threat (symbolic or otherwise) to their own existence. This part of my research is particularly interesting because consciousness is an ideology that has its roots in racial prejudice research and has been linked to lower (not higher) levels of racial prejudice. My findings suggest that in the context of gender identity, a conscious ideology may not be an effective prejudice reduction strategy.

During the hour-long poster presentation session, I had numerous discussions as well as positive and insightful feedback on the nature of my research with others, both in academia and industry. Whilst at the conference, I was able to attend many interesting talks and learn about the research being done by those in similar fields to my own. I met with other PhD students and together, we exchanged stories of the varied paths of our individual journeys as early career academics. I also had the privilege to attend a talk given by one of the keynote speakers, Jason Jones: A prominent human rights defender whose activism has been instrumental in shaping LGBTQ+ legislation, both in the UK and abroad.



Pictured left to right: Keynote speaker Jason Jones; One of several conference presentations

For all these opportunities I am incredibly grateful to the Doctoral School at Royal Holloway, University of London for financially sponsoring my attendance to this amazing two-day conference. The Research Travel Award helped pay for my travel to Scotland and back, as well as my stay in Glasgow. Without the award, I would have missed out on meeting the extraordinary minds that have no doubt added to the building blocks of my foundation as an early-stage researcher. I would also like to thank my supervisors, Professor Hanna Zagefka, Dr. Thora Bjornsdottir, and Professor Ryan McKay, for their continued support and dedication in my PhD journey.