Jingwen Zhang

Comparative Topoi Analysis of Online HIV/AIDS Patient Narratives in the United States and in China

Abstract:

This study focuses on the cross-cultural comparison of the public rhetorics that construct HIV/AIDS in two online discussion forums from the United States and China. Social constructions of HIV/AIDS have previously been explored in specific countries and cultures; however, comparative studies have rarely been conducted. This study examines how online communications and topoi identified in discussion forum posts reveal and construct the meaning of HIV/AIDS in the two countries. Through comparing the predominant themes in the two forums, 5 major similar boards from each forum (10 in total) were selected. From there, a topoi analysis on 100 most-responded posts (10 posts from each of the 10 boards) demonstrates how specific reasoning traditions shape the cultural mindset for constructing HIV/AIDS in certain ways. The findings suggest while Chinese participants view contracting AIDS as fate and social death, the U.S. participants do not share this intense concern with moral criticism.