

Edited Volume

Beyond the Sum: Experiences, Autonomy, and Complexity in Multiple Disabilities

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I. Hypothesis and Objectives

This edited volume aims to bring together theoretical, empirical, and interdisciplinary studies on multiple disabilities, taking as its starting point a question that remains insufficiently explored in disability studies: what happens when two or more disabilities coexist in the same person?

The proposal is based on the understanding that multiple disability should not be conceived simply as the sum of two or more previously identifiable disabilities. Two conditions that coexist in the same person may interact, reciprocally modify the ways in which they manifest themselves, and produce a configuration of experience that cannot be understood by analysing each disability in isolation.

In this sense, the complexity of a situation of disability does not necessarily derive from the severity of a single disability. A disability considered in isolation may be highly severe and give rise to intensive support needs. Yet an equally or even more complex situation may result from the coexistence of two or more disabilities, even when each of them, considered separately, is not necessarily severe.

The hypothesis guiding the volume is therefore that multiplicity may produce a qualitatively distinct complexity, rather than merely a quantitatively greater one.

Such multiplicity may occur among disabilities within the same domain—such as two sensory disabilities—or across different domains: sensory, physical, intellectual, cognitive, or psychosocial, among others. It may be present from the early stages of life or emerge successively over the course of a person's existence. Thus, a person with a pre-existing disability may subsequently acquire or develop another condition, altering their experience of themselves, others, and the world, as well as their modes of communication, participation, exercise of rights, and expression of autonomy.

For this reason, the volume seeks to shift the analysis from disabilities considered separately to the person who experiences them together.

The question is not merely what the characteristics of disability A and disability B are, but what happens when A and B coexist in the same person. How does one disability affect the ways in which the other manifests itself? What specific experiences does their coexistence produce? What kinds of support become necessary? Do strategies appropriate to a disability considered in isolation remain appropriate when another disability is present? Can tensions or

incompatibilities arise between different forms of support? And how can the person's autonomy be recognised and fostered in contexts of greater complexity?

Autonomy is therefore one of the transversal themes of the volume. It should not be confused with independence, self-sufficiency, or the absence of support. Rather, the aim is to investigate the ways in which autonomy can be expressed and exercised in contexts of interdependence, including when a person requires intensive or permanent support.

The volume thus seeks to examine multiple disabilities from the standpoint of the person's concrete experience, considering, as appropriate to each chapter, such aspects as embodiment, perception, communication, cognition, movement, intersubjective relationships, temporality, care, interdependence, social barriers, technologies, support, participation, and the exercise of rights.

The purpose is not to establish a new classification of multiple disabilities, but to understand the complexity produced by their coexistence and its effects on the person's experience and autonomy.

II. Conceptual Guidelines for Authors

To ensure that the chapters form a genuinely coherent volume, rather than merely a collection of texts on different disabilities, it is important to establish several shared premises.

1. The person, not the diagnosis, should be at the centre of the analysis. The existence of two or more disabilities should not lead to a merely parallel description of diagnoses, symptoms, or limitations. The volume is concerned with the experience of the person in whom these conditions coexist.
2. Multiple disability should not be treated as simple addition. A chapter on blindness and autism, or on deafness and dementia, for example, should not first present "the characteristics of blindness or deafness" and then "the characteristics of autism or dementia", concluding that the person has both. The problem begins precisely after that: what changes when both coexist in the same person?
3. Severity and multiplicity are not equivalent concepts. A single disability may be severe. Likewise, the coexistence of disabilities may produce a highly complex situation without each of them, considered separately, necessarily being severe. Chapters are invited to examine this distinction whenever relevant to their subject.
4. Multiplicity should also be understood in its relational dimension. The interaction between different disabilities may modify how a person perceives, communicates, moves, establishes relationships, learns, makes decisions, or expresses preferences and wishes. It may also alter the effectiveness of available support. One should therefore not assume that combining forms of support designed separately for each disability necessarily produces an appropriate response for that person.
5. The need for support should not be regarded as synonymous with the absence of autonomy. Chapters should avoid conceptions that identify autonomy with functional

independence. Particularly in situations of greater complexity, the aim is to investigate how autonomy, support, care, and interdependence may coexist.

6. Experience should receive specific attention. Whenever the subject permits, authors should seek to understand not only what is externally observed about disabilities, but also the ways in which the person experiences their embodiment, environment, relationships, communication, temporality, and participation in the world.
7. The temporal dimension may also be relevant. Coexisting disabilities do not always appear simultaneously. It is equally important to understand situations in which a second disability emerges later, transforming an already established life trajectory. The experience of a deaf person who subsequently develops dementia, for example, raises questions different from those arising when different disabilities coexist from childhood.
8. Each chapter should present its own problem and contribution. Literature reviews will naturally be necessary to provide a foundation for the work, but should not in themselves constitute the chapter's central contribution. Each author is expected to formulate a question, hypothesis, argument, empirical analysis, case study, or theoretical proposition capable of adding something to our understanding of multiple disabilities.

A Question Common to All Chapters

What can we understand about this person and their experience only when we cease to analyse separately the disabilities that coexist in them?

III. Organization of the Volume

Part I — Rethinking Multiple Disabilities

This part will bring together predominantly theoretical and conceptual studies on multiple disability, complexity, experience, autonomy, embodiment, interdependence, care, vulnerability, recognition, and models of disability.

Part II — Experiences of Multiple Disabilities

This part will bring together chapters investigating concrete configurations in which disabilities coexist, whether within the same domain or across different domains. Contributions may include empirical studies, case studies, or theoretical analyses closely connected to a particular experience of multiple disability.

The essential requirement will be an analysis of the interaction between the disabilities and its effects on the person's experience, rather than a parallel presentation of the conditions.

Part III — Rights, Support, and Institutions in the Context of Multiplicity

This part will bring together studies on social and institutional responses to multiple disabilities: education, healthcare, legal capacity, supported decision-making, care, assistive technologies, accessibility, ageing, public policies, family, social participation, institutionalisation, and other relevant fields.

Here the central question may be particularly fruitful: to what extent have our systems of rights, policies, services, and support been designed for persons with complex experiences of multiple disabilities, and to what extent do they remain structured around consideration of a single disability in isolation?

IV. Guidelines for the Submission of Proposals and Chapters

1. Participants

Chapter proposals may be submitted by master's students, holders of master's degrees, doctoral students, PhD holders, postdoctoral researchers, and professors, whether or not affiliated with higher education or research institutions, in the fields of Law, Psychology, Education, Health, and Philosophy.

Single-authored chapters or chapters co-authored by up to three authors will be accepted.

2. Submission of Proposals

Interested contributors must submit, by December 7, 2026, a chapter proposal in the form of an extended abstract of at least 500 and no more than 600 words, including bibliographical references but excluding the title and authors' identification details from the word count.

The proposal must include:

- a) provisional chapter title;
- b) definition of the research problem;
- c) hypothesis or central research question;
- d) objectives;
- e) methodology or theoretical-methodological approach;
- f) expected contribution to the understanding of multiple disabilities, taking into account the hypothesis and conceptual orientation of the volume;
- g) main bibliographical references.

The following information must also be provided for each author or co-author:

- Full name;
- Academic degree or qualification;
- Institutional affiliation, where applicable;
- Email address;
- Link to the Lattes CV, mandatory for Brazilian authors;
- Link to the ORCID profile.

3. Evaluation and Announcement of Results

Proposals will be reviewed by the editor of the volume, taking into account their thematic relevance, theoretical or methodological consistency, originality, and contribution to the volume's overarching hypothesis.

The list of approved proposals will be published by December 18, 2026, exclusively on the editor's website:

<https://apbarbosafuhrmann.com/>

Applicants are responsible for checking the announcement of results. There will be no individual notification by email.

Approval of a proposal does not automatically imply approval of the completed chapter, which must comply with the volume's conceptual and editorial guidelines.

4. Submission of Completed Chapters

Authors whose proposals have been approved must submit their completed chapters by May 21, 2027, observing the following guidelines:

- Accepted languages: Portuguese, Spanish, or English.
- Length: 15 to 18 pages, including bibliographical references.
- Format: Word file (.docx), A4 paper.
- Font: Times New Roman, 12 pt.
- Chapter title: 14 pt, bold and centred.
- Text: justified alignment.
- Line spacing: 1.5.
- First-line paragraph indent: 1.25 cm.
- Margins: top and left 3 cm; bottom and right 2 cm.
- Citations: author–date system, in accordance with ABNT NBR 10520:2023.
- Direct quotations longer than three lines: Times New Roman, 10 pt, single-spaced, with a 4 cm left indent and without quotation marks.
- Bibliographical references: in accordance with ABNT NBR 6023:2025, with titles of works consistently highlighted in bold.

Chapters must make an original contribution, in accordance with the conceptual guidelines set out in Section II, and will be subject to final evaluation by the editor of the volume.

5. Schedule

Stage	Deadline
Submission of chapter proposals	By December 7, 2026
Announcement of approved proposals on the editor's website	By December 18, 2026

Submission of completed chapters	By May 21, 2027
Expected publication of the volume	Second half of 2027

6. Submission Address

Proposals and, subsequently, completed chapters must be sent to anapbarbosa@direito.ufrj.br, using the following email subject lines:

a) For submission of proposals:

Subject: Chapter Proposal – Multiple Disabilities Edited Volume

b) For submission of completed chapters, following approval of proposals:

Subject: Full Chapter – Multiple Disabilities Edited Volume

Both proposals and completed chapters must contain the identification details and academic information of all authors and co-authors, as specified in item 2.