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Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

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If there is one thing that was ingrained in me during my training as a biologist, it is that all members of the species *Homo sapiens*—humans—are nearly identical. The DNA—that life molecule that dictates how we look, act, and function—of any two randomly selected individuals is over 99 % indistinguishable. However, there is no denying that the remaining 1 % variation in our DNA accounts for the rich diversity of people on Earth.

One could argue that the United States showcases that human diversity better than any other place on Earth. We are lucky to live in a racial and cultural melting pot that, should we take advantage of it, can enrich our very existence. Yet, this same amazing mix of diverse individuals can also bring with it challenges: How can the overarching American culture adequately and fairly accommodate, enhance, and benefit from such disparate cultures that come together under one government?

In this issue of Papers and Pubs, I am honored to say that several of our scholarly pieces touch on the beauty and challenges of diversity in America. For example, the fascinating historical literary review “To Belong or Not to Belong?” explores whether African American literature has effectively portrayed and broadcasted Black voices in America. The piece “The Relevance and Redefining of Du Bois’s Talented Tenth: Two Centuries Later” extends the study of the African American experience by examining W.E.B. Du Bois’s proposition of educating and promoting the top tenth of African Americans as a way to advance this entire portion of society. This article explores how the “Talented Tenth” has advanced African Americans and if this approach is still effective in today’s society. On a more applied note, “Developing the College Student Stress Inventory for Black Women (CSSI-BW)” focuses on the creation of an instrument for measuring response to college stress for African American women. In “Changing attitudes toward LGBT students: An analysis of an awareness training paradigm aimed at increasing pro-LGBT attitudes,” the authors explore a potential intervention for decreasing negative attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) students on a college campus.

In addition, the piece “Heirloom Seed & Story Keepers: Growing Community & Sustainability Through Arts-Based Research” touches on the preservation of an essential type of diversity—that of our food sources. This piece details a multidisciplinary path to sustainability through recapturing the agricultural practices of the Appalachian region. While the preservation of heirloom seeds for the purpose of propagation is in itself a worthy celebration of the culture of the southeast, it is also imperative that we preserve a diverse array of fruit and vegetable seeds—for these may become a real form of sustenance for future generations in the region.

Finally, this issue of Papers and Pubs showcases another type of diversity—that of scholarly pursuits in varied academic fields like biology, neuroscience, criminology, and English literature.

I hope you have the time to look through the engaging articles featured in this issue. I know you will enjoy them tremendously.

Sincerely,

Miriam Segura-Totten, Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief