



DiGeSt

Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies

Editorial

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Editorial

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We start this editorial note not in the usual format, but with a statement of acknowledgement that is appropriate to the times we live in. We are facing the reality in which social and economic precarity has taken a great toll on many academics' work. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only revealed the implicit biases and vast inequalities in our social systems with which the most socially and economically vulnerable are charged, but it has also created a wave of implicit and explicit practices of solidarity. COVID-19's devastating effects are hardly news to the scientific community. While the virus itself might be a new phenomenon, scientists, philosophers, and activists have long reminded us that a situation like this was at hand. In the words of the great primatologist and anthropologist, Jane Goodall, "we have brought this on ourselves. A pandemic like this has been predicted ... and it is because of our absolute disrespect for nature and animals ... we hunt them, kill them, eat them, traffic them, sell them for meat in wild animal meat markets."¹

As editors of DiGeSt we feel the responsibility to emphasize that undermining the very real difficulties that people face due to COVID-19 spread is against our academic, moral, and professional values. We have not and will not adhere to 'business as usual' as long as care workers, mothers, and marginalized and often racialized groups of people face unprecedented amounts of labor while struggling with the everyday issues we encounter in this turbulent period. We stand by those who are affected by the pandemic and underline our understanding and support to all members, subscribers, readers, reviewers, and authors who have been negatively impacted — directly or indirectly — by COVID-19. DiGeSt takes this message seriously, and to solidarize with our collaborators who have been affected by the pandemic, we have postponed our upcoming special issue and extended review and submission deadlines. For this same reason, while we continue working under the current circumstances, we appreciate the support and understanding of the readers in case of any delays in our future publications.

Besides this message of solidarity, we also have a message of hope and progress to share. This issue of Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies introduces some changes in the editorial team and in its publication format. As of September 2019, **Ladan Rahbari** and **Tina Goethals** have taken up the torch from Mieke Vandenbroucke as the new editors of DiGeSt. This editorial change was simultaneous to DiGeSt's transition into an open access journal. Our open access platform is made possible and supported by Ghent University's OJS platform. DiGeSt has received support from the many amazing colleagues in the ICT department of Ghent University for which we are very thankful. As we continue our publication journey, DiGeSt strongly believes in making research accessible to everyone regardless of their level and forms of academic affiliation across the world. For this, we have taken steps towards a fairer and more accessible format of distribution. By adopting the open access digital format, we will not require any publication fees from authors, nor subscription charges from our readers. The publications will also be accessible through the world wide web and open to all readers regardless of their affiliations. We are thus happy and optimistic about our commitment to research dissemination and breaking down paywalls in the academy.

This issue of DiGeSt features a special collaboration between us — the journal's new editors, Ladan Rahbari and Tina Goethals — and the former editor Mieke Vandenbroucke. The contributions that this issue brings together touch upon topics which we expect to continue being relevant and pressing, even in a post-COVID-19 era of potential deglobalization and increasing nationalism: non-normative parenthood, LGBT+ presence, refugee narratives, and ethical trans research.

In the first contribution, "'Deviant' or the Consequence of Social Evolution? Discourses of Intentional 'Multiple Parenthood Practices' in the Dutch and the Flemish

¹ Sadler, R. (2020). 'We brought this on ourselves': Dr Jane Goodall's reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2WHcZvc>.

Press”, **Nola Cammu** offers an analysis of press articles concerning intentional multiple parenthood in Belgium and the Netherlands. Through discourse analysis, this study examines how the media portray intentional plus-two-parent families and questions dyadic and gendered representations of normative parenthood within public discourse. This article illustrates how newly developed concepts within the traditional framework of parenthood remain dependent on mainstream portrayals and how the concept of parenthood fails to become more inclusive.

In “LGBT+ visibility in Flanders, The Presence of Sexual and Gender Diversity in Flemish Television Fiction (2001-2016)” **Florian Vanlee, Frederik Dhaenens and Sofie Van Bauwel** examine fictional representations of LGBT+. A quantitative analysis of LGBT+ characters in Flemish television fiction conducted between 2001 and 2016 disclosed representational patterns of LGBT+ found in domestic television culture. The results of this paper provide a descriptive framework to facilitate qualitative analysis of the representation of sexual and gender diversity in popular culture in Flanders—a relevant, yet understudied context.

In “Beyond Persecution: Exploring Alternative Refugee Narratives in Jenny Erpenbeck” **Jessy Carton** reflects on refugee narratives and interactions currently performed in national administrations. This article offers a literary contribution to the long-standing narrative research in forced migration studies through an analysis of the fictionalised migrant-citizen dialogue in a recent German novel *Gehen, ging, gegangen* by Jenny Erpenbeck (2015). Beyond the legal discussion about the required scope of international protection, the literary dialogues in this novel can help reveal the strengths and weaknesses of narrative interactions between case officers and asylum seekers, between citizens and displaced others.

Finally, in “Shaping an Ethical Approach to Trans Research: Some Reflections from My Doctoral Project”, **france rose hartline** reflects on what it means to be an ethical feminist scholar. Based on a doctoral research project on trans and gender-diverse experiences in Norway and on the impact of a new law on gender recognition, this article presents essential theoretical and methodological considerations to ethical trans research. By examining the own positionality and some of the struggles in the research, suggestions are made for an ethical transfeminist approach when conducting trans research.

Many DiGeSt issues also include a “What are your reading?” section, in which we give the floor to early-career researchers to report shortly on critical studies that are of particular significance to their ongoing research. To continue this tradition, this issue features four pieces. The contributors to this issue’s “What are you reading?” section are: **Jasper De Cnuydt, Soumaya El Majdoub, Guangxing Fu, and Jana Heemeryck**. This section presents a number of short notes where the authors introduce you to topics such as gender and media, the impact of Malthusian thinking in capitalist development policy, gender inequality in China, and environmentalism and feminism. The impact of these specific on the authors’ ongoing research is highlighted and the relevance of these studies for the wider field are discussed.

As the editors of the Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies, we would like to close this editorial with a call for action and a final word of gratitude. As we and the world around us, globally and locally, are in turmoil, we are reminded yet again that the capacity and responsibility of academics is not solely to deliver academic publications and research papers. We invite our readers, subscribers, and academic colleagues to join us in creating not only a slow science approach in the time of a global pandemic, but also to rethink the ways in which academia realizes its promise to bring about intellectual and practical change to the world. We are thankful to the members of our editorial and advisory boards for their continuous work and support. We are especially thankful to our editorial interns Anna Ropianyk and Vanessa Van Puyvelde for their help and support in the optimal delivery of this issue and for their hard work and commitment in such difficult times. And finally, we thank the readers for following DiGeSt, and the authors and reviewers for their valuable research, academic work, and critical approach.