

## Editorial note

---

**Elbie van den Berg and Jessica Murray**

**Editors**

(murr@unisa.co.za; vdberms@unisa.ac.za)

From being a marginalised field of study, gender has become part of the mainstream of academic interest and endeavour. Gender studies academics are delighted with this shift in the status of our discipline, and the establishment of *Gender Questions* – a new journal in the field of gender studies – is a visible sign of the prominence that gender has acquired. We are delighted to welcome you to this first issue, which showcases the theoretical sophistication and scholarly rigour that we will infuse into all subsequent volumes of the journal.

At the same time, the diversity of articles in this issue testifies to the wide range of interests that are encompassed by gender studies. The articles are not, in the main, concerned with the ‘big questions’ of gender theory and how we understand the relationship between gender and identity. They are, rather, scholarly engagements with particular instances of culture, society and relationships in which gender is a key aspect.

There is a definite emphasis on the way gender is performed and enacted within the field of digital and popular culture, as, for example, in Tisha Dejmanee’s article on ‘Bodies of technology’ and in María Martínez Lirola’s article on ‘Exploring virtual interaction’. Likewise, Jennifer L. Epley deals with the representation of the Indonesian *waria* on YouTube. These three articles demonstrate that gender studies are alive and well in the digital age, and that, despite the much-vaunted anonymity of cyberspace, gender has a role to play in the construction of virtual identities.

Other articles demonstrate equally effectively that gender studies have, thankfully, moved away from a consideration of ‘grand narratives’ to a concern with the micro-narratives of the personal and the local. At the same time, there is a synchronous emphasis on gender as boundary transgression, on the porousness of borders and the subversion of received wisdom concerning social and personal roles. Thus Kendall Petersen’s article on *Lola und Bilidikid* explores boundary-crossing gender identities in Turkish-German film; Mzikazi Nduna and Rachel Jewkes examine the role of narrative discourse in the construction of gender and sexual identity in black women in the Eastern Cape. Aderemi Suleiman Ajala and Olarinmoye Adeyinka Wulemat are also concerned with the lived realities of resistance to patriarchy, as practised in Nigeria. Helen Namondo Linonge-Fontebo and Armela Xhaho, no less, explore the ways in which queer studies, and queer identities, can be used to challenge received categories for acceptable identities.

In this issue the five book reviews focus on publications dealing with qualitative research methodologies on sexualities and gender; gay identities in small-town South Africa; queer

sexuality and the struggle for freedom; communication, gender and culture; and a Gayle Rubin reader respectively. *Gender Questions* is committed to publishing cutting-edge scholarship across the broad reach of gender studies, and to the establishment of gender equality in society more generally. We invite you to enjoy reading this first issue as much as we have enjoyed compiling it.