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DISHING IT OUT - WAITRESSES AND THEIR UNIONS IN THE 20TH-CENTURY - COBBLE,DS

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policies are chronically vulnerable to two critiques, one based on a discourse of procedural justice, as exemplified by attacks on the juvenile court in the 1960s and 1970s, and the other on a discourse of political mobilization, as exemplified by the settlement movement and by 1960s welfare rights activists. By the 1980s, therapeutically minded social personnel indeed pervaded the American welfare state, but major policy decisions were in the hands of economists.

This is an interesting and valuable book, and I think Polsky's arguments are largely correct, but it is no intellectual bombshell. It is weakened by its being both too narrow and too broad. It is narrow in the sense that Polsky focuses on only two institutional sectors as exemplars of the therapeutic model. Greater attention to the fate of normalizing technologies in, for example, criminal justice and mental health would have complicated his story but given him a stronger claim to comprehensiveness. I don't think that book can yet be written. The present work is too broad in that it lacks historical nuance—a sense of place, time, and personage. There are very few actors in this book; the major protagonists are discourses, professions, and decontextualized movements, and many things happen in the passive voice. History is fuzzier than Polsky implies, but strangely, given its glossy surface and macro focus, his book is undertheorized. Polsky's argument is basically that human service professionals have advanced the therapeutic ideology to promote their status. The state itself—the object of these entrepreneurial efforts—is left passive and almost completely unanalyzed.

Despite these analytic weaknesses, the normative thrust of this book is admirable. Throughout, Polsky argues persuasively that the therapeutic model has had morally and politically reprehensible results. In his conclusion, he further argues that now, at the apparent nadir of the American welfare state, is the time to dislodge that model in favor of a rights-based regime, with income maintenance as its cornerstone. He expresses hope for political action to this end, driven by mobilized citizens in geographically concentrated pockets of marginality. He may be on to something, if only because the poor have so few alternatives—these days social workers can't even make the checks come on time.

As social scientists, we might watch for the collapse of the therapeutic state. As citizens, we might do more than watch.

Organizations, Occupations, and Markets

“Make Mine a Double”

Dishing It Out: Waitresses and Their Unions in the Twentieth Century, by **Dorothy Sue Cobble**. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991. 327 pp. \$34.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-252-01812-5.

Dishing It Out: Power and Resistance among Waitresses in a New Jersey Restaurant, by **Greta Foff Paules**. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991. 225 pp. \$39.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-87722-887-6.

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These identically titled books provide equally vivid descriptions of the occupation of waitressing. Despite their quite different vantage points, they ultimately complement each other. In the final analysis, they achieve parallax in the sociological relevance of their work, especially for scholars interested in the structural conditions that generate and sustain sex segregation. Paules's book, anthropological in scope and focus, is based on a single New Jersey field site in a national coffee-shop chain. Her emphasis is on the social construction of power and resistance among waitresses in the absence of organized labor. She highlights the dramaturgical features of the occupation, including the emotion work waitresses organize around their labor and the strategies of action which underlie customer service and interaction with managers, cooks, and co-workers. At issue is the personal preserve waitresses construct to ensure autonomy as a response to the structural inequity and exploitation inherent in this sexualized service occupation. The reader acquires a detailed knowledge of the day-to-day physical and personal constraints and demands of

waitresses' work and of the rewards and satisfaction under demanding conditions that often reach intolerable levels. Equally interesting is Paules's examination of waitresses' rationales for not seeking managerial positions (less autonomy, longer hours, identical work due to bureaucratic downgrading of the managerial role, insignificant increase in pay).

In contrast, Cobble's approach offers a rich historical account of the emergence and survival of all-female waitress union locals that began around the turn of the century, reached prominence before 1930, and remained powerful and dominant until they all but died out in the 1970s. Cobble explores the emergence of the gendered nature of waitressing (that Paules takes as given) by tracing its origins from before the turn of the century to the growth of wage labor and the role of immigration, the emergence of service occupations, and the feminization of food service in the independent restaurant sector following the decline of domestic service. Contributing to the feminization of these sectors of food service were changes in the living patterns of the urban working classes, thus creating a new mass market for meals outside the home. In the minds of employers, women provided cheaper labor and quick, personal service where simple dining and high turnover were required to assure profits. The intimacy of food service, the tip exchange, the decided departure of waitresses from middle-class standards of gentility, and perhaps the association—often unconscious—between eating and sex led to the denunciation of waitresses as loose women and even as prostitutes. Cobble's thesis reconsiders the relationship of that gendered, class-bound work to craft unionism, providing the counterpoint to Paules's contemporary emphasis on autonomy. Waitress unionism, manifested as a "craft sisterhood," overrode such divisive issues as exactly what constituted "sexual respectability" and "women's work" and held at bay the competitiveness among waitresses over customers, tips, and individual gain. Although waitresses' consciousness contained elements of class and gender identification, the strongest, most consistent aspect of their ideology appears to have been trade identification. When the interests of their trade conflicted with the larger interests of their class or sex, the needs of the craft usually came first.

In combination, these two books provide fas-

cinating insights into the structural conditions that account for the origins and persistence of a sex-segregated occupation. Cobble's history of waitressing calls into question the search for a single explanatory schema to account for the feminization of all occupations. In particular, she highlights unique aspects in the evolution of personal service work, in which the element of consumer preference, actual and as perceived by employers, is a catalyst to this process. Sociological explanations have emphasized "male flight" in the feminization of occupations, which presumes males have alternative occupations to move to. Cobble shows how occupational feminization that is encouraged by the actions of employers is met with resistance by male incumbents. Cobble's research also points to the importance of expanding explanatory schemas to encompass nonprofessional and multiracial occupational shifts. Both books emphasize the strategies by which women mobilize resources and derive meaning from the occupations that are open to them; these women are anything but passive participants, naive to issues of opportunity, immobility, and discrimination. In the end, both authors directly challenge sociological and historical assumptions derived from studies of working-class men that presume there are inherent advantages to job advancement and deny the value of alternative occupational objectives. And both broaden thinking about alienation, working-class culture, and skill that challenges scholars to encompass the service sector and female worker.

Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880–1940, by **David E. Nye**. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990. 467 pp. \$29.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-262-14048-9.

The Electric City: Energy and the Growth of the Chicago Area, 1880–1930, by **Harold Platt**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. 371 pp. \$34.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-226-67075-9.

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David Nye has written a wide-ranging description of the effects of electrification on the lives of ordinary people before 1940. He argues that