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NEUROGENDERINGS III

THE 1ST INTERNATIONAL DISSENSUS CONFERENCE ON BRAIN AND GENDER

8-10 May 2014, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

THE NEUROGENDERINGS NETWORK

In 2010, the conference *NeuroGenderings: Critical Studies of the Sexed Brain* was held in Uppsala (Sweden). It brought together experts from different disciplines to identify theoretical and methodological strategies for social scientists, cultural scientists and neuroscientists to engage with radical, intersectional feminist and queer studies of the brain. Two years later, *NeuroCultures – NeuroGenderings II* was organized in 2012 in Vienna in order to continue the critical engagement with neuroscience and particularly to address processes of gendering in today's rapidly emerging "neurocultures."

Behind these international and transdisciplinary meetings lies *NeuroGenderings* (NG), a network which aims to elaborate innovative theoretical and empirical approaches for questions of sex/gender and sexuality for neuroscientists; to analyze the social and political underpinnings of the ongoing "cerebralization" of human life and especially of sex/gender, and to discuss the impacts of neuroscientific sex/gender research in sociopolitical and cultural fields. Some of these approaches can already be found in [2] and [24].

In cooperation with the network *NeuroGenderings*, the Laboratory of Sociology (LabSo) and the Institute of Social Sciences at the University of Lausanne will host a three-day conference entitled "**NeuroGenderings III – The 1st international Dissensus Conference on brain and gender,**" 8-10 May 2014. We encourage submissions from scholars and students from all domains in the humanities, in the social, biological and medical sciences, including clinical practice, to discuss current developments – and alternatives to the existing research trends, models and practices— in the areas of brain, sex/gender and sexuality.

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The idea and interest of organizing *dissensus* (rather than consensus) conferences were initially suggested [17] with two main objectives in mind. The first was to advance "dissensus studies" exacerbating through critical analysis the conflicting dimensions of social life, especially in relation to (neuro-)science, medicine, gender and society, thereby extending the STS tradition of controversy studies [e.g., 9]. From a dissensus perspective, controversies and conflicts are considered not as obstacles to be overcome before we can have a "proper conversation," and build collaborations or bridges between science, medicine and society. Rather, they are conceived of as ordinary, even desirable, phenomena in the practices of "good science," of alliance formation, and of democracy. The second objective was then to explore how a dissensus framework could be operationalized to do more robust empirical research, improve healthcare practices, and "bring the sciences into democracy" [see 19].

The third edition of the *NeuroGenderings* conference series inaugurates the first international "Dissensus Conference." Like earlier NG meetings, this three-day event will focus on the dynamic and multidimensional relations between brain, sex/gender, sexuality, and society. It aims to foster productive exchanges by inviting all participants to make explicit the different, and sometimes diverging, perspectives from which we problematize and study these relations, their implications for the concerned persons, and the broader sociopolitical stakes involved in our respective studies. We would like to bring the participants to reflect critically on the ways in which we do, or should do, brain research, feminist and queer theory, as well as brain sciences studies to make them relevant for political minorities and society at large.

We are particularly interested in concrete discussions that clarify how we produce knowledge, blind spots and ignorance; the potentials and limits of our own inquiries compared to other concerns, perspectives and research areas; articulate alternative models for research on a multimorphic rather than a dimorphic male or female brain; make explicit the kind of (im-)proper objects, subjects, agency, (im-)possibilities for (self-)transformation, and social order that we presume and produce through our knowledge practices; contextualize these practices in light of broader sociopolitical stakes, controversies, conflicts, social

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movements, health and public policies to name just a few. Such a collective endeavor is meant to open up the possibility of formulating constructive critiques of the often problematic “neurosexist” assumptions [7] that underwrite brain science and politics, while at the same time inspiring new ways of collaborating and of doing empirical neuroscience — towards a feminist/queer neuroscience [3].

Contributions to these discussions are welcome in the following **THEMATIC STRANDS**:

1. Hands-on NeuroGenderings — queering the brain / queering neuroscience

Which alternative research designs and models for sex/gender and sexuality need to be implemented by feminist and queer neuroscientists so as to avoid determinism and other methodological defaults that reinforce sex differences more than anything else? What are the variables and statistical approaches to be used in order to carry out more robust empirical sex/gender research?; what kind of sex/gender research practices would enable us to transform the experimental process itself into a new form of critical intervention? [e.g., 3-4, 8, 10-11, 13-15, 18, 20, 26-27].

2. Feminist/queer brain science studies and “dissensus studies”

How should we best do feminist/queer brain science studies? With which theories, epistemologies, ontologies, ethics, tools, concepts, questions, objects, and methods?; which analyses of controversies and conflicts over brain, sex/gender and sexuality research are required for this purpose?; further elaborations and critiques of the dissensus framework [e.g., 1-5, 8, 12, 14, 16-18, 20, 22-27].

3. Interdisciplinarity and other modes of collaboration — for what?

Concrete discussions identifying convergences and divergences between neuroscience, feminist and queer theory, the social studies of neuroscience, and within each of these domains; analyses of the conditions of (im-)possibilities of articulating different perspectives, methods, disciplines, concerns, etc. [e.g., 1-4, 8, 12, 16-18, 20, 23, 25-26].

4. Neuroscience in relation to clinical research and healthcare practices

Analyses of the medical/clinical issues that frame brain research on sex, gender, and sexuality; uses of such research in clinical studies and healthcare practices; psychiatric/clinical neuroscience; psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy; drug research and clinical trials; epidemiology; psychiatric classifications (DSM, ICD, other); standards of care; implications for the concerned persons [e.g., 4, 10, 12, 16-17].

5. Neuroscience, ethics and politics

Sociological, historical, philosophical, ethical, cultural, etc. analyses of the broader sociopolitical stakes and related issues such as age, class, race involved in brain research on sex, gender, sexuality; implications for the concerned persons and society at large in terms of naturalization, discrimination, individual and group definition/formation, power relations, agency, etc. [e.g., 2-3, 7, 13, 16-18, 21-27].

6. Expert, lay expert, and pop uses of brain research

Social life of brain research outside the laboratory; neurocultures, neurolaw, neuroeconomics, neuroenhancement, etc.; public policies (education, health care, employment, equality, diversity, physical/personal integrity, etc.); brain-related activism; media; public understanding of neuroscience; pop neuroscience literature, etc. [e.g., 5-7, 21, 25, 27].

7. Other themes relevant to brain science studies and gender studies

Contributions to this conference can be submitted for oral presentation (20 min. paper) or for a poster presentation. Abstracts for papers/posters should not exceed 3000 characters (including spaces).

Please send your abstracts, along with a very short bionote, to dissensus_neurogenderings@unil.ch and indicate the strand in which you aim to present your paper/poster.

Deadline for submission: 1st October 2013. The papers will be selected within a short time frame; confirmation by mid-October.

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