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Appreciative inquiry is an approach to seeking what is right in an organization in order to create a better future for it. How and when it might be used in evaluation practice is explored in this chapter.

An Overview of Appreciative Inquiry in Evaluation

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Appreciative Inquiry is a relatively new asset-based approach from the field of organizational development that has been garnering attention for its successful application in facilitating organizational change. Appreciative Inquiry is a process that inquires into, identifies, and further develops the best of what is in organizations in order to create a better future. A fundamental premise is that "organizations move toward what they study" (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros, 2003, p. 29).

A wide range of approaches, including Total Quality Management, Continuous Quality Improvement, the Balanced Score Card, Future Search, Open Space, and Appreciative Inquiry, have led change management efforts. The strategies outlined in these approaches vary; they include, among others, using measurement and evidence-based decisions for quality improvement, employing mediation and negotiation for the discovery of common ground, and following processes that aim to build organizational assets. While organizational development methods differ greatly depending on the purpose of the intervention and the organization's population and context, many approaches tend to focus on identifying specific problems, analyzing possible causes and solutions to these problems, and devising a plan to resolve or eliminate the problems.

Appreciative Inquiry looks at organizational issues, challenges, and concerns in a significantly different way. Instead of focusing on problems, organizational members first discover what is working particularly well in their organization. Then, instead of analyzing possible causes and solutions, they envision what it might be like if "the best of what is" occurred more

frequently. Here participants engage in a dialogue concerning what is needed, in terms of both tasks and resources, to bring about the desired future. Finally, organization members implement their desired changes. A common underlying assumption of problem-solving approaches is that organizations are served best by identifying and removing their deficits. In contrast, Appreciative Inquiry argues that organizations improve more effectively through "discovery and valuing, envisioning, dialogue and co-constructing the future" (Ashford and Patkar, 2001, p. 4).

The power of Appreciative Inquiry is the way in which participants become engaged and inspired by focusing on their own positive experiences. Usually in a workshop setting, participants remember and relate personal experiences of success, identify the common elements of these experiences, and devise statements and action plans for making those experiences occur more often in the organization. Because Appreciative Inquiry focuses on the positive and is grounded in participants' actual experiences, they "walk away with a sense of commitment, confidence and affirmation that they have been successful. They also know clearly how to make more moments of success" (Hammond, 1996, p. 7).

According to its proponents, Appreciative Inquiry is not just another organizational development tool or technique but "a philosophy and orientation to change that can fundamentally reshape the practice of organizational learning, design and development" (Watkins and Mohr, 2001, p. 21). It is an alternative approach, framework, or mind-set that focuses on illuminating and affirming personal success factors or forces within an organization to use with existing organizational development interventions such as strategic planning, organizational design or restructuring, and project evaluations (Watkins and Mohr, 2001). As such, it is both a philosophy and a worldview, with particular principles and assumptions and a structured set of core processes and practices for engaging people in identifying and cocreating an organization's future.

A common criticism of Appreciative Inquiry is that it ignores or even denies problems. While at first blush this view may seem understandable, it is nevertheless untrue. Appreciative Inquiry does address issues and problems, but from a different and often more constructive perspective: it reframes problem statements into a focus on strengths and successes. For example, rather than ask participants to list the problems their organization is facing, they are asked to explain what is going well, why it is going well, and what they want more of in the organization. In some Appreciative Inquiry efforts, participants are also asked to state their specific wishes for the organization. This implicitly raises and addresses problems. "More broadly, Appreciative Inquiry does not turn a blind eye on 'negative' situations or 'deficit-oriented' realities in organizations; it does not substitute a 'rosy' and 'romantic' picture for an 'objective' and 'realistic' one. It accepts these realities for what they are—areas in need of conversations and transformation. . . . But [Appreciative Inquiry] intentionally shifts the focus of the inquiry and intervention to those realities that are sources of vitality"

(Banaga, 1998, p. 263). Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) add, "We do not dismiss accounts of conflict, problems, or stress. We simply do not use them as the basis of analysis or action" (p. 18).

Perhaps the best explanation for the benefits of Appreciative Inquiry is from Tom White, former president of GTE Telephone Operations, shortly after completing an Appreciative Inquiry process:

> Appreciative Inquiry can get you much better results than seeking out and solving problems. . . . If you combine a negative culture with all the challenges we face today, it could be easy to convince ourselves that we have too many problems to overcome—to slip into a paralyzing sense of helplessness. . . . Don't get me wrong. I'm not advocating mindless happy talk. Appreciative Inquiry is a complex science designed to make things better. We can't ignore problems—we just need to approach them from the other side [Cooperrider and Whitney, 2000, p. 7].

History of Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is based on the work of David Cooperrider, who in 1980 as a doctoral student at Case Western Reserve University intended to study physician leadership in one of the most highly regarded medical centers in the United States. After asking physician leaders to tell their stories of successes and failures, he was amazed at the level of positive cooperation, innovation, and egalitarian governance when they were most effective. As a result of this finding, he decided to look at only those data that described the physician's leadership and the organization when it was most effective: when it was at its best. "The results of the study created such a powerful positive stir that the board requested this [Appreciative Inquiry] method be used at all levels of the 8000-person organization to facilitate change" (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros, 2003, p. xxiv).

Over the past two decades, Appreciative Inquiry has evolved from what began as an academic theory-building effort to a practical and powerful process for organizations to learn about and transform their processes and systems. Since the mid-1980s, the practice of Appreciative Inquiry has been applied in diverse settings in the United States and internationally. Numerous articles and books documenting its theory and application have been published, and Appreciative Inquiry-focused workshops and conferences have been offered throughout the world. Over the years, the theory and practice of Appreciative Inquiry has evolved into a comprehensive organizational intervention framework. A number of milestones mark its development (Watkins and Mohr, 2001):

• In 1990, the Taos Institute was founded by several Appreciative Inquiry practitioners and became a world-renowned training center for organizations, consultants, family therapists, educators, and others.

• In 1990, the Global Excellence in Management Initiative was begun with funding by the U.S. Agency for International Development to promote organizational excellence in development organizations in the United States and abroad. The initiative fostered innovative uses of Appreciative Inquiry in the international development field and created strong Appreciative Inquiry groups in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

• In 1992, Imagine Chicago was started as a large-scale community development effort in which children conducted hundreds of appreciative interviews with adults and elders throughout the city. This highly successful effort generated additional "Imagine" projects in other countries, including Australia and India, and in several other U.S. cities and states.

• In the mid-1990s, an Appreciative Inquiry-based international conference took place that offered participants an opportunity to build partnerships between corporations, foundations, nongovernment organizations, and governments across countries. In addition, the United Religions Initiative started using Appreciative Inquiry to bring together the world's religions in support of peace. Later, David Cooperrider was asked to bring Appreciative Inquiry into a world peace program started by the Dalai Lama.

• By 2000, in addition to the publication of books and articles, other means of disseminating information about Appreciative Inquiry were established, including annual conferences, an electronic newsletter, a listserv (ailist@lists.business.utah.edu), and several regional Appreciative Inquiry networks.

The overall impact of Appreciative Inquiry on the organizational development field has been significant. This impact was predicted and summarized by Richard Beckhard, one of the founders of the profession in his presentation to the National Academy of Management Conference in August 1999: "Appreciative Inquiry is, in my view, an exciting breakthrough, one that signals a change in the way we think about change. I'm intrigued by how rapidly it is emerging; but it is something substantive, conceptually strong, not like the quick fads. In my view we are looking at something important—[Appreciative Inquiry] will be of enduring consequence and energizing innovation for the field" (Watkins and Mohr, 2001, p. xxv).

Core Principles and Assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry

As the practice of Appreciative Inquiry has evolved, so have its core principles, assumptions, and processes. Ken Gergen's book, *Toward Transformation in Social Knowledge* (1994, 1982), and the theory of social constructionism have strongly influenced the development of Appreciative Inquiry. Social constructionism reflects a belief that there is no one reality or truth; rather, truth is grounded in the multiple and contextually determined realities of individuals' perceptions, dialogues, and shared understandings.

In developing Appreciative Inquiry, Cooperrider was also influenced by numerous research studies from the fields of medicine, sports, behavioral sciences, and anthropology that demonstrated the power of positive images. The first such finding was the placebo effect, in which one- to two-thirds of patients showed marked improvement in symptoms by believing they had received effective treatment. A second set of influential findings was from the Pygmalion studies, which demonstrated the relationship between the images teachers have of their students and the students' levels of performance and long-term futures. A third set of studies showed the effects of both positive and negative thinking on the outcomes of surgery: patients with more positive thoughts recovered at a much faster rate (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2000).

Cooperrider and others applied the theories of social constructionism and the power of image to organizational change and developed the following five core principles for the practice of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2000):

1. *Constructivist Principle.* Related to the notion that multiple realities exist based on perceptions and shared understandings, this principle suggests that what is known about an organization and the organization's actual destiny are interwoven.

2. *Principle of Simultaneity:* Because reality is an evolving social construction, it is possible through inquiry to influence the reality an organization creates for itself. Inquiry and change are simultaneous and "inquiry is intervention." Thus, the nature of the inquiry itself is critically important where the very first questions we ask set the stage for what people discover and learn and the way they coconstruct their future.

3. *Poetic Principle.* Because reality is a human construction, an organization is like an open book in which its story is being coauthored continually by its members and those who interact with them. Consequently, members are free to choose which part of the story to study or inquire about—its problems and needs, or its moments of creativity or joy, or both.

4. *Anticipatory Principle.* This principle postulates that the image an organization has of its future guides that organization's current behavior. Thus, an organization's positive images of its future will anticipate, or lead to, positive actions.

5. *Positive Principle.* This principle arose from extensive experience with Appreciative Inquiry. Early Appreciative Inquiry practitioners found that the more positive the questions they asked were, the more engaged and excited participants were and the more successful and longer lasting the change effort was. This is in large part because human beings and organizations want to turn toward positive images that give them energy and nourish happiness.

Based on these principles, eight assumptions form the foundation for Appreciative Inquiry's processes and methods (Hammond, 1996, pp. 20–21):

1. In every society, organization, or group, something works.
2. What we focus on becomes our reality.
3. Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities.
4. The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.
5. People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).
6. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.
7. It is important to value differences.
8. The language we use creates our reality.

These principles and assumptions underlie both the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry and the ways in which it is conducted.

## Appreciative Inquiry Models, Processes, and Methods

Of the two primary models for conducting Appreciative Inquiry, the more common is the 4-D model (Figure 1.1). The first phase in the model, Discovery, consists of participants interviewing each other and sharing stories about their peak experiences. The following foundational (or generic) questions guide these interviews (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros, 2003, p. 23):

• Describe a high-point experience in your organization—a time when you were most alive and engaged.
• Without being modest, what is it that you most value about yourself, your work, and your organization?
• What are the core factors that give life to your organization, without which the organization would cease to exist?
• What three wishes do you have to enhance the health and vitality of your organization?

Participants share their individual stories in pairs and then with the larger group, and together they identify key topics or themes common to the stories. They then create a customized interview protocol by selecting three to five of the identified topics or themes and writing several appreciative questions for each. Using the new protocol, interviews are conducted with as many organization members as possible, ideally by the members themselves.

Participants then begin the Dream phase: based on the information obtained from the interviews, they envision themselves and their organization functioning at their best. Through various kinds of visualization and other creative exercises, participants think broadly and holistically about a desirable future. Based on these dreams, and in the Design phase,

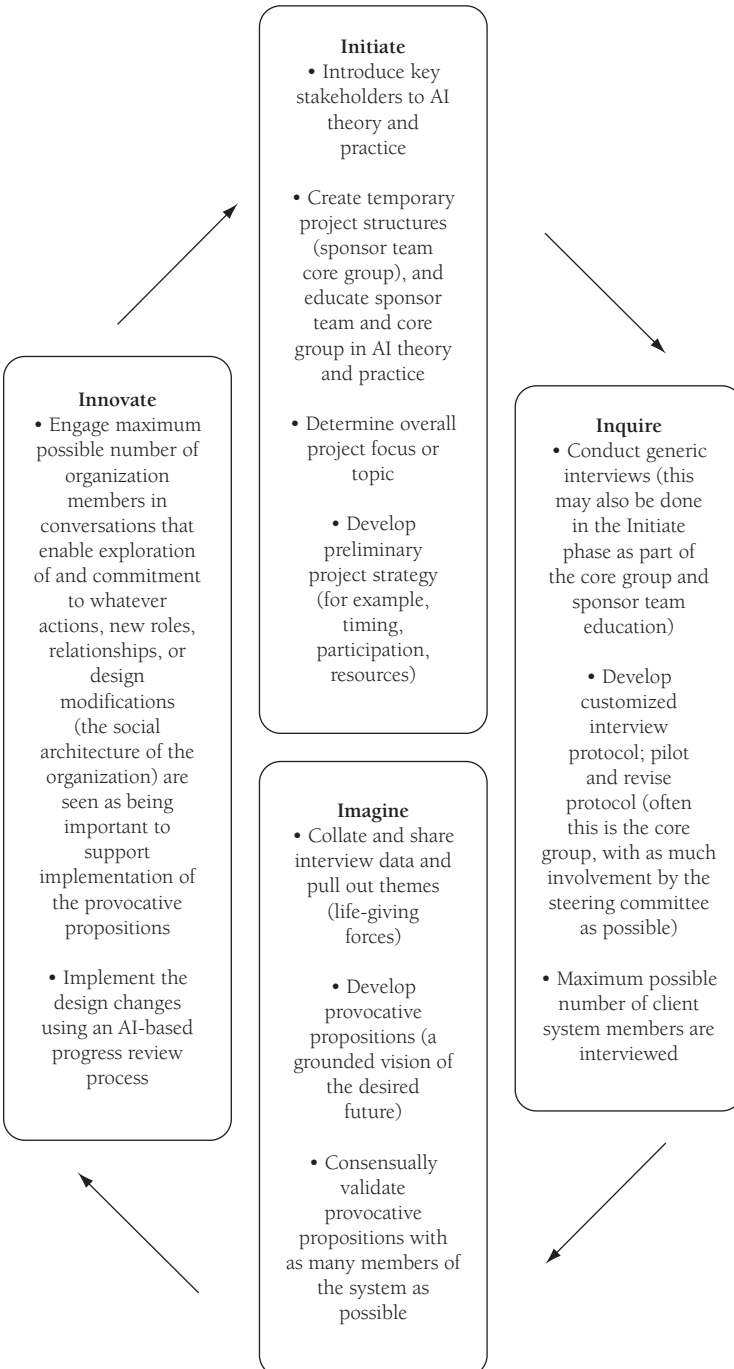**Figure 1.1. Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Model**
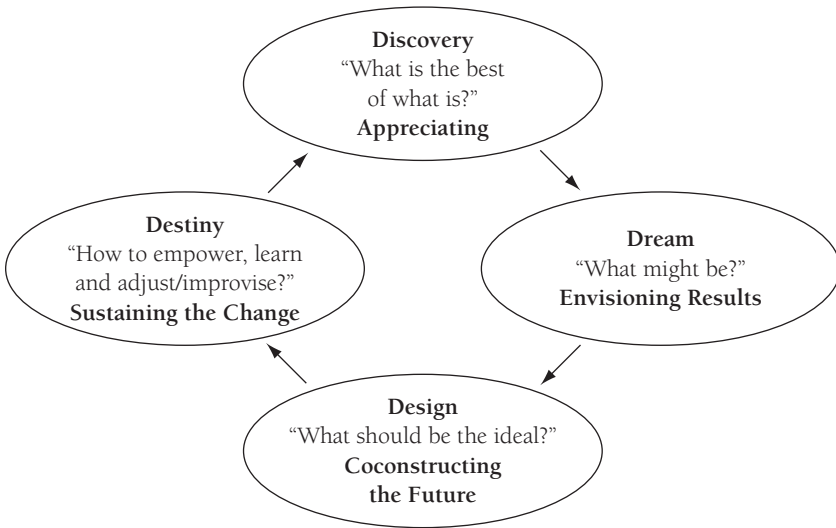
Source: Adapted from Watkins and Mohr (2001).

participants propose strategies, processes, and systems; make decisions; and develop collaborations that will create and support positive change. They develop provocative propositions or possibility and design statements that are concrete, detailed visions based on what was discovered about past successes. In the Destiny phase, participants begin to implement both their overall visions of the Dream phase and the specific provocative propositions of the Design stage. This phase is ongoing as participants continue to implement changes, monitor their progress, and engage in new dialogue and Appreciative Inquiries.

A slightly different model illustrating Appreciative Inquiry processes is the 4-I model (Figure 1.2), developed by Mohr and Jacobsgaard (Watkins and Mohr, 2001). Its phases are Initiate, Inquire, Imagine, and Innovate.

The models, which are similar, have two major differences: (1) they use different language to describe the various phases, and (2) they present a different delineation of the phases. The 4-D model has a Destiny or Deliver phase that relates to implementation, while the 4-I model has an extra early planning step, Initiate, and embeds implementation into the Innovate phase. These subtle differences, along with those found in some of the case studies presented in the following chapters, have evolved based on the facilitators' experiences implementing Appreciative Inquiry with different audiences and in varying contexts. This continuous adaptation is an illustration of the dynamic nature of Appreciative Inquiry and its models and applications. Regardless of the model used, neither prescribes a rigid process. For example, when Appreciative Inquiry is implemented in real-world

Figure 1.2. Appreciative Inquiry 4-I Model

Initiate
• Introduce key stakeholders to AI theory and practice

• Create temporary project structures (sponsor team core group), and educate sponsor team and core group in AI theory and practice

• Determine overall project focus or topic

• Develop preliminary project strategy (for example, timing, participation, resources)

Innovate
• Engage maximum possible number of organization members in conversations that enable exploration of and commitment to whatever actions, new roles, relationships, or design modifications (the social architecture of the organization) are seen as being important to support implementation of the provocative propositions

• Implement the design changes using an AI-based progress review process

Inquire
• Conduct generic interviews (this may also be done in the Initiate phase as part of the core group and sponsor team education)

• Develop customized interview protocol; pilot and revise protocol (often this is the core group, with as much involvement by the steering committee as possible)

• Maximum possible number of client system members are interviewed

Imagine
• Collate and share interview data and pull out themes (life-giving forces)

• Develop provocative propositions (a grounded vision of the desired future)

• Consensually validate provocative propositions with as many members of the system as possible

settings, the various phases often overlap and repeat themselves in unpredictable ways, and some steps may fall into various stages.

Clearly, each Appreciative Inquiry effort needs to be adapted to the context in which it is being conducted and to the topic of the inquiry. The application of Appreciative Inquiry to evaluation is an example of one type of adaptation. Later in this chapter, we share some examples of how Appreciative Inquiry has been used in an evaluation context. First, however, we provide examples of where it has been used within an organizational development context using both the 4-D and 4-I models (L. Webb, personal communication, Apr. 3, 2003).

Catholic Relief Services (CRS). This sixty-year-old international development organization revitalized its relationships with local partner agencies through an Appreciative Inquiry process that over two and a half years brought field offices into dialogue and reflection with its partners in southern Africa, Eastern Europe, and South Asia about just and quality partnerships. CRS works entirely through partners such as local Catholic churches and compatible nongovernmental organizations. To model such relationships, it formed a partnership with the GEM Initiative (Global Excellence in Management) of Case Western Reserve University to guide this work.

CRS followed the 4-D cycle, holding two global partnership meetings and then coaching pilot countries to use appreciative interviews to discover what gives life to their partnerships through examples of past successes and resolving and reconciling past misunderstandings. They then dreamed about the effective and excellent partnerships they wanted to create together. The data from the partnership meetings fed into an international partnership conference in 2000. In a three-day conference, CRS and partners designed systems, policies, and procedures to make them more congruent with their emerging vision of partnership principles. The data from the partnership meetings fed into two international partnership summits in 1998 and 2000. This strategic process eventually contributed significantly to a 2001 World Summit that developed the agency's vision for the next ten years and involved four thousand staff in eighty countries. Also as part of the delivery phase, CRS has launched the implementation of the vision. According to Meg Kinghorn, CRS's technical adviser for partnership and capacity building at that time, relationships changed as soon as people started talking about what they had jointly achieved and what was really important in working together (C. Liebler, personal communication, Mar. 30, 2003). GEM codirector Claudia Liebler stated, "We did make an impact—we created an agency-wide dialogue, changes were made in relationships, and some changes were made in the social architecture of CRS" (personal communication, Mar. 30, 2003).

Hills and Dales Child Development Center. This center for physically and mentally disabled children in Dubuque, Iowa, used the Appreciative Inquiry 4-I process as a strategic planning tool to energize its board of directors and engage a larger number of community stakeholders in developing a vision and identifying directions for the future. An internal

planning committee led the Appreciative Inquiry process with consultant guidance. Twenty interviewers were trained to inquire by conducting 140 interviews with diverse stakeholders over a six-week period about their best experiences of Hills and Dales and their experiences with its commitment to service. At a Futures Conference that followed, fifty key stakeholders met for a day and a half to imagine and innovate, or design, the future. An internal management team and the board continued to implement the new strategic directions. The Appreciative Inquiry process was deemed successful in achieving consensus on the future (Webb, 1999).

In assessing its impact three years later, the executive director stated,

> One of the ways we found using Appreciative Inquiry has been of tremendous value is in answering the question, "How is what we are doing building a more meaningful life for this person?" I'm so pleased when I hear this approach [is] used as the yardstick by which staff measure their activities, their projects, and their priorities. . . . I can attribute the success of the capital campaign to Appreciative Inquiry. Two years ago, 67 percent of the general public, including business owners and community leaders interviewed, did not know anything about Hills and Dales. These same people, after hearing the story, have given a total of $1.2 million toward our capital campaign. By putting before them the "best of what is possible" visions, we successfully stimulated them to new levels of participation in our community" [J. Imhof, personal communication, Apr. 2003].

Nutrimental Foods. This Brazilian manufacturer of healthy food products, founded in 1968, faced a major crisis after the government, its sole revenue source, decentralized the purchase of food for all federal institutions. The company adapted its products for the consumer market, developed new products, and downsized from 2,000 to 650 employees to stay alive, but was left with a fearful, demoralized workforce. Nutrimental used Appreciative Inquiry to create confidence in its employees and gain a competitive edge in the new markets they were entering. One of the Appreciative Inquiry cofacilitators said, "What the company needed to develop was a breakthrough organization rather than look for breakthrough products . . . something to be built together . . . that no competitor is able to copy" (Marczak, 1998, p. 4).

The company began a whole-system change process in 1997, with guidance from David Cooperrider and a Case Western Reserve University doctoral student, Ilma O. Barros. Barros began the process with a successful pilot Appreciative Inquiry workshop, which led to the launch of an Appreciative Inquiry summit with 750 people—employees and key stakeholders including suppliers, customers, and literate and illiterate workers—where the organization identified best practices and its most important strengths. Cooperrider guided the summit with simultaneous translation, and through the traditional Appreciative Inquiry processes of storytelling,

sharing feelings and expectations, and creating the desired future, fully engaged stakeholders. Appreciative Inquiry and the whole-systems change process continues as a way of doing business for Nutrimental Foods.

By 2001, Nutrimental Foods had achieved a 66 percent increase in sales, a 422 percent increase in profitability, and a 42 percent improvement in productivity. It reported that the Appreciative Inquiry process energized the employees and stakeholders and created a "feeling of ownership." A 2000 organization climate survey showed that 91 percent of employees were happy and 95 percent liked their work. The company achieved national status as one of the 100 Best Companies to Work For in Brazil. Organizational leaders attribute their success to "the triple bottom line—people, environment, and profit—all intimately related" (Marczak, 1998).

Evaluation and Appreciative Inquiry

Within the past decade, much has been written about the value of participatory, stakeholder, and learning-oriented approaches to evaluation. Evaluation scholars have recommended that evaluation be more democratic, pluralistic, deliberative, empowering, and enlightening. Evidence of an increasing interest in including stakeholders in evaluation was reported in a study on evaluation use that sought evaluators' feedback using a survey (Preskill and Caracelli, 1997). The authors found that 95 percent of the respondents agreed that "evaluators should take responsibility for involving stakeholders in the evaluation process" (p. 215). When asked to reflect on how important participatory evaluation approaches were ten years ago compared to today, 67 percent said this approach was greatly to extremely more important today. Cousins (2003) provides the following definition of participatory evaluation: "An approach where persons trained in evaluation methods and logic work in collaboration with those not so trained to implement evaluation activities. That is, members of the evaluation community and members of other stakeholder groups relative to the evaluand each participate in some or all of the shaping and/or technical activities required to produce evaluation knowledge leading to judgments of merit and worth and support for program decision making" (p. 245).

By involving stakeholders in the evaluation process, evaluators typically seek to increase the validity of the evaluation data and the use of findings (Brandon, 1998; Cousins and Earl, 1992; Patton, 1997), build evaluation capacity (Compton, Glover-Kudon, Smith, and Avery, 2002; King, 2002; O'Sullivan and O'Sullivan, 1998; Preskill and Torres, 1999), empower individuals and groups to effect social change (Fetterman, 2000; Rebien, 1996), and make evaluation more democratic (Greene, 2000; House and Howe, 1999; MacNeil, 2002; Mathison, 2000). Although the degree of stakeholder participation may vary from one evaluation to another, there is little doubt that evaluators are increasingly involving stakeholders in various phases of evaluation practice (Cousins and

Whitmore, 1998; Ryan and Johnson, 2000; Shulha and Cousins, 1997; Torres and Preskill, 2001; Weiss, 1998).

Evaluators have also been exploring the ways in which stakeholders' learning can be supported and sustained as they participate in evaluation processes (Forss, Rebien, and Carlsson, 2002; Patton, 1997; Preskill and Torres, 1999; Preskill, Zuckerman, and Matthews, forthcoming; Owen and Rogers, 1999; Rossman and Rallis, 2000). By being intentional about learning throughout the evaluation; encouraging dialogue and reflection; questioning assumptions, values, and beliefs; and creating learning spaces and opportunities, individuals may come to more fully understand the evaluand, the organization or community, themselves, each other, and ultimately evaluation practice. The learning that occurs as stakeholders participate in evaluation processes has been called "process use" by Patton (1997), who defines it as "individual changes in thinking and behavior, and program or organizational changes in procedures and culture, that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process. Evidence of process use is represented by the following kind of statement after an evaluation: The impact on our program came not just from the findings but from going through the thinking process that the evaluation required" (p. 90).

Process use reflects social constructivist learning theory in that it focuses on how groups of people make meaning as they conduct an evaluation. The construction, interpretation, and integration of such new knowledge are based on the context of the situation and on participants' experiences (Bruner, 1971; Campbell, 2000; Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Interest in the process of evaluation capacity building has also been growing. The goal here is to help organization and community members understand and develop the knowledge and skills that will enable them to think evaluatively and conduct more internal evaluations. Building evaluation capacity typically entails developing a system and related processes and practices for creating and sustaining evaluation practice within organizations (Stockdill, Baizerman, and Compton, 2002). Evaluation capacity building is often based on participatory approaches to evaluation with an emphasis on learning from the evaluation process and its findings.

Current evaluation practices reflect approaches that are diverse, inclusive of multiple perspectives, and generally supportive of using multiple methods, measures, and criteria. In an effort to refine evaluation practice continually so that evaluation processes and findings are useful and acted on, evaluators continue to explore ways in which evaluation theory and methods can be more effective, while always striving to maintain the integrity of evaluation's logic, process, and findings.

Using Appreciative Inquiry in Evaluation

Appreciative Inquiry is a highly participatory form of inquiry that is often used to address critical organizational issues. As we have considered the underlying assumptions, purposes, and methods of both Appreciative

Inquiry and participatory, stakeholder, and learning-oriented approaches to evaluation, we have come to realize the many similarities. First, both Appreciative Inquiry and collaborative forms of evaluation practice emphasize social constructivism—that sense making and meaning are achieved through dialogue and interaction. Both forms of inquiry stress the significance of asking questions and dialogue. Second, both Appreciative Inquiry and learning-oriented forms of evaluation view inquiry as ongoing, iterative, and integrated into organization and community life. Third, both approaches reflect a systems orientation that includes a structured and planned set of processes. And fourth, both Appreciative Inquiry and participatory, stakeholder, and learning approaches to evaluation stress the use of findings for decision making and action. As proponents of using Appreciative Inquiry in evaluation explain:

> Appreciative Inquiry as a perspective for an evaluation process is grounded in several basic beliefs. The first is the belief that the intervention into any human system is fateful and that the system will move in the direction of the first questions that are asked. In other words, in an evaluation using an appreciative framework, the first questions asked would focus on stories of best practices, positive moments, greatest learnings, successful processes, generative partnerships, and so on. This enables the system to look for its successes and create images of a future built on those positive experiences from the past [Watkins and Mohr, 2001, p. 183].

In surveying the literature, we found several applications of Appreciative Inquiry in conducting evaluations. In some cases, the entire Appreciative Inquiry process was used, while in others the Appreciative Inquiry approach was modified and only partially used. Regardless of the extent to which Appreciative Inquiry was applied, it appears that those who have used it for evaluation purposes have experienced encouraging results.

Elliott (1999) used an appreciative approach to evaluate programs working with street children in Africa. He first included stakeholders in a preparatory workshop where they were introduced to Appreciative Inquiry and developed an appreciative interview protocol. The stakeholders then interviewed the street children, analyzed the resulting data, and developed provocative propositions and actions plans based on their findings. Elliott describes the benefits of using Appreciative Inquiry as the evaluation's overarching philosophy and framework:

> The essence of appreciative inquiry in the context of evaluation is that it gives the organization as a whole a process by which the best practice of the organization can become embedded as the norm against which general practice is tested. In this sense, it is at least as much a teaching and training exercise as it is an evaluative one and therefore has a prolonged beneficial effect on the performance of the organization. This is especially true in an organization which is still unsure of itself, and in which the staff is relatively

inexperienced, for the embedded evaluation to which appreciative inquiry gives access is much less threatening and judgmental than many variants of traditional evaluation for it invites the staff—and indeed, in theory, all the stakeholders—to reflect on their best practice rather than to admit their failures and unsolved problems [pp. 202–203].

Mohr, Smith, and Watkins (2000) conducted an evaluation using Appreciative Inquiry principles within a large pharmaceutical company. They focused on participants gathering information by adapting the generic Appreciative Inquiry protocol and developing provocative propositions. Other adjustments included the consultants conducting many of the interviews themselves and with only some of those within the program being evaluated. Both of these practices differ considerably from full Appreciative Inquiry efforts, where it is desirable for as many program participants to interview each other as possible. The authors and client in this study found that the four generic Appreciative Inquiry questions (peak experiences, personal values, core life-giving factor, and wishes for the future) yielded much richer data than the more traditional evaluation questions and were most valuable in fulfilling the overall goals of the eval-uation. They concluded:

> Appreciative Inquiry does work for evaluation purposes, [for] . . . identifying behavioral changes and . . . as an organizational intervention. The biggest question we had when starting this project was whether Appreciative Inquiry would allow us to answer, to the clients' satisfaction, the fundamental organizational concerns of "how well is this Simulation going and is it a good investment for the corporation?" . . . Not only were these traditional evaluation questions effectively met with this approach, but the corporation benefited from both the learning reinforcement that occurred and the richness of data which would not have been captured in a normal evaluation process [Mohr, Smith, and Watkins, 2000, p. 49].

Odell (2002) has used Appreciative Inquiry in his evaluation work by combining appreciative and participatory approaches in Habitat for Humanity's Measuring Transformation Through Houses program. Within this program, participants developed participatory and appreciatively focused planning, monitoring, and evaluation tools, including qualitative and quantitative reports, surveys, studies, evaluations, and sets of indicators. He explains:

> While the tools of participation and participatory research are relatively well known, the use of Appreciative Inquiry in evaluation and monitoring is relatively new. . . . The Appreciative Inquiry approach is being integrated into Habitat's already "bottom-up" participatory approach to evaluation that is now being used by local Affiliates [in] many other countries beyond Sri Lanka

and Nepal. Together these are already yielding results that are attracting attention in other countries and other organizations [p. 2].

This combined participatory and appreciative approach to planning, monitoring, and evaluation has been successful in tracking the program's achievements and progress in meeting objectives. Odell (2002) reports that the approach also has reduced the negative feelings often associated with evaluation efforts and has increased affiliates' ownership and commitment to monitoring and evaluation processes and to the program overall.

As these three examples illustrate, there are many ways in which Appreciative Inquiry can be applied to evaluation work. To summarize, we provide the following list of situations in which we believe Appreciative Inquiry has the most potential to contribute to evaluation practice:

Contexts
• Where previous evaluation efforts have failed
• Where there is a fear of or skepticism about evaluation
• With varied groups of stakeholders who know little about each other or the program being evaluated
• Within hostile or volatile environments
• When change needs to be accelerated
• When dialogue is critical to moving the organization forward
• When relationships among individuals and groups have deteriorated and there is a sense of hopelessness
• When there is a desire to build evaluation capacity—to help others learn from evaluation practice
• When there is a desire to build a community of practice
• When it is important to increase support for evaluation and possibly the program being evaluated

Process
• To guide an evaluation's design, development, and implementation as an overarching philosophy and framework
• To develop specific data collection methodologies

The use of Appreciative Inquiry in several of these evaluation contexts and processes is explored in Chapters Two through Five.

Reflections on Using Appreciative Inquiry in Evaluation

We believe that using Appreciative Inquiry as an overarching philosophy, approach, or method for evaluation may provide meaningful and useful results. It does this in ways that are similar to participatory approaches to evaluation by stressing the questions asked, viewing inquiry as ongoing and integrated in organizational life, following structured processes, and

emphasizing the use of findings. However it is applied, Appreciative Inquiry can also increase participation in the evaluation, maximize the use of results, and build capacity for learning and change within organizations and communities. By focusing on exceptional performance, it creates continuous opportunities to look back on those moments of excellence and use them to guide the organization toward a more positive future.

Although Appreciative Inquiry has been used in several evaluation studies, the literature so far has not addressed some of the more complex issues, such as the appropriate circumstances for using Appreciative Inquiry in evaluation, the advantages and disadvantages of doing so, and the lessons learned from these evaluations. Many of these and other issues are addressed in the following chapters.

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