

https://dspace.org/

Creating a therapeutic community in an adolescents' online support forum for depression

Kaufman, Samantha

2015-09-01
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/18379

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

ABSTRACT

Literature shows that adolescents experiencing emotional distress do not often seek support in the form of therapy, and are thus at greater risk for experiencing depression and suicidal thoughts. As such, adolescents require varying sources of support. Owing to evidence suggesting that adolescents prefer seeking support from their peers, with online forums being popular sources of support, it becomes relevant to consider how it is that such media are used to create supportive environments. In light of this, I use conversation analysis to examine how users interactionally create a therapeutic community through their actions and practices in an adolescents' online support forum for depression. My findings show that the forum is interactionally organised in such a way that a series of recurrent actions and practices that the users exhibited while co-creating a supportive environment could be grouped together to form a typical overall sequential structure. It further showed how the success or failure of particular practices that the literature seems to treat as "good" or "bad", in counselling terms, is a contingent outcome of the particular details and circumstances of their production. Furthermore, my data provide empirically-grounded accounts for previous findings showing that the action of displaying sympathy yields both positive and negative reactions.

Key words: online forum, therapeutic community, adolescent depression, peer-support, conversation analysis, discursive analysis