Dear RC49 Members, Colleagues and Friends

I am wishing you a happy and healthy New Year.

While the world is still struggling with the COVID 19 pandemic, we seemingly adapt more and more to the new normal of social distancing, remote working and online meetings.

It is against this background, that the 1st RC49 Online Symposium “The Sociology of Mental Health and Illness – Emerging Issues and Perspectives” on November 19th 2021 with around 30 participants from around the world was a success. We are very grateful to the presenters and audiences for inspiring presentations and lively discussions. We agreed that such online meetings should be continued in order to intensify connections between RC49 members. Please find the program including abstracts in this newsletter.

On Saturday, Dec. 18th 2021, the ISA Research Council took place and a number of important and exciting developments have been introduced. In a nutshell: A research council task force, chaired by Debra Davidson (RC24) is developing strategies to strenghten equity, diversity and inclusion and to foster more active participation by sociologists from different backgrounds. Further, Jan Fritz, member of the executive committee of ISA, provided a report on ISA presence and activities at the UN and initiatives and how RC/WG/TG may start new collaborations with UN bodies.

Maintaining communication and exchange between ISA members and between ISA and societies is a continous challenge. Thus, ISA started new social media strategies and offers support RC/WG/TG online communication, e.g. Twitter, Facebook. In 2022, ISA will hold a series of webinars on “The pandemic and the world that will come out of it”. This could be a great opportunity for RC49 to present the mental health consequences of the pandemic. One or two RC/WG/TG will be invited to present the contributions of the field in a better understanding of the way the pandemic has shaken our societies and of the world that is rising out of it. A selection of the papers presented at the webinar will be published in an edited volume of “Global dialogue”. The first webinar will be held in late January 2023. I will keep you updated.

A big thank to Takashi Asakura from Tokyo Gakugei University who, in this newsletter, shares his views on the challenges of planetary health.

Last not least you can find some of the recent academic activities by RC49 Senior Board Members.

Very best wishes
Silvia Krumm
RC 49 President
Opening Remarks: Silvia Krumm (President) – Ulm University, Germany.

Session I (2pm-3pm, Ulm, BW, German time): Psychosocial impacts of the COVID pandemic
(Chair: Maike Klein)

1.) Ireen Manase Kabembo, Lingnan University Department of Sociology and Social Policy

Background: Today’s adolescents have seemingly a lot to handle on their plates. The happenings in the internal and external environment continuously put pressure on adolescents. Phenomena such as the twisted nature of child abuse and neglect in families and communities, gender-based violence, increased household poverty levels due to collapsing economies, technological advances that expose them to delinquency, crime, pornography, substance abuse and other negative vices; all tend to have an adverse toll on their mental health. The scenario concerning access to and utilization of child and adolescent mental health services during the COVID-19 pandemic is one characterized by limited access to the already meagre public, private, and community mental health services. In this regard, the family bears the brunt of providing care in the home with limited support. Consequently, many adolescents with mental health problems are detached from essential mental health services and unserved, thereby denying them the right to proper recovery. Methodology: An exploratory qualitative research design will be used to document perspectives of adolescent mental health care service providers, using an interpretive approach. Results/Expected Outcomes: The focus on adolescent mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, from the perspective of service providers in a low-and-middle income country context will aid in the development of strategies to mitigate the effects of disrupted services.

2.) Laura Huerta Muñoz, Autonomous Metropolitan University- Azcapotzalco, Mexico.
Loneliness as social emotion: The pandemic lesson

Solitude is what isolation represented when the covid outbreak exhorted the world to quarantine, instead, it was loneliness (even among those who were at home their families, and even though actual communication technologies kept people in communication) that grew up as a sense of being left behind and with no meaningful relations. Elias described how the “homo clausus” was a predominant point of view although we are all connected in interdependent relations. Simmel wrote about the role senses play in socialization and how loneliness can only be perceived when social life has been incorporated by the individual. The pandemic events have shown the interdependence of health and that individualization of health is more a cognitive scheme of social order than a fact, and that its materiality relies more on the cultural imperative of individual response rather than on actual possibilities of solving alone the life needs. Self-regulation linked to the individualization process leads people to search “alone” (individually) the solution to their psychosocial problems. This culturally based idea seems to affect the belief that it is up to individuals to be well although they’re isolated and avoiding the touch of other people. Some in dept interviews showed up that the sense of touch is important not only for well-being in mental health terms but also as metaphor of being related to others. Here, I explore the implications of these findings for mental health research from a sociological point of view.
The Psychosocial and Political Implications of Covid-19 in Chile

Chile is known as one of the most economically developed and, until recently, most politically stable countries in Latin America. It is also known for the high quality and wide coverage of its healthcare and mental health services and preventative programs. Nevertheless, with Covid-19, it is experiencing its worst pandemic in 100 years. This nation, which has a population of about 19 million, has reported over 768,000 cases of Covid-19 and 19,000 deaths. It has recently ranked among the top 10 countries in the world in deaths per 100,000 residents. The first case of Covid-19 was reported in March 2020 in the midst of a profound social revolution, which had been ongoing since October of the previous year. The rapid social, economic, and political changes that have occurred with both the social revolution (estallido) and the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in unemployment, isolation, illness, and death and have produced in many Chileans an anomic crisis that includes greater anxiety and depression because of the uncertainty about the future. This chapter is a comprehensive description and in-depth analysis of the current pandemic and political crisis in Chile. It provides a structural analysis of the Chilean economy and discusses how Chileans in different social strata are coping with both Covid-19 and the social revolution. Concerns are expressed regarding the access and quality of medical and mental health services for low income Chileans. Conclusions are drawn to the question: Did the Covid-19 pandemic undermine the social revolution in Chile?

Session II (3:15-4:15pm, Ulm, BW, German time), COVID and low-income neighbourhoods in Brazil (Chair: Masoud Zamani)

1.) Lenora Bruhn, Felipe Szabzon, Cristobal Abarca Brown, Daniela Ravelli, Elisangela Miranda, Laura Helena Silveira Guerra de Andrade

Outcomes of the suspension of welfare services in the routine of families of a low-income neighbourhood during the COVID-19 pandemic in São Paulo, Brazil

In Brazil, urban peripheries face overlapping crises in social, economic, political and sanitary spheres. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these places have been severely affected both by the spread of the virus and by social and economic unfolding outcomes. This article presents the results of a qualitative research that investigated subjective experiences of suffering in a peripheral region of São Paulo, Brazil, during the pandemic. A team of researchers worked closely with volunteers from the district who made emotional support calls to community neighbours who requested the project’s support. From September to December 2020, weekly meetings were held between volunteers and researchers, aimed at reporting the cases heard and promoting discussions about the social determinants of the suffering experienced by those who received the calls. This article explores one important dimension of these experiences, namely, the interruption of public services that make up the social protection network of families from the region. The suspension of many of these services during the pandemic impacted the daily dynamics and family organization of the poorest, leading many of these families to circumstances of affliction and despair. We argue that, in urban peripheries, the COVID-19 pandemic must be understood beyond its health dimension, and considered as a major crisis with important implications to the social organization of care. These has revealed the unequal dynamics of the work of social reproduction of life in several layers, which falls mainly on women.

2.) Felipe Szabzon, Lenora Bruhn, Cristobal Abarca Brown, Daniela Ravelli, Elisangela Miranda, Laura Helena Silveira Guerra de Andrade

A report of a qualitative research experience in mental health in a low-income neighbourhood in the outskirts of São Paulo in times of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic had as one of its consequences the need to create new ways of doing social research. This article reports how a multidisciplinary research team adapted an ethnographic study
on mental health in a low-income neighbourhood in the outskirts of São Paulo during the COVID-19 pandemic. This adaptation has led to the creation of the “Sapopemba’s Solidarity Neighbourhood Network” aiming to foster solidarity bonds and at the same time exploring experiences of social suffering and local repertoires to handle these situations. To overcome the contingencies of the pandemic we referred to Participatory-Action Research (PAR) approaches. In a joint initiative between researchers and a local NGO, a group of volunteers were trained to perform “empathic listening” through phone calls to neighbouring counterparts, offering emotional support. For a period of three months, we followed up on the experiences of these volunteers in performing calls and discussing with them the challenges of the cases reached on weekly meetings via online platforms. Meetings were recorded, transcribed and analysed with CAQDAS software. Firstly, we explore the difficulties of shifting to online methodologies in contexts of poverty and adversity. Secondly, we point to the feebleness of digital tools to intermediate personal relationships, which is an important component to qualitative research. Finally, we highlight the potential of fostering bonds of solidarity between neighbouring counterparts that experience similar structural challenges, either for action and research. We argue that the shift to the virtual world in social research reinforced persistent inequalities, especially due to a ubiquitous digital divide. Nonetheless, we call attention to the power of PAR methods to inform qualitative research in times of difficult access to the fieldwork.

3.) Cristobal Abarca Brown - Transdisciplinary Laboratory in Social Practices and Subjectivity University of Chile, Felipe Szabzon, Lenora Bruhn, Daniela Ravelli, Elisangela Miranda, Laura Helena Silveira Guerra de Andrade

(Re) thinking Urban Mental Health from the periphery of São Paulo, Brazil

Urban life configures new health-disease processes at mental, neurological and emotional levels in the inhabitants of large cities. Studies of psychiatric epidemiology in Urban Mental Health have been devoted to identifying the elements that characterize “the city”, exploring the relationship of causality between exposure to risk factors in the city and mental disorders. This paper discusses the importance of (re)thinking the “urban experience” in contexts of adversity from the point of view of local residents of their immediate environment. A qualitative participatory project was settled in a peripheral area of the city of São Paulo - Brazil, named “Neighbourhood Solidarity Network”, in which volunteers from the territory itself performed empathic listening calls to their neighbours in order to provide emotional support to community counterparts during the Covid-19 pandemic. Weekly follow-up meeting was held to up-hold discussion session between volunteers and researchers about the nature of the experiences found during the calls. The analysis of the discussion sessions shows the importance of three central categories for reflecting about the urban experience: (a) material and financial insecurity linked to work, housing and access to food; (b) the dynamics of violence and world of the crime in the periphery and; (c) the lack of social support and the community agency that emerges in the neighbourhoods. We highlight the possibility of rethinking urban mental health from a situated and decolonial phenomenological tools that allow us to contextualize social suffering in concrete circumstances, such as the case of Latin America, where the neoliberal state assumes specific forms of subsidiarity and police control.

Session III (4:30pm-5:30pm, Ulm, BW, German time), Gender and mental health (Chair: Fernanda Cruz)

1.) Tetyana Ivanova - Sumy State University, Sumy, Ukraine

Transgender and non-binary people in a lockdown situation (Covid-19)

Since March 12, 2020, in order to prevent infection with COVID-19, the government of Ukraine has introduced quarantine throughout the country for a period until April 3. From July 25 to September 31, a survey was conducted among individuals who identify themselves as non-binary / transgender people. The purpose of the survey was to assess the impact of the quarantine situation on the social status and emotional state of the respondents. A total of 288 people took part in the survey. The lockdown situation, first of all, influenced the emotional state and physical health of the respondents
(60% answered that they had a predominantly negative emotional state), and 26% answered that their physical health became worse. One of the factors was probably the inability to visit a doctor, which was noted by more than a third of those surveyed. In second place among the negative consequences of quarantine are financial problems. The reason for these problems was the loss of a job - this was mentioned by almost half of the respondents - 44%. 42% of respondents noted a deterioration in interaction with others. In particular, 20% noted an increase in conflicts, 16% noted various forms of violence against them, 6% separated from their partners. 28% of respondents had problems related to their trans status. In particular, 15% did not have the opportunity to receive hormones, 13% were forced to suspend the transition process.

2.) Masoud Zamani Moghadam, Yazd University, Iran
The Social Construction of Existential Anxieties: portraiture of seven female heads of households
The aim of this research was to study the socio-cultural construction of existential anxieties of female heads of households. Using the qualitative method of portraiture, I studied seven female heads of households in deprived neighborhoods of Khorramabad in Iran. Data were collected through purposive sampling strategies and through in-depth interviews, field notes, and review of participants' records in two health centers and analyzed. Based on data analysis, eleven themes with main and subcategories and related concepts were obtained. These eleven themes are: 1) livelihood and economic bottlenecks; 2) inadequacy of networks and social relations; 3) limiting cultural elements; 4) conflict of roles; 5) children's problems; 6) in pursuit of authenticity; 7) desire for subjective wellbeing; 8) death anxiety; 9) responsibility concerns; 10) difficulties of isolation; 11) meaninglessness experiences. Themes 1 to 5 indicate the socio-cultural context of the participants, and themes 6 and 7 indicate their individual-psychological context. Themes 8 to 11 also deal with the existential anxieties of the participants. Findings show that participants' existential anxieties are constructed in their socio-cultural context and influenced by their individual-psychological context. In addition, although participants have similar experiences with existential anxieties, they also have unique and different experiences. Finally, it is argued that existential anxieties, despite their philosophical and psychological basis, are formed in the socio-cultural context.

3.) Gleiciane Souza - Federal University of Bahia, Brazil
Female suicide in Brazil. Knowledge and care in the face of domestic violence
This study seeks to understand the specific dynamics of female suicidal behavior, questioning the reasons and causes behind these behaviors. Due to the fact that the mortality rate from suicide is higher for men, female suicidality has been neglected and suicide has been considered a male phenomenon. However, when non-fatal suicidal behavior is included in suicidality, as proposed by Canetto and Sakinofsky (1998), suicidal behavior turns out to be an equally female phenomenon. In this respect, women's suicidal behavior is very often related to gender violence. Indeed, it is known that their suicide attempts in particular are very often linked to situations of abuse and sexual violence experienced in childhood (Counts, 1987; Devries and Seguin, 2013; Fischbach and Herbert, 1997; Johnson, 1979; Meneghel et al., 2013; Stephens, 1984; Vijayakumar, 2015), but these factors and life histories have yet to be studied empirically by the social sciences. Here, it seems, particularly from the example of female suicide in China, that some of these acts function as a form of revenge that aims to denounce the spouse's abuse and thus discredit the spouse and family
(Baudelot and Establet, 2006). In other cases, highlighted by new legislation in France, suicide sometimes appears to be the only way of escaping domestic violence, and represents an aggravating factor when this violence is judged by the law. Therefore, it is worthwhile to study more precisely in Brazil the links between female suicide and gender violence in order to better prevent the risk, especially among the medical professions, which are not always aware of the relationship between this risk and male domination. Keywords: Female suicide. Gender violence. Suicide prevention.

Session IV (5:45pm-7:30pm Ulm, BW, German time), Sociological perspectives on “deviance behaviour”: Violence, drugs, risks, work (Chair: Felipe Szabon)

1.) Joaquim Matavel - Faculty of Medicine, Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique, Khâtía Munguambe, Deborah R. Wilson, Osvaldo Loquiha, James G. Linn
Cross-cultural adaptation of an intimate partner violence screening tool (WAST) for the Mozambican context; implications for more effective HIV prevention and treatment counselling
This article aims to translate and carry out the cross-cultural adaptation of the WAST - Woman Abuse Screening Tool, designed in English and used to track violence by an intimate partner. For adaptation, the conceptual equivalence of terms and semantics between the original version in English and the version translated into Portuguese was evaluated, the result of two translations and back-translation, discussion by a panel of experts, establishment of the preliminary version and finally testing in 88 participants of both sexes, selected in two health units at the level of primary health care. The cross-cultural adaptation resulted in an equivalence of concepts and semantics between the initial translation and the final back-translation. From the testing it was concluded that the version of WAST translated and adapted to the Mozambican context, has good internal consistency, the scales of WAST-Short (α =0.813) such as those of IPV or WAST-Long (α = 0.834) are highly related. The two scales do not discriminate between men and women (WAST-Short p = 0.204, WAST-Long p = 0.271). Implications are discussed for more effective HIV prevention and treatment counselling.

2.) Kris Deering – University of the West of England, UK, Jo Williams and Rob Williams
The risk of risk management: Adopting critical theories to explore clinical risk concerns in mental health care
Purpose. The paper will outline several critical risk theories and explore their application to risk concerns in mental health care. This will contribute to the ongoing debate about risk management practices and the impact these might have on recovery and social inclusion. Notably, whilst risks like suicide can be therapeutically addressed, risk management may involve paternalistic practices that excludes the participation needed for recovery. Design/methodology/approach. A viewpoint of key risk theories will be presented to provide a critical eye about some clinical risk concerns in mental health care. Implications for recovery and social inclusion will then be discussed alongside direction for practice and research. Findings. Clinical concerns seemed to involve difficulties with uncertainty, holding onto expertise, and the Othering of patients through risk. These concerns suggest the patient voice might become lost, particularly within the backdrop of clinical fears about blame. Alternatively, a relational approach to risk management could have merit, while patient expertise may develop understanding in how to improve risk management practices. Originality/value. Clinical concerns appear more than managing potential harms; it can involve appraising behaviours around societal norms, explaining to an extent why mental illness might be addressed in terms of risks. Whilst the points raised in the paper support existing findings about risk management, the underlying reasons drawing on the critical risk theories are less explored.

3.) Maike Klein, Department of Social & Policy Sciences, University of Bath
Lived experiences of multiple relapses into opiate and/or crack cocaine misuse among relapse survivors and addiction therapists in the UK: A multi-perspectival interpretative phenomenological analysis
Introduction: Previous research has linked repeated relapse to an increased risk for drug-overdose death, for which the UK currently holds one of the highest rates in Europe. The current evidence base on relapse is dominated by studies which sought to explain, predict and treat relapse in isolation of the individual’s lived context. This leaves a relative gap in our understanding of relapse from a lived experience perspective. Therefore, this presentation will focus on part of a doctoral thesis project which explores how relapsing multiple times into substance misuse is experienced by relapse survivors and addictions therapists, as well as how these perspectives relate, differ and co-exist. Methods: Data were generated through qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 14 participants (7 relapse survivors and 7 addictions therapists) in the UK, and subsequently analysed using a multi-perspectival approach to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Findings: This presentation will focus on preliminary findings of the relapse survivor group analysis. Findings include 6 superordinate themes which offer nuanced understandings of how multiple relapses feel, and how this shapes survivor’s perspectives of recovery. Conclusions: Relapse into opiate or crack misuse informs how individuals perceive and position themselves in their recovery. Future practice will need to account for the individual’s unique needs in, and after, treatment. This research offers real-life implications for clinicians, social workers or counselling psychologists who work to support people through substance misuse issues.

4.) Sarah Sharifiyazdi
Investigating the feeling of job failure (feeling of job rejection) and its social and psychological consequences in people aged 30-40 years in two groups of second-generation immigrants from a village in Tehran.

The phenomenon of feeling job failure is one of the main concerns in society. Actors were selected (with three criteria (client claim, therapist diagnosis, and failure emotion test)). Interviews continued until theoretical saturation (65 people). The subjects of the study were selected from the psychology clinics of 5 clinics in Tehran (centre of region 6, east of region 8, north of region 1, west of region 5, south of region 18) purposefully (by quota sampling). Subjects were selected from 25 to 45 year old in two groups (1- Immigrants to Tehran metropolis 2- Born and living in Tehran). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data and thematic analysis was used to interpret and analyze the data. Findings indicate that low job security, poor communication between employees and also the feeling of injustice, no risk-taking for work, business failure, economic sanctions, unmet government demands, extreme support of families, unfriendly work environment, lack of job security, feeling stuck in a job, no support, not being able to get a work permit, being a victim of fraud, bankruptcy, bankruptcy of a spouse or parents are some of the factors that affect the feeling of job failure. Job failure has consequences such as aggression, helplessness, stress and anxiety, anger, isolation and feeling unworthy of the spouse, irresponsible reading of the spouse, anxiety, confusion, helplessness, distrust of the future, sense of powerlessness and inability, guilt, social isolation; Self-blame leads to self-victimize, loss of social status, shock and denial of failure, and destruction of social capital.

5.) Fernanda Cruz, University of São Paulo, Brazil
Why do police officers attempt suicide? A qualitative analysis of the narratives of military police in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

There is an ongoing debate in the international literature whether the risk of suicide for police officers is higher than in the general population. Less attention has been paid to the aspects of police work that could affect these police officers’ mental health and contribute to the development of suicidal behavior. Previous literature on police stress has pointed that operational and organizational issues are relevant sources of stress for police officers. Operational aspects are composed of factors such as exposure to risk and violence, risk of victimization, and the need to dealing with suffering and pain daily. Organizational issues are defined by aspects of the internal organization of police work which can generate effects on police officers' mental health. Both perspectives are relevant to comprehend police suicide in Brazil. First, the country has high rates of police lethality and of police victimization, which indicates higher levels of violence exposure among these officers. Second, the main
Brazilian police have a military structure and hierarchy, which means a reproduction of principles, values, and practices from the Armed Forces. This structure of policing has been receiving some criticism within the country for reproducing internally and externally practices incompatible with democracy. We analyzed 25 interviews carried out with military police officers in Rio de Janeiro who had attempted suicide. We mapped and analyzed the factors they pointed out to have contributed to the development of their suicidal behavior and whether these factors are related to operational or organizational issues.

Closing Remarks: Jeremy Dixon (Vice-President) – University of Bath, UK
Challenges of planetary health from a perspective of health education in schools
Takashi Asakura (Tokyo Gakugei University)

I would like to point out a few issues regarding planetary health from the perspective of education and public health. First, to address planetary health as an issue for all people living on the earth, it is necessary to implement it in education, especially in school education. Health education in schools is not only to teach information, knowledge, and skills related to health, but also to develop human and social perspectives throughout education. Through this education, human resources who will be responsible for planetary health are developed. So, what kind of educational contents, human and social perspectives do planetary health require? For example, the goals of citizenship education and global citizenship education can be considered.

The concepts related to planetary health are public health, international health, and global health. In addition, ecohealth is a similar concept. Koplan JP, et al (2009) summarized the relationship among public health, international health, and global health. The major difference between these concepts and planetary health is the perception of national borders: public health focuses on domestic health issues, while international health focuses on bilateral health issues between developed countries and low-income countries. Global health provides a framework for collaborating on transnational health issues. In comparison, planetary health has no longer any borders, as if it has a perspective from outer space. It is therefore difficult to determine the institutions of governance. Existing international organizations, such as WHO and UNESCO, are not appropriate as a governing body to promote planetary health, since most of the problems of planetary health are caused by the major power nations in these organizations. For example, we should consider a new organization that would weaken the power of major countries and make them more responsible, while strengthening the power of other countries and local perspectives.
Activities of RC49 members

James G. Linn

Articles in Journals and Books


Presentations


Professional Activities

Associate Editor,Journal of AIDS and HIV Research
Reviewer,International AIDS Association Annual Conference
Community AIDS Board Member of HIV/AIDS Vaccine Clinical Trials Center of Vanderbilt University
Visiting Professor,University of Valparaiso,Chile
Coordinator of the Section on Chronic Disease and Disability of the Western Social Science Association
Doctoral Committee Adviser to Joaquim Matavel ,Ph.D in Public Health Program,Faculty of Medicine Eduardo Mondlane University,Maputo Mozambique
President,Tennessee Chapter of Partners of the Americas

Jorge Chuaqui

Articles in Journals


New Book
