

# Women in science



# Logic problem

A father and his son are in a car accident. The father dies instantly, and the son is taken to the nearest hospital for surgery.

The surgeon comes in and exclaims 'I can't operate on this boy.'

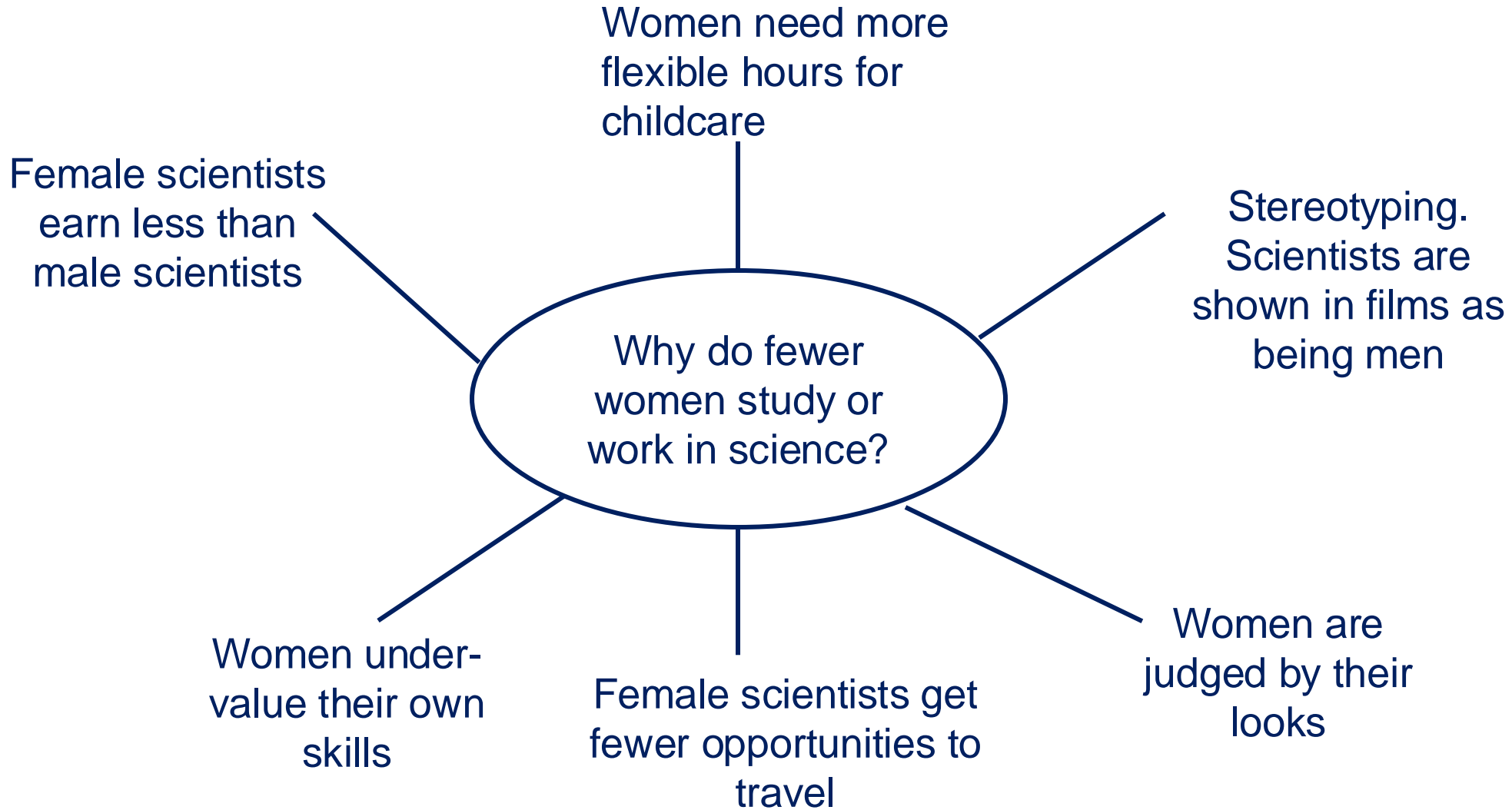
'Why not?' the nurse asks. 'Because he's my son,' the surgeon responds.

How is this possible?

Read the paragraph. Which facts do you find most surprising?

According to the campaigning group WISE (women in science and engineering), in the UK only 12.8% of jobs in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) are held by women. Similarly, the proportion of boys studying science at school-leaving age is still much higher than girls, especially physics, where it's about 78%. This continues at university, where 52% of male undergraduates take a science degree, compared with 40% of women. The situation is not dissimilar in the United States, where only 1/5 of physics degrees are awarded to women. But why is this?

Make a list of possible reasons why there are far fewer women studying and working in science than men.



# Using reference words

- When you read (or write) a text, reference words are used to link parts of the text. Usually a reference word points backwards to another word or an idea in the text.
- Reference words are often personal pronouns (he, she, they, etc.), possessive pronouns (his, their, etc.), demonstratives (this, that, these, those).
- We can also use 'one' or 'ones' to substitute a noun, for example 'I'd like a small one, please.'

# Check your understanding 1

Look at the words in **red** in the article (1–3). In each case, what does the highlighted word refer to?

According to the campaigning group WISE (women in science and engineering), in the UK only 12.8% of jobs in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) are held by women. Similarly, the proportion of boys studying science at school-leaving age is still much higher than girls, especially physics, where **it's** about 78%. **This** continues at university, **where** 52% of male undergraduates take a science degree, compared with 40% of women. The situation is not dissimilar in the United States, where only 1/5 of physics degrees are awarded to women.

# Check your understanding 2

Now choose the best reference word from the box to put in each gap in the text below.

one

this

they

their

Research has shown that if women are told that men do better in maths tests than women, <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ can affect <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ score negatively.

And there is certainly also some external bias. A study carried out by the American Institute of Physics, looking at 1,500 physicists from 130 different countries, found that almost always the female scientists received less money, less space to work in and fewer opportunities to travel. Another study showed that both male and female professors were more likely to give the job to a male candidate than a female <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, when given the same curriculum vitae, with a male or female name attached. <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ also planned to pay the 'male' candidate more.

# Discussion

Which of the jobs below are typically done by men or typically done by women? Are there any (good) reasons for this?

Dental hygienists	Car mechanics	Childcare workers	Roofers (people who mend roofs)
Hairdressers	Receptionists	Primary school teachers	Painters and decorators