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Introduction: Special Issue on Gender & Sexuality Studies

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Abstract

The articles included in this special issue represent a selection of the thirty four gender and sexuality related projects that were scheduled to be presented at the 2020 Senior Projects Day event at Pacific University's Forest Grove campus. The papers included in this special issue come from a variety of academic disciplines and speak to a wide range of topics, but unable to be disseminated due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Keywords

Gender, Sexuality, Identity, Equity, Inclusion

Peer Review

This work has undergone a double-blind review by a minimum of two faculty members from institutions of higher learning from around the world. The faculty reviewers have expertise in disciplines closely related to those represented by this work. If possible, the work was also reviewed by undergraduates in collaboration with the faculty reviewers.

Introduction

Each April, Pacific University hosts an undergraduate conference called Senior Projects Day. The event carries with it an air simultaneously serious and celebratory. The former stems from the fact that students present projects that they have independently worked on for the vast majority of their senior year. Therefore, the students are sharing their own unique contribution to the scholarly community. At the same time, then, students often experience a sigh of relief as they realize that they have just completed the last major requirement for graduation. It is in this mix of emotions that students can reflect upon how much they have grown as scholars, as well as dream about what lies ahead.

The unprecedented intrusion of the coronavirus pandemic, bringing with it stay-at-home-orders and social distancing requirements, prevented these students from presenting their work to the public as planned. The Pacific community was denied the opportunity to learn from these scholars and to celebrate their outstanding achievements. The Gender and Sexualities Studies (GSS) Program at Pacific University values all the critical thought, creativity, and innovation that these students put into their projects specifically to bring new awareness, understanding, and innovation to related topics. To foster the dissemination of new research around gender, sexuality, and inclusion, the GSS program has partnered with the *International Journal of Undergraduate Research & Creative Activities* on this special issue to share some of their work.

The articles included in this special issue represent a selection of the thirty-four gender- and sexuality-related projects that were scheduled to be presented at the 2020 Senior Projects Day. This work comes from a variety of academic disciplines and speak to a wide range of topics. Emily Spalding and Micaela Frick's articles offer analyses of sexual assault prevention programs and provide suggestions about how to make these programs more effective. Gina Kelly and Sophia O'Neal both interrogate the ways gender informs the institution of politics in the United States.

While Alessandra Govi and Rae Martinez's work critically engage gender representations in contemporary media, Gillian Gauer demonstrates how an ecofeminist perspective shifts our understanding of landscape and pioneer literature. Finally, Kaira Bird provides insights into the experience of gender and sexual minorities on college campuses, developing a quantitative research tool to help others understand this experience.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all the faculty, staff, and other members of the Pacific community that partnered with these authors to make these innovations possible. We are particularly grateful to Dr. Ashley Mikulyuk, assistant professor of Sociology, for her added expertise in the final round of evaluations for this issue.

Congratulations to all of the seniors for their outstanding contributions to this special issue of *IJURCA*, to the scholarly understandings of gender and sexuality, to the Pacific University community, and wider national conversation.

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