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admirable, and interesting book, but for the reasons noted I also found it to be a bit puzzling and frustrating. I wanted to like it more than I did, but I am confident that others will not only like it, but learn from it.

*Women's Work: Gender Equality vs. Hierarchy in the Life Sciences.* By Laurel Smith-Doerr. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004. Pp. xv+205. \$49.95.

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This ambitious book stands at the intersection of three areas of sociology: organizational theory, the sociology of science and technology, and gender studies. Laurel Smith-Doerr compares the position of female life scientists in academia, large pharmaceutical corporations, and biotechnology firms, and finds that women occupy more supervisory positions in the biotechnology setting. Smith-Doerr concludes by challenging the assertion by sociologists of gender such as Barbara Reskin that formalized bureaucratic rules for promotion are associated with greater workplace equality for women.

Smith-Doerr's most compelling finding is that women in biotechnology firms are almost eight times more likely to hold supervisory positions than are female life scientists in academia or at traditional pharmaceutical corporations. This finding comes from a quantitative analysis of an original database Smith-Doerr compiled from information on over 3,000 life science Ph.D.'s included in grant applications to the National Institute of General Medical Sciences submitted in the 1980s and 1990s. To attempt to discover what could explain this striking finding, Smith-Doerr engaged in qualitative research at university life science laboratories and biotech firms.

In analyzing her qualitative data, Smith-Doerr comes to the conclusion that what explains women's success in biotech firms is the companies' organizational structure. She posits that biotech firms' "innovative, flat network structures" allow women to advance as they cannot in the entrenched bureaucracies of universities and traditional pharmaceutical firms (p. 24). Smith-Doerr's use of the term "network" is somewhat confounded by her employing it without modifier to refer at times to individual personal relationships, at other times to interorganizational alliances, and finally to signify an ideal-type of organization that is most weblike in comparison to the pyramidal structure of a bureaucracy. The reader must deduce whether she is referring to social networks, business networks, or a particular organizational structure as Smith-Doerr repeatedly asserts that networks benefit women.

Smith-Doerr's main arguments for why the network structure of biotech

firms benefits women are (a) biotech firms' deep reliance on interorganizational networks for their success creates "transparency" that protects biotech firm employees from discrimination (p. 100); (b) biotech firms' organization around networks of cross-specialty research teams leads managers to value diversity in demographics as well as research specialty; and (c) the flexibility of teams within biotech firms allows women to avoid supervisors with bias and to cultivate personal networks with people who are supportive. Smith-Doerr does not deny that bureaucracies are also permeated by network relationships, but she sees networks within formal bureaucracies as working against women's interests. She attributes this to the fact that networks within bureaucracies are not formally acknowledged and hence manifest as "less visible" and "more insidious," as "old-boy networks" instead of healthy network relations (p. 101).

Smith-Doerr's argument that the network form of informal organization is significantly better than bureaucratic antidiscrimination regulations at producing equality challenges well-established lines of research in the sociology of work and gender (not to mention the entire *raison d'être* of civil rights legislation and litigation). Because of the powerful implications of her claims and because her causal arguments are occasionally weakly supported by the anecdotal character of some of her qualitative reporting, Smith-Doerr's hypotheses about what causes women to have greater authority in the entrepreneurial world of biotech firms than in the supposedly politically correct realm of academia need further confirmation.

I hope Smith-Doerr or others will do additional research to pursue the claims made in *Women's Work*. If less bureaucratic, more weblike, flexible organizations are becoming more common, and if women suffer less disadvantage in these organizations than they do in traditional firms, then this obviously bodes well for future gender parity. However, it may be that the greater success of women in biotech firms is explained by something other than their network form, and the success of women will not generalize. Smith-Doerr's quantitative data are from the 1980s to mid-1990s, and her qualitative research took place in the early to mid-1990s. This was during the youth and adolescence of biotech as a field, and young fields tend not to draw privileged job candidates as strongly, allowing more marginal candidates to move up the job queue. It may be that as biotech has matured in recent years, women have moved further back in the job queue. There are also geographic issues that may limit the generalizability of Smith-Doerr's qualitative data, which were collected in the San Francisco area, which is racially diverse and politically progressive. Manager comments about valuing diversity may be prompted more by the political and ethnic setting than the network form of organization. Finding limitations in a book as ambitious as Smith-Doerr's is inevitable, but it is a provocative study to be appreciated by scholars in economic sociology, work and organizations, technology studies, and gender.