

## THE PROPOSITION

# ‘Grants for women reinforce sexism’

**Special grants for women scientists do exist. But PhD student Jessica de Bruijn is against them because, she claims: *Science grants for which only women are eligible reinforce sexism.***

‘Working in the sciences is highly competitive and there is a lot of pressure to obtain grants. A grant is intended for the best proposal and the best person to do the research. If you ask me, that has nothing to do with your sex. There are two aspects of this that bother me. Firstly, it is discrimination if you exclude men. And secondly, it has potentially negative consequences for the researcher and her

group. I’ve heard stories about women who get told: you only got that funding because you are a woman. If men had been allowed to compete, you wouldn’t have got a grant. Like that you start off on the wrong foot, as a woman. The risk is that your scheme aimed at creating equality unintentionally stimulates discrimination against women. We should also think about why we think we need to attract more women into the sciences – for the sake of balanced teams, for instance – and why those women are not there now. It could be partly because of discrimination, whether deliberate or unconscious. But it might also be a conscious



PhD candidates are expected to submit a handful of propositions with their thesis. In this feature, they explain their most provocative proposition. This time, it’s Jessica de Bruijn, who got her PhD on 4 February for her study on the influence of learning on the foraging behaviour of parasitoid wasps.

choice by women. Women are no longer expected to stay at home and look after the children, but maybe women see other pros and cons when they consider the option of a job in the sciences.

**‘It is discrimination if you exclude men’**

Men and women scientists are equally qualified. It is good to have more women in the sciences, but I don’t think you should force it in this way.’ **RTL**