

The Anthropology Department Fall 2012 Colloquia Series



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Hearing Voices in San Mateo, Accra and Chennai

Psychiatric scientists often assume that the hallucinations associated with schizophrenia are uninteresting byproducts of an organic illness. This talk presents data from interviews with 20 patients each in San Mateo, Accra, and Chennai which suggest that in fact, there are significant differences between the voices associated with schizophrenia in different cultural settings. These basic psychiatric symptoms appear to be shaped by local theories of mind. While the term 'theory of mind' has a specific meaning in developmental psychology, anthropologists have begun to question whether ideas about minds are in fact universal, or whether they are local ideas rich enough to be considered 'theories.' This research suggests that indeed there are such local theories, and that they are powerful enough to shape perceptual experience in schizophrenia.

TANYA MARIE LUHRMANN is the Watkins University Professor in the Stanford Anthropology Department. Her books include *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft*, (Harvard, 1989); *The Good Parsi* (Harvard 1996); *Of Two Minds* (Knopf 2000) and *When God Talks Back* (Knopf 2012). In general, her work focuses on the way that objects without material presence come to seem real to people, and the way that ideas about the mind affect mental experience. She trained at the University of Cambridge (Ph.D 1986), and taught for many years at the University of California San Diego. Prior to coming to Stanford she was the Max Palevsky Professor and a director of the Clinical Ethnography project in the Department of Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago.

Monday, Oct 22nd
3:30 - 5:00pm
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