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**Review of *Home Bound: Growing Up with a Disability in America*.
Cass Irvin. Reviewed by Elizabeth Lightfoot.**

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these social security schemes. One of the conclusions of this study is that "ellipsisa reform that delays benefit eligibility by three years would likely reduce the proportion of men age fifty-six to sixty-five out of the labor force between 23 and 36 percentellipsis"

The structure of the chapters 1 through 12 is very similar. Basically the same type of analysis is done in each chapter so as to facilitate the comparison of results across nations and the preparation of summary tables based on results for all twelve nations. The quality of the analysis is consistently strong throughout the book. The target audience for this book is graduate students in economics and professional labor economists with an interest in retirement behavior. It will be all but impossible for graduate students in sociology and social work to grasp much of the analysis presented in this book and certainly the fine points unless they happen to have strong backgrounds in econometrics and experience working with simulation models.

John B. Williamson
Boston College

Cass Irvin, *Home Bound: Growing Up with a Disability in America*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004. \$59.50 hardcover, \$19.95 papercover.

Those involved in the disability rights movement have long talked about such issues as prejudice, inaccessibility, the need for attendant care, and the mystifying concept of 'normalcy'. Cass Irvin, a disability advocate, teacher, and writer, brilliantly illustrates these issues through a series of essays about her personal experience as a woman with a disability, her own encounters with discrimination and stigma, and her awakening as a disability activist in the 1970s. These essays, some of which were previously published in *The Ragged Edge* or *The Disability Rag*, tell an intimate and compelling story, and serve as a primer on disability identity and disability rights for the uninitiated.

Underlying Irvin's personal narrative is the concept of the social model of disability, which Irvin never names, but adeptly describes as: "it is not the disability itself that handicaps us," but the people that "do not see us as capable (p. 111)." Irvin demonstrates this concept through numerous examples from her

own life. For example, she shows how, as a bright young college student, an instructor refuses to make accommodations to a library research assignment that is clearly physically inaccessible to her, causing her to receive a C for the course. In addition, as a student teacher, her supervisor gave her a lower grade with the only rationale being simply "you, after all, are handicapped."

A key handicapping factor that appears frequently throughout the book is the role of economics in the lives of people with disabilities. Irvin frequently compares herself to one of her heroes, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who like Irvin, went to Warm Springs, Georgia for rehabilitation from polio. Although FDR could not walk without assistance, he had the financial capability to hire attendants, and thus the capability to do anything, including being president. Irvin, who grew up in an upper middle class family in Louisville, also had the resources to hire attendants, to attend college, and to live in her own home. Irvin describes how her economic situation both shielded her from some of the barriers other people with disabilities faced, yet also kept her from realizing the commonalities that she shared with others with disabilities.

Drawing from the American feminist tradition, most prominently from Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique*, Irvin outlines what she calls 'the gimp mystique.' People with disabilities feel they have to hide their needs for accommodations or assistance because it is not 'normal' to need such things. People with disabilities are often made to feel stigma or shame due to having a disability or being dependent on others, and are praised for not being too demanding or by not being similar to others with disabilities. Irvin demonstrates the gimp mystique with personal examples of her own feelings of stigma and questions of her own intelligence and self-worth, despite the fact that Irvin is clearly gifted in many ways. Additionally, Irvin recounts the many years she spent in bed as a teenager so as not to be a bother to her family or others. Even FDR experienced the gimp mystique, with his self-reference as a 'cured cripple' when his condition was not 'curable', and his concealment of his disability while in public.

Irvin outlines the notion of how the feminist notion of the personal being political is particularly relevant to people with disabilities. Society often views problems people with disabilities

face as being an individual problem resulting from an individual's condition. However, when viewed collectively, the problems people with disability have are in reality social problems caused by the society's inaccessibility and discrimination. The book also discusses how each individual with a disability is part of the disability movement in their day-to-day requests for accommodations or demands for inclusion. Moreover, when people with disabilities join together, as Irvin did when she first joined a disability advocacy organization in the 1970s, they can not only raise their consciousness about their common experiences with discrimination and the gimp mystique, but also begin to change society's ideas of normalcy.

Irvin's book is destined to become a classic in disability studies, disability history and disability policy. Written with eloquence and humor, it provides convincing examples of the key concepts of the disability rights movement. The one thing missing from this important work is an index, which hopefully will be included in the second printing. While this book reads like an autobiography or a novel, it is a book to be revisited many times.

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Friedan, B. (1963). *The feminine mystique*. New York: W.W. Norton.