Katelynn Bishop Wins CAS Award For Writing Excellence in the Social Sciences

Senior Katelynn Bishop has won this year’s Michael A. Sassano III and Christopher M. Sassano Award for Writing Excellence in the Social Sciences. The announcement of the award by Professor Joseph Bizup, Director of the CAS Writing Program, noted that ‘Judges of the competition were unanimous in their praise of your writing and research.’ Katelynn won the award for her paper, ‘Queering Identity: The Deviantization of Bisexual Identities in the Lesbian Community and Bisexual Responses,’ written in her junior year for the seminar on deviance and social control taught by Professor Peter Yeager. The paper served as a prelude to her senior thesis research this year on the subject of non-traditional sexual identities. Next year Katelynn will continue her studies of gender and sexualities in the sociology doctoral program at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

Excerpt from ‘Queering Identity’

In the course of my research, I have been interested in exploring possible explanations for the deviantization of bisexual identities in the lesbian community, and bisexual responses to this exclusion, on both macro- and micro-sociological levels. Thus, the question I have attempted to answer is: How and why have bisexual women been labeled as “deviant” within the lesbian community, and how have bisexual women constructed macro- and micro-political identities in response to this exclusion? By reference to a literature review on the topic, as well as information I have gathered through qualitative interviews with bisexual women, I will argue that the deviantization of bisexual women in the lesbian community stems both from the contradiction bisexual women pose to lesbian politics, and the contradiction bisexuals in general pose to a dichotomous view of sexual identity. I will argue, however, that the latter form of deviantization, unlike the former, is largely an apolitical process. In response to the second half of my research question, I will argue that bisexual women have responded to their deviantization in the lesbian community by creating macro- and micro-political identities that seek to challenge the conceptions of sexual identity that have led to their deviantization. In the end, I believe that an understanding of how and why bisexual identities have been deviantized in the lesbian community, and how bisexuals have responded, is sociologically interesting and important, as it has much to teach us about the meanings and implications of our culture’s conceptions of sexual identity.