



# Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2019 Mary Gates Hall

## Online Proceedings

### POSTER SESSION 1

Commons East, Easel 82

11:00 AM to 1:00 PM

#### **Feminism is for Every Body: The Propagation of Problematic Feminism in The Handmaid’s Tale Series**

*Christina Givens, Junior, Communication , Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Calif St University San Marcos*

*McNair Scholar*

*Mentor: Michelle Holling, Communication Department, California State University San Marcos*

This is a rhetorical analysis of Hulu’s televised adaptation of the 1985 Margaret Atwood novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* as an episodic rhetorical act. This analysis merges feminist and ideological criticism to analyze the show’s twenty-three episodes and explores how the series is influenced by the veneration of feminist tropes within our current cultural milieu and how it influences social and political mobilization from its empirical audience. Within a context of historical gendered oppression, I analyze how *The Handmaid’s Tale* series furthers hegemonic ideologies regarding gendered behavior and reproduction by representing cisgender, heteronormative, nuclear families. I also examine how the repression inherent in each trope leads to the championing of biological essentialism from the show’s viewers. Finally, I examine how the series denotes personal agency as it relates to biological motherhood and any disruption to the state of biological motherhood as immoral, thus reasserting rhetoric inherent in modern, restrictive reproductive public policies. Drawing from scholarly sources and popular media such as news articles and protest images, this paper deconstructs the show’s narrative which positions reproductive tyranny at its center. This paper examines the cultural perspective on reproduction while contributing to the understanding of reproductive oppression in the United States; broadening the choice/anti-choice conversation to include other examples of gendered oppression, such as forced sterilizations and maternal mortality.

### SESSION 1F

#### **IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY MOMENT**

*Session Moderator: Ralina Joseph, Communication*  
**MGH 234**

12:30 PM to 2:15 PM

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

#### **Black Student-Athletes’ Experience in the Classroom at Predominantly White Institutes**

*Michael Eugene Neal, Senior, Communication*

*UW Honors Program*

*Mentor: Ralina Joseph, Communication*

My research topic is on Black student-athletes’ classroom experience at predominantly White institutions. As a Black student-athlete myself, I have been in classes where not only am I the only Black student, but the only Black student-athlete. The research shows that Black students are primarily affected by their perceived ability to succeed in college by the lack of Black representation in amongst their peers and professors, in the classroom. In my thesis, I build upon aspects of UCLA scholar, Tyrone Howard’s view of the critical race theory. In particular, I explore the idea that rather than race being biologically grounded and natural, it is socially constructed and functions as a means to maintain the interests of the White population. My thesis argues that Predominantly White Institutions set the “lay of the land” in terms of what is socially acceptable and deemed okay, and which often excludes Black student-athletes. The methods I use are surveys, individual interviews, and a focus group, with an equal number of Black men and women study participants. This qualitative data will show that Black student-athletes’ experience in the classroom at predominantly White institutions is directly related to whether they grew up being around White individuals.

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## SESSION 1F

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### IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY MOMENT

*Session Moderator: Ralina Joseph, Communication*  
**MGH 234**

*12:30 PM to 2:15 PM*

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#### **“Not My Type”: Exploring the Experience and Perception of Sexual Racism on Mobile Dating Apps Targeted at the LGBTQ+ Community**

*Kenneth J. (Kenny) Applewhaite, Senior, Communication*  
*UW Honors Program*

*Mentor: Ralina Joseph, Communication*

My proposed research examines how sexual racism is experienced by LGBTQ+ community members in the greater Seattle Area who use Tinder and Grindr and other mobile dating apps. Sexual racism can be defined as a specific form of racial prejudice enacted in the context of sex or romance. My primary research investigates a series of in-person interviews that qualitatively analyze and articulate the various experiences of Black individuals, as well as focus groups to help to understand different and diverse manifestations of sexual racism. I use information/narratives from the in-person, and one-on-one interviews to analyze the experiences and compile them into a data set that can be closely looked at for trends and overlapping experiences. My research analyzing the effects of the experience of sexual racism as shown through mobile dating apps helps readers understand one form of inequity in our modern digital society that often goes unspoken. In addition, my research helps to identify how microaggressions work by the microaggressor’s dismissing their racialized/sexualized comments as simply an issue of personal preference. While my primary research focuses on sexual racism in local communities, my secondary research draws on literatures that examine sexual racism both nationally and internationally. By working closely with a variety of people in the local community as well as drawing on research from other scholars focusing on the ideas of white privilege, constructed racism, and intersectionality, this research helps me speak up for Black LGBTQ+ individuals who are often marginalized by sexual racism.

### POSTER SESSION 2

**Commons West, Easel 29**

*1:00 PM to 2:30 PM*

### Exploring the Metamorphic Impact of an Underrepresented Minority Support Program at a Public Selective University

*Jaylen Willingham, Senior, Communication*

*Mary Gates Scholar*

*Mentor: Kirsten Foot, Communication*

*Mentor: Kenderick Wilson, OMA&D/EOP*

The University of Washington (UW) has a rich history around diversification and over the past 50 years anti-affirmative educational policies have reconfigured what “achieving diversity” looks like beyond admission statistics. Effective support is critical for the underrepresented minority (URM) student who gets into the UW and faces many disadvantages that make it difficult to succeed. The UW Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Scholars Academy was created in 1968 to facilitate the metamorphosis (transformation) of low-income, first-generation URM students into independent and successful scholars. However, what is not publicly known is why the EOP Scholars Academy support program is effective and in what ways. This study explores how the EOP’s process of curating the student metamorphosis experience impacts 1) students’ academic outcomes and 2) their sense of belonging. The chosen field of perspective in this study is Organizational Communication (OC), looking at the interaction between parts of an organization (UW’s EOP and students) and the resulting behavior as seen through student actions. Some OC concepts used in exploring students’ responses to EOP affiliation include performance, social support, motivation, sense-making, diversity, and identity. Pre-existing data of two EOP-affiliated student-groups (~165 in EOP-1 and ~165 in EOP-3) include longitudinal grade point average, retention, major acceptance, and campus resource engagement metrics over the 2015-2016 school year. The data was statistically analyzed and compared across the two EOP-affiliated student groups, where EOP-3 consists of conditionally admitted Scholars Academy students and EOP-1 consists of non-conditionally admitted students. It is hoped these findings will assist in informing improved diversification policies, program changes, and future research on URM support programs within similar public selective universities.

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## SESSION 2I

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### EQUITY AND ACCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

*Session Moderator: Gillian Harkins, English*

**MGH 254**

*3:30 PM to 5:15 PM*

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

## **Exploring the Role of Peer Mentorship in Acculturation among International Students at the University of Washington**

*Jenel Li, Senior, Communication*

*UW Honors Program*

*Mentor: John Crowley, Communication*

While the cross-cultural learning experience may be perceived as stimulating and intellectual, international students may unfamiliar with their host culture and can be especially vulnerable to building their level of self-efficacy in social interactional tasks. Due to the little research has been down to address in what ways we could improve international students' cultural adaptation, the main purpose of this study is to raise awareness of the potential challenges faced by international students on campus and to promote an inclusive space for them by proposing a potential strategy to aid their acculturation. Acknowledging the need to support international students, I postulate that the peer mentorship, which is considered as a relationship between a student and someone in a similar age who has volunteered to support their transit through the various experiences in college, can promote a better college transition. Through conducting an online questionnaire to make a comparison study, I am attempting to explore the correlation between peer mentorship, acculturation, and self-efficacy.

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## **SESSION 2L**

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### **MCNAIR SESSION - EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND IDENTITY**

*Session Moderator: Carolyn Jackson, GO-MAP/Graduate School*

**MGH 287**

*3:30 PM to 5:15 PM*

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

### **Mixed Plate: Understanding Multiracial Student Identities within Higher Education**

*Haley Okamoto, Junior, Communication Studies, Portland State University*

*McNair Scholar*

*Mentor: Brianne Suldovsky, Communication, Portland State University*

Race is a social construct that was originally developed to differentiate between superior and inferior human beings. Race has been primarily studied from a monoracial perspective, which prohibits multiracial individuals to express themselves because their racial identity does not fit into the neatly, pre-established monoracial categories. Multiracial is used as an umbrella term to describe an individual whose identity is comprised of multiple races or ethnicities (multi-ethnic). Pre-

vious research has found that multiracial students experience life in ways that are unique compared to their monoracial peers. Multiracial students are often required to conform to socially constructed monoracial boxes, and often have negative experiences from microaggressions, monoracial family member comments, and lack of demographic categorization. Additional studies have found that the denial of multiracial identities have the potential to cause lower levels of self-esteem along with decreased motivation. The multiracial population in America is steadily growing and, if current trends continue, will only continue to do so. As a result, an increased number of multiracial students on college campuses are expected. This paper explores multiracial student identities within higher education at a public university in the Pacific Northwest and aims to learn about racial identity beyond a monoracial paradigm. The knowledge gained from this research will contribute to higher education administration, faculty, and staff to inform them of the ways in which they can validate multiracial students' identities on their college campuses.

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## **SESSION 2L**

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### **MCNAIR SESSION - EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND IDENTITY**

*Session Moderator: Carolyn Jackson, GO-MAP/Graduate School*

**MGH 287**

*3:30 PM to 5:15 PM*

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

### **Classifying in the Classroom: Education Experiences of Mixed Race College Students**

*Izaiha X Ellis, Junior, English*

*McNair Scholar, UW Honors Program*

*Mentor: Ralina Joseph, Communication*

As the number of American students who identify as mixed race or biracial continues to grow, the American education system still has yet to make the necessary changes that are responsive to the needs of this shifting demographic. While identifying students on their own terms is important for all students, for mixed-race students, the questions and potential disconnect between racial labelling and how one defines themselves is fundamental. This study examines the roles biracial categorization plays in today's classrooms through lived experiences as remembered by college students. Many classrooms still struggle to incorporate the achievements of minorities, and, in some cases, the mixed identity of a historical figure is overlooked entirely. The inability to see themselves in the curriculum may be causing mixed-race students to feel invisible in the classroom and disconnected from their education (Joseph-Salisbury, 2017). Drawing on findings

from survey results, focus groups, and individual interviews, this research project contributes to studies focusing on the schooling experiences of mixed-race students. Maria Root (1996) and Kristen Renn's (2003) models of biracial categorization are used as a framework for the study, as the project re-assesses the inclusivity and adequacy of the biracial categories introduced. In the classroom, seemingly small interactions and events may be forcing students to choose one aspect of their identity, rather than celebrating both. Focusing on how the classroom setting impacts identity has the potential to make the classroom a more inclusive space that is responsive to the myriad of ways biracial students may or may not choose to identify.

## **POSTER SESSION 3**

### **Commons East, Easel 81**

*2:30 PM to 4:00 PM*

#### **A Loveless Generation?**

*Olivia Bakken, Sophomore, Communication, Shoreline Community College*

*Mentor: Brooke Zimmers, Communication Studies, Shoreline Community College*

With the introduction of new social technology to society, there has been a clear paradigm shift in the way in which we are initiating, maintaining, and facilitating relationships. Technology has no doubt made it easier for people to communicate but has also diminished the need for interpersonal skills. I use multiple interdisciplinary lenses including: communication studies, gender studies, and a generational lens for this systematic literature review. With my findings, I have been able to conclude that people are indeed getting too comfortable hiding behind technology and using it as a mechanism to avoid in-person confrontation and emotional discomfort. A growing phenomenon that is rising in spite of this is 'ghosting', in which one party blocks or deletes a person virtually from their life to break off any means of modern communication. Dating apps such as Tinder encourage this sort of behavior and are accelerating the rise of a hookup culture with little means of a true connection. There are a number of generational and gender differences in how people are approaching technology and intimacy in a digital age. My research delves into what exactly is going on with millennials and modern-day dating and aims to dissect the behaviors in order to further understand the driving force behind the hookup culture.