

Are women a problem, do women have a problem or do women point out a problem?

Basic ideas behind the FESTA project

Minna Salminen-Karlsson  
Uppsala University  
FESTA coordinator

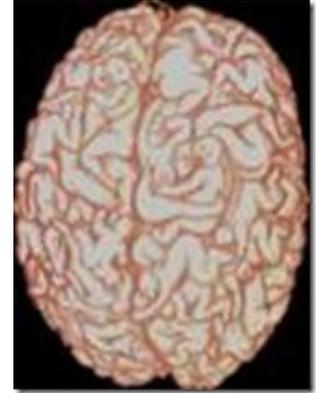


Once upon a time we had no  
gender problem in science



# No women, no problem...

But it was based on assumptions of women's incapability for scientific thinking



We know today that it's not true.

There is very little difference between female and male brains. Differences among women and among men are larger than differences between women and men.

It also ignored the fact that women did do research, as sisters, wives, daughters



# Times changed...

- Women's and men's roles started to converge. Girls and boys got to have the same curriculum. Several girls performed well in scientific subjects.
- Increased economic-scientific competition between countries and between Europe and USA
- => by not having women, we're wasting talent

So (the missing) women became a  
problem

We would welcome them –  
so why don't they choose  
to be in science?



(the workplace would be much  
nicer, too)

# Girls into science

Campaigns for recruiting more girls into scientific educational programs



(if they start in science, they will stay, why wouldn't they)

# Women have problems in science

- Women increasingly came to science, but they were still not making careers

They seemed to have problems...

Children, for example...

... and self-confidence



Maybe they're not really committed...?

# Help women

Help women to trespass the limits of being women

Arrange daycare



Help women to take place in academic life

Attend to representation

Create networks, mentoring etc



These men lived in a different world  
Science could be created in ivory towers



These men, too, lived in a different world  
Science still was an exclusive profession  
and scientists could dedicate themselves exclusively  
to science

Today, science is done by many more  
people. They are smart and dedicated  
but they want to have space for other  
aspects of life. They want to make good  
science, have good careers and live  
good lives.



**The truth is, science can be done  
by people who are not necessarily  
younger versions of their  
professors.**

Sheila Tobias

# Women point out problems with old ideals

- Bias and subjectivity in appointments
- Unrealistic conceptions of excellence
- Undemocratic decision-making processes
- Inefficient communication patterns
- Violent socialisation processes
- Unhealthy work environment



# Improving the environments where science is done is



Female Empowerment in  
Science and Technology Academia

**Environments which empower women =  
environments which empower new people and new ideas**



# This is what FESTA is about

Unhealthy work environment – What are the differences in women’s and men’s work environment, and how can environments be made better?

Bias and subjectivity in appointments – What really are the criteria? Is that what we want to have? What are the implications?

Undemocratic decision-making processes – How can we give influence to those who don’t have the networks and protectors? How can we make sure that different interests and groups are represented?

Unrealistic conceptions of excellence – What kind of research do we really promote? Who are our heroes and why? Do these ideals lead us to where we want to go?

Inefficient communication patterns – How can we ensure that everybody is heard? How can we communicate effectively and creatively?

Violent socialisation processes – How can we introduce PhD students to academia and keep their inspiration and creativity?

- We still have the missing women as a problem



- Women still have problems



- But most of all, we are working with the problems that women have pointed out, creating good work environments for both women and men

# Thank you for your attention



UPPSALA  
UNIVERSITET



Female Empowerment in  
Science and Technology Academia