BOOK REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS DE LIVRES


Reviewed by Robert G. Brunger

The fields of public administration and nonprofit organization management have taken performance measurement to heart in recent years, with fecund results. In the United States, the *Government Performance and Results Act* (1993) created a national model that has inspired numerous state and local government initiatives emphasizing measurable results for governmental activities. Similarly, the United Way’s landmark publication (and subsequent promotion) of *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach* (1996) set in motion a widespread interest among service providers in demonstrating that desirable outcomes would occur as a result of what their program did. By the late 1990s, words like “benchmark,” “logic model,” and “long-term outcome” were being uttered with increasing frequency, and not just by program evaluators, either. Meanwhile, citizens everywhere continued to be involved with issues in their own communities, assisted with new tools such as online databases and e-mail.

Put more simply, a great deal has occurred in recent years that affects both the theory and practice of public governance and citizen involvement. Thus, the publication of *Results That Matter* provides a useful, current, and timely review of the situation. The authors present a model (represented by three overlapping circles) of four advanced governance practices involving various combinations of citizen involvement, systematic performance measurement, and program implementation. When citizens are engaged to provide leverage to ensure that things get done, they are involved in the first advanced practice: community problem-solving. This time-honoured practice has the weakness of not including systematic feedback to measure

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results. When civic entities or community-oriented organizations are able to measure and report results in conjunction with their actions and services (including provisions to provide sufficient resources), they are involved in the second advanced practice: organizations managing for results. This practice is well established within many governmental entities and nonprofit organizations, but citizens are limited to their role as customers and do not get to influence what gets planned, measured, or implemented. When citizens become involved with reviewing performance, they achieve the third advanced practice: citizens reaching for results. This practice, a more recent phenomenon, is not necessarily linked to resource commitments for continuing implementation, however. The fourth advanced governing practice, called communities governing for results, includes all three components of effective governance—citizen engagement, measurement of results, and getting things done—being present in a fashion that tends to overcome the weaknesses of the first three advanced practices taken individually. Any one of the first three advanced practices can and does improve the practice of governance, so all are beneficial to the extent that they are practiced in any given community. However, the fourth is a more desirable option: "Communities governing for results build on the collaborative strengths of all of the first three practices by combining some of the best features of all their collaborative tendencies ... and [adding] the missing links to resolve issues that limit governance effectiveness" (pp. 130, 131). In support of this model, the book also defines roles that individual citizens can play (stakeholder, advocate, issue framer, evaluator, and collaborator) and presents a related concept of "community learning" in which there are distinctions about "who learns" (engaged citizens, public or private organizations, or both) and what it is they learn (using or improving decision processes, using information on measurable results, or both).

If the authors had elected to present just their conceptual model of advanced governance practices—perhaps as an extended essay rather than a book—it would still be an approachable abstraction that could generate interest and discussion from members of the academic community interested in theories of governance and citizen participation. What changes this book from a solid base hit to a home run, however, is the authors' extensive and skillful use of a plenitude of examples and case studies to support and illustrate their ideas. The examples are drawn from local and regional governments and nonprofit organizations serving communities of different sizes and situations located all over the United States, and most of the stories
are drawn from organizations that have been in existence for several years. These case studies are described in sufficient detail for the reader to appreciate that these concepts of advanced governance practices are not just simplistic representations on a flow chart, but have been developed from some real applications with real people confronting real issues in real communities. Furthermore, the stories are presented candidly enough to show some occasional weak spots, which are illuminating in their own way. For example, a citizens’ organization in Nevada “faces a challenge in just staying afloat” (p. 121), but was still able to generate an active interest in the local community development indicators they created. In another example, a community organization in Jacksonville, Florida, set educational achievement targets that have not been met, but which have served to renew the organization’s dedication to the task. The situation also prompted the useful observation that “major improvements of complex community systems do not occur quickly and easily, even with the help of indicators” (p. 112). The numerous stories from the field constitute the most compelling feature of this book, and the authors openly invite the reader to consider how the principles could be applied to one’s own community. Although the book is not designed as a “how-to” manual, all of the case study descriptions are supported with numerous notes that would allow a motivated reader to learn more.

The experiential grounding of Results That Matter could have only come from authors with extensive public policy experience. All three co-authors have just such a background, with long careers that have combined academic and practitioner positions in the United States and Canada, and the named contributor has extensive expertise with one of the more prominently featured case study examples. This work should be of special interest to anyone involved with citizen participation in matters of public administration, including elected officials in local government; appointed members of neighbourhood, community, or regional planning boards; community development officials (public or private sector); and neighbourhood or citizen activists.

*Reviewed by Charles Lusthaus and Anette Wenderoth*

Preskill and Catsambas describe their text as a “crossover” between evaluation and organizational development and change (p. x), as it illustrates how Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which has its origins in organizational development, can be utilized to enhance evaluation processes. In this context, the text follows in the tradition of Patton’s utilization-focused evaluation.

The book is structured into six chapters that are framed by a short narrative prologue (pp. xv–xviii) and a summarizing epilogue (pp. 139–140). Chapter 1 provides a brief yet comprehensive introduction to Appreciative Inquiry—its history, underlying principles and assumptions, key processes, and examples of its use for organizational change and development. Chapter 2 proceeds with an orientation on key concepts of evaluation and a summary of current evaluation trends. It includes information on formative and utilization-focused approaches. The authors outline a number of common features that AI and current participatory, learning-oriented evaluation approaches share (pp. 45–46).

The following four chapters systematically explore four core applications of Appreciative Inquiry in evaluations in more depth: Chapter 3 addresses the question of how to use AI to focus and plan for an evaluation by compiling key questions, issues to be addressed, and stakeholder opinions on the use of evaluation findings; Chapter 4 outlines how to use Appreciative Inquiry to (re-)design interview guidelines and surveys into appreciative, forward-aiming tools; Chapter 5 focuses on the use of AI to develop evaluation systems; and Chapter 6 describes approaches to building evaluation capacity through Appreciative Inquiry. All six chapters include numerous examples of “real life” applications of AI in relation to the chapter focus. In total, the book includes 16 detailed case studies.

The authors introduce Appreciative Inquiry (pp. 1–34) as “a group process that inquires into, identifies, and further develops the bet
of ‘what is’ in organizations in order to create a better future.” As a decidedly constructionist approach, Appreciative Inquiry regards reality as something that does not exist outside human interaction, but is constructed during and through interactions (p. 10). The text relates AI principles to older theories and studies focusing on positive thinking, such as the placebo effect, the Pygmalion effect, and positive images, as well as the narrative of stories and theories of motivation (pp. 11–14).

One common criticism of AI is that it would ignore problems by focusing on the positive and on successes rather than on shortcomings (p. 26). The text offers an alternative view: Appreciative Inquiry reframes our view on problems, but does not ignore them. AI focuses on “what to do more of based on what has worked, which translates into knowing what to do less of that has not worked” (p. 27).

The book is based on a four-phase model of Appreciative Inquiry that distinguishes between four main AI processes: Inquire, Imagine, Innovate, and Implement (p. 15). The Inquire phase (pp. 16–19) mainly consists of appreciative interviews. Different from other approaches, AI interviews are usually not carried out by an external interviewer. Instead, participants are asked to interview each other in pairs, using a prepared interview guide. Questions focus on peak experiences of the participants. During the Imagine phase (p. 20), participants are asked to imagine being in the mid-term future when their organization or program is being awarded a prize for excellence (or similar positive scenario). They are asked what changes made this success possible. During the Innovate phase (pp. 20–25), participants develop concrete actions—building on their past successes and strengths—in order to achieve their previously outlined visions. The final Implement phase (pp. 25–26) invites participants to act upon what they have accomplished in the three previous phases and make concrete plans for future action.

Besides describing the use of AI in evaluations, the book also outlines various ways in which Appreciative Inquiry can be used to build organizational capacity and evaluation capacity (pp. 119–138). This capacity-building potential lies, for example, in AI’s ability to reframe the study of problems into the study of successes. As a learning process, rather than a punitive one, AI makes evaluations less threatening and increases members’ motivation to participate in evaluation activities. In consequence, AI fosters a greater use of evaluation findings, and thus greater evaluation impact.
Reframing Evaluation is a practical guidebook for evaluation practitioners who are interested in increasing their repertoire of methodological approaches to evaluation. In addition, it would be of interest to those managers who want evaluation focused on internal organizational change. Preskill and Catsamba are convincing advocates and throughout the book show their passion not only for AI, but generally for “good” (i.e., useful) evaluations. Their presentation helps the reader to keep an open mind toward AI and its potential uses, without feeling the need to defend traditional approaches of evaluation against AI. This is helped by the fact that the authors emphasize that they do not suggest Appreciative Inquiry should completely replace other approaches to evaluation, nor that it would be the best and only approach for every evaluation task. In taking a non-dogmatic stand, the authors emphasize that there is a wide range of ways that evaluation professionals can approach and integrate AI into their practice, ranging from changing the focus and tone of a few evaluation questions, to embracing AI as a complete paradigm shift of their evaluation practice.

The text is well structured and written in clear, understandable, yet never over-simplifying language. The theoretical background sections are brief, but sufficiently detailed for the purpose of introducing and linking key concepts of AI and evaluation. The case studies offer useful examples of evaluation questions and AI applications.

Readers may differ in their judgement as to whether they regard AI as a unique approach to evaluations and organizational development, or merely as a new label for a collection of existing ideas and tools for formative evaluation, participatory assessments, and learning-oriented evaluations. Similarly, evaluators will ask the question of whether this approach to evaluation can help when summative choices need to be made as part of the evaluation assignment. This book is less concerned with these ideological debates than with the practical application of the learning-focused approach that it describes. The text provides plenty of concrete suggestions for evaluation practice and also raises questions regarding the best ways of making evaluations as useful for their users as possible. While the text does not “reframe evaluation,” it does provide an interesting look into how appreciative inquiry can reframe some aspects of our work—in particular in formative, learning-oriented evaluation settings.

**Reviewed by Kenneth Watson**

This is the best book that I’ve read on the type of in-depth interviewing that is vital to every evaluation study. Indeed it is one of few books I’ve encountered that show real appreciation of how an evaluator conducts a good interview and learns from it. Other economists, Friedrich Hayek in particular, have emphasized how important “tacit” knowledge is—that is, knowledge that arises from direct experience. This book refers mainly to this type of experience.

Although the book is titled *Qualitative Interviewing*, the Rubins use the term “responsive interviewing” to describe their technique, and I think it is a better term. The technique is responsive in the sense that, although the interview is meticulously prepared in advance, it is a conversation and the interviewer lets it take its own course.

In the preface to the second edition the authors say: “We call this approach responsive interviewing because the researcher is responding to the interviewee and then asking further questions about what he or she hears, rather than asking only predetermined questions … the philosophy that underlies our model underscores the importance of working with interviewees as partners rather than treating them as objects of research” (p.vii).

Part of the idea is that the evaluator learns as he or she goes along. Analysis occurs throughout the project, not just at the end. What is learned in one interview changes the questions that are asked in the next; indeed it changes even the questions that are asked later in the same interview.

The Rubins describe in detail the techniques of responsive interviewing, including how to build interviews around main questions, how to use probes to manage the conversation and to elicit detail, and how to formulate follow-up questions. They describe the use of software in support of interviews. They also consider the implications of research ethics review boards, and how to maintain the flexibility to be

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responsive in the research while, at the same time, not having to go back to an ethics review board because the research has significantly changed during implementation.

The weakness of the book, from the point of view of the professional evaluator, is that it contains everything but the kitchen sink. Graduate students are one of its main audiences and, along with excellent material on responsive interviewing, the book contains a lot of material on choosing research topics, getting published, and so on, that is not of interest to the non-student professional. Nevertheless, what is good in the book is so good that it’s worth persevering.

It is also true that the relationship between an evaluator and an interviewee is special in some ways that are not examined in this book. The evaluator is not just a dispassionate researcher, but is also an instrument of accountability and an appraiser of performance. This changes the dynamics of interviews. It poses different challenges to establishing trust.

As well, the evaluator is looking not only for insights, as an academic researcher might be, but also for evidence. Interviews must be handled and recorded in certain ways if they are to produce acceptable evidence. For example, they may need to be recorded contemporaneously and confirmed either by a second interviewer (assuming there was one) or by the interviewee. The dynamics of challenge and factual clearance are different for an evaluator than they are for a pure researcher.

It would be ideal for the evaluation practitioner if this book were cut down to about 150 pages by eliminating all the student tips that don’t really have much to do with the core material on interviewing, and focusing on the points that are explicitly relevant to evaluators. Nevertheless, it is good value even as it stands.

Reviewed by Michael Obrecht

Suppose that you have set out to identify the evaluation issues for a complex program and find that after consulting a wide range of stakeholders you have 57 different statements about what needs to be considered. To distill these statements to a manageable set of evaluation issues, you might simply find a quiet time and space and do it yourself. Or you could convene a small group of stakeholders and have them wrestle over the relative importance of the statements and how they interrelate. Or you could work with data from a large number of stakeholders, say 40 people, who have independently reviewed the entire set of statements, rated the importance of each, and sorted them into categories. The latter approach is probably the most participative and thus likely to yield the benefits of stakeholder participation—a greater sense of ownership of the evaluation and greater confidence that it reflects broad opinion. Averaging the 40 stakeholders’ ratings of the importance of each statement would be straightforward. But to extract an overview set of categories from their diverse categorizations of the statements you would need a special algorithm. Enter concept mapping.

The algorithm behind concept mapping first creates a matrix for each participant’s sorting of a set of statements. The matrix records whether or not a given statement has been placed in the same category as any other statement. Combining data from the matrices of all stakeholders, the algorithm uses multi-dimensional scaling to determine the distance between statements. If most people grouped two statements together, then the distance between them will be very short. If statements were only rarely grouped together, the distance between them will be great. The distances are then displayed visually in a point map such as is illustrated in Figure 1.

Next, the analyst activates a hierarchical clustering capability within the concept mapping algorithm. The objective is to identify a useful
Figure 1
Point Map
set of clusters within the statements. The number of clusters should be as parsimonious as possible yet large enough to capture all major themes. The analyst will probably have a sense of the appropriate number of concepts. This intuition could be complemented by an examination of the mean, median, and modal number of categories used by stakeholders when sorting the statements. Let’s assume that intuition and analysis suggest there are four to six significant concepts underlying the 57 statements in our example. The analyst would then examine the themes that emerge when the statements are clustered into groups of four, five, and six, respectively, to identify the most practically useful solution which would then be displayed as a map to provide a starting point for stakeholder discussions of issues.

Figure 2 shows a map of five clusters. Note that the number of layers in the visual display of a concept indicates its importance. For example, the evaluation issue represented by the lower right cluster appears to be the most important to stakeholders. In contrast, the issue captured by the cluster at top left seems to be of lesser importance. If stakeholders have been characterized along some dimension, such as role in the program, the concept mapping software enables a comparison of the importance that various groups attach to each concept, yet another good stimulus for discussion and an opening up of various perspectives.

In Concept Mapping for Planning and Evaluation, Mary Kane and William Trochim provide a first full-scale description of the technique. Trochim could be considered the inventor of concept mapping. In the early 1980s, as a fledgling professor at Cornell University, he was helping a graduate student who was conducting research on the meaning of empowerment. The student had generated a long list of variables related to the phenomenon and wanted to tease out underlying concepts. In working with the student on a categorization of the variables, Trochim observed that there were a large number of possibilities, all valid, varying with the perspective and experiences of the person who did the sorting. He then realized that it would be feasible and useful to aggregate the data from multiple categorizers into a single matrix. Remembering lessons from a class on multidimensional scaling taught by Will Shadish at Northwestern University, he realized that scaling the information in the master matrix would allow one to display it visually. Then, hierarchical analysis of the data would allow a systematic search for meaningful groupings of variables. Concept mapping was born. In addition to using it as a tool for academic enquiry, Trochim tried it out in a major strategic
planning exercise for a unit within the university. It worked well in that practical context as well. His first major paper on the technique appeared in 1989. Since then, concept mapping has been the principal methodology for over 60 doctoral theses, including 13 at Canadian universities. Organizations that have used concept mapping include, among others, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the National Cancer Institute, the American Cancer Society, the University of North Carolina, and, as mentioned already, Cornell University.

Mary Kane is well positioned to provide a definitive description of the technique. Currently the president and CEO of Concept Systems Incorporated, Kane co-founded the organization with Trochim in 1993. She has helped to transform the methodology from a manual system, in which statements were on index cards that participants sorted into piles, to an electronic system in which participants can work online. Incidentally, in the acknowledgements section, the co-authors point out that it would have been inappropriate to follow the tradition of dedicating a book to their respective spouses. They have been married to each other for 35 years.

Figure 2
Cluster Map
The book is a complete guide to the theory and practice of concept mapping. It leads the reader step by step through all stages of a concept mapping study, from the selection of participants and the first brainstorming of ideas to the interpretation of the maps that are generated. There are separate chapters devoted to case studies in which the technique was applied in planning and evaluation projects. On the evaluation side, concept mapping has been used to develop logic models, identify evaluation questions, determine measures and scales, and examine patterns of outcomes.

This reviewer would recommend the book to anyone who wants to know more about the technique. For someone who is conducting a first concept-mapping exercise, the book might be considered essential reading.

REFERENCE