

INTRODUCTION

Marie Aubrey Villaceran

Feminist research practice focuses on trying to document and understand the lived experiences, the concerns, and the roots of oppression of women and other marginalized groups with the aim of using the awareness and knowledge gained from this process for social activism and social change (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). It constructs knowledge that “breaks down boundaries between academia and activism, between theory and practice” (Brooks, 2007, p. 77).

The five articles in *Review of Women's Studies* volume 31, number two draw our attention to the experiences of LGBTQI individuals, students, and feminist groups and offer recommendations to address issues highlighted in their studies.

The educational institution as a site where discrimination and harassment occur is examined in three studies in this volume.

The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law requires the Department of Education (DepEd) to design a Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) which is a curriculum-based process of teaching that “focuses on the integration of scientific, age- and developmentally appropriate, and culturally and gender-responsive information on the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality in the K-12 Curriculum” (Department of Education, 2021). The implementation of the CSE has been, even the Dep Ed admits, irregular. The current curriculum is based on conservative, heteronormative values that view sex as acceptable only within marriage and as something that is kept private and even a source of shame. Abesamis and Siddayao attribute this view to the CSE’s roots in “Catholic values”. They assert that the CSE becomes a vehicle to perpetuate SOGIE-based discrimination as “a

heteronormative CSE rooted in religious doctrines frames homosexuality and gender non-conformity as immoral” and excludes LGBTQI+ youth. Their article recommends a review of the program and its associated policies to ensure that it is inclusive and grounded on information based on Filipino gender and sexuality.

The persistence of SOGIE-based discrimination and sexual harassment in an institution such as the University of the Philippines in spite of its official policies, documents, programs, and offices ensuring the safety and mitigation of discrimination of its members is the problem investigated in “Expressions of Justice and Accountability in Dealing with SOGIESC-based Discrimination” by Senga and De Torres and the survey on “Student Knowledge and Awareness of the University Policy, Procedures, and Resources on Sexual harassment in a College in the University of the Philippines” by Endriga and Frio.

The survey on University of the Philippines policy, procedures, and resources on sexual harassment by Endriga and Frio recommends that not only should student awareness of offices offering services to address sexual harassment and discrimination be increased, but also the proper conveying of “information on behaviors that constitute sexual assault and related misconduct” as well as the detailed process of filing a complaint.

Ensuring knowledge of policies, programs, and services is just one of the ways to address discrimination and harassment in educational institutions. Senga and De Torres note that in spite of University of the Philippines’ policies such as the UP Gender Guidelines and the Anti Sexual Harassment (ASH) code, “some victims of discrimination distance themselves from formal redress mechanisms, existing policies, programs, and other services, despite the university’s open campaign for inclusion, the presence of allies in the administration and civil society groups, and the availability of other resources and information provided by the university.” This eventually results in discouragement of victim-survivors from reporting experiences of discrimination and sexual harassment in the university and from seeking justice and accountability. The study recommends revisiting the policies and holding dialogues with victim-

survivors and the LGBTQI community to align policy with “how victims processed and acted upon their experiences of stigma, discrimination, and aggression.”

The aging population has recently been the subject of contemporary studies, and Pavo and Chan’s study on aging lesbians highlights the concerns of *tiguwang* lesbians through an analysis of their narratives. For the aging lesbians in their study, concerns are tied to masculine gender expectations of being the primary earner in a family—whether in a romantic relationship, in traditional notions of family, or family of choice; representation and belonging in communities; and expectations to care for their older family members since they are expected to be most likely single or alone. Aging as a concept is a compelling issue only for specific socio-economic classes because for those in the lower economic classes, staying able-bodied enough to perform physical labor for income is a more pressing concern.

The still-ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in transformations in the many ways we live our lives. The study on feminist online spaces in the pandemic by Laguilles-Timog and Cruz highlights the important role that feminist online spaces in highlighting and addressing gender issues brought about the pandemic and its role in social transformation. They push for a greater appreciation of these feminist online spaces, as they see the significance of these spaces even in a future beyond the pandemic.

The featured artwork by Vida Soraya Verzosa uses mixed media and assemblage of found objects to feature women’s different experiences—from work, love, and family to issues of intimate partner violence.

We hope that the articles and artwork in this issue will not only help you become aware of the different concerns and issues brought about by intersecting vectors of identity, but ignite us to move towards social activism and transformation, which is what the best research should aim to do.

References

- Brooks, A. (2007). Feminist standpoint epistemology: Building knowledge and empowerment through lived experience. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Feminist research practice: A primer*. Sage Publications.
- Brooks, A., & Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2007). An invitation to feminist research. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Feminist research practice: A primer* (pp. 53-82). Sage Publications.
- Department of Education. (2021, September 16). *ICYMI: DepEd, DOH, POPCOM launch convergence of comprehensive sexuality education and adolescent reproductive health*. Retrieved March 1, 2022, from https://www.deped.gov.ph/2021/09/16/icymi-deped-doh-popcom-launch-convergence-of-comprehensive-sexuality-education-and-adolescent-reproductive-health/?fbclid=IwAR3Mj_7vhmAQY656qjgwgWJY7z4mjsTJcNJU62NcvZCmk7Q9hMuKSlbCHE