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Review of *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*. Theda Skocpol. Reviewed by James Midgley, Louisiana State University.

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of persons who use social services. The author advocates that state constitutions should be brought in line with the Universal Declaration where variations occur in relation to economic social and cultural rights. However, a specific set of recommendations on steps as to how to bring this about are not included in the book. This reader did not find the section on the debates within the United Nations as the Universal Declaration was under development to be helpful in understanding the nature of human rights or how their condition could be advanced in the United States. This section did not shed light on the central purpose of the book. In addition, the section wherein the Universal Declaration was compared to each of the fifty states (147 pages) was tedious to read. Such elaborate coverage may have been appropriate for a dissertation but not in a book presented for public consumption. The author's conclusions about commonalities and differences between the Universal Declaration and constitutions of the fifty states should have been compressed into a shorter version. It is the reviewers opinion that the very excellent coverage of the nature of human rights' their historical development; and comparison with U.S and state constitutions could have been accomplished in about half the 259 pages of the book.

Roland G. Meinert
Southwest Missouri State University

Theda Skocpol. *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*. Harvard University Press, 1992. \$34.95.

Over the last twenty years, sociological research into the emergence of the modern welfare state has increased rapidly. This research has generated competing theoretical accounts of the dynamics of social welfare. For example, while some studies attribute the emergence of national social policies to the social and economic changes brought about by industrialization, others stress the role of trade unions in successfully negotiating with reluctant governments for the introduction of social programs. Yet others contend that social programs are purposely

introduced by the ruling class in an attempt to stifle the revolutionary potential of the proletariat.

These explanations are usually based on detailed comparative research involving several country case studies. occasionally, scholars will trace developments in only one country but references to the accumulated comparative body of knowledge will be made. Theda Skocpol's study falls within this latter category.

Skocpol is particularly interested in two questions which have previously been explored in comparative social policy research. First, why was the United States a 'welfare laggard' when compared with the majority of European countries which introduced comprehensive social programs long before the New Deal? Second, can a detailed historiography of social policy in the United States discover the underlying social, political and economic factors responsible for the emergence of the American welfare state? Skocpol's meticulous research provides surprising answers to these questions.

In the preface of her book, Skocpol reveals how she discovered that far from being a welfare laggard, social provisions in the United States at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries were quite extensive. The federal government had established a large pension program for Civil War veterans which was subsequently replaced by a comprehensive system of state funded mother's pensions. As the Civil War Pensions were phased out, highly activist groups of middle class women were able to influence the legislative process to foster the creation of mother's pensions by state governments. Unlike Europe, where social insurance was introduced primarily to protect the male working class, the efforts of these women resulted in the creation of what Skocpol describes as an embryonic 'maternal' welfare state which might have evolved into a unique formation had events during the 1920s and the New Deal itself not inhibited its further development.

Skocpol demonstrates that established explanatory theories of the development of social policy in the United States are seriously deficient. Her finding that extensive social provisions were in existence at the end of the 19th century challenges the view that America's rugged individualism precluded the development of social policy. It also challenges conspiracy theories

that claim that the interests of capitalists dictate the evolution of social welfare. Similarly it casts doubt on theories that accord primary explanatory importance to economic factors such as industrialization in the dynamics of welfare. Instead, Skocpol develops her previously articulated 'state centered' approach into a 'policy centered' approach in which underlying social conditions, political pressure and the autonomous actions of the state combine in a complex way to facilitate the introduction of social programs.

Theda Skocpol is already recognized as a distinguished academic. This book will further enhance her reputation and her account of the development of social policy in the United States will inevitably stimulate further debate. Her book is essential reading not only for those who wish to follow the debate, but for anyone studying comparative social policy today.

James Midgley
Louisiana State University

Katherine S. Newman, *Declining Fortunes: The Withering of the American Dream*. New York: Basic Books, 1993. \$23.00 hardcover.

Anthropology, arguably the most American of the social sciences, is also the most poignant. In *Declining Fortunes*, Katherine Newman adeptly applies her anthropological skills to a most American topic: the prospects of the baby boom generation. Drawing on interviews with residents of "Pleasanton," a prosperous suburban community in the Northeast, Newman traces the generational identity of what could be the most influential cohort in the nation's history. But fortune has eluded the baby boomers. In her exploration of the context, the consequences, and the rationalization of generational failure, Newman integrates demographic and economic evidence with her interviews producing an account that is as satisfying as it is troubling.

Baby boomers, contends Newman, are products of a generation imprinted with the despair of the Great Depression. Having survived the Depression, the parents of the baby boom were able to assure their children a life style that was unimaginable given their up-bringing during the 1930s. The boomers of