

# Dilemma:

## "We are not Barbies."

Each group has a host.

This dilemma card is for the host and contains:

- A host guide
- A dilemma
- Fact boxes
- A question guide for dialogue one and dialogue two

**Host guide** As a host, your role is to facilitate a good, constructive dialogue where everyone gets to speak. Your role is not to participate by sharing your own perspective, but you are welcome to put your perspective into play by phrasing it as a question ("What if they ...?").

Try to be curious ("Why do you think that?") and investigative ("What if they react differently than you assume?").

Aim to make it safe for participants to say or share something vulnerable by making it clear that different perspectives are welcome and that everyone should be respectful.

### **The dialogue is divided into two parts.**

The first part is about giving advice to the person who posed the dilemma, and the second part is about the theme of the dilemma from the perspective of the panellists and their experiences at DTU.

On pages 3 and 4, you will find questions and data, which you can use to qualify the dialogue.

After reading this guide and skimming the question guide, please read out the dilemma to the panel. Give them a moment to reflect on the dilemma. Then initiate dialogue one.

# Dilemma:

Victoria is a PhD student at DTU. Recently, she and her female colleague Lily were pitching a project to a panel of judges for a pitch competition. Winning could be a stepping stone to success, so they went all in.

They were well prepared and thought they did a great job delivering their pitch.

Consequently, they were shocked when the group pitching after them took to the stage and started out with a dismissive gesture in Victoria and Lily's direction saying *"We are not Barbies, we are Oppenheimers!"* in a condescending tone.

The all-male group then carried on like nothing had happened. Not even the panel of judges, which also consisted only of men, seemed to raise an eyebrow at the derogatory and sexist comment with the apparent intention of discrediting Victoria and Lily's presentation.

After the episode, Victoria and Lily discussed it with other female PhD students who shared similar experiences with sexism. In addition to similar comments, they have received different questions than the men pitching, all with an undertone suggesting women are less competent.

Victoria and Lily didn't win any of this year's prizes. This is of course not necessarily due to the Barbie comment or the all-male panel. However, the comment and the fact that no one did anything still haunts them and leaves them feeling frustrated at the condescending discrimination.

They keep asking themselves if they should have done something. But if so, what? And is it too late to do something now? Victoria would like to hear the panel's thoughts on this.

# Dialogue one:

**1**  
**What advice does the panel give?**

- [Start by hearing each panellist's thoughts on the dilemma so everyone gets the chance to speak from the start]
- "What could the underlying cause(s) for the dilemma be?"
- "Should the panel have done something? If yes, what? If no, why not?"
- "What do you think of the options stated by the person who posed the dilemma?"
- [Feel free to use the data from the boxes to boost the discussion]
- [Other investigative questions]
- "We have to come up with an answer, but you don't all have to agree. What does each of you think the person who posed the dilemma should do?"

*Harvard studies show that during pitches, women are asked preventive questions 2/3 of the time, while men are asked promotional questions 2/3 of the time. Those who get more promotional questions get more funding. Promotional questions lead to conversations about gains and growth, while preventive questions lead to conversations about how the pitchers can achieve results or avoid potential losses.*

*Microaggressions can be expressed in many ways, e.g. as seemingly innocent comments or jokes that are deliberately or unconsciously linked to biases about a particular group.*

*Examples include:*

- *Having to defend your own competences more than others.*
- *Receiving or overhearing derogatory comments about people like you.*
- *Being interrupted or ignored more than others.*

# 2 Dialogue two:

## What do you do, and what could you do?

This part of the dialogue focuses on the panellists' own experiences at DTU.

Start dialogue two by telling the panel that the focal point is still the theme of the dilemma, but now they should look at the conditions in their own unit as well as considering other solutions.

Please note that dialogue two may be a bit more sensitive. Aim to create a safe and respectful space for everyone. The goal is still not to agree on everything, but to learn more about each other's perspectives.

- "Do you recognize the dilemma or parts of it, either on a personal level or through observation?"
- "Do you do anything active to create equal opportunities for all employees? If yes, how?"
- "Is there a part of the advice you gave that you practise in your unit? If yes, what? If no, would that be possible?"
- "What else could you do? At individual, group, and organizational level?"
- [Other investigative questions]
- "What will each of you take with you to your unit, either as a point of attention or as possible solutions related to the theme of the dilemma?"