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All I Want is a Job: Unemployed Women Navigating the Public Workforce System. Mary Gatta. Reviewed by Joyce Bialik.

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Mary Gatta, *All I Want is a Job: Unemployed Women Navigating the Public Workforce System*. Stanford University Press (2014), 168 pages, \$19.95 (paperback).

During the Clinton Administration, American labor market policy moved from a focus on the economically disadvantaged and secondarily dislocated workers to a universal service, whose gatekeeper for job seekers and employers was One Stop Career Centers. Introduced in 1999 as part of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the Centers provide a succession of services starting with basic labor market information. Job seekers may also move to more costly services—counseling and training—if front line staff determine they would benefit from them. Researchers have agreed that WIA has been affected by funding decreases and the proliferation of low wage jobs. In this context, economically disadvantaged workers have failed to receive useful training that translates into obtaining decent jobs.

Mary Gatta adds to the literature by focusing on the felt experiences of women at One Stop Career Centers. With qualitative data, Gatta explores the experiences of customers and front line workers at a New Jersey center, using the concept of street-level bureaucracy to illustrate how interpretation of the program by front line workers may dictate the nature of the program more than official policy.

Among Gatta's findings is that the workers' interpretation of their role differed from the official understanding of it. She writes, "While the state may see the value added of the worker as navigating the system with the client so that he or she can access services in keeping with the policy goal, the workers see their value added as being the supportive and encouraging platform for the client" (p. 79). However, Gatta found that clients generally did not experience the workers as helpful; workers' low salaries and minimum qualifications for employment (high school diploma) help explain the clients' reaction.

Other findings stem from Gatta's undercover participation as a low- and high-skilled job seeker. She was able to feel the stigma and dehumanization job seekers experienced waiting for an unhelpful, mandatory workshop. She also experienced the frustration of being denied a voucher for training toward

a higher paying job because she was able to secure a new job in her current field without training. Counseling did not direct jobseekers to a career path, and there was no push to direct women to nontraditional employment. Gatta concludes that there seems to be little difference in implementation between One-Stop Centers and TANF welfare-to-work programs. One Stop clients were stigmatized like TANF clients, clients were held responsible for their own employment, and both systems adhered to a "work first" policy, negating consideration of further training if a job could be obtained without it.

While Gatta describes how her findings were used by New Jersey workforce administrators to improve certain features of the centers, such as the quality of workshops, she laments the inadequacy of the policy and calls for a new social contract to address structural issues. Excellent workshops have limited value without decent jobs at the end of the day.

With its lens on gender, this book is an important addition to workforce development literature. However, Gatta's description of jobseekers' difficulties obtaining training vouchers was repetitious, and she did not dig more deeply into the costs and benefits of training. While longer training periods generally can result in higher paying jobs, the U.S. lacks family policies that support job skills training. Costs increase not only because good jobs require more preparation, but also because some individuals have greater needs, such as those with disabilities or with limited basic education and English language skills. On the benefit side, training increases women's incomes as well as the well-being of their children with respect to their educational attainment, social behavior, and occupational aspirations.

The greater costs associated with these benefits are impeded less by the economy than by political resistance to such investments. As Gatta suggests, the workforce development system must move away from blaming individuals for their lack of persistence to achieving "economic security for workers, their families, and America at large" (p. 132), which is hardly a new assessment of the problem for feminists and social justice advocates.

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