

Editorial

As *DiGeSt* goes to press, the stakes in the debate on gender and diversity are once again high. The beginning of 2017 saw a powerful statement of women across the world with the Women's March on 21 January, only days after the inauguration of President Trump in the United States. Men and women marched together to advocate women's rights, LGBTQ rights, workers' rights, racial equality, and freedom of religion. That the fight for equal rights continues to be necessary was also demonstrated when a Polish member of the European parliament, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, told his fellow members that he thought women should earn less than men, because they are supposedly "weaker", "smaller", and "less intelligent".¹ Korwin-Mikke was called out on his statement by a Spanish member of the European parliament, Iratxe García-Perez, and sanctioned by the European parliament. Protest continued on International Women's Day when women went on strike to protest against a neoliberal system and to fight for a more inclusive, gender equal world. Within this context of advocacy for women's rights and human rights, *DiGeSt* continues its commitment to publishing new work on gender and diversity across the humanities, social sciences, and psy-disciplines. It wants to provide a forum for debate on gender and diversity, predominantly in Europe.

This issue opens with a quantitative study by **Myrte Dierckx, Petra Meier, and Joz Motmans**. In "Beyond the Box': A Comprehensive Study of Sexist, Homophobic, and Transphobic Attitudes Among the Belgian Population", Dierckx, Meier, and Motmans present and interpret the results of a large-scale survey conducted in Belgium in 2013 on sexist, homophobic, lesbophobic, biphobic, and transphobic attitudes. Their research splits up attitudes in cognitive beliefs, affect, and behaviour, and looks for correlations between sexist, homophobic, lesbophobic, biphobic, and transphobic attitudes on the one hand and background variables such as sex, age, education, religion, and gender identification on the other hand. According to their study, socially dominant and rigid gender attitudes are the strongest predictors of sexist, homophobic, and transphobic attitudes, and this for men and women, younger and older generations. Despite anti-discrimination laws and equality policies, so Dierckx, Meier, and Motmans assert, "individuals who do not conform to the heteronormative standard . . . often remain the objects of stigmatisation and prejudice". The authors argue for a more nuanced understanding of gender as going beyond the metaphorical male/female "box" as crucial for ensuring more positive attitudes towards LGBTQ people. They recommend creating more diverse social environments and giving adequate information on sexual identity as beneficial for altering heteronormative and rigid gender beliefs.

The distribution of adequate information regarding sexual identity is precisely what is at stake in **Justine De Kerf's** contribution "Anti-Gay Propaganda Laws:

1 Rankin, J. (14 March 2017). Polish MEP punished for saying women are less intelligent than men. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/14/polish-mep-janusz-korwin-mikke-punished-saying-women-less-intelligent-men>

Time for the European Court of Human Rights to Overcome Her Fear of Commitment”. De Kerf elucidates Russia’s prohibition of propaganda of non-traditional (read: LGBTQ) sexual relationships. In Russia, she notes, the law states that “children should not be misguided into believing that non-traditional relationships are equivalent to traditional (heterosexual) relationships”. De Kerf discusses Russia’s anti-gay propaganda laws in the context of human rights. She examines the role of the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights in enforcing the European Convention of Human Rights, signed by Russia. If the European Court is truly committed to defending the rights of LGBTQ people, she argues, then it should make a clear statement with regard to Russia’s anti-propaganda laws that are found to be at odds with the European Convention. De Kerf, however, also points to the complex political situation, since a strong judgement by the Court condemning these laws could be perceived as a sign of Russophobia, therefore alienating the Russian people from the human rights debate. Nevertheless, she urges the Court to take a strong stance.

If the first two contributions are concerned with LGBTQ rights, the next two articles engage with theoretical perspectives and intersectional analysis. **Seunghyun Song** revisits Frantz Fanon’s seminal *Black Skin, White Masks* in “Bridging Epidermalization of Black Inferiority and the Racial Epidermal Schema: Internalizing Oppression to the Level of Possibilities”. She reads Fanon’s text in relation to phenomenology, elucidating how modes of perception in colonial contexts become ingrained in the body, thus leading to the internalization of racial oppression. Song asserts that Fanon’s insights are still relevant to our understanding of racial oppression today. Phenomenology, she maintains, helps us to attain “deeper and more impactful understandings of oppressive processes and their consequences”, highlighting “how oppression functions at the level of bodily consciousness”. However, Fanon’s study also needs to be expanded, as he does not take into account an intersectional perspective. For Song, the racism and sexism as experienced by women of colour lead to “fundamentally different forms of self-realization and decolonization”: women of colour, she notes, do not don a white mask but a white, male mask. In other words, we need to question how the internalization of oppression works across multiple categories of identity.

In “Diasporic Muslims, Mental Health, and Subjectivity: Perspectives and Experiences of Mental Health Care Professionals in Ghent”, **Elise Rondelez, Sarah Bracke, Griet Roets, Caroline Vandekinderen, and Piet Bracke** rely on Nikolas Rose’s theory of subjectivity and Edward Said’s views of cultural difference to examine how mental health care professionals in Ghent approach and construct diasporic Muslims as subjects and mental health care recipients. They focus on diasporic Muslims in Ghent, because this group is “largely underrepresented in or even absent from mental health care institutions in Belgium”. As an ethnic-religious minority in Ghent, diasporic Muslims are often subject to racism and social exclusion, leading to a higher risk of mental health problems. Through an analysis of twenty-four interviews with mental health care professionals, Rondelez et al. are able to identify

a number of assumptions professional health care providers make with regard to diasporic Muslims. Their research shows that mental health care professionals often adopt a neoliberal logic in which good citizenship equals being a healthy, autonomous individual. Mental health care providers, moreover, are shown to set up a system of “us” versus “them”, by treating diasporic Muslims as different and inferior, for instance, with regard to knowledge about the body and mind. The authors further warn against the dangers of “hyper-culturalisation”, in which a so-called “culturally sensitive approach” constructs diasporic Muslims as almost entirely determined by their culture. Such a discourse, they argue, ignores personal and contextual differences, reducing diasporic Muslims to one homogeneous group. The article concludes that further research is necessary to investigate how a more dialogic relation can be constructed between (Western) mental health care professionals and diasporic Muslims.

The “What are you reading?” section presents a number of short notes on recent and canonical critical studies that are of particular significance to a researcher’s on-going project. **Sophie Withaecx** discusses Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman’s *Colonize this! Young Women of Color on Today’s Feminism*; **Ntokozo Yingwana** examines Chi Mgbako’s *To Live Freely in this World: Sex Worker Activism in Africa*; **Rozemarijn Vervoort** explores Sara Ahmed’s *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*; Nira Yuval-Davis’s *Gender & Nation* is taken up by **Laura Andriessen**; **Emma-Lee Amponsah** returns to Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*; and **Sean Bex** engages with the discourse of human rights in his discussion of Samuel Moyn’s lecture “How Human Rights Changed Utopianism” and *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*. These researchers not only comment on a critical work but also relate it to their own research and gauge its significance for current developments in the field of gender and diversity studies.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that *DiGeSt* has been included in the Flemish Academic Bibliography for the Social Sciences and Humanities (VABB-SHW) and that it has found a new home with University Press Leuven. We look forward to the new collaboration and hope that our readers and subscribers will continue to support us. We would also like to acknowledge the assistance of our interns Laura Andriessen and Lisen Maebe with the daily business of the journal and in proof-reading texts. As always, thanks are due to the members of the editorial board and the advisory board, as well as the anonymous peer reviewers for making *DiGeSt* possible. We hope the journal may continue to flourish and grow. The next issue will be a special issue on “Unruly Bodies”, guest edited by Sarah Bracke, Anaïs Van Ertvelde, and Lith Lefranc.

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