

Stimpson, Catherine R. *Women and the American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, 274 pp., \$5.00 paper.

The city—and its analysts—have often ignored women, but this neglect hasn't been entirely benign. Rather, women have also been disadvantaged and even harmed by city life, especially as both their employment and their poverty increase. Understanding this situation, how it has been perpetrated, and how it may be changed are the aims of this volume.

To understand the volume, readers should first note that it is a special issue of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, supported through a grant received from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. As then-Assistant HUD Secretary Donna Shalala notes in the introduction, the Department regards women as a major concern.

This is an ambitious book. The editor, Catherine Stimpson, and nineteen contributors (in 13 articles) set out to explore the intersection of women's studies and urban studies, themselves both interdisciplinary areas. This complex enterprise produces exciting results which stimulate innumerable research hypotheses for sociologists. "Women and the American City" is a new topic, and these political scientists, urban planners, psychologists, sociologists, and architects examine it from many angles.

I recommend that the reader begin with Gerda Wekerle's integrative contribution "Women in the Urban Environment." Wekerle is a sociologist, and in this review essay (and a current co-edited collection, *New Space for Women*), she organizes and connects what research has been done. Her articulation of the issues serves as a framework for the other contributions and for the topic. Wekerle identifies three issues: the public-private dichotomy, women's relationship to the urban environment, and environmental equity. Under the first, she considers housework and its physical and social location in the single-family homes, as well as efforts to alter its performance. The focus of the second issue is suburbia as a constraint on women's lives, particularly as those lives change. Wekerle points out that, in comparison to women in suburbia, central city women have been overlooked, at least until they became "troublemakers." By the third issue of environmental equity Wekerle means "women's

equal access to housing, transportation, and public services" and their community activism to secure them. Also indispensable is Jo Freeman's analysis "Women and Urban Policy." In it she characterizes the urban female population, links their concentration in the city, especially as family heads, to its fiscal problems, and critiques employment and child care policies.

A conceptualization of women's relationship to the city is developed by Ann Markusen ("City Spatial Structure, Women's Household Work, and National Urban Policy"). She argues that "the dominance of the single-family detached dwelling, its separation from the workplace, and its decentralized urban location are as much the products of the patriarchal organization of household production as of the capitalist organization of wage work." Consequently, patriarchy may be the cause of at least some urban problems and should be analyzed as such—as should alternatives to this form of organization *and* the resistance to such change.

A further conceptual point is registered by environmental psychologist Susan Saegert in "Masculine Cities and Feminine Suburbs: Polarized Ideas, Contradictor Realities." The segregation to which the title refers is "a guiding fiction, yet one that finds its way into public policy and planning and into women's and men's sense of who they are."

In "Crime, Women, and the Quality of Urban Life" sociologists Margaret Gordon and Stephanie Riger, Robert LeBailly, and Linda Heath present a statistical analysis of the fear of crime on the part of a sample of 299 urban women. Their results indicate that, although women are less likely to be victimized than men, their fear of crime is greater, primarily because of the perceived risk of rape. The authors attribute women's lesser victimization not to specific precautions they take, but to a *general* female life-style which includes many restrictions on behavior.

Also of interest are Helena Znaniecki Lopata's study of mobility and transportation for a large sample of Chicago women, Elizabeth Markson and Beth Hess' consideration of older women in the city, Marilyn Gittell and Teresa Shtob's documentation of urban working-class women's emerging participation in explicitly political community organizations, and Marsha Hurst and Ruth Zambrana's probing of women's experiences with health services

in East Harlem. Although perhaps less directly related to sociologists' research, Dolores Hayden's imaginative yet feasible proposals for converting present urban forms into a more collective existence in a "non-sexiest city" inspire action as well as thought. Concluding the volume are nine research notes and two book reviews.

Sociologists—and sociology—appear throughout this volume, attesting to the importance of their contribution. We should not allow this new area in urban/women's studies to develop without benefit of a sociological perspective, especially if we were later to decry its absence. Besides, there is much here which positively invites study, whether of household form, urban policy, or community organization.

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