

Portland State University

PDXScholar

Systems Science Friday Noon Seminar Series

Systems Science

11-12-2010

Gender and the Social Structure of Collaboration

Kjersten Bunker Whittington
Reed College

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/systems_science_seminar_series



Part of the [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), [Science and Technology Policy Commons](#), and the [Technology and Innovation Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Whittington, Kjersten Bunker, "Gender and the Social Structure of Collaboration" (2010). *Systems Science Friday Noon Seminar Series*. 23.

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/systems_science_seminar_series/23

This Book is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Systems Science Friday Noon Seminar Series by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.



Gender and the Social Structure of Collaboration

Kjersten Bunker Whittington

Reed College

whittington@reed.edu

PSU Systems Science Seminar

November 2010

Focal Issues

- Broadly: Public Science, Private Science
- Science as an institution exists in the face of great gender inequality
- Intersection of gender and commercial science relatively unaddressed.

- **Academic-Commercial Pipeline** professional structure in academia and industry:
Patenting → Licensing → Industry Consulting →
Involvement with a Company → Firm Founding

Distribution of Scientific Clusters
Main Component, Boston Inventors
1976-2002

Color Legend

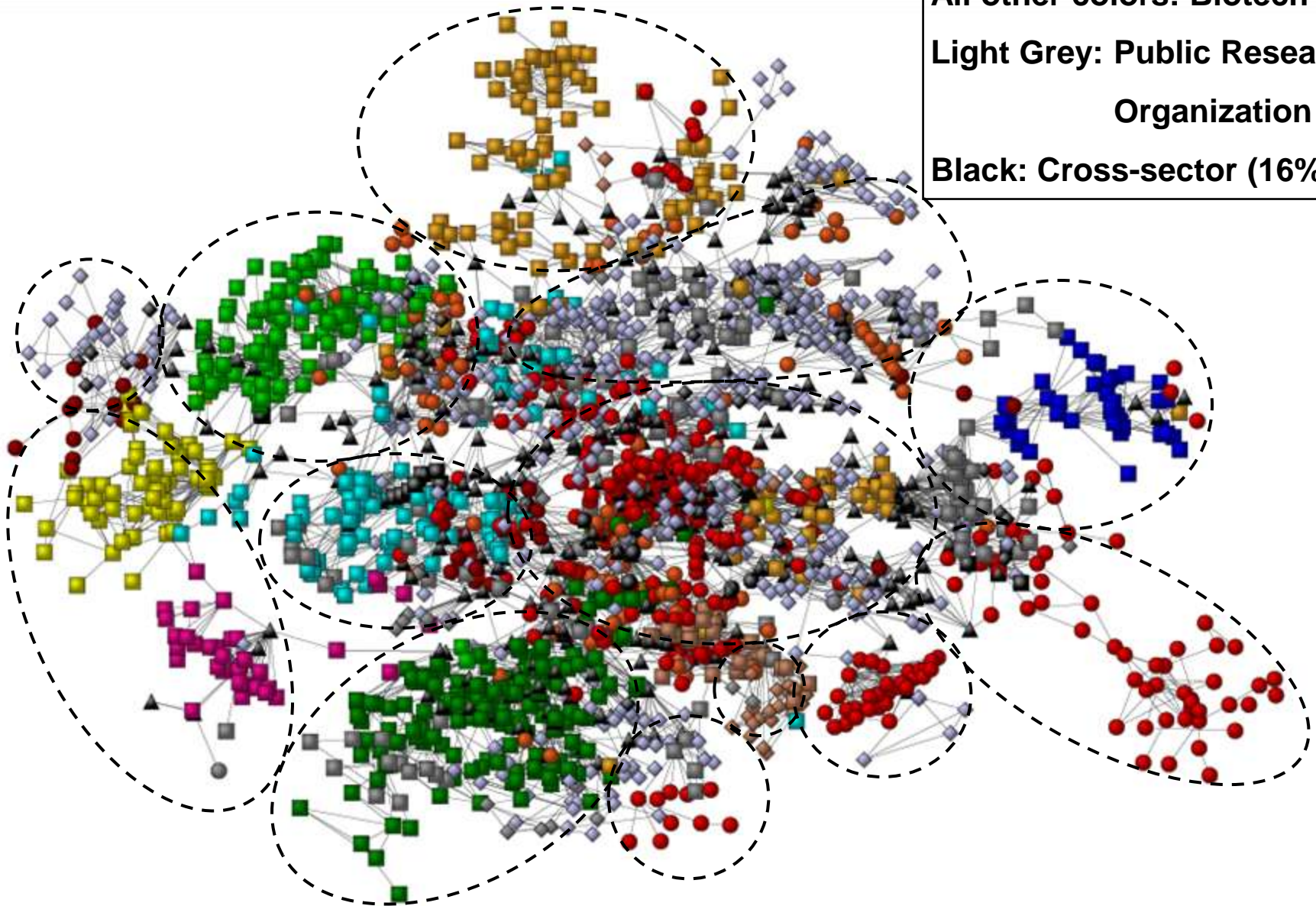
Reds: University (21%)

All other colors: Biotech (38%)

Light Grey: Public Research

Organization (26%)

Black: Cross-sector (16%)



Distribution of Male and Female Scientists Main Component, Boston Inventors 1976-2002

Node Color

Blue: Male (69%)

Magenta: Female (18%)

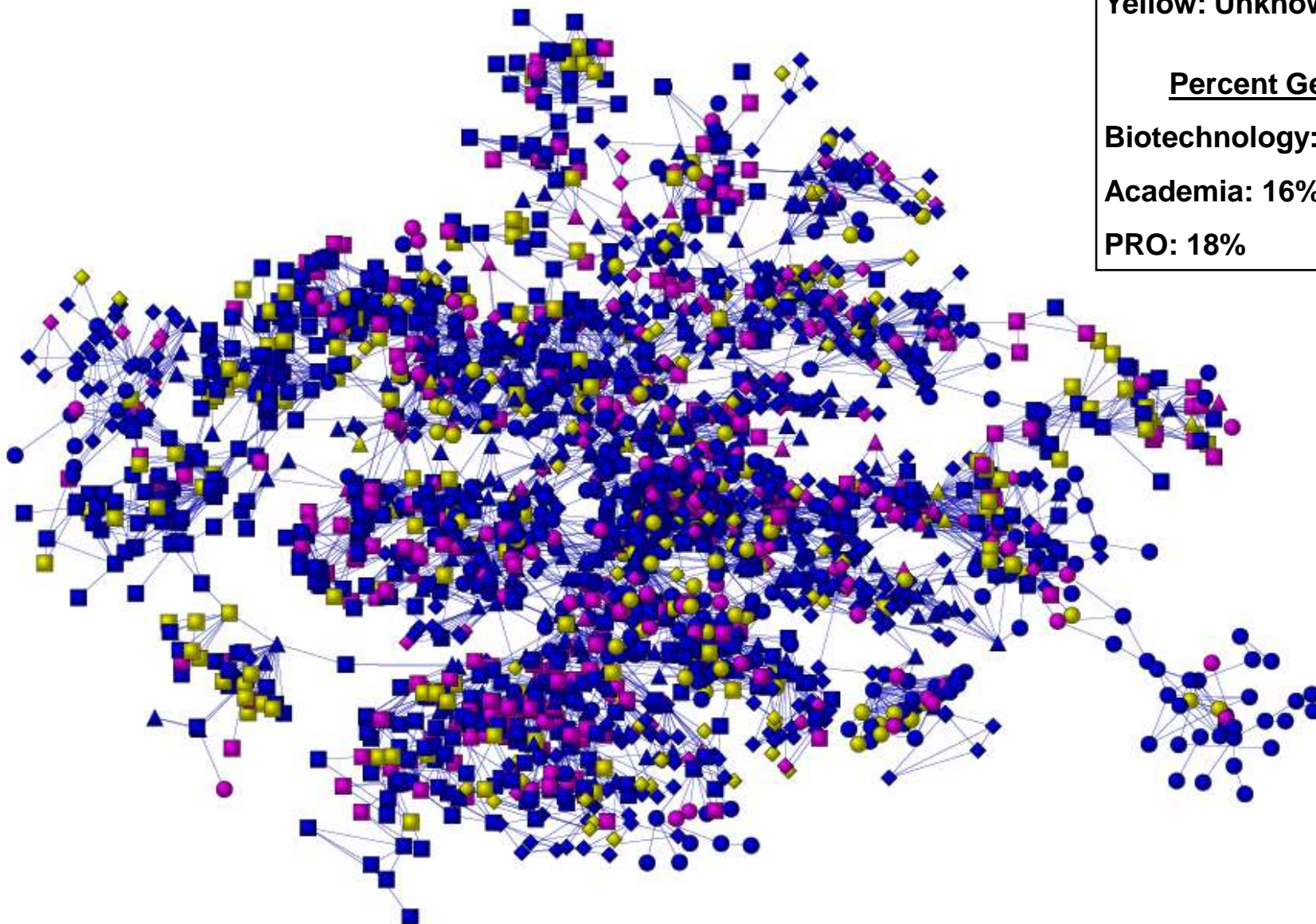
Yellow: Unknown (13%)

Percent Gender:

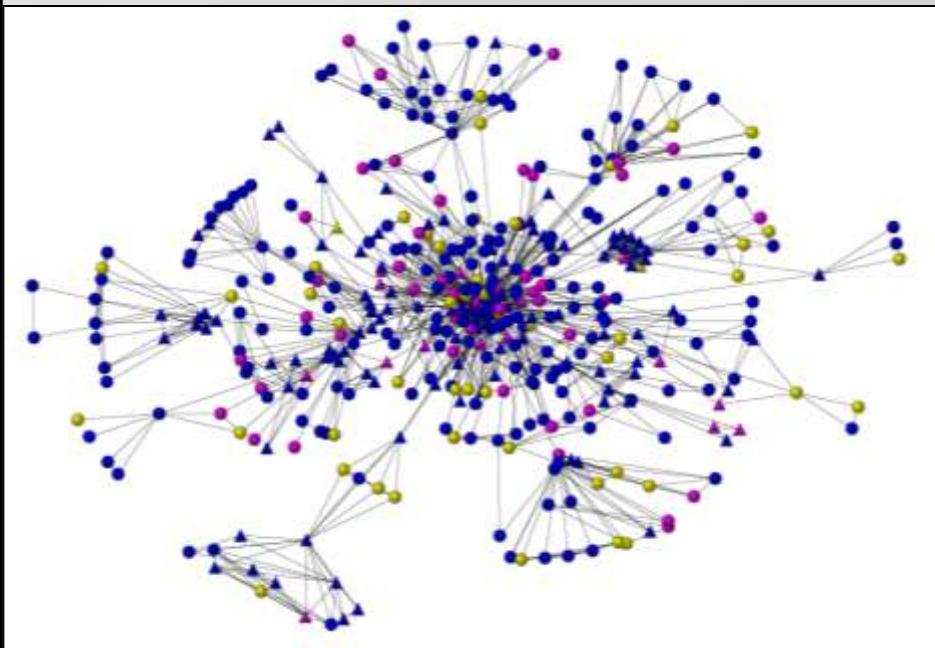
Biotechnology: 21%

Academia: 16%

PRO: 18%



The social structure of academia and industry



Academic Science

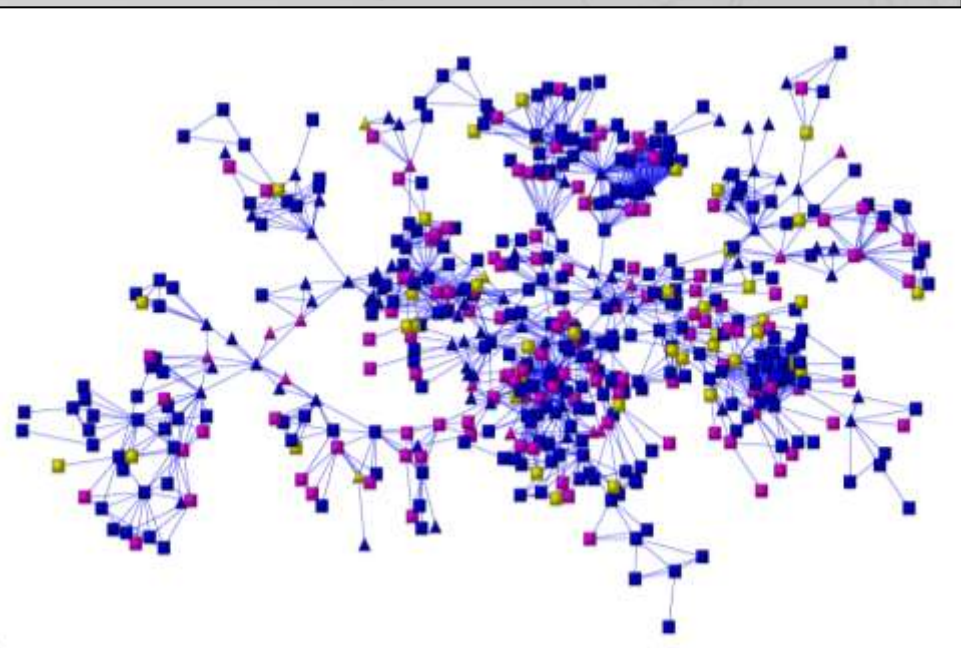
Largest Academic Component (all years)

Male (Blue) = 73%

Female (Magenta) = 14%

Unknown (Yellow) = 12%

Overall Centralization (0-1 range): .28



Industrial Science

Largest Industry Component (all years)

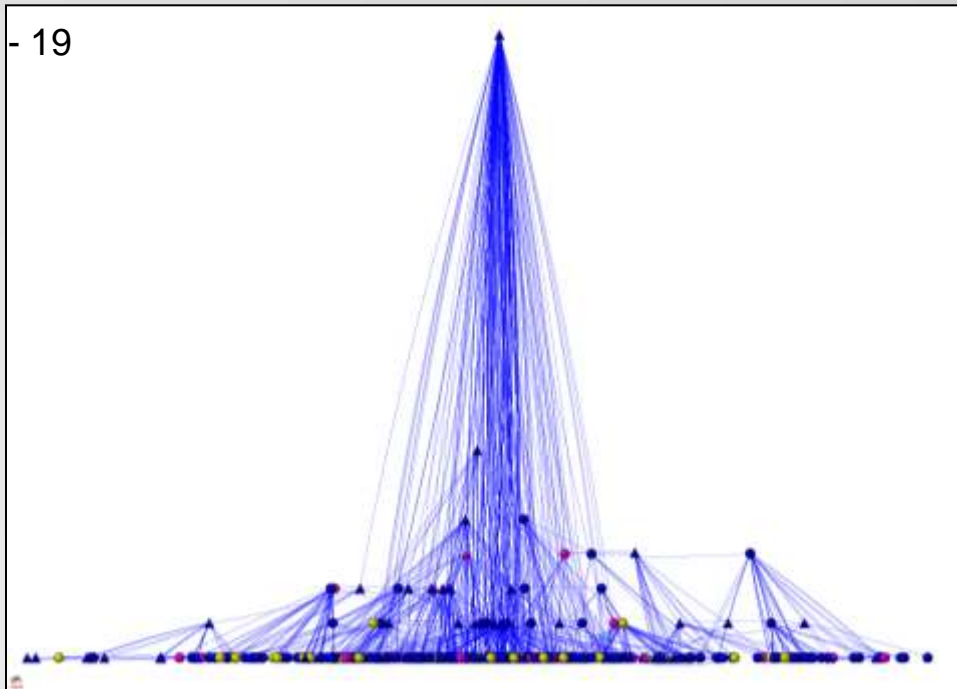
Male (Blue) = 66%

Female (Magenta) = 25%

Unknown (Yellow) = 8%

Overall Centralization (0-1 range): 0.07

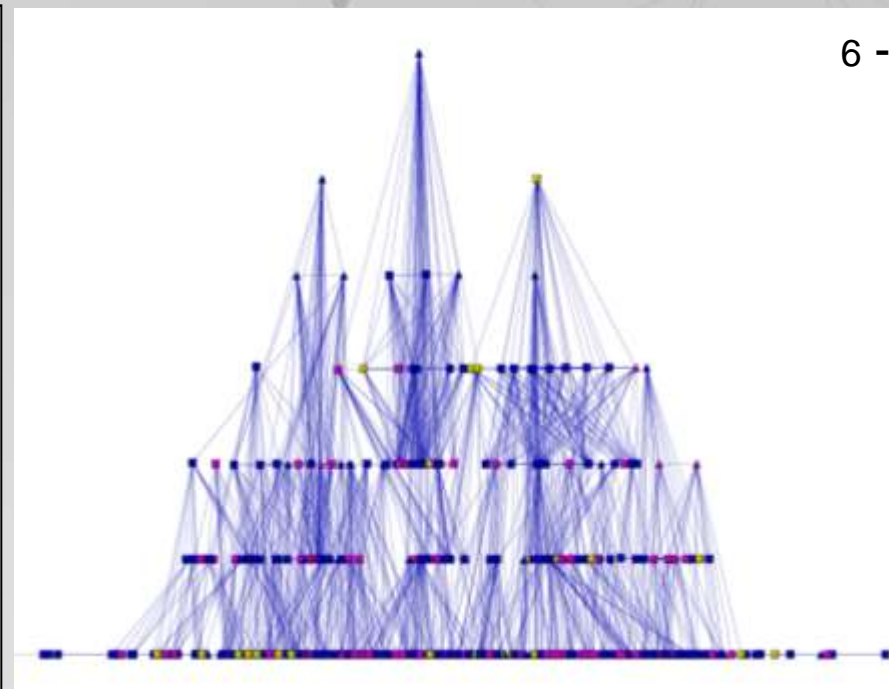
These same networks inverted hierarchically:



Academic Science

Degree Distribution
Largest Academic Component

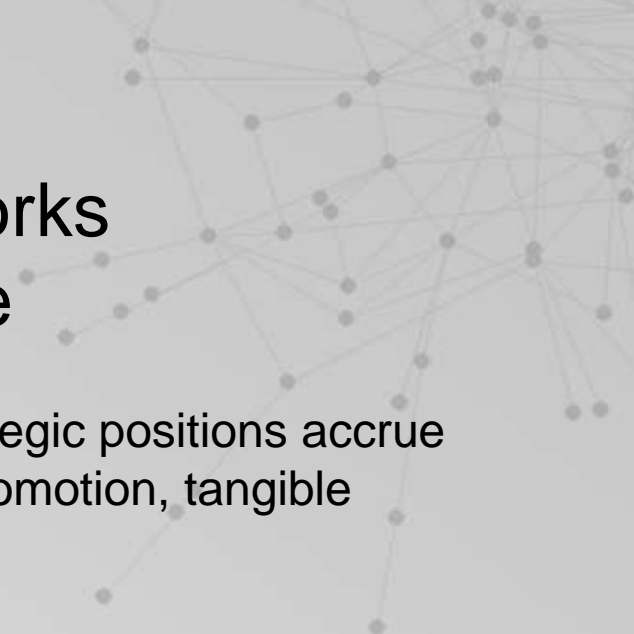
Bottom Level (avg.): 5.25
Subsequent Levels (std. dev): 6.93
Overall Centralization (0-1 range): .28



Industrial Science

Degree Distribution
Largest Industry Component

Bottom Level (avg): 6.45
Subsequent Levels (std. dev): 5.31
Overall Centralization (0-1 range): 0.07



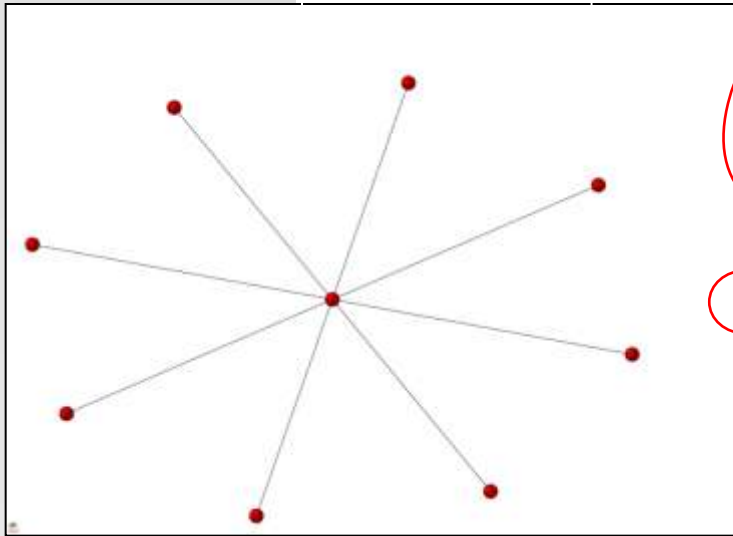
The Importance of Networks and Network Structure

- Those situated in particularly central or strategic positions accrue benefits from these positions, be they for promotion, tangible outcomes, likelihood of retention, etc.
- Positioning in surrounding social structure influences the extent of output and performance. At the level of:
 - **Scientists**
 - Science **Organizations**
 - Science and Technology **Regions**

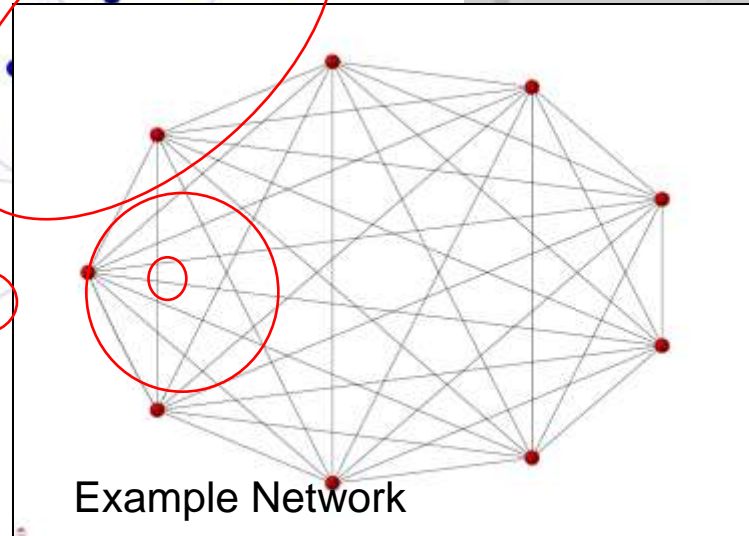
Collaboration Network Mechanics

Male: Blue
Female: Magenta
Unknown: Yellow

Examples of Network Structure



High Centralization: 1



Example Network

Example Network
Low Centralization: 0


Network Analysis Can Reveal:

- Differences among individual positions
- Overarching structure of collaboration

Networks and Gender

- Situation of underrepresented groups may complicate taken for granted network relationships – status, legitimacy, and marginality influence the flow of information and resources.
- Both structural and status mechanisms are speculated to play a role in defining where women are located in work and productivity networks.
- The need for “borrowed social capital” may be a need for women in workplaces where issues of status and legitimacy are prevalent (Burt).

Gender, Networks, and Work Setting



- The necessary connections needed to establish successful innovative outputs may vary for women by location in academia or industry.
- In industry (specifically in horizontally organized firms) collective work environments may result in women assuming more central collaborative locations than in academic settings.
- Those with decreased access or exposure to potential collaborators may benefit more from dense ties than sparse ones.
 - Academic women may see more innovative return from network positions that foster close ties than those high in brokerage opportunities.
 - DBF women (and men) may see return from brokerage opportunities.

Data

I construct patenting collaboration networks of life science inventors in the Boston region.

- Global population, 1976-2005.
- Total N = 215,639, Total(Boston) = 6,988
- Scientific Affiliations:
 - 5% Dedicated biotechnology firms (DBF)
 - 12% University
 - 5% Public research organizations (PRO)
 - 67% Pharmaceutical firms
 - 4% Other biotechnology firms
 - 7% Multiple firm-type inventors
- 21% Female

Measures and Methodology

A decorative background graphic in the top right corner consisting of a network graph with numerous nodes and connecting lines, rendered in a light gray color.

Individual Fixed Effects Models, 1980-2000 (inventor-years)

Dependent Variable: Patenting involvement (0/1, Logit)
Patenting productivity (Count, NBCM)

Independent Variables: Degree centrality, normalized
Brokerage (0/1)

Control Variables: Betweenness centrality, normalized
Main component membership (yearly)
Current patenting activity

Directions of Network Effects on Increasing Centrality Measures

Centrality Measure	Involvement in Patenting or Number of Patents			
	Academic Men	Academic Women	Firm Men	Firm Women
Degree Centrality	+	+	+	+*
Brokerage Role (at least one instance)	+		+	+
Betweenness Centrality (normalized)	+			
Main Component				

Notes: Signs indicate statistically significant coefficients ($p < .05$). Models control for previous patent activity and individual fixed effects.

Blank cells indicate neither a positive or negative effect of the measure on patenting.

* Coefficient not significant in models predicting involvement in patenting.

Implications and Conclusion

- Patenting as a non-required activity in the academy may also be influencing women's involvement in patenting.
- Lack of influence for various network measures may suggest that other types of ties and linkages may be more salient for women.
- The models suggest that organizational form mediates the effects of centrality for women.
- Underrepresented groups may be more constrained in conditions of hierarchy versus more horizontal arrangements.