
Appreciative inquiry, a constant in social work

María Pilar Munuera Gómez¹, Carmen Alemán Bracho², Mar Hernández³

¹Department Social Work and Social Services, Social Work Faculty of Universidad Complutense de Madrid, España

²Department Social Services and Historical-Legal Foundations, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, España

³Faculty of Law, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, España

Email address:

pmunuera@ucm.es (M. P. Munuera), caleman@der.uned.es (C. Alemán), marimar_ucm@hotmail.com (M. Hernández)

To cite this article:

María Pilar Munuera Gómez, Carmen Alemán Bracho, Mar Hernández. Appreciative Inquiry, a Constant in Social Work. *Social Sciences*. Vol. 3, No. 4, 2014, pp. 112-120. doi: 10.11648/j.ss.20140304.12

Abstract: The use of the appreciative inquiry favors the change in perception and in speech made by individuals when they face their troubles. Appreciative inquiry is conducted from a theoretical structure which is based in a process, several principles and related techniques. Such performance can be sensed through the historical development of social work, where we could find female authors who, from their theoretical contributions, have shaped a solid structure of inquiry whose goal is to foster individuals' capacities in order to achieve their empowerment. It is necessary to strengthen this design of inquiry initiated with techniques that can change clients' narratives and can reinforce social workers' professional role.

Keywords: Social Work, Appreciative Inquiry, Empowerment, Techniques, Narrative

1. Introduction

Social workers are professionals who make the citizen's empowerment possible, through information in respect of their rights and obligations in relation with their condition of citizens, teaching them how to exercise themselves in the duty of giving birth "empowered" citizens capable of thinking, participating, proposing, spreading the word, collaborating, etc., giving them the feeling that they are the owners of their own work and lives.

Since its beginning, Social Work has taken on account principles in its professional practice which give prestige to this profession, among them it can be found the following: work for the dignity of the individual, the right to self-determination, respect, confidence in the capacity of the individual, positive consideration of the human being, social justice, etc. (Munuera, 2003). Its work has been addressed to the encouragement of the competences and possibilities of the individuals, groups or communities with the goal to accomplish their prominence, considering the idea that individuals have resources, knowledge and experience, main elements for their empowerment.

Among the many definitions of Social Work coined by international institutions, the one offered by United Nations in 1959 brings together mediation and social work in the resolution of problems, since social work is seen as an

activity: "organized whose goal is to contribute to the mutual adaptation between individuals and their social environment. Such goal is achieved through the use of techniques and methods aimed at individuals, groups and communities so that they can satisfy their needs and resolve their problems of adaptation to a society which is in process of evolution, as well as through a cooperative action to improve the economic and social conditions" quoted in Alayón (1987:16). This definition highlights the function of a social worker as a subject-intermediary between the problems of the clients and the resources to try to solve the former. The social worker can be seen as an intermediary between the client and the institution, and as an intermediary between the subject of inquiry and the client himself, becoming an indispensable resource for an adequate inquiry. Empowerment becomes a strategic tool that strengthens the individual's leadership from a motivational philosophy. The individual decides how to do things and assumes responsibility in the process. To us the proposal of "empowerment" must be addressed towards the strengthening of the self, in three dimensions: a) more development of the self's sense, more positive and powerful; b) construction of a comprehension capacity more critical towards the social and political realities, as well as towards the environment; and, c) promotion of

resources and personal strategies to accomplish individual and collective goals.

Social Work inquiry is and must be participative. It locks rights and duties for individuals and institutions within. It becomes a duty of the social ethics, a duty of justice, to contribute, to collaborate... according to your own ability and other people's necessity. The requirements for a responsible and efficient participation are: the person shall be free, he shall be informed, he shall be prepared and, at last, the participation shall be subordinated to the common good.

Mary Richmond (1922) mentioned in her work that the treatment depends on the abilities of the people: the ability to connect, the ability of affection, of admiration, of additional training, of a more energetic effort, the ability to enjoy and the ability of social development. Different authoresses have left proof of this principle since the inquiry based on the potentials of the person, has proved to be quite effective taking on account the good outputs achieved.

2. Appreciative Inquiry at Social Work

Appreciative inquiry has been applied formerly to Social Work in different realities and professional careers pursuing several objectives (Payne, 1997). Richmond considered that: the hopes, projects and attitudes of the client himself when confronting life, are far more important than any other information (Richmond, 1917). Therefore, it is in the treatment phase when the social worker needs to have the ability to find out, realize and use the positive factors for the reconstruction of the person (Richmond, 1917), an ability that forms part of a true social worker. Richmond defines the following as the treatment steps:

A. Insight into individuality and personal characteristics.

B. Insight into the resources, dangers, and influence of the social environment.

C. Direct action of the mind upon mind.

D. Indirect action through the social environment. (Richmond, 1922: 101-102).

The aforementioned steps have some similarity with the phases of the appreciative inquiry, since the perception of the resources of the person available to resolve a social trouble, is assessed through the direct action of mind upon mind. Via the empowerment of the person by the social worker, the individual finds out his chances or abilities to change his social career.

Helen H. Perlman in 1957 in her book "Social Casework: A Problem-Solving Process", develops a research work shared with other members of the School of Social Work of Chicago, particularly with Charlotte Towle and Laura Ripple, in which the questions related to the solution of problems are laid out (Neves, 2001). Perlman develops a model for the casework called "the problem-solving model". This model is based on the psychology of the I, considering the client as an active agent who can solve his

own troubles: Customized social work is a process used by some institutions well-known for encouraging the public welfare in order to help the individual to face more efficiently his troubles with social adjustment (Perlman, 1957: 4).

1. The person or client. The personal factors related to the problem and the objective being pursued shall be considered in order to find out the potential of the person, as well as the psychological factors which take part herein (positive and negative adaptation mechanisms to the environment), the expectations trusted, the client status and the importance of the study of the past and the present.

2. The problem. The key aspects subject to modification shall be taken into account, considering the client expectations, the possible solutions and the resources available for the social worker.

3. The process. It combines professional methods and several ways of behavior to help the client.

4. The place.

In this model, the social worker and the client decide over many issues, which among them there are: which is the problem you want to direct to?, which output do you want to achieve?, how to conceptualize it?, which procedures and specific actions are necessary to achieve the goals that had been set up on advance?, etc.

In his following works Perlman delves into the relationship between the client and the specialist as the main instrument, since it is through it that the social worker encourages the client's ability over the solution of the problem, making resources and influences closer to the client in order to satisfy his needs and to improve consequently his social efficacy.

Jessie Taft developed her theory over the professional relationship based on Otto Rank's psychological growth, creating the "Functional theory of Social Work" together with Virginia P. Robinson. The inquiry defined by her with a therapeutic approach, pragmatic, psycho-social and individualized, was critical with the static diagnosis and the moralist judgments of that time. She defended the acceptance and tolerance towards the emotions of the persons who requested help, principles she considered related to self-determination and respect to the person's dignity. Taft's proposal was based on 1) the creation of a relationship of equality: giving and taking as phenomenons integrated in the relationship of help as though it was a reciprocal process of creativity and growth; and 2) the social worker's comprehension and his empathy ability. It became a revolutionary proposal at the time for changing the power that the professional used to have in the relationship. The goal of her model was to direct the will of the person who requested help towards the task of change. *Under Rank's influence, she emphasized the importance of client resistance and will, the fact that each client will accept help in his or her own individual way and the centrality of the helping relationship as a vehicle for change* (Furman, R., 2008: 201). Her ideas show the ability

of the person in leading his destiny, from the resistance and will.

Amy Gordon Hamilton has stated the importance of the psychosocial formulation of diagnosis in Social Work (1974) in several publications, where she mentioned the resources and abilities that the person has in order to solve the situation, a diagnosis that agrees on the finding out phase from the appreciative inquiry. Hamilton considered that:

The diagnosis is specially complicate in social casework because it's not only the problem but the configuration of the person who has the problem or who is reacting to his problem. A person may have an external problem, just like when we say he has "insufficient" earnings due to low salaries; (...) Social diagnosis is normally a cycle of cause-effect phenomenon, of people and situation, of people and people, or both, (Hamilton, G., 1946: 67-68).

Hamilton also laid out the need to keep a good work over the register of the social casework in order to be able to create, from that moment on, the participation of the person in the process of change and growth. Social casework ought to get interested in not only the satisfaction of the basic needs or the assessment of the social services' program, but in other many aspects of the socialized life, since a social worker works in the field of the interpersonal relationships, specially inter-family relationships, from his special angle and with his special contribution.

Virginia Satir (1991), social worker and family therapist, centered her professional activity on improving the communication inside the family, from the positive consideration of the human being, teaching an adequate communication inside the family core. To Satir, the family must nourish, become characterized by being a provider of an adequate self-esteem to its members through a direct and assertive communication. Keeping clear limits with the society, where a big part of the laws are negotiated explicitly. The aforementioned characteristics make growth and an adequate development of the person possible. She taught the ability of changing and of growth via an adequate communication, based on self-respect when interacting with others.

For this reason, appreciative inquiry, its tasks or techniques can be used in the different areas of Social Work to improve the efficacy of the psychosocial inquiry (Kohler and Quinney).

3. Construction of a new Narrative in Social Inquiry

The appreciative inquiry works through a dynamic cycle consisted of four processes called the 4 D's (discovery, dream, design and destiny) according to Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987). Each of such processes is focused on reaching the objectives that the system wishes to (a person or an entity). The motivation is looked for through the

accomplishment of dreams not yet achieved, in order to break with routines that don't favor change, generating a synergy that mobilizes forces which appeal to the future. This way of asking is "created" from the experience of lived-in examples, where dreams and wishes have been accomplished (real cases) that prove the possibility of creating a future reality (Von Foster 1974).

The transformation comes into motion, in conformance with Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987), when an official "program" becomes the inner dialogue of an entity. The aforementioned inner dialogue transforms the entity or the person modifying the story that is narrated. Among the tasks which favor the construction of new narratives the following can be found:

1. Prepare a list with the things that work out, remarking the positive facts and the achievements accomplished. The person has to pay attention to what is working out well. Many people don't expect to be asked about what is working out well, so sometimes they get surprised at the question "what is happening that you would like it to go on taking place?"

2. Appreciate the ability to create new behaviors, changing the rules of interaction. The task consists of recommending the employment of dysfunctional behaviors on odd days and the employment of "new" behaviors on even days. Progressively decreasing the resistance against change, since people know that the new behavior will only last one day and that, afterwards, it will always be followed by the "old" behavior. People distinguish their ability to create new behaviors from the advantages of such, and from that point on, they become part of their pattern of interaction.

3. Prepare a nice surprise to change interactions, questioning the current situation and creating the chance that other people may change their current circumstances.

4. Fix the perception of change on a daily pattern using self-assessment (from 0 to 10) over the aspect wished to be changed. Its efficacy lies in the change of perspective required to each person in order to "centered" on oneself to self-assess. This causes changes over the interactional patterns, making positions flexible expecting that the other person can assess the change achieved too.

5. Create an image or a metaphor over what is wished to be changed. An example of its implementation is to put in an object the meaning of what is wanted to be changed and locating such object in a place like a fridge. It allows to modify the interactions of symmetric scale through analogous messages, concentrating the attention on the "story" that has been created around the object located inside the fridge. The person assesses his ability to keep "inside the fridge" the negative interaction he wants to suppress.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is being used in mediation for the transformation of entities as well as of persons, through the change in the way of communicating, evolving from an inadequate language to an appreciative language, being

configured as a new approach of inquiry. The use of these postulates can enforce the professional profile of the social worker in certain competences, improving professional inquiry.

Appreciative inquiry is a system of questions characterized by a questioning attitude that looks for the potential of the person. Its origins can be found in constructivist and post-modern philosophical approaches, in other words, in a “positive-appreciative perception” of reality. This “positive principle” requires big quantities of positive energy and social links to be effective. This system of questions states that the more positively the question is made, the more successful and long-lasting the effort of change shall become. The evaluative questioning tends to create a positive environment of learning, that favors empathy, hope, emotion and even social linking to yearned values with a creative attitude towards life all the while.

In order to achieve it, different aspects of the problem or difficulty need to be analyzed:

1. The causes: you can agree with the existence of a problem or difficulty, but each person gives several explanations of the aforementioned since they are conditioned by their own system of references. Generally we can say that the main causes of the problem depend on the direct interest in the subject, on the social context in which it is generated, on the psychological tensions it stirs and on the divergences of intellectual positioning or of principles. It is important to know how to identify which are the true causes or the issues that stirs it, which they can be the distribution of resources, certain aspects of the family relationship, cultural divergences...

2. The perception: From which perspective the person is living the situation has to be known, since each person understands the same reality in a very different way. The perception can get deteriorated against a situation that has not been resolved satisfactorily for a long time. A misperception of the interests of the other may cause that the behavior or intentions of the other party could be perceived in a wrong way.

3. The communication: an essential way of relationship between living things, it must be analyzed through the paradigms established by Paul Watzlawick in “Pragmatics of Human Communication” (Watzlawick, Beavin y Jackson, 2011).

4. The information: verified, clear, direct and weighed information shall surely become a benefit for all the parties.

Subsequently, the behavior when facing the problem is shown and the will to solve it or not is displayed. Here it is important to observe which solutions are being looked for, because, sometimes, the latter don’t do anything but to perpetuate the problem. Behaviors like those that avoid the encounter, let the time pass by, are attitudes, among others, that don’t face the situation. To solve the conflict, some previous conditions have to take place, such as leaving behind the conflictive behavior and getting ready to share a space of respectful listening, where communication can be re-established.

The change in the narrative can be achieved also through the employment of presupposition questions centered on new narratives (Cobb 1992). These questions rely on constructivism, they are questions that co-create a different future where the professional leads the interview towards a closer future where the person shall visualize himself with the ability to become the main character of his life and leave behind the pattern that prevents him from making a change.

4. Techniques Employed in the New Narratives

“Technique” is used to being confused with “application of the technique”, which in most of the cases is closed to an art. This “art” is reached when the social worker knows how to choose the adequate technique in the convenient moment and achieve the proposed objective in accordance with the process, taking in account their personal abilities and the characteristics that belong to the people he has in front (Larson, Sjöblom, 2010).

The catalogue of techniques is quite wide as we can see in the following table 1. The use of one or another, depends on the complex system where they are applied to produce the expected purposes since all of them don’t have the same scope.

Table 1. Techniques

Psychodramatic	Legitimation	Traffic Light	Resilienc e	Positive Connotation
Change of Roles	X	(Green/Red)	Assertiveness	Over Characteristics
Double	X			Over Intentions
Handling of The Silence	X			Over Actions
Reflective Team	X			
Sculpture	X			

Source: Personal compilation

The questions related to the new narratives are stated in table 2, without ruling out that the techniques described in table 1 may be used in any moment. Since the beginning, a thorough analysis of the communication between the couple who turns to mediation is performed: the syntactic of the sentences, the tense (affirmative, interrogative, conditional, negative) of the verbs they use in the sentences to explain what has happened, etc. The use of the tense that brings the person and the change in its formulation that executes the social worker, shall let us destabilize old stories and build new stories as it can be studied in the following example: the person says “I’m a loser” and the social worker shall respond “You have failed to communicate with your partner” or “You haven’t known how to interpret his needs”. The aim is to widen the knowledge of the subconscious of the person, the image of a “Me” different, recover potentials, moving from “perception 1” to “perception 2” of herself.

This achievement depends on the power that the social worker may have to ask. It is an effective ability for generating differences, such differences become information in respect of the interactions for the family (Haley 1993) as well as for the social worker. Due to this, the more unusual the question the more useful. It shall be asked in order to generate a relationship. For asking, “the power” (power, prominence and responsibility) that shall be generated in the asymmetric interaction (Watzlawick y Krieg, 1984) created between the social worker and the person, must be used. Asking questions, everybody involved focuses over an specific subject leaving behind the rest of it. Questions about the content, the relationship, the parties and the context can be made.

Questions are very important techniques to generate differences. Such differences shall be generated¹:

- 1.-Inside the content of the problem: A question can “widen the focus” and let observe something that was not perceived before. For example: Do you believe that this thing you have said is the biggest problem of this family...?
- 2.- Inside the person who asks, that feel involved in the situation. An example shall be: Do you mean that I am the only person who has heard this?
- 3.-Inside the involved parties: Which other persons shall intervene in this matter...?
- 4.- Inside the context: ...does it happen only at home or in other places...?

The classification shown in Table 2 is displayed below, it only has didactic purposes, since one question can belong to two or more categories simultaneously.

Table 2. Questions for A New Narrative

Active Listening	Circular	Presumptions
Reflex	Action (To Do)	“Why Now”
Paraphrasis	Retro-Actions (To Wonder, To Feel)	“On The Exception”
Summary	Context	“Explanation And Re-Description”
Clarification	Time	“Sequence Of The Question For The Miracle”
Paraphrase	Stories	“For The Scale”
	Patterns	“Percentage”
	Scale	“Reveal The Problem”
		“Focused On The Future”
		“Conversational”
		“To Consolidate The Change”

Source: personal compilation

With this type of questions it is sought to help the people make their own decisions, being conscious of their needs and their feelings, in conclusion, help them tune in clearly with what they want. For example, at impersonal formulations such as this one made by a client: “Alimony must be paid”, it is specified by the professional: “Did you

¹ SUARES, MARINES “Mediación. Conducción de disputas, comunicación y técnicas” (“Mediation. Handling of disputes, communication and techniques”). Published by Paidós Mediación 4. Buenos Aires. 1996. pg. 249-255

want to say that alimony should be paid by your ex-husband?”.

Hereinafter each of the proposed techniques are analyzed:

1. *Active Listening*: The questions of active listening are based on the empathetic attitude, unconditional acceptance and congruence established by Carl R. Rogers in 1961. People need to be listened and nothing else but the listening can produce a new personal reality.

If the empathetic attitude is an inner disposition that has to be turned into communication abilities, then the person who is in an empathetic disposition, well trained, shall be able to listen actively, because only that way he may have access to the comprehension of the experience of the person who comes to receive mediation. Listening techniques come to implement the empathetic attitude.

These techniques are used, as R. Carkhuff states, from the physical care², a disposition to help the other and take care of the physical aspects as far as possible; whose messages are codified a big part through the verbal language (prudent distance, given eye contact, a small tendency towards the other, etc. are conditioners because they are in itself communicative messages transferred to the people who are being listened). (...) On the other hand, they favor that the social worker can perceive numerous elements of the experience of the other party through observation and the vital experience of meeting the person they are listening to. Among the most used techniques of active listening we have:

1.1. *The technique of the reflect of the feeling*. It’s the most important, and, as its name indicates, consists of reflecting verbally like a mirror the feelings expressed by the client. There are different varieties of reflection, the most effective is the one that responds to the feeling transmitted through the words of the person, remarking aspects of this phenomenon field which are located at the background of his expressions. It requires a lot of ability to communicate in the precise moment, and without the least disruption, those core feelings that target of the heart of the conflict. Giving in return the feelings collected in social work is advised to do it once an adequate empathetic atmosphere has been created between the parties.

1.2. *The technique of the reflect of the content* (total, partial or the key words) collects the content of the facts. To a person who has no experience, it may seem useless or inadequate, to repeat what the other party is transmitting. But, thoroughly analyzed, the empathetic response is the result of an active process that requires a great deal of attention. It means to concentrate intensely on the person, on what he is saying, walking in the other’s shoes to see things from his point of view.

1.3. *Clarification*, explicitly state, clarify the message the person is sending, helping him to choose or delete

² Quoted by MARROQUÍN, M., “La relación de ayuda en Robert R. Carkhuff” (“The relation of help in Robert R. Carkhuff”), published by Mensajero, Bilbao, 1982, (pp. 109-110).

options, for example “Do you feel sad or shameful?” would be a clarifying question.

1.4. *Summary*, in order to close interviews leaving a synthesis of the contents, feelings and proposed tasks as well as to introduce the touching subject of the inquiry.

1.5. *Confrontation*, allowing the exploration of the choices, the social worker shall not abandon the common thread of the active listening, for example: Are you sure that you don't feel anything?

1.6. *Paraphrasis*, in this technique what the person does with his life is reflected, the listening is performed over the global behavior: Why does he doesn't allow himself to be happy?

1.7. *Paraphrase*, expressions that confirms to the person who asks for help that the professional is following him and listening to him: ¡ah, ah!, ¡Hum!, etc.

The previous techniques don't limit themselves to repeat the words, concepts and feelings that the people bring to mediation. They demand from the social worker concentration on the phenomenon world of the client, in which the main cause of his psychological imbalance resides, as well as it is required an active search of his basic feelings and the implicit meanings of the same. In this kind of questions, the important thing is the bond created and at its service the techniques functioned as vehicles or instruments.

2. *Circular questions*. With this type of questions the social worker creates a circuit of interaction among the parties interviewed, who perceive a circular causality on the facts introduced, a kind of causality not created by other types of questions. The success on this achievement depends on the social worker's ability to lead the interview, based on the retro-actions that the family bring to the social service, the social worker has to require information in terms of relation, and, therefore, in terms of difference and change. Circular questions are made over a circuit which involves all the members of the family. The social worker asks to one member of the family about the interaction with the others. The information is received by the social worker as well as by the couple or by all the persons summoned up, who start to perceive a new causality, this causality is perceived as though it was circular and doing so, they cast aside the lineal causality where only one sole person is responsible of what is happening. This effect can be assessed in the following image, where the social worker leads the question to a person so that he perceives he is inside a sequence of other persons and where every happens due to the interaction of the parties. Circular questions explore:

2.1. *Actions-retroactions to the action*: What does daddy do when mum tells your brother off for doing something wrong? What does your wife do when you are mad?

2.2. *Retroactions to the retroactions*: What does your brother do when your mother tells him off on behalf of your dad? They are also used to research on interactions, by showing the interaction between the parties, for

example: what did you do when you realized she was going to get retired?

2.3. *About the context*: your brother answers the same way when he is told off by your mum as when he is told off at school? Your wife acts the same when she is at work or at home?

2.4. *Time* (before – now – after): in order to help the parties realize that things happen, that they integrate processes, that they are not sheer fixed, stuck events but that they are always getting built and re-built, that they are inside a sequence which involves the past, present and future. They are very useful to change the stories. Does mum punish now as in the past? What happened before...? What do you think may happen after...?

2.5. *Stories* (plots – subjects – characters – roles): What does mum tell you about when she was a child and she was punished by her parents? What story have you told to your children about the reasons why you got married?

2.6. *Patterns*: In which exact way your mother punishes your brother differently than when she punishes you? Or it can also be asked the following to the wife: What does your husband do differently with his own mother than what he does to you?

2.7. *Relations*: At the beginning they were used to ask to one of the attendees about the relationship between other two parties. For example, it can be asked to the father: How do you see the relationship between your wife and your daughter? It is not necessary to have all the persons present in the place to obtain this information.

Circular questions are very useful to make classifications and to help the parties realize that there aren't things that “exist by themselves” as our language wants us to believe, but that everything is part of the relations and that inside our tales, generally, one of the terms have been deleted. Circular questions can be made about the feelings, thoughts and the performance of the people. Only once an articulated chart of the relations inside a nuclear family has been obtained, we shall widen the interview towards the relationships with the families of origin of the parents, asking carefully about the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren, paying always attention to the modalities explained formerly to gather information.

3. *Presumptions*: they are questions which co-create a different future, since the person who has requested the social work is transferred for some minutes to a new future perception that he has built and visualizes as “real”, such perception stays in his mind as a new reality at his reach and where the problem has been resolved (White, 2007).

The social worker directs the attention of the person towards the aforementioned future reality that helps to solve the current difficulties. They are recommended to visualize the changes and exceptions, they help to convince about the inevitability of the change, they discover new objectives for the persons and co-create with them a future reality free of problems. Some examples of this kind of questions would be:

How do you picture the relationship with your husband one year later, after the divorce and once both of you may have settled down and start a stable life once more?

Imagine we meet again one month later... and all the objectives you yearned for have been accomplished: which measures would you tell me you have adopted? What might have changed in your situation? That little progress, what may it be consisted of?

This type of questions are addressed to co-create with the person interviewed all sorts of details until he may live by himself that reality (Payne, 2006). There are different modalities of questions that work with the assumptions and motivation of the person³, among them there are:

3.1. Questions about the "why now". Based on this type of question, it shall not be asked about the problem, but from which point the change is tried. For example: what would you like to change first? What for did you come here? What would you like to change now?

3.2. Questions focused on the exception. Exceptions take the shape of thoughts, beliefs, feelings and useful patterns of behavior that may help the person to free himself from the mortifications that cause him a conflict. These exceptions amplified function as blocks to build a solution. As it can be assessed in the following example: "You have given me a very good description of the problem... but I need to know what happens when the problem is not on stage."; "Is there something else she can do or have already done for you to help you when...?"; "What different things is she doing... in respect of his ex-husband?"; "How could that occur to you?"; "What needs to happen in order have this exception taking place more frequently?"; etc.

3.3. Questions over the explanation and the re-description. They are recommended to assist the family with the co-authorship of new stories about themselves and about their relationships, stories than are opposed to those predominant which have been oppressing the aforementioned family.

3.4. The sequence of the question for the miracle. Its purpose is to transfer the person quickly to a future reality free of problems. It is useful to define reachable objectives for the empowerment and obtain from the person a detailed description of what might be the ideal result of a solution to the problem. It helps the parties to describe a detailed chart of what the changes produced by the miracle might become in each context where they interact and, also, it helps the persons important to your life to realize such differences over the behavior, after the miracle has happened.

3.5. Questions for the scale. It becomes a tool to define and keep clear the focus during the social work. Once the person has identified and graded the problematic situation using a 1 to 10 scale, the task consists of dealing with the persons what each of them should have to do in order to obtain half a point or a whole in the scale at the end of the

week. These questions are used to measure the level of the client's confidence in respect of the possibility of resolving his problem.

3.6. Questions for the percentage. They help to focus with clarity and quantitatively measure the advances produced. They also open way to new possibilities: Which percentage of your free time can you spend in the care of your children? Which percentage of your time... do your children ask you to be in charge of them?

3.7. Questions for revealing the problem. In persons very refractory to change, who don't respond well to the questions focused on the solution, the familiar conflict is revealed as a style, a race or a problematic pattern, or the former is objectified as a tyrant. Revealing the problem, it is necessary to use carefully the language and the system of familiar beliefs which the conflict is referred with.

3.8. Questions focused on the future. They are especially useful for chronic cases of "refractory to change" families, stuck to the past. They encourage the test of new solutions, suggest alternative actions, promote learning, cast off the ideas of determination and they are applicable to the model of change: What sorts of change will I see? Imagine you have found the cherished job, what do you do? How did you manage to be promoted? Imagine that one year has passed by since your divorce and that your life has gone back to stability, how do you see yourself? What are you doing? What are you celebrating with the father of your children?

3.9. Conversational questions. They become especially effective for very traumatized and refractory to change people, who have already experienced many times failure. Also for those who have had many experiences in which secrets are involved and other professionals may have intervened to help. These kind of questions accept many responses and they are elaborated from the position of "not knowing", lead frequently to reveal "what has not been said yet", as we can see in the following example: If I was in charge of a family like yours, which advice would you give me to help me?... If there was a question you would like me to ask you, which would it be?... If there was a problem inside the family which we haven't yet referred to, which would that be? To which member of the family to speak about it would be the hardest?

3.10. Questions to consolidate the change. They pretend to consolidate the change accomplished and prevent to go back to previous interactions. For example, what would you have to do so that these changes remain? , or, what would you have to do to not suffer a set-back?

Presumption questions are based on constructivism. They transfer the parties to future situations, setting fixed new stories, new tales and memories. They erase certain inner tearings, creating a new identity that retouches repeatedly, giving consistence to a new feeling, giving a new significance... Even the image of the phenomenon world of the person and indeed our own identity, don't

³. Selekman, M. (1993) *Pathways to Change: Brief Therapy with Difficult Adolescents*. New York, Guilford Press, pp. 65-86.

correspond with a static description, because they give birth to a living story.

The inquiry is focused on the chances that the development of the person may offer. The changes may be defined by the structure of the person and his interaction with the social worker.

To Come to an End

Applying an appreciative approach to a psychosocial inquiry may make the performance of social workers more effective, making people realize their sleeping skills and creating new narratives where the latter shall be acknowledged, just like the skill to fly of an “eagle brought up in a henhouse” can be appreciated. Such inquiry is accomplished through the change on the way of interacting with people, with the use of a new language enforced by appreciative tasks. Through the presupposition questions employed by professionals, the “empowerment” of the person can be accomplished.

In Social Work History theoretical contributions can be found in Mary Richmond, whose contributions have strengthened the person through the use of skills or chances of the persons as well as through the use of their will to solve their social troubles, breaking up with the social determinism pre-established.

Knowledge and the use of this model may make that social workers become sufficiently specialized to assure that those who request social work could create new stories where “the butterfly shall be recognized in a caterpillar” and stay in “their world” in a more friendly way. The techniques introduced in this model herein are employed indistinctly by different professionals whose objective is to achieve the “empowerment” of the person, since there is no prohibition that may limit the use of such techniques to a specific profession.

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