Unpacking Bureaucracy
An Intersectional Theory of Gendered Organizations

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Bureaucracy and gender

Unpacking bureaucracy
- Horizontal vs. vertical power
- Formal rules, practices, policies

Unpacking gender
- Intersectional analysis (Collins 1990)
Two worker-owned cooperatives
- One World Natural Grocery (215 employees)
- People’s Daily Bread Bakery (112 employees)

The issues
- Class and organizational type
- Bureaucratic features and gender (and race and class)
How do organizational power & the degree of formality interact to influence gender inequality?

- Job access
- Wealth
- Power within organization
- Job autonomy

What can democratic employee ownership tell us about this?
Qualitative comparative research spanning 3 years

- **Phase 1:** 12 interviews, 4 meetings
- **Phase 2:** Ten weeks of intensive observation; a year of meeting & orientation attendance; two years attending informal gatherings at each site
- **Phase 3:** archival research & financial records

HyperRESEARCH to code & analyze

Inductive & deductive
BAKERY: MANAGERIAL HIERARCHY

- Board of directors elected from employees
- Highly formal: policy & orientation manuals; financial reports; disciplinary records; team logs; team, committee, & company meeting agendas; meeting minutes; orientations; safety trainings; etc.

GROCERY: HYBRID DEMOCRACY

- Membership meeting
- Board of directors
- Coordinating committees (SPC, CRT, AOTF)
- Intercooperative Coordinating Committee
- Each of the 14 teams
- Committee of 3

Highly formal: policy & orientation manuals; financial reports; disciplinary records; team logs; team, committee, & company meeting agendas; meeting minutes; orientations; safety trainings; etc.
Bakery inequality outcomes

- county average household earnings
- 3:1 maximum pay differential
- 40% people of color in 7% county
- majority working-class managers
- women’s earnings 112% that of men
- 31% women managers

- women only 15% of workforce
- 87% of women employees white
- 50% of women in all-women office team
- 83% of people of color in all-men production teams
- people of color’s earnings 80% that of whites
- most autonomous jobs held by whites; people of color in least autonomous jobs
Grocery inequality outcomes

- < county average household earnings
- whites overrepresented for county
- whites, middle-class overrepresented on board
- women’s earnings 87% that of men

+ > hourly earnings than county average
+ > women’s hourly earnings (across race)
+ women 56% of workforce (non-white 25%)
+ people of color’s earnings 102% that of whites
+ no discernable race/gender patterns to teams
+ no race/gender/class difference in team/job autonomy
## Interactions of organizational power structure and formality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bakery</th>
<th>Grocery</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access</strong></td>
<td>Hierarchy reduces openness to alternative job histories, formality reproduces occupational segregation</td>
<td>Hybrid democracy maximizes inclusion, formality protects against homosociality</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wealth</strong></td>
<td>Hierarchy naturalizes workplace inequalities, formality obscures and cements ethnoracial inequality</td>
<td>Hybrid democracy democratic control interrupts cultural capital link to wealth, formal equalities of wealth-sharing protect those without elite advantage</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
<td>Hierarchy attributes superior skills to managers, formal empowerment of workers undermined by hierarchy</td>
<td>Formal codification of hybrid democratic practices distributes power across ethnoracial, class, and gender differences</td>
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<td><strong>Autonomy</strong></td>
<td>Formal allocation of job control to supervisors reduces autonomy for women &amp; most people of color, but could be subverted by majority white male teams</td>
<td>Formal delegation of authority combined with heterosociality of teams to distribute autonomy of jobs and teams across gender, race, and class</td>
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Hierarchy reduces openness to alternative job histories, formality reproduces occupational segregation

- Turn-over in worst jobs
- Manager reliance on ethnoracially segregated external labor market for recruitment & retention strategies
- Managers’ internalized gender beliefs
- Individualized hiring decisions
- Inflexible, manager-created formal schedules
- Result: no Latina access to best bakery entry point; reduced gender balance
Bureaucratic solutions to reduced job access: grocery hybrid democracy and formality

- Hybrid democracy maximizes inclusion, formality protects against homosociality
  - No single “entry point,” cross-team work urged
  - Previous industry, not job, experience valued
  - Flat but livable first-year wages
  - Hiring by committee using formal, team-created hiring policy
  - Individual/team-created flexible formal schedules
  - Result: ethnoracially diverse gender balance
  - Counter example: lack of formality and buyers
“Bureaucracy” requires unpacking: harmful and protective configurations

Race and class inequality mechanisms have gender effects

Interconnections between organizational form and inequality mechanisms help explain workplace gender inequality outcomes
Thank you

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