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# Editorial

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Risk thinking has come to pervade almost every aspect of life, from the regulation of financial institutions to the categorization and management of individuals who are thought to be either risky or at risk. While all forms of risk-thinking aim to bring the future into the present and make it calculable (to use the terminology of Ian Hacking), risk-management activities take many different forms, address different problems, with different targets, using different methods and with different social and ethical implications. It is necessary, therefore, to go beyond broad ascriptions of a ‘risk society’ to empirical investigation, and we carry two such investigations in this issue of *BioSocieties*. Alessandra Frigiero, Lorenzo Montali and Michelle Fine consider the place of risky and at risk subjects in the Italian debate about the ADHD child, and show how these issues are articulated quite differently by mental health professionals, teachers and parents, but nonetheless lead to a moral imperative to identify and govern children *in the name of risk*. Aaron T. Norton explores another dimension of risk thinking: the way in which epidemiological surveys, in this case surveys of men asking if they would be willing to be circumcised to reduce the risk of HIV infection, actually function to induce a kind of ethical obligation in those so surveyed to consider just that. Surveys are therefore not merely a passive methodology; here, the surveys position uncircumcised men as risky subjects, and reciprocally ‘biomedicalize’ circumcision itself.

Andi Johnson considers another set of methods, in an article on the measurement of fatigue by exercise physiologists working in South Africa. Combining intellectual history with laboratory ethnography, Johnson explores the problem of standardization and innovation in laboratory practice, using these issues as a lens to examine, on the one hand, the specific geopolitical issues that arise for those scientists working in the global South, and on the other, the debate over whether human fatigue begins in the mind or the muscles.

Our two final papers consider issues of collaboration across disciplinary boundaries. Andrew Balmer and Kate Bulpin propose the term ‘sociotechnical circuits’ to describe the rich and complex relations among the members of the interdisciplinary teams working collaboratively on synthetic biology in the context of the International Genetically Engineered Machines Competition. They demonstrate once again the need to go beyond the narrow framework of ‘ethical, social and legal implications’ of emerging biotechnologies to examine fundamental issues of the social embeddedness of the life sciences, and of the relations among the disciplines themselves. Moreover, in a novel form of dialogue, Barbara Prainsack and Ayo Wahlberg explore their own experiences of research in bioscience and biomedical regulation in non-Euro-American regions, and the lessons they learned about the methods required to understand regulatory configurations in these distinct political contexts. They argue that to render visible and intelligible the contradictions and elisions in their empirical research, a certain ‘ethnographic sensibility’ is required of researchers.

Charles Rosenberg is perhaps the foremost historian of contemporary biomedicine. His work has come to focus on the issue of diagnosis and on the emergence of the contemporary belief that diseases are best understood ontologically, as specific entities whose reality is to be found in the tissues. In this revealing interview with Associate Editor Chloe Silverman, Rosenberg discusses the trajectory of his work and the dilemmas posed by the search for biomarkers and the current enthusiasm for screening. Locating these developments in a longer history, and in his own research on diseases ranging from cholera to mental disorder, we are able to see clearly the immense contemporary value of the kind of rigorous yet humane history of medicine that Rosenberg has been undertaking for more than half a century.

We continue our practice of publishing vibrant contemporary debate in our Books Forum, with reviews of several key books on scientific controversies over tobacco, global warming and environmental knowledge. Reiner Grundmann explores the stakes in constructivism and its critics in his review of Oreskes and Conway's *Merchants of Doubt* that takes an explicitly 'anti-constructivist' line in its analysis of scientific debates on issues from tobacco smoke to global warming. Shiho Satsuka examines relations between local and expert knowledge, and indigenous and state interests, in his review of Choy's *Ecologies of Comparison*, Forsyth and Walker's *Forest Guardians, Forest Destroyers*, and Mathews' *Instituting Nature*, drawing attention to the additional issues that arise where human and non-human actors inevitably collide. Finally, John Law explores the literary forms used by Michel Serres in his *Biogea* and draws out the strengths and weaknesses of its novel ways of reconciling myth with contemporary knowledge from the life and earth sciences.

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