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Ian Shaw (2011), *Evaluating in Practice*. Farnham: Ashgate. £25, pp. 184, pbk.
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In theory the relationship between social work practice and social science research should be a harmonious one, with researchers supporting practitioners in understanding the impact of their interventions on individuals and their families and the factors that support such interventions' effectiveness, and practitioners in turn supporting researchers to identify areas of potential interest and complexity and to gain access to rich and meaningful data. In practice, the relationship is often more tense, with practitioners viewing researchers as being out of touch with the realities of day-to-day life whilst critically judging their judgements and approaches, and researchers becoming frustrated that lessons from research are so slow to be reflected upon and used to improve practice and policy. Factors that underlie this tension are the separation in expertise (academics or practitioners and managers), the organisations that lead on activities, funding opportunities and incentives.

In this book, Ian Shaw seeks to provide a different way of looking at relationship between research and practice. His primary interest is not finding a new approach to securing the practical implementation of findings but rather in how research methods (and in particular qualitative methods) could be embedded within practice to facilitate social workers in gaining a better understanding of the individuals and families that they are working with and a more critical perspective of their own attempts to provide positive support. He argues that research approaches can benefit all stages of the social process, from assessment, to intervention and on to review and monitoring of outcomes. The book is a second edition to the original version published in 1996, and the author describes it as maintaining 'all of the vision' but 'little of text' (p. ix), with the latest version incorporating new developments in methods and more current examples from practice.

To achieve its vision of challenging social work to 'new understandings and new methodologies', the book seeks to address four connected problems: the tendency of practitioners to rely on interview-based interventions, the emphasis placed on application of research findings to the exclusion of the potential of methodology, a perceived deference between social work practice and social science research and a narrow perspective of the purpose of evaluation that is limited to 'accountability'.

Chapters 1 to 3 provide the 'main contours' of the 'topography'. The basic assumptions that traditionally lie behind the connection between evaluation and practice, and those that underpin Shaw's alternative paradigm, are presented. This leads to engaging summaries of the history, theoretical underpinnings and current critiques of key existing research approaches that seek to 'square the circle' of 'research and action' (including 'Action Research', Participatory Inquiry', and 'Practitioner Research'). Comparisons are made between these approaches and 'Evaluation in Practice', and this leads to an interesting discussion of key questions regarding the nature

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of social work practice, the arguments of Romm (1996) that 'application' is an essential part of gaining 'comprehension', and the work of Bornat and Walmsley (2004) regarding 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' perspectives. The experiences and perspectives of social work practitioners highlights the distinction by many between 'evaluation proper' (typically instigated from 'external' sources with a focus on 'scrutiny' and 'service level' concerns' and a tendency to deploy quantitative methods) and their 'own kind of evaluation' (which requires more complex data sources, is grounded in personal values and takes place over a longer time period that reflects the slow progress of practice). The former (which is often perceived negatively) is seen by practitioners as the dominant evaluation approach and it is argued that practitioners often lack confidence in and knowledge of potential methods to undertake practice evaluation competently. This section concludes with a consideration of user-led research, and the differing views held by social workers in comparing their criteria and overall judgement of outcomes with that likely to be deployed by the service user.

Having set out the 'lie of the land', the book now builds an approach through which the integration of evaluation into day-to-day practice could be achieved. Links are made to previous thinking relating to 'research as a model' and 'research as a resource' (Parton and Kirk 2010) and reflective practice, principally that of Schon's work regarding (1983) 'reflection-in-action' (which highlights the need for practitioners to be 'tacit' in its application and to exhibit both 'reflexivity' and 'testing by reflection'). This requires an iterative research approach in which practitioners are open to the possibility of evidence from their current practice challenging theories and explanations that they would have previously expected to apply. Potential methods (such as *narrative*, *life history, arts based* and *ethnography)* are then described, along with six 'working rules' to guide practitioners to be more objective about the basis of their knowledge, fully engage services users in the process and seek contributions from relevant colleagues and peers. The final chapters follow the different components of social work, i.e. 'assessment and planning', 'the process of practice' and 'evaluating outcomes', and identify potential research methods that could be applied in order to strengthen these areas of practice. The methods are explored through Shaw drawing from an eclectic and rich range of sources and providing a fascinating commentary illustrating the potential impact on their deployment in a practice setting.

This book makes a good case for 'evaluation in practice' as a means through which practitioners can widen their horizons in relation to potential interventions, see 'evaluation' in a new light and see their application of such methods on an equal footing to that of more academically orientated researchers. Shaw clearly has an excellent knowledge of different qualitative approaches, and brings these to life through a judicious use of vignettes, research evidence and personal reflections. The book therefore offers much to anyone with an interest in improving social work practice – it could also be recommended as an accessible introduction to qualitative methods in a social work context. The book is though let down at times by the structure and format, which did not always make it easy to follow the progression of the overall argument in the face of such rich (and therefore dense!) writings on the different methods. At times, the book is academic in tone (which could be off putting to many frontline staff who could gather great benefit from its insights), and Shaw is clear from the outset that it is not a 'skills handbook'. In many ways, this is a shame as such a volume may have a better chance of actually being applied in practice and one would hope that it is under consideration for future authorship.

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David Billis (ed.) (2010), *Hybrid Organizations and the Third Sector: Challenges for Practice, Theory and Policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. £19.99, pp. 270, pbk.
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Although written before the implementation of the Big Society agenda, this book has much to say that is of relevance to those engaged with, or interested in, the third sector — or what should now, perhaps, be referred to as the civil society sector. It has long been recognised, and many have questioned, the blurring of the boundaries between the public, private and third sectors. This book uses the concept of hybridity to explore the challenges, tensions and dilemmas that face those involved at the frontline.

The book is structured in two parts, the first providing a context and conceptual base, from which the second part examines various elements of the third sector to understand the different manifestation of hybridity. David Billis starts by setting out the concept of hybridity as organisations possessing 'significant' characteristics of more than one of the public/private/third sectors. He qualifies this by suggesting that these sectors have features that have 'roots' and adhere to 'distinctive principles' and 'rules of the game' that become evident in hybrids.

In Chapter 2, Margaret Harris sets the policy scene and highlights the tensions between conflicting policies that both recognise and encourage the special values of third sector organisations and exert pressure to become more managerialist and quasi-public sector in operation. She refers to the 'conflation of economic and social purpose' that has led to the increased formation of hybrid organisations.

In the following chapter, Billis sets out to define the public and private sectors to arrive at a clear definition of TSO's from which to build his thesis of hybrid organisations. He uses the concept of decision-making to define ownership. Billis identifies four dimensions of hybridity: shallow and entrenched in terms of degree of hybridity; organic and enacted in terms of origin.

His model seems to avoid any reference to civil society and the political/democratic dimension of active citizenship which is often central to the discussion, and centres instead on an organisational model more useful to the intentions of this book. However, this omission is perhaps a weakness in the argument developed, particularly in the context of the smaller 'associational' model discussed later in Chapter 7.

In the final chapter in this first section, Chris Cornforth and Roger Spear provide a valuable discussion of the issues of governance of organisations and the tensions between governance and management boundaries that can emerge when staff are employed.

Part two starts with Chapter 5 in which Angela Ellis Paine, Nick Ockenden and Joanna Stuart discuss the implication for volunteers within organisations and explore issues such as professionalisation and resulting formalisation, the changed volunteer experience and the paid staff/volunteer tension.

The following five chapters paint a picture of the varied nature of third sector organisations. In the first of these, Colin Rochester and Malcolm Torry make the case for the uniqueness of faith-based organisations. They discuss the tensions that emerge when these groups engage with

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