

Recent dissertations on health, culture and society

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

Susanne Brandner

'All women want to be healthy': Risikovorstellungen, gesundheitsförderliches und präventives Verhalten in der Schwangerschaft; eine qualitative Studie in Phnom Penh, Kambodscha [Risk perceptions, health-enhancing and preventive behaviour during pregnancy; a qualitative study in Phnom Penh, Cambodia] (285 pp.)

Defended at 14-01-2010

University of Münster, Germany

Summary — Cambodia is characterized by a fragile post-conflict society, high levels of distrust in social relationships, challenging economic circumstances and poor health services. The country's maternal mortality rates remain among the highest in South East Asia. Pregnancy and birth are therefore life transitions inherently linked to risks, fears and uncertainties. The thesis describes and analyses the manifold risk perceptions of women regarding pregnancy within these local contexts. Data is derived from qualitative interviews with pregnant women carried out in the capital city of Phnom Penh. It illustrates how women's reproductive perceptions are strongly related to specific (preventive) practices, including the use of health services and various indigenous practices based on emic taxonomies, to deal with these uncertainties and to ensure the healthy development of pregnancy. The thesis suggests that health perceptions and practices in pregnancy are the result of complex processes of social negotiation formed by circumstances related to power, sociocultural and economic factors within the specific historical context of the country. The results therefore contribute to the shift from the idea of 'health behaviour' as a result of individual rational choice to approaches emphasizing the socially constructed and relational nature of health perceptions and practices.

Full-text can be found on <http://d-nb.info/1002020581>.

The dissertation is not for sale.

Inma Hurtado

More to life. Envejecimiento, salud y cuidados en la inmigración internacional de retiro a la Costa Blanca (Alicante) [More to Life. Ageing, health and care in the international retirement migration to the Costa Blanca (Alicante, Spain)] (468 pp.)

Defended at 29-06-2010

University Rovira i Virgili, Spain

Summary — This thesis represents a framework for reflection on the social changes that were caused by the migratory movements in Spain. It focuses on retirees from the centre and north of Europe. Central to the analysis is the interaction between migration, health and ageing. The sociomedical field is especially sensitive to this phenomenon, and is pervaded by demands that demonstrate cultural logics regarding how and where to age, the role of the family, and the state's responsibility towards the sphere of 'care'. Taking an anthropological approach, the author argues for a more comprehensive analysis of movements, migrants and their relationship with the society of destination.

The thesis will be published online by the Spanish Ministry of Culture later this year; a full-text will also become available on <http://www.tdx.cat> in 2013.

The dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an e-mail to Inma Hurtado (inmaculada.hurtado@uch.ceu.es).

Yannick Le Henaff

L'entreprise morale en chirurgie esthétique : un mandat aux marges de la médecine. [Moral enterprise in cosmetic surgery: a mandate at the margins of medicine] (549 pp.)

Defended at 15-11-2010

University of Rennes 2, France

Summary — This thesis analyzes, from an interactionist perspective, the construction and perpetuation of a marginal world: cosmetic surgery in France. The author particularly investigates the various processes of the moral enterprise. His findings are based on hundreds of interviews with surgeons, patients, representatives, academic associations and insurance companies. Historical analysis shows the progressive institutionalization of the world of plastic surgery and, at the same time, the marginalization of cosmetic surgery. As a result, segments compete to claim the status of *authentic* physician; cosmetic surgeons are involved in intense negotiations (*facework*). They define their work using a 'psychosur-

gical' approach, involving a specific job of deciphering during the diagnosis. But the lack of medical nosologies, as well as the difficulty of understanding social and psychological demands, actually encourages an aesthetic normalization. This normalization is supported by social categorizations which delegitimize and even exclude the male demand.

Full-text is not available online.

The dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an e-mail to Yannick Le Henaff (yannick.lehenaff@yahoo.fr).

Mariola Bernal

Body, Food and Migrations. A transcultural analysis of eating disorders (385pp.)

Defended at 22-12-2010

University Rovira i Virgili, Spain

Summary — The aim of this research is to deconstruct the social representations that have been created around eating disorders (EDs) and its sufferers by the biomedical science, which, in its attempt to formulate diagnosis, protocols and appropriate treatments, applies a particular and limited perspective of the ED phenomenon. The work includes a historical and transcultural review of those practices, and a critical analysis of the hypotheses proposed by transcultural psychiatric epidemiology to explain cases occurring in societies geographically and culturally far from the West and among migrant persons and/or ethnic minorities living in western societies. Applying an ethnographic methodology, the life histories and therapeutic itineraries of immigrants who have experienced ED are analysed.

Full-text can be found on <http://www.tesisenred.net/bitstream/handle/10803/34759/Tesis.pdf?sequence=1>.

A PDF file of the dissertation can be obtained by sending an e-mail to Mariola Bernal (mariolabernal@yahoo.com).

Concetta Russo

Prendersi cura della cittadinanza: politica, intimità e ironia in un servizio di salute mentale all'Avana [Caring Citizenship. Imagination, Politics, and Irony in a Psychiatric Mental Health Community in Havana (Cuba)] (238 pp.)

Defended at 10-05-2011

Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca, Italy

Summary — This research has been carried out in a Mental Health Community centre in La Habana (Cuba). Patients of this kind of service are referred to as ‘neurotics’, people who, even though without a severe mental disorder, need psychological support because they are in a difficult moment of their lives. In a situation where the patient is disoriented about his/her perception of the ‘state of things’, psychiatrists and psychologists may become the patient’s guide. Nevertheless, as the results of this ethnographic research suggest, psychiatrists and psychologists don’t use their role to shape the psychiatric care into a form of governmentality. Instead, they use the therapy, and the ironic speech sometimes included in it, also to highlight the social contradictions that bring citizens to neurotic behaviour.

Full-text will be available from 2014 on <http://boa.unimib.it/browse?type=author&order=ASC&rpp=20&value=RUSSO%2C+CONCETTA+%2824827%29>.

The dissertation is not for sale.

Cristina Santinho

Refugiados e requerentes de asilo em Portugal: contornos políticos no campo da saúde [Refugees and asylum seekers in Portugal: political perspectives in health] (313 pp.)

Defended at 07-06-2011

Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Portugal

Summary — This dissertation focuses on refugees and asylum seekers in Portugal. It describes the political limitations and constraints that determine and regulate these individuals’ arrival, permanence and mobility. The author conducted fieldwork in and outside of the Host Refugees Centre (a structure incorporated in the Portuguese Centre for Refugees, CPR) and demonstrates the contradictions between the legislative level and the reality refugees and asylum seekers experience in the process of requesting and being granted asylum. She shows that these individuals are far from fully accessing their right to adequate physical and mental health while they may deal with traumas related to the experience of warfare, conflicts, as well as other human rights violations. Refugees and asylum seekers’ invisibility in the Portuguese context and the uncertain support from institutions that are responsible for their integration constitute, together with the inadequacy of medical health services, some of the reasons for the continuation of these individuals’ suffering, and increase the difficulties of their integration. Nevertheless, in the pursuit of a dignified future and with the will to share their knowledge with the hosting society, these individuals refuse the victim label, invest in new forms of resilience, and claim their rights within the Portuguese society.

Full-text can be found on <http://hdl.handle.net/10071/3512>.

A PDF file of the dissertation can be obtained by sending an e-mail to Cristina Santinho (cristina.santinho@gmail.com).

Elisabeth de Schauwer

Participation of children with severe communicative difficulties in inclusive education and society (278 pp.)

Defended at 08-09-2011
Ghent University, Belgium

Summary — The framework of this thesis is within disability studies – an upcoming, interdisciplinary field that critically investigates the dynamic interaction between disability and environment. A disability is a social, cultural, historical and relational phenomenon. Inclusion and inclusive education for disabled children are multifaceted and multi-interpretable concepts that are often misunderstood. The author tries to approach the issue from the perspectives of several stakeholders involved: children, parents and teachers. She presents the case-study of Sofie, a girl with severe communicative and physical difficulties, who acted as a personal assistant in this research and collected data from the first until the sixth year of primary education. In the thesis, Sofie's participation, development and learning are described and analyzed. The conclusions of the dissertation outline five concepts that are central to this thesis: 'becoming' (Deleuze and Guattari), 'desire' (Deleuze and Guattari), 'ethical encounter' (Levinas), 'listening' (Rinaldi) and 'political engagement' (Allan).

Full-text is not available online.

A PDF file of the dissertation can be obtained by sending an e-mail to Elisabeth de Schauwer (Elisabeth.DeSchauwer@UGent.be).

Stéphanie Dutertre

Étude sur la fonction de l'hystérique dans le système de sens construit en France face à la souffrance et à la mort [Workings and purpose of the medical recognition of hysteria within the French system of meaning regarding suffering and death] (1019 pp.)

Defended at 26-09-2011
Université de Nantes, France

Summary — 'Hysteria' is a category often referred to by French biomedical professionals, implicitly or explicitly, when faced with a woman complaining of durable pain, which medicine fails to relieve or explain for lack of a visible lesion in her anatomy. It is not a psychoanalytical category; it is a biomedical category. Yet, it does not qualify as a diagnosis.

This study is based on extensive fieldwork in a Pain Clinic, and feeds on epistemology, anthropology and history. It depicts the system – the organization, the language – within which the recognition of hysteria occurs and lasts, and questions its purpose.

Full-text can be found on <http://archive.bu.univ-nantes.fr/pollux/show.action?id=ded7f1c7-16ab-4bc1-81f2-4f79d170b548>.

The dissertation is not for sale but can be ordered through a university library via the website <http://www.sudoc.abes.fr/>.

Gaia Cottino

Il peso del corpo: un'analisi antropologica dell'obesità a Tonga [The weight of the body: an anthropological analysis of obesity in Tonga] (271 pp.)

Defended at 28-09-2011

Università La Sapienza di Roma, Italy

Summary — Obesity is a worldwide issue of medical concern, but its causes are not simply genetic or physical: the social and cultural environment influences eating habits and patterns, body and beauty ideals. The Kingdom of Tonga, where obesity ranks fifth highest worldwide, is an interesting site for exploring this multi-factoriality. The dissertation, based on a year fieldwork in the Kingdom, analyzes critically the obesity phenomenon from a social and cultural point of view through the food and the local eating habits, the body size and beauty ideals, and the public health care policies and interventions.

Full-text can be found on <http://padis.uniroma1.it/handle/10805/1112>.

The dissertation is not for sale.

Julien Grard

Frontières invisibles. L'expérience de personnes prises en charge au long cours par la psychiatrie française [Invisible boundaries. Psychiatrically labelled and followed persons' life experiences in France] (539 pp.)

Defended at 25-10-2011

EHESS, Paris, France

Summary — Based on a 4-year ethnography conducted in a mutual help group in a French city, this investigation focuses on the institutional and social construction of experiences and subjectivities of people suffering from mental illness. In many disciplines, even among

social sciences, research among those people focuses on the disease itself and addresses the person as a patient, despite the will of some authors to depict lived experiences. Relying on long-lasting fieldwork within non-medical settings, the author focuses on people's experiences and approaches those who are usually labeled and defined as 'users', 'patients', 'lunatics' or 'consumers' as persons. Their experience of illness is set in the context of their life trajectories and of other social experiences, examining the tension between structural constraints and agency. By questioning the dialectic relations between those experiences, institutional technologies, as well as moral, political and semantic networks around them, this thesis shows how social statuses interact and shape persons' daily life experiences. The social, moral and institutional shaping of subjectivities are unraveled.

Full-text can be found on <http://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00682280>.

The dissertation is not for sale.

Cláudia de Freitas

Participation in mental health care by ethnic minority users: Case studies from the Netherlands and Brazil (381 pp.)

Defended at 14-12-2011

Utrecht University, the Netherlands

Summary — Despite evidence that ethnic minorities are under-represented in health participatory spaces across the world, few studies have been done on the factors promoting minority user participation. This thesis aims to fill this gap by investigating why minority users get involved, how they benefit from participation and which barriers impede them from realising their full participatory potential. Employing a qualitative case study approach it investigates two exemplary cases: Cape Verdean migrants' participation in a mental health advocacy project in Rotterdam; and minority Northeasterners' participation in a mental healthcare service in Rio de Janeiro. Results reveal that the involvement of these user groups is driven by various motivations which, put together, indicate an aspiration to promote not just their own social inclusion but also the welfare of their communities. Motivations do not suffice to facilitate their engagement, however. Direct recruitment, capacity-building and empowering participatory spaces are also essential enablers of participation. This thesis also shows that participation generates numerous benefits for users themselves, including broader social networks, empowerment, increased sense of citizenship, enhanced health literacy and improved access to mental healthcare. Finally, it identifies several barriers that hold back participation by minority groups, including unawareness of, self-exclusion from, and exclusionary dynamics within mental health participatory spaces. These hindrances diminish the potential of these spaces to foster the development of diversity-competent healthcare.

Full-text can be found on <http://igitur-archive.library.uu.nl/dissertations/2012-0203-200415/UUindex.html>.

A PDF file of the dissertation can be obtained by sending an e-mail to Cláudia de Freitas (claudia_defreitas@yahoo.com).

Emmanuel N'koué Sambieni

Gouverner la maternité au Bénin. Les difficiles conditions d'application des politiques sanitaires dans le territoire de la Pendjari [Governing maternity in Benin. The difficult conditions for the application of sanitary policies in Pendjari territory] (440 pp.)

Defended at 10-01-2012

Université de Liège, Belgium

Summary — This thesis describes the presence of, and clashes between, traditional and modern health care provisions for pregnant women in the socioculturally unique Tanguieta health district of Benin. During four years of anthropological research, the author aimed to understand how the health care provisions for and demands by women who want 'to give life' are structured and governed in this area. 'Maternal habitus' and 'governmentality' are used as concepts and as methodological and epistemological issues for analyzing 'order' and 'progress' in obstetrical practices. The thesis describes how traditional institutions are weakened by many social influences and are therefore unable to adequately protect child-birth. At the same time, modern maternity hospitals have little knowledge of sociocultural realities, and are often conflict-bound and turned away from their mission due to their dependence on numerous conflicting actors. The author argues for more understanding and recognition of women's own obstetric practices and risk perceptions so as to strengthen their position in the negotiation for obtaining essential and immediate obstetric health care.

Full-text is not available online.

The dissertation (€ 50) can be ordered by sending an e-mail to Emmanuel N'koué Sambieni (esambieni@yahoo.fr).

Annelies Kusters

"Since time immemorial until the end of days": An ethnographic study of the production of deaf space in Adamorobe, Ghana (351 pp.)

Defended at 23-01-2012

University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Summary — The typical life experience for most sign language-using deaf people in the world is one of problematic communication with the surrounding society. However, a number of ‘shared signing communities’ exist where, due to the historical presence of a ‘deaf gene’, both deaf and hearing people use a locally-emerged sign language with each other. A number of western writers have tended to perceive these as utopian communities. This ethnographic study of one such community in Adamorobe, Ghana, problematizes this assumption in its analysis of the community’s deaf-hearing and deaf-deaf social relationships.

To frame everyday life in Adamorobe, this study employs Lefebvre’s ‘spatial triad’ which consists of three dimensions, *Perçu*, *Conçu* and *Vécu*. Firstly, it demonstrates how the deaf people are inherently part of the space produced in Adamorobe “since time immemorial until the end of days”, by interacting naturally with hearing people through sign language, but also by producing ‘deaf spaces’ (*Perçu*). Secondly, it explains how they conceive of these spaces by exploring the deaf inhabitants’ sharing of certain ontological experiences and characteristics, summarized in the expression that “deaf are the same” (*Conçu*). Thirdly, it examines the tensions and difficulties they experience in relation to their own ideas of what an ideal or utopian world would be like (*Vécu*).

The study also identifies the recent profound effects of external practices and discourses on deaf-hearing relationships, which affect the way the space of Adamorobe is produced, and the way the deaf people produce deaf spaces. It is believed that the conceptual framework used in this dissertation has the potential both to advance the investigation of other similar communities, and the discipline of Deaf Studies in general.

Full text is not available online.

A PDF file of the dissertation can be obtained by sending an e-mail to Annelies Kusters (annelies.kusters@telenet.be).

Jonathan Mensah Dapaah

HIV/AIDS treatment in two Ghanaian hospitals. Experiences of patients, nurses and doctors (168 pp.)

Defended at 24-01-2012

University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Summary — This thesis is based on fifteen months of anthropological research in two Ghanaian hospitals, including in-depth conversations with people living with HIV/AIDS, nurses and doctors. It shows that the persistent stigma around HIV/AIDS has a profound negative impact on people with HIV/AIDS and on their use of counseling, testing and treatment services. Many prefer absolute secrecy or even death to the shame and social exclusion that may follow if their condition is revealed. However, the study also demonstrates that the provision of high quality services can lead to an increased uptake of serv-

ices. The monograph describes the complexities involved in the care and treatment of HIV/AIDS. The author advocates that treating clients well during interactions in the centres and clinics is crucial for the increasing use of these services by both clients and other people. It can be the first step to reducing the perceived stigma associated with the use of services in the hospital setting that has discouraged many people from accessing VCT and ART.

Full-text is not available online.

The dissertation has been published by the Africa Studies Centre in Leiden and can be ordered for € 15 on the ASC website (<http://www.ascleiden.nl/Publications/>).

Meike Heessels

Bringing home the dead. Ritualizing cremation in the Netherlands (173 pp.)

Defended at 17-02-2012

Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands

Summary — ‘While taking his father’s ashes back home from the crematorium on his bike, Rob stopped for dinner with his father. He placed the urn in its white carrier box on the table and ordered a glass of wine’. This book analyses the creative ways in which Dutch people perform and create death rituals. Through working in crematoriums and interviewing mourners in their homes, the author found that people talk to the ashes, stroke the urns or take them for dinner. By investigating people’s practices with ashes from up-close, the author asks what the dead mean to the Dutch. Where do the dead reside in a modern secular society?

Full-text is not available online.

The dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an e-mail to Meike Heessels (meike-heessels@gmail.com).

Fuusje de Graaff

Partners in palliative care? Perspectives of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants and Dutch professionals (217 pp.)

Defended at 23-02-2012

University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Summary — This thesis explores palliative care provided to immigrants with a Turkish or Moroccan background in the Netherlands. The study comprised two qualitative sub-stud-

ies, a survey and a systematic literature study. The first qualitative sub-study of the experiences of Turkish and Moroccan families who recently cared for an incurably ill patient revealed that several factors influenced access to Dutch care services: patients' limited knowledge of their disease; the task division among male and female family members; the perception of family care as a duty; and the discrepancy between care services and the care needs of the families. The next sub-study, a survey, focused on the perceptions of general practitioners and nurses. They cited the same barriers for the use of palliative care, but their greatest problems regarded communication. The theme of communication was explored in depth in a third sub-study conducting qualitative interviews with cancer patients in the palliative phase, their families and the care providers involved. We concluded that participants did not always agree on what constitutes 'good care' during the final phase of life. We also found that care professionals often preferred to regard the patient as an autonomous decision maker, while in practice the family was often functioning as a 'care management group'. The multilingual communication triangle of patient-family-care provider often also complicated the bridging of differences in care perceptions. The systematic literature review reinforced these findings. The study ends with recommendations to members of the Turkish and Moroccan communities, to care providers and for follow-up research.

Full-text is available on <http://www.mutant.nl/en/publicaties-health.htm>.

The dissertation can be ordered for free by sending an e-mail to Fuusje de Graaff (fuusdegraaff@wxs.nl).

Lorenzo Alunni

Healing and eviction. An ethnography of sanitary interventions in the Roma camps of Rome (285 pp.)

Defended at 24-02-2012

Università degli Studi di Perugia, Italy

Summary — This thesis deals with the sanitary interventions in the urban spaces called 'campi nomadi', where Roma communities live, in Rome. It presents ethnographic data obtained by following the daily activities of a mobile medical unit (called 'sanitary camper') whose main goal was to offer medical support in the Roma settlements. The medical encounter that takes place in these areas offers insights into the dynamics of the relations of the Roma people with the dominant society and with the ruling institutions. This research aims to identify those elements that relate to the moral economy of the acts of medical intervention. It explores the biopolitical dimension related to the pacification of the subjects, who are exposed to strict security policies and to rejection from local and national administration.

Full-text is not available online.

A PDF file of the dissertation can be obtained by sending an e-mail to Lorenzo Alunni (lorenzo.alunni@gmail.com).

Iris Shiripinda

Sex, HIV and AIDS. Practices and ideas of Zimbabwean women on sexuality and prevention of infection (278 pp.)

Defended at 28-02-2012

Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands

Summary — This thesis focuses on women's sexuality in urban and rural Zimbabwe in the context of HIV/AIDS and AIDS prevention. The main research question was: How do women occupying different marital statuses talk about and practice their sexuality in a time of AIDS in Zimbabwe and which factors enable or limit their efforts of preventing HIV infection? Methods included open-ended and closed questionnaires, in-depth interviews, participant observation, passive listening, audio and video taping and focus group discussions. The author shows that women of different statuses – unmarried, married, widowed, divorced, or sugar mummies – face different pressures on their sexuality and have different views and opportunities of protection against infection. She also critically analyses kitchen tea parties and funerals, as well as forums at which ideas on and practices of sexuality are constructed, presented and challenged. The author stresses the need for prevention programs to pay attention to women's agency if HIV/AIDS infections are to be stopped.

Full-text is not available online.

The dissertation (€ 30) can be ordered by sending an e-mail to Iris Shiripinda (drshiripinda@gmail.com).

Lena Kroeker

"In between life and death". HIV-positive women in Lesotho and their obstetric choices (270 pp.)

Defended at 21-05-2012

Universität Bayreuth, Germany

Summary — In the past 30 years many women in Lesotho have become labour migrants and family breadwinners, which entailed shifts in the relations of gender and generation. While Basotho women are pro-active decision-makers on every-day life affairs, pregnancy, being an unusual event, brings in elder relatives as well as biomedical practitioners. While families counsel towards safety from spiritual harm and well-being of mother, child,

and the community, hospital counselors merely focus on physical health of the child, particularly, since 28% of these women test HIV-positive and automatically enter a program of prevention of mother to child transmission. This thesis presents HIV-positive pregnant women in urban Lesotho and their household decision-making in uncertain times. The study engages with debates on social navigation (Utas 2005; Christiansen et al. 2006; Vigh 2009), uncertainty (Whyte 1997; Evans-Pritchard 1967; Jenkins et al. 2005) and some aspects of avoidance of conflict (Scott 1985, 1990; Eckert 2004).

Full-text is not yet available online.

The dissertation can be ordered by sending an e-mail to Lena Kroeker (Lena.Kroeker@uni-bayreuth.de).