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Review of *Developing Practice Guidelines for Social Work Intervention*. Aaron Rosen and Enola K. Proctor (Eds.). Reviewed by Eric R. Hardiman.

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that could have been funded in the absence of chosen human capital programs.

When these very different recommendations are combined with the response and counter-response structure of the book, the text takes on the flavor of an intellectual debate. This characteristic is both strength and weakness. Many readers will find it stimulating to be in the company of such bright minds who attack an important question with intellectual rigor. In the end, however, the debate seems to somewhat overshadow the policy questions. Finding the answers to the book's central question, "what role for human capital policy?" may require a second and even third reading. And different readers will likely formulate different answers. In other words, this book offers no simple five-step formula for increasing skills and reducing inequality. This is the murky reality of policy, however, where decisions require value judgments and different conclusions are inevitable. For readers who are familiar with economic terminology and who are interested in weighing opposing arguments and even grappling with value questions involving trade-offs between efficiency and equity, this book will stimulate thinking about policies to improve education and skill levels.

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University of Kansas

Aaron Rosen and Enola K. Proctor (Eds.), *Developing Practice Guidelines for Social Work Intervention*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. \$62.50 hardcover, \$29.50 papercover.

The influence of the evidence-based practice movement has begun to change the landscape of both social work practice and intervention research. Yet, despite increased attention to empirically-tested knowledge, front line practitioners continue to face significant challenges as they select and implement intervention strategies and struggle with decision-making processes. While few would argue with the value of offering services with solid empirical support, practice realities often make application difficult and cumbersome. Practitioner resistance to evidence-based practice is common, and many would claim that the gap between

research and practice in social work has actually widened in recent years.

In response to these and other dilemmas, Rosen and Proctor's edited collection offers an ambitiously comprehensive look at the development of practice guidelines, conceptualized as a concrete tool for social work practitioners seeking to utilize an evidence-based approach. The case for practice guidelines is made in a logical and persuasive fashion, with an impressive group of social work scholars providing valuable contributions. The collection is organized into four sections: (1) precursors to practice guideline development; (2) needs and challenges; (3) responsiveness to diversity in populations and settings; and finally (4) practitioner, organizational, and institutional factors in the utilization of practice guidelines. Each section provides a refreshing blend of overview, analysis, critical discourse, and direction for the future. The book ends with thoughtful and cohesive essays from Rosen and Proctor.

Rosen and Proctor have wisely chosen a broad spectrum of authors to present multiple sides of the issues. Ever mindful of historical precedents and debates in allied professions such as medicine (where the practice guideline movement began), the editors have successfully articulated a cogent and persuasive argument. The level of attention to history and context is evidenced in the early chapters by Fraser, Gambrill, and Reid and Fortune who help the reader to understand current challenges and issues. Gambrill sets the stage in a particularly clear fashion by contextualizing the evidence based practice movement, distinguishing between evidence based practice and practice guidelines, and providing implications for the development of social work practice knowledge.

The various authors do not shy away from controversy, and the editors demonstrate an admirable ability to consider multiple viewpoints and divergent opinions. Easy solutions are not proffered; rather a spirit of discourse and critical engagement with the material is encouraged. One thought-provoking example is Thyer's call for an interdisciplinary rather than social work specific approach to practice guidelines. In a series of separate chapters, several authors (including Proctor, Rosen, Kirk, and Mattaini) grapple with how best to organize intervention knowl-

edge. They offer an intriguing discussion of the relative benefits of using diagnostic or problem classification systems rather than taxonomies of the targets of interventions (advocated by the editors). These discussions, as well as those offered by Videka and others on ways to account for variability among setting, client, and population factors, are treated in some depth. Marsh also provides a thorough consideration of institutional theory and the multifaceted issues of professional authority, knowledge, and legitimation. These topics are often left out of discussions on evidence based practice.

After taking into account the range of perspectives offered here, the editors conclude by presenting a structured research agenda that will hopefully lead to the development and utilization of practice guidelines by social workers. The overarching message is one of optimism tempered with awareness of the need for ongoing reflection and critical dialogue. The editors clearly recognize the limitations and challenges, as well as the inherent strengths of the practice guideline approach. It is their willingness to tackle difficult tensions and issues that solidifies their primary argument. Successfully avoiding any urge to simplify the discussion, they provide a much needed focus and clarity to the issues. This book is certainly one of the best volumes on social work practice and research published in recent times. Its only potential weakness lies in the relatively sparse attention given to issues of cultural competence and diversity. A short yet useful chapter from Zayas takes a step in this direction, but the editors have missed an opportunity to adequately link evidence based and cultural diversity issues and thus to enhance the field.

Taken as a whole, the book is a major step towards resolving some of the challenges the social work profession currently faces. It offers an invaluable guide for practitioners and program administrators seeking to bring their practice efforts into a new era of accountability and effectiveness. Rosen and Proctor are to be commended for enhancing the level of discussion about evidence-based practice in social work and for offering a novel way to ease the divide between research and practice. They have compiled a fascinating and intellectually stimulating book that will be an excellent resource for both social work practice and research courses, particularly ones taught with emphases on

evidence-based practice and critical thinking methods. Those interested in breaking the divide between research and practice, and seeking to advance the profession's commitment to knowledge development should read this book. It should also be required reading for doctoral students, faculty teaching practice courses, and social work practitioners.

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Jonathan Gruber and David Wise (Eds.), *Social Security Programs and Retirement Around the World: Micro Estimation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, \$99.00 hardcover.

Social Security Programs and Retirement Around the World: Micro Estimation presents analyses of the effects of structural incentives to retire on labor force participation rates among older workers in each of twelve OECD nations. All of these nations, with the exception of Japan, are in North America or Western Europe. Each chapter (other than the introduction) reports results for a different OECD nation. Both editors are distinguished economists. Jonathan Gruber is a professor of economics at MIT and David Wise is a professor of political economy at the John F. Kennedy School of government at Harvard University. As contributors the editors have managed to assemble an impressive list of thirty-one economists most of whom are affiliated with institutions outside the United States.

This book presents the results for the second stage of an ongoing research project sponsored by the National Bureau of Economic Research. The overall project is dedicated to the study of the relationship between the structure of social security systems and labor force participation among older workers. This volume is the second of what the editors hope will eventually be at least three volumes to come out of the project. The first, published in 1999 and titled *Social Security and Retirement Around the World*, was also edited by Gruber and Wise.

It is very likely that the most widely read and useful single chapter in this book will prove to be the clearly written and forty page "Introduction and Summary" by Gruber and Wise that precedes Chapter 1. This introduction seeks to summarize