

Editorial

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Healths, Bodies and Intercultural Contexts

The present proposal to organize a thematic dossier emerged from the consolidation of the technical-scientific cooperation that began at the XI Luso-Afro-Brazilian Social Sciences Congress held in August 2011 in the city of Salvador, Bahia. The aim was to document the search for contextualized, critical and reflective modes of understanding the complexity of the social phenomena that exist in the fields of Human Sciences and Health.

To understand how different cultures experience health and disease, how they conceive of them, how they explain them, what meaning they attribute to them, and how they deal with them requires a contextualized understanding of the plurality of languages and rationalities that exists in intercultural spaces. Naturally, this endeavor is a challenge given the plurality of forms of knowledge in this field and the plurality of agents and institutions active in it, as well as the diversity of the populations that experience the processes underlying *health* and *disease*.

This dossier contains a set of articles that problematize this panorama within diversified contexts, seeking to promote the debate and deepening that must occur for there to be scientific advancements in the understanding of health and disease in the field of social and human sciences. The authors of the 13 articles and 2 reviews included in this dossier have performed recognized research within this field and now present several challenges to approaching this problematic subject as an *integral social phenomenon*. This dossier is quite heterogeneous inasmuch as it brings together researchers working in different disciplines, thereby presenting a wealth of perspectives that emphasize the complex relationships between science and society.

The article that opens the dossier was written by Ceres Victora and approaches suffering as a social phenomenon present in several historical periods. Victora suggests that suffering has been expressed and interpreted differently as a function of different cultures and areas of knowledge. Her study depicts a conceptual mosaic of social suffering, presenting the results of ethnographic research performed with indigenous groups in the Southern region of Brazil.

Based on press materials on esthetic clinics in the cities of São Paulo and London, Ana Lucia de Castro argues that aesthetic plastic surgery constitutes an instance of the medicalization of society associated with socially and historically imposed views of femininity.

Next, the article by Rosário Rosa, Fátima Alves and Luisa Ferreira da Silva discusses "alternative protagonisms in the trajectories of health." It attempts to identify the analytical pillars that ground the comprehension of such protagonisms as well as the social mechanisms of rationalities, demands and integralities such trajectories imply.

The article by Dulce Pombo derives from a research project on the pluralistic therapeutic models that emerged in the 19th century in Portugal. The author discusses the model developed by Raspail, which represented an alternative to official therapeutic practices, that the author suggests was part of a movement to affirm the validity of medicine and acknowledge its power through knowledge. Thus, this article contributes to many ongoing discussions of contemporary therapeutic pluralism.

Bárbara Maria Granés Gonçalves Bäckström discusses the representation of health and disease and related practices among Cape Verde immigrants in Portugal, analyzing the overemphasis on multiculturalism by health care providers facing ethnic groups.

Working within several areas of knowledge and methodology, Aurea Pinheiro and Pedrina Nunes Araújo discuss healing rituals developed by faith healers from the Northern region of Brazil, seeking to understand the social processes involving the sacred and the profane that occur in spaces of healing and that condition Brazilian cultural diversity in the religious social imaginary.

The article by Ana Cristina de Souza Mandarino, Alexnaldo Neves de Jesus, Sandra Regina Passy and Estélio Gomberg seeks to characterize the social and therapeutic relationships between Candomblé yards and public markets, considering how health supply opportunities are grounded in differentiated cultural models. The article also seeks to analyze these spaces as the locus of Afro-Brazilian

consumption of the sacred par excellence, while also considering the public policies developed based on the knowledge and practices associated with "Afro-Brazilian medicine".

Emphasizing the need to provide health-related support to people from different countries, people of different races and cultures and people with different beliefs, Maria de Lourdes Martins Saraiva da Silva Nunes and Natália Ramos performed an ethnographic study of ill Muslim and Hindu individuals and their families. The researchers focused on highly cultural views of healthcare that involve religious and biomedical issues and different images of the body.

The article by Monica Lima, Mônica de Oliveira Nunes, Vânia Sampaio Alves and Marcos Roberto Paixão Santos investigates the mental health field, using ethnographic methodology and data triangulation to examine the confrontation between the points of view of the different social actors participating in the development of mental health services and assistance networks. These actors include the users, their relatives, their care providers, the relevant managers and the community.

Márcia Cristina Maciel de Aguiar and Luiz Claudio Lourenço reflect on the relationships among disease, crime and hospitalization in a Brazilian custody and treatment hospital, including its institutional ambivalences regarding methodological procedures related to background, the familiarity of researchers with their research subject, the accumulation of roles by the staff and the difficulties into distinguishing these roles in actual practice.

The second section of this thematic issue is composed of two reviews:

The first review was written by José Luís de Oliveira e Silva on *The Slaves of the Mother of God*, an ethnographic documentary produced by Áurea Pinheiro and Cássia Moura that was awarded an Etnodoc-2009 grant and sponsored by Petrobras. Structured at the "tripoint" Historiography, Cinema and Ethnography, it depicts celebrations of Our Lady of Piety in Northern Brazil.

Finally, Fátima Alves reviews the book *Practical Health Knowledge. The Logics of Healthfulness in Everyday Life*, written by Luisa Ferreira da Silva and published by Editora Afrontamento (Portugal). In that text, the author discusses the existence of a "culture of resistance" against the specialization of health and disease practices and argues in favor of a form of practical knowledge of health that addresses wellbeing and health and disease practices in everyday life.

Ana Cristina de Souza Mandarino, Estélio Gomberg & Fátima Alves
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