

GiMSIG Newsletter

Special Edition for International Women's Day 2022

Message from the GiMSIG Chair

*"You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise."
Still I rise, Maya Angelou (1978)*

The theme of this year's International Women's Day is #BreakTheBias, which is a call for collective action to forge a world that is inclusive and equitable for women, and celebrates and values their diversity. We invited women who are BAM Fellows working in the field of gender and diversity in management to share with messages with the GiMSIG community to encourage us to reflect about ways in which through our personal lives, academic work and collective interests we can #BreakTheBias.

As women, we face many challenges, which have and continue to impact and define our lives. From being and expressing ourselves, and being recognised and accepted, to reaching our potential and thriving, women's journeys are multilayered and uneven, and at times complicated by crises and conflicts that exacerbate gender and intersectional inequalities that disproportionately affect them. However, our will and resilience to overcome these hurdles, to beat the odds and to support each other are stronger, and still we rise.

In a day like today, it's good to remind ourselves of how we #BreakTheBias in ways that have a transformational impact in our lives and in the lives of others. As we recognise the many inspirational women that we know and know of, we also must recognise ourselves as inspirational as we achieve, do not give up, and hold ourselves and each other up.

Every day is women's day because we live, struggle and thrive every day. Still, it is great that today we are able to collectively celebrate women. In that spirit, it gives me great pleasure to share this special newsletter with the lovely, powerful and inspirational messages from **Professor Nelarine Cornelius, Professor Carole Elliott, Professor Sharon Mavin, Professor Valerie Stead, and Professor Sue Vinnicombe**. Happy International Women's Day, everyone!

Dr Jenny K Rodriguez
Chair of the Gender in Management Special Interest Group

Professor Nelarine Cornelius, Queen Mary University of London

I am delighted to be able to add to the GIMSIG newsletter by adding a message on behalf of the Human Resource Management Special Interest Group, on International Women's Day.

Although there have been important milestones towards women's equality across the years, there is still a great deal of work that needs to be made. The United Nations Gender Equality Index and Gender Inequality Index highlights the need to redouble efforts to ensure women's wellbeing and quality of life. Participation in the labour market and the workplace are important indicators of women's equality within societies, and there is clear evidence from the UN's work that women continue to lag in labour market participation. Numerous reports in countries across the globe indicate the need for better representation of women on boards, and especially so at the intersection with race and ethnicity.

Like the GIMSIG, the HRM SIG provides a critical forum for understanding these challenges and how they can be addressed. HRM policies and strategies, and professional HRM function and line management practice, are important factors in enabling or slowing women's career progression.

International Women's Day is an opportunity to put women's achievements and life chances in the spotlight. I applaud the GIMSIG's commitment to these issues and reinforce the HRM SIG's interest in supporting these conversations and developing actions.

Professor Carole Elliott, Sheffield University Management School

As I write this myself and many colleagues at Higher Education institutions across the UK are taking strike action in a 'four fights' dispute. One of the 'fights' demands universities address the gender, ethnic and disability pay gap. As we approach this year's International Women's Day (IWD) I anticipate there will be discussions in the media that focus on whether IWD is an anachronism irrelevant to 21st century women. The rigidity of the gender pay gap, which is particularly severe for women of colour, and disabled women, suggests otherwise and indicates the resilience of the neoliberal heteropatriarchy in women's subordination. IWD is still relevant, but we need to be attentive to its capture by corporatist interests for whom it can be mobilized as a symbol of equality. When IWD was officially marked for the first time in 1911 women demanded the right to vote, to fight against sex discrimination in the workplace, and the right to hold public office. Women still struggle to hold power in most countries, so the fight for equity is not over. The Gender in Management group of scholars have the collective power to hold our workplaces to account. Ask for your institution's gender pay gap data and the action plan that details how the gender pay gap will be eradicated. Check who holds power, and if there is a gender imbalance at senior levels in the organization, inquire as to how the institution plans to tackle gender inequity in positions of authority. Let this International Women's Day be the start of an activist renewal for gender rights.

Professor Sharon Mavin, Newcastle University Business School

Likeability, Authority, Sexism and Action #IWD #BreakTheBias

Recently I've been struck by how journalists have managed to articulate the biases and hurdles facing women at work - to wide and diverse audiences - making significant impact. Alicia Menendez, MSNBC anchor, reporter and author of *The Likeability Trap* (2019) and Mary Ann Sieghart, Assistant Editor and columnist at The Times and author of *The Authority Gap* (2021), shine a light on the scale of unseen gendered bias at work in everyday lives – in practical ways that are just hard to argue against.

The Likeability Trap articulates how, 'likeability' is really 'you do or do not meet my expectation of how a person like you is supposed to show up in the world'. The Authority Gap articulates 'why women are still taken less seriously than men and what we can do about it'. As researchers of gender in management and leadership, *we know, in vivid detail, all about the bias, stereotypes and discrimination* women face at work.

As a Gender in Management community there is more we can do – switching the flood lights *full beam* onto these biases in our everyday worlds. For example, we can talk to each other to find support and ways of calling 'it' out - when confronted (regularly) with mansplaining, bropropriating, maninterrupting, verbal manspreading and hepeating, and, when we experience hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, internalized sexism, from *women* as well as men – when we are silenced. We can also bring biases and stereotypes into business and management education and learning spaces; to hold them up, scrutinise and critique them - with our colleagues and with learners.

Professor Valerie Stead, Lancaster University Management School

Working on the international EU Horizon2020 funded [TARGETED-MPI](#) project that is committed to advancing gender equality in Business & Management Schools, I have been reflecting on the progress of women in HE, and in particular over the past couple of years as the second anniversary (11th March) of the World Health Organisation declaring Covid-19 a pandemic falls close to International Women's Day. Times of crisis typically bring inequalities into stark relief and it has been well documented that women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, with the [World Economic Forum](#) predicting that the pandemic has added an extra 55 years to the timeline for closing the gender gap in economic equality. In Higher Education an increase in workloads due to a move to hybrid models of teaching and assessment, has been intensified with the increased burden of care where access to care support, nurseries and schools has been limited and patchy. The effects are seen in the decline of women academics' research outputs, placing women at a significant disadvantage in advancing their careers, which in turn risks stalling women's already glacial progress into senior academic and professorial roles. As we begin to emerge from the pandemic it is vital that we take up the International Women's Day call to accelerate gender equality. Individually as gender and management scholars we are uniquely placed to #BreakTheBias by calling to account everyday discriminatory practices and behaviours. Collectively we can act by generating, promoting and supporting research initiatives that bring inequalities to light and that press for change.

Professor Sue Vinnicombe, Cranfield School of Management

It is hard to focus on International Women's Day when we are being bombarded with these terrible scenes of violence in Ukraine and the unfolding huge humanitarian disaster it is causing. My heart goes out to members from Ukraine and to those of you with family and personal friends there. Apart from donating money it is hard to think of practical ways in which we can help.

Yesterday in London there were two protests; one, against the war in Ukraine and the other against violence to women in their homes, on the streets and at work. Of course, the common theme across both of them is the deliberate suppression of the less powerful by the more powerful. We in GIMSIG have a special role to play, through our research, in shining a light on how women are suppressed at work and helping those in leadership roles to understand what needs to change. In my experience we often research topics that resonate with our own experiences at work, so our research takes on a powerful personal meaning to us. For me, I have always been concerned at the lack of women in leadership in our key corporates and have been leading our annual women on boards report for 23 years now! What is important to me is not just doing the research but making sure the results are listened to by those who can make change happen. The gender balance of top corporate boards has changed dramatically over the years- it was 7% back in 1999 and now is 39%. Of course, there is still much to do to ensure that women not only sit on boards but also occupy influential roles. I often feel I am primarily a campaigner and secondarily an academic! Please remember, we can all make a difference in helping to break those biases which women face at work, and in so doing fostering a truly inclusive place where everyone can thrive. Happy International Women's Day!

Further reading (and listening!)

Angelou, M. (2014): 'Still I Rise' by Maya Angelou (Live performance) https://youtu.be/qviM_GnJbOM

Correll, S. J. (2017). SWS 2016 Feminist Lecture: Reducing Gender Biases In Modern Workplaces: A Small Wins Approach to Organizational Change. *Gender and Society*, 31(6), 725–750. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243217738518>

Perriton, L., Elliott, C., & Humbert, A. L. (2021). Where is the visible commitment to gender in the advertised content of UK management degree programmes? *Gender in Management*, 37(1), 58–76. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-01-2021-0015>