**Benevolent Dictator or Queen of Hearts:**

**Women Managers at the Top of the Organization**

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Feminist organizational theory takes a dim view of traditional bureaucracy. Work by Ferguson, Iannello, and Acker contends that hierarchy is inherently a male characteristic so that women managers need to radically reform organizations making them flatter and less hierarchical. In addition to suggesting that women will desire non-hierarchical organizations, these authors contend that bureaucratic structures limit the benefits that an organization has for women and may in fact be detrimental to their professional success. Our argument, in contrast, is that bureaucracies are a key political forum and women who enter public bureaucracies are political actors who recognize the value that hierarchy has in restructuring an organization, implementing reforms, and inculcating missions and values. Our argument, therefore, is based on the premise that people, not organizations, are gendered. Women managers similar to male managers will have goals for the organization. Hierarchy in this view is a tool and can be used for feminist managers as well as non-feminist ones. In the words of Max Weber (1947), bureaucracy is a power instrument of the first order, for the person who controls the bureaucracy.

This paper attempts to build an alternative view of women in management positions and the role of women in bureaucracies in general. First, we present a short summary of our theory followed by the currently accepted literature on women and the bureaucracy and its role in the development of feminist organizational theory. Second, we link our view to the literature on organization theory. Borrowing from feminist theory, organizational theory, and a historical study of feminism and organizations, we conclude that the body of literature on feminist organizations and gender and bureaucracy must be revisited if it is to remain a viable source for

understanding the importance of gender differences and ensuring that these differences are not associated with a negative connotation.  Third, using these insights, we pose two hypotheses about the behavior of women managers that directly contradict feminist organizational theory and previous studies of gender and bureaucracy.   Fourth, we provide an empirical test of these hypotheses about women managers using data from all Texas school districts from the years 1995 to 1999.  This analysis shows that female superintendents actually increase bureaucracy when they take over these typical glass ceiling organizations.  Women managers are less likely to add bureaucracy in organizations where they also have more political support for their goals, that is, in organizations with larger numbers of other women managers.

**Prior Literature**

Past research on women and bureaucracy and feminist organizational theory has two central components.  The first is that women are different from men as a result of their concern with relationships and personal contacts.  Simply put, women are more nurturing than men, and this is reflected in their professional as well as personal lives.[1]  A second component of this literature focuses on hierarchy.  These scholars associate hierarchy with bureaucracy and assert that women are inherently opposed to such structures.  They argue that hierarchy is, in fact, detrimental to women.  We believe that these authors conflate patriarchy, hierarchy, and bureaucracy. They ignore the vast literature on organizational theory and bureaucracy that is

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[1]A variety of social science disciplines discuss the difference between biology and socialization, all recognizing that there are both biological and environmental explanations for human development (Scarr 1993). These ideas have been applied to women and men in the workplace.  Findings imply that men and women in the same occupation are different because of socialization and that they display different concerns and interests as well as bring different values and experiences to the workplace (Betz and O'Connell 1989).

contrary to their claims. In addition, their generalizations perpetuate gender stereotypes that could be detrimental to women. As a result both central claims of the literature are inaccurate and unsubstantiated. The first contention is that women have trouble succeeding in bureaucracy because it is a male-oriented structure and because women are less able to function successfully in bureaucracy owing to inherent gender differences. The second contention is that women will, if given a choice, institute organizations that are non-hierarchical and often structureless. Authors support this assertion by referring to a number of organizations structured in this way that have been, at times, quite successful.

The leading feminist critic of bureaucracy is Kathy Ferguson (1984). She argues that the structure of bureaucracies leads to depersonalization of activities and relationships in the work place, thus rendering the individual within the bureaucracy a non-entity (Ferguson 1984, 14).[2] The alienation of self from the workplace is inherently detrimental to women because women are ultimately concerned with personal relationships and contacts in both their personal and professional lives. Depersonalizing the workplace through hierarchy and bureaucracy, according to Ferguson, means that all organizational communication is formal and "one-directional" so that employees cannot discern where directives originate.[3] Individuals within the organization, therefore, are unable to contribute to the decision-making process, increasing the difficulty that

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[2]Ferguson's view on alienation of labor draws from a rich tradition in political theory that includes Aristotle, Marx and Arendt.

[3]This view of organizations misses the large role that informal structures and communication play in any organization. Both Barnard (1938) and Simon (1947) present a view of organizations that relies heavily on communication from subordinates to superiors. Similarly the use of informal methods of communication to augment the official organizational channels is well documented (Blau 1956).

employees find in identifying with the mission of the organization.  Ferguson believes that

solving these gender inequities would require the dissolution of bureaucracy in its current

organizational form, replacing it with structures based more on the experiences of women.  This

would require new organizations that emphasize participation, power sharing, consensus,

connection, and empowerment (Britton 2000, 422).[4]  Organizations would be flatter, less

hierarchical, and less bureaucratic.[5]

Katherine Iannello (1992) also stresses the authoritarian nature of the bureaucracy.

Patriarchy, she contends, is inherent in any hierarchy whether it is controlled from the top down

or from the bottom up.  Such structures destroy any prospective organizational benefits for

women.  Iannello also argues that span of control and singular authority are detrimental to

women because they limit access to the decision-making process.  Additionally, she criticizes

specialization and expertise as being limitations to change.[6]  Her implication is that women are

generalists.  In making such an assumption Iannello ignores the specialization and expertise that

women might add to an organization.  Specialization is necessary for any large scale organization

to function; and to the degree that women contribute key specializations, their position in the

organization is likely to be enhanced.

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[4]These prescriptions are similar to those of the New Public Administration (Marini 1971), the workplace democracy advocates (Pateman 1970), and human relations approaches to management (McGregor 1960).  All seek to counter the alienation of the work place by creating a less hierarchical and more participatory organization.

[5]See Hult (1995, 135) for a discussion on why such structures might not benefit women.

[6]This seems to be an unwarranted concern as, according to Herbert Simon (1947) specialization just means that different people will be doing different jobs because it is impossible for more than one person to be doing the same job in the same place at the same time.

Similarly, Joan Acker (1990) suggests that bureaucracies serve to consciously hide the fact that solely masculine traits are needed to be successful in their organizations.[7] Acker begins her critique of the neglect that feminists have given to the idea of gendered organizations by suggesting that all powerful positions in organizations are occupied almost entirely by men with the exception of those who are filled by a "biological female" who act as a "social man" (Acker 1990). Acker's solution to the lack of gender in organization theory is a concentrated effort to study how organizations could be better structured to support the needs of women. She believes that to do so would require an end to organizations as they exist today. Redefinition of work and work relations would mean a complete restructuring of organizations. Hierarchy would need to be abolished, and workers would have sole control of the organization.[8]

Common amongst all three critiques is the desire for flatter organizations and less bureaucracy/hierarchy. We believe that these authors are suggesting that women who understand their identity as women will not embrace hierarchy and will, in fact, work to abolish such structures in organizations where they work. Women who work in such structures without attempting to change them are, according to these ideas, acting as men. They are not typical women and may be viewed as concerned only with their own success and power. These women are the real life examples of Lewis Carroll's Queen of Hearts.

**Dissension Amongst Feminists**

Despite the certainty of these scholars, there is dissension amongst feminists. According

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[7]Acker and others seem to assume that any trait, outside those associated with anachronistic ideas of women in the home, are masculine traits.

[8]An interesting question is whether Michel's iron law of oligarchy would apply to such organizations.

to Patricia Yancey Martin, feminism is not a single ideology but a "broad multifaceted political orientation" (Martin 1990, 184). As such, there is no consensus on the essential qualities of organizations. Liberal feminists do not view hierarchy and bureaucracy as intrinsically anti-feminist while radical, socialist, and lesbian feminists often do (Martin 1990). Lynda Glennon, also recognizing that even feminists do not have a shared identity, discusses four types of feminism and their varying approaches to increasing the power of women. While all four groups argue that the subjugation of women must be overcome, each addresses the method for doing so and the cause for the problem differently.[9] Ferguson, Iannello, Acker, and other scholars who support their ideas, propose a very limited view of women, while not recognizing that their generalizations ignore the difference and individuality of women.

Though arguing that there may be a cross-cultural set of traits distinctive of women, Nancy Holmstrom (1990) suggests that there is not truly a "distinctive women's nature" ( 76). She argues that women and men have as many similarities as differences and women do not just belong to a biological or socially constructed group. Holmstrom argues that women also belong to distinct social classes, races, and cultures, and women may identify with these groups more strongly than with sex or gender. Holmstrom argues that even if there are distinct traits associated with women's nature, it does not mean that every woman has such a nature and that a women's nature. Her conclusion is that there are no clear implications about how women should or should not live (Holmstrom 1990).

This idea of distinct variations in women and feminists is observed by early feminists as well. Simone De Beauvoir (1952) articulates the lack of group identification among women,

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[9]For a complete discussion of this argument see Glennon (1979).

emphasizing the same groups that Holmstrom suggests. Beauvoir also argues for the need of women to be examined as individuals. The necessity of autonomy and independence are constant throughout her work (de Beauvoir 1952). Women should have the chance to pursue interests of their own and to determine for themselves both their wants and needs (Grimshaw 1986). By ignoring differences in women, Ferguson and her colleagues ignore the complexities of individual women, both their weaknesses and their strengths. As such, we believe that offering alternative theories of women in management positions is important.

**An Alternative Theory**

We are not rejecting gender as an important issue in the lives of women in bureaucracy. Organizational life, we think, teems with gendered issues many of which affect women managers. Women managers frequently face opposition from other individuals within an organization simply because they are women. Attitudes that affect the relations between men and women as well as the power women have to gain and use authority may require women to function differently in both managerial and lower level positions. This view of gender, however, holds that individuals make the organization; and as such it is the bureaucrats that are gendered not the bureaucratic structure. Individual attitudes may affect the receptivity of reforms initiated by women whether they be those that improve the roles of women or simply those that are new and different.

Previous studies suggest that women who reach high level administrative positions tend to be more highly educated, from a higher socioeconomic class, and perform better than men holding the same positions (Guy and Duke 1992). Given the barriers women face in all organizations, they have to excel to rise in the organization and must be able to demonstrate their

abilities without insulting or alienating men. In tandem, therefore, we think that the socialization

of women and the highly talented nature of individual women who reach the top results in

managers who are strategic. These women can be viewed as benevolent dictators, who feel that

they are doing what is best for their organizations and want their policies to have some degree of

permanence. They are strategic in their actions and are mindful of the organizational politics that

might hinder or aid them in instituting policies that they desire. They are able to use the

structures of bureaucracy and hierarchy for their own ends.[10]

We argue that bureaucracy could actually be more beneficial to women managers. While

this is contrary to the literature of feminist organizational theorists, we believe that this segment

of literature should be re-evaluated. Because individuals within bureaucracies are often resistant

to change (Downs 1967), managers need to institute structures that increase the likelihood of an

organization accepting new values and missions. Once they are able to structure the bureaucracy

according to these values, they will have created a new and equally permanent administration.

The work of Max Weber, while often used by feminist organizational theorists to critique

bureaucracies, illustrates why women might find bureaucratic structures useful in spreading their

values and creating a legacy.

> Bureaucratic and patriarchal structures are antagonistic in many ways, yet they have a most important
> peculiarity: permanence. In this respect they are both institutions of daily routine…The patriarch is the
> 'natural leader' of the daily routine. And in this respect, the bureaucratic structure is only the counter-image
> of patriarchalism transported into rationality (Weber 1948).

Weber does not support the subordination of women in patriarchy; he is simply drawing

comparisons and demonstrating that these structures share characteristics but they are distinct.

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[10]This argument is consistent with the empirical literature that women gain more access to male-dominated professions to the degree that those professions are bureaucratized (Cook and Waters 1998; England et al. 1994; Reskin and McBrier 2000; Waters 1989).

The work of Mintzberg (1977) also highlights a number of issues that supports the importance of hierarchy for the success of women managers.  Mintzberg describes organizations by the coordinating mechanisms they use to address problems.  He notes that the simplest organizations can rely on mutual adjustment as a way to coordinate the basic work of production.  As an organization grows, Mintzberg suggests that a more complex division of labor is necessary and direct supervision becomes more important.  Mintzberg discusses the necessity for a division of labor, an addition of managers of managers, or an administrative hierarchy (Mintzberg 1979).  Thus, managers from outside an organization may see fit to institute hierarchical controls in order to spread new goals and values throughout the established structure (for an alternative view see Hult and Walcott 1990).

Mintzberg also suggests that organizational structure must fit the problem that is to be solved.  An organization should not be structured based on who is part of the organization but rather on what it produces or what goals it expects to attain.  For an organization to fulfill its mission, it must orient either a hierarchy or lack of hierarchy to carrying out that mission (Mintzberg 1979).

Joan Woodward's (1980) classical studies also demonstrate that goals, and thus production technologies, should determine organizational structure.  She finds that large batch organizations are more effective if hierarchical while small batch and continuous process firms have different optimal structures.  Woodward's lesson for management is that they need to structure organizations in a way for them to be successful, regardless of the gender of the manager.  These issues are relevant for feminists who hope to establish enduring organizations.  Flatter and less hierarchical organization are not necessarily the solution to gender inequities.

These structures may be appropriate at times, but they should be a function of the problems to be addressed. Women may find that to initiate gender equal structures or pursue feminist goals, hierarchy is their most powerful tool.

In studying organizations from a gender perspective, Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) actually finds that gender explains little, but the location and position of women in various structures are a key component of the actions that women must take in organizations. Kanter studied the relationship between men and women in the workplace. She examined how mixed-gender project groups interacted, as well as the role that individual group members undertook. Studying a single woman working with a group of men, she designated four character types that these women developed as part of their interaction with men. These roles included "mother; sex-object or seductress; pet (group mascot); and 'iron maiden' (militant and unapproachable)" (Kanter 1977). Kanter argues that these women felt pressure to conform to the designated role based on the reactions of the men that they are working with not because of the structure of the organization. Individuals who a woman works with, something often determined by a woman's position in an organization, structures how she will act. Gendered behavior, as a result, is not the result of the organization per se but rather imposed by co-workers.

The work of Mintzberg, Weber, Woodward, and Kanter have direct application to how women manage in traditional, male-dominated organizations. We believe that women have faced stereotypes and have been socialized differently from men, not only in the workplace but throughout their lives (Betz and O'Connell 1989). As a result, they are concerned with the method by which they implement their policies through leadership positions (including the superintendents in this study). Facing skepticism or even hostility linked to gender, these

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benevolent dictators, hoping to ensure permanence of their reform, must change an established system by using new policies. Such mangers may see it necessary to add a large centralized administration to begin the process of reform. By surrounding oneself with a capable group who hold values that support the mission, it is easier to inculcate these values in the organization as a whole.

Why women might institute hierarchy differently can be explained by a political interpretation of organizational theory. Women's use of hierarchy as a tool will be conditional upon the presence of female allies or those who share the manager's values. Several organizational theorists suggest that the cooperative and networking opportunities present in organizations with shared values should become an important part of the management strategy for such organizations. Where allies exist, we believe that women managers will seize these opportunities and supplant the use of hierarchy with other tools. Thompson (1967), for example, portrays the organization as a complex set of interdependent parts. These networks of parts make up the whole as each is interdependent with the system which in turn is interdependent with the environment. Controlling such an organization requires management to establish relationships with other managers and subordinates. These relationships may not, however, be similar to those in social settings. Thompson (1967) posits that a self-stabilization process controls the relationships between the components in an organization so that the system remains viable even when faced with disturbances. Thompson (1967) also contends that it is important to have an inner core of hierarchy, much like the hierarchy we argue women managers need to establish themselves, that is somewhat buffered from outside influences so that an organization can remain functional. Central bureaucracies in a school district could shelter schools from the outside, thus

allowing them to continue with the primary goal of the institution, education (see for example

Meier, Wrinkle and Polinard 2000).

The following section of theory explains interaction of women managers with other

women administrators. Works on organizational culture, cooperation, and human resources in

the field of organizational theory examine the relationships between managers and subordinates

and suggest that the stance taken by Ferguson and others ignores vast a range of literature on

bureaucracy.

In contrast to the arguments that hierarchy limits women due to the impersonal, alienated

aspects of the structures, organizational theory devotes considerable attention to the study of

organizational culture. Rather than an impersonal, alienating bureaucracy, these theorists argue

for the necessity of the organization to reflect values and establish an organizational culture.

Schein (1993) argues that organizational culture is a group learning process that is not

exclusively determined by the behavior of the leadership. According to Schein (1993)

organizational culture is a set of *shared* assumptions that a group develops as it works together.

Culture does, in fact, determine who will or will not be accepted as a manager and can, therefore,

lend permanence to a manager's reforms. Implied is that strong organization culture determines

organizational behavior. This culture is determined by the personalities of individuals in the

organization as well as society, competition, and markets.[11] In short, there is a reciprocal

relationship between the manager and subordinates.

Other theorists argue that organizations must have cooperation for goals to be

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[11]There is an argument in the literature that the real class ceiling is essentially a cultural ethos, see Hult (1995, 136), Guy and Duerst-Lahti (1992).

accomplished. Chester Barnard (1938) contends that the ability of a manager to persuade individuals in a cooperative system is an essential element of bureaucracy. This persuasion can take place through inducements, clarification of personal benefits, or the "inculcation of motives" (Barnard 1938).[12] Through hierarchy, managers can build the skeletal structure of a cooperative network to aid in the implementation of goals. Such networks can be either informal of formal. Once an organization culture of cooperation is established, less bureaucratic structures may be needed because informal personal relationships result in common goals and a learned method for implementing these goals.

Additionally, Mary Parker Follett (1926) examines the relationships necessarily to successfully implement orders from a manager. She argues that orders can not be given, if a manager is expecting compliance, without the consent and acceptance of the subordinates. In order to successfully implement orders, managers must build certain attitudes among employees, "provide for a release of these attitudes, and augment the released response as it is carried out" (Follett 1926). Implied in the work of Follett is a reciprocal relationship between the manager and the managed.

According to Mary Guy and Lois Lovelace Duke (1992), successful managers develop and use networks; and strong network ties have traditionally been perceived as a means of obtaining power that is critical to a manager's success. Research indicates that men and women react and establish networks differently (Guy and Duke 1992). Men's networks are generally informal while women formalize these contacts. Women strategically establish networks in an effort to

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[12]The implication of these bottom up views of authority is that coercion in an organization is rare. If relationships are consensual, then the alienation arguments are called into question.

link women with other women, to expand contacts, to provide successful role models for one another, to generate solutions to problems, and to disseminate information (Guy and Duke 1992). A clearly established central bureaucracy allows for formalized networks and organized organizational learning. Because women joined the ranks of management later in the game than men, their male counterparts likely have already formed these networks and therefore have more and deeper connections. As a result, it may be necessary for women to create these networks in a different fashion such as using the hierarchical structure of a bureaucracy.

Our reading of the literature suggests two contrasting hypotheses about women managers and the extent of bureaucracy. From the work of Ferguson (1984) and others who view the gendered aspect of bureaucracy as inherent in the organization and its hierarchy, we would expect women managers to restructure their organizations to be flatter and less hierarchical. In the school districts under study, that implies relatively fewer total bureaucrats (overall as well as at the central office and school levels). Interpreting bureaucracy from a more political, Weberian perspective, women managers are perceived as facing gendered bureaucrats rather than a gendered bureaucracy. From this perspective, we would expect women managers to take advantage of the hierarchical structure of bureaucracy and to appoint allies to key positions in the bureaucracy. In the short run, this strategy implies a larger bureaucracy, particularly in the central office.

**Methods and Measurement**

Empirically testing how women will structure a bureaucracy requires a data set with some special characteristics. An ideal setting would be organizations that traditionally have a glass ceiling so that women top level managers are unusual and would need to deal with resistance to their programs and possibly themselves. Such a set of organizations, at the same time, should

have enough women managers in top level positions so that statistically reliable hypotheses tests

are possible. One data set that meets these criterion is the Texas school district data set; this data

set contains information on over 1000 school districts in Texas (the entire universe) for a five year

period (1995-9). School districts are classic glass ceiling organizations; women comprise 75% of

all classroom teachers, 32.8% of principals, 25.3% of central office administrators, but only 8.8%

of all superintendents. Despite the small percentage of women superintendents, in 528 of the

district-years, a women was a school district superintendent. These 528 cases provide a relatively

large number of women top managers for analysis.[13]

**Dependent Variables**

The extent of bureaucracy could be measured in a variety of ways. We follow the work of

Meier, Wrinkle and Polinard (2000) who argue that for school districts bureaucracy should be

measured in terms of administrators relative to the number of students.[14] Table 1 shows the

descriptive statistics for three measures of bureaucracy–total bureaucracy, central office

bureaucracy, and school level bureaucracy. The average district employs 7.19 central office

bureaucrats for every 1000 students enrolled; the standard deviation is relatively large, 4.22, and

the distribution is positively skewed (see Table 1). Central office bureaucrats are probably the

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[13]Women superintendents head districts that do not differ a great deal from those headed
by men. There are no significant differences in enrollment, performance on the state-wide exam,
revenues per student or instructional spending per student. Women preside over districts that are
slightly more low income with modestly larger percentages of Latinos and African Americans.

[14]One can measure bureaucracy in terms of a ratio of administrators to teachers, however,
this often is confounded by district wealth. Wealthy districts both tend to have more
administrators and more teachers than poorer districts. One could also measure bureaucracy
more subjectively via surveys of redtape or procedural delay (Bozeman 1987). Lacking survey
measures, we opt for the ratio to students since students are the primary production unit of
schools.

best indicator of overall bureaucracy. Management reforms in education (see Hess 1999) consistently advocate school-based management to move personnel and decisionmaking to the school level. School bureaucrats, principals mostly, are generally first line supervisors; and first line supervisors are not generally our image of "bureaucrats." Central office administrators, in contrast, who do not actively deliver educational services directly to students, are frequently the target of those who cite public school systems as overly bureaucratized (see Chubb and Moe 1990). The data reveal that central office bureaucracy is the more variable of the two measures; central office bureaucrats have a mean of 3.09 bureaucrats per 1000 students (standard deviation 3.27) compared to 4.09 for school level bureaucrats (standard deviation 2.21).

[Table 1 About Here]

**Independent Variables**

Our key independent variable is whether or not the district superintendent is female, coded as 1 for female and 0 otherwise. As part of our political view of management, we measure potential allies for a women superintendent as the percentage of district administrators who are also female. If the gendered portion of the organization is the bureaucrats rather than the bureaucracy, then we would expect that female superintendents might make different structural decisions in organizations that have more female administrators. Such administrators are also likely to see the potential sexist aspects of the organization and become allies in redesigning procedures or changing administrative goals. Administrators in this measure include all central office administrators as well as all principals and assistant principals.

**Control Variables**

Although models of school district bureaucracy are relatively rare, organization theory

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suggests that the size of the administrative component in an organization is likely to reflect

economies of scale, needs for specialization and hence coordination, resources, and organizational

problems (Rainey 1997; Meier et al. 2000; Thompson 1967; cite bureaucracy studies).[15]

Economies of scale is the easiest of these concepts to operationalize; we should expect the size of

the bureaucracy to decrease as the size of the organization increases. Organizational size will be

measured by the total student enrollment (in thousands).

Specialization breaks down tasks into smaller units often linked only marginally to each

other (Simon 1947). Schools specialize primarily with curricula, grouping students into like

categories for specialized education. The four measures of specialization are the percentage of

students in special education, bilingual education, vocational education, and gifted classes. Most

remaining students are classified into general or regular education.

Problems that might require additional bureaucracy to deal with include factors that affect

both students and teachers. Student factors are measured as the percentage of low income

students (eligible for free or reduced price school lunch), the average daily attendance rate, and the

official school dropout rate. Each of these measures could require greater administrative capacity

in order to achieve acceptable performance. Teacher problems include teacher turnover and the

number of uncertified teachers. Both problems are likely to generate additional bureaucracy for

recruitment and monitoring.

Finally, resources might generate greater bureaucracy either because those resources

permit hiring more individuals or because those resources come with reporting requirements and

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[15]Our objective is to include as many control variables as possible to make sure that our
results are not generated by some omitted variables bias. Doing so will generate a fair amount
of collinearity among the control variables and thus at times make these coefficients unreliable.

thus need bureaucracy to generate the appropriate paper trails. Three resource measures will be used--average teacher salary, the local tax rate, and the percentage of funds from state government. The exact signs of these coefficients are ambiguous because greater wealth might simply mean more district employees including more bureaucrats; greater wealth could also mean the ability to attract better qualified personnel with the result that less direct supervision is needed.

Because we have data for five years, a pooled time series model was run. To correct for time dependence, annual dummy variables were included in the analysis. To determine if heteroscedasticity might affect the results, the residuals for each year of the model were tested. The results indicate that levels of heteroscedasticity are well within the normal tolerance ranges.

**Findings**

Table 2 provides the initial test of whether women managers increase or decrease the level of bureaucracy. Quite clearly the evidence is inconsistent with the speculations of Ferguson (1984); women superintendents are associated with an increase in central office bureaucrats (although not school level bureaucrats), and this central office increase means more bureaucrats in the entire organization. In terms of central office bureaucracy, an increase of .29 bureaucrats per 1000 students is approximately a 9.4% increase on average. Although the gender of the superintendent is by no means the most important determinant of central office bureaucracy, it does have a consistent positive impact.

[Table 2 About Here]

We hypothesized, based on the work of Weber and others, that women managers might approach the question of bureaucracy from a political perspective. Women might see additional bureaucrats as a way to provide political support for their own positions. Such a hypothesis is

supported by the positive relationships presented in Table 2. If political factors were paramount, then we might expect that organizations with more female administrators already on board would see less bureaucratization when a female superintendent took over. Table 3 adds the percentage of female administrators to the equation. Quite clearly as the percentage of female administrators increases, the level of bureaucratization declines. For central office bureaucrats, for example, we can divide the women administrators slope into the superintendent's slope to determine at what level the percentage of women administrators counters the bureaucratization efforts of the superintendent. At approximately 15% of total school administrators, the net effect of gender of the administrators and the superintendent cancel each other other. That this figure is exactly what Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) suggested would be a critical mass for gender is interesting.

[Table 3 About Here]

Including other women administrators in the model as was done in Table 3 suggests that women superintendents are actually associated with more bureaucracy than the results in table 2. The coefficient for the superintendent increases to .384 for central office bureaucrats, approximately a 32% increase.

If women superintendents are using more bureaucracy for political support, then one might expect the level of bureaucracy associated with women superintendents to decline as they gain more experience on the job and put allies into key positions. Tables 4 and 5 investigate this possibility. Table 4 replicates table 2 (the equations without female administrators) for all superintendents, and then for superintendents with 1 or more years of experience, 2 or more years, etc. Table 5 presents the same key regression coefficients for the replications of Table 3. In all four possible cases, the relationship between women superintendents and bureaucracy drops to

insignificance by the third year of a manager's tenure. Even the size of the coefficient continues

to drop after the third year and in three of the four cases actually becoming negatively signed

although statistically insignificant.[16]

[Tables 4 and 5 About Here]

One final aspect of table 5 merits comment. Although the impact of a female

superintendent on bureaucracy declines with administrative experience, there is little evidence that

the impact of women administrators in general also declines. While the coefficient becomes

somewhat smaller, the differences are not statistically significant. This finding is further support

for the political hypothesis.

## Conclusion

Ferguson and colleagues offer one, very negative, view of women and the bureaucracy.

By emphatically stating their cases, they make it appear that no other theories adequately explain

the role of women in organizations or bureaucracy in the lives of women. Although they purport

to help women through broadening the field with the inclusion of gender into organizational

criticism, they ignore the differences and complexities of individual women. Building from this

perspective, we offer an alternative theory to the one posited by our predecessors. This theory

does not attempt to generalize to *all* women, but only those who enter the public bureaucracy as

political actors. As such, these women likely recognize the value that hierarchy has in

restructuring an organization, implementing reforms, and inculcating missions and values.

From this theory we derived two hypothesis about the behavior of women managers. First,

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[16]To support Ferguson's argument, the coefficient would need to be both negative and statistically significant.

women managers increase bureaucracy when they take over organizations that may not be receptive to their administration; and second, women managers are less likely to add bureaucracy in organizations with larger numbers of other women managers. The analysis supports these hypothesis, women superintendents are associated with an increase of 32% in central bureaucracy when controlling for other women administrators. Additionally, our findings suggest that the level of bureaucracy associated with women superintendents declines as they gain more experience and put allies into key positions. These findings exist for top-level women managers in this study even though many of their decisions are not related directly to gender issues in education.

Our theory of women in organizations make as contribution to feminist studies broadly and to organizational theory. This study illustrates and remedies many of the components of past feminist theory that limited women and ignored the fact that women were not acting in a vacuum, but in situations that they would need to confront gendered individuals, both men and women. Our study also contributes to the literature on organizational theory, by demonstrating that this literature already could adequately explain the behavior of women in organizations. Many, including the feminist organizational theorists cited above, assumed that authors such as Thompson, Weber, and others were explaining only the behavior of men. Our study demonstrates that their theories continue to be applicable, even as greater numbers of women move into positions of power.

**Table 1.   Descriptive Statistics**

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                    Bureaucrats per 1000 students
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|          | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|----------|------|--------------------|
| Total    | 7.19 | 4.22               |
| Central  | 3.09 | 3.27               |
| School   | 4.09 | 2.21               |

_____

**Table 2. Women Managers Are Associated with More Central Office Bureaucracy**

| Independent Variables | Dependent Variables | | | | | |
| | Total Bureaucracy | | Central Bureaucracy | | School Bureaucracy | |
| | Slope | T-score | Slope | T-score | Slope | T-score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female Superintendent | .241 | 1.62* | .292 | 2.42 | −.073 | .89* |
| Enrollment (000) | −.023 | 5.66 | −.015 | 4.69 | −.008 | 3.38 |
| Low Income Students | .063 | 21.22 | .039 | 16.39 | .024 | 14.80 |
| Special Education | .110 | 10.50 | .048 | 5.66 | .061 | 10.57 |
| Bilingual Education | −.055 | 8.58 | −.035 | 6.70 | −.021 | 5.99 |
| Vocational Education | .033 | 7.20 | .003 | .85* | .030 | 11.79 |
| Gifted Classes | .068 | 6.06 | .049 | 5.34 | .020 | 3.21 |
| Attendance | .941 | 18.35 | .748 | 18.00 | .194 | 11.79 |
| Dropouts | −.202 | 4.91 | −.142 | 4.29 | −.057 | 2.51 |
| Teachers Salary (000) | −.295 | 12.80 | −.200 | 10.73 | −.095 | 7.51 |
| Noncertified Teachers | .064 | 6.90 | .049 | 6.58 | .015 | 2.88 |
| Teacher Turnover | .044 | 7.35 | .026 | 5.28 | .018 | 5.39 |
| Local Tax Rate (00000) | .342 | 18.93 | .262 | 17.83 | .081 | 8.12 |
| State Aid Percent | −.017 | 6.32 | −.008 | 3.57 | −.009 | 6.33 |
| | | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-Squared | .37 | | .28 | | .21 | |
| Standard error | 2.93 | | 2.38 | | 1.61 | |
| F | 165.76 | | 110.76 | | 75.51 | |
| N | 5087 | | 5089 | | 5089 | |

Coefficients for annual dummy variables not included.

*insignificant $p < .05$

**Table 3. The Political Allies Hypothesis:**

**Women Managers and Bureaucracy Controlling for Female Administrators**

| Independent Variables | Total Bureaucracy | | Central Bureaucracy | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Slope | T-score | Slope | T-score |
| Female Superintendent | .324 | 2.20 | .384 | 3.25 |
| Female Administrators | -.023 | 10.85 | -.026 | 15.02 |
| Enrollment (000) | -.014 | 3.37 | -.005 | 1.60* |
| Low Income Students | .058 | 19.42 | .033 | 14.13 |
| Special Education | .112 | 9.84 | .038 | 4.70 |
| Bilingual Education | -.049 | 7.74 | -.029 | 5.62 |
| Vocational Education | .027 | 5.81 | -.004 | 1.10* |
| Gifted Classes | .070 | 6.30 | .051 | 5.69 |
| Attendance | .818 | 15.73 | .611 | 14.68 |
| Dropouts | -.184 | 4.51 | -.123 | 3.76 |
| Teachers Salary (000) | -.282 | 12.36 | -.186 | 10.14 |
| Noncertified Teachers | .066 | 7.21 | .052 | 7.05 |
| Teacher Turnover | .047 | 7.98 | .029 | 6.14 |
| Local Tax Rate (00000) | .328 | 18.31 | .246 | 17.09 |
| State Aid Percent | -.017 | 6.52 | -.008 | 3.82 |
| | | | | |
| Adjusted R-Squared | .38 | | .31 | |
| Standard error | 2.90 | | 2.33 | |
| F | 166.85 | | 121.45 | |
| N | 5087 | | 5089 | |

Coefficients for annual dummy variables not included.

*insignificant $p < .05$

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**Table 4. Political Allies Part II: Bureaucracy Decreases with Experience**

**Total Bureaucrats**

| Years of Experience | Slope | T-score | R-squared | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All | .241 | 1.62 | .37 | 5089 |
| 1 or more | .207 | 1.32 | .38 | 4462 |
| 2 or more | .252 | 1.38 | .38 | 3562 |
| 3 or more | .148 | .78 | .42 | 2976 |
| 4 or more | -.023 | .11 | .40 | 2562 |
| 5 or more | -.159 | .71 | .39 | 2237 |
| 6 or more | -.201 | .84 | .39 | 1982 |

**Central Bureaucrats**

| | Slope | T-score | R-squared | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All | .292 | 2.42 | .28 | 5089 |
| 1 or more | .203 | 1.63 | .30 | 4464 |
| 2 or more | .267 | 1.89 | .32 | 3564 |
| 3 or more | .134 | .96 | .38 | 2978 |
| 4 or more | .020 | .13 | .35 | 2562 |
| 5 or more | -.061 | .37 | .35 | 2238 |
| 6 or more | -.125 | .70 | .35 | 1983 |

Equations control for all variables found in table 1.

**Table 5. Gender, Experience and Bureaucracy: Female Superintendents and Female Administrators**

**Total Bureaucrats**

| Experience | Female Superintendent | | Female Administrators | | R-squared | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Slope | T-score | Slope | T-Score | | |
| All | .324 | 2.20 | -.023 | 10.85 | .38 | 5087 |
| 1 or more | .300 | 1.93 | -.021 | 9.15 | .39 | 4463 |
| 2 or more | .344 | 1.90 | -.018 | 7.25 | .39 | 3562 |
| 3 or more | .240 | 1.27 | -.014 | 5.21 | .43 | 2976 |
| 4 or more | .103 | .50 | -.016 | 5.56 | .41 | 2562 |
| 5 or more | -.004 | .02 | -.018 | 5.96 | .40 | 2237 |
| 6 or more | -.001 | .00 | -.019 | 6.07 | .41 | 1982 |

**Central Bureaucrats**

| Experience | Female Superintendent | | Female Administrators | | R-squared | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Slope | T-score | Slope | T-Score | | |
| All | .384 | 3.25 | -.026 | 15.02 | .31 | 5089 |
| 1 or more | .309 | 2.51 | -.024 | 13.28 | .32 | 4463 |
| 2 or more | .375 | 2.70 | -.022 | 11.15 | .34 | 3564 |
| 3 or more | .250 | 1.80 | -.017 | 9.06 | .39 | 2978 |
| 4 or more | .164 | 1.08 | -.018 | 8.84 | .37 | 2562 |
| 5 or more | .102 | .62 | -.019 | 8.66 | .37 | 2238 |
| 6 or more | .077 | .44 | -.020 | 8.43 | .37 | 1983 |

Equations control for all variables found in table 1.

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