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AI Practitioner

International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry



Feature Choice by Chris Laszlo, Robert Sroufe and Sarah Waddock
**Torn Between Two Paradigms:
A Struggle for the Soul of Business Schools**

Business, Schools and Communities as Agents of World Benefit: Flourishing in Challenging Times

Edited by

Wick van der Vaart and David Cooperrider

Co-publishers

**Instituut voor Interventiekunde and the
David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry**



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Business, Schools and Communities as Agents of World Benefit: Flourishing in Challenging Times

This issue of *AI Practitioner* is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Charleyse S. Pratt 1948–2017

It is with a loving heart that I share that Dr. Charleyse S. Pratt – one of the great contributors to AI scholarship and practice – passed away this spring. Charleyse was one of our most creative doctoral students at Case Western Reserve, and was loved by all.

Her work bringing Appreciative Inquiry to children and teachers in our public schools was an inspiration. She worked wonders with children, many of whom had literally been written off – by schools, by teachers, by our testing systems, and she helped them see their strengths, and do AI interviews with exemplary leaders, successful professionals



and build mentorships that were transformational. She created amazing designs where these students would, over a series

of months, go through the 4D cycle to envision their valued future and design pathways to progress. In one experiment with twenty-seven

students in East Cleveland's high school, every one of them had failed all the state's proficiency tests and were viewed by teachers as "not likely to graduate". Charleyse said, "It's time to aim higher".

She created a whole new kind of summer school using AI as the experiential learning model. Her expectations were high. Three students, almost immediately, dropped out. But the other twenty-four? That fall semester when school resumed they each passed the state proficiency tests in math, reading and writing. All graduated from high school. Two-thirds went on to college.

Marge Schiller, one of the great catalysts for this special issue and long-time AI advocate for Positive Education, said this:

When Charlie was on the faculty of Case Western University, she and I worked on

an Appreciative Inquiry project called Schools and Youth as Agents of World Benefit.

This spring there will be a conference that will take some of Charlie's ideas and have them central to some important conversations sponsored by the Fowler Center at The Business School at Case. Many of us will be there to gather the flowers that are growing from the seeds she planted.

Charlie was a gift. Three weeks before she passed away, Cleveland State named a center in her honor. It is called the Pratt Center, and it houses the Sullivan-Deckard Scholars' Opportunity Program, which provides scholarships for students who have grown too old for the foster care system. She was the catalyst

behind this groundbreaking initiative, launched in 2015: it is now a national model in the US for enhancing educational opportunities for a student population that faces more challenges than most. Charleyse wrote about AI in books such as *Appreciative Inquiry and Organizational Transformation: Reports from the Field*, edited by Ron Fry, Diana Whitney, Frank Barrett and Jane Seiling.

The people in our AI family who knew her will never forget Charleyse Pratt, mentor, AI leader and friend. And it is to her service of building a better world that we dedicate this special issue of our journal, the AI Practitioner.



David Cooperrider

Inside this issue

- 05 Business, Schools and Communities as Agents of World Benefit: Flourishing in Challenging Times
Wick van der Vaart
- 09 **Agents of World Benefit: Business**
An Appreciative Inquiry into Business as an Agent of World Benefit
Ronald Fry
- 17 Evolving Approaches to Design at Hunter Douglas Window Fashions Division
Amanda Trosten-Bloom
- 28 Enhancing Profitability Through Business Process Excellence: The Green Mountain Coffee Roasters' Story
Ilene Wasserman and Amanda Trosten-Bloom
- 35 Beyond Traditional Banking: Finding Solutions for Climate Change is Something We Must Do Together!
Wick van der Vaart
- 38 **Agents of World Benefit: Schools**
Intergenerational Learning Leaders and the Embodiment of Appreciative Inquiry
Lindsey Godwin and Marge Schiller
- 46 An Inspired Future: The Significance of City-wide Conversations in Chicago
Bliss Browne
- 59 Tapping the Soul of Higher Education
Jeanie Cockell and Joan McArthur-Blair
- 67 **Agents of World Benefit: Businesses and Communities**
Business as An Agent of World Benefit: Why Do Good Things Happen to Good Companies?
David Cooperrider
- 76 Appreciative Planning and Action in Nepal and Liberia
Malcolm Odell and Marcia Odell
- 93 Appreciative Inquiry in Community Action for Health in Kyrgyzstan
Tobias Schüth
- 103 **Nourish to Flourish** Voices from the Field
Keith Storace, Roopa Nandi and Jacqueline Wong
- 108 **Feature Choice**
Torn Between Two Paradigms: A Struggle for the Soul of Business Schools
Chris Laszlo, Robert Sroufe and Sandra Waddock
- 120 **Appreciative Inquiry Research, Review & Notes**
Doing Appreciative Inquiry Research in Your Own Organisation: My Significant Lessons
Neelima Paranjpey
- 128 **Appreciative Inquiry Resources**
Roopa Nandi
Hardik Shah, Ph.D.
- 132 **AI Practitioner Co-publishers**
Instituut fur Interventiekunde
David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry
- 133 **Advertisements**
Instituut fur Interventiekunde
Company of Experts
Lincoln Workshop Series
Appreciative Inquiry Field Lab
David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry
- 136 IAPG Contacts and *AI Practitioner* Subscription Information



Wick van der Vaart

Wick van der Vaart has Masters degrees in Dutch literature and social psychology. In 2005, he founded the Instituut voor Interventiekunde (Institute for Interventionism) in Amsterdam. The core of this Institute is a two-year program in appreciative interventionism. He is Editor-in-Chief of AI Practitioner. He has participated in two Iron Man Triathlons.
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David Cooperrider

David Cooperrider is the Fairmount Santrol/David L. Cooperrider Professor of AI at the Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University. David is best known for his original theory and writing on Appreciative Inquiry, with his mentor, Suresh Srivastva, in 1986.
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Business, Schools and Communities as Agents of World Benefit: Flourishing in Challenging Times

Towards a Flourishing World: Interacting with People as the Agents of World Benefit

Kurt Lewin spent the second half of his career in the USA, examining the question: Can we create knowledge about the productive forces in groups and societies? This question has become crucial again. It is time to re-create knowledge about the productive forces in societies and groups.

In the original article on Appreciative Inquiry, which grew out of Cooperrider's Ph.D. dissertation, David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva (1987) paid tribute to Kurt Lewin:

Lewin's character was marked by a spirit of inquiry that burned incessantly and affected all who came in contact with him, especially his students. The intensity of his presence was further fueled by the belief that inquiry itself could be used to construct a more democratic and dignified future. At least, this was his hope and dream, for Lewin had not forgotten his experience as a refugee from fascism in the late 1930s ... It was this spirit – a relentless curiosity coupled with a conviction of the need for knowledge-guided societal development – that marked Lewin's creative impact on both his students and the field.

*'If you truly want to
understand something, then
try to change it.'*

Kurt Lewin

When I studied social psychology in Amsterdam in the middle 1990s and became aware of the importance of Kurt Lewin's work, this struck a chord that made my heart sing. This is why Cooperrider's and Srivastva's homage to the German psychologist as a starting point for AI is so crucial to me. Kurt Lewin spent the second half of his career in the USA, examining a fundamental question: We know so much about the destructive forces in groups, can we now create knowledge about the productive forces in groups and societies?

His research was the foundation for group dynamics and action-research. For Lewin and his students, action and research were tightly coupled because, he said, "There's nothing as practical as a good theory" and "If you truly want to understand something, then try to change it". Changing and understanding go hand in hand.

Lewin's question "How can we understand more of the productive forces in groups and in society?" seems to have become crucial again. With the strong emotions on all sides surrounding Brexit, the election of Trump, the way Putin, Erdogan, Orban, Kaczynski and others talk and behave, it looks and sounds very familiar to people living in central Europe, a throw-back to the 1930s. It is indeed time to re-create knowledge about the productive forces in societies and groups.

Groups and societies

Groups consist of people interacting with each other; societies of people and groups interacting with each other. By far the majority have the best of intentions, but the only thing that matters is the effect of their (lack of) collaboration. When we live in challenging times, we have the tendency to look for easy explanations and easy solutions. "It all started when... you...when they... did so and so." By simplifying our world in these cause-and-effect sequences, we tend to forget what our own contributions to events have been; we tend to ignore interactions between people that don't "start" somewhere. Interactions are feedback loops going back-and-forth between people. Studying those feedback loops, let alone influencing them, is a complex process.

I strongly believe that individuals can change the world, for the better or for the worse. But they can never do this alone. One of my teachers in AI, Maureen McKenna, stated this beautifully, quoting Margaret Mead: "Yes, any one of us can change the world. One conversation at the time." It is in our conversations, in our interactions with other people, that we have the power to influence things.

*'Any one of us can change the
world. One conversation at
the time.'*

Margaret Mead

The philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry begins with a respect for all voices. In a recent and timely TED talk, entitled "Why the Only Future Worth Building Includes Everyone", His Holiness Pope Francis addressed exactly this issue: in



To read David Cooperrider's thoughts on fresh eyes and fresh ideas, go to "Business as An Agent of World Benefit: Why Do Good Things Happen to Good Companies?" on page 67



To read about Mac and Marcia Odell's experiences in sharing the WORTH project and APA goals in Nepal and Africa, go to "Appreciative Planning and Action in Nepal and Liberia" on page 76



To read more about the Imagine Chicago project and how it spread, go to "An Inspired Future" on page 46

the video, he says "Let us help each other, all together, to remember that the 'other' is not a statistic, or a number. We all need each other."¹

Agents of world benefit

The topic of this issue of *AI Practitioner* is so important at this moment in time: Businesses, Schools and Communities as Agents of World Benefit. Large companies, educational systems, communities, are more-or-less coordinated assemblages of conversations. And when a large collection of interactions coincides, such as a multinational company embracing a purpose like climate change to create a flourishing world, it becomes easier to coordinate the interlocked behaviours within a group or an organization.

A mixture of old and new

This issue of *AI Practitioner* is a much bigger than we are used to: the articles are a mixture of "old" and "new". In June, 2017, Case Western Reserve University hosts a conference in Cleveland on "Discovering Flourishing Enterprise: Businesses as an Agent of World Benefit". This issue is special, not only for our subscribers but also for the participants of the conference. David Cooperrider and Ron Fry have written longer, informative and stimulating articles about the topic of the conference. Wick van der Vaart has interviewed Léon Wijnands, Global Head Sustainability of ING. Marge Schiller and Lindsey Godwin have written about the potential of intergenerational learning as a possibility the world can embrace and benefit from.

Another idea was to select some articles we have published before, articles that talked about communities, schools and businesses that have made a difference. We contacted the authors and asked them whether they could write a reflection about their earlier articles, by asking them the following questions:

- What has happened since, what were the long-term effects of the project;
- What did you learn from it, as an AI facilitator and how did you take this knowledge forward?
- And how can this knowledge help us in these challenging times?

Amanda Trosten-Bloom, Tobias Schüth, Bliss Browne, Ilene Wasserman, Malcolm and Marcia Odell, Jeanie Cockell and Joan McArthur-Blair responded to our call and their reflections are a pleasure to read.

¹ You can hear the talk in full at https://www.ted.com/talks/pope_franis_why_the_only_future_worth_building_includes_everyone?utm_source=tcdcomshare&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=tcdspread.



To read Marge and Lindsey's article on intergenerational learning, go to page 38

I would especially like to thank Marge Schiller and Lindsey Godwin who not only submitted their article about the importance of intergenerational learning, but who also enticed Chris Laszlo and his co-authors into writing a splendid Feature Choice article about the narratives in modern business schools.

As well, we have our regular features: Nourish to Flourish, with practitioners' stories compiled by Keith Storace; Research Review and Notes, by Neelima Paranjay, about conducting research within your own organization; and the Resources column by Hardik Shah and Roopa Nandi.

This issue wouldn't have been possible without Shelagh Aitken who had to be very patient this time. She really helped us to come up with a big and beautiful *AI Practitioner*, a worthwhile and engaging summer read.

Enjoy!

Wick van der Vaart and David C. Cooperrider
Spring, 2017

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

AI Practitioner Co-Publishers

AI Practitioner is now being brought to the world by academic co-partners the Instituut voor Interventiekunde in Amsterdam and the David L. Cooperrider Center in the Stiller School of Business at Champlain College, Vermont.



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Appreciative Inquiry Theory and Practice in Amsterdam

The Instituut voor Interventiekunde (Institute for Interventionism) was founded in 2005 by Wick van der Vaart for two purposes:

- To train coaches, trainers, consultants and/or managers in the craft of appreciative interventionism. Students range in age from 24 to 65.
- As a network of practitioners who use an appreciative approach in working with individuals, groups and organisations.

The programs the Instituut voor Interventiekunde offers are both theoretical and practical. Our main programs are:

- A two year basic program in interventionism;
- International programs to become an AI practitioner, an AI master practitioner, and an AI meta practitioner.

The David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry

The David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry is the global Center of Excellence in Appreciative Inquiry and strengths-based organizational management. Situated in the Robert P. Stiller School of Business at Champlain College, the Center:

- Provides cutting-edge educational offerings in AI and Positive Organizational Development,
- Provides AI-related organizational consultancy services to organizations,
- Serves as a scholarship incubator that advances the theory and practice of AI across all organizational sectors around the world.



Lincoln Workshop Series
Learning Through Experience

tickets-31358841138

The Lincoln Workshop Series will be conducting the following Appreciative Inquiry training workshops in 2017:

Appreciative Inquiry Foundation Course: Lincoln, England 11 – 15 September 2017
With Mette Jacobsgaard

This workshop is designed for managers, human resource professionals, organisational and community facilitators, from corporate, governmental and charitable, not-for-profit organisations – anyone who wants to get a solid grounding in the theory and practice of AI.
[https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/appreciative-inquiry-foundations-lincoln-2017-](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/appreciative-inquiry-foundations-lincoln-2017-tickets-31358841138)

AI for Human Interaction & Group Process (AIHI): Gallese, Italy 14 – 20 October 2017
With Mette Jacobsgaard

Learn how to enhance your interactions by gaining a clear and practical understanding of how groups form, work together and evolve as well as how to gain the skills for working with different communication styles from an AI perspective to increase your personal and professional effectiveness. Developing a deep understanding of AI and applying AI principles real time in daily interactions during this intensive workshop gives you the foundation for personal and professional success.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/appreciative-inquiry-human-interaction-group-process-aihi-tickets-31673856357>

For further information about all of these workshops visit: www.appreciative-inquiry.co.uk

A creative and reflective Human Interaction Lab for experienced professionals at a crossroad

A Practitioner's Journey

When: August 14th-19th, 2017. Where: Argentat, France

In this week you will:

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- Develop a new focus on what matters to you;
- Will find new paths and revitalise your approach to old ones;
- Discover new language and new ways to articulate your essence;
- Get a more powerful self-image as a professional.

The leaders on this journey are Wick van der Vaart, social psychologist, and Mark Lough, psychological therapist. They designed this Practitioner's Journey based on their own experiences in conducting T-groups and on theories from Watzlawick, Weick, Schein, Cooperrider and others.

[pdf-brochure](#)



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<http://www.champlain.edu/ai-home/appreciative-education/ai-practitioner-certification-program>



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