

BOOK REVIEWS

Women's Science: Learning and Succeeding from the Margin. Margaret A. Eisenhardt and Elizabeth Finkel. 1998. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL. 272 p. \$15.00 paper.

What is science? And what do scientists do? How do women scientists do science different than men scientists? This appears to be the underlying concept of this book. Eisenhardt, an education and anthropology professor, and Finkel, a science teacher in a public school, along with three friends started to explore this concept of women scientists, their struggles, networking, and placement as professionals.

The book has an introduction and nine chapters divided into three parts. The first part deals with what they call "The Gendered Landscape," part two is "Practice on the Margins," and part three is "Discourses and Struggles." This format makes the book a possible text for a women's studies course or an intellectual read for fun.

The authors begin the book by trying to describe the forces that encourage or discourage girls from pursuing scientific studies. They seem to feel that a strong network and mentor system are the strongest of positive reinforcers for success. They report that women often change their mind about pursuing studies in science and "succumb" to more social circumstances such as relationships, marriage, and family. This is almost seen as a lack of success. The authors contend that women seek out more flexible programs and occupations so that they can fulfill these other obligations.

The authors seem to define success for women as "acting like male professionals" or working long hours, taking on difficult assignments, and sacrificing other activities in order to accomplish the job. This should not be seen as a gender issue, but as a professional issue. The authors also tend to believe that all science is the same, not making allowances that engineering is vitally different from biology, and genetics from physics. One observation reported is that girls are not often electing to take physics in high school, so how could they take sciences in college?

The book struggles with a lot of jargon and anecdotal evidence, trying to prove a point. The point one must glean is that women are still on the margins of elite

science establishments. What the authors fail to see is that there are women at those elite centers. They are doing good work. There are only a few superior men scientists at those centers. They are also doing good work. The fact that women are not all employed in great research facilities, with endless resources, pales when one remembers that Marie Curie worked in a barn with her own money, or that Einstein was a clerk when he first published his theories. Just because a woman is a scientist does not automatically give her an elite status.

This book is good in one major aspect. It made me think. I had to go back and review some facts. The top ten universities in the United States that produced the most doctoral dissertations in nutrition sciences all reported more women than men doctoral students during 1986 to 1995 (Keller and others 1999). All schools in the state of Ohio reported more women than men in the medical field of nursing. All of the medical colleges in the state of Ohio reported higher acceptance and completion rates of women doctors in the last years than ever before. Are these not scientists? Are the women (and men) who have completed doctoral studies in nutrition not going to practice science? Yes, of course they are. Perhaps the authors of this text should have broadened their view of science before pronouncing the majority of women scientists as "scientists on the margins." A better view of science and what scientists do would have made a fresher and more unique book.

The sad truth, not well described in the book, is that women scientists still do not receive equal pay with their male counterparts. This fact is almost lost by the sheer weight of useless verbiage and whining. The authors also felt that networking and monitoring from senior women to younger women was essential, and would be gladly given and received. Sadly, I have found that women administrators and women senior scientists do not automatically give mentorship nor adjust salaries, even when warranted.

LITERATURE CITED

Keller HH, Ostby T, Edwards HG, Johnston C. 1999. A decade of doctoral research in nutrition. *J Amer Dietetic Assoc* 99(9):1065-71.

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