



The Science on Women and Science

Christina Hoff Sommers

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Women have achieved or exceeded parity with men in most academic fields but continue to be outnumbered in the physical sciences, engineering, and math. For many equity activists, this imbalance constitutes a serious problem, even a "crisis," necessitating federal oversight to prevent gender bias in higher education and scientific industries. Congress, the Obama administration, and many science and education leaders are considering dramatic measures to improve women's prospects in the sciences. But what if claims of gender bias have been exaggerated?

In 2007, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) released *Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Promise of Women in Academic Science and Engineering*, an influential study suggesting that women face a hostile environment in the laboratory. The NAS report dismissed the possibility that gender disparities in scientific fields might be attributable to biological differences and called for immediate remedial action in education, government, and business. This volume examines the research behind the NAS's claims and presents a more balanced analysis of the gender gap.

Scientific research on the relationship between gender and vocation is complex, vibrant, and full of reasonable disagreements. Some scholars agree that discrimination is the best explanation for the current configuration of men and women in science, but others, perhaps a majority, suggest that biology and considered preference explain why men and women follow different career paths. *The Science on Women and Science* is a lively, readable, and balanced collection of articles by distinguished scholars from sides of an often-contentious debate.

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