

In remembering the idealistic element that Ellis plays down, however, we cannot ignore how the Pledge has operated as a form of political football. Or how it elicits fears about difference. Or how sometimes when Americans get whipped up over patriotism, they forget central features of their own creed—namely, freedom and democracy. Reminding us of that and of our conflicted story of patriotism, Ellis has performed a very important service indeed.

Disability Rights and the American Social Safety Net.

By Jennifer L. Erkulwater. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006.

272p. \$42.50.

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— Christopher Howard, *College of William and Mary*

Political scientists who study the American welfare state tend to focus on a small number of social programs. Social Security and “welfare” (now called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) are probably the best known. Typically, the goal is to show how much one or two factors—for example, public opinion, institutional design, policy elites, race, gender—influence these programs. This book is different. It focuses on two programs for the disabled, Disability Insurance (DI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which are studied less often. And it tries to account for a wide range of influences on their development. The book is a genuine addition to our understanding of U.S. social policy and a fine example of how to create a rich explanation of policy change.

The basic puzzle of *Disability Rights and the American Social Safety Net* is how DI and SSI managed to expand in recent decades. Between 1974 and 2003, total spending on SSI increased from \$4 billion to \$35 billion. Spending on DI grew even faster. Although some of this growth was due to recipients living longer, some of it reflected broader eligibility rules and a larger number of recipients. The latter trend, Jennifer Erkulwater argues, was by no means inevitable. Many of the new people eligible for benefits had disabilities that were hard to verify medically and, therefore, suspect. As DI and SSI covered more individuals with chronic pain, drug addiction, and a variety of mental disorders, some policymakers worried that they had gone too far. Moreover, as these programs grew larger, they became a more visible target for critics of government spending. Consequently, the overall record of expansion includes periods of rapid growth and periodic cutbacks.

Specialists in disability policy will find much of this story to be familiar. Retrenchment occurred in the early 1980s when Reagan officials tightened up on eligibility for disability benefits, and in 1996 as part of welfare reform. Interest groups hoping to expand eligibility and increase benefits turned often to litigation, rather than legislation, and stressed the rights of the disabled. Debates over dis-

ability programs were generally limited to a small number of policy elites and seldom attracted national attention. Growth did not always translate into more coherent policymaking; programs for the disabled remained quite fragmented and in some cases embodied conflicting objectives. Anyone who has read work by Edward Berkowitz, Thomas Burke, Martha Derthick, Jerry Mashaw, and Deborah Stone will likely know these lessons.

What Erkulwater does so well is to synthesize many of their insights. Some studies of disability programs, for instance, have concentrated on Congress, the courts, or bureaucracies; this book covers all three. Some studies concentrate on the role of medical professionals or lawyers; this book does both. If readers are concerned that the author tries to do too much, rest assured that she weaves these different strands together into a concise and coherent narrative. For those who do not know this literature (which is the vast majority), this is probably the first book I would suggest reading in order to understand the contemporary politics of disability in the United States.

The book also has something to say about the politics of social policy more generally. We have been told, for example, that programs for the poor are poor programs, meaning that they are slow to grow and vulnerable to attack. Yet the means-tested SSI program has expanded substantially in recent decades, and it joins Medicaid and the Earned Income Tax Credit as big exceptions to the rule. Likewise, we usually think of institutional fragmentation as a major reason why the American welfare state started late and remained small. There are simply too many veto points in the system. Erkulwater shows that veto points can also be access points. In the case of DI and SSI, fragmentation gave advocates for expansion more options for achieving their goals. In response to retrenchment under Reagan, advocates worked hard to shift the debate to the courts and won a number of important victories. They also turned to Congress and found legislators on several committees who were willing to hold hearings and introduce legislation. These moves not only helped to slow down retrenchment but also ultimately succeeded in broadening eligibility. Anyone looking for a prime example of “venue shopping” will find it here.

Near the end of the book, the author reiterates how much of this history resulted from a certain measure of luck and miscalculation. Senator Russell Long did not propose creating SSI in the early 1970s because he was unsatisfied with how government helped the disabled. He hoped that SSI would help him siphon off support for the more sweeping Family Assistance Plan. Reagan officials never imagined how much backlash they would generate when they tried removing people from the disability rolls. The judges who paved the way for expansion inadvertently left DI and SSI open to charges of fraud and abuse. *Disability Rights and the American Social*

Safety Net tells us what happened to DI and SSI, explains why, and shows that it did not have to happen that way. This is what historically informed political analysis is supposed to accomplish, and Jennifer Erkulwater does it well.

Activism Inc.: How the Outsourcing of Grassroots Campaigns Is Strangling Progressive Politics in America.

By Dana R. Fisher. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. 168p. \$24.95 cloth.

The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle.

By T. V. Reed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005. 362p.

\$74.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

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— Doug Imig, *University of Memphis*

These two new books bring welcome perspectives to the study of social movements in America. Reed considers the art of collective action: in terms of both the creative repertoire of activists responding to evolving social and political contexts and the cultural arts that are invoked by and associated with social movements. Fisher's book, meanwhile, sheds light on a second dimension of collective action: the nationwide grassroots canvassing organizations that collect donations and [ostensibly] inform concerned citizens about progressive issues. At first glance, the two books seem to be speaking to aspects of mobilization that are worlds apart. However, their differences help to bring a fuller understanding of the operational field in which social movements are sustained or wither.

Reed examines selected cultural aspects of nine waves of mobilization: songs of the American Civil Rights Movement, the drama of the black power movement, poetry of the women's movement, murals of the Chicano movement, Hollywood's portrayal of the Native American movements of the 1970s, the phenomenon of rock concerts as fund—and consciousness—raisers, the centrality of the graphic arts to the work of ACT UP, the contribution of academic writing to the movement for environmental justice, and the importance of new media to the global justice movement. Reed's selection of movements and specific cultural products associated with those movements was guided by his interest in "movements as sites for the production and reception of cultural texts" (p. xvii). The examples he includes are illustrative, but certainly not exhaustive.

Reed offers brief—at times too cursory—summaries of each movement and then focuses on their cultural dimensions (p. 298). His examples illustrate the ways that art functions within movements to encourage and empower group members; harmonize diverse constituencies; reinforce movement values; express those values to potential recruits, opponents, and undecided bystanders;

enact movement goals; historicize the movement; critique dominant ideas and undercut dogma; and make room for pleasure (pp. 299–300). This list nicely summarizes the ways in which social movement cultures contribute to the process of organization and mobilization, and—in so doing—serve both to expose the injustices motivating the movement and elevate alternative cultural and political understandings.

Reed's analysis explicitly entwines culture with social, economic, and political forces (p. 314). His examples also speak to the importance of environmental and technological forces. We know, for example, that geographic proximity remains one of the strongest correlates of participation in protests, and Reed's own examples underscore the importance of the Internet for creating a "virtual" organizational network within the global justice movement.

One of the most intriguing chapters in the book considers the drama of the black power movement. Reed discusses the efforts of members of the "black power theater" movement to fundamentally alter consciousness among black Americans (Chapter 2). Playwright Amiri Baraka described his work as a revolutionary "theater of assault" on dominant consciousness. Reed connects the theater of black power with the evocative actions of the Black Panthers, including their 1967 armed siege of the California legislature (p. 40). Reed argues compellingly that the Sacramento action not only was the party's most famous political-theatrical work, but that it was a logical extension of the theatrical practice at the center of black power (p. 53).

One—perhaps inevitable—danger of explicating the meaning of movement art is that doing so privileges one strand of mobilization over others. As Aldon Morris (*The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, 1986) argues, there were many origins of the civil rights movement, and the repertoire and cultures of the movement reflected that rich inheritance. No doubt the newspaper photographs of Linda Brown crossing the train tracks to attend her segregated school or of six-year-old Ruby Bridges single-handedly integrating New Orleans public schools contributed to the national framing of the movement and its achievements, but so too did the tactical maneuvering that undergirded the NAACP strategy to pursue integration, first, in graduate schools, and then in undergraduate admissions, and only then in public schools.

Dana Fisher's *Activism Inc.* provides a useful counterpoint to a discussion of the importance of culture and the process of crafting authentic meanings within effective social movement mobilization. Fisher describes the workings of a grassroots canvassing organization called the People's Project and similar organizations that have contracted to undertake the grassroots canvassing efforts of a range of progressive movements including Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, Save the Children, the Human Right