Woman on the verge

Transitioning from graduate school to the “real world”

Anita Melnyk
Empowering Voices of Early-Career Scientists
Gender Summit 2013
Anita Melnyk

• PhD candidate in biology at the University of Ottawa
• at a critical point in my career; transition from PhD to postdoc
• organizer of the Symposium for Women Entering Ecology and Evolution Today (SWEEET)
• topics discussed include implicit gender bias and women developing the art of self-advocacy
What do I want in a science career?

- have an impact beyond publications (outreach and engagement encouraged)
- work in a diverse environment
- flexibility
- security and support
Most importantly maintain work-life balance

- personal health
- it is possible; role models in academia
- options to make this more achievable include part-time tenure track positions, larger working groups, parental leave, and on-site affordable daycare
Participants

Why is there a leaky pipeline?

- lack of funding / jobs
- few mentors
- more difficult to access networks
- gender bias
- lack of family friendly policies
Recommendations

- increased mentorship between females at different career points

- women should be encouraged to foster negotiation and self advocacy skills

- important to frame advice around the current workplace environment
Key points to be addressed to retain women in science

- job flexibility (part-time positions, familial leaves, dual career hires)
- increased diversity within workplace
- workplace willing to change with the times
Scientific careers are changing

- new definitions of success as a scientist
- new paths to forge vs previous generation (less jobs, longer and more postdoctoral positions)
- demands for increased time with family irregardless of gender
- new challenges require new policies (e.g. how to overcome implicit gender bias)
To conclude

• personally, mentorship and networking will allow me to effectively transition from “the verge” to a postdoctoral position

• changing definition of a “science career”
  • increased pressure to achieve work-life balance
  • less funding and job availability has led to longer postdoctoral career stage

• changing workplace means that it will be necessary to effectively take experiences of well-established female scientists and use it to address issues currently faced by female students & postdocs in STEM disciplines
Thanks

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The “pyramid effect”

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