

Recent dissertations on health, culture and society

This section informs about PhD dissertations in the broad field of medical anthropology, recently defended at Dutch and Belgian universities and about dissertations by Dutch or Belgian authors abroad. Those who want to be included in this section, should contact Erica van der Sijpt: e.vanderSijpt@uva.nl.

Karen Hosper

Health-related behaviour among young Turkish and Moroccan people in the Netherlands: prevalence and underlying mechanisms among the first and second generation aged 15-30 years (144 pp.)

Defended at 23-11-2007
AMC / University of Amsterdam

Summary — Health damaging behaviour is an important cause of many diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and several forms of cancer. Despite the increasing ethnic diversity of many Western populations, there are few preventive interventions that specifically aim to reduce health damaging behaviour among ethnic groups from a non-Western background. More insight is needed into the prevalence of healthy and unhealthy behaviours and their underlying causes within these ethnic groups. This information is important as it can shed light on whether targeting these groups, through the use of more ethnic-specific health promotion programs, is necessary. The main objective of this thesis was to provide insight into the prevalence and underlying determinants of smoking, alcohol use, physical (in)activity and overweight among first and second generation Turkish and Moroccan young people (15-30 years) in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The focus was specifically on those risk factors that are high prevalent in both ethnic groups i.e., physical inactivity and overweight.

Full-text can be found on <http://dare.uva.nl/record/259576>.

A limited number of copies of the dissertation are still available and can be ordered for free by sending an e-mail to Karen Hosper (k.hosper@pharos.nl).

Daniel Oshi

Rural women and the financing of health care in Nigeria (244 pp.)

Defended at 12-03-2009

Institute of Social Science, the Hague

Summary — This study investigates how rural women in an Eastern Nigerian village make attempts to access health care for themselves and their households. Ethnographic approaches are used to explore the constraints and opportunities women encounter in deploying social relations in the effort to overcome financial barriers to health care access at a time when health care services have gone beyond the reach of most rural Nigerians. The findings of this study show that due to the economic situation of most households in Uketé and the consequential limited access to health care, many cases of sickness go untreated, or get treated by recourse to inappropriate sources. Contrary to what might be expected, informal/traditional relationships and networks within the households and kin groups generally do not provide emergency funds for medical treatment, and certainly cannot be relied on. Local-level formal savings-and-loan associations, in which membership is not based on kinship and political factors, survive and flourish. This study suggests that local-level mutual aid associations may provide a stable basis for the establishment and operation of community-based health insurance (CBHI) schemes. Such a model would incorporate community-based organizations as independent titular members in CBHI schemes. The author suggests that such an approach to CBHI schemes may offer greater financial risk protection to members, minimize burden of premiums, lower operational costs, and provide forum for mutual social influence, social support and social engagement for members.

Full-text is not available online.

The dissertation has been published by Shaker Publishers and can be purchased for 36 € on their website (<http://www.shaker-online.com/catalogue>) or for £12.00 on the website of Amazon UK (http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/offer-listing/904230359X/ref=sr_1_1_olp?ie=UTF8&qid=1287425248&sr=1-1&condition=used).

Erik Beune

Culturally appropriate hypertension care: From patients' perspectives towards practical tools (165 pp.)

Defended at 16-06-2010

University of Amsterdam

Summary — Given the high prevalence rates of hypertension among ethnic minority populations of African descent living in the Netherlands, there is an urgent need to improve

prevention and control of hypertension among these groups. This thesis presents a series of studies that had the aim to provide information for the development of culturally appropriate interventions among African Surinamese and Ghanaian migrant populations in the Netherlands. The following main conclusions can be drawn from these studies: there is an important difference between the biomedical explanatory models of hypertension and those of patients. Although many similarities exist between the explanatory models of ethnic Dutch, African Surinamese and Ghanaian hypertensive patients, culture and migration play a significant role in how ethnic minority immigrant patients perceive and manage their hypertension. Based on these findings, a provider-based intervention and implementation strategy to enhance culturally appropriate hypertension education has been developed and evaluated in routine primary care. The intervention can increase the acceptance of a culturally appropriate approach among hypertension care providers. Moreover, most of the barriers for the adoption of the intervention are commonly encountered when innovations are introduced in primary care and do not indicate a resistance to providing culturally appropriate care. A cluster randomized trial is currently being conducted to evaluate the effect of the intervention on blood pressure control, adherence and satisfaction with care.

Full-text can be found on <http://dare.uva.nl/record/341433>.

The dissertation is not for sale. Only in exceptional cases could personal copies of the author be ordered by sending an e-mail to Erik Beune (E.J.Beune@amc.uva.nl).

Suli Sui

Vulnerable population and genetic disorders. A socio-science approach to the application of genetic technology in China (205 pp.)

Defended at 28-09-2010
University of Amsterdam

Summary — The research explores cultural, social and economic aspects of the role of genetic technologies played in the area of state organisation, population policies, healthcare systems and research regulation in China. It is experiential and sheds light on the applications of modern genetic technologies in China. It takes the application of genetic testing in China as the point of departure to explore links in relation to Chinese society, with consideration of social economics, national population policy, national healthcare system and traditional/local culture in China. The research discusses social and ethical issues involved in Chinese contexts. Through the discussion, it explores the identity and vulnerability of populations with regard to the practice of genetic services in China and delineates the socio-economic and socio-political factors that influence, shape and sharpen their vulnerability. The research argues that in the post-genome era, the rapid development of genetic technology and its application have strongly impacted society. During such times, the living conditions of vulnerable populations do not get the attention they deserve. This research offers an

insight to understand the vulnerable population with genetic disorders in the Chinese social contexts and from a social science perspective.

Full-text can be found on <http://dare.uva.nl/en/record/353064>.

The dissertation can be ordered for 10 € by sending an e-mail to Sui Suli (suisuli@hotmail.com).

Mariame Maiga

Gender, AIDS and food security. Culture and vulnerability in rural Cote d'Ivoire (194 pp.)

Defended at 14-10-2010
Wageningen University

Summary — This study is about the effects of AIDS on women and food security in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa. AIDS is more than a health problem. Rural households and women in particular have to cope with the lack of labour in agriculture. For the matrilineal Agni women land ownership appears to be an unexpected burden, rather than a safeguard from poverty. Culture matters, but in various ways. Matrilineal or patrilineal kinship organisation, gender inequality, and norms about sexual relationships very much influence the differences in Agni and migrant women's vulnerability to AIDS. African women are often seen as victims of AIDS. This study shows that women may also use their creativity and social networks to battle and to be resilient against the effects of the illness in their everyday household activities. Using a combination of quantitative statistical data and qualitative methods, this research questions the effectiveness of mainstream AIDS policy and interventions in Côte d'Ivoire. Victimising the poor does not help. Instead, multi-sector policy interventions can mitigate the social effects of AIDS by improving household food security and by changing cultural practices through local leaders who have historical legitimacy and power.

Full-text can be found on <http://edepot.wur.nl/150456>.

The dissertation has been published by Wageningen Academic Publishers can be purchased for 39 € on their website (<http://www.wageningenacademic.com>).

Ngozika Chinwe Mbonu

HIV/AIDS: stigma as a factor that affects care seeking, care and support of persons with HIV/AIDS in Port Harcourt Nigeria (208 pp.)

Defended at 15-10-2010
Maastricht University

Summary — This dissertation examines the problems of PLWHA in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. HIV/AIDS has been identified as one of the major problems facing the global community. People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) need care and support from the society as well as from professionals in healthcare institutions to preserve or enhance their quality of life. Finding the barriers to a good quality of life for PLWHA remains a challenge. One of these barriers is stigma. The study in this book uses several theoretical and analytical frameworks to explore the problems of PLWHA, from the perspective of the general public, health care professionals and people living with HIV/AIDS. It illustrates ways in which PLWHA experience stigmatization which affects their quality of life. The first part of the study aims at understanding the HIV-related stigma in Sub-Saharan Africa and the consequences of stigma for care seeking in general. The second part aims at understanding stigma and other problems PLWHA in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, face in seeking care. In addition, gender-related differences in stigma and in care given to PLWHA were also investigated. The book discusses the implications for future research as well as recommendations for health care, health care institutions and health promotion interventions.

Full-text can be found on http://dissertaties.ub.unimaas.nl/detail.asp?doc_id=24272.

The dissertation can be ordered for 20 € by sending an e-mail to Ngozika Chinwe Mbonu (ngoziombonu@yahoo.com).

Victor Toom

Dragers van de waarheid. Normatieve aspecten van twintig jaar forensisch DNA-onderzoek in Nederland [Carriers of truth: Normative aspects of twenty years of forensic DNA research in the Netherlands] (212 pp.)

Defended at 21-10-2010
University of Amsterdam

Summary — This dissertation presents three criminal cases in order to analyse how forensic DNA technologies are applied in processes of criminal investigation. Using Latour's actor network approach, the author follows biological traces, suspects, victims, prosecutors and detectives in processes of criminal investigation, and hence analyses not only (forensic) science in action, but also law in action. The dominant contemporary forensic genetic discourse, which essentially tells that forensic DNA technologies produce truth unproblematically, is contrasted with the practice of *doing* forensic DNA. The author analyses how forensic DNA technologies interfere with processes of criminal investigation, and how these processes have become dependent on the availability of bodies and the DNA therein, which is captured by the title *Carriers of Truth*. The dominant contemporary discourse is problematized by centre staging bodies, and how, as a result of new genetic techniques and laws to regulate these techniques, they become associated into criminal investigations in new and novel ways. Becoming incriminated is not without politics, but involves infringe-

ments and erosion of individual rights and legal principles. The subtitle *Normative aspects of twenty years of forensic DNA profiling in the Netherlands* articulates these political, ethical, legal and societal issues.

Full-text can be found on <http://dare.uva.nl/record/355406>.

Some last copies of the dissertation can be purchased for 20 € by sending an e-mail to Victor Toom (victor.toom@northumbria.ak.uc).

Frank Hermans

Trauma and civilization: A historical–sociological study of the rise and expansion of the care for victims of traumatic events (276 pp.)

Defended at 19-11-2010
University of Amsterdam

Summary — This thesis deals with the psychic pain caused by traumatic events such as wars, disasters, sexual abuse or severe loss. The central question in this study is why the attention for this pain has increased so much and what this means for Dutch society. The study describes the history of reactions on traumatic events worldwide over the course of the last 150 years, and, in more detail, in the Netherlands since 1945. One part of the study deals with the quality of current care given to victims in the Netherlands. It tries to answer the question whether deprecatory designations of the result of this care, such as a “culture of victims” or a “culture of claims”, have any empirical basis. The final question this thesis tries to answer is whether the expansion of trauma care has resulted in increased susceptibility to the pain of others and, consequently, whether it can be seen as part of a civilizing process. The study is based on extensive literature search of the relevant regulations and practices in different countries and on 47 interviews by the author with the most important key figures and experts in the field of trauma care in the Netherlands.

Full-text is not yet available online.

The dissertation has been published by Boom (Arq Psychotrauma Expert Groep) and can be ordered for 35 € in any bookshop.

Silke Heumann

Sexual politics and regime transition: Understanding the struggle around gender and sexuality in post-revolutionary Nicaragua (323 pp.)

Defended at 25-11-2010

University of Amsterdam

Summary — After the breakdown of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua in 1990, sexuality became an important object of political debate, struggle and mobilization. An initial period of flourishing of feminism was followed by a decline in mobilizing capacity of the women's movement, particularly in relation to sexual and reproductive rights. At the same time a social conservative ("pro-life") movement emerged that would gain increasing political power, mobilizing capacity, and discursive resonance throughout the 1990s. Based on in-depth interviews with activists, participant observation and an analysis of newspaper articles throughout the decade, this study tackles the question of how and why these puzzling developments came about. An important conclusion of this research is that even though religion offers an important interpretative and organizational frame for "pro-life" activism, religious conservatism should not be taken for granted. The participation of the Catholic and (later) Evangelical churches in the "pro-life" movement should be seen as a (relatively recent) historical development that has to do with changing political contexts, changing political agendas of the churches, their shifting relationship to the state, and the recruitment strategies of "pro-life activists" directed towards appropriating religious networks as mobilizing structures for the "pro-life" movement. Another important conclusion of this study has to do with the relationship between feminism and sandinismo. Feminism should not be seen as a legacy of the revolution, but as something that inspired the revolution. Feminist ideas and ideas of sexual liberation were already present in the social movements of the 1970s in Nicaragua. The marginalization of sexual and reproductive rights is therefore not the product of a "natural prioritization" of the struggle for political and economic rights, but of a power discourse that was propagated by the Sandinista leadership.

Full-text can be found on <http://dare.uva.nl/record/358829>.

The dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an e-mail to Silke Heumann (heumann@iss.nl).