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OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR: RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BOOK AWARD

Mr Chancellor, I have the honour of presenting to you
Professor Catriona Ida Macleod,
of the Department of Psychology,

for the **Vice-Chancellor's Book Award**.

One of the core purposes of a University is to produce new knowledge that enhances our understanding of the natural and social worlds.

The Vice-Chancellor's Book Award seeks to recognize a recent book published by a staff member, that advances knowledge and understanding, and also brings considerable credit to the University by virtue of the contribution it makes to scholarly literature, or the discipline within which it is authored.

Professor Macleod's research focuses on feminist and critical psychology, and she has contributed significantly to building a body of knowledge that challenges heteronormative and patriarchal global narratives on gender, sexuality and reproduction. She leads one of Rhodes University's Mellon Research Focus Areas.

In 2011, Routledge released Macleod's book "*Adolescence*", *pregnancy and abortion: Constructing the threat of degeneration*¹, a 184 page work of original scholarship in which the author questions the assumptions underlying contemporary discourses around the "problem" of teenage pregnancy. She argues that the negativity surrounding early reproduction is underpinned by a discourse of "adolescence-as-transition". She provides evidence that the idea of "adolescence" arose out of a specific historical context, which provided the grounds for the construction on an imaginary wall between young people and adults. She examines the entrenched status of "adolescence" within a colonialist discourse that equates development of the individual with the development of civilisation,

¹ Macleod C: "*Adolescence*", *pregnancy and abortion: Constructing the threat of degeneration*, (Routledge, London and New York, 2011), ISBN: 978-0-415-55338-4.

and the consequent threat of degeneration that "adolescence" implies. Many important issues are explored, such as the invention of teenage pregnancy and abortion as a social problem; issues of race, culture and tradition in relation to teenage pregnancy; and health service provider practices, specifically in relation to managing risk. The concluding argument of the book indicates a need for a shift from discussion of "teenage pregnancy" to "unwanted pregnancy", forcing scrutiny to change from the individual to the gendered and social space within which reproduction occurs.

This book by Professor Macleod has attracted a range of critical reviews in scholarly journals and elsewhere, and has rapidly gained international recognition. It was identified by the USA based Association for Women in Psychology (AWP), for their prestigious Distinguished Publication Award for 2011, in recognition of significant and substantial contributions of research and theory that advance the understanding of the psychology of women.

Reviewers describe the book as "timely and provocative", "compelling", "tremendously useful", "articulate, clear and enticing", "an extremely competent and well-researched critique", "a fascinating read that challenges the way we think", and that it 'serves as a great example of a constructionist approach'.

While several reviewers praise its "clarity around the genealogy of adolescent discourses and the clear organization", one focuses on the underlying research, noting that "One of the strengths of this book lies in the diversity and rigour of evidence that is drawn on."

Another reviewer writes that the book "maps an important field of research with intellectual rigour and exemplary fair-mindedness, and negotiates a complicated route through a plethora of contentious artistic manifestoes and critical opinions with sophistication and maturity."

Yet another concludes that "The lesson derived from Macleod's work is that obsolete demographic scapegoating – which inevitably targets whatever race, immigrant ethnicity, religion, gender, age group, etc., is the most feared and powerless in any era and locale – undermines science, distorts discourse, erects imaginary barriers, and disrupts the unifying forces crucial to the fabric of diversifying modern societies."

For her lucid writing and original contribution to knowledge, Professor Macleod is a worthy recipient of this award.

So, Mr Chancellor, I request you to award the **2012 Vice-Chancellor's Book Award** to **Professor Catriona Macleod**.