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The Geography of American Poverty: Is There a Need for Place-Based Policies? By Mark D. Partridge and Dan S. Rickman. Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2006. ix + 355 pp. Figures, tables, maps, notes, appendixes references, index. \$56.00 cloth, \$22.00 paper.

This book is a comprehensive examination of poverty in the United States from 1969 to 1999. Its three main objectives are to document the uneven distribution of poverty, to explore its underlying demographic and economic determinants, and to offer policy prescriptions for its amelioration. The analysis of rural poverty is likely to be of most interest to readers of *Great Plains Research*.

To begin, the authors effectively demonstrate the persistence of high rural poverty in central Appalachia, the lower Mississippi delta, the historic Cotton Belt in the Southeast, along the Rio Grande and Mexican border, and on Native American reservations in the West and Great Plains. Next, they present a multitude of statistical analyses to identify the determinants of poverty and find it highly dependent on previous poverty rates, strengthening the argument that it is place-dependent. Employment growth reduces rural poverty only over the long term, and it is more effective in more isolated rural communities than in urban ones. The authors find that it takes at least five years of continuous job growth to reduce rural

poverty effectively. Employment growth is also most forceful when concentrated in industries that are growing nationally, while job creation in nationally slow-growing industries has only a modest effect. Increasing female employment leads to greater reductions in total poverty and child poverty in rural areas. Greater concentrations of high school graduates and those with associate degrees reduce rural poverty. Rural areas with more single-headed families with children tend to increase poverty, especially families headed by women.

Lastly, the book outlines policy prescriptions to reduce poverty. The authors advocate targeted tax breaks and infrastructure enhancements to promote job creation, as well as child care and transportation assistance to promote workforce participation. They caution, however, that these tools should only be used for industries growing at the national level that diversify the local economic base away from the farm and goods-producing sectors and that provide job opportunities for women. In a sobering argument, they emphasize that many rural communities, especially in the Great Plains, no longer have a critical mass of economic activity to sustain them. Putting scarce public resources into these communities would be wasteful, they conclude, and better spent elsewhere.

The Geography of American Poverty authoritatively documents the trends and determinants of American poverty across both space and time. Its strength is in its quantitative analysis, but what interests poverty researchers may be tedious for nontechnical audiences. Its weakness is its inadequate discussion of the core theoretical explanations of poverty; the absence of such a discussion limits its use in the classroom. **David J. Peters**, *Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska–Lincoln*.