



Appreciative Inquiry: Research Methodology for Building Public Health System Capacity

“ Making Healthy Communities Count ”

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Funders



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- Canadian Health Services Research Foundation

 - Health Canada
 - Public Health Agency for Canada
 - Health Human Resources Strategy Division
 - Office of Nursing Policy
 - First Nations & Inuit Health Branch

 - British Columbia Ministry of Health
 - Nursing Directorate
 - Communicable Diseases & Addictions Prevention Branch)

 - McMaster Nursing Health Services Research Unit

 - Vancouver Coastal Health

Research Team Decision Makers



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- Paula Bond - BC Ministry of Health
- Dr. Susan Matthews - Victorian Order of Nurses
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Purpose of this Session



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1. Introduce Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a research methodology
 2. Describe our focus group process
 3. To evaluate AI as research methodology for building Public Health capacity
 4. Provide preliminary results of the focus group inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)



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- Traditionally used for organizational development
 - Generative approach contrasts to the traditional problem-solving orientation of research
 - Emphasizes what works best in organizations rather than focusing on needs and gaps
 - Participatory action research approach

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)



- *“ A search for knowledge and a theory of intentional collective action” (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987)*
- *“Aims to find out what’s right and help enhance it” (Carter, 2006)*
- *“Results in a series of statements that describe an organization working at its highest potential and what else should be done to further optimize the potential.” (Hammond, 1998)*

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)



- *“An attempt to generate a collective image of a new and better future by exploring the best of what is and what has been” (Bushe, 1995)*
- *“Begins as an adventure” (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999)*

Why use AI?



- Engages participants
- Leads to policy statements rather than a focus on the problems
 - *Our research was asking people who work in organizations to describe their lived experiences*

Research Question



- What are the organizational attributes that best support Public Health Nurses to practice their full scope of competencies*?

* *Competency refers to skills, knowledge and attitudes (PHAC, 2007, Core Competencies for Public Health Release 1.0)*

Research Challenges



- To develop a process for AI (AI is an approach not a procedure)
- To develop a process for involving participants in the 1st level of analysis
 - We were unable to reconvene groups with the same participants
- To provide a procedure for various facilitators (n~6) for assuring a consistent process for conducting focus groups

Focus Groups



- 23 separate groups
- frontline PHNs or Policy makers / managers
- N= 156
- urban or rural /remote areas
- 6 geographic regions across Canada (BC, Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic, and the North)

Focus Group Methods



1. Appreciative Inquiry used to elicit information about perceptions of optimal organizational attributes to support PHN practice
2. An adaptation of ICA* Nominal Group process used to achieve consensus during theme analysis

*Institute of Cultural Affairs







AI has 3 Parts



1. 'Discovering the best of ...'
2. 'Understanding what creates the best of...'
3. 'Amplifying [the voices of] the people and processes to exemplify the best of...'

Appreciative Inquiry



 'Discovering the best of ...'	 Story of a successful PH intervention
 'Understanding what creates the best of ...'	 What organizational attributes contributed to the success?
 'Amplifying [the voices of] the people and processes to exemplify the best of...'	 Theme Analysis

Method: Nominal Group Process (adapted from ICA)



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- **Individual brainstorming**
 - (10-15 min)
 - **collecting the objective facts – card sort**
 - (on 4" x 5" cards, post on walls all ideas about factors that contributed to effective nursing situation) (15 min)
 - **reflections**
 - (questions bring out other participants immediate responses) (30 min)
 - **Interpretations**
 - (highlight meaning; sort like ideas together) (30 min)
 - **decisions**
 - (focus group participants name ideas, label the themes, and re-assign ideas) (20 min)

Focus Group Interpretation



Analysis



- 3 levels of analysis:
 - The participants identified and confirmed themes
 - The researchers collated themes from all groups, integrated literature review and analysis
 - Researchers and decision-maker partners will conclude the analysis by addressing the implications of the findings for policy

Purpose of Evaluation



- To determine the extent that participants felt that their ideas were heard (that their participation was worthwhile/ counted)
- To evaluate AI as a research methodology

Evaluation



Agreed the process was successful in achieving objectives	93%
Agreed ideas were heard and understood	95%
Believe AI is a useful process	92 %
Would recommend AI to others	89%

Response Rate: 147/156 = 94%

Limitations



- May overlook problems inherent in the system being studied (i.e. more focused on positive than negative aspects)
- Lose specific quotes from individuals for report of findings

Limitations



- No transcription available because active card sort interferes with audio recording
- Challenge of “memoing” during the focus groups to assure that meaning was well understood by researchers after the focus group meetings

Strengths



- Results of the inquiry are grounded in practice experience
- Credibility of the findings-participants see the themes they have generated at the conclusion of the focus group
- Researcher / focus group facilitator has limited influence on first level of analysis

Strengths



- *“It is looking at what’s working and aims to strengthen what works for me”*

(PHN focus group participant, 2008)

How Can Ontario and the Local Boards of Health Support Meeting the Standards?



This AI identified ways to maximize the PHN contribution ...
to meeting the standards

Identified Issues Related To:



- Government policy
- Corporate Culture
- Management Practices
 - General
 - Specific to Public Health Nursing services

Preliminary Results: Recommendations for Federal and Provincial Ministries



Champion Public Health and Public Health nursing
as important services in the health care system

- Coordinate PH planning across jurisdictions
- Provide adequate funding with enough flexibility to be responsive to local health needs

Recommendations for Local Boards of Health



- Accept and articulate a clear vision for Public Health that addresses social determinants of health and includes health promotion and prevention services
- Provide effective, visionary and empowering leadership
- Be creative and responsive to community needs

Public Health Management Practices



- Link program planning, clearly to corporate and government strategic directions
- Plan effective HR retention & recruitment strategies
- Value PHN contributions by supporting autonomous practice

Public Health Management Practices



- Communicate effectively internally and externally
- Support community partnerships including community development activities
- Support healthy workplace policies

Concluding Steps (in progress)



- Reviewing the analysis
- Finalizing main messages and recommendations for public health policy makers
- Discussion with field representatives to assure analysis resonates with their experience
- Disseminating results



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