



# Collaborating with men

From research to  
day-to-day practice



Murray Edwards  
College  
University of Cambridge

## FOREWORD

# Building on the 'Collaborating with Men' research



**Dame Barbara Stocking**

*President, Murray Edwards College (formerly New Hall), University of Cambridge*



**Dr Jill Armstrong**

*Bye-Fellow at Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge*

Evidence continues to show that women still experience inequality in the workplace.

- Male managers are 40% more likely than female managers to be promoted.<sup>1</sup>
- Men are 4.5 times more likely to make it onto an executive committee than a woman embarking on her career at the same time.<sup>2</sup>
- Women hold less than 19% of Executive Committee roles in FTSE 100 companies.<sup>3</sup>
- Women made up only 14% of Executive committees in the financial services sector in 2015.<sup>4</sup>

Research from Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge, shows that women feel their progress at work is inhibited by inhospitable or hostile workplace cultures (38%) rather than difficulties balancing work and family life (22%)<sup>5</sup>. Other studies show that the culture and composition of the most senior echelon in organisations means many women feel that they will be assessed for promotion on gender biased definitions of merit. This affects women's motivation to get to the top.<sup>6</sup> Even in organisations with a progressive approach to diversity and inclusion, unconscious bias can adversely affect women's careers.

We believe, as many do, that the problem of gender inequality in leadership is only going to be solved by men and women working together. This is why we conducted the 'Collaborating with Men' research, published in the winter of 2016 and available on the college website.<sup>7</sup>

The 'Collaborating with Men' research sought the views of 40 men from large organisations and SMEs in both private and public sectors. Men in their early careers, in middle management and in senior roles were asked about their understanding of workplace culture problems experienced by women. These men also worked in partnership with women at a conference at Murray Edwards College to suggest ways that men can intervene to tackle behaviours that lie behind gender inequality.

Our study prioritises the actions individuals can take within the working day to make a difference.

Of course, it is also vital that leaders show their commitment to change through their actions. However, this report does not cover 'top down' policies to be implemented at an organisational level in areas such as recruitment, promotions, parental leave or flexible working.

We have now presented this research to many organisations. Many have asked for more detail on how to implement the solutions suggested in the research. We have therefore written this guide to act as a companion to 'Collaborating with Men' and to help you turn the research into action.



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In every workplace,  
in every sector

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Increasing the numbers  
of women means engaging  
men to make workplace  
culture more inclusive



# Key ways to transform workplace culture

This report focuses on interventions that have attracted the most interest in the many organisations to whom the research has been presented. It contains more detailed explanation of how to make these popular interventions work. This report also highlights the benefits for men of more inclusive cultures.

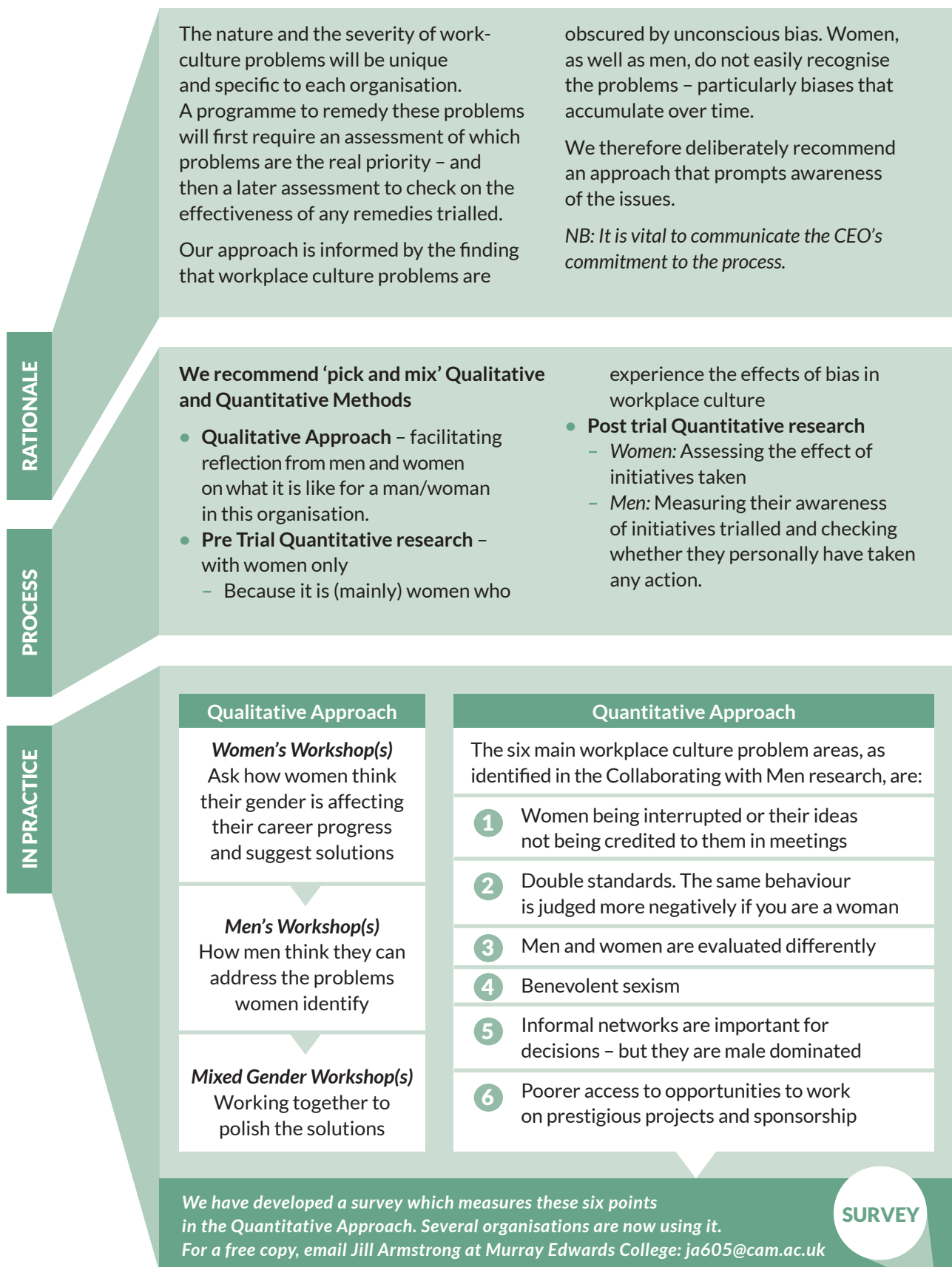


Get unconscious  
bias into the open

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Just ask how gender  
is affecting your  
career progress

# Understanding workplace culture problems: Just ask



## RATIONALE

The nature and the severity of work-culture problems will be unique and specific to each organisation. A programme to remedy these problems will first require an assessment of which problems are the real priority – and then a later assessment to check on the effectiveness of any remedies trialled.

Our approach is informed by the finding that workplace culture problems are

obscured by unconscious bias. Women, as well as men, do not easily recognise the problems – particularly biases that accumulate over time.

We therefore deliberately recommend an approach that prompts awareness of the issues.

*NB: It is vital to communicate the CEO's commitment to the process.*

## PROCESS

We recommend 'pick and mix' Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

- **Qualitative Approach** – facilitating reflection from men and women on what it is like for a man/woman in this organisation.
- **Pre Trial Quantitative research** – with women only
  - Because it is (mainly) women who

experience the effects of bias in workplace culture

- **Post trial Quantitative research**
  - *Women:* Assessing the effect of initiatives taken
  - *Men:* Measuring their awareness of initiatives trialled and checking whether they personally have taken any action.

## IN PRACTICE

### Qualitative Approach

**Women's Workshop(s)**  
Ask how women think their gender is affecting their career progress and suggest solutions

**Men's Workshop(s)**  
How men think they can address the problems women identify

**Mixed Gender Workshop(s)**  
Working together to polish the solutions

### Quantitative Approach

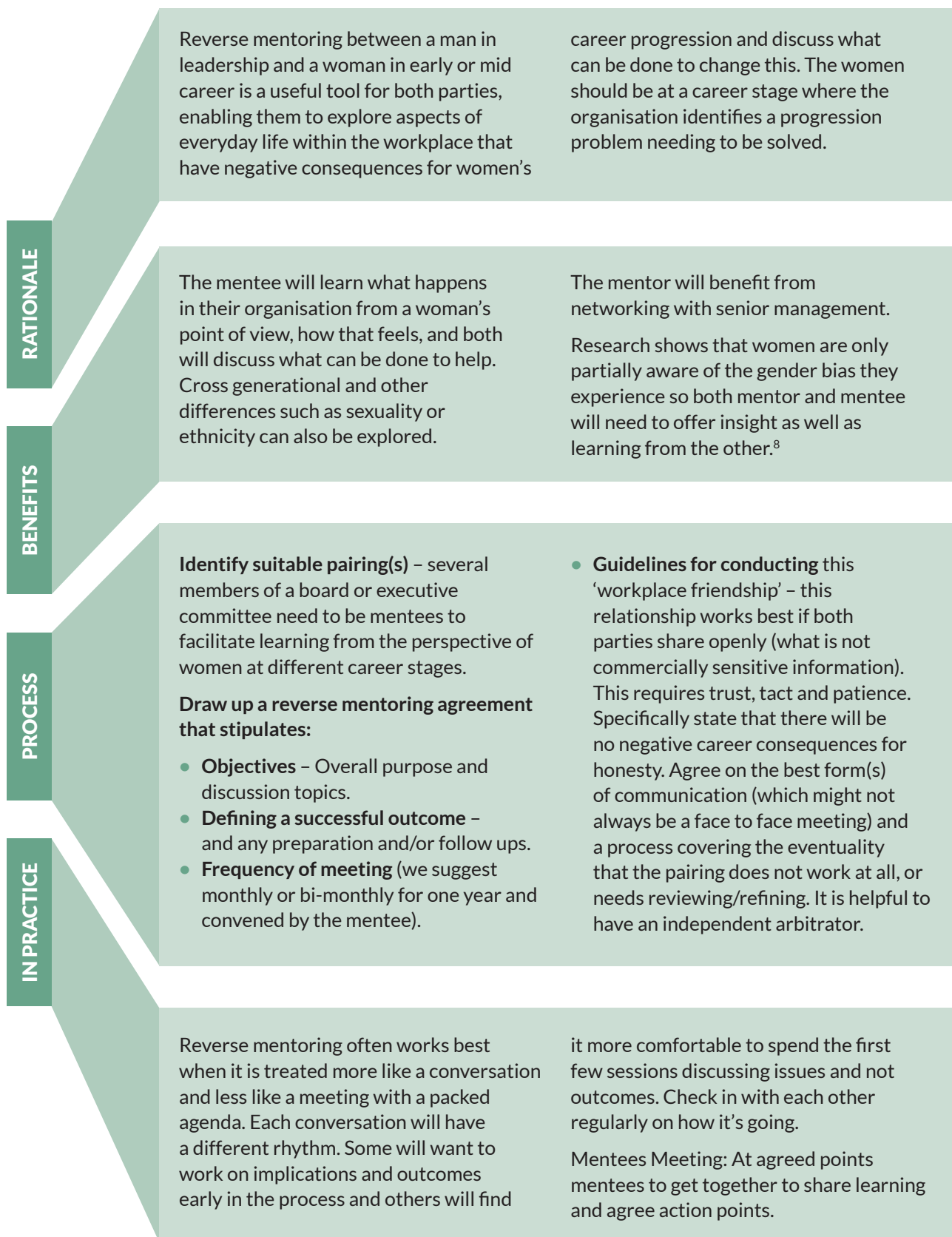
The six main workplace culture problem areas, as identified in the Collaborating with Men research, are:

- 1 Women being interrupted or their ideas not being credited to them in meetings
- 2 Double standards. The same behaviour is judged more negatively if you are a woman
- 3 Men and women are evaluated differently
- 4 Benevolent sexism
- 5 Informal networks are important for decisions – but they are male dominated
- 6 Poorer access to opportunities to work on prestigious projects and sponsorship

We have developed a survey which measures these six points in the Quantitative Approach. Several organisations are now using it. For a free copy, email Jill Armstrong at Murray Edwards College: [ja605@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ja605@cam.ac.uk)

**SURVEY**

# Understanding workplace culture problems: Reverse mentoring





# The gender power of reverse mentoring

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A woman from middle management mentoring a senior man reveals issues and provides a platform for better outcomes

# Ensuring women are heard

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Sensitive ways to  
amplify points made by  
women in meetings

# Individual interventions: Amplifying women to be heard in meetings

## RATIONALE

In mixed groups men tend to dominate the conversation.<sup>9</sup>

When women speak, their opinions often go unheard; they are frequently interrupted; and ideas they express are commonly repeated by, and then attributed to, a man.<sup>10</sup>

This happens for many reasons, which are explained in the 'Collaborating with Men' report.

Women who experience this find it demoralising. Rather than being a bystander, men and women – when made aware of this problem – can intervene in a sensitive way to stop this happening. Evidence from Obama's female staffers shows that repeating (amplifying) and attributing a comment made by a team member makes it more likely to be heard.<sup>11</sup>

## PROCESS

- **Raise awareness:**
  - Use the evidence quoted here.
  - Task people to look out for this happening.
- **Help with tactics for interventions:**
  - People are understandably wary about intervening in a way that exposes them to criticism or makes

them seem dislikable. They need suggestions on how to intervene.

- **Leaders to model this behaviour:**
  - Also address in private those whose behaviour in meetings excludes or offends others.

## IN PRACTICE

### Tactics for sensitive intervention that does not feel patronising

The following are interventions research participants tell us work for them:

- **Before the meeting**
  - Chairs/meeting conveners to initiate conversation about agenda points with women and men who tend to be more reflective or reticent about public speaking.
  - In the meeting, introduce a 'good point' they made and invite them, by name, to expand upon it.
- **During the meeting**
  - When you notice that an idea has been ignored or misappropriated say something like; "yes and, as Kate said/

*that builds on a point raised by Kate earlier", and repeat the point.*

- It may help to share the problem and pair up with an ally in advance of the meeting (of the same or different gender) who is primed to amplify a point if you are interrupted or simply repeat the point to ensure it is heard.
- This is especially useful for online conferencing.
- Also if your point is misunderstood, your ally can intervene and say "what I understood by Kate's point is..."
- Chairs/meeting conveners to consciously intervene when women are interrupted and invite them to finish their point.

# Individual interventions: Better chairing of meetings

These ideas help to tackle the problems previously described about women being interrupted or not heard – as well as helping everyone work more efficiently.

There was a strong call in the research for training in how to run a meeting effectively. This is unsurprising given that

research shows that professionals attend an average of 60 meetings per month and think that between 30-50% of the time they spend in meetings is wasted.<sup>12</sup>

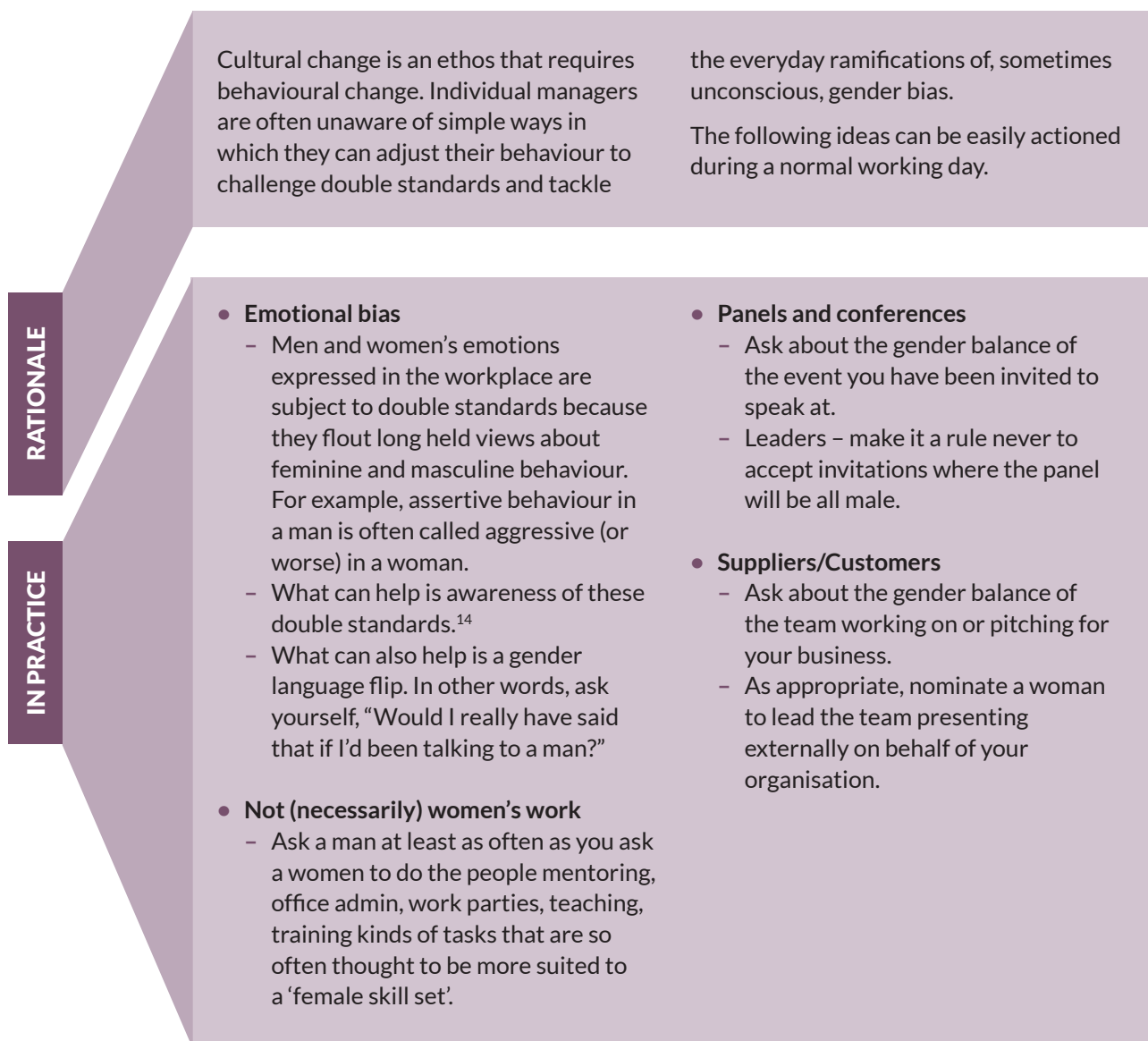
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## RATIONALE

- **Timing of the meeting**
    - Think about whether it is possible to change the time of day or day of the week when a meeting is held to ensure it does not conflict with school pick up or drop off time and maximises the opportunity for those working part-time to attend.
  - **Nominating chairs**
    - Ask a woman to chair an agenda point that she is well-qualified to comment upon and rotate the overall chairing responsibilities to a woman, where possible.
  - **Leaders to model this behaviour:**
    - Address in private those whose behaviour in meetings excludes or offends others.
  - **Chairing the meeting**
    - Welcome and make everyone feel comfortable.
    - Clearly explain the purpose of the meeting and when it will finish.
    - Invite a woman to ask the first question. Other women are then more likely to speak out.
- Stop the dominant by using techniques such as repeating verbatim their main point so they feel acknowledged and then explicitly inviting others to contribute or holding up a finger and saying, 'I'll come to you later' (and do so).
  - Make sure everyone has their say - scan the room and invite others to contribute by eye contact whilst saying, 'who else would like to make their point/ask a question'.
  - Consciously intervene when people have been interrupted and invite them to finish their point.
  - Move on the discussion by invoking the time and overtly parking a point to come back to in a subsequent meeting.
  - Listen and summarise the arguments and decisions for each agenda/action point.
  - Stay neutral and fair and be ready to suggest a solution if none emerges easily.
  - Finish on time.

## IN PRACTICE<sup>13</sup>

# Individual interventions: Challenging double standards



Think different

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Challenge and  
widen the way merit and  
leadership is defined



# Building closer relationships: Ideas to facilitate more mixed gender networking

## RATIONALE

'Collaborating with Men' reveals that men and women tend to have a different approach to networking and men and women's strongest networks are with their own gender.

Gender issues tend to be thought of as an issue only for the 'women's network', which is one reason why men are unaware of many of the career barriers women face as a result of their gender.

## IN PRACTICE

### • Individual interventions on recruitment/promotion

- Make an effort to extend your networks to more women so you can advertise opportunities more widely (for example join women's network groups on LinkedIn, ask women's networks to recommend candidates).
- Ask why fewer men than women have applied for a job in your team, set back the deadline until more are found.
- Research from organisations such as Timewise<sup>15</sup> shows that advertising flexibility in managerial jobs significantly expands the talent pool – and that flexibility is positively associated with commitment to the organisation.<sup>16</sup> The clear implication is to challenge what kind of flexibility can be offered.
- Recognise that women are often reticent about applying for a promotion unless they meet almost all of the advertised criteria and encourage them to do so.<sup>17</sup>

### • Mixed gender network building

- Actively support the plan in many workplaces to extend gender equality networks to all inequalities and genders.
- Organise peer co-mentoring and skill swaps in mixed gender pairs. For example, interview practice, CV development, introduction to new software.
- Set everyone in the team the task of meeting someone new of another gender for coffee, say, once a month to discuss a topic of relevance to the team or just to chat.
- Mixed gender teams to organise work social activities that create shared experiences, and think about the time and location of these events to maximise the chance of a broad group of people being willing and able to attend.
- Ban eating at your desk and create social spaces for lunch breaks.

# Action for leaders

It's complicated. Not all women work in a gender inclusive way, let alone men. So you need leaders to take a stand. *Early Career Male research participant.*<sup>19</sup>



# Action for leaders: Communicate benefits for men<sup>18, 19</sup>

Men aren't all the same. A small group of a particular type of highly-competitive men seem to set the tone in many organisations. I think these solutions will help many men too.  
*Senior Leader, research participant.*

## DIVERSITY

Inclusive environments allow more people to flourish irrespective of their personalities, communication styles, sexuality and other aspects of diversity.

## RELATIONSHIPS

Gender equality starts at home. Research shows that men released from the pressure to be the 'provider' enjoy relationships of greater equality, stability, quality and intimacy. It's good for men's friendships with women too.

## INVOLVED FATHERS

Gender parity also affords men the space and time to build closer relationships with their children which much research shows benefits all individuals within families.

## HEALTH BENEFITS

Masculine norms (for example 'be a winner', 'don't show weakness', 'be one of the boys') in a 'command and control' management environment is often linked to stress, depression and safety risks for men.

## BETTER WORK

Collaboration and team work has proven links to productivity, creativity, innovation and enjoyment of work.

# Supporters of our research

We have presented within over 25 organisations from the private and public sectors and, presented on public platforms to dozens more. Many organisations, like those quoted here, are interested in and acting upon the ways individuals can change and mould the culture in their workplaces to be more inclusive.

Organisations supporting this research and its practical solutions include Aviva, the Royal Mail, Cambridge Assessment, the Home Office, BBC Wales and Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group.

Like many of the other men who participated, I was surprised at just how many women still feel that workplace culture is an issue. Men should at least meet women half way and change their own behaviours.

*Simon Carpenter, Head of Delivery Product Deployment, Royal Mail*

The '5 key ways to transform workplace culture' provides a strategic understanding of workplace culture, whilst promoting tangible and tactical suggestions for improvement.

The key insights from Murray Edwards' research has helped us to develop an approach based on staff insight from all levels of the organisation, with steps to improve the workplace culture for all based on sound qualitative and quantitative evidence.'

*Jason Ghaboos, Deputy Director, Home Office (UK Civil Service)*

Jill presented the Collaborating with Men research at a heavily over-subscribed and very well-received event at SMBCE. What we found particularly inspiring was the identification of 5 key ways to transform workplace culture, noting that small, incremental changes in individual behaviours can add up to significant benefits particularly when supported by strong leadership from the top down.

*Alison Ress, Deputy General Manager and chair of DRIVE diversity initiative, Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation Europe Limited*

# An invitation to get involved

We invite you to join these companies and try out some of the solutions contained in this report. Jill Armstrong, Researcher and Bye-Fellow at Murray Edwards College can help in establishing what actions may work best in your workplace and in monitoring the effect of the trials.

Jill will be delighted to hear from you.

**Jill Armstrong, email: [ja605@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ja605@cam.ac.uk)**

Contact Louise Ovens, PA to the President,  
Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge  
**Tel: 01223 762227 Email: [ljo30@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ljo30@cam.ac.uk)**

Hard copies of this report and 'Collaborating with Men' are available from Louise Ovens. Alternatively, both are available for download from the Murray Edwards College website:  
**[www.murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk](http://www.murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk)**

## MEASURE YOUR ORGANISATION'S GENDER BIASES

*For a free survey to measure the six main workplace culture problem areas (see page 7), email Jill Armstrong at Murray Edwards College: [ja605@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ja605@cam.ac.uk)*

## Footnotes:

- 1 CMI (2016) Creating balanced workplaces. [online] Available from: <http://www.managers.org.uk/~//media/Appius/Submissions/cmi-women-the-missing-middle-infographic.pdf> [accessed 29/5/2017].
- 2 YCS and KPMG (2014) Cracking the Code. [online] Available from: <http://30percentclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/YSC-Cracking-the-Code-brochure.pdf> [accessed 29/5/2017].
- 3 Hampton Alexander Review: FTSE women leaders. (2016) [online] Available from: [https://30percentclub.org/assets/uploads/UK/Third\\_Party\\_Reports/Hampton\\_Alexander\\_Review\\_Paper\\_Nov\\_2016.pdf](https://30percentclub.org/assets/uploads/UK/Third_Party_Reports/Hampton_Alexander_Review_Paper_Nov_2016.pdf)
- 4 Women in Finance (2017) Empowering Productivity: Harnessing the talents of women in financial services. [online] Available from: <https://uk.virginmoney.com/virgin/assets/pdf/Virgin-Money-Empowering-Productivity-Report.pdf>
- 5 Murray Edwards College (2014) [online] Available from: [http://issuu.com/murrayedwardscollege/docs/140227\\_women\\_today\\_survey\\_final\\_ver\\_2435ce7a5d1be5](http://issuu.com/murrayedwardscollege/docs/140227_women_today_survey_final_ver_2435ce7a5d1be5)
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- 7 Armstrong, J (2016) Collaborating with Men. [online] Available from: <https://www.murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk/news/collaborating-with-men-report-talks-about-changing-workplace-culture>.
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- 9 Karpowitz, C.F. & Mendelberg, T. (2014) *The Silent Sex*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP; Leaper, C. and Ayres, L. 2007 A meta-analytic review of gender variations in adults' language use: talkativeness, affiliative speech, and assertive speech. [online] Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18453467>
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- 11 [online] Available from: <http://nymag.com/thecut/2016/09/heres-how-obamas-female-staffers-made-their-voices-heard.html>
- 12 [online] Available from: <https://www.atlassian.com/time-wasting-at-work-infographic>; <https://www.dpgplc.co.uk/2016/03/time-management-employees/>
- 13 Thanks to Professor Jeremy Sanders for his training notes. For more advice on improving meetings a whole issue of HBR was recently devoted to this topic <https://hbr.org/topic/meetings>
- 14 Catalyst (2005) *Women Take Care. Men Take Charge*. [online] Available from: [http://www.catalyst.org/system/files/Women\\_Take\\_Care\\_Men\\_Take\\_Charge\\_Stereotyping\\_of\\_U.S.\\_Business\\_Leaders\\_Exposed.pdf](http://www.catalyst.org/system/files/Women_Take_Care_Men_Take_Charge_Stereotyping_of_U.S._Business_Leaders_Exposed.pdf); Williams, J. & Dempsey, R. (2014) *What works for women at work*. New York: NYU Press.
- 15 [online] Available from: <https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/som/press/flexible-working-are-employers-restricting-talent-pool>
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- 17 [online] Available from: <https://hbr.org/2014/08/why-women-dont-apply-for-jobs-unless-theyre-100-qualified>
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- 20 Credit Suisse Research Institute CS 3000: the reward for change, 2016 [online] Available from: <https://glg.it/assets/docs/csri-gender-3000.pdf>; McKinsey Global Institute, 2016 [online] Available from: <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/women-matter/the-power-of-parity-advancing-womens-equality-in-the-united-kingdom>



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