

# Lecture by Nina Toren, 28 June 2005: Women in Academic Science

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## **Abstract**

### **Women in Academic Science**

Women comprise a small minority of the total tenure-track academic faculty with somewhat larger minorities in the humanities and social sciences and very small minorities in the physical sciences and engineering. Their rank distribution has the shape of a pyramid - large numbers are concentrated at the lower ranks whereas only a few reach the highest rank of full-professor. They advance less rapidly on the academic ladder as compared to their male colleagues. They are over-presented in off-tenure tracks (temporary, part-time etc.). These characteristics are surprisingly similar cross-nationally. Underlying gender-inequality in academia is the traditional sex-typing of scientific research as a masculine enterprise. The scientific disciplines to which women are thought to be particularly unsuitable are mathematics, the physical sciences, and engineering. In addition to stereotypes several obstacles inhibit women's careers, such as marital and parental obligations that coincide with the first crucial years of the academic career; limited geographical mobility; the reluctance of faculty men to serve as mentors and collaborators; the relative absence of female role models; exclusion from informal networks, genderized stereotypes, and discrimination. According to "The Matthew Effect in Science," disadvantages accumulate and the discrepancies between genders widen over time. An important reason for the persistence of gender-inequality in academic science is that women are less integrated into social networks, namely have smaller amounts of 'social capital' although they have similar 'human capital' as compared to male colleagues. What can be done to accelerate the movement toward gender equality in science?