

PhD Studentship

Domestic Violence in the Family Court System

Closing date: Thursday 1st June 2017

Interview date: Wednesday 5th July 2017

Supervisory team

Director of Studies:

[Professor Erica Bowen](#), Institute of Health and Society, University of Worcester

Supervisors:

[Dr Holly Taylor-Dunn](#), Institute of Health and Society, University of Worcester

The Project

Applications are invited for a fully-funded full-time PhD studentship exploring the issue of domestic violence within the family court system.

Domestic violence is an issue that was traditionally seen as a private 'family' matter and was therefore initially dealt with by the family courts (Dobash and Dobash 1979). It is now the case that domestic violence issues appear in a range of cases presented to the family courts, including; direct applications for non-molestation orders and occupation orders; applications for divorce or separation; applications for child contact or dispute over residency; and care proceedings issued by the local authority. Yet despite the frequency with which these cases appear in the family court there is relatively little research regarding how they are managed and resolved (Wilson, 2015, Macdonald, 2016). Furthermore, while the criminal courts have made attempts to create separate waiting areas for victims and introduced specialist support workers, the family courts often have no such facilities, raising the potential for increased violence and abuse.

This studentship will explore; the prevalence of domestic violence issues within family law cases, the extent to which domestic violence is addressed by judgements made in family law cases, and the practical risk and safety issues of hearing cases where there is on-going or historical domestic abuse.

References

Dobash, R. and Dobash, R. (1979) *Violence Against Wives: A case against the patriarchy*. Open Books: London.

Macdonald, G. (2016) Domestic Violence and Private Family Court Proceedings: Promoting Child Welfare or Promoting Contact? *Violence Against Women*, 22 (7), pp. 832-852

Wilson, R. (2015) *Domestic Violence and Care Proceedings: Re-victimising the Victim?* Available from: <http://www.familylawweek.co.uk/site.aspx?i=ed152435> (Accessed 10th January 2017)

The University of Worcester

Research at the University of Worcester has grown significantly over the last 10 years. This growth is most clearly shown in the outcomes of the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014). Worcester was the most improved University in the UK based on Research Fortnight's "Research Power" measure, reflecting a more than four-fold increase in the number of staff submitted compared to RAE 2008 and a commensurate increase in the quality of the research. As a consequence of its REF 2014 submission, Worcester's QR income for 2015-16 is up by 341% from 2014-15.

The University is committed to further developing its research profile in the coming period, through a strategic approach to its support for and investment in research. As part of this investment it is funding a number of full-time PhD studentships in its areas of particular research strength.

Institute of Health & Society

The [Institute of Health & Society](#) brings together academics and researchers from across a wide range of disciplines but with a shared focus of enhancing the health and well-being of society through its education and research. Its transformational research seeks to address some of the major issues within health professions, local services, community and beyond. By pulling together academics working across disciplines to tackle important, social, scientific and environmental challenges, this research is having an impact on people's lives and helping to expand the institute's base of world-leading research. Areas of particular research strength are: Dementia Studies, Violence Prevention, Mental Health and Palliative Care. The Mood Disorders Research Group is a core component of the University's mental health research.

Research School

The Research School is a focal point for all our research students. It provides:

- day-to-day support for our students, both administrative and practical, through our dedicated team
- a Research Student Study Space with both PCs and laptop docking station
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars

Details of the studentship

During the period of your studentship you will receive the following:

- a tax free bursary of £13,863 for a period of 3 years
- a fee-waiver for 4 years
- a laptop
- use of the Research Student Study Space in Research School
- access to the Research Student Support Scheme to cover costs and expenses related to your research

You will be expected to play an active role in the life of both the Research School and of the Institute of Health and Society. You will be given opportunities to gain experience in learning and teaching within the Institute under the guidance of your Director of Studies.

Qualifications needed

Essential:

Applicants should have or be able to evidence:

- A First or Upper Second (2.1) Honours Degree in a social science, or expect to receive one by October 2016;
- A sound understanding of, and interest in domestic violence and/or the family court system
- Experience of relevant research methods and skills;
- Ability to contribute to research study design;
- Computer literacy;
- Proficiency in oral and written English;
- Ability to organise and meet deadlines;
- Good interpersonal skills;
- Ability to work independently and contribute to a team;
- Commitment and an enthusiastic approach to completing a higher research degree;
- Means of travelling independently to conduct research in locations throughout the UK;

Desirable:

- Education to Masters Degree level in a relevant area.

As part of its mission statement the University is committed to widening participation for its higher degrees. Although most candidates will have an undergraduate and/or a Masters degree, the University is happy to accept applications from candidates with relevant professional qualifications and work related experience

The Interview

The interview will provisionally be held on Wednesday 5th July 2017. All successful applicants will be interviewed. You will be asked to make a short presentation on a topic related to the study. You will also be asked to provide an example of your written work (e.g. a dissertation) ahead of the interview.

For further information or an informal discussion on this project, please contact Professor Erica Bowen (Director of Studies) via email at e.bowen@worc.ac.uk

Application forms are available at:

<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/researchstudentships>

Completed application forms should be sent by email to: research@worc.ac.uk or sent via post to: Research School, Jenny Lind Building, Henwick Grove, St Johns, Worcester, WR2 6AJ