

Purposeful Program Theory

By Sue Funnell and Patricia Rogers
Jossey Bass, 2011

Reviewed by Matt Baumann, managing partner, Prova Research and Consultancy

Part encyclopaedia, part guide, *Purposeful Program Theory* is an invaluable resource for anyone responsible for design, management or evaluation of public policy and larger scale social programmes and initiatives. Based on their considerable careers in programme design, evaluation, research and performance measurement, the authors set out comprehensively, the myriad ways in which program theory can be developed and applied.

The book aims to help practitioners assess their circumstances and develop, represent and use

programme theory appropriately. It presents, in rich detail, the options at every stage of programme theory in the context of different purposes and applications.

It is intended for those new to programme theory as well as those with some/more experience. The book will be of most value to those studying programme development and/or evaluation at Masters or PhD level and those with (or likely to have) a substantial role in developing or evaluating major programmes or initiatives.

It is set out in 5 sections covering an introduction to programme theory; its various purposes; its development; resources; and how to use programme theory for evaluation.

An expansive and engaging read, the book can be read in full, chapter by chapter (time permitting!) but is also designed with speed readers in mind with good signposting and introductory and summary sections highlighting the key learning from each chapter.

The book talks to multiple practitioners (programme staff and evaluators) and contexts (programmes in design stage and existing programmes). It could perhaps have been more helpful, and an easier read, had the authors fundamentally distinguished - in their organisation of content - between the development and application of programme theory at the design stage and its use in review/evaluation of programmes which already exist.

As an encyclopaedia of programme theory and the likely options / considerations at every stage in the development and application of programme theory, it works extremely well. And the reader does not have to agree with everything the authors say in order to benefit from its provocations and ideas.

1/6 - £75

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landscape - no bleed**

1/3 - £150

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portrait - no bleed**

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Promoting Social Cohesion: Implications for Policy and Evaluation

Edited by Peter Ratcliffe and Ines Newman
 Policy Press, 2011

Reviewed by **Robert Willis**,
 senior research officer, Welsh
 Government

This book presents a critique of the UK Government's model of community cohesion, and seeks to replace it with an alternative vision, based on recognising the central importance of social deprivation, and the conflicts that develop within, not just between communities (hence 'social cohesion'). It also gives advice on evaluation.

The editors argue that, although there have been many academic critiques of community cohesion, little has been done to present alternatives, or methods of evaluation. This book seeks to fill this gap.

The community cohesion model has its origins in a Home Office sponsored inquiry, following disturbances in

northern towns and cities in 2001. The Cantle report (*Community Cohesion: A report of the Independent Review Team (2001)*) argued that, in towns like Oldham, Asian and white communities were living 'parallel lives'. The remedy was to be promoting contact between these groups. However, as Peter Ratcliffe puts it: "...it is infinitely easier to bring people together for social events than it is to solve the material differences that divide those same people" (p.33).

Chapters on population distribution and housing counter the myths of self-segregation and 'ghetto-isation'. In the first case, ethnic minorities as well as white people are moving out to the suburbs. In the second case, ethnic minorities were restricted, on arrival, to poor inner city areas, because the racist residency rule excluded them from council housing, and because of white hostility.

The authors say that the existing approach, to evaluation based on performance indicators (PI), is fundamentally flawed. The Government's national performance indicator 1, for example, is: 'that percentage of people who believe that people from other backgrounds get on well together in their local area'.

Apart from the ambiguity in the measure, (although 'other backgrounds' seems to be commonly understood as other ethnic or faith groups), and the

assumption that people define themselves in relation to their neighbourhood, the PIs approach is not subtle enough, to pick up differences in attitudes to different ethnic groups, for example.

The alternative presented here, is based on a theory of change approach, and includes specific advice, such as how to use local administrative data sources.

The book is aimed at academics, those working on, or evaluating community cohesion projects, and anyone who wants to understand a key policy initiative. It would also be of interest to those who think that research is, or should be, about ideas, not just methodology.

The fact that the authors seem to care about the issue, carried me through the occasional bit of jargon, such as 'visual imaginary'. I found the critique of the community cohesion policy both powerful and convincing. The alternative model and approaches to evaluation are valuable contributions to work in this developing area

1/2- £225
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portrait - no bleed

The community development reader – history, themes and issues

Edited by Craig, G., Mayo, M., Popple, K., Shaw, M. and Taylor, M.
The Policy Press, 2011

Reviewer: Andrew Curtis, freelance researcher

Community development (CD) in the UK has survived, albeit somewhat beleaguered, successive governments and altering ideological contexts over the last few decades. So, it is extraordinary that this is the first reader focusing on CD in the UK. It is, therefore, a potentially valuable resource, both for those in the field and for policy makers. It encompasses various writings on CD since the late 1960s and editorial essays which consider how it has interacted with broader political and economic changes. The editors concede that there are inevitably significant omissions, and it is also a shame that the (sometimes truncated) contributions rarely exceed a dozen pages. However, this does not detract from the book's importance.

Many of the contributions seek to define the role of the CD worker and community work. Should CD workers solely tackle local issues or should they also address and challenge structural factors and inequalities? The reader illustrates that from the late 1970s, the scope for more radical work was eroded. CD workers are now often marginalised, attached to departments not solely focused on CD and employed on short-term contracts. As well as exploring these external pressures, there is also critical self-reflection on certain aspects of CD work. This includes the absence of recognition in early CD literature of the role of women, black and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities.

A recurring theme, is the difficulties CD workers face in effectively criticising the state whilst also being in its employ. The state continues to be the main source of CD funding, either through central or local government, and has often managed to harness CD work for its own ends. Lovett et al (chapter 4.1) refer to this as the 'British genius for taking the radical edge off radical community initiatives by creating forms of co-optative machinery' (p. 204). This has been especially true of the New Labour administrations. There have been many initiatives in the last decade to help individuals and communities become more empowered, but these were often only within parameters set by the state and measured by narrowly defined targets. The inherent contradiction of such 'top-down empowerment'

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