Abstracts: Culture and the Mind – interdisciplinary workshop

Kirrily Pells
'Who has earnt the right to hear my story?' Imaginings of childhood, culture and the mind in the Rwandan context

Dominant 'Western' constructions of childhood and the mind are deeply intertwined. Such constructions are rooted in colonialism and underpinned by deeply entrenched power relations between those positioned as adults and those as children on account of generational and racialised, colonial Global North-South locations. Within the fields of Critical Childhood Studies and Global Mental Health there are calls to 'decolonise' knowledge production both about childhood and mental health, examining the normative assumptions underpinning both and interrogating power relations that sustain interventions in these fields. This presentation will explore these entanglements using the case study of Rwanda and arts-based research projects Connective Memories and Mobile Arts for Peace with children and youth which aim to explore more locally-grounded and culturally sensitive approaches to addressing past legacies of violence and to mental health, by using Rwandan cultural forms, such as proverbs, storytelling, drama and art.

Vivian Dzokoto
Conceptions of mind in the Akan of West Africa

Cultural psychological perspectives posit a bidirectional relationship between cultural environments and psychological affordances (Markus & Kitayma, 2010) such that culture and the psyche "make each other up" (Schweder et al., 2007). This is evident in the comparison between western conceptions of mind and traditional Akan representations of *adwen* (mind). My presentation will explore the "dimensions" of the Akan mind narrative: pragmatism, moral valence, porosity, and embodiment. I will discuss links between the Akan representation of mind and the West African cultural environment which shaped the Akan mind narrative, and in turn has been shaped by it.

Sonia Cancian
Empathy and the Narrativization of Migration

Empathy, a concept that describes a multitude of feelings and states of mind of openness to other people's emotions and thoughts, has garnered rising interest across the disciplines in recent years. When we consider migration and the debates and conflicts around it, empathy plays a critical role. How audiences in host and sending societies respond to news, stories, and other narratives of migration, and subsequently exercise degrees of empathy with migrants, is interconnected with a string of factors, including the power of empathy itself. Related concepts like recognition and acknowledgement undergird these narratives as well. In conversation with the workshop on culture and the mind, this paper will explore the intersections of empathy and migrant narratives re/constructed by transnational women and men engaged in historical and current migration movements, in an attempt to advance understandings of what it means to be human in a 21st century mobile world.

Lamia Moghnieh

Culture, emotion and the modern mind: A reflection on the infrastructures of mental illness

Drawing from several ethnographic and archival cases from Lebanon and other MENA societies, I examine the ways in which identified cultural differences in (and sometimes absences of) emotions (such as trauma, grief and anger) contribute to constructions of the rational and sane mind. My intervention is a reflection on the relation between culture and emotion, and its implication on what constitutes mental illness and suffering.

Ville Kivimaki

Translating trauma: How to think of posttraumatic stress in historical terms

The aim for the study of trauma in history is usually understood as an analysis of those social and cultural contexts that have constructed the trauma concept. In my presentation, I try to think of ways to study the experience of trauma in historically sensitive terms, which would recognize the time-bound contingency of traumatized minds. Is it possible to use the concept of trauma without reducing past experiences to a present-day medical category?

Jason Crouthamel

Contested Minds: Cultural and Political Constructs of the Psyche at War

In my field of study (German history during and after the First World War), 'the mind' is an embattled site where the military-state-medical complex debated how to manage and control the individual psyche in the context of industrialized violence. In this context, the psyche was constructed differently by competing political groups driven by socio-economic interests and divergent memories of war as a brutalizing or ennobling experience. Recently, scholars of the First World War have moved away from the medical, political and state constructions of mental illness ('shell shock', 'war hysteria') to more subjective experiences and narratives of trauma, which were driven by complex cultural differences that included gender, religion and ethnicity. To further complicate approaches to trauma, historians have further shifted the conversation to more 'hidden' layer of expression and representation (in letters and diaries, art, rituals), uncovering ever more subjective ways in which men and women narrate traumatic experiences, pushing us to think more broadly about the varied cultural contexts in which the individual psyche is conceptualized.

Martha Sif Karrebaek

Ideologies of language & people in interpreted therapeutic encounters

In this talk I will take a starting point in the notion of language ideologies (Silverstein 1979; Irvine & Gal 2020; Kroskrity 2004) and discuss how I as a linguistic ethnographer approach understand and analyse relations between language, participants in interaction and the setting in which these participants find themselves. I will draw on a small corpus of recordings of interpreted therapeutic encounters where the client is a speaker of Arabic and the therapist a speaker of Danish.

China Mills,
"Cultural context becomes like footnotes": constructing and contesting universality in global guidelines for mental health

A key mechanism in the global mental health assemblage is the production of guidelines that construct mental health as global. Drawing on interviews with the makers of the World Health Organization's (WHO) mhGAP-Intervention Guide (mhGAP-IG) (evidence-based guidelines designed to be a key tool for scaling up mental health globally) - this presentation adds empirical depth to understanding the contested nature of universality in global mental health. Findings show that a number of strategies are used to construct universality in global mental health, including the framing of cultural relativism as nihilistic; acknowledgement, but delaying, of complexity in favour of pragmatism; and the conceptualization of messiness within local contexts of primary healthcare, and not within the messy process of designing and constructing guidelines, or the wider work of standardisation.

Romain Tiquet
Family care put to the test of a "cultural-in-between". Reflections on Written Requests for Psychiatric Internment of Dangerous Individuals in Dakar, Senegal (1960s)

This short presentation invests a corpus of written resquests produced by family members for the psychiatric internment of individuals in Dakar (Senegal). It aims at interrogating the relation between 'culture' and attitude of families toward mental disorder in Senegal, during the 1960s' right after the independance and the opening of the first psychiatric unit in the country.

Ursula Read
"His mind was not there" – thinking about presence, agency and responsibility in concepts of severe mental illness in Ghana
The concept of *mens rea* is central to criminal justice and mental health in many jurisdictions. Here I draw on interviews and ethnographic research with adults with serious mental health conditions in Ghana who have committed acts of violence or homicide when mentally unwell. The notion of a temporary absence of the mind and a disturbance of conscious perception is central to thinking about agency and culpability in relation to these acts. At the same time families bear moral responsibility for reparation in the event of harm.
In this presentation I consider how caregivers and the persons affected make sense of these events and the implications for social inclusion.

Ruairi White
Mad, But Not Too Mad

Within the mental health landscape, people acting on and using their lived experience of Madness, mental ill-health or distress are often in a precarious and contradictory position. Our authority to speak on the subject in mainstream spaces is granted based on our experiences, on the condition that those experiences can be communicated in a reasonably palatable, organised, 'sane' way. Drawing on my work at NSUN, I will explore this contradictory position and what it means for mental health research.

Reima Maglajlic (with China Mills (City University London), Halida Vejzagic ('Menssana', Sarajevo, BiH) and Jasmin Palata ('Fenix', Tuzla, BiH))

Madness after the war – exploring alternatives to dominant understandings of mental health in the context of political conflict

To date, the impact of the war on mental health is mainly conceptualised and researched through Western and medicalised understanding of mental distress. Meaningful engagement with people with lived experience has been identified as missing from much global mental health research and practice, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. As mental health is a global development priority, BiH was a site of various post-war development interventions. One of the rare development successes was the introduction of community mental health services, including the development of organisations run or led by people with lived experience. However, reforms in BiH have been criticised for being predominately shaped by donor interests.

The presentation focuses on the findings from an exploratory study which offers new insights on mental distress during and after political conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). It was co-produced by the representatives of two organisations run and led by people with lived experience and two professionals with a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. The study explored experiences of mental distress and support received of people with lived experience in two BiH regions. Narrative analysis of the data utilised the concept of border thinking from decolonial theory, enabling focus on the lived dimension of experiences which have been excluded from knowledge production. The presentation will offer a summary of the findings, appraising whether and how the study contributes to the emerging field of Mad Studies, as well offer insights into methodological and contextual challenges encountered during and after the fieldwork.