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# Storytelling in Appreciative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling in Appreciative Inquiry

by

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This study is an examination of the role of story and storytelling within Appreciative Inquiry, a

method of organizational change that orients around a consensus model building on individual

and collective strengths instead of focusing on overcoming problems.  Interviews with 12

Appreciative Inquiry practitioners were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed using a process of

iterative coding consistent with a General Inductive method of qualitative research.  Once

consensus with a secondary coder was achieved, 6 themes emerged. The 6 emergent themes

outlined general roles that story and storytelling plays in the Appreciative Inquiry process:

relationship building, coauthoring a future, reframing narrative, narrative meaning, discovery,

and engagement. No one of these categories seemed to guarantee success, and all success stories,

shared during the interviews, incorporated something from all 6 of these categories. These

categories also provide a possible framework for further study on how to optimize or incorporate

more storytelling into Appreciative Inquiry practice.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Appreciative Inquiry, or AI as it is commonly known among proponents and practitioners, is an organizational philosophy and organizational development methodology. It bucks the centuries-old approach of deductive problem solving and instead seeks to inductively determine an organization's inherent strengths and maximize those aspects. This leads ideally to more holistic, unified, and successful process of organizational change. The term "Appreciative Inquiry" elegantly captures the essence of the approach. "Inquiry" because these strengths are inquired after among all levels of the organization, not predetermined or mandated by those with control. "Appreciative" because the viewpoint of each member is acknowledged and his or her best or peak experiences are sought. Much of the data collected in this inquiry process is in the form of stories, and yet very little Appreciative Inquiry literature focuses on the role that story and storytelling plays in this process.

Meanwhile organizational storytelling has become a buzzword in business. Long an integral but unconscious component of marketing, advocates like Stephen Denning (2005) now champion the importance of storytelling in knowledge management, and Howard Gardner (1995) promotes the importance of story in leadership. Others, like Annette Simmons (2007), focus on the quality and substance of the stories themselves and teach organizational members how to tell stories in a variety of capacities. Many experts and scholars have started to study and write about the role story and storytelling play in all aspects of organizational life—including organizational change.

Denning, Gardner, Simmons, and the other experts and scholars who have studied organizational storytelling did not originate storytelling in organizations. They called attention to

what was already happening and revealed what was possible if stories were nurtured and storytelling applied in all these different aspects of organizational life. Case studies such as those found in Simmons's book *Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins* (2007) or in Marshall and Adamic's article "The Story is the Message" (2010) give evidence that attention to storytelling can be transformative and powerful. Nevertheless, few who write about storytelling in organizations mention Appreciative Inquiry, and few who espouse and write about Appreciate Inquiry connect it to the growing body of knowledge about storytelling in organizations.

In the same way that marketers have always used story to build brands, coworkers have always swapped stories to share information, and leaders have always told stories to inspire, storytelling is already present in Appreciative Inquiry. It forms an integral, yet unexamined, part of the accepted 4D process in Appreciative Inquiry of discover, dream, design, and destiny (Cooperrider, Stavros, & Whitney 2008). As seen in the study of other organizational aspects, a clearer understanding of the role storytelling already plays in Appreciative Inquiry may lead to insights or refinements in the way storytelling is used in the method hereafter. Thus those using Appreciative Inquiry will have a better understanding of when storytelling may, or may not, enhance the positive growth they are seeking. There is also much left to be studied and much left to be said about storytelling in all aspects of organizational life—Appreciative Inquiry included. Research linking the study of organizational storytelling to Appreciative Inquiry is a foundation on which to build future explorations.

Statement of Purpose

Due to the limited literature that directly addresses the role of storytelling within the Appreciative Inquiry process, I will undertake exploratory research on the questions:

- What links, if any, can be found between the use of story and the outcomes experienced by a sampling of Appreciative Inquiry practitioners?

- What role does storytelling play in the dissemination of leadership and organizational change through the Appreciative Inquiry process?

Definitions

Appreciative Inquiry (also known by the acronym "AI"): "[A] philosophy that incorporates an approach, a process (4D Cycle of Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny) for engaging people at any or all levels [of an organization] to produce effective, positive change" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. xv)

Direct stories: Stories that are related wholly and purposefully from teller to listener (in the case of oral storytelling) with an explicit structure that involves, to some degree, characters, conflict, and plot.

General Inductive methodology: A qualitative research methodology that uses "detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data" and results in "dominate, frequent, or significant themes" (Thomas, 2006, p. 238).

Indirect stories: Stories that are latent in an organization and are expressed without explicit story structures (plot, conflict, etc.) by referencing common knowledge, experiences, or sensory artifacts such as photos, décor, industrial design, etc.

Ingroup and outgroup: A basic psychological division of a people into those who are, or are not, part of an individual's social group. Individuals will show preference towards members of their

ingroup and are more likely to discriminate against those considered in their outgroup (Billig, Bundy, & Tajfel, 1971).

Narrative: A description of a series of events. This description of events may be expressed externally or internally (Gold, 2007).

Story: As used in the context of this research, story is a narrative with some degree of structural components like character, plot, conflict, etc. These may be explicit (see direct stories) or implied (see indirect stories).

Storytelling: One party relating a story (as previously defined) to another party. For the purpose of this work storytelling is usually, but not limited to, oral storytelling where the participant(s) who is not telling the story is listening to the story.

## Scope of the Study

### Delimitations

This study is not an exhaustive review of Appreciative Inquiry practice. It is an exploratory deconstruction using General Inductive qualitative methodologies to create a framework for understanding the role storytelling plays within the practice of Appreciative Inquiry. It is not an intervention or comparative study of specific storytelling techniques. Participants are limited to practitioners currently operating in the United States of America.

### Assumptions

The validity of Appreciative Inquiry as a method for organizational change and development is assumed. There are many case studies and testimonies that attest to the impact of the method and explain its growing popularity. Checking the validity of these case studies and testimonies is outside the scope of this study. Likewise, the truthfulness of the interviewed

practitioners' observations is assumed. Their observations are compared to other practitioners

participating in the study but the validity of their individual observations is not quantified or

verified.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studying organizational storytelling can be a bit like picking up a screw driver and musing, "what's this used for . . . really?" In order to delve into what may seem self-evident to some, I will first address the fundamentals of what is an organization, what is storytelling, then the role of storytelling in organizations, and finally the methodology and theory behind Appreciative Inquiry.

Organizations

Prior to examining the role of storytelling within organizations, it is pertinent to examine how an organization can be defined. On the one hand there is Frederick W. Taylor's (1911) appeal in *The Principles of Scientific Management* that the "system must be first," an appeal that, while contested many times in the 100+ years after its publication, still holds sway on many approaches to change management. On the other end of the spectrum are examples of emergent organization design such as Cottingham and colleagues at Indiana University who contend that "an organization is not a machine that can be designed, but rather a dynamic web of conversations" (Cottingham et al., 2008). To pinpoint where organizations really lie along this spectrum is outside of the scope of this project and literature review; however, if we examine the overlapping points between these viewpoints, a skeletal frame emerges that gives some necessary boundaries and a scope to my further exploration of storytelling within an organization.

Both Taylor and Cottingham agree that there must be a collective of persons because an organization is clearly not an individual. While individuals and organizations may have some parallels in their behaviors and psychology, they are not the same. This must be clearly stated

because throughout the research it may be an easy pitfall to ascribe the same relevance to a group psychological manifestation as to an individual one. A collective of persons must also possess some level of commonality to their goals and intentions to be an organization.  The group must also interact together to achieve this common goal or purpose—it is not enough to have the goal or purpose in common. This last component may seem self-evident; however, business competitors or political opponents have a common goal but do not work together. Therefore these groups would not be organizations. They may coexist, they are made up a multiple parties, but if there is not required interaction, and all the subsequent complexity that arises from that interaction, they cannot be considered an organization as it may be defined here (Burke, 2011).

<div align="center">Organizational Storytelling</div>

Central to the formation and success of an organization is organizing the collective persons, whether premeditatedly or emergently, in such a way that unifies them around the stated purposes and moves them towards those purposes efficiently. Screenwriter and consultant Robert Mckee told Harvard Business review in 2003 that a business leader's job is to persuade people. This can be done with the intellect through statistics, rhetoric, or command, but while the leader is intellectually persuading the organization, the organization's members "are arguing with you in their heads". Story, on the other hand, "expresses how and why life changes," which lowers emotional resistance to change by getting to the "heart" (Mckee, 2003).

The importance of storytelling in organizations is difficult to quantify and no studies went farther than correlating the success of a particular intervention.  Most studies of scholarly merit are heavily qualitative, employing ethnographic or emergent methodologies such as Grounded Theory or action research to analyze the data. This results in thick description and case studies. Professional consultants and coaches write much of the existing literature for other

professionals looking to understand and enhance areas such as communication, motivation, knowledge management, team building, or consensus building. There is much that is valuable in the growing body of literature on storytelling in organizations, but it offers little concrete and generalizable data. The actual storytelling described in this literature falls into two general categories that I call *direct* and *indirect* storytelling.

Direct storytelling encompasses traditional narrative as understood by Western cultures that follows Polanyi's (1989) definition of "story" as an event where "a teller describes events which took place in one specific past time world in order to make some point about the world in which the teller and story recipients reside" (p. 16). Indirect storytelling would encompass many of the other types of narrative that Polanyi hints at and that coincide with what Boje calls the fragmentary "systemicity" found in organizational storytelling, where narrative fragments hint at a greater narrative unfolding in real time or rippling below the surface of an organization as subtext (Boje, 2004). I focus first on direct storytelling and explore its purpose, approaches of study, and key research findings. I then move to indirect storytelling to explore where and how narrative in organizations splashes in and out of these two tenuously separated pools of indirect and direct storytelling. I also look at the generative effect that this fluidity has on the emergent leadership stories told purposefully or reflexively in organizations.

Marshall and Adamic (2010) make a concise survey of storytelling in organizations with their paper "The Story is the Message", in which they outline four key aspects of effective organizational storytelling: Purpose, Allusion, People, and Appeal. They arrived at these four aspects after interviewing business leaders. The Purpose is to "applaud and foster a certain type of behavior or ingrain a tenet of corporate culture" which applies to "folksy" stories or stories superficially told to entertain (p. 18). Marshall and Adamic posit that a leader's stories become

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"not only part of a company's folklore but eventually the unconscious fabric of employee's behavior patterns" (p. 18). Given the propensity and longevity of a leader's stories, the purpose must be clear enough to survive the transitions and inevitable morphing of organizations "like epic poems passed down and adapted by each generation" (Adamic & Marshall, 2010, p. 19). In a case study of the Turkish copper mill Sarkuysan, Nayir, and Uzunçarsili (2008), point to the company's identification of storytelling as one of its five key "pillars" as a source of its longevity and success. The company's high retention rate coupled with low turnover among the few new hires from outside the company is attributed to the stories passed on to new hires about the origins and values of the company. Few founding members are left on the board, but all the members of the organization know the story of the founding members building a company from nothing more than their personal integrity and a hopeful ad in a local paper soliciting investors. The Sarkuysan origin story is an example where Purpose propels a story from being a folksy anecdote into a thread in the fabric of the organization's culture that persists through time and change.

Allusion is connecting the immediate story or situation to the historical context of the organization and/or to a cultural trope (Adamic & Marshall 2010). A story connects stakeholders in the organization to the past to make them "feel like they are part of a mission" (Adamic & Marshall 2010, p. 19). They give as example the David and Goliath trope fostered within MCI as they, originally a small upstart company, sought to break up the AT&T monopoly. This was done by building on the historical and immediate situation of the two companies but framing the conflict in a way that suggested an empowering trope instead of a disheartening one.

Purpose and Allusion are meaningless without People because in "companies that lack a culture of strong visionary leadership, even powerful and compelling stories may fall on deaf

ears" (Adamic & Marshall 2010, p. 20). The audience is a foremost consideration in storytelling because there is no quantifiable formula of success for persuasion or communication in storytelling. Simmons (2007) in her book *Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins* posits that storytelling is distrusted or misunderstood among many business organizations because it is a subjective activity with a success rate of 50% to 70%. That is to say that the problem is not that the storytelling is risky or unsuccessful but rather that it cannot be quantifiably assured of succeeding, as it is dependent on not only the perception and skill of the leader—who must identify the Purpose and craft the Allusion—but also the perceptions and openness of the story receivers.

Simmons as well as Adamic and Marshall (2010) place importance on storytellers' ability to engage their audiences. The reception of the story by the listener is the ultimate indicator of success in imparting knowledge, motivation, or change—not the skill of the storyteller in telling the story. Adamic and Marshall take this relationship one step further, advocating storytelling in the hiring process and weeding out those who are too cynical and resistant to the story and message (p. 21). Receptivity, or rather the ability to be receptive, is a critical variable in organizational storytelling. A well-received story means the immediate audience to a story will disseminate that story spatially (by repeating it beyond the physical boundaries of a particular telling) and temporally (by repeating it to new hires and stakeholders).

Adamic and Marshall's final key aspect, Appeal, is perhaps the factor most commonly associated with effective storytelling in every circumstance. Simply put, "a story becomes an Appeal when it connects emotionally with the audience" (Adamic & Marshall, 2010, p. 21). Howard Gardner in *Leading Minds* (1995) calls this "effectiveness" and postulates, "the story needs to make sense to audience members at this particular moment, in terms of where they have

been and where they would like to go" (p. 14). Simmons adds to this, "stories help people feel acknowledged, connected, and less alone" (2007, p. 3).

The power of direct stories therefore comes from their ability to "diagnose, analyze, and intervene" in subjective communication (Simmons, 2007, p. 10). This intervention allows participants to gain appreciation for subjective experiences that cannot be easily quantified. Trust is such a subjective experience (Simmons, 2004). The Allusion and Appeal of direct storytelling can create common experience among receptive People in an organization, allowing for trust and building understanding (Adamic & Marshall, 2010; Simmons, 2004). In her works with organizations, Simmons gives several pertinent case studies. For example, she cites a politician who cannot sympathize with a single mother from the projects until he walked in her shoes through the power of story (p. 20). In another case study, she discusses a law firm who hired her to help resolve a power conflict over pay structure among the partners. Simmons (2007) shares the "hero" stories of several of the partners and how sharing Allusion through the stories (or "subjective context" in her terminology) built trust, understanding, and the common ground necessary to equitably negotiate a compensation package that met the needs of all the partners. Simmons points out that "sharing true stories is more time- and cost-effective in increasing trust than ice breakers, trust falls, ropes courses, or group hugs" (2007, p. 225).

If we approach the narrative fragments found "embedded in wall murals and emblazoned in the collage of images and science references in such simple objects as a tray liner," scholars such as Boje contend that there is an emergent story being told in organizations and by leaders (Boje, 2006, p. 41). In *Organization Change* Burke points out that "successful leaders have a story that works for them. It is dynamic . . . a journey that leaders and followers take together. The story concerns issues of identity, who we are and what we believe, and must fit at a

particular moment" (Burke, 2011, p. 263). This look at storytelling incorporates Allusion, People, and Appeal but incorporates a looser Purpose that belies an evolving position unfixed by plot. Boje calls the relating of these stories "improper storytelling" because they break the convention of a linear plot, and the element of characters and action are suggested and implied more than explicitly stated (Boje, 2006). By looking beyond narrative and plot confines, we see "emergent" stories in organizations that Boje (2006) identifies as "storytelling organizations". Boje's colleague Harold Garfinkel studied how "retarded children were able to accomplish story in groups" through what was termed "story behaviors" (Boje, 2006). When in a later study Boje failed to find complete, plot centered narratives in an organizational study, he turned to "story behaviors" to analyze the narrative fragments he found among his transcripts and data collected. In this he found a "systemicity of storytelling behaviors" in organizations that coexist and interact with the "petrified" or direct, plot constrained narratives also used within organizations.

These story behaviors are not often studied because they fall outside the narrative or plot constraints of traditional storytelling (Boje, 2006). Dalkir, in studying storytelling in knowledge management in organizations, also points out that organizational stories often contain holes or are incomplete and must be deconstructed to understand the "tacit elements" that inform the researcher of the context of the story (Dalkir, 2004). A thorough deconstruction is necessary to identify traditional narrative elements that may be missing from an organizational story told amongst the ingroup of the organization. In a "storytelling organization," the Purpose the story is serving may not require even the narrative elements usually assumed to be necessary to a story, instead accessing the latent narrative elements within the relationships and context of the organizational culture itself.

Direct stories, or stories that do contain a plot and contextual storyworld, as Polyani (1989) calls the space where a story's plot unfolds, will still play on many of these same story behaviors. The strong contextual markers of stories lend them a much higher retention rate—as high as three times that of a PowerPoint presentation (Love, 2008)—because "stories are how we remember; we tend to forget lists and bullet points" (Mckee, 2003). Chip and Dan Heath in their book *Made to Stick* relate a story from Julian Orr, who did an ethnographic study of Xerox repairmen where one repairman related a humorous story (to his ingroup) about a cryptic error that had taken 4 hours for repairman and his partner to correctly diagnose and fix (Heath & Heath, 2007; Orr, 1996). The war story of the E053 error is so couched in jargon and contextual references that is almost undecipherable to laymen; however, the story serves both to entertain and also has a Purpose of conveying critical knowledge about a time wasting inconsistency in the copier's self-diagnostic circuitry. As Dalkir points out, "stories should have an impact [Appeal]: they should prevent similar mistakes from being repeated, or they should promote organizational learning and adoption of best practices stemming from the collective organizational memory" (Dalkir, 2004, p. 58). Human memory is story based, and knowledge sharing depends on the people not the facts involved (Mckee, 2003). The subjective nature of sharing mirrors that subjective nature and natural cognitive retention of storytelling; but, as Adamic and Marshall (2010) also point out, Dalkir (2004) insists the relationship between the teller and receiver is crucial for stories to "bring order to complex situation[s]" (p. 65).

The retention, trust, and motivating power of storytelling in organizations intertwine it with leadership. Gardner distinguishes direct leadership—where a leader guides an organization through a task or scenario—from indirect leadership—where a leader guides an organization (or more often a collective) through their distinguished accomplishments that redefine what may be

possible in a certain field. In Gardner's 1995 book *Leading Minds*, Einstein is given as an

example of an indirect leader, whereas Margaret Thatcher is given as an example of direct

leadership. These two forms of leadership are not mutually exclusive.  J. Robert Oppenheimer is

an example of a leader who maintained a degree of indirect leadership while being best known

for his direct leadership during the Manhattan Project (Gardner, 1995). Story and storytelling

play crucial roles in both forms of leadership, although in the context of this project direct

leadership is more relevant.  It is important to distinguish between Gardner's two forms of

leaders and to note that when "leaders" are referenced here it is primarily those practicing direct

leadership in an organization and not indirect leaders guiding a collective in a field of study or

common pursuit.

In his analysis of Gardner's work, Burke identifies three kinds of direct leaders: ordinary,

innovative, and visionary (Burke, 2011). Ordinary leaders are concerned with maintenance of the

status quo. Innovative leaders seek evolutionary change. Visionary leaders aim for revolutionary

change. Visionary leaders are those who have "the ability to communicate a vision and inspire

others to action" (Adamic & Marshall, 2010, p. 22). This type of leadership (and by extension

the leaders who use it) is the type most relevant to this project.

There are pitfalls to using stories in organizations (Dalkir, 2004). The contextual nature

of storytelling may limit its usefulness in an organization if the context is not universal among

the People (thereby limiting its appeal) or it cannot be sufficiently conveyed. Cultural differences

can also get in the way, especially if there is a language barrier between participants, because

Appeal and Allusion may not translate effectively. Dalkir (2004) also argues that the presentation

and context of the telling of the story can be a pitfall:

. . . stories are also best experienced orally. They lose much of their effectiveness when simply read as a text, and they lose even more of their effectiveness when the target audience is a virtually distributed community where stories are simply posted to a shared work space. (p. 70)

Story therefore is not and cannot be the only form in which leadership is disseminated throughout an organization—particularly as organizations become more global in structure and reach and encompass a wider range of persons and cultures.

<div align="center">Appreciative Inquiry</div>

Simmons (2007) contends that organizational storytelling begins with group members telling stories about "who they are and why they are here, personally" but those stories do not need to be a part of a formal organization or even told out loud (p. 190). Appreciative Inquiry builds on that approach but brings latent stories out into the open and selectively focuses on their positive or strength building aspects. In 1979 David Cooperrider was a PhD candidate at the Case Western University organizational business program interning at the Cleveland Medical Clinic. He began interviewing physician leaders about governance and process in the clinic. He wanted to understand what worked and what did not. A professor, Suresh Srivastva, was impressed by Cooperrider's enthusiasm and encouraged him to put the problem stories aside and focus on the success stories, as they were the most impactful stories—those with Allure. From this study, Cooperrider and Srivastva developed a theory of the egalitarian organization in the late 1980s that later developed into Appreciative Inquiry (Busche, 2012, p. 8).

Appreciative Inquiry was originally put forth as an alternative model for action research that incorporated the principles of generative theory (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Generative theory incorporates post-modern thought models into social psychology to challenge positivist

notions of what is "fact" in a social setting (Gergen 1978). The theory of a socially constructed reality is key to Appreciative Inquiry because it means that language is not merely a mechanism for meaning exchange but that language itself is "an active agent in the creation of meaning" (Busche, 2005, p. 123) Therefore language that shares, promotes, and discovers new ideas, theories, or visions can be a powerful instrument for change.

David Cooperrider initially resisted authoring a book on Appreciative Inquiry because he felt a definitive work might discourage the experimentation and innovation that characterized Appreciative Inquiry in the 80s into the 90s (Busche, 2012). Instead, there were four guiding principles:

1. Grounded observation to determine the best of what is

2. Vision and logic to determine what ideals might be

3. Collaborative dialogue and choice to achieve consent over what should be

4. Collective experimentation to determine what can be.

Popular publications in the mid-to-late 90s began to move Appreciative Inquiry towards a clearer, more actionable process. Through a process similar to action research, AI reached a point of identifying four general cyclical phases:

1. Discover

2. Dream

3. Design

4. Destiny.

It is important to point out that this four step model is not itself Appreciative Inquiry. There are other methods and models that incorporate the philosophy and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry such as the 5I model of initiate, inquire, imagine, innovate, and implement

(Saint & Stavros, 2010). However, the 4Ds are the most common model for Appreciative Inquiry. David Cooperrider later coauthored the *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook*, which uses this model, and I use it here to explore how an Appreciative Inquiry might play out in an organization.

An Appreciative Inquiry always starts with a Discovery, but as an emergent and cyclical approach to organizational change, this discovery process may be used repeatedly. This discovery process is different from looking for the "core" or "root" problem; in fact, it largely eschews problem solving altogether. In *Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins,* Simmons (2007) discusses the "root cause" problem. One common response to problems is to trace the issue back to the root cause and then fix that problem. While that may work sometimes in a perfectly reliable, obedient, and repeatable set of circumstances, in human systems it is less likely to succeed and may actually be detrimental. Simmons gives the example of low employee morale. Addressing morale directly may increase resistance and resentment, whereas instead, "you might tell a story, or better, ask staff to tell stories about 'Why I work here'" (2007, p. 36). Human issues like morale do not always stem from "solvable" problems and are often best corrected by a sense of purpose. Simmons goes on to draw parallel with Alcoholics Anonymous. Alcohol is a "root cause," but addiction recovery that focuses on the drinking itself is less effective than AA's focus on telling all kinds of survivor narratives. Unlike a problem solving approach, which sees the root cause as the barrier to success, Appreciative Inquiry seeks "an alignment of strengths, making our weaknesses irrelevant" (Saint & Stavros, 2009, p. 278).

These strengths are discovered through an interview process that starts with a basic interview protocol developed around the focus of the inquiry at large. For example, if an organization is seeking to improve teamwork, then the questions will relate to teams and

teamwork. The interviews are conducted one-on-one or in small groups and are designed to promote dialogue about the best of what is and the best of what could be. All stakeholders or stakeholder representatives are interviewed, and from these interviews themes and common ideas begin to emerge as conversations. Through the sharing in these conversations individual high points and aspirations become collective accomplishments and dreams (Cooperrider, Stavros, & Whitney, 2008).

The Dream phase begins as soon as the best of "what is" has been identified. Stories, values, and ideas from the personal interview conducted during the Discovery phase are shared with the group (Cooperrider et al., 2008). A moderator balances the need to build enthusiasm, establish consensus about the future vision, and also probe for details and specifics regarding that future vision. The Dream phase can very significantly in how it is carried out and what artifacts or images it develops but the result is always a shared, symbolic understanding of an ideal future (Gervashe, 2011).

In the Design phase the vision story from the Dream phase is formed into a strategic intent. This is a clear statement of what the organization wants more of and concrete plans for how to actualize this intended future (Cooperrider et al., 2008). These plans are built on the work done in the earlier two phases and focuses on defining what structures and processes currently exist in an organization and which ones will need to exist for the intended future to become a reality (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001).

The final phase, Destiny, was originally called "Delivery" and the focus was on the adjustments and challenges of sustainability for the plans and intentions developed over the previous phases (Cooperrider & Whitney 2001). This was changed because Cooperrider felt that "Delivery" focused too much on traditional change management techniques, although

controversy still remains over what exactly happens in this phase (Busche, 2011). The Appreciative Inquiry Handbook says that "improvisation" and creating an "appreciative learning culture" are important in this phase of the process (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Naming this phase "Destiny" instead of "Delivery" reinforces the idea that this phase should lead to an ongoing process (Cooperrider & Whitney 2001; Cooperrider et al., 2008); however, this if the part of the process where most unsuccessful Appreciative Inquiry interventions fail to take hold (Busche, 2011).

Throughout the phases of the 4D process, Appreciative Inquiry solidifies or brings to bear the indirect narrative fragments; it attempts to cohere the storytelling "systemicity" within an organization. This creates awareness that both alters the story by the act of awareness and allows the latent narrative elements to be formed into a future- and/or present-oriented action narrative—a leadership story (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

According to Boje, "systemicity is defined as a languaged, dialogized complexity, a work-in-process, not a completed or merged whole" (2006, p. 31). This fits with the AI understanding of organizational change:

> A space for true valuing of novel thinking and acting is created. Hierarchy is suspended; harmony is postponed in favor of curious questioning. Symphonies of logical rationales are replaced with cacophonies of wild, half-baked notions; and typical incentives to conform are supplanted with celebration. (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 24)

Appreciative Inquiry has an "improvisational capacity;" it prompts emergent systems (Cooperrider et al., 2008). In what may be called the "Principle of Simultaneity," the act of inquiry is itself a force for change as what people ask about becomes the things people talk about and those conversations construct the reality of an organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001).

As an emergent response to their Appreciative Inquiry initiative, GTE's frontline employees created their own leadership initiatives. Likewise the medical students at Indiana University's medical school started compiling Appreciative Inquiry derived positive stories for incoming students in the white coat ceremony (Cottingham et al., 2008).

All this is not without some potential pitfalls and Appreciative Inquiry has been criticized since its inception. Appreciative Inquiry has been criticized for being anti research or overly positive. Busche (2012) summarizes the response to this in "Foundations of Appreciative Inquiry" by reiterating that Appreciative Inquiry is built on a social constructionist theory, which means a shift in worldview that may seem contrary to an existing body of research. Appreciative Inquiry is more concerned with discovering and working toward what could be and allows for meaning to be created by consensus.

These stakeholders may disagree with or fall outside the sphere of consensus building created by Appreciative Inquiry. This can lead to a collective and positive orientation of Appreciative Inquiry, which may cast a "side shadow" marginalizing the viewpoint of individuals or groups within an organization (Boje, 2010). Every positive social construction perpetuated by Appreciative Inquiry casts a possible negative shadow, while very negative shadow ignored in an Appreciative Inquiry process has the potential to gain positive meaning if inquired about in the right way (Busche 2011). The shadow of Appreciative Inquiry is an important and emergent area of scholarship in Appreciative Inquiry with many scholars currently writing and researching on this topic. The issue has informed my interview protocol but since my study is about the role of storytelling generally, delineating and qualifying AI's shadow is outside the scope of my study.

We see in the literature that an organization is a collective of persons moving toward a common goal or goals. Leadership is the vision of that goal, usually developed and/or championed by a leader. Leaders, in so far as this project is concerned, are those who organize and disseminate leadership to an organization. Leaders may also be influencers in a looser collective like a profession or school of thought. These leaders may still use story, but because they do not guide an organization (a collective of persons with a common purpose) they fall to the periphery of most Appreciative Inquiry activities and are therefore excluded from this study.

Summary

Organizations must change as they seek after their goals. The impetus for this change may be motivated externally (through market pressures for example) or internally (through an independent change of priorities or leaders) but in either case this call to change results in a subjective understanding of the situation in the minds of each person, or stakeholder, in the organization. Storytelling is an acknowledged and studied method of communicating and relating subjective understanding. The subjectivity makes it valuable but also hard to quantify because it depends on the Allusion of the story, the Appeal of the teller, and also the receptivity of the People listening to the story. If the story is being told indirectly using the tacit knowledge of the ingroup of stakeholders—and so missing some common elements of well-made narrative—the existence and action of the story may be harder to discern.

Appreciative Inquiry uses story and storytelling implicitly in its four phases: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. In Discovery, a common set of questions gets a representative sample of stakeholders to share both direct and indirect stories. In Dream, the future stories of "what could be" are shared. In Design and Destiny, those direct stories may give way to indirect stories that disseminate the empowering present and future stories collected in the Discovery and

Dream stage back out to stakeholders. The reality of this storytelling thread must be untangled

and examined.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

<u>Theoretical framework</u>

This research followed a General Inductive approach to qualitative research. Instead of setting out to prove or disprove a prior hypothesis, I have approached this study with an intention of finding patterns and categories that may have been unanticipated before starting the project. A General Inductive approach is related to Grounded Theory, the difference being that a General Inductive methodology seeks "a description of [the] most important themes" whereas Grounded Theory focuses on creating theories from those themes (Thomas, 2006, p. 214).

<u>Research Design</u>

For my principle data set I interviewed 12 self-identified practitioners of Appreciative Inquiry. These interviews were semistructured and lasted less than 1 hour. The interviews were then transcribed and coded and these codes were grouped into themes that were then used to group the relevant sections of the interviews into categories. This process and its results are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Before deciding to use structured interviews, I also considered observing an Appreciative Inquiry process or collecting case studies. Observing an Appreciative Inquiry process was rejected because it would provide a depth of experience and data but limited breadth. Because of the time involved, only one process, or one part of one intervention, could have been witnessed. This would have increased the likelihood of circumstantial factors confounding my observations. My own newness to the Appreciative Inquiry process might color my judgments or skew my observations. The results of one experience or intervention are less generalizable beyond that

single experience or intervention. The need for informed consent of all the participants, the practitioner, and the practitioner's client also made this approach prohibitive.

Collecting case studies as a data set is broader than shadowing a single, or several, AI processes because the data collected are already distilled and the results are already written down. However, using case studies would have limited me to the interpretation of the person who recorded and compiled the case study. Follow-up questions would have been more limited with case studies, and the role of storytelling would have to be inferred if not explicitly stated in the record. True follow-up would have required dialogue with someone who was present and able to recall the details of the case according to the focus of this study. In addition, case studies are usually recorded and shared when an intervention is notable in some way: usually in a positive way. Basing my data on recorded case studies would have meant that my observations were more likely to be confounded by unseen negative or detrimental aspects of storytelling in Appreciative Inquiry. It may also have hid the limits or failings of Appreciative Inquiry as a method; and storytelling may have also played a part in those failings.

I chose semistructured interviews because interviewing practitioners is a way to combine the breadth of ready experience from case studies with the depth of dialogue with a practitioner who was present in those events. While interviewing only the top authorities in the field of Appreciative Inquiry might have yielded the most dramatic case studies, it may also have limited the data to best-case scenarios, or over emphasized information about how Appreciative Inquiry is *supposed* to work in organizations and ignored potentially diverse applications that fall outside the ideal. As a result, I choose to include participants who were self-identified practitioners, selected in the order in which they volunteered, with no additional qualification standards. The participants represented a diversity of backgrounds and level of expertise, including some

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participants who personally studied with David Cooperrider and others who laid the foundation

for Appreciative Inquiry. Among the 12 participants who were selected and successfully

interviewed, there is over a century of combined experience in the field of Appreciative Inquiry

and organizational development.

<div align="center">Subjects</div>

One hundred ninety practitioners were approached about participation in this project.

Participation was limited to people currently operating in the United States of America for

convenience and scheduling purposes and to reduce the chances of cultural differences and

attitudes toward storytelling confounding the results. One 185 of these potential participants

were pulled from a list of practitioners publicly available on the website of the Appreciative

Inquiry Commons (http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/community/people.cfm); the other five

were personal referrals. While these 190 are certainly a subset of those people in the United

States using Appreciative Inquiry, it seemed like a purposive sampling due to all of them having

self-identified as practitioners either on the Appreciative Inquiry Commons or through the

referring party. The referrals were contacted directly while the rest of the potential participants

were contacted via a form letter sent out through VerticalResponse.com. A mass e-mailing

service was used to hide email addresses from other potential participants and to prevent massive

"reply all" spam that can occur when long lists of strangers are carbon copied on the same email.

Only the first 15 responders were sent a consent form and offered an interview time. Out

of the initial 15 interested, three either did not follow through on scheduling an appointment or

were not still based in the USA. The ultimate sampling method could be called a convenience

sample because the size and demographics of the community of Appreciative Inquiry

practitioners was not determined past the listing on the Appreciative Inquiry Commons website.

Because several of the participants were found through other methods and were not listed on that directory, there is a portion of the population that is underrepresented. A convenience sample was chosen because determining the size and demographics of the Appreciative Inquiry community was outside the scope of this project and the resources at my disposal. This type of sample may not yield generalizable results about specific techniques or trends but may provide the exploratory insight I sought with this project (Leedy & Ormrod 2010, p. 212). A list of the participants and a short description of their background can be found in Appendix D: List of Appreciative Inquiry Practitioners.

<u>Interview Protocol</u>

The exact protocol can be found in Appendix B: Interview Questions. The core of the protocol came directly from the Statement of Purpose, namely:

- What links, if any, can be found between the use of story and the outcomes experienced by a sampling of Appreciative Inquiry practitioners?

- What role does storytelling play in the dissemination of leadership and organizational change through the Appreciative Inquiry process?

I decided that it would be easier to discuss the role of storytelling with participants before broaching the topic of links between their uses of storytelling and the outcomes they experienced using Appreciative Inquiry. I also knew that establishing the context of the practitioner's work with Appreciative Inquiry would be important. Therefore I divided the interview into three segments: experience or personal context, examples and use of storytelling, and evaluation of the outcomes of using storytelling.

Originally the first question of the experience or personal context section was to ask directly when and how the practitioner was introduced to Appreciative Inquiry. Then, following

the example of Appreciative Inquiry protocols, I asked for a peak experience that the practitioner had had using Appreciative Inquiry. This format worked well because that peak experience often was a bridge to the section on examples and use of storytelling. I followed up the story of their peak experience by asking how they used storytelling in that experience. Unlike Appreciative Inquiry protocols, I felt it was necessary to then ask if a focus on narrative had ever caused an inquiry to lose its way or had a negative impact. I felt this was important in order to uncover any negative or antistories that might not otherwise come up because the practitioners may, by nature of their involvement in Appreciative Inquiry, focus only on the positive aspects of storytelling in their work.

Unlike the first two segments, the questions in the evaluation section were worded to elicit concrete statements and observations more than storied answers. The first question came directly from my research questions but was often adapted to fit into the flow of the interview. The last question was added as a recap to elicit any other observations not already covered. It usually elicited a summary of ideas the interviewee had already expressed, which, while not the original intention of the question, gave them a chance to better articulate some of the thoughts they had formulated during the interview.

The interview questions were pilot tested with several people who have experience with Appreciative Inquiry and use it to some degree in their professional work but do not identify themselves as Appreciative Inquiry practitioners. In these pilot tests I discovered the terms storytelling and narrative caused confusion because of their different possible definitions. The current first question, which asks the participants for their personal definition of these two terms, was added to the interview protocol. From these pilot interviews I also learned to remind each

participant that the interview was only semistructured and that they could share their perspective and thoughts without waiting for me to ask all the questions.

The responses to defining storytelling and narrative were varied. Some participants saw the need immediately and were able to give concise definitions to both terms; others talked about an experience with the use of story, and several expressed the sense that definitions of storytelling and narrative should be self-evident—although no two interviewees gave the same definition. All the participants responded well to the emphasis that the interviews were semistructured and volunteered information beyond that which was explicitly asked for in the questions. Also from feedback in the pilot, I explicitly stated that I had reached the end of my predetermined questions and asked the interviewee if they had anything more that they would like to add. Many did. I found this to be an effective technique for soliciting unplanned insights into the research questions.

### Data Collection

Every interview was conducted using the Skype VOIP service to call the participant's phone, or in one case via Skype-to-Skype audio chat. The interviews were recorded via the program Audio Hijack Pro at a very high quality. Identifying information was removed from the audio using Soundtrack Pro. At the start of each interview, the participant was given a chance to ask questions about my position as a graduate student and the purpose of my research. At the end of each interview the participants were asked an open-ended question, such as, "do you have anything else you would like to add?" The intent was to capture any relevant thoughts or observations that they had not shared in answer to the previous questions. In several instances the participant gave new information or restated and summarized information given earlier.

The interviews were transcribed with attention to word and phrasing accuracy. Because the goal of transcription was not to do linguistic analysis, the natural meter and rhythm are not explicitly evident in the structure of the text. Pacing and pauses are approximated with em dashes and ellipses where appropriate. After transcription, each participant was given a copy of his or her interview with the option of redacting a portion or the entire interview.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

Once transcribed and reviewed by the participants, relevant sections of the interviews were marked and given a descriptive label. After thus labeling all 12 interviews, I made a list of the resulting 120 labels and designated those that appeared multiple times in italics. Then I evaluated the relationships and connections between these labels by creating a mind map with similar labels branching off of common themes. By iteratively examining the connections between different labels, a set of five master categories emerged: discovery, connections, identity, engagement, and transformations. Some labels had connections to other labels, which did not branch off the same master category. For example, the label "personal/inner narrative" branched off of the category "identity," while the label "change in personal narrative" fell under the category "transformation," yet there is a connection between personal or inner narratives and a change in that personal narrative. Arrows with dashed lines designated these connections between labels grouped under different master categories to illustrate the fluid nature of these initial five master categories. This complete first iteration of categories can be seen in Appendix C Mind Map of 1<sup>st</sup> Iteration of Categories.

In the aforementioned process of conducting all of the interviews, listening to them, transcribing them, and labeling them, certain conclusions and connections were starting to form in my mind. In order to control for my natural bias, which may have blinded me to key

observations and patterns in the transcripts, I sent the even numbered transcripts to a second researcher, Catherine Janssen, who had not listened or read any of the interviews up to this point. She read the first three of these transcripts (numbers two, four, and six) and independently determined what she perceived as the general categories present in the texts. She marked several passages that supported each category. Her categories were:

- Use of first person plural: telling stories with "we" instead of "I"

- Coauthoring a future: telling a future

- Reframing narrative: lack of agency to positive agency

- Building of relationship and finding commonality

In our subsequent discussion she also observed that when the participants told the story of their own journey with Appreciative Inquiry, they had a moment of enlightenment that started them on path to learning more about Appreciative Inquiry. This was an interesting contrast to the hero's journey proposed by Joseph Campbell where the call to adventure is the result of "suppressed desires and conflicts" (Campbell, 2008, p. 42). It did reflect, in Janssen's observation, the positive framework that the participants used even when describing difficult inquiries, and was an important category itself.

We had a discussion to compare and contrast our categories and develop a consensus framework.  From the outset, we concluded that "building of relationships" and "connections" were a close match. That descriptor was the first carried over as a final category. Instead of generalizing all transformations, reframing a narrative means looking at the present and past in a transformative manner. Whereas when participants "coauthor" a future, in the words of participant #2, they are engaging in not only a future centered transformation but they are doing this transformation collectively. Considering the personal vs. collective nature and the present

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and past vs. future element "coauthoring a future" and "reframing narrative" are different manifestations of transformation. Thus, "coauthoring a future" and "reframing narrative" were designated as final categories to provide a more nuanced view of the previous "transformations" category.

"Use of the first person plural" is an element of identity, but the important component of identity in these interview transcripts seemed to be tied to a transformation or change of some kind. The use of first person plural and the subcategories I had coded for identity were all relational in nature. Identity in Appreciative Inquiry stories seemed to come from ways of building relationships; either directly or through transformations (reframing a narrative and coauthoring a future together). Therefore, "use of first person plural" and "identity" were both dropped as categories so that those segments that had been coded as such could be relooked at in terms of more relational or transformative meaning.

Going back through the transcripts with the idea of enlightenment, the importance of story in uncovering new or forgotten information seemed like a reoccurring pattern. This enlightenment, like transformation, took on two related but separate forms. Story would help participants uncover or retain information; however, this intellectual process seemed independent to a parallel emotional process where story would generate an emotional reaction and/or connection with participants. The intellectual side of the enlightening process of storytelling was labeled "discovery," while the emotional side was labeled "engagement," which are words repeated in many of the interviews.

Inherent in the idea of reframing or coauthoring a narrative is the idea that pervasive narrative runs through the interviews. As participant #2 put it, "Narrative is more long-term and less conscious. It's sort of the themes of our life, if you will . . . Storytelling to me is an

opportunity or an effort to bring greater consciousness to it." And, as participant #7 says, "it's the weaving, it's the personal or organizational weaving together of data, facts, observations, context, perspective . . . it's a way to make sense of a person's or a group's or an organization's experience." This underlying story sense I will call "Narrative meaning".

Based on Janssen's input and my study of the interviews, we arrived at the following list of final codes:

- Relationship building

- Coauthoring a future

- Reframing the narrative

- Narrative meaning

- Discovery

- Engagement

I then recoded all of the interviews with these categories. The coded content was loaded into the TAMS (Text Analysis Markup System) software package so that the categorized content could be culled and studied independently. Connections between passages within the same category were then evaluated.

In order to openly explore the relationship between storytelling and Appreciative Inquiry, I approached the problem with several general questions and no concrete hypothesis. Conducting a series of semistructured interviews with self-identified practitioners of Appreciative Inquiry was a data collection method that best balanced the need for depth and breadth in the data set. I transcribed the 12 resulting interviews and through an interactive reading and evaluation process that incorporated the input of a second coder, common themes in the texts emerged. Using a General Inductive research methodology, parts of the text were grouped in categories based on

the themes they had in common. In the following chapter these themes, their substance and connection, are explored.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

My purpose in this study was to explore the links between storytelling and

Appreciative Inquiry and the roles storytelling plays in outcomes from using Appreciative

Inquiry in organizations. The final set of six categories emerged after iteratively analyzing and

coding the interviews revealed roles that storytelling plays in the Appreciative Inquiry process.

These categories of roles include relationship building, coauthoring a future, reframing the

narrative, narrative meaning, discovery, and engagement. The link between each of these

categories and the outcomes of an application of the Appreciative Inquiry method in an

organization is how well storytelling was used in this role throughout the process. No one of

these categories seemed to guarantee success, and all effective interventions or applications of

Appreciative Inquiry, shared during the interviews, incorporated something from all six of these

categories. As each category is described I let the words of the interviewees speak for themselves

as much as possible.  Most of the categories were named not just for the repeating concepts

found in all 12 interviews but also for repeating words and phrases contained in the interviews.

<u>Relationship Building</u>

Every participant stressed the importance of relationship building in Appreciative

Inquiry. They asserted that storytelling in Appreciative Inquiry is, "first and foremost about

bonding and finding the connecting points and similarities between two or more individuals. It's

about relationship building," which is crucial because, "the bond that gets created between two

people when they're sharing stories about when they're working at their very best is very, very

different emotionally from the bond that gets created when they are sharing a list of what they

see are their strengths" (Interview #4). Practitioner #5, the head of a major Appreciative Inquiry

center within a large institution, suggested that these stronger relationship form when:

. . . two human beings being[are] able to connect around a shared . . . picture if you will—word picture—about something. And so people when they hear a story they have various ways of connecting in the way that they can't connect to facts. So stories are certainly ways that we can create human connections. It goes way beyond just giving information.

Storytelling in Appreciative Inquiry allows participants to connect over a shared mental image. This shared mental image creates a deeper emotional involvement and engagement not only with each other but also with this mental image, which is often a past peak experience or an imagined best-case scenario.

"Problem-solving" may be a subordinated concept in the world of Appreciative Inquiry, but most consultants are brought in because performance or culture in an organization is somehow deficient. Around all of the experiences shared in the interviews there was always an initial lack even when talking with practitioners about their highlights or best experience. No one shared an experience where an organization was doing so well it brought in an Appreciative Inquiry consultant to do even better. Rooted in this reality, storytelling plays a role of building relationships to create a different set of outcome links:. Sharing an experience about company-wide AI summit that one client held in Las Vegas, Practitioner #7 related that:

[The] relationship that got built between these people who really didn't know each other before these one-on-ones, because the depth of sharing that goes on when you ask people to tell stories about themselves and their one best experience, is very, very energizing. I'll never forget that buzz in the room and we've got 375 conversations going on scattered around a ballroom. People sitting on the floor, lying on the ground, scattered around--just a buzz. It was amazing. . .  And that's never failed to happen. The instructions are you

pair up [with] someone you don't know and you ask these questions which are meant to

share--and people get at a fairly deep level fairly quickly. So you get this incredible

relationship building and a number of people said, "yeah I realized we work on the same

floor and I've never spoken to you. I've seen your name on email and I never [knew] who

you were."

Ultimately the goal of any use of Appreciative Inquiry in an organization is to change

that organization, the depth of relationship that storytelling provides forges connections that can

be used in the future for advancing the organization's dreams and goals.

<div align="center">

Coauthoring a Future
</div>

"Actually, I wouldn't say it's the stories I shared with them, it's that in engaging with

them we coauthored a story about our relationship. You know, it was a very dynamic

storytelling." Appreciative Inquiry differs from group therapy because it seeks to engage the

whole organization in a new future. In the commonly accepted 4Ds of the AI process, the story

sharing of peak experiences from the past is covered only in the Discovery phase. The other

three phases of Dream, Design, and Destiny are future focused. Those relationships formed in

the Appreciative Inquiry process that storytelling helps to deepen create a readiness to coauthor a

new story.

> So it became a tool to then say, ok, we've articulated [our vision] now in our stories so
>
> how do we go about enhancing that? Because that's what we think is extraordinary, we
>
> want more of that, how do we do it? (Interview #5)

Several practitioners used very direct storytelling prompts to help groups of organizational

stakeholders coauthor their future stories. These often were along the lines of "imagine a

newspaper has published a story about your company three years from now, what would the

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headline read?" Storytelling plays a complimentary role to other techniques that engage
additional senses or introduce greater novelty to the process:

I always bring Legos to an AI experience and so in the Design phase [. . .] they built their

preferred future out with these Legos, and for me that's an example of storytelling… [in

a] kinesthetic way. They each laid out in these Legos what it was and then they told their

stories after they have had designed this, "well this is this, this is the outlet we're going to

have in Norway, and here's what we've got going on here in the Netherlands," that sort

of thing. That's very powerful. (Interview #6)

Out of this storytelling comes nuance and social significance that would be impossible to express
and share effectively in bullet points:

The other place that storytelling is just fun is in the Dream phase of Appreciative Inquiry

and people once again make up a story in a kinesthetic way and they have to share that

with other participants . . . but it is that experience of… putting your dream into some

kind of a story. And some times the story is a little story… one of the most fun ever was I

did an Appreciative Inquiry for our church and in the Dream phase—I'm Catholic—in

the dream phase there's a little tiny Nun, she's about four foot ten M__ is, and her group .

. . her group, when they dreamed put a miter on--you know the Bishop's hat--they put

that on M__ and they had her walk out and … one of the team members was a reporter,

and he said "we're doing so well at St. Francis that the Pope has come to visit." And M__

walks out in this miter and she's exactly [doing] the Pope's kind of wave at people. Pope

M__ couldn't have been more fun … and in a way the Dream allows for that kind of

craziness but it also tell us something about … where people are. So, we knew--and

especially from the reception that she got--we knew that we had probably a very, very

liberal group. With three whole Dreams around that and that story gets told without ever

having to say I think we're wrong because we don't have female priests or female

cardinals and all that. That story was told when M___ came out and they said here comes

Pope M__. (Interview #6)

In coauthoring a future storytelling weaves the personal change story of each participant

into a new organizational future story. In this way, storytelling can help overcome the natural

personal resistance many may feel to changes in the status quo:

So it's a three-step process of appreciating, visualizing . . . but then it's the actualization

phase too. And that's the story where you tell how are we gonna do this. You know,

where do you fit in that story as we go forward…what does the framework of our future

story look like how are we organized to live that story. So, it's all story, it's taking the

stories of what was, creating a story of what is together, and then kind of building,

creating your story of the future, what will be. (Interview #10)

<u>Reframing the Narrative</u>

The impact and success of Appreciative Inquiry is not only in future events or strategic

planning, but the inquiry itself can shift the current narrative, sometimes in dramatic ways. One

interviewee related the story of beginning to apply Appreciative Inquiry into his work with

nonprofit AIDS organizations shortly after taking his first class on Appreciative Inquiry:

I sort of did a mini Appreciative Inquiry with many of our clients but some of the

questions were along the lines of, "if HIV hadn't come into your life, where would you

be?" And what I found was that one woman said real clearly, "I'd be dead," that HIV was

what . . . actually got her into a hospital, got her treated, and got her out of the sex

industry and using drugs, and what I also saw was that peoples lives who were actually--

you still see this around the world--HIV actually got you the opportunity to improve the quality of peoples' lives [and] stop the degradation of their life. (Interview #2)

This woman's story reframed the HIV narrative in a way that was not a denial but "it's sort of incorporating it [into her life] and moving forward." Appreciative Inquiry is an organizational methodology that puts particular emphasis on collaboration and grass roots efforts. Storytelling helps participants in this process reframe their personal narratives in a more positive way, empowering them to contribute in a more meaningful manner:

They were funded by county mental health agencies, in many cases they were wanting to create a pool of story, of storytellers, for anti-stigma--sorry about the negative language, but that's their language! So, they were looking to have people create their stories and then sit on panels in public arenas sharing their stories as a way for people to get a different perspective and view on what it means to be living with a mental health issue and the kind of strength and hope that is possible. There were some extraordinary individual transformations out of that work also. You know people whose perception of themselves and their capacity was totally shifted around and you know people who had been on disability coming off it and being able to hold down a job that they love . . . (Interview #4)

Another practitioner spoke specifically to the effects a reframing story can have on a personal narrative within an institution:

The patients teach us, we teach the patients, the housekeeper is a teacher, so it was really quiet an extraordinary discovery of what we meant by amazing teaching or by amazing learning experiences. So that's one example where the stories were really powerful and in helping people to connect to . . . the best of who they are as teachers and learners. You

know, we get so mired in metrics—how many students do you teach, how many evaluations did you do, how long did it take you to do evaluations—that pretty soon we're like why are we doing this again? Why are we teaching? So this really did re-inspire people. Ah, this is why I'm a faculty member at the University of ____. (Interview #5)

Reframing the narrative does not only play a role with individuals involved in Appreciative Inquiry. It may also be linked to engagement and relationship building. Through the stories that are told as part of the Appreciative Inquiry process, a positive narrative of the team members can spread as described in interview #5:

Gossip is stories right? And negative gossip is an incredibly important negative social tool. It's a destructive social tool. But if you can flip gossip around and make it positive storytelling then it can be a very positive social tool. In bringing people together, in motivating a whole group, in helping them to see the capacity in one another.

This role of reframing is not universally beneficial to the overall process. Using story to reframe a situation in a negative manner could be linked to negative outcomes. The role of reframing stories in Appreciative Inquiry is to keep participants personally engaged with their personal and collective strengths.

You're starting the change through literally what people start to pay attention to so in AI you're looking for . . . or you're eliciting positive stories. You're not eliciting stories of failure or suffering or pain or . . . of pessimism. You're eliciting stories of success or inspiration stories that help people both imagine and believe in the best in themselves. So it matters what kind of story it is. It matters what question you ask; as soon as you ask that question and elicit that story people are moving toward that. (Interview #5)

Reframing stories adds transformative power to Appreciative Inquiry. It helps overcome resistance and prepares the way for future stories to be told. There is also the potential for personal transformation that comes from a story that moves people out of victim roles. Because Appreciative Inquiry practitioners do not walk into an organization already knowing the answers but rely on the organization's members to generate the answers, the role of stories in reframing the current narrative is a powerful one. It enables a positive story to be told that was latent before the Appreciative Inquiry process started.

<u>Narrative Meaning</u>

Stories to reframe personal and organizational narrative play a role because "narrative and story in organizations is really what is the fiber of the culture. It's the background of the organizational life." Practitioners all had different methods of addressing these latent stories but their existence influences the process and outcomes of an Appreciative Inquiry method because the participants are first "primed" to hear the stories:

> I think people are engaged in a different way that has altered the way that they'll go through all phases actually. So that they're listening in between the cracks, in the pauses, they're listening through the silences in different ways, they're listening to the stories that even come up for themselves. (Interview #8)

Appreciative Inquiry is about making these latent stories manifest, allowing them to be told, examined, and evaluated:

> Everybody's got a story about who the best boss is or what would make a great boss. Or what would make a good board. Or what would make a good company. There's a story…we only really pass information from each other to one another because we have something in our minds and hearts that is really the story we are…the story we care

about…we care about how thing should be. When I used to do parenting work I would

ask how many of you have got a movie in your head about how things should be in your

family. And people say all the time, "oh, yeah!" and, "what's your story?" and the story

is about something they've learned in the process of growing about how things should be.

And it isn't just about parents; I've discovered it's about who the leader in this

organization should be and what kind of a leader there should be. Should we have a

leader? You know those are all stories that people, I think, not consciously but they have

within [them], and part of the genius of AI from my perspective is you get a chance to

express that. (Interview #6)

These are stories that play a role in the Appreciative Inquiry process but exist

independently of whether a person or organization ever comes into contact with Appreciative

Inquiry. By acknowledging their role, these narrative-meaning stories can be a crucial link to

long-term meaning in successful AI endeavors:

It doesn't always just come as "here's a story about something I know" or "here's a story

from my life" or "here's a story or metaphor that is helpful." My memory/experience was

the stories that they told as they were designing their new reality. (Interview #6)

Appreciative Inquiry is usually a novel way of thinking for participants. The stories that

result from an Appreciative Inquiry process are therefore usually indirect stories that cohere the

allusions and narrative fragments that echo around the organization long after the dreams and

experiences are discussed. Practitioner #7 related this to the fabric of the organization:

I'd say it's the weaving, its the personal or organizational weaving together of data, facts,

observations, context, perspective . . . it's a way to make sense of a persons or a group or

an organizations experience . . . It's beyond the PowerPoint bullets, it's the story behind

the facts if there were such a thing. It's the weaving together of individual pieces of information, a way to make sense of stuff.

Discovery

While storytelling is helping to build relationships, reframe circumstances, provide meaning, and even design the future, it also leads to personal and collective enlightenment and learning. The story itself may uncover specific personal facts as one practitioner pointed out in describing the necessity of finding one's own stories to tell:

When you have to examine "who am I?" or, "why am I here?" then it's often a transformational question because people haven't asked themselves that in a long time. . . it is a very useful exercise to go and track down a story until you find it and if you can't find it then you're going to learn something about why it's not there. (Interview #1)

This discovery through storytelling process may remind the participants of personal memories or it may help them learn and synthesize existing ideas and memories into new concepts. While storytelling is not the only way to do this, storytelling may make those facts, new or not, "stickier" in the minds of the participants (Heath & Heath 2007). Practitioner #7 summarized it this way:

What's funny is, I must have done, "tell me a story about your best leadership team experience," twenty times and I can tell you before [hand] with 98% accuracy ten of the eleven things that any come up with because, guess what, there are some commonalities. But the power of people discovering it for themselves based on their own peak experiences versus someone coming and saying, all the research done by, by . . . here's the article on Harvard Business Review that talked to 6,000 leaders in fourteen countries and these are the six factors. Well, then it's somebody else versus my own experience,

and our experience, and it comes back to how are we going to make sense collectively regardless of what some supposedly objective data set is.

Using stories also can make facts and new ideas more palatable for participants who are listening. Part of the collaborative nature of the Appreciative Inquiry process is that all participants spend as much if not more time listening than talking. This listening and collaboration combined with the stickiness of storytelling creates possibilities for effectively sharing key knowledge. One participant spoke about how Appreciative Inquiry was incorporated into difficult team meetings at her health care institution and how the role of discovery through storytelling played a part:

> Now these may be extraordinary ideas that somebody, some health worker on the front lines has come up with a way to do something reliably and safely that nobody thought of; so it's actually, again, it's true data collection that may be extremely important . . . although it's an anecdote this is how things, new ideas are brought forward about how we can do things better. So it becomes sort of a data collection process. (Interview #5)

Learning and discovery are not just parts of the first phase of the 4D process but are integral to the ongoing success of incorporating Appreciative Inquiry into an organization. Storytelling is central to the effectiveness of nurturing discoveries and passing them along.

<u>Engagement</u>

The other component to the intellectual discovery that storytelling provides the Appreciative Inquiry process is engagement. Engagement in this sense is a cognitive but primarily emotional connection between participants and the process. Seligman (2011) in his book, *Flourish,* describes engagement as, "being one with the music, time stopping, and the loss of self-consciousness during an absorbing activity" (p. 11). This aspect of storytelling in Appreciative Inquiry is most like the fuel that feeds the fire. An argument may be convincing but unless a person wants to change, their opinion is not likely to be swayed. Storytelling provides that engagement that drives the desire to change:

> . . .[I]t connects to our emotional lives. It connects to not our analytic brain, it connects to our deeper, or I should say a different part of our brain, basically to our emotions. And I think most of our capacity for change comes out of that place. It doesn't come out of our calculating brain. Because it's out of a desire and that desire is an emotional state. So music and art and stories make us want to jump out of our chair and run and embrace someone and then get going on whatever it is. Whereas if I present data on something people may nod their heads but they're not jumping out of their chair. So it connects to our emotional selves. (Interview #5)

Storytelling plays a role in this emotional process from the very beginning of most Appreciative Inquiry processes that start with the sharing of personal stories:

> I think the overarching thing that stands out is to watch what happens when you allow people to tell their stories and talk about the things of which they are most proud. The excitement that happens, physically people change, their voices elevated, they get more excited. (Interview #3)

If storytelling continues to be a part of the organization's culture and practices, the engagement cultivated in an Appreciative Inquiry summit or intervention can continue. One interviewee spoke of applying this storytelling engagement to how doctors in her medical institution interacted with patients:

[I]f I start the encounter by saying, "so tell me about something that went really well since I saw you last," and first of all what you chose to tell me about—whether its your kids, or your spouse, or some accomplishment—tells me a lot about your priorities and your strengths. And then were starting that visit with you feeling quiet strong and proud of yourself and really happy about something, and now I really have a window into how I can help you better when we do start to talk about your high blood pressure or your whatever. (Interview #5)

The engagement that comes from using storytelling in this doctor's visit would expand the number of stakeholders positively influenced by Appreciative Inquiry. That is not to say that continuing success with Appreciative Inquiry principles is tied to campfire, kumbaya story-sessions. Engaging stories must deliver a "significant emotional experience" and be carefully crafted to avoid engaging a negative anti-story (Interview #1). One practitioner broke it down like this:

But eventually it does get down to, Ok, what's the action plan--,what the plan, who's responsible for what; but even so I think keeping . . . being able to paint the picture of what the organization will look like when these things are actually in place is very much a leadership role. Being able to tell that story in a compelling way without seeming Pollyannaish. So it's no less important, it's not as easy to do or as simple as in the earlier phases. And then I think, to me, delivery is how do you continually keep this [a]live and I

think that's where storytelling, especially from a leadership role, is even more crucial. (Interview #7)

"Pollyannaish" stories can best be avoided when coauthoring is used so that the narrative is reframed in a collaborative way that strengthens relationships. Even when this coauthoring process yields no new discoveries, or new information, it plays a role in engaging the organization's stakeholders beyond what the self-same plan could do if not developed collaboratively.

So you think, well you brought all these people in and you really didn't gain any new information in the system, however what we did gain is now that plan is owned by all the employees. They're all part of that story. So the strategic plan isn't just a story of, a couple smart people at the top devising a plan, and moving it forward, and then implementing that or issuing that, orders to everybody else. Now; now everybody owns that. Everybody is part of the story and when they're part of that story, they're more fully engaged in that story. (Interview #10)

This engagement, which all the practitioners agreed comes mostly through sharing stories, is a key link to success. So not surprisingly, in the latter phases of Destiny and Delivery, where more concrete planning is accomplished and storytelling in less of a focus, and in the follow-through after an event like a summit are where most initiatives falter. The engagement that storytelling brings to Appreciative Inquiry may be one reason why in the Appreciative Inquiry handbook and other publications the 4Ds are presented as a cycle and not a linear process. There is a clear link between storytelling and engagement and between engagement and positive results from an Appreciative Inquiry process.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

<u>Moving Forward</u>

The purpose of this project has been to explore the role of storytelling in Appreciative Inquiry and the relationship between storytelling and the outcomes of an Appreciative Inquiry based organizational change intervention. The sample size and unknown quantity of Appreciative Inquiry practitioners in the USA (let alone the world) limit the generalizability of the outcomes of this project; however, some interesting and noteworthy trends have come up through the careful examination of the data. Taken with a dose of scholarly skepticism, I believe that these findings can feed useful applications and observations on the practice of Appreciative Inquiry.

As Cooperrider and Whitney point out in "A Positive Revolution in Change", Appreciative Inquiry is a fluid field of study and "it is difficult to sum up the whole of AI—as a philosophy of knowing, a normative stance, a methodology for managing change, and as an approach to leadership and human development" (p. 3). Practitioner #11 points out that "every practitioner seems to take the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry and use it a little differently." While #6 states, "It's a philosophy really in so many ways, and a way of life, AI is." If Appreciative Inquiry is more than a methodology for organizational change but a way of thinking, then storytelling is a method of perception.

Simmons (2007) suggests organizational members, and by extension organizations, should look into their past and present narrative for stories that sum up and define who they are internally and externally. Likewise, Denning in his book *The Leader's Guide to Storytelling* calls future stories "inherently difficult" to find but worth trying to see (Denning, 2005, p. 228). The

Heath brothers (2007) in their book *Made to Stick* suggest that the process of finding organizational stories is one of learning to see and discern worthwhile stories from the myriad of mundane events that surround us. As one example, they give the story of Jared, a near-morbidly obese man, who lost significant weight while eating only Subway sandwiches. The story was unnoticed and then rejected by Subway's management. It was an advertisement company working on spec (i.e. for no money upfront) who saw the story and its value, which they used to launch a wildly successful marketing campaign for Subway. Simmons, Denning, and the Heath brothers all stress the importance of seeing stories. Practitioner #12 used a technique she called "Jumpstart storytelling" to jumpstart this process of seeing and telling appreciative stories. She first had participants tell appreciative stories from any area of their lives before narrowing this story-sight to gaze on their organizations and immediate work environments. Storytelling, like Appreciative Inquiry, is hard to tie down to a single, universal definition; but, regardless of the myriad of definitions, given by the participants in this study and elsewhere, storytelling does seems to be a way of perceiving the world, events, and relationships.

There seemed to be a dual awareness of story among the interviewees. Defining story as an experience implies some level of structure, usually with a beginning, middle, and end. There is also an event of the telling itself where all parties are active participants. This is the kind of storytelling that is most obviously at work in an Appreciative Inquiry intervention. It is incorporated into the Discovery phase through interviews and the Dream phase through group visualizing experiences. It engages the participants and aids them in making personal and collective discoveries. It builds new relationships and refines old ones.

The "backdrop" storytelling, which is a link between the narrative meaning and reframing narrative categories discussed earlier, is harder to quantify. It is not something

structured and concrete. However, these stories are the values in action that Appreciative Inquiry is striving to uncover. The indirect stories are only passed through the systemicity of story fragments like suggestive artifacts, allusions in conversations, cultural standards, or, at most, the briefest of anecdotes. Many of the interviews touched on the importance of these indirect stories in different ways. Practitioner #5 mentioned them as "positive gossip" that can push past a few resistant negative voices to change an organization's culture. Practitioner #11 refers to them as "signal stories" where actions of a key figure, in her example the CEO, can disrupt the cultural norms of an organization and create ripples that signal change in the organization's culture. Practitioners #7 and #9 involved an artist in their AI summits so that participants could take with them visual artifacts of the reframing and future coauthoring they had experienced. Introducing these visual artifacts into the backdrop story of the regular organizational life, like using signal stories or positive gossip, carries the engagement participants had with that future story past the AI summit, strategic planning session, or whatever forms an intervention may take.

The background story is therefore an interaction between the stakeholders, organizational processes, and artifacts. Appreciative Inquiry is one way of giving a voice to those latent stories by bringing them to the surface in a positive and constructive manner. The inquiry is key because by voicing the narrative it inherently changes the narrative. It also validates each individual's interpretation of the common experience of being in the same organization. It lifts the curtain on the background narrative and brings the unspoken stories into the open where they can be shared, examined, and reimagined.

These disparate voices are then joined in some kind of joint visioning activity. One thing the future coauthoring of Appreciative Inquiry accomplishes is to provide a means to reintegrate the examined indirect stories back into the background narrative. The ideal future that is

collectively imagined should be what all the participants are looking toward and now alluding to

in their conversations, expectations for each other, and artifact creation. On paper this process of

bringing latent narrative out in the open, examining it, and then reincorporating the best stories

back into the latent organizational narrative may seem easy, but the truth is that this process is

messy.

Many persistent issues can keep these new indirect stories from sticking. Once the novel

situation of an AI summit or strategic planning session is past, old processes and artifacts may

persist, bringing back elements of the preexisting underlying narrative and culture. If an inquiry

process did not involve all stakeholders, the nonparticipants may reject the new and improved

story being grafted onto their lives, like host tissue rejecting a donor organ.

"[Appreciate Inquiry is] not a one-time event, it's a way of being," said practitioner #12

in our interview. Successful Appreciative Inquiry initiatives in organizations reintegrate and

perpetuate these positive, strength-building narratives through an active collaboration.

Organizations, according to the Appreciative Inquiry philosophy, are not machines and the

messiness in organizations will never be excised or eliminated (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001).

Therefore the most successful interventions have "sparkplugs who [. . .] can adapt to this way of

thinking […] and then they model it," as practitioner #7 put it. These sparkplugs are the

perpetuators of the positive gossip. They are the inquirers who continue to interview peers and

colleagues, formally or informally. They are the grass roots advocates, like the students in

interview #6 who collected and published their own positive, appreciative stories. These

sparkplugs *see* stories and they *think* appreciatively. Although management support is crucial,

these sparkplugs are not solely senior management but "regardless of their status or position . . .

all people in [organizations] are potential storytellers" (Kaye, 1996, p. 34). Appreciative Inquiry

practitioners understand the importance of thinking appreciatively, but beyond the discovery phase, and the need for novelty, are they teaching participants to continue to see stories? An area of future research would be to examine the genesis and effects of these "sparkplug" storytellers in organizations. Can Appreciative Inquiry practitioners encourage the development of such storytellers?

These may be suggestions shouted from atop the ivory tower, but storytelling brings so much to the Appreciative Inquiry process in the way of relationship building, specific and personal discovery, and emotional engagement. Seeing stories in the Discovery phase is easy, perpetuating stories in the latter phases is harder. Nevertheless, it is more likely to lead to long-term success. Teaching participants to perceive and value appreciative stories will go a long way into changing Appreciative Inquiry from an event into a way of life for an organization.

## Future Explorations

I would like to do a more in-depth study using Grounded Theory to understand the interplay of direct and indirect storytelling in the Destiny phase. Of all the phases, this was the part of the Appreciative Inquiry process that practitioners were the least clear about the influence of storytelling. Incidentally, it is also the phase where most AI interventions break down. After doing this study, there seems to be preliminary evidence that focusing on organizational storytelling could enhance the effectiveness of AI. An in-depth study focusing specifically on the weakest parts of the process could be beneficial. This would involve examining case studies and securing the cooperation of several organizations and their consultants or leaders who have committed to the Appreciative Inquiry process. This could even be carried into an intervention where storytelling techniques are taught as part of an AI summit or consulting. The intention would be to sow seeds for organizational sparkplugs and give members of all levels the skills

they need to evolve the plan and increase the likelihood of success in the Destiny phase through storytelling. Another option is to do a deeper, perhaps longitudinal, study of organizations like the health care institution that practitioner #5 worked in where I can focus on their mini-inquires and storytelling that has been incorporated into the culture. It could also be revealing to apply mini-inquiries and short storytelling sessions other organizations and observe the effects.

There is also the possibility of exploring the role of storytelling in Appreciative Inquiry as applied to individual coaching. Several practitioners mentioned they use AI with individual coaching, but that was not the focus of this study. Practitioner #4 used AI Discovery techniques with patients in the county mental health system and had great success with personal transformational stories. These successes could reveal important information when put under the microscope. Like the topic of this study, this is a relatively underexplored area as well and could reveal many things about storytelling and Appreciative Inquiry that could be applied to coaching and small group change.

Appreciative inquiry is a powerful change process. When effective it uses storytelling to effect real change in socially constructed realities that make up corporate cultures, work environments, and possibly our individual lives. As the study of applied storytelling grows, and new storytelling tools develop, there is a great opportunity for feeding these innovations back into the proven processes and practices of Appreciative Inquiry. My hope is that by facilitating the understanding of the connection between these two fields a foundation for further research has been laid.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Consent Form

**Storytelling in Appreciative Inquiry**

Principle investigator Joel Richards

East Tennessee State University

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in this project. This information is provided to help you decided if you wish to participate in this research into the role and importance of storytelling in Appreciative Inquiry.

**Purpose of the study**: To undertake exploratory research on the role storytelling plays in the dissemination of leadership and organizational change through the Appreciative Inquiry process.

**Voluntary participation**: You participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time with no negative consequences, penalty or loss of benefits. You may withdraw your participation after the interview or refrain from answering any of the questions in the interview. You will be given an opportunity to review the transcript of the interview. Your interview should last approximately 45 minutes.

**Confidentiality**: All identifying information will be redacted from the interview transcript. If a third-party transcription service is used all identifying information will be removed from the audio prior to transcription. Only the principle investigator and advisor will have access to the original audio.

**Risks and anticipated benefits**: There are no known risks for participating in this study. The study hopes to broaden and deeper the understanding and possibilities of storytelling in the Appreciative Inquiry methodology and your participation will help to accomplish that. Results of the study will be made available through East Tennessee State University and submitted to relevant publications for consideration.

**Audio Release:** By signing this form you consent to your interview being recorded and transcribed for the purposes of this research. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript, if desired, and may redact any portions.

**Contact information**: If you have any questions or concerns please contact Joel Richards at me@joelrichards.com or 347/556-2003. **If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439-6002.**

Please sign this form and return the signed form by email (me@Joelrichards.com), fax (646-439-9065), or mail (1301 Buffalo St. #4, Johnson City, TN 37604). If mailing your form, a SASE will be sent to you upon request. You will receive a signed copy of this form.

_____

Signature of participant                                                                    Date

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Establish experience/personal context of the interviewee:

- Would start by defining storytelling and narrative?

- How did you first come in contact with Appreciative Inquiry?  How long have you been using it in your work?

- What is a highlight of your experience with Appreciative Inquiry?

Examples of Narrative/Storytelling:

- In your experience with Appreciative Inquiry has there been a moment where narrative or storytelling specifically facilitated some aspect on that process? What did it facilitate and how? Why do you think this instance stands out?

- Has there been an experience where a focus on narrative caused an Inquiry to lose its way or had a negative impact?

Evaluation:

- What role do you think storytelling plays in dissemination of leadership?

- What links, if any, can be found between the your use of story in Appreciative Inquiry and the outcomes you experience?

# Appendix C: Mind Map of 1st Iteration of Categories



**Discovery?**
- discovery of future vision
- applicability of past accomplishments
- specificity
- data gathering
- remembering self
- inspiration
- remembering
- reported story
- finding a story
- exploration

**Connections**
- knowledge sharing
- controlling
- shared perspective
- collective storytelling
- relationships
- bridging barriers
- neurological connections
- teach
- community
- empathy building
- harmony
- story to build empathy
- OPPOSITION: story to preserve outgroup
- difficult connections
- expressing dangerous ideas
- consensus building

**identity**
- Personal discovery
- self-identification
- self-actualization
- consctructionist activity
- story is not inquiry
- personal/inner narrative
- vicitim narrative
- positive relief of negative narrative
- perspective
- touching hearts
- trust
- Authenticity
- reflections
- contextualization
- language
- dissemination — retelling stories
- out group story
- self-actualization
- quest narrative
- in-group story
- perpetuation
- integration
- self-assesment
- ambiguity of story

**Engagement**
- increases stickiness
- innovation
- invigorating
- OPPOSITION: negative story
- increasing buy-in
- mental imaging
- productivity
- retention
- excitement
- emotional connection
- prioritizing
- leadership

**Transformations**
- change in norms
- change in perspective
- change personal narrative
- changing focus
- synthesis
- challenges assumptions
- conflicting person/org stories
- OPPOSITION: presenting/upholding status quo
- re-visioning
- Healing

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APPENDIX D: List of Appreciative Inquiry Practitioners

1. A consultant and author with a strong background in organizational storytelling.

2. This practitioner has always worked in non-profits with a focus on AIDS/HIV and gay rights. He has worked in many conservative and religious communities.

3. After working as a health administrator, she studied at Case Western along side David Cooperrider and went on to use AI as a manager and later as a consultant.

4. This practitioner is certified with the Appreciative Inquiry Corporation and specializes in strategic planning.

5. She is a leader of an ongoing appreciative inquiry initiative at a major medical school/health care center. This practitioner is also a doctor and educator.

6. Coming from a back ground in public administration, this practitioner has experience consulting with organizational and personal coaching using Appreciative Inquiry.

7. This practitioner has twenty-three total years of organizational development experience and fourteen practicing Appreciative Inquiry. He has led several large summits.

8. Also earning her PhD from Case Western, this practitioner has taught AI and organizational develop in several universities as well as consulted.

9. An organizational development consultant with around six years of experience in AI, this practitioner led a successful AI intervention at NASA.

10. In addition to studying under David Cooperrider and others, this practitioner has an extensive background in business and is now a university educator.

11. This practitioner holds an MBA from Case Western and consults individuals and organizations using AI as a primary methodology. She is also a published author.

12. She is a consultant working at a large government consulting firm.

VITA

JOEL RICHARDS

| | |
|---|---|
| Personal Data: | Date of Birth: March 5, 1980 |
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| | |
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| | |
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