

Picture a Scientist Discussion Questions

FIRST 05.26.22

Discussion Roles

- Group Reporter - shares what the group discussed during large group discussion
- Equity Monitor - ensures everyone in the group gets opportunities to contribute

General Questions

1. How do you picture a typical scientist now? Has it changed from before the film?
2. How did you feel after watching the film?
3. What surprised you or did not surprise you? Why or why not?
4. What new ideas do you have about ways to make science more equitable for everyone?
5. Has the film changed your perspective at all on diversity in science? If so, how?
6. How can institutions change mentorship or management structures to protect people from potential harassment and inequity?
7. How do some of the experiences shared in the film compare to your own?
8. What would you do if a person junior to you came to you with experiences of sexual harassment?
9. How can the science community accommodate identities who do not have clearly visible markers of marginalization (e.g., sexual orientation, low-income, disability, mental health, etc.)? How might the struggles of folks with these backgrounds be different from those portrayed in the film?

Discussion Questions by Section

I. The Tip of the Iceberg

- A. What would be other reasons women may choose to wait to report, or not report such incidents? How do you think these concerns may vary between academia and various science industries?
- B. The National Academies of Science report describes sexual harassment as an iceberg, with the vast majority consisting of subtle slights and microaggressions. Have you ever experienced or witnessed activities such as subtle exclusion or not being invited to meetings where you are an expert? How did it make you feel? What did you do to combat the feeling?

II. The Underneath

- A. Dr. Burks describes some of the slights she has endured in her career, like being mistaken for a janitor, being ignored in meetings, or being told to straighten her hair for a more professional appearance. Have you experienced or witnessed similar behavior? How did the experience affect your work?
- B. Dr. Burks discusses her childhood scientist heroes coming from sci-fi. Did you have science heroes growing up? Who were they?

III. Data Driven

- A. Dr. Willenbring talks about considering leaving her scientific field as a result of her experiences. Have you ever considered quitting as a result of someone questioning your competence to be in your field, or as a result of harassment and other negative experiences?
- B. Dr. Burks said: "You get used to being underestimated. You get used to being treated a bit shabbily... You get used to being invisible in the sciences." Have you ever felt like you do not belong or fit in? How did Dr. Burks' experience inform or change your idea of what it is like for women of color to be invisible in the sciences? Do you think white women experience this differently? Why or why not? Who else might feel invisible in the sciences?

IV. The Nature of the Beast

- A. Dr. Sangeeta Bhatia described witnessing the "leaky pipeline." What factors do you think contribute to the leaky pipeline? Is this a helpful or harmful analogy, as it uses passive language to discuss a problem that can be solved through action?
- B. Dr. Corinne Moss-Racusin described her and colleagues' study looking at applicants who were identical except for their gender. Were you surprised to see the results? How did it strike you that the same implicit bias against women is observed in all faculty, regardless of their gender?

V. The Eyes to See

- A. Dr. Burks discusses her science communication work and the importance of representation in science. Why is it important for young people to see role models representative of their identities? What kind of impact do you think representation of race and gender bears for young girls entering the sciences? Why is representation particularly important for women of color in science?
- B. Dr. Burks talks about emboldening herself—instead of fitting into the mold of what a scientist has historically looked like, she decided to have fun and become more authentically herself. Why do you think this was important for her? Have you ever made that choice? If so, why?

VI. The Scouts Before the Troop

- A. Dr. Raychelle Burks talked about "code-switching"—changing your speech and mannerisms depending on the cultural and social context, such as between workplace and private lives, for example. Have you ever felt internal or external pressure to code-switch based on concerns over perceived stereotypes? What are some of the ways you have had to code-switch in your own life?

