

---

# Editorial

*BioSocieties* (2010) **5**, 405–406. doi:10.1057/biosoc.2010.29

On occasion, *BioSocieties* publishes a special issue or cluster of articles focused on a topic of broad interest to our readership. Many of these have had earlier incarnations as conference sessions or streams of sessions, an excellent strategy to generate both useful comments for revisions and a deeper coherence across the papers that makes for a more integrated and provocative issue.

The Special Section in this volume on ‘Perspectives on Globalizing Genomics: The Case of “BRCA” Breast Cancer Research and Medical Practice’ offers accounts of scientific and clinical developments in this domain over the past 15 or so years. BRCA genetics and practices are an exemplary case of biomedicalization – the increasingly science-based expansion of medicine into more and more aspects of life, including in the absence of disease (Clarke *et al*, 2010). Here the focus is on risk – its assessment (for example, Fosket, 2004) and management, including such major interventions as preventative mastectomy, oophorectomy and chemoprevention. The Special Section thus extends the emerging sociology of diagnosis (Jutel, 2009) and the treatment of risk. It also offers analyses of the early relations of ecogenetics to breast cancer, emerging as breast cancer activism itself moves ‘from pink to green’ (Ley, 2009).

We are particularly excited about publishing this cluster of articles because they examine an array of breast cancer genetics developments that have occurred transnationally, including research in Cuba, the United Kingdom, the United States, Greece and Germany. Together they offer comparative studies of the co-constitution of sciences, clinical efforts, public and private health care, and the creation of distinctive new populations and subjectivities. And they do so across quite differing cultural and national settings with dramatically different social arrangements vis-à-vis health-care provision. Not only is such comparative work all too rare, but also ‘co-constitution’ and ‘co-production’ (Jasanoff, 2004) are all too often used as a gloss rather than an analytic tool.

Further, the introduction and articles provide some reflection on the pleasures and challenges of cross-national collaboration. In particular, the authors address some of the complexities of rendering qualitative research across different sites and by different researchers more comparable, an issue important to many of us (for example Prainsack *et al*, 2010). Thus this Special Section not only instantiates the present and future of biomedical sciences and practices, but also those of science, technology and medicine studies.

Biomedicalization and diagnostics are also subjects in a provocative interview with Dr David Kupfer, Chair of the *Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V)* taskforce. The interview conducted by Berend Verhoeff, who is both a psychiatrist and PhD candidate in Theory and History of Psychology, clearly underlines the relevance and productivity of interdisciplinary debate, collaboration and scholarship.

The Books Forum offers a mini-forum on the debate or non-debate about neuroenhancement initially discussed in *BioSocieties* 5(1), including an author's response and several letters to the editor. There is also a review of two recent books on stimulants and addiction, following through on the Special Issue on Drugs, Addiction and Society in our last issue.

## References

- Clarke, A.E., Mamo, L., Fosket, J., Fishman, J. and Shim, J. (2010) *Biomedicalization: Technoscientific Transformations of Health, Illness in the U.S.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Fosket, J. (2004) Constructing high-risk women: The development and standardization of a breast cancer risk assessment tool. *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 29(3): 291–313.
- Jasanoff, S. (2004) *States of Knowledge: The Co-production of Science and the Social Order.* London: Taylor and Francis.
- Jutel, A. (2009) Sociology of diagnosis: A preliminary review. *Sociology of Health & Illness* 31(2): 278–299.
- Ley, B. (2009) *From Pink to Green: Disease Prevention and the Environmental Breast Cancer Movement.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Prainsack, B., Svendsen, M.N., Koch, L. and Ehrich, K. (2010) Workshop report: How do we collaborate? Social science researchers' experience of multidisciplinary in biomedical settings. *BioSocieties* 5(2): 278–286.

Adele E. Clarke  
Nikolas Rose  
Ilina Singh