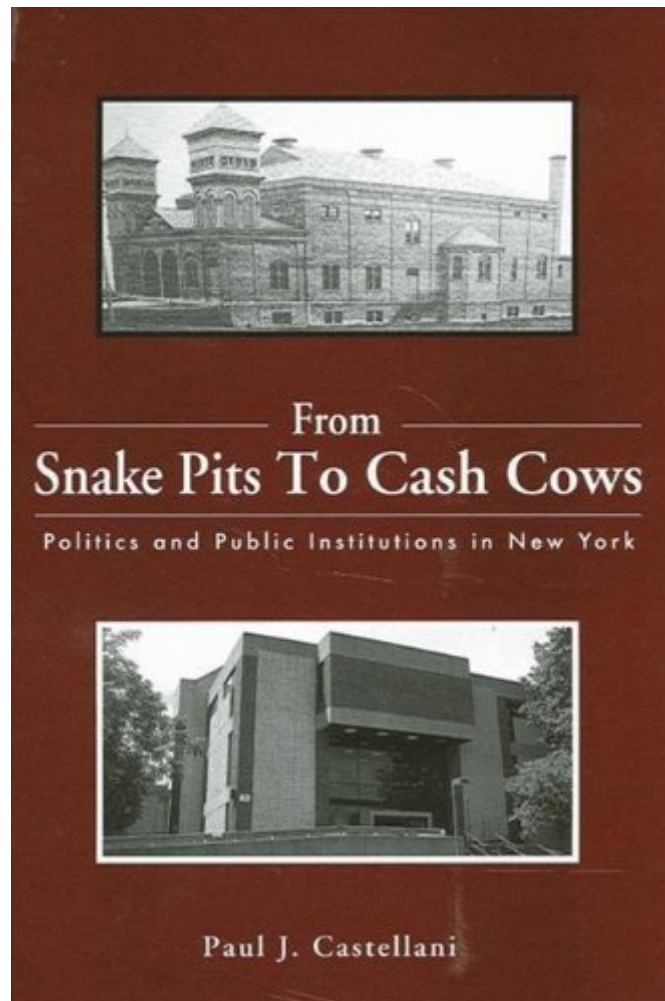


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# From Snake Pits To Cash Cows: Politics And Public Institutions In New York



## Synopsis

Explains why public institutions for people with developmental disabilities have persevered despite plans to eliminate them. Public institutions for people with developmental disabilities continue to operate within New York State, although their very existence has been condemned, and public policies directed their complete closure by the year 2000. *From Snake Pits to Cash Cows* investigates why these institutions persevere despite virtually universal predictions of their demise. Paul J. Castellani's provocative account spans the years 1935 to 2000, describing decades of conflict and confusion about the role of public institutions. This book demonstrates how and why a convergence of operational, fiscal, and political crises in the mid-1970s resulted in a series of agreements among adversaries that radically changed the political landscape, and reversed the plan to close all public institutions. He also shows why New York's experience has implications and lessons for the study of public policy in the area of developmental disabilities services and for understanding Medicaid policymaking, intergovernmental finance, and human services administration. Paul J. Castellani is Public Service Professor at the Nelson A. Rockefeller College, University at Albany, State University of New York. He is the author of *The Political Economy of Developmental Disabilities*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

How well do you care for someone when they cannot care for themselves? It is a question that haunts history. In New York, from the 19th century alms houses for the poor, indigent, and mentally deficient... to the early experimental colonies and state schools... to the overcrowded infant infirmaries of the postwar era... to the massive institutional human warehouses that came to symbolize institutions in the late 20th century, how society considers those who are the most vulnerable is illuminating. "From Snake Pits to Cash Cows" is an important resource for those in the developmental disabilities field and, especially, for those concerned about succession planning. Castellani offers a very readable historical examination of the social, economic, and political forces which drew individuals to institutions, kept them there, and then (albeit gradually, and still not completely) allowed them to begin moving into community settings. It offers context to the conflicting financial interests, community fears, and professional judgments over more than 70 years of policymaking. Institutions were built on a medical model to serve thousands of individuals and evolved at a time when the nuclear family (father, mother, and their children) began to constitute the primary social unit. By the 1950s, the post-War collective goal was to achieve the "American Dream". In a way that was not experienced under the extended family paradigm, a family member with a "mental defect" just did not fit. Despite prosperity never before seen in the history of humankind, segregation of the developmentally disabled from the rest of society was justified socially and defensible professionally.

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