

Policy Analysis in Canada: The State of the Art
IPAC Series in Public Management and Governance

Laurent Dobuzinskis, Michael Howlett, and David Laycock, Editors
University of Toronto Press, 2007

Reviewed by Dorothy Hasinoff, M.S.W., M.Ed.

This series of articles by leading policy scholars and practitioners was compiled by editors Laurent Dobuzinskis, Michael Howlett, and David Laycock of Simon Fraser University's Department of Political Science. Their undertaking has all the hallmarks of a comprehensive, thorough, and academically sound book. Speaking as a fourth-year doctoral student with social policy research and teaching responsibilities, and as a former civil servant with the lead role on a range of public policy portfolios during my twenty-five-year career, I believe this book delivers a realistic rendering of the current state of policy analysis within the Canadian context.

This 600-page volume is exceptional in that it reveals the richly textured landscape of Canadian public policy, from the perspectives of both inside and outside various levels of government. It focuses on the roles of the three major players, who are the "proximate [formal] decision makers' ... 'knowledge generators' [experts] ... [and] 'knowledge brokers [or] intermediaries' "(Lindquist, 1990, as cited by Dobuzinskis et al., 2007, p. 5). These categories reappear in various forms throughout the book. For example, they can be found in the book's structure, in its historical treatises, and in the comparative analyses.

Although *Policy Analysis in Canada: The State of the Art* covers a wide array of topics, it is structured in such a way as to gracefully usher the reader through its twenty-three chapters. Space does not permit a chapter-by-chapter review of the book. Rather, I will discuss the thrust of the book's six major sections. The first section, "The Styles and Methods of Public Policy Analysis in Canada" could be dubbed "the analysis of the analysis." These four chapters provide the necessary grounding to understand policy analysis processes within the Canadian context. The chapters in this section also highlight trends in policy analysis in Canada. The unique contribution of the second section, "Public Policy Analysis in Canada: Historical and Comparative Context," is its retrospective look at policy advising in the Canadian context and its comparison of policy analysis approaches in jurisdictions outside Canada, specifically the U.S. and European Union. Third, the section titled "Policy Analysis by Governments" succeeds at bringing to light key issues for policy researchers at the federal, provincial, and local government levels. This section analyzes the policy research capacity and dominant styles at each of these respective levels of government. As its title suggests, the fourth section,

"Committees, Public Inquiries, Research Institutes, Consultants, and Public Opinion" details the assortment of policy analysis actors who are not part of the executive wing of government. An underlying theme of these chapters is that the influence of these arms-length bodies cannot be underestimated. Similarly, the fifth section, "Parties and Interest Group-Based Policy Analysis," discusses partisan and interest groups and their unique brand of analyses. The sixth and final section, "Academic and Advocacy-Based Policy Analysis," has three chapters that spell out the influence of those institutions which purportedly are not political but which hold considerable sway over the direction of public policy, that is, the media, think tanks, and academic institutions. While they are not lobbyists, they are among the multiple forces outside the bureaucracy that promote ideological perspectives.

Carefully thought-out and well organized, the book is informative to read. Its breadth and depth, as well as its high readability quotient, make it a "must have" for any policy professional. Many of the book's articles are not highly technical; therefore, they do not require a great deal of background knowledge. What is more, the authors are careful to provide easily understandable definitions of concepts and relate one to another such that the result is both comprehensive and comprehensible. They make a valiant attempt to include examples of topical policy issues; frankly, however, in the field of policy, what is "hot" one day is passé the next. The relative priority of any given issue can change abruptly.

Authors of the various chapters frequently refer to or draw upon the thinking of the other writers. Not surprisingly, there is little evidence of dispute, philosophical or otherwise, among the various contributors, yet it would have added interest had the authors more forcefully discussed their areas of agreement and disagreement.

Only a handful of the articles report research and findings that were carried out either by the contributors or others. This raises the question of whether the policy analysis field should demonstrate more reliance on evidence-based knowledge. What is more, some writers did not consistently cite sources nor did they include references when generalizing.

After reading this book, one is left with the impression that Canada's policy analysis profession is a young discipline consisting of a loosely associated community of interest. Perhaps this explains why a thorough discussion of an overarching philosophy of the policy profession is absent. Furthermore, there is only scant discussion of the various theoretical frameworks within which we policy professionals operate. Although the book adequately describes the profession's history and methods, it is silent on the underlying principles that bind it together. What is more, it does not mention whether there are mechanisms that ensure checks and balances within the profession. Finally, it is important to note that as a discipline, we have many overseers, but we have not defined a self-regulation role.

The book would be greatly helped by the inclusion of a comprehensive model

that provides a cohesive conceptual framework for policy analysis in Canada. This would have given the reader a roadmap that would orient and contextualize the various discussions by signalling to the reader its place in the overall scheme.

This book's attempt at increasing the understanding of Canadian policy analysis has succeeded. The writing meets a high standard, the calibre of enquiry is excellent throughout, and the reportage is appropriate for students, policymakers, practitioners, academics, and politicians. This consistently high quality ensures that this book can readily act as a primer, a reference book, a textbook, or a pleasant Sunday afternoon read. In sum, the authors and editors of this landmark tome have achieved their collective goal of enhancing the understanding of Canadian policy analysis, and by extension, the ability of government to achieve better results.

Daily Struggles: The Deepening Racialization and Feminization of Poverty in Canada

Maria Wallis and Siu-ming Kwok, Editors
Canadian Scholar's Press, 2008

Reviewed by Lea Caragata

Maria Wallis and Siu-ming Kwok have created a book on a critical topic with an impressive list of contributors ranging from Grace Edward Galabuzi and Roxana Ng to Sherene Razack and George Sefa Dei. The inclusion of a chapter by Amartya Sen seals any claim that the book has the most scholarly, thoughtful and challenging of authors illuminating the deepening racialization and feminization of poverty in Canada. From this perspective of significant promise, the book fails to deliver quite what it might have. These failings, such as they are, accrue not from the content of most chapters but from what appears to be an editor's or publisher's (or both?) notions of what will make a book saleable.

Focusing on what appears to be an undergraduate audience, material with significant stand-alone scholarly merit is diminished by not simply allowing powerful articles to speak for themselves. Through over-organizing and in some cases under-editing, somewhat lost is the power of the composite picture of the systematic processes by which gender and racialization, always present, have been permitted new ground as determinants of poverty and exclusion. The book is organized into four parts; each is framed by an introduction and section objectives, and each concludes with suggestions for websites and further readings related to each of the chapters. The four sections themselves are somewhat oddly organized, beginning