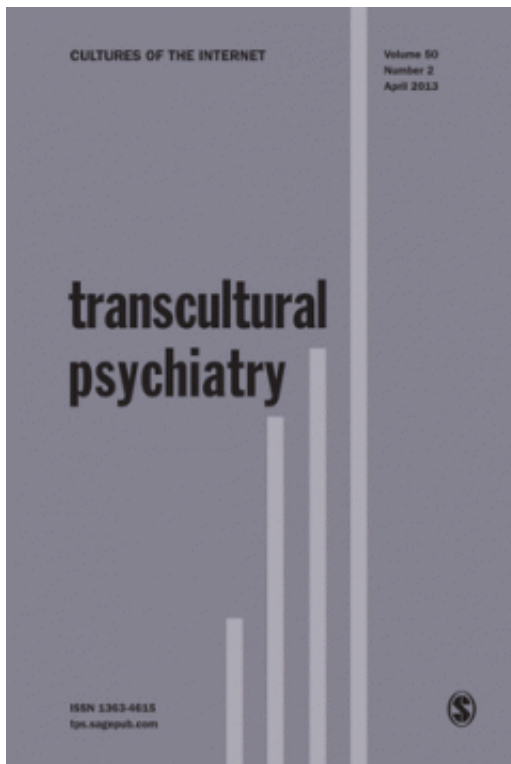http://somatosphere.net/2013/06/cultures-of-the-internet-a-special-issue-of-transcultural-psychiatry.html

Cultures of the internet: a special issue of Transcultural Psychiatry

2013-06-07 09:04:37

By Eugene Raikhel

The latest issue of _Transcultural Psychiatry_ is devoted to "Cultures of the Internet" – also the title of the 2011 McGill Advanced Study Institute (ASI) in Cultural Psychiatry at which many of the papers were originally presented. In our introductory essay to the issue, Laurence Kirmayer, Sadeq Rahimi and I examine some of the issues which the Internet and other new media raise for cultural psychiatry. In addition to giving some context for the papers in the issue, we review the social science and clinical literatures in four thematic areas:

> "(a) how the Internet is transforming human functioning, personhood, and identity through the engagement with electronic media; (b) how electronic networking gives rise to new groups and forms of community, with shifting notions of public and private, local and distant; (c) the emergence of new pathologies of the Internet, e.g., Internet addiction, group suicide, cyberbullying, and disruptions of neurodevelopment; and finally, (d) the use of the

Internet in mental health care, for example, by consumer advocacy and support groups, as well as for the delivery of health information, web-based consultation, treatment intervention, and mental health promotion," (Kirmayer, Raikhel and Rahimi 2013).

Here's the TOC along with abstracts:

Cultures of the Internet: Identity, community and mental health

Laurence J. Kirmayer, Eugene Raikhel, and Sadeq Rahimi

The Internet and World Wide Web have woven together humanity in new ways, creating global communities, new forms of identity and pathology, and new modes of intervention. This issue of Transcultural Psychiatry presents selected papers from the annual McGill Advanced Study Institute (ASI) in Cultural Psychiatry on ''Cultures of the Internet'' which took place in Montreal, April 26–29, 2011.…In addition to some of the ASI papers, this issue includes other recent contributions to the journal on related themes. In this introductory essay, we set out some of the broad implications of the Internet and related new media and information communication technologies (ICT) for cultural psychiatry.

Digital media, the developing brain and the interpretive plasticity of neuroplasticity

Suparna Choudhury and Kelly A. McKinney

 The use and misuse of digital technologies among adolescents has been the focus of fiery debates among parents, educators, policy-makers and in the media. Recently, these debates have become shaped by emerging data from cognitive neuroscience on the development of the adolescent brain and cognition. "Neuroplasticity" has functioned as a powerful metaphor in arguments both for and against the pervasiveness of digital media cultures that increasingly characterize teenage life. In this paper, we propose that the debates concerning adolescents are the meeting point of two major social anxieties both of which are characterized by the threat of "abnormal" (social) behaviour: existing moral panics about adolescent behaviour in general and

the growing alarm about intense, addictive, and widespread media consumption in modern societies. Neuroscience supports these fears but the same kinds of evidence are used to challenge these fears and reframe them in positive terms. Here, we analyze discourses about digital media, the Internet, and the adolescent brain in the scientific and lay literature. We argue that while the evidential basis is thin and ambiguous, it has immense social influence. We conclude by suggesting how we might move beyond the poles of neuro-alarmism and neuro-enthusiasm. By analyzing the neurological adolescent in the digital age as a socially extended mind, firstly, in the sense that adolescent cognition is distributed across the brain, body, and digital media tools and secondly, by viewing adolescent cognition as enabled and transformed by the institution of neuroscience, we aim to displace the normative terms of current debates.

Marketing the "radical": Symbolic communication and persuasive technologies in jihadist websites

Kamaldeep Bhui and Yasmin Ibrahim

This paper reviews the persuasion techniques employed by jihadist websites with particular reference to the patterns of rhetoric, image, and symbolism manifested in text, videos, and interactive formats. Beyond symbolic communication, the online media needs to be also understood through its persuasive tendencies as a medium which elicits social response through its design architecture. This double articulation of new media technologies, as a medium for information and as a form of persuasive technology, has provided new means to market the radical. The marketing techniques of jihadist websites through multimedia formats have consequences for the formation of identities, both collective and individual. As a marketing tool it combines established forms of rhetoric and propaganda with new ways to reach audiences through both popular culture and religious ideologies. The paper analyses the implications for further research and counterterrorism strategies.

A formal anthropological view of motivation models of problematic MMO play: Achievement, social, and immersion factors in the context of culture

Jeffrey G. Snodgrass, H. J. Francois Dengah II, Michael G. Lacy, and Jesse Fagan

Yee (2006) found three motivational factors—*achievement*, *social*, and *immersion*—underlying play in massively multiplayer online role-playing games ("MMORPGs" or "MMOs" for short). Subsequent work has suggested that these factors foster problematic or addictive forms of play in online worlds. In the current study, we used an online survey of respondents ($N = 252$), constructed and also interpreted in reference to ethnography and interviews, to examine problematic play in the *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*; Blizzard Entertainment, 2004–2013). We relied on tools from psychological anthropology to reconceptualize each of Yee's three motivational factors in order to test for the possible role of culture in problematic MMO play: (a) For *achievement*, we examined how "cultural consonance" with normative understandings of success might structure problematic forms of play; (b) for *social*, we analyzed the possibility that developing overvalued virtual relationships that are cutoff from offline social interactions might further exacerbate problematic play; and (c) in relation to *immersion*, we examined how "dissociative" blurring of actual- and virtual-world identities and experiences might contribute to problematic patterns. Our results confirmed that compared to Yee's original motivational factors, these culturally sensitive measures better predict problematic forms of play, pointing to the important role of sociocultural factors in structuring online play.

[Prevalence and risk factors of problematic Internet use: A cross-national comparison of Japanese and Chinese university students](#)

Chun Yan Yang, Takeshi Sato, Niwako Yamawaki, and Masakazu Miyata

The aim of the present study was to compare risk factors for problematic Internet use (PIU) among Japanese and Chinese university students. A sample of 267 Japanese and 236 Chinese first year university students responded to questionnaires on the severity of PIU, depression, self-image/image of others, and perceived parental child-rearing styles. The results indicated that Japanese participants were more likely to demonstrate PIU than their Chinese counterparts. Compared to Chinese students, Japanese students reported more negative self-image, lower parental care, greater overcontrol, and higher depression scores.

The PIU group had a higher depression score compared to the normal Internet use group. Compared with the non-PIU group, the PIU group consisted of more male and Japanese participants. Further, they tended to have more negative self-images, saw their mothers to be less caring, and perceived their mothers and fathers as more overcontrolling. PIU is strongly associated with depression, negative self-image, and parental relations. Finally, mediation analysis revealed that such national differences in PIU between Japanese and Chinese were clarified in depression and perceived mother's care. This cross-national study indicated that depression and perceived mother's care were both significant risk factors that were associated with the national difference in PIU between Japanese and Chinese participants.

Internet suicide in Japan: A qualitative content analysis of a suicide bulletin board

Ai Ikunaga, Sanjay R. Nath, and Kenneth A. Skinner

Netto shinju, or Internet group suicide, is a contemporary form of Japanese suicide where strangers connect on the Internet and make plans to commit suicide together. In the past decade, numerous incidents have occurred whereby young Japanese make contact on the Internet, exchange tips on suicide methods, and make plans to meet offline for group/individual suicide. A systematic qualitative content/thematic analysis of online communications posted on a popular Japanese suicide bulletin board yielded a textured, thematic understanding of this phenomenon. Themes identified reflected Shneidman's theory of suicide but with an emphasis on interpersonal concerns that are embedded in Japanese culture.

Internet suicide: Communities of affirmation and the lethality of communication

Ronald Niezen

As a tool of instant information dissemination and social networking, the Internet has made possible the formation and affirmation of public identities based on personality traits that are

usually characterized by clinicians as pathological. The wide variety of online communities of affirmation reveals new conditions for permissiveness and inclusiveness in expressions of these socially marginal and clinically pathologized identities. Much the same kind of discourse common to these online communities is evident in some suicide forums. Web sites with suicide as their central *raison d'être*, taken together, encompass a wide range of ideas and commitments, including many that provide collective affirmation outside of (and often with hostility toward) professional intervention. The paradox of a potentially life-affirming effect of such forums runs counter to a stark dualism between online therapy versus "prochoice" forums and, by extension, to simple models of the influence of ideas on the lethality of suicide. Different forums either intensify or mitigate self-destructive tendencies in ways that are significant for understanding the place of communication in the occurrence of suicide and for therapeutic practice.

Factors influencing mental health providers' intention to use telepsychotherapy in First Nations communities

Johana Monthuy-Blanc, Stéphane Bouchard, Christophe Maïano, and Monique Séguin

Telemental health is the use of information and communications technologies and broadband networks to deliver mental health services and support wellness. Although numerous studies have demonstrated the efficiency and utility of telemental health, certain barriers may impede its implementation, including the attitudes of mental health service providers. The current study draws on the technology acceptance model (TAM) to understand the role of mental health service providers' attitudes and perceptions of telemental health (psychotherapy delivered via videoconferencing) on their intention to use this technology with their patients. A sample of 205 broadly defined mental health service providers working on 32 First Nations reserves in the province of Quebec completed the questionnaire adapted to assess TAM for telepsychotherapy. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling provided evidence for the factor validity and reliability of the TAM in this sample. The key predictor of the intention to use telepsychotherapy was not mental health providers' attitude toward telepsychotherapy, nor how much they expected this service to be complicated to use, but essentially how

useful they expect it to be for their First Nations patients. If telemental health via videoconferencing is to be implemented in First Nations communities, it is essential to thoroughly demonstrate its utility to mental health providers. Perceived usefulness will have a positive impact on attitudes toward this technology, and perceived ease of use will positively influence perceived usefulness. Cultural issues specific to the populations receiving telemental health services may be more efficiently addressed from the angle of perceived usefulness.

AMA citation

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