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# Transnational Brazilian Project

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# Transnational Brazilian Project

The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy

## Summary

Since 2012, the Transnational Brazilian Project has been successful in organizing a **transnational network of faculty, students, and community leaders to promote collaborative research and service**. UMass Boston students and faculty have conducted research in Brazil, volunteered at the Brazilian Immigrant Center (BIC), and several Brazilian students gained research experience at the Mauricio Gastón Institute. In addition, a number of public health faculty from Brazil have visited UMass Boston to discuss future research projects and collaborations.

## Goals and Objectives

- Organize a network of faculty and students at UMass Boston to promote transnational, transdisciplinary, and transcultural research, teaching, and service activities focused on Brazilian immigrants in Massachusetts and the United States as well as Brazilians residing in Brazil; and
- Promote academic collaborations between UMass Boston and universities and government agencies in Brazil through short- and long-term exchange of students and faculty.

## Approach

Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between UMass Boston and Brazilian universities, government agencies, and a local organization:

- University of São Paulo (USP)
- Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG)
- The Júlio de Mesquita Filho State University of São Paulo (UNESP)
- Ministry of Labor and Employment (MTE) of Brazil
- Federal University of Bahia (UFBA)
- National School of Public Health (ENSP)
- Brazilian Immigrant Center (BIC)

## Impacts

### Student Exchanges



Brazilian doctoral students who visited the Gastón Institute:

**Dr. Sandra Cavalcante** - Public Health, University of São Paulo (6 months at the Institute, 2013 – 2014.)

**Dr. Renata Santos** - Social and Preventive Dentistry at UNESP (4 months at the Institute, 2013 – 2014.)

**Dr. Gabriella Barreto** - Social and Preventive Dentistry (will be at the Institute for 1 year, 2014 – 2015.)



**Cristina Brinkerhoff** - UMass Boston Master student in Applied Sociology, at the National School of Public Health (ENSP), Rio de Janeiro, 2013. Cristina spent ten weeks at ENSP in 2013.



**Fernanda Lucchese** – UMass Boston doctoral student in Psychology, in her field work in Governador Valadares, Brazil. Fernanda's trip was sponsored by a grant from the Office of International and Transnational Affairs (OITA).

### An Illustration of a Transnational Research Project

Fernanda Lucchese's research explores the effects of cultural factors on infant development and maternal well-being. By conducting interviews with mothers and their infants from Minas Gerais, Brazil, half of whom are living in Massachusetts and half in their country of origin, Fernanda's dissertation research aims to discover risks and resilience in immigrant infant development in the U.S.

To date, several **outcomes** have resulted from this project:

- 80 participating mothers received a personalized evaluation in Portuguese with recommendations related to education and child development.
- 4 Brazilian undergraduates served as research assistants supporting Fernanda's field work.
- 2 of these students received 2012-13 Annual Research Grant Competition for Undergraduates, allowing them to present at the American Public Health Association Conference
- Research involvement inspired one student to initiate a Beacon Voyages for Service trip to Brazil in 2013.



Children at a preschool in Brazil visited by Fernanda Lucchese.

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## Conclusions/Next Steps

- Building a transnational network of students and faculty from both Brazil and UMass Boston to conduct transnational and transdisciplinary research and service appears to be feasible, based on initial success.
- Further collaboration with the National School of Public Health in Rio, and the establishment of new MOUs (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, University of Brasília, University of Campinas, among others).
- As graduate students complete doctoral dissertations and Masters degrees, peer-reviewed publications in academic journals in Brazil and the U.S. will demonstrate the impact of the partnerships on their research.
- By exploring culture at the individual, network and transnational level, collaborative research projects will identify pathways by which culture may serve as a risk and/or protective factor for health.