

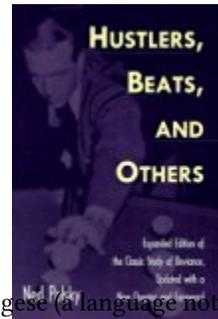
# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Ned Polsky. *Hustlers, Beats, and Others*. New York: Lyons Press, 1998. xviii + 266 pp. \$16.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-55821-404-0.

Reviewed by Marshall Fishwick (Virginia Tech)  
Published on H-PCAACA (September, 1998)



This book is “An expanded edition of the classic study of deviance,” which Polsky wrote some years ago. That claim makes me suspicious—but surely this book, at least, is well-worth reading. It may or may not be a “classic,” but it casts light on some dark areas of popular culture, and has been well researched and written.

“I have tried in each chapter to link up and to make coherent a good number of seemingly heterogeneous and disparate details,” Polsky writes in his Foreword. Pool began as an English gentleman’s game, he points out—accidentally revived by the enormous success of a movie—*The Hustler* (1964). En route, we meet up with Minnesota Fats, and other colorful characters. Good reading. He beats up on the Beats.

The best chapter comes last—“Thirty Years On,” points out the incredible change in public mores, hustling, and conning in recent years. Not all the scoundrels are in pool halls, either. (Bill Clinton, take note).

Polsky writes and speaks sociologese (a language not dear to my heart) and attacks those who abuse it. One example: Steven Marcus’ 1966 *The Other Victorians*. Polsky calls it “a prime instance of rubbishy sociologizing.” He does not suffer fools, or lightweights, lightly.

Nor does he hesitate to enumerate them: neo-Marxists, ethnicity freaks, reverse racists, gender benders, color warriors looking for new enemies, Billy Graham crackers, populists, multi-culturalists, neo-Jungians, and road companies of the Paris Follies. Forget Foucault.

A man can’t be all bad that compiles a list like that.

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**Citation:** Marshall Fishwick. Review of Polsky, Ned, *Hustlers, Beats, and Others*. H-PCAACA, H-Net Reviews. September, 1998.

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