



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY



13th Annual Conference
March 26th – 27th, 2021

Keynote by Kate Abramson, Indiana University
3:30 p.m. Friday, March 26th

The conference will take place over Zoom.

Please find Zoom details below.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://fsu.zoom.us/j/97364501138>

Meeting ID: 973 6450 1138

Conference Schedule

Friday March 26th, 2:25 pm - 5:30 pm

2:25 - 3:15 *Mohna Khan*
“On the Shattering of Self and World in the
Aftermath and the Need to Care for Survivors
of Sexual Violence”

15-minute Break

3:30 - 5:30
Keynote Speaker *Kate Abramson*
“Learning About Trust From Gaslighting”

Saturday March 27, 11:00 am - 1:55 pm

Saturday 11:00 - 11:50 *Michael Omoge*
“Analytic Philosophy and Africanity”

15-minute Break

Saturday 12:05 - 1:55..... *Dana Fritz*
“Radical Passing: Why Autistic and Non-
Autistic People Must Both Be Responsible for
Empathy”

Link for All Meetings:
<https://fsu.zoom.us/j/97364501138>
Meeting ID: 973 6450 1138

Presentation Abstracts

On the Shattering of Self and World in the Aftermath and the Need to Care for Survivors of Sexual Violence

Mohna Khan
Penn State University

Susan Brison's first-person account of her experience of sexual violence confronts us with the way in which in the aftermath of trauma, one is faced with the shattering of their identity and world and learns that there can be no restoration of a prior order or understanding of the self—that is, there can be no return to a self before the trauma. As Brison discusses, the survivor is faced with a reality that challenges assumptions about the self as wholly unified and autonomous; in the aftermath, one no longer feels in control of their body or surroundings, one experiences a radically altered relationship to the past and future. Yet, even in the face of such disorienting consequences, what Brison's account makes clear is that the self is relationally constituted—that we stand in relationship to and are dependent upon one another in meaningful ways, and our ability to remake the self and continue to persist is made possible with the help of others.

Using care ethics, which sheds light on our fundamental condition of interdependence, as an ethical approach to this problem, I draw attention to the importance of caring for trauma survivors by being morally attuned to their reality—as Nel Noddings highlights, by attempting to “feel-with” them as one apprehends their reality as a possibility for oneself. This attunement should impel us to center and address their particular/concrete needs as we recognize that care must be taken up as both value and practice, and again recognize that our care helps make the survivor's recovery a real possibility. In Brison's case, this meant aiding the survivor in the process of reestablishing their identity by empathically listening to her trauma narrative. As she writes, those who were unresponsive or unable to empathize only further contributed to her suffering.

In addition to drawing attention to Brison's lived experience, I also seek to underscore the importance of recognizing and concretely responding to the different needs of survivors, especially in the case of survivors of color and others with marginalized identities whose narratives and needs largely remain neglected. Pushing back on Nel Noddings' emphasis on relation and reciprocity (that our responsibility to care only arises when we stand in close relation to the other, and that the other must be able to respond to our care) I suggest that we have a moral responsibility to care for those who face particular realities insofar as we recognize their suffering as well as the systems of oppression that help give rise to it.

Analytic Philosophy and Africanity

Michael Omoge

University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Underrepresentation in philosophy has become very noticeable that institutions have begun to establish policies to remedy the disproportionate distribution of experts in the field. But underrepresentation seems to be an evidence of the cultural undertone of philosophy. Analytic philosophy, for instance, seems to be represented mostly by Westerners because its history seems to run concurrently with the history of the Western culture. Similarly, for African philosophy—it is no coincidence that Africans dominate African philosophy. Thus, in principle, underrepresentation in philosophy isn't necessarily pernicious. What is pernicious, which is my concern here, is the epistemic bias that comes with underrepresentation.

As an African, studying in Africa, and an analytic philosopher, I receive incredulous stares at conferences, not just from Westerners who wonder what business I have doing analytic philosophy, but also from Africans who expect that I be doing African philosophy. It is as though one's culture determines the philosophy he/she should do. No doubt, one would thrive better in a cognitive niche that supports one's research (Clark 2006), but there is no evidence, empirical or otherwise, that one's research would be underserve if one is in a separate niche. Being an African in Africa, where the cognitive niche supports African philosophy doesn't mean no other philosophical tradition can thrive in Africa for Africans.

I will argue, in this paper, that this epistemic bias isn't just blind to the available technological achievements, but also close-minded to the advantages of cross-culturation in philosophy. Cognitive niches, I will argue, are no longer geographically located, but are spatiotemporally extended. All I need is a functioning internet to be a member of a cognitive niche. I will also argue, in Wiredu's (1980) spirit, that philosophy has much to gain if it is cross-cultural. Analytic philosopher gains something from an African perspective that it wouldn't have otherwise, and so too, African philosophy. As an African analytic philosopher, some of my traditional African heritages have been insightful to my research in modal epistemology.

For instance, for Africans, perception isn't the only factive source of knowledge; intuition, dream, and imagination are also (e.g., Mbiti 1969). This is because this physical world of you and I isn't only governed by the nomological laws of physics, but also by the supernatural laws of the ethereal world of ancestors. And the ancestors, having transcended the spatiotemporal bounds that limit us can share non-causal knowledge with us through intuition, dream, and imagination. Hence, the factivity of intuition and its ilk. No doubt, intuition and its ilk aren't factive if we take this physical world to be governed only by the nomological laws of science as Western philosophy does. But the claim that they can be factive, which an African heritage affords, is important and relevant to how we treat the deliverances of science.

This, and other areas an African heritage can be relevant to analytic philosophy I will explore in this paper. I will conclude by saying that the epistemic bias, which is often associated with underrepresentation not only hamper the objectivity philosophical analyses, but it is also a vice that philosophy as a whole is better off without.

Clark, A. (2006). 'Language, Embodiment, and the Cognitive Niche'. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 10(8): 370–74.

Mbiti, J. (1969). *African Religions & Philosophy*. Heinemann.

Wiredu, K. (1980). *Philosophy and an African Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Radical Passing: Why Autistic and Non-Autistic People Must Both Be Responsible for Empathy

Dana Fritz

Marquette University

Autistic people are accused of lacking empathy. This is problematic for certain philosophies, such as phenomenology, which argue that in order to be a person one must be intersubjective. The bond which holds intersubjective relationships together is empathy. Without empathy, one cannot be human. Still, Autistic people do form relationships with immediate family members, partners, and friends. Thus according to these theories they must display some type of empathy, meaning they are human. In response to these concerns, Tim Dant offers radical empathy as a solution to the problem of Autistic personhood. Radical empathy is the suspension of beliefs about others. The other's experience is viewed in the way they would see it, not as one preconceives it. He argues that most Autistic people already perform this type of empathy by pretending they are non-Autistic in their daily lives. Current Autistic therapies aid in the project of radical empathy by teaching the Autistic how to suppress their Autistic tendencies such as hand flapping and rocking. This forces the Autistic person to pass as non-Autistic. The notion of passing is not foreign to philosophy. Originally discussed in racial and queer studies, passing is when a minority group identifies and lives as if they were a member of a majority group. So an Autistic person may pretend to be non-Autistic in order to avoid becoming the victim of ableism and discrimination, which would constitute passing. Passing can, however, lead to an identity crisis since the Autistic person is trapped in a world she does not understand amongst people making no effort to empathize with her plight. This can create psychological issues such as anxiety and depression, which makes social interactions even more difficult. For the Autistic person then, passing is an untenable situation. Any solution for bridging the gap between the non-Autistic and Autistic person must involve both parties empathizing with each others experiences, and not one which involves the Autistic person passing as non-Autistic.