Bureau Men, Settlement Women: Constructing Public Administration in the Progressive Era (Studies in Government & Public Policy)  
Camilla M. Stivers

Description
During the first two decades of the twentieth century in cities across America, both men and women struggled for urban reform but in distinctively different ways. Adhering to gender roles of the time, men working for independent research bureaus sought to apply scientific and business practices to corrupt city governments, while women in the settlement house movement labored to improve the lives of the urban poor by testing new services and then getting governments to adopt them. Bureau Men, Settlement Women offers a rare look at the early intellectual history of public administration and is the only book to examine the subject from a gender perspective. It recovers the forgotten contributions of women—their engagement in public life, concern about the proper aims of government, and commitment to citizenship and community—to show that they were ultimately more successful than their male counterparts in enlarging the work and moral scope of government. Stivers's study helps explain public administration's long-standing "identity crisis" by showing why the separation of male and female roles restricted public administration to an unnecessary instrumentalism. It also provides the most detailed examination in half a century of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research and its role in the development of twentieth-century public administration. Her well-researched critique will help students and professionals better understand their calling and challenge them to reconsider how they think about, educate for, and perform government service.

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Stivers's contribution is in her interpretations of historical research on women's urban settlement activism, combined with her original research on the bureau, its means, and mission in the context of New York City politics. Even more persuasively, Stivers documents and interprets the gendered anxieties of reformers—particularly their concern for maintaining a masculine image for reformers in the face of a central paradox.