

Editorial

This special issue of *Studies on Home and Community Science (S-HCS)* provides an interdisciplinary exploration of gender and cultures of equality in Europe and beyond. The majority of articles selected for this issue focus on productions of in/equalities within Europe and emerge from research produced as part of the *Gender and Cultures of Equality (GRACE)* Project (www.graceproject.eu), funded by the European Commission through the Horizon 2020 Marie S. Curie Actions (2015-2019). This European focus is enhanced and complemented by research articles that interrogate cultures of in/equalities at sites within Bangladesh and Brazil.

It would be useful for readers to preface this editorial introduction with a brief explanation of both the research and conceptual approach underpinning this special issue. The GRACE project was initially conceptualised and produced by Clisby (myself, project director), and colleagues Mark Johnson and Jimmy Turner at the Universities of Hull and Goldsmiths in the UK, with the aim to systematically investigate the cultural production of gender equalities within Europe. GRACE draws on interdisciplinary methodologies to investigate the production of cultures of equality that underpin, enable and constrain changing policy and legislative frameworks in the European context, posing the following overarching critical questions: How have cultures of equality been produced, embodied, objectified and visualised in art, media, material and popular culture, as well as 'official' discourse in Europe? How might cultures of equality in Europe be produced and performed differently? And, in what ways do changing and contested cultural productions shape and constrain people's awareness about, perceptions of, responses to and deployments of equality discourses within specific social contexts?

Conceptually, as explained further below, the approach of authors in this special issue, in line with that of the GRACE project itself, treats equality as a contingent cultural product. Methodologically this issue draws together interdisciplinary work to investigate the production of cultures of gender equality across a range of sites, contexts, and practices. Here 'gender' is

understood as both ideologies and embodied practices through which femininities, masculinities, transgender and Queer subjectivities are produced and the relations between people who occupy differently gendered subject positions. These, moreover, are subjectivities and subject positions that are mutually shaped by the intersections of sexuality, race/ethnicity, nationality, class, disability and age. The research in this issue builds on and develops from previous work that can be separated into two broad strands: firstly, comparative sociological, political and policy studies of gender equality regimes (for example, Walby et al. 2012); and secondly, comparative studies of national normative cultural frameworks which promote or constrain the emergence of gender equality (for example, Tomlinson 2011; Harding et al. 2013).

There has been a relative absence of considerations of culture within research exploring different equality regimes. Those that have emerged tend to fall within one of two broad camps. The first camp, as it were, frames culture as a set of shared normative understandings that are deemed to impinge on perceptions of and attitudes towards inequality, the shaping of equalities frameworks and on the preparedness of people to respond positively to processes designed to enhance gender equality. An example of work that could be located within this camp is that of Inglehart and Norris (2003), whose approach tends to assume that different countries are characterised by different national cultures and that some are more receptive to change and to equality than others. There are also within this camp those studies that have given greater consideration to the dynamics within putatively national cultures and their interplay with policy and economy. Here one could look, for example, to the work produced by and associated with Pfau-Effinger (2004, 2005; see also Stephenson 2009; Duncan and Pfau-Effinger 2012; Fitzgerald et al. 2014; Röder 2014). The second camp includes cultural critics who, despite different vantage points, share a skepticism about the putatively shared normative values of national cultures, and critique the way that equalities dis-

course, particularly within Europe and North America, can negatively stereotype non-European peoples and cultures as somehow ‘backward’ and ‘resistant’ to gender equality. These critiques are concerned broadly with cultural essentialism, or ‘culturalism’ in Appadurai’s (1996) terms, and the politics of recognition (for example, Benhabib 2002; Towns 2002; Balibar 2007; Gilroy 2013; Narayan 2013).

The approach of the GRACE Project shares the critical concerns of the latter approach, and we seek not only to ‘provincialise’ European claims about equality, but also to treat equality as a culturally contingent, historical artifact. While we agree with those scholars who assert that culture matters we do not view culture as a pre-existing condition that belongs to or describes the norms and values of discreet groups of people in ways that inexorably shapes, constrains or enables greater or lesser degrees of gender (in)equality. Rather we view culture as both a process of communication and contested arena of meaning making practices, and as a process of invention and innovation. The question becomes, then, not how to change people’s cultural views of gender equality, but rather to ask about how equality is produced, embodied, objectified and visualised in and through a variety of cultural practices and sites. Hence, culture is the process through which people create and contest the social worlds they inhabit, and, moreover, gender equalities and inequalities are themselves cultural productions, subject to contest, challenge, and change.

This conceptual, methodological and theoretical framework provides a backdrop to and rationale for this special issue and underpins the articles selected for readers here. By way of explanatory note, as this volume differs slightly from the usual publishing style of S-CHS, the explicit understanding of the authorial subject position is a fundamental tenet of a feminist epistemological and methodological framework. As such, our feminist methodological approach confers the political use of the first person, as in *I*, rather than the third person as in ‘the researcher’ throughout this volume.

In the first of our selections Enderstein (“*First of All Gender is Power*”: *Intersectionality as Praxis in Gender Training*), Clisby (*Gender Games: Practical Tools for Gender Analysis*) and Grabher (*Observing Through Participants: Analytical and Practical Potential of*

Citizen’s Involvement in the Context of Social Regeneration) focus on methodological tools and approaches to conducting gender analysis, research and training. Enderstein explores the application of intersectionality in gender+ training drawing on in-depth interviews with gender trainers working in Europe and internationally across private, public and civil society contexts. Here, echoing the demands of her participants, she calls for a ‘historicization, a recouping of the genealogy of intersectionality and increased attention to the interrelation of systems of power and oppression over time’ (Enderstein 2017, this issue). Her analysis of gender training and trainers in European-wide contexts leads her to conclude that one key to effective and meaningful processes of knowledge exchange is to apply an emic approach to address, understand and engage in dialogue between differing intersectional subject positions.

Clisby provides a practical piece positioned as complementary to Enderstein’s article. Here she offers an illustrative example of what elements of gender analysis training might look like and how these may be utilised in gender analysis training. Grabher’s contribution to this issue explores the potential and characteristics of working with ‘observing participants’ through a ‘citizen science’ approach as method informed and inspired by feminist methodologies.

From this methodological beginning this issue then takes an interdisciplinary approach to analyses of cultures of gender in/equalities, beginning with Drage and Rosado Perez’s literary-based contributions. Drage (*Science, Myth and Spirits: Re-Inventions of Science Fiction by Women of Colour Writers, Between Arica, Europe and the Caribbean*) focuses on three works of science fiction by Jamaican Canadian/British Jamaican and Kenyan authors. Using these works as an illustrative lens, Drage explores how ‘women of colour’ writers ‘are changing the face of science fiction (sf), both by their mere presence within the genre and through the hybridisation of ‘hard science fiction’ with spirituality, mythology and indigenous scientific literacies from Africa and the Caribbean’ (Drage 2017, this issue). She ultimately argues that these differentially globally positioned authorial entries into the genre are heralding a positive shift away from more Euro-American-centric perceptions of what science fiction looks like, especially as a field traditionally dominated by white

men, to one that is beginning to reflect a greater diversity of subject positions, central actors and perspectives. In Rosado Perez's literary analysis (*Literary Activism for "Mental Equality" in Mary Robinson's Proto-Feminist Pamphlet 'A Letter to the women of England on the Injustice of Mental Subordination with anecdotes' (1799)*) we are provided with an insight into the life and work of Mary Darby Robinson, an 18th Century English proto-feminist author and associate of British 'First Wave' feminist foremother, Mary Wollstonecraft. Here the reader is guided through a historiographical and critical literary approach to Robinson's 'A Letter to the women of England' to illustrate the significance of early feminist debates and their interweaving with complex revolutionary ideas. Underpinning the article is the author's intrigue concerning the ways in which 'the term 'equality' has been used historically, and how women writers' genealogies have functioned as a form of resistance to social and cultural practices that contributed to women's subordination' (Rosado Perez 2017 this issue).

Moving then to a social scientific approach to gender analyses, Benitez Silva's article (*Sport: a site of exclusion or space for equality?*) provides an engaging exploration of debates concerning the role of gender in sport based on extant literature. Addressing some of the challenges in making sport a site for gender equality, she concludes that 'as long as sport remains an arena where gender inequalities are naturalized and normalized, as well as a sphere dominated by masculine structures of power, actions towards equality may have little impact' (Benitez Silva 2017, this issue). Levy's research (*Of Mobiles and Menses: Period Tracking Apps and Issues of Response-ability*) explores the developing arena of online menstrual tracking digital apps through a feminist lens. Drawing on Donna Haraway's concept of multispecies response-ability here Levy reflects on accountabilities, ethics and practices using the figure of the cyborg to conceptualise the complex inter-weaving of bodies and technologies in our digital age. Staying with a digital theme, Trilló's article (*Can the subaltern tweet? Reflections on Twitter as a space of appearance and inequality in accessing visibility*) immerses us in the world of social media and political participation. Drawing on Butler (2015) and Gerbaudo's (2012) choreographic and performative theories of assembly, Trilló points out that the relationship be-

tween social media and political participation is complex and cannot be reduced to simplistic cause and effect. Using the examples of Twitter campaigns #RhodesMustFall in South Africa and #NiUnaMenos in Argentina Rhodes, Trilló argues that while Twitter can be a space in which people can potentially enact and perform political action and resistance, however and ultimately, real-world inequalities continue to pose obstacles to the efficacy of digital activism and the digital sphere as a site of inclusion.

In the final companion pieces in this special issue and moving now towards gendered anthropological approaches to cultures of equalities, we have both Choudhury and Clisby's and Turner's articles. In the former (*Masculinity in Transition or Patriarchy Reasserted? A study of construction workers in Sylhet, Bangladesh*), readers are offered a glimpse into the lives and homes of particularly situated female and male construction worker households in Sylhet. Based on extensive ethnographic research conducted by Choudhury, here the authors explore and articulate constructions of masculinities in a patriarchal context which is undergoing rapid socio-economic transformations. Finally, Turner (*Women with Knives in Their Boots: How Brazil's Gaúchas Turn 'Machismo' to Their Advantage*) draws this interdisciplinary focus on gender and equalities to a close with his exploration of *machismo* in the south of Brazil and of women's resistance to this folk model of patriarchal masculinity. While clearly not being an advocate for *machismo*, here Turner pushes his analysis beyond strategies of resistance and towards a focus on 'the ways in which women use *machismo* productively, even turning it to their advantage [whereby] *machismo* becomes a productive site within which women who understand the rules [...] are able to not only play its games successfully, but also construct their own gendered, and in their view 'modern', lives' (Turner 2017, this issue).

In conclusion, I hope that readers will appreciate the diversity and richness of this collection of new and emerging research in the field of gender analysis and I would like to express my appreciation to have been offered this opportunity to bring together this issue for S-CHS.

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