

Discussion Questions

“Does gender matter?” by Ben Barres

Q1: What motivated Barres to write this paper?

- To challenge claims that women are not advancing in science due to an “innate inability.” (133)
- “I would like female students to feel that they will have equal opportunity in their scientific careers.” (134)

Q2: What does Barres think is/are the foremost factor(s) for women’s slow advance in science careers?

- “The societal assumption that women are innately less able than men.” (134)
- “Women are not advancing because of discrimination.” (133)

Q3: Why are so many still ‘in denial’ about the problem of gender discrimination?

- “We all have a strong desire to believe that the world is fair.” (134)
- “When it comes to bias, it seems that the desire to believe in a meritocracy is so powerful that until a person has experienced sufficient career-harming bias themselves they simply do not believe it exists.” (134)

Q4: What are some actions that academic leadership can take to create a more equitable science community?

- “Enhance leadership diversity in academic and scientific institutions.” (135)
- Increase diversity on search committees. (136)
- “Women getting additional assistance from institutions in balancing career and family responsibilities.” (136)
- Speak out against discrimination. (136)