

Appreciative Democracy

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## ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative exploratory, descriptive study to ascertain the feasibility of public administrators at the local government level using an Appreciative Inquiry approach to increase direct citizen participation. It is framed by the interpretive paradigm. Twenty city managers or their designees from cities of between 40,000 and 250,000 citizens were interviewed. Specifically, respondents were asked twelve semi-structured interview questions. Content analysis was used to identify six themes in the data. Ultimately, this study found that Appreciative Inquiry may be useful in limited circumstances as long as barriers to implementation were adequately addressed. However, the potential risks may outweigh the benefits.

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## I.

### INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a descriptive, exploratory study. The goal is to determine the feasibility of a natural experiment, namely, engaging in an Appreciative Inquiry approach at the local level with the aim of increasing direct citizen participation. It is designed to examine perspectives of city managers or their designees regarding the viability of Appreciative Inquiry at the local government level.

To achieve this objective, this dissertation uses a qualitative research approach relying primarily on elite interviews of local government managers in large cities (*i.e.*, 40,000 to 250,000 in population). The interview questions were designed to elicit assessments from local government managers regarding the potential of using Appreciative Inquiry to increase direct citizen participation at the local government level. This research assumes that direct citizen participation is better than nonparticipation in a constitutional democracy.

For the purposes of this scholarship indirect citizen participation refers specifically to indirect mechanisms such as voting (*e.g.*, Roelofs, 1998<sup>1</sup>) whereas direct citizen participation involves the public's participation in discussions, partnerships, and inquiries with elected officials and public administrators (*e.g.*, Evans, 2000<sup>2</sup>). The term "citizen" refers to those individuals in a society who have the "capacity to influence the political system; it implies active involvement in political life" (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003, p. 27). This definition is a broader view than "the rights and obligations of citizens as defined by the legal system; that is, citizenship seen as a legal status" (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003, p. 27)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> (*e.g.*, Wendling, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> (*e.g.*, Scott, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> This research draws primarily on the work of Denhardt and Denhardt (2003); specifically, their notion of the New Public Service (NPS). Hence, the definition of "citizen" conforms to their argument of who is considered a citizen and the work that they draw on (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003). Specifically, Denhardt and Denhardt (2003) write regarding "democratic citizenship" that "[A]n alternative, broader view considers citizenship as concerned with more general issues [rather than narrowly defined legal citizenship

## *Statement of the Issue*

Many scholars and practitioners argue that there is a growing need for public managers at the local government level to engage the citizenry they serve more directly and increase citizens' participation in their own governance. There is a call for new, innovative ways to increase direct citizen participation. It is argued that new strategies are necessary because the current techniques fail to genuinely engage the citizenry or they are perceived as unfair or frustrating (*e.g.*, Box, 1998<sup>4</sup>). The challenge is to avoid deficiencies of contemporary strategies while at the same time finding an approach that meets scholars' and practitioners' requirements for successful citizen engagement efforts.

A wide range of techniques are being used by public managers to increase direct citizen participation at the local government level. Strategies include public meetings, public hearings, citizen advisory committees, citizen surveys, citizen juries, deliberative democracy, e-democracy, participatory budgeting, collaborative policy making, task forces, focus groups, visioning techniques, facilitation meetings, alternative dispute resolution, community dinners, and brainstorming sessions (*e.g.*, Bingham, Nabatchi, & O'Leary, 2005<sup>5</sup>). However, all of these techniques have limitations ranging from issues of inclusiveness to representation (*e.g.*, Chrislip, 2002<sup>6</sup>).

The most popular form of citizen participation that is also required by law is the public hearing; however, it has several shortcomings. One such complaint is that these meetings are forms of structured co-optation (Patterson, 2000). For example, fifty citizens may show up to speak out against a proposed

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issues] related to the nature of one's membership in a political community, including such issues as the rights and responsibilities of citizens, regardless of their legal status (Turner 1993, 3)" (p. 27).

It is acknowledged here that, as Rohr (1998, 1994) points out, persons and not just citizens are covered under the Constitution. In keeping with Denhardt and Denhardt's (2003) conceptualization of "citizen," as outlined above, citizenship means individuals have rights (Rohr, 1998, 1994). Notably, the problem posed by illegal aliens is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

<sup>4</sup> (*e.g.*, Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003; DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002; Friedmann, 1973; Hansell, 2002; Kettering Foundation, 1991; King & Stivers, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> (*e.g.*, Carr & Halvorsen, 2001; Lindstrom & Nie, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> (*e.g.*, Matthews, 1999; Thomas, 1995).

municipal golf course, but elected officials and local government managers go ahead with the plan despite public disapproval.

Many scholars and practitioners are calling for either an expanded usage of successful techniques to increase citizen participation (*e.g.*, Lindstrom & Nie, 2000) or new, innovative ways for local government managers to engage the citizenry because of the shortcomings found with current techniques. Newer techniques include charettes, thematic fairs, open houses, multi-media venues, informal meetings, and authentic, collaborative task forces (*e.g.*, Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates and Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Quade, & Douglas, 1996). More direct, collaborative, and genuine interaction and information sharing is recommended by many who write in the field of public administration.

Robert and Janet Denhardt (2003) have suggested that there is a new movement occurring in public administration in the United States. They call this movement the New Public Service (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003)<sup>7</sup>. The New Public Service focuses on serving citizens, delivering democracy<sup>8</sup>,

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<sup>7</sup> One must not overstate the differences that Denhardt and Denhardt (2003) make between the New Public Service (NPS) and traditional public administration thinking. The NPS is grounded in more traditional public administration intellectual roots (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003). Denhardt and Denhardt's (2003) NPS is not new per se, rather it is an argument for a different normative model other than the New Public Management (NPM) (*e.g.*, Osborne & Gaebler, 1992) or traditional public administration (*e.g.*, White, 1926; Willoughby, 1927; Wilson, 1887), or as they put it old public administration, based on earlier scholars' and practitioners' writings. Denhardt and Denhardt (2003) clearly state that their notion of the NPS is a synthesis of several others' work including public administration pioneers such as Paul Appleby (1949). For example, they write "[O]thers, such as Paul Appleby, dean of the Maxwell School at Syracuse University, were even more to the point, 'public administration is policymaking'" (Appleby, 1949, p. 170 as cited in Denhardt & Denhardt (2003) Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003, p. 7).

Drawing from this existing base of knowledge, Denhardt and Denhardt (2003) argue that there are some general themes public administrators might consider. Specifically, Denhardt and Denhardt (2003) identify seven themes or "ideas" that emerge from this earlier scholarship, or as they put it from these earlier intellectual roots. These seven ideas are as follows: (1) serve citizens, not customers, (2) seek the public interest, (3) value citizenship over entrepreneurship, (4) think strategically, act democratically, (5) recognize that accountability is not simple, (6) serve rather than steer, and (7) value people, not just productivity.

<sup>8</sup> In their preface, Denhardt and Denhardt (2003) write "[P]ublic servants do not deliver customer service; they deliver democracy" (p. xi). The notion of "delivering democracy" is part of an attempt to contrast the language of the New Public Service with that of the "old public administration" and the New Public Management. It is also part of an attempt to highlight the second theme that forms the "theoretical core and the heart" (p. xi) of their book. In their own words, the authors argue that this second theme is "to reassert the values of democracy, citizenship, and the public interest as the preeminent values of public administration. It is our hope that the ideas presented here may help us not only to initiate more conversations, but also to look within ourselves for the soul of what we do. We want words like

continually striving to meet the public interest, fostering democratic ideals, renewing civic engagement, and creating a better life for the people living in the polis (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003). Denhardt and Denhardt (2003) argue that this movement “is now being manifested in the way we [*i.e.*, public administrators] *interact* with political leaders, in the way we [*i.e.*, public administrators] *engage with citizens*, and in the way we [*i.e.*, public administrators] bring about *positive changes* in our organizations and communities” [italics added] (p. 4).

The New Public Service has highlighted a recent resurgence in scholarship directed toward normative values that center on the role of the public administrator, his or her relationship with the citizens he or she serves, and his or her attempts at actively engaging the citizenry in authentic discourse and participation (*e.g.*, Box, 1998<sup>9</sup>). Denhardt and Denhardt (2003) have called for an “affirmation of the soul” of public administration (p. 4). They want public managers to seek out ways to *serve* citizens while at the same time promoting the common good. They desire to improve the quality of life for all citizens (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003). Appreciative Inquiry may be one answer to this call.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the possibility of public managers using Appreciative Inquiry to increase direct citizen participation to enhance local government. This purpose is achieved by describing and exploring the feasibility of the approach. This research project is about Appreciative Inquiry’s potential usefulness in local government management. To that end it is framed in the context of the interpretive paradigm.

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‘democracy’ and ‘citizen’ and ‘pride’ to be more prevalent in both our speech and our behavior than words like ‘market’ and ‘competition’ and ‘customers’ (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003, p. xi).

<sup>9</sup> (*e.g.*, Box, Marshall, Reed, & Reed, 2001; Cook, 1996; DeLeon, 1997; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2003, 2001, 2000, 1999; Denhardt, 1999; Fox & Miller, 1997, 1995; King & Stivers, 1998; Morris & Hess, 1975; McSwite, 1997; Sennett, 1977; Stone, 1997; Wamsley & Wolf, 1996; Wamsley *et al.*, 1990; Vinzant & Crothers, 1998).

### ***Contextual Framework***

The contextual framework for this research project is the interpretive paradigm. From this perspective the social world is believed to be an emergent social process created by individuals resulting in multiple realities. Researchers in this paradigm attempt to observe current social processes to understand individuals' behavior. The interpretive paradigm is used to explain human behavior from an individual's point-of-view. The paradigm assumes individuals' subjectivity and interactions as the reality of the world. Given the interpretive paradigm's contention of multiple realities based on individual truths a descriptive, exploratory approach is necessary to understand social phenomena in the processes of everyday life (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The data for this research was gathered through elite, qualitative semi-structured interviews. The qualitative nature of this research means that the findings are not generalizable to populations; however, they are generalizable to theoretical propositions and they can assist in explanation building (Yin, 2003). Thus, this research is of value.

### ***Value of this Research***

The value of this research is that it contributes to public administration scholarship in general and specifically to public management practitioners at the local government level regarding the issue of direct citizen participation. It will assist practitioners in two primary ways. First, it helps by educating local government managers to the benefits of using Appreciative Inquiry to increase direct citizen participation. Second, it offers the approach as a "tool" to assist public managers in local governance. This study addresses a gap in the local government administration and public management practitioner literature. It is an attempt to fill that gap by determining the feasibility of local government managers using Appreciative Inquiry to increase direct citizen participation.

## ***Research Question***

The question addressed by this dissertation is: *In what way, if any, can Appreciative Inquiry be useful in increasing direct citizen participation at the local government level to improve local government?*<sup>10</sup> To answer this research question it is also necessary to address five challenges that local government managers may face in using Appreciative Inquiry. These challenges are as follows: theoretical grounding, context, unrealistic expectations, potential for manipulation, and the utility of maintaining the status quo.

## ***Organization of the Dissertation***

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. The second chapter presents a discussion of Appreciative Inquiry. It substantively addresses one of the five challenges, theoretical grounding, facing local government managers who might want to use the approach in the way this dissertation suggests. It also makes the argument for how Appreciative Inquiry might answer the research question. Finally, this chapter introduces four other challenges local government managers need to be aware of: context, unrealistic expectations, potential for manipulation, and the utility of maintaining the status quo.

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<sup>10</sup> There is a body of literature that supports the assumption that increasing direct citizen participation improves governance, which is discussed in the literature review in chapter 3, (*e.g.*, Alkadry, 2003; Anderson, 2000; Bartlett, 1998; Boorstin, 1965; Bryson & Farrell, 2000; Callow, 1982; Chudacoff, 1975; Cole, 1974; Fainstein & Hirst, 1995; Friedmann, 1973; Glaab & Brown, 1967; Halvorsen, 2003; Hofstadter, 1955; Levy, 2000; McKelvey, 1973; Miller, 1973; Mintrom, 2003; Monkkonen, 1988; Schlesinger, 1970; Vigoda, 2002). Also, while it is true that certain groups like skin heads, neo Nazis, or KKK klansmen could also increase their participation rates, the laws of the land, beginning with the Constitution, would still apply. Even though these groups' participation will be unpleasant they cannot, nor should they be, excluded. For example, if a collective's idea to improve local government was vigilantism, then public administrators would point out the illegality of their proposed solution and therefore it could not be implemented.

In addition, as discussed in chapter 2, Appreciative Inquiry has mechanisms (*e.g.*, the focus on the positive, a trained facilitator) that would help mitigate these types of individuals or groups. However, these mechanisms alone would not be sufficient to guard against this issue. Therefore, a higher principle, the rule of law, is applied to counter inappropriate excesses. Finally, another mechanism is the normative role for public administrators. It has been argued that public administrators have an ethical obligation through their administrative discretion to pursue the public interest and the common good, that means they have an obligation to the entire citizenry and not just those who choose to show up to participate. Therefore, even if these groups participate "regime values" still need to be upheld (*e.g.*, Rohr, 1998, 1976). This latter issue is discussed in more detail in chapter 2 of this dissertation.

The third chapter is a review of the literature. Literature is examined from four substantive fields: political science, public administration, urban planning, and Appreciative Inquiry. The discussion begins in the field of political science with participatory democracy. It narrows within the disciplines of public administration and urban planning to focus on direct citizen participation. The culmination of the literature review exposes a gap in the local government and public administration management literature where this research contributes to the scholarship.

Chapter four discusses the research strategy and design. This chapter examines the methodology employed in this research project. It explores the interpretive paradigm. It discusses elite, qualitative semi-structured interviews. It also addresses the data collection and analysis strategy, covering how data was obtained and evaluated. Finally, Institutional Review Board requirements and the limitations of this research are included.

Chapter five presents the data analysis. It identifies themes from the content analysis. Specifically, six themes are presented. Several aspects are offered in support of these themes. This chapter helps answer the research question and address the remaining four challenges.

Chapter six presents the conclusions of this research. It provides a summary of the dissertation. It examines whether the data support the argument and content analysis to the extent that the Appreciative Inquiry approach is determined to be feasible for increasing direct citizen participation. This chapter answers the research question: *In what way, if any, can Appreciative Inquiry be useful in increasing direct citizen participation at the local government level to improve local government?* It also addresses the four remaining challenges introduced in the second chapter. Finally, suggestions for future research are offered.

## II.

### APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Appreciative Inquiry is a central focus of this research and this chapter presents the approach. First, an understanding of where Appreciative Inquiry fits into the broader theoretical grounding of social theory is offered. This is also the first challenge regarding using Appreciative Inquiry in the way that this research suggests. Second, this chapter explores how scholars tend to define the approach and provides the operational definition used for this research project. Third, the basic model of Appreciative Inquiry is examined. Fourth, the five generic processes undergirding all Appreciative Inquiry approaches are offered. Fifth, an argument is made for how Appreciative Inquiry could be used to meet the needs of public managers in local government for increasing direct citizen participation. Sixth, four additional challenges to Appreciative Inquiry's use are introduced. These four challenges are dealt with in detail in the conclusion of this dissertation.

#### *Theoretical Grounding*

Two theories undergird Appreciative Inquiry: social constructionism and the power of positive thinking (*e.g.*, Cooperrider, 1986<sup>11</sup>). Social constructionism is usually the more contested because there are other theories of social constructionism to compare, contrast, and evaluate it against. Appreciative Inquiry relies on Ken Gergen's (1994, 1999) work on social constructionism. His form of constructionism differs from other forms of constructivist theory in a variety of ways. It is important to understand the differences because they are crucial distinctions and they are also contradictory. Hence, at their most basic level they are mutually exclusive views of how social reality is created and an individual cannot hold both perspectives.

While Gergen (1994, 1999) believes in a more liberal view of social construction, many others take issue with the argument that just because people come together to engage in positive dialogue the

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<sup>11</sup> (*e.g.*, Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

result will be the creation of a new, better reality<sup>12</sup>. Is this how reality is created? If reality is created in this way, then does not manipulation become an issue? This notion of constructivist theory is the first of five challenges local government managers may face when using Appreciative Inquiry to increase direct citizen participation.

Social constructionism, first-and-foremost, is a theory about knowledge. Its origin is in the field of sociology with social constructionism being an attempt to understand how social phenomena, such as social order and agreement on the language people use to identify objects, are created in social contexts. Social constructs are artifacts or conventions created by a culture or society through their channels of communication. Perceived reality is created by the social interactions and conversations between individuals in a collective with emphasis placed on discovering the ways that people create their social reality, institutionalize social phenomena, and make them traditions. Social construction of reality is an ongoing, iterative, emergent, interpretive, and dynamic process where social reality is subjective. It is created by individuals through their experiences, socialization, and interpretation of their own knowledge of perceived reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 1994, 1999).

The foundational theories of social constructionism are important to acknowledge and are key in determining the success of Appreciative Inquiry. Again, many take issue with the argument that just because people come together to engage in positive dialogue the result will be the creation of a new, better reality. While others believe that more than just words are necessary to improve reality.

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<sup>12</sup> An expanded discussion of the theory of social constructionism undergirding Cooperrider's (1986) Appreciative Inquiry approach and whether or not Berger and Luckmann's (1966) or Gergen's (1994, 1999) notion of constructivism is correct is outside the scope of this research project. A comparison is made between the two perspectives. They are offered in contrast for the reader to be aware of some scholars' and practitioners' objections to the underlying premises of Appreciative Inquiry; hence, the first challenge to public administrators contemplating the use of the approach to increase direct citizen participation in local government. However, as this dissertation points out, there are both proponents and opponents of this theoretical debate. In a word, the reader is left to weigh the merits of the two theoretical perspectives and judge for him or herself the merits of the arguments.

Several examples in the literature suggest Appreciative Inquiry has been successful at the organizational and community level. The intention in this dissertation is not to dispute the scholarship. The aim is to compare Gergen's (1994, 1999) work on the social construction of reality to Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1966). Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work serves as a beginning for the discussion.

### *Berger and Luckmann*

Berger and Luckmann's (1966) scholarship is restricted to a sociological context. They argue that all societal knowledge is socially constructed. They do not concern themselves with mathematical laws or proofs, for example two plus two equals four is knowledge that is not socially constructed. Rather, they are interested solely in social order and how it becomes institutionalized (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). They write "[O]ne may ask in what manner social order itself arises. The most general answer to this question is that social order is a human product. Or, more precisely, an ongoing human production. It is produced by man in the course of his ongoing externalization" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 51). Further, Berger and Luckmann (1966) posit that social order and social reality are maintained through social interactions that become institutionalized.

These scholars assert that social knowledge is negotiated by people and that at some level individuals know that they are intentionally co-creating reality through "habitualized actions." Moreover, they claim that people understand that through their interactions their perceived reality is related and because they act on this shared understanding their perception of reality is reinforced. Human typifications, significations, and institutions (*e.g.*, the family) over time are institutionalized and consequently perceived as objective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Berger and Luckmann (1966) write "[A]n institutional world, then, is experienced as an objective reality" ... and "[I]t is important to

keep in mind that the objectivity of the institutional world, however massive it may appear to the individual, is a humanly produced, constructed objectivity” (p. 60).

Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) theory centers on the idea that individuals and collectives in a social context eventually habituate shared concepts or mental representations of each other’s actions through their interactions over time. These become reciprocal roles each actor plays in relation to one another. As more members of a society enter into these roles, adopting their shared meaning, these reciprocal interactions become institutionalized. Meaning is embedded in society through these social institutions. An individual’s perception of what reality “is” becomes enmeshed in society’s institutional fabric. Therefore, reality is argued to be socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Only after repeated interactions between individuals and groups of people does reality come to be perceived as objective and taken-for-granted, and then only after it has become institutionalized. The primary goals of Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) conceptualization of the social construction of reality are to explore and understand the sociology of knowledge and how knowledge is created or known (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). They seek to find embedded, shared meaning, and how individuals “know” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This is different than Gergen’s (1994, 1999) notion of believing that reality is created as words are spoken. Not only is there the issue of longevity versus immediacy between Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) and Gergen’s (1994, 1999) views on the social construction of reality, but there is also the difference of shared meaning versus co-creation.

### *Gergen*

Some proponents of Appreciative Inquiry apply Gergen’s (1994, 1999) idea of the social construction of reality and believe that “words create worlds” (*e.g.*, Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 53). Gergen (1994, 1999) offers four assumptions that guide this thinking. First, he states that the “terms by which we understand our world and our self are neither required nor demanded by ‘what there

is” (as cited in Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 56). Second, Gergen (1994, 1999) maintains that “our modes of description, explanation, and/or representation are derived from relationship” (as cited in Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 56). Third, he states that “as we describe, explain, or otherwise represent, we also fashion our future” (as cited in Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 56). Fourth, Gergen (1994, 1999) claims “reflection on our forms of understanding is vital to our future well-being” (as cited in Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 56). Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) and Gergen’s (1994, 1999) conceptualizations differ on some key points.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that people make meaning out of shared dialogue. Gergen (1994, 1999) assumes that reality is created as dialogue is being exchanged. Berger and Luckmann (1966) assert that there is a place for objective things and different levels of reality with multiple layers of meaning and that people attempt to share and eventually identify these meanings through institutions. Gergen (1994, 1999) seems to be arguing that reality is created from a purely subjective standpoint and “what there is” has no substantive bearing on individuals’ shared meaning or their attempt at sensemaking. Finally, Berger and Luckmann (1966) claim typifications, significations, and institutions are vehicles through which meaning is embedded in society and in individuals’ consciousness. These meanings are agreed on over time so that they become tradition, to the point they are taken-for-granted. Gergen (1994, 1999) asserts that rather than meaning being made over long periods of time between people and the groups that they interact with reality is created immediately as soon as words are spoken.

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) offer an example of how proponents of Appreciative Inquiry apply Gergen’s (1994, 1999) idea of social constructionism. They write “all this suggests [*i.e.*, the four assumptions made by Gergen (1994, 1999)] that words matter. They not only make a difference, they literally bring things to life. *They create the world as we know it ...* [maintaining that] the Constructionist Principle suggests that words, language, and metaphors are more than mere descriptions

of reality. They are words that create worlds” [italics added] (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, pp. 53, 56). This difference in the idea of social constructionism poses challenges for advocates of Appreciative Inquiry because they are then left in the unenviable position of defending such a claim.

For example, if it is true that words alone create worlds and literally bring things to life, then a strong argument can be made that no one should work and make money or go to the doctor when they are sick; they can just speak their way into an economic surplus and excellent health. This theoretical issue should be reconciled in local government managers’ minds if the approach is to be used in a responsible manner. After all, it can be argued that administrators should know why they are doing what they are doing when it comes to governance. In addition to being aware of the theoretical grounding issue presented by the Appreciative Inquiry approach, it is important that this dissertation provide a definition of Appreciative Inquiry after examining how others have defined it.

### ***Appreciative Inquiry as Defined by Scholars and Practitioners***

Appreciative Inquiry is an organizational development approach created by David Cooperrider in 1986. Cooperrider (1986) maintains that Appreciative Inquiry is a positive<sup>13</sup> discourse approach to

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<sup>13</sup> Where not specifically defined in context (e.g., such as in a specific definition of Appreciative Inquiry), the term “positive” is defined in this dissertation first as “involving advantage or good” (WordNet, 2008). When referring to the positivist principle of Appreciative Inquiry the following guidance is offered “[P]ut most simply, it has been our experience that building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding-things like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together. What we have found is that the more positive the question we ask in our work the more long lasting and successful the change effort. It does not help, we have found, to begin our inquiries from the standpoint of the world as a problem to be solved. We are more effective the longer we can retain the spirit of inquiry of the everlasting beginner. The major thing we do that makes the difference is to craft and seed, in better and more catalytic ways, the unconditional positive question” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2008, p. 17).

When discussing the “positive” in a public administration context the positive becomes that which is in the public interest. Public administrators have an obligation through their use of administrative discretion to uphold “regime values.” This research is concerned primarily with public service in the United States of America; therefore, the concern is with the particular regime values of the United States as provided in the Constitution (e.g., “freedom, property, and equality” (Rohr, 1998, p. 24)) and in the interpretation of the Constitution by the Supreme Court (e.g., *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)) or questions regarding constitutionality answered, at least in part, by the various judicial opinions of Supreme Court justices (Rohr, 1976, 1998).

The positive and the negative are not self-defining and neither is the public interest. There are those on both sides of the debate regarding the public interest. On the one hand, there are those who maintain that since the public interest can never be defined because of America’s pluralistic society (i.e., diversity of citizens) public

change that draws on Gergen's (1994, 1999) social constructivist theory and the power of positive imagery. Scholars agree that Appreciative Inquiry uses storytelling to share visions for the future in a collective setting. They argue that themes identified in these stories can become the norm rather than the exception in organizations and communities (*e.g.*, Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990<sup>14</sup>). Appreciative Inquiry involves asking questions that focus on what gives life and meaning to stakeholders, to foster an understanding of instances where highly positive and successful stories become commonplace (*e.g.*, Aram, 1990<sup>15</sup>). Examples of these types of questions include the following. How would our organization look if members practiced servant leadership? Relate a positive story when you were inspired by a manager or leader in the organization? When have you felt most alive in the organization or community? When have you felt most energized in our community? When have you felt the safest in the community? From a positive standpoint what would you like our community to look like in five years? When have you felt most connected to your neighbors or most a part of the community? What are some of the best experiences you have had in this organization (*e.g.*, Aram, 1990<sup>16</sup>)?

Other examples include “[Q]uestions focusing attention on what the future would look like if the collaborative alliance succeeded, and what each partner organization wanted to accomplish in order for their partnerships to be effective” (Bilimoria, Wilmot, & Cooperrider, 1996, p. 214). And, “[I]n an

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administrators should not attempt to pursue the notion of the public interest as a practical matter of governance. On the other hand, while they agree that the public interest can never be defined, there are scholars who argue that the pursuit of the public interest is ennobling in-and-of-itself and that public administrators should attempt to discover through dialogue with the citizenry the various perspectives and interests of the public that they serve. Further, arguments are presented that suggest one way to ascertain the public interest is by defining what it is not (*e.g.*, Wamsley, *et. al.*, 1990). For example, it is clear in the United States of America that racism or arbitrary suppression of speech is not in the public interest.

<sup>14</sup> (*e.g.*, Bushe, 1995; Bushe & Pitman, 1991; Carter & Johnson, 1992; Chandler, 1999; Cooperrider, 2001; Cooperrider, 1995; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2002; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999; Cooperrider, Sorenson, & Yaeger, 2001; Cooperrider, Sorenson, Whitney, & Yaeger, 2000; Curran, 1991; Elliot, 1999; Fitzgerald, Murrell, & Miller, 2003; French & Bell, 1994; French, Bell, & Zawacki, 1994; Gotches & Ludema, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> (*e.g.*, Banaga, 1998; Barrett & Peterson, 2000; Belsie, 2001; Bilimoria, Wilmot, & Cooperrider, 1996; Bushe, 1999; Finegold, Holland, & Lingham, 2002; Fry, Barrett, Selling, & Whitney, 2001; Hammond, 1998; Hammond & Royal, 2001; Kaye & Jacobson, 1999; Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> (*e.g.*, Bushe, 1999; Fry, Barrett, Selling, & Whitney, 2001).

appreciative inquiry into leadership, people in this organization interviewed their executives about the greatest acts of leadership they had seen in the organization as well as what they would consider their own peak leadership experiences” (Bushe, 1998, pp. 4-5). These examples of life giving questions, while applied in varying contexts, all have a focus on the positive in common.

Appreciative Inquiry begins with an affirmative topic choice. It emphasizes sharing the positive and effective in an organization or community, rather than focusing on the negative and ineffective (*e.g.*, Cooperrider, 1986<sup>17</sup>). Appreciative Inquiry is defined in many ways. For example, Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) write,

Appreciative Inquiry is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives ‘life’ to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the “unconditional positive question” often-involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people. In AI the arduous task of intervention gives way to the speed of imagination and innovation; instead of negation, criticism, and spiraling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream, and design. AI seeks, fundamentally, to build a constructive union between a whole people<sup>18</sup> and the massive entirety of what people talk about as past and present capacities: achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies,

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<sup>17</sup> (*e.g.*, Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> “Whole people” here refers to whoever is included as participants given the particular context Appreciative Inquiry is being used in. For example, it can mean in a broader sense all Koreans or in a narrower sense all CPAP students depending on the population involved in the participation process.

stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul— and visions of valued and possible futures. Taking all of these together as a gestalt, AI deliberately, in everything it does, seeks to work from accounts of this “positive change core”—and it assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized (pp. 245-263).

Others definitions include the following.

White (1996) states “Appreciative Inquiry focuses us on the positive aspects of our lives and leverages them to correct the negative. It’s the opposite of ‘problem-solving’” (p. 15). Hammond (1998) defines the approach this way,

The traditional approach to change is to look for the problem, do a diagnosis, and find a solution. The primary focus is on what is wrong or broken; since we look for problems, we find them. By paying attention to problems, we emphasize and amplify them ... Appreciative Inquiry suggests that we look for what works in an organization. The tangible result of the inquiry process is a series of statements that describe where the organization wants to be, based on the high moments of where they have been. Because the statements are grounded in real experience and history, people know how to repeat their success (pp. 6-7),

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) claim that “Appreciative Inquiry is a form of action research that attempts to create new theories/ideas/images that aide in the developmental change of a system” (p. 33). And, Bushe (1999) states that, “the key data collection innovation of appreciative inquiry is the collection of people’s stories of something at its best...These stories are collectively discussed in order to create new, generative ideas or images that aid in the developmental change of the collectivity discussing them” (p. 10).

Scholars generally characterize Appreciative Inquiry in a similar way and differences are slight. Most agree that Appreciative Inquiry is a form of action research and that it maintains an unequivocal focus on the positive. Scholars also agree that Appreciative Inquiry engages in possibility thinking and that it is a holistic approach that engenders cooperation and acknowledges organizations and communities as open systems. Writers also concur that the Appreciative Inquiry approach attempts to discover a system's life giving forces, involves storytelling, is a pragmatic search for what works in a particular situation or circumstance, asserts that how we inquire is fateful, and begins by asking an unconditional positive question (*e.g.*, Bushe, 1999<sup>19</sup>). Some writers emphasize why a focus on the negative is detrimental (*e.g.*, Hammond, 1998; White, 1996) while others describe Appreciative Inquiry in Pollyannaish language (*e.g.*, Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005<sup>20</sup>) as opposed to more concise, practical terms (*e.g.*, Bushe, 1999<sup>21</sup>).

#### *Appreciative Inquiry Operationally Defined*

This research project uses a definition of Appreciative Inquiry provided by Watkins and Mohr (2001) that is based on Cooperrider's (1986) conceptualization of the approach. It is the most appropriate definition for this work because of the language that it uses and its application to previous research. Watkins and Mohr (2001) write that Appreciative Inquiry is a "collaborative and highly participative, community-wide approach to seeking, identifying, and enhancing the life-giving forces in the community..." (p. 15) "that are present when a system is performing optimally in human, economic, and organizational terms" (p. 14).

Watkins and Mohr (2001) maintain that *appreciative* "comes from the idea that when something increases in value it 'appreciates'" (p. 14). As such, Appreciative Inquiry "focuses on the generative

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<sup>19</sup> (*e.g.*, Cooperrider, 2001; Cooperrider, 2006, 1986; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 2005; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Hammond, 1998; Srivastva, 2007; Steinbach, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> (*e.g.*, Steinbach, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> (*e.g.*, Hammond, 1998; White, 1996).

and life-giving forces in the system” (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p. 14). According to Watkins and Mohr (2001) *inquiry* is meant as the “process of seeking to understand through asking questions” (p. 14). Regardless of how they define Appreciative Inquiry, all practitioners agree that there is a definitive process or model that constitutes the approach.

#### *Appreciative Inquiry: The 4-D Model*

Cooperrider (1986) states that one of the benefits of the Appreciative Inquiry approach is that it can be modified to fit a specific situation or context. He maintains that all Appreciative Inquiry approaches start with affirmative topic choice. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) argue that this is usually done by the creation of a core group comprised of participants and facilitators. They claim that this is a crucial task because the choice of what to focus on is fateful (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

Once a topic has been identified, Watkins and Mohr (2001) note that as long as certain tenets are adhered to (*i.e.*, the five generic processes of Appreciative Inquiry discussed below), then users of the approach can create a model that meets their specific needs. A review of the literature suggests that since Appreciative Inquiry was created practitioners have developed and used various models (*e.g.*, Jacobsgaard’s 5-I model, GEM Initiative’s 4-D model). Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) argue that the basic model all other models are variants of is the 4-D model or 4-D cycle. The four “D”s in the model are four distinct stages: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Refer to Figure A.

## 4-D Model of Appreciative Inquiry

Figure A

- Discovery stage

- Dream stage

- Design stage

- Destiny stage

Source: Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003.

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) assert that in the first stage participants attempt to “appreciate what is” (p. 6). They state that in this phase practitioners typically conduct one-on-one appreciative interviews, although, it can also include large group meetings and focus groups if necessary. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) maintain that the Discovery stage “involves purposefully affirmative conversations among many or all members” (p. 8) in the process. Results of this phase include an in-depth description or mapping of what stakeholders’ value and community-wide sharing of positive stories regarding the topic. In addition, the process allows for an increase and enhancement of collective wisdom and community knowledge. Any feedback assists by allowing participants to consider unplanned changes to the process before actually implementing the latter three stages of the model (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) describe the second stage as where participants “imagine what might be” (p. 6). This is when all of the stakeholders meet in the Appreciative Inquiry Summit(s). Participants in this large gathering engage in collective conversation.

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) maintain that there are many ways to engage in this dream dialogue because it is a creative process. However, they state that it typically centers on a focal question(s) (*e.g.*, when have you felt safest in the neighborhood?) crafted by the core group and posed by the facilitator. People are then asked to share a personal, positive anecdote in their lives that answers the question (*e.g.*, I always feel safe when I see Officer Smith walking around the neighborhood when I am sitting on my front porch). The Appreciative Inquiry summit is where the actual intervention in the process occurs because Cooperrider's (1986) argument is that if you can imagine a preferred future, then you will move inexorably toward that future. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) claim that once stories are shared communally then emergent positive themes or values are identified as core group or community values.

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) characterize the third stage as where participants seek to identify "what should be" (p. 9). They claim that stakeholders in this phase usually meet in large or small groups and draw on the Discovery and Dream stages to "select high impact design elements, and then craft a set of provocative statements that list the ... qualities they most desire" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 9). These scholars argue that these statements are written in the affirmative and provide "compelling pictures of how things will be when the ... positive core is boldly alive in all of its strategies, processes, systems, decisions, and collaborations" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 10).

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) write that in the fourth stage, Destiny, participants focus on creating "what will be" (p. 6). They maintain that this is where stakeholders meet initially in large groups and continue meeting in small groups to participate in creative, outside-the-box thinking. They attempt to strategize and agree on paths forward. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) state that certain questions need to be answered such as how do we get to where we want to go as a community based on what we value and what we have talked about? How do we achieve our goals of a preferred future?

How do we make it a reality (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003)? Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) write that “the result of Destiny is generally an extensive array of changes throughout” (p. 9) the community.

Cooperrider (1986) maintains that Appreciative Inquiry is action research and that it is pragmatic, adaptable, and flexible. He notes that these four stages are definitive, yet there are many variations (*e.g.*, small work groups, focus groups, brainstorming) within these stages on how to go about accomplishing the goals of each (Cooperrider, 1986). Cooperrider (1986) asserts that facilitators are encouraged to design their own model predicated on the five generic processes of Appreciative Inquiry.

*Appreciative Inquiry: Five Generic Processes*

Watkins and Mohr (2001) identify five generic processes common to all models of Appreciative Inquiry. They argue that Appreciative Inquiry is a holistic approach. If any one of the five processes is missing from the approach, then it is not considered Appreciative Inquiry (Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

These five processes are “choosing the positive as the focus of inquiry; inquiring into stories of life-giving forces; locat[ing] themes that appear in the stories and select topics for further inquiry; creat[ing] shared images for a preferred future; and find[ing] innovative ways to create that future” (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, p. 39). Watkins and Mohr (2001) maintain that, as long as these five processes are engaged in, then an Appreciative Inquiry approach has been used. They claim that it is important to understand that these components are not linear and that they occur continually throughout the intervention (Watkins & Mohr, 2001). Refer to Figure B.

Watkins and Mohr (2001) state these processes overlap and “repeat themselves without predictability” (p. 39). Practitioners of Appreciative Inquiry must recognize that all of the elements are necessary and part of the larger whole (Watkins & Mohr, 2001). With this discussion of Appreciative

Inquiry, how it is defined as well as its standard 4-D model, and the five generic processes investigated, the argument can now be made for how Appreciative Inquiry might benefit local government managers.

## **Five Generic Processes of Appreciative Inquiry**

Figure B

- Choosing the positive as the focus of inquiry
- Inquiring into stories of life-giving forces
- Locating themes that appear in stories and select topics for further inquiry
- Creating shared images for a preferred future
- Finding innovative ways to create that future

Source: Watkins and Mohr, 2001.

### ***Appreciative Inquiry: Meeting Requirements of Successful Citizen Participation Strategies***

The Appreciative Inquiry approach differs from other strategies (*e.g.*, deliberative democracy, charettes, citizen juries) identified by writers in the literature dealing with direct citizen participation. This work explores whether Appreciative Inquiry meets the requirements for successful public involvement strategies that have been outlined by both academicians and practitioners<sup>22</sup>. In light of the literature on citizen participation and its authors' subsequent recommendations for successful citizen participation strategies, it is beneficial to identify some of these characteristics.

<sup>22</sup> These successful requirements are discussed in detail in the literature review chapter of this dissertation.

Practitioners can use Appreciative Inquiry to address inequality and power differentials (*e.g.*, King, Feltey, & Susel, 1998<sup>23</sup>). They can use Appreciative Inquiry to deal with the issue regarding authentic venues for participation to improve social inequalities (*e.g.*, Patterson, 2000). Insofar as dialogue is key to citizen/administrator collaboration efforts (*e.g.*, Friedmann, 1973), proponents of the Appreciative Inquiry approach maintain it is a discourse centered strategy.

Administrators using an Appreciative Inquiry approach can use it to address criticisms leveled against public hearings. Specifically, the call for new types of meetings that include characteristics such as being jointly convened by citizens and officials, that there be no preconditions of attendance, that there is individual rather than interest group representation, and that participant agreement to purpose is achieved (Matthews, 1999). Further, the concern that public meetings are asymmetric in structure and ritualized (Chrislip, 2002) is addressed by those using an Appreciative Inquiry approach. The issue raised in the literature regarding the involvement of citizens throughout the entire direct citizen participation process (Lindstrom & Nie, 2000) is addressed by public managers using Appreciative Inquiry because the approach is designed in such a way that citizens are involved from inception to conclusion of the process. Finally, practitioners of the Appreciative Inquiry approach can incorporate Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, Inc. and Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Quade, and Douglas' (1996) elements of effective public involvement efforts including good organization, beginning with establishing a small core group of citizens, and holding both informal and formal meetings.

#### *Appreciative Inquiry at the Community Level*

To adequately deal with Appreciative Inquiry it is appropriate to examine its limited application at the community level. Although Appreciative Inquiry is an organizational development approach, it is currently used by one nonprofit organization, Imagine Chicago, in a community setting. Imagine Chicago uses Appreciative Inquiry to engage citizens in strategic visioning and as a way of creating an

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<sup>23</sup> (*e.g.*, Wendling, 1997).

empowering context where innovation can flourish (Browne & Jain, 2002). In addition to Imagine Chicago other instances are reviewed.

Imagine Chicago began its work in 1993 using Appreciative Inquiry to achieve its stated end of replacing injustice with justice in communities around the world. Browne and Jain (2002) write “the existence of injustice offers a constant innovation to work towards justice” (p. 2). This nonprofit organization characterizes itself as part of a larger social movement rooted in collective imagination. Browne and Jain (2002) note that Imagine initiatives are occurring all over the world on six continents having unique contexts but similar convictions, including

human beings can unite around shared meaning; that each person’s contribution is vital to a flourishing community; and that creating a culture of public learning and civic engagement that connects generations and cultures is at the heart of self- and social transformation ... [and that] these beliefs translate into positive and inspiring images, ideas, and actions (p. 2).

In keeping with the characteristics of Appreciative Inquiry of the power of language and the focus on the positive, Imagine Chicago intentionally uses words in its actions and writings that are positive rather than negative. Browne and Jain (2002) write “at Imagine Chicago, we are convinced that our words will (and do) shape our thoughts and actions” (p. 3).

Browne and Jain (2002) cite six key organizing principles of Imagine Chicago: work in partnership with local individuals and organizations; encouraging participants to find ways to connect their particular gifts to the community where they live;” “build where life and energy are already at work;” “create opportunity for constructive interactions across boundaries;” “identify individuals who are committed to being change agents in their organizations and communities, and help them make a difference by connecting them to opportunities and effective tools;” “keep the whole in view;” and “expect the best from everyone and hold them accountable” (pp. 4-5). Imagine Chicago’s initial project

was intergenerational interviewing. Members used Appreciative Inquiry to facilitate urban adolescents in appreciative interviewing of city adults “who were recognized as providing the city’s ‘civic glue’” (Browne & Jain, 2002, p. 8). The goal was inspiring the city’s youth on the one hand, and helping adults to view the city’s teenagers as “contributors to the public good rather than ‘problems to be fixed’” (Browne & Jain, 2002, p. 8), on the other. Imagine Chicago’s staff views the organization as a catalyst for social change and possibility that connects people and improves social and civic networks (Browne & Jain, 2002).

In addition to Imagine Chicago, there are other instances where Appreciative Inquiry has been used in the area of community development or at the community level by members of nonprofit organizations (*e.g.*, Belsie, 2001<sup>24</sup>). However, the literature does not report its use by local government managers to engage the citizens they serve at the community level. It is nonprofit entities that are attempting to assist in community development and capacity building by way of Appreciative Inquiry, not public managers in their capacity as representatives or employees of government.

It has been suggested that Appreciative Inquiry may meet the elements cited in the literature for a successful citizen participation strategy. Appreciative Inquiry may be one way for local government managers to engage the citizens they serve. The remaining four challenges public managers may face if they want to use an Appreciative Inquiry approach to increase direct citizen participation are introduced to help determine the appropriateness of Appreciative Inquiry.

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<sup>24</sup> (*e.g.*, Booy, Sena, & Arusha, 2000; Bowling, 2001; Bowling, Ludema, & Wyss, 1997; Bowling & Brahm, 2002; Browne, 2002; Browne, 1999; Chapagain, 1999; Chien, Cawthorn, & Browne, 2001; Evans, 2002; Finegold, Holland, & Lingham, 2002; Kish, Gephardt, Browne, & Hanger, 2004; Ludema, 1994; Ludema, 1993; Muscat, 1998; Sena & Booy, 1997).

## ***Challenges with Appreciative Inquiry being used by Public Administrators to Increase Citizen Participation***

This section highlights five challenges relevant to a discussion of using Appreciative Inquiry to increase citizen participation. These challenges will be addressed more extensively in the final chapter of this dissertation. The first challenge is context, specifically, the challenge of a political context versus an organizational context. The second deals with unrealistic expectations; specifically, unrealistic outcomes. The third addresses the potential for manipulation; specifically, of the citizenry. The fourth is concerned with the utility of maintaining the status quo in the field of public administration in the United States. The fifth challenge is theoretical grounding. Refer to figure C.

In addition to answering the research question, this dissertation addresses these challenges ultimately deciding whether the benefits to using Appreciative Inquiry outweigh the risks. The last challenge, theoretical grounding, has already been addressed in this chapter. Data was not gathered regarding this challenge from practitioners that were interviewed for this research project. Therefore, its inclusion was appropriate to include in the beginning of this chapter.

## Five Challenges to using Appreciative Inquiry

Figure C

- Context
- Unrealistic expectations
- Potential for manipulation
- Utility of maintaining the status quo
- Theoretical grounding

### *Chapter Summary*

This chapter explored Appreciative Inquiry and how it relates to this research project. It began with a discussion of the theoretical grounding of the approach and the challenge that this theoretical underpinning presents. Next, it examined how some practitioners and scholars define Appreciative Inquiry and provided an operational definition. Then, it discussed both the basic 4-D model and the five generic processes undergirding all Appreciative Inquiry approaches. Also, it provided an illustrative example of Appreciative Inquiry's use by nonprofits and suggested the possibility of its use by public managers at the local government level to increase direct citizen participation. Finally, this chapter introduced the four remaining challenges facing public managers who might want to use Appreciative Inquiry in the way this dissertation suggests. Chapter three provides a review of the literature on participatory democracy, opponents of direct citizen participation, and Appreciative Inquiry concerning this research project.

### III.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

This research project contributes to the literature on citizen participation. The citizen participation literature cited herein is composed of three areas that are discussed separately. The main points from each area of literature are addressed. First, the literature on participatory democracy is presented. It is a context from which the discussion is sharpened to focus on direct citizen participation. This literature has its roots in the disciplines of urban planning, political science, and public administration focusing on the time period of the 1960s to the present. The chapter begins with a discussion of participatory democracy in general. Then, the focus of the discussion narrows to direct citizen participation in the urban planning and public administration literatures. Subsequently, the exploration of the direct citizen participation literature centers on even the more specific implementation literature at the programmatic level, using transportation policy as an example.

Second, the literature pertaining to the critics of direct citizen participation is presented. Third, this dissertation draws on the Appreciative Inquiry literature as a focus for defining the research question. The Appreciative Inquiry literature is discussed beginning with the inception of the approach in 1986 and continuing with it through to the present day. Finally, the question of the relevance of this dissertation's research is addressed at the end of this chapter after a gap in the current scholarship on direct citizen participation located in the local government and public administration management literature has been identified.

#### *Participatory Democracy*

Participatory democracy is used as a framework from which to discuss direct citizen participation in a local government setting. Many scholars argue that increasing direct citizen participation at the local government level is one method of increasing participatory democracy. This

research is a descriptive, exploratory study to determine the feasibility of a natural experiment; namely, engaging in an Appreciative Inquiry approach at the local level with the aim of increasing direct citizen participation thereby enhancing local government (*e.g.*, Cuthill, 2003<sup>25</sup>). This chapter explores participatory democracy, especially as it relates to direct citizen participation.

The chapter begins by outlining the theoretical tenets of participatory democracy and how some writers conceptualize it. Next, a discussion of participatory democracy in practice and the results it has produced is provided. Then, this chapter cites those in the literature who maintain that direct citizen participation and face-to-face civic engagement are vital components of participatory democracy. Finally, this chapter explores why participatory democracy matters, especially its component of direct citizen participation.

### *Participatory Democracy in Theory*

Many writers have dealt with the issue of participatory democracy and its relationship to direct citizen participation. These authors identify what it is in theory and in practice (*e.g.*, Benn, 2000<sup>26</sup>). A diverse collection of academics argue that in theory participatory democracy is the most egalitarian form of democracy (Wendling, 1997). In the ideal, it is “a self-managing society in which there are no political leaders” (Wendling, 1997, p. 162). Wendling (1997) argues that there needs to be more equality among participants in a participatory democracy. She claims that who is defined as a participant is a crucial aspect of this form of government. She further maintains that the citizen is a participant who is qualified by holding citizenship to be a participant in the governance process (Wendling, 1997). Wendling (1997) holds that in a participatory democracy society it is the state’s responsibility to ensure inequalities do not interfere with individuals’ rights to participate.

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<sup>25</sup> (*e.g.*, King, Feltey, & Susel, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> (*e.g.*, Carr & Halvorsen, 2001; Evans, 2000; Forrester, 1999; Leighley, 1991; Patterson, 2000; Vigoda, 2002; Webler & Tuler, 2000).

Wendling (1997) is not alone in pointing out issues of power differentials and inequality. Patterson (2000) writes that unequal circumstances, statuses, and power differentials serve to inflate estimates of citizen dissatisfaction and disinterest. She maintains that nonvirtue (*e.g.*, frustration from impediments to participation) is not apathy and that social inequalities result in the inhibition of conventional forms of citizen participation (Patterson, 2000). Patterson (2000) also contends that the concept of citizen participation, in a participatory democracy, needs to be expanded outside of the parameters of apathy versus virtue. In other words, she concludes that the idea of participatory democracy in America is skewed in that most venues for participation are not authentic and genuine, but rather just varied forms of co-optation (*e.g.*, public hearings) (Patterson, 2000).

King, Feltey, and Susel (1998) argue that participation within participatory democracy has to be reframed to address power differentials and extant inequalities. They hold that participation needs to be authentic (King, Feltey, & Susel, 1998). They write “authentic participation is deep and continuous involvement in administrative processes with the potential for all involved to have an effect on the situation” (King, Feltey, & Susel, 1998, p. 321).

In sum, several writers deal with the subject of participatory democracy. The topic is vast and many scholars approach it from different perspectives. Some focus on notions of equality, equity, and power. As a consequence these proponents advocate for genuine, authentic dialogue. Some writers also highlight an important distinction between apathy and frustration. Next, the literature on how participatory democracy works in reality and what it produces as a consequence of its implementation is examined.

### *Participatory Democracy in Practice*

Scholars maintain that in practice participatory democracy has traditionally meant decentralization of governmental functions and administration, massive devolution, and grassroots

organization, as well as the requisite voting and election processes (*e.g.*, Roelofs, 1998<sup>27</sup>). Scott (2000) goes further stating that participatory democracy is more than just the private act of suffrage. Rather, it is the act of public participation. It is citizens gathering in a capacity to discuss issues of governance and participating (*i.e.*, acting) in their own governance (Scott, 2000). Evans (2000) maintains that participatory democracy in practice is about citizens engaging in inquiry to decide on appropriate governance actions within specific contextual circumstances. Vigoda (2002) views participatory democracy as enhanced citizen and administrator collaboration and partnerships. Maintaining participatory democracy requires a willingness to participate (Vigoda, 2002).

Participatory democracy in practice is viewed differently by various scholars. However, many agree that, in addition to voting, actually engaging citizens directly and allowing them to participate more fully beyond just casting a ballot is an important component of America's political system. Before exploring the literature on how administrators have been attempting to promote participatory democracy by increasing civic engagement, public participation, and public dialogue, it is important to discuss why scholars and practitioners believe participatory democracy is necessary.

### *Why Participatory Democracy Matters*

It is generally agreed on by contributors in the scholarship of participatory democracy that participation has an impact on individuals (*e.g.*, Bachrach, 1967<sup>28</sup>). Scholars maintain that participatory democracy is becoming crucial to good governance in America because in American political literature, there is a growing concern about the failure of liberal democracy (*e.g.*, Dionne, 1991<sup>29</sup>). Some writers assert that citizen participation in the polis has been viewed as an important aspect of societal mechanism and citizenship from Aristotle to Mills to Rousseau (Roelofs, 1998; Vigoda, 2002). Using a

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<sup>27</sup> (*e.g.*, Wendling, 1997).

<sup>28</sup> (*e.g.*, Benello & Roussopolous, 1971; Cook & Morgan, 1971; Leighley, 1991; Pateman, 1970; Pranger, 1968; Thompson, 1970).

<sup>29</sup> (*e.g.*, Greider, 1992; Lasch, 1995; Nye, Zelikow, & King, 1997; Sandel, 1996).

Hobbesian viewpoint, Roelof's (1998) observes that America is in a state of arrested political maturation. Many other scholars call for increased and sustained participatory democracy for a variety of reasons.

Webler and Tuler (2000) believe that participatory democracy increases fairness, equity, equality, and competence among citizens. Benn (2000) argues that it serves to educate the citizenry. A number of scholars maintain that it expands and enhances political knowledge and the citizenry's conceptualization of politics (DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002; Leighley, 1991; Lynn, 2002). Others assert that it elevates levels of social capital (Cuthill, 2003; Putnam, 2000), helps to frame policy issues (DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002; Hendriks, 2002), creates an enlightening experience for all involved stakeholders (Leighley, 1991), serves as a model for the private sector (DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002), and helps to regain publicness and restore the public-private distinction (Haque, 2001). Still others describe participatory democracy having a part in individuals' self-actualization and development (DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002; Leighley, 1991; White, 1998).

Some researchers have concluded that participatory democracy promotes governmental efficiency and effectiveness (DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004), enhances the quality of life of citizens in general and in particular (Eckersley, 2001), and improves citizens' ability to come to consensus on seemingly objective circumstances (White, 1998). Other scholars argue that it enhances collaborative decision-making and partnerships (Webler & Tuler, 2000) and provides administrators with local knowledge imparted from citizens who live and work in specific geographical areas (Karr & Halvorsen, 2001). They maintain that participatory democracy helps overcome context- and situation-specific challenges while at the same time ensuring long-term sustainable development (Karr & Halvorsen, 2001; Stiglitz, 2002). Some writers describe participatory democracy as serving to improve

the citizenry's perception of government (DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002; Halvorsen, 2003) and legitimize both government and public administration (Box, 2002; Farrell, 2000; Leighley, 1991; White, 1998).

Regarding diversity, some proponents argue that participatory democracy enhances various aspects of the citizenry's life contending that it recognizes and respects differences among people (DeRienzo, 1995; Dryzek, 1996; Halvorsen, 2003). DeRienzo (1995) relates that it helps diverse peoples maintain their distinctive cultures. Some assert that issues of power inequalities are related to issues of diversity, claiming participatory democracy can balance those power differentials (Dryzek, 1996; Patterson, 2000; Scott, 2000). Other academicians maintain that participatory democracy and its processes can increase administrator and by extension governmental responsiveness to the public being served (Alkadry, 2003; Bryson & Anderson, 2000; Farrell, 2000; Halvorsen, 2003; Mintrom, 2003; Vigoda, 2002).

In summary, participatory democracy is conceived by some as the most egalitarian form of government comprised of not only voting but also various forms of direct citizen participation. Well rounded participatory democracy involves direct engagement of citizens through authentic dialogue and opportunities for genuine participation in their own governance. Issues of equity, diversity, and equality are important. In addition, participatory democracy matters for a many reasons including education, empowerment, efficiency, effectiveness, and governmental legitimacy. Having explored the literature on participatory democracy in theory and practice, its potential benefits to citizens and society, and how citizen participation in practice is often argued to be an integral part of participatory democracy theory, the focus is narrowed to direct citizen participation specifically in the urban planning and public administration literatures at the level of local government.

### ***Citizen Participation in Urban Planning and Public Administration at the Local Government Level***

This section of the literature review draws from two streams of thought originating out of the urban planning and public administration literatures. It begins with urban planning theory, picking up the literature in the 1960s. Next it examines Friedmann's (1973) work on Transactive Planning. His work is a generally accepted starting point for discussions of direct citizen participation in local government. Direct citizen participation strategies that both planners and administrators have used at the local government level to engage the citizens they serve is explored.

#### *Citizen Participation in Urban Planning Theory*

Citizen participation has long been a strong and recurrent theme in urban planning theory. Some researchers have argued that citizen participation helps administrators and citizens discover synergistic solutions to challenging, complex issues (Bryson and Anderson, 2000; White, 1998). It not only enhances governmental provision of the public good and welfare (Docherty, Goodland, & Paddison, 2001; Vigoda, 2002; Waugh, 2002) but ultimately enhances self-government (Carr and Halvorsen, 2001; Evans, 2000; Farrell, 2000; Hamlett, 2003; Wagle, 2000). There are many reasons given in the literature for why direct citizen participation is viewed as necessary. There are many ways presented in the literature to go about achieving it.

Citizen participation in America can be traced from colonial times, through the country's inception, forward past the progressive era, on up to the present day. This discussion will begin in the 1960s and early 1970s with the major urban political reform known as the Civil Rights Movement, urban unrest during this period, and the development of inner cities and rural areas at this time. It will examine how direct citizen participation at the local government level saw an increase during this era

because of the belief that involving the public in the participation process not only created better social programs and improved local governance but was also more democratic (*e.g.*, Bartlett, 1998<sup>30</sup>).

### *Civil Rights Movement*

Castells (1983) maintains that the urban political reform movement changed the landscape of American cities. He argues that one of the primary impetuses for social change was the Civil Rights revolution (Castells, 1983). Chrislip (2002) writes “one of the purposes of the public interest reform movement of the 1960s and early 1970s ... was to open up public access to governmental decision making. By providing avenues for public participation, policymakers would receive input from all affected parties and decision making would become an expression of the broad public interest” (p. 14).

Scholars agree that the Civil Rights Movement was dominated by African-Americans who had moved from rural settings to urban settings in the post-World War II era. These African-Americans became a political force that swept the nation achieving monumental change. Academics note that this new found political power of previously disenfranchised peoples was augmented by federal policies of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s designed to empower the impoverished. Scholars contend that these two factors posed a substantial challenge to local city governments. For example, federal policy that benefited minorities included Community Development programs that required citizen representation in program design and operation. Additionally, Community Action Programs made funds available to lawyers so that they might assist citizens in suing municipal governments (*e.g.*, Ginzberg, 1993<sup>31</sup>).

### *American Civil Upheaval*

In addition to the Civil Rights Movement and subsequent federal policy, scholars maintain that the reform movement was fueled by the general civil upheaval in America feeding on such diverse

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<sup>30</sup> (*e.g.*, Boorstin, 1965; Callow, 1982; Chudacoff, 1975; Cole, 1974; Fainstein & Hirst, 1995; Glaab & Brown, 1967; Hofstadter, 1955; Levy, 2000; McKelvey, 1973; Monkkonen, 1988; Miller, 1973; Schlesinger, 1970).

<sup>31</sup> (*e.g.*, Levy, 2000; Mayer, 1999; Spinrad, 1969).

man as the anti-war movement, women's liberation, alternative cultures, student protests, and postindustrial society itself (e.g., Castells, 1983). Castells (1983) observes "beyond its internal diversity, the revolt came from a common matrix of contradictions underlying the fabric of the inner cities, defined as the spatial manifestation of ethnic segregation, urban poverty, economic discrimination, and *political alienation*" [italics added] (p. 49). He maintains that people are important because they "have been and still are the makers of cities" (Castells, 1983, p. 67). The urban political reform movement of the 1960s and 1970s has an extensive literature from which to draw (e.g., Beauregard & Boyd-Gendrot, 1999<sup>32</sup>).

Friedmann's (1973) work on Transactive Planning is used as a starting point for contemporary discussions of direct citizen participation in urban planning and policy. Friedmann (1973) argues that Transactive Planning is necessary for the survival of contemporary society because of the notions of participatory democracy and direct citizen participation. Friedmann (1973) links urban planning theory with participatory democracy, specifically, and with its component of direct citizen participation.

#### *Transactive Planning: Improving Local Governance*

Friedmann's (1973) point is that urban planners have to liberate themselves from traditional planning predicated on Frederick Taylor's (1911) principles of scientific management. He maintains that today's world does not lend itself to this empirical, rational approach. Friedmann (1973) called his new approach Transactive Planning. He grounded his argument in the work of Mannheim's exploration of the sociology of knowledge. He writes that Mannheim's goal is to "understand reality" (p. 42); consequently,

scientific work ... could not produce 'pure' facts but only a selected emphasis and perspective interpretation of them ... a moral judgment lay at the roots [of knowledge] ... facts without values were meaningless; an array of data such as might be contained in a census publication

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<sup>32</sup> (e.g., Clark, 1976; Goldfield & Brownell, 1979; Glaab, 1963; Mayer, 1999; Sugrue, 2003).

revealed nothing until subjected to disciplined analysis and interpretation (Friedmann, 1973, p. 42).

Friedmann's (1973) Transactive Planning was a radical change in the conceptualization of urban planning and policy. He argues that it engages the citizen at a personal level focusing on the interdependence of people and their environment. Urban planning is a social process that helps to guide change in society (Freidmann, 1973).

Friedmann (1973) maintains that Transactive Planning is a method for advancing social knowledge; effectively creating a learning society. He saw the learning society as an ideal society. He believed that citizens must engage in Transactive Planning to survive in a postindustrial society. In his own words,

a trillion-dollar society cannot survive its central management. Learning must be more widely diffused throughout the social body, each cell becoming a vital element in the whole configuration (Friedmann, 1973, p. 223).

Friedmann (1973) maintains that this need exists in a postindustrial society because of things like participant democracy and increasing cultural pluralism. He argues that experts and clients educate one another and influence each other by their respective morals shared through interaction (Friedmann, 1973). Put another way, Transactive Planning "changes knowledge into action through an unbroken sequence of interpersonal relations" (Friedmann, 1973, p. 171).

Friedmann (1973) calls for an interpretive approach and research strategies outside of the empiricist tradition. Central to Transactive Planning are the ideas of "human worth and reciprocity" (Friedmann, 1973, p. 112). Friedmann (1973) argues that Transactive Planning can be used as a social learning process. The key to this urban planning concept is dialogue between citizens and administrators on the one hand, and their environment on the other. Friedmann (1973) insists that

citizens and administrators must learn to listen to one another, not just hear the semantics of discourse but understand the reasons things are said and the feelings behind the words. Planners have to get to know the person speaking and, what is more, care about them (Friedmann, 1973). Friedmann (1973) maintains that Transactive Planning is a holistic worldview for engaging people and allowing citizens to participate in the co-creation of their cities and communities.

Many contemporary scholars in urban planning literature hold that the reform movement beginning in the 1960s is alive and well (*e.g.*, Beierle & Cayford, 2002<sup>33</sup>). Lowndes (1995) contends that the 1990s saw a resurgence of interest in citizenship and participation because relationships between citizens, communities, and government were breaking down. Writing “that individuals are alienated from their communities and that governmental institutions are inaccessible and unresponsive” (160).

Urban planners and public managers attempt several different types of public participation strategies. Some scholars claim that emerging out of the urban political movement of the 1960s and 1970s was a renewed interest in citizen participation by scholars and practitioners who worked in the fields of urban planning and public administration (*e.g.*, ASPA, 1970<sup>34</sup>). One of the stated goals of these civil servants and their attempts to engage the citizenry they serve is to achieve more direct citizen participation. Some of the methods scholars cite that they have employed at both the programmatic and organizational levels to increase direct citizen participation are examined next.

### *Strategies for Increasing Citizen Participation*

Many strategies have been used in an attempt to increase direct citizen participation at the local government level. Some have been more successful than others. This section outlines several of these strategies as cited in the literature. In the early days of the reform movement, strategies such as citizen boards (Clark, 1976), multiple service centers, neighborhood councils, little city halls, city hall annexes,

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<sup>33</sup> (*e.g.*, Berry, Portney, & Thomson. 1993; Citrin, 1996; Sirianni & Friedland. 2001).

<sup>34</sup> (*e.g.*, Minnowbrook, 1968).

and mini-governments were popular (Cole, 1974). These types of direct citizen participation efforts were “designed to provide the citizen with a more direct means of participating in the political affairs of the community” (Cole, 1974, xiii). Scholars report that in the intervening years, practitioners expanded on their repertoire of public participation types.

These various types include normative theories of public participation that focus on issues of competence and fairness (Webler & Tuler, 2000), citizen advisory councils, citizen panels, public surveys (Carr & Halvorsen, 2001; Crosby, Kelly, & Schaefer, 1986; Kathlene & Martin, 1991; King, Feltey, & Susel, 1998; Parsons, 1990), and public forums (Farrell, 2000; Hendriks, 2002) as well as citizen juries (Hendriks, 2002). More recent innovative citizen participation strategies include study circles (Leighninger, 2002), participatory budgeting processes (Kooning, 2004), community conversations, community dinners (Carr & Halvorsen, 2001), deliberative democracy forums (Carr & Halvorsen, 2001), large group interaction models (Bryson & Anderson, 2000), and e-government initiatives (Cuthill, 2003). Other contemporary examples include ombudspersons and action centers, coproduction of services (*e.g.*, education and policing), volunteerism, (*e.g.*, social services), institutionalized citizen roles in decision making (*e.g.*, permanent citizen steering committees), structures for protecting the public interest (*e.g.*, creation of special public involvement forums to define the public interest or articulate means for achievement) (Thomas, 1995), new types of Citizen Advisory Boards (*e.g.*, Birmingham), newly configured Neighborhood Associations, quasi-governmental Priority Boards (*e.g.*, Dayton), and District Councils that are the focus of neighborhood city interaction (*e.g.*, St. Paul) (Berry, Portney, & Thomson, 1993). Other strategies include referendums, which are gaining increasing support (Citrin, 1996), town hall meetings, in the belief that deliberation as envisioned by the founding fathers is necessary (Fishkin, 1995), advisory committees, which are republican in form

limiting full participation, mediation (Thomas, 1995), negotiations (Beierle & Cayford, 2002), and public hearings, still the most popular form of citizen participation (*e.g.*, Adams, 2004<sup>35</sup>).

Although public hearings are still the most often used citizen engagement strategy, many scholars have noted problems with this type of public participation format (*e.g.*, Chrislip, 2002<sup>36</sup>). For example, Matthews (1999) laments that public meetings do not work. He calls for a new type of public meeting where hearings are convened jointly by citizens and officials. In this modified forum, no one can set preconditions of attendance and each person attending represents only himself (*e.g.*, no representatives of interest groups). Matthews (1999) states that all parties should agree on the purpose of the meeting, and that meetings ought to be open to the press but comments should not be for public dissemination to protect participant candidness. Along with Matthews (1999) Chrislip (2002) criticizes public hearings writing that “the ritualized, asymmetric structure of public participation subverts its intended purpose” (p. 15). Supporting Matthews’ (1999) and Chrislip’s (2002) point-of-view are Steuerle, Gramlich, Hecl, and Nightingale (1998) who write that,

the issue is not one of reducing ‘openness’ but of organizing open discourse in a better way. By ‘better’ we mean expanding deliberative space in the public conversation, space where it becomes more politically feasible for citizens and their representatives to work through policy issues and talk more honestly about their problems engaging the informed and active consent of a much broader constituency -- a citizen public that is much truer to the vision of self-government than a consumer public can ever be (p. 158).

Many scholars agree that direct citizen participation and discovering new ways for local government managers to engage the public are on the rise. They argue that new innovations are needed regarding

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<sup>35</sup> (*e.g.*, Cuthill, 2003; King, Feltey, & Susel, 1998).

<sup>36</sup> (*e.g.*, Matthews, 1999).

approaches to engage the citizenry (Berry, Portney, & Thomson, 1993). The search for citizen participation strategies continues.

### *The Search for Citizen Participation Strategies*

Some scholars describe a situation where public managers in local government during the reform movement had to begin paying more attention to the citizens they served and to the idea of the common good. Levy (2000) writes that “implicit in the Reform movement was the idea that there is a *public interest* and that city governments could rationally and efficiently serve that interest” [italics added] (p. 64). He also maintains that the post-reform era saw an increase in community control where citizens’ interests in their particular neighborhoods or communities were placed at a premium (Levy, 2000).

Other examples in the literature pointing to this idea include Fainstein and Fainstein (1977) who support the need for involving citizens more in their own governance by writing that “the existence of urban movements and the reasons given by members for participation [in them] ... attest to the inadequacy of routine political institutions for serving the needs of [citizens]” (p. 339). Another indication of this thinking is evident in the scholarship of Wilson (1970) who writes that “*what constitutes the ‘urban problem’ for a large percentage (perhaps a majority) of urban citizens is a sense of failure of the community*” (p. 366).

Scholars describe many policy areas in local government at the programmatic level where public managers are required by law, funding mandate, or devolution to involve the public in decision making. This supports the rise in civil servants’ search for new ways to engage the public that they serve. Bingham, Nabatchi, and O’Leary (2005) are conducting research into new governance focusing on increasing direct citizen participation as public administrators at the local level. They report that practitioners are using a variety of quasi-legislative and quasi-judicial governance processes to engage citizens including e-democracy, citizen juries, study circles, deliberative democracy, collaborative policy

making, participatory budgeting, and alternative dispute resolution (Bingham, Nabatchi, & O'Leary, 2005). Other examples of policy areas cited by researchers and practitioners include environmental policy (e.g., Fiorino, 2000), urban renewal (e.g., Hallman, 1972), criminal justice (e.g., Stenberg, 1972), and urban planning (e.g., Day, 1997).

Scholars maintain that public managers at the local government level are challenged most with increasing direct citizen participation in transportation planning policy. This portion of the literature review focuses on this policy area for three reasons. First, public participation is required by law and cannot be dismissed. Second, it is an area that has a strong history of direct citizen participation during the time period covered. Third, recent legislation continues to strengthen transportation planning's direct citizen participation requirements.

This research project focuses on the feasibility of using a new direct citizen participation strategy at the local government level. Therefore, it is helpful to explore a concrete example at this level. The literature on Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in the area of transportation planning is examined because MPOs play a prominent role in shaping public policy. This literature is used to further investigate direct citizen participation strategies that are being used at the local government level. Also, MPOs affect populations of similar size comparable to this research.

*Metropolitan Planning Organizations: A Detailed Examination of Citizen Participation Strategies at the Local Government Level*

In 1962 the Federal-Aid Highway Act established Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). These entities were assigned a role in regional transportation planning and are concerned with metropolitan regions of 50,000 citizens or more. Following their inception MPOs' responsibilities were extended with the passage of both the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21). These two pieces of

legislation require MPOs to follow a specific set of criteria in their planning. One important criterion that ISTEA and TEA-21 require is increasing direct citizen participation in the transportation planning process (Wolf & Farquhar, 2005).

Citing a U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (1997) study Wolf and Farquhar (2005) state that MPOs have increased “efforts to gain timely and effective citizen involvement in the development of both” (p. 1067) long and short range transportation planning. They maintain that scholars like Goetz, *et al.* (2002) find MPOs believed that they effectively engaged citizens in their planning initiatives. Wolf and Farquhar (2005) point out other scholars find that MPOs are less effective at engaging citizens they serve than they would like.

For example, Gage and McDowell (1995), in what they labeled a midterm assessment of MPOs, reported of the MPOs they evaluated that the greatest statistical difference lies in the amount of public involvement in MPOs planning. They found this interesting given the emphasis placed on MPOs after the passage of ISTEA. Citing more evidence that MPOs may need to be more effective in garnering direct citizen participation than they have been so far, Wolf and Farquhar (2005) write

The American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and their member states have been critical of participation procedures because they seem to serve more as a ‘lightning rod’ for controversial projects. Often, these activities are seen as bringing out those with strong opposition on a one-issue basis, though they do not create a consistently engaged public (p. 1068).

Scholars have conducted research resulting in recommendations for MPOs so that they may be more effective in increasing citizen input. For example, Goetz, *et al.*, (2002) maintained that by adopting an aggressive position on public involvement MPOs could become more effective at reaching higher levels of citizen participation.

Goetz, *et al.*, (2002) report that the MPOs successful at generating more public involvement are going beyond the mandated public hearing by including the following avenues of engagement: aggressively forming partnerships with citizen groups; encouraging stakeholder groups concerned about transportation issues (*e.g.*, chambers of commerce and land-use organizations) to become more involved in advocating their transportation priorities; providing informational briefings and engaging in dialogues with transportation committees of their state legislature, state transportation commissions, local transit providers, municipal leagues, and county organizations for purposes of informing them of, and building consensus on, needs and priorities; publicizing the work they do in addressing transportation and air quality problems; and responding promptly to inquiries and complaints (Goetz *et al.*, 2002, p. 17). Goetz *et al.*'s (2002) recommendations are important. However, they still do not provide the "how" of accomplishing increased citizen engagement. Given the mandates for citizen participation placed on MPOs and other transportation policy issues, it is beneficial to review the literature and examine some of the specific strategies administrators of MPOs have used.

The U. S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration provides an article written by Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates and Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Quade, and Douglas (1996) addressing strategies to increase public participation in MPOs. They advise that a "purposeful, grounded, specific, and productive" (Howard *et al.*, 1996, p. 1) public involvement effort is one that begins with good organization and has a well-planned outreach component. They maintain that beginning with a small core group of citizens and then expanding outward is generally a good strategy. According to these researchers core groups can be established in various ways including civic advisory committees, allowing citizens onto decision making and policy bodies, and forming collaborative task forces. They maintain that establishing communication with the public through things like mailing lists,

public information packets, briefings, speakers' bureaus, and both video and telephone contacts is key (Howard *et al.*, 1996).

Howard *et al.*, (1996) believe that meetings, both informal and formal, are crucial to the success of increasing public participation in policy initiatives. They recommend informal public meetings, more formal public hearings, hosting open houses, facilitating open forum hearings, and holding conferences, workshops, and retreats (Howard *et al.*, 1996). In addition to these various types of meetings, Howard *et al.*, (1996) suggest several techniques for engagement at these meetings including brainstorming, charettes (*i.e.*, a meeting to solve a specific problem or issue), visioning, and different types of small group work. Finally, Howard *et al.*, (1996) state that innovative or special techniques can be used to increase citizen participation such as hosting thematic fairs and providing games or contests. The literature reveals other research conducted on MPOs and their public participation strategies, presenting what administrators are actually doing.

Lindstrom and Nie (2000) draw on a 1996 survey conducted by the Arizona Department of Transportation. They analyzed the different strategies transportation administrators used in engaging the public. Fifteen strategies were identified in descending order based on the most used to the least used: public meetings and public hearings, citizen advisory committees, various media strategies, citizen surveys, collaborative task forces, focus groups, visioning techniques, facilitation meetings, thematic fairs (*i.e.*, transportation fairs), drop-in centers, telephone techniques, video techniques, brainstorming sessions, charettes, and other innovative or special types of approaches (Lindstrom & Nie, 2000). Lindstrom and Nie (2000) found that although public meetings and hearings were the most typically employed strategies they were almost the least effective methods of engaging the citizenry. They write that even though public meetings and public hearings are “the federally mandated and most traditional

strategy of gathering public information [they are] not very effective and often counter-effective” (Lindstrom & Nie, 2000, p. 2).

Lindstrom and Nie (2000) report two of the most popular methods of involving the public, citizen advisory committees and media techniques, are only moderately effective. Additionally, drop-in centers and video techniques are only partially effective. Finally, they found that citizen surveys and focus groups while not used very much were highly effective (Lindstrom & Nie, 2000). Lindstrom and Nie (2000) conclude that citizen involvement in decision making processes is important. They argue that an engagement strategy is most successful when citizens are involved from the inception to the conclusion of the entire process.

This example of MPOs in the area of transportation planning illustrates the issue of direct citizen participation at the programmatic level. It has served to identify many of the citizen participation strategies at the local government level that scholars have called for and practitioners have engaged in. This policy area is not unique in its inclusiveness of the public in decision making. However, it is representative of what the literature cites as most of the methods for engaging citizens in participation across all policy areas. Figure D summarizes the strategies that are reported in the literature that have been used to increase citizen participation in local government.

<b>Citizen Participation Strategies</b> <small>Figure D</small>	<b>Citizen Participation Strategies Continued</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transactive Planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District councils</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referendums</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple service centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town hall meetings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighborhood councils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen advisory committees</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little city hall annexes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mini-governments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normative theories focusing on issues of competence and fairness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public hearings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen advisory councils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quasi-legislative governance processes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen panels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quasi-judicial governance processes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen/public surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative policy making</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public forums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative dispute resolution</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen juries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal public meetings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study circles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open houses</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory budgeting processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open forum hearings</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community conversations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen conferences</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community dinners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen workshops</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberative democracy forums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen retreats</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large group interaction models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorming sessions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-government initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charettes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ombudsmen roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visioning techniques</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen action centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group work</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coproduction of services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic fairs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteerism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various media strategies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutionalized citizen roles in decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone techniques</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structures for protecting the public interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video techniques</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New types of citizen advisory boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitation meetings</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighborhood associations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quasi-governmental priority boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drop-in centers</li> </ul>

Citizen participation strategies are well documented in the literature. Many scholars maintain that they are necessary for good government. While there are many proponents of direct citizen participation there are also those who feel that increasing direct citizen participation does not make for better or necessarily more democratic governance. These critics of increased public involvement in governmental processes are examined next.

*Opponents of Increasing Citizen Participation*

Many writers take issue with increasing direct citizen participation in government. Opponents criticize what direct citizen participation is supposed to achieve citing its costs and speaking out against several of its perceived benefits. Some contend that direct citizen participation in government is too laborious and time intensive to be feasible (*e.g.*, Gamble, 1997<sup>37</sup>). They maintain that individuals are apathetic and do not want to be involved in their own governance unless they are affected by a Not-In-My-Back-Yard (NIMBY) issue (*e.g.*, Berman, 1997<sup>38</sup>). Other writers state that many public managers do not have the resources or the time to facilitate public involvement meetings. And, when they do hold public meetings or hearings it is because of legal mandates (Echeverria, 2001; Lawrence & Deagen, 2001; Rourke, 1984). Critics point out that citizens are often uninformed on issues, do not have the accountability or responsibility that public managers do, and do not have the commitment for sustained

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<sup>37</sup> (*e.g.*, Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Markham, Johnson, & Bonjean, 1999).

<sup>38</sup> (*e.g.*, Williams *et al.*, 2001).

citizen engagement with local civil servants and other citizens over time (*e.g.*, Kenney, 2000<sup>39</sup>). Others question the representativeness of citizen participation efforts (*e.g.*, Abel & Stephan, 2000<sup>40</sup>). Cnaan (1991) maintains that avenues such as neighborhood-representing organizations are not more democratic than other forms of participatory democracy. He argues that like other citizen meetings they can become dominated by interest groups and the more invested, outspoken citizen(s).

Lynn (2002) provides a critique of citizen participation calling DeLeon and DeLeon's (2002) idea of pandemic participation, democracy's "unforgivable sin." Lynn (2002) writes the "benefits would be chimerical and the costs would be much higher than just excess time as DeLeon and DeLeon (2002) argue" (p. 447). He argues that shifting more power to citizens "place[s] in jeopardy fundamental rights and protections that citizens" depend on (Lynn, 2002, p. 448). Lynn (2002) notes that in his personal experience he has encountered frustrating issues regarding direct citizen participation including "the destructive consequences of rent seeking, ambition, ignorance, avarice, ideology, narcissism, and prejudice by 'inefficient citizens,' behaviors that seem as likely to disfigure the deliberations of a grassroots forum" (p. 448) as any other official meeting held by career public managers. In Lynn's (2002) experience, "citizens are not always virtuous, often preferring to extinguish the freedoms and rights of others, to discipline or expel dissidents, and to aggrandize themselves at public expense over preserving the democratic ethos in any version" (p. 449).

Lynn's (2002) reaction to DeLeon and DeLeon's (2002) pandemic participation is consistent with Morone's (1990) democratic wish; "chasing the elusive image of the people ... seeking participation in often imaginary communities" (as cited in Lynn, 2002, p. 448). Like Morone (1990), Lynn (2002) has reservations about increasing direct citizen participation in governance concluding his article with this parting shot, "if pursued without realism, pandemic participation would constitute

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<sup>39</sup> (*e.g.*, Ostrom, 1990; Russell & Vidler, 2000; Smith & McDonough, 2001).

<sup>40</sup> (*e.g.*, Kenney, 2000; McCloskey, 1996).

democracy's 'unforgivable sin,' relying on citizens to accomplish purposes for which strong, representative institutions are required" (p. 452).

Irvin and Stansbury (2004) provide a critical appraisal of citizen participation efforts. They offer eight disadvantages of increasing public involvement in governmental decision making: cost, time, difficulty of diffusing citizen goodwill, lack of authority, complacency, persistent selfishness, the power of wrong decisions, and representation (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). They warn administrators who are thinking about engaging in citizen participation processes to bear "in mind that talk is cheap -- and may not be effective" (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, p. 63). Many other scholars question the benefit of increasing citizen participation in government processes (*e.g.*, Alcock, 2004<sup>41</sup>). Figure E summarizes the criticisms of the opponents of increasing direct citizen participation found in a review of the literature. They are divided into general categories of criticism focused on the citizens themselves, issues pertaining to democratic notions, and logistics.

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<sup>41</sup> (*e.g.*, Burton *et al.*, 2004; Callinicos, 2001; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Foley & Martin, 2000; Sanders, 1997).

## Criticisms of Direct Citizen Participation

Figure E

Criticisms focused on the citizens themselves:

- Citizen apathy
- Citizens are uninformed on issues
- Citizens do not have a commitment for sustained civic engagement
- Citizen participation efforts can be dominated or hi-jacked by interest groups and outspoken citizens
- Citizens lack authority
- Citizens have a tendency to engage in destructive rent seeking
- Citizen participation efforts tend to be prejudiced by inefficient citizens
- Citizens have a tendency to be ignorant, ambitious, ideological, narcissistic and filled with avarice
- Complacency
- Persistent selfishness
- The power of wrong actions

Issues Pertaining to Democratic Notions:

- Citizens do not have accountability or responsibility to the public good
- Citizen participation is not representative of the entire public
- Citizen participation violates republican ideals and jeopardizes fundamental rights that protect all citizens
- There is difficulty associated with diffusing citizen goodwill

Logistics:

- Cost
- Lack of resources
- Too time intensive

In summary, this section of the literature review examined direct citizen participation at the local government level drawing on the literature from the fields of urban planning and public administration. First it provided an overview of direct citizen participation in the urban planning theory literature to include a discussion of the Civil Rights Movement, American civil unrest and upheaval, and Friedmann's (1973) Transactive Planning. Second, it presented the literature on direct citizen participation strategies used by public management practitioners. Further, it cited the scholarship of those who argue that the search for direct citizen participation strategies is on the rise. Third, it addressed the literature regarding local government managers at the programmatic level, specifically, providing an example of metropolitan planning organizations. Fourth, it cited the literature from opponents of increasing direct citizen participation in governance. Figure F summarizes the main ideas from the participatory democracy literature. Literature on Appreciative Inquiry is examined next. To reiterate, Appreciative Inquiry is an approach to positive change originally developed for use at the organizational level. Although it has been applied outside of the organizational setting its use has been limited largely to the non-profit sector.

## **Main Ideas from the Participatory Democracy Literature**

Figure F

- Participatory democracy includes the component of direct citizen participation
- Citizen participation has a long history that can be found in the urban planning and public administration literature
- There are many strategies and techniques presented in the literature for increasing citizen participation and engaging the citizenry
- There are also many opponents arguing that increasing direct citizen participation is not a beneficial endeavor

### *Literature on Appreciative Inquiry*

This part of the chapter provides an overview of the Appreciative Inquiry literature in general as it relates to organizational development. Next it discusses how the approach differs from other direct citizen participation strategies. Then it explores how Appreciative Inquiry meets the requirements of what scholars outline as necessary to successful citizen engagement strategies. Finally, it examines the more specific literature on Appreciative Inquiry and its implementation at the community level.

### *Appreciative Inquiry: Applications in Organizational Development*

The Appreciative Inquiry approach was designed for use at the organizational level. Specifically, it was used in organizations in the private sector. Since its inception in 1986 by Cooperrider (1986) many scholars and practitioners have extended its use by applying it in both public and nonprofit sector organizational settings. This section of the literature review explores Appreciative

Inquiry's traditional settings and how its application has been extended. First, it deals with the literature on Appreciative Inquiry's application in private sector organizations. Second, it explores how Appreciative Inquiry has been used in different settings.

Several writers discuss how Appreciative Inquiry has been used in private sector organizations. In a general context, many authors illustrate Appreciative Inquiry's application in terms of its value as a paradigmatic shift in thinking, its generative power as metaphor, its key focus on dialogue, and its aspects of its social construction of reality component (*e.g.*, Barrett, 1999<sup>42</sup>). Then, there are several individuals who focus their research and writing on Appreciative Inquiry's more specific uses at the organizational level in the private sector.

For example, authors who describe using Appreciative Inquiry as it relates to organizational leadership (*e.g.*, Aram, 1990<sup>43</sup>). Others offer instances where Appreciative Inquiry has been applied to human resource challenges (*e.g.*, Castello, 2005<sup>44</sup>). Some write regarding its use in organizational culture change or in organizational development and organizational community building (*e.g.*, Anderson, 1999<sup>45</sup>).

Continuing with scholarship regarding Appreciative Inquiry's use in private sector organizations many writers cite its application in organizational sustainability (*e.g.*, Cooperrider, 2006), team building (*e.g.*, Alfred, 2003<sup>46</sup>), spirituality in the workplace (*e.g.*, Banaga, 1998<sup>47</sup>), project management (*e.g.*,

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<sup>42</sup> (*e.g.*, Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990; Barrett & Fry, 2005; Barrett, Thomas, & Hocevar, 1995; Bilimoria, Wilmot, & Cooperrider, 1996; Blaire, 1998; Blake, Carlson, McKee, Sorensen, & Yaeger, 2000; Brittain, 1998; Browne, 1998; Bunker & Alban, 1997; Bushe, 2007; Bushe, 1999; Bushe, 1995; Bushe & Khamisa, 2004; Bushe & Pittman, 1991; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Carter & Johnson, 1992; Carter, Mische, Schwarz, 1993; Cooperrider, 2000; Cooperrider, 1998; Cooperrider, 1996; Cooperrider & Avital, 2004; Cooperrider & Pratt, 1996; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1998; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1990; Cooperrider, Sorensen, & Yaeger, 2001; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999).

<sup>43</sup> (*e.g.*, Block, 2002; Bosche, 2005; Bosche, 2004; Bunker, 1990; Bushe, 2001; Bushman & Buster, 2002; Cooperrider, 1990; Collins, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> (*e.g.*, Bosche, 1998; Case Western Reserve, 2002; Cheney & Jarrett, 1999).

<sup>45</sup> (*e.g.*, Axelrod, 2000; Barrett, 1995; Barros & Cooperrider, 2000; Chandler, 2001; Chandler, 1999; Clemson & Lowe, 1993; Schneider, Gunnarson, & Niles-Jolly, 1994).

<sup>46</sup> (*e.g.*, Brittain, 1998; Bushe, 2001; Bushe, 1998; Bushe, 1995; Bushe & Coetzer, 1995; Head, 2000; Nordbye & Yaeger, 2003).

Cobb, 2002), strengthening personal relationships between employees (*e.g.*, Adams, 2004), reframing workplace challenges (*e.g.*, Busch & Goodman, 2000), creating learning conversations (Brown & Isaacs, 1996), and examining multi-organizational partnerships (Barrett, 2000). Many writers offer instances of Appreciative Inquiry's use in globalization as it relates to organizations (*e.g.*, Barrett & Peterson, 2000<sup>48</sup>). Despite its use at the organizational level in the private sector, Appreciative Inquiry has also been increasingly used in other areas where it has reportedly produced positive results.

One of the first areas outside of the private sector to use Appreciative Inquiry was education. It has been applied in both primary and secondary education (*e.g.*, Adamson, Samuels, & Willoughby, 2002<sup>49</sup>). Other areas where Appreciative Inquiry has been used include land-use and resource management (*e.g.*, Ashford & Perry, 2001), self-improvement (*e.g.*, Ailabouni, 2005<sup>50</sup>), health care (Bukenya, Ziegler, Baine, White, & Cooperrider, 1997<sup>51</sup>), environmental issues (*e.g.*, Carnegie, Nielsen, & Glover, 2000), social work (*e.g.*, Cojocar, 2005<sup>52</sup>), criminal justice (*e.g.*, Easley, Yaeger, & Sorensen, 2002<sup>53</sup>), to promote world peace (*e.g.*, Cooperrider, 2002<sup>54</sup>), and in religious settings (*e.g.*, Branson, 2004<sup>55</sup>). A review of the Appreciative Inquiry literature reveals that it has applications inside and outside of its originally intended setting. Before examining how Appreciative Inquiry has been used

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<sup>47</sup> (*e.g.*, Gibbons, 1999).

<sup>48</sup> (*e.g.*, Bilimoria, Cooperrider, Kaczmariski, Khalsa, Srivastva, & Upadhyaya, 1995; Cooperrider, 1996; Cooperrider, 1991; Cooperrider & Bilimoria, 1993; Cooperrider & Dutton, 1998; Cooperrider & Pasmore, 1991; Cooperrider & Thachenkerry, 1995; Khalsa, 2000; Khalsa & Kaczmariski, 1997; Mantel & Ludema, 2000).

<sup>49</sup> (*e.g.*, Bloom & Martin, 2002; Calabrese, 2006; Calabrese, Hummel, & Martin, 2007; Evans, 2003; Nightingale, 2006) and in higher education (*e.g.*, Davis, 2004; Hargis, 2006; Head, 2006; Head & Young, 1998; Henry, 2005; Ludema, 2000).

<sup>50</sup> (*e.g.*, Ashby, Isen, & Turken, 1999; Barrett, 2000; Chessher, 2003; Frederickson, 2001; Goldberg, 1998; Nicholas, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> (*e.g.*, Feinson & Mohr, 2006; Havens, Wood, & Leeman, 2006; Kravatzky & Akeung, 2006; Kumar, 2007; Reed & Turner, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> (*e.g.*, Dinga & Peirick, 2003).

<sup>53</sup> (*e.g.*, Liebling, Elliott, & Arnold, 2001; Liebling, Prize, & Elliott, 1998).

<sup>54</sup> (*e.g.*, Sampson, Abu-Nimer, Liebler, & Whitney, 2003).

<sup>55</sup> (*e.g.*, Camson, 2003; Chaffee, 2005; Chang, 2005; Cojocar, 2005; Coloma, 2001; Crowley, 2005; Davis, 1999; Ludema, 1999; Ludema, 1998; Mahe & Gibbs, 2003; Odell, 2000; Paddock, 2003).

outside of the organizational context at the community level it is useful to explore how it differs from other direct citizen participation strategies that have already been discussed.

*Appreciative Inquiry: How it Differs from other Citizen Participation Strategies*

The literature suggests that there are many ways public managers go about increasing citizen participation in local government. These strategies have been examined in the preceding pages and are now contrasted with Appreciative Inquiry. The previous strategies are grouped into three broad categories of citizen participation: indirect, representational, and direct.

The indirect category includes strategies that do not require citizens to interact personally with public managers. This category includes the following citizen participation techniques: referendums (*e.g.*, Citrin, 1996), public surveys (*e.g.*, Carr & Halvorsen, 2001), media strategies, citizen surveys, telephone techniques, video techniques, and other indirect ways of receiving or providing information from or to citizens (*e.g.*, Lindstrom & Nie, 2000). While these strategies do not require face-to-face interaction Appreciative Inquiry does (Cooperrider, 1986). The Appreciative Inquiry approach is predicated on personal interaction between facilitators and participants in one-on-one and group contexts (*e.g.*, Watkins & Mohr, 2001<sup>56</sup>).

The representational category includes strategies that scholars note are either republican in nature or in some way limit the participation of citizens; especially, in collective group settings. Representational techniques cited in the literature include the following. Citizen boards (*e.g.*, Clark, 1976), multiple service centers, neighborhood councils, little city halls, city hall annexes, mini-governments (*e.g.*, Cole, 1974), negotiations (*e.g.*, Beierle & Cayford, 2002), ombudspersons, action centers, coproduction of services, volunteerism, permanent citizen steering committees, citizen advisory boards, citizen advisory committees, mediation (*e.g.*, Lindstrom & Nie, 2000<sup>57</sup>), neighborhood

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<sup>56</sup> (*e.g.*, Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

<sup>57</sup> (*e.g.*, Thomas, 1995).

associations, quasi-governmental priority boards, district councils (*e.g.*, Berry, Portney, & Thomson, 1993), citizen advisory councils, citizen panels (*e.g.*, Carr & Halvorsen, 2001), citizen juries (*e.g.*, Hendricks, 2002), study circles (*e.g.*, Leighninger, 2002), collaborative task forces, focus groups, thematic fairs, and drop-in centers (*e.g.*, Lindstrom & Nie, 2000). Scholars maintain that these strategies limit participation of all of the stakeholders in the process either by their representative design or their limited points-of-contact (*e.g.*, Lindstrom & Nie, 2000<sup>58</sup>). In contrast, the Appreciative Inquiry approach provides opportunity for and encourages participation of all stakeholders in the process at the same time making it more democratic. All affected citizens are given the opportunity to participate in an Appreciative Inquiry approach, which addresses issues of inequality, diversity, and inclusion (*e.g.*, Cooperrider, 1986<sup>59</sup>).

Finally, the direct category includes those citizen participation techniques identified by scholars that strive to be inclusive and have public managers interact personally with citizens. These direct strategies include the following: public hearings, public meetings (*e.g.*, Beierle & Cayford, 2002<sup>60</sup>), public forums (*e.g.*, Farrell, 2000<sup>61</sup>), town hall meetings (*e.g.*, Fishkin, 1995), alternative dispute resolution (*e.g.*, Bingham, Nabatchi, & O’Leary, 2005), large group interaction models (*e.g.*, Bryson & Anderson, 2000), deliberative democracy forums, community conversations, community dinners (*e.g.*, Carr & Halvorsen, 2001), brainstorming, and charettes (*e.g.*, Lindstrom & Nie, 2000). Although commentators maintain that these direct techniques provide opportunity for administrators and citizens to interact in person (*e.g.*, Lindstrom & Nie, 2000), there are a few key differences that make the Appreciative Inquiry approach unique (*e.g.*, Cooperrider, 1986<sup>62</sup>).

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<sup>58</sup> (*e.g.*, Matthews, 1999).

<sup>59</sup> (*e.g.*, Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

<sup>60</sup> (*e.g.*, Lindstrom & Nie, 2000; Thomas, 1995).

<sup>61</sup> (*e.g.*, Thomas, 1995).

<sup>62</sup> (*e.g.*, Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

First, as Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) have written, Appreciative Inquiry intentionally focuses on the positive in an attempt to appreciate what individuals value; “it is fully affirmative” (p. 10). Second they maintain that the approach follows specific, definitive stages which combine both informal and formal interactions with citizens in the form of inquiry; “it is inquiry-based” (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 10). Third, it uses storytelling as a main component to initially imagine and then create a preferred future; “it is improvisational” (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 10). Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) argue that these three components set Appreciative Inquiry apart from other approaches. A review of the literature indicates that Appreciative Inquiry differs from all other citizen participation strategies that scholars hold are employed by public managers at the local government level.

### ***Contribution of Dissertation to the Scholarly Literature***

As cited in the citizen participation literature that has been explored from the disciplines of urban planning, political science, and public administration, there is a need for new and innovative ways to engage the citizenry in conversation. Specifically, the literature reveals that there is a need to interact with citizens on a personal level increasing direct citizen participation in governance to enhance local government. Focusing on government at the local level, this chapter has examined MPOs and the lawful mandates that they operate under including ISTEA and TEA-21. These laws require public managers to engage citizens in urban planning and policy decision making. While many ways have been recommended for increasing direct citizen participation, it is the general consensus among scholars and practitioners that more effective ways of promoting public involvement need to be discovered.

This research project explores whether an Appreciative Inquiry approach is one of the potential new ways to engage the citizenry and increase public participation to enhance local governance. Proponents have maintained that Appreciative Inquiry is a highly participative discourse approach

undergirded by five identifiable generic processes (e.g., Cooperrider, 1986<sup>63</sup>). This dissertation seeks to answer the question: *In what way, if any, can Appreciative Inquiry be useful in increasing citizen participation at the local government level to improve local government?*

The gap that has been identified is found in the local government and public administration management literature. This research will appeal to an audience including city managers, county administrators, and other local government managers interested in increasing direct citizen participation in local government. This research will be useful to individuals such as members of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

A review of the literature in the Public Management journal over the past fifteen years supports the contention of scholars and practitioners discussed previously. Namely, that direct citizen participation at the local government level is on the rise. Many local government managers are seeking ways to improve and increase public involvement in local government. ICMA has a code of ethics all members commit to in writing. The twelve tenets of the code express three basic values.

The first value is belief in representative, democratic self-government. This is specifically supported and affirmed by tenets 1, 5, 6, and 7 (Hansell, 1994) of the code of ethics. A case can be made that democratic methods of local government like citizen participation are integral to the belief of most local government managers. Further evidence supporting the claim that citizen participation is an important, central issue to members of the ICMA is the Citizen Involvement Program Excellence (CIPE) award that the organization bestows annually (e.g., ICMA, 1994, 1996, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2000, 2003).

Hansell (1993), a former executive director of ICMA, writes that local government managers “are tasked with maintaining and uplifting the values of the community through improvement of the physical, economic, and social well-being of the citizens” (p. 18). He maintains that this should continue even as society evolves (Hansell, 1993). Hansell (2002) believes that there will be “even more

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<sup>63</sup> (e.g., Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

movement toward a citizen-empowered-almost-direct-democracy, with more restrictions being placed on representative democracy” (p. 32) in the future.

Others also make the case for increasing citizen participation. Frisby and Bowman (1996) cite several studies indicating that many Americans “have lost confidence in the abilities of public officials and local government” (p. 1). They propose that improving this perception can be achieved by “giving people the chance to participate in the decision-making process for communities” (Frisby & Bowman, 1996, p. 1). Benest (1996) expresses his concern for citizens’ deteriorating confidence in local government and its administrators, believing that civil servants should work on empowering neighborhoods and involving citizens in governance issues. Parrish and Frisby (1997) round out the discussion on the future of local government managers by maintaining that public managers at the local level will have to adopt a new role, one which requires skill in democracy building directly related to increasing direct citizen participation.

Focusing on contemporary challenges reveals the importance of administrators’ advocacy for citizen participation. For example, Bowman (1997) notes that “citizens must be placed at the center of civic democracy by offering them the tools they need to understand their local government and their community’s social dilemmas and to become an active part of finding solutions to those problems” (p. 9). Nalbandian and Nalbandian (2003) claim that one of the challenges local government managers face is being able to function not only in the arena of the traditional institutional paradigm (*e.g.*, structure, representation, law) but also in the arena of community orientation which “places more emphasis on process, norms, and direct engagement of citizens” (p. 12).

The literature supports the idea that many local government managers are trying to involve citizens more in governance (*e.g.*, Berkich, 1998<sup>64</sup>). Contributors suggest that public managers at the local government level need to engage citizens in participation opportunities to provide better services

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<sup>64</sup> (*e.g.*, Dills, 1997; ICMA, 1999; Roberts, 2000; Wray & Hauer, 1997).

(*e.g.*, Otey, 2001), be more accountable and responsive to them by way of increased public involvement (*e.g.*, Braunstein & Tyre, 1994<sup>65</sup>), engage in direct citizen participation efforts to help educate the citizenry regarding governance (*e.g.*, Bressner, 1995<sup>66</sup>), and pursue strategies that can assist citizens in reconnecting to local administrators and to one another (*e.g.*, Benest, 1999<sup>67</sup>). In addition, public managers at the local level have been trying to increase direct citizen participation specifically in the areas of budgeting (*e.g.*, Harrison, 2003<sup>68</sup>), the environment (*e.g.*, Harless, 2001), land planning and land-use (*e.g.*, ICMA, 1997), emergency management (*e.g.*, Carney, 1993), and community development (*e.g.*, Clark, 1998<sup>69</sup>).

Local government managers have claimed that citizens have become more helpful rather than being a hindrance (*e.g.*, Knudsen, 2004) and continuing to involve the public in governance processes is effective (*e.g.*, Behr & King, 2005). The literature suggests that scholars and practitioners are seeking new ways to increase direct citizen participation in local government and to engage citizens in meaningful ways (*e.g.*, Babington, 1995<sup>70</sup>). Finally, there are those who advocate for increasing direct citizen participation in the local government management literature. For example, Lukensmeyer and Boyd (2004) write that the “public” must be put back into public management. They outline the following seven principles for meaningful citizen engagement strategies: creating strategies that are context-specific, building credibility with stakeholders, ensuring diverse participation, establishing informed dialogue, creating safe public spaces, influencing decision making, and sustaining citizen engagement.

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<sup>65</sup> (*e.g.*, Holtz, 1999).

<sup>66</sup> (*e.g.*, Hansell, 1994).

<sup>67</sup> (*e.g.*, Falk, 1993).

<sup>68</sup> (*e.g.*, Ohren & Bernstein, 2001; Preisser, 1997; Stampfler, 2005).

<sup>69</sup> (*e.g.*, Geis & Kutzmark, 1995).

<sup>70</sup> (*e.g.*, Buckwalter, Persons, & Wright, 1993; Coleman, 1996; Dyal, 2006; Hayward, 1994; Plein, 1996; Ruiz & Heffernan; WTM, 2003).

Given the focus on increasing direct citizen participation in the literature at the local government level and the continued search for innovative engagement strategies by local government managers, Appreciative Inquiry may add to this area. A review of the literature reveals that there are no articles written about public managers using the Appreciative Inquiry approach to increase direct citizen participation. Though no instances are found in the literature, there may be civil servants who are using the approach in this way. This research allows public managers at the local government level to expand their “tool box” to make government more effective. It can also help guide decisions regarding using an Appreciative Inquiry approach about whether or not it may not be feasible or appropriate in their local government setting.

This dissertation lays the groundwork for a future research agenda. It is a descriptive, exploratory study to determine the feasibility of a natural experiment, namely, engaging in an Appreciative Inquiry approach at the local level with the aim of increasing direct citizen participation thereby enhancing local government. This research focuses on local government managers in cities with populations of 40,000 to 250,000 people.

This work seeks to answer the question: *In what way, if any, can Appreciative Inquiry be useful in increasing direct citizen participation at the local government level to improve local government?* It also addresses the four remaining concerns that public managers may face if they decide to use an Appreciative Inquiry approach at the local government level to increase direct citizen participation. To answer the research question and address the challenges an appropriate research strategy and design are used. They are described in chapter four.

## IV.

### RESEARCH STRATEGY AND DESIGN

No instance in the literature has been found where Appreciative Inquiry has been used by local government managers to increase direct citizen participation. Therefore, qualitative, semi-structured interviews of elites, local government managers, are used as the appropriate research strategy and design for this project. Because research of this type has not been found in the literature, this study is necessarily descriptive. It is framed within the context of the interpretive paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This chapter first discusses the interpretive paradigm and examines why it is appropriate for this project. Second, it explores the various research strategies in the social sciences that scholars may use. It argues that elite, qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted by way of a purposive sample are the most appropriate for this field research. Third, it presents the data collection and data analysis approaches used for this project. Fourth, it mentions Institutional Review Board concerns regarding this research project and discusses the limitations of this study.

#### *Interpretive Paradigm*

The approach used in this dissertation is framed by Burrell and Morgan's (1979) interpretive paradigm. This research project attempts to understand local government managers' views regarding whether Appreciative Inquiry could be used to increase direct citizen participation in government. The researcher has directly experienced the social phenomena being studied and is attempting to describe what was observed and learned (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) classify the interpretive paradigm in the postpositivist era of paradigm progression. They argue that it relies on qualitative strategies to investigate and describe social phenomena from the point-of-view of multiple realities in a disparate and nonlinear fashion (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Given these

multiple realities based on individual truths, a descriptive, exploratory approach is necessary to understand the social phenomena found in the process of everyday life (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

***Research Strategy and Design: Elite, Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviewing***

Yin (2003) describes five social science research strategies that researchers have to choose from: experiments, archival analysis, histories, case studies, and surveys. The first four are inappropriate for this research strategy because this research focuses on a gap in the literature where Appreciative Inquiry has not been used by local government managers to increase direct citizen participation before. Therefore, no natural experiment yet exists, there are no archival data from which to draw, there are no histories to explore, and there are no cases to study.

A descriptive survey is most appropriate as the researcher is interested in exploring if Appreciative Inquiry can be used by civil servants to increase direct citizen participation to improve local government. This is a descriptive, exploratory study to determine the feasibility of a natural experiment; namely, engaging in an Appreciative Inquiry approach at the local level with the aim of increasing direct citizen participation, consequently, enhancing local government. The researcher tried to elicit experiences and perspectives from local government managers which were ambiguous, diverse, and context specific, therefore, qualitative semi-structured interviewing was the most appropriate research technique (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002).

The data for this descriptive research was gathered through elite, qualitative, semi-structured interviews. Using this technique allowed the researcher to consider many facets and perspectives of various local government managers while at the same time not leading them to provide data that might support his argument. The researcher informed local government managers what the research project was about, provided them an overview of Appreciative Inquiry, posed twelve relevant questions to them,

and asked them what it is they thought that he needed to know about their locality in relation to his research interest.

### ***Qualitative Interviewing***

Interviews are recommended by many social scientists because they are regarded as being the most appropriate strategy when attempting to discover social phenomena related to human affairs. They are the technique most often used in public administration research (*e.g.*, Berg, 2001<sup>71</sup>). Qualitative, semi-structured interviews allowed the flexibility and rich detail necessary to address an issue as complex as direct citizen participation. This technique provided local government managers broad discretion to tell the researcher what they thought he ought to know and not just what he may have wanted to hear. An added benefit to qualitative, semi-structured interviews was the identification of other key informants for future research and potentially other factors yet to be considered. These factors may have a significant bearing on a future research agenda (*e.g.*, Berg, 2001<sup>72</sup>).

Qualitative interviewing is exploratory and collaborative. It is most appropriate when the researcher desires to understand respondents' experiences. This type of interviewing technique allows the researcher the freedom to "raise topics, formulate questions, and move in new directions" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 57).

Rather than focusing on "fact finding," the goal of qualitative interviewing is to gather information in such a way as it meaningfully frames information in the context of the respondents' life experiences (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). Qualitative interviewing allows the interviewees' latitude in sharing their own meanings (Warren, 2002). Warren (2002) writes "the purpose of most qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from respondent talk" (p. 83). This is consistent with the goal of researchers using an interpretive paradigm.

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<sup>71</sup> (*e.g.*, Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McNabb, 2002; Yin, 2003).

<sup>72</sup> (*e.g.*, Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McNabb, 2002; Yin, 2003).

Warren (2002) outlines a qualitative interviewing protocol used for this research. This section presents her format explaining how each facet was addressed in this research. After dealing with the qualitative interviewing technique both semi-structured interviews and interviewing elites are addressed.

### *Reflexivity*

Warren (2002) begins her discussion on qualitative interviewing with a word about researcher and respondent perspectives. She notes that it is important to engage in reflexive thinking regarding both. Warren (2002) writes

perspectives other than those drawn from the discipline [*i.e.*, interviewing to publish in academia] come into play for the interviewer as well as the respondent ... [there] are not only distinctive respondents but various perspectives that can be taken up by a single respondent within a single interview (p. 84).

One of the most often overlooked, undervalued, and/or deemphasized areas of qualitative data analysis is reflexivity (*e.g.*, Ellis & Bochner, 2000<sup>73</sup>). Warren (2002) maintains that it is essential to qualitative interviewing. Fontana and Frey (2000) write “many studies using [semi-structured] interviews are not reflexive enough about the interpreting process” (p. 661). Further, they state that

common platitudes proclaim that the data speak for themselves, that the researcher is neutral, unbiased, and ‘invisible.’ The data reported tend to flow nicely, there are no contradictory data and no mention of what data were excluded and/or why. Improprieties never happen and the main concern seems to be the proper, if unreflexive, filing, analyzing, and reporting of events. But anyone who has engaged in fieldwork knows better; no matter how organized the researcher may be, he or she slowly becomes buried under an increasing mountain of field notes, transcripts, newspaper clippings, and audiotapes. Traditionally, readers were presented with the

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<sup>73</sup> (*e.g.*, Warren, 2002; Yin, 2003).

researcher's interpretation of the data, cleaned and streamlined and collapsed in rational, noncontradictory accounts (p. 661).

This exercise also provides readers with alternative ways to examine the data enabling them to reach divergent outcomes. Or at the least it provides them with the ability to enter into a more informed dialogue with the author about his findings (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Yin, 2003).

The issue of reflexivity was addressed for this research through a review of the researcher's journal notes. Respondents' and the researcher's own subjectivity were taken into account. Potential biases and preferences that may have affected recording, analyzing, and interpreting data were cited.

Respondents were predisposed to be in favor of an Appreciative Inquiry approach used to increase direct citizen participation. This is not only because of legal requirements but also current normative trends in the field of public administration favoring public involvement in local governance issues. Given their level of education respondents were aware of the more common direct citizen participation strategies available to them along with their benefits and detriments. It is also reasonable to assume that after many years of government service interviewees have a desire to continually strive to achieve the common good. All these reflexive factors have a potential influence on the data respondents provided.

The researcher's own biases regarding Appreciative Inquiry and direct citizen participation in general and toward this research project specifically were taken into account and mentioned where appropriate. The researcher wanted the outcome to suggest that an Appreciative Inquiry approach could be used by local government managers to increase direct citizen participation in government, consequently, making it more effective. He guarded against this bias as much as possible. An expectation was that interviewees would agree that Appreciative Inquiry was feasible to be used to increase direct citizen participation. Moreover, it was expected that talented facilitators could be used to

keep the focus on the positive while still acknowledging the negative. These expectations were challenged and were not always met.

It was taken-for-granted that increased direct citizen participation in the United States is a beneficial thing for local government managers to strive toward. In addition, it was assumed that with proper training local government managers could become effective facilitators of Appreciative Inquiry. The researcher believed Appreciative Inquiry to be a panacea. He placed faith in its ability to increase direct citizen participation at the local government level.

There were many emotional highs and lows throughout the journey. At times the researcher was despondent feeling that his ideas were no good and that he was a failure. Other times he felt he was on the edge of a breakthrough in direct citizen participation strategies.

As readers will learn, this research project has shaped the researcher's thinking about Appreciative Inquiry and direct citizen participation. The entire process has been an exercise which has borne witness to maturation of his thinking and perceptions. This information is provided so readers of this dissertation may reach their own conclusions regarding this research. And so that they may evaluate whether the researcher adequately accounted for his subjective biases present in this research project.

### *Qualitative Interviewing*

Warren (2002) advises social scientists to consider qualitative interviewing most appropriate when "their topics of interest do not center on particular settings but their concern is with establishing common patterns or themes between particular types of respondents" (p. 85). A primary aim of this research was to identify common themes from interviews with local government managers regarding direct citizen participation in government. After presenting her thoughts on researcher perspective and offering her notion of reflexivity, Warren (2002) discusses designing qualitative interview research.

She suggests that a review of the existing literature on a specific research topic be conducted to determine if a qualitative interview would contribute the scholarship. This research is being conducted because there is a gap in the literature. No research on this particular topic has been found. The qualitative interviewing in this research project contributes to the literature that deals specifically with local government and public administration management literature.

Warren (2002) also discusses the issues of both time and access. Regarding time, the researcher completed interviews over a period of six weeks. The access issue will be addressed in more detail when elite interviewing is discussed next.

Warren (2002) rounds out her section on designing qualitative interview research by suggesting that researchers develop ten to twelve specific questions to ask respondents and that they should note interviewee descriptors such as respondent age, gender, education level, years of experience, ethnicity, and race. The researcher noted this descriptor information and the following are the twelve questions he asked each public administrator he interviewed:

1. Do you believe citizen participation in local government hinders or enhances your job?
2. What is your experience with citizen participation in local government?
3. How and to what extent have you attempted to engage the citizenry you serve?
4. What are the challenges in your experience to increasing citizen participation?
5. What challenges do you see regarding using an Appreciative Inquiry approach to increase citizen participation in local government?
6. What can you perceive as the benefits to an Appreciative Inquiry approach?
7. Where do you think the Appreciative Inquiry approach can be useful?
8. Are there elements of an Appreciative Inquiry approach you may have used in engaging the citizenry in the past?

9. Do you think an Appreciative Inquiry approach used by public administrators is feasible to increase citizen participation in local government?
10. How would you increase citizen participation in local government?
11. Do you think it would be realistic to acknowledge the negative but move forward with a focus on positive inquiry when dealing with citizens regarding difficult issues such as the one in the anecdote I shared with you?
12. Can public administrators using an Appreciative Inquiry approach stay focused on the positive without getting into old issues?

Note: Questions 11 and 12 are based on the following fictional anecdote:

Joe Citizen was victim to eminent domain last year and had to sell his house to the local government so the new municipal golf course could be built. Now he is attending your appreciative inquiry summit to vent his anger. He feels he was abused by the system.

Warren (2002) maintains that there are three types of questions in qualitative interviewing. Main questions are used to begin and guide the interview conversation (*i.e.*, the aforementioned list of twelve). Probing questions are used to clarify answers or elicit more examples. And follow-up questions are used to explore the implications of main questions. The researcher followed this strategy. The next step in Warren's (2002) qualitative interviewing process is to locate respondents.

Warren (2002) poses the question "whom does one interview?" (p. 87). She goes on to discuss various methods of choosing respondents including snowball sampling, convenience sampling, and key informants. For this research purposive sampling was used. The researcher specifically interviewed city managers or their designees as elites or experts in their field based upon their education, experience, and position of power in local government.

Respondents were chosen based on the following criteria. They were a professional city manager or expert designee. They work in a central city and not in a suburban area. They were the most knowledgeable public manager dealing with direct citizen participation in the organization. And, they worked in a city with a population between 40,000 and 250,000 people. Regarding the number of respondents to interview Warren (2002) states that while there are “few reasons set forth for numbers of respondents appropriate in qualitative studies, there seem to be norms ... [with] the minimum number of interviews [falling] in the range of 20 to 30” (p. 99). Twenty city managers or their designees were interviewed for this research project meeting the minimum requirement outlined by Warren (2002). This number of interviewees also fulfilled the requirement that no new information emerged from the interviews as they proceeded and that themes and redundant answers began to be identified.

Next in Warren’s (2002) qualitative interviewing process is the idea of informed consent. She discusses some alternate strategies for gaining consent such as getting it verbally on a tape recorder if respondents refuse to sign a consent form. The researcher complied with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. He was granted an exemption for review not requiring written consent of respondents but requiring verbal consent. Consent was granted via email confirmation of interviewees’ verbal consent. The IRB process is discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter.

Finally, Warren (2002) explores the issue of setting up the interview essentially arriving at the conclusion that there is no one right way to achieve this. She further stated that “the procedural staging of the qualitative interview develops both extemporaneously and methodologically within the social relations of the participants” (p. 91). For this project the researcher called and emailed respondents<sup>74</sup>. He asked them for their consent to be interviewed for one hour. The email included a short description<sup>75</sup> explaining Appreciative Inquiry. Also, that it has been used successfully in the private sector but that

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<sup>74</sup> Refer to Appendix A.

<sup>75</sup> Refer to Appendix B.

the researcher was interested in exploring its potential feasibility in local government by local government managers as a tool to increase direct citizen participation. The email included the twelve interview questions<sup>76</sup>. In addition to this email respondents were called to schedule an interview time if they agreed to participate.

The email stated that interviews were to be anonymous and not tape recorded. The reason for this is that Warren (2002) argues respondents are less likely to openly discuss issues and be comfortable with the interview process when tape recorders are used. Respondents were provided the opportunity to review interview notes to ensure the validity and accuracy of data. Interviews were conducted in the administrators' offices unless another location was necessary. Having examined and addressed Warren's (2002) qualitative interviewing process semi-structured interviews are now discussed.

### ***Semi-Structured Interview***

Fontana and Frey (2005) maintain that there are three basic types of interviewing: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. This research project used semi-structured interviews. They are the interview technique that best fits Warren's (2002) qualitative interviewing protocol.

The semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to ask specific questions regarding his topic of interest. At the same time they allowed the respondents flexibility to elaborate on the topic of direct citizen participation at the local government level. Semi-structured interviews also allowed the researcher to clarify answers and to probe for further examples. Both structured and unstructured interviews were not appropriate techniques given the purpose of this research. Having explored the notion of qualitative semi-structured interviews, the idea of using this interviewing technique on the elite is discussed.

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<sup>76</sup> Refer to Appendix C.

### *Elite Interviews*

Odendahl and Shaw (2002) provide an overview of interviewing elites. They identify elites as individuals “generally hav[ing] more knowledge, money, and status and assume a higher position than others in the population” (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002, p. 299). The researcher considered city managers to be professional elites because they have more power and knowledge than ordinary citizens because of their education and position in local government.

City managers also wield administrative discretion and are responsible for the running of local government. City managers are elite because they have decision making and implementation power. Odendahl and Shaw (2002) caution researchers that elites are difficult to study because there are usually more barriers to overcome in gaining access to them such as gatekeepers, for example, personal assistants and city attorneys.

The researcher found in his research that the gatekeepers were executive assistants. Taking the time to explain his purpose and the project usually resulted in gaining access to the city manager or his or her designee. If city managers refused to participate it was not because their executive assistant had made that decision, but rather the public manager did.

Oldendahl and Shaw (2002) maintain that one of the best research techniques for getting information from elites is the interview. They write that “personal interviews are an effective method for research on elite subjects” (Oldendahl & Shaw, 2002, p. 300). There are certain considerations to think about when attempting to interview elites. The first step is locating and contacting respondents. Oldendahl and Shaw (2002) write that

the process of identifying and gaining access to elite subjects calls for the incorporation of strategies that include a mixture of ingenuity, social skills, contacts, careful negotiation, and circumstance (p. 305).

The researcher located and contacted the elites for this research in a variety of ways. The Internet was used to retrieve U.S. Census Data to determine which cities' public administrators qualified for the project based on population size. City government websites were used to obtain email addresses for city managers or their designees. In addition the researcher used his own contacts in local government to identify or assist in contacting respondents.

Odendahl and Shaw (2002) talk about the issues of access and preparation when interviewing elites. They write that "early in a research project, it is extremely useful for a researcher to acquire one or more key informants" (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002, p. 307). They further affirm that

elite groups are often characterized by intricate interpersonal networks that include influential actors behind the scenes or others who control access to those scenes. Acquiring the right key informant can set the course of the research, because 'who knows whom' matters. The best entrée to elite individuals for interviews is provided by members of the elites' own groups, or, as a substitute, their 'gatekeepers' (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002, p. 307).

The researcher attempted to identify key informants who might have assisted him in accessing other elites. For example, he contacted a professor he knows who is friends with one of the city managers interviewed, gaining access to him in that way. Most of the interviews were arranged by telephone from information retrieved from the census without having an introduction made by a third party.

Regarding the interview, Odendahl and Shaw (2002) state that it is preferable for face-to-face interviews with elites for the same reasons they are preferable with other interviewees. Namely, in face-to-face interviews researchers "generally glean more information ... where the interviewer can assess the personality of the subject as well as the nuances, gestures, omissions, and dynamics taking place" (p. 308). They do point out that in some cases where too much time has passed or respondents are evasive, telephone interviews can be used (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002). All twenty interviews for this research

project were conducted face-to-face. Telephone interviews were not necessary. Odendahl and Shaw (2002) also address time and venue considerations.

Odendahl and Shaw (2002) also state that in almost all cases the location is chosen for the convenience of the elite. The researcher met with public managers in their offices unless they preferred another location. Odendahl and Shaw (2002) contend that time is very important to elites and in the interest of maximizing interview time, researchers should discover as much as possible about the person being interviewed and the organization or locality he or she may be involved with. The researcher did this background investigation before meeting with respondents to save time and to help facilitate the interview by building rapport.

Odendahl and Shaw (2002) recommend that social scientists save time by sending a copy of any questions they may ask to respondents in advance. A copy of the twelve questions was included with the email sent to public managers after they agreed to participate. Odendahl and Shaw (2002) state a preference for using a semi-structured interview format because of the flexibility for both questioner and respondent and the use of a few questions to keep the interviewee on topic. Having reviewed the research strategy and design this chapter next discusses specifics of data collection and data analysis

### ***Data Collection***

Potential respondents for the purposive sample were initially identified using U.S. Census Bureau data for the year 2000. Census population data for the Commonwealth of Virginia was located and a hard copy was obtained. In accordance with predetermined parameters of this research project, all eligible cities with populations between 40,000 and 250,000 residents were highlighted, excluding those local governments which were unincorporated or listed as counties or towns. The goal was to interview a minimum of twenty to thirty city managers or their designees. Because Virginia did not have enough

qualified respondents to meet the minimum size for an applicant pool, census data for the state of North Carolina was also obtained.

The next step in the research was to visit each city government website meeting the population size requirement and obtain the necessary contact information for each locality and all of the pertinent information regarding the city manager, for example, name, age, gender, education, background. This strategy saved time when the researcher conducted the face-to-face interviews because he already possessed the basic demographic information for the interviewee. After retrieving information from local government websites, each potential respondent was telephoned. In most cases a “guardian” (*i.e.*, the office manager) had to be dealt with. In a few instances the researcher made the initial contact with city managers themselves.

First, the script for the research was related. The researcher explained the purpose of the study, methodology, time requirement, and issues of anonymity and confidentiality. Second, each contact was assured that the researcher would follow-up their conversation with an email detailing these points, confirming dates and times when appropriate, and providing the twelve interview questions for the city manager’s convenience in advance of the interview or decision to participate. The majority of city managers’ executive assistants informed the researcher that they would discuss the research project with their respective city managers and then contact him if they agreed to participate.

After waiting one week and receiving few responses, the study was expanded to include census data for South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Maryland that was obtained to expedite the setting-up of interviews and subsequent data collection. The researcher also contacted a few personal acquaintances, both academics and practitioners, to try and gain access to previously identified potential respondents. This alternate strategy enjoyed limited success.

After identifying, contacting, and arranging dates and times to meet with city managers, qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted in accordance with the research strategy. All of the respondents agreed to participate in advance. Emails were exchanged for confirmation of their willingness to participate, dates, times, and the locations of interviews. Demographic information obtained during data collection is presented next.

Overall, twenty public managers were interviewed. Eighteen respondents are city managers and two are designees represented as the local city governments' experts on direct citizen participation. Respondents ranged in age from forty-one to sixty years old.

All respondents are Caucasian. Nineteen respondents are male and one is female. All respondents possess some form of graduate education, with a Masters in Public Administration degree being most common.

Experience as a city manager ranged from four months to thirty-two years. Years of experience in local government for all respondents ranged from seven to thirty-five years. Finally, seventeen interviewees were not familiar at all with Appreciative Inquiry, two were slightly familiar with the approach, and only one was very familiar with the Appreciative Inquiry process.

Every respondent was interviewed in person, using the aforementioned qualitative, semi-structured interview format. Nineteen interviews were conducted in local city hall buildings and one was conducted over lunch at a local restaurant. Most interviews occurred in the city manager's or designee's private office. However, a few were completed in conference rooms.

In accordance with the research strategy and Institutional Review Board approval none of the interviews were video or audio recorded. In addition to handwritten notes, the researcher maintained a detailed journal of his impressions focusing on themes, circumstances, body language, and emotions. Entries were made as soon as possible after the interviews were completed. The purpose of this

journaling was twofold. First, the journaling technique was used to crosscheck handwritten interview notes for accuracy and to assist in data analysis. Second, this technique was used to assist in reflexivity, focusing on how the researcher felt, his preconceived notions, his expectations, and his biases regarding this research in general and the interviews specifically as well as respondents' nonverbal communication.

Each interview followed a typical format. The researcher began by introducing himself. He then reiterated what the research pertained to and what the project in general was about in an attempt to establish rapport with the interviewee. Respondents were reassured that there would be no video or audio recording and that anonymity as well as confidentiality would be maintained.

Interviewees were advised that they would have an opportunity to review handwritten notes to ensure accuracy. The researcher usually spent ten to fifteen minutes discussing Appreciative Inquiry giving respondents an overview of the approach and clarifying any questions they had. The main differences between an Appreciative Inquiry approach and other approaches used to increase citizen participation were emphasized. The researcher stressed that Appreciative Inquiry focuses on the positive and when negative circumstances arise they are acknowledged but that dialogue is redirected back toward positive inquiry. It was also emphasized that Appreciative Inquiry makes no provision for inquiring into problems or negative issues and that one of the primary goals is to imagine an ideal preferred future (*e.g.*, Cooperrider, 1986; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

After the initial phase of the interview process, respondents were asked to tell the researcher what he should or ought to know about citizen participation in their local government or about citizen participation strategies in general. Then, the researcher proceeded to ask the respondents the twelve interview questions that they had been given in advance. Interviewees were encouraged to expand on stories, personal anecdotes, and examples whenever they shared them.

Once the twelve interview questions were completed, the researcher usually spent five or ten minutes probing for more information regarding his research interests. The researcher closed each interview session by reminding respondents that they would receive, via email, a copy of the interview notes so they could check them for accuracy, annotating any appropriate additions or deletions. The researcher confirmed the email address that respondents wanted him to send the notes to reminding them that media and other third parties generally had access to city government emails as they are a matter of public record.

The researcher engaged in journaling as soon as possible after the interview was conducted while the experience was still fresh in his mind. In addition to journaling, handwritten notes were typed up and the researcher emailed a copy of the notes and another copy of the original twelve questions to respondents usually within two weeks of the interview itself to ensure accuracy, validity, and reliability. Typed interview notes were kept alongside email correspondence with respondents in an electronic folder entitled “interviewees” on the researcher’s personal, password protected desktop computer at work which was always kept in a secure office as outlined above.

The interview notes have no names, localities, or other identifying information on them. They are coded with an alphabetical letter (*i.e.*, A-T). The master list was kept in a locked filing cabinet in a secure office at work. No follow-up interviews were necessary for this research project. Having examined the collection of data for this dissertation this chapter next turns to a discussion of the data analysis.

### ***Data Analysis***

Analyzing qualitative data is challenging. Various strategies and techniques are not as well defined as those available for measures of quantitative data (*e.g.*, Denzin & Lincoln, 2000<sup>77</sup>). Yin (2003) maintains that, while not generalizable to populations, data can be generalized to theoretical

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<sup>77</sup> (*e.g.*, McNabb, 2002; Warren, 2002; Yin, 2003).

propositions. He also states “any of these strategies can be used in practicing five specific techniques for analyzing [qualitative studies]” (Yin, 2003, p. 109). Data was used to assist in explanation building.

### *Content Analysis*

Content analysis was used to identify themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). In addition to Yin’s (2003) approach, Ryan and Bernard’s (2000) analysis methods were used in data analysis. Analyzing the content of interview notes and journaling with an eye toward specifics assisted in examining, evaluating, and interpreting this research. Johnson and Reynolds (2005) were also used to assist with content analysis.

This research is qualitative and highly subjective. Other scholars may identify themes not listed in this work. There may be many interpretations of this data that can be drawn from this content analysis and that only one of those options is presented. This is not the only way of interpreting this data. It is not the “one correct” way. There is no capital “T” truth to be discovered in a qualitative worldview. Rather there are many small “t” truths arrived at based upon the researcher’s or reader’s socialization and subjectivity (*e.g.*, Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The raw data has been presented as thoroughly as possible in addition to the analysis so that readers may assess for themselves the interpretation and argument. They may draw their own interpretations and conclusions.

Johnson and Reynolds (2005) further describe content analysis. They state that researchers “extract excerpts, quotations, or examples from the written record to support an observation or relationship” (p. 222). They maintain that, especially when dealing with an episodic record, content analysis is an accepted way to analyze, evaluate, and interpret data (Johnson & Reynolds, 2005). Johnson and Reynolds (2005) identify four specific steps in a content analysis procedure: deciding which material is to be included in the analysis, defining the categories of the content to be measured, selecting the recording unit, and devising a system for coding content. The fourth step in this process

was omitted from the data analysis because the researcher did not obtain written transcripts of interviews. Johnson and Reynolds (2005) also explore the issues of validity and reliability.

The researcher examined both his interview notes and journaling. Johnson and Reynolds (2005) insist that two sub-tasks are involved with this first step in the procedure: “selecting materials germane to the researcher’s subject” (p. 223) and “sampling the actual material to be analyzed from that sampling frame” (p. 223). The materials are relevant to the research project because the researcher created them specifically for this exploratory project, preserving them from the beginning for content analysis. The issue of sampling has already been addressed. A purposive sampling frame was used because of the nature of the phenomenon being investigated. Elites were interviewed for this data because they were the most appropriate sources of information.

The second step in this content analysis, “defining the categories of content that are going to be measured” (Johnson & Reynolds, 2005, p. 223), was addressed in the following way. Twelve interview questions were created by the researcher. These questions were designed to answer the research question. They were also designed to support conclusions drawn by the researcher to assess his argument and provide a rationale for answering the research question.

The researcher created questions that addressed components of Cooperrider’s (1986) theoretical framework undergirding Appreciative Inquiry. Not only was insight into public administrators’ perspectives and experience collected but potential influencing factors such as age, gender, and race were obtained and recorded for analysis. Special attention was given to this step in the content analysis procedure because, as Johnson and Reynolds (2005) point out, “this process is in many respects the most important part of any content analysis because the researcher must measure the content in such a way that it relates to the research topic, and he or she must define this content so that the measures of it are both valid and reliable” (p. 223).

Johnson and Reynolds's (2005) third step in a content analysis procedure is "choosing the recording unit" (p. 224). They maintain that "the researcher usually considers the correspondence between the unit and the content categories" (Johnson & Reynolds, 2005, p. 224) when making this choice and oftentimes selecting the "appropriate recording unit is often a matter of trial and error, adjustment, and compromise in the pursuit of measures that capture the content of the material being coded" (Johnson & Reynolds, 2005, p. 224). They note that different units of analysis may be selected for coding and that these choices include "each word, each character or actor, each sentence, each paragraph, or each item in its entirety" (Johnson & Reynolds, 2005, p. 224). Concerning this third step, the researcher chose individual words, particular sentences, and sometimes entire paragraphs, where appropriate, as the recording units. Corresponding examples include interview questions lending themselves to yes or no answers, direct quotations used in sharing anecdotes, or whole experiences shared regarding specific instances or stories.

The fourth and final step in a content analysis procedure as outlined by Johnson and Reynolds (2005) is "to devise a system of enumeration for the content being coded" (p. 224). They write that [T]he presence or absence of a given content category can be measured or the 'frequency with which the category appears,' or the 'amount of space allotted to the category,' or 'the strength or intensity with which the category is represented' (Johnson & Reynolds, 2005, p. 224).

This fourth step was not implemented as it was not methodologically appropriate.

Because the researcher is not applying quantitative measures, as in "classical" content analysis, it is not necessary to elaborate on the other aspects of enumeration as listed by Johnson and Reynolds (2005). This is a qualitative, exploratory study meant to be descriptive, not a quantitative, causal investigation where inferential statistics are appropriate. A word needs to be written about validity and reliability in content analysis.

Johnson and Reynolds (2005) write that “validity of a content analysis can usually be enhanced with a precise explanation of the procedures followed and content categories used” (p. 224). A discussion of these procedures has already been provided in this chapter. Also presented in the preceding paragraphs are the content categories that were used.

In accordance with Johnson and Reynolds’s (2005) work the researcher has attempted to be as specific as possible so validity issues and determinations can be made by those who read this work. They argue that “usually the best way to demonstrate the reliability of content analysis measures is to show intercoder reliability” (Johnson & Reynolds, 2005, p. 224). Because there is only one researcher involved with this project he cannot rely on a colleague to review his work. The researcher relies primarily on his dissertation chair, Dr. Jim Wolf, to assist him with the issue of intercoder reliability and secondarily on his dissertation committee, Doctors John Rohr, Orion White, and Bill Haraway, to determine whether or not he applied the proper content categories to this material. This chapter continues with the Institutional Review Board considerations and the limitations of this study.

### ***Institutional Review Board and Limitations of the Study***

This research follows all ethical requirements. All research involving human subjects conducted through Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University requires Institutional Review Board approval before beginning any data collection. This research was conducted in compliance with Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University’s Institutional Review Board process<sup>78</sup>.

This is a descriptive, exploratory study based on a qualitative, interpretive worldview. It cannot, nor does it claim to, measure or identify causal relationships or make inferential assertions. It is not generalizable to populations. Rather it is a “snapshot” in time.

Given the use of Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) interpretive paradigm as a conceptual framework for this work, an attempt has been made to interpret and record how people interpret and conceptualize

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<sup>78</sup> Refer to Appendix D.

their world. As a result, many interpretations from the data can be made as there are many meanings and multiple realities depending on an individual's emergent social processes and understandings. This dissertation presents one way the data can be interpreted and, it is argued, the primary way. Others may interpret the data differently arriving at equally valid conclusions<sup>79</sup>.

Qualitative interviewing assumes that both the respondents' and researcher's subjectivity is part of the process. Subjectivity is accepted and attempts to account for it have been made. Bias can never be completely removed because of the nature of subjectivity and its inseparable properties from the researcher. To guard against bias the researcher used the technique of reflexivity.

Qualitative research is not generalizable to populations as quantitative research potentially is. The purposive sample of elites used in this work is not representative or random. Although these limitations exist the research itself is still useful.

### ***Chapter Summary***

In this chapter Appreciative Inquiry has been defined. The interpretive paradigm has been discussed. The contextual framework for this research has been provided. The research strategy and design have been presented. An argument has been made that elite, qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted by way of a purposive sample was the most appropriate method for collecting data. The data collection and data analysis strategy have been outlined. And, Institutional Review Board issues and the limitations of this study have been explored.

This research explores a previously uninvestigated social phenomenon. Therefore, a descriptive survey was most appropriate because the researcher was interested in discovering if Appreciative Inquiry may be used by civil servants to increase direct citizen participation and, consequently, improve local government. This is a descriptive, exploratory study to determine the feasibility of a natural experiment. Data analysis is presented in chapter five.

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<sup>79</sup> Refer to appendices E – X.

## V.

### **Data Analysis: Themes**

This chapter presents the data analysis. Six themes are identified from the content analysis of the data gathered from the twelve semi-structured interview questions posed to city managers or their designees. The following themes are the most important results of the data collected because they narrow the focus of this research. They directly aid in answering the research question: *In what way, if any, can Appreciative Inquiry be useful in increasing direct citizen participation at the local government level to improve local government?* In addition, they assist in addressing the four challenges introduced in the second chapter of this dissertation.

Themes were identified based on the frequency of occurrence, for example, repeated answers, responses, or ideas, and from the overall text. Definitive themes are revealed in this analysis. Some are more prominent than others. All are presented and supported by excerpts and quotations from the data. Aspects supporting these themes are provided.

Six themes are identified in this chapter. First, the barrier to Appreciative Inquiry is real: negative environment works against its successful implementation. Second, despite negative environments, Appreciative Inquiry can be useful in some areas of local government activity. Third, representativeness is also a barrier to successful implementation of Appreciative Inquiry. Fourth, the key to the entire Appreciative Inquiry process is an effective facilitator. Fifth, Appreciative Inquiry has some potential for improving citizen participation. Sixth, the more a community is already engaged in citizen participation efforts the more feasible using an Appreciative Inquiry approach becomes. Refer to figure G. These themes and their supporting aspects are explored more fully.

## Six Themes Identified from the Data Analysis

Figure G

- Barrier to Appreciative Inquiry is real: negative environment works against its successful implementation
- Despite negative environments, Appreciative Inquiry can be useful in some areas of local government activity
- Representativeness is also a barrier to successful implementation of Appreciative Inquiry
- Key to the entire Appreciative Inquiry process is an effective facilitator
- Appreciative Inquiry has some potential for improving citizen participation
- The more a community is already engaged in citizen participation efforts the more feasible using an Appreciative Inquiry approach becomes

### ***Theme # 1: Barrier to Appreciative Inquiry is Real: Negative Environment Works against its Successful Implementation***

This is the strongest theme to emerge from the data. To support this theme five aspects were identified and are presented. These aspects are as follows: Negativity is going to arise in a political context and it is unavoidable; local government managers must deal directly with negativity; direct

citizen participation empowers the negative citizen and dealing with them is not new; negativity has a disproportionate influence and local government managers will need to avoid moving in a negative direction when using Appreciative Inquiry; Appreciative Inquiry can offset the negative political environment. Figure H summarizes the five aspects supporting this theme.

**Aspects Supporting the Theme:  
Barrier to Appreciative Inquiry is Real:  
Negative Environment Works against its  
Successful Implementation**

Figure H

- Negativity is going to arise in a political context; it is unavoidable
- Local government managers must deal directly with negativity
- Direct citizen participation empowers the negative citizen and dealing with them is not new
- Negativity has a disproportionate influence and local government managers will need to avoid moving in a negative direction when using Appreciative Inquiry
- Appreciative Inquiry can offset the negative political environment

*Aspect # 1: Negativity is Going to Arise in a Political Context; It is Unavoidable*

As one public manager pointed out there is a very competitive environment in local politics. For example, one city manager asked the question “how do you get people to come out and participate?” He argued that if they do choose to participate they still “get pissed off and mad ... tend[ing] to dwell on the

negative.” He said that the “negative stirs deep emotions” which cannot be arbitrarily discounted, suppressed, or circumvented.

This interviewee related an instance dealing with citizens where an “opposing group turned everything around [claiming that] we’re [*i.e.*, local government managers] from the government and we’re [*i.e.*, local government managers] lying to you.” The negative minority also claimed that the experts work for the government and they are lying to you too so do not trust them. Another civil servant commented that with private citizens “you can try and keep it [*i.e.*, the focus] positive but there will be a point you can’t work with them anymore.”

One public administrator stated that the political context can be very volatile. He maintained that culturally politics are focused on the negative. Yet another respondent warned that in a political context, hostile crowds can be too difficult to cope with successfully and that using Appreciative Inquiry could be problematic because individual negative citizens or their comments can be counterproductive to the whole if they “have free range.”

Other respondents provided the following feedback. One public manager stated that “like elephants, [people] can’t forget it [*i.e.*, a wrong done to them, perceived or otherwise] until we [*e.g.*, they] get revenge.” Another administrator echoed the sentiment maintaining that “people have a problem with accepting the answer they don’t want.” Still another respondent noted that “once people have a negative experience it’s almost impossible [for them] to ever view government positively again ... [they are] going to be mad at local government forever.”

Another public manager argued that “somewhere along the line you’re going to have to know about the old issues.” You need to pay attention to history not to make the same mistakes or to re-offend. For example, he related that negotiators for the city already try to keep the focus positive, but the people that they talk to remember the negative and will not move past the negative until they are

redressed. He argued that it is human nature to focus on the negative, and that it is generally only the negative people who show up to participate in public involvement initiatives.

Another interviewee stated that negative people are going to be against the government period. It does not necessarily have to have anything to do with the current issue. It could be an issue that happened years ago and is totally different, but citizens will want to focus on their negative experience(s) with local government to the exclusion of a positive focus. Yet another civil servant agreed and stated the “ones that show up are usually the ones that have a bone to pick; they have a problem.” Still another echoed his colleagues, stating that the “biggest challenge is keeping people from reflecting on the negative.”

*Aspect # 2: Local Government Managers must Deal Directly with Negativity*

When asked whether they thought local government managers might be able to avoid getting into old, negative issues with citizens, none of the interviewees thought that it was possible or that it would even be desirable. Many respondents indicated that facilitators would have no choice but to acknowledge past, negative issues or concerns brought up by citizens. Ignoring or spending too little time dealing with them would be detrimental to the governance process. Although some city managers argued that effective facilitators could refocus on the positive, most maintained that local government managers could not avoid the negative given the nature of human beings in general and the issue of direct citizen participation in local government specifically. They claimed that if government exists to serve the people, then, they have a right to be heard; both the positive and the negative perspectives. For example, one city manager stated that with private citizens you really do not have any control regarding buy-in to the approach, whereas you would at the organizational level. Consequently, “you can try to keep the focus positive but there will be a point you can’t work with them [*i.e.*, citizens] anymore.”

There are many other examples in the data to support this aspect. One respondent provided an answer summing up all of his colleagues stating that, “somewhere along the line you’re going to have to know about the old issues.” Another interviewee noted that “if you don’t let them [*i.e.*, negative citizen/participant] talk then all you’ve done is [to] create another spark point or area of criticism.” He stated that there is “always a risk, always history to every issue and every event.”

Yet another administrator allowed that you have to deal with the negative and the angry citizen sometimes and that “you can do it without focusing on the negative, but you at least have to acknowledge it.” Still another manager stated that “no, [local government managers cannot avoid the negative] but you [*i.e.*, they] just got to not spend too much time there.” Another colleague agreed that the negative citizen or the negative comments will come up and that public managers will have to deal with them.

Still another respondent concurred that no, you cannot avoid dealing with the negative, saying that at “some point you [*i.e.*, local government managers] have to clear the deck.” It is that way in all interpersonal relationships. And, to a certain extent managers have to be able to get into the old issues. The key is “acknowledging and not dwelling,” but negative citizens do have to be dealt with by demonstrating through “word and deed” a more positive approach. Finally, another civil servant answered that “I think if the old issues come up you [*i.e.*, local government managers] certainly have to recognize those issues, but you [*i.e.*, they] then have to take those issues and move to the positive.” Although one interviewee noted that when dealing with negative citizens you “go to a point and then you have to cut them off,” most interviewees related that the negative “voice” needs to be heard.

For example, one respondent argued that in a political context, the “public needs to be allowed a legitimate voice.” He stated that in an organizational context legitimacy and voice can be controlled, manipulated, or oppressed, but that this is not so in the highly politicized realm of local government.

Further, this respondent emphasized that administrators “have to give people an ability to express their negativity or it becomes the dominant issue ... [the] negative needs to be heard, recorded, and followed-up on.”

*Aspect # 3: Direct Citizen Participation Empowers the Negative Citizen and Dealing with Them is Not New*

In addition to dealing with any negativity that arises, interviewees also commented that local government managers who use Appreciative Inquiry and other direct citizen participation strategies may create a platform for empowering negative citizens to express their negative point-of-view. One respondent related that direct citizen participation empowers the negative. It brings out the negative. He specifically stated that “our processes empower the negative twenty percent” of citizens and that this twenty percent are the only ones who generally come out to participate. Further, arguing that “so much of self-initiated citizen participation comes from a negative place.” Getting citizens to adopt a bigger picture or broader perspective may not be feasible. Many citizens just want their problem taken care of and they only want what they want done.

Another administrator asserted that “many citizens are very parochial; if they’re energized enough to get involved they are generally mad ... there is a highly energized negative minority [who] keep bringing up the old stuff and won’t let it go.” Still another maintained that too many people have an “axe to grind” and these are the people who show up to participate. And yet another respondent warned that in a meeting or summit “where anyone can come to it, you’re [*i.e.*, local government managers are] not going to get the positive.” According to interviewees, in addition to potentially empowering the negative, civil servants using Appreciative Inquiry should be careful to avoid letting the negativity expressed by citizens become a catalyzing or paralyzing event. Even though negativity may

come up in the form of negative citizens or negative comments from participants, many interviewees were quick to point out that civil servants have dealt with this in the past.

For instance, one civil servant stated that small groups can guard against the detrimental effect of negative people and minimize their effect on the larger collective of citizens. Still another administrator maintained that their localities' current citizen participation processes are structured so that if there is a "naysayer(s)" in the collective that voice is mitigated by the use of small groups and rotation through those groups. Another respondent noted that there are facilitation techniques to deal with negative citizens and naysayers.

Another city manager posed the question "how do you neutralize the one tenth of the one percent of people [*i.e.*, citizens] who are naysayers in the community?" One interviewee stated that we currently attempt to stay away from letting individuals influence the crowd by trying to dilute negative influences by having different meeting times. And, still another claimed that local government managers can more effectively handle the negative citizen with "face-to-face interaction or one-on-one meetings."

One interviewee commented that you can structure meetings so that they "cannot be hi-jacked." Another administrator warned other civil servants not to create an open forum where one individual can dominate the collective process with the negative point-of-view. Still another respondent said that it is possible to use various techniques to protect against "NIMBY show stoppers" and that this citizen(s) will either fall into group conformity or else they will leave on their own. Echoing this sentiment another public official stated that guarding against the negative is about "setting up ground rules and enforcing them."

*Aspect # 4: Negativity Has a Disproportionate Influence and Local Government Managers Will Need to Avoid Moving in a Negative Direction When Using Appreciative Inquiry*

In addition to comments regarding empowering the negative citizen and guarding against him, many respondents also agreed that the negative citizen or negative comments have a disproportionate influence on citizens and direct citizen participation efforts. One interviewee noted that there “seems to be a trend that negative connotations are voiced at a much higher concern” in our society, which subsequently creates more problems for cities. He further maintained that a small negative vocal group has a larger potential impact than their numbers would seem to indicate. As an example, he related that the John Locke foundation in North Carolina is using negativity to achieve their goals.

Still another civil servant stated that “unfortunately, most community meetings are negatively driven” because NIMBY issues tend to bring out more people. Arguing correspondingly, the criticism of Appreciative Inquiry will be that it is not accurately reflecting the community because public managers are creating an environment to “bring out the positive views only.” As a result of the disproportionate influence that negativity has on citizen participation efforts, some interviewees cautioned that civil servants using an Appreciative Inquiry approach will have to avoid having the process move in a negative direction.

For example, one civil servant commented that there is “always a risk [that you will not be able to focus on the positive], [there is] always history to every issue and every event.” He further related that, if there are concerns, they have to be discussed or addressed. For example, “race issues and slavery,” so that the effort does not move in a negative direction. Another public official noted that it is possible to refocus on the positive, but “you have to acknowledge it [*i.e.*, the negative] because others in the meeting will be sympathetic to his concern.”

Still another respondent claimed that there are always a “few people that walk-in that tend to want to dominate the meeting with negative input.” Yet another stated that many times those who have “self-selected to participate” already have an issue, good or bad, that motivates them to come out. Still another respondent pointed out that it is challenging “getting people to deal with each other on a non-conflictual basis.” And one public administrator warned that a “critical mass . . . might be formulated around the negative,” so practitioners will have to guard against having the meeting or process turn negative.

*Aspect # 5: Appreciative Inquiry can offset the Negative Political Environment*

While discussing the negative citizen and his or her comments, some interviewees stated that the biggest advantage to an Appreciative Inquiry approach was its potential to counteract or offset this negativity. This aspect arose primarily from the question posed to city managers or their designees regarding what advantages, if any, they perceived in utilizing an Appreciative Inquiry approach to increase citizen participation at the local government level. For instance, one city manager discussed how Appreciative Inquiry may make citizen participation efforts “smoother.” He cited as an example a local municipal golf course issue. He emphasized that it was a “big war, not a battle, but a war.”

He elaborated on the golf course example stating that because of the negativity surrounding the issue, there were a lot of things public administrators could not do that would have been “ultimately beneficial to the citizenry and the community.” However, citizens and administrators were “limited because of the negativity.” Summing up, he stated that if there were “cooperation or collaboration, such as in an Appreciative Inquiry approach, rather than this negativity, it could have been much better.” “Ultimately, the golf course was built anyway.” In describing the negativity inherent in a political environment such as local government, he went on to assert that “people tend to dwell on the negative,” “get pissed off and mad,” and that the “negative stirs deep emotions.” “Like elephants, [people] can’t

forget until we get revenge.” He argued that people may be more willing to participate from a positive perspective and that “too often a negative perspective is used” in local governance.

Another respondent claimed that “most people want to be optimistic and positive” and that Appreciative Inquiry provides a way to achieve this intrinsic desire. Still another stated that an Appreciative Inquiry approach may “help dissuade some of the negativism toward government.” That it may create positive community spirit and pride. Another added that a focus on the positive and working from that perspective would be good. That being positive helps achieve “cohesion and unity.”

Still another respondent stated that Appreciative Inquiry would result in a more positive view of government. With Appreciative Inquiry it “starts from the positive instead of the negative.” “Instead of being a complaint session [it becomes] what can we do to move forward?” In effect, taking all the negative energy and focusing it in a positive direction. Another administrator noted that Appreciative Inquiry could turn negativity into citizen support, and because of the positive angle, outcomes are “more likely to stick and less likely to be a victim of pendulum-like political swings.” One of the other interviewees related that local government managers can “start to talk about what to do rather than what not to do.” Focusing on “what should we [*i.e.*, local government managers] be doing to build on the successes we’ve had?”

Yet another interviewee said that Appreciative Inquiry might help to guard against the negative impression of government, “improving the balance of citizens’ impression of government” so it is not so negative an impression. Another believed that it could be an “opportunity to change an attitude.” Maintaining that in other formats like radio and television people can say whatever negative they want to, but in public meetings they tend to be “more fair and less negative.” Finally, one respondent stated that by using Appreciative Inquiry correctly public managers can get at the negatives, but also “pull out the positive leading to balance.” Arguing that administrators get a lot more out of the positive, and

citizens respond better and feel more open and energized, and “if they’re [*i.e.*, citizens and local government managers] energized they’re [*i.e.*, citizens and local government managers] going to be more creative.”

***Theme # 2: Despite Negative Environments, Appreciative Inquiry can be Useful in some Areas of Local Government Activity***

This is the second theme that emerged from the data. There are three aspects that support this theme. First, local managers would like to use Appreciative Inquiry. Second, Appreciative Inquiry can be used for gathering input, educating, and informing. Third, Appreciative Inquiry can be used primarily for land-use planning and visioning projects. Figure I provides a summary of the three aspects supporting this theme.

**Aspects Supporting the Theme:  
Despite Negative Environments, Appreciative  
Inquiry can be Useful in some Areas of Local  
Government Activity**

Figure I

- Local managers would like to use Appreciative Inquiry
- Appreciative Inquiry can be used for gathering input, educating, and informing
- Appreciative Inquiry can be used primarily for land-use planning and visioning projects

*Aspect # 1: Local Managers would like to Use Appreciative Inquiry*

One city manager stated that people may be more willing to participate from a positive perspective because “too often a negative perspective is used” in local government and “people tend to dwell on the negative.” Therefore, “if we [*i.e.*, local government managers] focused on the positive we [*i.e.*, local government managers] may get things done.” Also, focusing on the positive “makes it [*i.e.*, governance process] smoother.” Another administrator asserted that “most people want to be optimistic and positive.” And, that the “public needs to be allowed a legitimate voice.” Unfortunately, if you create an environment (*e.g.*, public meeting) where the naysayers are allowed to run the meeting, then they can negatively affect a positive citizen participation process. Still another respondent wanted an Appreciative Inquiry approach to work because it is perceived as having the “potential to make citizens feel more connected to government, to feel like they have an actual voice in the running of government.” Appreciative Inquiry might “help dissuade some of the negativism toward government.”

Still other interviewees offered similar evidence that they too wanted an Appreciative Inquiry approach to work in a local government setting. For instance, one respondent stated that “conceptually Appreciative Inquiry would be great!” Another added that it “sounds like the exact opposite of what they [*i.e.*, citizens and local government managers] normally do in public meetings.” Still another administrator argued that an Appreciative Inquiry approach “would encourage overall a more positive view of the topic at hand or the city itself upfront.” And, “once it became more institutionalized you’re probably going to get more people to come to meetings like that [*i.e.*, with a positive focus].”

Another interviewee noted that a key advantage to Appreciative Inquiry is that it “starts from the positive instead of the negative.” Still another civil servant stated that it may improve citizen participation by “getting people to deal with each other on a non-conflictual basis.” Another respondent related that “anytime that you can engage people and set aside their pet peeves and talk about what’s

really in the best interest of the community,” it is ideal. If you can do it, then “you have the potential to escape the mundane and petty.” “You begin to bring out positives that you don’t get now.” Finally, one interviewee said that “people [*i.e.*, citizens and local government managers] respond [better] to positive reinforcement rather than negative” reinforcement.

*Aspect # 2: Appreciative Inquiry Can be Used for Gathering Input, Educating, and Informing*

Many city managers or their designees also agreed that Appreciative Inquiry could be used to gather input, educate both civil servants and the citizenry, and to improve the exchange of information between government and the people that it serves. Some argued that using Appreciative Inquiry to educate the citizenry would be a key asset. That it can be helpful for “elected officials to gauge where the constituencies’ feelings lie for prioritizing” agendas.

Another stated that an Appreciative Inquiry approach could be beneficial by “improving the understanding of the service or project itself ... [resulting in] improved service.” It can also assist with having “citizens buy into a decision or at least understand why we [*i.e.*, local government managers] are doing what we [*i.e.*, local government managers] are doing.” Another interviewee noted that the approach could be useful because getting citizens involved helps “educate public administrators.” One civil servant related that through informing and educating the citizenry Appreciative Inquiry can be an “opportunity to change an attitude” regarding citizens’ views of local government. And another respondent stated that people “a lot of times don’t have the facts to back up what they’re saying.” Therefore in face-to-face situations, such as an Appreciative Inquiry format, citizens have to make better arguments rather than just disparaging others’ ideas or government’s actions.

Still another administrator stated that an Appreciative Inquiry approach gives public managers the opportunity to get a more “balanced set of input” and it is useful in trying to gauge the community’s interest. Another interviewee agreed that Appreciative Inquiry could help with issues where local

government has to change and where you need to educate people to what that change could be like. A great benefit of citizen participation is that if you have open, honest discussions you can see what people are “thinking early on.” And finally, one respondent commented that if public managers could successfully get citizens to participate in an Appreciative Inquiry process, then they could “produce some unbiased feedback” rather than stuff that is simply single-issue oriented.

*Aspect # 3: Appreciative Inquiry can be used Primarily for Land-use Planning and Visioning Projects*

In addition to responses indicating that most local managers would like to use Appreciative Inquiry, and that many managers believed that it could be beneficial for gathering input, educating, and informing, many respondents related where they thought it would be most amenable. This aspect came out of the direct question regarding where public administrators thought that Appreciative Inquiry could be most useful in local government citizen participation. Overwhelmingly, land-use planning and visioning were cited.

Several respondents mentioned land-use planning and visioning as the most appropriate areas for using Appreciative Inquiry. For example, one interviewee stated that it would be useful in “comprehensive land-use planning.” Another maintained that “any planning meeting lends itself to” Appreciative Inquiry; specifically, land-use and “other types of quality of life elements people would like to see in the community.” Still another respondent indicated that “planning capital projects” and “land-use planning” are definitely amenable areas for Appreciative Inquiry’s use because it is these policy areas that have the most effect on citizens. One interviewee stated that land-use planning “would be a big one [*i.e.*, policy area].” Another respondent commented that Appreciative Inquiry could be most useful in “planning in particular [specifically in] land-use, zoning, [and] all those issues.” Another interviewee noted that it could be used in “comprehensive planning and visioning processes.”

Yet another civil servant stated that the approach could be used for “establishing goals and objectives for the community.” Another city manager said it could best be used in “any of the more global what do we want our community to look like” stuff and “when you’ve [*i.e.*, citizens and local government managers] got some understanding that change to a better future is desirable.” Finally, one respondent stated that Appreciative Inquiry could be used in “major goal setting processes” (*e.g.*, visioning processes), visioning projects (*e.g.*, at the neighborhood level) or it could be a “useful tool in creating strategic maps or developing a strategic plan for the city.” This public manager stated also that ultimately, Appreciative Inquiry can be applied to “any problem you [*i.e.*, local government managers] deal with [where] you [*i.e.*, local government managers] start with [the notion of] where do you [*i.e.*, local government managers] want to end up?”

***Theme # 3: Representativeness Is Also a Barrier to Successful Implementation of Appreciative Inquiry***

This is the third theme identified from the data analysis. Five aspects support this theme. First, we live in a representative democracy, not a direct democracy. Second, apathy is a luxury. The third aspect is public versus individual good. Fourth, Appreciative Inquiry could be a threat to representative democracy. Fifth, the status quo should be maintained. Figure J summarizes the five aspects that support this theme.

**Aspects Supporting the Theme:  
Representativeness Is Also a Barrier to Successful  
Implementation of Appreciative Inquiry**

Figure J

- We live in a representative democracy, not a direct democracy

- Apathy is a luxury

- Public versus individual good

- Appreciative Inquiry could be a threat to representative democracy

- Status quo should be maintained

*Aspect # 1: We Live In a Representative Democracy, Not a Direct Democracy*

Many respondents brought up this aspect. For example, one civil servant maintained that only the people being impacted negatively will come to the meetings or else “they will send a paid advocate.” Consequently, “you [*i.e.*, local government managers] don’t get a cross section” of the citizenry. Another stated that it is “hard to get a representative sampling at the official public meetings but you [*i.e.*, local government managers] still do them.”

Another interviewee asked “is the participation you’re getting representative or is it biased?” “Are we [*i.e.*, local government managers] getting good input?” One administrator cautioned public managers to be aware that one of the challenges to citizen participation efforts like Appreciative Inquiry is getting the “professional citizens” always coming out who “tend to dominate the conversation.” Still another interviewee spoke to the aspect of representativeness maintaining that overcoming language and cultural differences (*e.g.*, African-American and Latino populations) can be difficult. In addition, pointing out that it is “traditionally difficult to get low income people to participate” because some view government as the enemy which raises issues of equity.

Another respondent cited that “one flaw in citizen participation now is [that] your people [*i.e.*, citizens] who have a broad perspective” do not choose to participate in local government. Maintaining a part of that nonparticipation is “attributed to [all] the negativity out there.” He further concluded that the question becomes how do local government managers “get the non-negative people involved?” Still another public administrator argued that “you’re [*i.e.*, local government managers] never going to involve all the citizens.” Another respondent stated that we need more “statistically valid” types of citizen participation, “things where you have validity rather than a negative point-of-view.” Along with

the aspect of representativeness is the belief that there is a point where local government managers will have to limit or restrict the citizenry's "voice."

One public administrator maintained that many times all public managers are going to hear are the "negative minority." Another respondent reminded readers that in any citizen participation effort it is "important that city managers don't lose perspective on [the] constituents [that] they serve." One city manager, addressing the aspect of representativeness, claimed that people in "favor of issues" very rarely come out to public hearings. Rather it is usually the people "opposed to an issue" who show up. As an example, he stated that "ten people may show up at the public hearing to oppose an issue, but twenty may phone to support the issue." Then the question for local government managers becomes "who do you listen to?"

Another respondent stated that readers of this research must remember that the city council is going to do what is best for the community as they see it, and sometimes "one or two people can sway the city council one way or the other." This interviewee also posed the rhetorical question, "what about the tens of thousands of other citizens who did not participate at all?" He cited further that, "even if no one [*i.e.*, citizens] called or showed up [to the public meeting], you [*i.e.*, local government managers] still have to do what is best in the public interest." "Admittedly, it is a difficult position to be in."

This person reiterated that it is human nature to focus on the negative and it is generally only the negative people who show up to participate. Another civil servant mentioned that, because of issues such as representativeness and equity, sometimes Appreciative Inquiry could possibly be better used "after a decision by the city council has been made so that people do not have their time wasted." He maintained that rather than using it as a "decision making tool," managers could use it more as a

“potential implementation approach.” He further stated that the question then evolves into “is the participation you’re [*i.e.*, local government managers] getting representative or biased?”

Still another respondent building on the NIMBY-type concern related that people participating who may harbor NIMBY-type issues can be detrimental to the process because the focus in that situation may be “too personal, too narrow, [and] not for the greater good.” Another interviewee asserted that “you [*i.e.*, local government managers] don’t get a cross section” of the citizenry. It is “hard to get a representative sampling at the official public meetings.” Also, agreeing with other colleagues, this city manager stated that citizen participation empowers the negative, sharing that “three people saying something negative could seem like a tidal wave to elected officials.” He stated that the city council is very susceptible to making major decisions based on “squeaky wheels and naysayers.”

Another respondent asked “why have town meetings when people can contact us via email or by telephone?” He further maintained that town hall meetings are a “real good example [of] where you empower the negative,” saying “it’s brutal for public administrators.” In addition, he related that because “most citizen participation is disjointed” the legal issue becomes one of interjecting “arbitrariness and capriciousness into local government.” Another administrator stated that “one flaw in citizen participation now is [that] your people who have a broad perspective” do not choose to participate in local government and that part of it is attributed to all the “negativity out there.” Another noted that there is “nothing wrong with citizens requesting services or volunteering,” but local government managers have to be cautious because citizen participation inflates the individual citizen. And, “calls for citizen participation at times being [no more than] an effort to advance a very narrow political agenda to advance a certain group.”

This respondent maintained that citizen appointees “assume their opinion is more important than other citizens” and that this is simply not the case and that it needs to be guarded against in a republic. This particular interviewee went on to state that, it would be good if you [*i.e.*, local government managers] could get “people to the point of one hundred percent positive participation and get them involved.” It is just not very realistic because “you’re [*i.e.*, local government managers] never going to involve all the citizens” and managers have to guard against the negative minority. In addition, he related that in any meeting or public involvement initiative “where anyone [*i.e.*, citizens] can come to it, you’re [*i.e.*, local government managers] not going to get the positive.”

One administrator perhaps put it best regarding the aspect of representativeness when she stated that “citizen participation may not be seen as the primary role of local government, but it may be a means to an end.” “Serving people, all people, is the end,” and Appreciative Inquiry, like any other public involvement effort, does not engender one hundred percent participation from the citizenry. Therefore, “who is getting best served if some people choose not to participate, especially, if minorities and low income populations tend to participate less than the more well to do or educated majority?” Finally, according to one respondent, the primary challenge is to “get the voices heard from people who are truly looking out for the good of the whole community.”

#### *Aspect # 2: Apathy is a Luxury*

In addition to issues stemming from the aspect of our representative democracy, some respondents commented that apathy toward governance is a luxury that citizens of the United States of America have. These interviewees pointed out that people can choose not to participate and the country will still be governed in much the same way as it is now, without their direct participation. For example, one interviewee asserted that “citizen participation is very important,” but the challenge includes

political issues. He maintained that “not every stakeholder [*i.e.*, citizens or local government managers] will have buy-in or have an amenable perspective on Appreciative Inquiry.” Moreover, he claimed that citizens “do not have to, given our political context.”

This respondent went on to state that “most people do not want to be burdened with governance issues.” “They like government best which is seen least.” He continued saying that most times, “if it is not a crisis,” people do not want to show up;” thus citizens’ “investment in local government isn’t there.” Further he related that “we [*i.e.*, citizens] have the luxury in America to ignore our government and things are just fine.” He concluded with the statement and subsequent question that “citizen participation means different things to different elected officials so how do you lead while following” elected officials?

Echoing these sentiments another public administrator cited a recent Gallup poll that reported people spend on average about four minutes a month thinking about local government. He related to public managers “do not lose sight of the fact that with most people things are going well.” Therefore, “it is more difficult to get them involved in issues that are not NIMBY-type issues.” Yet another “avowed skeptic in our profession about citizen participation” claimed that “we’re [*i.e.*, local government managers] doing our jobs well if citizens don’t have to think about us.” “Citizens shouldn’t have to participate” if local government is doing its job. He stated that “if you’re [*i.e.*, citizens] obeying the laws you shouldn’t have to have contact with us [*i.e.*, local government managers].” Another city manager concurred with his colleague stating that “most people don’t want to think about local government until their ox is gored.” He maintained that if things are running smoothly “it’s not our [*i.e.*, local government managers] goal to be involved in peoples’ lives.”

### *Aspect # 3: Public versus Individual Good*

Some interviewees also provided answers that had to do with self-interested individuals. Many agreed that citizens do not necessarily act in the interest of the public good rather they act first-and-foremost in their own interest. For example, one public official interviewed asserted that “citizen participation inflates the individual citizen.” Still another respondent described “calls for citizen participation [as], at times, being an effort to advance a very narrow political agenda, to advance a certain group.”

### *Aspect # 4: Appreciative Inquiry could be a Threat to Representative Democracy*

According to some city managers or their designees, there is also a concern that direct citizen participation efforts undermine our democratic system of government. For example, one interviewee cautioned that citizen participation “raises red flags because it is not correct from a political standpoint.” This is because we are a “federalist republic.” “People forget that we live in a republic not a democracy.” Further he argued that citizen appointees “assume their opinion is more important than other citizens,” but they have not been elected themselves.

Another interviewee related that “increasing citizen participation is not necessary all the time and it is not necessarily a good thing.” One city manager said that the “ultimate responsibility [for local government managers] is to make sure the [citizen participation] process is fair and open” in accordance with democratic values. Another city manager spoke directly to this aspect stating that it is “important that city managers don’t lose perspective on constituents [that] they serve but [that] they have to be vigilant on managing the process.” Yet, another civil servant said that citizen participation efforts may be “guilty of disconnecting the political process.” “People get elected to solve problems ... [our political system is] contrary and in direct conflict with direct democracy.”

#### *Aspect # 5: Status Quo Should Be Maintained*

Some interviewees noted that there is no convincing need to change the way that things are currently done in local government. Several respondents expressed that they felt nothing is wrong with maintaining the status quo. For example, one public administrator asked “what is wrong with the way we [*i.e.*, local government managers] do things now?” More specifically, he posed the questions “what’s wrong with where we [*i.e.*, citizens and local government managers] are?” And, “why do we [*i.e.*, citizens and local government managers] need to make that change [*i.e.*, to Appreciative Inquiry]?” Further he pointed out that “an increasing older population, coupled with high attrition, contributes to a sentiment of let us [*i.e.*, citizens and local government managers] keep the status quo.” In essence, he asks why do local government managers need to change the way they govern? This civil servant concluded that outside-the-box thinking is good, but the “reality is boxes are what make the world go round.”

#### ***Theme # 4: Key to the Entire Appreciative Inquiry Process is an Effective Facilitator***

This is the fourth theme. Two aspects support this theme. First, citizen participation efforts should be clearly defined, formal, and highly structured. The second aspect is the necessity of a competent facilitator. Figure K summarizes these two aspects.

## **Aspects Supporting the Theme: Key to the Entire Appreciative Inquiry Process is an Effective Facilitator**

Figure K

- Citizen participation efforts should be clearly defined, formal, and highly Structured
- The necessity of a competent facilitator

### *Aspect # 1: Citizen Participation Efforts Should be Clearly Defined, Formal, and Highly Structured*

Most respondents agreed with this aspect. For example, one city manager argued for increasing citizen participation in local government. Stating that “most of the time it [*i.e.*, citizen participation] does [enhance local government]; particularly if it’s structured properly, [but] it [*i.e.*, a citizen participation effort] can get away from you” if it is not. He added that citizen participation initiatives can “be a real problem if you don’t have the right staff handling” them. Another administrator said that “I think in general it [*i.e.*, citizen participation] enhances [local government], but it has to be a very defined and directed way [that] citizens participate.” The more formalized citizen participation approaches are the better. If a citizen participation process is structured properly and citizens are “willing to spend [the] time to be educated, then it does enhance governance.” Still another interviewee stated that the “environment needs to be structured so [that] the environment is right” if citizen participation efforts are to have any chance of succeeding.

Other respondents supported this aspect. For instance, one city manager stated that when local government managers organize a meeting they need to “take the floor at the beginning and set the tone.” In other words, you need to structure the endeavor. Another interviewee related that local government

managers have to be careful about picking the issue or policy area and have to make sure to “define those well at the beginning of the process.” Still another subject argued that “yes, you could use it [*i.e.*, Appreciative Inquiry] if you structured it [*i.e.*, the process] right.” It “would depend a lot on how you structured the process.”

Yet another respondent offered that a citizen participation effort “takes a great deal of leadership, planning, and setting the stage upfront so [that] everyone [*i.e.*, citizens and local government managers] understands the guidelines of the meetings.” Another civil servant commented that managers can structure meetings so that they cannot be “hi-jacked by NIMBY show stoppers.” And, that having a structured forum guards against these negative citizens through the use of various techniques. A colleague stated that an effective citizen participation initiative “depends on how you manage the process (*e.g.*, community courtesy rules) as the parameters of structure are important to success.” “Essentially, it is about setting up ground rules and enforcing them.”

Still another public administrator maintained that management is the key to successful citizen participation strategies and that initiatives need to be well structured so that people do not feel like they are wasting their time. Another interviewee claimed that an Appreciative Inquiry approach could be used in “any number of the subject areas.” “I think that the key would be how you [*i.e.*, local government managers] structure the process in which you [*i.e.*, local government managers] use it.” Finally, one respondent stated that success “comes down to techniques and scripting and how and who is steering the conversations.”

#### *Aspect # 2: The Necessity of a Competent Facilitator*

All of the respondents agreed that without an effective facilitator an Appreciative Inquiry approach could not be successful. For example, one administrator argued that public managers need “effective facilitators in [any] group” regardless of the context (*i.e.*, within an organizational setting or

within a local government setting). One civil servant related that there are “facilitation techniques to deal with negative citizens and by having a skilled facilitator locales could guard against negative citizens or negative comments.” Another interviewee stated that “it takes a skillful moderator or facilitator to succeed in refocusing on the positive.” Yet another administrator claimed that success depends on “how good your facilitator is” because facilitation skills are the key. One city manager said that “someone [*i.e.*, facilitator] has to be strong and acknowledge the concern [*i.e.*, a citizen’s past issue] but move on so that it doesn’t become the focus of the meeting.” Another interviewee conceded that meetings can turn negative but it is generally the fault of the facilitator(s) if they do.

Another public manager argued that for Appreciative Inquiry to succeed public administrators “would need very good facilitation skills.” Still another respondent stated that “if the meeting is run right participants can feel that the process was fair but you [would] need a strong facilitator.” One administrator said that “to use the approach [*i.e.*, Appreciative Inquiry] you [*i.e.*, local government managers] really would need someone else in the organization who has the training to facilitate the [Appreciative Inquiry] process ... [and ultimately success] depends on the skill of the facilitator.”

Another civil servant related that public officials “really [have] got to have ... a real talent in facilitating meetings.” Another respondent stated “if you’re [*i.e.*, local government managers] skilled at it [*i.e.*, facilitation],” then an Appreciative Inquiry approach could be successful in local government. Another city manager maintained that “a lot would depend on who’s leading the meeting or group.” Success and refocusing on the positive comes down to “techniques and scripting and how and who is steering the conversations.” Another respondent claimed that public managers would need “effective facilitators in a group to make that [*i.e.*, focusing on the positive] happen.” Finally, one city manager agreed that facilitation skills were crucial but argued that it would be “very difficult for the city manager to adopt the role of facilitator.”

***Theme # 5: Appreciative Inquiry Has Some Potential for Improving Citizen Participation***

This is the fifth theme. Two aspects support this theme. First, Appreciative Inquiry may be feasible with certain caveats and if certain conditions are met and situations exist, but it is not a panacea. The second aspect is decision making. Figure L summarizes these two aspects.

**Aspects Supporting the Theme:  
Appreciative Inquiry Has Some Potential  
for Improving Citizen Participation**

Figure L

- Appreciative Inquiry may be feasible with certain caveats and if certain conditions are met and situations exist, but it is not a panacea
- Decision making

*Aspect # 1: Appreciative Inquiry may be Feasible with Certain Caveats and if Certain Conditions are met and Specific Situations Exist; it is not a Panacea*

Most city managers or their designees provided answers that supported this aspect. For example, one subject said what most respondents related stating that “I think it’s [*i.e.*, Appreciative Inquiry] feasible” but it would be very difficult to get it going. One “obstacle to overcome with public administrators [themselves being] is this a fad?” “Is this going to be good next year?” When asked about Appreciative Inquiry’s feasibility regarding increasing citizen participation in local government another respondent answered that “yes, in some instances if you have the time and resources because it is very labor and time intensive.” It “could be added to the toolbox.”

Another administrator said that Appreciative Inquiry is feasible “as long as you [*i.e.*, local government managers] have the time to do it.” In other words, as long as there is not a time constraint

making it infeasible. Still another commented that the approach could be used in a limited way, but that it is “not feasible on a day-to-day basis.” He argued further that “if we [*i.e.*, local government managers] are doing what we should be doing, then there is not a major need for increasing citizen participation everyday.” Another respondent said that Appreciative Inquiry is potentially feasible and that it could be used “on a limited basis.”

Still another civil servant noted that “if you [*i.e.*, local government managers] pick your [*i.e.*, their] issue” Appreciative Inquiry can be successful. Another administrator maintained that “resources are the biggest challenge.” Yet another interviewee thought that “maybe” Appreciative Inquiry could be used for “stuff that does not require immediate implementation, with proper training and marketing,” and that “you [*i.e.*, local government managers] have to tailor it to a niche in the market.” He went on to state that “you [*i.e.*, local government managers] could sell it” but not in “less dynamic or progressive communities.”

Another colleague stated that the feasibility of the Appreciative Inquiry approach depends on answering the question “how you [*i.e.*, local government managers] lead while following elected officials?” Further he maintained that it is a “risk for a city manager to engage in Appreciative Inquiry” and a difficult role for him or her to play. “In order to use the approach you [*i.e.*, local government managers] really would need to have someone else in the organization who has the training to facilitate the process.” Another interviewee related that it would be feasible “to the extent [that] this Appreciative Inquiry approach can counter those whose interest is to short circuit the process.” Yet another respondent stated that “I think its feasible [but] I think it would require a lot of resources.” And, you would need “the commitment and staff and time” to make sure that it works. And, “unless it leads to tangible outcomes it will be short lived.” Finally, one respondent commented that Appreciative Inquiry “is as feasible as any tool.”

Buttressing their caveats to the feasibility of Appreciative Inquiry being employed in this fashion, many city managers or their designees argued that it is not the ultimate strategy for increasing citizen participation in local government. For example, one administrator stated that “like anything it isn’t a panacea” and therefore not amenable to all situations. However, some situations will lend themselves to the Appreciative Inquiry process. And, another civil servant also asserted that “Appreciative Inquiry is not a panacea.”

*Aspect # 2: Decision Making*

A few respondents spoke to the aspect of decision making when discussing Appreciative Inquiry. Some interviewees maintained that civil servants definitely cannot use it in every citizen participation setting, arguing that decision making is also affected by context. For example, one respondent noted that externally (*i.e.*, outside of an organizational level) Appreciative Inquiry could only be used successfully “where you [*i.e.*, local government managers] have [to make] factual not emotional based decisions.”

***Theme # 6: The More a Community is Already Engaged in Citizen Participation Efforts the More Feasible Using an Appreciative Inquiry Approach Becomes***

This is the sixth theme identified from the data analysis. The following examples support this theme. One city manager of a locality with a “culture of public involvement” said that his administrators provide a multitude of citizen participation opportunities. He stated that this is because our civil servants believe that the “public needs to be allowed a legitimate voice” in their own governance. Consequently, our public managers have developed a good working relationship with the citizenry in this regard. He related that success of citizen participation efforts depends a lot on what public administrators want. Asking rhetorically, do administrators either want “collaboration with citizens or do they just want what they want?” He argued that citizens need to have discussions about

what is good and what is not good for their community. Therefore, he stated that our public managers are “a lot more involved in citizen participation things in lots of different ways.” “Every major policy initiative [we undertake] has citizen involvement somehow.” Continuing, this administrator answered that “yes, an Appreciative Inquiry approach is feasible definitely in our community [because] it’s essential to getting a result.” Citizens here are very active and our administrators cultivate that type of citizen participation and community culture. It is his belief that “you [*i.e.*, local government managers] have to take the time to involve people and [to] hear them out.”

In another example, a respondent commented that the Appreciative Inquiry approach is not going to work in the formal processes currently being used such as mandated public hearings. However, he claimed that the process could work well with established community watch groups and groups such as that. In addition, this respondent “think[s] [that] an Appreciative Inquiry process would work very well in some communities” where the community environment is different from his. For instance, he noted that it may work better in smaller communities rather than in larger urban environments. Yet, another administrator stated that context is important insofar as determining “what has this group of citizens had to deal with in the past?”

One interviewee stated that Appreciative Inquiry would probably work best at the city level or smaller and that “once it became more institutionalized you’re [*i.e.*, local government managers] probably going to get more people to come to meetings like that.” Many respondents agreed that the more a city government already engages in citizen participation efforts the more likely an Appreciative Inquiry approach would be successful. They maintained that this is because most likely rapport and a certain level of trust are already established between public managers and the citizens they serve. That is of course, providing local government managers have done an adequate job of facilitating fair public involvement opportunities in the past.

### *Chapter Summary*

This chapter analyzed the responses given by public managers to the twelve semi-structured interview questions. It concluded the data analysis for this research project by identifying six themes in the data. These themes are as follows: (1) The barrier to Appreciative Inquiry is real: negative environment works against its successful implementation, (2) despite negative environments, Appreciative Inquiry can be useful in some areas of local government activity, (3) representativeness is also a barrier to successful implementation of Appreciative Inquiry, (4) the key to the entire Appreciative Inquiry process is an effective facilitator, (5) Appreciative Inquiry has some potential for improving citizen participation, and (6) the more a community is already engaged in citizen participation efforts the more feasible using an Appreciative Inquiry approach becomes. Some conclusions are presented next in the sixth chapter of this dissertation.

## VI.

### Conclusion

The final chapter of this dissertation presents the conclusions of this research project. It is divided into three sections. First, it provides an overview of the dissertation and presents a summary of the findings. Second, a discussion of the findings and their theoretical implications is presented. Third, directions for future research are offered. This chapter answers the research question: *In what way, if any, can Appreciative Inquiry be useful in increasing direct citizen participation at the local government level to improve local government?* It addresses the remaining four challenges to local government managers who may want to implement Appreciative Inquiry to increase direct citizen participation.

#### *Overview*

##### *Overview: Introduction*

As a descriptive, exploratory study this research investigated the feasibility of public administrators' using an Appreciative Inquiry approach to increase citizen participation in local government, thereby making it more effective. The purpose of the study and the contextual framework for this research were discussed. The value of this research was identified and the research question for this project: *In what way, if any, can Appreciative Inquiry be useful in increasing citizen participation at the local government level in order to improve local government?* was posed. Finally, a review of the organization of this dissertation was provided.

##### *Overview: Appreciative Inquiry*

The chapter on Appreciative Inquiry began by addressing the first of the five challenges local government managers wanting to use it at the local government level to increase citizen participation may face. Namely, the challenge of the approach's theoretical grounding. Specifically, the theoretical underpinnings of the social construction of reality were examined. This challenge was addressed by

contrasting Gergen's (1994, 1999) notion of constructivist theory with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) view of the social construction of reality.

Next, several definitions of Appreciative Inquiry were provided. The following definition by Watkins and Mohr (2001) was used for this project and is as follows: "Appreciative Inquiry is a cooperative and highly participative, system-wide approach to seeking, identifying, and enhancing the 'life-giving forces' that are present when a system is performing optimally in human, economic, and organizational terms" (p. 14). Then, how Appreciative Inquiry meets the requirements for successful citizen participation initiatives was discussed. Finally, the four remaining challenges civil servants might face if they want to implement the approach in their local governments: namely, context, unrealistic expectations, potential for manipulation, and utility of the status quo were introduced. After these dimensions of Appreciative Inquiry were explored, the relevant literature surrounding the topic of inquiry was presented.

#### *Overview: Literature Review*

First, a review of the literature from political science, urban planning, and public administration revealed that direct citizen participation in local government exists. The chapter began with a discussion of participatory democracy in general and moved to a more narrow focus on direct citizen participation efforts. Regarding participatory democracy, the theory undergirding it, the results of participatory democracy in action, and why it matters were examined.

Concerning direct citizen participation, a review of the literature began with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, civil unrest and social upheaval during this period, and Friedmann's (1976) work on Transactive Planning. Next, several citizen participation strategies and techniques, both historical and contemporary, were presented. Then, literature pertaining to Metropolitan Planning Organizations was used as an example of direct citizen participation efforts at the local government

level. Finally, opponents to increasing direct citizen participation in representative government were highlighted.

In addition to the literature concerning both participatory democracy in general and direct citizen participation specifically, a review of the literature on Appreciative Inquiry was conducted. The exploration of the literature on Appreciative Inquiry was presented by first identifying how it has been used at the organizational level, which was its originally intended application. Finally, the limited instances where Appreciative Inquiry has been used at the community level were presented. Specifically, the instance of the nonprofit organization Imagine Chicago and subsequent imagine initiatives were discussed.

The latter portion of the literature review addressed this research project's contribution to the scholarly literature. A gap was identified in the public administration literature. Specifically, a gap in the local government and public administration management literature (*e.g., Public Management*) was highlighted. Throughout the literature several requests were made by academics and practitioners for local government managers to discover and implement new, innovative citizen participation approaches, strategies, and techniques. The literature supported the idea that several interested parties in the field of public administration are seeking to increase public involvement in local governance. After reviewing the literature the research strategy and design for this dissertation project was discussed.

#### *Overview: Research Strategy and Design*

To begin the discussion of the research strategy and design the definition of Appreciative Inquiry adopted from Watkins and Mohr (2001) was explored in more detail. Next, a review of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) interpretive paradigm and the research strategy and design for this project were presented. Then Warren's (2002) protocol for qualitative interviewing which was used for this research was examined. Within this discussion her notion of reflexivity and how it affected the researcher and

this work was addressed. Her strategy and how it was applied specifically for this purpose was provided in detail. In addition to Warren's (2002) research protocol, Odendahl and Shaw's (2002) notion of interviewing elites and how it was used to assist in accomplishing data collection for this project was discussed.

After outlining the specifics of the research strategy and design the particulars of the data collection approach and the method of data analysis were presented. Field research was conducted through face-to-face interviews of elites (*i.e.*, city managers or their designees). The data revealed that Appreciative Inquiry is not being used to date by local government managers, at least those interviewed for this project, in government to increase citizen participation.

In addition, managers' thoughts were solicited and examined regarding the feasibility of using the Appreciative Inquiry approach in general and the certain characteristics undergirding the approach specifically. Once field research was completed content analysis was used to evaluate and examine the data. Finally, the Institutional Review Board requirements for this research project were briefly discussed. The limitations of the current study were explored. The first four chapters of this dissertation provided an overview of the research project. Next, the data and findings are summarized.

### ***Summary of Findings***

The findings for this research project were derived from a content analysis of the interview data. The data analysis for this dissertation was addressed in chapter five. In chapter five six themes were identified with aspects that supported the inclusion of these themes. The themes were a result of the data analysis of the twelve semi-structured interview questions posed to city managers or their designees.

### *Summary: Themes*

Six themes were identified. These themes are as follows: (1) the barrier to Appreciative Inquiry is real: negative environment works against its successful implementation, (2) despite negative environments, Appreciative Inquiry can be useful in some areas of local government activity, (3) representativeness is also a barrier to successful implementation of Appreciative Inquiry, (4) the key to the entire Appreciative Inquiry process is an effective facilitator, (5) Appreciative Inquiry has some potential for improving citizen participation, and (6) the more a community is already engaged in citizen participation efforts the more feasible using an Appreciative Inquiry approach becomes. For example, most local government managers that were interviewed wanted Appreciative Inquiry to work, they thought that Appreciative Inquiry would be most useful in visioning, land-use planning, informing, or educating, and they believed that Appreciative Inquiry would work better in an environment where citizen participation efforts were already routinely used successfully.

### ***Theoretical Implications of the Findings***

Overall, the major finding for this research was the same one identified in the beginning of this research by the dissertation committee and in the literature. Namely, that negativity is the main obstacle to Appreciative Inquiry's successful implementation by public managers at the local government level, to increase direct citizen participation. The study found that, although Appreciative Inquiry seems to be feasible for use in local government to increase citizen participation and that it has desirable face validity, the caveats cited as necessary for its successful implementation and the potential negative consequences of its use severely limits its usefulness and appropriateness in a local government setting. Even though Appreciative Inquiry is intended to be a more democratic approach where all of the stakeholders should be involved and all of the "voices" ought to be heard, its focus on the positive with the limited acknowledgement of the negative effectively restricts the "voice" of the discontented or

genuinely aggrieved citizens. Also, by itself the approach would most likely not be enough motivation to cause widespread participation because of time constraints that most citizens contend with and the lack of a galvanizing event.

In theory Appreciative Inquiry seems to be useful for increasing public participation. However, as many respondents pointed out, in practice it would “not be a panacea.” Despite the limitations reported in the data, many city managers or their designees concluded that Appreciative Inquiry could be used by public managers in limited, specific circumstances such as visioning projects or land-use planning initiatives as long as local government managers had a highly skilled facilitator and the support of local politicians. In this case, there are still the four challenges for local government managers wanting to use an Appreciative Inquiry approach to overcome: context, unrealistic expectations, the potential for the manipulation of the citizenry, and the utility of maintaining the status quo.

#### *Theoretical Implications Regarding the Challenge of Context*

The challenge of context is a question about how well Appreciative Inquiry would work outside of its originally intended application which is within an organizational context. What do local government managers need to be concerned about when considering using an Appreciative Inquiry approach outside of the organizational context within a political context at the local government level? What contextual differences are especially troubling to local government managers for Appreciative Inquiry’s use outside of the organization?

Originally, Appreciative Inquiry was developed for use at the organizational level (Cooperrider, 1986). It operated within an organizational context. In organizations there are employees who are governed by rules who answer to managers. There are many different types of organizations with different structures, goals, outputs, agendas, communication and leadership styles.

In an organization there is almost always some type of hierarchy and form of control whether it is relaxed or constrained. Managers in organizations have the authority to require employees to engage in certain practices for the betterment of the organization (*e.g.*, Clegg, Hardy, & Nord, 1996; Drafi & Kossen, 2002; Gordon, 1996). If a manager wanted employees to engage in an Appreciative Inquiry approach at work, the employees would have to at least participate or else they could suffer an adverse action.

Public administration operates within a political context (*e.g.*, Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006; Wilson, 1887). In a political context there are winners and losers. The political context is about competing influences for power (*e.g.*, interest groups, individual constituents, city council members, public administrators). More often the political context requires compromise rather than synergistic solutions to situations. Citizens are not employees of organizations and public managers are not their bosses (*e.g.*, Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006; Patterson, 2006). Citizens participate in local government because they voluntarily elect to do so; local government managers cannot compel them to do so. A majority of respondents raised concerns regarding Appreciative Inquiry's potential application in a local government setting. Nevertheless a few argued that context was not that big of an issue or felt it could be mitigated depending upon the environment.

Responses ranged from issues of voluntary participation, to freedom to dwell on or to express the negative, to the belief that context is not an issue. As far as voluntary participation, several respondents raised concerns about using Appreciative Inquiry in the political context of local government administration. They stated that there was a different type of opposition that public managers faced by citizens in a community other than the type encountered by supervisors dealing with employees in an organization. They pointed out that local government managers had no control regarding buy-in to the Appreciative Inquiry approach because citizens had to have a voluntary, noncompulsory willingness to

participate in their own governance. They argued that public managers had no recourse available to them to control citizens in this way (*e.g.*, threat of an adverse action). Respondents related that in addition to voluntary participation is the challenge of getting citizens to agree to the guidelines of an Appreciative Inquiry process. This emphasizes that a part of government's legitimacy comes from allowing its citizens to participate in a non-restricted manner.

Another issue raised by interviewees is the necessity of allowing citizens the freedom to dwell on or to express the negative. Respondents claimed that it was unethical and illegal to restrict the negative point-of-view in terms of an Appreciative Inquiry approach, noting that culturally politics is inherently negative and volatile. The third issue mentioned by a few respondents regarding the challenge of context was that it was not important. They claimed that both an organizational context and a political context present the same types of challenges and that it might be easier to overcome the challenges in a political context. They cited that the key factor is a strong facilitator. They speculated that the more supportive the community environment is of citizen participation efforts in general, the more likely Appreciative Inquiry will work. In addition to the challenge of context is the challenge of unrealistic expectations.

#### *Theoretical Implications Regarding the Challenge of Unrealistic Expectations*

Regarding the challenge of unrealistic expectations, an issue is the fact that Appreciative Inquiry focuses on the positive which is what primarily makes it different from all other organizational development and direct citizen participation approaches. If the negative comes up in an Appreciative Inquiry process the goal is to acknowledge it but to refocus as soon as possible on the positive (*e.g.*, Cooperrider, 1986; Watkins & Mohr, 2001). In a political context this may not be possible or even desirable because of free speech issues.

Local government managers cannot legally restrict the free speech of citizens by placing some type of illegal constraints on their “voice.” Is it realistic then for public administrators using an Appreciative Inquiry approach to deal with difficult or negative citizens without violating the key proposition of Appreciative Inquiry; namely, the focus on the positive? Or is that hope too naïve? How do local government managers get citizens, who they cannot legally compel, who want to focus on the negative to focus on the positive?

As with the evaluation of the political context, the analysis of this challenge revealed three issues: local government managers cannot avoid the negative, citizens must have a “voice,” and direct citizen participation efforts in general empower negative citizens. Regarding the first issue almost all of the respondents agreed that public managers cannot avoid the negative and that focusing completely on the positive would be impossible, if not disastrous. The bottom-line is that the political context at the local government level is so negative that avoiding the negative is not realistic. As far as allowing citizens a “voice” in their own governance, respondents stated that not being able to express the negative can backfire.

They further argued that local government managers have to allow citizens their say even if it is negative. Finally, the third issue arising out of the analysis of this challenge is that direct citizen participation efforts in general empower negative citizens. Furthermore, direct citizen participation processes tend to bring out the negative twenty percent of the population and the people who have NIMBY-type issues. Negative citizens have a more disproportionate impact on local elected officials than their numbers would otherwise suggest. Next the challenge of the potential for manipulation is examined.

### *Theoretical Implications Regarding the Challenge of the Potential for the Manipulation of the Citizenry*

The issue with this challenge is that if citizens agree to focus on the positive, does that exclude those citizens who want to participate, but feel that they may not be able to if they do not adopt the norms (*i.e.*, to willingly focus on the positive and not the negative) of the majority? Also, public managers might use Appreciative Inquiry to legitimize decisions that they have already made, thereby engaging in another form of manipulation. Can citizens and local government managers resolve issues and solve wicked problems without dealing with the negative? Will public managers relinquish their power of administrative discretion and subject themselves to a consensus decision reached by a group of citizens? What about those citizens who do not choose to participate in this way and as a result have no “voice” in the process? What about the public interest and administrative responsibility? Is this not the slippery slope James Madison writing in the Federalist papers was warning us about when he warned against factionalism and the tyranny of the majority?

The responses to the third challenge, the potential for manipulation of the citizenry, highlighted three issues: there will be some attempt at manipulation of the citizenry by local government managers; Appreciative Inquiry could be used inappropriately by untrained public managers to legitimize governance decisions; and the process could be manipulated and subverted by the citizens themselves. First, after analyzing the responses to several interview questions, it was apparent that some form of manipulation of the citizenry would be attempted by local government managers using an Appreciative Inquiry approach. However, this manipulation did not come from a malicious intent. Rather these attempts at manipulation were all articulated as efforts to limit the negative point-of-view or the negative concerns of the citizenry to moderate any negative impact on the process. For example, many civil servants offered strategies or techniques to guard against the negative viewpoint, including using small

groups, rotating people through different groups, assigning different meeting times, holding no open forums, and establishing and enforcing ground rules.

The second issue related to the challenge of the potential for manipulation of the citizenry is that Appreciative Inquiry could be used inappropriately by untrained public managers to legitimize governance decisions. Some respondents felt that it might be better and more beneficial to use an Appreciative Inquiry approach after elected officials had already made a governance decision, although this would violate the principle of Appreciative inquiry of inclusion of stakeholders from the beginning of the process. Finally, the third issue related to this challenge is that the process could be manipulated and subverted by the citizens themselves.

Many interviewees related that people often send paid advocates to citizen participation efforts on their behalf to argue their position and to help ensure a favorable outcome. Also, many respondents alluded to the fact that the negative citizens or the so-called “professional” citizens will show up and attempt to dominate the conversation. Others stated that some of these citizens would attempt to subvert the political process through this direct citizen participation route; in effect, violating the system of representation. Next the fourth challenge is examined.

#### *Theoretical Implications Regarding the Challenge of the Utility of Maintaining the Status Quo*

At issue with the fourth challenge of the utility of maintaining the status quo is that public administration in the United States has developed over the course of American history and it has always been set within a political context. One cannot realistically discuss public administration outside of this context (*e.g.*, Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006). Should public managers then change the way that they are conducting the running of government and adopt an Appreciative Inquiry approach? Is it ethical, as a local government manager, to agree to follow the consensus of the people who participated in an

Appreciative Inquiry process while ignoring those who choose not to participate? What about the issue of the common good?

This final challenge was addressed by interviewees'. After analyzing answers to the twelve interview questions, three issues relevant to the discussion emerged: local government managers do not have to change how things are done now, representativeness is a consideration, and public managers only have so much administrative discretion. First, many respondents maintained that local government managers do not have to change how things are done now arguing for maintaining the status quo. These civil servants stated that citizens, especially those with a positive view of government, have no motivation to come out to citizen participation efforts and participate in their own governance. What is more, most interviewees argued that citizens do not have to because of America's system of government. We live in a representative democracy not a direct democracy. If local government managers were to institute an Appreciative Inquiry approach they would most likely still get the negative people coming out resulting in a disproportionate influence on governance.

The second issue regarding the challenge of the utility of maintaining the status quo is that representativeness is a consideration. Many interviewees noted that local government managers are primarily going to get only the negative minority, those who have a bone to pick, coming out to participate. They will not get a good cross section of the citizenry. Also, many maintained that minorities and impoverished citizens would not be as adequately represented in direct citizen participation efforts, if at all, because of time constraints and other factors adversely affecting participation efforts of people belonging to this socio-economic group.

Finally, the third issue related to this challenge of the utility of maintaining the status quo is that public managers only have so much administrative discretion and power. Civil servants still have to answer to elected officials. This is the way that the citizenry holds local government managers

indirectly accountable. Respondents pointed out that at some point local government managers have to go back to their elected officials. Then they claimed that the issue becomes one of being able to deliver on what they have promised to the citizens who participated.

In addressing the four challenges to public administrators who might want to use an Appreciative Inquiry approach at the local government level to increase citizen participation three other theoretical implications present themselves. First, given that the responses to the majority of challenges centered on issues concerning the omission of the negative point-of-view, some type of discursive space in an Appreciative Inquiry approach should be created for the negative “voice” to be heard. This dialogic space should be at the front end of the process. It might be addressed in a multitude of ways. For example, using deliberative democracy may be one avenue to explore because the latter part of this technique requires dialogue.

The second theoretical implication of the findings related to the challenges facing local government managers is that Appreciative Inquiry should only be used where the environment supports its application. For example, where citizens are used to citizen participation efforts, where they want to be involved in their own governance in a more direct way, and where a culture of participation already exists. The third theoretical implication of the findings is that local government managers wanting to use Appreciative Inquiry to increase citizen participation in their local communities should already have an effective working relationship with their elected officials and where they have already received permission or garnered strong support for engaging in an Appreciative Inquiry process with the citizenry regarding some specific, amenable policy issue (*e.g.*, land-use planning, visioning projects, etc.).

*Summary Discussion of the Theoretical Implications Regarding the Four Challenges of Public Managers Using Appreciative Inquiry in a Local Government Setting*

It is clear that these four challenges to local government managers who may want to implement Appreciative Inquiry to increase direct citizen participation need to be addressed and that they are context specific; meaning that each public administrator will have to decide on his or her own if it is an appropriate approach to use given the community that they serve in and the policy that is at issue. However, as previously mentioned, there are policy areas where the approach may be used more effectively such as land-use planning and visioning projects. There has also been support in the data, outlined above, for overcoming these four challenges.

Regarding the challenge of context, it may be that Appreciative Inquiry might be better utilized in a political environment than in an organizational environment and in a community where a strong history of successful, effective direct citizen participation exists rather than in a community without such a history. Also, the use of an external, skilled facilitator trained appropriately in Appreciative Inquiry is a key element that cannot be overly emphasized. Additionally, establishing ground rules at the beginning of the process, or put another way adequately structuring the process, is a way of garnering buy-in from the citizens to the approach. There is a strong possibility given the right setting that public managers can get citizens to agree to the parameters of Appreciative Inquiry and as a result the participants could be more likely to adhere to the norms of the approach through the process. Also, having the support of elected officials for the Appreciative Inquiry initiative could make it extremely effective.

For instance, the increased public participation could add procedural as well as substantive justice to the process. Also, decisions by governmental actors could be seen as being more legitimate because of the democratic nature of the approach. Further, the process could improve the citizenry's

perception of government and the public interest could better be served by the discourse engaged in throughout the initiative. In a word, the challenge of context could become the *opportunity* of context.

Regarding the challenge of unrealistic expectations, public managers could address the negative in a substantive manner without restricting citizens' "voice" and without having the focus of the meeting turn negative, as suggested by some of the interviewees as cited in the data. During the setting of ground rules and even throughout the process as the negative comes up, public servants can acknowledge past transgressions and apologize for previous grievances. For example, they might say that "yes, in the past there have been some things that we [*i.e.*, local government administrators and elected officials] have done poorly and we are sorry for that but now we want to work with you [*i.e.*, the citizens] to make sure that government does a better job and that the public interest gets served."

With the setting of ground rules and the acknowledgement of past issues, effective facilitators do not have to let the process be "hi-jacked" by "NIMBY show stoppers." It is legitimate for public managers to remind participants of the guidelines of the approach that they have agreed to. This can also be an opportunity for civil servants to educate citizens as well as to learn things about the people they help govern. In short, public managers do not have to allow an Appreciative Inquiry approach to be dominated by the negative citizen(s) rather it can be used, if handled correctly, to empower the positive citizen(s).

Regarding the challenge of the potential for manipulation of the citizenry, public managers with their administrative discretion can ensure that this does not occur. In chapter two of this dissertation this line of reasoning was introduced. Rohr (1976, 1998) has made the argument that civil servants need to act in an ethical manner and that they have an obligation because of the oaths they make (*e.g.*, to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America) to use their administrative discretion in such a way that the "regime values" of America are upheld. If, in a public administration context, the positive is

what is in the public interest, then public managers have a duty to see that the public interest is pursued. Acting in accordance with this perspective of ethical administration should help guard against any type of manipulation on the part of administrators or citizens<sup>80</sup>. Put simply, public managers should act to guard against any form of manipulation and to make sure that the rule of law is upheld.

Regarding the challenge of the utility of maintaining the status quo, an argument can be made that change is constant and that change can be a good thing. While maintaining the status quo is a valid consideration and radical changes in governance should not be the rule, there are times when change is preferable. Just because something has always been done one way does not mean that society has not matured or that the way it has always been done is the best way (*e.g.*, at one time slavery was thought to be a legitimate institution but as a nation our values and perspectives have changed).

Also, as discussed at length in chapter three of this work, the literature suggests that direct citizen participation continues to grow in the United States and that there are many public managers who are looking for ways to engage the citizenry they serve on a more substantial level; to engage them also in more dialogue to improve governance and pursue the public interest. In light of these two arguments, the utility of maintaining the status quo is called into question, at least in some circumstances. Therefore, this issue ceases to become a challenge in certain situations or settings. Finally, public managers should have a close working relationship with their elected officials so that they can make the best use of their administrative discretion.

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<sup>80</sup> Rohr (1976, 1998) acknowledges that his approach to ethical decision making is subjective and that it is not without ambiguity but he maintains that it is still useful. He writes, “[I]n studying Supreme Court opinions, the bureaucrat will be exposed to many conflicting interpretations of American values. Whenever possible, he or she will look for some consistency in the values of the American people, and the judicial process with its concern for precedent will be of some help. Frequently, however, mutually exclusive values will arise within the tradition and the bureaucrat will have to choose the position that seems most appealing and persuasive. There should be no embarrassment if two bureaucrats choose interpretations of American values that are mutually exclusive. The purpose of ‘regime values’ is not to make all bureaucrats march in lockstep. There is no one ‘authoritative’ interpretation of the American experience that all bureaucrats must adopt. What is important is that they accept the moral obligation to put themselves in touch with the values of the American people. Just how those values are interpreted is a decision only the bureaucrat himself can make” (Rohr, 1998, p. 28).

In sum, public managers should be aware of these four potential challenges but they need to also understand that these challenges can be overcome, or may even cease to be issues at all, given the right set of circumstances. Administrators should determine if they can use Appreciative Inquiry effectively based on local conditions. They should not be discouraged outright by the potential obstacles, though a sober assessment of Appreciative Inquiry's appropriateness needs to be conducted. In addition to the theoretical implications related to the four challenges facing local government managers who might want to use the approach in their communities, there are also additional theoretical implications of the findings arising out of the themes identified using content analysis.

*First General Theoretical Implication Related to the Research Question: Public Administrators Should Not Force an Appreciative Inquiry Approach*

The theoretical implications from the findings suggest several things for public managers to consider before attempting the use of any Appreciative Inquiry approach at the local government level to increase direct citizen participation. The first general theoretical implication of the findings is that even though civil servants are looking for new ways to engage the citizens they serve, they should guard against the inclination of forcing new approaches in such a way as to make them work. Put simply, if it does not fit, do not force it. It was interesting to discover that most respondents agreed that time and interest level were the biggest challenges to increasing direct citizen participation in general. And, because of this almost all interviewees claimed that if they could choose one initiative to increase citizen participation they would invest in more e-government initiatives.

For example, one interviewee stated that the "more people you have involved [in a citizen participation effort] the more time it takes." People do not have the time to get educated to a level that enhances participation or involvement. In short, citizen participation efforts are "too time consuming."

Peoples' "willingness to take time to be involved" is an issue that cannot be ignored. Another respondent maintained that because of limited resources and time somewhere along the way "you're [*i.e.*, local government managers] going to skip a step" in the process. The reality is that local government managers are dealing with finite resources, mainly time. "Everyone's [*i.e.*, citizens and local government managers] limited in time."

Others provided the following responses. Appreciative Inquiry is too time consuming, especially the requirement of one-on-one appreciative interviewing. The biggest challenge to Appreciative Inquiry is for "citizens having enough time to be involved."

Getting citizens who are very busy to come out and participate is problematic. "Fitting it [*i.e.*, Appreciative Inquiry] into the fast paced" environment local government managers operate within is challenging. "It's [*i.e.*, Appreciative Inquiry] an investment of time, energy, and resources" that are already limited.

There is an "increasing competition for time [*i.e.*, time for people is an issue]." The "biggest challenge is time, everybody values their time." With Appreciative Inquiry "time and energy first-and-foremost" are issues because it takes a lot of time to engage and educate citizens and people are very busy in their own lives. "Anytime you work in a collaborative process [like Appreciative Inquiry] it is going to take more time." Regarding limited resources and an Appreciative Inquiry approach it is all about "time, time, time; not money, money, money." And, finally, one city manager related that in the 1970s the "perception was that people would be working fewer hours by now but it has actually gone the other way, peoples' work is more taxing and time consuming then it used to be." As stated previously, because of the issues of time and interest level many respondents noted that they would improve their e-governance initiatives if provided with the resources.

Examining the issue of increasing e-government initiatives further, interviewees were asked specifically, if they were given unlimited resources, the absence of a political context, and complete authority and control, how they would increase citizen participation in local government. By far the most prominent and interesting answer was that they desired to implement or increase the use of e-government and other related initiatives such as Internet marketing and advertising. A few examples are presented here.

One of the respondents alluded to the necessity of alternate approaches such as e-government initiatives to reach the citizenry by asking “if nobody watches t.v., listens to the radio, or talks to their neighbor, how do you [*i.e.*, local government managers] communicate with them?” Another interviewee echoed this sentiment while at the same time being more specific stating that “I think we [*i.e.*, local government managers] need to be more effective in getting information out to the community in ways [that] they can access it.” The Internet has helped but local government managers have to maximize its potential. Another civil servant argued for e-government stating that public managers need to get people better access to local government through e-government “where a citizen can pick and choose their own time as opposed to having a meeting.” This respondent surmised that, local government managers will only increase citizen participation “long-term through technology as we [*i.e.*, local government managers] bridge that technological divide.”

Still other administrators stated the following. E-government can save a lot of time for people. “How do we [*i.e.*, local government managers] deal with blogs?” How can local government managers be more proactive to counteract the detrimental negative blogs? E-government should be used for increasing feedback loops and increasing communication between citizens and public managers. Local government managers should also spend some resources upgrading their localities’ websites. E-

government can be used by local government managers for “real time follow-up as to status on issues.” And, public managers can use the Internet and electronic means for information dissemination.

*Second General Theoretical Implication Related to the Research Question: Structure and Clarity are Important*

The second general theoretical implication of the findings is that, before implementing an Appreciative Inquiry approach, the model to be used by local government managers should be clearly defined, formal, and highly structured. All of the stages of the Appreciative Inquiry model should be well thought out and articulated by public managers before beginning a citizen participation effort. And, all stakeholders should be aware of the guidelines and understand their role in the process before participating. In short, structure and clarity are important.

*Third General Theoretical Implication Related to the Research Question: Appreciative Inquiry is not a One Size Fits All Solution*

The third general theoretical implication of the findings is that Appreciative Inquiry is just one approach that may be used by local government managers to attempt to increase citizen participation. Further, it is more amenable and appropriate in some areas rather than others. Public managers should only seriously think about using an Appreciative Inquiry approach if it fits the policy scenario or situation appropriately. This determination will need to be made by local government managers who are familiar with the local environment and who also understand the Appreciative Inquiry approach preferably with the assistance of an outside consultant who is able to guide and facilitate the process effectively. As many respondents pointed out, Appreciative Inquiry is not a panacea.

*Fourth General Theoretical Implication Related to the Research Question: A Conducive Environment and the Support of Elected Officials is Critical to the Success of an Appreciative Inquiry Approach*

The fourth general theoretical implication of the findings is that both the political and community environments must be conducive to using Appreciative Inquiry. Support of elected officials is crucial to its successful implementation. Most respondents agreed that if local government managers did not already have rapport, trust, and an established track record of fair direct citizen participation with the citizenry, then Appreciative Inquiry would most likely not be effective. Moreover, almost all interviewees mentioned having to get the approval of elected officials before they could even use an Appreciative Inquiry approach. Many emphasized that more than just politicians' tacit approval is required for Appreciative Inquiry to succeed. Rather, it would require their positive support.

*Fifth General Theoretical Implication Related to the Research Question: An Effective Facilitator is Key*

The fifth general theoretical implication of the findings is that an external, highly trained, competent, and skilled facilitator should be used to guide any Appreciative Inquiry approach so that the process is not mismanaged or misapplied. Most, if not all, city managers or their designees agreed that this component was the single most important factor related to the potential success of Appreciative Inquiry being used to increase citizen participation. Many also stressed that for the facilitator to be most effective, he or she should be external to the local government. For example, the city manager or any of his staff should not act as the facilitator of an Appreciative Inquiry process because citizens will likely view an external consultant as being more legitimate and more objective. And, an external consultant will have the advantage of not having any negative history with the citizens.

*Sixth General Theoretical Implication Related to the Research Question: Negativity will have to be Addressed*

The sixth general theoretical implication of the findings is that before using an Appreciative Inquiry approach local government managers should understand that they will have to deal with the negative in some way because it will come up. A dialogic or discursive space should be created at the front end of a highly structured and defined process or some other mechanism for dealing with the negative that does not violate the integrity of the Appreciative Inquiry approach; specifically, a discursive space that allows for the constructive handling of the negative citizen or their less than positive input into the process.

*Summary Discussion of General Theoretical Implications*

Although Appreciative Inquiry, as it is conceptualized currently, might appear to be well suited for use by managers in the public sector to increase citizen participation at the local government level, the research findings suggest otherwise. The results of this study tend to support the finding that an Appreciative Inquiry approach should not be used by public managers to increase citizen participation in local government unless they can meet the aforementioned theoretical criteria. In addition to the limitations regarding the implementation of Appreciative Inquiry by public managers in local governance, there are also the five challenges that need to be addressed.

The data do not suggest that these concerns are mitigated by the potential benefits of Appreciative Inquiry. Rather, the use of an Appreciative Inquiry approach in this way would fundamentally challenge the notions of representative democracy, oppress, suppress, or otherwise manipulate the citizenry, and potentially further erode public trust in the bureaucracy. The risk may simply not be worth undertaking. Finally, even if the ideal situation materialized, the opportunity presented itself, and the potential challenges could be overcome there are still the issues facing direct

citizen participation in general. All respondents in this study agreed that the majority of people either do not want to be involved in governance issues at all, only want to be involved if a situation negatively affects them, or would like to be involved but just do not have the time to participate. Despite the theoretical implications of the findings, this research is still significant

### *Significance of the Research*

The theoretical implications of the findings are important to the field of public administration in five ways. First, this work adds to the scholarly literature on direct citizen participation and Appreciative Inquiry within the fields of public administration and organizational development specifically and political science generally. It addresses the gap in the literature where scholars and administrators call for new, innovative approaches to increase citizen participation and argues that Appreciative Inquiry is an approach that should not be attempted to be used toward this end unless certain limitations are considered and steps to address them are implemented. Also, this research contributes to studies that are focused on current local government citizen participation efforts, in effect, contributing to what Yin (2003) terms explanation building; providing a “snapshot” picture in time of how citizen participation exists now in certain cities in the Southeast with populations of between 40,000 and 250,000 citizens.

Second, it provides local government managers, who are interested in using Appreciative Inquiry in local government to increase citizen participation, with serious food for thought. It outlines for their consideration the primary concerns that they might have with using such an approach with citizens in relation to matters of governance. The study presents and evaluates several caveats and challenges. Also, conducting this field research has made more local government managers aware of Appreciative Inquiry and its potential use at the organizational level.

Third, as a descriptive, exploratory study, the findings of this research suggest that an Appreciative Inquiry approach should not be attempted by researchers or practitioners to be used in this way for future research without first exploring and addressing the implications previously outlined. This work has the potential to save time, money, and resources for both administrators and academicians interested in pursuing Appreciative Inquiry in this way by presenting the obstacles that an Appreciative Inquiry approach presents to local government citizen participation efforts. Also, it has emphasized, explored, and discussed a gap identified in the academic literature.

Fourth, this research project is significant because it begins to illuminate the nonprofit sector as a potentially fertile ground for further Appreciative Inquiry efforts. It provides an opportunity for local government managers to realize the potential to work collaboratively with nonprofit entities on Appreciative Inquiry projects. It suggests that Imagine initiatives might be nonprofit organizations that public managers might reach out to as community partners in attempts to increase more direct citizen participation at the local government level.

Fifth, scholars in public administration who are also in academe may consider teaching Appreciative Inquiry in political science, urban planning, and public administration graduate programs to increase or round out their students' proverbial "toolbox" of skills. Many local government managers in the field of public administration are not aware of Appreciative Inquiry and its potential benefits, especially at the organizational level, even though it is established in the private sector, specifically in the realm of organizational development. This work contributes to the cross-fertilization of ideas between the public, nonprofit, and private sectors in the United States. In the final section of this dissertation's conclusion chapter directions for future research are highlighted and discussed.

### ***Directions for Future Research***

This dissertation addressed whether or not it would be feasible for public managers to use an Appreciative Inquiry approach to increase citizen participation in local government. Using an interpretive conceptual framework this study focused on emergent social processes and how local government managers interpret their world and make meaning out of their professional experiences. This research attempted to ascertain the subjective thoughts and opinions of public managers as elites to answer the research question.

Having answered the question and used the data to support the conclusion that Appreciative Inquiry should not be used by local government managers in this way unless certain conditions are addressed, other possibilities emerge. Specifically, the not-for-profit sector provides an alternate venue for Appreciative Inquiry's use. Building on the arguable successes in limited instances within this sector should be a priority; especially, given the collaborative nature of public administration and the nonprofit sectors and the fact that issues directly related to governance such as social networks, community building, and social justice are addressed therein.

In conclusion, future research regarding Appreciative Inquiry should focus on bridging the divide between nonprofit organizations and their potential community partners found in the persons of local government managers. For example, initiatives such as Imagine Chicago should explore collaborative relationships with public managers in local government, and vice versa, and both should work together to achieve common governance goals such as providing for the public interest. Further, a highly defined and structured model of Appreciative Inquiry should be developed for use to include a mechanism for adequately addressing the negative or self-interested citizen and his or her input.

The researcher is currently working on developing such a model called Appreciative Democracy. And, also, a normative role for the public administrator should be developed that meets the criteria identified in this research project. The researcher is also currently working on developing the parameters of such a role called the Appreciative Administrator.

The deliberative democracy approach and its potential use with Appreciative Inquiry should also be explored. Moreover, the theoretical foundations underpinning Appreciative Inquiry, specifically Gergen's (1994, 1999) conceptualization of the social construction of reality, should be thoroughly investigated on a more philosophical level, adequately dealing with the neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) literature<sup>81</sup>. Furthermore, once this Appreciative Democracy model is developed, a local government that meets the criteria should be identified. The model should be implemented as a natural experiment. Additionally, research still needs to be conducted regarding the gap in the literature related to local government managers discovering new, innovative ways to engage the citizenry in the limited instances where direct democracy efforts have their place. Particular attention should be given to e-governance strategies.

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<sup>81</sup> This is the literature addressing the science of neuro-linguistics which is interested in the mechanisms of the human brain underlying language comprehension, language production and the abstract knowledge of language. Specifically, NLP is an interpersonal communication model concerned with the subjective study of personal change, communication, and language. Notably, NLP is offered as an alternative to psychotherapy (*e.g.*, Bandler & Grinder, 1975, 1979, 1981).

## APPENDIX A

### EMAIL TEMPLATE

Mr./Ms. \*\*\*\*\*,

Thank you for your expedient reply and your willingness to participate in my research. I look forward to meeting with you on \*\*\*\*\* at \*\* p.m. As we discussed earlier today I have attached a short blurb on my project and the 12 interview questions I will be asking you when we meet for your perusal. Again, the interview will not be recorded and it will be anonymous. I will be taking handwritten notes and you will have an opportunity to review the notes afterward. Thank you again for your time sir/ma'am.

Sincerely,

Shawn Schooley

## **APPENDIX B**

### **SCRIPT FOR RESEARCH**

Hello, my name is Shawn Schooley. I am a Ph.D. student in public administration and policy at Virginia Tech. I am doing some preliminary research into the area of citizen participation at the local government level. I am interested in interviewing you regarding your thoughts and views about a new potential approach, Appreciative Inquiry, for increasing citizen participation in local government. Your position as a City Manager, your education, and your professional experience makes you an invaluable source of information for my study. You could provide me with insight into citizen participation and; specifically, whether or not you think this new approach may be feasible.

Appreciative Inquiry is an approach that was developed in the private sector in 1986. Since its inception it has enjoyed great success at the organizational level in the private sector. The distinctive element of Appreciative Inquiry is that it focuses on the positive. The process includes sharing positive stories, imagining a preferred future, and strategizing to achieve that future. Again, what makes Appreciative Inquiry different than other citizen participation techniques is that you do not inquire into problems and issues; you acknowledge them but move on toward positive inquiry.

If you agree to be a part of the project, I would need to schedule a face-to-face interview with you at your convenience in your office. The interview will last approximately one hour. I will have a few questions to ask but you will be free to tell me what you think I need to know. Your identity will remain anonymous as I will not be recording your name at all in my records. Any information I use in my writing will be presented such that your identity or the city you work in will not be identifiable. Thank you for your time and I appreciate your help.

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe citizen participation in local government hinders or enhances your job?
2. What is your experience with citizen participation in local government?
3. How and to what extent have you attempted to engage the citizenry you serve?
4. What are the challenges in your experience to increasing citizen participation?
5. What challenges do you see regarding using an Appreciative Inquiry approach to increase citizen participation in local government?
6. What can you perceive as the benefits to an Appreciative Inquiry approach?
7. Where do you think the Appreciative Inquiry approach can be useful?
8. Are there elements of an Appreciative Inquiry approach you may have used in engaging the citizenry in the past?
9. Do you think an Appreciative Inquiry approach used by public administrators is feasible to increase citizen participation in local government?
10. How would you increase citizen participation in local government?
11. Do you think it would be realistic to acknowledge the negative but move forward with a focus on positive inquiry when dealing with citizens regarding difficult issues such as the one in the anecdote I shared with you?
12. Can public administrators using an Appreciative Inquiry approach stay focused on the positive without getting into old issues?

**Note: Questions 11 and 12 are based on the following fictional anecdote:**

Joe Citizen was victim to eminent domain last year and had to sell his house to the local government so the new municipal golf course could be built. Now he is attending your appreciative inquiry summit to vent his anger wanting to focus on how he feels he was abused by the system.

## APPENDIX D

### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

#### APPROVAL LETTER

*An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution  
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**Office of Research Compliance**

1880 Pratt Drive (0497)

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

540/231-4358 Fax: 540/231-0959

E-mail: ctgreen@vt.edu

[www.irb.vt.edu](http://www.irb.vt.edu)

cc: File

DATE: November 3, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: James F. Wolf

Shawn Schooley

FROM: Carmen Green

**IRB Exempt Approval:** “Appreciative Democracy”, IRB # 06-658

I have reviewed your request to the IRB for exemption for the above referenced project. I concur that the research falls within the exempt status. Approval is granted effective as of November 3, 2006.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

FWA00000572( expires 7/20/07)

IRB # is IRB00000667.

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY AND  
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## APPENDIX E

### Interview Notes – Actual Data - 11/13/06 A

#### Handwritten Notes

##### Demographics:

Age: 60

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 30

Years as City Manager: 6

Previous Local Government Experience: Assistant City Manager, Acting City Manager

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

##### General discussion:

- people may be more willing to participate from a positive perspective “too often a negative perspective” is used
- attempts in this city have been made with town hall meetings and public hearings
- Town Hall meetings were held in different locations and advertised in many places but there was not enough participation (e.g., three attendees sometimes)
- Challenge is to get people involved
- E.g., personal property tax issue (i.e., car tax) – public hearing held but not a lot of participation which led to uninformed citizenry and shock when tax went up and people did not understand why

##### Q.1 A.:

- citizen participation can make the job easier
- “don’t know what citizens want you’re doing what you want ... basically have a dictatorship”
- remember that the city council is going to do what’s best for the community as they see it and sometimes 1 or 2 people can sway the city council one way or the other
- “citizen participation is vital”
- City manager can use discretion but has to go back to the city council at some point

##### Q.2 A. :

- Public hearings; attempt at town hall type meetings at the neighborhood level in many different locations; neighborhood coalitions (there were many different neighborhood coalitions at one time); citizen academy (first year, great participation, used to educate citizenry about local government) (educating the citizenry is key)

Q. 3. A. :

- See the answer to question 2
- Also added a c-span broadcast of the city council meetings approximately 6 years ago, meetings are covered live
- Public information officer position has been added in the last few years and it is their responsibility for facilitating the citizen academy project

Q. 4. A. :

- Biggest challenge is getting people interested
- “How do you get people to come out and participate?”
- “What do you do?”
- For example, advertised for the public hearing regarding the personal property tax and participation was low
- How do you get word to people and get their cooperation/participation?

Q. 5. A. :

- How do you get people to participate?
- Being positive may be the problem
- “people tend to dwell on the negative”
- Difficult but not impossible
- We tend to remember the negative more than the positive; human nature
- “negative stirs deep emotions”
- People “get pissed off and mad”
- “like elephants, [people] can’t forget it until we get revenge”
- “people have a problem with accepting the answer they don’t want”

Q. 6. A.:

- Focusing on positive would be a refreshing change
- “if we focused on positive we may get things done”
- “makes it smoother” (i.e., governance process)
- For example, municipal golf course issue: “big war, not a battle, but a war”
- (continued golf course e.g.) Because of the negativity surrounding the issue there were a lot of things public administrators could not do that would have been ultimately beneficial to the citizenry and community – they were limited because of the negativity
- If there was cooperation/collaboration it could have been much better and ultimately the municipal golf course was built anyway

Q.7 A.:

- Municipal golf courses; sale of high school to university; landfill locations; most government activities
- “any types of activities or programs that aren’t viewed as traditional government type things” (e.g., municipal golf course construction)
- “anything that would benefit the entire community” (researcher note: this is an excellent way of framing this issue I had not thought of; generally I focused on

specific policy areas but considering the number of people affected is an excellent way to think about it)

- Not useful on things like drug task force or other things that have to remain confidential or secret for law enforcement or security purposes
- Not useful on issues that do not effect a lot of the citizenry; for example, issues of purchasing land from individuals or small groups

Q. 8 A. :

- No, usually focused on negative things
- Only time in past really was when we first started with the municipal golf course Issue; tried to keep the focus positive and present all the positive aspects of it and even brought in many different experts to discuss and present the benefits of constructing a municipal golf course
- “opposing group turned everything around: we’re from the government and we’re lying to you” and all the experts work for the government and they’re lying to you too
- Notably, people in favor of issues very rarely come out to public hearings, it’s generally always the people opposed to an issue that show up

Q. 9 A. :

- “I think it’s feasible” but it would be very difficult to get it going
- “obstacle to overcome with public administrators; is this a fad?”
- “Is this going to be good next year?”
- My overall feeling of local government managers in VA is that they realize they have to be more flexible and go with the “flavor of the day”
- Regardless is Ai is a passing fad or not public administrators may have to consider using it
- Hi-performance government is on the rise (e.g., Darden school at UVA runs an executive education initiative for city managers and their assistants)
- For example, benchmarking and budgetary goal setting (i.e., You give me x amount of money and I will meet my stated goal for that money)

Q 10. A. :

- Citizen Academy – educate the citizenry as to what local government is all about
- “the citizens have to understand” why decisions are made
- Education key
- For example, 10 people may show up at the public hearing and oppose an issue but 20 may call the city manager or city councilperson and support the issue, “who do you listen to?”
- What about the tens of thousands of other citizens that didn’t participate at all? (i.e., no call, no show up to meeting?)
- “If I [city manager] don’t go along with the people at the meeting then I don’t listen to the people” is how it is characterized
- Even if no one called or showed up you still have to do what’s best in the public interest; it’s a difficult position to be in

- Rezoning issues are usually a hot topic engendering a lot of emotion and seem to always gravitate to the negative side (e.g., particularly issues like student housing)
- “How can you communicate to the citizenry better?”
- “If nobody watches t.v., listens to the radio, or talks to their neighbor, how do you communicate with them?”

Q. 11. A.:

- Not realistic, just going to bog it down (regarding the anecdote)
- “He’s going to be mad at local government forever”
- “once people have a negative experience it’s almost impossible to ever view government positively again”
- Same on the other hand with the positive experiences, though most experiences with local government have been negative
- It’s the same with ex-government workers, sometimes worse: after they retire they sometimes have negative things to say about the local government
- Negative stuff triggers more emotions and deeper feelings
- It’s more difficult to overcome the negative
- How soon can you get people involved in a citizen participation project? As soon as I throw out an idea that is equivalent to “that’s what we’re definitely going to do”
- It’s an issue of collaboration early on – people view it as policy already if the city manager or local government administrator says it or mentions it

Q. 12. A:

- Difficult
- “somewhere along the line you’re going to have to know about the old issues”
- You need to pay attention to history not to make the same mistakes or to re-offend
- It’s possible if you account for past issues for example in the eminent domain anecdote
- With private citizens you really don’t have any control regarding buy-in to the approach whereas you would at the organizational level
- Private citizen “you can try and keep it positive but there will be a point you can’t work with them anymore”
- For example, negotiators for the city already try to keep the focus positive but the people they talk to remember the negative and will not move past the negative until they are redressed
- Again, it’s human nature to focus on the negative and it is generally only the negative people that show up to participate
- Negative people are going to be against the government period
- And, it necessarily doesn’t have to have anything to do with the current issue it could be an issue that happened years ago and is totally different but they will want to focus on their negative experience(s) with local government

## APPENDIX F

### Interview Notes – Actual Data - 11/14/06 B

#### Handwritten Notes

##### Demographics:

Age: 55

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 32

Years as City Manager: 12

Previous Local Government Experience: Assistant City Manager, Deputy City Manager

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

##### General Discussion:

- we are “a lot more involved in citizen participation things in lots of different ways”
- there is a risk for public administrators in going into a meeting not being able to control it or know the outcome
- overall land issues are very prevalent
- people need to have discussions about what is good and what is not good
- if you create an environment (e. g., public meeting) where the naysayers are allowed to run the meeting then they can negatively affect a positive citizen participation process
- small groups can mitigate against the negative people and minimize their effect on the larger collective of citizens
- “public needs to be allowed a legitimate voice”
- Success of citizen participation efforts depends a lot on what public administrators want – collaboration with citizens or do they want just what they want

##### Q. 1 A. :

- “ultimately enhances it”
- Sometimes initially seems to slow the process down
- Almost always need a couple more steps
- Needs to be fairly early on to get collaboration
- Could backfire on you especially if “you know what you we’re going to do why’d you even ask us”

##### Q2. A. :

- Because of the university community, being heavily democratic, and most council persons come from an active neighborhood group and they are advocates
- A lot

- Almost every major issue includes citizen participation
- We do more than just a public hearing
- Especially in cases concerning city planning and land use
- Over 50 advisory boards and task forces
- “every major policy initiative has citizen involvement somehow”
- Fairly common

Q.3 A. :

- See answer 2
- “who has an interest and how do we involve them?”

Q. 4. A. :

- Gallup poll = people spend on average about 4 minutes a month thinking about local government
- Don’t lose sight of the fact that with most people things are going well; ergo, it is more difficult to get them involved in issues that are not NIMBY type issues
- “how do you creatively get people involved?”
- Get involved with the neighborhood about an issue, start a process, but the problem sometimes is attrition – the process or approach takes a significant amount of time and therefore some people move out of the area or neighborhood and that becomes a problem because it changes the dynamic
- People move

Q. 5 A. :

- We try and use Ai elements by trying to focus things on the positive
- The process is structured so that if there is a naysayer(s) their voice is mitigated by the use of small groups and rotation through the groups
- From a policy standpoint a positive approach is good
- “have to give people an ability to express their negativity or it becomes the dominant issue”
- Focusing on the positive is done primarily by the facilitator
- “environment needs to be structured so the environment is right”

Q. 6 A. :

- Focus on the positive
- “most people want to be optimistic and positive”
- Minority of people can change the discussion to the negative and some issues become difficult to get away from once that happens
- Staff plays a mediator role – how do you bring people together

Q. 7 A.:

- Land planning
- Community development
- Bigger issues affecting more people
- Takes time but you can move the focus to the positive

- You have to slow things down for collaboration

Q8. A. :

- Focused on the positive
- Told stories among the council persons at a retreat and it was intended to be a positive focus
- Small focus groups with the focus on stories and on the positive

Q. 9. A. :

- Yes it is feasible
- “definitely in our community its essential to getting a result”
- Citizens here are very active and we cultivate that type of citizen participation and community culture

Q. 10. A. :

- We use different strategies
- Focus groups
- “how do you create opportunities for people to be involved in issues that interest them?”
- For example, tax benefit issue = sunshine laws expired, needed to get it renewed but public administrators had to engage both the technical folks and the citizens in discussion regarding the issue for the renewal to be possible
- Involving the citizenry is the bottom line especially in discussion
- “take the time to involve people and hear them out”
- Getting out and trying to do it
- Need to inform and educate the citizenry

Q. 11. A.:

- See earlier answers
- Facilitation techniques available to deal with negative people and naysayers
- Facilitated discussion and breaking people into groups can help mitigate against the negative citizen
- Educate people as to the alternatives
- “negative needs to be heard, recorded, and followed-up on” but doesn’t need to derail the entire group or project
- Land issues again are very prevalent and important

Q. 12. A.:

- See earlier answers
- Keep educating people
- Do not blow off naysayers or negative citizens, rather listen to their concerns
- Fix problems separately
- “listen to people and follow through on educating people”
- When you organize a meeting take the floor at the beginning and set the tone
- Structure the endeavor

## APPENDIX G

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 11/16/06 C

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 51

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Female

Education: Masters Degree

Years Experience in Local Government: 27

Years as Intergovernmental Relations Officer: 7

Previous Local Government Experience: Legislative Lobbying

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

Q.1 A.:

- Yes, both
- “you have to have citizen participation because ultimately it’s the citizens that run government through the electorate”
- City council needs to be responsive
- You need a way to be responsive and to gauge where citizens are at
- “can be detrimental in two elements” (1) it can be very time consuming (e.g., chronic complainers and/or gadflies)
- NIMBY issue because the focus there is “too personal, too narrow, not for the greater good” potentially
- The “more people you have involved the more time it takes”
- There has to be a balance

Q.2 A.:

- Minimal
- Tried to get citizen involvement on key legislative issues
- Very difficult to get people motivated and to do something
- Committee (6-8 months ago) Youth Initiatives – looks at issue of gang violence within the community (it tries to focus on the positive)
- Appreciative Inquiry can be very feasible depending on the policy
- Very positive results from the Youth Initiative
- Public hearings
- Planning and neighborhood issues – generic go into the community and take comments or issues
- Town hall style meetings

Q.3 A.:

- See answers to question 2
- Putting citizens on commissions and advisory committees

- E.g., mayor's committee to look at changing the mayoral race to election

Q.4 A.:

- “getting citizens to pay attention and care is always difficult”
- “difficult getting them to understand a complex issue well enough to be really involved”
- People don't have the time to get educated to a level that enhances participation/involvement
- “informed citizen involvement and their willingness to take time to be involved”

Q. 5 A.:

- “too time consuming”
- E.g., the appreciative interviewing component
- Some issues like eminent domain might not lend themselves to that
- “some issues may not be amenable to that type of use”
- Creating consensus could be very problematic especially within the larger community
- Could create unrealistic expectations – e.g., not enough resources
- Lends to frustration – can't always do what consensus agreed upon

Q. 6. A.:

- “potential to make citizens feel more connected to government”
- “to feel like they have an actual voice in the running of government”
- Creating community pride
- Creating positive community spirit
- Can be helpful for elected officials to gauge where the constituencies feelings lie for prioritizing
- “help dissuade some of the negativism toward government”
- Things not done to them but with them (i.e., collaboration)

Q. 7 A.:

- Community planning
- Parks and recreation
- Neighborhood development
- Transportation
- “any of the more global what do we want our community to look like” stuff
- Public safety
- Different community safety issues e.g., gangs
- Community events e.g., parades and festivals

Q. 8 A.:

- Youth Initiative – positive focus
- Development projects – developed task force with positive bent
- E.g., historical projects like an American History museum

Q. 9 A.:

- “yes, in some instances”
- “could be added to the toolbox”
- Yes if you have the time and resources “very labor and time intensive”
- “but general principle of it has some merit and we do some things that are at least on the edge of that already”

Q. 10 A.:

- Increasing communication
- “I think we need to be more effective in getting information out to the community in ways they can access it”
- Internet has helped but we have to maximize that potential
- Creating citizen groups that have special interests at different levels
- Email system citywide
- Communication is key
- Extra effort to reach out to the citizenry
- Identify change agents in the community and keep them abreast of the happenings in the policy area of their interest

Q. 11 A.:

- Possible
- Takes a skillful moderator/facilitator
- “have to allow the person to be heard or else you create an angry situation”
- But you can’t let them take over the meeting or bog it down
- “perhaps the way is to get some people to share the positive side” of some issue in the past
- Redirect into a more positive rather than negative direction
- We have to do it anyway with current citizen participation efforts

Q. 12 A.:

- “human nature says if the results of the past get challenged you tend to get defensive”
- Public administrators have to be prepared to respond differently
- Need an approach that turns the negative into an opportunity to move forward
- “citizen participation may not be seen as the primary role of local government but it may be a means to an end”

## APPENDIX H

### Interview Notes – Actual Data –11/21/06 D

#### Handwritten Notes

##### Demographics:

Age: 60

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: Masters in Urban Affairs

Years Experience in Local Government: 33

Years as City Manager: 3

Previous Local Government Experience: Director of Planning, Assistant City Manager

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

##### General Discussion:

- Conceptually appreciative inquiry would be great

##### Q. 1 A.:

- Enhances
- Citizen participation “is involving your customers in the delivery of your services”
- E.g., Coca-Cola and the new formula analogy related
- E.g., airline industry
- “what allows for a better service delivery?”
- Having customers engaged helps with finite resource allocation
- “where is it we need to have services?”
- You need to hear feedback or else there is a “fundamental disconnect” between citizens and local government
- Use private sector models

##### Q. 2 A.:

- “run the gamut”
- Planning charettes “planning on fast food”
- Televised city council meetings
- Government access channel
- Website
- Email/Internet
- Informative initiatives
- Use local media a lot
- Brochures/newspapers
- Inserts in utility bills for information dissemination and education of citizenry
- Public meetings

- “problem with public meetings – world we live in now people have a lot of things going on” time issue
- Only people being impacted negatively will come to the meetings or else they will send a paid advocate
- “you don’t get a cross section” of the citizenry
- Public hearing = too limited regarding involvement
- “hard to get a representative sampling at the official public meetings but you still do them”
- Budget message on website and community objectives

Q. 3 A:

- See answer to question 2

Q. 4 A.:

- Time, “everyone’s limited in time”
- Finite resources (mainly time)
- Getting participants to participate
- Sometimes don’t have the time to make some decisions
- “go slow to go fast”
- How do you get citizens involved?

Q. 5 A.:

- Getting the time
- “building it in structurally”
- Limited resources and time and somewhere along the way “you’re going to skip a step”

Q. 6. A.:

- “improved service”
- “improving the understanding of the service or project itself”

Q. 7 A.:

- Public safety e.g., community policing
- Community planning
- Transportation planning
- Capital project decisions e.g., road projects
- Budget and finance

Q. 8 A.:

- Comprehensive planning e.g., corridor plan
- Positive focus
- Challenges in citizen participation to Appreciative Inquiry = sometimes there are professionals who are snooty e.g., engineers can be close minded
- Resistance (e. g., passive-aggressive) to Appreciative Inquiry by public administrators

- Administrators have to buy-in to approach
- “if their hearts not in it the process doesn’t work well”
- E.g., traffic engineers would probably be resistant to Appreciative Inquiry

Q. 9 A.:

- Yes
- It can be done
- “like anything it isn’t a panacea”
- However, it is not amenable to all situations
- “as long as you have the time to do it”
- Some situations will lend themselves to that process
- As long as there isn’t a time constraint making it infeasible

Q. 10 A.:

- More use of website and email
- E-government
- “look for opportunities all over the place where we interact with our citizens”
- “time, time, time, not; money, money, money”

Q. 11 A.:

- Yes, we have that situation now that we deal with e.g., parks, airports, roads
- “need to acknowledge and respect” the citizen’s views
- Got to have empathy – let citizens “vent and move on”
- “go to a point and then you have to cut them off”
- Bottom line is we deal with this now in other citizen participation efforts and we deal with it
- Depends on how good your facilitator is
- Facilitation skills are key

Q. 12 A.:

- Sometimes yes
- “yes, generally”
- Sometimes you have to get into the old issues e.g., racial issues
- If there is some intractable issues e.g., flood plain, feelings of discrimination of African Americans
- Careful about picking the issue or the policy area
- “Appreciative Inquiry is not a panacea”

## APPENDIX I

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 11/22/06 E

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 49

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years experience in Local Government: 25

Years as City Manager: 1

Previous Local Government Experience: Assistant City Manager

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

Q. 1 A.:

- “depends on the kind of participation”
- Different opportunities for participation formal to informal (e.g., public hearings to citizens calling in with a service request
- “skeptical in our profession about citizen participation”
- ICMA and those types of groups push citizen participation
- “we’re doing our jobs well if citizens don’t have to think about us”
- Two things local government does: 1) regulate behavior and 2) provide services
- “citizens shouldn’t have to participate” if local government is doing its job
- “if you’re obeying the laws you shouldn’t have to have contact with us [local government]”
- Citizen participation raises red flags because it is not politically correct
- Could hinder or enhance
- Some aspects you do want citizen participation (e.g., neighborhood watch, crime issues, citizen/public servant partnerships)
- Citizen participation in terms of citizens volunteering to do things (e.g., parks and recreation as coaches etc.)
- Wide spectrum – in formal citizen participation “our processes empower the negative 20%; the positive 20% like what you’re doing and don’t show up, the indifferent 60% don’t come out regardless”
- Citizen participation empowers the negative – it brings out the negative
- “three people saying something negative could seem like a tidal wave to elected officials”

Q. 2 A.:

- Public hearings
- Community watch meetings
- Neighborhood association meetings

- Town hall meetings – “real good example where you empower the negative, it’s brutal for public administrators”
- Note: why have town hall meetings when people can contact us via email or phone?
- Citizens’ boards and commissions
- Advisory boards
- Note: “most citizen participation is disjointed”
- The legal issue with citizen participation is that it interjects “arbitrariness and capriciousness into local government”
- Citizen appointees “assume their opinion is more important than other citizens” they haven’t been elected though
- “calls for citizen participation at times being an effort to advance a very narrow political agenda to advance a certain group”
- Citizen participation inflates the individual citizen
- People forget “we live in a republic not a democracy”
- “one flaw in citizen participation now is your people who have a broad perspective” do not choose to participate in local government and part of it is attributed to the negativity that is out there
- “nothing wrong with citizens requesting services or volunteering”

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- Broadcast our council meetings
- Bi-annual citizen survey

Q. 4 A.:

- How do you increase participation by the indifferent 60% or the positive 20%? These are the ones you want to get involved
- Getting these 80% of people involved
- If there is no direct issue then people do not really have time to get involved

Q. 5 A.:

- “so much of the self-initiated citizen participation comes from a negative place”
- Getting them to adopt a bigger picture/broader perspective may not be feasible; many of them just want to get their problem taken care of
- Some people want what they want done
- “many citizens are very parochial; if they’re energized enough to get involved they are generally mad”
- “there is a highly energized negative minority” and the media keeps covering it
- How open will the negative people be to moving beyond the old stuff?
- “keep bringing old stuff and wont let it go”
- Too many people have an axe to grind and these are the people that show up to participate
- Possibly mitigate the negative with random focus groups but it would require a different methodology than we have historically used

- Key = how do we get the non-negative people involved?

Q. 6 A.:

- A focus on the positive and work from that would be good
- Good if you can get people to that point and get them involved it is just not very realistic
- Better for the staff and public administrators too

Q. 7 A.:

- Possibly land planning
- Focus groups to get random sample from a neighborhood
- Groups of people in a particular department (e.g., parks and recreation)
- “any number of the subject areas, I think the key would be how you structure the process in which you use it [Ai]”
- Not going to work in the formal processes we currently use
- Appreciative Inquiry might work in a planning process but you would have to be careful about where to use it

Q. 8 A.:

- Try to focus on the positive in the public information that we put out (e.g., press releases)
- Emphasize the positive on the public relations side of the house
- Town hall meetings (e.g., department heads present at the beginning “unidirectional from us to them”)

Q. 9 A.:

- “yes, you could use it if you structured things right”
- “increasing citizen participation is not necessary all the time and is not necessarily a good thing”
- Could be used very limitedly
- Not feasible on a day-to-day basis
- Not a major need for increasing citizen participation everyday if we are doing what we should be doing
- “you’re never going to involve all the citizens”
- “You have to guard against the negative minority”

Q. 10 A.:

- See ways already mentioned
- “more and more frequent random sample surveys”
- “more focus groups”
- “Things where you have validity rather than a negative point-of-view”
- More statistically valid types of citizen participation
- If citizens are not informed I do not want them participating
- Informed citizenry is more important for federal or state government than local government

Q. 11 A.:

- Very hard to do in my experience
- Many local government actions have a dramatic personal affect on people
- Very, very difficult
- Meeting/summit “where anyone can come to it, you’re not going to get the positive”
- “would depend a lot on how you structured the process – “better approach would be random selection; ransom sample of people”
- Appreciative Inquiry process could work well with established community watch groups
- “more formal it gets and open to everybody the less useful it gets” and vice versa
- “think an Appreciative Inquiry process would work very well in some communities” where the community environment is different
- Beginning in a more positive environment would work better
- Smaller communities it may work better, larger urban environments would be much more challenging

Q. 12 A.:

- Public administrators could but perhaps not the citizens
- Definitely cannot use it in every citizen participation setting

## APPENDIX J

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 11/22/06 F

#### Handwritten Notes

##### Demographics:

Age: 58

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 30

Years as City Manager: 12

Previous Local Government Experience: 3x City Manager, Assistant to the City Manager

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

##### Discussion:

- “internally [at the organizational level] I really see a place for it”
- “Externally it becomes quite a challenge”
- Limitations I see right off = public administrators meeting with a group are “limited about what he or she may promise because of the city council”
- Flexibility depends on the your in
- “sounds like the exact opposite of what they [public administrators and citizens] normally do in public meetings”
- Facilitation skills would have to be developed

##### Q. 1 A.:

- Yes, I believe it enhances the outcome of government
- “yes it also hinders if you define hinder as it takes more time” etc.
- Ultimately citizen participation serves the community

##### Q. 2 A.:

- Public hearings legally required and otherwise
- Neighborhood meetings
- Inform community beforehand on issues
- Educating the community beforehand
- Information dissemination through local cable television

##### Q. 3 A.:

- See answer to Q. 2
- We try to be more proactive not just rely on what is required
- Citizen surveys
- We go a step beyond

##### Q. 4 A.:

- Time constraint

- “difficult sometimes to explain very complicated and complex issues”
- “could be a very negative meeting”
- “not being able to promise an outcome”
- To what extent do you say you are going to have citizen participation and in what decisions?

Q. 5 A.:

- Timing
- The competing negative
- Training
- Issue and scenario selection would have to be cautious
- Timing; especially, interviewing one-on-one (i.e., time consuming)
- Money and other resources

Q. 6 A.:

- Positive is when you have a split neighborhood or community
- “how do we get to where we all want to be?”
- Achieving cohesion/synergy

Q. 7 A.:

- Internally at the organizational level
- Externally – “where you have factual not emotional based decisions”
- Useful in comprehensive land use planning

Q. 8 A.:

- All of us [public administrators] go into meetings wanting to come out with positive outcomes

Q. 9 A.:

- “on a limited basis”
- Could not be used for everything
- If you pick your issue it can

Q. 10 A.:

- Key = information
- Rely on local media a lot
- Get information out and seek genuine input
- Seeking citizen information is very important
- Try to get out in advance on major issues before making big decisions
- Get information
- Use citizens on ad hoc committees, advisory groups, boards, etc.
- E-government = more use of the Internet
- Neighborhood associations and groups

Q. 11 A.:

- Not realistic

- He will want to always focus on the negative
- Too difficult to buffer that
- Any group, city, or setting you will have these difficult, negative people
- “if you don’t let them talk then all you’ve done is create another spark point or area of criticism”

Q. 12 A.:

- “always a risk, always history to every issue and every event”
- If there are concerns they have to be discussed or addressed (e.g., race issues and slavery)
- Could be more difficult to get citizen buy-in
- “ultimate responsibility is to make sure the process is fair and open”

## APPENDIX K

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 11/27/06 G

#### Handwritten Notes

##### Demographics:

Age: 49

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 19

Years as City Manager: 9

Previous Local Government Experience: Assistant City Manager

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

##### Q. 1 A.:

- Enhances the job overall
- “I don’t believe in today’s environment you can be successful without citizen participation at least some level”

##### Q. 2 A.:

- Neighborhood level: neighborhood program – encourage input at that level = very successful
- Various visioning processes citywide and specific land use plans (e.g., downtown master plan and center city master plan)
- Public hearings – “very limited in its success, too late at that time to have input that is meaningful and that the citizens feel positive about”

##### Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- Every two years citizen survey (telephone and mail-in)
- Citizens’ academy citywide
- Police/fire safety academy
- “structured input related to land use”
- Citizen input into major projects

##### Q. 4 A.:

- Apathy “whether it’s people don’t care or don’t have time”
- Time – unless it is a direct issue that affects them (e.g., NIMBY issues)
- “more mobile population – if it does not impact me now or in the next five years they may not focus on it much”
- “so many different ways people get information and to try and solicit engagement” getting people involved requires outreach to several different media in order to reach all people

Q. 5 A.:

- “sounds like it [Ai] focuses on the future and a vision rather than immediate issues”
- “few people that walk-in that tend to want to dominate the meeting with negative input” – this would need to be addressed by a skillful facilitator

Q. 6 A.:

- “would encourage overall a more positive view of the topic at hand or the city itself upfront”
- Positive view of government
- “once it became more institutionalized you’re probably going to get more people to come to meetings like that”
- Working on the positive would potentially encourage more participation

Q. 7 A.:

- “any planning meeting lends itself to that [Ai]”
- “where variables haven’t been decided in any major project”
- Citywide or smaller area
- E.g., park projects
- Community visioning
- Land use and “other types of quality of life elements people would like to see in the community”

Q. 8 A.:

- “in a lot of our processes we do get people to focus on” the positive
- A few neighborhood plans that focused on the positive and what the future should look like
- Ask about the positives of the community

Q. 9 A.:

- “I think so, yes”
- More challenging to keep on focus and resources become an issue
- “resources is the biggest challenge”
- Already seen that at the neighborhood level
- “can be a very positive part [of local government]”

Q. 10 A.:

- First, “have to break it down into smaller chunks” – a particular neighborhood or section of the city
- Break it down into topics “people can get their arms around”
- “always got to be working toward developing a sense of community”

Q. 11 A.:

- “yeah, but you have to acknowledge it because others in the meeting will be sympathetic to his concern”

- Need to let people know what kind of input process was used in the past
- “someone has to be strong and acknowledge the concern but move on so that it doesn’t become the focus of the meeting”
- We try and stay away from letting individuals influence the crowd as it is now
- Try to dilute negative influences by having different meeting times

Q. 12 A.:

- “yes, it’s possible but it will be very difficult”
- “Takes a great deal of leadership, planning, and setting the stage upfront so everyone understands the guidelines of the meetings”
- Meetings can turn negative but it is generally the fault of the facilitator(s)
- Sometimes Ai could be better after a decision by the city council has been made so people do not have their time wasted (e.g., new county/city jail)

## APPENDIX L

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 11/27/06 H

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 46

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 16

Years as City Manager: 4 months

Previous Local Government Experience: Assistant City Manager, Director of the Office  
of Organizational Effectiveness, Budget Analyst

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

Q. 1 A.:

- “enhances it by far”

Q. 2 A.:

- “variety of things”
- Public hearings
- Public forums
- District and ward meetings
- Special interest forums (e.g., bond referendum)
- Small group work meetings
- Citizen surveys

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer to 2
- “call center 311-type line”
- Added four positions for neighborhood liaisons with the goal of citizen engagement

Q. 4 A.:

- “biggest challenge is citizens having enough time to be involved”
- Time commitment
- “getting citizen’s interest is a challenge”
- Many times those who have self-selected to participate already have an issue good or bad that motivates them to come out

Q. 5 A.:

- “to bring elected officials up to speed” so that they embrace it
- “easier to try something different if you have best practices and/or examples to cite”

Q. 6 A.:

- “starts from the positive instead of the negative”
- “instead of being a complaint session; what can we do to move forward?”
- “intuitively, we try to do that in neighborhood settings when there is a major issue”
- Take all the negative energy and focus it in a positive direction

Q. 7 A.:

- “neighborhood issues, where there are some common goals”
- More difficult with an issue where you have strong, opposing interest groups

Q. 8 A.:

- Try to focus on the positive
- Try and use positive stories
- “most people want the same things, it’s just a matter of how to get there and who’s going to pay for it”

Q. 9 A.:

- “maybe”
- “would it actually increase participation or would it be a tool to improve outcomes?”
- “not sure a positive approach will persuade more people to engage”
- Spend most time on property cases (e.g., NIMBY issues)

Q. 10 A.:

- “long-term through technology as we bridge that technological divide”
- Get people better access maybe through E-government
- “where a citizen can pick and choose their own time as opposed to having a meeting”

Q. 11 A.:

- “I do think it’s realistic”
- “is it perfect? No.”
- OD people say let us deal with it upfront so it does not poison the process
- Helps others understand where you are coming from

Q. 12 A.:

- A good politician does this when facilitating a group
- We already do this but politicians are better at it
- “yeah, I think so”

- Allowing people an alternate way to vent (e.g., a citizen call center would help)
- “I think there’s merit in it”

## APPENDIX M

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 11/28/06 I

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 54

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 29

Years as Deputy City Manager: 1

Previous Local Government Experience: Assistant City Manager

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

Q. 1 A.:

- “enhances the outcome”
- At times especially at the local government level it can be powerful
- Conflicts between business and residential
- “city government becomes referee to determine what’s best for the entire community”
- Does make for better decisions
- Need great citizen buy-in to what you are doing because the majority of funding comes from local taxes
- E.g., urban space use – public space issues

Q. 2 A.:

- Citizen surveys (i.e., telephone surveys)
- Public hearings – “most formal and traditional but also the least effective”
- Over 50 boards and commissions comprised of citizens/residents (i.e., term we use here) (e.g., planning, parks, history, etc.)
- Note: “is the participation you’re getting representative or is it biased?” – “are we getting good input?”  
stakeholders’ groups (e.g., affordable housing versus redevelopment and historical areas – participation process used for education, community, and feedback; better informed)
- Charettes (e.g., land use areas – designs for parks)
- Focus groups/nominal group techniques (e.g., dog park and adjacent residents)
- One-on-ones telephone and email (majority is email and people expect immediate responses)
- Providing information regarding government itself (e.g., cable cast city council meetings and they are live on the Web and meetings are also digitally archived)
- “whole range of things we do depending on the circumstances”

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- “first time we’ve done stakeholders’ groups” was this year
- Citizen debate over major projects (e.g., building bridges)
- Smaller group work helps mitigate personality differences and you achieve “real participation rather than more staged participation”

Q. 4 A.:

- Getting the “professional citizens” always coming out
- Issues of representativeness
- “tend to dominate the conversation”
- Getting citizens who are very busy to come out and participate
- Overcoming language and cultural differences (e.g., African-American and Latin populations)
- “traditionally difficult to get low income people to participate”
- Some view government as the enemy
- Difficult to engage citizens because they are very busy
- “staff people have to like the citizens they’re dealing with; not personalize interactions”

Q. 5 A.:

- Getting people to come out
- Time
- Projects and decisions need to be made quickly because that is what most citizens want
- “fitting it into the fast paced” environment we operate within

Q. 6 A.:

- Having the citizens buy into a decision or at least understand why we are doing what we are doing
- “getting people to deal with each other on a non-conflictual basis”
- Having effective discussions
- Decisions can be accepted because people understand the rationale behind the decisions
- “process where people understand each other”
- There is “potential value in an Appreciative Inquiry approach; matter of determining where it is practical”
- Can turn around negativity into citizen support

Q. 7 A.:

- Land use planning definitely – has the most effect on citizens
- “planning capital projects”
- Where you have something with a potential of high conflict (e.g., public housing)

Q. 8 A.:

- Trying to get people to come together and spend time talking
- Small group breakdown to engender participation

Q. 9 A.:

- “yes, it can be feasible”
- Administrators need to find alternative citizen participation approaches

Q. 10 A.:

- E-government and the Internet
- “how do we deal with blogs?” How can we be proactive to counteract the detrimental or negative blogs?
- Neighborhood associations have a number of interactive websites
- E-government can save a lot of time for people

Q. 11 A.:

- “an after the fact situation is hard to deal with”
- May not be realistic in all situations
- Need to build relationships and trust and stay solution focused
- After the “anger mode” we can move forward
- Need very good facilitation skills
- Can mitigate it some with a one-on-one
- If meeting is run right they can feel the process was fair

Q. 12 A.:

- Sometimes you have to deal with the negative and the angry citizen(s)
- Similar to stages of grief
- “you can do it without focusing on the negative but you at least have to acknowledge it”

## APPENDIX N

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 11/30/06 J

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 53

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA/MA in Planning

Years Experience in Local Government: 23

Years as City Manager: 6

Previous Local Government Experience: County Administrator

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

Q. 1 A.:

- Both
- “I think it’s essential and I’m committed to it, it’s just part of the job”

Q. 2 A.:

- Public hearings
- Neighborhood meetings
- Emails, phone calls, walk-ins
- Citizen task forces
- Citizens’ academy
- Citizen monitoring committees
- Tourism task force

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- Publish press releases
- Information out to citizens
- “active website”
- “citizens can sign up to receive emails about new things happening in the city”

Q. 4 A.:

- “most people don’t want to think about local government until their ox is gored”
- Tend to hear more when something negative has occurred
- Time issues
- If things are running smoothly “it’s not our goal to” be involved in peoples’ lives
- Lack of interest until something happens that bothers them (e.g., NIMBY issues)
- Citizens must take the first step
- Issue of getting the right information out
- “a lot of assumptions and false assumptions”

Q. 5 A.:

- “one challenge is to get a group of people together who would accept the” guidelines of the approach
- Have to be proactive
- “has to be in a non-threatening environment”
- Getting them to agree to the rules and follow them
- Need a good facilitator to keep them on task

Q. 6 A.:

- Focuses on positive outcomes as long as you get agreement
- “people are always willing to agree to a decision if they were involved in the process”
- Getting them involved helps educate public administrators
- “they are stakeholders, they ought to have a voice”

Q. 7 A.:

- “when you’ve got some understanding that change to a better future is desirable”
- Less technical issues
- Anything that requires balancing competing issues or concerns
- “more strategic rather than tactical issues”

Q. 8 A.:

- “I think we have”
- E.g., comprehensive plan = focused on the positive
- E.g., solid waste collection program = community meetings and focusing on some positive outcomes
- Envision a better, preferred future
- “try to focus on what they could become”

Q. 9 A.:

- “not sure if it will increase citizen participation”
- “think it could enhance the quality of citizen participation”
- More involved process requiring time commitment and continuity
- “yeah, absolutely I think it can be helpful”
- Stuff that does not require immediate implementation

Q. 10 A.:

- Things already mentioned – need to do more
- “just being available to citizens”
- People need to have a positive experience with public administrators
- Greater use of cable television and outreach programs
- Need more informed and interested citizens

Q. 11 A.:

- “I think it’s realistic but difficult”

- Problems that occurred years ago are a hindrance
- If you are going to talk about the positive you must acknowledge the negative but move on
- Need a strong facilitator
- It is a challenge
- Got to be in an environment where you are trying to make positive change
- Got to find a way to appease or mitigate the continually negative citizen

Q. 12 A.:

- “no, but you just got to not spend too much time there”
- They will come up and you will have to deal with them
- People have difficulty focusing on the common good

## APPENDIX O

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 12/05/06 K

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 52

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 26

Years as City Manager: 18

Previous Local Government Experience: City Manager 3Xs

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: Little experience/familiar

Q. 1 A.:

- “enhances the work by virtue of lending support, commitment, and ownership to the plans we implement”

Q. 2 A.:

- “community wide goal setting and strategic planning processes”
- Bond referendums
- Capital improvement projects
- Community meetings
- Public hearings (e.g., land use issues)

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- “very active community building program”
- Go beyond things mentioned in answer 2
- “regular neighborhood meetings and community outreach”
- Establishing public administrators as community liaisons – “how do we positively engage as an organization with the existing neighborhood organizations?”
- “how can public administrators bolster a sense of community and provide citizens access through all media?”
- Web bases and e-news forums
- Cable television and print media – information dissemination
- Now with the web it is more interactive (e.g., project tracking)
- E-government
- A lot of communication and neighborhood outreach programs

Q. 4 A.:

- “it’s an investment of time, energy, and resources and requires skilled communicators and delegation of responsibility to very task-oriented managers”
- Public administrators need a communication plan as part of an effective management system
- “changing the culture and putting management systems in place”
- Elevate the role of public information officer to improve community action and to be a liaison
- Need coordination of efforts to be effective
- Marketing and communication are necessary

Q. 5 A.:

- “disconnecting the political process”
- Negative focus is inherent in a political context
- “people get elected to solve problems”
- How do we get public administrators to move from a problem solving focus to a positive focus with citizen feedback?
- “contrary and in direct conflict with direct democracy”
- Not every stakeholder will have buy-in or an amenable perspective on Appreciative Inquiry
- Political context can be very volatile
- Time, trouble, etc.
- Culturally politics are focused on the negative
- Appreciative Inquiry can be “in direct conflict of the most basic of political traditions”
- Very competitive environment especially in local politics

Q. 6 A.:

- “anytime that you can engage people and set aside their pet peeves and talk about what’s really in the best interest of the community” is ideal
- If you can do it “you have the potential to escape the mundane and the petty”
- Can create something of benefit and be long-term
- “more likely to stick and less likely to be a victim of pendulum-like political swings”

Q. 7 A.:

- Council/staff annual meetings
- Strategic planning
- Bond programs
- Capital improvement programs
- “major goal setting processes”
- Significant community and economic development
- Visioning processes
- “with adaptation it can also be used in race relations”

Q. 8 A.:

- Focused on the positive in some instances (e.g., land use exercise in Liberty, MO where administrators created a vision for downtown development regarding historic preservation)
- Positive image of a preferred future for downtown – “what do you want downtown to look like?”
- Positive images for the final outcome
- “positive image, vision driven”
- E.g., goals for Dallas Initiative – community goals; asking people “what’s your dream?” kind of processes

Q. 9 A.:

- Yeah
- “think people have to be facilitators and some successful pilot projects”
- Need marketing through organizations like ICMA, etc.
- Trained public administrators could be successful with it
- “only 5-10% of local governments aspire to be hi-performance to begin with”
- You have to “design and tailor it to a niche in the market”
- Especially some variations on techniques of it
- “you could sell it” but not in “less dynamic or progressive communities”

Q. 10 A.:

- Citizens’ academy to educate the citizenry and to change people’s perspectives of local government
- Other avenues of indirect community building
- Citizens’ police academy
- “programs to share the big picture vision”
- Need to increase understanding to get increased citizen participation
- “participation begins with building knowledge and awareness of what you’re participating in”
- You have to show people what is in it for them

Q. 11 A.:

- “I think you can on front page issues but not on front door issues”
- NIMBY issues could be very difficult
- “I think you can segue people who don’t have an emotional attachment”
- Possible
- Yes, you can structure meetings so that they cannot be hi-jacked
- Have a structured forum/milieu to mitigate against that
- Do not create an open forum from where one can dominate with the negative
- Possible to use techniques to mitigate against NIMBY show stoppers
- This citizen will either fall into group conformity or else they will leave on their own

Q. 12 A.:

- “anything’s possible”
- Very difficult for the city manager to be in the facilitator role but you really need some community leadership
- There has to be a leadership style that supports it
- You have to have the necessary political support (e.g., city council)
- It can occur in local government; however, as primarily the idea of the public administrator it becomes much more difficult
- Professional public administration is about focusing on long-term planning and strategies
- Necessary ingredient is professional support

## APPENDIX P

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 12/07/06 L

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 41

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MBA/JD

Years Experience in Local Government: 13

Years as City Manager: 4

Previous Local Government Experience: Assistant City Manager

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: Little experience/familiar

Q. 1 A.:

- “citizen participation is very important” but the challenge includes political issues
- I am a “strong believer in democracy”
- Citizen participation means different things to different elected officials
- “disagreement, disenfranchisement of the electorate in the U.S. is threatening democracy”

Q. 2 A.:

- Public involvement processes
- Design charettes (e.g., environmental efforts)
- Public hearings
- Open houses
- Public meetings
- Surveys
- Focus groups

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- Informational presentations
- “part of the responsibility of local government is to inform the electorate”
- Communication is key
- Website
- Media inserts

Q. 4 A.:

- “Increasing competition for time”
- Time for people is an issue
- “we have the luxury in America to ignore our government and things are just fine”

- Most times if it is not a crisis people do not want to show up
- A lot of turnover in our communities; transient population
- Citizens “investment in local government isn’t there”
- No interest unless it is a pressing NIMBY-type issue
- Elected officials may not value and support that dialogue
- Need trained individuals with engagement strengths
- “it’s an investment, communication’s not free”
- Getting citizen support
- Change in the local culture or environment – turning good-old-boy network issues into growing communities (e.g., “this is the way it’s always been done in this community”)

Q. 5 A.:

- “matter of training”
- “getting people who have the skills to manage that process”
- Skilled facilitators needed
- “ones that show up are usually the ones that have a bone to pick; they have a problem”
- Challenging to get people to show up with a positive focus

Q. 6 A.:

- Focus on the positive – “start to talk about what to do rather than what not to do”
- “what should we be doing to build on the successes we’ve had?”
- More productive
- Helps mitigate against the negative impression of government
- Improve the balance of their impression of government – not so negative an impression
- “opportunity to change an attitude” regarding citizen’s perspectives
- Organizational communication in local government is crucial – internally you have to include effective communication to be successful externally

Q. 7 A.:

- “respond to problem areas in the community”
- Economic development
- Neighborhood visioning
- “problem service areas” (e.g., zoning issues)
- goal setting processes
- community visioning

Q. 8 A.:

- do tell good, positive stories in Q & A’s – informational/educational settings

Q. 9 A.:

- depends “how do you lead while following” elected officials?
- Risk for city manager to do it – difficult role to play

- “in order to use the approach you really would need to have someone else in the organization who has the training to facilitate the [Ai] process”
- Need to have those individuals in local government who are trained and the Ai process is appropriate to their role

Q. 10 A.:

- “key to having positive public support is empowerment”
- People need to know their investment in the process is not in vain”
- There has to be that feedback loop
- “setting up those mechanisms for feedback loops” is critical

Q. 11 A.:

- “it depends on the skill of the facilitator”
- Depends also on the topic and on the group dynamic
- “1 to 3 out of 20 people you can probably get past it, if you have 12 out of 20 you’re not going to get past it”
- Depends on how you manage the process (e.g., community courtesy rules)
- Parameters of structure are important to success
- Hostile crowds can be too difficult

Q. 12 A.:

- “with the right training, yeah”
- About setting up ground rules and enforcing them
- It has the potential to get to the point it is “peer sustaining”

## APPENDIX Q

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 12/08/06 M

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 43

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: JD/Masters in Industrial Relations

Years Experience in Local Government: 7

Years as City Manager: 3

Previous Local Government Experience: City Councilman

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

Q. 1 A.:

- I am a “real believer in citizen participation”
- Can be problematic because citizens can be counterproductive to the whole if they have free range
- Citizens focus on their specific issues
- “important that city managers don’t lose perspective on constituents they serve but they have to be vigilant on managing the process”
- Issues with best interest of the city and available resources

Q. 2 A.:

- Advisory boards
- Citizen boards
- Citizen commissions
- Neighborhood councils
- Land use issues – identifying stakeholders, interviewing them, visioning, identifying what they value (e.g., riverfront master plan)
- Community meetings
- Community charettes

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- Public hearings
- Public meetings
- Citizen’s initiatives (e.g., renaissance group = transformation of downtown)
- Citizen “think tanks” addressing various topics that impact the city

Q. 4 A.:

- Apathy
- “seems there is a core group of people that are always taking the lead”
- Need a “galvanizing event or proposal” or else people just are not involved
- NIMBY issues get attention others do not

Q. 5 A.:

- “biggest challenge is keeping people from reflecting on the negative”
- “what’s wrong with where we are and why do we need to make that change?”
- Increasing older population coupled with attrition contributes to a sentiment of let us keep the status quo
- Why do we need to change?
- To keep people focused on the process and moving in that direction

Q. 6 A.:

- “it allows people or gets people to start thinking outside-the-box”
- What it cannot be to what it can be

Q. 7 A.:

- Land use planning = “would be a big one”
- Infrastructure planning
- Visioning projects (e.g., at the neighborhood level)
- “useful tool in creating strategic maps or developing a strategic plan for the city”

Q. 8 A.:

- Interviews, positive focus on the future
- Imagining a preferred future

Q. 9 A.:

- Yes
- “I think it can increase citizen participation”
- “approach itself is not necessarily” going to increase citizen participation on every issue – there has to be a galvanizing event

Q. 10 A.:

- Internet
- E-government
- Feedback to citizens – information sharing
- Increased communication and “real time follow-up as to status on issues”
- How do you measure intangibles?
- Harvard balanced scorecard approach = develop objectives, develop measures of objectives, and develop initiatives
- Citizen surveys
- More charettes
- More think tanks

- Innovative approaches to develop objectives

Q. 11 A.:

- “I think it’s realistic”
- “I think we do that now”
- You cannot please everyone all the time
- “you can try to mitigate that person’s problems on issues but at the end of the day you’ve got to move forward, focus on the positive, and see where you’re going to take it”
- You do this in ways already other than just Appreciative Inquiry
- “you have to acknowledge and move on or you’ll get bogged down and never move forward”

Q. 12 A.:

- It is possible
- “it’s desirable”
- Depends on the issue and the “critical mass that might be formulated around the negative”
- Just a few people and it can be possible but if you had the whole council or community against you it would not be possible

## APPENDIX R

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 12/11/06 N

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 54

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: Management Executive Development Program

Years Experience in Local Government: 26

Years as City Manager: 3

Previous Local Government Experience: Deputy County Administrator; Assistant City Manager;

Department of Budget and Research

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

Q. 1 A.:

- “I think on the balance it overwhelmingly enhances my job”
- Council is very susceptible here to making major decisions based on “squeaky wheels and naysayers”

Q. 2 A:

- Public hearings
- “very over the top with what’s demanded” in standard citizen participation requirements
- Public feedback
- Civic and neighborhood associations and structure
- Dedicated resources to citizen participation
- Land use planning and neighborhood planning initiatives/meetings
- Citizen task forces
- Citizen committees
- “every other year we do an extensive communitywide survey”

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- “everybody in the government is expected to engage citizens directly” we are very hands on here
- Roles for public administrators include taking citizen requests and responding to them within 24 hours
- Two year election cycle for mayor and council with results in a high level of accountability

Q. 4 A.:

- “biggest challenge I think is getting the people who are satisfied with and positive about government” heard rather than the negative people
- To “get the voices heard from people who are truly looking out for the good of the whole community”
- Presenting data and analysis to the governing body and citizens which is based on decisions, positions, and viewpoints that are based on facts and not opinions or personal interests

Q. 5 A.:

- Implementing it as something other than what we already do
- Getting people to come to consensus or agreement on what that positive future looks like

Q. 6 A.:

- Everything significant that we do we take into account the various interests regarding the positive outcome

Q. 7 A.:

- “any problem you deal with you start with where do you want to end up?”
- Visioning
- Analysis for feasibility of making changes

Q. 8 A.:

- “we encourage people to articulate a positive future”
- “positive vision of the future for the entire community” (i.e., a visioning document)
- Touchstone in all policy development

Q. 9 A.:

- “yeah, I think so”
- People are turned off by the negative and they do not show up to participate
- Public participation techniques need to be designed in such a way as everyone gets to be heard
- “to the extent this Appreciative Inquiry approach can counter those whose interest is to short circuit the process” it could be very beneficial
- “how do you neutralize the one tenth of one percent of people who are the naysayers in the community?”

Q. 10 A.:

- Internet and electronic means (e.g., you can share more information)
- E-government
- Making it easier to vote for people (e.g., maybe through mail and by extending the period of time)
- Civics and the way it is taught in the schools

- Information dissemination to citizens in the form of monthly newsletters, mail outs, list serves, Internet
- Keep things as “transparent as possible”

Q. 11 A.:

- Absolutely
- We already do that now
- “we train people’ on how to do this
- It is a “matter of showing and expressing empathy that’s convincing to people”
- Even the most negative people you run up against can be swayed toward the positive
- Citizens being uninformed is sometimes the real issue
- Communication is important to mitigate against the negative

Q. 12 A.:

- At “some point you have to clear the deck”
- It is that way in any interpersonal relationships
- To a certain extent you have to be able to get into some of the old issues
- “acknowledging and not dwelling”
- But they do have to be dealt with by demonstrating through word and deed a more positive approach
- “government at its essence ... is the institution in society within a given geographic area” having the legitimate authority to use force
- “governments are inherently coercive institutions”; ergo, the question becomes is government legitimate in the eyes of the citizens?
- Legitimacy is related to the ability to participate
- “being a public official is more than being a professional and/or expert” there is also a moral and ethical component
- Resources are exacted from the population and not necessarily based on the free choices people are making so government must be viewed by the citizenry as legitimate

## APPENDIX S

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 12/14/06 O

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 53

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 30

Years as City Manager: 4

Previous Local Government Experience: Parks and Recreation Director

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

Q. 1 A.:

- “it enhances your job, no question”
- “negative energy” = ICMA check out recent San Antonio meeting
- There “seems to be a trend that negative connotations are voiced at a much higher concern” in our society which subsequently creates more problems for cities
- The “average citizen doesn’t differentiate between local, state, and federal government”
- I am a proponent of local government because it provides the most direct services and direct accountability to the citizenry
- At the state and federal level there is a separation between the public administrators and the public
- “citizen participation is vital”
- Small negative vocal group has a larger potential impact than their numbers seem to be
- E.g., John Locke foundation in North Carolina is using that mechanism to achieve their goals (i.e., using the negative)
- “got to have citizen participation, the key is getting a broad base of citizen participation and to me that is the challenge”

Q. 2 A.:

- It “varies depending on the element, issue, and the department”
- Citizen survey
- Citizen boards
- Citizen advisory commissions
- We are “at a time when we’re not seeing as much interest as we once did” in citizen participation probably because of individual’s time constraints
- Parks and recreation (e.g., is huge because the “citizen initiates the contact” with local government)
- Council meetings are televised and attendance depends on the issue

- Public hearing

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- “pursue our website and try to attach to that group”
- New police chief was found with inclusion of focus groups comprised of citizens to get community input into the hiring decision
- Various public community meetings (issue focused)
- “participation varies in these” meetings
- Advertising is an element of getting citizen participation
- Advertising needs to be like private advertising
- We have to let the public know about services and opportunities to participate in decision making
- “people have been disenfranchised because they think we don’t care about what they think”

Q. 4 A.:

- Communication
- Getting information to people is difficult and traditional milieus have changed
- Time management and time constraints
- In the 1970s the perception was that people would be working less hours by now but it had gone the other way where peoples’ work is more taxing and time consuming
- E.g., readership of local newspapers is down across the country and we are attempting to go to direct mail (e.g., information placed in the water bill)
- We are a commuter community because of our location and that effects our information dissemination capability

Q. 5 A.:

- Advocates will definitely come to this type of process which could be both good and bad
- Results being economically feasible
- “is it statistically fair?”
- Have to discuss how to finance the services that are being advocated; need to tie finances to vision
- “double-edged sword”

Q. 6 A.:

- “you do indeed bring advocates out”
- “you begin to bring positives out that you don’t get now”
- Easier these days to criticize rather than to find the good in situations; ergo, you have to position yourself sometimes to see what peoples’ mindset is
- Ai could be a more balanced approach and it is potentially good
- In other formats like radio and television people can say whatever negative they want but in public meetings they are more fair and less negative

- People “a lot of times don’t have the facts to back up what they’re saying” therefore in face-to-face situations they have to make better arguments not just disparage

Q. 7 A.:

- Parks and recreation
- “in schools I think it could be used a great deal”
- Public education
- Environmental issues
- “to me it’s more broad issues that literally have to be addressed”
- Quality of life issues that impact the community
- Not police because the focus is generally on the negative to begin with
- “people want to live somewhere they feel comfortable”

Q. 8 A.:

- Positive visioning
- Note: government has to get their side out to counteract the negative
- Focus on disseminating positive information and public reporting on positive success stories
- “you have to really rally the positive at times to your community ... people still want to feel good about themselves and the community they live in”
- Because negative media sells better local governments need to work harder at getting the positive stuff out

Q. 9 A.:

- “I think you bring your advocates out’ but I do not know if it would increase participation of those who generally do not come out to participate

Q. 10 A.:

- Government academy (i.e., comprehensive 10 week program)
- Educational opportunities
- “we struggle with this”
- “you have to be resilient and not throw your hands up because people do care”
- More use of websites and the Internet
- Have to be resilient and pursue participation
- Direct information sharing through utility billing
- Community meetings that are issue driven or issue based
- “make it easy to participate”
- Design efforts that people can easily respond to public administrators in

Q. 11 A.:

- “absolutely, that’s actually how the meeting is handled now”
- Facilitators deal with this all the time and do it now
- Redirection

- “really got to have ... a real talent in facilitating meetings” (i.e., getting that meeting or group under control)
- Got to redirect back to what you are trying to get done and want to be specific to an Appreciative Inquiry approach

Q. 12 A.:

- “I think if the old issues come up you certainly have to recognize those issues but you then have to take those issues and move to the positive”
- E.g., the hiring of the new police chief
- “unfortunately most community meetings are negatively driven” – NIMBY issues tend to bring out more people
- But an Ai approach can definitely work – “sure it can work”
- Criticism will be it is not accurately reflecting the community because you are creating an environment to bring out the positive views only

## APPENDIX T

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 12/14/06 P

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 46

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 26

Years as City Manager: 2

Previous Local Government Experience: Deputy City Manager; Assistant City Manager

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: Yes

Q. 1 A.:

- “enhances it, handled properly”
- “always enhances, sometimes it’s more painful than it needs to be”
- Democratic process – citizen participation cannot be bad

Q. 2 A.:

- Meetings
- Public hearings
- Council hearings (very participative)
- Very rare to have large numbers of citizens involved because if it is not a NIMBY issue then it needs to be a specific interest to the citizens
- If things are going fairly well then not much citizen participation occurs

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- One-on-one with public administrators (i.e., face-to-face meetings)

Q. 4 A.:

- “developing the interest”
- “figuring out how to motivate people to get involved”
- Comparison can be made to voting
- If citizens believe their input will affect outcomes then probably over time citizen participation will increase

Q. 5 A.:

- “done very well ... it can work effectively”
- “probably the better of the tools for getting citizen participation”
- Can be perceived possibly as an effort at propaganda to increase a favorable view of government

Q. 6 A.:

- Gives ability to get a more “balanced set of input”
- If you ask for negatives you are going to hear negatives resulting in an imbalance
- Ai done right – you get at the negatives but also pull out positives leading to balance

Q. 7 A.:

- “where you’re looking for general input about the effectiveness” of government
- Trying to gauge community’s interest
- “you can use it in every process”
- Probably not in rezoning issues
- Anywhere you want people’s input
- “probably more effective the more ambiguous the issue is”
- Ai = be careful not to get too broad – tell people why you are doing what you are doing
- “if it starts narrow and goes broad it can be detrimental”

Q. 8 A.:

- Positive focus
- Storytelling
- Visioning

Q. 9 A.:

- “as feasible as any tool”
- If handled right the positive focus is not really a negative

Q. 10 A.:

- Negative issues are why they come out
- Who is impacted?

Q. 11 A.:

- It happens so you have to deal with it regardless
- Management is key
- Facilitation is key

Q. 12 A.:

- “if you’re skilled at it”
- Turn the negative into the positive

## APPENDIX U

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 12/15/06 Q

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 57

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 26

Years as City Manager: 17

Previous Local Government Experience: Assistant City Manager; Community Development

Director

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

Q. 1 A.:

- Enhances
- “most of the time it does; particularly if it’s structured properly ... it can get away from you”
- “be a real problem if you don’t have the right staff handling it” or at least give your staff the appropriate guidance
- Has to be a good understanding with the board (i.e., elected body) about what you are trying to accomplish – not grandstanding
- “I value the input of citizens”

Q. 2 A.:

- Citizen meetings
- Citizen committees
- Public hearings
- Charettes

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- “charettes are becoming more commonplace”
- Neighborhood visits
- Open town meetings
- Taking citizens to see other cities’ ideas (e.g., schools) for best practices

Q. 4 A.:

- “Biggest challenge is time, everybody values their time”
- They have to believe their input is valuable
- “Logistics sometimes”

- Need to garner buy-in
- Getting the information out to the people

Q. 5 A.:

- “biggest is really having the people with the skills to do it”
- Staff without good training could not do this

Q. 6 A.:

- Great benefit of citizen participation if you have open, honest discussions you can see what people are thinking early on
- “people respond to positive reinforcement rather than negative”
- Get a lot more out of the positive
- Citizens respond better and feel more open and energized
- “if they’re energized they’re going to be more creative”
- More creativity and synergy
- “I just think it’s going to produce a lot of results”
- The Ai process from the staffs’ point of view is that it takes more time
- Results should be longer lasting because people believe in it and have been a part of it and they can spread the word

Q. 7 A.:

- Community development
- “projects where you are looking for creativity or where you’re looking to make a major positive change, there’s no question it would be beneficial there”
- Possibly it can be used with different NIMBY issues despite the fact they are inherently negative
- Land use and planning
- Housing redevelopment initiatives
- Issues where you have change and need to educate people to what it could be like

Q. 8 A.:

- Yes (e.g., location of the new landfill)
- Visioning – “reinforce and paint the picture of what it could be”
- Focus on the positive

Q. 9 A.:

- “yes, no question”

Q. 10 A.:

- Other than normal marketing and advertisements and websites an traditional news media getting the information out to the public for citizen participation to occur
- Call-in radio show with the city manager
- “the attitude you convey” is very important
- Key thing in the public sector is the attitude of the CEO or city manager that he/she conveys to the staff (i.e., the importance and value of citizen participation/the positive angle or benefit)

- Context sensitive planning = representative group of 15 – 20 people and try to get consensus

Q. 11 A.:

- “really depends on the group you’re working with” (e.g., education level, reasonableness, objectiveness, etc.)
- Context is important – what has this group of citizens had to deal with in the past?
- Facilitator or some other community leader that can mediate and who are open to discussion
- “a lot would depend on who’s leading the meeting or group”
- Some of it is how good or interested your mayor or elected officials are

Q. 12 A.:

- “oh, yeah”
- Sometimes difficult
- But it happens all the time in citizen participation meetings now
- “it’s possible but it’s also possible to lose it easily”
- “level of negativity can reach a point where the techniques not going to work whatsoever”
- Might mitigate the negative by having more than one facilitator and they can have different skill sets or personalities (e.g., one authoritarian and one touchy feely type)

## APPENDIX V

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 12/19/06 R

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 42

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 14

Years as City Manager: 2

Previous Local Government Experience: Assistant County Manager; Budget Department

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

Q. 1 A.:

- “Oh it enhances it”

Q. 2 A.:

- Public hearings
- Community visioning initiatives – seek the input of specific sectors of the community and organize them into teams
- E.g., traffic calming
- Community focus-type groups

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- Neighborhood associations (e.g., formalized meetings with public administrators)
- “we engage the citizenry at many different levels”

Q. 4 A.:

- “time and energy first and foremost”
- Takes a lot of time to engage and educate citizens
- “always a bit of inherent negative friction”
- Service delivery is not specialized to neighborhoods
- Educating the citizens for a more global rather than NIMBY view
- Getting people to consider the negative impact government decisions may have on their neighbors

Q. 5 A.:

- “biggest one would be raising expectations”
- Outside-the-box thinking is good but the “reality is boxes are what make the world go round”
- “expectations can be created that you just can’t meet”

Q. 6 A.:

- “if you can mitigate the expectations there could be a lot of benefits”
- E.g., neighborhood college (i.e., 8 weeks to educate citizens)

Q. 7 A.:

- “planning in particular: land use, zoning, all those issues”
- Visioning

Q. 8 A.:

- Visioning
- Positive focus
- Indirect positive storytelling
- Notably, there are probably more areas we could use principles of Ai to focus on the positive
- “Where you have inherently negative and conflictual situations Appreciative Inquiry could potentially be very useful”

Q. 9 A.:

- “yeah, I think with participation the proof is in the pudding”
- People will participate if they think the government uses their input to solve problems in a win-win fashion
- “unless it leads to tangible outcomes it will be short lived”

Q. 10 A.:

- “I would love to have any number of community visioning, defining, planning, activities going on all the time”
- If we had a research and development type department like the private sector and could do citizen participation all the time
- “our mindset for the most part is grinding out the day to day stuff and solving problems”

Q. 11 A.:

- “no”
- You can turn negative into positive but not in this type of case
- If someone just shows up and wants to be negative you have to deal with them in some way

Q. 12 A.:

- “I think it’s possible”
- Comes down to techniques and scripting and how and who is steering the conversations
- If it has worked in organizations then it can work externally
- Internally you have passive-aggressive externally you have disgruntled citizens – in some ways at the organizational level it could be harder to address

- If you want more than just going through the motions you have to deal with the negative employee just as you would have to deal with an angry citizen

## APPENDIX W

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 12/22/06 S

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 58

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 35

Years as City Manager: 11 months

Previous Local Government Experience: Assistant City Manager

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

Q. 1 A.:

- “I think in general it enhances, but it has to be a very defined and directed way citizens participate”
- More formalized citizen participation approaches with main function as educatory
- If it’s structured and citizens are willing to spend time to be educated then yes
- Negative – very time consuming for both public administrators and citizens
- Get citizens to buy-in then they become advocates for what government does and that is an important benefit

Q. 2 A.:

- Public hearings
- Citizen groups (e.g., waste energy project)
- Citizenry advisory groups/committees
- All kinds of boards and commissions (e.g., framework for future comprehensive plan)

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- “when we have issues we create advisory committees”
- Crime watch groups
- Citizen police academies
- We do a lot of that but it is not necessarily broad it is directed toward specific issues
- Neighborhood groups or civic organizations we work with
- Most cases it is effective some it is not as effective
- Have to commit staff resources to make it successful

Q. 4 A.:

- Time, staff, resources

- “anytime you work in a collaborative process it is going to take more time”
- Educating the citizenry

Q. 5 A.:

- “I like the concept of trying to focus the discussion” on the positive
- “conceptually it sounds like the right way to engage citizens”

Q. 6 A.:

- To get citizen support and buy-in – building consensus, commitment, and direction
- Leaders get positive the positive reinforcement they need
- Educating
- Moving in a common direction

Q. 7 A.:

- Comprehensive planning/visioning processes
- Community visioning

Q. 8 A.:

- “not that I’m aware of”

Q. 9 A.:

- “I think so”

Q. 10 A.:

- “we have a high level of citizen participation now in different areas”
- Not necessarily increase but finding tools to make it more effective
- Hardest part is getting citizens to see the bigger picture

Q. 11 A.:

- “I would like to think it is”
- But not sure
- Deal with these kinds of citizens for the most part and it may be difficult – easier probably in a collective rather than a one-on-one

Q. 12 A.:

- “the jury is out on that, I don’t know”
- Think you want to try and do that but it would be difficult
- Need “effective facilitators in a group to make that happen”

## APPENDIX X

### Interview Notes – Actual Data – 12/29/06 T

#### Handwritten Notes

Demographics:

Age: 59

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Male

Education: MPA

Years Experience in Local Government: 34

Years as City Manager: 32

Previous Local Government Experience: City Manager/Assistant City Manager

Experience with Appreciative Inquiry: None

Q. 1 A.:

- “I think it enhances the job”
- “since we’re serving the public it’s better to know what public opinion is”

Q. 2 A.:

- “most citizen participation is issue oriented”
- E.g., zoning, baseball program for youth, dogs running loose in the neighborhood
- “most citizens become active or involved because some issue directly impacts them”
- Public hearings

Q. 3 A.:

- See answer 2
- Annual citizen survey
- Annual report sent to 1/3 of citizens yearly
- Police department does a survey every 3 years
- Try to get information out to citizens regarding opportunities to participate
- Numerous boards and committees
- Website with links
- “a lot of people get involved through our boards and committees”

Q. 4 A.:

- “most people are issue oriented” trying to get people without an issue to participate is challenging
- People are very busy in their own lives

Q. 5 A.:

- “no special challenges other than the basic challenge of trying to motivate people to participate”

Q. 6 A.:

- If you could successfully get people to participate you could “produce some unbiased feedback” not stuff that is simply single issue oriented

Q. 7 A.:

- “overall establishing goals and objectives for the community”
- Visioning
- E.g., annual planning retreat
- Getting citizens to look at overall city goals
- Community policing efforts

Q. 8 A.:

- “some focus groups on annexation” some elements of Ai were there – got citizens together and talked about positive views of the city
- Focus on positive benefits of living in the city

Q. 9 A.:

- “I think it’s feasible; I think it would require a lot of resources”
- Need commitment and staff time to make sure it works
- Needs to be pretty well structured so people do not feel they are wasting their time

Q. 10 A.:

- Getting information out from government to the public
- Local government television channel with more programming – good feedback from community so far regarding the television channel
- Raising citizens’ awareness is important
- Upgrade website
- Educating the citizenry through making information available

Q. 11 A.:

- “I think it would be a challenge”
- Some of your success would depend on how recent the incident was and the make-up of the offended person
- It would be difficult to shift that particular citizen back to the positive

Q. 12 A.:

- Certainly the public administrators can
- But “again I think it will be quite a challenge”
- Depend on the make-up of the audience
- People tend to focus on the negative
- “negative seems to stay with you and when you are shifting to the positive,” it could be done but it is a challenging effort
- “In public meetings if you have a couple of vocal opponents in a meeting they will carry the day even if the majority are not opposed because they are more

vocal and the less vocal are not going to take an argumentative stance against them if it is not an issue they feel strongly about”

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