

## **Celebrating Madhabi Chatterji**

### **Remarks by John Allegrante**

Thank you. Thank you for inviting me to help celebrate our good friend and colleague, Madhabi Chatterji, on this occasion. So, I would like to talk about Madhabi as a scholar, Madhabi as a teacher and mentor, and, finally, Madhabi as a friend and colleague.

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I first met Madhabi Chatterji sometime shortly after she arrived at TC in 2001 from the University of South Florida, where she had been on the faculty in measurement and had earned her Ph.D. a decade earlier. I hadn't heard of her. And I didn't know her work.

Our first encounters were most cordial to be sure. But being accustomed to the hurly-burly of New York and TC's informality, I found Madhabi somewhat formal.

But once I got to know her, I liked her. I learned quickly that she was thoughtful, honest, and direct — refreshingly direct. And I came to like — and value — her even more because of those attributes.

Most importantly, as a scholar, Madhabi brought fresh perspective to TC. In fact, it became evident that she was at the vanguard of a new, era of pragmatic evaluation, and that she was leading the field in the science and methodology of educational measurement through her work and, later, through AERI.

If you have ever seen her CV, you will know that she has been a productive scholar, with her two decades at TC being her most

productive years. She has produced a corpus of well over 50 journal papers, proceedings and edited works — all largely first-authored — that have been published in journals with the highest impact factors — *Educational Researcher*, *Review of Educational Research*, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *American Journal of Evaluation*, and *Health Education & Behavior*, where I was honored as its editor to have edited and published a manuscript reporting her work that emanated from a prestigious National Academy of Medicine committee on which she served with my good friend and colleague, Lawrence Green.

One of her early papers, “Evidence on what works: An argument for extended-term mixed-method (ETMM) evaluation designs,” stands as one of the most compelling examples of the scholarship she has produced. Her work to conceptualize, develop, and demonstrate her concept of this approach to evaluation design in field evaluations generated considerable interest at AERA when it was first published. In addition to being published in the *Educational Researcher*, the paper received the AERA Division H Outstanding Publication Award in 2004 for its contribution to advancing research methodology. And I will, yet again, be drawing on that very paper during the class session on challenges in evaluating health promotion programs that I will teach later today. Thus, I will tell my students, to quote Madhabi:

*“Randomized experiments alone won't yield the best evidence on what works, when it works, and whether it works in the same way in different [settings]. For that, one must mix different research methods ....”*

In addition, her books have reshaped the contours of the field of measurement. Her first book, *Designing and Using Tools for Educational Assessment* (published in 2003 by Allyn & Bacon/Pearson), presented a new Process Model to guide instrument design, validation and use. The book has become a popular guide among students and

the process model has been used by several of my own doctoral students on whose dissertations Madhabi has advised. In fact, it was the conceptual framework for the most recent dissertation I sponsored — Janhavi Mallaiah's dissertation that developed and validated a stroke literacy assessment test for community health workers.

And Madhabi's forthcoming book, *Designing Assessments for Multidisciplinary Constructs and Applications: A User-centered Methodology* (to be published by Guilford), will extend her lines of inquiry beyond education to problems in health, psychology, and other applied fields.

In sum, Madhabi's scholarly contributions build on the traditions of the pioneering and renowned educational evaluation specialists — Michael Patton, Michael Scriven, Robert Stake, and Daniel Stufflebeam — by logically extending our collective thinking about the need for new and more pragmatic evaluation methods. That is the league that she is playing in. And as a result, Madhabi's scholarship in assessment and evaluation in education have put TC back on the map in a field that TC essentially founded.

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In addition to her scholarship, Madhabi is a superb teacher and mentor. To illustrate, 10 years ago, Madhabi and I worked together as Co-Principal Investigators on a large subcontract to TC that she and I secured from the Department of Biomedical Informatics at the College of Physicians & Surgeons to conduct curriculum development and assessment work for the Columbia Curriculum Development Center, one of five centers (including Columbia, Duke, Johns Hopkins, Oregon Health & Science University, and the University of Alabama) that were funded nationwide with a \$1.2-million Obama-era federal grant to Columbia to support the implementation of the electronic health

record. Madhabi shouldered most of the conceptual and technical work on the project and proved to be a tremendous asset to the work of the Columbia team—teaching all of us as we went along.

But it is through my work with her on doctoral dissertation advisement and various committees that have shown me what a tremendous force she is as a teacher and mentor. Of the large number of doctoral students (other than her own) on whose committees she has served, Madhabi has graciously agreed to be the second member on the committees of at least seven doctoral candidates in health education whose dissertations I have sponsored. In each case, she has been a valuable contributor to the candidate's progress and efforts to improve or clarify the methodologic approaches of these studies. Her suggestions for changes in design are always thoughtful and pragmatic, and all of my students report that working with Madhabi has significantly strengthened their proposed studies.

As a consequence, I have routinely recommended that all doctoral students with whom I work enroll her in vaunted HUDM 5055-HUDM 5056 course sequence in evaluation of institutions, programs and curricula. Those who have taken her courses have consistently reported her teaching to be organized, challenging, and, yep, highly pragmatic.

All of these students have gone on to make considerable postdoctoral achievements and contributions. And I don't think they would be the success they have become without Madhabi's ideas, without her dedication, and without her deep understanding of how scholarship must be done to be meaningful.

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Finally, I want you to know that it has been a great point of pride for me to have worked with Madhabi Chatterji during her years at TC. She is a superb colleague whose advice is always valued and I am grateful to have had her as a colleague and collaborator. Madhabi, thank you for being such a wise and generous colleague.

But, with that said — and I hope you know that I could say much, much more — what I really want Madhabi to know is that I am among the legions of colleagues and students who care deeply about her, who respect and value her, and who have always enjoyed being with and around her.

Madhabi, you have always been kind and generous with your time and advice, and you have always brought perspicacity to the work of TC. And it is for these reasons that I wanted to be among your TC colleagues to wish you well today.

We are going to miss you around here.

But we are not going to forget you.

In fact, we expect you to visit frequently, remain productive, and continue leading.

So, as you prepare to embark on the next phase of your journey, please know, dear friend: we thank you for the contributions and the memories, we love you, and we all wish you and your family the very best in the years ahead.

Godspeed!