Sources of Information about Appreciative Inquiry

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Abstract

This *CASEmaker* includes references to sources of information about appreciative inquiry (AI). AI is a process for systematically identifying the characteristics of a program, system, practices, etc. that are most effective in terms of productivity, valued practices, and desired outcomes. AI focuses on what is currently working well or has worked well in the past, highlights the positive characteristics of those experiences, and creates positive energy to sustain effective processes. The strategy holds promise as a capacity-building strategy for organizations open to thinking and practicing in new ways using AI as a facilitatory process.

This *CASEmaker* bibliography includes references to sources of information about appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry (AI) was developed by David Cooperrider (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) at the Case Western Reserve University Weatherhead School of Management. AI is a capacity-building process that seeks to increase best or desired practices by encouraging people both individually and as a group to engage in desired and effective behavior. The AI process facilitates the identification of peak or optimal performance. By highlighting these desired and valued practices, it is hypothesized that people will engage more frequently in the use of these practices. The focus of AI is using asset-based strategies to search for solutions (used currently or in the past), amplifying what is working well (or has in the past worked well), and creating positive energy to sustain application of those solutions in the future (Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1990). Examples of peak performances and visions for the future are amassed during appreciative inquiry's 4D cycle of discovery, dream, design, and delivery.

The *discovery* phase starts with the premise that every system (organization, team, work group, etc.) works effectively to some degree. During this phase, staff engages in activities to find, describe, and explain the positive factors (past or present) within an organization. This phase is meant to generate knowledge that will help build momentum for what is possible.

The *dream* phase of AI uses an organization's history to generate a practical yet different positive future. It is in this phase that the *status quo* is challenged and images of realistic developmental opportunities are generated.

The *design* phase of AI uses the data gathered in the first two phases to create a new infrastructure and governance that will support the new vision of the system. Once the organization has articulated what it wants to become, the new design is used to support the organization as it reinvents itself.

The change is well underway by the time the process enters the *destiny* stage of AI. This phase is about maintaining the momentum of the new system. It is about looking at what is working well in the new system and bringing the process back to the beginning of the AI process, the discovery phase, with the focus being the new system.

Case Example

AI was used at the Family, Infant and Preschool Program (FIPP) to refocus staff attention on the characteristics of effective participatory helpgiving practices (Dunst & Trivette, 1996; Wilson & Dunst, 2004). The process began by interviewing staff about their most positive/ef-

Rx   Prescription for Practice   Rx

Improve your knowledge and understanding of appreciative inquiry and how this process can be used to promote practitioner adoption of evidence based practices in early intervention by reading the following:

Bushe, G. R. (1998). Appreciative inquiry with teams. *Organization Development Journal, 16*(3), 41-50.

Bushe, G. R., & Kassam, A. F. (2005). When is appreciative inquiry transformational?: A meta-case analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 41,* 161-181.

Cooperrider, D. L., & Srivastva, S. (1987). Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. In W. Pasmore & R. Woodman (Eds.), *Research in organization change and development* (Vol. 1, pp. 129-169). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Goldberg, R. A. (2001). Implementing a professional development system through appreciative inquiry. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal, 22,* 56-61.

Hammond, S. (1998). *The thin book of appreciative inquiry* (Rev. ed.). Plano, TX: Thin Book.

fective experience they have had with a family in terms of participatory helpgiving. Taped interviews were transcribed and the information was used to identify themes or common elements in the stories. The participants then met as a group to use the themes from the interviews to write provocative statements about how they wanted their practices to look in the future given their best experiences using participatory helpgiving practices in the past. These provocative statements were used to identify specific actions that members would take to move the organization towards the realization of practices consistent with the statements. As a result, FIPP staff identified prior successes, the processes that operated to make their practices effective, and ways to increase the use of participatory helpgiving practices. The four D process of discovery, dream, design, and destiny motivated and energized staff to repeat those peak performances not only among themselves but to other staff members that were not part of the AI process.

Change within organizations is inevitable. AI allows practitioners the opportunity to carryover the best practices (past and present) into the new system. This helps to build a smooth transition for those resistant to change and

supports more effective learning and use of desired practices. AI would seem a useful strategy for the advancement of practices that are consistent with evidence-based early childhood intervention practices (Bushe, 2005). The *prescription for practice* includes articles that readers should find especially helpful for understanding the possible use of AI specifically for the field of early childhood intervention. AI is considered one of a number of practices that promotes adoption and use of evidence-based practices (Dunst, 2005). This bibliography was prepared as an activity of the *Program Standards and Benchmarks Laboratory* of the Center for the Advanced Study of Excellence in Early Childhood and Family Support Practices (http://fippcase.org/labPSB.php).

Appreciative Inquiry

Foundations

A number of key articles include description of the development and foundation of AI as a capacity-building process. These articles were mostly written by leaders from within the field of organizational development. A more complete bibliography pertaining to AI can be found at the AI Commons (http://ai.cwru.edu) maintained by the Case Western Reserve University Weatherhead School of Management.

Barrett, F. J. (1995). Creating appreciative learning cultures. *Organizational Dynamics, 24*(2), 36-49.

Bushe, G. R. (1999). Advances in appreciative inquiry as an organization development intervention. *Organization Development Journal, 17*(2), 61-68.

Bushe, G. R., & Coetzer, G. (1995). Appreciative inquiry as a team-development intervention: A controlled experiment. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 31,* 13-30.

Cooperrider, D. (1996). Resources for getting appreciative inquiry started: An example OD proposal. *Organization Development Practitioner, 28*(1/2), 23-33.

Cooperrider, D. L. (1996). The "child" as agent of inquiry. *Organization Development Practitioner, 28*(1/2), 5-11.

Cooperrider, D. L., & Srivastva, S. (1987). Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. In W. Pasmore & R. Woodman (Eds.), *Research in organization change and development* (Vol. 1, pp. 129-169). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Hammond, S. (1998). *The thin book of appreciative inquiry* (Rev. ed.). Plano, TX: Thin Book.

Hammond, S. A., & Royal, C. (Eds.). (2001). *Lessons from the field: Applying appreciative inquiry* (Rev. ed.). Plano, TX: Thin Book.

Head, T. C. (2000). Appreciative inquiry: Debunking the mythology behind resistance to change. *Organization Development Practitioner, 32*(1), 27-35.

Srivastva, S., & Cooperrider, D. L. (1990). *Appreciative management and leadership: The power of positive thought and action in organizations* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Whitney, D. (1998, Spring). Appreciative inquiry: An innovative process for organization change. *Employment Relations Today,* 11-21.

Appreciative Inquiry Themes

AI has been used for different purposes including, but not limited to, staff development, team development, and organizational change. AI seeks to find the *best* or *peak performances* in given situations or systems. AI suggests that when people concentrate on and converse with one another about what is *best practice* within their organization, their practices will mirror these standards without having to dwell on the negative aspects of poor performance. *Best practices* can be the best experience learning and implementing a new skill, the best example of providing parenting supports, or a time when a practitioner felt especially confident in supporting children and families. The following references should be helpful for those interested in learning more about how AI applies to organizational learning.

Barrett, F. J. (1995). Creating appreciative learning cultures. *Organizational Dynamics, 24*(2), 36-49.

Bushe, G. R. (1998). Appreciative inquiry with teams. *Organization Development Journal, 16*(3), 41-50.

Bushe, G. R., & Coetzer, G. (1995). Appreciative inquiry as a team-development intervention: A controlled experiment. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 31*, 13-30.

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Golembiewski, R. T. (1999). Fine-tuning appreciative inquiry: Two ways of circumscribing the concept's value-added. *Organization Development Journal, 17*(3), 21-28.

Johnson, G., & Leavitt, W. M. (2001). Building on success: Transforming organizations through an appreciative inquiry. *Public Personnel Management, 30*, 129-136.

Meda, A. K. (2003). Tendercare, Inc.: A case study using appreciative inquiry. *Organization Development Journal, 21*(4), 81-86.

Newman, H. L., & Fitzgerald, S. P. (2001). Appreciative inquiry with an executive team: Moving along the action research continuum. *Organization Development Journal, 19*(3), 37-44.

Norum, K. E. (2001). Appreciative design. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science, 18,* 323-333.

Srivastva, S., & Cooperrider, D. L. (1990). *Appreciative management and leadership: The power of positive thought and action in organizations* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Potential Benefits

Due to the qualitative nature of the appreciative inquiry process, experimental research studies demonstrating the effects of AI are not yet readily available. However, various case studies and reports on the application of AI all describe similar benefits for people who take part in the appreciative process. The reader is referred to Bushe and Kassam (2005) for a recent review of AI research. The following articles include some of the key benefits of AI.

Barrett, F. J. (1995). Creating appreciative learning cultures. *Organizational Dynamics, 24*(2), 36-49.

Bushe, G. R. (1998). Appreciative inquiry with teams. *Organization Development Journal, 16*(3), 41-50.

Bushe, G. R., & Kassam, A. F. (2005). When is appreciative inquiry transformational?: A meta-case analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 41,* 161-181.

Fry, R., Barrett, F., Seiling, J., & Whitney, D. (2002). *Appreciative inquiry and organizational transformation: Reports from the field.* Westport, CT: Quotum.

Hammond, S. (1998). *The thin book of appreciative inquiry* (Rev. ed.). Plano, TX: Thin Book.

Hammond, S. A., & Royal, C. (Eds.). (2001). *Lessons from the field: Applying appreciative inquiry* (Rev. ed.). Plano, TX: Thin Book.

Liebler, C. J. (2005). Getting comfortable with appreciative inquiry. Global Social Innovations: *The Journal of the GEM Initiative, 1*(2).

Conclusion

The references included in this *CASEmaker* bibliography should be particularly useful to professionals interested in developing an understanding how Appreciative Inquiry (AI) can be used for facilitating and promoting organizational change. As stated in the introduction, AI is a *capacity-building strategy* that seeks to increase best or desired practices by encouraging people both individually and as a group to engage in desired and effective behavior. The AI process facilitates the identification of peak or optimal performance. By highlighting these desired and valued practices, it is hypothesized that people will engage more frequently in the use of these practices. The benefits that are consistently reported across studies suggest that AI should is a viable and positive approach to organizational change. The applicability of the AI principles across settings should make it easy for those

in early childhood intervention programs to use the approach with staff, families, and their organizations when examples of exemplary practices within their own field may not be readily available.

References

Bushe, G. R., & Kassam, A. F. (2005). When is appreciative inquiry transformational?: A meta-case analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 41,* 161-181.

Cooperrider, D. L., & Srivastva, S. (1987). Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. *Research in Organization Change and Development, 1,* 129-169.

Dunst, C. J., & Trivette, C. M. (1996). Empowerment, effective helpgiving practices and family-centered care. *Pediatric Nursing, 22,* 334-337, 343.

Dunst, C. J. (2005). Framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support. *CASEinPoint, 1*(1), 1-11.

Srivastva, S., & Cooperrider, D. L. (1990). *Appreciative management and leadership: The power of positive thought and action in organizations* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Trosten-Bloom, A. (2002). Creative applications of appreciative inquiry in an organization-wide culture change effort: The Hunter Douglas experience. In R. Fry, F. Barrett, J. Seiling & D. Whitney (Eds.), *Appreciative inquiry and organizational transformation: Reports from the field* (pp. 181-208). Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Wilson, L. L., & Dunst, C. J. (2004). Checking out family-centered helpgiving practices. In E. Horn, M. M. Ostrosky & H. Jones (Eds.), *Young Exceptional Children Monograph Series No. 5: Family-Based Practices* (pp. 13-26). Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

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