Artigo Original

COMMUNITY HELPING SERVICES: DYNAMIC OF
FORMATION AND EXPRESSIVENESS OF THE CULTURAL CARE

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Community helping services is an expression used by the social movements to designate families that live in shacks installed in a public area intended for building of own house at a community helping system. Studies in ethnonursing that aimed: in order to detail dynamic configuration in a community helping service. It took place in an community helping area located in the outskirts of Fortaleza, Ceará. The community members acting as general informants from the local culture, while eight (8) women heads-of-families, working as key informers. The data collect used the Observation-Participation-Reflection Model. The analyses were processing by the time that the dates were collected, considering the categories: inserting in the community helping culture to obtain their history; community helping is not a slum -describing the formation dynamic. Established that the formation dynamic of the community helping go on the own house representation as a symbol of " a better life". To assimilate such expression introducing in own cultural universe is a challenge for the nursing to assist a care culture congruent.

DESCRIPTORS: community health nursing; public policies; consumer participation

COMUNIDAD MUTIRANTE: DINÂMICA DE FORMACIÓN Y
EXPRESIVIDAD DEL CUIDADO CULTURAL

Comunidad "mutirante" es una expresión utilizada por los movimientos sociales para designar familias que habitan barracas instaladas en terreno público destinado a la construción comunitaria de las casas que esas familias habitarán. Estudio en etnoenfermagem, que tuvo como objetivo: describir la dinámica de formación de una comunidad mutirante. Fue realizado en un área de construcción comunitaria localizada en la periferia de Fortaleza-Ceará-Brasil. Los miembros de la comunidad actuaron como informantes generales de la cultura local, mientras que ocho mujeres jefes de familia fueron informantes llave. La colecta de datos utilizó el modelo de Observación-Participación-Refleja. Los análises fueron siendo procesados al mismo tiempo en que los datos fueron colectados, considerando las categorías: Insertándose en la cultura mutirante para obtener su historia; Comunidad mutirante no es favela- describiendo la dinámica de formación. Se constató que la dinámica de formación de la comunidad mutirante pasa por la representación de la casa propia como símbolo de "una vida mejor". Asimilar tal representación, introduciéndola en el propio universo cultural es un desafío para la enfermería prestar um cuidado culturalmente congruente.

DESCRIPTORES: enfermería en salud comunitaria; políticas públicas; participación comunitaria

COMUNIDADE MUTIRANTE: DINÂMICA DE FORMAÇÃO
E EXPRESSIVIDADE DO CUIDADO CULTURAL

Comunidade mutirante é expressão utilizada pelos movimentos sociais para designar famílias que habitam barracos instalados em terreno público destinado à construção da casa própria em sistema de mutirão. Este é um estudo em etnoenfermagem, que objetivou à descrever a dinâmica de formação de uma comunidade mutirante, realizado numa área de mutirão localizada na periferia de Fortaleza, Ceará, Brasil. Os membros da comunidade atuaram como informantes gerais da cultura local, enquanto oito mulheres chefes de família atuaram como informantes-chave. A coleta de dados utilizou o modelo de Observação-Participação-Reflexa. As análises foram se processando no tempo em que os dados eram coletados, considerando as categorias: inserindo-se na cultura mutirante para obter sua história; comunidade mutirante não é favela - descrevendo a dinâmica de formação. Constatou-se que a dinâmica de formação da comunidade mutirante passa pela representação da casa própria como símbolo de "uma vida melhor". Assimilar tal representação, introduzindo-a no próprio universo cultural é desafio para enfermagem, prestando cuidado culturalmente congruente.

DESCRITORES: enfermagem em saúde comunitária; políticas públicas; participação comunitária

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INTRODUCTION

Under the aegis of the need for housing[1-2], families adventure themselves into the limits and possibilities of a proposal that can mean great suffering, losses and regret but, mainly, that evidences the possibility that a person will break with everything that seeks to deny intelligence and the natural ability to take care of oneself and deliver care[3], with the freedom and autonomy characteristic of human beings[4-5].

This article results from the Doctoral dissertation[6] in Nursing developed by one of the authors, which was concluded in 2001. As a doctoral student and member of the Family: teaching, research and extension (FAMEP) group, at the Nursing Department of the School of Pharmacy, Dentistry and Nursing, she led a Scientific Initiation grant holder and undergraduate students in activities involving families, besides composing a multidisciplinary team to accompany groups of female family heads in health education activities[7]. The families were part of an agglomerate[8], living in shacks installed in a public community helping area reserved to construct houses. This housing condition incurred a particular treatment form and community leaders referred to these families as "shack dwellers" or "community helping" families.

This group of families gave rise to the expression *Comunidade Mutirante*, which means Community Helping Services. Both expressions, i.e. *community helping family* and *community helping services* were used in this article whenever we needed to refer to those specified phenomena.

Although not registered in Brazilian Portuguese reference works, in Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries, the term "mutirante", in the absence of a better connotation, is widely used in social movements' jargon, particularly in housing mottos by popular classes in the State of Ceará, located in the Northeast of Brazil. Considering the diachrony of language, lexicologists will certainly include the expression into different reference work, so that we will use to while another expression is lacking, waiting for this fact to occur.

The families' patience and determination to conquer a house to live in stood out, arousing interest in developing research based on joint experiences, observation and recording of testimonies, among which we highlight the following statement by a female family head, in the early moments of the research:

...everything I had I exchanged for this old shack, I smashed myself in with my children (...) there are mosquitoes, it's cheap, there are rats walking over us at night (...) but I could either do that or lose the house in here...(M, Mutirante).

The systematic follow-up in this community allowed us to construct the synthesis of these families' history/trajectory until they arrived in the shacks. These families consist of women who represent a large part of Brazilian society which, as they do not manage to overcome material poverty and socioeconomic limitations[9], are attracted by the possibility of conquering a space and, together with other families in the same situation, build their houses through the community helping system. It was these families' standard of behavior that motivated the development of this study, with the following objective: describe the configuration dynamics of a community helping service.

This article is relevant because it evidences the extent to which the culture that gives rise to the community helping services emerges as an unknown challenge to all knowledge areas. In nursing, its study is particularly necessary in order to guarantee care in congruence with local practices, articulating solidarity and health[10].

METHODOLOGY

This ethnonursing study was developed in view of the phases of the observation, participation and reflection model (O-P-R-Model) described by Leininger[11]. This model is recommended because it can favor researchers' entry and permanence in cultures different from their own, in order to obtain information from people's daily lives.

Data were collected during almost two years, from January 2000 to August 2001. In this period, the author was inserted in a community of about 400 families, installed in a location donated by the Municipal Government of Fortaleza-Ceará-Brazil to construct popular houses in according with the Community Helping Program for Habitation.

In the model's observation-participation phase, all family members acted as general informants about local culture. Key informants were eight women, who were chosen because they were community leaders.

Home visit[12] was the strategy used to reveal the families' structure and dynamics, as well as their

interaction with the community sphere they usually live in. Moreover, this represented an actual opportunity to make ourselves known and accepted, starting to share their daily reality.

Once inserted in the community and accepted by the family group, we initiated the research by observing and listening, in order to get a general impression and describe the predominant culture. During field activities, we started to interact with people and observe their answers. The observation and interaction process gradually became more intense, rising on the scale of familiarization with the cultural context until participant observation was characterized[11].

In this research phase, the ethnographic interview[13] was applied, based on the selection of themes that allowed informants to describe their trajectory until their arrival at the community service location, in depth and in their own way: the history of their insertion in the community helping services for housing proposal and the dynamics of the community' establishment. It was the degree of interaction that characterized, in our perspective, the exact moment when the informants were stimulated to naturally externalize what we requested in the interview.

Data analysis occurred at the same time as data apprehension, in accordance with the reference framework of ethnonursing, that is, during the observation and interaction process. This analysis was intensified in the reflection phase of the O-P-R-model[11]. The reflection or reflexive observation phase was realized continuously, relating to the other research moment as a way of confirming (or rejecting) information captured during the interactions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Getting inserted in the community helping culture to obtain their history

The existence of previous contacts, when accompanying Scientific Initiation grant holders and nursing students in community visits, as well as the realization of health education actions and activities involving the female family heads, characterized a peculiar way of insertion into the research culture. This was facilitated by the families' full acceptance, which no longer saw us as outsiders.

Although marked by opportunity, it could not be forgotten that this type of social grouping, the "tribes"[14], privileges the collective spirit and its mechanism of belonging. No matter in what domain the information had to be accessed, participation in this spirit was necessary, whose authenticity was confirmed or denied by the level of acceptance-rejection of the community's different integration rituals.

In daily life, rituals are always needed and important to construct a group's cultural identity, independently of this group's duration[14-15]. In the community helping service, there were almost imperceptible rituals for receiving and welcoming (outsiders) in its culture: one example was the "bingo of used products", promoted by families and allowing "outsiders" to participate. Other rituals helped to construct sociality[15] itself and referred to the history of fighting, of conquering power spaces inside the community. These should not be underestimated or transgressed by the researchers, in view of the risk of no longer being accepted.

After some time, during which interactions happened, the experience of being incorporated by the community and extracting information from it was accompanied by discoveries that could be and were clearly delimited by the invisible powers that acted to establish rules for the community's functioning[16]. We soon discovered that going beyond these limits would not be easy, to the extent that they put the maintenance of these powers at risk; in this respect, we were being watched every day by "appointers".

Appointer was the expression used among community helping service families to designate a specific role board members played within the community house construction activities. Hence, the character of appointer, as the person who had the power to appoint a task to someone, was present in different situations inside the community. At the construction sites, it was the appointer who made records, appointing workers who were missing and should compensate for the work day, at risk of being passed over when houses would be delivered.

Thus, we concluded that it was not enough just to enter the community and be accepted by the families. To get access to information about the dynamics of the community housing service, as well as about the participatory functioning mode (families-communitarian society), the appointers could facilitate

our impair this access[13] - inclusively by obliging families, which depended on their leaders' consent/ complicity to continue living in the shack on the community helping site.

Next, negotiations occurred to obtain 'permission'. This search centered on persons who would legitimize that access and, also, the researchers' presence in the field, as such - a true outlining of small power points within the community relations network (society leader, vice-leader, secretary, treasurer, supporter, among others): "Saber quién tiene el poder de facilitar o bloquear el acceso o quiénes se consideran o son considerados por los demás como poseedores de la autoridad suficiente para garantizar o rechazar el acceso es, sin lugar a dudas, un aspecto fundamental del conocimiento sociológico del campo"[13].

The fact that we were nurses who showed they were interested in acting on those community problems related to our area, and in building a bridge between the community and the local health service, was convenient to the leaders, who manipulated this condition to their benefit; when our presence could be related to these leaders' influence/bargaining power with instances outside the community.

Moreover, the above mentioned fact strongly influenced the quality of the accessed information, as well as the intent to guarantee the protection of our physical and moral integrity, considering that we needed to enter, move around and leave the community during the entire year of study. Community members themselves assumed this protection, offering strategies to avoid any harassment. Anthropologists[13] already previewed that this kind of protection could be achieved by recurring to social relationship and friendship networks.

Community helping is not a slum - describing the formation dynamics

Our description starts with one of the phrases families in the research community most frequently mentioned: *We aren't slum dwellers!* The frequency at which this phrase was repeated and the ardor used to pronounce it can be justified by the history that gave rise to community helping services.

In the specific case of the study community, its origins go back to four (04) neighborhood associations: *Associação Comunitária Nova Vida, Associação Comunitária do Jardim Iracema,* *Associação Comunitária São Raimundo* and *Associação Comunitária Santa Maria Gorete*. Until November 2000, these associations' headquarters were located in different neighborhoods on the outskirts of Fortaleza. On November 18th 1993, they joined forces and constituted the *Sociedade Comunitária Habitacional Nova Vida* (SCHNV). Three of the four constituent associations were led by women.

The creation of this society was a landmark in the formalities that legitimized the community's housing demands to the Municipal Government of Fortaleza-Ceará-Brazil. The proposal to make viable a significant number of families in order to justify the purchase of the site and the elaboration of the popular house construction project permitted the union between leaders and their associates. In response to their demands, the Municipal Government gave its approval and destined a project to the SCHNV that covered the construction of 608 housing units (corresponding to the number of registered families). Construction works would occur in phases, materialized in a housing complex with more than 300 housing units. The remainder would result from a proposal to build popular houses, in which the families' voluntary adherence would allow for its execution through a community helping system.

In order to register and become part of the community housing project, families had to attend to inclusion criteria, prioritizing families in risk situations as characterized by the State's Civil Defense service, those led by women and those with more children. Records were always made in the woman's - the family head's - name or, in her absence, in the name of the woman who assumed this role in family, such as the grandmother or an older sister - even in those cases when a man was the family head.

We found that this strategy originated from two distinct phenomena. The first derived from leaders' low education level, which caused lack of understanding and even difficulty to decode many documents that constituted the proposal to make viable the housing programs. Thus, recommendations prevailed that had been assimilated during many meetings and assemblies between these leaders and representatives from institutions responsible for the implementation of the Project. The idea - which had gained force in statistical data kept by the Municipal Government - that women, when they are the only responsible for the family's survival, weakens this

social group, emerged as a risk condition that should be valued in the registration files. In this respect, we highlight the gender issue, i.e. when women are socially recognized for their vulnerability[17].

The second phenomenon was much more related to the culture that would create, in the families and their leaders, the belief that it will be easier for the family to keep the house if the official usufruct contract, as well as the final property document, were issued in the woman's name.

We observed this reality while following the community. The women idealized the house as the only material good they could give their children, offering them a "better life" than the one they witnessed. However, the "complicated" male character was a threat that could not be forgotten and put the achievement of this ideal at risk, as proved by some statements and doubts revealed during contacts: *...my husband is complicated (...) he drinks a lot. I'm even scared that he'll go mad and exchange our little house against a bottle of sugarcane rum (La, mutirante) ...I don't leave my shack because, if I do, he sells it and leaves us on the street. He also thinks he can sell the house we're going to get (D, mutirante). ...the house belongs to my two daughters! I'm going to transfer it to their name as soon as possible, so that he won't sell it and let them suffer like I did when I die...(Ra, mutirante).*

According to the leaders' information, the SCHNV's housing construction project was approved to be implanted on two tracts of land located in Western Fortaleza, near the centre and the industrial zone of Avenida Francisco Sá.

Although neighboring, the sites were separated by a large lagoon, which also symbolically delimited the leaders' action areas. The differences in force/pressure exerted by the community leaders and the particular way each of them worked with the community exerted a strong influence on the processes and even determined behaviors towards to construction team (engineer, construction site responsible, bricklayers and aids) and Municipal Government Technicians (social workers, psychologist, nurse etc). They assimilated the leaders' differences in command in such a way that they gradually started to acknowledge the housing complex not as a unit, but as something fragmented, to which they responded by intensifying their activities, depending on the level of urgency and demand the respective leaders and their subordinates presented.

This phenomenon affected the conclusion and delivery time of the two housing complex segments.

Although they were part of the same project, they started to receive names that characterized them according to the construction's evolution and, later, the order in which the apartment keys were handed over to the families. Thus, the *Conjunto Habitacional Santo Antônio da Floresta II*, although located on a side of the lagoon that provided easier access to the industrial zone of Francisco Sá, was concluded about four months after its complement, *Conjunto Habitacional Santo Antônio da Floresta I*, located on the opposite side.

The sites destined for housing the families came from the 'Fortaleza Municipal Government Land Fund'. During talks with community leaders, we found that the land had been purchased in 1994, from a private owner, when Antônio Cambraia was the mayor. *This site was bought by the municipal government (...) it was between 93 and 94 when we received the land. Everything here was covered with bushes, but it had an owner (...) we went, contacted the broker, took it to the Regional Housing Sector. Over there, they discovered that the owner owed a very large amount in territorial tax. They reached a settlement with him and bought the land in the name of Sociedade Nova Vida (T, mutirante leader). ...this land was a private farm. There was every possible fruit you can imagine, and a lot of weed too (...) but there was a wire fence and a guard, who still lives out there, he didn't let anybody in (...) when Dr. Cambraia bought it and donated it to the Society (S, mutirante leader).*

These sites are characterized by a predominantly large area, purchased with public resources. This purchase is justified by the need of a large number of families, who do not have their own house and start to dispute a place on the site to build the home they have dreamt of.

Once the land had been purchased, it had to be "taken care of". Due to mistaken interpretations in the conduction of community helping movements, the acquisition of housing rights involved requirements that would oblige the associated families to occupy the land, followed by the obligation to clean it, despite all obstacles uneven land could offer, preparing it for construction works. As if that were not enough, after cleaning it, the land and any construction material placed on it had to be warned day and night, in order to avoid robbery and land invasion by other associations or anomalous movements. *When we first came here, it was covered with weed (...) the mud came up to the middle of your legs (...) many people got health problems while cleaning this site. There were trees so thick that not even the machine could pull them out (Lu, mutirante) ...I not only cleaned*

but guarded this as much as I could. I just was not present for a while when I got pregnant, because I was sick a lot (…) I wasn't present like (…) I didn't come myself, but I paid a person to come in my place (Re, mutirante) …this was really horrible (…) there were women, old people, children, everybody running up and down this land. When we turned our backs an invasion happened or material was stolen… (M, mutirante) …we started to take care of the site in 94, soon after we received it (Ra, mutirante).

The day and night surveillance task gave rise to the need for people to get shelter. Thus, shacks were constructed for resting or protection from rain and sun. Following the example of what was happening in other community helping services, resources available in the immediate surroundings were used for building the shacks - the basic structure was strengthened by large wooden poles, but the sides and roofs were covered with plastic, canvas, cardboards and rests of old wooden boards, which the families obtained from dumpsters. Some of this material came from donations by private persons, leaders and the Civil Defense Service.

The families spent months and even years like this. As the situation remained undefined, without complying with terms to start the construction works - and as the possibility of losing the land, which they supposed had already been conquered, was a real and constant threat, the shacks were not abandoned but, on the contrary, started to house the entire family, which saw moving to the site as the opportunity to put an end to the constant absence of their loved one who had to keep watching the land. This move also meant an escape from the "punishment" of rent these families had been paying outside the community helping service. *…the leader selected the partners to build the shacks. We had already been working here for a long time when she put 27 families, in principle, to come and live here to herd the land (…) exactly families of people from Vila Olímpica, which was the neighborhood I used to live in (D, mutirante) …after the first families came in, shacks started to appear, shacks appeared (…) just the members, those who were registered and had the membership card (T, mutirante leader).*

The construction of the shacks had to follow a logic in which the most central areas of the site were kept clean. Those areas could not be occupied by shacks, as they were reserved for building the permanent houses. Hence, the shacks were constructed in more peripheral areas of the site, which were generally the roughest and most subject to inundations, as they were located at the margins of the lagoon or on the slope of a landfill that delimited

the border of the land: *…the shacks were down there. Further on, when people wanted to invade that side, exactly here where the community helping houses were going to be built, the leader accepted to put more families in; provided that they did not interfere with the construction (…) when the houses would be constructed, they had to empty the land (La, mutirante).*

Moreover, the shacks had to be constructed constantly, considering few resources and, hence, little spending, because they would have a very temporary function, that is, the families would only use them until their permanent houses were constructed. Thus, the shacks were built and multiplied, always maintaining their extremely fragile appearance. For the leaders, these shacks should serve, and at first they did, as a point of support to the people guarding the site. After the start of the construction works, the shacks could remain as a kind of 'private shed' the family members - men, women and children - could turn to at the end of each work day while building the houses.

Over the years, deadlines were not respected, so that each family felt the need to give a new definition to the shack, making it safer or expanding it to guarantee more comfort and attend to a new family structure reality; at this point, people who got into the community helping service alone already mobilized and brought their entire family. What had been a couple at first already had children or, sometimes, a young man got married and, as he had no place to go with his wife, continued sharing the shack with the family. Thus, the shacks gradually gained a more permanent character, although this procedure went against the leaders' interest, who had never stopped emphasizing that housing condition as very temporary.

When they moved to the shacks, the families left behind histories of difficulties, such as paying, rent, water and electricity bills, but they also left behind friends, close relatives - many of whom got their own house through a similar mechanism - with whom they kept contact to obtain information and help of any kind. Besides relatives, key persons in the family performed paid work in the neighborhood, and there were also young people who studies and had to get in and out of the community every day. All of this was important to maintain references, so that the families would not immediately and traumatically lose all bonds and links with the world outside the community helping service.

It was only over the years that these few bonds were destroyed. The building of the shacks and

the living condition imposed by the community helping service dynamics, fear and social rejection of this kind of agglomerate predominated, favoring the community's isolation, unemployment or difficulties to get a job for those who wanted to work, children and adolescents' distancing from school, caused by fear of great violence and - the main consequence - increased risks of drug addiction, alcoholism and promiscuity. Mothers complain: *...my son was discriminated against (...) he could not keep his job just because he gave the address of the community helping site. But I went there! I didn't go there to cause a scandal, no, I went there to tell them that we live here but that we are not slum dwellers, no. My son is able. He finished secondary education, he took an informatics course, he's intelligent. What they did by not giving my son the job was pure discrimination (...) Afterwards, they wanted to retract themselves and called my son to do another test. Then it was I who did not want him to go back there (Lu, mutirante).*

Despite all of these events, the families did not consider moving away from the community helping site. When they moved there, they sold almost everything they had and only kept what could easily be accommodated in the new reality of leaving in a shack of few square meters. Over the years, abandoning the shack and going back to the life of paying rent was taken into consideration less and less. The family head became unemployed, got addicted, the woman or her husband went away and left the children with the partner.

Moreover, families gradually lost the few reference points they had in the 'world out there' - some families' children did not know another reality, they were born in that agglomerate. There is also the fact that they did not accept the idea of losing neither the money they already invested by paying the membership, nor the work they had to take care of the land and construct their shacks. That is how the families started to accepted that as a permanent way of life. Given the legitimization by consensus, the shacks became accepted as something natural among community dwellers, who felt no constraint about possessing them. Status was now measured by the location of the shack, and myths were created around this: *...I exchanged my television for a better shack. I used to live further down there and that's why my children were always ill. Now I'm in a better place, when it rains there's no water coming in, and there are no rats biting my boys' toes either (Re, mutirante) ...look, when you go down here you just see misery, you have to get to know it. The people are careless, all children*

have fleas (La, mutirante) ...from here until there it's the dogs' village. That's how it's called because they say that the people there look like dogs, they're always fighting. Not over here. This is the green area. People are nice here (M, mutirante).

This shows that the leaders could no longer avoid the families' transference to the site. They had no more arguments to delay the construction works and, as many families followed this same process, many shacks were constructed and occupied on the site. To the extent that the occupation advanced, in combination with irregular installations, this characterized the condition of agglomerate.

Not only the installations (most visible artifact) characterized the irregular ways of 'doing' within the limits of that community helping service. To the example of what happens in almost all others, positions and behaviors destined for secrecy were present and led to denouncements that talked about the purchase and sale of 'pieces of land', of shacks or even memberships to families who were willing to accept the established conditions and amounts: *...there are people around who are experiencing this (...) they invade a piece of land here, build a shack and then sell it. They arrive here, in another community helping service, build another shack and sell it (...) and they are making a lot of money like that (D, mutirante) ...we know that our leader sold our houses, even before we built them. I was here standing on my doorstep and I just saw people pointing, saying that that was where the house was going to be (...) and pointed to my shack as if I did not exist (...) who had bought it I don't know for how much, that the house was going to be on the shadow side (...)I just kept quiet (...) I want to see who's gonna take me away from here. If somebody sold, then he has to settle it with here, because here (...) it's gonna end up in blood if they come and mess with me (Re, mutirante).*

Soon, it was not uncommon to find families inside the community helping site who were not registered in the project or, on the opposite, registered families who did not live on the site. The existence of non-registered families living in shacks on the site created a situation of great rivalry, representing a source of growing insecurity about the possibility of getting one's own house.

Despite so many difficulties, uncertainties and harsh housing conditions, the families, more than any others, rejected the label of slum dwellers, based on socially attributed meanings (stereotypes); an invisible barrier put up to complicate further or even impede their goals.

When they left behind all of their references in the world outside the community helping service,

the families were betting on the promise of land and better conditions to build the house they had dreamt of. This promise characterized life in the shacks as a necessary and even strategic, but also very temporary condition. Thus, the families living in shacks had a goal, as well as the persons conducting them within this goal. Hence, they neither wanted nor could be treated as slum dwellers, and the community they constituted should not be mixed up with a slum either.

This condition, which is so characteristic of the formation of agglomerates, contained important variables that permitted not only the appearance of potent social organization forms, but also the construction of a self-concept. Because they disagreed with the rest of society, these families reinterpreted the slum concept, constructing the concept that best defined slums in their opinion: these are the community helping services, and its inhabitants are the families that become members of this community.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We found that the dream of "a better life" is part of families' representations in the community helping service, whose symbol is materialized in the acquisition of one's own house. However, the social and historical transformations that make us witness the passage from the traditional slum formation model to the current reality of big human agglomerates resulting from own house policies, have not brought great changes for the fragile condition these families are exposed to, when the reality they are faced with on the community housing sites is still marked by the absence of socio-environmental and sanitary structure.

If, on the one hand, they are more subject to diseases due to their greater exposure to risk factors, on the other, the families' needs in the community go beyond the limits of material poverty and reach personal identity, making it impossible not only to satisfy basic needs, but also being responsible for the breaking of other bonds. This phenomenon has repercussions as a barrier that makes these families' access to the formal service and health care network more difficult; thus, the system contributes to the family's discrimination/marginalization on the basis of its exclusion from public spaces.

Nevertheless, the fight to continue occupying the shack on the community helping site, the need to overcome environmental problems (such as weed, mud, insects etc,), the need to delimit domains as a way of guaranteeing the conquered spaces, associated with the physical work of constructing their shacks creates a very intense feeling of belonging in the families.

For these families, belonging also means feeling the need to appear, to make themselves evidenced; the survival of the community in its current structure depends on an explicit and permanent disclosure. This disclosure contains the fundamental important of the community helping service's recognition as having its own identity; revealing pertinent cultural traits and more clearly reflecting the dynamics of its formation, the feelings and processes the families are submitted to.

This gives rise to the use of the expression "community helping service" by people who want to be inserted in this service in order to work with the families. It is almost a requirement. Assimilating its convictions and introducing them into their own cultural universe is a huge challenge to care professionals.

This challenge also includes following the families in community helping services to learn about their most instinctive concept: the concept of solidarity. Working with nursing care on the basis of this concept requires a direct partnership with the community, weaving a true relationship network, inside which nurses can articulate/mobilize material and human resources located at different points in the network.

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