



**VIRTUAL**  
24HR NACADA CONFERENCE

**Contested Terrain:  
Women in Higher Education Globally**

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NACADA  
THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY  
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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**The story for many women  
in HE globally in the last 40  
years is one of  
Opportunity, Access, &  
Attainment.**

*Bhandari, 2017*



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**Access**

**Women's enrollment in  
higher education globally  
has grown almost twice as  
fast as the rate of male  
enrollment in the past four  
decades.**

*Bhandari, 2017*



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**Attainment**

**Women are as likely to earn a bachelor's degree as men, and more likely to earn their Masters.**

*Bhandari, 2017; UNESCO, 2019*



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**Attainment**

**More and more adults are earning a tertiary qualification, but not all tertiary degrees have the same value on the labor market.**

*OECD, 2016*



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**Outcomes**

**Women are more likely to choose fields that are middle-to-low income producing such as education, humanities, the arts, social sciences, business, and health and welfare.**

*Bhandari, 2017; UNESCO, 2019*



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**Outcomes**

**Men are much more likely to choose higher-income fields such as technology, engineering, construction, and manufacturing.**

*Bhandari, 2017; UNESCO, 2019*



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**Attainment**

**Men are more likely (56%) to earn their doctorate (44%) than women in every part of the world except Latin America and the Caribbean.**

*Bhandari, 2017*



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**Outcomes**

**Men make up 71% of researchers globally. In every part of the world, women researchers in STEM fields are in the minority.**

*UNESCO, 2019*



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**Access**

**Barriers in STEM fields include:**

- Sex and gender-typing that impacts girls in primary and secondary school
- Workplace bias in hiring and promotion
- Family-care responsibilities expected of female students

*UNESCO, 2019*



10

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**UK Physics Study**

- A multi-year effort in the United Kingdom focused on the abysmal rate of girls pursuing Physics at the A-level
- Boys in the UK were 4x more likely to progress to A-level; half of co-ed schools in the UK sent 0 (zero) girls to do A-level Physics

*2012 Institute of Physics Report*



11

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**UK Physics Study**

- The study found gate-keeping efforts by schools and students reinforced gendered notions of who should be studying Physics (and who should not)
- Girls also self-selected out to avoid school and lab environments that were perceived as unfriendly and unsupportive

*UCL, SPIRES 2, 2019 report*



12

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**UK Physics Study**

The effect of these (and other) forces impacts physics-based employment of women. Fewer than 11% of the UK Engineering workforce is female.

*UCL, ASPIRES 2, 2019 report*



13

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**UK Physics Study**

"The lack of girls studying physics at a higher level has consequences for the UK economy. The government's industrial strategy places emphasis on the high demand for skilled workers in the sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics."



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**UK Physics Study**

"...But more importantly, generations of innovative, talented and brilliant girls are being led to believe they can't be engineers, scientists, programmers or technicians."

*Professor Dame Julia Higgins DBE FRS FREng  
President, Institute of Physics*



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**Access and Opportunity Varies Globally**

The pipeline from primary to secondary to participation in higher education for girls and women cannot be stressed enough. There is a heavier impact in some parts of the world than others.



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**Access and Opportunity Varies Globally**

Globally there are 60 million primary school-age children (6-11 years old) missing from classrooms.

Half of them live in sub-Saharan Africa.

- 23% of primary-age girls in Sub-Saharan Africa are out of school

*UNESCO, 2019*



17

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**Access and Opportunity Varies Globally**

Barriers in Sub-Saharan African schools include:

- School systems unable to keep up with rising populations
- Poverty
- Family expectations
- Marriage pressures
- Unsafe conditions to get to school and,
- Unsafe and unhygienic conditions while at school.



18

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**Access and Opportunity Varies Globally**

Access to education and educational attainment in Sub-Saharan Africa impacts future generations of girls and women. Female teachers play a positive role in encouraging enrollment in secondary ed; those countries with a high number of female teachers have more girls in secondary education classrooms.

*UNESCO, 2019*



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**Our Bodies, Ourselves**

With college completion as a central focus in the United States and elsewhere, LGBTQ student experiences in all areas of education are under scrutiny.



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**Our Bodies, Ourselves**

A survey of over 27,000 trans adults, found that 24% of respondents who were out as or perceived as trans in college reported being verbally, physically, or sexually harassed.

*U.S. Transgender Survey, 2016, reported in Goldberg, 2018*



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**Our Bodies, Ourselves**

In that same study, 16% of those experiencing harassment eventually left college due to that harassment.



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**Our Bodies, Ourselves**

In a survey of nearly 6,500 trans students attending higher ed institutions, students reported experiencing harassment, financial issues related to transition, and a lack of financial aid.

Students of color and trans women were especially likely to highlight these barriers.

*National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 2017, reported in Goldberg, 2018*



23

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**Our Bodies, Ourselves**

“College has the capacity to reinforce the gendered and transphobic treatment that many students have already experienced in school and in society, leading to poor academic and psychosocial outcomes...”

*Goldberg, 2018*



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**Our Bodies, Ourselves**

“... or, to support and empower these students (who already show signs of resilience, in that they have completed high school and enrolled in college), thus enhancing academic and personal success.”

*Goldberg, 2018*



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**Understanding Women in Higher Education Globally is a Complex Story – We’ve Just Begun**

- Access, opportunity, & attainment are negotiated & differ by race, class, caste, gender identity and expression, indigenous & ethnic identity via economic, cultural, and even scientific capital
- Undergraduate completion doesn’t mean access to access to all jobs or high-paying jobs
- Undergraduate completion rates are not yet matched by doctoral and research-level attainment
- First-world activists must remember that gains for some are not gains for all



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**Contested Terrain Indeed: Women in Higher Education Globally**

Throughout the following 23 presentations that follow, listen for stories and voices that describe where the places of resistance and challenge exist and how either personally or structurally, our speakers fight back and resist dominant norms to claim, occupy, and transform space.

Listen for the points of pain and, above all, listen for the rising up.



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Please take a minute to complete a session eval using the link or QR code below:  
<http://bit.ly/24hrEval>



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29

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