The Appreciative Perspective in Multicultural Relations

Stefan Cojocariu

Lecturer, PhD, Department of Sociology and Social Work, "Al. I. Cuza" University, Iasi, Romania.

Abstract : In this article, the principles of appreciative inquiry are used in order to mediate multicultural relations. Using the constructionism theory, I describe and analyze the theoretical articulations adopted to make sense of co-constructing the relationships between different people. I find that, instead of being applied as the sole theoretical foundation, constructionism principles have been incorporated in the appreciative inquiry principles, the effects of which should be the co-constructing of social reality by the interactions of different people. The paper draws on the process that appreciative inquiry perspective works for rebuilding the social relationships. Its main contribution is to show how theoretical complementarities using constructionism theory are promising avenues of research in the field of multiculturalism.

Introduction

Constructionism is a new orientation in sociology, based mainly on Gergen's works printed in the '80s. It designates diverse approaches to the way reality can be known and especially how realities can be constructed. There are multiple definitions of social constructionism, due to its very nature, that is, due to the recognition of the multiple realities generated by the diverse interactions between the individuals who construct these realities. The appreciative inquiry, as a form of intervention research, has as a foundation ideas of constructionism that can be used in reconstructing relations from the perspective of multiculturalism.

Key words:

multicultural relations, social change, action research

Constructionism And The Construction Of Interactions

By its very nature, constructionism cannot generate a unitary definition, due to the fact that any knowledge is socially constructed. The present paper does not aim to exhaustively treat the definitions given to social constructionism, but rather to highlight its essential features and the manner in which they can be used in organisational development, community development, in constructing relations between members of different ethnic groups, and in the management of vulnerable populations. Some of the most significant features we shell deal with in this paper are:

a) This approach considers that reality cannot be known in itself and asserts the existence of *multiple realities* constructed in the interactions between individuals. "The inquiry of social constructionism is focused mainly on explaining the processes through which people describe, explain, or *interpret* the world they live in (including themselves)"[1]. Social constructionism is interested in the communication and relations between people and in the process of producing meaning in social interactions. A point of departure is represented by the fact that people, in the same circumstances, are capable of producing very different social constructions of the same reality.

b) Language, communication and discourse are considered as means of interaction between individuals who construct multiple realities. "Social constructionism considers that realities are created by people who communicate through language, each of them influencing and limiting the responses of the other. In this approach, the area of interest is not represented by the individual, but by the *network of interactions* between individuals. This approach is applicable in the analysis of the ways realities are created within organisations (...) Constructionism is concerned with, in our view, the process through which people construct an image about the organisational problems and the process through which we construct or co-construct together with them a new history, which includes the solutions to the problem"[2]. This means that human organisations represent the various ways in which people define these organisations through explanations and personal understandings brought into the sphere of negotiation with the others.

c) Social constructionism concentrates on the *relations* through which social actors construct realities. "The approach of social constructionism starts from the assumption that the terms through which the world is understood are social artefacts, historical products of the exchanges between people."[3].

d) This kind of approach holds that the *subject-object distinction* is not productive and generative enough, maintaining a dualism which considers that the subject and the object are independent one from another. "Social constructionism abandons the illusion of the ontological fissure between subject and object and replaces it with an *intersubjective reality*. Social constructionism believes in the idea that reality is considered an interactive process because people give meaning to their own experiences through the constant interaction with the environment"[4]. Cooperider and associates[5] consider that postmodernism is returning to social theory by the fact that the constructionist theory goes beyond "all the assumptions of the type subject/object, observer/object separation, words seen as instruments, the rigor of discovering immutable models and laws..."[6].

e) Knowledge and social reality are dependent on *the social relations* and on *the negotiation processes* between people. In past years, the sociology of knowledge has refined the approach of social constructionism in or-

der to show that all knowledge of reality is more of a human creation than a mirror of independent reality. "Social constructionism considers that when we start observing or talking about what is, we, in fact, are constructing a social reality"[7].

Both constructivism and constructionism start from the idea that social reality is constructed and can be known, but are different in the ways the subject-object relation is seen.

The constructivist perspective affirms, in the same way as constructionism, that "everything we know about the world is a result of a construction process"[8]. The constructivist approach maintains the duality subject-object and presents the fact that the construction process takes place in the mind of the individual through the socialisation process; the individual remains an external observer who *internalises knowledge* about the world as an external reality. The mind is like a mirror of reality, and the individual habitus is a social construction, but it is particular to the individual. This habitus represents a "map of reality", constructed by the individual during social interactions, and not reality itself. This process of internalisation takes place in the individual mind during the contact with the social structures the individual belongs to and "is influenced by the individual's social relations"[9].

The constructionist perspective states that we can never know what is universally true or false, what is good or bad, right or wrong, but we only know stories about truth, falsehood, good, evil, right or wrong, and it abandons the constructivist idea according to which the mind of the individual represents *a mirror of reality*. Constructionism focuses on relations and upholds the role of the individual in constructing significant realities. "The map is identical with the territory" seems to be the essence of the constructionist vision, the map being considered as an interpretation of reality being permanently constructed in the interaction with the others. Thus, maps are permanently constructed and re-constructed through the interactions with the other individuals' maps, through a process of continuous negotiation. Reality itself is a result of these negotiations and interactions and "we are capable of making multiple and diverse maps of reality"[10]. Social constructionism is not interested in elaborating a perfect map of reality, but in capturing the processes through which the maps are constructed and negotiated between individuals by tuning up the individual maps, because this construction process is the most important: "the attention must be directed towards the multiplicity of the ways the world can be constructed"[11].

Dynamic maps are continuously constructed and reconstructed, having several social motors, filtered through the individual's perspective: interest, purposes and means, values, habits and knowledge. They are also useful in interpreting the ways people interact in various circumstances.

The Appreciative Inquiry — Renouncing The Paradigm Of Deficiency In Social Change

Origins of the Appreciative Inquiry

In 1987, Cooperrider and Srivatsva launched the concept of *appreciative inquiry*, as a response to the *action research* developed by Lewin in the '40s; the appreciative inquiry intended to be an instrument for social change, especially for organisational change. From the

point of view of the authors, one of the failures of action research was due to *focusing on the problem*, which leads to a lack of innovative potential. They argued that this focus on the problem leads inevitably to a restraint of imagination and diminishes the possibility of creating new theories. The vision of appreciative research turns the problem-focused approach upside-down, taking into account what goes well in an organisation, its successes, as identified by its members. Any organisation faces problems, but researching the problem with the purpose of solving it increases its development; the questions asked during the research become courses of action. Focusing the questions on identifying the problems in the organisation, during an organisational investigation, directs the organisation's actions towards deepening the problems. The appreciative inquiry does not deny the existence of problems in an organisation or community, but, in order for them to be reduced, positive aspects are identified, cultivated and promoted. Cooperider and Srivastva build the appreciative approach based on Keneth Gergen's constructionism, which sees reality as a social construction and a permanent reconstruction on the interactions between individuals.

From the constructionist perspective, any organisation is a human construction, generated by the interpretations the social actors have about this entity and about themselves: "organisations are products of human interactions and a social construction rather than an anonymous expression subordinated to a natural order"[12]. Some authors categorically place the base of the appreciative inquiry in the foundation of social constructionism: "The appreciative inquiry is the way of thinking about change, built on the assumption of the social construction of an organisation's reality"[13]. In order to change an organisation, action must be directed to the way individuals interpret the organisation. "The appreciative inquiry seeks to identify the best of 'what is' in order to help imagination to erupt in connection with 'what could be'. The purpose is to generate new knowledge that expands the domain of the possible and helps the partners create a collectively desired vision of the future and then pursue this vision by transforming the most realistic approaches into reality…"[14].

From the description given by the authors it follows that, in order to expand the domain of knowledge, we must find *'the best of what is'* in the organisation's experience and, on the basis of these successes, create a *collective vision of 'what could be.' 'What is'* does not concern only the present, in the sense of a reality manifesting itself, but also actual interpretations given by agents to past events. *'What is'* represents a social construction in the moment of analysis, but this can also be a result of the interpretations given to past events. From this perspective, the present is what people think at this moment about the organisation.

Other authors have seen the appreciative inquiry as an instrument that can be used to direct change in an organisation or in a community. "The appreciative inquiry is an instrument of organisational change which focuses on learning from success. Instead of focusing on deficiencies and problems, the appreciative inquiry focuses on discovering what works best, why it works and how success can be expanded in the organisation"[15]. The authors state categorically the need to learn from success and the necessity to abandon the orientation manifested in action research, which aims to identify *deficiencies, problems, shortcomings* and *constraints*.

In 1999, Bushe reconsiders the concept of *appreciative inquiry*, building a definition that makes good use of the *constructionist perspective* on social reality, as a result of creating a collective image about a desired future: "The appreciative inquiry, an organisational theory and a method for changing social systems, is one of the most significant innovations in action research in the

past decade. The appreciative inquiry, as a method for changing social systems, is an attempt to generate a collective image of a new, better future by exploring what is best or what was best…"[16]. In this definition, the author underlines the role of a common vision, a *"common reading"* of the organisation and of its future, as Elliott states[17].

The perspective of the Appreciative Inquiry is a constructionist one, summarised in its essential elements as follows[18]:

1. Social order is permanently in a *dynamic equilibrium* that has an unstable character, and this order is the product of a *negotiation* or *convention* between people; this order is generated by the negotiation process itself.

2. Human actions are prescribed by ideas, beliefs, intentions, interests, purposes and means, values, habits, and theories; the transformation of human behaviour is achieved by *changing conventional ideas, beliefs, intentions, interests, purposes and means, values, habits, and theories*; all these action generators are the result of social construction and have a strong affect in the reconstruction of the future interpretation and action frameworks.

3. Social action is interpreted differently by individuals, who, from *actors* become *social constructors*; from this perspective, social change means a reconstruction of the *social architecture*, through the negotiation of the individual interpretations and the construction of a common vision.

4. The action models developed in the organisation can be found in various forms, due to the different individual interpretations, the permanent negotiations in the organisational environment and the permanent change of social contexts.

5. The transformation of conventions and interpretations into norms, values, purposes, and ideologies is the result of *dialogue*, of the *consensus* expressed through *language*; the latter becomes "a map preceding the territory."

6. The deep changes in social practices can be generated by the changes in linguistic practices.

7. Social theory can be seen as *an elevated language possessing its own grammar,* it can be used as a linguistic instrument capable of creating new models of social action.

8. Any theory is *normative*, irrespective of whether this is intended or not, and it has the potential to influence social order, irrespective of whether people have or do not have reactions of acceptance, rejection, or indifference.

9. Every social theory has a *moral significance*: it has the potential of influencing and regulating the interpersonal relations in daily life.

10. Social knowledge resides in *collective interaction*: it is created, maintained, and used by people in interaction.

11. Constructionism can be applied to introduce change in approaching organisations, communities, or any other social institution, by going beyond the *dualism of subject-object*, *true-false*, *good-evil,* etc.

The principles of Appreciative Inquiry

Cooperider and Whitney[19] conclude that the Appreciative Inquiry has as its basis 5 principles:

1. The constructionist principle states that every community is a result of human creation, more precisely of the collective interaction between individuals and of the permanent reconstruction generated by our knowledge, beliefs, and ideas. The community is a manifestation of the interaction between our mental models re-

garding it, which are constructed socially through a relational process. From this perspective, the community is itself a reality generated by multiple interpretations, and community change through appreciative inquiry means, in fact, changing these interpretations and constructing a common, collective, and coherent image.

2. The simultaneity principal refers to the fact that community research and community change are always *simultaneous*. Cooperider considers that any organisation or social system changes in the direction in which the attention of the researcher is focused, calling this a "heliotropic process" (1990), because, "the same as the sunflower turns to follow the sun, so the organisation turns to follow its positive image"[20]. Action research also considers that *the questions asked by research generate changes in the organisation* due to the presence of the researcher and of the imagination it activates[21]. According to the simultaneity principle, "even the most innocent questions trigger changes"[22]. This principle, formulated by Cooperider (1999), cancels the myth according to which we first analyse the situation and then decide on the change, because any community changes in some situations without a clear decision being made about it, and when we ask about certain aspects of the community, we effectively start change inside it.

3. The poetic principle refers to the fact that any community is a result of the multiple interpretations given by people, expressed through *language*, which, in its turn, has a formative character, being a part of the constructed world. Language is not only an image of the world, but truly a form of social action. The ideas, representations, images, histories, stories, and metaphors generate events, depending on their *emotional charge* and on the way they are interpreted. *Metaphors* describing the communities are ways of social action for structuring these communities. Community is "like a poem" or "can be thought as a text" [23] that can be interpreted permanently, and the beauty and the senses of this poem are given by the interpreters.

4. The principle of anticipation states that the destiny of a community is the *positive future image* constructed through the individual creations that influence present events. One may say that *the best way of predicting the future is building it*, starting from the desired images, because *the map precedes reality*: "It is not the territory preceding the map, and it does not survive it, but the map preceding the territory also generates it..."[24]. Thomas formulates this principle, also known as "the self-fulfilling prophecy": "if people define a situation as real, then this situation *is real* [author's emphasis] through the consequences of defining it as real[25]. In order to argue for this principle, Cooperider uses the placebo effect used in medicine, and the Pygmalion effect, which shows that a teacher's image of a pupil is a strong predictor of the actual performance of that pupil.

5. The positive principle concerns the potential and the force *appreciation* has in organisational, and implicitly, in community development, by discovering the positive aspects and by achieving innovative change by anticipating a positive future. "The essence of positive change is one of the largest and broadest unknowns of change management today"[26], because classical change management focuses on the analysis and diagnosis of organisational problems and deficiencies. Because "organisation and interpretation habits often omit the positive vision in favour of analysing obstacles, resistances and deficiencies[27], present community management is tributary to the dysfunctional perspective. Formulating and asking the questions is one of the most impacting actions of the agent for change, because *what we ask we shall later find in the community*. In the research on the development of the rehabilitation system, based on a community of children with disabilities in

one particular village, which research we conducted in June 2003, one of the questions asked was about the existence of services offered to families in the village with disabled children who had not been institutionalised. At the time of the research, no such services were identified, because the programme offered by the organisation only pursued family integration and the deinstitutionalisation of the children in the placement centre. In less than 3 months, in that particular village, there have been identified services for the families in the community, including support groups, which fact may indicate that *the questions asked during the research* directed the change in community services. The way we formulate the questions will direct attention to the various aspects of the community, and very probably, will direct change in the community.

Appreciative Inquiry and Action Research

Together with the development of this technique, some significant differences between the two forms of intervention research have been highlighted. The most important is that which Cooperider calls a *"deficiency paradigm"* (2000), due to the fact that Action Research is oriented towards *identifying problems, deficiencies, limitations, and obstacles* and towards solving them: "when organisations are approached from the perspective of deficiency, all the properties and organisations are examined for their dysfunctional but potentially solvable issues[28].

The approach of appreciative inquiry is *in contrast with action research* also with respect to their ontological, epistemological, and methodological aspects. "This approach is in stark contrast with the traditional methods of approaching organisational development, based on deficit and relying on evaluating and diagnosing the problem (...) this type of methodology develops [traditional - author's note] implicitly defended universal standards about what is right, good, and acceptable, and consider everything that does not reach these standards as being a problem"[29]. Any organisation passes, during its existence, through various fazes and may encounter problems, but the important thing in its change is using the appreciative approach, because "any organisation, no matter how conflicting at a given moment, can find a positive practice, a set of experiences at a time in its history when things went well"[30] and which can be used in order to construct a positive vision about its future.

Action research aims to solve the problems of the organisation or of the social system by "identifying the dysfunctions and planning the interventions that will reduce these dysfunctions"[31]. The appreciative inquiry does not aim explicitly to solve problems, but to *change the organisation* or *the social system*, in other words, it proposes "an interactive projection that dissolves the problem by changing the system that generates it"[32]. Through this form of intervention, "the appreciative inquiry approaches a research perspective that aims to discover, to understand and to bring innovation to organisational processes and order."[33].

Abandoning the "deficiency paradigm" helps us avoid the negative consequences and the constraints of a problem-centred approach, which increases the identified deficiencies: "traditionally, we isolate a problem, diagnose it and find a solution; unfortunately, one of the effects of this approach is that we magnify the problems and keep them alive"[34].

Problem centring is a conservative and limitative approach as far as the "generation capacity" is concerned, because "people learn to do what is possible, real, and less to creatively research possibilities"[35]. Operating within the mental framework specific to the paradigm of

problem solving leads to conservation of the problem. Some authors take into account the *ethical aspects* of problem centring, stating that "a problem-centred approach in the management of change leaves people demoralised and distressed concerning their own future and the organisation's[36]. This is because researching the problem contains in itself the generation of guilt, by the desire to identify the causes of the problem; from this point of view, the organisation must meet pre-established standards, and the problem represents infringing upon these standards. Solving the problem means alignment to standards or establishing a new system of reference.

The process of Appreciative Inquiry

In order to use the Appreciative Inquiry technique, Cooperider and associates developed the 4-D model (the 4 D-s represent the initials of the stages of the appreciative inquiry: Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny), which explains the stages of the inquiry.

The first stage (Discovery) of the appreciative inquiry is the stage where "what is best" in the community is identified and consists in finding positive "histories," personal and community experiences considered successful. This stage supposes performing cross-interviews on focus groups so that people can share their positive experiences related to the research theme. One relatively frequent form of appreciative inquiry uses, as an initial manner of finding positive aspects and of documenting them, a list of questions that generate positive interpretations, handed to every community member. Thus, the individuals have the opportunity and the time to reflect on their experiences, on those of their peers, and on those of the community. After this first stage, *group cross interviews* and *focus groups* are organised, in which questions from the initial meetings are asked again. The cross-interview supposes writing an interview guide which is supplied to all the participants and each of them can ask questions of the others within the group meetings intentionally organised in the stages of the appreciative inquiry. Starting from the hypothesis that *a community evolves in the direction in which it is researched*, choosing the research topics and constructing the questions become crucially important.

The second stage (DREAM) is the stage where people describe their desires and their dreams related to work, motivations, work relationships, the organisation they work in, the community they live in, etc. This stage aims to construct a collective vision of "what the community would be like," even as an *ideal image.* The vision is a collective construction of the community members, drawing on the community potential. An important watchword for this stage is "thinking out of the box," overcoming the limits of the usual thinking about what has been, and constructing images, beliefs, and representations about the organisation, generated by individual positive desires and articulating them in a coherent collective image. These representations appear in the shape of "provocative propositions"[37], which are ambitious, pushing the community's limits, but reachable, because they rely on past experience, characterised as excellence.

The third stage (DESIGN) aims to build *a new community architecture*, oriented towards "what could be," designing new community structures, processes, and relations capable of bringing the community closer to the *imagined vision* from the previous stage. According to the poetic principle, in this stage are designed the infrastructure and the management system needed in order to support the system vision. This represents a process of *reinventing the community*, based on *imagination*. Starting from the idea that any community can be

interpreted and reinterpreted as a text, Elliot considers that the metaphors about the community or about the organisation represent our interpretations in presenting facts, and that "the construction is not isolated from the present and the future"[38]. This construction is the result of a permanent "negotiation with the others" of the interpretations based on the members' memory and imagination. In order to reach the positive vision imagined in the previous stage, the *reconstruction of the past* is necessary, using the imagination (because we can choose different ways of interpreting the same reality) and establishing by consensus concrete short-term and long-term objectives that can lead to the fulfilment of dreams, desires, and projects.

The fourth stage (DESTINY) is the stage of implementing the plans established in the previous stage and supposes *establishing roles and responsibilities, developing strategies,* building new interaction networks within the organisation or community, using resources in order to obtain results. Having gone through the previous stages, the people in the organisation or community become agents for change, having a profound understanding of the purposes, objectives, and tasks that have been constructed through *dialogue* and *consensus*.

The Appreciative Inquiry And Multicultural Relations

From our point of view, approaching the relations between the members of various ethnic groups belonging to the same community is still tributary to the "dysfunction paradigm," because it has kept in the centre of attention the problems generated by communication dysfunctions, by different interpretation of diversity, and by maintaining different interpretations for ethnic groups. The Appreciative Inquiry can be an alternative intervention aiming to change the way people construct the reality in which they live, act, communicate, and react, without keeping in the foreground the problems they face. This approach supposes a type of *interactive planning* that relinquishes offering solutions to the identified problems and focuses on *changing the system* that generates these problems. In Romania there has recently been much talk about the "corruption problem" and about finding solutions for decreasing it. The solutions identified are still in the area of the problem (for example, replacing problem persons), and from this point of view, no decrease of the phenomenon is seen, but to the contrary, a qualification of it. From our point of view, solving a problem supposes changing the system that encourages its development and survival, without approaching the problem explicitly.

Similarly, approaching multicultural relations means solving the problems of various categories of persons by *identifying the causes* that generate one problem or another and eliminating them. Most of the time, *eliminating the causes* can have a positive result at the level of social policies regarding the population as a whole, in order to prevent other interethnic problems from appearing. At the level of intervention proper, the most sought-after result is *the decrease of effects* various causes have on people. The Appreciative Inquiry can be used in rebuilding interethnic relations because "it refers both to a research for knowledge and to a theory of collective intentional action, with the purpose of helping the development of the normative vision and of the will of the group, organisation, or of the society as a whole"[39]. The appreciative vision is provocative and it is not the result of a single mind, but a collective construction based on *negotiation* and *consensus*. From this point of view, Elliott considers that through the approach of the appreciative inquiry it is possible to

achieve "the minimisation of the asymmetry of power and the increase of the level of involvement in the change process... by direct, one-on-one communication". This idea produces modifications concerning the interpretation process of the community members who are different, the social inclusion generated by a common interpretation of the community reality.

Bearing in mind that "the appreciative inquiry is an arbitrary social construction, whose limits are outlined only by the people's imagination, and by the collective will"[40], its application pursues organisational or community change through the *reconstruction of metaphors* the members utilise in speaking of the organisation or the community. Some authors [41] consider that language and words are social artefacts and not only *a mirror of reality*. Words represent "a convention people establish in order to understand each other"[42] and these conventions *construct the social reality*.

A community is constructed through the interactions people establish and it reflects the multiple ways in which they interpret the past and the present (through memory) and design the future (through imagination); the situations are perceived through the *histories* of various events, phenomena, happenings, etc., or through the metaphors expressed. The interpretations become, unconsciously, a motor of social actions and of the permanent construction and reconstruction of reality. People's discourse about their community reflects the meanings they give to events, for example, a simple metaphor expresses the way the community is structured, how it works, how it meets the needs of its members or of its customers: "Discourse concerns a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, histories, appreciations etc. that, together, produce particular versions of the events".

In the constructionist approach, the analysis of texts, conversations, communities, and organisations represent undertakings that capture the ways people construct realities and present them as such. In order to reach a *communal interpretation*, most organisations construct internally, through dialogue and consensus, a *mission*, represented by a metaphor directing the objectives and the entire activity of its members. The communities that do not manage to *construct* a mission cannot reach a communal interpretation of a desired future. Even if they do not introduce change, the meetings for constructing the mission have the role of reliving positive experiences and of re-affirming, collectively, a common image of the future.

The researcher using the appreciative inquiry in order to introduce change in the community must monitor the following aspects[43]:

a) To appreciatively discover the community, by looking for the best examples of success found in the past of its members and to motivate the membership to identify these examples. The appreciative discovery of successful experiences, interpreted as successes by community members, is oriented by the research topic; for example: the motivation of community members, identifying the needs of the members, and adapting the services offered in the community to those needs, etc.

b) To appreciatively understand the community, by approaching its problems in depth and by understanding the community contexts that have lead to success in the past.

c) To help community members to appreciatively amplify the discovered experiences and to boost these experiences by encouraging their repetition.

From the perspective of social constructionism, which sits at the basis of the appreciative inquiry, we "see what we believe"[44], and the theory that explains certain phenomena is a representation of our belief. This helps us understand how an organisation or community

can be changed by redefining the way people describe events. The appreciative inquiry uses these ideas, putting in the foreground *appreciation* as a necessary and appropriate force for organisational and community change. It introduces the criterion of appreciative statements as a source of orientation for the organisation, according to the *heliotropic principle*, seen as a paradigm generated by analogy. "In the same way plants orient themselves in the direction of the source giving them life and energy"[45], organisations orient themselves depending on what ensures their development. Furthermore, the source of community development is, naturally, in the way people see its development, by anticipating future situations. This energy source is generated by the vision people construct and negotiate through dialogue.

Conclusion

The relations between the members of a community can be reconstructed by abandoning the dysfunctional perspective, by creating conditions for the common reading of reality and of the relations between members. Often the cultural stereotypes about various categories of people in the community act as an obstacle to the development of relations based on dialogue and consensus, turning into prejudice and labels. Placing the accent on the positive aspects in an appreciative approach can lead to a restructuring of relations between the members of a community, irrespective of how different they are, through the common reading generated by the common vision of the future. People are different because they are interpreted differently and because they interpret differently certain situations. To have a common reading of reality does not entail uniformity, but rather accepting and incorporating diversity as a natural form of social relation and interaction.

Notes:

[1] Gergen, K.J., *The social constructionism movement in modern psychology,* in *American Psychologist,* vol 40 (3)/ 1985, p. 266.

[2] Campbell, D., Coldicott, T. and Kinsella, K., *Systematic work with organizations: a new model for managers and change agents,* Karnac Books, London, 1994, p. 18.

[3] Gergen, K.J., *The social constructionism movement in modern psychology,* in *American Psychologist,* vol 40 (3)/ 1985, p. 267.

[4] Haar, Van Der, D., *A positive change. A Social Constructionist into the Possibilities to Evaluate Appreciative Inquiry,* Tilburg University, Netherlands, 2002, p. 26.

[5] Cooperrider, DL, Barett, F. and Srivatsva S, Social construction and appreciative inquiry: A journey in organizational theory, in Hosking, D.M., Dachler, P.H. and Gergen, K.J., Management and Organization: relational alternatives to individualism, Aldershot, Avebury, 1995, pp. 157-200.

[6] Ibid., p. 161.

[7] Haar, Van Der, D., *A positive change. A Social Constructionist into the Possibilities to Evaluate Appreciative Inquiry,* Tilburg University, Netherlands, 2002, p. 24.

[8] Ibid., p. 41.

[9] Gergen, K.J., *Realities and relationships: soundings in social construction,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 60.

[10] Maas, A.J.J.A, Manschot, E.M., Roodink, T.J., *We make sense of all that jazz: mapping in social context,*

in *Career Development International,* vol. 6(7)/2001, p. 373.

[11] Gergen, K.J., *Realities and relationships: soundings in social construction,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 82.

[12] Cooperrider, DL, Barett, F. and Srivatsva S, Social construction and appreciative inquiry: A journey in organizational theory, in Hosking, D.M., Dachler, P.H. and Gergen, K.J., Management and Organization: relational alternatives to individualism, Aldershot, Avebury, 1995, p. 157

[13] Murrel, K.L., *Book review of Appreciative inquiry: change at the speed of imagination*, by Watkins, J.M. and Mohr, B., *Organization Development Journal*, vol. 19(3)/ 2001, p. 92.

[14] Cooperrider, DL, Srivatsva S, *Appreciative inquiry: an alternative to problem solving,* in French., W and Bell, C., *Organizational development and transformation,* Irwin, Burr Ridge,1994, p. 207.

[15] Johnson, G., Leavitt, W., *Building on success: transforming organisations through an appreciative inquiry,* in *Public personnel management,* vol. 30 (1)/ 2001, pp. 129-130.

[16] Bushe, G.R., *Advances in appreciative inquiry as an organization Development Intervention,* http:// www.gervasebushe.com/aiodj.htm, 1999, pp. 1-2.

[17] Elliott, C., *Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry,* International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 1999, p. 76.

[18] Cooperider and Srivatsva, apud. Cojocaru, D., *Ancheta Apreciativă-formă a cercetării-acţiune în schimbarea socială,* in *Revista de Cercetare şi Intervenţie Socială*, "Al.I.Cuza" University, vol. 2/ 2003, pp. 203-204.

[19] Cooperrider DL, Withney D, *Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change,* Stipes, Champaign, IL, 1999, pp. 3-27

[20] Johnson, G., Leavitt, W., *Building on success: transforming organisations through an appreciative inquiry,* in *Public personnel management,* vol. 30 (1)/ 2001, p. 130.

[21] Miftode V., *Tratat de metodologie sociologică*, Lumen Publishing House, Iaşi, 2003, p. 393.

[22] Cooperider and Srivatsva, apud. Cojocaru, D., *Ancheta Apreciativă-formă a cercetării-acţiune în schimbarea socială,* in *Revista de Cercetare şi Intervenţie Socială*, "Al.I.Cuza" University, vol. 2/ 2003, p. 206.

[23] Elliott, C., *Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry,* International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 1999, pp. 14, 15.

[24] Wachowski, apud Felluga, D., *Matrix: paradigma postmodernă sau impostură intelectuală?* in Zeffeth, G., *Matrix. Ştiinţă, Filozofie şi Religie*, Romanian translation., Amaltea Publishing House, 2003, p. 84.

[25] Thomas, apud Ungureanu, I., *Paradigme ale cunoaşterii societăţii*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucureşti, 1990, p. 124.

[26] Cooperrider DL, Withney D, *Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change,* Stipes, Champaign, IL, 1999, p. 248.

[27] Withney, D., *Let's change the subject and change our organization: an appreciative to organizational change,* http://proquest.umi.com, 1998, p. 5.

[28] Cooperrider DL, Withney D, *Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change,* Stipes, Champaign, IL, 1999, p. 146.

[29] Mantel, M.J. and Ludema, J.D., *From local conversations to global change: experiencing the worldwide*

web effect o appreciative inquiry, in *Organization Development Journal,* vol. 18 (2)/ 2000, p. 49.

[30] Liebler, C.J., *Getting comfortable with appreciative inquiry,* http://geminitiative.org/getting.html, 2002, p. 3.

[31] Miftode V., *Tratat de metodologie sociologică*, Lumen Publishing House, Iaşi, 2003, p. 395.

[32] Cojocaru, Şt., *Prevenirea abandonului şi dezinstituţionalizarea copiilor*, in Vasile Miftode (coord.), *Populaţii vulnerabile şi fenomene de automarginalizare. Strategii de intervenţie şi efecte perverse*, Lumen Publishing House, Iaşi, 2002, p. 47.

[33] Cooperrider DL, Withney D, *Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change,* Stipes, Champaign, IL, 1999, p. 147.

[34] Cox, G., Appreciative inquiry, http://newdirections.uk.com-ai.htm, 1998, p. 1.

[35] Barett, F., *Creating appreciative learning culture,* in *Organizational Dynamics,* vol. 24 (2)/ 1995, p. 37.

[36] Withney, D., *Let's change the subject and change our organization: an appreciative to organizational change,* http://proquest.umi.com, 1998, p. 2.

[37] Haar, Van Der, D., *A positive change. A Social Constructionist into the Possibilities to Evaluate Appreciative Inquiry,* Tilburg University, Netherlands, 2002.

[38] Elliott, C., *Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry,* International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 1999, p. 36.

[39] Cooperrider DL, Withney D, *Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change,* Stipes, Champaign, IL, 1999, p. 147.

[40] Cojocaru, D., *Ancheta Apreciativă-formă a cercetării-acţiune în schimbarea socială,* in *Revista de Cercetare şi Intervenţie Socială*, vol. 2, "Al.I.Cuza", Iaşi, 2003, p. 205.

[41] Gergen, K.J., *The social constructionism movement in modern psychology*, in *American Psychologist*, vol 40 (3)/ 1985, pp. 266-275, Withney, D., *Let's change the subject and change our organization: an appreciative to organizational change*, http://proquest.umi.com, 1998; Elliott, C., *Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry*, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 1999; Bushe G.R., *Five Theories of Change Embedded in Appreciative Inquiry*, in Cooperrider DL, Sorensen P., Withney D, Yeager T, *Appreciative Inquiry. An Emerging Direction for Organization Development*, Stipes Champaign, IL, 2001; Haar, Van Der, D., *A positive change. A Social Constructionist into the Possibilities to Evaluate Appreciative Inquiry*, Tilburg University, Netherlands, 2002.

[42] Haar, Van Der, D., *A positive change. A Social Constructionist into the Possibilities to Evaluate Appreciative Inquiry,* Tilburg University, Netherlands, 2002, p. 25.

[43] Bushe, G.R., *Advances in Appreciative Inquiry as an Organizational Development Intervention*, in Organization Development Journal, Fall, 13 (3)/ 1995, p. 16.

[44] Bushe G.R., *Five Theories of Change Embedded in Appreciative Inquiry*, in Cooperrider DL, Sorensen P., Withney D, Yeager T, *Appreciative Inquiry. An Emerging Direction for Organization Development,* Stipes Champaign, IL, 2001, p. 24.

[45] Elliott, C., *Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry,* International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 1999, p. 43.