

These points aside, *After Brown* is an extremely valuable book. Charles Clotfelter has done yeoman's work in providing his readers with the best evidence to date on a subject that continues to attract a great deal of national attention. In turn, it should be read by all those interested in understanding the true state of desegregation and the role of interracial contact in the education of America's children.

**To the Flag: The Unlikely History of the Pledge of**

**Allegiance.** By Richard J. Ellis. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005. 312p. \$29.95 cloth, \$15.95 paper.  
DOI: 10.1017/S153759270707034X

— Kevin Mattson, *Ohio University*

This is an intelligent book about the strange story of American patriotism. Strange because America is much more of an “imagined community,” to use Benedict Anderson's evocative concept, than most Western European states. Also strange because, as Richard Ellis points out, it has been so contested over the years.

Ellis's book will no doubt annoy political scientists who search for models, airtight theories, or a quantifiable subject matter. We have here no obsession with “methods,” just straightforward historical narrative. This makes the book not only enjoyable to read but also appealing for use in undergraduate courses dealing with American patriotism and nationalism.

Ellis refuses to tell a simple, unified narrative about how the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag was adopted. A straightforward or Whiggish story is impossible due in part to the “decentralized character of American education,” wherein different schools and municipal and state governments could adopt the pledge and its rules (how to hold your hand, the need to stand, etc.) in different ways (p. 58).

The book is strongest in its opening sections. Here, Ellis explores the story of Francis Bellamy, the original author of the Pledge. It is fascinating to note that Bellamy (a cousin of Edward Bellamy, radical author of *Looking Backward*) was a Christian socialist and concerned with the selfish materialism and business culture taking root during the Gilded Age at the turn of the last century. Though Ellis admits that Bellamy was “undeniably radical” (p. 26), he downplays this element of his life and instead stresses his nativist streak. It was Bellamy's fear of new people coming ashore to America that drove him to write the Pledge and then try to get it adopted nationwide. The biggest aid in his campaign came during World War I, a time known for whipped-up nativism (anti-German most obviously) and patriotism.

The author is quick to document early dissent from the Pledge. Most of this came from religious believers, especially Mennonites and Jehovah's Witnesses, who no doubt worried that the Pledge deified the flag and nation more

than it did God (and “under God” was not in the original version). The conflicts documented in this story are fascinating and sometimes comical. For instance, during World War II, there was some concern that the original arm-extended salute to the flag looked frighteningly like the Heil Hitler salute in Nazi Germany (p. 115). Never was it an easy thing to get American patriotism right!

Ellis's story turns particularly contentious as it moves up in time. As the saying goes, the 1960s changed everything, and it certainly changed the way Americans thought about the Pledge. More secular claims started to be made against the Pledge, with some students saying that it was impossible for them to state that America really stood for “justice” (pp. 160–61). Judges increasingly allowed students to sit and remain silent during the Pledge. Teachers, too, got in on the act of refusing to comply. Battles emerged between legislatures—typically in support of the pledge—and the judiciary—which was more willing to accept the importance of dissent, and religious dissent especially (p. 168). Ellis then shows how this story culminated in the Dukakis-Bush Sr. battle for the presidency, when Vice President George H. W. Bush thrashed Governor Michael Dukakis for refusing to sign a pro-Pledge bit of legislation.

Toward the end of the book, the story turns less illuminating as it turns fairly obvious. After all, it is no surprise to find that the Pledge became a political football after 9/11. Republicans turned increasingly strident, and more willing to make patriotism work for them as the culture wars heated up. Ellis shows how “politicians” have used the Pledge and mandatory laws to “mobilize political support and to portray opponents as insufficiently patriotic” (p. 207).

The idea that stating certain words could make clear one's loyalty is indeed a strange practice. It is also exceptional, as Ellis points out. He cannot find any other country that does what the United States does with its pledge. He argues that America's “idea-based identity” (p. 214) cannot explain it. He also knocks down the idea that America's self-conception as a chosen people has much to offer in way of explanation. He emphasizes instead a national “anxiety” that is prone to abuse. And he has much documentary evidence to show that.

Still, “anxiety” might sound like something bad—something prone to manipulation. But it might also offer us another interpretation. Ellis himself documents how a fear of “materialism” has inspired Americans to seek a faith in something that transcends self-interest. Recall Bellamy here. And though he downplays this dimension and emphasizes fear, it is important to recall the idealist strain behind the Pledge. After all, the idea is not necessarily that Americans *are* unified and not divided—it is that Americans *should be* united even across class lines. Though saying words does not ensure that America will achieve more social justice, the spirit behind saying those words might matter more than Ellis himself thinks.

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.

DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707070351

— 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*