Tackling Gender Equality through Athena SWAN

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Session overview

- Considering differences
- What is Athena SWAN
- Discussion of research findings
- Gender pay gap
- Strategies to mitigate bias

Never Have I Ever

- Been afraid to show affection to a partner in public for fear of violence.

- Been told to "go back where you came from."

- Been called a slur.

- Been stopped by the police for doing something innocuous.

- Been misgendered.

- Lived in a country where I couldn't communicate with my native language.

- Been followed by someone, despite expressing disinterest.

- Not seen anyone who looks like me on TV while growing up.

- Not been able to physically enter a building because of lack of accessibility options.

- Had to use a different name to get respect.

- Even if there is no one within the group that a statement applies to, can take stock of privilege.

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What is Athena SWAN?

- Award for work on gender equality in HE demonstrating national level of achievement
  - Bronze, Silver and Gold, departmental and Institutional
- Set up 2005 and run by Equality Challenge Unit
- Self assessment based on evidence, supported by 4 year Action Plan
- Submission measured against set criteria
- Independent assessment leads to award
- Application process framework through which develop robust 4 year Action Plan which will deliver change – **so not just a tick box????**

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Ten Athena Swan Principles: Commitment to:

1. Recognise talents of all

2. Advance gender equality, particularly loss of women across career pipeline & absence from senior roles

3. Recognise differences across disciplines (STEMM and AHSSBL)

4. Tackle the gender pay gap

5. Remove obstacles at major points of career progression

6. Address short-term contracts

7. Tackle discrimination against trans people

8. Demonstrate senior commitment

9. Make structural and cultural changes

10. Consider intersectionality of gender and other factors

Contradictions of Athena

- (i) attempts to incorporate intersectionality and trans inclusion;
  - Issues with collecting data, binary approach.

- (ii) the workload and personal cost of Athena SWAN;
  - Excessive workload, recognition of committees to undertake the submission.
  - Women unduly burdened as they are more likely to volunteer.
  - Challenges from male senior colleagues reluctant to be seen in a negative light.
  - Emotional labour toll due to negotiating opposition to submission.
  - Promotions on hold until successful award.
  - Holding women to account for collective failings.

- (iii) the perception of Athena SWAN as a 'box-ticking' exercise.
  - Prestige of university to improve its competitive advantage.
  - Benchmarking exercise making

Tzanakou and Pearce (2019)

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Bias

- **Affinity bias** – recruiting and promoting people with similar interests, experiences and backgrounds to existing employees (halo effect)

- **Confirmation bias** – rewarding employees disproportionately based on their educational experiences, where they lived or their names.

- **Name bias** – US led research found white names receive 50% more interview call-backs than African American sounding names (horn effect)

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A male colleague on a job interview panel ruled out the best candidate, a woman, because, he said, "what if she has problems with the children and has to leave halfway through the day". She said: "At that point we didn't even know if she had children."	A female colleague noted, speaking up during a meeting it would frequently be brushed aside, but if a male colleague then raised the same concern or idea those at the meeting would say "that's great"	"I find it very frustrating that you're just told that your publication record is inadequate, you're not going anywhere, when it's due to my career break as a consequence of having children. It's absolutely ruthless."
"Despite being high achievers academically, many of women we questioned doubted their own success and ability within the faculty environment."	A female professor asked advice regarding appointing a research fellow, "although they were my first choice having a baby seems to be distracting them"	There are a lot of problems, bullying and people being aggressive. I'm talking about big problems, fundamental problems, the fact women are referred to as 'that stupid woman'.

Gender Bias

- https://www.youtube.com/embed/rDrfNgFwHew

Gender pay gap

- **Academic gender pay gap will take 40 years to close**

- Experts warn much more is left to do to reduce inequality, as male advantage grows at 46 institutions

- The national average pay gap in UK HE is 15.1% (2018)

- https://www.thegenderindex.co.uk/?ct=t%28EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_April_2022%29&mc_cid=01b58706ae&mc_eid=9644685368

Implications of bias in the workplace

- **Emotional** - increased anger, cynical, sad

- **Unfairness** - Disengaged and alienated

- **Turnover** - 3 times as likely to leave

Inclusion matters

- The most diverse companies are now more likely than ever to outperform less diverse peers on profitability.

- 2019 analysis by McKinsey finds that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25 percent more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile—up from 21 percent in 2017 and 15 percent in 2014.

- More than a third of the companies in our data set still have no women at all on their executive teams.

- Representation of ethnic-minorities on UK and US executive teams stood at only 13 percent in 2019, up from just 7 percent in 2014.

Strategies to mitigate bias…

- **Self reflection** - acknowledge your privilege

- **Inclusive leadership** - communicating competing messages

- **Sponsorship** - gain an advocate and advocate for someone else.

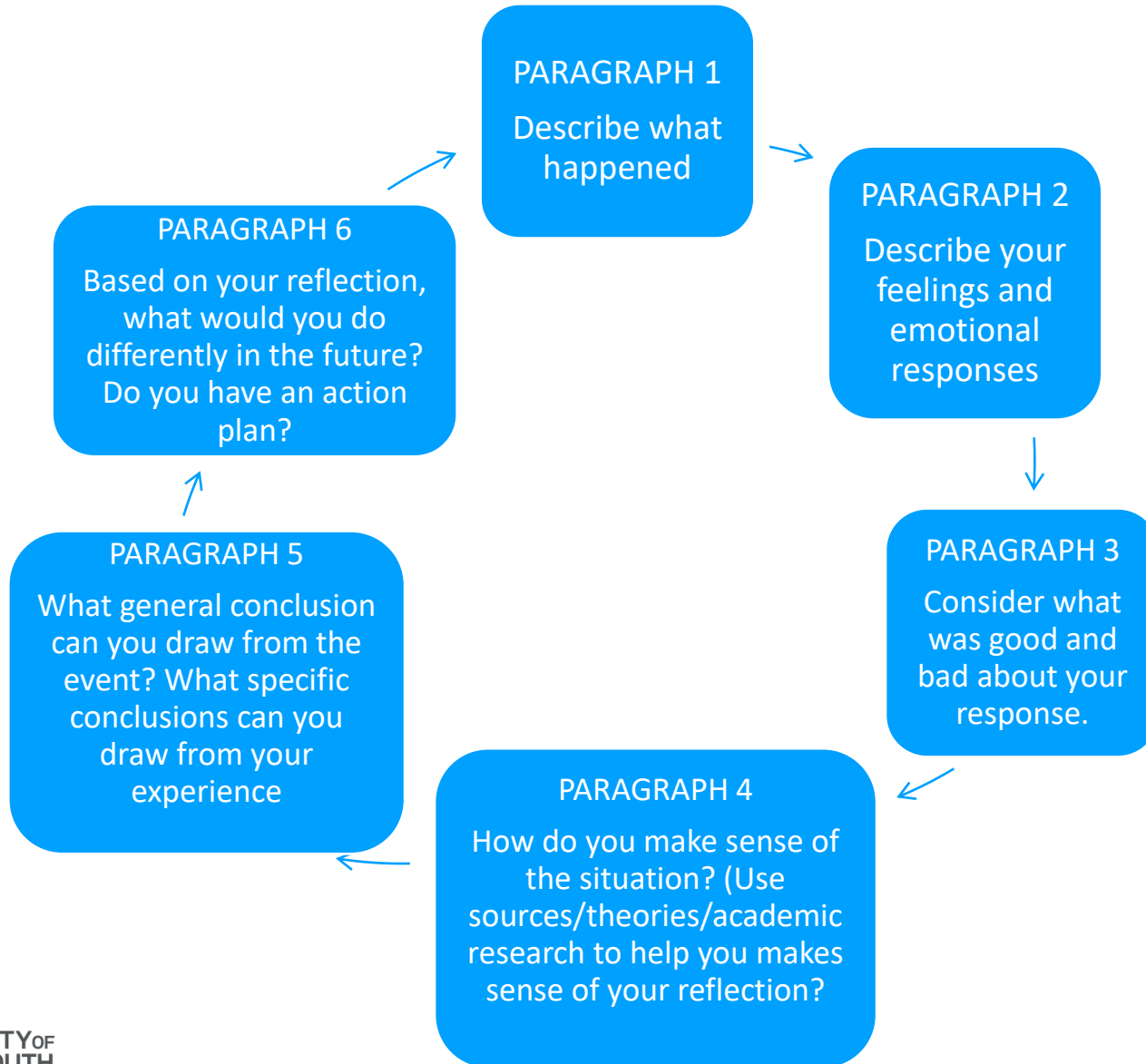- **Engage with Charters** – Advance HE, Athena SWAN and Race charters

What did Athena SWAN do for us?

- Set up of the Parents and Carers Network

- Enhanced bullying and harassment reporting including development of the student "*Speak Up, Step Up*" reporting tool into the staff "*Report and Suppor*t" tool

- Ensuring interview panels have both female and male panel members

- Provision of Keeping in Touch (KIT) days for staff on maternity leave

- Funding for staff to undertake Aurora, Springboard and Navigator staff development programmes

- Introducing anonymous shortlisting for many roles

- Development of core training on diversity and inclusion, unconscious bias awareness, and anti-bullying and harassment

- Extended Christmas leave for all staff in 2020

- Improved gender balance in many areas including REF submissions

- Improved gender balance and representation in University course web pages, publicity material and images

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Continued….

- Inclusion of student representation within our SAT

- Collection and consideration of student gender attainment gaps

- Equality Impact Assessments for new and updated policies

- Institution of the Athena SWAN Champion's Fund to support targeted projects.

- Development of a consistent University-wide PDR process

- Revised promotion criteria for Professors and Readers together with the use of only one chair per year for all panels

- Implementation of a transparent and equitable institutional wide workload planning model

- Regular staff culture surveys and Athena Swan conferences

- Improved access to gender neutral toilet facilities.

- University engagement with the Girls Network

- Introduction of university wide staff mentoring program

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Gibbs (1988) *Reflective Cycle*

PARAGRAPH 1

Describe what happened

PARAGRAPH 2

Describe your feelings and emotional responses

PARAGRAPH 3

Consider what was good and bad about your response.

PARAGRAPH 4

How do you make sense of the situation? (Use sources/theories/academic research to help you makes sense of your reflection?

PARAGRAPH 5

What general conclusion can you draw from the event? What specific conclusions can you draw from your experience

PARAGRAPH 6

Based on your reflection, what would you do differently in the future? Do you have an action plan?

Next steps

- Consider your career goals
- Engage with reflective practice
- Consider your development needs
- How effective is your communication style
- Who advocates for you
- How will you support inclusivity

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Thank you.
Questions?

References and further reading

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