Asset–Based Community Development and Appreciative Inquiry (ABCD/AI) Approach to Community Transformation: The Case of the Drewsland Community

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Abstract

This article is based on a 2014 study of Drewsland, an inner–city community in Kingston, Jamaica. It includes an investigation of how the Asset–Based Community Development and Appreciative Inquiry approaches may be applied to identify the assets of the Drewsland community, empower the residents, and guide the community transformation process through collaboration and partnership between these assets. The study concluded that since educational transformation is a subset of community transformation, community transformation in Drewsland is possible through collaboration among a community and leadership network including the school, community–based organizations, government entities, the church, and the business community.

Keywords: Asset-Based Community Development, community transformation, educational transformation

Introduction

Drewsland is one of nine urban communities within the Duhaney Park Development area of the city of Kingston, Jamaica. Howard (2005) described Kingston as a city that "once stood out as the Caribbean's English–speaking capital. It stands now as a capital for all that is right in the world, and much that is wrong" (p. 1). This description seems to fit Drewsland and some of its neighboring communities which includes Waterhouse, Maverly, Pembroke Hall, Patrick City, Washington Gardens, New Haven, and Duhaney Park.

Urbanization, though inevitable as part of a modern nation's economic growth and development process, is associated with many negatives: poor housing and living conditions, high unemployment and low employability, high school dropout rates and low student achievement, teenage pregnancies, single–parent households, and high poverty and crime rates. McKnight and Block (2012) stated, "Our communities are abundant with the resources we need for the future. It is the awakening of families and neighbourhoods to the resources that are needed" (p. 18).

This paper summarizes a study conducted in the inner–city community of Drewsland, with the goal of identifying and mobilizing community assets to facilitate socioeconomic transformation— including the transformation of the school in the community. Most struggling communities have the inherent capacity to prosper, but the

process of community transformation requires a change in mindset (McKnight & Block, 2012). The aim of this study is to facilitate the required mindset change among Drewsland's citizens and other stakeholders, empowering them to achieve prosperity through partnership, collaboration, and community networking.

Research Problem

This study of the Drewsland community was carried out through the lens of the Asset–Based Community Development (ABCD) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approaches, which seek to address community transformation through a process of empowerment and mindset change among community members who view themselves as powerless and voiceless. As postulated by Bernard (2006), the mindset (and hence the behaviour of members of a community) is not only the product of intrinsic psychological factors, but more so of the impact of external forces on the mind.

The research problem under study therefore is, the application of the ABCD/AI approach as a community transformation strategy for the Drewsland Community. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) defined ABCD as an alternative community development approach that "acknowledges and embraces particularly the strong neighbourhood–rooted traditions of community organizing, community economic development and neighbourhood planning" (p. 9). Hammond (2013) described AI as an approach to community development or organizational change that looks beyond the problems and failures of a community or organization and focuses on its successes, abilities, and capabilities — in essence, all that is good and positive within a community.

Education transformation as a subset of community transformation is student learning that is culturally and environmentally relevant to student empowerment and which enables the learner to develop personal strengths and abilities within a stimulating and engaging environment (Whitby, 2017). This definition therefore adheres to the ABCD/AI community development approaches. The ABCD/AI approach to community development as

postulated by McKnight & Russell (2018) also fosters implementation strategies which are unique to this approach. According to McKnight and Russell (2018), three implementation strategies which are used to identify and connect resources are (1) starting with the gifts, skills and talents of residents (2) identifying the need for external help (3) citizens deciding on what they want outside help to do.

As clearly stated by McKnight and Russell (2018) the order in which these strategies are applied makes the ABCD/AI approach unique to the other approaches which usually start at step #3 and so 'preclude citizen power' (p.6)

Background and Rationale

A 2009 survey by the Social Development Commission (SDC), an agency of Jamaica's Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, estimated the population of Drewsland as 7,773, inhabiting a total of 1,610 dwellings, for an average household size of more than 4.7 persons. The households ranged in size from 1–12 members, and 54% were headed by males. All heads of households in the community were at least 19 years old. The survey determined that 54% of all households were headed by a single parent, 20% by married couples, and 18% by couples living in common–law unions. The unemployment level was 41% overall and 44% among men; males represented 54% of all employed heads of households and 56% of unemployed household heads. The monthly income of over 30% of the employed population was $10,000–$20,000 in Jamaican currency, or US$67–US$133.

Drewsland has a reputation for sporadic gun violence, which may be linked to the violence that characterizes its closest neighbor, Waterhouse. Land tenure is also an issue in the community, and squatting posed a problem since some residents refused to pay for the land they occupied. Most squatter settlements in both urban and rural areas of Jamaica are plagued by violence and lack of law and order (Moore, 2014; Tindigarukayo, 2014). In his study of the impact of "place" on human development from medieval times to the 21st century, Inge (2003) pointed

out, "it is of great interest to note that those few people who want to look for a different way forward emphasize the importance of place and the notion of inhabiting as being vital in the formation and nurture of the community" (p. 127). The Government of Jamaica's response to growing squatter settlements and their resulting problems included the development of a housing plan for the Drewsland area (SDC, 2009), which entailed the establishment of the Drews Avenue Primary and Infant school and a nearby health centre.

The rationale for studying Drewsland was influenced by the author's personal experience through church affiliation. The church, though not located in the community, has many Drewsland residents among its membership. This church has established and maintains a Sunday School program at Drews Avenue Primary and Infant, and its pastor and another church member have each served as chair of the Drews Avenue Primary school board.

Student attendance at Drews Avenue Primary has been affected by the crime and violence in the community. The church earlier mentioned seeks to provide spiritual and moral education along with supporting students' academic achievement and employability, to prepare them to lead the process of transformation in their community. The parents (especially mothers (McFarlane, 2017)), therefore send their children to Sunday school because they want better results for their children. The Sunday school program is a collaborative partnership between the church, the school, and the community, and represents an extension of the relationship between Drews Avenue Primary and the church.

The overall project aims to initiate the process of community transformation through collaboration among the residents, community leaders, the church, the school, the business sector, non–government organizations, and public entities and agencies—all of which have an interest in seeing Drewsland change from a troubled, crime–ridden, inner–city community to one that facilitates growth and development.

Research Questions

Terrell (2016) posed two questions that should guide the researcher in the development of relevant research questions; "Do the problem statement, purpose statement and research questions flow together? Can we ultimately learn something about the research problem by answering the research question?" (p. 29). In adherence to Terrell's recommendation, the following research questions were developed as guided by the research problem, which is focused on the application of the ABCD/AI approach as a community transformation strategy for the Drewsland community.

Main question: How can the ABCD and AI approaches to community transformation be implemented in Drewsland?

Sub–questions:

1. What are the most utilized assets in the Drewsland community?
2. What role can the school play in the transformation of the Drewsland community?
3. What ABCD and AI strategies can be implemented in Drewsland?

The overarching research strategy was to investigate and determine the readiness of Drewsland's residents to realize their abilities and capabilities to lead and manage their personal transformation and that of the families, systems, institutions, and organizations within their community through applying the principles of the ABCD and AI approaches.

Research Methodology and Design

The qualitative research process adhered to a phenomenological design, in that both processes and techniques facilitated the incarnational process of close face–to–face interaction through informal, grassroots–level discussions with community members within their space and place of comfort—i.e., their own community. According to Hays and Singh (2012), qualitative research is guided by relationships with people, systems, and the environment, and provides a scaffold for the actualization of human potential.

One characteristic of phenomenological research designs is that they facilitate the sharing of the lived experiences of research participants and privilege the voices of those who have not previously had the opportunity to speak out (Hays & Singh, 2012). In this case, the research design captured the daily lived experiences of the residents of Drewsland and of those who serve the community, and therefore should be able to provide a trustworthy, credible, and transferrable answer to the main research question.

Research Population and Sample

The research population included leaders from various sectors: community–based organizations (CBOs), healthcare workers, church, business, education, and a public–sector community development agency. A purposive sampling procedure was applied to select a research sample from this population. As Suri (2011) stated, "purposive sampling requires access to key informants in the field who can help in identifying information–rich cases" (p. 4). The selection criteria included (1) residing or working in the community, (2) leadership of a church within or close to the community, (3) leadership in the business community, and (4) the education institutions within or in close proximity to the community.

The eventual research sample contained 11 participants: 1 nurse and 1 patient from the health centre; 1 education officer assigned to the primary and infant school in the community; 1 principal of a nearby school that serves the community; 2 leaders of community–based organizations; 3 leaders of churches of different denominations that serve the community; and 2 representatives of the Social Development Commission assigned to the community. The research sample was therefore representative of the research population, thereby contributing to the trustworthiness of the study's findings (Anney, 2014).

Instrumentation

An open–ended, semi–structured interview instrument was developed — as guided by the 3 research sub–questions. However, adjustments to some items were made based on 6 of the 7 categories of research participants represented

in the research sample, as previously described. This was necessary to ensure that the items included in each interview instrument were relevant to the role and context of each research participant within the community (other than the patient at the health centre) (Qu & Dumay, 2011). An unstructured interview was conducted with one patient at the health centre, but did not require an instrument (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

The general interview items sought to establish the role of each research participant (and, where appropriate, the entity they represented) within the Drewsland community, along with their views on the problems the community was facing and the role they or their entity could play in addressing those problems. The specific questions were mainly geared toward gathering in–depth data on each participant and entity represented for the purpose of asset mapping and to determine their level of Appreciative Inquiry. According to Green and Haines (2008), "Asset mapping is a process of learning which resources are available in your community. The asset approach…implies that the community development effort is directed toward the locality or place." (p. 11).

Document Checklist

The Social Development Commission Profile of the Community of Drewsland (2009) was used as a source of data on the community. The process of document review was guided by a document checklist, which included a list of the general assets of a typical community, such as its infrastructure, housing, public services, and facilities (e.g., healthcare, school, church, business, and recreational facilities). The checklist also included a list of items related to human resources as a community asset.

Data Collection

The data collection process included face–to–face interviews, telephone interviews, and a review of the SDC's 2009 profile of the Drewsland community. These data sources facilitated the asset mapping process, which is the primary phase of the ABCD approach. According to Green & Haines (2008), the asset

mapping process includes four key activities (1) identification of available skills, knowledge and experiences among the residents, (2) documentation of natural resources within the community that may have economic development potential, for example, land and beach, (3) assessment of potential for business pursuits, and (4) development of a community resources inventory; which include services being provided such as education, religious & health care. This process was completed in April and May 2014. The first step in the process was to "gain entry" or make initial contact with each selected member of the sample, so as to obtain their consent to participate in the research. In so doing, the assistance of a reputable community resource person, the leadership of a church that was active in the community, and relevant Government of Jamaica (GoJ) staff was sought. Each research participant was contacted by telephone and an appointment made for either a face–to–face or a telephone interview. It should also be noted that the nurse at the health clinic sought permission from her superior in order to engage in the interview.

The remaining steps in the data collection process are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Outline of the Data Collection Process: April–May 2014

Steps	Process	Instruments	Participants	Objectives
1. **Interviews**	Formal telephone interview	Unstructured interview	Two church leaders from different denominations. Both are within neighbouring communities, and one has an outreach program in collaboration with the Drews Avenue Primary School.	1. To gain information on the role of the church in the community 2. To investigate the potential impact of church unity in addressing the issues being faced by the community 3. To probe the church's willingness to partner and collaborate with other community stakeholders in the process of community transformation
	Informal interview	Semi-structured interview	Leader of church within the community	Same as in 1 above
	Face-to-face, informal interview conducted at the home of a participant within the community	Semi-structured interview	Community-based organization (CBO) leader	1. To gain information on the role and achievements of the CBOs in the community 2. To inquire about community assets and needs
	Informal telephone interview	Semi-structured interview	CBO leader	Same as in row 3 above
	Formal face-to-face interview	Semi-structured interview	Principal of a primary school located in a neighbouring community that serves Drewsland	To gather data on student achievement, school facilities and infrastructure, school-community initiatives, and school networking for partnership and collaboration
	Formal telephone interview	Semi-structured interview	Education Officer of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (MoEYI)	Same as in row 5 above
	Informal face-to-face interview	Unstructured interview	Teacher at a neighbouring high school	Same as in row 5 above
	Formal face-to-face interview	Semi-structured interview	Community development and research officers of the SDC	To gather data on the SDC's role in Drewsland, and to identify networking opportunities for the SDC and other community stakeholders such as the school and churches
	Formal face-to-face interview	Semi-structured interview	Nurse at the community health centre	i. The role of the health centre in the community ii. To identify networking opportunities between the health centre and the Drews Ave. Primary
	Informal face-to-face interview	Unstructured interview	1. Patient at the Health Centre 2. Community health worker	To gather information on the lived experiences of the residents of Drewsland
	Formal face-to-face interview	Semi-structured interview	Property manager of a large business complex that serves the community	To gather information on the community development initiatives of the business community
2. **Document Review**	Review of research report on Drewsland	Document Review Checklist	Social Development Commission	Same as in row 8 above; also, to gather data on community assets, problems facing the community, and Drewsland's socioeconomic status and facilities

Note: This table provides a summary of the data collection process, which informed the asset mapping process and also the level of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) of the local community leaders.

The 5–D Appreciative Inquiry model approach was used to guide the data collection and content analysis processes of the study—in which the first D, "Definition," is the most critical step in the AI process—as argued by Sue Ann Hammond (2013). As Figure 1 indicates, at this initial stage of the AI approach, answers were provided to the questions of what to learn, whom to involve going forward, and how to involve them. This process was then followed by the second D, "Discovery," which is the data collection stage of the study. The remaining three D's of the model are related to the data analysis, results, conclusion and recommendations of the research report.

Figure 1

Appreciative Inquiry Model
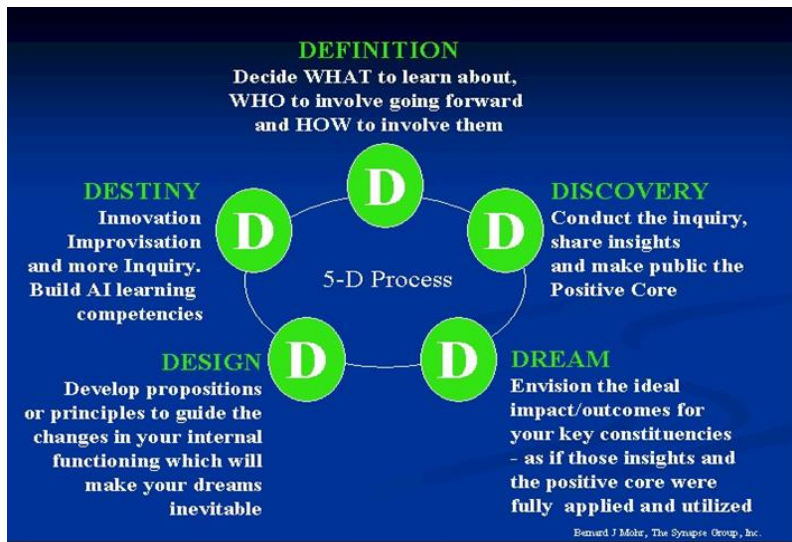
Source: Hammond (2013).

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Asset mapping, the initial phase of the ABCD/AI approach to community transformation, was facilitated by the interviews and document review. According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), "each community boasts a unique combination of assets upon which to build its future. A thorough map of these assets would begin with an inventory of the gifts, skills and capacities of the community's residents" (p. 6). The asset mapping process also includes an inventory of the community's physical assets, such as land, housing, roads, and other infrastructure features. In addition to these components, asset mapping also identifies local institutions such as schools, businesses, healthcare facilities, and other educational institutions, as well as facilities for citizen networking such as churches, CBOs, and clubs. (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; McKnight & Russell, 2018).

Physical Assets

Through the document review process, it was found that 75% of housing in Drewsland were in good condition and 5% were in very good condition. Seventy–three percent of household heads reported that they owned their homes, while 63% owned their land. Twelve percent of the land in the community were used for agricultural and commercial pursuits. The material assets of the community were mainly for the delivery of services to residents. Table 2 provides details of these assets.

Table 2

Physical and Material Assets of Drewsland

Number or Percentage	Name of Asset	Category of Asset
One	Marverley and Drewsland Health Centre	Public health clinic
84%	Telephone service	Telecommunications
Two	Drewsland Youth and Community Development Club	Youth development
	Young Individuals Making Progress (Y.I.M.P.) Youth Club	
Two	Upper Olympic Citizens Association	Community network
	Building Together Citizens Association	
Three	Balcombe Drive Primary and Junior High PTA	Parenting network
	Drews Avenue Primary and Infant School PTA	
	St. Mary's Basic PTA	
Four	Kingston Open Bible Church	Churches
	Washington Gardens S.D.A. Church	
	St. Mary's Anglican Church	
	Foursquare Church	
One	The HOPE Centre	Faith-based organization
Four	Seaward Drive Provident Society	Community-based organization
	Balcombe Drive Homework Centre and Internet Café	
	Drewsland Development Committee	
	FIWI Center-Palms Ave. Community Centre	
Two	Waterhouse Football Club	Sports
	Waterhouse Mini Stadium	
Two	Tankweld Limited	Business partners
	My Father's Place Bar	
Three	Drews Avenue Primary and Infant School	School
	Balcombe Drive Primary and Junior High School	
	St. Mary's Basic School	
One	Social Development Commission	Government agency

Source: Social Development Commission, 2009.

The data received through the interviews with the two community leaders also identified the community assets listed in Table 2. Additionally, the semi–structured interviews provided valuable details of how the residents functioned as important community assets. According to Mcknight and Russell (2018), there are six category of community assets which are critical to the community development process, one of which is the "contribution of residents". They went on to point out that such contribution includes "gifts , skills, passions, and knowledge of residents which have contributed toward the collective wellbeing of their community."(p.3) Information was also provided on a) the relationship between the parents and a high school in the community through the Parent Teachers' Association (PTA); b) youth development efforts through collaboration and partnership between the Drewsland Community Youth Club, the SDC, and the church; and, c) young people's (aged 15–35 years) involvement in the critical area of elder care.

Apart from addressing the spiritual needs of the residents, the interview with the three church leaders produced data on the church's involvement in the community, which included development of parenting skills, youth education and training, and the creation of employment opportunities for the unemployed and the

unskilled. The question of the possible impact of church unity despite denominational differences in addressing the socioeconomic needs of the community received 100% positive response from all three church leaders who participated in the research.

The obstetric nurse interviewed at the health centre indicated how critical health care is to the general well–being of a community. She also shared her concerns related to the women in the community, family planning, the impact of absentee fathers on child rearing, teenage pregnancies, the high school dropout rate, and the problems of crime and violence that the community had been facing over many years. Since the health centre and Drews Avenue Primary and Infant school are in close proximity, the nurse indicated interest in building collaboration between the school and the community to improve community healthcare and adult education.

One patient at the health centre (a pregnant teenager who agreed to an impromptu interview) shared the pain and stress of her experience—including incomplete schooling that contributed to her lack of academic certification and acquisition of employable skills. She also indicated that the staff of the health centre were very helpful in providing economic support so that she could feed and care for her children. During the interview, the young mother requested assistance in seeking training and employment opportunities, as well as money to purchase food for her children. The nurse also indicated that the clinic staff often felt moved to assist their patients financially from their personal resources.

The interviews conducted with the two representatives of the education system provided insight on education issues facing the community at the primary and secondary levels. The 2013 Inspection Report of the National Education Inspectorate (NEI) indicated that the overall level of school effectiveness of the Drews Avenue Primary is unsatisfactory while the 2012 Report of Pembroke Hall Primary indicated that the school's overall level of effectiveness is satisfactory. Both schools, however, had strong and positive relationships with the parents residing in the community, the churches, and the business community.

One member of the management team of a large shopping center in close proximity to the community, along with a high school athletic coach, described the positive relationships between the school and the business community, which included financial and material support. However, both participants indicated the challenge of student behavioural problems. The business community representative said the behavioural issues had become so severe that students from the high school where the coach works had been banned from the shopping center. The representative had requested intervention by the MoEY and the churches to address the problem of student behaviour at that particular high school.

An interview was also conducted with a community liaison officer and a research officer of the SDC. It is through this interview that access was given to the Drewsland Community Profile and contacts to local community leaders initiated.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis was guided by the research questions. Data gathered from the document review and the interviews were analyzed through the application of the content analysis process. Table 3 provides a summary of the process, which includes the establishment of common codes through inductive reasoning, categorization of these codes, and the determination of the frequencies of these categories and the emerging themes through deductive reasoning (Griffiths, 2016).

Table 3 indicates that the level of educational attainment of the residents of Drewsland was a significant issue as recorded in the SDC community profile. The codes, level of education, employable skills and certification as presented in Table 3 represent the data collected by the SDC from the residents who participated in the survey. It is noted however, that a percentage for the category 'Education and Training' in Table 3 was not derived due to the following characteristics of the data as presented in the SDC (2019) profile of Drewsland.

1. **Nature of Data**. The data as presented in the SDC Community Profile was categorised under the following headings:
   - Educational Level Attained
   - Academic Achievement
   - Academic Qualifications of Household Members
   - Training

2. **Issue with calculation of percentage.** It is the differences in the type of data provided by the SDC which do not adhere to the mathematical principles which would have facilitated the arrival at a percentage representative of the 4 categories of education and traning.

3. **Secondary & Primary Education Completion percentages**. According to the SDC (2019), "Fifty four percent (53.8%) of head of households reported receiving up to secondary education followed by 12.5% who received primary education and 10.6% who received elementary education." (p.19)

Table 3

Assets of Impact in the Drewsland Community

Research Sub-Questions	Instrument	Codes	Categories	Frequencies	Sub-themes	Themes
1&3	Document Checklist	Youth clubs, church	Youth development	36%	Community networking	1. Establishment of community networks through collaboration & partnership between all stakeholders 2. These community networks should facilitate the skills & input of the residents 3. The community networks should address the educational & training needs of the residents
		Not involved in CBOs or any other community group	Youth development, adult education, and social awareness	64%	Community networking and public- and private-sector partnerships	
1,2&3		Level of education, employable skills, and certification	Education and training	(Not derived)	Formal and informal education opportunities	
1,2&3	Unstructured interview with 1 participant	School, youth clubs, PTA, CBOs, private-sector partnerships, church, SDC	Youth development, education and training	100%	Community networking and public- and private-sector partnerships	
1,2&3	Semi-structured interviews with 10 participants	School, PTA private-sector partnership, church, SDC	" "	100%	" "	

Note. This table presents a summary of the application of the content analysis procedure to the data collected in 2014 via document review, and interviews in response to the research questions.

Results and Interpretation of Data

The results of the data analysis will be presented in response to the three research sub–questions.

Research Sub–Question 1: What are the most utilized assets in the Drewsland community?

The analysis of the data collected through the processes outlined in Table 2 and as presented in Table 3 indicates that the community assets of impact in the Drewsland community are as follows:

1. Church
2. School (including the Parent–Teacher Association)
3. Youth clubs
4. Community–based organizations (CBOs)
5. Social Development Commission (SDC)
6. Private–sector partnerships

These assets of the Drewsland community are typical of the general community assets, as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Typical Community Asset Map
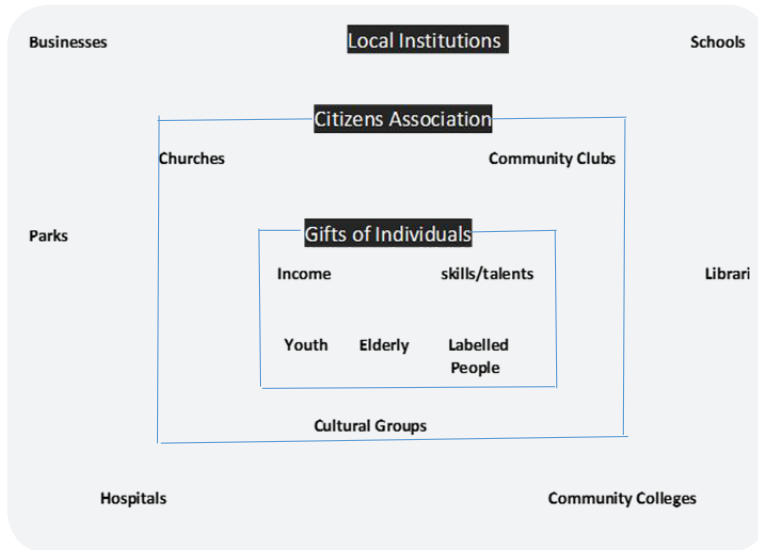
Source: Kreztmann & McKnight (1993).

Despite the relatively wide range of community groups that exist in Drewsland, the data in Table 3 indicate that 64% of the residents were not involved in any community activity or associations. However, as indicated in Table 3, 36% of respondents stipulated that the most used assets of the community were the church and the youth clubs. There is therefore an opportunity for the churches in the community to unite and network all other assets in the community for the purpose of change and development. As postulated by Corbett and Fikkert (2012) and Magezi (2017), churches typically do not have the capacity to provide training for the poor, but they can help people identify their long–term goals and further their postsecondary education.

Research Sub–Question 2: What role can the school play in the transformation of the Drewsland community?

As outlined in Figure 2, the school is one of 6 local institutions that form the basic framework of a typical community, and 100% of the interviewees in this research indicated their belief that the school has strong potential and has been playing a significant role in the development of the Drewsland community. According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), the school serves as one of the most important institutions to the community in which it is located and is therefore categorized as a community asset. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) described the school as a collection of valuable assets which might be mobilised to assist the community development process.

The results also indicated that the primary schools included in the research sample were performing at very different levels (one satisfactory and the other unsatisfactory), as measured by each school's performance in the MoEY, National Education Inspectorate reports of 2012 and 2013 and the schools' participation and achievement in extracurricular activities.

In the interviews, leaders of both schools indicated that leadership ability and teacher qualification and dedication were on par with the standards of the MoEY. The interest and participation of parents at both schools were also reported to be high. However, student attendance and cognitive readiness of students for primary–level education were at opposite ends of the education spectrum due to the level of social stability of the wider school community and parents' literacy levels. This scenario has been emphasized by Lipps et al. (2010), who studied secondary school students from selected Caribbean islands, including Jamaica, to determine the factors affecting their academic performance.

Two examples of parent–school partnership that have been operational in each primary school are (1) neighborhood watch committee meetings and (2) parent literacy and skills-training programs. On the other hand, the two research participants from a high school in the vicinity of Drewsland indicated that the high school's performance and its graduates' quality were unsatisfactory and that the PTA,

though active, was ineffective. The overall low performance of this high school was blamed on school leadership, lack of parent interest, and the community where the students lived (Lipps et al., 2010).

As a collaborative initiative of the school and the private sector, sports was introduced in the high school in an effort to address issues of student quality and performance. There has been some level of success in terms of both achievement in high school sports tournaments and student performance at school and in regional examinations (Van Deventer, 2012).

Community development, as defined by Green and Haines (2008), "may lead to a more efficient use of resources, reduce a community's dependency on external resources and decision making, and create a better system of managing markets (financial, housing, labor, etc.) to satisfy local (societal) needs" (p. 5). Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) identified 9 important elements of the school as a community asset, 7 of which are outlined in Figure 3; the remaining 2 are parents and students, both groups contributing their abilities, ideas, energies and participation to school and community efforts.

Figure 3

Elements of the school as a community asset
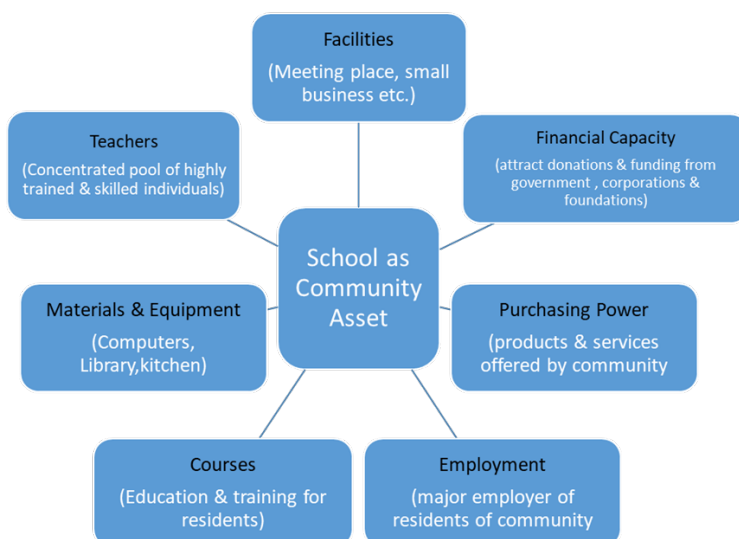
Source: Kreztmann & McKnight (1993).

"All over the U.S. creative educators are reconnecting their institutions with their local community, building new alliances which recognize that healthy schools and healthy communities reinforce each other" (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 209). However, as pointed out by Lipps et al. (2010), Jamaican schools located in low–income, inner–city areas are stereotyped and stigmatized as prone to violence and are less equipped to address the stagnation of community transformation. To strengthen the point of Lipps et al. (2010), the results of a study by Samms–Vaughn & Lambert (2017) indicate that "the direct impact of violence on IQ shows that Jamaican boys and girls who have suffered such victimisation are at increased risk for compromised functioning…."(p. 77).

Research Sub–Question 3: What ABCD and AI strategies can be implemented in Drewsland?

The transformation of the Drewsland community through the ABCD/AI approach would constitute the building of a Drewsland Community Development Network, as outlined in Table 3. This network would result from a collaboration and partnership relationship between all the stakeholders in Drewsland and would guide the collaboration of each stakeholder group to form sub–networks. There would therefore be sub–networks for the churches, schools, youth clubs, citizens associations, PTAs, CBOs and the business community. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) outlined the positive outcomes of community networks, which include organizational strengthening, capacity building, expansion of resources, and expansion of the scope and impact of community development projects and proposals for future projects. Green and Haines (2008) reiterated the strength of community networking in the process of community development, stating, "this is why community buildings, recreational centers, and other public buildings (e.g., schools) are so critical to the development of communities" (p. 116).

The ABCD approach seeks not only to identify the strengths within the Drewsland community but, through the application of the principles of Appreciative Inquiry, could guide the residents of Drewsland to create and implement strategies for the development of their community through the recognition of their abilities to manage and lead the process. The application of the ABCD and AI approaches through the community network strategy, would facilitate the development and implementation of a plan to foster the unity of the churches and youth clubs in the community. It is assumed here that the churches and youth clubs, which are the two most popular community assets, are being used by residents of two different age groups and interests, adults and youth. McKnight and Block (2012) pointed out that "the idea of community abundance is about our common interest and who will care for the whole" (p. 52).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the data analysis process have implications for a multifaceted approach to address the main research question; how can the ABCD and AI approaches to community transformation be implemented in Drewsland? One approach is to obtain the answers to the questions posed by the AI 5–D model by holding a meeting of the leaders of all stakeholder groups identified in Table 2. Bakke (2004) identified 4 competencies that are developed by AI; 2 of these are "Affirmative Competence, [which speaks to] the capacity to focus on what an organization has done well in the past and is doing well in the present," and "Collaborative Competence, [which is] the power of dialogue with others to transform both people and systems in and out of your own organization"

Slide 4

The Definition stage of the AI approach will seek to develop both competencies within the residents, leadership, and partners of Drewsland, to effect the desired change. The ultimate goal is to arrive at the fifth stage of the 5–D Model, "Destiny," where each stakeholder group would have acquired all 4 AI competencies: Affirmative, Generative, Expansive, and Collaborative. However, for effective leadership of community transformation, the progression has to include all 5 stages of the model to facilitate the personal transformation that can have a strong bearing on the mindset change of each stakeholder. According to Keane (2012), "AI is a fresh way of seeing the Jamaican context, recognising the best in the people and systems that touch their lives" (p. 95).

The proposed Drewsland Community Development Network is the dominant theme that emerged from the content analysis process (See Table 3), and would include various sub–networks — one of which should be an education transformation network. This networking facility would provide the opportunity for community members to share their resources among the different groups within the community and to identify all the existing and accessible community resources. Therefore, this community networking facility would empower the residents of Drewsland to address their community development needs

by pooling all the available resources or assets within the community. Some of the areas of need that could be addressed are as follows:

1. Increased employment opportunities provided through the creation of connections among stakeholder groups.

2. Fostering collaboration and partnerships between the schools that serve Drewsland and other stakeholder groups such as the church, youth clubs, and the business community to address school violence, behavioural problems, lack of resources, and poor academic performance.

3. Access to professional groups, mainly through alignment with the church, school, and business community, to provide people who could serve as counsellors, mentors, advisors, and trainers (or as part of a project management team).

4. Overall improvement of quality of life in the community to help foster the reduction of violence and eradication of gangs in the community.

5. Expansion of the resource base through public and private–sector partnerships, to address the developmental needs of stakeholders who use the services offered by the school and the public health clinic.

The National Parenting Support Commission (NPSC) and the Jamaica Teaching Council (JTC) are products of the Education Transformation programme of the MoEY. The NPSC works closely with communities to increase parental involvement in the education of their children and to foster community parenting networks. The JTC's Education Circles program, an education resource–sharing community network facility, is also a relevant community–based initiative that can facilitate the connection of community resources for the education of school children (aged 6–17 years) and adults.

The final recommendation is that the Social Development Commission considers the adoption of the Appreciative Inquiry approach in the constitution of its CBOs, to foster maximum use of the many assets of Drewsland by residents

with a focus on the inclusion of the existing educational facilities in the community. This can be achieved through the networking approach, by which all residents become aware of all the assets within the community, identifying themselves and the knowledge and skills they possess as assets, and learning to maximize the personal and collective benefits that can be accrued through collaboration and networking among community assets.

For many centuries education has been seen as the engine of economic and social development in developed and developing countries such as Jamaica. Therefore, financial investment in Early childhood, Primary and Secondary education is seen as the most important path to take, in view of the successes of first world countries. For example, as evident in the rates of literacy and numeracy among students at the primary and lower secondary level as reported by the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment results (OECD, 2022). The education transformation process, however, requires more than financial investment for sustainable community and national transformation. According to Anderson and Ackerman Anderson (2010), "a key differentiator between transitional and transformational change is the degree of impact on people and the required attention to human and cultural dynamics" (pp. 67–68). Therefore, educational transformation seeks to change the minds of people — an undertaking that can be facilitated by the application of the ABCD/AI approach to community transformation, since the focus is the mobilisation of the residents of a community to develop a vision of the required change and to become aware of their abilities to lead, maintain, and sustain that change.

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