

## Abstracts

**Chantelle Kruger** | North-West University (South Africa)

### *On the cusp of my Becoming*

Early in the 20th century Arnold van Gennep proposed the idea of Rites of Passage that consists of three stages, namely: separation, liminality and incorporation. Victor Turner (1969) built on Van Gennep's work by describing liminality as being neither here nor there, or being betwixt and between spaces and places. liminality is often described as a liminal zone where a threshold or boundary must be crossed from the know into the unknown. Crossing the threshold is a process of transformation from one physical or psychological state to another, such as changing careers, growing from childhood into adulthood, from being single to married, and so forth (Larson, 2014). The liminal zone is ultimately a learning experience and crossing a threshold results in transformed ways of being and meaning making.

Applying the theory of liminality to my own life, I have identified three threshold phases that transformed me into the aspiring academic that I am today. For phase one, I will reflect on my childhood, growing up in a non-academic family, and how my caring yet sporadically absent parents constructed my identity. Phase two is a reflection on my early adulthood, where I felt left behind because I could not attend university due to personal indecisiveness and financial restraints. Furthermore, I was judged by community members for not attending university, owing to their misconceptions that I have no ambition to succeed in life. Lastly, my current threshold experience, phase three, revolves around my academic state of flux. Suffering from imposter syndrome, I fear that I am not taken seriously enough as an aspiring academic and that my research on language and social integration is also not important enough. Jumping at all the temporary teaching and research assistant opportunities that come my way, I frequently rely on my resilience to ward off burnout and bounce back from rejected job applications. Currently, I am on the cusp of becoming an academic, but I have not yet exited the liminal zone and crossed the threshold into academia.

## **References**

Turner, V. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing.  
Larson, P. 2014. *Liminality*. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-6086-2\\_387](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-6086-2_387)



**Christina Wolff** | Gender Equality Commissioner of Potsdam University

### *Equal opportunities for women in German academia? Successes and challenges of institutionalized diversity policies in German universities.*

About 20 years, gender equality policies are successful instruments in academia to promote equal opportunities. Gender equality policy is institutionalised in different levels of management, in academia structures, with different resources and level of professionalization in German

## Learning from Africa: Equal opportunities for women in academia

University of Potsdam | 28-30 October 2019

universities. The talk will focus on the structures of the university of Potsdam, will point out which successes and which challenges faces the university today and in future. The main question will be: How diversity management can affect the gender equality policies and develop more opportunities for women in academia?

==

**Grace Nana Aba Dawson-Ahmoah** | University of Ghana, Legon (Ghana)

### *Female Participation in Technical Education*

Many jobs that were previously thought of as jobs for men have seen a change in recent years with women being actively involved in these jobs. Women in Ghana are not an exception to this change. Therefore, this research paper seeks to determine the level of participation of females in technical education programmes in Ghana using a frequency data. The target population for the research will be female educators in various technical programmes from selected technical universities in the country. The objectives for the research are: to determine the level of participation of women in technical education programmes and to determine the status of women in technical education programmes. Recommendations will be made based on the findings of the study.

#### **Key words**

technical education, technical university, educators

==

**Heike Küchmeister** | Head manager of Potsdam Graduate School

### *Potsdam Graduate School – Support and Career Development for PhD Candidates and Postdocs*

In addition to a comprehensive funding program, the PoGS has developed a mentoring program which is designed specifically for young female scientists who are planning a scientific career, a career in science-related fields or alternative career paths. The aim is to improve career and advancement opportunities for highly qualified women in science, business and administration. The competencies and potential of young female scientists in their various personal and professional development and qualification levels become visible through intensive exchange with specialists and executives, and they also become anchored in the consciousness of regional and supraregional actors from science, industry, administration and politics. In the medium and long term, this should help to reduce gender-specific barriers to accessing specialist and management positions and to increase the proportion of women in top positions.

==

## Learning from Africa: Equal opportunities for women in academia

University of Potsdam | 28-30 October 2019

**Jemima Akosua Anderson** | University of Ghana, Legon (Ghana)  
*Equal Opportunities for Women in Academia: Perspectives from Ghana*  
**Kave Bulambo** | Founder/CEO of My Career Path

*Navigating diversity and inclusion in context. What is hindering career accessibility for women in academia, that is very familiar for women in the private sector.*

The struggles of women building careers in academia globally are not peculiar to women in the private sector. In order to understand what has made some African countries successful in creating spaces for women to succeed in building academic careers much faster/better than Germany, we have to acknowledge the importance of historical contexts that have called forth such environments. Diversity and inclusion, while a global conversation, requires a local implementation strategy for success.

==

**Lillian Brise** | Independent researcher (Germany/Switzerland/Nigeria)

*Gender parity in academia in Nigeria: the two sides of the story*

This presentation showcases the two sides of the story of gender parity in academia in Nigeria. Despite comparatively low rate of enrolment of women into tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the gap between male and female numbers is slowly but surely closing. The success of institutionalised policies aimed at reducing gender disparity in academia is debatable as these are often inadequately structured where they exist at all and the political will to enforce them in any sustainable form is usually lacking. This paper argues that the increase in the number of female students (and by extension, female academics) on the campuses of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is, among other paradoxical effects, a result of societal pressure to uphold gender roles and expectations for women. Therefore, the social, cultural and socio-political factors that influence the participation of women in academia in Nigeria form the pivotal points of this discussion.

==

**Pheladi Fakude** | North-West University (South Africa)

*The environmental and situational factors that influenced my ability to study and learn*

More than 50 years ago families depended on agriculture in order to provide for their families, where both men and women contributed to reproduction and production. But, during the industrial revolution the agricultural focus changed from being family oriented and moved into different sectors. This led to the different spheres for both men and women, where men were in the public domain, while women found themselves in private domain. Women had to focus on motherhood and maternal roles and men were forced into labour. The shift in the economic structure saw men's wages decreasing and women were then entering job markets in order to

## Learning from Africa: Equal opportunities for women in academia

University of Potsdam | 28-30 October 2019

assist their homes with extra income because the money was not enough. The shift in the economic structure was now more dependent upon education. Although, the level of education is a prerequisite for jobs in the academia, we still see fewer women occupying more senior or managerial positions. My narrative will focus on the environmental and situational factors that played a role in my ability to study and learn, specifically on educational, social and cultural factors and on my grit personality: perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. The structure of the presentation will follow this pattern:

The presentation will firstly, focus on how my household influenced (and continue to influence) my success as a women in the academia. Secondly, I will focus on the influence of the social and cultural expectations in my household situation and the role of education as a mediator or focal point for my growth. Thirdly, I will base my talk on my grit personality because more than anything, it became my survival tool/kit out of poverty. Despite the social and cultural factors that seemed to have fought their way against me in my journey of success, I have come far. My current environment and situation (both at home and work) although with its own limitations, have contributed to where I am and to where I imagine I would be.

“Your life has marked you in unique ways and those marks whether you know them or not, will determine how you live your life, what quests you pursue, and what you are equipped to say with passion and authority”

Michael Rabiger

==

**Susan Coetzee-Van Rooy** | North-West University (South Africa)

*A narrative of different kinds of privileges that empowered me to imagine*

Throughout my career I was involved in sporadic activities related to the empowerment of women in the academe. I was often asked: what is your recipe for success? My answer was always awkward: choose the right partner. I was elated to read Probert's (2005: 70-71) article in which results from two large scale studies that investigated the lack of representation of women in the professoriate levels in Australian higher education concluded:

- “these measures [workplace initiatives and policies to increase gender equality in the academe], on their own, are unlikely to ensure any substantial increase in the proportion of women reaching senior academic positions”; and
- “We need ... to focus more specifically on the impact of the **household** [my emphasis] on men's and women's working lives” to understand why women do not reach senior academic positions.

The results of this research confirmed to me that my idea that the right partner contributes to the success of women in the academe was not isolated. It confirmed to me that elements in the household of girl-children when they grow up and when they become adults (e.g. in the form of insight and support of their partners, parents and other members of the community; often in resistance or discord with the social and cultural expectations of society) play a major role in their success as female academics.

With this background in mind, we decided to structure the narratives of our experiences in the academe around this basic question: how did your household influence (and continues to

## Learning from Africa: Equal opportunities for women in academia

University of Potsdam | 28-30 October 2019

influence) your success as a woman in the academe? We will also pay attention to the influence of the social and cultural expectations in the contexts where our households were (and are) situated; and the role of education as facilitator of our growth. The South African delegation's presentations will therefore be structured as narratives related to the households in which we lived (and live) over our life-span and how these households contributed (and continues to contribute) to our success as women in the academe; keeping the educational, social and cultural contexts in which our households were (and are) situated in mind.

My personal narrative will unpack the different kinds of privilege which I experienced as a white girl-child growing up in apartheid South Africa; getting married in 1994, the year of the first democratic election in South Africa; and being a working parent in the academe in the post-1994 South Africa. My narrative includes my realization of the influence of the educational, social and cultural contexts that constituted (and continues to constitute) different kinds of privilege (and oppressions) which I experienced throughout my life. For example, the social and cultural expectations for girls and boys in an Afrikaans community in South Africa influenced my life and career in the academe profoundly. In my intimate household circles, my wise mother's warnings, my caring father's support, the collaboration with my super unique supportive husband and clued-up children all positioned me in unique ways so that it was imaginable for me to participate as a woman in the academe in South Africa at all levels. In tandem, school and university created experiences and opportunities that made me grow; and they were spaces where I had to challenge certain practices. While reflecting on my personal narrative of privilege, I again became very aware of the much bigger struggle for equality that continues to unfold in the broader South African society and specifically for girl-children in education and later in the academe.

### Reference

Probert, B. 2005. 'I Just Couldn't Fit It In': Gender and Unequal Outcomes in Academic Care. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 12(1): 50-72.