

DEVELOPED BY



WARWICK CHEMISTRY

Facilitator Notes

Invisible Women, Exposing Data Bias in a World

Designed for Men

Parts 5, 6 & Afterword

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&

Breaking the Barriers, Women's Retention and
Progression in the Chemical Sciences

A report by the Royal Society of Chemistry



B O O K C L U B

DISCUSSION BOOKLET 3 - CRIB SHEET

"My mother used to tell, 'Kamala, you may be the first to do many things, but make sure you are not the last,' and that's why breaking barriers is worth it. As much as anything else, it is also to create that path for those who will come after us."

Kamala Harris

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All Diversity Book Club materials are brought to you as open access to enable you start your own club, through the hard work of the above individuals. We ask if you use these materials to keep the Acknowledgement Section in the Booklets you use and credit the Chemistry Department of the University of Warwick.



Thinking back - What challenged/surprised you from the chapters?

This could be something pertinent or something that really grabbed your attention and made you think twice.

This is an open question that we will likely use in some form in all the sessions. It is a good opportunity to gauge the feelings and understanding of the group.

Last session we looked at why women are often ignored or excluded from research and decision making. We also considered Arnstein's ladder as a tool to understand levels of engagement within the university and departments and the role we can all play in better engaging, supporting and representing women and minority groups. Alongside this we explored the trans-exclusionary aspects of "Invisible Women".

This session we will look at how women have been excluded from positions of power, what are the consequences of this exclusion and how we can fix this exclusion. While doing this we will also explore the underlying systems and expectations that perpetuate this issue, such as how we measure GDP, childcare responsibilities and tax incentives; that undermine gender equality.

Discussion

Why is GDP measured the way it is? What and who does this approach exclude and why? Page 239-241

"...after a bit of to-ing and fro-ing', and much debate over how you would measure and value unpaid household services 'it was decided', says Coyle, 'that this would be too big a task in terms of collecting the data'."

Page 241

GDP was initially designed to suit the needs of a war economy (output vs consumption), therefore it took into account everything produced by government and businesses.

However, it excluded unpaid household work including cooking, cleaning and childcare - all typically jobs performed by women, as the data on this was perceived as "too difficult" to collect.

How do cuts to public spending and tax incentives not work for the benefit of women? (P. 244-245, 257-260)

Think back to Chapter 3 “The Long Friday” and why women went on strike and the consequences of “part-time poverty”.

The cuts to public spending, notably around childcare and social care, shifted the onus of cost from the taxpayer to women. These changes not only disproportionality impacted poorer women but also benefitted richer men. Tax incentives that consider households as having an equal male:female income disproportionality tax women (257-9) and can incentivise women not seeking formal employment (260).

“The Long Friday” chapter described the gender disparity in auto-enrolment for the workplace pension scheme. Only 14% of men don't, compared to 32% of women (77).

Why is it important to have women in positions of power? (P. 265-266) Why does intersectionality matter too? (P. 289-291)

When considering abortion legislation in the U.S – states that have low numbers of female legislators (percentages shown in brackets below) have passed laws to ban or restrict abortions, for example North Dakota (21%), Ohio (26.5%), Kentucky (22.5%), Arkansas (23.7%), Mississippi (13.8%), Georgia (30.5%) and Alabama (15.7%).¹⁻⁴

Intersectionality: “The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise.”

Oxford English Dictionary

For example – a woman of colour is not only a woman but also a person of colour and will have unique experiences based on the intersectionality of being both a person of colour and a woman. For example the experiences and outcomes, both historical and current, of black women around pain and high maternal death rates.⁵⁻⁷

Women are more likely to speak about and action policies about women's issues, as well as education, family policy and care. Interestingly, when a higher proportion of women are in power, changes are also more likely to be carried out in these areas, for example when female legislator numbers fell in Ireland, Italy and Norway, so did spending on education (265-266).

When women are not represented properly this can lead to discussions that negatively impact women. However, making sure that the intersectionality of groups is represented matters too (291).

How do barriers to women in (political) power? (P. 281-285)

What barriers and abuse do women face in getting into office and when in office? Do we see these issues in other areas such as Science? (P. 279-81)

Women are seen as “too ambitious” and their gender can be seen as a reason not to vote for them (P266-7). Women are more likely to be interrupted (277 & 282), they are patronised and threatened by male colleagues (278-279). They are also the targets of derogatory and sexist comments (279-281).

It is important that policies which account for these systemic disadvantages don't just reinforce them (281-285).

Reflecting

54% of mothers would work outside the home if they could obtain convenient, reliable and affordable childcare. Why is this significant? (P. 251)

“But it's also because of the gender pay gap: for many heterosexual couples it makes financial sense for the woman to be the one to reduce her working hours, because she tends to be the one who is earning less.”

Page 251

This dispels the notion that mothers (and other people with children) do not want to return to formal employment. They DO, they just need appropriate support and opportunities.

“...Women choose to have families, which is a very significant responsibility and not compatible with a competitive career as a professional chemist. Women face zero discrimination. Quite the opposite. Women chemists are encouraged at every opportunity.”

Male survey respondent from RSC Report

Why is child-care perceived as a choice for women between children or career? (P. 252-253) Why is this often not the same for men?

Does this link to Chapter 3 – “The Long Friday”? Is this perception reinforced by gender asymmetrical parental policies? Are parental leave policies that prevent leave being transferred to the women (i.e. the man has to take leave or lose it) a step forward? (P. 84)

Societal expectation for women to take on the majority of unpaid work (such as childcare) has led to the belief that this is women's choice. This is exasperated by one-sided parental leave policies (e.g. women granted more leave than men).

Women are also perceived to have more free time (247)

How could modern methods of working (working from home etc.) support parents in staying in the workforce? What else could be done?

This is an open question to collect ideas on what could be done to better support women in work. Some examples might be; working from home means no commute and provides greater flexibility for child care and other tasks, plus allows for non-traditional work activities such as consulting.

This report provides tangible examples of support for those looking for a more in-depth consideration.⁸

Application

How can you use your privilege to be a better ally and empower others?

What is "naïve realism" or "projection bias"? Why do allies matter? (P. 270-271)

Naïve realism and projection bias assume our own way of thinking and doing things is typical/the norm. This fails to acknowledge that others might think or see things differently. Being an ally first requires you to acknowledge any naïve realism/projection bias of your own and second to use your privilege (i.e. a male on a majority male panel) to speak up for/with others with less privilege and argue for better representation. It is also important for those from the same group to be supportive of one another too, for example women speaking up for women.

Next Steps

First things first, thank you for taking part in the sessions, we hope you enjoyed them and will join us for the next book. Your contributions have been appreciated and the discussions we have had are contributing to making a more inclusive community for all. However, this is the last booklet in the series exploring Caroline Criado Perez's book and the linked RSC report, so any **comments, critiques** or **feedback** would be much appreciated by the authors of these booklets and the wider team.

Second, we will be holding a "Positive Action and Discussion Session" that all participants will be invited to. In this session we will discuss how we can bring about positive change in the community, curriculum and culture of the department and University.

We hope to see you all there!

Additional Notes;

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