Introduction

In a 1975 volume of the *American Sociological Review*, Treiman and Terrell (1975) reflect that the 1970's could be characterized as the time when research on women began in earnest in the academic community. They comment, "…just a few years ago, women were excluded from stratification studies on the grounds that their experiences were too complicated for analysis" (174). Thirty years later, research on women – and particularly women and work – has made considerable progress both in its quality and inclusion in mainstream sociological journals. While the research agenda on women in work is by no means exhausted, it is certainly substantial enough to warrant a retrospective of the field and propose some areas where the field has room for greater theorizing and empirical research.

The obvious difficulty of writing a literature review on a topic as broad as "women and work" is narrowing one's attention to a small enough slice of the body of research to create a meaningful "story" of the literature's progress and debates. For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to focus on primarily *organizational studies of women and work*, especially those that place emphasis on gender work effects related to structure, networks, and institutions of the workplace. The unifying element of these three concepts is the implications they have on policymaking for issues related to women in individual organizations and the workplace more generally. Much of the research on women and work possesses implicit or explicit policy recommendations to increase gender equality in work structures and processes. One can reasonably argue that the policy implications of research on women and work are one of its most useful features. The findings of these studies not only build on social theories of gender relations, they also lay the groundwork for social action and change, one of the goals of public

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intellectuals. Thus, the policy implications of the research included in this review are explicitly considered.

Methods and Data

Because the primary focus will be on those articles that are likely to have the greatest visibility and impact in the organizations sub-field of sociology, the review of the literature is limited primarily to research articles included in three top tier sociology and organizations journals: *American Sociological Review, The American Journal of Sociology, and Administrative Science Quarterly*. The titles and abstracts of all articles related to women and work were extracted from the JSTOR database between the years 1975 and 2004 and categorized into broad topic areas. Those articles specifically concerned with women's work as it pertained to organizational structures and/or processes were selected for deeper review. This selection process eliminated studies on issues such as sex role attitudes, fertility and employment, effects on marital divorce rates, retirement decisions, occupational choice in college, and macro-level wage difference studies.

Limiting the review to three top tier journals necessarily also excludes numerous innovative articles and books on women and work in organizational theory. However, since the focus of the review is to consider what substantive topics and explanations are most central in the sociology discipline – and theoretically in the policy realm as well – it makes sense to limit attention to the most influential journals in the field. The review covers those ideas that are "making the cut" into the top journals. Focusing on empirical studies investigating substantive problems for women in the workplace also results in less attention to *social theories* surrounding women and work, especially since no theoretically-centered journals were examined for this

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review. Rather less attention is also devoted to social psychological research related to women and organizations, although some of the studies in this area are referenced throughout the paper.

Another potential bias of the review is the methodology employed in the majority of the articles discussed. This literature review contains a disproportionate number of quantitative studies of women and work and organizational life. From one perspective, this bias could be viewed as problematic given the commonly heard argument that qualitative research methodologies have been thought to be "especially appropriate for study of gender issues and women's experiences and to be an effective strategy for correcting androcentric biases in construction of formal theory" (Grant, Ward, Rong 1987). However, in their examination of methodologies employed in ten sociological journals between 1974 and 1983, Grant, Ward, and Rong (1987) found that women were more likely to employ qualitative methods than men but gender studies increased the likelihood that the study used quantitative methods. The authors purport that researchers employing qualitative methods to gender issues display "double nonconformity" to the academy and are less likely to be published in mainstream journals. Despite some biases in this examination of research on women's work in organizational settings, the work discussed here nonetheless provides a good starting point to evaluate women and work studies related to organizational processes and structure.

Woman and Work Research: The Early Years

In 1975, there was little empirical work yet completed that addressed the gendered process of status attainment in the workplace (Treiman and Terrell 1975). The primary interest of status attainment research at this time was related to earnings differences between men and women. Treiman and Terrell (1975), for example, attempted to unpack the relationship between gender and earnings by comparing earnings of husbands and wives. They found that after

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controlling for hours worked, wives still earn less than half of what their husband's earn. The methodological problems with comparing wives earnings to husbands' wages seem obvious to researchers today, but at the time this article was written, there was a burgeoning interest in comparing husband and wives' participation and success in the occupational sphere. Some believed increased wage earnings for women would threaten the stability of the family, and research that investigated the effect of women's employment and earnings on divorce rates began to emerge (Oppenheimer 1977, Hannan, Tuma, and Groeneveld 1978, Huber and Spitze 1980).

Treiman and Terrell (1975) also showed that single women earn more than married women, another area of increasing interest as women entered the workforce. While this study's design and methodology seem simplistic and problematic given the research progress made in the sub-field of women in work over the past thirty years, it does signal a new interest in earnings and status inequality issues within the academy during the 1970's. This early study is also noteworthy for its data disaggregation between white and non-white women. One of the criticisms of research on women and work as well as the first wave of U.S. feminism is its lack of attention to gender differences across race. The Treiman and Terrell study points to sociologists' understanding of potential interaction effects between race and gender as early as the 1970's, and subsequent sociological research has continued to attend to this issue (Burstein 1979, Greenman forthcoming).

Many studies of occupational status attainment in the 1970s and early 1980s attempted to link occupational gender differences to variables exogenous to the organizational environment within which women were working: levels of education, returns to education by gender marriage, family background, and full or part-time work schedules to occupational differences

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between men and women, as well as married and unmarried women (Treiman and Terrell 1975, McClendon 1976, Rosenfeld 1978, Sewell, Hauser, and Wolf 1980). The social psychological research agenda did begin to focus on how individual characteristics could lead to discrimination inside the organization as well. Defining authority as "the legitimated control of over the work processes of others," Wolf and Fligstein (1979, 236) found that the attitude of employers is a more influential determinant of increased authority roles for women rather than the women's attitudes themselves.

Perhaps most importantly, however, the mid-1970s saw a shift from trying to explain inequality using individualistic accounts toward employing structural barrier models in inequality research. (Sorenson 1975, Burawoy 1977). This research created an opening and receptive audience for Kantor's (1977) models of tokenism.

<u>Kantor: The Influence of Structure and Tokenism</u>

It is undeniable that Rosabeth Moss Kantor's 1977 book *Men and Women of the Corporation* has had an indelible effect on gender (and race) research in work organizations. In fact, it is not much of an overstatement to suggest that Kantor's work is cited in virtually every article focusing on structural effects of work organization on women. Kantor devotes a significant amount of her book to the issue of *homophily* in work organizations, the propensity of the majority group to prefer to recruit and work with individuals similar to them. The preference for homophilic colleagues disadvantage women's career advancement in organizations where men constitute a large majority of managers and upper-level.

Furthermore, Kantor (1977b) argues that three features of organizational life place pressure on tokens who do reach these higher levels of the organizational hierarchy. Tokens are defined as any group of people that are in the minority in terms of a given ascribed characteristic,

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such as gender or race. Higher *visibility* of tokens makes their performance more noticeable and places pressure on them to perform well, *polarization* causes dominants in the organization to make special attempt to maintain group membership boundaries, and *assimilation pressures* force tokens into roles they may feel uncomfortable or unwilling to adopt.

A great deal of subsequent research has tested Kantor's propositions. Spangler, Gordon, and Pipkin (1978), for example, attempt to test Kantor's three-dimensional pressure model on token women in two law schools, one with skewed gender ratios and one with a tilted gender ratio. Their findings support Kantor's claim that women in the skewed organization felt visibility, polarization, and assimilation pressures more greatly than those in the tilted program. However, the two law schools were very different from one another in terms of prestige and student body composition. Despite efforts to control for these differences on the part of the authors, it seems possible their findings were spurious. Walker (1980) also criticizes the authors for running inappropriate statistical models for individual and aggregate-level data.

Data from the California savings and loan industry has also shown the presence of greater numbers of women in a particular job level increased the probability of a woman being hired or promoted to that same job level (Cohen, Broschak, and Haveman 1998). They also found women's hiring and promotion rates were higher when greater numbers of women were present in job levels below the level of interest and when numbers of women reached a threshold level at jobs above the occupation level of interest. The author's suggest that their findings support statistical discrimination theory (Bielby and Baron 1986) as well as Kantor's (1977) model of homophily, homosocial reproduction (Ibarra 1993) , and social networks (Granovetter 1985).

Kantor's token-group size hypotheses are not without empirical critics, however. In their study of men and women in the federal bureaucracy, South et al (1982) found evidence that

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counters Kantor's claim skewed groups create more pressure on tokens than tilted or balanced groups. Drawing on Blalock's (1956) theory of minority group size-inequality, which suggests larger minority are viewed as greater threats than small numbers of tokens, the authors found that as female representation increased in the organization, the amount of encouragement related to promotion received from male supervisors decreased.

More recently, Peterson and Saporta (2004) also contest some elements of tokenism. Starting with the assumption that employers discriminate, Peterson and Saporta (2004) focus on the opportunity structure for organizations to discriminate against women in the current legal environment. Using data from personnel records from a large service delivery firm from 1978 to 1986, they focus on managerial, professional, and administrative positions. They find support for their hypothesis that the hiring process is the easiest organizational point to discriminate against women, but they do not rule out the possibility that gender differences in conditions of hiring are related to different work experience between men and women.

However, contrary to "glass-ceiling" and social psychological explanations of discrimination against women (Reskin 2000) in top managerial positions, Peterson and Saporta find that discrimination actually decreases as one moves up in the hierarchy. This is perhaps because of the convergence of education, age, and occupation variables among men and women in higher organizational echelons. Xie and Shauman (1998) also find that women scientists' disadvantage disappears when they reach the highest ranks in their fields. These results call into question Kantor's tokenism hypotheses, instead suggesting ascriptive characteristics become less salient at higher levels of the organization.

However, it is also possible the women who reach high-level positions have assimilated with their male counterparts to such a high degree to offset their gender identity that they

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essentially operate “like men” in the firm (Kay and Hagan 1998). Network analysis of demographic minorities serving on corporate boards has shown that minority board member influence increases with prior experience on other boards, and more importantly, previous social network ties to other board members (Westphal and Milton 2000). These social network ties create the impression of greater assimilation with the majority corporate board members, producing more affirmation of Kantor’s tokenism hypotheses.

Tests of Kantor’s work have not been limited to her token hypotheses, however, as her research created a wellspring of empirical questions related to the effect of structural variables on organizational processes related to inequality. Using data on turnover and replacement in a state civil service agency, Begnoche Smith (1979) found that women were more likely to occupy positions in low advancement potential occupations. She also finds support for Kantor’s structural hypothesis that both men and women are less attached to low-occupational prestige positions. In Begnoche’s study, turnover for men and women was the same for occupations with low-advancement potential. This study showed sex has almost no independent effect on employee quit rates.

Di Prete and Soule (1988) also provide empirical support for Kantor’s structural disadvantage hypothesis. Examining the U.S. federal civil service during the mid-1970s, they found that grade promotion disparities between men and women were a result of job ladder promotion opportunities even after controlling for personal characteristics. Women in lower-tier positions were most disadvantaged in moving up to higher-tier positions, while women in high grade positions had promotion rates that were indistinguishable from men’s. However, these women were underrepresented as a group in the upper ranks.

Opportunity Structure and Mobility

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Kantor's work also highlighted the need for sociologists to pay greater attention to the organization as the primary unit of analysis when studying gender inequality. In their review of the organization of work, Baron and Bielby (1980) delineate five levels of social organization: societal, institutional, organizational, role, and individual levels. In line with Kantor's organizational emphasis, they advocate greater research attention to the firm as the unit of analysis in order to better understand structural stratification (Baron and Bielby 1980). In their view, organizational life mediates the relationship between societal and institutional forces on the one hand and stratification at the job and worker level on the other hand. In essence, the critique levied by the authors relates to the neglect of intervening organizational effects on structural stratification originating at the societal level and affecting the individual level. This critique is not unique to sociology. Meta-analyses of public sector management in the U.S. and internationally has shown a similar research bias toward modeling institutional change and outcomes without controlling for mediating organizational variables (Hill and Lynn 2005, Forbes and Lynn 2005).

Empirical work has emerged in the sociological literature to fill the organizational lacuna, however. Reskin and McBrier (2000) found that informality favors men in the hiring process due to ascription. Their data showed that in a given firm, greater numbers of men in managerial positions was related to greater informal hiring practices through social networks and personal references. Most notably, this study shows that firms have the power to limit ascription in their hiring practices by implementing open recruitment processes and formalizing hiring channels.

Baron, Mittman, and Newman (1991) have studied how organizational dynamics in state public agencies affect gender integration. Drawing on organizational theories such as population ecology (Hannan and Freeman, 1984, Meyer and Rowan 1977), resource dependency (Pfeffer

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and Salancik 1978), and institutionalism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), they find that younger and smaller agencies integrated most quickly. However, the oldest state bureaucracies also integrated at faster rates than was anticipated, suggesting that these organizations understood that adaptation was inextricably linked with organizational survival. Similar to Reskin and McBrier (2000), agencies that relied on formalized and centralized personnel practices also demonstrated greater rates of gender integration. Internally, they also find evidence supporting Kantor (1977) that the presence of greater numbers of women was related to greater gains in integration.

Analysis of women's positions in work organizations has not been limited to the private and public sector either. Chaves (1996) takes the idea of organizational innovation in personnel policies and applies them to rule changes allowing women to be ordained in Christian denominations. The purpose of the study was to discover why some denominations allowed ordination of women earlier than others and the distinguishing characteristics of churches that were early versus late adopters.

Employing event-history analysis and new institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell 1993), Chaves finds that institutional pressures associated with second-wave feminism in the U.S. increased acceptance of female ordination in churches, as well as interorganizational ties with previous adopters of the change. Churches with decentralized authority structures in their denomination were also more likely to adopt female ordination earlier than centralized churches, and the presence of women's voluntary associations connected to the church increased the likelihood of early adoption. One of the concluding observations made by Chaves that might have implications for gender equity policies in public and private sector organizations is that early adopters of women's ordination faced less contentiousness in the process than late

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adopters. Calls for change in the early periods came from the top of the organizations and from bottom-up social movements in late adopter churches (Chaves 1996, 867).

Research Productivity: Structural Explanations of an Organizational Problem

Structural explanations of differences in work outcomes for women and men have not focused exclusively on hiring and wages, however. One of the subfields of interest to sociologists that is related to structure and women's work surrounds the productivity of women academics, especially women scientists. As early as the mid-1970s, Reskin (1976) published an article showing that postdoctoral fellowships increase productivity for both men and women, but women have less occupational success than the men later in their careers. She hypothesizes that one reason women who receive post-doctoral fellowships have less occupational success than male scientists may be a result of women viewing the postdoctoral position as a substitute for entry to barrier-ridden regular tenure-track employment. In a later study (Reskin1978), she found evidence suggesting women scientist productivity was more positively affected than men's by prestigious postdoctoral fellowships, tenure-track positions, and collegial recognition.

More recent research has attended to the gender productivity gap between men and women scientists, attempting to parse out the different effects of individual characteristics and structural variables. Xie and Shauman (1998), for instance, found structural effects on women scientists' productivity in their large-scale longitudinal survey of postsecondary faculty. Contrary to theoretical arguments suggesting women's professional productivity is negatively affected by marriage, the authors find no statistically significant difference between married men and women scientists. Marriage has a positive correlation on productivity for both (Xie and Shauman 1998, 863).

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However, the results of the study also show that women differ from men in the quality of employing institution, time between bachelor's degree and PhD, and research resources such as grants and access to graduate assistants, with women faring worse than men on all of these variables. When these variables are controlled, the gender research productivity disparity decreases to a large degree. The authors also note that the data shows gender disparities in resource allocation are decreasing over time as well (i.e. women are gaining greater institutional resources). This research is particularly crucial given that productivity is one of the best predictor's of promotion in academic science careers (Long, Allison, and McGinnis 1993). Social psychological analyses of gender inequality within organizations caution against accepting resource inequality as the cause of gender inequality, however. Ridgeway (1997) in particular has suggested that gender stereotypes affect status long after resource inequalities are removed, which in turn increases women's willingness to settle for worse job outcomes.

Women and Men's Occupational Networks

The introduction of network analysis into sociological research has also played a major role in facilitating greater research on the causes of differential occupational outcomes for men and women in work organizations. Examining a New England advertising and public relations firm, for example, Ibarra (1992) conducted network analysis on the personal and instrumental networks of men and women in the firm. Her results showed women sought out ties with men for advice and influence, while they sought out ties with women for friendship. This finding is consistent with Smith-Lovin and MchPherson's (1993) research which shows men and women possess different social networks. Men also possessed greater multiplex ties with other men than women possessed with other women.

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Ibarra notes that these differences are potentially problematic for women, who because of their inferior status positions relative to most men and proclivity to seek out instrumental rather than multiplex ties with men, may make them less desirable as ties for men to reciprocate. This research suggests that “rank and professional activity appeared to provide differential returns to men and women (Ibarra 1992, 441).

Miller, Lincoln, and Olson (1981) investigate network centrality measures to test the interaction between race and gender in determining centrality in multi-agency social service delivery networks. They use centrality as the dependent variable to reflect varying levels of network resources available to the individual. One of the interesting findings of the network analysis is that men who occupy positions as social workers, counselors, or court officers had greater centrality than other men in the network, although women in the same positions had negative centrality scores.

As the authors point out, “while men were not numerically dominant in these categories, it appears clear that they fit into the professional exchange networks in different ways from their female colleagues” (Miller, Lincoln, and Olson 1981, 322). This finding calls into question purely rational explanations of structural advantage, which would contend that individuals who achieve placement in the same structural position would possess the same network resources, regardless of individual characteristics like gender. The difference in men and women’s centrality is line with William’s (1989) research on men in nursing, however. Despite representing a minority in the occupation, they were a majority in managerial and professional positions related to the nursing field. The only social category that fit the “rationalist” structural model of centrality was nonwhite women. Their centrality scores increased with education and recent entry into the field, patterns that did not hold for the other three groups.

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Policy and Institution Effects

The importance of resource allocation alluded to in the research productivity studies above suggest that organizational policies related to allocation decisions can and do matter for gender equality. As recognition of gender inequality in the workplace heightened in the 1970s, it began to garner policy as well as academic attention. Given that research on women and work inherently possesses policy implications for firms, government, and non-profit organizations, it is helpful to assess how policy has been incorporated into the sociological analyses of women and work over the past thirty years.

Burstein, Bricher, and Einwohner (1995) conducted a retrospective analysis of policies and political change related to work and gender between 1945 and1990, which is a helpful starting place to obtain an overview of trends in the policy realm over the second half of the twentieth century. Examining the ideas included in bills presented to the U.S. Congress, the authors found three main typologies of gender and work ideas: a “separate spheres” package, an “equal opportunity” package, and a “work-family accommodation” package. By coding congressional bills on these dimensions, the authors found that the “separate spheres” package lost popularity after the 1950s, the “equal opportunity” package has received the greatest attention and support by Congress, and “work-family accommodation” packages have increased since the 1980s when recognition that work and family responsibilities and pressures do not operate independently from one another. The authors also note that the types of gender and work ideas present on the Congressional agenda represent a “constrained change” typology (Burstein, Bricher, and Einwohner 1995, 80). Ideas originating outside of any of the three idea packages analyzed have been non-existent, suggesting the limits placed upon creative solution production given U.S. political and social institutions.

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In line with calls to focus greater attention on the mediating influence of organizations on individual outcomes (Baron and Bielby 1980), Kelly and Dobbin (1992) find that policy can affect organizational processes even when they come in the weak form of administrative laws. Employing neoinstitutional theory, their models find the media and public attention that occurred when the Supreme Court overruled the 1972 EEOC ruling that employers who grant medical disability leave must also grant maternity leave actually made maternity leave policies more popular. Their research shows support for the neoinstitutional hypothesis that "legal ambiguity can thus lead to strong corporate response" (Kelly and Dobbin 1999, 485) when environmental pressures are diverse and salient. Their models also refute the feminization of the workforce theory of maternity leave policy adoption as well as legal sanction theories that suggest firms will adopt policies only when they are mandated by legal statutes.

Bridges and Nelson (1989) also focus on the way organizations buffer themselves from institutional demands by considering how market forces of supply and demand were mediated by different agencies in the State of Washington's personnel system. The authors contest market-based theories of wage determination, arguing instead that large organizations may possess internal labor markets that buffer them from pure market wage pressures and bureaucratic personnel systems that create complicated non-market compensation schedules. They also test a bureaucratic-politics model of wage differentials between men and women, which assumes wage levels are affected by internal organizational constituencies and deviate from the external market.

The results of the study demonstrate that organizational influences do affect wage differences between men and women. Jobs that are predominantly female are compensated less than predominantly male jobs, and predominantly male and female jobs that are buffered from market pressures display greater wage differences than jobs that act as market benchmarks in the

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personnel system (654). The qualitative dimension of the research also demonstrated that the process of using wage surveys to find market benchmarks and index wages of remaining positions to them are highly subject to interest group influence, which disproportionately disadvantages women who occupy lower-level positions.

Finally, DiPrete and Grusky (1990) employ a multilevel modeling strategy to parse out whether individual organizational strategies or direct federal policy interventions have a greater impact gender occupational attainment between 1972 and 1987. They find that both bureaucratic personnel systems and direct federal policy interventions have increased equal opportunity for women, but federal policy intervention has had a greater impact than individual organizational change. The authors note that the gains in equal opportunity slowed during the 1980s, even after controlling for the phenomenon that initial gains are likely to be larger and taper off as opportunity becomes more equal. The data does not suggest that the conservative political environment of the 1980s was strong enough to reverse the equal opportunity gains made in occupational attainment for women, but it could retard its further progress.

Conclusion

The task of writing a literature review of the research on women and work is happily a difficult one. The research progress made in understanding gender inequality faced by women in the workforce over the past thirty years has been tremendous, necessitating limiting strategies when reviewing the research in this area. This review has selected studies for review that primarily address organizational structures and processes and their effects. This emphasis does not suggest that societal influences on individual work outcomes are not important, but rather it reflects homage to Baron and Bielby's (1980) recognition that organizations often play a mediating role between societal and institutional pressures and individual level changes.

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Recognizing this mediating role is also crucial for policymakers to understand, and the review has also included an analysis on what has been learned about how organizations respond to direct policy interventions that ultimately affect work outcomes for women. Network analyses of men and women's ties in the workplace were also included and highlight the potential for methodological sophistication to further our understanding of structural differences between men and women that lead to differential occupational success.

Additionally, this review has place an emphasis on structural causes of workplace inequality for women (Kantor 1977) rather than social psychological barriers to gender equality. This decision was a conscious one, given that organizational structures and processes are more easily changed by policymakers within and external to the firm compared to social psychological processes like stereotyping. However, the importance of social psychological research on women and work cannot be underestimated. As structural conditions change in favor of workplace gender equality, explanations of persistence gender inequality in organizations will likely rely more on social psychological theories.

Despite the strides made in women and work studies, it is easily discernible that there is much work left to be done, especially in organizational theory. A cursory glance at the reference page of this review shows the much smaller number of gender studies included in the journal *Administrative Science Quarterly* compared to the *American Sociological Review* or the *American Journal of Sociology*. Given *ASQ's* status as the standard-bearer journal in organizational studies, it is possible to claim women and work studies in this field have not been given adequate attention, even as control variables in more generalized organizational studies. The large number of book reviews on women and organizations might suggest, however, that women and work research is more likely to appear in book rather than article publications. This

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possibility would also make sense if researchers studying women and work are more likely to employ qualitative methods, given that qualitative research findings are often more lengthy and may need book-length publication for proper analysis.

Although a comprehensive review of the women and work literature is too lofty a goal for any single paper, this review has attempted to include the highlights of organizational studies of women and work since 1975. While the research began by focusing primarily on individual characteristics of women to explain workplace inequality, it quickly shifted to organizational levels of analysis that often employed structural explanatory variables. Kantor's (1977) influence on the structural research trends on women and work are undeniable and continue to influence researchers today. It is also appropriate to consider how institutional factors are facilitating organizational change related to women's status and success in the workplace. Neoinstitutional theories of organizations, such as those related to isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), are likely to provide even greater insights into why some work organizations promote gender equality and others do not. Indeed, it cannot be said too often that there is still much work to be done.

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