

# Editorial Introduction

## Researching Differently

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At the heart of much feminist research is a critical urge to challenge conventional ways of doing scientific and scholarly work. Feminist research is often postconventional and unorthodox. This volume gives an introduction to some of the ways in which feminist researchers do things differently.

The focus of *Theories and Methodologies in Postgraduate Feminist Research: Researching Differently* is theories and methodologies in interdisciplinary feminist research, within a context of increasing globalisation. In particular, the volume addresses postgraduate researchers whose interest is in arts- and humanities-based feminist research. Advanced textbooks in feminist theories and methodologies have had a tendency to focus strongly on research within a social sciences frame, and whilst this volume includes topics, methodologies and theories of interest to social-science-based constituencies, its main emphasis is on arts- and humanities-oriented feminist research within an interdisciplinary, transnational European frame. This approach is a response to clearly articulated needs within the feminist research community.

Importantly, and for the first time, this volume also takes into account the increasing need to engage with the issues of transferable skills and professionalisation in feminist studies.<sup>1</sup> To this end, a section of this volume is devoted to the professionalisation of the field and to the professional opportunities this brings with it, as it is exemplified through selected European case studies.

The volume is the result of a long-term collaboration between major European research training programmes in feminist studies, including a European Union-funded thematic network called ATHENA (Advanced Thematic Network in European Women's Studies)<sup>2</sup> which started in the late 1990s and since then has gathered feminist scholars from over 100 European universities. This network has made it possible for teachers, researchers and students of feminist studies to engage in a long-term commitment to compare notes as far as theories and methodologies are concerned. This has resulted in transversal dialogues across disciplinary, geographic and language borders. The network has opened a unique space for such dialogues, facilitating both in-depth explorations of disciplinary

and national differences/similarities and the emergence of new synergies between approaches to feminist research training.

The sharing of ideas and the development of joint curricula are key concerns for the contributors to this volume. However, a central principle is also to pay due respect to differences and to carve out diversity. A one-size-fits-all-approach has never seemed a viable option for the group of authors behind this volume, but methodological nationalism—i.e., that one's own country is taken as the final horizon when thinking about the development of curricula in feminist research training—does not seem very adequate either. Therefore, we pursue notions of feminism that promote a politics of location but have no borders. According to the contributors, new ways of constructing postgraduate research training on gender in its intersections with race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, nationality and so on are best developed in transnational and interdisciplinary dialogues which take into account both common ground and differences, and which pay thorough attention to power differentials.

In the context of existing resources on feminist theories and methodologies, this volume represents a distinctive contribution to the field in terms of its focus, level of study and engagement with European issues. More precisely, its focus on the humanities marks it out as different from the many social-science-oriented textbooks concerning theories and methodologies in feminist research, such as Ramazanoglu and Holland's 2002 volume, *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices*. Furthermore, the humanities profile also makes *Theories and Methodologies in Postgraduate Feminist Research: Researching Differently* different from its sibling *Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing* (Lykke 2010) in the series Routledge Advances in Feminist Studies and Intersectionality, as the latter volume focuses more generally on trans- and postdisciplinary perspectives. With that said, this and the sibling volume will complement each other well as guides to feminist research training programmes and classrooms. *Theories and Methodologies in Postgraduate Feminist Research: Researching Differently* is also different from more basic bachelor- or master-level introductions to the field of feminist studies within the humanities (Buikema and Smelik 1995; Buikema and van der Tuin 2009), addressing itself instead to those engaged in postgraduate research. Finally, *Theories and Methodologies in Postgraduate Feminist Research: Researching Differently* is in dialogue with an earlier volume compiled in the context of the above-mentioned ATHENA collaboration, entitled *Thinking Differently* (Griffin and Braidotti 2002). The purpose of that volume was to introduce European issues in feminist research.

The overall development of the contents as well as the individual contributions to the volume are based on the contributors' long-term commitment to gender research training in different disciplinary and interdisciplinary, national and international contexts. There are six main parts. They cover questions of feminist theory, methodology, research

methods, interdisciplinarity and careers in feminist studies, as well as offering a couple examples of what it means to choose a research topic and ask research questions within the field. A coda addresses the writing process. Balancing respect for differences with a search for common ground in gender research training, each section presents key issues with a starting point in different contexts, disciplines and interdisciplines. The volume is necessarily selective, covering cutting-edge gender research issues on the one hand, and seeking to address some of the key methods and methodologies used in arts and humanities based feminist research on the other. The editors have commissioned chapters which give examples of central discussions within each section. Firmly anchored within an interdisciplinary feminist framework, the volume pays special attention to three kinds of approaches:

- 1) approaches located centrally within the humanities such as textual and visual analysis
- 2) approaches located at the borders between the humanities and social sciences and based in fields such as cultural studies, anthropology, social psychology and history
- 3) approaches representing specific discipline-transgressing fields such as feminist technoscience studies.

The theme of Part I is *feminist theories*. Whilst the overall background for this volume is the development of feminist studies at the borders of various disciplinary contexts and spatiotemporal locations, the first part profiles feminist theorising through a cluster of debates about the dynamics of generational and disciplinary locations. More precisely, the contributors to the part discuss which specific knowledges emerge from feminist encounters within the framework of third-wave feminism and technoscience studies.

In chapter 1, 'Gender Research with 'Waves': On Repositioning a Neodisciplinary Apparatus,' Dutch feminist scholar Iris van der Tuin argues for a revised conceptualisation of 'feminist waves' alongside a third-wave feminist conceptualisation of generationality. The analytical tool of 'feminist waves' is considered to be part of a 'neodisciplinary' apparatus in feminist studies, that is, a scholarly model for understanding the history of feminism, which has been widely used within feminist studies. Van der Tuin argues that the canonising of this 'tool' has resulted in a kind of paralysis experienced by contemporary young feminists. An effect of the modelling via the wave model is that the history of feminism becomes stuck in a dichotomy between a 'second' feminist wave located in the 1970s and a 'postfeminist wave,' implying that feminism is not needed anymore. Interpellating the theoretical framework of feminist scholar Karen Barad (2003), van der Tuin seeks to break the dichotomous logic by rethinking the wave model according to a third-wave feminist economy of dis-identification which

acknowledges both kinship *and* a multitude of nonhierarchically organised differences and potentials.

Chapter 2, 'Feminist Science and Technology Studies,' explores another aspect of feminist theorising. UK-based feminist scholars Maureen McNeil and Celia Roberts show how this vigorous and strongly interdisciplinary branch of feminist research is a space for productive encounters between feminism and human- and social-science studies of technoscience. The chapter outlines how feminist science and technology studies is an area of detailed empirical research, lively intellectual and political debate, and cutting-edge conceptual development. It addresses three core questions: What have feminists brought to technoscience studies? What have feminists found to be of most interest in technoscience studies? What have feminists working in other areas borrowed from feminist technoscience studies?

The topic of Part II is feminist debates on *methodologies*. It takes issue with three questions of key concern for many feminist scholars interested in renegotiations of methodological rules and principles for the production of knowledge: How can gender be analysed in intersections with other power differentials and identity markers such as class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality and so forth? What does it mean to revise historical narratives of the past from feminist perspectives? Is the concept of 'experience' useful for, or a barrier to, deessentialising gender analyses, and how can this troubled notion be handled in the wake of the poststructuralist critique of it?

In chapter 3, 'Intersectionality: A Theoretical Adjustment,' Danish social psychologists Dorthe Staunæs and Dorte Marie Søndergaard critically investigate the concept of 'intersectionality' that, in recent years, has given rise to many productive feminist debates. Although gender as an analytical category does useful and important critical work, many feminist scholars today are in agreement that gender analyses should be linked to investigations of other social categorisations and intersections with race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, nationality and so on. According to this view, identities and power differentials are always complex and based on multiple interwoven categorisations. 'Intersectionality' has become the umbrella term which many feminists use when they refer to these complexities, and 'intersectional analysis' is a critical methodological tool for approaching them. In the chapter, Staunæs and Søndergaard provide an overview of recent feminist debates on intersectionality and argue specifically for a poststructuralist approach, paying special attention to the question of whether or not the concept works as a tool for critical feminist analysis of subject formations within social psychology.

The second chapter of this part, chapter 4, 'What to Make of Identity and Experience in Twenty-first Century Feminist Research,' deals with another conceptual tool which has been much discussed by feminist scholars, namely, 'experience.' Hungary-based feminist scholar Allaine Cerwonka discusses an important divide between different kinds of feminist scholars.

On the one hand, feminists anchored in standpoint epistemologies have celebrated methodologies which take as their point of departure explorations of feminist and women's experiences as alternatives to mainstream research. On the other hand, postmodern and poststructuralist feminists have claimed that the subject, and hence experience, are discursively constructed and therefore not to be confused with an 'authentic' inner-core identity. Cerwonka gives an overview of these debates and argues that an unproblematised understanding of experience as 'authentic evidence' may become a trap and reproduce individualist and neoliberal ideologies. Instead, she argues for a relational approach that carefully addresses the all-pervasiveness of power as well as the fluidity of identities and that, in particular, avoids the construction of an innocent 'outside.'

Chapter 5, 'Histories and Memories in Feminist Research,' is written by two feminist historians, Andrea Petö and Berteke Waaldijk, who are located in Hungary and the Netherlands, respectively. It focuses on questions relating to history, memories and historical narratives which—like 'intersectionality' and 'experience'—have attracted much feminist attention. How to subvert the stories of mainstream history, their entanglement in constructions of nation and nationhood and their complicity in processes of marginalisation and exclusion? What does it mean to rewrite history from feminist perspectives? Which methodologies can be mobilised? According to Petö and Waaldijk these questions are crucial not only for feminist historians; to reflect on strategies for approaching history and memories differently can be very useful for feminist scholars from other disciplines and interdisciplines as well. As Petö and Waaldijk argue, important lessons can be learned from the methodologies developed by feminist historians.

Part III is concerned with the *research methods* deployed in feminist research and, in particular, methods originating in the humanities. Gender researchers use many kinds of methods. However, the choice of focus for this section is motivated by the fact that the substantial contributions from the humanities to the toolbox on which many interdisciplinary feminist researchers draw are not as visible as the contributions from the social sciences. Some of the reasons for this are explained in the first chapter of the section, and the remaining two introduce specific methods developed within the framework of the humanities, close reading and visual analysis, which are key to much feminist research.

In chapter 6, 'Writing about Research Methods in the Arts and Humanities,' UK-based feminist scholar Gabriele Griffin argues that many arts and humanities disciplines have tended to remain silent about the research methods they employ as evidenced by the fact that subjects such as literary studies do not at present require PhD theses to contain a methodology section and also by the lack of books on research methods in the arts and humanities compared to similar texts in the social sciences, for example. However, as research-funding bodies as well as interdisciplinary collaborative working increasingly require arts and humanities researchers to be

explicit about their research practices, it is necessary for arts and humanities disciplines to develop articulated elucidations of their research methods. This chapter provides a variety of examples of how research methods in the arts and humanities operate and might be articulated.

In chapter 7, 'Feminist Perspectives on Close Reading,' two literary feminist scholars, Jasmina Lukić from Hungary and Adelina Sánchez Espinosa from Spain re/evaluate the importance of close reading while foregrounding gender as a central critical concept. The chapter sets out to show that, far from being neutral as conventionally assumed in literary theory, close reading can be used as a tool to go further when combined with other approaches. The chapter moves on to investigate how the traditional methods of close reading become modified, invigorated and renewed when adapting to the needs and claims of feminist research. It does so, in its second half, through a case study of a number of close readings of the nineteenth-century English novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë (1847)—a text that has received much critical attention from feminist scholars working with different critical positions.

Chapter 8, 'Visual Cultures: Feminist Perspectives,' written by two feminist researchers based in the Netherlands, Rosemarie Buikema and Marta Zarzycka, maps the reception, interpretation and circulation of images within academic research on visual culture, with particular attention paid to gender, ethnicity and the politics of representation. Through a couple of case studies—images from different genres and disciplines, directed to different audiences and yet travelling beyond their original contexts—the authors point out how different methods of visual research can be articulated. This chapter further demonstrates that questions concerning globally available images are not only restricted to academic discourses but are concerned with the larger scope of knowledge, power and their interconnections.

Part IV focuses on the issue of *multi-, inter-, trans- and postdisciplinarity* in feminist studies. It introduces different meanings of disciplinary boundary-crossing, as it is theoretically explored and widely practiced within the field of feminist studies. Many feminists underline the impact of feminist research within the disciplines (understood as human, social, medical, natural and technical science disciplines). At the same time there is also a widespread consensus that transgressions of disciplinary boundaries are crucial when it comes to theorising the complexities of gender/sex and gender relations in their intersections with other power differentials. Against this background, part IV discusses diverse definitions, as well as the overlaps and differences between ways of characterising cross-disciplinary work as multi-, inter-, trans- and postdisciplinary. The contributors analyse the ways in which these different modes of cross-disciplinary work have been very influential in the development of feminist studies.

In chapter 9, 'This Discipline Which Is Not One: Feminist Studies as a Postdiscipline,' Sweden-based feminist scholar Nina Lykke discusses how, on the one hand, feminist theorising leads towards radical multi-, inter-,

trans- and postdisciplinarity, while on the other hand, the field of feminist studies is so well developed and established by now that it can pass and claim academic authority as a discipline in itself. Against this background, the author discusses how different feminist epistemological positions may lead to different dilemmas and approaches to the question of disciplining. Drawing on the ontoepistemological framework of feminist scholar Karen Barad and locating herself in a postconstructionist position, Lykke explores the problems and potential of defining the field as a postdisciplinary discipline or postdiscipline.

Chapter 10, 'Why Interdisciplinarity? Interdisciplinarity and Women's/ Gender Studies in Europe,' is written by Swedish feminist scholar Mia Liinason. She analyses the interdisciplinary search for knowledge in feminist studies as a twofold strategy. On the one hand, Liinason explores interdisciplinary feminist research as resistant to the knowledge-seeking strategies and inherent power structures of the traditional disciplines. On the other, she interprets the interdisciplinarity of feminist research as a struggle for pluralism in the hope of a democratic and progressive politics of human rights.

In chapter 11, 'Transdisciplinary Gender Studies: Conceptual and Institutional Challenges,' two German scholars, Antje Lann Hornscheidt and Susanne Baer, focus on the interaction between transdisciplinary practices in feminist studies and disciplinary research and underline that gender research—be it disciplinary, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary—should be understood, first of all, as a transformatory practice. The point is not simply to add to disciplinary canons but also to intervene in them. Illustrating their points with examples from the transdisciplinary gender studies programme at Humboldt University, Berlin, Hornscheidt and Baer point out that it is important to define disciplinarity, inter- and transdisciplinarity in a context-specific way. They analyse disciplinary gender research as an endeavour which aims at the enhancement of disciplines, whereas interdisciplinary gender research combines two or more disciplines in terms of methodological and theoretical approaches with the goal of enhancing the findings. Finally, transdisciplinary gender research is to be understood as an explicitly reflexive mode of research that scrutinises and challenges implicit norms (e.g., in terms of gender blindness, bias and so on) of the disciplines from a critical intersectional gender perspective.

Part V centres on *professionalisation* processes in feminist studies. This is becoming an increasingly important topic in the context of research and transferable skills training where the question of academic career development looms ever larger. The multidimensional institutionalisation and professionalisation of feminist studies which has taken place at many European universities during the last decades has made prominent the question of professional possibilities, developments and destinies. It is important for the students who register for programmes or modules in feminist studies, as well as for the organisers, to know for which kinds of jobs these programmes and modules potentially prepare them. It is

also important for employers to know what skills a graduate or PhD with a profile or degree in feminist studies is likely to bring to a position. In addition, the EU's implementation of the so-called Bologna Process on the harmonisation of European teaching systems has forcefully put 'employability' on the agenda of higher education in Europe. The part on the professional outlets for feminist studies is motivated by this backdrop. Its discussion of university structures and career opportunities aims at providing an overview for research students keen to understand higher-education systems in Europe and feminist studies' position within these. As the situation regarding recognition and the conditions for professionalisation are different in diverse European countries, we have chosen to focus on national/regional examples. As the whole area of professional outlets for feminist studies is very underresearched, the section draws on the only cross-national analysis of the issue to date, a major EU-funded research project titled *Employment and Women's Studies: The Impact of Women's Studies Training on Women's Employment in Europe* (Griffin 2002, 2004 and 2005).

Chapter 12, 'The Professionalisation of Feminist Researchers: The Nordic Case,' is written by Finland-based feminist scholar Harriet Silius. Whereas the field of feminist studies in Europe more broadly seems to have had an uneven institutionalisation, across the Nordic countries it is assumed to look much the same. Not surprisingly, the Nordic countries are frequently believed to be emblematic of feminist studies' smooth and successful professionalisation. Is this really the case? Can one talk about one pan-Nordic development, implying the same patterns in each of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden? The chapter explores precisely this question. The theme of professionalisation of feminist studies is analysed from two angles: (1) from the point of view of disciplinisation and (2) from the perspective of institutionalisation. The chapter concludes by assessing the actual degree of professionalisation that has occurred in the various Nordic countries and suggests there are considerable differences between them.

In chapter 13, 'The Professionalisation of Feminist Researchers: The Spanish Case,' Spanish feminist scholar Isabel Carrera Suárez explores the ways in which feminist studies in Spain has rapidly developed since 1975 and has consolidated its position at graduate and postgraduate level, partly through new MA programmes adapted to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) developed as part of EU integration policies. The transformed structures, together with recent political moves and legislation which explicitly support the creation of courses in the field of feminist studies, should create new opportunities for feminist researchers and experts. However, old obstacles, particularly rigid discipline-based structures and the academic resistance to feminist studies, remain firmly in place. The chapter offers a brief overview of the Spanish higher-education system and the development of feminist studies within it, followed by a discussion of

recent developments in academic structures and in legislation, analysing their relationship to professional opportunities for students of feminist studies in Spain, both inside and outside academe.

In chapter 14, 'The Professionalisation of Feminist Researchers: The German Case,' German feminist scholars Marianne Schmidbaur and Ulla Wischermann outline the current conditions and development of feminist studies professionalisation in Germany. This chapter analyses women's participation in academe and the process of feminist studies institutionalisation. Feminist studies graduates' choices of employment and academic career paths are also analysed, and it is above all suggested that gender knowledge and gender competence emerge as key professional and personal qualifications for feminist studies graduates. The chapter makes clear that career planning is becoming increasingly target oriented and is supported by networking and mentoring programmes. It concludes with some best-practice examples and a comment on future trends for feminist studies in view of the Bologna Process.

Part VI, *The Choice of Topic and Research Questions: Some Examples*, exemplifies how the process of choosing a research topic and asking research questions may proceed within feminist studies. It goes without saying that this process can take many different routes, so this part offers a few selected examples. The two chapters each give a glimpse of the process, one from the perspective of a researcher who is at the beginning of her research career and one from the point of view of two professors. Following the attention which this volume gives to the humanities and cultural disciplines within an overall interdisciplinary framework, the examples are drawn from feminist scholars who pursued academic careers in media and cultural studies and in anthropology.

In chapter 15, 'My Dissertation Photo Album: Snapshots from a Writing Tour,' German feminist scholar Doro Wiese retrospectively reflects on the process of choosing a dissertation topic. Dissertation writing is mostly considered a necessary step on the academic career ladder. In this chapter, however, Wiese argues that something else happens when we give in to the experiences offered and mediated through the two key practices of scholarly work—reading and writing—which humanities scholars, in particular, have reflected on as methodologies. Mediating other times, peoples and worlds, reading and writing are precisely those practices that allow us to be othered, to be haunted by difference in and for itself. Wiese offers as an example of this her own experiences of choosing a dissertation topic, which allowed her to engage in the creative act of what cultural theorist Marianne Hirsch has called 'postmemory.' Wiese carves out how a reading of US novelist Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002) allowed her to come to terms with a traumatic family history during and after the Nazi regime, in particular, the history of Wiese's grandmother.

Chapter 16, 'Intimate Truths about Subjectivity and Sexuality: A Psychoanalytical and a Postcolonial Approach,' is a conversation between two

feminist anthropologists, Henrietta L. Moore from the UK and Gloria D. Wekker based in the Netherlands. Wekker is theoretically located in transnational, intersectional feminist theory, while Moore works within a tradition of psychoanalytical feminist theory. From this dual starting point in intersectional and psychoanalytic feminist theory, Wekker and Moore enter into a dialogue, raising key research questions on the discursive entanglement of gender, sexuality and processes of racialisation. The questions are articulated against the background of a joint rereading of a case story from the historical archives of classic psychoanalysis. While the classic psychoanalytic reading of the case story focuses on gender and sexuality, discussing female masculinity, Wekker and Moore foreground how the discourse on gender and sexuality is intertwined with an underlying racialised discourse which echoes colonial power relations. What does it mean that the Dutch psychoanalyst Van Ophuijsen, who reported on the case (1924), substituted gender for race in his interpretations while he produced a racialised discourse in his paraphrasing of the ways in which the women on whose stories he is reporting talk about their sexual organs? What does this story more generally say about the intersections of gender, sexuality and racialisation, nationalism and colonialism, in the national Dutch cultural imaginary (or cultural archive; Said 1993)?

The *coda* of the book is a chapter on writing, discussed as an inevitable and crucial dimension of all research work that can be both pleasurable and painful. Chapter 17, 'If Writing Has to do with Desire, What 'Kind' of Desire Is It? Between Jacques Lacan and Gilles Deleuze,' is written by Polish feminist scholar Edyta Just and focuses on the role of desires in academic writing processes. Just takes as her starting point the fact that in climbing the stairs to the top of the scholarly world, one must pass through many levels: bachelor, master, doctoral level and so on. She also reminds us that the 'passport' needed to move from one to the other is a degree, and that a written text is a requirement for this. A paper, a thesis, is a *sine qua non* of being finally granted the 'passport.' Referring to philosopher Gilles Deleuze's and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's different concepts of desire, Just proposes an approach to the writing process that can make research students more confident and less fearful when it comes to the 'writing exercise' which is supposed to award them 'the passport.'

## NOTES

1. We will use the phrase 'feminist studies' throughout this introductory chapter, whilst recognising that both 'women's studies' and 'gender studies' are used by the same constituencies and also by a range of the contributors to this volume. However, since women's/gender studies is not institutionalised in some international sites whilst the concept of feminist research is, we utilise that phrase for our purposes here. For more or less the same reason, we have decided to let the contributors to the volume choose to refer to the subject area in the way each of them have found most appropriate for her

specific purposes and institutional tradition. This means that women's studies, gender studies and feminist studies are used to refer to the subject area in the volume as a whole.

2. ATHENA Web site, <http://www.athena3.org/> (accessed September 9, 2010).

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