



**Abstract Nr:** 191  
**Internet ID:** 465

**Type of Presentation:** Symposium

**Voices in Psychosis: An interdisciplinary investigation of relationality, insecurity and meaning-making in experiences of hearing voices**

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**Learning Goal:**

Presents new insights into what voices reveal about experiences of relationality, insecurity and meaning-making among users of early intervention in psychosis services

Demonstrates the value of an interdisciplinary approach to the experience of hearing voices

**Abstract Text:**

“Voices in Psychosis” (VIP) is a mixed-methods longitudinal study conducted by Durham University’s “Hearing the Voice” project. This symposium presents findings from the first year of research with users of Early Intervention in Psychosis services in the cities of the North East of England. 40 voice-hearers participated in in-depth phenomenological interviews exploring the spatial, emotional and embodied qualities of voices; their perceived characterfulness, agency and change over time; and their relation to urban precarity, insecurity, and social and material hardship.

Research into the experience of hearing voices has recently moved away from a focus on auditory phenomenology to considering voices as personified in some way – whether as people, characters, spiritual entities or other kinds of social agents. So how do varieties in ‘personification’ relate to voice-hearers’ wider experiences of social connectedness, precarity, security, isolation and meaning-making?

Our symposium – presented by a psychologist, a linguist, a literary theorist and a medical humanities researcher – will explore this question in relation to the VIP project. After introducing the study, we will outline various ways of understanding “personified” voices and the challenges this poses for “bridging the gap” between voice-hearers, clinicians and society. We will look in detail at the language used by voice-hearers to describe experiences which are intensely difficult to describe, and the role of approximation in those descriptions. Expanding our focus to include interviews with voice-hearers conducted in the second year of the study, we will consider how the characterful qualities of voices change over time and in relation to people’s social and material circumstances. Finally, we analyse themes of home and identity in voice-hearers’ accounts of their experiences, showing that these interviews speak literally and metaphorically of a radical ‘unhousing’ that disturbs boundaries between inside and outside, real and imaginary, past and present.

**ON THE HEALING POWER  
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**