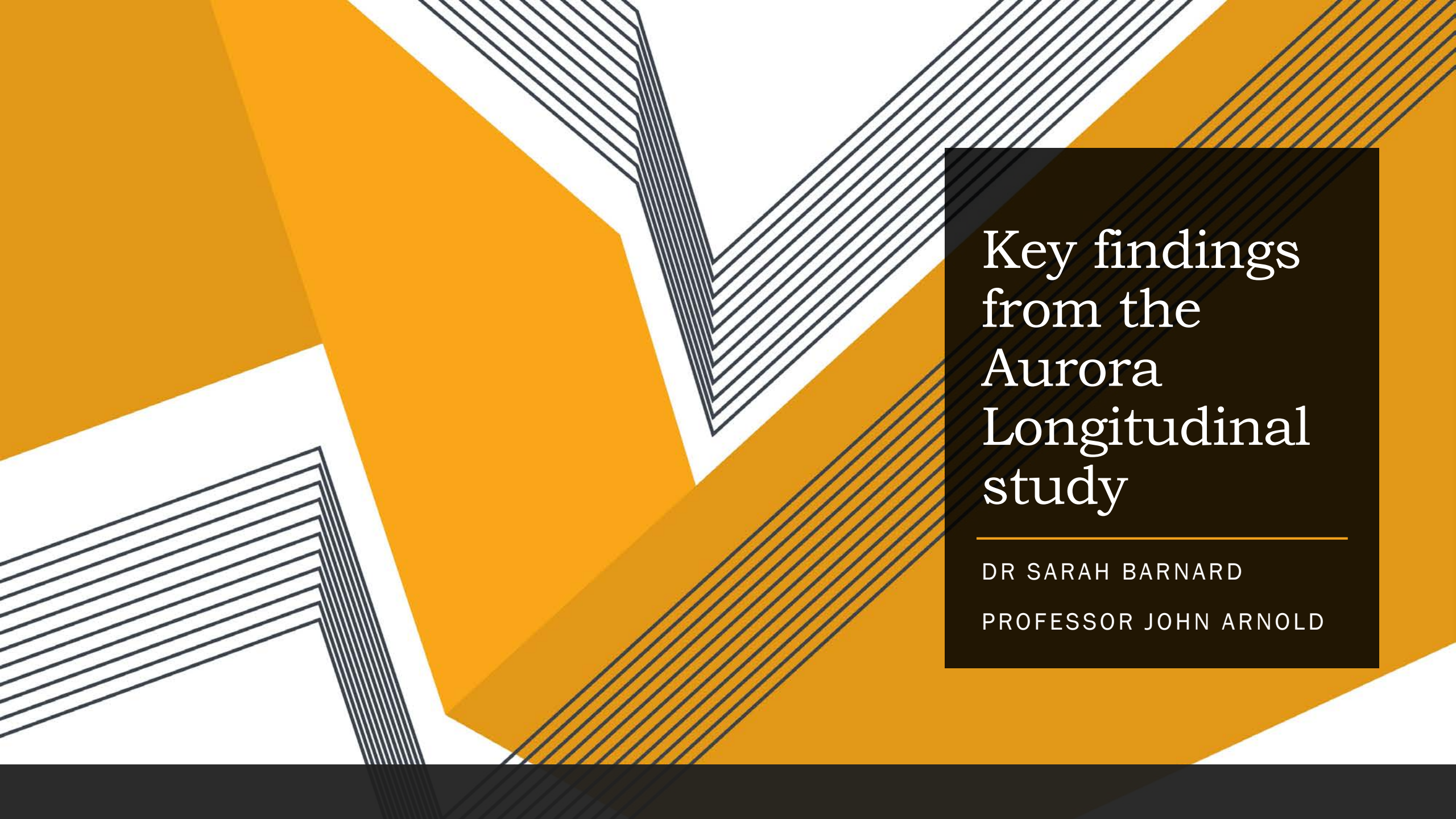




Key findings from the Aurora Longitudinal study

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About the study

A five-year, mixed-methods, longitudinal study

Aim: To describe and understand the leadership and career experiences, and the institutional and personal influences on those experiences, of women working in academic and professional services roles in HEIs in the UK and Republic of Ireland, together with practical implications for HEIs and individuals.

Methods: Online surveys, semi-structured interviews and diaries with women who participated in Aurora. A comparison group of women who had not participated in Aurora were also surveyed.

Who took part?

- In total 3796 women contributed to the survey data.
- 3423 participated in Aurora either before or during the study.
- 47% were professional services and 53% academics.
- A total of 79 interviews were conducted with 30 women who had completed Aurora and 16 of their Aurora mentors;
- Nine Aurorans completed diaries.

Some findings on HE contexts (1)

- Perceptions of a collaborative and developmental workplace culture were more negative than positive.
- Respondents reported low perceptions of gender equality in their workplace. There was a slight improvement in perceptions of gender equality over the course of the study.
- Academics were more negative than professional services staff.

Some findings on HE contexts (2)

- Positive attitudes to the employing organisation were influenced most strongly by a collaborative and developmental workplace culture (often not perceived to be present) and a supportive line manager (more commonly perceived to be present).

Some findings about leadership (1)

- Generally strong self-perceptions of leadership skills and engagement – somewhat contrasting with narratives about lack of confidence.
- Women tended to describe their leadership in terms of relationship building, and frequently contrasted this with aggressive and/or autocratic styles they saw around them.
- Relational leadership was particularly characteristic of those who placed high importance on being of service to the organisation.

Some findings about leadership (2)

- Holding a leadership position was not associated with higher stress.
- Those in part-time roles, and those with home care responsibilities, were as interested in leadership as others – but less likely to get the chance to exercise it.

Some findings on Aurora impacts

- The Aurora programme had clear effects on the women who undertook it, most notably increased interest and confidence in leadership roles, confidence to put themselves forward for career advancement, challenging gendered or other unfair practices, and enacting assertive leadership.
- These effects were largely maintained, though not increased, during three years post Aurora.
- There were some signs that this was Aurorans "catching up" with others in terms of their self-perceived leadership skills.

Recommendations....

- For higher education institutions structured around promotions; workload and leadership; and workplace culture, diversity and inclusion.
- For individuals focused on building supportive relationships; proactive career self-management; strategic career reconnaissance; and professional development.

Discussion on Leadership in HE

To explore own experiences, potential 'solutions' and the challenges in trying to tackle these issues

In breakout rooms please discuss the two study findings:

1. A third of respondents agreed with the statement “I have been placed in leadership situations where success has been almost impossible to achieve”.
2. Perceptions of others' leadership was often substantially different from how women perceived their own leadership practice.

Questions to consider include: In what ways does this resonate with your own experiences? How might these issues be tackled? What are the main barriers to change?

One person per group please prepare to feedback during the plenary.



Thanks for your
contribution
For more
information on the
project go to
[www.advance-
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