

Women and Research

Issue 2, 2017

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Mission statement

To foster an active and inclusive research environment in order to enhance high quality research output



Welcome from Angela

Dear Fellow Researchers,

Hello and welcome to our second issue of the Women and Research newsletter for 2017!

In 2015, UN Women, the European Commission, the Belgian Development Cooperation and the United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC) organised a Comic and Cartoon Competition on Gender Equality.

European comic and cartoon artists and art students, aged 18 to 28, were invited to submit wordless cartoons highlighting “their understanding of women's rights and gender equality”.

In this issue of Women and Research, we are pleased to reprint the cartoon of third place winner, Agata Hop, from Poland. Her cartoon represents the gender career ladder (see page 2) and depicts the sad reality of gender equity today.

She describes her cartoon like this: “While the man is riding an escalator to success, the woman has to climb the ladder carrying a lot of burden.” If you would like to see more of Ms Hop's work, please visit her Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/HopAgata/>.

In our first feature in this issue we hear from Professor Cobie Rudd, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Strategic Partnerships) and Vice-President at Edith Cowan University (ECU).

Professor Rudd is leading gender equity in academia for ECU as part of the first pilot of the Athena SWAN Charter in Australia. Her

article considers research pathways, the ‘leaky pipeline’ and what we can all do to bust gender bias.

In our second feature, I interview Dr Janneke Blijlevens about her journey towards an Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) A* journal acceptance. Dr Blijlevens talks about her research program, her co-author team and offers suggestions for targeting A* journals.

Our final feature article for this issue is from PhD Candidate Ms Ashleigh Powell. Ms Powell is approaching the PhD finish line. Her article considers the intangible things she found for each of her three years as a candidate.

In her first year, Ms Powell found her voice, in her second, she found balance and in her final year, she is finding her feet. As Ms Powell moves towards PhD completion she finds herself drawing on all three of these new skills as she turns her attention to finding one last thing: a full-time job.

If you would like to be featured in the Women and Research newsletter please contact me. Or consider nominating someone else to be featured.

Welcome again to our second 2017 issue and happy reading.

Warm regards,

Angela

Editor

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Previous Issues

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Bias Busting In Higher Education: Promoting Gender Diversity In Research

by Professor Cobie Rudd



Professor Cobie Rudd

A major challenge in higher education today is ensuring women progress in their chosen research pathways and into the senior echelons. There are compelling productivity, governance and social justice reasons to prioritise gender equality at all levels in academia. As Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Strategic Partnerships) at ECU, one of my roles is to lead the gender equality agenda as we participate in the first Australian Pilot of the Athena SWAN Charter which actively aims to address gender imbalances, in the first instance, within science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM).

Host of the Pilot, the Science in Australia Gender Equity initiative (known as SAGE), notes the ongoing aging profile in the STEMM workforce has low rates of senior female academics (approximately 17%) in Australian universities and research institutes. This occurs in spite of higher commencing enrolment statistics for females in Australia (55.7% as at 31 May 2015) and they continue to hold a relatively low share of completed STEM undergraduate degrees compared to males.

This significant loss of women scientists and researchers in seniority is referred to as the 'leaky pipeline'; that is, the further women go in their scientific educations and careers, the less likely they will remain in science-related fields or professions. By way of example, when we look at the senior executive levels in academia, there is less than 35% of women at my level.

This is concerning given academics are supposed to provide thought leadership; yet the narrow and gendered constructions of leaders and leadership still prevail. In a related space, we are still a long way from seeing equal pay for females in senior roles. In my state, Western Australia, we hold the highest gender pay gap in the nation at 30.9% for total full time remuneration by the state employers (from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency Gender Scorecard, 2016).

Nationwide, Australia's lagging position in innovation and research collaboration between universities and business is well known. We're hearing a lot these days from politicians about the country ranking last and second last in the two most recent

The significant loss of women scientists and researchers in seniority is referred to as the 'leaky pipeline'



Source: Agata Hop www.facebook.com/HopAgata

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Science, Technology and Industry surveys. What is concerning is that the importance of STEM is acknowledged by industry and business alike, with experts predicting that 75 per cent of the fastest growing occupations will require STEM skills. Moving forward we will need to grow and cultivate the next generation of innovators and inventors by looking at sustainable cultural change that has impact at very young ages.

Gender bias starts in our children as young as 5-7 years old. Unless students are interested and engaged in STEM at an early age, they are unlikely to pursue a career in those fields. This means building teaching capacity in primary and secondary schools in STEM, as well as spiking interest in science, specifically for girls, at the earliest age possible, to ensure there is a pipeline to university delivering inter-generations of STEM specialists and researchers. We need to break gender-based stereotypes and challenge the existing thinking which continue to prevail around us.

Only a few years ago, a car was sent to pick me up for a gala event. I was ushered into the back seat of the car by the driver. After some time, I noticed the driver pacing up and down the footpath and I asked him if he was all right. He said "Yes, I'm just waiting for the Professor". I thought there was only one underlying message from this staggering episode – it is still difficult for some to envisage women as leaders.

Targeted and disruptive programs are vital in eradicating outdated gender-based notions of work. We need to encourage a greater presence of diverse role models and researchers (for example, women as experts/opinion leaders); provide different learning opportunities that teach gender equality at the earliest ages, and ensure cultural changes and provisions that promote greater work satisfaction for all such as flexible working hours, job share roles and part time opportunities in a senior capacity. If we are going to achieve gender equity in academia in the next decade, I believe the association

between gender and required work effort, recognition, progression and satisfaction will have to be equal. Merit must be considered relative to opportunity and one should not be disadvantaged when returning to a research career after taking time out for carer or parental roles. Reaching this goal will require the eradication of both conscious and unconscious bias. Although racial bias and discrimination is highly documented, gender bias is considered the strongest basis for classifying others.

For broad-ranging cultural change we will require investment and structural transformation. Our working environments have historically been designed by men for men – this is a huge demotivating factor for women who make up 47% of the workforce in Australia. Female scarcity is a myth – we perpetuate an environment that does not actively consider gender minority groups and continues an ongoing traditional belief system – this is not a conducive environment for inclusion, creativity and diversity necessary for innovation and research with impact. Change can only happen through an honest assessment of institutional issues with a sustained focus from all levels within the academic and professional staff cohort to senior/ executive roles coupled with visible leadership from the Vice-Chancellor/ CEO.

We need to start challenging the status quo, changing attitudes and behaviours through well informed initiatives geared to transforming organisational culture. By instinctively seeking out people who reflect these values in our recruitment practices, promotion strategies and selection processes – we need to 'catch ourselves' and be aware of our own biases that pose risks and/or could inhibit a progressive workforce. At ECU we see the Athena SWAN initiative as a catalyst to ensure there is better information out there about women's equality and to change the working environment for everyone in a systematic way. We need to shift away from the traditional and hierarchical world of academia to a more lateral thinking and flexible approach that aligns with our contemporary lives – it is time for a new approach.

Gender bias starts in our children as young as 5-7 years old

We need to break gender-based stereotypes and challenge the existing thinking

Dr Janneke Blijlevens: Aiming for A*

by Associate Professor Angela R. Dobele

Have the confidence to approach an A* journal

Identify your research program plan, know your contribution and stay up-to-date in your field



Dr Janneke Blijlevens

Janneke Blijlevens is a senior lecturer in the School of Economics, Finance and Marketing. Recently, Dr Blijlevens had her first Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) A* publication accepted. A* journals are the highest ERA ranked journals researchers can aim for, and, correspondingly, are highly prized and incredibly competitive. Having a paper accepted by an A* journal is worthy of celebration. Congratulations Dr Blijlevens!

Dr Blijlevens' article is titled "Data Driven Styling: Augmenting Intuition in The Product Design Process Using Holistic Styling Analysis (HSA)" and will be published in the Journal of Mechanical Design with co-authors Dr Charlie Ranscombe and Mr Philip Kinsella. You can view the online version of this article here: mechanicaldesign.asmedigitalcollection.asme.org/article.aspx?articleid=2644456

I was fortunate to have a chat with Dr Blijlevens about her publication journey.

1. Please tell me about your paper?

Our paper describes a new method for measuring design newness. It is an objective measure, whereas most researchers use subjective measures, in the sense that consumers are asked to rate how new a product's design is. Our measure is based on fitting a point-cloud onto 3D digital images of product designs. By comparing two point-clouds for two different designs we get a numerical measure of how different these designs are. These measures can be used to develop a strategy of differentiation from other brands or within the evolution of a product category.

2. What was the publication route towards the A*?

This is the third publication within this research program. In preparing the first two papers, our familiarity with the literature expanded, which enabled us to recognise the hot topics. Also, the momentum of writing

within this research area developed our writing skills to the point where we felt confident in approaching an A* journal for the third paper in the series. We targeted this particular journal because it announced a special issue on data-driven design (D³). We contacted the editor prior to submission to confirm our paper would be a good fit. Upon positive response from the editor, we submitted early and were successful!

3. Your team is inter-disciplinary. Tell me about that?

Charlie's background is in product design engineering while Philip's is in mechanical engineering and mine is in design research from a consumer psychology perspective. Charlie asked me for advice on an innovative measure he had developed. I recognised how this measure could be developed into a method, thereby making a great contribution to not only design strategy but also business practice. Philip's expertise in mechanical engineering rounded out the technical specifics of the method. As a team, we realised we could make a significant contribution by combining our expertise.

4. What advice would you offer researchers aiming for A*?

Work with strong collaborators. Know the hot topics in your research area. Gradually build confidence and then don't hesitate to aim for an A*. I think there is also a part where you need to give and take with your research team. For example, who is first author and, especially for interdisciplinary teams, where you target for publications and setting up a plan for making contributions across multiple disciplines.

You need to take a longer term view regarding the research outcomes. What I mean is, don't look at your research as a single publication, consider it as a research program.

The PhD Journey: What You Find Along The Way

by Ms Ashleigh Powell

Throughout the PhD journey you can lose a lot of things. You can lose sleep, a lot of time, and potentially some of your sanity along the way. However, there are many valuable things that you find along the way as well. Some of the things that you find are obvious and concrete, like new research skills. Some of the things that you find are less tangible but just as important.

As I work through the third year of my PhD I have taken some time to reflect on these intangible attributes I have developed throughout this program. As I looked back, I noticed that across the years of my PhD journey I have found something slightly different each year. The first year of my PhD was about finding my voice, the second, some balance, and now in the third year, I have begun to find my feet.

For me, and for many other students beginning a doctoral program, the first year of the PhD was about finding my voice. I came to the program with some skills related to research and some knowledge of my topic. But what I lacked was a clear and decisive voice regarding my area of research, my PhD program as a whole, and an understanding of how to communicate my work effectively to others.

When I look back on the first few months of my PhD journey, I remember it as a time where I needed to find my voice in regard to the ins and outs of completing my PhD. When you begin a program of this nature your first few months require you to meet new people, take in the challenges that lay ahead of you, formulate a plan, and make your voice heard regarding the direction of your project.

A key aspect of this process is meeting your supervisory team. For many students, this is a nerve-wracking aspect of starting your program, and for good reason. For a PhD student, your supervisory team is a lifeline throughout your project. These are the people who will guide you regarding the “big

picture” stuff, like the overall direction and aims of your project, as well as the nitty gritty details around how you should do your research, manage your time, and write up your thesis.

Ideally, your supervisory team will give you a good mix of advice, critique, and encouragement along the way. What the balance between these key aspects of supervision looks like will depend on you as the student, and the supervisors that you work with. Some supervisors may be less hands on, some may be interested in more closely managing your work. Some supervisors will leave it to you as the student to decide on the direction of your work, some may be more prescriptive. At the end of the day whether your supervisors are more hands-on or hands-off doesn't matter, what matters is how you communicate your needs to your team so that both you and your supervisors are getting what you need out of the relationship. What is important in those early stages of your PhD is, therefore, to find your voice within the team of people who are working with you throughout this journey.

When I started my PhD I knew that I had set my sights on a career in academia. However, I was uncertain regarding what I wanted my project to look like, what my plan was, and what my goals throughout my PhD would be. I have been lucky enough to have been able to work with three talented and enthusiastic supervisors who have helped me to find my voice regarding these aspect of the project along the way.

When I first began my working relationship with these accomplished academics I would feel almost hesitant to bring up new ideas, ask for help, or have my say regarding the direction of my PhD. That is, I had not yet found my voice within our team. Looking back, I think for me, and potentially for other students who progress straight from undergraduate and then honours programs to a PhD, it was leftover from my earlier studies.

Taking time to reflect

What matters is how you communicate your needs to your team

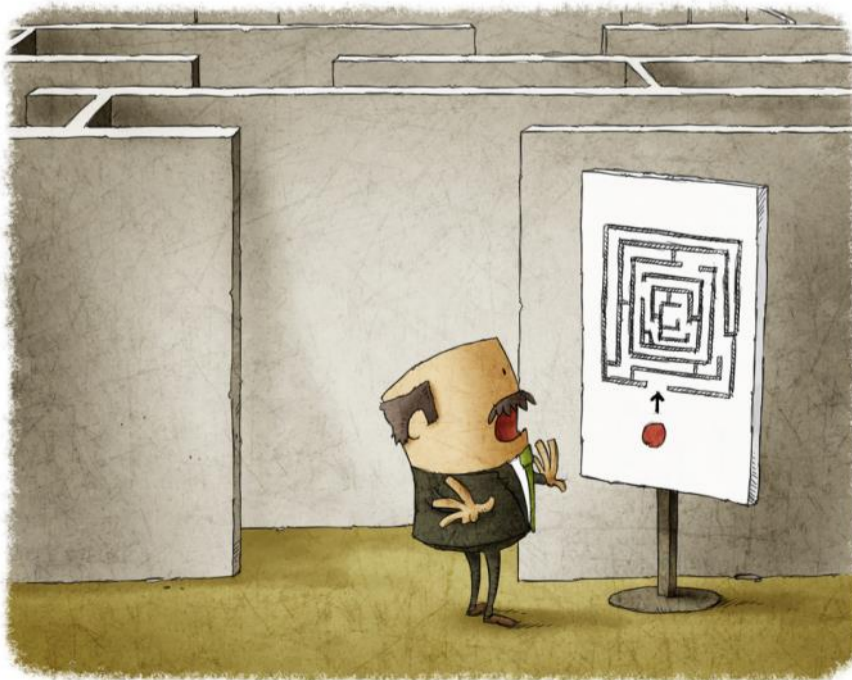
As an undergraduate and then honours student I felt that the goals, deadlines, and structure of my work was laid out for me – I just needed to do as I was told and the job would be done! As a new PhD student, however, I felt overwhelmed regarding the need to make these decisions for myself. What would my thesis look like? How would I address my research questions? Which research questions should I explore, and which should I leave for future research? In the beginning I felt more comfortable deferring to my supervisors regarding these decisions, however, that's not what a PhD is all about. I needed to find my own voice regarding where my project would go, and how I wanted to get there. It was through building a strong working relationship with a team of supervisors who understood my goals that I was able to become more decisive and find my voice regarding the direction of my project.

Another place where I needed to find my voice in the early stages of my PhD was in regard to my area of research. In the early stages of my program I had a burgeoning understanding of the literature, and I had a number of ideas about how I could fit in to the academic landscape of this area. But, like many PhD students in the beginning of their project, I struggled to feel that my ideas were worthy, that I could trust my judgement regarding what the future of this research should be, and that I could provide a worthwhile contribution to the literature.

What helped me to get through this stage of the PhD journey, and ultimately find my voice

in regard to my chosen research area, was talking this through with my supervisors and the other academics I have been lucky enough to engage with at RMIT. Early on in my PhD, I was able to take part in the RMIT Behavioural Business Lab, which is a multi-disciplinary team of researchers at RMIT who have a particular interest and skill in conducting experimental research to understand the behaviour of consumers. By communicating the literature to them, talking through my research questions, and outlining my intended methodology, I was able to gain feedback not only from my team of supervisors, but also from a diverse group of researchers whose multi-disciplinary approach helped to guide me. Allowing myself to explain the concepts and theories I was interested in to others helped me to understand the research more deeply, allowed me to gain a firmer grasp on what I wanted my research to achieve, and helped me to clarify how I should go about meeting my aims.

Communicating my work to others has been a key aspect of finding my voice throughout my PhD, and I started to work intensely on this early on. Toward the end of my first year, I presented at my first conference. At the time I was equally excited and daunted – I was excited by the idea of attending the conference, hearing other peoples' work and ideas, but the thought of spending 20 minutes speaking about my own work was nerve-racking. I spent weeks preparing for this (comparatively brief) presentation, and tried to keep my supervisors' advice front of mind: don't just outlay the facts, but tell a



Ms Ashleigh Powell

It is important to develop as a well-rounded professional at the end of the PhD journey

Teaching, research and leadership have been my focus throughout my candidature

story about your work, make the audience feel something, and ensure they walk away from your presentation with an understanding of the impact of your work.

After much nervous preparation, I was able to stand in front of my newfound colleagues at this conference and speak confidently about my research. I found this experience fulfilling, and it set me up to enjoy talking about my research throughout the remainder of my PhD. Not long after this conference I had my first PhD milestone presentation to prepare for, and the lessons that I learnt through my first conference presentation helped me to communicate effectively with my panel and be prepared to deal with the feedback that comes with this process.

Since my first year, I have made communicating my research findings a real priority. Pushing myself to compete in competitions like the RMIT College of Business “Pitch or Ditch” and the 3 Minute Thesis have provided me with funding opportunities and, more importantly, the chance to hone my ability to speak about my research in a way that is engaging and effective. Being a comfortable presenter is an important aspect of being an academic regardless of the stage you are at in your career.

As a PhD student, it is essential to find your voice as a presenter early on. The advice that I would give students entering their PhD program is to get up and present your work to people as often as you can. Practice makes perfect, and if it scares you, you should probably do it! While I still feel nervous before I present – and likely always will – developing these skills early on in my PhD has meant that I now have increased confidence in my presentation skills and my ability to communicate my findings effectively.

In addition to finding my voice, another thing I have found along the PhD road is balance. When you are working toward your PhD there will be multiple demands on your time. There are the many aspects of conducting your research, writing your thesis, meeting with your supervisors, maintaining a family and

social life, and attempting to have some time left over for yourself. Like many of my PhD colleagues, a further demand on my time has been associated with my employment. For me, employment has not just been about making ends meet, but also about finding balance during my PhD between working on my thesis and working on other skills and attributes that will make me a more well-rounded professional at the end of my PhD journey.

When I began my PhD, I had been tutoring for various university level courses for nearly two years. I began tutoring when I was an honours student in psychology, and at the time, I was incredulous at being given the opportunity to guide and develop students of my own. I found the experience incredibly rewarding, and it helped me to clarify my goals in regard to a career in academia. I have been lucky enough to continue to develop my teaching skills both at the University of Melbourne and at RMIT throughout my PhD.

Not only have I enjoyed being a part of other students’ journeys, building a rapport with a new group of students each semester, and imparting knowledge and skills that will be part of their future careers, but teaching has also made me a better student. When you give feedback, you learn to take feedback more effectively. When you have to explain concepts to others, you understand these concepts more deeply.

My advice to other PhD candidates is that it may take some time for you to find your balance in regard to how you will manage your time effectively and work toward completing your thesis. However, finding space to take up other opportunities, whether these be related to teaching or working in industry, can ensure that you come out of your PhD program as a well-rounded professional. In addition to preparing you for a career post-PhD, engaging in opportunities, like teaching, can be a rewarding process that show you how to be a better student, researcher, and human being!

As I work through the third year of my PhD the time has come for me to do something

My advice to other candidates: put yourself forward

Find your voice
Find your balance
Find your feet

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new; find my feet as a researcher and professional. So far, the third year of my PhD has been both challenging and rewarding. Challenging because we are now entering the stage where we aim to pull together the research I have been working on throughout my program, which can be a daunting task. However, this year has also been rewarding. Publishing the first paper related to my PhD research has given me the confidence to know that my work is worth being heard, but also imparted new practical skills related to dealing with reviewer feedback while remaining true to my own vision and voice.

While the publication process does involve a unique set of challenges, many of which a PhD student may have not been exposed to before, it is also highly rewarding. Making your research visible is an important part of your work as a researcher, both during your PhD and beyond, and it is at this point in my PhD that I am finding my feet in regard to this aspect of academic life. The experience is the same for many of my PhD colleagues, and the advice that I would give to other candidates is to push yourself to make your work heard by the community, whatever that may look like for you. Making your research heard could be through publication, in the media, or directly in the industry that will benefit from your work.

Another rewarding aspect of this third year of my PhD has been related to my teaching work. I have been lucky enough to have been able to progress from tutoring to lecturing in a course that I enjoy and am passionate about. Along with this opportunity has come increased pressure, responsibility, and new challenges but, at this critical stage in my candidature, I am grateful for the opportunity to find my feet as a lecturer.

Along with these increased challenges, lecturing has involved greater rewards. I'm now able to guide and engage with a larger group of students, have further input to how the course is run, and work with a team toward improving the student experience. For many PhD students who are at a similar stage of their PhD, this is characteristic of their professional development at this time and involves transitioning from a more junior role to one that is closer to your post-PhD goals. My advice to other candidates at this stage of the journey is to put yourself forward for such opportunities as these are the experiences that will help you to both clarify your career goals and prepare yourself for your future employment.

The point at which I find myself at now – preparing a second paper for publication, pulling together my thesis, and developing my skills as an instructor – is a culmination of the experiences that I have had throughout my PhD journey. There are many skills that I have learnt throughout this journey which fall into those three broad categories: finding your voice, finding your balance, and finding your feet. Finding these three things can seem like an insurmountable task at the beginning of your PhD, and as you come toward the end of your program your work on these aspects of yourself will be far from over. I recognise that I still have much left to learn. However, through the experiences you have during the PhD journey, like working with your supervisors, communicating your research to others, and potentially teaching a new generation of students, you find these valuable attributes along the way.

Associate Professor Angela R. Dobe is an academic research professional with a passion for word of mouth (wom) marketing, from traditional face-to-face through to social media and electronic wom. Her research interests extend to marketing education and education issues including academic workload and student performance.

Angela is an experienced quantitative and qualitative researcher who has published 50+ papers. In the field of wom, she has contributed to the understanding of the key drivers of positive wom and the organisational strategies that facilitate it. She is currently developing a framework to assist commercial marketers improve the effectiveness of blogs and micro-blogs: building on co-creation and collaboration to communicate with loyal and passionate community members.

In the field of education, Angela is currently working with Griffith University's Professor Sharyn Rundle-Thiele to develop an understanding of the full impact of ERA and the differences in academic workload and performance on promotion.

Angela has developed strong links with industry with a commitment to bridging the relationship between practitioners and academia. Her current industry projects involve research into tourism, life insurance and blood donation.

