

Facilitator Notes

Superior, The Return of Race Science

Prologue, Chapters 1-3

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&

Diversity Landscape of the Chemical Sciences

A report by the Royal Society of Chemistry



B O O K C L U B

DISCUSSION BOOKLET 1 - CRIB SHEET

"It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength."

Maya Angelou

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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 – “Two truths and a lie”

For this task come up with two statements about yourself that are true and one that is a lie. The group will then try and work out which one of your three statements is a lie

Truth –

Truth –

Lie –

The aim of the *Icebreaker* and *Get Talking* sections are to get people comfortable in the session. Working round the room with introductions and “Two truths and a lie“, should help you to set the tone for the session by engaging everyone and getting everyone contributing.

Get Talking - How would you describe yourself?

If you had to write a short bio for Twitter, Facebook etc. what would you write?

Later on in the session we will refer back to people’s answers to this section. It is expected that people from non-underrepresented backgrounds will not identify themselves with an inherited characteristic i.e. skin colour or gender.

We anticipate this may not be the case for our underrepresented members, this is an interesting talking point for later – why do underrepresented members identify based on inherited characteristics is this “otherness”?

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

Discussion

How would you define race?

If someone were to ask you what is race, what would you say?

There is no correct answer to this question – that is the point! Race is a weird concept we invented (as explored in the next question), it has no factual basis. We expect people to come up with definitions based on skin colour (other physical features too) or country of origin. Asking follow on questions like; “but don’t people groups with no shared ancestry have similar skin colours and physical features?” “why should geography influence how we define race considering how fluid country borders and migrations is?” and “why does race/skin colour etc even matter?”

Where does our definition of race come from?

What are the societal, political and historical backgrounds of our definitions of race? Re-read page 3-4

Get the group to turn to P3-4.

Race is based on power politics – it is a system used to justify political control. It is a desire to apply Linnean concepts to humanity and make us unequal – usually with white people on the top

Asking questions about Mostafa Hefny on P4 and considering how using the groups definitions Mostafa would have been classified might be useful.

How and why have societies and empires used race to their advantage?

Re-read page 5, page 19-22 and page 37

Societies have defined race to suit their own purposes – P5

Why did Australia use policies like forced separation? Was it to assert racial/political hegemony over the land? i.e. lesser races don’t deserve this land – P19-22 (P19-22 is a clear example of race being weaponised by a colonising force or see Macaulayism in British India or the treatment of indigenous peoples in N.America)

How has our understanding of Neanderthals changed and why? Has our understanding shifted because we realised, they were more “white/European” than we thought? – P37

What does this all tell us about race? Is it like history – the victor gets to define it to their advantage?

What are the differences and similarities between “human villages” and eugenics?

Thinking back to chapter 2 where “human villages” were discussed and chapter 3 where eugenics are discussed, what are the motives behind and outcomes of these acts and ideologies?

Human villages provided a way to bring race into the public forum in a non-threatening way whilst maintaining racial hierarchy (the “watched” and the “watchers”). It sanitised the acceptability of “racial difference” while eugenics “sanitises races” themselves.

To an extent “human zoos” provided a justification for colonisation by presenting lesser races in a supposedly “child-friendly” manner. It was an educational tool to justify colonial expansion.

There is a certain naïveté to human villages that is lost with eugenics – the motives of eugenics are clear and calculating while “human zoos” were presented as entertainment despite their more sinister undertones.

Human zoos present a racial hierarchy while eugenics seeks to deliberately manipulate, maintain and distil that hierarchy by applying genetic principles. While human zoos present the “other”, eugenics looks to eradicate the other and refine the gene pool.

“Race wasn’t just a tool for classifying physical difference, it was a way of measuring human progress, of placing judgement on the capacities and rights of others”

Page 61.

“Eugenics is a cold, calculated way of thinking about human life, reducing human beings to nothing but parts of the whole ... [it] assumes that almost all that we are is decided before we are born”

Page 71.

Reflecting - Look at the two quotes above and contrast them with your answer to **Get Talking**, how are their focusses different?

Did you define yourself by your appearance and race, or the content of your character? And does this matter?

It is expected that people from non-underrepresented backgrounds will not identify themselves with an inherited characteristic i.e. skin colour or gender.

We anticipate this may not be the case for our underrepresented members, this is an interesting talking point – why do underrepresented members identify based on inherited characteristics is this “otherness”?

Do we see otherness as something we have to escape from rather than embrace as diversity?

Application

What societal systems do we have in place that characterise on race or bias based on race?

You can also think about the University? Is differentiation based on "race" always bad or just oversimplistic? Examples might include stop-&-search, discrimination in the beauty industry or being overlooked for promotions, jobs or housing

Examples;

- Black lawyer mistaken as defendant – Guardian 26/9/20
- Stop and Search – police disproportionately stop black people (~8 times more than white people – Home Office 28/7/17) and 21% resulted in an arrest compared to 16% white people – Full Fact 24/6/19
- Black home buyers denied mortgages twice as much – Forbes 7/5/18

How does the concept of race impact Chemistry and its practitioners?

Bluntly, why do you think there are so few black chemists and what impact has this lack of inclusion likely had on the field? See pages 16-18 of the RSC report

There is an idea that people from underrepresented backgrounds have to escape or overcome their backgrounds to reach university.

Toxic environments that isolate those who are different from the community. There are very few role-models in Chemistry of people who have succeeded from underrepresented backgrounds i.e. name one black chemistry academic.

A very colonised curriculum that only highlights the achievements of white men.

Additional Notes;