

18 - 11. Culture Bound Syndromes

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Culture bound syndromes are identified in both ICD and DSM classification systems. Most of these syndromes are merely locally flavoured varieties of illnesses found elsewhere. Most actually occur in many unrelated cultures. More than the symptom profiles of the syndromes, the explanatory mechanisms like witchcraft or humoral imbalances are the defining features. Such illness beliefs can lead to behaviours that would seem to indicate disordered thought processes outside their cultural context, which actually make sense within the context. For example, consider the Chinese syndromes of pa-feng and pa-leng below.

© SPMM Course Culture-Bound Syndromes Amok (F68 disorder of personality and behaviour)

Mostly dissociative not psychotic in nature. Starts with sullen period, followed by outburst of violent, sometimes homicidal behaviour; A return to premorbid state occurs after the episode. Some instances of amok may occur during a brief psychotic episode or constitute the onset or an exacerbation of a chronic psychotic process. Seen in Malaysia, Laos, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and Puerto Rico. Ataque de nervios (F45 somatoform)

An attack of distress wherein sudden shouting, crying, beating oneself on chest with dissociation and panic attacks can occur with a sense of being out of control. May have loss of consciousness or amnesia afterwards. Related to acute stress (trauma or family conflict) A sense of heat arising from chest into head may be present Mechanism: dissociative trance. Berdache North America Term for a male who has assumed female gender role Bouffee delirante Seen in French-speaking nations where a sudden outburst of agitated and aggressive behaviour, confusion resembling an episode of brief psychotic disorder. West Africa and Haiti commonly. Brain fag West Africa - seen in students with difficulties in concentrating, remembering, and thinking. A type of somatoform illness. Dhat (F48 / F45: neurotic disorder / somatoform autonomic) India/SE Asia Refers to severe anxiety and hypochondriacal concerns associated with the seminal discharge accompanied by feeling weak and exhausted. Called shenkui in China (fear of loss of yang from men: see below) According to old

Hindu tradition, it takes forty drops of blood to create a drop of bone marrow and forty drops of bone marrow to create a drop of sperm Frigophobia (Pa-Leng : fear of cold; Pa-Feng: fear of wind) (F40 specific phobias) A morbid fear of feeling cold / wind due to presumed yin-yang imbalance. Yin-yang refers to Oriental psychological notion of two opposing forces; yin is dark, female and negative force. Yang is bright, male and positive force. Excessive yin in males leads to pa-leng or pa-feng Affected men typically bundle themselves in warm clothing, avoid wind or drafts, and eat foods that are symbolically and calorically "hot" while avoiding foods that are "cold"

Koro (Turtle Head) (F48 / F45: neurotic disorder / somatoform autonomic) Malaysia, SE Asia Refers to an episode of sudden and intense anxiety that the penis (or, in women, the vulva and nipples) will recede into the body and possibly cause death. Can occur as epidemics! Latah (F48 / F44: neurotic disorder / dissociative) Hypersensitivity to sudden fright, often with echopraxia, echolalia, command obedience, and dissociative or trancelike behaviour seen in middle-aged women. Malaysia and south East Asia

© SPMM Course Mal de ojo Mediterranean concept of evil eye affecting children with physical symptoms mostly. Nerfiza or Nevra Egypt, Greece and Central America Common, often chronic, episodes of extreme sorrow or anxiety, inducing a complex of somatic complaints such as head and muscle pain, diminished reactivity, nausea, appetite loss, insomnia, fatigue and agitation. The syndrome is more common in women than in men. Often treated with traditional herbal teas Piblokto (F44 dissociative) Dissociative episode with excitement often followed by seizures and coma lasting up to 12 hours. May be withdrawn before the attack and usually has amnesia for the episode; they may tear off clothing, shout obscenities, eat faeces, jump into ice cold water naked etc. Seen in Arctic Eskimo communities (Inuits) Shinkeishitsu "Nervous traits" in Japanese A syndrome of obsessions, compulsive perfectionism, social withdrawal, extreme sensitivity and neurasthenia. Susto (F48 / F45: neurotic disorder / somatoform autonomic) Attributed to a frightening event that causes the soul to leave the body and results in unhappiness and sickness. Tajin-kyofu-shou (F40.1 / 40.8 social phobia) Japanese psychiatric syndrome Fear of losing good will of others due to imagined shortcomings of oneself Social anxiety, tremulousness, self-consciousness and a sense of physical defect or deformity Can develop into anthropophobia (fear of people) - a severe form of social phobia four subtypes: sekimen-kyofu (the phobia of blushing - closer to social phobia), shubo-kyofu (the phobia of a deformed body- closer to body dysmorphic disorder), jikoshisen-kyofu (the phobia of eye-to-eye contact), and jikoshu-kyofu (the phobia of one's own foul body odor). Ufufuyane, (singular), Amafufunyane, (plural), Seen in Kenya, Southern Africa; Bantu, Zulu; and affiliated groups Anxiety state attributed to the effects of magical potions (given to them by rejected lovers) or spirit possession Characteristic sobbing, repeated neologisms, paralysis, trance-like states, or loss of consciousness in young, unmarried women, who may also experience nightmares with sexual themes, and rarely episodes of temporary blindness. Windigo (F68 personality and behaviour) Involves an intense craving for human flesh and the fear that one will turn into a cannibal. Seen among Algonquian Indian cultures (Adapted from American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. 4th ed. Washington, DC.)

Piblokto Windigo Brain Fag Boufee delirante Mal-de-ojo, Ataque de nervios, susto © SPMM Course

Pa-leng Tajin-kyofushou, Shinkeishitsu Amok, Koro, Latah Dhat Ufufuyane 40

© SPMM Course What effect can culture have on psychopathology? Tseng described 6 different effects:

1. Pathogenic: Culture is directly causative
2. Pathoselective: tendency to select certain culturally influenced reactions (e.g. culturally sanctioned suicide of wife when husband dies prematurely)
3. Pathoplastic: Culture influences the manifestation e.g. delusional content. Acute onset of schizophrenia was seen in 40.3% in developing nations compared to 10.9% of cases in West. WHO conducted a collaborative study in 4 countries (Montreal, Tehran, Nagasaki, Tokyo and Basel) using the Schedule for Standardised Assessment of Depression – this study observed that there was a significant similarity in the core symptoms across various nations, the differences were quantitative rather than qualitative in terms of depressive symptoms.
4. Pathoelaborating: Universal behavioural reactions that are selectively reinforced by a culture
5. Pathofacilitative: cultural beliefs affect the frequency of onset by facilitating risk factors.
6. Pathoreactive: culture affects the treatment, stigma and outcome. Interestingly, the prognosis of schizophrenia seems much better in developing than developed nations. But remission was achieved by 62.7% in developing countries compared to 36.8% in the West (IPSS Data – WHO).

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