

THE RELUCTANT WELFARE STATE *3rd Edition*

**American Social
Welfare Policies:
Past, Present,
and Future**



Bruce S. Jansson

THE RELUCTANT WELFARE STATE

American Social Welfare Policies—
Past, Present, and Future

Bruce S. Jansson

University of Southern California



Brooks/Cole Publishing Company

ITP® *An International Thomson Publishing Company*

Pacific Grove • Albany • Bonn • Boston • Cincinnati • Detroit
London • Madrid • Melbourne • Mexico City • New York • Paris
San Francisco • Singapore • Tokyo • Toronto • Washington

Sponsoring Editor: *Lisa Gebo*
Marketing Team: *Jean Vevers Thompson and Margaret Parks*
Editorial Assistant: *Terry Thomas*
Production Editor: *Laurel Jackson*
Production Assistant: *Dorothy Bell*
Manuscript Editor: *Bernard Gilbert*
Permissions Editor: *Mary Kay Hancharick*
Interior and Cover Design: *Sharon L. Kinghan*
Interior Illustration: *Lisa Torri*

Cover Photos: © *Bob Daemmrich / Stock Boston*, © *Stock Montage, Inc.*, © *Katherine McGlynn / The Image Works*
Art Editor: *Lisa Torri*
Photo Editor: *Robert J. Western*
Photo Researcher: *Susan Kaprov*
Indexer: *James Minkin*
Typesetting: *TBH Typecast, Inc.*
Cover Printing: *Phoenix Color Corporation*
Printing and Binding: *Quebecor Printing Fairfield*

COPYRIGHT © 1997 by Brooks/Cole Publishing Company
A division of International Thomson Publishing Inc.
ITP The ITP logo is a registered trademark under license.

For more information, contact:

BROOKS/COLE PUBLISHING COMPANY
511 Forest Lodge Road
Pacific Grove, CA 93950
USA

International Thomson Publishing Europe
Berkshire House 168-173
High Holborn
London WC1V 7AA
England

Thomas Nelson Australia
102 Dodds Street
South Melbourne, 3205
Victoria, Australia

Nelson Canada
1120 Birchmount Road
Scarborough, Ontario
Canada M1K 5G4

International Thomson Editores
Seneca 53
Col. Polanco
C.P. 11560 México, D. F., México

International Thomson Publishing GmbH
Königswinterer Strasse 418
53227 Bonn
Germany

International Thomson Publishing Asia
221 Henderson Road
#05-10 Henderson Building
Singapore 0315

International Thomson Publishing Japan
Hirakawacho Kyowa Building, 3F
2-2-1 Hirakawacho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102
Japan

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transcribed, in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher, Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, Pacific Grove, California 93950.

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Jansson, Bruce S.

The reluctant welfare state : American social welfare policies—
past, present, and future / Bruce S. Jansson.—3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-534-34141-1

1. United States—Social policy. 2. United States—Social
conditions. 3. Public welfare—United States—History. I. Title.

HN57.J25 1997

361.6'1'0973—dc20

96-12028

CIP



Preface

Before I undertook this revision, I asked myself whether social policy history is still relevant to students who are entering the social work profession. Viewed merely as a descriptive enterprise that focuses on the memorization of events and facts, it clearly is not. Nor is it relevant if history, interesting as it may be, is seen as an end in itself. Social policy history is powerfully relevant to social workers, however, if it is used to stimulate critical thinking about issues, developments, and policies in prior eras and in contemporary society. It can encourage the following:

1. Ethical reasoning about a range of issues, including controversial policies and social reform
2. Analysis of limitations and strengths of the American welfare state, including the role of the federal government and entitlements
3. Analysis of the evolution and structure of the American welfare state—and comparisons with the welfare states of other nations
4. Analysis of specific policies
5. Awareness of the evolution and direction of the social work profession
6. Knowledge of the oppression of diverse outgroups—including women, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, gay men and lesbians, older Americans, children, and people with physical disabilities—and of policies that might help them better their condition
7. Understanding of the need to include policy practice and social reform work in professional careers in order to help outgroups and others improve their lot
8. Understanding of how the lives of ordinary people and social work clients are deeply affected by social policies of local, state, and federal governments, as well as by agency policies

All these purposes are even more compelling today in the United States, where basic values and commitments are questioned more extensively than in any recent period and where the central theme of this book—the reluctance of the American welfare state—has never been more acutely demonstrated.

To focus the teaching of social policy history so that it promotes critical thinking about these kinds of issues, I have added 33 inserts to this edition. Some are titled “Critical Analysis”; others are titled “Ethical Analysis of Key Issues and Policies.” They cover a range of topics relevant not only to specific historical periods, but to contemporary society. When discussing poorhouses in the 19th century, for example, students are asked to analyze when people are “deserving” and when, if ever, they are “undeserving.” When discussing conservatives’ efforts to curtail AFDC in the 1990s, students are asked to analyze whether denial or curtailment of benefits to single mothers would diminish out-of-wedlock births.

To promote critical thinking, I discuss competing radical, liberal, libertarian, and conservative ideologies in the new first chapter and identify their premises, core values, and perspectives. I argue that social workers can develop their policy identities by examining issues that have arisen in prior eras and the contemporary period.

I introduce readers to analytic and ethical-reasoning skills in the new second chapter. I provide a framework for ethical reasoning that links ethical principles, analysis of policy outcomes, and practical considerations. To help students understand how the American welfare state evolved, the chapter also discusses contextual and political factors that have shaped social policies in the United States.

Two concluding chapters have been rewritten to stimulate critical thinking about the direction of the

American welfare state. Chapter 13 discusses six dimensions that make the American welfare state more reluctant than most European ones and identifies a number of factors that have contributed to this reluctance. Drawing on examples from prior chapters, I critically examine key assumptions and panaceas of conservatives in Chapter 14 and dispute conservatives' contention that many social problems are primarily caused by the welfare state. I also discuss the limitations of public policies and suggest that they often cannot solve a range of problems, even if they provide many positive benefits. By discussing reform projects of social workers in prior eras, I discuss how students can include policy practice in their professional careers.

I include an extended chapter on the Clinton presidency that analyzes the conflict among Newt Gingrich, "New Democrats" like Bill Clinton, and Democratic liberals in Congress.

I retain the previous edition's emphasis on the oppression of various outgroups during American history. Drawing on the rapidly expanding research of many historians, I have supplemented these materials with more emphasis on empowerment strategies. Although these groups have often been subjected to punitive policies and discrimination, they have developed ingenious survival strategies, such as self-help, advocacy, and political action.

I have merged the chapters on the medieval and colonial periods. This revision allows me to place colonial Americans in their European context and also to examine how they evolved unique institutions by the end of the 18th century.

I have made some interpretive changes in this edition. Prompted by the work of such historians as Gordon Wood and Joyce Appleby, I have substantially modified my interpretation of the colonial period. Whereas the previous edition emphasized the lack of competing perspectives in this period, the current edition emphasizes political conflicts within American society from the 1750s through the early part of the 19th century. Influenced by Charles Sellers, I place even more emphasis on economic inequality in my discussion of the 19th century. I have used Theda Skocpol's inventive insights in my discussion of the 19th century and the progressive period, though I argue that she overreaches

when she contends that Americans constructed a significant welfare state in these periods.

To help instructors teach social policy history so that it encourages creative thinking, I have developed a compendium of innovative approaches that emphasize the relevance of social welfare history to professional education. Titled *Creative Ways to Teach Social Policy History and to Link It to Contemporary Society and the Profession*, it draws on contributions from faculty from around the country.

I have benefitted from the comments of many reviewers. Paul Harris and Kenneth Smemo, both from the Department of History at Moorhead State University, helped to refine my discussion on several historical points. Professor Charles Atherton, professor emeritus of the University of Alabama, saved me from a number of errors with his extended comments. Many helpful suggestions were provided by other reviewers, who include Janice Adams, Indiana Wesleyan University; Joel Blau; William Hershey, University of Washington; Robert Hudson, Boston University; David E. Pollio, Washington University; John McNutt, Indiana University East; Tom Roy, University of Montana; and Martin B. Tracy, Southern Illinois University. I received first-rate research assistance from Eugene Alper on Chapter 12. Jeanette Cambra provided invaluable assistance in locating fugitive materials, drafting the chapter on Clinton, and co-authoring the compendium of innovative teaching approaches. Three colleagues—Professors Ramon Salcido, Essie Seck, and Madeline Stoner—steered me toward important materials on outgroups.

Lisa Gebo, the sponsoring editor for this book, encouraged me to undertake this revision and brainstormed ways of introducing critical thinking. The production editor, Laurie Jackson, skillfully shepherded the book through production, and the copy editor, Bernard Gilbert, made many good editing suggestions. All errors of omission or commission rest on my shoulders alone.

Many thanks to Betty Ann, who tolerated the piles of books and papers that littered the household as this revision was in progress, not to mention other encouragement that she provided.

Bruce S. Jansson

Contents

1 Social Reform in a Society with Conflicting Tendencies 1

- A Reluctant Welfare State 2
- The Controversial Nature of Social Policy 3
- Using Social Policy History to Develop a Policy Identity 7
- Policy Eras in U.S. History 9
- Notes 11

2 A Framework for Understanding the Evolution of the Reluctant Welfare State 12

- The Two-Sided Context 12
- The Role of Political Processes in Creating a Reluctant Welfare State 14
- Policy Choices 15
- Evaluating Social Policies in the Past and in the Present 17
 - Evaluating Specific Policies with Reference to Outcomes* 17
 - Ethical Reasoning from First Principles* 18
 - Relativism* 21
- Toward Ethical Reasoning: An Eclectic Approach 22
- Notes 24

3 Fashioning a New Society in the Wilderness 25

- The Feudal Inheritance 26

- Social Policy in Medieval Society 27
- The Gradual Unraveling of Feudalism 28
- Policy Choices in the Period of Transition 30
 - Positive Policies* 30
 - Punitive Policies* 33
- The American Colonists 34
 - Patterns of Continuity* 34
 - Patterns of Change* 35
- The American Revolution as Catalyst 37
- From Revolution to Limited Government 38
- Legitimizing Limited Government 40
- Positive Responses to Social Need 41
- Punitive Policies 43
- Harsh Treatment of Outgroups 44
 - The Native Americans* 44
 - African Slaves* 47
 - The Status of Women* 50
- Ominous Signs 52
- Overview: Social Policy at the Nation's Inception 54
- Notes 54

4 Social Welfare Policy in the Early Republic: 1789–1860 58

- Social Realities in the New Nation 59
- Immigration and Urbanization 60
- A Moral Crusade 63
- Social Reform Policies 65
 - Temperance* 65
 - Antipauperism Strategies* 66
 - Character-Building Institutions* 69

<i>Opportunity-Enhancing Policies</i>	73
Radical Movements: Conspicuous by Their Absence	74
Outgroups in the Early Republic	75
<i>Irish Immigrants</i>	75
<i>The Status of Women</i>	77
The Evolution of American Social Policies	79
Notes	80

5 Lost Opportunities: The Frontier, the Civil War, and Industrialization 82

Policy at the Frontier	83
<i>Land Policy</i>	83
<i>Conquest and Persecution</i>	84
<i>Finding Laborers</i>	87
<i>Appraisal of Frontier Policy</i>	88
The Civil War and Freed Slaves: An Exercise in Futility?	89
<i>Origins of the Civil War</i>	89
<i>Social Policy During the War</i>	93
<i>Reconstruction</i>	94
<i>Women, Policy, and the War</i>	98
Social Policy and Industrialization	99
<i>Industrialization Before the Civil War</i>	99
<i>Industrialization During the Gilded Age</i>	100
<i>The Failure of Regulation</i>	101
The Absence of a Welfare State	105
Notes	106

6 Social Reform in the Progressive Era 109

Realities in Industrial Society	110
The Genesis of Reform	113
<i>Catalytic Events</i>	114
<i>Intellectual Ferment and Public Opinion</i>	116
<i>The Specter of Social Unrest</i>	118
Regulatory Reforms in the Progressive Era	118

The Limited Social Programs of the Progressive Era	120
<i>Policy Reforms for Women and Children</i>	120
<i>Private Philanthropy</i>	122
<i>Other Policy Reforms</i>	123
<i>The Limited Nature of Progressives' Social Reforms</i>	124
Cultural and Policy Realities That Limited Reform	124
Political Realities That Limited Reform	126
Women and Children: Seizing the Opportunity	128
Social Reformers and the Bull Moose Campaign of 1912	129
Outgroups in the Progressive Era	131
<i>People of Color</i>	131
<i>Women and Politics</i>	135
<i>Immigrants and the Closing of the Doors</i>	137
The Resilience of Jane Addams and Her Allies	138
The Emergence of Social Work	139
The Evolution of the Reluctant Welfare State	143
Notes	144

7 The Early Stages of the New Deal 148

The 1920s	149
The Period of Denial: 1929–1933	151
The Era of Emergency Reforms: 1933–1935	152
<i>Forces That Promoted Major Reforms</i>	154
<i>Forces That Limited Roosevelt's Initial Policy Initiatives</i>	155
<i>Emergency Relief</i>	158
<i>Reform of the Economic System</i>	162
Emergency or Permanent Programs?	164
The Evolution of the Reluctant Welfare State	165
Notes	166

8 Institutionalizing the New Deal

169

- Toward Ongoing Programs 170
 - Liberal Forces* 170
 - Conservative Pressures on Roosevelt* 172
- Legislation in the Second Half of the New Deal 172
 - The Social Security Act* 173
 - Labor and Public Works Legislation* 179
- The Era of Stalemate: 1937–1941 181
- Policies During the Era of Stalemate 183
- Outgroups in the New Deal 184
 - African Americans* 185
 - Women* 187
 - Latinos* 188
 - Asian Americans* 189
- Social Workers in the New Deal 190
- The Evolution of the Reluctant Welfare State 193
- Notes* 195

9 The Era of Federal Social Services: The New Frontier and the Great Society

198

- World War II, the Postwar Era, and the 1950s 199
 - The Failure of Social Services in the Truman Era* 199
 - Eisenhower and the Conservative 1950s* 201
- The Turn Toward Reform 203
- Domestic Policy During the Kennedy Presidency 205
 - Poverty and Civil Rights: Toward Reform* 206
 - The Course of Reform: Failures and Successes* 210
- Kennedy and Johnson: A Study in Contrast 212
- Johnson's Social Welfare Legacy 214
 - Civil Rights Legislation* 214
 - Earl Warren and the Supreme Court* 215
 - Medicare and Medicaid* 216
 - Aid to Education* 218

The War on Poverty, Welfare Reforms, and Food Stamps 218

- The Overextended President and the Loss of Credibility 221
- The Beleaguered President: 1967–1968
- Outgroups in the 1960s 222
 - Women* 225
 - Gay Men and Lesbians* 228
 - Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans* 229
 - People of Color in the Urban Ghettoes* 232
- Social Work in the 1960s 232
- The Evolution of the Reluctant Welfare State 234
- Notes* 235

10 The Paradoxical Era: 1968–1980

240

- Richard Nixon: Political Opportunist 241
- Nixon's Strategy: Floating Coalitions and Outbidding 242
- From Strategy to Policy 243
 - Welfare Policy* 244
 - Social Security* 246
 - Revenue Sharing and Social Services* 246
 - Civil Rights* 248
 - Health Policy and Other Legislation* 249
- Nixon's Shift from Reform to Conservatism 249
- The Brief Reign of Gerald Ford 252
- Jimmy Carter: Outsider in the White House 252
 - Carter's Domestic Legislation* 253
 - Carter's Fall* 256
- The Hidden Social Spending Revolution of the 1970s 256
- Why Was the Spending Revolution Hidden? 258
- Outgroups in the 1970s 259
 - Changes in Tactics and Organization* 259
 - The Mobilization of New Sets of Outgroups* 261
 - The 1970s as a Revolution in Rights* 262
 - The Beginnings of Backlash* 262

The Evolution of the Reluctant Welfare State	263
Notes	263

The Evolution of the Reluctant Welfare State	301
Notes	302

11 The Conservative Counterrevolution in the Era of Reagan and Bush 267

The Ascendancy of Conservatism	268
<i>The Legitimation of Conservatism</i>	269
<i>Ronald Reagan as Catalyst</i>	270
<i>Ronald Reagan's Emergence as a National Hero</i>	272
<i>Supply-Side Economics: A Positive Way to Be Negative</i>	272
<i>The Campaign of 1980: Two Styles</i>	274
The Reagan Policy Blitzkrieg	274
<i>The Triumph of Conservatism</i>	277
<i>OBRA, Tax Reductions, and Deregulation</i>	278
<i>Reagan's Loss of Momentum</i>	279
<i>Social Security, Job Training, and Medicare</i>	280
<i>Moral Reforms</i>	283
Stalemate and Scandal	283
<i>The Election of 1984</i>	283
<i>Reagan's Second Term</i>	284
Passing the Torch: From Reagan to Bush	285
Social Policies of the Bush Administration	286
<i>Social Spending and the Politics of the Budget</i>	286
<i>Domestic Reforms</i>	288
Outgroups in the Era of Reagan and Bush	289
<i>Predictions Come True</i>	290
<i>Poverty and People of Color</i>	290
<i>Immigrants</i>	291
<i>Gay Men and Lesbians</i>	292
<i>People with Disabilities</i>	293
<i>Women</i>	294
<i>Children</i>	295
<i>Aging Americans</i>	296
<i>Homeless Americans</i>	297
<i>The Erosion of Rights</i>	299
The Social Work Profession	300

12 Reluctance Illustrated: Policy Uncertainty During the Clinton Administration 307

The Ascendancy of Bill Clinton	308
<i>The Search for the Real Bill Clinton</i>	308
<i>The Search for the New Democrat</i>	309
The Presidential Campaign of 1992	311
Clinton's Grim Options	312
From Social Investment to Deficit Reduction	313
<i>Developing an Economic Package</i>	314
<i>A Brief Digression: The Budget Process</i>	315
<i>The Demise of the Stimulus Package</i>	317
<i>Early Warning Signs</i>	318
<i>The Sacrifice of Social Investments</i>	319
The Second Year: Anticrime Legislation But No Health Reform	320
<i>The Fight for Health Reform</i>	320
<i>Anticrime Legislation</i>	324
Building a Revolution Within the Counterrevolution	324
The House Republicans Take Charge	326
The Budget Confrontation of 1995	327
<i>Toward a Budget Resolution</i>	329
<i>Toward a Reconciliation Bill</i>	332
Clinton's Zigzag Course	338
Outgroups	341
<i>Affirmative Action</i>	341
<i>Immigration</i>	342
<i>Child Welfare</i>	342
<i>Women</i>	343
<i>Gay Men and Lesbians</i>	344
Reluctance Illustrated	344
Notes	345

13 Why Has the American Welfare State Been Reluctant? 347

- Manifestations of Reluctance 347
- Contextual Causes of Reluctance 349
 - Cultural Factors* 350
 - Economic Factors* 356
 - Institutional Factors* 357
 - Social Factors* 358
 - The Sequence of Events* 360
 - Legal Factors* 361
- Political Processes 361
 - The Absence of a Powerful Radical Tradition* 361
 - Nonvoters* 363
 - The Power of American Conservatives* 363
 - Moral Crusades* 364
 - A Rigged System* 364
- Reluctance as the Outcome of Numerous Factors 365
- Some Interpretive Challenges 367
 - Variations Between Eras and Issues* 367
 - Gauging Missing Factors* 368
 - Barriers to Social Reform in Other Nations* 368
- Some Redeeming Features of the American Welfare State 368
- From Determinism to Social Action 370
- Notes* 370

Seeking Nongovernmental Substitutes for Publicly Funded Programs 380

Deterrent Policies 382

Relying on Personal Responsibility 382

The Social Reform Tradition in American History 383

Toward Policy Practice 386

Notes 390

Name Index 391

Subject Index 394

14 Policy Perspectives: Past, Present, and Future 372

- The Case Against the Welfare State 372
- The Case for the Welfare State 373
- Missed Opportunities 377
- Admitting Errors 378
- The Limitations of Public Policy 378
- Would Conservatives' Policies Solve Major Social Problems? 379
 - Reducing Social Spending* 379
 - Delegating Policy Responsibilities to State and Local Government* 380
 - Privatizing Social Services* 380

Social Reform in a Society with Conflicting Tendencies

Like other societies, the United States has experienced social problems throughout its existence. In the colonial period, released indentured servants often experienced poverty as they tried to eke out an existence on the American frontier. Poor immigrants encountered poverty, discrimination, and disease in the rough American cities of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Native Americans, African Americans, and Latinos encountered hostility from the broader society as they endeavored to improve their economic conditions or merely to retain their traditional lands and customs. Homeless persons in the 20th century had their counterparts in the 19th century, who were commonly called vagabonds. The predicament of people with AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s, in which a desperate medical condition is compounded by unfavorable health and social policies, was foreshadowed by the treatment of those with malaria, typhoid fever, cholera, and syphilis in earlier eras.

Throughout this nation's history, those who must bear the brunt of social problems—individuals contending with poverty, discrimination, and disease—have depended in considerable measure not only on their personal and familial tenacity and on community supports, but also on the policies of public and nonpublic agencies and of federal, state, and local governments. At various times, these policies, singly and in combination, have provided assistance to some, have left others with no assistance, and have worsened the plight of many.

This is a book about the evolution of American social policies from colonial times to the present. It chronicles and analyzes conflicting tendencies in American attitudes to social problems. Sometimes Americans have developed positive strategies to address specific problems; at others, they have chosen not to act or to develop punitive policies.

At many points in this book, we consider American policies directed to specific populations that have often experienced a disproportionate burden of social problems. These groups include African Americans, women, Native Americans, Latinos, gay men and lesbians, children, persons with chronic physical disabilities, persons with psychiatric disorders, and persons accused of violating laws. Moreover, we often discuss problems of those in the lower economic strata of society. Our focus here is not exclusively on the hardships these groups have endured; we also acknowledge their resilience and strength in forging survival strategies.

However, this book is not *only* about the social problems of specific subgroups

within the population. Most Americans confront social problems and needs at some time in their life. In the absence of national health insurance, for example, middle-class Americans may experience catastrophic illnesses that can bankrupt them. The economic losses experienced by middle-class Americans in the 1980s and 1990s have spawned problems such as family violence, crime, and substance abuse.

A RELUCTANT WELFARE STATE

Profound ambivalence toward the victims of social problems has existed in American society since the colonial period. On the one hand, Americans have exhibited compassion toward those who are hungry, destitute, ill, and transient, as illustrated by a host of ameliorative public policies and a rich tradition of private philanthropy. On the other, they have demonstrated a callous disregard for persons in need. Assistance has often been coupled with punitive and demeaning regulations; federal programs were not developed until relatively late in the nation's history; and racial and other groups have been subjected to consistently oppressive treatment. The term *reluctant welfare state* expresses this paradox of punitiveness and generosity.

In the 19th century, the nation developed a set of poorhouses, mental and children's institutions, and sectarian welfare agencies, but these policies were grievously insufficient to deal with the serious economic and social problems of immigrants, factory workers, displaced Native Americans and Spanish-speaking persons, and urban residents. A federal welfare state was fashioned belatedly in the 20th century, during the New Deal, to supplement various social policies at local and state levels. However, it was limited and harsh in comparison to its counterparts in Western Europe. Portions of this American welfare state have often been attacked by conservatives, who question its cost, its centralization of power in the nation's capital, and its effectiveness, as illustrated by arguments espoused by Newt Gingrich and other Republicans in the

1990s. Conservatives fought funding of relief programs in the New Deal, blocked national health insurance after World War II, sought to cut funding of social programs created during the Great Society of the 1960s, made large cuts in programs helping poor people during the administration of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, and sought to end many social programs funded or administered by the federal government in the wake of Republicans' electoral triumphs in 1994, when they gained control of both houses of Congress.

While their responses to social problems or to the specific needs of various groups in the broader society were often belated or inadequate, Americans did develop a variety of regulations, institutions, and social programs that helped people cope with poverty, illness, and many other problems. In the colonial period and in the 19th century, local and state governments constructed an array of institutions, albeit sometimes inadequate or punitive, to help individuals who were poor, older, or mentally ill. Just after the turn of the 20th century, progressive reformers developed many regulations, such as housing codes and child-labor laws, that helped to protect people against victimization by landlords and corporations. Under the leadership of Franklin Roosevelt, New Deal reformers helped millions of Americans who had been cast into unemployment by the Great Depression. In the 1960s, during the era of the Great Society, Congress passed a wide range of reforms, such as Head Start, Medicare and Medicaid, and the Older Americans Act. Despite concerted efforts by conservatives to cut social spending by the federal government in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, domestic expenditures (excluding interest on the national debt and defense spending) had reached approximately \$1.3 trillion by 1996.

Finally, we should note that groups confronted with harsh economic and social conditions have not passively awaited assistance from outside agencies; over the years, they have fashioned an array of ingenious survival strategies for themselves, whether by founding self-help organizations, community groups, and advocacy groups, or by pursuing redress in the courts.

THE CONTROVERSIAL NATURE OF SOCIAL POLICY

Throughout history, social policies have been associated with political controversy and conflict. Some people (we often label them conservatives today) opposed the development of policy initiatives to address the social needs of citizens—the use of federal funds to build mental institutions in the 1840s, the development of civil rights legislation in the 1960s, and the development of major initiatives to help homeless people in the 1990s. Contemporary conservatives view themselves as ideological descendants of the founding fathers, 19th-century capitalism, and Presidents Coolidge, Hoover, Eisenhower, and Reagan. Libertarians have sought to curtail government control or regulation of citizens. Emphasizing the Bill of Rights, they oppose laws that outlaw the use of drugs like cocaine, that prohibit abortion, or that censor publications. As the term *libertarian* suggests, they want to enhance the freedom of citizens to the extent possible, in contrast to conservatives, who support the criminalization of specific drugs and abortion. Social reformers (today, we often refer to those who seek incremental reforms as liberals), including Dorothea Dix, Jane Addams, Franklin Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson, obtained enactment of a range of policy reforms despite the

concerted opposition of conservatives and many interest groups. Contemporary liberals perceive themselves as ideological descendants of Presidents Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, Wilson, Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson, as well as such professional leaders as Jane Addams. These individuals were in the vanguard of the movement to build an American welfare state, even if their limited vision and the political opposition that they encountered meant that it was a reluctant welfare state. American radicals, including union organizers, socialists, and communists, have periodically pressured liberals and conservatives to consider major expansions of the welfare state, just as various social movements have sought reforms for specific causes. American radicals trace their heritage to union organizers and legendary radical figures of the 19th and 20th centuries, such as Eugene Debs and Norman Thomas, as well as the socialists and communists of the 1930s. They often identify with grass-roots social movements, including movements to abolish imprisonment for debt and to end slavery prior to the Civil War, the Industrial Workers of the World in the progressive era, the Southern Tenant Farmers Association, the unemployed workers movement, the industrial workers movement in the New Deal, the civil rights and welfare rights movements of the 1960s, and organizations representing homeless persons in the 1980s.

Citizens in societies with conflicting policies

FIGURE 1.1 (left) An American conservative: Ronald Reagan; (center) an American liberal: Franklin Delano Roosevelt; (right) an American radical: Jesse Jackson



SOURCE: (left) © Scott Stewart/UPI/Bettmann; (center) UPI/Bettmann; (right) © Gutierrez/UPI/Bettmann

and relatively harsh traditions must at some point shape their personal values. Do they share the values of contemporary American conservatives, libertarians, liberals, or radicals? Do they favor the expansion of the federal government's social welfare role, advocate the status quo, or want reductions in existing programs? Citizens must decide what policies they advocate with respect to contemporary social problems such as homelessness and the provision of medical care to those who cannot afford insurance.

While recognizing that they are not homogeneous groups, we can compare conservatives, libertarians, liberals, and radicals with respect to ten dimensions, as illustrated in Table 1.1: They differ in their attitudes toward the federal government and state and local government; in their beliefs about the causes of social problems; in their views of capitalism, human nature, the safety net, abortion, nongovernmental associations and agencies, and subgroups; and in the core value they consider most important.

For conservatives, freedom is fundamental; they value the freedom to retain personal wealth and to conduct enterprises with minimal public regulation. Conservatives are optimistic that unfettered capitalism will produce prosperity if government does not place excessive regulations upon it. Rather than favoring government programs or tax policies that redistribute wealth, they believe that economic growth will “trickle down” to persons in the lower economic strata. Many conservatives believe, as well, that communities, families, churches, and nongovernmental organizations can meet most needs of citizens and that these nongovernmental entities can even replace many public programs—for example, by encouraging individuals and communities to care for homeless persons. To the extent that social programs *are* developed, many conservatives prefer to have them vested not with the federal government but with local and state governments, which would bear their full funding and implementation. If local resources are unavailable to implement specific programs, conservatives often favor policies such as block grants, where state and local units of gov-

ernment receive fixed annual allowances from the federal authority and are free to decide precisely how to use them.

Conservatives are relatively pessimistic about the fundamental nature of human beings, particularly those of limited means. They tend to believe that people in need can be corrupted by social programs, that is, that those who receive benefits will rely on them *instead of* seeking gainful employment. To counter what they regard as the “perverse incentives” provided by welfare and other social programs, many conservatives want to make social benefits less munificent and to set time limits and other conditions to their receipt. To prevent large numbers in the population from using social programs, conservatives usually want to tighten eligibility requirements. In contrast to their pessimism about persons in the lower economic strata, conservatives tend to be relatively optimistic about persons in the upper economic strata. Far from contending that wealth or inheritances might corrupt those individuals, conservatives want them to retain much of their wealth, on the assumption that they will place it in job-creating investments that will ultimately spur economic growth. In seeking the causes of social problems, conservatives generally emphasize personal or cultural factors. They contend that many people use social programs because they do not want to work or because American culture fails to emphasize “personal responsibility.”

Conservatives do not emphasize disparities in economic and social status between subgroups (such as African Americans or women) and the general population and often dispute data suggesting that these disparities are wide or growing. Conservatives such as Ronald Reagan opposed civil rights legislation in the 1960s. Conservatives tend to oppose affirmative action, as well as redistributive policies such as increasing the tax rates on affluent Americans. They often question whether widespread discrimination exists or discount its importance.

Conservatives are not a homogeneous group, as an examination of the contemporary Republican Party makes clear. Persons from the “religious

TABLE 1.1 Comparison of different ideologies

	<i>Conservatives</i>	<i>Libertarians</i>	<i>Liberals</i>	<i>Radicals</i>
Views of federal government	Negative, except in military and international policy and as source of subsidies for business	Negative	Relatively positive	Positive, unless it is under control of monied interests
Views of state and local government	Relatively positive	Negative	Divided, but federal government is often preferred	Less positive than views of federal government
Views of causes of social problems	Emphasis on personal and cultural factors	Unclear	More emphasis than conservatives on environmental factors	Environmental factors generated by monied interests
Views of capitalism	Positive	Positive	Positive, but regulations are favored	Negative, unless workers are empowered
Views of human nature	Relatively optimistic about affluent people, less optimistic about poor people	Favor policies that maximize the liberty of all people	Relatively optimistic about poor people but less optimistic about rich people	Pessimistic about monied interests, but optimistic about other people
Views of safety net	Want relatively meager safety net	Unclear	Want relatively generous safety net	Favor generous safety net
Attitudes to abortion and other moral issues	Divided, but a significant faction favors government controls	Dislike government regulation of social matters	Usually oppose restrictions on abortion but favor restrictions on drugs	Often oppose restriction of social matters
Core value	Liberty, though some government incentives and regulations are favored	Liberty	Liberty, but social justice is also important	Social justice
Views of nongovernmental and governmental programs	Favor nongovernmental initiatives	Favor nongovernmental initiatives	Favor a mixture of both	Favor governmental programs, but often recommend worker or citizen inclusion in government decisions
Views of subgroups who lag behind others in economic status or who experience discrimination	Tend to deny their existence or minimize discrimination	Unclear	Favor some redistribution and strong civil rights	Emphasize oppression of outgroups and seek major corrective action

right,” who constitute a large proportion of the contemporary conservative movement, strongly believe the government should act to restrict abortion, censor pornographic literature, outlaw certain drugs, and allow prayer in the public schools. They have often clashed with other conservatives who oppose some of these policies. Some conservatives, such as Newt Gingrich, carry an antigovernmental ethos far further than do moderate Republicans, who are more supportive of government programs, less inclined to cut domestic spending deeply, and more inclined to retain many government regulations. Nor do conservatives always act in a manner that is consistent with their stated principles. Many Republican legislators, for example, oppose new reform initiatives such as Medicare when they are first proposed, only to vote for their funding and expansion after their enactment; in part, this is because these lawmakers realize that their constituents often like—and use—such government programs.

Libertarians agree with conservatives about the primacy of freedom but, unlike conservatives, they oppose policies that enforce a single standard of public morality. For example, they oppose laws that restrict abortions, criminalize drugs, or impose censorship of journalism or art. Because libertarians tend not to like taxes, which they regard as infringing on the economic independence of citizens, they do not emphasize public expenditures or redistribution.

While liberals want to keep government powers more limited than do radicals, they are less sanguine than conservatives about unfettered capitalism. Left to its own devices, capitalism often produces considerable inequality, as is apparent from the disparities between wages, salaries, and private wealth that exist in the United States today. Moreover, many capitalists victimize people; examples include avaricious landlords, entrepreneurs who pay low wages, and purveyors of tainted food and drugs. Believing that many people are subjected to discrimination in employment, education, use of public places, and accommodations, liberals have often favored the enactment of civil rights legislation. Placing somewhat more emphasis upon equality than do conservatives and wanting to

restrict the victimization of people, liberals favor an array of government regulations and programs, such as: minimum-wage legislation; regulation of working conditions; subsidies for persons of low income, through welfare programs, Medicare, Medicaid, and Food Stamps; and job-training and Head Start programs to provide individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to be productive citizens. Liberals are less inclined than are conservatives to believe that nongovernmental associations, not-for-profit agencies, churches, or civic groups can solve or address major social problems without government assistance; however, they often support partnerships between government and these entities. Liberals are more optimistic about government's ability to ameliorate major social problems such as poverty and homelessness. Whereas conservatives view government cynically and emphasize the negative qualities of bureaucracy and regulations, liberals are more inclined to believe that government officials can implement strategies to assist those in need.

Liberals recognize disparities in economic and social status between subgroups (such as women or African Americans) and the general population. They favor redistributive policies, such as the progressive income tax, and redistributive programs like Medicaid. Liberals like Hubert Humphrey and Lyndon Johnson were in the forefront of the civil rights movement, just as many liberals have supported policies that affirm the employment and social rights of women, gay men and lesbians, and persons with physical disabilities.

Just as conservatives are not a homogeneous group, varieties of liberals exist. Some liberals favor a relatively expansive welfare state that attempts both to equalize opportunity and to decrease economic inequality (stalwart liberals); others are content to equalize opportunity through Head Start and similar programs and a minimal set of safety-net programs such as Food Stamps (traditional liberals). Stalwart liberals favor relatively generous welfare programs, tax policies that redistribute resources to people in the lower economic strata, and affirmative action programs that provide special assistance to groups who lag behind the rest of the population. Hubert Humphrey, Claude Pep-

per, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King exemplify stalwart liberals. Traditional liberals, such as John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, emphasize educational, medical, and job-training supports for citizens but do not favor tax or welfare policies that substantially redistribute resources to poor persons. Stalwart liberals seek to temper freedom with social justice by supporting a wide range of social programs and some redistribution of resources to low-income persons, while traditional liberals, more cautious in seeking reforms that address economic inequality, prefer to equalize opportunity through the expansion of educational, medical, and social services. In the 1990s, a number of Democrats sought to evolve a centrist position that emphasized the roles of local and state government and personal responsibility. They sought to enlist Bill Clinton in their efforts to define "new Democrats," but later complained that he emphasized traditional liberalism in the first two years of his administration.¹

Many kinds of radical positions exist. Emphasizing equality, radicals are deeply pessimistic about the efficacy of unfettered capitalism in advancing social justice. Some radicals, such as socialists, want to transform capitalistic institutions into publicly run industries or favor worker ownership of corporations. Realizing that these policies are difficult to achieve because of the sheer power of corporations, radicals favor the major redistribution of wealth through tax policies, as well as far-reaching government programs that both provide services and benefits to all citizens and target them to less affluent citizens. Whereas liberals favor government programs and progressive taxes but usually want to keep them within certain limits, radicals have fewer inhibitions about far-reaching government interventions. While also advocating broader reforms, some radicals emphasize far-reaching reforms to help specific groups, such as African Americans and women. Feminists favor far-reaching policies to equalize conditions between women and men—for example, children's allowances, remuneration for raising families, affirmation action, aggressive collection of child support from former spouses, and a constitutional amendment to guarantee equal rights for women.

Radicals are often critical of existing social programs, which, they argue, reflect the interests of corporate and conservative groups; for example, they might contend that programs like Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) are structured so as to provide a source of cheap labor. Others view government programs as a conspiracy to defuse pressure for social change by making relatively small concessions to working-class persons. They often advocate grass-roots organizing to develop constituencies for radical policies; for example, radicals would support projects to unionize workers in low-wage service industries.

Radicals believe that the social and economic problems of subgroups stem from their oppression by the broader society and corporate interests. They strongly support civil rights and redistributive policies to restore equal status and opportunity for oppressed groups. More than liberals, they link the oppression of subgroups to the economic and political subjugation of the working class, which includes many of their members. To upgrade the economic and political status of women and African Americans, for example, they would favor sweeping economic reforms, such as curtailing the ability of corporations to move their operations to low-wage nations or to underpay their employees.

USING SOCIAL POLICY HISTORY TO DEVELOP A POLICY IDENTITY

The hundreds of thousands of professionals who deliver the services and resources of the welfare state to consumers include physicians, nurses, psychologists, and social workers, who work in a variety of public, not-for-profit, and for-profit agencies. The social work profession illustrates dilemmas and choices that confront intermediaries between the welfare state and consumers. Because the agencies for which they work typically receive public or private funding, and such funds are rarely given without accompanying policies, regulations, and demands for accountability, social workers must interact frequently with funders, legislators, and government officials.