The Girl in the Corner: Aesthetics of Suffering in a Digitalized Space

# Details

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Narrative of Suffering: Meaning and Experience in a Transcultural Approach

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* Wellbeing
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* Other

## Sample

YouTube video montages on the subject of self-injury.

## Implications For Stakeholders About

* Researchers
* Healthcare
* Other

## Other Stakeholder Implication

Social work professionals

# Abstract

The Internet may provide the means for otherwise marginalized groups – such asyoung people with mental health problems – to make their voices heard in public,and online representations are therefore an important source for studying howemotions are conceptualized and communicated in these groups. In an on-goingstudy of YouTube video montages on the subject of self-injury, we have found oneemblematic and frequently occurring character: a girl sitting alone in a corner, onthe floor, with drawn up knees and head bent down. Images of this character arewidespread, not only on YouTube but also on blogs, discussion forums and websites.Together with her likewise sitting ‘sisters’ – the girl on the swing, the girl on the pierand on the railway track – she is taken to represent young people’s unhappiness, painand misery. Our chapter sets out to explore in greater detail how this characteremerges as a signifier of gendered suffering in online contexts. We argue that itcontributes to an aestheticization of suffering that often seems to emanate from therejection of conventional ideals and hegemonic definitions of normality; theembracing of suffering might, thus, be used as a strategy for achieving socialdistinction. Also, we suggest in our chapter that the girl in the corner and similarrepresentations may be seen as facilitating certain emotional identifications,especially as regards gender.

# Outcome

"...a girl sitting alone in a corner, on the floor, with drawn up knees and head bent down.... [T]his character emerges as a signifier of gendered suffering in online contexts. We argue that it contributes to an aestheticization of suffering that often seems to emanate from the rejection of conventional ideals and hegemonic definitions of normality; the embracing of suffering might, thus, be used as a strategy for achieving social distinction." (Authors, in Abstract)