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Voices from the Edge: Narratives about the Americans with Disabilities Act. Ruth O'Brien. Reviewed by Juliet C. Rothman.

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world of social work looks bright. Always remember when the going gets tough, the tough get going!

Mel Gray

The University of Newcastle, Australia

Ruth O'Brien, *Voices from the Edge: Narratives about the Americans with Disabilities Act*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. \$55.00 hardcover, \$16.95 papercover.

Voices From the Edge presents a refreshing and innovatively organized look at the disability literature in the context of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. While the field is replete with excellent collections of personal narratives of the experience of disability, and, though fewer, with legal analyses of court cases, the ADA, and American disability rights history, O'Brien's skillful blending of the two genres offers readers the best of both: powerful personal narratives and a thorough grounding in legal cases, issues, and precedents which touch upon the lives of each of the people who share their experiences. Through this unusual approach, O'Brien makes an excellent contribution to the field of disability studies.

O'Brien sets the stage by providing us with a brief history of disability and disability rights in the United States from colonial times, when people with disabilities were often hidden away by ashamed families in a world that valued self-reliance, to our present-day disagreements over the interpretation and intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act and issues of judicial oversight affected by the new federalism. While self-reliance continues to be a strong national value, mitigating circumstances tempered public attitudes, beginning with the disabled Civil War veterans, on whose behalf the first programs in support of people with disabilities were developed. World War I veterans were similarly supported, and programs were later extended to cover non-veterans with disabilities. While concern with the needs and conditions of people with disabilities in the United States grew, there was a simultaneous effort by the government's immigration authorities to keep disabled people from entering the United States, fearing that they would become a public burden. There was also a medicalization of disability, where physicians' roles

as gatekeepers to benefits increased, and the disabled individual was viewed as the locus of the "problem". The end-of-century shift to a social context for considering disability continues to challenge individuals, institutions, and government agencies today.

While there were isolated civil actions early in the 20th century, the major changes in disability rights laws occurred in the latter half of that century. The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 and the Mass Transportation Act of 1979 were among the earliest, but they were not fully implemented for many years. The landmark Rehabilitation Act of 1974 with its 504 regulation prohibited discrimination in employment of people with disabilities in all sectors that received federal funding. The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act further supported 504, and is divided into sections ("Titles"), three of which are developed in this book. Title I addresses employment issues, Title II addresses rights for people with disabilities to government services, such as education, access to public areas and buildings, and mass transit, while Title III addresses an area not covered in any previous legislation: access to private entities such as restaurants, theaters, hotels, stores, gyms and daycare centers. Title IV, which is not covered here, addresses rights in terms of common interstate carriers of telephone and related services.

In Part 1, Joan Aleshire challenges our thinking about what constitutes a disability by sharing her special life experiences as an advantaged person with a disability. Understanding what constitutes a disability is a necessary pre-condition to the rest of the book's presentations, and O'Brien encourages the reader to consider the subject and to recognize that this in itself is one of the most difficult issues upon which to arrive at a consensus.

Part 2 addresses Title I's employment issues by presenting three very different narratives, two of which focus on disclosure issues: Nowak's on disclosing HIV status, and Atkins on disclosing a paralysis that has an exacerbating-remitting pattern. Two of the narrative's, Atkins' and Kwsisto's, occur in the context of university settings. The ensuing in-depth presentation of the legal issues around workplace hiring, firing, promotions, and accommodations aptly illustrates the vast complexities of this field, and provides a discouraging statistic: between 80 and 90% of lawsuits filed under this section of the ADA found for the employer.

Part 3, Title II issues, includes three separate areas: Kriegel and Hockenberry take us for a walk and a ride, respectively, in New York, followed by an interesting presentation of the legal issues in regard to mass transit and curb cuts; Tollifson shares her experiences with getting a driver's license, which is followed by a discussion about testing and disability which challenges readers to explore their own beliefs - should people with disabilities be tested differently than people without disabilities? Stewart shares her experiences in trying to get a deaf interpreter for her daughter in an ER, while O'Brien shares frustrations over a copy machine, followed by a complex discussion of the impact of the new federalism on the Supreme Court on the enforcement of ADA provisions.

Part 4, which relates a frustrating if wryly amusing story about handicapped parking places on private property, includes an insightful analysis of the complexities of enforcing Title III of the ADA: the lack of direction of responsibility leaves everyone - police, mayor's office, government officials - unsure and unwilling to ensure this code is followed.

This book is a "good read", and it presents a great deal of useful legal information in a very accessible manner by connecting the personal to the legal spheres in a very immediate sense. Concerned first about the person in the narrative, the reader eagerly peruses and absorbs the applicable sections of law and the challenges that directly impact each individual's life.

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Susannah R. Ottaway, *The Decline of Life: Old Age in Eighteenth-Century England*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004. \$70.00 cloth

Susannah Ottaway, a professor of history at Carlton College, Minnesota, has written an important monograph that is one of books in the Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy and Society in Past Time. It examines provision for the elderly in eighteenth-century England, a time of population growth and the beginnings of the industrial revolution. The well-being of the elderly, generally seen as those over the age of sixty, was