

Opposition & Intimidation: The Abortion Wars and Strategies of Political Harassment. By Alesha E. Doan.
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Last spring, the innocuously named “Center for Bio-Ethical Reform” set up a demonstration in downtown Portland, Oregon, in the middle of my university. Although it picketed and wielded enormous, graphic murals of fetuses representing what it calls the “American holocaust,” this organization received little response, or even notice, on this urban, liberal campus. The media and local analysts largely described the event as an isolated instance of antiabortion activism. It seemed at the time that the intellectual community simply did not have the proper framework for understanding this form of political behavior. Alesha E. Doan’s book provides us with that framework, and reminds us that far from isolated, innocuous events, such direct actions are rather a deliberate and political form of harassment designed to create an environment of fear in which fewer individuals will be willing to perform or receive abortions.

Doan has contributed a very timely and valuable work to our understanding — both practically and theoretically — of contemporary abortion-protest strategies. She places current strategies within a framework of social movement theory, both reviewing that voluminous literature and expanding it as she explains the ways in which contemporary antiabortion tactics sit uncomfortably within our academic understanding of political protest.

Much of contemporary antiabortion protest is generally understood by academics, activists, and casual observers alike as individual and isolated behavior, devoid of political intent. Doan challenges her readers to recast this understanding; picketing, sidewalk counseling, and the like are better understood, she argues, as *political harassment*. She rightfully documents the pervasiveness of these and other techniques, even in the wake of the 1994 Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) law, and illustrates the ways in which these tactics, when they become intimidating, personalized, and continuous, constitute a new form of political strategy, and that those tactics have impact.

These actions transcend political protest into the realm of harassment and are both purposeful and rational. Innovation of social movement

tactics is a natural response to the longevity of any movement. Given the duration of the American antiabortion movement, scholars might predict a turn toward more “insider” tactics, but that prediction would overlook the creativity of the current movement. Rather, these forms of political harassment are a reasonable response for the branch of the movement that finds other forms of dissent (working for policy change) slow to produce social change.

In short, those who see a need for immediate action against abortion are rational actors, taking their dissent to nongovernmental actors, those most intimately involved in the practice of abortion: women and clinic providers. For this “direct action” wing of the movement, dissuading one woman from having an abortion today is a greater achievement than the future promise of an illusive policy change.

Doan reminds us that the costs of these direct action tactics are low to the activists who wield them, but quite high for their targets. Pickets, protests, and “rescues” take time, though not much money. For the targets of these efforts, the emotional drain, in addition to the added security features required at the clinic and, far too often, at home, become a barrier to abortion provision.

The impact of political harassment is well documented in Doan’s work through both the use of interviews and the innovative use of statistical analyses. The author finds a causal connection between these tactics of intimidation and fear and the decline in providers nationwide. Though many abortion scholars and practitioners have understood this connection intuitively, Doan’s is the first statistical analysis to confirm it. The multiple interactions that providers face with direct-action advocates, and the larger context of fear in which these actions take place, become daunting to continued abortion provision.

To a lesser degree, Doan finds a causal connection between the abortion rate and political harassment. Because an individual woman’s abortion decision is relatively inelastic, and she is likely to experience protest only once in the pursuit of her abortion, she is only modestly likely to be affected by political harassment, compared to the physicians, whose experiences with political harassment are continuous.

Doan further shows us that the more personalized, and more frequent, the political harassment becomes, the more it affects abortion consumers and providers alike. Women seeking abortions and the clinic workers who provide them have understood this connection all along, but it took Doan’s compelling and thorough research to demonstrate that connection for scholars concerned with women, gender, and power.

The personal and persistent campaign of political harassment is perhaps one of the most effective — and until now least understood — features of antiabortion activism in the United States.

The book is filled with useful tools, from a table chronicling the history of abortion in America to the nonmathematical synopsis of the statistical findings, that make the subject accessible to a wide readership. Although the historical chapter examines the ways in which class has played a significant role in American abortion history, it overlooks the role of race in reproductive politics. Still, the early chapters form a solid foundation for a general audience in advance of the data chapters. Anyone seeking to fully understand the innovative and effective nature of the current antiabortion movement in America would do well to read this important book, which calls on us to reexamine our public understanding of antiabortion activities in order to fully appreciate their impact on public discourse, policy, and politics.

Women and New Labour: Engendering Politics and Policy?
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This volume probes the record of Britain's Labour Party governments from 1997 through 2006, asking what a series of Tony Blair-led political executives did and did not accomplish for women. The table of contents features 10 substantive chapters, plus introductory and concluding essays, all written in 2005 or later by members of the Social Science Gender Research Network at the University of Manchester. Their core empirical focus involves domestic public policy, including employment, child care, and machinery-of-government questions, with one chapter each devoted to international development policy and internal Labour Party politics.

Given the pent-up expectations that built to a crescendo throughout 18 years of Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher and then John Major, the question of what Blair and his team contributed is of far more