
Women's Work: Gender Equality vs. Hierarchy in the Life Sciences, by **Laurel Smith-Doerr**. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004. 205 pp. \$49.95 cloth. ISBN: 1-58826-264-2.

DENISE D. BIELBY
University of California-Santa Barbara
bielbyd@soc.ucsb.edu

Is organizational form consequential to gender equality in women's careers? According to Laurel Smith-Doerr's *Women's Work*, the short answer is yes, organizational context structures career outcomes, although in ways not fully anticipated by prevailing scholarship on gender stratification. The research on which this book is based draws from a quantitative and qualitative analysis of one-of-a-kind data on Ph.D.'s employed in the biotechnology industry. Relying upon a dataset constructed by the author from applications submitted by universities to the General Medical Science division of the National Institutes of Health, this study of over 2,000 Ph.D.'s in the human biological sciences—molecular biology, biochemistry, biomedicine, cell biology and genetics—reveals that biotech firms exhibit less gender inequality than allied employment contexts (the academy and the pharmaceutical industry) in hiring and promoting female life-science Ph.D.'s. Coupled with an analysis of nearly 50 interviews with industry participants and fieldwork in 12 biotech firms located around the country, Smith-Doerr reveals that the smaller, flatter, inter-organizational networks that make up these firms are considerably less discouraging to women interested in entering the field or in assuming project leader positions within them.

As a case study of the network form of organization that makes up the new knowledge economy, this book provides an engaging history of the establishment of the biotech field that is consequential to the matter of gender equality. Following a post-Cold War shift in government funding from physics to the life sciences, the legislation that resulted in the 1980 Patent and Trademark Law Amendments Act allowed inventors (including university faculty) with patents formulated with federal funds to retain ownership and thus to invest in, and profit from, start-up companies. Such direct

academic involvement was instrumental to conferring legitimacy to this emerging field and its founding participants rationalized their actions and continue to justify their practices as credible, trustworthy, and reliable by locating themselves within the larger enterprise of science. The resultant blurring of traditional boundaries between commercial and academic science on campuses brought about by such legislation, coupled with a more accommodating legal and regulatory environment (patenting freedom, DNA research, and more liberal FDA approval for new drugs) and more readily available venture capital, shaped the organizational ecology of the field, which became populated by small firms founded primarily by elite male scientists for whom innovation and other intensive knowledge generation was structured through extensive, diverse, inter-organizational connections. This field contrasts with the hierarchical, bureaucratic, secretive conglomerates that populate the pharmaceutical industry, whose focus on development of applied treatments, rather than curing diseases through discovery of the root cause of the ailment, as in biotech or the hyper-competitive hierarchy of basic scientific research in academia.

Given the robustness of sex segregation in industrialized labor markets, and the persistence of gender inequality in the academy, what characterizes the relatively advantaged status of female Ph.D.'s in biotechnology? One of the main findings is that, despite the fact that elite males from elite Ph.D.-granting institutions founded the field and remain central to its core inter-organizational networks, women were early entrants alongside men. Thus, their continued presence may be accounted for in part by the strides women have made in gaining access to elite male scientists at elite, life-science Ph.D.-granting programs. These ties translate via visible social networks into desirable placement in the job queue for this industry. Another main finding is that female Ph.D.'s are also more likely than their counterparts in either the academy, or the pharmaceutical industry, to occupy project or firm leadership positions within biotech companies. Crucial here, asserts the author, is that the collaborative project teams that make up biotech firms, by their very nature, focus greater attention to the usefulness of contributions to a project

goal and less to the ascriptive characteristics of their source. Given the emphasis on innovation, it becomes irrelevant to dwell on matters other than the next scientific breakthrough. Where these findings depart from prevailing thinking on gender stratification is in the significance of gender queues to gender inequality, at least in this industry. According to Smith-Doerr, when women and men share the same educational advantage in a knowledge-expanding field like biotech, the significance of gender queues to occupational inequality decreases.

In contrast to the insight gained from these intriguing findings, less is gleaned about how biotech's organizational culture actually fosters gender equality. Although biotech's inter-organizational connectivity is more transparent, making discrimination more difficult to accomplish, and its form demands flexible organizational boundaries, project teams, and roles that minimize the opportunity for gender discrimination, how this translates into on-the-job practices that actually facilitate gender equality is less apparent. The book could have benefited from more attention to analysis of firm-level policies and procedures that make the field so accessible to women, although it is not always possible to be thoroughly inclusive. Finally, this book, as edited, seems to be of two minds. One is the considerable elaboration that surrounds the stripped down presentation of the findings, but the other is the equally fascinating if not more engaging description—relegated to an appendix—of the data collection efforts deep in the basement archives of NIH and the painstaking logic of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The appendix alone is a valuable picture of the rigors of doing social science. This book may be about the collaborative inter- and intra-organizational networks of biotech workers but it will bring a knowing smile to sociologists familiar with the isolating challenges of empirical discovery in the social sciences.

Sustaining Nonprofit Performance: The Case for Capacity Building and the Evidence to Support It, by **Paul C. Light**. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004. 211 pp. \$44.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-8157-5226-1. \$18.95 paper. ISBN: 0-8157-5225-3.

WOLFGANG BIELEFELD
Purdue University
wbielefe@iupui.edu

This book is the third written by Paul Light for the Brookings Nonprofit Effectiveness Project. Each book deals with issues of central concern in the contemporary nonprofit sector, including nonprofit reform (*Making Nonprofits Work*, 2000) and high performance (*Pathways to Nonprofit Excellence*, 2002). In *Sustaining Nonprofit Performance*, Light considers the causes and consequences of increasing pressures on the nonprofit sector to (1) provide more and better services with fewer resources, and (2) address lingering public concerns about nonprofit accountability. His main point is that the nonprofit sector has a long history of underinvestment in basic organizational infrastructures, which results in the inability of nonprofit organizations to respond adequately to these challenges. If they do not, according to Light, public confidence in nonprofits will continue to wane. The central premise of the book is that nonprofits can, in fact, bolster public confidence through their own capacity-building efforts.

In Chapter 1, Light outlines a series of problems and issues the nonprofit sector faces, including a series of scandals and investigations; scrutiny by the media, watchdog groups, and Congress; increasing public wants and needs; sluggish giving; and an erosion of public confidence in how nonprofits are doing the work that is expected of them. Chapter 2 presents the basic logic upon which the book is based. Greater nonprofit capacity will lead to enhanced organizational effectiveness which, in turn, will lead to increased public confidence and, ultimately, to increased public giving. A survey of nonprofit employees is used to provide evidence for the link between capacity and effectiveness and a survey of the American public is used to provide evidence for the link between nonprofit effectiveness and public