



The Diversity Essay as Citizenship Preparation

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Dr. Kirkland's project contributes to NCID's priority area of **Politics, Culture and Social Justice**. An extension of her scholarship on conceptual categories in contemporary American civil rights law, this project investigates the significance of the diversity essay as a facet of college admissions. Despite the increasing use of the diversity essay in admissions, few researchers have systematically examined the content of these essays for shared and disparate conceptualizations of "diversity." Given the heated recent political discourse surrounding diversity, affirmative action, and college admissions, the study will analyze and codify large samples of diversity essays of students from a wide range of backgrounds and evaluate the differing viewpoints and challenges of racial, gender, and socioeconomic groups. She will also conduct an interactive focus group with undergraduate students, as well as form inquiries into the nature of how these students are prepared to write the diversity essay. The study will address important questions regarding the meaning of diversity across various social groups.

Anna Kirkland earned her J.D. (2001) and Ph.D. (Jurisprudence and Social Policy, 2003) from the University of California, Berkeley. Her scholarly interests are in the areas of antidiscrimination law; gender and sexuality in contemporary U.S. law, the politics of rights claiming, and law and identity. More specifically, her research focuses on the construction of the legal categories that receive civil rights protections in various jurisdictions of the United States, particularly gender, race, sexual orientation, and disability. She is interested in the politics of gaining legal protections as well as the ways in which ordinary people understand and negotiate their identities through the law. Dr. Kirkland teaches courses on gender, sexuality, politics and law in Women's Studies and Political Science, and was recently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Law at the Michigan Law School.

Anna Kirkland is consulting with Ben Hansen, Assistant Professor in the U-M Department of Statistics, on statistical design. Hansen received an M.A. in Statistics and his Ph.D. in the Logic and Methodology of Science from the University of California Berkeley.

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