

<http://somatosphere.net/2012/03/in-the-journals-4.html>

In the journals... March 2012 round up (2/2)

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This month in *Sociology of Health & Illness* there is an interesting [article on wheelchair users in residential care](#). This study addresses the role that wheelchairs, as potential enablers and barriers to mobility and participation, play in the lives of residents. To better understand residents' experiences, an ethnographic study was conducted drawing on Bourdieu's theoretical constructs of capital, field, and habitus.

[Another article deals with former clients of The AIDS Support Organisation \(TASO\) in Uganda](#) who, when tested for HIV during the rollout of antiretroviral therapy, were found to be HIV negative. In-depth semistructured interviews reveals that the people had to leave TASO and that support was sorely missed. The identity 'reversal' or change was often handled privately. Compared with their transition to an HIV-positive identity, they now lacked a social dimension to their identity transformation as they managed their new identity in the face of self- and public doubt.

Furthermore, the [article on age-related infertility](#) explores the reproductive experience of 22 infertile women, from their reproductive experience from fertility postponement to assisted conception. In these accounts age-related infertility emerged as a tale of two technologies: two technologies linked to each woman, and each other, through the social practice of postponement.

Science, Technology & Human Values comes with a [text on the consequences of using statistics wrongly](#). Since 1989, widely circulating statistics on gay teen suicide in the United States have acted as catalysts for institutional reforms, scientific research, and the creation of an identity category "gay youth." While one figure has been replicated scientifically, these numbers originated not from a scientific research study but as risk estimates developed by a social worker and published in a government document. Many people within the public took up these original numbers, attributing their author the status of scientific researcher. In effect, the numbers became "black boxed," often traveling without citation. Drawing on Ian Hacking's "dynamic nominalist" perspective, this article utilizes interviews with the author of these statistics and other key claimants, along with textual analysis, to trace the origins, uptake, and effects of these figures.

Two (online first) articles in *Science as Culture* deal with questions around chimeras. The [first is about the maternal-foetal interface](#), as the science of gestational cell transfer—research into the transfer of cells between a pregnant woman and foetus during gestation—and subsequent mingling of transferred cells, or microchimerism, is bringing new attention to it. The findings challenge previous biological understandings of a barrier between the body of a pregnant woman and developing foetus, a barrier maintaining the identity integrity as it were, of two beings, two separate subjects. In this sense, the maternal–foetal interface is an interesting bio-political object, predicated upon understandings of individuals as discrete and bounded organisms, an understanding that has been strongly implicated in immunology.

The [second is about the bioethical implications and anticipatory governance of chimeras](#). The process of anticipatory governance is characterised by the entwining of the scientific and the philosophical so that judgements against science are also found to be philosophically unfounded, and conversely, those activities that are permissible are deemed so on both scientific and ethical grounds. Through what is presented as an organic process, the emerging bioethical framework for human-to-animal chimera research becomes a legitimating framework within which ‘good’ science can safely progress. Science gives bioethical expertise access to new governance territory; bioethical expertise gives science access to political acceptability.

There is also an interesting (online first) [text about the cholera stigma and the challenge of interdisciplinary epistemology](#). This stigma is the product of epistemic practices within an interdisciplinary and orientalist cholera science that took shape in the 1860s and 1870s, which have, without renewed scrutiny, prevailed largely uncontested until recent decades. Those practices involved an over-interpretation of the historical epidemiological work of John Macpherson by his colleague N.C. Macnamara. Recent research offers an alternative context for appreciating Macpherson’s insights.

As part of their special series on neuroscience in health and disease, the February/March issue of *Psychosomatic Medicine* contains an article by Johansson et al. The authors’ longitudinal study on [“Midlife Psychological Distress Associated With Late-Life Brain Atrophy and White Matter Lesions”](#) among women examines the connections between long-standing psychological distress and risk of Alzheimer’s disease, finding a positive relationship between the two.

Among other articles in this issue: a review on the [“The Neural Bases of Social Pain”](#), [insights into emotional stress and cardiovascular risk in Hurricane Katrina relocated survivors](#), the question [“Is It Better to Be More](#)

["Optimistic or Less Pessimistic" in IVF treatment for infertility](#) and research on the [Relationship Between Depressive Symptoms, Anemia, and Iron Status in Older Residents](#).

AMA citation

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