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**Review of *Becoming Bureaucrats: Socialization at the Front Lines of Government Service*. Zachary W. Oberfield. Reviewed by Edward U. Murphy**

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ethnographic interviewing and participant observation, he makes a compelling case that cultural narratives, such as American individualism, or class differences, explain less about unemployment experiences than the games people play and the institutions that set the rules. In the tradition of sociologist C. Wright Mills, he urges us to link private troubles to public issues and to pursue collective action to change labor market institutions. And he reminds us that “looking for work may be the hardest work of all” (p. 180).

*Randall P. Wilson, Jobs for the Future*

Zachary W. Oberfield, *Becoming Bureaucrats: Socialization at the Front Lines of Government Service*. (2014). University of Pennsylvania Press. \$59.95 (hardcover), 236 pages.

Published at a time of fiscal austerity and cynical attitudes towards government, *Becoming Bureaucrats* will not threaten any bestseller lists. Zachary W. Oberfield takes an interesting if unfashionable look about how front-line public service workers think about their roles and responsibilities. In particular, he explores the socialization process of new recruits in two areas of government service: police officers and welfare caseworkers. In conducting his research, Oberfield employed surveys, participant observation, and in-depth interviews with police officers and TANF/welfare caseworkers over a two year period in an urban setting in the United States.

The central theoretical question the author wants to address is the degree to which bureaucrats' motivations, identities, and attitudes change over time, and whether personal disposition or organizational culture is more influential in driving that process. This research contributes to debates in the academic literature as to how organizations shape the behaviors and attitudes of their workers. On the one side, William Whyte's *The Organization Man* is a classic example of organizational culture as a dominant influence. On the other side, personality characteristics and Bourdieu's concept of habitus (“internalized and forgotten socialization” quoting Desmond, 2007) that individuals bring to the workplace may ultimately prove more important in determining how workers think and behave on the job. Finally, a better understanding of the ways in which

frontline workers are socialized into their jobs can provide a basis for improving their effectiveness and their interactions with ordinary citizens whom they serve.

How did new workers change during their first two years? Oberfield surveyed both sets of workers over time and found that their motivations, identities, and attitudes had changed, but not very much. The changes that did occur involved matters such as the use of discretion and attitudes toward citizens or clients they encountered. Initial training for police officers and caseworkers emphasized following rules and regulations, but over time, they became more comfortable with exercising greater discretion in day-to-day interactions with welfare clients and potential lawbreakers. Welfare caseworkers became more inclined to see the individuals they served as personally responsible for their situations, rather than buffeted by social forces beyond their control. However, these changes were not large.

Oberfield's findings also addressed differences in motivations, identities, and attitudes of police officers and caseworkers. He found that police officers were more altruistic—wanting to help their community—in choosing their careers, that their identities as police officers were more important to them, and that they were more inclined to see individuals as responsible for their own problems. These differences are not surprising since, compared with being a police officer, a career as a caseworker in the welfare department offers relatively low pay and status. Caseworkers were more likely to be politically liberal, Black and female than police officers who, as expected, tended to be more conservative, White, and male. In contrast, a police career not only promises better pay and status, but also offers a sense of calling and strong group identity.

The fact that motivation, identities, and attitudes were fairly stable over the two-year period of the study indicates that organizational culture is not a dominant influence on workers. Personal dispositions that individuals brought with them to their new workplaces were equally or more important, which could be explained by recruitment and self-selection into these occupations. This is a highly significant finding, and if right, it may be very difficult for changes in training and supervision alone to improve frontline workers' dealings with the public. As we know, police officers too frequently deploy excessive

force in making arrests and engage in racially discriminatory stop-and-frisk practices. Oberfield's research suggests that the key to reducing abusive police behavior is likely to be the recruitment of much more diverse police recruits.

It should be noted that the research focused on the views and values of its informants, not on behaviors. As with any case study, generalization of results is limited. Its two-year time period is too short to address long-run questions. Originally a dissertation, it is destined to appeal primarily to scholars and practitioners of public administration. Nevertheless, with its careful, multimethod research and thoughtful analysis, interested readers will glean many insights into the worldviews of welfare caseworkers and police officers. *Becoming Bureaucrats* is a worthy addition to the literature on front-line public servants pioneered by Michael Lipsky's classic *Street-Level Bureaucrats*.

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Miriam Frank, *Out in the Union: A Labor History of Queer America*. (2014). Temple University Press. \$54.50 (hardcover), \$29.95 (paperback), 240 pages.

At a time when ally-ship has again become an intense focus of left protest and strategy, Frank's *Out in the Union: A Labor History of Queer America* explores an understudied and complex arena of coalition politics: the contingent, uneasy alliances between LGBT culture and politics and labor activism. Frank provides a rich case study of "surprising, but not impossible" political intersections that were always embattled. As Joni Christian, one of the book's many narrators, explained about her experience with union co-workers at an Ohio GM plant in the mid-1970s during her gender transition, "We didn't have to like each other, but we learned to live together."

The book chronicles the remarkable story of LGBT labor history from 1965-2013. Five chapters are divided into three sections: "Coming Out," "Coalition Politics" and "Conflict and Transformation." This thematic organization allows Frank to break with standard chronology and capture key moments of a relationship that shifts across time, place, union, local and