

work will be, at best, discouraged, perhaps tolerated, maybe even suppressed in the name of disciplinary integrity. Still Bartie's book is testament to the fact that there have been, and, one hopes, will continue to be, those who nevertheless resist such proto-totalitarian behavior because doing so is so much fun.

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Alison C. Carey, Pamela Block, and Richard K. Scotch, *Allies and Obstacles: Disability Activism and Parents of Children with Disabilities*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020. Pp. 334. \$109.50 hardcover (ISBN 9781439916322); \$34.95 paperback (ISBN 9781439916339); \$34.95 ebook (ISBN 9781439916346).  
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*Allies and Obstacles* is a welcome addition to the academic literature on disability rights advocacy. Rather than focusing on the successes of exemplary individuals with disabilities such as Judy Heumann, or the social movements that they worked in, like the Independent Living Movement, the authors have undertaken a comprehensive historical study of parent-led activism. They do so across the four following disability categories: intellectual disability, psychiatric diagnosis, autistic identity, and physical disability. This comparative approach allows the authors to draw out valuable conclusions regarding the way parent-led movements are positioned within the universe of disability activism, as well as within social movements more generally. Moreover, it allows the book to reject any essentialist understandings of activism and instead embrace the diversity and complexity of parent movements, presenting a nuanced account of the areas of agreement and tension between disability rights self-advocates and parent activists.

The first half of the book focuses on case studies centered on the historical perspectives around parent activism in the four disability categories. The second half of the book outlines key factors that shape parent-led disability activism, including the timing of parent activism, how parents of disabled children frame and position themselves within disability advocacy, strategies employed by parent-led movements to achieve their goals, the relevance of a "rights" framework for disability movements, and how parental efforts change across their child's lifespan. This two-part structure is particularly effective, allowing for cross-disability analysis to be grounded in specific experiences of parents

and individuals with disabilities, thereby navigating between the macro and micro levels of analysis.

A key strength of the book is its intersectional lens, which acknowledges the numerous ways in which parental activist movements have centred the narratives and needs of privileged white communities. As part of this lens, the book touches on the disproportionate role that (mostly white privileged) women, and specifically mothers, have played in the history of disability activism. It was mothers who were blamed by the medical profession for their children's disabilities in the case of the so-called "refrigerator mothers" of autistic children (a discarded theory that a lack of maternal warmth caused autism), they were commonly the primary caregivers of their disabled children, and they were often the ones taking on the activist role. Importantly, however, the authors note that non-disabled parents are themselves in a privileged position vis-à-vis their children with disabilities, which in turn creates tension, since, in their words: "even if the rhetoric and goals of parents and disabled activists align, the presence and political power of parents in and of itself may still be problematic for activists with disabilities" (20). This criticism presupposes a zero-sum game of influence in activism, as if action by some will correlatively disempower others, and prompts important questions such as, what constitutes an "ally," and when and how parent-led movements can ever, truly, be "allies" given the above tension in which "the very power of parents thereby potentially undermines disabled activists" (80). Notably, the answers to these questions would have repercussions beyond just disability activism to all social movements.

An important theme in the book is the authors' explanation of the importance of the neoliberal context in shaping American parent activism. Parent activism emerged as a practical response to filling a particular need—be it removing children from institutions, securing adequate education, or providing social and therapeutic support. The authors argue that this individualist and pragmatic approach to activism can be at odds with collective and ideological activism. While this is, indeed, a problem that is particularly acute for disability activism, the tension between practical short-term individual gains and long-term collective gain is not unique to disability activism. Nevertheless, the focus on the provision of services within the neoliberal context has had a profound impact, positioning disabled people primarily as "consumers" rather than rights-bearing citizens, as well as leading parents to choose to ally with service providers and professional organizations rather than to identify as activists for those with disabilities. It has also meant that some parent-led organizations, such as Autism Speaks and United Cerebral Palsy, have adopted a corporate structure and continue to focus primarily on fundraising for services and medical research. The addition of this political economy lens in the book does much to demonstrate the inherent constraints under which parent activism operates, as well as the continuing struggle within those organizations for

adequate representation by the subjects of the activism—the children with disabilities themselves—especially as they grow to adulthood. As adults, they may have a broader and more ambitious vision in terms of views about how to address the systemic barriers that they have faced, ideas that are difficult to fundraise around.

The emphasis on intersectionality and neoliberalism leads the authors to conclude that disability movements should move away from rights-based goals to justice-based goals. They write the following: “justice-based approaches, emerging largely from marginalized communities, share a criticism of the ways in which rights rhetoric has served a neoliberal agenda while denying basic human rights such as affordable housing, food and treatment” (220). Indeed, it is this latter part of the statement, on the use of a human rights framework in parent movements, that is ripe for further scholarly research. For example, the authors touch on the influence of the civil rights movement on parent activism, specifically in framing rights and providing a successful strategy for challenging segregated education following *Brown v. Board of Education*. However, since that time, contemporary racial justice movements have adopted a somewhat different formulation of rights, goals, and strategies, explicitly emphasising a global human rights approach. Unfortunately, because the book is United States-centric, it does not account for the influence of the international human rights framework, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and corresponding international efforts. An exploration of whether and how the modern human rights framework (nationally and internationally) has shaped American disability activism and parental activism would further enrich the current scholarly debate to which this book ably contributes.

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\*Pamela Block’s name has been corrected in the title and within the review. A corrigendum detailing this change has also been published (doi:[10.1017/S0738248021000559](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248021000559)).