



## Call for Papers

### World Masters in Cultural Psychiatry

Mario H. Braakman

#### Abstract

*Cultural psychiatry is coming of age. Evidently, studies concerning the history of this discipline start to appear. The Cultural Psychiatry Research Review does want to make a contribution to this historiography. This paper is intended as an invitation for scholars to write a contribution for the World Cultural Psychiatry Research Review (WCPRR). The field of cultural psychiatry, in all its aspects and depths, has become a mature scientific discipline and it is about time to devote a complete series to the history of this discipline. More specifically we are interested in eminent or undiscovered scholars who according to many or according to some, have made essential or specific contributions to the field. Highlighting these scholars is the purpose of this series of papers that we hope, will appear in the coming years. We would like to call these papers the "World Masters of Cultural Psychiatry".*

**Keywords:** *cultural psychiatry, history, masters*

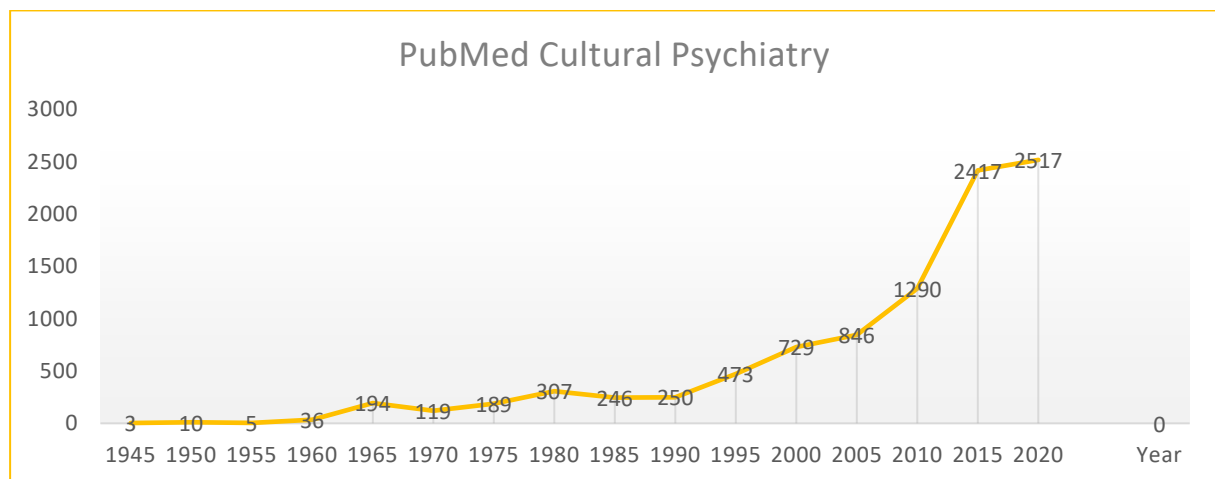
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## INTRODUCTION

Cultural psychiatry is coming of age. One of the scientific phenomena that accompany this maturing process is the appearance of papers about the history of the discipline. As a journal about cultural psychiatry, it is about time that the WCPRR starts to invest time and devote its attention to the history and further development of this discipline. In the past, we have published several papers in this regard, e.g. this article is an action call to all scientists, to contribute to the historiography of our field. In the upcoming series of papers we wish to devote attention to scholars who made major contributions to the field of cultural psychiatry. One could argue that the coming of age of a scientific (sub-)discipline can be noticed by the fact that scholars of that discipline start to look at the history of that (sub-)discipline. Within the field of cultural psychiatry, we already witnessed several accounts delineating the history of cultural psychiatry. Several authors have contributed important aspects of cultural psychiatry. And they have used several perspectives to do so. What the journal WCPRR would like to do is to take the initiative to record and compile a history of cultural psychiatry by focusing on the scholars themselves that have contributed to this development and expansion of the field.



**Figure 1: PubMed query, January 2021, term “cultural psychiatry”**

As can be seen in figure 1, the number of papers have increased substantially since World War II, especially in the last decade we observed over 5000 publications within the MedLine database concerning ‘cultural psychiatry’. Kirmayer (2007) summarized this development as follows:

*Over the last 50 years, the discipline has grown from a marginal field, concerned mainly with folklore, exotica and the distant cultural ‘other’, to a dynamic research and clinical enterprise of crucial importance in the light of increasing migration, cultural intermixing and the insights of social neuroscience (Kirmayer, 2007).*

Several authors have published fine papers on the structural developments underlying the discipline of cultural psychiatry (Bains, 2005; Laurence J Kirmayer, 2007; Machleidt & Sieberer, 2013; Tseng, Jilek, Bartocci, & Bhui, 2014). Papers like these offer a deeper and broader understanding of developments in their cultural and scientific contexts. In the series of papers presented in this journal we want to focus for the next few years on undiscovered **authors** that made significant contributions to the field. That contribution could be made up of a complete oeuvre like that of scholars as Arthur Kleinman or Wen-Shing Tseng who both published many significant books and papers. It also can be a specific contribution to a whole sub-discipline like Keh-Ming Lin did within the area of ethnopsychopharmacology. But it also quite conceivable that it will be scholars who did not become known to the broader group of scholars in the field of cultural psychiatry but made maybe small but significant contributions or innovations.

Of course, as cultural psychiatrists, the cultural perspective is always present if we portray an individual scholar. Thus we will always (re-)construct the socio-cultural and historical context around that scholar. The prototype of studies we would like to publish is the one that our colleague Wolfgang Jilek published a while ago about Kraepelin (Jilek, 1995). We observed in this study a careful exploration of the intellectual achievements of Kraepelin, within the cultural and historical context, of the status and nature of the discipline of psychiatry at that time point and, the state of the world about more than hundred years ago. Paper like these are insightful not only in understanding our history, but also in comprehending the present state of the discipline and, its limitations.

If we want to present this history in the form of research papers devoted to key-scholars, evidently, we are obliged to start this journey with fundamental questions like ‘what is *cultural psychiatry*’, ‘*when did it originate*’ and ‘*who were the pioneers that began exploring this discipline*’? And who are those that ‘deserve’ to be honoured by a title like ‘*World Master of Cultural Psychiatry*’ and, most importantly why? In order to establish this focus, it is important to consider these main concerns in this call for papers.

## CULTURAL PSYCHIATRY

What are we writing about? Cultural psychiatry is a scientific discipline studying the interaction between cultural context and mental illness. It is concerned both with the impact of cultural factors on mental illness as well as the different ways mental illnesses express themselves through cultural factors (Tseng, 2001). This is a widely accepted view of our field. However, we never reconstruct part of history nor do we reconstruct our discipline. We construct it, we create it and, produce it and shape it together with contexts and associations. The same accounts for the delineation of our field. If a scholar devotes attention to the discipline of western psychiatry itself as an object of investigation and sees it as a cultural system itself: Is this cultural psychiatry as well or should that be excluded from being a part of cultural psychiatry (Kirmayer & Minas, 2000)? Are contributions made by pioneers in the development of psychiatry from African or Asian contexts considered to be a cultural psychiatric undertaking or not. There is no clear answer to that, being inclusive would mean that we welcome these parts of our field as well as many more. But in fact there is no one single scholar who will tell where the boundaries of our field are drawn. We at WCPRR are keenly looking ahead to a lot of discussions in this direction.

It is a matter of dispute how to address our discipline (what concept do we use for our discipline itself)and, because different terms could refer to our discipline, does the meaning of it remain the same or not. What I mean is the following: Murphy when studying the historic developments of our field in McGill University summarized it in this way:

*The choice of the term ‘transcultural’ caused some debate, since ‘cultural’, ‘ethno-cultural’, ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘comparative’ could also have been used, each carrying a somewhat*

*different connotation. The 'trans' part of the term even caused some unease, since it appeared to imply that the field would be concerned only with features that transcended cultural boundaries, not those that remained within them; but on the other hand it could be taken as implying intercultural comparison, and that was definitely the intention of some of us (Murphy, 1986).*

The WACP definitely chose to use the term *cultural psychiatry*, and in our view, it is an inclusive term that contains both the aspect of looking at psychiatry from a cultural perspective as well as the transcultural psychiatry in which the emphasis is on transcending cultural boundaries. The term cultural psychiatry does not exclude scholars that carry their analysis within one culture, those who do not transcend or cross boundaries. Considering and maintaining the perspective of culture will suffice. And this also is a matter (I hope) of future discussions within our journal.

## THE BEGINNING

When did it all begin? And who started it? Some would pinpoint the beginning of cultural psychiatry as early as the Greek or Roman period (ref Murphy), others will pinpoint the Arab historian, Ibn Khaldun (Bibeau, 1997), in the fourteenth century A.D., since he described the pathogenic nature of culture change due to the urbanization in Arab cities. Again others would start with the Italian, better Venetian, traveler Nicolo Conti who visited Java in the 1430s, and came back with a concept of the culture-bound syndrome, called amok.

My view is that not one individual scholar will decide when our discipline started. Several views are possible and likely, so let us express and present them all. We can present the history of our discipline as a group of scholars without possessing the monopoly of truth. The same logic and perspective can be applied and held with regards to who was the master who started it: some scholars would prefer to point towards Arthur Kleinman as the founder of modern day cultural psychiatry, others might prefer William Caudill, a personal favorite of mine when I studied (medical) anthropology in the 80's (Caudill, 1973). He is the father of medical anthropology, but might also be considered to be the founder of cultural psychiatry as well. Wolfgang Jilek considers Emil Kraepelin, the father of psychiatric nosology, to be a pioneer in comparative sociocultural psychiatry and maybe this is our starting point: *'the inaugurator of systematic investigations into culture-dependent differences in psychopathology'* (Jilek, 1995).

## SCIENTIFIC ETNOCENTRISMS?

We will also long for discussions in which a counter reaction will appear against the dominant, maybe even 'ethnocentric', view of cultural psychiatry as being an Anglo-Saxon undertaking with the big centres in the USA, Canada and Great Britain, followed by countries in which the dominant intellectual language is English. There are a lot of alternatives or additions we do not know about or the ones known are scarce. There were some scholars in the past who bridged more or less two citation-communities like the English and the French domain: clearly that was Georges Devereux, the French-Hungarian psychoanalyst and anthropologist. But to a large extent the French cultural psychiatry as well as the German community are still intellectual islands in themselves that bear very rich fruits and we are longing for authors who want to open up and share these resources. Just as our past editor-in-chief Goffredo Bartocci, did in our journal, by writing about Italian scholars deserving attention for our

international audience. Likewise as M. Fakhr El-Islam pointed out a long time ago, there is a whole world of Arabic speaking (and writing) scholars waiting to be discovered (El-Islam, 1982).

## MASTERS

So, who can be considered a master, and who is not? The decision who is a Master in Cultural Psychiatry is a collective one. No single author will nor has it been proved that certain scholars deserve this term and others not. It is up to the field to present one of those scholars and present the arguments etched on the pages of this journal as to why someone should be considered as such. Do masters have to be psychiatrists since we are dealing with the area of cultural *psychiatry*? Our discipline is a highly inclusive field so it is very doubtful if there is any colleague whose opinion is to exclude non-psychiatrists. I believe that the culture-and-personality school forms are an essential part of our discipline, thus excluding all the anthropologists and psychologists who were active in this field makes no sense.

Eminent anthropologists like Obeyesekere (1990, 2014) or Richard Sweder (Shweder, 1979), who devoted their careers to our field can never be left out nor can a large range of (cross-) cultural psychologists who are very active in areas like cultural identity, acculturation, and cultural neuroscience. It is up to us, to describe and define these masters. And my only hope is that this short text will inspire many of you to start thinking and writing about your favorite scholar, or someone who you want to present to us who has made some remarkable achievements that deserve to be highlighted, heard and seen. As long as culture and mental illnesses are concerned in any way and, as long as the portrayed masters are sketched within their cultural and historic frameworks, anything goes.

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## List of Contributions

### World Masters in Cultural Psychiatry: Planned Contributions

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Writing a paper on Masters in Cultural Psychiatry is a time consuming process. In order to avoid disappointments, it is important that potential authors contact the editorial office to verify whether there might be a colleague who already started to write a contribution for the WCPRR.

Below you can see already a few names of Masters on which authors have already chosen to write about. For an up-to-date list please consult the Editor before you begin writing a paper on the mentioned subject area.

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