Investigating Identities in Academia: an International Interdisciplinary Workshop
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Introduction: Why We Need to Study Identities in Academia?
Endla Lõhkivi
Department of Philosophy, Institute for Philosophy and Semiotics, University of Tartu, Estonia
endla.lohkivi@ut.ee

At the beginning of contemporary science in the 17th century, a scientist was defined as an independent researcher and an educated gentleman. Higher education at the universities was not necessarily research-related, different types of universities existed. Since the 19th century universities have been the centres of academic research and the latter has served as a prerequisite of teaching. This Humboldtian model served as an ideal for generations of researchers and university organisation. With the rapid expansion of the higher education and research at the end of the 20th century, the aims, organisation and cultures within academia have changed. Both teaching and research are supposed to be better integrated with the societal needs and possibilities. New academic structures do not involve unequivocal description of the participants’ identities, the issue of identities in academia has become as complex as social identities in general. At the same time, identity has become an important issue even in disciplines like philosophy of science which until recently hardly paid attention to the researchers as social beings, hierarchies, power relations, workplace climate related to research process. Empirical science and technology studies (STS) as well as feminist critique have demonstrated that researchers’ self-perception determines their choice of research topic, methods and to some extent the results. Therefore it is important to investigate how the identities are created and changed, in what ways they play a role in research and teaching, and what consequences may follow from value conflicts in academia. At our workshop, we address the issue of identities in academia from different disciplinary perspectives, including both theoretical and empirical approaches.

Transgressive Identities and Interstitial Spaces
Anita Hussénius*1 and Kathryn Scantlebury*2

*Centre for Gender Research, Uppsala University, Sweden
1 Faculty of Engineering and Sustainable Development, University of Gävle, Sweden
2 Department of Chemistry and BioChemistry, University of Delaware, USA
anita.hussenius@gender.uu.se
kscantle@udel.edu

In this presentation we examine the different experiences that have caressed, chafed, pained, influenced and thus contributed to our shaping of our identities. That is, if you can talk about shaping an identity as “shaping” may imply that something we can control and influence, while identity is a result of contexts, experiences, relationships, combined with a staging (volitional control) of who you are and want to be, or alternatively an adaptation (forced) constructed by others. Identity is prescribed, depending on the context, by other’s perceptions and one’s self-perception (McNay, 2000). We acknowledge that identity as a concept has various meanings
depending upon different “schools” or knowledge domains, but we will not discuss these
meanings in this presentation. Rather our focus is the challenges and advantages of using
*transgressive identities* as feminist scholars to engage with, and participate in, the cultures of
different disciplines. Transgressive identities may emerge when one is situated in contexts that
allow for, and promote, the challenging of perceived boundaries. But often a transgressive
identity results from one’s active choice and/or movement away from one “context” to
something “else”. Our transgressive identities emerged in multiple and different contexts, that
placed us in *interstitial spaces* from which we are both researchers within the discipline and its
culture and feminist researchers who may also work outside traditional structures.

Feminism promotes an awareness of, and a need to challenge, social power structures. Feminists
have provided critical stances of scientific knowledge, the production of that knowledge and
where the knowledge resides. While science is an obvious ‘target’ of a feminist critique, as
researchers who operate in interstitial settings between feminism and science, science and
education, our transgressive identities provide us the opportunity to examine the role of status
and power in elevating one subject over another and to discuss how feminism, science and
science education may intersect to produce new knowledge, practices and structures. Coming
from science disciplines into a research environment where transgressive encounters between
cultural, social and biological understandings of sex and gender are characteristic, we want to
examine how one can use transgressive identities to offer a feminist critique of traditional
organizational and knowledge boundaries.


**Discourse analysis as a method of mapping values, goals and actions**
Pille Põiklik
Institute of Germanic, Romance and Slavonic Languages, University of Tartu
pille.poiklik@ut.ee

In the talk, I will attempt to make some connections between the project of mapping researchers’
goals and potential means in the area of (Critical) Discourse Analysis that could be employed in
an investigation of these goals. Goals, alongside agents’ perceptions of circumstances, motivate
their action, as Fairclough and Fairclough (2011, 2012) suggest. As such, taking certain values
and circumstances as the premise of one’s actions also entails positioning oneself in a specific
point of view and in relation to specific elements. Borrowing from Bourdieu (1985), the
construction of social spaces could thus be conceptualised of as a process in which agents
construct intrinsic as well as relational positions for themselves, that is, positions based on their
values and positions based on the role they have inside an institution. Following Chilton (2004),
Blommaert (2005) and other DA authors, these processes can be viewed in discourses produced
in the society. The talk will provide some insights into what tools from the DA toolbox could be
borrowed to research goal setting and self-positioning in the interviews conducted with
researchers.
In a research and intervention project we are studying how an increased awareness of gender issues in science and in science teaching among student teachers influences their identities as teachers, and their teaching of science. A cohort of student teachers (N=120), early years to lower secondary, has been followed through their first year of science courses. As an integral part of these science courses our intervention has introduced critical perspectives on gender and science as related to the culture of science and a feminist critique of the sciences. One of the assignments the student teachers’ carried out was to try to “grasp the culture of science”. In this presentation we want to present results from analysing this written assignment and audio recording seminars. One result is students’ describing of how different traditions or cultures come in conflict and in the interstices in between these cultures chafing emerge. From the analysis of the empirical material we identify three chafing borderlands:


Several narratives, both written and orally, revealed that the students felt stupid during science lessons, which resulted in low-esteem and a negative attitude towards the subjects. Instead of blaming themselves and thinking that they are the problem according to learning science, when manage to “catch sight of” the science culture, they could move these feelings outside themselves. This movement of emotions from them as subjects (the individuals) to the object (science culture) made them cultivate a different attitude to the subjects and could strengthened them in their identities as teachers.

Intersectionality and the negotiation of identities
Raili Marling
Institute of Germanic, Romance and Slavonic Languages, University of Tartu
raili.marling@ut.ee

The presentation will discuss intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989, Collins 1998, Davis 2008), a widely-used concept in gender studies research, with focus both on its theoretical strengths and challenges. Intersectionality will be placed into the context of research on discursive creation and negotiation of identities (cf Davies & Harre 1990, Bucholtz & Hall 2005), to test it as a potential tool for analyzing academic identities (e.g., on the axes of gender and age).
Physics students’ identity formation, gender and social class
Anna Danielsson
Centre for Gender Studies, University of Uppsala
anna.danielsson@edu.uu.se

In the talk I will explore how the doing of social class and gender can intersect with the learning of physics, through case studies of two male, working-class university students’ constitutions of identities as physics students. In doing so, I challenge the taken-for-granted notion that male physics students have an unproblematic relation to their chosen discipline. Working from the perspective of situated learning theory, the interviews with the two male students were analysed for how they negotiated the practice of the physics student laboratory and their own classed and gendered participation in this practice. By drawing on the heterogeneity of the practice of physics the two students were able to use the practical and technological aspects of physics as a gateway into the discipline. However, this is not to say that their participation in physics was completely frictionless. The students were both engaged in a continuous negotiation of how skills they had learned to value in the background may or may not be compatible with the ones they perceived to be valued in the university physicist community.

Aims of science in the context of the aims of society
Jaana Eigi
Department of Philosophy, Institute for Philosophy and Semiotics, University of Tartu, Estonia
jaana.eigi@ut.ee

The question of aims is important both for analysing science—for instance, as a philosopher—and for governing it—for instance, as someone evaluating research and making grant decisions. Ideally, empirical and philosophical analysis should provide an adequate picture of the aims scientists have and science policy should take it into account. Philosophers of science have increasingly realised that such an adequate understanding is impossible without attention to the role of social factors, including influence of values and interests, in science.

In the presentation I summarise the development of Philip Kitcher's account of the aims of science and reflect on its implications for evaluation practices. In Kitcher's *Advancement of Science* (1993) scientific aims were seen as internal for science and the role of society was limited by creating an efficient organisational framework for science. In *Science, Truth, and Democracy* (2001) the aims of science were no longer considered autonomous—instead, Kitcher stressed the role of human interests in defining scientific significance and thus making particular aims worth pursuing. Accordingly, Kitcher's ideal of *well-organised science* required inclusive democratic decision-making process on all levels in science, beginning with formulating aims. Finally, in *Science in a Democratic Society* (2011) both democracy and science were analysed in the very general ethical framework Kitcher called the *ethical project*.

If scientific aims are not seen as something independent from society's ones, but rather as what is, and should be, their continuation, it widens greatly the audience before which science is accountable. Accordingly, evaluation of science cannot be limited by the formal criteria of publication and citation count but must acknowledge the ways scientists connect with wider
social aims and serve them. Social philosophy of science thus helps to bring attention to the aspects of scientific aims that formal evaluation practices may miss.

References:

**Value conflict between university policy and teachers’ self-image**
Anu Sarv & Mari Karm
Department of Semiotics, Institute for Philosophy and Semiotics,
Institute of Education, University of Tartu, Estonia
anu.sarv@ut.ee, mari.karm@ut.ee

Formation of the professional identity is related to various factors, one of the most important of those being the work environment. Since the focal point of the professional self-determination lies in the perception of oneself as the performer of a role, it influences also the perception of the expectations how one’s professional identity is shaped at the workplace. When we investigate the university lecturers’ professional self-determination, it is important to pay attention to the degree the meanings and values essential to them are shared with the rest of the university. University as an organisation with its ideology (i.e., its basic norms and values) forms its stand to lecturers’ work and this in its turn, when internalised by the lecturers, gives direction to the ways the lecturers perceive their professional role and define their professional identity. In addition to that, the local workplace culture and general attitude to teaching, as well as teacher training at the university, have their impact on the formation of professional identity.

Various studies of the academic *habitus* show that the ways individuals perceive their role and identity in the academic world are related to and influenced by local contexts, incl. discursive ideologies represented by the home university (Harris 2005; Clegg 2008; Entwistle 2009).

In our presentation we shall describe how the teaching staff at the University of Tartu has perceived the expectations to their role, and we shall analyse to what extent the perceptions accord to the formal norms and expectations from the University part, and what kind of ideology the University is representing via its norms and expectations. We have analysed our empirical material which consists of the descriptions of the expectations the University staff has perceived to have on their work role, as well as the documents and regulations of the work of teaching staff currently in force at the University of Tartu. Based on the analyses, we claim that Tartu University is representing an ideology in which quantitative measurement of academic work is highly valued at the expense of its content. This has its direct impact on the overall regard to teaching and its quality at the University, and via this also on how the role as a lecturer at the University is perceived and to what extent the formation professional identity is endorsed. Our results characterise the pattern of conduct at the University that indicates managerialism and does not promote collegiality. This university model makes an individual lecturer dependent on the institution which in turn encourages formal and fabricating attitude towards one’s work (Ylijoki...
In such a situation, the quality of teaching may severely suffer. Moreover, since the internal value hierarchy is based on the external one (Stryker, Burke 2000: 286), the norms and values of the institution which do not appreciate the content of the lecturer’s work and its quality do not promote the value of the position of the teaching staff, and thus also their professional identity qua teaching staff.