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Special Issue on Gender in Education and Information Studies: Interrogating Knowledge Production, Social Structures and Equitable Access

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Authors

Wood, Stacy E.
Cifor, Marika
Ilano, Lauren

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This special issue is a direct outgrowth of a partnership between InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies and Thinking Gender 2015, a Graduate Student Research Conference sponsored by the UCLA Center for the Study of Women. The first partnership of its kind, it afforded us an unprecedented opportunity to interact with emerging scholars at varying stages of the publication process. As editors we participated as judges for the poster competition and maintained a presence at the conference to discuss student work. We are excited to introduce two new Lead Editors for InterActions with this issue, Marika Cifor and Lauren Ilano. In a combination of strategy and serendipity, all members of our current editorial team explicitly engage feminist and gender studies in their research agendas. The theme of 2015's gathering foregrounded feminist approaches to knowledge production, specifically addressing historical and contemporary marginalization, access to technology and resources, and educational opportunity and structural oppression. We situate this issue as in conversation with activists, scholars and artists whose work engaged critically with feminist epistemology and knowledge production. This issue seeks to complicate and deconstruct hegemonic ideas of what counts as knowledge, the effects of which challenge traditional approaches to pedagogy, information literacy and information access. InterActions is committed to an intersectional approach, recognizing that markers and categories of gender, biological difference and sexuality co-constitute political and embodied subjectivities alongside and through race, class and ability. Both Education and Information Studies contend with the pragmatic and the theoretical and are intimately tied to technologies and techniques of social control. We must commit to developing and nurturing critical language and research agendas contending with gender, sexuality and identity. We hope to continue to challenge and expand existing conversations as well as break new ground through this crucial, interdisciplinary work.

Christine Vega juxtaposes the mythological dismemberment of Coyolxauhqui with the cleavage of bodymindspirit experienced by Chicana mothering PhD students. She offers her own powerful birth story as a counternarrative to the violence inflicted by the academy in an attempt to reconcile her own fragmentation. Through an analysis of arpilleras, textiles and tapestries crafted by Chilean women, Elizabeth Doolan encourages us to think beyond records as necessarily textual. Her innovative piece examines how gendered activities and expression can escape archival grasp. Further challenging the archival canon, Marika Cifor calls reliability as an archival imperative into question through her analysis of the internal activist newspapers of ACT UP in Los Angeles and New York. She examines how affective and bodily knowledge disseminated through gossip evades archivists, despite its evidentiary value for understanding movement dynamics, because it is a form of knowledge that is rendered feminine. These pieces challenge us to expand our definition of evidence

and examine the way that feminized contributions are rendered illegitimate. Further, they urge us to consider what is at stake in these not-so-innocuous omissions.

Jennifer Pierre's "The Myth of 'Oneness': Erasure of Indigenous and Ethnic Identities in Digital Feminist Discourse" critiques the concept and rhetoric of "oneness," the belief that there can be a singular and cohesive experience of womanhood across cultures, domains, and social movements. This concept as articulated and practiced by global feminist social movements, such as One Billion Rising, contributes significantly to the silencing and exclusion of the voices of women with diverse indigenous and ethnic identities. Pierre's piece demonstrates the power of a concept that when applied from outside can marginalize and silence those who should be full participants in feminist movements. In "The Keeper of the Collections and the Delta Collection: Regulating Obscenity at the Library of Congress, 1940-1963" Melissa Adler exposes the central role of the Library in the government policing of sexual deviance in the United States. The concept of obscenity central to Library's development of the separated and highly restricted Delta Collection, of the world's largest collections of materials on sex and sexuality. Adler examines how the labeling of these materials functioned as a mechanism in seemingly oppositional efforts to contain and preserve them, while simultaneously censoring texts and serving government. Together Pierre and Adler's articles expose the immense power of concepts applied from without to shape the identities of marginalized individuals and communities.

Now in our 13th year, InterAction is proud of our continued engagement with complex, interdisciplinary work on an off of the UCLA campus. This year, a collaboration with the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies Research and Inquiry Conference should allow for an even broader reach, showcasing diverse research agendas, methodologies and political orientations.