*Transformative Learning and Appreciative
Inquiry: Incorporating Coaching and Action
for Deep Organizational Change*

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Transformative Learning and Appreciative Inquiry: Incorporating Coaching and Action for Deep Organizational Change

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This article identifies how deep change in organizations, catalyzed by Appreciative Inquiry, and facilitated by coaching, can be the consequence of simultaneous, synergistic Transformative Learning that is experienced at the individual level and enacted at the group level. The authors examine the theoretical and structural framework of these two constructivist views of development and discusses the role of coaching in implementing a new bridging construct, Transformative Appreciative Inquiry, which enlightens the potential for sustainable, ongoing adaptation is based on the tenets of action technology and inspired by inter- and intra-personal narrative and reflection from a generative perspective.

At the organizational level, attempts at altering strategy, operations and culture imply that shifts in performance will occur due to changed or enlightened perspectives (Davis & Ziegler, 2000; Kasl & Elias, 2000; Shaw & Taylor, 2000; Yorks & Marsick, 2000). The literature of change, while addressing the needs of individuals and groups for information and social engagement, gives scant attention to the derivation of those enlightened perspectives that enable stakeholders to fully and purposefully engage in organizational transformation. Deep and long-lasting perspective transformation, facilitated by coaching, can occur during times of significant change as the result of a specific combination of processes described in this paper.

One purpose of coaching during a change initiative is to support perspective transformation, defined as " . . . the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world" (Mezirow, 1990, p. 167). Building from the notion that perspective transformation is essential to organizational change at both the individual and group levels, it is critical to understand how best to support this requirement and at the same time allow for participation in and knowledge of the system to be shared and understood. Given that a shift in perspective is the outcome of learning, we propose that theory related to individual learning in the midst of change can provide a conceptual platform from which a group process can be proposed with similar intent. At the same time, organizational learning and organizational change theories and processes allow for the involvement of the group in meaning making and adaptation of work practices. To make the leap from insights and behavior change at individual level to comparable results at the group level calls for incorporation of theories that uphold similar principles concerning the nature of the person, of learning, of the organization, and of change. The convergence of Transformative Learning (TL) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) provides such a foundation. The possibilities for bringing together these theoretical perspectives and practices and the potential impact of their synergy will be illustrated through discussion of a new bridging construct, Appreciative Transformative Learning. This construct builds from the strength of the union of TL and AI in fostering deep and lasting organizational change.

AI is one of a group of loosely-connected approaches, sometimes called *action technologies*, that includes action research, action science,

participatory action research, action learning, and collaborative learning. These action technologies serve as a catalyst for organizational learning and have potential for fostering organizational change. Of these, the broad emphasis of AI on generative capacities gives it perhaps the deepest potential for wide-scale organizational change.

From our perspective, change of this nature begins at the individual level and then expands to the group as a direct outcome of individual and collective transformative learning. Change at the individual level, to be lasting, must be supported by reflective pauses and coaching to investigate and support new habits of mind. This change must be embedded in the cognition, memory and perspective of individuals and the whole if it is to produce new behaviors at the organizational level. Others have identified this process as collective or organizational learning (e.g., Akgün, Lynn, & Byrne, 2003). Coaching is the tool that best supports this change, as recommended in Miller, Fitzgerald, Murrell, Preston, & Ambekar, (2005).

Given that a shift in perspective is the outcome of learning, we propose that theory related to individual learning in the midst of change can provide a conceptual platform from which a group process can be proposed with similar intent.

> An additional recommendation for alliance-building interventions is to provide more technical and personnel support during AI breakout sessions. … Coaches who understand the AI philosophy should also be available to work with the breakout teams so that they can more readily adapt AI to their groups' developmental needs. During the AI session, AI coaches could have helped each breakout team tailor the AI exercises so as to be most relevant to their level of content and relational development. For example, the cotton team had met on previous occasions and developed their direction. Consequently, they needed more focus on specific business and technical challenges. On the other hand, the R&D and Operations & Facilities Management teams were meeting for the first time, so they needed to establish their direction. This suggests, consistent with Bushe (1991), that practitioners should consider adapting the AI process for teams in various stages of development. (p. 15)

The process of transformation is best understood within the context of knowledge and behavioral change at the personal and group levels. As such, it may include cognitive, emotional and social components. At the cognitive level, learning needs to be integral to change. It is an effect confirmed by establishing or reestablishing understanding, belief and behavior. Organizational change requires learning at both the individual and group levels. At an emotional level, transformation may elicit reactions within a broad range. Affirming and elevating reactions to individual and organizational effectiveness, such as empathy, encouragement, confirmation, self-efficacy, happiness, peace or euphoria, can result from discovering new or deeper meaning within experiences or beliefs. Disorienting dilemmas, which occur when individuals are made uncomfortable by experiences or assumptions that do not fit their worldview, may lead to negative emotions including fear, loss of faith, hopelessness, or disenchantment. At social levels, transformation may be instrumental in fostering stronger relationship, inspiring loyalty, or nurturing community development; conversely, it may bring about misunderstanding, cause conflict, or trigger polarity. In other words, transformation may be construed as value- and valence-neutral, though it is commonly assumed to be an unquestioned good. For example, Marsick (in Mezirow & Associates, 1990) pointed out the following:

> . . . (t)oday, workers at all levels are called upon to think differently and more deeply about themselves, their work, and their relationship

to the organization. This is nowhere more evident than in the ranks of managers, whose very survival is threatened by mergers and acquisitions, downsizing, and flattening of the organizational pyramid.

This capacity depends on learning to reflect on and in action (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Daudelin (1996, as cited in Rigano & Edwards, 1999) found that "Efforts by some major companies such as PepsiCo, Motorola and General Motors to harness reflection as a deliberate tool of learning are a significant trend towards addressing the need for formal reflective practices in the workplace."

Change at the individual level, to be lasting, must be supported by reflective pauses and coaching to investigate and support new habits of mind.

Transformative Learning (TL) theory provides insight into how AI can foster deep change in organizations. Beginning with an overview of the theories behind TL and AI, the intersections of these frameworks are explored, and a case for a spiral structure that is supported by constructionist ideas of organizational learning is made. These interwoven shifts of individual transformation and organizational destiny provide optimism that firms can be financially successful while simultaneously achieving some positive social goals.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

TL results in substantive change in both thinking and behavior (Mezirow, 1991). It ". . . results in new or transformed meaning schemes, or when reflection focuses on premises, transformed meaning perspectives" (Mezirow, p. 6). The six action steps of TL (Mezirow, 1991), describe the process: 1) Experiencing a disorienting dilemma; 2) Undergoing self-examination; 3) Conducting a critical assessment of role assumptions; 4) Recognizing that one's problem is shared; 5) Exploring options for new ways of acting; and 6) Building competence and self-confidence in new roles.

In order for transformative learning to occur, new concepts and behaviors need to be viewed in relation to the old. At some point, individuals realize that what they are doing is somehow out of sync with the rest of the world. Some may proceed through the remaining steps independently, but others may become stuck and unable to conceive of other possibilities. The process can be facilitated through partnership with a coach. The coach encourages reflection and together the coach and client take a hard look at how the client is functioning and examine the assumptions underlying practice. This involves understanding that their dilemma may be experienced by many. The coach relates individual perceptions to those more widely held. Alternatives are generated together, based on revised assumptions. The client, supported by the coach, proceeds with new (changed) behavior, based on new assumptions. In order for learning to be transformative, both thinking and subsequent behavior must change. This requires a specific form of coaching described as a learning laboratory (Schön, 1987) – a safe environment in which to experiment with new ideas and behaviors. It "involves helping people surface, question and reframe their stories when their current stories are disconfirmed or break down" (Hargrove, 1995, p. 62).

Hargrove drew heavily on Argyris and Schön in the development of his perspective on coaching. He suggests using questions as a model for clarifying stories from clients. An emphasis is placed on not accepting the client's interpretation at face value – or as the only interpretation – of the situation. This work can foster triple loop learning – "transforming who people are by creating a shift in people's context or point of view about themselves" (Hargrove, p.27).

Shifting contextual perspective requires a capacity to distinguish oneself from one's environment. Kelly (1963) described this process metaphorically:

> But life, to our way of thinking, is more than mere change. It involves an interesting relationship between parts of our universe wherein one part, the living creature, is able to bring himself around to represent another part, his environment. … Because he can represent his environment, he can place alternate constructions upon it and, indeed, do something about it if it doesn't suit him. To the living creature, then, the universe is real, but it is not inexorable unless he chooses to construe it that way. (p. 8)

Boyd and Fales (1998) stressed that sharing one's reflections with others, having a sense of openness and receptivity to information within and outside the self, and setting aside previously held positions are integral and essential to the reflective process. Similarly, Dilworth (2004) strengthened the link between reflection and action in his discussion of action learning, which is another action technology. He reminds us that its founder, Reg Revans, saw the reflective component as "an essential complement to action. …In fact, the learning flows from the reflective part of action learning more than the action component. The action component gives us the ammunition for reflective examination, learning and change" (Dilworth, in ICSAI Books).

In order to create and support deep (transformational) change, dialogue and reflection must include action and be facilitated by coaching that reveals multiple perspectives, develops a mechanism for informed choice and helps the individual move from choice to action.

Hence, in order to create and support deep (transformational) change, dialogue and reflection must include action and be facilitated by coaching that reveals multiple perspectives, develops a mechanism for informed choice and helps the individual move from choice to action. This suggests a natural pairing of coaching with the action technologies and a strong affinity with AI, as described in the next section.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Altering the entry-point for the change process within the organization, Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) devised a pathway that encouraged transformation, based on unique experiences of the exceptional already lived by individuals who were stakeholders in the organization's present and future. Two distinctive standpoints significantly differentiate the process that has come to be known as Appreciative Inquiry. First, Cooperrider's work falls within the framework of constructionist theory. This foundation is explained by Gergen (1985):

> . . . [It is] principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live. It attempts to articulate common forms of understanding as they now exist, as they have existed in prior historical periods, and as they might exist should creative attention be so directed.

Van der Haar and Hosking (2004) make an important distinction between *constructivism* and *constructionism*. The former is primarily an intra-cognitive activity of an individual inquirer who separates him/herself from his/her own discourse. In contrast, constructionism is socio-relational and focuses attention on processes of relating, with the inquirer seen as a participant in the discourse that s/he is co-constructing. Constructionism is germane to the foundations of AI, although constructivism also plays an important role.

Second, Cooperrider departed from prevailing approaches to managing change that operated from mechanistic, problem solving modes. In seeking the best of what existed as the building blocks of the future, his theory evolved from generative assumptions regarding the capacity of people and organizations to adapt. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) explained:

> Appreciative Inquiry is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives "life" to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential.

AI incorporates four principles that derived from Cooperrider and Srivastva's (1987) initial utilization of an appreciative model for action research: research into the social (innovation) potential of organizational life should begin with appreciation and be applicable, provocative, and collaborative. These underlying tenets have evolved as other researchers and practitioners examined and applied AI. In 1999 Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) identified five principles that underlie the worldview and practice of AI: the constructionist, poetic, anticipatory, positive, and simultaneity principles.

As a descriptive theory, TL sheds light on how an individual moves into enlightened change, and AI, as an applied construct and generative worldview, provides the model for engaging the entire system in pursuit of transformation informed by grounded experience and values.

In practice, AI's structural framework is a guided process composed of five phases. The momentum for changing the course within an organization, and ultimately, the outcomes it achieves, begins in the phase referred to as Design. The four phases of the inquiry that engage the larger organization are widely known as Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny (e.g., Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

Cooperrider spanned the distance between incipient, incidental occurrences of achievement and purposeful, consistent excellence. This was accomplished through dialogue that made tacit knowledge explicit, made unrecognized values identifiable, and brought social systems as well as technical ones into play. It is at this juncture that organizational change and organizational learning intersect. It is also here that group coaching can support the movement from design to implementation through regular support of project teams. Peltier (2001) describes a four-step coaching process: 1) getting things started (accomplished by supporting participants during Discovery and Dream); 2) gathering information and making a plan (facilitating Design); 3) implementing (supporting groups moving towards Destiny); and 4) locking in changes through on-going support (an additional, post-Summit phase). This on-going support can be likened to the role of the learning coach in Action Learning, where a coach works with teams to both keep them on task and enhance group learning. Miller, Fitzgerald, Murrell, Preston, & Ambekar (2005) stated it this way:

> Transcultural strategic alliance success will be improved with leadership's commitment to alliance building. Commitment requires continuous organizational development support ranging from AI interventions such as those discussed in this article to one-on-one coaching. Ongoing alliance-building processes help build a unified business direction and a synergistic culture. They also help alliance members understand and leverage the cultural artifacts and challenges that may otherwise hamper their abilities to achieve their desired business results. (p.18)

RELATIONSHIP OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING
TO APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

As a descriptive theory, TL sheds light on how an individual moves into enlightened change, and AI, as an applied construct and generative worldview, provides the model for engaging the entire system in pursuit of transformation informed by grounded experience and values. In both TL and AI, meaning-making is enhanced by anecdotes of lived experience. Stories and clarification are central to both TL and AI – stories of the past and present, and stories of an imagined future. Stories of the past are examined as sources of strength (AI) or as barriers (TL) in relation to development of the organization or the person. Through the process of continuous questioning and clarification, coaches help their clients make these connections between stories and development on the group and organizational levels. These very narratives, once understood within personal and organizational contexts, help to uncover the values and beliefs that lead to habits of the mind. The leader of an organization must be cognizant of them before they are able to replicate or replace them. Coaching in support of change helps raise this awareness.

AI theorists have increasingly called for the incorporation of reflection and reflexive practices within AI processes (Fineman, 2006; Fitzgerald & Oliver, 2006; Fitzgerald, Oliver, & Hoxsey, 2007; Grant & Humphries, 2006; van der Haar & Hosking, 2004). For example, van der Haar and Hosking (2004) suggested that "reflexivity now becomes a quality of the appreciative process - rather than an act of the inquirer in relation to his or her reality construction and 'after' the intervention has 'finished'" (p. 1027). Thus, this valuing of reflection, which is integral to TL, is increasingly advocated for AI as well.

The process of self-reflection has been thoroughly documented on the individual level. Bandura (1986, cited in Pajares, 1996) saw beliefs that people hold about themselves as key elements in determining how they will act. This is consistent with the views of a number of other theorists who describe the influence of beliefs as a filter supporting or constraining behavior (Pajares, 1996, citing Abelson, 1979; Dewey, 1933; James, 1885/1975; Mead, 1982). This viewpoint is also consistent with Kelly (1963) and Ellis and Harper (1975), who perceived working with the constructs or beliefs that individuals hold as crucial to effecting change. Furthermore, Bandura (1986) recognized the reciprocal relationship between individual and environment, with the individual as both producer and product of life events and their own social system. This process is analogous to that used in many therapies including Kelly's (1963) construct theory, Glasser's (1975) reality therapy and Ellis' rational-emotive therapy. It is also a natural part of coaching, where the process may center around freeing the individual from old ideas or thought patterns that block the ability to change. It is used by executive coaches, including Hargrove (2005), O'Neill (2000), Peltier (2001) and Crane (2007).

Reflection to recognize, include, value, express, and understand the shadow can promote transformative learning and change, both individually and collectively.

On the organizational level, Bushe (1999) explicated these connections. First, organizations have an inner dialogue made up of the things people say to each other in small confidential groups that are undiscussable in official forums of organizational business. Second, this inner dialogue is a powerful stabilizing force in social systems that accounts for the failure to follow through on rationally arrived upon decisions. It is here where people's real thoughts and feelings about what is discussed in official forums are revealed and communicated. Third, this inner dialogue is mainly carried through the stories people tell themselves and each other to justify their interpretation of events and decisions.

As the AI practitioner provides opportunities for dialogue and reflection-in- and on-action, participants are able to deepen the shift in thinking created by taking an appreciative stance.

Bushe's (1999) observations reflect what Fitzgerald and Oliver (2006) referred to as the individual and collective shadow. They define these shadows as censored emotion and cognition. The term "censored," in turn, refers to any conscious or unconscious regulation of cognition and/or emotion by self or others where their expression is considered to not fit with "accepted" cultural or group norms (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). Ironically, when reflexive practices are absent from AI processes, "unconditionally positive" interpretations of AI may unwittingly strengthen the shadow and increase, rather than decrease, negative behavioral manifestations associated with the repressed material (Fitzgerald & Oliver, 2006). However, reflection to recognize, include, value, express, and understand the shadow can promote transformative learning and change, both individually and collectively (Fitzgerald & Oliver, 2006). We see a vital role for coaching in helping individuals make these tacit dialogues explicit by creating a safe environment within which to discuss undiscussables. The coach would further encourage and model reflexive practices and support questioning and reporting practices that do not censor outlying opinions.

One perspective on the role of transformative learning within the AI process can be inferred from McBride, Voetterl, and Kinnick (2003), who introduced Bohmian dialogue as a tool to foster transformative learning. Bohmian dialogue opens lines of communication within groups of individuals (Vassallo, 2000). Bohm emphasized the need for dialogue to include reflective thought and joint meaning-making. This requires both self-awareness and sharing of personal meanings in dialogue in order to develop a collective understanding. In Bohmian dialogue a group of individuals can develop and share meaning together through this attention to personal meaning and the willingness to share and be open to alternate perspectives. Bohm (1996) explains:

> A dialogue can be among any number of people, not just two. Even one person can have a sense of dialogue within himself, if the spirit of the dialogue is present. The picture or image that this derivation suggests is of a *stream of meaning* flowing in the whole group, out of which may emerge some new understanding.

Dialogue, coupled with reflection and moved to action, creates the conditions for transformative learning. This assertion appears throughout the literature on action technologies (Davis & Zeigler, 2000; Kasl & Elias, 2000; Shaw & Taylor, 2000; Yorks & Marsick, 2000). For example,

> Reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983, 1987) involves looking back on personal experiences to evaluate practical reasoning and build personal theories of action. Schön's (1983) discussion of reflection-in-action adds to the picture of learning from experience. He sees learning as occurring when a reflective conversation occurs, drawing on experience to understand a situation, framing and reframing, suggesting action, then re-interpreting the situation in light of possible outcomes.

When AI is informed by TL theory, the conditions of a reflective practicum (Schön, 1983) are created. As the AI practitioner provides opportunities for dialogue and reflection-in- and on-action, participants are able to deepen the shift in thinking created by taking an appreciative stance. This critical self-reflection has previously been seen in the action learning approach of Revans (1978, 1982), designed to generate solutions utilizing the concrete experiences of the group and, in some cases, facilitated by a learning coach.

Further, Boyle and Fales (1998) cited Butler (1996), who added reflection-to-action in his description of a model for human action and change:

> Butler posited that these three modalities of reflection (reflection-to-, -on and -in-action) are the means for individuals to achieve learning through action and to improve performance. Actions and performances are connected by reflective learning loops so that the outcome of one action feeds directly into the design of later actions.

It is here where the interplay between individual and organizational transformative learning occurs. Mezirow (1991, p. 209) says that "(a)ction is an integral and indispensable component of transformative learning." He further discusses the interplay between the personal (individual) and public (societal or organizational) spheres in the transformative process, reminding us that "personal transformation involving sociolinguistic distortions can only happen when a perspective of social change is involved, and, social change, in turn, depends upon personal transformation" (*ibid.*).

He goes on to link the transformative learning process to a need for strategies that create change. AI offers that called-for strategic component. It provides the framework within which to make the theoretical internal process an external, social reality.

TL may be seen as the strands of genetic material that shape the spiral architecture of change for the organization, just as reflection clarifies the code that is consequential to critical thinking. Stories are the source of the code . . .

It is our contention that the opportunity for deep change at the organizational level is intertwined with transformation at the individual level because of the prospect for a shift of both thought and action. Bushe and Kassam (2005) performed a meta-analysis of twenty AI cases published prior to 2003 to determine the extent to which transformational change occurred. In discussing their findings, they observed this:

> The idea of changing how people think lurks implicitly in the normative re-educative change model (Chin & Benne, 1976), which is a foundation of the OD field, but usually the focus in application of that theory is on changing group norms and accepted behaviors.…The forms of engagement that have evolved in AI practice may not, in the end, turn out to be the best way to engage collective ideation, but these research cases demonstrate that doing so appears to be central to transformational change. (p. 176)

They found that this collective ideation appeared to be critical to the transformational outcomes across the 20 AI cases they studied. It was the result of new knowledge creation, a generative metaphor, and penetration that shifted the 'ground' of the organization (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). Further, Miller et al. (2005) found that

> AI skilled coaches can help multiple breakout teams who are in diverse stages of team development tailor the AI work to best meet their developmental needs. Thus, by leveraging AI breakout coaches, team members can focus on more of the tangible issues that they face and lessen the likelihood that AI exercises are being done simply for the sake of going through the motions and/or "following orders." This will help participants create more meaningful direction, dialogue, and design. (p. 16)

As noted previously, reflection is a fundamental aspect of change-related learning and within the process of learning, new knowledge is created. Given that Mezirow (2000) called for a strategy to actualize transformative learning, and Bushe and Kassam (2005) suggested that learning is related to the degree to which organizational change is transformational, we suggest that in practice AI and TL can inform and support one another. Further, we argue that AI may generate transformative change more consistently by ensuring opportunities for reflection in action.

Metaphorically, TL may be seen as the strands of genetic material that shape the spiral architecture of change for the organization, just as reflection clarifies the code that is consequential to critical thinking. Stories are the source of the code, which (through the culling of repetitive themes within the 4-D process of AI) becomes an embedded message for the future-- like base pairs in a segment of DNA. The union of these constructs is expressed in Table 1 (Donovan & Meyer, 2006).

Table 1. Relating Transformative Learning to Appreciative Inquiry

TL – Individual	AI - Collective	Appreciative Transformative Learning
• Experience disorienting dilemma • Engage in self-examination	• Discover	• Individuals and groups inquire together about successful experiences. • This generates a disorienting dilemma as participants discover previously hidden individual and collective strengths and capacities.
• Critically assess role assumptions • Recognize that one's problem is shared	• Dream	• As previous role assumptions are challenged, expectations begin to be reframed and positive images of an exceptional future are co-created. Participants recognize that they share tremendous strengths and capacities.
• Explore options for new ways of acting	• Design	• The new mindset emerges in provocative propositions. • Individuals and groups explore options and embedding new mindset in socio-technical systems.
• Build competence and self-confidence in new roles	• Destiny	• Continuous investment in competence and confidence as the new roles and relationships are lived. • Emerging opportunities for inquiry develop the individual and reinforce the system.

Given the focus on deep change, AI might be considered a catalyst for transformation as it naturally partners with TL. Individually and collectively, we construct our own meaning within and from encounters with life within context. At its heart, TL is constructivist. As Cranton (1994) explained, "We interpret our experiences and the things we encounter in our own way; what we make of the world is a result of our perceptions of our experiences." Reflection-in-action allows for that inspection and interpretation of the history of the personal and group. The output of that process is an identity grounded in past experience.

As a process of examining, questioning, validating, and revising these perceptions, TL calls for an examination of prior experiences, values, and frames of reference.

We commonly use old meaning perspectives to interpret new experiences. AI creates opportunities to operate without old meaning perspectives, in an open field of inquiry, as participants engage in discovery, dream and design in the co-creation of new reality. On-going coaching allows content and process reflection (Mezirow. 1991, p. 117) to be incorporated into these phases as a means to delve deeper into the complexity of organizational challenges and the strategic courses of action which are being improvised. Similarly, premise reflection (Cranton, 2006, p. 34) is a natural component of the dream and design phases.

Often, without a stimulus to promote deeper reflection, people are uncritical of the assumptions that create their meaning frameworks. As Thatchenkery (1999) pointed out:

> When organizations find that attempts to fix problems create more problems, or the same problems never go away (Senge, 1990), it is a clear signal of the inadequacy of the organization's current images or projections of who it is. In that context, appreciative inquiry is an attempt to co-create a shared consensus of a new future by exploring the core competencies that are resident in an organization. (p. 5)

If, as Bushe and Kassam (2005) contended, transformation is ". . . a qualitative shift in the state of being or identity of the system, usually reflected in patterns or organization emerging after the appreciative inquiry that were clearly different from previous patterns" (p. 170), AI has occasionally embedded a new level of thinking and behavior. Purposeful incorporation of reflection in action, as understood from TL and facilitated by coaching, into the AI process appears to provide the potential for more consistent transformational change among participants across the entire organization or community.

AI creates opportunities to operate without old meaning perspectives, in an open field of inquiry, as participants engage in discovery, dream and design in the co-creation of new reality.

CONCLUSIONS

This discussion illustrates the need to create opportunities for reflection, change, and action within an appreciative framework in order to embed change within an organization, rather than merely espousing positivity and suggests that coaching be used as a vehicle to support the process of *appreciative transformative learning*. Transformative learning theory, with its emphasis on personal reflection as an integral part of a process of developing and testing meaning schemes with and through others, complements the constructivist approach of appreciative inquiry, adds depth, and creates intriguing possibilities for increasing both the speed and depth of change. It also creates possibilities for change to begin at multiple points within the organization, rather than being limited to top-down efforts. Coaching serves as the vehicle for richer, deeper conversations and multiple appreciations of situations.

There is a need for further research that applies Bushe and Kassam's (2005) criteria for organizational transformation to verify the meaning-making that underlies the transformative nature of AI. Additionally, the development and integration of reflection in action practices within AI, as well as investigation of their impact on organizational change, will increase our understanding regarding the nature of systemic meaning making and learning within a generative framework. Finally, the role of coaching within AI and other transformational organizational constructs should be documented and studied.

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