**Suvi Salmenniemi**

This paper presents findings from a multi-sited ethnographic research conducted on the therapeutic culture of self-improvement, complementary and alternative medicine, and new spiritualities in Finland. Drawing on participant observation and interviews with therapeutic practitioners, and engaging with affect theory and methodology, the paper explores the “affective life of therapeutic culture”. More specifically, it asks: How are affects solicited, performed, experienced, articulated, and regulated in therapeutic engagements? What kinds of techniques are mobilized to generate affects? What kinds of affective experiences, responses and attachments do therapeutic engagements enable or preclude? How is affect intertwined with power?

The paper suggests that affect is absolutely central to understanding the logics of therapeutic engagements and how they are intertwined with power. Therapeutic engagements can be conceived as an “affect machine” that shapes and orients bodies and subjectivities in particular ways. Therapeutic engagements offer a space where it is possible to legitimately experience, show, and share feelings with others, and make sense of them through the therapeutic narrative of the self. These engagements often seek to facilitate a process of healing and empowerment by mobilizing a set of bodily, discursive, and spatial practices that are supposed to generate affective responses in the audience. For many practitioners, therapeutic engagements offer powerful positive affective experiences and relationships, while for some, they inflict pain and raise vexing questions of ethics and responsibility. Affective experiences can thus both attach practitioners to the field and repel them from it.

The paper concludes that although therapeutic events may often strive to solicit, regulate, and sometimes even manipulate affect, affect cannot never be fully controlled, anticipated, or managed, which makes therapeutic engagements inherently ambiguous, open-ended, and susceptible to a variety of meanings and experiences.

**Wenjia Zhou**

In the era of precariousness, multiple insecurities and risks, how do we ensure our health and well-being? Medical sciences regard human vulnerability as the objective vulnerability of the human body. Diseases are not the only target of medical and public health intervention. The pharmaceutical industry employs clinical trials to pinpoint health risk factors and claims that they should be treated before developing into diseases. An example is the vaccine, which is used to prevent illness and stop the spread of disease. However, people may have different perceptions of the vaccine. While anti-vaccination movements have come into the spotlight in the West, Chinese young women are actively embracing HPV vaccination, despite, or partly due to its high cost and scarcity. Do they get the vaccination for preventing cervical cancer, as promoted by the media? Drawing on my ethnographic research, I discuss how the vaccination plays a role in mediating precariousness in Chinese young women’s life.

**Daniel Nehring**

In this paper, I develop an argument for a ‘sociology of psychologies’ as a distinctive sub-field of the discipline. Since its early years, sociology has been preoccupied with the social organization of self-identity and mental life. This preoccupation has been bound up with an interest in emergent technologies of the self and the formation of a sociology of the self and self-identity. At the same time, from the 1960s onwards, sociologists have begun to explore the ways in which specialist, academic and clinical, psychological knowledge may inform everyday understandings and experiences of mind, self, and society. However, occasional references to such a project notwithstanding, to date no distinctive sociology of psychologies has crystallised, as an arena for sociological enquiry about the ways in which variegated forms of psychological knowledge organiza academic and popular understandings of the self, of interpersonal relationships, and of social problems. Here, I make a case for such a sociology of psychologies. I point, first, to its growing importance, at a time, when psychological and neuro-scientific knowledge and attendant technologies have become foundational to strategies of governance, modes of social, economic, and political organization, and experiences of everyday life in diverse societies around the world. Second, I suggest that there is a need to reflexively interrogate the role of sociologically informed understandings of self and mental life in the public sphere and politics, as well as the potential for the sociological information to serve as a corrective to psychological and neuroscientific common sense.

**Johanna Nurmi**

Reaching reluctant participants: Alternative health influencers and the experience of distrust

This presentation discusses the methodological and ethical challenges in studying alternative health influencers’ contestation of public health recommendations during the COVID19 pandemic. Recent literature has emphasized the role of social media influencers in spreading misinformation and conspiracy theories amidst the pandemic (e.g. Baker 2022; Hiaeshutter-Rice et al. 2021), while theoretically the contestation of public health recommendations is conceptualized as a crisis of trust in scientific institutions (e.g. Goldenberg 2021).

In the beginning of 2020, in hopes of tracing the processes of challenging public health expertise, I started conducting digital ethnography of Finnish social media influencers who criticized nutrition recommendations. During the first phase of fieldwork, the pandemic notably shifted the content of the influencers, increasing elements of distrust and mistrust and introducing aspects of health related conspiracy theories in some of their content. Many influencers in the Finnish alternative health scene became increasingly suspicious of scientific institutions and expertise. Consequently, reaching potential participants and creating trustful (or any kind of) relationships, which are typically the goal in ethnographic research, became extremely challenging.

In my presentation, I will ask how researchers can navigate analyzing health related contestation and distrust in a context of increasing polarization and science-related populism. How might it be possible to conduct research aiming to understand and create dialogue when positioned by participants as part of the establishment they distrust?

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**Linda Pitkänen**

Boundary-work in the interviews of Finnish integrative medicine activists

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is a heterogenous group of healing practices that are often seen as separate from conventional health care (e.g. Wieland, Manheimer & Berman 2011). As a controversial phenomenon, CAM also provokes public debates, and it is a subject of various kinds of boundary drawing.
This presentation is based on my master’s thesis on sociology about Finnish integrative activists who aim to increase the cooperation of conventional medicine with CAM. I have interviewed 11 Finnish integrative activists who discussed the topic from the point of view of healthcare professionals. Ten of the interviewees had trained in conventional health care and most of them were also trained in complementary and alternative medicine.
Thematically my thesis is grounded in science and technology studies (STS) and sociology of health. I have applied Thomas F. Gieryn’s (1999) concept of boundary-work as a theoretical tool in my analysis. Gieryn describes boundary-work as activity by which a boundary between science and “non-science” is being drawn. (Gieryn 1999). In my analysis I have focused on how integrative activists define, reshape and cross boundaries between CAM and conventional health care. By using qualitative content analysis, I have separated four overlapping dimensions of boundary-work: (1) boundary-work about public identity and principles, (2) boundary-work about meaning of knowledge and its production, (3) boundary-work about professional practices and (4) boundary-work about health care systems and clinical practices. In my presentation I will discuss the analysis of boundary-work in the CAM domain.

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**Aapo Kuusipalo**

This research is based on my master's thesis awaiting evaluation at the University of Eastern Finland. It utilized a rhetorical approach in studying “Let’s save the children of Finland”, a campaign which originally sought to prevent COVID-19 vaccinations for children, but subsequently adopted a position opposing all COVID-19 vaccinations. The campaign was started by medical doctors, including two docents with PhDs, and provides an interesting case for studying the contestation of expertise and evidence from actors within the medical profession.

The rhetorical analysis showed that the campaign tended to use rhetorical tools and strategies characteristic to both scientific and populist rhetoric, but that these approaches were often more prevalent in separate individual documents. Despite sometimes leading to contradictions when viewed as a whole, this practice resulted in the optimization of the persuasive power of the campaign’s materials toward differing audiences. This could serve to heighten the campaign’s overall impact especially when viewed in conjunction with the rationale of social media algorithms, which tend to show individuals the materials deemed most appealing to them.

Analysis on the campaign’s constructions of credibility identified sources of funding as key demarcations. Although the campaign values traditional expertise, statistics, and medical research, dependency on pharmaceutical companies for funding either directly, or through various intermediaries, was constructed by the campaign as a feature designating actors and research as untrustworthy and biased. Performance of crisis and the furthering of suspicions towards societal “elites”, strategies characteristic to populist rhetoric, were utilized in these constructions of distrust.

**Sami Torssonen**

Words as Reins: Marxist Discourse Analysis and European Media Representations of Nurse Strikes

My presentation discusses the challenges of conducting a Marxist media analysis of nurse strike coverage since the start of the Covid pandemic. The focus is on how to conduct materialist discourse analysis in a theoretically complex intersection of reproductive labor, gender, crisis, strike, ideology, and welfare state regimes. The presentation also briefly discusses differences between the traditional Marxist approach adopted here and other recent approaches to comparable topics.

**Elina Helosvuori**

Multi-sited ethnography and co-constitution in the study of assisted reproduction

The tradition of multi-sited ethnography originates from Marcus’s methodology that was designed to study how social orders such as the capitalist world system come to be displayed in multiple arenas that cross-cut dichotomies such as the ‘local’ and the ‘global’. Since Marcus’s landmark paper published in 1995, the idea of multi-sitedness has spread beyond its original framing and been used more widely, including in social studies of reproduction.

In this presentation, I developed the idea of multi-sitedness to trace the intra-actions that result in the phenomena of assisted reproduction in Finland. The concept of intra-action draws from Barad’s thinking about co-constitution as the fundamental, processual principle of the continuous becoming of the world. I analyse the assemblage of clinical practices, laboratory technologies and patient experience in IVF (in vitro fertilization).

In my dissertation, I have shown that the enactments of embryos I have traced in various sites are not only different and multiple, but also overlapping and mutual. Drawing from diverse ethnographic material, I argue that paying attention to the dynamics of difference and contestation, but especially to the mutual becoming of entities under observation, is a useful starting point for a research design that makes intra-actions empirically traceable. Through this strategy, research sites can be analysed not so much as different places, but rather, when brought together and analysed against each other, as sites of the mutual and processual formation of the phenomena of assisted reproduction in Finland.

**Line Joranger**

The pandemic, Covid 19, has raised issues of racial and geographic discrimination, health equity, and the balance between public health imperatives and individual rights. Fighting a global pandemic requires large-scale cooperation and complementary and alternative ways of thinking health and wellbeing. In times of pandemic, the problem is that, by definition, cooperation requires people to bear an individual cost to benefit other people. There is a conflict between short-term self-interest vs longer-term collective interest. Moreover, in this pandemic, there are several collectives (for example, family, community, national and international) which can make decisions to cooperate challenging. My talk will focus on the dilemma of having to choose between oneself, the other, and the community welfare. What kind of methods and theoretical approaches do we need to deal with this dilemma? The fear for the virus has created new ways of living and caring for oneself, others, and the world, that has disturbed the normal human interplay. Loss of social arenas and an expanding technological communication platform where a language without a human body dominates the communication, challenge and effect interpersonal relationships. By separating human beings from each other (fear) to save each other (care), we are forced to come to a new understanding of the meaning and value of wellbeing and the reciprocal relationship between oneself, the other, and the world.

**Tiina Väänänen**

Voices of the healed in the Finnish CAM culture

The concept of health culture includes the conventional care culture and the culture of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM culture). Within the theoretical framework of cultural semiotics we conducted qualitative content analysis of the 259 written reports describing CAM users' experiences on the benefits and harms of CAM therapies. The data yielded four types of users: multi-users with health promotion orientation, those disappointed on the official health care, nature-oriented users and those scammed by CAM.

Multi-users utilized various CAM-therapies in parallel with the conventional health service use. Those disappointed with the official health care described their positive healing experiences of CAM in contrast with poor experiences gained within the health care system. For the nature-oriented users, the natural healing had been a part of the health promotion tool kit for generations. The fourth group, those who felt scammed by CAM reported financial losses and the lack of any healing effects due to CAM.

Holism and meaningfulness turned out to be the key modalities of good quality care experienced by CAM users framed by other 14 modalities, such as healing encounter, trust, hope and health promotion approach. The modalities of good quality care within CAM culture were mostly similar to related modalities within conventional care culture.

**Suvi Rytty**

Contesting medical knowledge and expertise through natural lifestyle from the late 19th century to the present day

Awakening to the ecological crisis has increased aspirations to lead a natural lifestyle, reflected in the popularity of vegetarianism, waste recycling and sustainable development. A central feature in natural lifestyle is the notion that human well-being is dependent on nature, and the causes of illness and disease are extended beyond the physical body to lifestyle choices, cultural values, and social ills. Therefore, natural lifestyle also contains elements that contest official biomedical notions of health and well-being concerning vaccines, food and nutrition or alternative healing methods among other things.

Natural lifestyle, however, is not only a present-day phenomenon and cannot be explained solely as a product of the post-modern era. Natural lifestyle is part of the long tradition of “returning to nature” that started truly to bloom in the 19th century along with the accelerating modernization process of the Western societies. In this presentation, I discuss my postdoctoral research project concentrating on the tradition of natural lifestyle in Finland from the late 19th century to the present day. By using the periodicals published by the supporters of natural lifestyle and applying the historical method, I search the different meanings that natural lifestyle has been given in different eras and seek explanations to these meanings from the predominant values and world views of the given times. The research shows how contestation of medical knowledge is something that is rooted in the Western cultural structures.

**Laura Kemppainen**

Migration, transnationalism and the use of health care services – A mixed methods approach

In my presentation, I discuss the advantages and disadvantages of combining survey and qualitative interview data in studying health service use from the perspective of migration and transnationalism. I present examples from our ongoing and published research on inequalities related to the use of digital health care services and transnational use of health care by older Russian-speaking migrants living in Finland. Our survey results provide insights into the socio-demographic determinants of digital and transnational health care use and associated inequalities. The qualitative data give us a deeper understanding of agency and contestation, as well as the role emotions play in decisions to use and choose different types of health care services. The combination of these two approaches gives us both a statistical overview of the phenomenon, along with a more detailed understanding of people's everyday experiences that survey data cannot fully capture. In an ideal situation, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods and data allows one to take advantage of the best of both approaches. However, there are limitations associated with mixing different types of data, and they can sometimes produce contradictory results. In my presentation, I hope to spur discussion of mixed methods research designs, the possibilities and problems of integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches, and how to create a dialogue between different data types.

**Steven Stanley**

Being mindful, and practicing mindfulness meditation, are widely promoted as forms of self-help, in response to trends of rising mental ill health, consumerism, and climate crisis especially in Anglo-American, Nordic and Scandinavian countries. Framed as a complementary or alternative medicine, mind-body therapy, or way of being, mindfulness is increasingly being disseminated across a diversity of sectors in the UK – especially health and wellbeing, education, business, politics, religion, along with activism. Research on mindfulness is burgeoning across scientific disciplines (especially medicine, psychology, neuroscience), which includes mindful research where mindfulness is a method of inquiry. Recently, social researchers have turned towards the study of the mindfulness movement as a whole. The Mapping Mindfulness (UK) project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust (2017-2021), is the first nationwide study of the mindfulness field. This interdisciplinary ethnographic project is a multi-method, quantitative and qualitative, investigation of mindfulness work (teaching, provision, and practice). The data and methods comprised: online survey designed and distributed in collaboration with 60 mindfulness centres, networks and organisations (768 participants); online interviews and focus groups (106 participants); ethnographic fieldwork at mindfulness teaching, training and advocacy events (27 multi-sited fieldwork trips over 44 days producing over 800 pages of fieldnotes) across diverse sectors, both online and offline. This paper summarises the methodological design of the project, before outlining the challenges and dilemmas of conducting social research on mindfulness in relation to knowledge, positioning and politics. In particular, we provide fieldwork examples of negotiations of expertise in our social research on mindfulness. We consider the wider relevance of being mindful of mindfulness research.