

## Book Reviews

**Williams, Christine L.** *Still a Man's World: Men Who Do "Women's" Work*. Berkeley: University of California Pr., 1995. 243p. \$40 cloth (ISBN 0-520-08786-0), \$15 paper (ISBN 0-520-08787-9).

What do librarianship, social work, nursing, and elementary school teaching have in common? All are "female professions," where men constitute less than one-third the work force and are viewed as having made "unconventional career choices." Based on interviews with seventy-six men and twenty-three women divided among these four professions, Williams explores whether the presence of men in these women's fields helps achieve gender neutrality in the workplace. She concludes that women may be worse off in these professions than in "men's" professions, such as law.

Williams's feminist inquiry focuses on the role of men "in overall pattern of discrimination against women." She asks, "Why is gender a liability for women and an asset for men?" "What are the mechanisms that propel men to more successful careers," even in these female-dominated fields where one might think women could have a gender-based advantage?

Williams finds gender "embedded" in jobs in such a way that males almost always benefit—getting the highest-paying, most interesting, and most powerful positions. In librarianship, these are in administration and automation, or in traditional library jobs such as reference when there are enough men to make the function seem not feminine. Men rise by the "glass escalator" to assume these "masculine" roles, helped by the fact that they make more hiring decisions than women. Williams argues that job descriptions, far from being gender-neutral, contain societal expectations about the personality types best suited to them, and societal ide-

als of masculinity automatically cast men in certain jobs.

Williams traces briefly the "rise and fall" of these four "women's" professions. They expanded and became almost exclusively female from the late 19th century until about 1930. Women were perceived as innately domestic, maternal, quiet and orderly, nurturing, caring, and gracious—qualities society held as essential to these professions. To this day, although attitudes about women have changed, these women's professions remain tainted as inappropriate for "masculine" men. Williams documents how men in these professions have to rationalize that they are masculine despite their career choice. Many men face a societal preconception that choosing these professions means they are gay, which can lead them to "do gender" by bonding with other men and acting "masculine." Conversely, women in men's professions strive to behave like men.

Beginning about 1930, men were recruited into these professions in order to "professionalize" them—gain higher salaries and more societal respect. As men entered these fields, more administrative and supervisory roles were developed, and men tended to fill these dominant positions. Equal-pay-for-equal-work arguments resulted less in women being advanced than in "job segregation," with women concentrated in nonmasculine jobs receiving lower pay.

One of Williams's most astute insights is that men and women as gender minorities in the workplace are not treated equally. Men, composing less than fifteen percent of these four female-dominated professions, do not suffer marginalization, mockery, and ostracism from women as do women from men in men's fields. Women usually welcome men doing



"women's work." High visibility for men often results in favoritism, especially from male professors or administrators. Men's opinions are acknowledged and lead to advancement in ways that women's opinions proffered in men's professions would be ignored or seen as unduly aggressive.

To explain these phenomena, Williams turns to feminist psychoanalytic theory. Society defines masculinity as being superior to women, more powerful, phallic. Men, on the whole, are driven to do this by the conflicts and ambivalence entailed in breaking from their mothers and assuming male roles in a society where men are not nurturing. Williams espouses R. W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity to explain men's compulsion to assert their difference from, and superiority to, women by often participating in the currently socially dominant ideal of masculinity (at present "physical strength and bravado, exclusive heterosexuality, stoicism, authority, and independence"). Thus, labor is always divided by gender to men's advantage. Williams quotes from interviews with men working in women's professions to illustrate her thesis. Although she found a few men exhibiting "alternative masculinities," she found no reformist "gender renegades." This chapter was often irritating for its failure to perceive the full array of motivations individual men have for pursuing careers in women's professions, as Williams's theories led her to read into interviews the desire for men to assert masculinity.

Williams concludes by cautioning that increasing the presence of men in female professions is likely to worsen discrimination against women in these fields. Before workplace equality can occur, society must cease devaluing female qualities (e.g., emotional expressiveness and empathy) in the workplace and must see them as valued job skills on a footing equal to masculine qualities. The organizational arrangements that give men privilege must be transformed, and the

psychological incentives that impel men to strive for differentiation and dominance over women must cease. Believing it will be easier for women than men to change, Williams sees positive social change and the goal of gender neutrality as more likely to occur if women infiltrate male professions.

This is a provocative and timely book, particularly in the present climate of threatened affirmative action. Williams points to academic librarianship as one field in which women may have gained leadership clout thanks largely to affirmative action. She challenges us to notice the often insidious influence of gender in job content, workplace behavior, and hiring/promotion decisions. It is unfortunate that she does not distinguish among different types of librarians, often generalizing based on school, public, or academic librarians as if they were identical. The applicability of her research to librarianship would be enhanced with a sample larger than the twenty-nine librarians interviewed and if she paid greater heed to the individual gender orientation of her interviewees. Recent theories of masculinity and femininity evolved by gay, lesbian, and other gender-focused minorities seem to have eluded Williams's attention. One wonders, too, whether Williams's theories would hold up in such new female-dominated professions as paralegalism, which postdates the Victorian era. Although meriting further inquiry, Williams's thoughts and conclusions stand up as challenging, highly readable, never dull, and worthy of debate.—Joseph W. Barker, *University of California, Berkeley*.

**Gibbons, Michael, Camille Limoges, Helga Nowotny, Simon Schwartzman, Peter Scott, and Martin Trow.** *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage, 1994. 179p. \$21.95, paper. (ISBN 0-8039-7794-8).