

Introduction to the Proceedings of the 2018 Thompson Rivers University Undergraduate Student Research Conference

At first glance, the contributions of TRU undergraduate students to this year's peer-reviewed journal seem diverse in discipline, approach, subject matter and scope. Some papers focus on areas close to home; others are pan-Canadian; some cast their nets farther afield. The articles are, however, knit together by two threads: a common concern for those whom mainstream society has marginalized and a recognition (implicit or explicit) of the interdependence of the human and the more-than-human worlds.

Benjamin Froese's "The Effects of War on Women in Syria: A Feminist Analysis" argues that women were differently impacted by the war that began in 2011 than men, and that, even among women, there has been a diversity in effect and response that Western media have failed to recognize. To counteract Western bias, Froese analyses both the varying effects of the war on Syrian women and the media depiction of them through a lens of postcolonial and transnational feminist theory.

Karmen McNamara's "The Advantages of Gay Parents: Examining the Outcomes of Children of Same and Different-Sex Parents" examines the relationship between parental sexual orientation and children's health, development, and well being. Several recent studies in the United States,

Australia, and elsewhere indicate no direct correlation between parental sexuality and children's mental health outcomes. Studies in various countries—including Canada—on physical health also indicate that parental sexuality has no direct effect—although income and level of education do, and same-sex couples tend to be somewhat more affluent and educated than heterosexual couples. Although most studies have not found appreciable differences in educational outcomes, a Netherlands study indicates a higher level of civic education (respect for diversity, for example) among children of same-sex couples. McNamara finds no significant differences in health and development between the two groups, notes the need for more research on the children of gay men, and seems confident Canadian studies would produce similar results to those done elsewhere.

In “Addressing the Call: A Scoping Review Investigating Indigenization of Canadian Nursing Schools” Katrina Boisclair measures the extent to which Canadian nursing schools have incorporated Indigenous knowledge-based courses into their curricula. Taking into account the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 2012 Calls to Action, which encourage Canadian nursing programs to include a course with Indigenous context, Boisclair found little evidence of Indigenization in Canadian nursing programs; she calls for more research on nursing student engagement with Indigenous knowledge, and urges programs to include Indigenous histories and lived experiences, and, thereby, mirror the communities where they practice.

The need for social change is also front and centre in Karmen McNamara's “People Worthy of Respect: Health Care Disparities in Trans Canadians.” Trans people face myriad health issues: increased risk for mental and physical illness, stigma and discrimination, and health care providers who may be inadequately trained to meet their needs. McNamara provides evidence from Canadian studies that suicide, eating disorder, and drug or alcohol addiction are

higher in the trans population, indicating higher mental illness rates. Studies also indicate that trans people are more likely than the general population to have an unmet physical health care need. Suggested changes to health care facilities include gender-neutral washrooms, appropriate language, friendly signage, and better training of healthcare providers. McNamara recommends further research in the areas of disease progression and life expectancy in trans patients.

Change on the environmental level is the concern of Allison Hughes and Mike Simak. In “Fires in the Rough: A Close Examination of the Fire Hazards in the Rural –Urban Fringe in Kelowna, B.C.” the two focus on the 2003 Okanagan Mountain Park Fire as evidence that low maintenance, weather, observance of policy, and slow regional district reaction times all factors that make the rural-urban fringe especially susceptible to wildfires. They recommend increasing education, improving policy and government assistance, and encouraging individuals to shore up personal property to decrease vulnerability.

Nathaniel Mount takes us on a botanical exploration in “Knowing the Flowers: A Floristic Analysis of the Diversity of Flowering Plants on the Sunshine Coast, B.C.” Mount examines a boundary where two biogeoclimatic zones—Coastal Western Hemlock and Coastal Douglas Fir—intersect, looking at relative species richness. Surveying multiple sites in zone, Mount identified 129 species of angiosperms across 44 floral families and found that the zones do not differ in species richness. Perceiving the area as “a kind of biological mixing point” between the two zones, Mount recommends that future researchers study diversity within each zone at a greater distance from the boundary.

Monica Kunze also illuminates rural concerns in “Lighting up Chicken Production,” taking a narrative approach to a subject that is both a research and a personal interest. A member of a family of chicken farmers in B.C.’s Fraser Valley, Kunze focuses on the role of artificial light in every aspect of broiler

breeding; light simulates the seasons and stimulates reproductive activity in males and females. Photostimulation requires delicate management, and Kunze provides a detailed look at the challenges the family faces during a twenty-five week breeder cycle.

It has been a privilege to read the works of these young scholars, to observe their passion for their studies, and to glimpse their visions for a better world.

Ginny Ratsoy

English and Modern Languages