

BUREAUCRATIZATION

Bureaucracy, or bureaucratization, refers to routinized, depersonalized, and dispersed processes devoted to the execution of a variety of administrative tasks, and to the regulation and assessment of these tasks. Within a bureaucratic system of governance, authority is dispersed and disconnected from ownership or physical production. Notions of a “bureaucratic manhood,” or a “bureaucratic team player,” slowly began to appear in U.S. society as bureaucratic systems of governance and administration emerged after 1830. This development enabled men to articulate masculine power and authority outside the contexts of crafts skills (which were slowly displaced by industrialization after 1830) and ownership and entrepreneurial control (which were transformed by corporatization after 1880). In addition, a mode of bureaucratic manhood gained ground after 1880 that linked masculinity to the exercise of social, economic, and political power and authority in an increasingly capitalistic society.

Bureaucracy in the United States

A federal bureaucracy remained largely undeveloped until the presidency of Andrew Jackson (1829–37), when an informal process of institutional regulation was replaced by a formalized administrative system. The emergence and expansion of a federal bureaucracy was a consequence of the implementation of universal white-male suffrage. In an age characterized by political majority rule by white men, power had to be abstracted, divided, recombined, and allocated—a process that required a formalization of administrative hierarchies, a specialization of administrative procedures, a division of responsibilities, and an explicit definition of jurisdiction and powers. This bureaucratization of government was instrumental in shaping a democratic and national system of political organization.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, antebellum moral reformers who had gained positions of power adopted an ideal of a masculine “scientific morality,” which combined moral imperatives with abstract standards of bureaucratic efficiency and rational performance. This ideal significantly informed the policies of the Freedmen’s Bureau, created in 1865, and of the Civil Service Commission, created by the 1883 Pendleton Act, which set out to regularize the process of selecting and appointing federal office holders. With the rise of the corporation in the late nineteenth century, processes of bureaucratic governance quickly spread into the private sector as well.

The idea that government should be in the hands of trained administrators instead of partisan legislators received

Buddy films have changed to reflect shifting social and cultural concerns involving race, class, and gender. Yet despite these differences of personality and background, the heroes’ shared masculine identity overrides other identifiers, including race, in the face of threats to masculinity—typically represented by women in the comedy buddy film, the law in the outlaw buddy film, or criminals in the cop-action buddy film. Buddy films express a perennial theme in American culture: the escapist male fantasy of rejecting heterosexual coupling, domesticity, and prescribed social roles in order to find freedom and adventure through male bonding.

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RELATED ENTRIES

African-American Manhood; Asian-American Manhood; Civil Rights Movement; Class; Cop Action Films; Detectives; *Easy Rider*; Ethnicity; Heroism; Hollywood; Male Friendship; *Odd Couple*, *The*; Race; Sensitive Male; Westerns

—Philippa Gates

a boost during the Progressive Era and the “managerial revolution” of the New Deal, both of which saw a host of new bureaucratic agencies emerge, including the Federal Reserve Board (1913) and the Social Security Administration (1935). In the 1930s and 1940s, private businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and labor unions (which all began to interact and cooperate more closely with the emerging corporate state) increasingly adopted bureaucratic forms of governance. By 1945, bureaucratization had transformed much of the public and private sectors in the United States.

Bureaucratization received a new boost in the 1960s, when the federal government added 400,000 new positions and state and local governments added another 4 million new jobs. The decade also witnessed a dispersion of administrative functions from the federal to the local level, and a subsequently closer intertwining of federal, state, and local governments. As part of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society program, as well as his War on Poverty, the federal government funded over 150 Community Action Agencies under the Community Action Program. Built on an idea of “maximum feasible participation,” these programs localized bureaucracy and accountability. Johnson’s Creative Federalism and Richard Nixon’s New Federalism appeared to work against centralization of power, but actually promoted a dissemination of bureaucracy. Despite attempts to stem bureaucratization through deregulation in the 1980s and the new populism that emerged in the 1990s, attempts to control bureaucracies have usually led to the creation of new bureaucracies.



Bureaucratization in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries generated depersonalized definitions of masculine authority and power based less on physical labor than on intellectual work and efficiency within large-scale institutional structures. (From the collections of the Library of Congress)

Bureaucratization and Masculinity

Definitions of manhood have historically stood in an ambiguous relation to bureaucracy and bureaucratization. Some scholars have emphasized that men’s desire for individualistic self-assertion and affirmation are fundamentally at odds with both the need for men to surrender to a larger collective and the depersonalized patterns of authority that exist within a bureaucratic culture. Others have emphasized that service and the ability (and even eagerness) to submit to larger collectives, such as an institution, the nation, or other social groupings, constitute a spirit of teamwork that is inherent in cultural constructions of masculinity. Becoming part of a bureaucracy, then, poses the potentially complex problem for men of how to be assertive and in control as individuals, while also surrendering self-interest and accepting the individual subordination inherent in bureaucratic authority and control.

For men, the fragmentation and dispersal of control, authority, and individuality within a larger administrative process complicated notions of manhood, especially when bureaucracies became more prevalent in the late nineteenth century. However, the ability to be part of these dispersed patterns of power, and to act on behalf of a larger authority, has provided some compensation for these difficulties. In other words, while bureaucratization has restricted male individualism, it has also empowered men in other ways.

The need to conform to systemized behavior and professional routines, and to the depersonalized exercise of authority within an administrative, bureaucratic apparatus, has placed greater emphasis on interpersonal skills among men, generating a “bureaucratic manhood.” For instance, advice books such as Dale Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936) emphasize the need to cultivate interpersonal skills in order to interact with others and achieve one’s goals in bureaucratic settings. After World War II, bureaucratic manhood, and the ideal of man as a bureaucratic team player, gained increasing acceptance. In 1956, William H. Whyte published *The Organization Man*, a sociological study detailing the impact of corporate, bureaucratized mass society on social patterns and notions of middle-class masculinity. While critical of the developments he observed, Whyte discovered that, by the mid-1950s, masculine individualism had found its expression within and through an integration into routinized bureaucratic structures in both the public and private sectors.

Yet while bureaucratization and bureaucratic forms of governance have provided institutional sites for the articulation of masculinity, they have also, according to sociobiological arguments, challenged conventional constructions of

masculinity and undermined men's claim of exclusive control over large areas of social and political life. Bureaucratization and technological change have disconnected large areas of work from the physical power traditionally associated with men. Furthermore, while bureaucratic or corporate white-collar jobs require the mental work and rational thought that men have traditionally claimed as their domain, many of these positions also require social skills traditionally associated with femininity, such as the ability to negotiate social distance and social intimacy and to handle emotional encounters with colleagues or clients. In the end, the bureaucratization of society may have contributed to the undermining of traditional gender roles.

Bureaucratic Manhood and its Critics

Finding an accommodation between traditional ideals of manliness and the bureaucratic demands of service, teamwork, and surrender to authority has often been an uneasy process. Whereas the futuristic vision of a corporatist society that Edward Bellamy unfolds in his book *Looking Backward, 2000–1887* (1888) implicitly praises bureaucratic efficiency as a means to address human needs, critics have challenged this perspective in both popular culture and academic circles. Ayn Rand's books—particularly her novel *The Fountainhead* (1949)—celebrate an individualism unfettered by restraints in an increasingly bureaucratized society. David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), C. Wright Mills' *White Collar* (1951), and Norman Mailer's "The White Negro" (1957) all bemoan the impact that bureaucratization and mass society have had on masculinity and the role and value of the individual. Critical works such as Herbert Marcuse's *The One-Dimensional Man* (1956) have held bureaucratized, corporatized mass society directly responsible for a host of social and personal ills. More recently, Sam Keen's *Fire in the Belly* (1991), Robert Bly's *Iron John* (1990), and Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette's *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover* (1990) have encouraged men to foster behavioral and emotional qualities that may compensate for a perceived loss of individuality in a bureaucratized society. But such advice appears difficult to reconcile with the behavioral and performance imperatives of a bureaucratic apparatus, and thus with the success so often associated with manliness.

Conclusion

In both the public and private sectors, bureaucracy and bureaucratization have been accused of assuming power at the expense of transparent decision making and the larger democratic process, and of paying insufficient attention to

individual needs. Yet modern needs of governance and administration appear to require ever-growing bureaucracies to execute the many administrative tasks that have become part and parcel of modern life. In modern society, power has become depersonalized in systems that subject all citizens to sets of rules and record-gathering activities. The modern corporate society has steadily replaced a process of male individuation and gender identity formation mediated solely through participation in the marketplace with a process of individuation that also requires compliance with bureaucratic rules and regulations.

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RELATED ENTRIES

Breadwinner Role; Business/Corporate America; Citizenship; Individualism; Industrialization; Middle-Class Manhood; Nationalism; *Organization Man, The*; Postmodernism; Professionalism; Self-Made Man; Work

—Thomas Winter

BUSINESS/CORPORATE AMERICA

In 1925, Calvin Coolidge uttered the oft-repeated remark: “The business of America is business.” Over the course of the twentieth century, the United States underwent a profound transformation in its industrial practices, as small factories and local crafts gave way to large national and multinational corporations. In the process, the ways that Americans work changed dramatically, for this change has had an enormous impact on the places, products, and psyches of American male workers. It increased the desire to own a business, left management–worker relations more impersonal and bureaucratic, and distanced owners from managers and workers in salary and prestige. In the midst of these trends, traditional definitions of manhood gave way to newer definitions grounded in the social reality of corporate hierarchies.

The Rise of Corporate Work

Prior to the rise of corporations in the late nineteenth century, the majority of American men worked as small farmers or local craftsmen under a system where task completion, rather than time schedules, determined the rhythm of the day. A finished job was determined not by eight or ten hours spent on a particular task but by the completion of a finished product. This preindustrial system of production demanded hard labor, particularly at times of high demand or harvest, but also afforded considerable self control over one’s workplace. By the late nineteenth century, the lifestyle that this work environment created and the economic independence it afforded had come to be seen as essential to manhood.

By the 1880s, this preindustrial workplace was rapidly being replaced by a new system based on large-scale factories and complex corporations, both of which altered previous definitions of masculine work. New factories, represented by Henry Ford’s River Rouge plant outside of Detroit, employed thousands of men in the production of uniform products. By the 1910s, Ford’s assembly-line production system, which would become the model for American factories, had dramatically changed the way work was done. Although workers were still male, they no longer worked individually to craft finished products. Instead they worked collectively, each person performing one brief, routine task as the product moved from worker to worker until it was completed. This change resulted in employee dissatisfaction and a high turnover rate until Ford instituted the five-dollar day (a doubling of the previous minimum wage) in 1914 and deliberately crafted a masculine atmosphere in the factory through company publications like *Ford Man* and the continued exclusion of women employees.

Emerging corporations found that selling masculinity to white-collar workers required similar efforts, for new positions in urban offices offered young men a workplace dramatically different from that experienced by their fathers. This new environment was largely incompatible with traditional notions of masculine labor and individualism. Photographs of the period taken for large corporations like Metropolitan Life Insurance in New York reveal large rooms with hundreds of similarly dressed white male clerks sitting at identical desks and shuffling identical papers. Such work was typically done in high-rise structures, with each floor specializing in a particular area of corporate work. Thus, the building functioned as an organism, with each employee providing a component part of the whole. Employees frequently performed an entire day’s labor without traveling beyond the papers and phones at their desks. Documentation was of the utmost importance in a system where thousands of employees worked simultaneously, and employees were frequently required to submit productivity reports monitoring their daily performance and progress.

The corporate environment fostered new ideals of masculine identity and achievement grounded in mental work, entrepreneurship, competitiveness, pursuit of economic success, and breadwinning. Whereas distinctions between owner and worker had frequently been minimized in a small business where everyone labored, corporate systems developed elaborate hierarchies and “ladder” systems to chart employees’ positions and progress, using frequent promotions and raises in a conscious effort to retain workers. Few men were eager to give up their vision of nineteenth-century workplace independence; however, ranking systems and frequent