

DEVELOPED BY



WARWICK CHEMISTRY

Facilitator Notes

Straight Jacket – Overcoming Society’s Legacy of Gay Shame

Prologue, Introduction & Part One

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&

Exploring the Workplace for LGBT+ Physical Scientists

*A report by the Institute of Physics, Royal Astronomical Society
& Royal Society of Chemistry*



DISCUSSION BOOKLET 1 – CRIB SHEET

“My sexuality is my own sexuality. It doesn’t belong to anybody. Not to my government, not to my brother, my sister, my family. No”

Ashraf Zanati

Acknowledgments

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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.



Icebreaker – “Superpower”

For this task think about the one superpower you would like to have. You will need to explain your choice to the group.

The aim of the icebreaker is to get people comfortable talking to one another and expressing their own opinions. This should help set the tone of the session and help to engage everyone in the conversation.

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.

While racial slurs are often perceived as culturally unacceptable; many homophobic, transphobic, and other sexuality-based slurs are perceived as culturally (more) acceptable. Since in these sessions we are going to discuss discrimination both current and historic, we ask participants to consider their language carefully and not use any slurs often targeted at the LGBTQUA+ community, even as examples of discrimination. The authors of the booklets wish to highlight the following resource on homophobic language.¹

We would also like to emphasise that while the author uses this kind of language to highlight and emphasise the seriousness of the discrimination and the topics being discussed, we wish to create and maintain a welcoming environment for all, especially members of the LGBTQUA+ community – therefore this kind of language is not acceptable in the book club.

If people do feel threatened or unsafe during the session, please refer to the Code of Conduct for the Book Club and follow reporting routes either within the Book Club or externally.

Discussion

How would you define sexuality? Is it sexuality or deviation from the “default” straight (heteronormative) standard that matters to society?

Sexuality - A person's sexual attraction to other people, or lack thereof. Along with romantic orientation, this forms a person's orientation identity.²

We expect people to have varying definitions of “sexuality” for example;

- Sex(s) you are attracted to
- Separation between sexual and romantic attraction
- Gender specific rather than sex specific

Why are sexualities and sexuality-based slurs used as derogatory? How does this impact people “opening up” about their sexuality? Re-read pages 20-21

Historical context of homophobia in the UK is provided by chapter 3, while chapter 4 provides a lived experience of growing up gay in the UK.

“... it's not our sexuality that is the problem. ... Being gay, though, means we have, almost invariably, been shamed growing up.”

Page. 27

More modern examples of homophobia and transphobia include; only recently allowing gay men to donate blood^{3,4} and UEFA banning Germany from displaying the Pride flag on the stadium at their Euro 2020 match with Hungary (a country with discriminatory laws towards LGBTQUA+ individuals).⁵

Sexuality and slurs based on one's sexual orientation are prevalent within society from playground insults to workplace discrimination. This often comes from a place of societal shaming and toxic masculinity. It has become the norm to use “gay” as an insult for more effeminate men and those whom outwardly show emotion, this not only promotes the unhealthy idea that men should not show emotion (JAMA Psychiatry, 2020, 77(4), 435-437) but also the concept that not being straight is somehow wrong. It is often said that homophobic bullies are often gay themselves. Whilst this can be true and homophobia and transphobia are rife within the queer community, one's self-loathing and internalised homophobia have been caused by something, and that is a society that shames and degrades the queer community for just existing.

Furthermore, there has been a history of homophobia and discrimination towards anyone who does not fit the heteronormative mould. This continues in the present day. Therefore, many people who do not identify as “straight” or “heterosexual” are unwilling or wary of being open or disclosing their sexuality for fear of reprisals and discrimination.

What were the aims of Section 28? What is its legacy?

Re-read pages 41-42 and Chapter 6 (specifically 90-91)

Can a policy be homophobic and transphobic?

“Children who need to be taught to respect traditional moral values are being taught that they have an inalienable right to be gay”

Margaret Thatcher

Section 28 aimed to remove all discussion about non-heterosexual relationships from the classroom. The legacy of the policy (even after it was rescinded) is homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools; and a lack of support and education about or for the LGBTQUA+ community.

Reflecting

Considering the discrimination and harassment that many in the LGBTQUA+ community face – how do you think it feels to be a member of this community in the UK and the University?

To reiterate members of the LGBTQUA+ community do not have to share any lived experiences

The aim of this question is to get participants who are not members of the LGBTQUA+ community to empathise with members of the LGBTQUA+ community and consider the impact of discrimination (such as Section 28).

How do we as a university and community support LGBTQUA+ students and colleagues?

There are a variety of initiatives run by the University (<https://warwick.ac.uk/services/equalops/getinvolved/initiatives/lgbtua/>). These initiatives cover advice on language, allyship and support networks.

Application

How can we better support LGBTQUA+ students and colleagues?

We expect people to come up with ideas that support individuals, groups and the institution. These could include undertaking active bystander training to help call out homophobia and transphobia or getting a pronoun badge for themselves (<https://warwick.ac.uk/services/equalops/getinvolved/initiatives/lgbtua/getpronounright/pronounbadge>).

Additional Notes;

References;

- (1) Kibirige, H.; Tryl, L. *Tackling Homophobic Language - Stonewall Education Guides*.
- (2) Stonewall. *Stonewall Terminology Guide*.
- (3) Berger, M. U.K. ends restriction on gay and bisexual men donating blood <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/06/17/united-kingdom-gay-bisexual-lgbtq-men-donate-blood-plasma/>.
- (4) The Economist. Which countries prohibit gay or bisexual men from donating blood? <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2021/06/14/which-countries-prohibit-gay-or-bisexual-men-from-donating-blood>.
- (5) BBC News. Euro 2020: Fans make pro-LGBT protest at Germany-Hungary football game <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-57570472>.