

AI++: Innovations in AI through the Lens of Australia and New Zealand

Guest Editors: **Sallie Lee and Dayle O'Brien**

Inside:

**Positive Education,
Positive Psychology**

**Re-storying for
Individual Potential**

**AI in the Defence
Community**

Change and Grow: PwC

Resilient Leadership

**Creating a Professional
Learning Community**

**Many Voices,
One Purpose**

'Being' AI to 'Do' AI

**AI Research Notes:
The Roles of Theory
and Practice**

**Unstoppable Positive
Social Change**

**Facilitating Strategic
AI Interventions**

**AI Resources:
Scholarly Articles
and Books**

**Becoming
Appreciative Leaders**

**Building the Optimal
Cricket Operation**

International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry

Inside:

- 4** Introduction by Sallie Lee and Dayle O'Brien
Combining AI with other strengths-based methodologies and approaches in Australia and New Zealand
- Whole System Innovation**
- 8** Pathways to Positive Education at Geelong Grammar School:
Integrating Positive Psychology and Appreciative Inquiry by Paige Williams
AI + positive psychology
- 14** What Would You Like to Change and Grow? Price Waterhouse Coopers
Explores Positive Conversational Habits by Michelle McQuaid
AI + hope theory
- 18** Many Voices, One Purpose: Innovations in New Zealand in AI Practice for
the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect by Liz Kinley and Sally Christie
AI + community development + social marketing
- 24** Creating a New Paradigm of Unstoppable Positive Social Change
by Lisa Doig and Karen Muller
AI + Values Assessments
- Innovation in Practice: Leadership**
- 32** Becoming Appreciative Leaders: Integrating AI and Strengths-Based
Approaches into an MBA Program by Barb Wood
AI + coaching
- 38** Re-Storying for Individual Potential by Dayle O'Brien
AI + individual strengths
- 43** Resilient Leadership: Grounded in a Strengths-based and Appreciative Life
by Wendy Campbell
AI + resilient leadership
- Innovation in Practice: Facilitation**
- 49** 'Being' AI to 'Do' AI by Max Hardy
AI + personal preparation

International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry

Inside continued:

- 52** Facilitating Strategic AI Interventions by Liz Mellish
AI + knowledge of facilitation
- 60** Building the Optimal Cricket Operation by Sandy Gordon
AI + team cohesion
- Innovation in Practice: Community Building**
- 65** AI and Asset-Based Community Development in the Defence Community Organisation by Dee Brooks and Graeme Stuart
AI + ABCD
- 70** Creating a Professional Learning Community: Embedding AI in a Complexity Thinking Framework by Chris Jansen
AI + complexity theory
-
- 76** **AI Research Notes**
by Jan Reed and Lena Holmberg
The role of theory, and its relationship to practice: possible differences between the academic goals of individual study, and the collaborative goal of AI
- 79** **AI Resources**
by Jackie Stavros and Dawn Dole
Scholarly articles and books on AI from 1987 to the present
-
- 82** **Call for Papers**
Guest Editors: David Cooperrider, Lindsey Godwin, Brodie Boland and Michel Avital
The Appreciative Inquiry Summit: Explorations into the Magic of Macro-Management and Crowdsourcing
- 84** **About the August 2011 Issue**
Guest editors: Mette Jacobsgaard and Irene Norlund
The Impact of AI on International Development
- 85** **IAPG Contacts and AI Practitioner Subscription Information**





Dee Brooks

is a passionate and highly energetic community worker, facilitator and trainer who currently works with the Family Action Centre based at the University of Newcastle. Dee is the Facilitator of the ABCD Asia Pacific Network, an accredited ABCD trainer and an Art of Hosting facilitator.

Contact: Dee.Brooks@newcastle.edu.au



Graeme Stuart

is a community facilitator and researcher at the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle. His current research and teaching focuses on community engagement, asset-based community development and strengths-based practice.

Contact: Graeme.Stuart@newcastle.edu.au



Innovation in Practice: Community Building

AI and Asset-Based Community Development in the Defence Community Organisation

ABSTRACT

In 2010, a training program was delivered by the Family Action Centre to 14 Defence Community Organisation offices throughout Australia. This article discusses the capacity-building model used for creating a shared language and understanding for family workers in the Australian Defence Force, and how Appreciative Inquiry influenced the training agenda.

The Defence Community Organisation¹ (DCO) is responsible for supporting Australian Defence Force (ADF) families. Their mission is 'to establish the conditions upon which Defence Families and the Defence Community can achieve self-reliance'. They do this by providing information, referring and linking families to existing services, and hosting numerous functions and events throughout Australia.

Self-reliance is a new approach being used increasingly in the Defence Forces, where families are regularly relocated and re-settled into new communities. It is important that families are able to become part of these communities as quickly as possible, increasing their health and happiness.

In 2010 DCO conducted a review of its operating systems and identified Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) as being best placed to provide the shared language and understanding that was required for the future needs of the DCO.

ABCD is a model that focuses people's energy on the capacities of a community instead of the deficits² and is consistent with Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and strengths-based approaches. It was agreed that the implementation of ABCD would begin with a series of workshops around the country.

The project

The Family Action Centre³, which aims to strengthen families and communities by undertaking research, training and learning and developing and implementing strengths-based programs, were asked to facilitate 14 interactive workshops

1 <http://www.defence.gov.au/dco>

2 Center for Development Services, 2005; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993; Mathie and Cunningham, 2002

3 <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-centre/fac>

Self-reliance is a new approach being used increasingly in the Defence Forces, where families are regularly relocated and re-settled into new communities.

with all staff of the DCO. Each workshop involved a wide range of staff including family liaison officers, social workers, military liaison officers and administration staff who had varying levels of experience with strengths-based approaches and ABCD.

Workshop design

The workshops began with a variation of World Café⁴ to explore three questions:

- What time is it for DCO?
- What does your area team do really well?
- What would I like to gain from the workshop?

These questions provided a guide for us as facilitators to gauge knowledge and experience, and to hear concerns. We then ran an 'Introduction to the Strengths Perspective' session, and participants were asked two further questions as a large group:

- What are some of the strengths of ADF families?
- How can we build on the strengths of ADF families?

These conversations clearly demonstrated that ADF families have many strengths and encouraged participants to think about ways they could draw on these strengths in their work. Some of the groups commented that it was helpful to see the wide range of strengths and that, compared to a traditional problem solving approach, it was uplifting and inspiring. It reinforced a positive focus for the workshop and demonstrated that if the families they worked with were viewed as a resource, new possibilities might emerge. Below are some examples of how participants felt they could build on the strengths of ADF families:

1. Identifying informal community leaders
2. Encouraging interaction with the broader community and building relationships
3. Supporting families to build on existing skills (e.g. training spouses to mentor other groups and families)
4. Educate families, the wider community and Command about relevant ADF family related issues (e.g. resilience building)
5. Offering more ownership and responsibility of existing groups to the spouse volunteers
6. Running groups in conjunction with other organisations (ADF and non-ADF)
7. Sharing and intentionally mapping stories of success and experience (e.g. hardships, recovery, mobility)
8. Acknowledging and creating ways for children to be heard
9. Engaging in social media

⁴ www.theworldcafe.com/



Facilitated strengths-based discussions highlighted how language reflects thinking and helped to provide a shared understanding in the ADF context.

Challenges

The workshops were offered within the context of a process of change where the DCO was moving towards a greater focus on community capacity building and self-reliance. While some staff embraced the innovation this would create, others were concerned about the new direction, fearing this would lose an individual, case-by-case focus, and were suspicious that the workshop was about reducing the roles of workers in the lives of Defence Force families.

Staff were *required* to attend the workshops, which, at times, led to resistance. Some staff, with many years of training and experience who felt they were already working from a strengths perspective and using ABCD, found that the workshops could not meet their more advanced learning needs, while also catering for less experienced staff.

Addressing the challenges

When there was resistance in some of the early workshops, we realised that we needed to make more use of AI. We wanted to encourage participants to see things in a different light, and needed questions that would help us gauge the feeling of the group towards the DCO (without inviting negativity), encourage participants to explore what they were already doing well, and to discover the expectations of staff in terms of the workshop.

In addition to the questions in the opening World Café, questions such as 'What possibilities exist that we have not yet considered?' and 'What would a strength-based team look like?' helped to shift negativity. People could see that their contributions were valuable and that we genuinely wanted to hear what they had to say.

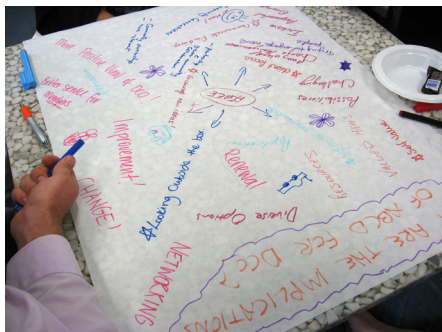
Throughout the process we consciously used AI in a whole-system context to encourage staff to explore what was currently working, to encourage innovation and to overcome some of the workshop challenges. We acknowledged the wisdom in the room and recognised the ways in which many of the teams were already incorporating the strengths perspective and ABCD into their work. We encouraged innovation by allowing participants to share their knowledge and ideas, to be engaged, have a sense of humour and stay open to new ideas.

In one workshop, participants were dealing with a recent military death and were, understandably, preoccupied with meeting their responsibilities in relation to bereavement. While there were minor disruptions to the workshop (e.g. phone calls requiring urgent responses), participants were encouraged to use the workshop to discuss ways of responding to bereavement. For example, by encouraging AI-based questions for the Open Space⁵ sessions, it was possible to incorporate their priorities into the workshop in ways that were consistent with a strength-based approach.

Emerging possibilities

Throughout the workshops, participants thought about innovative ways of working with families and their communities. For example, identifying and offering further support to ADF spouses who were actively engaged in their communities was seen as a way to acknowledge and build on individual strengths. In turn, this could assist in recognising further strengths and building

⁵ <http://www.openspaceworld.org>



Encouraging everyone's contribution is an important part of hosting a World Café session which not only surfaces assumptions but can inspire and create new visions and unique collaborations.

stronger relationships within the broader community. Workshop participants discussed how they could support spouse-led groups to utilise ABCD for mentoring programs, both within and without the ADF, to acknowledge past and present experiences; recognise stories of success, hardship or recovery; and to increase community awareness of other ADF family issues. Another idea was to assist families in identifying community assets through the ABCD asset mapping process which would support DCO's increased focus in self-reliance; and to use more targeted, appreciative questions when working with families, including allowing time for reflection.

In another workshop, a planned DCO family event was discussed and the questions developed demonstrated a shift from the needs-based questions that had frequently been used in the past:

- What qualities make a good (or resilient) Defence family?
- What would be your number one tip to pass on to another Defence family in the following circumstances: When relocating; Coping with Deployment; On joining the ADF; Changing schools; Moving with children
- What skills/knowledge/interests/talents or abilities do you have? Would you be willing to share these with other ADF families?

A powerful example of how AI could help other possibilities emerge was provided by a long-serving staff member during an Open Space session. Like the workshop discussed above, his question arose during a workshop following a recent military death. He posed the question, 'How can we use AI for grieving families?' This question rippled through other workshops and encouraged thoughtful and practical responses that allowed participants to identify what they were doing well and what they could do differently next time.

Applications of AI beyond the workshop

At times, the difference in discussions and levels of contribution toward the end of the workshops was striking when compared with the resistance encountered at the beginning. Participants enthusiastically identified a range of ways in which they could use AI in their work:

- In questionnaires, newsletters, feedback and evaluation
- For induction and training
- In self reflection, team meetings and programming
- During facilitated discussions
- For developing questions for family forums and functions
- For bereavement 'wash-ups'
- In counselling – individuals, couples and groups
- At inter-agency meetings to discover what's working in a community
- In use with Command



ABCD says if you can discover what people truly care about, you can mobilise communities. Participants utilised Open Space as an energising way to discover and discuss future tasks and directions.

Impact of workshops

While it is too early to determine the extent to which the workshops impacted on the work of the DCO and the level of self-reliance within Defence Force families, anecdotal evidence suggests at least some offices have been trying new ways of working with families.

According to DCO Headquarters, DCO staff are increasingly sharing ideas through an on-line forum; seeking guidance and support for community capacity building activities; and thinking outside their normal frame of reference. There have also been comments suggesting that in some offices administration and office staff are interacting more positively with each other.

Some offices have experimented with using appreciative questions (e.g., What is important to a Defence Force family?) rather than focusing on needs and problems. Other offices are planning gatherings that will use World Café or Open Space to explore an appreciative question.

Conclusion

ABCD and AI work extremely well together because they both appreciate what communities have, explore what can be and create what will be. When an ABCD tool, such as asset mapping, was being explored, AI provided the impetus required to re-frame questions. AI played an important role in the development and implementation of the ABCD workshops, particularly in encouraging DCO staff to think about their work in new ways. It provided the facilitators with strategies to overcome challenges in the workshop and to create a positive energy over the two days. It provided participants with a practical tool that they could take back to their communities and start conversations that help create new possibilities. AI was one of the main tools to be enthusiastically embraced by many DCO staff.

Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge Maureen Greet (Director, Community Capacity Building) and Michele Chaseling (Manager, Community Capacity Building) from the Defence Community Organisation for their contributions to this article and their commitment to the work being done to support Defence Force families.

References

- Center for Development Services. (2005) *Asset-Based Development: Success Stories from Egyptian Communities: A Manual for Practitioners*. Cairo: Center for Development Services. Available from http://www.coady.stfx.ca/tinroom/assets/file/resources/abcd/CDS_manual.pdf.
- Kretzmann, J. P. and J. L. McKnight. (1993). *Building communities from the Inside Out: a Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Evanston, Ill.: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University.
- Mathie, A. and G. Cunningham. (2002). *From Clients to Citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a Strategy For Community-Driven Development*. Antigonish, Nova Scotia: Coady International Institute. Available from http://coady.stfx.ca/tinroom/assets/file/resources/publications/4_From_Clients_to_Citizens.pdf

IAPG Contacts and AI Practitioner Subscription Information



International Advisory Practitioners Group IAPG

Members of the International Advisory Practitioners Group working with AIP to bring AI stories to a wider audience

Druba Acharya, Nepal

Gervase Bushe, Canada

Sue Derby, Canada

Sara Inés Gómez, Colombia

Lena Holmberg, Sweden

Joep de Jong, Netherlands

Dorothe Liebig, Germany

John Loty, Australia

Sue James, Australia

Maureen McKenna, Canada

Liz Mellish, Australia

Dayle O'Brien, Australia

Jan Reed, United Kingdom

Catriona Rogers, Hong Kong

Daniel K. Saint, United States

Marge Schiller, United States

Jackie Stavros, United States

Bridget Woods, South Africa

Jacqueline Wong, Singapore

Margaret Wright, United Kingdom

AIP Subscriptions

Individuals

NGOS, students and community groups

Small organisations

University/Research Institutes

Large organisations

<http://www.aipractitioner.com/subscriptions>

Back Issues and Articles

<http://www.aipractitioner.com/issues>

<http://www.aipractitioner.com/articles>

Change of subscriber details

<http://www.aipractitioner.com/customer/account/login/>

Publication Advertising/Sponsorship

For the advertising rates, contact Anne Radford.

Disclaimer: Views and opinions of the writers do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher. Every effort is made to ensure accuracy but all details are subject to alteration. No responsibility can be accepted for any inaccuracies.

Purpose of AI Practitioner

This publication is for people interested in making the world a better place using positive relational approaches to change such as Appreciative Inquiry.

The publication is distributed quarterly: February, May, August and November.

AI Practitioner Editor/Publisher

The editor/publisher is Anne Radford. She is based in London and can be reached at editor@aipractitioner.com

The postal address for the publication is:
303 Bankside Lofts, 65 Hopton Street, London SE1 9JL,
England.

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7633 9630

Fax: +44 (0)845 051 8639

ISSN 1741 8224

AI Practitioner © 2003-2011 Anne Radford

