



**Global Voices for Workplace Equity
Interview with Simone Taylor, co-founder WE Project**

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KENNEALLY: First, the good news. According to three out of four survey respondents, work/life balance is good in scholarly publishing. 60% said their organizations were supportive of diversity, and over half say people of all religions and all sexual orientations have equal opportunities for promotion. But the findings and answers from nearly 1,200 individuals on six continents don't stop there.

Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center's podcast series. I'm Christopher Kenneally for Beyond the Book. As 2018 opened, the Workplace Equity Project released its survey to capture and analyze data on diversity and equity-related issues in the scholarly publishing field. At that time, WE Project organizer Susan Spilka outlined for me her expectations for the survey.

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SPIILKA: Our industry is known to have a majority female workforce, male-dominated leadership, and a striking lack of ethnic diversity. Studies show that around 60% of the workforce is female, over 85% is white, and 60% of the leadership is male. I think the WE survey is going to find that the imbalances persist. We hope to gain some insight into why and identify some of what's reinforcing the status quo. That said, we truly believe that our industry leaders want to change that equation. Change has to come from the top and from within — that's how WE fits in.

KENNEALLY: Now, the Workplace Equity Project has reported on the survey's findings. The industry earned some high grades as well as lower marks for needs work. With a review of this revealing professional report card, Simone Taylor, a co-founder of the Workplace Equity Project, joins me now from New York City. Welcome to Beyond the Book, Simone.

TAYLOR: Hi, Chris. Thanks for inviting me on.



KENNEALLY: Well, we're delighted you could join us, and you certainly are well qualified to talk about this project. Apart from being a co-organizer of the Workplace Equity Project, you are currently publisher of books for the American Institute of Physics Publishing, and as well, a researcher by training. You hold a PhD in materials science from the University of Manchester.

Simone, as we referred to, we previewed this project and encouraged our audience to participate in the survey by speaking with your co-organizer Susan Spilka earlier this year. Things went pretty well, it looks like. You received responses from 1,152 – sorry, 1,182 individuals across six continents. Were you pleased with the response to this effort?

TAYLOR: We were pleased with the response to this effort. We got a great deal of support from industry organizations. I don't want to name any for fear of skipping over some who responded, but there's a whole list on our website. And it was through these industry organizations who disseminated the survey and encouraged their members to participate that we were able to get the results from across the globe, and as you said earlier, from six continents, which was really, really reassuring and really helpful. So a great thank you to everyone who participated and allowed us to collect this very important information.

KENNEALLY: On Beyond the Book, Simone, we have covered not only the Workplace Equity Project, but other efforts to shine a light into diversity and equity in publishing. I suppose it's worth to take a moment to remind people of why this is so important. Obviously, it's about making for an open and welcoming culture, but it has an impact on the bottom line, as well.

TAYLOR: It does. There have been reports – well, there have been reports on a number of issues. First, Kathleen (sic) Phillips from Columbia University, I believe she's at, did some work that was recently republished by *Scientific American* where she outlined results on putting people to work in different teams and found out that diverse groups tended to perform better, solved problems more effectively, and got better results.

But in addition to that, McKinsey has also put out some data that actually says that gender diversity has a direct influence on a company's performance. And it's not only limited to gender. Cross-cultural and ethnic diversity also improves an organization's performance. The McKinsey analysis also, interestingly, suggests



that there's a penalty to pay, so that if your organization is less diverse, you are more likely to perform less well. I think it's rather interesting.

KENNEALLY: Right. As far as the survey respondents, this is self-reporting – people volunteered to complete the survey – so this isn't scientific, in a sense. Yet the proportion of men and women and age groups and so forth are apparently fairly representative of the industry. Can you describe for us the demographics of the responses?

TAYLOR: The demographics of the responses are interesting. As you mentioned, our survey was self-selecting, so we felt that that kind of skewed the data one way or another. Just to give you a brief summary of our results, we found that the industry is 76% female, 81% white, 83% heterosexual. But then if you look at other surveys that have been done, conducted in the UK and in the United States of America, those data come out to be quite close. I think in the UK, they found the industry to be something like 78% female, and in the USA, it was about 79% female. Our number of 76% isn't that far off, even though our survey was self-selecting. So it is interesting.

KENNEALLY: And of course, it covers a wide range of age groups. I thought what was interesting for me was that what we call these days, at least in journalism, the millennials are more ethnically diverse – more diverse, generally speaking – than their older counterparts in the industry.

TAYLOR: That is true, but also I think we need to look into that a bit more, because for our survey, we got quite a huge response from people who actually live in Asia. So that might have had an effect on the results on the survey as a whole – we had a lot of Asians living in Asia who contributed to that demographic. So we need to work out whether that demographic is still diverse in non-Asian countries, if you see what I mean.

KENNEALLY: I do, but it raises the point that this is a global report.

TAYLOR: Absolutely.

KENNEALLY: And I would imagine that notions of diversity are ones that shift across cultures. It represents a fascinating challenge to try to get that global picture, because what diversity may mean in the US or in the UK would be an entirely different question in Malaysia or Singapore or any part of Asia.



TAYLOR: Yes, that's right. Those are areas where it'd be really interesting to delve in a bit further, and we hope that this survey encourages more people to look into those issues, too.

KENNEALLY: One of the things that stuck out for me was the notion of a majority culture and the expectations and assumptions that come with that and that therefore have an impact on those who are not a part of that majority culture. Can you tell us a bit more about that?

TAYLOR: Well, what we did find – you mentioned the positive news that just over three-quarters of us in the publishing industry feel we can achieve a good work balance, that just above 62% find the culture in our organizations supportive. But to your point about a majority culture, it was interesting that when it came to alignment with corporate values, some demographics, who invariably tended to be in the minority, found that alignment somewhat of a struggle.

For instance, people who identified as black or as mixed/multiple ethnicity tended to report in the highest proportions that their organizations aren't as supportive. Similarly, non-binary colleagues, who were in the minority – our data showed that people identified as either 76% male or 21% female, but people who identified as non-binary, although they are at small values – 1.2% of the total as a whole – a third of them felt that their organizations had no alignment with their values. So even though that's a small number, it is significant, and it's something that we need to pay more attention to.

KENNEALLY: And certainly an area that does require more attention is the challenge between an organizational policy, one that states respect for diversity, and then the actual practice that comes in the direct line management. This is where individual experiences of prejudice – or acceptance, for that matter – really are felt. One doesn't feel the policy. One feels the experience. Sometimes the experience is shaped by individuals who may not be in line with the policy.

TAYLOR: Yes. That was a distinctly recurring theme that came through the survey. We gave people an opportunity, in addition to being able to tick yes or no or answer questions, we had what we termed freeform comments, where we allowed people to just add anything else they needed to say. And a recurring theme in many of these comments was that irrespective of organizational policies, what people experienced, as you just said, depended on their line manager's interpretation of that policy.



That, I think, presents a very interesting challenge to an organization. What is clear is that setting the policy is one thing, and we know that there have been quite a few initiatives in the industry to address work/life balance issues, to address promotion and compensation. But if your own line manager doesn't understand or doesn't interpret these things in the way the company intends, then your own experience is very, very different from others around you. And it's a challenge for the industry, because your managers are the people who you have entrusted with the values of the organization, and it presents an opportunity to maybe have a better discourse with managers, better training, improved oversight. I don't know, I think there's a lot we can do around – to improve this and attempt to make the experience more uniform.

KENNEALLY: Indeed. And the report on the survey does make some very important suggestions for change – how things can be improved. Apart from challenging exclusionary practices, a response to that is to – a positive response to that is to facilitate networks to enable sponsorship and advocacy. Tell us about some of the ways in a positive fashion organizations and the entire industry can begin to address these problems.

TAYLOR: Networking is something that the industry does periodically. So industry organizations will hold sessions, workshops, lunch-and-learn seminars, and that kind of thing. What we found in the survey was that most people acknowledged the benefit of such structures, but not all people felt adequately prepared for making the best of those situations. So people who identified as introverts struggled with networking. People who were early career researchers, for instance, felt that they didn't know how to go about making the most of the facilities available to them. So a positive way of changing that would be to try and actively meet people who find the process challenging and get them to be more involved by making it easier for them, maybe partnering them up with a mentor who could introduce them to the right sort of events where they might be able to participate.

Similarly, mentoring and advocacy was something that we felt could be improved. The industry has done a great deal – and the SSP, I think, has a very active mentoring program, where it's trying to match people to others who can help them develop their skills. But I think to make a really positive change, we need to go beyond mentoring to actual sponsorship and advocacy, which is what I think makes a significant difference in a professional career, especially people looking to move into more responsible leadership roles. It really helps where you have somebody actually advocating for you to move forward.



Similarly, with exclusionary practices, it comes down to really being aware that our practices are exclusionary, because most of the time, we're not deliberately exclusionary. It just happens by default, almost. And it happens by default because we're not aware that our behaviors exclude other people from things they might want to participate in.

There was a very interesting study or report done by *The Scholarly Kitchen* earlier this year where people of color gave testimonies on their experiences in publishing. What really struck me, beyond the really stark experiences that some people described, was the fact that all of these summaries and the names of the – and the editors who put them together opted to do this anonymously. My real hope is that one day, we will move towards – the industry will move towards being able to have these conversations in the open. Because if we don't know what the experiences are, then we stand no chance of trying to change them.

KENNEALLY: Indeed, that would be a state to be desired. But for the moment, an effort like your own at the Workplace Equity Project has helped to raise awareness, to document the challenges, and that's an important step. What's next for the Workplace Equity Project?

TAYLOR: Well, we're hoping to build on this. The next phase would be to publish the data so that it's disseminated more widely, but also to partner with institutions and the industry – and we've started to do that already – to try and get people engaged and involved in changing the way we respond and react to our colleagues, but also to more actively do things like encourage mentoring networks, encourage professional interaction and sponsorship and advocacy. Does that answer your question?

KENNEALLY: It certainly does. And indeed, when it comes to encouragement, we encourage our listeners to obtain a copy of the Workplace Equity Project report. Going online, they can do that at [workplaceequityproject](http://workplaceequityproject.org) – all one word – .org. We've been speaking today with one of the co-founders, co-organizers of the Workplace Equity Project, Simone Taylor, who is currently publisher of books for the American Institute of Physics Publishing. Simone Taylor – let me try that again. Simone Taylor, thank you so much for joining us on Beyond the Book.

TAYLOR: Thank you very much for asking me to join you, Chris. It's been a pleasure talking with you.



KENNEALLY: Beyond the Book is produced by Copyright Clearance Center. Our co-producer and recording engineer is Jeremy Brieske of Burst Marketing. Subscribe to the program wherever you go for podcasts and follow us on Twitter and Facebook. The complete Beyond the Book podcast archive is available at beyondthebook.com. I'm Christopher Kenneally. Thanks for listening, and join us again soon on CCC's Beyond the Book.

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