

reduction policies made on these methods will not be likely to be effective (p. 62). Above all, there is a clear evidence of lack of political will for poverty reduction in many governments (p. 187).

There is detail discussion on the whole PRSP approach in the book. For example, the author questions how the PRSP could be owned by the country when it was prepared by a small elite who do not represent the general masses particularly the poor. To him, country ownership sounds attractive but in reality international lending agencies like the World Bank and IMF have not given up their “control, influence and interest” (p. 100). He has rightly pointed out that the government’s unwillingness to challenge the donors led the bureaucrats and consultants to work on the donors’ agenda (p. 156). These bureaucrats and consultants belong to a small group whose interests are not rooted in the country (they educate their children mostly to migrate to the west, p. 162). A good idea could be to present key components of PRSP of Bangladesh first and then discuss its weaknesses.

There is limited discussion on religion in the book. However, it has become sketchy and weak. In today’s world, religion is important and it is very important in a Muslim majority country like Bangladesh. It seems the author has failed to address the reason and its implications for multi-stream education in Bangladesh. A large number of children in Bangladesh pursue religious education (to be very specific, Islamic education). Even in the Islamic stream of education, there is a clear division. One part is funded and controlled by the state while the other is not. In the one which is controlled by the state, the students get the subsidized education and can ‘compete’ with graduates from secular schools. However, they are weaker candidates in the job market. Those who take Islamic education in the schools not recognized by the Bangladeshi state get cheap education (funded by philanthropy from home and abroad) but their employment opportunity is limited to working in the mosques and some coaching in Arabic. So, one can link the growth of Islamic education in Bangladesh with poverty and religious belief (since some parents feel that religious education is compulsory for every Muslim child). The education (i.e. the Islamic education) perhaps perpetuates the poverty cycle through its limited employment opportunities.

It is not clear what was the message from the cover of the book. It looks like a man working in the ship-breaking industry in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. One guess could be the effort to reduce poverty by harbouring this dirty industry in a country like Bangladesh where the priority is to reduce poverty at any cost, let alone considering its environmental consequences. Those who want to know how the PRSP process was practiced should read the book. Except for a few typos (pages 93, 13, 31, 211 for example) the book gives pleasant reading.

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Kyle Farmbry (ed.) (2014), *The War on Poverty: A Retrospective*. Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield. \$65.00, pp. 276, hbk.
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On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the War on Poverty, several books have taken stock of what this comprehensive initiative accomplished. Unlike others, however, such as *Legacies of the War on Poverty* (Bailey and Danziger, 2013), this book looks beyond the War, and examines a whole range of anti-poverty policies and programs, some with little or no connection to the War on Poverty.

The book opens with an introduction that recalls the genesis of the War on Poverty in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. One chapter (Ch. 6) raises the issue of what it means to use “war” language when tackling poverty, drawing parallels with the War on Drugs, and how such framing ends up demonizing the poor, particularly program participants, and often sets up the “war” as one of opposing values and moralities. Other than that, there is little discussion of overall goals of this war.

Nor does it discuss context, particularly the parallel, and related civil rights struggle. Some of the subsequent chapters however, bring in race or racism as relevant, but this is uneven.

The chapters in this book can be grouped into four types: (1) those that deal with anti-poverty policies focused on specific geographies, such as rural poverty, suburbs, Mississippi and Appalachia; (2) those that deal with specific groups, such as women, immigrants, youth; (3) those that focus on specific policy areas, such as education, drugs, health care, employment; (4) those that look at comprehensive approaches such as worker co-operatives and inclusive capitalism.

The chapter on Mississippi, (Ch. 4), the state that was seen by many as a “front line” in the War on Poverty, is an excellent discussion of how ongoing myths about African Americans and/or the poor are used to perpetuate racism and classism. These intersect to not only create poverty, but result in underfunded education and health care that leads to limiting the growth of the state’s economy. It includes details, such as the continued existence of two medical societies segregated by race that make the analysis concrete. In contrast, the chapter on suburban poverty (Ch. 9) treats “minorities” and the “poor” as interchangeable, and uses the term “gentrification” in an odd way; it discusses exclusionary zoning policies, but not white flight, and it is never clear quite how this fits into a narrative of anti-poverty policies (these are anti-poor, anti-minority but not anti-poverty).

Appalachia (Ch. 5) was the target of federal policy under Kennedy, and President Johnson folded it into the War on Poverty. This is the only chapter that discusses the impact of community action, one of the true innovations of the War, and how it impacted and empowered the lives of Appalachians, leading to mine safety, workers’ rights, etc. Though the authors conclude its approach was overly “simple”, the analysis they present makes clear that changing economic conditions, such as globalization and the demise of coal, overwhelmed and undercut the War’s initiatives.

The chapter on women (Ch. 2) takes a close-in look at child care, and mothers’ concerns with quality and dangers of abuse, issues rarely discussed. It also makes the case that stigmatization not only harms the poor, but leads to restrictive policies. It is not however a comprehensive examination of gender and poverty, not mentioning workforce issues, child support, or gender discrimination.

As with several of the chapters, the chapter on immigration (Ch. 3) gives a comprehensive history of how immigration policies have changed, and particularly relates how current legislation that excludes immigrants from many programs, locks this group into dead-end poverty, with negative effects on other low income people. The chapter on juvenile justice (Ch. 7) also provides a history of changing policies, and does an excellent job of showing the unintended consequence of the Supreme Court decision, *in re Gault*, which shifted juveniles from a service-oriented system to the court system, where they gained rights, but lost services. (This is the best example of unintended consequences, and more relevant, than the chapter on policy-poverty linkages, (Ch. 1) which presents little that is new or unknown.)

The education chapter focuses on Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (which funds education in low income schools) and Head Start (preschool for low income children), but helpfully puts it in the context of school desegregation (initiated by the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*). The evolution of Head Start programs, focusing on

emerging needs, such as migrant and homeless children, is an indicator of adaptation to changing needs, which by default, has not occurred in most other programs. Health programs, however, have evolved, particularly Medicaid; that chapter (Ch. 10) documents its expansion through SCHIP, and ACA, though the latter is only mentioned.

The irony that pro-homeownership policies were used to exploit poor, minority, and women householders in the foreclosure crisis (Ch. 8) highlighted the limits of anti-poverty programs in changing economies.

Workforce programs (Ch. 12) also evolved, but unfortunately, from the original focus on the poor and to one focused on dislocated workers, with modest results, and the analysis details how lack of good data hampers developing effecting programs, though neither here nor elsewhere does anyone tackle what poverty is, and what measures to use to document success. This chapter has enough detail in its specific example of Maryland to make clear what works in this area.

The remaining chapters address alternatives such as worker co-operatives (Ch. 13) and inclusive capitalism (Ch. 14) as alternatives to address low incomes and wealth among the poor. Not having ever been on the agenda, however, as major alternatives, these are of interest mainly because they highlight by default the plight of workers today, of low wages and little labour power, that are quite different from the problems of the poor a half-century ago.

Indeed, the introduction posited that the book's goal was to answer the question, 'Why does poverty exist in America?' It would have been helpful, and more in keeping with the title . . . *A Retrospective*, to have asked how the War on Poverty's programs reflected the program designers' answer to that question, and then to ask how those answers have fared over the ensuing five decades. Some chapters did trace how programs evolved, but others were basically ahistorical. Still others ignored or gave short shrift to key events and trends that deeply affected the scope and direction of these programs, such as busing and school desegregation, deep cuts in housing and other programs under President Reagan, or the Great Recession.

The War on Poverty was a testament to the belief that comprehensive initiatives, by the government but in partnership with public and non-profit entities, can have an impact on the lives of poor people. This book, though uneven, documents how both difficult and persistent some dynamics are (racial inequality), how good and adaptive ideas can succeed (Head Start), but at the same time, how easy it is for economic trends to overwhelm the best and brightest ideas (the Great Recession, globalization.)

Reference

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Daniel Béland and Pierre-Marc Daigneault (2015), *Welfare Reform in Canada: Provincial Social Assistance in Comparative Perspective*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. \$38.95, pp. 448, pbk.
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This volume offers a comprehensive review of social assistance programmes in the Canadian provinces. It begins with chapters by the editors and by Robert Henry Cox that propose a general framework for understanding the evolution of Canadian social assistance in recent decades.