

WOMEN AND WORK

An Annual Review

volume 3

EDITORS

**Barbara A. Gutek
Ann H. Stromberg
Laurie Larwood**

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Women and Work: An Annual Review

The Sage series **Women and Work: An Annual Review** brings together research, critical analysis, and proposals for change in a dynamic and developing field—the world of women and work. Cutting across traditional academic boundaries, the series approaches subjects from a multidisciplinary perspective. Historians, anthropologists, economists, sociologists, managers, psychologists, educators, policymakers, and legal scholars share insights and findings—giving readers access to a scattered literature in a single comprehensive yearly volume.

Women and Work will examine differences among women—as well as differences between men and women—related to nationality, ethnicity, social class, and sexual preference. The series will explore demographic and legal trends, international and multinational comparisons, and theoretical and methodological developments.

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SAGE Publications Inc.
275 South Beverly Drive
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CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	7
Series Editors' Introduction	
<i>Barbara A. Gutek, Ann H. Stromberg, and Laurie Larwood</i>	9

SYMPOSIUM: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE— WIDENING OUR HORIZONS

1. Women in the Global Economy	
<i>Kathryn B. Ward</i>	17
2. Economic Restructuring in the United States: Hispanic Women in the Garment and Electronics Industries	
<i>María Patricia Fernández Kelly and Anna M. García</i>	49
3. The Mobilization of Women in the Bolivian Debt Crisis	
<i>June Nash</i>	67
4. The Interaction of Women's Work and Family Roles in the U.S.S.R.	
<i>Gail Warshofsky Lapidus</i>	87
5. The Effect of Sex Composition of the Workplace on Friendship, Romance, and Sex at Work	
<i>Elina Haavio-Mannila, Kaisa Kauppinen-Toropainen, and Irja Kandolin</i>	123
6. Stress in Dual-Earner Families	
<i>Suzan N.C. Lewis and Cary L. Cooper</i>	139

7.	Women's Work Experience and the "Rusty Skills" Hypothesis: A Reconceptualization and Reevaluation of the Evidence	
	<i>Patricia A. Gwartney-Gibbs</i>	169
8.	Women's Relationships with Women in the Workplace	
	<i>Virginia E. O'Leary</i>	189
9.	Trade Union Stewards: Handling Union, Family, and Employment Responsibilities	
	<i>Pamela Roby and Lynet Uttal</i>	215
10.	Women's and Men's Commitment to Paid Work and Family: Theories, Models, and Hypotheses	
	<i>Denise D. Bielby and William T. Bielby</i>	249
11.	When Discrimination Makes "Sense": The Rational Bias Theory	
	<i>Laurie Larwood, Eugene Szwajkowski, and Suzanna Rose</i>	265
	<i>About the Authors</i>	289

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At this time, we particularly remember Eleanor Leacock, founding member of our Editorial Board, who died as we were preparing this volume.

SERIES EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

This is the third volume of *Women and Work: An Annual Review*, a series that brings together research, critical analyses, and review articles on the topic of working women. Based on the concept that a publication should be available to bring together research from all the disciplines that study women and work, the *Annual* is interdisciplinary in nature and intent. The purposes of the series are to spotlight the importance and variety of women's paid and unpaid work in our society and in other societies, to stimulate further research on women and work, and to provide a forum to which historians, anthropologists, economists, sociologists, psychologists, and management, educational, policy, and legal researchers, among others, can contribute.

Some research topics—such as women and work—are so wide ranging that they are not the exclusive province of any one discipline. Researchers studying multidisciplinary topics such as women and work often advance knowledge most when they intentionally cross traditionally distinct disciplinary boundaries. However, most scholars usually have a difficult time just keeping up with journals in their own fields, much less journals from other disciplines that might have occasional articles of relevance to them. *Women and Work* was created to overcome this problem, by bringing together important concepts, findings, and paradigms from the many disciplines engaged in the study of women and work. In this way, we hope to help to develop the field of women and work and to replace myths about working women and women's work with realities.

As with the first two volumes, each chapter in Volume 3 was invited and then reviewed by two members of the editorial board (one person within the author's discipline and one outside) as well as by the three series editors. The purpose of having reviewers from both the author's discipline and outside the author's discipline is to ensure that the articles are both current and accurate within the author's discipline and intelligible and accessible to readers outside the author's discipline.

In each volume of *Women and Work*, we present a symposium on a timely topic regarding women and work, generally by authors from several disciplines and, in some cases, with different points of view. This volume features a six-chapter symposium called "An International Perspective: Widening Our Horizons."

SYMPOSIUM: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In the United States some of the disciplines that study women and work, such as anthropology, have always transcended national borders; others have generally limited their study to women in this country. Further, sometimes because of the legitimate domain of the discipline (for example, management researchers tend to focus on women in U.S. management) and sometimes because of bias, researchers have particularly advanced our knowledge of women's employment in the United States with regard to elite professional and executive women. This trend toward focusing a disproportionate share of the research on a small proportion of employed women has been noted by many authors (see Stromberg & Harkess, 1988).

While research in the United States has proceeded rapidly in many areas concerning women and work, researchers in many disciplines in this country tend to be uninformed about theory and research carried out by scholars in other countries. Many European journals routinely publish in English in an effort to reach English-speaking researchers who are unlikely to notice work written in another language. Some European researchers have expressed disappointment that scholars in the United States still do not read or cite their research, even when it is in English. An international perspective is likely to reduce the isolation of our scholarship and to result in more collaborative and better-informed endeavors.

Somewhat belatedly, the various social sciences have discovered that the world is shrinking psychologically and that global economic interdependence is a reality. The situation in other countries has an effect on the United States as well as vice versa. In recognition of these trends, several of the social science disciplines have recently adopted international themes. For example, in 1987 the Academy of Management had as its theme an international perspective, and in 1988 the American Psychological Association has psychology in developing countries as its focus. The area of women and work, too, is affected by global interdependence. The kinds of jobs that women in the United States today get and reject depend in part on the paid and unpaid work of women in other countries. As manufacturing is increasingly a global process, with components made throughout the world, products are assembled in some distant location or in multiple locations to be shipped to various parts of the world. The labor of women and men in many countries and organizations is likely to have gone into the appliances used in your home, for example.

Similarly, national and corporate policies and regulations often take on an international perspective as multinational companies are introduced into host countries. For example, policies on maternity leave or sexual harassment, which may differ dramatically from location to location and are nonexistent in many parts of the world, can be introduced through multinational organizations.

Volume 3 of *Women and Work: An Annual Review* focuses on the global perspective on working women in order to call attention to the interdependence

of working women throughout the world as well as to highlight similarities and differences in women's employment across countries. In putting together a symposium, we might have chosen a tightly knit set of articles representing one particular international perspective. We opted instead for a smorgasbord of articles in an attempt to "broaden our horizons." The six chapters in the symposium represent three ways in which we attempted to broaden our horizons. Three of them represent the growing research on comparative international development or the global economy. Researchers using the perspective of the global economy study economic interdependencies among countries as well as the effects of such interdependencies on various countries and within them, for example, on women. (For researchers who are unfamiliar with this field and wish to know more, there are several excellent volumes available; (see, for example, Beneria & Rolden, 1987; Nash & Fernández Kelly, 1983; Portes & Walton, 1981). One chapter on the global economy (Ward) represents an overview and the author's view of the field, and two other articles (Fernández Kelly and García; Nash) consist of specific research findings in the field. Fernández Kelly and García examine the effect of the global economy on Hispanic women's employment in Southern California, while Nash examines the effect of the global economy on women in Bolivia. A second type of chapter in the symposium is a specific analysis of working women in another culture from the perspective of an American researcher (Lapidus). The third type of chapter in the symposium represents the research of scholars outside the United States (Haavio-Mannila, Kauppinen-Toropainen, and Kandolin; Lewis and Cooper).

The first chapter in the symposium, "Women in the Global Economy," by Kathryn Ward, a sociologist, presents a provocative overview of the changes in paid labor brought about by a global economy, especially as it affects women in Third World countries. Ward argues that women's economic status has stagnated due to underdevelopment in Third World countries. She contends that women tend to be relegated to subsistence agriculture, transient employment by transnational companies, or jobs in the informal economy. According to Ward, capitalism, combined with patriarchy, accounts for differing effects of the global economy on men and women.

The next two chapters in the symposium detail particular situations of women and work. Anthropologists María Patricia Fernández Kelly and Anna M. García focus on the effect of the global economy on Hispanic women in the United States. They demonstrate that global economic and political processes affect employees in advanced industrial nations as well as Third World workers. More specifically, they examine two industries in Southern California, the garment industry and electronics, both of which employ many Hispanic women. Women are affected similarly by industrial restructuring in both industries in that they have similar hiring practices and wage levels, and both rely on various modes of subcontracting. Especially in the garment industry, however, more women are becoming small-scale entrepreneurs. There may be distinct advan-

tages both for the companies where the women formerly worked and for the women entrepreneurs. Still, these women also tend to "live perilously on the edge of bankruptcy."

In her chapter, "The Mobilization of Women in the Bolivian Debt Crisis," June Nash provides another example of research on the way the global economy affects women's paid and unpaid work. The response of Latin American countries to the current debt crisis is affected by the policies of international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund, policies that in turn affect all aspects of life in the debtor countries. Nash illustrates the impacts of the debt on women and women's work in Bolivia. She focuses on women's strategies for economic survival in three regions of Bolivia: a mining area, an agricultural and trucking center, and an agrobusiness area.

In her chapter, political scientist Gail Lapidus focuses on one country, the Soviet Union. She examines the interaction of women's work and family roles in the U.S.S.R. Unlike the United States, the Soviet Union has specific policies about women's employment. Women are well integrated into the labor force and in fact constitute the majority (51%) of it. Yet there are problems. Occupations in the Soviet Union, as in most other countries, tend to be sex segregated, with women clustered into lower-paying and lower-prestige jobs. Work and family linkages are also problematic because, despite the widespread availability of child-care facilities in the Soviet Union, women shoulder the responsibility for maintaining household and family. Western policymakers and researchers have much to learn from the way the Soviet people grapple with these issues and from the reasons they have not been able to solve the problems faced by Soviet working women.

Finnish researchers Elina Haavio-Mannila, Kaisa Kauppinen-Toropainen, and Irja Kandolin report on their ongoing research on friendship, romance, and sex at work in the next chapter in the symposium. Finland is another country in which most women spend a significant portion of their adult lives in the labor force (Kauppinen-Toropainen, Haavio-Mannila, & Kandolin, 1984). Haavio-Mannila and her colleagues examine the extent to which the workplace contributes to cross-sex friendships, romance, and sexual harassment. They are particularly interested in the effect of sex composition of the work environment on friendship, romance, and sexual harassment because jobs in Finland, as in most other countries, are generally sex segregated. Are women's experiences different when they are in nontraditional jobs in which most of the other workers are men versus traditionally female jobs, in which women predominate?

The last chapter in the symposium is by two researchers in England, Suzan N.C. Lewis and Gary L. Cooper. They review the literature on stress in dual-earner couples. Their survey covers the range of English-speaking journals, and, although they rely heavily on U.S. data, they also include a section on the situation in the United Kingdom. Lewis and Cooper discuss sources of stress in dual-earner couples as well as the impact of stressors on their well-being. They accord a central role to sex-role ideology and conclude that the potential for

stress in dual-earner couples is largely the product of internalized and institutionalized sex-role expectations. They also find that despite the intrusion of stress-producing sex-role expectations and, at least in the United Kingdom, policies based on stereotypical views of maternal responsibility, most couples cope well and are quite satisfied with their lifestyles. Not surprisingly, they find differences between husbands and wives, with women more likely than men to experience guilt and conflict between parental and work roles and men more likely than women to experience discomfort when their "major provider" role is threatened by their wives' success at work.

Together the six chapters in the symposium are intended to sensitize women and work scholars to the variety of experiences of women workers and the variety of research currently under way. Our aim in featuring a symposium on an international perspective is to widen our horizons.

CHAPTERS ON SELECTED TOPICS REGARDING WOMEN AND WORK

In addition to the symposium, Volume 3 of *Women and Work* features five chapters about women and work on other selected topics: a chapter examining the hypothesis that women's relatively low wages are due to their intermittent employment history (Gwartney-Gibbs); a review of the literature on women's relationships with women in the workplace (O'Leary); an examination of the way women union stewards manage job and family responsibilities (Roby and Uttal); an examination of the development of commitment to work and family domains (Bielby and Bielby); and an explanation and test of a rational bias theory of discrimination in organizations (Larwood, Szwajkowski, and Rose). Two of the chapters in the symposium (Lapidus; Lewis and Cooper) and another two covering selected topics (Roby and Uttal; Bielby and Bielby) come under the broad topic of work and family. The prevalence of theory and research concerned with the interaction between work and family lends support to the contention that work-family linkages constitute a major research focus and a major issue for employed women, both in the United States and elsewhere.

In the first of the selected topics articles, sociologist Patricia A. Gwartney-Gibbs examines one common hypothesis frequently given for women's lower wages relative to men's: rusty skills. According to the rusty skills hypothesis, women's traditional household, childbearing, and child-care responsibilities lead to intermittency in employment; it is intermittency defined as "discontinuity of work experience" that accounts for women's lower wages. According to this argument, during the time a woman spends out of the labor force, her skills atrophy and thereby her human capital and subsequent earnings are lowered. Gwartney-Gibbs provides a careful analysis of the rusty skills hypothesis by disentangling several aspects of labor force discontinuity. She measures both characteristics of lifetime work experience (including duration with employers) and length of work experience (both time spent out of the labor force and

intermittency defined as multiple labor force entries or exits). Her results challenge the argument that employment discontinuity should result in lower earnings. In fact, she contends that intermittency is a rational strategy for maintaining skills, rather than a mechanism by which skills become rusty.

Psychologist Virginia O'Leary reviews a generally understudied topic in her chapter, "Women's Relationships with Women in the Workplace." Pulling together literature from psychology, sociology, and popular sources, O'Leary examines what we know about women working for and with women. Because there is relatively little field research on the topic, many of the findings are based on laboratory studies or anecdotal accounts. Combining these disparate literatures, O'Leary comes to conclusions that are contrary to popular stereotypes—that working *for* a woman is problematic and working *with* women is difficult. Instead, she finds generally positive relationships between women at work, whether those are vertical, boss-subordinate relationships, or horizontal, co-worker relationships. However, her review of the literature shows that generally people still prefer to work for a man rather than a woman, if they express a preference, and many people believe that women are not wholly accepted in business.

Whereas O'Leary reviews an understudied topic, Pamela Roby and Lynet Uttal examine an understudied population: working women who are trade union stewards. Much has been written about the role conflict and role overload faced by women who combine paid employment with spouse and mother roles. Women who are union stewards add yet another role to their repertoire. Roby and Uttal consider how women handle all these roles and find some interesting, but not unexpected, differences between men and women union stewards, for example, in the kind of support they get from their spouses for their steward work.

Denise Bielby and William Bielby also review an area related to work and family. They focus on the concept of commitment, noting that "how adults form and distribute subjective attachments" across work and family roles has received little theoretical or research attention. The popular, "commonsense" notion is that men are more strongly committed than women to work, whereas women are more strongly committed than men to family. Synthesizing extant literature, Bielby and Bielby identify three alternative researchable perspectives on the commitment process in order to account for the way individuals develop preferences for a particular balance of paid work and family activities.

The final chapter in this volume, by Laurie Larwood, Eugene Szwajkowski, and Suzanna Rose, addresses "rational" discrimination. The authors test Larwood's rational bias theory of discrimination. According to rational bias theory, discrimination is a consequence of managers making personnel decisions concerning subordinates based on their own self-interest rather than on the abilities or capabilities of the subordinates. The chapter reviews the theory and reports results from a program of research on the topic. In three separate studies, Larwood, Szwajkowski, and Rose find support for rational bias in organizations

and suggest that such bias helps to explain why discrimination in the workplace has proven difficult to eradicate.

—Barbara A. Gutek
Ann H. Stromberg
Laurie Larwood

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